

An aerial photograph of a glacier system. In the foreground, a large, dark, textured iceberg floats in the water. The glacier behind it shows various shades of blue, grey, and white, with intricate patterns of ice flow and meltwater channels. The overall scene is dramatic and captures the raw power of nature.

SIGURGEIR SIGURJÓNSSON

ICELAND FROM AIR



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# Believe in two things in the world of the highest glory, God in the universe, God in yourself,

wrote poet Steingrímur Thorsteinsson,  
capturing in just four lines  
the religious convictions  
of many Icelanders.

“God in the universe” is God Almighty. He’s out there,  
somewhere: far off in eternity, far above and all around,  
maker of heaven and earth, and we approach him in prayer,  
going hence, from ourselves, and thither, to him.

And at the same time he resides in us.

The poet’s phrase “God in yourself” is a reference to this.  
Only a few people ever have the good fortune to perceive  
that God in themselves, like a flash of light. Yet within us is a  
power which some call the soul, others “The voice of God in  
one’s heart”, yet others conscience.

On a mountain peak we come close to bringing together  
these two concepts of God – God in the universe, and God  
in our souls.

And at that point we gain a perspective.

\*

To the minds of most citydwellers, the highlands are  
identified with the faraway. They are distant, remote. They  
are *there*. We see the mountains on the horizon, somewhere  
a long way away, and they are lofty and massive and final.  
They have sprung from the bowels of the earth and stretch  
towards the heavens, and they contain within them the  
primal elements: earth, air, fire and water. We look at  
them, from down here in the lowlands, and we feel that the  
mountains form a setting for us, define our horizon. We feel  
our littleness vis-à-vis the mountains, realise our own limits.  
They stand beyond our reach, perfect and ultimate, symbols  
of the untouchable and immutable in nature.

And off we go.

To encounter earth and air, fire and water, and the powers  
within us, we ascend the mountains: higher, higher, up,  
up. And when we finally stand on the summit and look out  
over the world of the mountain, we feel of course that we  
have won some kind of victory over the mountain. That  
is a misconception: people who climb a mountain have  
done no more than permit the mountain to conquer them.  
The mountain-climbers set off onto the mountain on the  
mountain’s terms: they take the time the mountain demands,  
using the methods the mountain requires, and are finally  
rewarded by the vision granted by the mountain, when it has  
set free the forces within them. And while they walk, and

feel their muscles toiling, and their body responding to the  
mountain at every step, the walkers are gradually set free of  
everything that happens in the lowlands, that we call culture  
and society. The higher they climb, the noise and bickering and  
squabbling – what we call debate – all human concerns, fade  
into the distance. It all becomes so small and quiet, up there.

The mountain itself is, admittedly, more-or-less untouched  
by our achievement, but the ascent of the mountain has  
given us so much: we have made our body stronger, and  
discovered that it is capable of more than we thought; we  
have pushed ourselves to be worthy of the mountain. We  
have grown spiritually stronger too; conquered the trials  
within us, overcome mental obstacles. At the peak, we have  
come closer to some essential core of ourselves. And at our  
destination we are *there* and not *here* – we are in the faraway.  
We are beyond our daily existence, and we feel that we are  
alive, far from the mechanisms of the world, the glitz and  
glamour, the toil and trouble, far above all that, alone with  
the elements – closer to God.

God in yourself stretches out towards God in the universe.

\*

This is one revelation of this book: we gain a perspective  
which can otherwise only be seen by a bird on the wing. We  
glide above the country, free as a bird, glide across the wide  
open spaces, and what was lofty and faraway becomes close.  
We see the wonders that reside beyond the horizon. We see  
the faraway in close-up.

It is in perpetual motion. Here land is in the process of  
creation, as if an artist were at work in some remote place,  
not having heard that it’s all been done before.

This is a living land. Here creation and destruction are  
simultaneous, as continuous as the rhythm of breathing. We  
see the fluid boundary of land and sea move back and forth,  
like a courtship ritual. Ice, etched in a thousand shades of  
grey, lies on the land like tyranny. Under and around it tumble  
fire and brimstone, building up mounds which wait to be  
sculpted by rain and wind into ever-changing forms. Torrents  
roar by like eternity. Rivers and streams meander back and  
forth, like blood vessels in the body, transporting nutrients.  
And lakes, eyes in the landscape, gaze back at us.

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In these pictures, in other words, there is a lot of art. And  
perhaps they would even be inconceivable if painters had  
not already opened our eyes to a new view of nature –  
liberated us from seeing only a mountain where a mountain  
is, only rock in rock, only clouds in clouds. These images are  
in a dialogue with the Icelandic landscape painting. And not  
only the old-style pictures, which depicted specifically the  
conventional stereotypical mountain to hang in the living  
rooms of the gentry, but rather the powerful Icelandic  
landscape expressionism seen in the work of the masters  
of the 20th century such as Svavar Guðnason, Kristján  
Dávíðsson and others, who painted eddies in rivers, the  
tideline, and slapped thick lava on the canvas, without people  
exactly seeing it, although they instantly saw it, of course, in  
the mind’s eye.

Man hasn’t the imagination to think of shapes that don’t  
exist in nature.

Yet, while nature possesses all conceivable shapes and  
colours within itself, and while man cannot imagine  
more than a fraction of all the colours and shapes and  
combinations which exist in the universe, man’s perception  
of nature comes from within. The shapes seem to have  
parallels in man’s inner life. And as we feel that frisson of  
familiar pleasure in the sight of something beautiful, perhaps  
“God in yourself” suddenly recognises “God in the universe.”  
All art is, in a sense, prayer.

If prayer is to be effective, we must see with fresh eyes, with  
the eyes of the mind.

It is the role of visionaries such as photographers and other  
artists working directly in the visual media to open our eyes  
to a new way of seeing familiar phenomena.

The ocean is not just sea, water is not only wet, the sky not  
only blue, a mountain not simply a variation on a vertical  
curve, but a world of infinity.

We blink and see the world afresh, for a moment. That  
is creation. We blink and momentarily we stand in the  
footsteps of the maker of heaven and earth.

**GUDMUNDUR ANDRI THORSSON**







































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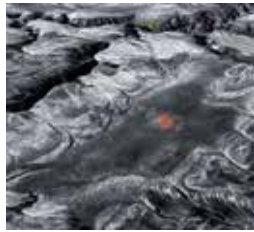
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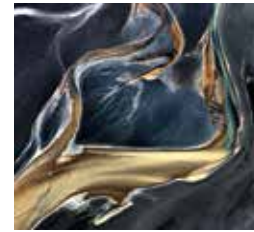
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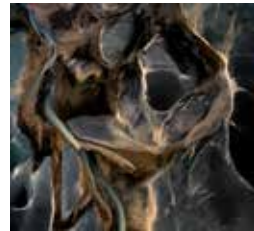
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ÞÆR ERU PRENTADAR Á FINE ART COTTON SMOOTH BRIGHT  
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1	Skipagerðisós, forsíða	250.000	77 x 72
2	Tungnaá	250.000	77 x 72
3	Tungnaá	400.000	100 x 236
4	Tungnaá	250.000	77 x 72
5	Hekluvikur	250.000	77 x 72
6	Veiðivötn	250.000	77 x 72
7	Veiðivötn	250.000	77 x 72
8	Hólsá	350.000	100 x 100
9	Botnlangalón	250.000	77 x 72
10	Þjorsá	250.000	77 x 72
11	Langjökull	250.000	77 x 72
12	Landeyjarsanduur	250000	77 x 72
13	Landeyjarsanduur	250.000	77 x 72
14	Hekluvikur	350.000	109 x 140
15	Hólsá	250.000	77 x 72
16	Hólsá	250.000	77 x 72
17	Hvítá	250.000	77 x 72
18	Skyggnisvatn	250.000	77 x 72
19	Torfajökull	350.000	100 x 200
20	Þjorsá, baksíða	250.000	77 x 72





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