

**Text by Ika Kaminka for "Momentum 04" catalogue.  
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### **Erla Haraldsdottir & Bo Melin**

Haraldsdottir: Born 1967, lives and works in Reykjavik

Melin: Born 1964, lives and works in Göteborg

*Here, There and Everywhere, (Dronningens gate in Moss), 2004, digital photo montage on lightboards.*

Why be content with the world as it is? Why not just turn the whole thing upside down? Or at least meddle with it a bit?

Haraldsdottir & Melin's collaborative project *Here, There and Everywhere*, which has been ongoing for several years and has given various cities food for thought, is a study of what things might be like if they were just a little different from the way they are. So far they have, among other things, given a street in Reykjavik a more cosmopolitan profile, with immigrant shops and foreign restaurants; they have transformed Akureyri from a provincial town into an aspiring metropolis, and turned a prim and proper Swedish small town into a rundown, rubbish-filled satellite town. But only on paper. Starting with photographs of a certain setting, they digitally introduce foreign elements taken from other towns and localities. It is up to the viewer to decide what improves and what degrades each setting.

The special quality of their utopian approach – or dystopian, depending on one's point of view – lies in the modesty of their visions. Haraldsdottir & Melin do not envisage grand, universal schemes. It is rather a matter of small adjustments that require some searching before they are found, which means that they generally seem utterly plausible. For those who do not know the places in question, there is no way of knowing that the pictures are not genuine. Someone who has never been to Iceland would probably be surprised to learn that a fruit and vegetable stand on a street corner can seem out of place. In other words, the artists' project depends on local knowledge. It is those who are familiar with an area who are most likely to be taken aback, and who might get engaged in a discussion for or against the transformations that the artists present. Perhaps the people of Moss, for example, could ask themselves why the artists feel the need to jazz up their town through the addition of a certain disturbing details?

Haraldsdottir & Melin have been working together since 2001. Both artists regularly collaborate with others. Both are as interested in creating and showing their projects outside as inside the art institution. One of Haraldsdottir's earlier projects was a collaboration with the Mexican Daniela Franco; the two artists sent each other "exercises", which they subsequently documented and exhibited. In 1995 Melin caught the attention of people far beyond the confines of the art world by hanging up 38 handwritten posters around town with the text "Eva come home – everything is forgiven". Everyone from radio presenters to local priests got involved in the sad story of the entirely fictional Eva.

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