

FOREWORD

Arne Bergh, ICEHOTEL Artistic Director

Text by Anders Porter

In the winter of 1993, I traveled with my good friend and colleague Åke Larsson from Uppsala, outside of Stockholm, to Kiruna, high above the Arctic Circle. Eager to see and experience the artistic possibilities of ice and snow, our destination was the Kiruna Snow Festival.

During our stay, we heard talk of something magical brewing about 20 kilometers outside of Kiruna, in the small village of Jukkasjärvi. To our surprise and delight, an art gallery in an igloo was steadily gathering attention. Visitors were flocking to Jukkasjärvi to see this aptly named ARTic Hall, some even opting to stay overnight in the one-of-a-kind structure. This was something that we definitely had to see.

Little did we know how dramatically we would be affected by the 15-minute drive to this quaint little town situated on the bank of the majestic Torne River. Our professional objectives and our artistic aspirations would soon be guided by a new medium: a medium that flows freely through a striking Northern Scandinavian landscape during the spring, summer and autumn until it is eventually captured by the chill of winter. A passionate affair with ice was about to begin.

We came to the realization that while the ARTic Hall was a brilliant starting point, the possibilities going forward were endless. Managing Director Yngve Bergkvist wholeheartedly welcomed our comments and ideas. We all knew that with enthusiasm and hard work, we could create an environment unlike anything ever seen before. In order to provide guests with a distinctively unforgettable experience, we needed to do more than simply show them ice and snow – we needed to embrace them with ice and snow and present them with an opportunity to leave reality behind and step into a frosty fairy tale.

In the years that have followed, we have played and experimented our way forward to become one of the most unique and creative endeavors on the planet. The journey from “then” to “now” has been a magnificent ride. What started as a large sleeping hall with about 20 beds is now a hotel with over 70 rooms, 22 of them specially designed suites. Early ice columns that were swiftly erected to assist a wavy ceiling of snow in its battle against gravity are now trademarks of the ICEHOTEL, gracing the long expanse of the famous Main Hall.

Artist selection in the early days was based on coincidence and availability. Today, the selection process is quite competitive and draws from an international pool of applications. This year’s ICEHOTEL features artwork designed and created by 58 artists from 12 countries. A jury of ICEHOTEL representatives selected these artists from hundreds of applicants, based on design, feasibility and experience. Working with ice or snow is not and has never been a prerequisite, a fact that we are extremely proud of. Our artists come from all professional walks of life, covering everything from graphic design and sound expertise to video artistry and education. By reaching beyond their typical mediums and challenging themselves with ice and snow, new techniques are discovered and refreshing sensations are realized, something that the both the artists and the ICEHOTEL benefit greatly from.

The philosophy that drove the creation of the first ICEHOTEL is a simple philosophy, one that we still strongly believe in today: The ICEHOTEL and the art within shall be created using only the resources that the Torne River provides. Period. Despite being an obvious artistic challenge, we will follow this strategy as long as the mighty river is willing to make its annual donation of crystal clear ice. In doing so, we strive to pay tribute to the Torne River and to show the world what a little hope and a lot of frozen water can do.