

# ICELAND

## PUBLIC ART

We are back from our month long Iceland adventure. We returned three weeks or so ago actually, but editing thousands of bird photographs, hundreds of waterfall photographs, and thousands of various other photographs have kept me busy and it is only now that I am starting to put together any *Flying Pig Adventures Travelogues*.

There are a lot of photographs and experiences I'd like to share, way too many to include in a single travelogue. So to that end our Iceland adventures will be covered over several individual issues of the *Flying Pig Adventures Travelogues*.

This first Iceland installment is going to be photographs of the public art I saw in Iceland, mostly works I saw in Reykjavik. And within Reykjavik in particular, The Einar Jónsson Museum Sculpture Garden. In using the term 'public art' I mean art that one can see without paying. Paying an admission fee to go into a museum, garden, grounds, gallery, etc., precludes it from being public art in the context I use here. Considering the size and population of Iceland, the amount of public art astounded me.

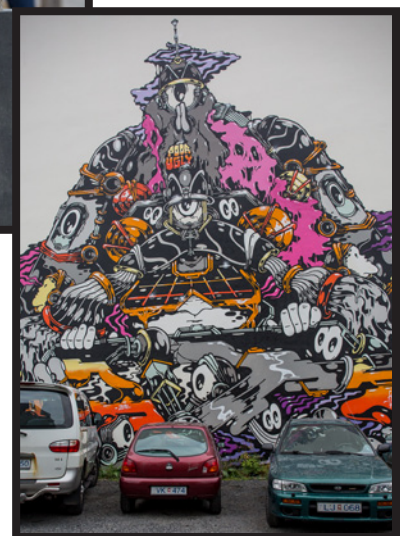
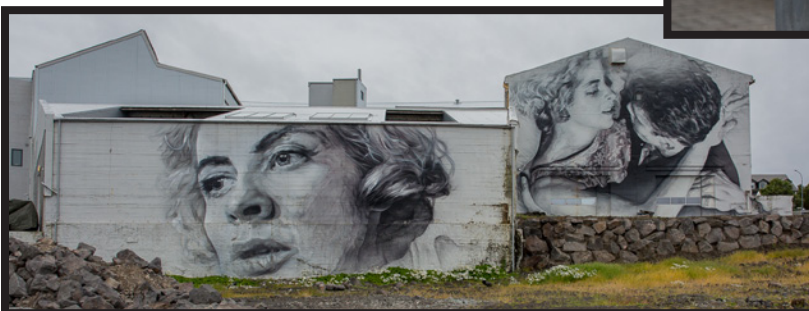
Iceland has a population of about 330,000 and an area of about 40,000 square miles, making it the most sparsely populated country in Europe. With the population of about 200,000, Greater Reykjavik comprises over 60% of the population of Iceland in an area that is only just over 1% (400 square miles) of the total size of the country. That leaves about 130,000 people to cram themselves into the remaining 39,600 square miles.

For comparison, Eastern Washington has a population 4.5 times that of Iceland at over 1,500,000 and is about the same size as Iceland. Another comparison for those without a knowledge of just how very densely populated our Eastern Washington is (sarcasm)... The state of Tennessee's population is 20 times that of Iceland at about 6,500,000 and about the same size as Iceland.

Anyway, I spent much of my time in Reykjavik enjoying the public art.

### ~ REYKJAVIK ~

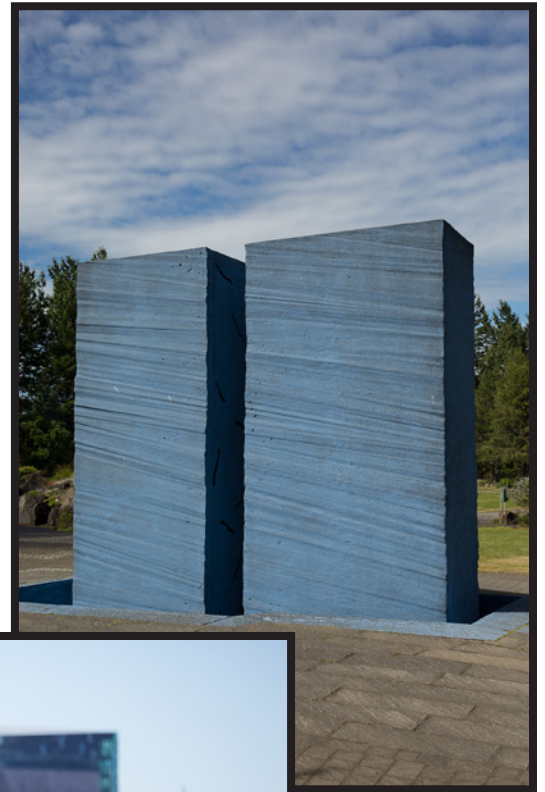




















## ~ THE EINAR JÓNSSON MUSEUM SCULPTURE GARDEN ~

Einar Jónsson (May 11, 1874 - October 18, 1954) was an Icelandic sculptor, born in Galtafell, a farm in southern Iceland. Einar was a groundbreaking figure in Icelandic sculpture and his influence on the visual arts in Iceland has been considerable, though indirect. Einar attended the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen from 1896 to 1899, studying under Wilhelm Bissen and Theobald Stein. Einar laid the foundation for Icelandic sculpture with his first publicly exhibited work, "Outlaws," which was shown at the Spring Salon in Copenhagen in 1901.

In 1909, after living abroad for almost 20 years he made an arrangement with the Althing to provide him with a home and studio in Reykjavík. In return, he agreed to donate all his works to the country. Einar did spend two years in North America though, to complete a couple of commissions. The first a statue of Icelandic explorer Þorfinnur Karlsefni (Thorfinn Karlsefni) installed along Philadelphia's Kelly Drive near the Samuel Memorial and unveiled on November 20, 1920. Today Einar's intrepid Norseman stands on East River Drive in Philadelphia. There is also a casting of that statue in Reykjavík. The second, a casting of his Jón Sigurðsson statue is at the Manitoba Legislative Building grounds in Winnipeg.

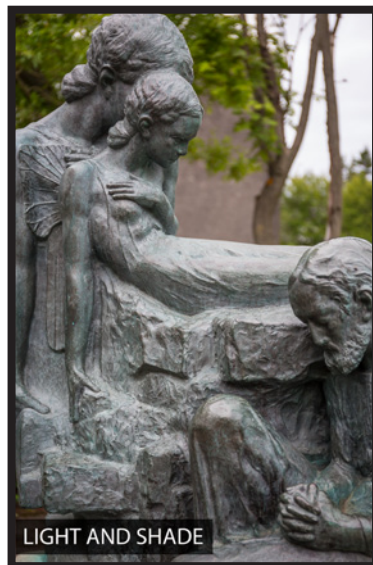
After the two years in North America to complete the two sculptures mentioned above, Einar moved permanently back to Iceland in 1920 at the age of 46 and resided there until his death in 1954. In Iceland he produced an amazing body of work, none of it seen outside Iceland.

Unlike most other sculptors, Einar worked almost entirely in plaster. This had to do partly with the lack of good modeling clay in Iceland, but it allowed Einar to work on his individual sculptures for years. Spending over a decade on a particular piece was not uncommon for him.

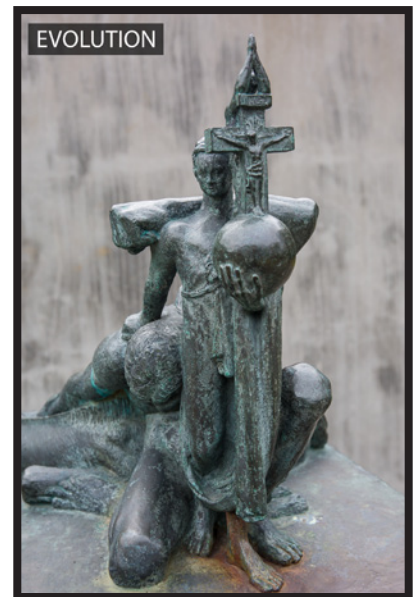
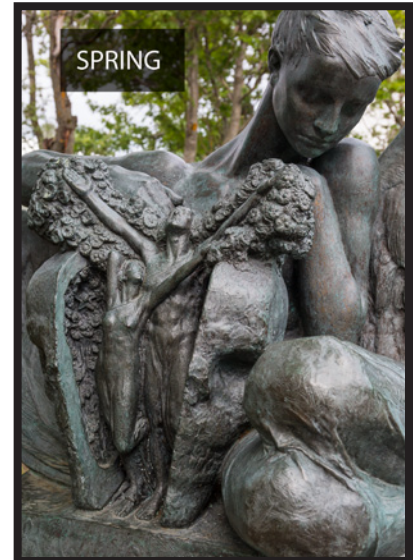
Einar drew inspiration from the Icelandic folklore heritage for "Outlaws" and other works from the first decade of the century, but also used mythological and religious motifs. After residing in Rome from 1902 to 1903, Einar completely rejected naturalistic depiction and publicly criticized the classical art tradition, which he felt had weighed artists down. He emphasized the need for artists to forge their own path and cultivate their originality and imagination instead of following in the footsteps of others. His ideas were related to German symbolism, and he developed a figurative language composed of interpretable symbols, personification and allegory. Einar's exposure to the ideas of the Swedish theosopher Emanuel Swedenborg in 1910 had a significant influence on his life and art. From that point on until the end of his life, he created figurative art works whose complex symbolism was based on theosophy.

Even though Einar dealt with abstract themes, he always used concrete imagery that made it easier for people to approach his works on their own terms. Many casts of Einar's sculptures adorn the city of Reykjavík, not just the The Einar Jónsson Museum Sculpture Garden.

On most of photographs of Einar's works I included the title of the work, feeling knowing titles helped interpreting his intent.







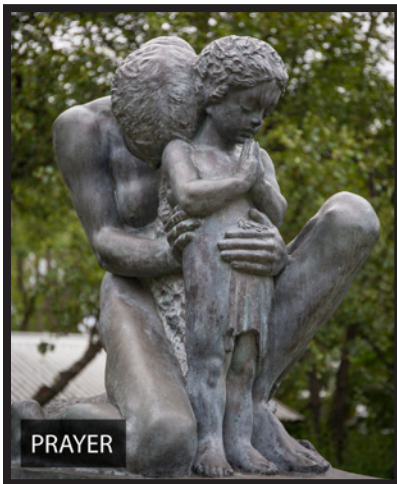




CHRISTMAS



THE KING OF ATLANTIS



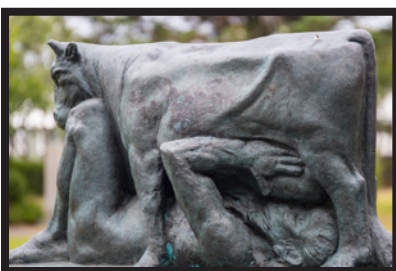
PRAYER



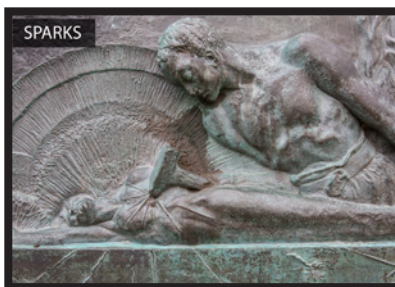
THOR WRESTLING WITH AGE



THOR WRESTLING WITH AGE



THE WRESTLERS



SPARKS



GRIEF



THE BIRTH OF PSYCHE



THE END



## ~ OUTSIDE OF REYKJAVIK ~

### THE GREAT AUK

This is a sculpture of a Great Auk near the island of Geirfuglasker (the "Great Auk Rock").

The last colony of great auks lived on Geirfuglasker (the "Great Auk Rock") off Iceland. This islet was a volcanic rock surrounded by cliffs which made it inaccessible to humans, but in 1830 the islet submerged after a volcanic eruption, and the birds moved to the nearby island of Eldey, which was accessible from a single side. When the colony was initially discovered in 1835, nearly fifty birds were present.

Museums, desiring the skins of the auk for preservation and display, quickly began collecting birds from the colony.

The last pair, found incubating an egg, was killed there on July 3, 1844, on request from a merchant who wanted specimens, with Jón Brandsson and Sigurður Ísleifsson strangling the adults and Ketill Ketilsson smashing the egg with his boot.



That's it for this issue. The next issue will probably be photographs of birds. Issues with Waterfalls, Landscape, Architecture, and that not covered by the aforementioned are forthcoming.

.END