

Press Information

“When are you coming back?”

Frankfurt Book Fair’s Guest of Honour 2011, Fabulous Iceland, received with enthusiasm by German and international audience – Project to be continued

Frankfurt am Main, 15/10/2011 – Fabulous Iceland, this year’s Guest of Honour at the Frankfurt Book Fair, captivated visitors from Germany and around the world. At the Guest of Honour’s closing press conference today, the organisers of the project were unanimous in drawing a positive balance. “We are very proud of the overwhelming – almost euphoric – response to our presentation,” said Halldór Guðmundsson, Director of Fabulous Iceland. “It’s better than we ever expected or hoped for.” And Director of the Frankfurt Book Fair, Juergen Boos, asserted: “Iceland has shown us that storytelling is an essential part of life. With more than 200 new releases, it’s clear that Icelandic literature was met with open arms by the German publishers and readers alike. Now, as Iceland’s joyfully eventful year comes to an end, there’s just one question on my mind: When are you coming back?”

Especially popular was the Guest of Honour Pavilion at the exhibition site (Forum, Level 1). As Halldór Guðmundsson explained: “We wanted the pavilion to place books and the reader centre stage by using modern media to create an experience for the senses, and to offer visitors an oasis of Icelandic literature in the hurly-burly of the Book Fair. The large number of visitors who spent time here, just reading, relaxing and feeling happy, showed us we got it right.” Alongside a room-sized, 360-degree film panorama featuring natural scenery, the pavilion also included a large-format video installation showing 30 Icelandic readers busy reading their favourite books – either to themselves or out loud for the viewers. This was praised by many visitors as a “wonderful celebration of reading”, and it proved very popular with the public. So too did the international book exhibition, “Books on Iceland”, which was displayed in the recreation of an Icelandic living room. The programme of book presentations and talks with Icelandic authors hosted in the pavilion also proved a big attraction for the public.

In advance of the Frankfurt Book Fair, an extensive programme had already successfully drawn attention to the island’s rich literature. Iceland then brought 230 new releases to the Book Fair, serving all segments of the book market. Some 39 Icelandic authors travelled to the Book Fair, where they presented their own books, which are part of a literary continuum that has endured ever since the Sagas and Eddas were written down in the 13th century. Exhibitions of Icelandic art in Frankfurt’s cultural institutions rounded off the comprehensive presentation, with which the country demonstrated it is a unique cultural nation.

The Fabulous Iceland presentation has opened up new opportunities for Icelandic publishers in the international book market. As Kristján B. Jonasson, head of the Association of Icelandic Book Publishers, said: “For Iceland’s publishers, a whole new situation has arisen with respect to the international rights trade. We received countless inquiries from international publishing houses during the Book Fair. The interest was particularly high among publishers from Eastern European countries, such as the Czech Republic Poland and Slovenia. But there were inquiries from other countries too, like Malaysia and India.” Author and chairperson of the Writer’s Union of Iceland, Kristín Steinsdóttir, also saw new chances developing in the future as a result of the Fair: “The Guest of Honour appearance has been a great door opener to the world for Icelandic authors.” And in the words of Kristof Magnusson, an author and translator into German of numerous Icelandic books, including sections of the Icelandic Sagas: “This autumn, the writers of Iceland succeeded in narrating

their version of Iceland – an Iceland of stories that is much larger than the actual surface area of the island.”

On Sunday (tomorrow) when the Guest Scroll – an artwork created especially for this occasion – is passed to the new Guest of Honour New Zealand (Forum Level 1, 3.30 p.m.), Iceland's official status as Guest of Honour will come to an end. But the story of Fabulous Iceland will continue, as Rakel Björnsdóttir, its Deputy Director announced: "The Fabulous Iceland project will keep on running, even after this year's Frankfurt Book Fair. We are looking forward to having many more encounters."

The Frankfurt Book Fair and Fabulous Iceland's window display competition

The winners of the window display competition, which was organised jointly by the Frankfurt Book Fair and Fabulous Iceland, were also announced at the press conference. Around 700 bookshops – more than ever before – took part in the competition marking the Guest of Honour appearance. Prizes were awarded for bookshops with the most original window dressing on the theme of "Fabulous Iceland". The winners were:

- 1st Prize: Bindernagel bookshop in Friedberg, Hessen
- 2nd Prize: Witthuhn bookshop in Uttenreuth, Bavaria
- 3rd Prize: Athesia bookshop in Traunstein, Bavaria

The winners receive a two-week trip to Iceland, sponsored by Katla travel. For the runners-up, the Guest of Honour Team will arrange an Icelandic Evening in their shop, and will also invite a well-known Icelandic author to give a reading. Those in third place win a voucher worth 250 euros for clothing from the Icelandic outdoor specialists Cintamani.

The window display competition was organised by the Frankfurt Book Fair in collaboration with Fabulous Iceland. You can find more information at the following address:
<http://www.buchmesse.de/de/fbm/fachbesucher/buchhaendler/schaufensterwettbewerb/>

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