

# Was Skarphéðinn Jóhannsson a radical architect?

If so, in what sense?

róttækni  
samhengi  
samfélag  
menning  
náttúra  
**radical**  
**context**  
**society**  
**culture**  
**nature**

Byggingarlist hefur áhrif á líf fólks. Hún mótar hreyfingar okkar, rammur inn sjónarhorn og tengsl inni-úti. Hún veitir rúm fyrir athafnir, þarfir og frístundir. Þegar Skarphéðinn Jóhannsson fæddist 1914 á Íslandi var landið byggt á gildum landbúnaðar og engin raunveruleg borgarmyndun til staðar. Á smærri mælikvarða var svefnherbergi ekki einu sinni talið nauðsynlegt í húsnæði. Á æskuárum hans voru salerni sjaldgæf eða jafnvel ekki til staðar. Búfánaður var algengur í landi Reykjavíkur. Meira að segja árið 1952, það hann föður sinn að leita að íbúð fyrir þá tvo, sem hefði eldhús.

Skarphéðinn opnaði teiknistofu sína í Reykjavík árið 1952, 38 ára gamall, þá ebonisti og arkitekt frá Kaupmannahöfn, lærður frá Kunsthandværkerskolen (1935-1938) og Kunstakademiets Arkitektskole (1945-1949). Hann hafði einnig starfað á arkitektaskrifstofu Kaare Klints í Kaupmannahöfn (1950) og ferðast um Ítalíu, Grand Tour, í eitt ár (1951). Slíkur bakgrunnur vekur upp spurningar um hvort tillögur Skarphéðins geti talist róttækar á Íslandi. Eða lá styrkur hans, ásamt öðrum íslenskum arkitektum, í að nútímavæða landið og ýta undir framþróun samfélagsins?

Rök verða lögð fyrir því að í þessu íslenska samhengi bjó Skarphéðinn til róttækar húsagerðir byggðar á afstæðum gildum og sem urðu hvati og nokkurs konar leiðarvísir að endurskilgreiningu arkitektúrs út frá menningu, samfélagsmyndun og náttúru. Nokkurs konar félags- og menningarmannfræði þar sem efniskennnd, umhverfi og félagslegar tengingar eru samtvinnaðar hönnunarþáttum arkitektúrs.

Architecture affects people's lives. It shapes our movement, frames our visions and relationship between inside – outside. It provides spaces for activities, needs, and leisure. When Skarphéðinn Jóhannsson was born 1914 in Iceland, the country was based on agrarian principles and with no real sense of a city. On a smaller scale, a bedroom was not even considered necessary in a dwelling. During his childhood, toilets were scarce or non-existent and livestock was common in the village of Reykjavík. Even at the beginning of 1952, Skarphéðinn asked his father to look for a decent flat for the two of them, which would have a kitchen.

Skarphéðinn opened his office in Reykjavík in 1952, aged 38 years; before then he had studied to become an ebonist and architect at Copenhagen, the Kunsthandværkerskolen (1935-1938) and Kunstakademiets Arkitektskole (1945-1949). He had also worked in Kaare Klint's architecture office in Copenhagen (1950) and spent a year on a Grand Tour in Italy (1951). With such a background, it will be reflected on whether Skarphéðinn's proposals can be considered radical in Iceland? Or was he, together with fellow architects, modernising the country and responding with an architecture elevating the society?

In this Icelandic context, it will be argued that Skarphéðinn surely created typologies that were radical in ways based on relative values and guidelines of redefining architecture through culture, society and Nature. A kind of cultural anthropology, where physical character, environmental and social relations, and culture are part of the architectural project.

**Arnardóttir, Halldóra<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> University of the Arts, Department of Arts Education, Reykjavík, Iceland.  
<https://orcid.org/0009-0005-4063-0941>  
halldoraa@lhi.is

Citation: Arnardóttir, H. (2024). "Was Skarphéðinn Jóhannsson a radical architect?", UOU scientific journal #08, 42-51.

ISSN: 2697-1518. <https://doi.org/10.14198/UOU.2024.8.06>  
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Article Received: 15/09/2024  
Received in revised form: 02/11/2024  
Accepted: 02/11/2024



## INTRODUCTION

When the author was encouraged to write an article for the issue on Radical architecture, it started a series of reflections on what constitutes such a concept. Certainly, Radical architecture is known as a concept and often attributed to Andrea Branzi's thought in the sixties where he says:

*Radical architecture forms part of a wider movement for man's liberation from the tendencies of contemporary culture; individual liberation understood as the rejection of all formal and moral parameters, which, acting like inhibiting structures, hinder the individual's total fulfilment. In this sense, the term, radical architecture, denotes a cultural place rather than unitary movement* (Jarauta, 2023, 134).

A question mark is placed to whether the Icelandic architect Skarphéðinn Jóhannsson (1914-1970) can be seen within this context of radicalism. When he returned to Iceland after his studies and Grand Tour in 1952, his membership in the Iceland Architectural Association was number 26. Modern architecture was practiced by few, yet one could agree with Jarauta that "What was at stake was the defence of a new social use of culture against the global project of a new interpretation of the modern." (Jarauta, 2023, 133).

Searching for answers on Skarphéðinn's radicalism, a thorough observation was laid out on his thoughts, a kind "thinking through mapping". It began by getting to know the man through hundreds of letters he wrote home from where he studied in Copenhagen, then his letters from Italy in 1951 were examined in which he expressed his opinions on what he saw and listened to. Through his pen, he seemed to think and used correspondence for reflection and conversation on architecture and cultural issues. Along with this work, mind maps were made at different points in the process. It became a kind of working atlas, a collection of maps that

gave hints on different realities. His writings and sketches became the grounds for rethinking "the internal relationship which governs the idea of inhabitation and its construction." (Jarauta, 2023, 137).

During the time of Skarphéðinn's practice (1952-1970), the initial steps were being taken for making the city of Reykjavík. Radical changes of attitude were foreseen of how to live in a city. Skarphéðinn was part of the transformation. His radicalism lay partly, in his sensitivity and skills of observation. His design of buildings came from sociological surveys, but also from research on other cultures – Italy – noting patterns of use between buildings and space/context, like an anthropologist. From these researches, he transmuted them into design in another culture – Iceland.

## SKARPHÉÐINN JÓHANSSON, HIS BACKGROUND

Skarphéðinn Jóhannsson was born in Iceland in the year 1914 and was brought up with respect for hard work and responsibility, a commitment of doing his best for his country. He was raised by his parents in the spirit of the youth movement, the set of values that laid in working wholeheartedly for the progress and well-being of oneself, the country, and its people. In a letter to his father from Copenhagen in February 1949, Skarphéðinn recalled what his father had taught him in his childhood. It was to treat the poor well and be aware of the fact that there are those who live difficult lives, and whom we have a duty to help, if it is in our power.<sup>1</sup>

During Skarphéðinn's childhood, the population of Reykjavík was just over 4,000. In 1916, a book by the doctor Guðmundur Hannesson, *On town planning*, was published. There he argued, for the first time in Iceland, that towns should be planned with regard to the health and well-being of their inhabitants. Factors such as good daylight and access to clean water were

essential. There was a direct link between clean drinking water and diseases such as typhoid fever. Roads in Reykjavík were made of gravel and a sewer system gradually took shape. Water supply had come in 1909. The number of water closets increased, depending on the means and circumstances of the families. According to a report about toilets from 1926, in Reykjavík, there were 1.294 outdoor toilets and 1.155 water toilets (Friðriksson, 81) Skarphéðinn was 12 years old then. The development of the town was therefore a response to the increased need for hygiene, clean water, fresh air, and more spacious and brighter apartments.

Skarphéðinn Jóhannsson is one of the key figures amongst architects who introduced modernity into the Icelandic society through his furniture designs and interior fittings, writings, and buildings. His work is interwoven with the cultural and economic history of the country. One must also remember that during the Second World War, the country was still under the rule of Denmark,<sup>2</sup> and a great number of people moved from the countryside to start a new life in Reykjavík. Due to the British occupation in 1940 and a year later the USA army, the demand for workforce in Reykjavík increased immensely. Roads and airports were built but also there was a need for services like laundry washing for the army forces.

This raised questions on modernity both in terms of industrial production and civil society, in a country that was still based on rural values and in great need of housing in Reykjavík. In fact, Skarphéðinn won the First Prize in a furniture competition for farmers' homes in 1939. The proposal showed light furniture (easy to move around), simple forms, easy to clean and care for. He had written fiercely in the newspapers to reach the general public on the need for furniture and interior designs that were closer to functional use than reduced to uncomfortable decoration. He proclaimed that domestic settings needed to be easier to manage and of better quality.<sup>3</sup> Furniture designs he made

for the domestic management school in Reykjavík, in 1941, are still in use more than 80 years later.

## SKARPHÉÐINN'S FORMATIVE YEARS 1945 TO 1952

Skarphéðinn had always been a keen observer, whether in Nature, in the city or even drawing caricatures of his friends. From when he was a young man, he travelled extensively on a pair of skis in Iceland's mountains and glaciers, and published observations that later scientists referred to in their articles on the development of glaciers. Nature was an engaging place, a place of reflection. In the city, during his Grand Tour around Italy in 1951, he sat long hours drawing details of squares and buildings, contemplating people's behaviour and social life, observing. Skarphéðinn documented the journey in travel diaries in the form of hundreds of letters, drawings and photographs. He wrote to his father two or three times a week, making reference to the city urban fabric, history and culture, people's behaviour in public spaces and streets, as well as social relationships. The letters were his forms of not forgetting. He had a reflective character, about himself and who he was, detecting cultural differences between Iceland, Denmark and Italy, wanting to learn from others and to give Nature a voice, have Her as mentor.

Skarphéðinn began his architecture studies in the autumn of 1945, just a year after Iceland became independent from Denmark. When embarking on his studies at Copenhagen in the *Kunstakademiets Arkitektskole*, he was fully aware of the importance of expanding his knowledge and to contribute to the modernization of dwellings, industrial production facilities and work conditions upon his return.

During his academic years in *Kunstakademiets* he also received practical experience in Kaare Klint's architecture office, he learnt about typologies (dwellings,

banks, schools, churches etc.), ways of thinking and selecting materials, context and function, light and orientation. On a number of occasions Skarphéðinn chose Icelandic themes for his student projects. Here one could draw attention to a tourist hotel with a spa or Iceland National Art Museum. Both of which he took great care in moulding to the preexisting landscape and which were new typologies in the country. Furthermore, he took commissions in Iceland that enabled him to finance his studies, as for instance, furniture designs for *Búnaðarbankinn* (Bank of Agriculture) or a summer house by *Elliðavatn* in the outskirts of Reykjavík. On that drawing he emphasized the importance to choose materials for the interior that would enhance the feeling for being in Nature.

## SKARPHÉÐINN'S HOMECOMING 1952

Skarphéðinn knew architects' working environment well upon his return to Iceland in 1952. He had already earned respect in society from influential people in the diary product industry, steel and electronic, as well as Iceland's Oil Trade company and education authorities. His office became one of the most sought after, leaving behind hundreds of projects when Skarphéðinn died prematurely in 1970 from cancer. These projects included buildings, furniture, interiors, and exhibition designs. Iceland needed new schools, factories, offices spaces, banks, research laboratories, single dwellings as well as a new image abroad and at home. Many were done in collaboration with his wife, Kristín Guðmundsdóttir (1923-2016), who had a degree in Interior Design from Northwestern University in Chicago.<sup>4</sup>

At the age of 38, Skarphéðinn felt ready to return home and leave his formative years behind. He had gained experience and knowledge abroad which he wanted to follow up in his projects. Would he be understood? Prior to formulating

a project in drawing, he devoted himself to preparatory work, which involved acquiring knowledge about the culture of his clients and seeking experience from experts even abroad. Study trips were thus taken for selected projects. It was essential to understand the social issues in order to rethink the architectural proposal for a new age. Iceland was going through great changes linked to the conditions deriving from the cultural changes in human inhabitation, conditions that Francisco Jarauta rightly draws out in his article, *Questioning Contemporary Architecture*, as a decisive force architecture had to face (Jarauta, 2023, 129).

Below will be drawn out three fields of the architect Skarphéðinn, as a curator and designer of schools and single dwellings. Creating an image for a nation, a setting for the family, and the collective future through education. It will be argued that his architecture was radical in the sense of defending a new social use of culture in the architecture project against a global project of a new interpretation of the modern.

## The architect as a curator

One of the first commissions Skarphéðinn received in 1952 was to curate the Reykjavík Industrial Exhibition.

The exhibition had two main goals. Firstly, to demonstrate to the nation's authorities that the industry was surely to significantly increase employment opportunities, thus preventing unemployment and improving the nation's earning potential and economy. And, secondly, to eliminate the underestimation and misbelief which the general public had shown towards the importance, abilities and production of Icelandic industry.<sup>5</sup> Industry should be promoted, in other words, and its fields and products should be made more visible. Agriculture and fishing were no longer the nation's main means of employment. Already one third of the population lived on industry, directly or indirectly.



To achieve these aims of visibility and educate people about industrial products and restrain the purchase of unsophisticated foreign products, it was decided to organize an exhibition. Skarphéðinn was approached to design and curate the exhibition. He accepted

the challenge. He had seen a great diversity of exhibitions abroad and he had been fascinated by the way in which objects had been staged and put into context.

Here, in the Reykjavík Industrial Exhibition, he decided to create a small narrative in each stand,



from the technique and material to the realisation of the product and to the consumer. The setting was at the same time playful and often interactive. In that way, the visitors moved between over 200 short stories narrated in five level exhibition space (Fig.1 and 2).

More than a decade later, Skarphéðinn was selected to be one of the five architects to collaborate in the design of the Scandinavian pavilion in the Expo 67 in Montreal. Furthermore, he was commissioned to curate Iceland's exhibition. He and his team decided to reinterpret the culture of the water and show how Icelandic citizens use their hot water and its effects on their habitation. Additionally, a section was dedicated to volcanoes which had affected the lives of the island's inhabitants right from the days of first settlement. Skarphéðinn's initial question was around "What kind of people live in this country of ice and fire",<sup>6</sup> but refrained from cliché or already known facts. His answer lay in showing very normal people who had adjusted well in the hard living country by making use of technology and consumption (Fig.3 and 4).

Again here, Skarphéðinn brought real pieces from the Icelandic Nature to the exhibition – lava – that supported diagrams, models, photographs (so called "photographic linework") and scientific descriptions by Sigurður Þórarinnsson geologist, demonstrating how water had shaped people's inhabitation through the ages.

### The architect of Education Centres and Research

In 1956, Skarphéðinn was commissioned to design two grammar schools for the city of Reykjavík, Réttarholtsskóli and Hagaskóli. Great ambitions in terms of educational space as well as caring for students' mental health.

Action had to be taken because, although compulsory education

for 7 to 15 year old children had been legislated in 1946, in 1956 the law had been implemented in only 42 school districts out of 218 (Jóhannesson, 301-305). One of the main innovations of the education law was that vocational training was greatly increased. The practical training consisted of cooking, handicrafts, construction and visual arts. These subjects were intended to bridge the gap between the activities of daily life and general schooling as well as to connect with the practical skills that the country needed. The country of Iceland was far behind other neighbouring countries in terms of industry and craftsmanship. It was planned that all state-run schools would be equipped with special classrooms for cooking, crafts, construction and art. Sports facilities were also considered important at schools or in their vicinity when urban areas grew, including swimming facilities.

Another issue that was discussed within the field of education, was studies of Nature. Iceland was far behind in teaching and communicating material about Nature (Pétursson, 55-77). This was an important point as the country's culture is based on knowing Nature, its laws and character. In that way progress would be made. More value had to be placed upon learning through practical tasks, that children should learn to measure and examine in a practical way and not only theory. Schools should also be based on democratic values and equality, in the sense of raising children so that they receive an intellectual, practical education that is useful for society as well as for the home.

Within this context, the school building itself, its interior, materials and layout, should reinterpret this new social condition and benefit children's wellbeing, for teachers and staff alike.

The grammar schools, Réttarholtsskóli and Hagaskóli, were designed simultaneously and were to be built in stages. Skarphéðinn interpreted these social expectations by designing buildings where honesty and purpose

prevailed in construction. Structure and materials were made visible in simple forms and proportions, and textures of materials. Furthermore, Nature became an integral part of the design, for the sake of respect, learning environment and appreciating beauty. This,

Skarphéðinn believed, would be reflected in a culture of habitation inside and outside the home

Before starting the design process, Skarphéðinn together with a group of educators, went to visit new schools in Denmark and Sweden.

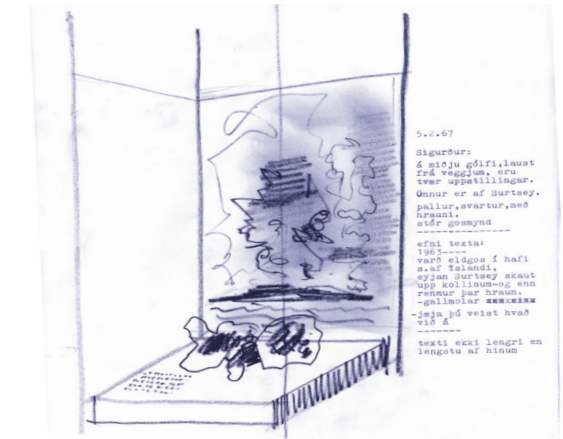


Fig.1 and 2 - The industrial exhibition in 1952 at the Reykjavík Polytechnic School. Curator and exhibition designer: Skarphéðinn Jóhannsson. Skarphéðinn had paid special attention to museums during his travels through Europe. In particular, how objects were arranged and put into context, their "natural environment". The exhibition visitors were made active participants and children could even try the bicycles in the case of the stand with Fálkinn's productions (© Reykjavík Photography Museum. Photographer: Amatörvinnustofa G. Ásgeirssonar).

Fig.3. and 4 - Montreal '67, Expo. Sketches and real model: volcanic eruption and real lava. In the background on the wall are so called "photographic linework" by Rafn Hafnfjörð photographer (© Hornsteinar architects).



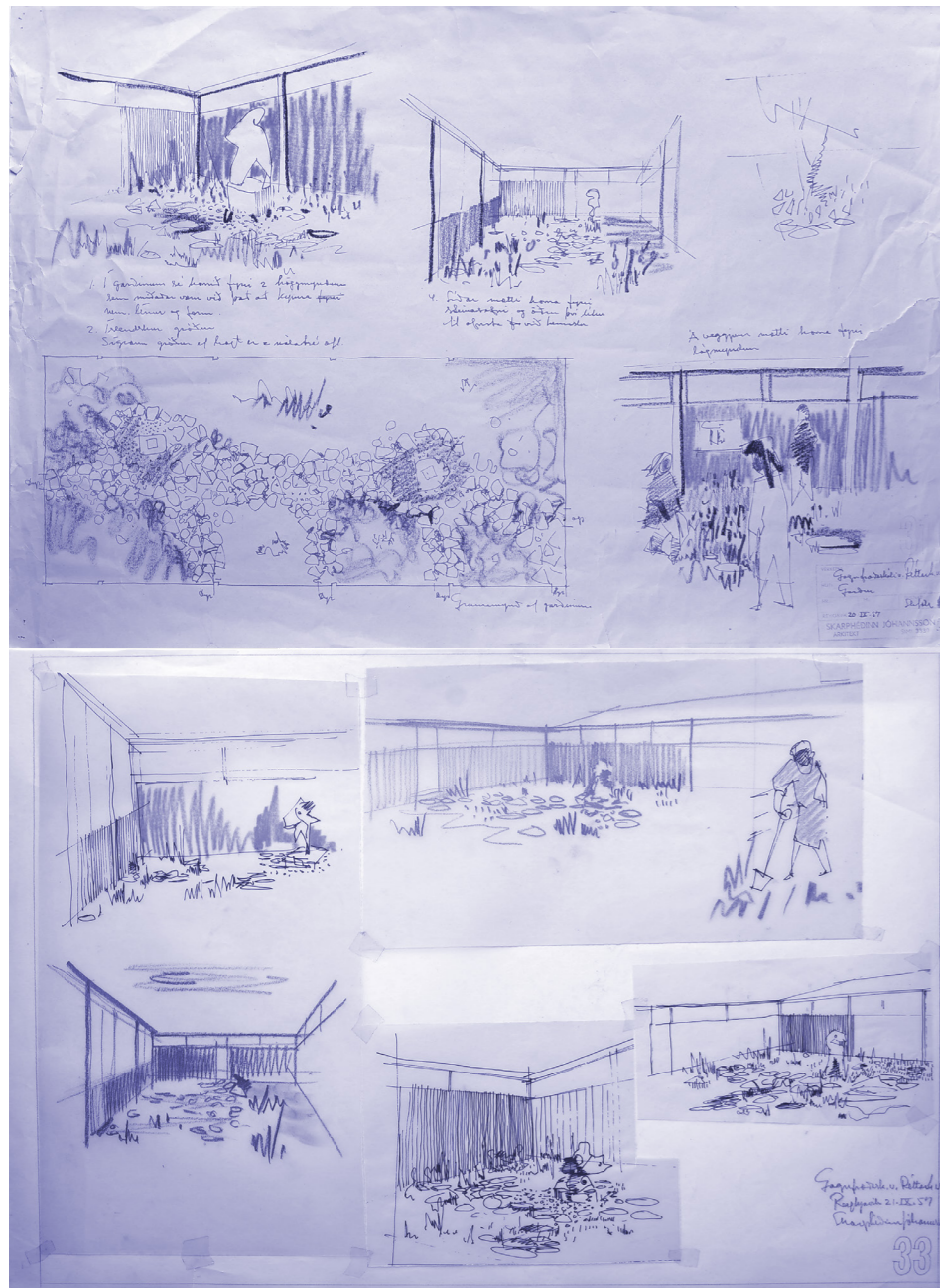


Fig.5 and 6 - Sketches for the elementary schools Réttarholtsskóli and Hagaskóli Reykjavík, 1957, of internal patios for practical classes in natural science. Skarphéðinn proposed two versions; one garden based on native plants and another on Icelandic stones. In both cases, Skarphéðinn played with colours, forms and textures from both the built materials, sculptures and plants (© Hornsteinar architects).

Among them was Munkegårdskolen designed by Arne Jakobsen which Skarphéðinn considered outstanding.<sup>7</sup>

Points that he noted in his notebook regarded typology, access to the schools and their gardens, shelter from traffic, winds and weather, heating and fittings such as for windows and ceilings for the sake of acoustics. A few such elements were translated into Skarphéðinn's schools in Reykjavík. These include wide corridors, educational gardens between the

school wings with a direct access from the classrooms, large windows with curtains for the lower part and built-in blinds for the upper part.

There were two exits in the classrooms, to the corridor and to the garden. Windows faced the garden. Great care was taken with acoustics. There were soundproof panels in the ceilings of the classrooms. In the corridors there were wooden ceilings and vinyl flooring. The cost of maintenance was low.



Fig.7 - Newly built Réttarholtsskóli, first phase. The construction started in May 1957 and teaching started in 8 classrooms the same autumn. Characteristic is the raw concrete and composition of windows, as well as how the light is brought into the building from above (© Reykjavík Photography Museum. Photographer: Pétur Thomsen 1910-1988).

Both schools, Réttarholtsskóli and Hagaskóli, were designed partly on two levels. Connected wings created a core around an open play area and the educational gardens between the wings (Fig.5 and 6). Skarphéðinn envisioned that the buildings would be built around a playground so that the best possible shelter and privacy would be provided for the children. Playgrounds were to be located according to weather conditions. In this context, it is interesting to remember that shade was one of the factors that attracted Skarphéðinn's attention during his travels in Italy. In summer, the sun heated both the air and the squares, often with dramatic consequences. In those conditions, the city dwellers looked for shade, and in doing so, social relations were strengthened and the quality of life improved. In the Reykjavík's schools, Skarphéðinn rethought this element by finding shelter from the wind (Fig.7).

Here the words of the Swiss architect Alfred Roth apply well, as he writes about school buildings in his book *The New School*. That book was published in 1950 and Skarphéðinn had it in his office. Roth emphasized a healthy environment in and around the school building with areas for sports, outdoor games and exercise. Shelter from the wind would be provided by nearby houses and vegetation. The school would be an extension of the home in a way. Therefore, classrooms should be

cozy and friendly, and mental well-being should be nurtured. That attitude would apply equally to students as well as teachers and other staff. Care was taken in the working environment.

Skarphéðinn's school buildings set the tone for the educational buildings of tomorrow, a kind of guidelines for the future. He became the architect of many schools in Reykjavík and elsewhere. Among them are Hvassaleitisskóli, the secondary school at Hamrahlíð, a school for children with impaired hearing, university faculties, research centres, and laboratories.

## The architect and the single dwelling

Skarphéðinn worked on different scales simultaneously. He designed several houses, often for collaborators or for people who held positions in society and were expected to invite guests home for

formal dinners. There were still very few restaurants in Reykjavík in the fifties and sixties. One of his radical solutions for a family dwelling was designed in 1955. It was expected to fulfil the needs of a family house and at the same time to be a place of reception for up to hundred and twenty guests and twenty-eight sitting for dinner.

Many of his designs for dwellings therefore had a dual function for his clients, being a home for the family and a meeting place for a specific community. The dwelling was a window to the outside and became a reference for modernity and modern designed homes. It is worth remembering that more than 2.000 people still lived in barracks at this time that the British and American armies had left behind. They were in many parts of Reykjavík while new neighborhoods were being built. The last barrack as a dwelling was not demolished until around 1970. Immense visual contrasts

characterized therefore housing in Reykjavík. Builders and architects had enormous influence on the quality of life and ways of living.

One of the houses Skarphéðinn designed is now protected by the National Heritage in Iceland.<sup>8</sup> Bergstaðastræti 70 from 1957 was built for a furniture designer and his wife, a historian (Fig.8).

Before starting the design process, Skarphéðinn raised scaffolding on the site to find out the best views and viewpoints. The plot was small and tight to neighbouring houses, only 398 square meters, so it was not easy to accommodate a house that would meet the expectations and needs of the family.

The result was to use the potential of the plot and the view to the south over the nearby houses and treetops, the living spaces had to be planned on the upper floor and the sleeping area on the lower one. The difference in height on the plot was



Fig.8 - The house is singular for its respect for the preexisting environment in grown street, receding from the street and creating a sheltering entrance from the wind and rain (© The Cultural Heritage Agency of Iceland)



used for the benefit of the family, and the spaces were organized according to use and the optimum light during the 24 hours.

The simple form of a house is broken up on the street side. The house recedes from the street and entry, and although the garage is connected to the house, it is not fully visible until you reach it on the pavement. A basement flat under the garage is not visible from the street. It has views to the garden. The kitchen looks out onto the street, designed by the furniture designer himself, while the dining room and other sitting rooms are along the south wall with panoramic views over the neighbouring houses. Downstairs, the bedrooms overlook the garden. The wall between the dining room and living room is covered with red stone slabs on both sides.

The house is singular for its setting and respect for the preexisting environment in an established street. A conclusion which can be drawn bearing in mind his comments made from his observations in Italy, where different periods of buildings generally characterized the streets and amphitheatres were placed as to draw out the qualities of the site and its views. Yet, it redefined the architecture through the culture of the clients. This house was thus radically new to Iceland in several ways. Primarily in its integration with an existing street - International Style Modernist buildings were typically free-standing objects - and the radical making of such a large protected entrance from wind and rain, or at least a radical departure from International Modernism.

Another house of a very different kind was that made for an engineer and his family in Álftanes near Reykjavík. The house Hraungarðar designed in 1955 in close collaboration with the clients, merges into the Nature surroundings of the lava (Fig.9). Together with specific needs, the clients provided the architect with a map of viewpoints and timings that showed specific directions towards



Fig.9 - Building within a context of the client, culture and wishes, as well as the characteristics of the site (© Reykjavík Photography Museum. Photographer: Pétur Thomsen 1910-1988).

the mountains. The family wished to place the house in this context and its rooms in line with the lava and mountain views along the day.

Hraungarðar became an opportunity for rethinking the setting for human actions where the dialogue between architecture and landscape was a response to reinterpreting culture of the modern age.

## SKARPHÉÐINN'S RADICALISM

Returning to the title of this article, whether Skarphéðinn Jóhannsson was a radical architect and if so, in what sense, it becomes clear that the territory this architect worked within, the formation of a city, was a subject of the central discussion of rethinking architecture and its typologies for new demands. Skarphéðinn took action in rethinking the culture of living and working, through sociology and anthropology - his own country and other cultures.

He took the liberty of reinterpreting modernity in relation to what was becoming the industrial city of Reykjavík. In that context, his radicalism is identified in his way of rethinking architectural norms in particular incorporating Nature into the architectural project. These new kind of spaces and typologies

included among others, education centres, dwellings, summer houses, industrial buildings, reshaping Iceland's image at home and abroad.

The architectural project became a meeting between places, and identifying the social, cultural, technical and natural relationship between man's dominion and Nature (Fig.10 and 11).

In his competition proposals, of which he won first prizes, the building and garden, were equally important. This could be seen in a proposal for the Iceland Central bank and for nursery schools.

In the international context, one can also argue that he was radical in

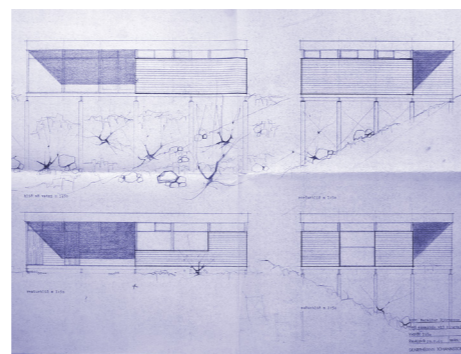


Fig.10 - Summer house by the lake Þingvellir for Haraldur Björnsson (© Hornsteinar architects)

The architectural project became a meeting between places, and identifying the social, cultural, technical and natural relationship between man's dominion and Nature.

his self-education through his letter writing and reflections. He firmly believed his formative years had not ended until he had completed the practical training in Kaare Klint's office and spent a year travelling around Italy, giving himself time to observe Italian culture, architecture heritage and a particular people's social behaviour in the different cities.

Here it has been suggested that perhaps the truest description of Skarphéðinn, as an architect and active member of the society he designed for, is to say he was a radical architect based on social and anthropological values. Not only about fulfilling basic needs for modern dwelling but reinterpreting culture.

For Skarphéðinn, architecture was an opportunity for rethinking the setting for human actions where the dialogue between architecture and Nature was a response to reinterpreting culture of the modern man. In that sense, Skarphéðinn was ahead of his time, and Branzi's words above can be adopted, understanding radical architecture as a cultural place.

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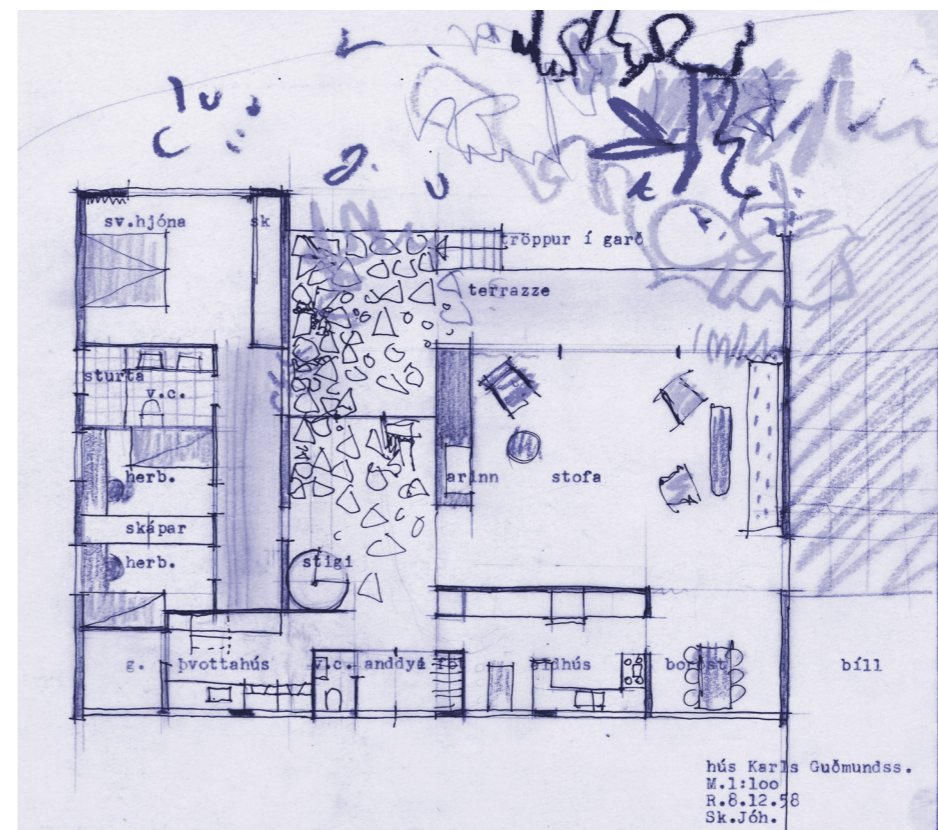


Fig.11 - A sketch proposal for a house in 1958 which clearly shows how Nature enters the interior domain and becomes part of the home (© Hornsteinar architects).

Jóhannesson, Skarphéðinn. Húsbúnaður. In *Heimilið og Kron*. Blað Kaupfélags Reykjavíkur og nágrennis. III. árg. 8.-9. Tbl ágúst-sept. 1940. pp 74-77.

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## NOTES

1. The research for this article is to a large extent based on original material taken from Skarphéðinn's archive. The author has had a private access to this material stored in architecture office Hornsteinar in Reykjavík, where Skarphéðinn's original drawings are also kept from his students years and professional work. This article is based on a book manuscript on the architect hoped to be published in the year 2025. Research funding include: Design Funding Ministry of Culture and Education, The Icelandic Centre for Research - RANNÍS, Architectural Heritage Fund, Hagþenkir - Association of non-fiction writers, Reykjavík city Council Visual Storytelling Grant, and Memorial Fund Guðjón Samúelsson. Hornsteinar gave permission for the visual material from Skarphéðinn's archive.

2. The founding of the Republic of Iceland was declared in 1944 when Denmark was still occupied by Nazi Germany.

3. See to name only a few: Jóhannesson, Skarphéðinn and Hallgrímsson, Helgi. Hlutirnir sem skapa heimilin. Um húsgögn I. In *Morgunblaðið*, 7 January 1939, p 4.

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4. Halldóra Arnardóttir (ed). 2015. *Kristín Guðmundsdóttir hóbýlafræðingur/ interior designer*. Reykjavík. Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag.

5. See articles, N.N. Til iðnaðarmanna. *Tímarit iðnaðarmanna*. 3. hefti. 25. árg. 1952 and Berg, Helgi. Iðnsýningin 1952. In *Samtíðinn*. September 1952, pp 3-4.

6. The quote is taken from a handwritten text written on one of Skarphéðinn's working sketches for the exhibition.

7. Skarphéðinn kept a diary on this trip and wrote down pro and contra of all the schools they visited. Some of which he incorporated into his designs.

8. See The Cultural Heritage Agency of Iceland website: <https://www.minjastofnun.is/is/byggingararfur/fridlyst-hus-og-mannvirki/bergstadastraeti-70>