

# Moments from *Iceland*

*Blind Pilot drummer Ryan Dobrowski opens new art show at Imogen Gallery*

**H**is studio fronts the Columbia River. A large open space, it seems to have everything an artist might need. Room for painting, with a ping-pong table on one side and a set of drums on the other. Ryan Dobrowski is an artist who works in at least two mediums, oil painting and music.

Most people know Dobrowski as a musician, the drummer with the indie folk collective Blind Pilot, co-founder of the band with Israel Nebeker. During the June 13 Second Saturday Art Walk in Astoria, you can see another side of Dobrowski: A show of his paintings opens at Imogen Gallery, the result of a month-long, 1,000-mile bicycle trip he took around Iceland. "It's something I did solo," he says, "and now I'm sharing with other people the various moments I had on the trip."

Before he went there, it was not unusual for people to tell him that many of his landscape paintings reminded them of Iceland. When he arrived in Iceland, he says, "Sure enough, there was a moody starkness and a

kind of beauty I had been trying to capture in these paintings." There were no trees and a lot of bare rock. "You're very exposed to the elements, the wind and rock."

Dobrowski has always felt that his connection to a landscape, "is very real and interesting, and Iceland resonated with me."

While in Iceland Dobrowski took a lot of pictures with a cheap plastic camera. "They weren't enough," he says, "but they were a starting point for the paintings." That Dobrowski might start with photographs isn't too surprising. His mother is a painter and his father a photographer, and one of his early influences was Robert Rauschenberg, "who used photo collage with loose paint marks to document his experiences in life."

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The result, in many of the paintings in this show, is a landscape that is impressionistic and painterly, to which Dobrowski has added an element that is more rendered, if not quite photo-realistic. Dobrowski says, "It creates a tension, how different planes and objects in the planes add up. There's a flipping back and forth between a photograph and an impressionist painting."

Over the years, Dobrowski says, he has "changed things a good amount with each new body of work. It's almost like making an album. It's still my voice, but it's something new and quite a bit different."

Dobrowski studied art at the University of Oregon, where he had to choose to pursue a degree in either music or fine art. He chose to earn a Bachelor of Fine Arts with painting as a



Submitted photo

"Renna," a slide, by Ryan Dobrowski.

focus. "I was trained in oils," he says, "and it's still my preferred medium."

Which is not to say that he is about to abandon his other medium, music. The University of Oregon was also where he met Israel Nebeker, and they began to play music together. He asked Nebeker if he would like to take a bike tour while playing music, "and then we came out here to the coast. Israel already had some songs, and we recorded our first EP here."

Of painting and music, Dobrowski says, "It's tough because both things are important to me, and I want to do them well." There's also a benefit to pursuing both, he continues, "It's a big mental shift to go from one to another, but each influences how I think about the other."

Whether a song or a painting, Dobrowski says, "It's important to work with it, but not to overwork it. That's easy to do in both music and painting. You want it to be good, and at the same time you want the work to be thoughtful while still holding a bit of urgency."



Photo by Dwight Caswell

Blind Pilot drummer Ryan Dobrowski, who has a Bachelor of Fine Arts with a focus in painting from the University of Oregon, will show a series of paintings inspired from a recent trip to Iceland at Imogen Gallery in Astoria.



Submitted photo

"Tófa," the arctic fox, by Ryan Dobrowski.



Submitted photo

"Skógafoss," a waterfall on the river Skoga in Iceland, by Ryan Dobrowski.

## 'On My Own'

ARTIST RECEPTION

5 to 8 p.m. Saturday, June 13

Imogen Gallery

240 11th St., Astoria

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