Karin Sander
1957–2057
Reykjavík Art Museum
Hafnarhús



30.05.–20.09.2026

Introduction

Reykjavík Art Museum is proud to present Karin Sander: *1957–2057*, a major exhibition, opening as part of the Reykjavík Arts Festival. The show brings together works from across Sander's career alongside new pieces made in Iceland, offering a broad and engaging look at one of Germany's leading conceptual artists.

Sander's work often shifts how we see everyday things, making familiar spaces and situations feel newly charged. Rather than presenting something fixed, her artworks frequently invite visitors to become part of them. Through subtle and precise interventions, she draws attention to details we might normally overlook, encouraging us to think differently about how we experience the world. Many of her pieces depend on audience participation or are shaped by their surroundings, so the exhibition keeps evolving as people move through it.

Karin Sander (b. 1957) lives and works in Berlin and has had a strong connection to Iceland for more than 30 years. The country has been both a place

where she produces work and an ongoing reference in her practice. This exhibition reflects that long relationship, including works created in different locations around Iceland that respond directly to its landscapes, environments, and cultural context.

A key aspect of the exhibition *1957–2057* is site-specificity—how artworks connect to the space they inhabit, physically and conceptually. At Reykjavík Art Museum, the exhibition activates the building itself, with works that respond to its architecture and its place within the city.

A neon piece uses Google Earth coordinates to locate visitors within the museum, while others highlight surfaces, structures, and even the passage of time within the space. The exhibition also introduces new works from Sander's "Patina Paintings" series. For this show, white primed canvases were installed across Iceland, resulting in works that reflect the country's varied landscapes and changing conditions.

Participation plays an important role throughout the exhibition. In *Museum Visitors 1:7*, one of

Sander's most ambitious ongoing projects, guests are invited to be scanned and turned into small-scale 3D sculptures. As the exhibition progresses, these sculptures gather into a growing installation, making the audience visible in the space and turning their presence into part of the artwork.

Across her career, Sander has explored how time, environment, and context shape both objects and people. Her work challenges traditional ideas about authorship and permanence, focusing on process, change, and interaction. By using everyday materials, architectural features, and digital tools, she creates situations where art emerges through experience rather than being imposed.

1957–2057 highlights the artist's distinctive approach to material, space, time, and lived experience, encouraging visitors to reflect upon their role within the exhibition—and the wider environment.

Ólöf Kristín Sigurðardóttir and
Markús Þór Andrésson, curators

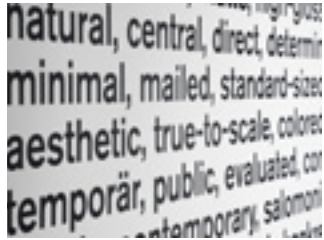




Identities on Display
2013/2026
Vitrines with coat hangers and coin-operated locks;
wood, glass, metal
200 × 80 × 60 cm; 120 × 60 × 80 cm

Visitors are invited to store their personal belongings in glass cabinets in the museum foyer. In each one, attention is directed toward the everyday possessions of visitors, which thereby become exhibits and acquire artistic value. While their owners move through the museum, jackets, coats, and bags remain present, carefully safeguarded, yet visible to all other museum visitors. The garments reflect personalities sketching portraits of absent individuals. A collection of clothing and objects from diverse origins suggest a season, age and maybe the background of the owners. Here, it is the context of the museum and of art itself that shapes how objects, information, and personalities appear. Everybody is free to expose their belongings, without the artist directly intervening. By emphasizing the presentation in these glass lockers, Karin Sander highlights, how meaning emerges within the framework of the exhibition itself.





All adjectives from the Wikipedia entry about Karin Sander, retrieved: 20.04.2026
2022/2026
Text source, vinyl lettering
Various dimensions

Karin Sander extracted all adjectives found in the Icelandic and English versions of Wikipedia entries on her. Removed from their original context, the words are systematically taken from the document and written on the wall, that the museum regularly uses for communications of the exhibitions. The accumulation of just the adjectives evokes an idea of the artist by an essence of description. The work draws attention to how an artist's identity is constructed through wording, repetition, and, in the case of Wikipedia, collective editing. Rather than defining herself or adopting institutional language, Karin allows this open source to do so. The work reveals cultural differences between languages and regions. By isolating adjectives, she underscores how discourse quietly shapes reputation, power, and meaning. Here, descriptive language is transformed into a material trace of perception and presence.





Museum Visitors 1:7
2026
3D color scans of museum visitors,
polychrome 3D printing, plaster material
Scale 1:7

This work is part of an ongoing series developed by the artist in various locations worldwide. Museum visitors are scanned using a 3D body scanner. The resulting digital data is processed and sent to a 3D printer, which recreates the visitors in plaster. The title refers to the scale of the printed sculptures in relation to the body. Following image capture, the process unfolds over time, with the scanned photo files compiled, reviewed and printed several days later. The sculptures are installed in the space, forming a growing and evolving cross-section of visitors over the course of the exhibition. The portraits are precise renderings, capturing individual traits, attire, posture, and gesture in a black-and-white spectrum. These sculptures are both familiar and remote, an anonymous collective, yet also distinct individuals, active spectators who become a silent display.





Mobile Spectator Stand
2021
Aluminium
160 × 1500 × 180 cm

The work consists of a long tribune along the exhibition gallery. It displays the visitors, watching the exhibition process, the people and the installation. It also constitutes an artwork in its own right. By incorporating seating into the installation, Karin Sander draws attention to the role of the viewer and their bodily presence within the space. The benches evoke rest, waiting, and observation, while simultaneously becoming part of the exhibition's visual framework. The viewer assumes a position, both literal and conceptual, thereby becoming an active participant as well as part of a living tableau. From the benches, visitors are also given the opportunity to use their phones to listen to a guided introduction to the exhibition as a whole.





64°08’56.9“N 21°56’27.3“W
2015/2026
Coordinates of the Reykjavík Art Museum – Hafnarhús
Vinyl lettering
240 cm

Text applied directly on the wall references the precise geographic position of the Reykjavík Art Museum – Hafnarhús through its coordinates. By using numerical coordinates as both the title and subject of the work, Karin Sander transforms a simple location into a conceptual and artistic proposition, drawing attention to how places are defined, marked, and perceived. Positioning based on the Earth’s latitude and longitude is a constructed system we inhabit, one that shapes and frames our existence. These simple yet exact data points render the invisible visible and invite reflection on how we locate ourselves in the world. The work is inherently as site-specific as one could imagine and cannot exist outside this singular location without altering its form. At the same time, it holds an infinite capacity for adaptation: when installed in a new location, both the coordinates and the title change.





Patina Paintings, Iceland
2025–2026
Stretched canvases in standard sizes, white universal primer
Various dimensions

These paintings were created over the past year specifically for this exhibition. Primed white canvases of different sizes were placed at various locations across Iceland, both in inhabited areas and in untouched natural environments, and left to weather for a period of time. The paintings are shaped by their surroundings and conditions, by weather and wind, as well as by the interventions of animals and passersby. Chance and time thus become active agents in the creation of the works, without the direct involvement of the artist. The paintings presented here bear traces of climate, weather, humidity, salinity, and pollution in the form of debree, tonal variations, textures, and even scent. *Patina Paintings* draw attention to the idea of process rather than finished form, and to painting as a documentation of place and time. The viewer's mind travels through the paintings along different paths, sensing a journey from one work to another. A couple of paintings hang outside on the museum's façade, continuing to weather and environment during the exhibition.

Akureyri Art Museum
November 2025 – April 2026
145 × 200 cm

Underpass in Reykjavík
October – December 2025
250 × 400 cm

Sælufossvirkjun Dam in
Ásgarðsá River, Kerlingarfjöll
August 2025 – May 2026
40 × 50 cm
40 × 50 cm

Warden's Cabin, Kerlingarfjöll
August 2025 – May 2026
40 × 50 cm

Hallormsstaðaskógur Forest
September 2025 – April 2026
145 × 200 cm

Sheep House,
Brúnir Farm in Eyjafjörður
January – April 2026
145 × 200 cm
40 × 50 cm

Seltún, Krýsuvík
May 2026
100 × 145 cm

Lake Þingvallavatn
October 2025 – May 2026
250 × 400 cm





















3D Inkjet Print of the Painting *Mt. Herðubreið* (1992) by Stórval (Stefán V. Jónsson)
2026
Polychrome 3-D print, plaster material, colour pigment ink
24.8 × 26.5 × 2 cm

The self-taught artist Stórval (Stefán V. Jónsson, 1908–1994) painted numerous images of the mountain Herðubreið. His distinctive style and prolific output are widely recognized in Iceland. For Stórval, Herðubreið was not merely part of a landscape but a personal connection to his origins in the highlands of Möðrudalur. His work was not driven by the pursuit of a precise likeness but by repetition, reinforcing the mountain's symbolic significance. Here, Karin Sander has three-dimensionally scanned and printed one of Stórval's characteristic paintings. Proportions and colours are distorted, yet the motif remains unmistakable. She translates the artist's two-dimensional rendering of the landscape into a three-dimensional form, transforming the painting into a relief in which brushstrokes and frame become integral elements of the work. As in other works, like the *Iceoscapes* in the exhibition, Sander engages with ideas of place and our relationship to it.

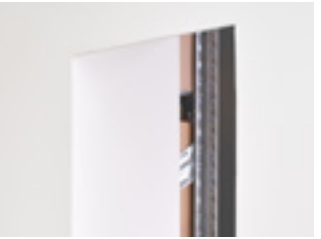




Chicken Egg, Polished, Raw, Size 0
1994
Chicken Egg, raw
6 × 4.5 × 4.5 cm

The surface of a hen's egg is polished until it becomes completely smooth, glossy, and textureless. An everyday egg is transformed into an almost translucent white sculptural object that absorbs its surroundings. The pure form rests on a pedestal, revealing a subtle yellow hue where the egg meets the base, suggesting its interior. Here, Karin Sander transforms a fragile, everyday commodity into a work of art. Its delicacy and limited lifespan stand in contrast to traditional notions of artistic permanence.





Window A4 < A3
2018/2026
Wall cut; 29.7 × 21 cm (A4), 42 × 29.7 cm (A3)

A window is cut into the gallery wall, exposing its internal structure. On the outside of the gallerywall, the opening is the size of a DIN A4 format; on the inside, it expands to A3. This creates a perspective effect that widens inward. Positioned at eye level, like a painting, the opening has no frame, and its sharp edges and depth create the illusion that reality itself has been sculpted. For the artist, the window references the conceptual intertwining of art and architecture, where the work's properties are inseparable from its location. The work resonates with another intervention in the adjacent gallery, and together they highlight the massive qualities of the former warehouse of which they are part.

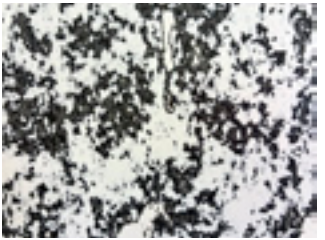




Kitchen Pieces
2012/2026
Fresh fruits and vegetables, stainless steel nails
Various dimensions

Vegetables and fruits, such as potatoes, apples, cauliflower and many more, are brought into the realm of visual art simply by being hung on the wall of the exhibition space. These naturely grown food items, nailed to the wall with precision and familiar from classical still-life paintings, are introduced directly into art without mediation. Over time, the natural process of decay becomes part of the work, with changing colour, texture, and smell. Instead of representations, real, untreated objects are presented, creating tension and ambiguity. The work emphasizes transience, transformation, and the blurred boundary between art and everyday life, inviting reflection on material value, perception, and the aesthetic potential of the ordinary and perishable.

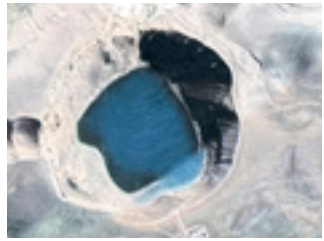




Wall Piece 42 × 29.7 (A3)
1986/2026
Wall paint, polished
42 × 29.7 cm

The *Wall Piece* is created by polishing a demarkated area of the wall in the exhibition space itself as both material and meaning. Instead of placing an artwork on the wall, Karin Sander works directly with the wall's surface. By carefully sanding the wallpaint, a thin layer of it is removed revealing older layers of paint and smoothing out imperfections until a polished, completely reflective surface remains. Through this minimal intervention, part of the wall is transformed from a neutral background into an autonomous artwork. The work reveals the properties of the space and highlights how architecture, material, and light shape visual experience. By working within the space rather than filling it, Sander suggests that art may reside in uncovering what is already there.





Ideoscapes
2023
Polychrome 3D prints from Google Earth 3D data, plaster
Various dimensions

Using Google Earth Data 3D landscape sculptures are generated that depict real locations in Icelandic nature. The data is sourced directly from Google Earth and is visualized as 3D inkjet prints. Karin Sander treats this digital data as different levels of reality and translates the digital into the analog, both in the selection of locations and scale. The works are records of a particular version of digital reality—and at the same references to a broader associations linked to places, names, history, politics, and symbolism. The contemporary landscape is increasingly shaped, mediated, and perceived through data systems and visual representation. Here, digital information forms the basis of the works in the exhibition space, even though the places they depict carry other dimensions, such as light and shadow, or subjective and even transcendent connections to nature.





Hair Drawings
1998
Selection of drawings from a series of 970 works,
970 hairs from 122 people, paper
27.9 × 21.6 cm, framed 45.3 × 38.7 cm

Singular pieces of hair from dozens of individuals form a series of chance line drawings. Each strand is pulled from the root, passed through dry adhesive, and allowed to fall onto paper, where it sets in its own unique way. Differences in colour, thickness, length, and texture produce an almost infinite variety of lines, resembling pencil marks of varying hardness and width. Together, they form landscapes reminiscent of mountains, valleys, and bodies of water. Here we see a selection from a series of 970 works, collected from 122 individuals. The display is in the order of individuals, the same person may have a couple of frames and is not split between lines.

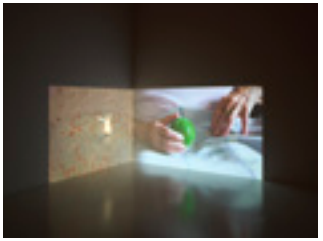


Glass Drop 20B
2019
Glass
58 × 20 × 20 cm



Glass Piece 93
2022
Glass
37 × 17 × 12 cm

Molten glass is allowed to drip and solidify into droplet-like form. The outcome is shaped by gravity, temperature, and surface conditions—balancing control and chance. Installed in an unexpected place, the work draws attention to material presence in the space and the subtle boundary between creation and perception, between the solidification of ice and the state of flow.





Sigrid 1930
2009
Digitalized excerpt from a 1930 Pathé film, 9.5 mm, with traces, stains, and scratches, sound, loop: 0:36 min

Sigrid
2018
Digital film clip 5:32 min

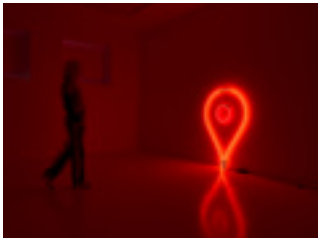
The two videos are closely connected across an extended span of time. On the one hand, there is a very short film clip from 1930 showing a young girl playing with a ball, throwing it away and retrieving it. On the other, a close-up of the hands of the same person near the end of her life in 2018, seated and handling a spiky massage ball. The work carries a clear reference to the passage of time, in which the same objects, and actions continually take on new forms depending on external and internal conditions.

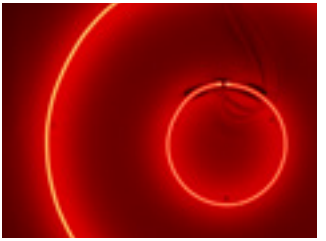




Counting Water
1962/2000
Photograph
36 × 26.8 cm, framed 55.8 × 46.6 cm

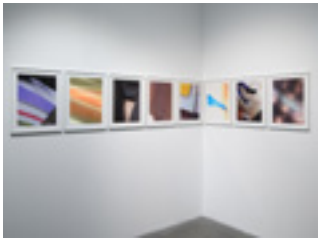
Karin Sander considers her first artwork to date from 1962, when she was five years old. Documented in a black-and-white photograph taken by her mother, *Counting Water* shows the artist as a child transferring water from a large bucket with a small jug into a canister, counting each measure. This early gesture reflects Sander's ongoing engagement with everyday actions and materials, exploring processes of measuring, counting, and quietly observing the reality that surrounds us.





Map Icon
2026
Neon
150 × 95 cm

A symbol used to mark locations in Google's navigation system is enlarged. This familiar icon is transferred from the digital realm into physical space and presented as a neon light work. By removing the symbol from its practical context and placing it within the exhibition space, Karin Sander transforms its meaning from a navigational tool into an object of reflection. The simplified form remains instantly recognizable, yet its original function is no longer present. Instead, it draws attention to place and moment, to the viewer within the space, and to questions of how space is defined, valued, and experienced in everyday life. The work is placed in the exhibition as close as Reykjavík Art Museum-Hafnarhús is pinned online.





Call Shots
2014–2026
Chrome pigment prints
34.5 × 25.8 cm, framed 43.1 × 34.5 cm

Karin Sander often incorporates randomness into her practice as a way of relinquishing control, allowing chance encounters and unpredictable processes to shape the final outcome. For this work, the artist programmed her smartphone to take a photograph each time she answered a call. At that same moment, the device records its location as coordinates that accompany each image. The resulting work embraces play and happenstance, challenging deliberate aesthetic choices and foregrounding contingency as a creative force.





People on Stone Plinths
1987/2026
Concrete slabs
24 × 16 × 13 cm, various dimensions

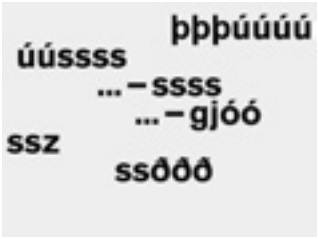
Participants are standing on brick-sized concrete plinths in the courtyard. Some of these plinths are formed of two or three blocks placed on top of each other and so are proportionally higher than others. Compared to the classical proportions between plinth and statute, the figures appear far too big for the plinths they stand on. They choose their poses freely while endeavouring at the same time to keep their balance. Despite being relatively close together, quite concentrated they may not communicate with each other but form independent sculptures. Reenactments will take place on special occasions, but the audience is welcome to engage and experiment on their own.





Brushstroke, Red
1998
Acrylic paint
Various dimensions

The work forms part of an ongoing series begun in 1998 in which Karin Sander applies a single mobile red brushstroke in acrylic paint. Appearing on various surfaces, like walls, windows, or architectural elements, the gesture foregrounds the act of painting itself while invoking its historical legacy. At once minimal and conceptual, the work reduces painting to its most essential mark, emphasizing presence, context, and perception, and inviting viewers to reconsider the relationship between artistic gesture, surface, and space.



Audio Piece (Geyser)
2026
Silkscreen print in collaboration
with Andreas Uebele and Atli Bender
59.4 × 84.1 cm (DIN A1)

The work is a handmade A1 silkscreen print composed of Icelandic letters arranged into a visual whole that evokes the sound of a geyser erupting, such as Strokkur in the Geysir geothermal area. The letter composition captures the moment when tension builds in stillness before bursting into a powerful surge, recalling the rush, hiss, and patter of falling water. In this transformation of language into image, space opens up for the imagination. The work addresses the capacity of language to convey the embodied experience of nature, and how such experiences shift as they are interpreted and transmitted between individuals. The work is published in a limited edition and available in the museum store and online on www.artmuseum.is.



Biography

Karin Sander (b. 1957) lives and works in Berlin and Zürich. She has been a frequent visitor to Iceland since 1993. She studied in Stuttgart and New York and has held professorships at Kunsthochschule Berlin-Weißensee and ETH Zurich. Her work has been exhibited internationally, including at the Museum of Modern Art and the Whitney Museum in New York, SFMOMA in San Francisco, Kunst Museum Winterthur, and the National Museum of Art in Osaka. In 2023, she represented Switzerland at the Venice Architecture Biennale together with the art historian Philip Ursprung. Her works are held in major collections worldwide, including the Reykjavik Art Museum and the National Gallery of Iceland.

This booklet is published on the occasion of the exhibition at Reykjavík Art Museum – Hafnarhús from May 30 to September 20, 2026.

Curation
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Photography
Vigfús Birgisson, Karin Sander and others

Information on guided tours and other events on the museum website – small or large groups can book private tours, hopar.listasafn@reykjavik.is

Studio Karin Sander, Berlin
Stefan Alber, Marcel Frey, Daniela Ihrig, Eckhard Karnauke, Alexander Wolframm

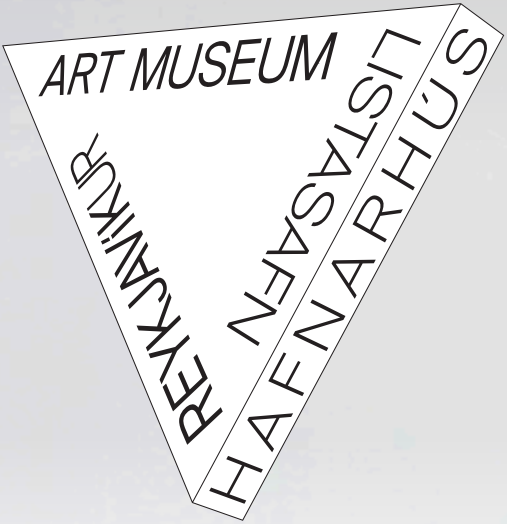
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