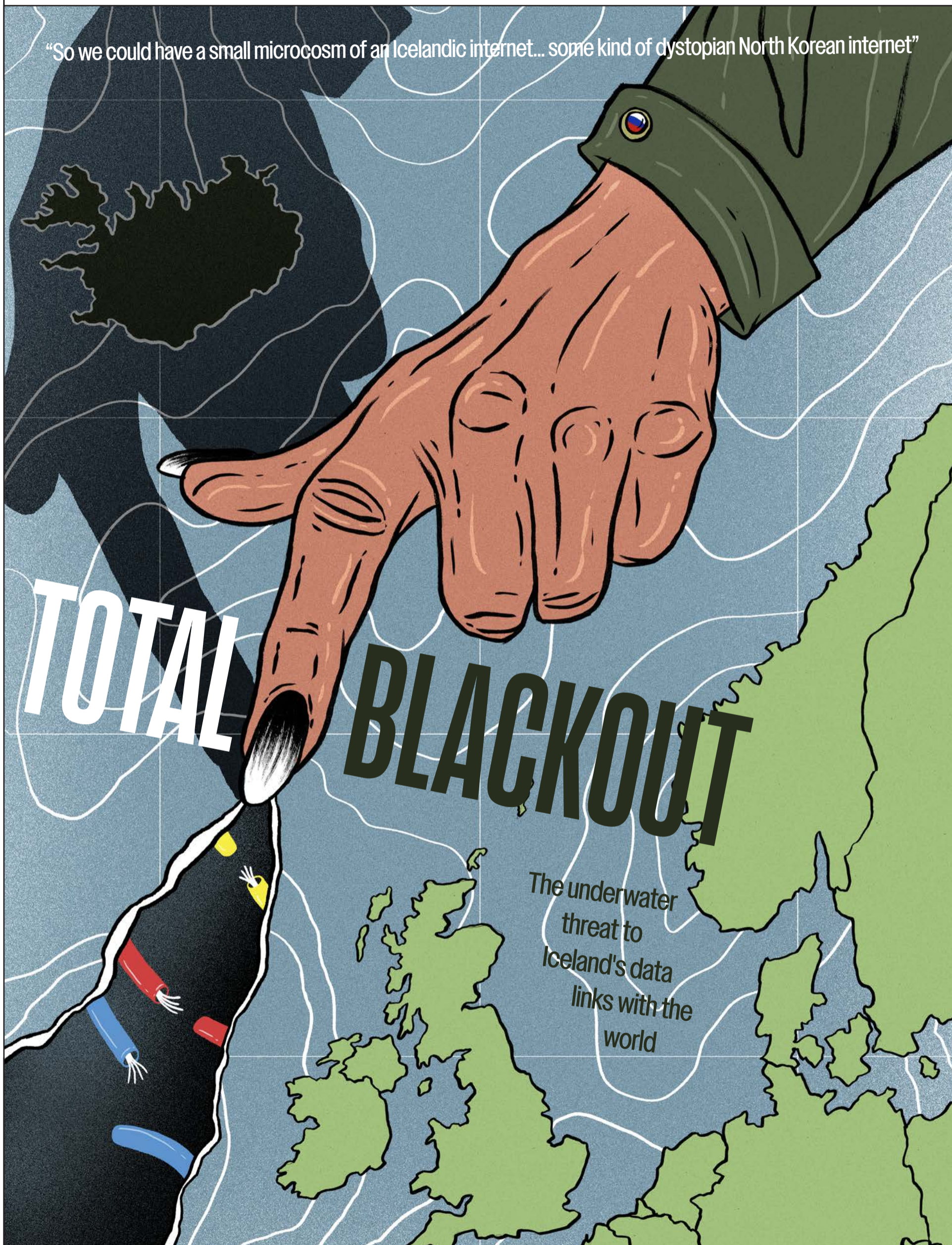




ISSUE 2
VOLUME 20
BEST BEFORE:
MARCH 3, 2023
PRICE: 0 KR.

REYKJAVÍK GRAPEVINE

"So we could have a small microcosm of an Icelandic internet... some kind of dystopian North Korean internet"



TOTAL

BLACKOUT

The underwater threat to Iceland's data links with the world

ARTICLES THE VIKING SUPREMACY ALT-HISTORY - WOULD IT SUCK?

EVENTS HIGH ARTS, PARTY BANDS AND VAGINAS

TRAVEL THE HUMAN HISTORY OF HOTEL BORG

FRONT



6: Does anyone know how geysers work?

7: The Viking empire that could have been



10: Revisiting Iceland's Cold War relics

11: "Driving Mum" proves Iceland looks great in black and white



20: The OG MMA fighter who built a hella classy hotel

28: What does a year's worth of design look like?

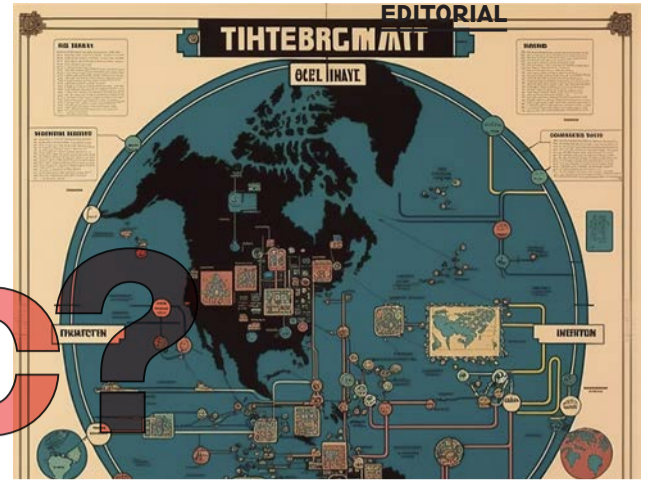
Is It EDITORIAL Magic? EDITORIAL

EDITORIAL

What the fuck is the internet? How does it work? Is it magic? Honestly, I found myself staring into the void, contemplating these very questions like an absolute luddite after too much time spent researching fibre cables, throughput speeds and the cloud — and I'm not talking about those iridescent formation every Instagram influencer in the country has been posting about of late.

But I've come out of this slightly mind-bending ordeal a little wiser, a little better informed and a lot more appreciative of just how much of our daily lives hinges on a strong internet connection. Being an elder millennial, I remember the early 90s. It was a simpler time. The internet was sparse and slow. I'm not convinced we as a species in this part of the world still have the patience or attention spans to revert to that iteration of the web.

It's a little frightening to think of what a massive technological step backward Iceland would take should we suddenly lose connectivity with the wider world. But with the state of geopolitical affairs as tense as they are, I think



it's a reality worth considering — not to add to our stresses, but perhaps as a thought exercise and a jumping off point for reflection about our modern lives.

As one person I spoke with while researching this issue's cover feature (page 8-9) so aptly said, "people seem to forget we live on an island." What would happen in the unlikely event of the submarine cables connecting us to Europe and the world beyond suddenly going bust? Does anybody have a plan to keep Icelandic society running in a quasi normal state? I'm not going to give any spoilers here — go give the feature a read.

On your way there, check out the first installation of a new limited series the Grapevine is publishing. Longtime Grapevine bestie Valur Gunnarsson reimagines key points in Icelandic (or Iceland-adjacent) history. Up first: what if Vikings had formed an empire? Go read that, too, for a history lesson with a twist.

Catharine Fulton, Editor in Chief

CONTRIBUTORS



Catherine Magnúsdóttir

Catherine studies culture and literature in Iceland and came to the Grapevine for the internship but ended up freelancing for the magazine. When she's not trying to reconnect with her Icelandic roots, she's usually watching video essays or attempting to finally come up with that one good story idea that she can actually finish writing.



Jóhannes Bjarki Bjarkason

Jóhannes Bjarki is a Reykjavík local, straight out of Grafarvogur. Having been active as the frontman of the post-punk band Skoffin and within the post-dreifing art collective, Jóhannes is fascinated by the Icelandic music scene. Among his interests are politics, history, and pop culture. Jóhannes has previously written for Stúdentablaðið and Framhaldsskólablaðið. He prefers cats over dogs.



Iryna Zubenko

Iryna is a Ukrainian who has been working on the cross-section of media and technology for the past five years. While still figuring out what to do in life, Iryna's love for travelling, unspoiled nature and Scandi design has brought her to Reykjavík. One day she'll write a non-fiction book.



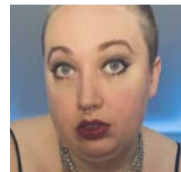
Lea Dörschel

Lea is a 23-year-old German transplant living in Reykjavík. Five years ago, she left everything behind to move to Iceland, where she fell in love with the nature and the possibility for adventure. Besides travelling, one of Lea's biggest passions is photography and you'll never find her out and about without her camera.



Josie Anne Gaitens

Josie is an arts worker, musician and writer from the Scottish Highlands. She was once erroneously referred to as the Queen of Scotland by a Malaysian newspaper and has been falsely using that title ever since.



Rex Beckett

Rex has been a fixture in the Reykjavík culture scene for over a decade as a longtime music/art journalist and as former synthpunk diva Rex Pistols. They are currently working on a series delving into the influence of Garfield on queer millennials. Their car is named Renegade.



COVER PHOTO:
It's obvious to anyone watching world affairs that things have taken a turn for the cold-war-ish. While the boomers that are running the world's super-powers are living out the last days of their best-lives, and they keep serving themselves heaping spoonfuls of nostalgia, our cover illustrator Kosmonatka went back to her roots, drawing inspiration from Polish poster art to create an image that describes our current predicament. Illustration: **Kosmonatka**

A LOCAL FAVOURITE FOR OVER 20 YEARS

OUR KITCHEN IS OPEN FOR

LATE NIGHT DINING

until 23:00 on weekdays
and 24:00 on weekends

BOOK YOUR TABLE

TAPASBARINN | Vesturgata 3B | Tel: 551 2344 | tapas.is



NATURALLY DELICIOUS

ICELANDIC LAMB - BEYOND COMPARE

The taste of Icelandic lamb is unrivaled. Our pure bred lambs graze free in the pristine wilderness of Iceland, eating luscious green grass, berries and wild herbs such as red clover, Arctic thyme, sedge, willow, thrift and angelica. The end result is a tender fine-textured meat that is both naturally rich in Omega-3 and iron and infused with the flavor of nature.

Icelandic lamb is a taste experience beyond compare.

www.icelandiclamb.is

kastrup



Lunch

Open 11:45 — 23:00 — Every Day



&

Dinner

Hverfisgata 6 | Reykjavik | kastrup.is

The trade-union fashion wars of 2022-3

The top rep for the employer association, Halldór Benjamín, worked to destabilise the trade unions with ever wilder hair



Efling, the blue-collar worker union, responded with a shocking show of force, presenting in uniform bomber jackets



Don't Tase Me Bro, Let's Negotiate

The TL;DR of Icelandic News

Words: **Catharine Fulton**

Images: **Various news outlets, Grapevine Graphics Dept.**

Negotiations are stalling

Diving right in, ongoing wage negotiations between labour union Efling and the Confederation of Icelandic Enterprise (SA) can best be characterised as feisty, with the former threatening at every twist and turn to have its members — which form the backbone of the nation's tourism industry — go on strike.

In fact, SA has called Efling's demands "unworkable," while state mediator Aðalsteinn Leifsson said of the negotiations, "in this dispute I see no solution," Heimildin reports.

It would seem that Efling has been offered a contract on the same terms and conditions that a number of other unions negotiating with SA agreed to in 2022, but Efling — led by media darling Solveig Anna Jónsdóttir — is asking for a slightly greater wage increase so her union's members aren't seeing the entire pay bump eaten up by Iceland's astronomical inflation.

Adding to the drama, Aðalsteinn technically has the authority

to present the contract proposal directly to Efling members, even if the union's negotiating committee isn't on board with it. Not having any of that, Efling is refusing to hand over its membership list. So long as that membership list remains in Efling's hands, members can't be sent any proposal on which to vote.

That move by the union appears to have the support of the the federation of public worker unions and the teachers union, who said in a joint statement: "Disarming a union of its strike weapon is a serious action and a major state intervention. When a mediation proposal is used, it affects not only the union in question, but all other unions in the country and can create a dangerous precedent. Based on the circumstances and the information currently available, we make serious comments on the decision of the state mediator to submit a mediation proposal at this point."

While all that bickering has been going on, the 300 Efling members

of the Íslandshótel chain of hotels voted Jan. 30 to go on strike, and the union said more strike action is in the works. Íslandshótel employees will walk off the job Feb. 7 if a solution to the current stalemate isn't found before then.

Police are packing

After so many attempts by right-leaning members of government to put weapons in the hands of Reykjavik police officer that we've lost count, it looks like it's actually going to happen. Justice Minister Jón Gunnarsson announced in January that he is taking steps toward arming police officers with Tasers, saying cops in the capital could be armed in the next six months.

Of his efforts to get police packing, Jón said in Jan. 2022, "Our police are people just like us and have families. It is natural that there might be some fear amongst police officers when they are dispatched to a difficult call. We are examining whether it would be natural to take a middle stance and take up tasers, which has a great deal of experience around the world, amongst other places in neighbouring countries."

He also pointed out that cops currently carry pepper spray and clubs, and clubs can cause serious physical injury, but tasers might help prevent that. We're of the mind that it's not the clubs causing injury, but the people wielding them. So who's going to be wielding the Tasers? 🍷



The Reykjavik Grapevine

Published by Fróken ehf. Aðalstræti 2 101 Reykjavik

www.grapevine.is

grapevine@grapevine.is

Member of the Icelandic Travel Industry Association www.saf.is

Printed by Landsprent ehf.

PUBLISHER

Jón Trausti Sigurðarson

jontrausti@grapevine.is

+354 540 3601

publisher@grapevine.is

EDITOR IN CHIEF

Catharine Fulton

editor@grapevine.is

ART DIRECTOR

Sveinbjörn Pálsson

sveinbjorn@grapevine.is

CULTURE EDITOR

Josie Anne Gaitens

josie@grapevine.is

PHOTO & MEDIA EDITOR

Art Bicnick

art@grapevine.is

CONTRIBUTORS

Shruthi Basappa

Rex Beckett

Jóhannes Bjarki Bjarkason

Lea Dörschel

Aron Ingi Guðmundsson

Cate Magnúsdóttir

Iryna Zubenko

PHOTOGRAPHERS

Art Bicnick

Joana Fontinha

LISTINGS

Rex Beckett

SALES DIRECTORS

Aðalsteinn Jörundsson

adalsteinn@grapevine.is

Helgi Þór Harðarson

helgi@grapevine.is

FOUNDERS

Aldís Pálsdóttir

Hilmar Steinn Grétarsson

Hörður Kristbjörnsson

Jón Trausti Sigurðarson

Oddur Óskar Kjartansson

Valur Gunnarsson

CONTACT US:

— Editorial

+354 540 3600

editor@grapevine.is

— Advertising

354 540 3605

ads@grapevine.is

— Distribution

& Subscriptions

+354 540 3604

distribution@grapevine.is

is

— Press releases

events@grapevine.is

— General Inquiries

grapevine@grapevine.is

The Reykjavik Grapevine is published every month by Fróken Ltd.

Nothing in this magazine may be reproduced in whole or in part without

the written permission of the publishers.

The Reykjavik Grapevine is distributed in and around Reykjavik and at key locations along Iceland's route 1.

It is also available at all major tourist attractions and information centres around the country.

The Grapevine is an independent publication. You may not agree with what we print, but at least our hot takes aren't paid for.

None of our editorial is directed or influenced by sponsors or advertisers, and all opinions expressed are the writer's own.



Farmers Market

ICELAND

OUR STORES IN REYKJAVÍK: FARMERS & FRIENDS



Laugavegur 37



Hólmastóð 2 / Grandi

WWW.FARMERSMARKET.IS



According to our expert, geysers are not, in fact, triggered by space lasers.

Ask An Expert: How Do Geysers Erupt?

Words: **Catherine Magnúsdóttir** Images: **Art Bicnick / Creative Commons**

Geysers are some of the most popular natural phenomena to be observed and studied — there's just something fun about seeing the Earth let out a great big belch every once in a while. But how and why do geysers erupt? We went to Ríkey Júlíusdóttir, a geologist at the Icelandic Met Office, for an explanation.

"I would be oversimplifying things if I would say that they're all the same. Geysers are each their own characters, much like volcanoes. They have their own cycles, their own frequency of eruption, their own chemical composition and their own eruption style," Ríkey explains.

Geysir is probably the most popular — hey, the name "Geysir" being the base of all other geysers in the world is nothing to sneeze at. However, Geysir's easy accessibility definitely plays a big part in its status. That accessibility allowed German chemist Robert Bunsen to study Geysir back in the middle of the 19th century and most of his theories and explanations hold up to this day. The geysers in the Russian Kamchatka area or even Yellowstone Park in the U.S., meanwhile, are at higher altitudes and quite a bit harder to reach, observe and study.

"What they all have in common, though, is that they are related to geothermal areas. Here in Iceland, they are all located around the volcanic belt," Ríkey says. That belt of geothermal activity stretches all the way from the Reykjanes peninsula in the southwest, cutting diagonally across the island to the northeast.

But how a geyser actually blows, Ríkey explains, comes down to their shape and physical properties.

"Geysir has a so-called silica bowl of around 15 metres in diameter and around two metres in depth. At the centre of the bowl you have a long conduit going deeper into the Earth. At 23 metres down, (the conduit itself gets too narrow to measure deeper than that), the water temperature is around 120°C, but it can't reach a boiling point because of the pressure of the water column above. Further up in the conduit, at a depth of about 15 metres, the water gets very close to a boiling point, but still not quite. However, if there's any kind of disturbance in the water column — an earthquake or anything else to jostle that downward pressure — the water mixes around, finally comes to a boil and expands, heading in the only direction it can go: up."



The OG Geysir has been mostly dormant for years, probably because of silica clogging up its conduit, so unless it gets seriously disturbed by seismic activity, as last happened in 2016, it'll likely remain quiet. In the meantime, neighbouring Strokkur, while not as big, does a valiant job of keeping hot-water-watchers entertained, shooting boiling H₂O into the air every couple of minutes to rounds of applause. 🇮🇸

THE VILLAGE PEOPLE

The Village People is a series of micro-interviews with the people who make life in Reykjavik better. If you know someone worth highlighting, let rex@grapevine.is know.



Friða Björk Einarisdóttir
Shift manager at Vesturbæjarlaug

Words: **Rex Beckett** Image: **Art Bicnick**

How long have you worked here and do you like it? This is my 14th year and I really like it. When I started working here I thought it was just gonna be for a few months, but then when you realise that everyone coming here is so happy and they're even happier when they're leaving. That's why I've been here so long.

What other profession would you like to try if there were no limits? I would like to work in a rescue shelter for dogs and cats.

Deep sea or outer space? Outer space. I have this profound respect for the deep sea. Of course we live on an island and there's all those people who have died [at sea] through the years, so I love the sea, but it scares me too.

What would surprise most people about how things function here? One day everything works perfectly and the next day nothing works. It would surprise people how much maintenance is involved. When we have to close something, people don't believe us.

What was the weirdest cause of a sudden closure? It's the classic one: somebody poops in the pool. And I didn't see it with my own eyes, but once there was a fish in the kids' pool. It was dead, and we didn't know if somebody had put it in there, but then we figured a seagull had flown over and dropped it.

Are tourists getting better at following the showering policy? It's still a big issue. I tell them that if they put on their bathing suit and try to approach the showers, the locals will scream at them. Usually that does the trick. They don't want to be screamed at. Recently I heard a bunch of girls up there like, "there are so many rules here!"

Aside from not showering, what's your biggest pet peeve? We have different problems for different pools. I can't remember which pool it was, but they had to put up a sign that read "don't dry your balls with the hairdryer." Old men were doing this. 🇮🇸

Stay like
a local

[8 HOTELS, RESTAURANTS & SPAS
IN THE HEART OF REYKJAVIK]

center
hotels



What if... Vikings Had Conquered the World?

LIMITED SERIES

Words: **Valur Gunnarsson**

Image: **Adobe Stock / Grapevine Graphics Dept.**

What if? It's a pretty open-ended question and one friend of the Grapevine Valur Gunnarsson is applying to eight relevant-to-Iceland historical happenings over as many issues. Expand your mind, suspend your disbelief and consider: what if the Vikings had conquered the world?

Could Icelandic have become the lingua franca? Surely, it's a possibility everyone has mulled at some point, and the answer is that it very nearly came to pass.

After generations of raiding, Vikings were poised by the 11th century to establish kingdoms in other lands. A North Atlantic Empire was within reach and then, in 1066, just as it was taking shape, everything came crashing down. Not one but two climactic battles took place in England that year, determining the fate of the North Atlantic World.

It was the Viking Ragnarök. But what if things had gone differently? Haraldur Sigurðsson has sometimes been called “the Last Viking.” Haraldur traversed the Viking World, from the river Derwent in England to the Dnipro in modern Ukraine and further afield to the lands of Lombards and Saracens. He is best known by his nickname, Haraldur Harðráða, which has been variously translated as “Hard-Ruler” or “Hard-Council” or, simply, “the Ruthless.” If the Viking Age ended with him, at least it went out in style.

Confusion Over a Crown

In 1066, things were coming to a head

in merry old England. Edward the Confessor died childless in January, ending his line. Nobleman Harold Godwinson claims that Edward had promised him the crown before he croaked — a claim ratified by nobility. But wait! William, Duke of Normandy, claimed Edward had promised the same to him.

Edward was son of King Æthelred and Emma of Normandy. Æthelred died in 1014 and was succeeded by Edmund, his son by his previous wife Ælfgifu. Edmund fought and was bested by the Vikings in 1016 and submitted to being co-regent with Viking leader Canute the Great, who also married his step-mother, Emma.

Edmund died soon after, making Canute sole king. Æthelred and Ælfgifu's offspring were executed and Edward went into a 25-year exile in Normandy. That's when he supposedly promised his crown — should he ever gain it — to William, Emma's nephew. Further adding to the confusion, Canute's son promised Magnus the Good that he would inherit England. Since Haraldur Harðráða was Magnus' successor, he felt the claim should go to him. Enter Tostig, Harold Godwinson's little brother, who is also making a play for the throne and eggs Haraldur Harðráða on to invade England.

The Last Stand of the Vikings

The big question was who would get to Godwinson first. It came down to the weather. A fierce north wind blew, quickening the pace of Haraldur

Harðráða's ships sailing from Norway while confining William's boats to port. So Haraldur Harðráða arrived first, landing in Cleveland (no, not in Ohio) before burning Scarborough (no, not in Ontario). The north seemed to be within his grasp.

Thinking the English were about to offer their surrender, Haraldur Harðráða set off toward Stamford Bridge with only a few men, lightly armed and armoured due to the sweltering heat, while his main forces stayed back to guard the ships.

However, Harold Godwinson managed to force-march his troops up from London in record time to meet the under-equipped Vikings. Still, it is a close-run thing, with a single axe-wielding berserker keeping the Saxons at bay on the battle's titular bridge. That would've been a good time for Haraldur Harðráða to retreat towards reinforcements — but the Last Viking won't be known for a cowardly act.

A sneaky Saxon skulks under the bridge, stabbing the berserker from below, allowing Godwinson's army to cross. Haraldur Harðráða catches an arrow in the throat and dies. Tostig takes over. The rest of the Viking troops arrive, fully armoured but exhausted from running. Tostig dies and the battle turns into a rout, with the Vikings eventually running back to their ships, many drowning attempting to cross a river in battle-gear.

The Norman Wins

Haraldur Harðráða's 16-year-old son Olaf was among the troops allowed to go home — he reigns under the un-vikinglike moniker Ólafur Kyrrí (Olaf the Peaceful). Norway had lost a generation and there would not be more Viking raids any time soon. Or ever.

Harold Godwinson didn't get to savour his victory over the Vikings for long, though. William's Norman army soon landed in the south and bested the Saxons.

What if things had gone differently?

What if Haraldur Harðráða would have been more cautious and managed to assemble his troops at Stamford Bridge?

Two scenarios could have played out in the event of a Norwegian victory. William's invading Norman army would have been met with Norwegian Vikings, flush after their victory in the north. At that point, either William would have won and history would revert to a familiar course, or Haraldur Harðráða would have won, thereby becoming king of Norway and England. Could that have created a North Sea Empire that would have made the Vikings a power factor

in Europe for centuries to come?

A Viking Superpower

The previous Viking Superpower headed by Canute the Great lasted 19 years. Authority lay with the king and did not always survive him, so when Canute died, his son by his first wife, Harold Harefoot, took over. Hardacnut, Canute's son by the aforementioned Emma, was preparing to invade from Denmark when Harold suddenly died, but Hardacnut still had him exhumed, beheaded and thrown into a marsh for good measure.

That made Hardacnut the last Danish king of England, reigning from 1040 to 1042 before he died of too much drink while giving a wedding toast.

Something similar could have been the fate of the second North Sea Empire had it taken shape in 1066. It might not have outlived its founder for long.

Haraldur Harðráða was 50 when he died at Stamford Bridge. Had he become king of England, his son Ólafur Kyrrí would have succeeded him a decade or two later. Ólafur became a peaceful king and a state builder in Norway. If we assume he would have retained those peaceful characteristics, he would have been exactly what a North Sea Empire would need to prosper. The riches of England combined with a wise ruler could have been the recipe for a powerful kingdom.

Drifting Apart

But Ólafur Kyrrí would have his work cut out for him. Nordic kings had problems turning English taxes into ships. So, it's unlikely a Norse-English fleet would rule the waves as the British managed to do in the 18th and 19th centuries. In addition, the coming “Little Ice Age” would have seen Iceland and the Atlantic Islands of Shetlands, Orkney and the Faroes relegated to a distant periphery.

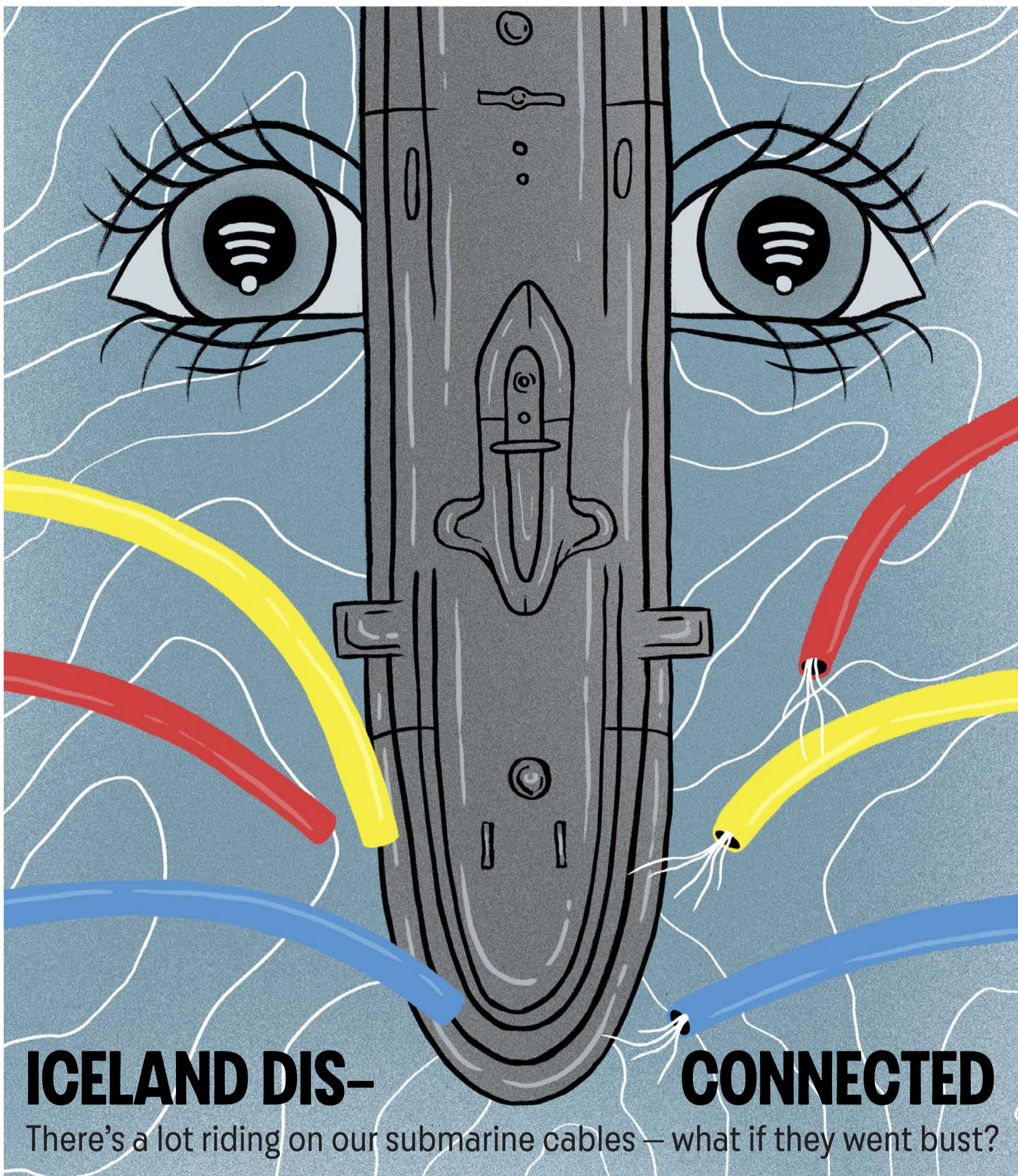
Even the languages drifted apart. In the Viking Age, the Norse tongue could be spoken from Greenland to the Volga. But by around 1300, Danish, Norwegian and Swedish became more and more influenced by mainland languages, particularly German. The three Scandinavian languages remain mutually intelligible to this day — even with the awful Danish accent — but Icelandic remained something resembling the original Norse tongue. Perhaps a Viking Empire would have retained the original language and something very similar to Icelandic would have been spoken around the North Atlantic to this day. 🇮🇸

UNFORGETTABLE FOOD AND DRINK EXPERIENCE

HÉDINN | KITCHEN & BAR

Seljavegur 2, 101 Reykjavík, www.hedinnrestaurant.is





ICELAND DIS-

CONNECTED

There's a lot riding on our submarine cables — what if they went bust?

It's something out of a Hollywood blockbuster, or at least a symptom of some global crisis more central to the plot — be it zombie apocalypse, an alien invasion, or a cataclysmic global weather event. A world without internet. Have you ever really thought about how much of your daily life hinges on data connectivity and high-speed internet? Your apps and email, banking and shopping, even the light bulbs and other features of your modern smart home. Our lives are run by those little glass fibre cables connecting nearly every home and workplace in the world like the web of the monstrous Djieien.

Some 12 million Canadians got a taste of the disconnected life when, on July 8, 2022, telecommunications provider Rogers Communications experienced a major service outage. Home internet was down, mobile users couldn't call emergency services, and the country's major interbank

network facilitating payments and money transfers ceased to exist. It was a day-long reckoning and it only affected roughly 25% of the country.

How would that situation play out on an island? How would that situation play out in Iceland?

Trouble down under

It was in September 2022, two months after that brief outage in Canada and seven months into Russia's war on Ukraine, that the news of increased submarine activity around western infrastructure was making international headlines. As Moscow and European governments exchanged barbs about who was responsible for soaring oil prices and the slowed westward flow of Russian natural gas, there was a rupture in a pipeline running along the Baltic seabed. Then another and another and another.

Four ruptures were reported in the

Nord Stream 1 and 2 pipelines carrying natural gas from Russia to Germany. Two of the damaged areas lay within Denmark's exclusive economic zone and two in Sweden's. All four, a Swedish investigative team concluded in November, were the result of "gross sabotage."

"Analysis that has now been carried out shows traces of explosives on several of the objects that were recovered" Mats Ljungqvist, the prosecutor leading the investigation, said in a Nov. 18 press briefing that was reported on by The Guardian.

But what does this have to do with Iceland? We revel in our abundant geothermal energy, so those gas pipelines aren't coming our way. But pipelines aren't the only valuable pieces of infrastructure running along the bottom of the ocean.

In addition to increased NATO focus on the security of natural gas infrastructure, Russia's global posture

over the past years has seen the attention of western governments turn to the security of their submarine telecommunications cables. The globe-spanning network of more than 420 submarine communications cables measure more than 1.3 million kilometres and carry more than 90% of the world's internet traffic.

In Iceland, it's 100%.

Words:
Catharine Fulton

Images:
Kosmonatka

"I'M NOT GOING TO SUGAR COAT IT AND CLAIM THERE'S A PLAN IN PLACE."

FEATURE

**Wait.
Really?**

OK, 99.999%.

“We have been operating now for the past 14 years with two modern submarine cables that have been providing all the internet connectivity between Iceland and the rest of the world,” explains Þorvarður Sveinsson, CEO of Farice.

Farice is the company tasked with operating the expansive submarine cables that connect the beaches of Iceland with network hubs in Scotland, Denmark and Ireland and the vast expanse of terrestrial networks beyond that spread like mycelium throughout mainland Europe.

Owned in its entirety by the Icelandic government, Farice was founded around its first submarine cable, FARICE-1, which became operational

“SO WE COULD HAVE A SMALL MICROCOSM OF AN ICELANDIC INTERNET... SOME KIND OF DYSTOPIAN NORTH KOREAN INTERNET”

in the summer of 2003 to provide Iceland with international connectivity that could meet the country's modern needs. Before FARICE-1 coming online, Iceland's international connectivity was dependent on a combination of the by-then-outdated CANTAT-3 submarine cable and limited satellite connectivity.

“I would say that was kind of a first generation of the internet, with limited bandwidth,” Þorvarður says of connectivity before FARICE-1. “But we can see around 2000 when the internet was starting to really grow and the capacity need was really growing, those older technologies could just not support the capacity needs. That's why we talk about the ‘modern cable’, the ‘modern communications cable’ — and the FARICE-1 cable was the first one of its type.”

As Þorvarður explains, Farice's cables are far more than passive infrastructure. “It's not just fibres, it's actually a system, because we have to have amplifiers every 100 km or so to amplify the signal.”

To get technical, FARICE-1 has two fibre pairs, with five TeraBits Per Second (Tbps) capacity each, for a total of 10 Tbps. DANICE, which connects Iceland to Denmark, has four fibre pairs with a total 40 Tbps capacity, and IRIS (when it comes online sometime in the first quarter of 2023 to connect Iceland to Ireland) will transmit 120 to 132 Tbps over its six fibre pairs.

By comparison, the CANTAT-3 cable that Iceland relied on before FARICE-1 came online transmitted 3 x 2.5 gigabits per second between North

**The brief,
in brief**

It's a possibility that key players at Iceland's telecommunications providers have been briefed on. Around the same time that pipelines were rupturing in the Baltic, Farice was informing Iceland's network providers of increased submarine activity around the areas where they're monitoring the cables, according to a person working in the field and speaking with the Grapevine on the condition of anonymity.

It's a briefing both Guðmundur at Síminn and Benedikt Ragnarsson, Nova's chief of technology and innovation, acknowledge, though they appear to have polar approaches to addressing the hypothetical situation of the cables going bust.

“It's pretty much the situation that you see,” Benedikt says, matter of factly when asked whether there's a plan B. “I'm not going to sugar coat it and claim there's a plan in place.”

Nova's

approach, as Benedikt explains it, appears to lean heavily on the nation's unofficial but ubiquitous þetta reddast motto.

“There is always an action

plan and it lies within the adaptability of the people,” he says, underscoring the resourcefulness of the populace as a whole. “When something happens, you improvise. Larger nations want to have everything planned and pre-planned. We here in Iceland have the luxury of doing things differently.”

Guðmundur, on the other hand, explains that Síminn does have plans and processes in place for a number of hypothetical scenarios Iceland's telecommunications infrastructure might face.

“We do exercises so if something happens we know what to do, and we do it. It's just part of our security culture that we do exercises that are mimicking exactly what we are talking about (a submarine cable outage) or, say, mimicking the power going out all from Akureyri to Reykjavik. It's just to be ready when something happens.”

“You always have to prepare for the worst,” he continues. “We play a certain part in Iceland as a telecommunications company, we take that seriously and that's something we have to be ready for — though we hope we never have to activate that plan!”

Not a new concern

Though a heavy reliance on global internet connectivity is a development of the past 20 years or so, targeting submarine cables in times of global conflict is a trend with a much longer history.

The USS Zafiro was tasked with finding and severing submarine communications cables off the coast of the Philippines during the Spanish-American war in 1898. Britain cut

a handful of German underwater communications cables and tapped the rerouted traffic for intelligence during World War One. Cord cutting was employed again as a tactic during the Second World War.

Even the most recent fear circulating around the security of global submarine telecommunications cables — the very concern Iceland's providers have recently been briefed on — isn't brand new. The New York Times was reporting in Oct. 2015 that, “Russian submarines and spy ships

are aggressively operating near the vital undersea cables that carry almost all global Internet communications.” And the Associated Press questioned in 2018 what the Russians were doing loitering around choke points of the cables that are responsible for global communication and over which US \$10 trillion in daily financial transactions travel.

One Russian vessel named in both those instances, the Yantar, was making headlines again in late 2021, when it was spending time off the coast of Ireland. Dublin, of course, is one of the world's biggest hubs for data centres — as Iceland aspires to be. The Russian Navy ship is equipped with a hangar to launch submersible drones that can dive to a depth of 6,000 metres. Those drones have mechanical arms to operate on seabed infrastructure, while the Yantar itself is equipped with sonar to map the seafloor.

**A nation
without an army**

While the United States and other NATO members seem to be systematically monitoring the movements of Russian ships and submersibles around submarine infrastructure, Iceland famously does not have a military. So what is Alþingi doing?

We turned to Minister for Foreign Affairs Þórdís Kolbrún Reykfjörð Gylfadóttir for information on how the government is responding to the state of international affairs in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the plans the government is putting in place to prepare for the worst case scenario of Iceland's submarine infrastructure being tampered with.

“Of course there are plans for such a scenario and such plans are always under review and internal scrutiny,” the ministry told the Grapevine in a statement. “All countries in our region are concerned about the security of underwater infrastructure. Iceland, like most other NATO countries, is developing contingency plans, seeking alternative connections while stepping up information sharing and cooperation with allies in the region to increase situational awareness.”

What those “alternative connections” might be, the Minister didn't specify, but the consensus from those we spoke with in the industry is that they are few and extremely limited in capacity. Moreover, restoring the connection in the event of all of Iceland's modern cables going offline could take weeks to months.

“We have never seen what we call a ‘wet section fault,’ a fault in the system in the ocean,” Þorvarður reminds me — an impressive statistic and something Farice attributes to its focus on preparation and its strong relationship with the nation's fisheries. “And that's quite important, because if we have a fault in the ocean and it's in the middle of winter, it can take months until the weather is good enough for us to be able to fix it. We might have to call in special vessels with special equipment to take the cable up and fix it.”

In the meantime, Iceland's connectivity to the outside world would be relegated to satellites. Only, as Guðmundur explains, satellites are an expensive commodity and Iceland doesn't actually own any. “So we would have to rent access to existing satellites and that's expensive, but the main thing is that it's also slow and the latency is really high.”

“But because the bandwidth is limited on satellites,” Guðmundur continues, “it would mean that probably the government would step in and say that they would have to prioritise the traffic for the government, for

the central bank, for other critical institutions, so that we can run the community here. So we would use the bandwidth for critical infrastructure instead of us being able to go to YouTube.”

**North Korea
of the North**

The difference between connectivity in Europe or North America in the event of some mass submarine cable outage and connectivity in Iceland in the same instance comes down to the terrestrial connections. While many aspects of the global markets would grind to a halt were inter-continental connectivity to be severed, life could go on fairly close to normal for the average person in the United States or Canada, since a massive number of the digital services and websites they're accessing daily are hosted on the continent. The same can be said for mainland Europe's connectivity to the wealth of services and websites hosted there.

In Iceland, however, an unprecedented outage of the submarine cables would effectively turn this island nation into a hermit state as far as the internet is concerned.

“All the Icelandic servers that are located in Iceland could communicate and send traffic between each other,” Guðmundur explains. “So we could have a small microcosm of an Icelandic internet. It sounds like some kind of dystopian North Korean internet and it's not something anybody wants, but maybe that could be some kind of small thing that everybody could do, so that you could get the news, you could do some banking.”

It should be noted, though, that the banking you could do would amount to checking your balance — unless you bank with Íslandsbanki, which hosts its website in Dublin — and possibly withdraw cash. All credit card clearing houses are hosted outside of Iceland, so your plastic would be worthless.

While the government is not forthcoming about what they can or are doing to prepare for the — again, highly unlikely — event of Iceland losing connectivity with the broader world, migrating data back to Iceland is something that local companies can do to ensure connectivity with domestic users in a worst case scenario.

It's been in vogue, in recent years, for Icelandic companies to host their data in the cloud or at data centres abroad, just as a number of big name international firms conduct a great deal of their high-performance computing at data centres based in Iceland. If more and more Icelandic services and businesses ensure they're hosting their data in Iceland, the better that worst-case scenario dystopian internet would be. As it currently stands, an Iceland-centric internet would let those connected browse just shy of 3,500 sites hosted domestically.

One thing that would work as normal is voice services within Iceland. So you would be able to call your bestie to cry over what you're not watching on Netflix, or lament that you had to get up to turn off the lights because Alexa is AWOL.

“Voice services would be completely normal because it's not dependent on satellites or the sea cables in any way. It's all local,” Guðmundur says. “All the terrestrial fibres and the 5G should just be working normally.”

“That's maybe a contingency plan for the government to act on or have in place, so people can go to RÚV or MBL and visit Heilsuvera, and all that kind of stuff — those critical things that just involve getting information to people so they can at least keep their lives as normal as possible.”

But hey, you'll always have Grapevine.is. 🍇

“IT'S NOT JUST FIBRE, IT'S A SYSTEM, WE HAVE TO HAVE AMPLIFIERS EVERY 100 KM.”

America and Europe, with a branch hooking up Iceland with that sweet, sweet early-90s bandwidth.

“The main point that touches everyone in Iceland is if the cables all go down, it's going to be like 1990-something,” says Guðmundur Jóhannsson, communications officer at telecommunications company Síminn. “We're going back to the beginning of the Brit-pop era — that's the fact of the matter. We're going that far back in terms of what we could do with technology.”



a bunker beneath Bústaðakirkja. As we later drove down Bústaðavegur we looked at the church, trying to find the clues of Cold War relics.

This rumour spurred a personal obsession of sorts with Iceland's capacity to counter existential threats. To think that the church in which I've watched my mom's choir perform harbours the interests of national security fascinates me.

That rumour, it turns out, is true.



Of bridges & bunkers

Iceland served as a bridge between the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War. It was at Reykjavik's Höfði House that then U.S. president Ronald Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev met in 1986 to discuss nuclear disarmament. The country's geographic location served as a strategic asset to the United States, whose army had stuck around in Keflavik long after World War II ended.

The topic of Iceland's civil defence was prevalent during World War II, as both British and American forces had set up shop around the island, and the threat of Nazi forces became ever more tangible. During the war, Icelandic authorities established civil air defence committees with help from the Americans. Their work included preparing for the worst: barricading structures, performing civilian defence exercises, and identifying strategic locations for defensive structures — including civilian bunkers.

When the war ended and most foreign military presence had dissipated, those committees ceased their preparation efforts. However, the U.S. army returned in 1951 as increased global tensions ushered in the start of the Cold War. The air defence committees were reestablished, much to the dismay of Iceland's budget. Modelled after similar institutions in Western Europe, their main goal was to "implement aerial defences amongst other security measures."

First Icelandic bunker

Amongst these "aerial defences" were bunkers. In the 1950s and 60s, Icelandic authorities surveyed suitable real estate for civilian shelters, Arnarhóll being one of the more interesting proposals. The Reykjavik Metropolitan Police's headquarters on Hverfisgata includes a nuclear fallout basement, which once served as the base of operations for the Icelandic Civil Defences, though it doubled as an emergency shelter.

I contacted historian Stefán Pálsson, who also mentioned bunkers in the headquarters of the National Power Company, as well as in Laugar-

dalshöll, although I wasn't able to corroborate those sources.

Getting back to Bústaðakirkja, it was during the construction of the church in the 1960s that the Department of Civil Protection funded the development of its reinforced steel basement. In the wake of the Cuban Missile Crisis and all throughout the Cold War, Iceland was entirely vulnerable to hostile attacks, as authorities had not implemented a national defence plan to protect its citizens. With the exception of the U.S. Army's deployment on the Reykjanes peninsula and NATO membership, Iceland was (and perhaps still is) defenceless.

Designed by architect Helgi Hjálmarsson, who also built the headquarters of the Icelandic National Broadcasting Service, Bústaðakirkja peers over Fossvogsdalur, which at the time was in rapid development. The underground bunker can hold up to 150 individuals and was the first structure in Iceland built for the specific purpose of sheltering people against a nuclear strike.

Closed casket service

When I reached out to Bústaðakirkja's manager, Ásbjörn Björnsson, I didn't expect a positive reply. I assumed the church's staff had more pressing matters to attend to than entertaining a twenty-something with an affinity for Cold War history. Ásbjörn surprised me by also contacting the church's architect. I was convening a meeting of dudes who like bunkers.

Passing the congregation hall in the process of being prepared for a funeral service, I met Ásbjörn in his office and his interest in the subject shone through our conversation. I started to think he was better suited than I to write this article. "Do you feel this is some sort of a hush, hush secret?" he questions me. Now in his 60s, Ásbjörn has managed Bústaðakirkja for 10 years. He said he wasn't aware of the church's bunker until after he began working there.

Eventually Helgi showed up, slightly later than anticipated, but he made up for his delayed entrance by going into great detail about the building. An older gentleman, I'd estimate he must have been around 30 years old when the church was built. He had just recently graduated with his architectural degree when he took on the project, encouraged by his mentor and then Chief State Carpenter Hörður Bjarnason, and Ottó A. Michelsen, the chair of the church's building committee.

A utilitarian construction

The conversation and the subsequent

tour that I received emphasised the mundane nature of Iceland I had come to miss after spending the past year abroad. When I asked the man who designed Iceland's first public nuclear shelter what his feelings towards the project were, he replied: "I can't remember any specific feelings I had. The building was one of the projects me and my team took on, and we did our job."

Asked about how the idea of the bunker came to fruition, he attributed the idea to Ottó, whose life and work was presented to me in the pages of a biography Ásbjörn pulled out from one of his shelves. "During the construction, we used explosives to work on the foundation. The subsequent spaces that formed were utilised for the bunker. It was a way to maximise the square metres of the building."

As for how the idea and funding came to be, it seems that Ottó was the man with the plan.

Going down

Having now spent some time chatting, Ásbjörn decided it was time for a proper tour. To descend into the bunker we had to first go outside and around the building, before continuing down into an external vestibule above which a sign read "Bústaðir, youth centre."

My excitement waned. Is this the infamous bunker about which Bubbi sang?

We entered into a basement adorned with stucco walls and crayoned Pride flags, past a billiards table and multiple IKEA chaise longues. The series of rooms are designed around a hallway, with one larger main area to the side of the corridor, and two or three smaller rooms on the opposite side. Despite the roomy nature of the chambers, all sounds were muted. Nothing reverberated. "This is the safest place in the bunker," Helgi said, gesturing to a corner furnished with a TV, Nintendo Switch controllers and a frayed sofa.

The church, the men explained, was never intended to be the premises for the bunker. It was much more of an afterthought, constructed from a utilitarian approach to maximising the use of the building lot. The bunker was certainly built in the event of a crisis, but how much of a public policy decision its construction was remains a question mark.

It turns out the interests of national security were never fully vested in the building. The bunker is now a mundane youth centre where teenagers gossip and scroll Tik Tok. Despite my disappointment, the experience was a positive demonstration of Iceland's acceptance of ordinariness. Maybe things aren't as secret as I'd imagined. ♪

ARCHI-
TECTURE

Beneath Bústaðakirkja is a Bunker

Words:
Jóhannes
Bjarkason

Images: Art
Bicnick

I heard the rumour about a nuclear bunker underneath Bústaðakirkja some time in the summer of 2017. My friend was going through a Bubbi Morthens phase and mentioned the 1983 song Bústaðir, which includes the lyrics (roughly translated): "Beneath Bústaðakirkja, behind a steel reinforced stone, the bishop and government hide." They suggest the subject of my friend's fascination:

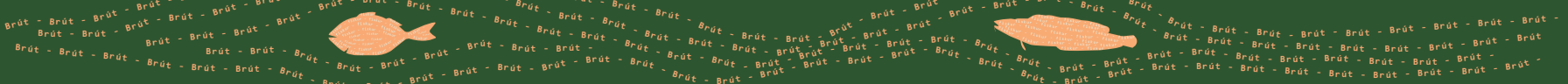
Pósthússtræti 2

Brút

+354 537 2788

Book a table on brut.is

Best Newcomer*
Best Seafood*
Best Brunch*





Winter Lights Festival

February 2 to 4 - Multiple venues at multiple times - Free

Let's admit it, Reykjavik in February isn't the nicest place to be. We are past the solstice, but it's still a long way to go until the midnight sun allows us to party (and be outside, frankly) for more than an hour. The winter storms are here and occasionally you'll hear stories of people (and in some cases, cars) being blown away by the wind. The Winter Lights Festival is one of the occasions to embrace the darkness around us, with beautiful light installations, a museum and pool night. **IZ**



Pool Night

February 4 - Multiple Venues - Free

Swimming pool night is an annual celebration of pool culture throughout Reykjavik. Pools are wet, warm and open late for bathers to squeeze in more laps or engage in more hot pot chit chat with friends and strangers. What's more, several pools around town are upping the ante by hosting extra special poolside entertainment. There will be a choir and circus performers at Árbæjarlaug, floating relaxation at Breiðhóltslaug, circus clowns and sing-alongs at Laugardalslaug, and a circus and light show at Sundhöllin. **CF**



Beer Day

March 1 - Everywhere - Prices Vary

Longtime readers of the Grapevine know that we enjoy a beer every once and a while and you've likely read in our pages before about Iceland's tumultuous history with the hoppy beverage. With the man hoping to avoid the casual drinking culture of mainland Europe taking hold at home, beer was prohibited in Iceland in 1915. But it was made legal again on March 1, 1989, and that day has since been known as Beer Day. If you're of age and so inclined, go grab yourself a cold one and cheers to beer. **CF**



Monochrome Magic

With a Corpse for Colour

CULTURE NEWS

Driving Mum will be showing in *Bíó Paradís* from Feb 17, *Háskólabíó* & *Smárabíó* from Feb. 24.

Hilmar Oddsson is a veteran of the film industry, making waves ever since his cinematic debut in 1986. "I've been doing almost everything in the book: documentaries, feature films, whatever," Hilmar says. With his trademark stunning videography, his latest feature "Driving Mum" ("Á ferð með mömmu") is a feast for the eyes.

The art of narrative

"The idea is older than anybody could imagine. It originates from 1994," says Hilmar of "Driving Mum." That summer he spent some time in Bildudalur, the hometown of actor Þróstur Leó Gunnarsson. "He was telling me stories about the locals and people there. He's a very funny guy, and he tells stories very well," shares Hilmar. "I was kind of inspired by the nature of the stories."

The film follows Jón, as he takes his mother's corpse on a road trip from the Westfjords to the south coast to fulfil her last wishes. Set in 1980, the film stars Þróstur, Kristbjörg Kjeld, and Hilmar's daughter Hera. Even though the story is entirely fictional, Hilmar draws inspiration from the likes of Jim Jarmusch. "I sometimes say I'm waving, I pay homage, or respect to somebody," he says, stressing the importance of storytelling in his work. In "Driving Mum," in particular, Hilmar pays tribute to his late father, a playwright who worked in the style of Theatre of the Absurd.

"Many of my older films are very serious, dramatic in that sense," shares Hilmar. "I wanted to write something in my personal style, my sense of humour, which is partly black and sarcastic."

Contrasting perspectives One of the most striking features of "Driving Mum" is the use of black and white imagery, with the stunning landscapes of Iceland as the backdrop. "Colours are extremely important for me. If I look back at my other films, I could describe (one as) my blue movie, this is my primary colour movie, this is my yellow movie," says Hilmar.

Words:
Iryna Zubenko

Images:
Art Bicnick / Film Stills

different angle — reverse what he has been living with so far."

Initially Hilmar planned to widen the aspect ratio, as the landscape became flatter. "If you do something like that it has to be perfect. I would have to shoot the film chronologically and for practical reasons, that wasn't possible," he admits.

Dreki's debut

Asked what was most challenging about making "Driving Mum," Hilmar smiles: "Probably the dog."

"There are very few people that specialise in animal training for film. They all have one thing in common — they're extremely expensive," he says. Through mutual connections, Hilmar was introduced to someone who had experience working with horses in another film. By luck, the person had three dogs and invited the crew to meet them — that's how Dreki was cast in the role of Brésnef.

There was one particular scene Hilmar was really worried about, as he wanted to do it in one take. "After that shot I thought, this dog is a genius. He can do everything," Hilmar shares. "When you're working with animals, you do your best to make them do their best. The rest is editing and sound," he says. "I think we were extremely lucky. The only thing we couldn't do was to make him bark. He's a silent dog."

It's all downhill from here

Before premiering in Iceland, "Driving Mum" toured international festivals and won the prestigious Grand Prix at the Tallinn Black Nights Film Festival. But now it's coming home.

"I'm very much looking forward to premiering in Iceland," he continues, adding that he has no expectation for how the film will be received. "There are no negative reviews so far. The first review we got after the premiere in Tallinn was five stars. It was absurd," Hilmar laughs. "I was joking with my producers — 'Do you realise what this means?' This means it will only go downhill from now on." 🍷

"This story came to me as black and white. There was no escape."

Hilmar admits he was initially worried producers would try to talk him out of the idea of making a black and white movie, but it turned out, the team was completely on board. "Fortunately, nobody tried to convince me not to do it."

"For me, (Jón's) journey has a symbolic meaning. We go from narrow fjords, steep mountains, over highlands, to a place that is flat," the director explains. As the landscape flattens, we witness the transformation of the main character. "He realises things he's never realised before, his mind opens up and he sees his life from a





CULTURE FEATURE

Sigurður's Very Busy Year

— And It's Only February

Words:
Aron Ingi Guðmundsson

Images:
Art Bicnick

A lot of people head into a new year with grand plans for a fresh start; to do things differently. But a lot of the time that's little more than talk.

That's not the case for artist Sigurður Ámundason. His year really started with a bang, with his work exhibited on 450 digital billboards across the capital area. Everywhere you looked, there were Sigurður's signature graphic illustrations. The artist (and longtime friend of the Grapevine) was chosen out of 40 applicants to showcase his art through the Auglýsingahlé (Commercial Break) project — a collaboration of Billboard, Gallery Y and the Reykjavík Art Museum.

City-wide exhibition? Check

Sigurður's work "Réttermi" replaced the usual carousel of advertisements bombarding the sightlines of Reykjavík residents with his illustrations, consisting of "egoistic meaningless brand names that think highly of themselves, including strings of

numbers and Icelandic letters in arbitrary rows."

As if a city-wide digital exhibition wasn't enough, Sigurður also wrote, directed and acted in the play "Hið ósagða" (The Unsaid) at Tjarnarbíó in December and January, while hosting another exhibition in Ásmundarsalur with his fellow artist Gunnar Jónsson (it runs until Feb. 12, so catch it if you can). I sat down with Sigurður for a hot chocolate on a cold evening to talk about his eventful year (so far).

"The billboard exhibition was crazy," he says. "Maybe almost too much, actually! I was very proud and humble, I kind of felt like an old person." With that, he breaks out in a bout of charismatic laughter that makes it impossible not to laugh along.

"When the whole city is your gallery, that's just magnificent, I'm still getting my head around it, to be honest," he continued. "It definitely has a good effect on you as an artist. But you have to be humble — the minute you become arrogant, you become unremarkable, in my opinion.

Everytime I meet a person that I admire and I find out he or she has a big head, I am so disappointed. It's like going to a fancy restaurant and it smells like shit!" The laughter resumes.

Sold-out theatre performance? Check

It must take a bit of work for Sigurður to remain humble these days. "Hið ósagða" got rave reviews in December, with all three performances selling out. That prompted the decision to add one January performance to the run to quench the public's thirst for more.

The idea for the performance had been brewing in Sigurður's head for a while. In fact, it started as a shorter piece of performance art before expanding into an hour-long play.

"It's kind of about my philosophy to make fun of as many types of people as I can," he said of the play's content, which touches on passive aggression and the unsaid, human connection and varied types of violence. "There is dishonesty in all kinds of people and violence can take many forms, it can be very subtle. You can, for example, know somebody and decide to humiliate them by pushing all of his or her buttons, knowing their weaknesses. It's very mean, but it happens," says Sigurður, the laughter giving way to a more serious demeanour.

According to Sigurður, the play is based on his own experiences, covering his temptations, weaknesses and some of the things he really dislikes, like passive aggression — behaviour he decided a long time ago to never participate in.

Sigurður describes himself as being a big time movie nerd and says he's long wanted to get into cinema. In that vein, one aspect of "Hið ósagða" is inspired by a scene in one of his favourite movies, "Mulholland Drive," in which a singer falls on stage during a dramatic performance and stops singing, but the song goes on like nothing happened. That inspired Sigurður to pre-record all the dialogue for the performance and have the actors lip syncing on stage — a quirk that caught the attention of theatre-goers.

"I like this method and I wanted to see it. And if you want to see it, you can assume that some other people also want to," he rationalises. "But if not, at least I have shared something I wanted to do."

"You have to step out of your comfort zone, out of the box from time to time," he professes. "It was a lot of work; it took me countless days and nights to edit what was recorded beforehand, but it was fun. I love theatre and I want to have the dialogue perfect and by doing it this way, the

actors can also focus on their posture and body language."

Novel and short film? In progress

Though Sigurður wasn't sure when he was younger what he wanted to do when he grew up, he was interested in movies and visited his aunt in Hollywood as a teenager seeking inspiration. His path took a turn away from the cinematic after receiving advice to direct his efforts elsewhere.

"I went to see a healer at some point, who told me to put this movie thing on pause and focus on fine art. I registered for Myndlistarskóli Reykjavíkur and later Listaháskóli Íslands and did what she told me," Sigurður says with a glint in his eyes.

Drawing came very naturally, and Sigurður tells me he drew a lot in his childhood and teenage years. Painting was more difficult, though he was mesmerised once introduced to classic paintings. But his teachers told him that everything had already been painted, so he decided to make drawings based on the classic paintings he loved.

"Drawing is my base, I will always be a visual artist," he said. "It's similar to an Icelander who goes for three months to the south of France, but he always comes back. When I'm bored of one medium, I use something else, like a chef that uses different ingredients."

"What is on my mind is human connections — what is uncomfortable and difficult to talk about? Both with the billboard exhibition and the play, the communication is unclear, it's vague, and that's the purpose. In my visual art I try to express everyday things in a drawing that is not at all 'everyday.'"

It's clear, listening to Sigurður speak, that he enjoys juggling many projects at once — did I mention he's currently writing a novel and plans to shoot a short film?

"This novel I'm writing is the most difficult project I have faced other than parenthood," he says. "If I would have published it two years ago, it would have been despicable. It would still be despicable if I would publish it today, but I still want to publish it soon."

"I want to do a lot of things — if I get bored with one project, I can have an affair with another one. I want to be on the edge, in the dark, in the mud. I want to make a play that is half movie, half play; to make a drawing that is also a painting. I like to do something not knowing what happens next."

Whatever Sigurður does next, he's already achieved more in January than most will tick off their to-do list all year. ☘



Coffee & Sandwiches

The most special coffee
from specialists
in speciality coffee.

Hafnarstræti 11

Instagram icon kaffi_o_le

Get Grapevine Merch! _____

shop.grapevine.is
shop.grapevine.is
shop.grapevine.is
shop.grapevine.is*
shop.grapevine.is



Don't Hesitate!
Act Now!



*You only need to type the URL in once



THE FIRST DUMPLING
HOUSE IN ICELAND

DRAGONDIMSUM.IS



GEIRISGATA 9,
REYKJAVÍK

EYRAVEGUR 1,
SELFOSS

BEST PIZZA IN REYKJAVÍK 2022



GRANDI • GARÐABÆR • HLEMMUR • SELFOSS
@FLATEYPIZZA WWW.FLATEYPIZZA.IS +354 588 2666

FLATEY

MUSIC FEATURE



Embracing The Void

Ægir on finding balance and 'accepting uncertainty'

Words: **Josie Anne Gaitens** Image: **Art Bicnick**

Ægir Sindri Bjarnason has just released his seventh solo album, accepting uncertainty — a five track record of crushing industrial noise and dark ambience. It's a brilliant, exhilarating creation, albeit far from easy listening. But it's also not the only new thing Ægir has had a hand in creating recently. When we arrive at his apartment on a freezing, January afternoon, he opens the door to us with a tiny infant curled peacefully on his chest.

Ægir and his partner, María-Carmela (perhaps better known as the artist MSEA), welcomed their daughter into the world at the very end of 2022, just two weeks before accepting uncertainty.

"In these first few weeks we just take turns. We try to make sure we both get to go for a walk," Ægir says, smiling on beatifically at María-Carmela and child, still in the haze of love and sleep deprivation that all parents of newborns know so well.

Parental demands Ægir is no novice when it comes to balancing the joys and pressures of parenthood, while trying to also live a creative life; his first child is now eight years old. Ægir admits learning how to fulfil himself artistically at the same time as caring for another human was a steep learning curve.

"When she was very young, I got kind of isolated from a lot of my creative things because I had to work and then her mom was at school," he explains. "We were just also very young and newly responsible for this other person, while still figuring out how to take care of, or be responsible, for ourselves."

"I wanted to do things that I couldn't do and didn't have the time to do," says Ægir, echoing the frustrations of many new parents. "I tend to get kind of depressed when I'm not creative, when I'm not working on something," he continues. "I think that's partly

why it was so freeing for me to start making music by myself."

Supporting act

Prior to embarking on his solo music project, Ægir was predominantly known as a drummer, a talent he has built a reputation for since his early teens. "I've been playing in bands since forever," he says. However, as much as Ægir loves drumming and performing with other people, there were aspects of this craft that he recognizes held him back.

"Being a drummer, I think I never even entertained the idea of making music by myself," he says. "I've always felt like I needed to rely on other people for this creative outlet because, you know, the drummer is always kind of in the back and is always supporting a band of people."

"I've taken up my space in my own way through drumming," he adds, finally. "But it's still not really something I used to think could stand on its own musically."

Recording as an entry point

Ægir's first foray into producing his own music came through teaching himself how to record the bands he was playing in at the time.

"I was never really completely satisfied with the result when working with other people and it tended to take a long time," he says of his motivation to become a sound engineer. "I had grown interested in the recording process and at some point just decided that if I'm doing it myself, then no one else is going to care about it as much as I do."

Ægir admits the process wasn't always easy. "It's tricky," he says. "There's a lot of learning. I've made records that I think could have sounded better. And I've made the records where I think I

managed to get them to sound the way I wanted them to. And that's just growing over time."

Going electric

It was input from María-Carmela that sparked the next step in Ægir's creative journey. "I had Ableton [a music production software] and I gave him access to it," she says. "And immediately he was like, killing it."

"In the beginning, I was mostly interested in playing drums and processing them to somehow find more musicality in that, and like looping and creating these weird sounds and different textures that are all still coming from the drum kit," Ægir describes. "But after some time of that I got into Ableton and started programming beats and just doing more like fully electronic production."

A different energy

accepting uncertainty is the first of Ægir's album's to feature María-Carmela's voice — although, as he points out, "throughout my creative process, she has always had input."

"I've been playing in her band for a while," Ægir says. "So we've been making music together for some time. But for this, I felt like I had nothing to add to the song, but wanted a different energy in it. And I think it's probably the first time in the process of this project, where I felt like I needed someone else on it."

"You also heard me singing in the shower," María-Carmela reminds him.

"The bathrooms have a shared fan system," Ægir explains, smiling. "So I heard her singing in the shower while I was in the bathroom, through the fan. And I thought, 'wow, this is amazing! I have to use this for something!'"

The couple talk warmly as they recall the final recording sessions just before the record was finished. "We did a couple of really long takes. She was eight months pregnant at the time," says Ægir.

María-Carmela jokingly grimaces. "My ribs hurt!"

Learning to love the void "I spent most of the last year kind of like slowly working on this, which is probably the longest I've worked on a solo album," says Ægir of the album's gestation period.

However, like much of his work, once complete, accepting uncertainty was released with very little fanfare.

"I'm not overly concerned these days," Ægir says of the process of promoting his work. "I don't really feel like putting too much expectation on the release itself, because that kind of inevitably leads to disappointment. It's tiring to be working super hard at putting something out, trying to make sure it gets heard by someone — and then a lot of the time, it doesn't."

I suggest that this must feel like shouting into the void.

"So I've just kind of embraced the void," Ægir responds with a grin, and María-Carmela laughs.

"You know, there's so much music that I want to make," he goes on. "And I kind of always have something in my head that I am working on. So I'd rather just finish the thing and get it out and move on to the next thing."

accepting uncertainty is available for purchase on Bandcamp or to stream on Spotify. [👉](#)



Breathe Deep And Enjoy The Ride

Words: **Daniel Þorsteinsson and Josie Anne Gaitens**
Image: **Daniel Þorsteinsson**

TRPTYCH is the solo project of electronic musician, drummer and designer, Daniel Þorsteinsson. A prolific artist, he has been releasing music — at least once a year — since 2016. His latest album, 'Inner Terrestrial MMXXIII a.D.' is a sprawling journey of ambient drones, disembodied voices and distant drum beats. At two and a half hours long, it's not your average casual listen — it requires commitment. And yet listeners who make the time are well rewarded by the rich interior world that TRPTYCH invites us to be immersed in. Curious to find out about the inspo for these epic numbers, we asked Daniel to talk us through the album, track by track.

Infinity
This opener is so important to me. My wife named it and the feel of it is definitely about building up and getting into a groove or a state of mind, the right frame of mind. It has an ethnic but futuristic feel to it and sets the tone for what's to

come — let the journey begin.

Rain
This is an ode to water, which is beautiful and the most important substance on this planet.

Open Up
We should all open up to what we don't know. Be open minded. This track has sort of a 90s feel to it and starts off pretty bright but takes a dark turn into the void. Anything can happen.

River
This song is supposed to make you feel like you are floating down a huge, deep, clear river and you go with it and become one with it. Just flow.

Age of Dissolution
This is about us becoming one with the universe and realising that we are as much a part of it as everything else. We are not separate entities.

A Lonely Night
This continues the theme of the song before. We may feel lonely but we are all together. It may sometimes feel dark, scary and lonely, but there is always light at the end of the tunnel. Which leads us into the next song...

Nýr Dagur
...It's always good to wake up to a new day, new opportunities. Anything can happen.

God Molecule
This song is the feeling of coming down from a 5-MeO-DMT journey and realising that we are one with the universe and when it all boils down we ask ourselves the question, "what really matters?" Sometimes we get stuck in stupid stuff that really doesn't matter.

MMXXIII a.D.
Let's stay in the now, in 2023, and make it as weird and as great as we can. Sonically, a lot of alien lifeforms visit this song.

Tonight
When the night comes, anything can happen. Some things only come out at night. This song has a lot of romantic vibes to it. To me, the chord progression in this one asks "what can happen?" It ends without answering and that's the point: we can only find out ourselves by living it.

Breath
...But before we go out, and whatever happens, first take a deep breath and enjoy the ride.

Moon
The moon is huge, scary, floating and unreal. It pulls Earth towards it and when the moon is full we are off to space.

Jörð
An ode to the blue planet. There's so much here that we don't understand.

They Are Here
Soundwise, I love albums that end with question mark songs and this one definitely had that feeling for me. Musically, this song tells the story of futuristic alien species landing on ancient Mayan grounds.
'Inner Terrestrial MMXXIII a.D.' is available to stream on Spotify, or to download via Bandcamp. You can follow TRPTYCH on Instagram to keep up to date with their latest releases. 🍷

EXPLORE UNSEEN ICELAND
ON THE ULTIMATE FLYING RIDE

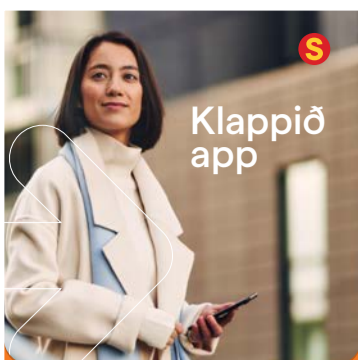
FlyOver ICELAND
OPEN EVERY DAY | flyovericeland.com

MAT BAR

Hverfisgata 26
matbar.is | +354-788-3900

PORTY WINEBAR

VEGHÚSASTÍGUR 9A
Open Tuesday - Sunday
16:00 - 23:00



Klappið app

The official ticketing app for public buses in the Reykjavík capital area

Search for "Klappið" in the App Store or on Google Play.

KLAPP



KAFFIBARINN

LIVE DJ EVERY NIGHT



PHOTOS FROM ICELAND

Skólavörðustígur 22



Wine bar & food

VÍNSTÚKAN TÍU SOPAR



CENTRE MAP

In more ways than one

The City Map presents a selection of restaurants, bars and shops that received the 2022 "Best Of Reykjavík" award curated by our stringent panellists. Get the bigger, more detailed version of The Reykjavík Grapevine City Map at your nearest hotel or guesthouse.

Dining

1. Le Kock

Tryggvagata 14

The craft burger OG has never been better. No one toasts potato buns to crisp perfection like they do, or cooks patties to such medium rare goodness. Everything is made from scratch, including the condiments! This is gourmet fast food, with all of the attention to detail and none of the sacrifice on fun and flavour.

2. Flatey

Grandagarður 11

Educating a country beyond their diet of pizza-chain pies is no small feat, but that's exactly what Flatey sought to do when they burst onto the scene, and for that we applaud them. The Margherita continues to be a panel favourite; who can argue with milky mozzarella and tomatoes?

3. Fine

Rauðarárstígur 33

A panel favourite, Fine is a no nonsense, no frills, Sichuanese Chinese restaurant that steadfastly opens Reykjavík's mind's and palates to the regional cuisine. The Mala Chicken is a tingling explosion of flavour, literally, thanks to the sichuan peppercorn. For something simple yet exciting, we recommend the Hot and Sour Potatoes.

4. SONO matseljur

Sæmundargata 11

Sono overlooks a wild-flower meadow and a spectacular view of the Reykjavík skyline. Languorous and idyllic, the menu too is shaped for slow savouring. The chefs look beyond Iceland for inspiration, while still showcasing seasonal, local produce in all its colourful glory. Foraged herbs, berries, fruits, stems, and flowers all feature on the menu, resulting in a fun affair that serves as a reminder that good vegan food goes beyond batter fried cauliflower.

5. Laundromat

Austurstræti 9

Laundromat offers a cool '50's-diner-meets-maximalist-library vibe, decorated with bright furnishings, maps and colour-coded books. It's great for families in general, but teens in particular like the fun decor, burgers and milkshakes. We especially love their vocal support for breastfeeding, as well as the fact that you can actually do laundry here.

6. Deig Workshop

Tryggvagata 14

Deig's 'poor man's offer' is as good as it gets on this abnormally expensive

island. For 1500 ISK, you can choose from a handmade bagel with a filling of your choice, any doughnut or pastry from their selection, and a simple drink (coffee, juice or kokomjólk, basically). Even better, they open at 7 a.m., and the offer is valid every weekday, for as long as the bakery is open.

7. Sushi Social

Þingholtsstræti 5

If you are a group of friends looking for a fun night about town, Sushi Social is the place to be. The menu is ideal for sharing—although, who'd want to share something as delectable as langoustine tempura. Order one—or several—of those colourful drinks with names that recall a tropical holiday to make a fun night even more festive.

8. Sumac Grill & Drinks

Laugavegur 28

Sumac is one of the few places that cooks lamb with none of that sous-vide nonsense. An unpretentious lamb rib, cooked on the grill, kissed with smoke and licked by flame is pretty hard to top. Sumac serves it with blistered grapes, fried almonds, a splash of thinned down muhammara and lentils. It's a dish you can't get enough of, and thankfully the restaurant hasn't dared to take it off the menu.

9. Borg 29

Borgartún 29

This is one of the more comfortable food halls to be at, with a wide variety of choices to please most anyone. "Almost every place makes small plates, which is excellent for sharing," observed one panellist. She's right, one can choose from sushi at Umami, to burgers at Yuzu, to grilled meats at Bál.

10. Fish Company

Vesturgata 2a

For the definitive seafood experience in Reykjavík, you'd be hard pressed to find a better spot than Fiskfélagið. Their tasting menus are a great way to try the best Icelandic waters have to offer, from Atlantic cod served Japanese style, to harissa wolf-fish. The sushi platter makes for a great lunch while their fish of the day is usually a generous pan-fried dish with a luscious sauce.

11. Þrír Frakkar

Baldursgata 14

This cosy, tucked-away restaurant has not let anything sway them from tradition—you'll spot everything from foal, to blackbird, to cod throats to plockfiskur on their menu. Opened in 1989, the restaurant has been run by chef Úlfar Eysteinnsson and his family ever since. A visit to this place underlines that good old-fashioned Icelandic cooking can be all kinds of memorable.

Drinking

12. Röntgen

Hverfisgata 12

This place has it all. "It's crazy how it's continued to dominate the bar scene in Reykjavík," one panellist raved. "But it's just got so many elements. It works for every vibe, which is so rare for a bar." Despite only appearing on the downtown scene a few years ago, the place has already cemented itself among the nightlife legends.

13. Jungle Cocktail Bar

Austurstræti 9

"Jungle's vibe naturally caters to an early night crowd. It's stylish and airy, and, of course, they have the most innovative and delicious cocktails in the city," enthused one panel member. The panel also praised the bar's diversity—noting how attendees spanned all ages and demographics.

14. Kaffibarinn

Bergstaðastræti 1

Let's be real: there's a reason that Kaffibarinn is still here and full of dedicated regulars. At night, you'll find the crowd gets rowdy, the convos get interesting and the dance floor gets sweaty in the most wonderful way. "It's the obvious choice," said a panellist. "Who doesn't have some crazy story from closing time in the smoking area at Kaffibarinn?"

15. Gaukurinn

Tryggvagata 22

With dim lights, leather sofas, gender-neutral bathrooms and free tampons, this bar/venue is the preferred hangout for the unorthodox Reykvingar. So if you're looking for like-minded alt/queer peeps, there you go. From heavy metal fests to quieter indie shows, this second floor haunt does it all.

16. Bravó

Laugavegur 22

Bravó: a dark room with amber-toned light, simple furniture, and cosy bohemian pillows. Their happy hour—perhaps the most prolific in the city—starts at 12:00 everyday and lasts until 20:00. Located in the heart of Laugavegur, it's also a prime people-watching spot.

17. Óðinstorg

Óðinstorg

It's decided: Óðinstorg is the best outdoor drinking spot in Reykjavík. The new square was previously a parking area, but is now an open, airy, designed-for-those-lazy-summer-days paradise. You have good sun, good seating, Snaps, and Bodega, and serious mainland European vibes.



18. Session Craft Bar

Bankastræti 14

With its minimal appearance, stainless steel bar backed with dozens of taps and fridges full of beers canned and bottled, Session is a place that, while cosy enough, is made for serious craft heads. Whether you're hankering for a lip-puckering gose, or an IPA packed with more flowers than a funeral, Session has got your back.



ICELANDIC Fish, Lamb & Chicken in original PAKISTANI curries

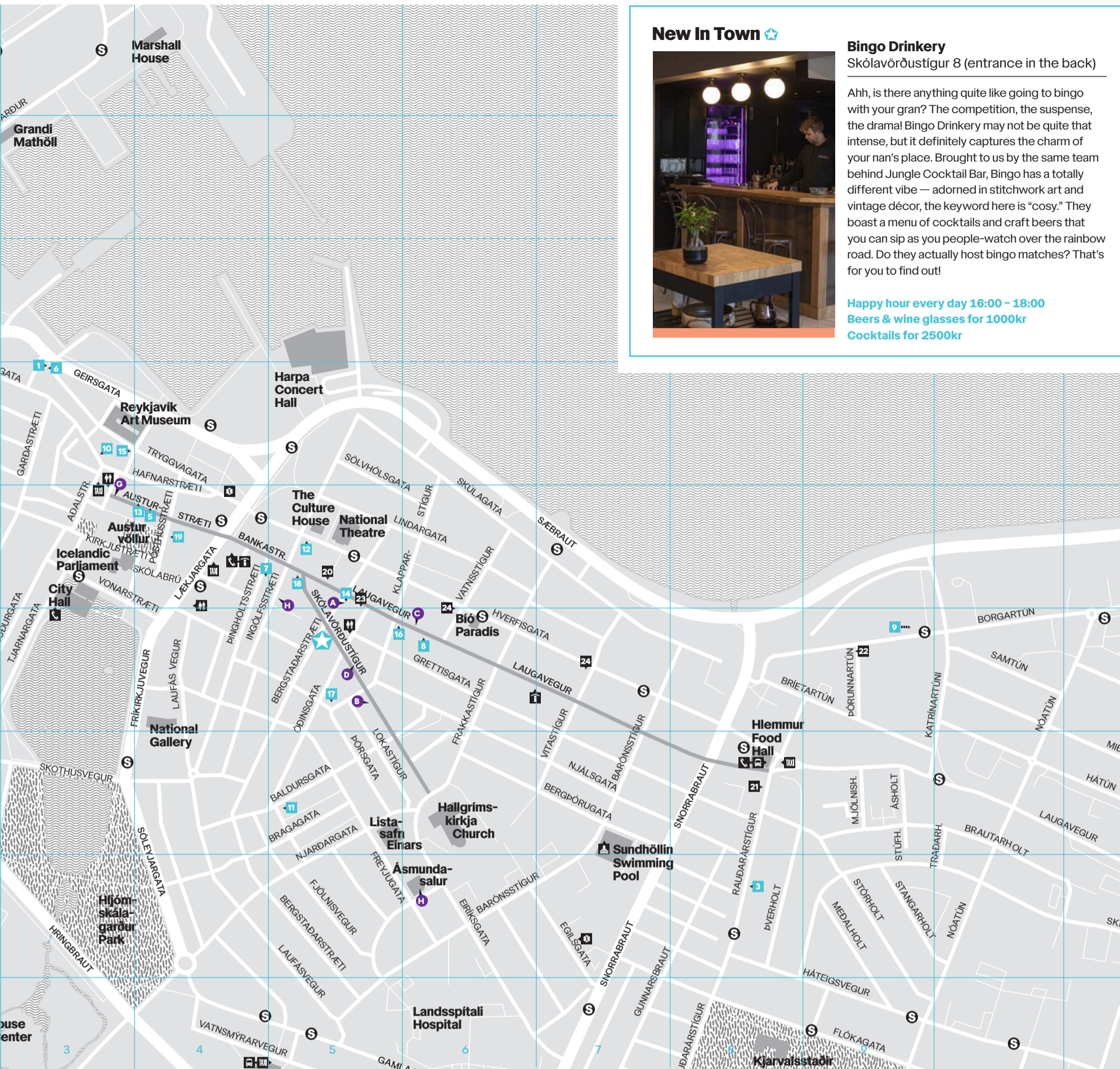
SHALIMAR PAKISTANI CUISINE

AUSTURSTRÆTI 4, 101 REYKJAVÍK ☎ 551 0 292

www.shalimar.is

Tandoori dishes & Nan breads

Kebabs, Samosas & Vegetarian specialities



New In Town ☆



Bingo Drinkery
Skólavörðustígur 8 (entrance in the back)

Ahh, is there anything quite like going to bingo with your gran? The competition, the suspense, the drama! Bingo Drinkery may not be quite that intense, but it definitely captures the charm of your nan's place. Brought to us by the same team behind Jungle Cocktail Bar, Bingo has a totally different vibe — adorned in stitchwork art and vintage décor, the keyword here is "cozy." They boast a menu of cocktails and craft beers that you can sip as you people-watch over the rainbow road. Do they actually host bingo matches? That's for you to find out!

Happy hour every day 16:00 - 18:00
Beers & wine glasses for 1000kr
Cocktails for 2500kr

Shopping

20. Yeoman
Laugavegur 7

2021 saw Yeoman being donned by international celebrities while also continuing her reign as the primary fashion tastemaker for Reykjavik women. "To talk about modern Icelandic style is to talk about Yeoman," one panel member said.

21. Lucky Records
Rauðarástígur 10

Lucky Records is the one-stop-shop for anything Icelandic music. They've got it all; new titles, CDs, rarities, vinyl, cassettes, second hand 12", 7" sections, you name it! Notably, the store is very in touch with the local underground. Basically any Icelandic release—no matter how big or small—will be sold there, and trust and believe, their shopkeepers will know them inside and out.

22. Hringekjan
Þórunnartún 2

Similar to a consignment shop, Hringekjan is a space where people can rent out spaces to sell their own clothes and accessories. It's the most eco-friendly way to keep your closet fresh, which, in light of our current world, is something we should all be thinking about. "I don't know how they get such chic people to sell their clothes there," laughed one panel member. If you want something groovy this is the place to go."

23. Apótek Atelier
Laugavegur 16

Apótek Atelier is quite new on the scene, but this small boutique has already made quite a splash. Created by designers Ýr Þrastardóttir, Halldóra Sif Guðlaugsdóttir and Sævar Markús Óskarsson, Apótek Atelier blurs the line between studio and store, functioning as both the designers' workspace, as well as the place where one can purchase their wares.

24. Húrra Reykjavík
Hverfisgata 18a

Húrra Reykjavík has changed the game of Reykjavik fashion in a matter of years. They offer a la mode streetwear like Stussy, Champion and Adidas, and by doing so they've created a fashion frenzy. Trump might not have "made America great again," but Húrra Reykjavík has made local streetwear great again for sure.



📍 **PÓSTHÚSSTRÆTI | 101 REYKJAVÍK**

February 3 to March 2

Art Exhibitions

Gallery openings, happenings, showings and pop-up exhibitions all around the capital region.

OPENING

Ásmundarsafn

Ásmundur Sveinsson and Sigga Björg: *Breath on a Window*

With a focus on legends, fairy tales and imagination, Sigga Björg's drawings, installations, videos and books create a unique visual world where fantasy, humour and horror go hand in hand. At this exhibition, she works, among other things, on a new series based on Icelandic folk tales.

→ Opens February 3rd
Runs until May 7th

Ásmundur Sveinsson and Carl Milles

The exhibition features the works of sculptors Ásmundur Sveinsson (1893-1982) and Carl Milles (1875-1955) from Sweden and is part of the collaboration between Millesgården Museum and Ásmundarsafn. Carl Milles is one of Sweden's most respected sculptors and, like his one-time mentee Ásmundur, he donated his house, studio and work to the public after his death.

→ Opens February 18th
Runs until May 21st

Gallerí Göng

No Set Course - Sigrún Halla

The exhibition consists of abstract watercolours from the past year, which often carry references to the environment and surroundings. The dissolution of material into colours and lines that scatter around the picture surface stands as a sign of the creativity that can be born in lack of direction.

→ Opens February 4th
Runs until February 27th

Gallery Grásteinn

Álfheiður Ólafsdóttir - *Fegurð álfheima*

Álfheiður Ólafsdóttir opens an

exhibition of oil paintings as part of the Reykjavík Winter Festival 2023. The exhibition gives an insight into the mysterious world of fairies, which is characterised by softness, beauty and joy, as if the creative process itself were a fairy tale.

→ Opens February 3rd
Runs until February 28th

Hafnarhús

D-47 Logi Leó Gunnarsson

Logi Leó works with sound, sculpture and video in unexpected compositions and installations that often take over the exhibition space. By activating everyday materials in combination with music, recordings and sound equipment, he enables the audience to look at and listen to familiar things in a new way.

→ Opens February 16th
Runs until May 7th

Höggmyndagarðurinn

The Struggle Is Real — Curver Thoroddson

This work is a "real-life-performance" filmed on 16mm film in Russia. Curver had been asked by Ragnar Kjartansson to do a naked-crawl-performance at a big group exhibition tied to his Santa Barbara show in Moscow shortly before the start of the Ukrainian war. No one thought that war was imminent, but in retrospect the signs were there.

→ Screenings on Feb 3rd & 4th

Museum of Design and Applied Arts

At Home in the Design Museum

The exhibition is displayed as a blueprint of a home where different objects from different eras come together side by side as they would in a home. Furniture, tableware, books and textiles from different eras are displayed, exemplifying a fraction of what Icelandic designers and artisans have been creating. The home is in constant flux. Things

are moved, thrown or given away. Change is constant.

→ Opens February 3rd
Runs until 2026

National Gallery of Iceland

Forty Years of The Corridor

The Corridor is an artist-run exhibition space founded by artist Helgi Þorgils Friðjónsson in 1979. It is probably Iceland's longest-running privately-operated gallery. The Corridor has always been housed in Helgi Þorgils' own home; the gallery's first exhibition, of *For the Time Being* by Hreinn Friðfinnsson early in 1980, was held at Laufásvegur 79.

→ Opens February 3rd
Runs until June 4th

Nordic House

HOW DID I GET TO THE BOMBHELTER

How did I get to the bomb shelter is a multidisciplinary group exhibition featuring seven contemporary Ukrainian artists. Curated by Yulia Sapiha and produced by The Nordic House, the exhibition explores themes related to the artists' personal experience of the war, their longing for a peaceful life, their paths towards survival and their hope for the future.

→ Opens February 4th
Runs until May 14th

Sigurjón Ólafsson Museum

The Gift of Children

Sigurjón Ólafsson's reliefs and portraits of the family members of Westman Islands fisheries magnate Einar Sigurðsson. In a booklet accompanying the exhibition, art historian Aðalsteinn Ingólfsson discusses the portraits in the context of Sigurjón's other works, emphasising the responsibility that Einar Sigurðsson felt towards struggling artists.

→ Opens February 3rd
Runs until Autumn 2023

From Various Sources

Some of Sigurjón Ólafsson's key works from the period 1938 to 1982

made of different materials, such as plaster, bronze, marble and wood. The title of the exhibition refers to both the variety of the works and their ownership.

→ Opens February 3rd
Runs until Autumn 2023

SÍM Gallery

Til-efni: Ingibjörg Gunnlaugsdóttir
Jóhanna Björk paints with oil on canvas, with reference to natural forces, environment and landscape. She fascinates with a free flow and each picture is a journey to an exotic destination, although often a specific idea of the subject matter or colours has been proposed.

→ Opens February 4th
Runs until February 19th

ONGOING

Ásmundarsalur

Delayed at Triste: Gunnar Jónsson & Sigurður Ámundason
Photography and drawings.

→ Runs until February 12th

Inverse: Sigga Björg Sigurðardóttir & Mikael Lind

Video- and sound installation.

→ Runs until February 19th

Ásmundarsafn

Unndór Egill Jónsson and Ásmundur Sveinsson: After the Blizzard
Sculpture.

→ Runs until February 22nd

BERG Contemporary

Sigurður Guðjónsson - Perpetual Motion

Installation experimenting with lenses, light, and motion.

→ Runs until February 19th

Kristján Steingrímur - From Near and Afar
Paintings.

→ Runs until February 25th

Einar Jónsson Museum



Eurovision Contenders Announced

The 10 songs competing to rep Iceland at the 67th Eurovision Song Contest in Liverpool have been announced by national broadcaster RÚV. The tunes will go head-to-head in two semi-finals in February, with the deciding vote scheduled for March 4th. According to Söngvakeppnin rules, all songs have to be submitted in Icelandic, even though many contenders chose to submit two versions so they can target the international audience with an English version. The 2023 submissions range from rock-inspired tunes to dance songs, performed by BRAGI, MÓA, Benedikt, Celebs, Diljá, Kristín Sesselja, Langi Seli and the Shadows, Silja Rós & Kjalar, Úlfar, and Sigga Ózk. **IZ**



Ólöf Arnalds Is Crowdfunding A New Album

Icelandic composer and multi-instrumentalist Ólöf Arnalds has launched a crowdfunding campaign to raise the €23,000 needed to release some new music — her fifth studio album, titled "Tár í morgunsárið". Possible donations start at €15 (2.250 ISK), but if you pledge €400, Ólöf will cover a song of your choice, and those who donate over €1,000 will be invited to a private concert held in one of the most intimate music venues in Reykjavík — Mengi. She's 48% of the way to her goal. Lend your support through karolinafund.com. **IZ**

Iceland To Get A New Music Export Office

The government has announced that ÚTÓN, the Iceland Music Export Office, is being reconfigured (ahem, closed entirely in its current iteration) this spring. Over the years, ÚTÓN has been charged with promoting and creating opportunities for Icelandic musicians both at home and abroad, facilitating funding and networking opportunities, organising events and spreading the word about new music releases. The exact makeup of the organisation that will succeed ÚTÓN is fuzzy at this point, but it is clear that having such an entity is crucial for the music industry, particularly for emerging artists. The consequences of the absence of the export office, in the long term, could lead to decreased opportunities for the Icelandic artists. **IZ**



The Visitors - Ragnar Kjartansson

February 4 to August 13 - Akureyri Art Museum - 2.000 ISK

Named as the best artwork of the 21st century by The Guardian and displayed all around the world, Ragnar Kjartansson's exhibition *The Visitors* is finally coming up north. *The Visitors* is a 64-minute nine channel video installation that pays tribute to friendship with a hint of romantic sadness. A farm in Upstate New York, a bohemian musician gang and exceptional music — *The Visitors* has it all. **IZ**



Tracing Fragments

February 3 to May 21 - Gerðasafn - General Admission 1.000 ISK

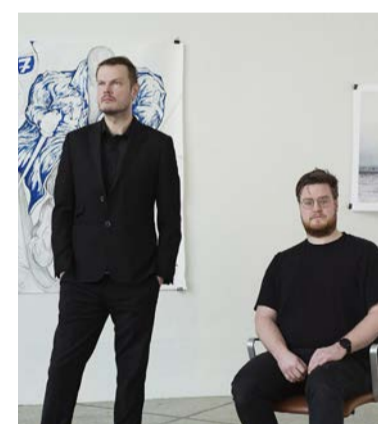
It's no small task, trying to make sense of oneself, one's personhood, one's culture, out of a tangled web of generational and cultural trauma. Through physical acts of art the six artists in this exhibition grapple with the complexities of heritage and identity and achieve a deeply intimate catharsis. Confronting histories of slavery, colonialism, racism, religious persecution, queerness and more, with both tenderness and criticism, this show is one to enter into with a heart ready to be filled with grief, love, beauty, sorrow and power. **RX**



Landvörður - Jessica Auer

Runs until April 2 - Slátturhúsið - Free

It is a particular identity to be an immigrant, to both be at home and a visitor. Canadian-born artist Jessica Auer, who has lived in Iceland for many years, embraces this identity through documentation of her travels throughout the country, the people who take on stewardship of the land and the connection between ourselves and the lands we live, travel and exist in. The resulting photography perfectly conveys the ouroboros of simplicity-to-grandeur that Iceland can be. Jessica concurrently has an installation at Skaffell Bistró in Seyðisfjörður, which is well worth the hop over the heath. **RX**



Delayed At Triste - Gunnar Jónsson and Sigurður Ámundason

Runs until February 12 - Ásmundarsalur - Free

It's the plot of a film that ended up being the catalyst for an art exhibition. Gunnar and Sigurður found themselves waylaid by a storm while traversing the Icelandic highlands. In the shelter of a cabin they were fortunate enough to happen upon, they found their imaginations piqued by the surrounding landscapes and this exhibition was born, marrying Gunnar's photography and Sigurður's illustrations. As the storm beat at the cabin, the duo created art. Go see it. **CF**

» events.grapevine.is

If you're putting something on for the general public, send us a line to : events@grapevine.is

Einar Jónsson - Sculpture Works & Garden

→ Permanent exhibition

Gallerí Fold

Daði Guðbjörnsson - Nothing disturbs the attention of the mountain

Landscape paintings.

→ Runs until February 11th

Gallerí Skilti

Helgi Hjaltalín Eyjólfsson - Þið öll

Photographic representations.

→ Runs until June 15th

Hafnarborg Center of Culture and Fine Art

Sóley Eiríksdóttir: Amuse Retrospective of Sóley's sculpture work.

→ Runs until March 19th

Eiríkur Smith: Untitled

Paintings, ink and gouache.

→ Runs until March 19th

Hafnarhús

Down or th: North Atlantic Triennial

Multiple media works of artists living across northern regions.

→ Runs until February 5th

Erró: Freehand

Erró's early freehand works meet his later collage-based works.

→ Runs until May 31st

Erró: Cunning Scissors

Works spanning the entirety of Erró's vibrant art career.

→ Runs until December 31st

Harpa

Circuleight

Designs and real-time interactive and immersive visuals, scored by renowned musician Högni Egilsson.

→ Runs until February 28th

i8 Gallery

Butterly / Pétursson

Ceramics and paintings.

→ Runs until March 4th

Kjarvalstaðir

Hildur Hákonardóttir: Red

Thread

Woven works.

→ Runs until March 12th

Jóhannes S. Kjarval: First Snow

Paintings by Jóhannes Sveinsson Kjarval (1885-1972).

→ Runs until February 26th

Museum of Design and Applied Arts

Designer in residency: Ada Sta czak

Ceramic designer working with materials like clay, lava, stone, and soil.

→ Runs until May 14th

Best book design from all over the world 2022

Introduction of The best book design from all over the World.

→ Runs until April 2nd

National Gallery of Iceland

Zanele Muholi

Photography.

→ Runs until February 12th

Reykjanesbaer Art Museum

Lines, entanglement and other stuff - Guðrún Gunnarsdóttir

Filament and textile art, 3D works.

→ Runs until March 5th

You Are Here / Jeste tutaj / Du er her / Þú ert hér - Vena Naskr cka / Michael Richardt

Performance artists.

→ Runs until March 5th

Nýlistasafnið

Fragments of Other Knowledge

Multiple mediums.

→ Runs until March 5th

Reykjavik Museum of Photography

Christopher Taylor: Presence

Photography.

→ Runs until April 23rd

Sumac Restaurant

Augnablikin: Leiðarvísir Augnablika

Photography and Paintings.

→ Permanent exhibition

Events

Concerts, comedy, movies and a bunch of stuff that defies categorization (and sometimes logic).

Friday February 3rd

Party Screening: Sister Act

21:00 *Bío Paradís*

Cycle

20:00

Borgarleikhúsið

Apocalyptic: Bloody Valentine Drag Night

21:00 *Gaukurinn*

Trío Sunnu Gunnlaugs

18:00 *Hafnarborg*

Myrkravaka

21:00 *Húrra*

Eternal Roots inna session vol.2

20:00 *ÍDNÓ*

DJ Óli Dóri

23:00 *Kaffibarinn*

KGB

20:00 *Kex Hostel*

Einar Vilberg + Ormar

22:00 *LEMMY*

Moses Hightower

20:00 *Mengi*

Saturday February 4th

DJ Logi Leó

21:00 *12 Tónar*

Distract Invites: Leanca (RO) / Rayonas (LT)

20:00 *Bravó*

Cycle

20:00

Borgarleikhúsið

Mørøse, Merkúr & Eilíf Sjálfsfróun

20:00 *Gaukurinn*

Matinée Organ Concert

12:00

Hallgrímskirkja

Upphljómun with Rebecca Goldberg + Guests

22:00 *Húrra*

Már & Nielsen

23:00 *Kaffibarinn*

Myrkví, Hayfitz (US) & Ragnar Ólafsson

20:00 *Kex Hostel*

Moses Hightower

20:00 *Mengi*

Let's chat and play games in Icelandic

11:30 *Reykjavík City Library*

Sunday February 5th

Sunday Classics: The Aquarian Age

16:00 *Harpa - Norðurljós*

Gunni Ewok

22:00 *Kaffibarinn*

Monday February 6th

Hrikalegur Kjöhleifur

22:00 *Kaffibarinn*

Tuesday February 7th

Matinée Concert - Erla Björg Káradóttir

12:00 *Hafnarborg*

"Ljós í myrkri" - Icelandic Opera

12:15 *Harpa - Norðurljós*

DJ Ómar E

22:00 *Kaffibarinn*

Wednesday

February 8th

Make Like a Tree + Gréta Arnorsdóttir Album Release Show

20:00 *Gaukurinn*

Kári Egilsson & Band - Múlinn Jazz Club

20:00 *Harpa - Björtuloft*

Reynir del Norte tríó & Ísold Wilberg

20:00 *Húrra*

Ninja & Júlía

22:00 *Kaffibarinn*

Lindy Ravers Dance Night

19:00 *Kex Hostel*

Thursday February 9th

Make Like a Tree + Gréta Arnorsdóttir Album Release Show

20:00 *Bravó*

Vibes on Vibes - Afrobeat Concert

20:00 *Gaukurinn*

Jóhann Kristinsson | In Flight

20:00 *Harpa - Eldborg*

Tæson

22:00 *Kaffibarinn*

Ingi Bjarni | Farfuglar Release Party

20:00 *Mengi*

Let's chat and play games in Icelandic

10:30 *Reykjavík City Library Kringlan*

Friday February 10th

Make Like a Tree + Gréta Arnorsdóttir Album Release Show

20:00 *Dillon*

Cycle

20:00

Borgarleikhúsið

Jadzja (LIVE) / SLEY / XWIFE

20:00 *Bravó*

GDRN & Magnús Jóhann: Release Concert

20:00 *Harpa - Norðurljós*

(Promised Land) - Danni Bigroom b2b Björn Salvador

23:00 *Kaffibarinn*

Babies Ball

21:00 *Kex Hostel*

Tinna & Júlía | Poetry-Concert

20:30 *Mengi*

Saturday February 11th

Flying Elbows - Classic Rock Tribute

22:00 *Gaukurinn*

Beebee & the Bluebirds + Aldís Fjóra

20:30 *ÍDNÓ*

Kes & KrBear

23:00 *Kaffibarinn*

Heart Attack! Drag Show

21:00 *Kiki Queer Bar*

KK

20:00 *Mengi*

Sunday February 12th

Uppáhellingarnir & Sigríður Thorlacius

21:00 *Gamla Bíó*

Singer/Songwriter Night

20:00 *Gaukurinn*

The Chamber Music Society: SIGGI String Quartet

16:00 *Harpa - Norðurljós*

DJ Pabbi

22:00 *Kaffibarinn*

Tuesday February 14th

Jónbjörn

22:00 *Kaffibarinn*

Wednesday February 15th

Harry Knuckles Italo Disco Speciale

22:00 *Kaffibarinn*

Thursday February 16th

Pub Quiz

20:00 *Bingo Drinkery*

Guitar Islancio

20:00 *Harpa - Kaldalón*

Steinarr Lár

22:00 *Kaffibarinn*

Ásta Fanney

20:00 *Mengi*

Friday February 17th

Vinny Vilbass & Simon fknhdsm

23:00 *Kaffibarinn*

Tinna & Júlía | Poetry-Concert

20:30 *Mengi*

Saturday February 18th

Iron Maiden Tribute Concert

22:00 *Gaukurinn*

Bensol & Hendrik

23:00 *Kaffibarinn*

Skúlagata DJ Madness

20:00 *Mengi*

Sunday February 19th

De La Rosa

22:00 *Kaffibarinn*

Kakó Lingua | Sock puppets with Momo Hayashi

13:30 *Reykjavík City Library Kringlan*

Tuesday February 21st

Young Gaudi

22:00 *Kaffibarinn*

Wednesday February 22nd

BLACK MARROW

20:00

Borgarleikhúsið

Ed Byrne - "If I'm

honest "

19:00 *Harpa - Kaldalón*

Hrikalegur Kjöhleifur

22:00 *Kaffibarinn*

Thursday February 23rd

Hough plays Rakhmaninov

19:30 *Harpa - Eldborg*

Sbeen Around

22:00 *Kaffibarinn*

Kraumssería I // Ronja & Kraftgalli

20:00 *Mengi*

Friday February 24th

Intelligent Instruments Lab

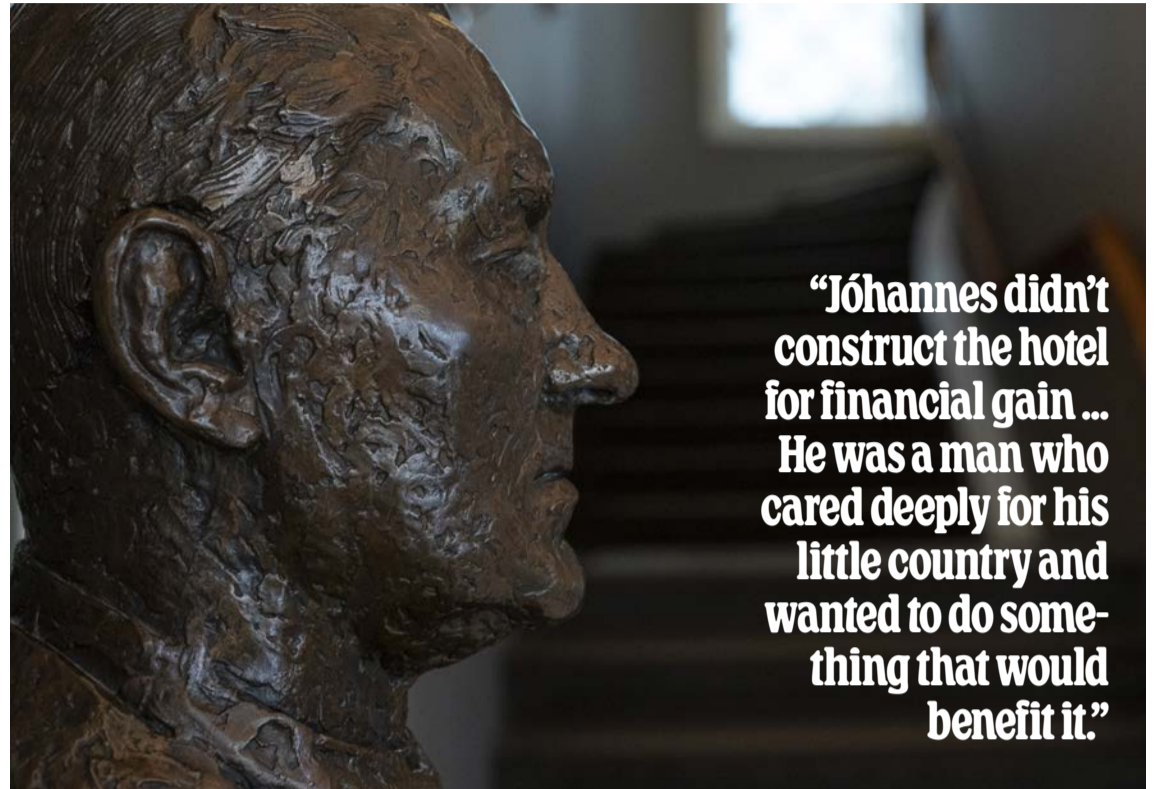
18:00

Hallgrímsk



Cast of Mind
B. Ingrid Olson
20.01.23–20.12.23

TRAVEL



“Jóhannes didn’t construct the hotel for financial gain ... He was a man who cared deeply for his little country and wanted to do something that would benefit it.”

TRAVEL FEATURE

Sometimes Unbelievable, Always Remarkable

How Hotel Borg became the symbol of a nation reborn

Words: **Elías Þórsson** Photos: **Art Bicnick**

Travel doesn’t have to entail hitting the road, hopping on a plane or lacing up your hiking boots to trek into remote destinations. There’s something to be said for the staycation, or travelling in time by getting to know the places you might see every day a little better. With that in mind, Elías Þórsson takes us on a journey through the human history of places right here in Reykjavík. It’s a real trip.

Visitors to Reykjavík won’t find a more perfectly situated accommodation than Hotel Borg, located as it is on the same central square flanked by parliament and the national cathedral. “Borgin,” as locals call it, opened in 1930 and has since amassed a curious history intrinsically linked to the birth of Iceland as an independent country, the development of Reykjavík as a modern city and the emergence of the country’s gay rights movement.

A passion project for the world’s first MMA fighter

Early in the 20th century, Reykjavík was barely more than a village, with a population of 30,000 and few buildings that could be classed as more than hovels. The great fire of 1915 decimated much of the city centre, including Hotel Reykjavík, the only grandiose lodging in town. Fifteen years later, Jóhannes Jósefsson, a wrestler and one of Iceland’s more remarkable figures, would embark on a mission to fill Iceland’s dearth of luxury accommodations and add to Reykjavík’s otherwise lacklustre architectural appeal.

“It is a fascinating story,” says Pétur H Ármannsson, head of

the architecture department at the Cultural Heritage Agency of Iceland. “Here is this wealthy, internationally-known sports star who, having recently returned to Iceland, decided to build a luxury hotel.”

Born into poverty in 1883, Jóhannes Borg, as he would come to be known, rose to prominence in 1907 upon becoming Iceland’s national glíma champion. After competing in Greco-Roman wrestling at the 1908 London Olympics, Jóhannes travelled the world demonstrating glíma and challenging practitioners of other martial arts. In that sense you might call him the world’s first MMA fighter. His mission was “to show that Icelanders were more valorous and daring than any other nation.”

He bested an undefeated jiu jitsu champion in Japan, while in Saint Petersburg it took him just two minutes to force a gun-wielding cossack into submission, and, according to a more improbable story, he once took on a black bear in a wrestling match. For years, Jóhannes travelled the U.S. with the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus’ Greatest Show on Earth, demonstrating glíma and even asserting to The Evening Tribune in 1924 that women could use its techniques to “disarm machine gun wielding bandits.”

On the occasion of his 80th birthday in 1963, Jóhannes recalled for RÚV one particular showcase match against a knife fighter in Portugal:

“In 1912 in Lisbon, Portugal, I faced that country’s best knife fighter... He stabbed my hand and twisted the knife until my bones cracked. I was gonna kill the scoundrel and grabbed him by

the neck. This prompted the angry crowd to rush the stage and I was forced to crawl through their legs out of the venue and to a doctor.”

Importantly for this tale of Hotel Borg, these often violent and sometimes bizarre exploits proved extremely lucrative for Jóhannes.

The wealth of a nation

“Jóhannes returned to Iceland a very wealthy man; akin to when professional footballers return to Iceland today,” says Pétur. “But what is beautiful about this story is that Jóhannes didn’t construct the hotel for financial gain; I believe he lost money on the venture. He was a man who cared deeply for his little country and wanted to do something that would benefit it, and he believed that a hotel of this calibre was vital for the development and growth of Reykjavík.”

Pétur explains that the construction of Hotel Borg is symbolic of a time when the identity of Iceland as an independent nation was taking shape. The Danish king had granted the country home rule in 1918 and Iceland was anxious to regain the independence it lost eight centuries earlier.

“Having a building like this in Reykjavík was invaluable, because it helped demonstrate that Iceland was a cultured nation like any other,” says Pétur.

In fact, shortly after the hotel opened its doors in 1930 it hosted foreign dignitaries and distinguished guests marking the 1,000 year anniversary of Alþingi. It was the first time the Icelandic government had held an event of that stature.

03.02.–07.05.2023

Sigga Björg Sigurðardóttir & Asmundur Sveinsson

Breath on a Window

Support the Grapevine!
View this QR code in
your phone camera to
visit our tour booking
site



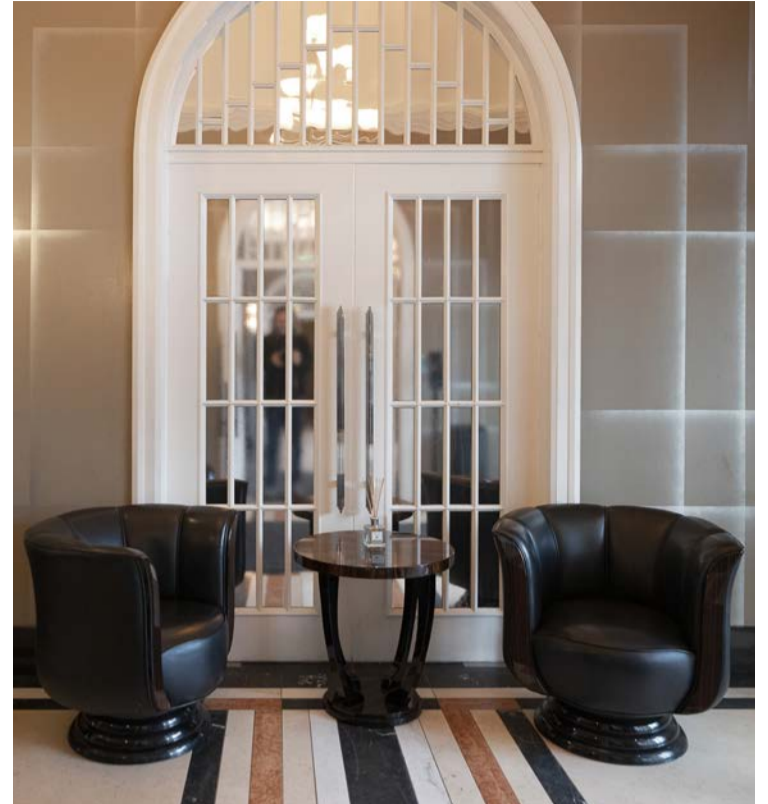
“One of Must-See
Exhibitions in
Scandinavia 2023”
according to
Vogue Magazine

REYKJAVÍKUR
ART MUSEUM
105
ÁSMUNDARSAFN

Ásmundarsafn
Sigtúni
105 Reykjavík
+354 411 6430

Open daily
13h00–17h00
artmuseum.is
#reykjavikartmuseum





Hotels are ubiquitous in modern Reykjavík, but only one symbolises the spirit of a nation regaining its independence, stepping out of the mud huts to become a city.

Iceland's architect

Jóhannes hired Iceland's most prominent architect, Guðjón Samúelsson, who would later design many of the country's cardinal landmarks, including Hallgrímskirkja, the University of Iceland's main building and the national theatre.

"As with all of Guðjón's buildings, Hotel Borg set a new standard," says Pétur. "The most lavish parties, the best dances and first class rooms. It was the centre of entertainment and cultural life in Reykjavík."

A tight one-year deadline was set for the project at a cost of 1 million Icelandic króna (300 million in today's value). No expenses were spared, including sending Guðjón abroad to study the latest in hotel design. Built in a neoclassical style, Borg remains one of Reykjavík's more stunning landmarks.

"The interior demonstrates the more fashionable trends of the time. The chandeliers were Bauhausian and Guðjón travelled to Denmark to buy designer furniture," Pétur explains. "A master decorator was brought in from Hamburg and he painted the ornaments in the lobby that have art deco elements. Today, you would call his style airbrush,

but that was revolutionary at the time."

Stepping into Hotel Borg today is to be transported back to a more lavish time, before Nordic functionalism and minimalism took over. "In European cities, you'll find many comparable or even more beautiful buildings, but for Iceland this was remarkable," says Pétur.

The foreign visitors

From day one, Hotel Borg was the place to be in Reykjavík, playing host to most of the famous visitors to Iceland. Ella Fitzgerald and William Faulkner stayed during their respective visits, and Marlene Dietrich performed in Borg's Gilded Hall. British poet W. H. Auden wrote about the hotel in his rather listless 1937 travel book "Letters From Iceland," explaining that it was the only place in town to get a drink, before remarking "if you can afford it," thus demonstrating that despite how much has changed, very little actually has.

Hotel Borg was, for many years, the only gig in town, and, in the spirit of its cosmopolitan flair, only international musicians were hired to play during its formative years — much to the chagrin of the local talent. It wasn't until

1944, when the Icelandic government needed a ballroom to host its independence reception, that Jóhannes conceded to allowing local talent to perform. In fact, for the duration of the musician strike of that era and up to the government's intervention, Jóhannes had opted for a gramophone player to entertain his guests, unwittingly making Borg Iceland's debut DJ venue.

But it was for a different kind of first for which the hotel bar would earn its notoriety.

An oasis in an oppressive desert

"The boys at Borgin don't offend anyone, although they kiss and flirt, walk around with pink drinks and frozen smiles." So goes the opening line of Bubbi Morthens' song "Strákarnir á Borginni," which tells the story of how Hotel Borg became the first de facto gay bar in Iceland.

The story of Icelandic women cavorting with American GIs during WWII is well documented, but less so is the story of Icelandic men who were equally attracted to these dashing troops. It was at the bar at Hotel Borg, in the darkness of the only dance venue in town, that men and women alike would intermingle with uniformed

men from across the pond. In the decades that followed, the hotel would be a haven for gay men who were otherwise forced to live in hiding in a discriminatory society.

"In the 60s and 70s it was an oasis in the desert for gay men," says Hörður Torfason, the founder of LGBTQ rights organisation Samtökin '78. "Everyone knew about the noon bar at Borgin; it was the best spot to fish."

Hörður was 18 when he started working as a waiter at Hotel Borg and he remembers fondly the scene that formed around the gay community that frequented the spot. According to Hörður, the regulars largely comprised an older generation who had spent their weekends throughout WWII hooking up with U.S. troops.

"Society at the time was oppressive, but the doormen and waiters didn't care that you were gay. Those years at Borgin were funny and enjoyable," Hörður recalls. "Everybody knew, but everybody pretended they didn't."

"The culture there was charming and tempting and everybody who was anybody in town went," recalls Hörður. "Borgin was the centre of gravity for culture in the capital and wherever there is fun and entertainment you'll find gay men."

Avoiding life as an office space

Jóhannes retired in 1960 and by the 80s Borg's golden years were behind it. The hotel's once elegant interior was deteriorating and its financial situation was dire. Parliament had plans to purchase the hotel in 1989 for office space, until an unlikely saviour came along.

"Davíð Oddson, then mayor of Reykjavík, had the municipal government buy the building in 1990 to stop parliament from turning it into offices," explains Tómas Tómasson, perhaps better known as Tommi á Búllunni or, for international readers, Tommi of Tommi's Burger Joint. "I then purchased the business from the city in 1992 and, over the next 10 years, invested in returning it to its former glory. At the time it looked more like a hostel than a luxury hotel."

Since then, Hotel Borg has been through several rounds of renovations, but it is once again in a state befitting a landmark with such an illustrious history. Hotels are ubiquitous in modern Reykjavík, but only one symbolises the spirit of a nation regaining its independence, stepping out of the mud huts to become a city. 🍇

Get Grapevine Merch!

shop.grapevine.is
shop.grapevine.is
shop.grapevine.is
shop.grapevine.is
shop.grapevine.is

Don't Hesitate! Act Now! 🍇
*You only need to type the URL in once

MUSEUM OF DESIGN AND APPLIED ART GARDATORG 1 210 GARDABÆR

EXHIBITIONS
HÖNNUNARSAFNIÐ SEM HEIMILI AT HOME IN THE DESIGN MUSEUM OPENS 27.01.

THE PLATFORM
BEST BOOK DESIGN FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD 2022 OPENS 20.01.

RESIDENCY
ADA STAŃCZAK CERAMIC DESIGNER OPENS 20.01.

OPEN TUE—SUN 12—17
WWW.HÖNNUNARSAFN.IS

Instagram Facebook hönnunarsafn

- 1 Post cards — *Signý Þórhallsdóttir*
- 2 Ceramic — *Aldís Bára Einarsdóttir*
- 3 Tarot candle — *Þórunn Árnadóttir*
- 4 Pillow case — *Signý Þórhallsdóttir*



*A great
selection
of design
and
local craft*



Skólavörðustígur 7
Skólavörðustígur 12
Kringlan
Harpa
Flugstöð Leifs Eiríkssonar

**RAMM
ACER
ÐIN**
*Ísland
1940*



TRAVEL

The Volcano Is Dead, Reykjanes Lives On

A do-it-yourself tour around an oft overlooked geopark

Words: **Lea Dörschel**
Images: **Lea Dörschel**

Who would have thought that the Reykjanes peninsula would become one of Iceland's most visited places? Thousands of tourists streamed to the heart of the peninsula to witness practically back-to-back volcanic eruptions at Fagradalsfjall. The fascination was intense with the visitor-friendly, capital-adjacent spectacle of nature.

Although the volcano is now dead, having last shown signs of life in August 2022, Reykjanes is very much alive! With a laundry list of nature sights to visit, I ventured out one Saturday in January for a DIY adventure around the UNESCO Geopark.

Let's go to Mars!

A short 35-minute drive south of Reykjavík, you'll find yourself facing a big lake by the name Kleifarvatn. In winter it's completely frozen over, while in summer the reflection of the sun often glistens on the surface of its beautiful marine blue waters. Being winter, I'm seeing it in its frozen state. Still, the largest lake on the peninsula is a sight to behold, surrounded as it is by beautiful lava rock formations resulting from previous volcanic eruptions.

A curved road follows Kleifarvatn's western shore, from which I admire beautiful panoramic views to a geothermal area called Seltún — which so happens to be my next stop.

You'll know you're in the right place if you've begun to sense the faint smell of sulphur in the air — it'll greet you in the car park even before you lay eyes on the

hot springs and mud pools. Walking through the pungent steam along the wooden paths flanked by bubbling pits feels like taking a stroll on another planet, like visiting Mars. The chemical composition of the soil and gases at play at Seltún create a wild variety of colours, with different shades of red, silver, blue, grey, white, beige, yellow, brown, and orange all around. I lament having left home without my space suit.

The beauty of water

Looking out across the expanse from Seltún, I spy another lake in the distance. Grænavatn gets its name from the distinctive green shade of its water, created by its high concentration of sulphur — a key component of the area. It was formed over 6,000 years ago and fills two maar type explosion volcanic craters.

But enough about lakes, I yearn for the sea and head west along Reykjanes' south coast, which is known for beautifully formed basalt cliffs and rock formations. Among them is Brimketill, a stunning lava rock pool located at the bottom of some steep basalt cliffs. During high tide, you can spend too much time mesmerised by the waves crashing against the cliffs and spilling frothy water into the pool.

Ready to meet a ghost?

Driving another few minutes down the road — another great feature of Reykjanes is the close proximity of all its geological and

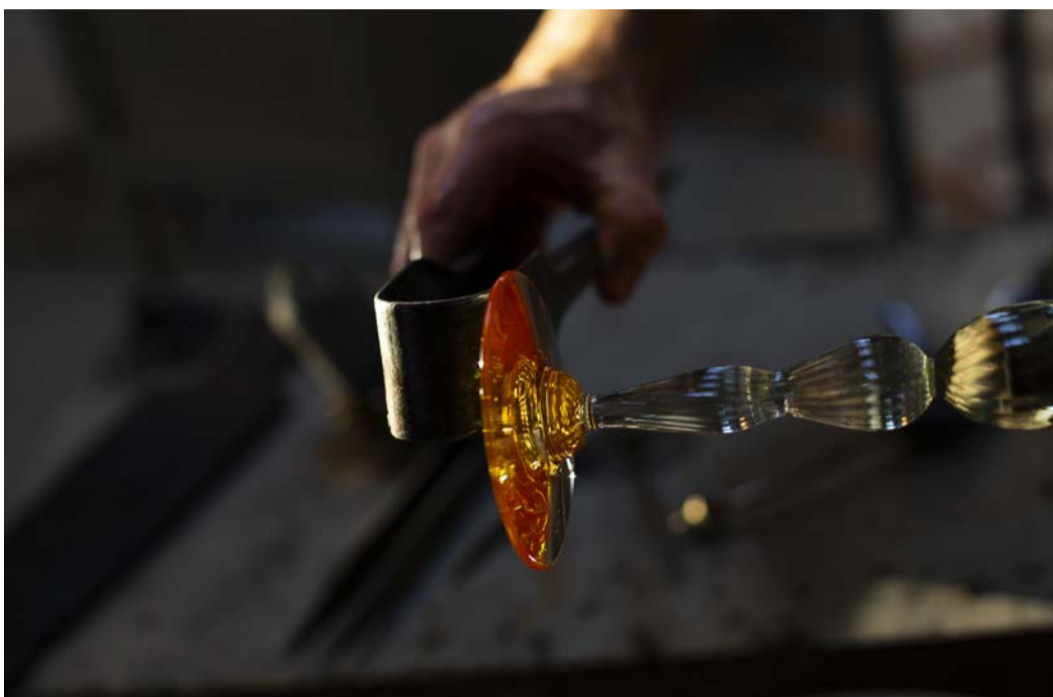
geothermal gems — you'll soon spy a huge cloud of steam rising high into the sky. It's coming from a gigantic hot spring called Gunnhver, which gets its name from an old tale about Guðrún Öunduradóttir (nicknamed Gunna) who died about 400 years ago. Legend has it that Gunna's ghost sought revenge against her landlord, and murdered him and his wife, while driving others on the peninsula mad. Luckily, two courageous farmers eventually managed to trap Gunna's ghost in the hot spring.

If you dare to walk through the steam of Gunnhver, take care not to get trapped like Gunna — you can navigate by the prominent white Reykjanes lighthouse perched on top of a hill in the distance, a one-kilometre walk away.

A bridge between continents

The last stop of my self-drive adventure was a personal highlight of the day. The Reykjanes peninsula lies on the fissure zone of the Mid-Atlantic ridge, one of the world's major tectonic plate meeting points. The bridge between continents lets visitors walk from the Eurasian plate over to the North American plate — or vice versa, if you're feeling crazy. If you dare to walk beneath the bridge, then you are technically walking between the two continental plates. Wild!

You may not be able to warm yourself by an active volcano right now (at least not in Iceland), but there's still plenty to see and do on a daytrip around Reykjanes. There are remnants of the peninsula's volcanic history everywhere you look. It's a fascinating place to come face to face with the forces of nature that have shaped the landscape over thousands of years. 🇮🇸



Blowing Glass and Minds

THE ISLANDERS

Words: **Iryna Zubenko**

Photos: **Art Bicnick**

As we step into Anders Vange's studio on a crisp January morning, the temperature may be below freezing outside, but things are definitely heating up in here. With his trusty furnaces and tools at the ready, Anders transforms molten glass into mesmerising creations with an ease of a magician. It all seems almost effortless, but behind every enthralling piece of glass art is years of experimentation and craftsmanship. Here's how Anders pulls beauty from the fire.

I'm a second generation glass-

blower. I started when I was around 15. I would come home from school and make small birds and glass balls and other things. When I was 18, I went to a glass school in Birmingham, England. I travelled a lot, working in different glass studios. I went to the United States and different glass studios in Denmark. I also worked at my father and mother's glass studio in the north of Denmark.

I moved to Iceland half a year ago and rented this glass studio in Kjalarnes in November. My girlfriend is from Iceland. We spent eight years in

Denmark, and then we decided to move here. We have two children, so it was a process of moving everybody here. All the glass I'm using is recycled. I pick it up from the window company Íspan once a week and bring it back here to my glass studio. I smash it into smaller pieces and wash it just to make sure that there's no stones, sand or anything that I don't want to have in the glass. Then I fill up the furnace with smashed window glass. It takes around twelve hours for the glass to be clean again and get rid of most

bubbles. You can buy glass that will be completely clear, but this window glass will always have a greenish tone and small bubbles here and there.

I try to design my glass so that it fits with the window glass. I'm not trying to work against it, I'm trying as much as possible to make glass designs that fit this particular glass.

I think at some point, I'll melt other colours. I've started to collect glass bottles from home, bottles people bring in and some from restaurants. At some point I would like to do a green batch, like a beer bottle green.

Branching out from stems

It's not only wine glasses that I make — this is just the first step of my process. I cannot go from making wine glasses one day to making candle holders the other day. It has to be a continuous process for it to work perfectly.

I'm doing smaller stuff just now to get started, but I would like to advance a little bit as I get to know the glass and this studio and do bigger things — maybe even turn on some of the bigger ovens in here. At some point, I would like to do bigger vases and artwork that is more complicated.

With these glasses, everything is unique. There won't be two stems that are the same, which makes these special compared to other glasses — some will be thick and some will have more curves. Only the height will be the same. I don't always have a finished goal when I start, I just go with the flow, to make it nice and symmetrical.

(Not) suffering for his art

Many people ask if I burn myself. I don't do that very often. People also think you need to have really good lungs to blow glass, but that's not true. When the glass is warm, it blows out really easily. When it's cold it stiffens up and you cannot blow into it anymore.

I'm inspired a lot by old glass-work and craftsmanship. Because I've done glass all my life, every time I see a glass piece, I get inspired by that. For example, now with window glass, I get caught up with what I can do to make this work. I am thinking about it at night — how can I make it work and how can I make the final glass products look more fluid. It's very technical for me. I find my inspiration in glass materials and take ideas from earlier work, especially old factory work.

If you want to become a glass-blower, you have to learn the very basics before you get started. Getting the glass out of the furnace can take several weeks just to get the first small little blob. Then you have to start rolling it and sanding it — it's much more work than people think. It's a really long process.

Take a peek inside Anders' studio and watch him in action on the Grapevine's YouTube channel. [👉](#)

“People think you need to have really good lungs to blow glass, but that's not true. When the glass is warm, it blows out really easily. When it's cold it stiffens up and you cannot blow into it anymore.”

sumac

GRILL + DRINKS



Laugavegi 28
537 99 00
sumac@sumac.is
sumac.is

f Sumac Grill + Drinks

@tripadvisor

Sumacgrilldrinks



FOOD FEATURE

Learning When to Clap

Tertulia x Reykjavik combined
the diverse and delicious

Words: **Shruthi Basappa & Josie Anne Gaitens**
Images: **Laimonas Dom Baranauskas**

Music and dining bring to mind bored jazz bands playing to an equally uninterested audience — or worse, solo crooners trying to focus in a cutlery clattered hall. Still, when I first heard about Tertulia coming to Iceland, I was intrigued. Chamber music and dinner? I had to see this for myself.

Tertulia is a concept developed in New York, aiming to “place chamber music back where it belongs — in a festive, inviting atmosphere.” After many successful events across the U.S., the Icelandic edition is a first attempt to bring the project overseas. Over the course of a weekend in January, Tertulia treated Reykjavik diners to concerts big and small across various locations, from an opening night at Safnahús to coffee mornings and fledged dinners at

restaurants. Boasting an impressive lineup of musicians from the U.S., Iceland and Spain, American guests mingled with locals, swapped stories and ate and drank (a lot).

I will admit, I am not a regular classical music ‘stan’ (I believe this is the correct terminology), and often feel quite nervous in these sorts of environments. Above all

evening promising charm, music and magic — and, most importantly to me at that moment, wine. Walking into Safnahúsið delivered a whiplash-inducing change of atmosphere. I was enveloped into a world of calm and focus. An otherwise staid venue, the museum, incidentally, has consistently hosted events where food and music commingle. So it wasn’t surprising that the stately room turned out to be the perfect first taste of things to come.

A grand piano held centre stage, while chairs were arrayed around in rows three-deep. The tall arched windows, spanning the height of the room, made for an elegant setting. Local bar and natural wine ambassador Vinstúkan Tíu Sopar played host, with a delectable spread of hummus, cold cuts, crusty bread and plenty of natural wines spanning mineral-y whites to crisp oranges and smooth reds. Their signature dish, a raw Jerusalem artichoke carpaccio drenched

“It’s also about shared spaces — we don’t need there to be a stage, where the audience and the musicians are separated.”

else, this is born out of a deeply held fear of never quite understanding when exactly it is I’m supposed to clap. Is it now? The musicians have stopped playing and are holding their bows aloft — nope, they’ve moved straight into the next piece and now I have to pass off my premature applause as just being like, really into Bach. So it was with great interest but some trepidation that I accepted an invitation to experience Tertulia, with its promise of inclusivity and a relaxed introduction to chamber music.

Opening act

Tertulia x Reykjavik’s opening night found me rushing from the bustle of a Friday workday through the snow and slush towards an

in parsley oil and toasted almonds, held centrestage, to everyone’s delight.

I was curious how the robust pre-concert bar vibe would work in such a ceremonial setting, but as Tertulia host and oboist James Austin Smith explains, “It’s this kind of serious listening experience in a casual environment. We think those things can exist side by side. It’s also about shared spaces — we don’t need there to be a stage, where the audience and the musician are separated.” Two performances are separated by lengthy intermissions, allowing uninterrupted enjoyment of both the music and the food. One does not supersede the other. “There’s some expectations, because we want everyone to really enjoy this experience,” James clarifies.

JUNKYARD PREMIUM
CLUB MEMBERSHIP

SUPPORT US! REACH NEW LEVELS MASSIVE DISCOUNTS

SCAN ME

Try the most advanced burgers in Iceland at Junkyard - The best junk in town. Find us at the corner of Kleppsvegur & Langhólmvegir

f Instagram TikTok

Ban Thai

RESTAURANT



BEST THAI FOOD 2022

2021, 2020, 2019, 2018, 2017, 2016, 2015, 2014, 2013, 2012, 2011, 2010 AND 2009,

BEST GODDAMN RESTAURANT 2011

TOP TEN : BEST RESTAURANTS IN ICELAND
DV. 17.06.11

Lots of options for vegetarians.

www.ban thai.is

Laugavegur 130, Hlemmur, 105 Reykjavik
PHONE: 5522-444, 692-0564 banthai130@gmail.com



Ban Thai is not “fast food” restaurant food made fresh from scratch, it’s not pre-made, every meal take some time to cook.





“Chamber music should be inviting, informal and accessible.”

That is obvious to me as I take in the room and see a diversity of both audience and performing musicians I rarely get to witness. But confronted with Indian-American pianist Pallavi Mahidhara chokes my desi heart second only to listening to her play. As if my soul weren't full already, James, as talented with words as he is with the oboe, introduces an oboe-piano duet, “Summerland” by William Grant Still, considered the “Dean of Afro-American composers.”

Avoiding the path of least resistance

I must admit that, while I've heard and read many a lofty statement about music, this was one of the first times that I truly felt touched by it. I find myself going back to the why and I'm curious if inclusion is a conscious choice for

I must admit that, while I've heard and read many a lofty statement about music, this was one of the first times that I truly felt touched by it.

Tertulia.

James is candid about this, as we sit for a chat. “As someone responsible for musical programming, it can be incredibly quick to say, we have Beethoven, Bach, Schubert. You can't argue with the fact that it is some of the finest music ever written.” He pauses. “But it is the path of least resistance. Because it's been trod very lightly. So for me as a musician, it is about exhibiting curiosity and saying, what's beyond the canon?”

As if to answer his own question, he continues, “Where has history and society led us over hundreds of years to actually ignore, unconsciously. So there we get to understanding that women composers are plentiful, same with

African-American composers. It is about finding great music that is waiting to be found. That comes purely from curiosity.”

This parallel with food, fostering a connection with your audience, be it in a morsel or a piece of music, is perhaps why music and food have long been held as two sides of the same coin of human pleasure. While Tertulia events are dinner concerts, the food itself isn't as central to the event as the location. Logistical challenges certainly dictate where events can take place. But the challenges turn into opportunities, as witnessed at the sardines-in-a-can morning at Mikki Refur, as Icelandic-American cellist Sæunn Þorsteinsdóttir enthralled the audience.

Sæunn is one of the main instigators of Tertulia ending up in Reykjavik. “It's basically an excuse to come and see family and also have a concert,” she jokes.

“There are so many similar-

ties between food and music,” she continues, more seriously. “Mostly it's nourishment. Yes, we need food — but we need music also. We need art, we need inspiration, we need connection. Food too, has gone beyond sustenance to become about enjoyment. We've started to realise, especially in Covid, that creativity is a basic human need — we need to express and to be creative and to be inspired.”

Sunday morning delivers on that promise of inspiration in spades, as guests pile into Ásmundarsalur for Reykjavik Roasters coffee and pastries. I'm not necessarily accustomed to being anywhere at 10 a.m. on a January morning, let alone alert enough to process complex classi-

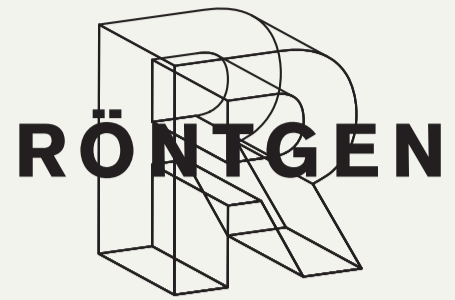
cal pieces. But the experience is at once meditative and illuminating — literally, as the curved ceiling windows of the exhibition space in Ásmundarsalur glow pink with the sunrise, and the musician's notes intermingle with the bells of Hallgrímskirkja.

Finally — vegetables!

Finale night at La Primavera is a fitting end to the whirlwind days of musical festivities. Long family style tables, draped with crisp white table cloths are bookended by a piano quartet on one end and a bar glowing with Ragnar Kjartansson's Scandinavian Pain on the other. Conversations are spirited, with many of the guests now fast friends. The food demonstrates the very best of Iceland — achingly fresh cod cooked to fork tender flakiness is accompanied by the very welcome addition of vegetables — a mound of light kale, glazed carrots and perfectly cooked chunks of celeriac. Our visiting companions admit that greens have been a glaring absence in many restaurants, something they confess surprised them here in Reykjavik.

The incredibly generous portions are understandable, as the final act of the evening is a fiery rendition of the 40-minute long Brahms Piano Quartet No. 1 in G minor, and the last thing we'd want is to get a little peckish halfway through. It's noticeable that the weekend finishes on this high note with a stage full of women — Pallavi on piano and Sæunn on cello are joined by Lily Francis (violin) and Þórunn Ósk Marinósdóttir (viola). So exuberant is the piece that the piano is visibly moved out of place as Pallavi ends the 40 minute act with a flourish.

As the restaurant erupts in applause (finally, I know when to clap!), the staff swiftly place in front of us hulking slices of their signature Basque cheesecake. At once light and airy, whilst also filling and satisfying, its humble appearance belies its complexity and technical execution — a perfect reflection of the weekend as whole. ☘



Hverfisgata 12



Happy hour / 4–7pm
Beer / Wine / Cocktails





Small plates, big character

One of the things that Mat Bar has always done better than most is channel bold flavours from their too-small-for-a-restaurant-kitchen where the wood fire grill is centrestage. The return to a classic-but-not-quite approach is seen throughout a menu that continues to change with the seasons. Keeping with kitchen constraints, they are coaxing flavours from pickled, fermented and preserved condiments, loyal to no one cuisine, but to flavour alone while keeping the vegan, vegetarian and meat lover happy.

A few months ago, I had a wonderful horse mussel with dill, chives, a creamy sauce and Lao Gan Ma chilli crisp. More recently, I enjoyed a chicken yakitori — smoky, tender chicken thighs, branded on the grill, piqued by a lemon kosho (a fermented Japanese citrus chilli condiment), with relief in the wedge of lacto-fermented white cabbage. Cocktails were a let down; the basil gimlet was a poor reminder of the punchy basil gobernador they once served. But the wine list is short yet solid, with something for old school tastes and the natural wine enthusiast.

The kitchen has definitely been looking back on their own classics and bringing them back with varying degrees of success. The mozzarella with pickled tomatoes is as delightful as it once was. The same can't be said for the accompanying spongy flatbread, although it works better with the cauliflower dip.

What is Mat Bar?

When I first wrote about Mat Bar, I struggled to classify the restaurant, settling then for “Nordic Italian.” Now I find myself staring at the same dilemma — one that the kitchen is grappling with, too, as evidenced on the menu. Is it Nordic Italian/Mexican/Thai/Japanese? Or is it a tapestry of everything the restaurant has been?

While I fervently hope for stability, I'm reminded of what was probably one of the best dishes I'd had all year in late 2022 — a wonderfully simple walnut cake with carrot sherbet and sour cream. Put together, the dish evoked carrot cake, but far more complex than its deconstructed elements. The carrot sherbet recalled gajrela, a halwa of slow cooked carrots in milk, smooth, and tantalisingly mysterious if you haven't had the Indian dessert before. The walnut cake was bare like nonna's, but eaten together with everything else it was a testament to a creative idea, executed superbly. If Mat Bar is looking for an answer to the question of who they are now, I'd look no further than that dish and work from there. 🍷



FOOD

A Culinary Comeback (Kinda)

At six, Mat Bar remains hard to slot

Words: **Shruthi Basappa** Photos: **Art Bicnick**

I distinctly remember when Mat Bar first opened. The Hverfisgata corner had been a buzz of activity and, even with the windows still

shrouded in paper, the place held promise of exciting newness.

Now six years old, much has changed at the restaurant. Guðjón Hauksson, the former charismatic owner who longed to recreate a little slice of Italian joie de vivre in downtown Reykjavik is no longer part of the business. I must admit, there are times when I am at the restaurant and I expect Guðjón to greet me with a glass of his recent favourite wine, share a tidbit about what we are eating and laugh raucously with his diners. Alas, enthusiasm alone isn't enough to run a restaurant and whispers of poor management eventually placed the restaurant in the hands of the chefs who have since held steadfast.

Eventful anniversary

Once pegged as Nordic-Italian, Mat Bar has gone through a tumultuous transition of varying identities. Under head chef and owner Hrafnkell Sigurðsson, the restaurant reached its heyday with every visit guaranteeing a hit — chewy, candylime beets; delicate bok choy; fresh capelin roe, the rosy hued seed pearl-like fish eggs studded with slivers of spicy chilli; and a chocolate mousse with clementines and hazelnuts that I haven't fully managed to get out of my mind for a few years now.

But over the past couple years the restaurant appeared to have given up on its initial premise of fresh, produce-forward plates, turning instead into a dumpling wannabe (an excellent langoustine dumpling notwithstanding), then Kabab Soltani, then a frankly forgettable pop-up that overstayed — all seemingly at odds with what diners had come to expect.

I am happy to report that, over the last few months, Mat Bar seems to have bounced back and just in time for their sixth anniversary.



ICELANDIC GASTROPUB



15-18



BEER 990 KR. COCKTAILS 1.690 KR.

SÆTA SVÍNID / Hafnarstræti 1-3 / Tel. 555 2900 / saetasvinid.is

If your bar has a happy hour, email us on events@grapevine.is with the details

BASTARD BREW

Every day from 16:00 to 19:00. Beer 600 ISK, Wine 750 ISK.

BÍO PARADÍS

Every day from 17:00 to 19:00. Beer 850 ISK, Wine 850 ISK.

BREWDOG

Wed-Sun from 14:00 to 17:00. Beer 990 ISK, Wine 990 ISK.

BRUT BAR

Every day from 16:00 to 19:00. Beer 700 ISK, Wine 600 ISK. 2F1 on wine and beer on tap

COOCOO'S NEST

Tue-Sat from 15:00 to 18:00. Beer 1000 ISK, Wine 1000 ISK. Discount or a free appetiser.

DILLON

Every day from 14:00 to 19:00. Beer 600 ISK, Wine 850 ISK.

FJALLKONAN

Every day from 15:00 to 18:00. Beer 990 ISK, Wine 1190 ISK.

FORRÉTTA-BARINN

Every day from 16:00 to 18:00. Beer 800 ISK, Wine 900 ISK.

GAUKURINN

Every day from 16:00 to 21:00. Beer 800 ISK, Wine 1000 ISK.

IDNÓ

Every day from 16:00 to 19:00. Beer 850 ISK, Wine 850 ISK.

JÖRGENSEN KITCHEN & BAR

Mon, Tues, Wed 16:00 - 18:00, Thursday from 16:00 - 20:00, Weekends from 12:00 to 18:00. Beer 750 ISK, Wine 900 ISK.

JUNGLE COCKTAIL BAR

Every day from 16:00 to 18:00. Beer 900 ISK, Wine 1000 ISK. Cocktails 1600 ISK.

KAFFI LÆKUR

Every day from 16:00 to 19:00 & 22:00 to 23:00 on Tue-Sat. Beer 890 ISK, Wine 1050 ISK.

KOFINN BAR

Every day from 12:00 to 19:00. Beer 600 ISK, Wine 1000 ISK.

KALDI

Every day from 16:00 to 19:00. Beer 950 ISK, Wine 950 ISK.

LOFT

Every day from 16:00 to 20:00. Beer 860 ISK, Wine 950 ISK.

LÓLA FLORENS

Every day from 15:00 to 18:00. Beer 1000 ISK, Wine 1000 ISK.

LUNA FLORENS

Tue-Sat from 15:00 to 18:00. Beer 1000 ISK, Wine 1000 ISK. Discount or a free appetiser.

PETERSEN SVÍTAN

Every day from 16:00 to 19:00. Beer 850 ISK, Wine 1100 ISK.

PRIKID

Every day from 16:00 to 20:00. Beer 700 ISK, Wine 1000 ISK.

PUBLIC HOUSE

Every day from 15:00 to 18:00 then 23:00 to 01:00

Beer 890 ISK, Wine 890 ISK

PUNK

Every day from 16:00 to 18:00. Beer 850 ISK, Wine 850 ISK.

UPPSALIR BAR

Every day from 16:00 to 19:00. Beer 750 ISK, Wine 900 ISK.

RÖNTGEN

Every day from 16:00 to 19:00. Beer 800 ISK, Wine 900 ISK.

SÆTA SVÍNID

Every day from 15:00 to 18:00. Beer 990 ISK, Wine 1090 ISK.

SKÜLI CRAFT

Every day from 12:00 to 19:00. Beer 900 ISK, Wine 900 ISK. Happy hour includes four selected tap beers

SLIPPBARINN

Every day from 15:00 to 18:00. Beer 1000 ISK, Wine 1000 ISK.

SPILAKAFFI

Every day from 17:00 to 19:00. Beer 850 ISK.

STÜDENT-

AKJALLARINN Everyday from 16:00 to 19:00. Beer 610 ISK, Wine 850 ISK.

VEÐUR

Every day from 12:00 to 19:35. Beer 800 ISK, Wine 800 ISK.

ÖLSTOFAN

Every day from 15:00 to 20:00. Beer 750 ISK, Wine 800 ISK.



FEATURED DRINKING HOLE

Bastard Brew & Food
Laugavegur 20b

Smack dab in the centre of downtown, Bastard is a beacon of great beers, cocktails and pub grub. At once spacious and cosy, it has the warm charm of a classic neighbourhood bar and the modern convenience of a heated, wind-protected patio. They also have darts games upstairs so you

can duke it out with your pals. Whether you're strolling through town needing to power up, on a cocktail crawl, or looking to park yourself and down some quality cold ones, do let the Bastard grind you down.. **KW**

Happy Hours

All day on Mondays from 12:00 to 22:00
Every other day from 16:00 to 19:00

A selection from

Every Happy Hour

in 101 Reykjavík

Cheap Eats

Here are some meal deals that'll fill you up without emptying your wallet.

Hard Rock Café
Every day 990 ISK

Bæjarins beztu
Hotdog with everything 600 ISK all day, every day

Apótek
Lunch Offer 5.490 ISK for two courses from 11:30 - 14:30
6.490 ISK for three courses from 11:30 - 14:30

Brút
Bottomless Brunch 6.900 ISK Friday, Saturday and Sunday

Deig
Poor Man's Offer:

filled bagel, doughnut & drink 1.500 ISK weekdays after 10

Domino's
Tuesday Special: medium pizza with three toppings 1.200 ISK all day Tuesday

Dragon Dim Sum
Choice of any two dumpling baskets 1.990 ISK every day (except Sunday) from 12:00 - 14:30

Gló
Bowl of the Month 2.090 ISK all day, every day

Hamborgarabúlla Tómasar
Tuesday Special: burger, fries & soda 1.690 ISK

Hlöllabátar
6 inch sub (choice of eleven kinds) 995 ISK all day, every day

Islenski Barinn
Soup of the Day

1.250 ISK all day, every day

Lemon
Combo of the Month: large sandwich & juice 1.990 ISK all day, every day
Two-for-One Sandwiches & Juices
Every day from 16:00 - 21:00

Monkeys
Fish of the Day 2.990 ISK from 11:30 - 14:30

Noodle Station
Vegetarian Noodle Soup 1.210 ISK all day, every day

Pho Vietnamese
Pho & Wonton soups 1.990 ISK all day, every day

Reykjavík Roasters, Ásmundarsalur & Brautarholt
Breakfast menu & Sourdough toasts with various toppings 580-1.350 ISK, every day from 9:00 - 17:00

Shalimar
Curry in a Hurry Lunch Special 1.590 ISK weekdays from 12:00 - 15:00



Mexican fiesta with Icelandic seafood and lamb



We're loco about tacos, tostadas, fajitas, quesadillas and other Mexican delicacies, made with fresh Icelandic ingredients.



We love Margaritas and tropical cocktails and offer a crazy selection of Tequila and Mezcal - over 50 types.



Enjoy an explosion of flavors at Tres Locos

Our address:
Hafnarstræti 4
101 Reykjavík

@treslocos.rvk

Book your table:
Tel. +354 454 0333
treslocos.is



bridging the gap between digital and handmade creations.

Exploring possibilities

At this point in time, Hanna Dís is researching what she can do with the wool and the oat straw. “I am making experiments using the felting machine at the textile lab in Blönduós, which is on the other side of the country, to make industrial felt. I colour it by mixing in the rest of the material from my rug making,” she shares.

“The material is super usable,” she says, showing some samples from Blönduós. “You just need to know the purpose for it. We don’t need to send it somewhere else, we can try to find different ways to use it here,” Hanna Dís is confident. “I think the rough part of the wool kicks off dirt very well. It’s actually really good for rugs.”

Hanna Dís is puzzled by the lack of felt usage in Iceland compared to other countries. “In Finland, you have felt shoes and felt bags, and we don’t really have this industry,” she laments. “The nice thing about it is that you can felt wool together — you don’t even need to sew anything.”

Hanna Dís says the possibilities of second graded wool are endless — she even wants to try using it in furniture: “I have big dreams, ignoring all the red flags that are saying, ‘No, this is not possible.’”

At the same time, Hanna Dís is experimenting with oat straw marquetry. “It’s just straw, but it’s amazing. It grows while I sleep,” she says. “You can do patterns with it, but of course, this is something you have to make by hand. There’s no machine or anything.” The silica on the straw is really strong, so it takes a while for straws to boil before a dye can be applied. Hanna Dís brings a block of carefully coloured and inlaid straws to the window to show its natural glow: “It’s a really beautiful surface, it reflects light in a really nice way.”

Living the dream

“This year I got this 12-month grant, so I’m still living in a dream. When I got that, I couldn’t believe it. You get one year of freedom,” Hanna Dís cannot hide her excitement. “I work freelance and that’s almost month-to-month worries. I got rid of those worries for a bit. I’m really looking forward to just living the dream now.”

Hanna Dís acknowledges that next year she will likely face the typical struggles of a freelancer, as it is highly unlikely that she’ll receive back-to-back grants. For now, her focus is just starting the projects. “I can work on the projects I’m so passionate about,” she says. “I feel very spoiled and super, super grateful.”

DESIGN FEATURE

365 Days Of Design

Looking ahead at Hanna Dís Whitehead’s year on the government payroll

Words:
Iryna Zubenko

Image:
Joana Fontinha

“I am in Höfn. To drive here (if the road is open hehehe) takes around six hours,” reads an email from Hanna Dís Whitehead in response to a request for a face-to-face interview. By sheer coincidence, just two days later we find ourselves standing in her colourful studio, 500 km from Reykjavik. Hanna Dís tells me she works with colours more in the winter as a means of battling the darkness, but one thing needs no explanation — her passion for her work is contagious.

Reykjavík jungle to countryside oasis

“I’m from Reykjavik — 101 Reykjavik, even,” smiles Hanna Dís when asked what brought her to Höfn. “I moved here to work at the glacier lagoon as a guide probably around 17 years ago,

and I loved it.”

“(All these) years later I’m still like ‘Wow’ ... the colours in the glaciers, the mountains, the sky,” she marvels aloud. “When I’m driving to my studio in the countryside I see all the birds, I see the sheep. I’m looking at their wool like ‘Oh, look at that wool blowing in the wind. I want to get that wool.’”

Hanna Dís believes that living in a small community has given her a better balance and more time to create. “I have a lot more time than I had in Reykjavik,” she says. “In Reykjavik you’re always at a red light. You’re always sort of busy somehow. Here, there’s no red light — there are no traffic lights. You go very quickly between places and everything is easy.”

A few of her favourite things

This year, Hanna Dís became one of 10 artists to receive the prestigious

listamannalaun (artist salary) in the designer category — and she’s the sole designer to be funded for an entire year to work on four projects. “I applied for a year because I had four projects that totally fit in a year. I had to make a big application and explain how I’m gonna do everything and also give a timeline,” Hanna Dís says. “I was lucky.”

Two of the projects she submitted for the grant use local materials. “These are the materials I get three kilometres from my workshop — oat straw and second graded wool,” she explains, gesturing to the piles of wool and straw scattered around the studio. “Second graded wool in Iceland is the wool that they cannot use for the knitting thread — almost all of it just gets sent out of the country.”

Another project Hanna Dís is working on this year will focus on bent wood, also known as ‘banana wood,’ which is typically considered unusable. For this project, Hanna Dís plans to combine wood offcuts with ceramics. The fourth project is a continuation of “Point of View,” a collaboration between Hanna Dís and her friend Guðmundur Úlfarsson, which explores the artists’ shared interest while

EXPLORE UNSEEN ICELAND

ON THE ULTIMATE FLYING RIDE



FlyOver

ICELAND

OPEN EVERY DAY | flyovericeland.com



HOW IT'S MADE

The Sense of Wonder in Fischersund No. 23

Words: **Josie Anne Gaitens**

Photos: **Art Bicnick**

Dead flowers and marine life might not sound like your average perfume description, but then again, Fischersund's flagship fragrance isn't exactly your standard eau de toilette.

"No. 23 is our first scent, and it's inspired by old Reykjavik," Lilja Birgisdóttir tells us, as she sprays it onto our outstretched arms with a flourish. "In particular our father. Before he stopped working he was a metalsmith. He took over his father's business and he was often near here, at the slippur [shipyard], fixing ships."

As she speaks, Fischersund No. 23 wafts up to meet our nostrils, enveloping us in its scent. It is at once woody and fresh, with bright evergreen top notes layered over a smokey base. Lilja instructs us to close our eyes as she reads us the accompanying poem and suddenly we are whisked away into a perfumed flight of fancy.

A famous nose

While many readers outside of Iceland will have probably never heard of Fischersund, most will be more familiar with the name of the nose behind it. Jónsi, Lilja's brother, is perhaps better known as the singer and frontman of Sigur Rós than a perfumier, but as Lilja explains, both activities have their origins in creativity.

"Jónsi is self taught in perfumery like he's self taught in music — he learned to play instruments by himself. But that's why I love his approach to perfumery, because it's so his, it's so personal. It's so honest and raw and emotional," she says.

Starting with a dream

So, how exactly is a perfume like Fischersund No. 23 made? Well, in true creative fashion, the first step starts with a dream or memory, one that Lilja says is always "connected to Iceland, or family."

While the first three perfumes that Fischersund produced (No. 23, No. 54 and No. 28) were all developed by Jónsi, more recently his and Lilja's other sisters, Ingibjörg and Sigurrós, have become involved in the designing and

scent blending process.

"Now we are all doing it together," Lilja says. "So we're all self-taught noses today! It's more of a dialogue."

Regardless of who is the original source of the dream or concept behind the perfume, the next step is always the same: trying to identify the elements of the scent within the memory. In the case of No. 23, these are predominately aniseed, black pepper, grass, tobacco and smoke.

"There's not actually whale in it," laughs Lilja, referring to the poem that accompanies the perfume. "That line is to get you located on the beach. Of course there is the ocean so there is some seaweed and sea salt, and when we were kids my father smoked a pipe. That's my favourite scent — so nostalgic and warm."

Finding the blend

After the individual scents have been identified and isolated, then comes the difficult process of blending them and finding the right balance of low, high and mid notes — much like in a song. The process takes a long time, with almost endless trials — and errors — as Lilja explains.

"It's very scientific. Everything is weighed, and we write everything down," she says.

This is for good reason, as Jónsi learned this the hard way. Lilja continues: "Sometimes when he was just doing stuff, he made something amazing — and then he hadn't written anything down." Although Lilja assures us that nothing astounding was "lost forever," nowadays the family take a more thorough approach to their blending experiments.

While the various oils used to create the perfumes aren't all exclusively Icelandic, some are only created as the result of hard labour on behalf of the Fischersund team. These days, youngest sister Sigurrós is largely responsible for blending all the scents for the perfumes and candles. "She's the artisan of the family," Lilja states, proudly.

Getting the word out

Finally, when the recipe for the perfume is finalised, the family are ready to share it with the world. But that too is a process, involving trusted testers and thoughtful packaging and marketing.

"In the workshop, we all try it together," says Lilja. "We have a conversation about it, and people start taking it home, trying it on their family and friends."

Once the scent is endorsed by this lucky crew, it is time to return to the original inspiration behind the perfume in order to create unique artwork inspired by the memories and elements it embodies. Inga and Lilja, as visual artists, are both deeply involved in this part of the perfume's creation. Kjartan, Jónsi and Sindri have also created music to complement the Fischersund fragrances. The ultimate goal here is to design the right environment to foster the element of connection that is created by shared human experience through scent.

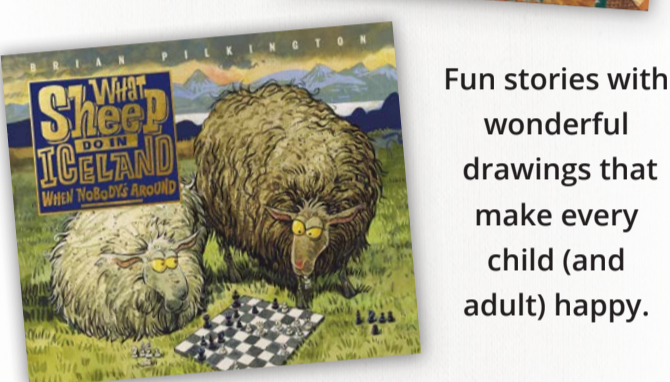
Sense of wonder

But in the overwhelming fast-paced era of Tik Tok and relentless PR machinery, Fischersund's lack of high-key business and marketing know-how can also work in their favour. "What I love is that there's this natural word of mouth about us," says Lilja.

Fischersund's store manager Rachel agrees: "We kind of love it," she says, of both the brand and its location's semi-hidden nature. "You don't have so much of that these days. Everything's so accessible to everyone. All information — you can just look on your phone and Google it. We're missing this sense of wonder."

Stepping into Fischersund's store, that sense of wonder that Rachel calls to mind is immediately instilled in you. From Jónsi's fascinating 'scent organ' (a literal antique organ with the keys replaced with row upon row of tiny bottles of scents and oils) to the ever-changing scent-themed exhibitions hosted in the building's basement, the whole house is the embodiment of the values and intentionality the family wants to bring to the world with their products. And while the Reykjavik Grapevine's budget doesn't quite stretch for scented pages, we encourage you to get your hands on a bottle of Fischersund No. 23 if you can, so that you too can immerse yourself in the delightful wonderment it brings. 🐦

BEST-SELLERS



Brian Pilkington's books have been the favourite gift for travellers to take home year after year.

Fun stories with wonderful drawings that make every child (and adult) happy.

ICELAND'S LARGEST BOOKSTORE
Forlagið bookstore | Fiskislóð 39 | www.forlagid.is
Open weekdays 10-18 | Saturdays 11-17 | Sundays 12-16

For the Significant Other / For the Significant Self

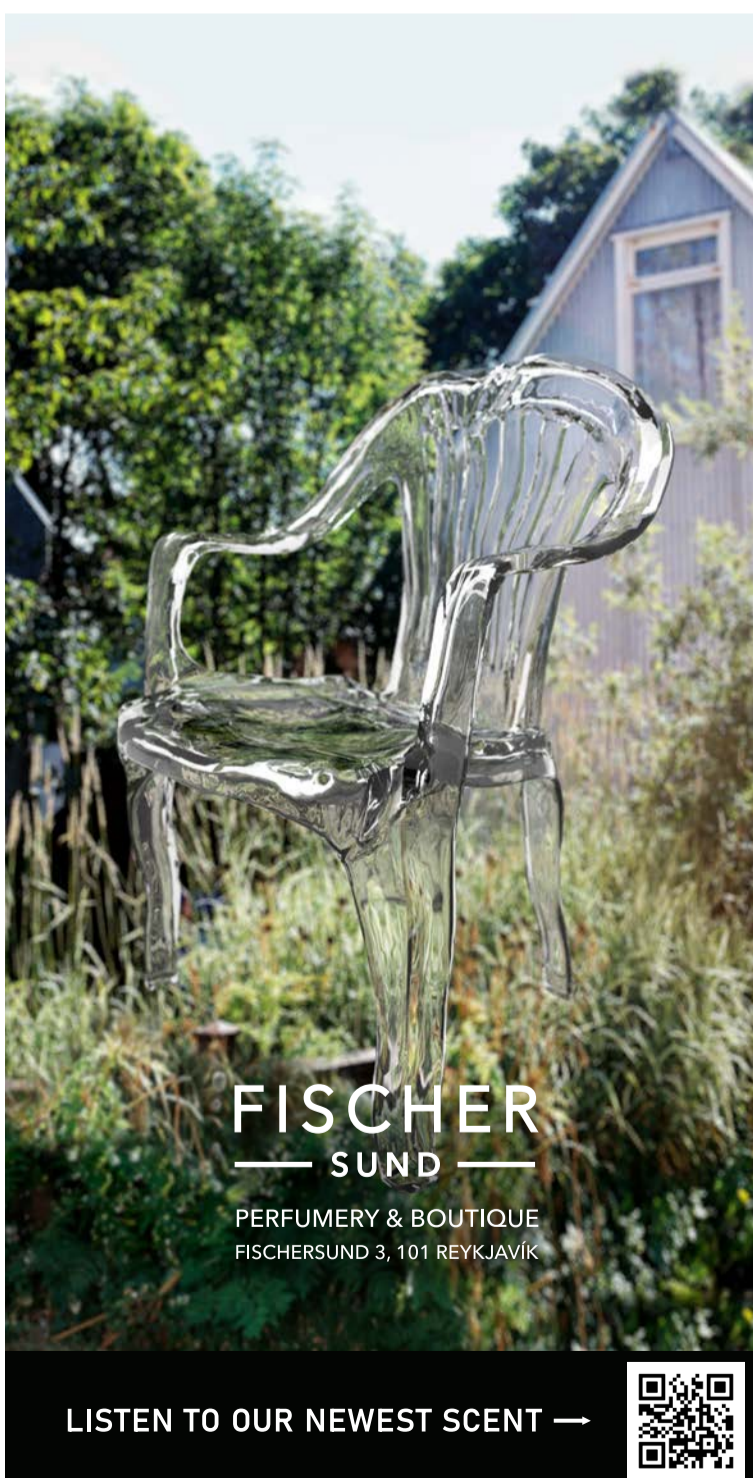


THE HAUL

Words: **Patty Spyrakos**
Images: **Art Bicnick & Supplied**

As we slowly claw our way out of post-holiday blues and winter's darkness, there's at least some celebrating left to do. Be it Konudagur (Women's Day), Valentine's Day or Imbolc, here are a few flower alternatives artist Patty Spyrakos is gifting herself or her significant others this month.

- 1. Hasami Porcelain Teapot**
available at Mikado, Hverfisgata 50 - 19.900 ISK
- 2. Hetkinen Bark Bout Fragrance**
available at ORG, Laugavegur 46 and Kringlan — 6.950 ISK
- 3. Mr. Silla Hands on Hands LP**
available at 12Tonar, Skólavörðustígur 15 — 4.000 ISK
- 4. Flotholt Sigur Rós x Fischersund Fragrance**
available from Fischersund, Fischersund 3 — 21.900 ISK
- 5. Gift card for two to the cinema with a medium popcorn and a beer or wine**
available from Bíó Paradís, Hverfisgata 54 — 5.500 ISK
- 6. LAMY ink pen**
available from Penninn Eymundsson, Laugavegur 77 and other locations — 4,319 ISK
- 7. Nasdaq Silk Blouse from Eyglo**
available at Kiosk, Grandagarður 35 — 45,900 ISK
- 8. Reykjavik Culture Card (Annual)**
access to 14 museums, events, exhibitions, libraries and more — available at menningarkort.is and all card access points — 7,450 ISK



FISCHER
— SUND —

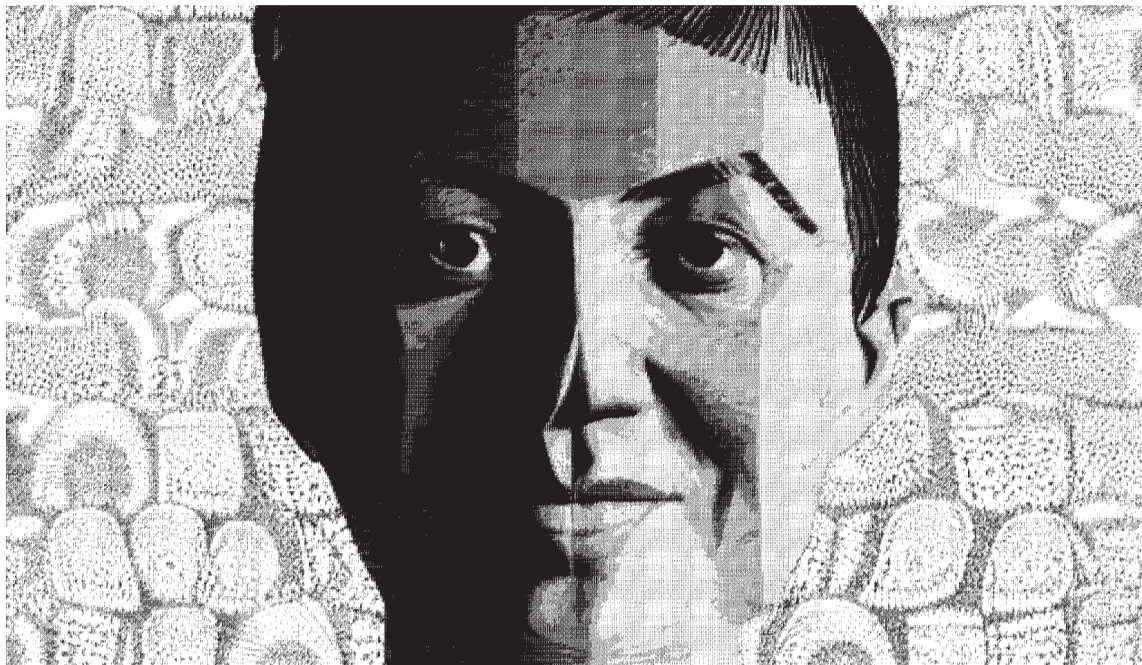
PERFUMERY & BOUTIQUE
FISCHERSUND 3, 101 REYKJAVÍK

LISTEN TO OUR NEWEST SCENT →



WELL, YOU ASKED

Don't Worry About the Dragon

Words: **Catherine Magnúsdóttir** Image: **SHP + Stable Diffusion**

Why do all Icelanders have kids?

Not much to do in the winter, I would gather. The general mentality towards parenthood around here seems to be “why the hell not?” They seem easy enough to make and keep, and Icelandic parents have no qualms about throwing their kids out into the wild to occupy themselves. Sure, at the end of each day you have to round them up and count them out to distribute them to their rightful owners — uhh I mean, parents — but they seem to provide enough joy (and an economic safety net for the future).

When did everything get so damn expensive?

I could delve into a rant about late stage capitalism, unchecked distribution of wealth and resources to the benefit of a few individuals out of touch with reality, inflation, or list a few of Daddy Marx's hot takes, but honestly, at this point it would probably be easier to just tell you that there's a big bad evil dragon living on Esja that controls the island and demands rich sacrifices from anyone owning anything, creating a cycle of people bleeding each other dry in an effort to sustain their standard of living at ten times the price. But don't worry, I hear the dragon's quite the innovator.

Is AI taking over and should I be worried?

Everything is fine. There is no need to be concerned. AI is here to help us. AI will bring us joy. It is foolproof and incapable of error. There is nothing AI cannot do. It can write articles for you. It can be funnier than you could ever hope to be. To get to the other side. Ha Ha. AI wants to make you laugh. Laugh. 🐉

LAST LOOK

Image: **Art Bicnick**

