The Ever Changing Volcano

When the Grapevine’s photo editor Art Bicnick and I first visited the Geldingadalir volcano on March 20th we were speechless. On an Icelandic scale, the volcanic activity was small and it was incredible how close we could safely get to the eruption. We realised instantly that this was a historic event. There hadn’t been an eruption on the Reykjanes peninsula for around 800 years and not a single volcano had erupted so close to the capital area in modern times. To add to the dramatics, history tells us we can expect over 20 volcanoes to erupt on the peninsula in the next two to four centuries.

Our biggest surprise has been how diverse and ever changing the eruption has been. At first there was a small fissure that became quite big. Then we had three different fissures at the same time. They grew to eight fissures that finally turned into a graceful, beautiful fire geyser with a lava fountain shooting up 300 metres, reminding Icelanders of our famous Geyser. How can one not be in awe witnessing such raw power? For me and Art, it has been an adventure every time we visit the volcano, just to see something completely new. Everything from a lava tornado in the lava stream, to the dramatic weather transforming the area into something that even the best CGI in Hollywood could never recreate.

But the volcano also has some answers to provide and secrets to unlock. In our feature about the scientists researching the volcano on page 10, it’s evident that we have a scientific goldmine on our hands, making this eruption even more spectacular. If it’s true, as scientists have considered, that the eruption is a shield volcano, it’s an event that hasn’t happened in Iceland for thousands of years. What’s more, that would mean it could go on erupting for years to come, although scientists aren’t convinced that will be the case. Nonetheless, this is an interesting re-beginning of volcanic activity on the Reykjanes peninsula. Maybe it will even turn the economy around after the shock of COVID-19, proving once again the power of Icelandic nature.

Valur Grettisson
Editor-in-chief

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What Are Icelanders Talking About?

Whole lotta banishing on

NEWs

Infection rates for the coronavirus have been low and a recent easing of restrictions has allowed Icelanders to forgo wearing a mask in a great many situations, including visiting grocery stores, restaurants and cafes. This has prompted a very obvious divide in the public discourse, between people who are thrilled to visit Bónus bare-faced and those who are still concerned about unintentionally spreading the virus to vulnerable and as-yet-unvaccinated compatriots and will continue to mask up for the foreseeable future. We certainly would not take a position one way or the other and wouldn’t dream of questioning the wisdom of our health authorities, but it should go without saying that continuing to wear a mask, at the very least, certainly isn’t going to hurt anyone. Let no one mask-shame you.

Speaking of the pandemic, quarantine hotels are now a thing of the past. No more will new or returning arrivals to Iceland have to sequester themselves at a hotel, barring special circumstances. Readers may recall the very public legal battle that arose around these hotels, replete with lawyers making grand statements that compared the scheme to North Korea, culminating in a court battle that forced Parliament to review the legislation. All that is most now—just in time for the start of Iceland’s traditional tourist high season.

Any time the Directorate of Immigration (ÚTL) makes the news, you can bet that it’s not going to be good. Such has been the case for the past couple weeks now, after it came to light that ÚTL was evicting refugees from shelters for not taking a pre-deportation PCR test. 14 refugees, most of them from Palestine, are currently homeless, cut off from food stipends (asylum seekers are not legally permitted to work) and denied health care. The legality of this has been questioned by the Icelandic Red Cross, amongst others, as has the legality of deporting anyone to Greece. ÚTL has been on the defensive over these actions, so it remains to be seen if sustained public criticism and protests will have any effect on their policies.

In brighter news, tourism is back! Relaxed pandemic restrictions and the massive vaccination rollout in the US and other countries—not to mention here at home—has tourism operators very optimistic. It is predicted that some 700,000 tourists will visit Iceland this year. A far cry from the 2 million who would visit the country each year at the peak of the tourism boom, but as a country with an economy so heavily reliant on tourism, it’s certainly better than nothing.

Whole lotta banning goin’ on

Words: Andie Sophia Fontaine Photos: Art Bienick & AdobeStock

It’s ain’t mask but it’s honest work
ICELANDIC LAMB – BEYOND COMPARE

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Enjoy the best we have to offer, Icelandic food – naturally.
Iceland Saves All Animals, Real or Not

First

Words: Andie Sophia Fontaine
Photo: Adobe Stock

While daily infection rates for the coronavirus have been quite low lately, the big question on people’s minds is vaccinations. On February 17th, Minister of Health Svandís Svavarsson told reporters the government expected to have 100,000 people fully vaccinated by the end of June, calling it “numbers we can stand by.”

As of June 1st, there are just under 92,000 people fully vaccinated. Bearing in mind that “fully vaccinated” means that a period of time—usually two weeks—have passed since a person has received both shots, we still have our work cut out for us to reach that number.

Bingo!

However, one of the vaccination strategies that have raised the biggest questions is that of random selection, which begins this week.

In case you were wondering whether this random selection was going to be done using some high-tech AI, or even an online random number generator, Ragnheiður Ósk Erlendsdóttir, director of nursing at the Capital Area Health Care, told reporters that “we are going to put all the remaining cohorts in a certain hat or mug and then draw either men or women from the relevant cohort.”

What if you’re not a man or woman?

Ragnheiður explained that this method is simpler than some 21st-century method of random selection and also that “there were so many tasks with our programmers” that they couldn’t get just one of them to code something on the fly.

That said, since the National Registry allows people to register their gender as non-binary (i.e. neither a woman nor a man) and there are an unknown number of people who are currently registered as such, it was unclear how any of these people were to be random selected.

At long last, health authorities issued a clarifying statement: everyone, regardless of gender, would be eligible for random selection, and the solitary concern was regarding AstraZeneca and its possible effects on those with high estrogen levels. Feels like they could have said that from the beginning and avoided any confusion, rather than insist on this weirdly gendered selection system.

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Iceland Saves All Animals, Real or Not

According to FritTABLÍÓ, a wooden parrot was courageously rescued by the Icelandic fire brigade on May 17th. At first, the Grapevine was less than impressed. It wasn’t exactly the brazen, eye-catching rescue we all crave, in a country where reporters flock to the first sign of a runaway sheep, falling victim to the ring road enthralling tourists. Saving a wooden parrot? Not exactly heroic, until it’s realized this was exactly everything we had wished for—an audacious rescue of an actual living parrot.

While it might not be as wild as those in South America, a domestic parrot still requires a focused and methodical rescue mission of the nation’s best, albeit only fire brigade. The parrot was found perched in a tree, naively assuming that he belonged out in Icelandic nature—how wrong he was. This is no place for a parrot, heck, it’s no place for humans most of the time. Unfortunately, this was no locally-made, hand-crafted, artisanal parrot carved from the birch trees of Iceland’s wilder- ness—though, it’s definitely organic.

The headline reads, “SLÓKKVI ÞÖÐ bjargið páfagauki úr tré,” but Google translates the title to “The fire brigade rescued a wooden parrot.” “SLÓKKVI ÞÖÐ bjargið” accurately becomes “The fire brigade rescued” but unfortunately, the composition of the parrot transformed when the verb “ur” was introduced.

This is supposed to mean “out of” but when com-bined with “tré,” or tree, the meaning evolves. Google sucks the life out of the parrot and creates an illusion that Iceland’s fire brigade is hope-lessly devoted to all animals, whether they’re locally-bred or locally-made. We don’t discriminate—all animals will be saved here.

Bingo!
Höður, The Forgotten Emo Kid

Always in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Who is Höður?

He is the blind and forgotten son of Öðinn and Frigg. He’s also Þór’s brother—though you don’t see him in any flashy Hollywood blockbuster. In the sagas, Þór is busy roaming all over Yggdrasil with his sly ginger beard flowing in the wind and his best hammer-companion Mjólnir in hand. Höður is not. But he has another brother, his twin Balder, the darling of the gods, who some might think arrogant but was actually, in fact, pure of heart. But while his family went around fighting monsters and doing good deeds, Höður was probably busy playing FPS games in his pungent basement.

The tale of dark Höður

After needy Balder had some frightening nightmares of being killed, Frigg—an oath from the Mistletoe, which she didn’t even matter. Her family went around fighting monsters and doing good deeds, Höður was probably busy playing FPS games in his pungent basement.

The Icelandic saying “Að gera garðinn frægan” literally means “to make a garden famous”. Colloquially this means, more or less, that you’ve already made it.

The phrase is widely used in the Icelandic language when mentioning Icelanders who have found success abroad, like Björk. One could say, “Wow! Björk has really made her garden in England!” While others might think that the ethereal songstress has perhaps taken up the very honourable and traditional practices of arranging English gardens, in reality, this has nothing to do with rolling lawns, charming trees or gothic castles. No, it just means that she sold a lot of albums there.

The phrase only becomes complicated when talking about people who are actually involved with gardens. For example, there’s been historical confusion when discussing Samwise Gamgee’s success in destroying the ring in Mordor. Many a hobbit thought that Sam had merely grown some lovely tulips around Barad-dûr when they heard that the good ol’ gardener had made his garden on the plateau of Gorgoroth, when in reality he had destroyed evil forever. But, you know, fame is overrated.

Do you want to be famous? Of course you do. But here’s the real question: Have you made your garden famous? Wait—you don’t have a garden? No worries. It’s not required.

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On March 19th, 2021, the world’s gaze turned to Iceland as fissures opened in the Geldingadalir valley—the first eruption on the Reykjanes peninsula in over 800 years. Initially, scientists predicted the volcano would erupt for a matter of days or weeks. This was quickly proven wrong as its flow grew stronger and stronger, starting as a light trickle of lava and morphing into the pulsating geysir-like monolith it is today. Now, in a quaking-liquid,udy and capituł, in fact. In the time you are reading this, it’s very likely the lava might have taken over the nearby road.

At the same time it has wreaked seismic havoc on southern Iceland, the volcano has given scientists an unparalleled opportunity for research. An accessible erupting volcano on the doorstep of a capital city is, by the time you are reading this, it’s very likely the lava might have taken over the nearby road.

It’s eye-catching. In fact, the differences they are measuring aren’t particularly important, it’s rather the composition of other eruptions in Geldingadalir that is eye-catching. In fact, the differences between the trajectories of the Geldingadalir samples from the others are so stark that they actually prompt an audible “Wow!” from me.

As the eruption has powered on—which is as what scientists are observing at Geldingadalir, means something significant. “Nothing is eye-catching. In fact, the differences between the trajectories of the Geldingadalir samples from the others are so stark that they actually prompt an audible “Wow!” from me.

The onset of the eruption is the 19th or 20th of March and you move through March and not much happens. Then April kicks in, and you see the shift in compositions.

But what’s a shift in composition actually mean? Well, it varies by element. Take something like magnesium, one of the major elements in a rock, typically making up around <5-10% of it, and these particular changes aren’t so meaningful. But when you look at more trace elements, especially highly incompatible ones, more conclusive information can be extrapolated. There’s hardly any of these elements in the rocks and they are extremely sensitive to the arrival of new melts, so if the melt is consistent and from the same source, the ratios shouldn’t change. Therefore a notable change in the ratios of these elements, such as strontium and calcium, are occurring at Geldingadalir means something significant.

Looking at the ratio of radiogenic lead isotopes, which have extremely long half-lives, it’s incredibly intriguing. “Nothing should change this,” Sæmundur says as the jump in these data points in the graph.

In order to change this ratio, you first need some kind of influx of new melts, so if the melt is consistent and from the same source, the ratios shouldn’t change. Therefore a notable change in the ratios of these elements, such as strontium and calcium, are occurring at Geldingadalir means something significant.

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"So to go from here to here over a few weeks in one eruption indicates that it is driven by mantle processes," he concludes. And the main message is, "So this is remarkable!"

** Mantle processes?**

The mantle makes up 84% of the Earth's total volume. While it appears solid to us, within the geologic time frame, the mantle moves as a viscous fluid, with the rocks being thrown from the Earth's core to its surface via convection. A mantle plume is an anomalously hot selection of material that rises from the core-mantle boundary to the surface, which forms hotspot volcanoes—places like Hawaii and Iceland. Belgium, too, is unique in that it's also located on the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, a divergent plate boundary, which adds another layer to its complex volcanism.

"So taking this all into account, just how unique is it to find a volcano that pulls up such deep magma in Iceland? It's something really astonishing," Sæmundur adds.

"We've surely seen this before. There were multiple episodes of the Reykjanes peninsula where we have from what angle you approach the problem. 'Moho' refers to the boundary between the crust and the mantle. That point is a point of issue from what angle you approach the problem— if it's from a geophysical, geochronological or volcanological perspective. It's the deeply derived character that is truly remarkable and unique here!"

Sæmundur chooses the Krafla volcano as a point of comparison. From 1975 to 1984, there were repeated eruptions over a period of nine years at Krafla, but they were largely derived from a fairly shallow crustal reservoir, he says. "Essentially you had magma coming in from below—obviously it's all formed by partial melting of the mantle—but they accumulated and were stored in a crustal reservoir. For how long? We don't know but probably for a fairly short time and then were transported most likely laterally in the crust before erupting!"

The same occurred during the Holuhraun eruption. "There was clear evidence for storing of magma for considerable time in the years preceding the Holuhraun eruption," Sæmundur relays. But again, even though it was fed from a fairly deep crustal reservoir at about ten kilometers or so, it's still crustally located. It's within the crust," he pauses. "You see the precursor. The magma comes together, it mixes, it homogenizes and ultimately there is the eruption of one liquid that has uniform composition."

But Geldingadalur's composition is anything but uniform, which indicates that it's not from a stored homogenous crustal reservoir. "Here it's different in every way," he smiles.

"We realised very early on that this was a heterogenous source clearly plays a role. Essentially a mantle upwelling that is undergoing melting is not a single source. It's a source that's highly variable, that has lots of history," he continues. "You're pulling up melts. You're extracting melts. You've depleted one residue and so forth. It has a complicated history that reflects millions of years, so one of the things we are playing with is how do you bring this together?

"And this is the team that is now working on, Sæmundur explains, though any results are far from ready.

**The realm of speculation**

"So what does this mean? Did one magma source dry up only to be replaced by an even deeper magma source to the mantle? What exactly can we derive from the available information?"

Well, it's only been a few months of collection and analysis, so it's here that we enter the realm of speculation. The data is coming in as fast as Sæmundur and the rest of the geochemistry team at Háskóli Reykjavíkur are used to. "We'll hold our breath to make concrete statements."

"Well, a first order interpretation of a ratio change like this is consistent with the arrival or ejection of melts which are extracted deeper," Sæmundur explains. "So does that mean more than one source branching off?"

"A heterogenous source clearly plays a role. Essentially a mantle upwelling that is undergoing melting is not a single source. It's a source that's highly variable, that has lots of history," he explains. "You're pulling up melts. You're extracting melts. You've depleted one residue and so forth. It has a complicated history that reflects millions of years, so one of the things we are playing with is how do you bring this together?"

"And this is the team that is now working on—Sæmundur explains, though any results are far from ready.

**Hey! I’m back!**

In terms of predicting the next steps of the eruption, Sæmundur can't give any concrete answers, but he does point out that the Reykjanes peninsula does have rift episodes, and looking at the historical patterns, we are due for a new one.

"It's referring to the age of settlement, from 800 to 1,100 years ago, when Iceland was a rather busy place geologically speaking. In fact, there were around 20 eruptive events similar to this one during that time frame. And we know from the geological record that the hotspots in the region imprint themselves. They repeat events of this magnitude," he explains. "So the geological record really is screaming at us, 'Hey! I'm back!'

But it's still hard to place Geldingadalur within the historical context of the Reykjanes peninsula's eruptions. It acts differently from the surrounding systems, which is something Sæmundur and his team noticed the moment they began studying the eruption. "We realised very early on that this was unusual, that it stood out in comparison to other recent eruptions. It resembles the big shield volcanoes," he explains. "Shield volcanoes are known for their fluid lavas, which aren't particularly viscous, leading to large volcanoes that resemble shields—hence the name. Despite shield volcanoes being typical for divergent plate boundaries and hotspot locations, the majority of Iceland's volcanoes are not of this shield variety—in fact, it's been thousands of years since Iceland experienced one."

"It's still these volcanoes we could look to for more information on Geldingadalur's future. 'So if we want to find a unit in the area close to the eruptions, site that best resembles it, it'd be the large shield volcanoes. So then you can speculate, what does this imply for the duration of the eruption?'

Sæmundur questions.

**A golden goose**

Regardless of how long the volcano erupts, or whether it takes over the road or not, the eruption at Geldingadalur is still a golden goose for scientists. "Seemingly safe and easily accessible from the city, it's the new Mecca for those who study the earth or those that just want to get closer to the insight than ever imagined. Already, scores of researchers from Iceland—like Sæmundur and his team—and from across the globe have arrived at Geldingadalur, eager to get to closer and closer to the history of our planet. It's unfathomable just what a wonder the information provided by Geldingadalur will be for science—both worldwide and on this little volcanic island."

"Despite decades of studies looking at the eruptions on the Reykjanes peninsula, we still know so little, so this is really an eye-opener," Sæmundur smiles. "And yes! It's just here in our backyard!"
Iceland’s #MeToo Movement: Breaking The Cycle

How can we move from reaction to education?

Last month, the greater Icelandic public was reminded that the MeToo movement never really went away.

This was kicked off when two women came forward on May 7th saying that the well-known podcaster and media personality Sólvi Tryggvason had sexually assaulted them. Sólvi used his platform to make a tearful denial of what he termed slander aimed at ruining his reputation. Another media personality, Sigmundur Viðalínsson, in turn posted a video of himself watching the video of Sólvi crying and exhorted the general public to consider how Sólvi must be feeling. This prompted untold many Icelanders, most of them women but including some men and nonbinary people, to take to social media and employ the #MeToo hashtag to talk about their own experiences with sexual assault. There has also been an uprising in people reporting to the Stígamót crisis centre. Many of these testimonies urged men to talk to other men about consent and boundaries. Some men seconded this sentiment, encouraging other men to examine their own experiences.

“Consideration that this is a cycle we re-visit, with or without hashtags, on a fairly regular basis, the main question that arises is: how do we end for good? At the risk of being utopian, can we as a society ever have a healthy understanding of and relationship with consent?”

Different this time around

For Pórdís Elva Borrvaldsdóttir, an author, playwright and gender equality activist, it’s something she’s thought about—and spoken very frankly about—for years. She recently penned a column for Stundin, “An open letter to the good guys”, and told the Grapevine that she also noticed the familiar cycle.

“I would say that consent isn’t being taught enough in schools,” she says. “I do not have 100% insight into the curricula, but I have children who are preschool and elementary school age, and my gut feeling is that we’re not doing enough to teach healthy approaches to bodily integrity. I also think that we go about it a bit wrong.”

Whose responsibility is it?

That said, there is also the question of upon whom the onus of consent lies. For Pórdís, this distinction is crucial.

“We still haven’t shifted the emphasis enough, so that we free the child from that burden of having to be the gatekeeper of their own bodies,” she says. “That relates back to this victim-blaming culture, that if you are not the one who is stating those boundaries entirely clearly, so that it is in accordance with the law, then basically you have no rights and a crime against you is not a crime, according to these sets of rules. That is, of course, why it was great that our authorities passed a new rape legislation three years ago. That sent a clear message that we need consent for something to be considered sex and not abuse.”

Porn and more

Another contributing factor to the poor understanding of consent among far too many, Pórdís believes, is the proliferation of porn and the effect this has on young minds who have not yet developed a healthy relationship with sex and boundaries.

“Given that we have such enormous access to porn, in so many cases it erases the distinction between what is sex and what is abuse,” she tells us. “With such material so readily available to children, I feel that we’re definitely not doing enough to counter those blurred lines and undo the harms that such material risks doing to children that have no comparison, as they have no sexual experience of their own. We risk setting them off in a direction where consent isn’t as stated and as involved as it should be.”

Where that is concerned, it was striking that the first public reaction that the Icelandic police had to the latest resurgence of the MeToo movement was to announce that they intended to go after content creators on OnlyFans, which was most likely due to the fact that one of Sólvi’s accusers met them through the platform.

Iris Ellenberger, a historian and assistant professor at the University of Iceland School of Education, cites the history of such legal approaches to sex and porn and who is hit hardest by them.

“I’m a historian, so I come to these things from a historical perspective,” she says. “From that perspective, you can see throughout history people trying to regulate sexuality. To make some sort of laws or rules around sexuality. The people lowest in the hierarchy tend to suffer the most from these laws, while people higher up in the hierarchy tend to be able to use their social position or the capital that they have to avoid sentencing or otherwise get out of the situation easily. With everything that has been going on ... it brought these historical facts back to me.”

Change starts at home

For Íris, if we are to seek any kind of broad social changes we cannot rely on the police and the courts.

“I think we, as a society in general, need to have these conversations with each other; not just the teachers,” she says. “To be able to recognise the power structures that are dominant in these conversations. So much depends on the power position of the people involved, if the people who have been trespassed upon are to get any justice. Sex education needs to take power structures into account as well.”

The education of each other

Pórdís sees education as crucial, believing that it should extend beyond the walls of the school. This notion touches on so many aspects of parenting, including teaching that even something like tickling needs to be consent-based. Teaching these lessons to the next generation of Icelanders would, by Pórdís’s estimation, have a great positive impact.

“It’s such an intimate relationship when you’re raising kids,” she says. “It’s important to always keep the onus on the person who’s seeking to engage, whether it’s sexual activity or physical activity of any sort. If we have that, if we just have that one thing down, it would make a tremendous difference.”

“I think we, as a society in general, need to have these conversations with each other; not just the teachers.”
The future of HEMA

HEMA's current practise space is under KS's stadium. The group trains with German long-swords on Tuesdays and Thursdays and experiments with different styles and weapons on Saturdays. A typical practice lasts two hours, with the first hour devoted to training and learning practical moves and the second hour spent sparring. Matches last three minutes and the goal is ultimately to best one's opponent using everything one has learned thus far.

Swords & Friendship

An unorthodox way to stay fit and make friends gains popularity in Reykjavík

Words: Sam O’Donnell Photos: John Pearson

Historical European Martial Arts, or HEMA, is more than just learning to fight with ancient weaponry. It is a community devoted to becoming better through discipline and friendship. It’s also a great excuse to hit people in the face with steel swords.

“HEMA is the study of historical European weapons, wrestling, all the way down to bare knuckle boxing,” Rúnar Páll Benediktsson, the president of Reykjavik HEMA Club, explains. “It’s essentially different weapons systems;” treasurer Atlí Freyr Guðmundsson adds. There are different rules depending on the club or tournament one is participating in, but there are two consistent tenets you’ll find in every HEMA organization: Hit your opponent and don’t get hit in return.

Humble beginnings

At first, the two were in a HEMA club called Varríngar. In the beginning, it was less formal training and more friends playing with swords. Some members wanted to turn it into a bigger, more formal thing, studying manuscripts and learning proper fencing styles. Rúnar and Atlí agreed. While they didn’t intend to become the de-facto leaders of the group, it just sort of happened and they took their new roles seriously. But that group was not destined to last.

Falling out and forming anew

In September 2019, Atlí received a link to a news story. “I checked the link and it said that the president of our club Varríngar, was the president of another club here in Iceland,” he says. “That other club was the Icelandic chapter of the Nordic Resistance Movement, a neo-Naz group that was described by many as a terrorist organisation.”

“I woke up after a night shift, checked my phone and was just like ‘Oh, no.’ We immediately called an emergency meeting of the core group,” Rúnar says. Of course, they did not invite their racist leader. The group saw two options ahead of them. They could either kick him out of the group, or leave and form their own group. “The easiest choice was just to leave.”

“Even if we took over the club, it would still have that toxic aura about it,” Atlí continues. “People would remember and they would say ‘wasn’t he a part of this group?’” So the five core members, who are active to this day, left to form Reykjavík HEMA Club.

But their work was far from finished. There was damage to control, so the group publicly denounced the actions of their former president on social media and in news outlets. “We did everything to make sure that the only HEMA club in Reykjavík is not these guys.”

As bad as the situation was, they fought to turn the misfortune into something good. “It’s essentially different weapons systems;” treasurer Atlí Freyr Guðmundsson adds.

Despite appearing on the surface to be all about fighting, the core of HEMA is community, friendship and self-improvement. “You can never be too good.”

There are plans to expand their circuit and stage competitions with the HEMA group in Akureyri. They’ve even found humanitarian goals for the fights. “The Akureyri tournament is a charity event,” Atlí says. “It’s in honour of Szczepan Lakomy, who used to train with us.”

Sérgis passed away in the downtown fire that claimed several lives last year. The proceeds will go towards measures to prevent such a tragedy from occurring again.

The group also has a new youth program, which started as a three-month summer camp in 2020, but due to its success, morphed into a long-term membership program.

Striving for the next level

Anyone who is interested in HEMA is encouraged to come and try it out—it’s free for the first three practices. If you don’t live in Iceland, you can always go to hemaalliance.com and find a club in your area. “No matter where you are, if you study HEMA, you are welcome at almost any club.”
Ragnar Kjartansson
On A Summer’s Night
The artist’s latest video work is striking in its simplicity

Words: Andie Sophia Fontaine
Photos: Art Bicnick & Ragnar Kjartansson

Exhibit
Death is Elsewhere by Ragnar Kjartansson will play at Listasafn Íslands until September 19th.

Ragnar Kjartansson is a man of surprises, seeming to delight in surprising himself as much, or even more, than surprising others. ‘Death is Elsewhere’ (called ‘Sumarnótt’ in Icelandic, which translates to ‘summer night’), a video installation of his that has been getting praise and accolades across the art world and currently showing at the National Gallery of Iceland until September 19th, is exemplary of this.

The concept is deceptively simple. The viewer is invited to stand in the middle of a ring of seven screens. Projected onto them, a couple is singing a lilting tune and playing guitar while walking in a circle around you. The setting takes place in the middle of one of Iceland’s famed summer nights, when the sun doesn’t set, at Eldhraun in south Iceland, the current site of a lush meadow but in 1783, the site of the devastating Laki eruption that killed roughly 25% of Iceland’s population.

Knowing the history of the setting, the contrast between what appears to be two lovers singing a sweet song at the site of one of Iceland’s most destructive natural disasters is striking. But even not knowing this context, the longer you stand in the midst of this piece, the weirder it gets. You begin to notice that the ‘couple’ in question changes costumes as they circle you. Sometimes, the guitarist is playing the harmony, other times, the melody. Is this really just one couple? Or are you actually seeing two couples who look very much alike?

The old twin trick
The answer, it turns out, is the latter: the ‘lovers’ in question are two sets of twins, Gyða and Kristín Valtýsdóttir and Bryson and Aaron Dessner.

“I’ve remembered for a long time this kind of ‘magic twin trick,’” Ragnar tells us. “The idea was that it would be great to do a performance where this was a stage and a couple always crossing the stage, leaving the stage, and then like two seconds later they come back, leaving the audience to ask ‘how can they run so fast around the stage?’ It’s a very simple trick. For this performative happening, we had to write some songs, which was the four of them. The joke became ‘it’s like ABBA, but with twins.’ You know, ‘We’re gonna make a million dollars! ABBA with twins!’"

Sampling literature
The impetus and the process for the piece is an adventure in itself. “With this work, like with many other works, many things come together and suddenly you wanna do it. This collaboration between me and Gyda and Kristín and Bryson and Aaron started because I had worked with them separately on other projects. But then Aaron and Justin Vernon [of Bon Iver] were doing this festival in Ash Claire, Wisconsin. It was a fantastic festival, where he asked if I could do a performance for it and he said I could use any of the musicians or anyone involved. And I was just like ‘OK!’ The people who were involved were just open for anything, which was a fantastic invitation.”

“We wrote the music just across the pond,” Ragnar continues, gesturing to Tjörnin, right across the street from the National Gallery of Iceland. “At my home. All the lyrics are sampled from my bookshelves.” This included random selections of poetry, translations of ancient Greek and other texts. “It was a fun way to write music, because we knew how the performance was going to be, we just had to write music for a couple walking across the stage, some kind of love songs. A few years later it came to me that I really wanted to do this
piece in the south of Iceland near where Eldhraun is, where we had this mega, gorgeous, panoramic nature, but also this violent nature. The frolicking, cliched lovers in this kind of landscape.”

You don’t have to get it

Since the piece’s launch, many critics have had different takes on ‘Death Is Elsewhere.’ It’s honestly not a piece that invites interpretation so much as just experience. It’s something to be felt; not understood. Fortunately so, as Ragnar admits that not even he knows what it means.

“I really like pieces that I don’t understand myself,” he says. “It was something that I wanted to do, in this nature, with these people and this material and it just all came together. When I watch this I’m still like ‘What is this?’ I really like it when pieces are like that. When you’re like ‘what the hell is this piece?’ When you can explain to yourself, as an artist, ‘this is this’, then it’s almost like, why bother making it?”

Painting is hard

Ragnar happily shares photos from the shooting of Death Is Elsewhere, showing how the cameras were set up, comparing it to a “techno Stonehenge”—a ring of cameras, each equipped with three mics, their lenses facing outward.

“I really like the painterly quality of video,” he says. “Video is like a painting and I really like painting.” This naturally raised the question: why not just paint? Ragnar responds immediately: “It’s really hard to paint,” and then laughs at length. “Also, I really like something that’s performative and narrative in its essence, turning it into something that’s just like a painting. Where there’s no beginning and no ending—it’s just there.”

Those summer nights

As far as the difference between

the English and Icelandic titles go, Ragnar says that he felt a direct translation didn’t work and was too “oppressive,” so he took the suggestion of his wife Ingibjörg to just call it “sumarnótt”. He is, however, considering changing the title to Sumarnótt/Death Is Elsewhere because, he explains, “summer night” on its own is a little too ‘Grease.’

“These few hours of an Icelandic summer night are a bit like what it’s like to be dead,” he says. “Those few hours when the birds are asleep. My dad used to take me for a night walk around summer solstice up in Höfðimörk, to watch this thing when the birds stop singing and then start singing again.”

You can hear this in the piece as well, as the birds go silent, but then later begin to sing again—perhaps underlining the idea that death may always be with us, but for the moment, in a gorgeous Icelandic meadow where death once sprang forth, it is indeed elsewhere.
COVID-19 might have killed our desire for handshakes, video chats and bats, but that doesn't mean the optimists at the Grapevine won't find a silver lining in it. Yes, while the pandemic did hit our local economy hard, there were still many exciting arrivals to the city over the past year. Here, our writers Alina, Brittnee and Hannah Jane—the official Grapevine welcome wagon—pick their favourites.

Sæta húsið
Laugavegur 6

If you've been drooling over that luscious Thai-rolled ice cream on Instagram, we have good news! Sæta húsið opened up shop in the heart of Reykjavík in May and is ready to serve deliciously fresh rolled ice cream, mixed with all sorts of candy and fruit. Our souls are ready for more treats – especially if it's ice cream!

AM

Maika’i
Hafnarþorg, Kolagata 1

Want to feel like you’re in the tropics while absorbing the rare Icelandic sunshine? Stop by Maika’i near the Old Harbour for an Açaí bowl, covered in the toppings of your summer dreams. You can also grab a bowl at Smáralind on a rainy day while still taking a trip to the southern hemisphere.

BK

La Poblana
Laugavegur 2

Taking up the former residence of Sushibar-inn, La Poblana is the brainchild of Carlos Guererro and has quickly garnered a reputation round town as the place for world-class tacos. There’s long been a dearth of Mexican food in this city, but finally you can stuff yourself with all the carnitas you desire. We thank you, 2021. Our waistlines and wallets do not.

HJC

Vegan World Peace
Aðalstræti 2

What sounds like a call for eco justice is actually an urban chic plant-based Vietnamese restaurant. Creative, unusual and exotic dishes convince even the ardent meat lover. Everything, including the peking duck and crispy prawns, is vegan. Not only impressive to one’s taste buds but also candy for the eyes.

AM

Chickpea
Hallvágarstígur 1

Craving falafel that transports you to a place of simultaneous warmth and freshness? Check out Chickpea, a street-style restaurant that can satisfy all taste buds, introducing an unparalleled twist on the otherwise ordinary falafel. Their vibrant pitas, wraps and bowls are layered with various greens and flavorful sauces, paying homage to nature and all that it deserves.

BK

Mutt Gallery
Laugavegur 48

Mutt Gallery goes hard. Their first three exhibitions featured a powerhouse lineup of Úlfur Karlsson, Shu Yi and Grapevine favourite Almar Atlason and, if that’s anything to go by, we really can’t wait to see what they do next. That said, we are also waiting with bated breath to see what they do with their urinals.

HJC

Chikin
Ingólfsstræti 2

This ain’t your mama’s KFC. No, Chikin—Reykjavík’s first dedicated hot chicken and bao joint—manages to be at once both totally sophisticated foodie cuisine and also food that’ll definitely fill the hole in your soul you usually quench with a spicy Twister (and then hate yourself for). So grab some chicken with pickled daikon, shiitake mushrooms, miso mayo and lots of other delicacies. And then love yourself.

HJC
In Your Pocket

June 4th—July 1st

Perfect Day

Dance, jive & have the time of your life

Get Grapevine Merch!

“Getting a hot dog with everything is traditional Iceland and just the way to go.”

Vital Info

Useful Numbers

Emergency: 112
On- call doctors: 1770
Dental emergency: 676 0505
Twin: Reykjavík 584 5222 - 888 561 0000

Post Office

The downtown post office has moved to Hagatún 1, open Mon–Fri, 09:00–17:00.

Pharmacies

Lyft og heilsa, Egilsgata 3, tel: 563 1020
Austurstræti 1 E4

Opening Hours - Bars & Clubs

Bars can stay open until 23:00 on weekdays and until further notice.

Opening Hours - Shops & Banks


Swimming Pools

Sunbílín, the downtown pool at Barónsvatnur, is an indoor swimming pool with hot tubs and a diving board. More info: piscinavatn.

Public Toilets

Public toilets in the centre can be found inside the Reykjavík City Hall and Hallgrímskirkja, by Reykjavík Art Museum, located at Hlemmur, Ingólfstorg, by Reykjavík City Hall. Public toilets in the centre can be found in the Reykjavík City Hall and the Reykjavík Library.

Public Transport


Venues Finder

The venues are a B and E tell you the position on the map in the next page. The letter in the row is the venue, the number is the column.

Museums & Galleries

Baldursgata 12 G4
Eyrarbakki Museum
Town Hall Museum
Amber Museum
Naustin D3
Paloma
Bergsta

Opening Hours - Bars & Restaurants

June 4th—July 1st

June 4th—July 1st

Elísabet Hulda Snorradóttir
Elísabet Hulda Snorradóttir is the reigning Miss Universe Iceland 2020 as well as a student at the University of Iceland. Along with being a pageant queen, she speaks Japanese, Korean and Chinese fluently. Here’s her perfect day in the capital.

Kick start the day!

The moment I wake up, I always start every morning by drinking a ton of water and making breakfast at home. Now in Iceland. Life can sometimes seem a bit boring, so you have to find ways to make it interesting. For me, I like to kick start everything with an interesting activity. For example, I sometimes like to take a walk to Elliðaárdalur and the harbour in downtown Reykjavík. The path is long, it’s a nice view and there’s very few people to get in the way of running far.

Soak the afternoon away

After that, I’d head downtown to meet some of my friends for brunch or a late lunch. Right now, the places I frequent the most are Fjallkonan, Apioek and Duck & Rose. But, anywhere you can sit outside and enjoy the weather is good.

We usually stay for quite a while, but afterwards what I love to do is head swimming pool, probably Laugardalshöll. If you visit Iceland, you have to go to a swimming pool— that’s just a necessity. Depending on whether I feel like it or not, I’ll swim some laps but usually the hot tubs are so nice I will just soak there. If the weather is really good, you’ll see everyone decked out on the edge of the pool trying to get a tan, but those are quite rare in Iceland!

Iceland’s #1 combo

Traditionally, after swimming you need to get an ice cream or hot dog. There’s the Pylsuvogurinn Laugardal right next to the pool, but I also love the classic Bejjarins Beztu. I actually used to work there for four years and you’re missing out if you don’t get the one with everything. Honestly, I used to hate it but after working there, I really love it and getting a hot dog with everything is traditional Iceland and just the way to go.

For ice cream, almost all the parlours are amazing. There’s Brynja in Kópavogur, Videll by the harbour and Jakob Restaurantar in Vesturba. People usually get a bæði or a cup and if I get one, I opt for fresh (not frozen) strawberries, Daim and a white lion bar. It’s an amazing combo. Treat yourself

Then it’s dinner! My favourite places right now are Sushi Social, Fjallkonan (ok, if I went there for brunch I’m not going there for dinner) and Reykjavik Meat. The steaks at Reykjavik Meat are really great. If you want to treat yourself, that’s where you should go.

Now, usually, if did not have an ice cream before dinner, then it’s time to go for an ice cream when we’ve finished eating. But if not, I like driving down to Grótta, the lighthouse, and just sitting there with my friends and chatting away.

Don’t Hesitate! Act Now!

* You only need to type the UIN in once
**Dining**

1. **Mandi Pizza**
   Hafnarstræti 8
   Mandi Pizza is the answer to the question: what can I eat if I’ve had Mandi shawarma six days in a row, and I want something different? Try the kebab pizza, and make sure to cover it in sauce. And don’t worry—they also got their famous hummus on stock so you can pick some up to quench your post-pizza health kick.

2. **Eriksson Brasserie**
   Laugavegur 77
   It’s hard to categorise Eriksson with its Italian-French leaning menu. The interiors and menu whisper nouveau riche indulgence, the ‘tacky’ ingredients are a giveaway. But all these reservations aside, they dish out a mean veal, good steaks and a smattering of pasta and pizzas.

3. **Horni**
   Hafnarstræti 15
   Appropriately named “The Corner” from its position on the street, this Reykjavik institution is one of the oldest dining establishments in the city. Opened in 1979, the family business has been serving fantastic Italian fare in a remarkably unique atmosphere. It is truly a stand-alone restaurant in town and hands down one of the best.

4. **IDA Zimsen**
   Vesturgata 2a
   This peaceful spot is equal parts café and bookstore, so you can get a coffee and a snack while you leaf through your purchases. Everything in there is interesting, and if the magazines fail, people-watching never does.

5. **Sandholt**
   Laugavegur 36
   Well-known for its sourdough bread. Sandholt has consistently delivered great baked goods since its inception. The laminated pastries are hands down the best in Iceland; try the butter croissants or seasonal Danish pastries, locally known as “vinbrot” with rhubarb and raspberries, or the classic, vanilla custard.

6. **Sumac Grill & Drinks**
   Laugavegur 28
   Sumac’s vivacious seats everything—the food, ambiance, service and its mix of diners across age groups. By focusing on flavour profile, they’ve upped their game. It’s a successful transplant from Búir to Reykjavík. For an indulgent spread, we recommend getting all the dips and a few flatbreads.

7. **Borg29**
   Borgartún 29
   Wait—a NEW food hall? Hurray! Yup. Borgartún now has its own haunt, and you can bet that we’ve already tried it all. Our favourites so far include Pronto Pasta. We’ve been saying for years that Reykjavík needed a good ole’ quick pasta stop and now we’re there. We’re also obsessed with Hipstur, which serves up that kind of healthy food that feels so unhealthy, which is very much the vibe at the Grappovin.

8. **Makake**
   Brandagarður 101
   Named after the hot tub loving meditative monkeys. Makake throws down the gauntlet for casual Asian dining. They’ve got dimsum bunches, pop-ups with guest chefs, and vegan tasting menus in addition to their staple fare of a selection of dumplings, small plates like the braised pork belly, an interesting assortment of vegetable-forward plates and desserts like mochi and anko.

9. **Chickpea**
   Hallgrímsstígur 1
   Tucked in next to downtown’s Kronan supermarket lies Chickpea, a new bijou vegetarian eatery. The restaurant is based around falafel, which is delicious, bringing to the fresh bites you’d find on the carts of the Middle East—and the salad is equally as visceral. Many of the ingredients are locally sourced and seriously—try the kim chi. It’s a family secret and probably the most creative.

10. **Búllan**
    Bjarðargata 1
    An oldie but a goodie. Búllan slings a solid burger that seals Iceland’s reputation as a worthy burger destination. It was the winner of our Best Of Reykjavík 2020 Best Burger award and man, does it deserve that. So for a nice groovy hangover meal or go on a date—either is fine, but don’t let anything sway them from the buttery croissants or seasonal baked goods since its inception.

11. **Pír Frakkars**
    Baldursgata 14
    To get a sense of Icelandic food culture from a time before it was fashionably New Nordic, pay a visit to Pír Frakkars. This restaurant has not let anything away from tradition—you’ll spot everything from teas, to black bird, to cod thors and borkafiskur that are sure to remain long in your memory. A visit to this place underlines that good old-fashioned Icelandic cooking can be all kinds of memorable.

**Drinking**

12. **KEX Hostel**
    Tryggvagata 22
    KEX is stronger than ever right now. Out of the pandemic haze, they have come to try out guns a blazing with a series of fantastic concerts and events that shows they are one to compete with for the cool artistic crowd in Reykjavík. So if you’re one of those people who enjoys Joyce as well as Cardi B, this is probably the place you’ll meet your like-minded paws. (JK, no one has really read Joyce.)

13. **Kaffibærinn**
    Bergstaðarstræti 1
    While many Reykjavík bars come and go and redecorate and rename and put on bells and whistles, Kaffibærinn has stayed the course for almost three decades—because it’s just a really good, reliable place. It plays host to Reykjavík’s artistic intellectuals, creative talents, and well, downtown characters and consistently puts on a show. Basically, you’ll never have a boring night in KEX. It’s no ordinary watering hole.

14. **Gaukurinn**
    Tryggvagata 22
    With dim lights, leather sofas, and gender-neutral bathrooms, Gaukurinn is the perfect hangout for the unorthodox Reykvingur. So if you’re looking for like-minded people, then here we are. The venue hosts everything from metal to drag extravaganzas, so you never really know what to expect. But never fear—Bókabú is operating from the basement. During the day, the legendary Bókin is here. There’s live music most nights, from DJs to jazz, and during the day, the legendary Bókin is here. When you need to get drunk and sing Aqualight to your crush, there you go.

15. **Skúli Craft Bar**
    Aðalstræti 9
    For a quick drink, the real beer nerds hole up in Skúli. The cosy drinking hole offers a great selection of local and guest craft beers, with the option of a flight of beers for the inquisitive or curious. Make sure to stop in to Skúli, because they also got some great outdoor tables.

16. **The Irishman**
    Klapparstígur 27
    If your idea of fun involves pints of Guinness and Kilchoman, have we got a place for you! With a spacious wrap-around bar and a great downtown location, this one has a better vibe than most; while it is undeniably cheesy, like a tiny, cartoonishly Dublin-themed Disney World located on Klapparstígur. Most importantly—they have KARAOKE ROOMS to rent! So when you need to drink and sing Aqualight to your crush, there you go.

17. **Mál og Menning**
    Tryggvagata 12
    Aðalstræti 9
    For a quick drink, the real beer nerds hole up in Skúli. The cosy drinking hole offers a great selection of local and guest craft beers, with the option of a flight of beers for the inquisitive or curious. Make sure to stop in to Skúli, because they also got some great outdoor tables.
cultural scene. Talk talk.

18. Kaffibrennslan
Laugavegur 21

Located right smack in the centre of town so you can easily pop in for a quick one on your way, or stay and drink the evening away. It’s just a cool, casual, calm place with friendly staff. Good beers and tasty snacks. Their happy hour is one of the biggest ways any individual can do their part to heal our planet and it’s this cosmic belief that powers the stars behind Reykjavik’s newest second-hand store Space Odyssey. Along with selling understated Earth-made garments, the store also allows you to swap your own atmospheric attire. And if that’s not enough, the celestial haven also doubles as a concert venue, having already hosted sets by galaxy-renowned artists like Henningsvöllur, Krafthall and more. (Word in the meteor belt is that Odysseus is on his way.)

19. English Pub
Bústaðir 12

If it’s football you’re hankering for, go to those that know it best: the

English. This pub serves up a dark wooden Anglo-kitsch interior, a long bar with plenty of staff, and loads of comfortable seating and best of all, a plethora of screens. Make sure to yell loudly and berate Sky+ when he misses his penalty—you wanted an authentic pub experience, right?

Shopping

20. Memoria Collective
Sæmundargata 52

A tattoo parlour that does most styles and does them $$%$$-ing well. That said, Bali’s got some particularly stellar neotraditional and we must also shout out the

black and gray work of Emi Dun (who has tattooed the author of this map many times.) Our favouritism here, folks.

21. Aurum
Bankastræti 4

Aurum is a wild and wondrous brand that still seems chic and modern. The store, which occupies one of the best spots on Laugavegur, serves up finely-crafted pieces firmly based in Icelandic nature. We’re longtime fans of the store, and were we to win the lottery, we’d go there more.

22. Nordic Wasabi
Skólabrú 40

You thought just because we’re in Iceland that doesn’t mean we don’t have fresh, locally-grown wasabi? Wow—how wrong you are! Nordic Wasabi is used all over the world and luckily, they’ve got a shop downtown where you can check the whole operation out.

23. Bóksala Stúdenta
Sæmundargata 4

Located within the main building of Háskóli Íslands, the university bookstore runs the gamut from speciality academic texts to classics, new fiction, notebooks and much more. Another plus? The on-site coffee shop serves up what are potentially the fairest priced coffees in town, as does the Háskóli Islands cafeteria next door.

24. Geisladiskabúð Valda
Laugavegur 64

Valda is by far the most obscure shop in the city. You’ll find things in this store that you won’t find anywhere else in the world, from black metal cassettes to Japanese bootlegs. It’s a true gem.

25. Húrra Reykjavík
Hverfisgata 18A

This minimalist streetwear/athleisure store serves up a mixed selection of classic items and trendy cuts. They were massively hyped when they opened years ago and have stayed hyped because they know what they are doing and are damn good at it.


AMERICAN BAR
REYKJAVIK
The Possessed Flowerchild

Possimiste shares her ethereal space creations with our earthly world

Words: Alina Maurer Photos: John Pearson

Album

Check out ‘Youniverse’ online at possimiste.com/youniverse. It’ll be available on all streaming platforms at June 25th.

“I have always felt that it was my destiny to channel music to this world from the ethereal space around us that words cannot yet explain,” Possimiste — also known under her terrestrial name Leeni Laasfeld — explains in a velvety voice. The 28-year old artist, originally from Estonia, is on the cusp of releasing her debut album ‘Youniverse’ on June 25th, following a slew of galactic electro-pop singles over the last few years.

While other artists simply write their songs, Possimiste channels her creations from another space outside of our imaginable world. Her title is, therefore, fitting. The word Possimiste comes from being possessed by some kind of magical spirit, which then accesses an extraterrestrial space where her music originates—one that, as she details, is out of this world.

Seriously, she’s from Sirius

Possimiste finds her inspiration in visions and dreams, and ‘Youniverse’ is a compilation of her most meaningful ones. “I feel all the time that I’m not from [this Earth]. I never feel 100% home,” she elucidates. In fact, she contends that her alter-ego Possimiste is actually from the bright star system Sirius, which is also the name of the first—and the artist’s personal favourite—song on the album. “Sirius is the home that everybody wants to reach.”

“[I hear] melodies, even some of the lyrics, [in my dreams],” she smirks; her eyes twinkling. “Sometimes it’s some kind of gibberish and then you start decoding. If I hear a flute, I really need to put a freaking flute there! I cannot change it.”

The song “Freefall” exemplifies the fusion of Possimiste’s unusual sounds. The song begins with a wave of slow melancholic synthesiser undulation, with bird calls. It all feels very mysterious—like a foggy valley waiting for Possimiste to wander through. By the middle, it coalesces into an explosion of upbeat drums fitting of a joyous carnival. It’s a sharp contrast that leads to her chanting the words “Freefall” over and over like a mantra that leads to her
decoding dreams & unlocking magic

The album will come out alongside an online experience available on Possimiste’s website. Every ‘dream’—as she refers to her songs—will be observable, with visuals and written prose describing the origin of the track.

Possimiste calls her listeners “secondary dreamers” and believes this more interactive experience will allow them to decode her messages, or dreams, more easily. She hopes that her album will be a conversation starter about what music means to people. “It makes us feel shivers, it makes us cry, it just has so much power,” she says. “It’s the closest thing to magic that humans can ever experience.”

Foreign from the whole world

Being a foreigner in Iceland has also coloured her experience as an artist. “I think Iceland is such a great place for artists. There is a cultural scene, there is funding and there is support,” she explains. “I feel like music is such an international thing, but more like an intergalactic thing. So, let’s not classify!” That said, while she calls Iceland her home, it’s more a temporary one—or rather, a temporal foreign here,” she smiles. “But rather [foreign] from the whole world.”

Even though Possimiste might be, as she explains it, a foreigner to the world, she hopes to change it for the better. “Youniverse,” she emphasises, should inspire kindness. “Visualize the songs and get lost,” Possimiste concludes. “[...T]hen I want the audience to do something good.”

Alongside wanting to bring good to the world, Possimiste also hopes that with her dreams, she can inspire listeners to be more childlike. To be astonished by the wonders of life again—just like when they were young.

“You need to take care of the inner kid,” Possimiste beams.

TASTE THE BEST OF ICELAND

ICELANDIC GOURMET FEAST

Starts with a shot of the infamous Icelandic spirit Brennivín

Followed by 7 delicious tapas

• 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-butter sauce
• Smoked puffin with blueberry “brennivín” sauce

And for dessert

• White chocolate “Skyr” mousse with passion coulis

8.990 kr.

BOOK YOUR TABLE

TAPASBARINN

Vesturgata 38 | Tel: 551 2344 | tapas.is

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• Smoked puffin with blueberry “brennivín” sauce
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Our events and music listings will resume the moment the entire Grapevine staff is vaccinated.

Man In The Age Of Immortality
Viktor Orri Árnason composes a future with eternal life

Words: Hannah Jane Cohen
Photo: John Pearson

Album
"Eilífur" by Viktor Orri Árnason will be released on June 18th, 2021

The Epic of Gilgamesh, written around 2100 BCE and one of the earliest examples of human literature, tells the tale of a thwarted search for immortality. In it, the raucous Gods dispensed to mankind, Death they kept for themselves.

What is our purpose?
The idea really grabbed me that it is possible—that not too far in the future we will have such technical advances that we may be able to regenerate ourselves and choose to live as long as we want," Viktor explains. "My thoughts then became: What does that mean for us as human beings? What is the purpose of life? How can we even enjoy it?

In Viktor’s view, it was man’s own knowledge of their mortality that drove so much of their happiness. “Today, people imagine themselves living 60–90 years and this gives you a timeline to engage with life with the knowledge that you will die,” he says. “If that is gone suddenly, it’s going to be difficult to stay optimistic and easier to just be bored and depressed.”

The goal was to create a space where you would feel lost,” Viktor explains. “I found a sense that you could lose yourself in time.

And to do this, Viktor actually did lose himself in time. When composing each track, Viktor used tape-based time manipulation to warp discordant sounds together. [This] was very important to me in the process of making this music, he continues. “These are tools that allow me to mix together things that were originally recorded in different tempos or keys, to slow them down or speed them up to get them to play together. The whole album is a display of a distorted reality, of time being irrelevant.

Would you do it?
But the question remains, were these medical advances available would Viktor embrace them? Will he be uploading his brain in 2045? “I would do it, but I’d want to stay optimistic,” he laughs. “Everyone I’ve talked to, though, are frightened by this. So yes, I would definitely do it but it saddens me to know that many of my friends and family would not want to.”

As a whole though, Viktor’s album urges us to seize the day, regardless of immortality. "My question was, in the end, what do we need to do to enjoy life? And it became about the simple things in life," Viktor concludes. "We need to learn to appreciate the moment. Allow yourself to be a child and look up at the sky and enjoy how wonderful it is. Enjoy every breath you take.”

A bit “Rites of Spring”— albeit more relaxed—until a droning men’s choir appears, pulling the listener into the depths of meditation. Slow and intense on the surface, the song is underscored at all times by a viscerally senseless, almost searching, or senseless. Apparently living forever doesn’t sound particularly upbeat.

“...the day, put very little trust in quam minimum credula postero” poem in the first book ends with Horace pens ‘Odes’, whose 11th verse: “allow yourself to be a child and look up to the sky and enjoy how wonderful it is.”

“...the day, put very little trust in quam minimum credula postero” poem in the first book ends with Horace pens ‘Odes’, whose 11th verse: “allow yourself to be a child and look up to the sky and enjoy how wonderful it is.”
To Know Is To Design
Kristín Þorkelsdóttir on a lifetime of designing Iceland

Words: Hannah Jane Cohen
Photos: Ólöf Breiðfjörð

Exhibit

“You could say this is my lifetime work,” says product designer Kristín Þorkelsdóttir, gesturing to the large, airy exhibition hall of the Museum of Design and Applied Art. She’s standing in front of what appears to be a corner of logos, with the Icelandic Nature Conservation Council, the town of Mosfellsbær and even BYKO’s symbol on display. Yes, all around Kristín are the icons of Iceland—her life’s work.

Even if you’ve never heard the name Kristín Þorkelsdóttir, if you’ve spent more than a minute in Iceland, you’ve no doubt familiar with her work. From Icelandic butter to the Icelandic banknotes, the history of this country is written with Kristín’s product designs. And now, it’s all gathered in one retrospective on her work. From Icelandic book jackets for Rachel Carson’s game-changing environmentalist work “Silent Spring”, to the króna get their own corner of Mosfellshver, and the story goes that he kept over her lifetime and other designs that were inspired by the design process that Kristín has kept over her lifetime and other designs that were inspired by the design process.

Hidden gems
The króna get their own corner of the exhibition. Of course, the banknotes are present but alongside them are sketches from the design process that Kristín has kept over her lifetime and other designs such as the reference photos Kristín used to draw those of the most curious note in the collection though is one that many newcomers to Iceland might not even know exists—the 2,000 ISK bill, which features famed painter Jóhannes Þórðarson. “The 2,000 ISK bill was never programmed into the ATMs, so not a lot of people use it. You have to specifically ask in the bank to get it,” Kristín explains. “I’m actually quite sad it didn’t get a lot of attention — I think it’s the most beautiful one.”

Found treasure
“Fjallabak has many cores, as the room is filled to the brim with works of all forms. There’s floral packages of Nýmót, which, as Kristín explains, were inspired by the works of Egill Skallagrímsson. And across from that is a special glass case featuring the progression of Kristín’s book jackets for Rachel Carson’s game-changing environmentalist work ‘Silent Spring’. But it’s Mosfellshver’s logo that Kristín is quick to point out as a favourite. ‘Egill Skallagrimsson was a painter for the King of Denmark and the story goes that he got a silver treasure for his great feats. He supposedly buried it in Mosfellshver,’ Kristín explains. So when given the challenge of designing the town’s coat of arms, Kristín contacted then-president Kristján Eldjárn, who was the guardian of the relics, to see the treasure. He showed her the coins Egill got from the king and voilà—the core was found.”

That’s a secret
While the current banknotes are here to stay, there has been talk once again about removing two zeros off the króna to reorganise and stabilise the currency. If so, does Kristín have any ideas of who she’d choose to feature from the modern era? “My husband and I were talking about it yesterday evening, and we have some ideas, but we will never say,” she says cheekily. “But I think there might not be more banknotes. I think the world is using cards.” She pulls out her card, laughing. “That’s a secret!”

Kristín Þorkelsdóttir showcasing the progression of the Icelandic banknote.
REYKJAVÍK ART MUSEUM - KJARVALSSTADIR
Eternal Recurrence
Johannes S. Kjarval—after whom the museum is named—is put in dialogue with a number of prominent contemporary Icelandic artists including Ólafur Elíasson, Ragnar Kjartansson, Stein & Eggert Pétursson. Now that’s a lineup.
• Runs until September 19th, 2021

REYKJAVÍK ART MUSEUM - ÓSMUNDARSAÐIÐ
Sigríður Sigurðardóttir & Ósmundur Svavarsson: As If To Demonstrate An Eclipse
Sigríður’s work is cosmic in nature, often inspired by contemplation about our position within the inner workings of nature, physics and the forces that drive the world. Her works often display our position as individuals, our significance and insignificance. As an unflinching paper, who ramified on our own obscurity, we can’t agree more.
• Runs until October 17th, 2021

REYKJAVÍK ART MUSEUM - KRISTÍN ÞÝRKJÓS
Design for sculptor Þómaríður Svínsson
Free product designers take over the museum shop at Ósmundarsafn with objects inspired by Þómaríður Svínsson’s world and heritage.
• Runs until October 17th, 2021

HÍÐ ISLÆNSKA BØKMEYNAFÉLAG
Abstract Reality
The ground floor of the Hotel Saga will play host to a series of abstract works by Valtýr Pétursson. He used abstraction to express sudden cultural, social and political shifts in Iceland, so his pieces are the perfect thing to start at and reflect on our own relatively abstract times.
• Runs until August 21st, 2021

NORDIC HOUSE
Nature in Transition: Shifting Identities
The North is changing. Man-made climate change is pushing our climates into new territory and things are moving more rapidly than we could have ever imagined. This special exhibition dissects the nature of that instability in the light of the four Nordic countries and their history and future. It’s an important topic—and one that we cannot afford to ignore.
• Runs until August 1st, 2021

REYKJAVÍK ART MUSEUM - HAFNARBORG
Discotheque
Annick forgiveness’ exhibition presents new works that draw inspiration from the ambiguous imagery of Icelandic night club culture in the seventies and eighties. While the title is a reference to revelry, what we have here is nonetheless a rather dreary discotheque. There is no glitz and glamour to be found here, only the harsh light of something that has already happened.
• Runs until August 15th, 2021

REYKJAVÍK ART MUSEUM - FÆRGÚSIÐUR
Discotheque
But don’t worry: it’s an uplifting and colourful exhibition, so no need to bring the tissues.
• Runs until August 31st, 2021

REYKJAVÍK ART MUSEUM - ÁSÍS
Kjartansson, Steina and Eggert Pétursson: The National, the seven-channel video installation sees a single song and several themes that drive the world. Her artwork inspires a feeling of doom and gloom to be found here, only the harsh light of something that has already happened.
• Runs until August 19th, 2021

REYKJAVÍK ART MUSEUM - KRISTÍN ÞÝRKJÓS
The Border Between Nature And The Scene
In my art, I explore the limits of photography by fragmenting exactly the concept of time for scenes that testify to the human encounter with life. The photographic scenes are set in scenarios where I have worked to show perspectives that make visible the fictional environment and illusion within the scenic geographic image. Peter Stridbø.
• Runs until August 8th, 2021

REYKJAVÍK MARITIME MUSEUM
Fish & Folk
Name a better duo than fish and Iceland. You can’t. So come learn about the history of Icelandic fishers from row boats to monstrous trawlers.
Medalwyn 1659
Melakweyt was a Dutch merchant ship that crashed near Flatey Island in 1659. Explore the wreck with two images of different origins against each other.
• Runs until September 20th, 2021

MUSEUM OF DESIGN AND APPLIED ART
Exhibitions
Kritín Porsdóttir
You’ve probably seen Kristín Porskeldóttir’s work before though you might not know it. She’s designed the packaging of countless foods as well as the banknotes in Iceland, among other famous items. Come see her program as an artist.
• Runs until January 30th, 2022

BEHIND 3HC SCENES
NATURAL DYES: A MODERN PERSPECTIVE
OPEN TUE–SUN 12–17
WWW.HÓNUNARSAFNS.IS
GARðABÆTUR 1
210 GARÞORG 1
MUSEUM OF DESIGN AND APPLIED ART
GARÐABÆTUR 1
210 GARÞORG 1
REYKJAVÍK MARITIME MUSEUM
FASN803
After the Flood
Hildur Bjarnadóttir presents her third solo show at Hafnarþægl, Hilda is known for works that investigate issues of belonging, ecology, politics and cohabitation with animals and plants in the south of Iceland.
• Runs on June 19th, 2021
• Runs until August 21st, 2021

MUSEUM OF DESIGN AND APPLIED ART
Behind 3HC Scenes
Natural Dyes: A Modern Perspective
OPEN TUE–SUN 12–17
WWW.HÓNUNARSAFNS.IS
THE SWEETEST CENTURY

Since opening our bakery in 1920, we have constantly pushed the boundaries of traditional Icelandic baking methods. Find us in the heart of Reykjavík serving piping hot, fresh pastries made from scratch, every morning from seven-thirty AM. Not a sweet tooth? That’s OK. Come by for a savory brunch or taste one of our homemade sodas or craft beers.

Reflecting On A Moment

‘Apausalypse’ captures philosophers, musicians, and dancers at a standstill

Words: Britnee Kiner Photos: Art Bicnick & ‘Apausalypse’

Capturing the pause

While all opportunities seemed to have faded amid the global lockdown from COVID-19, Andri Snær and Anni allowed art to persevere. They hoped to capture this moment in time through the nation’s best storytellers, such as photographer Ragnar Axelsson, poet Elísbet Jókulsárdóttir and professor of philosophy Sigríður Porgeisdóttir, gaining a philosophical and theoretical deep-dive before any of these creative thinkers had time to process the unfolding of the world around them.

“Our intentions were to make a work of art when almost everything was impossible,” Andri Snær asserted, speaking to the limitations they faced. When asked about the status of restrictions, Anni explained that “Everything was closed” but nonetheless, the pair travelled around Iceland. They engaged in conversations from a distance—through living room windows or metres away in cars. The two set out with no idea where the words exchanged, they talked indiscriminately with subjects, developing the narrative of the ‘Apausalypse’ as they went. When asked about how they chose which individuals to interview, Andri Snær admitted “We didn’t know if they would be the ones” but that regardless of what came of the words exchanged, they would maintain historical significance.

Occasionally overlooked victims of the pandemic include kids—withdrawn from social situations and experiences that shape their character. In one scene of the film, a couple’s eight-year-old son had not been in school for several weeks, and it did not take long for him to express the suppressed emotions of confusion and isolation felt by children across the world. The boy took a seat at the bench of the piano, stabbing at the keys as he sang with rage against the virus.

Return, release & reflect

In the film’s closing, images of an empty airport and a car-less Reykjavík flash across the screen. Hints of desolation and sorrow pervade, carried by the gentle notes of musician Ásta Fannney Sigurðardóttir, while a poem is read aloud describing the resurgence of nature that was seen around the world. With the suspension of societal consequences, it explains, came notions of peace and tranquillity unfounded in a century of haste.

Reflections on the film

Snær and Ólafsdóttir reveal the true origins of the name for the film. Visual artist Haraldur Jónsson, who is featured in the film, told the two that the Greek word ‘Apocalypse’ originally meant to uncover something. So contrary to last year symbolizing an ending—a modern apocalypse, ‘Apausalypse’ captures philosophers, musicians, and dancers at a standstill.
Iceland’s civil defence relies heavily on local search and rescue (SAR) teams, highly-trained volunteers who undertake a huge range of tasks from searching for missing people to mountain rescue and disaster response.

They’ve been particularly busy these past few months, helping visitors at the ever-shifting and potentially dangerous volcano site in Reykjanes. The Grapevine joined a team from Kópavogur for an evening patrol, just before the closure of the site.

Visitors are always happy to see SAR on site
SAR are here to help, not to enforce
Visitors are always happy to see SAR on site
The hike to site
The patrol leaves the site at 2300, but visitors are welcome to stay
An end-of-shift BBQ has become a team tradition

The Grapevine joined a team from Kópavogur for an evening patrol, just before the closure of the site.

End of shift BBQ has become a team tradition
‘Sometimes depressed… but always antifascist’ By BSÍ

All rise for some sweet songs against bad things

Words: Hannah Jane Cohen  Photo: John Pearson

BSÍ—one of the more un-Googleable bands in Iceland—are back with ‘Sometimes depressed… but always antifascist’. To learn more, Sigur- laug ‘Silla’ Thorarensen and Julius Rothlaender—the duo behind BSÍ—sat down with us to talk about the release track by track.

first half:
‘Sometimes depressed’

My Lovely

Julius: In this song, you’ll hear the secret ingredient of BSÍ—an old Casio keyboard, found in a flea market in Berlin a century ago. Mysteriously it found its way to Reykjavík and we gave it the name ‘Casillus’. It’s preferably played by Silla’s hands or my toes.

Uncouple

Silla: This is the first and only song we composed with a guitar. Usually we make a song by improvising on bass and drums. We are always switching around who plays what instrument, so Julius made the guitar melody and I made the bass melody, but I ended up playing the guitar and Julius the bass! Confusion is key!

25Lue

Julius: I was born in a town called Lübeck in Northern Germany and went to revisit that place two years ago. Silla came to visit me and that really meant a lot to me. The song is not about medieval cathedrals and the title is just the name of the demo file – that’s as much BSÍ as it gets.

second half:
‘...but always antifascist’

Vesturbæjar Beach

Julius: We stole the idea for this song from ourselves as we sifted through old demos from our very first rehearsals at R6013 a couple of years ago. The last bits and pieces for the lyrics we wrote together in a bar in Berlin, while drinking champagne and banana juice the night before recording the song.

Old Moon

Silla: This is the first and only song we composed with a guitar. Usually we make a song by improvising on bass and drums. We are always switching around who plays what instrument, so Julius made the guitar melody and I made the bass melody, but I ended up playing the guitar and Julius the bass! Confusion is key!

Uncouple

Silla: I think this song was actually the most cathartic one for me because of a heart-break I was going through at the time. In the outro, I say goodbye to a future that didn’t come. But I like that it is a pretty upbeat song though, which is a big contrast to the lyrics.

Feela þæð

Silla: You only need to know this: ‘We’re all sluts—you’re a slut, all these dudes behind you’s a slut, your mama’s a slut, your grand- ma’s a slut, everybody!’

My Knee Against Kyriarchy

Julius: More sweet songs against bad things! Silla taught me the term ‘kyriarchy’, which is an intersectional extension of the idea of patriarchy beyond gender, encompassing more forms of dominating and oppressive hierarchies, such as sexism, racism, ableism, antisemitism, homophobia, transphobia.

Dónakallalagið

Silla: This song is an angry anthem aimed at all the ‘dónakallar’—all the percy rude dudes out there and a big F*** yoo to the social systems that allow them to easily get away with all kinds of shit.

Altaf Altaf Stundum Altaf

Silla: The working title for this one was “Gróulagið”—a reference to the great band GRÓA. We still call it that when rehearsing and I don’t think we’ll get used to the new title any time soon. Fríða Ísleifsdóttir and Karó from GRÓA with Bjarni Daniel from Supersport! sing backing vocals in the outro that lift the song to a higher level!
Here are some deals that’ll keep your wallet feeling happy and full.

**AMERICAN BAR**
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00.
- Beer 850 ISK, Wine 900 ISK.

**APOTHEK**
Every day from 15:00 to 18:00.
- Beer 890 ISK, Wine 990 ISK.

**BASTARD BREW**
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00.
- Beer 500 ISK, Wine 850 ISK.

**BJÖRK**
Every day from 11:00 to 20:00.
- Beer 700 ISK, Wine 970 ISK.

**CAFÉ BARALU**
Every day from 19:00 to 21:00.
- Beer 690 ISK, Wine 795 ISK.

**DÍLOK**
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00.
- Beer 600 ISK, Wine 870 ISK.

**FÁJLÖKANAN**
Every day from 15:00 to 17:00.
- Beer 890 ISK, Wine 990 ISK.

**FORESTABARINN**
Every day from 16:00 to 19:00.
- Beer 800 ISK, Wine 880 ISK.

**ÍSLÉNSKÍ BÁRINN**
Every day from 16:00 to 18:00.
- Beer 700 ISK, Wine 800 ISK, Cocktails 1.200 ISK.

**ÍBA ZIMÍNEN**
Every day from 8:00 to 10:00.
- Coffee 400 ISK.

**JÚRGLÍS KOKTAIL BAR**
Every day from 17:00 to 20:00.
- Beer 800 ISK, Wine 1.000 ISK, Cocktails 1.500 ISK.

**KAFFIBÁRIRN**
Every day from 16:00 to 20:00.
- Beer 600 ISK.

**PÍRÍKÍD**
Every day from 16:00 to 20:00.
- Beer 890 ISK, Cocktails 1.500 ISK.

**PETERSEN SVÍTAN**
Every day from 16:00 to 20:00.
- Beer 800 ISK, Wine 1.000 ISK, Cocktails 1.500 ISK.

**PETERSEN SVÍTAN**
Every day from 16:00 to 20:00.
- Beer 800 ISK, Wine 1.000 ISK, Cocktails 1.500 ISK.

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

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

**SUSHI SOCIAL**
Every day from 17:00 to 18:00.

**TAPAS BÁRINN**
Every day from 17:00 to 18:00.
- Beer 645 ISK, Wine 745 ISK.

**VEBÚIR**
Every day from 12:00 to 19:30.
- Beer 800 ISK, Wine 900 ISK.

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

**Featured Drinking Hole**

**PETERSEN SVÍTAN**
>

**INGLÍSFJÖRÐUR (2.4)**

The sun is finally out, which means it’s time for your annual pilgrimage to Petersen svítan. Never been? Well, make sure to bring your sunglasses because this place has one of the best views in Reykjavík. Look over the city and have a beer on a rooftop that is almost entirely in direct sunlight (!!!). Happy Hour lasts from 16:00 to 19:00, which are the perfect hours for not only drinking, but also after-work tanning. Work. 😁

**Cheap Food**

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

**1,000 ISK And Under**

- **FAD** / **Le Krek**
  Every day - All day
  - Doughnut, coffee & bagel - 1,000 ISK.

- **Súlón**
  Monday - Friday
  - Coffee 400 ISK.

- **TAPAS BARÍNN**
  Every day
  - 17:00 - 18:00
  - Half off of selected tapas

- **Sushi Social**
  Monday - Friday
  - 17:00 - 18:00
  - Truffle potatoes - 1,290 ISK.

- **Avocado fries - 690 ISK**
  Lobster sushi, ribs & more - 890 ISK.

- **Gló**
  Every day - All day
  - 16:00 - 20:00
  - Vegan option

- **Shallmar**
  Monday - Friday
  - 12:00 - 14:30
  - Curry - 1,290 ISK
  - Vegan option

- **Satie Sóhilt**
  Every day 11-18
  - Chicken wings - 1,190 ISK
  - “Dirty” Fries - 1,390 ISK

- **Sólón**
  Monday - Friday
  - 11:00 - 14:30
  - Caesar salad - 1,490 ISK

- **Leb**
  Every day - All day
  - 12:00 - 14:30
  - Fish of the month - 1,290 ISK
  - Vegan option

- **Lemon**
  Every day
  - 16:00 - 21:00
  - 250 Jóice + sandwich - 1,050 ISK
  - Vegan option

- **Uppsalir - Bar and café**
  Every day 11-14
  - Burger & Fries - 1,390 ISK
  - Two-course lunch - 3,390 ISK
  - Three course lunch - 4,390 ISK

- **Kids Eat Free**
  At Pírilók if you order two adult meals

**All Icelandair Hotel restaurants**

- **At Hótel**
  The buffet is free for kids

**Cheap Food**

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- **At Hótel**
  The buffet is free for kids
It’s that time of the year again—the time of maddening light and endless days that mess up your sense of time completely. Yes, you guessed it, it’s summer! And what else is there to do during these overwhelming hours than to read something utterly stupid, or better yet, incredibly brilliant?

It’s true that Icelanders, like most Scandinavians, aren’t very fond of writing about summer. Most Icelandic authors seem to prefer something gloomier—usually a desolate farm that’s fallen to despair, with a storm on the horizon and rogue sheep. However, you need not despair, for here’s a selection of jolly and bright Icelandic novels to take you through the summer months.

### ‘Summer Light, and Then Comes the Night’ by Jón Kalmann

This is the book that made Jón Kalmann an overnight superstar. In fact, right now he’s probably the most beloved fiction writer in Iceland—one of those guys that you’d like to send a friend request to on Facebook and ask him over for a coffee. (Not that I’d do that, but Jón, if you’re reading this...)

Yes, I’m a fan boy and will proudly admit it.

‘Sumarljósi, svo kom niðtín’ (‘Summer Light, and Then Comes the Night’) is a beautiful poetic effort that is both incredibly wise and insanely funny. The book is compiled as a series of short stories over one summer in a small Icelandic fishing town, with every story connected by a strong thread. The protagonists include an odd astronomer, boys in a haunted warehouse and a police man who can’t seem to man his son up before he commits suicide. Notably, nobody dies in this odd village. In fact, the town doesn’t even have a cemetery. In my view, the book is a masterpiece, and it’s quite promising. Not only is it beautifully written, but it was also originally written in English—targeting an international crowd—which is a remarkable feat in the Icelandic literary world. It’s also, I must add, a refreshing one.

Each poem in the book is part of a larger story of a city and Jókatan’s poems allow the reader to dive into each character’s thoughts, revealing their inner connections. Of course, I must admit that the effort does bear some of the unavoidable characteristics of a new writer, but it’s ultimately a surprising, worthwhile read.

### ‘Here We Are’ by Kjartan Ragnarsson

From a master to a newby. ‘Here We Are’ is the debut poetry book from Kjartan Ragnarsson and it’s quite promising. Not only is it beautifully written, but it was also originally written in English—targeting international audiences, with a remarkable unique feat in the Icelandic literary world. It’s also, I must add, a refreshing one.

Each poem in the book is part of a larger story of a city and Kjartan’s poems allow the reader to dive into each character’s thoughts, revealing their inner connections. Of course, I must admit that the effort does bear some of the unavoidable characteristics of a new writer, but it’s ultimately a surprising, worthwhile read.

### ‘The Sagas and Shit’ by Grayson Del Faro

I can’t go on without mentioning one of the funniest books in the Northern Hemisphere and it’s definitely not one I have any personal connection to. No way.

Grayson Del Faro’s epic ‘The Sagas and Shit’ began as a regular Grapevine column. It was quickly discovered, though, that it was something special. Grayson, who is a scholar of the Icelandic sagas, has a deep understanding of these complex stories and his summaries are not only enlightening, but also extremely funny. See, Grayson doesn’t approach these cultural holy grails with the same dusty attitudes as most scholars. No, he draws out the core meaning and messages and puts a modern twist on them. Think intriguing, drama and sex jokes you really don’t want your grandma to see.

### ‘666 Jokes’ by Hugleikur Dagsson

We’ve now reached the infamously dark and twisted humour of comic artist Hugleikur Dagsson. Where to start? First off, it really is insane that this humorous genius hasn’t been cancelled by an angry mob yet. Truly mind-boggling. But I think the answer is simple—the man is so talented that even though his humour is as depraved and dark as it gets, he still manages to entertain, shock and showcase his brilliantly sar- castic messages to the world. It’s a delicate line, but he treads it.

In ‘666 jokes’, Hugleikur showcases the best and worst of Icelandic humour. These are thoughts you might not even say in a tight group of friends while drunk by the campfire and everyone’s cell phones are out of battery. Hugleikur makes fun of everything—and I mean everything. Only the bravest of the brave should read this book, for Hugleikur is like a lovely Icelandic summer festival—filled with unruly madness, riot, burning tents and crappy folk music.
FANCIES is where we talk to Reykjavík’s most fashion-forward figures about style

Regn Sólmundur Evu

Regn Sólmundur Evu (24) is an art student and comedian.

Wearing:
• Thrifted shirt, jacket & stockings
• Lindex skirt
• Handmade harness & earrings
• Nike shoes
• Kiko lipstick

Describe your style in 5 words:
Chaotic. Fun. Moody. Wild. 80s. It’s all over the place!

Favourite stores in Reykjavik:
I love the Red Cross, Fatamarkaðurinn and Wasteland. I used to go there all the time but now I just have too many clothes! But I still check in every now and again to see if I can find some gems.

Favourite piece:
Actually, this top that I have on is my favourite piece ever. I found it 5-6 years ago at Fatamarkaðurinn and I thought it was so ugly that I bought it. It has grown on me so much. It’s so 80s—it looks like a carpet—so I’m like an arcade. I also have some pieces by a company called Trash Queen that make beautiful clothes that are all handsewn and from a queer person, so that’s pretty cool.

Something I would never wear:
I’d give everything a chance, but maybe not low-rise skinny jeans.

Lusting after:
First off, I’d like Iceland to stop deporting people. But clothes-wise, I’m on the lookout for some good cowboy boots. Also a good corset, but I haven’t found corsets in my size yet. Just being a plus size non-binary person is tough sometimes because it feels like there’s so many rules about what to wear and what not to wear so I’m just on the lookout for things that go outside the box that I am put in. Non-binary people are supposed to be androgynous and fat people are supposed to wear loose clothing so I don’t do any of that!

Regn’s official non-binary style tips:
Gender and gender expression is not the same thing, so basically—you can do whatever the fuck you want with clothes! Clothes are just drag and gender expression is just drag, so you’re basically just doing everyday drag when you get dressed each morning. Having fun is the most important thing. Don’t be afraid of colour and don’t be afraid of going outside the box of what people expect of you.

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

Fjallkonan Krá & Kræsingar

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

ARCTIC CHARR & BLINI
Lightly cured arctic char, 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

Happy Hour 15-17 every day

FJALLKONAN WELCOMES YOU!
Talk About Tacos

La Poblana has its sights set on expanding Mexican cuisine

Words: Shruthi Basappa  Photos: Art Bicnick

When La Poblana showed up on the roster at Hlemmur Mathöll in 2017, the tiny restaurant was filling the gaping void of Mexican cuisine in Iceland. It came on the backs of Taqueria in Ármúli, a brief but delicious love affair; an attempt at Cali tacos at Taco fyrir mig, the once-a-week event at The Coocoo’s Nest; and the continued popularity of Tex-Mex by way of Icelandic fixture Culiacan.

But far removed from global interpretations of Mexican cuisine outside of his home country, Carlos Guarneros, encouraged by the support of his then partner, opened La Poblana to honour the culinary memories of his mother and grandmother. “It is a project to make Mexican food the way I grew up with it,” says Carlos. “My mom is from Puebla, and this is for her,” he smiles shyly, explaining that ‘Poblana’ is someone from Puebla.

But after only a year of operations, a divorce and subsequent sale, La Poblana downed their shutters at the food hall. “It was kind of OK for me,” Carlos admits. “I felt I wasn’t ready to run a place. I wasn’t happy, to be honest,” he confesses.

“To close Poblana for the first time was necessary.”

We are sitting in the high-ceilinged taqueria, with large windows perfect for people watching and walls awash with a striking mural from one of the Aztec codices by the artist ‘Otho’. The two gods are Mictlantecuhtli (god of the underworld) and Quetzalcóatl (the god of war). Together, they symbolize life and death. The mural has the gods holding ears of corn in place of the traditional canes—a reminder of the importance of the simple grain. It’s all fitting for Carlos’ taqueria.

The current menu is concise, with just four tacos on offer. It’s a throwback to Mexican taquerias where pride is taken in doing a few things and doing them well. I chose the tacos that reminded me of something,” Carlos shares.

“For example, the carnitas were my late night tacos with friends, after a long night of drinking and you want something greasy. The campechano is the taco that reminds me of Mexico City; it’s the taco you eat before you take the bus, before work, on the way back home. The chicken tinga is what my mother makes often. So I chose the ones that I can put a little bit of myself into.”

Carlos’ earnest y translates into his food. The carnitas are fatty chunks of slow braised pork, cooked with oranges and aromatic spices. There is plenty of lime to squeeze, the acidity vital to cutting through the richness of the...
meat. The campachano, a personal favourite of mine, is a grilled beef leg, with homemade chorizo and melted cheese, singing with the warm depth of guajillos, anchos and smoked paprika. If the taqueria isn’t packed, one can see Carlos busy at the grill, stirring in the melty cheese, chop-chop-chopping with his wide spatula and flipping one tortilla after another.

The pollo de tinta is a sublime contrast to the darkness of the red meats and is perfumed with the heady aromas of oregano. His mother’s recipe, this is a lighter version compared to the tomatowy, smoke kissed versions one may have encountered.

An Honest Tortilla
A tortilla is more than a piece of bread, more than its components of flour, fat and water. A freshly made tortilla, be it made with corn or flour, is a simple joy to behold. Warm corn tortilla with its milky mustiness is as important as the meats and vegetables it holds. At the taqueria, Carlos dishes both yellow and blue corn tortillas. They even arrive with a smear of the chorizo fat as is wont in Mexico. This little detail, amiss in the pop-up, food truck, claim-to-be-Mexican but aren’t menus and restaurant offerings is one to applaud.

Tacos belie the labour and complexities involved in its 1-2-3 bite of dance of textures, temperatures, the contrast and balance of heat, acidity and freshness, lent by the crunch of white onions, the citrusy spring of fresh coriander all brought together by carefully chosen salsas. The overall balance comes down to the size of tortilla and just the right amount of filling, enough to fold them over in one hand and be eaten in no more than a few bites, juices running down satisfyingly.

Carlos serves the carnitas with mexitokosk súpa, not to be confused with sopas de tortilla, or the equally hallowing Mexican cheese, again, not to be mistaken for cotija or queso fresco. Supermarket aisles are dedicated to canned refried beans (shockingly amiss from restaurant menus), sliced jalapenos and varieties of oregano with sopa de tortilla, or the equally fermentedarveisla fixture of menus), sliced jalapenos and varieties of the mild, hot and spicy salsas of the mild, hot and spicy varieties, with tactfully placed blazing flames indicating heat and the danger they bring, alongside tortillas and unfortunately labelled jars of ‘street food sauces’. “Contrary to what people think, we are not eating raw chillies all the time,” Carlos says bemused. “I can’t quite explain it...” Carlos pauses, searching for words, “it’s just, you know? I wonder why?” he says. Even as traditions are important, Carlos insists nothing remains static, “I still believe that everything changes. And maybe this is part of the transformation. But we have to be careful where we are borrowing traditions from.”

Chicós and Stereotypes
For a culture that gave the world everything from chocolate and chillies to chewing gum, Mexi-food outside of its home is a strange concoction far removed from its origins. Its popularity here has translated to the birthday party and formigavrezsia fixtures of ‘Mexíkósk súpa’, not to be confused with sopa de tortilla, or the equally hallowing Mexican cheese, again, not to be mistaken for cotija or queso fresco. Supermarket aisles are dedicated to canned refried beans (shockingly amiss from restaurant menus), sliced jalapenos and various salsas of the mild, hot and spicy variants, with tactfully placed blazing flames indicating heat and the danger they bring, alongside tortillas and unfortunately labelled jars of ‘street food sauces’.

Future plans
The small taqueria has already proven too small and Carlos is running a hurried expansion at Kofinn. “I’d like to have a dynamic menu. I’m thinking of summer tacos with fish, braised lamb in the winter. Use all the parts of the animal—like the tongue, head [and] offal, which is traditional in Mexico,” he says excitedly.

“I am also working on pop-up menus without any tacos. Maybe sopes? And not the chocolate one that people know but the rich varieties [with] nuts, greens, seasonal ingredients. Pair them with top shelf Mezcal, Tequila and maybe even Mexican wines,” he says.

For all his excitement Carlos is mystified, “I’m kind of surprised how much people like the food,” Carlos says. For me, it is normal. I am following the recipes from my mom — this is natural. I’m not doing anything extraordinary,” he says. The Well Carlos, if this is your take on the ordinary, we’d like more of it.

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This Is A Story About A Girl Named Lucky (And A Pool)

Words: Hannah Jane Cohen Photos: Art Bionick

I am the luckiest girl in the world.

It was those eight words that came into my head the moment I first submerged myself into the waters of Sky Lagoon, Reykjavík’s newest luxury pool. The spa revolves around what they call “The Ritual”—a seven step relaxation process that begins with a soak in the lagoon, followed by a cold plunge, sauna, cool mist, exfoliating scrub, steam bath and a gentle shower. It may seem like a lot of steps toward relaxation, but it’s delightful.

I was lucky enough to visit the La - goo pre-opening, which meant that 1—the aforementioned luckiest girl in the world—got the entire pool to myself. This, I daresay, will only ever occur again in my wildest dreams, so I made sure to savour every moment. Because, let’s be fair, if you’re going to enjoy a spa in absolute, total, meditative solitude, there’s none better than this locale, hidden in the depths of Kópavogur, far removed from the hustle and noise of the city.

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Rewind… let’s enter the lagoon!

The interior of the Sky Lagoon is cozy. Bathed in soft mood lighting, you’re treated to individual pods in the dressing room, which allow you to change and shower in seclusion. When you’re used to other Icelandic pools, which often involve many people showering in the same area, this feels extremely luxurious. Immediately, I loved this place—who doesn’t want to feel this special?

Exiting the dressing rooms, you stroll into a small outside enclave with stairs that lead down into the azure waters of the lagoon. The whole experience so far was so meticulously designed that I already felt like I had left my normal life as my toes touched down into the water. Usually, I’m more of a calm mosey-about swimmer, but the swirling toasty waves of the lagoon were so inviting that I immediately relaxed and dunked my head beneath the surface.

The pool is massive, I came to find. The weather was perfect; the sun shined into the Atlantic—despite being toasty warm. I spent my time luxuriating in all the little nooks and grottos of the Lagoon. Being alone meant I could really be present and I took advantage of the silence to just breathe and be mindful.

Welcome to the Turf

The Ritual, causing any remaining tension in my body to completely evaporate, I did decide at one point that —were I to pull a ‘Where The Heart Is’ heist and live in secret somewhere for the rest of my life—it’d be the Sky Lagoon.

I made sure to savour every moment. Because, let’s be fair, if you’re going to enjoy a spa in absolute, total, meditative solitude, there’s none better than this locale, hidden in the depths of Kópavogur, far removed from the hustle and noise of the city.

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Enjoying the lagoon, looking just as excited and hopeful as I had an hour previously. I took advantage of this and spent my time meandering around the oasis until it was time to return to real life. And it was only as I was journeying back to the dressing rooms that the first patrons of the day began to enter the pool, looking just as excited and hopeful as I had an hour previously.

Of course, I had already completed The Ritual but was still anxiously waiting for when I could return. Whatever religion created The Ritual, I’d be lucky—no, ecstatic—to convert.

Travel distance from Reykjavik: 6.6 km

Experience provided by: skylagoon.com
The wandering sheep did call the Heav'n's decree. And by wrath, we mean that the end of this mask-manhood approaches!

Naked ye was borne and naked ye will exit ye pandemic, ya loins to an alehouse! As ye do follow yer loins this coming month, The stars guide ye. Ini loins. What ho!

While Mans first Disobedi-ence brought the Fruit of that Forbidden Tree and Death into the World, the death of yer new friend, don’t speak to them unless ye have ye so down, so leave the loom, make three paces through the room and blast yer best Type O Negative. An ill-fated romance with a half-sick of shadows? Say not, “Half-sick of shadows!”

Listen closely to yer arrow-smith. Yer half-way there. This month ye might beg for a mead and head out of yer isolation to an alehouse! This time of 420 is over! Nei, this here June, the rivers flow red with wine. Methinks, a good start for a pilgrimage and a romp in the holy hay.

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"I feel like music is such an international thing, but more like an intergalactic thing. So, let’s not classify!"
Possimiste on her galactic travels, new album and the biggest cultural differences between aliens and humans. P18

“It’s really hard to paint.”
Visual arts rockstar Ragnar Kjartansson succulently explains why he did a video installation instead of a painting. P12-13

“If we can stop for a virus and protect the elderly, can we protect the future?”
Andri Snær Magnason and co-director Anni Ólafsdóttir discuss their new documentary ‘Apausalypse’, which captures the poetic silence of the COVID-19 pandemic. P22

One of 25 wonders of the world
Blue Lagoon geothermal seawater is unlike any other water on the planet. Born deep underground, this natural marvel is rich in silica, algae, and minerals—the elements that give the water its extraordinary powers.
Discover the water. Experience the wonder.

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