

Statements on Fabulous Iceland

“Icelandic poets and writers will be encouraged and inspired by this opportunity given to them by the Frankfurt Book Fair to speak to the world. I have no doubt that readers of the noble language of Goethe will appreciate the Icelanders’ contribution to ‘Weltliteratur’, their experience of the world and how it translates into art.”

Vigdís Finnbogadóttir, former President of Iceland and patron of the Fabulous Iceland Society

“Literature has been the backbone of our nation for a thousand years – and it still is today. The Book Fair should make this a tangible experience, and awaken interest in Icelandic literature.”

Svandís Svavarsdóttir, Minister of Education, Science and Culture

“In Iceland we have a priceless body of medieval literature, excellent contemporary literature, and writers of international stature. This was confirmed recently when Reykjavík was named a UNESCO City of Literature. The invitation to be Guest of Honour at the Frankfurt Book Fair is a just as much of an acknowledgement. I am looking forward very much to this opportunity to present Icelandic culture and literature on an international stage.”

Jón Gnarr, Mayor of Reykjavík

“There’s a hunger for good stories deep inside us all. Hardly any other country demonstrates that as clearly as Iceland. The Icelanders really live in their stories, whether it’s the medieval sagas or today’s multi-medial arts scene. Obviously the German readers share that desire for good stories, as the wealth of new releases shows.”

Juergen Boos, Direktor of the Frankfurt Book Fair

“For us Icelanders, the Guest of Honour appearance is already a success. We are delighted to see how well our previously published books, the exhibitions in Frankfurt’s cultural institutions, and the innumerable events in the accompanying programme have been received. We can say we’ve been welcomed with open arms, not only in Germany, but also in Austria and Switzerland, by the general public, the media and the publishing houses. Some 230 new books related to Iceland have been released by 111 German-speaking publishers – far more than we could have hoped for.”

Halldór Guðmundsson, Director of Fabulous Iceland

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“What will remain after the Guest of Honour appearance will be the stories – stories from Icelandic books, and the stories of meetings between Icelandic authors and an enthusiastic readership. These stories will be recounted in German and Icelandic, and in the many other languages of the Fair. They will add to the expansive and proud story of Icelandic literature.”

, Programme Manager for Literature – Germany, Fabulous Iceland

“In Frankfurt, for half a year, Icelandic arts and culture will enjoy a higher profile than ever before in Europe. This promises a whole new way of seeing things – in particular, there’s a completely different approach to the traditional and the modern. For me, the real hot springs of the Atlantic island are the ateliers and studios of the Icelandic artists.”

Matthias Wagner K., Curator for the arts and cultural programme of Fabulous Iceland

“Every year, just over 300 000 visitors attend the Frankfurt Book Fair, which is the same number as the entire Icelandic book market. Effectively, therefore, that market is going to double in 2011.”

Kristján B. Jónasson, President of the Iceland Publishers Association

“The Frankfurt Book Fair provides a window onto the wider world and will lend wings to Icelandic literature. Iceland’s appearance as Guest of Honour is a great chance for the country’s literature, arts and culture. We’re looking forward to 11 October with great anticipation. The 396 members of the Writers’ Union of Iceland send Frankfurt their warmest greetings.”

Kristín Steinsdóttir, Author and Chairperson of the Writers’ Union of Iceland

“The literature of Iceland is characterised by its great breadth. If you had to describe it in a few simple words, you could say we appreciate well-told stories. For centuries, the Icelanders’ image of themselves has been closely tied to their literature. That’s why I find it especially gratifying to see the wide variety of publications appearing this year in German translation. I hope the Icelandic literature, which is filled with adventurous characters, will inspire readers to undertake their own journeys of discovery to the world of our books.”

Arnaldur Inðridason, Author

“One of the most remarkable traits of the Icelanders is their devotion to books. Their own venerable literary culture is as vibrant for them as if it had been created only yesterday; at the same time, they are aware of all the new movements in world literature and they read copiously in many languages.”

John M. Coetzee, Author

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“In the late 1990s I’d thrown away all the early versions of *The Corrections*. I was getting nowhere, looking for a new style and a new topic, trying to become a different author. At that point I came across two books: *Independent People*, by Halldór Laxness and *A Personal Matter*, by Kenzaburo Oe. I’d begun to think that nothing would ever really grab me again, but these two did grab me. When I’d got into a blind alley with *The Corrections*, these two books showed me the way out.”

Jonathan Franzen, Author

“Countries became interesting to Borges through their literature. For him, the literature of Iceland was one of the most important in the world. Together, he and I studied Iceland’s magical stories that were written hundreds of years ago. It was a tremendous pleasure that brought us much happiness.”

María Kodama, Widow of Argentinean author Jorge Luis Borges

“It’s a happy coincidence that S. Fischer Verlag was able to take part in this wonderful project in our 125th anniversary year. The founder of our publishing house, Samuel Fischer, was particularly fond of Nordic literature. And we are now very proud to be able to offer the German-speaking readership the new translation of the Icelandic sagas. It’s impressive to see how well the translators have managed to transfer the powerful language of the sagas into modern German, enabling us to immerse ourselves in its world. The leap into medieval Iceland seems a big one, but with this new edition it’s an easy one to make.”

Hans Jürgen Balmes, Editorial Director, International Literature, S. Fischer Verlage

“That the Frankfurt Book Fair provides a stage once a year for the literature of its Guest of Honour is not only valuable for the readers, it also gives publishers an additional window on the world. The writers of Iceland produce books that astonish, seduce and delight me – I knew that already. Yet I didn’t know Gyrðir Elíasson. When Thomas Böhm told me about him, I became interested. An author who loves the absurd, who writes stories with poetic power and who, for all his strangeness, maintains a measured and quiet tone: how could that not convince me? And what can I say? I’m smitten.”

Peter Graf, Managing Director, Walde + Graf Verlag

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“Icelanders know how to tell stories. And they do so, too – sometimes quietly, sometimes loudly, always authentically, with elements of surprise and a feeling for human drama. That’s why at btb-Verlag we’ve loved Icelandic literature for many years, especially Einar Kárason with his unmistakable voice. Reconciliation and Resentment, his prize-winning novel about one of Iceland’s most war-ravaged periods, is written in such a densely atmospheric and exciting way that you’re compelled to catch your breath in guilty reflection – because somewhere deep down we’re all Icelanders.”

Regina Kammerer, Publishing Manager, btb

“We publish Icelandic authors for the same reasons that we publish other literary works: they give us a chance to expand our view of the world. In Iceland, this view is a very special one, as Jón Kalman Stefansson’s traditionally-rooted novel impressively demonstrates.”

Thomas Tebbe, Editorial Director, Fiction, Piper Verlag

“We’re publishing Pétur Gunnarsson’s book out of enthusiasm, and because we’re curious about the new literary cosmos. In Iceland, Dot Dot Comma Dash is a modern classic, but it’s a new discovery for us. It’s the first volume of a four-part novel about being young in post-war Iceland. We’ll also publish the second part of the tetralogy.

Icelandic literature is addictive. It’s varied, highly eloquent, entertaining, spiky, original, weird, offbeat, brazen, artistic, wild; it’s refreshingly different, like the country itself.”

Barbara and Stefan Weidle, Weidle Verlag

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