

Languages of Climate Crisis

Friday 8. November, Lecture hall
National Museum of Iceland

The Scale of Things

Bogasalur / Arch Hall
Þorgerður Ólafsdóttir

In museums artefacts' documentation, a centimetre scale is usually placed beneath the object as to underline its size and stature in the world. The delicate black and white paper strips caught my attention when I first started visiting the *more recent* artefacts' collection in the museum. They are a part of a much larger and complex measuring and structural systems, humans have developed in an effort to grasp the world; to understand or even fathom something that is not within reach.

My contribution to the symposium will be in the form of a walking tour around the exhibition *Future Fragments*, where I will share moments that have fundamentally shaped my practice and served as guideposts up until this point, in the blue hall of The National Museum.

Bio: Þorgerður Ólafsdóttir is a visual artist. In her practice she considers various objects and phenomena that are connected to our understanding of and relation to the natural world as it meets, overlaps and is interpreted within human environments. Her work is layered in process, research and fieldwork where her careful approach is recognised through different notions of time, scale and narratives.

Þorgerður is a part of the research project *Relics of Nature, an Archaeology of Natural Heritage in the High North*. In the summer of 2021, she received a research permit to travel to Surtsey island. Her stay on the island has highly influenced her artistic practice. In her recent publication, *Island Fiction*, she weaves together artworks with essays that address the complex aspects of the existence, herstory and meaning of Surtsey.

Her exhibition [Future Fragments](#) at the National Museum of Iceland, is open until 10th November.

Imaginations for the Anthropocene

Fyrirlestrasalur / Lecture hall

Þóra Pétursdóttir

The theme of this interdisciplinary seminar is the current climate crisis and the question of how to grasp and communicate its urgency – for example within the walls of a (cultural heritage) museum.

Scientifically supported claims repeatedly refer to the unprecedented nature of the changes experienced and expected in the world at present. However, the formats on which these claims are mostly communicated seem to rather withstand and even resist change and rupture. We ask, are the dominating languages of the Western world, such as those of academia, science and politics, able to react to an unprecedented climate crisis, or to encourage the public to needed action? What other forms of communication may possibly be better equipped to do so? Or, what kind of articulation (approach and configuration) does the Anthropocene require, and what is possibly the role of art and artistic method here?

Bio: Þóra Pétursdóttir is a Professor of Archaeology in the Department of Archaeology, Conservation and History at the University of Oslo. Her research combines contemporary archaeology, heritage studies and environmental humanities and draws on the theoretical frameworks of e.g. New Materialism and Post-humanities.

Her work has focused on e.g. the topic of material memory and suggested a more constructive understanding of processes of decay/ruination in heritage contexts. She has explored understandings of the Anthropocene in archaeology and reflected on how climate change challenges archaeological thinking and practice. Her work has always transgressed and problematised the boundary between nature and culture. This divide, and the “nature of heritage”, is also the focus of her current research where notions of sustainability and more-than-human ethics are of central concern.

Þóra's publications include the books *Ruin Memories: Materialities, Aesthetics and the Archaeology of the Recent Past* (2014), *After Discourse: Things, Affects, Ethics* (2020), *Heritage Ecologies* (2021) and *The Routledge Handbook of Archaeology and Plastics* (2024). Þóra is the principal investigator of the project Relics of Nature (www.relicsofnature.com).

Getting a Felt Sense of Being Stuck to Move Forward

Sigríður Þorgeirsdóttir

This summer in Iceland felt and was noticeably colder than in previous years, evoking a visceral realisation that climate change is no longer just a scientific concept but a personal, lived experience. This shift evokes an eerie, unsettling feeling, leaving one speechless in the face of the overwhelming scale of the problem. There is a sense of powerlessness. I argue that it is essential to lean into this feeling, even when words fail to fully capture it. What does it mean to exist in a world where our ways of living remain largely unchanged despite the climate crisis? Why are more sustainable alternatives, such as the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, not being adopted quickly enough? How can we cultivate new sensibilities that allow us to deeply perceive the “stuckness” of the situation, thereby potentially motivating individual change that can fuel systemic changes?

In this talk, I will first explore how developing these sensibilities—by reconnecting with lived experience—can help counter the disconnection from the environment caused by objectifying modes of scientific and technological thinking. Secondly, I will discuss how reconnecting with lived experience also allows us to regain a more relational, embedded, and embodied sense of self and restore our dignity like Claire Petitmengin argues (2021). Finally, I propose that this approach offers valuable theories and methodologies for cultivating more profound sensibilities in the face of climate change. Methodologies that are an important contribution to the Inner Development Goals, a movement that is complementary to the UNSDG.

Bio: Sigríður Þorgeirsdóttir is a Professor of Philosophy at the University of Iceland, specialising in the philosophy of embodiment and the environment, feminist philosophy, women in the history of philosophy, and 19th- and 20th-century German philosophy. She has taught environmental ethics for nearly two decades and has been actively involved in Iceland's environmental movement, particularly regarding the construction of the Kárahnjúkar dam in the highlands. Sigríður currently serves as Chair of the Gender Committee of FISP, which organises the World Congress of Philosophy. She is also one of the leaders of two projects focused on researching and teaching embodied critical thinking (www.trainingect.com and www.makesense.hi.is). In 2024, she co-edited two books related to these projects: *Embodied and Elemental Thinking for a New Era* (Springer) and *Embodied Thinking in Research and Learning* (Routledge).

Assembling Anthropocene(s): Museums and the situated appearances of a concept

Bergsveinn Þórsson

For over a decade the concept of the Anthropocene has been a catalyst for thoughts and actions on environmental issues for various cultural activities and productions. In museums the concept has taken hold of objects, exhibitions and strategic plans as a way to raise a much needed awareness of the adverse impacts of human activity on the planet.

In this presentation, I discuss different Anthropocene assemblages in three museums and explore how a range of museum practices impact the materialisation processes of the concept, resulting in situated appearances of Anthropocenes across the Atlantic. While the excitement for the Anthropocene has dwindled in the cultural sector, its traces are still discernible. As it erodes away it is important to dissect its material and semiotic functions to prepare us for wandering the post-anthropocene in search for inspiration.

Bio: Bergsveinn Þórsson has a Ph.D in Museum Studies and is an Associate Professor at the Social Science department of Bifröst University in Iceland. Based in Reykjavík his research interests circle around cultural organisations and their uncertain futures, from investigating the implementation of sustainability and climate action in the cultural sector, to developing speculative methods of future thinking. He is an active member of CoFutures, an international research group on global futurisms, that received the Inter Circle U. prize for transdisciplinary research in 2024. Bergsveinn co-curated *Beyond Barcode*, an exhibition on locally generated future scenarios of Oslo that opened in 2023 at the Intercultural Museum. He is a fellow at the Centre for Advanced Study (CAS) in Oslo, in the 2024-25 project The Nordic Little Ice Age (1300-1900), Lessons from Past Climate change (NORLIA). He teaches courses on audience development, sustainability and green governance in the Cultural Management and Public Governance programs at Bifröst University.

Lunch break

Difficult beauty: the role of art and aesthetics in a climate crisis

Kelly Jazvac

Keynote Friday 8th November 13:15

In the context of this symposium, this presentation will walk through the artist's observations and experiences on some of the possibilities and trappings of environmentally-oriented art making, both within the museum/gallery context and within academia. Of particular focus will be the slippery role beauty plays here: sometimes as a tool for poetics, engagement, complexity and community; but at other times complacent with a commodity culture that embraces fetishization, easy consumption and/or quick dismissal. Here Jazvac will ask what role art and aesthetics have and could play when tackling the urgency of the climate crisis, while also thinking carefully and candidly about her own next steps as an artist, academic and cultural producer.

Bio: Kelly Jazvac is a Canadian artist who works with plastic waste and the permanence of disposability. She is part of a plastic pollution research team called The Synthetic Collective, which includes scientists, artists and writers. She has exhibited at MoMA (New York); The Musée D'Art Contemporain (Montréal), the Eli and Edyth Broad Museum (East Lansing); Ujazdowski Castle CCA (Warsaw); and FIERMAN (New York). Her work has been written about in *National Geographic*, *e-flux Journal*, *Hyperallergic*, *Art Forum*, *The New Yorker*, and *The Brooklyn Rail*.

Her co-authored art/science research has been published in scientific journals including *Nature Reviews*, *GSA Today*, and *Science of the Total Environment*. Jazvac is based in Tiohtià:ke/Mooniyang/Montreal where she is an Associate Professor at Concordia University. Jazvac is currently in residence at the Conseils des Arts et Lettres Québec residency in New York City, collaborating with the Healthy Materials Lab at Parson's the New School as part of a year of research on non-toxic materials and the social histories they contain.

Yes, 'n' how many spikes will it take till we know ...?

Gísli Pálsson

This presentation focuses on current debates about the status of the „Anthropocene Epoch“, the extent to which growing human impact on planet Earth justifies a new label, a new geologic period –

debates partly centred on the number and scale of human „spikes“ (signatures of human presence in the geologic record), including conglomerates and atomic waste. I shall argue that the „Anthropocene“ label should be seen as a speech act, generating attention to, and general engagement with, global environmental problems, facilitating hope in times of unprecedented distress.

Bio: Gísli Pálsson is former professor at the University of Iceland and the University of Oslo. He holds a Ph.D. in Anthropology from the University of Manchester, England (1982). He has written extensively on a variety of issues – including human-animal relations, slavery, extinction, and environmental discourse – and he has done anthropological fieldwork in several contexts, Iceland, the Republic of Cape Verde, and the Canadian Arctic. He is the author, editor, or co-editor of several books, including *Biosocial Becomings; Integrating Social and Biological Anthropology* (co-edited with Tim Ingold (2013), *The Man Who Stole Himself: The Slave Odyssey of Hans Jonathan* (2016), and *The Last of Its Kind: The Search for the Great Auk and the Discovery of Extinction* (2024).

Moving Bodies

A moving/walking presentation

Gunnþís Ýr Finnbogadóttir

A practical workshop in the form of a guided walk (outside if weather permits, inside if shelter is needed) exploring inner and outer environments through moving, sensing, writing, drawing and documenting.

Bio: Gunnþís Ýr Finnbogadóttir lives and works in Iceland. She graduated with an MA in Fine Art from the Piet Zwart Institute and Plymouth University in 2008 and M.Art.Ed. in art education from the Iceland University of the Arts in 2011. Gunnþís is an Associate Professor at the Iceland University of the Arts, Department of Arts Education. She is currently a PhD candidate at the University of Iceland, investigating environmental immersion and movement in thinking in an artistic research project aimed at developing environmental pedagogies.

Languages of Climate Crisis

Saturday 9. November, Lecture hall
National Museum of Iceland

Tales of Tethered Realities

Garðar Eyjólfsson

In this presentation, I use speculative fiction to explore the complex and evolving relationship between technology and the environment in the Anthropocene. Through stories like *The Fox & the Drone*, *The Watchtowers*, and *Rover's Reckoning*, I examine the intersection of human innovation and ecosystems, exploring both the tensions and synergies between them. These narratives reflect on the hybridization of the organic and the technological, offering different perspectives: from the harmonious balance between ancient environmental rhythms and futuristic innovation to the potential costs of progress. Each story invites audiences to reflect on the possibilities of posthuman and transhuman futures, asking how we might adapt, surrender, or evolve in our relationship with the environment in the face of the climate crisis.

Bio: Garðar Eyjólfsson holds a B.A. (Honours) in Product Design from Central Saint Martins, London, and an M.A. (Cum Laude) in Contextual Design from the Design Academy Eindhoven. He has extensive experience in cross-disciplinary projects focusing on human-environment and human-technology relations, communicated through various formats, platforms, and media, including artefacts, scenography, curation, speculative fiction, video, performance, dialogue, and writing.

Deeply involved in academia, Garðar served as the Program Director of the B.A. in Product Design at the Iceland University of the Arts from 2012 to 2017 and as the Program Director of the M.A. Design Explorations & Translations from 2017 to 2021. He lectures and conducts courses and workshops at universities worldwide. His diverse work includes developing personal research projects, curating exhibitions, advising the public and private sectors, project management and workshop facilitation. Garðar is pursuing a PhD in the platform Fishing Architecture at the Faculty of Architecture - University of Porto.

Where's my jetpack? Salvaging fragments of the future

Ole Martin Sandberg

Generations ago, the future was looking bright. Futurists like R. Buckminster Fuller imagined sustainable utopias where technological progress would result in ever-increasing standards of living with minimal energy usage and environmental impact. Although there is an echo of this in current internet memes about “fully automated luxury communism”, nobody really believes in this optimistic view of the future anymore. Instead, our visions of the future range from dystopian nightmares of authoritarian techno-feudalism to societal collapse as a result of climate breakdown. In both scenarios, the concept of *salvage* becomes important: the effort to make a life either in the margins of civilization or in its ruins by using the materials left by the past. In this talk, I discuss how visions of the future - both utopian and dystopian - have changed, and ask: what fragments can we salvage from past ideas of the future?

Bio: Dr. Ole Martin Sandberg is an environmental philosopher working at the University of Iceland and the Icelandic Museum of Natural History. He teaches Ethics of Nature and does research into the interconnected crises of climate change, biodiversity and loss of nature-connectedness. His work focuses on embodied critical thinking, affect, and process philosophy. He has written about climate change, fiction and collective imagination.

Navigating the Anthropocene

Arndís Bergsdóttir

In this lecture, I explore the role of museums in addressing the Anthropocene by blending human and environmental histories to inspire climate action. Drawing on interdisciplinary frameworks from heritage studies and environmental humanities, I examine how museums engage with the Anthropocene as a lived experience, engaging visitors with the entangled histories of human impact on ecosystems. By simulating the forces shaping our planet—such as oceanic and atmospheric dynamics—museums can offer a sensory understanding of climate change. Drawing on concepts of vulnerability and relationality, this talk highlights how discomfort in facing ecological realities can provoke critical reflection. Through storytelling and participatory experiences, museums can challenge visitors to rethink their roles in the climate crisis. This lecture introduces a more nuanced, affective, and systemic narrative than generally practised in museums, pushing them from mere presenters of information to agents of emotional and intellectual transformation.

Bio: Dr. Arndís Bergsdóttir is a postdoctoral researcher and project manager at the Queen Margrethe's and Vigdís Finnbogadóttir's Research Centre on Ocean, Climate, and Society (ROCS) at the University of Iceland. Her interdisciplinary work bridges museology, heritage studies, and environmental humanities, focusing on human-nature relationalities and contributing to understandings of ecosystem dynamics in Iceland. Arndís holds a PhD in Museology from the University of Iceland, where her dissertation, *Absence Comes to Matter: Entangled Becomings of a Feminist Museology*, was awarded multiple competitive grants. She is also an adjunct lecturer in the Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Folkloristics at the University of Iceland and has authored several articles and book chapters. Her academic interests include feminist museology, critical heritage studies, and transdisciplinary collaborations on climate action and biological diversity.

Lunch break

Creative Responses

Auður Aðalsteinsdóttir

All life reacts to its environment and in turn shapes its environment. With reference to theories on artistic expression as an ecocentric mode of conveying information, examples from contemporary Icelandic art are used to explore artistic practices as a part of this process.

Bio: Auður Aðalsteinsdóttir is a research lecturer and director of the University of Iceland's research center in Þingeyjarsveit. Her PhD-thesis on literary criticism was published in the book *Þvíllkar ófreskjur* (2021). Her postdoctoral research of natural disasters and climate anxiety in Icelandic fiction, at the Research Centre on Ocean, Climate and Society, was published in the book *Hamfarir* (2023). She is also the editor of the anthology *Creative Responses to Environmental Crises in Nordic Art and Literature* (2024).

Auður has taught courses in literary criticism, cultural studies, and contemporary literature at the University of Iceland. She has also worked as a journalist, as an editor at literary and academic journals, and hosted a weekly radio show on literature at the Icelandic Broadcasting Service.

Between science and vernacular culture: The politics of climate change temporalities

Kyrre Kverndokk

“Climate change” is a concept that moves between science, politics, media, and everyday life. Doing so, it creates various kinds of meaning which implies a range of different timescales. This paper states that “climate change” has an elastic conceptual content that may shift, depending on the sociocultural and political situation. This paper argues that a better understanding of this elastic is required to improve environmental communication.

Bio: Kyrre Kverndokk is Professor of Cultural Studies at the Department of Archaeology, History, Cultural Studies and Religion, at the University of Bergen, Norway. He has published on topics such as the practice and politics of Second World War memory, the cultural history of natural disasters and climate change temporalities. He is currently the PI of the interdisciplinary project “Gardening the Globe: Historicizing the Anthropocene through the production of socio-nature in Scandinavia, 1750–2020”. He also has a special interest in folklore archives and is the PI of the digitization project “SAMLA: National Infrastructure for Cultural History and Tradition Archives” which is responsible for the Norwegian online tradition archive samla.no

Examples of the collapse of language and meaning during paradigm shifts and what it tells us in our current collapse of words and meaning

Andri Snær Magnason

Keynote Saturday 9th November 14:35

The Icelandic language gives excellent examples of the influence of new ideas and how old language collapses and new words and meaning are slowly understood. Our major paradigm shifts have been the transformation between the Nordic worldview to the Christian one, from kingdom to democracy, from the introduction of women's rights to the norm of a female president. Now we are in the midst of one of the largest paradigm shifts humans have been faced with. How do you talk today, when you know that our language, rhetoric and explanations of the world are obsolete. How do you talk when the words at hand are actually larger than language. How do you understand that you don't understand how large words like Ocean Acidification actually are.

Bio: Andri Snær Magnason is an Icelandic writer and documentary film director. He has written poetry, fiction, non-fiction and science fiction. His work has been published or performed in more than 40 languages and he has won the Icelandic Literary Awards in all categories.

Andri has received international awards like the Philip K Dick honorary mention for LoveStar, the Prima Tiziano Terzani in Italy for On Time and Water and The Green Earth Book Award for his books for children. He is the co-director of three documentary films that have premiered in international festivals like IDFA, RIFF, CPH:DOX and HOTDOCS. Andri has been active in the fight to preserve the highlands of Iceland and raising awareness about our fast changing climate. His eulogy for the first glacier that Iceland lost to climate change, the Ok glacier was shared by millions in 2019.

Relics of Nature website: <https://relicsofnature.com>

Future Fragments' online Catalogue:

<https://www.thjodminjasafn.is/syningar-vidburdir/brot-ur-framtid-syningarskra>

