

Darkness visible – The Eyjafjallajökull Project

By Sophia Hernández Álvarez, curator.

After some time of high seismic activity, in spring 2010, the volcano Eyjafjallajökull erupted, leaving most of the area of Thórsmörk (southern Iceland) covered by a veil of magma and ashes. The artist Simone Couto therefore traveled to Thórsmörk valley on summer 2015, to explore and make a reflection about this recently devastated area. Whether a personal or a universal reading is made, the land covered by ashes after the catastrophe could be observed as a desolated and dead landscape, but also -and that's what the artist found out and tries to emphasize- as a *tabula rasa* where multiple re-beginnings are just arising.

Darkness visible is an experience of confrontation to the difficulties, in both physical and psychological ways. Reimagining an earth beyond Kant's theories where there is no Correlationism or no being but the earth-in-itself, or keeping a close with the Kant's ideas about the sublime, the landscape in this project is no longer a comfortable retreat or a getaway, but a quite hostile environment in which body and mind are challenged, revealing at the same time the smallness of the subject and the greatness of his/her faculties. Couto's proposal towards this experience of asymmetrical powers is the dissolution of the subjectivity into the landscape, and that's why Tibetan mandalas and the martial art of aikido have a strong presence in this project. Smooth movement, flexible strength and conciliation with a hard environment are the key to favor a re-birth from adversity.

The video of the performance that took place at the Eyjafjallajökull is the main focus of a multimedia installation that also includes sculptures, paintings, pictures and sheets of a poetry book. As the project has a strong interest in the multi-sensorial experience, several activities will take place beyond the contemplation of the visual artworks: the sound work that the composer Brian Mountford created for *Darkness visible* will be played live, and also a performance and a public discussion about the project with art professionals could be developed as parallel events.