

portfolio nienke bouwhuis

Iceland's Hottest Footpath wedstrijd Vision Akureyri, IJsland ism D. Lohuis en D. White



Iceland's Hottest Footpath

Context
With 15,000 inhabitants Akureyri is the second biggest town in Iceland. Most inhabitants of Iceland know it Reykjavik, which is the country's gate to the outer world. Every year a fair number of tourists come in visit, of which the bigger part gets there by the cruise ships that call at Akureyri. Overall things are pretty good in Akureyri, but something is missing. Akureyri wants more.

Climate
Akureyri is situated on the north side of Iceland. Warm ocean currents make the climate more temperate than the latitude would suggest. Mostly the northern winds bring cold, rain and snow. In conjunction with the heat of Iceland, Akureyri has warmer summers and more snow in winter. Also the amount of daylight time varies highly during the year. In the middle of the summer it doesn't get dark at night and around Christmas there are only four hours of daylight.

Energy
There is no shortage of energy, rather a surplus, and the energy needed is generated in a clean and durable way. The biggest part is generated through hydropower. Geothermal sources near Akureyri are used for heating. The hot water is pumped to the houses with a temperature of 80 °C. The effluent water still has a temperature of 30 °C and is used for heating streets and pavements, to prevent them from freezing.

Vision
Akureyri doesn't only consist of buildings, but it's also formed by the character of the public space. In today's situation Akureyri's public space is rather underdeveloped and unattractive. A crucial part in revitalizing the lower center of Akureyri lies in making public space more pleasant. During the warm and dry days of summer there's nothing really wrong, but otherwise people on the cold and dark streets when Akureyri is covered under snow and everybody wants to get home as quickly as possible.

Intervention
Our intervention is a radical architectural or urban design, but rather a subtle reinforcement of one of the existing qualities of Akureyri. The situation of Akureyri having a surplus of energy and warmth at its disposal is an environment which is warm and cold and hardly gets any daylight during a large part of the year is motive for our design. We've developed a footpath through Akureyri which encompasses the previous situation, which improves the quality of the public space and makes it more pleasant. With this footpath we bring light, warmth and exotic plants.

Route
Where possible the footpath follows existing routes. Where needed on the Southside, to connect the old village to the rest of Akureyri) new stretches are sketched out. The route links the existing parklands of Akureyri. On several strategic locations we will see elements such as a bridge, a sculpture garden, a heating pier, a playground, a fountain and of course benches, flower beds and bus stops. These elements are connected to the heating system of Akureyri so they feel completely warm.

Materialisation
The footpath is recognizable by the red asphalt which has a story right in itself. The red asphalt is a mix of red and black. The entire route is heated by the effluent water, so that snow and ice have no chance to settle. The elements are built with basic materials, such as wood, and as for their style relate to the existing environment of Akureyri.

