

Nordic Narratives at the Scottish Storytelling Centre

The Nordic House Exhibition: 29th July to 5th September 2015

This summer, the Scottish Storytelling Centre will be transformed into the Nordic House.

From 29th July until 5th September, the Scottish Storytelling Centre will host a multimedia exhibition of art and culture from the five Nordic nations. The exhibition, in collaboration with Glasgow research and design collective Lateral North and policy group Nordic Horizons, will feature reproduced artworks, special events and activities celebrating Scotland's northerly neighbours Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark and Iceland.

THE EXHIBITION

The exhibition will see the Scottish Storytelling Centre's public space transformed into an 'immersive Nordic experience', says Programme and Events Manager Daniel Abercrombie. "There are many organisations now looking at how Scotland can learn from the North, and there is a long tradition of links between our nations and people – not least in Shetland and Orkney. This exhibition will examine the many different facets of this relationship, primarily looking at shared landscapes, social and cultural traditions; past, present and future."

"We have programmed some storytelling, poetry and music events to complement the exhibition, and can't wait to see it all come together. We hope the exhibition will be of interest to all who visit us, whether they just like the art or wish to find out more about the relationship between Scotland and the Nordic countries."

LANDSCAPE ART

The big talking point of the exhibition, sponsored by the Nordic Culture Fund, will be the variety of painting and photography on display. "Visitors should expect colour, impact and stunning Nordic landscapes," reveals Nordic House Director Lesley Riddoch. "There will be different perspectives on 'northernness' by artists and photographers for whom these remote latitudes are home." Here are some of the art highlights for visitors:

- **Women at Sea.** Photographs from three collections that show the women of the Finnish Åland islands fishing at sea and sailing to Helsinki to sell their catch.
- **Kaare Espolin Johnson.** An exhibition of work by this renowned Norwegian painter, who produced striking images of people and seascapes, despite being almost blind.
- **Johannes Sveinsson Kjarval.** Iceland's most prolific painter, Johannes uses a wide variety of artistic techniques to depict the country's landscape and lava formations.
- **Vennelyst.** A photography series depicting Copenhagen's oldest allotment from the 1900s to today.
- **Kiruna.** Artistic photographs of the Arctic Swedish mining town, currently being moved three kilometres to the east after mining-related subsidence.

NORTHERN STORYTELLING

The Nordic House exhibition will also include a selection of live storytelling, spoken word and poetry events. Here are three exciting events due to take place during the exhibition (a full programme can be found [here](#)):

- **Café Voices: Norse Myths and Legends.** *Thursday 30th July*

Join storyteller Calum Lykan, in full Viking dress, as he transports you back to the Norse lands in an evening of sagas surrounded by the dramatic Nordic House.

- **Reforging the Sampo.** *Friday 31st July*

A spoken word and musical mash-up of mythological and contemporary social commentary across a landscape of love, loss and endless questing for the shamanic holy grail of the North.

- **Wild Song by Janis Mackay.** *Saturday 1st August*

Award-winning author Janis Mackay uses live storytelling to share the tale of 13-year-old Niilo, who discovers the ancient Saami custom of 'joiking'; a form of singing to help us remember who we are.

OTHER EVENTS

Aside from the art and storytelling, there will also be a number of other events taking place over the course of the month-long festival. The festival programme is designed to appeal to the widest possible audience. "The exhibition by its nature offers different experiences," reveals Daniel Abercrombie. "There are beautiful artworks, photographs, information and discussions on landscapes, but there are also interactive children's displays and a treasure hunt, which may extend into the back garden!" What's more, the children's trail will be populated with Nordic soft toys, and the Storytelling Café will feature a menu of delicious Nordic dishes.

The Nordic House exhibition will be formally opened at the Scottish Storytelling Centre at 6pm on 29th July, and will include a talk by Scottish artist Richard Demarco CBE on the importance of strong artistic links with Scotland's northern neighbour. The event will then close on September 5th with an evening of films about the renowned artists Kaare Espolin Johnson and Johannes Kjarval, and a talk by the former artist's son Gisle.

A SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP

For everybody involved, the aim is to promote and strengthen the long-established relationships between the Nordic nations and Scotland. "Scotland has always had strong connections with the Nordic countries throughout history, with our similar culture and traditions, as well as physical connections in terms of the landscape, climate and maritime connections," says Graham Hogg, co-founder of Lateral North. Director Lesley Riddoch concurs with this. "The Norwegian for house is 'hus', mouse is 'mus' and woman is 'kvinne'; the linguistic links with Scotland are clear. We also share the North Sea, and an orientation towards the sea in our history and folklore, as well as some aspects of landscape. Anyone who loves the island landscapes of Scotland will instantly connect with the art's vivid portrayal of remote, northern scenery and fishing life."

Lesley sums it up with this: "We sincerely hope this exhibition – one of the first multimedia displays from all the Nordic nations – helps to stimulate curiosity, invite comparisons with Scotland and re-establish a 'north-east passage' of art, ideas and stories between Scotland, Norway, Iceland, Finland, Sweden and Denmark."

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ABOUT THE SCOTTISH STORYTELLING CENTRE

The Storytelling Centre is located on Edinburgh's second busiest pedestrian thoroughfare. It has six shows daily during the Edinburgh Fringe Festival and an estimated 11,000 visitors daily in peak summer months. The building is part of John Knox House (Edinburgh's oldest) and contains a bookshop, exhibition and café.

MEDIA ENQUIRIES

Please direct your enquiries to:

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IMAGES:

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