Iceland: In Space
From the foundations of the Moon landing to tomorrow’s microsatellites

Is Iceland doing enough for queer people?

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1: Stormnation And The Political Pandemic

When the pandemic began in March, Icelanders took it seriously straight away. False information wasn’t part of the discussion; we knew then what remains clear now: this was bad. And we knew that we needed to take action as one nation. The incredible scientists who have led us through this pandemic gave the nation the latest information at their daily briefings and everybody in Iceland followed their advice. We lost ten lives during the first wave and thought that it could not get any worse.

The reward was rich. We were one of the first nations in the world to flatten our first wave and had a good summer. We travelled, we met family and friends at the bar, at home and anywhere else we wanted. We opened our borders early and it looked like we had things under control.

We genuinely believed that was it.

One explanation for how well Icelanders handled the pandemic in the beginning is because we are a stormnation. We have gone through so many hard winters, raging storms and satanic seasonal wins. We are accustomed to taking certain precautions just to assure that the weather is not a serious threat.

But, here’s where storms differ from pandemics; they are ever quick. And this is where Iceland’s weakness is unveiled. We can handle the fleeting threat of a storm, but we have a much harder time planning for the future and taking long-term action.

The third wave that we’re currently riding has proven to be a real challenge for Icelanders. We have reverted to the lockdowns that marked the beginning of the pandemic. No one has died, but...statistically—it’s just a matter of time. To top it off, unemployment is at a record high. Most of the unemployed are immigrants. But that fate will hit more and more Icelanders soon enough.

The government has yet to unveil any convincing ideas for creating jobs and have been slow rolling out solutions for companies or communicat- ing the fine print of existing bandaids, leaving companies desperate at the end of the month, not knowing if some of the important government solutions for companies will be extended. Meanwhile, the government has focused on saving a massive cooperation like Icelandair, even though the borders are essentially closed for tourism. There were less than 12,000 arrivals in the whole of September.

There is no wholesome future vision when it comes to the pandemic. Perhaps we will have a vaccine at the beginning of 2021. But it could be just 50% effective and it could take at least a year to produce enough to get the economy back on its feet. In short, Iceland, like most governments in the world, is not acknowledging the fact that this pandemic will control our lives at least until the turn of 2022. Possibly longer.

So, where are we now? We are at the beginning of another kind of pandemic, a political one, and it could last even longer than COVID-19.

Valur Grettisson
Editor-in-chief

Hörður Harðarson is an Illus- tor and cartoonist born and raised in Borgarnes. At the tender age of 15, Hörður moved to Reykjavík and hasn’t looked back, except for the annual springtime impulse to move somewhere quiet and keep chickens. Hörður likes folk music, stationery, travel, the country of Iceland, and eggs.

Hannah Jane Cochet is based out of Iceland by way of New York. She’s known for her love of Billie Ford, David Foster Wallace, and other such “intellectuals.” Her visionary work is known for expanding the definitions of emotion, introspec- tion, and above all else, taste. Hannah is also the current Drag King of Iceland, HARIS.

Catharina Hjörnudottir studies social sci- ences and came to the Grapevine for her internship. She’s a die-hard Blue Jays fan and loves any game she can watch from a table in a Laugardalur radio show or sits at a table in a Laugardalur café, drinking copious amounts of coffee and thinking about fonts.

Jöns Rangvarpiñson is an English gradu- ate from the UK. She writes children’s books, but has de- cided to also go into journalism on the absolutely magnificent off-chance that her first book doesn’t immediately turn her into a multimil- lionaire. Her hobbies include getting up late and indulging in illusions of grandeur.

Sveinbjörn Pálsson is our Art Director. He’s responsible for the design of the magazine and the cover photography. When he’s not work- ing here, he Ski’s at the Froðdalsfjall mountainous region of southern Iceland. He’s also been the lead host of a radio show, or sits at a table in a Laugardalur café, drinking copious amounts of coffee and thinking about fonts.

Andja Sophie Fontaine has lived in Iceland since 1999 and has been reporting since 2003. They were the first foreign-born member of the Icelandic Parliament, an experience they recommend for anyone who wants to experience a workplace where colleagues work tirelessly to undermine each other.

Iona Rangvarpiñson is an international man of mystery. He moves like a shadow through the subcul- tures and somers of Reykjavík, never seen, only ghosting the scene in a puff of blue smoke—the exhaust fumes of the elusive, well-travelled Bionici mini.

Karen Davidson is a musician, artist and wannabe writer from St Albans, England. As a long time lover of Iceland, and recent co-owning of the Grapevine, Karen came to the Grapevine to expand her writing portfolio whilst swea- ing if she could hash it as an Icelandic resident.

Jennifer Talk is a wannabe writer from St Albans, England. As a long time lover of Iceland, and recent co-owning of the Grapevine, Karen came to the Grapevine to expand her writing portfolio whilst swea- ing if she could hash it as an Icelandic resident.

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Editorial

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For the Economy?

Thirsty Goddesses

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In the Westfjords of Iceland, what we call “downtown” others might refer to as “the Arctic.” Call it what you will. We just live here.

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What Are Icelanders Talking About?

The topics that are getting people banned from the comments

Words: Andie Sophia Fontaine
Illustration: Sveinbjörn Pálsson

The massive Zhenhua Data leak, where millions of influential people around the world were ranked in terms of their interest to Chinese authorities by a company with ties to that country’s military and intelligence sector, the Chinese embassy in Reykjavík has come under fire for another sort of alleged surveillance: its CCTV cameras. Reportedly, the embassy’s video surveillance covers a much wider swath around the embassy than is deemed necessary and Iceland’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs has asked the embassy to move the cameras. With that in mind, whatever you do, don’t do anything anti-China anywhere near the embassy; they may be watching you. Apparently Centre Party chair and disgraced former Prime Minister Sigmundur David Gunnlaugsson is not getting enough attention, as he chose to direct national focus on himself by speaking out in opposition to a bill that would protect intersex children from medically unnecessary, non-consensual and, in many cases, psychologically damaging surgeries on their genitalia. Sigmundur spared no hyperbole, calling the bill “probably the scariest parliamentary issue I can remember in recent times” — pretty rich coming from a guy named in the Panama Papers. Response came swiftly from director of the National Queer Organisation Pórbjörg Borrudldóttir, who said in part, “This is the most extremist talk I have ever heard.”

The topics that are getting people banned from the comments

The increased domestic restrictions in response to the coronavirus pandemic. The restrictions, which went into effect at midnight on October 5th, limit social gathering to 20 people; shut down bars, restaurants, gyms and Reykjavík-area pools; and require the use of masks everywhere it’s not possible to maintain a two-metre distance between people.

Two points of conflict have raised concern which facilities are closed and the non-mandatory policy of wearing a mask on the bus. Gym owners in particular have been upset about the restrictions, pointing out that while they can create conditions for proper social distancing, for whatever reason Icelandic authorities are allowing contact sports to continue. Meanwhile, regular bus users were not alert to the mask policy through the apps they use and those who do mask up have complained that some drivers are admitting passengers without mask. So it would seem there are still a few kinks to work out.

A great many Icelanders are seriously concerned about China allegedly spying on us. Shortly after news broke that some 500 Icelanders were included in the massive Zhenhua Data leak, where millions of influential people around the world were ranked in terms of their interest to Chinese authorities by a company with ties to that country’s military and intelligence sector, the Chinese embassy in Reykjavík has come under fire for another sort of alleged surveillance: its CCTV cameras. Reportedly, the embassy’s video surveillance covers a much wider swath around the embassy than is deemed necessary and Iceland’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs has asked the embassy to move the cameras. With that in mind, whatever you do, don’t do anything anti-China anywhere near the embassy; they may be watching you. Apparently Centre Party chair and disgraced former Prime Minister Sigmundur David Gunnlaugsson is not getting enough attention, as he chose to direct national focus on himself by speaking out in opposition to a bill that would protect intersex children from medically unnecessary, non-consensual and, in many cases, psychologically damaging surgeries on their genitalia. Sigmundur spared no hyperbole, calling the bill “probably the scariest parliamentary issue I can remember in recent times” — pretty rich coming from a guy named in the Panama Papers. Response came swiftly from director of the National Queer Organisation Pórbjörg Borrudldóttir, who said in part, “This is the most extremist talk I have ever heard.”
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Minister Floats Refugee Camps, Idea Sinks "Not possible," says coalition MP

The response was as fast as it was strong. Many pointed out that no matter what language the minister used, what she was describing was a prison. Criticism came from opposition MPs and human rights activists alike. Pórunn Olafsdóttir, who has long fought for refugee's rights, was amongst them, asking, "Why is there a child prison in Iceland in 2020?"

It also bears mentioning that the idea would appear to violate the holy writ of Icelandic refugee policy: the Dublin Regulation. In particular, Article 28.1 makes this very clear, where it states, "Member States shall not hold a person in detention for the sole reason that he or she is subject to the procedure established by this Regulation.

Several articles of the Geneva Convention on Refugees also expressly prohibit Áslaug's idea.

Ruling party dismisses idea

All eyes were on the Left-Greens, who lead the ruling coalition and have been criticized for being ineffectual when it comes to protecting refugees. In response, Left-Green MP Björkey Olsen Gunnarsdóttir took to Facebook to say: "The issue in question is, of course, nothing more than a refugee camp or a prison; it is not possible to set such up on the part of the Left Green parliamentary party. A new law would be needed to make this a reality, and such a bill would not pass through my party."

FOOD OF ICELAND

Hverabrauð

What do you do when you've tried a food, enjoyed it, but found that it's not quite Icelandic enough? You might end up with some well-done toast in that case—but burying it by a volcanic hot spring is close enough. In fact, most traditional Icelandic rye bread is baked that way. The name "hverabrauð" literally means "hot spring bread," but its other nickname "þrúmar" translates to the even more exciting "thunder bread." Though this becomes less exciting when you realize that it refers not to the awe-inspiring elements that helped create it, but to the flatulence that follows its excessive consumption.

Though most Icelandic rye bread is cooked in ovens nowadays, there are still some bakeries that insist nothing tastes quite as good as their ancestors' method. The Laugnæsin Fontana is one such place: dough here is placed in a lidded pan, cling-filmed, and buried in the hot sand for exactly twenty-four hours. The result is dense, chewy and sweet—a little bit like gingerbread. For the most traditional combination, serve warm with melted butter, smoked trout and some hard boiled eggs. You can also cook these in the hot spring, too, if you're feeling adventurous and you, well... have a hot spring nearby.

The experience is surely special, but just... it? It's hard to say. Certainly, most Icelanders are familiar with some of the magic that happens when humans don't have to share with humans.

Several stories exist about clashes between building projects and elves. Work has often already started when messages come from the elves to stop. Nobody listens and then machinery breaks, work's halted and roads have to be rerouted. Most of these situations date back 40 or 50 years and such clashes with the elf folk rarely happen anymore. But elves are extremely clever and often several steps ahead of us, so they monitor our behavior and have the means of changing our decisions without conflict.

Dísa lives near people, in uninhabited rural areas. Therefore, most of the stories about elves interrupting construction happened when roads were first being built and cities and villages were growing rapidly. Nowadays the elves have moved into urban areas, finding homes in man-made structures. A large elf community lives in the ocean wall in Reykjavík—I hear it's the most popular place to live! They don't have to share with humans. Many live in Hallgrímskirkja, museums and other buildings. They don't like buildings where humans reside. Incidents where "mould" is found and pavement and buildings show how elves keep humans in place, driving them out of places they want for themselves. They've also realized that natural parks and reserves are carefully protected, so those who don't want to live in cities instead make their homes in places like Pingvallavík.
Rán, The Sea Goddess
The Goddess who will literally drown you

Rán is the wife of Ægir, a jötunn (a kind of giant) associated with the sea. While Ægir is all about the more positive aspects of the sea—sailing, exploring, fishing and such—Rán has but one mission in life and that is to literally drown you.

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Where Thor has a hammer and Freyr has a magic sword, Rán has a net. She uses that net to literally drown you. Freyr has a magic sword, Rán has a net.

Freyr and his sister Rán have their own special territory and having your car stolen is upsetting, it's certainly better than being out to sea and having a powerful goddess throw a net at you, and then literally drown you. Why will Rán literally drown you? Because she can. Some people bake bread, some people knit, Rán literally drowns people.

Because she can. Some people bake bread, some people knit, Rán literally drowns people. Much like the sea, she does not have any rhyme or reason in terms of who will be lost in her watery embrace—one only needs to be in the wrong place at the wrong time for Rán to see you, cast her net, and literally drown you.

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With the launch of Sputnik 1 in 1957, Earth’s exploration of space began in earnest. Since then, the focus had been primarily on two countries—Russia and the United States—although in more recent times, India, China, Japan and a host of others have made remarkable strides in the exploration of Earth’s orbit, the Moon, Mars and beyond. Even Iceland has played an important role in space exploration since the 1960s and continues to do so. Today the country has its sights set on becoming a member of the European Space Agency (ESA).

Iceland’s unique geography, its technical expertise and its keen interest in participation on the world stage have all played a part. Its involvement in space exploration has included the launching of a suborbital rocket from Langanes just last August; the ongoing development of AI and remote sensing technologies; the study of Iceland’s pristine lava caves as a means to ascertain the possibility of building habitats on Mars, where such caves could shield inhabitants from the unforgiving levels of radiation that bombard the planet; and the development of what may become Iceland’s very first orbital satellite. In this feature, we spoke with a few of the people trying to make Iceland’s role in space exploration even greater.

Walking on the moon

While the Soviet Union and the US engaged in heated competition to achieve a series of firsts in space exploration, the former had been outpacing the latter for years, and Iceland largely stayed out of it. The 1950s and 1960s had been a time of prosperity for Iceland, but it remained largely neutral during the Cold War, focusing instead on internal matters and enjoying the wealth of the post-WW2 years.

All that changed in 1965, when NASA sent prospective astronauts to Iceland to train for a potential moon landing. They were sent again in 1967. In all, 32 astronauts trained in Iceland and 14 who would eventually get to the moon—including Neil Armstrong—trained here first.

The reason was simple, best summed up by Apollo Program geologist Dr. Elbert A. King: “We took one of our best field trips to Iceland. If you want to go to a place on earth that looks like the Moon, central Iceland should be high on your list, as it beautifully displays volcanic geology with virtually no vegetation cover.”

“Walking on the moon, that was a huge part of space, which was why they came here to train,” Thor Finnadóttir, the director of Space Iceland, explains. “The reasoning was that obviously we have an amazing environment when it comes to space. Iceland does look a bit like the moon, and even more like Mars. The astronauts were mostly pilots, they weren’t scientists. There was a need for them to have the ability to pick the best rocks, for example, for analysis down here. NASA at first attempted to teach them in classrooms, and apparently, they showed absolutely no interest in it. So the idea came up that maybe they should do field trips.”

Today, you can visit the Astronaut Monument, located outside the Exploration Museum in Húsavík, commemorating Iceland’s contribution to the space race. But the adventure didn’t end there.

Enter Space Iceland

Space Iceland, as Thor describes it, is...
a sort of “knowledge hub” that helps make things happen. As a service entity, they work closely with the Icelandic government and bring together institutions, companies and individuals who want to do anything space related in Iceland.

“It’s an odd job, but what’s so odd about it is it’s like any other office job,” he says. “It’s very stressful and mundane most days, but then you have these tidbits that make it a bit weird. Like ‘we need to go and buy gunpowder’ or ‘meet an institution because we want to send up a rocket’ or welcome astronauts because you’re taking them to training. But 90% of the job is just being on the phone, writing reports and making sure that everything functions. I feel really fortunate to be able to do this job, but I think a lot of people get disappointed. But in the end the projects we do help with value, create jobs and contribute to space in particular.”

Thor believes it only natural that Iceland gets even more involved in space.

“We get this question of ‘why should Iceland participate in space?’ he says. “We make a point of telling people that we do participate in space; the only questions we’re facing now is do we want to do it on our terms so it leaves as much investment behind as possible, or do we want to stay in the passenger seat? There’s no real question as to how or why we would participate in space; we’ve been doing it for 50 years.”

Is there life on Mars? Ask Iceland

There is greater potential in Iceland’s environment for learning more about space than just the presence of wide expanses of rocks and sand. Oddur Vilhelmsson, a professor of biology at the University of Akureyri who has collaborated with NASA’s astrophysics projects, believes that Iceland could hold clues for how to detect life, presenting and past, on Mars.

Oddur first met Thor in Húsavik, where he learned about Space Iceland and became “quite enthusiastic” about the endeavour.

“This opens an exciting door in the field of research with international universities and institutions,” he told us.

“There’s a lot of demand now that these institutions come to Iceland and do research related to the field of space. It is highly desirable to have a regular budget for this, to welcome these people and assist in the research. Personally, I find it a rather fun and exciting subject: it’s not more complicated than that. I find it fascinating to consider where the ‘edge of life’ is, where one can find microorganisms and where one can’t, why and why not. This to me, is a fundamental scientific and even philosophical question, which is very exciting. It’s something I’ve been having conversations about with many of my colleagues abroad.”

So how exactly can Iceland’s environment play a part in finding life on other planets such as Mars? Apparently, the answer is in our lava caves.

“On the one hand, [we’re working] in the desert sands of the Highlands and on the other hand, in lava caves,” Oddur says. “Astrobiology is connected to this, as the environment in Iceland, especially in the Highlands, is well suited in many ways as an analog for a planet, especially Mars. The caves are also quite exciting in this context, because one of the things that prevents Mars from being friendly for life is radiation, because Mars has no magnetic field. So if there had at one point been life on Mars, as many believe was the case billions of years ago, the best chance of finding signs of it would be underground. So we’re working on researching how microorganisms live in these caves here in Iceland, examine what chemical processes to look for, and wonder how that could apply to the conditions on Mars.”

That certainly is intriguing, but the question of implementation falls upon one primary factor: money.

“As with so many other things in life, this research depends a great deal on access to funding, to be able to hire scientists and buy the equipment necessary,” Oddur says. “Being a part of the ESA would increase our access to such funding, especially from Europe.”

Iceland’s first satellite?

Closer to home, Thor points out that only 10% of [the space sector] is actually exploring space. Most of it is understanding the Earth, and furthering our knowledge of humankind.” In fact, he says, we rely on space every day.

“Tinder is space technology,” he says. “It uses GPS and satellite clusters to locate you and find you a partner. I sincerely doubt that these couples are thinking ‘Thank God for the space sector, or we would have never found each other’.”

While Iceland does not, as yet, have a satellite of its own, Jinkai Zheng, a researcher for Space Iceland, is hoping to change that. He is currently designing a prototype for Iceland’s first satellite.

“It’s not for just one purpose this satellite could be used in multiple ways, providing different services at different times,” he says. “It could be commercial communication or scientific research, conducted by organisations or the universities. But what we need to figure out right now is who will provide the biggest sponsorship and who will be a client for such a project. But for what I’ve seen in Iceland, this satellite could be used for the global navigation system, which could be a part of the Galileo navigation system.
The subject of building more satellites has been cause for concern, amongst astronomers in particular. Astrono-
mmer James Blake of the University of Warwick recently pointed out that “orbital debris posing a threat to opera-
tional satellites is not being monitored closely enough, as they publish a new survey finding that over 75% of the
orbital debris they detected could not be matched to known objects in public satellite catalogues.”

For his part, Jinkai sees a great deal of potential in an Icelandic satellite program and says interest is growing.

"Currently, I'm just working in the office, doing research and writing reports, so I don't have direct contact
with the Icelandic government," he says. "But from what I've been doing, I think Iceland has a lot of poten-
tial interest in this subject, because Icelanders have relatively good tele-
communications. The interest in the space program has been increasing in recent years, too. From what I've seen, it's quite possible for Iceland to have such a satellite project; I'm quite posi-
tive about this."

Not just satellites

"Iceland has a really good background in the space industry through history," Jinkai says, adding that Iceland is also
a good model for how a colony on the moon or Mars could thrive. "Iceland has very similar environments (to
these places) and really good energy policy in terms of renewable energy. And that's what we need for developing
humanity in outer space."

Even Iceland's geothermal and hydropower energy have a role to play in space exploration, he believes.

"There's a lot of possibilities," he says. "Iceland has been growing in the field of software engineering, so it
could be a control base for the future of space exploration, for example by developing software for the rocket
navigational system, or designing simulations for the challenges we'll face in space exploration. At the same
time, we can use Iceland for testing and construction for future spacecraft, because we have a very positive renew-
able energy policy."

Government “aggressively absent”

Thor characterises the Icelandic government's participation in space as “aggressively absent,” pointing out that there are some things that only the government can do.

"The government is in no way in our way; they're not working against us or something like that," he emphasises.

"But the problem with developing a space sector is that it is a bit different than opening a gift shop. There's a lot of planning, there's a lot of interna-
tional contracts involved and so there's this need for the government to be involved on a policy level."

Part of the reason for the current situation can be attributed to the fact that Iceland has no Ministry of Space. It
doesn't have an Icelandic Space Agency, either. All the different factors that play into how Iceland participates in
space fall under many different ministries.

"What we're trying to convince the government of is that we need a minis-
try that is willing to sign the papers and coordinate with other ministries," Thor says. Their projects could fall
under the ministries of the Environment, Innovation, Education, Science and Culture, Transportations, and
sometimes Foreign Affairs. "We need all of them to be aware and review what happens under their auspices."

That said, Space Iceland has report-
edly had very positive contact with the
Ministry of Education, Science and
Culture. "I think it's fair to say that
the minister who has shown the most
interest and who has been the most
welcoming is Lilja [Alfre
sdóttir]," Thor says. "It's important to note that we've had a very positive communica-
tion with all of them, but I think the
Ministry of Education, Science and Culture has put the most time into reviewing this and trying to make it fit."

Space is “a world without borders”

We reached out to Lilja for comment
on this matter and she confirmed her interest in space is many-fold.

“Space research and science is appealing for many reasons, both educational and practical," she told the
Grapevine. "It helps us grapple with the fundamental questions about our place in the universe, the history of the
solar system, and future opportunities. Space is a world without borders, it encourages international cooperation
and, hopefully, peace in the long term. The practical applications of space have made our lives easier, created job
opportunities, and orbital satellites have certainly been used in one of the biggest challenges faced by our planet:
the effects of climate change."

While Lilja admits that establish-
ing an Icelandic Space Agency "has not been discussed" within the govern-
ment, she points out that Iceland join-
ing the ESA "has been encouraged by Parliament," although Iceland's entry
has yet to become a reality.

"Iceland will obviously not play a huge role in the field of space science, but we could offer assistance or exper-
tise that can be used in a greater context," she says. "At the same time, we must be careful, as space research and
science are foreign to the govern-
ment and to the general public. But they are exciting and we should not close our doors in this area."

Thor agrees and believes Iceland must act quickly. Whether in geol-
yogy, biology, software engineering or
even the crafting of our first satellite, the
time for Iceland's participation in
space is now.

"The opportunity is now and the window will soon close," he says. "We're going to Mars within the next couple of
decades." While Icelanders will never be indispensable, he says, "what we can do is be amazingly focused and organ-
ised and get as much long term value as possible."
You Say It's Your Bday!

Imagine Peace Tower Relight

Yoko Ono’s Imagine Peace Tower on Viðey Island can’t be visited due to COVID-19. But you can watch it light up for the first time this winter on October 9th from the comfort and warmth of your own home. "What's the occasion?" John Lennon’s would be 80th birthday. Celebrate the late, great icon, unite in the glow of the light as it shoots skywards and just imagine ALL the people. Best enjoyed whilst sitting in bed, with some classic Lennon tunes quietly playing in the background.

All are welcome

Felix has nothing but praise for the Nordic Council, who have for years now been detailing where countries are doing well and where they can improve in queer rights. "The Nordic Council is really putting so many things on the map that need to be fought for and need to be discussed," he says.

For this reason, the National Queer Organisation of Iceland and the Nordic House are hosting an event called, "A Queer Utopia? The Dissonance Between Legal Rights and Societal Acceptance in Iceland." Felix readily admits that he’s not an expert on this topic, but is very eager to learn. "I think it’s a pretty safe place for queer people to live. It’s pretty boring at times, but that’s what comes with living in a small society. In a European perspective, I think Iceland is a good place to live for queer people," says Felix. "It bears mentioning that even those who are cis and straights are not only welcome, but encouraged to listen in. "I think it’s going to be a very interesting afternoon, and I think that anyone who’s interested in queer rights, and human rights in general and a better society should definitely tune in," Felix says.

A Queer Utopia?

Examining the gap between the law and the people

Iceland has a reputation, in many ways well-deserved, as a good place for queer people to live. While the country has definitely made great strides—especially when it comes to gay people—to ensure equal rights and fair treatment for queer Icelanders, there is still much to be done. In many ways, Icelandic people show more acceptance of and greater progressive attitudes about queer people than the law might reflect.

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The turn-of-the-century shift

"There’s been such a shift in attitude over the last 20 years or so," says Felix Bergsson, an actor and broadcaster who came out as gay in 1992 and who will be moderating the event. "This means that the possibility to live your queer life in Iceland is there. Before the 90s, people moved away, they had to leave the country. It was a very homophobic place. But I think the biggest change was in 1996 when we got the registered partnership laws [a precursor to same-sex marriage]. Things started really changing after that. With the broadening of the fight, taking in trans rights and queer issues in general, new things have been put on the map that need to be fought for and need to be discussed."

Things have definitely been good for many queer people in Iceland, for the most part, which Felix underlines. "In my experience, Iceland is pretty open and friendly to queer people," he says. "I think it’s a pretty safe place for queer people to live. It’s pretty boring at times, but that’s what comes with living in a small society. In a European perspective, I think Iceland is a good place to live for queer people."

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There's more to queer than just being gay

That said, there is much more to the queer community than its gay citizens. The discussion will also examine trans rights, non-binary issues and the status of queer asylum seekers. Felix readily admits that he’s not an expert on this topic, but is very eager to learn. "I think it’s going to be a very interesting afternoon, and I think that anyone who’s interested in queer rights, and human rights in general and a better society should definitely tune in," Felix says.

Carnal Appetite

Until October 14th - FLÆ

Culinary artist Elín Margótt is known for making lollipops in the shape of fingers and cakes that resemble vaginas—literally Food porn. At this exhibitionist exhibition, she presents a dinner ritual in order to promote not only healthy nutrition but also a healthy sexual appetite. To keep everyone safe, there will be a 6-person limit, with hand sanitiser readily available. Masks are recommended, as is not licking the plate. ;)

Eat My...

October 10th - 20:00 - Bíó Paradís - FLÆ

A special preview screening of the movie on Saturday, October 10th. Of course, every precaution will be taken when it comes to COVID-19—especially when it comes to COVID-19—especially when it comes to COVID-19—especially when it comes to COVID-19—especially when it comes to COVID-19. We Love U, Mads will be moderating the event. "This must be in bed, with some classic Lennon tunes quietly playing in the background. The light will be lit every night until November 29th.

We Love U, Mads

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Julius & Claire, sharply visible

Seemingly random, in front of wood paneling and amid shelves of books, an odd looking, torn, bright yellow dress hung in the Gerðuberg Library this month; almost like a phantom apparition. Made from stitched together rubber gloves, Ewa Marcinek’s art piece, ‘Second Skin,’ was accompanied by a music piece featuring voice recordings of a Polish woman named Anna who came to Iceland. But ‘Second Skin’ was not alone. In fact, Reykjavík has been peppered with similarly-themed public installations over the past month as part of the exhibition ‘Vestur í bláinn,’ which aimed to tell the story of immigrants in Iceland through the lens of both foreign and Icelandic artists.

The initial idea for the project came from the mind of musician Julius Rothlaender, known for his work in bands like BSÍ, Laura Secord and Vil. He was looking for an opportunity to develop his compositions while also tackling a topic that had been on his mind for a while: Immigration.

“[Vestur í bláinn] started as an experiment to bring together music I had written over the past year and spoken word,” Julius says. “More specifically, it would focus on the topic of immigration, which has been something I’ve personally been thinking about.”

Along with putting his own experiences into the budding project, the musician aimed to create a space for other voices to be heard, both musically and visually. Cue the arrival of French artist Claire Paugam, a board member of the Living Art Museum and the winner of the 2020 Icelandic Art Prize’s Motivational Award. Julius contacted her, she explains, and the idea for the project immediately resonated—particularly its emphasis on diversity.

“These voices you hear in this music are not (often) heard in the Icelandic media, so we thought it would be cool to have them be present in public locations,” Claire explains. “So, that’s also how the concept of the exhibition came up. How can we have these voices accessible to everyone? Then later the idea came up to give sound pieces to local artists which they could then base their work on.”

The exhibition features works of such artists as Eva Bjarnadóttir, Hugo Llanes, Melanie Ubaldo and Bára Bjarnadóttir.

The musician moulded his compositions around conversations he heard in different languages, ultimately creating a musical response to the everyday dialogue you might hear in Hlemmur or Vesturbæjarlaug.

“I thought a lot about letting people talk in their own language. People won’t understand the words maybe, but I relate to the sound of the human voice and language. It’s a connecting element,” he says.

“Do you hear me?” Claire emphasises that the project was built on a foundation of empai-
thy. After Julius finished the musical tracks, they were then given to the visual artists, whose job was to interpret the voices, find some creative and personal relationship to them and create the final product.

"There’s this art piece at Hlemmur by the artist ÚaVon who describes this very well," she recalls. "In the music piece she worked with, you hear a bus driver. At one point, he asks ‘Do you hear me?’ That sentence really resonated with her … she says that the thing we all long for is to have someone to hear us and to connect with us. That’s what makes us human."

What onlookers and listeners take away from the pieces is up to them. With the project exhibiting in public spaces, Julius likes the idea that people might just stumble upon the artwork without looking for it. He particularly hopes that people who maybe don’t often go to art galleries and venues get to experience the exhibition.

**Into the blue**

The namesake of the project is the 1975 RÚV documentary ‘Vestur í bláinn’. In fact, Julius’ track “Salomé & Björn,” and its connected art piece “Driftwood” directly reference the subject matter of the original documentary.

The film documents the late 19th century emigration of Icelanders, when almost a quarter of the nation resettled mostly in North America in search of a better life and hoping to escape the poverty and hunger that marked the time. The documentary featured interviews with people who had been part of the emigration wave, like the aforementioned Salomé and Björn, who discuss the journey and the difficulties of starting a new life in a new land. The interviews greatly influenced Julius’ work and the emotions behind it.

"There’s this poem by a man writing to his friend, who’s leaving Iceland and he more or less asks him, ‘Are you leaving, my friend, out into the west, into the blue?’ he recalls. "I just think that no matter which country we’re talking about, there’s always a story of people, then and now, moving to other countries looking for a better life and … I felt including the Icelandic perspective could give a little twist on how we look at things from here and at the people coming here."

**Opening doors**

Claire adds that with the testimonies of Icelandic immigrants as well, there’s an incitement to think about the cycle of migration.

"Talking to other artists, we thought about how plants migrate, how objects can migrate, how everything is constantly moving. It’s really good to be reminded of that. Sometimes it’s too easy to be stuck in a state of things that you think will be true forever," she points out.

But ‘Vestur í bláinn’ is not there to make any specific point about immigration, Claire and Julius emphasise. Instead, the exhibition aims to open doors and provoke conversation and introspection by presenting real narratives of people who live in Iceland. The takeaway, the two collaborators conclude, can be as personal as each individual feels it to be.
Eat, Pray, Quarantine
The best takeaway for your time alone

Words: Iona Rangeley-Wilson & Valur Grettiðsson
Photos: Art Biencik

It’s evening, you’ve just started ‘Suc-
cession’ and the prospect of any
kind of human contact is at least 6
days away, or maybe even 14. So how
does one quell their sadness in the
light of such solitude? That’s right!
It’s time to eat your lonely, lonely
feelings. Of course, you’ll need to do
so through delivery places or kind
friends and family members who
will bring the food (safely) to your
door. Please, don’t risk the safety of
others just to satisfy a craving.
And remember: Your lonesome tears
will add a nice salty seasoning
to every meal.

Ramen Momo
Tryggvagata 16

Start off your inside time by order-
ing some ramen from Momo. The
beloved hole-in-the-wall ramen bar
was the first in Iceland and also
gives a discount for bringing your
own container. (Not that you can!
You’re in quarantine, remember?)
Although most of their ingredients
are made in Iceland, that Japanese
taste means that if you close your
eyes and concentrate very hard, you
might be able to convince yourself—
just for a moment—that you’re some-
where far, far away from here. But you’re not. So try the Gyoza.

Dirty Burger and Ribs
Austurstraeti 18

It’s a sad fact that some people go
their entire life without being truly
honest to themselves. But the mo-
otony of quarantine calls for some
brutal soul-searching; it’s an op-
portunity to finally accept yourself
fully. Start with this honest fact—
Dirty Burger & Ribs is as real as it
gets when it comes to greasy food.
They have the best homemade buf-
falo sauce. smoke their own bacon,
serve up wings that are nothing less
than perfection and slow cook their
pulled pork with nothing short of
love. Dirty is the place you call when
you admit to yourself that you’ve
been done with green juice and want a
real barbecue feast. It’s also not a
bad option when you want to cry
into your pillow and wonder why
you are so disgusting. Either way, it
works. VG

Flatey Pizza
Grandagardur 11 & Hlemmur Mathiol

Okay, 24 hours looks was a pretty
good start, but who are you kidding?
This is quarantine. You wouldn’t be
doing it right without eating an
entire pizza, drinking a bottle of
wine and passing out in front of
an episode of ‘Friends’ you’ve seen ten
times already. But if you’re going
to ruin your diet, at least make it
classy: Flatey Pizza boasts a killer
sourdough base and they even have
pizzas to match the seasons. Does it
get any classier? We’d recommend
the Tarrhub, which features moe-
zarrella, ricotta, potatoes, and truffle
oil, but that said, if you wanna go
nuts, you can always opt for the
Nutella pizza. But please have some
self-respect whilst eating it. On sec-
ond thought, that would be… perfec-
tion. IRW

Roes is for both. The food there is not only
sublime, but the head chef has put a
lot of thought and research into the
menu. Which basically means that
now Icelanders can boy the Kimchi
(it’s a staple) or the crispy ‘Tteok-
bokki—which is incredibly fun for
me to order over the phone with
my accent. Kore is the best when it
comes to Korean food in Iceland and
is highly recommended when one is
hungover or just fed up with the win-
ter darkness. VG

There are two kinds of people in the world: The one who eats “Asian
food” and the one who understands that continents are composed of
more than one country (ignoring Australia, obviously). Luckily, Kore
is for both. The food there is not only sublime, but the head chef has put
a lot of thought and research into the
menu. Which basically means that
now Icelanders can boy the Kimchi
(it’s a staple) or the crispy ‘Tteok-
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me to order over the phone with
my accent. Kore is the best when it
comes to Korean food in Iceland and
is highly recommended when one is
hungover or just fed up with the win-
ter darkness. VG

Grótt is something of a hidden
gem. At the end of the Seltja-
narnes peninsula, not far from
the centre of Reykjavík, there’s a
lonely, windswept, red-topped
lighthouse, with a walkable
causeway that’s only accessible
at certain times, depending on the
tide. There’s a black beach, a
miniature hot pot, and a nature
reserve. Now, to find the North-
ern Lights, it’s rather complicat-
ed. Basically, you stand on this
picturesque beach, open your
eyes, and look up. There you go.
Pure happiness. Note: Be aware of the tides if you want to cross
over and check out the light-
house. You could get stuck over-
night.

RUNNERS UP

Landakotstún
Havallagata 14-16, 101 Reykjavík

This spot is a sneaky one. It’s
smack downtown, but yet
there’s magically enough dark-
ness there to spot the aurora if
it’s burning up above the city.
Where is it, you ask? Find the
Catholic Church—there’s only
one—and walk to the bench be-
hind it. That’s it. Now, pull out
your flask and enjoy the green
fire in the sky.

Sæbraut
Sæbraut, 101 Reykjavík
Sæbraut’s coastline path fea-
tures a gorgeous sculpture called
Selfa The Sun Voyager’. There,
take a seat and soak up the dark
ocean as you enjoy the dancing
lights above you. It’s a simple
spot that can be surprisingly se-
cuded.
In Your Pocket

October 9th—November 5th

In The Heat Of The Night

Perfect Day

Dance. jive & have the time of your life

Venue Finder

Words: Jennifer Distill
Art: Blöndók

Seth Sharp

Seth Sharp is a DJ, producer, singer and vocal coach originally from the US. His perfect day? A perfect mix of fitness, food, family and friends.

Morning

I start out of the 6th floor window of the luxury hotel, the scent of the crisp air wafting through the room like fresh morning rúgbrau. Though many years have passed, I still recall sleeping off the flight from JFK and experiencing the aroma for the first time. It was pure and unfamiliar, and in that moment I knew this land would become my home. As I look out onto Mt. Esja, the blissful city remains forever my muse. Through-out the suite, my friends—brought together by music, art and creativity—rest peacefully, sleeping o
to the slide an inordinate amount of times to the delight of my four-year-old nephew and his preteen sister, who forces her adolescent angst to enjoy being a kid again.

Evening

Dinner’s at Böot, where I introduce my family to the scrumptious veg-an burger. Strolling to Úta Gelato for gelato, the kind staff reward my loyalty (I eat there every day), present-ing me with delicious passion fruit sorbet. DJ Karel and I head to the club for a DJ set, savoring the crowd with three hours of tech house music.

The numbers on the right (i.e. E4) tell you the position on the map in the next page.
1. Austur-Indiafélagið
Hverfisgata 14B
Still going strong 20 years on, Austur-Indiafélagið is an institution. Make a meal out of the delicate salmon paella, kebabs and mussels, and you’ll feel like you’re in the Indian state of Punjab.

2. Gaeta Gelato
Hafnarstræti 84 - 101 Reykjavík - Tel. 562 3232
Gaeta Gelato is owned by recently-arrived Italian transplants with nearly 25 years of experience as gelateria. Their artisan sorbets are made with fresh and well-sourced Icelandic ingredients. Though only recently opened, Gaeta Gelato has already won over a crowd of committed regulars.

3. Óðalvík
Grottuborga 4
With big portions and a tasty menu, this hip restaurant offers everything you might desire, from crispy broccoli to big bowls of mussels to a great leg of lamb and a taste of lobster. Try and get a seat upstairs: it’ll be like dining under the stars in the most romantic, dim-it-up set-up.

4. Valdís
Grandagarður 12 b Frakkastígur 10
This beloved ice cream parlour—which has a Grandi and downtown location—makes everything in-house each morning, and you can tell. If you like liquorice, try the Icelandic Peter Weir. It looks like liquid cement, it tastes more heavenly. The spot doesn’t have a large seating area, so take your cone on a stroll along the harbourside or enjoy it in a parked car. Ice cream style.

5. Bastard Brew & Food
Vegamótastígur 4
This downtown drinking hole is something of a bear and bar-food palace. It’s an English pub style environment, without the sense of history—everything from the tables to the plush leather seating are catalogue-fresh—but with eleven beers on tap, a great happy hour, and the phenomenally good ‘Fat Bastard’ burger on offer, it’s a firm Drinking favourite. Their tacos are pretty notable too.

6. Noodle Station
Laugavegur 153
Bellowing clouds of onion water any month-warming introduction to Noodle Station. Choose beef, vegetable or chicken, and add an extra spice or flaky chilli sauce until you lose your tongue. The best plokkfiskur in the city, some say. That’s just growing and growing. Run by the legends behind Húrra (RIP), Röntgen unexpectedly grabbed the runner-up for the Best Goddamn Bar category at the 2020 Best Of Reykjavík awards. We stan.

7. Grandi Mathhóll
Grandagarður 16
Grandi Mathhóll has an immediately comfortable feel with various stools, benches and couches scattered throughout the space. There are nine concessions and a bustling, social feel as people meander between the vendors, who shout out names as their orders are ready. Tip: Your food from Spes and friend chicken from KOKI. Everyone’s happy!

8. Vitabar
Bergþórgata 21
This old-school burger ‘n’ beer joint is right downtown—near Sundhóll— but feels like a real neighbourhood bar. Its unassuming exterior hides a cozy, no-frills dining room, where you’ll mostly be surrounded by locals for once.

9. Salka Valka
Skólaharðarstræti 23
For a piece of good ol’ Icelandic fish, there’s no better spot than Salka Valka. The restaurant serves up a steamed fillet in their Fish Of The Day menu, with the fish options depending on what is the freshest available. They also have potentially the best plókkfiskur in the city served as starra soup and—quite recently—a pizza menu.

10. Bojarins Beztu
Tryggvagata 1
Icelanders have a weird obsession with hot dogs—trust us, you won’t understand until you’ve been here. It’s universally agreed though that the tiny stand Bojarins Beztu serves the best one. Pro Tip: When they ask what toppings you want, say ‘All!’ This is the only way to eat it.

11. Mama
Laugavegur 2
Nothing tastes better than ethics, which is why we love to try the rainbow salad and ‘nicrecowm’ bowls at Mama, a plant-based restaurant with big dreams. The company is proudly environmentalist—they hope to use their profits to transform Iceland so that the kitchen can become self-sufficient. The restaurant also doubles as a temporary space offering a whole host of yoga sessions and breathing workshops. Have your plant-based prayers been answered?

12. Röntgen
Hverfisgata 12
Röntgen is a party bar in the purest sense, with a rowdy dance floor, delicious cocktails and a fanbase that’s just growing and growing. Run by the legends behind Húrra (RIP), Röntgen unexpectedly grabbed the runner-up for the Best Goddamn Bar category at the 2020 Best Of Reykjavík awards. We stan.

13. Lebowski Bar
Laugavegur 20a
This fully carpeted bar honouring the “Lebowski” (not The Dude, man), is a nice place that offers two vibes: start the night nice and cozy with an artisanal White Russian, and end it on one of the rowdiest and most underated dance floors in the city. Yup, Lebowski is a great place to hang at, but that could just be, like, our opinion man.

14. Jungle Cocktail Bar
Austurstræti 9
This west-end speakeasy bar, encourages new collaborations and experimental performances, so even if you’re not a music lover, you won’t want to skip out on the walk to the venue. The Day meal, with the fish options depending on what is the freshest available, is an institution. Make your gums howl. It’s bar-style with hot dogs—trust us, you won’t want to skip out on the walk to the venue.

15. Port 9
Ygeþúsastígur 9
Cosy and tucked away with a secretive vibe, Port 9 is a true hidden gem, hosting a delicious wine list as well as potentially the most intimate atmosphere in Reykjavík. It also has a nice balcony—the ideal locale for sipping some Pino in the summer sun.

16. Mengi
Öldugata 16
Mengi’s concert room is more white than it is one that you need to check out. Yes, there is a bar on Skipholt, and yes, it is one that you need to check out. The RVK Brewing Company has slid

17. Luna Flórens
Grandagarður 25
Luna Flórens is Iceland’s only “gypsy bar.” Part flower-child, part spiritual and with a whole lot of whimsy thrown into the mix, this cozy and hand-crafted bar is so intimate it makes you want to spend the day musing breathing workshops. Have your plant-based prayers been answered?

18. RVK Brewing Company
Skipholt 31
Yes, there is a bar on Skipholt, and yes, it is one that you need to check out. The RVK Brewing Company has slid
under the radar since it opened, but
now, we’re here to bring it out of the
shadows. The brewery and beer hall
offers a varied list of brews, most of
which they make themselves locally.
Come and experience your new beer
addiction.

Shopping

20. Hildur Yeoman
Skóliaveit Bústigur 22b.
As well as selling her own designs—
women’s wear characterised by
flowing shapes made from fine
fabrics with colourful, distinctive,
busy prints—Hildur Yeoman’s
boutique also features sunglasses
by Le Specs, jewellery by Vanessa
Mooney, French tea, and other
interesting trinkets.

21. nomad.
Frakkastigur 8f
A relative newbie to the Laugavegur
scene, nomad. was a surprise
runner-up for the Best Design
Store at the 2020 Best of Reykjavík
awards. They have a fantastically
curated selection of books, lamps,
candies and more. Plus, the owner
is a photographer and often has
exhibitions on the lower floor.

22. Wasteland Reykjavík
Ingólfstraeti 5
For super à la mode downtown
Reykjavík looks—i.e. cheerleader
uniforms, Guy Fieri t-shirts, and
astronaut-esque jumpsuits—this
second-hand store is the go-to.

23. Lucky Records
Rauðarærístigur 10
Lucky Records is the punky,
underground horse of the Reykjavík
record scene. It’s one of those shops
that is easy to get lost in—expect
to easily spend an entire afternoon
perusing their selection.

24. Melabúðin
Hagamæli 39, 107
For foodies looking for artisanal
deli meats, fresh figs, rare cheeses
and all sorts of unexpected, hard-
to-find treats, Vesturbær’s beloved
Melabúðin should satiate your
desires.

25. Pastel Flower Studio
Baldursgata 36
Pastel Flower Studio is only open on
Fridays and Saturdays from 13.00
to 18.00—so plan accordingly.
The studio uses cut, dried, and
fresh flowers to create unique
arrangements that reference
classic Icelandic nature in an
unexpected and innovative way.
Trust us: You won’t find a florist in the
city that’s in any way comparable.

26. Street Rats Tattoo
Númergata 27
Kristófer, a.k.a. Sleepofer Tattoo,
has proven himself to be a fresh,
experimental artist whose works
have become a somewhat coveted
symbol in the city. So if you’re
looking to get your travel tattoo,
go there. It’s way more interesting
than a Vegvisir.

Lagó Pizza
Hagamæliur 67, 107 Reykjavík

Love pizzas, but don’t think they’re quite
big enough? Why not dive into an 18 inch
pie from Vesturbær’s newest haunt, Lagó
Pizza? Dr. if that sounds a bit much, opt
for their slice and drink deal; and when we
say ‘slice’, we’re still talking about a quar-
ter of a pizza here—you won’t go hungry.
With the dough made fresh each morning
and aspirations for fresh pasta on the ho-
rizon, we can’t get enough of this taste of
New York.
A Feast For The Ears, The Eyes And The Soul

A look at MSEA’s latest and most intimate album yet

Words: Jess Distill  Photo: Art Bicnick

Album
Pre-order ‘I Turned Into A Familiar Shape’ on Bandcamp.

“It’ll be my first gig of 2020!” MSEA—real name Maria-Carme-la Raso—says of her album launch concert, which is slated for October 16th at Mengi. The album, ‘I Turned Into A Familiar Shape,’ will drop the same day, but it’s been ready since early this year. “We started recording in December and finished at the end of February,” she explains. But then the pandemic started and the world stood still. “I’d anticipated touring this year and wanted to release it in April,” she shrugs. Unfortunately, 2020 had other plans.

Despite not being a conscious decision to use the relationship as inspiration for her work, it was clearly an intrinsic part of the album’s creation. “[It] was written throughout that time, but I wasn’t thinking, ‘I’m going to write an album about this,’” she says. “When the relationship was over I wrote more and noticed the songs were all definitely from that period, from that state of mind.”

A rich and vivid experience

But MSEA’s creations go far beyond the audible. Every song conjures up such a vivid sense of colour and texture that they become completely immersive; the sort of music that should be listened to lying down, eyes shut, so that one can fully appreciate all it has to offer. “I often have images in mind when writing. It could be as simple as rain or ice. Even a smell or a tactile impression.”

Released on the Myrkfælni label, ‘I Turned Into A Familiar Shape’ was, as the artist explains, written during an abusive relationship. The emotions the artist felt during the relationship and the effect it’s had on her become clearer with every listen of the album. Her soft, gentle vocals battle against striking and dissonant electronic sounds to create a feeling of vulnerability and confusion, while short, repetitive musical phrases with lyrics like, “I still feel you in my body” and “I’ll breathe you into life” become something of a mantra that pulls the listener directly into the singer’s brain.

The inspiration behind the album

“I often have images in mind when writing. It could be as simple as rain or ice. Even a smell or a tactile impression.”

“I wanted a pretty big theatrical show and then COVID happened,” she laments, diving into her vision of a larger, higher-production release concert. But while 2020 has made such a show impossible, hopefully 2021 will bring MSEA’s fantasy to life. Until then, we’ll just stream the album and dream.

MSEA, pictured in her home

Music

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Starts with a shot of the infamous Icelandic spirit Brennivín

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• Smoked puffin with blueberry “brennivín” sauce
• Icelandic Arctic Char with peppers-salsa
• Lobster tails baked in garlic
• Pan-fried line caught blue ling with lobster sauce
• Icelandic lamb with beer-butterscotch sauce
• Minke Whale with cranberry & malt sauce

And for dessert
• White chocolate “Skyr” mousse with passion coulis

“I often have images in mind when writing. It could be as simple as rain or ice. Even a smell or a tactile impression.”

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October 9th—November 5th

**Our Picks**

**Concerts & Nightlife**

Events listed are all live performances, shows and DJs. Venues are listed by day. For complete listings and detailed information on venues visit grapevine.is/happenings.

Send your listings to: listings@grapevine.is

**Note:** Due to COVID-19, at the time of writing there are gathering bans and event limitations until October 18th. If you are reading after that day, check covid.is for the latest information.

**Friday October 9th**
- **COVID-19/coronavirus**
- Imagine Peace Tower Relighting: John Lennon's 50th Birthday
  20:00: Everywhere!
- Múlinn Jazz Club: Sigurður Flosason Quartet
  20:00: Harpa

**Saturday October 10th**
- **COVID-19/coronavirus**
- ‘Another Round’ Screening!
  20:00: Bíó Paradís

**Sunday October 11th**
- **COVID-19/coronavirus**
- Monday October 12th
- **COVID-19/coronavirus**
- Tuesday October 13th
- **Awards**
  - A Queen Shells/’The Dissonance Between Legal Rights and Societal Acceptance in Iceland Lecture
  17:00: Nordic House • Livestreamed!

**Wednesday October 14th**
- **COVID-19/coronavirus**
- Mullin Jazz Club: Gammar
  20:00: Harpa
- All You Can Eat Wings Wednesday
  All Day, Browdog Reykjavik

**Thursday October 15th**
- **COVID-19/coronavirus**
- Dummplings Night!
  17:00: Makaka Restaurant
- Meet the Author: Hanne Høj from Copenhagen
  20:00: Bíó Paradís

**Sunday October 18th**
- **COVID-19/coronavirus**
- ‘Veronika Voss’ at Bíó Paradís

**Wednesday October 21st**
- **AWE**
  - Mullin Jazz Club: Andrés Pór Quintet
  20:00: Harpa
- Classics in The Moorland: Þórar Johannsson & Ingum Hildur Haakonsdóttir
  20:00: Nordic House
- All You Can Eat Wings Wednesday
  All Day, Browdog Reykjavik

**Thursday October 22nd**
- Iceland Symphony Orchestra: Bjarne Conducts AOW
  20:00: Harpa
- Duone Ultimate Guido Bäumer & Madár Rácz
  19:30: Harpa
- Dummplings Night!
  17:00: Makaka Restaurant

**Friday October 23rd**
- Mamma Mia: Here We Go Again!
  Friday Screening Party!
  20:00: Bíó Paradís

**Saturday October 24th**
- Tumi Árnason & Magnus Tryggason
  19:00, 21:00: Mengi
- All My Sons: Live British National Theatre Screening
  14:30: Bíó Paradís
- Iceland Symphony Orchestra: Maximum Musics Visits The Orchestra
  14:00: Harpa

**Sunday October 25th**
- Black Sundays: ‘Veronika Voss’ Screening
  20:00: Bíó Paradís

**Monday October 26th**
- All My Sons: Live British National Theatre Screening
  20:00: Bíó Paradís

**Wednesday October 28th**
- Mullin Jazz Club: Gammar
  20:00: Harpa
- Iceland Symphony Orchestra: Stuart Skelton Sings Wagner
  20:00: Harpa
- All You Can Eat Wings Wednesday
  All Day, Browdog Reykjavik

**Thursday October 29th**
- Dummplings Night!
  17:00: Makaka Restaurant
- Museum Free Thursdays
  17:00: Reykjavik

**Friday October 30th**
- ‘Little Shop Of Horrors’: Friday Halloween Screening Party!
  20:00: Bíó Paradís
- Skönrøkk
  21:00: Harpa

**Saturday October 31st**
- ABBA Tribute Show
  19:30: Harpa

**Sunday November 1st**
- Black Sundays: ‘The Omen’ Screening
  20:00: Bíó Paradís

**Wednesday November 4th**
- All You Can Eat Wings Wednesday
  All Day, Browdog Reykjavik

**Thursday November 5th**
- Iceland Symphony Orchestra: Four Horses & Flute Concerto
  20:00: Harpa
- Dummplings Night!
  17:00: Makaka Restaurant

**Sunday November 8th**
- Dummplings Night!
  17:00: Makaka Restaurant


**The Meaning Of Everyday Objects**

Guðlaug Mia Eyþórsdóttir blurs the line between functionality and decoration

**Words:** Irena Rangeley-Wilson  **Photo:** Art Biencik

**Exhibition**

Check out 'Milli Hluta' at the Mosfellsbær Library.

The neat stacks of the Mosfellsbær Library don't stop abruptly at the door of the exhibition that lies hidden behind it; rather, they seem to continue on inside. The first piece, hung from crisp white walls, looks rather like a stack of shelves, or perhaps some sort of play shelf. After all, it's made of fabric—hardly something the librarians can arrange their books on. Beyond this, a metal frame forms the shape of a chair. From a distance, it appears three-dimensional, but a closer inspection shows it flattened against the wall, as unfit for function as the "shelves" that came before it. Together, these objects form the entrance to Guðlaug Mia Eyþórsdóttir's new exhibition 'Milli Hluta.'

**Leave it at that**

"It's a reference to an Icelandic saying that we have," Guðlaug says, explaining the origins of the exhibition's name. "Liggur á milli hluta, which means 'lies between objects.' It's a bit like, 'leave it at that', so it's a play with words. I could say that the meaning of the exhibition itself is lying between the objects."

While this might sound a bit like the English phrase "to read between the lines", there's no true direct translation of the Icelandic saying. "It makes more sense in Icelandic," Guðlaug laughs. "When you read between the lines the meaning is still there, but with 'liggur á milli hluta' you cast the meaning aside. You just leave it at that, you don't read into it. Is there a meaning or simply none at all?"

**Familiar yet unfamiliar**

Like the title, the exhibition repeatedly teases the viewer with meaning and then with its absence. Each object is familiar yet unfamiliar: almost recognisable as an everyday object, but never quite. That is a cabinet? Well, sort of, but certainly not one you could keep anything in. Moreover, there are no titles or placards to help the viewer out. Instead, each piece stands anonymously, spaced evenly around the white room, silently begging questions but answering none.

"You construct the meaning with your presence in the space," Guðlaug answers. "My starting point is the forms that surround us everyday: a texture, a form, a material. And I take those forms and I reshuffle them—try out different colours or scales. You could come here and see what looks like a cabinet and then what looks like a shelf and you decide that it's an office space. You develop your own meaning out of the familiar objects that surround you."

**Figure it out!**

Though Guðlaug takes her inspiration from everyday objects, she concedes that her ideas often start more abstractly with an atmosphere or space. This particular exhibition started with the idea of a library, the very one she's exhibiting in. Guðlaug's early idea suggested a series of objects—a shelf, drawers—and once placed in the exhibition space, those objects would construct their own new meaning in relation to one another. One viewer, she explains, might look at them and see a library; another, a bedroom. That's why Guðlaug doesn't, or perhaps can't, explain where each piece of inspiration came from, even as she walks around the exhibition; it's more fun for the viewer to have to figure it out for themselves.

Fundamentally, what fascinates Guðlaug, she emphasises, is forms. She quotes the Danish art historian Rudolf Broby-Johansen: "Things live longer than people and forms live much longer than the objects themselves." It's a sentiment that's easy to view when confronted with her work. Guðlaug's forms are at once familiar yet bewilderingly unfamiliar, representative of everyday objects, but never fully taking those objects' shapes. In 'Milli Hluta,' she abandons the objects' limitations and retreats to the platonic form: form that retains beauty, but exists without function.
Continued from the previous page...

A new exhibition at the Reykjavík City Museum, Settlement Exhibition, explores the use of digital technology in art. This exhibition provides insight into how technology is being used in Iceland today. It examines how technology inspires new ways of thinking and working. The exhibition features works by a variety of artists from different disciplines. The exhibition runs from October 20th to December 20th at the Reykjavík City Museum.

The exhibition includes works by artists from Iceland and abroad. The works explore the relationship between technology and culture. The exhibition examines how technology is being used to create new forms of communication and expression. The exhibition also explores the role of technology in shaping society.

The exhibition is open to the public and is free to attend. It is open daily from 10am to 5pm. The exhibition is located at the Reykjavík City Museum, Strætt 1, 101 Reykjavík. For more information, visit the museum’s website at ReykjavikCity.is.
A Half-Elvish Film Festival

The Skjaldborg Film Festival, ageing communism and the history of humanity told from Neptune

Words: Valur Gunnarsson
Photo: Still From ‘Hálfur álfur’

One might be forgiven for thinking that some sort of elven curse was placed upon this year’s Skjaldborg Film Festival. For the past 13 years, the festival has showcased new Icelandic documentaries at the local cinema of Patreksfjörður. Usually held in May, this year it was initially moved to the first weekend of August due to COVID-19. As it happened, there was then a COVID surge in August, so the festival was once again moved to mid-September and relocated to Reykjavík’s newly reopened Bíó Paradís.

As volunteers worked hard to get the renovations done in time for the festival, another COVID surge began and it seemed the festival might have to be postponed again. However, things went forward and Skjaldborg’s first edition in the big city can be deemed a success.

Ageing Communism

As usual, Skjaldborg’s programme introduced us to hidden worlds in our midst. In this iteration, we got ageing communists, the clientele at a second-hand shop and even a circus. While the opening film, ‘Aftur heim?’ was about giving birth at home, if there was an overarching theme this year, it was of saying goodbye. Perhaps this focus was a hidden sign of an ageing society or just very 2020.

A double bill on Saturday afternoon started with ‘MÍR: Byltingin lengi lifi,’ about the MÍR Cultural Centre. The Centre has been showing Russian films in Iceland since 1950—outliving the Soviet Union by almost 30 years now—and is still run by the ageing idealists that founded it. The film was followed by ‘Ökukveðja 010006621,’ a heart-rending story about a woman learning to let go of driving as her body deteriorates. The day closed with ‘Er ást,’ which is about the widow of beloved artist Þorvaldur Þorsteinsson and their last days together in Antwerpen in 2013.

A history of humanity

The festival closed on Sunday with the much anticipated ‘Last and First Men’ by renowned film score composer Jóhann Jóhannsson, who died suddenly two years ago and would have turned 51 during this year’s festival. A future history based on a 1930 novel by Olaf Stapledon, it tells the history of humanity and its successor species for the next two billion years, largely from its base on Neptune.

While one might think the film would be prohibitively expensive to make, instead it’s composed of actress Tilda Swinton reading from an abridged final chapter of the book as the screen is filled with images of World War II monuments from the former Yugoslavia, themselves part of a communist world that no longer exists and that stand in rather well for large scale science fiction sets. What at first seems like yet another dystopia is actually surprisingly optimistic and is lent extra pathos coming, as it is, from beyond the grave. It is our world still; it’s not too late to save it.

But the jewel in the crown of this year’s festival was ‘Hálfur álfur,’ which won the Grand Jury Prize. Here, filmmaker Jón Bjarki Magnússon documents the final days of his grandfather, leading from his 100-year birthday to his death. The film is touching but never overly sentimental—even very funny in parts. Saying farewell is a part of life and we should all hope for a send-off like this. The title is a reference to the fact that the grandfather believed himself to be a half-elf. It seems the elves came through for Skjaldborg after all.

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“Saying farewell is a part of life and we should all hope for a send-off like this.”

EST. 1920
SANDHOLT REYKJAVÍK
Laugavegur 36, 101 Reykjavík www.sandholt.is

A Half elf
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Climate change is a world-wide tragedy, the full force of which will be experienced by everybody in the near future. But, despite the enormity of the situation, many people still choose to believe that climate change won’t tangibly affect them or their everyday lives. That said, for people living in the Nordic countries, the natural changes brought about by mankind’s negligence are appearing rapidly. Sometimes, right on their doorsteps.

“For people living in the Nordic countries, the natural changes brought about by mankind’s negligence are appearing rapidly. Sometimes, right on their doorsteps.”


Through paint, video, sculpture and photography, Arinnunnur Yí, Erna Skuladóttir, Ingiðjörð Fríðriksdóttir, Nestori Syrjälä, Pétur Thomsen and Úrðra Sparre magnify tiny, often overlooked aspects of climate change that they witness in their homelands on a daily basis, piecing them together to create one large, foreboding picture of the future of our landscape. Pétur Thomsen’s work ‘Ingólfsfjall’ exemplifies this concept beautifully through a series of photos documenting the mining of Ingólfsfjall mountain in Iceland. Pétur took one photo a day, from the same spot overlooking the mine, showcasing the changing seasons and the mountain which, due to the industry, slowly disappears before the viewers’ eyes. The piece will be added to daily until the wall is full of photos of the vanishing landscape. “This is a practice that happens all across the world and mountains are disappearing because of it,” Daría explains. “But it’s actually quite ancient earth that’s been under this glacier for thousands of years, so this is a direct print of the earth. She also makes paint from the clay and dirt and that’s where this rich, earthy colour comes from. It’s sad, because the reason you’re seeing this earth is climate change and the glaciers melting, but uncovering untouched land and the way the landscape has changed is still really interesting.”

“Norðrið’ also proves that the Earth is, in fact, flat

A stark reminder of what our near future is likely to look like if we don’t act now.

Inevitable evolution

Another theme that runs throughout the exhibition is that of the inevitability of changes in nature. Regardless of human intervention, nature will always be changing around us and we should embrace and welcome this evolution—without speeding up the process.

A large scale installation by Erna Skuladóttir illustrates this, with a number of castings of the ground in Solheimajökull and Langjökull. “She pours this casting over the earth and in many cases it’s earth that—because the glacier is receding and melting away—is kind of new earth that is just being uncovered,” Daría explains. “But it’s actually quite ancient earth that’s been under this glacier for thousands of years, so this is a direct print of the earth. She also makes paint from the clay and dirt and that’s where this rich, earthy colour comes from. It’s sad, because the reason you’re seeing this earth is climate change and the glaciers melting, but uncovering untouched land and the way the landscape has changed is still really interesting.”

A stark reminder of what our near future is likely to look like if we don’t act now.
Listen to Mighty Bear’s new EP ‘Tveir’ on all streaming platforms.

One of the most ethereal faces of Iceland’s electronic music scene ironically hardly shows his face at all. That enigmatic figure, Mighty Bear a.k.a. Magnús Bjarni Gröndal, embodies both eerie darkness and sparkling glamor through extravagant cloaks and intricate masks, all underscored by ethereal beats and lyrics. All of this shines through in his newest EP ‘Tveir’.

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Once upon a dream

Over five tracks, Mighty Bear takes his listeners on an emotional, dreamlike— and at times nightmarish— journey. A spiritual release with the flair of a personal dramatic soundtrack, ‘Tveir’ walks the line between comforting and uneasy. That said, there’s still something about the sound that’s universally accessible. Adorned with a magnificently large set of sunglasses, Mighty Bear basks as he divinifies the origins of the edgy and emotional EP. “For me, music is expressing myself, so I try to create a sound that only I can create,” the artist says. “Especially with the new EP. It’s very personal lyric-wise and I spent months creating these synth layers so that they emotionally come through as well as the lyrics and the vocals.”

The track “Yfir” is emblematic of this. The song pulls at your heartstrings with harrowing vocals and dramatic beats to simultaneously create a feeling of longing and a sense of inner strength. “I started the EP when I was in the middle of a heartbreak, so that definitely shows through. I have always found comfort in sombre and melancholic things, so it was definitely a way for me to kind of get through the relationship and figure out who I was again,” Mighty Bear explains.

Behind the mask

A self-described fantasy and sci-fi fan, Mighty admits he finds deep inspiration— both consciously and subliminally—in those genres. Upon further inspection, the touch of artists like David Bowie are hard to miss. It’s not difficult to envision Mighty Bear as a side character in ‘Labyrinth’.

Mighty Bear built his aesthetic with the help of Iceland’s rising drag scene, which gave him the opportunity and encouragement to explore his glamorous side, with glittering gowns, full scale gold crowns and other ornate pieces. Starting out at drag shows, he was able, “to create the fantasy mythical character that is Mighty Bear.” Later, Mighty Bear made intricate masks—a gentler alternative to drag make-up—his trademark symbol, furthering his mysterious and mystical persona. His fringy style and ever-growing collection of masks create an interplay between the visual and the audio. A mask, he emphasises, makes one focus on the sound, but his otherworldly appearance intertwines with the music, adding another dimension to it. As Mighty Bear, the artist says he had the opportunity to create something uniquely his own, without compromise and with the freedom to express every aspect of his personality— both his masculine and feminine sides.

“Fantasy fits [me] very well, because then I can be something that’s not male and not female,” he concludes. “I’m just being the purest expression of myself.”

The best of Icelandic produce with a nod to Japan and South America. Modern Icelandic flavours, share plates and award winning cocktails.

Sombre Sparkle & Ghostly Glamour

Mighty Bear on their extravagant new EP and the masked fantasy

Words: Catherine Magnúsdóttir Photos: Birta Rán

EP

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The Reykjavík Grapevine
Issue 08—2020

A masked Queen? Mighty Bear was way ahead of their time

Music

Mask4Mask

The Reykjavik Grapevine
Here are some deals that’ll keep your wallet feeling happy and full.

### 1,000 ISK And Under

- **American Bar**
  - Every day from 16:00 to 19:00.
  - Beer 800 ISK, Wine 1,000 ISK, Cocktails 1,500 ISK.

- **Kaffibarinn**
  - Every day from 15:00 to 20:00.
  - Beer 800 ISK, Wine 1,000 ISK, Cocktails 1,500 ISK.

- **Rosenberg**
  - Every day from 16:00 to 18:00.
  - Beer 750 ISK, Wine 950 ISK.

- **Sólon**
  - Every day from 15:00 to 21:00.
  - Beer 800 ISK, Wine 1,000 ISK.

- **Secret Cellar**
  - Every day from 19:00 to 21:00.
  - Beer 800 ISK, Wine 900 ISK.

- **Sólon**
  - Every day from 15:00 to 21:00.
  - Beer 800 ISK, Wine 1,000 ISK.

- **Sólon**
  - Every day from 15:00 to 21:00.
  - Beer 800 ISK, Wine 900 ISK.

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- **Hamburgare-butik fremsælar**
  - Tuesdays–All day.
  - Burger, French fries & soda - 1,390 ISK.

- **Bló**
  - Every day–All day.
  - Bölkibær & fries of the month - 1,290 ISK.

- **Shalimar**
  - Monday–Friday.
  - 12:00–14:30 Curly - 1,290 ISK.

- **Hamurbarinn**
  - Every day from 16:00 to 20:00.
  - Beer 800 ISK, Wine 1,000 ISK, Cocktails 1,500 ISK.

- **N flygtig**
  - Every day from 16:00 to 18:00.
  - Beer 400 ISK.

### 2,000 ISK And Under

- **Sólon**
  - Monday–Friday.
  - 11:00–14:30 Caesar salad - 1,490 ISK.

- **N Flygtig**
  - Every day.
  - 16:00–21:00 211 Juice & sandwich - 1,990 ISK.

- **Sólon**
  - Every day from 11:00 to 14:30.
  - Fish of the day - 1,990 ISK.

- **N Flygtig**
  - Every day.
  - 11:00–21:00 211 Juice & sandwich - 1,990 ISK.

### 5,000 ISK And Under

- **Apótek**
  - Every day.
  - 11:30–16:00 Two-course lunch - 3,390 ISK.

- **Bøll**
  - Every day.
  - Half-priced cocktails - 2,000 ISK.

- **Sólon**
  - Every day.
  - 11:00–14:30 Caesar salad - 1,490 ISK.

- **N Flygtig**
  - Every day.
  - 11:00–21:00 211 Juice & sandwich - 1,990 ISK.

### Kids Eat Free

- **All Icelandair Hotel restaurants**
  - At Pískóti if you order two adult meals.

- **At Húsavík**
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**A selection from Every Happy Hour in 101 Reykjavík**

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Books

The Reykjavík Grapevine often mentions Yrsa Sigurðardóttir and for good reason. Yrsa is the queen of horror and Icelandic crime. She’s also an engineer, which makes her murder stories creepily methodical and detailed. If that’s not enough, Yrsa was also once held in police custody on suspicion of being involved with the drug import trade, so she knows the shady details of crime better than anyone else on this list. To be clear, she wasn’t involved in drugs, but it’s still a cool backstory. Yrsa’s best work, in my opinion, is ‘My Soul To Take’, with our favourite heroine, Póra Guðmundsdóttir. But you can’t go wrong with any of her books.

The Christmas Bloodbath
Do you really want to hang out with people that think about killing other people their whole life? ...yes

Words: Valur Grettisson Photo: AdobeStock

There is, on average, one murder committed each year in Iceland. But, surprisingly, every Christmas brings a complete bloodbath to the bookstores. During the holiday season, Icelandic writers compete to kill their literary characters in as brutal a way as they can imagine. This, naturally, then draws out a flawed, depressed, down-on-their-luck investigator with a broken relationship with their only adult child, who has to, against all odds, solve the heinous crime. Welcome to the Scandinavian crime novel.

Although many have tried to write these dark stories, surprisingly few succeed. Still, while Iceland once boasted just two brilliant crime writers, now we have a ton.

The Queen Of Horror
Yrsa Sigurðardóttir

The Reykjavík Grapevine often mentions Yrsa Sigurðardóttir and for good reason. Yrsa is the queen of horror and Icelandic crime. She’s also an engineer, which makes her murder stories creepily methodical and detailed. If that’s not enough, Yrsa was also once held in police custody on suspicion of being involved with the drug import trade, so she knows the shady details of crime better than anyone else on this list. To be clear, she wasn’t involved in drugs, but it’s still a cool backstory. Yrsa’s best work, in my opinion, is ‘My Soul To Take’, with our favourite heroine, Póra Guðmundsdóttir. But you can’t go wrong with any of her books.

The King Of Killings
Arnaldur Indriðason

When talking about Icelandic crime literature, you must bow down to the literature crime king himself, Arnaldur Indriðason. In the late 90s, Arnaldur lost his job as a journalist and decided to try his hand as a crime writer—something that was more or less frowned upon at the time. But the author proved with his slick style and sharp focus that crime stories were more than just light reading. Now, he’s the father of modern Icelandic mysteries, an international household name and a yearly murderer that we can’t get enough of. Best books? Well, all of them, but you can start at ‘Jar City’ and afterwards check out the film version directed by Baltasar Kormákur—the one that directed ‘Everest’.

The Prinz Of Germany
Ragnar Jónasson

When Ragnar Jónasson first emerged with his Agatha Christie-esque crime novels in 2009, he didn’t get raving reviews in the Icelandic media. His first book ‘False Note’ was said to be “slick but hollow,” but Ragnar, who is a corporate lawyer by day, writer by night, kept going, publishing one novel per year until he topped the German bestseller list and literature list at Amazon with ‘The Mist’. This incredibly skilled author has earned every bit of his success and could possibly stand up as the most successful Icelandic international crime writer. But where to start? ‘The Darkness’ would be a good choice. If that’s not enough, the Icelandic TV show ‘Trapped’—also with Baltasar Kormákur at the helm—is based on Ragnar’s books.

The Duchess Of Inner Demons
Lilja Sigurðardóttir

Lilja Siguríómundsdóttir is perhaps not the most well-known name in this category, but she has the most diverse writing style. Lilja jumps from being an award-winning playwright to a fantastic crime fiction writer as seamlessly and effortlessly as George R. R. Martin kills off beloved characters. Her characters are also more diverse than most of the other crime writers in Iceland. For example, her women are often queer—such as in the well-executed ‘Snaer’. Unlike other writers, Lilja is not obsessed with murder mysteries, but rather with character-driven drama that surrounds a crime. Not to say that there are no plot twists or schemes in her works, because she is excellent when it comes to that too. So start with ‘Snaer’, and then just keep going.

ICELANDIC JOURNEY
7 COURSE TASTING MENU
WE START WITH A REFRESHING SHOT OF ICELANDIC “BRENNIVÍN”
SMOKED PUFFIN with a 64° Reykjavík Distillery crowberry liqueur sauce
MINKE WHALE, smoky celeriac puree, “malt” sauce
TRADITIONAL ICELANDIC “FLATKAKA”
LING, mashed potatoes, caper flowers, Dijon-butter sauce
ICELANDIC LAMB RUMP STEAK, parma ham & herb crumble, mashed potatoes
SKÝR PAVLOVA, meringue, skyr cream, blackberry jam, raspberry coulis, red velvet short cake

7,990 kr.
Lovísa Tómasdóttir is a fashion designer and tailleur. You can check out her work at lovisatomas.is

Wearing:
• Pants, turtleneck and jacket are all made by myself
• Tank top from a market in Budapest
• Nameless black shoes
• Earrings from a market in Serbia

Describe your style in 5 words:
I always say that I don’t really have one style because I want to get into all styles, but if I had to pick 5 words it would be 70s, rock, glamour, weird, and eye-catching. I never want to be too clean or simple—I like bigger things with patterns and sequins and want to mix things together. Maybe I’ll pair something 70s with something that’s 80s or 90s. I always love when someone sees something and says, “Oh my god, that’s so you!” and it’s just the ugliest, weirdest thing. I love when people connect me with something weird.

Favourite stores in Reykjavík:
Definitely Rokk og Romantík for rock-themed accessories like chain belts and stuff. I sometimes shop second-hand, but I don’t buy a lot of clothes. Most of the stuff I wear day-to-day I made myself.

Favourite piece:
I went to Greece with my friends once and bought a floor-length mint green shiny leather jacket with white fur. It’s so ugly that it’s beautiful. I love it.

Something you would never wear:
I love patterns but I don’t think I’d ever wear zebra print. Is that random?

Lusting after:
There’s no pieces that I’ve been eyeing but I’m going to make myself a red pleather coat with fake fur soon.

FJALLKONAN WELCOMES YOU!

Fjallkonan is a new lively restaurant & pub in the heart of Reykjavík offering a selection of Icelandic and international dishes from local ingredients. Casual and cozy atmosphere yet still fun and festive. Stop by for snacks & drinks, lunch or dinner.

LAMB & FLATBREAD
Slow cooked lamb, traditional Icelandic flatbread from the Westfjords, carrot purée, pickled red onions, horseradish sauce

ARCTIC CHARR & BLINI
Lighly cured arctic charr, chickpea blini, horseradish sauce, roe, crispy lentils, yuzu-elderflower dressing

ICELANDIC PLATTER
Puffin, crowberry gel
Minke whale, malt glaze
Lamb tartar, chive mayo

THE LAMB BURGER
Bacon, mushroom & date duxelle, pickled red onions, pickled cucumber, rucola, smoked cheese, fries

SKYR ETON MESS CHEESECAKE
White chocolate “Skyr” mousse, meringue, raspberries, raspberry sauce

Fjallkonan
Krá & Kæsingar
Hafnarstræti 1-3
Tel. +354 555 0950
fjallkonan.is

Icelandic Delicacies
Must try dishes

LAMBSKIN
Slow cooked lamb, traditional Icelandic flatbread, onion relish

MARINATED LAUGA
Marinated Arctic char, pickled red onions, horseradish sauce, crispy lentils, yuzu dressing

ICELANDIC PLATTER
Puffin, crowberry gel
Minke whale, malt glaze
Lamb tartar, chive mayo

THE LAMB BURGER
Bacon, mushroom & date duxelle, pickled red onions, pickled cucumber, rucola, smoked cheese, fries

SKYR ETON MESS CHEESECAKE
White chocolate “Skyr” mousse, meringue, raspberries, raspberry sauce

Happy Hour 15-17 every day
More Is More

Garðabær’s Sjáland shows off fine dining beyond the downtown scene

Words: Shruthi Basappa Photos: Art Bieniek

There has long existed a firm divide between Reykjavík and the greater Reykjavík area. For some of us, the distinctions between local municipalities bhar into, well, Reykjavik. For others, so is full of downtown rats, 107 is for hipster snobs, the suburbs of Grafarholt don’t exist and Garðabær and Hafnarfjörður are seldom top the list of anyone’s favourite dining destinations. Stereotypes within our small city aside, I have to admit, I rarely go to Sjáland, he says, “it’s been easy,” says Ólafur, “we wanted a relaxed atmosphere, big bold flavours and simple food.”

“Elevated comfort food
‘We want to do comfort food, maybe a bit elevated,’ says Olafur. “We want people to be able to enjoy a ‘fine dining’ experience,” he continues, making air quotes, “without all the fuss. We wanted a relaxed atmosphere, big bold flavours and simple food.” He also admits he’s never worked solely for this clientele.

“But you have to learn a new rhythm. And you learn very soon that dinners here are far more demanding and forthright than say in Reykjavik,” Rúnar confirms, “they are unafraid to speak their mind, which has been very refreshing,” he says.

“The menu, which has undergone several changes in its short life, certainly reflects that vibe now. It is kinda seasonal and kinda how we feel,” Olafur confirms. There are wood fired pizzas with various toppings (an anchovy potato pizza sounds enticing), a selection of various proteins and as many desserts as main courses. The pizzas are available for lunch and dinner. And if you’ve been lamenting the loss of Hverfisgata 12, well you’re in luck as the pizzas here certainly echo those pies. “It’s his baby,” Rúnar says pointing to Olafur, “he’s all about the pizzas.”

Modern Icelandic

The kitchen sends out an assortment of starters—beautifully composed plates of smoked trout with candied fennel and preserved lemons, a steaming seafood soup with startlingly well cooked local shrimp and scallops, and a bloody beef and fig carpaccio punctuated with savoury thimbles of foie-gras crumbles. “I think it’s the only dish that has stayed,” Rúnar says of the...
carpaccio, “except for the pizzas.”

The menu and the wine list plays it safe and don't veer towards staples favoured and I suspect, strongly dictated by the neighbourhood (plans are underway for a contemporary wine menu that will change shortly). It is a conflict that plays out on your plate and belies the kitchen's fine dining roots.

The food however tries to balance what I've come to identify as distinctly Icelandic dining expectations with modern flourishes. A beautifully cooked lightly salted cod, is served with roasted cauliflower that is sneakily pickled as well. The halibut, from Nora Seafoods is doused in a mysa-fermented cabbage sauce. The vegan dish of grilled broccolini, pak choy and dukkah like seeds is all bite and grit and I really enjoy the smokiness the grill lends them.

Working out the kinks

While in their previous avatars these chef's pared down the focus into distilled flavours, here “more is more” is really the mantra. The rib-eye is expectantly fatty and juicy, but the mashed potatoes alongside also have brisket in them. The lamb is excellent and the pickled mustard jis carries the acidity that I'd been longing for to cut through the richness of the other dishes. Alarmingly, almost every single dish is served with a herb oil, the presence of which I discover to be the handiwork of a young chef with an enthusiastic trigger finger on the squeeze bottle, although I question its presence entirely. Given a little more time, I think these kinks will be worked out eventually as they hit that stride between crowd favourites and their own signatures.

I marvel at the portion sizes which are more than generous and the continued bonhomie in the dining room is an indicator of the diner's happiness and the attentive sprightly service.

I sit back and wonder how curiously full the restaurant is, how much the locals have embraced their neighbourhood restaurant and ask myself if I'd leave the confines and comforts of Reykjavik dining for a meal here again. As if he'd read my mind, chef Rúnar appears with a dessert that has, I admit, changed my mind. “You can’t leave without desserts,” teases Rúnar. He carefully pours what seems like a gallon of cream into an expectant mound of skyr ganache sprinkled with frozen blueberries, rose petals, and homemade granola. “It is for all the ammas,” Rúnar says and as if to confirm simply how good it is, my 7-year old upended the entire bowl to catch every last drop.

Sjáland is located at Ránargrundur 4 in Garðabær.

The head chefs at Sjáland are Rúnar Pierre Herivaux, Víðir Erlingsson and Ölof Agústsson. Front of house team, Álmars Ingvi Garðarsson, restaurant manager Styrmir Örn and Sigurður Hörvar Olafsson.
The Autumn Fog Reveals Your Fate

Please don’t dress up as “Slutty Coronavirus” for Halloween...

Words: Catherine Magnusdottir & Hannah Jane Cohen

HORROR-SCOPES

Aries
The spirits demand their offering, Aries. An oath made in blood weighs as much as a delicate click of “I have read and agree with the terms and conditions.” Don’t challenge their wrath. Updating your iOS won’t end well.

Taurus
No, Taurus, it is absolutely NOT too early to be wearing that Halloween sweater. Mix it with a witch’s hat while you’re at it, why don’t you? We called alleged White Collar Tax Fraud

Words: Iona Rangeley-Wilson

Mafia boss?

Get a burning question? In desperate need of advice? We at the Grapevine are here to help.

How do I move out of home? Get arrested. It’s time to get real, Millennials and Gen Z-ers. You are never going to own your own home. Not unless you become the sole inheritor of an estranged aunt’s vast fortune or seduce Leonardo DiCaprio. What better way to get out of your parents’ house than to have the country’s law enforcement services expressly forbid you from spending further time in it? Be creative: commit some cheeky yet charming white-collar tax fraud, murder your least favourite politician, or allow your ex-partner-in-crime to emotionally blackmail you into helping him heist a casino. And once you’re in prison? I’ve heard rent’s paid for by the state, and you’ll never get Mum telling you off for not making your bed again. I mean Jesus, you’re not twelve.

My fish died. I didn’t feed them. Am I a murderer? Yes. You’re a cold-blooded killer. And on a subconscious, subliminal level, you did this on purpose. Was it a twisted way of getting back at your primary school lunch lady for forcing you to finish your fish fingers? Or perhaps the dark impulse of a repressed vegetarian? Well, you’re too far gone now. There’s no way back. Either hand yourself in to the police right away, or be bold and become a career assassin. Just make sure you remember your roots.

Get Grapevine Merch!

Words: Catherine Magnusdottir & Hannah Jane Cohen

In Horror-Scopes, the Grapevine’s dedicated team of amateur astrologists give you their mystical visions on the dark fate that lies before you. The tea leaves have spoken.

Gemini
The cold autumn fog hides many things, Gemini, but not that unfinished assignment nor your fraught relationship with your father.

Cancer
Byronic poetry is best enjoyed at a graveyard, don’t you think? Just make sure you get all your longing out before sunrise and don’t accidentally carry home some graveyard dirt under your pointy, leather, gothic shoes. It might invite some restless soul to follow you and your deep paranoia—monster doesn’t need more company. Unless it’s a fellow Cradle of Filth fan.

Leo
I don’t care what they say, Leo, you go and enjoy that pumpkin spiced latte! This year has been harsh enough, so just go ahead and embrace everything that would have made you a basic bitch before. Pop in that Notebook DVD or go listen to the Chainsmokers’ “Missing You.”

Virgo
Scrolling through aesthetic blogs on Tumblr might not be the best coping mechanisms on a long-term scale, but reblogging some of those ‘Hocus Pocus’ gifs can’t hurt.

Libra
There’s nothing wrong with caring so little about Halloween that you once again opt for the sexy cat look this year. Just kidding—we know your ambitions for Samhain grandeur journey far beyond the feline. We foresee a unanimous win at this year’s costume contest if you go big and rent some tigers for a sexy Carole Baskin look. For full authenticity (allegedly) kill your husband.

Scorpio
Make like a ghost and grab some boo-ze. Maybe it’ll warm your dead Scorpio heart.

(Sadly, you were born to be.)

Capricorn
It’s time for a girls’ night! Create a group chat for all your gal pals, get some firewood and just go apeshit in the woods! Satanic chanting can be an excellent bonding experience, we hear, as is dancing naked in the woods! Just make sure none of your friends are called Abigail Williams, Elizabeth Proctor, or something equally... dangerous.

Aquarius
The only things following you into the grave will be worms. You’ll be alone forever, you aquatic loser.

Pisces
It’s not too late to book a cabin for the autumn days ahead. Fulfill your dream of being the hermit of the highlands, Pisces! Vanish mysteriously into the mist, go pick some berries and knit yourself an awesome cloak. Be the folklore figure you were born to be.

*The Man With The Double Shadow*

Get Grapevine Merch!
Travel distance from Reykjavík: 45 km

The quintessential Icelandic town

After a week of working from home, a trip—even just a small day trip out of the house and into the fresh air—sounded very good to a pair of Reykjadalur visitors. The legends of the hot ground beneath Hveragerði only served to intrigue us further. Whispers of hot springs, home grown bananas and basement saunas captured our minds, luring us to the little town that could—seemingly be overlooked on the road to the more high-profile attractions and up and down a mountain, steam rises up through the ground beneath Hveragerði, the quintessential Icelandic village.

The quintessential Icelandic town

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Situated at an elevation of 164 m above sea level, Hveragerði is the world's northernmost producer of the world's northernmost producer of the world's northernmost producer of bananas. In fact, Hveragerði is the quintessential Icelandic town, with waterfalls providing an almost alien atmosphere—how one would imagine the surface of Mars to look. Barren but majestic, Iceland's landscapes really are like no other. We could have stopped and stared for hours.

Intrepid Interns

Along with its geothermal prowess, Hveragerði is also a well-known hiking destination. Most famous is a steep, slightly challenging 40-minute hike to the Reykjadalur Thermal River. Here, wonder at Djúpagilsfoss waterfall, take in the breathtaking beauty of the Reykjadalur valley and don your swimming trunks for a soak in the hot river. Although the river can get busy—particularly in the summer—it's long and fairly easy to find a secluded spot in.

That said, we decided we weren't feeling particularly intrepid on the day of our visit, so we skipped the full Reykjadalur hike and instead meandered through the less-steep surrounding trails. Before starting off, we headed to the local Bónus to grab some food. For some reason, we were craving eggs... and some stockings.

Witches around a cauldron

Our hike reminded us we were alive and mobile, even after so many days spent at home. From the outskirts of town, the views go on for kilometres across unspoiled and ancient lava fields. The red clay lends the landscape an almost alien atmosphere—how one would imagine the surface of Mars to look. Barren but majestic, Iceland's landscapes really are like no other. We could have stopped and stared for hours.

But then it was time to eat. We grabbed our six-pack of eggs and two pairs of nylon stockings, desperate to fulfill our dream of naturally boiling eggs in the earth. But where to find a good boiling station? To our dismay, the geothermal park—which offers a special egg-boiling hot pool—was closed on the day of our trip, so we opted to look on our hike for a natural off-the-beaten-track pot to serve our needs.

And yet, like the ever eluding fairy morgana of the desert, no matter how close we came to a steam column, it would always turn out to remain unreachable, cooped in by either a fence or pipes or pumps.

So, we hiked for a while longer and after examining the area for about two hours, we finally found a suitable place just outside of town. The grey, steamy, bubbling sludge in a hole was the perfect place to prepare our snack. Gently loading our new stockings up with eggs, we crouched, like witches around a cauldron and tentatively lowered them into the hotpot. It's sweaty work, cooking eggs like this, but we embraced the heat, figuring that the steam would definitely be beneficial for our skin, despite the condensation clinging to our eyelashes and woolly hats.

After about ten minutes we removed the eggs, cooled them down in the river and began cracking them open. Having no idea what to expect—were we journalists, not chefs—we were surprised to find that the eggs were still very soft boiled. Slowly taking our first bites, we couldn't decide if it was the sulphuric nature of the water or the fact that we'd worked hard to earn our food, but we agreed that these eggs were particularly delicious. All we needed was a pinch of salt and toast for dipping and these Hveragerði delights would have made an excellent meal.
The GOP Proves Zombies Would Win

Words: Hannah Jane Cohen

In Max Brooks’ superb novel ‘World War Z’, a zombie virus is created—curiously, due to tainted water in a village in China, but I digress—and is spread through the world by people who knew they were bitten by an infected person and still inexplicably travel to other countries, subsequently infecting people there. Some are looking for elusive cures; others are fleeing chaos, but all of them knowingly put their family, friends, and literally every other person on Earth in danger. This happens so often in zombie media—Resident Evil, The Last Of Us, etc.—that it’s become a trope. We laugh, wondering who on Earth would do something so idiotic and selfish? Most of us assume that no one would be so heartless and delusional that they would—knowing they were inflicted with a massively contagious deadly virus—go and hang out with their family, friends, doctors, politicians and Supreme Court nominees, right? Who would do that?

I suppose you know where I’m going.

Yes, in an amazing feat of hubris, the Trump administration—in but a few hours, accompanied by cocktails—just ensured that one single building in the 3rd largest country in the world now has more active coronavirus cases than some entire countries. The White House is currently—at the time of writing—a hotbed of COVID-19, having literally hosted a super-spreader event. And what’s come out of the #RoseGardenMassacre? A host of infections among everyone from the President himself to numerous GOP senators to bottle-blonde robots Kayleigh McEnany and Kellyanne Conway. Note that Kellyanne lied to her 15 year-old daughter about her diagnosis, subsequently infecting her, which we only found out about via her daughter’s whistleblower TikTok. 2020, yeah?

By the time you’re reading this, it’s very possible one of them may have died. It’s very possible one may have infected a family member, dear friend, or employee. It’s very possible that the GOP itself might have lost themselves the opportunity to appoint Aunt Lydia to the Supreme Court because of their own arrogance. It’s very possible this might cause Mitch McConnell to explode.

All we know? In the event of a zombie apocalypse, stay the fuck away from Hope Hicks.