



### PÁLMATRÉ / PALM TREES

In the future residential area of Vogabyggð, Reykjavík, the area P2 on the development plan will be a public square and central meeting place for the people who live there. From the square, a bridge leads to a landscaped recreational island surrounded by tidal waters. The square will be part of a new residential area, a housing project in Vogabyggð that will create a new Reykjavík city district. In planning the development, the project's high construction standards and recreational qualities must be taken into consideration and an area of diversified use created. The square should therefore radiate an invitingly positive aura, establishing a link with the world of nature, in particular the waters, plants and birds of the region. A work of art should in this sense enhance the overall appearance of the new city district.

### CONCEPT OF THE WORK

In Vogabyggð a functional residential architecture is being created in line with contemporary specifications and needs, centred on the square at P2. According to the architects' plans, this square and the waterfront promenade are to be bordered and beautified with planted trees. My concept conforms with these plans, but instead of planting trees from Scandinavian countries, it envisages importing palm trees from central Europe and installing them in specially designed, climatized protective glass tubes on the square, with a solitary specimen located on the island. The hemp palm tree is very robust, able to withstand short periods of cold weather; a climate of constantly warm temperatures can also be created for date palms in the vitrines. As soon as the dark months begin in Iceland, the "greenhouse" light up at night, thus providing the palm trees with the necessary UV light that is in short supply during the winter months—not to mention providing the people who live there with it too, thus acting as an antidote to depression. (In Finnish primary schools, daylight lamps are used in winter to raise the children's spirits and thus their learning capabilities.)

On the square and the island opposite, a southern European vacation landscape will thus blossom for residents to explore – complemented by mosses, grasses and sand such as are to be found in south and central European maritime landscapes. The suggested design mirrors the residents' imaginings and desires, creating a dreamscape woven of escape and exoticism, longing and fantasy. The palm trees taken from the centre of Europe stand in their architectonic columns as solitary sculptures, in the midst of the Icelandic climate, in the midst of Icelandic flora and fauna. The trees thus planted are intended to remain a part of the new district of Vogabyggð for 10 to 15 years, after which the residents can plant their own choice of trees – for instance Japanese cherry trees, whose fruits they can harvest for themselves.







*Wardian Case* by Nathaniel Bagshaw Ward, 1829

## FACIT

The idea behind the 18th and 19th century landscape garden – importing exotic plants from foreign lands for the edification of a bourgeois public – is here democratised, made a part of people’s daily lives. The artistic concept thus functions primarily as an intervention in a pre-existing urban social context that is today characterised by high standards but also by international, global comparability. The palms enhance the square’s attraction as a place to see and thus to linger, at the same time creating an ideal opportunity for communication on the interplay of urban space and landscape such as is characteristic of contemporary Iceland. In summer and in winter, the four columns with their palms literally and figuratively radiate warmth, creating a transcultural gesture.







Paul Gauguin *Tahitian mountains*, 1893



Video still of Rodney Grahams film *Vexation Island*, 1997

Across continents, religions and cultures, the palm tree carries a promise of prosperity, peace and salvation. It conjures up images of luxury, jet set and eternal sunshine and represents a kind of modern paradise. The Palm was in the 19th century an utopian projection image for the departure into a new world, and for the painter Paul Gauguin the palm created a fascination for the exotic and the foreign, in Rodney Grahams film "Vexation Island" you find a roar of surf and wind, a feeling of paradise-style euphoria.

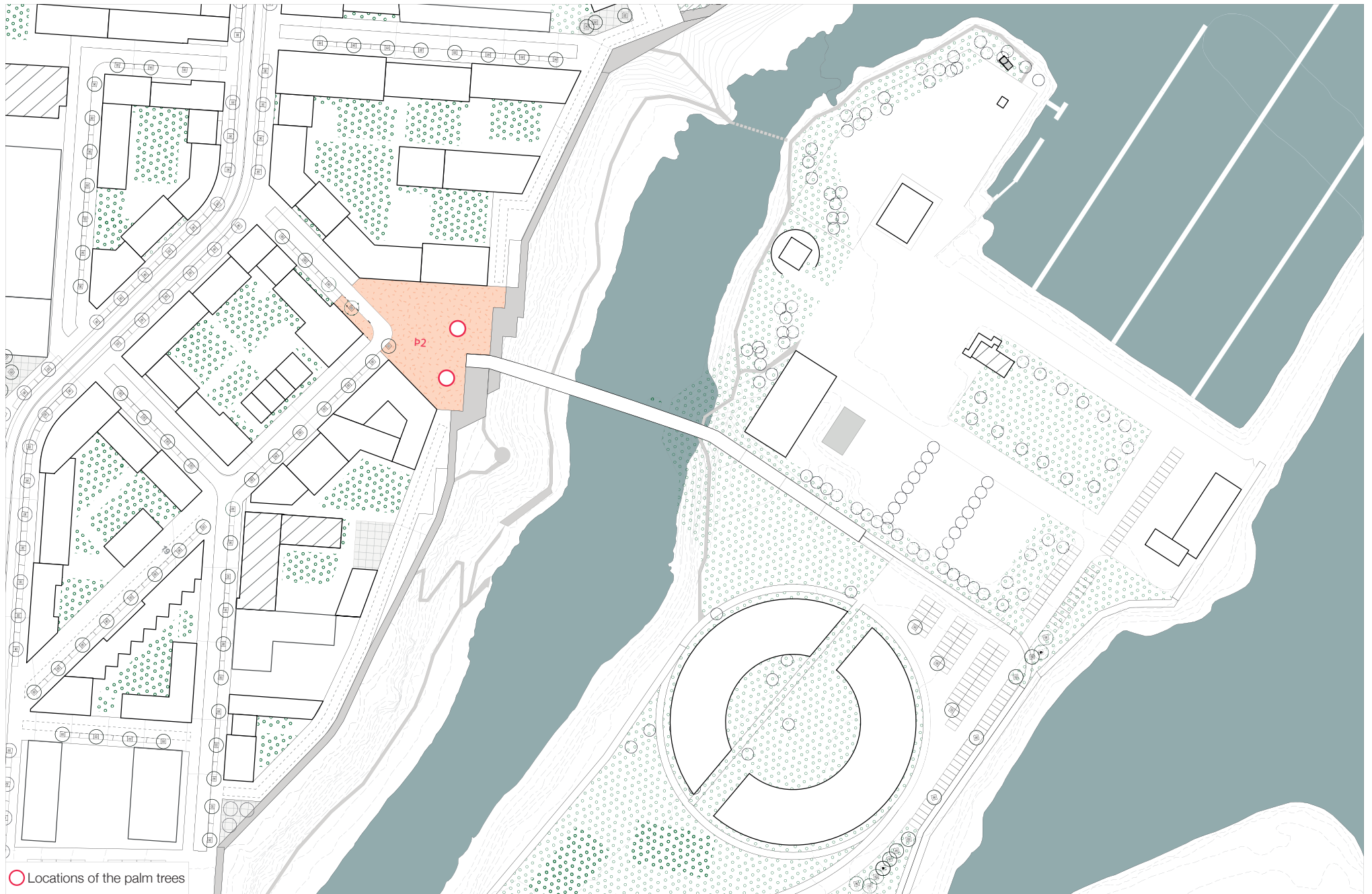


Edward Ruscha from the publication *A FEW PALM TREES*, 1971



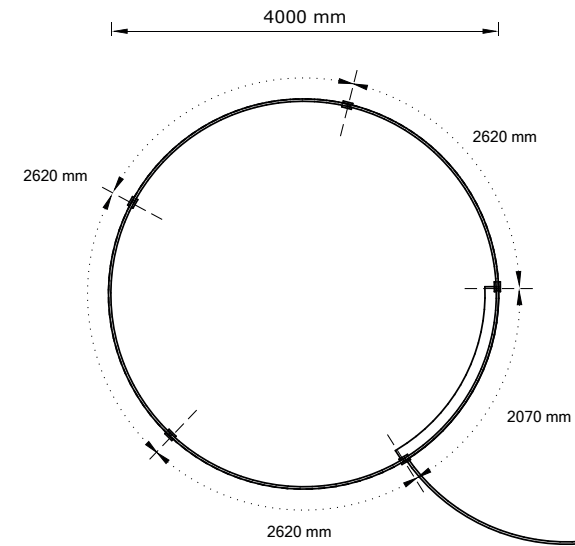












**DESCRIPTION**

<b>Glass</b>	Annealed, laminated; PVB/SGP interlayer; UV open (no sun coating); Low iron.
	Radius: ca. 2000 mm Height: ca. 11000 mm Girth: ca. 2620 mm
<b>Glass fixing</b>	Clamping profiles outside; Slender steel strip inside.
<b>Steel</b>	Stiff ring bottom and top; RHS frame around door.
<b>Door</b>	Manual door; Free height: ca. 2300 mm Width: ca. 1980 mm Girth: ca. 2070 mm
<b>Ventilation</b>	Top: Shutter Bottom: Vents in ground



## REALISATION

Palm trees (date palms or hemp palms) that can grow to a height of 6–8 metres will be imported and planted in prepared beds of earth on the square. The beds will be climatically linked with the 8–11-metres-tall and c. 4-metres-wide, double-glazed tubes aerated with oxygen. An invisible fine net prevents the glass from breaking, the thickness of the material resists vandalism. The temperature of the roots and in the tubes must not fall below minus 25 degrees centigrade. Ideally the temperature should vary between 8 and 30 degrees centigrade during the year. Irrigation using rain water will be made possible using a drainage system. The light sources in the tubes compensate for the lack of UV light in the winter, bathing their surroundings in a pleasant light. The showcases containing the trees are accessible from the side and from above in order to carry out necessary maintenance work.

Firms specialising in the construction of air-conditioned botanical showcases (using geothermal energy) have already been co-opted into project planning and have generated technical data on its feasibility and on possible options for its implementation. The firms have drafted statements detailing the project's technical feasibility within the framework of the budget.

