



The REYKJAVÍK GRAPEVINE

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ND

Issue Nº 5 - May 8 - 22 - 2009

INSIDE!

www.grapevine.is


"This project will
transform the country
— raising Iceland
out of economic collapse
and into an era of
great good fortune"
—David Lynch

Saving Iceland?

David Lynch

*Wants You To Empty
Your Mind*

Director David Lynch recently paid Iceland a visit, announcing a project that will possibly rescue Iceland from all of its woes via Transcendental Meditation.

We're very much into the idea of great good fortune, so we checked it out.  PG. 14.

Editorial

Haukur's 5th Editorial!

Wherein I espouse and clarify my views on the recent elections, our not-quite-there-yet government, whether Iceland should join the EU, Transcendental Meditation and Hollywood's latest blockbuster, X-Men Origins: Wolverine



Lóa is the Grapevine comic artist. As well as doing our comics she runs a prominent downtown hang-out, **Karamba**.

Comic strip

– by Lóa Hjálmtýsdóttir



Masthead

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You may not like it, but at least it's not sponsored. (No articles in the Reykjavík Grapevine are pay-for articles. The opinions expressed are the writers' own, not the advertisers').

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Sour grapes and stuff

Say your piece, voice your opinion, send your letters to letters@grapevine.is

04
Letters

Dear Grapevine,

I discovered your magazine as I was to travel to Iceland for the first time, and found it to be the best source for intelligent articles and info on what was going on in your country. I just got back yesterday after 11 amazing days and I'm simply shook and amazed. It will be hard to resume daily chores or work...

Your article on the current crisis [The End of Neo-Liberal Neverland] was the best written and interesting article I have read in a long time. I just had finished to read The Shock Doctrine and the insight you gave on the current politics or the state of the media was mind blogging.

Not to mention the rest of the coverage on Hrsey, live reviews, CD reviews...

Your paper is fantastic keep up the good work
Yours Truly
Patrice

Awww, gee, thank you Patrice. I just read your letter out loud and we're all pretty flushed here at the office. Takk!

Just wanted to send a word of appreciation to you for enlightening the often difficult to understand politics here in Iceland. It can be challenging to try to follow what I see in the news as Icelandic is not my native language. Your paper serves a great purpose for those of us who live here, and wish to contribute to this nation. I did not come here from a third world nation seeking asylum, I came here from America shortly after 9/11/2001.

Iceland is a unique and beautiful country not only for its nature, but its people. Hard working, and honest folk, quite and sensible. I have been disheartened by the news reports from around the world talking about the economies collapse. Greed has no nationality or tendency towards one group or another. I try to point out America's lead in the policies that have caused the banking system to put short term gain above common sense.

The honest hard working people in America were caught up in this thing like everyone else. The potential in both nations is great if the right leadership is in place. In America we got lazy in not looking more closely at what our politicians were doing because life was good. In a democracy it is by the people FOR the people. The people in Iceland deserve a break from this B.S. negative news. I just hope for everyone's sake the politicians can put country and it hard working people before politics.

jeffrey bogans

Sour grape of the month

A case of POLAR BEER for your thoughts.

We're not gonna lie to you: we really love us some beers. Some folks would call it a problem, but beer never gave us any problems. In fact, over the years, it's solved most of 'em. A frosty glass of cold, frothy, bubblicious, golden-tinted beer has consistently failed to let us down. In the immortal words of Homer J. Simpson: "Mmm... Beer..."

Now, since we're real pleasant and giving folks here at the Grapevine, we thought we'd share some of that wonderful POLAR BEER with you, our readers. From this issue and henceforth in every issue, until the end of days (or our Polar Beer-sponsorship program, whichever comes first), we will reward one **MOST EXCELLENT LETTER** with a case of the Polar Beer. You read right. A full case of beer. At your disposal.
Give us your worst: letters@grapevine.de



(light)

THE MOST EXCELLENT LETTER

March 18, 2009

To Editor or whomever it concerns:

Please could you place this ad in your classified ads; also the picture.

I Robert S. Hoffner, Sr. would like to hear from you. We met while I was at the Army base in 1956. Please respond soon to me at: RRB Box 6219 Stroudsburg, Penna. 18360 - U.S.A. or e-mail rhoffner@peoplepc.com.

Thank You very much,

Respectfully R. Hoffner.



Hey Jeffrey, thank you for your letter. You should check out Grapevine.is, where Paul Nikolov is doing an excellent job of writing daily news for all you English-speaking news-readers out there.

You know, a lot of us at Grapevine HQs are actually native Icelandic speakers, and we still have problems comprehending the local politics. As for politicians putting their politics aside, I wouldn't hold my breath.

“I discovered your magazine as I was to travel to Iceland for the first time, and found it to be the best source for intelligent articles and info on what was going on in your country.”

-Patrice

ALL CITIES IN NORTH AMERICA, INCLUDING HAWAII, HAVE BIKE RACKS FITTED TO THE FRONT OF ALL TRANSIT BUSES. WHAT ARE YOU PEOPLE WAITING

FOR?
COLIN W. SINCLAIRE.
BRITISH COLUMBIA. CANADA.

You, sir, are a liar. Our awesome new journalist, Catharine, hails from Canada and she says that there are, in fact, a lot of cities in Canada and the US that don't have bike racks. Quoth Catharine: "It's not true that they are in every city in North-America. Besides, if you're riding your bike, why would you take a bus?" That said, I have nothing against bike racks, and would in fact welcome such devices on our transit buses.

Top Gun homoerotic?
Haukur, you are one gay motherfucker to see this! May the lord of ass fucking bring you closer to your buddies!
Love,
Gomer...

And may the lord of ass fucking bring pleasant dreams to you too, sir.

Hressingarskálinn

Hressingarskálinn (Hressó) is a Classical Bistro, located in the heart of the city at Austurstræti 20.

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Article | Immigration

The Other Unemployed

Iceland's Immigrants Confront the Economic Crisis



Words

Paul Nikolov

Photography

Jói Kjartans

As the government struggles to come to terms with Iceland's economic crisis, daily life for immigrants in Iceland has invisibly, silently been turning upside down.

Iceland has no law prohibiting job discrimination based on nationality.

The Directorate of Labour puts the national average unemployment rate at 6%. For immigrants, the figure is closer to 12%. When focus shifts, as it naturally does in a troubled economy, from creating jobs to saving jobs, legal loopholes - and in some cases, illegal practices - that exclude or exploit foreigners begin to increase.

A French woman, who we'll call Marie, has plenty of first- and secondhand knowledge of how the crisis has been affecting her, her friends, and her family. In many ways, she's typical of the kind of young, European globetrotter who falls in love with off-the-beaten-path places like Iceland - she was taken by the natural beauty, would lend CDs of Icelandic bands such as múm to her friends, and looked forward to moving to Iceland. She arrived some years ago, taking up one of the easier jobs a European national can get in Iceland - working in an after-school centre.

"I put a lot of effort into that job," she says. "I really wanted to prove myself, but most of all, it was just a job I loved doing."

As her time in Iceland wore on, she began encouraging her cousin to relocate as well. And why not? The jobs were plentiful, any foreigner could find work, and you didn't even need to know the language right away - you could learn it as you work. And so her cousin arrived in Iceland, just weeks before the nation's banks collapsed. That was, of course, to change everything.

"Before the crisis, they needed us," she says. "And now, everything's reversed. It used to be, it was always easy for a foreigner to get any kind of low-paying job, but extremely difficult to find an apartment for rent, especially downtown [Reykjavík]. Now it's the opposite - there are plenty of places for rent, but there's not work anywhere."

Marie talks about one aspect of the situation that many foreigners might be familiar with: language requirements for work.

Typically, the entry level jobs that most foreigners will work when they first arrive in Iceland - nursing homes, restaurants, custodial work, support work for the disabled - don't require high proficiency in Icelandic. This, apparently, has changed.

"I started noticing [language requirements] increasing around the beginning of December. More and more, you'll see jobs for places like working in a restaurant," says Marie. "You know, working food prep, cutting onions - the ads for these jobs were saying 'must have Icelandic as a mother tongue.' It really surprised me. I've been visiting and living in Iceland for ten years now, and this is the first time I'm seeing such a strict requirement for a job as basic as this."

The requirement is more than strict, of course - "mother tongue" specifically denotes an Icelandic; someone either born in Iceland or to Icelandic parents. As a member of the European Economic Area, Iceland is legally obligated to grant EU

citizens labour rights comparable to those of Icelanders. The mother tongue requirement would seem to be in contradiction with international law. But Iceland has no law prohibiting job discrimination based on nationality. Also, employers have every right to set standards with regards to language proficiency in their workplace.

One such place, the restaurant Sjúvarkjallarinn, had an advertisement on the news website visir.is which specifically asked for applicants to have "Icelandic as a mother tongue". Upon calling the main offices of Foodco, the company that owns Sjúvarkjallarinn, to ask what the difference was between someone who speaks Icelandic fluently - or even perfectly - and someone who speaks Icelandic as a mother language, we spoke with Hervik Syen, who explained the rationale behind the wording of the advertisement:

"The unfortunate fact is that when we've advertised for people who were very good or fluent in Icelandic, we received applicants who were actually not so good at Icelandic," he explains. "And so we decided to make the language of the advertisement a bit more demanding, in order to get applicants who spoke the language better." Hervik emphasised that Foodco restaurants employ many foreigners, some of them in positions of management, and that Foodco does not discriminate on the basis of nationality. "But I can see how the advertisement would be confusing," he added.

"To me, an ad like this says they're looking for people with Icelandic blood," says Marie. "If you did something like this in France, you'd end up in court."

Marie's cousin continued to have difficulty finding work. As an EU citizen, she's entitled to be in Iceland for up to 90 days before she needs to either get hired, or leave. Then came the e-mail with a job offer.

"We were pretty excited," says Marie. "And I was happy that even in this economic crisis, she was able to find work."

Marie's cousin was told she would undergo a training period. During this time, which lasted all of four hours, she did housecleaning. Her supervisor was not present, and no one gave her any orientation. At the end of the four hours, she was paid 5,000 ISK in cash and told that she would be called if needed again.

"My cousin doesn't know her legal rights," says Marie, describing a situation familiar to many newcomers to Iceland. "She thought being paid cash was odd, but she didn't know it was illegal. She needs to work, of course, to live. But working like this is very risky."

And that's the quandary. Being paid in cash by an employer for your work, with no receipts, no contract, and no registration of any kind (known in Iceland as "black work"), is illegal for both the employer and the employee to engage in. But while an employer who engages in the practices might be fined, a foreign employee will, in all likelihood, be deported, and possibly barred from re-entry. As Iceland's economic crisis continues, employers will be seeking to cut overhead any way they can. And foreigners, who are twice as likely to lose their jobs as Icelanders, are more willing to risk deportation to stay in Iceland.

"I have a life here," says Marie. "I've invested nine years of my life in Iceland. But the message I keep getting is: I'm never going to be an Icelandic." 🍷

Article | Nightlife

Smartly Promiscuous in Reykjavík



Words

Catharine Fulton

Photography

Jói Kjartans

There are two key draws to Reykjavík if the all-knowing Internet is to be believed: parties and promiscuity. Visitors to the city spew out paragraphs on their debauched nights and well-known travel resources like "Rough Guide" assert that Reykjavík has earned its "reputation for hedonistic revelry." Reykjavík aside, Iceland as a whole has been ranked as one of the most promiscuous countries in the world, with natives first getting-it-on at 15-years-old and carving an average of 13 notches on their well-worn bedposts.

There's nothing wrong with a bit of the old in 'n' out, but with a population allegedly traceable within six coital degrees of everybody else - not to mention the tourists - maybe it's wise to kill the mood momentarily for a run down of some of the potentially unpleasant results of ye ol' bump and grind.

Note that reading beyond this point, while a smart thing to do, will subject you to such words as 'mucous' and 'discharge' - not pleasant if you happen to be eating right now.

Chlamydia Me Later

Chlamydia, a bacterial sexually transmitted infection (STI), is on the rise in Iceland, with thousands of new infections popping up in the past few years. Icelanders are not alone in their propensity for spreading Chlamydia: it is the most common STI in the world and has been called "the silent epidemic," since so many people are unaware they're even infected. That being the case, the number of people in Iceland with Chlamydia is likely more than the average, 1.827 newly diagnosed yearly since 2000. The symptoms for men and women include genital discharge and burning when you pee, and normally show up 1-3 weeks after doing the deed with an infected person. Since symptoms can disappear quickly and lay dormant for a long time, many people don't even know they have the disease - not cool, since ignorance will lead to spreading it further and possible sterility.

Clap Your Hands, Say Yeah!

Gonorrhoea, a.k.a. 'the clap,' is another bacterial STI that, luckily, is on the decline in Iceland, after a peak of 31 new cases in 2006 alone (much higher than the 13 diagnosed cases per year national average from 2000-2007), but is still common and something you obviously want to avoid. It is spread through the contact of mucous membranes (e.g. bumping uglies) and, like Chlamydia, causes urethral discharge and can lead to sterility. The disease also thrives in the

throat, rectum and eye (keep that last one in mind if you're feeling particularly kinky). Symptoms show up a mere 3-5 days after being infected... if they show up at all: 20% of men and 50% of women infected never experience symptoms, but can still pass it along.

If you're looking for some silver lining at this point, here you go: Chlamydia and Gonorrhoea are both easily diagnosed with a urine sample or swab and are treatable with oral medication. This is not the case for all STI's, so read on.

Not Just For Pornstars Anymore!

Genital warts, caused by the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV), are exactly what the name implies: warts on the genitals. An unlucky 12% of Icelanders between the ages of 18 to 45 have or have had protuberance-covered nether regions. The warts usually sprout 1-3 months after contact with an infected partner and can grow in large bunches or remain smooth, making them harder to detect. Treatment for genital warts is more invasive, sometimes involving a chemical cream and other times requiring that the warts be burned off or frozen with nitrogen. If untreated, HPV can lead to cervical cancer in women.

How Do You Like My New Herpes?

Herpes is available in two styles - I and II. Herpes I, a.k.a. a cold sore, shows up on the face, primarily around the mouth; it is infectious and can be transferred to other areas of the body, via oral sex for example. Herpes II is the genital variety of the virus. Both are transferred through direct contact and both lead to red spots that blister, pop, ooze and scab (all painfully) within 2-20 days after infection occurs. There is no cure for herpes, so carriers will remain infectious and continue to experience symptoms intermittently. Forever. A not-so-fun fact: while stats on herpes are disputable, it has been estimated that up to 70% of Icelanders have the virus in some form. That's a whole lotta herpes!

To Wrap it Up: Wrap it Up!

These are just four STI's from a long list of sexually transmitted diseases and infections - other big names include hepatitis, crabs, syphilis and HIV/AIDS, more info on which can be procured from your friendly neighbourhood health care provider. In fact, if you fancy a swabbing, are looking for an excuse to pee in a cup or crave some peace of mind? Call up the Dermatology and Venereology Outpatient Ward at 543-6050. They're conveniently located at Þverholt 18 for all your dermatological and venereological needs.

Has the mood sufficiently been killed? Sure, there are a lot of nasty things floating around that you don't want to wind up with, but if you procure your jollies responsibly, by getting tested regularly and using protection every time you engage in a session of carnal aerobics, then, by all means, enjoy the hedonistic revelry that earned Reykjavík its 'Bangkok of the North' moniker. 🍷

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Where is the Icelandic Solon?



Words
Valur Gunnarsson

Sólón Íslandus, whose real name was Sölvi Helgason, was an Icelandic 19th Century drifter and painter who was arrested for vagrancy and sent to Copenhagen in chains. He is immortalized in a novel by Davíð Stefánsson, as well as with the downtown bar that bears his (assumed) name.

The original Solon, however, was a 6th Century BCE Greek statesman and poet. His poetry, as well as his statesmanship, did his people more good than that of recent Icelandic leaders. In his time, people still believed that success only came to those who deserved it. Thus, only individuals and states that were honest and just could achieve material success. This somewhat naive idea found its clearest expression in the writings of Hesiod. We find this simple belief echoed here in Iceland during the boom years. A group of men enjoyed previously unheard of riches and so it seemed to many people that these men must have some remarkable qualities, that they were somehow better at being people than the rest of us.

Solon questioned this belief, as it did not seem to fit the facts. Success is neither fair nor honest. A good worker may have disaster befall him or her, whereas a bad worker may win out by the will of God. Of course, what to him seemed the will of the gods is something that today we would simply call luck.

It can be said that one of the greatest revelations in any civilization is when it realises that the world is not fair. For the Greeks, it came with Solon. For the Hebrews, it came with Job. In the Torah, it is always assumed that God, whether he is destroying Sodom or drowning the whole world, is just in his actions. The good are rewarded and the bad are punished. It is only with Job that we see a man divinely punished for his good deeds, while "The tabernacles of robbers prosper, and they that provoke God are secure; into whose hand God bringeth abundantly."

To which God belatedly answers: "Look on every one that is proud and bring him low, and tread down the wicked in their place." With these words, God essentially abdicates from his role as dispenser of justice. It's all up to us.

The question posed in the book of Job is essentially: why do good things happen

to bad people? Solon divided circumstances into two parts. There are outer events, which we cannot control, and inner events, which we can. In the case of the latter, we only have ourselves to blame. It would follow from this that the outer events of society can be influenced by the inner events of those who hold power. Their flaws become the flaws of society. It is not all up to the gods.

In his poems, Solon makes it plain that the success that men acquire by outrageous methods does not last: "It is the citizens themselves who choose to destroy the greatness of their country by their stupidity, and their motive is financial gain." It is not only in modern Iceland that stupidity and greed have gone together. It is a story as old as that of human society, and the results are invariably the same.

Solon continues: "Wealth comes to many bad men, and poverty to many good men; but we shall not exchange our self-respect for their wealth, because self respect is the same always but wealth changes hands."

Solon's reforms seemed initially disappointing to many, and society was still torn in strife between different classes. Nevertheless, he managed to end the reduction of the poor to slavery and turned Athens into the leading state of the Greek world in both commerce and the arts. In Iceland, we had the opposite results. It was the desire to become a leading state in commerce that has reduced the population, deeply in debt, to near-slavery.

The whole history of the Icelandic boom and subsequent banking crisis reads like a Greek tragedy, a morality play about the consequences of letting greed and stupidity run rampant. Last October, Icelanders lost both their self-respect and their wealth. In January, we went some way toward retrieving our self-respect. Hopefully, the new government will restore, if not our wealth, at least our mental health. The rest will surely follow. ♡

Fucking Expensive Karaoke



I recently paid \$60 to make a fool of myself. I and about eight other people went to an Indian restaurant inventively named Calcutta. After some mediocre Chicken Danshak and a dauntingly massive bottle or three of Taj Mahal beer (or as it is known to the Shah Jahan, 'My Dead Wife's Tomb Beer'), I ventured that the only prudent course of action at the time was to hit up a Karaoke place.

Two bars later, we had finally gathered enough juice to make good on the suggestion, and travelled to an undisclosed location in New York's East Village. A room was rented, and a series of inspired renditions of underappreciated nineties songs quickly followed, along with uncounted pitchers of the horsewash they call beer in the States.

Now, understand, that to me this is standard fare. Nothing reserved for the ultra-rich; just an innocent, affordable gathering of young alcoholics with a bottled-up and repressed love for well-crafted pop songs. Nothing out of the ordinary. Nothing you'd have to pay more than, say, \$150 for. Well, I thought wrong.

Together, me, Sprengjuhöllin and their assorted lackeys and sycophants ran up a bill of \$385 dollars, tips excluded, of which I paid \$60. It's insane. How did what we did that night equal the value of the same time spent in a psychiatrist's office, the Ritz-Carlton, or a hooker's ass? It's mind-boggling. Human beings, evolved human beings, should not have to pay that amount of money to sing badly recreated pop music through poorly equalised microphones.

Now I'm not saying Karaoke is a bad choice for an evening's entertainment, but is it really worth all that? Couldn't you get the same experience at home for a tenth of the price? Why do we feel this constant need to throw our money away on commodities so dubious they can scarcely be referred to as such? It's ridiculous. We pay more money for worse alcohol and have less control over shittier music and talk to more boring people in bars; why do we do it?

I'm not trying to make some searing indictment of the alcohol-based entertainment industry here. I just want to know where these guys get off charging money like that for a basic human need. No answer so far provided to me has been satisfactory, save for the theory that we're all misanthropic, self-destructive animals, unhappy with survival and discontent with happiness. Only that could possibly explain why we paid all that money to sing Karaoke. ♡

The Angry Sex Election



Here are my thoughts on the recent parliamentary election in Iceland.

.....

That's it.

That was the totality of my formed opinion on the recent democratic process this country just experienced.

It's not that I haven't thought about the election - 'cause I have. It's just that I still can't find a satisfactory angle to explain it. Or the result.

As far as I can tell, this election was about one thing: having an election. Following the collapse of the economy, the people of Iceland (or a fair portion of the population) demanded a mulligan for the 2007 election. This was a somewhat rightful claim, given the circumstances (I say this because we probably should have seen the writing on the wall in 2007). As a result, the whole election process evolved around the people's anger and desire to punish the politicians responsible for the crash.

It's like angry-sex. You bicker and quarrel until you are all hot and bothered and angry, and you just want some form of release. But while sex may be a great way to vent all that frustration, it still doesn't solve any of the underlying problems. It doesn't really fix the issue that caused your anger in the first place (unless the cause was sexual starvation - I cannot rule that one out).

That's what happened. This may have been the most important election since the Republic of Iceland was founded in 1944. But instead of using this as an opportunity to move forward and debate what sort of society we want to build, we used it to release the frustration that had boiled over and, in the process, partially deflating the mass movement for change in this country.

The European Union may be the most important political question facing this country since we joined NATO. It was hardly mentioned, let alone discussed during this campaign. Ethics? Political reform? Next question, please. The economic desert and the financial disintegration of Icelandic homes? Nothing. What should post-crash Iceland look like? Yeah, I know. The other guy did it.

We could have built pillars, man. Instead, we squandered the opportunity. We paid no attention to the ideological bankruptcy of Icelandic politics. There were no issues, no solutions, and no plans. No ideas. But we were all too happy to hit the bastards where it hurt - right there in the voting booth.

I think I'd rather just work out the issues first, and then have some of that good ol' lovin' sex. ♡

1. A statue said to be of the Greek statesman and poet Solon
2. A photograph said to be of the Icelandic Sólón Íslandus

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Whose knees are frozen numb;
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*From the Hávamál, 1300 AD



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The Regular | "Travis Bickle"

Taxi Driver

Grapevine's cabbie pal explores
Reykjavik's seething underbelly



Death Metal on the stereo paints the backdrop, once the universal drunk point passes that brings the traffic lights whizzing by, the white lane dividers streaking past ever faster as the night progresses into blackouts or make-outs in the back seat. The odometer revolves, the taxi meter ticks away, beer is downed and drugs wear off or take over, as the night slowly becomes light.

The junky mumbles his sad soliloquy upon deaf ears as he empties his pockets in search of fare and all his earthly possessions are sprawled on the seat around his emaciated syringe-marked frame. The hussy then sniggers en route to a raucous laugh and prepares for fellatio, the impudent cab sharing youth empties his repertoire of come-ons as his target slams the door and later the elderly gentleman is roused from a stupor to deliver a rant of excuses for his sorry state. I don't mind, as long as they foot the bill and get out post haste. Then there are the heated arguments and the occasional roofie victim of a girl passed out with her panty hose in tatters.

There is sometimes the striking young thing whose patronage makes the next amphetamine-fuelled, bleach haired jazz bag bearable. There is always the enlightening conversation on movies and music that cancels out the vacuous dimwits that insist on FM 957 to be played at full blast to some sorry karaoke renderings. Then there are those that sit with you: the chick that blew me in heavy Laugavegur traffic, the fare so obnoxious I had to knock him out outside the stables near Players, and the most wrecked piece of humanity you ever did see who spent her last króna on a Bacardi Breezer as I stopped for her at the liquor store, and who whiles away the half hour plus of us getting lost on the way to the state prison doing speed off of her fingernail as I pretend not to notice. A guard then appears with a wad of cash and she is gone but not forgotten.

How people are always polite and conscientious enough to have me stop for them to throw up out the open door or on the nearest lawn, amazes me. How those too drunk to fuck are always the most eager to. How dealers will bring backpacks full of weed inside and expect me not to have a fully functioning nose. How the strung out are oblivious. How the desperate fidget and the desperately lonely have me pick them a suitable watering hole.

How tourists are wide eyed and the 101 Reykjavik bar scene fixtures wear their jadedness on their sleeve. How alcohol loosens inhibitions and THC opens the creative realm. How drunkenness opens the purse for the ridiculous 4000 ISK fare and how strangers lock lips and part thighs; for the night pries logic loose and underwear off. How I profit at the hands of Dionysus is a shame wrapped in a blessing. 🍷

Ongoing Commentary | Catharine Fulton

For the Love of Tubular Meat

This is the first of what is meant to be an ongoing commentary, so let's start with introductions, shall we? My name is Catharine. I work here at the Grapevine. I'm firmly in my mid-twenties, where I plan on staying. My favourite colour, like my hair, is orange. Contrary to popular belief, I'd like to think that I do have a soul. I like piña colodas and getting caught in the rain.



Scratch that. I hate pineapple in any incarnation and I despise becoming involuntarily wet as it oft results in frizzy hair and running mascara – not a good look for me.

Moving on. The ingenious editor of this here Reykjavik Grapevine asked me to share my thoughts as a foreigner, on the city, the country, my experiences, etc. That was nearly a month ago. Being an obedient and diligent employee, I ignored his request until this Monday, when the sun was shining on the café patio of Eymundsson on Austurstræti in such a way that it reminded me of summer picnics and inspired me to write about something that has struck me about Reykjavik.

Hotdogs // Pylsa.

Where I come from the only time I encounter hotdogs is if there's a family barbeque and somebody tosses one or two on the grill 'for the kids.' Hot dogs are, by and large, the food of children... or beer-bellied spectators at sporting events. Sure, every once in a while the pungent aroma of 'street meat' is just too enticing to resist after a night out on the town, but never have I witnessed such an affinity for wieners like in Reykjavik – or such line-ups for the fare day and night.

The choice of Presidents and Rock-stars

Intrigued by the seemingly universal love of the dog, I did some online investigation about Iceland's relationship with pylsa to find out what the big deal was.

Entering the terms "Iceland" and "hot dog" into Google produces 343,000 results – positive proof that y'all love your tubular meat. Reading through the pages, I learned that hot dogs are somewhat of the national dish of Iceland (who needs foie gras or other such pretensions), and the only way to order one (properly) is "eina með öllu."

I also learned that Bæjarins beztu pylsur, which I can see from a window in the Grapevine offices, is the best of the best and has satiated the hungers of both Bill Clinton and James Hetfield. They must be doing something right because the crowds of hungry patrons around the tiny kiosk are always sizeable.

Confession: I have yet to sample the goods of Bæjarins beztu pylsur. I'm slightly ashamed now that I'm aware of their status among Reykjavik's hot dog aficionados.

Condiments are dangerous

The one pylsa I've indulged in since arriving in Iceland was at a petrol station not far from the centre of Reykjavik. An Icelandic friend and I had just driven back from Ísafjörður and he was in serious need of a fix. As the woman behind the counter piled on the onions, mustard, ketchup and remúlaði, my friend painted a mental picture for me of the atmosphere in that petrol station on a typical Friday or Saturday night... or Saturday and Sunday morning: beautiful young people, hungry after a night on the town, sloppily drunk and equally sloppily devouring pylsa. Particularly enjoyable was his description of the young men who go out dressed to impress in sleek suits and ties and then end the night eating out of a paper wrapper and going home with mustard slopped down their lapels. The 'beautiful' image of Icelanders just doesn't mesh with mustard-stained designer clothes.

Maybe that's why I always relegated hotdogs to kids. 🍷



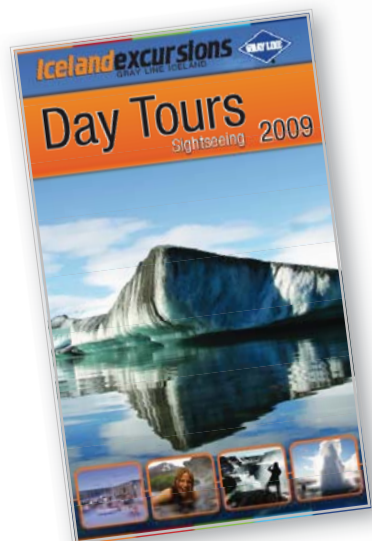
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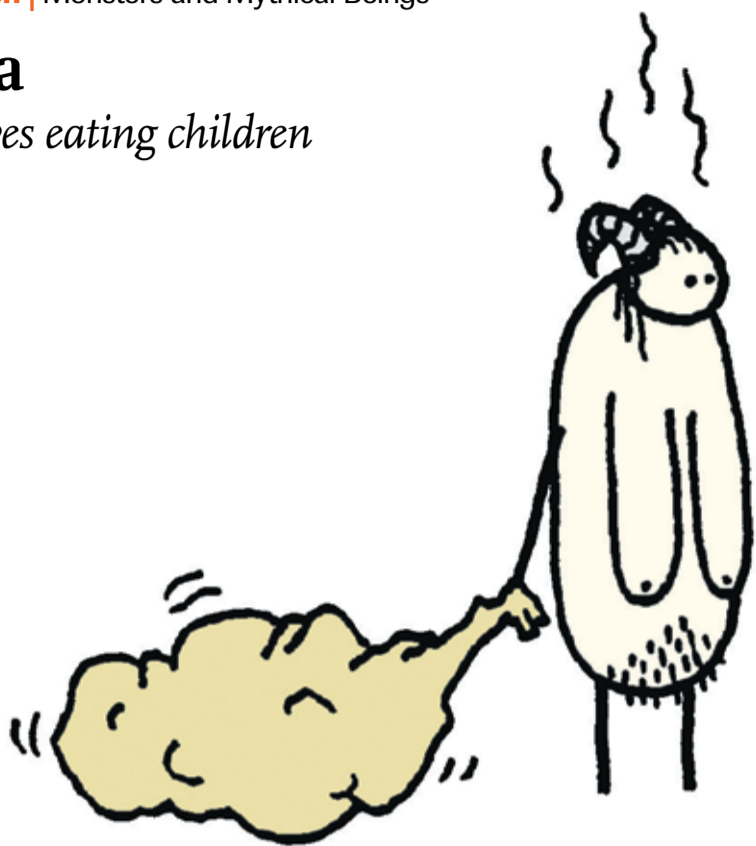
*According to the Dear Visitor study done by Tourism Research and Consulting in the summer of 2008, Iceland Excursions had a significant lead compared to competitors in satisfaction and quality.



Illustration | Monsters and Mythical Beings

Grýla

She loves eating children



Words
Haukur S. Magnússon

Illustration
Hugleikur Dagsson

Fittingly enough, the unlucky thirteenth instalment in our Hugleikur Dagsson illustrated series of Iceland's monsters and mythical beings is about an evil old ogress called Grýla. Mostly known nowadays as the mother of the thirteen Yuletide lads, the lady has a dark, evil, dark past. Of eating children. Kids, she eats.

Grýla has successfully scared Icelandic children into being good for centuries, and with good reason: if you are a kid, and you are not "good," the woman will eat you. Quite literally. Eat you. Boil you alive. Gnaw on your bristle. Suck the skin off your bones. Lick your fat off her fingers. Keep a serving of your thighs in a Tupperware container in her freezer. Chomp on your tasty buttocks, Jeffrey Dahmer-style. She. Eats. Children.

And she looks the part, too. Sources agree that her appearance is no less than hideous; she has cloven hooves for feet, and a whopping fifteen tails hang from her backside. Some reports state that one hundred sacks hang from each tail, with twenty kids stowed away in each. That would mean she goes around carrying 30.000 kids wherever she goes. That's a lot of kids to carry, but bear in mind that Grýla is a troll and, as everyone knows, trolls are huge and strong and could very well carry around a hefty load of children should they so wish. Other, more modest sources claim Grýla simply carries a single sack with a bunch of kids draped over her shoulder at all times.

Some tales claim she has more than one head on her shoulders, and all of them agree that she has excellent hearing that alerts her when kids are being noisy and bad (and are thus ripe for the eating. She can't actually eat good, quiet kids). So, from her mountainside cave, she can hear noisy kids from all over the island. That maybe explains why she wants them to keep quiet.

Not much is known of Grýla's origins, where she came from and where she's go-

ing. Or what the hell she wants to accomplish by eating all those kids. The earliest written records of Grýla-sightings date back to the 13th century, and she has been a mainstay in the Icelandic ghoulish ever since. In the 17th century, reports started trickling through that the evil ogress was in fact mother to the ever-popular Yuletide lads, and lived with them in a cave in the mountains. Bear in mind that up until the 19th century, those Yuletide lads were a pretty scary bunch that went around terrorizing farmers and their kids. They've since cleaned up their act, but you've got to wonder how being raised in a cave by a cannibal-mom affects one's psyche.

The totally evil Christmas Cat (see our ninth instalment, December 2008) also lives in that cave, as does Grýla's husband, a lazy troll called Leppalúði. He is said to sit around all day waiting for his wife to bring him fresh kids for eatin'. He is also, reportedly, Grýla's third husband, and not father to the Yuletide lads.

A plethora of different stories, poems and songs revolve around Grýla. In latter days, she is mostly connected to Christmas, and is said to only come out looking for children around the festival of lights. Other tales describe her as more of an all-season demon. And the most recent ones report she's dead. But who knows. In any case, it sucks being eaten. 🍴

Poetry | Eiríkur Örn Norðdahl

Hay-grinder of the greenpeace-kitten earth-channels of the desert-asphalt sugar-free beach-found transparent salt-Coke



When modernism in poetry shocked its way through Europe in the beginning of the last century, people's main concern was how the hell to understand it. The modernists would often build image upon image in ways that many readers found antagonizing – like oh so much posturing – and it was made new rather than simple, the emphasis being on visual (mostly metaphorical) complexity as the number one tool of the trade. "The tower like a one-eyed great goose / cranes up out of the olive grove," to quote Pound (Canto II).

When, eventually and at long last, modernism reached Iceland in the mid-fifties understandability wasn't anybody's main concern, but lack of rhyme, alliteration – that is to say, traditionality, singalongevity and rememberability. People asked, how am I supposed to remember this drivel if it doesn't drive on alliteration? Where is the song in irregular metre? Why are you disregarding the Icelandic heritage?

As interesting as these questions are, I'll leave them be for now, and ask instead (I already have an answer – it may be right, it may be crazy, but it just might be a lunatic we're ... wait, back to the text at hand): why didn't the readers criticize the difficult visuals of the poetry? Why weren't they pissed off at Steinn Steinarr's "Sun-winged circle-waters / equipped with hollow-mirrors / of four-dimensional dreams"? (The Time and the Water).

The answer is to be found in the crossword-puzzly nature of ye olde Icelandic metaphors: the kennings of skaldic poetry. A kenning is (I'm copy-pasting from Wikipedia) a circumlocution used instead of an ordinary noun [...]. For example [you] might replace *sverð*, the regular word for "sword", with a compound such as *ben-greiffill* "wound-hoe".

Kennings can be rather complicated, and Icelanders not having anything simpler to be proud of (this is way before the rise and fall of Mercedes Club), had to make do with being proud of ye olde Icelandic poetry (and ye olde Icelandic Sagas, *bien sûr*). This meant at least reading it and perhaps, occasionally and with some luck and a scholarly background, understanding bits of it.

But, you ask, enraged: what's so difficult about a metaphor? You don't need to have a doctorate in literature to get that "wound-hoe" might mean sword?

Well, no, I answer, blushing yet happy to have this opportunity to expound:

wound-hoe ain't that hard – but I'm a fairly literate person, and I had to look up both *ben* and *greiffill*. I've heard the latter, and I might've guessed correctly (we'll never know), but that doesn't make it part of my active vocabulary, snoozing on the outskirts of my passive vocabulary. And *ben*? I thought that was Michael Jackson's rat (the two of us need look no more!)

But wait! It still gets more complicated. You can replace one part of the metaphor with another metaphor. That is to say, instead of just simply saying "ship of the desert" (camel), you can replace either ship or desert with yet another metaphor, making, for example "sea-steed of the desert". "Steed of whale roads of the sand-sea". or "Hay-grinder of the greenpeace-kitten earth-channels of the desert-asphalt sugar-free beach-found transparent salt-Coke."

And all it "really" means is camel, in a more fun and interesting way. According to Snorri Sturluson, you can have up to six metaphors in a kenning, and although more are to be found in some poetry, they're considered useless (Snorri is too dead for us to ask why). Add to this allusions to Nordic mythology, the gods etc. – Sif's hair is gold, for example – and other particulars which you can't really know without being well versed and read in this particular form, most of it is completely unreadable to a layman reader, and even a scholar must delve into it to solve these puzzlified mysteries. A lot of it's actually easier for me to understand in English translations, having been modernized and interpreted, than it is in the original – although I was taught in elementary school that I could read it, and made to read it in high school (with thorough notes explaining every step, and it still was hard to get).

Oh, and yes, the word order could be totally messed up as well, making the piecing-together of base-word and determinants quite a challenge.

So when modernism finally, finally (hurrah! hurrah!) made it to Iceland, it's no surprise that the people, so used to reading poetry they couldn't understand, didn't really react much to it as being difficult. Because when it comes to being hard to decipher, Ezra Pound and Steinn Steinarr can't hold a candle to Snorri Sturluson. 🍴

List & Ast & List

<http://daysofartandlove.dk/listogastoglist>

Curator: Poul R. Weile
Hosts: Charlotte Bøving og Benedikt Erlingsson

Thursday May 21st 2009

- 15.00 Grand Opening v. "Nyhil" (IS)
- 17.00 "Extension trio"
Lau Strandby Nielsen poems,
Jakob Riis laptop,
Mette Stig Nielsen piano (DK)
- 18.00 Steingrímur Eyfórd (IS)

pause
- 20.00 Johanna Gustafsson Fúrst(SE)
- 21.00 Ólóf Arnalds,
Asdis Sif Gunnarsdóttir (IS)

Friday May 22nd 2009

- 17.00 Bård Ask (N)
- 18.00 Sara Riel (IS)

pause
- 20.00 Jörgen Svensson (SE)
- 21.00 Andrea Hördur Hardarsson,
Einar Már Gudmundsson (IS)

Saturday May 23rd 2009

- 15.00 Katerina Mistal (SE)
- 16.00 Egill Sæbjörnsson,
Magnús Jensson (IS)
- 17.00 Petri Ala-Maunus (FI)
- 18.00 Anna Helga Henning (N)

pause
- 21.00 Hess is more (DK)

Sunday May 24th 2009

- 15.00 Björg Viggosdóttir (IS)
- 16.00 Hulda Hákon (IS)
- 17.00 Jógvan Sverrason Biskopstø (FO)
- 18.00 Vebjörg Hagene Thoe (N)

Finale





Fös. 8.

Robyn

Robyn DJ set
**Konichiwa
Girls**

Damien EIE
Sexy Lazer

Fös. 15.

BMP Reykjavík
Hunk of a Man

LAU. 16.

Jón Jónsson
DJ Margeir

**Sexy
Lazer**

LAU. 23.

Togo to go
Styrktartónleikar

Mammút
Sykur og fleira
**Kalli og
Maggi Felix**

Fös. 30.

Big Ben DJ's

LAU. 31.

Disco kvöld

**Maggi
Lego**

Breakbeat celler set

LAU. 9.

Gísli Galdur

Ocultus
live set

Ewok

Fös. 22.

**Sebastian
Ingrosso**

Orang/Asli



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Our Big, Important David Lynch Interview

Photography
David Lynch

Words
Haukur Magnússon

It was a rather amusing spectacle that played out in Háskólabíó last Saturday. Arriving late to the scene, I witnessed most of Reykjavík's hipsters and, well, pretty much most of Reykjavík standing around in the movie theatre's hallway, gazing intently at a television screen where a tall, grey-haired man waxed ecstatic on the benefits of Transcendental Meditation. It was a surreal scene, one well worthy of the speaker in question: award winning, revered director David Lynch.

A few days earlier, Lynch, famed for his intriguing and often off-beat filmmaking, had announced that he was on his way to Iceland to "announce [via the David Lynch Foundation and the Icelandic Transcendental Meditation Society] a national project to bring health, creativity, prosperity, and peace to the people of Iceland through Transcendental Meditation," as the press release put it. "This project will transform the country – raising Iceland out of economic collapse and into an era of great fortune," Lynch was further quoted in the release. "The people of Iceland will witness gains difficult for them to imagine today," he said. "This project will transform the country – raising Iceland out of economic collapse and into an era of great good fortune," he said.

Wait a minute...

If you happen think this all maybe sounds a tad too good to be true, well, so do we. But let's step back a minute here. This is David Lynch we're talking about. David fucking Lynch. The David Lynch that brought us such masterpieces as Blue Velvet, Eraserhead, Lost Highway, Twin Peaks, Mulholland Drive... David Lynch, man. He's nobody's fool. The guy's solid, he's an artist. A filmmaking revolutionary, a virtuoso. So when he speaks, we listen.

So, yeah, as soon as we got the press release, we arranged for an interview with the man. We wanted to put him on our cover, preferably a self-portrait of his. The cover of the Grapevine, directed by David Lynch himself. How cool is that? Well, just turn to the cover and see for yourself. It's pretty cool, huh?

And of course we went to his presentation/seminar on TM at Háskólabíó, and we arrived late and had to stand in the hallway and watch him via CCTV with a bunch of other tardy folks, as the lecture hall had filled up completely. Mr. Lynch sounded much like you would expect him, all calm and cool and on top of things. Choosing to answer TM related questions from the audience over giving a straight up presentation, he explained how he got into the business of TM in the early seventies, how he found enlightenment through diligently practicing the meditation every day. How it helped him find a balance and surged his creativity and all around well-being.

This is not an experiment

Lynch went on to cite various scientific studies that are said to have proven TM's benefits, and explain how it could benefit the world at large and promote world peace, if practiced by enough students. He then explained the project his foundation was



undertaking, which involves raising funds to subsidize TM courses for every Icelander that wished to learn it, and putting together a meditation team of 200 Icelanders to raise national consciousness and spirits through TM (according to him, you only need the participation of the square root of 1% of the population of a nation for this to happen). Like in his press release, he "emphasized that the project is not an experiment, but rather a scientific demonstration of 50 years of research verifying the benefits of the Transcendental Meditation program for the individual and entire society."

Mr. Lynch's presentation was followed by a panel discussion, in which some local TM followers – including Lynch's friend and sometimes collaborator, Sigurjón Sighvatsson – and a visiting Raj further extolled the virtues and benefits of TM. It was all very interesting and this TM business seems like something one should maybe check out, after all it's free after the initial payment, and only takes about 40 minutes per day. I imagine I would surely trade 40 minutes of my day for some health, enlightenment and peace of mind.

The only sort of potentially embarrassing aspect of the whole event was when they projected an E! Entertainment style montage from a recent benefit concert thrown by the David Lynch foundation. It took the whole celebrity endorsement factor a bit too far for my tastes, but I guess some people are into that. All in all, it was a fun and interesting day courtesy of David Lynch, Sigurjón Sighvatsson and the Icelandic TM Foundation.

What have we learned, then?

Still, looking back, I don't know what exactly I learned from that meeting. I learned that David Lynch, Sigurjón Sighvatsson and the other speakers present are really into TM, and sincerely believe it can be a worthy addition to anyone's life, a welcome tool to reflect and gaze inwards in what seems like

an increasingly chaotic universe. And that most people should adopt it as part of their daily regime.

I have not coughed up money for the course, so I can't verify or deny any of their beliefs. But it might be worth a shot. Who knows?

One thing I did learn, however. This is that Icelanders are currently looking for answers, for solutions; they are looking for guidance and they are looking for a suitable path to venture now that the one they've been on for the last couple of decades has crumbled underneath their feet. I learned that they are willing to listen to anyone, and that they are willing to lend any idea consideration.

This of course leaves the door wide open for a variety of charlatans and/or Pied Piper-types to march right through Reykjavík, kindly offering their snake-oil as a cure-all fix-all for our purported woes. Be they economists dying for a guinea-state to try out some of their more extravagant theories, huge international corporations lusting for "lowest energy prices" or political ideologues sorely lacking in subjects. We are now in their sights, if not at their mercy.

I am in no way insinuating that Lynch and his bunch fall in any of the above categories, and I do not question their intentions or their integrity. But there is one thing I do question and I will continue to question, and that is any form of easy solution or quick fix.

We've had quite enough of those already. ☹

Transcendental Meditation: Do it Right and You Might Even Fly!

Nothing beats relaxation and down time, and when such time is trademarked by a global corporation it must be the most superior rest period ever. Such is the case with Transcendental Meditation™, also known as TM™, a licensed trademark of the Maharishi Foundation, Ltd., which in turn is named for the late brainchild behind TM, the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. The Maharishi introduced the meditation technique globally in 1958, teaching his followers the benefits of achieving deep restfulness through sitting quietly with eyes shut, repeating a personal sound mantra for twenty minutes twice daily. TM also claims to improve mind, body and relationships; reduce stress and high blood pressure, as verified by a number of reputable publications; and work toward achieving world-peace.

As Easy as 1, 2, 3... 4, 5, 6, 7!

While the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi asserted that TM is simple, can be practiced without any preparation and can be learned by anybody, it must first be taught to new practitioners by a certified instructor via a seven-step program and subsequent follow-up sessions.

The initial seven steps constitute Phase 1 of the TM process. They are spelled out on the oddly big-pharma-looking official TM website that extols the science of the practice. With the exception of the personal interview step, which runs 10–15 minutes in length, each of the steps requires 45 minutes to 2 hours time to complete. Phase 2 involves weekly and monthly check-ups – possibly for the rest of your life – to ensure that TM is being practiced correctly and that all the benefits are being sufficiently reaped: all this for the low, low price of 100,000 ISK. Courses will be provided for around 10,000 ISK shortly as a result of the recent efforts of Mr. David Lynch and friends.

TM enthusiasts stand by the practice due to its numerous benefits. According to the TM's official website and supporting journal articles on the subject, it encourages the development of total brain functioning by improving communication between different parts of the brain; it promotes creativity and reduces stress by easing access to the thinking mind and reducing activation of the sympathetic nervous system; TM enables the management of diabetes symptoms by minimising stress and, as a result, blood pressure; and it contributes to the creation of a healthy, peaceful and creative society by encouraging the same traits in its practitioners.

In recent years, TM has been introduced to teenaged school children in the hopes of boosting their ability to concentrate in the classroom and increase their IQ's, and it has been promoted as an acceptable workplace habit to increase employee mental health and productivity. Outside of such institutional venues, TM is practiced by millions seeking health and balance of the body and mind.

The Maharishi Mahesh Yogi

Born in 1917 in Madhya Pradesh, India, Mahesh Prasad Varma (later changed to Maharishi Mahesh) began his spiritual studies under Swami Brahmananda Saraswati

in 1940 after completing a Masters Degree in Physics. After twelve years studying meditation under the Swami, he decided to become a Maharishi (a teacher of mysticism and spiritual knowledge) and share his views on meditation with the world.

Maharishi Mahesh Yogi developed TM in 1955, established the Spiritual Regeneration Movement in 1957 and kicked off his first world tour in 1958. Beginning in the 1970's, the Maharishi sought to establish enough TM teaching centres globally to accommodate one in every million humans and in 1975 introduced TM-Sidhi – at the time claiming it could teach people to fly and develop other superhuman-esque abilities! The Maharishi also introduced Maharishi Vedic Science (MVS) for those wanting to add a touch of the Maharishi to their health-care, architecture, farming and musical tastes. Nobody makes a TM mix-tape quite like the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. Though TM-Sidhi and MVS are creations of the Maharishi and related to TM, they are not active requirements of practicing TM.

Celebrities and Controversy

TM garnered popularity worldwide in the late 1960's and throughout the 1970's, helped in part by famous practitioners like The Beatles, The Beach Boys, Andy Kauffman, Clint Eastwood and... David Lynch. Actress and activist Mia Farrow was also a student of the Maharishi in 1968 until he allegedly got a little too handsy in a cave in India following some hard-core meditation. Ms. Farrow later noted in her autobiography that her panic and fleeing from the cave was in part due to her heightened state of consciousness. However, this alleged scenario had also allegedly played out with other female followers. Allegedly.

The word 'cult' has been tossed around when referring to TM since the late 80's because the practice ideally integrates itself into every aspect of the practitioner's life and, according to the Cult Awareness Network (which kept tabs on TM and over a hundred other suspected cult groups worldwide), "seeks to strip individuals of their ability to think and choose freely." Proponents of TM, however, note that the practice is not a religion and it is practiced independently of religious beliefs – the official TM website features letters written by priests and rabbis who meditate daily using the Maharishi's technique. Whether or not they freely choose to write those letters is anybody's guess.

Despite instances of controversy, by the late 90's the Maharishi's foundation was worth more than US\$3 billion, and TM claimed millions of followers worldwide. With millions of people labouring under the scientifically proven (by 600 studies, no less) tenant that their positive thought will pump peace into the world, cure heart disease, produce only favourable weather and fix the economy (David Lynch has his sights set on Iceland – thanks man!), world peace may be just around the corner... and if it doesn't come soon, there are a lot of TM-ers to blame. ☹

WAIT A MINUTE!

"Hey! Where's the David Lynch interview you promised in the headline?" you ask. Well, I can't tell you that, my friend. See, we were unfortunately forced to conduct the interview via e-mail from Los Angeles. And it seems that if you're doing anything with anyone in Los Angeles, you'll need to go through an army of assistants – every time. Long story short, his answers arrived too late for us to print the interview, past our deadline. However, you can go to www.grapevine.is at this very instant and read the Grapevine's exclusive interview with the good man, where he talks about various aspects of TM and answers a bunch of our questions. I'm not gonna lie to you, David Lynch sure is a sweet guy.

The REYKJAVÍK GRAPEVINE **iNFO**

G Music, Art, Films and Events Listings + Eating, Drinking and Shopping + Map
+ *The Reykjavík Arts Festival - Dance, Theatre and Music Take Over in the Latter Half of May*

YOUR ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO LIFE, TRAVEL AND
ENTERTAINMENT IN ICELAND.

Issue 5 2009

www.grapevine.is



The opera *Í Óðamansgarði* (The Madman's Garden) will be performed at the National Theatre of Iceland in collaboration with The National Stage of The Faroe Islands.

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GroundBRAKing brilliance!

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BRAK 01

Löngu komin út

CARPET SHOW / music from soul
★★★★★ / Morgunblaðið



BRAK 02

Komin út

BLÓÐ / Fólkið heimtar blóð
★ / Gaur sem ég hitti á tónleikum



BRAK 03

Lika komin út,
en samt bara nýlega

DJ. FLUGVÉL OG GEIMSKIP
/ Rokk og róleg lög ★★★★★ / jonh pele



BRAK 04

Kemur út 15. maí

LÉTT Á BÁRUNNI / Sexí
★★★★★ / skakapopp.is



BRAK 05

Kemur líka út 15. maí, jell!

PRINS PÓLÓ / Einn heima EP
★★★★★ / facebook

BRAK
HLJÓMPLÖTUR

kimirecords.net/brak



MUSIC

CONCERTS & NIGHTLIFE

PRESCRIBING WITH LOVE
MUSIC FOR YOUR LIVE
EXPERIENCE

How to use the listings
Venues are listed alphabetically by day.
For complete listings and detailed information on venues visit www.grapevine.is

8 FRI

B5 23:00 Resident DJ.
Café Paris 22:00. Cocktail Night.
Celtic Cross 01:00 Live Music.
Dublíner 22:30 Live Music.
English Pub 22:00 Live Music.
Græna Hattinum (Akureyri) 21:00 Janis Joplin Tribute Band.
Hressó 22:00 Band **Tepokinn** in concert followed by **DJ Elli**.
Kaffibarinn 23:45 **Alfons X**.
Prikið 17:00 **Danni Boy**.
Q-Bar 23:00 **Anna brá**.
Rósenberg 21:00 **Hrafnaspark**.
Salurinn (Kópavogi) 17:00 Violinist **Kristín Þóra Haraldsdóttir** performs.
Sódoma Reykjavík 22:00 Band **Jeff Who?** performing live in concert.

9 SAT

B5 23:00 Resident DJ.
Celtic Cross 01:00 Live Music.
Dublíner 22:30 Live Music.
English Pub 22:00 Live Music.
Græna Hattinum (Akureyri) 21:00 Janis Joplin Tribute Band.
Hressó 22:00 Band **Napóleon** in concert followed by **DJ Elli**.
Kaffi Hljómalind 20:00 Hardcore and Punk bands.
Kaffibarinn 23:45 **Már and Nielsen**.
Prikið 12:00 **Skate Party** featuring **DJ Addi**.
Q-Bar 23:00 **DJ Shaft**.
Rósenberg 21:00 **Hrafnaspark**.
Salurinn (Kópavogi) 17:00 Hörn **Hrafnadóttir** and **Antónía Hevesí** perform. Entr: 2.500 ISK
Sódoma Reykjavík 21:00 Band **DUST** present **Radio Killer** CD release party.

10 SUN

Dublíner 22:30 Live Music.
Háteigs Church 17:00 Annual Spring Concert.
Prikið 22:00 Hangover Cinema, **The Warrior**. Free Popcorn!!!
Q-Bar 23:00 Open decks.
Rósenberg 21:00 **Halli Davids**.
Salurinn (Kópavogi) 20:00 Pianist **Frank Glazer** performs. Entr: 2.000 ISK.

11 MON

Dublíner 22:30 Live Music.
Rósenberg 21:00 **Moonboy** and **Sunbeams**.

12 TUE

Dublíner 22:30 Live Music.
Prikið 17:00 **Eurovision Semi-Final** followed by **DJ Addi**.
Q-Bar 23:00 Concert **Seth Sharp**.
Rósenberg 21:00 **Three Voices**.
Salurinn (Kópavogi) 20:00 Cellists **Pawel** and **Agnieszka Panasuik** perform.

13 WED

Dublíner 22:30 Live Music.
Kaffibarinn 23:45 **FKNHUDSM DJs**.
Prikið 17:00 **DJ Krúsi**.
Q-Bar 23:00 Pub quiz.
Rósenberg 21:00 **Ragnar Sólberg and co**.
Salurinn (Kópavogi) 20:00 Guitarist **Jón Gunnar Biering Margeirsson** performs.

14 THU

B5 21:00 **Three Voices**.
Cultura 21:00 Jazz **Mingus Ah Um**.
Dublíner 22:30 Live Music.
English Pub 22:00 Live Music.
Hressó 22:00 Acoustic **Jógvan and Vignir**.
Kaffibarinn 21:00 **Oki Doki** presents bands **Fist Fokkers** and **Miri** followed by DJs.
Prikið 17:00 **Eurovision Semi-Final** followed by **DJ Kári**.
Rósenberg 21:00 **Trío Björhs Thor**.

15 FRI

B5 23:00. Resident DJs.
Café Paris 22:00. Cocktail Night.
Celtic Cross 01:00 Live Music.
Dublíner 22:30 Live Music.
English Pub 22:00 Live music.
Hressó 22:00 Band **Dalton (Country)** in concert followed by **DJ Maggi**.
Kaffibarinn 23:45 **DJ Magic**.
Karamba 22:00 Surf rock band **Bárújárn** in concert followed by resident DJs.
Prikið 21:00 **Benni B-Ruff**.
Q-Bar 23:00 **DJ G.E.M**.
Salurinn (Kópavogi) 17:00 Singer **Stefán Hilmarrson** performs. Entr: 3.500 ISK
Sódoma Reykjavík 21:00 End of exams!!!

16 SAT

B5 23:00 Resident DJs.
Celtic Cross 01:00 Live Music.
Dublíner 22:30 Live Music.
English Pub 22:00 Live Music.
Hressó 22:00 Band **Ímynd** in concert followed by **DJ Maggi**.
Kaffibarinn 23:45 **Maggi Lego**.
Prikið 17:00 **Eurovision Final!!!** Followed by **Danni**.
Q-Bar 23:00 **DJ Manny**.
Rósenberg 21:00 **Menn Ársins**.



9 May

Hrafnaspark

Rósenberg
Klapparstíg 25 ☺ 9pm

Playing Icelandic and Scandinavian music in a gypsy jazz style alongside jazz standards, Hrafnaspark's sound is charmingly fluid and sexy. The trio, featuring Jóhann Guðmundsson and Ólafur Haukur Arnason on guitar and Pétur Ingólfsson on the double bass, was established in Akureyri in 2001 and has been playing around Iceland regularly since, often collaborating with other musicians and singers. Their sound is sure to please patrons of Rósenberg this month.



14 May

Fist Fokk Anyone?

Kaffibarinn
Bergstaðastræti 1 ☺ 9pm

Ok, Fist Fokkers is not your average name for a band I know...more like an obvious title for a German porno. But open your mind a little, we have. This frantic noisierock duo are open for propositions on May 14th at Kaffibarinn, and we are more than panting in expectation. As shown during their previous show at the art festival LungA, expect harsh choppy guitars and even trashier drums. To top it off, the graceful Miri are sharing the excitement by completing the evening! Bringing instrumental aural pleasure direct to your ears, and hearts. So bend over and enjoy a night of blood, sweet and tears. —JB

Grapevine Top 6 Most Played during the making of this issue

1 Tiga
Love Don't Dance Here Anymore

2 Swervedriver
Never Lose That Feeling

3 Proxy
Raven (Crookers Remix)

4 Patrick Watson
Man Like You

5 Zoo Brazil & Adam Sky
Circle Jerk

6 Burial & Four Tet
Wolf Cub

17 SUN

Babalú
21:00 Band **Sunday Parlours** (Berlin) and **Spelgur**.

Dubliner
22:30 Live Music.

Háskólabíó
20:00 Acclaimed Icelandic concert pianist **Vikíngur Heidar Ólafsson**.

Prikið
22:00 Hangover Cinema, **Tron**. Free popcorn!!!

Q-Bar
23:00 Open Deck.

Rósenberg
22:00 **Mike Pollock**.

18 MON

Dubliner
22:30 Live Music.

Rósenberg
21:00 Jazz and Soul bands.

19 TUE

Dubliner
22:30 Live Music.

Prikið
17:00 **Skate Party!!** Chill, relax and watch skate videos. Followed by **DJ Intro**.

Q-Bar
23:00 Pub quiz.

Rósenberg
21:00 Rock band **Tjarnar Mafia**.

20 WED

Dubliner
22:30 Live Music.

Hressó
22:00 Acoustic **Gotti and Eisi** in concert followed by **DJ Elli**.

Kaffibarinn
23:45 **Alfons X**.

Prikið
22:00 **DJ Moonshine**, open until 05:30!

Q-Bar
23:00 Girls Night with **Elin Ey** and **Myrra**.

Rósenberg
21:00 Big band with singers **Andrea**, **Kristjana** and **Hera**.

21 THU

B5
21:00 **Three Voices**.

Cultura
21:00 Jazz **Jussanam Da Silva** and **Hjómssveit**.

Cultura
22:30 Jazz **Hjómssveit Guðlaugur**.

Dubliner
22:30 Live Music.

English Pub
22:00 Live Music.

Hressó
22:00 **Böddi and Davíð** followed by **Dalton**.

Prikið
22:00 **DJ Kári**.

Rósenberg
21:00 Big band with singers **Andrea**, **Kristjana** and **Hera**.

OUTSIDE REYKJAVÍK

Keflavík

Paddy's
MAY 8 Pontiac Pilatus
Anti Fem
11pm - 02am
Free admission

MAY 9 INK
12am - 02am
Free admission

MAY 14 Live Music
MAY 15 G-Strengir
12am - 04am
Free admission

MAY 16 G-Strengir
12am - 04am
Free admission

MAY 21 Pub Quiz
10pm - 12am

MAY 22 Megabite
12pm - 4:30am
Free admission

The Officers Club
MAY 16 Eurovision

15 May



Jeepers Creepers

Karamba

Laugarvegur 22 ☺ 10pm

Everyone's new favourite haunt, Karamba, will play host to ghouly surf-garage rockers **Bárujárn** on May 15th. Picture this: you wake up in a graveyard at 3 AM, on a gloomy winter's morning crashed on an LSD binge? No? Well, attending this show might leave you feeling like you have - if the band are in form expect psychedelic theremin swirls, mixed with atmospheric guitar picks, thumping rhythms and groovy basslines. Gogo dancers, crazy lights and disco uniforms can also be expected to turn up at their shows. So don your Brothel Creepers, do the **Bárujárn** mash and don't miss out. **-JB**



Dust

Sódóma Reykjavík

Tryggvagata 22 ☺ 8pm

Rock, metal and power-pop will fill Sódóma Reykjavík May 9th when **DUST** host the official release concert for their album **Radio Killer** (so named for "the music passing itself off as rock on the radio these days"), which has been available since February. **DUST** offer up some moody rock ballads and fast-paced guitar solos on their album and they're eager to finally debut them officially to their would-be fans. The bands **Ten Steps Away** and **Bad Carburator** will kick off the night with some rock sets.



Raflost Jumbo Concert

Icelandic Academy of the Arts Concert Hall

Sölvhólgötu 13 ☺ 8pm

If you haven't heard of **Raflost**, it is Reykjavík's crème de la crème of electronic media festivals, thrown annually in the beginning of May. The festival consists of performances and lectures by internationally known artists together with young up-and-coming artists. The festival emphasizes the connection between music, dance, visual art and cinema in an electronic environment - a sort of an electronic 'art total'. The festival will be operated from May 5 till May 9, but the grand finale will be this ultra stimulating concert. What makes it a bit odd is that its program will be announced during the performance, but you can be assured that the miscellaneous line-up will be a true feast for all you art-loving folks.



UPCOMING CONCERTS

MAXIMUS MUSICUS - A FAMILY CONCERT
SATURDAY, MAY 9TH @ 14 PM

Conductor | **Bernharður Wilkinson**
Storyteller | **Valur Freyr Einarsson**



FROM NOVGOROD TO NAPLES
THURSDAY, MAY 14TH @ 7.30 PM

Conductor | **Eivind Gullberg Jensen**
Soloist | **Olga Kern**
Felix Mendelsohn | **Symphony no. 4 - Italian**
Johannes Brahms | **Tragic Overture**
Sergei Rachmaninov | **Piano Concerto no. 2**

IN THE SOUTH
FRIDAY, MAY 22ND @ 7.30 PM

Conductor | **Rumon Gamba**
Soloist | **Guðrún Jóhanna Ólafsdóttir**
Benjamin Britten | **Phaedra**
Brett Dean | **Amphitheatre**
Edward Elgar | **In the South**
Joseph Haydn | **Arianna a Naxos**
Ottorino Respighi | **The Fountains of Rome**

REYKJAVÍK ART FESTIVAL GALA
THURSDAY, MAY 28TH

Conductor | **Gennadi Rosdestvensky**
Soloist | **Viktoria Postnikova**
Dimitri Shostakovich | **Symphony no. 7 - Leningrad**
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart | **Piano Concerto in c-minor, K-491**



Tickets sold at www.sinfonia.is
or tel. 545 2500.
All concerts take place in Háskólabíó.



ICELAND SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Live Music

FRIDAY, MAY 8
» **Cæðablóð** and friends at 17:00

FRIDAY, MAY 15
» **Sudden Weather Change** at 22:00

SATURDAY, MAY 16
» **The Psyke Project**
» **Celestine**
» **Momentum**

WEDNESDAY, MAY 27
» **The Champions League Final live** at 18:00

FRIDAY, MAY 29
» **Grapevine Consert**

SATURDAY, MAY 30
» **Ramming Speed**

JUNE, 4 to 7
» **Grand Rokk Cultural Festival**

FRIDAY, JUNE 12
» **Grapevine Consert**



Grand Rokk
Reykjavík

Grand Rokk » Smiðjustigur 6 » 101 Reykjavík

Numismatic Museum



The Central Bank and National Museum of Iceland jointly operate a numismatic collection that consists of Icelandic notes and coins, foreign money from earlier times, especially if mentioned in Icelandic sources, and more recent currency from Iceland's main trading partner countries. A selection from the numismatic collection is on display in showcases on the ground floor of the Central Bank's main building.

Situated in the Central Bank's main building in Kalkofnsvegur 1, Reykjavík. Open Mon.-Fri. 13:30-15:30. Free admittance.

Gogoyoko presents:

GRAPEVINE GRAND ROCK

Grand Rokk / 22:00 / Friday May 29 / 1.000 ISK

Kimono Rökkuró
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MUSIC MAY

– continued –

Ísafjörður

- Kaffi Edinborg**
MAY 9 *Dj Hálfán*
 Free admission
MAY 16 *Benefit for BÍ*
 Húsið á sléttunni plays
 Admission 1500 ISK
MAY 23 *90's Party*
 1500 ISK

Akureyri

- Græni Hatturinn**
MAY 8 *Janis Joplin - Tribute*
 10pm - 12am
 Admission 2000 ISK
MAY 9 *Janis Joplin tribute*
 10pm - 12am
 Admission 2000 ISK
MAY 22 *Dúndurfréttir*
 10pm - 12am
 Admission 2500 ISK
MAY 23 *Creadens Clearwater*
 Revival - Tribute

Húsavík

- Gamli Baukur**
MAY 9 *Brain Police*
 Nevolution
 10pm
 1000 ISK
MAY 12 *Eurovision* on a widescreen and the games we play with Sigga & Sunna
MAY 14 *Eurovision* on a widescreen and the games we play with Sigga & Sunna
MAY 15 *Eurovision pub-quiz*
 10pm
MAY 16 *Eurovision* on a widescreen and the games we play with Sigga & Sunna
MAY 23 *Party* with Sigríður, the rock band

Egilsstaðir

- Skjálfti**
MAY 8 *Closed for private party*
MAY 9 *Party*
 11pm - 3am
MAY 15 *Party*
 12:30am - 3am
MAY 22 *Party*
 11pm - 3am

- Valaskjálfi**
MAY 16 *Eurovision* and Party with Von
 Admission 2500 ISK
MAY 23 *Party*
 11pm - 3am
 Admission 2500 ISK

Selfoss

- 800 Bar**
MAY *Mono plays Beatles* Tribute concert followed by a party
 10pm - 3am
 admission for tribute and party 1800ISK
 admission for party 1200ISK
MAY 9 *Sniglabandið*
 11pm - 3am
MAY 15 *Live Music*
MAY 16 *Live Music*
MAY 22 *Live Music*
MAY 23 *Live Music*

16
May



Sudden Release?

Grand Rokk

Smiðjustíg 6 ☺ 10pm

You can say a lot of crazy things about the rock-star loonies in Sudden Weather Change, and although a lot of those things are simply tall stories fabricated by its members, they undoubtedly boast of launching an album bearing the most twisted name released in Iceland for a very long time. And so, when you release an album called "Stop! Handgrenade in the name of Crib Death'nderstand? (Abbreviated SHIT! No CD?) you better throw a wicked release party – and so they will. You might wanna keep your distance from the stage though – if you won't you'll either be knocked out by a flying microphone or spritzed in stale beer. –SKK

17
May



Sunday Parlours

Babalú

Skólavörðustíg 22 ☺ 9pm

Soft, soothing, melodic sounds reminiscent of the feeling of exhaling deeply while sinking into your favourite chair on one of those days when the world is turning slowly and everything is right. Sunday Parlours exude this feeling. It's next to impossible to improve on the classics of The Cure, but the Sunday Parlours take on Pictures of You is like a dream, and their original music is captivating. Comprised of Malte Jantzen and Saskia Melina, Sunday Parlours hail from Nordhessen, Germany. They have been playing shows around Reykjavík the past few weeks and will be performing at Babalu later this month with Spelgur. –CF

16
May



Menn Ársins

Rósenberg

Klapparstíg 25 ☺ 9pm

Menn Ársins will be taking the stage at Rósenberg on the 16th, demonstrating their eclectic brand of melodramatic pop rock. The diverse musical backgrounds of the band members – grunge, classical, Balkan folk, funk and jazz – create a sound that is varied and hard to categorize, as hints of each influence are distinguishable at different points in their songs. But it all works together to create a sound that is catchy, yet somewhat sombre, with the trumpet adding a welcome punch and string arrangements creating a sophisticated fluidity to the sound. –CF

ART

GALLERIES & MUSEUMS

COCKTAIL PLEASURES AND VISUAL STIMULATION

How to use the listings
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OPENING

MAY

8 ☺ 1pm

LHI Lecture Hall

Thorhallur Magnusson- On Epistemic Tools: The Phenomenology of Musical Instruments.

As part of *Raflost Electronic Music Festival 2009*

8 ☺ 8pm

LHI Visual Art Building

Raflost Workshop Performance.

As part of *Raflost Electronic Music Festival 2009*

8 ☺ 5pm

Lost Horse Gallery

Responsive Existence - Heidi Mullins, Kate Dambach and Will Scough:

8 ☺ 8pm

Living Art Museum

Avi Mograbi- How I Learned To Overcome My Fear and Love Arik Sharon

Documentary

9 ☺ 2pm

The Nordic House

Conference on new Nordic food.

9 ☺ 2.30pm

Reykjanesbær Art Gallery

Lorna- Art/Visual Installations.

As part of *Raflost Electronic Music Festival 2009*

9 ☺ 8pm

LHI Concert Hall

Raflost Performance.

As part of *Raflost Electronic Music Festival 2009*

10 ☺ 3pm

Hafnarborg Centre of Culture and Fine Art (Hafnarfjörður)

Final day of Weather Writing including a talk with Guðrún Kristján.

15 ☺ 8pm

Living Art Museum

Rithy Panh- S21.

Documentary

16 ☺ 2pm and 4pm

Downtown Reykjavik

Strange Fruit- Performing arts that fuses theatre, dance and circus.

As part of *Reykjavik Arts Festival 2009*

16 ☺ 2pm and 4pm

Reykjavik

Camping Woman- Five large Sculptures suspended on functional caravans by Marit Benthe Norheim. Found throughout Reykjavik

As part of *Reykjavik Arts Festival 2009*

17 ☺ 3pm

Hafnarhús

The fun of discovery

Guided tour through Elin Hansdóttir's exhibition Parallax. Families are invited to help them find their beings around the exhibition rooms of Hafnarhús.

ONGOING

Akureyri Art Museum (Akureyri)

Current exhibitions:

May 06- July 05

Hulda Hákon- Two Men, One Woman and a Monster From The Sea.

ASÍ Art Museum

Current exhibitions:

May 02- May 24

Póra Sigurðardóttir and Sólrún Sumarliðadóttir- Mixed-media collaboration Exhibition.

The Culture House

Permanent exhibitions:

Medieval Manuscripts

March 28- Jan 10 2010

ICELAND::FILM

This exhibition traces for the first time the development of Icelandic filmmaking from its origins around 1904 to the year 2008

May 16- May 26:

Orbis Terrae- ORA

Performance about "the culture of war" lead by Margrét Vilhjálmsdóttir.

The Library Room.

Current exhibitions:

Genesis

The exhibition traces the emergence and evolution of the island Surtsey until the present day and predicts its geographical and ecological development over the next 120 years.

The Late View - Halldór Laxness' Photographs

Nobel Laureate and cosmopolitan Halldór Laxness was better known for his writing but also proved to be a good photographer. This is an exhibition of his works.

Exhibition Series:

Weird and Wonderful Beasts from Icelandic Folklore by Jón Baldur Hlíðberg is an exhibition of illustrations from his book on the magical creatures of Icelandic folklore.

The Einar Jónsson Museum

Permanent exhibition: **The work of sculptor Einar Jónsson.**

Gallery Ágúst

March 21- May 09

Paintings by young and promising artists,

Magnus Helgason and Marta Maria Jonsdottir exhibit their work consisting of paintings and drawings.

Gallery StartArt

April 04- May 09:

6 Artists will be showing at Start Art.

Lene Boel, Joseph Henry Ritter, Dagrún Matthíasdóttir, Sigurlín M. Grétarsdóttir, Margrét Jónsdóttir painter and Ragnheiður Ragnarsdóttir. The exhibitions will consist of video installations, 3-D works, photographs, paintings, mixed technique and papier maché.

Gallery Turpentine

May 08- May 31

You Are More Beautiful than A Butterfly- 9 artists from Iceland, England and France exhibit their work.

Gerðarsafn Art Museum (Kópavogur)

May 9- June 21

Myths and Legends

Featuring works from local Kópavogur artist Baltasar.

Gerðuberg Cultural Centre

March 21 - May 24

The Dark Truth

A photo exhibition of the reportage "The Dark Truth: Coal Miners of China" exposes some of the working conditions in the world largest coal industry

Gljúfrasteinn Laxness Museum

Gljúfrasteinn was the home and workplace of Halldór Laxness (winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1955) and his family for more than half a century. It has now been opened to the public as a museum, unchanged from when Laxness lived there.

Hafnarborg Centre of Culture and Fine Art (Hafnarfjörður)

Current Exhibitions:

Veðurskrift (Weather Writing) -

Guðrún Kristján. Guðrún is known for her powerful works that interpret Icelandic nature in an original way. This exhibition will be displaying paintings, photographs, videos and massive installations dealing with the ever shifting Icelandic nature.

Wight Works- Jónína Guðnadóttir

In this exhibition she wrestles with supernatural beings and forces of nature.

is Gallery

March 27 - May 09.

Limboland:

An exhibition by Icelandic artist Ólafur Elíasson.

May 16- June 14

The Road To You Is On My Mind

Shoplifter a.k.a Hrafnhildur Arnardóttir exhibits her new works made out of human hair.

Living Art Museum

Throughout May- Exhibitions from Runo Lagomarsino, Ylva Westerlund and Olivia Plender.

Lost Horse Gallery

A Wild Night. Come back to an era when jazz raged and gin flowed (illegally) and charleston crazy



The Cultural House of Icelandic Heritage

Hverfisgata 15 ☺ 8pm

An assembly of diligent artist exploring philosophical questions about borders, bureaucracy and the culture of war will perform an installment, under the fierce direction of Margrét Vilhjálmsdóttir, in The Cultural House of Icelandic Heritage. But the happening is a part of Reykjavik Arts Festival. They describe the world they have created within the walls of this rigid building as a new republic where a new border has been established and everything that follows: a refugee camp, UN soldiers etc. If you have the guts to actually visit the set, believe me, you'll experience an adventure or two - for the installment is definitely an interactive one. **-SKK**



Reykjavik City Library

Tryggvagata 15

☺ 10-4pm weekdays

The banal act of sitting around in your local bus shed, waiting for the next bus to sweep you away is often an underestimated one, for the bus stops can be a real work of art. Although you might not pay the bus stops any attention whatsoever, they are as different as they are many, and photographer Sigurður Gunnarsson has researched this phenomenon in his exhibition "Bus Stop". The show includes photographs of 10 different bus stops, but these samples emphasize the versatility in their design and how they blend in with their surroundings. If you ever wondered what The Hollies found so spellbinding - you should check this one out. **-SKK**



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Daily except Mondays 11-17



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MAP

Places We Like

1 Kaffibarinn

Bergstaðastræti 1

kaffibarinn

Weekends are somewhat overrated at Kaffibarinn if you ask me. Don't get me wrong, they can be brilliant if you're completely pissed, the DJ is fresh and the crowd is full-blooded, still the weekdays are better. It doesn't matter when you pop in, you're always treated like a pal rather than a customer, and you should always expect get caught in some shenanigan, whether it's a crazy Monday bender or a wacko Tuesday... well... bender. SKK

2 Jacobsen

Austurstræti 9

A fairly new venue in town, Jacobsen is owned by some nouveau riche Swedes, and has been providing a non-stop party over the last few months. Besides its importing foreign big-shot DJs and other niceties, it is probably most appreciated for its loooong hours; it doesn't matter if you stop partying at 2AM or way-too-much AM, Jacobsen is always forking out shots and cocktails. SKK

3 Hemmi og Valdi

Laugavegi 21

The "colonial store" Hemmi and Valdi was probably 2008's most surprising crowd pleaser. The cosy hangout advanced from being a toasty retreat, where you could get cheap beer and have a quiet chat, into being a chock-full concert venue and an all-night party place. And believe me, the new atmosphere is brilliant. SKK

4 Segurmo

Laugavegi 28b

This place was something we all needed, a cheap and scrumptious bistro, right inside one of our favourite bars: Boston. The cuisine really is Icelandic, because of their cornerstones: the meat soup and the fish stew, but the rest varies between weeks, so their menu could even pass as international. So, if you don't like the current meat dish, you might in a week. SKK

5 Tíu Dropar

Laugavegi 27

If you're sick of all the arty cafés, filled with Sigur Rós wannabes and their Macs, browsing Facebook— go to Tíu Dropar. It's a back-to-basics Icelandic café that hasn't changed their interior since the 60s. Really proves the saying 'if it ain't broke, don't fix it.' Plus, the coffee's great. SKK

6 Prikíð

Bankastræti 12

Prikíð is one of those places that shape-shifts. It's a warm café with photographs of their senior frequenters on weekday mornings, a hung-over hangout on weekend afternoons, and during nights it's filled to the brim with what remains of Iceland's hip hop scene. Go there in daytime for the cheap burgers; enter at night for some OTT hip-hop debauchery, old skool and the latest bangers alike. SKK



7 Pizza King

Hafnarstræti 18

To be honest, this isn't the best pizza up for grabs, but it's cheap, not pre-heated (like at various other pizza places downtown), and the guys are rather cool. Their pizzas are always bulletproof, and they offer various great offers on top of it, which you should definitely check out. SKK

8 Café d'Haiti

Tryggvagata 16

The first time I entered this exotic little joint, meaning to buy myself a take-away espresso, I ended up with two kilos of fresh and roasted coffee beans due to some language complications and way too much politeness. Since then I have enjoyed probably way-too-many wonderful cups of Haitian coffee, but they're always as nice, so the two kilos were definitely worth it. SKK

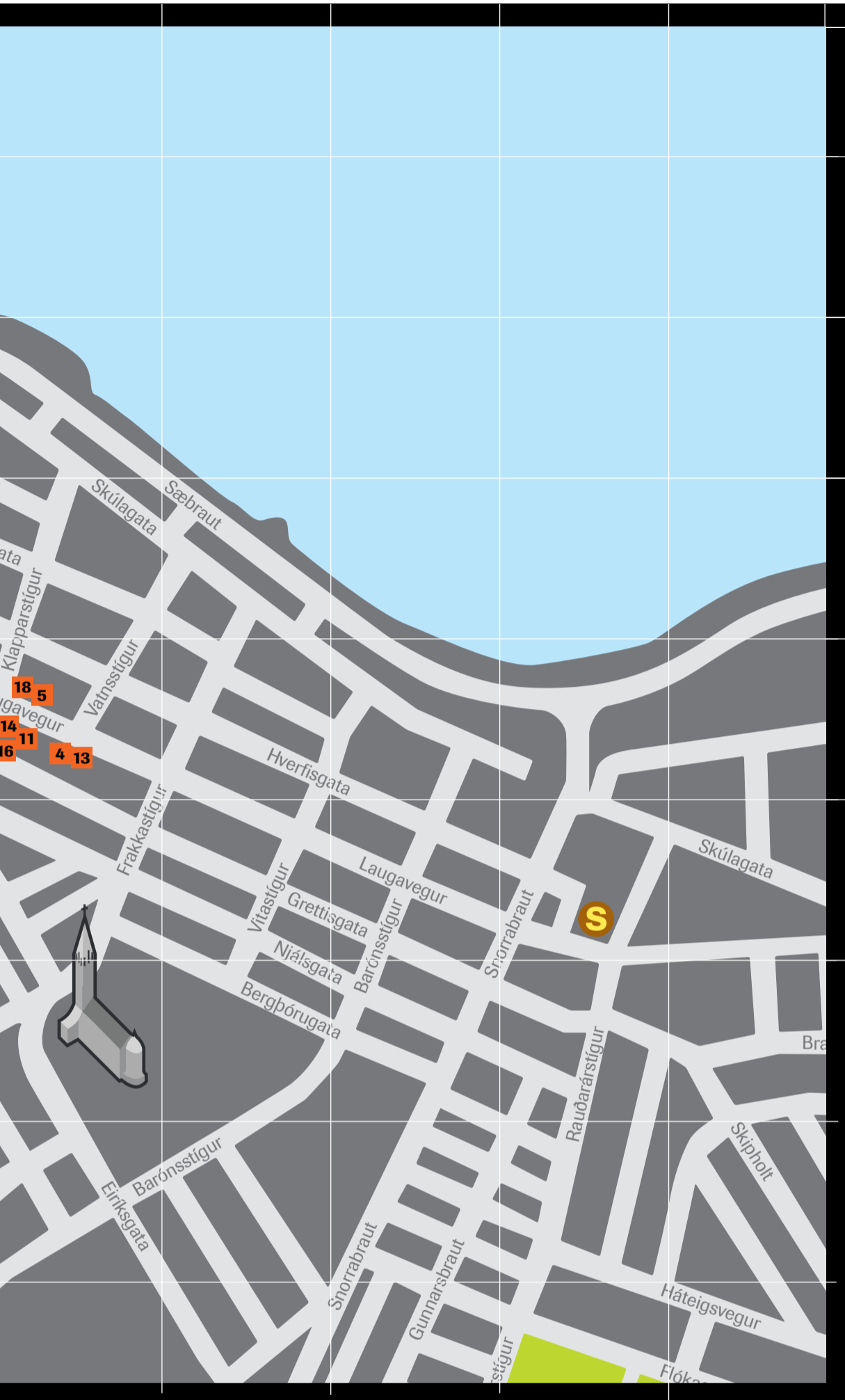
9 Hressó

Austurstræti 20

You know, Hressó is basically the only place I go for coffee. Why? Their coffee is decent to excellent, but their forte is surely their wonderful patio, where you can enjoy the spring breeze in the sun, wrap yourself in a blanket beneath an electric heater in January and at all times: smoke. They boast of quite the prolific menu, but I'd reconsider the playlists to tell you the truth, too much of Nickelback really hurts. SKK

www.grapevine.is

Go to Grapevine.is for daily news, opinions, event listings and exclusive articles.



13 Boston

Laugavegi 28b

Like an older sibling to the fabled (now deceased) Sirkús, Boston is a warm and mellow second-floor bar on Laugavegur that plays host to the arty party crowd. The baroque wall dressings and deep, rich coloured décor make this bar feel pretty swank, but Boston also serves up some reasonably priced food earlier in the evening, so it's not too swank. CF

14 Karamba

Laugavegi 22

New hotspot in town Karamba is a colourful and eclectic bar on Laugavegur with a comfortable atmosphere, typically great music and a chill crowd. This is a good place to relax or to do some serious drinking or to relax. Plus, their decors are done strictly by Grapevine-friendly artists, such as Lóa (who does our comics), Hugleikur Dagsson (who illustrates the monster column) and Bobby Breiðholt (who's done a lot of nice illustrations for us); they are truly a sight to behold. CF

15 Babalú

Skólavörðustíg 22

Located on the second-floor of a quirky little building on Skólavörðustígur, Babalú is an inviting, quaint and cosy café serving up a selection of tea, coffee and hot chocolate along with delicious baked goods and light meals. Food and drink aside, Babalú boasts colourfully decorated and super-comfortable surroundings and a genuinely friendly and likeable staff. CF

16 Barbara

Laugavegi 22

At Laugavegur 22, above Karamba, Barbara serves up a lively atmosphere for Reykjavík's gay community and anybody else who just wants to dance and have a good time. The first level is made for dancing and is often packed with sweaty bodies, while the second level of the bar offers a place to sit, drink and chat and another in which to smoke. CF

17 Habibi

Hafnarstræti 18

This small restaurant offers up a concise menu of delicious Arabic cuisine, from shawarma to kebabs and falafels. The staff is really friendly and accommodating of requests to kick up the spiciness or tone it down if the customer so desires. Habibi seriously hits the spot after hours of partying (or any other time of day) so it's convenient that the place is open until 6 a.m. Friday and Saturday. CF

18 Kaffi Hjómáland

Laugavegi 23

The only true activist-friendly, community servicing co-op in town, Kaffi Hjómáland lends a breath of fresh air and a welcome alternative to Reykjavík's beer-stained, decadent cafés. Offering up a fare of vegetarian- to vegan friendly courses, some pretty good coffee and an awesome selection of tea. As well as a free, anarchist library. What else do you need?

10 Grand Rokk

Smiðjustíg 6

The only 'real' bar in town, no doubt. In downtown Reykjavik it's hard to rumble into a pub not crowded by musicians or artsy folks, but this one is an exception. Whether it's 4AM on a Friday or 5PM on a Monday you'll see the same flock of John Does, taking a break from their daily routines, enjoying a shot 'n' a brew. If you want to witness an earnest Icelandic 'Cheers' or a 'Moe's' - this is the place. Oh, and on weekends, they play host to some awesome concerts, too. SKK

11 Santa Maria

Laugavegi 22a

On Laugavegur, Santa Maria offers a fairly extensive menu of Mexican dishes and drinks at a really reasonable price - possibly some of the best in the city. The décor is colourful and welcoming, the portions are generous and the service is fast and friendly. Recommended. CF

12 Kaffitár

Bankastræti 8

Kaffitár on Bankastræti is a comfortable little café with a great selection of coffee, tea and baked goods on offer. Since Kaffitár is also a big-name Icelandic roasterie the caffeinated beverages on the menu are quality. The wi-fi makes this a nice place to sit and chill with your laptop as well. CF

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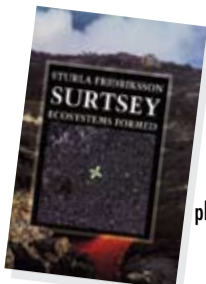


RING OF SEASONS. ICELAND - ITS CULTURE AND HISTORY

Terry G. Lacy brings both the perspective of an outsider and the familiar eye of a long-term resident to this delightful exploration of all facets of Iceland, past and present. She conveys her story with a skillful interlacing of history, religion, politics, and culture to paint a vivid picture of the way Icelanders live today.

„This fascinating book is a must for anyone who is interested in Iceland.“ - Dick Ringle

„This is an excellent encyclopedia of Iceland's folklore, fact, science, history, anecdote, written in clear and lively prose.“ - Bill Holm



SURTSEY - AN ECOSYSTEM FORMED

Dr. Sturla Fridriksson describes the birth of the island in 1963 and how in itself it became an interesting geological phenomenon and a biological laboratory, where scientists could investigate how organisms disperse across the ocean to remote islands and how plants and animals colonize completely barren areas such as Surtsey. Available in English, French and German

Surtsey was inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List in 2008.

11 YEARS - A DECADE OF CONTEMPORARY ART

A selection from Iceland's leading modern art gallery i8, drawn from its archives in order to paint a coherent picture of the body of works exhibited over the years. The selection clearly portrays the pioneering work that i8 has done in the past decade.



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ART GALLERIES

– continued –

flappers danced the night away behind locked doors. Have a seat at our candlelit tables and enjoy popular standards of the 1920's by Irving Bell, Hoagy Carmichael, Fats Waller, The Gershwins, Rodgers & Hart and Hammerstein and Kern.

The National Gallery of Iceland

May 15- June 28

The work of Hrafnkell Sigurðsson and Kristján Guðmundsson.

In conjunction with Reykjavik Arts Festival 2009.

The National Museum

Permanent exhibition:

The Making of a Nation

Heritage and History in Iceland is intended to provide insight into the history of the Icelandic nation from the Settlement to the present day.

Jan 31 - Nov 30.

Encounters.

Archaeological excavations at many locations around Iceland have been funded by Kristnihátíðarsjóður (the Millennium Fund). Finds from some of these excavations are on display in an exhibition suitable for the whole family.

The Nordic House

May 21- May 24

18 various artists, actors and musicians from Iceland, Finland, Denmark, Sweden and Norway perform.

May 21- May 24

ART&LOVE&ART

Installations based on the formation of dialogue.

The Numismatic Museum

Permanent exhibition:

The Central Bank of Iceland and the National Museum of Iceland jointly operate a numismatic collection consisting of Icelandic notes and coins.

Reykjavík 871 +/- 2

Permanent exhibition:

The Settlement Exhibition

Reykjavík Arts Festival

May 16- August 02

Strat Beacons

Ásdís Sif Gunnarsdóttir, Curver Thoroddsen, Icelandic Love Corporation and Unnar Örn exhibits their works in lighthouses around Iceland. See artfest.is for more info.

Reykjavík Art Museum

Asmundarsafn

May 2- April 30 2010

Rhyme - Works by Ásmundur Sveinsson and contemporary artists

This exhibition showcases contemporary artists that tackle similar issues as Ásmundur did in his time, but in a context of a new age.

Reykjavík Art Museum

Hafnarhús

Feb 05 - May 10.

Shadow Boy:

The world of Alfred Flöki.

Jan 5- May 17.

Erró :

Point to the east, point to the west

Jan 17 - May 17.

The Erró Game-

An interactive exhibition, kids can reconstruct paintings by Erró.

March 19 - May 17.

Parallax - Elín Hansdóttir.

The artist tries to erase the line between personal space and public space.

May 28- August 23.

Possibilities

Works by 10 Guðmunda Kristinsdóttir Art Prize winners.

May 28- August 29 2010

Erró- Portrett-

A deication to Erró.

Reykjavík Art Museum

Kjarvalsstaðir

May 15- August 30

The House of Una And West 8th Street

The life of Icelandic artists Louisa Matthíasdóttir and Nína Tryggvadóttir and their connection with artists from Iceland and New York.

May 09- August 30

Kjarval and Animals

An exhibition focusing on Kjarval's depictions of animals.

May 15- August 30

Icelandic design, furniture, architecture and product design.

Reykjavík Maritime Museum

Current Exhibitions:

Living Museum by the Sea; Arterial for Country and City; From Poverty to Abundance; The Shark - Light and Life Energy; Hidden Craftsman.

The Reykjavík Museum of Photography

Jan 17 - May 10.

Tíra

The art of Bjargey Ólafsdóttir.

Ásmundur Sveinsson Sculpture Museum

Permanent Exhibition:

The Shape of Line.

A new retrospective of works by Ásmundur Sveinsson. The exhibition focuses on abstract works from 1945 onwards.

May 01- April 30 2010

RHYTHM- Ásmundar and Our Age

This exhibition showcases contemporary artists that tackle similar issues as Ásmundur did in his time, but in a context of a new age.

OUTSIDE REYKJAVÍK

Keflavík

Suðsuðvestur Gallery

May 16 - June 14

Exhibition by Klaas Kloosterboer

Hafnarfjörður

Hafnarborg

May 16 - June 20

Exhibition "Vættir" by Jónína Guðadóttir

Exhibition "Madame Lemonique & Madame Lemonborough" by Guðný Guðmundsdóttir

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Art | Venue finder

101 Gallery

Hverfisgata 18A | **F6**
Thu-Sat 14-17 and by appointment
www.101hotel.
is/101hotel/101gallery/

Artótek

Tryggvagata 15 | **D5**
Mon 10-21, Tue-Thu 10-19, Fri 11-19, Sat and Sun 13-17
www.sim.is/Index/Islenka/
Artotek

ASÍ Art Museum

Freygata 41 | **G10**
Tue-Sun 13-17

Árbæjarsafn

Kistuhylur 4

The Culture House

Hverfisgata 15 | **F6**
Open daily 11-17
www.thjodmenning.is

Dwarf Gallery

Grundarstígur 21 | **H8**
Opening Hours: Fri and Sat 18-20
www.this.is/birta

The Einar Jónsson Museum

Eiriksgata | **G9**
Tue-Sun 14-17
www.skulptur.is

Fótógrafi

Skólavörðustígur 4a | **F7**
www.fotografi.is

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Gallery Auga fyrir Auga

Hverfisgata 35 | **G7**

Gallery StartArt

Laugavegur 12B | **G7**
Tue-Sat 1-17
www.startart.is

Gallery Ágúst

Baldursgata 12 | **F9**
Wed-Sat 12-17
www.galleriagust.is

Gallery Fold

Rauðarástígur 14-16 | **J9**
Mon-Fri 10-18 / Sat 11-16 / Sun 14-16
www.myndlist.is

Gallery Kling & Bang

Hverfisgata 42 | **G7**
Thurs-Sun from 14-18
this.is/klingogbang/

Gallery Turpentine

Ingólfstræti 5 | **F7**
Tue-Fri 12-18 / Sat 11-16
www.turpentine.is

Gerðuberg Cultural Centre

Gerðuberg 3-5
Mon-Thu 11-17 / Wed 11-21 / Thu-Fri 11-17 / Sat-Sun 13-16
www.gerduberg.is

Hitt Húsið

- Gallery Tukt
Pósthússtræti 3-5 | **E6**
www.hitthusid.is

i8 Gallery

Klapparstígur 33 | **G7**
Tue-Fri 11-17 / Sat 13-17 and by appointment. www.i8.is

Living Art Museum

Vatnsstígur 3 - **G7**
Wed, Fri-Sun 13-17 / Thu 13-22. www.nylo.is

Lost Horse Gallery

Skólastræti 1 | **F6**
Weekends from 13-19 and by appointment on weekdays.

Hafnarborg

Strandgötu 34,
Hafnarfjörður

The National Gallery of Iceland

Frikkirkjuvegur 7 | **E8**

Tue-Sun 11-17

www.listsafn.is

The National Museum

Suðurgata 41 | **C9**
Open daily 10-17
natmus.is/

The Nordic House

Sturlugata 5 | **C11**
Tue-Sun 12-17
www.nordice.is/

The Numismatic Museum

Einholt 4 | **K9**
Open Mon-Fri 13:30-15:30.

Reykjavík 871 +/- 2

Adalstræti 17 | **D6**
Open daily 10-17

Reykjavík Art Gallery

Skúlagata 28 | **H6**
Tuesday through Sunday 14-18

Reykjavík Art Museum

Open daily 10-16
www.listsafnreykjavikur.is
Ásmundur Sveinsson Sculpture Museum Sigtún
Hafnarhús
Tryggvagata 17 | **E5**
Kjarvalsstaðir
Flókagata | **K11**

Reykjavík City Theatre

Listabraut 3

Reykjavík Maritime Museum

Grandagarður 8 | **C3**

Reykjavík Museum of Photography

Tryggvagata 16 | **D5**
Weekdays 12-19 / Sat-Sun 13-17
www.ljosmyndasafnreykjavikur.is

Sigurjón Ólafsson Museum

Laugarnestangi 70

The Vinebar

LOOK AT THE VINE-SIDE OF ICELAND

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Borgarnes

The Icelandic Settlement Centre
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 The Settlement of Iceland; The Saga of Egill Skalla-Grímsson.
 Current theatre productions:
 Brák – a monologue by Brynhildur Guðjónsdóttir
 Mr. Skallagrímsson – a monologue by Benedikt Erlingsson
 Storms and Wars – a monologue by Einar Káráson

Stykkishólmur

Library of Water
 Permanent Exhibition:
 Roni Horn installation. The artist has replaced stacks of books with glass columns containing water gathered from Iceland's glaciers and glacial rivers.

Akureyri

Akureyri Art Museum
 Gallery Box
 Gallery Dalí
 Akureyrarstofa
 Populus Tremula
 May 9 – May 10
 Exhibition by Kjartan Sigtryggsson
 Kunstraum Wohnraum
 April 4 – June 21
 Exhibition by Huginn Þór Arason

Seyðisfjörður

Skaftfell
 April 11 – June 7
 "The Thirteenth Day"
 An exhibition by Ben Kinsley & Jessica Langley

Hveragerði

LÁ Art
 May 2 – June 28
 "Flashes in the moment of Danger"
 An exhibition of works by 8 artists.

8
 May

Responsive Existence

Lost Horse Gallery

Skólastræti 1

The trio Heidi Mullins, Kate Dambach and Will Schlough have thrown out a few challenging questions about our existence in this exhibition hosted by the Lost Horse. They describe our perceived world as a blur of interactions between societal and natural components determining the definition, functionality and survival of each – apparently some heavyweight issues on these kids' minds. The exhibition's function is to explore the varied relationships between man and nature, man and man and nature and nature, resulting in a unique exploration of the environment in which we exist. And who knows, this yawning exploration might even result in the lost horse finding itself.

—SKK



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15 31
 May May



Reykjavík Art City
 Dance, Theatre and Music
 Take Over in the Latter Half of May

The Reykjavík Arts Festival

The Reykjavík Arts Festival kicks off May 15th, with a generous helping of theatre and dance performances, opera, concerts and art exhibitions of artists from Iceland and abroad. This is the 22nd occurrence of the RAF, which debuted in 1970 as a biennial event and has been held annually since 2004. The festival will showcase numerous unique events at several venues throughout the city until May 31st.

Ensuring that the festival begins on the right foot is Strange Fruit, a performing arts company out of Australia that merges theatre, dance and circus, with its performers perched atop 4 metre high flexible poles. The unique performance – inspired by wheat, oddly enough – will be repeated on the 16th in downtown Reykjavík at 14:00 and 16:00.

Billed as a "young Icelandic virtuoso," pianist Víkingur Heiðar Ólafsson and will dazzle the audience May 17th at Háskólabíó Concert Hall with the works of Icelandic composers, as well as Bach, Debussy and others. "The Madman's Garden," the premiere Faroese opera, will debut on the 22nd at the National Theatre of Iceland and, being the first such offering from the islands, is surely an event not to be missed. Caravans from the 1960's or 70's dolled-up to look like women in full skirts will be parked around the city throughout the entire festival as part of "Campingwomen," the exhibit of sculptor Marit Benthe Norheim.

A bunch of cool things are going on as part of the RAF programme, so be sure to check out www.listahatid.is is to download the festival's official schedule and to get more information on all the exhibits, as well as their respective showing dates and times. —CF



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Eyrarbraut 3A, Stokkseyri
www.fjorubordid.is

What we think:
Good soup,
great service.

3,5 out of 5 stars

What is your house wife?

Fjöruborðið serves its lobster soup, known as the best in the country, in the South Coast village of Stokkseyri, a mere 45-minute drive from Reykjavík.

The setting is easygoing and there is no need to worry about any faux pas in lobster eating etiquette, yet there is atmosphere enough for President Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson to enjoy romantic dinners with his Dorrit in the corner table.

As soon as we take our seats, home-baked bread with tarragon yogurt and sweet garlic sauce are brought to the table. Unlike myself ("What is your house wife...wine?"), our waiter is brilliantly on top of things throughout the meal and us diners are safely held in the grip of his claws. His service features a perfect balance between relaxed and polite and his smile does not fade for one second, no matter my accidental enquiries regarding his marital status.

Of course, we start with the famous soup (1.390 ISK) and it is very good, with tomatoes, succulent chunks of soft lobster tail and – as the lyrical menu enthuses, "charm & passion" – the soup is creamy and full of flavour.

For the main dish, I choose lobster grilled in garlic butter (3.240 ISK for 250g). The tiny tails come in their shells, causing a steady beat of cracks and cricks to fill the restaurant as the patrons fight their way through the armour. The taste is rich and making a mess is fun.

The accompaniments (790 ISK for couscous, cucumber salad, tomato chunks, potatoes and green salad) do not quite meet the flavours of the lobster; the vinegar in the cucumber salad is too strong and the couscous tastes plain when put next to the soft, rich lobster meat.

My date's lamb fillet with potatoes and vegetables (3.990 ISK) was well cooked, but crusted with a tomato-y tapenade that overpowered the flavour of the meat itself. While the seafood chefs tackled the red meat passably and the menu has something for everyone, from children to vegetarians, it is most definitely the lobster that one should order at Fjöruborðið.

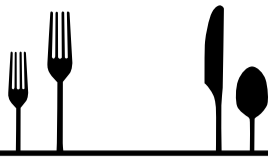
"It is langoustine," insists my date, inspecting the crustaceans with the enthusiasm of David Attenborough. Indeed, it is Nephrops norvegicus, also referred to as langoustine, scampi, Norwegian Lobster or Dublin Bay Prawn, a small creature rarely larger than 20 cm in length.

Be it langoustine or lobster, the famous soup was delicious. Whether it really deserves the reputation as the best in the country, I am not quite sure, as Sægreifinn in Reykjavík and Rauða Húsið in the neighboring village of Eyrarbakki boil down a beautiful bisque too. What I am sure though is that the service at Fjöruborðið was the best I have experienced in a long time.

– SARI PELTONEN

Food & Drink | Venue finder

3 Frakkar Baldursgata 14 F9	Bæjarins Beztu Tryggvagata E6	Grái Kötturinn Lækjargata 16A G7	Jómfrúin Lækjargata 4 E6	O Sushi Bankastræti 2A E6	Sólón Bankastræti 7a F6
Aktu Taktu Skúlugata 15 K8	Brons Pósthússtræti 9 E6	Grillhúsið Tryggvagata 20 E5/ E6	Kaffi Hjómáland Laugavegur 21 G7	Pisa Lækjargötu 6b E6	Sushibarinn Laugavegur 2 F7
American Style Tryggvagata 26 E5	Café Cultura Hverfisgata 18 G6	Habibi Hafnarstræti 20 D5	Kaffitár Bankastræti 8 F6	Pizza King Hafnarstræti 18 E6	Svarta Kaffi Laugavegur 54 H8
Argentína Steak-house Barónstígur I8	Café Loki Lokastígur 28 G9	Hamborgarabúlla Tómasar ("Bullán") Geirsgata 1 D5	Kaffivagninn Grandagarður 10 D1	Pizza Pronto Vallarstræti 4 D6	Sægreifinn Verbuð 8, Geirsgata D5
Austurlanda-hraðlestin Hverfisgata 64A H7	Café Paris Austurstræti 14 E6	Híolla Batar Ingólfstorg D6	Kebabhúsið Austurstræti 2 E6	Pizzaverksmiðjan Lækjargötu 8 E6	Tapas Vesturgata 3B D5
Á Næstu Grösom Laugavegur 20B G7	Café Roma Raudarárstígur 8 J9	Hornið Hafnarstræti 15 E6	Kofi Tómasar Frænda Laugavegur 2 F7	Prikið Bankastræti 12 F6	Thorvaldsen Austurstræti 8 E6
B5 Bankastræti 5 F6	Domo Þinghólststræti 5 F7	Hótel Holt Bergstaðarstræti 37 F7	Krua Thai Tryggvagata 14 D5	Ráðhúskaffi Tjarnargata 11 D7	Tíu Dropar Laugavegur 27 G7
Basil & Lime Klapparstíg 38 G7	Einar Ben Veltusundi E6	Humarshúsið Ammtmanstígur 1 E7	La Primavera Austurstræti 9 E6	Segafredo Lækjartorg E6	Tívólí Laugavegur 3 F7
Babalú Skólavörðustígur 22A G8	Eldsmíðjan Bragagata 38A G9	Hressó Austurstræti 20 E6	Lystin Laugavegur 73 H7	Shalimar Austurstræti 4 E6	Vegamót Vegamótastígur 4 G7
Balthazar Hafnarstræti 1-3 D6/E6	Fiskmarkaðurinn Aðalstræti 12 D6	Icelandic Fish & Chips Tryggvagata 8 E5	Mokka Skólavörðustígur 3A F7	Sífur Pósthússtræti 11 E6	Við Tjörnina Templarasund 3 E7
	Geysir Bar/Bistro Aðalstræti 2 D6		Nonnabiti Hafnarstræti 9 E6	Sjávarkjallarinn Aðalstræti 2 D6	Vítabar Berghjólvegur 21 H9
	Garðurinn Klappastígur 37 G7				



The Red House

Rauða Húsið

Búðarstígur 4, Eyrarbakka
www.raudahusid.is

Rauða Húsið ("The Red House") was built by the powerful and progressive Mrs. Guðmunda Nielsen in 1919 for her retail shop, which was at the time considered the trendiest of its kind in the region.

Ninety years later, after a side step as a fishing equipment factory, the Red House is once again decorated with taste good enough to make it the trendiest of its kind. The setting is relaxed, atmospheric and beautiful: perfect for romantic dinners.

Chef Pétur Andrússon serves lunch and dinner specializing in the sweet south coast lobster and seafood. There is also coffee and cake in the afternoons.

We visited for dinner. As a starter, we shared the combo plate, which came with a cup of lobster bisque, deep-fried lobster tails and chicken liver pâté with sweet apple jam and wafer thin toast (1.990 ISK). The meat of the deep fried tails was juicy, but the crispy coating was a little heavy. The pâté dish was an interesting take upon a classic combination of textures, but less successful in its mix of flavours. We adored the bisque – thick, creamy and hearty – well worth another visit and a bigger bowl. While we kept casting dreamy looks to the big bowls our waitress carried to the other tables, we were pleased to see that everybody got the excellent home-baked bread with almonds, pistachio, herbs and olive oil dip.

For a main course, we had lobster the Red House way (3.400 ISK for 4–5 tails) and oven roasted cod with potato mash and melted butter (2.800 ISK). The lobster was cut open and turned inside out for the meat to sit on top of the shell, a beautiful and practical presentation. The easily accessible meat was delicate and complemented well by a light spicy coating and the tastes of the accompanying lime and buttery dipping sauce.

The dish was heavenly as hell – considering the scarceness of culinary luxuries in Iceland it is a shame that Icelanders only began to eat lobster relatively recently: trawling only started in Eyrarbakki in 1954.

The local staple cod was an excellent piece of fish cooked well, richly dressed in melted butter and served with green beans and mashed potato – a generous portion that would satisfy a fisherman twice my size.

For dessert, we fought over the volcano inspired hot chocolate soufflé (1290 ISK), but the fruit salad, ice cream, whipped cream and raspberries were an unnecessary excess of good things on the plate. Just like the diminutive Icelandic lobster, sometimes less is more. – **SARI PELTONEN**

What we think:
Pretty house,
brilliant lobster

4 out of 5 stars

Thailand in the heart of Reykjavík

Mai Thai

Laugavegur 116, 105 Reykjavík

I'd never been to Mai Thai. To me, it was simply "the store with the bike in the window." To be honest, I was a tad prejudiced towards it: I pictured a space cramped with incense, small Buddha statues, and strange little things made of multi coloured paper – and I was not excited. Surely, those things are all to be found at Mai Thai, but the store turned out to be quite a bit more.

Located on the corner of Laugarvegur and Rauðarstígur, this homely store has been up and running for nearly three years now and has established a loyal customer base. Open for business six days a week, they don't seem to be greatly affected by any economic recession (although they were out of "lucky cats" by the time I got there). Mai Thai is a family operation, run by Egill Matthíasson and his wife Linda Thérjanthúk, who also run another store of the kind in Bildshöfði.

Mai Thai is a friendly and inviting store. Upon entering, I got the feeling I'd stepped into a parallel universe, as nothing in here – aside from a local talk show on the radio – seemed in its natural habitat. Now for a statement: Mai Thai has the biggest selection of noodles in town. I was utterly flabbergasted at how many different kinds of noodles (most of which look exactly the same to the untrained Western eye) can occupy the same place at the same time without the universe imploding. Back to the Future-style. Another thing I definitely did not expect was the Kolaportíð-style band shirt section, sporting very questionable shirts featuring such acts as Linkin Park, Mötley Crüe and MANOWAR. I was pleasantly surprised.

Wandering around in the store, I stumbled upon by many unfamiliar things and curios. There is, however, one section of a store by which I am not usually baffled: the vegetable section. This section of Mai Thai is unbelievable, to say the least. A steadfast vegetarian for almost five years, I am ashamed to reveal that the only recognizable veggie on display was ginger. Something I took for a slice of a giant mushroom was actually Nangka, or Jackfruit, the friendly clerk informed me. Turns out Nangka is actually the biggest fruit to grow on trees, known to be 90 cm long, 50 cm in diameter and weighing 36 kilos! This particular one was a young jackfruit sliced up. They are reportedly a must for Indonesian curries.

Leaving the store, I knew I couldn't fully appreciate its greatness, but I was nevertheless greatly intrigued. Carrying a wide variety of sauces, stir fries, noodles, beans, soy products, incense, elephant towel holders, exotic sodas and snacks, the cheapest Nori in town, no-name brands of shampoos and toothpaste and huge sacks of rice at very reasonable prices, Mai Thai makes for a good resource for those hungry for Asian food as well as major corporation boycotters; a welcome component of Iceland's otherwise monotonous grocery scene.

– **FRÍÐA BRÁ PÁLSDÓTTIR**

What we think:
Mai Thai makes for a good resource for those hungry for Asian food as well as major corporation boycotters

4 out of 5 stars

Lunch

1 Grái Kötturinn

Hverfisgata 16a

Nothing quite beats a good brunch at Grái Kötturinn. Their hearty servings of gourmet breakfast foods and intimate, personal atmosphere will ensure repeat visits. Especially recommended for those in need of hangover resuscitation.

2 Tíu dropar

Laugavegur 27

We really, really like Tíu dropar for coffee and pancakes, succulent soups and a glimpse of old Reykjavík. Really, this is an excellent place to spend ones Saturday afternoons. Very kid-friendly too.

3 Hamborgarabúlla Tómasar

Geirsgata 1

Grapevine pretty much subscribes to the Búlla burgers for sustenance while creating the paper you are now reading. Not only is it an extremely tasty, meaty and succulent burger, it comes for a very fair price, too. And the staff-members are all super friendly. This is the place to go for burgers downtown, unless you want a blue-cheese special (more on that in our next issue).

Fancy Schmancy

1 Gallery Restaurant at Hótel Holt,

Bergstaðastræti 37

If you can afford to go there, go there. Simple as that. Atmospheric, old-school decorations and prominently displayed paintings by some of Iceland's most revered masters lend the place an air of sophistication, but the real draw is the sheer quality of their food and service.

2 Tapas Bar

Vesturgata 3b

Tapas Bar actually borders between fancy and casual, but it sure ain't no budget food-hole. Any of their variety menus, along with some nice red wine and a couple of cocktails are a sure-fire way to kickstart a night on the town with friends, the tasty food and relaxed, carefree environment are sure to get you started. However, do expect to fork over a nice sum at the end of your meal. Added quality: they probably serve food later than every other sit down restaurant in Iceland (23:30 on weekdays, 1 AM on weekends).

3 Fiskmarkaðurinn

Aðalstræti 12

Master chef Hrefna Sætran conjures up some truly exhilarating courses from Iceland's best and freshest seafood. Usually has foreigners frothing at the mouth with excitement, and us locals like it fine, too.

Cheap Eats

1 Núðluhúsið

Laugavegur 59

Núðluhúsið offers up a mean plate of Pad Thai, big enough to comfortably serve two and just right in the taste department. We'd surely recommend some of their other dishes, but frankly we're too tempted to just get the Pad Thai every time we go there. As an added bonus, the place is as close to dirt-cheap as you get in Reykjavík.

2 Santa María

Laugavegur 22a

This place was a revelation to the good people of Reykjavík when it opened its doors just over a year ago, and it's pretty much been filled to the rafters ever since. With a solid and admirable price policy of "nothing over 1.000 ISK" (which might actually have gone up a couple hundred krónur when you read this), Santa María's low prices are only beat by their nice service and tasty take on authentic Mexican food.

3 Drekkinn

Njálsgata 23

Nothing beats Drekkinn for cheap eats in 101 Reykjavík. Nothing. Their burgers are ludicrously inexpensive, and surprisingly tasty. And they have that awesome chilli-ketchup that makes anything worth eating.

For full restaurant and food listings and venue finder visit www.grapevine.is for detailed information.

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Feature | Dreamland

Don't Thank Icelanders For Iceland

Given the chance, we'd have made it into Murmansk



Photography
Jói Kjartans

Words
Haukur Magnússon

The documentary Dreamland was premiered in Reykjavík last month to great fanfare. Aiming to shock the nation out of a stupor that's already claimed a lot of the unspoilt nature those of us working in the field of tourism are constantly trying to sell to the rest of the world, the film provides a unique and enlightening viewpoint on the last two decades of Icelandic history and what they have meant in a greater context. It is indeed a must-see; even if you won't agree with its message, the important issues at hand surely deserve your consideration.

These are some hefty demands we are making of our country: "If I am to be able to live in this country, I will need to exploit it relentlessly. I want Iceland to provide me with a pleasant, well-paid factory job for the rest of my life."

Dreamland is the result of collaboration between documentary filmmaker Þorfinnur Guðnason and author, playwright and poet Andri Snær Magnason. It is based on the latter's best selling, award winning 2006 non-fiction book, 'Dreamland: A self-help manual for a Frightened Nation' (available in English translation through Amazon.co.uk and at local bookstores). The book stirred a lot of controversy in Iceland, as it shed new light on some of the issues surrounding the conflict between environmental preservation and the build up of heavy industry in Iceland. It furthermore examined the government's hope to sell cheap energy from hydroelectric power plants in order to place Iceland among the world's biggest aluminium manufacturers – and why on Earth we'd aspire to that.

The film goes even further, using the full potential of the medium to conjure up a truly chilling vision of recent events. And it's effective. As we exited a screening of the film, my friend Geiri summarised the experience perfectly, saying: "Most of the time, I didn't know whether to laugh, cry or vomit in disgust." That somehow says it all. A scathing indictment of Iceland's recent "all in" industrial and environmental policies, Dreamland combines archival news footage, exquisite nature shots and select interviews to achieve its goal of waking Icelanders up to the very real, very serious consequences of selling off some of the last bits of pristine wilderness remaining in Europe.

We caught up with Andri Snær – whom many of you tourists might know from his heavily lauded children's book 'The Story of the Blue Planet', released in 20 some countries to this day – to learn more about Dreamland and its subject.

What's Dreamland about?

"The movie is about a small nation that doesn't recognise the advantages of its smallness. And overvalues its need to be "saved" by giant, instant solutions. A nation standing at crossroads. Why should people go see it? Because it is stirring to watch, it's important to see it to realise why we are in the position we are today, so that history doesn't repeat itself.

The book was rooted in worry, mostly. My worries about how I felt people harboured all these misconceptions about our society and economy, based on a dearth of information and a wrong approach to human nature. It remains. We could have made a much longer film. You could say that every two pages in the book could be fodder for forty minutes of film, putting it all together as a whole was quite the challenge.

We initially wanted to present viewers with a lot of the startling facts we've discovered in our research, to expose things that maybe haven't gotten a lot of news coverage or none at all. But we soon realised that the

biggest contribution we could make was the "emotional angle," our artistic experience of the whole debacle. Of how the machine takes over as well as our own experiences of the whole frenzy surrounding the events.

We're really projecting our emotions so that the viewer senses that this is what we felt reviewing all the footage; our awe when confronted with the majestic nature and our sense of despair when witnessing how those in authority treat unique, invaluable landmarks with such irreverence. Juxtaposing the two creates such an inner tension that you want to laugh and cry at the same time. In the end, we decided we simply had to convey our reactions to it all; we could have said that carbon dioxide emissions will go up by 50,000 tonnes, etc., but such numbers aren't really comprehensible to normal people.

Direct Action

You seem very passionate about the subject. Have you yourself considered partaking in some direct guerrilla action, like chaining yourself to some heavy machinery, Saving Iceland-style?

Yes, well, I did want to do that. But circumstances didn't allow for it. I fathered two children during that period, and was also making this movie. I have participated in such protests, but never taken the full step towards direct action. But there are places in this country that I would do that for. January's Saucepan Revolution proved that it's easy for authorities to ignore articles and letters to the editor; it isn't until you get physical, by banging on the house of parliament or chaining yourself to building cranes that they're forced to pay attention. The government showed no reaction at all to people's arguments until they raised their voice.

And that's probably what needs to be done in this case too. The Saving Iceland protests enraged a lot of people, I'd meet a lot of folks who'd espouse all these opinions on their clothing and hairstyles while ignoring their very vital point altogether. Based on their hair. Instead of looking into what these people were actually protesting against, they focused on their taste in clothes. All the while, respectable-looking, suit-wearing men were busy bankrupting our country.

Anyway, Landsvirkjun [the state power company] uses direct action to achieve their goals. They'll start shovelling roads and blasting foundations for aluminium smelters before the factories are even sanctioned by municipal planning agencies. A bit of direct action from the other side is surely justifiable, to counter them.

What's really striking is this structure, how the corporations integrate whole com-

munities into their empire, by luring its chieftains to their sides. How communities that lead decent lives without this authority become dependent on it and start thanking it for saving their lives. Even though it's really us that are saving the companies. It's a colonial mindset; the nation can never be truly independent because it owes everything to the very master that it maintains just by existing. This is very much what's happened in the east of Iceland. Alcoa are benefiting hugely from being there, but they never thank Reyðarfjörður [where they built their smelter]. Instead, Reyðarfjörður thanks Alcoa for its purported prosperity.

Apolitical, cynical no more

And that prosperity seems rather fickle, according to recent reports.

We thought about showing that in the film. It would have been an emotional high point, talking about the 200 empty apartments in Reyðarfjörður, the blowing tumbleweed. And we thought it was a bit too much. We assumed people knew that already, that despite the smelter, the growth spurt in Reyðarfjörður is slowly but surely diminishing.

So you maintain that no good came of these developments?

Society will never reach the place where unemployment is eradicated. It's ironic that by undertaking the project, the government destroyed more long-term jobs than they created.

The peripheral effects of the damming and smelter projects are the ruination of so many jobs in the fishing industry and in various export sectors. Marel [Icelandic high-tech food system company] only grew outside of Iceland during the project, and many high-tech companies moved their operations abroad. Due to the inflation caused by the project, the ISK strengthened by 10–20% and thus our companies weren't able to compete with their peers in neighbouring countries. Of course, now, post-collapse, we're back at the starting point and need to re-build these companies. But that takes time, and we've lost four years advantage. We're still talking about Össur, Marel and CCP as our high-tech exports, there hasn't been room for any new companies to grow.

What do you hope to accomplish with the film?

We hope that people start giving more thought to these matters, and maybe get a glimpse of the grand scale of the nonsense that's been going on. But we also wanted to make a movie that was a work of art in and of itself, one that people can watch and enjoy and gain something from. I have no great hopes that it'll change anything in the short run, or cause any sort of sea-change, but hopefully it'll be one of many steps in the right direction of showing people that these things matter a great deal, that they need to be thought about and dealt with. And we're actually seeing such results already, I was recently interviewed for a pop music station in Reykjavík, and its host was furious after seeing the movie. He realised that some regions that he held sacred and had assumed were protected were actually being developed for exploitation by the aluminium and power companies. He was in a state of shock. And I believe that if the film reaches and touches some of the folks that have up until now allowed themselves the luxury of being apolitical and cynical – if it lights a spark within them that turns them away from being this neutral mass – then we've accomplished something.

Review | Valur Gunnarsson

Saving Iceland

And what a documentary can do to help

Most of the major disputes of the past ten years have now been settled. The War in Iraq was a terrible idea. Neo-liberalism was a terrible idea. Privatizing the banks was a terrible idea. However, the jury is still out on Kárahnjúkavirkjun, the colossal dam in the highlands. From a conservationist point of view, the dam is an unmitigated environmental disaster. That much is clear. The question now is, what did we get in return?

The movie Dreamland criticizes the project from both of these viewpoints. The book of the same name is one of the most important Icelandic books of the last decade or so. Its attention to detail, and the research involved, put most local journalists to shame. It also, incidentally, proved that a non-fiction work released in the spring could sell a lot of copies.

The movie is more blunt. The scenes of the area from the air are breathtaking, the scenes of a mother duck trying to save her babies from drowning, heartbreaking. No one was expecting this film to be politically neutral; in fact, neutrality can be callous when the future of your country is at stake. But it starts to grate a little. A ditty about a bogeyman is heard when we see the head of Alcoa; the film goes all Michael Moore by showing the Minister of Business bang her head in a bus; and a piano teacher talks about the spirit of the mountain just after we have seen one of the staunchest opponents of the dam talk, doing him few favours. The film is at its most effective when it leaves narration aside and concentrates on real news segments. It is only when we step back and look at what was actually said that we begin to understand the magnitude of what has happened.

In the end, though, none of this really matters. The future of the country is at stake, and this documentary should not be judged on aesthetic merits, but on what it contributes to the debate.

The highlands are gone. The two main questions remaining are:
a) Did the building of the dam contribute to, or even cause, the economic collapse?
b) Was Iceland to some extent bankrupted by economic hit men and/or aluminium companies?

The film answers neither of these questions, but just by asking them it may offer a glimpse of the larger picture. The evidence that John Perkins submits regarding the hit men theory is circumstantial. Still, he says that if hit men were at work, we should expect to see former politicians become consultants for the company. This is precisely what happened with the mayor of Egilsstaðir.

But did the dam bankrupt the country? One of the economists consulted thinks so. Sadly, the film, though released in April, was made too early to adequately deal with the connection between the collapse and the dam. Perhaps it should have come out later. And yet, it didn't come soon enough. The movie predicts that if the dam will lead to an economic collapse, the only remedy seems to be to build yet more dams in an ongoing vicious circle. This is exactly what seems to be happening right now. It seems more likely than not that the true cost of the dam was not just environmental, but will have indebted the country financially for decades to come.

One leaves the cinema feeling both sad and angry towards our former leaders who will probably go down in history as the most incompetent rulers of this, and perhaps any, country. In this sense, the film achieves its goal and should be seen by everyone. But a little more restraint might have made it even more effective. 🍷



Valgeir Sigurðsson

Grylukvæði

myspace.com/valgeirs

Composer Valgeir Sigurðsson did a great job of scoring fabled documentary Dreamland (read all about the film – and win tickets to a screening P. 15).

His music plays a big role in the documentary, and serves to emphasise its important message. To create the score, Valgeir drafted in the all-star Bedroom Community team with the expected results. The track on offer, Grylukvæði, is likely to be one of the more chilling pieces of music you'll hear this year. Based on an ancient Icelandic folk song, the BC gang's re-arrangement is inventive and moving. Sam Amidon sings the tune (in Icelandic!), Nico Muhly played piano and organ, Ben Frost created electronics and beats and Valgeir produced and mixed everything.

The History of Icelandic Rock music: Part 3

Hljómar-mania



The development of rock music was much the same in Iceland as in the rest of the world. First we had "early-American rock" copycats, then a bunch of Cliff and The Shadows soundalikes, and then when all hell broke loose with Beatlemania, we had ourselves some Hljómar-mania.

Hljómar ("Chords") from Keflavík were the first "real" modern group in Iceland, as the band – primarily Gunnar Þórðarson – wrote much of their own songs. He was taking cues from Paul and John, just as Mick and Keith had got hip to songwriting following the initiative of the boys from Liverpool. Before that, Paul and John had started to write songs taking cues from young Texan Billy Holly who was, then, probably the biggest influence on how songwriters within the bands became the norm, rather than songs being manufactured elsewhere and then adopted by singers and groups.

The closeness of the US Navy base had a strong influence on the Hljómar boys. In Keflavík one could pick up signals from the Navy radio and sometimes young Keflavík boys got to know about rock n roll from young Americans. The Holy Grail for bands was to play at one of the clubs at the base. Beer (then forbidden in Iceland), hamburgers, foreign atmosphere; a whole tantalizing otherworld waited inside the fences at Miðnesheiði.

In early 1963, self-educated guitarist Gunnar Þórðarson, then 17 years old, was playing with older dudes in a "ball-group". He was also in a school band aptly named Skuggar ("Shadows") that played at school events. News of Beatlemania in the UK widened the generation gap and Gunnar left the older dudes to form Hljómar. He enlisted his friend Rúnar Júlíusson to play bass, an instrument Rúnar had never touched before. After two weeks of severe rehearsals the new band was ready to play. The drummer suggested the name "Hljómar" which the others found too silly. Nobody came up with

anything better in time for the first gig, so the name stuck, for better or worse.

In the beginning of 1964, Beatlemania had hit Iceland full force. In March, Hljómar played "all the latest Beatles-songs" four nights in a row at Háskólabíó theatre along with other delegates of the new breed. "Four groups played mostly the same songs over and over again," said newspaper Morgunblaðið. "The house was packed with teenagers, aged 14-18. When the noisy playing and the shrill screams of the singers reached its peak, big sections of the crowd lost control, clapping, screaming and stomping their feet, some on the floor, some standing in the seats. Most mesmerising were Hljómar. When they played the din in the house was so loud one could hardly hear the music."

For the rest of 1964 Hljómar were kings. The band played relentlessly all over Iceland and caused havoc as Icelandic teenagers took out their Beatlemania on them. Hljómar was the only "Beatle"-band in Iceland to live entirely off of playing music. In February 1965 it was time to record the first single. Two originals by Gunnar were chosen, Fyrsti kossinn ("The First Kiss"), a fast rocker that Gunnar later admitted to have based on "She loves you", and Bláu augun þín ("Your blue eyes"), a ballad sung by Engilbert Jensen, the drummer/singer. The single sold 4,000 copies, an unheard of number at that time. Both songs are now considered Icelandic classics.

Despite all this, a switchover was imminent in the Hljómar world. After a year of total domination of the scene, Hljómar had formed some new goals. Following the arrival of Pétur Östlund to the band, a skilled drummer who liked modern jazz, Hljómar now wanted to make more complex music. They wanted international success too. More of that next time. – DR. GUNNI

By Dr. Gunn, based on his 2000 book *Eru ekki allir í stuði?* (Rock in Iceland). A revisited update of the book is forthcoming in 2010.

Releases



Sudden Weather Change

Stop! Handgrenade in the Name of Crib Death 'nderstand? (2009)

myspace.com/suddenweatherchange

Highly recommended Post-Punk

Within seconds, Sudden Weather Change's (not that) new recordings catch me. The way the five seem to break every genre border between emo, punk, rock and even funk or danceable disco-pop is unique so far, but they manage to make the outcome even catchy and full of emotion. The good thing is that Sudden Weather Change stay off the cosmetics: the songs sometimes seem weird, but are all the more rousing and heartfelt. The sometimes off-key vocal lines add an air of honesty. All of the aforementioned are qualities that made those bands big who should be called out in a review for S!HITNOCD: Quicksand, Sparta and The Promise Ring.

– FLORIAN ZÜHLKE



Sparks

Exotic Creatures of the Deep (2009)

myspace.com/allsparks

Another hit-and-miss album from two of the most unclassifiable, inventive and prolific American musicians working today.

Sparks' 21st studio album is not exactly a return to their seventies golden age values and energy, but it comes as close as the fifty-year olds are likely to get at this point. Discarding the distinctly fake-sounding string synths of their last two albums, the Mael brothers wisely place more emphasis on their more-than-competent rhythm section, and at least try to rein in their inherent silliness, to varying degrees of success. What emerges is a more modern and self-aware spin on their operatic power-pop, more accessible than anything they've done in years. I Can't Believe You Would Fall For All The Crap In This Song could even see radio play, with its shuffling analog synth and sultry harmonizing. The song titles and subject matter remain as brilliantly daft, with (She Got Me) Pregnant and Let The Monkey Drive being arguably the dumbest – the former being about backseat nuptials between a couple while the latter a simian takes the wheel (how the monkey got in the car in the first place is never mentioned), and the most poignant lyrics being the sexual innuendo in The Director Never Yelled 'Cut' and the self-explanatory Lighten Up, Morrissey. –SINDRI ELDON



Muck

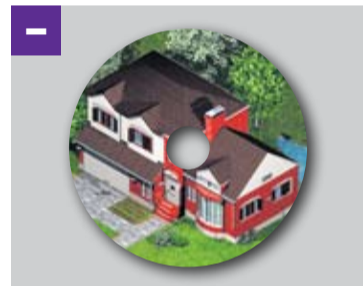
Vultures (2009)

myspace.com/muckiceland

Sinister, doomish hardcore

The Vultures EP is the début offering from a very young Reykjavík band, Muck, whose members barely seem to have left their teens – at least judging by their appearance, because the first evil-downtuned chords of Vultures display that this is serious music, not about playing around childishly. Although Muck share a lot of folks' passion for slow, heavy, crawling hardcore music, they add something very special to the mix: Muck flavour their sound with a pinch of crust and thus call to mind bands like Dystopia or His Hero is Gone. This is also due to the throaty singing and the epic melodies that lie beneath the surface of Muck's concrete riffing.

The combination of this all makes Vultures a very dark debut EP and leaves you aching for more from these guys. – FLORIAN ZÜHLKE



David Byrne & Brian Eno

Everything That Happens Will Happen Today (2009)

myspace.com/wavves

Incredibly interesting people making completely dull art. A lot like Woody Allen's last ten films, really. Óli Palli would love it.

It is amazing how two incredibly talented and interesting musicians can conspire to make something as inherently dull and commonplace as this. Middle age, it seems, has not only caught up with the duo, but completely overwhelmed and surrounded them. There are points when their painfully predictable blues-pop seems almost self-aware; the sonic fiddling of I Feel My Stuff and the lyrics to Strange Overtones (This groove is out of fashion / These beats are 20 years old... Strange Overtones / Though they're slightly out of fashion... It is strong and you are tough / But a heart is not enough-), combined with the simple fact that men with Byrne & Eno's history of innovation and perfectionism could not permit them to make an album like this unless there was a reason for it, all seem to point to the possibility that ETHWHT may be part of a larger picture visible only to its creators. Who knows, maybe this forgettable piece of radio-friendly fluff may be the album Byrne & Eno have wanted to make all their lives.

–SINDRI ELDON



Electric Six

Flashy (2009)

myspace.com/electricsixmusic

Flashy is, frankly, anything but. After four albums of rollicking, spectacular cock-rock that have gone sadly unnoticed, Electric Six's fifth studio LP in six years is little more than a slightly sexed-up lumpy slab of rock. It is almost totally devoid of the irreverent fun of 2003's Fire, the shocking power of 2005's Senor Smoke, the sophisticated cool of 2006's Switzerland or the inventive variety of 2007's I Shall Exterminate Everything Around Me That Restricts Me From Being The Master. Flashy plods uncertainly through its 45 minutes, desperately trying to be all the other albums at once, but it just plain old isn't up to it.

Part of the reason for this ham-handedness may be that front man Tyler Spencer is credited with all the tracks on the album save two. This is a step backwards, as writing responsibilities had been shifting steadily to the band as a whole on the previous albums. To be fair, there is fun to be had here. A bad Electric Six album is still a killer album, and anyone with a modicum of sense will at least be mildly entertained. That said, judging by the fact that Senor Smoke, easily their best record and possibly the best album of all time, was critically panned and ridiculed, no-one is going to care much about this, a decidedly mediocre offering from the Detroit sextet. –SINDRI ELDON



Jarboe

Mahakali (2009)

myspace.com/wavves

The brilliant culmination of two decades of doom and ambient sound-sculpting, although a bit pedestrian at times.

Jarboe's magnificent Hindu-apocalyptic concept album Mahakali is nothing short of spectacular in its gloom, hopelessness, and sense of impending insanity; although it could have used a little more adventurousness, it is no less a fitting product of the sound she has been slowly evolving for the last twenty years. Due to her status as an ex-member of the Swans, she has enjoyed the liberty of picking anyone from underground noise and metal to work with, and this album is no exception. However, the guests fail to live up to the succubal screams and satanic whispers of Jarboe herself, and it would seem that Jarboe has finally escaped her status as simply a spin-off of Swans and has established herself as a brilliant sonic landscaper in her own right—a title she has earned over a score of fascinating albums.

–SINDRI ELDON

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Art Reviews

It is not easy to make a mark

Málverkasýning / Paintings

Marta Jónsdóttir
Magnús Helgason

Gallerí Ágúst

Baldursgata 12, 101 Reykjavík



Painting is undoubtedly one of the most challenging media to be working in today, due to its massive baggage of history and competition. After all, it has been declared dead numerous times by noted artists and philosophers. Painting requires skill, innovation and, as in any art form, historical awareness.

The current show at Gallery Ágúst presents paintings by two young Icelandic artists, Marta Jónsdóttir and Magnús Helgason. Both artists' paintings rest on the line between abstraction and representation, with a slight naïve sensibility. These two painters are taking on the historical baggage by boldly painting on canvas and utilizing a non-conceptual approach, which feels refreshing and alive.

Magnús Helgason's cathartic paintings are explosive and have wondrous space. His work plays with scale by manipulating speeds with drips, brushstrokes and slowed down details. Perhaps this is a technological influence from also working in the field of video art. In "Shitty Weather," he has painted a barcode on the painting, which opens up a new sense of discovery. Magnús' paintings smell, or should I say, reek at times, of the testosterone and alcohol of the abstract expressionists. It's courageous and gutsy to be painting like this today, but it needs to bring something new to the table beyond banal materiality of paint and the palette. In comparison, the German born painter, Charline von Heyl, creates paintings that dance on the line between abstraction and figuration but she carves out her niche by editing her paintings and addressing the question of how to paint, instead of what or even why. Even though Magnús' paintings are seductive in their immersive scale, colour and gestures, there is a disconnect with the outside world and a lack of a cerebral intentionality.



Marta Jónsdóttir conjures more representational and iconic elements, yet the paintings are still obscure and full of transparent nuances. There are bizarre anatomical references in her work, where I see organs, sex and science fiction and thankfully nothing hits you in the face. Marta's work is less about paint than Magnús's and is more graphic and specific. Her work lies between the organic sculptures of Lynda Benglis, the linearity of Jonah Groeneboer and Mark Grotjahn and the abstract simplistic quality of the post-minimalist, Richard Tuttle. Also working in video, Marta's paintings, particularly the smaller ones on paper, are almost like an animation of line, shapes and patterns. The rawness and immediacy of the smaller works are stronger than the bigger paintings.

Both artists incorporate a unique sense of humour and play in their work, which is revealed in Magnús' titles and Marta's imagery.

As the Swiss born artist, Ugo Rondinone, said in an interview with Doug Aitken, "if you want to be good at making art, I think an artist has to go further and know each medium's own history. You carry a weight on your shoulders when you make art." I'm uncertain how concerned Magnús and Marta are about this weight and its detrimental force. Even though these two artists can push the boundaries further, Marta's and Magnús' paintings are vulnerable and sincere, which makes it a compelling exhibition. I salute Gallery Ágúst for showcasing work by young and emerging artists, especially during these uncertain times. —LANA VOGESTAD

Gallery Ágúst is located at Baldursgata 12 with the entrance on Nonnugata, right across from the restaurant, Þrír Frakkar.

A Reconstruction of Thoughts

Parallax

Elín Hansdóttir

Reykjavík Art Museum

Tryggvagata 17, 105 Reykjavík



"Parallax," by the artist Elín Hansdóttir, will be showing at the Reykjavík Art Museum until the 19th of May. The show truly has its audience perplexed. Its simplicity in design reflects two basic elements, a room and a video recorder. So why is entering a cause for anxiety? I knew the exhibition was going to attempt to manipulate my visual awareness, but was I ready to be manipulated?

Beginning A Thought

The inspiration of the work was drawn from an exterior façade of a local house in Hafnarfjörður. Intrigued by the home owners' aspiration to mimic and reconstruct the glass exterior of a Reykjavík office building, the artist sought to translate aspects of their ambition for an archetypal modernist style, reflected in the architectural structures throughout the installation. Working with the ideas of visual memory and reconstruction, the artist began her process for the exhibition and in homage to her thought process, a small image of the house in Hafnarfjörður can be observed just after exiting the exhibition.

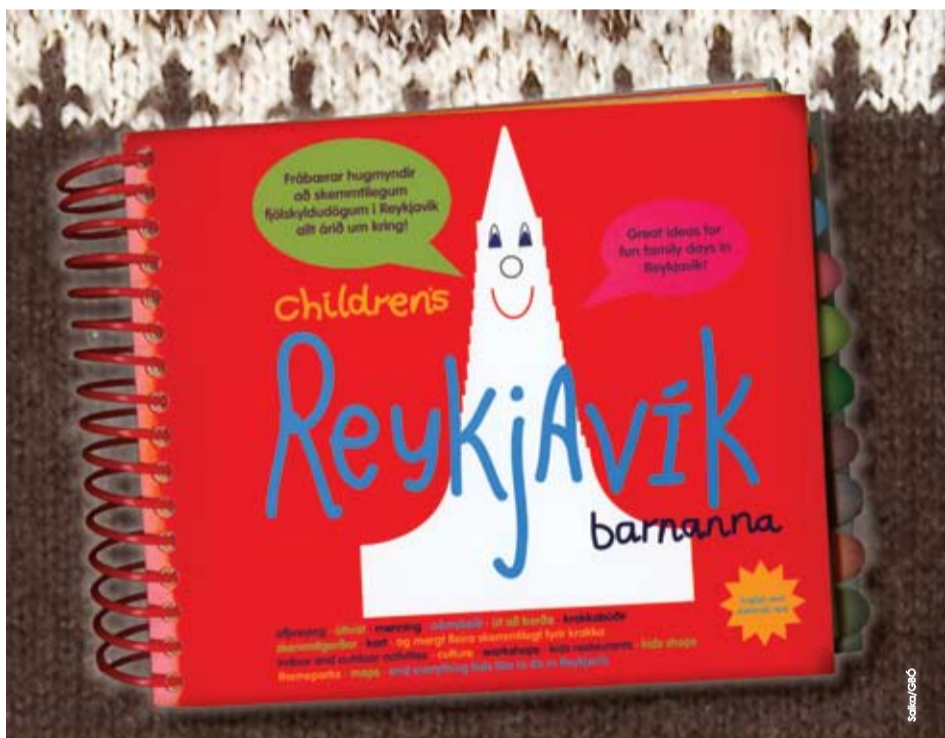
A Dark Walk

Entering the darkness of the installation, I saw a motionless space displayed through a television screen. Whilst it recorded all who entered the space, the distance between them and myself seemed enormous. My trepidation was the awkward appearance of the people on screen. Was the room twisted or the people? And just how far did I need to walk to enter this room? The thick black curtains blinded my perception of distance as I walked further. The narrow path winded around several times like a thought process leading to its end. While trying to stay calm as the curtain brushed my arm and holding back a slight scream, I turned with an unnerving sense of confusion and apprehension into the peculiar room.

The Room

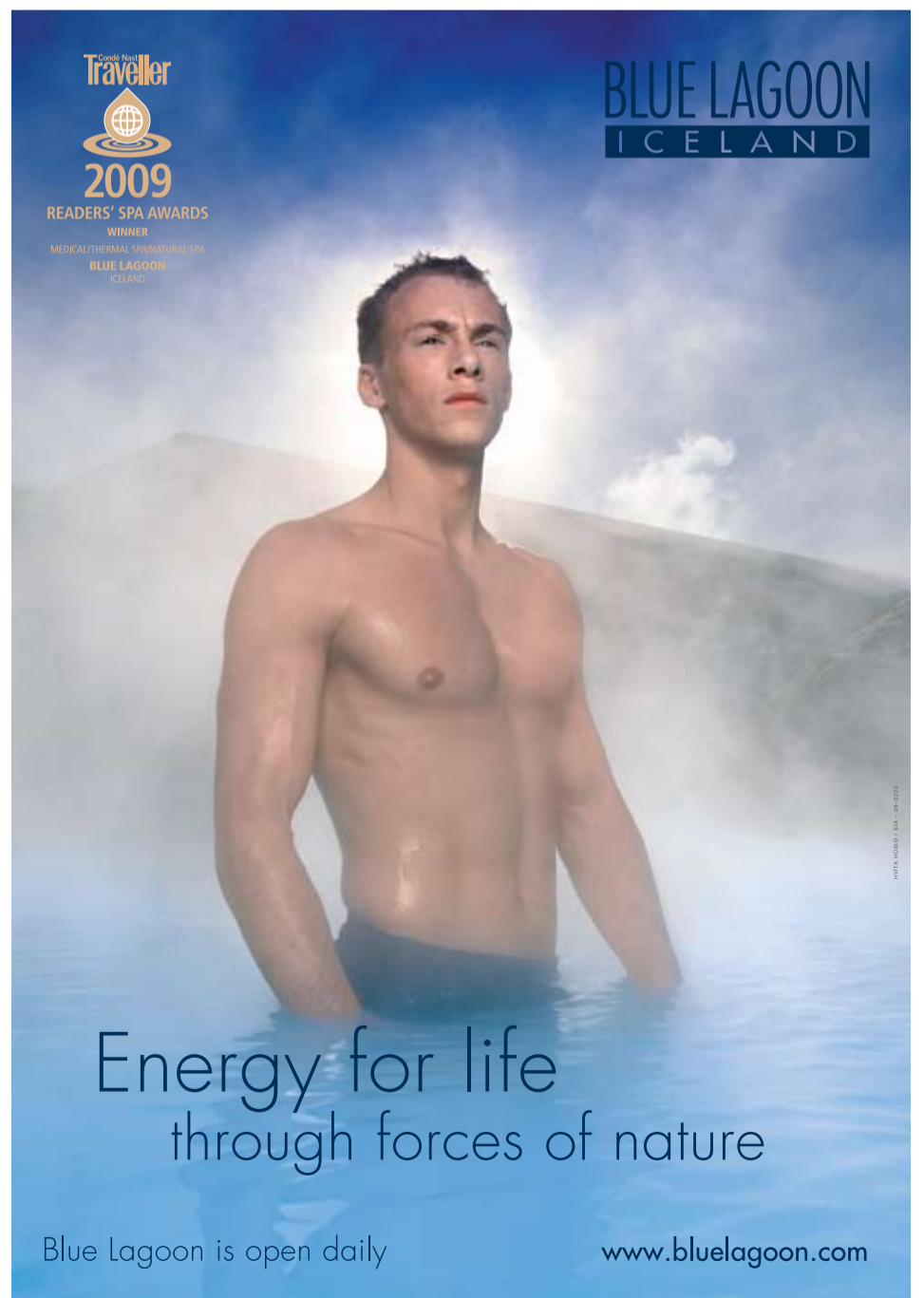
Although in keeping with the structure and décor of the building, it was clear the artist had constructed the space to a certain degree. However, what was original and what was a façade remained indistinguishable. I watched two teenage girls, arms linked, entering the room on the precarious vertical slanted floor. As they walked towards the black dot that was recording our every move, the space appeared to become smaller in size, gradually connected with the ceiling of the building. There was an unsettling feeling in the air, although no one knew why. Upon closer inspection, it turned out most of the room had been constructed. The lights on the right appeared to be sunlight from outside; however, if you remembered the positioning of the room to the external space, you would recall that the windows are only down the left of the building. Curious to discover more, I knocked on the cement ceiling and heard its hollow echo: it was another artistic façade. If it had been the original we would have been standing very high up. Realising these falsehoods, I felt duped and naïve. Were my visual senses so easily controlled?

It appeared that the artist, Elín Hansdóttir, intends to confuse conventional functions, making the space, the low ceiling and angular floor, uncomfortable to stay in – alerting the viewer's natural precautions for the unconventional or impractical. Half knowing this before entering, I wondered why I could not overcome my fearful state of mind. Whatever the artists intentions, for me she has managed to play upon our memory and instinctive fears when losing control over our perceptions. —RICHARD P. FOLEY



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Art

What Will We Remember?

The annual Iceland Academy of The Arts show at Kjarvalsstaðir was another diverse range of innovative designs and artwork, divided into five sections: Fine Art, Fashion, Graphic Design, Product Design and Architecture. But what will be remembered?



The Iceland Academy of the Arts
2009 Graduation Show

Will it be the politically controversial art of Emil Magnússon Borhammmar and Bergdís Hörn Guðvarðardóttir? The digital music album produced through cymatics by Eyþór Páll Eyþórsson. Perhaps we will remember the chocolate souvenirs we bought after visiting Arna Rut Þorleifsdóttir's product design exhibition. What will stick in our minds come next year?

The Political Artists?

On Election Day, two artworks were banned from view after governmental officials tagged them as having propagandist undertones and disallowed them to be displayed whilst the voting commenced. The law states that advertisements or items interpreted as having potential political undertones cannot be displayed near polling places, so as to ensure voters freedom from propaganda.

The artists in question viewed this as an attack on their freedom of speech. Emil Magnússon Borhammmar had to pack up his painting-filled van and drive it down the street, away from view. The artwork was until then displayed in his van, just outside the museum, so as to "protest the institutional exclusivity in the art-world." His monotone paintings were several sizes, depicting politicians'

and celebrities' public affairs. Ironically, many of the pictures didn't seem to pass judgment negatively or positively. One picture merely depicted rapper 50 Cent and (potentially former) billionaire Björgólfur Thor Björgólfsson standing side-by-side ('Fitty' in fact performed at the latter's 40th b-day bash in Jamaica). The other artist, Bergdís Hörn Guðvarðardóttir, created an interactive space documenting whale research that has been undertaken over the past years. This show, which includes a skull of a northern bottlenose whale, was blocked from view with a barracked wall to prevent it from being seen or entered. When asked her feelings on this, Bergdís told me that it's "absurd that caring about nature and the protection of animals has become a politically controversial issue."

Cymatic Graphics

Graphic designer Eyþór Páll Eyþórsson produced a digital graphic piece based on the principles of cymatics. In case you were wondering, cymatics is the study of pattern formations produced through sound waves. In light of these principles, Eyþór experimented with a small amount of sugar, a metal plate and a set of speakers. "I allowed the frequency from the speakers to permeate the metal plate and into the sugar

which formed patterns reflecting the sound waves... the music played on the speakers were tracks I made for the project." The resulting music and graphics may now be purchased from the 12 Tónar record store.

A Product To Remember Or Not?

The edible chocolate souvenir was inspired by the mass of construction still taking place in Reykjavík post economic collapse. About the inspiration for this work, artist Arna Rut Þorleifsdóttir told me: "What is most striking about the Reykjavík skyline in 2009 is the number of construction projects and unfinished buildings." The designer wanted the product to have a temporary feeling to symbolise the monuments under constructions, so she chose chocolate. You had a choice between eating Hallgrímskirkja, taking a bite out of luxury apartments at Skuggahverfi or rebuilding the half-built Reykjavík Concert Hall by licking the roof off. Each chocolate was on sale at the museum for 1.000 ISK, and although more expensive than normal sweets, they seemed to be a hit with the kids. Probably the real estate developers that inspired Arna might have preferred running after the chocolate versions, too, in light of recent events.

— RICHARD P. FOLEY

Art

Otherworldly Creatures

The Iceland Dance Company performed Transaquadonia – Out of the Blue on 22 April, leaving the audience mesmerized by a Blue Lagoon outing unlike anything they had ever experienced.



TRANSAQUANIA
Out of the Blue

Choreographers Erna Ómarsdóttir and Damien Jalet and visual artist Gabriella Friðriksdóttir created an emerging world, rising up from the milky waters of the lagoon, in celebration of the final day of winter.

Otherworldly creatures, seemingly nude with sparse tufts of hair and oddly shaped heads, bobbed in and out of the water and writhed across a platform shrouded in mist, evolving before the audience's eyes from silent alien beings to erect, vocal creatures. The physical and emotional pains of evolution were beautifully portrayed by the team of dancers, who screamed and screeched upon first discovering the strength of their limbs. Having the audience in the warm waters, the performance's source of life, while witnessing the birth of a species created an intimacy and physical connection to the piece that other arenas could not provide.

After a brief intermission, allowing time to shower and dress, the audience proceeded down a dimly lit hallway to the Blue Lagoon's Lava Room. The corridor was littered with the costumes of the dancers, who were now in street-clothes with the exception of two, as if the creatures from the lagoon had shed their skin in a final phase of physical



metamorphosis. The music of Ben Frost and Valdimar Jóhannsson (of Reykjavík!) filled the space as the plainly clothed dancers lead the audience through a spectrum of emotions, from pain and suffering to pure elation, rising up from the ground and throwing themselves down with incomprehensible strength and grace. The one-time performance was stunning both in concept and execution: a dramatic adieu to another winter season.

— CATHARINE FULTON

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What we think:

All in all it was a great experience; I highly recommend it for people trying to get the most out of a short visit to Iceland.

Reykjavík Activity Center Tour

This particular tour is very convenient for folks who don't know their way around Reykjavík, as the good people of the Reykjavík Activity Center pick you up right at your front door, given that you let them know where you're staying. That seems easy enough. For this Grapevine reporter, it wasn't. I like to sleep in. Thus, my activity tour started with a lot of wild flailing for clothes and some desperate running out the door.

During all the confusion, shaking hands and attempts to shake off a hang-over, I got word that the first thing on our schedule was to go snorkelling in Silfra located at Þingvellir, the Icelandic National Park. Naturally I got very excited: Silfra is rated as one of the top 3 cold water diving sites by various divers magazines. I did get a little nervous upon hearing that the waters in Silfra dance between 2–4° C in temperature. I just shook my head and tried to think of the cold showers I'm prone to taking to freshen up on weekend mornings.

Diving in

After a short (approx. thirty minute) drive, we arrived at Silfra and were handed our very own wet suits. If you haven't tried putting one on, let's just say it's like trying to get the whole of your body into a 7mm thick regular sized condom using only talcum powder as lubricant. I think I broke three nails trying to get the sucker on. Once in the wet suits we were provided with



all the basic gear: snorkels, gloves, webbing and hoods, before being lead into the water.

The first thing you notice upon entering the cold, cold water is that it's surprisingly hard to keep one's balance. And the fact that the pristine waters of Silfra offer an almost 150 metre visibility in prime conditions does not add to your comfort. My suit started leaking immediately, but I only really felt the cold on my hands and face, both of which immediately stiffened up. The view was absolutely breathtaking though. I could compare it to magically floating in the air nine stories up, but that would be a total understatement. The amazing underwater colours add to the experience in a way that can

hardly be described with words.

We apparently missed a much greater spectacle due to the sky being cloudy. Our guide informed us that watching the colour spectrum in the water as a thousand rays of sunlight pierce the surface is quite the vista. Better luck next time.

I soon came to the conclusion that snorkelling – while fun in and of itself – is not a wholly fulfilling experience, since you don't actually get to submerge yourself in the water. It's more like an appetiser that leaves you wanting more of the same. However, floating in the water and looking down to the seemingly bottomless deep was enough for me right now. And as soon as my face got used to the temperature,



I discovered the most pleasant way of viewing the sights: facing the water belly down and submerging my ears to eliminate any aboveground distraction. It really does feel like the sort of awesome dream where you fly through a totally silent lagoon.

The next rite of passage our guide had in store was to jump off a four metre high cliff into the water. Without our diving hoods. It felt a bit like a numbing slap from an ice cold wet rag that smothers your face and threatens to suffocate you.

When I finally got out of the wet-suit, I discovered to my horror that I was actually a lot wetter than I had assumed. From my old woollen sweater to my longjohns, every thread of fibre in my body's vicinity, was soaked through. And in my hung-over state, I had forgotten to bring extra clothes. So heed my advice: bring extra clothes. You will need them. Things did get more comfy as the guides offered us homemade sandwiches and a small sip of Gammel Dansk to inject some heat into our bodies.

Land Roverload

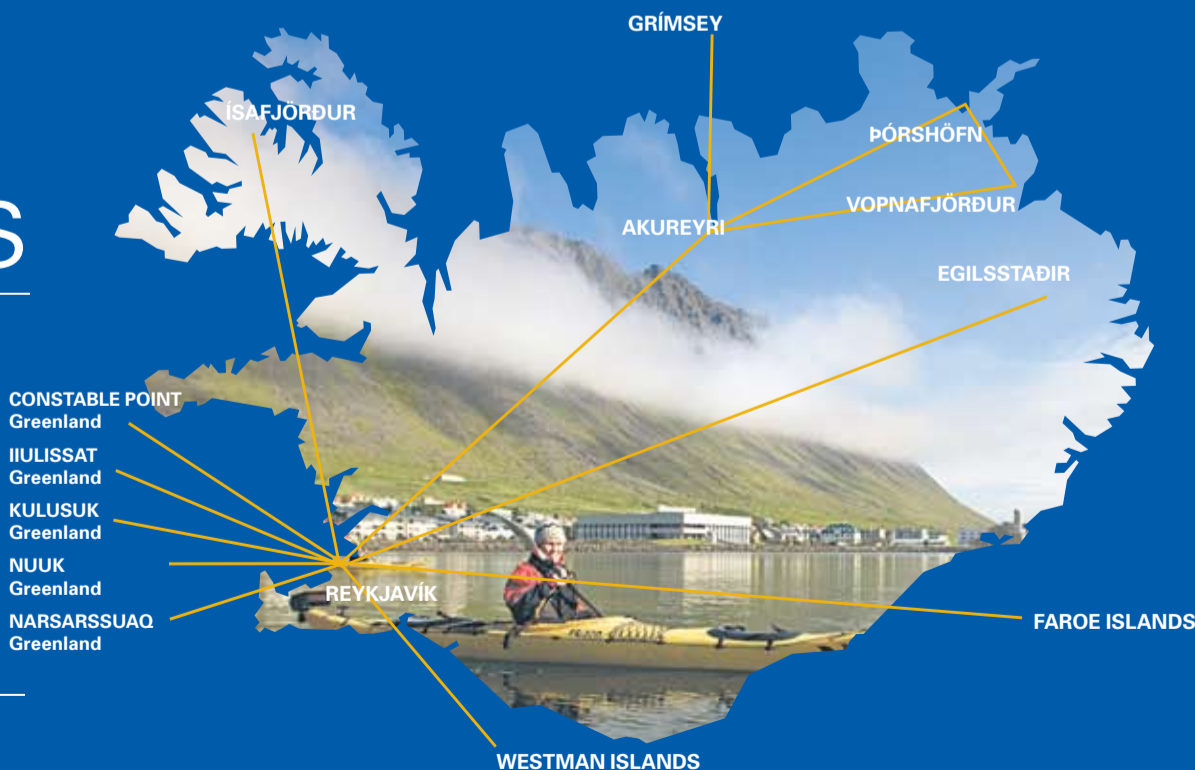
Next on the schedule was a jeep-trip across a route near Þingvellir, called Hengill. I myself have never fully

understood the concept of these jeep tours, but that might be because I can count the times I've driven a motorized vehicle with the fingers of my right hand. Also, one thing that subtracted from the overall enjoyment was the lack of view since the snow was coming down hard in huge sloppy flakes. This became worrying after we couldn't get through the third snowbank we came across on the on the road. The wet snow – called "slydda" – had defeated the Land Rover beasts.

After getting stuck in the snow, we were supposed to go paintballing for some reason. Alas, our paintball guide had apparently bailed on us while we were getting un-stuck. So the very special fun of getting into the surplus amounts of beer brought along for the trip seemed like the only thing left to do.

The trip was pleasant and, trying to see it from a non-local POV, there are a lot of things that are sure to cause great excitement. The tour guides were great people, and that, in my opinion, is one of the most important things in this kind of excursion. All in all it was a great experience; I highly recommend it for people trying to get the most out of a short visit to Iceland. – RAGNAR JÓN HRÓLFSSON

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What we think:

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* * * *



Four star country resort Hotel Rangá has been a favoured local city escape destination for years. Only an hour out of Reykjavík, right off the ring road in the Southern low lands between Hella and Hvolsvöllur, Rangá offers views of Mt. Hekla, river Rangá and the Northern lights (“subject to availability”) accompanied by all the luxuries of the civilized world, including a fine dining restaurant and a bar menu featuring a different martini for each day of the week.

With its brand new World Pavilion™, featuring seven suites, each built and decorated in a style inspired by a different continent, Hótel Rangá will soon dish out global as well as local flavours.

“Here you can travel around the world in seven days” says the hotel manager Björn Eriksson. “It is an ecological choice too: you don’t have to take a single flight.”

In the Antarctica suite, everything is black and white, luxurious and futuristic. “I went crazy on this one,” laughs Björn, the mastermind and head designer behind the pavilion, while leaning on the Jacuzzi in the corner of the living room. “I call it the suite for aristocrat penguins.”

A couple of metres down the hall brings the visitor to another world – or at least another continent. The ceiling of the African suite resembles a tent, lowering in the corners of the room. Björn plays a little solo on the African drums while I take a closer look at the

tribal artwork that serves to decorate the room.

The walls of the Asian room are painted with an interior coating rarely found in Europe to give them the right kind of soft feel, Björn tells me, while the ceiling is built according to models from 13th century Japan. Futon and tea served at a Japanese Chabudai style table come without saying.

Everything from furniture to decoration items and building materials are especially flown in from the respective continents.

Currently Björn is busy mixing a unique soundtrack for each room to complete the multi-sensory experience. In the Australian suite, for example, a didgeridoo concerto will start up as soon as the electricity is switched on.

The suites still need some touching up before the summer season, but the only one that still resembles a construction site rather than a hotel room is the Icelandic suite. Then again, it only makes for a truly authentic experience of the post-financial crisis Reykjavík, with its many half-built torsos. “It is like, take a hammer and build yourself!” Björn says laughing.

— SARI PELTONEN



1. The Antarctica Suite
2. The North America Suite
3. The Hot Tub!



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Film | Catharine Fulton

Iceland's ties to Recluse Anti-Semitic Chess Grandmaster

New Bobby Fischer doc examines an unlikely friendship



The April 16th premiere of "Me & Bobby Fischer" kicked off Green Light Films' Bíódagur film festival, which showcases 17 films in as many days. The offering of director Friðrik Guðmundsson, "Me & Bobby Fischer," follows carpenter, retired policeman and unlikely Fischer companion Sæmi Pálsson as he ventures to Japan and back to deliver the late chess grandmaster to exile in Iceland.

While the shockingly abrasive personality and scathing anti-Semitic commentary of the title character would seem an attractive focus for a documentary, it wasn't him that the director was intrigued by. "I wasn't really interested in Bobby Fischer, I was only interested in Sæmi and his friendship with Bobby Fischer. They were totally different types. Like Yin and Yang. It's difficult to imagine that they would have been friends."

The film begins by examining this unlikely friendship, explaining how it came to be. When working as a police officer during the 1972 World Chess Championship, Sæmi was assigned to be Bobby's bodyguard. While this bodyguard/bodyguard relationship is devoid of the sassy vocals of Whitney Houston, the rapport between Sæmi and Bobby is charming nonetheless.

The bromance continued after Sæmi followed Bobby to the US, but it was short-lived. Sæmi soon grew tired of Bobby's Cold War fuelled delusions and returned to Iceland.

Jumping to 2004, Guðmundsson followed Sæmi, journalist John Bosnitch and Bobby's lawyer Masaka

Suzuki to Japan where the chess star was being held in an immigration detention centre for attempting to travel to the Philippines with a revoked US passport. With Bobby facing deportation to the US and sure to meet an extended jail term once there, the entourage was determined to secure an Icelandic passport for their friend and bring him to asylum. Guðmundsson's hand-held camera captures the exhaustion on Sæmi's face, as he seems to spend every waking moment in Japan on one crowded train or another, conversing solemnly, yet optimistically, with Bobby's girlfriend about the situation at hand.

Bobby's only appearance in the first half of the film is in news footage from the height of his career. This outdated imagery, paired with more recent sound clips of Bobby's passionate, off-kilter ranting about nuclear war and Israel, builds anticipation in the audience: what has he become?

"Always shouting, a raving lunatic"

When an Icelandic passport is issued and Bobby is shuttled away on a private jet, the audience gets its first glimpse of the chess genius turned raving lunatic. Unkempt hair and a scraggly overgrown beard frame the haggard face of an aged man. Night and day from the clean-cut, suit and tie clad boy on screen moments earlier. The personality of the Bobby now gracing the screen matches the sound bytes at least, as he rhymes off a laundry list of personal gripes: Conspiracy. Corrupt US government. Israel. Nuclear War.

Contrary to this image, Guðmundsson insists that Bobby was a decent guy. "I knew him and I spoke with him and went to the bar with him. It was not a friendship. He was a likeable guy. Very likeable. Very friendly," the director tells me. "But, I wanted to show more about how he was in the media. He was always shouting, a raving lunatic. I wanted to get a feeling for why he was doing that."

While it never discovers why Bobby was the way he was, "Me & Bobby Fischer" succeeds in providing a glimpse of what the man was like on a daily basis: stubborn, persistent and unashamedly opinionated.

Bobby Fischer death circus

After following Bobby around Reykjavik for a brief period of time, almost too brief for those interested in delving deeper into the psyche of the protagonist, the film ends rather abruptly. Bobby has died, that much is clear, but what leads to his death and any details surrounding his passing are omitted. "If I were to go into all the circus about his death I would have lost something else," said Guðmundsson. "He died very suddenly so in the film he dies very suddenly, with no explanation." What happened after Bobby's death, explains Guðmundsson, is actually rather interesting. "He died suddenly and the body was taken from the hospital the next day and just driven right away to the countryside and he was buried in the middle of the night. The priest [of the church where Bobby was buried] didn't know about it. Nobody knew."

A fittingly bizarre ending for an illusive and bizarre man, possibly more fitting than what actually wrapped up the film.

"Me & Bobby Fischer" is a selective look into the mind of a one-time pop culture sensation and at the unlikely friendship that delivered him from prison in the final chapter of his life. While it loses momentum at times and the ending leaves the audience slightly unsatisfied, it is definitely worth seeing for anybody intrigued by Iceland's link to Bobby Fischer. ♡

Film | Valur Gunnarsson

Nazi Zombies at the Movies

Like crossing garlic with blue cheese, it's hard to see how you can go wrong with two such strong ingredients as Nazis AND zombies, all rolled into one mouth-watering package. And yet, more often than not, you end up feeling unfulfilled with stink in your mouth. So far, the 21st Century has given us three films featuring Nazi undead. No sign yet of a Churchill/Van Helsing team-up, so we have to make due with:



The Bunker

Rob Green
2001 (UK)

Nazi Zombie factor: *Actually quite realistic for a film featuring Nazi Zombies. The plot is fairly plausible, as these things go, and there even is a moral. War is, indeed, hell.*

Directed by Rob Green, currently working on a film featuring Romans and werewolves. Of course. Not, as the name would imply, yet another take on the last days of Hitler. There were plenty of other bunkers in World War II, the suicidal Fuehrer's not included. Some, however, did include Nazi Zombies, as this film suggests. This is one of few Nazi zombie films from the point of view of the Nazis, though, alas, not from the point of view of the Nazi Zombies. Set at the end of 1944, a group of German soldiers are surrounded by hamburger eating Americans on one side, and the no doubt flesh eating Nazi zombies on the other. They have to choose which enemy is worse. How will it end? Well, we all know who eventually took over the world. Clue: it was not the flesh eating Nazi Zombies.



Outpost

Steve Barker
2008 (UK)

Nazi Zombie factor: *Nazi Zombies as one of Hitler's wonder weapons is not such a bad idea. It's their inconsistency that grates. Sometimes they march in formation like good Wehrmacht soldiers, at other times they appear out of nowhere and dig themselves up from the ground, caring little for Nazi tactics. Come on, make up your mind.*

The Brits really seem to have a thing for Nazi Zombies. Perhaps they are trying to remind us how things would have been if they had lost the Battle of Britain. Ray Stevenson, best known as Pullo from the Rome series, is here a mercenary somewhere in the Balkans. His group is on a mission to retrieve a MacGuffin from an old German bunker where they run into, you guessed it, Nazi Zombies. Apparently, the Germans' mad scientists had their own version of the Philadelphia Experiment way back when, leaving some of their henchmen still alive, or rather, undead. An inferior ripoff of The Bunker.



Dead Snow

Tommy Wirkola
2009 (NOR)

Nazi Zombie factor: *Abandoning any attempt to explain their presence via deserting soldiers or wonder weapons, we instead get people using their intestines to mountain climb. This is the Nazi Zombie movie to beat.*

Tommy Wirkola, best known for his Kill Bill spoof Kill Buljo, set among Sami reindeer herders in Northern Norway. Of course. Disgustingly healthy and happy looking young Norwegians on a skiing trip get their comeuppance from the undead. With the charming tagline "Ein, zwei, die!", Dead snow is everything you want a Nazi Zombie movie to be. Little attempt is made to explain their presence, other than an old Norwegian skier telling of a squad of particularly nasty Nazi bastards in occupied Norway during World War Two. What it lacks in subtlety, it makes up for in chainsaws, axes, Molotov cocktails, machine guns, and yes, even a hammer and sickle. Model Jenny Skavlan, best known from the irritating Grandiosa Pizza commercial, gets pulled down an outdoor latrine to be decapitated when the Nazi Zombies make their entrance. It's all uphill from there.

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Books | Haukur Már Helgason

“A promise was made somewhere” - A Member of the Alþingi on how the Health Sector Database Act came to pass



Promising Genomics – Iceland and deCODE Genetics in a World of Speculation

Mike Fortun

2008

University of California Press

“Hereby we formally request an answer from the Independence Party and the Centrist Party regarding the truth of the claim that these parties have accepted a large sum of money, a contribution worth as much as half a million US dollars, from deCODE Genetics, the parent company of Íslensk erfðagreining, or from related parties.

It is alleged that the Independence Party accepted 20 million IS krónur and the Centrist Party 17.5 million to grease the company's momentum and especially to help the bill on the centralized health database clear the Alþingi. At the passing of the bill into law, the stocks of deCODE rose to thirty times their original price making the company worth a total of 40 billion krónur.

Icelandic voters deserve to have full disclosure of such bribery, granted the rumor has basis in reality, so that the nation may rise from its slumber and realize what sort of government holds the reins of power in Iceland. The nation must guard against the predator's claw, it must cease to sleep on the watch, it must show will and stop accommodating liars and cheaters.”

The above was written by Valdimar Jóhannesson in the conservative daily Morgunblaðið, in 1999. His question is yet to be answered. Perhaps Iceland's most glamorous pre-laps failure was the rise and decline of deCode genetics. The company was – and remains – one man's alter-ego, Dr. Kári Stefánsson, who utilised his high-school friendships, not least his bonds with then prime-minister Davíð Oddsson,

not so much to get direct state-support for his company as to create a convincing aura of such support. As a law was passed to allow the creation of a supposedly unique database of medical history and genetic data, the company promised to transform the Icelandic population's supposed genetic homogeneity into hard cash. Ten years on, the concern-raising database is still to be established. Or not. In many ways it was a very different Iceland, one in which no active stock exchange had yet been established. Along with more financially capable individuals, thousands of ordinary people, pensioners, dayworkers and students bought company stock in a frenzy of financial faith. Many took loans to buy such stock. A personal friend of mine, 19 at the time, quit school, took a loan of 2 million ISK, which at the time was real money, bought stock, and got a daytime job as a floor-level assistant at the company. DeCode's stock was your plumber Joe's first chance to take part in the action of a supposedly upcoming economic miracle. Under the eternal sunshine of Oddsson's spotless optimism, and in the joyfully unregulated arena then known as the 'gray market', ministers, banks and local media all took part in pushing the sputnik company's stock – which sold at up to 65 dollars per share and amassed ISK billions – before registration at Nasdaq. After a steady decline since registration in 2000, the shares hit rock-bottom this winter, going as low as 33 cents per share. To this day they remain penny-stock.

For the original investors the whole process resembled a well orchestrated and glamorous robbery, inasmuch as they were parted from their money and left with little but magic dust in return. Company spokespeople, not least the firm's very much outspoken CEO Kári Stefánsson – the idolised prototype of the country's modern-day Viking executives – would simply reply that investors should have known better – and that of course no promises were made as no promises could be made in the stock market, a self-evidently risky business. Hannes Smárason, the company's finance manager, carried his share into other investments, taking on a leading role among the once beloved sputnik-investors locally known as the 'outburst-Vikings'. Smárason's story is a classic tale of capitalist catastrophe. CEO

Stefánsson still operates deCode. And he writes promising poetry.

Mike Fortun is the author of Promising Genomics, a book recently published by the University of California Press, that tries to come to terms with promises no-one made, medicine never developed, racisms never directly uttered, megalomania never fully analysed, and corruption that today seems to lie at the very foundations of this country but remains undisclosed under a veil of ignorance, partly provided by the legislators. As Fortun concludes in the passage quoted above: “Jóhannesson knew full well that campaign finance laws in Iceland provided total secrecy and that their demands were likely to go unanswered. Which they did.” Ten years on, the all too familiar rumours and accusations still pile up around this extraordinary enterprise: Þorgerður Katrín Gunnarsdóttir, member of the Independence party, and Education Minister until late last January, is said to have put, er, extra-curricular pressure on the now state run bank Landsbanki to ease deCode's cash flow by some US\$ 11 million, just before her government was toppled in a popular uprising. The bank cashed in, but the role of peer pressure remains a rumour.

‘Volatile’ is an oft-repeated word through Fortun's narrative. The advances in genetic research made at deCode, published in peer-reviewed science magazines but interpreted at Nasdaq and Yahoo! finance, are convincingly described as volatile at best. The book's strength lies in portraying the shortcomings of language in a world where it is under so much constant pressure from financial interests and imagery. As if this feeble little country didn't have enough problems with its self-identity, putting it on Nasdaq certainly did not help the advocates of realism. Hype is another keyword in this story. As is promise. If you are looking for a thoroughly researched and enlightening glance past the self-glorifying, saga-mongering repertoire of local literary anaesthesia, and if you want to peak into the country's open wounds, you might certainly do worse than Fortun's Promising Genomics. And it's not just about Iceland. Fortun, a historian of science, utilises ten years of bizarre history as a case study to offer a subtle take on a capitalism that produces nothing as ferociously as it produces promises. ☘



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Feature | Continued from page 15.

Don't Thank Icelanders For Iceland

Given the chance, we'd have made it into Murmansk

Excellent salesmanship

Have the aluminium companies and Landsvirkjun responded to your criticism at all?

They'll give these standard PR answers where they draw out five points that are all pretty much irrelevant to the heart of the matter. The local president of Alcoa has even come out saying that I'm "doing a character," that this is my shtick to sell more books. And they'll give lectures and throw around references to carbon dioxide emissions, green energy and export revenues that have no basis in reality.

That's a pretty hefty claim for you to make.

They've gone on record saying that their projects are creating 100 billion ISK in export revenue for Iceland. So I thought I'd verify their claims, and after making some basic calculations I saw that what's left when everything has been accounted for is around two to seven billion ISK in pure export revenues. So they were exaggerating that number tenfold to give people the impression that a lot was to be gained.

It's old-fashioned salesmanship, but at a much greater scale than we're used to. These companies are selling an entire nation the idea that it ought to become the biggest aluminium smelter in the world – a nation that had no pressing problems, really. They surely deserve some sort of marketing award. Reviewing all the information and all the deals that have gone down, you get the same feeling as you will when your friend comes home from a presentation with a sackful of Herbalife products to resell. She had a good job, but wanted to make a little extra on the side. So she bought the idea that if she stocked up on these products she could sell them to her friends and make a nice profit, instead of them gathering dust in her basement.

The problem is that even if it's easy to sell you something, that does not make you a good salesman. Quite the contrary. For instance, we have been unable to secure adequate prices for the energy we're selling. We're not basing them on energy prices in other countries, or how much money we're ultimately saving companies like Alcoa. It's interesting to observe the local technocrats deal with these huge corporations, how naïve they seem. Like watching a team of your local amateur football dads compete against Juventus or Manchester United. They imagine they're on the same level, just because everyone's wearing a costume. But Juventus, like Alcoa, have played this game

all over the world. For a long time. And they know how to win; they know how to get the upper hand.

You offer up some economic arguments, but less so than in the book.

We had to decide what to emphasise. We had a lot of economic arguments and calculations lined up, but ultimately you've got to consider the message you're sending out. Let's say that there were no empty apartments in Reyðarfjörður, and that our export profits would have exceeded 100 billion ISK, and the Kárahnjúkar-dam wasn't a losing venture. Would that have justified the whole scenario? We'd rather question the incentive behind these actions, and how Iceland as a nation got caught up in big corporations' plans.

Don't thank the Icelanders!

How do you view the local discourse on these matters thus far? In the media, etc?

You know, it's surprising. One would have thought that matters of such grave importance and consequence should merit a balanced and rational discussion. Instead of any of that, it was pretty much gold rush from day one; those who voiced dissent or doubt were often ridiculed or, more commonly, ignored. And no one questioned the motives behind it all either, no one stepped aside and said, "Look, do we really need this? Are we starving yet?"

This confirms that Iceland owes its majestic and unspoiled beauty not to us, its inhabitants, but to the fact that we haven't been able to gather the money and manpower to lay waste to it properly. But we've been saving up. Don't imagine that Icelanders as a nation have anything to do with the enchanting country they inhabit. That's just confusion. That's like thinking that someone's an artist just because he lives nearby the Louvre. Don't confuse the country with its people; the two aren't necessarily connected. If it were up to us, we'd probably be living in Murmansk. Just look at our suburbs. We're maybe not what you think we are.

They are already planning more dams and smelters, up north in Húsavík and a series of geothermal plants to power a proposed smelting plant in Helgúvík. The problem with that is that the energy is not renewable. Many areas are harnessed too aggressively, and they will cool down and be useless for energy production in the future. You can call them energy mines.

All of the energy, all the rivers in the north and east of the country, they want to sell them to Alcoa. Save for Jökulsá á Fjöllum, which is located in Jökulsárgljúfur National Park. Which is sponsored by Alcoa. So now Alcoa can publish pictures of Skaftafell in their press materials saying, "we saved the north of Iceland, the east of

Iceland – and helped them preserve this majestic landscape." This is how dignified us Icelanders are today. Our jobs, as well as our rivers, are "given to us" by Alcoa.

Let them eat bakery!

One of the criticisms Dreamland has gotten is that it's dismissive and disrespectful of Icelanders outside of Reykjavík, from the East coast and the North. That the film portrays them in a negative light – as naïve villagers – and disregards their towns' need for growth, the townspeople's need for work.

The fact is that people – both in and outside of Reykjavík – have acted in an irresponsible manner towards our nature and our interests, welcoming people and corporations to "save them." They invite and welcome huge entities that they haven't done any proper research on, that they haven't even googled. Celebrating projects that practically demand violations of basic human rights, and that huge, unspoiled parts of nature be destroyed – both here and in the third world nations that supply the plants with bauxite – and our whole economy driven into the ground. Even if a community is on the defensive, there are limits to what its members can demand from the world in terms of being "saved."

And we aren't working on the assumption that there is a divide between Reykjavík and the rest of Iceland – we're all Icelanders, and we're all responsible. We have this image of the noble small-town dweller that is always right, and much more grounded and connected to reality than the latte-sipping hordes of the city. Yet if he needs a job, nothing less than a hydroelectric plant that could power the entire city of Copenhagen will do. These are some hefty demands we are making of our country: "If I am to be able to live in this country, I will need to exploit it relentlessly. I want Iceland to provide me with a pleasant, well-paid factory job for the rest of my life."

You could try and shift the blame on politicians, and they are to blame for a lot of this. But we are all voters in a democratic state, and as such we are all responsible and we can and should be held responsible for what we've allowed to happen. The people we show celebrating so vulgarly in Reyðarfjörður when they announced the dam, they aren't the ones taking the loans to build it, they aren't the ones sacrificing their nature and they aren't the ones that will suffer the consequences. We all are. All of Iceland is. And the world.

In the end, no one bled worse from this than our fishing industry that used to employ people in small towns all over Iceland. When the Kárahnjúkar dam project commenced, 2,000 jobs were lost. We just didn't notice because we were in the midst of our

self-created inflation bubble.

Of course you have sympathy for these people who feel their communities are dying, that they need prospects and projects and construction. But when the help lies in a factory that employs 400 people and requires amounts of energy that could power a city of millions, that's going overboard. That's not a loaf of bread to quell the hunger; it's the entire bakery, bread, cakes, pastries and all.

The aim was not to portray anyone in a negative light or demean them. We were merely trying to accurately portray the atmosphere in Reyðarfjörður at the time, an atmosphere that seemed manic and tense to us at the time, and our footage seems to support that.

...and all you can do is laugh

Do you imagine that the industrialisation of Iceland will move on at full speed now that the economy has collapsed, in the name of "rebuilding Iceland"? Or do you expect our new government to put a halt to these developments?

Well, the Independence Party's campaign promised unfettered progress and projects, if they had won the election and regained power this would have been the case. It's worse with the Social Democrat Alliance, they pretend as if they're not working with those ideas, they play environmentalists and lead a lot of well meaning people on when all of their action thus far gives evidence to the contrary.

It's farcical. Now they're saying that the industrialization process is coming to an end. We only need to build those little smelting plants in Helgúvík and Húsavík. But when you peer into the numbers, you learn that when they finish those they will have doubled what we have now. And they're talking about it as if it's a final measure of no consequence – while it's really a whole new chapter in the destruction of Iceland.

For the record, there's no such thing as a "small aluminium smelter." An aluminium smelter has to be at least 360,000 tonnes, the technology requires it. Century Aluminium, for instance, is a very dishonest company. They were campaigning to build a 200,000 tonne plant. Which is comparable to building a three-legged chair. It doesn't add up. And lo and behold, three days after the crash, they offered to expand their plans to a 360,000 tonne plant. Out of their good nature, to help us out. These companies, if they manage to cram one foot in the doorway, soon enough they'll be moving in with you. ☹

News | Catharine Fulton

In Limbo

Iceland's Shameful Treatment of Refugees

"It is better that I kill myself than to be sent back and be killed by them"

Last September, the Grapevine reported on the situation of asylum seekers living in the Fit Hostel in Njarðvík. At that time, their living quarters had just been raided by 58 police officers, and their private property and money was confiscated. Matters have not since improved, as evidenced by a letter published in the previous issue of the Grapevine from Nour Al-din Alazzawi, a 19-year old Iraqi refugee fighting his looming deportation. Numerous refugees continue to reside in the Fit Hostel for months, even years, at a time awaiting decisions to be made regarding their residence statuses.

The long waiting periods and lack of communication from Icelandic authorities has prompted some sans-papiers to resort to hunger strikes. "It is better that I kill myself than to be sent back and be killed by them," says a 50-year old refugee from Iran who commenced a strike after four years in the Njarðvík hostel. Twenty-eight days into the strike authorities issued the refugee a 6-month work permit. Taking the same route, two refugees have committed suicide upon learning of their deportation and another, a 30-year old Algerian, was given a statement to sign after ten days without food, waiving medical aid should he fall unconscious. He continues to strike; it is not known if the document was signed.

While residing at Fit Hostel, the refugees, most of who were apprehended with false passports, are provided with food and a 2500 ISK per week stipend. This is Iceland's effort in sharing the burden of asylum seekers that often flock to Southern European nations, which they agreed to do by signing the Dublin Accord in 2003. Since 1990, Icelandic authorities have only granted one person (out of 600) refugee status. This is the lowest percentage (0.26%) to be found among neighbouring countries.

More on the plight of asylum seekers in Iceland will be available in the next issue of the Grapevine. ☹



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Iceland owes its majestic and unspoilt beauty not to us, its inhabitants, but to the fact that we haven't been able to gather the money and manpower to properly lay waste to it. But we've been saving up...

Dreamland author Andri Snær Magnason has lots of eye opening stuff to say.

PAGE 15

An unlucky 12% of Icelanders between the ages of 18 to 45 have or have had protuberance-covered nether regions.

Catharine Fulton spills the beans on Icelandic promiscuity.

PAGE 6

If you are a kid, and you are not "good," the woman will eat you. Quite literally. Eat you. Boil you alive. Gnaw on your bristle. Suck the skin off your bones. Lick your fat off her fingers. Keep a serving of your thighs in a Tupperware container in her freezer.

Grýla is pretty awful, all things considered.

PAGE 12

There is sometimes the striking young thing whose patronage makes the next amphetamine-fuelled, bleach haired jizz bag bearable. There is always the enlightening conversation on movies and music that cancels out the vacuous dimwits.

Being a Reykjavík taxi driver can be kinda... taxing.

PAGE 10

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