



**A Message  
from  
the President of Iceland  
Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson**

The coastal villages in Iceland are a world of their own; small settlements on the shores of magnificent fjords, the landscape framed by towering mountains and deep valleys. The connection between man and nature is a feature of everyday life and has, generation after generation, been the basic premise for existence.

Like the photographer, I have my roots in such a village. In fact, we share the same one: Þingeyri in Dýrafjörður.

Vikings arrived on the shores of that fjord more than a thousand years ago. Their feuds and wrangles were immortalised in the Saga of Gísli, written in the thirteenth century.

The first settlers brought horses with them from their Nordic homelands, and ever since the horse has been an integral part of the nation's fortunes; often called the most needful servant and used to journey across unique landscapes. The horse: noble, confident, tough, independent; whether in the grip of winter frosts or bathed in the summer sun.

Although a rich palette of colours is among the glories of the Icelandic horse, rhyming and resonating with green grasslands and grey cliffs, yet it is in black and white film – his camera guided by an eye trained by the village background – that Jóhannes Frank has chosen to bring us the world of the horse. And it works, like a drama from times past or a dream of tomorrow, something both eternal and new; horses and landscape caught in a magic web with multiple dimensions.

Are these pictures art or super-charged reality? Maybe they are both, in a creative way.

They convey love and respect – an almost sacramental homage to the Icelandic horse; they capture living moments that would be at home in the plays of Shakespeare or the films of Ingmar Bergman, in Game of Thrones or Harry Potter – yet they are simply Icelandic horses, free and tamed, in their ordinary setting.