

Laster, Paul
"Ragnar Kjartansson and the National, A Lot of Sorrow"
Time Out New York.
Issue 981, December 4-10, 2014. p. 38.

LUHRING
AUGUSTINE

531 West 24th Street
New York NY 10011
tel 212 206 9100 fax 212 206 9055
www.luhringaugustine.com

Ragnar Kjartansson and the National, *A Lot of Sorrow*

★★★★

Luhring Augustine Bushwick,
through Dec 21 (see Brooklyn)

Ragnar Kjartansson is a master of durational art. Every day during the six-month run of the 2009 Venice Biennale, Kjartansson painted a portrait of a model in a black Speedo while he and his subject drank beer and smoked cigarettes. For the 2011 edition of Performa, New York's performance-art biennial, he took to the stage with other vocalists to repeatedly belt out the final aria from Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* for 12 straight hours.

Last spring at MoMA PS1, the Icelandic artist enlisted Brooklyn alt-rock act the National to undertake a similar feat by singing its 2010 song "Sorrow" for six hours. Kjartansson recorded the set, and now he's back with a finely

edited video of its mesmerizing performance.

Using five cameras, Kjartansson filmed the group in MoMA PS1's fog-filled VW Dome as it played its three-minute, 25-second ballad 105 times. After five renditions, the piece sounds meditative. Two hours in, repetition turns into boredom, which itself becomes

hypnotic somehow. Four hours in, the vocals become thicker, while the instruments get looser. In the final hour, applause and alcohol spur the band on as lead singer Matt Berninger grips the microphone with both hands and guitarist Bryce Dessner bobs his head heavily. Reaching an emotional conclusion, the National

returns for an ironic encore—"Sorrow"—with the audience happily chiming in. For an exercise that would ordinarily test everyone's patience, *A Lot of Sorrow* offers a great deal of joy.
—Paul Laster

THE BOTTOM LINE The song remains the same and then some.

