



MEDIA RELEASE

NATIONAL GALLERY OF VICTORIA

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Lights, Curtains, Action! *Children's Play: Ragnar Kjartansson* sets the scene with a theatrical kid's exhibition at NGV

Children's Play: Ragnar Kjartansson for Kids | 26 June – 4 October 2026 | NGV International | FREE



NGV presents the world-premiere of *Children's Play: Ragnar Kjartansson*, the Icelandic artist's first ever exhibition for children. Taking inspiration from the lavish festivities of European courts from the Rococo period that have since evolved into the modern theatre tradition of 'dinner and a show', Kjartansson invites visitors of all ages to create their own version of a theatrical feast. Featuring elaborate stage sets, activities, props and costumes, young visitors can dress up, play, perform or create a scene of their own.

Children's Play: Ragnar Kjartansson coincides with NGV's exhibition *Ragnar Kjartansson: Mercy*, which features eight new and recent video works by the Icelandic artist, which continue to incorporate Kjartansson's key artistic elements of storytelling, performance and music, which intertwine with his inspirations across films, literature and pop music. *Children's Play: Ragnar Kjartansson* is part of NGV's year-round dedicated children's program of exhibitions for young people and their families.

Being the son of an actor and theatre director, Kjartansson spent his upbringing surrounded by rehearsals, scripts and backstage activity. This lifelong connection to theatre and his love of make-believe, costumes, sets, props, and food sparked his inspiration for the playful exhibition design. Featuring striped walls, hand-painted curtains and candelabras, Kjartansson's drawings adorn the exhibition, harmoniously tying together the various props, costumes and stage elements with the banquet-style cake and interactive activities around the exhibition.

Central to the exhibition is the theatre, featuring three hand-painted scenes of a cabin, Rococo garden and snowy forest, accompanied with an array of props to complement each setting. Bespoke costumes, hand-painted with designs such as Rococo dresses, workers' attire and forest animals have also been crafted to immerse participants in the world of each stage setting. Children can choose to be an audience member, actor, storyteller or creator, inventing and performing with friends and family on stage.

Referencing special occasions, celebrations, Rococo feasts, and Kjartansson's love of cake, children will also be able to play with soft, colourful cushions that can be stacked into their own custom cake sculptures. A decadent display of cakes of varying sizes – including a giant upholstered cake that can be sat upon – will also serve as joyful inspiration for the soft cake sculpture activity. Displays of cake and food, arranged like still-life compositions, also decorate the exhibition, serving as a place for kids to participate in drawing activities inspired by the theatre or foods that entice them.

Tony Ellwood AM, Director, NGV said: 'Featuring immersive stage settings, costumes and activities, this playful exhibition from Ragnar Kjartansson is designed to inspire creativity and confidence through the lens of theatre. Children will be able to explore, play and create both on the stage and as an audience, introducing young minds to the magnificent world of theatre.'

Children's Play: Ragnar Kjartansson and *Ragnar Kjartansson: Mercy* will be on display from 26 June – 4 October 2026 at NGV International, St Kilda Road, Melbourne. Further information is available via the NGV website:

[NGV.MELBOURNE](https://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/exhibitions/childrens-play-ragnar-kjartansson)

ABOUT RAGNAR KJARTANSSON

Ragnar Kjartansson (b 1976) works across video installations, performances, drawings, and paintings that draw on interconnected historical and cultural references often rooted in the comedy and tragedy of classical theatre. Kjartansson engages in the tension between beauty and banality, often using durational, repetitive performance as a form of exploration. He has held major solo shows including exhibitions at the Museo Tamayo, Mexico City; Louisiana Museum, Humlebaek; the De Pont Museum, Tilburg; the Kunstmuseum Stuttgart; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Reykjavík Art Museum; the Barbican Centre, London; the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Park, Washington D.C.; the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal; the Palais de Tokyo, Paris; the New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York; the Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Zurich; the Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin; the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston; and the Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh; among others. Kjartansson participated in *The Encyclopedic Palace* at the Venice Biennale in 2013, Manifesta 10 in St. Petersburg, Russia in 2014, and he represented Iceland at the 2009 Venice Biennale. The artist received the 2019 Ars Fennica Award and was the recipient of the 2015 Artes Mundi's Derek Williams Trust Purchase Award and Performa's 2011 Malcolm McLaren Award.

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Images:

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/x3b5zcyb3yh3m40lvi90r/AGWIkOBnQ1cg6n2otxbrllg?rlkey=mm1meul7no4wr36c5qajdfake&st=u6i4akq9&dl=0>

Image Caption: Installation views of *Children's Play: Ragnar Kjartansson* on display from 26 June to 4 October 2026, at NGV International, Melbourne. Photos: Tim Carrafa, Sean Fennessy

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