

Memories Etched in Time; Leeds Craft Centre & Design Gallery Showcases Works by Renowned Artist

If Christmas shopping is getting too much to handle then a visit to The Craft Centre and Design Gallery's current Print Exhibition is a great way to escape the hustle and bustle on the high street.

Let the imagination of renowned printmaker Karolina Larusdottir take you away to her childhood where she'd visit Hotel Borg, the first Grand Hotel opened in Iceland by her Grandfather (who started off his career as a strongman with Barnum & Bailey's travelling circus in America).

"It was a very grown-up world at the hotel; there were lots of events and parties and preparations for them and I would watch the chambermaids, chefs and waitresses prepare for these."

Such busyness is evident in her work, where characters dine together, or pay each other a visit, the seriousness of their everyday endeavours etched on their faces. And just like a theatre set, every scene is peopled with characters.

"I only ever wanted to paint people; that's my favourite subject," says Larusdottir. "People and what they're doing." As she prepares to celebrate her 75th birthday next year the Craft Centre chose to celebrate her life and works in a special solo print exhibition which will remain in the gallery until the 26th of January.

Karolina commented: "The Craft Centre and Design Gallery have always offered an innovative, constantly changing series of exhibitions, representing talented printmakers of a very high calibre.

It has been wonderful to be included among these artists and I am honoured to be invited to exhibit this group of etchings. Thank you for all your encouragement and support over the last 20 years."

Today, tourists who visit Iceland's largest church in the centre of Reykjavik, the landmark Lutheran church Hallgrímskirkja – a striking white modernist structure rising 75 metres high – will find Karolina's artwork hanging inside.

Her oils, watercolours, and etchings are reminiscent of the Iceland she knew as a child: a magical time when she says, "nobody could do anything without other people knowing," when there was no television, just occasions; parties, birthdays and being invited to people's homes.

While Karolina acknowledges that her characters might not look happy in their unfolding dramas, they certainly don't look sad either. They're just busy getting on with things.

As Larusdottir likes to say, just people being themselves. Leeds is lucky enough to be showcasing several of Karolina's etchings that have been out of circulation for some time including The Good Gathering, The Chat Up, The Boat, Tango, The Lover, Good Intentions, The Dark Forest, The Big Stage, Rok and High Tide; all works are available to purchase.

For further information on the gallery's exhibition programme you can sign up to their monthly newsletter via their website or visit the What's On page of their website www.craftcentreleeds.co.uk