



ICELAND



1944

332 529 inhabitants

103 001 km²



1918

10 553 843 inhabitants

78 866 km²



CZECH REPUBLIC

THE CONDITIONS AND THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE BEST PRACTICE TRANSFER IN REGARD TO THE PROMOTION AND PROFESSIONALIZATION OF DESIGN AND APPLIED ARTS BETWEEN ICELAND AND THE CZECH REPUBLIC

This expert study is based on a two-month study tour by one of the core employees of the CZECHDESIGN organisation to the Iceland Design Centre.

THANKS

This study could not be created without a selfless assistance, patient consultations and interviews of my colleagues from the Iceland Design Centre, where I spent almost two intensive months and had a chance to become a part of their team.

They deserve great thanks! Specifically, I would like to thank **Halla Helgadóttir, Olöf Rut Stefánsdóttir, Sari Peltonen, Arnar Fells Gunnarsson, Linda Vilhjálmsdóttir, Hlin Helga Gudlaugsdóttir, Arnar Ingi, Elin Hrund Thorgeirsdóttir, Bryndís Ásmundsdóttir, Gyða Borg Barðadóttir, Elisabet Jonsdóttir, Maya Badouk Epstein, Daantje de Klein** and also the Icelandic designer **Hanna Dís Whitehead**.

I would also like to thank my colleagues from the CZECHDESIGN organisation for their support and cooperation in my research work. Namely **Jana Vinšová, Karolina Kučerová, Karolína Matějková, Ondřej Matoušek, Radka Machalická, Jindřich Oukropec, Tomáš Melichar** and **Anežka Adamíková**.

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INTRODUCTION

CZECHDESIGN

The CZECHDESIGN research organisation has been providing support for Czech design and, through its cultural and educational activities, presenting it to the public since 2003. Currently it is implementing a project that is entitled *“The Future of European Design and Applied Arts”* that is supported by the EEA Fund, which enables it to bring a number of foreign theorists and designers to Prague and also to other Czech cities to provide them with the opportunity to hold workshops and to organise lectures both for professionals and for the general public. Foreign know-how provides a very valuable and welcome enrichment of the local scene and it also brings with it many new ideas, approaches and different issues.

TO OBTAIN EXPERIENCE

We decided to continue in the acquisition of foreign experience and we expanded our project to additionally include the intensive study trip of the Project Manager, Kamila Matějková, who is one of our regular staff members. The final destination was Iceland, specifically because of the local design centre’s activities, which had long been a subject of interest for us. We perceive the collaboration with the experts from Iceland as being a valuable experience and enrichment for our team that also provided us with a new view of our own work. The opportunity to be able to mutually exchange the know-how that the organisations in both countries obtain



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4

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so laboriously is invaluable and we hope that it will be developed even further in the future. The project entitled *“The Future of Design and Applied Arts in Iceland and in the Czech Republic - the conditions and the opportunities for the transfer of best practice”* was supported by the EEA Fund.

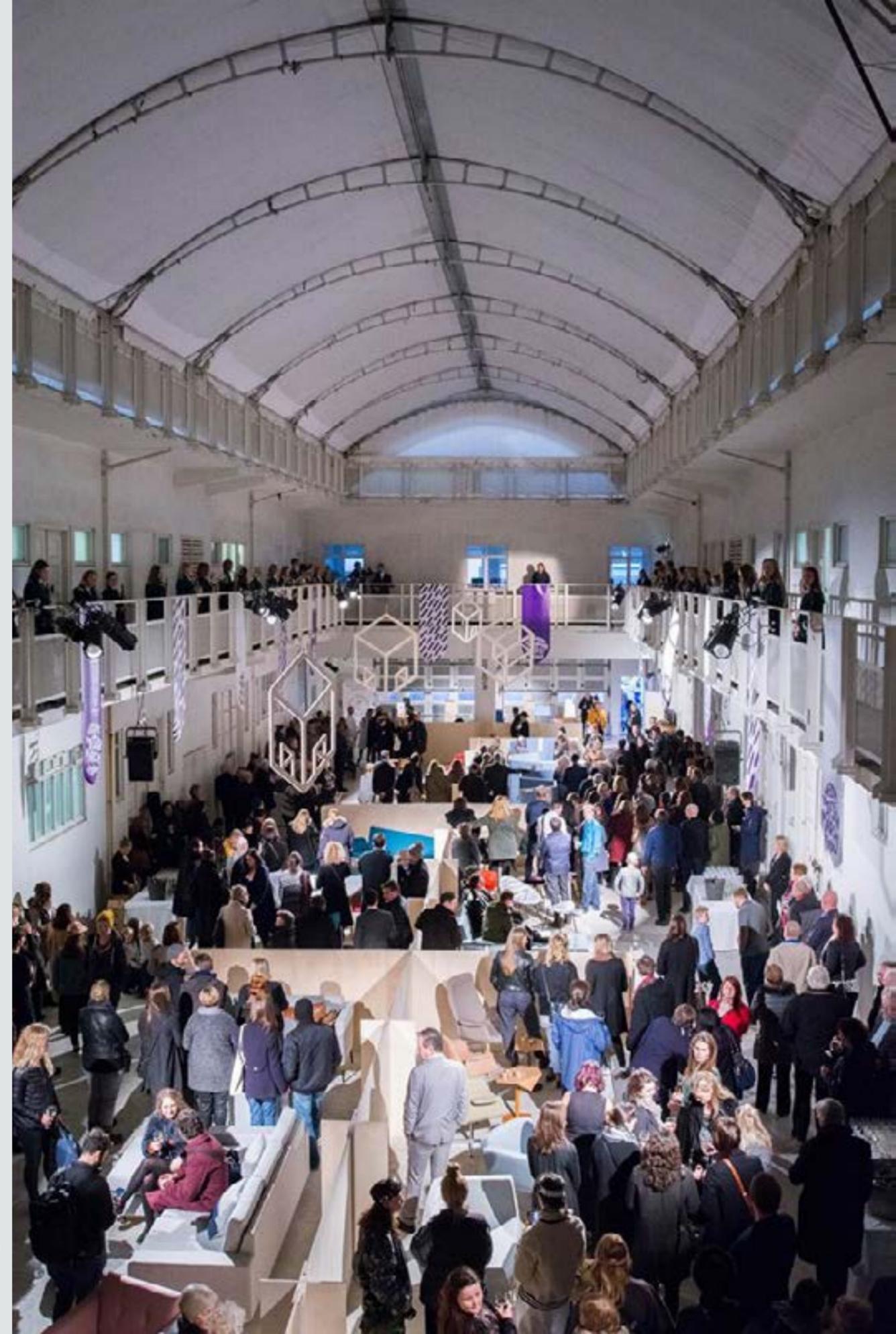
KAMILA MATĚJKOVÁ

This Charles University graduate in Art History, thanks to her current study of Arts Management at the University of Economics, is devoted to the concept of combining the artistic and the economic aspects of the creative disciplines, specifically in the field of design. Since 2011, she has been active in CZECHDESIGN, where she has been working on projects that are designated for the strategic development of this discipline and also for the promotion of the introducing of design into practice. She is the author and the co-author of numerous articles, exhibitions and publications on design, amongst others a methodological publication for businesses entitled *Why Design?*, which is about the process of introducing design into practice, or of scientific studies on the topic of the situation of Czech design in the publication entitled *“Mapping the cultural and the creative industries in the Czech Republic”* that was published by the Institute of Art – the Theatre Institute.



ICELAND DESIGN CENTRE

This umbrella organisation for Icelandic design is funded by the Icelandic Ministry of Education and Culture and also the Ministry of Industry and Innovation. The aim of the Iceland Design Centre is to achieve more appreciation of the importance of good design and architecture for society. Its role is to promote design of all kinds as a vital and profitable aspect of the Icelandic economy, and thus to enhance competitiveness and economic gain. One of the most important events that is organised by the Design Centre, is an international design festival DesignMarch and conference known as the Design-Talks, which takes place in March each year, 2016 being the eighth edition. The festival covers all aspects of design, from fashion to furniture, architecture to food design, the festival showcases the best of the local design scene alongside exciting international names.



OBJECTIVES AND TRIPS

THE OBJECTIVES

The expert study represents the output of the nearly two-month long internship of a Czech expert in the Iceland Design Centre organisation. It had the following key objectives and motivation:

- to summarise the experience and the know-how,
- to outline a few activities or approaches that it would be suitable to transfer to the Czech environment,
- to inspire other Czech experts who are active in the field of design,
- to provide information for Czech professionals and for the general public about the current situation in the field of design in Iceland.

TRIPS

This study would not have been viable without the implementation of a study trip targetted to some intensive cooperation with the Icelandic experts in the area of design. This took place from the 8 th of February to the 28 th of March 2016 at the headquarters of the Iceland Design Centre organisation in Reykjavik.

During the study period the Czech expert had the opportunity to familiarise herself with the common design practices and projects and also the ways of working of her Icelandic colleagues. During this cooperation a specific shadowing method was utilised, i.e. an intensive learning technique. The



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Czech expert successively “shadowed” several of the Iceland Design Centre’s executives. This method is considered as being one of the most effective techniques for the exchange of best practices between two organisations. It enables studying both the specific methods of work and also how to apply these techniques in practice. Also valuable sources of material for the formation of the study were interviews with several Icelandic designers and experts, from amongst the Iceland Design Centre’s team and beyond. Also important was the participation in several events that were organised by the host organisation, i.e.:

10. – 13. 3. 2016 The International Design [DesignMarch](#), is a design festival that is held in Reykjavik, during which a number of exhibitions and accompanying events are also held, representing both the local design production and also that of the foreign guests.

10. 3. 2016 The [DesignTalks](#), International Conference is an all-day series of lectures, this year on the topic Innovation by design. Lecturers were VP of Experience Design Autodesk Maria Giudice, the author of a digitisation project focussing on the British system of government known as GOV.UK, Tom Loosemore, the Assemble architect Maria Lisogorskay, the graphic designer Jonathan Barnbrook, the Icelandic designer Katrín Ólína Pétursdóttir and the British fashion designer Lauren Bowker.

11. 3. 2016 [DesignMatch](#), an all-day event that connects Icelandic designers with both local and foreign manufacturers and companies.



ICELAND VS. THE CZECH REPUBLIC IN FIGURES

ICELAND



89,4 KG

the amount of fish eaten per capita per annum



45 LITRES

the amount of beer drunk per capita per annum



6 °C

the average annual temperature

the average monthly salary

3 472 EUR

design strategy at the national level



state-founded and supported design centre



the number of universities that are active in the field of design



the number of annual design shows



CZECH REPUBLIC

3,5 KG



the amount of fish eaten per capita per annum



143 LITRES

the amount of beer drunk per capita per annum



11,39 °C

the average annual temperature

the average monthly salary

955 EUR

design strategy at the national level



state-founded and supported design centres



the number of universities that are active in the field of design



the number of annual design shows



ICELAND

CZECH REPUBLIC

1918

the year of its creation

the year of its creation

1944

1948

saw the initiation of the Communist Regime

Icelandic design was first exhibited together with that of the other Nordic countries at the "Formes Scandinave" exhibition in Paris

1958

Czech designs achieved success at EXPO 58 in Brussels

marked the advent of economic liberalism and of the increase of imports

1960

1989

marked the end of the Communist Regime and the opening-up of the economy

1991

was the date of the establishment of the Czech Design Centre

2007

saw the closure of the Czech Design Centre

was the date of the establishment of the Iceland Design Centre
the collapse of the banking system
and the beginning of the financial crisis

2008

CONDITIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR DESIGN IN ICELAND

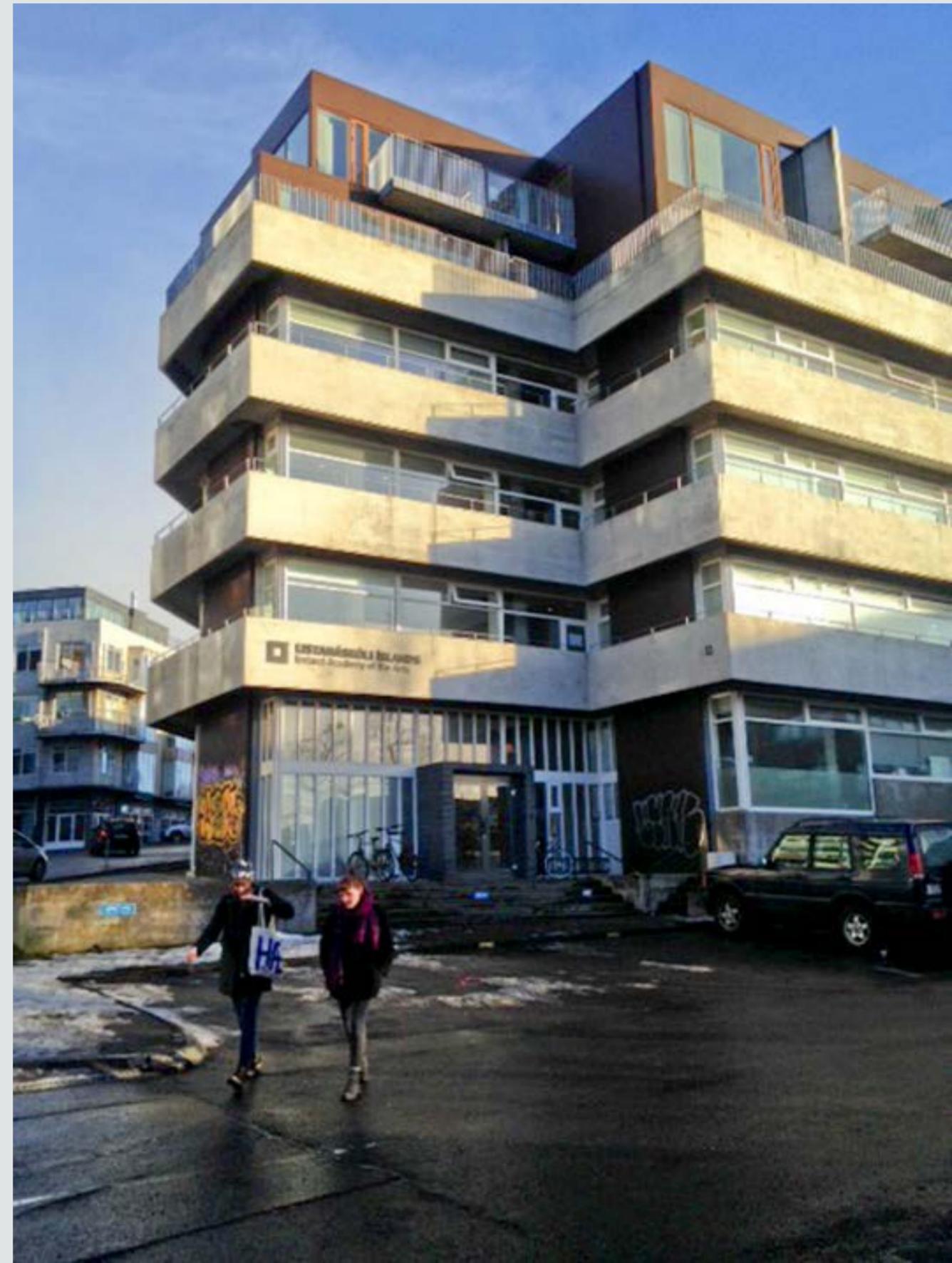
Thanks to its geographic position, its population size and its historical development, Iceland has produced very specific conditions for the development of design and applied arts. The size of this icy island is slightly larger than that of the Czech Republic. Its population of 332.529¹ inhabitants makes it, however, the most sparsely populated country in Europe. Its small population also affects the situation in the field of design. The design scene is very small, which entails a number of disadvantages but certain advantages too. The benefits certainly include the very close interconnectedness between professionals and also the need to establish relations with foreign countries.

EDUCATION

Only one local university – the Iceland Academy of the Arts (<http://english.lhi.is/>) in Reykjavik - has been offering Icelanders, since 2001, the opportunity to obtain a university degree in the areas of design and architecture. The undergraduate programme provides a choice between studying Architecture, Fashion Design, Product Design and Visual Communications, while the Master's Programme, which accepts only 12 students annually, functions only in one generic field that enables deepening knowledge and improving skills in the chosen specialisation.² Young creatives therefore frequently travel abroad to study, most frequently in Denmark, Great Britain or Italy, where they devote themselves to diverse disciplines and also often gain experience in local design studios and companies. Most of them do return, however, althou-

1 Information valid as of the 1 st January 2016; source: www.statice.is.

2 "Iceland Academy of the Arts", available [on-line](#) [2016-04- 14].



gh the conditions for designers working in Iceland are very restricted.

NATURAL RESOURCES AND MATERIALS

Its small population and the isolation of the location of the island from the outside world is the reason for the absence of large companies and its almost non-existent industrial production. Therefore opportunities for employment as designers in manufacturing companies or the option of obtaining orders from manufacturers are both very limited. Additionally the extreme environmental conditions are the reason for the shortage of wood, which makes the existence of the furniture industry as we know it, for example, from the Czech environment, virtually impossible. Icelandic designers have to seek-out other partners for their work. It is the highly developed fishing industry that does provides opportunities for their work³, as farming and the processing of animal materials do too. The food industry and farmers are both partners for designers operating in the discipline that is referred to as food design, an example of which might be the **Skyrkonfekt** product – a dairy dessert that is produced in collaboration of designers and the Erpsstaðir farm.⁴

Aluminium, of which Iceland produces more than 800,000

3 Fishing is one of the most important pillars of the Icelandic economy and it constitutes 40% of the country's total exports.

4 This product constitutes part of the Designers and Farmers project, which was initiated by the Iceland Academy of the Arts between 2007 and 2011.



tons per year, is also a material with great potential. Most of the raw material is exported, however, without its value being increased by processing it into products.⁵ The Iceland Design Centre responded to this situation by implementing the [13Al+ project](#), which focused precisely on the problem of the excess of aluminium and the inability to process it effectively directly on the island. A group of Icelandic designers, in cooperation with the Swedish aluminium processing companies, was looking for ways in which to work with this material. One of these designers was **Katrin Olina**. A native of Iceland, she studied industrial design in Paris. After completing her studies she worked there for the Philippe Starck design studio or for Ross Lovegrove in London. She also has experience with large-scale manufacturers such as DuPont Corian and 3M. One of her recent realisations is a very interesting collection of steel bookshelves, which engaged an almost defunct pipe-bending factory in the town of Hofsó in the production process. This detail points to the very interesting context of the current situation in Iceland. Until the 1960's, there was a very nationally oriented policy that restricted the importing of foreign products. The country was thereby forced to produce a number of items directly on the island. Around 1970-1973 Iceland was opened up for foreign trade and the production of furniture and clothes dropped dramatically. Also a large increase in imports caused a drop in the number of local industrial producers. Today the infrastructure that still remains in some places, may provide opportunities for new innovative applications.

5 "13AL+", the Iceland Design Centre, available [on-line](#) [2016-04- 15].



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THE SCANDINAVIAN CONTEXT

Iceland is traditionally looked-upon as being a smaller brother of Norway, Sweden and Denmark, the Scandinavian superpowers - and it looks to them not only in regard to the field of design. Together with Finland it constitutes with them a group of countries, which are commonly defined as the “Nordic Countries”. Iceland and Finland, however, are also sometimes included in the broader definition of the familiar phrase “Scandinavian design”. Rather than emphasising the geographical proximity or the national identity this definition should underline these countries common history in the field of design and their sharing of certain specific values. It started to be used more than fifty years ago, when the Nordic countries began to respond to the economic and the political challenges of the post-war situation and to purposefully promote design and applied arts together through a series of exhibitions. The most important of these include “**Design in Scandinavia**”, which toured North America during the years 1954-1957, and “*Formes Scandinave*” which was presented in France in 1958. Also included within the latter was the first Icelandic design.⁶

In 1974 the designer **Sigurdur Már Helgason** created a footstool that he named Fuzzy. Its stubby screw-on wooden feet support a conspicuous seat made of sheep’s wool, a traditional product of Iceland’s economy. Helgason planned to sell

6 Katherine Nelson, Raul Cabra and Christopher Mount, *New Scandinavian Design*, (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2004), 237



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this local product, together with other souvenirs, in the duty-free zone of the international airport in Keflavik. Although he failed to fulfill this intention, the footstools subsequently became a very popular gift for graduations or for other significant life events that took place specifically in Iceland. "The story in this capricious furniture supplement shows the typical groundbreaking nature of contemporary Icelandic design."⁷

It is interesting that it is only Iceland and Norway – i.e. the countries that have contributed the least to the Scandinavian modernist movement, are today the places that are the most active designer communities in the Nordic region.⁸ We can say that in recent years, Iceland has been catching-up with its former role-models in many different ways and is beginning to reap the benefits that such a small, isolated nation enjoys. In terms of design we are talking mainly about the fact that the current generation of designers do not need to deal with any famous legacy of the past, as they do in Sweden, Finland and Denmark with their legendary inter-war era. Basically, there is not much to build upon, which gives more freedom and allows more space for one's own journey.

7 Katherine Nelson, Raul Cabra and Christopher Mount, *New Scandinavian Design*, (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2004), 159

8 Katherine Nelson, Raul Cabra and Christopher Mount, *New Scandinavian Design*, (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2004), 17

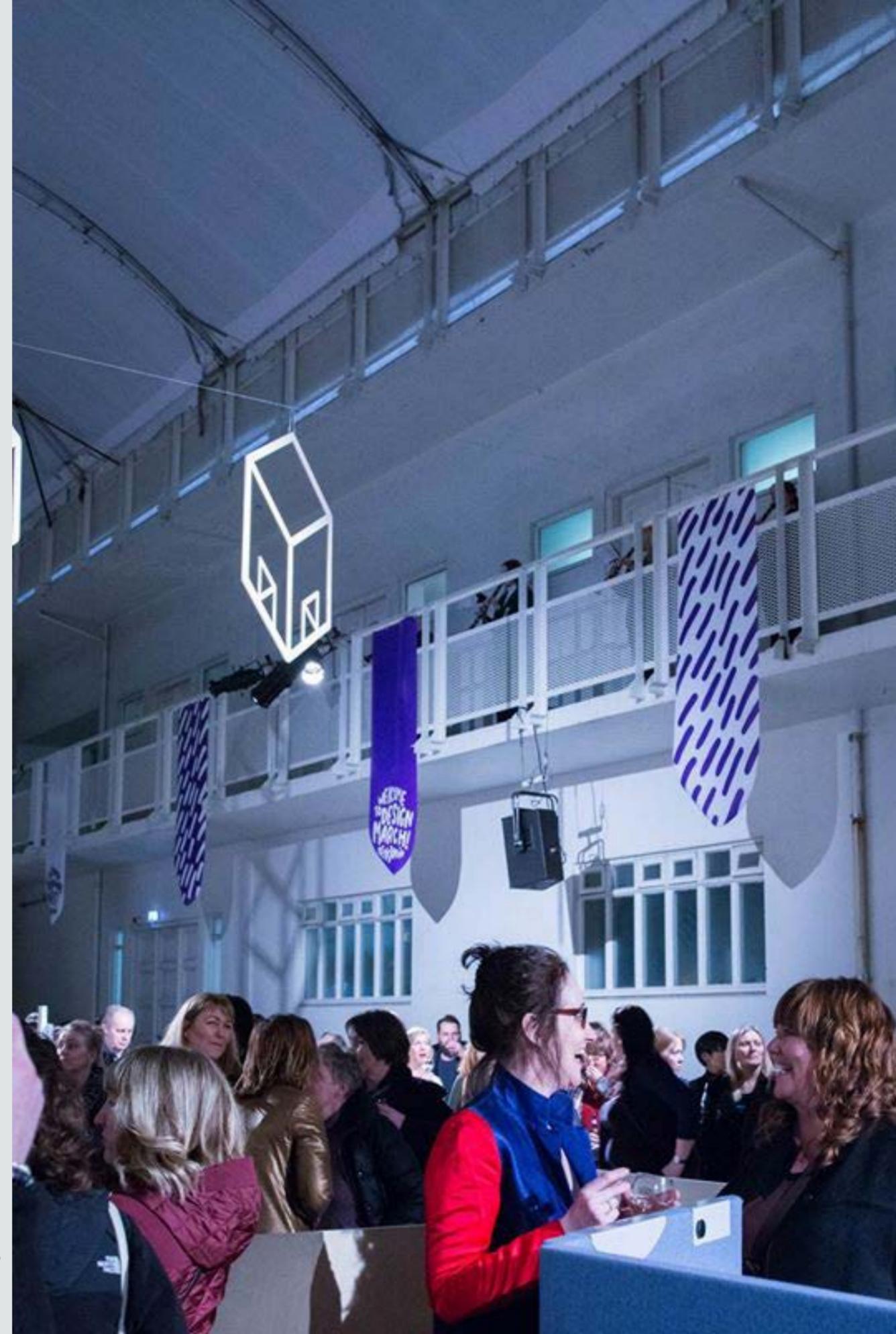


THE ECONOMIC AND THE CULTURAL CONTEXT

During the 20th Century Iceland underwent a rapid evolution from being a traditional agricultural society that had prevailed on the island until the 1950's to a highly educated and modern nation that is open to new technologies. This transformation took place very late, however, in an area that had been isolated for a long time and even today the country is still facing the consequences of the rapid development of an infrastructure on greenfield.

Since in the 1980's the Cultural Revolution took place there, which accelerated in the 1990's together with a significant increase in tourism and in the number of telecommunications networks, which led to both an economic and a cultural boom. Almost overnight Reykjavik, the capital city, was transformed from a sleepy port to a small cosmopolitan centre with more than 150,000 inhabitants (which at that time represented more than half of the total national population). In addition to music scene traditionally associated with Icelandic design, the applied arts also played a role. In 1998 a **Museum of Design and Applied Arts** was established. A few years later, for the first time, both design and architecture started to be taught at the university in Iceland, in the above-mentioned Iceland Academy of the Arts.⁹ In 2008 "a

9 Katherine Nelson, Raul Cabra and Christopher Mount, *New Scandinavian Design*, (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2004), 159



long-unfulfilled dream of Icelandic designers and architects”¹⁰ became a reality through the initiation of the Iceland Design Centre.

Shortly afterwards, however, a massive financial crisis associated with the collapse of the banking system erupted in Iceland and the country was on the brink of disaster. The Design Centre that was being financially supported by the state survived the crisis period, however, and by linking the creative world with the business world it contributed to the country’s recovery process and its economy.

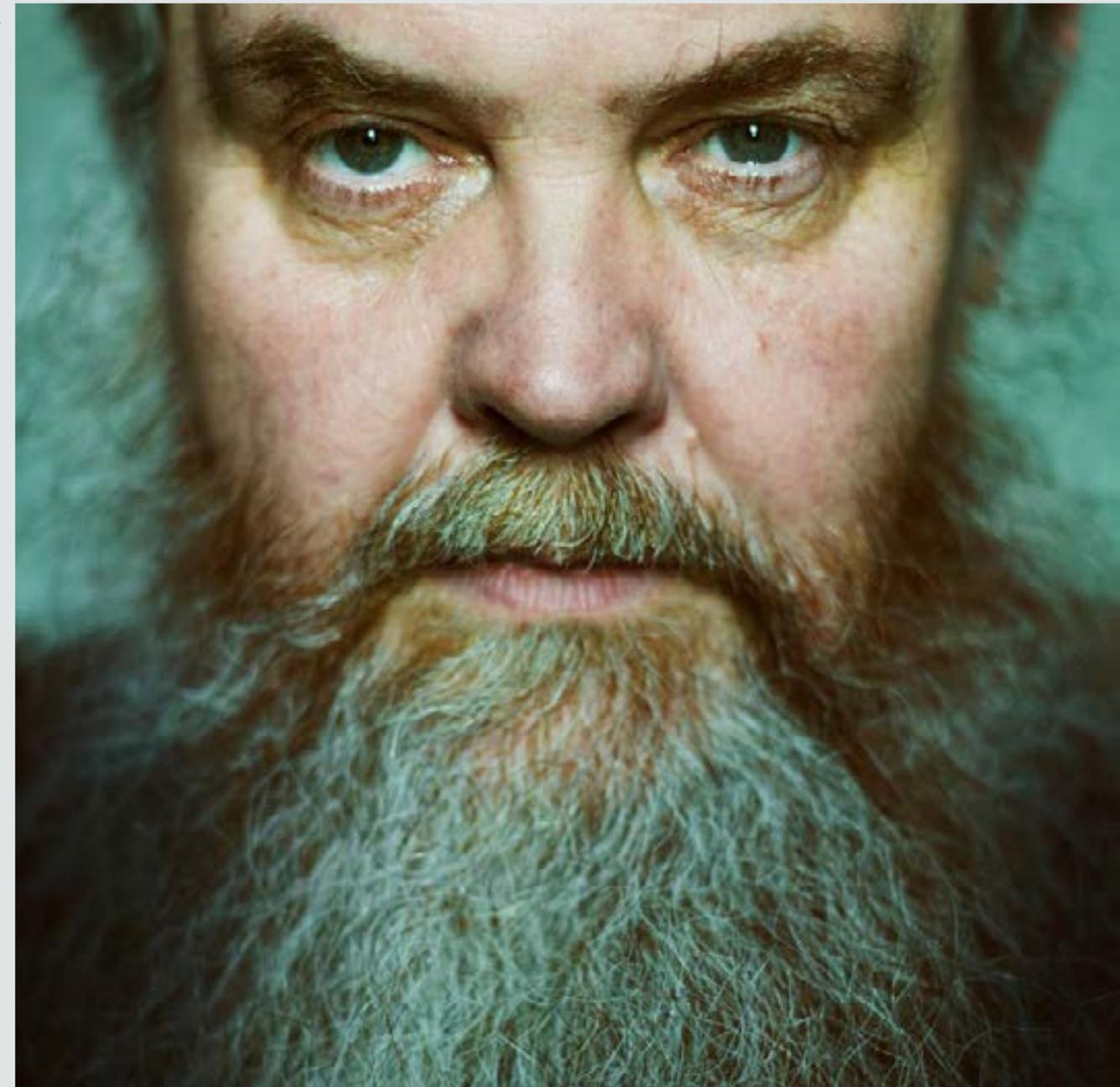
THE CONTEMPORARY DESIGN SCENE

Currently several renowned theorists and professionals are active in implementing design work in Iceland. One of these is **Hlín Helga Gudlaugsdottir**, who comments on the current design scene as follows: “Our history of design is short, so that when you look at Icelandic product design, you may find yourself confronting a large number of experiments. But it is not because of the experiment itself - it is a necessity. We have a phrase in Iceland that could be translated as ‘Shortage teaches a naked woman to go for it’. When you have nothing you are obliged to either find out how to obtain something or to create it yourself. Product design works on similar principles here - we have no industry nor any other support mechanisms though many other countries do. We’re

10 “Iceland Design Centre”, available online at www.icelanddesign.is.
[2016-04- 15]

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so small!” Designers, however, according to Gudlaugsdottir can also make the most of the least. “There is a certain type of perceptive experimentation that happens quite naturally - a little funny, a little strange and usually unpredictable. This approach is present in the Icelandic culture and design is no exception.”¹¹

Gudmundur Oddur Magnússon, the “forefather” of Icelandic graphic design, brings an interesting point of view to the national literary heritage being a source of inspiration for local designers: “Icelandic product design is so young that we find it a problem to identify what it is actually about. Undoubtedly, we could find some stories in it, but these would not define its main characteristics. Engaging storytelling can be found in Bjork’s music lyrics of or in the works of many graphic designers, but I do not encounter it in a 3-D design too often. I feel that it is more about the way in which it is made – they are not the forms that tell stories, but the stories that shape the product.”¹²

Nature constitutes a part of everyday life for all Icelanders and it is therefore no surprise that the local nature is an important source of inspiration. One example is the **IIIF** studio and its collection of glass that represents the different phases of volcanic eruptions that are so typical in regard to the form of the local landscape. The Petits Volcans collection was manufactured in Meisenthal in France and in the

11 Magnús S. Helgason, “Play To Win”, The Reykjaik Grapevine, DesignMarch issue (2015): 2

12 Katherine Nelson, Raul Cabra and Christopher Mount, New Scandinavian Design, (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2004), 95



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realm of Icelandic design it is something of an exception.

On the other hand, however our cooperation with foreign colleagues is frequent. A recent example is the **1+1+1** project, which connects the Icelandic designers Róshildur Jonsdottir and Snæbjörn Þór Stefánsson with the Finnish Aalto + Aalto studio and with Petra Lilja from Sweden.

As has already been mentioned earlier, orders from major producers are rare. Icelandic designers therefore often focus on their own business and on what they produce for their regular customers in terms of small-scale, products that are both practical and useful. Functionality and practicality are actually the qualities that Icelanders carry in their blood. In the past they were frequently obliged to rely on themselves and on their own skills. The result of this is the beautiful and practical enjoyment of everyday life, including utilising such items as the tea towels designed by **Hanna Dís Whitehead**, **OMNOM** chocolate that is wrapped in illustrated packaging or a planning calendar from the **Snæfrið & Hildigunnur** studio.

Then Icelandic fashion is a chapter of its own. The field of design in Iceland is about both the most unusual and the most visible discipline. The Icelandic fashion industry is being increasingly regarded not only as a serious industry and an important export commodity. The financial crisis has brought Icelandic designers an opportunity in the form of the cheap rents for commercial spaces on the main streets,¹³ which is still apparent in the centre of Reykjavik when you are looking into shop windows.

13 Charlie Strand, *Icelandic Fashion Design*, (London: Gudrun Publishing), 2012, 6

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THE CONDITIONS AND THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE TRANSFER OF BEST PRACTICE

COMMON FEATURES

Although at first glance it may appear that the situation in the area of design is very different in Iceland and in the Czech Republic, a number of influential factors are common to both the countries. Until the early 1960's Iceland's economy was closed and the importing of foreign products was limited. One analogy, though certainly with very different causes and degrees of impact, could be seen in the situation in the Czech Republic before 1989. With the passing of 30 years, both Iceland and the Czech Republic experienced a rapid increase in the influx of foreign capital and goods, which has not occurred without having any consequences for the local industries and their infrastructure. The design scene in both the countries is very small and the lack of balance between the number of creatives and the demands of local companies is self-evident. In addition to the competition within their own countries it is also necessary to be able to face competition from the outside, whether this concerns close-by Scandinavian countries and the UK in the case of Iceland, or the traditional top design centres that are neighbours of the Czech Republic, i.e. Germany and Austria.

Based on knowledge of the Czech situation and experience in the field of design together with a two-month research period in regard to the Icelandic conditions, the following projects, activities and actions were identified that can provide inspiration for the Czech environment and that can lead to the promotion, the development and the professionalization of design at a national level:



1/ THE SYSTEMATIC SUPPORT FOR THIS DISCIPLINE

[The Iceland Design Centre](#) provides excellent support for Icelandic design. Since 2008, when it was established on the basis of the initiative of the state, it has been constantly taking care in regard to the development and the promotion of Icelandic design and architecture. From the outset it has been funded by the Ministry of Education and Culture and also by the Ministry of Industry. As a result, not only its necessary competences for the development of the design and the architecture at the national and the international level are secured, but also its own continuous operation and the basic funds for this operation that amount to EUR 210,000 per year (as compared to the total annual budget of EUR 611,000). Also very well organised is the system for linking to professional organisations that represent individual disciplines, since the Design Centre is formally actually owned by the following entities: The Association of Icelandic Architects, The Icelandic Society for Furniture and Interior Architects, The Federation of Icelandic Landscape and Garden Architects, The Association of Icelandic Product and Industrial Designers, Icelandic Association of Ceramic Artists, The Association of Icelandic Fashion Designers, The Association for Icelandic Textiles, The Association of Icelandic Goldsmiths and The Association of Icelandic Graphic Designers. The governing and decision-



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-making body of the Design Centre comprises a committee that consists of the heads of the listed entities, who meet every two months, while the day-to-day management of this organisation is entrusted to a manager who is currently **Halla Helligadóttir**. Thanks to this “bottom-up” system of management almost every Icelandic designer and architect has participated in the orientation of the design centre, which also serves very well as a defence mechanism against any deviation of its activities from the real needs of the industry and from the current best practice. The main activities of the Iceland Design Centre, which will be additionally described in more detail, include the following:

- organising the international **DesignMarch** festival to promote Icelandic design,
- managing **The Design Fund**, which, based on tenders, supports individual designers and projects,
- awarding prizes in the field of design,
- linking the Icelandic design scene with the international environment,
- providing information about Icelandic design on a Web platform,
- publishing a design journal,
- linking designers with manufacturers.

The situation in the Czech Republic

The operation of the Czech Design Centre was terminated in 2007. Subsequently several independent private organisations undertook some of its activities: **CZECHDESIGN** (an information web portal of Czech design, offering educational activities for designers and for firms, providing advice to com-

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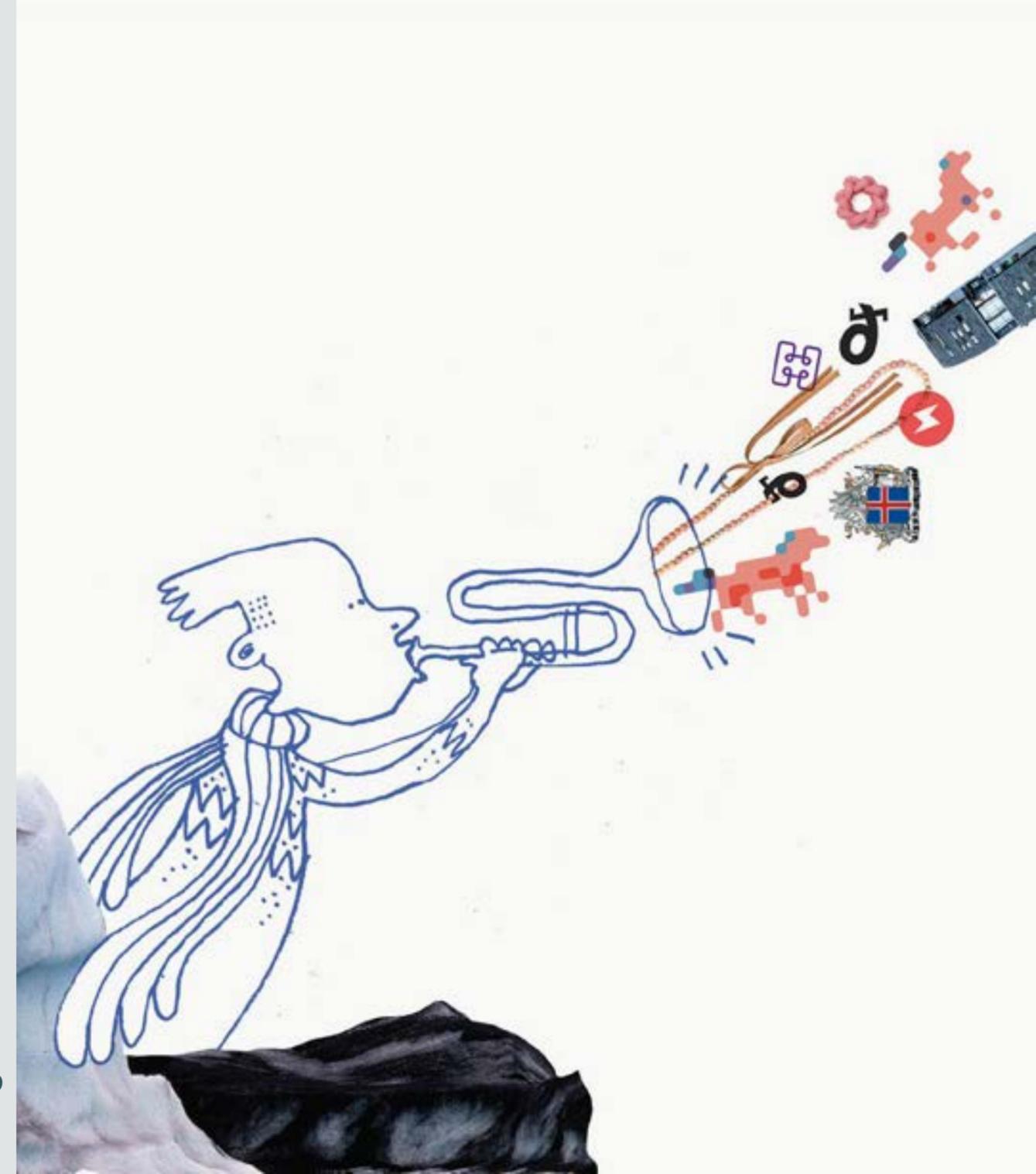
panies, the presentation and promotion of design, exhibition activities both in the Czech Republic and abroad), [Design Cabinet](#) (organising the National Award for Student Design, a Web portal about design), **Profil Media** (Academy Awards for designers and for firms), [Czech Grand Design](#) organising the [Designblok](#) show, [PRO TEBE live](#) (activities implemented for the development of design in the Karlovy Vary Region), individual professional organisations (e.g. The [Moravian Association of Designers](#), [The Union of Professional Designers and the Association of Designers](#), [The Association of Applied Graphics and Graphic Design](#), [The Association of Czech Furniture](#), [The Union of Graphic Design](#), [The Czech Fashion Council](#)). Financial support for companies that are cooperating with designers can be obtained through the [Design for Competitiveness programme](#) that is administered by the CzechTrade agency.

2/ STRATEGY AT A NATIONAL LEVEL

Fundamental in regard to the institutional development of design is the existence of a strategy document that sets-out the priorities and the direction in which the promotion of art will focus. Following the example of many Western and Nordic countries the Iceland Design Centre, together with the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry of Industry, created the strategy entitled

Design as a Driver for Future

Icelandic Design Policy 2014–2018



[“Design as a Driver for Future: Icelandic Design Policy 2014–2018”](#), in which the country establishes priorities, targets and the tools with which they should be achieved. This is a very short and simple document that clearly defines several specific activities and also obliges the government bodies involved and the Design Centre itself to implement them. The document’s “Education and knowledge” section focuses on ways in which to foster education in the field of design in primary and secondary schools as well as on how to expand research activities in the field of design in university studies. The “Work and the Support of the Environment” section addresses the targeted use of funds and of support systems including support for specific projects and also ways in which the public authorities can set an example in the area of design. This point especially is very interesting because it takes into account how to motivate authorities to include Icelandic design in their projects and their environments. The final “Promotion” section addresses the issues of a campaign concerning the benefits of design in Iceland and also the effectiveness of international promotional activities for supporting the national design creation.

The situation in the Czech Republic

Currently, completely missing in the Czech Republic, is a comprehensive strategy in the area of design. Although some strategic documents mention design and the importance of its support, i.e. The Concept of Support for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises 2014-2020, they lack specific goals and they also do not define the instruments needed for achieving them.



3/ SUPPORT FOR INTERNATIONAL CONTACTS AND FOR EXPORTS

Another of the Iceland Design Centre's activities concerns the promotion of Icelandic design abroad and linking the local designers with their counterparts from the international environment. The promotional activities comprise activities, such as networking meetings related to Nordic gastronomy – e.g. a [Nordic Design Lunch](#) that was organised in cooperation with the Finnish Design Centre during Stockholm Design Week 2014. Additionally also exhibitions; recently, for example, it was the [We Live Here](#) exhibition project that was implemented last year.

The [13AI+ project](#) already referred to, i.e. cooperation between Icelandic designers and Swedish aluminium-processing companies, represents a very good example of a small-scale but very useful project that may eventually have a significant impact on the domestic scene. A very successful and effective event that is organised annually by the Iceland Design Centre is **DesignMatch**. This all-day meeting of Icelandic designers and local and foreign manufacturers and companies in the “speed dating” style represents a mutually beneficial opportunity for establishing cooperation. Also invited to this event are both foreign and local manufacturers



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who are seeking for talents from amongst the designers and are interested to start cooperation with them. Once they confirm their participation, the portfolio of Icelandic designers is made available for them from which they choose candidates with whom they wish to arrange a meeting during the DesignMatch. The organisers create a relaxed and informal environment and it depends on the representatives of companies and designers whether or not they develop any future cooperation. A few examples of products that have been introduced on the market are proof that these inconspicuous events can bear fruit.

The situation in the Czech Republic

The presentation of Czech design abroad is frequently implemented on a rather random basis, but this also depends on the designers, the companies or the universities that participate in the international fairs and festivals. Also sporadic are the comprehensive exhibition projects, such as [The Wishing Table exhibition](#) that CZECHDESIGN organised in several European cities, and then also the exhibitions that are held in the Czech Centres. One organised group that presents selected Czech companies abroad is [Czech Selection](#). Meetings between Czech designers and foreign manufacturers and companies are extremely rare.



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4/ DESIGN WEEK, AS WE DON'T KNOW IT

The annual **DesignMarch** festival transforms Reykjavik into a centre of design and architecture for an entire week. Throughout the city visitors are able to attend exhibitions and the presentations of local designers, while there is also a rich accompanying programme. Also comprising part of the programme is an all-day professional conference entitled **Design Talks**, at which presentations are given by many respected guests from abroad, and the annual attendance of which is cca. 700 participants. The tradition of festivals, fairs and Design Weeks is quite familiar in European cities but in Reykjavik everything does happen a little differently. The entire event takes place in the city, in its streets and in its showrooms, in both small and large galleries and also in some unusual locations, which make design and the applied arts accessible to the general public in a very simple and relaxed atmosphere. A classical fair presentation form, which would close a large-scale exhibition in one or more buildings, is entirely absent there. Also interesting is the manner of the organisation of this event. The Iceland Design Centre functions as the organiser of the entire event; it works as a platform, promotes the entire event in Iceland and abroad, publishes a catalogue with the programme of the event, invites foreign experts and journalists and takes care of them during the festival. The presentations and the exhibitions that take place throughout the city are directed by the designers themselves, to whom, if



it is necessary, the Design Centre will provide a helping hand. Also important is the support for the event that is provided by the local authorities. Both meetings of foreign guests at the Presidential Residence and the launching of the conference by the Mayor of Reykjavik are important for the local and the international participants of this festival.

The situation in the Czech Republic

Several design shows are currently held in the Czech Republic. One very popular and time-tested event that has a great impact both on the general public and on the professionals is [Designblok](#), as also is the [Designsupermarket](#) sales fair. In recent years, additional shows have taken place, such as the [Czech Design Week](#), the [Prague Design Week](#), and the [Zlín Design Week](#). With the exception of the latter they rather prefer the traditional trade fair presentation in one or more buildings.

5/ MARKETING CAMPAIGNS

Very important is the high quality and effective communication of national design through various channels. The Iceland Design Centre maintains the website about Icelandic design in English language and publishes the professional [HA magazine](#) about local production with English texts. Social media also play an important part in the campaign, i.e. profiles on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram communicating



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in English. The visual style of the campaign is changed on an annual basis in accordance with the new visual identity of the DesignMarch festival, which is the centrepiece of year-round activities of the Design Centre. In 2016, it was visually appealing and effective campaign using the designation “This is design from Iceland”, including engaging puns, using the natural beauty of Iceland and a nice method of communication with local and foreign visitors.

The situation in the Czech Republic

In the Czech environment, a unified communication of local design and applied art abroad is completely absent. Materials available in the English language are rather exceptional. Adam Štěch, czech theorist contributes to the several foreign periodicals (eg. DOMUS, ICON WallPaper).



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ICELANDIC AND CZECH DESIGN IN IMAGES



Glass collection Petits Volcans, studio IIF (Agla Stefánsdóttir, Sigrún Halla Unnarsdóttir & Thibaut Allgayer), glass, 2015, produced by CIAV Meisenthal, foto: Anne Rombach



Decorative object Glass landscape, studio Dechem (Michaela Tomišková, Jakub Jandourek), glass, 2011, foto: Kristina Hrabětová



Tables Berg, FAERID, 2015, foto: North Limited



Shelf system Sequence, Petr Hák, 2015, foto: dumabyt.cz



Cape on stand, Claire Anderson and Hanna Whitehead, 2015,
foto: Tian Khee Siong



Pasture, woven carpets made of wool, DurchDuo, 2015,
foto: Durch Duo



High Heel Cups, Hrafnkell Birgisson, glass, porcelain, 1998,
foto: Berlinord



Fast Collection, Maxim Velčovský, glass, 2005,
foto: Qubus



Symbiotic Leg 3, Össur, Icelandic significant exporter in the field of non-invasive medical devices for surgical and orthopedic fields, foto: Össur



Eleganza 2, Linet, significant Czech exporter in the field of hospital equipment and medical aids, foto: Linet



**Kitchen Garden, Brynja Gudnodóttir, 2015,
foto: Kamila Matějková**



**Greenhouse, Kristýna Pojerová, glass, 2011,
foto: Design Cabinet**

REFERENCES

Useful books and materials

Elísabet V. Ingvarsdóttir, *Icelandic Contemporary Design* (Reykjavik: Crymogea, 2010)

K. Nelson, R. Cabra and C. Mount, *New Scandinavian Design* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2004)

Charlie Strand, *Icelandic Fashion Design* (London: Gudrun Publishing), 2012

[HA: Icelandic design magazine](#)

[Design as a Driver for Future: Icelandic Design Policy](#) 2014–2018

[Neptun](#): Icelandic design magazine about art, design and architecture

Places and events to visit

[Iceland Design Center](#)

[Iceland Academy of the Arts](#)

[Iceland Museum of Design and Applied Art](#)

[DesignMarch](#)

[DesignTalks](#)

Social networks to follow

FCB [HönnunarMars // DesignMarch](#)

Twitter [IcelandDesignCentre](#)

Instagram [icelanddesigncentre](#)

Instagram [designmarch](#)

#icelandicdesign #designmarch

IMAGES

1. Team of Iceland Design Centre, foto: Ragna Margrét Guðmundsdóttir
2. Team of CZECHDESIGN, foto: Jan Hromádko
3. CZECHDESIGN, Vojtěšská 3, Prague 1, foto: Marie Bauerová
4. The Future of Design Project, Zlín, foto: Zlín Design Week
5. The Future of Design Project, CZECHDESIGN, foto: Lucie Nohejlová
6. Kamila Matějková, foto: Jan Hromádko
7. Design March Opening Ceremony, foto: Ragna Margrét Guðmundsdóttir
8. Design Talks Conference, Harpa building, foto: Iceland Design Centre
9. Design Match, foto: Iceland Design Centre
10. We Live Here Exhibition, Stockholm Design Week 2015, foto: Iceland Design Centre
11. Iceland Academy of the Arts, Reykjavík, foto: Kamila Matějková
12. Skyrkonfekt, foto: Designers and Farmers
13. Reading Horse, Katrin Olina, steel, 2015, foto: dezeen.com
14. Fuzzy, wool pad, Sigurdur Már Helgason, 1974, foto: Kamila Matějková
15. Aluminium table, Garðar Eyjólfsson and Katrin Olina, 2013, foto: dezeen.com
16. Design March Opening Ceremony, foto: Ragna Margrét Guðmundsdóttir
17. Hlín Helga Gudlaugsdottir, DesignTalks, foto: Iceland Design Center
18. Gudmundur Oddur Magnusson, foto: Muddy Water Magazine
19. Cabinets, 1+1+1, foto: Petra Lilja
20. Packaging design, Omnom Chocolate, foto: Omnom Chocolate
21. Flóra Collection, Hildur Yeoman, foto: Hildur Yeoman
22. Men's Fashion, FarmersMarket, foto: Farmersmarket
23. Iceland Design Centre Project for Arion Bank, foto: Iceland Design Centre
24. Iceland Ocean Clustr, incubator for creative and innovative solutions for Icelandic fish industry in Reykjavík, foto: Ocean Clustr
25. We Live Here Exhibition, Stockholm Design Week 2015, foto: Iceland Design Center
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29. Icelandic Design Policy 2014 – 2018, foto: Iceland Design Centre
30. Design March, foto: Sebastian Ziegler
31. Design March, foto: Eypór Árnason
32. Design Match, foto: Iceland Design Centre
33. Design March, foto: Sebastian Ziegler
34. Design March, foto: Iceland Design Centre
35. Design Talks Conference, foto: Lorena Sendic Silvera
36. Marketing campagne, foto: Iceland Design Centre
37. Marketing campagne, foto: Iceland Design Centre
38. DesignMarch, foto: Iceland Design Center
39. Design March, foto: Grímur Kolbeinsson