

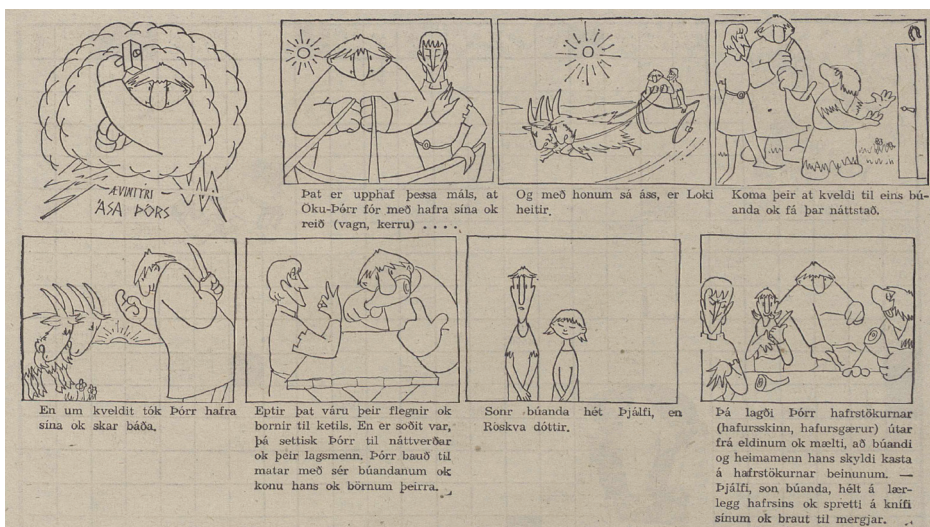
ICELANDIC COMICS

EXHIBITION IN THE NATIONAL AND UNIVERSITY LIBRARY OF ICELAND, OPENED IN MAY 2023



Comics are one of the most popular and accessible art forms. There is hardly an Icelander today who does not know international comic book heroes such as Donald duck Tintin or Asterix. However, Icelandic comics generally seem to receive little attention as an art form. About a hundred years ago, Icelandic artists Guðmundur Thorsteinsson (Muggur) and Tryggvi Magnússon drew works that we would now call comic books, and Erró has referred to the works of international comic book authors in his visual works.

But where are Icelandic heroes in the realm of comics? Sigga Vigg-a by Gísla J. Ástthórsson has been called the first Icelandic comic book hero, but she first appeared in the newspaper *Alþýðublaðið* in the spring of 1959. Five books about Sigga Vigga were published by Bros publishing house in the years 1978-1980.



Icelandic magazines started publishing comics by Icelandic authors in the middle of the 20th century. Káti Láki was a story for children that was published in the spring of 1948 and 1949. It can be said that the comics *Ævintýri Ása Þórs* by Harald Guðbergsson that appeared in *Lesbók Morgunblaðinn* in the fall of 1964 and the story of *Sæmund the Wise* that appeared in the review *Fálkinn* in the summer of 1965 brought Icelandic comics more into the cultural field. In 1980, the comic books *Baldur's Dream* and *Þrymskvida* by Haraldur were published.



Sigurður Örn Brynjólfsson (SÖB) made the comic strip *Bísi og Krimmi*, which appeared daily in the years 1977 and 1978 on the pages of the newspaper *Dagblaðið*. *Bísi og Krimmi* was published in book form in 1999. *Svínharður Smásál* is a character created by Kjartan Arnórsson (Kjarnór) that first appeared in *Þjóðviljinn* in the spring of 1982. *Froskur* edition published a book with the stories in 2022.

In 1985, Bjarni Hinriksson published *Sjaldséðar sögur* and a year later Bragi Halldórsson published the comic strip *It*. In 1989, Þorri Hringsson and Sjón published the comic book *1937 – the adventures of Tinna and Hreinn Borgfjörð*. In 1990, the comic magazine *Gisp!* was launched. *Gisp!* has been published in various forms 12 times. In 1991, the comic book store *Nexus* was opened, and access to comics greatly increased. In 1996, the comic magazine *Blek* was first published, which became *Neo-Blek* in 2005 when Jean Posocco founded the comic book publication *Froskur*, which has been fruitful in publishing comics translated to Icelandic.

More writers and illustrators started to publish comics such as Hallgrímur Helgason, Huggleikur Dagsson and Lóa Hlín Hjálmtýsdóttir. And now the comic has gained ground in the education system. Elías Rúni and Halldór Baldursson have recently used the comic book form as a means of expression to do a final project at the Iceland Academy of the Arts.

Today there is a lot of growth in the world of Icelandic comics. Iceland is at the center of international influence: modern authors enjoy the influence of murky underground comics as well as Holly-

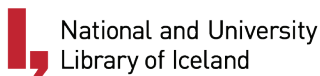
wood action stories from the United States, they soak up the stylish adventures of the European masters and they fearlessly draw on the exotic narrative traditions of Japanese and Korean authors. It will be exciting to see what Icelandic authors of the future will come up with.

The Icelandic Comics Society was founded in autumn 2019 to promote the culture and industry of comics in Iceland. The association holds various cultural events related to comics, holds regular courses and workshops related to comic book making and supports the production and publication of comics in Iceland. Is it the society's hope that the growth spurts of Icelandic comics no less than entrepreneurs can be found at this exhibition.

The National and University Library of Iceland is in charge of preservation and collection of all types of material published in Iceland or for distribution on the Icelandic market, including comics. Icelanders comics are often printed abroad or in very small editions and is therefore there is a risk that they will not find their way into the museum.

Electronic data, such as e.g. webcomics, also belong in the museum. This exhibition is part of the collaboration between the National Library and ÍMS to promote the relationship with the authors and artists who publish Icelandic comics.

The Icelandic Comic Book Society and the National and University Library of Iceland encourage comic book authors and publishers to bring their publications to the library.



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