

# Vík

& the south shore  
of Iceland  
by Elena Galani



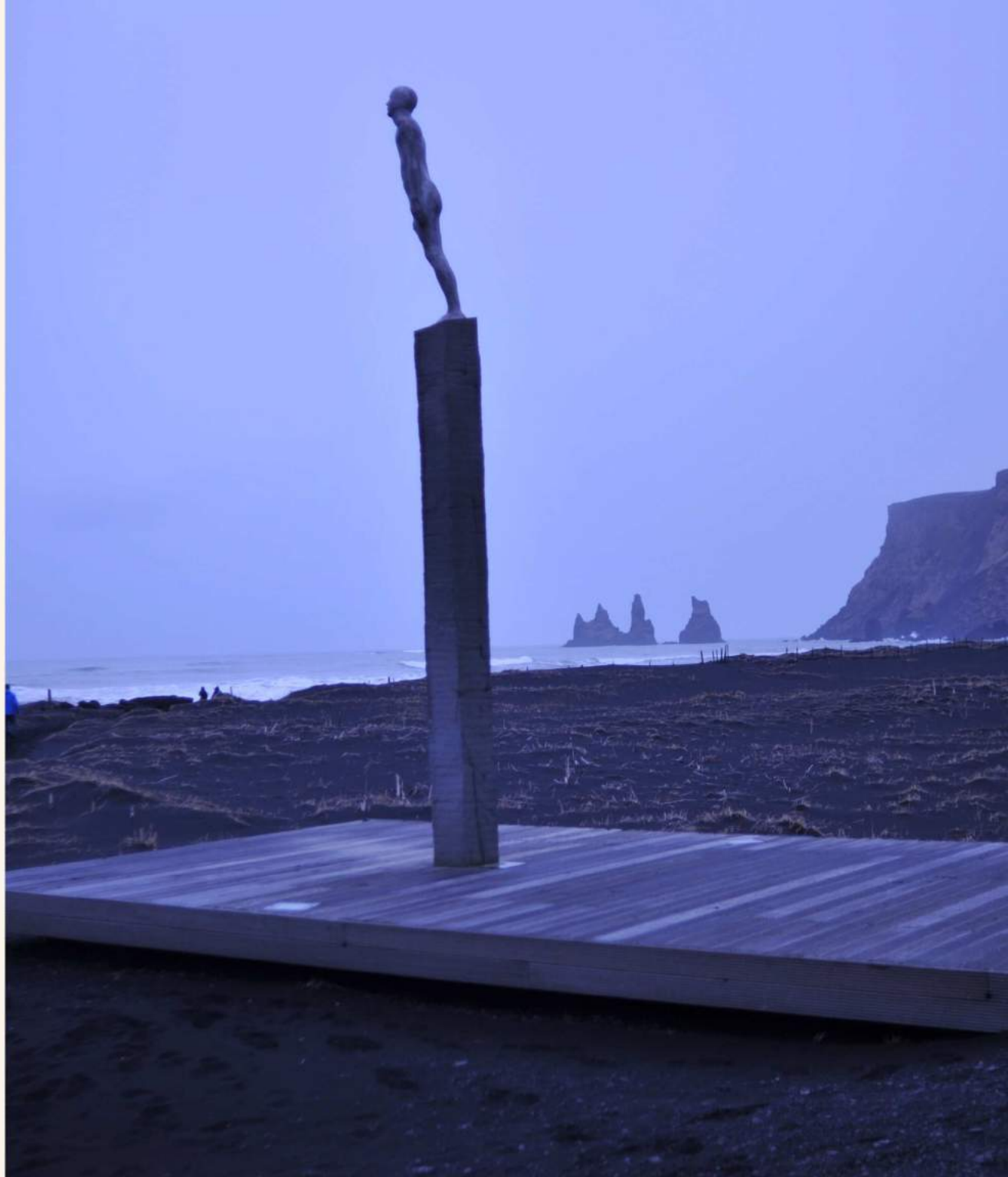


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Magic as the  
manifestation of  
a contradiction



There is a strange sculpture on the beach in Vik, at the southern shore of Iceland: a naked man standing on a column of basalt, motionless, staring at the ocean. It is a straight, tall structure, dedicated to the fishermen and the people who lost their lives in the northern sea. The statue is tearing across the landscape like a sword. Its name is "För" (Fair) - in Icelandic the word means "journey"-, and is an artwork from Steinunn Thorarinsdottir.

On my way to the southern shore I travel through a lunar landscape. Iceland is a country with very few trees. The streets are almost empty, surrendered to ice like white sandy deserts. There are geothermic pools here and there; I can see the lonely path of their steam heading to the sky. The sea is also seen on the background along with the gigantic shadows of the extinguished volcanoes of the ocean.

That sculpture of Vik reminds me of the "Tomb of the Diver", a famous fresco (5th century BC.) currently at the museum of Paestum. I recall having seen an image of that fresco in a book, with the phrase "the fall as an allegory of death" underneath.

The diver scene has been interpreted in various ways in ancient greek civilization. Death and diving were connected in the Greek mind.

"It is suggested that the dive is meant to depict the moment of death: the diver dives alone, isolated against the sky. There is present all the intensity of the moment of death"

An icy wind suddenly blows, the weather conditions here can be extreme; as cold immobilizes parts of my body secret internal processes are mobilized, the night will soon come, darkness will envelop the landscape in an unfamiliar silence, it will reveal everything back again all renewed, under another light.

At the other end of the ocean, in the UK, at the small community of Hull, this very moment, a twin "diver - sculpture", named "Voyage" is looking at the same sea -from the opposite side. In an imaginary straight line the eyes of the two statues -as the eyes of the dead-, would meet somewhere.

In the middle of the ocean.

While I am getting ready to take the way back home a photography crew approaches the beach. They are here to cover a wedding. The bride is dressed in white. The sand, the rocks and the background, everything around her, is totally black.

Maybe magic becomes alive in harsh contradictions - maybe magic is the manifestation of a contradiction itself.





















