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PRESS RELEASE

EXHIBITION	<i>RONI HORN</i>
CURATOR	MARCELLA BECCARIA
PRESS OFFICE	MASSIMO MELOTTI
OPENING	APRIL 20, 2000 7pm
DATES	APRIL 21 – JUNE 18, 2000
MUSEUM HOURS	FROM TUESDAY TO FRIDAY 10am – 5pm SATURDAY AND SUNDAY 10am – 7pm FIRST AND THIRD SATURDAY OF THE MONTH 10am – 10pm CLOSED ON MONDAY
EXHIBITION	CASTELLO DI RIVOLI MUSEO D'ARTE CONTEMPORANEA PIAZZA MAFALDA DI SAVOIA 10098 RIVOLI (TO)

Roni Horn

"Big enough to get lost on. Small enough to find yourself. That's how to use this island. I come here to place myself in the world. Iceland is a verb and its action is to center". With these words Roni Horn (New York, 1955) describes the relation which has for several years bound her to Iceland. Indeed since 1975 Horn has returned with almost migratory regularity to the island which, in its role as a locus of definition and recovery of identity, has become central to her work. The geography of this *terra extrema* - a land which, according to Jules Verne's vision, harbored the gateway to the center of the earth - becomes for Horn, both symbolically and literally, an interior geography that each successive voyage brings gradually to light. Almost as though she were a cartographer, albeit one who has swapped her sextant for a still camera, over the years Horn has been developing an encyclopedic project entitled *To Place* which currently runs to seven books along with a number of photographic installations.

On the occasion of her exhibition at Castello di Rivoli, Roni Horn presents the recent installation *Pi*, which is strongly related to the book, *Arctic Circles*. The installation's title alludes to the mathematical symbol π , the incommensurable quantity which indicates the relationship between the circumference of a circle and its diameter. As a ring, the arctic circle has a perfect and thus ideal form, one which is visible on the map, though difficult to individuate on the actual horizon. While existing in the geography of our globe, it is a place which has the volatile concreteness of a line traced to encompass the infinite.

Through the sequence of images of which it is composed, the work deploys itself in the exhibition space like a far off horizon made up of partial visions. "Any idea of place - says the artist - is an ongoing summation of the dialectic relation the viewer maintains to the view." Thus the images of *Pi* follow one another according to a precise rhythm, like fragments which come together to compose a whole that the human eye would otherwise be unable to see.

Visions of open sea bordering on the sky alternate with segments of land or beach, while close-up shots capture the animal and human life that inhabit the portion of Iceland which falls within the polar circle.

Human life appears in the form of several portraits of Hildur and Björn Björnsson, an elderly Icelandic couple whose sense of time, like that of other inhabitants of the Island, runs to the rhythms of nature. The Björnssons make their living selling Eider ducks' feathers, that they collect from recently abandoned nests. The lives of Hildur and Björn depend on and are organized around the natural cycle just as the rhythm of their day is marked by *Guiding Light*, the TV soap opera broadcast every evening at five. Images taken directly from television provide a further rhythmic counterpoint to the *Pi*'s visions of arctic interiors and exteriors, bringing a touch of pop to the edge of the world. Horn's installation places us at the center of this finite space enclosed by a line of infinity. The experience of *Pi* unfolds under our eyes as we wander around the installation that for a moment runs parallel to our own lives.

The role of the observer is fundamental also to *Still Water (The River Thames for Example)*, the other new installation by Horn to be presented at Rivoli on this occasion. Seeking out the works that comprise *Still Water* is left to the visitor's own discretion, since the artist has wished to install these at various points along the itinerary of the Museum's permanent collection. As subtly insinuating as the water they describe, the images are placed in the various rooms of the Castello, in such a way as to instigate an unforeseen dialogue with the works already present. Conceived in a geographical context quite different from that of *Pi*, *Still Water* refers to the waters of the River Thames, waters as cryptic as an arcane language, which harbor a multiplicity of meanings and allusions. "Watching the water, I am stricken with vertigo of meaning. Water is the final conjugation: an infinity of form, relation, and content. (I never know where I'm standing when I'm standing by the river)." The installation is composed of various close-up shots of the river's waters each of which is annotated as though it were an elaborate text on which the artist provides a commentary in the written section that forms an integral part of each work.

"I was interested in the nature of opaque waters, what happens when water's relationship to light changes" says Horn. Like other rivers the Thames is characterized by waters that are dark, turbulent and polluted, which makes seeing into them

extremely difficult. Coupled with the fact that, particularly for the English, the image of the river is closely bound up with the grisly discoveries it throws up. In both senses of the word the Thames is a "container" of life that frequently reveals part of its content in the form of the bodies or body parts it deposits on the foreshore. Both life and death run through the river. "Everything flows" said the ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus (also known as "the obscure") who first gave sense to the universal dynamism of all things. *Still Water* is likewise a project whose scope is sufficiently wide to contain numerous citations from literature, cinema and music along with aphorisms and informal reflections all of which become swept up in a continuous play of references. It is hard to believe that each of Horn's images depicts the same river, which reveals itself to be made of waters that are visibly diverse, composing a great liquid universe. "Going into water is going into yourself. Water is a mirror" begins one of Horn's notes, opening the work to its more introspective dimension. *Still Water* extends a theme which is central to Horn's work in the way it manages to convey a portrait of the artist, while at the same time it recomposes before our eyes to give back to us an image of ourselves.

Marcella Beccaria
(Translated by Graeme Thomson)

Thanks to Raffaella Cortese, Milan for her generous collaboration and to the Jablonka Galerie, Cologne for the loan of Roni Horn's works. The artist would like to thank Nic Tenwiggenhorn.

Exhibition checklist:

***Pi*, 1997-1998**

45 unique iris printed photographs
Courtesy Jablonka Galerie, Colonia

***Still Water (The River Thames for Example)*, 1999**

offset lithograph (photograph and text)
Courtesy Jablonka Galerie, Colonia