

Posta Stamps

Faroe Islands No. 53

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Posta 
FAROE ISLANDS

Faroe Islands in
the Cold War

Landscapes:
Skálhøvdi

Art by Arnold
Vegghamar

Towns and Villages

Neighbourhoods in Suðuroy



On Suðuroy's east side, there is a 7-kilometre-long fjord, *Trongisvágsfjørður*. In this fjord, which stretches from southeast to northwest, we find the ancient settlements of Froðba, Tvøroyri, Trongisvágur, Øravíkslíð and Øravík, which today have more or less grown together into Suðuroy's largest city, Tvøroyrar municipality.

Froðba

At the northeastern mouth of the fjord lies the old settlement Froðba with roots dating back to the Middle Ages. According to a local legend, Froðba must be the oldest settlement in the Faroe Islands. Its name refers to the legendary Danish king Frode, who founded a settlement there according to the legend - hence the name. This must be taken with a grain of salt - the name probably refers to one of the first settlers of the place and means something like Frode's settlement or Frode's land. Froðba is located in a very scenic area on the lowlands, a little inside the promontory Froðbiarnípa. Along the beach, we find ancient basalt columns bearing witness to violent volcanic activity dating back approx. Fifty million years ago when the Faroe Islands came into being.

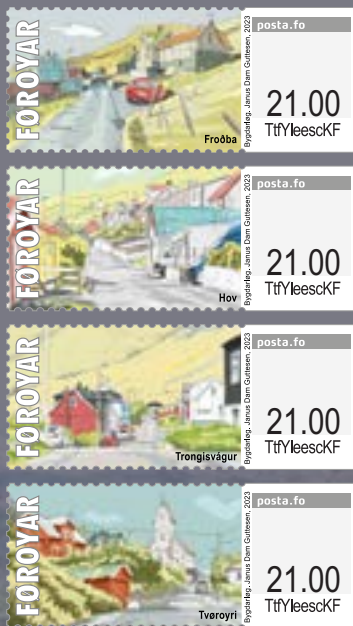
The franking label motif shows one of Froðba's old town districts, "*uppi á Hamri*," where the well-known Faroese poet Poul F. Joensen lived.

Tvøroyri

Somewhat paradoxically, Tvøroyri is the youngest settlement, located on the northern shore of the fjord, between Froðba and Trongisvágur. The area was once part of Froðba's outskirts, but when the Royal Monopoly trade established a branch on the Tvøroyri isthmus in 1836, the settlement began

in 1856. Private individuals took over the trading business, which over time expanded with increased shipping and fishing industry. At the turn of the last century, Tvøroyri had grown into one of the Faroe Islands' largest towns with the largest fishing industry.

The franking label depicts the so-called "Kirkjubrekka" - the road up the hill to the church. The parish church was initially located in Froðba, but when the new settlement at Tvøroyri began to grow, it was decided to move the old church to Tvøroyri in 1856. From 1880 until the turn of the last century, the number of inhabitants in the parish doubled. It was therefore decided to build a new and larger church. The Danish architect Viggo Bertram designed the church - and emphasised that



Froðba

Foto: alamy.com

it should be able to withstand the harsh Faroese weather conditions, with intense storms and lots of rainfall. It left a unique mark on the church's architecture; the solid half-timber work was bolted to a foundation of basalt stone, which had already been bolted to the rock foundation. It can be said that the church in Tvøroyri was built according to Matthew's well-known parable about *"building one's house on a rock."* The church was prefabricated in Norway - and in 1905, work began erecting the structure. Three years later, in 1908, the new beautiful church was ready for use.

Trongisvágur

At the bottom of the fjord lies Trongisvágur, which like Froðba, is an old settlement that has grown together with Tvøroyri. From ancient times, Trongisvágur consisted of several districts along the river *"Stórá,"* which runs through the territory and meanders into the fjord. The stamp motif depicts one of these districts, *"í Húsgarði."*

Over the past 40 years, Trongisvágur has undergone significant changes. A sports hall and later a football field were built at Stórá. There are a kindergarten, school and camping facilities on-site in addition to the usual expansions of buildings and infrastructure.

The beautiful natural surroundings include, among other things, an old pine grove with hiking trails - and along the west coast behind the settlement, magnificent geological formations of the oldest volcanic basalt layers are only visible on Suðuroy and the westernmost islands, Mykines and Vágar. Rangabotnur, with its coal seams formed in violent volcanic activity, lies southwest of the settlement. 50 million years ago. Coal was mined here almost a century ago - and

from Rangabotnur towards Drelnes on the south side of the fjord, we can still see the woodwork remains in the cableway that brought coal down from the mines for further transport.

Hov

In the fourth and last franking label, we leave Trongisvágsfjørður and go a little further south to the settlement *"Hov"* by *Hovsfjørður*. Hov is also an ancient settlement with roots in the Viking Age. The village is often mentioned in the Saga of the Faroese as the home of Havgrímur Illi, chief of the southern part of the Faroe Islands. *"Hov"* means temple/house of sacrifice, where people sacrificed and worshipped the Norse gods in the Viking Age. It is said about Havgrímur that he was *"blótmaður mikil"*, i.e. a man offering great gifts to the gods.

In the mountainside above Hov, along the old road to the north, we find impressive basalt columns from the volcanic activity which formed the Faroe Islands. West of the settlement lies the large waterfall Foldaráfossur in the river Hová. In the fjord near Hov, there is the small islet, *"Hovshólmur"* - and since the eighties, salmon have been farmed in the fjord. Down by the harbour facility is a small museum, art gallery and café in the old commercial building.

On the franking label, we see the church tower in the background. The church originally stood in Vágur but was moved to Hov in 1942 when Vágur erected a larger church in 1939.

Anker Eli Petersen



Tvøroyri

Foto: Ólavur Frederiksen

The Faroe Islands and the Cold War

60 Years at Sornfelli



Sornfelli - FO 993

Photo: Jákup Brúsá

During World War II, the Faroe Islands were occupied by Great Britain. During the war, the British built a military airport at Sørvgur on Vágur, and several radar stations around the Islands, monitoring the waters and airspace around the Faroes.

60 years since the radar base at Sornfelli was taken into use

The Faroese radar stations played an essential role in the Arctic supply convoys, mainly transporting American military equipment to the Soviet port cities of Murmansk and Arkhangelsk.

The British also set up a so-called *Loran* (Long Range Navigation) station in Vágur on Suðuroy to obtain more precise navigational data at sea and in the air.

After the war, Denmark regained sovereignty over the Faroe Islands and Greenland (Iceland had then completely seceded from the Danish kingdom in 1944). The USA showed interest in the LORAN station in the Faroe Islands and offered to overtake its operation. Denmark, however, having learned from the signing of unfavourable agreements regarding the American military presence in Greenland, rejected the offer and hastily decided to operate the station itself in 1946, even though they did not have qualified personnel for the task.

The Referendum of 1946 – Home Rule Act 1948

Denmark recognized that the separation during the war had changed the relationship between Denmark and the Faroe Islands. During the five-year British occupation, the desire for

increased self-determination had grown in the islands. After the war, negotiations began for the Faroe Islands' future position in the Danish kingdom and political authority. The talks dragged on without the parties' having reached an agreement - and the Faroese were also divided among themselves. Therefore, Denmark formulated a home rule proposal, which was submitted to the Faroese Parliament. But even then, no agreement was reached. The consequence was that in 1946 the Faroese Parliament called a referendum on whether the Faroese wanted extended home rule or secession from Denmark. The referendum showed a slight majority in favour of secession among the votes cast - but was soon cancelled by the Danish government. Instead, in 1948, the Home Rule Act was introduced, with expanded powers for the Faroese parliament and national government.

When Denmark joined NATO in 1949, the Faroe Islands and Greenland automatically became members. It caused quite a bit of dissatisfaction in the Faroe Islands. But in response to a question from the Faroese

member of parliament, Poul Niclassen, whether the Danish government had violated its obligation to submit the conclusion of intergovernmental agreements concerning the Faroe Islands to the Lagtinget – the Faroese parliament. Prime Minister Hans Hedtoft replied that it was a political treaty that fell outside the obligation to submit, specified in home rule legislation.

Denmark did not have the military resources to defend the North Atlantic parts of the kingdom effectively. The Faroe Islands and Greenland defence was therefore subordinated to SA-CLANT, NATO's Atlantic Command in the USA. In the event of war, forces from Great Britain would carry out the direct defence of the Faroe Islands.

Faroe Islands Command

In 1951, the Danish Navy established the Faroe Islands Marine District, later the Faroe Islands Command, to carry out sovereignty assertion, fisheries inspection, and rescue tasks in the Faroe



Sornfelli - FO 992

Photo: Jákup Brúsá

Islands. The studies were carried out using ships that were already available - but in 1963, the navy got the new inspection ships of the *Hvidbjørnen* class, built especially for North Atlantic conditions and equipped with Alouette helicopters. At the same time, the new Marine station was constructed at "Hoyvíkstjørn" on the outskirts of Tórshavn and put into use in 1965.

NATO's interest in the Faroe Islands was limited during the first years. NATO aircraft could use Vágar airport for emergency landings - and the large fjord, "*Skálafjørður*," would become an anchorage point for NATO ships and submarines in case of war.

Loran C and the Polaris missiles

However, during the fifties and with the technological advances of the Cold War, the strategic and tactical importance of the Faroe Islands changed due to their location in the middle of the North Atlantic, between the two main actors of the Cold War, the United States, and the Soviet Union. The power play of the superpowers unfolded on many levels - on land, the seas, and in the air. The increased military traffic required coordination and precise position fixing - and in the late fifties, the US Coast Guard installed 30 Loran C radio beacons all around the islands. One of these facilities was the Loran C station in Eiði on the northernmost part of Eysturoy, commissioned in 1960. The station was established with permission from the Danish government, paid for by the US Coast Guard, and operated by the Danish Lighthouse Service.

Loran C, Eiði, with its 190-meter-high transmitting mast, was a master station supported by slave stations around the North Atlantic. It

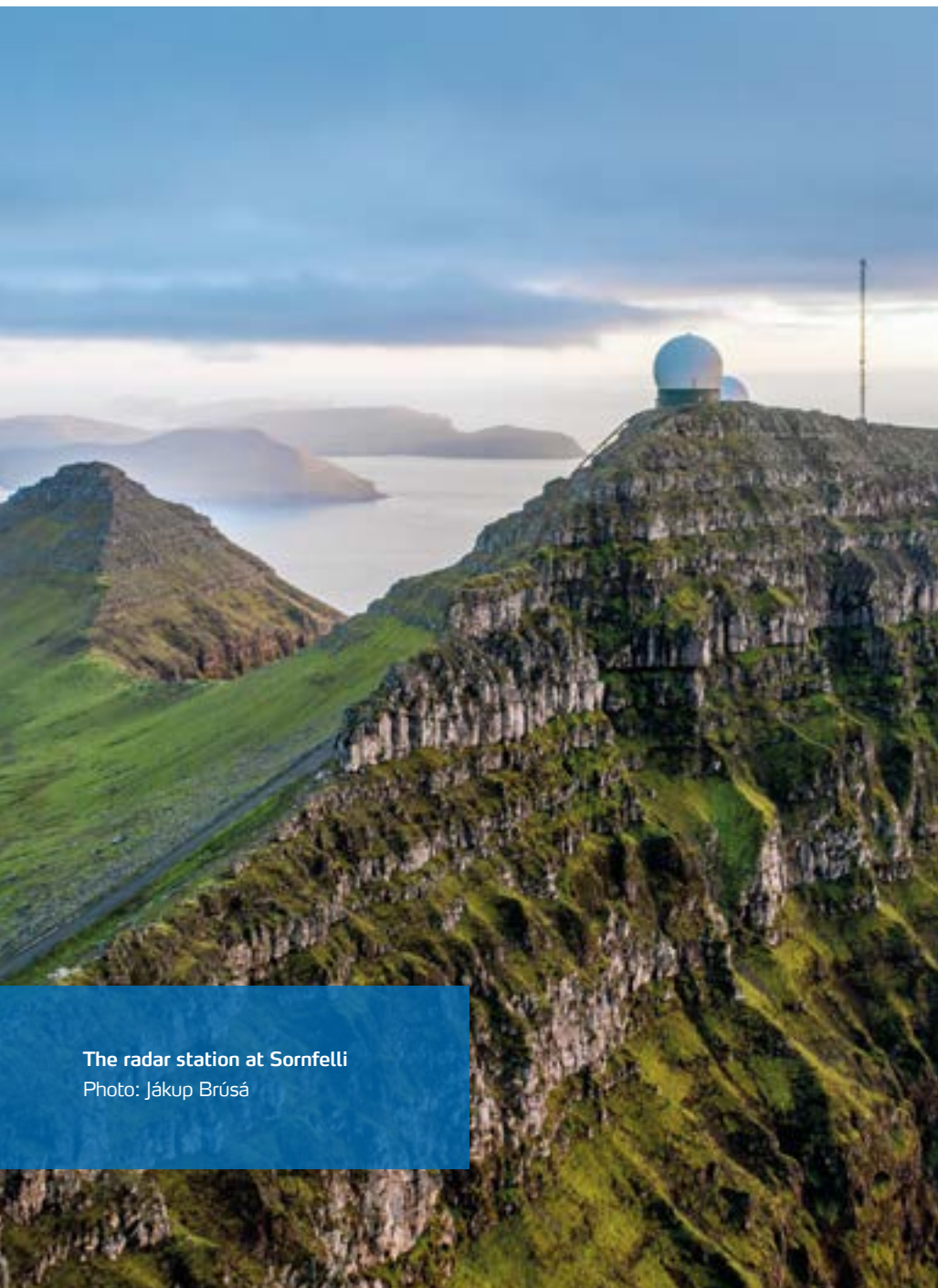
improved navigation and position fix for NATO naval units. Among other things. For aircraft carriers, submarines, and military aircraft. In particular, the system was necessary for the first generation of submarine-based Polaris nuclear missiles, whose limited range meant that the subs had to operate in the Norwegian Sea for the missiles to reach their targets in the Soviet Union.

However, Loran C's military importance was quickly overtaken by technical developments. Improved navigational systems, satellite navigation, i.e., the military predecessor to today's GPS navigation, were more accurate. In addition, the newer generations of the Polaris missiles had a doubled range, which meant that the Polaris submarines could operate from longer distances than the Norwegian Sea.

The radar station at Sornfelli

In 1963, Faroese could ascertain that the mountain Sornfelli, which towers over the bottom of the *Kaldbaksfjørður* north of Tórshavn, had had its peak equipped with two strange-looking white domes. After three years of construction work, the radar station at Sornfelli, with the official designation, "NATO Early Warning Station Site 09," was finally finished.

One dome was equipped with a large horizontal radar and the other with an equally sizeable vertical radar. Eighty meters down into the mountain itself, an operations bunker had been drilled out, with a shaft leading up to the two radars, which together provided the radar operators with a three-dimensional situational picture of the North Atlantic waters and airspace.



The radar station at Sornfelli

Photo: Jákup Brúsá

Further down the mountainside, in “*Mjörkadalur*” (Fog Valley) above “*Kaldbakstunur*,” an administration and residential building was built, completed in 1964. This was called Air Base Thorshavn and was attached to the Danish air force, which served the Sornfelli base installations. A part of the agreement with NATO was that the staff, radar operators, technicians, and service personnel had to be Danish, even though the radar station was a decidedly NATO project. For inscrutable reasons, the Danish government believed that this would make the presence of the radar base more palatable to the Faroese population.

Early Warning – but for whom?

In the usual literature about the radar station at Sornfelli, it appears that it was an extension of the American-Canadian DEW (Distant Early Warning) chain, which was supposed to warn the United States of attacks by Soviet bombers. In an article in “*International Politics - Scandinavian journal for international studies*,” from September 2020, military analyst Esben Salling Larsen, from the Danish Defence Academy, points out, however, that this was not necessarily the case.

Salling points out that in American sources about the DEW line, Sornfelli is not mentioned as part of the line. From 1961 to 65, the DEW line was extended with a constant presence of four warships with radar and four radar surveillance aircraft in the GIUK line, which ran from Greenland, over Iceland, to Scotland. But Sornfelli was, as I said, not a part of this extension.

Salling further demonstrates that, according to NATO sources, the radar station was built as part of NATO’s “Air Defence Ground

Environment” (NADGE), a chain of airspace surveillance radars and control stations, which were established along NATO’s outer border with the Soviet Union, from Norway to Turkey. The purpose was to warn of tactical attacks against European NATO forces and territories. In this expansion of NATO’s warning network, the station at Sornfelli was one of the stations to be built first.

At the same time, the Faroese airspace in the NATO context was taken over by NATO’s Supreme Commander in Europe (SACEUR), while the Supreme Commander in the Atlantic (SACLANT) continued the naval responsibility around the Faroe Islands.

Therefore, the radar station in Sornfelli was part of Europe’s naval and air defence, which had to support anti-submarine warfare and the fight against the Soviet surface ships and air forces that protected the submarines. An eye had also to be kept out for a low-flying cruise and sea-target missiles that threatened NATO ships and aircraft - and after the radar station got a new three-dimensional radar in the 80’s and the ability to receive and forward radar images from NATO’s radar aircraft, you could register missiles that went below radar height. Thereby, the station became an essential part of electronic warfare – and, as part of the NADGE chain, could support high-priority tactical operations, according to Salling.

As a consequence of the apparent end of the Cold War in the 90s, the radar station at Sornfelli was closed in 2007.

However, there are plans to reopen it - but that’s another story.

Anker Eli Petersen

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Landscapes

Skálhøvdi



Skálhøvdi



View from Skálhøvdi

Photos: Pól Sundskarð

Approximately midway on the east side of the island of Sandoy, one of the Faroe Islands' most striking landmarks faces the tempestuous Atlantic Ocean.

This is the *Skálhøvdi* promontory, which separates the two villages, Skálavík to the north and Húsavík to the south. In the topographical sense, a "promontory" is the term for a headland with its highest point jutting out into the sea. Ravages of time, erosion and repeated landslides have gradually eroded the seaside rock resulting in an indentation at the end, a so-called "*barmur*" with vertical rock sides - thereby creating the distinctive headland that characterizes Skálhøvdi's features.

In his book "*Søgur og søgubrot*" (Stories and Fragments), Jóannes Dalsgaard tells us that Skálhøvdi was the last place on Sandoy where the old Faroese sheep breed existed before it was exterminated. Female sheep on Skálhøvdi used to have small upright horns – and the reason, according to the old shepherd, Pætur í Búð, was the fact that they were in part descendants of the old breed. Legend has it that a long time ago, "big birds", ie. guillemots, teals and razorbills bred in Skálhøvdi's rock wall. But after a large landslide, the entire bird mountain crashed down on the *Torvunæs* indentation and the birds subsequently disappeared from the mountain.

The village of Skálavík, reportedly, had an original sandy beach just like Húsavík on the other side of Skálhøvdi. After a hurricane, possibly the infamous Candlemas hurricane in 1602, the sand disappeared and instead the beach became covered with pebbles. Someone puts this phenomenon in connection with the aforementioned landslide in Skálhøvdi, but that is improbable.

The pebbles have probably been there all along, just buried under the sand. And it probably takes some more time along with other conditions to shape the beautiful pebbles that make up the beach of Skálavík and Skálhøvdi. They were probably deposited back in the ice age, which incidentally shaped both Skálhøvdi and the valleys where Skálavík and Húsavík are located.

Even though the big birds disappeared from the mountain in Skálhøvdi, men from Skálavík could still hunt the smaller puffin, south of *Borðtangí*. A hole had been made through the seaweed, so that at low tide you could walk barefoot from the beach under the indentation, over to a place on the south side, wherefrom puffins were caught with "*fleygingarstong*" - a racket-like rod with a net at the end.

In the sea just off the promontory, there is also a skerry, popularly called *Flidnasker*,

Skálhøvdi is the landmark of the village of Skálavík.

because it was populated with common limpet (*patella vulgata*), "*flíða*" in Faroese. There they used to pick up the limpets that were used for bait in coastal fishing.

Skálhøvdi is the landmark of the village of Skálavík. An impressive phenomenon of nature and geology, whose dimensions are best viewed from a boat at sea. Such a visit is most definitely recommended if you are lucky enough to be in the area.

Anker Eli Petersen



Colour Maestro

Arnold Vegghamar



Twilight, 1993



Village, 2007

The sharp blue and green formations of mountains and grass quiver in the yellow and red rays from the setting sun.

It is a magnificent natural experience which is displayed with full force and dramatic splendour of colours in the painting *Twilight* from 1993. The master behind this work, Arnold Vegghamar, is his own man both stylistically and motivically to such an extent that the viewer in front of one of his works is rarely in doubt as to the author's identity. The recognizable style is achieved because the visual artist endows a classic Faroese landscape painting with a distinct perspective, in many cases by going very close to the subject, just as he uses atypical effulgent range of colors.

The painter Arnold Vegghamar was born in 1937 in Viðareiði. He is an autodidactic painter who already the fifties started working as as visual artist, participating in the *Ólavsøka Art Exhibition* in 1957. He was then a student at the short-lived but important art school run by the modernist pioneers, Ingálvr av Reyni, Jack Kampmann and Janus Kamban in the winter of 1958-59. Vegghamar was apprenticed to a goldsmith and worked in the trade for a number of years, whilst also painting, but for the last several years he has devoted himself entirely to visual arts in the studio at his home in Viðareiði.

In 2010, the Faroe Islands Art Museum held a large separate exhibition displaying Arnold Vegghamar's older and more recent works. Here we see an encapsulation of Vegghamar's distinct artistic development towards an increasingly radical simplification and abstraction of landscape motifs, which unmistakably took off at the start of the new millennium. These images appear almost primitive in their intrepid construction and colour choices, with few but strong colours and a powerful, simplified field painting. During his many years in

the service of art, Arnold Vegghamar has developed his composition from naturalistic landscape painting and a fierce coloristic expressionism to a relatively simple and unostentatious style, in which he reinterprets the well-known theme of the village by the sea inspired by his own surroundings in and around Viðareiði. He has reiterated and simplified this motif, so that it has become iconic in paintings that adorn the walls of many homes.

As evidenced by a painting like *Bygd* (Village) from 2007, the motif is expressed in naivistic style with houses devoid of doors, windows or other realistic details. The red, yellow and black cabins are almost arbitrarily placed on the painting's surface like floating Lego bricks above a green ground representing grass. In addition, we observe ocean, sky and mountains. These bricks form some of Arnold Vegghamar's basic elements, which he

arranges diversely in a seemingly endless series of combinations.

Despite the cheerful, luminous colours in Arnold Vegghamar's paintings, the impression can come across as serious and mystical – the landscape paintings are usually empty of people, revealing only life provided by nature. On the other hand, the candy-coloured rocks in the mountains and by the beach seem vibrantly alive, almost as if they were populated by supernatural beings. This gives Vegghamar's pictorial world a coherent character, which is further emphasized by the horizontal line and the edge of the mountain that meanders through the visionary landscape portrayals.

*Kinna Poulsen,
MA in Art History and Art Critic*



**New issue: Sornfelli radar station****Issue date:** 20.02.2023**Value:** 31.00 and 61.00 DKK**Number:** FO 992-993**Size, stamp:** 30 x 40 mm**Size, mini-sheet:** 84 x 64 mm**Photos / artist:** Jákup Brúsá**Printing method:** Offset**Printer:** Bpost, Belgium**Postal use:** Letters and large letters abroad, 0-250 g.**Other products:****Landscapes: Skálhøvdi****Issue date:** 20.02.2023**Value:** 21.00 and 31.00 DKK**FO 994-995****Size, stamp:** 40 x 30 mm**Photos / artist:** Pól Sundskarð**Printing method:** Offset**Printer:** Bpost, Belgium**Postal use:** Inland letters and letters abroad, 0-100 g.**Other products:** Selfadhesive booklet with 2x3 stamps + 2 postcards**Art by Arnold Vegghamar****Issue date:** 20.02.2023**Value:** 21.00 and 47.00 DKK**FO 996-997****Size, stamp:** 30 x 35 mm**Photos / artist:** Arnold Vegghamar**Printing method:** Offset**Printer:** Cartor Security Printers, France**Postal use:** Letters and large letters inland, 0-250 g.**Other products:** 2 posters**New issue:****Franking labels 2023: Villages in Suðuroy****Issue date:** 20.02.2023**Value:** 4 x 21.00 DKK**Size:** 55.0 x 22.5 mm**Artist:** Janus Dam Guttesen**Printing method:** Flexo-print**Printer:** Limo Labels, Denmark

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