

Iceland

Listhus art residency Olafsfjordur, winter 2015/16

Skammdegi art festival











One night on Grimsey
an island crossed by the Arctic Circle



The aurora, a storm of light, passed overhead and to the horizon, taking a number of hours to move out of sight.











The Blue Man

The Blue Man lives in the light. It took me some time to realise this. I would catch glimpses of him, trailing me and then in front, sometimes at the same time. Then I saw that he walked with me all the time, at one time showing himself more plainly, at another very faint, almost not-there, trying to convince me he wasn't there at all.

In fact, it took me weeks to see him at all. That was the beauty of his approach, to always be there. If something is always there, it is never there, like the water to the fish. Because the Blue Man lives in blue, moves in blue, is blue, and moves as blue, it is very hard to see him at all. I might have never seen him but for a chance opening of my eyes at a moment when my head was bent down. But once I saw him, he was always on my mind.

Maybe, I thought, that was his mistake, coming to this place where blue was not so common, that he could not hide here as he could elsewhere, in warmer climes where there was more sky and more blue to hide in. Perhaps he had no choice. Perhaps he lived everywhere, and it was only here that I might see him at all. Why did I not see him elsewhere? Perhaps he could hide better with more light to obscure him.

I felt I was beginning to understand him. But that did not make him go away.

I paced along the road, carefully as always when it was this icy. The Blue Man strode along with me, somehow more smoothly than I, slipping easily over the crevices and peaks in the snow as I scrambled across them. He faded and was gone, but I knew as I turned around that he would be behind me, and he was. Waiting for me to go on so he could follow rather than precede me.

I saw that as the last of the day light faded that he really did leave, slowly ebbing to the point where I could not see him at all. Only the yellow of the street lamps was on the snow now, a dull lifeless grey crowding the aura they cast. Where the blue man had been was a steely dark figure, solid by comparison, more familiar.

I knew that the long night would give me hours free of him, more hours than I would have at home. Not that I had ever known he was there before, when I had perhaps a scant ten hours without his company in the summer, but somehow it felt better knowing this all the same. When I went back .. I could not think what I would do. There was so much light; I would never be alone. Night would bring only short relief.

I caught myself thinking these things and stopped in my tracks. I had never noticed any harm before. But then, I had never noticed Him. What if, somehow, not noticing had been the harm? Why did the street lights at home not reveal Him? Was he stronger there? Perhaps – perhaps I had it the wrong way around – I could see him now because he was actually weaker here. Nothing was made sense.

I slowed down. Tomorrow would bring another chance to see the Blue Man, and wrestle with him. As the light faded, and the street lights showed him out, I would come to grips with my blue shadow.



