

**Bryndís Snæbjörnsdóttir & Mark Wilson: *Nanoq: Flat out and Bluesome*  
Collection CAE1310**

**Introduction/Abstract**

Bryndís Snæbjörnsdóttir and Mark Wilson created an exhibition of taxidermic polar bears intended not to celebrate the hunter, the collector, the taxidermist or the collection house, but the bear itself. Materials include photographs, posters, research materials, sketches, drawings, plans, correspondence, publications, press materials, and printed ephemera from exhibitions.

**Biographical Note: Bryndís Snæbjörnsdóttir and Mark Wilson**

Icelandic artist Bryndís Snæbjörnsdóttir, professor of Fine Art at Gothenburg University's Valand School of Art, has been working as an artist, lecturer and researcher since 1995. She was a lecturer and research fellow at Glasgow School of Art in Scotland for until 2002 and the Head of the master program New Art and Media at Valand from 2002 until 2004 when she joined the research program there and graduated with a PhD in 2009. In her current position as a Professor of Fine Art she is responsible for artistic research. UK artist Mark Wilson, who has a PhD in art, teaches contemporary art at the University of Cumbria.

Snæbjörnsdóttir and Wilson describe their collaborative practice, which they have conducted since 2001 from bases in the north of England, Iceland and Gothenburg, Sweden, as follows: "With a strong research grounding, their socially engaged projects explore contemporary relationships between human and non-human animals in the contexts of history, culture and the environment. The practice sets out to challenge anthropocentric systems and thinking that sanction loss through representation of the other, proposing instead, alternative tropes of 'parities in meeting'. The work is installation based, using objects, text, photography and video."

**Scope and Content**

*In Nanoq: The Great White Bear: A Survey of British Taxidermic Polar Bears 2001–2004*, Bryndís Snæbjörnsdóttir and Mark Wilson photographed 33 taxidermic polar bears from public and private collections in Britain. Each photograph was captioned with a researched biography of the bear: its place of capture or shooting, the name of the person responsible, the nature or purpose of the expedition, the bear's history in captivity, and its age at death. Their exhibition was a cultural, not a natural, history of polar bears, its intent not to celebrate the hunter, the collector, the taxidermist or the collection house, but the bear itself.

The traveling exhibition moved through a series of museums and art galleries between 2006 and 2009. CA+E Advisor and historian Libby Robin described the exhibition: "*Nanoq* is at the leading edge of a new art movement that challenges the place of animals and their bodies in museums. It charts 'the uneasy relationship between the wild and its representation in our museums, galleries and media [and] highlights the current plight of polar bears who are facing extinction because of the destruction of their habitat'. These bears are no longer objects, performing realistic animal activities in dusty dioramas, but rather particular bears from particular places at the time of their death, and in other particular places at the time of being photographed."

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**This archive is currently in process.**