





**Island Souvenir**  
Minningar um ey

G. N. Louise Jonasson

#### A MESSAGE FROM THE PREMIER

As Manitoba Premier, it is my great pleasure to extend greetings to all Icelanders and valued patrons of the Reykjavik Art Museum on the special occasion of *Island Souvenir*, an exhibition of paintings by Manitoba artist G.N. Louise Jonasson.

The country of Iceland and the province of Manitoba, Canada have developed a very special relationship over the years. Our two jurisdictions share many things including deep cultural ties, a history of valued friendship and a common moral vision. Manitoba is home to a vibrant and thriving Icelandic community, particularly in the community of Gimli, Manitoba, which is known for its proud Icelandic heritage.

There have been a number of exchanges and cultural events which have brought our people and leaders together throughout the years. We are tremendously pleased to have an opportunity to share the fine work of Manitoba artist Louise Jonasson over the next two weeks. Ms Jonasson is part of a long tradition of Icelandic artists who are very important to the cultural and artistic landscapes of both Manitoba and Iceland.

We are proud of our common history and the bonds of friendship that remain strong between our countries. We look forward to more cultural and artistic exchanges in the near future and to building on our shared comradeship.

Takk.  
Gary Doer

#### NOKKUR ORD FRÁ FYLKISSTJÓRA MANITOBA

Það er mér mikil ánægja, sem fylkisstjóra Manitoba, að færa öllum Íslendingum og hinum ágætu forsvarsmönnum Listasafns Reykjavíkur góðar kveðjur við opnun *Island Souvenir*, sýningar á málverkum listakonunnar G.N. Louise Jonasson frá Manitoba.

Ísland og Manitobafylki í Kanada hafa þróað með sér afar sérstakt samband gegnum í gegnum árin. Við eigum margt sameiginlegt, m.a. djúpstæðar menningarlegar rætur og vinahéð, og framtíðarsýn sem byggist á sömu lífsgildum. Í Manitoba þrífst kröftugt og blómlegt íslenskt samfélag, sér í lagi í Gimli, sem er þekkt að sinni stoltu íslensku arfleifð.

Um árunna skeið hafa fjölmargar heimsóknir og menningarlegir atburðir leitt okkur saman. Við erum sérstaklega ánægð að fá tækifæri til að deila með ykkur hinum ágætu verkum Louise Jonasson næstu tvær vikurnar. Hún er ein þeirra íslensku listamanna sem sett hafa svip á menningarlega og listræna ásýnd bæði Manitoba og Íslands.

Við erum stolt af sameiginlegri sögu okkar og þeim styrku vinaböndum sem tengja lönd okkar. Við hlökkum til aukinna samskipta á sviði lista og menningar á komandi tíð og til þess að halda áfram að byggja á okkar góða vinskap.

Takk.  
Gary Doer



25/11/85, 1985, 47.5 x 58.3 cm.  
Oil pastel, graphite on rag paper.  
Collection of the Manitoba Art Bank  
PHOTO: LOUISE JONASSON

**A MESSAGE FROM THE HONOURABLE RON LEMIEUX,  
MINISTER OF CULTURE, HERITAGE AND TOURISM**

The people of Manitoba extend their gratitude and their best wishes to the people of Iceland on this exciting occasion. As Manitoba Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism, I am particularly pleased our province has this opportunity to exhibit paintings by Manitoba artist G.N. Louise Jonasson at the Reykjavik Art Museum.

Manitoba is home to numerous talented artists, many of whom have international reputations. Ms Jonasson's work is quickly gaining favour across Canada and we are happy to be able to share it now with the people of Iceland.

Icelanders have a strong presence and a proud history in Manitoba. Icelandic culture and traditions contribute greatly to the rich quality of life in our province. The depth and colours of Jonasson's fine paintings subtly reflect her Icelandic roots as well as her ties to the province of her birth—a symbol of the melding of two cultures.

On behalf of the people of Manitoba, I thank you for your hospitality and for this opportunity to build on the strong relationship between us. We look forward to sharing *Island Souvenir* with the people of Iceland and we eagerly anticipate many similar artistic exchanges with you in the future.

Manitobabúar senda Íslendingum þakkir og árnaðaróskir við þetta skemmtilega tækifæri. Sem ráðherra menningar- og ferðamála í fylkisstjórn Manitoba er ég sérlega ánægður yfir því, að fylki okkar skuli eiga þátt í að koma verkum G.N. Louise Jonasson á framfæri og sýnt þau í Listasafni Reykjavíkur.

Í Manitoba búa margir hæfileikaríkir listamenn sem margir hverjir hafa óðlast viðurkenningu utan heimalandsins. Orðstír Louise Jonasson og frægd verka hennar hafa vaxið um gervallt Kanada og þess vegna er það okkur ánægja að deila þeim með Íslendingum.

Áhrif Íslendinga í Manitoba eru sterk, bæði í nútíð og fortið. Íslensk menning og hefðir hafa lagt mikið af mörkum til að auðga lífið í fylkinu. Dyptin og litirnir í verkum Louise Jonasson endurspeglar bæði íslenskan uppruna hennar og tengsl hennar við heimkynni og fæðingarland—í þeim mætast tveir menningarheimar.

Fyrir hönd íbúa Manitoba vil ég þakka ykkur fyrir gestrisnina og þetta tækifæri til að efla tengslin á milli okkar. Um leið og við gleðjumst yfir því að deila með okkur *Island Souvenir* bíðum við þess með óþreyju að eiga við ykkur viðlíka skipti af listrænum toga í framtíðinni.

**18 Knots X**, 1990-96, 76.25 x 50.75 cm.  
Oil stick on rag paper & oilpaint on carved relief plywood.  
Collection of the Manitoba Government.  
PHOTO: LOUISE JONASSON





## GREETING FROM THE PRESIDENT OF ICELAND, ÓLAFUR RAGNAR GRÍMSSON KVEÐJA FRÁ FORSETA ÍSLANDS

When Icelanders emigrated and settled in Canada, the culture and history of their mother country proved to be an unbreakable bond with their ancestral home. It soon came to light that creative literary talent had also accompanied them, and the poetry and prose they sent back became part of the Icelandic national consciousness.

In recent years our eyes have been opened to a new creative flourishing among our relatives in the New World, who have been establishing good reputations for themselves in literature, film making, music and the visual arts. We have become aware of new perspectives by seeing these works from across the Atlantic in the context of the creative currents in Iceland.

Louise Jonasson's exhibition gives us the opportunity to enjoy the work of a superb painter sprung from the settler stock of the prairies of Manitoba who combines a range of influences to create works with integrity and appeal. The exhibition is also a challenge to us to deepen our understanding of the culture of our relatives in the New World, so making the cultivation of our common heritage a fertile and creative experience.

Þegar Íslendingar námu land í Kanada voru menning og saga ættjarðarinnar veganesti sem tengdi landnemana sterkum böndum við fornar slóðir. Skálddagsýðjan reyndist einnig vera með í för og heim til Íslands bárust ljóð og sögur sem urðu samofin sjálfsvi-  
tund þjóðarinnar.

Á undanförunum árum höfum við verið að kynna nýrri listsköpun ættmenna okkar í Vesturálfu, verkum afkomendanna sem getið hafa sér gott orð í skáldskap, kvikmyndagerð, tónlist og málaralist. Við höfum uppgötvað nýjar viddir með því að tengja verkin sem orðið hafa til fyrir vestan við þá gerjun sem einkennir listalíf Íslendinga.

Með sýningu Louise Jonasson gefst okkur tækifæri til að njóta verka frábærs málara sem á rætur að rekja til sterkra stofna á sléttum Manitoba og nýtir áhrif víða að til að skapa heillandi og heilsteypta list. Sýningin er okkur einnig hvatning til að efla skilning okkar á menningu og listsköpun frændfólksins í Vesturheimi og gera þannig arfleifðina sem bindur okkur saman að frjórri og skapandi reynslu.



The Iceland Reading Room, University of Manitoba

## ADDRESS FROM THE PRIME MINISTER OF ICELAND, DAVÍÐ ODDSSON

Last year we celebrated the 1000th anniversary of the Icelandic discovery of Vinland and the 125th anniversary of the first Icelandic settlements in Canada and the USA. The largest community of people of Icelandic origin is in Canada, in Manitoba. The celebrations were a great success, thanks not least to the sincere interest of the descendants of the settlers to keep the memory of their origins evergreen.

In recent decades, Icelanders have showed increasing interest in cultivating relations with our relatives in Canada. This has not only taken the form of books and television programmes, but also increased travel between our two countries. More and more Icelanders are visiting Manitoba and we are seeing an increasing number of visitors from Manitoba in Iceland. This contact is of great importance for us. Louise Jonasson's art exhibition contributes to the strengthening of these ties.

I myself have visited Nýja Ísland a few times and made many friends there. I have many pleasant memories from my visits. Many of these friends have now come to Iceland, bringing Louise Jonasson's exhibition with them. I should like to bid them welcome and congratulate Louise on the occasion of her exhibition.

Á síðasta ári var þess minnst að 1000 ár voru liðin frá landafundum Íslendinga í Vesturheimi og að 125 ár voru liðin frá því að landnám íslenskra manna hófst í Kanada og Bandaríkjunum. Stærsta byggð fólks af íslenskum uppruna er í Manitoba í Kanada. Hátíðahöldin tókust í alla stadi vel og er það ekki síst að þakka einlægum áhuga afkomenda landnemanna á að rækta tengslin við upprunann.

Á undanförunum misserum hefur áhugi hér á landi á tengdum við frændfólk okkar í Kanada aukist verulega. Ekki aðeins hafa verið gefnar út bækur og sjónvarpsefni heldur hefur samgangur aukist verulega. Heimsóknnum fólks héðan til Manitoba hefur fjölgað og fólk þaðan hefur í auknum mæli heimsótt okkur. Þessi samskipti eru okkur mikils virði. Myndlistarsýning Louise Jonasson er liður í að styrkja þessi tengsl.

Ég hef sjálfur nokkrum sinnum heimsótt Nýja-Ísland og eignast þar marga vini. Margar ánægjulegar endurminningar eru frá þessum ferðum mínum. Nú eru margir þessara vina minna komnir hingað til lands og í farteskinu hafa þeir sýningu Louise. Ég býð þá velkomna og óska Louise til hamingju með sýninguna.



Dr. Paul H.T. Thortakson Gallery  
The Iceland Reading Room, University of Manitoba



***Atlas with Tentative Title***

South wall installation view with  
*Legend Survey X, VIII, VII: Shelf*,  
Gallery 1C03

University of Winnipeg, 1994.

PHOTO: PETER TITTENBERGER

I am delighted to have been asked to contribute a short personal statement for the catalogue of this present exhibition, *Island Souvenir*, as it travels to Reykjavik in 2001. This work was first shown at Gallery 1C03 of the University of Winnipeg in November 2000. The show was very well received, and from that time on, I hoped that it would be seen by many more viewers.

Louise Jonasson has had a long relationship with the University of Winnipeg and Gallery 1C03. Her mother, Nadia Novak Jonasson, is an alumna (1947) of United College, a founding institution of the present University of Winnipeg. In September 1991, both Louise and her sister Marianne had paintings included in the Gallery 1C03 exhibition *Synergos 2*, an art exchange project that toured Ukraine. Although Gallery 1C03 is a public gallery, it also serves as a tutorial for our Art History program.

I first got to know Louise in 1992. At that time, the University community had donated funds in memory of the late Kay Duckworth, wife of former University President Harry Duckworth. Mrs. Duckworth had been a great supporter of visual art and of the Art History program here, and I felt that a work of art by a contemporary woman artist from Manitoba would be a fitting memorial. We selected *8/88-20/11/90* for our permanent collection, and I was able to meet Louise and speak to her about our choice. I was impressed when I met her as she told me about her work, and I have followed her career ever since.

March 1994 saw a solo Jonasson exhibition, *Atlas with Tentative Title*, at Gallery 1C03. The paintings were creative and exquisite, mixing the visual with ideas and with wordplay as only Louise can do. After that very successful exhibition, we acquired the largest piece from the show, *Shelf*, with a partial donation from the artist. It has been shown prominently in several locations on campus and now hangs in the Office of the President, Dr. Constance Rooke, who personally chose it. On the retirement of Dr. Rooke's predecessor, Dr. Marsha Hanen, in 1999, and in recognition of Dr. Hanen's tenure as president, Louise presented the University with the gift of another painting, *Wood: Panel XV, from wood + gravity = timber*.

*Island Souvenir* was a highlight of our exhibition season. As this body of work had its beginnings in *Atlas with Tentative Title*, I was extremely pleased that Louise wanted to exhibit it at Gallery 1C03, where it was seen by many Manitobans. I am proud that the show has now come to Iceland, where these remarkable visual expressions will be understood and valued by a new audience.

Louise Jonasson is a wonderful ambassador for Manitoba and Canada: a fine painter, articulate and thoughtful.

Dr. Sarah McKinnon

Dean, Faculty of Liberal Studies

Ontario College of Art and Design

Former Art Curator, Professor and Acting Dean of Arts, University of Winnipeg



Það gleður mig mjög að hafa verið beðin um að rita stutta umsögn í sýningarskrá fyrir *Island Souvenir* í Reykjavík 2001. Verkin voru sýnd fyrst í listasafninu Gallery 1Co3 í Winnipeg-háskóla í nóvember 2000. Sýningunni var afar vel tekið og síðan hef ég vonað að æ fleiri mættu njóta hennar.

Louise Jonasson hefur átt langt samstarf við Winnipeg-háskóla og Gallery 1Co3. Móðir hennar, Nadia Novak Jonasson, útskrifaðist úr United College (1947), sem var undanfari Winnipeg-háskóla. Í september 1991 áttu bæði Louise og systir hennar, Marianne, málverk á sýningu í Gallery 1Co3, *Synergos 2*, en það var samskiptaverkefni sem sent var til Úkraínu. Þótt Gallery 1Co3 sé opinbert listasafn þjónar það einnig sem kennslusafn fyrir listasöguskor háskólans.

Ég kynntist Louise fyrst 1992. Á þeim tíma hafði háskólasamfélagið lagt fram fé til minningar um Kay heitina Duckworth, eiginkonu fyrrverandi rektors háskólans, Harry Duckworth. Kay hafði verið mikill stuðningsmaður sjónrænna lista og listasöguskorar háskólans og ég taldi að listaverk núlifandi konu frá Manitoba væru við hæfi til þess að minnast hennar. Við völdum 8/88-2/11/90 fyrir varanlega sýningu og mér tókst að ná fundum Louise og ræða við hana um val okkar. Hún vakti strax hrifningu mína þegar hún sagði mér frá verkum sínum og ég hef fylgst með ferli hennar síðan.

Í mars 1994 hélt Louise einkasýningu, *Atlas with Tentative Title*, í Gallery 1Co3. Myndirnar voru frjór og undurfagrar, þar sem blandað var saman hinu sjónræna og orðaleikjum eins og henni einni er lagið. Eftir þessa vel heppnuðu sýningu tókst okkur að kaupa stærsta málverkið á sýningunni, *Shelf*, með aðstöð listamannsins. Verkið hefur verið sýnt á ýmsum áberandi stöðum í háskólanum og hangir núna á skrifstofu rektors, dr. Constance Rooke, sem valdi það sérstaklega. Þegar forveri hennar, dr. Marsha Hanen, lét af störfum 1999, og til minningar um starf dr. Hanen sem rektors, gaf Louise háskólanum annað málverk, *Wood: Panel XV, wood + gravity = timber*.

*Island Souvenir* markaði hátínd sýningartímabili okkar í fyrra. Þar eð þessi verk eiga uppruna sinn í *Atlas with Tentative Title* gladdi það mig mjög að hún skyldi velja Gallery 1Co3 til að sýna það því þar gátu margir Manitoba-búar séð það. Ég er hreykin af því að sýningin skuli nú vera komin til Íslands þar sem nýir áhorfendur fá að njóta þessarar merkilegu sýningar.

Louise Jonasson er dásamlegur sendiherra Manitoba og Kanada: góður málari, hugsandi listamaður og vel máli farin.

dr. Sarah McKinnon

When I was growing up in Arborg, Manitoba I often listened to my grandmother speak of her birthplace on the Snæfellsnes peninsula in Iceland. She spoke of snow-capped mountains, cobalt ocean and black lava rimming valleys of bright green grass. I was reminded of her words when I first came to The Icelandic Collection at the University of Manitoba, and am reminded of them every day, upon seeing "Snæfellsjökull" by Jóhannes Sveinsson Kjarval, the painting which hangs permanently in The Collection space.

In his poem, "From an Icelander's Day Address," Stephan G. Stephansson underlines that wherever we journey, the features of our homeland always remain in our minds and hearts. Thus it was that, throughout her life, my grandmother chose to surround herself with the colours of her early childhood. So it was, also, in designing the new space for the University of Manitoba Libraries Icelandic Collection and The Iceland Reading Room, that the goal became one of creating "a small piece of Iceland" in Manitoba. To achieve this goal we looked to Iceland's landscape for inspiration. We did not have far to look, however, for the colours and textures of building materials and furnishings chosen for the new facility were influenced by none other than Kjarval's "Snæfellsjökull."

Located within The Iceland Reading Room is the Dr. Paul H.T. Thorlakson Gallery, a permanent exhibition space that was officially opened in October 2000 with the exhibition "Living and Reliving the Icelandic Sagas." It was during a visit she made to this exhibition that I mentioned to Louise Jonasson that the intention was to follow the manuscript exhibit with an art show. I also suggested that perhaps she might be interested in mounting an exhibition in the Gallery at some time in the future. Louise replied that not only would she be interested but that she had an exhibition available to be mounted and that it would "fit" well in the space.

Louise Jonasson has had a long association with the University of Manitoba Libraries. From 1980-1995 she worked as an Architecture and Fine Arts Library assistant. I first met Louise in 1989 when she and her sister, Marianne, mounted a joint exhibition of their work in the Archives and Special Collections Reading Room to coincide with the visit of the President of Iceland, Vigdis Finnbogadóttir to The Icelandic Collection. I was therefore delighted when, following a successful show at Gallery 1C03 of the University of Winnipeg in November 2000, *Island Souvenir* became the first art exhibition to be shown in the Dr. Paul H.T. Thorlakson Gallery opening February 23, 2001.

The exhibition is entitled *Island Souvenir, not Iceland Souvenir*. Louise has indicated that she was initially connecting with islands in general, not Iceland in particular when creating the works that make up *Island Souvenir*. Louise has never been to Iceland, and has made the statement that "one should never underestimate the influence of book culture." Yet there is more at work here than book culture alone. *Island Souvenir* "fits" perfectly inside the Dr. Paul H.T. Thorlakson Gallery, and not just physically, but visually and spiritually. So well does *Island Souvenir* fit into this "small piece of Iceland" in Manitoba that it is almost as if the works were created specifically for the exhibition space. I believe that Louise Jonasson, true to the words of Stephan G. Stephansson's poem, carries features of an ancestral homeland in her mind and heart.

While at the Dr. Paul H. T. Thorlakson Gallery, *Island Souvenir* was seen by many Manitobans and by visitors from around the world. Many came back two and three times to view the exhibition. As a Manitoban of Icelandic descent, I am thrilled that the exhibition has now traveled to Iceland, where I know these remarkable visual creations will be immediately understood and appreciated by our Icelandic cousins. My best wishes to Louise Jonasson and Kjarvalsstaðir for a most successful show.

Sigrid Johnson  
Head, The Icelandic Collection, University of Manitoba Libraries

Þegar ég var að alast upp í Árborg, Manítóba hlustaði ég oft á ömmu mína segja frá fæðingarstað sínum á Snæfellsnesi. Hún sagði frá snævipöktum tindum, dökkbláu hafinu og svörtu hrauni sem umlykur græna dali. Mér varð hugsað til frásagna hennar þegar ég kom í fyrsta sinn inn í íslenska bókasafnið við Manítóbaháskóla, og mér verður hugsað til þeirra á hverjum degi, þar sem ég horfi á „Snæfellsjökul“ eftir Jóhannes Sveinsson Kjarval, sem hangir á einum veggja bókasafnsins.

Í ljóði sínu, „Úr Íslendingadags ræðu“, undirstrikar Stephan G. Stephansson að hvert sem við ferðumst geymum við ávalt mynd föðurlandsins í hug okkar og hjarta. Því var það að allt sitt líf kaus amma mín að umlykja sig litum bernsku sinnar. Og því var það einnig að þegar hið nýja rými íslenska bókasafns Manítóbaháskóla var hannað var eitt af markmiðunum það að skapa „svolitinn hluta af Íslandi“ í Manítóba. Til þess að ná þessu markmiði litum við til íslensks landslags til innblásturs. Við þurfum ekki að leita lengi því litir og áferð byggingarefnis og húsgagna þessa nýja rýmis var innblásið af engu öðru en „Snæfellsjökli“ Kjarvals.

Dr. Paul H.T. Thorlakson gallerið er staðsett í salarkynnum íslenska bókasafnsins, sýningarsalur sem formlega var opnaður í október 2000 með sýningunni „Stefnumót við íslenska sagnahefð“. Ég nefndi það við Louise Jonasson, eitt sinn þegar hún heimsótti safnið, að ætlunin væri að fylgja handritasýningunni eftir með listasýningu. Ég spurði einnig hvort hún hefði áhuga á að sýna myndir sínar í þessum salarkynnum. Hún svaraði því til að ekki einungis hefði hún áhuga heldur hefði hún tilbúna sýningu sem myndi henta þessu rými fullkomlega.

Louise Jonasson hefur um langt skeið verið tengd bókasafni Manítóbaháskóla; frá 1980–1995 vann hún í hlutastarfi við arkitektúr—og listadeild safnsins. Ég hitti Louise fyrst 1989 þegar hún og systir hennar, Marianne, sýndu saman verk sín í Lessal skjalsafns og sérbókasafna Manítóbaháskóla, í tengslum við heimsókn forseta Íslands, Vigdísar Finnbogadóttur, í íslenska bókasafnið. Það var því dásamlegt að eftir vel heppnaða sýningu í Gallery 103, sýningarsal Winnipegháskóla, í nóvember 2000, skuli *Míningar um ey* hafa orðið fyrsta listasýningin sem sett er upp í Dr. Paul H.T. Thorlakson galleriinu en hún var opnuð 23 febrúar 2001.

Sýningin ber nafnið „Island Souvenir“, ekki „Iceland Souvenir“. Louise hefur sagt að hún hafi verið í tengslum við eyjar almenn, ekki aðeins Ísland, þegar hún vann að *Míningar um ey*. Hún hefur aldrei komið til Íslands en hefur fullyrt að „enginn skyldi vanmeta áhrif bókmenningar“. Samt er meira í verkum hennar en aðeins bókmenning. *Míningar um ey* „passar“ fullkomlega inn í Dr. Paul H.T. Thorlakson gallerið, ekki aðeins efnislega heldur og einnig sjónrænt sem andlega. Svo vel passar *Míningar um ey* inn í þennan „svolitla hluta af Íslandi“ í Manítóba að það er eins og sýningin hafi verið hönnuð með þetta pláss í huga. Ég trúi að Louise Jonasson, trú orðum Stephans G. Stephanssonar, beri mynd föðurlandsins í hug og hjarta.

Fjölmargir íbúar Manítóba, svo og gestir hvaðanæva að úr heiminum, komu til þess að sjá sýninguna á meðan hún var í Dr. Paul H.T. Thorlakson galleriinu. Margir komu aftur og aftur til að skoða myndirnar. Ég er Manítóbabúi af íslenskum ættum og er í skýjunum yfir því að þessi sýning skuli nú vera á leið til Íslands þar sem ég veit að þessi stórkostlega sjónræna sköpun verður auðveldlega skilin og metin af íslenskum frændum. Kærar þakkir til Louise Jonasson og Kjarvalsstaða fyrir vel heppnaða sýningu.

Sigríð Johnson  
forstöðumaður  
Íslenska bókasafnið við Manítóbaháskóla



14/1/86, 1986, 37.6 x 50.7 cm.  
Oilstick, graphite on rag paper.  
PHOTO: LOUISE JONASSON

## ICELAND WITHIN

Guðrún and I first "discovered" Louise Jonasson at an art show, at the Upstairs Gallery in Winnipeg, Canada. Guðrún noticed a painting at the show which she found attractive. She enquired about the artist: "Jonasson" was the answer, but Jonasson is a common surname among Canadians of Icelandic descent. Sigtryggur, who has been called "The Father of New Iceland", was Jónasson. That Jónas grew up at Hraun, "where high hills fill half the valley", early in the century which saw thousands of Icelanders leave to the New World. I am not saying that Louise Jonasson is a relative of Jónas Hallgrímsson, as far as we know, and she is definitely not his descendant, but this is her surname and Sigtryggur Jónasson and Jónas Hallgrímsson were certainly cousins.

After spotting the painting at the Upstairs Gallery, we tried to locate the artist and managed to do so. From there on Louise joined us on many occasions during the year of Millennium Celebrations in Canada. For example, she took part in Round Table discussions on the Icelandic Cultural Heritage, with the President of Iceland, Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson, during his visit to Winnipeg last year. Louise is only partly of Icelandic descent; she is also of Ukrainian ancestry, and had never given much thought to her personal or artistic ancestry. She told us that she had done nothing in particular to cultivate her Icelandic heritage, except for what came naturally. Like other artists, she first and foremost identifies with being an artist and is mainly influenced by the creative forces of artistic expression. Louise had never before involved herself in the many Icelandic cultural activities which take place in Manitoba. However, she was among the thousands who joined in celebrating the Icelandic Heritage during the Millennium Celebrations in Manitoba and elsewhere in Canada.

Louise has a strong, independent art expression. Her style is unique and the ideas are carried out with precision and meticulousness, in the colours, the framing—all the way to the smallest details. Also the unity in the art, where all the pieces create one continuum. Her art expression is European in character rather than North American and it has little in common with the Canadian Prairie paintings, which have their own appeal. Icelanders will immediately notice the Icelandic influence in her paintings. This is quite supernatural as the artist has never been in Iceland and has never particularly connected Iceland to her art. The green colour on the roofs is nowhere found except in Iceland; the blue colour is the Icelandic blueness. This woman expresses in colours what Jónas Hallgrímsson once expressed in words: the colours, the land, the fabric woven by Icelandic nature, so ingeniously that we barely notice it. Only one who carries Iceland within expresses oneself this way in colour.

It is fitting that the Honourable Gary Doer, Premier of Manitoba, has decided to invite Louise Jonasson to join forces with him during his visit to Iceland. Premier Doer's visit to Iceland, at the invitation of Prime Minister Davíð Oddsson, is an important event. By offering Louise to join him in visiting Iceland, the Premier of Manitoba is showing us that the people who left Iceland to settle in Manitoba still carry Iceland with them. They paint their surroundings green and blue as if they had always lived here.

Congratulations on this show.

Svavar Gestsson, Iceland's Ambassador to Sweden  
Former Consul General of Iceland in Canada



*Island Souvenir VI, detail.*

## MEÐ ÍSLAND Í SÉR

Þegar við Guðrún „fundum“ fyrst Louise Jonasson var það á sýningu í Upstairs Gallery í Winnipeg. Guðrún rak augun í myndverk og fannst það álitlegt. Hún spurði um höfundinn: „Jonasson“ var svarið en það er algengt nafn meðal Vestur—Íslendinga að ekki sé meira sagt. „Faðir Nýja Íslands“ Sigtryggur var einmitt Jónasson. Og þessi Jónas er einmitt sá sami sem snemma á landflóttöldinni miklu ólst upp á Hrauni þar sem háir hólar hálfan dalinn fylla. Ekki þannig að skilja að Louise Jonasson sé frænka Jónasar Hallgrímssonar svo vitað sé og þaðan af síður afkomandi; en hún ber þetta nafn og þeir Sigtryggur Jónasson og Jónas Hallgrímsson voru sannarlega frændur. Eftir að hafa séð verkið í Upstairs Gallery reyndum við að finna listmanninn og það tókst. Louise var svo alltaf með þegar eitthvað var um að vera; hún tók til dæmis þátt í umræðunum um íslenskan menningararf þegar forseti Íslands kom í heimsókn til Winnipeg í fyrra. Samt er hún ekki íslenskrar ættar nema að hálfu; að hinum helmingnum er hún úkraínsk og hafði eiginlega aldrei hugsað sérstaklega út í uppruna sinn sem einstaklingur og enn síður sem listamaður. Hún segir sjálf að hún hafi ekki gert neitt sérstakt til að rækta það íslenska í sér nema það sem kannski kæmi eins og af sjálfu sér. Hún vill vera listamaður fyrst og síðast eins og aðrir listamenn og lúta einungis þeirri sköpun sem listin sjálf blæs henni í brjóst. Louise hafði aldrei tekið þátt í íslenskum verkefnum í Manitóba sem eru þó óteljandi. En hún varð ein þúsundanna sem hrifust með á hátíðarárinu mikla í Manitóba sem annars staðar í Kanada.

Myndir Louise eru sterk, sjálfstæð listaverk. Hún ferð ótroðnar slóðir og leggur nákvæmni og natni við alla hugsun myndarinnar, litina, umgjörðina, allt niður í allra smæsta smáatriði. Einnig samfelli myndanna og allar myndirnar skapa eina samfelli. Myndirnar eru eiginlega einsog evrópskar fremur en norður-amerískar og eiga engann sinn líkan í sléttumálverkinu kanadíska sem hefur alveg sérstaka skírskotun. En þegar áhorfendur íslenskir skoða þessar myndir munu þeir tafarlaust skynja að margt í myndverkinu er svo íslenskt að stappar nærri yfirnáttúrulegum tíðindum vegna þess að konan hefur aldrei komið til Íslands, hefur aldrei skynjað Ísland sérstaklega í tengslum við listsköpun sína. Græni liturinn á þökunum í sumum myndunum er þó hvergi til nema á Íslandi, blái liturinn er íslenski bláminn. Þannig yrkir þessi kona í litum það sem Jónas forðum kvað í orðum, um litina og landið og þann vef sem íslensk náttúra býr til handa okkur svo þétt og oft að við tökum varla eftir því. Svona getur heldur enginn ort í liti nema sá sem hefur Ísland innan í sér.

Það fer einkar vel á því að forsætisráðherra Manitóba, Gary Doer, skuli einmitt hafa ákveðið að kalla Louise til liðs við sig fyrir heimsóknina til Íslands. Heimsókn Doers forsætisráðherra í boði íslenska forsætisráðherrans Davíðs Oddssonar er merkur viðburður. Með því að bjóða Louise að koma með til Íslands er forsætisráðherra Manitóba að sýna okkur að fólkíð sem fór frá Íslandi til Manitóba það tók Ísland með sér: það málur umhverfið grænt og blátt eins og það hafi alltaf átt heima á þessu landi.

Til hamingju með þessa sýningu.

Svavar Gestsson sendiherra Íslands í Svíþjóð  
fyrirverandi aðalræðismaður Íslands í Kanada



**18 Knots.** 1990-98, 76.25 x 50.75 cm.  
Oil stick on rag paper & oilpaint on carved relief plywood.  
Private collection.  
PHOTO: LOUISE JONASSON

## THE PROVENANCE OF ISLAND SOUVENIR: AN ARTIST'S STATEMENT

How does one write about where a work of art has come from and how does one write about how it got here? How does one write about its provenance? Where does one begin, especially if that "one" is the artist?

An ostensible beginning could be the body of work *Atlas with Tentative Title*. Hopefully, this title evokes a myriad of possibilities, from the imagined reality of a mythic Titan to the fleeting victory of a self-actualized, muscle-flexing entrepreneur (Charles Atlas, a founder of the twentieth-century American-style body-building craze), or the outsized tome on the table, abstractly mapping our versions of geographic location, our visions of terra incognita. For me, it also implies the tenuous hold we humans have upon this earth that we arrogantly accept as of our making.

Within *Atlas with Tentative Title* is a series of twelve 62 cm x 62 cm wood panel paintings entitled *Legend Survey I-XII*, each perhaps curiously framed on the bottom and right-hand side only, the other two edges scarred and hacked as if rent from something much larger. Having an interest in general morphology, I borrowed the linguistic idea of the morpheme: a meaningful morphological unit that cannot be further divided. This "morpheme," intended to imply the lower right-hand corner of a map, where the legend inset most often occurs, was an abstract way of making very large paintings. The impact of scale, so basic to how we experience, has always held my interest, as does this idea of what a fragment can embody and convey.

*Island*, a painting that has the appearance of being drawn and quartered, was a direct descendant of *Legend Survey I-XII*. The canvas "island" had worked diligently for several years in my studio as a distressed-surface experiment and I had assessed it as being past its prime. After rather haphazardly slicing it in four and tossing it on the floor I saw, like that veritable phoenix arising from ash, renewed possibility for the *Legend Survey* morpheme: a fragmented island, a wheel of life with marginal beings seeking refuge within its watery rim.

*Island* has been exhibited within the context of *wood + gravity = timber*. In a slightly amended state it forms the anchor for this present exhibition and the new paintings *Island Souvenir*. The word "souvenir" can be so evocative: perhaps it is a mnemonic artifact or a bona fide cultural remnant, a relic of conquest once wrested and now sanctioned by the museum catalogue, also things ersatz or kitsch or possibly prêt-à-porter, the ubiquitous tourist keepsake, but all those catalysts cause some kind of commotion in the eddies of memory.

With *Island* in mind (and for me, because of my paternal gene pool, it is difficult not to acknowledge the possible presence of at least the idea "Iceland"), I created five paintings of imaginary islands. They are heavily textured and topographic in appearance—they could be satellite images condensing our world or microscopic samples of it enlarged. Their surface qualities imbue them with an aura of the precious and, during their creation, each of them was attended to formally as an independent aesthetic experience. This was important, but it made the next phase rather difficult. I tore each one of these five islands into quarters, and each quadrant gained a tempered independence. This process was akin to miming genetic replication. After carving each medium-density fibreboard support in response to my contemplation of the twenty new entities as isolated individuals, I mounted each island quadrant onto its support. It is interesting how the five island "families" retain substrata of commonality and how the suite of paintings, as a whole, continues to interact. Perhaps this way of making art is a way of acknowledging the idea of diaspora.

What became clear to me after I carried these five island paintings from my Winnipeg studio to my summer home in Boundary Park (the New Iceland side of the border), where I carved their marginal borders, was how this work was touched by the presence of my father. The further I explored, the more my thoughts of him and his too-short life became manifest and, inevitably, thoughts of his parents—my grandparents—and Iceland.

And so, what of this writing, this provenance? Truly, my desire is for the work to speak for itself.

G.N. Louise Jonasson



## UPPRUNI SÝNINGARINNAR ISLAND SOUVENIR (MINNINGAR UM EY): YFIRLÝSING LISTAMANNS

Hvernig á maður að skrifa um hvaðan listaverk er komið og hvernig á maður að skrifa um tilkomu þess? Hvernig á maður að skrifa um uppruna þess? Hvernig á maður að byrja, einkum ef viðkomandi er listamaðurinn sjálfur?

Sýndarbyrjun gæti verið *Atlas with Tentative Title* (*Atlas með bráðabirgðahætti*). Vonandi vekur þetta heiti aragrúa möguleika, allt frá ímynduðum veruleika godsagnakennds jötuns til hverfuls sigurs sjálfsbirtingar vöðvastælt athafnamanns (Charles Atlas, upphafsmanns líkamsræktaræðis Bandaríkjamanna á 20. öld), til gríðarmikils döðrants sem með óhlutbundnum hætti kortleggur túlkun okkar á landfræðilegri staðsetningu, draumóra okkar um ókönnuð svið. Fyrir mér gefur þetta til kynna hve haldlítill tók við mennirnir höfum á þessari jörð sem við þó hreykjum okkur af að hafa skapað.

Innan *Atlas with Tentative Title* er að finna röð tólf 62 sm x 62 sm málverka á fleka með heitinu *Legend Survey I-XII* (*Yfirlit yfir skýringartexta I-XII*), og er hvert þeirra aðeins innrammað að neðan og á hægri hlið, sem kann að vekja nokkra furðu, en hinar tvær hlíðarnar eru rispaðar og skórdóttar eins og þær hefðu verið rifnar frá einhverju miklu stærra. Þar ed ég hef áhuga á almennri formfræði tók ég að láni málvisindalega hugmynd um myndön: minnstu merkingarbærnu einingu máls. Þessu „myndani“ er ætlað að gefa í skyn neðra horn hægra megin á korti, þar sem skýringartexta er að jafnaði komið fyrir, og var afstæð aðferð til að búa til mjög stór málverk. Áhrif stærðar, sem er undirstaða þess hvernig við skynjum hlutina, hafa alltaf vakið áhuga minn, svo og hvað brot getur falið í sér og gefið til kynna.

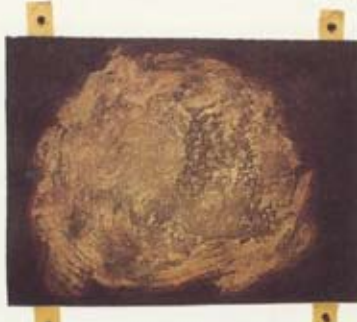
*Island (Ey)*, málverk sem litur út fyrir að hafa verið iðradregið og hlutað í fernt eftir aftöku, er skilgetinn afkomandi *Legend Survey I-XII*. Málverkið „Ey“ hafði verið í nákvæmri vinnslu í mörg ár á vinnustofu minni sem tilraun um þjáningarfyllan flöt og ég hafði talið það vera orðið úrelt. Eftir að ég hafði skipt því í fjóra hluta með fremur tilviljunarkenndum hætti og fleygt því á gólfid sá ég, rétt eins og þegar hinn sanni Fönix reis upp úr öskunni, nýja möguleika fyrir *Legend Survey*—myndanið: slitur af eyju, lífsins hjól þar sem jadarverur leita hælís innan vatnsósa umgjörðar hennar.

Málverkið *Island* hefur verið sýnt í samhenginu *tré + þyngdarafl = timbur*. Í örlítið endurbættri mynd er það umgjörð þessarar sýningar og nýju málverkanna, *Island Souvenir*. Orðið „souvenir“ (minjagripur) kallar gjarnan fram minningar: e.t.v. er það smíðisgripur minnisins eða raunverulegar menningarmínjar, til minningar um sigur sem eitt sinn náðist með erfiðismunum en er nú staðfestur á lista yfir safngripi, en einnig eftirlíking eða ómerkileg list eða hugsanlega fjöldaframleiðsluvara, alls staðar nálægur minjagripur handa ferðamönnum, en allir þessir hvatar valda einhvers konar uppnámi í hringiðu minninganna.

Með *Island* í huga (og fyrir mér, sökum erfdamengis úr föðurætt, er erfitt að hafna hugsanlegri nálægð hugtaksins „Iceland“), hef ég búið til fimm málverk af eyjum. Þau hafa flókna áferð og eru staðfræðileg ásýndum—og gætu rétt eins verið gervihnattamyndir af jörðunni eða stækkaðar smásjármyndir af henni. Yfirborð þeirra gefur þeim finlegan blæ, en við sköpun þeirra var hverju þeirra sinnt formlega sem sjálfstæðri, fagurfræðilegri reynslu. Það skipti miklu máli en gerði eftirlíkingin erfiðari. Ég reif hverja þessara fimm eyja í fjóra hluta og hver fjórðungur óðlaðist temprað sjálfstæði. Þessu ferli svipaði til þess að líkt sé eftir genaafritun. Eftir að ég hafði skorid út hverja meðalstóra undirstöðu úr spónaplötu í samræmi við hugsun mína um tuttugu nýjar einingar sem aðgreinda einstaklinga kom ég hverjum eyjarfjórðungi fyrir á sinni undirstöðu. Athyglisvert er hvernig eyja „fjölskyldurnar“ fimm halda undirlagi sameiginlegra eiginleika og hvernig öll málverkin halda áfram að verka hvert á annað. E.t.v. er þessi listsköpun aðferð til að viðurkenna hugmyndina um tvístrun hvers kyns hópa.

Mér varð ljóst, eftir að ég flutti þessar fimm eyjamyndir frá vinnustofu minni í Winnipeg til sumarhúss míns í Boundary Park (nýjaislandsmegin við landamærin), þar sem ég skar út jaðrana á þeim, hvaða áhrif nálægð föður míns hafði á verkin. Því lengur sem ég ihugaði þetta þeim mun nærtækari orðu mér hugrenningar um hann og of stutta ævi hans og að sjálfsögðu um foreldra hans—afa minn og ömmu—og Ísland.

Nú, hvað um þessi skrif, þennan uppruna? Í raun vonast ég til að verkin tali sínu eigin máli.



## THE SUBSTANCE OF REMEMBERING: THE PAINTINGS OF G.N. LOUISE JONASSON

by Anne Brydon

Dú manst hvernig fór, þegar fornöld var unnin  
og fallinn var Surtur og goðheimur brunninn  
og jörð okkar hrúin og himnarnir níu,  
svo heimur og sól varð að gróa upp að nýju:  
Það geymdist þó nokkuð, sem á varð ei unnið  
af eldinum—gulltöflur, þær höfðu ei brunnið.  
Við sitjum hér, Kanada, í sumars þíns hlynning  
og sólvörmdu grasi að álíka vinning;  
Hver gulltafla er íslensk endurminning.

You remember how it ended, when ancient times were defeated  
and the giant Surtur was felled and the world of the gods burned,  
and our world ruined and the nine heavens,  
so the world and the sun had to grow anew:  
Something remained however, which was not destroyed  
by the fire—golden tablets, they had not burned.  
We are sitting here, Canada, in the warmth of your summer  
and in the sun-warmed grass, with a similar reward;  
Each golden tablet is an Icelandic memory.

Stephan G. Stephansson (1902)

In this closing stanza of his *Speech in Verse for the Toast to Canada*, Stephan G. Stephansson dramatises emigration from Iceland to western Canada during the last quarter of the 19th century. He refers to the world's ongoing cycle of destruction and renewal at Ragnarök, when the old gods of Ásatrú battle their enemies and the established order is overturned. Golden tablets, symbols of rebirth, survive the fire. Memories of Iceland amongst those who depart their homeland are like those golden tablets, brought to the new world where they enter into the creation of new cultural expressions.<sup>1</sup>

The paintings by G.N. Louise Jonasson exhibited at Kjarvalsstaðir under the title *Island Souvenir* can be thought of as the return to Iceland of a few of those tablets. The exhibition is comprised of three separate works: *Island* (1989-97) consists of one painting divided into four parts; *Island Souvenir I-XX* (1997-2000) of five paintings, each divided into four parts; and *Banner with Lance* (1989-94). As the years spent in their creation attest, these works are the culmination of extensive thinking about artistic, intellectual, cultural, and existential questions. As both Louise Jonasson and Svavar Gestsson note in their remarks, these works have emerged from the artist's commitment to her practice. They are not attempts to illustrate her ethnicity, and the fact that imagery referring to her part-Icelandic heritage appears in them is the unintended consequence of creative processes directed elsewhere. Yet that imagery is undeniably present, for the first time rising from her imagination and into the oil-based pigments, the canvas, paper, and wood with which she has worked over the last fifteen years.

Taken together, the works in *Island Souvenir* suggest how a person might imagine their sense of location through history and culture. As personal rather than political explorations, they bring together and transmute a lifetime of influences and experiences into visual form. In this regard, Jonasson's art is comparable to the poetry of Stephan G. or the writings of Kristjana Gunnars, another Icelander more recently transplanted in Canada, whose novel *Substance of Forgetting* this essay's title invokes.



This link to literature I highlight intentionally. Part of Jonasson's inspiration comes through the printed word via a voracious, wide-ranging reading habit. She has worked for fifteen years as image editor and art director for the western Canadian literary journal *Prairie Fire*. I first got to know her not as an anthropologist who works in Iceland and with Icelandic-Canadians, but rather in my other role as writer about Canadian art: Louise edited my essay on the Winnipeg-based painter Eleanor Bond. That I should now, with this meditation on her work, have the opportunity to bring together these two streams of my life is itself a privilege. But there's more to it, since Winnipeg and Reykjavik are the two places that anchor me in the world even though my present fate prevents my living in either one. Thus the themes of displacement, loss, remembrance, and acceptance that permeate Jonasson's art resonate for me in personal as well as more broadly cultural ways. They reach beyond talk of immigrant histories to underscore the sporadic ruptures that in one way or another rend the fabric of our lives. As the art essayist John Berger comments, the opposite of love is separation, not hate.<sup>2</sup>

Jonasson writes of a phoenix rising from ashes and Stephan G. proposes golden tablets surviving Ragnarök. The coincidence of their metaphors is suggestive: true artists hungrily consume everything life offers them while their art creates meaning from the flames of that mental and material chaos. As if the incarnation of Stephan G.'s tablets, Jonasson's paintings evoke the form of the book (one senses the heft of large vellum manuscripts) but have also the palpability of stone slabs. Their three-dimensional quality produced by various actions, whether carving, scraping away or layering paint, makes these works cross into the realm of sculpture. In this subtle manner, their materiality tempts the viewer to touch them. At the same time, their sensual beauty and metaphorical richness touch something standing deeper in the soul.

In *Island Souvenir*, the artist explores a cross-cultural array of symbols and icons in order to effect reflection on the psychological and cultural processes of making meaning in the world while in the midst of experiencing it. The act of looking at the paintings exemplifies these processes. The mind tries to place the various images in relation to one another, but no narrative from the "real" world suggests itself. Yet they hint at something remembered, or perhaps familiar, as in *déjà vu*. Condensed, elegiac; concurrently material, metaphorical, and metaphysical: the paintings' logic is more like the poem, their intimacy that of the dream. Jonasson's artistry assumes about human thought what the dry language of cognitive science now acknowledges to be the case: namely, that "the mind is inherently embodied, thought is mostly unconscious, and abstract concepts are largely metaphorical."<sup>3</sup> The dream, the poem, the painting come closest to speaking a language of the body.

As landscapes of the imagination evoking Icelandic culture and history, the paintings of *Island Souvenir* portray what Jonasson has never seen except through photographs, books, and the fragmented images inherited from immigrant grandparents and passed to her through her father—to the memory of whom these paintings are dedicated. In this sense, they may be thought of as memories of memories, as well as meditations upon the actions of memory and forgetting, of time and how we dwell in it. They bear the melancholy of loss yet there's acceptance as well, a coming to terms with the past as it persists in the present.

In her name—Gilda Nadia Louise Jonasson—the artist carries fragments of two histories, of Iceland and Ukraine. Her name interweaves the lives of those who quit old lands in an era of recurrent partings to voyage westward, seeking another future, or fleeing the past, or both at once. The names *Island* and *Island Souvenir* carry parallel traces that epitomize how cultures extend themselves into the world through their images and objects as well as through people themselves. An island is "at once a place of a fresh start, a clean slate, and a colony in which a resettlement of tradition is bound to occur."<sup>4</sup> Souvenirs are the things—mementos, photos, stories—which give material form to what the heart desires never to forget. These souvenirs acquire their own agency and transform as they enter the flow of various life journeys. In Icelandic, *Minning um eyu* evokes the image of an island—"Iceland within," as Svavar Gestsson calls it—carried in the mind's eye when the land itself has long been abandoned.

### origin of naming

Unlike photographs that can freeze in time the appearance of a moment, paintings have the power to portray what is invisible to the eye yet nonetheless is sensed to exist. The paintings of *Island Souvenir* give visual form to the underlying structures of being, to metaphysical bedrock. When, in looking, I give myself over to them (savouring their rich, earthy hues and engraved surfaces, contemplating what images of wood, stone, metal, and water can recall), I slip into a state seemingly between waking and sleeping, where word and meaning are one, where reality takes on the quality of myth. John Berger calls this "the place of original naming," where a person contacts in the marrow of their being the ground of origin: the moment not of birth but of conception. All is innocent, timeless, and unparticular.<sup>5</sup>

In *Island*, the paint's application—the canvas is distressed, abraded, the pigment layered and the surface worked to grey and white—sensually renders the effects of weathering, as if little flakes of the island were eroding bit by bit. Both technique and appearance thus mimic the workings of time. Swaddled human figures form a marginal register, intimating the presence of others. Like guardians, like ghosts, like just-born babies wrapped in swaddling. Or maybe they are bundled up mummies, preserved for eternity. In a contrary move, they could also be new lives emerging from chrysalides. These deliberately ambiguous figures occupy a space where up and down have

no reference, and temporality is uncertain. Do they surround the island and represent the "real" world of our senses? Or do they denote a timeless, invisible underpinning briefly rising into view?

In both *Island* and *Island Souvenir*, the tension between time and timelessness forms a dynamic motif that connects to the sense of contingency with which we inhabit the present. Elsewhere Berger writes that, until the general acceptance of Darwinian evolutionary theory over the last one hundred years, time had been experienced as "infiltrated by timelessness." A painting's stillness symbolized that timelessness, and provided one point of contact—along with "ritual, stories, and ethics"—between the profane world of time and the sacred substratum of the timeless and enduring.<sup>6</sup> Since technology and evolutionary thinking began to pervade our common sense, we have accepted as normal that change typifies existence, and that the forward movement of time rather than timelessness is the substance of the universe.

In contemporary art, this shift in cultural understanding manifests itself in the displacement of painting as the paramount art form. Further, the trajectory of painting and other media has been toward analytical thinking, emphasizing diagnosis and discovery over a concern with creation. Like Enlightenment philosophy in general, artistic inquiry delves into the mind more so than into questions of being. This can favour the intellectual at the cost of the emotional, which at times appears to be the goal. Jonasson works in an older tradition of painting, still intellectual but thoughtful as well, one that concerns itself with the timeless and with deeper existential meanings. She turns the analytical bits into particular experiential metaphors by leaving them open to interpretation. Her visual technique allows for the music of chance to resonate between object and viewer.

Jonasson describes her artistic process as the reverse of archaeology and Freud's archaeological metaphor for probing memory; rather than digging through layers to find the origin, she reveals a deeper level at which meaning is organized, by building up layers of paint until the image emerges. She describes this process as akin to meditation, a dialogue between her and the initial marks she lays on canvas and board. There's no goal to represent something already known, but knowing comes through her relation with the materials. Only when the work is close to completion does she recognize the form that it has taken.

References to sciences that think time and conceptualise the past repeat within *Island Souvenir*. Geology, archaeology, genealogy, history, genetics, and psychoanalysis manifest as, for example, lava-like surfaces and stratified edges, or pre-modern artefacts like a carved stirrup and a sod house. In one way or another, these sciences show a contemporary concern with beginnings, with creations—of the earth, a society, a family, a persona. The first creation, of the universe, can also be read in the now-quartered island images, like gaseous clouds out of which matter formed. The search for beginnings posits the hope that there is something to which everything returns, a fundament or universal, perhaps even a guarantee of future redemption. It also suggests that time is knowable. Beginnings raise a conundrum, however, since one can't stop wondering, what came before time? The mind cannot think nothingness. The artist gives us one possible place of resolution, in the watery imagery surrounding each island. Water is a metaphor for creation as well as emotion, suggestive of cleansing and beginning again, but also of the amniotic fluid from which we all emerge. Here birth and the process of artistic creation flow together, suggesting that the particular—the birth of the individual—and the universal—the ongoing cycles of death and rebirth—bear a family resemblance.

### **material remains**

Notions of objects and images moving through time and marking its passage follow naturally upon considerations of time and timelessness. The title word "souvenir" opens onto another grammar of Jonasson's art that explores ideas of transmission and communication, possession and loss. The English word "souvenir" derives from the French "memory" or "to remember," which derives in turn from the Latin "*subvenire*," to occur to the mind. According to Susan Stewart, the souvenir "speaks to a context of origin through a language of longing, for it is not an object arising out of need or use value; it is an object arising out of the necessarily insatiable demands of nostalgia."<sup>7</sup> Possessing an object or memento is a way of remembering a place or person, and of retaining a bond or sensation despite separation. The souvenir is the material remainder of an original experience, something physical a person can touch and gaze upon to recall what was felt to be desirable, authentic, and true. It works as a talisman against forgetting, embodying a refusal to allow a brief encounter to slip silently away.

The paintings of *Island Souvenir* can in this way be looked upon as mementos for recollecting, reworking, and transmitting personal, cultural, and visual pasts. The objects portrayed—things like rope, nets, wool and knitting, stone, wood planks, a stirrup, a manuscript, fish—share a down-to-earth materiality and give to the paintings an aura of deceptive simplicity, as if they illustrated a book of fables or legends. The lack of contemporary technology and the referral to historic ways of meeting practical needs evoke a peasant clumsiness that speaks to the real labour of existence.

It comes as no surprise to learn that one of Jonasson's earliest encounters with art came at an exhibition of paintings by Vincent van Gogh that opened in Winnipeg in December 1960. Van Gogh's and Jonasson's art share a deliberate primitiveness, as well as an intense, sumptuous palette as luminous as stained glass. In addition, both artists have created paintings to be experienced by their tactility as well

as visually. Neither is it surprising that her child's hand surreptitiously reached up to touch those paintings' thick surfaces. Fanciful though it is, I imagine her fingers as the conduit for transmitting a desire to touch the world by means of a skin of paint.

Van Gogh and other artists such as Matisse and Cezanne of early 20th century modernism are not the only visual points of reference. Jonasson's visual sources multiply: like her reading habit, her visual habit is omnivorous. Pre-Renaissance art; medieval manuscripts; Brueghel's genre depictions of peasant life; textiles; Persian miniatures; artefacts and imagery from early history such as from ancient Egypt and the culture of the Scythians and Sarmatians who once inhabited what is now the Ukraine: these all influence the organisation of the pictorial space, the working of surfaces, colours, and icons. In a sense, one can think of those original objects and images, whether tens or hundreds or thousands of years old, as souvenirs from elsewhere, fragments which Jonasson has collected and reworked, making them communicate other realities by mutating them into poetic metaphors and metaphysical proposals. The past thus remains alive—"nothing can take the past away: the past grows gradually around one, like a placenta for dying."<sup>8</sup>

In everyday speech, the term "souvenir" implies kitsch—a cheap, sentimental substitute for the real thing. Yet the word's etymology suggests that this is a recent denigration linked to the commodification of the desire to call to mind that afflicts us all. Jonasson's use of the term redeems it and suggests a broader sense in which an object or image can act as a material vector for transmitting the remains of other times and places. These vectors demonstrate, I would argue, the workings of an external, collective cognitive process—an intimation of how cultures remember. Her references to codes and languages such as DNA, hieroglyphs, runes, and American weather icons, as well as to the book and the ship, indicate a curiosity about the material forms that communication takes. That some of these codes have fallen into disuse or may do so in the future (what *will* happen to the book?) or their meanings are the esoteric knowledge of a few, suggests the fragility, mutability, and incompleteness of any act of communication or transmission.

Returning to Stewart's definition of the souvenir as feeding the appetites of nostalgia raises the denigration as well of the word "nostalgia." In North American usage, the term has come to refer to a romantic sentimentality that freezes the past and places it in the archives or curio cabinet. Nadia Seremetakis describes this cultural sense of "nostalgia" as precluding the past from "any capacity for social transformation in the present, preventing the present from establishing a dynamic perceptual relationship to its history."<sup>9</sup> She contrasts this to the term's original Greek meaning with its evocation of journeys and returns, of the maturation and ripening of a taste, and of a burning pain in soul and body. In Greek, *nostalgia* is "the desire or longing with burning pain to journey" wherein the past, as it is transformed in the present, attests to an "unreconciled historical experience."<sup>10</sup>

The imagery of *Island Souvenir* resonates with an aura of the primordial, the archetypal, the generically European. The paintings conjure nostalgia, but not for something that has ever been lived by the artist. The notion of "unreconciled historical experience" comes closer to describing memories of the memories belonging to others. On the map of the world, repeated like an invocation across the surface of *Banner with Lance*, Iceland is missing. It is an unsettling absence, even if it is one that Icelanders themselves have had to learn to tolerate. Maps are artefacts for locating one's self in the abstract geometry of latitude and longitude. But instead of location, this string of maps yields only a gap, a silence. This, then, is the memory, the souvenir—the reminder of loss at the centre of being.

## time of consciousness

John Berger proposes that we live between two times, one of the body that is birthed, lives and dies, and the other the time of consciousness.<sup>11</sup> Our biology drives us inexorably toward death, while consciousness moves relentlessly amidst past, present, and future, making hesitant meanings and provisional stories.

We now live in an era of contingency, knowing that what exists at this moment can quickly disappear. In modernity, we have been directed to fragment experience and create separate realms for emotion and thought, body and mind, pleasure and pain. It is, amongst other things, a coping mechanism, a story we tell ourselves about ourselves. Nonetheless, beneath conscious thought, these rent pairs are experienced as alienated halves of a single entity—that is, of the self.

In contemporary art practice, explorations of the self and the problems of subjectivity in an indeterminate world without foundations are commonplace. Often they probe the wound of living, using visual imagery suggestive of pain, violence, and alienation. Edvard Munch's *The Scream* is the quintessential example, its potency now sadly spent by its commodified dissemination. Poignant examples abound, but at its worst, this genre of art does little more than pick at the sore with the tools of critical theory, diagnosing and describing an inability to come to terms with a most imperfect world.

*Island Souvenir* can be understood as exploring the self as well, but it probes no wound, displays no injury. Jonasson does not intellectualize upon selfhood as if it were an object removed from her own experience. She creates art from thoughtfulness, not theory. She has worked out her own, personal language to address the world, reclaiming its experience in the face of the loss at its core. The paintings can evoke a sense of melancholy but they do not induce in the viewer a chill; they are not fraught or depressive. Rather, they are mitigated by an acceptance that comes from the eventual recognition of the inevitability of death in life. Each icon is thus implicated in the paradox of identity. Her art does not propose any solution to that paradox but it does help with the suturing of the wound.

## of forgetting and desire

I am thinking home is where you choose to forget and choose to remember at the same time. Nothing hinders your choices. Nothing forces you to remember and nothing forces you to forget. There is no reason to repress memory. There is no reason to hold it up against the daylight either.

Kristjana Gunnars  
*The Substance of Forgetting*<sup>12</sup>

The severing of the *Island* canvas into four quarters has an astute, organic feel to it. Behind the gesture one senses a larger meaning, and the mind tries to reassemble the pieces, to recognize the original image before it was torn asunder. What is it to recall something in its entirety when all that remains is a fragment, a trace, or a residue? What feat of imagination is needed to reassemble shards in order to recreate the original object and bring it back to life? Like archaeologists of the soul, we try piecing together stories about ourselves, using bits of memories reaching back to the time of childhood when the world felt electric with secrets. The recollected bits are eccentric and serendipitous, the remains of a child's active mind making sense of the perplexing adult world. Do we make memories, or do they make us?

Growing up, we identify facets of our personality as our uniqueness, to separate our personal identity from that of others. As adults, we examine what habits we have acquired—the foods we like, the books we read, and the desires we have—then speculate as to their origins. From where do they come? A recent visit with a beloved uncle made me wonder if I caught my own fascination for the North Atlantic from his attachment to that region he could so rarely visit except through his imagination. In parting, he gave me a well-thumbed book about Alfred the Great, King of Wessex. A small and loving gesture, his gift marks a lifetime of our connection that will not end with his death. I have taken him into my psyche, grafting his curiosity onto other of my influences, assuring its immortality even as it is transformed.

We used to speak of things bred in the bone—or in Icelandic, *eittívað í bláð boríð*—but our metaphor for what is felt as our abiding connection has now shifted to the molecular level. In one painting, Jonasson represents the popular version of the original model of the Watson-Crick double helix in replication. The new strands, referred to as daughters, Jonasson has chosen to sever so that they appear as a double X, the code used for describing females. Jonasson dedicates *Island Souvenir* to the memory of her father, Dr. Harold David Jonasson, who died in 1970 when he was fifty-one years of age and she sixteen. In her statement, the artist writes that she took unfinished paintings to her summer cottage, where memories of her father entered into the works' making. Knowing this, the relationship between father and daughter becomes a subtext for our own seeing, yet here we must tread with care. We might be tempted to think the sutures to be a reference to his medical practice, or diagnose the figure in the bottom right corner of *Banner with Lance* as a representation of her grief for the loss of her father.

If encoded references to her own life story were what these paintings contained, however, they would not resonate with the viewer as they, in fact, do. Another level of reading is in order. The spiralling strand of DNA is juxtaposed to seemingly disparate symbols and images, suggesting another grammar. Every mark, every figure, each fragment making up these paintings, speaks to the other, as if linked by an invisible genealogy.

One can interpret these metaphoric references in numerous ways. Given the context of this exhibition and Jonasson's Icelandic and Ukrainian pasts, the immigrant connection between Europe and the Canadian prairies comes to the fore. In this reading, the paintings suggest the working through of larger cultural forces that make possible a psychical possession of a strange environment. They explore how memories pass along lineages, of how cultures remember, of how other places are dreamed into being. The immigrant makes a new home in a strange world with bits of memory—photos, souvenirs, and other shards of another life. There is no line connecting this new land to the immigrant's ancestors. The dead are dead and gone; they are buried elsewhere. This is a loss that one can never retrieve.

The immigrant's child or grandchild has a paradoxical relation with the ancestor's homeland. Being an immigrant's child grants the liberty to pick and choose out of all that one has been told, and reassemble these bits and pieces into an "Iceland of the mind" or a "Ukraine of the mind." One can take a story and map it onto one's sense of self, in order to identify with it as the primal truth of self-authenticity. There is dreaminess to this imagining. It makes a mental space but it has no physicality. The first generation passes their longings on to you, the child, and you take it in as exotic knowledge that is truer than anything. It becomes a mystery inside one's self. But as the child gets older, the questions start to come. Why, if the homeland was so wonderful, did people leave? There occurs then a loss of the idea of the homeland's reality: like a homunculus inside one's self, it never had a chance to be birthed. It remains a mythical landscape, a source of solace, a place that cannot be contaminated by actually living in it.

Svavar Gestsson refers to these paintings as European, unlike other art produced on the prairies. They seem to be messages from another place, speaking another language, telling of other worlds. Still, there's something of the prairie in Jonasson's art. It is the art of the periphery and of wide-open spaces. Living on the margins, at a distance from the major urban centres like Toronto or New York, grants freedom to imagine a fresh homeland and to respond to ancestral scripts in such a way as to transform and transplant them in a new place.

The prairies are frequently likened to the ocean: the horizon is so distant and the sky so big that a person is constantly humbled by how large is the world and how small is humanity. In this sense, it is a little less strange that islanders would settle in the middle of a giant

continent, even if the actual story of that settlement was more accidental and contingent than deliberately comparative. Sometimes I have thought of Winnipeg as an island on dry land (the urban equivalent of volcanic islands like Dyrhólaey or Pétursey in Iceland). Knowing that they are surrounded by distance and space has produced a sense of mutual reliance that is manifested in the city's vibrant artistic community. The parallel to Iceland's high level of participation in cultural creation is striking. Islanders know they must produce their own culture if there is to be anything to pass on through time.

Cultures must create their own clichés, since this helps to unite enough to get things done, to make routines for living. The columnar basalt motif used in Hallgrímskirkja is a case in point, and Jonasson represents its edge against the radiant blue of a northern sky. Elsewhere a small, traditional Icelandic farmhouse is dwarfed by an open expanse of ground, suggesting both refuge and isolation. In the shops of Iceland one finds its form reproduced in miniature as a souvenir, and many, not quite so miniature, versions appear tucked into corners of urban gardens. Nostalgia for a sense of home, the miniaturization suggests a desire to possess its soothing certainty.

Home isn't a place; it's a state of mind in which threat has receded and satisfaction seems attainable. It is a place of comfort. The gamble for those who seek a fresh start is that a new sense of belonging may never be found. Not every house is a home, and not every country can feel like a homeland. To abandon home is to surrender one's self to the power of the unknown, to the unreal, to the whims of strangers. Meaning might come undone because home is its guarantor, forming the centre of the world. Such a connection is visible in Icelandic, in which *heim* (home) and *heimur* (world) bespeak a common origin.

The profound beauty of Jonasson's art is not its end purpose—these are not simple decorative works. Rather, their loveliness entices the viewer to linger and contemplate what archetypal figures suggest to be a substratum below the surface of everyday life. Using images drawn from geology, genetics, archaeology, and myth as metaphors for much slower accretions of time, the artist takes us to a place of constancy and continuance. In a modern world now overwhelmingly experienced as in flux, the sensing of deeper layers consciously or unconsciously lived connects us to what matters most. Reality requires creativity and imagination to make the events that envelop us coherent. Jonasson recognizes that life in modernity is fraught with journeys and departures, and that we struggle to make sense of codes and symbols, places and relationships with which we are only partially familiar. Our understandings are always incomplete, and possible meanings are sutured together just like the stitches the artist uses to mend a painting's surface, or to hold together the linen of *Banner with Lance*. We can experience this incompleteness as a perpetual sense of loss or displacement in the world or, as these paintings so poignantly suggest, we can learn to accept it as the substance, the tender beauty of our lives.

### acknowledgements

I wish to express my warmest thanks to Louise Jonasson for many things, not least the invitation to write about her work. Graham Asmundson deserves credit for his considerable labours to co-ordinate all aspects of this exhibition. My thinking and writing about Louise's art have benefited from conversations with the artist, as well as with Kristine Hansen, Guðrún Ágústsdóttir, Svavar Gestsson, Ástráður Eysteinnsson, Viðar Hreinsson, and Robert McKaskell.

### endnotes

1. Viðar Hreinsson (2001) "Folly in Tailcoat, or Multiculturalism." *Kistan* ([www.kistan.is](http://www.kistan.is)). "Íslendingadags ræða" ("Icelandic Day Speech") translated by Viðar Hreinsson. Originally published in *Heimskringla* August 14, 1902, as *Kanada. Íslendingadagsminni, flutt á Íslendingadagshátíðinni í Red Deer nýlendunni í Alberta, 2. ágúst 1902*.
2. John Berger (1984) *And Our Faces, My Heart, Brief as Photos*. New York: Vintage International.
3. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1999) *Philosophy in the Flesh*. New York: Basic Books, p.3.
4. Ástráður Eysteinnsson (1997) *Icelandic Resettlements*. *Symplokę* 5(1-2): 153-166, p.153.
5. John Berger, *And Our Faces*, p.14.
6. John Berger (1985) *The Sense of Sight*. New York: Vintage International, p.20.
7. Susan Stewart (1993) *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*. Durham and London: Duke University, p.135.
8. John Berger, *And Our Faces*, p.78.
9. Nadia Seremetakis (1994) *The Senses Still: Perception and Memory as Material Culture in Modernity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p.4.
10. Ibid.
11. John Berger, *And Our Faces*, p.9.
12. Kristjana Gunnars (1992) *The Substance of Forgetting*. Red Deer, AB: Red Deer College Press, p. 125.

**UNDIRSTADA ENDURMINNINGA:  
MÁLVERK G.N. LOUISE JONASSON**

Myndröð Louise Jonasson, sem birt er á sýningunni *Island Souvenir*, svipar til ljóða—samþjöppuð og harmræn og jafnframt efnisleg, myndhverf og óhlutbundin. Í myndunum kannar listamaðurinn röð tákna og merkja tveggja menningarheima í því skyni að endurspegla sálfræðilegt og menningarlegt ferli við að skynja þýðingu hlutanna í þessum heimi á meðan við upplifum þá. Hér er um að ræða landslag ímyndunarafstsins sem kallar fram íslenska menningu og sögu, nokkuð sem Louise hefur aldrei séð nema á ljósmyndum, í bókum og slitrótttri frásögn innflytjendanna, afa hennar og ömmu, og síðar föður hennar—en málverkin eru tileinkuð minningu hans. Í þessum skilningi má líta á þau sem minningar um minningar, svo og hugleiðingar um tilverknad minnis og gleymsku, um tímann og hvernig við lifum í honum. Myndirnar bera með sér þunglyndi eftir missi, en þó má einnig sjá viðurkenningu á því sem orðið er og sátt við fortíðina eins og hún varir í nútíðinni.

Í nafni sínu—Gilda Nadia Louise Jonasson—ber listamaðurinn brot úr tveim heimum—Íslandi og Úkraínu. Nafn hennar fléttar saman líf þeirra sem yfirgáfu gamla landið á tímum mikilla breytinga og héldu í vesturátt til að afla sér nýrrar framtíðar eða til að flýja fortíðina, nema hvort tveggja væri. Heiti þessara tveggja myndraða, *Island* og *Island Souvenir*, bera með sér hlíðstæðan vott um hvernig menningin gerir víðreist í heiminum með myndum og hlutum og einnig fólki. Ey er „um leið nýr upphafsstaður, óskrifad blað og nýlenda þar sem nýtt landnám hefða hlýtur að eiga sér stað“.<sup>1</sup> *Souvenirs* (minjagripir) eru þeir hlutir—ljósmyndir og sögur, sem gefa því efni form sem hjartað vill ekki að gleymist. Slíkir minjagripir öðlast eigið líf og breytast þegar þeir koma inn í flæði hinna ýmsu lífsbrauta. Á íslensku birtir *Minning um ey mynd af eyju*—„hinu innra Íslandi“, eins og Svavar Gestsson orðar það—og lifir enn í huganum þótt landið sjálft hafi verið kvatt fyrir löngu.

Þegar ég horfi á málverkin *Island Souvenir* (og nýt ríkulegra jarðarlita og útskorinna flata og hugsu um hvaða myndir af viði, grjóti, málmí og vatni ég get kallað fram í hugann) fer ég í ástand sem virðist vera milli svefns og vöku, þar sem orð og merking þeirra renna saman í eitt, þar sem raunveruleikinn tekur á sig mynd gödsagnarinnar. John Berger kallar þetta „stað upprunalegrar nafngiftar“, þar sem maðurinn nær sambandi í kjarna sínum við uppruna sinn: ekki andartak fæðingar heldur andartak getnaðar. Allt er saklaust, tímalaust og án sérstöðu.<sup>2</sup> Ólíkt ljósmyndum, sem geta fangað um eilíft umhverfi augnabliksins, hafa málverk afl til að sýna það sem augað sér ekki en gefa þó tilfinningu fyrir tilvist sinni. Þessi málverk gefa sjónrænt form grundvallareiningum tilverunnar, óhlutbundnum kjarna tilverunnar.

Hin djúpstæða fegurð listar Louise er ekki endanlegur tilgangur hennar—þetta eru ekki einfaldlega listaverk til skrauts. Frekar má segja að yndisþokki þeirra hvetji áhorfandann til að staldra við og ihuga hvaða fullkomnu ímyndir teljast vera kjarninn undir yfirborði hversdagslegs lífs. Með ímyndum úr jarðfræði, erfðafræði, fornleifafræði og goðafræði, sem myndlíkingum fyrir miklu hægari samsöfnun tímans, fer listamaðurinn með okkur til staðar þar sem ríkir stöðugleiki og festa.

Dr. Anne Brydon

1. Ástráður Eysteinnsson. "Icelandic Resettlements." *Symplek* 5.1/2 (1997): 153.
2. Berger, John. *And Our Faces, My Heart, Brief as Photos*. New York: Vintage International, 1984: 14.

Opposite: *Banner with Lance*  
Following two pages: *Island*  
Subsequent pages: *Island Souvenir*



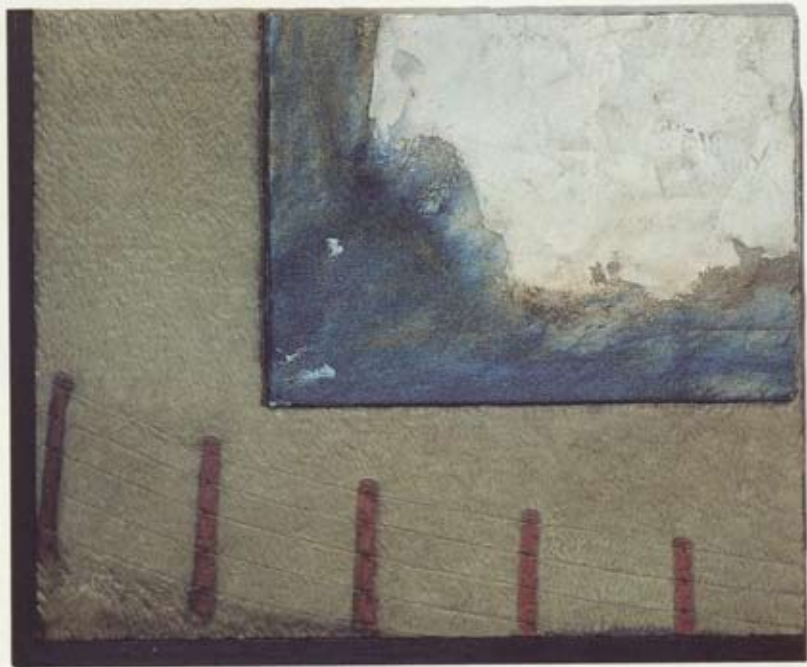














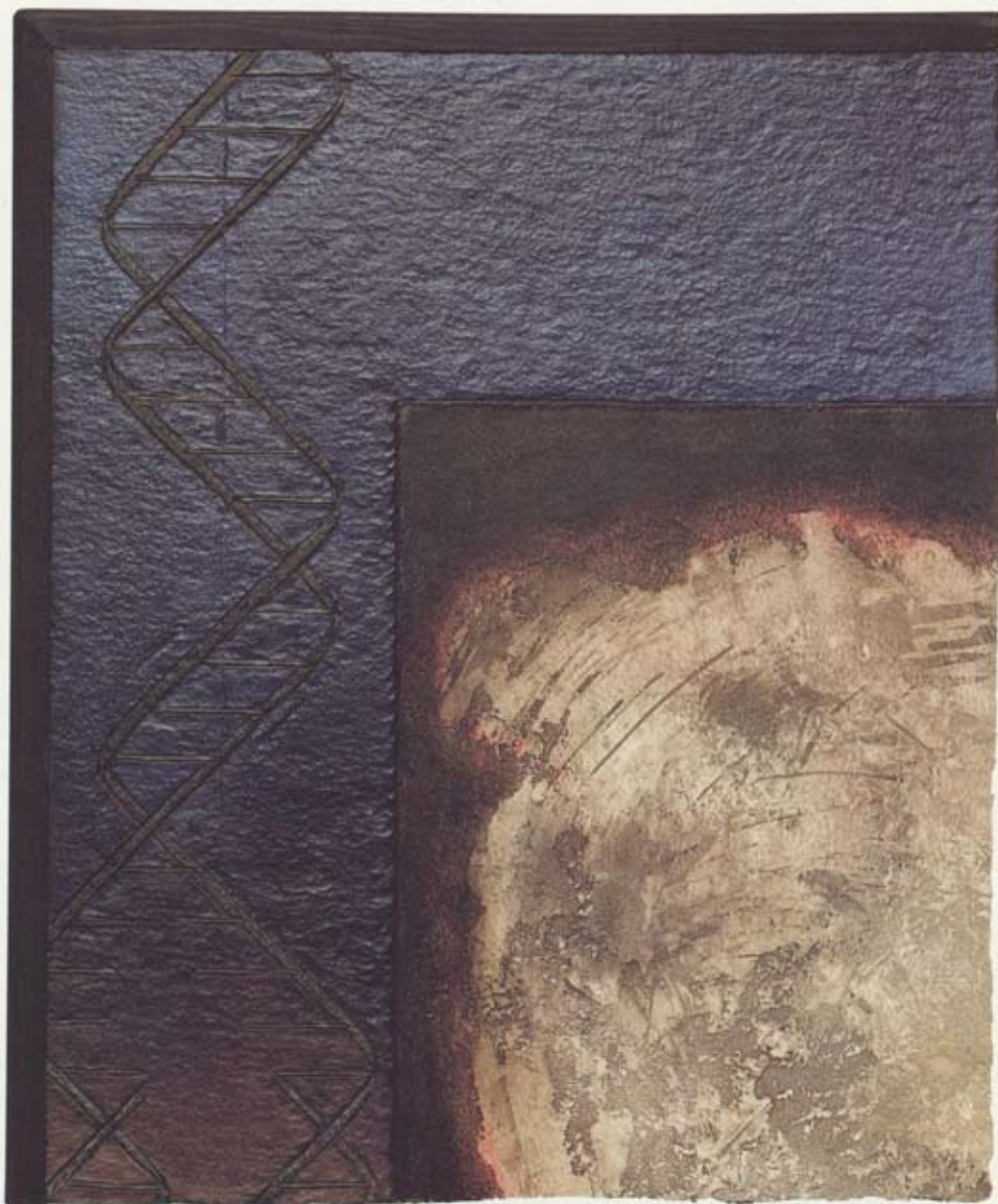


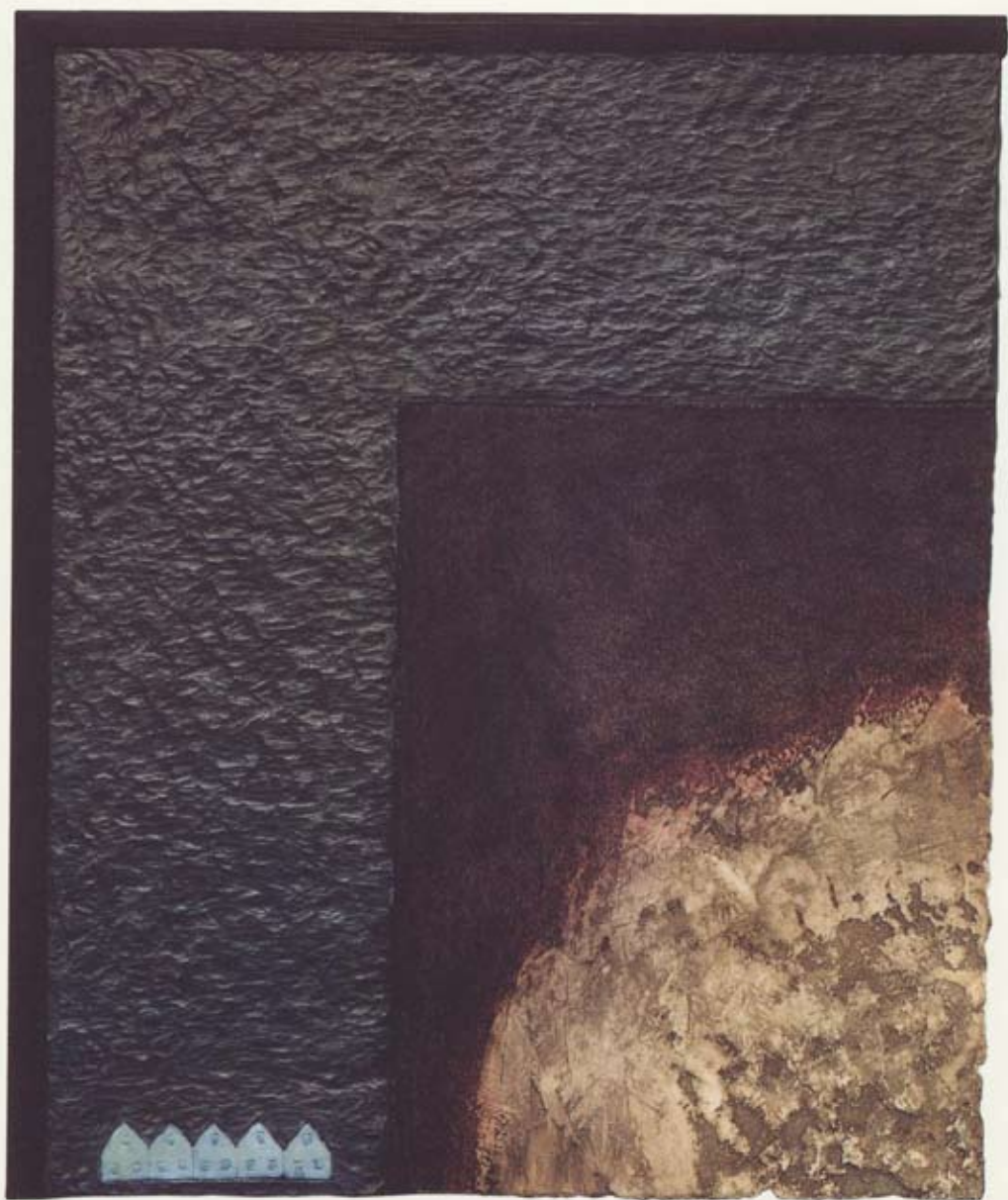










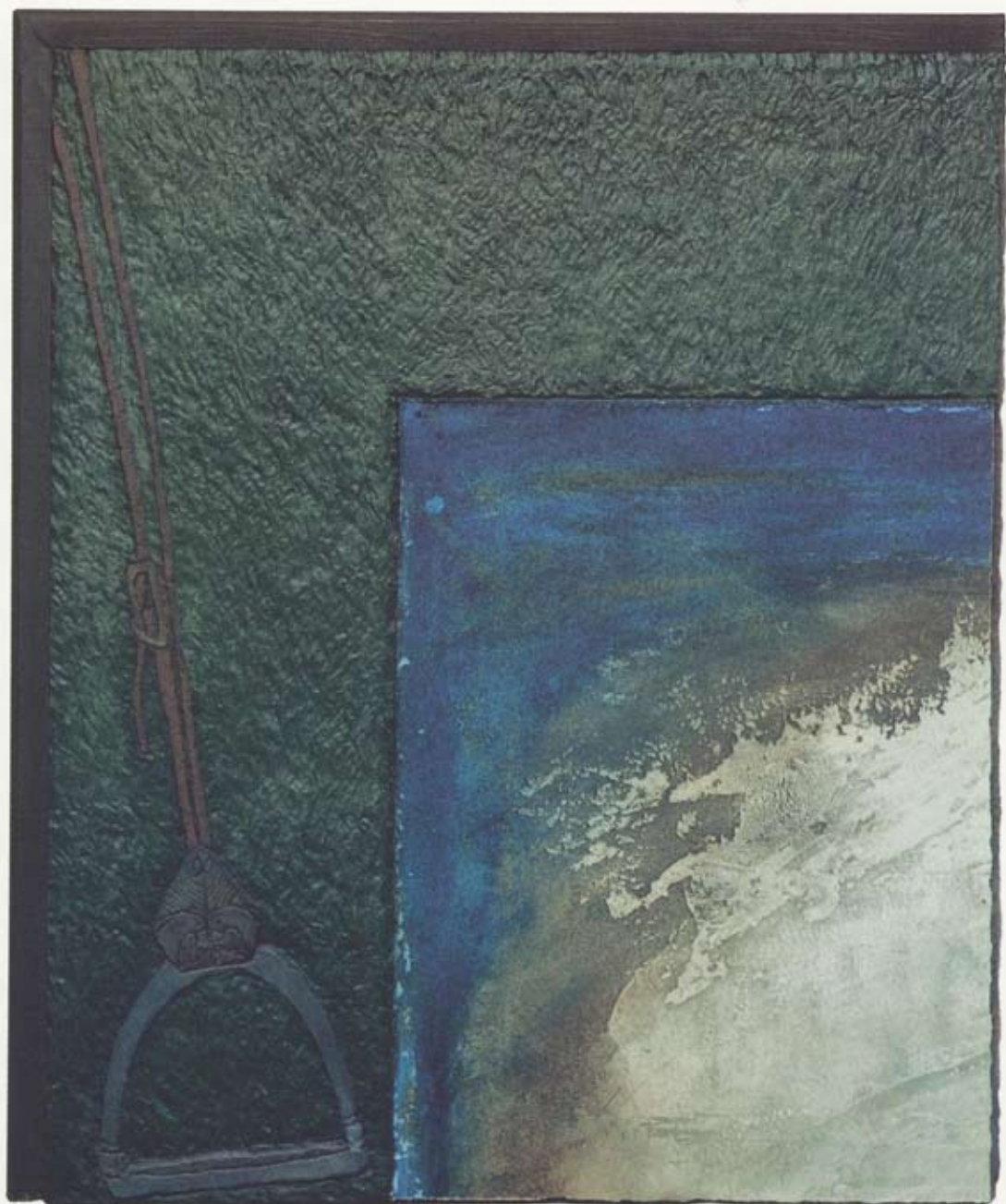




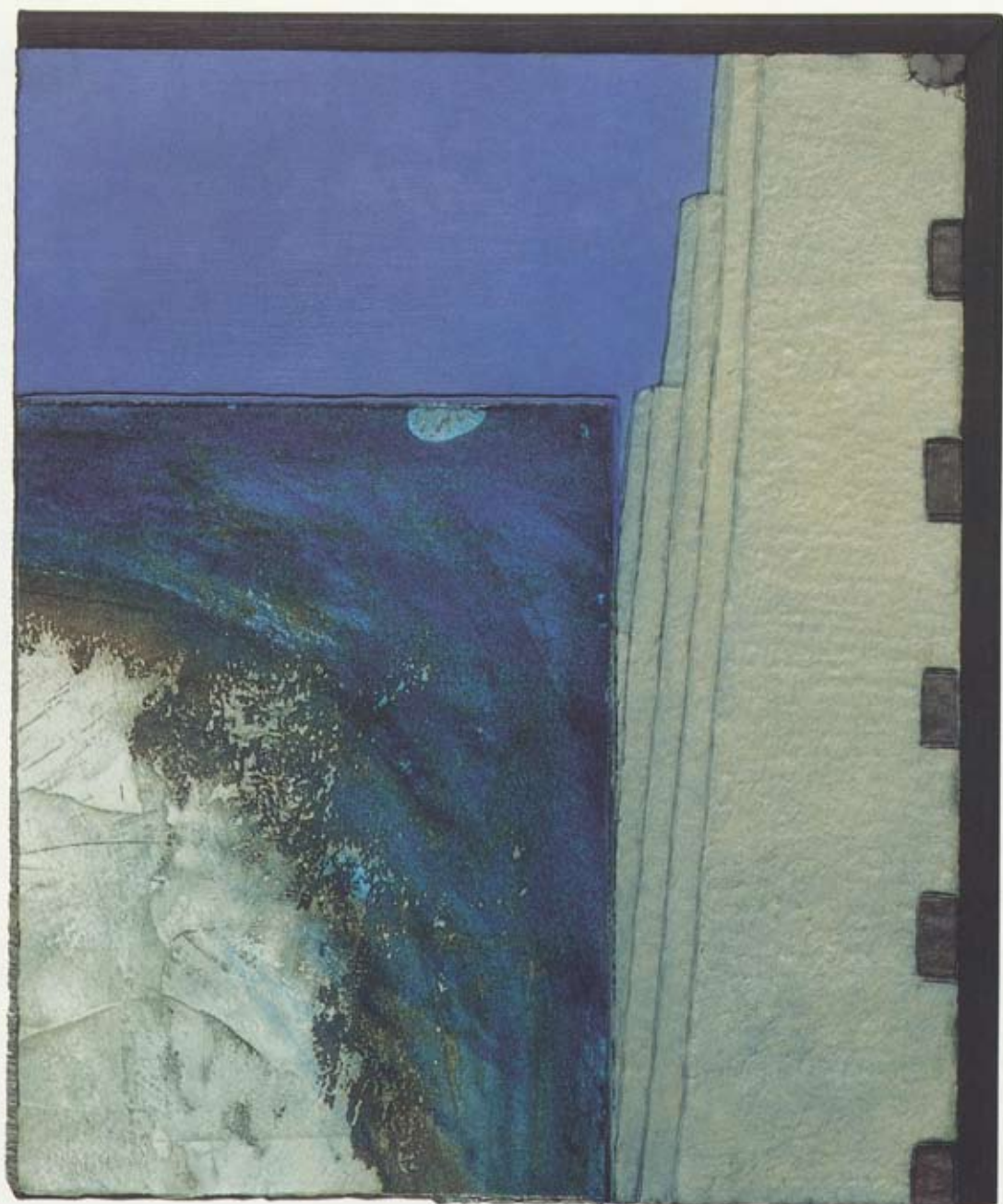












## **GILDA NADIA LOUISE JONASSON**

Born Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, 1954.

### **Formal Education**

- 1973-74 Brandon University, Faculty of Arts: Religious Studies and Anthropology.  
1980 University of Manitoba, Faculty of Medicine: Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology. Clinical Teaching Associate Certification.  
1980-85 University of Manitoba, BFA (Honours) Program. Double Major: Painting and Photography, Thesis in Painting.

### **Awards**

- 1986 Visual Arts Project Grant, Manitoba Arts Council.  
1987 Visual Arts Grant, Manitoba Arts Council.

### **Selected Solo Exhibitions**

- 2000-01 *Island Souvenir*. Gallery 1C03, University of Winnipeg.  
Circulated to the Dr. Paul H.T. Thorlakson Gallery, University of Manitoba.  
1998 *18 Knots*. The Upstairs Gallery, Winnipeg.  
1997 *wood + gravity = timber*. <SITE> Gallery, Winnipeg.  
1994 *Atlas with Tentative Title*. Gallery 1C03, University of Winnipeg.  
1993-94 *Artists With Their Work: G.N. Louise Jonasson*. Winnipeg Art Gallery Extension Services Provincial Tour.  
1986 Brian Melnychenko Gallery, Winnipeg.

### **Selected Group Exhibitions**

- 1997-98 *The Light Within: Manitoba Women in Art*, selected from the Government of Manitoba Permanent Collection.  
Pool of the Black Star, Manitoba Legislative Building, Winnipeg.  
Circulated provincially and to the Instituto Cabanas, Guadalajara, Mexico.  
1995- <SITE> Gallery and The Upstairs Gallery, Winnipeg.  
1991 *Synergos II*. Gallery 1C03, University of Winnipeg, circulated to Ukraine.  
1991 *Paradise Revisited*. Oakham House, Ryerson Polytechnic University, Toronto, Ontario.  
1988 *Winnipeg Works on Paper*. The Art Gallery of Peterborough, Peterborough, Ontario.  
1987 *1987: Contemporary Art in Manitoba*. Winnipeg Art Gallery. Circulated nationally.  
1987 *A Multiplicity of Voices: Work by Manitoba Women Artists*. Gallery I.I.I., University of Manitoba in cooperation with Plug In Gallery.  
1985 *The Demolition Show*. 284 Kennedy Street, Winnipeg.

### **Selected Public and Corporate Collections**

Air Canada  
Canada Council Art Bank  
Government of Canada  
The Great West Life Assurance Company  
Hewlett-Packard (Canada) Limited  
Investors Group  
Manitoba Art Bank  
Manitoba Government Collection  
Royal Bank of Canada  
Toronto Dominion Bank  
University of Winnipeg  
Winnipeg Art Gallery

### **Selected Biographical Miscellanea**

Since 1986, Louise Jonasson has been affiliated with *Prairie Fire*, a Canadian magazine of new writing, as the Visual Arts Editor and Art Director. Her other art-related work experience runs the gamut from working as an Architecture/Fine Arts Library assistant and a technical assistant (photography and sculpture) to being a facilitator, mentor (MAWA Mentor Program), a lecturer and a juror.

Louise's volunteer activity specific to the arts community includes past board membership of Plug In and the Winnipeg Art Gallery. She has also served on the Multi-Disciplinary Arts Advisory Board of the Manitoba Arts Council, an agency whose purpose she strongly supports; acted as an assessor for the Pan Am Games Arts and Cultural Initiatives Committee, and was a founding executive board member of <SITE> Gallery, a Winnipeg artists' cooperative. Louise was a member of the inaugural *Prix Manitoba Award-Arts* and she is currently a member of The Forks North Portage Partnership Site Advisory Committee. In the year 2000, Louise was commissioned to create a limited edition silkscreen, the fifth print in the annual *United Way Art of Appreciation* series, as a contribution to her immediate community, Winnipeg.

**ANNE BRYDON** is a cultural critic recently appointed Assistant Professor of Anthropology at Wilfrid Laurier University, in Waterloo Ontario. She specializes in the anthropology of modernity, an ideal location from which to examine diverse aspects of contemporary life in Iceland, her fieldsite since 1988, and Canada. With Sandra Niessen she co-edited *Consuming Fashion: Adorning the Transnational Body* (Berg 1998) and recently published "Eyjabakkagjörningur: Náttúran, mótmæli og nútíminn" ("Eyjabakkagjörningur: Nature, Protest, and the Dynamics of Modernity") in *Tímarit máls og menningar* (June 2001). She is also a member of Reykjavíkur Akadémin, an innovative institute for independent scholars.

**SUSAN CHAFE** is a Canadian artist and designer whose publications include *Beck & Al Hansen: Playing with Matches* (Plug In Editions and Smart Art Press); *Bruce LaBruce, Ride, Queer, Ride* (Plug In Editions); *100% Natural* (The Museum for Textiles); *Trance: Patrick Traer and Janet Werner* (The Mendel Art Gallery); *Sitings: Trajectories for a Future* (The Winnipeg Art Gallery); and *in/versions magazine* (Mentoring Artists for Women's Art). In 1996 she founded *Lives of Dogs*, a collective for the publishing of limited edition books by artists. She has been part of the virtual directorship of Mentoring Artists for Women's Art and is on the board of Plug In Gallery, Winnipeg.

Design: Susan Chafe

Photography: Henry Kalen (unless otherwise noted)

Translation courtesy of the Prime Minister Davíð Oddsson's office and Kristín Jóhannsdóttir, University of Manitoba.



Studio at 315 William Avenue, Winnipeg, Canada  
PHOTO: KEITH OLIVER

### **In acknowledgement of another provenance for *Island Souvenir***

The presence of *Island Souvenir* in Iceland, here at the Kjarvalsstaðir, overwhelms me. This is truly an honour, a rare opportunity to exhibit my work in such a distinguished gallery in my father's ancestral homeland. What makes this even more poignant is knowing that it was not of my own design: so many remarkable people have generously endorsed this project and worked diligently, enthusiastically and tirelessly to ensure its success, and for this I am forever grateful.

In particular I would like to thank the Premier of Manitoba, the Honourable Gary Doer, The Honourable Ron Lemieux, Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism, and the Government of Manitoba for inviting me to participate so fully in the cultural component of this trade mission. To President Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson, Prime Minister Davíð Oddsson, Her Honour Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir, and the people of Iceland, I offer my heartfelt thanks for your hospitable welcome. I sense that everyone is aware of this exchange's reciprocity.

I feel most indebted personally to Guðrún Ágústsdóttir and her husband, Svavar Gesstson, the former Consul General of Iceland in Canada. They each, in their own way, created such a congenial presence during their tenure in Winnipeg, which was highlighted by their boundless energy during the Millennium Celebrations. They sought me out and encouraged me to join in the jubilation and, even if I didn't have Icelandic blood coursing through my Canadian veins, I would have found their enthusiasm for things Icelandic infectious. I know I have not thanked them adequately for this gift. Furthermore, I must express my appreciation for the fact that they found my work genuinely interesting. Both Svavar and Guðrún assured me that many Icelanders would also find it so.

Earlier, I alluded to the energy expended on my behalf. For this particular installation of *Island Souvenir*, I wish to thank Eirurak Thorlaksson and his colleagues and staff at the Kjarvalsstaðir: the subtleties of presentation are so influential with regard to how a work of art is perceived. This can also be said for its documentation: I have been much blessed, with the photographic acuity of my uncle, Henry Kalen, with publication designer Susan Chafe's innate sensitivity to the tango of image and text, with writer-anthropologist Dr. Anne Brydon's insightful essay (coupled with the pleasure of its ephemera, all those engaging long-distance discussions), with my *Prairie Fire* friend-colleagues Andris Taskans and most particularly Heidi Harms for their alert proof-reading editorial eyes. For all this I am grateful, especially considering the duress of an intolerably tight time frame.

The Arts Branch of the Manitoba Government's Department of Culture, Heritage and Tourism is worthy of special note. As the Visual Arts Officer, Doreen Millin worked quietly for many years to benefit our community in countless ways. Prior to her retirement this past spring, she witnessed this project's inception. Her incumbent, Graham Asmundson, has Icelandic ancestors, and *Island Souvenir* seems to have had an osmotic effect, awakening in him an interest in his own heritage. Graham has administered this enterprise admirably, with foresight and acumen. Having been a longstanding member of the cultural "infantry," I know that the "foot soldiers" do not often get adequate recognition. I only wish that Doreen and Graham could be here to witness the fruits of their labour.

*Island Souvenir* was first shown at the University of Winnipeg's Gallery 1C03 sans "*Banner with Lance*" in November 2000. Although the work was chosen by myself, University curator Dr. Sarah McKinnon, who has long had an interest in my work, selected the exhibit and her assistant Jennifer Gibson acted as facilitator, abetted by the Media Department's graphic designer Ian Lark. I truly appreciate their efforts on my behalf.

Mounting the presentation of *Island Souvenir* at the University of Manitoba's Dr. Paul H.T. Thorlakson Gallery in the Iceland Reading Room was accomplished with ease thanks to the most gracious and accommodating Icelandic Collection librarian Sigríð Johnson. Because of her enthusiastic support, *Island Souvenir* enjoyed an extensive exhibition run, from February to August 2001.

With regard to the work *Island Souvenir* itself, an archipelago of family, friends, and colleagues merits special recognition: in particular, my most cherished companion in life, Dennis Faraci, and my immediate family—my father, the late Harold; my mother Nadia, my siblings Harold, Robert, the late Peter, Marianne, and Jon, and their loved ones—and my extended family, whether they be Jonasson, Novak, or Faraci, for they have all shaped me in various ways.

I have had the good fortune to share a warehouse floor with the same eclectic clan of studio mates for many years: Eleanor Bond, Keith Oliver and Harry Symons have been so stimulating, helpful and engaging. As I write this I am acutely aware of my absence there, that I am not fully participating in our studio move and reconstruction, and so I rightly add patience and tolerance to their list of attributes. To this roster of enduring associations I must include friend-sculptor Eva Stubbs, the extended family of *Prairie Fire*, Faye Settler and her Upstairs Gallery staff, my <SITE> Gallery artist cooperative confreres, and the Winnipeg arts community.

In closing, I regret any errors or sins of omission. Also, one should never underestimate the influence of book culture.

*Island Souvenir* is dedicated to Dr. Harold David Jonasson (1918-1970).

Ég er gagntekin af því að sýningin *Island Souvenir* skuli vera komin hingað til Íslands, á Kjarvalsstaði. Það er mér mikill heiður og einstakt tækifæri að geta sýnt verk mín í þessu virðulega listasafni í heimalandi forfedra minna. Það sem gerir þetta enn áhrifameira er að þetta er ekki fyrir eigin forgöngu. Margir mætir menn hafa mælt með þessu verkefni og unnið sleitulaust og af miklum áhuga að því að þetta mætti takast. Ég er innilega þakklát fyrir það.

Ég vil einkum þakka Gary Doer, forsætisráðherra Manitoba, Ron Lemieux, ráðherra menningar-, erfða- og ferðamála, og ríkisstjórn Manitoba fyrir að bjóða mér að taka þátt í menningarhluta þessarar viðskiptaferiðar. Ég flyt mínar bestu þakkir David Oddssyni forsætisráðherra, Ólafi Ragnari Grímssyni forseta, og Ingibjörgu Sólrúnu Gísladóttur borgarstjóra fyrir gestrisni þeirra. Ég finn að öllum er ljós gagnkvæmni þessarar heimsóknar.

Ég stend í mestri þakkarskuld við Guðrúnu Ágústsdóttur og eiginmann hennar, Svavar Gestsson, fyrrverandi aðalræðismann Íslands í Kanada. Þau sköpuðu, hvort með sínum hætti, viðkunnlegt andrúmsloft á meðan þau dvöldu í Winnipeg, sem kom best í ljós í takmarkalausri atorku þeirra í hátíðahöldunum í tilefni af þúsaldamótunum. Þau höfðu samband við mig og jafnvel þótt ég væri ekki með íslenskt blóð í mínum kanadisku æðum hreifst ég af áhuga þeirra á öllu því sem íslenskt er. Ég veit að ég hef ekki enn þakkað þeim þá gjöf sem skyldi. Enn fremur lýsi ég yfir þakklæti mín fyrir það að þau skyldu telja verk mín raunverulega athyglisverð. Þau hjónin fullvissuðu mig um að margir Íslendingar yrðu sama sinnis.

Ég nefni þá miklu vinnu sem unnin hefur verið í mína þágu. Ég vil þakka Eiríki Þorlákssyni og samstarfsmönnum hans fyrir uppsetninguna á *Island Souvenir*. Smáatriði við kynningu skipta svo miklu máli í því hvernig listar er notið. Hið sama má segja um þessi gögn: ég hef verið svo heppin að njóta frábærrar kunnáttu Henry Kalen, frænda míns, við ljósmyndatöku, næmis prenthönnuðarins Susan Chafe varðandi samspil mynda og texta, skarplegrar ritgerðar mannfæðingsins dr. Anne Brydon (ásamt skemmtilegum samræðum um hverfuleika milli fjarlægtra staða). Einnig þakka ég glöggskyggni vina minna og samstarfsmanna á *Prairie Fire*, Andis Taskans og einkanlega Heidi Harms, fyrir nákvæmni í prófarkalestri. Ég er þeim þakklát fyrir allt þetta, einkum með tilliti til þess að óviðunandi skammur tími var til stefnu.

Ég vil geta sérstaklega þáttar listadeildar ráðuneytis Manitoba um málefni menningar-, erfða- og ferðamála. Doreen Millin, sem hafði með höndum málefni sjónrænna lista, vann árum saman að því að auðga samfélag okkar með ýmsum hætti. Hún hleypti þessu verkefni af stokkunum áður en hún lét af embætti í vor sem leið. Arftaki hennar, Graham Asmundson, á ættir að rekja til Íslands og virðist *Island Souvenir* hafa vakið hjá honum áhuga á eigin uppruna. Graham hefur staðið aðdánlega vel að umsjón þessa verkefnis með framsýni og skarpskyggni. Þar eð ég hef lengi verið liðsmaður í hinu menningarlega „fötgönguliði“ er mér kunnugt um að „fötgönguliði“ njóta ekki oft þeirrar virðkenningar sem þeir eiga skilið. Ég hefði óskað þess að þau Doreen og Graham hefðu getað verið hér til að verða vitni að ávöxtum erfiðis síns.

Sýningin *Island Souvenir* var fyrst sett upp í listasafni Winnipeg-háskóla, Gallery 1Co3, án *Banner with Lance*, í nóvember 2000. Þótt ég hefði valið verkið sjálf sá forstöðumaður listasafnsins, dr. Sarah McKinnon, um uppsetningu sýningarinnar, en hún hefur lengi sýnt verkum mínum áhuga. Aðstoðarmaður hennar, Jennifer Gibson, sá um fyrirgreiðslu með aðstoð Ian Lark, grafíks hönnuðar í Fjölmíðladeild. Ég er þeim innilega þakklát fyrir störf í mína þágu.

Vel gekk að setja upp sýningu á *Island Souvenir* í íslenski lesstofu listasafns dr. Paul H.T. Thorlaksón í Manitoba-háskóla sökum mikillar greiðvikni og hjálpsæmi Sigríð Johnson sem er bókaforúður á íslenska safninu þar. Með hennar góðu aðstoð tókst að hafa sýninguna á *Island Souvenir* opna frá febrúar og fram í ágúst 2001.

Hvað varðar verkið sjálft, *Island Souvenir*, ber mér að færa sérstakar þakkir fjölda fólks, fjölskyldu minni, vinum og samstarfsmönnum: einkum ástkærum lífsforunauti mínum, Dennis Faraci, og nánum skyldmönnum, föður mínum heitnum, Harold, móður minni, Nadia, systkinum mínum, Harold, Robert, Peter heitnum, Marianne og Jon, og þeirra ástvinum, hvort sem þau eru Jonasson, Novak eða Faraci, því að þau hafa öll mótað mig með ýmsum hætti.

Ég hef verið svo heppin að hafa um margra ára bil haft aðgang að húsnæði í vöruskemmu með sömu úrvalsfélögum í listinni. Eleanor Bond, Keith Oliver og Harry Symons hafa verið uppörvandi fyrir mig, hjálpsamir og elskulegir félagar. Þar sem ég sit nú og rita þetta geri ég mér vel grein fyrir því að ég er fjarrí félögum mínum og tek því ekki fullan þátt í flutningi okkar og uppbyggingu á nýrri vinnustofu og því bæti ég þolinmæði og langlundargeði við þá kosti sem þeir eru búnir. Við þennan góða vinahóp verð ég að bæta Eva Stubbs, myndhöggvara, stórfjölskyldunni á *Prairie Fire*, Fay Settler og starfsmönnum hennar á Listasafninu á loftinu og hinum hjálpsömu starfsbræðrum mínum í <SITE> Gallery.

Að lokum biðst ég velvirðingar á hvers konar vanrækslusyndum. Enn fremur ættum við aldrei að vanmeta áhrif bókmenningar.

Sýningin *Island Souvenir* er tileinkuð dr. Harold David Jonasson (1918-1970).





