



Company Name

Heima – Art Residency

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Heima - a multidisciplinary art residency located in Seyðisfjörður East Iceland.

Heima Art Residency is an independent non-profit organisation founded in 2013. It was initiated to provide a space where emerging artists across a variety of disciplines can live and work in close proximity, sharing energies and ideas.

Hilmar Guðjónsson (b. 1991) is one of the co-owners of Heima, he is an Icelandic born and raised entrepreneur and artist who sought higher education in Denmark. Post education Hilmar lived and worked in Denmark for four years in the cultural sector. Now living in Iceland in the small town of Seyðisfjörður, managing numerous projects, related to Heima, and also around art, culture and creative outlets.

After a long time living in classically regarded “cultural hotspots” aka Europe’s major urban cities and capitals. Hilmar concluded that the grounds for creative projects are just as fertile if not more so in the rural areas, than the big cities. Housing and spaces are easier to come across, simplicity in life and even lack of temptations create a working environment for artists and makers that’s different from the classically regarded Boho Lifestyle of the Parisians of the 20’s we all romanticize and know so well. In today’s world where information and access to inspiration is so easily found, maybe a bustling city is not what’s needed for creating art, rather simplicity, lack of resources and time and space to practice one’s artisan process proves more beneficial.



WHAT WAS THE TRIGGER FOR YOUR BUSINESS OR ENTREPRENEURIAL IDEA?



I sought education in the town of Aarhus in Jutland, Denmark called KAOSPILOT. A renowned entrepreneurial, business and project leadership school. Build around innovative schools of thought in the realm of start-ups, consultancies, business management and project leaderships.

It proved to be a great time studying at the KAOSPILOTS, I learned many things both consciously and subconsciously. But it gave me the tools and the ideology to think in a “this could happen, let's do it” kinda way.

A few graduate and alumni students were discussing this idea of starting an artist residency in the east of Iceland, and after some visits, heartfelt dialogues, idea sharing and good old partying together. I jumped on the project after I had become an alumnus myself.

I think we all fell in love with the place, Seyðisfjörður. I think the town came first and then the idea. There's something about the purity you find in that pristine landscape of mountains, rivers and just the quietness of it all.

We had all gone to the annual two-week “LungA - Art Festival” and I guess found a space where our creative process was enhanced. As well as having the sensation of “I don't want to leave” at the end of the festival. People started thinking about how they could stay and keep on working on their art, how could we hold a space for other fellow artists and creators to work in this somehow prestige setting?

So, the idea was sculpted around a way of wanting/need to live;
Create and live in the mountains, meet artists, hold a space for artists to work in the surrounding that inspired us to such a degree.

HOW DOES THE BUSINESS HELP TO ADDRESS REGIONAL CLIMATE CHANGE OR SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES?



To be honest we don't have any major agenda, setting or vision statements regarding climate change and sustainability issues because that's not the sort of operation that we are running. Heima is a space held with freedom of thought for the people that reside in it.

So we hold a frame for the residence to do their own thinking, therefore the residence are free to even challenge the ideas of environmental sustainability as a thought pattern as we know it. It's not ours to govern.

Then of course at the same time, sure yes, we recycle, we use innovative solutions in terms of electricity, heating, isolation, and maintenance of the house.

But like I said we hold a frame, the entities inside the frame are thinkers and doers and they make their own rules.



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“I’ve been here for a month, and I’ve seen more quality events than I’ve done in Copenhagen for a long time”

Visitor in Heima

HOW IS YOUR PRODUCT OR SERVICE **INNOVATIVE**? WHAT GAP IN THE MARKETPLACE DOES IT FILL?

Heima is definitely not a brand-new idea out of the box. But perhaps the most innovative approach that the residency holds is its financial and ideology freedom.

Residency financed by more formal entities most often need to abide to myriads of rules,

Heima being free of that, creates a research and work platform for thinkers that has them returning again and again. I might be wrong on this, but it’s a feeling.

WHERE DID YOU SOURCE THE MAIN **SUPPORT AND RESOURCES** (Eg. Grants And Other Support)?

- Heima was a private initiative. Originally a house was bought by a group of young artists with all the things that came with a mortgage and renovation. The start was financed by a basic “home mortgage”.
- When ready, the house served as a home for many of the initiators, alongside a full functioning artist residency. Being a private residency, not backed up by governmental grants, universities, museums or other classical grant distributors. Heima had a price tag for the artist coming, “you want to stay, you pay”. A format more known in the North American art world than the socialistic Scandinavian one.
- Small grants were also found through local cultural initiatives, most in collaboration with the pre-established art festivals situated in Seyðisfjörður. Heima always strived to be an independent residency, we would make and hold the frames, the people living there, and therefore reap from the freedom that we sawed.
- Alongside those things some private sector sponsorship deals were made with companies that simply wanted to shoot add-campagnes, or just wanted to bathe their brand in the romanticism that is a rural artist residency run by young people in a secluded fjord in Iceland. Those deals came in handy.

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Heima is a art residency located in a town of 600 annual inhabitants, tucked in between the steep mountains of the East Icelandic Fjord - Seyðisfjörður.



WHAT **ADVICE** DO YOU WISH YOU COULD HAVE ACCESSED WHEN YOU STARTED?



Actually, nothing was missing, the whole journey was a learning process and hopefully continues like that. Heima evolved from the collaboration of open-minded people and entrepreneurs, questions were discussed and answers found.

WHAT WERE THE MAIN **OBSTACLES OR BARRIERS** YOU ENCOUNTERED?



From the beginning, the group that founded Heima gave its heart and soul into the project. Everyone contributed to the start-up work and gave time and energy to get it working. It was a part of the process to just continue with the renovations on the house as circumstances allowed. Even in the renovation stages exhibitions were held in the scaffoldings surrounding the house. But all those things were financed by a basic “home mortgage”.

When ready, the house served as a home for many of the initiators, alongside a full functioning artist residency.

Marketing and the overall popularity of the residency was never a problem thanks to artist residency sites such as “res artis” and other similar ones. And the word of mouth really spread the knowledge of the space. However, there is also a fine line between how many newcomers that stay in such a small town a small town can handle. Having guests all the time can become a bit tedious for the locals.



HOW SUCCESSFUL HAS IT BEEN?

Measuring success is always quite subjective.

The idea and the ethos of Heima was never to make a profit, or grow, or open another residency. It was simply to make a sustainable living and working conditions for likeminded people and in those terms the project has been successful. The house stands in great conditions still feeding artists from all over the world with energy and inspiration. That's one part.

The other success criteria if you may, is the energy we wanted the residency to give to the town.

Residencies have been run since around 2014 and up to this day, the house and the project has been a space where hundreds of people from all over the world have lived, worked and exhibited. Heima has taken the shape of a venue for events, gallery space, concert venue, cinema house, conference “hall” and exhibition platform of all sorts, and so many other different functions, difficult to put in words. And the heart of it all is that the door is always open. So Heima became somewhat of a vibrant cultural “stage” in a way. And that if you ask me is the real success.

It's a house that breathes experimental culture into a calm fishing village, sometimes a bit to experimental if you ask someone else then me. But it's there.

And being asked often by friends that still live in the major European cities “What do you do there?” my answer is “you have no idea how much there is happening there”. And that feeds into the returning of the young people. A constant dilemma or want from the other rural villages around Iceland, young people leave to go study and don't return.

People under 40 that now reside in Seyðisfjörður who have been involved with Heima are running a full licensed cinema, a high quality bakery, did manage the technical museum [that got mostly ruined by a mudslide in January 2021], work in the kindergarten and the schools, run tourist businesses. Just to name a few.

I would not in a million years say that people are moving to Seyðisfjörður only because of Heima, but I'm sure Heima has a tiny little fraction in it. Houses are hard to come by, and young active highly educated people from different nationalities are really wanting to make a life in the small town.

It's exciting, and even if Heima only played a tiny little roll in that big image, I think the real success of the project is that. Young people want to live in Seyðisfjörður.



WAS SUCCESS A RESULT OF INDIVIDUAL WORK OR COLLABORATION (OR BOTH)?

Definitely collaboration, from the first idea, through the steps of finding a place, the renovating process of the building, marketing, just name it, and it continues in the running of the residency.

Collaboration every step of the way.