



ARCTIC CREATURES

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N-B Nordatlantens
Brygge

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| | |
|----|--|
| 04 | Forord / Preface |
| 06 | TRE MÆND IND I LANDSKABET / THREE MEN IN THE WILD <i>Af / By Mai Misfeldt</i> |
| 14 | Biografier / Biographies |
| 16 | VESTFJORDSREJSEN / EXPEDITION TO THE WESTFJORDS <i>Et rejseessay af / A travel essay by Hanne Højgaard Viemose</i> |

LANGT UD I NATUREN

DK På Nordatlantens Brygge har vi glædet os meget til at introducere *Arctic Creatures* i Danmark.

Med høj energi, humor og vid sætter kunstnergruppen emner som venskabet, rejsen, menneskets forhold til naturen og – ikke mindst – forestillinger om sig selv i naturen, samt den allestedsnærværende plasticforurening i spil gennem iscenesatte fotografier og skulpturer.

Bag *Arctic Creatures* gemmer sig tre islandske kunstnere: billedkunstner Hrafnkell Sigurðsson, filminstruktør og manuskriptforfatter Óskar Jónasson og skuespiller og teaterinstruktør Stefán Jónsson. Igennem en årrække (2012-23) har de arbejdet sammen om fotografiske værker, der udspiller sig i den islandske ødemark.

I nærværende katalog bliver *Arctic Creatures* introduceret ved en tekst af Mai Misfeldt fra Nordatlantens Brygge. Som en ekstra gave til udstillingens besøgende har vi bedt den danske forfatter Hanne Højgaard Viemose bidrage med et selvstændigt essay. Hun har været bosat i Island gennem flere år og arbejder også som rejseleder. Hendes vinkel er kvinder og børn på rejse, hendes metode er forfatterens/(amatør)antropologens kaotiske blik på mennesker og relationer. Selv om hendes perspektiv er et andet, er der alligevel en samtale i gang.

Vi håber, at I vil nyde udstillingen og kataloget. Og gå hjem og tale videre om, hvad rejsen er for jer, hvad venskaber og humor betyder, og hvad det betyder at komme langt ud i naturen.

Mai Misfeldt
Udstillingsansvarlig på Nordatlantens Brygge

FAR OUT IN NATURE

EN At Nordatlantens Brygge we have been very excited to introduce *Arctic Creatures* in Denmark.

With high energy, humour and wit, the artist group brings topics such as friendship, travel, the human relationship with nature and – not least – notions of oneself in nature, as well as the ubiquitous plastic pollution into play through staged photographs and sculptures.

Behind *Arctic Creatures* are three Icelandic artists: visual artist Hrafnkell Sigurðsson, filmmaker and director Óskar Jónasson and actor/theatre director Stefán Jónsson. Over a number of years (2012-23), they have collaborated on photographic works set in the Icelandic wilderness.

In this catalogue, *Arctic Creatures* is introduced by a text by Mai Misfeldt from Nordatlantens Brygge. As an extra gift to visitors to the exhibition, we have asked the Danish author Hanne Højgaard Viemose to contribute an independent essay. She has lived in Iceland for several years and also works as a tour guide. Her angle is women and children travelling. Her method is the author's/(amateur) anthropologist's chaotic view of people and relationships. Even though her perspective is different, there is still a conversation going on.

We hope you will enjoy the exhibition and the catalogue. And that you will go home and keep talking about what travel means to you, what friendships and humour mean, and what it means to get far out into nature.

Mai Misfeldt
Head of exhibitions at Nordatlantens Brygge

Tre mænd ind i landskabet

Three men in the wild

En introduktion til *Arctic Creatures*

Gennem 10 år har de årligt taget på togter ud i den islandske ødemark, Hrafnkell Sigurdsson, Óskar Jónasson og Stefán Jónsson, tre kunstnere med hver deres karriere, som når de arbejder sammen kalder sig *Arctic Creatures*. Trangen til at drage ud i naturen deler de med mange andre mænd og kvinder, der i ferierne søger væk fra storbyen og kontoret, helt derud, hvor man kan finde og opleve sig selv i mødet med elementerne. Mænd og kvinder – ja, for den drift og den oplevelse er naturligvis ikke forbeholdt mænd. Ikke desto mindre er fortællingen om netop manden, der drager på ekspeditioner i det arktiske uvejsomme og rå landskab, en fast figur i den vestlige kultur. Det handler om at komme helt derud og helt derind, hvor man konfronteres med eksistensen, og vende vejrbidt og prøvet tilbage med en indsigt og kulturel kapital, man ikke kan købe sig til.

Men de tre mænd, der udgør *Arctic Creatures*, har noget andet for ude i det islandske landskab. For dem handler det ikke om at bestige det sværeste fjeld, gå den længste rute, eller svømme i det koldeste vand. Derimod handler det om at finde tilbage til noget meget primært i form af venskabet, legen, og humoren.

An introduction to *Arctic Creatures*

They have been taking annual trips into the Icelandic wilderness for a decade now: Hrafnkell Sigurdsson, Óskar Jónasson and Stefán Jónsson, three artists with established careers of their own who, when they work together, call themselves *Arctic Creatures*. Their urge to venture out into nature is one they share with many other men and women who spend their holidays escaping the office and the big city, setting out for wide vistas where you can reconnect with your authentic self in the encounter with the elements. Men *and* women, yes – because such drives and sentiments are not, of course, the sole province of men. Nevertheless, the narrative of a bold male figure setting out on expeditions in the rough and rugged Arctic landscape is something of a stock character in Western culture, a recurring trope. It's all about venturing so far afield and delving so deep within that you are confronted with the essentials of existence, returning weather-beaten and battle-scarred, armed with insights and cultural capital of the kind money could never buy.

But the three men who make up *Arctic Creatures* are up to something else in the Icelandic wilderness.



Endangered Species, 2021. Brúnarík, Víknaslóðir. Inkjet print

In the Beginning, 2013. Ingólfssfjörður, Hornstrandir. Inkjet print



Ude i naturen iscenesætter de sig selv og hinanden i tableauer, som de fastholder i fotografier. Deres regler er enkle: Intet er forberedt på forhånd, tingene opstår på stedet, og man må bruge de rekvisitter, stedet byder på. Efterfølgende lægges alt på plads igen, hvad enten det er tang eller plastic.

De tre kunstnere er barndomsvenner, som voksede op og blev kunstnere under den islandske punks velmagtsdage i 1980'erne. Som midaldrende genfandt de hinanden i en fælles interesse for lange, strabadserende vandreture langs kystlinjerne i Vest- og Østfjordene. Det var under sådan en tur for 10 år siden, at projektet *Arctic Creatures* blev født, i erkendelsen af at lige meget hvor langt de tre bevægede sig væk, så fyldte resterne fra civilisationen stadig i landskabet. Ligesom man aldrig undslipper sig selv og sit mentale affald, så er det heller ikke muligt at undslippe det fysiske affald. Plasticflasker, gamle sko, tov og fiskenet, det hele bød sig til – som et forfald, et klimamæssigt problem, men også som en overdådig visuel scenografi. Konsekvensen for dem blev at genbruge forureningen på en kunstnerisk måde, at sætte i gang med en leg med det forhåndenværende.

På én gang udstiller *Arctic Creatures* menneskets patetiske søgen efter sig selv i naturen, og samtidig skaber de visuelle udtryk, der demonstrerer et menneskeligt overskud til at gå langt ind i kreativitetens frie og dog rammesatte univers. Deres værker er i sig selv et udtryk for værdien af det, der sker mellem mennesker. På den måde er der ganske langt fra dyrkelsen af den heroiske ener i det store landskab. Det, der sker her, er relationelt, generøst og legende.

De fotografiske værker er spektakulære og humoristiske. Kunstnerne sparer ikke sig selv, når det handler om at iscenesætte de mest ynkelige positurer uden ret meget mere end figenbladet til at dække over det

Their endeavours are not about climbing the highest mountain, walking the longest route, or swimming in the coldest water. Rather, they focus on a return to something very primal: to friendship, playfulness and fun. Out in nature, they stage themselves and each other in tableaux which they capture in photographs. Their rules are simple: nothing is prepared in advance, things happen on the spot, and you must use the props available at the site. Afterwards, everything is put back where it was, whether seaweed or plastic.

The three *Creatures* are childhood friends who grew up and became artists during the heyday of Icelandic punk in the 1980s. Having reached middle age, they reconnected over a shared interest in long, arduous hikes along the coastlines of the West and East Fjords. It was during such a trip ten years ago that the *Arctic Creatures* project was born out of the realisation that no matter how far they went, the remains of civilisation still filled the landscape. Just as you can never escape yourself and your mental baggage, you also cannot escape the physical debris of humanity. Plastic bottles, old shoes, rope and fishing nets: all these things presented themselves before their eyes as signs of decay, as climate-related problems, but also as sumptuous visual scenography. In response, they decided to reuse this flotsam and jetsam in artistic ways, playfully interacting with what was at hand.

The *Arctic Creatures* exposes humanity's pathetic search for our own essence in nature, even as they create visuals that demonstrate a very human sense of optimism, a cheerful willingness to venture far into the realm of creativity, a world full of freedom yet not without rules. Their works serve, in and of themselves, as examples of the value of interpersonal interaction. In that sense, these works are far removed from the cult of the heroic loner pitted against the vast

mest private. På den vis er der noget utroligt afvæb-
nende over det performative projekt. Som man på den
ene side må tage for pålydende, og samtidig ikke kan
se på uden også at mærke ironien og humoren.

Som når en af protagonisterne sidder klemmt inde i
en varde i *Heart of Stone*. Manden er nøgen, dog iført
vandrestøvler og solbriller. Billedet mimer et billede af
ny følsomhed, det nøgne menneske i naturen, manden
og stenen. Men solbriller og vandrestøvler får patos til
at svinge over i ironi. Som også titlen: Et hjerte af sten.
Det bløde menneske i den hårde stenfæstning. Kender
vi den figur, at også i det hårde hjerte bor der en lille
nøgen dreng? Det komiske og det tragiske ligger side
om side. Nogle gange er det bare en lillebitte detalje,
der gør forskellen eller et lille ryk i den optik, der
betragtes med.

Arctic Creatures’ værker punkterer ethvert tilløb til
patos. Vi er flere, der har grædt sentimentale tårer
over Sir John Everett Millais’ prærafaelitiske maleri af
den yndige unge druknede Ophelia, der flyder ned ad
floden: "There's rosemary, that's for remembrance.
Pray you, love, remember. And there is pansies, that's
for thoughts." *Arctic Creatures’* version af Ophelia er
mere nøgtern: En nøgen gråskægget mand ligger i en
å, kun med lidt vilde blomster over kønnet. Billedet
er en let ironisk parafrase, som man kan spinde langt
over: maskuliniteten som en skrøbelig konstruktion
der må gå under. Men værket er ikke alene ironi. Det er
også en afmaskering af romantikken, døden er, som
manden der flyder, ganske konkret.

Når man betragter gruppens værker, er det tydeligt,
at hele den vestlige kunsthistorie og mytologi ligger
som et bagkatalog. At alting både er, hvad det er, tre
mænd rullet ind i tang, reb og plastic, men også un-
derfundige referencer til kunsthistoriens skatkammer
af overdådige tabernakler og stilleleben, symbolske

wilderness. What we find here is a different creature
altogether: relational, generous and playful.

The photographic works are spectacular and
humorous. The artists do not spare themselves,
gleefully adopting the most awkward and pitiful poses,
allowing themselves little more than a fig leaf to cover
the most private parts. The approach gives the entire
performative project an incredibly disarming air. On
the one hand, we have to take what we see at face
value, and at the same time you cannot look at this
without also sensing the tongue-in-cheek wryness.

Take, for example, the image of one of the
protagonists squeezed inside a cairn in *Heart of Stone*.
The man is naked, wearing nothing but hiking boots
and sunglasses. The image mimics an image of a new
sensibility, the naked human being in nature, the man
and the stone. However, the sunglasses and hiking
boots prod the inherent pathos over the tipping point,
entering the realm of irony. As does the title: *A Heart of
Stone*. The soft human within the hard stone fortress.
Perhaps this too is a familiar trope: inside even the
hardest heart there lives a little naked boy? The comic
and the tragic nestle side by side here. Sometimes,
just a tiny detail makes all the difference, or a slight
shift in how the totality is viewed.

The works created by *Arctic Creatures* are quick to
deflate any intimations of pathos. Many of us have
wept maudlin tears over Sir John Everett Millais’s
Pre-Raphaelite painting of the lovely, young, drowned
Ophelia floating down the river: ‘There's rosemary,
that's for remembrance. Pray, love, remember: And
there is pansies, that's for thoughts.’ The *Arctic
Creatures* version of Ophelia is rather more sober: a
naked grey-bearded man lies in a stream with only a
few wild flowers to cover his genitals. The image is a
slightly ironic paraphrase that invites lengthy musings



Ophelia, 2020. Veiðileysufjörður, Jökulfirðir. Inkjet print

The Throne of Poesidon, 2022/23. Mixed media





In Transit, 2021. Stóruð Borgarfjörður Eystri. Inkjet print

opstillinger og dramatiske symbolikker. Dertil kommer skulpturværket *Poseidons Trone* (*The Throne of Poseidon*), hvor gruppen både rækker legens stafet videre: Tag plads og bliv en del af det hele, samtidig med at værket med al tydelighed peger på, at vi for længe har glemt respekten for havet og naturen, og sat os i et Beckett'sk bjerg af skidt, hvorfra det er let nok, at udråbe sig selv til hersker.

Mai Misfeldt

Udstillingsansvarlig, Nordatlantens Brygge

and readings: masculinity as a fragile construct that will inevitably perish. But the work is not all irony. It is also an unmasking of romantic notions; death is, like the man seen floating here, quite concrete and real.

Looking at the group's works, they very obviously draw on Western art history and mythology. Everything is exactly what it is – three men wrapped in seaweed, rope and plastic – even as it also involves subtle references to art history's treasure trove of sumptuous tabernacles and still lifes, metaphorical arrangements and dramatic symbolism. To this we may add the sculptural work *The Throne of Poseidon*, where the group passes on the baton to us – urging us to take a seat and become part of it all – even as the work clearly points out that we have failed to respect the sea and nature for far too long, miring ourselves in a Beckettian mountain of filth from which it is easy enough to proclaim oneself ruler.

Mai Misfeldt

Head of exhibitions, The North Atlantic House

Heart of Stone, 2016. Bjarnarnúpur Vestfirðir. Inkjet print





Hrafnkell Sigurðsson (f. 1963). Billedkunstner. Uddannet på Kunstakademiet i Island (1983-87), Jan Van Eyck Akademie, Maastricht (1988-1990) og Goldsmiths College, London (2001-02). Udstillet i ind- og udland. Deltog i 2022 på CHART i Tivoli, København. Modtager af the Icelandic Art Prize 2023. Se mere på hrafnkellsigurdsson.com

Hrafnkell Sigurðsson (b. 1963). Visual artist. Educated at Icelandic College of Arts and Crafts (1983-87), Jan Van Eyck Akademie, Maastricht (1988-1990) and Goldsmiths College, London (2001-02). Exhibited nationally and internationally. Participated in 2022 at CHART in Tivoli, Copenhagen. Awarded the Icelandic Art Prize 2023. See more at hrafnkellsigurdsson.com



Óskar Jónasson (f. 1963). Filminstruktør og manuskriptforfatter. Hans første spillefilm *Remote Control* (*Sódóma Reykjavík*) blev vist i Un Certain Regard-sektionen på filmfestivalen i Cannes i 1993. *Reykjavík-Rotterdam* fra 2008 vandt fire Edda-priser og blev i 2012 genindspillet som *Contraband* med Mark Wahlberg i hovedrollen. Jónasson har også instrueret animationsfilm og adskillige tv-serier.

Óskar Jónasson (b. 1963). Film director and screenwriter. His first feature film *Remote Control* (*Sódóma Reykjavík*) was screened in the Un Certain Regard section at the 1993 Cannes Film Festival. *Reykjavík-Rotterdam* (2008) won four Edda Awards and in 2012 it was remade as *Contraband*, featuring Mark Wahlberg. Jónasson has also directed animated feature films and TV series.



Stefán Jónsson (f. 1964). Uddannet fra Guildhall School of Music and Drama, London, 1989. Aktiv inden for scenekunsten i Island i mere end 30 år som skuespiller og instruktør samt på film og tv. Skuespilchef og professor ved Iceland Academy of the Arts 2008-2018. Stefán har modtaget prisen som årets instruktør ved The Icelandic Performing Arts Awards i 2003 og 2022.

Stefán Jónsson (b. 1964). Educated from Guildhall School of Music and Drama, London, 1989. Active in the performing arts in Iceland for more than 30 years as an actor and director, as well as in film and television. Head of Acting and professor at the Iceland Academy of the Arts 2008-2018. Stefán has been awarded the Director of the Year prize at The Icelandic Performing Arts Awards in 2003 and 2022.

Vestfjordsrejsen

Expedition to the Westfjords

Det er aften, sent? Man kan ikke tage bestik af solen på denne tid, den skinner døgnet rundt, står lavt, det har den gjort længe, bevæger sig mere sidelæns end egentligt ned, og jeg aner ikke om den står i nord nu eller bare er på vej. Drengene og jeg står på pareringspladsen ved Dynjandi, Vestfjordenes største vandfald. Spejder efter de andre i den sorte Chrysler på de snoede bjergveje, de er igen kommet langt bagud, det er rejsens fjerdedag, virkelig kun fjerde dag? Jeg har vænnet mig til selskabet, nogenlunde, i hvert fald den voksne tredjedel af det, men nu jeg tænker over det, står det mig *igen* ikke klart, hvorfor vi egentlig skulle rejse rundt heroppe sammen. Mine to forfatterkollegaer: Ida Marie Hede, Kristina Nya Glaffey og jeg. Som del af et kunstprojekt. En ekspedition i de islandske Vestfjorde MED vores børn, 6 stk. i alt, i alderen 3-7 år.

Og nu er vi altså kommet til VandfaldET, Vestfjordenes største og mest spektakulære vandfald, Dynjandi: Drengene og jeg tripper prøvende omkring med vores stive bil kroppe i kaskaderne af vanddråber, der hvirvler omkring i kildrende skyer fra fossen, som bruser og plasker i vældige mængder ud over den rå fjeldside. Det er ved at være sent.

It's evening. Late? You can't really tell from the sun this time of year, it shines round the clock, hovering low, as it has for a long time, moving more horizontally than actually down, and I have no idea if it's in the north now or just on its way there. The boys and I are standing in the parking lot by Dynjandi, the largest waterfall in the Westfjords. On the lookout for the others in the black Chrysler on the winding mountain roads, they've fallen behind again, it's the fourth day of the journey, only the fourth day, really? I've gotten used to the company, more or less, at least the adult third of it, but now that I think of it, I'm really not sure, *again*, why we're travelling around up here together. My two author-colleagues: Ida Marie Hede, Kristina Nya Glaffey, and I. As part of an art project. An expedition to the Icelandic Westfjords WITH our children, six in all, ages 3 to 7.

And so we have made it to THE waterfall, the largest and most spectacular waterfall in the Westfjords, Dynjandi: The boys and I, with our car-stiff bodies, dance tentatively through the cascades of water droplets whirling around in tickling clouds as the falls spray and shower over the raw mountainside. It's getting late.

Vi var alle i svømmebassin i Tálknafjörður hele formiddagen, for ligesom at lade ungerne slå sig løs, gøre dem møre til nogle timer i bil ad snoede veje gennem bjergpas igen. Vi havde bassinerne for os selv, bortset fra en ung polsk mor med sin søn på 3-4 år. Hun havde plukkede øjenbryn og perfekt øjenmakeup, håret opsat, tørt, hun havde helt sikkert ikke vasket sig de på skiltet anviste steder, noterede jeg mig, ikke upåvirket af skråstreg grøn af misundelse over hendes lækre bikinikrop. Hun sad der i havfruestilling i det varme og lavvandede børnebassin, ubevægelig med et uudgrundeligt smil over sine, med billig polsk læbestift indsmurte læber (bemærkede jeg giftigt og bidsk), mens hendes søn spænedede rundt i alle bassiner efter en bold som han af helt egen drift fik i bevægelse, op og ned som en prop ploppede han alle vegne, indspændt i kork, mens hans havfrue-mamma som sagt, den polske nymfe med det mystiske (nærmest overlegent hånende?) smil, hun, ja hun bare sad.

Jeg spekulerede som en gal på hvordan jeg skulle få det sagt til de andre, at hun ikke var *local*, af en eller anden grund ville jeg ikke have de skulle tro hun var islandsk, men der var ingen naturlig overgang i samtalen, fordi der netop ikke var nogen samtale imellem os, vi forpustede, rundspurtende danske mammas med øjnene stift rettede mod vores afkom, og tankerne sprintende omkring enhver mulig druknedød eller faldulykke i området, og så, bedst som jeg forsøgte at indtage en easy-going havfrue-mamma-stil i et af de varme bassiner, skete det: Björns lufttanke på ryggen satte sig fast i en line som han forsøgte at dykke under i det store bassin, og der hang han så og sprællede under vandet mens jeg i et splitsekund forvandlede mig fra havfrue til tiger i spring og med brøl, nåede ham netop som han af egen hjælp kom fri.

Da jeg vendte mig var den polske mamma forsvundet, så de andre hende overhovedet?

(Var hun der faktisk?)

We all spent the morning in the swimming pools in Tálknafjörður to let the children run wild and wear themselves out enough to spend a few hours in the cars, on roads winding through mountain passes, again. We had the pools to ourselves, apart from a young Polish mother with her 3- or 4-year-old son. She had plucked eyebrows and perfect eye makeup, her hair up and dry, she definitely hadn't washed as directed on the signs I noted, not unaffected-by slash green-with-envy-over her delicious bikini body. She sat there in a motionless mermaid pose in the warm, shallow children's pool with an unfathomable smile playing across lips smeared with cheap Polish lipstick (I observed poisonously, viciously) while her son ran around every pool chasing after a ball he had set in motion, bobbing up and down all over the place, encased in cork, while his aforementioned mermaid-mama, the Polish nymph with the mysterious (haughty and almost mocking) smile, she, yes, she just sat there.

Like a lunatic I was deliberating over how to let the others know that she wasn't *local*, for some reason I didn't want them to think she was Icelandic, but there was no natural pause in our conversation because there was no conversation, we were breathless Danish mamas running around with our eyes rigidly directed toward our offspring, and our thoughts racing between every possible mode of drowning or slipping and falling—and then, doing my best to adopt an easy-going mermaid-mama-style in one of the hot pools, it happened: the air tank on Björn's back got caught in a line as he tried to dive into the large pool, and he hung there floundering under the water and I, in a split second, transformed from mermaid to leaping tiger and, with a roar, reached him just as he freed himself on his own.

When I turned, the Polish mama had disappeared, had the others even seen her?

(Had she even really been there?)

Vi spiste madder i campingpladsens betonkøkken, og kørte mod den næste fjordur, hvorfra vi skulle af helvede til ud ad vejen mod Selárdalur, hvor outsiderkunstneren Samúel Jónsson, som man siden har kaldt kunstneren med barnehjertet, boede isoleret i 22 år i sin alderdom og sled og slæbte med at bygge sine skulpturer derude på den yderste kyst, hvor havet og vinden brøler, som den kun gør heroppe på det yderste af en nordatlantisk kyst. Og dér stod de, de særeste naivistiske skulpturer af søheste og hvalrosser og løveheste og sæler, i lyserød, gul og blå og turkis, på størrelse med 3-7-årige børn, vores afkom der her i nogle åndeløse minutter gik i et med denne underlige og afsondrede verden, og så måtte vi selvfølgelig gribe ind: Stoppe dem i at komme i destruktiv nærkontakt med skulpturerne, tisse i bukserne, falde ud over en skrænt, brække alle lemmer, prikke øjnene ud på hinanden...

Men tilbage til vandfaldet:

Endelig kommer det sorte monster rullende ind på parkeringspladsen, vi springer dem i møde, ivrige og oplivede af det iskolde dråbebad vi netop er strøget igennem på alle leder. Stemningen i den sorte drages vom er presset, forstår jeg med det samme Kristina ruller ned og åbenbarer en sprække til deres indre postyr: De koger, mangler mad, børnene er køresyge og fortissede, de skriger af sult (og panik??).

Jeg finder skyndsomt alle vores rester frem, en halv bakke lammeleverpostej, noget brød og agurk, en halv pakke kiks.

Lammeleverpostejten ska jeg nok ikke regne med at nogen vil ha. Ok. Og de skal ikke se noget vandfald nu, så de kører bare videre. Ok.

Vi skal op gennem bjergene, på jord- og grusveje. - Måske lidt smattede, men der er ikke så langt, råber jeg efter dem med en klar fornemmelse af at ingen hører mig, de har allerede rullet op og er trukket brølende tilbage mod vejen til vores næste

We ate sandwiches in the campground's cement kitchen, and drove toward the next *fjordur* from which point we were going way the hell out of our way to Selárdalur, the valley where the outside artist Samúel Jónsson, otherwise known as 'the artist with the heart of a child', lived in isolation for 22 years in his old age, toiling away at building his sculptures on the outer coast, the sea and the wind roaring as they only do on the outer edge of a North-Atlantic coast. And there they stood: the strangest Naïve sculptures of seahorses and walruses and lion-horses and seals in pink, yellow and blue and turquoise, the size of 3- to 7-year-old children, and our offspring. For a few breathless minutes they were one with this strange and secluded world. And then, of course, we had to intervene: Stop them from coming into destructively close contact with the sculptures, wetting their pants, falling over a cliff, breaking all their limbs, poking each other's eyes out . . .

But back to the waterfall:

The black monster finally rolls into the parking lot, we jump up to meet them, eager and enlivened by the ice-cold mist-bath we've just passed through from every possible angle. The voice coming from the belly of the black dragon is distressed, I understand immediately, Kristina rolls the window down and reveals their internal commotion through a crack: They are boiling, need food, the children are carsick and piss soaked, they're screaming from hunger (and panic??).

I quickly pull out the rest of our food, a half container of lamb-liver paté, some bread and cucumber, half a packet of crackers.

I probably shouldn't count on anyone wanting the lamb-liver paté. OK. And they don't need to see any waterfalls right now, so they'll just drive on. OK.

We're driving up through the mountains, on dirt and gravel roads.

overnatningssted, Thingeyri.

En af mine Akilleshæler (måske er jeg ottefodet som Sleipner, når det gælder Akilleshæler) er planlægning. Klokkeslætter, afstande, priser. Alle de tal. Jeg trykker febrilsk på min telefon, der er helt dråbebefængt efter nærkontakt med Dynjandi, forsøger forgæves at få adgang til google.maps.

Så tripper vi op og ned omkring vandfaldet nogle gange, gyser frydefuldt når de iskolde dråber vælter ind over os. Björn brøler gang på gang, mere og mere intenst sit på rejsen udfoldede bjørnebrøl, jeg lytter og betragter ham med stolthed. Det er et brøl med brøl på, fra og med hele hans spinkle drengekrop, der ikke ved første syn afslører at rumme sådan en kraft og dybde, han virker også selv forbløffet.

Oplivede og i højt humør kører vi efter de andre, der for længst er forsvundet derude et sted på de smattede bjergveje, og overhaler dem inden længe. Jeg ved godt, hvad de tænker: hasarderet kørsel etc, men det er jo bare fordi, de ikke er vant til bjergkørsel og kører turistforsigtigt. I mine islandske bekendtes øjne er jeg stadig - om ikke inkarnationen af dansk fornuft - så dog langt fra en *living-on-the-edge*.

Anyway, vi kører i forvejen, holder ind et sted oppe i skyerne, drengene insisterer på at få afgjort, om de er lavet af skum eller vand. Jeg vil hen og presse ansigtet mod den kappe sne, der ligger ovenfor elven lige derhenne.

Resten af turen til Thingeyri, som jeg med en vis beklæmthed undervejs må indrømme, er væsentligt længere, end jeg havde beregnet (dvs. jeg havde jo netop ikke beregnet det, bare sjusset mig frem ud fra erindringen), foregår bogstaveligt talt oppe i skyerne (metaforisk talt et helt andet sted) på mudrede jordveje gennem bjerge, hvor klipperne ligger enorme og kantede som kastet fra månen, dækkede af mos og lav

“Maybe a little rough, but it’s not too far,” I shout after them, well aware that no one is listening to me, they’ve already rolled up the windows and pulled roaring away, back toward the road to the next place we’ll spend the night, Thingeyri.

One of my Achilles’ heels (perhaps I’m eight-footed, like Sleipnir, when it comes to Achilles’ heels) is planning. Times, distances, prices. All the numbers.

I tap feverishly on my phone, which is mist-infested from its close-proximity to Dynjandi, trying in vain to access Google Maps.

Then we dance up and down and around the waterfall a few times, shivering joyously as the ice-cold mist tumbles over us. Björn roars over and over again, more and more intensely, his bear-growl has matured over the course of our expedition, and I listen, regarding him with pride. It is a roar with roars on, emanating from the whole of his skinny boy-body, which, at first glance, does not appear capable of containing such power and depth, he even seems to surprise himself.

Revived and in a good mood, we drive after the others—who have long since disappeared out there on the rough and muddy mountain roads—and soon overtake them. I know what they’re thinking: reckless driving etc., but that’s just because they aren’t used to mountain-driving and drive like cautious tourists. In my Icelandic-acquainted eyes I am—if not the incarnation of Danish common sense—still far from *living-on-the-edge*.

Anyway, we drive ahead and pull over somewhere up in the clouds, the boys insist on settling the question of whether they’re made of foam or water. I want to press my face into the blanket of snow on the other side of the rapids.

i den psykedelisk babyskidengule farve, som altid gør mig hysterisk, overtroisk og utilpas.

Klokken nærmer sig midnat da vi rammer tankstationen i Thingeyri, bilen er dækket af et tykt lag mudder og støv. Vi er småfortumlede, bestiller straks en ordentlig kurv pomfritter, de andre kommer omsider og bestiller også, men Idas kort virker ikke, eller hun har glemt det et sted, hun vil have burgere og får mit kort. Hun er slet ikke sig selv, tårevædet og hærget af højdeskræk og bleskifter i bilen på de smalle og mudrede bjergveje.

Og nu står hun der med mit visakort.

Den ene burger efter den anden begynder at ankomme til vores bord, som børnene for længst har smurt ind i ketchup, op og ned af bord og stoleben, og nu løber de frem og tilbage mellem toilettet og bordet, trækker den ene rulle toiletpapir efter den anden ud for at forbinde deres bamser, der alle er tilskadekomne (efter den dramatiske bjergkørsel?): Elefantus har brækket snablen, Mikrobløde er vist gennemgående kvæstet, Bubbles vinger hårdt rullet op, Gamlehunni all round mumificeret.

Edgar tisser i bukserne, mens Ida forsøger at få standset den strøm af burgere, hun tilsyneladende har sat gang i. Aggi hvisker højere og højere, at damen på tankstationen er en heks, og det viser sig snart åbenlyst for os alle, at kvinden er farlig, da hun med et helt forvrænget ansigt bringer endnu en omgang cheeseburgere til bordet, der ikke er blevet mindre indsmurt, og i øvrigt endestation for en sti af mudder, ketchup, remoulade, smattede pomfritter og toiletpapir, der starter ved toiletterne i hjørnet, hvor Mille og Björn nu har lukket vandhanerne op for fuld drøn. Edgar har smidt tøjet og står nøgen og slår løs på spillemaskinen med sine ketchupsmattede barnehænder.

The rest of the drive to Thingeyri, which I, with a certain amount of anxiety along the way, have to admit is significantly longer than I had calculated (i.e., I had not calculated it at all, I just guessed based on memory), takes place literally up in the clouds (metaphorically it takes place in an entirely different place) on muddy dirt roads through mountains where enormous, angular rocks lay scattered as if thrown from the moon, covered in moss and lichen in that psychedelic, baby-shit yellow color that always makes me hysterical, superstitious, and queasy. It’s getting on toward midnight when we reach the service station in Thingeyri and the car is covered in a thick layer of mud and dust. We’re slightly out of it, immediately order a large basket of French fries, the others eventually show up and order too, but Ida’s card won’t work, or she left it somewhere, she wants burgers and takes my card. She’s not at all herself, tear-soaked and battle-weary from a fear of heights and diaper changes in a car on narrow, muddy mountain roads. And now she’s standing there with my visa card.

One burger after another begins arriving at our table, which the children have already smeared in ketchup, up and down the legs of both table and chairs, and now they’re running back and forth between the restrooms and the table, unravelling one roll of toilet paper after another to bandage their teddy bears and stuffed animals, which have all been injured (in the course of the dramatic mountain driving?): Elefantus has broken his snout, Squishybear appears to be hurt all over, Bubble’s wings are tightly wrapped, Doggo has been mummified.

Edgar wets his pants while Ida attempts to stem the flow of burgers she has apparently set in motion. Aggi whispers more and more loudly that the lady working at the service station is a witch and it soon

(Her slår det mig, at hvis vores rejse/ ekspedition fulgte en klassisk berettermodel, ville dette øjeblik være *point of no return*.)

becomes clear to us all that the woman is dangerous when, with her face contorted, she brings yet another round of cheeseburgers to the table, which has become no less ketchup-smearred and, incidentally, is the terminus of a trail of mud, ketchup, remoulade, smashed French fries, and toilet paper that starts at the restrooms in the corner where Mille and Björn have turned all the faucets on full blast. Edgar has thrown his clothes away and, naked, is bashing away at the slot machine with his ketchup-covered kid-hands.

(Here it occurs to me that if our trip/expedition were to follow a classic model, this would be the *point of no return*.)

Om forfatteren

Hanne Højgaard Viemose er forfatter og rejseguide bosiddende i Island.

I hendes seneste to romaner *Mado*, 2015, og *HHV FRSHWN, Dødsknaldet i Amazonas*, 2019, indgår rejser rundt i Island. Bogen, som ovenstående er uddrag fra, er endnu under tilblivelse.

About the author

Hanne Højgaard Viemose is an author and travel guide based in Iceland.

Her two most recent novels, *Mado*, 2015, and *HHV FRSHWN: The Death Bang in the Amazon*, 2019, include travels around Iceland. She is currently working on a new book from which the above was excerpted.

ARCTIC CREATURES

Óskar Jónasson, Stefán Jónsson, Hrafnkell Sigurðsson

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