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Ursa Major: A project by Snæbjörnsdóttir/Wilson

Spike Island and Bristol's City Museum & Art Gallery present

Ursa Major

A project by Snæbjörnsdóttir/Wilson

Based on the exhibition nanoq: flat-out and bluesome

Bristol City Museum & Art Gallery

1 April – 14 May 2006

Open 10am – 5pm daily

Preview and Book Launch: Friday 31 March, 6pm - 8pm

Spike Island has been working closely with Bryndís Snæbjörnsdóttir and Mark Wilson over a long period to commission a series of outcomes from the artists' extended period of research in to the origins and histories of the national collection of taxidermied polar bears. The first of these outcomes, the highly successful exhibition nanoq: flat-out and bluesome, brought ten taxidermied bears from collections around the country to the gallery at Spike Island in 2004.

Bryndís Snæbjörnsdóttir and Mark Wilson have been collaborating since 2001. Their work, characteristically rooted in the north, explores issues of history, culture and the environment in relation to the individual and our senses of belonging or detachment. The most recent projects use the relationship between humans and selected animals as a springboard to pose questions on cultural and individual location between 'domesticity' and 'wilderness'.

Ursa Major, a national touring show, is an comprehensive collection of photographic images taken by Snæbjörnsdóttir/Wilson as they visited public and private collections across the UK in search of the taxidermied polar bears. The exhibition has been shown at Oxford's Gallery of Natural History and will travel to the Horniman Museum in London later this year.

Bristol's Museum will show the artist's works within the existing collection of taxidermied specimens. The richness of the images taken in collections as far flung as Peterhead, Dover and Belfast, are slotted in and woven in to the World Wildlife Gallery. This is the first collaboration between Spike Island and Bristol's City Museum's impressive permanent collection.

Book Launch

nanoq: flat out and bluesome – A Cultural Life of Polar Bears

This event launches the publication that has arisen out of nanoq: flat out and bluesome, published by Black Dog Publishing and Spike Island. The book includes essays by: Dr. Steve Baker, Reader in Contemporary Visual Culture at the University of Central Lancashire and the author of 'The Postmodern Animal' and 'Picturing the Beast'; Dr. Garry Marvin, Reader in Social Anthropology at Roehampton University, author of 'Bullfight' and 'Zoo Culture' (with Bob Mullan); Michelle Henning, an artist and senior lecturer in Media and Cultural Studies at the University of the West of England and author of 'Museums, Media and Cultural Theory'; Patricia Ellis, a writer and curator who has written extensively for international institutions and art periodicals including The Saatchi Gallery, ICA, Contemporary and Flash Art International.

Talks from the World Wildlife Gallery

Saturday 1 April at 12pm – nanoq: flat out and bluesome.

The artists Bryndís Snæbjörnsdóttir and Mark Wilson will talk about the project and their work.

Sunday 14 May at 12pm – Frozen Worlds: Natural History Taxidermy

Michelle Henning, senior lecturer in Media and Cultural Studies at the University of the West of England.

Bristol's City Museum & Art Gallery,

Queens Road,

Bristol,

BS8 1RL

www.bristol-city.gov.uk/museum