

Soon you have reached the top of the world, fully encircled by familiar peaks. Propelled by the power of thought, you jump across to one of the mountains where you turn around and look back at yourself. The routine is repeated all the way along the craggy line on the horizon and soon you have been everywhere, seen the world from all angles, over and over again.

Small clouds of steam escape the vents that perforate the mountainside. The mossy lava fields lay perfectly still, rested in twisted heaps under a raging sky that whips at the ground with ice cold showers of hail. The boundless view is reduced to a hole where all you see is yourself, cold and shivering at the mercy of a monumental power. Hunched forward you trudge across the fields with an exhilarated smile across your face; because you are alive in a landscape devoid of any plants, animals or other human beings but yourself. The vastness is still, immense, the solitude only too tangible. You hobble back to the car, the highway is right there so you get in and drive back to Reykjavik with the windows all condensed and a loud Schubert's *Death and the Maiden* on the stereo.

Back at home I begin to paint. I have an urgent need to express what i just experienced. The first twenty minutes are performed like a ritualistic dance. I smile my exhilarated smile. Every gesture, every stroke is directly connected to the experience, the abstract strokes make up forms that resemble landscapes, mountains, clouds and skies. I turn up the volume of my Schubert to keep the memories boiling.

But the inevitable happens. As the canvas fills up, the painting begins to demand that the application of shape and colour must be done according to that which is already there. It is no longer a direct expression of a fantastic and unfathomable landscape, but a work of compromise, executed by the artist in compliance with the painting and within the limits of a symbolic frame. Already, new shapes affiliate themselves with the music, the shapes in the painting have become symbols for the intital experience. It will never be the same. It will always be something new. It will always be the same. It will never be anything new.

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