



BIRGIR KRUISE



MAGDEL BRENDZ

J. P. 'Palli' Gregoriussen, the Faroe Islands' father of modern architecture; Føroya Landsbókasavn (National Library of the Faroe Islands), Tórshavn, completed in 1979, one of Gregoriussen's well known designs.

IN 2013, Faroese architect Ósbjörn Jacobsen returned to his native Gøta to set up his architectural firm in partnership with his former employer, Henning Larsen Architects. His office has been busy from day one, having had five to six architects in place at any time since opening, including a total 15-20 interns, from every corner of the world.

Jacobsen had a leading role on behalf of Henning Larsen Architects as architectural manager of Iceland's milestone project a few years ago—Harpa Reykjavík Concert Hall and Conference Centre—and at the same time he had a supervising role on the Reykjavík University. Both projects have earned international acclaim, the Harpa winning, for example, the European Union Prize for Contemporary Architecture—Mies van der Rohe Award 2013. Five years on, in February 2018, the Architectural Digest magazine ranked it first of the '10 Best Designed Buildings in the World From Top Architects'.

Henning Larsen Architects have offices in Copenhagen, Munich, New York, Riyadh, Oslo, Hong Kong and, yes, the Faroe Islands. Jacobsen has no plans of slowing down,



The Nordic House in the Faroe Islands, Tórshavn, designed by Ola Steen and Kollbrún Ragnarsdóttir, completed in 1983.

regardless of what some would consider the odd location of his base. He views it in a slightly different light.

"I think one of the essential strengths of Nordic architecture is its inclination toward what you may call a blend of localism and internationalism," he said.

"It's about placing context at center stage, and this is something that works extremely well, everywhere around the world. The idea is really about respecting what is local—his-

tory, culture, environment, everything—and building on that."

And yet great works of architecture are frequently met with equally great residence—in the period prior to a wider recognition of their greatness, that is. Harpa and Reykjavik University, both building projects ongoing in the midst of Iceland's economic meltdown in 2008, were no exceptions to the rule.

"We see time and again that people consider architectural landmarks an excess,

especially during economically challenging periods," Jacobsen said. "It's as if architecture tends to get framed as an opposite to 'soft values' such as health care or education, perhaps like some controversial contrasting point to anything that is perceived as generally underfunded. Depending on the particular circumstances—and we're not going into that at this point—there are of course cases where such misgivings are justified. In reality, the value of great architecture doesn't

Harpa Reykjavík Concert Hall and Conference Centre: Exterior; Interior.



HENNING LARSEN ARCHITECTS



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MARIA OLSEN



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Partial views of the new seat of the Municipal Council of Eysturkommuna, Norðragøta.