Parliamentary elections are coming up. We interviewed some of the new people trying to win a seat in parties from left to right on what they want Parliament to take on first.

**NEW VOICES, OLD PARLIAMENT**
Immigrants Are Breaking Through in Icelandic Politics

We’ve been noticing something important about Icelandic politics here at the Reykjavík Grapevine. It’s no small thing, though it’s not been reported on by bigger media outlets. Immigrants, or second-generation immigrants, are becoming much more visible in Icelandic politics than just 10 years ago.

Now, this is important for numerous reasons. First of all, immigrants make up 15.2% of Iceland’s population, according to the 2020 figures from Statistics Iceland. This means that there are just shy of 60,000 immigrants in Iceland with various backgrounds and needs—that’s roughly half the population of Reykjavík or the entire populations of Iceland’s 2nd and the 3rd biggest towns combined. Still, there are few, if any, giving a voice to this massive group in our democracy.

This seems to be changing rapidly. We saw a sharp increase of immigrant candidates in the last municipal elections, which will be held on September 25th—read all about it in our elections feature on page 8.

Now, to be clear, this is not a big win for diversity. Most of the candidates that are not born in Iceland, or from Icelandic families, are not high enough on their respective parties’ lists to win a seat in Alþingi. But there is one exception: Lenya Rún Taha Kurtín, who is the third on the Pirate Party’s list for the Reykjavík North district. The Pirates have three elected in that district now, so there seems to be a fairly good chance that a candidate of Kurdish descent could be elected to the Icelandic parliament for the first time.

Immigrants in Iceland have the same needs as any Icelander. They rely on health care, the education system and they are active participants in the Icelandic economy. But most immigrants face many more obstacles than Icelanders, everything from racism to language barriers, to just plain selectiveness when it comes to company owners hiring immigrants over applicants over immigrants. Of course, this list is not exhaustive.

There’s no doubt in our minds that these voices need to be heard. But keep in mind, immigrants need to take the stage and grab that microphone to be heard—it’s not like anyone is going to give it up easily. And immigrants have the power to take it with those strong numbers. Now is the time.

Valur Grettiisson
Editor-in-chief
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Opening hours are every day between 7:00-16:00.

What Are Icelanders Talking About?

Some news is bad news

Words: Andie Sophia Fontaine
Photos: Landspítali & Art Bionick

The top story on Icelanders’ minds right now concerns the Icelandic Football Association (BSÍ), which we go into more detail about on Page 6. In a nutshell: it came to light that six or seven footballers reportedly committed sexual assaults in recent years. Gúni Bergsson, the BSÍ director at the time, denied ever hearing about the incidents, but testimony from one survivor and a leaked email proved this false. He would later resign and, after a lackluster apology and pressure from sponsors, the BSÍ board resigned, too. Missing in all of this is a statement from any Icelandic footballer condemning sexual violence. The silence is deafening.

In a rare turn of events, police shot a man in northeast Iceland. The injured person was reportedly firing at least one rifle at a house’s windows — fortunately no one was home at the time. He continued shooting once police arrived on the scene. When told to drop his weapon, he shot at police, who returned fire. He is currently recovering from his injuries and faces a battery of charges. The motive for his shootings has not been made public.

Tragedy struck the mental health ward of Landspítali hospital when a patient died after choking on food that a nurse was forcing him to eat. The immediate question of why a trained nurse failed to save the choking patient was superseded by questions regarding the use of force when it comes to people struggling with their mental health. The matter is being investigated by the police as a possible criminal act, and Müllfrður Ólafur Einarsdóttir, the director of Mindpower, an NGO focused on mental health care in Iceland, told reporters that the health care system needs a drastic change in policy when it comes to when and whether to use force.

Iceland’s Delta-driven spike in COVID-19 cases has been accompanied by more COVID patient deaths. Iceland had not experienced a single coronavirus death since May, in large part due to a successful vaccination drive, when three COVID-related deaths occurred within the span of a week in late August. While it has not been disclosed if any of the deceased were vaccinated, we do know they were all middle-aged or older and at least one had underlying health conditions which may have made them especially vulnerable to the virus. A tragedy either way.

First
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Dude, Where’s My Carp?

Imagine you’re laid out, soaking up some rays in the lovely green area. Imagine you’re laid out, soaking up the sun, and your extended hand has inadvertently caught the flying object. It lands with its leather and force like Thor-summoning the mighty Mjölnir. When you collect yourself enough to identify what’s happened, it turns out you’re holding no less than six pounds of high-grade marijuana. Delivered straight from the skies above. It’s like the opening scene to a supernatural 90’s stoner flick.

At least that’s what your mind would conjure up if you had the pleasure of reading a recent Google Translate snafu on RV which confusingly read, “Caught six pounds of marijuana in the sun”, instead of the original Icelandic title, “Veiddi sex punda mariullaxinn í solinni”. The confusion likely came from, well, no one has a clue. Interestingly, marijuana is just the term for the very first salmon a person has ever caught, in some strange nod to the Virgin Mary. Other than mariu sounding somewhat like marj, there is no linguistic basis for this blunder. So it seems to be just another example of Google Translate taking a puff and mellowing out too hard to give a damn on this one.

Iceland’s immigrant population—which includes those who are now citizens, capable of voting in parliamentary elections—is over 11%, but this is not reflected in the number of immigrants currently in Parliament. How do we account for this? The resigned Eva H. Ónnudóttir, a professor in political science at the University of Iceland, has this to say: “There’s definitely not one simple answer to why there are so few immigrants in Parliament. But one thing that comes to mind is how recently it’s been since we’ve begun receiving a large amount of immigrants in Iceland. We’re talking about this starting around 1994 or 95, when immigrants began to really arrive here. It’s my understanding that it’s often the second generation of immigrants who get into politics, that is, the children of people born abroad. So maybe there’s a time factor. There may also be certain obstacles or restrictions in the system, where there’s either nothing encouraging immigrants to run for office, or maybe they’re not connected with Icelandic society and politics as those who were born here. It could also be that immigrants, especially first generation immigrants, are paying more attention to politics in their home countries than in Iceland. So there’s really no simple answer. But we are seeing more and more immigrants on the candidates lists of certain political parties, which is of course a good thing. It could also be that immigrants are rather participating more in municipal elections, or that political parties are not trying to reach people who aren’t citizens and therefore cannot yet vote in parliamentary elections.”

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The Reykjavík Grapevine
Issue 09 — 2021

Words: Andie Sophia Fontaine
Photo: Art Biscick

Icelandic Football Association Under Fire

A series of sexual assaults, a cover-up and resignations

The Icelandic Football Association (KSÍ) has effectively collapsed within the span of a week. It began with Dórhildur Guðny Arnarsson, a woman who bravely came forward and recounted for RVU the 2017 sexual assault she was subjected to by a member of the national team. Dórhildur said she had been asked to sign a non-disclosure agreement about the matter—a request she refused. She told reporters that her father had subsequently contacted KSÍ about the matter, but then-director Guðni Bergsson responded to press inquiries by saying that he was never made aware of any players committing sexual assaults. This turned out to be a huge mistake, because it was demonstrably false.

The light of day

The press was then provided with a copy of an email Dórhildur’s father had sent to several members of KSÍ following his daughter’s assault, including to Guðni and KSÍ managing director Klára Bjartmarz. Caught in a lie, Guðni resigned and KSÍ issued a lukewarm apology. Their statement ended up having the opposite of its intended effect, especially as Klára doubled-down with reporters in repeating that the board was never made aware of sexual assaults committed by players, despite the aforementioned email suggesting otherwise.

The pressure pays off

After activist groups Öfgar and Bleiki Fillinn, various sports groups and sponsors such as Coca-Cola and Icelandair began expressing their great disappointment with KSÍ’s handling of the matter, the board of KSÍ announced their collective resignation. It remains to be seen what, if anything, KSÍ will do to change its culture and prevent further violence being committed by athletes who are supposed to be role models.

Iceland’s immigrant population—which includes those who are now citizens, capable of voting in parliamentary elections—is over 11%, but this is not reflected in the number of immigrants currently in Parliament. How do we account for this? The resigned Eva H. Ónnudóttir, a professor in political science at the University of Iceland, has this to say: “There’s definitely not one simple answer to why there are so few immigrants in Parliament. But one thing that comes to mind is how recently it’s been since we’ve begun receiving a large amount of immigrants in Iceland. We’re talking about this starting around 1994 or 95, when immigrants began to really arrive here. It’s my understanding that it’s often the second generation of immigrants who get into politics, that is, the children of people born abroad. So maybe there’s a time factor. There may also be certain obstacles or restrictions in the system, where there’s either nothing encouraging immigrants to run for office, or maybe they’re not connected with Icelandic society and politics as those who were born here. It could also be that immigrants, especially first generation immigrants, are paying more attention to politics in their home countries than in Iceland. So there’s really no simple answer. But we are seeing more and more immigrants on the candidates lists of certain political parties, which is of course a good thing. It could also be that immigrants are rather participating more in municipal elections, or that political parties are not trying to reach people who aren’t citizens and therefore cannot yet vote in parliamentary elections.”

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Don’t Hesitate! Act Now!
GODS OF ICELAND

Gods Of Iceland: Elli, The Sexy Wrestling Grandma
Throw away that eye cream, old is the new young

Words: Hannah Jane Cohen
Photo: Adobe Stock Creation

Botox, Retinoids. Push-up bras. Women do a lot of things to hide their rotations around the sun, spurred on by a society that defiles the young and relegates the old to silent corners. “Mom, you never saw any online counters anxiously tallying down the seconds to Meryl Streep’s 60th birthday—only the Olsen twins’ 18th.

That said, ladies need not be ashamed of your mortality anymore. For if there’s anyone that shows us that age is but a number—and that one can always be a bad sexy, bitch—that’s the Norse giantess Elli.

“Stricken with age”

Elli’s known as the Norse personification of old age—the Crone, one might say. In fact, one could easily make the point that Elli being old is really her only defining characteristic, like Sif having blonde hair or Vishar wearing one shoe. In the “Gyllingning”—Elli’s only Edda appearance—she’s described as being “stricken with age” and really, all other online or scholarly resources on the Norse Pantheon always begin by harshly defining her wrinkles, frail appearance—she’s described as being “afraid of hip replacements for thousand years to come” by Rahel Abulafia. This is the song your grandparents tell you to live in love, to worry for your time to come. Her honey-tainted voice sounds how drinking a warm cup of tea does—delightful, comforting and in a way, convulsive. It has a way to start a petition to remake the La La Land with Hulda as the lead. (?)

“Where’s your hammer now, bitch?”

So, to simplify, no one—not even a Norse god—beats old age. Unless you make a Heerux or something. But that’s another article.

Superpowers:
Old age.
Weaknesses:
Blinkly. Society’s perpetual underestimation of the elderly.

Modern Analogy:
Your grandma when someone turns off M.A.S.H.

Að finna einhvern í fjöru? ("The Beach 2.0"

Tired of uttering the same old threats? Feeling like your old ultimatums have lost their power? It’s a tale as old as time, but luckily Iceland has the solution. In Icelandic, when you really want to intimidate someone, you say you will “find someone at the beach ("Að finna einhvern í fjöru")”—an ominous invitation sure to bring a cold sweat to anyone’s brow.

The saying basically implies that you will find said enemy again in the future and possibly beat them up then—similar to “we’ll meet again.” The origin of this saying is rather ancient, referring to surf-side trials for thieves which would potentially conclude with the thief being drowned for their offences. Thrilling stuff.

Mooma vs. White

Picture this: Tough heartthrob Bör was not having a particularly spectacular day. He had just been defeated in a drinking challenge—a devastating blow to his masculinity, for sure—and needed to prove, once and for all, that he was a totally macho dude. Obviously, he decided to do this—as many a drunk white dude has done—by fighting someone.

So Bör searched for a competitor and Loki, iconic trickster he is, decided to “help out” by picking Bör’s adversary, ultimately deciding on a competitor he was sure to beat—an old fucking woman.

Yes, Bör challenged Elli—our wittingly, elderly protagonist—to a wrestling match. For comparison, imagine Jason Momoa going on Celebrity Boxing to TKO Betty White. You’d be kind of weirded out right? Jesus, talk about toxic masculinity.

That said, Elli, like Harry Potter, had powers to which the Norse God was not privy. She, bad bitch of the eons, totally owned Bör like a 15-year-old on Call of Duty, pinning him down on one knee and probably yelling something like, “Where’s your hammer now, bitch?”

Just saying.

“Help out” by picking your enemies again in the future will “find said enemy again in the future” ("Að finna einhvern í fjöru")—an ominous threat.

Subhaksha Blomdahl, Mohammad Rashed, Nok Autpasorn & Lajarin Reerezenn

Just sayings

"Help out” by picking..."
Nearly four years ago, in the wake of snap elections held after the collapse of the previous government, Iceland’s current coalition government was formed. It was a tumultuous process, involving negotiations between eight different parties over a span of weeks. In the end, it was three parties—the Left-Green Movement, who ostensively lead the government, the Progressive Party and the Independence Party—who managed to have the most combined seats for a stable majority, and who were able to hammer out a power- and platform-sharing agreement between them.

This time around, nine parties—including the new Socialist Party—are polling high enough (or in some cases, almost high enough) to win seats in Parliament. Mean-while, the parties comprising the ruling coalition are on a knife’s edge between holding and falling. On top of all this, the coronavirus pandemic has been dominating local headlines, and the government’s management of the situation and other parties’ proposed approaches to COVID-19, will likely be key influences on people’s ballot-box decisions—not to mention the influence it’s had on campaigning, which has barely even begun just a few weeks before election day on September 29th, or the effect it may have on voting itself. It’s a very unusual election season for Iceland.

In this feature, we spoke to six candidates from as many parties, spanning from the left to the right, whose names have not been very prominent in the media. We also spoke with two political scientists for further analysis. Here, you can learn what makes this election special, what Iceland’s next government needs to take care of first, where the different parties stand, and why there are so few connected via the pandemic, which makes the government’s handling of it distinguishes these elections. “What’s very special about this election is how many parties are running,” Hulda Ólafsdóttir, Ph.D., an associate professor at the University of Iceland, told us. “And by that I mean the difference between being on the left and being on the right in economic issues, it’s attitudes towards the healthcare system. There’s really no disagreement over how to fund health care. But there is disagreement over who should provide the services; whether that should solely be the government, or if private organisations should be allowed to do that, too.”

“There’s been a big tension within the current government, but the Ministry of Health has been with the Left-Greens, so there has been more of the politics of that party that have been implemented in the healthcare system. People on the right have voiced their disapproval of this. So it’s hard to say whether people are happy with this, it really depends on whether you’re on the left or the right.”

More parties, more problems

“What’s very special about this election is how many parties are running,” Hulda Ólafsdóttir, Ph.D., an associate professor at the Department of Political Science of the University of Iceland, told us. “Not only that, but how many parties are running that have a very viable possibility of getting representa-tives elected. This is a trend that started after the economic crisis, it’s almost stabilised, and now we have so many parties that are polling at around 10%.”

“What makes this really interesting is what comes after the elections,” she contin-ues. “How is the government going to be formed? That’s probably going to be a very difficult process, because a lot of negotia-tions have to take place. There used to be four or five parties, larger parties that were a bigger umbrella for a wider variety of opinions. But now with more parties, they become somewhat narrower. You as a voter can elect a party that’s closer to your opin-ions than you could maybe 15 years ago, when you may not have found as close of a match with your values. In many ways, this unique situation is a referendum on the last four years of a government spanning the left to the right.”

Eva R. Önnudóttir, a political science professor at the University of Iceland, also noted the number of parties running, but also how the pandemic and this govern-ment’s handling of it distinguishes these elections. “What makes this election special, in my opinion, are the circumstances in which it’s taking place,” she said. “And by that I mean the pandemic, which has been going on for more than a year and a half. While traditional left-right politics have been discon-nected via the pandemic, which makes the circumstances of this election special, the main campaign issues will probably be typi-cal important issues such as the healthcare, welfare, the economy and the environment. The government has had to deal with the pandemic, so there hasn’t been the usual campaign points, such as about how far to go when it comes to being socially minded or individual minded and such.”

The big three

“There’s no one [issue] that dominates everything.” Hulda said. “But if I had to pick one issue that’s going to be on the mind of most voters, that would be the healthcare system. People on the left are worried that it’s underfunded, people on the right are worried about too much centralisation in the healthcare system and how it’s run. This would be followed by one issue that’s always big—the economy, and how we get it going strong after COVID—and then environmen-tal issues; what parties will be offering credible and viable solutions, and not just greenwashing.”

“The campaign is only now just starting, so we’re still not yet seeing what are going to be the major issues in this campaign,” Eva cautions. “But we can assume that we’ll see the usual issues: the economy, health care and welfare, and some parties are also emphasising environmentalism. I think it’s probably not unlikely that amongst the first things Parliament addresses is how we deal with the pandemic going forward.”

Hulda agrees, believing that the pandemic is inextricably woven into the issue of health care in Iceland.

“This has been a very popular govern-ment,” she told us. “It is a ‘rally around the flag’ effect that we’ve been seeing, because we’ve been fighting a common enemy. The government was politically savvy enough to think the best way through this was to give a lot of power to the scientists in these matters, with health care officials not making this political.

“In terms of addressing the other issues, if there is one issue in Iceland that crystal-ises the difference between being on the left and being on the right in economic issues, it’s attitudes towards the healthcare system. There’s really no disagreement over how to fund health care. But there is disagree-ment over who should provide the services; whether that should solely be the government, or if private organisations should be allowed to do that, too.”

“That’s been a big tension within the current government, but the Ministry of Health has been with the Left-Greens, so there has been more of the politics of that party that have been implemented in the healthcare system. People on the right have voiced their disapproval of this. So it’s hard to say whether people are happy with this, it really depends on whether you’re on the left or the right.”

Our selection of candidates

In choosing who to reach out to, we had some basic criteria. We chose little-known to unknown candidates from parties running in the greater Reykjavík area with a realis-tic chance of getting into Parliament, who had people of foreign extraction at least 10th on their list, and who were not openly bigoted. This is why, despite the record of the Independence Party in their leadership position over some of the worst offenses of the Directorate of Immigration; there or less certain that they will be a part of the next ruling coalition; they can’t exactly be ignored. And this is also why, despite the Centre Party featuring at least two immigrants on their lists, they were not featured; their dangerous anti-asylum seeker and anti-immigrant rhetoric is a matter of public record, and does not need to be platformed further. This same goes for the People’s Party, who have had a history of foreign extraction on their lists, having one of Iceland’s most notorious racists, Magnús Pét Halldórsson, on their staff and for barely polling high enough to gain a seat. And the Reform Party is a special case, having the person responsible for their Reykjavík area lists, Rhea Juarez, but at the 10th seat.

Here’s what the candidates who made the cut had to say:
1. Briefly introduce yourself by summing up who you are in one or two sentences.

2. Why run for your party? Relatedly, why should they get someone’s vote instead of another party?

3. What are the top three things Parliament absolutely needs to address after the elections?

4. Are there any parties you would refuse to form a government with?

5. Iceland’s immigrants population—which includes those who are now citizens, capable of voting in parliamentary elections—is over 15%, but this is not reflected in the number of immigrants currently in Parliament. How would you account for this? What do you hope your party can do to change this for the better?
1. My name is Lenya Rún Taha Karim, a 21-year-old law student who is running for Parliament for the Pirate Party in the Reykjavik North constituency. I am of Kurdish origin and the daughter of an immigrant and a refugee.

2. The Progressive Party has done great things during this last term. Minister of Social and Children’s Affairs Asmundur Elínar [Dahsson] has served during the greatest improvements to the social welfare system in decades. This work has only just begun, and it is extremely important that he gets to continue his work. We also emphasise green infrastructure, small and medium-sized companies, and elderly persons issues.

3. Children’s issues, preventative measures where we invest in people, climate change and our health care system are the issues we must deal with.

4. The Progressive Party is a party of cooperation. We do not rule out working with anyone ahead of time.

5. This is true, and something we need to improve, as Parliament should best reflect the composition of the nation. The Progressive Party is responding to this by, for example, having an immigrant in third on the list for the southwest district, and the Social Minister appointed a person of foreign origin to the directorship of a government office. This is unfortunately uncommon. The Progressives want a diverse society and this is of course a part of it.

Dana M. Búkowska, 7th on the list for the Southeast district for the Social Democratic Alliance.

1. I came to Iceland 20 years ago but I was born and raised in south Poland. I am a mother of two young children, and a primary school teacher educated in, amongst other things, teaching English as a second language, biology and Polish. I have also been a teaching consultant for students with Icelands second language in Kópavogur’s primary schools but in the spring I began working as an expert in school development for the Ministry of Culture and Education.

2. All of the work of the Social Democrats is based on a policy of equality, which I am deeply fond of. The values, ideology and emphasis of the party and its platform mesh very well with my own personal values and political opinions. That’s why there’s no question in my mind about participating in the party. The Social Democrats are the one party in Iceland with a realistic and ambitious platform based on equal opportunities for everyone.

3. Health care, education, and the new constitution.

4. I would never form a government with the Centre Party, the Independence Party, or the Pirate Party. The Social Democrats are the one party in Iceland with a realistic and ambitious platform based on equal opportunities for everyone.

5. I think that there is definitely a lack of immigrant representation in Parliament. I didn’t have any role models when I started out in politics, nor did I grow up with any representation. The lack of representation and role models could lead to other immigrants being hesitant when it comes to running for Parliament. I hope to be the role model and representation for others that I lacked when I was starting out in politics.

As for the Pirate Party, I truly believe they will be welcoming to other immigrants or people of foreign origin as they were to me. Inclusion is very important. Our society desperately needs to welcome more diversity and it needs to be reflected in positions of power.

Brynjúl Dan, and on the list in the Reykjavik North district for the Progressive Party.

1. I’m 36-year-old and own a small company in Smáralind called Extraloppan. I sit on the board of Barnabéll and Icelandic Adoptions and am very passionate about issues related to children.

2. The Progressive Party has done great things during this last term. Minister of Social and Children’s Affairs Asmundur Elínar [Dahsson] has served during the greatest improvements to the social welfare system in decades. This work has only just begun, and it is extremely important that he gets to continue his work. We also emphasise green infrastructure, small and medium-sized companies, and elderly persons issues.

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The document tells that harrowing tale of Iceland’s first immigration policy, which was set up to keep Jews away.

December 30th, 1938: The Ministry of Justice receives a letter from 27-year-old Telmar and Paula Toller and their four-week-old son Den- ny. Jews from Berlin, they plead for a residence and work permit to Iceland. Telmar was an engineer, electrician and baker. One month later, the application was denied. Telmar, Paula and Denny died at a later, unknown date at the Auschwitz concentration camp.

August 26th, 1939: Leo Berger writes asking for a one-year residence permit for him, his wife Gertrud and their eight-year-old child, Herbert. They had already been granted entry into the U.S., but had to find a place to stay until he could emigrate, due to the many people in line before them. Leo notes that he does not intend to seek work in Iceland and is ready to finance his stay. A jew, he merely wants to enter Iceland so he can survive. Blue text written on the document by the Icelandic government says one word: Deny. According to the Czechoslovakian Holocaust database, Leo, Gertrud, and Herbert were killed in the Lodz Ghetto.

Edwin Brandes, 26, a dental technician, denied, died January 20th, 1944 in Auschwitz. Else Kurzbart and her brothers, denied, died before 1945 in the Minsk Ghetto. Josef Gelles, denied, died on May 30th, 1940 in Sachsenha- sen. Wilhelm Tichauer, denied, was killed in Rechenswil. Hundreds more—all rejected by Iceland in their time of need.

Their letters and documents—thousands of them—had, until now, remained unseen, hidden away in the National Archives. But they have been brought to light by Erik DeLuca at Kling og Bang’s new installation ‘Unheard Of’.

Edmund Gyldensted, a Danish diplomat, used to stage a benefit for the charity Fjørður Barna. It’s unclear whether punters will be luxuriating in the gothic splendour of these foreign countries or shivering on dry land during the concert. Please be careful with that salt and lime combination on the more sensitive areas of your body, though. It could sting, we have not applied with caution. But that the Grapevine staff have any personal experience of that...
Witness Life, And The Loss Of It
Anna Rún Tryggvadóttir takes on the confrontation between humanity and the natural world

Six trees rotate slowly in a dimly lit room, outlined only by the remains of their ever-fading leaves and branches, which litter the floor around you, crunching under your feet as you walk. Only months earlier, the trees were vibrant, hydrated and healthy—their stalks flexible and swaying as they spun lazily on their axis.

But, of course, they were as dead then as they are now. Six trees slowly exiting the world—an autotomy in front of your eyes, allowing you to witness, in real time, the degradation of what was once life.

Enter ‘Hringfarar’ the newest installation by artist Anna Rún Tryggvadóttir.

The prose of death
The aforementioned trees, Anna explains, were sourced from local forest brushers. “They take out trees that either don’t need to be there or shouldn’t be there, so these are trees that were not determined to end their lives through me, but through another agency, and now I’ve brought them into this situation,” she says softly, sitting back in a side-room of Hafnarhús. “I am bringing them into a situation where they are slowly becoming their own shrine and going through the process of leaving their earthly existence. These are trees that have been alive for decades, so there is a lot of accumulated life that is vanishing. These are the processes that living creatures go through when exiting. It’s almost like prose or a poem.”

Anna sees this act—as slow witnessing of natural death—as a confrontation for humanity.

“I am interested in what happens when you are faced with this sort of setting because we make decisions like these on an every-day basis. All the decisions that we make within our lives have some consequence on our environment. All of them,” she says. “I’m sort of obsessed with the bluff that we need to maintain and the bluff that we present. But at the same time, there’s a necessity to allow ourselves to feel the connection, to witness and to be present for something outside of ourselves. It’s a fundamental element of human nature and it’s really easy to go without it, to not allow yourself to think about it. It’s easy to only be faced with something that is man, or man-touched, or manmade. And I think there is great danger in that.”

Changing the hierarchy
Anna’s installation is part of the ‘Iðóvilir: Icelandic Art In The 21st Century’ exhibition, which saw 14 artists take over the entirety of Hafnarhús to showcase the work of a generation. While there were no specific guidelines for the creators, the loose overarching concept was to explore the massive changes this generation has seen since their coming of age, be that social, political or ecological.

Anna’s piece fits in well. It’s a brutal contemplation
Anna intentionally presents no prescribed solutions to these problems—in fact, part of her confrontation is that there are no prescribed solutions, for if there were, we wouldn’t be in this situation.

She says, “Not only in how we talk about things and how our system of definitions have been laid down, but in how we measure value. What is our value system?”

But Anna’s questions go deeper—getting to the heart of our core beliefs. “This is much more than climate change. This has to do with how we treat one another. It’s on a very basic and primitive level about interdependencies and inter-relation,” she states. “Our human nature is that we will always be full of contradictions. We need to embrace that, but we also need to make clear guidelines on where we are a danger to ourselves, and the sustainability of us as a species—no less the sustainability of the entire planet. This comes down, in some form, to ethics.”

A brutal contemplation
Anna’s questions go deeper—getting to the heart of our core beliefs. “This is much more than climate change. This has to do with how we treat one another. It’s on a very basic and primitive level about interdependencies and inter-relation,” she states. “Our human nature is that we will always be full of contradictions. We need to embrace that, but we also need to make clear guidelines on where we are a danger to ourselves, and the sustainability of us as a species—no less the sustainability of the entire planet. This comes down, in some form, to ethics.”

“T’m a visual artist. I’m not a scientist or an engineer,” she smiles. “My work is not to produce solutions; my work is to produce contemplations and I think that’s just as necessary for the human spirit.”

Walk through the installation and you can’t help but be ambushed by the brutality of time. A live presentation of death, it’s a play in its most primal form—no embalming, no shroud and no tomb. Just a room with a rotating machine presenting the thread that connects us all: mortality.

“There are six bodies in this space, six bodies rotating and changing and dying,” Anna concludes. “I think no matter who you are or how you think about things, your body is affected by witnessing this.”
Farmers Market
ICELAND

OUR STORES IN REYKJAVIK: FARMERS & FRIENDS
Laugavegur 37  Hólmarslótt 2 / Grandi
WWW.FARMERSMARKET.IS
With the latest reports on climate change painting a grim picture, it’s past time to take action. One of the best ways an individual can take a stand is by being a conscious consumer. While it is obviously impossible for everything you use to be sourced and made locally, that doesn’t mean there aren’t a few star products or businesses that you can feel good about consuming.

[Note: We of course know that impetus should be on corporations and governments to implement wide scale change and regulations to combat climate change and that personal responsibility on an individual is not the answer, that said, we can all do our part.]

Conscious Consumption
Locally-made products to satiate all your desires

Words: The Grapevine Local Lovers  Photo: Art Bieniek

Tea, whiskey and... wasabi?
If you’re looking to warm up with a cup of tea on a grey day, Hafnarfjörður’s Urta Islandica has you covered. Using local, native herbs like arctic thyme, sweet cicely and Icelandic moss, Urta offers unique tea blends to suit all your needs. They also produce versatile syrups, salt blends, jams and other products from herbs and berries that thrive in Icelandic nature.

On the alcohol front, Eimverk Distillery has been producing Iceland’s first and only whiskey, Flóki, since 2009. Using 100% home-grown barley, this family-run distillery harnesses tradition to produce spirits that are in a league of their own — and purely Icelandic.

If gin is what you’re after, they also have small batches, gins infused with native botanicals like juniper, rhubarb, kelp and birch. Of course they also produce a line of Brennivín, Iceland’s signature spirit.

For you salty readers, sustainability is what it’s all about at Norður & Co. Utilising geothermal energy, the team creates award-winning arctic sea salt flakes and other organic products that leave no environmental impact. Produced on Karløy island in the Westfjords, they deliver products as multifaceted as Iceland itself. If you’re new to town, add a pinch of the Liquorice Sea Salt to any dessert and impress all your newfound Icelandic friends while you’re at it.

One of the pillars of Icelandic sustainability, Sólheimar has been practicing what they preach for over 90 years. Located in the countryside near Selfoss, this sustainable community was a forerunner of organic farming in the Nordics. You can pick up one-of-a-kind handicrafts or take a trip out to the farm and purchase all manner of fresh produce and other organic products. You can even stay the night at one of their guest houses. Either way — you’re keeping your carbon footprint small.

But what if you’re looking for a unique gift? Well, adorning the dishes of restaurants all over town, Nordic Wasabi, the flagship product from Jurt Hydroponics, brings fresh, authentic wasabi to dinner tables across Iceland and Europe. Yes, Iceland-grown wasabi is a real thing. And trust us, this is nothing like the globs of western wasabi (which is mostly horseradish and food colouring) you find alongside your supermarket sushi, this fresh wasabi is delivered to your door within 48 hours of harvest for you to grate into a paste yourself. For a product that’s intended to stimulate your palate, why would you settle for anything less?

Sóley is an organic skincare company made in Iceland, using fresh spring water and all the best natural ingredients the island has to offer. Wild herbs are harvested every summer from Southern Iceland and transformed into the shampoos, balms, masks and other self-care necessities their customers adore. We’d particularly recommend their GR.EDIR healing balm and VARMI shampoo. If you want to elevate your environmental efforts, hold on to your spent bottles to have them refilled with Sóley goodness at Vonastræti on Laugavegur.

But, of course, you can’t talk about locally-made products without mentioning Icelandic wool. Iceland is well known for its lopapeysa — those famous wool sweaters—but you’d probably be surprised to know that many companies don’t produce their sweaters in Iceland, and some don’t even use Icelandic wool. That said, you can always trust the Handknitting Association of Iceland. Every single piece they offer is made using 100% Icelandic wool, knitted by hand in the country. They are also cool, gorgeous and the perfect thing to show off to your fast-fashion-obsessed friends back home to prove that local production is the way to go.

Get Grapevine Merch!
Dr. Bryony Mathew is the U.K.’s newest (and first female!) Ambassador to Iceland. She holds a PhD in Neuroscience from University College, London and has served under Her Majesty’s Diplomatic Service since 2005. Having just arrived in Reykjavík a few weeks ago, she’s still discovering all the charming little things that make Iceland so distinctly...Icelandic—and loving every second of it.

Rising refreshed

I think the absolute ideal is waking up early but feeling like you’ve had a great night’s sleep. I always start my day with coffee and maybe, if I’m lucky, I can see the sunrise. Then I would get changed into running gear and probably head out to the waterfront to get some fresh air and exercise. I love running there—really fresh air, the smell of the sea and seeing the mountains. I love having these fabulous views as I run. You really feel like you’re in Icelandic nature, despite being right in the city. On my way back, I’d stop by a bakery to get some sourdough and snúður and head home for brunch with my family.

Discovering Iceland’s adventures

Then I would love to head out on some kind of adventure. Just get in the car, drive somewhere and try something new. I’d really love to try ice kayaking. Or do some kind of hiking, maybe trail biking or even stand up paddle boarding. I’d love to do that in Iceland. I think that would be fabulous. From there, I would go to some summer house in the middle of beautiful nature with stunning views—just somewhere really Icelandic. Being in nature for some part of this perfect day is really important.

Learn a little something

Once there, it’ll be time to relax because I think we’ve done quite a lot of activity. I would sit down with another nice, big coffee. Something really important for me is to learn something every day. It doesn’t matter what it is. It could be reading a detailed article about a topic I don’t know about. It could be learning some Icelandic. I would like to feel like I’ve achieved something in a day. So a bit of time just reading and relaxing and looking at the beautiful view.

Martinis and making memories

Now it’s getting into the early evening so I’d say it’s time for a cocktail. My husband is, amongst many other things, a fantastic cocktail bartender, so he would mix the drinks. Then, a really lovely evening for me would be to have lots of friends and family come over to barbecue—kids running everywhere, people just relaxing, having fun and chatting late into the evening. Finally, when everyone’s tired and collapsed, I would love to fall asleep to the sound of rain on the roof, just knowing you’re in nature.
Dining

1. Blackbox Pizza
Borgartn 26
Blackbox is a solid competitor for best pizza pie in the city. Thin crust, inventive toppings—delivery—what else could you ask for? We’d particularly recommend the Parma Rucola, which serves up at the parma ham goodness you could wish for. For those journeying outside the city, they’ve also got a location in Akureyri.

2. Chikin
Inglóstæti 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 sugary glazed donut. So grab some chicken with pickled daikon, shitake mushrooms, miso mayo and lots of other delicacies.

3. Hosiló
Frakkastígur 16
A newcomer on the block who has certainly made a big stir! Hosiló is a small spot—seating around 30 patrons at full capacity—that offers an eclectic rotating menu of local fresh food. The offerings feature meals from around the world, from French cuisine to Northern Africa goodness, and much more.

4. Kaffi Laugalekur
Laugavegur 74a
For many a young parent, the cafe stop at the end of a long stroll is the proverbial pot of gold. Kaffi Laugalekur is especially popular with new parents, with a special kids’ corner for crawlers and drawers. The generously topped chicken and pork ‘tatta gila haman’ and the ‘shrawaramabe’ are our top lunch picks. Also, if you’re keto, don’t miss ‘um.

5. Brauð & Go
Frakkastigur 16
First off—don’t miss Brauð & Go’s pretzel croissants unless you really don’t want to have a spiritual experience. Why? lassen them a soft, “snubb”-cinnamon bread rolls smothered with a sugary glaze. They take it a step further and stuff the classics with blueberries and whatnot, eliciting inappropriate satisfied moans. Get there early to snatch a warm one.

6. Snaps
Borgartn 1
Year after year, regardless of how many restaurants open and close, Snaps remains a timeless classic. Be it lunch, date-night dinner, lazy weekend brunches or a boisterous Christmas work party, Snaps is the perfect venue for a boofload of memories. Steady standbys include the deeply savoury onion soup (with a union of its own we suspect), the house-made fries with crispy rosemary that begs to be a meal on its own, and the tartletto crème brûlée topped with an amiss snack.

7. Heimmur Mathóll
Heimmur
Once a bus station and now a bustling food hall—we love a repurposed atmosphere. Heimmur Mathóll is a classic in the Reykjavík dining scene, with everything from Vietnamese street food to delicious gelato to old school Italian pizza present. Yum.

8. Dragon Dim Sum
Bergstaðarstæti 4
For those of us longing for dim sum in Reykjavík, cravings have often had to be satisfied with daydreams of visits past to dim sum houses of Chinatowns abroad. But then Dragon Dim Sum arrived with their fanes, which is the perfect marriage between Icelandic ingredients and labouring of Asian dim sum passion. Don’t miss their bao or shaomai, and don’t worry, their carrot vegan dumplings are also sublime.

9. Lamb Street Food
Brandagarður 7
Pure Icelandic lamb with a middle eastern twist—that’s what you’ll get at this juicy local eatery where pure kebab is served up with no processed meat. For all you vegans though, never fear, the fresh made salads and hummus are equally awarding. This ain’t your regular kebab spot.

10. Laundromat
Austurstígur 8
Have you ever wanted to have lunch and do your laundry in a public place? You’re in luck. The Laundromat Café on Austurstígur is open (again) for business. Whether you want brunch, a sandwich, or a burger, they have a quality selection of food made to order. Their brunch ain’t nothing to scoff at either.

11. Nauthóll
Nauthólsvegur 106
A newcomer to the block that who has certainly made a big stir! Nauthóll is a small spot—seating around 30 patrons at full capacity—that offers an eclectic rotating menu of local fresh food. The offerings feature meals from around the world, from French cuisine to Northern Africa goodness, and much more.

Drinking

12. Prikkið
Bankastræti 12
Prikkið is the bar version of the “I’m going to bed early tonight vs. me at 3 a.m.” meme. At 22:00 you’ll have a bunch of regulars relaxing at the bar sipping brews, but arrive at 3:00 and it’s Project X. Their outdoor smoking area should be applauded too. Hang out long enough and you’ll be sure to buddy up and find an afterparty.

13. Röntgen
Hverfisgata 12
If the cancellation of literally everything is dampening your glamorous rock and roll style, Röntgen at Hverfisgata 12 will cure what ails you. This place—a relative newcomer—is already a stalwart in Reykjavík, cravings have often had to be satisfied with daydreams of visits past to dim sum houses of Chinatowns abroad. But then Dragon Dim Sum arrived with their fanes, which is the perfect marriage between Icelandic ingredients and labouring of Asian dim sum passion. Don’t miss their bao or shaomai, and don’t worry, their carrot vegan dumplings are also sublime.

14. Húrra
Frakkastígur 16
This charming, low-key, hole-in-the-wall serves up some great cocktails and a dedicated crowd that has grabbed the heart of the Grapevine, even though we are a magazine and not human. If you’re into all day brunching and chatting, it’s still a nice and sophisticated bar, but they’ve also got a quality selection of food made to order. Their brunch ain’t nothing to scoff at either.

15. Mál og Menning
Laugavegur 18b
This charming, low-key, hole-in-the-wall serves up some great cocktails and a dedicated crowd that has grabbed the heart of the Grapevine, even though we are a magazine and not human. If you’re into all day brunching and chatting, it’s still a nice and sophisticated bar, but they’ve also got a quality selection of food made to order. Their brunch ain’t nothing to scoff at either.

Establishments in Reykjavík. The Icelandic Bar is the only one that is called “too far away,” but with the advent of public scooters, you might call “too far away,” but with the advent of public scooters, you can arrive there in style in but 15 minutes. Without hyperbole, there probably isn’t a better outdoor view in the city than this place—and their Scandinavian fare is good too.
18. Dillon
Laugavegur 30
A mix between grunge and classy, Dillon Whiskey Bar dominates their little stretch of Laugavegur. Crammed most nights with rockers, metalheads, and tourists looking for a place to mumble AC/DC songs into their beer. Dillon boasts a wide selection of over 100 whiskies and a little stretch of Laugavegur.

19. Petersen svítan
Austurstræti 12
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 and also very fashionable clientele. Look over the city and have a beer in almost entirely direct sunlight (!!!!!!)

Shopping
20. Íslenzka Höfdifurðufan
Ingjaldsstætti 3
This classic shop caters to all styles, with a roster of artists that serve up everything from realism to new-school and more. We’d particularly recommend the hand-poked pieces by Habba (shabbabenotattoo). Not only are they gorgeously ornate in that straight-out-of-800-AD-way, but they might save you from spirits elsewhere in Iceland and all of them have a slightly different, edgy take on the island, instead of adding to the abundance of touristy subjects.

21. Nielsen Séerverzlun
Bakkastræti 4
Way more than your average design store, Nielsen is filled to the brim with knock-knacks from all over from gorgeous diaries to cozy towels and all the candles you could desire. Stop by, grab something for a gift, and don’t forget a little something for yourself.

22. Fótógrafi
Skólabríustigur 22
Fótógrafi claims to have been one of the first photo galleries in town. While its interior is tiny, there’s a surprising number of photos to be found inside. The pictures on display are mainly shot in Reykjavík or elsewhere in Iceland and all of them have a slightly different, edgy take on the island, instead of adding to the abundance of touristy subjects.

23. Stefánsbú/p3
Laugavegur 7
Stefánsbú showcases local designers and second-hand high-fashion finds (hello 1980’s Gucci!) as well as accessories from quirky international brands. Fun and zany, you don’t know what you’re going to find but you know it’ll be exciting.

24. Lucky Records
Reykhólahöfn 10
Lucky Records is probably the biggest record shop in Iceland, with shelves upon shelves of new and used vinyl and CDs on offer. If that’s not enough, they’re notorious for their export staff’s rock knowledge goes far beyond the latest Björk or Sigur Rós offerings. In fact, it’s best if you just let them take the lead.

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 a few years ago and have stayed hyped because they know what they are doing and are damn good at it.

New In Town
The Grumpy Whale
Skólavörðustígur 3a
If you’re up for a sweet adventure, look no further. The Grumpy Whale have opened shop at Skólavörðustígur 3a, serving up the best hot chocolate in town. For now it’s a store where you can stock up on hot chocolate and fun items before visiting the volcano, but it will also soon open up a coffee/hot chocolate house. The Reykjavík Snapsavine fell in love with this chocolate a long time ago and we’ve sold it in our store. Now you can visit them and enjoy the magic yourself. 4D
"Nasty & Classy… what else can you say?"

He’s Bassi Maraj… what else can you say?

Words: Hannah Jane Cohen  Photos: Supplied by artist

"Nasty-tude… and class mixed together. Cla-nast-itude," rapper and reality star Bassi Maraj says coyly, when asked to describe himself in a few words. The current darling of Iceland, Bassi is, to put it bluntly, a force of nature. If you need examples, just know that in only the past months, among other things, he’s gotten into Twitter beef with Bjarni Ben and recorded the official 2021 Reykjavík Pride song. Who else can compare?

“I’m nasty and classy,” he laughs. “That’s it.”

A born performer

The 22-year old burst onto the scene as a member of ‘Æi’—Iceland’s first genuine reality TV show—which stars Bassi and his friends Patrekur Jaime and Binni as they navigate life in this fair country. Think the Kardashians, but more gay, likeable and with better drama.

But then Bassi changed gears, releasing a single “Álit” which was followed by his namesake “Bassi Maraj”. The song blew up, creating a level of hype not seen since “B.o.B.a.” or “Joey Cypher”. One typically expects a reality or social media star’s entry into music to be rather terrible—we’ve all seen Addison Rae’s “Obsessed,” literally anything by Dixie D’Amelio and, of course, Jake Paul—but Bassi wowed everyone by being fucking fantastic. His music quickly overshadowed his reality TV career and he’s now a respected rapper in the scene, working with big name producers like DJ Nazareth and BNGRBOY, and performing at big live shows. So don’t be surprised if his TV presence quickly becomes a small note in his Wikipedia page. We wouldn’t be. The guy’s a born performer.

Surprise! Not trash!

“Everyone was like, ‘Yeah, I expected it to be trash!’ And then they heard it and said, ‘No, you didn’t write that. Who’s writing your songs?’” Bassi laughs, remembering the days before his first release. In person, he’s exactly the same lovely over-the-top character you see on ‘Æi’—absolutely nothing is played up for the camera. “And I was like, um, nobody—who else would make songs about gay sex and cum?”

No one in Iceland, for sure.

Minaj/Maraj

His artist name is a reference to Nicki Minaj, whose real name is Onika Tanya Maraj-Petty. Bassi’s obsessed with her, and her influence is clear in his verses—many of which, translated into English, could easily be Minaj lines.

While, perhaps, the nuances of his lyrics might be lost on the non-Icelandic-speaking crowd, we’ve done our best to translate them in a poetic way:

It’s not hard for me to attract women
I’m not a housewife even though I’m baked
I’m grilling motherfuckers so they call me steak
I don’t fuck with you ‘cause you’re fake
I’m Bassi Maraj

What’s the stunt?

Bassi’s currently working on his first EP, which should be released sometime soon. As you’d expect, he’s planning on dropping it with a bang.

“It’s five songs. I want to do something crazy before I release it so I was thinking, what stunt can I do?” he says, smirking. “Then I thought maybe I’ll just write the release date in poop on Alþingi.” Then he bursts out laughing. “No, I won’t.”

But even if he did, don’t pretend to be surprised. As he said, he’s nasty and classy.

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• Minke Whale with cranberry & malt sauce

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Event Picks

Reykjavík International Literary Festival 2021

Feel like you’re not satisfied with the usual literary events? Well, you’re in luck! The Reykjavík International Literary Festival is crawling with bookworms, writers and even commissioning editors from HarperCollins in Holland, showcasing the best literature in Europe. This year will be nothing less than spectacular, with writers from our First Lady Þúra Reid to Monika Fagerholm, who won the Nordic Council Literature Prize in 2020. RIJ has established itself as the most exciting literary event in Iceland and it’s guaranteed that you will not only meet your favourite Icelandic authors, you might also have a beer or two with them while debating your postmodern take on Einar Askiel. This festival is not only fun, it’s free. VG

Daydreams *

Sep. 4th and 11th - 15:00 - Borgarhúsið - 2,300 ISK

A dance performance for children from the age of two with the Icelandic Dance Company. A girl travels the Earth’s wonders, through the woods and across the sea, where she meets animals whose proper ties she deeply desires. We’re sold! The piece is 40-minutes long, followed by a small dance workshop for those interested. VG

Böðin Affect, Rafið Óg Hulðan

Sep. 4th - 21:00 - Mengi - 2,500 ISK

If you’re wondering what the musical genius Þára Ólafsson has been up to during the pandemic, look no further. Böðin Affect will perform at Mengi with Mikael Lind and Líja María Ámundsdóttir, and Þára will perform a live electronic soundscape—whatever that means. This is cutting edge, hyper artful activity that will connect you straight with another dimension. VG

Concerts & Nightlife

Events are listed by day, and are all live performances or DJ sets. For complete listings and detailed information on venues visit grapevine.is/happenings

Send your listings to: listings@grapevine.is

Friday September 3rd

Reykjavík Jazz Festival: Óskar Gúlftönsen
12:00 Fríkirkjan
Reykjavík Jazz Festival: Simons Rasmus Alsina & Ragnar Sigurðsson
17:00 & 20:00 Harpa
Our Classics: Iceland Symphony Orchestra
20:00 Harpa

Tuesday September 7th

Karlokk
20:00 Gaukurinn

Wednesday September 8th

Starr & Salmamandra
20:00 Gaukurinn
Folk Music Session
17:00 Kex Hostel

Thursday September 10th

Reynisson Release Show with Nýrst & Már Béxi
20:00 Gaukurinn
Borgarhúsið Borgþórsmörk
20:00 Skuggabaldur

Saturday September 11th

Bílshúrri, Frágróður og Móri
20:00 Gaukurinn

Sunday September 12th

Anders Algrund & Strings
20:00 Mál og Menning
Silva Pórrardóttir og Steinþórgrímur Tegu
20:30 Skuggabaldur

Monday September 13th

Máraflöð
20:00 Mál og Menning

Tuesday September 14th

Karoakon
20:00 Gaukurinn

Wednesday September 15th

Fótguðurinn
20:00 Gaukurinn

Thursday September 16th

Bucking Fastards
20:00 Gaukurinn
Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony: Iceland Symphony Orchestra
19:30 Harpa
Qua
21:00 Lebowski Bar

Friday September 17th

Party Karaoke
20:00 Gaukurinn
Bykön
21:00 Harpa

Sunday September 19th

Singer songwriter Night
20:00 Gaukurinn

Tuesday September 21st

Apocalypstick Drag Show
20:00 Gaukurinn

Wednesday September 22nd

Karma Brigade
20:00 Gaukurinn

Thursday September 23rd

Ultra Magna
20:00 Gaukurinn
Quiz
21:00 Lebowski Bar

Friday September 24th

Kingsbill
20:00 Gaukurinn
GÖÖB
20:00 Næskólabíó

Saturday September 25th

Dýnafar Release Show
20:00 Gaukurinn
Stjórn-Sævari and the Iceland Symphony Orchestra
14:00 - 20:00 Harpa

Sunday September 26th

Sílabás - the Young Orchestra of the Iceland Symphony Orchestra
17:00 Harpa

Tuesday September 28th

Karoakon
20:00 Gaukurinn

Thursday September 30th

Jónas Sig and band
20:00 Bæjarbarður
Máraflöð
20:00 Gaukurinn
Doveri Goja Concerto - Iceland Symphony Orchestra
19:30 Harpa
Qua
21:00 Lebowski Bar
Sigurður Guðmundsson
20:30 Salarninn

VG

You’ve never heard of KK? What have you been doing with your life? KK is Iceland’s best blues musician, a legendary songwriter and he’s been part of Iceland’s national soul since the early 90s. Finally, someone noticed this wonderful musician outside of Iceland—or, rather, a trio of people: former Pearl Jam frontman Eddie Vedder, actor and director Sean Penn, and Cat Power, another wonderful musician in her own right. Cat Power covered KK’s beautiful song “I Think of Angels”, and Eddie Vedder used it in his film from a movie, Dog Day, so obviously the movie’s going to be a masterpiece. VG

Composer Hildur Guðnadóttir, best known for her work in both television and film, has now brought her talent to a new medium: video games! No, not Fortnite, come on! The award-winning composer is making music for Bethesda’s Game of 2021: The Elder Scrolls VI. The first-person shooter will be released on PC, PlayStation and Xbox on October 25th, and Hildur’s score for the game will be released around that time on vinyl and streaming services. But what makes this even more interesting is that Hildur’s collaborator at the project is her husband, Ólafur Darri. VG

It’s always an event when Iceland’s most interesting director, Porfirio Ur Amaro, puts on a play in Iceland. Sometime speakers can see him in old work in Germany, Austria or Switzerland. But for those that don’t understand how rhetoric don’t worry, we got you. Porfirio has compiled Iceland’s best musicians—everyone from Brian 5 to Yuri Akiishi to Cyber—in his production of Shakespeare’s classics, Romeo and Juliet. The play is already making moves and this music is already topping the charts. VG

Music

September 3rd — September 30th

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Send your listings to: listings@grapevine.is

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September 3rd — September 30th
At ‘Slembilukka’, math is for everybody. Myths about math—that it’s only for scholars and educated people—will always get two.

“I thought these were disconnected ideas—the polyhedrons and the bridges—but you can transform a polyhedron into a two-dimensional network and the rules apply, so they are intimately connected. This is simple math, addition and subtraction, but they have large systematic consequences,” she continues. “I’ve been thinking about the geometry of that while Daniel was thinking about the systems. But it’s the same thing.”

It’s the basis of shapes—the basis of art. Dimensions, you can take the vertices of a polyhedron, subtract the edges and add the squares, and you will always get two.

“So get off your ass, let’s do some math, math math math math math.”

Jóhanna says. “It’s a place for experiments,” she continues. “People can come in and talk about these connections between art and math.” She’s also quick to note that while the official office hours are on Thursday, the group are there nearly all the time, so feel free to stop in any day, if your Thursdays are already booked.

“We are all interested in changing the idea that math is only for scholars and educated people,” Daniel concludes. “Math is for everybody and everybody can learn math.”
September 3rd — September 30th

Art Listings

Events are listed by venue. For complete listings and detailed information on venues, visit grapevine.is/happenings.

Send your listings to: listings@grapevine.is

Opening

Eliasson's Iceland
This new show gathers together projects by American artists N. Dash, R.I.M. Mooney, B. Ingrid Olson, and Carri Yamaoka, who use paint- erly, photographic and sculptural methods to explore the concept of 'Eliasson'. This word conveys the sense of something missing, nested, compressed, or contracted. To quote the promotional material stating about this launch: "Removal is additive, just quietly so." Quite so.

• Opens on September 25th, 2021
• Runs until November 6th, 2021

Hyervisíðaller
Below / Beyond
Although Hyervisíðaller have an- nounced this show by British-born artist Perry Roberts, details have yet to become available at what's in store. But given that in the past he has deftly turned his hand to drawing, painting, photography, installation, and even furniture—and knowing Hyervisíðaller—they are anything is possible.

• Opens on September 25th, 2021
• Runs until November 6th, 2021

Ongoing

National Gallery of Iceland
Of the North
'Of the North' (2001) is created from Iceland. You can't. So come learn about the history of Icelandic fisher- men from row boats to monstrous trawlers.

Einar Jónsson Museum
Painting Exhibition
In 1909 Einar Jónsson—described by the exhibition catalogue as 'Icel- and's first scultor'—offered all of his artworks for sale to raise funds to lift the Icelandic people, on the condition that a mu- seum be built to house them. The result: constructed just over the road from Hallgrím- skirja, now contains close to 300 artworks. There is also a beautiful garden with 26 bronze casts of the artist's sculptures to enjoy.

Reykjavík City Museum
Settlement Exhibition
This exhibition—a world of Viking ruins meet digital technology—provides insight into Reykjavík's farms at the time of the first settlers.

• Closed on September 3rd and 4th for conservation work

Reykjavík Museum of Photography
The Short But Robust Art
Sighurious Vigur (1884-1975) left the museum an archive of around 40,000 photographs. Many of these document everyday Icelandic- society just after the creation of the Republic of Iceland in 1944—a christ- mas card, a laboratory at work, people skating, the occupation of Iceland during World War II by British troops, a beer party, a birthday party, a wigmaker... and so on.

• Runs until September 19th, 2021

Reykjavík Maritime Museum
Fish Folk
Name a better duo than fish and Iceland. You can't. So come learn about two of the best of the best of Iceland.

Sigurður Sigurðardóttir & Ásmundur Sveinsson:'As If To Demon- strate An Eclipse'
This year's autumn exhibition in Reykjavík's Com- munity of Sentient Beings, curated by Lilja Ólafsdóttir and Robert Spessi, a.k.a. Sigur Spessi, has invited various professionals to participate in the exhibition in the aim to create a space for multiple voices to come together, while reflecting on different ways of viewing, hearing, smelling and sensing. Makes sense, right?

• Runs until September 19th, 2021

Community of Sentient Beings
Private Beach Party for Two
Until Oct. 31st, Hafnarhborg, Strandgata 44

This new exhibition, presented by the Community of Sentient Beings, is the latest in a series of collaborative projects with several artists. The aim of the exhibition is to bring together many different styles and approaches, in order to create a space for multiple voices to come together, while reflecting on different ways of viewing, hearing, smelling and sensing. Makes sense, right?

• Runs until September 19th, 2021

Reykjavík Art Museum
- Ásmundar Garðarsdóttir

Unless otherwise stated, all images and details are property of the respective artists and institutions.

REYKJAVÍK ART MUSEUM - ÁSMANDUR SVEINSSON
Sveinbjörn Gunnarsson Miniatures
Five product designers take over the museum shop at Ásmundarsafn with objects inspired by Ásmundur Sveinsson's world and heritage.

• Runs until October 3rd, 2021

REYKJAVÍK ART MUSEUM - KRISTÍN KRISTÍNSDÓTTIR
Ételkunst*
This exhibition came about when Icelandic-based artists Klára Liljaev, Rannóla Róisinsdóttir and Rafaela Fazikova answered a call by Björg for artists who feel under- represented in the Icelandic scene to come forward. Their resulting soil-based installation/performance piece serves as a symbol of the fabric of society and national- ism. This show rejeunes in the full- title of "Ételkunst"- Of all to show Wax 1 / As I Am Now So Will You Be, but to be honest—as respectable as The Icelandic artist of irtant—is that was all we had left. artist transform ordinary materials and as the exhibition makes use of the packaging of countless foods and other nations.

• Runs until September 12th, 2021

Behind the Scenes – Natural Dyes: A Modern Perspective
Where do textile colours come from? Dyes from our Chro- mal, but this project shows the wide range of colours one can produce neutrally in Iceland.

• Runs until September 12th, 2021

Nordic House
Rostrucksmalers
Rockscarvers is inspired by the illustrated poetry of poet Mads Sønderlund and illustrator Kathrina Skalba. On view are the illustrations and poetry in their original forms and one can also interact with a mysterious recording of Sønderlund himself, a cave where young visitors can have a cozy time and (if) a new climbing wall.

• Runs until September 5th, 2021

REYKJAVÍK ART MUSEUM - HAFNARHÓLÐIN
Iceland Art in the 21st Century
In 2021, Reykjavík Art Museum focuses on the microenvironment, with an aim of displaying the growth of the Icelandic art scene. The whole of Hafnarhóls becomes the setting for a powerful exhibition of new works by young artists considered to be leading for their generation, and as- sumptions can also be made about the larger context of Icelandic and international contemporary art.

• Runs until October 17th, 2021

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ICELAND
Kristín Magnusdóttir
Backyards, sheds, clothes-lines and now and then, a cat. Photographer Kristín Magnusdóttir trains his lens exclusively on a narrow, enclosed swath of the urban environment: the back lots of residential areas in the old town of Reykjavik.

• Runs until September 12th, 2021

Spessi 1990-2020
Spessi’s art mirrors the history of Icelandic fisher- men from row boats to monstrous trawlers.

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The Reykjavík International Film Festival bounces back

Words: John Pearson  Photo: Supplied by RIFF

This September sees the return of Iceland’s leading celebration of cinema to its more familiar format, following a year of pandemic-enforced suspended animation.

In 2020, the Reykjavík International Film Festival (RIFF) rode out the viral waves by taking to the streets—and to the digital streams—to reach an Icelandic public unable to gather in cinemas. The RIFF Bus roved the land, carrying its programme of children’s films and independent flicks to communities beyond the capital, and allowing regional audiences to experience the safely isolated delights of a drive-in cinema.

Meanwhile RIFF Home, the festival’s online offering, allowed viewers to take it all in from their couch: a particularly attractive proposition given that you can make your own popcorn, and pause that Belgian art house classic while you nip out to the loo.

Back to the bíó

However now that the festival can return to physical venues, it will be bringing this year’s offerings—which will have a focus on Dutch cinema and film music—to such locations as Bíó Paradís and The Nordic House. But the bolstered online element will remain, and there will be special events in Reykjavík and beyond, including screenings in a cave and the return of the RIFF drive-in cinema experience.

Since its inception in 2004, RIFF has not only brought fine cinema to the masses; it has also developed a purpose as patron of the cinematic creative community. Alongside Industry Days, (RIFF’s networking and learning events for cinema professionals), the festival runs The Talent Lab, a programme for emerging film creatives who are just starting their journey. Participants have the chance for their short film to feature in the festival’s official program, and to be in the running for RIFF’s prized Golden Egg award. And then there’s RIFF4Future, the festival’s innovative three-day workshop for young Nordic filmmakers.

Three to see

Over its eleven-day run, RIFF 2021 will screen more than 180 films from around the world. To help you choose from this cinematic cornucopia, The Grapevine has picked three favourites from the festivities.

The School Of Housewives
Year: 2020
Director: Stefanía Thors

This gentle and fascinating documentary made a splash at last year’s festival, going on to represent Iceland at this year’s BBC LongShots international film competition. Although technically not a part of RIFF 2021, its insights into Icelandic culture make it compulsory viewing for anyone who missed it last year.

The story is about a school in Reykjavík that has taught traditional domestic crafts to aspiring housewives since 1942. The school has moved with the times and now accepts male pupils—artist Ragnar Kjartansson is a high-profile alumnus—but its future is never secure, as Icelandic social fashions ebb and flow around it.

Zinder
Year: 2021
Director: Aicha Macky

The director shines a light on her hometown of Zinder in Niger, where “Palais”—gangs feared by the local community—hold sway. But some of these young men are trying to break free from the trap of jobless violence. Macky’s film peels back their bravado, often revealing desperate but hopeful youths in search of dignity.

Sisters With Transistors
Year: 2020
Director: Lisa Rovner

The role played by female innovators in the field of electronic music often lies underexplored, other than when BBC-based titans Delia Derbyshire and Daphne Oram are quite rightly pushed to the front. This engaging documentary spreads the electronic net much wider, bringing to the fore other women who pushed the boundaries as composers, musicians and engineers to shape the soundscapes we take for granted today.

Do you even lift motorbikes, bro?
They’re still killing innocent people. They’re destroying homes. They’re burning houses. They’re still doing all the same things.

From Afghanistan to Iceland
An activist seeks to help his homeland

Words: Desirai Thompson
Photos: Art Bicnick

On the morning of August 19th, Sayed Khaanghli, an Afghan refugee and Chairman of the Youth at Amnesty International, watched a video from Afghanistan. It showed a young girl of only thirteen in abject terror as she is being pried out of the arms of her mother by a Taliban fighter. The child is screaming to be left alone as she is violently pulled away and forced out of frame. This is the Taliban they claim has changed.

The Taliban has been establishing its rule over enormous swathes of Afghanistan for months. Starting in the countryside, district after district fell to the terrorist group until the capital of Kabul was finally captured on August 19th, signalling the toppling of the civilian government. At first, people spoke of a strange calmness in Kabul, no doubt due to the presence of countless members of the international media on the ground. It was ultimately the scenes of chaos at the Hamid Karzai Airport—where people were so desperate to flee that they clung to the sides of departing planes—that finally caught the attention of the world.

A family in peril
After journeying through numerous countries and spending months in an Icelandic refugee shelter, Sayed is now settled in Reykjavík and pursuing film studies. His family, however, remain in Taliban-controlled Afghanistan, where they face imminent danger of retaliation and death, as do untold numbers of other Afghan families.

"Since 2001, my entire family has been involved in the government. I grew up in a very politically minded family that always stood up for what was right—and that really cost us," he says. Detailing his personal losses, Sayed continues, "I have a brother who’s almost four years older than me. There was an attack on our house and he was paralysed permanently, just for the reason that my family was involved in the government. Another attack on my family happened in 2016 when my uncle was shot in front of my eyes."

Sayed’s family is just one example of the countless vulnerable people who will fall through the cracks of Iceland’s new plan for accepting Afghan refugees. The government has agreed to receive up to 250 individuals, focusing primarily on government workers and students involved in Icelandic projects, as well as a fortunate few whose residence requests have been approved but are unable to secure their own passage. Sayed’s family, however, don’t qualify under those conditions, leaving them helpless in their attempts to flee the danger closing in around them. "They just need to figure out who my family is and in a matter of seconds, my whole family can be massacred," Sayed reflects. "It really has cost us, like everyone in Afghanistan who was standing for the people’s rights and wanting to educate people about the things that are going on."

Despite claims that the Taliban has shifted their stance on women’s rights, Afghan women and girls are already facing abhorrent abuses under their new rule. Sayed explains, "They have made an announcement in my city stating that we have to put a sign on our house that we have a young girl who is eligible for marriage. I have three nieces who meet their requirements. So if they get in there they can do anything to them. And who’s going to answer for it? No one. There are no police you can complain to and there is no government you can go to. There is nothing you can do," he declares. "Since last week, I just feel terrible. I just don’t know what to do."

Taking action for Afghanistan
With the stakes so high, Sayed, who has become a voice of activism in Iceland, continues to urge the government to halt deportations of individuals at risk of being sent back to life-on-death situations. He’s also calling for the government to accept at least 100 refugee families—not only the 250 individuals they’ve pledged. Along with talking to news outlets and spreading the word on social media. Sayed also created a petition on change.org through his organisation, Samstaban, to push the government to expand its acceptance criteria for Afghan refugees. In addition, Sayed hopes to see Iceland help fund their resettlement and provide them with adequate support upon arrival.

"I know the Icelandic government can provide better conditions for refugees in the camps. If you go to these camps, you’ll feel distressed. That’s not a place that human beings can live. If they’re not providing a good place for refugees to live, at least they can provide a temporary work permit so they can work during the asylum process and they can live a better life during that time," he says.

Responsibility lies not only with the government. Sayed emphasises, but with citizens and residents of Iceland. "We’ve put out a petition for people to sign and we’re going to start a fundraiser for those who have been displaced. I really want people to donate to them," Sayed urges. "I want them to at least educate themselves and their families on the subject—that way people can try to understand the situation. I want them to know this is still the Taliban from the 1990s; it’s no modern version, like they say. They’re still killing innocent people. They’re destroying homes. They’re burning houses. They’re still doing all the same things."

"It’s time of the essence—every day the Taliban tightens their stronghold on Afghanistan with the entire country now under their control. Human lives are being lost as Afghanistan resists instituting a more comprehensive plan for Afghan refugee acceptance and resettlement."

When speaking of his new home Sayed concludes, "We need their help today. I don’t want them to leave us alone."

Fighting for his homeland
"Deluge" by Boncyan

If only listening to songs was always this easy

Words: Hannah Jane Cohen  Photos: Joe Shutter

Info
'Deluge' by Boncyan will be released September 17th. Find it on all streaming platforms.

Bncy (Iceland’s resident mature boy band) is composed of Janus Rasmussen, Sakaris and Tom Hannay. After a slew of fun releases, they are finally dropping their first EP. We sat down to hear it out—track by track.

Turn It All Around

Tom: "Turn It All Around" is about the negative effect that social media can have on your life, and the vicious cycle that you can fall into when you spend too much time comparing yourself to images of lives (seemingly) better than yours. Ultimately spending more and more time with your head online, neglecting to appreciate the here and now—it’s a modern cliché, but a good one.

Janus: Writing the song was swift and effortless, and I feel it shows how much fun we had making it. If only making songs was always this easy.

Tom: Agreed! Must have been something in the water that day. Writing music can often be hit and miss, you have to show up and start writing, knowing that what you’re about to write will probably end up in a ‘demo’ folder with some random-ass working title like “Post MaTome.”

Still, you’ve got to show up each day and put the work in because there’s always a slim chance that it might actually be a decent song, and an even slimmer chance that it might be a great song.

Wait For It

Tom: "Wait For It" is about the feeling right before you make up your mind to drop a truth bomb on someone and give them a piece of your mind.

Sakaris: We had a ton of fun doing this completely unapologetic retro ’90s house track, with quite era-authentic instrumentation. We didn’t really know what to do with the thing, until one of us proposed that we call our good friend Guðrún (GDRN) and have her smack some vocals over the top. Then Tom arrived in Iceland so we put him on background ad-lib diva duties, and bam! Instant banger.

Deluge

Sakaris: We found this cheap living room organ sound, which by itself sounded quite comical. We then proceeded to play some melancholy ballad chord progressions on top of a super sparse beat, and it turned from comical to beautiful.

Tom: This song is a great example of how we each use our individual strengths to work as a team, creating a song that’s greater than the sum of its parts.

The decision to sing softly was pretty much the first decision we made. We wanted to write a slow and sensitive song that would fit nicely as an interlude to an otherwise energetic live set. I’m telling you now, singing softly is much harder than singing with power! The lyrics were centred around the idea of ‘life happening,’ where life is a deluge that can sweep you away from someone you had no intention of being swept away from and how sometimes, you just need to hold your breath, let go and wait for the swell to carry you to calmer waters.

Fire

Tom: This song is more about trying to capture a feeling rather than having a clear narrative... pf narrative, who needs one of those anyway? It’s the feeling of being so sexy that you’re on fire and the atomic bomb of emotions that grips you when you come face to face with someone who is fire to you.

Sakaris: This was a simple jam, based on some hefty beats and distorted synths and 808s, but once Tom ad-libbed some vocals on top of it, it turned into a proper song. We decided to just let go of conventional pop-form and do whatever felt right and interesting, ending with that filthy solo in the end.

Tom: Making music is supposed to be fun, we all got into this business because, more than anything, we love creating music.
Here are some deals that’ll keep your wallet feeling happy and full.

**1,000 ISK And Under**

- **American Bar**
  - Every day from 16:00 to 19:00.
  - Beer 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 700 ISK.

- **Bikini**
  - Every day from 11:00 to 20:00.
  - Beer 700 ISK, Wine 900 ISK.

- **Brewdog**
  - Wed-Sun 14:00 to 17:00.
  - Beer 800 ISK, Wine 800 ISK, 15:00 to 17:00.
  - Every day from 15:00 to 18:00.
  - Beer 890 ISK, Wine 990 ISK.

- **Café Babalu**
  - Every day from 19:00 to 21:00.
  - Beer 690 ISK, Wine 700 ISK.

- **Deí / Le Kock**
  - Every day from 16:00 to 18:00.
  - Beer 990 ISK, Wine 900 ISK.

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

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

- **Sílenski Barinn**
  - Every day from 16:00 to 18:00.
  - Beer 700 ISK, Wine 700 ISK.

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

- **Júlíus**
  - Every day from 8:00 to 15:00.
  - Coffee 400 ISK.

- **Júlíus Cocktail Bar**
  - Every day from 17:00 to 20:00.
  - Beer 800 ISK, Wine 1,000 ISK, Cocktails 1,500 ISK.

- **Kaffibærinn**
  - Every day from 15:00 to 19:00.
  - Beer 700 ISK, Wine 700 ISK.

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

- **Kex Hostel**
  - Every day from 15:00 to 19:00.
  - Beer 700 ISK, Wine 700 ISK.

- **Laundromat**
  - Every day from 20:00 to 22:00.
  - Beer 500 ISK, Wine 1,000 ISK.

- **Lost**
  - Every day from 16:00 to 20:00.
  - Beer 710 ISK, Wine 750 ISK.

- **Miami**
  - Every day from 15:00 to 19:00.
  - Beer 700 ISK, Wine 800 ISK, Cocktails 1,200 ISK.

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

- **Public House**
  - Every day from 15:00 to 18:00 & 23:00 to 1:00.
  - Beer 890 ISK, Wine 890 ISK.

- **Punk**
  - Every day from 16:00 to 18:00.
  - Beer 890 ISK, Cocktails 1,500 ISK.

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

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

- **Sólon**
  - Everyday from 15:00 to 18:00.
  - Beer 800 ISK, Wine 800 ISK.

- **Sushi Social**
  - Every day from 17:00 to 18:00.
  - Wine 990 ISK, Cocktails 1,500 ISK.

- **Sólon**
  - Everyday from 10:00 to 12:00.
  - Beer 800 ISK, Wine 800 ISK.

- **Spider Barinn**
  - Every day from 14:00 to 20:00.
  - Beer 450 ISK, Wine 850 ISK.

- **Tapas Barinn**
  - Every day from 11:00 to 14:00.
  - Beef 2,000 ISK, Chicken wings - 1,190 ISK.

- **Shalom**
  - Monday - Friday 12:00 - 14:30.
  - Durry - 2,990 ISK.

- **Sæta Svíni**
  - All day, every day.
  - Fish of the day - 1,390 ISK.
  - Fisherman’s fish soup - 990 ISK.

- **Skóli**
  - Every day from 19:00 to 21:00.
  - Caesar salad - 990 ISK.

- **Sílenski Barinn**
  - Every day from 16:00 to 19:00.
  - Burger & fries - 1,390 ISK.

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

- **Sæta Svíni**
  - Every day from 11:30 to 15:00.
  - Fisherman’s fish soup - 990 ISK.

- **Sólon**
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  - Fish of the day - 1,990 ISK.

- **Shalom**
  - Monday - Friday 11:00 - 14:30.
  - Fish of the day - 1,990 ISK.

- **Sólon**
  - Every day from 11:00 to 14:30.
  - Fish of the day - 1,990 ISK.
How does one describe a city that is barely a city? Reykjavík was a town for most of the 20th century. Suddenly, the city moniker crept up on us. There was an announcement in the late ‘80s. A headline announcing there was finally a hundred thousand of us living in the same area and so, technically, we were officially a city—although we had been calling ourselves a city since the ’60s. It felt like a message; we now belong to something more than the mountains and the glaciers and the baren wastelands and the endless northern wind.

Small city, plus two million

“The Book Of Reykjavík” tries to capture the essence of this small metropolitan city, which transformed once again, only a decade ago, when more than two million travellers poured onto our streets. The people of Reykjavík finally understood the exhausting feeling of thousands of strangers making eye contact; how your soul becomes like a torn sail after a quick walk through the downtown.

Complex metropolis

“The Book Of Reykjavík” is compiled by ten Icelandic authors, and comprises the same number of short stories about the inner life of Icelanders living in this odd locale. The city is now home to roughly 200 thousand, if you count the populations of the surrounding suburban areas. We often make jokes about this in Iceland: Reykjavík is two streets in Tokyo; it’s not even a neighborhood in New York. Still, the complexity of this city is like that of a metropolis of millions.

Lonesome death of the old times

The short stories in “The Book Of Reykjavík” are penned by Iceland’s best authors. Many from the younger generation that lost its connection with the old farmers’ society a long time ago. Although, there are also stories to be found from more mature authors, like Einar Már Gíslason, who endeavours to explain in “The Gardeners” how farmers tried to find their place in this new world, and delves into the lonesome death of the old times.

Losing connection

The young authors are more focused on the inner life of the average resident in Reykjavík. Fjögur Einarsen, one of the authors, describes a city that he does not know, in some ways echoing Einar Már’s short story in a modern way. The protagonist returns home for his mothers funeral, only to find that he has not only lost a mother, but perhaps his connection with this small city.

We also are burdened with grim feelings about being alone in a big crowd as well as just finding love.

Great care and deep thought

The stories are written by very well-known Icelandic writers, and it’s a good compilation of authors of different ages and genders. Vera Júlíusdóttir and Becca Parkinson edited the book and they seem to have done so with great care and deep thought. Expertly translated, it showcases much of the best that is happening in Icelandic literature right now. For example, at least six of the ten authors have received the Icelandic Literary Prize. It’s a very ambitious offering. The foreword is written by none other than Reykjavík Grapevine favourite SJÓN, and Vera does a good job explaining the aesthetic of the stories in her introduction.

A good place to start

The “Book of Reykjavík” is, first and foremost, an excellent place to begin if you want to get to know Icelandic modern literature. It becomes more and more of an urban work, unlike most Icelandic literature produced in the 20th century which focused on the life of farmers and on the past. It gives the reader a peek into the mindset of Icelanders in this small city. Overall, this is an easy, fun read, giving readers a deep understanding of the modern lives and thoughts of people in Iceland.

You can find the book in our online shop at grapevine.is
Góa Briem (24) is a medical student and works at the hospital.

Wearing:
- Blue dress from some place online—I don’t remember where
- Thrifted jacket
- Fendi bag that I inherited from my grandmother
- Ring that I inherited from my mother
- Dahlia shoes
- Black ripped tights
- Jewelry from Harajuku Chains

Describe your style in 5 words:
First off, free. I want to wear whatever I want and I don’t really care about what other people think of it. Second, my friends always describe me as extra, and I like that. Then a little bit messy or punk. For me, everything is usually kind of ripped. Like I can’t wear a pair of tights without them being ripped in the first two minutes, but that doesn’t stop me. Last, definitely scandalous. I like that aesthetic and since I’m plus size, a lot of clothes just look tight on me and I love that.

Favourite stores in Reykjavík:
I thrift a lot from the Red Cross, ABC, Fatamarkaðurinn, Spúðukins and Hringekján. Otherwise, I mostly shop online. Usually I just see things pop-up and get them, but Jaded has some really nice clothes.

Favourite piece:
I really like things that have a story! You know something someone else owned that I get, usually from a relative. I’m wearing a ring from my mother. It’s a graphic face and I wear it all the time. I also love my Buffalo shoes. They’re definitely a staple and I don’t know what I would wear if I didn’t have them. They’re so comfortable but they also look good.

Something I would never wear:
I hate ankle socks. I don’t know why, but they just kind of freak me out. I sometimes have to wear them at work and I’m always like, oh no.

Lusting after:
I’ve been searching for an old school black leather jacket because I recently lost my favourite one—it was really old and it fit me so well. A good black leather jacket is such an essential piece for your wardrobe, so I’m on the lookout.
It was a Friday night a couple of weeks ago when I found myself in the boisterously festive Selva Latin Bar. My friend, suffering from the traumatic after-effects of terrible service specific to the countryside, was overjoyed by the hurried yet attentive service that had plonked into our hands delicious Pina Coladas and citrusy ceviche moments after we were seated. As we sat sipping our heady cocktail chock full of pulpy pineapple bits, we took in the bright foliage wallpaper, the on-trend dusty rose walls and the smoked mirrors reflecting the good times everyone around was clearly having. There was no trace of Le Bistro, the French restaurant that occupied this very spot not so long ago. A pandemic crisis that challenged its continuity, Le Bistro closed doors and reopened as an entirely new concept—Selva Latin Restaurant & Bar, a restaurant that celebrates the region’s diversity and its flair for adding the festive into everything it touches.

Arnór Bohic has taken on the exciting task of “bringing a piece of Latin America to the heart of Reykjavík,” supported by his wife Paola Cardenas. They bring with them the combined experience of being in the hospitality industry for over two decades, seasoned chefs from across South America and the ambition to “share Latin culture with the soul of Reykjavík, not only with Icelanders but also the Latin community living in Iceland.” Paola shares enthusiastically.

Latin America, isn’t that Mexico via Spain?

“The idea was to not get stuck in one country, but to really play around with a couple of the most popular dishes that people already know,” explains Arnór. “Like empanadas or arepas,” I cannot help but smile, “Okay,” he pauses, “some of the people know,” he smiles.

This undercurrent of not infantilising the customer echoes through the menu at Selva. Names of dishes aren’t anglicised, nor are the dishes overly simplified. “It isn’t just me and my wife,” Arnór clarifies. “It is the chefs who are really bringing this together,” he continues. “They are the ones who are working the flavours together, brainstorming and creating these dishes that work.” Sixto and Gabriel from Venezuela and Chile, respectively, are at the helm of operations at Selva, and stress that South American food “isn’t tacos and tortillas.”

A much-misunderstood term and cuisine, Latin America isn’t a geographically defined region, but a linguistic distinction. With over 20 countries, diversity is the norm and the team is determined to let the food speak for itself. “There is so much diversity here, Bolivian, Peruvian, Chilean food that influences our cuisine. Not Mexico, as is wrongly presumed.” Sixto elaborates.

Tequenos and Tostones

Paola is a true global citizen. Raised in Venezuela and Colombia, with a Chilean mother and Columbian father, her childhood was “spent eating tequenos by the pool,” she shares, her eyes twinkling at the memory. Paola has lived in Iceland for 20 years now. “I moved here when I was 17-18, but those summers spent by the pool, eating tequenos is something else, I knew I had to have them on the menu here,” she says. I can immediately see why. Essentially deep-fried cheese sticks, tequenos are surprisingly light. At Selva, they arrive looking deceivingly light and dry, but one bite of the stretchy warm cheese—a cross between haloumi and mozzarella—encased in flaky dough begs the question as to why we aren’t enjoying these tasty morsels by the pool ourselves! The accompanying guasacaca sauce, made with avocados, green chilli and cilantro, and the salsa peruana rocoto, made with rocoto chillies, haloumi, lime and...
garlic, deliver a smooth, gentle heat. The Cuban classic sandwich Cubano is next, served Selva style. Eschewing bread (we simply don’t get the same kind of bread here, explains Sixto) for tostones, the meat is a 24-hour affair; slow-cooked pulled pork in mole negro, redolent with the heady bitter notes of chocolate that bring to mind the smokiness of coffee, lending a depth that the other spices and seasoning rest on comfortably. Pickled onions add a welcome burst of acidity and the accompanying salad from El Salvador with silent whispers of oregano is a herby respite from the deep darkness of the mole. Mexican mole is, of course, popular, but in a lot of countries like Guatemala and El Salvador, they also cook a lot with cacao.

The tostones are expertly fried and shaped like a cup, somehow being both light yet sturdy at the same time. These double-fried smashed plantains, that are crunchy with floury insides, are an integral part of the cuisines from Puerto Rico to Venezuela.

Selva boasts a vast selection of rum and tequila from the region and the cocktails are worthy accompaniments. Watch out for the rum soaked pineapple that arrives seductively nestled between plump shrimp—they are bossy with a capital B.

Culinary bridge

“This is food that I like to eat, but miss,” Paola shares. “Which is why you’ll always find me here after work,” she laughs.

I ask her how she sees food as a cultural ambassador. “I have lived here so long, I am Icelandic by now,” she admits. “And I understand what people would like. I think it is important for Icelanders to participate, share and learn from people from different cultural backgrounds. And Latin culture is already known to many in terms of the music, the dance, it is time for them to know about the food, too.”

“Here we want to present Latin food, without sacrificing flavour or what it is meant to be and present it in a fun, fresh way.” The grilled octopus, pulpo a la parrilla and the camarones al ajillo (shrimp with garlic) certainly embody that. Succulent and jewel-hued, they are served on mounted skewers, a playful invitation to plate the meat off the skewers, slice them and share it together with any of the sauces.

It is worth noting that the range of salsas and sauces at Selva are freshly made every day and are carefully paired with the various meats, vegetables and seafood. I especially appreciate the deliberate absence of mayonnaise. Instead, fresh herbs, infused oils, tomatoes, onions, avocados and garlic are used generously to create luscious emulsions.

For far too many, even in the age of the internet and cooking shows dominating seemingly all air time, food cultures outside of Europe and America still seem to be new territory. A peculiar conundrum considering the ingredients from these regions that have had far-reaching influence on global cuisines. Consider the absence of potatoes, tomatoes and corn from our menus. Our tablescapes would be quite bleak then.

“We want people to experience the range and diversity of these cuisines. Latin culture has a way of getting into your heart,” Paola smiles. If they can keep this consistency up, they are sure to make inroads into ours, too.
Your GPS announces you’re near your destination. You drive past sheep lazily napping in tufts of luscious moss as rain gently patters your windshield. The buzz of the city begins to wash away. The absolute serenity of your new surroundings starts to set in.

Stepping onto the black volcanic rock paving Torfhús Retreat, you’re struck with an immediate sense of luxury, history and an intensely personal oneness with nature. It’s no surprise that each aspect of the retreat, down to the dutifully crafted stonework adorning each turf-topped home, was deeply important to the minds behind this haven. Who knew a mutual love of breeding Icelandic horses could bring two families—one from Iceland, the other from Liechtenstein—to develop this stunning countryside oasis? Yet, that’s exactly what Torfhús Retreat was born.

Once you’ve been welcomed by the vibrant staff and finally turn the knob to your new—albeit temporary—home, you’re met with the stunning façade of 200-year-old reclaimed wood from Swiss and Austrian churches and you realise that nothing—not a thing—has been taken for granted here. Sink into a piece of handcrafted furniture for a post-travel snooze, warm up with a shower that’s practically begging you to treat yourself to a self-care night or pick up the phone and dial 9 for an entirely new culinary journey night after night. Do opt for the remarkable wine pairings selected by the on-site sommelier.

Nobody puts nature in the corner

Set in a field surrounded by slightly rolling land with mountains looming in the distance, you could set an afternoon aside to just admire how your surroundings morph in the ever-changing Icelandic weather. It looks, at times, like there’s a different season in full swing in every direction you look. Not that the weather will dampen your enjoyment of this place. Taking a dip in your private and, dare I say, instantly iconic basalt stone hot pool while soft rain falls is one of those joys within yourself to leave.

when soft rain falls is one of those joys that make you feel unquestionably in touch with your surroundings. This, right here, is Iceland.

Palate teasing & appetite pleasing

The main lodge at Torfhús is a masterclass in comfort, washing you in the warm golden hues only otherwise found in the most quaint Alpine chalets or movies featuring a gourmandising Viking feast scene. If it’s time for dinner, you’re one to be envied. Locally-sourced ingredients are harmonised for each course to produce plates that feel both rustic and sumptuous, as in unison as every other aspect of the experience here. You wouldn’t tire of eating this fare even if the chef wasn’t dedicated to creating an entirely new culinary journey night after night. Do opt for the remarkable wine pairings selected by the on-site sommelier.

Onward to adventure

When your sojourn comes to an end, you’ll depart feeling refreshed but undoubtedly bittersweet. Luckily, the Golden Circle is rife with adventurous activities to help your spirits rebound. Hike one of the lesser known trails within the area, take a moment of reflection at the strikingly serene Brúarhlöð canyon, book a heart-racing rafting trip or check out the classic stops along Iceland’s famous Golden Circle. It’s also just a short drive over to Fríðheimar in nearby Reykholt, a delightfully restaurant, bar and tomato-centred shop situated in the corner of a fully functioning greenhouse, growing some of the best tomatoes in Iceland. Sink into the freshest bowl of tomato soup around or, for the tomato-crazed among us, sip a wildly drinkable tomato beer. You’ll be dropping that tidbit at cocktail parties for years to come.

What Torfhús Retreat has created is a space that is at once a perfect destination in and of itself while also functioning as the ideal jumping off point to enjoy everything the area has to offer—if you can find the power within yourself to leave.
Hello There!

Hello there! Hello there! Hello there!

Words: Total Astrology Expert Hannah Jane

Yousa thinking dat the amateur astrolgers of the Grapevine don't a live in a galaxy, far, far away made of computer animations and stilled dialogue? How wude!

HORROR SCOPES

When dealing with trade disputes, there’s no other better than a Cancer to call on. Not only do you think quickly on your feet—and apparently run really fast—but you’re also totally immune to droid shots, which is an admirable trait. So in September, take on an international issue and throw yourself headfirst into it. We’d recommend global warming. What could go wrong.

Leo

Here’s a fun exercise to wow your friends at the post-COVID parties. Get them to describe certain characters without using their appearance or profession. Han Solo? A rakish rogue with a heart of gold. Princess Leia? An outspoken fighter finding her place as a leader. Copper? A tentative, nervous robot with a surprisingly courageous core. Now try Qui-Gon Jinn! He’s um, uh, well, you know...

Virgo

You said it best: “There’s always a bigger fish.” And with ground-breaking oceanic wisdom like that, Virgo, perhaps you should change your career from a wise soldier into some sort of oceanographer or marine biologist or something. Scared of fish? Better get home before your bones start achin’.

Libra

For the next month, try to refrain from making jokes. They won’t land and instead, you’ll be the drunk girl downtown who bursts out with comments like “I don’t care where in Iceland you’re from, that’s gotta hurt” or “Now that’s what I call partying!” This will certainly affect your future merchandising sales, which is totally not why you exist at all.

Scorpio

We get that there’s something strangely alluring about that kid you babysat ten years ago when he was nine and you were 14 but just... don’t. Seriously, don’t. Everyone will be super weirded out by it, and it will totally overshadow any large, poetic love story you were supposed to share at your wedding. In fact you might end up getting married alone, accompanied only by your iPad or something.

An American Abroad

Words: Desirai Thompson

Icelanderes love to know what others think of Iceland. Well, you asked — and an American newcomer answered.

Is living in Reykjavík all it’s cracked up to be?

After spending years dreaming of living in Iceland — here I am. With an address in 101 and a new-found obsession with mango peach Collissip, it’s safe to say I’m a full-fledged Reykkvingur now. Did I once daydream of having happy hour at Kex several times a week with the striking view of Mount Esja overhead? Perhaps. Do I instead find myself falling into bed at 17:00 every day, worn down by the city’s ubiquitious hills? Also-breaking-lately.

What did you think would be different that really isn’t?

Electric scooters. With basically everything downtown within a 20-walk or so, I was hoping this fad wouldn’t be as prevalent in Reykjavík. But now you’re not only darting around tourists with selfie sticks to get to that meeting on time, you’re also navigating around teens on Hoppis going 20 km. It’s real-life Frogger on Bankastræti. Whew. Now that I got that off my chest, You wanna know the most stunning thing I’ve learned since moving to the Icelandic capital? Curry fries taste the same in every language — and they are essential on a hangover Sunday after one too many Briló. •

CHIKIN

Hot Chikin & Bao Bar

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“There are six bodies in this space, six bodies rotating and changing and dying.”

No humans were harmed in the creation of Anna Run Tryggvadottír’s installation, currently on show at the Reykjavík Art Museum’s Hafnarhús. But some trees disintegrated... P12

“I’d stop by a bakery to get some sourdough, some snúður and head home for brunch with my family.”

The UK’s shiny new ambassador to Iceland, Dr. Bryony Mathew, gives us an insight into what her perfect day looks like. P15

“Nasty-tude... and class mixed together. Cla-nast-itude.”

Rapper and reality star Bassi Maraj jumps through some verbal hoops to describe himself to Hannah Jane Cohen. P18

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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