

= Icelandic Phallogological Museum =

The Icelandic Phallogological Museum ( Icelandic : Hið Íslenska Reðasafn ) , located in Reykjavík , Iceland , houses the world 's largest display of penises and penile parts . The collection of 280 specimens from 93 species of animals includes 55 penises taken from whales , 36 from seals and 118 from land mammals , allegedly including Huldufólk ( Icelandic elves ) and trolls . In July 2011 , the museum obtained its first human penis , one of four promised by would @-@ be donors . Its detachment from the donor 's body did not go according to plan and it was reduced to a greyish @-@ brown shrivelled mass pickled in a jar of formalin . The museum continues to search for " a younger and a bigger and better one . "

Founded in 1997 by retired teacher Sigurður Hjartarson and now run by his son Hjörtur Gísli Sigurðsson , the museum grew out of an interest in penises that began during Sigurður 's childhood when he was given a cattle whip made from a bull 's penis . He obtained the organs of Icelandic animals from sources around the country , with acquisitions ranging from the 170 cm ( 67 in ) front tip of a blue whale penis to the 2 mm ( 0 @. @ 08 in ) baculum of a hamster , which can only be seen with a magnifying glass . The museum claims that its collection includes the penises of elves and trolls , though , as Icelandic folklore portrays such creatures as being invisible , they cannot be seen . The collection also features phallic art and crafts such as lampshades made from the scrotums of bulls .

The museum has become a popular tourist attraction with thousands of visitors a year and has received international media attention , including a Canadian documentary film called The Final Member , which covers the museum 's quest to obtain a human penis . According to its mission statement , the museum aims to enable " individuals to undertake serious study into the field of phallogy in an organized , scientific fashion . "

= = History = =

The museum 's founder Sigurður Hjartarson worked as a teacher and principal for 37 years , teaching history and Spanish at Reykjavík 's Hamrahlid College before his retirement . As a child , he owned a bull 's pizzle , which was given to him to use as a cattle whip . He began collecting penises after a friend heard the story of the bull 's penis in 1974 and gave him four new ones , three of which Sigurður gave to friends . Acquaintances at whaling stations began bringing him whale penises as well , and the collection grew from there , expanding through donations and acquisitions from various sources around Iceland .

The organs of farm animals came from slaughterhouses , while fishermen supplied those of pinnipeds and the smaller whales . The penises of larger whales came from commercial whaling stations , although this source dried up after the International Whaling Commission implemented a global ban on commercial whaling in 1986 . Sigurður was able to continue to collect whale penises by harvesting them from the 12 ? 16 whales that fall victim to stranding on the Icelandic coast each year . He also obtained the penis of a polar bear shot by fishermen who found the animal drifting on drift ice off the Westfjords .

Sigurður was assisted by his family , though not without some occasional embarrassment . His daughter Þorgerður recalls that she was once sent to a slaughterhouse to collect a specimen but arrived just as the workers were taking a lunch break : " Someone asked , ' What 's in the basket ? ' I had to say , ' I 'm collecting a frozen goat penis . ' After that I said , ' I will never collect for you again . ' " According to Sigurður , " Collecting penises is like collecting anything . You can never stop , you can never catch up , you can always get a new one , a better one . "

The collection was at first housed in Sigurður 's office at the college until he retired from his teaching job . He decided , more as a hobby than a job , to put it on public display in Reykjavík and was awarded a grant from the city council of ISK 200 @, @ 000 to support the opening of a museum in August 1997 . By 2003 , it was attracting 5 @, @ 200 visitors a year , of which 4 @, @ 200 were from abroad . He put the museum up for sale in 2003 , but also offered it to the city of Reykjavík as a gift . However , he was unsuccessful in obtaining financial support from the state or city . When he

retired in 2004 , he could no longer afford the rent on the museum 's premises .

After his retirement , he moved along with his collection to Húsavík , a fishing village with a population of about 2 @, @ 200 people located 298 miles ( 480 km ) northeast of the capital . The museum was housed in a small building , formerly a restaurant , that was marked with a giant wooden penis and a stone phallus standing outside on the street . The village 's inhabitants were at first skeptical of the new arrival , but came to accept it when they were persuaded that there was nothing pornographic about the museum .

In 2012 he handed over the collection to his son , Hjörtur Gísli Sigurðsson ( described by Slate as " the world 's only hereditary penis @-@ museum operator " ) . It was relocated from Húsavík to Reykjavík 's main shopping street at Laugavegur 116 . Its former location in Húsavík is now home to The Exploration Museum . An offer from a wealthy German to buy the museum for ISK 30 million ( US \$ 232 @, @ 000 / ? 186 @, @ 000 ) and a proposal to move it to the United Kingdom were both turned down , as Hjörtur insists that " the museum has to be in Iceland . " He intends to continue acquiring new penises because you can " always get a better , newer one ... a bigger size or better shape , you know ? "

According to University of Iceland anthropologist Sigurjón Baldur Hafsteinsson , Icelanders ' tolerance of the museum is an indicator of how Icelandic society has changed since the 1990s , when a newly elected neoliberal government fostered a more open outlook on entertainment , creativity and tourism that has " enabled new ideas to emerge publicly " . He has documented the significance of the museum 's role in Icelandic culture in a book , Phallogological museum ( ISBN 9783643904706 ) OCLC 888575994 .

= = Collection = =

According to the museum 's website , the collection comprises 280 specimens from 93 species of animals . They range from some of the largest to some of the smallest penises in the animal world . Its largest exhibit is a portion of a blue whale 's penis measuring 170 cm ( 67 in ) long and weighing 70 kilograms ( 150 lb ) , which Iceland Review has dubbed " a real Moby Dick " . The specimen is just the tip , as the entire organ , when intact , would have been about 5 m ( 16 ft ) long and weighed about 350 ? 450 kilograms ( 770 ? 990 lb ) . The baculum of a hamster , only 2 mm ( 0 @. @ 08 in ) long , is the smallest item in the collection and needs a magnifying glass to be viewed . Sigurður has described the collection as the product of " 37 years of collecting penises . Somebody had to do it . "

The museum also has a " folklore section " exhibiting mythological penises ; its online catalogue lists specimens taken from elves , trolls , kelpies , and " The Nasty Ghost of Snæfell " . Sigurður says that the elf 's penis , which the museum 's catalogue describes as " unusually big and old " , is among his favourites . It cannot be seen , as Icelandic folklore holds that elves and trolls are invisible . The folkloric penises also include those of a merman , a one @-@ legged , one @-@ armed and one @-@ eyed monster called a Beach @-@ Murmurer , an Enriching Beach Mouse ( said to draw " money from the sea to enrich her owner " ) , and an Icelandic Christmas Lad found dead at the foot of a mountain in 1985 and whose penis was presented to the museum by a former mayor of Reykjavík .

The museum 's website states that it enables " individuals to undertake serious study into the field of phallogy in an organized , scientific fashion " , giving due prominence to a field that until now has only been " a borderline field of study in other academic disciplines such as history , art , psychology , literature and other artistic fields like music and ballet . " The museum aims to collect penis specimens from every mammal in Iceland . It also exhibits phallic artwork and penis @-@ related objects or " phallobilia " such as lampshades made from the scrotums of bulls . Other exhibits range " from an 18th @-@ century engraving depicting the circumcision of Christ to a 20th @-@ century plastic penis pacifier . " Most of the collection has been donated , and the only purchase to date has been an elephant 's penis measuring nearly 1 m ( 3 @. @ 3 ft ) long . The penises are either preserved in formaldehyde and displayed in jars or are dried and hung or mounted on the walls of the museum .

Sigurður has used a variety of techniques to preserve the penises , including preservation in formaldehyde , pickling , drying , stuffing and salting . One particularly large penis taken from a bull has been converted into a walking stick . Many of the museum 's exhibits are illuminated by lamps made by Sigurður from rams ' testicles . Sigurður has also carved wooden phalluses , which can be found adorning various objects around the museum , and has a bow tie decorated with images of phalluses that he wears on special occasions .

Josh Schonwald of Salon.com described his impressions of the museum when he visited in 1998 :

They were hanging on the walls , stuffed in jars , displayed with curatorial love ? dried penises , penises embalmed in formaldehyde , massive penises displayed like hunting trophies . A tanned bull 's penis , a smoked horse 's penis . There were runty , shriveled penises of reindeer , foxes , minks and rats . There were seal and walrus penises with stiff penis bones ? ensuring a perpetually erect state . There was the Big Penis ? a 3 @-@ foot @-@ long blue whale penis ( which could have been an oar for a canoe ) .

The museum is open every day and by July 2011 was attracting up to 11 @,@ 000 visitors annually . Sixty percent of the museum 's visitors are reported to be women , though according to the authors of the Rough Guide to Iceland , mentioning the museum " causes the staff at the tourist office to blush with embarrassment . " The museum 's guest book includes comments such as , " I 've never seen so many penises ? and I went to boarding school ! " ( from a New Zealand visitor ) , " They 're bigger in the USA , " ( from someone from Wisconsin ) and " Is there a vagina museum ? " On this point , Sigurður has said , " I 'm only collecting the male organ . Somebody else has to do the other job . I 'd be interested in how they would preserve it . I think vaginas are better alive . " ( There is in fact a " Museum of Vaginal Imagination " in Rotterdam in the Netherlands . )

= = = Human penis = = =

For many years , the museum sought to obtain a human penis . Sigurður was able to obtain human testicles and a foreskin from two separate donors ; the foreskin was donated by Iceland 's National Hospital after an emergency circumcision operation . The museum also contains sculptures of 15 penises based on the Iceland national handball team . As the team had won the silver medal at the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games , the penises were made from a silvered material . Sigurður claims that although they are not displayed in the same order as the individuals shown in the photograph that accompany them , " their wives would recognise them . " According to Slate , these sculptures were created by Sigurður 's daughter , Þorgerður Sigurðardóttir , and were based on her own experience rather than any knowledge of the team . The team 's goalkeeper denies that the sculptures are casts .

The museum has so far received pledges from four men ? an Icelander , a German , an American and a Briton ? to donate their penises . Canadian film @-@ maker Zach Math comments that the American , Tom Mitchell , " is an ordinary guy but he has this quirk where he thinks of his penis as a separate entity from his body ? Elmo . He has this dream that he wants it to be the most famous penis in the world . " According to Sigurður , Mitchell " wanted to have his penis cut off even during his lifetime and then visit the museum . " Mitchell sent a cast of his penis to serve as a substitute in the meantime , along with photographs of it dressed up as Santa Claus and Abraham Lincoln . The donor also tattooed his penis with the Stars and Stripes to make it look more appealing . He says that " I 've always thought it 'd be really cool for my penis to be the first true penis celebrity " and has made it the star of its own comic book , Elmo : Adventures of a Superhero Penis .

The Icelandic donor was a 95 @-@ year @-@ old man from nearby Akureyri who was said to have been a womaniser in his youth and wanted to donate his penis to the museum to ensure his " eternal fame " . Sigurður said that , even at the age of 95 , the donor remained active , " both vertically and horizontally " . However , the donor was said to be concerned that " his penis is shrinking as he gets older and he is worried it might not make a proper exhibit . " His penis was given priority over those of the non @-@ Icelandic donors in accordance with the museum 's mission to display the organs of Icelandic mammals . Removing and preserving it was not an easy proposition , as Sigurður explained : " The donor and the doctors are in agreement , it must be taken

while the body is warm . Then bleed it and pump it up . If it cools you can 't do anything , so [ the donor ] is eager to have it taken warm and treated to be preserved with dignity . "

In January 2011 , the Icelandic donor died and his penis was surgically removed so that it could be added to the museum 's collection . The penectomy was not entirely successful and left the penis " a greyish @-@ brown , shrivelled mass " . According to Sigurður , " I should have stretched it and sewn it at the back to keep it in more or less a normal position " . Instead , it " went directly into the formaldehyde " . Although disappointed with the results , Sigurður expressed confidence that " I will get a younger and a bigger and better one soon . " Visitors ' most common reaction to the preserved human penis is " that it 's very old , you know , a bit shrunken , and the male members [ sic ] say ' oh , I hope mine will not look like this when I get old . ' " Sigurður has considered donating his own penis to the museum when he dies but said that it depends on his wife : " If she dies first , my specimen would go in here . If I die first , well I can 't say . She might say no . "

American writer and actor Jonah Falcon , known for his impressively sized penis , was invited by the museum via The Huffington Post to donate his member after his death . It was announced in May 2014 that Falcon had accepted the proposal , suggesting a display alongside a sperm whale to be called " Jonah and the whale " , after the biblical story .

= = Film = =

The museum is the subject of The Final Member , a film by Canadian documentarians Zach Math and Jonah Bekhor . It profiles Sigurður and his quest to obtain a human penis for the museum , telling the story of the American and Icelandic donors and examining the quasi @-@ taboo nature of the museum 's collection . Bekhor says : " I wouldn 't say it 's a Rorschach test , but depending on how you react to it really says a lot about what your relationship is with that element of the human anatomy . It 's a really interesting phenomenon and we 're really curious to see how audiences respond . " The film premiered on 1 May 2012 at the Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival .