

**Interview of Margrét Elísabet Ólafsdóttir, conducted in Bergen (NO) on 22.11.2013**

**Organisation: Lorna (Reykjavik, Iceland) / [www.lornalab.is](http://www.lornalab.is)**

**Festival: Pikslaverk**

**> Give yourself a title, some kind of imaginary title, something unconventional that describes best your role in the organisation?**

A navigator. As an organizer I have to be able to give directions and make decisions, but at the same time I am navigating through a position I took on without really knowing what I was getting into.

**> What kind of animal is your festival and why?**

A lamb because it is small and confused and tends to go in directions it is not supposed to. Thus the lamb needs to be taken care of as it does not take care of itself.

**> What was the spark that inspired your festival?**

Pall Thayer. He is an artist and member of Lorna working with free and open software. Pall had been going to both Pixelache in Helsinki and Píksel in Bergen, when the opportunity came to bring an Icelandic node into the Pixelache Network. The first festival was organized by Pall in 2008. When he moved to the USA at the time we were starting to prepare the second edition, he handed the baton to me.

**> Why are you doing this and not something else with your life?**

I do other things in my life too. I finished a PhD in aesthetics in 2013, I write, teach and do research. Lately I have also worked as a curator. As a specialist in a small community like Iceland, I also sit in committees.

But I am also a co-founder of Lorna, which has held together a small group of people interested in electronic arts for over a decade now. My activities with Lorna are important for me as a researcher as they are directly related to subjects I am interested in. And as a member of Lorna I thought it was important to continue what Pall Thayer had started. I also thought that the festival would have a greater significance if we would have other activities going on during the year, on a regular basis. I thought that artists interested in this field needed a platform to experiment and exchange skills and knowledge. So when we had the opportunity to get a space, something Lorna has never had, I thought it would be a good occasion to see what would happen. The result was beyond anyone's aspiration. We got together a group of people that expanded

in an incredibly short time and decided to found an interdisciplinary collaboration platform called Lorna Lab. Unfortunately we lost the space after ten months, but could continue our activities in collaboration with the Reykjavik Art Museum for the next two years. My main role in all this was to apply for the space. The rest was done by the artists. At the moment my challenge is to help Lorna Lab to find ways to sustain its activities and revitalize its energies. Organizing the next Pikslaverk Festival is a part of the process.

**> How would you describe your festival to your grand-parents?**

It is a festival for curious people, artists and computer geeks, interested in exploring, trying, playing and hanging out with interesting and inspiring people.

**> What would you have in an organiser's survival kit?**

Patience, resilience and a dash of unrealistic optimism.

**> What's one thing that you do wrong?**

I lose my temper.

**> What is your relationship to other similar organisations in your context?**

We have had a very close collaboration with Raflost another local festival of electronic arts that was created by teachers at the Iceland Academy of the Arts, and also functions as a workshop for art students.

**> What is a successful festival according to your own standards?**

When things go smoothly, participants are happy and go home with good memories.

**> How many people are involved in your team and what are their roles?**

I was the only person in my team after Pall Thayer left, but that does not mean that I have organized the festival alone. It has been coordinated with Raflost, so there has been four to six people in the main organisation team. The disadvantage of the collaboration for Pikslaverk is that it has not been able to develop its own profile. This is something we are working on now, by separating the festivals again. It will allow us to involve the Lorna Lab members in the organisation team through the Grundtvig Life Learning program.

**> How can one contribute to your festival?**

We usually send out open calls but things also happen on a more informal level,

especially the contact with local artists.

**> What advice would you give to someone who would want to start a festival?**

Do not think about it too much, just do it. It is always possible to find ways to do a festival, even with small resources. Cultivate your local network, stay open to changes, and be ready to scale it down to a size you can manage.

**> What is the frequency is your festival?**

Whenever we can, let's say every 1-2 years.

**> How do you envisage having round-the-year impacts? Do you provide anything throughout the year?**

We have had regular workshops but now we do not have a place so that has slowed down the regularities of the open workshops. But I think it is important to have activities on a regular basis, especially when you are the only organization doing it. It keeps people together and reminds people of the fact that you exist. If you want people to collaborate with you, it ties them together to have an ongoing activity. It is also easier for new people to keep in touch if they now they can come to open workshops. But it is difficult to sustain them when you do not have a fixed space and it also makes it more difficult for newcomers to find you. So this is another challenge were are facing these days.