

# The Reykjavík Grapevine



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Volume 22

Issue 3 2025

Best before April 3

## It's Time For A New World Order

Culture

Music

Travel

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## On The Cover

Iceland is at a crossroads. Shifting geopolitical winds and crumbling alliances has put this small state in the position of having to decide where its future lies. What is the right choice? We can't say, but we spoke with a couple experts on the matter, who present some salient thoughts on Iceland's long-standing relationship with the United States and its prospects within the European Union on pages 14-16.

COVER IMAGE: Joana Fontinha  
ILLUSTRATION: Bladur Björnsson

Editorial

## A Time For Change

WORDS Catharine Fulton  
Editor in Chief

There comes a time in many people's lives when it is time to make a change. Maybe you're bored in your current situation, maybe you're fed up with having to stroke the egos of musty middle-aged-men-cum-meangirls in your midst, maybe you're a small nation state on the verge of reconsidering long-standing military alliances.

Whatever the scope or the reason, change can be good. Sometimes change can be vital.

Change is a constant theme of conversation these days. A change in government in one nation has been a wake up call for many others, who are now scrambling to make changes either to adapt to the new world order or to forge new paths forward that diverge from the steady march of the Western world for the past 80 years.

It's a confusing time. But it's also a good reminder that things change and it's never a good idea to be so heavily invested in one person or place that it is self-destructive to leave when that person or place shows you who they really are. You have to look out for yourself and your own well being.

As this issue's cover feature explores on Pages 14 – 16, Iceland is on the cusp of change. But first some very big decisions must be made. Does Iceland's future lie within the long-standing defence agreement with the United States, potentially putting its sovereignty on the line in exchange for a maintenance of a military status quo? Or should this island at a crossroads in the North Atlantic instead look East, strengthening ties with Europe and potentially taking up membership in the European Union?

For a small state that has largely gone with the flow, accepting the strategic military decisions of one global superpower and adopting nearly all policies passed by another bloc, it's a potential turning point. History is being written right now and Iceland needs to actively decide how it sees itself, morally, economically and strategically.

As always, Free Palestine. ■

## Contributors



CHARLIE WINTERS

Ever since escaping his enclosure in the U.K., Charlie has been on the loose in Reykjavík. Idea spouter, drag queen, comedian, retail worker, English teacher and short story writer, he is single handedly ruining the job market. In his free time he skitters along the fine line between delusion and fantasy through tabletop roleplaying games.



ISH SVEINSSON HOULE

Ish is a former radio station manager and DJ, mainly focusing on music writing with a side of other cultural happenings. Ish moved to Reykjavík to get more in touch with half-Icelandic genes, also writes poetry, and has unfortunately only ever been in a cover band.



IRYNA ZUBENKO

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



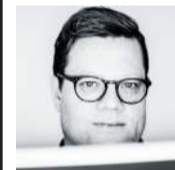
JOANA FONTINHA

Joana is an Aries baby expressing her soul through photography. She's been obsessed with Icelandic culture since her teens, so much that at 20 she threw herself headfirst on a plane to her long-time dream country, Iceland. Driven, energetic and unable to be still, she clumsily moves like a flash and suffers from a serious fast-talking condition.



JÓHANNES BJARKI BJARKASON

Jóhannes Bjarki is a Reykjavík local, straight out of Grafarvogur. Having been active as the frontman of the post-punk band Skoffin and in the post-dreifing art collective, Jóhannes is fascinated by the Icelandic music scene. Among his interests are politics, history and pop culture.



RAGNAR EGILSSON

Ragnar Egilsson has been part of the Reykjavík Grapevine longer than wood pulp and usually writes about something involving the joys of eating out and drinking in. In his spare time he likes cashmere, arguing, running a profitable business, parboiling food and overanalyzing Eurodance music. His favourite colour is gin.



SHRUTHI BASAPPA

Shruthi Basappa traded the warmth of Indian summers for Arctic winds of Iceland. She's a food enthusiast masquerading as an architect at Sei Studio and loves obsessive attention to detail. When not leading our Best of Reykjavík food panel, Shruthi can be found trying to become a Michelin restaurant inspector.

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What The News!?

# Pickpockets And Political Parties

A selection of stories making headlines in recent weeks

WORDS The Reykjavik Grapevine  
IMAGE Art Bicnick

### WOMAN ON TOP

Former minister of judicial affairs Guðrún Hafsteinsdóttir is the new leader of the Independence Party (Sjálfstæðisflokkurinn). She was elected during the party's 45th national convention which took place between February 28-March 2.

Competing against Guðrún for the leadership seat was former minister Áslaug Arna Sigurbjörnsdóttir, who lost by 19 votes.

Guðrún is the party's 10th chair and the first woman in the office. She succeeds former minister Bjarni Benediktsson, who stepped down as chairman and MP earlier this year. Bjarni had served for 16 years as chair of the Independence Party.

### ÍSAFJÖRÐUR'S S.O.L.

Icelandair plans to cancel its flight routes to Ísafjörður, in the Westfjords. The changes are said to be implemented in the summer of 2026. Company CEO Bogi Nils Bogason spoke with RÚV on March 3, arguing that the decision was made due to changes to Greenlandic airports.

Icelandair plans to phase out its Q200 airplanes, which have been used in tandem for flights to both Ísafjörður and Greenland. But with Greenland upgrading its airports to accommodate the larger Q400 models in Icelandair's fleet – planes that are too large to land at Ísafjörður Airport. So the reasonable thing, it seems Icelandair decided, is to give a big fuck you to a remote town in Iceland that is often reliant on plane transport throughout the winter in favour of shuttling people (tourists) to Greenland. Okay.

### PROTECT YOUR POCKETS

Keep your belongings under lock and key, and your head on a swivel if you dare venture into the depths of the Golden Circle. A highly trained crime syndicate is making the rounds and picking pockets left, right and centre.

"When Strokkur erupts, there might be 300-500 people gathered around it. While everyone is watching, the thieves slip into the crowd and rummage through backpacks, waist bags, and other belongings. Then, others take possession of the stolen goods, so the person who actually steals gets rid of the items within a minute or two," park ranger Dagur Jónsson told mbl.is. The gang hasn't only been operating at Gullfoss and Geysir; the same issue has been reported at Þingvellir as well.

Pickpocket gangs have been regularly showing up in February, March, and July in recent years. Tour guides are being urged to report any incidents involving their groups to the authorities in order to help track the scale of the thefts.

### STAND WITH UKRAINE

Prime Minister Kristrún Frostadóttir announced the additional spending in her speech at the Kyiv Summit in Ukraine. This pledge raises Iceland's monetary backing to Ukraine up to 3.6 billion ISK. Leaders and government officials from 12 countries convened in the Ukrainian capital on February 24 for a summit held to mark the third anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

According to a statement made by the prime minister's office, Kristrún's government approved Foreign Minister Þorgerður Katrín Gunnarsdóttir's motion regarding additional aid.

Iceland's contribution is in accordance with an agreement made at a NATO summit from July, 2024, where member states agreed to pledge at least 40 billion EUR to Ukrainian defence spending. Divided among the members in proportion to their GDP, Iceland's share came at 3.6 billion ISK.

### WELCOME TO UGLY TOWN

A group of ten interdisciplinary urban design specialists have launched a petition calling for changing attitudes in city planning and design. The reason: Reykjavik has gotten too fucking ugly. ■



The Reykjavik Grapevine

PUBLISHER  
Jón Trausti Sigurðarson  
[jontrausti@grapevine.is](mailto:jontrausti@grapevine.is)

EDITOR IN CHIEF  
Catharine Fulton  
[editor@grapevine.is](mailto:editor@grapevine.is)

PHOTOGRAPHY /  
MEDIA EDITOR  
Joana Fontinha

JOURNALISTS  
Iryna Zubenko  
Ish Sveinsson Houle  
Jóhannes Bjarkason

CONTRIBUTORS  
Adam Roy Gordon  
Agnar Freyr Stefánsson  
Charlie Winters  
Grayson Del Faro  
Irina Shtreis  
Jón Trausti Sigurðarson  
Micah Garen  
Ragnar Egilsson  
Shruthi Basappa  
Valur Gunnarsson

ILLUSTRATIONS  
Blaður Björnsson  
Finnur Matteo Bettaglio

PHOTOGRAPHY  
Art Bicnick  
Atli Freyr Steinsson  
Björgvin Sigurðarson  
Kjartan Hreinsson  
Óskar Gíslason  
Timothée Lambrecq

SALES DIRECTOR  
Aðalsteinn Jörundsson  
[adalsteinn@grapevine.is](mailto:adalsteinn@grapevine.is)

LAYOUT  
Blaður Björnsson

MAGAZINE DESIGN  
Sóley Bartsch  
& Arnar Hjartarson

GRAPEVINE STORE  
[shop@grapevine.is](mailto:shop@grapevine.is)

ADVERTISING  
[ads@grapevine.is](mailto:ads@grapevine.is)

DISTRIBUTION &  
SUBSCRIPTIONS  
[distribution@grapevine.is](mailto:distribution@grapevine.is)

PRESS RELEASES  
[events@grapevine.is](mailto:events@grapevine.is)

GENERAL  
INQUIRIES  
[grapevine@grapevine.is](mailto:grapevine@grapevine.is)

FOUNDERS  
Aldis Pálsdóttir  
Hilmar Steinn Grétarsson  
Hörður Kristbjörnsson  
Jón Trausti Sigurðarson  
Oddur Óskar Kjartansson  
Valur Gunnarsson

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Word On The Street

# Is 3.8 Million ISK Per Month Too Much For The Mayor Of Reykjavík?

Modestly paid Grapevine staffers took to the streets to ask what passersby think

WORDS Lára Sif, Anonymous, Rens & Freyja  
IMAGES Joana Fontinha

According to recently published info, the monthly salary of Reykjavík's new mayor, Heiða Björg Hilmisdóttir, is 3.867.891 krónur per month (to be fair, the outgoing mayor was earning about the same). That's nearly one million more per month than the Prime Minister's salary and almost the same as the President of Iceland's. But hey, who needs a functioning public transport system when your mayor is raking in cash?



LÁRA SIF, 24  
Iceland

Wait, doing what? Being a mayor? For 4 million? Okay. Give me a cut of it, please. I need it. That's way too fucking much!



ANONYMOUS, 25  
Iceland

I don't know. I think I don't have an opinion on that. I saw an article about the town mayors of Kópavogur and Garðabær having a higher salary than the mayor of New York. I think it's a lot, but I don't care. I think the mayor of Garðabær has even more. There are a lot of other problems. This is just one of them.



RENS & FREYJA, 25 & 22  
Germany & Iceland

R: I don't know. The good thing about high salaries in politics is that they are not so easy to bribe, or they're not corrupt, maybe, so it's good to pay them a lot. I guess.

F: I don't think I have anything valuable to add to that. It's a lot. Maybe it shouldn't be that much. ■



Word Of The Issue

## Can't Hold A Candle To...

The Grapevine's guide to sounding Icelandic, one word at a time

WORDS Ish Sveinsson Houle  
IMAGE Timothée Lambrecq

mother of those Yule Lads who are projected on the side of Ráðhúsið, MR, and 11 other buildings I'm not bothering to name. She's famously terrifying, living in a cave and devouring naughty children at Christmastime. That's our Grýla, first half of the word, menacing mother of 13 and dedicated cat lady!

Onto the second half of the word: kerti. Kerti means candle. So...what are Grýla's candles? Any guesses?

A *grýlukerti* is an icicle!

Now, there are a few different theories as to why Grýla's candles are icicles. But the confirmed origin (I trust those clever linguists over at Háskóli Íslands) is that stalactites (you know, limestone deposits that grow down from the roof of the cave, not stalagmites which grow up from the floor) are also often called *grýlukerti*, and because they grow in caves they were first named *grýlukerti*. Then, the resemblance of stalactites to icicles led to them both being called by the same thing.

So, next time you see icicles lining the roofs of Reykjavík, make sure to point them out as Grýla candles. I wouldn't recommend trying to light them, though. They might just disappear! ■

It's been a fickle few weeks, weather-wise. Is it spring? Is it still winter? This often-changing weather keeps us on our toes (or desperately checking [vedur.is](http://vedur.is) and cursing when reality does *not* match what was forecasted). Maybe we haven't seen the topic of today's Word Of The Issue in a while, but as winter (maybe, potentially, honestly who knows but I'll say this anyway) draws to a close, let's discuss *grýlukerti*.

As always, we're going to break down this beauty of a compound word. If you're one to diligently read signs next to giant metal cats with piercing, nightmare-inducing red eyes, then maybe you're already familiar with Icelandic Christmas folklore — and so you're already familiar with Grýla.

Grýla (Grýlu when declined) is the

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Do Shit

# Whether You're Fired Or You Quit, You Have Rights

The Útlendingur's ongoing guide to getting shit done

WORDS Catharine Fulton  
IMAGE Art Bicnick

your union post haste to make sure that everything is above board and you're getting everything you're owed *and* fulfilling your own duties to your soon-to-be-former employer.

#### NOTE THE NOTICE PERIOD

"You should always get a notice period, that's the first thing," says Aðalheiður Rán Prastardóttir, an employment specialist with VR union. "It's very seldom that you don't get a notice period — never, really — and if you are ever fired without a notice period, always come to your union."

The key to nailing down the duration of our notice period is having a written termination letter. Whether you have resigned or you're being let go, having the details of the contract termination in writing is key. And that stands even if you've never had a written contract in place, as Aðalheiður Rán explains that any working relationship that has produced pay slips falls under the unions' collective agreements and, as such, comes with the same requirements for notice periods of varying length. How long? That also depends on with which union you are a member.

"It is different between the collective agreements," Aðalheiður Rán

explains. "So each job has their collective agreement. If you work in cleaning, for example, then you usually go by a collective agreement made by a union like Efling and you have a specific notice period. Then, if you work in a shop or office, there is usually the collective agreement for VR, which has its own notice periods."

The difference is significant, with Aðalheiður Rán explaining that someone who has been working six months under Efling's collective agreement would have a one-month notice period, while someone who has been working six months under VR's agreement at the time of resigning or being laid off would have a three-month notice period.

"You should always finish your notice period," Aðalheiður Rán emphasizes. "It's a mutual notice period, which means that whether you quit or you're laid off, you have the same notice period. You can always make an agreement to leave sooner, whether you're terminated or if you resign yourself — if you make an agreement and everybody's happy with it, then the agreement stands. But it should be in written form so you can prove that you made this agreement."

In fact, if you, as an employee, resign or are terminated and decide to just ghost your former employer, you could be on the hook to compensate the company you're effectively scorning. How much compensation depends on your monthly wages. But any amount would likely sting.

#### GET WHAT'S YOURS

So now you know that you're going to be working a few more months after being fired or quitting — it's like the job market's equivalent of saying goodbye to someone and then awkwardly walking in the same direction — but what about getting any money you're owed?

Your pay, whether set salary or hourly wages, will continue so long as you're working your notice period. Then you're also owed pay for any vacation days or overtime you have accrued.

"On your last salary slip, you should have the accrued vacation days, which is orlof, and also the proportional pay, like December and holiday bonuses," Aðalheiður Rán explains. She adds that you may have additional accrued amounts owed, so it's best to familiarise yourself with your payslip and speak with

your union.

As for when an employer is meant to pay out accrued vacation days, Aðalheiður Rán doesn't hesitate: "Always with the last payslip."

"It's best to call your union or send an email or come by then not to have done it and figure out that you have a specific right that hasn't been upheld until it's too late," she says. "Usually, if you get a termination letter and you get a notice period, it's usually correct, but it can be done incorrectly. For example, if a person tells [their employer] that they're pregnant and are laid off. That's not usually legal, but in certain cases it is. It's always just good to ask."

#### ONWARDS

So, there you have it. You now know what to do when you are either fired or make the decision to put an employer in the rearview.

All there is to do now is start looking for a new job (or figure out how to turn that side hustle into a lucrative endeavour) and reach out to the Directorate of Labour (Vinnumálastofnun) to learn what unemployment benefits you might be entitled to. ■

**J**obs. You can't live with them, you can't live without them. Well, fine, you *can* live with them — a lot of people have jobs they love, with employers and colleagues they gel with — but it's a lot harder to live without them. You know, since jobs = money and money is needed for practically every aspect of survival.

But what if you've heeded the words of Beyoncé and decided to "release ya job"? Worse yet, what if your employer has decided to release you from "ya job"?

Fret not. And get on the phone with

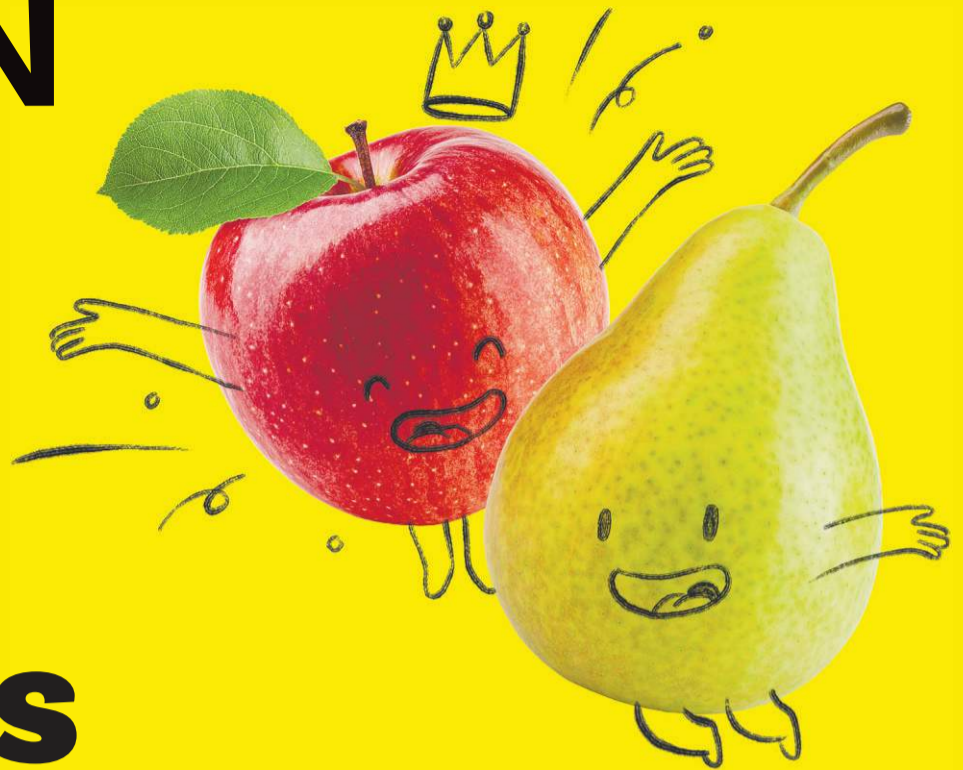
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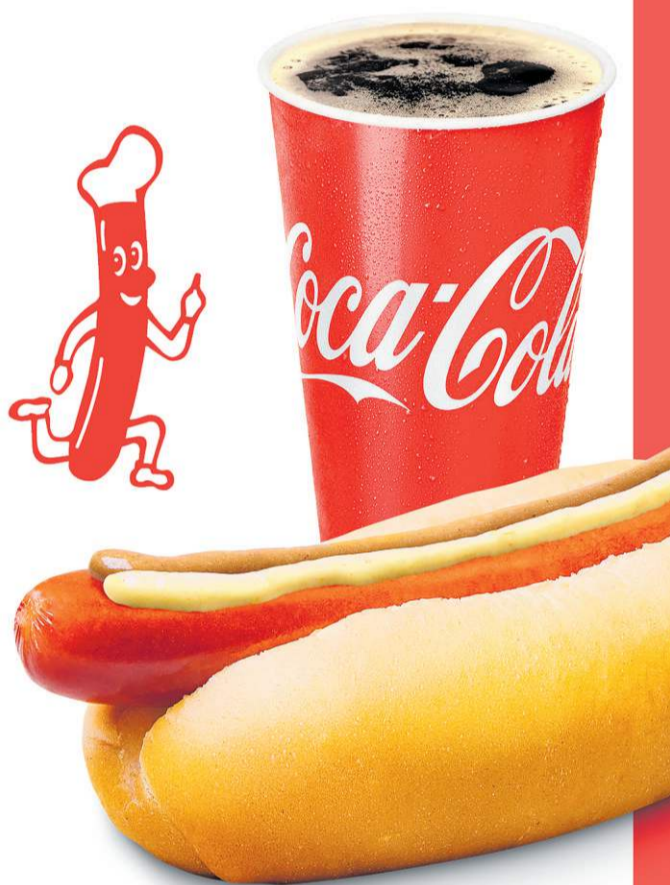
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In This Economy?

## Do-It-Together

Reddingakaffi empowers all who come to learn how to repair their things

WORDS Ish Sveinsson Houle  
IMAGE Joana Fontinha

I arrive at Reddingakaffi (e. Repair Café) with a wet boombox, just one minute after the event begins. At the monthly Reddingakaffi, in Borgarbókasafnið Grófin (the downtown library, next to Hafnarhús), volunteers will help you repair whatever you bring, encouraging a circular economy and waste reduction. As I shake hail out of my hair I'm greeted by two volunteers: Magnús and Jakób.

Magnús, a heavy metal bassist, has been a part of Reddingakaffi basically since it began in 2018. Jakób, on the other hand, has been a part of Reddingakaffi for just a month and is an electrician-in-training. Magnús explains that the volunteering aspect of Reddingakaffi drew him in, while Jakób shares that it's good practise for school.

As they begin work on my boombox (which has one small problem – when I switch between radio and CD, I have to apply an unreasonable amount of force for it to switch to CD mode), I ask Magnús for some

notable repairs he's encountered over the course of his volunteership. He tells me that his first repair is his most memorable, as it's the one that started it all. It was an electric shaver. He explains that it had to be fixed over two Reddingakaffi sessions; first, they took it apart and diagnosed the problem, but had to send the owner to buy a new part – with an offer that if they came back with the new part, they'd fix it.

Other than the shaver, he recalls a smoke machine being fun to repair.

SAVING ALL SORTS OF STUFF!

Reddingakaffi started in August 2018, and is co-sponsored by Hringrásarsetur Íslands and Munasafn RVK Tool Library. With these tools and volunteers, their skills are vast and it takes a fair bit to stump them; as I entered the library with my boombox, I saw someone happily wheeling away a bicycle. When I sat down, someone came in with a printer, another followed with bluetooth headphones, and another volunteer, Rósa, was working on a down jacket next to me with her sewing machine.

I chat more with Magnús about the intentions of Reddingakaffi. Both he and Rósa express that these events are not meant for them to just do the repairs for you, but for you to learn – and for them to empower you to repair your own things in the future. While Magnús and Jakób were kind enough to take the wheel with my boombox (as I don't know the first thing about electronic repair), they also explained everything they were doing.

"I don't even know what half these things do!" says Magnús, gesturing to the multiple circuit boards of my

boombox. "But if it's about buttons, I can do this." I feel as though that's selling himself a bit short, as he's one of the veteran volunteers and had been explaining the different functions of the complicated boombox innards for the duration of our talk. But his point is fair – even if you don't understand *everything* going on in your electronics, you can get to a point of understanding where you can repair on your own.

And, proving that he can do this, I put in the test-CD I brought with me (Miles Davis' *Kind of Blue*, saved from 12 Tónar's basement discount box), easily slid the switch to CD-mode, and dulcet piano fills Borgarbókasafnið.

DO IT!

When we opened my boombox, we saw that it is from 2002 – which Magnús immediately characterises as "right at the end of 'Do-It-Yourself' repair." Explaining this, he shows me arrows on the backside of my boombox pointing to where all the screws are. Electronics used to be designed to allow anyone to be able to open them up and repair for themselves, he says. But screws are often hidden in more modern tech, leading many to assume they need years of experience to even consider an at-home fix.

In the face of these changes, Reddingakaffi is attempting to demystify repair and empower you to do it yourself. They just provide the tools. ■

The next regular Reddingakaffi will be held on Sunday, April 13, from 13:00-16:00. Reddingakaffi will also be hosting a "Repairathon" in April. Follow Munasafn RVK Tool Library on Facebook or go to [hringrasarsetur.islands.org/reddingakaffi](http://hringrasarsetur.islands.org/reddingakaffi)

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Islanders

# Becoming Icelandic

Gamithra Marga on emotional language learning and building TVÍK

WORDS Iryna Zubenko  
IMAGE Joana Fontinha

Gamithra Marga's relationship with Iceland is a bit of a love-hate affair. Over the years, it's been a mix of both obsession and discomfort. Originally from Estonia, she learned Icelandic without ever attending a formal institution. In 2022, Gamithra won the entrepreneurship competition Gulleggið for her idea of building a language learning app. Three years later, her brainchild, TVÍK, aka "your technology-powered Icelandic teacher" — is finally coming to life. This is just a glimpse into her journey of finding her footing in Iceland.

I figured out Iceland existed when I was, I don't know, 13? There was some magical pull towards it. I was becoming obsessed with or having a crush on something, but it was a country — the entirety of the country — the culture and everything in it and the language. I became known as the "Icelandic girl" in my school. I'd never even been to Iceland but I obsessively absorbed everything I could find that related to it.

I first came here in 2016 and met someone who was like, "You can stay at my place", to help me fulfil this dream of moving here. I was 17 at the time, and I had about 200 euros, so there was absolutely nothing to build upon. But I quit my high school in Estonia. No one knew what I was doing, and I didn't really know either but there was a strange pull and a mission I knew I needed to follow.

### ICELAND, HERE I COME

[I ended up in Akureyri] because the person that I could live with lived there. My first legal domicile was at my Icelandic teacher's place from high school. It was all a bit of a legal

mess. There were lots of documents that my parents had to sign, send over, and notarise. I'm actually quite amazed it all worked out.

does completely remote studies. So I'd never been to the high school I graduated from until my graduation day, which was really nice. I always

## I became known as the "Icelandic girl" in my school.

There was very little community — the only people I could hang out with were the kids who were playing card games in school and speaking English, even though they were Icelandic. It was the most outsider group, and it was very hard for me to find anyone to hang out with, or just any community whatsoever.

In high school, I was exposed to a lot of Icelandic immediately. I was mostly doing subjects like chemistry and maths, where the language was quite easy for me to decipher. In the beginning, I always replied to everything in English, but I'd Google translate whenever I had a question, which worked pretty well. I was a bit of a sponge immediately.

I was in Verkmenntaskólinn for a year, and then I switched over to Menntaskólinn á Tröllaskaga, which

learned quite quickly and felt that sitting in a classroom was a waste of time. Being able to do everything at my own speed I had way more time available. This is when I really got into programming and had the time to pursue other curiosities or interests.

### FLUENCY THROUGH DISCOMFORT

I got my first job in Iceland at a sheep farm. I moved there for a month, and when one of the owners of the farm picked me up, I realised in the car she didn't speak English. At that time, I was four months into living in Iceland, and over the years, I had built up vocabulary but not really any confidence or understanding of grammar. I was totally thrown in the deep end of the pool and just had to figure it out and rescue myself in that situation, which ended up being

one of the bravest and best things I did.

It's just so emotionally taxing to attempt to speak in a language you know you can only express yourself at the level of a three-year-old, while also being a foreigner in a new society where you're trying to prove to everyone that you're worth something, you're building a network, you're interesting, and you're trying to find friends. You're absolutely not in a position to sound like a three-year-old; you're not at a level where that is available to you socially.

All of my progress really happened on the sheep farm during this ridiculously uncomfortable month where I had no other option than to figure out what I was trying to say.

### STARTING WITH A PITCH

I always knew I wanted to build something of my own. I had quite obsessively participated in innovation competitions and hackathons over the years — every time there was a competition where you had to make up a business idea, prototype it, get judged on it and get some prize, I would be there.

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Then Gulleggið happens. I'm like, "Oh, here's another competition" – I'm gonna participate in that because I want to win it. I opened my list of startup ideas, and one of the first ones was some kind of system to get people to sheep farms in Iceland – ship them up so they can learn and won't be stuck in this environment, just like I did. This was

landic. And then one of my friends comes up to me and says, "Do you know that now you have to actually go through with the project?"

During the past three years, I felt like I was never going to get there and now I've kind of gotten there. It feels a bit unreal still – I just had this idea, and now I've made the thing.

## Although the first simulations in TVÍK are quite simple, by the end of it, we're talking about index loans, capitalism and eavesdropping on old people at the pool.

when AI was really cool, so when I talked about using an AI solution to learn Icelandic, it hit the point. Although, as the project progressed, I've removed as much AI from it as I can.

I ended up winning Gulleggið – I had this story about me in the sheep farm and how I was going to use computers to teach people Ice-

### TVÍK'S GOT YOU

TVÍK is different from Duolingo [or other similar apps] as it is kind of the next step. It doesn't start really in the beginning – it doesn't start with things like "this is the alphabet" and "this is how you say woman and cat." Although the first simulations in TVÍK are quite simple, by the end

of it, we're talking about index loans, capitalism and eavesdropping on old people at the pool.

It's meant to force you into situations where you have to say something, and you have to say it in a grammatically correct way. This is what TVÍK is built on – like the sheep farm experience of "I now have to make sentences, oh my God" but you get all of the tools on the way, and it all happens in context. All of TVÍK is a single storyline – you meet this weird robot and his non-binary friend, then you go to a party, and then TVÍK gets really depressed, and there's a storm, and then you try to go on a road trip, but there's a volcano and all that goes bad, and then people die in the end. It's super dramatic.

So people ask me, is it an app, or is it a game or a story, or is it a piece of art? Why does it have its own soundtrack? And I'm like, do we have to categorise this? It's a new category, I guess. It's an experience slash learning thing; a work of art that takes you through a story where things happen and it's really emotional. I wanted to create something that's kind of all of the above.

Learning something is such a social and emotional experience, especially learning a language, like learning to become a new person and learning to find the words that define you and your voice. It's so much more than experience that you can do sitting in a classroom with a book. I wanted to create an experience that was equally immersive and equally all-encompassing.

It's an experience that will work for many people and it won't for others. But then again, it's made for humans – it's made for messy and complex humans that want different information and different ways of interacting with different information. Basically, everything in TVÍK is a button of some kind – to a large extent, you decide the amount of interaction that suits you.

### STILL NOT AN ICELANDER

I think I've reached the understanding that it will never happen and that maybe I don't want to. I'm finding this balance and plurality of my coming from multiple cultural backgrounds, and none of them is me. I am the weird blend and amalgamation of all of them. I've grown to appreciate some of my Eastern

European traits and a form of humour that I've never found in Iceland – banter and memes that you absolutely can't find anywhere else, some aspects of social life, art, and political conflict and unhappiness that just doesn't exist here. It's culturally a part of me and I don't want that to go away.

I want to get to the point where I've wrapped up all the grants, posted the launch party, and things have settled down for a bit. There are still some bugs in the app that I need to go and fix, but in a few weeks, everything will settle down a tiny bit more, and I can see with a bit more clarity what will be next. There will definitely be some kind of next. There are so many options for what's next that I need to step out to see what it is.

[For now,] I'm gonna celebrate the thing I've been doing for three years – the biggest thing I've ever made, and I'm gonna host the biggest party I've ever thrown to celebrate that. ■

TVÍK Launch Rave takes place on March 8th at 19:00 at Höfuðstöðin. Download TVÍK at: [tvik.is](http://tvik.is)



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Strange Days

# Iceland At A Crossroads

A shifting world order presents Iceland with the opportunity to forge a new path (or not)

WORDS Catharine Fulton  
IMAGES Joana Fontinha & Blaldur Björnsson

Which longtime ally will he spurn next? Who will be slapped with the next tranche of tariffs? Is he really going to invade Greenland?

As Canadian Prime Minister Justin

going to get it," the president said in his March 5 address to the U.S. Congress. The comments were his latest staking claim to the autonomous Danish territory, which have included previous remarks about Denmark

**Situated at the crossroads of the North Atlantic, Iceland's geographic location has made it a pivotal player in global geopolitics, particularly during the Cold War.**

Trudeau said in a press conference on March 4, after his American counterpart sung the praises of Russian President Vladimir Putin one moment and launched a trade war against America's closest ally and trade partner the next: "Make that make sense."

While the growing stack of Mr. Trump's executive orders has already enacted significant sweeping change throughout his own country, the list of the Trump administration's actions on the world stage has begun to pull at the thread of a tapestry of global stability and world order that has been woven over the course of the past 80 years.

"The European Union was formed in order to screw the United States," Mr. Trump said from behind his desk in the Oval Office of the White House on Feb. 26 while being asked about tariffs he is considering placing on exports from the bloc.

"We need Greenland for national security and even international security ... And I think we're going to get it one way or the other. We're

being "unfriendly" if it didn't capitulate to the United States' claim on the arctic island, and refusing to rule out sending military forces to make it happen.

"I think he'll keep his word. I've known him for a long time now, and I think he will. I don't believe he's going to violate his word," Mr. Trump said Feb. 27 about Putin and his conversations with the Russian president about signing a ceasefire agreement with Ukraine.

It's no wonder High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Kaja Kallas posted to social media on Feb. 28, "The free world needs a new leader."

With the United States apparent expansionist aims, heightened global interest in the Arctic, and Mr. Trump's growing disregard for both NATO and the alliance-first foreign policy forged by prior administrations, the future can feel uncertain. It's high time Iceland determines where it will stand.

## A SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP

The historic relationship between Iceland and the United States has long been defined by strategic necessity, mutual benefit and occasional tension. Situated at the crossroads of the North Atlantic, Iceland's geographic location has made it a pivotal player in global geopolitics, particularly during the Cold War. The U.S. established a military presence in Iceland during World War II, a partnership that solidified during the Cold War as both nations sought to counter Soviet influence. The Keflavik Air Base, operational until 2006, served as a critical link in NATO's defense strategy, highlighting Iceland's strategic importance despite its small size – and lack of its own military.

Beyond military ties, the relationship between the two countries has expanded into trade, diplomacy, and cultural exchange. Though Iceland

after World War II," explains Valur Ingimundarsson, a professor of contemporary history at the University of Iceland, who has written extensively on the military relationship between Iceland and the United States. "It gave the U.S. exclusive military rights in Iceland – in peace and war."

What that means, according to Valur, is that even if Iceland were to repeal the defence agreement, it would still be required to grant the U.S. access to the military facilities that it had previously enjoyed in the case of an attack on a NATO member.

"Thus, the agreement was far broader in scope than the North Atlantic Treaty itself, on which it was based," Valur elaborates. "Its wording also exposed tension between idealistic ideas about sovereign rights and an awareness of their limitations in practise."

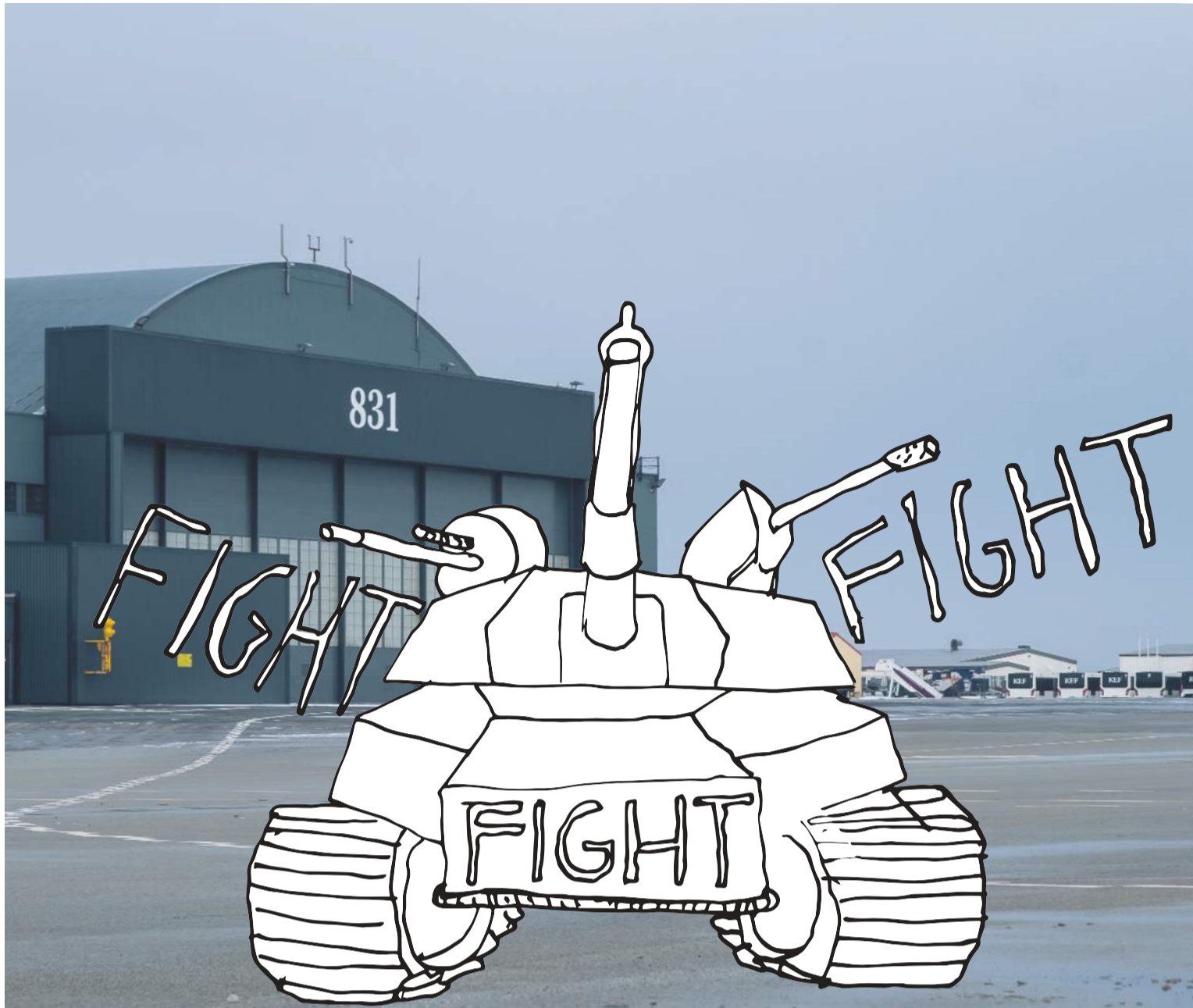
**The base was a grey zone, where the boundaries between domestic legislation and extra-territoriality were blurred.**

has often diverged from the U.S. on policy issues, strong ties have been maintained between the two nations. The United States is one of Iceland's biggest trade partners, with the States' importing \$1.1 billion USD worth of Icelandic goods in 2024.

"The 1951 U.S.-Icelandic defence agreement was a Cold War construct and part of the U.S. global military base system established

"On the one hand," Valur notes, "it stated that *nothing* could be interpreted as infringing on Iceland's control over its own affairs. On the other, it conceded that Icelanders could not protect their own territory and that the lack of defence threatened Iceland's security and that of neighbouring states. The outsourcing of military defence to the U.S. was, thus, justified on the basis NATO's collective security interests – even if it was a bilateral agreement."

When this magazine finds its way into the shops, cafés and cultural institutions of Reykjavík, it will have been a mere 46 days since the inauguration of President of the United States of America Donald J. Trump. While tradition dictates the analysis of a politician's first 100 days in power, the Trump administration's approach to foreign policy in a short span of time has spurred daily analyses, with the world press devoting copious column inches to deciphering the to-the-minute musings and maneuverings of the U.S. president.



The enforcement of the agreement – a hot button issue in Icelandic politics during the Cold War – required significant attention when U.S. troops were stationed at the Keflavik base from 1951 until 2006.

“The U.S. was not only given access to certain areas and control over their own troops; they were also given exemptions from various national laws.” Valur says. “Thus, the base was a grey zone, where the boundaries between domestic legislation and extra-territoriality were blurred.”

Even after the base was shuttered in 2006, the agreement between the two nations left the U.S. largely

military presence along the demarcation line of Crimea (which Russia had annexed in 2014) permitted the U.S. to resume use of the facilities in Keflavik.

“This paved the way for increased rotational deployments of American troops to take part in anti-submarine warfare operations from Iceland,” Valur explains. “It was followed up by a bilateral agreement in late 2017, which provided for U.S. access to airfields, ports and other places within Iceland as well as to ‘operating locations,’ which had been returned to Iceland when the United States closed down the base [in 2006]. These measures signified a

How do Iceland’s military entanglement with the United States and membership in NATO – which the Icelandic government characterises as “the two main pillars of Iceland’s security policy” – function simultaneously now that the United States is in a second, non-consecutive term of leadership under a commander in chief expressing outward disdain for the military alliances formed in the ashes of the Second World War?

“Trump’s imperialist and neo-colonial foreign policy rhetoric – as exemplified by threats to take over Greenland, the Panama Canal and Canada – and his critical views of NATO Allies, have so far not targeted Iceland,” Valur notes. “Yet with a president bent on questioning core premises of the international liberal order, which the United States was, ironically, responsible for creating and guarding since World War II, there are bound to be repercussions in Icelandic foreign security policy.”

#### NEW POLICY, WHO DIS?

Any new foreign policy explored by the coalition government elected in November 2024 would very likely align with the ruling parties’ interest in strengthening Iceland’s ties with the European Union. Iceland is a member of the European Economic Area (EEA) and, along with Norway, Lichtenstein and Switzerland, rounds out the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), but it is *not* a member of the European Union.

“Previous governments have not at all been in favour of Iceland’s involvement and closer European integration, and they had emphasised the defence and security lead of Washington,” says Baldur Þórhalls-son, professor in political science and Research Director of the Centre

for Small State Studies School at the University of Iceland. “They didn’t want to compromise it by pursuing closer security ties with the EU. But from my point of view, it’s important to change this policy and work closer with our European partners.”

If Iceland were to formally join the EU, it will have been a long time coming, marked by starts and stops. In 2009, in the wake of Iceland’s devastating financial collapse and saddled with a deeply devalued Króna, a coalition government of the Social Democratic Alliance and the Left-Green Movement applied for membership to the European Union. Talks were ongoing for the years that followed until 2015, when, under an Independence Party – Progressive Party coalition government, the plug was unilaterally pulled on talks with the bloc. In fact, Progressive Party MP and then foreign minister Gunnar Bragi famously sent a letter to the EU negotiating team expressing Iceland’s disinterest in continuing accession talks – a decision he didn’t bother running by Alþingi.

mation to hold a public referendum on joining the bloc by 2027.

That’s a timeline that Dagur B. Eggertsson, Social Democratic MP and chair of Iceland’s NATO Parliamentary delegation, expressed in early March he would like to see expedited in light of the shifting geopolitical world order. “It is clear that this situation is evolving rapidly and could have significant consequences. We need to monitor it closely, but there is a sense that we do not have a direct seat at the table,” Dagur told Iceland’s national broadcaster in the days following a meeting of European leaders in London.

The 2025 London Summit on Ukraine was held on March 2 as a forum for international leaders to come together and draft a peace plan for the Russian invasion of Ukraine to take to the United States. It took place just two days after President Volodymyr Zelenskyy of Ukraine met with Mr. Trump in the White House, where he was chastised for his perceived lack of gratitude for U.S. aid over the course

## The U.S. was not only given access to certain areas and control over their own troops; they were also given exemptions from various national laws.

responsible for Iceland’s defence. Though Washington ceded joint control of the Keflavik base, Valur explains that it maintained a listening post in Grindavik, the village on the south coast of the Reykjanes peninsula that was famously evacuated toward the end of 2023 amid a violent earthquake swarm that has since been followed by a series of nearby eruptions.

That’s not to say that Washington’s presence in Iceland has been limited to a singular post since 2006. The United States has taken part in NATO exercises out of Iceland in the interim, along with other alliance members. In 2016, a joint declaration was issued by Reykjavik and Washington as Russia increased its

new phase in the relationship with the U.S., which gradually led to the resurrection of the Keflavik base in all but name.”

That new relationship was also marked by the Icelandic government in 2023 authorizing nuclear-powered U.S. submarines to make service visits and to replace crews off the coast of Iceland – a first in the history of the military relationship between the two nations.

Not all is quiet on Reykjanes’ western front today. The United States military is currently bankrolling a massive new military supply depot within the footprint of the base, signalling an uptick in activity in the near future.

## Previous governments have not at all been in favour of Iceland’s involvement and closer European integration, and they had emphasised the defence and security lead of Washington.

While euroscepticism has reigned since, the current coalition, composed of the Social Democratic Alliance, Liberal Reform Party and People’s Party, pledged upon its for-

of three years of war that erupted when Russia invaded. Mr. Trump was also pushing for Mr. Zelenskyy to sign an agreement to repay the U.S. aid through granting 50% of future



proceeds from state-owned mineral resources, oil and gas to Washington. As of publication time, no agreement had been signed, though Mr. Zelenskyy has signalled his willingness to resume negotiations.

Most troubling, however, was Mr. Trump's insistence in that ill-fated meeting and ever since, that Russian President Vladimir Putin was a trustworthy ally and dedicated to peace in the region – despite his nation's history of repeatedly signing and breaking ceasefire agreements with Ukraine. Mr. Trump has since suspended military aid to Ukraine and ceased sharing intelligence with the war-battered nation.

Dagur's interest in exploring stronger ties with Europe is in line with public opinion in Iceland. Polling by Prósent published in early January, but based on polls conducted in December 2024, suggests that 58% of the population was in favour of a referendum on whether Iceland should resume negotiations with the EU at that time. A lot has happened in the interim.

TIME TO LOOK EAST

Iceland's need for stronger ties with Europe is something Baldur agrees with – though he's also a proponent of strengthening and maintaining partnerships with Washington.

"If you look at it from the small state perspective, it would, of course, be in our best interest to be part of the organisation, to have a seat at the negotiation table, to sit with the European Leaders within the European Union and take part in decisions," Baldur says. "Regarding security and defence and all other related matters, this can only be accomplished by full membership in the European Union. That is, of course, the way that most small states in Europe have gone – if you have an associated relationship, like Iceland, you are never a full partner."

Baldur points out that Iceland is already far more aligned on policy with the EU than many people may realise. Whenever the European Union puts out foreign policy declarations, the EEA member states – including Norway, Iceland, Switzerland and Lichtenstein – are offered to take part in these declarations," he says. "Iceland almost *always* takes part in these declarations ... This means Iceland follows the EU's foreign policy lead, because Iceland and the EU have similar, or if not the exact same, foreign policy goals."

The problem, then, from Baldur's perspective, is that Iceland has been adopting EU policy without actually having a voice or a seat at the table to influence policy. At the same time, Iceland's defence agreement with the United States puts it in a position of having the military protection of America without having much in the way of bargaining power to set boundaries or limits.

Baldur is hesitant, however, to write off the United States as yet – even as Washington eyes expansion into the North Atlantic.

"As I read the situation, the geographical location of Iceland places it in a bit of a different situation," he says. "Trump's interests in Greenland are both of a defence and economic nature. With regard to Iceland, this has more to do with security and defence – Iceland is still important for the defence of the United States when it comes to defending the North Atlantic. And here, I think the administration or policy makers in Washington are noting the long term future and a potential rivalry with China in the Arctic and North Atlantic. That's why I think the Defence and Security relations are still intact."

Chinese investors have long been attempting to buy up large swaths of land in Iceland, only to be denied by whichever government is in Alþingi

at the time. While Beijing maintains investor interests lie in tourism and geothermal knowledge sharing, it is no secret the nation has been working actively to insert itself in Arctic governance and affairs, despite not currently claiming any Arctic territory.

China's interest in the Arctic aside, Baldur argues that the real concern is Russia: "I would say that the risk to Iceland comes from Russia. We are vulnerable to Russian sabotage, and the main risks are associated with cyber attacks and the possibility that something is going to be done with our sea cables," he explains. "For some reason the Trump administration completely sidelines the potential Russia threat."

communications cables measure more than 1.3 million kilometres and carry more than 90% of the world's internet traffic.

In Iceland, it's closer to 100% – damage to the cables connecting Iceland to the world would see the country booted back to the dial-up era.

LOOKING AHEAD

Foreign Minister Þorgerður Katrín Gunnarsdóttir has promised to develop a new Icelandic defence policy, and while Baldur agrees it's high time Iceland has its own strategy and to map out how we would like our defence policies to look, Valur argues "in view of the aggressive,

to strengthen its relations with Washington – it *needs* to keep the relations intact. Secondly, we need to work closer with the other Nordic states on security and defence. Thirdly, we need to take a much more active role in the EU's foreign policy initiatives and get a seat at the table."

Though Baldur emphasises the need for Iceland to forge a new path, he concedes the country is not in a strong negotiating position when it comes to the United States. "If the United States wants to leave the security agreement, they will do it," he concedes. "And if they want to start a military buildup in the security zone, they can and will do that. They have been allowed to do so, even under the leadership of the Left-Greens in Iceland. So Iceland is, of course, not in a strong position."

Even if Iceland would seek to establish far deeper security partnerships with other European NATO countries, such as the Nordics, in an attempt to extricate itself from its relationship with the United States, Valur says there would be "no guarantee of success because of the broader geopolitical complications involving U.S.-European relations and NATO."

Guaranteed success or not, big swings will need to be taken by policy makers in Alþingi – and fast – lest Iceland simply be co-opted by whichever global power acts first and most aggressively. Now, as long-standing global alliances fray and a new world order appears to be taking shape in real time, Iceland is in a unique position to change its course, enact greater self-determination when it comes to defence and security, and decide where its future allegiances lie. ■

**If you look at it from the small state perspective, it would, of course, be in our best interest to be part of the organisation, to have a seat at the negotiation table, to sit with the European Leaders within the European Union and take part in decisions.**

Targeting submarine cables in times of global conflict is a trend with a long history, and a Practise that has been making headlines in the years since Russia's invasion of Ukraine. In addition to increased NATO focus on the security of submarine natural gas infrastructure, Russia's global posture over the past years has seen the attention of western governments turn to the security of their submarine telecommunications cables. The globe-spanning network of more than 420 submarine

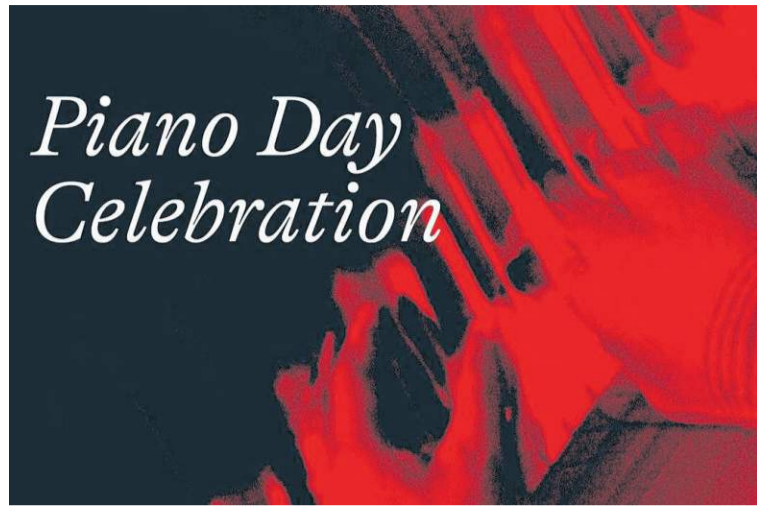
disruptive, and unpredictable behaviour of the Trump Administration, it will be extremely difficult to carve out a credible defence policy of an unarmed country, which is military dependent on the U.S."

He is concerned that Iceland's strategic location and its proximity to Greenland mean the Trump administration will steadfastly retain its military interest in Iceland.

"I would say Iceland needs to do three things," Baldur says. "It needs



## Top Events



PIANO DAY CELEBRATION  
MARCH 29 AT 21:00  
BÍÓ PARADÍS  
FREE ENTRANCE, DONATIONS ACCEPTED

This might not have been on your radar, but March 29 is International Piano Day! To celebrate, seven pianists will be showing music videos on the big screen at Bíó Paradís. An event that began from the upcoming (March 8) release of Sævar Jóhannsson's "Headspace," 10 videos will be shown from artists that are either Icelandic or have connection to Iceland. "Usually, you just see these on social media, watch them on your phone," organiser Brynja Bjarnadóttir explains, "so it is much more exciting to see them on the big screen." The bill will include: Magnús Jóhann, Eydís Evensen, Snorri Hallgrímsson, Sævar Jóhannsson, Viktor Orri, Oldhánd, and Sofí Pæz. Come celebrate the piano! ISH



SMÁTÍÐNI  
MARCH 14 AT 19:00  
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2500KR OR PAY WHAT YOU CAN

Smátíðni is back! The concert series is a fundraising event for post-dreifing's always highly anticipated grassroots music festival Hátiðni. Excitingly, artists Iðunn Einars, sameheads, and Amor Vincit Omnia are set to perform – so you should be sure not to miss this event. I'd say that the beginning of Smátíðni means that summer is just around the corner. ISH



DESIGNMARCH  
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MULTIPLE VENUES  
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It's almost time for DesignMarch! The yearly design festival – that is notoriously not in March – platforms the most fascinating designers from near and far, and this year is no exception. From conversations between foreign and Icelandic designers in their ambassadors' living rooms, children taking a crack at city planning, and more gallery openings than we could possibly count, there's more variety in mediums of design than ever. Find the full program at DesignMarch.is, and stay tuned for our deeper coverage of the festival. ISH



Girl Talk

## Sharing Her Voice

Women of foreign origin share their stories through a new book

WORDS Ish Sveinsson Houle  
IMAGE Kjartan Hreinsson

"At the time, it seemed as though Iceland wasn't quite ready for this conversation" Chanel says.

"We just realised that it didn't really make any sense to only publish in one language," Chanel explains, "because the women in the book, they don't speak just one language."

Now, the project has come to fruition. Chanel and co-editors Elinóra Guðmundsdóttir and Elínborg Kolbeinsdóttir published the book with Vía útgáfa, a publishing house committed to sharing diverse stories. The book is substantial, with a serious black cover and gold embossing. It has the heft of a telephone book.

Asked who the book's intended audience is, Chanel states that, first and foremost, this is a book for women of foreign origin in Iceland. Following that, she identifies a second group: "we also really hope that, maybe, people who aren't as embedded in diverse communities in Iceland, that they pick up this book."

**R**elated in mid-February, *Her Voice: Stories of Women of Foreign Origin in Iceland* (i. *Hennar Rödd: Sögur kvenna af erlendum uppruna á Íslandi*) features stories of 33 different women of foreign origin in Iceland, and is the culmination of a five-year project from the eponymous organisation Her Voice.

"We wanted it to be a big book. I don't know how to put that a bit more eloquently," Chanel laughs. "We wanted it to have a lot of weight to it."

BY FOREIGN WOMEN,  
FOR EVERYONE

The book gathered its 33 different stories through an open nomination process, with Chanel admitting the team was overwhelmed by the number of women nominated.

Though already released, *Her Voice: Stories of Women of Foreign Origin in Iceland* will have a formal launch on International Women's Day (March 8) with a ceremony and celebration at Harpa.

"I guess it started even earlier than that, because the project is really inspired by a book that my mum had started working on nearly 15 years ago" Chanel Björk Sturludóttir tells me. Her mother is Jamaican, raised in England, and moved to Iceland after meeting Chanel's Icelandic father. "Due to her own experiences of discrimination and prejudice and so on, she thought that it would be really important that the experiences of women of foreign origin in Iceland got more attention in Icelandic society." When her mother originally embarked on this project, however, she experienced hardship finding funding and a publishing house.

"That goes to show and prove what we thought," she says, "women of foreign origin in Iceland have touched so many lives, have made really valuable contributions to society." The book's size isn't only a result of the large amount of stories it holds, but from the fact that it is bilingual – on every page, one half is in English and the other is in Icelandic, as translated by Ásdís Sól Agústsdóttir.

Join Her Voice and Vía at Harpa at 12:30 on March 8 to celebrate the book's launch. *Her Voice: Stories of Women of Foreign Origin in Iceland* is for sale in major bookstores in Iceland, and on Vía's online market Uppskera, and will be for sale discounted at the event!





Ask The Curators

# Where North Begins

Eight perspectives on what it means to live in the North

WORDS Iryna Zubenko  
IMAGE Joana Fontinha

**W**hat is North? Do we think about the North solely from the perspective of our own position in the world? What does it take to be an artist living and working in the North? Are there any common threads that connect these regions? These are just a few of the questions explored in the exhibition *Is This North?*, currently on view at the Nordic House.

*Is This North?* is a multimedia group exhibition featuring works by artists from the North of Finland, Norway, Sweden, Iceland, Greenland, Siberia, Alaska and Canada – namely, Gunnar Jónsson, Anders Sunna, Máret Anne Sara, Inuuteq Storch, Nicholas Galanin, Dunya Zakha, Marja Helander, and Maureen Gruben.

Originally exhibited at the Akureyri Art Museum, *Is This North?* has now made its way to Reykjavik, where it will be open to the public until April. I caught up with curators Daria Sól Andrews and Hlynur Hallsson to discuss what the exhibition seeks to explore.

## FROM THE COLDEST CORNERS

Hlynur and Daria began planning the exhibition nearly two years ago. “We wanted to do an exhibition on artists from the North – *really* North – Sámi

artists, Greenland, Alaska, Siberia, northern Canada – and try to see if there was something they all had in common. What are they telling us?” says Hlynur.

At the time, he was the Director of the Akureyri Art Museum, so it felt natural for the exhibition to debut there. Now, in Reykjavik, the layout of the space has given the show a new life – some pieces have changed, and the basement of the Nordic House, with its darker setting, adds to a “more dramatic” atmosphere, as Hlynur puts it, compared to the bright, open space in Akureyri.

“What was also important was that the artists wouldn’t be living in Berlin or New York, that they would be active where they came from, where they were born,” Hlynur explains. The curators managed to achieve this goal with the exception of one artist – Dunya Zakha, an artist from Siberia, who now lives in the USA.

“After the Russian invasion of Ukraine, we thought, ‘Should we have an artist from Russia?’” Hlynur explains. “Then we thought it was important to have some indigenous artists from that area.”

“Dunya is from Yakutia, in northern Siberia – the coldest inhabited place on the Earth, where it gets to around -40°C,” adds Daria. “Given the political situation in Russia, we felt that it was important to include artists from this area. Dunya also told us that many indigenous artists from this area are being censored by the Russian government right now.”

Now based in New York, Dunya insisted on being credited as an artist from Siberia, not a *Russian* artist.

## TIMELY MATTERS

The current geopolitical situation in the North – take, for example, U.S. President Donald Trump’s ongoing threats against Greenland – makes the exhibition particularly timely. “Now you hear Greenland every day in the news,” says Hlynur. “Two years ago, it was not like that. Same with Alaska – what’s happening in the States right now with indigenous people is even more of an issue than it was two years ago.”

Daria adds that the exhibition aims to offer a deeper understanding of what it means to live in Arctic regions. “It’s not a show explicitly about climate change or global warming, but those themes kind of resonate throughout, because it’s what you deal with when you live in these areas,” she says.

Both curators agree that artists from the North have become increasingly visible and are gaining international recognition. “Three or four years ago, the Scandinavian pavilion at the Venice Biennale wasn’t a Scandinavian pavilion, it was a Sámi pavilion,” Hlynur points out.

Last year, Greenlandic photographer Inuuteq Storch became the first Greenlander to represent Denmark at the Venice Biennale. At *Is This North?* Innuteq presents a series of black and white photographs that often capture intimate surroundings, including friends and family. “He’s talking about indigenous connection to the afterlife – how his people have a really strong relationship with death and the people who pass on and probably communicate with the afterlife,” Daria explains. “He’s approaching his photography Practise through a deep colonialist view-

point, taking back the power of how Greenlandic people are documented and photographed, and trying to preserve the image and life of his people through his own lens.”

## LAND, IDENTITY AND ART

The work of Finnish Sámi artist Marja Helander stands out in the exhibition with her captivating video piece *Birds in the Earth*, which follows ballerina sisters Birit and Katja Haarla. The film takes dancers through diverse landscapes – from the snow-covered villages of the Sápmi region in Northern Finland to the concrete facade of Finland’s parliament building in Helsinki – exploring profound questions of land ownership and indigenous sovereignty for the Sámi, who are the only indigenous people within the European Union.

*Birds in the Earth* is a poetic journey that contrasts the structured discipline of ballet with the backdrop of wild nature. Within just a few minutes, viewers are introduced to the traditional Sámi vocal art of joik and learn about the vital role of reindeer herding for Sámi survival.

Marja has a few other works on display at the exhibition, one of which is a photograph from Kiruna, Sweden. It depicts a mountain being mined for its minerals, ultimately changing the landscape.

“It’s not the kind of initial landscape that you would associate with the Nordic countries,” says Daria.

Anders Sunna, a Sámi artist from northern Sweden, brings attention to the history of the eradication of Sámi culture – the loss of land and rights, affecting reindeer herding

families, including his own. Anders works with large-scale paintings and graffiti that are often political.

## ASKING QUESTIONS

Representing Iceland in the exhibition is Gunnar Jónsson, whose sound and video work occupies a separate room.

Initially, Hlynur wanted to include an artist from North Iceland. Gunnar, however, is based in Ísafjörður in the Westfjords. “But then I thought, well, if you’re not from Iceland, you see the Westfjords as definitely North Iceland. You can’t get any further North than that.”

Gunnar created a new piece specifically for the exhibition where as Hlynur explains, “He confronts the signal lights for both the airport and ships, and how how they irritate some, but they are, in a poetical way, also important – they are the reason why people *can* live there in the North West of Iceland.” He’s referring to the obstruction lighting placed on the mountain in Ísafjörður, which guides planes safely to land when approaching from behind the peak.

“I knew that many of the artists are working very politically, but I didn’t realise they are so much into their heritage and defending what has been done wrong to their people,” Hlynur admits at the end of our conversation. “I hope the exhibition will answer some questions, but it raises many more.” ■

*Is This North?* is free to visit at the Nordic House until April 27



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Tree Talk

# Deny, Defend, Deforest?

The case of Reykjavik's trees vs. Reykjavik's airport

WORDS Grayson Del Faro  
IMAGE Art Bicnick

Negotiations with the city resulted in 140 trees being felled in 2017 and a handful of trees meeting the same fate each year since. Fire was held within a hair's breadth of the issue in July 2023 when Isavia, who declined to comment for this article, demanded that 2,900 of the 8,300 trees in Öskjuhlíð be cut down.

Öskjuhlíð is one of only two wooded areas in Reykjavik and the only one within walking distance of the center. Its quarries and WWII-era relics earned it a place on the National Historic Register. First planted in the 1950s, its trees have since grown into a full-fledged forest crossed with paths for walking and biking. Crowned by the Perlan museum, the green space serves as an urban oasis for residents and visitors alike.

The demand to raze over a third of its trees left Reykjavik residents outraged. Grapevine reported that then-mayor Dagur B. Eggertsson resisted the initial demand and requested more information on alternatives, citing the area's value as a recreation space and the time it would take to replace swaths of mature forest.

"The area will absolutely look quite ugly for some 10, 15 years," warns Brynjólfur Jónsson, the Director of the Icelandic Forestry Association. "This will completely spoil the recreation area."

RÚV reported that the debate about the number of trees dragged on into 2024, when the Icelandic Transport Authority stepped in and ordered the City of Reykjavik to comply with the initial demand, threatening to arrange for the work and requested the closure of the runway, citing "urgent" safety concerns. The City

stalled further, claiming it had already felled 35 trees. The Transport Authority paused enforcement until Isavia could revise their assessment, the December 2024 results of which ultimately placed even more trees in danger.

## DEFENDING THE ARGUMENTS

The gunpowder ultimately caught on February 8 when the east-west runway of the airport was closed down at the Travel Authority's request. The next day, then-mayor Einar Þorsteinsson announced the collapse of the coalition in Reykjavik City Council. The national broadcaster reported that he cited the issue of the airport second in the list of issues on which the factions failed to find common ground. Just as the threat against Öskjuhlíð angered the residents of Reykjavik, the news of the runway's closure left residents of Iceland's countryside similarly enraged.

It has become an issue of City vs. Country. City residents want to free up space to alleviate the dire housing crisis, reduce noise pollution and, of course, save their beloved urban forest. Country dwellers want the airport to stay put for easy access to services unavailable in the countryside, particularly medical services.

"You could say that is the issue," said Eva Bergþóra Guðbergsdóttir, Communications Manager for the City of Reykjavik. "I mean, the airport is here right now. And while it's here, it's the main airport for domestic flights and for the medevacs."

In 2013, the City of Reykjavik signed an agreement with the national

government that the airport would remain in service until at least 2022, when they made a new agreement that the airport would be moved as soon as a replacement was in service. "That agreement is still there," Eva Bergþóra insists. "Nobody has taken that up and ripped it apart. It's just that we don't have another location yet."

In 2015, Hvassahraun was selected as the best potential site and in 2019 they began an assessment that finally concluded in 2024 finding it suitable, despite concerns about volcanic activity in the region. The Meteorological Office is conducting a separate assessment that will not be complete until 2026. With the process of building a new airport moving along about as quickly as the trees in Öskjuhlíð are growing, the question remains: what will happen to them?

## DEFORESTING THE CITY

The issue has officially blown up and left destruction in its wake. On February 11, just three days after the runway was closed and two after the collapse of the city government, the trees were already falling. The final number of trees demanded by Isavia to be felled was 1,400. By Feb. 22, when the first phase of work was completed, nearly 600 trees were already cut down.

"People have always asked, 'Can't you just cut the tops off?'" Eva Bergþóra says. "There are all kinds of reasons why it's not enough just to trim the trees," she says, although she is unable to provide any: "I'm not an expert really, but this is what I've been told." Brynjólfur, however, is an expert. When asked whether it would be a possible alternative in his

professional opinion, he responds without hesitation: "Absolutely."

Dr. Hreinn Óskarsson, Head of Division for National Forests and Land, states that the Icelandic Forest Service has no official position for or against the work. He allows that while "felling the tallest trees is not common Practice in forest management," that "cutting the top section of the trees is not considered good Practice and is probably bad for tree health." That said, it doesn't take a forestry official to recognise that whatever damage may be caused to the tree by cutting its top off is unlikely to be worse than cutting it down entirely.

Forestry aside, trimming the trees would also meet the demands of Isavia and the Transport Authority. "It would be sufficient," admits Þórhildur Elín Elínardóttir, Communications Manager at the Transport Authority. "But it's not up to us. Whether the trees would be trimmed or taken away, that's the landowner's choice." In this case, that's the City of Reykjavik and they seem to be handling their responsibility about as poorly as any other landlord in this country. "This is Iceland," Brynjólfur says sadly. "There are no plans. You can ask the municipality how many trees they are going to plant or what species, but they don't know. They have no plan."

At the time of this writing, the City of Reykjavik and the Transport Authority were still waiting on Isavia to finish their assessment of the first phase to determine whether it meets their demands. Meanwhile, hundreds of trees have already been lost and the runway remains closed. In the City vs Country debate, both sides seem to be losing. ■

**T**rees have always been a hot topic in Iceland. Although about 40% of Iceland's land area was once blanketed in old-growth birch forest, trees were widely felled for firewood and building homes. Soon after, whole forests were slashed and burned to make room for livestock to graze. By the turn of the 20th century, Iceland had less than 1% forest cover. Even after more than 100 years of intentional reforestation efforts, coverage is only about 2% today. This long history of deforestation has turned the preservation of our forests into a powder keg issue.

## DENYING THE VALUE

The match of politics was first struck back in 2013 with the issue of cutting down Öskjuhlíð's trees to better serve Reykjavik's domestic airport. Airport operator Isavia claimed that the height of the trees poses a safety threat to planes landing on one particular runway from the east.

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Film Feature

## The Night The Mountain

Daníel Bjarnason's documentary revisits the deadly night of the Súðavík avalanche

WORDS Iryna Zubenko  
IMAGES Joana Fontinha & Björgvin Sigurðarson

the village had been evacuated that night? And why was the response so flawed, leading to a significant delay in aid?

In November of last year, the Icelandic Parliament finally appointed a committee of inquiry to examine the circumstances and aftermath of the tragedy. The investigation has only just begun, but the harrowing

tal area at age five when his father began studying there, his family had always planned to return to Flateyri. However, in 1994, his brother was born with a heart disease. "We had to fly to Boston for open heart surgery. Because of that, we couldn't move back to Flateyri. We needed to stay in Reykjavik with all the doctors and medical teams. So we leased out the house we were going to

**I've done a lot of difficult interviews in my career, but nothing compared to this.**

night of the avalanche and its aftermath is captured in Daníel Bjarnason's award-winning (Einarinn, the Audience Award at Skjaldborg Documentary Film Festival) and now Edda-nominated documentary *Fjallið það öskrar* (*When the Mountain Roars* in English).

Though his background in television is substantial, *Fjallið það öskrar* is Daníel's first feature-length film — closely connected to his own family history. "I'm from Flateyri, which is where the second avalanche that year happened," explains Daníel, speaking about the October 1995 avalanche that killed 20 people. "Actually, I always wanted to make *that* film, but it had already been made. So, I started checking out the stories from Súðavík, and I felt like those stories haven't really been told as much as those from Flateyri."

Though Daníel moved to the capi-

tal area at age five when his father began studying there, his family had always planned to return to Flateyri. However, in 1994, his brother was born with a heart disease. "We had to fly to Boston for open heart surgery. Because of that, we couldn't move back to Flateyri. We needed to stay in Reykjavik with all the doctors and medical teams. So we leased out the house we were going to

move back into, and a few months later, the avalanche happened, and everyone in the house died. My brother, born sick, actually saved our lives — otherwise, I wouldn't be here today."

As he set out to make a film about the decades-old tragedy, Daníel reached out to journalist Aron Guðmundsson, who had made a podcast about the avalanche. "He already made the basic connections needed for the film — I took that information and wrote a short screenplay," shares Daníel. "Then we started checking out who was available and who wanted to be in the film."

**A**t around 6:25 on January 16, 1995, a massive avalanche struck the fishing village of Súðavík in the Westfjords, claiming the lives of 14 people, including eight children aged between one and fourteen. To this day, it remains one of the deadliest natural disasters Iceland has ever experienced. Thirty years on, many questions remain unanswered: Why were houses built in a known avalanche-risk area? Why were preventive measures never taken, despite avalanche warnings being identified years earlier? Could the tragedy have been prevented if



# ain Roared

avalanche

## A HYBRID DOCUMENTARY

*Fjallið það öskrar* recounts the tragic events of the night of the avalanche in Súðavík, blending personal accounts from survivors Sigga Ranný, Hafsteinn Númason and Elma Dögg Frostadóttir, alongside those of rescue team members who came to Súðavík from nearby towns. Due to the lack of available footage, some scenes were recreated with actors. According to Daniel, only one actual clip was available from the avalanche site, as the authorities declined all photo and film requests, wanting to respect the rescue operation and victims.

"I always call it a hybrid documentary," he explains. "It is a documentary first and foremost, but it also has recreations in it. It's not a narrative film, though it kind of feels like a narrative film when you watch it. But everything you see is true."

A significant challenge for Daniel and the crew was piecing together the weather conditions leading up to the avalanche — a heavy snowstorm that night. He spent hours in archives reviewing footage from all over the country. "That footage is really hard to come by because people don't really go out and shoot footage when there's a snowstorm. They go out and shoot when it's sunny," he explains.

Given the limited budget, the crew couldn't shoot on location in Súðavík. Most recreations were done in Reykjavík, and for the storm scenes, the team travelled to Bláfjöll

ski resort. There, they placed the actors between snow machines to simulate the heavy snow. "They could only spend a few minutes in there because they were freezing," Daniel recalls, describing the challenging production. "We had to stop, dry out and get back. We were really going back and forth."

## RESPECTING THE STORY

Convincing people who lived through traumatic experiences to share their stories on screen required careful trust-building. "First, I met with them and told them about myself, showed them my work and told them I was from the Westfjords as well. I think that helps," Daniel explains. In some cases, it took several meetings to establish trust.

"At first they didn't really want to do this because they felt that over the years, the media had taken their stories and changed them a little bit. They weren't really happy with how they turned out," he says. "But this time, I was offering them to just sit down and tell their own stories." Throughout the process, Daniel showed the interviewees rough cuts and edited sections, making sure they were comfortable with how their experiences were portrayed. "I needed to have them on board the whole time. As soon as you start to do something that they don't like, you lose all credibility as a documentary filmmaker."

One of the actors, Emilía Tera Þorsteinsdóttir, is actually the daughter of one of the survivors. She plays her

mother, Sigga Ranný, who was 22 when the avalanche struck, tragically losing her one-and-a-half-year-old daughter, Hrafnhildur Kristín Þorsteinsdóttir. Her five-year-old daughter, Linda Rut, survived. Now at a similar age, Emilía Tera relives her mother's most painful moments on screen.

Despite the recreated scenes, the film relies almost entirely on the voices of its interviewees. "We didn't really use any dialogue in the recreation scenes," Daniel explains. "I always try to make the actors improvise. I never write their lines — I just tell them the situation and want them to bring something to the table. You can maybe hear a few words here and there, but the audience isn't supposed to connect with that, the audience is supposed to connect with the interviews."

And those interviews were the hardest part. "I've done a lot of difficult interviews in my career, but nothing compared to this," Daniel admits. "With Sigga Ranný, we filmed her interview in Súðavík. She's [worked through her grief] through the years, but what I was asking her to do was just something completely different — put [her] back into that situation. We had to stop all the time just for her to get tears out and go again."

He continues that the heaviness of the subject slowed down the editing process. "Many of those interviews were so heavy and so difficult to work with, I always had to take a lot of breaks. I'd have an episode of *Seinfeld* on another screen, so

I could gather energy to keep on going."

## UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

Ever since its premiere at Skjaldborg last year, the response to *Fjallið það öskrar* has been exceptional. Daniel admits that by releasing the film around the 30th anniversary of the tragedy, he hoped it might push the government to finally move forward with an official investigation. "If you look at the documents and

they don't want to watch the film because they know it's difficult — they know people are going to die and they don't want to put themselves through that," Daniel admits. "But I always try to tell them, it's not just about people dying. It's also beautiful survival stories and a testimonial for that time — the mid 90s — and what everything was like. It's a huge part of our history as a nation."

He continues, "I think it's really important to preserve our history this

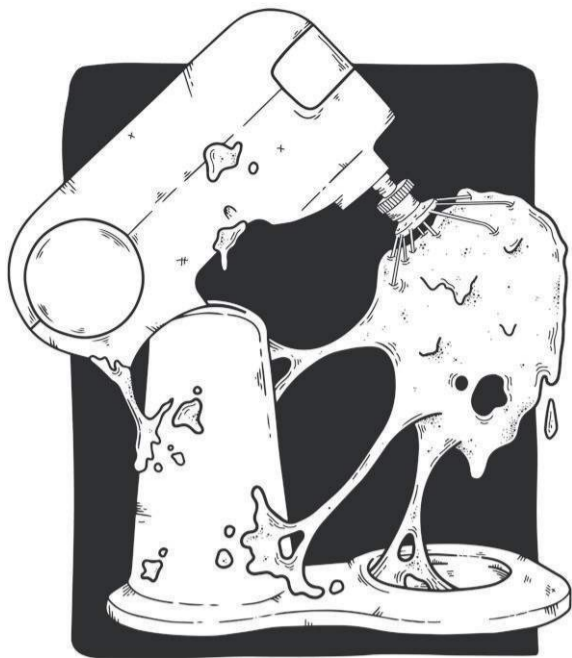
## If you look at the documents, it really looks like nobody had to die that night.

facts, it is clear a lot of mistakes were made by Almannavarnir (Civil Protection) and the government because they had been warned," says Daniel. "If you look at the documents, it really looks like nobody had to die that night."

An investigation was finally launched in January 2025, but with some of those responsible for monitoring the situation and coordinating the rescue efforts having since passed away, it remains unclear whether anyone will be held accountable. Nearly three decades later, the survivors who lost their loved ones are still searching for closure. *Fjallið það öskrar* doesn't offer answers, but it contributes to the documentation of one of the darkest chapters in Iceland's history. "I've heard from a lot of people that

way — through an accessible medium. We've all read interviews about this event, and yes, it's horrible. But when you actually see the people this happened to talk about it on camera, you see their emotional response as they think about these events and retell the stories — it hits you completely differently." ■

If you're in Europe, you can rent *Fjallið það öskrar* on [sjonvarp.stod2.is](https://www.sjonvarp.stod2.is), with English subtitles available.



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Fishy Business

# A Disaster Waiting To

Seyðisfjörður continues its fight against open net-pen salmon farming

WORDS Micah Garen  
IMAGE Still from *We Draw The Line*

Icelandic company with Norwegian shareholders, to set up a salmon farming operation in the fjord of the same name.

The proposed salmon farm has been strongly opposed by the local community for several years. The movement started in 2020, but took on a greater urgency in 2023 when news broke that more than 3,000 farmed salmon had escaped the open net-pen facilities in Patreksfjörður in the Westfjords, threatening the nearby wild salmon population. It was at that time that Björk took up the cause, recording “Oral” with Spanish singer Rosalía in 2024 as a protest song against open net-pen salmon farming in Iceland.

Though its inhabitants number less than 700, Seyðisfjörður is the first community in the country to stand up to the onslaught of salmon farming that is rapidly spreading through Iceland’s fjords.

**T**he government said that they wanted to work for the people and not the big companies,” says Benedikta Guðrún Svavarsdóttir, head of the nonprofit VÁ, which has been fighting to stop open net-pen salmon farming from coming to Seyðisfjörður, “and the ball is falling very quickly in their court. This will be a big test if they are really going to do it or if they are going to fail that test, it’s a perfect example of people vs big capital power.”

Prior to the most recent elections, in november 2024, all three parties now in a coalition government were opposed to fish farming in Seyðisfjörður, an artsy little town in the far East of Iceland. The Icelandic government must now decide whether to issue a license to Kaldvík, an

The town, with settlements dating almost one thousand years, is known for its beauty and creativity, hosting the The Skaftfell Center for Visual Art and LungA art school. Though small and relatively isolated, nestled in the embrace of a steep fjord with just one road in and out — one that is frequently impassable in the winter months — Seyðisfjörður is still well connected to the wider world. Its harbour is the port of call of the only car ferry connecting Iceland to the Faroes and Denmark, and other cruise ships, and its the point at which an important underwater internet cable that runs along the bottom of the fjord to Scotland comes ashore to keep Iceland technologically connected to the world.

With 75% of the population against

the salmon farms, a local movement has spawned a number of artistic protests, from floating ice sculptures this summer, to a line of lights strung across the fjord in October.

“We got together and made this line in the sea with emergency flares and closed the fjord to signify that there is a line there that can’t be crossed, it is an emergency, we don’t want this, and we are in control,” says Benedikta.

### WHAT’S THE BIG DEAL?

There are a number of reasons to deny the salmon farming license, including threats to the ecology and its negative impact on a growing tourism industry. Then there’s its detrimental effect on property values and the potential for the industry to damage vital underwater infrastructure. Most significant, though, is the risk of avalanche.

“There are really strong arguments against open net-pen farming in general, but in Seyðisfjörður in particular, because there is a grave danger of avalanches,” says Katrín Oddsdóttir, a lawyer for VÁ and well known activist. One of the striking sites in Seyðisfjörður is the local museum, half of which was tragically destroyed by a mud slide four years ago.

“They have not estimated the danger of those avalanches falling on the pens themselves and destroying them with a catastrophic outcome for the wild salmon of Iceland and possibly blocking the fjord for the coast guard to help people, so this has not been estimated at all, which is crazy because the companies are applying for the pens to be *inside* the avalanche danger zone.”



## Happen

How the avalanche assessment was conducted speaks volumes to the nature of how turnkey business is done in Iceland. Kaldvík, the company applying for the salmon farming license, requested the avalanche assessment. "The way it should have happened is the governmental institutions should have asked for it," says Benedikta. "It's a wrong assessment — an assessment of threat to life on land — not what could happen if the avalanche goes to the anchors of the pens with the possibility of an environmental disaster that could occur if salmon escape or if the sailing route is blocked."

Benedikta says the town had to request a new assessment which was then added to the more than 200 comments from the community on the license application.

"I really feel they are not able to put out an operating license for the company unless they start all over again and do a proper estimation of the danger," says Katrín. "And that will slow them down. I don't think we are able to stop them yet, but we are slowing them down and hopefully time is on our side."

The pressure is mounting, with the closure of the fish factory in town in 2024 resulting in the loss of 33 jobs. Already Kaldvík has begun hiring people in the community. "What is most ridiculous is that it is exploiting our ecosystem, the wild salmon, all of the tons of shit that is going to be ending up in the fjord, it is a huge sacrifice, and what we get instead is 10 to 15 jobs?" says Benedikta.

Contacted for a comment about the status of Kaldvík's license, Karl Steinar Óskarsson, head of the Aquaculture department at MAST

replied: "MAST is working on investigating some criteria mentioned in comments MAST resived [sic] during the period the proposal for license was adverticed [sic]. So this is still work in progress. Decision will be made after thorough investigation. Could take some months. We are hoping that the new law proposal for aquaculture will be put forward this fall. In there are extended mesures [sic] regarding lice and exscapees [sic]."

### TERRIBLE IN EVERY WAY

"I'm not sure why this industry is in every single aspect so terrible," says Jón Kaldal, spokesperson for the Icelandic Wildlife Fund, who has also been fighting salmon farming. "It is polluting the fjords, ruining the ecosystems and killing the farmed animals in higher numbers than we see in any other food production."

Half a million salmon were lost in sea pens in both November and December.

"We want a total ban in Iceland, but we also understand that the politicians will have to find a way to introduce legislation that gives companies a chance to do it in a different way," he says. "If I had advice for the current government, I would say this should not be complicated. The legislation should focus mainly on three things: zero escapes, zero pollution and animal welfare much stricter than it is now."

Animal welfare is one of the strongest arguments against open net-pen salmon farming in general, with massive die-offs, fish infected by sea lice and the widespread use of chemicals. "Last winter I saw two pieces by industry analysts that said

'has the industry reached its PETA moment?' Sometimes you don't see it until you look in the rear view mirror, but this is the moment when things turned," says Jón, who credits Björk with helping put the focus on animal welfare.

But the alternative to sea pens — land based farming — may be better for the ecosystem, but it is certainly no better for the animals. On Vestmannaeyjar, where a fish processing plant also closed recently, a massive land based salmon farm is being constructed, a dystopian technological solution to the problem of sea pens. The facility looks like a concrete oil storage depot, with 40 tanks neatly arranged like an out-take from a *Matrix* film, where fish will live and die in a completely artificial environment, never to see the light of day, or the natural world around them.

"I am totally against it personally," says Jón. "Besides treating the animals badly, salmon farming is not a real food production system, it's a food reduction system. To make one meal of farmed salmon, you need nutrients and protein that would make meals for three to five people."

While the long term battle is focused on ending industrialised salmon farming all together, in the short term all eyes are on Seyðisfjörður.

Benedikta remains optimistic. "There is this hope that this government, with what they have in common, that they will change the way it has always been done and work for the people of their country, for whom they work. And the majority of the people are against salmon farming in open net-pens in general — and in Seyðisfjörður." ■

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# Centre Map

We're here to fill you in on our personal favourite places around town – and a few to consider avoiding.

## Dining

**1 NAPOLI**  
Tryggvagata 24  
We love places that do one thing and do them damn well. This takeaway place is a case in point. Napoli offers sourdough Neapolitan-style pizzas with a menu to match – think margherita, quattro formaggi, parma, calzone – plus vegan options and magnificent sandwiches. Look out for their lunch offer, every day from 11:30 to 15:00. JT

**2 GAETA GELATO**  
Aðalstræti 6 & Hlemmur Mathöll  
Gaeta Gelato is at the centre of a heated ongoing debate at the Grapevine office about who makes the best ice cream in the country. For those keen on the deep tastiness of Italian gelato, this place is IT. They are also located right smack downtown, so you can take that icecream for a stroll – we suggest a stroll to their other location for another scoop. JT

**3 PLANTAN**  
Njálsgata 64  
This cute little neighborhood cafe is 100% vegan and does a few things right: their soup of the day menu updates every week and uses seasonal produce, they mastered the plant-based cheese bun recipe to perfection, and this might be the most hearty vegan brunches in town. Look out for the daily bun and coffee deal, it truly is like a warm hug. IZ

**5 CAFÉ BABALÚ**  
Skólavörðustígur 22  
This quirky café hangout is a great choice when you're looking for a cozy, chill experience. Decked with kitschy decor and plush chairs, the café is perfect for a refuge from an instant shower of rain. If you're looking to snuggle up with a book and a good cup of coffee, look no further. JB

**6 BAN THAI**  
Laugavegur 130  
The absolute GOAT – as they say – in Thai cuisine in Reykjavik. Ban Thai's menu is dotted with little symbols of chili, denoting the spice level of each course. You're welcome to order a level-5 chili course, but do so at your own risk. JB

**7 GRÁI KÖTTURINN**  
Hverfisgata 16a  
This no-nonsense downtown staple has been serving Reykjavik dwellers quality breakfast food since 1997. Tucked away in a cute cellar, the diner boasts retro Icelandic design charm, while its menu is far from outdated. Pancakes, bagels and frying oil all have their special place at Grái Kötturinn. As Grái Kötturinn closes at 14:30 every day, it's not a place for nighthawks, but early-birds. JB

**8 CHICKPEA**  
Hallveigarstígur 1  
This Mediterranean-inspired restaurant is a great place for a quick bite. Servings are generous and the

food nutritious, meaning you'll go full well into the day. They do wraps, falafels, and all kinds of salads exceptionally well. Prices aren't extremely steep, but nothing to write home about either. JB

**9 KRÓNAN**  
Hallveigarstígur 1 & more locations  
If you're ever in a pinch while looking for something cheap to eat if you're downtown just go to Krónan and pick out some flatkökur. Flatkökur goes great with everything. Be it the Mediterranean/Icelandic fusion of lathering some with hummus, or turn it into a poor-man's pizza with pizza sauce and cheese. Honestly, the flatkaka is an empty canvas for you to paint your wildest dreams on. JB

**10 JÓMFRÚIN**  
Lækjargata 4, 101 Reykjavik  
Icelanders may have a love-hate relationship with the Danes, but let's be honest, who can resist craving a delicious smørrebrød every now and then? If you get what we are talking about, there's no better place in town for an authentic Danish smørrebrød than Jómfrúin. This family-run restaurant specialises in serving Danish and Scandinavian dishes, and to top it off, it boasts a fantastic outdoor terrace where you can relax, sip a beer and complain about politics overlooking the Icelandic parliament. IZ

## Drinking

**11 APERÓ VÍNBAR**  
Laugavegur 20b  
A wine bar that is both opulent and accessible? Yes please. The small team at Aperó remember the orders of regulars and make first-timers feel like regulars. If you know what you like, Aperó will tick your boxes; and if you're new to wine, the sommelier will soon unite you with your ideal glass. CF

**12 BINGO DRINKERY**  
Skólavörðustígur 8  
Admit it, sometimes you just feel like travelling back in time to your grandma's house, full of weird memorabilia one should have gotten rid of at least three decades ago. Luckily, Reykjavik now has a place like this – Bingo Drinkery. Tucked away from the crowds of tourists just off Skólavörðustígur, it offers a selection of beers and cocktails, all on happy hour 16:00-18:00. IZ

**13 KAFFIBARINN**  
Bergstaðastræti 1  
There are no correct words to explain just how iconic Kaffibarinn is in the local bar scene. It's the perennial hangout for the who's who of Reykjavik, welcoming everyone from members of Blur to curious passers by and everyone in between. Kaffibarinn is an establishment in and of itself. JB

**14 VITABAR**  
Bergþórugata 21

If you're staying in Reykjavik more than a few days, you ought to find your own dive bar – this is ours. It seems like the time froze at Vitabar, but we love it that way. People come for their famous blue cheese burger, but stay for a few pints and delicious fries. Sometimes I wish Vitabar discovered craft beer, but I go back nevertheless – for a late night bite and Thule on draft. IZ

**15 VÍNSTÚKAN TÍU SOPAR**  
Laugavegur 27  
There are a few bars in Reykjavik that have learned how to do wine right, and Vinstúkan Tíu sopar, although located in the middle of the chaos and tourist buzz of Laugavegur, is one of them. Craving Pét-nat? In the mood for orange wine? Ready to explore small Slovenian wineries? You name it – the bar's staff will be ready to come up with suggestions that will suit any pocket. Don't get me started on their small bites to pair with wine – I'm already dreaming about their grilled peppers and torched broccoli with salted lemon. IZ

## Shopping & Activities

**16 BÍÓ PARADÍS**  
Hverfisgata 54  
Sometimes the smell of popcorn fills the air of Hverfisgata, as if beckoning you to come inside. You succumb and find yourself in the cutest art house cinema with colourful posters on the walls and vintage-looking bar straight outta Wes Anderson movie. There's always a film screening and you rarely need to book tickets in advance, so enjoy the old school walk-in experience and one of the best Happy Hours in town. IZ

**17 LAVA SHOW**  
Fiskislóð 74  
I didn't know I had a primal urge to see a person clad in a Homer Simpson nuclear suit replicate the natural flow of molten lava until I paid the Lava Show a visit. Nothing will prepare you for sitting in an enclosed space while literal magma flows out of a chute through the wall. And then you just stare at the colours as the host explains the geological properties of lava. JB

## Be Warned

**18 101 BISTRO**  
Austurstræti 3  
The bistro on the corner of Ingólfs-torg and Austurstræti that has a plaque outside saying, "Come in and try the worst [insert popular food item] that one guy on Tripadvisor said we had", or something like that. It's a trap, do not go there. That plaque has been in the same spot ever since Hrunið. RG

**19 10-11**  
Austurstræti 17  
If you're shopping here, I hope it's because you consider this an absolute last-minute resort. Like, you're down-and-out after a night of partying and you need some form of carbohydrates (or for that matter, protection). Don't make this a frequent pitstop in your grocery-shopping because: a) their prices are gouged to compensate for the fact they're always open, and b) their product variety is shit – even by Icelandic standards. Check out Krónan instead, a stone's throw away. RG

**20 LEBOWSKI BAR**  
Laugavegur 20a  
A joke that's gone too far. The longest lasting theme bar that sprung up during a theme-bar craze many years ago. We'd list off a bunch of reasons to avoid this place, but the owner has our phone numbers and we're over the after-hours calls. So just take our word for it. The Dude does not abide. RG ■

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daily 16-20

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Happy Hours 16:00-18:00

**Veghúsastígur 9 - 101 Reykjavík**

**Lembrança**  
Gustavo Donofrio







**I**

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**H**

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**G**

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kaffihús

Speciality coffee, cakes, sandwiches & soup

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RVK

SKIPHOLT 33

New In Town **hafnar**  ★

**TRYGGVAGATA 17**

Lurking inside Tryggvagata 17 is a vibrant world of art – in Hafnarhús, the City Art Museum, and hafnar.haus, the collective art hub. With over 250 artists creating inside hafnar.haus, curator Leeni Laasfeld tells us this new window gallery emerged from thinking “if only the people on the street could see what’s happening behind these walls.” Now, we have a window in! Literally! hafnar is a new gallery space, a window on the outer wall of the building, with the hallmark hafnar.haus yellow catching your eye and inviting you to stare. The current exhibition is Oceans by A Million Tiny Lines – make sure to take a peek. ISH ■

**OPENING HOURS:**  
If you're there, it's open!



**22 TAPS BREWED in the heart OF REYKJAVÍK**

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**S**

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**B**

**FOOD HALL & BAR**

**PÓSTHÚS**

**PÓSTHÚSSTRÆTI | 101 REYKJAVÍK**

**HAPPY HOUR 16:00 - 18:00**

# Art Exhibitions

# 07.03.25–03.04.25

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

## Opening

**ÁSMUNDARSALUR**  
*Group exhibition – Chain Reaction*  
 20 artists collaborate to make a fascinating and interconnected work  
 Opens March 6  
 Runs until March 23

**ÁSMUNDARSAFN**  
*Ásta Fanney – Wonderland*  
 Ásta Fanney is the next artist with works in progress through Ásmundarsafn's year-long Wonderland series  
 Opens March 29  
 Runs until June 9

**BERG CONTEMPORARY**  
*Anna Júlía Friðbjörnsdóttir – ECHO LIMA*  
 95 etched copper plates draw from ancient Greek pottery and manipulate Morse code to explore tension, strategy, and conflict  
 Opens March 8  
 Runs until April 26

**MUSEUM OF DESIGN AND APPLIED ARTS**  
*Unndór Egill Jónsson*  
 The artist-in-residence and furniture maker will open his workshop in the exhibition space  
 Opens April 1

**HANNESARHOLT**  
*Sigurdís Gunnarsdóttir – HUGARÓRA*  
 Landscape oil-on-canvas paintings create dreamy scenes and cause you to ponder the relationship between man and nature

Opens March 15  
 Runs until April 3  
**HAFNARHÚS**  
*Group exhibition – List er okkar eina von!*  
 Opening on International Women's Day, "Art is our only hope!" features new works by living female artists  
 Opens March 8  
 Runs until May 8

**SÍM HLÖÐULOFTIÐ: KO-RPÚLFSSTAÐIR**  
*SÍM Residency Nordic-Baltic Mobility for Culture – Final Exhibition*  
 The current SÍM artists-in-residence present their research and work  
 Opens March 22  
 Runs until March 27

**LISTVAL**  
*Geislaspinnar Magnúsar 2025 – Magnús Helgason*  
 Instinctual and precise, painter Magnús Helgason shows his bright and colourful work  
 Opens March 7  
 Runs until March 29

**LITLA GALLERY**  
*Hjalti Parelíus – Ooops..!*  
 Oil painter and collagist, Hjalti Parelíus' work is eye-catching and evocative  
 Opens March 20  
 Runs until March 30

**LÖFTSKEYTASTÖÐIN**  
*Group exhibition – Glacier Generations*  
 This photography exhibition chronicles Iceland's glaciers and documents their transformation across generations  
 Opens March 21

## Ongoing

**ÁSMUNDARSAFN**  
*Unnar Örn – An Experiment With Time*  
 Works in progress, part of Wonderland series  
 Runs until March 23

**GERÐARSAFN (KÓPAVOGUR ART MUSEUM)**  
*Group Exhibition – Stare*  
 Photography  
 Runs until April 19

**HAFNARBORG CENTER OF CULTURE & FINE ART**  
*Helgi Vignir Bragason – Still Lifespan*  
 Photography and drawing  
 Runs until March 30

*Group exhibition – Linger*  
 Multimedia  
 Runs until May 18

**HAFNARHÚS (REYKJAVÍK ART MUSEUM)**  
*Erró – 1001 Nights*  
 Paintings  
 Runs until March 23

*Ragnar Kjartansson – World Light*  
 Four-screen cinematic adaptation  
 Runs until September 21

**HAKK GALLERY**  
*Group exhibition – Hooked*  
 Multimedia  
 Runs until March 31

**HOF CULTURE HOUSE (AKUREYRI)**  
*Ásta Sigurðardóttir – Sunday night to Monday morning*  
 Linoleum cuts  
 Runs until March 31

**THE HOUSE OF COLLECTIONS**  
*Stay and turn to stone! Folklore in Icelandic Art*  
 Group exhibition, paintings  
 Runs until May 25

*Resistance*  
 Interdisciplinary group exhibition  
 Runs until March 26

**18 GALLERY**  
*Kristján Guðmundsson – As Far as the Space Allows*  
 Installation  
 Runs until March 22

**GALLERY GRÓTTA**  
*Group exhibition – Opposites*  
 Photography  
 Runs until March 15

**KAFFI LAUGALÆKUR**  
*Aðalsteinn Guðlaugar Aðalsteinsson – Myndræn hugsun*  
 Painting, drawing  
 Runs until March 31

**KJARVALSSTAÐIR (REYKJAVÍK ART MUSEUM)**  
*Group exhibition – Swell*  
 Multimedia  
 Runs until May 11

**KLING & BANG**  
*A Misunderstanding in Planning Procedures – Sólbjört Vera Ómarsdóttir*  
 Found-object sculptures  
 Runs until March 30

*As The Crow Flies – Hrafnkell Tumi Georgsson*  
 Sculpture and video works  
 Runs until March 30

**LITLA GALLERY**  
*Ecaterina "Kat" Botezatu – Guardians of Nature*  
 Oil paintings  
 Runs until March 9

**MUSEUM OF DESIGN AND APPLIED ARTS**  
*Group Exhibition – Barbie Visits the Design Museum*  
 Fashion  
 Runs until June 1

*The Most Beautiful Books In The World*  
 Book design  
 Runs until March 23

**MHR SCULPTURE GARDEN**  
*Ósk Gunnlaugsdóttir – Sortatíra*  
 Clay and glass sculpture  
 Runs until March 27

**NATIONAL GALLERY OF ICELAND**  
*Hildigunnur Birgisdóttir – That's a Very Large Number – A Commerzbau*  
 Installation  
 Runs until September 7

*Looking Inward, Looking Outward: 140 years of the National Gallery of Iceland*  
 Group exhibition, works from the collection  
 Runs until March 30

**NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ICELAND**  
*Group Exhibition – Intimacies of the Everyday*  
 Photography  
 Runs until May 4

**THE NORDIC HOUSE**  
*Group Exhibition – Is This North?*  
 Multimedia  
 Runs until April 27

*The Tree*  
 Children's exhibition, interactivity  
 Runs until May 1

**PORT9 WINE BAR**  
*Gustavo Donofrio – Lembrança*  
 Paintings  
 Runs until April 1

**REYKJANESBÆR ART MUSEUM**  
*Ívar Valgarðsson – Ocean*  
 Photography and painting  
 Runs until April 19

**REYKJAVÍK MUSEUM OF PHOTOGRAPHY**  
*Group Exhibition – Weathered*  
 Photography  
 Runs until March 16

*Telma Har – Glam Pics*  
 Photography  
 Runs until April 15

**GALLERY SIGN**  
*Kristín Karólína Helgadóttir – Global Village*  
 Found images  
 Runs until June 15

**SÍM GALLERY**  
*Ragnhildur Jóhanns – Handled*  
 Paintings  
 Runs until April 3

**SIGURJÓNS ÓLAFSSONAR ART MUSEUM**  
*Helga Pálína Brynjólfssdóttir – INTERLACED*  
 Installations interacting with Sigurjón Ólafsson's sculptures  
 Runs until May 2025

**WINDOW GALLERY SLÉTT**  
*Amanda Rizzo – The Blue Spot*  
 Installation  
 Runs until May 15

**WHALES OF ICELAND**  
*Otilía Martín Gonzalez – Songs from the Forsaken Sea*  
 Digital collage  
 Runs until March 31

**Y GALLERY**  
*Arnfinnur Amazeen – Nokkurskonar samheiti*  
 Drawings, found material  
 Runs until March 8

**PULA**  
*Group Exhibition – Cross Section*  
 Multimedia  
 Runs until April 6

## Art Picks



*Group exhibition – List er okkar eina von!*  
 March 8, at 15:00  
 Hafnarhús (Reykjavik Art Museum)

Intentionally opening on International Women's Day, "List er okkar eina von!" or "Art is our only hope!" features new works by living female artists. The 16 different artists culminate their work into an exhibition that is diverse in both medium and subject. ISH



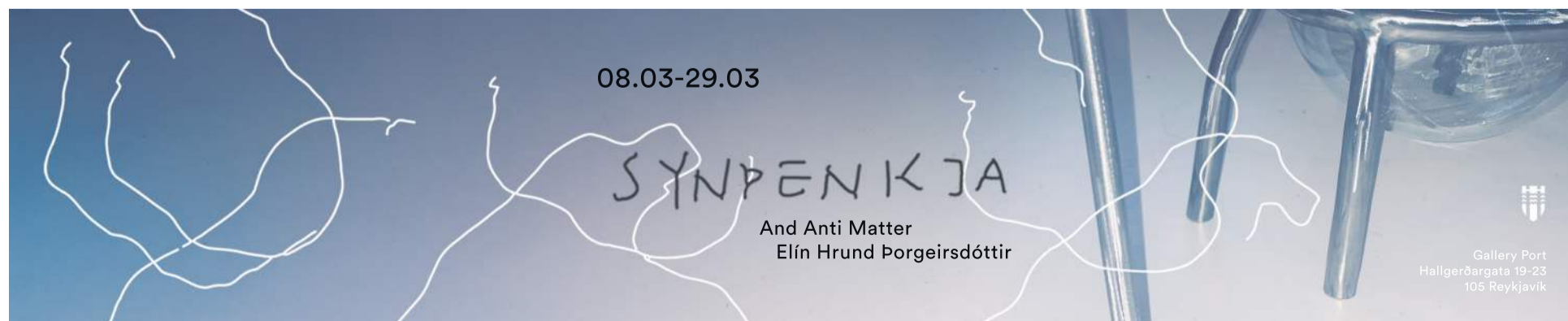
*Anna Júlía Friðbjörnsdóttir – ECHO LIMA*  
 March 8, at 16:00  
 BERG Contemporary

The code EL, or ECHO LIMA, signals "repeat the distress position" in Morse code. Artist Anna Júlía Friðbjörnsdóttir explores dialogue and communication, strategy and conflict, clarity and miscommunication in this installation. On a series of 95 etched copper plates, the artist draws influence from an ancient Greek pottery representation of the myth of the goddess Nike. ISH



*AND ANTI MATTER & Elín Hrund – Synþenkja*  
 March 8, at 15:00  
 Gallery Port

Unbridled, multimediam exhibition Synþenkja takes you on a sensory journey. Studio AND ANTI MATTER and scent designer Elín Hrund collaborate to examine how visual and aromatic perception can be warped, particularly to explore the experience of synesthesia. They present sculptures – or machines, made of blown glass, 3D printed ceramic, and brushed steel, which will generate new work throughout the exhibition's run, allowing the viewer to experience this synesthetic changing of perception in real time. ISH



And Anti Matter  
 Elín Hrund Þorgeirsdóttir

Gallery Port  
 Hálfgerðargata 19-23  
 105 Reykjavík

# Events

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

## Friday March 7

*Now-Soon-Later: SÍM in-residence artists*

18:00 Á milli space

*While in Battle I'm free, never free to rest*

20:00 Borgarleikhúsið

*Zoolander: Party Screening*

21:00 Bíó Paradís

*Hristo*

23:00 Kaffibarinn

*DJ/DRUMS: Valgeir & Gvari*

22:30 LEMMY

*PUNCH IN THE MOUTH FROM THE INSIDE II*

20:00 Mengi

*SKRATTAR*

21:00 Prikið

*Sonur Sæll*

22:00 Röntgen

## Saturday March 8

*Women's March*

13:00 Arnarhóll

*Garg Bookstore Housewarming Party*

16:00 Fiskibúðin Hofsvallagata

*Artisanal Food Fayre*

11:00 Harpa

*Book Launch: Her Voice*

12:30 Harpa

*Straumur Concert: Torfi*

21:00 Kaffibarinn

*Simon (fknhdsm)*

23:00 Kaffibarinn

*DJ/DRUMS: Gvari*

22:30 LEMMY

*Night Of Improvised Music*

20:00 Mengi

*KGB*

22:00 Röntgen

*Gabriel Gold*

17:00 Space Odyssey

## Sunday March 9

*Coffee Without Borders*

13:00 Andrými

*Women's Day: Potluck & Discussion*

17:00 Dalur Hostel

*Artisanal Food Fayre*

11:00 Harpa

*Vinyl Sunday: DJ Júllala*

21:00 Kaffibarinn

*Freyas Daughters Concert*

20:00 The Nordic House

## Monday March 10

*Pub Quiz*

20:00 Bodega

*Board Game Mondays*

19:00 Loft Hostel

*MarioCon 2025*

11:30 Next Level Gaming

Egilshöll

## Tuesday March 11

*Upprásin: Samosa, Unfiled, Eló*

20:00 Harpa (Kaldalón)

*Jónbjörn*

21:00 Kaffibarinn

*MarioCon 2025*

11:30 Next Level Gaming

Egilshöll

*Pub Quiz*

20:00 Röntgen

*Knitting Winter: Vík Þrjónsdóttir*

20:00 Sigurjón Ólafsson

Museum

## Wednesday March 12

*Guðný Jónss*

21:00 Kaffibarinn

*MTV Unplugged: Franz & Erla Stefáns*

21:00 LEMMY

*Ljóð og vinir*

20:00 Mengi

*MarioCon 2025*

11:30 Next Level Gaming

Egilshöll

*Vinyl Wednesday: Eldar*

21:00 Röntgen

## Thursday March 13

*Buy Now! The Shopping Conspiracy*

*Screening & Discussion*

19:00 Dalur Hostel

*Bros*

21:00 Kaffibarinn

*Motorcycling Across Mongolia*

*Lecture*

17:00 Kringlan City Library

*Grunge Unplugged: Members of*

*Ensími, Noise & Vintage Caravan*

22:00 LEMMY

*Drink & Draw*

19:00 Loft Hostel

*MarioCon 2025*

11:30 Next Level Gaming

Egilshöll

*Karaoke*

22:00 NINA

*LILJA*

21:00 Röntgen

*Af fingrum fram: Sigurður Flosason*

20:30 Salurinn

*Two Beats Ahead Live! With Siggí*

*Baldursson*

14:30 Space Odyssey

(Huldunótur)

*Jonathan Normita*

18:00 Space Odyssey

## Friday March 14

*Scott Pilgrim vs. the World: Party*

*Screening*

21:00 Bíó Paradís

*Kjörk*

23:00 Kaffibarinn

*DJ/DRUMS: Steini Milljón & Benni*

*Bent*

22:30 LEMMY

*Smátíðni: Þóunn Einars, sameheads,*

*Amor Vincit Omnia*

19:00 Mengi

*MarioCon 2025*

20:00 Next Level Gaming

Egilshöll

*DJ Cream and Sugar*

22:00 Röntgen

*Briet*

20:00 Salurinn

## Saturday March 15

*Kapelludrengir Release Concert*

21:00 Bird

*Swap Market*

16:00 Dalur Hostel

*Straumur Concert: Flesh Machine*

21:00 Kaffibarinn

*IntrObeatz*

23:00 Kaffibarinn

*SLEIKUR 6.0*

21:00 Kiki

*DJ/DRUMS: Steini Milljón*

22:30 LEMMY

*Marja Ahti / Masaya Ozaki*

20:00 Mengi

*MarioCon 2025*

13:00 Next Level Gaming

Egilshöll

*DJ Station Helgi*

22:00 Röntgen

*Herðum haus: Oyama*

20:30 RVK Tónabíó

*Briet Family Concert*

14:00, 16:00 Salurinn

## Sunday March 16

*Vinyl Sunday: Silja Glömmi*

21:00 Kaffibarinn

*MarioCon 2025*

11:30 Next Level Gaming

Egilshöll

07.02.–21.09.2025

# Ragnar Kjartansson Heimsljós World Light



HAFNARHÚS LISTASAFN ARTHUS  
REYKJAVÍKUR ART MUSEUM

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artmuseum.is

**Open daily**  
10h00–17h00  
Thursdays  
10h00–22h00

# Event Picks



**Food & Fun**  
March 12-16  
At participating restaurants

Food & Fun is upon us again! Yearly, Reykjavík's finest establishments dish out experimental and delicious food with support from visiting international chefs. Culinary wizards from both sides of the Atlantic are travelling in to put their spin on the best ingredients Iceland has to offer. In addition to dining, foodies can seek out workshops, tasting sessions and networking events. To learn about visiting chefs and participating restaurants, visit [foodandfun.is](http://foodandfun.is) ISH



**Even If We Never Figure Out What Happened**  
March 19 at 16:00  
Forlagið (Fiskislóð 39)  
Free entrance

Poet Laureate of Vancouver, Canada, Elee Kraljii Gardiner is joined by Copenhagen-based sound artist Eduardo Abrantes for an afternoon of poetry and sound. Sponsored by the Canadian Embassy, the event is free of charge, and worth the short commute to Grandi to check out. ISH



**JFDR + 'A Story From St. John's Eve' Screening**  
March 29 at 20:00  
Mengi  
2.500kr

Jófríður Ákadóttir (JFDR) collaborates with musician Áslaug Magnúsdóttir to create 'A Story From St. John's Eve' – a short film exploration of identity and nature (and how the two are intertwined) through the lens of the Icelandic midsummer festival St. John's mass. Sure to be thought-provoking and beautiful, join this event at Mengi. ISH



National Gallery of Iceland  
Frikirkjuvegur 7  
The House of Collections  
Hverfisgata 15

## That's a Very Large Number – A Commerzbau Hildigunnur Birgisdóttir



Hildigunnur Birgisdóttir, *6:1 (Green)*, 2024. Courtesy of the artist and i8 gallery

Listasafn Íslands  
National Gallery  
of Iceland

+354 515 9600 [listasafn.is](http://listasafn.is)

22.2.–  
7.9.2025

# Events

# 07.03.25-03.04.25

Concerts, comedy, movies and other happenings that defy categorisation

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

**Monday March 17**  
*Brynja (Girls Gang)*  
 21:00 Kaffibarinn  
*Board Game Mondays*  
 19:00 Loft Hostel

**Tuesday March 18**  
*Fu Kaisha*  
 21:00 Kaffibarinn  
*People In Orbit Concert*  
 18:00 Norræna Húsið (The Nordic House)

**Wednesday March 19**  
*borsteinn Eyfjörð*  
 21:00 Kaffibarinn  
*MTV Unplugged: Franz & Hildur Hlíf*  
 21:00 LEMMY  
*Vinyl Wednesday: KGB*  
 21:00 Röntgen

**Thursday March 20**  
*Jazz: Ragga Gröndal, Guðmundur Pétursson & Nico Moreaux*  
 18:00 Hotel Holt  
*PVPR*  
 21:00 Kaffibarinn  
*FLYING ELBOWS*  
 21:00 LEMMY  
*Karaoke*  
 22:00 NÍNA  
*DJ Björn Leó*  
 21:00 Röntgen  
*BLOSSI*  
 20:30 Röntgen

*Carpenters NOSTALGÍA*  
 20:00 Salurinn  
*Patawah*  
 18:00 Space Odyssey

**Friday March 21**  
*Friday: Party Screening*  
 21:00 Bíó Paradís  
*Ann and Me: or The Big Bad Abortion Play*  
 20:00 Dansverkstæðið  
*HAM + APPARAT = HAMPARAT*  
 20:00 Harpa (Eldborg)  
*Már & Nielsen*  
 23:00 Kaffibarinn  
*DJ/DRUMS: KGB*  
 22:30 LEMMY  
*Curro Rodriguez & Knackered, KVÆÐAKÓRINN*  
 20:00 Mengi  
*DJ Óli Dóri*  
 22:00 Röntgen

**Saturday March 22**  
*Suntiger*  
 21:30 Bird  
*Star-gazing & Light Pollution Lecture*  
 20:00 Dalur Hostel  
*Ann and Me: or The Big Bad Abortion Play*  
 20:00 Dansverkstæðið  
*Release Concert: Spacestation*  
 20:00 Iðnó  
*Straumur Concert: Róshildur*  
 21:00 Kaffibarinn  
*Óli Dóri*  
 23:00 Kaffibarinn  
*DJ/DRUMS: Gvari*  
 22:30 LEMMY  
*Arnljótur*  
 20:00 Mengi  
*DJ Sóley Bjarna*  
 22:00 Röntgen

*Wiolka Walaszczyk: Polish Stand-up*  
 18:00, 20:30 Tjarnarbió

**Sunday March 23**

*Sexy Beast: Black Sunday*  
 21:00 Bíó Paradís  
*Vinyl Sunday: Árni Sveins*  
 21:00 Kaffibarinn

**Monday March 24**  
*Pub Quiz*  
 20:00 Bodega  
*Simon (fknhdsm)*  
 21:00 Kaffibarinn  
*Board Game Mondays*  
 19:00 Loft Hostel

**Tuesday March 25**  
*Orang Volante*  
 21:00 Kaffibarinn

**Wednesday March 26**  
*Silja Glömmi*  
 21:00 Kaffibarinn  
*MTV Unplugged: Franz & Roland Hartwell*  
 21:00 LEMMY  
*Vinyl Wednesday: Uoon*  
 21:00 Röntgen

**Thursday March 27**  
*Jazz: Sigurður Guðmundsson, Daníel Fríðrik Böðvarsson & Nico Moreaux*  
 18:00 Hotel Holt  
*DREAM WIFE & LOTTÓ*  
 19:30 Iðnó  
*borgerður Jóhanna*  
 21:00 Kaffibarinn  
*Opening: Seed Library*  
 17:00 Kringlan City Library  
*FJÖLL*  
 21:00 LEMMY  
*Drink & Draw*  
 19:00 Loft Hostel  
*Karaoke*  
 22:00 NÍNA  
*Jamesendir*

21:00 Röntgen  
**Friday March 28**  
*Licks: KISS Coverband*  
 22:00 Bird  
*Fright Night: Party Screening*  
 21:00 Bíó Paradís  
*THE ORPHIC CIRCLES and other gossip*  
 20:00 Borgarleikhúsið (The City Theatre)  
*DJ Frímann*  
 23:00 Kaffibarinn  
*bjarni daniel: the bull's eye*  
 20:00 Mengi  
*DJ de la Rósa*  
 22:00 Röntgen  
*R.M. Hendrix YUKS Release Party*  
 18:00 Space Odyssey

**Saturday March 29**  
*Alchemia and Space Völvö*  
 21:00 Bird  
*Piano Day Celebration*  
 21:00 Bíó Paradís  
*Queer and Neurodivergent Art Market*  
 11:00 Borgarbókasafnið (The City Library)  
*Straumur Concert: Reykjavík!*  
 21:00 Kaffibarinn  
*DJ BenSöl*  
 23:00 Kaffibarinn

**VAX**  
 21:00 LEMMY  
*DJ/DRUMS: KGB*  
 23:00 LEMMY  
*JFDR: 'A Story From St. John's Eve' screening*  
 20:00 Mengi  
*Marla*  
 22:00 Röntgen  
*Dada & Óskar Guðjónsson*  
 17:00 Space Odyssey

*Saman: DesignMarket on DesignMarch*  
 11:00 Hafnarhús (Reykjavik Art Museum)

**Sunday March 30**  
*Evensong with The Choir of Hallgrímskirkja*  
 17:00 Hallgrímskirkja  
*Vinyl Sunday: Maggi Legó*  
 21:00 Kaffibarinn  
*Tíbrá – Ídraumheimum*  
 13:00 Salurinn  
*Saman: DesignMarket on DesignMarch*  
 11:00 Hafnarhús (Reykjavik Art Museum)

**Monday March 31**  
*Pub Quiz*  
 20:00 Bodega  
*Mikromusic & Ari Árelíus*  
 19:00 Harpa (Silfurberg)  
*Mary Jane from UA*  
 21:00 Kaffibarinn  
*Board Game Mondays*  
 19:00 Loft Hostel

**Wednesday April 2**  
*MTV Unplugged: Franz & Hildur Hlíf*  
 21:00 LEMMY  
*Vinyl Wednesday: DJ No Service*  
 21:00 Röntgen

**Thursday April 3**  
*Art School: Burlesque*  
 21:00 LEMMY  
*Drink & Draw*  
 19:00 Loft Hostel  
*Karaoke*  
 22:00 NÍNA  
*Elísabet*  
 21:00 Röntgen

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Appy Listings

# Some Of The Happiest Hours In Town

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**12 TÓNAR**  
Every day from 14:00 to 19:00  
Beer 1.100 ISK, Wine 1.200 ISK

**APÉRO**  
Every day from 16:00 to 1:00  
Beer 1000 ISK, Wine 1.200 ISK

**BINGO DRINKERY**  
Every day from 16:00 to 18:00  
Beer 1.000 ISK, Wine 1.000 ISK,  
Cocktails 1.500 ISK

**BÍÓ PARADÍS**  
Every day from 17:00 to 19:00  
Beer 1.000 ISK, Wine 1.200 ISK

**BODEGA**  
Every day from 15:00 to 18:00  
Beer 1.000 ISK, Wine 1.000 ISK

**DEN DANSKE KRO**  
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00  
Beer & Wine 1.550 ISK 2-for-1 offer

**FORRÉTTABARINN**  
Every day from 16:00 to 18:00  
Beer 950 ISK, Wine 950 ISK

**FRÖKEN REYKJAVÍK**  
Every day from 16:00 to 18:00  
Beer 900 ISK, Wine 1.100 ISK

**GAUKURINN**  
Every day from 17:00 to 21:00  
Beer 1.000 ISK, Wine 1.200 ISK

**HAFNARHÚS  
LADY BREWERY POPUP BAR**  
Every thursday 17:00 to 22:00  
Beer 1.100 ISK, Wine 1.300 ISK

**THE IRISHMAN**  
Every day from 12:00 to 19:00  
Beer 950 ISK, Wine 950 ISK

**JUNGLE COCKTAIL BAR**  
Every day from 16:00 to 18:00  
Beer 1.000 ISK, Wine 1.200 ISK,  
Cocktails 1.900 ISK

**KAFFIBARINN**  
Every day from 15:00 to 19:00  
Beer 950 ISK, Wine 1.000 ISK

**KAFFIBRENNSLAN**  
Every day from 16:00 to 20:00  
Beer 900 ISK, Wine 950 ISK

**KALDI BAR**  
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00  
Beer 950 ISK, Wine 950 ISK

**LOFT**  
Every day from 16:00 to 20:00  
Beer 990 ISK, Wine 1.400 ISK

**ÖLSTOFAN**  
Every day from 15:00 to 20:00  
Beer 1.100 ISK, Wine 1.100 ISK

**PRÍKIÐ**  
Every day from 16:00 to 20:00  
Beer 800 ISK, Wine 1.500 ISK

**RÖNTGEN**  
Every day from open to 19:00  
Beer 1.000 ISK, Wine 1.200 ISK

**SKÚLI CRAFT BAR**  
Every day from 12:00 to 19:00  
Beer 1.000 ISK, Wine 1.000 ISK

**STÚDENTAKJALLARINN**  
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00, until  
21:00 on weekends  
Beer 850 ISK, Wine 1.090 ISK

**TIPSÝ**  
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00  
50% off select cocktails

**VEÐUR**  
Every day from 14:00 to 19:35  
Beer 900 ISK, Wine 900 ISK

**VÍNSTÚKAN TÍU SOPAR**  
Every day from 17:00 to 19:00  
Buy one wine bottle, get two courses  
(any price)

\* We do our best to keep these prices current, but still they change.

Featured Happy Hour

## Ölstofa Kormáks og Skjaldar (Ölstofan)

VEGAMÓTASTÍGUR 4

In this time of profit above all, one of the quickest budget cuts for a bar to make is reducing happy hour. I'm certainly not the first Grapevine writer to take major issue with this fad of early start, over by 18:00 Happy Hours (don't you guys have jobs?). But lo and behold, these fellows are doing it right: Kormákur og Skjaldar, who have maintained an impressive 15:00-20:00 Happy Hour. Beautiful. With fairly reasonable prices, this bar is simple and perfect. I've even heard they've been hosting some good live music lately, if you stay past Happy Hour, that is. ISH

**HAPPY HOURS:**  
Monday to Saturday, 15:00-20:00  
Beer 1100, wine 1100



## Cheap Eats

Here are some sweet meal deals that'll fill your tummy and without draining your bank account.

**APÓTEK**  
Soup of the Day  
1.990 ISK all day, every day

**ARABIAN TASTE**  
Falafel Roll  
1.790 all day, every day

**BIRD**  
Deathmetal sandwich and beer  
3.500 ISK all day, every day

**BÆJARINS BEZTU**  
Hotdog and soda  
990 ISK all day, every day

**DEIG**  
Poor Man's Offer: filled bagel,  
doughnut & drink  
1.850 ISK weekdays after 10:00

**HAMBORGARABÚLLA  
TÓMASAR**  
Tuesday Special: burger, fries &  
soda  
1.990 ISK all day on Tuesday

**HLÖLLABÁTAR**  
Lunch Offer: Choice of any sub and  
soda  
2.195 ISK every day until 14:00

**ISLENSKI BARINN**  
Soup of the Day  
1.950 ISK all day, every day

**LEMON**  
Combo of the Month: large sand-  
wich & juice  
2.390 ISK all day, every day

**MAI THAI BISTRO**  
Lunch Offer: daily curry meal  
2.290 ISK weekdays between 11:00  
- 14:00

**NAPOLI PIZZA**  
Lunch Offer: choice of menu pizza

or sandwich  
1.890 ISK every day from 11:30 -  
15:00

**PÍTUBARINN**  
Veggie pita sandwich  
2.090 ISK all day, every day

**REYKJAVÍK ROASTERS**  
Breakfast menu & sourdough toasts  
580 ISK - 1.800 ISK, all day, every  
day

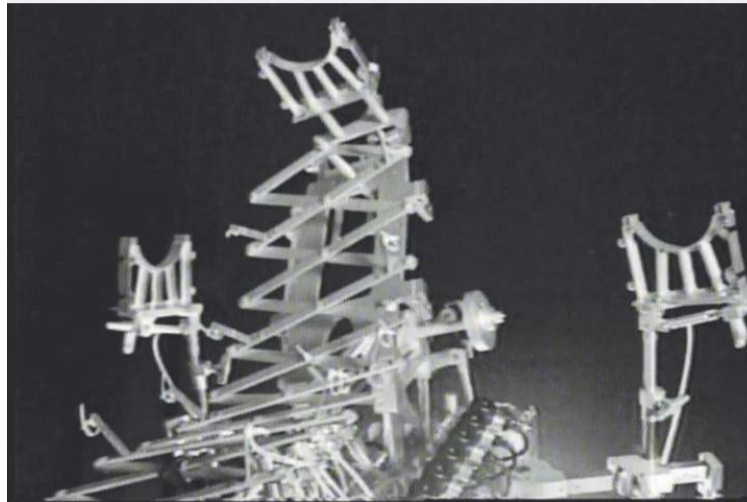
**SHALIMAR**  
Curry in a Hurry Lunch Special  
1.790 ISK weekdays from 12:00 -  
15:00

**ZORBIAN HOT**  
Chicken shawarma wraps & falafel  
wraps  
1.690 ISK all day, every day

\* We do our best to keep these prices current, but shit's outta control. Let us know if you spot a sweet deal: [grapevine@grapevine.is](mailto:grapevine@grapevine.is)

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Woody Vasulka  
*The Brotherhood - Table 6: The Maiden, 1998*  
Video still

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# Music News



## Documentary Scored By Icelandic Composer Wins Oscar

The documentary *No Other Land*, scored by Iceland-based composer Julius Rothlaender, won an Oscar for Best Documentary at the 97th Academy Awards on March 3. Julius has been based in Iceland since 2015 and features in bands such as Laura Secord and as the second half of lo-fi punk band BSI, where he plays the bass and prominently works a synthesiser with his feet.

*No Other Land* is made by an Israeli-Palestinian collective consisting of Basel Adra, Yuval Abraham, Rachel Szor and Hamdan Ballal. It shows the destruction of the West Bank's Masafer Yatta by Israeli soldiers and the alliance which forms between Palestinian activist Basel and Israeli journalist Yuval. The film premiered at the 2024 Berlinale and won the European Film Award for Best Documentary. *No Other Land* will be screened in Bió Paradis between March 30-April 2, 2025. JB

*No Other Land* is made by an Israe-



## First 35 Artists Announced For Iceland Airwaves

Iceland Airwaves has announced the first wave of acts for its 2025 edition, scheduled to take place November 6-8, 2025. This is the festival's 26th iteration. On the international front, the lineup includes Kenyan Grace, DEADLETTER, FAT DOG, Babymorocco, Night Tapes, So Good, and The Scratch, among others. As for the Icelandic artists, the festival welcomes both return-

ing favourites and fresh faces to the stage. The full list of Icelandic artists include Daniil, Floni, gugusar, Milkywhale, Hasar, Tófa, Emma, Izleifur, Jelena Ćirić, Kári Egils, KUSK & Óviti, Lúpína, Magnús Jóhann, Saint Pete, Snorri Helgason, superserious, Sunna Margrét, and Valdimar. Early bird tickets are available at icelandairwaves.is. IZ/JB



## Icelandic Music Awards Reveal Nominee Shortlist

The Icelandic Music Awards unveiled their shortlist of nominees on February 25, with the annual celebration of Icelandic music slated to take place March 12, 2025. Albums, songs and compositions, graphics and videos, production and lyrics are recognised as contenders in the various categories divided by genre. In addition, an honorary and a newcomer award will be handed

out. A host of artists are among the nominees, with five receiving the highest number of mentions. Una Torfa tallies the highest number of mentions, nominated for performer, song, album and lyrics of the year. Following the troubadour are artists Markéta Irglová, Emiliana Torrini, and GDRN with three nominations each. JB



Folking Great

# Maturing With Music

Folk artist Árný Margrét shares her diary on sophomore LP *Miss You, I Do*

WORDS Jóhannes Bjarkason  
IMAGE Joana Fontinha

Árný Margrét's rise to stardom has been rapid. In a matter of months, the young artist progressed from playing in her bedroom to securing a record deal with One Little Independent. Contemplating personal development and reverberating American folk music tradition, Árný Margrét's sophomore album *Miss You, I Do* is out on March 7.

Before all that, Árný was a shy teenager experimenting with playing the guitar and writing songs with the backdrop of the Icelandic Westfjords.

"I got a guitar when I was 14 and started playing some chords and covers. Gradually, at around 16, I started writing," Árný Margrét reminisces. "It was a big secret and only happened in my bedroom. Nobody could know." She stresses *could*, underscoring the covert nature of her musical endeavours.

"At this time, I found it very difficult to perform in front of other people. I didn't really want to do it, but when I did, it was fun! People knew who I was and listened, but it wasn't an aspect I pursued. I found it good to

son of Hjaltalin fame — a connection Árný admits to having not actively sought out.

"He tells me I need to meet Kiddi (Guðmundur Kristinn Jónsson) from Hjálmar — because he's very seasoned when it comes to recording acoustic guitar. So I went there — he wasn't expecting me — and I didn't really know who he was," she giggles. "I played ten songs, forgot my notebook with all my lyrics, went back, and he asks if I have more. So I play more. And there, the ball starts rolling with our collaboration. He helped me with a lot of things, and in a short time, we had struck a deal with One Little Independent and booking agencies in America, the U.K. and Europe. It happened before anything was released."

## I could get so nervous that I just blacked out.

keep it in my room where nobody knew. But then it just happened," she explains, repeating that refrain multiple times during the interview.

CLIMBING UP THE LADDER

Having only played a handful of shows in her hometown, Árný's musical career quickly took off. Through a mutual acquaintance, Árný was introduced to Högni Egils-

SHOWBIZ GRADUATION

In a matter of months, Árný Margrét had graduated from her bedroom to the big stage, debuting at the 2021 Iceland Airwaves festival.

"I'd say I'm braver onstage, more confident in my ability and vocal use. The 2021 Iceland Airwaves was a big jump for me. It was that

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# AMERICAN BAR

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moment I decided to never bring my notes up on stage," she confesses. "I could get so nervous that I just blacked out. So it was a big decision to just go for it."

In Árný's opinion, the speed with which she became acquainted with the music industry was by no means a part of a larger plan. In her own words, "It just happened. I've never been like, 'I'm going to be something.' Music is just a part of who I am. And writing music is just like journaling. It's something I would still be doing even if I weren't signed or releasing it," Árný explains.

**I've never been like, 'I'm going to be something.' Music is just a part of who I am. And writing music is just like journaling.**

According to Árný, her fast-paced introduction to a music career was in large part driven by Kiddi. A member of bands Baggalútur and Hjálmar, Kiddi is also a manager at studio Hljóðriti — a legendary music studio in Iceland's capital area. Looking around Árný's creative team, his name keeps popping up in the credits. Photographer, video director, instrumentalist — Kiddi lends a versatile helping hand.

"When I first met him, I had to Google him," Árný confesses jovially. "In the beginning, he wanted to introduce me to people around him. We tried working with all kinds of people on the first album, and it became pretty sustainable," she continues. "We work well together in the studio because we have the same taste in a lot of things. We just know what works and what doesn't, and we tend to agree," Árný smiles.

But Kiddi's involvement in Árný's

material is not a one-way street, says Árný. "I've been helping around all kinds of projects he's associated with. And we're best friends," she professes.

#### GREAT AMERICAN SONGBOOK

For Árný, writing music is as natural as her journaling. Writing down her thoughts on a piece of paper and physically storing it — only to turn the page onto a new idea — was a major stepping stone in the birth of her debut.

"The debut is very raw and open and honest. I think it's strange to listen to it," Árný smiles. "Now I'm like, 'Wow you're so small and you decided to write about *this*.' Nothing is being hidden, there are no instruments or anything happening. It just revolves around the voice and lyrics," she says as her cat meanders into the room.

In Árný's opinion, *I Miss You, I Do* highlights her artistic and personal maturity — a transformation — over the years. Recorded in collaboration with different producers — Brad Cook, Josh Kaufman, Andrew Berlin, and Kiddi — the studio sessions were initially conceived as an experiment but ended as the final result.

Written for the most part during Árný's overseas tours to the U.S., *I Miss You, I Do* references the oft-covered wandering soul of American folk culture and 20th-century literature. Images of Greyhound stations and North Carolina weather

are portrayed, creating delicate connections with the giants of American folk music and a life on the move.

Although it seems bare at first glance — perhaps due to the excellent protrusion of Árný's songwriting crux — *I Miss You, I Do* utilises an extensive array of arrangements which seep further as each listening session goes by. Starting with the title track, it seems as if Árný opens up her journal — and her heart — to the listener in the first seconds of the album.

But despite the artist's honest and tender subject matters, there's a perceptible distance between the words and their voice. Surprisingly, that's what Árný intends.

"The music that I listen to is very rooted in folk music and sung in English," she references. "I contemplate words a lot. [Singing in English] I feel more distance," Árný admits. "There's a big difference between writing in Icelandic and English. I have one song in Icelandic released ["radduptaka\_001"]. It's so different because it's so easy to be totally..." she pauses for words. "It's so easy to be cringy. You get very vulnerable, and you have to choose your words wisely."

With plans on releasing more Icelandic lyrics in the future, Árný's current hopes for the album are simple. "That [listeners] think it's as fun as I had creating it. [The album] can be a bit hard and borderline tragic at times," she explains. "But bright and fun. Music should stir up some emotions. That's my goal at least, always." ■

Árný Margrét's second album is out now on available streaming platforms. For more information on physical copies, tour dates and all things Árný, visit [arnymargret.com](http://arnymargret.com).

# NOO PIZZA

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HLEMMUR FOOD HALL



Track By Track

# Filling The Gaps

Elín Hall's latest EP wrestles with breakup in every shape and form

WORDS Elín Hall  
IMAGE Supplied by Elín Hall

It's safe to say that Elín Hall's name is on everyone's lips. If she isn't portraying Vigdís Finnbogadóttir on national television or Bubbi Morthens in the theatre, then she's probably off somewhere at a red carpet ceremony in Europe. Somehow, she even makes time for her music career. Springboarding off the success of her 2023 album *heyrst í mér?*, Elín phoned up her close associate Reynir Snær Björnsson to help out with her new album. Performed live in studio Hljóðriti, *fyllt í eyðurnar* aims to capture the essence of breakups.

## HEIÐA

This song is about the breakdown of friendships, which I think can sometimes be harder than a typical breakup. There are some guidelines to follow if a heart gets broken, but people don't really talk about losing friends. When people select their partner, they usually just pick one. Friends can be many and some closer than others, that's why it can feel much more personal when someone quits a friendship.

## AFMÆLI

"Afmæli" is probably the most literal song on the album and talks about simply breaking someone's heart on their birthday. There's an edge of country in the arrangements, but mostly in the narrative. The lyrics are direct, revealing and muted.

## GADDAVÍR

This one was close to ending up on my last record. You could say that this is the track that set the new album in motion as I contemplated releasing it. "Gaddavír" is the only track I wrote on piano. The framework for the song is simple and the subject matter is heartbreak. But there's a taste of poison in the lyrics, and they are pungent when you take a closer look.

## FÖÐURLANDSSÓL

The last song includes everything I've mentioned up until now. I wanted to write a big song during a time of momentous closure in my life. The song is influenced by a country-style narrative and Icelandic literary heritage. I wanted to paint pictures which seemed personal. I wanted to whisper secrets into the ears of listeners and subsequently blow the song up with grand metaphors and doomsday declarations. The goal was to encapsulate the concept of a breakup, process it with a song, and continue with my life. The birdsong revisits the listener at the end of the album and thanks him for the journey. Hopefully too early and perhaps without a conclusion. If I had to express my own verdict, it would likely be that all the world's art cannot describe breakup sufficiently. They are merely attempts. Maybe it's the struggle with this lofty goal that's more interesting. ■

## BARNAHÓSTASAFT

The opening track starts with the sound of birdsong, which Reynir recorded in downtown Reykjavík on his way to the studio. I wrote the song about the fact that you can't really console yourself after a breakup. When you've lost a person who was once there for you and you're stuck with your own emotions. It's incredibly childish to just want to be consoled.

## FYLLT Í EYÐURNAR

"Fyllt í eyðurnar" is a song I co-wrote with Hrafnhildur Magnea (Raven) and, like many of my songs, revolves around unsatisfactory communication. To be giving up on accommodating someone who doesn't dare to have the talk.



Podcastic

# On The Beat

R. Michael Hendrix's podcast series is a space for all to understand their fellow creatives better

WORDS Ish Sveinsson Houle  
IMAGE Joana Fontinha

**R**. Michael Hendrix sits beside Klemens Hannigan on a bright yellow couch to ask him about craftsmanship. Most associated with HATARI, Klemens is a renowned musician currently nominated for two Icelandic Music Awards, but music is not his only craft — he's a carpenter and has been for longer than he's been performing. That's exactly why Michael is interested in him.

Michael is an acclaimed graphic designer, creative director, musician and co-author of *Two Beats Ahead: What Musical Minds Teach Us About Innovation*. Under the same moniker, *Two Beats Ahead Live!* Michael launched a podcast series in which he interviews Reykjavík-based musicians to further explore concepts from the book. Preceding Klemens Hannigan, he spoke with Lilja Birgisdóttir (Fischersund), Pan Thorarensson (Space Odyssey, Extreme Chill), Melkorka Magnúsdóttir (Milky-whale, Iceland Innovation Week) and more.

## VITAL VERSATILITY

Moving to Iceland after his book's completion, Michael began thinking about how this topic applied in his new place of residence. "I actually worried," he admits, "I kept meeting so many people that were this kind of 'slash' person. You know, 'I do this-slash-this-slash-this.' And I thought, 'man, have I written a book that's completely useless in Iceland?'"

Despite his original inclination,

he eventually reached a different conclusion — and a catalyst for his podcast. "The principles of the book are alive and well in Iceland, but the mental models for it are not," he recalls thinking. "If I just do a podcast series about these musicians that are doing other things, it's a way to amplify and encourage other people to recognise this in themselves. I would hope. That's the idea behind it."

## SEEING EACH OTHER

Michael has been recording the podcast in live, free, open-to-the-public sessions at his Huldunótur (e. Invisible Notes) workspace, above the recently re-located Space Odyssey. "It's been another way for me to feel more integrated into Reykjavík and to be a host," he says of settling into the new space.

The podcast sessions are usually in the mid-afternoon on a weekday and, although many in the artistic scene this podcast is aimed towards might not hold a traditional 9-5, there was a modest attendance at the session I went to. Michael

quick to utilise the space for movie screenings, work projects, parties and as a gallery space, even having exciting plans for a ceramic exhibition during Design March.

## PETTA REDDAST

There's more coming up for Michael Hendrix, in addition to Design March. His album *YUKS* is set to be released on March 28. He's also thinking about writing a new book and concurrently starting season two of this podcast. At the forefront of his mind through it all is creative direction — one of his own "slashes."

"You don't go to school for creative direction. I want to see a book about this, about how to be a good creative director. And there's a very urgent reason for this: I think technology is continuing to take many things out of our hands."

Despite the fact that any reminder of our rapid progression towards an AI-dominated future puts a bad taste in the mouths of many, Michael offers a counter: "but, you know, having a camera in our phones

# Man, have I written a book that's completely useless in Iceland?

touched on this as I asked what he hopes for the future of these sessions, noting "[Reykjavík] is such a small place, but circles of people tend to stick together and not mix. And as wildly creative as this city is, and that's really what drew me here from America — I just felt an energy that I wanted to participate in — but often I find a lack of curiosity amongst these circles. So one thing I'm hoping for is that these interviews start to help the community see each other in a fresh light."

It's not just these sessions he's using to beckon Reykjavíkingar into Huldunótur: Michael has been

hasn't put all photographers out of business. It's just put the really boring ones out of business."

To hear and learn from a non-boring artist talking to other non-boring artists, attend a live session (or listen after the fact) to *Two Beats Ahead Live!* ■

The next *Two Beats Ahead Live!* will be with Sigtryggur Baldursson on March 13 at 14:30. Check it out at Huldunótur above Space Odyssey, Bergstaðastræti 4. Hear about the upcoming podcast sessions and events on Instagram @twobeatsahead.





Supergroups

# Machine Gun Etiquette

Trailblazers HAM and Apparat Organ Quartet melt into HAMPARAT

WORDS Irina Shtreis  
IMAGE Joana Fontinha

On March 21, members of HAM and Apparat Organ Quartet join forces as Iceland's newest supergroup: HAMPARAT.

When two cult collectives unite, the effect might be akin to a suddenly occurring natural phenomenon. Iceland cannot be easily surprised by eruptions or the Northern Lights, but creative partnerships and projects are some things that will always arouse curiosity and a sense of wonder among the locals.

The upcoming concert of supergroup HAMPARAT, which combines members of HAM and Apparat Organ Quartet, has caused ripples in the local waters. The event at Harpa will see the two forces of nature

playing amended versions of each other's compositions. Tracks such as HAM's "Vestur Berlin," "Partýbær" from the *Sódóma Reykjavík* film soundtrack, and "Stereo Rock & Roll" from AOQ's debut album will be performed with augmented arrangement.

## HELPING HANDS

"Iceland has often been misunderstood and not appreciated like it should," HAM guitarist Flosi Þorgeirsson comments on the communal spirit of the Icelandic music scene. "It has this unique artistic microclimate where you can easily reach out to musicians and do things together."

While at first glance, these two units seem to belong to parallel worlds — a meticulous exercise in prog and krautrock (AOQ) versus a guitar-driven act of pistaking (HAM) — they share a down-to-earth attitude and inventive approach. These bands are intertwined in a very Icelandic way, sharing drummer Arnar Geir Ómarsson and both having featured late composer Jóhann Jóhannsson.

The bands' common rehearsal space in Gufunes became a playground for future collaboration. "We

at HAM have always been fans of the Apparat Organ Quartet, and I'm told they also like our music, so it was really a match made in heaven," Flosi says. "It's been so much fun because we can try new things — I'm using new guitar effects, for example. I kinda discovered my inner prog guitar player. With reverb and delay applied in this project, I can allow myself to go into space and create dreamy landscapes."

In the canon of Icelandic music, both HAM and Apparat Organ Quartet are considered game-changing music collectives. One of the first shows of provocateurs HAM, according to Morgunblaðið, was revelatory. The band, comprised of Sigurjón Kjartansson, Óttarr Proppé, S. Björn Blöndal, and Ævar Ísberg, appeared before an audience at Du-shús in March 1988. "They played simple, fast and catchy devil rock," and "seemed the most interesting collective of the evening," Morgunblaðið's journalist wrote at the time.

The review perfectly summed up the concept of a fledgling unit whose name is an acronym for "Happy, Angry, Mad." A year later, the collective's second album *Buffalo Virgin* would be released on the UK independent label One Little Indian

(now One Little Independent). The success in Britain followed the lack of reciprocity from the local media industry: Icelandic radio stations rejected airplay for the band's debut *Hold*.

## IN THE GALACTIC TRENCHES

Although formed a decade later, in 1999, Apparat Organ Quartet — a brainchild of Jóhann Jóhannsson — also threw a gauntlet to the conventional approach to music. The idea to create minimalist soundscapes evolved into sophisticated prog aesthetics with prevailing analogue synthesizers. Talking to KEXP host Kevin Cole in 2012, AOQ member Sighvatur Ómar Kristinsson explained: "We had to invent a sound that could work with four organs to record this kind of music. For instance, we were trying to do bass lines on a synthesiser."

Though electric organs and synthesizers have served them well, Apparat Organ Quartet seem content with the addition of guitars. "I can see during the rehearsals that they really like it," Flosi said. "They have mentioned that some of the songs finally sound like they should have. I feel like these different instruments

complement each other."

Pondering over the influence of the collaboration on his artistic vision, Flosi speaks metaphorically. "Sometimes while playing with HAM, I feel like I'm in a World War I tank in the trenches. But playing the Apparat Organ Quartet compositions feel like travelling in space."

As a senior band, HAM brings a trademark comedic element to HAMPARAT. "Most foreigners don't relate to it but Icelanders do," says Flosi. "The lyrics in our songs are really funny; they are often about betrayal and love, but in a satirical way. We couldn't be a political band, it just wouldn't fit us."

"When we were teenagers, telephone books in Iceland had printed instructions on what to do if a nuclear bomb attack started," he adds. "Such things implying we might die in a horrible way created in that generation some kind of sarcasm and devil-may-care attitude. I think it's much more prevalent in HAM than in any other band." ■

Catch HAM and Apparat Organ Quartet's historical concert at Harpa's Eldborg on March 21. Tickets start at 5,990 ISK, available at [tix.is](http://tix.is).

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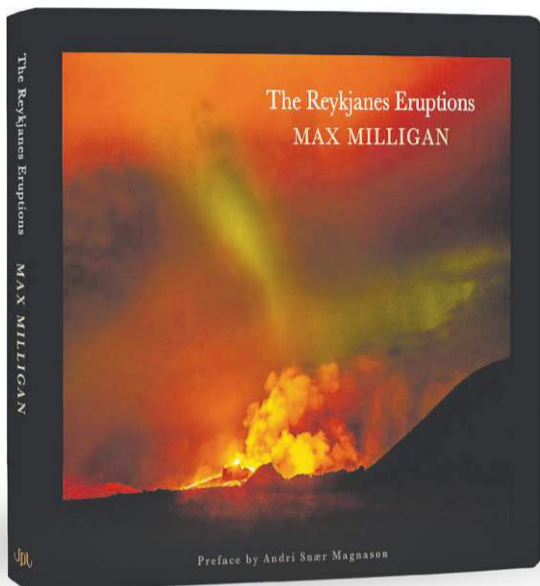


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Day Trip

## When The Road Calls A

Chasing spring through the winding roads of Hvalfjörður

WORDS Iryna Zubenko  
IMAGE Atli Freyr Steinsson

Oh, that first sunny day after weeks of grey skies and gloom. The one where the sky turns a crisp, cloudless blue, the sun finally breaks through, and the whole world feels just a little lighter. You take a deep breath, and for the first time in what feels like forever, everything seems possible. Spring is here – or, if you live in Iceland, at least you know it's on its way.

When a day like that lands in the middle of February – and on a weekend, no less – there's no excuse to stay inside. It's the kind of day that demands the first proper road trip of the year.

I spend ten minutes looking for my sunglasses. After months of relentless grey, I can't even remember the last time I wore them – six months ago, maybe? Sunnies finally on, I jump in the car, feeling fresh and ready to conquer the world. But first

– no proper conquests happen on an empty stomach.

A quick stop at the Brauð & Co. drive-through, arguably one of the best things capitalism has brought to Iceland. Unfortunately, it's after noon, which means all the good stuff is long gone. I hesitate for a moment, debating whether I can really start the day without a chilli cheese knot, but settle for a muesli caramel bun instead. It doesn't disappoint. Bun in hand and “Painted Image” by Oyama on full blast, I head towards Route 1, bound for Hvalfjörður.

### WINDING ROADS

No matter how many times I've driven these roads, Hvalfjörður's landscape takes my breath away. The snow lies in patches along the mountainsides, and here and there, the grass is starting to push through, finally emerging after months under frost. Much like our faces after a long winter, it seems desperate for a dose of vitamin D.

Every few hundred metres, it feels like the view could be pulled straight from a stilllife painting. How lucky are we to have this beauty right on the doorstep of the capital? Today's plan is simple: let the road take me as far as it will, then wrap up with a relaxing soak at Hvammsvík.

My excitement over the weather quickly fades as we pull up at

Pórufoss and I take my first step outside the car. It's a classic case of *gluggaveður* – beautiful to admire from inside, but absolutely brutal the moment you step out. I learn this the hard way when I try to open the car door, only for the wind to slam it shut again. On my second attempt, I push harder, jump out, and quickly throw on my hat and gloves. Deceived by the sunshine, I'm wearing my summer gloves (yes, I own summer gloves – please don't judge).

The waterfall is pretty, no doubt, but in Iceland, you're spoiled by the sheer number of *pretty* sights. Is it pretty enough for me to hike down? Not quite. Is it pretty enough to take a quick photo and enjoy the rest from the warmth of the car instead? Yes.

A group of tourists, lined up as if competing for the perfect waterfall shot, clearly think otherwise. Despite the wind trying to steal their hats and their car, parked nearby, rocking with the gusts, they stand firm, snapping photo after photo of Pórufoss.

I've got time to spare, so I take a detour, winding along the scenic roads from Kjósarhreppur, past Litlu-Tunga, and down to Hvalfjarðarvegur. The first spring birds pirouette above the fjord, while Hvalfjörður's infamous whaling station – the country's last remaining one – looms in the distance. On such a



# Again

stunning day, the steel towers stand stark and jarring, an eyesore amidst the otherwise peaceful landscape.

## SECLUDED ESCAPE

About 40 minutes later, our car bumps onto the gravel road leading to Hvammsvík Hot Springs, tucked away at the foot of the fjord. Iceland boasts countless hot springs, catering to every taste and budget, but none quite compare to the remoteness and breathtaking view offered by this one.

Hvammsvík is smaller than most local spas, so booking in advance is recommended. Admission starts at 4.900 ISK, depending on the day and time, but it only includes the semi-outdoor Natural Changing Rooms. While I love a good bargain, the temperatures are below freezing, so I opt for the Classic experience. Weighing all the options, I discover that my mobile provider, Nova, offers a 2-for-1 promo code – so instead 19.800 ISK, I pay 9.900 ISK for my travel companion and I.

The person at the register warns me that a large group is about to leave, so the changing room might get crowded – and oh my, it sure does. I push through the crowd to the lockers, then wait in line for the shower. But when I finally make it out and sink into the Lounge Pool, I can finally let go and relax.

For what Hvammsvík offers, it might actually justify its price tag: eight hot pools of varying sizes and temperatures, including a 35°C tidal pool that disappears entirely when the tide is high. It also delivers all the usual suspects of Icelandic spa culture – its own line of hair and shower products, a swim-up bar and a steam room.

**It's a classic case of *gluggaveður* – beautiful to admire from the inside, but absolutely brutal the moment you step out.**

The spa's design, though obviously man-made, manages to blend with the surroundings of the fjord without overpowering the view. And the view is what, for at least two years in a row, adds Hvammsvík bonus points when our sister magazine Best Of Reykjavik convenes its yearly panel to decide on the best spa.

## THE SUN IS BACK

One of the clear signs that winter is coming to a close is the lengthened days. There's a luxury in still seeing daylight after 16:00, with each passing day gifting us a few more minutes of light. It's like slowly so-

bering up from a nasty hangover. For those who think I'm losing my mind – you've clearly never lived through a full Icelandic winter.

Though it's not quite the peak tourist season yet, you can already hear a variety of accents in the pools. Some seem to be here only for their online following to know all about it. A couple, who doesn't budge from a

prime spot for at least forty minutes, posting endless Instagram stories until their followers are surely sick of them, inspires me to set a goal to learn a few curse words in Spanish.

The skyline is slowly starting to change. The icy wind bites at my back as I jump from rock to rock along the path between pools, feeling like I'm hopping across hot stones. As I sink into the comfortable 37°C pool, a woman lets out a scream while stepping into the cold plunge. Whatever works for her, I suppose – but the promise of spring's arrival is enough to wake my senses. ■

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## Food Feature Is It A Bakery, Is It A Ca

BakaBaka wears many hats, some better than others

WORDS Shruthi Basappa  
IMAGES Joana Fontinha

the confusion, wondering whether to be seated or grab a cinnamon bun to-go or, if you managed to cross all of those hurdles, you are now trying to pay and leave the cacophony.

prise they named it BakaBaka (baka being “to bake” in Icelandic).

Gústi’s background and experience as a baker in Iceland and Denmark

It is a style of pie that is great for a lingering dining experience: the dough has just enough hydration to keep it from being tough-when-cold.

### BAKERY/CAFÉ/PIZZERIA

When news spread around town that Gústi bakari, as Ágúst Fannar Einþórsson, is fondly known, was opening a new place, there was palpable excitement. One of the co-founders of Brauð og Co, his exit from the bakery behemoth had set tongues wagging about the whys and nexts.

Early in 2022, the iconic black timber house on the corner of Bankastræti and Lækjargata was reimagined as an all day dining establishment – bakery by day, lunch-time café, and a wine and pizza joint come dinner. Given Gústi’s reputation as a master baker, it is little sur-

continue to inform the selection at BakaBaka. The sensational cinnamon buns have found warm company in the cardamom knots, a bit of a cheeky Denmark meets Sweden but in Iceland moment. There are floppy rectangles of creme patisserie topped vinarbrauð, buttery croissants with honeycombed cross sections that make for Instagram-friendly content and a light, flaky and fantastic start to the day.

Lunch options range from a sit-down menu of eggs and bread in some form to a picture-worthy lemon curd filled French toast and take-away attempts at Italian-inspired sandwiches that are more bread than filling. All are served with healthy lashings of the indifferent

**W**hether you are a local or a visiting guest, chances are we have all experienced that same chaos that is the front room at BakaBaka. Despite three different entrances to the space, designers made the choice to have the bar extend almost to the door at the Bankastræti corner entrance. Which means you are cramped from the get-go in an uncomfortable hustle trying to figure out your next move.

At any given point of time, there are at least three people behind the high bar trying to decipher the chaos for themselves. No one seems to have designated roles. So you join



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## afé, Is It A Pizzeria?

service I have come to expect at BakaBaka.

Dinner is when the place comes alive, the chaos of the day giving way to some semblance of shabby balance at nightfall. Pizzas are stone baked and a healthy cross between a Napoli-NY pie that may be reminiscent of a Roberta's slice for some. The pasta from the early days has given way to a pizza-focussed menu with small plates to share. They are also encouraging diners to splurge on a bottle of wine, with the promise of a free pizza with every bottle on Sundays through Thursdays.

Pop-up's happen regularly, so keep an eye out for collaborative nights.

### EXCEPTIONALLY GOOD PIZZA

It is little surprise that a baker-led pizzeria would be this good. As every good baker knows, and pizzaiole will agree, it all comes down to flour, water and time.

So what exactly makes for a good pizza? As award-winning pizzaiole Fabrizio Mancinetti explains, you're looking for "lightness, flavour and texture." Sure there are endless debates about the effect of water, of culinary tradition, and of comfort

or nostalgia, but the one that stands head and shoulders above the rest is this: joy.

Pizzas have the incredible capacity to be both a Þriðjudagstilbóð for tired parents and singletons, to being the perfect communal meal on Friday, or a low stakes litmus test for first dates and ensuing anniversaries. In Iceland, they have long been a symbol of modernity, access to the outside world and, in their newest avatar, a way to showcase technique and know-how.

As expected, the pizzas here are sourdough, relying on the gentle fermentation of happy yeast over the aggressiveness of the dry yeast commonplace in industrial bread making. It is a style of pie that is great for a lingering dining experience: the dough has just enough hydration to keep it from being tough-when-cold. This is a pie you can hold a conversation over – as good within the first five minutes on arrival as it is 15 minutes later.

Toppings are selective and restrained, a departure from the local preference for a heavily laden pie. My personal favourites are the biancos; the Scandinava, with mascarpone, pickled chillies, ramps when in season; and the Salsiccia (both 3600 ISK) with mozzarella, crum-

bled sausage and potatoes, confit garlic and parmesan. Red pies like the Margharita (3200 ISK) are as expected at a place that prides itself on its pizzas – milky and delicious to the last bite.

While I nurse a soft spot for the garlicky langhos of BakaBaka's early days, the baked nduja with cheese (2500 ISK) is a nice stand-in. The anchovies with salsa verde and tomatoes (2500 ISK) however, hides the star ingredient, perhaps an attempt to not put off diners new to the fish.

While the layout of the space itself leaves a lot to be desired in terms of synchronised flow between the guests, staff and food, it is the entirely manageable aspect of front of house training that is baffling. That it has gone unaddressed by the owners is alarming.

What sets apart the service here is the refusal to redress the situation. Whether its bad planning – there is no one to tell you that back room seating is on two levels, or that you pay at the counter, or that your order was never delivered – raised

frustrated.

At a time when restaurants struggle to break even, places like BakaBaka have the enormous privilege of investors, an invested audience, a city that is hungry for a genuinely good dining experience that doesn't break the bank, and a location that would draw in crowds even if the food were terrible; it is a pity that reluctant hospitality threatens to overshadow the kitchen.

Sure, the cardamom knot is doughier and has lost some of its shine since its early days, sure the savoury croissant bakes hardly seem to make a comeback and the vinarbrauð can at times be raw – you forgive that, because any place can have a bad day. But when bad days become the norm, you have to wonder if the place is run as it's meant to be or expecting their guests to be servile and grateful that you deigned to serve them.

Perhaps BakaBaka is stretched thin by the weight of its own expectations to be many places at once while being only one of those for some and rarely all of them everyone at the same time. No matter their lofty ambitions, disdain for paying customers will always leave you with a bitter aftertaste, no matter how sweet the buns. ■

## It is telling that I have dined at BakaBaka as often as I have turned away frustrated.

### EXCEPTIONALLY BAD SERVICE

From being refused entry as an invited guest on their opening night, to dealing with slow service on slow mornings, to confused inefficiency, forgotten orders and being curtly told we cannot order our drinks before the food, dining at BakaBaka can leave you reeling from "what just happened?" to "what the fuck!"

concerns are met with indifference, dismissal, or sad attempts at jokes meant to make you feel like a burden for walking in. If you walk in after a snowstorm mid afternoon when crowds are low, you may have to wade through a giant puddle at the doorstep, as the staff just shrugs and blinks even as they see you turn around and walk away. Why bother cleaning up when guests will excuse themselves at the door step, literally. It is telling that I have dined at BakaBaka as often as I have turned away

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Meat Sweets

# Let Them Eat Meat

Steikhúsið delivers an undeniably tasty portion of protein

WORDS Ragnar Egilsson  
IMAGES Joana Fontinha

### MEATSURGENCE

The steakhouse has its origins in the working class London chophouses of the 17th century, serving up hearty stews of mystery meat, before the emergence of the 19th century American steakhouse catering to well-heeled New Yorkers and Chicagoans.

The 1990s threw a multitude of new twists on the concept, whether they were Brazilian rodizio-style steakhouses with herds of cattle spiked in u-shaped formation on bullfighter spikes or upscale Japanese contemporary spots flogging wagyu beef raised on whispered lullabies and the finest cognac.

After a dip in popularity in the 2010s, steakhouses seem to be crawling

their way back to the top among the culinary elite and hoi polloi alike, that seems to be part of a general resurgence in the type of old money status symbols one might associate with the roaring twenties, like gold trimming and stained glass lamps.

This has manifested itself in a range of opulent beef palaces in mainland Europe (usually called “beefbars”), as well as dimly lit neo-deco meat grottos like Daniel Boulud’s La Tête d’Or, which emerged in New York late last year. Meanwhile, U.S. steakhouse chains like LongHorn and Texas Roadhouse have enjoyed record sales and U.K. chains like Hawksmoor and Blacklock have taken the industry by surprise.

This is despite a steady growth in veganism and environmentalism

Steikhúsið has made the bold choice of claiming the title of being “the steakhouse” in Iceland. It may have been a reasonable attempt at gaming the Google algorithm, but also makes for pretty big shoes to fill in light of the recent boom in steakhouse culture. So it felt only right for us to pay them a visit.

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within the restaurant industry and despite ballooning beef prices (largely due to price-fixing by international beef conglomerates like JBS and Tyson). Perhaps the resurgence is part of the general backswing against progressive policies. Perhaps it's just another way to flaunt wealth. Or perhaps the allure of a grilled slab of meat is just that hard to resist.

#### SEARED HUNKS OF WHALE

Steikhúsið (Tryggvagata 4-6) leads the male of the species in balls first like a warm jockstrap. The yacht rock wafts gently from the speakers and the all-male wait staff greet guests confidently with full eye contact and guide guests to butt-worn leather cushions under the shadow of brick walls studded with metal gears.

We took in the view of boat houses and passing cars and soaked in the Saturday atmosphere, dominated by couples having a pre-show dinner and lubricated groups of bearded men chowing on wooden planks like hungry beavers.

## Steikhúsið leads the male of the species in balls first like a warm jockstrap.

The mixed appetiser seems to be the most popular choice and consists of three dishes. First is an understandable crowd-pleaser of savory, braised beef ribs in a sticky glaze, served over richly creamed Jerusalem artichokes and topped

with crisps of the same origin. The second app was a lightly-seared tuna tataki with prawn crackers, which was overly claggy with kewpie mayo and dominated by a crust of smoked paprika. The third was a grilled whale served cold with marinated cucumber and lotus root

crisps — a tasty dish but a foolhardy choice, seeing as the inclusion of whale meat was not noted by the waiter.

I would urge diners to steer clear of this “novelty” meat on Icelandic

menus. If someone is in the mood for an “edgier” choice, you can always ask for horse meat.

#### PENETRATING FLAVOURS

We picked a bottle of Douro off the iPad wine menu and proceeded to tuck into our respective “grass fed cows” (I believe they meant to say “bull” on the menu). There is something undeniably evocative about that mouth watering sound of sizzling beef and the feeling of sliding a strip of semi-molten fat between your lips. It may not be doing your body any favours, but it yields to the pressure of the carbonised hunk of meat, bringing on a deep, near-cellular longing for the caramelised exterior of animal muscle.

The 300 gram cut of beef tender-

loin served with garlic mushrooms and the Brazilian-style picanha with chimichurri fulfilled the meaty promise. Both were shockingly expensive, as was to be expected, but the uppercut to the wallet was offset by them being expertly seared to a level just south of medium-rare. The pungent kick of vinegar and dried oregano in the chimichurri was, as always, the perfect accompaniment to grilled meat (seriously, make that your go-to sauce).

Overall, Steikhúsið, doesn't quite live up to the standard of being the “definite article” steakhouse in Iceland, but there is no denying the dependable quality of the cuts and the craftsmanship on display in the kitchen. ■

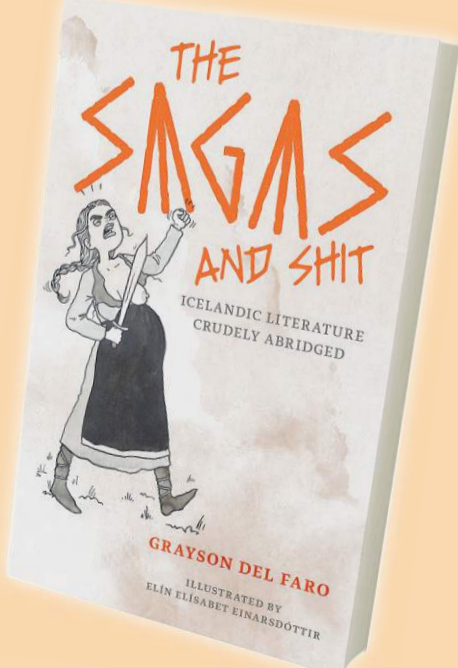


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Far Off Food

# All For Alfajores, Alfajores

Re Argentina Alfajores is selling South American sweets

WORDS Grayson Del Faro  
IMAGE Joana Fontinha

I started to try different recipes and Practise them – I Practised a lot!”

just started going with the flow!”

REALLY, BUT NOT REALLY

After some trial and error, she decided to begin with the most typical treat in Argentina: the sandwich cookies called alfajores.

The alfajor actually has its roots in the Andalusia during its centuries of Islamic reign – hence the common Arabic prefix “al” – and was spread all over the Americas during the colonial era. While vastly different confections called alfajores exist in Spain and across Latin America, it’s Argentina that takes the cake. They

Last summer, Carla began to gauge the general public’s reactions at Reykjavík’s Pride Festival and Menningarnótt. “I walked around Laugavegur and the pond with a

Carla Ines Valvo didn’t move to Iceland to sell cookies; she moved to sell clothes. After starting the clothing brand Intensa in Buenos Aires in 2011, the fashion designer moved to Reykjavík six years ago in order to expand her project’s reach to Europe. While the studded jackets that characterise the brand can be purchased in Nordic Market stores around Reykjavík, as well as in shops in Spain and Italy, it’s an entirely different business that’s keeping her busy these days.

I walked around Laugavegur and the pond with a basket full of tiny alfajores. And they loved them!

basket full of tiny alfajores. And they loved them! I made some reels about it and now they are actually my customers,” she says, explaining that some people who tried them that first day have actually gone on to make custom orders for their private events. That was the beginning of Re Argentina Alfajores – and it’s snow-balled since then: “Everything

produce and consume the most alfajores, both by total volume and per capita, of any country in the world.

The classic Argentinian alfajor is made of two round, powdery-soft cornflour cookies held together with sticky, caramel-like dulce de leche and rolled in coconut flakes. Common variations can be choco-

ALL FOR ALFAJORES

“Little by little,” Carla begins, “I started to think, ‘Okay, now I want to do something related to my country.’ So





## ores For All

late-covered or use different fillings. “There are a lot of recipes,” Carla explains, “but I started with the traditional one and the one that I really love.”

Carla was working at Omnom when her foray into alfajores began and after just three months, she was receiving enough orders to quit and focus on her side-hustle. “But the amazing thing,” she remembers

to celebrate the culture of her adopted country. She has used black salt caramel and even mulled wine to flavour alfajores for special holidays, but the local favourite flavour is always on offer. “Of course we have licorice,” she adds, “because Icelanders love licorice!”

**Because I'm a fashion designer, I tried to combine art and something sweet with the traditions of my country.**

“Re” is popular Argentinian slang for “really” and Argentina is not only the name of the country, but also the adjective related to it. So while Re Argentina Alfajores translates more-or-less as “really Argentinian alfajores,” they offer more than the typical version.

“I made 30 alfajores in a kitty shape to try,” Carla says of the cat-shaped confections she crafted for beloved local breakfast spot Grái Kötturinn. “And I sold 27 on the first day!” She says customers were excitedly saying, “I don't know what that is, but I want one!”

fondly, “is that they gave me 12 kilograms of chocolate to help me out, like a kickstart.” With Omnom's gift and new silicon molds, she began designing Re's signature alfajores with their glossy, iridescent white chocolate tops in detailed, elegant shapes of flowers, suns and moons. “That was my idea: because I'm a fashion designer, I tried to combine art and something sweet with the traditions of my country.”

### ALFAJORES FOR ALL

Although Carla is sharing the flavours of Argentina, she's also keen

After only six months since its beginning, Re's products are available in Grái Kötturinn and Taste of Iceland, and they will soon hit the shelves of Hagkaup. Although alfajores are typically eaten with coffee or the South American herbal drink called mate, Re has also partnered with Kramber to pair them with sparkling wine for special events. Carla keen expand into café's across the country and offer each place its own signature design or flavour.

“I love this island because you can grow so fast,” she says. “In Argentina, I'd have a lot of competitors, but here, I'm the only one doing this.”

“I was just trying to take baby steps,” Carla says, “but they turned out to be Viking steps!” ■



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Greenland, Ho!

## The End Of An Era

Exploring Greenland's lost independence and the downfall of the colonies

WORDS Valur Gunnarsson  
IMAGE Finnur Matteo Bettaglio

You know the Sagas. They're about Icelanders, right? Well, there's also the *Grænlendinga saga* (the Saga of the Greenlanders), which tells the tales of the Viking settlement of – you guessed it – Greenland. We've been recapping that in recent issues, but now we're taking a little diversion into a history lesson of sorts.

**M**uch like how they adapted Christianity from Leif Eriksson, Medieval Greenlanders seem to have given up their independence with a minimum of fuss. In 1247, the newly anointed bishop Ólafur arrived in Garðar from Norway and announced that the country should become a part of the realm of king Hákon Hákonsson. The Greenlanders deliberated but, in 1261, they agreed.

In Iceland, the process was in both cases rather different. In the year 1000, the adaptation of Christianity had almost caused a civil war and by the mid-1200s, an actual civil war was raging between the five leading families. The strife was finally brought to an end with Icelanders becoming subjects of the Norwegian king in 1262.

That same year, bishop Ólafur of Garðar headed to Norway to tell the king the good news, but was caught in a storm and spent the winter in Iceland. Having thus witnessed the end of both the Icelandic and the Greenlandic commonwealth in the space of a year, he finally arrived at the court of the king.

The first king of Iceland and Greenland would be known to history as Hákon the Old and would die the next year at the age of 59. His moniker can be attributed to the fact that he reigned for 46 years – longer than any Norwegian king since the semi-mythological Harald Fairhair. Hákon brought an end to the civil wars raging in his own country and is well-liked there – rather less so in Iceland.

At first, the end of independence in Greenland caused little direct change. Taxes would be paid to the king and restitution paid for murder would not go to the bereaved but to the royal coffers. A similar arrangement was made in Iceland, where the new order at least kept the peace. In Greenland, however, the results were to prove catastrophic in the long run.

### FROM RICHES TO RAGS

Like others, Greenlanders were expected to contribute to the various crusades and also pay direct taxes

to the church in Rome. For the Archbishop of Niðarós in Norway, whose dominion reached Greenland, getting paid was no easy task. It might take three to five years to go back and forth to Greenland to supervise the collecting. There was also little hope that the Greenlanders could pay in the required silver. In 1267, the Pope allowed him to send an emissary to Greenland with wide-ranging powers.

The emissary returned four years later with a boatload of sealskins, whale's teeth and leather harnesses. The Archbishop, rather perplexed, wrote again to the Pope and asked what to do with all this. The Pope replied that he should sell the lot and change the proceeds to silver, which should be sent to Rome without delay. The precedent was created that this sole bishopric in Christendom could pay its taxes to Rome in animal produce rather than coin.

The king also wanted his share and decreed that the Greenland trade was now a Royal Monopoly, which only those appointed by him were allowed to conduct. Far fewer ships would now make the trip. Walrus tusks were a sought-after product and a valuable cargo was reported in 1327, with half of the proceeds going to the king to aid in his war against the orthodox Russians and the other half going to Rome. The number of Greenlandic taxpayers is

presumed to be at 4000, which indicated a still vital settlement.

But things soon took a turn for the worse. The Greenlanders were having trouble importing necessities and, in 1345, the Pope granted them an exemption from the Crusader tax. Two years later, the king granted the Cathedral of Garðar a hundred marks of silver to purchase church materials. Greenland was becoming a burden.

### THE SUN SETS ON A CIVILIZATION

It was around this time that the Western Settlement was abandoned. In 1342, it is reported that Norse Greenlanders had converted to the Inuit's faith, although this probably only applied to small, remote groups so far. In 1355, the Greenland ship from Norway was ordered to make sure that Greenland's Christianity didn't end "in our time."

Things went from bad to worse. Black Death arrived in Scandinavia at the end of the 1340s. Norway was badly hit, which again reduced the king's power in the North Atlantic. English pirates roamed the seas. From 1349 to 1368, no bishop was appointed to Greenland. In 1383, it was belatedly reported the bishop Álfr had died six years previous. He was to be the last resident bishop of Garðar, as later appointed bishops

decided to stay at home in Norway and never made the trip over. The larger Eastern Settlement was also nearing its end.

Norway became a part of the Kingdom of Denmark in 1380, its own aristocracy decimated by plague. By centuries' end, Queen Margret of Denmark would rule over Sweden, too. This left Norway on the periphery of the new Union State, its dependencies even more so, while focus switched to the Baltic.

But there was no let-up in the Royal Monopoly, even though the last official trading ship sank in 1368 and was not renewed. In Bergen in 1389, two ship captains were sentenced to hanging for illicit trading with Greenland. The sentences were commuted when they claimed that they had been washed ashore by bad weather and, besotted with hunger and scurvy, saw no other option available than to trade some of their goods for food. The explanation may be untrue but shows how severely the Monopoly was upheld.

The Danish period would later be referred to by nationalist Norwegian historians as the "400 year-night." In Iceland, it could be argued that this night lasted even longer. In Norse Greenland, the sun was never to rise again. Their final fate remains a mystery. ■

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## Opinion What Happens When The World Starts Paying Closer Attention?

Iceland's strategic location in the Arctic could make for an eventful future amid shifting geopolitical alliances

WORDS Adam Roy Gordon  
IMAGE Art Bicnick

**D**onald Trump stood before Congress this week and made it official — again. The United States wants to buy Greenland.

The first time he floated the idea in 2019, it was easy to dismiss. It sounded like something out of the 19th century, a throwback to territorial expansion. But this time, it is not just a passing remark. His administration made it official on day one with an executive order, and now, standing before both houses of Congress, he has made it clear that acquiring Greenland is very much a priority.

The reasoning has been dressed up in national security rhetoric, framed as a way to counter Russian and Chinese influence in the Arctic. It is also about resources. Greenland holds vast deposits of rare earth minerals at a time when the U.S. is seeking to break China's dominance over global supply chains. The message is clear. The U.S. is making aggressive moves in the region and smaller nations may not have much say in the matter.

Greenland, of course, is not Iceland. It's a self-governing territory and ultimately under Denmark's control. Still, for small nations watching from the sidelines, the question is unavoidable. If the U.S. sees Greenland as something it can simply claim interest in, what does that mean for other small countries in the Arctic —

ones that are fully independent but just as strategically placed?

Iceland has long walked a fine line. It is part of NATO, but without a military of its own, relying on U.S. defense guarantees while staying out of the worst of global conflicts. It has maintained strong ties to Europe while keeping Brussels at arm's length. It has welcomed trade with China while staying firmly within the Western alliance. This balancing act has worked for decades, allowing Iceland to operate as a bridge, not only between North America and Europe but between the inhabited world and the Arctic. But bridges can be crossed, controlled, or ignored, and as Arctic competition intensifies, Iceland is finding that its position is becoming more complicated.

The Arctic is no longer a quiet frontier. Climate change is redrawing the region, opening up new shipping routes and making previously inaccessible resources available. Russia has responded aggressively, reopening Soviet-era bases, building nuclear-powered icebreakers and deploying submarines into the North Atlantic. China, despite having no Arctic territory, has declared itself a "near-Arctic state" and has been quietly buying its way into the region, investing in infrastructure and shipping routes. It has already attempted to buy large swaths of land in Iceland, under the pretext of tourism and research, only to be blocked by the Icelandic government. Every major power is looking for leverage in the Arctic — and Iceland is caught in the middle.

The United States has taken notice. Keflavik Air Base, once considered a relic of the Cold War, is no longer dormant. It's not a full-time U.S. military base, but it has become a key hub for NATO operations. The U.S. has invested in upgrading its facilities and American military aircraft,

including P-8 Poseidon surveillance planes, regularly rotate through, monitoring Russian activity in the North Atlantic.

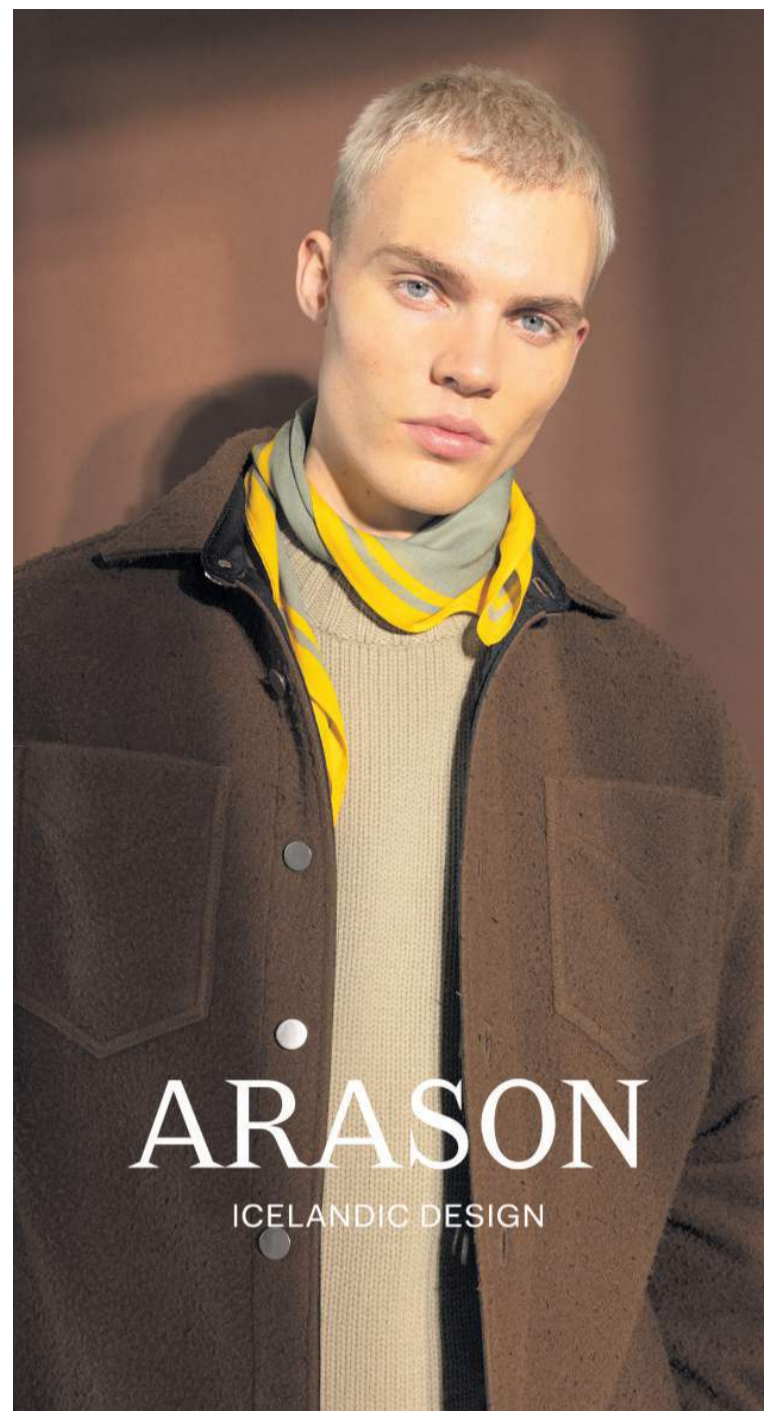
Iceland's strategic importance is growing. That should be an asset, but in this new era of great-power competition, it could just as easily become a liability.

Iceland, however, is not Greenland. It is not an isolated territory with little global influence. It has long been a proving ground for new ideas in politics, business, and society. It pioneered renewable energy, running almost entirely on geothermal and hydroelectric power, and exported that expertise to shape energy systems from East Africa to the American West. It set the global standard for gender equality, built one of the world's most resilient democracies, and fostered a high-trust, low-crime society that makes it one of the best places in the world to live, work, and raise a family.

For a nation of its size, Iceland punches far above its weight. It proves that small states, when governed effectively, can be flexible, innovative, and globally relevant. It has shown that small nations are not just shaped by global trends, they can shape them.

But here's the real question: What happens when the world starts paying closer attention? Iceland can't stop the U.S. from wanting Greenland or China from circling the Arctic. But it can decide how to respond. Will Iceland set the terms for its future—or wait for someone else to do it? ■

Adam Roy Gordon is CEO of GlacialEdge Advisory and a Lecturer at Columbia University. He resides in Iceland.



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Musings

# A Whale Of A Time

Charlie knows not all that may be coming, but be it what it will, they'll go to it laughing

WORDS Charlie Winters  
IMAGE The Reykjavik Grapevine Archives

tipped harpoon, I'm gonna blow the fucker sky high! Thankfully whale hunters patented the perfect whale slaughtering device in 1844. A bomb strapped to a fucking harpoon. And this premise has not changed... again, since 1844. The bombs are bombier and the harpoons are harpoonier, but there have been no advances in whale killing otherwise.

Loaded with explosives, I snuck aboard a schooner headed out into the cold. The conditions were rough, the rain beat against the bow of the ship almost as ferociously as the waves. The wind pierced my adorable little fishing outfit. And there, in the storm! "THAR SHE BLOWS!"

Aiming a harpoon for a lethal shot at a moving whale while on a moving ship is much harder than you'd think. Yet, she would not escape me, not this time. I let loose my harpoon and heard the crackle of the gunpowder. BOOM! The internal organs of the whale were scattered and scrambled as a ragged hole was ripped along its side. I got it! It was dead! What do you mean it isn't dead?

Oh... well apparently, it takes roughly a slow 5 to 25 minutes for a whale to die in extreme agony. Her body is reeled in, painting the side of the schooner a deep red. As she is hoisted by hooks and nets, up unto a platform her blood and guts roil with the water. She's trying to get air through a blowhole that is now frothing with blood, you can't hear her gasping for breath. Whales do

not make sound. They die silently. Maybe if she could scream, I'd have been able to tell she was begging for death.

This isn't as fun as I'd hoped it would be.

Whaling is not fishing. It's easy to kill a fish, it doesn't require mass amounts of explosives to slowly bleed them out.

Whales are no small part of the global ecosystem. We could talk about whether or not it's okay to hunt and kill whales just as much as you could about any animal you consume. But we know that whales die in pain. And for what? Why do we do this?

Whale meat isn't really eaten in Iceland. Whale beer... tastes like shit. Companies promise untested and unfounded medicinal supplements made from whale, while others hold onto whaling because it's a long-established (but not really) tradition. "It's cultural!" But there are a plethora of things we did in the past that we have since grown out of.

There are few countries left that still engage in this outdated and frankly cruel Practise, and Iceland is one of them. This was meant to stop. But Teflon Bjarni had to pull one more fast one before fucking off to obscurity. Like a shitty phoenix, rest assured he will rise from the ashes. I can only hope Icelanders wise up to the cruelty of whaling before then. ■

**C**all me Charlie. Some months ago — never mind how long precisely — having little or no self-respect on my person, and nothing to interest me in Reykjavik, I checked the news to find that former prime minister Bjarni Benediktsson gave out a bunch of whaling permits. I want to get in on this action. I have white whales to kill. Where's my permit? So come with me, on my journey to kill a whale. How unethical could it actually be?

Whaling is first and foremost an artform. These majestic creatures of the deep must be executed with the respect, dignity and reverence that they deserve... Get me my explosive



Now And Then

## Diving Into A Piece Of History

Deciphering the subtle transformation of Sundhöll Reykjavíkur

WORDS  
IMAGES

Jón Trausti Sigurðarson  
Joana Fontinha &  
Óskar Gíslason  
(1901-1990), Reykjavík  
Museum of Photography

**H**aving opened to the public in 1937, Sundhöll Reykjavíkur is Reykjavík's oldest swimming pool. Like so many of Iceland's iconic buildings from the first half of the 20th century, it was designed by state architect Guðjón Samúelsson, but the project was initiated by Progressive Party MP Jónas frá Hríflu. If anything or any place can be pointed to as the origins of Iceland's swimming pool culture – something that finally got Iceland on the UNESCO heritage list last year – it is this particular pool.

In the early 20th century, Icelanders built swimming pools all over the country – at least, anywhere that ample supplies of hot water could be procured. And then they built swimming pools where supplies of naturally hot water were not to

be found. The result of this is that almost every single suburb of Reykjavík and every single small town outside of Reykjavík, has a swimming pool. This begs the question: why?

Well, as may now be obvious, the fact that Iceland has incredible amounts of hot water is not the exclusive reason for the pools, though that is helpful. The real reason is that very few Icelanders knew how to swim in the 1920s. That's not a good thing for a country that counts fishing among its major industries. This meant that every year, very many people drowned, often in situations where simply knowing the basics of swimming would have been life saving.

Hence, in 1927 the Icelandic parliament passed a law making swimming lessons mandatory for all schoolchildren. Given the climate in Iceland, it thus became urgent to build warm water pools in which to hold lessons, lest every Icelandic kid would catch pneumonia.

The sudden abundance of soothingly warm swimming pools in an otherwise harsh climate resulted in the only places falling within the

scholarly definition of "The Public Sphere" in Iceland being the pools. It is there that people debate politics, where they meet, catch up, whatever you call it. It was also in the pools – or the change areas before entering the pools – that they got clean, which was something we had a far more difficult time doing prior to the 1930s. Out of this emerged our distinct pool culture.

Sundhöll Reykjavíkur remained open, and unchanged, until 2013, when construction of an outdoor pool and hot tubs began. They finally opened in 2017. The old pool and the building's neo-classical interior has remained unaltered. It remains (on the inside at least) one of the most visually pleasing buildings in Reykjavík.

Speaking of pool culture, before getting into an Icelandic pool, you must take off all your clothes. Go naked into the shower. Wash thoroughly with soap. And only then can you put on your swimwear. If you don't do this, you are not only contaminating the water for everybody else, you are now disrespecting our culture.

In the words of one Grapevine OG: Wash your fucking crack! ■

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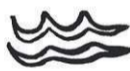


# Bogwarts School of Wizardry and Witchcraft

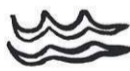
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WORDS Charlie Winters  
IMAGE Adobe Stock

Welcome to Bogwarts School of Wizardry and Witchcraft. Learn how to conjure, cast and make magic! What? No this has nothing to do with some British Terf's book series, this is an entirely original creation. Let's see what classes your horoscope has planned for you.



**Capricorn**  
(December 22 – January 19)  
Organised, ambitious, unforgiving, these are traits of a Capricorn – and the traits of a Dark Lord. How does it feel, Capricorn? Being they who may not be named. Now all you need is a nose job. And you'll be set.



**Aquarius**  
(January 20 – February 18)  
Accio Horoscope! There, I've summoned your horoscope, it should be on its way... Now we just have to wait...



**Pisces**  
(February 19 – March 20)  
Oh nooo! I can tell you were a quadball player back in school. You still wear your school robes and talk about your broom and the QuadWizard Tournament. My dude, we know you peaked at Bogwarts, this isn't a good look.



**Aries**  
(March 21 – April 19)  
This isn't a horoscope, Aries, I have something to ask. Find out whoever came up with all of the stupid dog shit names for things like Hertie Hotts Bean Sprouts, BogleKnocks Knee Sprayers, Bimbo Bob's Brooms and Broads. I need you to kill them.



**Taurus**  
(April 20 – May 20)  
Naughtee naughtee, you've been using the cloak of unseennity to sneekitty your way into the forbidny sectionny of the libraree. Oh neee, I'm having a stroketty. Call an ambulance.



**Gemini**  
(May 21 – June 20)  
Gemini, it's in the name, you've always been two faced, literally. This school year everyone's going to know. A wayward gust of wind is gonna blow off your hat and the secret magical second face you've kept hidden all this time will be revealed. What even is that?



**Cancer**  
(June 21 – July 22)  
Cancer, you've gotta make a choice for once. This school year, when they place atop you the Sorting Cloak™ to find out your Bogwarts House, I swear it's going to have a god damn aneurism.



**Leo**  
(July 23 – August 22)  
I'm sorry, Leo, but this month, you're the chosen one. This means that a failed attempt by the No-nosed dark lord to murder a literal child will accidentally leave you with a scar shaped like a dick on your forehead.



**Virgo**  
(August 23 – September 22)  
"It's actually pronounced Le-vio-SAA-" Nobody cares Virgo. Nobody cares. And guess what I see in your future? People still not caring. Let people have fun. This school year, ease up. By Bumbledore's beard man, you gotta chill.



**Libra**  
(September 23 – October 22)  
There's a troll in the girl's bathroom!" "There's a ghost in the girl's bathroom!" "There's a secret snake dungeon in the girl's bathroom!" It appears as though the only thing not in the girl's bathroom is me. Yeah Libra, your horoscope is probably also in the girl's bathroom.

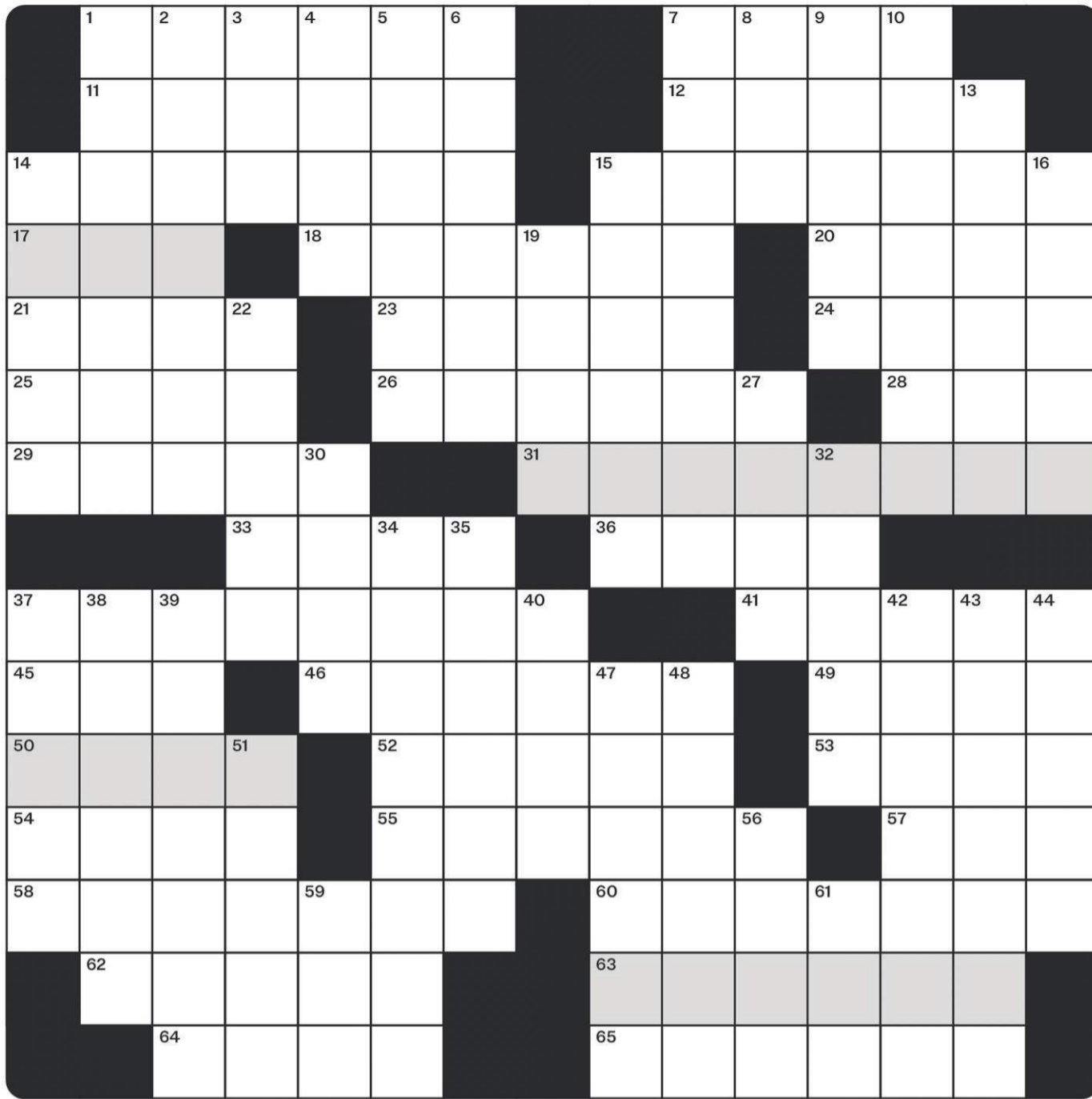


**Scorpio**  
(October 23 – November 21)  
"Ssss haaaaaaah, esseytha seethaaa, ssssaytha, esseytha seethaaa" said the snake. "Dude shut up, I'm trying to study," said the Scorpio.



**Sagittarius**  
(November 22 – December 21)  
You know what, we do send people to Marzipan Prison for blowing up their aunt. I don't care if there was a Breath Eater in the room, you should know better than to cast an Exploadio Curse with a Fuggle present.

It's important to reclaim art that the queer community enjoys, appreciates and has a connection to. It's also important not to buy any That One Magical School Book Series™ merchandise as long as "She who shall not be named" keeps funding transphobia with that franchise dough. ■



Crossword **Mint Condition**

We proudly present to you: our March crossword!

CROSS WORDS Ish Sveinsson Houle  
Agnar Freyr Stefánsson

Hey, cruciverbalists  
Ish and Agnar here! We're starting something new: the first person to solve this crossword and email a photo of their completed grid to ish@grapevine.is will get a free hot-dog from none other than Bæjarins Beztu! Good luck, góða skemmtun!

- ACROSS
- 1 Warm-up band
  - 7 Hotly debated military alliance discussed on pgs. 14-16
  - 11 Iceland's favourite metric: per \_\_\_\_
  - 12 Visually disorienting painting genre, for short
  - 14 After the sun has set (2)
  - 15 Yemeni or Omani
  - 17 Fish of liver oil, and wars
  - 18 Icelandic representation to 2019 Eurovision
  - 20 Shrek, for example
  - 21 Chimps, bonobos, gorillas
  - 23 Not even once
  - 24 Grains common for breakfast
  - 25 "Yeah, why not!"
  - 26 Approves everything before publishing
  - 28 Something you bring to yoga
  - 29 There are two in "crossword"
  - 31 Intelligent marine mammals

- 33 Group hangout, in slang
- 36 Russian gymnast Korbut
- 37 Levels off, in terms of progress or geography
- 41 Leaf pore
- 45 McKellen or Fleming
- 46 Go to confession, go to \_\_\_\_
- 49 Looped in, via e-mail
- 50 Zodiac crustacean
- 52 Dickens' " \_\_\_\_ of Two Cities" (2)
- 53 Round up, as a farmer
- 54 Suffix of teen or golden
- 55 Jog the memory of
- 57 Not SM, not MED, but \_\_\_\_
- 58 University workshop
- 60 Went bad, as in milk
- 62 Seated protest (2)
- 63 Icelandic mint?, or the theme to this crossword
- 64 Egyptian snakes
- 65 Go by again, in a race

- DOWN
- 1 Three hearts and eight limbs make an \_\_\_\_
  - 2 Caters to the crowd
  - 3 Prefix to centre or pen
  - 4 Close by, poetically
  - 5 Flammable gas
  - 6 Told on
  - 7 Seaweed-wrapped bite (2)
  - 8 Citation style, not MLA
  - 9 No-no or off-limits
  - 10 Folding craft
  - 13 Kilt pattern
  - 14 Make \_\_\_\_ for, to justify (2)
  - 15 Reply to "am not!" on a playground (2)
  - 16 Tree houses?
  - 19 Enthusiastic or keen
  - 22 Look at, in the Bible
  - 27 Dungeons & Dragons and more, for short
  - 30 Spots
  - 32 Come out of one's shell

- 34 Some desert dwellers
- 35 Harmer
- 37 Typesetters' measures
- 38 Some t-shirts, or plural of 57A
- 39 Deficiency of red blood cells, in England
- 40 Thailand, formerly
- 42 Eye-like markings, as on a butterfly's wings
- 43 Business marriages
- 44 Put two and two together
- 47 Popular photo-sharing site
- 48 Professor's goal
- 51 Telly watchers
- 56 Plummet
- 59 Playful bite
- 61 Genetic stuff ■



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## Potent Quotables

Although the first simulations in TVÍK are quite simple, by the end of it, we're talking about index loans, capitalism and eavesdropping on old people at the pool.

Believe it or not, Gamithra Marga's language learning app can prepare you for the realities of life in Iceland. Read more on page 12

The base was a grey zone, where the boundaries between domestic legislation and extra-territoriality were blurred.

We explore Iceland's military alliances and potential for forging new foreign policy on page 14

Now you hear Greenland every day in the news. Two years ago, it was not like that.

Is This North? exhibition at the Nordic House explores what it takes to be an artist in the North on page 18

Music should stir up some emotions. That's my goal at least, always.

Musician Árný Margrét talks about her sophomore album and building confidence on stage on page 30

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