



In the picture

Photography has a universal appeal due to the accessibility of the medium: anyone can pick up a camera and capture art. It takes a touch of genius however, to capture something with real mass appeal. *Jo Caird* investigates

“What’s interesting about photography”, says Icelandic artist Einar Falur Ingólfsson, “is that it is something that everybody owns and everybody does”. Where painting, sculpture and performance art are the domain of the professional artist and therefore remote, alien and with a reputation for being difficult to understand, photography is familiar and everyday, an art form that is fundamentally accessible.

Ingólfsson, one of Iceland’s best known artists, is talking to me on the eve of the opening of *Frontiers of Another Nature: Contemporary Photographic Art from Iceland*, a group exhibition at the Frankfurter Kunstverein that will include 10 photographs from his *Saga-Places* series. The series sees the artist walk in the footsteps of William Gershom Collingwood, an English artist and historian who toured sites associated with the Icelandic Sagas in the 19th century and published an illustrated account of his journey.

The show brings Ingólfsson’s work together with that of eight other Icelandic photographers, to explore innovative approaches to landscape and the complex relationship between man and his environment. Presented in collaboration with the Frankfurt Book Fair, which each year runs exhibitions and events around a different country theme, *Frontiers of Another Nature* is intended to work as a plat-

form for contemporary artists unknown outside Iceland. Given the directness of photography as a medium, of course, it will also offer visitors to the show a glimpse into the realities of life on this sparsely-populated island.

This is something that Celina Lunsford, artistic director of the *Fotografie Forum Frankfurt* and one of the show’s curators, is aware of. *Frontiers of Another Nature*, she says, is not intended as “a travelogue about a country”, but as something more subtle than that: a route into Icelandic photographic practice, itself a very varied field.

Aside from Ingólfsson, Lunsford says, the only artists featured in the show already known within Germany are the multi-media artist Haraldur Jónsson, showing *TSOYL* (*The story of your life*), a large series of poetic photographs exploring the minutiae of suburban existence; and the performance art trio *Icelandic Love Corporation*, showing a project called *Mother Earth*, a series of images of a long-term outdoor installation piece about the impact of a power station. More traditional landscape photography will be represented by Pétur Thomsen’s series *Imported Landscape*, which documents the construction of a massive hydroelectric power plant on what was formerly the largest area of unspoilt wilderness in Europe. Visitors will also be



- 01 From the series "Imported Landscapes", 2003-2009
© Pétur Thomsen
- 02 From the Series "Nowhereland", 2010
© Katrín Elvarsdóttir
- 03 "Sögustaðir / Saga-Steads - In the Footsteps of W.G. Collingwood", 2008
© Einar Falur Ingólfsson

introduced to Ingvar Högni Ragnarsson, who photographed the wall of a Reykjavik construction site each day for over a year for a project that explores the changing nature of the urban environment.

Lunsford is thrilled to be able to stage such a diverse mix of work in one exhibition. She believes that coming at the project as "an outsider" to Icelandic art has been crucial in letting her draw thematic links between series that might never meet in an Icelandic context. The example she gives is of Icelandic Love Corporation exhibiting side-by-side with Pétur Thomsen, a combination that shows "two very different ways of working".

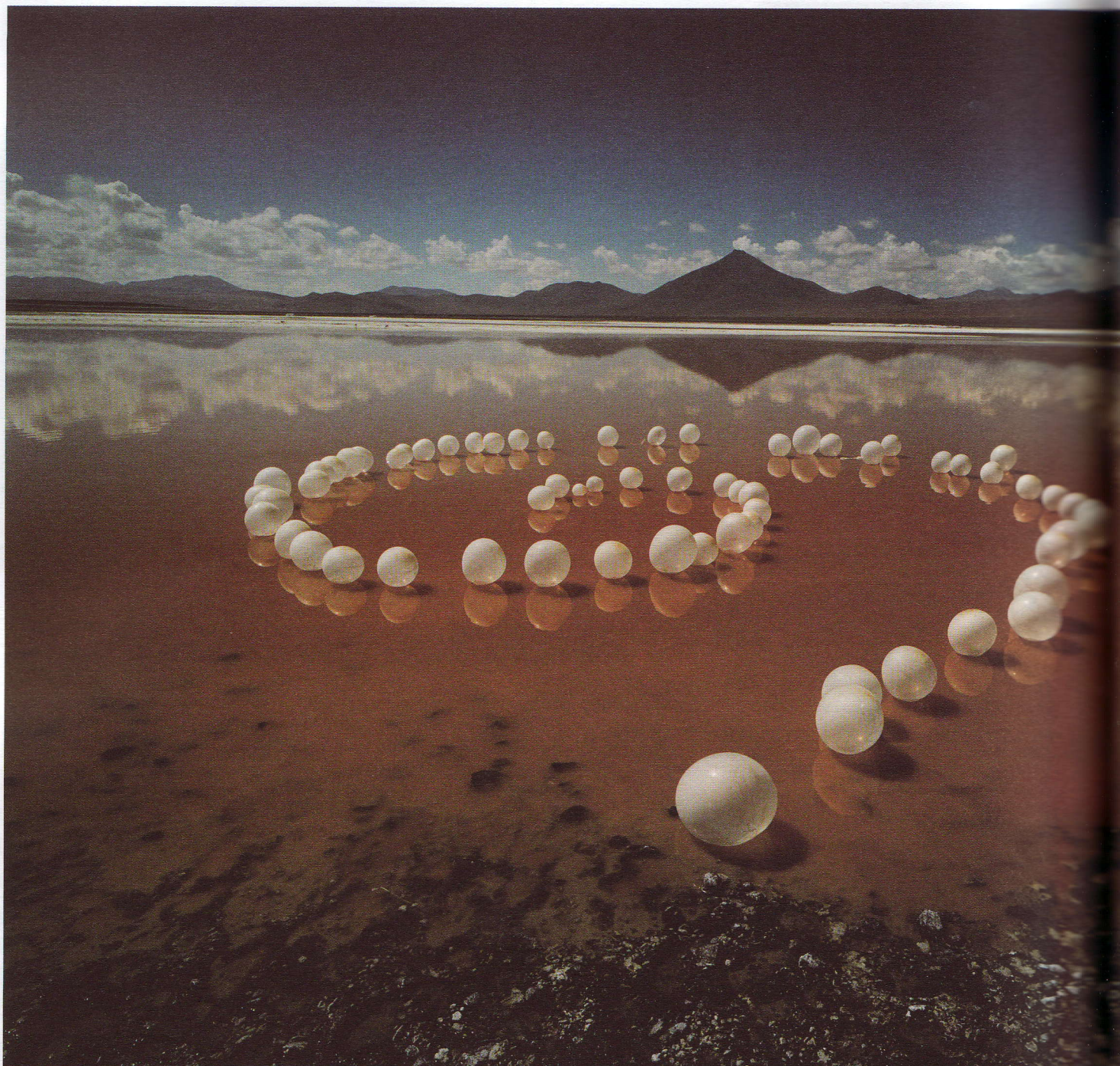
These artists' varying technical or stylistic approaches aside, they are all, in Ingólfsson's words, "at the forefront of finding new ways to show the people of Iceland how nature looks, what's out there." Lunsford points to the environmental impact of Iceland's booming energy industry as an inspiration for many of the artists in the show. "I think they're all deep down quite concerned with the environment", she says, "and what will eventually happen. Whether they're environmental activists, I don't think so, but I think that some of them want to make people in Iceland aware through their art of what's happening."

Ingólfsson's contribution to the show,

Saga-Places, which he worked on between 2007 and 2009, was actually the artist's first proper foray into landscape photography. "In the past", he explains, "my photographs involved people in one way or another, but when I started to work with Mr Collingwood's work, then somehow I managed to find a way to squeeze myself into the landscape, found a keyhole I could look through." By focusing on the ways that the landscape has changed over the century since Collingwood visited Iceland, Ingólfsson was able to explore the "notion of time", rather than addressing landscape as a timeless, unchanging entity, as is often the approach of traditional landscape art.

"I'm interested in seeing footsteps in nature. I'm not interested in untouched nature as it is, which is unusual, but that's something that you're going to see plenty of at this exhibition in Frankfurt. We're looking here at different approaches to nature - which is important - and I think the curators are really doing a great job." »

Frontiers of Another Nature:
Contemporary Photographic Art from Iceland is running at the Frankfurter Kunstverein, Frankfurt, Germany, from August 26 to October 16. www.fkv.de



SCARLETT HOOFT GRAAFLAND

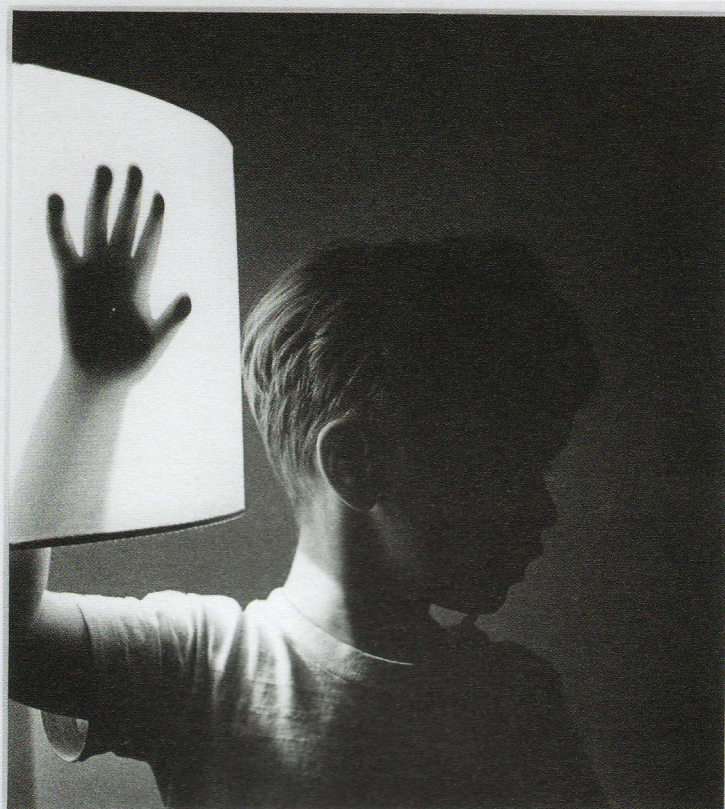
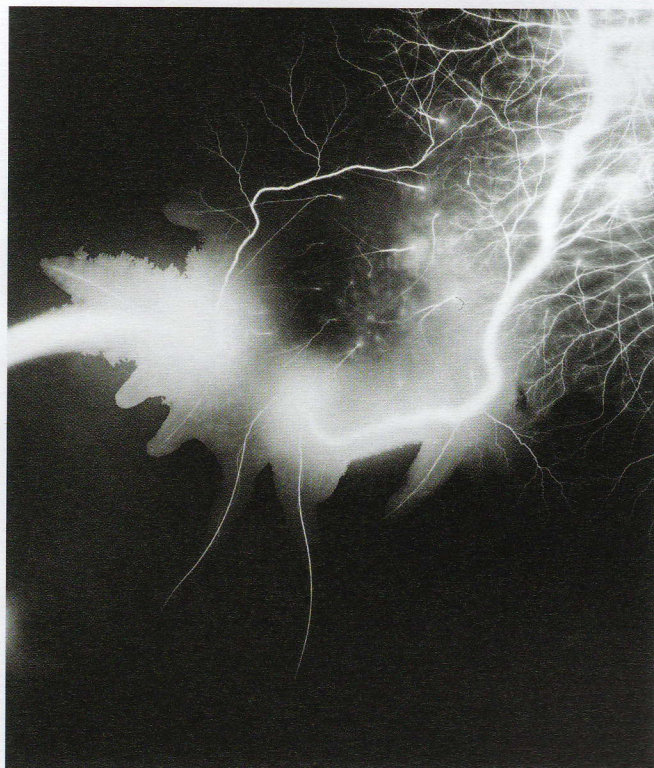
The Dutch photographer Scarlett Hooft Graafland's practice involves travelling to unusual and exotic places, creating installations there and then photographing them. Her photographs are not documents of her installation work, but are the end products of Graafland's projects, each of which are small, ultimately traceless interventions in nature, often assisted by the local population of wherever the artist has chosen to create her work.

Scarlett Hooft Graafland is running at the Huis Marseille Museum voor Fotografie, Amsterdam, the Netherlands, from September 10 to November 20. www.huisarseille.nl

HIROSHI SUGIMOTO

Presented in collaboration with the Edinburgh International Festival, this show sees the European premiere of work by one of the art world's best-known photographers (Sugimoto's *Boden Sea*, Uttwil, 1993, featured on the cover of the 2002 U2 album *No Line on the Horizon*). The exhibition presents *Lightening Fields* and *Photogenic Drawings*, two of Sugimoto's most recent series. The extraordinary and eerie *Lightening Fields* photographs are the result of exposing film to electrical charges not visible to the naked eye, while the works in the *Photogenic Drawings* series are made from rare and vulnerable negatives produced by 19th-century photography pioneer, Henry Fox Talbot.

Hiroshi Sugimoto is at the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh, from August 4 to September 25. www.nationalgalleries.org



OUT OF THE DARK ROOM: THE DAVID KRONN COLLECTION

Irish-born American David Kronn's photography collection numbers over 450 works, 165 of which will be displayed in this fascinating and varied show. *Out of the Dark Room* explores several themes running through Kronn's collection, including abstract landscapes and portraits of children and artists. Irving Penn's portraits of Frederick Kiesler and Willem de Kooning, Herb Ritt's 1980 photograph of Madonna and works from husband and wife team Nicolai Howalt and Trine Sondergaard are highlights. The collection ranges in content from 19th century Daguerreotypes to the 20th century photography of Edward Weston and August Sander.

Out of the Dark Room: The David Kronn Collection is running at the Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin, Ireland, from July 20 to October 9. www.modernart.ie