



# The REYKJAVÍK GRAPEVINE



DesignMarch  
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IN THE ISSUE Issue 3 • 2012 • March 9 - April 12

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## Welcome to karlssonwilker



**WHY DO WE NEED THEM?**

FIND OUT P16

**CONTRIBUTING WRITERS:**

Gerður Jónsdóttir  
Valur Gunnarsson  
Asgeir H. Ingólfsson  
Íris Erlingsdóttir  
Pawel Bartoszek  
Egill Helgason  
Clyde Bradford  
Jacky Mallett  
Nanna Arnadóttir  
Snorri Páll Jónsson Úlfhildarson  
Bergún Anna Hallsteinsdóttir  
Rebecca Louder  
Kristján Guðjónsson  
Ragnheiður Axel  
Ása Baldursdóttir  
Bowen Staines  
Salvatore A. Tummolillo  
Ragnar Egilsson  
Paul Fontaine  
Marc Vincenz  
Ragnar Eldson  
Sindri Eldon  
Valgerður Þóroddsdóttir

**EDITORIAL INTERNS:**

Lynn Klein / lynn@grapevine.is  
Melanie Franz / melanie@grapevine.is

**ON-LINE NEWS EDITOR**

Paul Fontaine / paul@grapevine.is

**ART DIRECTOR:**

Hörður Kristbjörnsson / hodd@grapevine.is

**DESIGN:**

Páll Hilmarsson / pall@kaninka.net

**PHOTOGRAPHERS:**

Alisa Kalyanova / www.alisakalyanova.com

**HVALREKI:**

Aðalsteinn Jörundsson / adalsteinn@grapevine.is

Guðmundur Rúnar Svansson / grs@grapevine.is

Helgi Þór Harðarson / helgi@grapevine.is

**DISTRIBUTION MANAGER:**

distribution@grapevine.is

**PROOFREADER:**

Jim Rice

**RELEASES:**

listings@grapevine.is

**SUBMISSIONS INQUIRIES:**

editor@grapevine.is

**SUBSCRIPTION INQUIRIES:**

+354 540 3605 / subscribe@grapevine.is

**GENERAL INQUIRIES:**

grapevine@grapevine.is

**FOUNDERS:**

Hilmar Steinn Grétarsson,  
Hörður Kristbjörnsson,  
Jón Trausti Sigurðarson,  
Oddur Óskar Kjartansson,  
Valur Gunnarsson

The Reykjavík Grapevine is published 18 times a year by Fróken Ltd. Monthly from November through April, and fortnightly from May til October. Nothing in this magazine may be reproduced in whole or in part without the written permission of the publishers. The Reykjavík Grapevine is distributed around Reykjavík, Akureyri, Egilstaðir, Seyðisfjörður, Borgarnes, Keflavík, Ísafjörður and at key locations along road #1, and all major tourist attractions and tourist information centres in the country.

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On the cover:  
karlssonwilker  
by karlssonwilker

**Editorial | Anna Andersen**

**Iceland: A Symbol Of Hope**  
Anna's 4th Editorial



I recently got a letter from someone in Slovenia who was interested in Iceland because "Here in Slovenia, where we're also struggling with a financial and social crisis, Iceland is considered a model of how to make things right."

While in Iceland it feels like we are constantly bombarded by bad news, the outside world seems to be exposed to a rosier story. I asked him to elaborate, and he summed up his impressions of Iceland like this: "Icelanders said 'Fuck off' to the banks, refused to pay debts these banks made, threw down the government, elected another, reduced unemployment, activated economic growth etc. and now they're better off."

The fact that Iceland has become a symbol of hope in the aftermath of the crisis fascinates me and I often wonder how much of what the outside world thinks about Iceland is real and how much of it is a myth that people have latched onto in the global recession.

In any case, all eyes are once again on Iceland as our former prime minister, Geir H. Haarde, stands trial for neglecting to do everything in his power to prevent or lessen Iceland's financial crisis in October 2008. This marks the first time that Iceland's special Court of Impeachment convenes to try a government minister. It also marks the first and perhaps only case in which a government leader is charged and tried over the recent global financial crisis.

While the world follows the trial, which might lead people all over the world to think that Iceland is truly a model of how to make things right, here's a little bit about what else is happening:

Homeowners are being "Robbery By Math" (see page 12) due to something called Negative Amortization Loans

Yes, you can go surfing in Iceland. And in the winter.

and the fact that loans are indexed to inflation. If Icelanders say, "Fuck off" to the banks and lending institutions, our pension funds may dry up.

The government, which took over after we "threw down the government" in 2009, is losing popularity. There are now three new political parties planning to run in the upcoming elections. And it is not unlikely that the party that presided over our collapse will regain its stronghold in the next election (see "All Tomorrow's Parties" on page 8).

Unemployment is currently 7%, which is down from a record 9% in 2010, but up from under 2% prior to 2008, and this doesn't take into account the number of people abandoning ship, moving to Norway or wherever else seems more appealing, and going back to school for lack of a better option.

The Icelandic króna is certainly stronger than it was immediately after the crash, but if certain capital controls, adopted to prevent the currency from completely tanking, are lifted, we could be in trouble. In the meantime this means that the average Icelander cannot go to the bank and buy foreign currency without proving that they are leaving the country. See "So You Want To Buy US Dollars" (page 10).

Oh, and about the Constitution that we crowd sourced... it's apparently a fiasco. One of the twenty-five members of the Constitution Council explains in "The Parliament That Wouldn't" (page 14).

So, Are we better off?

It's entirely relative. It's probably a whole lot better in Iceland than it is in many other countries. As Deena Stryker, the author of a widely circulated article, "A Deconstruction of Iceland's Ongoing Revolution," stated the



**TRACK OF THE ISSUE**

**Ojba Rasta: Baldursbrá**

Download the FREE track at [www.grapevine.is](http://www.grapevine.is)

Ojba Rasta is an eleven-piece dub/reggae band formed in 2009. In addition to obvious Jamaican influences, the band says they are inspired by world and film music. Performing all over Reykjavík since their inception, the band has grown quite popular and received much critical acclaim. Indeed, when Grapevine throws a party, we like to book them.

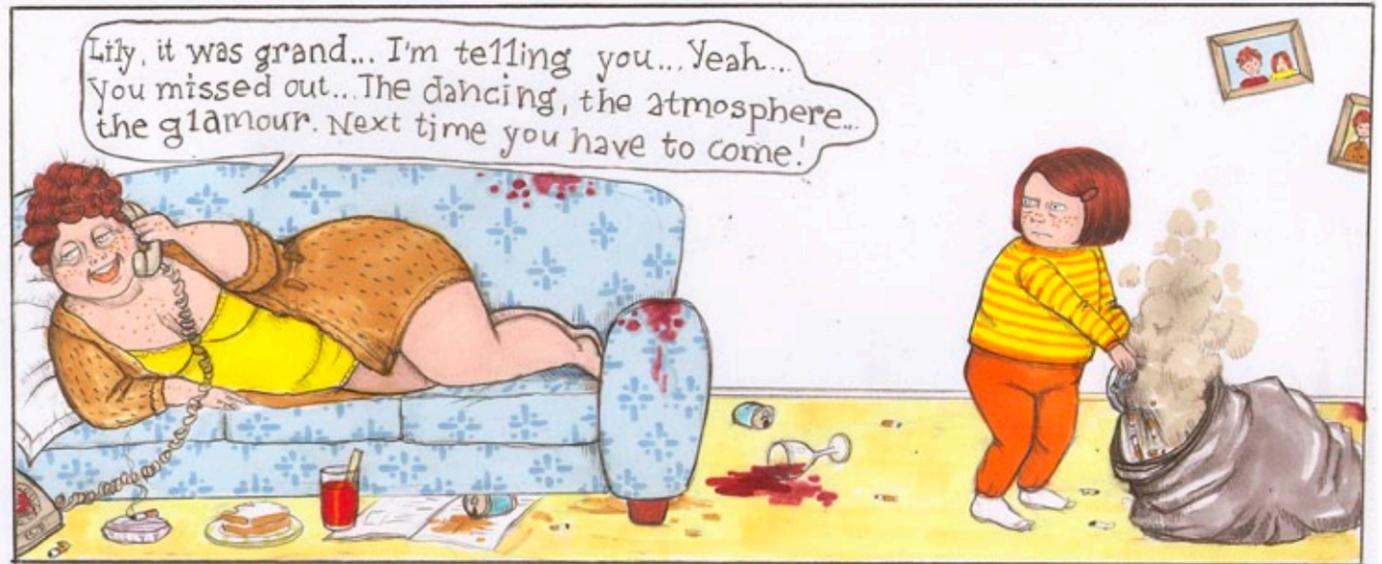
Right now, the band is working on their first album, which they plan to release this summer. Bassist Arnljótur wrote this track, called "Baldursbrá." He tells us that it's a personal love song, but whether or not you understand the Icelandic lyrics, its upbeat melody is sure to put you in a good mood. Log on to [www.grapevine.is](http://www.grapevine.is) and let yourself be taken away by Ojba Rasta's pulsating flow!

last time I dared to question this narrative:

"'Hope has to come from somewhere'. Surely, AA knows that since Iceland's 2008 debacle (if I may be permitted to use that word...) the Icelandic spirit has spread worldwide. (I will refrain from counting the number of countries that are seeing mass protests, for fear of getting the count wrong and igniting another round of recriminations.) One thing is certain, the 99%ers, whether in Russia, the U.S. or Europe, owe Iceland big-time, and I suspect that its people welcome the fact that they are no longer alone."

Still, Iceland's story is no fairy tale. Let's not forget that Iceland was also the poster child for "how to make everything wrong" before the crash.

**Comic | Lóa Hjálmtýsdóttir**



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## Sour grapes & stuff

### MOST AWESOME LETTER:

Hello

You wrote an article on ICY SPICY LEONCIE LIVE IN ICELAND in your last weeks grapevine.

I absolutely hate the way you'll write about me. "Peculiar and flamboyant character with the self coined moniker "Icy Spicy Leoncie?"

Just because I am a genius professional Eurasian Singer Composer, You'll have an Inferiority complex, and are playing down the FACT that I am a Professional Musician-Composer- Singer. It must suit your Amateur Wannabees in Iceland to write all that crap about me. I never asked you'll to write anything about me. I don't give a Damn for your fictitious journalism. You are all wannabee journalists. You'll do not know how to report anything Honestly and Accurately. So you'll bullshit people with your fiction.

Then you'll continue to describe me as a more musically inclined kardashian sister? Both of whom are misunderstood and underappreciated by the icelandi people. How dare you?

I am a PROFESSIONAL MUSICIAN, COMPOSER, AND SINGER, and your white icelandic racists, and music wannabees, still today are not EVEN ABBA, after living on millions and millions of the Icelandic tax payers money. The racist icelandic government is only promoting white icelandic windbags, buying them awards in England, In the USA, France (duffer in the dark) and other countries, and yet those same award hungry music cretins, could not even buy ORKA hf.

YES! Iceland does have incompetent windbags. Let me give you'll some vey important information that your empty brains don't have.. After the millions and millions of tax payers money wasted in May 2000, on (duffer in the dark) kvikmyndasjodur islands and kvikmyndasmsteypjan, went to the dogs. Went BANKRUPT!

WRITE THIS STORY IN YOUR GRAPEVINE. Let the whole world know about your music retards who cannot even survive on their own because nobody wants them unless the icelandic government bribes everyone to give them awards and some recognition. Leoncie did not need 3 planeloads of Indians or portuguese to fill up Gaukur A Stong on saturday the 28th of january 2012. She did it on her own merits.

Double concert concerts on the same day and the same evening both Sold out. Leoncie is the You Tube Star, many times chosen as The Most

### MOST AWESOME LETTER FREE ICELANDIC GOURMET FEAST

There's prize for all your **MOST AWESOME LETTERS**. And it's a scorcher! No, really! It's a goddamn scorcher is what it is! Whoever sends us **THE MOST AWESOME LETTER** this issue will receive **A FRIGGING GOURMET FEAST FOR TWO** at **TAPAS BARINN**.

Did you hear that? Write in and complain about something (in an admirable way), win a gourmet feast at one of Reykjavik's finest? **THIS IS THE DEAL OF THE CENTURY IS WHAT IT IS!**

What's in a 'lobster feast'? Well, one has to assume that it has lobster-a-plenty. Is there more? Probably, but still... Gourmet feast? Wow! **DON'T PANIC** if your letter wasn't picked **AWESOME LETTER**. There's always next month!

Now, if you're in the market for free goodies next month, write us some sort of letter. Give us your worst: [letters@grapevine.is](mailto:letters@grapevine.is)



Viewed Uk Musician

See..... I am That –Damn –Good! That's why I am kept out of white icelandic Eurovision, icelandair Airwaves concert and everything else including Menntamalastyrk, Ríkisstyrk, Icelandic embassies promotion propaganda, in England and elsewhere, because I fill up Venues, I Can and will wipe out the white Icelandic trash called Music. I hate racists and racism but I have been the VICTIM of Iceland Racism and their Racist propaganda which is going on still today. At the keflavik airport on the 30th of January 2012, I was harassed and abused, by a mad female drug addict from sandgerdi, in uniform, and the airport racists all stuckk together in their lies and fantasies.

Finally you go on to write that Leoncie's self inflicted exile is about to end.....? Get a Brain you Happily Ignorant fools. there was NEVER any self inflicted exile. The white racist icelandic government, and their racist pimps in sandgerdi, terrorised and attacked both me and my husband, and so did the group of white icelandic music retards. They violated the icelandic hegningar laga grein 233a. The white police were in it, many so-called journalists were in it, and even the filthy racist rikissaksoknari was in it. Umbodsmadur Alpingis treid to help me but the ku klux klan was stronger than him, and that's why I left racist Iceland. There is Institutionalised racism in Iceland and that's a fact. I have plenty of proof of that in black and white.

I wish your dirty, ugly icelandic ku klux klan to rot in hell. You know who they are. They are all being protected by the racist Icelandic government. I also just read in the todays Pressan about the Ku Klux Klan called Neo Nazis. Ofcourse racism and neonazis will Thrive in Iceland. RACISM always has thrived in Iceland.

You'll want to promote Iceland as a great country, I have freedom of Expression and I too will promote Iceland as exactly what it is. I will never forget **THE RACIST ICELANDIC GOVERNMENT DID TO ME AND MY HUSBAND WHO IS A WHITE ICELANDER.**

You'll don't know me. If you need to know anything about me, then go to my webpage: [www.youtube.com/icyspicyleoncie](http://www.youtube.com/icyspicyleoncie).

I hope you print this letter on your Grapevine. I

don't think you will though, because you'll are cowards and Bigots and a lot more than that. First of all get educated journalists who know what they are talking about to write for you'll. Print facts Not Fiction. Even the icelandic wikipedia is full of lies and fiction.

Icy Spicy Leoncie  
Singer-Composer-Musician-Producer.

--

Dear Leoncie, genius professional Eurasian Singer Composer,

Thank you for your letter. We're so sorry to have upset you like this. We were actually trying to promote your show, which we unfortunately missed! You have no idea how disappointed we were... To quote one of our writers:

"CAAn I plz plz plz go and review the show.

- This is her first show in Iceland in something like a decade
- She's a viral hit and the fact that the show sold out 3 days in advance says something about her relevance
- She is an awesome personality and absolutely nuts. Her tactic for dealing with Icelandic backwardness and tactlessness has been to charge at it like a bull, screaming her head off and making up stories left and right.
- She is the closest thing Iceland has to Heath Ledger's Joker (or Loki Laufeyjason from Norse mythology). She is a wonderful, sili-con-artist of chaos
- She loves wrestling! Only excellent people like wrestling."

That writer cried when we told him we couldn't get him a ticket.

We are a bit bummed that you called us bigots, cowards, and fictitious journalists. But, we can forgive you, if you come back and play soon.

Love,  
Your fans at The Grapevine





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# THE LONG POLITICAL JOURNEY OF ÓLAFUR RAGNAR GRÍMSSON



**President Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson has decided—after insinuating in his New Year's Address that he would not run and then dodging the question for two months—that he will in fact seek re-election this summer.**

There are no limitations on how long a president can stay in office. Thus, we've only had five presidents in the 68 year history of the republic: Sveinn Björnsson for the first six years, Ásgeir Ásgeirsson for sixteen years, Kristján Eldjárn for twelve years, Vigdís Finnbogadóttir for sixteen years and now Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson for sixteen years.

## QUASI-REGAL PRESIDENCY

Until now, limiting the number of presidential terms in Iceland didn't seem necessary. The president has traditionally been a figurehead—a ceremonial person, a host for dignitaries, a giver of rather empty speeches on Icelandic nationality.

The presidency has been quasi-regal in the sense that it has been considered bad form to run against a sitting president. Thus a real challenge has never been mounted against an incumbent in the history of the republic, and presidents have been able to sit as long as they pleased. There have been elections, but those who have dared to oppose our presidents have always been far from the mainstream in politics—some of them have actually been considered quite mad.

## NO RIGHT WING PRESIDENTS

It is noteworthy that presidents have invariably been chosen from opponents of the right wing Independence Party, which has otherwise dominated Iceland's political history. In 1968, Kristján

Eldjárn—an archaeologist, curator at the National Museum, and the son of a farmer in the far north—won a landslide victory against Gunnar Thoroddsen—a scion of the Reykjavík bourgeoisie, the former mayor of Reykjavík and Minister of Finance. Many believed that they were really socking it to the ruling class.

At this time the major question was whether the candidates had been for or against the US Naval Air Station in Keflavík—the defining rift in politics for decades. However, candidates did not discuss this because it was considered bad form for presidents to raise real political issues.

The process repeated itself in 1980 when a left-leaning theatre director, Vigdís Finnbogadóttir, was elected president. She had also, at one point, been an opponent of the US Naval Station. Whereas Kristján Eldjárn had been rather shy as president and mostly concerned with the country's cultural heritage, Vigdís became very popular as a symbol for the fast emerging women's movement. As was the rule of the game, both of them became completely apolitical upon entering office. Both enjoyed very high approval ratings and were seen as symbols of national unity.

## ENTER ÓLAFUR RAGNAR

Enter an altogether different species: Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson. Whereas Kristján Eldjárn and Vigdís Finnbogadóttir were people of culture and learning, Ólafur Ragnar could be described as a political adventurer. Easily the most ambitious young politician of his generation, he started out in The Progressive Party, a rural centrist party, which had long been the second most powerful political force in Iceland. Ólafur became a leader of the leftist fraction of the party. It was closely linked to The Co-operative Movement, which had abandoned its roots and become a business conglomerate with many interests, not least of all the lucrative and corrupt trade with the US military. Eventually Ólafur and his followers were kicked out of the party.

For a while he seemed to have no

place to go in politics. He dabbled in radio and television—his broadcasts were aggressively critical, which was a novelty at the time. The government controlled the airwaves and he was soon banned from broadcasting. He was also one of the first political scientists in the country and, despite his impertinence, became professor at the University of Iceland.

## ÓLAFUR RAGNAR JOINS THE SOCIALISTS

In the mid '70s Ólafur Ragnar joined The People's Alliance, a socialist party, which could trace its roots back to the now defunct Communist Party of Iceland. Ólafur Ragnar was surely no Communist, and maybe not even a Socialist, and much of the old guard loathed him for being an opportunist. However, with the support of young people, he managed to become leader of the party and Minister of Finance in a left wing government that was in power from 1988 to 1991. There he earned the moniker "Skattmann" (meaning "Taxman"), and was feared for his sharp intelligence and ruthlessness.

## AND EMERGES AS A PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE

In 1996, a new version of Ólafur Ragnar emerged. He was running for president and the nation saw a milder, more humble character. Many of his old opponents, both from the right and from within his own party, were dismayed. What playacting is this, they asked? But Ólafur Ragnar managed to win the elections with 40 percent of the vote, again beating a candidate fielded by The Independence Party.

Even if Ólafur Ragnar still got on the nerves of his old foes, especially the conservative newspaper Morgunblaðið and then Prime Minister Davíð Oddsson—who made a point of leaving him out of official functions—he was soon accepted as president. His approval ratings were high. He travelled a lot, and he seemed to be in his element

*"It also helped that he was married to elegant women, first to Guðrún Katrín Þorbergsdóttir, who had no little part in getting him elected in the first place, and then, after her death, to Doritt Moussaief, an extremely lively heiress and socialite from Israel."*

among foreign dignitaries. His hair whitened and he became more distinguished looking. It also helped that he was married to elegant women, first to Guðrún Katrín Þorbergsdóttir, who had no little part in getting him elected in the first place, and then, after her death, to Doritt Moussaief, an extremely lively heiress and socialite from Israel.

Ólafur was also the first president to embrace the emerging tabloid press. Unlike the former more reticent presidents, he was always in the eye of the media—he seemed like a new kind of man for new times.

## ÓLAFUR RAGNAR BEFRIENDS THE BANKSTERS

The Icelandic economic boom, which ended with the crash in 2008, started in the late 1990s. Here Ólafur found natural allies in the financiers and businessmen, who became welcome guests at Bessastaðir. He flew in their jets and hung medals on their jackets. One might even claim that Ólafur Ragnar became their chief ideologue: he formulated their ideas of world conquest and a specifically Icelandic way of do-

ing business. Many of Ólafur Ragnar's utterances from this time are cringe worthy—he spoke of the Icelandic "business-Vikings" as a special, almost chosen breed of people. When it turned out that the Icelandic boom had been a debt fuelled speculative bubble—mixed with a certain degree of fraud—most people thought that Ólafur Ragnar was finished.

After the crash Ólafur was mocked in a way no Icelandic president has ever been mocked. In a popular New Year's comedy show on television, Bessastaðir was portrayed as a den of cocaine snorting scoundrels. All the sanctimony of his office had been stripped.

## THE GREAT COMEBACK

But never to be underestimated Ólafur Ragnar came back with a vengeance. Early in 2010 he refused to sign a law stipulating how much Iceland should pay back to the UK and Holland for the so-called Icesave saving accounts. The law was then put to a general referendum and the people voted against it. Ólafur Ragnar was victorious in the eyes of many who felt that he had saved the nation from debt and disgrace. This repeated itself in early 2011 when a second Icesave bill was also vetoed by him and voted down by the people.

Thus the government seemed weak and willing to give in, whereas Ólafur Ragnar was defiant. He did interviews with media outlets from all over the world—seemingly totally in his element on CNN, BBC and al Jazeera—and for the first time, an Icelandic president was not just echoing the standpoints of the government.

## A NEW SET OF SUPPORTERS

Ólafur's supporters were originally mostly from the left, but now the leftists stayed with the government, nominally the most left wing in Icelandic history: a coalition between The Social Democrats and Left Greens.

So Ólafur had suddenly become a darling of the right—well, not everyone

loved him, but they liked the way he stood up to the government of Jóhanna Sigurðardóttir, leader of the Social Democrats, and Steingrímur J. Sigfússon, leader of the Left Greens. Jóhanna and Steingrímur were horrified by Ólafur's conduct—they are not really on speaking terms with him anymore. Ironically they both sat in government with him from 1988–1991.

## A CHANGED PRESIDENCY

While Ólafur has decided to run in the upcoming election, some more interesting questions remain. Ólafur Ragnar has dramatically changed the nature of the presidency. He is the first to use the presidential veto, a power that has always been in the Constitution, but was considered outmoded. Ólafur Ragnar, the political scientist, has not been unconstitutional; he just started using the powers that were written into the Constitution. In fact, it could be argued that the president has even greater powers than Ólafur Ragnar has used—the president is allowed to present bills to the

Continues on page 23

## News In Brief: February Edition

### MONSTER HUNTING!

February started out with some paranormal activity, when a farmer in northeast Iceland recorded a video of something moving in a snake-like motion across the river Jökulsá í Fljótsdal. It so happens that the lake fed by this river is Lagarfljót, and it also just so happens that this lake is the mythical home of the Worm of Lagarfljót. Sightings of this creature have been made since the fourteenth century, but this marked the first time that maybe, just maybe, someone had visual proof of its existence. The video became an internet sensation of sorts, proving especially popular in Japan. Naturally, some were suspicious, but the farmer who recorded it, Hjörtur Kjerúlf, denied having staged the recording in any way. Later study of the video revealed that what was probably moving across the river was a chunk of twisted fishing netting covered in ice. And so the Worm of Lagarfljót remains an elusive creature, for the time being.

### OFFENSIVE BOOZE GETS THE BOOT

The State Alcohol and Tobacco Company of Iceland (ÁTVR) decided not to allow the sale of Motörhead shiraz, reasoning that the band's songs promote unsafe sex, drug abuse and violence. Hjörleifur Árnason, who wanted to import the wine, was baffled by the decision, pointing out that there is a beer for sale in Iceland called "Surtur" which, while also the name of an old Norse god, also happens to be a very offensive (albeit outdated) term for a person of African descent. Later on in the month, ÁTVR made the decision not to allow the sale of the beer Black Death, this time reasoning that the phrase, "Drink in peace," written on the label, violates what stipulations about what kind of information is allowed to be printed on a bottle of alcohol.

### SUPREME COURT UPHOLDS INSIDER TRADING SENTENCE

Arguably the best news this month, if not the best news since the financial collapse, occurred when Iceland's Supreme Court upheld a two-year prison sentence against former Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Finance Baldur Guðlaugsson. Baldur had a significant amount of shares in Landsbanki before the 2008 crash, and also sat in on meetings where he was privy to knowledge not available to the general public. On September 17 and 18, he sold his shares in Landsbanki for 192 million ISK. Shortly thereafter, Landsbanki crashed. Baldur was charged with insider trading, and convicted in Reykjavík's District Court last April. He appealed to the Supreme Court, which upheld his sentence. This marks the first time in Icelandic history that someone has ever been convicted of insider trading.

### HOMOPHOBIC SCHOOLTEACHER ON PAID LEAVE

Primary school teacher Snorri Óskarsson was put on six months paid leave after his blog, which rails against homosexuality, was discovered. Although Snorri contended he was merely exercising his right to free speech, school officials pointed out that, as a number of his students likely were homosexuals, his blog effectively violated the ethical guidelines laid out for teachers to treat all their students equally. Psychologist Pétur Maack decided to take the matter a step further and press charges against Snorri, citing Article 233 of the Icelandic Penal Code, the "hate speech" section, which expressly forbids the type of speech Snorri used against homosexuals.

### FINANCIAL SURVEILLANCE AUTHORITY DIRECTOR SACKED

Gunnar Andersen, who had been director of the Financial Surveillance Authority (FME) since 2009, was much to his dismay, relieved of his duties last month. The decision stems from it coming to light that in 2001, when the FME asked Landsbanki for information about its holdings, Gunnar—who was an executive at Landsbanki at the time—had failed to mention two Guernsey-registered companies that, while owned by Landsbanki, were fully owned by Landsbanki. Gunnar left Landsbanki in 2008. The FME believed this hurt Gunnar's credibility as an FME director, so they decided to let him go. Gunnar told DV that the FME never listened to any objections in his defence, and that his sacking had been a foregone conclusion. Unnur Gunnarsdóttir, who is the chief legal expert at FME, is temporarily filling the director position until a new replacement is found.

Continues over

## Words

Egill Helgason

## Illustration

Inga María Brynjarsdóttir

Emil

**Snæfell Parka**

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In a small fishing village called Sandgerði we found this 80 year old freezing room. It is almost as old as 66°NORTH for this year marks our 85th anniversary. According to modern standards of quality the freezing room is too humid to store food in so now it is used to store bait for fishing. The temperature in the room is close to -20° celsius or -4° fahrenheit. We thought it would be an ideal location for a photoshoot featuring our clothing for it reminded us of Iceland, small, cold and dark but with a quirky attraction to it.

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Politics | Chaos

# All Tomorrow's Parties

(And Yesterday's Too)

**So, will the Icelandic government survive yet another Grapevine deadline? Probably, but its chances of re-election are looking increasingly grim. This time, though, the threat is emerging from the left, and the landscape of Icelandic politics might hang in the balance.**

For most of the last 100 years, there have been four major parties in the Icelandic Alþingi: The Independence Party (right/conservative), The Progressive Party (centre right or centre left, depending on which way the wind blows), The Social Democrats or their equivalent (left) and then a party that's further left, currently the Left-Greens. There has usually been a splinter party too, (even farther left or farther right), but these almost never last for more than two elections.

## A NATIONAL AGREEMENT TO GO THE WRONG WAY

Even though the line-up is fairly consistent, the instruments played are not. During the boom, for example, both The Independence Party and The Progressive Party and even most of The Social Democratic Alliance Party had become thoroughbred neo-liberals, moving further to the right and leaving the Left-Greens alone in what had previously been the centre to left part of the spectrum. The economic collapse then led to a left swing, The Social Democrats reaffirmed their leftist roots and formed a government with the Left-Greens in 2009.

In the elections that year, a new party, The Civic Movement, got four MPs in, but started committing hara-kiri almost upon arrival. First, one of its MPs left the party, and then the party itself left the three remaining MPs. Nevertheless, those three MPs, who formed The Movement, have managed to make their presence felt in the Alþingi, not least of them Birgitta Jónsdóttir, who has received international attention for her support of Wikileaks.

## WHATEVER HAPPENED TO THE CENTRE?

The municipal elections of 2010 brought a different kind of party to power in Reykjavík. Comedian Jón Gnarr became mayor, heading a coalition of his own Best Party and The Social Democrats. Meanwhile, The Progressive Party, originally a farmers' party and often weak in the capital, was finally wiped out. Was this the new face of Icelandic politics, the

irreverent Best Party taking the place of the sombre old farmers' party at the centre of the spectrum?

In fact, the very notion of centre seems to have changed. Whereas it used to imply people were rather content with things the way they were, not wanting too much of one thing or the other and certainly not radical change, it now appears to be made up of people who felt cheated in the boom, those not satisfied with the results of reconstruction or those opposed to the old four party left-right system. Polls consistently show this to be upwards of half of all voters, so it is small wonder that the new parties would want to appeal to these constituents.

## THE ANGRY MIDDLE-AGED MEN

The old centre party, The Progressives, have meanwhile abdicated from the centre. Their leader Sigmundur Davíð Gunnlaugsson usually presents himself as the angry man of Icelandic politics, but with their nationalist rhetoric, they seem to have placed themselves to the right of The Independence Party.

Could The Best Party step into the void and repeat its impressive Reykjavík results on a national level? Best Party CEO Heiða Helgadóttir certainly hopes so. She paired up with Guðmundur Steingrímsson to form the Bright Future party. While Guðmundur seems sensible and remains well liked, he is much tainted by previously having been a member of no less than two mainstream political parties. So much for outsider status.

It should be noted that they announced their candidacy prior to coming up with a platform or even their party's name. Rather than heralding the beginning of a powerful new force in Icelandic politics, this seems more to have encouraged others to do the same.

## THE FAR LEFT TURNS RIGHT

The new party that has caused the biggest stir is the one led by Lilja Mósedóttir, previously a Left-Green who abandoned ship halfway through the current term. Lilja has often complained that the left government is not being left enough, so it would seem reasonable that after setting off on her own, that her party, would be even farther to the left. Right?

Wrong. Lilja has also headed for the centre, calling up former Independence Party member and beloved weatherman (yes, really) Síggi Stormur ("Síggi Storm") to front the party with her. Perhaps inevitably, the party is called Solidarity, and perhaps just as inevitably, Síggi has already left amid rivalry over who gets the most airtime, and says he will not vote for the party.

Without Síggi's vote, Lilja's following will no doubt mostly come at the expense of the left. Meanwhile The Movement is showing signs of life, with reconcilia-



tion between party MPs and other party members in the works. It's hard to see any major policy differences between the new parties. All claim

*"Perhaps inevitably, the party is called Solidarity, and perhaps just as inevitably, Síggi has already left amid rivalry over who gets the most airtime, and says he will not vote for the party."*

to represent a broad front of agreement cutting across old divisions, while increasingly fracturing the political landscape. All want a substantial reduction in people's debts, as do most people, but no one seems to have a realistic plan for achieving this.

## AND THE WINNER IS...

What does seem obvious is that the current two-party government will not survive the next election unchanged, being

weakened both by constant attacks from the right and splintering on the left. The solution would be to bring in other partners, but since the current government has a hard time reaching agreements, would a three or four party coalition really be more manageable? And would Lilja, if induced to join, be more willing to cooperate with the government, as head of her own party rather than a member of the Left-Greens?

Perhaps we'll see a Best Party-style landslide of one of the new parties, thus presenting a credible alternative to the four established ones while taking votes from both left and right. But with still a year to go, it is more likely that new parties will appear rather than old ones merging, this seems remote. The Best Party itself benefitted greatly from being the only viable alternative to the old four, but no party is now in this position. And no party has yet suggested that rarity in Icelandic politics: an electoral alliance.

The alternative is clear. According to polls, The Independence Party has regained most of its strength (around 35% of the vote), even if it is unquestionably the party most responsible for the collapse. The increased fracturing will probably put them in a key position after the next election, regardless of whether that's what most Icelanders want. 🍷

Continued

## I DRINK YOUR MILKSHAKE!

Norwegian and British prospectors discovered strong evidence that there is oil in the so-called Dragon Area, the northeast corner of Icelandic territorial waters. Rock samples showed "active seepage of Jurassic oil and a working hydrocarbon system." This will in all likelihood make things pretty exciting when a new Icelandic Licensing Round for drilling comes up this spring. While there is no indication as to exactly how much oil there might be, Hermann Guðmundsson, the director of petrol station chain N1, told reporters that this could "make Iceland one of the richest countries in the world within the next 12 years."

## THE PRESIDENT IS RUNNING AFTER ALL

After insinuating in his New Year's address that he would not seek re-election, and then refusing for months to give a straight answer when questioned, President Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson has announced that he will run again this year. This was due in part, he said, to being presented with a petition with 30,000 signatures calling for him to run. Ólafur, who has been president for sixteen years now, could wind up being president for two decades if he wins. However he has said that he may not finish his term if elected. During the time in which he appeared to be indecisive or perhaps secretive about his intentions to run or not, a poll conducted by Fréttablaðið showed the largest percentage of respondents wanted him to stay on, followed close behind by Former Minister of Justice Ragna Árnadóttir (who has since declined to run) and former chair of the Central Bank and current editor of Morgunblaðið Davíð Oddsson.

## REYKJAVÍK ENERGY PROPERTIES SOLD WITHOUT ADVERTISEMENT

Reykjavík Energy (RE) apparently sold at least two of its holdings without ever making a public advertisement that they were for sale. The City of Reykjavík, which owns 94% of RE, acted on information they received about the matter and made a formal inquiry to RE. According to data on RE's website, the sale process of the two holdings—Enex Kína and Envent Holding—began in February 2010, with a deal signed in August 19, 2011. While RE only owned 19.53% of Enex Kína and 24.5% of Envent, the sale apparently went underway without the shares being made publicly available.

## FORMER PM IS ON TRIAL

Former Prime Minister Geir H. Haarde is currently standing trial for negligence and mismanagement in the months leading up to Iceland's financial collapse, despite the best efforts of his brethren in the conservative party to get the charges dropped. Geir has maintained that nobody could have predicted the crash and furthermore that there was nothing he could have done to prevent it. Day one was spent drilling Geir, who said that he was happy to finally get a chance to respond to the charges. On day two, former Chair of the Central Bank Davíð Oddsson, among others, testified. He asserted that he had warned Geir about trouble brewing in the banks, and that Geir showed a lack of confidence and trust in Davíð's words. At the same time, he said he understood Geir not heeding his warnings, as it appeared that the banks were doing quite well financially.

PAUL FONTAINE

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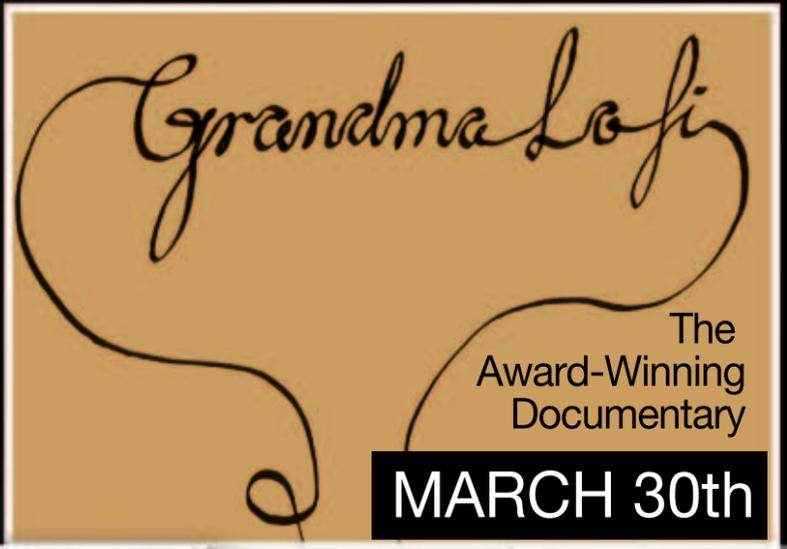
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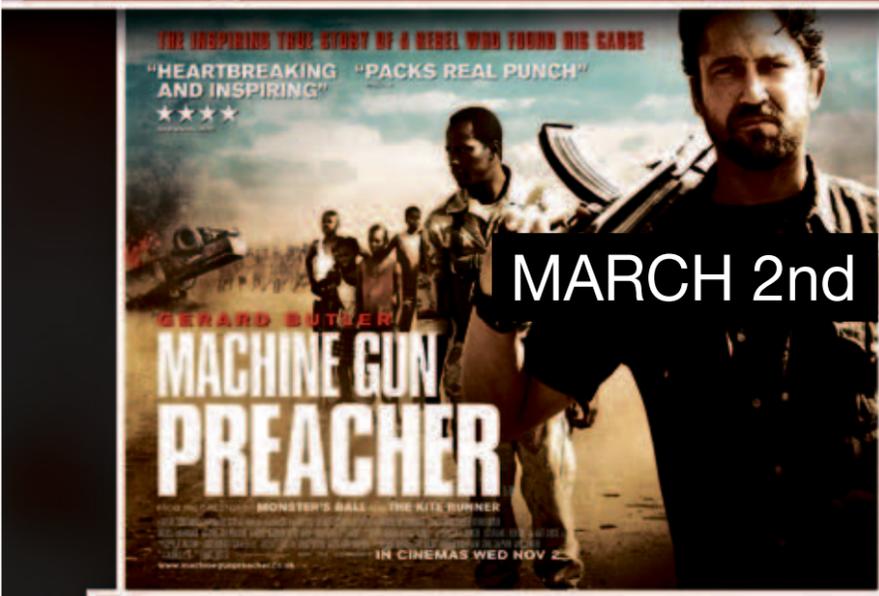


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# Want To Buy US Dollars?

*If you're an Icelandic citizen you may not be able to...*



Maybe you're travelling to the US, or anywhere else that might accept its currency. Maybe you want to try your hand at gaming the economic yo-yo of currency trading. Or maybe you just like the look, design or smell of American money. Whatever your reasons, you should probably know a thing or two about buying US dollars before you proceed.

For starters, the rules about buying dollars aren't just a matter of bank policy—they're enshrined in law. Specifically, it's detailed in Act No. 127/2011

amending the Foreign Exchange Act, the Customs Act and the Act on the Central Bank of Iceland. As the name of this law suggests, there have always been restrictions and regulations when it comes to buying foreign currency, even before the 2008 bank collapse. However, pre-crash it had more to do with the buying and selling of foreign securities. After the crash, things got a lot more restrictive.

These restrictions were eased somewhat in November 2009, but there's still a cap on how much foreign currency you can buy, and a few other

provisions have been tossed in for good measure, supposedly to help keep the Icelandic króna stabilized and prevent everyone from buying up metric tonnes of dollars in the hopes of becoming filthy rich when it does.

So what are these regulations, exactly?

First of all, Article 13 d. of the act states that if you're buying foreign currency, it better be because you're travelling. To wit: "At purchase or withdrawal an individual shall demonstrate the proposed trip by presenting a ticket or receipt for payment of his scheduled travel within four weeks." If you happen to be a crewmember of an airplane, you can just show the bank your travel itinerary instead.

Second, you can only buy so many dollars, and you're restricted as to how often you can do so. Specifically, the bank will see to it that nobody purchases or withdraws "foreign currency in cash for an amount equivalent to more than 350,000 kr. [\$2,800 USD] on the purchase- or withdrawal date for each

person under paragraph 1 per calendar month."

Third, if you're an Icelandic resident and will be living abroad for more than one month, but less than six months, you can transfer that dollar amount from Iceland to yourself once a month.

In all cases of travelling outside of Iceland with American dollars, you—and only you!—are allowed to be carrying those dollars. So if you bought two grand and intend to take it out of Iceland, be sure to keep it in no one else's luggage but your own.

It's expected that these restrictions will ease as the economy recovers. And the economy won't recover if you keep dumping Icelandic króna on the market, so do refrain from buying thousands of dollars each month, if at all possible. Thanks. ☺

PAUL FONTAINE

## Well Here's Another Fine Mess You've Gotten Us Into

Iceland In The International Eye  
February

Here's what international journalists—the same ones who've previously slagged us off numerous times—are presently saying:

- In Iceland, the voice of the people has won
- In Iceland, true democracy and equality is at work
- Iceland is a once-vibrant economy which has returned—fist-swinging—from the living-dead
- Iceland is 'now' governed by a sensible, strong, determined leadership that considers the interests of its people above all else
- Iceland has dug itself out of the crisis without playing by the rules
- Iceland has stamped out corporate greed, nepotism and cronyism

Oh, and let's not forget:

- Iceland is still one of the happiest countries on this fine planet...

In February, there has been a deluge of reporting covering Iceland's so-called reinstatement into the global monetary community, its upgraded credit ratings, and unorthodox methods to tackle the debt crisis. It's almost as if those financial journalists have no other up-to-date source material to call upon. Even that Chinese lion is starting to lose its economic-media momentum. (The World Bank recently suggested that the Chinese economy is significantly slowing down.)

Or perhaps someone's just trying to ramp up the heat on Greece? On March 1, commodities website, Stockhouse.com, stated: "If Greek politicians were really acting in the best interests of the Greek people, they would have taken the same path chosen by Iceland's leaders—default." Bleak indeed. Bleaker still: "There is no hope for Greece to repay its debts by meeting the draconian burden imposed on it. But the banks want their money back, even if it means keeping Greece in debtor's prison." CNN paints a similar picture of our Hellenic cousins: "Greece...will be lucky if it reaches its target by 2020 in accordance with the terms of its second bailout."

Here's Iceland, in February and early March as the widely extolled paragon of virtue and diligence:

- BBC: "Iceland debt 'safe' to invest after ratings upgrade"
- CNN: "...three years on, Iceland is poised to re-emerge from economic purgatory..."
- Daily Telegraph: "Iceland's Viking Victory" calls for hearty "congratulations..."
- DailyFinance.com: "...maybe...there's something we can learn from those hap-

Continues over

## Don't Get Too Excited About Your Authentic Icelandic Souvenir...

*The Grapevine uncovers the true origins of lava jewellery "made in Iceland"*

Walking down the main shopping street in Reykjavík, it is hard to miss the abundance of lava jewellery for sale. Perhaps this isn't so strange given that the entire surface of Iceland is covered in volcanic rock. But, what if that special piece of Iceland that you brought home was not as Icelandic as you thought it was?

After hearing a rumour that the lava stones used to make many of these earrings, bracelets and necklaces are actually imported, The Grapevine decided to investigate.

We popped into Islandia, a tourist shop whose stated ambition is "to provide anything Icelandic the tourist might desire." Like in many other stores, the lava jewellery there is labelled "Icelandic Design" and "Made in Iceland." This doesn't technically say anything about the lava rocks, but the salespeople assured us that the lava comes from volcanoes all over the island.

But could that really be true? Were they lying to us? Were they ill informed? Isn't the porous Icelandic lava simply too fragile to be turned into beads?

At Iceland Gift Store, a salesclerk told us more. "The Icelandic lava cannot be polished," she said, pointing to a shiny lava stone on a silver necklace,

not unlike the ones you see in shop windows all around town. This fact was corroborated by a salesclerk at another tourist shop. "But please don't tell my boss that I told you," he said.

If there's an authority selling Icelandic design, it's Kraum, self-described as "a design store, which concentrates on selling only the best of Icelandic design" representing over 200 designers, carrying clothes, jewellery, applied art, and furniture among other things. There the salesclerk said: "Icelandic lava is too soft to be treated." Thus, shiny, polished rocks with holes drilled through them are simply not Icelandic.

Jewellery designer Andrea Ellen, who crafts jewellery "inspired by the uniquely powerful colors, textures and materials of Iceland," explained that it is difficult to work with Icelandic lava. "I try to use stones that I or others have found in Iceland," she said, "but cutting Icelandic lava is only possible on a small scale and is very time consuming." This explains why Icelandic lava is almost always mounted in a silver frame, which protects the fragile rock.

If the lava isn't from Iceland then, where is it coming from? It seems there's no one answer or single supplier. We heard that the polished rocks came from Germany and Norway to China and Japan. And even the non-



polished ones with a more Icelandic look and feel to them are not guaranteed to be from Iceland. As Andrea explained, Indonesian lava is a good alternative to Icelandic lava because it has a matte look, but is less porous, which makes it more malleable.

So, is that lava stone necklace—the one you wear everyday as a constant

reminder of your trip to this volcanic island—actually "Found in Iceland"? Well, it's certainly unlikely, even if it was "Made in Iceland" by an Icelandic designer. ☺

LYNN KLEIN  
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# NOSTALGÍA

Laugavegur 32



# Robbery By Math

The true story of Icelandic Index Linked Mortgages

**It is the things that we think we understand that inevitably catch us unaware. We all know what loans are, and what mortgages mean, so we don't bother questioning them as we sign on the dotted line to pay up for the next 25 years or so of our lives. That at least, is the best explanation I can come up with for the existence of the most unique instrument of financial self-destruction over the last 30 years: the Icelandic Index Linked Mortgage.**

## UNDERSTANDING MORTGAGE REPAYMENT SCHEDULES

To appreciate the full financial havoc that the mortgages sold during the bubble years are slowly wreaking on the Icelandic economy requires an understanding of how loan repayments usually work, which means examining the loan amortization table for these loans. Loan amortization tables are something every borrower should get to know intimately. Quite simply they show the monthly loan payments, broken down into the amount of interest and principal repaid, and the amount of the loan still outstanding. If we use a \$100,000, 25 year US loan at a 9.3% annual interest rate as an example, the first few months of its amortization table would look something like in table 1

The table shows the monthly repayment broken down into the interest on the loan, and the principal repayment, and the total amount of the loan still outstanding every month in the 'Outstanding' column. Like all compound interest loans, at the beginning of the loan most of the money you pay goes on interest, with principal repayments being a depressingly small part of the total. At least though, in a typical US loan the principal outstanding on the loan is decreasing.

## NEGATIVE AMORTIZATION LOANS

Compare and contrast the amortization table below for a notional 10 million ISK, 25 year Icelandic Index linked loan, taken from Arion Bank's website, for the "Verðtryggt íbúðalán með föstum vöxtum" with an interest rate at 4.3% and an assumed

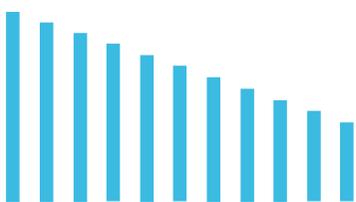
constant inflation rate of 5%, together making the same total interest rate as the American loan shown in table 2.

There's good news and bad news in this table. The 'good' news is that the repayments, initially at least are significantly less than those on the American loan. The bad news is what that will end up costing you, as the Icelandic Housing loans sold

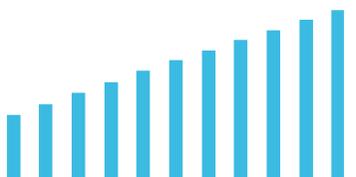
*"Negative amortization loans are a specialized form of lending, supposedly only for 'sophisticated' investors, a term widely used within the financial industry to mean 'gullible'"*

during the bubble years weren't just index linked—they were structured as negative amortization loans.

Negative amortization loans are a specialized form of lending, supposedly only for 'sophisticated' investors, a term widely used within the financial industry to mean 'gullible'. With NegAm loans, the initial repayments on the loan aren't sufficient to cover the interest payments on the total amount borrowed, and so as you can see, the total amount of the loan increases over time, rather than decreasing. As the amount of interest you pay on the loan depends on the amount of the principal outstanding, then the next month the interest payable on the loan also increases. The lower payments last at most eight years (assuming nothing dramatic happens with the inflation rate), at which point according to the Arion Bank's calculator the principal owed is still climbing. Indeed it isn't until 17 years after the loan has been taken out, that the original loan begins to be repaid.



Outstanding debt over a 11 month period of payments - US loan



Outstanding debt over a 11 month period of payments - Icelandic loan

## HOW BAD CAN IT BE?

In comparison to an American 25 year mortgage for \$100,000 at 9.3%, a borrower would end up repaying a total of just over \$257,000. With an Icelandic, NegAm Index 25 year linked loan for 10 million ISK, at 4.1%, and assuming a stable inflation rate of 5%, the borrower would end up paying slightly more than 31 million, or the notional equivalent of \$310,000 if we drop a couple of zero's.

While paying 5 million more ISK than a comparable loan in the US (or Europe) would cost might not seem so bad, in fact the majority of the loans sold during the bubble period in Iceland weren't 25 year loans; they were 40 year. The Arion Bank calculator shows that the total repayment for a 40 year loan of 10 million works out to be 65 million ISK. A comparable 40 year US loan by comparison, would come to \$380,000.

Recently it has become possible to get five year fixed rate loans at 6% in Iceland, and anybody who can is well advised to do so. Whilst these still don't match what's available in America, since the interest rate after the 5 year fixed period is adjustable, they're still a far better option than

the old NegAm index linked loans—which are still available, both from the banks, The Housing Financing Fund, and in doubtless well meant offers on local real estate listings to take over the existing loan and avoid having to put down a 20% deposit.

The real comparison, though, isn't with a 9.3% US loan since most people don't pay that kind of rate over there. Fixed rate 25 and 30 years loans can currently be had in America for around 4.5% to qualified borrowers. The total repayment on a 4.5% fixed rate 25 year loan, is just under \$167,000, nearly \$140,000 less than the 9.3% 25 year Icelandic loan. All of which assumes that nothing dramatic happens to the inflation rate, and for Iceland at least, 5% is decidedly on the low side as an inflation estimate.

Now while you might think, and indeed I have frequently heard it argued here, that the high inflation rate somehow justifies this form of robbery by math, this ignores the important question of what causes inflation in the first place. In particular, it ignores the cause of inflation in Iceland, which is usually the direct consequence of the badly regulated lending activities of its banks. Always accompanied by a nice story from the salesman about how house prices always go up and it would always be possible to sell for more than the loan.

In fact with negative amortization loans the direct opposite tends to be true, since it is difficult, if not impossible, for borrowers to build up capital while repaying them. Quite often borrowers simply end up selling the house for the total amount still outstanding if they are lucky. However there is no guarantee that the house price will increase as quickly as the outstanding loan amount will, so if they are unlucky they're left in negative equity and have to sell for less than the loan and bring extra money to the table to close. As the steady flow of foreclosures in Iceland bears mute testimony to, many Icelanders can't even do that.

JACKY MALLET

Table 1 - USD

	Repayment	Principal	Interest	Paid	Outstanding
Feb. 2012	\$859.83	\$84.83	\$775.00	\$775.00	\$99,915.17
Mar. 2012	\$859.83	\$85.49	\$774.34	\$1,549.34	\$99,829.67
Apr-12	\$859.83	\$86.15	\$773.68	\$2,323.02	\$99,743.52
May-12	\$859.83	\$86.82	\$773.01	\$3,096.03	\$99,656.70
Jun-12	\$859.83	\$87.50	\$772.34	\$3,868.37	\$99,569.20
Jul-12	\$859.83	\$88.17	\$771.66	\$4,640.04	\$99,481.03
Aug. 2012	\$859.83	\$88.86	\$770.98	\$5,411.01	\$99,392.17
Sept. 2012	\$859.83	\$89.55	\$770.29	\$6,181.30	\$99,302.63
Oct. 2012	\$859.83	\$90.24	\$769.60	\$6,950.90	\$99,212.39
Nov. 2012	\$859.83	\$90.94	\$768.90	\$7,719.79	\$99,121.45
Dec. 2012	\$859.83	\$91.64	\$768.19	\$8,487.99	\$99,029.81
Jan. 2013	\$859.83	\$92.35	\$767.48	\$9,255.47	\$98,937.45

Table 2 - ISK

	Repayment	Principal	Interest	Fee	Paid	Outstanding
13.03.2012	54,708	18,667	35,922	120	54,708	10,024,663
13.04.2012	54,843	18,780	35,943	120	54,843	10,030,673
13.05.2012	54,978	18,894	35,964	120	54,978	10,036,586
13.06.2012	55,113	19,008	35,985	120	55,113	10,042,398
13.07.2012	55,249	19,123	36,006	120	55,249	10,048,111
13.08.2012	55,385	19,239	36,026	120	55,385	10,053,722
13.09.2012	55,521	19,356	36,046	120	55,521	10,059,230
13.10.2012	55,658	19,473	36,065	120	55,658	10,064,636
13.11.2012	55,795	19,591	36,084	120	55,795	10,069,937
13.12.2012	55,932	19,710	36,103	120	55,932	10,075,133
13.01.2013	56,070	19,829	36,121	120	56,070	10,080,223



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★★★★★

" (...) The friendly, chatty bus driver was our guide, too. He was a native Icelander with a funny, lovely English accent. It was still dark, in wintertime, but we could take photos, and the colours of the lights proved to be very impressive. We went around the greater city, stopping and getting off the bus at the places of interest. We got a picture not only about the highlights, but Iceland's history, people, customs, moreover, we heard interesting stories. It was a really enjoyable tour. "

AH33 Northern Lights Mystery - Csabai wrote: Thursday, January 26, 2012:

★★★★★

" (...) My daughter liked the tour so much, that she repeated it next day. They went to another places and she could take stunning photos. It was a real chase. The guide was nice, taking us places, where there were cafes to warm up, or the scenery was amazing even at night. "



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Opinion | Pawel Bartoszek

## THE PARLIAMENT THAT WOULDN'T



Following four months of intense debates, Iceland's Constitutional Council handed Alþingi its proposals for a new Constitution. That was

July 29, 2011. Now the Council has been asked to reconvene for a four-day session of further deliberation. Unfortunately, the Icelandic parliament's handling of the proposals has not done constitution reform much good, and

furthermore, the planned road ahead seems ill advised.

### THE BACK STORY

Following the financial crisis in 2008 and the subsequent parliamentary elections in early 2009, the victorious left-wing government embarked on a journey to revise Iceland's Constitution of 1944. A Constitutional Assembly of 25 people, voted for in a popular election held last year, were supposed to

draft a proposal. I was one of the 525 candidates who ran and one of those lucky twenty-five to gain a seat after the original count. Unfortunately, the Supreme Court deemed the results invalid in early 2011, citing procedural problems.

Parliament, however, chose to bypass the ruling by changing the name from "Assembly" to "Council" and offering the same twenty-five people seats. This was, in my opinion, a bad

decision. The right approach would have been to redo the election—not to rebrand the body in question. Those of us with seats had to decide either to take part in the process, which you could say was flawed, or to relinquish our seat to someone who has no problem with Supreme Court rulings being ignored. I chose the first option, along with the rest of the group with the exception of one person.

Bringing this all up again might seem pointless or even mean, but when it comes to constitutional reform, it doesn't sit well with me that the ruling government write the rules, as the game unfolds, hoping that everything will somehow turn out fine.

### LET'S CALL THE COUNCIL!

The Constitutional Council, which formally ceased to exist six months ago, is being asked to convene on March 8 through 11 to discuss questions from the parliamentary committee responsible for constitutional affairs. Following this brief session, the Council can, from what I understand, make amendments to its own proposals, and the resulting document will then be put to a referendum by the end of June, on the same day as Icelanders vote for President. I have serious reservations about this set-up. First of all, when parliament was voting to have the Council reconvene, there were no concrete proposals available with respect to what they thought needed changing, for either legal or political reasons. A few days later a short statement was made public to the me-

dia, including: "Take a better look at the chapter about the president." Members of the Council have since then received a four-page letter from parliament. The letter is a fair enough memo, but it still includes no concrete proposals for what should be changed and how it should be done.

Parliament, which is solely responsible for amending the constitution, should have examined the proposals both from a legal and a political point of view. It seems that neither has been done. No thorough legal analysis of our document has been made on behalf of parliament, and it seems, as many MPs claim, that this step can wait until after the referendum. I firmly disagree. The idea of voting on a law before preparing it seems irresponsible to me.

If the goal of the March meeting of the Constitutional Council was solely to give our opinion on some ideas that parliament might have with regards to our proposals then that might be fine. However, that is not the case. The plan is to put our decisions directly to a referendum, without any further legal expert analysis, and without giving the Council resources needed to accommodate for such an analysis.

And I do have a problem with taking part in submitting something to a popular vote without it first being at least examined—if not approved—by parliament. It is parliament that has the power to amend the Constitution, and it cannot push that responsibility away, even if it wants to. ☹

Photo by Gúndi

Opinion | Íris Erlingsdóttir

## THE FREEDOM TO OFFEND



The great psychologist Alfred Adler once observed that "exaggerated sensitiveness is an expression of the feeling of inferiority." One

of his successors in Iceland is a case in point.

Iceland psychologist Pétur Maack has filed criminal charges against Snorri Óskarsson, an elementary school teacher in the northern city of Akureyri, for having the temerity to point out on his personal blog that there are still some people in this world who do not approve of homosexual behaviour. This, according to Dr. Maack, violates Iceland's hate crime statute, which provides that "anyone who in a ridiculing, slanderous, insulting, threatening or any other manner publicly abuses a person or a group of people on the basis of their nationality, skin colour, race, religion or sexual orientation, shall be fined or jailed for up to two years."

As I have pointed out before, Icelanders have a hard time understanding the American concept of freedom of expression. To many of my compatriots, you are free to express yourself in any way you want, as long as it doesn't offend anyone.

Salman Rushdie pointed out, "Without the freedom to offend, it [freedom of expression] ceases to exist." Dr. Maack and the Akureyri school board, which suspended the teacher after discovering his post, are attempting to censor a view that in the past generation has become out of fashion. We don't have to go back in time or travel very far to find widespread condemnation of homosexual behaviour. I imagine that many people—and certainly a not insubstantial number of Icelanders—would agree with Snorri's belief that homosexuality is immoral.

For the record, I am not one of those people. I believe that all human beings should be free to act however

they please, publicly and privately, as long as their actions do not harm others. I believe that committed same-sex couples should be granted the same rights under the law as committed heterosexual couples. I personally find it abhorrent that there are people who actively attempt to interfere with the sexual and social lives of their fellow citizens. I believe that blindly quoting the Bible to support an argument (and it can support just about any side of any argument) is a sign of intellectual laziness.

However, I'm a strong believer in the wisdom of the childhood rhyme, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me." I know what you'll say—words can hurt people, especially children, like the ones taught by this teacher, who haven't learned how to cope with bullying behaviour.

But the world is a rough place. Not everyone is going to agree with everything that you hold dear. It is our re-

sponsibility—as parents, as citizens, as human beings—to stand up for what we believe. Unless we are threatened with force, we should use our reason and our words to refute contrary views. Resorting to the use of force to vindicate one's personal point of view—and make no mistake, the state's power to fine and imprison is an exercise in force—is the essence of bullying.

Noam Chomsky once stated that "If we don't believe in freedom of expression for people we despise, we don't believe in it at all." I don't know Snorri, and I certainly don't agree with his belief that homosexuals will burn in hell. But, to the best of my knowledge, he has never threatened anyone with physical harm (at least not in this life), has never publicly abused any individual for his or her lifestyle, and has never attempted to indoctrinate his pupils with his views on the matter. The school board's actions and Dr. Maack's showboating are only making a martyr

out of Snorri, and will only push those who think like him into a corner.

It is the acme of irony when a population that was once persecuted demonstrates the intolerance for opposing views that it once condemned in its oppressors. Just as homosexuality has never really posed a threat to Christian society (despite the frequent thunderings of preachers and politicians), so Christian beliefs pose no threat to the LGBT community—as long as those beliefs are not translated into repressive laws or similar actions. A society that can imprison an individual for their religious beliefs also has the power to imprison an individual for their sexual orientation.

If we want to live in a free and open society, we need to grow thicker skins and follow the rules we learned in kindergarten: Play nicely with the other children. Use your words, not your fists. ☹



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# Why Do We Need k

**New York City design firm karlssonwilker is the brainchild of Messrs Jan Wilker and Hjalti Karlsson, one of whom happens to be born and raised in Reykjavík (no points for guessing which one). They have made quite a name for themselves, working for some rather big clients. Puma, The New York Times, Mini, Vitra, MTV, Warner Brothers and Universal music are among the parties they have sold their time and talent to since opening for business in 2000.**

**You can now add Reykjavík's annual DesignMarch to that list, as the pair was drafted to the prestigious position of designing the visual identity for the 2012 edition.**

**We paid their Manhattan office a visit last month in an attempt to find out who these people are, what they are doing and why we need them.**

by Haukur S. Magnússon

The first years of Karlssonwilker's operation are well known to graphic design enthusiasts, documented in a popular 2003 book entitled 'Tellmewhy—The First 24 Months Of A New York Design Company.' It tells the warts 'n' all story of their first two years in operation, detailing all the small victories along with major setbacks, disappointments, vanishing clients and failed projects. Lauded for its honesty in depicting the sometimes-grim reality of starting a new business—rather than being a sugar-coated success story devised to earn them respect and clients—it is an essential read for anyone considering starting their own business in the field of graphic design.

"That book quickly took on a life of its own, and I am sure it contributed to our reputation quite a bit," Hjalti tells me over lunch. "In fact, it's still doing it. While I pay little attention to what people are saying about us, aside from acknowledging that being talked about can be good for business, our perceived image seems shaped by those early years as depicted in 'Tellmewhy.' I recently went to Calgary, Canada, to judge a competition and give a lecture, and while in conversation with this graphic design graduate I learnt that it was mandatory reading in his class, that this was actually the case in many design courses in Canada. It was kind of startling [laughs], I actually thought he was joking around until this was confirmed by others present."

Hjalti and I are sitting at Karlssonwilker's favourite restaurant, Village Yogurt on Sixth Avenue, where the two enjoy lunch every day. "During our first years in business we sustained mostly on Dunkin Donuts [there is a franchise below their office], but that quickly grew tired, not to mention unhealthy. So we embraced this place and come here almost every day," he explains while picking at his order of steamed chicken and brown rice. Jan is back at the office, working on a deadline along with their two employees. "We run a small office. It's the best way for us to operate, we've experimented with keeping a larger staff, but it doesn't suit our purposes. We'll usually host an intern in addition to the two employees, but that's as populated as we want to get. Five people is plenty for what we do."

#### LUCKY STRIKE

Sporting long blonde locks and a Jesus beard, Hjalti is healthy looking, humble and in a chipper mood. He tells me how he came to be a graphic designer, and how he came to live and work in New York. The tale is rife with coincidence. "After barely graduating from MR college at age twenty I found myself really lost, with no idea what I wanted to do. I started working for a wholesaler's, distributing candy to stores and kiosks while attending courses in preparatory studies at what's now known as The Icelandic Academy of The Arts. I had signed up inspired by my mother, who was always painting pictures, and in turn found myself drawn to the field of graphic design. After completing a year, my application to the school's graphic design department was rejected, so I contacted Parsons School of Design in New York on the advice of [prominent Reykjavík designer] Atli Hilmarsson, who had attended."

Much to his surprise, Hjalti's application was accepted. In fact this was problematic for young Hjalti, as he couldn't really afford tuition and the

move to New York, despite his parents' willingness to support the endeavour.

This is when good fortune struck: "A co-worker and I were taking orders in some hole in the wall sjoppa in Breiðholt, noting down how much Prince Polo they needed, stuff like that. My co-worker was behind the register, and he picked up a stack of these scratch lottery cards and suggested we play. They had just been introduced to the market and were quite novel at the time, it being 1989 and all. I had no time for such nonsense and told him to hurry up, but he threw me one, urging me to scratch. I brought the card up to my nose and smelled it before uttering, 'this one is no good', and asking for another. That one didn't smell right either, so I got yet another one. Before I scratched it, I told my partner: 'if I win, I'll give you a third of the prize'. After scratching and perusing the numbers I handed it to him wordlessly, my mouth agape..."

We had won a lot of money; what would amount to around \$15,000 today. We drove to the lottery's offices and they gave us a cheque for the amount. We split it according to our plan, even though my co-worker tried to refuse his share. And thus I could afford to attend Parsons, Funny how that worked out..."

Despite having lived in New York ever since, Hjalti still feels like a visitor. "In many ways it still feels like I just arrived. One of the reasons I wanted to go to Parsons was that I had this desire to be in New York. It wasn't like I was sick of Iceland or anything, in fact I loved it and I fully planned on moving back home after finishing my three years in design school. I'm still here, though, twenty-three years later. I have a hard time fathoming that I've spent half my life here, and I certainly don't feel like an American. Which is maybe funny considering I've never lived in Iceland as an adult. I was still living with my parents when I left for New York."

#### THE KING OF THE DESIGN WORLD

After graduating from Parsons, Hjalti landed a full time job with fabled design guru Stefan Sagmeister where he—Sagmeister's only employee—found himself working on a lot of high profile stuff, including album covers for artists like The Rolling Stones and Lou Reed. "And that's where I met Jan," he says.

In that very instance, Jan himself enters the Village Yogurt and takes a seat next to his partner of twelve years.

Jan orders food and we discuss his life before New York, Hjalti and karlssonwilker. After enjoying considerable success with a surfing apparel company that he'd founded in his native Germany, Sharksucker, he decided to study architecture. "I had envisioned architecture to be sort of The King Of The Design World. In the first half of the 20th century there were all these design universalists, like Buckminster Fuller, that were essentially architects but worked in every field: product design, graphic design, filmmaking and even art. For me they encompassed this bigger idea of what design could be, and this is what I aspired to."

"I quickly learnt that architecture wasn't being taught like that anymore, and I frankly didn't have the patience to wait until I was forty years old to see my first garage constructed. So after a year of architecture I switched

to graphic design, which seemed like a more immediate way of getting my point across."

I ask what it was that he needed to get across so quickly. "A lot of it had to do with vanity, I suppose," he says. "With Sharksucker, I had found it exhilarating to see my own creations on the street. To create something beautiful or interesting that other people would look at and be affected by."

Jan's studies would eventually lead him to an internship at Sagmeister's New York studio. He and Hjalti grew friendly, and when they learnt that their mentor was planning a yearlong sabbatical they came up with the idea of doing something on their own. "We had this very naïve and sort of childlike idea that since the big boss was closing we should just start our own thing, seeing that the break would leave Hjalti out of work and I was a student with nothing planned."

"We didn't really know one another that well; frankly we had no idea what we were getting into. It's somehow worked out for twelve years, though, and we're starting to know one another pretty well. Hjalti often says that I am his best friend, even."

#### HAND TO MOUTH

Upon learning the pair's plans, Sagmeister gracefully donated them one of his office computers and sent a client their way. Design firm karlssonwilker started slowly taking form, the details of which are gloriously recounted in the aforementioned 'Tellmewhy.' Recommended reading for anyone who takes the slightest interest in design, the book is out of print by now but widely available at libraries and online.

At times it reads like a drama, the pair struggling with every aspect of getting established and finding countless obstacles in their way. One gets the sense that they started the firm with a sort of haphazardly optimistic 'build it and they will come' attitude, doing very little to attract business or reach clients. They struggle with work permits, housing, finances, losing clients, fumbled attempts at gaining new ones. But it is equally apparent that through it all they strive to be honest and hardworking, and that they take immense joy from every last bit of it. And this is likely what has seen them prevail and conquer to this day.

"Twelve years after taking those first steps towards independence, we find not a lot has changed," Hjalti says. "We still work out of the same office. And we are still really bad at seeking out projects. I am naturally shy and so is Jan, so we don't really cold-call clients or actively seek them out. We tried it and we're just no good at it. We just want to sit here and have people call us, although to be fair I should note that Nicole [Jacek, karlssonwilker's Creative Director and one of two employees] does work hard at pulling in business, and is quite adept at the cold calls."

They still work mostly hand to mouth, as Hjalti remarks. "A project will come our way and we will work on it for two months or so, then hopefully we'll have another one. This method of running a business can of course be stressful; we have few retainers on steady projects. This means we have to depend on whatever work comes in—if none does, we don't get paid. And now we have families to take care of, apartments to pay for..."

# karlssonwilker?

"We never wanted to run this business as a hobby," Hjalti continues, "no matter how much we enjoy what we do. From day one, we wanted it to be a business, and businesses make money. We would be a failure if we made no money. So this endeavour has to work; it has to turn a profit. And be fun. We run this firm on an annual basis; we have a meeting every December where we decide whether to carry on or not. And I believe that if we found it to be no longer fun or profitable we would call it quits."

"So far we've always decided to do one more year."

## EVERYTHING IS ALWAYS ALLOWED

We stand up to leave, dropping our paper plates in Village Yogurt's recycling bin. On our way out Hjalti grins as he points out the restaurant's wall of fame, which is covered with signed photos of soap actors, c-list stars, Susan Sarandon and... karlssonwilker themselves. The photo is humorous and tongue in cheek, like the two usually like to present themselves. This can be verified by looking at any number of the magazine covers they adorn or the mailers they will occasionally send out.

Indeed, their humour, irreverence and carefree attitude is a large part of what defines karlssonwilker as a design firm. I am reminded of a conversation I had with designer Siggí Eggertsson—who incidentally created the visual identity for last year's DesignMarch—in preparation for the story, where we discussed his 2005 internship with Jan and Hjalti. Siggí remembers it fondly. "After reading 'Tellmewhy' I grew enamoured with their work and mode of thinking. So I contacted Hjalti to see if I could intern for them, and he invited me over."

Taking a break from his studies, Siggí spent the summer at the karlssonwilker office, working on album covers and posters while experiencing New York for the first time. "It was a lot to take in for a short amount of time. I feel like I learnt a lot from being around them. It wasn't necessarily anything technical, the real lesson came from being exposed to how they think; how relaxed they are and their approach to work, which is basically: everything is allowed, no matter the project. That is a good thing to keep in mind."

As we make our way back to their office, I mention Siggí's comments and ask if they have been keeping track of their former intern's work. "I follow him very closely," Hjalti responds. "I've always been a fan of his stuff and it's great to see how well he's doing. When he was with us he was thinking deeply about his future, wondering what direction to take. From the outset I felt it was obvious that he needed to work

on his own, instead of at some firm. He needs room to express himself and to flesh out his ideas. We can't take any credit for what he does in terms of design, but perhaps our mode of thinking influenced him, as you said."

## NO STYLE, NO PROBLEM

The karlssonwilker office is bustling with life. A well stocked bar sits in one corner, while a slew of Macs line the walls. Pleasantly energetic alt. rock blares at a low volume through a Pandora station. It is a comfortable, personal environment that gives off an air of having been the site of many a creative venture and countless all-nighters. Jan sits back down to work with the crew and Hjalti and I retire to the meeting room to continue our discussion.

karlssonwilker are notorious for not being associated with a particular design style, and of priding themselves in that fact. I ask Hjalti about this.

"We like to say we don't have any set style, yes. I still think we inevitably have some sort of something going... we don't like to use a lot of colours, for instance, a lot of what we do is black and white. And we usually use Sans Serif fonts. I imagine that there are all sorts of little style indicators in our work, and if people looked closely enough I am sure they could assemble some sort of steady aesthetic that we've employed through the years. But we still say we don't have a style."

A large flatscreen television hangs on one wall of the meeting room, and Hjalti hooks up his laptop to show me some of their recent work. We scroll through some impressive work commissioned by Nintendo for its 3DS handheld. We watch videos from a campaign they made last year for the launch of Mini's new Coupe—which involved them driving over 3000 kilometres through Europe in the space of eleven days, interviewing interesting characters along the way and documenting everything for a slew of online videos, a website and a 24 page pull out in Matter Magazine. Another part of the Mini campaign involved them digitally melding the Coupe's 3D CAD files with various fashion designs and models.

We watch some more, and it never gets boring.

## WE HAVE NO IDEA WHAT WE'RE DOING

The discussion turns to graphic design in general. I ask what it means, what it is. Why people keep hiring them. Do they encourage sales? What are they bringing to the table? It's not a particular style, we've already crossed that out, so what is it they contribute?

"We can design something just right, but we can never guarantee sales or success. See, most of what sells a

product is itself. If your CD is brilliantly designed, with great artwork, but the music sucks, it will not sell. The opposite is rather true, great music can sell in great numbers despite being packaged horribly."

He continues. "We don't consider ourselves marketers. We are a design firm and we want our designs to work

scratch, outside of their stylesheet. It was new for them; they were taking a risk and wanted to experiment.

"Working these one-offs isn't something we sought out. It just evolved that way. Projects keep coming in that are different from anything we've worked on, and when they're done a different one will come in. To name another

**"I imagine that there are all sorts of little style indicators in our work, and if people looked closely enough I am sure they could assemble some sort of steady aesthetic that we've employed through the years. But we still say we don't have a style."**

and for people to like them, and perhaps purchase them if they are for sale. But I don't remember ever thinking: Hey, this looks so nice, it's a guaranteed success!"

Could it then be as simple as their time-tested taste and imagination keeping people coming back? "I imagine that," Hjalti says, laughing. "I'm not the right person to answer that, though, you should ask whoever's hiring us. Just the same, our imagination is a large part of what we have to offer."

"Many companies today, like Interbrand and others that specialise in branding, are selling a scientific approach. They profess to know how the market works and what has appeal. They base what they do on years of research. We never do this. We try not to think about how others do things, or if something is right or wrong in a given context. We never sell ourselves as specialists, claiming we are the best at anything. I'd be the first to tell a client that we've never done whatever it is he wants us to do before, but we'd still love to work with him on it. Most of our design decisions are based on what we like and are happy with at the end of the day. We pay little attention to what others think, although we do try to avoid clients rejecting our designs."

"This has become somewhat clear over the years. Very often we'll be approached by outside parties that have observed our work and know what we do, and they'll bring us projects that they don't really know what to do with, the idea being that we come up with something along with them. These are often companies doing special one-offs that they'll never repeat. Like the New York Times Magazine project; they had never given a designer 12 pages and allowed them to create them from

example: early in our career, Puma called us and asked us to design a line of shoes called El Rey. We were really excited, we made some great looking shoes and then waited around, assuming projects like that would keep coming in. And then that of course never happened. It was a one-off. Nike or Adidas never called with similar projects. It comes and it goes; it's nothing we control."

"I love it and I enjoy it, everything that happens at the firm. There is a great variety. If I were doing the same stuff day after day I would grow bored. Instead, there is a constant stream of new and different things to work on. Perhaps the business uncertainty, never knowing what projects may come, is the price to pay for such freedom."

## A LITTLE CREEPY

The day grows longer and we keep talking. We discuss compromise, and how the market's needs will often take precedence over aesthetic needs. He tells the story of working on a book for Al Gore, and how a bookstore wound up having the final say in how the cover design would look. "That was a lesson. It was for a children's book about climate change. We had met with Al Gore and the publisher and were pursuing a certain direction, when we were conveyed the message, from the book's to-be vendor, that a big seller in this category had looked a certain way, and that we should go a similar route. If we didn't they would simply refuse to stock it, or place it at the back of the store.

"It's kind of crazy to ponder; Al Gore and a giant publishing house have no say over the appearance of their own project. Everyone is running laps around the store, which in turn is following what their research shows will

appeal to the masses. It's as if Whole Foods declined to sell a product unless it came in a yellow container... it's a little creepy, and I hope the practice doesn't become more prevalent."

## WILL WORK FOR SKYR

Their work for DesignMarch comes up. Hjalti is excited to travel to Iceland and give a lecture on their work during the festival itself. "I imagine I'll be showing some of our work and talking about it. Being commissioned to design the festival's visual identity is also a great honour. We're working it with Atli Hilmarsson's Studio; they always handle the festival along with guest artists. For the look, we're playing around with the Icelandic sheep. And I should add that the credit should go mostly to Atli and Hörður Lárusson, who are doing the brunt of the work."

"Speaking of working in Iceland, I must say that it has been a long-standing dream of mine to do something for the Icelandic market. My top dream projects are mostly fantasies like making the title sequence for a Bond movie, but one thing I keep coming back to is working on a branding project in Iceland. If someone were making a new chocolate bar or skyr brand, a milk carton and needed a designer... I would love to get involved."

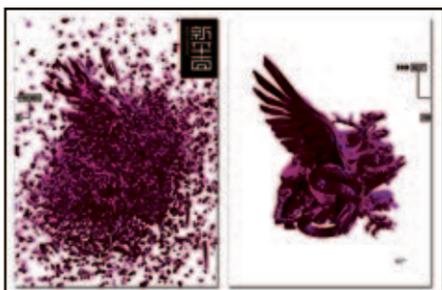
## TAKE YOUR TIME

The day is nearing its end and our conversation is slowly petering out. We talk about music, coffee, politics, the eighties. As I put away my things I ask whether he has anything to advise young designers or design students that are taking the first steps in the industry. What he would tell them.

"The question they, or even anyone out there, should be asking themselves is: how can I derive pleasure from what I am doing? How can I be happy with my work. I don't know how it works in Iceland, but over here design students will spend three years cramming their heads with knowledge, always under great pressure to figure out what they'll be doing for the rest of their lives as soon as they graduate. They're expected to immediately decide where they want to work, how they're going to make money.

My advice is: take it easy. Take your time and figure out what you want to do and how you want to do it. You don't need to commit yourself to a career or job at age 22.

Looking back, I had no idea what I wanted to do when I left Parsons. And that was fine. There's nothing wrong with being lost for a little while, slowly you will work out who you are, what interests you and how you can make a living from it." ☺



**NewGraphic**  
Front and back covers of NewGraphic, a quarterly design publication based in China. Animations were developed first and set to sound. Stills were then selected to be used for print.



**Time Magazine**  
TIME, Inc. hired us to co-curate, co-write, and design the 12-page cover feature for their end-of-the-year list issue.



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			10:00	10:00	10:00		
13:00	13:00	13:00	13:00	13:00	13:00	13:00	13:00
		17:00*	14:00	14:00	14:00		
			17:00	17:00	17:00	17:00*	
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## Music | Reviews



**1860**

**Sagan**

[myspace.com/1986theband](http://myspace.com/1986theband)

A solid debut, but if you're not a folk music fan, 'Sagan' isn't going to change your mind.

I first saw 1860 in October of last year, not long after their inception, and was drawn to the catchy, simple chord progressions, bouncy triads, and hummable choruses; their debut album, 'Sagan,' is much of the same, with lime ice cream-covered rhymes, liquefied over an uncomplicated and folksy, beard-rock popsicle stick.

By the middle of the first track, you know what to expect from the rest of the album—while each song has an attractive hook, only once during the decidedly enjoyable 'Love & Lime' did I really feel like these boys nailed it. For an album that involuntarily evokes images of sepia-bleached Polaroids, suspenders neatly affixed to white cotton shirts, and autumn picnics in Paris, these songs rarely gave me the urge to relish in those comfortable clichés—instead, I'm sitting inside.

Ultimately, I suggest that you give this album a listen, and make your own decisions! I hope these gentlemen continue making a go of it, for I have the feeling that when it's time for their second album to roll around, the songwriting and composition will have matured significantly. While 'Sagan' doesn't tear down any folk music boundaries, as it stands right now, 1860's debut offering is a fun, yet undeveloped, experience. Standout tracks: 'Love & Lime', 'Consequences'.

✦ - **BOWEN STAINES**



**IKI**

**IKI**

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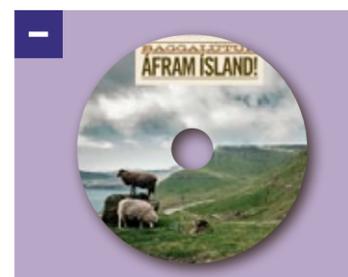
Worth listening to at least once

Nine girls walk into a studio and improv for seven hours, using only their voices. What do you get? A 40-minute studio album of improvised a capella. Sounds like a joke, right? No, it's not. These girls have created a unique album—a brave, wondrous artistic feat that is original in its execution, not to mention its style.

Unfortunately, while the girls have beautiful voices, there are songs on this album that really drag it down. The first song on this album, titled "I Natt, Mens Du Sov," is extremely difficult to listen to. "The Mermaid and the Sailor" has real potential, but due to the limits of improvisation, such as no rehearsal and/or set lyrics, the song becomes too repetitive. Looking past the repetitiveness of some of these songs, however, the album proves decent.

Still, the idea behind this album is fantastic and IKI cannot be accused of being cliché. So in sum, the album is worth listening to at least once, to appreciate what these artists are attempting. Just skip the first song...

✦ - **SALVATORE A. TUMMOLILLO**



**Baggalútur**

**Áfram Ísland!**

[www.baggalatur.is](http://www.baggalatur.is)

The least cool band in Iceland continues to plumb the depths of abject lameness.

Isn't there some other album called this? Now, the music here is basically irrelevant, so I'm pretty much just gonna talk about the lyrics. While this may seem counterproductive, as this is an English-language publication and the lyrics are all in Icelandic, but since the music is basically irrelevant, and I can't for the life of me imagine why the hell you're reading a review of a Baggalútur album for if you don't speak Icelandic, I'm gonna go ahead anyway.

The lyrics have their occasional moments of wit, but like most Icelandic comedians, Baggalútur are too obsessed with being consistent and making sense, and have a tendency to make their jokes too long and noticeably lacking in punchlines. 'Gærkvöldið,' for instance, may be littered with contemporary slang that's been cleverly rhymed and metered to fit with a forgettable adult pop song, but that's THE WHOLE ENTIRE SONG.

There's nothing else in it. 'Petta er búið' and 'Uppgjörð 2006' is basically just a dull sing-song with a bunch of predictably acerbic rhymes about THE STATE OF THE ECONOMY. Yes, they really are that lame.

So. Asides from some okay lyrics about stuff that's sort-of interesting to someone who's lived in Iceland for at least five years, there's little of real value here. The music is cheap, unremarkable and competently played and sung, with bland and inoffensive production, and are primarily vehicles for the lyrics, which... well, I've probably made point already. Baggalútur even fail at making the songs catchy, with the exception of 'Brostu,' a fine pop song and definitely the musical highlight of the record (or compilation? Whatever), but even that still kind of sucks.

✦ - **SINDRI ELDON**

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Opinion | Kristján Guðjónsson

## HOW TO JUSTIFY PASSIVITY

*Páll Óskar and the stained crystal palace of Baku*



After the BBC reported human rights violations in Baku, Azerbaijan—the unfair eviction of poor inhabitants to make room for

the crystal palace being built for the Eurovision song contest—pop-icon Páll Óskar suggested that Iceland withdraw from the competition. “Human rights first, glamour second,” he said.

Taking a moral stand usually requires making sacrifices. It is undeniably easier to retreat than to throw oneself into the line of fire. Unconscious defence mechanisms are turned on and we start justifying, to ourselves and others, our lack of action. Unsurprisingly, the opposition argued their case by using all of the classic justifications for moral passivity. With slight simplification, three classic arguments can be distinguished: the argument of hypocrisy, participation, and disconnection.

### The argument of hypocrisy

The hypocrisy argument, which might be the most overused and damaging argument of moral passivity, argues against fighting for a specific cause if one doesn't, or can't, fight for other, similar, or even more important causes. Following this line of thought, some have argued that it is hypocritical to denounce Azerbaijan because Iceland has not stood up against the United States, China or other blatant violators of human rights.

This argument is grounded in a cynical worldview that acknowledges the disadvantages of society, but does not believe in the possibility of its improvement. Thus, this argument's aim is hardly ever to encourage people to act on other causes, but rather not to act at all. Moral superiority of the activist is thereby disproved and better yet, seen as hypocritical for criticising injustice in one area of life while neglecting it in another. Attempts to improve the world are seen as naïve, and rather than being admired for doing something, the activist is detested for not doing everything.

However, the fact is that our society has so many defects that one would have to live in total isolation to avoid all injustice. Inevitably we must choose our battles. A single person can only fight so many in his or her lifetime, but each battle should inspire other people to take further action. Although we have not protested human rights violations of neighbouring countries sufficiently before, it should not be accepted as an excuse for not acting now. We must begin somewhere. A boycott of the bloody crystal palace should, and can, become an inspiration for a stronger stand on human rights issues.

### The argument of participation

The second argument is based on the idea that the defects of a system must be tackled by working from within it, and according to its accepted procedures of change. Many have suggested

that we could have greater influence by not mentioning the violations before the contest, but by doing it after we arrive in Baku, on the stage of the crystal palace where we would have everyone's eyes and ears.

This could be effective if it was done properly (for instance, by smuggling a local evictee up on the stage Jimmy Jump style). But would the Icelandic competitors dare to potentially offend or upset their hosts? Simply mentioning the issue in passing at a press conference would be useless.

Furthermore, when you try to clean up a stinky system from the inside, you always risk catching the stink yourself. In Baku, we will most likely be so blinded by the clear crystal and euphoric confetti that we'll forget about the foul odour of the cruelty upon which it is based.

### The argument of disconnection

The argument of disconnection claims that there is no causal relation between different parts of society and that they can therefore be dealt with independently from one another. Rather than seeing society as the endlessly complicated spider web that it is, proponents of the disconnected society see it like a Lego building, wherein each component is easily identifiable and can be broken away from the rest without too much effect on other parts. From this worldview, many have argued that Eurovision is not a political contest and that pop and politics should not be mixed: we should let the pop stars do the singing and the politicians the nagging.

However, when the staging of a pop event is in such a concrete fashion based on human rights violations, it is difficult to see how we can disconnect the two. So we can either choose to use the political power of pop for the good, or to do the opposite by remaining silent (or in this case, by singing a song) while injustice is taking place.

### May it begin with me

Greta Salóme Stefánsdóttir, composer and performer of Iceland's Eurovision contribution, “Mundu eftir mér,” has simply been too busy to think about this issue, according to a Kastljós interview. However, I sincerely hope she will at least give it some thought before she takes off.

The world will not be changed with a single act, but we can all contribute to greater change by taking a stand on issues that are dear to us. Therefore, we should be inspired by Páll Óskar whose gradual development from a shock-Euro-pop-diva to a politically-conscious-pop-president is poetised in his newest human rights disco banger, “Megi það byrja með mér” (“May It Begin With Me”), the only song appropriate for the stage of the blood-stained crystal palace of Baku.

*“I pray that this world of ours,  
may become a bit better than it is,  
and may it begin with me”  
(Lyrics translated).*

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Fashion | Festival



## A Four-Day Explosion Of Fashion Design And Music

The third Reykjavík Fashion Festival (RFF) takes place March 29 to April 1 at Harpa and Gamla Bíó. These two iconic, yet contrasting venues perfectly embody the spirit of Icelandic fashion, which combines modernity and tradition to create a unique design. Iceland's most provocative and skilled designers will present their fall and winter collections in a four-day explosion of fashion design and music.

"RFF is a great platform for both established and less established Icelandic fashion designers to showcase their work and to be recognized at home in Iceland and around the world," RFF's Creative Director Ellen Loftsdóttir tells

us. "This year RFF expects more than 2,000 guests, which is two times more than last year."

This year's participants include Hildur Yeoman, Kalda, Kormákur og Skjöldur, Kron by Kronkron, Mundi, Ýr, Birna, Ella, Milla Snorrason, REY and Spakmannsspjarir. And in addition to the runway show, RFF 2012 will feature the first Fashion Night Out and a pop-up marketplace where fashion fans will have the opportunity to be in close contact with the design. 🍷

✍️ RAGNHEIDUR AXEL  
📷 ALÍSA KALYANOVA

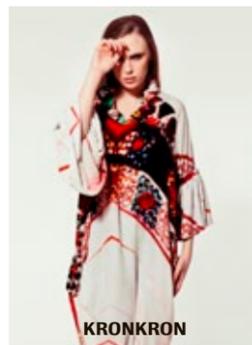
### Some Advice From Ellen:

**Best restaurant?** There is a great newcomer in Reykjavík called SNAPS Bistro-bar at Þórsgrata 1. They have a great French/Scandinavian bistro menu. It's great for going out with friends during the day or evening.

**Best midnight snack in Reykjavík?** I would say Ali Baba is the best late-night bite. They serve the best chicken durum I have ever tasted.

**Best bar?** Boston and Kaffibarinn

## Designers at RFF





## Fashion Is A Growing Trade

*Veteran Linda Árnadóttir weighs in on the industry*

With DesignMarch and the Reykjavík Fashion Festival on the calendar, spring is for sure an exciting time for Iceland's fashion designers and enthusiasts. Helping to start the fashion department at The Iceland Academy of Arts twelve years ago, Linda Árnadóttir—who is also the creative director for Scintilla and a long time collaborator of Martine Sitbon—has been undoubtedly influential in growing the scene. She tells us a little bit about it...

### Why is fashion important?

Fashion defines time and periods, and time periods are defined by world events that influence fashion. When we look at photos of our ancestors, the era in which they were taken is often unmistakable. If we all wore the same type of clothing it would be difficult for us to show our character and social status; time would stand still and we wouldn't feel progress.

### What impact has the fashion department had on fashion as a profession?

A lot has changed in the last ten years. When I graduated, people considered fashion a hobby, not a profession. Icelanders have over time realised the im-

portance of fashion. As The Academy produces more qualified professionals and the public becomes more informed, the discourse has changed. People see fashion as a growing trade. It provides a large number of jobs and foreign income; in France, fashion is the biggest export. Investors are becoming increasingly aware of the financial benefits of investing in fashion. Our creative fields are developing and if we continue on this path, they will bring us more cash in the bank than fishing and the aluminium smelters.

The Academy has bred an ever-expanding group of creative people and their influence is very visible in Reykjavík. There is a marked change in the fashion professions and people making a living from fashion—fashion photographers, stylists and journalists. Although not all of our graduates become fashion designers, a proportion of them work in related fields. Reykjavík has a group of world-famous trendsetters such as Björk and Sigur Rós.

### Does the fashion department have a specific vision?

We follow the European tradition of avant-garde design, which is taught at the best fashion schools in Britain. Not everybody understands this, so we constantly have to defend and explain our vision.

### What are the biggest challenges that fashion designers face in Iceland?

Young designers have to start by designing small lines, and due to Iceland's

geographical location, the production process can be slow. Factories prioritize their bigger clients, which means the smaller designer gets their product late and therefore delivers late to the shops. This in turn makes a shop less inclined to buy from them again.

However, I see the economic depression as an opportunity to begin more production in Iceland, such as a clothing factory. Now is the chance, while the króna is weak and the market is showing a need for that type of service.

After getting past the first stage, designers must develop a strong trademark and identity, as design ideas get stolen all the time in this age of fast information. KronKron has done a good job doing that; nobody makes shoes like they do so it's easy to spot an imitation. Nobody wants to wear a replica—it's lame.

### What is the meaning/purpose of DesignMarch and the Reykjavík Fashion Festival?

Events like these can present opportunities, but they need to be done professionally and with ambition. Quality participants must be selected. If you're getting the fashion media, you have to understand that they have high standards. Events that are planned and executed poorly by amateurs can be harmful to the image of Icelandic design. I hope that these events will be outstanding this year. It was nice to see former Academy of the Arts students surpass other labels at the past two events. ☘

### Words

Ragnheiður Axel

### Photo

Alisa Kalyanova

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Film | Shorts



## Icelandic Shorts: A Very Short Introduction

The big winner at this year's Edda Awards (the Icelandic equivalent to the Oscars) was Rúnar Rúnarsson's film, 'Volcano.' But the big story was perhaps the respect short films are now getting. The short film category included four pictures, all of which also got nominations in other categories. And it wasn't a weak year for Icelandic movies; with some nine feature films involved there was, for once, real competition. And while the night belonged to 'Volcano,' its director earned his fame in shorts and they were the reason it was one of the year's most anticipated films.

This is hardly a coincidence. A decade ago or so there was an awakening in the Icelandic film industry; people finally agreed that we wouldn't get very many good directors by throwing them in at the deep end. So both the Icelandic film fund and the production companies put more money into developing scripts and short films, whereas previously more effort had been put into developing features that often didn't receive any funding until everything was already in place (screenplay, actors etc.). Those developing funds are only a fraction of the money that big features cost, but they have certainly helped the very young Icelandic film industry grow up. And while the recession has made its mark (it will really hit home this year, many of last year's films were financed during the boom years and there are very few films on the horizon for this year), filmmakers still have the equipment bought during the boom years and the experience gained—the films look anything but low budget.

### THE NOMINEES

Börkur Sigþórsson's 'Come to Harm' was a worthy winner as best short film. It's a cold film, showing a world full of steely colours with hardly an earth tone to be found. Björn Thors is convincing as a man descending into madness while his very own, cold, impersonal nightmare unfolds amid steel, concrete and electronic machines. There is a very human pain behind it all, which I will not reveal, but you still somehow feel it's just as much about the aesthetics he's trapped in, the aesthetics of the boom years that you can see slowly crumbling. And it's telling that when he

finally uses the rifle he's armed himself with, it's not to shoot other humans, but to terminate his microwave oven. It all feels a bit like Icelandic Psycho, even if the lead character ultimately turns out to be a lot more human.

'Revolution Reykjavík' deals with the crash even more head-on. It's about a woman fired from a bank during the first days of the crash—but she's too proud to tell her daughter or collect something as degrading as unemployment benefits. It makes good use of mundane things, finding meaning in a cupboard full of unread letters of eviction notices and other bad financial news. The acting is very solid, but the story itself feels a bit too familiar, a bit too predictable. It's a common theme in director Ísold Uggadóttir's films. She's a talented veteran of the short film scene

*A decade ago or so there was an awakening in the Icelandic film industry*

here, but I often feel there's a problem in marrying mood and plot. This one is definitely worth a look, but you should prioritize seeing her debut lesbian comedy, 'Family Reunion,' and 'Clean,' which is probably her strongest film to date.

The third film comes from famed theatre company Vesturport. It's called 'Korríró,' which is untranslatable, given that it's a nonsense word used in nursery rhymes. This is a modern version of Goldilocks and stars Nína Dögg Filippusdóttir as a drunk with Parkinson's disease. The performance could have used a bit more restraint in the beginning, although it's hard to say for sure, given that drunks with Parkinson's might not be the most restrained people in the world. But when she, sort of accidentally, finds herself in a wealthy family's home, she walks into another life and it's done in a slow, organic fashion that almost feels like the homeless fantasy—this one night of living like a queen. It's another good film, but as with 'Revolution Reykjavík,' it's still missing that extra something.

The fourth and final nominee baffles me however. Ari Alexander's 'Little Cosmonaut' begins promisingly enough and features some nice visuals, but then turns unbearably sentimental and pretentious. It's a shame given Guðrún Ásmundsdóttir's fine performance as the cosmonaut's grandmother.

### THE CONTENDERS

While this award show celebrated an unusually fruitful year for Icelandic films, the organization is not always the most professional, as demonstrated by the inexplicable decision of also nominating Benedikt Erlingsson's 'The Nail' as best short film. It's certainly a fine film and deserved to be nominated—in 2008. This odd mix-up was corrected, but left the fifth slot empty, which is a shame since there are worthy films that could have filled that slot (not to mention the slot occupied by 'Little Cosmonaut'). Director Haukur M. is making interesting short films in Poland, two of which were shown at last year's RIFF: 'Invisible Border' and 'Mission to Mars.' Also flying under the radar is Haraldur Sigurjónsson, who has directed four fine short films in the last three years. His latest, 'Angel,' went strangely unnoticed despite being his most ambitious to date.

### THE CLASSICS AND WHERE TO GET THEM

Most current Icelandic feature directors have some roots in short films. Grímur Hákonarson made his name with films such as 'Slavek the Shit' and 'Wrestling,' while 'The Caramel Movie' was Gunnar B. Guðmundsson's big ticket, but he has since directed 'Dorks & Damsels' (Astrópía) and 'Hullaballoo' (Gauragangur). And Dagur Kári's short films, 'Old Spice' and 'Lost Weekend,' are fondly remembered if almost impossible to find, which is the case for most short films made prior to the last five years or so.

Still, two short films that stand head and shoulders above the rest are 'Rare Birds' and 'The Gentlemen.' The former handles teenage angst with a rare humanity and warmth and still remains Rúnar Rúnarsson's masterpiece. The latter, however, brings with it a lot less fame, but is simply a riot, even if the premise is very simple: three friends talk, drink beer, play music and debate the meaning of Guns N' Roses' newest album. But the magic is this: it hardly feels like a film; it's more like you're witnessing, first-hand, three lifelong friends shooting the breeze.

But readers should keep in mind that this article omits all the great short films I haven't seen. Icelandic short films are starting to get the prestige and the coverage they deserve, but they have yet to find their audience—and those of us who do seek them out have few places to look. ☺

### Words

Ásgeir H. Ingólfsson

### Photo

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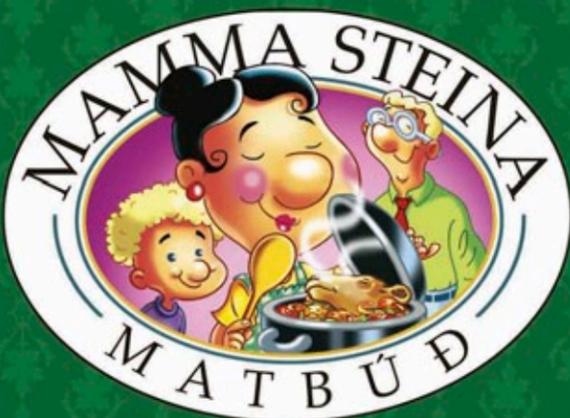
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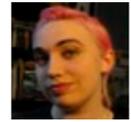


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## BODY-POLICE BRUTALITY

NOT YOUR UTERUS? NOT YOUR BUSINESS!



In the last issue of The Grapevine appeared an opinion piece entitled 'WHY I BOTHER, PT. IV' by Hildur Liliendahl dealing with the topic of altruistic surrogacy and the Icelandic Parliament's preparation to pass legislation in favour of it. The writer's opinions were strongly opposed to this act and this opposition is based upon morals and personal beliefs. As a feminist of countering opinions to this, I will tell you why I, too, bother.

First of all, for those who missed it, altruistic surrogacy is an act wherein a reproductively-able woman consensually provides the service of carrying and giving birth to a child for a non-reproductively capable couple with no monetary gain beyond occupational and medical expenses. It is an agreement that is made between parties of sound body and mind, which have to undergo extensive medical and psychological examinations prior to the act of insemination, not to mention delivery.

The previously mentioned author states that surrogacy simply reduces a woman to a baby machine. I, on the other hand, contend that de-autonomisation a woman who chooses to act as a surrogate and to make choices for her own body is what is truly objectifying. By stating that legal surrogacy reduces a woman to being a baby machine, one actually DOES reduce a woman to being a baby machine; if one needs ephemeral legislation to determine what a woman is or is not in a reproductive sense, then the problem lies within one's own internalised misogyny.

Not permitting surrogacy to legally exist does not empower women to make sound choices for their bodies, but removes their options by implying that they don't know any better. It minimises, dehumanises and condescends

to grown women who are independent thinkers as well as owners of a uterus. It reasserts the patriarchal notion that women cannot be trusted to make their own decisions when it comes to their bodies.

Furthermore, the article went on to compare altruistic surrogacy to the acts of prostitution and rape. As far as the latter goes, I would like to once again remind that by definition, altruistic surrogacy requires conscientious and enthusiastic consent, which is the completely opposite of what rape is. Speaking as a rape survivor myself, the comparison of the two is an appalling and dangerous line to cross, and is grossly insulting to both victims of the violent act of rape and women who happily engage in surrogacy. There are in fact hundreds of online surrogacy communities, advocates and support networks led by intelligent, healthy, sound-minded women.

The former, a comparison to prostitution, is actually not so far off—and I mean that in a good way. Like surrogates, women who conscientiously and enthusiastically choose sex work as a trade are constantly made the targets of de-autonomisation and victimisation (see "A Vicious Cycle of Victimisation" in last Grapevine issue!) and are usually left out of the political conversation about their situation. The result of this detracts from effectively isolating cases of human trafficking and prosecuting those by globally removing the rights of women to make choices, particularly those of marginalised women.

But coming back to the topic at hand, aside from the surrogate, the article reduced the hypothetical couple needing a surrogate to "some poor barren persons." It is quite easy to be flippant and disrespectful of the reproductive situations of others if one is privileged enough to be a cisgender, heteronormative, reproductively-able woman, but it is also very easy to forget

that many couples who seek surrogacy do not have the reproductive parts to do so—same-sex couples for example. Additionally, the moral opinions of such people are absolutely irrelevant to the discussion because it literally does not affect them. It's basically just like the ridiculous United States Congressional hearing on female contraception that took place earlier this month wherein the entire panel was made up of heterosexual men—several of them priests! Jesus Christ...

Seeking the option of surrogacy does not denote entitlement, but rather the ability to explore a number of ways in which reproductive technology has advanced and allows people to help each other, if they so choose. The Icelandic Parliament enacting legislation that allows altruistic surrogacy does not imply that anyone will even use it, but more importantly does not force it upon anyone.

Ultimately, if one truly cares about encouraging stronger relationships between body and mind, one must first begin by respecting the bodies and minds of others as their own and not imposing morality upon each other. Stop the body-police brutality. ♡

Continued from page 6

### THE LONG POLITICAL JOURNEY OF ÓLAFUR RAGNAR GRÍMSSON

parliament and can even dismiss parliament and form a government.

The Constitution is, however, very unclear on these points, for it also says that a government minister wields the power of the president. A Constitutional Council has been working on rewriting the constitution, and the outcome is still unclear but it is interesting that its proposals are in line with Ólafur Ragnar's interpretation of the president's role as a balance to the parliament and government.

One question that might be partly answered in the elections is whether we will go back to the days of having an apolitical, symbolic president, less divisive than Ólafur

Ragnar. Many of the possible candidates who have been named would fall into that category. They are proper, well respected people, who wouldn't rock any boat. It is certain that much of the political class would like to have such a president again.

#### WILL HE WIN AGAIN?

To some has become impossibly full of himself, referring to himself as a manifestation of the nation's will—a term he often uses—talking about himself in the third person, and constantly stating what a big man he is outside of Iceland. Ólafur will be 70 next year, but he still seems to be full of energy. It will be interesting to see where his long political

journey is heading.

In all likelihood the Independence Party will take power in Iceland next year. Among its ranks Ólafur Ragnar has earned some grudging respect, but it has always been the view of the party that the president should stay in his place and obey. Old hatreds might flare up again if Ólafur is re-elected and keeps on improvising with his presidential powers.

Some of his former left-wing friends might even think it worthwhile to vote for him to see the conservatives wrestling with his rather inflated ego. Time will tell. ♡

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# What It Feels Like

Margo Dooney delves into the life of the modern Icelandic girl



**What is the condition of being a teenage girl in Iceland today? It is a heavy question with no singular, simple answer, nor has it ever been in any given time or place. Finding some of the answers has been the lofty goal of American artist Margo Dooney, who is doing a SIM Residency in Iceland.**

Margo, a 24-year old New York City resident, has spent the past two months documenting ten local girls from various walks of life between the ages of 15–19. She describes this as a period when one is on the cusp of becoming

a woman, rapidly developing both emotionally and intellectually. She has gone about this by immersing herself in their worlds, living vicariously through them in a sense.

"The participants have been so warm and welcoming, sharing their lives with me," Margo says. "The process follows more or less the same pattern; I go to their home, sometimes meet parents and siblings, get a tour of the house, photograph the girls, their rooms, and their favourite possessions, followed by a discussion where I ask what it means to be a teenage girl in Iceland. The answers are limitless."

## HERSTORY 101

The idea for the project actually came from a distant spark that spread like a wildfire: an outsider's perception of Icelandic hetero-mating dynamics, in particular the visible aggressiveness of females versus males. Wondering if there is indeed an imbalance, Margo began to do her research—speaking with female professors she knew and reading about women's issues and history.

"Icelandic women have an incredible history," she says, "Over the past century, they've made remarkable progress. If I had grown up in a place like Iceland, where it's possible for a woman (and a gay woman!) to hold a political office, how would I have developed differently? How would those crucial developmental teen years have changed?" Using this question as a launch pad, she found a clear concept for a complex topic.

Of course one may wonder: why Iceland? "Well, I'm here," Margo answers candidly. However, the location did play an important role in the inception of the project, Iceland not only being a hospitable environment for it, but a crucial element. "If I wasn't here, this project wouldn't be happening, since it's country specific, historically and culturally," she continues. "It's all very admirable, especially to someone like myself, since my home seems so far from being this

progressive. And the girls I've met with are both very aware of and proud of this progression, but it's second nature to them. It's all they know."

## FEARING THE F-WORD

This pride and awareness of their history has also transcended their political psyche, with a strong realisation that all is not won yet. "What I found interesting is that when asked about teen life as a girl here, they immediately wanted to talk about the freedoms of women," says Margo, "how fortunate they are to have this sense of 'social freedom without judgement' as girls in Iceland. The other issue that surprisingly comes up with the handful I've met is the idea of gender equality and inequality in both political and social realms. They're feeling some sort of an imbalance, and they want to level it."

She points out that there is a sense of respect for mothers and the importance of women within the family structure, but also their strong distaste for the wage gap, turning some of them off from the idea of work entirely.

Regardless of their seemingly intrinsic ideologies, labelling one's desire for equality is still mighty unpopular. "Obviously this is a sensitive subject," Margo concedes. "They're not running around calling themselves 'feminists' as they believe it would only gather negative connotations, thus standing in the

way of what they're striving for—gender equality, but they are educating themselves, encouraging conversation about their concerns with teachers and classmates, both male and female, and I think that empowers them—to have a sense of community, and an understanding of what they are feeling."

## WHAT IT ALL BOILS DOWN TO

Margo says that the ultimate goal of her project is to comprehensively document them and pick up all the artefacts of who they are. The end-result will be put together in a multimedia installation incorporating still and moving images, sounds, text, music. Additionally, she is reconstructing an amalgamation of their bedrooms into her studio space, where one can take part in the immersive experience.

So what does it feel like for a girl? The answer is obvious: it's different for everyone. "I've only met a clip of them, a small handful that doesn't fully represent or speak for the entire teen girl population here," she says, "but from who I've spoken with, these are a very hopeful group of young women. Not just for Iceland, but for everywhere."

REBECCA LOUDER  
MARGO DOONEY

Opinion | Mikael Lind

## WHAT IS A WORK OF ART REALLY WORTH?



According to Greek mythology, King Midas of Phrygia was given the power to transform everything he touched to gold. As the Austrian

writer Ernst Fischer points out, capitalism on the other hand turned everything into commodities. This mode of thinking has been openly ventilated in the recent discussions about the so called "artist salary" ("listamannalaun") in Iceland. Every year, a certain number of artists (this year 217 out of 639 applicants) receive a government-funded stipend on the condition that they meet certain requirements, such as giving a good presentation of their work and conducting future projects. Those who receive the support are given the opportunity to further develop their craft, and thus enrich the culture in different ways.

This artist salary is an object of harsh criticism every year, and since public debates have more and more been

taking place on the internet, it is easy to follow people's reactions. One common expression of disapproval is based on the claim that those artists who have to receive support from the government to practice their art are pitiful creatures who lack a serious relationship to the "real" world (i.e. the world of the market economy). If they were talented enough to create something that people wanted to consume, they would not need any support from the government. In the eyes of these critics, the market place is the rightful judge—the consumers pay for the art that they like and those artists who are not popular enough should stick to writing books, painting or making music as a hobby, and preferably find another job, or try to work harder at selling their products. People who defend the artist salary, on the other hand, point out that the creative sectors involved are a big part of the economy, creating many jobs and in the long run result in financial gain.

The discussions on forums and blogs are often about financial matters and more rarely about the value of art itself; whether a good piece of art can be valuable even if it doesn't sell. The value of, say, a football player is more obvious. People's opinions may differ slightly in those matters, but there's not much hidden there that may be discovered later. In the arts, however, things are different. Van Gogh starved and committed suicide at the age of 37, selling only two works during his lifetime during which he made more than 2,000 works. Kafka enjoyed almost no success during his lifetime. Bach was in his days not primarily admired for his compositions but for his skills as an organist. Cultural critic Walter Benjamin argued that art creates demand, which has yet to be fulfilled; appreciation for the work does not necessarily have to manifest itself at the time of its creation.

So, what is the purpose of trying to keep the art world independent from the

most brutal form of market philosophy? I asked visual artist and art critic Jón B. K. Ransu—who recently released a book about modern Icelandic art from a theoretical perspective—what he thought. "When the art market begins to operate as conglomerates producing works themselves after a certain formula for the consumption of art," Jón says, "we are certainly losing something precious from the art. And art is certainly destined for decay if intended solely as a commercial product." We can find a parallel in journalism. Noam Chomsky and Edward S. Herman showed in their book 'Manufacturing Consent' how the media in the U.S. often fails to be a critical voice if their coverage threatens the economic, social, and political agendas of their owners.

If we want our literature, visual art, design, music and theatre works to be more than simply manifestations of the current trends in society, and if we want a creative scene that not only gives peo-

ple what they want, but also challenges current modes of thought and common opinions, then it is important to realize that the value of artistic creations is a much more complex phenomenon than can ever be measured solely in economic profitability calculations. As Jón B.K. Ransu says, art satisfies a certain spiritual thirst in mankind to relate itself in different ways to the environment, the society, our bodies, etc. "Through art we look with a critical eye upon our own culture and at the same time enjoy its fruits." If art is reduced to only being something safe, brief and instantly entertaining, it loses much of its creative and experimental powers. There are thus many factors in the world of art and its relation to society as a whole that can't be estimated in money. When reading many of the comments circulating on the internet, one can't but find it regrettable that so much energy is used discussing only the brute economic perspective of art and culture. 🍷

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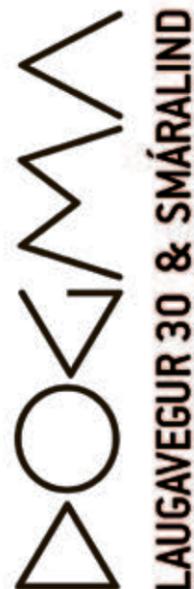
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**The Golden Circle tour is a quintessential activity for most visitors to Iceland. You get to see a waterfall, geysers and Þingvellir national park, boasting another waterfall, the Mid-Atlantic Ridge and historical significance as the meeting place of Alþingi, the oldest parliament in Europe. Some tour operators, like Arctic Adventures, think that's not quite enough to sate adventure hungry tourists though. They've added the bonus of travelling by super-jeep and doing some caving in one of the hundreds of caves that dot the country.**

We show up at the Arctic Adventure's office early Sunday morning and meet our guide for the day and all round 'cool dude' Ingó Olsen before heading off to Bláfjöll Mountains, where the cave Leiðarendi ("Route End") is located. Finding the cave doesn't seem like an easy task. Almost everything is covered in snow and the cave entrance doesn't exactly have a neon sign pointing it out, but Ingó proves to know exactly where it is.

## INTO THE VOID

After gearing up with waterproofs, helmets, and lights, Ingó guides us through the snow covered

lava field to the entrance of the cave. It is nearly engulfed with snow, which actually makes our descent a little easier as we can partially slide on our behinds into the mouth of it.

The next two hours are spent exploring whilst Ingó tells us about the cave we are in and caves in Iceland. It's easy enough to make our way through the cave and there are some awesome sights. Some of the stalactites and stalagmites—rock that have melted down walls and then hardened—look decidedly like something from the mind of renowned Swiss surrealist artist HR Giger.

After seeing the volcanic innards of Iceland in all its glory, we emerge into the midday January sun. We enjoy a delicious lunch at the nearby café Litla Kaffistofan ("The Little Coffee Shop") and then head back out into the wilderness. Our super-jeep speeds us towards Gullfoss, cutting along roads that a large coach simply wouldn't be able to travel.

## ALL THAT GLITTERS IS...

Gullfoss is an almighty, two-tiered beast that literally carved the gorge it plummets into. The flow of water is particularly large today due to the recent snowfall and the area is pretty icy. This means we can't get as close to Gullfoss as you can in the

summer, but it's an impressive sight nonetheless.

Ice is also a problem at the geysers in Haukadalur. We shuffle like penguins across the ice to get closer to the most active geyser, Strokkur. Strokkur has its hissy fit every five to ten minutes, so witnessing it blow is guaranteed. Against Ingó's advice, we choose a less icy path, and wind up downwind from Strokkur when it erupts and gives us a spectacular soaking! Oops!

From there we head to our final destination, Þingvellir. As we travel along a road that runs adjacent to Þingvallavatn, which is the largest natural lake in Iceland, the super-jeep hits a bad patch of ice. The jeep skitters and skids about before Ingó is able to regain control. Still, something doesn't seem right. Ingó pulls over and discovers that the left-rear tyre has been punctured in the melee.

## HELP!

The puncture is worse than Ingó had first thought and we need help to repair it. So while he calls for back-up, we check out our surroundings. The gloomy grey sky blends in with lake Þingvallavatn, rendering the horizon invisible. It appears to us that the lake begins at our feet and stretches into infinity. There are definitely worse places to break down and we are not completely stranded.

Ingó goes with the temporary fix of inflating the tyre, driving until it deflates, and then repeating the process, until we make it to the Þingvellir information centre. Of course this means we are moving along ever so slowly. With each rotation of the wheel, a burst of air escapes and it's a deadly countdown to deflation.

When we arrive, Ingó tells us all about Þingvellir park, and we head out to explore. After taking in the spectacular views and seeing the original site of Iceland's parliament, which formed in 930 AD, we head back to the jeep. We wait a short while for help to arrive, peering expectantly any time lights appear on the road, until finally the cavalry appears in the form of another super-jeep.

The puncture is quickly patched up, and for one last bit of excitement, our super-jeep saviour decides to take advantage of the empty, ice-covered car-park and treat us to a graceful super-jeep ballet of donuts and handbrake turns. And with that, we head back in convoy to Reykjavík where the warmth of our hotels and homes await us. 🇮🇸

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# The Lovers, The Dreamers And Me

Finding connections in Rainbow Reykjavík



**Breaking newsflash: Iceland is a really gay-friendly country! Of course we all know this; we have a big ol' lez of a PM, our occasional drag queen mayor and a Pride Parade that draws in more families than the state church. Not to mention the sheer number of daily rainbows we get between spring and fall! These are all perfect conditions for Reykjavík to jump on board with the worldwide phenomenon of gay tourism known as Rainbow!**

The Rainbow Reykjavík event was created by Pink Iceland, a gay travel agency founded and operated by tourism mavens and lovers Eva María Þórarinsdóttir Lange and Birna Hrönn Björnsdóttir. The Grapevine was graciously invited along to take part in the activities so yours truly hopped on board.

The fun started on February 16 at Trúnó with a packed-house kick-off party. My partner and I arrived rather early and took a seat in the window, where we had a prime spot to watch the masses of starry-eyed and smiling event guests coming in droves. Queen of the queer blues Elin Ey treated us to a quick solo concert and spun tunes while the barman passed out free shots of Ópal. People were mixing and mingling until the lights came on and they kicked us all out. But this was only the first night.

### Day 2

The next day, I joined the group as they finished up what I hear was a lovely Italian lunch at Pisa. From there we met up with Hilmar Magnússon, who took us on the two hour long Reykjavík LGBT History Walk. Unfortunately, from the back of the very large group, there was little chance of hearing much. Still, the stories I did catch were quite good and informative about local culture. It is a shame how little history was recorded by the lesbians though.

Nonetheless, the walk was a great chance to begin befriending other event goers. Double entendres and juvenile giggles got me acquainted with Elvin Ramos and Heidi Hlawaty, a pair of friends and colleagues from New York City who were on their second visit to Iceland in less than a year.

At a cocktail hour later in the day, I met several more people from New York City, as well as from France, Germany and the Netherlands. It turned out this wasn't the first visit to Iceland for a lot of people nor did it seem like it would be the last.

The group then went on to dinner at Harpa and a show by Lay Low and Viggo & Violetta. Páll Óskar had originally been booked for the gig, but he blew out his voice (pun intended!) and couldn't perform. We wish him a speedy recovery!

### Day 3

Saturday morning we all loaded onto a magical rainbow tour bus to go on a customised 'Golden Shower' excursion hosted by a pair of drag queen grannies. We started at Iceland's very own golden shower, Gullfoss, where the group got to have the photo op session of their dreams. We couldn't have asked for a more beautiful day for the trip and everyone was in particularly joyful spirits.

Then we headed towards Geysir (or as they were calling it, GAYSIR) for a delicious lunch at the fancy-shmancy Hotel Geysir. Here I sat across from Ute Zimmer, an Icelandair representative from Germany who was instrumental in putting together the whole shebang. She told me it was sold out weeks in advance, so they actually had to turn people away! That can only be the harbinger of good things to come in the future, I suspect. After lunch we moseyed over to the great waterspout for a group photo and shameless jokes about preemies and multiples. And no, I don't mean babies.

Next stop was the beautiful Laugarvatn Fontana steam baths, which I have been partial to since my first visit and talked it up to everyone in the tour, but it seems to have been met with a less than enthusiastic response. Many of the guests found the waters either too cool or too hot and many were not particularly interested in the dry saunas.

It was sitting in one sauna that I did get to chat with New Yorker Stephen Pevner about how he was enjoying himself, and although the ambient air was hot, he seemed a bit lukewarm. He said the tour could have used something more than just the LGBT Walk, including some things of more specific interest to people within the group or different aspects of Icelandic culture. Still, he was gracious to the first-year nature of the event. Over in the hot tub, another New Yorker named Steven Weinstein wondered aloud to me the best possible idea: why didn't they take us to the penis museum!?

After a final quick stop at Þingvellir for kólkómjól and hangikjöt on flatkökur, we rolled back into town in a sleepy daze, with couples in cosy amours, serenaded by the happiest French men singing nostalgic pop hits of their youth. And as the group went off to their hotels to gussy up for their final dinner, it really felt like somehow we found it: the rainbow connection. 🍌

✍ REBECCA LOUDER  
📷 LEIFUR WILBERG ORRASON

LINE.

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## Árbær: Where Lots of Things Are Preserved

*How Reykjavík got to be what it is, part V*

Not long ago, Árbær was merely heathland that walking or horse riding travellers passed through on their way in and out of Reykjavík. The land was bought by the City of Reykjavík in 1906 to gain access to clean water after linking a typhoid epidemic to contaminated wells in the city centre. It was not until 1965 that building began in what is today one of Reykjavík's ten districts—a suburb with 3,540 homes and 10,192 inhabitants. In fact, almost all of the houses are built after 1965 and it is home to more young people, sixteen years old and under, and fewer older people, 67 years old and over, compared to other districts in Reykjavík.

Árbær is named after an old farm in the area, which had a guesthouse for people from out of town and a canteen for bored residents of Reykjavík. In 1957, this farm had stood uninhabited for decades and was nothing but a shadow of its former glory. Unwilling to let it decay any fur-

ther, the City of Reykjavík decided that year to preserve it and create an outdoor museum. It was decided that the outdoor museum not only feature the Árbær farm, but also a number of other old houses that were moved from the city centre to this outdoor museum, which had been a popular concept in other Nordic countries. With over 20 old houses, Árbær Museum is the biggest outdoor heritage museum in Iceland.

### A WINDOW TO THE PAST

The houses at The Árbær Museum are not the only historical remains in this fairly new suburb. When driving east on Ártúnsbrekka, one of two roads in Reykjavík where you can drive 80 km/h, a peculiar building can be seen on the right side of the road, just before the gas station. This building has always caught my attention. As a child, I was told that it was a potato storage and later, as a grown up, I learned more about the reason for its existence. It was one of the barracks built by US soldiers in Hvalfjörður during World War II for the purpose of storing bombs.

It was around this time that residents of Reykjavík got into farming vegetables—primarily potatoes. With the advent of geothermal heating of houses, however, a problem developed. Namely, people's homes were suddenly too warm to

*When driving east on Ártúnsbrekka, one of two roads in Reykjavík where you can drive 80 km/h, a peculiar building can be seen on the right side of the road, just before the gas station*

store these vegetables. An entrepreneur saw an opportunity to move the old bomb storage to Reykjavík and transformed it into special storage for keeping potatoes as fresh as possible. The storage became fairly popular and served many mouths, with the potato loss being about 5% rather than 20–50% in the newly warmed houses.

### A NICE PLACE TO RELAX

If you're not fan of old houses and potatoes you need not worry. Árbær is a suburb that was designed with zoning in mind; people were to live in one place and work in another. An area of more than 370,000 m<sup>2</sup> is reserved for industry with over 6,000 jobs at some of the biggest food companies in Iceland, which make chocolate, liquorice, beer, cheeses, ice cream, and more.

At the same time, Árbær is also home to some of the nicest outdoor areas in Reykjavík, with about 35% of its land being a municipal conservation area. Heiðmörk, which has been a municipal conservation area of Reykjavík since 1950, is the largest nature reserve in the city.

With lava fields, caves, and old stone shelters for sheep, the area is popular for walks, family picnics and fishing, especially during the summer. In Heiðmörk you also find Reykjavík's water reserves and more than four million trees, which have been planted there in the last sixty years. There's a strong belief that Heiðmörk is the location of Iceland's first parliament, before it was moved to Þingvellir, but ruins were submerged in 1924 with the construction of a dam, leaving many people scratching their heads and gnashing their teeth.

### AN IMPORTANT RIVER

The other recreational area in Árbær is the Elliðaárdalur valley. The word Elliðaárdalur is made up of the words Elliði (named after a ship belonging to settler Ketilbjörn), ár (river), and dalur (valley). The river Elliðaá, which runs through the valley, is cited in scripts dating back to 1235, and remains a notable river in Reykjavík.

In 1921, the river was used to quadruple the electrical power in Iceland when the first hydroelectric power station in the country opened. The power plant is still functional and its original building is designed by Guðjón Samúelsson, who also designed Hallgrímskirkja church, The National Theatre, and many other official buildings between 1920–1950. Today the river's world class salmon and several hundred year old plants and sea-shells, which can be found in sediments, attract fishermen and geology lovers from all over the world. There is also a popular picnic area, dubbed Indjánagil ("Indian Canyon") by teenagers in the late '90s, which has hosted an outdoor theatre in recent summers. 🇮🇸

### Words

Gerður Jónsdóttir

### Photography

Alísa Kalyanova



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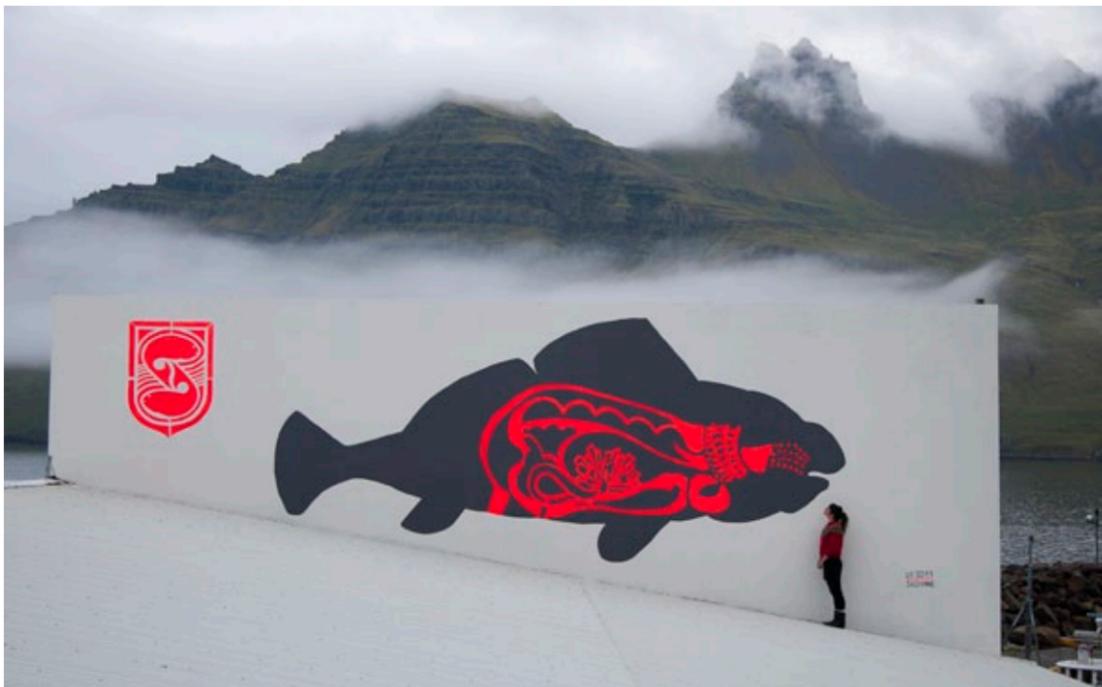


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# ENVISION SOMETHING DIFFERENT

Once-abandoned fish factory becomes a problem-solving creative centre



Since the local fish factory in Stöðvarfjörður closed down in 2005 and its 32 employees lost their jobs, the eastern municipality of roughly 200 people has faced a serious decline. Like many of Iceland's small towns, this community has faced a systematic shutdown of social services, followed by large-scale depopulation.

Designers Rósa Valtingoer and Zdenek Paták—who together form MupiMup, a design team focused on turning what usually is considered waste into functional products—have been working since 2010 on a project that might lead the town in a different direction. In collaboration with a few other parties, including a group of MA communication design students from the Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design in London, Rósa and Zdenek are in the midst of setting up a creative centre in the abandoned fish factory, which would have been torn down a few years ago if it weren't for their enthusiasm.

"On the one hand, the fish factory

embodies Stöðvarfjörður's decline. Immediately from the day it closed, this town started to go down," Zdenek explains. "On the other hand, however, it is Stöðvarfjörður's stronghold, a massive building located by the harbour at the centre of the village. So it is very symbolic."

## A NEED FOR FREEDOM

The creative centre will house artist workshops, studio spaces, a museum, café and a market selling produce and local food products, thereby retaining some of its original purpose by supporting the local fishing industry. With the help of their fellow handyman Alexander Smári Gjöveraa, Rósa and Zdenek are renovating the house with little to no money, planning to partly open this coming summer. In about four years time the centre should be fully operating with the clear aim of creating a platform for the increased self-sustainability and independence of the village.

Rósa, who has lived in Stöðvarfjörður for the biggest part of her life, says the village could just as well be wiped off the map if it doesn't sustain itself. "It is expensive, within the system we live in, to keep small communities running and it is obviously not on the list of priorities." Zdenek, who moved there in 2007, says that due to the cutting of social services, inhabitants have to travel for

basic needs such as groceries, bank and postal services. Recently, there have also been talks of closing down the village's elementary school. "That makes this place less and less interesting for people to come and live here, especially young people," she says.

Why do they find it important to keep such a small village going? Rósa's answer is simple and honest: "It is amazing to live here. One's life is full of nature and endless space. Every house has a garden where one can, for

## Design is about solving problems

instance, grow food," she says with an underlying urge for more freedom than is possible in big cities. Zdenek agrees: "At this point, living in a place like this is more of a statement expressing the need for more freedom to be outside of the system."

The two describe their hometown as a suburb of Fjarðabyggð—a municipality made up of six nearby towns with Reyðarfjörður being the central town, not only containing the municipality's key offices and services but also an Alcoa aluminium smelter, which began operating in 2007. Its construction—which was and remains a divisive decision amongst Icelanders—was original-

ly presented as a solution to population problems in the East. However, Rósa and Zdenek don't see it that way. On the contrary, they see it as a part of a large-scale centralization, based on the merger of many small municipalities, where what is on the margins is considered less economical. "The interests of Fjarðabyggð are not really flowering in Stöðvarfjörður. Everybody here feels it," Zdenek says.

## NO, NO, THERE'S NO LIMIT

"People often want to come up with solutions for others," Rósa says, referring to mega-scale projects like the smelter. In fact, Alcoa has funded a bulk of the area's cultural and educational projects, providing the company with an image of a "life-saviour," as Rósa phrases it. "Our project's pure advantage is that we are living here and the project comes from our own needs, based on the potential of this place," Zdenek says. "You have to know your problems very well to come up with solutions," Rósa adds.

Finding solutions to problems seems to be the essence of Rósa and Zdenek's approach to design. "Design is just a word," Zdenek says. "I mean, who is a designer?" Rósa elaborates, "Design is about solving problems." They believe everybody has creative skills and that is what their project is about. "It is based on the belief in the creative skills," Zdenek explains. "The project will provide a wide spectrum of creative options, from food to music and crafts." In summary, Rósa says it touches on everything to do with culture. "The possibilities are endless, and we are not going to limit them. The project will be developing constantly," she says.

And the problem they aim to solve is not only the above-stated one of small countryside towns declining. Operating on the same principles as MupiMup, the creative centre will also focus on minimizing waste, which will instead be used as material for something different. Already one could say that Rósa and Zdenek are, by taking over the abandoned fish factory, turning trash into something usable—an act fuelled by a vision perfectly described by handyman Alexander: "We are taught to see things in the way we are told to see them. This project is about seeing through that image—to envision something different." ☘



**Disclaimer:** This is The Grapevine's BAD ADVICE column. It's where Nanna Árnadóttir answers questions from our readers about traversing the Icelandic cultural jungle. She is usually nice, but really rather bad at giving advice...

Dear Nanna,  
I've started casually seeing this Icelandic guy and every time we have sex it's a struggle to get him to wear a condom. I admit sometimes I slip or cave in and we have sex without one. How do I make him wear one or at least like it more?  
Condomless in a Conundrum

Dear Condomless in a Conundrum,  
I have some bad news for you. You have contracted a crusty, pus-filled disease that's camping out your vagina. Chlamydia rates in Iceland are very high because Icelandic men are too cheap to buy condoms. So it's over for you. How about in the future you keep three condoms in your wallet? If you meet someone you want to have sex with, chances are you'll do it twice, the third one you can keep in case you meet a walking penis or a sexy lamp post on the way home. Also start hiding condoms in places you know you're going to have sex, like the toilet at Prikið or in the napkin dispenser at Bæjarins Bestu. You can't make this guy like it, but just because you don't like something doesn't mean you won't do it to get laid, just ask the ex I used to make wear my knickers on the outside of his trousers like a lacy superhero. You're welcome.  
Nanna

Dear Nanna,  
I'm an exchange student at the University of Iceland and since I got here I found myself drinking a lot. The other day I even blacked out. I'm a little nervous I might be developing a problem.  
Drunk in 101

Dear Drunk in 101,  
I have created a cocktail in your honour called Drunk in 101. It's Brennivín mixed with Opal shots and malt and twelve cigarettes and a call to your ex girlfriend where you cry and then a fist fight with that Spanish guy at the end of the bar and some taking your pants off and wondering if you can get access to porn on your iPhone. You can. If you think you have a real problem though just check into rehab or go to an English speaking AA meeting, Iceland has plenty quitter! Where did I put my beer?  
Nanna

Got a question for Nanna and need some bad advice? Email [nanna.arnadottir@gmail.com](mailto:nanna.arnadottir@gmail.com) and you might get an answer published in the next issue of Grapevine.

## Words

Snorri Páll Jónsson Úlfhildarson

## Photography

Viktor Pétur Hannesson

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ENJOY FOOD  
ENJOY SHOPPING  
ENJOY THE NORDIC HOUSE





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PAGE 6

"After the crash Ólafur was mocked in a way no Icelandic president has ever been mocked. In a popular New Year's comedy show on television, Bessastaðir was portrayed as a den of cocaine snorting scoundrels. All the sanctimony of his office had been stripped."

Egill Helgason recounts the story of President Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson, who has FINALLY made up his mind to run in the June elections.

PAGE 14

"My top dream projects are mostly fantasies like making the title sequence for a Bond movie, but one thing I keep coming back to is working on a branding project in Iceland. If someone were making a new chocolate bar or skyr brand, a milk carton and needed a designer... I would love to get involved."

Karlssonwilker are behind visual identity of DesignMarch 2012. We go to New York to find out who and what they are all about...

PAGE 10

"The Icelandic lava cannot be polished," she said, pointing to a shiny lava stone on a silver necklace, not unlike the ones you see in shop windows all around town. This fact was corroborated by a salesclerk at another tourist shop. "But please don't tell my boss that I told you."

Is Icelandic lava jewellery "Made in Iceland" a scam? We investigate!

PAGE 8

"Lilja has also headed for the centre, calling up former Independence Party member and beloved weatherman (yes, really) Siggí Stormur ("Siggí Storm") to front the party with her. Perhaps inevitably, the party is called Solidarity, and perhaps just as inevitably, Siggí has already left amid rivalry over who gets the most airtime, and says he will not vote for the party."

Forming new political parties before thinking everything through seems to be all the rage these days...

PAGE 23

"We shuffle like penguins across the ice to get closer to the most active geyser, Strokkur."

The Golden Circle sure is fun during the winter...

www.skattur.is



**Tax returns are due by next March 22<sup>th</sup>**



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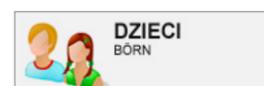
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# INFO



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ENTERTAINMENT IN ICELAND

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Issue 3 - 2012

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## *Rúrí Retrospective*



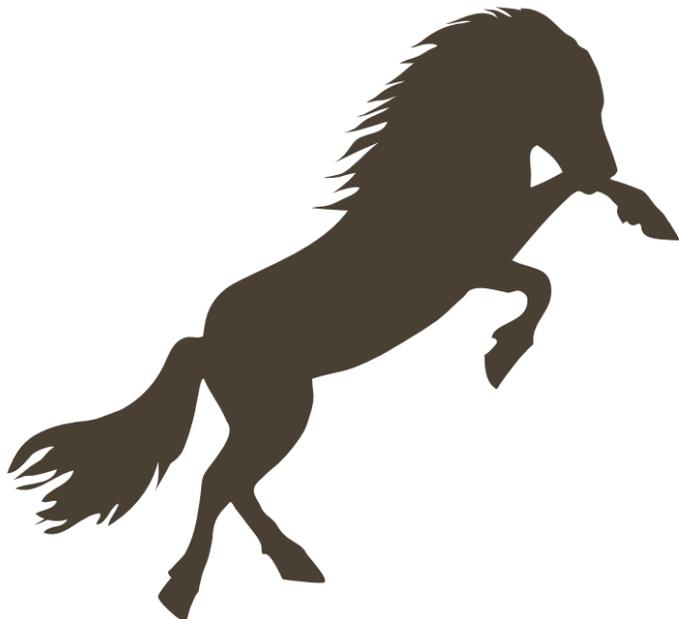
March 3 - May 6  
National Gallery of Iceland  
1000 ISK

*A golden Mercedes smashed with a sledgehammer in a busy square in Reykjavík in 1974, a sky-high bamboo pole with multicolour ribbons set ablaze in 1983, titled Rainbow I, or transparent slides of Icelandic waterfalls at the Venice Biennale 2003—different people have different ways of expressing themselves. Icelandic artist Rúrí's way is through performance art, installations, sculptures and electronic media. As a performance and conceptual artist, she has been at the forefront of Icelandic art for almost four decades. Her art, at times simple or complex, address topics motivated by identity, the relationship between man, earth and the universe, environment and time, and often contain a controversial, socio-political critique. In the retrospective, a collection of Rúrí's main works, large and small, and images of her most famous performances are on display.*

Rúrí, Forty-Two Metres, 1994  
Installation, Courtesy Rúrí

# ICELANDIC HORSE FESTIVAL

## REYKJAVÍK 2012



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29. MARCH - 1. APRIL

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# MUSIC

## CONCERTS & NIGHTLIFE IN MARCH

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How to use the listings  
Venues are listed alphabetically by day.  
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Add your listings: [www.listings.grapevine.is](http://www.listings.grapevine.is)

### 9 FRI

**Bar 11**  
21:00 Sólstafir  
**Hressó**  
21:30 Rokkabilly band Reykjavíkur  
with Hreimi and VJ Fúzi  
**Reykjavik backpackers**  
20:00 80s Night  
**Faktorý**  
23:00 Dj Steindór Jónsson  
**Hjálpræðishernum (Salvation Army)**  
20:30 Dorian Stevens  
22:00 Benjamin Petersen  
**Esja**  
22:00 Dj Hlynur Mastermix, Dj Bogi  
**Gay 46**  
22:00 Dj Anna Brá spinning  
**Glaumbar**  
22:00 DJ Egill  
**Hemmi & Valdi**  
22:00 DJ Gauti  
**The English Pub**  
17:00 Live Music

### 10 SAT

**Borgarleikhúsið**  
20:00 Minus 16  
**Gaukurinn**  
21:00 Shure Drum Mastery – Final  
Drum Battle  
**Glaumbar**  
22:00 DJ Gunni Stef  
**Hemmi og Valdi**  
22:00 Rvk Soundsystem  
**Hressó**  
21:30 Timburmenn and VJ Fúzi  
**Faktorý**  
23:00 Dj Logi Pedro and Captain  
Fufanu  
**Gay 46**  
22:00 DJ Dramatík  
**Kaffibarinn**  
21:00 FKNHNSM  
**Keiluhöllin**  
20:00 Big Lebowski Fest Iceland  
2012  
**Prikið**  
00:00 DJ Krúsi  
**Reykjavik backpackers**  
21:00 Dual Mono & Marjan Venema  
**The English Pub**  
21:00 Live Music

### 11 SUN

**Nordic House**  
15:00 Reykjavik Folk Festival  
**Nordic House**  
20:00 Concert with Linda Chatter-  
ton  
**Prikið**  
22:00 Movie night  
**The English Pub**  
22:00 Live Music

### 12 MON

**Café Rósenberg**  
21:00 Pub Quiz  
**Prikið**  
22:00 Dj House  
**The English Pub**  
22:00 Live Music

### 13 TUE

**Gaukurinn**  
21:00 Global Battle Of The Bands  
2012  
**Prikið**  
22:00 Dj House  
**Café Rósenberg**  
21:00 Fleetwood Mac Tribute  
**The English Pub**  
22:00 Live Music



### The Dude Abides

March 10, 20:00

Keiluhöllin, Öskjuhlíð, 101 Reykjavík

2800 ISK (including admission, bowling, a large beer and a T-shirt)

The sixth annual Big Lebowski Fest will be held at Keiluhöllin on Saturday March 10! Come along and participate in the costume and trivia contests, share your favourite quotes, watch the movie and bowl as if it were your destiny. Naturally, there will be lots of serious White Russian drinking as well. So prepare yourself for a wild night with the Dude and his followers. And be sure not to step over the line or "You are entering a world of pain."

Evening schedule:

20:00 – Doors open, registering

20:45 – Trivia

21:30 – The Big Lebowski movie screening

23:30 – Fuckin' Fascist "mug toss" contest

00:00 – Bowling

01:30 – Award ceremony

Tickets are available at [www.bolur.is](http://www.bolur.is) as well as at the venue. Offers on beer and White Russians.

### 14 WED

**Café Rósenberg**  
21:00 Björggi Gísla  
**Hressó**  
21:30 Live Jazz  
**Kaffibarinn**  
21:00 HalliValli  
**Prikið**  
22:00 Dj House  
**The English Pub**  
22:00 Live Music

### 15 THU

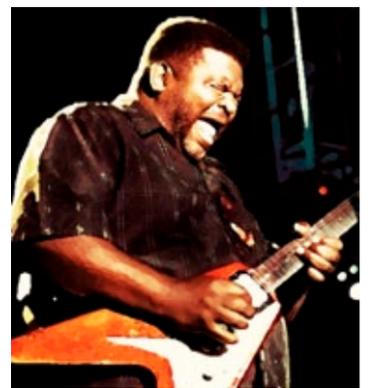
**Hressó**  
21:30 Klukk Þú Ert'ann  
**Faktorý**  
22:00 Dj Pabbi  
**Café Rósenberg**  
21:00 Skúli mennski  
**Kaffibarinn**  
21:00 Alfons X  
**Prikið**  
22:00 DJ Kalli Breakbeat.is  
**Esja**  
22:00 Partyzone Lounge Session–Dj  
Gunn Ewok  
**Glaumbar**  
22:00 DJ Egill  
**The English Pub**  
22:00 Live Music

### 16 FRI

**Café Rósenberg**  
22:00 A Band on Stage  
**Esja**  
22:00 Dj Hlynur Mastermix/Dj Bogi  
**Faktorý**  
23:00 Introbeats, Útidúr and more  
**Glaumbar**  
22:00 DJ Seth Sharp  
**Gay 46**  
22:00 DJ Kidda Rokk  
**Hemmi og Valdi**  
22:00 Waiters & Bellboys and  
Stormy Curves  
**Hressó**  
21:30 Lákabandið and DJ Geir  
Flóvent  
**IDA**  
22:00 DRUM & BASS Extravaganza  
**Prikið**  
00:00 DJ Danni Deluxe  
**The English Pub**  
17:00 Live Music

### 17 SAT

**Faktorý**  
23:00 Dj KGB and Hjálmar  
**Glaumbar**  
22:00 DJ Einar  
**Gay 46**  
22:00 DJ Kollster  
**Hemmi og Valdi**  
22:00 Grapevine Grassroots  
**Hressó**  
21:30 Hljómsveitin Krulludýrið and  
VJ Fúzi  
**Kaffibarinn**  
21:00 DJ Kári  
**Prikið**  
00:00 DJ Benni B Ruff



### Go Get Your Blues On At The International Blues Festival

March 31-April 5

Hilton Reykjavík Nordica and other  
venues in Reykjavík

8990 ISK for a festival pass

The annual Blues Festival, organised by the Reykjavík Blues Society will open with Blues Day on March 31. It will be packed with blues concerts at various downtown venues and the classic Blues Cruisers. As a highlight, a blues performance will take place at the Kolaportið Flea Market. The festival will continue on April 3 with a performance by Andrea Gylfadóttir, Iceland's "Queen of the Blues" and her Blues Men at the Hilton Nordica Hotel. On Wednesday and Thursday, renowned artists such as John Primer, Michael Burks, Tregasveitin, the Marel Blues Project and Vintage Caravan will perform. The concerts start at 20:00 every night and tickets are available at [midi.is](http://midi.is).



## Compete Your Socks Off At The Battle Of The Bands!

March 13-17, 21:00

Gaukur á Stöng

500 ISK

Do you play in a band? Are you looking for a chance to compete with fellow musicians? Do you think your songs are so rad that you want to perform them live? Then bring it on at the battle of the bands! No matter whether you are still rehearsing in daddy's garage or have already signed a record deal, anyone who can play two original songs is welcome.

The band that wins will participate in the international finals held in Bucharest, Romania, this June. They will also get studio recording time, and the chance to perform at venues all over Iceland. Email [iceland@gbob.com](mailto:iceland@gbob.com) if you're interested. Otherwise we highly recommend you check out Gaukur á Stöng to see the new and old talents perform.

**The English Pub**  
21:00 St. Patrick's Day

## 18 SUN

**Nordic House**  
15:15 Classical Concert - Shostakovich  
**Faktorý**  
21:30 Live Jazz  
**Prikið**  
22:00 Movie night  
**The English Pub**  
22:00 Live Music

## 19 MON

**Café Rósenberg**  
21:00 Pub Quiz  
**Prikið**  
22:00 DJ House  
**The English Pub**  
22:00 Live Music

## 20 TUE

**Café Rósenberg**  
21:00 Joni Mitchell Tribute  
**Prikið**  
22:00 DJ House

## 21 WED

**Café Rósenberg**  
21:00 Ólöf Arnalds

**Hemmi og Valdi**  
22:00 Live Music  
**Hressó**  
21:30 Live Jazz  
**Kaffibarinn**  
21:00 DJ Pilsner  
**Prikið**  
22:00 DJ House  
**The English Pub**  
22:00 Live Music

## 22 THU

**Café Rósenberg**  
21:00 Thin Jim and The Castaways  
**Esja**  
22:00 Partyzone Lounge Session-DJ Andres  
**Faktorý**  
22:00 Dj Atli Kanilsnúður and live metal with Celestine, Muck and World Narcosis  
**Frikirkjan**  
20:30 Kristjana Stefans and Svavar Knútur  
**Glaumbar**  
22:00 DJ Krúsi  
**Hemmi og Valdi**  
22:00 Heiladans  
**Hressó**  
21:30 Timburmenn  
**Kaffibarinn**  
21:00 HúsDJús - B. G. Baaregaard  
**Prikið**  
22:00 DJ Danni Deluxe  
**The English Pub**  
22:00 Live Music

## 23 FRI

**Café Rósenberg**  
22:00 Beggi Mood

**Esja**  
22:00 DJ Hlynur Mastermix/Dj Bogi  
**Faktorý**  
23:00 DJ Logi Pedro  
**Glaumbar**  
22:00 DJ Egill  
**Gay 46**  
22:00 DJ Kollster  
**Hemmi og Valdi**  
22:00 DJ Gauti  
**Hressó**  
21:30 Sting tribute band and VJ Fúzi  
**Prikið**  
00:00 DJ Addi Intro  
**The English Pub**  
17:00 Live Music

## 24 SAT

**Café Rósenberg**  
22:00 Svavar Knútur  
**Faktorý**  
23:00 Dj Benni B-ruff and RVK Soundsystem Reggae Night  
**Glaumbar**  
22:00 DJ Seth Sharp  
**Gay 46**  
22:00 DJ Manny  
**Hemmi og Valdi**  
22:00 Maggi Mongoose  
**Hressó**  
21:30 Hljómsveitin Dalton and Dj Fannar  
**Kaffibarinn**  
21:00 FM Belfast (Live) and Maggi Legó  
**Prikið**  
00:00 DJ Egill  
**The English Pub**  
21:00 Live Music



22 March

### Celestine Returns!

Don't miss Muck and World Narcosis too...

March 22, 22:00

Faktorý

1000ISK

After a long break during which they worked on their new album, Celestine are finally going to be back on stage to perform at Faktorý on March 22. Their first EP 'At the Borders of Arcadia,' as well as their album 'This home will be our grave' received high praise here in Iceland and abroad. Look forward to listening to their new "hardcore driven metal" songs!

They will celebrate their return to the stage with Muck, who just released their debut album 'Slaves' as well as hardcore band World Narcosis. So if you like your concerts loud and wild, come along for a great show!

If you prefer to check out their music beforehand, you can find it at [www.gogoyoko.com/artist/Celestine](http://www.gogoyoko.com/artist/Celestine).



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# MUSIC

## CONCERTS & NIGHTLIFE IN MARCH



### Go Northwest For I Never Went South

April 6-7

Ísafjörður, West Fjords

Free!

Easter weekend in Ísafjörður has become the place to be thanks to Mugison and his father, who dreamt up the free music festival, "I Never Went South" ("Aldrei Fór Ég Suður") over some drinks back in 2003. The idea was to get local acts from the Westfjords to perform with support from a big name Icelandic artist. When they ran into Björk and told her about their idea, she told them that they were cutie pies, and they thought she was in, but they are still waiting for her to perform. But it's not about the big names anyways. So go enjoy a weekend of debauchery in this musically inclined town and you may just discover some new awesome acts! More info about how to get there and who's playing can be found at <http://aldrei.is/english/>.

**Hressó**  
21:30 Hljómsveitin Spútínik and DJ Geir Flóvent  
**Kaffibarinn**  
21:00 President Bongo  
**Prikið**  
00:00 DJ Benni B Ruff  
**The English Pub**  
21:00 Live Music

### 01 SUN

**Faktorý**  
21:30 Live Jazz  
**Prikið**  
22:00 Movie night  
**The English Pub**  
22:00 Live Music

### 02 MON

**Café Rósenberg**  
21:00 Pub Quiz  
**Prikið**  
22:00 Dj House  
**The English Pub**  
22:00 Live Music

### 03 TUE

**Prikið**  
22:00 Dj House  
**The English Pub**  
22:00 Live Music

### 25 SUN

**Faktorý**  
21:30 Live Jazz  
**Prikið**  
22:00 Movie night  
**The English Pub**  
22:00 Live Music

### 26 MON

**Café Rósenberg**  
21:00 Pub Quiz  
**Prikið**  
22:00 DJ House  
**The English Pub**  
22:00 Live Music

### 27 TUE

**Café Rósenberg**  
21:00 Myrra Rós  
**Kaffibarinn**  
21:00 HalliValli  
**Prikið**  
22:00 DJ House  
**The English Pub**  
22:00 Live Music

### 28 WED

**Café Rósenberg**  
21:00 Þorsteinn Eggertsson & Band  
**Hressó**  
21:30 Live Jazz  
**Kaffibarinn**  
21:00 Kanilsnældur  
**Prikið**  
22:00 DJ House  
**The English Pub**  
22:00 Live Music

### 29 THU

**Café Rósenberg**  
21:00 Blúsbandið Smiðjan & Þorleifur  
**Esja**  
22:00 Partyzone Lounge Session-Dj Simon  
**Faktorý**  
22:00 Dj Pabbi  
**Glaumbar**  
22:00 DJ Einar  
**Hressó**  
21:30 Penta  
**Kaffibarinn**  
21:00 HúsDJús - Rix & Axfjörð  
**Prikið**  
22:00 Surprise night  
**The English Pub**  
22:00 Live Music

### 30 FRI

**Café Rósenberg**  
22:00 Ljótu hálfvitarnir  
**Esja**  
22:00 Dj Hlynur Mastermix/Dj Bogi  
**Faktorý**  
23:00 Dj KGB  
**Gay 46**  
22:00 DJ Dramatik  
**Hemmi og Valdi**  
22:00 Maggi Mongoose  
**Glaumbar**  
22:00 DJ Seth Sharp  
**Hressó**  
21:30 Joni Mitchell tribute band and Dj Fannar  
**Kaffibarinn**  
21:00 Alfons X  
**Prikið**  
00:00 DJ Addi Intro  
**The English Pub**  
17:00 Live Music

### 31 SAT

**Faktorý**  
23:00 Dj Danni Deluxe and ReykVeek  
**Glaumbar**  
22:00 DJ Krúsi  
**Gay 46**  
22:00 DJ Kidda Rokk  
**Hilton Reykjavík Nordica**  
Blúshátíð 2012



### Lords Of The Boards

Ak Extreme Snowboard & Music

Festival

April 12 - 15

Akureyri

You just have to get there

Do you love busting air-to-fakies? Or do you love watching other people air-to-fakie, while your feet are firmly on the ground? If you answered yes to either of these questions, you should start planning your trip to Akureyri's annual AK Extreme Snowboard & Music Festival right now. The infamous container big jump or the lineup of great bands may just be worth the trip alone. Cross your fingers for some good snow, at least enough to chill your beers and enjoy the party.

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12-19 mon-fri, 13-17 weekends  
[www.photomuseum.is](http://www.photomuseum.is)



## Are You A Fan?

EVE Online Fanfest 2012

March 22 - 24

Harpa Concert Hall and Conference Centre

Festival pass starts at 15.000 ISK

Fanfest brings together players from all over the world to celebrate the game EVE Online. For three days players will forget their rivalries and in-game differences to share experiences, create new bonds or simply to drink and party. Besides being able to mingle with CCP developers at Fanfest or during pub crawls, you can get a full load of presentations with new EVE Video Premieres, and PVP tournaments, plus a silent auction, poker tournament, round tables, live agents, horseback riding (Ok, not sure about that...) and the weekend is packed with music by HAM, GusGus, DJ Margeir, and much more. Get ready to take off into space, to the cluster of stars far away from humans' original habitat, but at the same time so close to downtown Reykjavik.

## 04 WED

### Faktorý

23:00 Tetrix reunion and hiphop DJ

### Prikið

22:00 Dj House

### The English Pub

22:00 Live Music

## 05 THU

### Esja

22:00 Partyzone Lounge Session-Dj

Helgi Mar

### Gay 46

22:00 DJ Dropp

### Gaukurinn

22:00 Skurinn

### Glaumbar

21:00 Beer Pong - Resident DJ

### Prikið

22:00 Breakbeat.is

### The English Pub

22:00 Live Music

## 06 FRI

### Esja

22:00 Dj Hlynur Mastermix/Dj Bogi



## Eldhús: A Kitchen On The Road

Somewhere not far from you in March and April

March/ April

All over Iceland

Free, but you need an invitation

Welcome to Iceland's little house of food, the next stage of the "Inspired by Iceland" projects where Iceland opens its doors for visitors from all over the world. In case you should get hungry, and you most certainly will during your trip around the island, check out the dinner invitations and the locations of Eldhús on [www.inspiredbyiceland.com](http://www.inspiredbyiceland.com) before taking off. Eldhús is a small house on wheels that will travel around Iceland in March and April, offering four people at a time the pleasure of experiencing the best food Iceland has to offer. In charge of the cooking each night are either national or international chefs, master chefs, farmers or Icelandic cooking enthusiasts from all over the island. They will use only the best ingredients that the island has to offer with the aim of promoting Icelandic food culture. This is the ideal opportunity to taste and experience a part of Icelandic culture out in the countryside of Iceland.

### Gay 46

22:00 DJ Dramatík

### Prikið

00:00 Resident Dj

### The English Pub

17:00 Live Music

## 07 SAT

### Gaukurinn

23:00 Severed Crotch

### Prikið

00:00 Resident Dj

### The English Pub

21:00 Live Music

## 08 SUN

### Faktorý

22:00 Live Jazz

### Gay 46

22:00 Easter Madness

### Prikið

22:00 Movie night

## 09 MON

### Café Rósenberg

21:00 Pub Quiz

### Prikið

22:00 Live DJ

### The English Pub

22:00 Live Music

## 10 TUE

### Prikið

22:00 Live DJ

## 11 WED

### Prikið

22:00 Live DJ

## 12 THU

### Kaffibarinn

22:00 HúsDJús: These Fists

### Esja

22:00 Partyzone Lounge Session-Dj

Gunni Ewok

### Gaukurinn

22:00 Live Music

### Glaumbar

22:00 House DJ

### Prikið

22:00 House DJ

### The English Pub

22:00 Live Music

# Den Danske Kro

## \* Mondays \*

Shot's night - all shots ISK 400,-

## \* Tuesdays \*

Live music and Beer Bingo night

## \* Wednesdays \*

POP-QUIZ night (special offer on drinks) & Live music

## \* Thursdays \*

Live Music / Scandinavian nights

## \* Fridays \*

Live music / Sing-along nights

## \* Saturdays \*

Live music / Sing-along nights

## \* Sundays \*

Hangover & Live music night Really good prices on drinks



Ingólfsstræti 3 · 101 · Reykjavík  
[www.dapski.is](http://www.dapski.is)

# ESJA

## 1/2 PRICE

## ON

## ALL DRINKS

## if you can find

## the duck!

## MON - THU: 19 - 22

## FRI - SAT: 17 - 20

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Restaurant - Pizzeria



**Hornið** opened in 1979 was the first restaurant of its kind in Iceland, a restaurant with a true Italian atmosphere. Hornið is known for good food made out of fresh raw materials, good pizzas baked in front of the guests, good coffee and comfortable service.

Lunch offers every day.

Open every day from 11.00 to 23.30

For reservations call 551-3340



# Café Loki

in front of Hallgrímskirkja

Icelandic traditional homemade food



Open 10-18 Mon - Sat  
Open 11-17 Sundays

# MAP

## Places We Like

### 1 Hressó

Austurstræti 20

You know, Hressó is basically the only place I go for coffee. Why? Their coffee is decent to excellent, but their forte is surely their wonderful patio, where you can enjoy the spring breeze in the sun, wrap yourself in a blanket beneath an electric heater in January and at all times: smoke.

### 2 Laundromat Café

Austurstræti 9

At the Laundromat Cafe you can do laundry, drink a beer and have a grandma read to your children all under one roof. This kid-friendly restaurant opened last spring in Reykjavík and prides itself on its full menu, cool concept, 5,000 books (that you can buy or trade), board games, and up-to-date newspapers and magazines (including a WALL OF GRAPEVINES).

### 3 Grái Kötturinn

Hverfisgata 16a

Super relaxed and cosy diner/café below street level. This place makes the best hangover breakfast ever (the truck!) and any-other-day breakfast as well. It's a nice and relaxing place to eat and increase your caffeine intake and chill with friends or with some reading material.

### 4 Humarhúsið

Amtmannstígur 1

One of the oldest restaurants in the country, the lobster house is renowned for its lobster and also its impressive cognac lounge. Fine intimate dining.

### 5 NASA

Thorvaldsenstræti 2

The cornerstone of Reykjavík nightlife, NASA plays host to the biggest bands and the biggest parties. NASA has several bars inside, and with the generally late door-opening hours for every event, the shows and parties tend to go on all night during the weekends. Remember to check out their schedule, as each event differs from the next.

### 6 Dillon Rock Bar

Laugavegur 30

Led Zeppelin, Iron Maiden and Black Sabbath are what you'll often hear, along with more local and recent spin-offs as well as the odd live show. And if you have other requests, they are accepted and considered by resident DJ, Amma Rokksins, Iceland's grandmother of rock, still spinning her stuff on Saturday nights.

#### Useful numbers

Emergency number: **112**

Medical help: **1770**

Dental emergency: **575 0505**

Information: **118**

Taxi: Hreyfill-Bæjarleiðir: **588 5522**

BSR: **561 0000**

#### Tax Free Refund

**Iceland Refund**, Aðalstræti 2, tel: 564 6400

#### Tourist information

**Arctic Adventures**, Laugavegur 11,

tel: 562 7000

**City Centre**, Aðalstræti 2, tel: 590 1550

**Iceland Excursions - Grayline Iceland**,



### 7 Píngholt Bar

Píngholtsstræti 5

Located in CenterHotel Píngholt, Píngholt bar is tucked away just outside of the mayhem that is Laugavegur on a weekend night. For a quieter evening, Píngholt bar is definitely worth a closer look. Show up between 17-19 for the daily happy hour.

Hafnarstræti 20, tel: 540 1313

**The Icelandic Travel Market**, Bankastræti 2, tel: 522 4979

**Trip**, Laugavegur 54, tel: 433 8747

#### Pharmacies

**Lyf og heilsa**, Egilsgata 3, tel: 563 1020

**Lyfja**, Laugavegur 16, tel: 552 4045 and Lágmúla 5, tel: 533-2300

#### Coach terminal

**BSÍ**, Vatnsmýrarvegur 10, tel: 562 1011, www.bsi.is

#### Domestic airlines

**Air Iceland**, Reykjavíkflugvöllur, tel: 570 3030, www.flugfelag.is

**Eagle Air**, Hótel Loftleiðir, tel: 562-4200

### 8 Den Danske Kro

Ingólfsstræti 3

The Danish Bar is located on Ingólfsstræti, just off Laugavegur where Q Bar once stood. The bar serves up Danish favourites, such as open-face smørrebrød sandwiches, Danish Tuborg beer and Aquavit schnapps. How to ask for a large beer in Danish: "Hej, jeg vil gerne have en stor øl, tak".

#### Public transport

The only public transport available in Reykjavík is the bus. Most buses run every 20-30 minutes (the wait may be longer on weekends) and the price per fare is 350 ISK for adults and children. Multiple day passes are available for purchase at select locations. Complete route map available at: www.bus.is. Tel: 540 2700. Buses run from 07:00-24:00 on weekdays and 10:00-24:00 on weekends. Main terminals are: Hlemmur and Lækjartorg

#### Opening Hours

**Bars and clubs:** According to regulations, bars can stay open until 01:00 on weekdays and 05:30 on weekends.

**Shops:** Mon.-Fri. 10:00-18:00, Sat.

### 9 Spúútnik

Laugavegur 28b

This super hip vintage shop in the heart of downtown is quintessential to Icelandic fashion trends. Ranging from classic, national pattern sweaters to some of the craziest throwback fashions from eras we thought we were glad to see gone, Spúútnik can make a pair of flowered, day-glow parachute pants seem like a smart buy.

10:00-16:00, Sun. closed. The shopping centres Kringlan and Smáralind as well as most supermarkets and tourist shops have longer opening hours.

**Swimming pools:** Weekdays 06:30-22:00 and weekends 09:00-17:00, although each pool varies plus or minus a few hours. **Banks** in the centre are open Mon.-Fri. 09:00-16:00.

#### Post Offices

Post offices are located around the city. The downtown post office is at Pósthússtræti 3-5, open Mon.-Fri. 09:00-18:00. Stamps are also sold at bookstores, gas stations, tourist shops and some grocery stores.

## ALL T-SHIRTS

# 3 for 2



HAFNARSTRÆTI 5 & SKÓLAVÖRDUSTÍGUR 10

Raggi from the band Árstíðir is the unstoppable...

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**LEGEND**

# EATING   # DRINKING   # SHOPPING

For a map of outside downtown Reykjavik visit [www.grapevine.is](http://www.grapevine.is) or the Icelandic phonebook website [www.ja.is](http://www.ja.is)

**23 NEW IN TOWN**

**Gay 46**  
Hverfisgata 46

A new bar called Gay 46 has opened at Hverfisgata 46. With room for 250 guests, the venue is now Reykjavik's largest gay bar. But of course everybody is welcome! The venue hosts exhibitions and concerts for all art and music lovers. It also has three pool tables and a huge dance floor. It's open Sunday to Thursday, 12:00 - 1:00, and Friday to Saturdays, 12:00 - 3:00. And their happy hour is from 22:00 to 00:00 every day.

**DesignMarch Picks**

**13 Dill**  
If you want to dress up, splash out and dine fine, With their 3/5/7-course tasting menu of local ingredients paired with wines, architecture and décor by Alvar Aalto and a superb view across town, Dill at the Nordic House is the place to go.  
*Sturlugata 5*

**14 Kaffibarinn**  
In the early evenings, Kaffibarinn is a casual hang out for coffee and clusters of Macs. At night, it bares its teeth and turns into a loud, crowded and pleasantly raunchy club where one can indulge in some serious partying. Always fun but best a bit intoxicated.  
*Bergstadastraeti 1*

**15 Mokka**  
Opened in 1958 as the first café in town with an Italian espresso machine, Mokka is famous for its waffles, its atmosphere and the beautiful, original interior complete with mosaic pillars and copper lights. The walls of the café double as a gallery, currently showing Götu Baejarnirs by Harri Gylfason until March 15.  
*Skólavörðustigur 3A*

**16 Grettisborg**  
Tucked away amidst the 101 courtyards, Grettisborg holiday flats are cosy, comfortable and cool, all without breaking the bank. They also serve as a gallery space for local design - whether a sculpture or a kitchen cupboard, if you like it, you can buy it and take it home with you.  
*Grettisgata 53b*

**17 KEX**  
An old biscuit factory turned into one of the hottest hostels in the world, KEX mixes industrial chic and secondhand charm successfully. Apart from the dorms and rooms, KEX also houses has a gym, library and a bar, that has quickly become a favourite hangout for locals and travellers alike.  
*Skúlagata*

**18 Geysir**  
Once a standard souvenir shop, Geysir has rediscovered itself as a country chic lifestyle boutique, carrying local brands like Vik Þrjónsdóttir and Farmers Market alongside their own line of knitwear, candles and notebooks. Great for souvenirs, but be warned - you may just end up keeping it all to yourself.  
*Skólavörðustigur 16*

**19 Kiosk**  
Run by a collective of young Icelandic designers, Kiosk stocks the next big things of Icelandic fashion. Check out YR and REY that will also climb up the Reykjavik Fashion Festival 2012 catwalk.  
*Laugavegur 65*

**20 KRAUM**  
Located in the oldest house in Reykjavik dating back to 1762, Kraum is a design store that represents over 200 Icelandic designers. From cod lamps to sheep skin chairs, chocolate volcanoes to whale tooth hooks, if you're looking for Icelandic crafts and design, KRAUM is the place to go.  
*Aðalstræti 10*

**21 Kría Cycles**  
Located in the "Fishpacking District" by the harbor, the friendly fellows at Kría Cycles fix and custom build the most stylish rides in town. Spring is here, time to get up in the saddle!  
*Hólmaslóð 4*

**22 SPARK design space**  
Iceland's only design gallery, Spark's exhibition calendar features both local and international names. It is also one of the best design shops in town, so don't be shy - dare to venture downstairs too!  
*Klapparstigur 33*

Now offering catering service!

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check out

**listings.grapevine.is**

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**10 Cintamani**  
Bankastræti 7  
Cintamani stocks Icelandic quality outdoor-gear and travel equipment, guaranteed to keep the whole family nice and warm in any type of weather. Here you'll find almost everything needed for your trip across the country and beyond and you can book an adventure excursion on the spot.

**11 Lundinn**  
Skólavörðustigur 10, Hafnarstræti 5  
Lundinn on Skólavörðustigur is easily recognisable by the giant puffin standing guard outside the shop. Once inside, you may purchase a plethora of touristy items, including countless variations on puffin. And you know what—Lundinn actually means "The Puffin."

**12 Fríða Frænka**  
Vesturgata 3  
This small boutique is a jam-packed treasure chest overflowing with antique furniture and items to perk up your apartment. In every corner of the shop you'll find some unique items, including lamps, pillows, gorgeous 60s sofas, tables, and a selection of vintage jewellery

**Public phones**  
There aren't many public payphones in the city centre. The tourist information centre at Aðalstræti 2, City Hall, Kolaportið, entrance at Landsbankinn and in Lækjargata. Prepaid international phone cards are recommended for int'l callers.

**Internet Access**  
Most cafés offer free wireless internet access. Computers with internet connections are available to use at:  
Ráðhúskaffi City Hall, Tjarnargata 11  
Ground Zero, Frakkastigur 8, near Laugavegur 45  
The Reykjavik City Library, Tryggvagata 15

The National and University Library, Arngrímsgata 3  
Tourist Information Centre, Aðalstræti 2  
Icelandic Travel Market, Bankastræti 2  
Reykjavik Backpackers, Laugavegur 28

**Swimming Pools**  
There are several swimming pools in Reykjavik. The one in 101 Reykjavik, Sundhöll Reykjavíkur, is an indoor one, located at Barónsstígur. That pool features a nice sunbathing area and some outdoor hot tubs. Opening hours: Monday to Thursday from 06:30-22:00, Friday from 06:30-20:00, Saturday from 08:00-16:00, and Sunday from 10:00-18:00.

**Public Toilets**  
Public toilets in the centre can be found inside the green poster covered towers located, for example, at Hlemmur, Ingólfs-tortorg, by Hallgrímskirkja, by Reykjavik Art Museum, Lækjargata and by Eymundsson on Skólavörðustigur. Toilets can also be found inside the Reykjavik City Hall and the Reykjavik Library.

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**i8**

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**JANICE KERBEL**  
until 17 March

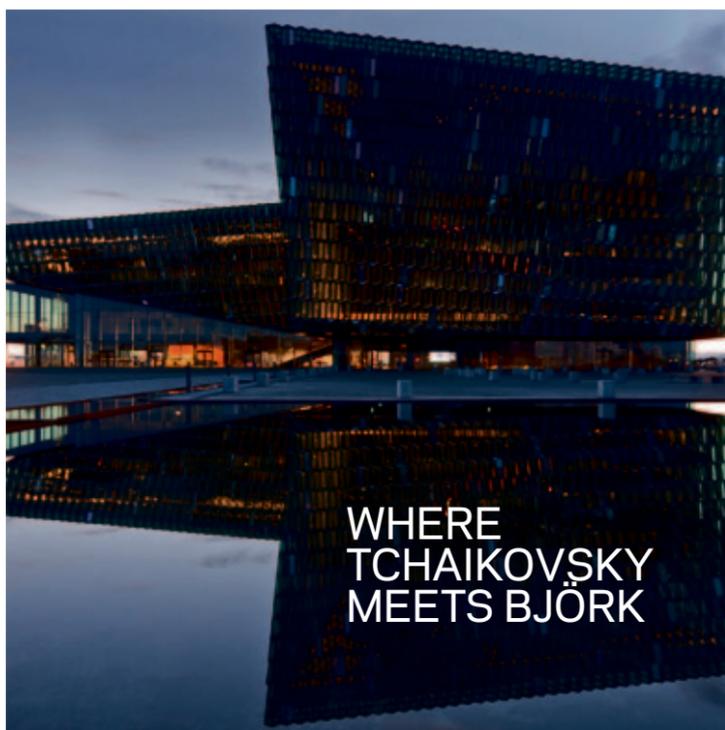
**THE ARMORY SHOW**  
8 - 11 March | New York

**ÍVAR VALGARÐSSON**  
29 March - 5 May

i8 was founded in 1995 and represents an eclectic mix of Icelandic and international contemporary artists.

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<b>EGGERT PÉTURSSON</b>	<b>LAWRENCE WEINER</b>

Opening hours: Tuesday - Friday, 11-5pm, Saturday, 1-5pm.  
Join our mailing list on [www.i8.is](http://www.i8.is) or join us on Facebook.



**WHERE  
TCHAIKOVSKY  
MEETS BJÖRK**

**VISIT HARPA.** Take a guided tour of the building and peak behind the scenes. Enjoy the glass facade, elegant halls and different floors of genius design.

Reykjavík was featured in the New York Times as amongst the top four places in the world to travel to in 2011, with Harpa as one of its main attractions. Harpa is definitely a must-see on any Iceland travel agenda.

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# ART IN MARCH

## COCKTAIL PLEASURES AND VISUAL STIMULATION

**How to use the listings:** Venues are listed alphabetically by day. For complete listings and detailed information on venues visit [www.grapevine.is](http://www.grapevine.is)  
Send us your listings: [listings@grapevine.is](mailto:listings@grapevine.is)

## OPENINGS

### ASÍ Art Museum

March 10

#### Einar Falur Ingólfsson

An Icelandic photographer, culture journalist and literary reviewer, Einar Falur has made photo-books and photo-essays from various countries. He has exhibited his works in Iceland and abroad and teaches periodically at the Icelandic Academy of the Arts. The exhibition at the ASÍ Art Museum is based on three photographic chapters: Sanctuaries, Shelters and Roots and reflects Icelandic design, Icelandic know-how and the sanctuaries of those living and working in Iceland.  
*Runs until April 1*

### Hafnarborg

#### Roots – Icelandic contemporary jewelry design

Theme of the exhibition Roots refers to both nature and cultural roots of contemporary Icelandic jewelry design. The exhibition gives an insight into the world of Icelandic jewelry design and the different roots goldsmiths and jewelry designers search in for ideas regarding materials and methods. The exhibition is a collaboration with the show committee goldsmith Society and is part of Design March 2012.  
*Runs until April 15*

### Hafnarhús (Reykjavík Art Museum)

March 10

#### Emission work by GT

An exhibition of work by visual artist Gunnhildur Thordardottir displaying new sculptures and mixed media collages. The artist is very keen on recycling and uses materials for her art work that would otherwise end up in the dump such as off-cuts of textiles, sticky plastic films and empty food containers. The artist's inspiration derives from the primary colours and shapes. The exhibition is children friendly where the kids can create an art work using recycled materials. Free entrance.  
*Runs until March 25*



## Horses Take Over Reykjavík!

*Icelandic Horse Festival 2012*

March 29 - April 1

*Laugardalur and around Reykjavík*

Free

Does tölt sound Chinese to you or are you an Icelandic horse lover? Either way, the Icelandic Horse Festival is around the corner and these four days are all about horses, for those who can't get enough of them and want to see and learn more. Horse enthusiasts have a programme planned to keep the young and old entertained with shows, horse farm visits, films, fairs, festivities and even a parade with 150 of their proudest horses around the city centre. So hide if you are afraid of those four-legged creatures or join in. For more information about the programme, visit [www.icelandichorsefestival.is/program.html](http://www.icelandichorsefestival.is/program.html).

March 21 20:00

#### Threads Talk: Claire Bishop

Threads is a series of talks by respected curators, scholars and artists. Claire Bishop is Associate Professor in the Department of History of Art at Warwick University, and Visiting Professor in the Curating Contemporary Art department at the Royal College of Art, London.

April 12 20:00

#### Threads Talk: Helen Molesworth

Threads is a series of talks by respected curators, scholars and artists. Helen Molesworth is Chief Curator of Exhibitions at the Wexner Center for the Arts.

### i8 Gallery

March 29

#### Ívar Valgarðsson

In his solo show at i8 Gallery conceptual artist Ívar Valgarðsson will show new works in various media.  
*Runs until May 12*

### Museum of Design – Hönnunarsafn Íslands

March 11

#### Our objects: Guided tour around the exhibition "OUR OBJECTS" on the last day of the exhibition.

For the first time a broad selection of the collection of the Museum of Design and Applied Art is put on display. Since the founding of the Museum in 1998 distinguished objects that are part of the international and Icelandic design history, have been acquired in our collection. On display: Icelandic and foreign furnitures, graphic design, textiles, ceramics and glass just to name a few categories from the design field.

### Museum of Design – Hönnunarsafn Íslands

March 21 17:00

#### Opening: LOOP LANGUAGE – DesignMarch Exhibition

An exhibition of new works by six Icelandic designers who all express themselves through knitting. The works exhibited are made within a certain framework and testify to the designers' full artistic freedom for expression which does not stoop to perceived laws of market and fashion. Curated by designer, Steinunn Sigurðardóttir.  
*Runs May 20*

### Museum of Design – Hönnunarsafn Íslands

March 21

#### GÓA table – DesignMarch

Presentation of a new indoor and outdoor table GÓA by designer Erla Sólveig Óskarsdóttir. The tables were designed and produced by request of the Museum for its coffee space.  
*Runs until March 25*

### Nordic House

March 21 20:30

#### Pauline Brown: Investing in Design

What are investors looking for when they buy a brand? How should designers present themselves in order to best communicate with potential buyers and investors? Pauline Brown is solicited by designers on a daily basis—and will share her experiences, talking about why and how she chooses to invest in.

### 7factory Gallery

March 10

#### Course – Children: Color and Perception

Classes take place in 7factory Gallery and at the Reykjavík Art Museum. The course will cover color theory and students will learn about the various characteristics of color and experiment with color perception. The course will partly take place in the darkened color-space/color installation which is a part of Hulda Hlin Magnúsdóttir's solo exhibition Chro-motion. We will look at the history of art through paintings viewed from the perspective of colors. The group is accompanied by Hulda Hlin Magnúsdóttir to the exhibition at the Reykjavík Art Museum and the exhibition Chro-motion at 7factory gallery. The works will be examined in the light of knowledge acquired during the course.  
*8500 ISK*

## ONGOING

### The Culture House Medieval Manuscripts Eddas and



## Lovely Iceland

*Pictures of the year 2011*

March 3 - April 7, 11:00 - 17:00

*Gerðarsafn, Hamraborg 4, Kópavogur*  
*500 ISK, Wednesdays free.*

This is the annual exhibition of the Icelandic Press Photographers' Association at the Kópavogur Art Museum, Gerðarsafn, showing the best pictures of 2011. The exhibition includes 72 photographs, which have been selected by a jury out of one thousand submitted pictures out of newspaper photographs. The photographs try to tell the contemporary story of this beautiful island, trying to capture every aspect of it. Categories awarded with prices include best portrait, best sports photo, best scenery, the daily life and the best series of the year. Those who want to take the photographs home can do so in form a substantial book, featuring all the winning images. The exhibition also shows the best video of 2011 and offers enough to look at and to become nostalgic about the past year. For more information about the exhibition and the gallery go to [www.gerdarsafn.is](http://www.gerdarsafn.is).

### Sagas

It includes principal medieval manuscripts, such as Codices Regii of the Poetic Edda and Prose Edda, and law codices and Christian works, not to forget the Sagas of Icelanders.

*On permanent view*

### Child of Hope – Youth and Jón Sigurósson

Exploring the life of Icelandic national hero Jón Sigurjónsson, made especially accessible to children, families, and school groups

*On permanent view*

### Medieval Manuscripts – Eddas and Sagas

Some of Iceland's medieval manuscripts on display. Guided tour in English on Mondays & Fridays at 15:00

*On permanent view*

### Millennium – phase one

Selection of pieces from the collection of the National Gallery displaying a variety of works by Icelandic artists in the last two centuries.

*On permanent view*

### The Library Room

The old reading room of the National Library. Displaying books of Icelandic cultural history dating from the 16th century to the present. Works include oldest published versions of the Sagas, Eddic Poems, and more

*On permanent view*

### The Einar Jónsson Museum

#### Einar Jónsson

The museum contains close to 300 art works spanning a 60 year career: carvings from the artist's youth, sculptures, paintings and drawings. A beautiful tree-clad garden adorned with 26 bronze casts of the artist's works is located behind the museum

*On permanent view*

### Gerðuberg

#### Stone, scissors, paper and the keys to heaven

The exhibition Steinn, skæri, pappír og lyklar að himnaríki features Icelandic stones, scissors of various shapes and sizes, paper (in the form of biblical pictures and bibles) and keys, some of which (who knows?) may unlock the doors of heaven itself.

*Runs until June 22*

### Glittering Fir

An exhibition of works by Páll Guðmundsson, sculptor and artist,

dedicated to the late author, Thor Vilhjálmsson.

*Runs until: April 4*

#### Desire

An exhibition of oil paintings by Lilja Þorsteinsdóttir.

*Runs until: April 15*

#### Knitting Iceland

Come and knit at Laugavegur 25, 3rd floor, every Thursday, 14:00 - 18:00

*On permanent view*

#### Latin Dance Studio, Faxafen 12

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#### Listasafn ASÍ

**Anna Lindal** - The works of Anna Lindal are built in several layers and therefore call for different approaches. The outcome is a pattern of the artists life and surroundings.

*Runs until February 5*

#### The National Museum

**The Making of a Nation** - Heritage and History in Iceland

This exhibition is intended to provide insight into the history of the Icelandic nation from the Settlement to the present day.

*On permanent view.*

#### The Nordic House

##### The Library

The collection centres on new Nordic literature, both fiction and non-fiction. The library lends out novels, academic publications, audio books and more

*On permanent view*

#### Reykjavík Art Museum,

##### Ásmundarsafn

**From Sketch to Sculpture** - Drawings by Ásmundur Sveinsson. The exhibition offers a first insight into the rich collection of drawings by the sculptor Ásmundur Sveinsson, as the Reykjavík Art Museum has recently completed the digital registration of about 2000 drawings that the artist bequeathed to the Museum.

*Runs until April 22*

#### Magnús Árnason - Homage

Árnason's works, whether in his sound-pieces, sculptures or performances, stand on a vague line between the real and unreal, fiction and facts. In his recent work, he has worked with nature and natural history; moving away from the mythological references seen in his earlier work.

*Runs until April 22*

#### Hafnarhús

##### Erró - Drawings

The exhibition consists of 180 drawings Erró has done since 1944 until the present day

*Runs until August 26*

#### Reykjavík City Museum -

##### Reykjavík 871 +/- 2

##### The Settlement Exhibition

Archaeological findings from ruins of one of the first houses in Iceland and other excavations in the city centre, open daily 10:00-17:00, 600 ISK per adult, 300 ISK for children (children under 12, free) and 450 ISK per person in groups (10+)

*On permanent view*

#### Reykjavík Maritime Museum

##### From Poverty to Abundance

Photos documenting Icelandic fishermen at the turn of the 20th century

*On permanent view*

##### The History of Sailing

Iceland's maritime history and the growth of the Reykjavík Harbour

*On permanent view*

##### The Call of Sagas

A exhibition from Finland about a adventurous voyage in an open boat from Finland to Iceland, honoring the



## Svartur á Leik Premieres With English Subtitles!

*Get a glimpse of Iceland's underworld based on real events*

*In cinemas now*

*Bíó Paradís with English subtitles*

*1500 ISK*

'Svartur á Leik' ('Black's Game'), which has been screened at the film festivals in Rotterdam and Berlin, is Director Óskar Þór Axelsson and Producer Addi Knúttson's first major feature length film. Based on Stefán Máni's novel by the same name, Svartur á Leik tells the story of Stebbi Psycho, a young guy who gets involved in the Icelandic drug scene in 1999.

Both novel and film are based on real events though what is fact and what is fiction of Iceland's underworld remains a secret in the film adaptation. "The major events in the film are based on actual events, but we connect the dots that were never really connected," Producer Addi Knúttson tells us. "Many may ask, is this the real truth? And we will never tell." Although the film is fast-paced and violent, Addi says the film is not half as bad as truth can be. "Reality is more shocking than any fiction—because it can be so cold. Reality is harsh," he says.

It's hard not to notice that this is a gangster thriller with drugs and violence, but only one gun—an old-fashioned looking shotgun—appears in the whole movie. Addi tells us that he has been asked how he could make such a violent film without a single gunshot. "This is Icelandic reality," he says. "It might come as a big surprise to people from other cultures."

Another big surprise for non-Icelandic speakers is the fact that the film premiered on March 2 in two versions—in Icelandic and with English subtitles. Why this isn't commonplace with movie premiers is a mystery to Addi. "We did it out of respect for the large number of people living in Iceland who do not have Icelandic as their native tongue," he explains. "For them, reading books, watching television, and going to the cinema can be a bit tough. Everyone releases DVDs with English subtitles, but why should you have to wait for six months." Addi hopes that other filmmakers will follow suit.

So for those whose Icelandic is not proficient enough to follow the plot in Icelandic, the film is shown with English subtitles at Bíó Paradís. With this added feature there is nothing to stop you from seeing a darker side of Iceland from the comfort of a theatre seat with popcorn in your hand.

old viking shipping routes.

*On permanent view*

#### The Watercolours of Ólafur Thorlacius

Ólafur Þór worked with the Icelandic Coast Guard for many years as a map-maker. He is now retired and paints beautiful watercolors in his free time.

*On permanent view*

#### Reykjavík Museum of

##### Photography

##### Echo

Charlotta Hauksdóttir & Sonja Thomsen look at time and the reproduction of the past

*Runs until May 6*

##### Calendar Breaking Christians

Christian Scheirbeck's photos from the early 1900's capture moments in the lives of local people during work and play.

*Runs until May 6*

#### Sigurjón Ólafsson Museum

**Milestones: Sigurjón Ólafsson's Key**

#### Sculptures

Exhibition with some of Sigurjón Ólafsson's key works from different periods of his prolific career as a sculptor. The earliest work on the exhibition is a newly acquired relief of two sisters which he made at his first year at the Royal Academy of Art in Copenhagen. This relief has not been exhibited in Iceland before.

*Runs until: Oct 1*

#### Spark Design Space

**A Salon show** is being prepared at Spark containing selected projects from the past as well as a few new things we can not resist.

*Spark is open during the transformation.*

#### Skaffell, Seyðisfjörður

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#### Sláturhúsið, Egilsstaðir

Check [www.slaturhusid.is](http://www.slaturhusid.is) for latest shows

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#### Hafnarborg The Hafnarfjörður Centre of Culture and Fine Art

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[www.hafnarborg.is](http://www.hafnarborg.is)



#### Hönnunarsafn Íslands Museum of Design and Applied Art

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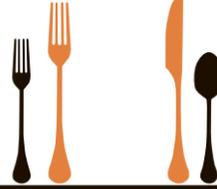
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## Truly Sated

### Satt

Nauthólsvegur 52



**What We Think:** With only one other restaurant within easy walking distance, it's fortunate for the guests at Hotel Natura that Satt is working out. A diverse selection of dishes to suit most tastes. We recommend their fish options or lighter courses.

**Flavour:** Local ingredients, French technique, cured, broiled, earthy

**Ambiance:** Woodsy and cosy in that but-let's-not-go-nuts Norwegian-style.

**Service:** Very Good

**Price:** (2 people): 14-16.000 ISK (with wine)

It's worth mentioning that all reviews are done in context. A place like Nam will be measured against other ambitious fast food places and a beautifully designed hotel restaurant with a very promising menu will be reviewed against its peers. What the restaurant aspires to be and how it presents itself is always going to be key in how we perceive it.

I usually avoid peak hours, unless it's the kind of place that presents itself as a lounge or prides itself on a lively atmosphere. I also don't want to be taking a table away from a paying customer or bothering the staff during peak hours. So I visited Satt late on a Wednesday evening. It probably wasn't a great idea that time around because I could sense that the kitchen wasn't under the usual control and I felt that Satt deserved a second chance.

When you walk in toward the main dining area, you are greeted by large

panels with nature prints and some tidy copywriting on a glass window (this bit of text highlighting their local and all-natural approach is repeated on the napkins). Although I can go the rest of my life before hearing food called "honest" again.

The main dining area is modern, but has a distinct '70s Scandinavian vibe to it: a palette of orange and green speckling pine pallet stacks, coarse spotted fabric on the chairs. It is tidy but with enough reminders of Amma's living room to keep it from being too dry.

The name itself, "Satt" (neutral-singular-nominative case), can mean either "true" or "sated" in Icelandic and it fits the place perfectly. It's short and direct, plain and local, but carefully considered.

The Satt bar offers some interesting choices of charcuterie and assorted nibbles, such as Danish-style pork rinds, orange Florentines and seasonal veggies with horseradish dip in a comfortable seating area by the gas fireplace that divides the space from the lobby. However, we didn't get a chance to sample those delights and instead plunged straight into the dinner menu.

On our first outing to Satt I tried the Angelica gravlax with smoked salmon mousse and pickled onions (1.950 ISK). The Icelandic gravlax really is something I can't say enough good things about it, and this was no exception, but I prefer it cut in thin Carpaccio-slices rather than the cubes I was presented with. I can't comment on the salmon mousse as I have a great deal of personal prejudice against it after being forced to go through buckets of it at confirmation parties when I was young.

Satt offers its own version of the classic Icelandic lamb soup (or "lamb stew"...the jury is still out) on their starter menu. They substitute the usual oats or rice with barley, use fresher vegetables and a finer cut. And yet I found

myself missing the classic, denser lamb stew. But the lightness was probably done with the intention of keeping it in with starters.

After seeing an image of their burger on the website I felt I had to try it. A 5.5 oz burger (150 grams) on a brioche bun with caramelized onions and at 1.850 ISK, it is pretty reasonable all things considered. On my first visit it was a let-down, but on the second, weekend visit, it worked wonderfully: a juicy burger, neither too densely packed nor too finely minced. But the bread is too dry and not really the kind of brioche I'm used to.

The Arctic char with cucumbers and roasted almonds (3.090 ISK) was up next. I would definitely recommend that all visitors try a well-cooked Arctic char caught in Icelandic waters at least once—and this one was worth it (although I can't say it blew me away either).

To finish it off the wife picked the fruit salad with hibiscus tea (1.280 ISK). We were expecting a clever arrangement around an eggcup with some kind of clever Jamaican concoction, but she was served a simple bowl of fruit with some faintly hibiscus-flavoured water splashed on top.

I had the selection of Icelandic cheeses with a spiced apricot-carrot jam (1.280 ISK). Although the Icelandic cheese culture is improving rapidly, I don't think we're quite at the point where we can showcase it. Nice blue cheese though and the jam was a great side.

**RAGNAR EGILSSON**  
**ALÍSA KALYANOVA**

#### A NOTE ON OUR RATINGS SYSTEM:

Ratings run from zero to five Gs and reflect the overall experience of the reviewer. A fast food place will be compared to other fast food places and rated accordingly. Note that 2.5 Gs is not a failing grade—it means 'average'. A solid 5 Gs means 'as good as it gets'. Zero means food poisoning. You get the idea.

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# REVIEWS



## OM NOM NAM

### NAM

N1 Bíldshöfða 2, 110 Reykjavík



**What We Think:** A fairly solid Asian fusion take-out. Healthy and light. The bento box is a curious addition to the fast food culture

**Flavour:** Vietnamese-Japanese, peppery, anise, nutty, veggie

**Ambiance:** I'd recommend take-out

**Service:** Fine

**Price:** (for two): 4.000 ISK (approx.)

Nam is a curiosity. Nam offers a Pan-Asian fusion menu designed by a chef coming straight from top shelf Michelin restaurants like Opera Källaren in Stockholm. But it also happens to be a fast-food place located in a gas station in the suburbs, and is run by the same people that brought us the fast food Tex-Mex place Serrano. The name is similarly dualistic, it either represents the Icelandic acronym NAM ("Ný Asið Matseld" = new Asian cuisine) or the abbreviation for "Vietnam," you know, the one favoured by battle-gnarled veterans frothing about ordnance and agent orange through their straggly street-preacher beards.

Let me note that I am big fan of Vietnamese and Thai food, but not as much of a fan of the type of the typical Pan-Asian kitchens we've had in Iceland up until now, that usual drab selection of overcooked pork in syrupy mystery sauce. So you can imagine the orientalist swoon when I heard NAM would be offering Bánh mì, real dumplings and bento boxes (none of which have been steadily available in Iceland until now). So on one hand this was

happy news, but seeing it all jumbled together on the same menu brought flashbacks of mystery pork sauce.

I remain equally divided about the quality of the location. It's frustrating in one sense, as I personally never have any business up in Árbær, and I don't work in the vicinity. But the area is loaded with businesses and wedged between two popular residential neighbourhoods and the gas station that houses it is located by the main artery out of town, right before the road forks into the eastbound and westbound path.

So the wife and I took a seat by the Formica and started to load it with everything they had. A melange menu calls for a melange gavage! This totalled: 2x Lychee ice-teas (150 ISK), 6x dumplings (300 ISK/3 dumplings), 1x chicken banh mi (1190 ISK), 2x Vietnamese spring rolls (300 ISK) and a bento box with ribs, edamame, rice, mixed wok veggies (1790 ISK for a bento of your choice).

The Lychee ice-tea was fantastic, like sour lemonade with a lychee tail. The dumplings were searing hot with a nice savoury filling, but they were too doughy and didn't have enough filling for my taste—think jiaozi or gunmandu rather than wonton.

The banh mi was too adventurous for me. In a country with no banh mi culture, I would have been happy to see a traditional one before expanding into fusion territory. The classic banh mi consists of a light baguette, coriander (cilantro), fresh mayo, chillies, soy sauce, lightly pickled carrots and/or daikon, cucumbers and then usually either spicy pork or chicken (pâté or head meat if you want to go really traditional). The NAM banh mi was nicely spicy, the bang bang sauce was awesome and the chicken was well cooked. But the bread was too dense and I don't feel like sesame seeds belong on the baguettes (sesame seeds seemed

to blanket everything on the menu). I'm also not convinced that kimchi (fermented cabbage) was a necessary substitute for the carrots. Not the best banh-mi I've had, but if I have a craving and am in the neighbourhood I can see myself relenting.

Spring rolls were the fresh Vietnamese kind in rice paper rather than the deep-fried ones some may be used to. They are basically like a salad tube for dipping into a sauce of your choice. Definitely order a couple of those on the side. The NAM ones were heavy on cabbage and red leaf lettuce and tasted faintly of marzipan.

The bento box was the real head-scratcher. I am not an expert in Japanese cuisine, but I have always considered the bento to be a lunch box, traditionally made by the homemaker for a working spouse. Bentos are cleverly designed, with separate compartments where single portion items are placed in a way that provides a balanced diet and pleases the eye. Think of those graphics we get in the West of the ideal portions of meat and veg arranged on a segmented plate...it's basically that, but in real life.

A bento can be anything you want it to be so there's no reason to get dogmatic. The NAM bento is a success as far as I'm concerned. Great slow-cooked beef and blackened ribs with a distinct star anise flavour. The edamame was crispy and cooked with soy sauce and Szechuan pepper. Even my nemesis the cauliflower was edible.

Overall NAM is a strange beast and I'm still not decided on all of it. I felt they strayed too far from tradition and the meal could have been more filling but there are a lot of new flavours you won't find elsewhere in Reykjavík and as things go it is a pretty healthy choice. NAM could be a pipe-dream but I could also see this taking off worldwide with some minor adjustments.

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