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SCANDINAVIAN REVIEW

VOLUME 108 NUMBER 2 FALL/WINTER 2021

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About our cover . . .
The 2021 Geldingadalir eruption was the first volcanic activity in Iceland's Reykjanes region in nearly 900 years (see pages 20-33). Photo by Toby Elliot/ Unsplash

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Munch Museum Strives Higher

Oslo's bold addition creates a vertical space for its titular master —while setting the city's stage to become a new art capital.

By Emma O'Kelly

Situated on Bjørvika Bay, Munch Museum is the latest addition to Oslo's trending waterfront district.

PHOTO BY EINAR ASLAKSEN/COURTESY MUNCH MUSEUM

"WE NEEDED MONUMENTAL; TO, maybe even brutal," says Stein Olav Henrichsen, director of Norway's new Munch Museum. "We had to take a stand." Take a stand he did, and this October, a bold landmark dedicated to the late Norwegian artist Edvard Munch opened on Oslo's waterfront.

Stein Olav Henrichsen

The 68-meter-tall glass and concrete tower dominates the skyline along the buzzing wharf of Bjørvika and is a far cry from the more conservative building in the Oslo suburb of Tøyen that formerly housed the artist's estate. When he died in 1944, Munch bequeathed his collection of 26,700 paintings, drawings, woodcuts, prints and photographs and all his personal effects to the city. With 11 galleries and ample space for storage and restoration, the new museum is five times larger than its predecessor and allows Munch's oeuvre to be permanently on display for the first time.

"We knew it was risky, but we wanted to create a vertical symbol for the city," says Juan Herreros, partner at Madrid-based estudioHerreros who designed the museum. "After the spectacular postcard museums of the Guggenheim era, it was time for something new."

Using technology from Norway's oil platform construction, 300 concrete piles were drilled into the bedrock 40 meters below sea level, while the concrete body was erected in 33 days—a process that was "fast, efficient and money saving. It is a laboratory for advanced building techniques," explains Herreros.

The $320-million museum was funded by the City of Oslo and planned in accordance with its FutureBuilt program—an initiative to reduce the carbon footprint of public buildings by at least 35 percent. Made of low-carbon concrete, Norwegian stone, FSC-sourced woods and recycled steel, it meets Passivhaus standards for outstanding energy efficiency. A perforated cladding, made of recycled aluminium, comes in varying degrees of translucency and covers it like a chainmail curtain. With its glass top tilting into a menacing stoop, it looks ready for battle.

Inside, however, it's the art, not the architecture, that speaks loudest. It's impossible not to be moved by Munch's great obsessions—life, death, landscape, the nude—and these are arranged around 12 different themes rather than chronologically, presenting him as both man and artist. And all the galleries have a number of entrance points, so visitors can start anywhere. "Munch is an artist to see in an open way, not as a closed, fixed narrative," says Henrichsen.

On the fourth floor, three versions of *The Scream* are stored behind

PHOTOS: EINAR ASLAKSEN/COURTESY MUNCH MUSEUM

Designed for easy public access, the museum's new location also enables visitors to relax in adjacent outdoor areas.

PHOTOS: EINAR ASLAKSEN/COURTESY MUNCH MUSEUM

Of the three versions of *The Scream* in the museum's collection, only one is on view at a time on the fourth floor.

On every floor exhibiting Munch's works, the artist's oeuvre is displayed thematically rather than chronologically.

On the seventh floor, digital panels and objects from his archive are used to recreate the atmosphere at his studio and home in Ekely outside Oslo.

PHOTO: EINAR ASLAKSEN/COURTESY MUNCH MUSEUM

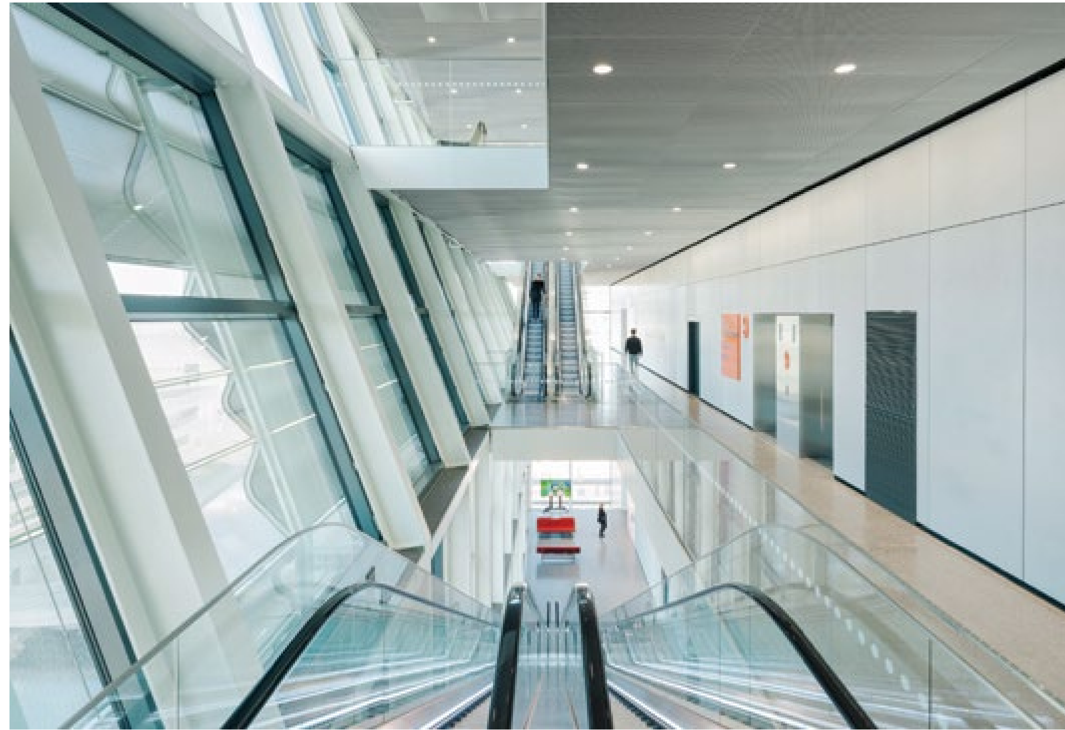
closed doors. Delicate works on paper, only one will be on show at any one time, and security is a concern too; in 2004 a version of the iconic work was stolen from Tøyen in an armed robbery, and although it was recovered two years later, it was a wake-up call for curators.

ON THE SIXTH FLOOR, MUNCH'S MONUMENTAL WORKS such as *The Sun* (1909) and *The Researchers* (which stretches to 50 meters square) are so large the museum's concrete walls were sliced open to install them. Coincidentally, the seventh-floor gallery is the same size as the basement of Munch's former home in Ekely outside Oslo; digital screens, furniture, utensils and artifacts depict his life there. In 1902, Munch started experimenting with a Kodak camera; the photographs he created in resulting years, including experimental portraits of himself, friends and family, only recently garnered widespread international attention with the ASF exhibition *The Experimental Self: Edvard Munch's Photography*, which opened at Scandinavia House in the fall of 2017 and will be returning this winter. His "selfies" look as modern today as they ever did, and his frequent self-portraits, in which his mouth etches ever downward, need no dates to resonate with the viewer. It's easy to get lost in the works and jump between floors on shiny elevators—which is the point.

More than 20,000 visitors attended the museum's opening weekend in October, as it set out to be a cultural hub as much as an art gallery. Its generous public areas are seductive; diners in its 13th-floor bar and restaurant can enjoy views across the city and the fjord and watch majestic ferries glide back and forth between the islands, discovering not only the artworks but also Oslo and its history. From the viewing gallery, visitors can admire bathers taking a

PHOTO: PABLO G. TRIBELLO/COURTESY MUNCH MUSEUM

PHOTOS: EINAR ASLAKSEN/COURTESY MUNCH MUSEUM



Juan Herreros and Jens Richter, partners at estudioHerreros, designed public areas to be light and open.

> *The museum can't fail to bring new life to this rapidly developing corner of Bjørvika.*

dip in the Baltic off the beach underneath them, and in the ground-floor shop, café and outdoor terrace, they have a chance to be part of Bjørvika's buzz.

Next year, a nine-meter-high bronze statue entitled *The Mother* by British artist Tracey Emin will touch down permanently in a meadow of flowers in front of the museum. The pandemic delayed its installation for the opening, but Emin, who has been a self-confessed Munch obsessive since she was 18, debuts with her masterful mentor inside the museum. *Tracey Emin/Edvard Munch, The Loneliness of the Soul* first aired in part in London's Royal Academy in 2020 and brings together works by both artists, among them a 1998 video of Emin screaming from the Oslo jetty on which Munch based many of his paintings. It is part of an ambitious contemporary program that consists of four or five exhibitions a year. Next up is *Solo Oslo 1*, a show of works by young Oslo-based artists, and in April, *Satyricon & Munch* explores the intersection of black metal and art, where a musical work by Norwegian metal band Satyricon is on show with a selection of Munch images.

The museum can't fail to bring new life to this rapidly developing corner of Bjørvika; a new wooden jetty will welcome visitors arriving by boat and a bridge connects the museum to a slick residential development at its south end. There's talk of a new photography museum opening on a graffiti-scrawled empty lot next door, further cementing the area as a "museum district."

HERREROS BELIEVES THAT IT IS A MUSEUM'S JOB TO encourage regeneration and this kind of leisurely activity, and he knows how to make it happen. His 2015 conversion of the public areas of MALBA (the Museum of Latin American Art of Buenos Aires) into a series of lively public plazas brought new life to the sleepy site. "When we transform an existing museum, we often bring staff out of the basement, we create an entrance that is receptive, a lobby which is not intimidating. We want all activities inside to be transparent." At the Munch Museum, offices for 250 staff, workshop space (for an estimated 100,000 children a year), storage and restoration areas are all visible. After dark, the building glows with internal activity.

Herreros acknowledges that some critics disagreed with the vertical design but believes the balance was essential. "It's not a flashy expression of the Emirates, not an architectural statement," he says. "We had to take the risk; Oslo is a very modern city and it has changed very fast. Many people thought that a vertical building was the preserve of hotel chains, not museums. I'm convinced we have created a new model."

Locals are still adjusting to the new contribution to their landscape. "I was waiting for the gray curtain that surrounds it to be taken away to reveal a

PHOTO: ESTUDIOHERREROS/COURTESY MUNCH MUSEUM

PHOTO: EINAR ASLAKSEN/COURTESY MUNCH MUSEUM

The museum also features drinking and dining areas on its top two floors where visitors can enjoy waterfront views.

> *“The choice of a foreign architect has started a conversation about cultural institutions and their openness.”*

façade, until I realized the gray curtain was the façade,” says a Danish restaurateur who lives nearby. To bathers at the Oslo Badstuforening sauna complex that floats in the museum’s shadows, it resembles “a 1960s Berlin watchtower.” The choice of a Spanish, rather than Norwegian, architect was also contentious. But Oslo Opera House was designed in 2008 by Norwegian firm Snøhetta and the new Deichman Library is by Atelier Oslo and Lundhagem—it was time to search beyond the borders. “We have been through a period of many Norwegian architects (winning big projects),” Henrichsen explains, “and next to the horizontal form of the Opera House, our verticality creates a new energy.” Herreros adds: “Norway is a very diverse society; around 60 percent of children have a foreign background. The choice of a foreign architect has started a conversation about cultural institutions and their openness, and led us to ask about ourselves and who we want to be.”

WHAT’S MORE, THE DELIBERATE CHOICE OF AN INTERNATIONAL practice echoes with Munch’s standing as an artist of international repute. The new museum is one of the largest dedicated to a solo artist, forming part of a network with around 20 similar organizations—among them the Frida Kahlo Museum in Mexico City, the Fundació Joan Miró in Barcelona and museums dedicated to Dali, Klee and Van Gogh. “We struggled to get any decisions made,” says Henrichsen, who helped establish the network. “We needed public opinion to see the power of our most famous artist. Half a million people went to see Munch at the Centre Pompidou in Paris in 2011, and we took Norwegian politicians and press to see the queues, to show them that even in that venue, there was not enough space.”

Next June, the new $58-billion National Museum opens at the other end of Oslo’s waterfront. With its collection of 400,000 objects and 87 galleries, it will be the largest museum in the Nordic region. German practice Kleihues + Schuwerk has created the 54,600-square-meter space with a vast horizontal terrace and an illuminated top-floor Light Hall. Together, these museums propel Oslo onto the world stage as a new art capital. And as visitors flock to visit works in their collections, there is no question that they will have more opportunities to visit old masters among the new; Munch himself is already there.

Emma O’Kelly is a freelance journalist based in London. A contributing editor at *Wallpaper**, she has spent almost 25 years scoping out the best in Nordic design. She is currently researching a book about Scandinavian sauna culture.

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Iceland's Volatile Landscape

Iceland's inhabitants have cohabitated with volcanoes, glaciers and earthquakes since the settlement circa 871 CE. The recent eruption in Geldingadalir is the latest chapter in a centuries-long tug-of-war between humans and forces of nature—as melting ice caps hint at an even more dynamic volcanic future.

By Tenley J. Banik

PHOTO: TOBY ELLIOT/UNSPLASH

ICELAND IS A LAND OF CONSTANT—and often dramatic—change. When inhabitants of Reykjanes, the peninsula that juts into the Atlantic Ocean on the southwestern corner of Iceland, began feeling earthquakes in February 2021, few people were surprised. After all, the region occupies one of Iceland's main rift zones, where tectonic plates are slowly spreading apart and new crust is created through volcanism. What followed was unusual: a month of seismic activity strong and disruptive enough to cause some residents to temporarily relocate to other areas of Iceland simply to be able to stand on solid ground or sleep through the night. Over 600 earthquakes of magnitude 3 or greater, which are easily felt by people, registered in Reykjanes during those weeks. Roads perched on mountainsides became unstable and dangerous to traverse, and geologists increased the amount of monitoring to better understand the local subsurface geology. The reason for the increased earthquake activity quickly became apparent: over several weeks, geologists were able to seismically track the movement of magma upward through the subsurface, culminating in Iceland's newest volcanic eruption on the evening of March 19 in an area called Geldingadalir.

Scientists, emergency personnel, and tourists swarmed the site. Unlike the penultimate Icelandic eruption at remote Holuhraun in 2014–15, the Geldingadalir (aka Fagradalsfjall) eruption was less than an hour's drive from the Reykjavík area and the international airport in Keflavík, and easily accessible to the public via an hour-long hike. In addition to being accessible, the eruption was characterized by a combination of mildly explosive, crater-building activity and basalt lava flows—evoking a sense of safety for people approaching the eruption site. This approachability, however, belies the omnipresent potential for hazardous conditions such as high concentrations of toxic gases and fast-moving lava flows.

Having now recently concluded (or nearly so), what can we take from this eruption and what it means for Iceland's landscape? In short, it serves as a reminder that Iceland is geologically alive, and that increases in earthquakes and volcanic activity can occur at any time—and that the forces that lead to Iceland's volatile landscape are always at work.

A HISTORY OF UNPREDICTABILITY

ICELAND EXISTS BECAUSE THE MID-ATLANTIC RIDGE—A tectonic plate boundary that stretches down the middle of the ocean basin where the North American and Eurasian plates are rifting apart—and a mantle hot spot are coupled, meaning that together they produce a much larger volume of magma than either feature alone. The nation is therefore the result of about 20 million years of higher-than-normal magma production and volcanism. As Iceland continues to spread, continued volcanism ensures the creation of new crust in the areas surrounding the active rifts in the west, east, and north of the country.

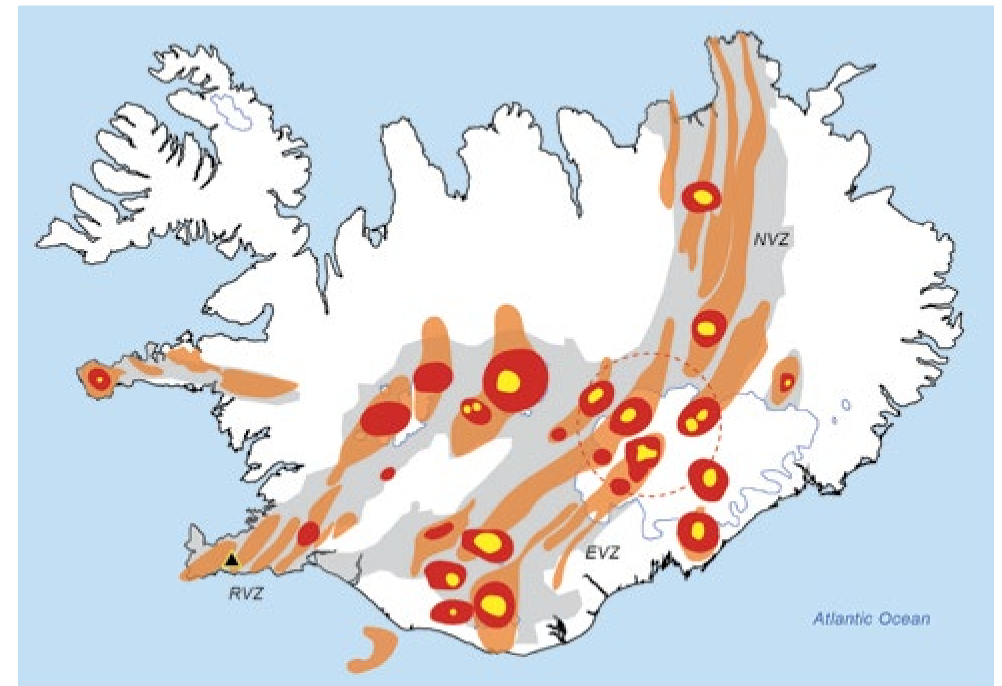


IMAGE COURTESY TENLEY BANIK

Iceland is the result of a combination of the Mid-Atlantic Ridge and a hot spot, which produces widespread active volcanism concentrated in volcanic zones.

Icelanders have lived with and in this dynamic environment since the Settlement approximately 1,150 years ago. Even the date of the Settlement itself is determined in part by the remnants of an eruption. Accounts written several hundred years later suggest Iceland's first permanent settler, Ingólfur Arnarson, arrived in the year 874; however, the presence of the Vatnaöldur ash layer (also called the Settlement or landnám layer), produced by a large eruption in circa 871-2, was found just below the oldest remains of a settlement in south Iceland. This hints that Norse settlers perhaps arrived on the heels of an eruption that dispersed ash across Iceland and even to continental Europe.

Icelanders have always paid close attention to volcanism and earthquakes; their survival depended on it. Since the Settlement, Iceland averages more than 20 eruptions per century. Roughly 75 percent of historical

Tephra horizons in south-central Iceland. The thick and light-colored layer at the center of the photo is rhyolitic tephra from Hekla.

PHOTO: DENTREN/WIKIMEDIA

eruptions have at least some explosive activity producing tephra—a catch-all term for bits of volcanic rock that result from explosive eruptions, which includes everything from tiny ash particles to pumices of all sizes. Tephra can have devastating effects on crop and livestock survival, which has led to many historical occasions of farm abandonment and regional agriculture devastation resulting from its deposition. In south-central Iceland, for example, homesteads throughout the valley of Þjórsárdalur were abandoned in 1104 after an eruption of Hekla deposited 10–30 centimeters (about 5–12 inches) of pumice over the landscape.

Tephra can have devastating effects on crop and livestock survival.

SIMILARLY, A 1362 ERUPTION of Öræfajökull buried the surrounding region in the southeast in tens of centimeter of pumice; as a result the region was renamed 'Öræfi', which means 'wasteland' in Icelandic. Before that eruption, the Öræfi district had been one of the most productive agricultural areas in Iceland, and at least 30 farms were destroyed and abandoned for decades after the eruption; rural settlements as far as 70 kilometers east of Öræfajökull were damaged by the tephra fall, and many were abandoned for several years. More recently, tephra from the 2010 Eyjafjallajökull eruption notably forced the grounding of airplanes, wreaked havoc on air traffic patterns for over a week, and ultimately led to more than $1.5 billion dollars in economic loss.

The scale of the effects of these impactful eruptions pales in comparison to those associated with the other, approximately 25 percent of Iceland's historical eruptions—the effusive basalt eruptions that blanket the landscape in seemingly endless lava flows forming much of Iceland's modern, unique landscape. On the extreme end, the Laki eruption of 1783–84 in southeastern Iceland produced basalt lava flows and craters that emanated from an erupting gash-like fissure in the ground. The lavas took advantage of pre-existing river valleys to travel more than 60 kilometers (35 miles) from the fissures; at one point, the flow speeds reached approximately 140 meters an hour (about 450 feet an hour).

Before Geldingadalir, the RVZ last experienced an eruption in the 1200s.

That eruption continued intermittently for 10 months, watched carefully by the inhabitants of the Síða district and the local Reverend, Jón Steingrímsson, who diligently recorded his observations on the eruption and the effects it had on the local people. When it was over, over 15 cubic kilometers (or about 3.6 cubic miles) of new lava covered more than 600 square kilometers (or about 230 square miles) of the landscape. The lavas that rushed out of the fissure also contained high levels of sulfur and fluorine. As the winds carried Laki's noxious fumes across Iceland in every direction, fluorine coated the grass, curbing its growth and poisoning the livestock that grazed on it. At the time, Icelanders were highly dependent upon the meager crops they could raise in the short summer months and their livestock; without them, approximately 20 percent of the population starved to death. The sulfur was distributed throughout the atmosphere and ultimately was responsible for lowering average temperature in the Northern Hemisphere by 1–3 degrees Celsius over the next few years.

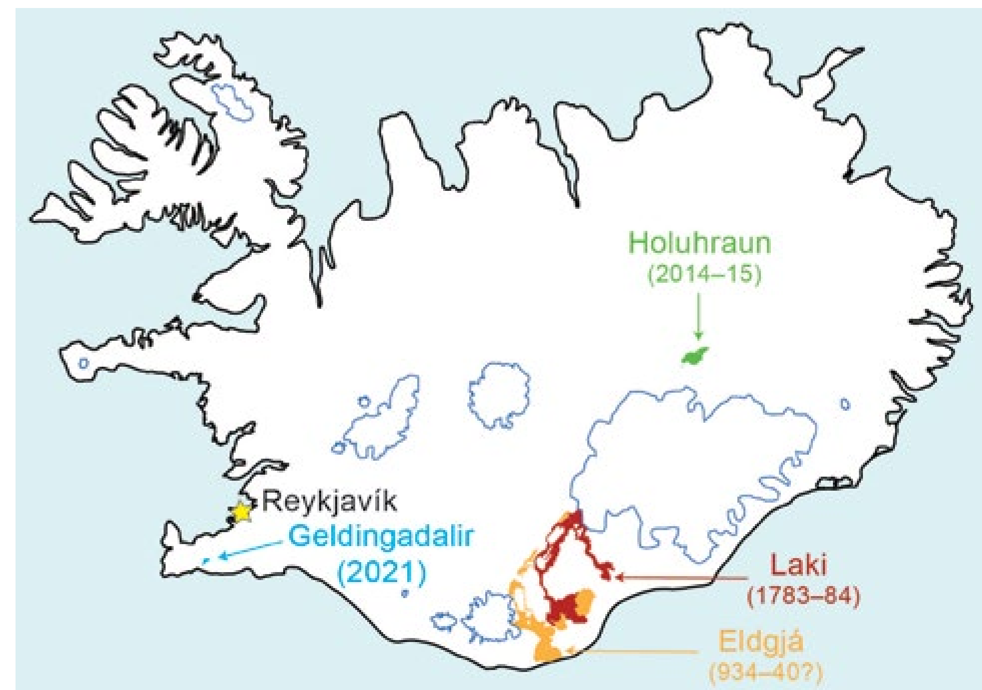
Another flood basalt eruption in the same region, that of Eldgjá from 934–40, erupted similarly large volumes of lava (about 18 cubic kilometers), tephra (about 1.4 cubic kilometers), and almost twice the sulfur volume as observed from Laki. The few written records that mention this time in Iceland's history indicate that the lava covered productive farmland, forced families to relocate, and even changed the course of the local river. Records from Europe and the Middle East also indicate significant changes in weather patterns that have been modeled to be strongly linked to the sulfur erupted from Eldgjá.

How do more recent flood basalt eruptions compare to these giants? The six-month-long Holuhraun (2014–15) eruption produced a mere 1.21 cubic kilometers of lava, and while gas emissions had effects regionally, they ultimately did not impact even the entirety of Iceland or elsewhere in Europe. Similarly, the Geldingadalir eruption, which has likely ceased after roughly seven months of activity, produced a comparatively paltry (about 4.5-square-kilometer) lava field containing a volume of 0.142 cubic kilometers of lava.

MANAGING PRESENT PHENOMENA

GELDINGADALIR LIES IN THE ACTIVE REYKJANES VOLCANIC zone (RVZ). The RVZ landscape is a hodge-podge of volcanic landscapes that tell of the region's dynamic past—this area of Iceland was glaciated during the most recent Ice Age, which ended around 10,000 years ago. A blanket of ice could not stop the volcanic forces at work in the subsurface, so volcanism continued despite the ice cover.

IMAGE COURTESY TENLEY BANIK



The Geldingadalir lava flow is tiny compared to several of Iceland's prior basalt lava eruptions, such as Eldgjá, Laki, and Holuhraun.

As a result, the RVZ is marked by unique landforms that only manifest when eruptions occur under and are confined by ice. These scattered subglacially erupted mountains consist of lava and glass that forms when magma erupts against ice or water—the rapid temperature change shatters the magma and quickly cools it into glass. This same process can produce violent, explosive eruptions when not constrained by a glacier (for example, Eyjafjallajökull in 2010), but when the explosivity is suppressed by ice, the erupted material piles up, leaving behind mountains and ridges when the ice melts. Younger lava flows, and their low craters erupted after the ice melted, fill in the topographic lows and leave a stark, sparsely vegetated landscape between the older mountains. Before Geldingadalir, the RVZ last experienced an eruption in the 1200s, and dating of eruptive material indicates that, on average, the RVZ erupts approximately every 700–800 years since the last major ice sheets in the area melted. At least with respect to timing, Geldingadalir is considered a very average eruption. Earlier historical RVZ eruptions were also similar in style to the Geldingadalir eruption, with basaltic lava flows, crater rows, and establishment of a flow field.

But one way this eruption is markedly different from previous eruptions has been in the monitoring and communication surrounding all aspects of the eruption. Icelanders have decades of experience in managing human interaction with a wide range of natural phenomena—ranging from avalanches, to

An effusive fissure eruption, the activity at Geldingadalir produced a steady outflow of basaltic lava while releasing volcanic gases.

PHOTO: TOBY ELLIOT/UNSPLASH

Steam rises where lava burns through glacier ice at Eyjafjallajökull in 2010.

PHOTO: CLEFTY/FLICKR

blizzards, to hurricane-strength winds, volcanic eruptions, and floods. Many view Geldingadalir as a monitoring and communication success. By the time the eruption started, the Icelandic Met Office, Civil Protection, University of Iceland, local police and rescue squads, and many other entities had been carefully tracking an uptick in regional earthquakes since the previous autumn, including installing more seismic stations to detect changes in earthquake patterns and magma movement. These groups then acted quickly once earthquakes intensified and the eruption started, working to ensure safety and scientific understanding at the site. Each new advance in the scientific understanding of the situation was published on social media and websites; police and other emergency personnel regularly communicated to the public about site conditions, closures, and new access routes; and the widespread use of social media sites and mobile phone coverage at the site allowed communication between locals and tourists. Determining the best parking location or sharing stories of expeditions to the volcano were ever-popular topics of conversation.

Earthquakes upended the daily lives of hundreds.

DESPITE THIS, THE Geldingadalir eruption was not without challenges. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic restrictions coinciding with its duration, hikers were encouraged to remain spaced apart while hiking—difficult to do with hundreds of other people also on the same narrow path. Iceland experienced an increase in tourism around the same time as the eruption started, and stories filtered through social media of foreign tourists foregoing testing and quarantine requirements in order to get to the volcano, thereby potentially putting others' health at risk. There were several instances of hikers not following posted health and safety precautions, including venturing into unsafe areas, being ill-prepared for weather conditions, getting lost at the site, or getting injured. The local environment was certainly impacted by the sudden arrival of humans wandering in nature; mountains that previously had little trace of humans teemed with people, machines plowing hiking trails, and noise. Local inhabitants dealt with hundreds of vehicles and thousands of people inundating an area that previously had no parking or other infrastructure or established hiking trails, in addition to the added concern about the eruption. The air quality was frequently degraded due to volcanic gasses, and the aforementioned earthquakes upended the daily lives of the hundreds of people living nearby.

PHOTO: JONATAN PIE/UNSPLASH

PHOTO: LEX MALONEY/UNSPLASH

ABOVE: **Hikers look out** at the lava field created by Fagradalsfjall.
LEFT: **On day 51 of the eruption,** visitors sit to observe an active fissure.

TRACKING THE FUTURE TO COME

THE GELDINGADALIR ERUPTION MIGHT BE ABOUT FINISHED, but Iceland is still volcanically active and will erupt again. Of particular interest now are the volcanic systems that lurk under Iceland's icecaps. Climate change is leading to accelerated ice melting—which has the potential to trigger more volcanic eruptions, as large ice masses press down on the surface, increasing the pressure on the underlying crust and mantle. When the ice later melts and the pressure on the subsurface releases, magma production intensifies. The last time Iceland experienced a deglaciation like the present one, approximately 10,000 years ago, the eruption rate increased tens of times higher than the current eruption rate due to this enhanced magma production.

Is this what awaits Iceland over the next few hundred years as the ice caps recede? If so, the resulting eruptions will impact the lives of Icelanders—and potentially people on a regional or global scale—for centuries to come.

Tenley Banik is an Associate Professor of Geology at Illinois State University. She has spent the last 15 years conducting research in Iceland on topics such as ancient volcanism, Iceland's construction, and magma-ice interaction, and was an American-Scandinavian Foundation Fellow in 2008 and 2015.

The Real Valkyrie of Birka

Recent reanalysis of a Swedish burial site offers new insight into the Viking Age—the existence of its women warriors.

By Nancy Marie Brown

PHOTO: NANCY MARIE BROWN

Looking back from the gate in the wall of Birka's Viking Age fortress to Björkö island's modern, peaceful farmland.

When Hjalmar Stolpe arrived on Björkö in 1871, this little island in Sweden's Lake Mälaren, a short boat ride from Stockholm, was a sleepy place, home to only five or six farm families. An entomologist, Stolpe was drawn there by reports of their plows turning up quantities of amber; he wondered if some of that amber preserved ants. What Stolpe discovered on Björkö, however, channeled his scientific career into quite a different direction. "His finds inspired him with a desire for archaeological investigation," reported a colleague in Stolpe's obituary.

What he had discovered on the island was the lost Viking town of Birka.

Over the next 18 years, Stolpe excavated approximately 1,100 Viking Age burials around Birka. According to Charlotte Hedenstierna-Jonson, one of the leading archaeologists working on Björkö today, Stolpe's "results were extensive and to this day the material constitutes essential reference material for study of the Viking Age."

Stolpe considered grave Bj581 "perhaps the most remarkable of all the graves in this field." By the time he addressed it, in 1878, he was quite an expert, having excavated over 500 Birka burials. Trained in stratigraphy, he produced "meticulous" scientific reports, Hedenstierna-Jonson notes; his field drawings on graph paper—a technique he introduced to archaeology—were "exceptional." He had also developed his instincts, learning to recognize hidden graves by the shallow depression left when an underground chamber collapsed, or simply by the thickness of the grass that grew there. "I have located many graves by striking the ground with a stick and listening for the duller sound made by the somewhat looser soil in the grave filling," he wrote.

The dip and the grass both identified Bj581, but Stolpe was stymied in his first efforts to excavate. The great standing stone marking the burial had toppled over and sunk into the chamber, capping it nearly completely. But by 1878, Stolpe had mastered a brand-new excavation technique—dynamite, patented by the Swedish chemist Alfred Nobel only a few years before, in 1867. Stolpe lit a match and blew the lid off the grave.

We are still hearing echoes of that blast, for recent reanalyses of Birka grave Bj581 have shown it to be even more remarkable than Stolpe imagined: Bj581 provides us with the first hard proof of real warrior women in the Viking Age; real valkyries.

REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION FROM NANCY MARIE BROWN, THE REAL VALKYRIE (2021)

Map of the Vikings' East Way c. 950, with an inset showing the town of Birka in Sweden. © 2020 Claire Van Vliet.

A BUSTLING, MULTICULTURAL AND MULTIETHNIC TRADING center of about a thousand residents, with a sturdy hillfort and a permanent garrison of warriors, Birka was founded in about 750 A.D. Traveling to Uppsala to meet the king of the Swedes, you would pass "a desirable, but to the unwary and those unacquainted with places of this kind a very dangerous, port," wrote the 11th-century monk Adam of Bremen. The danger came not only from the Vikings cruising Lake Mälaren, but from Birka's own defenses against such sea raiders: "They have blocked that bight of the restless sea for a hundred or more stadia" (at least 12 miles) "by masses of hidden rocks," Adam claimed, making the passage perilous but the harbor "the most secure in the maritime regions of Sweden."

Birka was desirable to clerics like Adam for its trade in "strange furs, the odor of which has inoculated our world with the deadly poison of pride." He added, "We hanker after a martenskin robe as much as for supreme happiness." Archaeologists have found thousands of pine marten paw bones in Birka's soil; their fur was known as "sable." The paws of squirrels—their fur marketed as "miniver"—along with bones of bears and foxes prove that many skins were prepared for sale onsite. These and other furs—beaver, otter—came from the dense coniferous forests at the far reaches of Lake Mälaren and through the town's trade with fur trappers farther north and east.

Iron forged from Sweden's red earth flowed to Birka as well, along the network of waterways that debouched into Lake Mälaren. But Adam did not mention Birka in his *History of the Archbishops of Hamburg-Bremen* only for its trade goods: Birka was the site of Sweden's first church. In 829, the Frankish emperor Louis the Pious sent a Christian missionary named Ansgar there. He set off from Denmark in a convoy of merchant ships, but "they fell into the hands of pirates," wrote his student, Rimbert, in *The Life of Saint Ansgar*. "The merchants with whom they were traveling defended themselves vigorously and for a time successfully, but eventually they were conquered and overcome." The pirates—Vikings—took the merchants' ships and trade goods. They took the royal gifts Ansgar had intended for Sweden's king. But the Vikings did not, strangely, take the missionaries themselves to sell as slaves or ransom as hostages. Instead, they put them ashore. "With great difficulty they accomplished their long journey on foot," Rimbert wrote.

The Swedish king, after he "had discussed the matter with his friends"—the town council—permitted Ansgar to preach at Birka. But Ansgar was able to convert only one important pagan. Herigar, called the "prefect" of Birka, was baptized and built a church on his estate outside the city walls, by the sheltered bay he named Korshamn, or Cross Haven.

Herigar's influence was not enough to protect the monks who replaced Ansgar, when he was called back south to become archbishop of Hamburg.

The reconstructed Viking Age village on Björkö gives a hint of what the bustling trading center of Birka might have looked like in the 10th century. At its height, Birka had a multicultural and multi-ethnic population of over 1,000.

PHOTO: NANCY MARIE BROWN

The people of Birka attacked the Christians' house "with the object of destroying it." They killed one of the monks; the others "they bound, and after plundering everything that they could find in their house, they drove them from their territory with insults and abuse." There was no priest in Birka until Ansgar himself came back in 852 and again received permission to set up "a place of prayer," as Rimbert wrote.

Ansgar's missionary efforts had little effect. Of Birka's thousands of graves, only a few hundred are simple enough to be Christian. Yet in some, both a cross and a Thor's hammer can be found. There is no Christian cemetery.

IN AROUND 930, A HUNDRED YEARS AFTER ANSGAR'S FIRST MISSION, when the Warriors' Hall was built beside Birka's hilltop fortress, the town remained decidedly, even aggressively, pagan. Spearheads were buried at several sites in the hall's foundation and under its protective rampart. These dedicate the area to Odin, god of war, whose weapon of choice was the spear. Beneath the central roof-bearing posts, along with more spearheads, were buried 40 comb cases made of deer antler, a Thor's hammer also carved from antler, a bronze sword chape bearing an image of Christ, and two silver dirhams with their Islamic inscriptions, "Mohammed is the messenger of Allah."

The comb cases—personal objects of no great worth—may represent each warrior in the garrison, imbuing the building with their individual spirit and strength. Were the warriors dedicating the building to Christ and

The warriors of Birka were taking sides, turning their backs on the increasingly Christianized West.

Allah, through the sword chape and Islamic coins, as well as to Odin and Thor? Hedenstierna-Jonson, who unearthed the deposits during an excavation in the 1990s, thinks not. The number of spearheads smothers the other religious offerings. The design of the hall itself is demonstrably pagan: Its boat-shaped walls and pairs of roof-bearing posts hark back to the chieftains' halls of an earlier age. The litter of cattle bones, including skulls and jaws, found on its floor speaks of animal sacrifices and ritual feasts.

The Warriors' Hall was "a statement of identity," "a sign of defiance" and "a response to an external threat," she concludes. In the mid 900s, King Håkon I of Norway, raised in England, was preaching Christianity and refusing to take part in pagan rituals. King Harald Bluetooth, who controlled the trade routes south and west from Birka, bragged of making the Danes Christian on the famous runestone he raised at Jelling. The warriors of Birka were taking sides, turning their backs on the increasingly Christianized West and reaffirming their ties to their pagan trading partners on the route known as the East Way, from Sweden east through the Baltic Sea to Russia and then south to Byzantium and the Silk Roads.

But the old gods did not save them; in the late 900s, the Birka warriors fought their last battle. Their enemies came from the lakeside, scaling the cliffs and swarming past the row of warriors' graves. With hundreds of flaming arrows, they set the Warriors' Hall ablaze, trapping the Birka warriors inside. They set fire to the smithies and the garrison's stores. They burned down the rampart, the gate and battlements, and took control of the hillfort. By then, they owned the town.

BIRKA'S WARRIORS' HALL WAS NEVER REBUILT, ITS GARRISON never reformed. After the attack, the town fell into a decline from which it never recovered. By the end of the 10th century, Birka ceased to function as a node on the East Way. Its artisans and traders found new homes on the isle of Gotland or in Sigtuna, about 20 miles up Lake Mälaren, where the first Christian king of the Swedes, Olof Skötkonung, would establish his official residence. Laid out in a planned grid punctuated by churches, Sigtuna was a new-style town, firmly facing the Christian West and turning its back on the still-pagan eastern shores of the Baltic Sea. It was a town built to service the bureaucracy of Christian kingship, not as a free marketplace of goods and ideas. Sigtuna was a Swedish town, a political center in which trade was regulated by the king and his ministers, not the multicultural, multiethnic mosaic of Birka. At Sigtuna, the first Swedish coins were minted. None have been discovered in Birka.

PHOTO: NANCY MARIE BROWN

Looking up from the gate in the wall of Birka's Viking Age fortress (Borgen) toward the lookout point on the crest of the hill, now marked with a cross to honor the first Christian church to be built in Sweden.

Filigreed silver cone found next to the skull in Birka grave Bj581.

PHOTO: SWEDISH HISTORY MUSEUM, STOCKHOLM

WHY DID THE PEOPLE OF BIRKA TURN THEIR BACKS ON Christianity? Partly it was to preserve the town's independence. But I believe it may also have been a response to the Christian attitude toward women, which was quite different than the pagan view. Unlike the Christian creation myth, where Eve is an afterthought, fashioned out of Adam's rib, in the Norse myth the first humans Embla (the female) and Askr (the male) are equal: They are made at the same time out of nearly the same stuff. As Snorri Sturluson tells the story in his *Edda*, in the beginning two driftwood logs, one elm and one ash, are found on the seashore by three wandering gods. These gods give the wood a human shape and bring it to life with blood, breath and curious minds. As different as an ash tree and an elm, these two new humans made a good team. The Vikings used ash wood for oars and the shafts of spears. They used elm wood for cart wheels and hunting bows. Both woods had uses in both peace and wartime, for transportation and for killing. The same was likely true about the pagan men and women of Viking Age Birka. They were equals, their roles in society being decided—not by gender—but based on their individual strengths and weaknesses.

By studying the graves opened by Hjalmar Stolpe and his successors, for example, archaeologists have learned that in Birka, over a third of the traders buying and selling cloth, iron, amber, honey, furs, salt, jewelry, weapons, wine or human captives, were women. And Birka's women were not only traders: They were warriors, as the recent reanalyses of grave Bj581 suggest.

IN 2017, CHARLOTTE HEDENSTIERNA-JONSON, NEIL PRICE AND eight colleagues at Stockholm University and the University of Uppsala published the scientific paper, "A Female Viking Warrior Confirmed by Genomics," in the *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*; in 2019, the team published a follow-up paper in *Antiquity*, "Viking Warrior Women? Reassessing Birka Chamber Grave Bj.581." Their first paper reports the results of chemical and genomic tests of the bones and teeth of the warrior dug up by Hjalmar Stolpe in 1878 from the weapons-rich grave he thought "most remarkable." Their second paper sets that warrior into a larger context, reexamining the grave and its contents as a whole.

Until their DNA tests proved the bones were a woman's, this grave was held up as the classic Viking warrior's grave. "The position of the skeleton," wrote an expert in 1966, "gave the impression that he had been sitting in the grave, rather than laid out. . . . The equipment indicates that this is a warrior's grave rather than that of a merchant. . . . The date of a silver coin, found underneath the skeleton of the dead man, provides a fairly good idea of the date of the grave: 913-980 A.D." Since 2017, when the DNA study turned "the dead man" into a dead woman, we've struggled with the implications. Beginning in 1837, graves containing weapons have been automatically catalogued as male. That assumption now seems to be a mistake—and one that's skewed our image of the Viking Age.

From her grave alone—if you discount the weapons—you cannot tell her gender, for the warrior in Bj581 is not wearing the kind of clothing or jewelry we assume that Viking women wore. Based on what little remains of her clothing, she dressed like the other 10th-century warriors buried in Birka. They affected an urban style, distinctive to the fortress towns along the East Way. It was a mixture of Viking, Slavic, steppe-nomadic and Byzantine fashion, both practical and unisex. Under a classic Viking cloak, clasped with a simple ring-shaped iron pin at one shoulder, the warrior in Bj581 wore a nomad's kaftan. It might have been made of Byzantine silk: In her grave was a scrap of fabric woven from silk and silver threads. It might have been decorated with mirrored sequins, a scattering of which were also found in her grave. On her head she wore a silk cap, topped by a filigreed silver cone. Only the cone and a scrap of silk remain of the cap, but an exact match for the cone was buried with another Birka warrior. A third matching cone was buried with a warrior near Kyiv.

The bones of the warrior in Bj581 are too degraded for any signs of battle trauma to be seen. Bone preservation at Birka is generally poor. The soil is too acidic. The mineral constituent of the bones simply breaks down into calcium and phosphorus salts that leach away. Microbes and fungi carve fissures and tunnels. The bones break into bits and dissolve into dust. But compared to her neighbors, this warrior is remarkably well-preserved. The

> *The warrior in Bj581 was not only an archer. She was buried with almost every Viking weapon known.*

university researchers from Stockholm and Uppsala were able to extract DNA from one tooth and one arm bone. They sequenced the DNA and searched for Y chromosomes, the genetic signal of maleness. Their results fell far to the female end of the spectrum. Other tests reveal extraordinary details about her life. The mature appearance of certain bones and the level of wear on her molars say she was at least 30 when she died—she could have been as old as 40. Her bones tell us, too, that she ate well all her life, which means she came from a rich family, if not a royal one. At over five feet, seven inches (170 centimeters), she was taller than most people around her: Five feet, five inches (165 cm) was the average man's height in 10th-century Scandinavia. The chemistry of her teeth tells us she was not a native of Birka, where she was buried, but came from far away. As teeth develop, they pick up isotopes of strontium (which mimics calcium) from the local water. The strontium signature of a tooth will thus match that of the bedrock where the child lived when that tooth's enamel formed. Her first molars (mineralized before she was three) reveal she was born somewhere in the southwestern part of the Viking world, in what is now southern Sweden or Norway. Her second molars say she sailed from there, before she was eight, west again—perhaps to the British Isles. She did not arrive in Birka until she was over 16.

THE WEAPONS BURIED WITH HER ALSO TELL A STORY. SHE was seated in her grave surrounded by them. None are overly fancy. None are simply for show. They are sturdy weapons, crafted for killing. The two-edged sword beside her right hand is an uncommon type, rare in Norway and Sweden, but more often found along the East Way. Her long sax-knife, in its elaborate bronze and silver ornamented sheath, is also Eastern, inspired by the equipment of the Magyar mounted archers who haunted the steppes and harassed the Viking traders along that East Way. The warrior of Bj581 was an archer, too, and may have shot from horseback. Two horses were buried with her, both with bridles. A pair of stirrups are all that remain of her saddle. By her left side were 25 spike-headed, armor-piercing arrows with elegant silver accents. Between the arrows and her sax was a bare spot, a gap, the right shape for a bow which had disintegrated. Mounted archery is a martial art at which women are well-known to match men. But the warrior in Bj581 was not only an archer. She was buried with almost every Viking weapon known: sword, sax, arrows and bow, axe, two spears and two shields.

Bj581 is also remarkable for its location. From the main gate of the hillfort that crowned the island, an avenue led to the Warriors' Hall, where

Coin found in a grave north of the Warriors' Hall, Birka.

ENGRAVING & SITE PLAN IMAGES: REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION FROM NEIL PRICE, ET AL. (2019)

COIN AND THE WEAPONS PHOTOS: CHRISTER ÅHLIN, SWEDISH HISTORY MUSEUM, STOCKHOLM

An 1889 engraving of Birka grave Bj581 made by Evald Hansen, based on Hjalmar Stolpe's site plans, for an article in *Ny Illustrerad Tidning* (Stolpe 1889).

The site plan Hjalmar Stolpe made during the excavation of Bj581 in 1878. From the Birka papers in the Antiquarian Topographical Archive, Stockholm.

The weapons from Birka grave Bj581: sword, scramasax, axe, two shields, two spears and 25 arrows.

PHOTO: USED BY PERMISSION OF THE VIKING PHENOMENON PROJECT, UPPSALA UNIVERSITY

The warrior in Birka grave Bj581, as imagined by artist Tancredi Valeri based on archaeologists' interpretations.

Birka's garrison lived. Bj581, marked with a large standing stone, lay west of the road, beside the hall, perched to look down over the harbor and out across the waters of Lake Mälaren. From this spot you could see everyone who came or went, to or from the busy town of Birka.

The prominent location of her grave, her panoply of weapons, the double sacrifice of valuable horses—these mark the high status of the warrior in Bj581. A final touch elevates her rank to war leader: the full set of pieces for the board game Hnefatafl, or Viking chess, that were placed in her lap. From the Roman Iron Age through the High Medieval Era, the combination of game pieces, weapons and horses in a grave has indicated a war leader. Game pieces symbolize authority and a "flair for strategic thinking." They express "the idea that success in warfare is not dependent on physical strength and dexterity alone but also on intelligence and the ability to foresee the actions of one's opponents," experts say.

Until the bones in Bj581 were determined to be female, no one doubted the warrior in that grave was a war leader. It was as a war leader she was buried, not as a woman. Her gender seems not to have been worth mentioning. Individuality was not highly prized in the Viking Age. What mattered was not your unique self but your role in life. If you had the required qualities, physical and mental, you could fill any role; you became that role.

The warrior woman buried in Birka grave Bj581 was a relic by the time she died.

THE VIKING AGE WAS AN AGE OF ENDINGS. IT WAS INDEED Ragnarok, the Twilight of the Gods, when the ancient pantheon of pagan deities was exchanged for the Christian one-in-three. It did not come at once, this Change of Ways, as the sagas call it, but in waves. The sun did not darken, nor the earth sink; the sky was not scorched by fire, nor the stars blotted out, as the wise woman predicts in the poem *Völuspá*, written in Iceland around the year 1000, when converting to Christianity was the policy of Viking kings. But when the Viking Age began, in the eighth century, the people of the North were pagan. When it ended, 300 years later, they had abandoned the old ways.

What changed? Their entire way of looking at the world. The roles of women and men were radically altered. What had once been ordinary became taboo. The warrior woman buried in Birka grave Bj581 was a relic by the time she died in the late 900s. By the time the stories and myths of the Vikings began to be written down in the 1100s, religion was a monopoly, power a hierarchy, and the idea that a woman could be a warrior was relegated to myths. It became hard for people to even imagine a Viking warrior woman like the real valkyrie of Birka.

Writer and independent scholar **Nancy Marie Brown** recreates the life and times of the Birka warrior woman in her book *The Real Valkyrie: The Hidden History of Viking Warrior Women* (St. Martin's Press, 2021), from which this article is largely taken. In 1988 she received the Thor Thors Memorial Fellowship for research in Iceland from the ASF.

The Changing Face of Greenland

As the Arctic becomes central to the climate debate, indigenous voices are key to deciding its future.

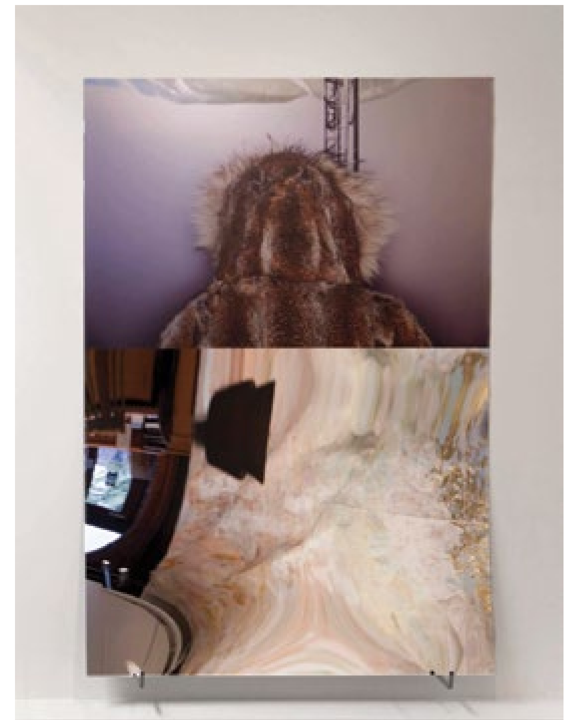
Text and photographs
by Marek Ranis

***Arrival Greenland*, 2009,** was an installation and performance taking place across locations in northwestern Greenland with Greenlandic and international volunteers (images pages 48-56).

AS THE NORTH HAS BEEN dramatically transforming alongside climate change, it has also been moving to the center of our attention. These environmental and social changes are deconstructing our maps and our perception of the peripheries versus the center—the Arctic is no longer a periphery of our universe or a large, white, blank backdrop on which we project our imaginary ideas. As the North has become overwhelmed by climate change-related challenges, it is at the same time a land where many recognize future economic opportunities. As a result, the Arctic now is the center, a focal point of an environmental, political and economic global discourse with many voices from southern regions eager to define its future.

IN 2009, I WAS ABLE TO TAKE AN ART residency at Upernavik Museum in Greenland with the support of an ASF Fellowship. This experience was crucial to my personal reassessment of my own climate-centered research and work, and one which began a process of decolonizing my own practice and expanding my understanding of complex relationships between the climate and the post-colonial challenges of many parts of the world. During this year, while gaining more political independence from Denmark, Greenlanders recognized a possibility of dramatic economic and political emancipation promised by potential access to the rare mineral deposits. Simultaneous to the catastrophic impact on the polar landscape, climate change provides a potential hope for a nation's economic independence.

MY 2009 PERFORMANCE AND photo series *Arrival Greenland* was produced in Upernavik and in Ilulissat with the participation of the local community and international tourists, who were deeply aware of the environmental and socio-economical changes happening in Greenland, both fearful and hopeful about the future. The concept that it explores—the return to Greenland's subtropical climate from 200 million years ago—will not take place anytime soon, but it does reflect the centrality of the Arctic and its communities to climate change. Later, the work from this series traveled to the subtropical location of Florida's Key West, with the performance *Arrival Key West*, and I have since worked with native populations in Alaska to explore these conversations further in the series *Arctic Utopia*.



Images from the 2014 series *Arctic Utopia*; digital prints on acrylic mirrors (pages 58-60).

INTERNAL AND INTERNATIONAL debates about the future of the Arctic riches continue today, now with much stronger and more powerful voices of Inuit nations. The political, economic and cultural self-empowerment of Arctic indigenous peoples is rightly setting the tone of a global conversation about the future of Arctic resources. Discussions on whether to tap Greenland's deposits of rare-earth minerals were crucial to this year's parliamentary elections and the now-ruling Inuit Ataqatigiit party, which this past November passed a law banning uranium mining and ceasing the development of its Kuannersuit mine, one of the largest existing rare-earth deposits. Native Greenlanders and their leaders are looking at environmental changes with a focused attention; their concerns include the right to protect their identity and their narrative, and the right to self-determination, including access to the natural resources. It is essential that those concerns are recognized and addressed.

Marek Ranis is a multi-media environmental artist and Associate Professor of Art at the College of Arts and Architecture, UNC Charlotte.

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Four Days in August

Remembering the 1991 Soviet attempted coup's impact on Finland—and reassessing its response.

By Jason Lavery

ALEXANDER II

Senate Square in Helsinki, Finland. Days after the Soviet coup attempt in 1991, the city's annual Night of the Arts here featured a screening of Sergei Eisenstein's 1927 film *The End of St. Petersburg.*

PHOTO: MILTON CORREA/FLICKR

In August 1991 I arrived in Helsinki for two weeks of research. On Monday, August 19, the first workday of that trip, I overslept my alarm and scrambled to maximize my day at Finland's National Archives. I did not look at the morning paper or turn on the television. A ubiquitous internet was still years away; unlike a growing number of Finns at the time, I did not own a mobile telephone. The only reason I still remember the chaos of that morning 30 years later stems from an event that day that would change the future of Finland and the world.

I made it to the bus for a half-hour ride to the archive. The atmosphere seemed very quiet, even by Finnish standards. When I arrived at the archive, anxiety rather than the usual industry of researchers seemed to power the quiet. I ordered documents and waited at my table to read them. The archivist who brought me the materials had been an acquaintance for some years; I asked him what was going on. He responded, "Haven't you heard? Gorbachev has been overthrown." A coup d'état had taken place in the Soviet Union which threatened to further undermine the carefully wrought Soviet-Finnish relationship and the resultant internal stability of Finland.

PHOTO: BIGPILESTOCK/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Russian Federation President Boris Yeltsin waves the imperial tricolor Russian flag during a rally on August 22, 1991, the day it was restored as the official Russian state symbol.

PHOTO: COURTESY GEORGE BUSH PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY

The U.S. President George H. W. Bush and Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev hold a press conference at the Helsinki Summit, Finland, on September 9, 1990.

FINLAND AND GORBACHEV'S SOVIET UNION

DURING THE COLD WAR ERA, FINLAND BENEFITED GREATLY from its foreign policy of neutrality deferential to Soviet power known as the "Paasikivi-Kekkonen Line," named after presidents J. K. Paasikivi (1946-56) and Urho Kekkonen (1956-82). Finland carved out a distinct place in the Cold War divide between East and West. Relations with its eastern neighbor were predictable, if at times constraining; trade with the Soviet Union, which at its height accounted for a quarter of Finland's foreign trade, fueled Finland's spectacular economic growth.

Against this backdrop of stability and prosperity, many in Finland greeted Gorbachev's policies of reform known as perestroika and glasnost as a threat rather than an opportunity. The new Soviet leader had inherited an ailing economy that he could never cure, and as a result, Finnish-Soviet trade had declined precipitously, contributing to a years-long depression in the Finnish economy starting in 1990. Gorbachev's direct outreach to the West threatened to make Finland less relevant as a recognized intermediary for East-West relations.

Most ominous was Gorbachev's attempt to melt a superpower frozen in totalitarianism. Many in Finland feared that the melt would flood their

President Koivisto and many of his compatriots saw themselves painted into a corner by Gorbachev.

country—Gorbachev's opening of the political system created political conflict not seen previously in the Soviet Union. Among these conflicts was the struggle in the neighboring Baltic republics of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania for independence; Estonia, a country with close historical and linguistic ties to Finland, commanded particular concern. As leaders of independence movements in the Baltic states called on Finland to help them, many private Finnish organizations leant support; official Finland kept its distance publically. After an attack by Soviet troops on demonstrators at the radio tower in Vilnius, Lithuania, in January 1991, Finland's President Mauno Koivisto reaffirmed his view that the Baltic republics belonged to the Soviet Union and that their independence was not in Finland's national interests. The Finnish president was not the only leader of a Western democracy reluctant to support the Baltics' drive for independence, but his lack of concern about the violent reprisals against peaceful demonstrators did set him apart. Despite hosting a European security conference in 1975 whose accords are associated with human rights, Finland had avoided the topic in bilateral Finnish-Soviet relations—Soviets looking to defect to the West during the Cold War knew that Finland could only be a corridor to reaching asylum elsewhere, as virtually all who had sought asylum there were returned to the USSR.

President Koivisto and many of his compatriots saw themselves painted into a corner by Gorbachev. If the opponents of reform won out and Finland had been seen as too friendly to Gorbachev, Finland could find itself on an even shorter Soviet leash; others feared the possibility of success. What if Gorbachev opened the Soviet Union's borders? More people lived in the greater Leningrad area than in all of Finland. Millions of Russians could stream into Finland, which was also a fear in the event of a violent crackdown.

A REALIZATION OF FEARS

ON TELEVISION DURING THE FIRST EVENING OF THE COUP, politicians, journalists and Sovietologists rendered a unanimous verdict: The Soviet Union's experiment in democratization had come to an end. Prime Minister Esko Aho proclaimed before the television cameras, "The government of Finland regrets that the state of emergency has interrupted the democratic development in the Soviet Union." Although diplomatically formulated, the prime minister's statement represented the first time since the end of World War II that a Finnish political leader of national stature openly criticized the Soviet Union.

Media reports focused on the leader of the Soviet junta, Vice President Gennady Yanayev. Yanayev had known many Finnish politicians, including Prime Minister Aho, from as far back as the 1970s, when Yanayev managed the Soviet Communist Party's relations with political youth organizations abroad. In an example of the breadth and depth of Soviet political influence in Finland during the Cold War, Yanayev had developed contacts with youth leaders of most of Finland's political parties, not just with the communists. Old video footage of Yanayev with Finland's future leaders ran regularly during the coup, an embarrassment to the Finnish politicians in question.

PHOTO: AIVIS FREIDENFELDS/COURTESY STATE CHANCELLERY OF LATVIA

Former Prime Minister of Finland Esko Tapani Aho, pictured here at a Foreign Investors' Council in Latvia (FICIL) press conference, 2010.

THE CONCLUSION THAT THE SOVIET UNION'S DEMOCRATIC development had come to an end rested on a long-standing assumption that Russia could not democratize itself. The conclusion did not account for how much the country had changed in the Gorbachev era. Power had become so decentralized that a sloppy coup could not reestablish the old central authority and eliminate newer locations of power. The USSR's largest republic—Russia—had declared itself sovereign in June 1990; Russia's leader Boris Yeltsin seized the initiative in rallying the widespread opposition to the coup. By Thursday, August 22, the junta had fallen from power and Gorbachev returned to Moscow from his short house arrest.

Finns had just witnessed the beginning of the end of the USSR.

A few days later, Helsinki held its annual Night of the Arts, when bookstores, museums, theaters and other cultural institutions stay open late into the night. The theme of this night—planned some months in advance—was Soviet culture. A movie was screened in Senate Square; this, ironically enough, was Sergei Eisenstein's 1927 film *The End of St. Petersburg*, which centered on the Russian Revolution of 1917. Finns had just witnessed the beginning of the end of the USSR. Gorbachev returned to power facing an ascendant Yeltsin; the national movements in the Baltic states and other republics intensified their push for independence. In December 1991, the leaders of the Soviet Union's republics agreed to end the USSR.

PHOTO: COURTESY U.S. EMBASSY IN FINLAND

President Mauno Koivisto and President Ronald Reagan meeting in Helsinki in 1988.

FROM MOSCOW TO BRUSSELS

THE COUP AND ITS IMPACTS pushed Finland towards joining the ongoing process of Western European integration led by the European Community. In 1987, the EC approved the Single European Act, which mandated by 1992 the creation of an internal market based on the free flow of labor, capital, goods and services between member states. The community then proposed a similar internal market or European Economic Area with the countries of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), a less-comprehensive trading bloc to which Finland and other European neutrals belonged. Finland, as well as other EFTA members, joined the EU in creating this in 1991.

The Berlin Wall fell in the fall of 1989; a year later, Germany was reunified. Germany's European partners and the Germans themselves then moved to further the process of European integration. In December 1991, the European Community's member states signed the Maastricht Treaty, which changed the community's name to the European Union, revised the Union's decision-making processes, outlined the process for the implementation of a single currency and opened the union to paths of cooperation beyond the purely economic.

Many Finns saw the process of Western European integration to be as problematic as the disintegration of the Soviet Union and its empire in Eastern Europe. The end of the Cold War forced not only Finland, but also other Western European neutrals, to reconsider their place in Europe. In October 1990, the Swedish government announced that it would seek membership in the European Union; its decision to integrate, along with the continuing disintegration of the USSR, threatened to marginalize Finland in the new Europe. Many also saw risks in similarly joining the EU. Would Germans and other foreigners buy up the country, especially its summer cottages? Agriculture, heavily protected and subsidized, would face greater competition from other European countries. How much national sovereignty would be lost to the EU? Would Finns have to sacrifice their welfare state?

Behind the façade, Finnish officials were in fact working with those forces of change.

Despite all this, in January 1992, just days after the collapse of the USSR, President Mauno Koivisto proposed Finnish European Union membership. After approval by the Cabinet and Parliament, Finland opened accession talks with the EU; when the accession treaty was completed in 1994, 56.9 percent of voters in a consultative referendum approved membership, which was then approved by Parliament by 152-45. On January 1, 1995, Finland, along with Sweden and Austria, became a member of the European Union.

Finns had ultimately joined the process of Western European integration because of the disintegration in the East. Finns wanted to secure their country's access to Western markets in the face of its deep depression, caused in part by the end of Finnish-Soviet trade. The end of the Soviet Union and the Cold War made Finland's claim as a place between the East and West irrelevant—Finland had to find a new place in a new Europe. While Finns were and still are reluctant to join NATO, the EU provided a political alliance that could enhance Finland's security in the face of the ongoing turmoil in post-Soviet Russia.

A TURNING POINT AND A CONTINUITY

IN THE YEARS FOLLOWING THE FAILED COUP, AN UNDERSTANDING had developed that official Finland had denied or dismissed the forces of change in the USSR, preferring instead to bet on the continuation of the totalitarian Soviet system. Finns sought to put distance between themselves and an era in which many either outright supported Soviet-style communism or ignored the moral ramifications of the Paasikivi-Kekkonen Line; Finland had now become a member of the European Union, an economic community as well as a community of values such as democracy, human rights and rule of law.

In the past few years, however, new information has come out that challenges this, and we now know that behind the cold façade, Finnish officials were in fact working with those forces of change. In a doctoral dissertation published in 2013, the historian Heikki Rausmaa revealed that between 1988 and 1991, official Finland—under the guise of maintaining cultural ties—channeled about a million Finnish marks (then about $200,000) into supporting training Estonians for a variety of jobs in government and business to serve a future independent Estonia. This secret operation had been actively supported by President Koivisto.

The passage of time has also allowed for a more nuanced understanding of what Finland's foreign policy leaders were doing. A five-part documentary about the year of 1991 that ran on Finnish television this past August illuminated the widespread contacts official Finland had with Russian and Soviet politicians as well as with the leaders of the national movements in the Baltic states. Official Finland had hedged its bets against all possible outcomes in the Soviet Union: a totalitarian backlash, the continuation of Gorbachev's policies or the disintegration of the USSR.

PHOTO: ALMOG/WIKIMEDIA CREATIVE COMMONS

Tanks at the Red Square during the Soviet coup attempt in August 1991.

In the wider sweep of Finland's history, these more recent revelations are not surprising. A small country on the border of a great power, Finland has always had to hedge its bets in foreign policy to prosper and even survive. During its first few months as an independent country, Finland had to orient its foreign policy away from Germany and toward the Allies to adjust to the outcome of the First World War; in World War II, Finland first fought with and then against Germany. During the Cold War, Finland accepted its place in Moscow's power-political sphere of influence while maintaining ties to the West, in a manner that would make its later entry to the European Union, in many ways, an uneventful matter of course. And despite its unwillingness to join NATO, Finland has cultivated close ties with the alliance; Finnish soldiers participated in the NATO-led operation in Afghanistan that ended in August 2021. Finland's reactions to the events of August 1991 therefore represent not only a turning point, but also a continuity of flexibility in its conduct of foreign policy.

Jason Lavery is Regents Professor of History at Oklahoma State University and Adjunct Professor of Scandinavian and Finnish Church History at the University of Helsinki. He has published widely on the history of Finland, such as his work *The History of Finland* (2006). His most recent book, *Reforming Finland: The Diocese of Turku in the Age of Gustav Vasa 1523-1560*, was published by Brill Academic Publishers in 2017.

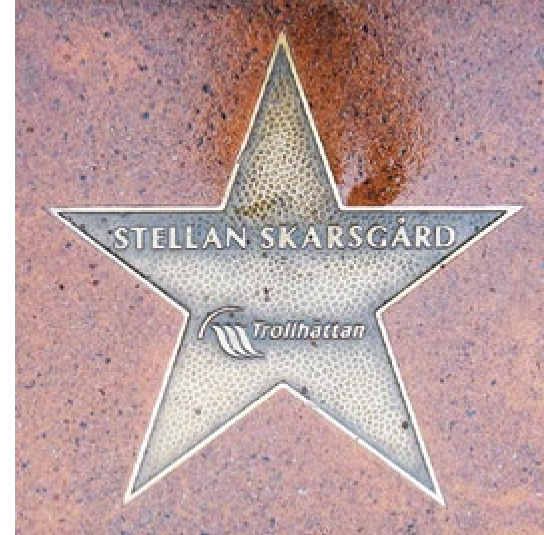
Welcome to Trollywood:

Cinema, Saabs and the Creation of Modern Sweden in the City of Trollhättan

How a Swedish city's storied background in manufacturing and beyond led it to become a major Nordic film center—and why it's known internationally throughout the film world today

By Rowdy Geirsson

PHOTOS: ROWDY GEIRSSON



Stellan Skarsgård's bronze star from Trollhättan's Walk of Fame along Storgatan.

The Saab Car Museum in Trollhättan.

PHOTO: COURTESY VISIT TROLLHÄTTAN VÄNERSBORG

A view of Trollhättan Falls, with Olidan Power Station above.

PHOTO: ROWDY GEIRSSON

Göta Älv and the Fall & Slussområde with Olidan in the center, viewed from the vantage point of Kopparklinten.

A SMALL CITY OF NEARLY 60,000 INHABITANTS, LOCATED 75 kilometers northwest of Gothenburg, the Swedish city of Trollhättan may not seem its likeliest to be a bustling hub of filmmaking. Long-associated with industrial activity and previously best-known as the home of Saab, Trollhättan, like so many other former centers of heavy manufacturing in the Western world, has since seen those days largely pass it by. But thanks to a unique set of factors that coincided in the late 1980s and early 1990s—and directly linked to the success of the rising film production company Film i Väst (Film in West)—Trollhättan is now known throughout the cinema world as headquarters of acclaimed productions ranging from the Academy Award-winning Swedish film *A Man Called Ove* to Lars von Trier's English-language films *Melancholia* and *Dogville*, where on any given day one might be as likely to spot Stellan Skarsgård, Kirsten Dunst or Nicole Kidman as any local. Trollhättan has become Trollywood.

But Film i Väst is not Trollhättan's first enterprise to distribute its products far beyond Sweden's borders; in that sense, the company follows a long line of others who have seized other opportunities for innovation. Dating back as early as the 15th century, Trollhättan has been a ripe center for activity, in part owing to its geologic and geographic location just south of Lake Vänern along the Göta Älv river. And while visitors today may flock to capture their photos on Trollywood's own Walk of Fame, the rich chapters of history that precede Trollhättan's film stardom have helped pave the way for its inventiveness today.

INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

ONE OF THE MOST VISUALLY STUNNING LANDMARKS OF Trollhättan is its Trollhättan Falls, located at the start of Malgö Bridge, where the Göta Älv drops 32 meters. In days of yore, the falls inspired the city's name—Trollhättan's earliest inhabitants believed that trolls lived within them and that the rocks and islands protruding from the water were their hats or hoods. But they were also of great significance to Sweden's early industrial development, as their high potential for waterpower attracted activity beginning in the 15th century with the first appearance of sawmills.

The founding of the city of Gothenburg in 1621 created additional opportunities for commerce between Trollhättan and the coast. As better transportation routes became necessary, early plans for a canal system to bypass the falls drew consideration, eventually culminating in a series of locks and canals in 1800 that have since expanded several times and, in conjunction with the longer Göta Canal, form part of the extensive canal system that cuts through Sweden from coast to coast.

As factories established themselves in the city during the 1800s and 1900s, Trollhättan became the home of NOHAB (Nydqvist och Holm AB), a major manufacturer of locomotives that began operating in 1847. But perhaps the most significant and lasting of all of Trollhättan's industrial achievements involved the construction of Olidan, the first large-scale

Built with 13 generators, Olidan now has nine in operation producing electricity via hydropower.

PHOTO: PER PIXEL PETERSSON/IMAGEBANK SWEDEN

hydroelectric power plant built in Sweden, which began operation in 1910 and is still in use today. In addition to the electricity it continues to generate, the most enduring aspect of Olidan's legacy is its role in helping establish the modern state of Sweden.

This was because the construction of Olidan involved the consolidation of the necessary land and water rights by the Swedish state (primarily the purchase of property associated with the existing locks and canals), which then created its own company to handle the financing and operation of the hydroelectric power plant. This event marked the first instance that the Swedish state assumed the role of entrepreneur and business owner. Still wholly owned by the Swedish state, the company is now known as Vattenfall and operates hydroelectric, nuclear, biomass, coal and gas power plants as well as solar and wind farms throughout Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.

The WWII era also marked a significant turning point in Trollhättan's industrial development. In 1937 Svenska Aeroplan AB—Saab, for short—was founded in the city to manufacture bomber planes for the Swedish Air Force as international tension escalated. As the war ended, Saab turned its attention towards car manufacturing, initially in the city of Linköping. Beginning in 1949, the company began producing the Saab 92 model at its Trollhättan factory and gradually built a reputation as a manufacturer of reliable vehicles.

Its big break on the international scene came in 1959, when a Saab 93 was one of only 13 vehicles to complete the 24 Hours of Le Mans sports

CREDIT: AREND/FLICKR

A Saab 93 raced by Sture Nottorp and Gunnar Bengtsson marked Saab's first appearance in the 24 Hours of Le Mans in 1959.

car race, the world's oldest vehicular endurance-based racing event. As the company's international profile increased, so too did its sales. Between 1978 and 1998 more than one million models of the Saab 900, generally considered to be the company's most iconic car, were sold. The Trollhättan factory remained its primary automobile production facility throughout the 20th century, including through General Motors' gradual acquisition of Saab's automobile division, until its eventual bankruptcy in the wake of the Great Recession.

INDUSTRIAL DECLINE AND THE EMERGENCE OF TROLLYWOOD

BEGINNING IN THE MID-1980S, TROLLHÄTTAN'S MANUFACTURING industries faced a series of challenges, beginning with the permanent closure of NOHAB in 1986. Not long after, Sweden experienced a sharp economic crisis in the early 1990s, leading to its joining the EU in 1994. But rather than spiraling downward in a state of irrevocable economic stagnation, Trollhättan reversed the decline by using its circumstances to reinvent itself in a unique way.

That reinvention is directly linked to Film i Väst, which was founded in 1992 by Älvsborg county's Landsting: a public entity akin to a county government responsible for funding and decision-making related to development, transportation, healthcare and cultural events within its territory, which has since been replaced by Sweden's Region framework. Film i Väst's original

Film i Väst was essentially able to hit the ground running shortly after it arrived.

name, Västernfilm (Western Film), referenced the organization's location in western Sweden originally in the municipality of Alingsås. The original purpose of Västernfilm was to establish a publicly funded pool of money for local filmmaking mainly intended for amateur filmmakers, as well as to provide filmmaking educational opportunities and film screenings for the local population.

THE FOLLOWING YEAR VÄSTERNFILM CHANGED ITS NAME to Film i Väst and over the next several years gradually grew, acquiring better technology, postproduction facilities and some increased financing while maintaining its focus on working with young, aspiring filmmakers. Its future impact for Trollhättan occurred in 1996, when it acquired funds from the EU as part of the EU's Structural Fund Objective 2 initiative. This initiative focused on declining industrial areas of its member states, one of which was the Fyrstad region of Sweden, comprising the "four towns" of Lysekil, Uddevalla, Trollhättan and Vänersborg. Consequently, Film i Väst would be required to relocate from Alingsås, which did not qualify, to one of those four municipalities.

This would prove serendipitous for Trollhättan, whose leaders were actively looking for new ways to reinvigorate the city. The former NOHAB location's large facilities, now closed, were viewed as ideal for Film i Väst's productions. A decision was made shortly thereafter, and Film i Väst was essentially able to hit the ground running shortly after it arrived.

And hit the ground running it did. Now wholly owned by Västra Götalandsregionen (the replacement for Älvsborg Landsting), in 1997 it produced its first two full-length feature films, *Hela Härligheten* (renamed as *Love Fools* in English) and *Sjön (The Lake)*, and by 2006 it co-produced *Arn: Tempelriddaren (Arn: The Knight Templar)*. Based on the novels of Jan Guillou, *Arn: Tempelriddaren* is the most expensive Swedish film ever made, and it received wide international distribution. Other hits followed thereafter and cemented Trollywood's reputation, with popular and critically-acclaimed television series and films including *A Man Called Ove*, *The Hundred-Year-Old Man Who Climbed Out a Window and Disappeared*, the Swedish adaptation of *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* trilogy and the first season of *The Bridge*.

As a result, the old area of NOHAB's facilities, also known as the Innovatum district, have since seen a revival. In addition to Film i Väst's Studio Fares (the second largest in the Nordic nations), the Innovatum district is home to predominantly 19th-century brick buildings that currently house the Saab Car Museum, Konsthallen (the local art museum) and

PHOTOS: ROWDY GEIRSSON

The main entrance to Film i Väst's location in Trollhättan.

Artist Kent Karlsson's large rabbit stands watch outside Konsthallen Trollhättan.

Film i Väst's building in Trollhättan.

PHOTO: ROWDY GEIRSSON

The Olidan hydroelectric plant viewed from the Fall & Slussområde.

Innovatum Science Center (an educational science museum for families and children). As Film i Väst has now co-produced more than 600 films since its inception in 1992, it has been the filming site of many other successful Swedish television and film productions—drawing many stars of the screen to Trollywood, including Swedish stars such as Mikael Nyqvist, Helena Bergström and Lena Endre, to name just a few. As a result, Trollhättan now features its own Walk of Fame along Storgatan (one of the main pedestrian thoroughfares in the center of town), replete with bronze stars cast into the pavement, emblazoned with the names of the actors and actresses who have visited the city.

AMONG THESE NEW AND STAR-STUDDED LANDMARKS, THE legacy of Trollhättan's earlier industrial achievements lives on. The Olidan hydroelectric dam remains an imposing and magnificent granite structure, drawing tourists particularly during the month of July, when its sluice gates are opened and the water of the Göta Älv comes storming down the rocky ravine. The surrounding area—the Trollhättan Fall & Slussområde, as it's called in Swedish, which is located immediately across the Trollhätte Canal from the Innovatum district—features walking trails and pedestrian bridges that crisscross the jagged terrain, while the main course of the Göta Älv and its man-made tributaries weave through the landscape.

Well-preserved buildings from Trollhättan's industrial past blend with the thick woods to create a tranquil atmosphere of a bygone era. In addition to the visual appeal of the historic buildings and infrastructure, the area also features the attractions of Kanalmuseet (a history museum about the locks and canals), Skulpturrundan (a series of public artworks integrated into the trail system), Kungsgrottan (a massive stone that members of the Swedish royal family have been inscribing their names upon since 1754) and boat rides on an authentic 19th-century vessel through the locks and canals during the summer months.

Meanwhile, other aspects of Trollhättan's industrial history are poised to make an impact elsewhere, just as Film i Väst has brought new ones in. Despite its dissolution as an automobile manufacturer, Saab continues to live on within various Saab Clubs around the world, as well as the current production of electric vehicles. Since it was founded in 2012, National Electric Vehicle Sweden AB, a Chinese-owned company registered in Sweden, has acquired Saab's assets including its name. While operating under a different moniker, it is presently conducting research and development for electric vehicles at Saab's former production facility in Trollhättan, continuing the thread of development from where Saab had been at the time of its legacy with the current NEVS 9-3 EV model, a successor to the Saab 9-3. Meanwhile, the separate Saab Group is still based in Sweden, where it continues to manufacture aircraft, radar systems and other military and defense equipment.

As filmgoers eagerly await the next cinematic masterpieces to be delivered from Trollywood, the city itself thus continues to contribute elsewhere beyond its municipal border and those of Sweden; and in decades to come, new chapters of innovation will be sure to follow.

TROLLHÄTTAN TIMELINE

1400s	Sawmills begin appearing along the river at Trollhättan (then known as Stora Edet).
1500s	Logging has become a thriving business; timber from Värmland is floated downstream through Trollhättan to Kongahälla and Lödöse for shipmaking, a demand that only increases with the founding of Gothenburg in 1621.
1700s	Smaller sawmills begin consolidation into larger ones.
1800	A first canal is built to bypass the falls.
1844	Following the 1832 completion of the Göta Canal between Vänern and the Baltic, the canal system at Trollhättan is expanded to enable larger boats to bypass the falls.
1847	NOHAB (Nydqvist och Holm AB) is founded in Trollhättan for the purpose of manufacturing water turbines.
1847	Trollhättan becomes its own parish (previously part of Gärdhem's parish).
1865	NOHAB produces its first locomotive, which becomes the company's specialty.
1904	The existing canal system is purchased by the Swedish state, which had already previously owned the water rights.
1907	The Olidan hydroelectric power station is complete.
1916	An additional expansion of the canal system is completed; this system is the one still in use today; Trollhättan officially becomes a city.
1930	NOHAB Flygmotorfabriker is founded as a new company in a joint effort by the Swedish state and NOHAB for the purpose of manufacturing airplane motors.
1936	Swedish arms manufacturer Bofors acquires NOHAB.
1937	Saab is founded to produce planes; it acquires Bofors' shares in NOHAB Flygmotorfabriker.
1941	Volvo acquires NOHAB Flygmotorfabriker; its name changes over subsequent years to Svenska Flygmotor, then Volvo Flygmotor, then finally Volvo Aerospace Corporation.
1942	Hojumstationen hydroelectric power station is completed to complement the power already generated by Olidan.
1949	Saab begins making cars in Trollhättan.
1975	Saab Car Museum opens in a very small, hard-to-find location in Trollhättan.
1986	Bofors permanently shuts down the NOHAB operations.
1987	Saab Car Museum relocates to the NOHAB area.
1997	Film i Väst establishes operations in the NOHAB area; this same year Innovatum is also founded in the NOHAB area, which includes the business park and science museum under its umbrella.
2004	Film i Väst establishes Studio Fares.
2011	Saab Automobile goes bankrupt.
2012	NEVS acquires Saab Automobile assets; it maintains research and development in Trollhättan.
2012	Volvo Aero Corporation is bought by British GKN Aerospace; manufacturing still exists in Trollhättan under the name GKN Aerospace, Engine Systems Sweden.

Storgatan in Trollhättan, home to the city's own Walk of Fame.

Sign along Trollhättan's Walk of Fame featuring Nicole Kidman for her work in *Dogville*.

PHOTO: ROWDY GEIRSSON

Rowdy Geirsson is the editor of the book *Norse Mythology for Bostonians*. His writing has appeared in the Sons of Norway's *Viking* magazine and online at *McSweeney's Internet Tendency*, among other sites.

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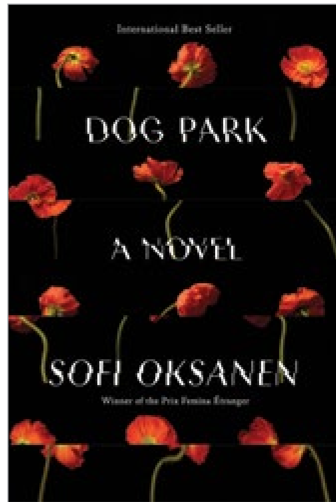
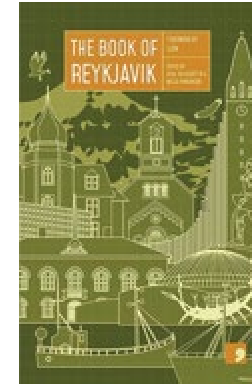


Dog Park
By Sofi Oksanen
Translated from the Finnish by Owen Frederick Witesman
Penguin Random House, New York, NY, September 2021
368 pages, hardcover, $28
ISBN 978-0-52565-947-1

This latest psychological thriller and international bestseller by award-winning Finnish-Estonian author Sofi Oksanen, *Dog Park* begins with two strangers encountering each other in a park in Helsinki in 2016. One has ruined the other's life, and yet both are experiencing the same fragile moment in the present—watching their own biological children play with the families who raised them. What follows is an intricate tale of intrigue set within the global fertility market, alternating between a history of lies and betrayal in early post-Soviet Ukraine to attempts by two enigmatic figures to outmaneuver one another in the present day. Ranking on several recent lists of crime novels to watch, *Dog Park* is a slow-burning thriller about the consequences of exploitation.

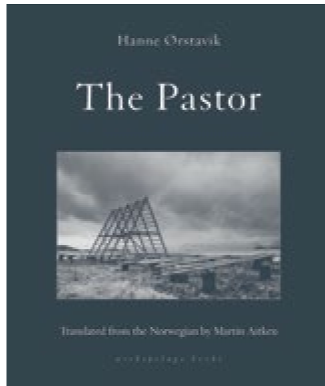


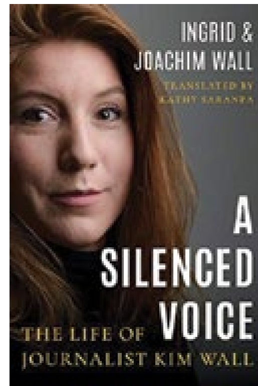
The Book of Reykjavik: A City in Short Fiction
Edited by Becca Parkinson and Vera Júlíusdóttir
Translated from the Icelandic by Victoria Cribb, Philip Roughton, Lytton Smith, Meg Matich and Larissa Kyzer
Comma Press, Manchester, UK, November 2021
160 pages, paperback, $16.95
ISBN 978-1-91097-403-2

It's said that every Icelander has a story—and in this new anthology, ten acclaimed Icelandic authors contribute tales that capture their capital city's creative energy, ranging from those of farmers struggling to become urban gardeners to lonely urbanites searching for love, to nocturnal encounters with arctic foxes, to an existential pilgrimage to the island of Grótta. Contributing authors include Friðgeir Einarsson, Kristín Eiríksdóttir, Þórarinn Eldjárn, Einar Már Guðmundsson, Björn Halldórsson, Fríða Ísberg, Auður Jónsdóttir, Guðrún Eva Mínervudóttir, Andri Snær Magnason and Ágúst Borgþór Sverrisson, with an introduction by Sjón.

After the Sun
By Jonas Eika
Translated from the Danish by Sherilyn Hellberg
Riverhead Books, New York, NY, August 2021
208 pages, hardcover, $26
ISBN 978-0-59332-910-8

Jonas Eika's American fiction debut (and winner of the 2019 Nordic Council Literary Prize) interweaves stories from various characters each on the brink of some form of anxiety—whether grief, addiction or economic exploitation—as they seek out personal transformation across a range of locations ranging from Cancún to the Nevada desert and through circumstances that occasionally set off into surreal directions.



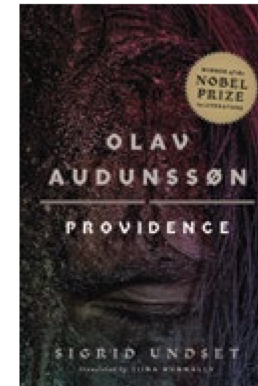


The Pastor
By Hanne Ørstavik
Translated from the Norwegian by Martin Aitken
Archipelago Books, Brooklyn, NY, October 2021
280 pages, paperback, $20
ISBN 978-1-95386-108-5

In the latest translation of acclaimed Norwegian novelist Hanne Ørstavik, the reticent theologian Liv has always been fascinated by language. After moving to a remote fishing village as its church's new pastor following the death of a close friend, she becomes preoccupied with her research of Norway's colonial past and ways that the Bible's language was used against the indigenous Sámi. As she becomes acquainted with villagers and their traumas, past mingles with the present, creating an existential journey of finding language to heal.

A Silenced Voice: The Life of Journalist Kim Wall
By Ingrid Wall and Joachim Wall
Translated from the Swedish by Kathy Saranpa
Amazon Crossing, Seattle, WA, 2020
271 pages, paperback, $14.95
ISBN 978-1-54201-814-2

Thirty-year-old Kim Wall was an ambitious and promising journalist when in 2017 she took an assignment that tragically claimed her life. Written three years after her death, Ingrid and Joachim Wall's *A Silenced Voice* shares the story of who their daughter was—loving, complicated, courageous and so much more than a shocking headline—while also relating a moving memoir of the devastating struggle following her loss and their journey of keeping her memory alive.

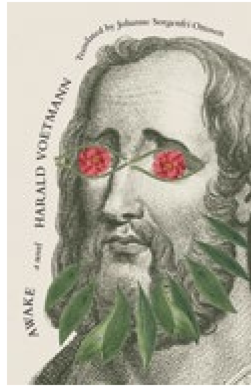


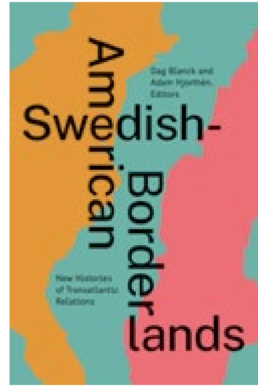
Olav Audunssøn: II. Providence
By Sigrid Undset
Translated from the Norwegian by Tiina Nunnally
University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, MN, October 2021
280 pages, paperback, $17.95
ISBN 978-1-51791-160-7

Out in their first new translation in nearly 100 years, the first two volumes of Nobel Prize-winning Norwegian novelist Sigrid Undset's medieval epic *The Master of Hestviken* chronicle the early relationship of Olav Audunssøn and Ingunn Steinfinnsdatter, betrothed as children during Norway's Civil War era and navigating competing bloodlines amid struggles between the crown and church. Following last year's release of *Vows*, this second book follows Olav and Ingunn as newlyweds; it will be followed by the final two books in the tetralogy in 2022 and 2023.

My Friend Natalia
By Laura Lindstedt
Translated from the Finnish by David Hackston
Liveright, New York, NY, 2021
240 pages, hardcover, $24.00
ISBN 978-1-63149-817-6

A gripping linguistic thriller from Finnish novelist Laura Lindstedt, *My Friend Natalia* explores the power dynamics of therapy sessions between a doctor and her new patient Natalia. When Natalia arrives with an unusual affliction—an obsession with sex—the unnamed therapist introduces an experimental treatment process that becomes increasingly personal. Through cat-and-mouse dialogue filled with sharp banter and double entendres, Lindstedt's American debut poses existential questions of identity and desire, while deconstructing the self-help process.





Awake
By Harald Voetmann
Translated from the Danish by Johanne Sorgenfri Ottosen
New Directions, New York, NY, September 2021
112 pages, paperback, $14.95
ISBN 978-0-81123-081-0

The first in a set of three historical novels exploring mankind's compulsion to conquer nature, Harald Voetmann's English-language debut takes an absurdist look at the lives of Pliny the Elder and Younger, as one obsessively focuses on classifying all elements of the natural world, until his death in the ashes of Mount Vesuvius transfers his work into the hands of its much more skeptical custodian. A slim and compelling read, *Awake* is equal parts comedic, grotesque and tragic.

Swedish-American Borderlands:
New Histories of Transatlantic Relations
Edited by Dag Blanck and Adam Hjorthén
University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, MN, May 2021
352 pages, paperback, $30

The new collection *Swedish-American Borderlands* from editors Dag Blanck and Adam Hjorthén aims to broaden understanding of Swedish-American relations through studies of the history of social, cultural and economic exchanges across disciplinary divides. With case studies of topics like jazz, design, geneology and more, contributing scholars from American and Nordic institutions analyze perceptions of what it means to be Swedish, American and Swedish-American.

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In recognition of its 100th Anniversary, the ASF launched a Centennial/Second Century Campaign. This campaign enables donors to provide a legacy of support for a wide range of projects, including: fellowships and internships for young people; educational and cultural programs at Scandinavia House and beyond; and initiatives to enhance the capabilities of Scandinavia House and expand the ASF's international outreach. By making a contribution to the Campaign, donors will ensure that the ASF remains a leader in international understanding and cooperation for generations to come.

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