



INTERNATIONAL FORUM

OSLO, NORWAY

**November
NEWSLETTER
11/2016**

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Number 415



INTERNATIONAL FORUM

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Forum Diary

DATE	EVENT	TIME	PAGE
November 29	Christmas Lunch at Asker Museum	11:30	Oct NL
December 05	Christmas Meeting	19:00	4

Committee leaders:

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From the President



Dear members,

I think that most Norwegians have an urge to talk about the weather. And I am no exception. Born in Bergen, where I lived for the first 20 years of my life, I am used to and actually enjoy the rain. Because as we say in Bergen: there is no bad weather, only bad clothing!

Today I woke up to winter; to the first day of snow and temperatures below zero degrees Celsius. It is windy and cold compared to the fantastic weather we had in October. But my advice to you all is: dress properly, and you will be able to enjoy winter with the crisp air and all the different winter activities such as skiing, skating or just walking in all the fantastic surroundings of Oslo. Speaking no walking, I would like to remind you of the Friday walking tours that are organized by the walking group.

Winter is also a time for indoors activities, and again, let me remind you of some of the possibilities that the Forum is offering. We organize for instance the book club, the cooking group, the indoor golf group, or maybe some of you would like to join the choir or play bridge. You can also bring your partner and learn to dance both standard and Latin dances, or why not take up traditional rose painting. The possibilities to be active are many, you just have to grab the occasion.

If you want to know more about the different activities, please log onto our Website, www.iforum.no, click 'Menu' and then 'Activities' and you will find both the non-paying and the paying activities listed. Many will start again in 2017.

I wish you all an enjoyable winter season and hope to see many of you at the Christmas Lunch at 11:30 on November 29 at the Asker Museum. We will enjoy a very special lunch, based on Hulda Garborg's private recipes, thanks to the Special Events Committee.

Best regards from

Siri S. Frigaard
President

COMING EVENTS

CHRISTMAS MEETING



You are all cordially invited to the International Forum's Annual Christmas meeting! This is a wonderful occasion to start off the festive season with friends for a sing-along led by the Forum Singers, a buffet of assorted finger food, wine and mineral water, coffee and tea.

As usual, we need gifts for the traditional raffle, the proceeds of which will again be donated to the Ravens [Natteravnene], a group of volunteer parents and grandparents who patrol the streets on weekend nights to make sure that young people are safe. We encourage all our members to bring gifts for the raffle and are very grateful for all contributions.

The raffle sticks cost NOK 50.- each. We have traditionally been able to raise around NOK 5000.- and hope to do so again this year.

We hope that as many of you as possible will join us!

DATE/TIME: Monday, **December 5** at **19:00**

For more information, please contact the IF Office.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Christmas Lunch

Tuesday, **November 29**, at 11:30.

For information, please see the October *Newsletter*.

ACTIVITIES

Monthly Wednesday Bridge

The **December** Christmas Bridge will take place on Wednesday, December 14 at 10:30. The hostess is Kirsten Whist. After playing we usually enjoy a nice lunch! You are very welcome! Inger Støtvig

For more information, please contact the IF Office.

The Cooking Group

The cooking group has met twice already this autumn. On November 1, we were treated to Scottish dishes from Eva Ziegler's husband's family. A big 'thank you'! For the next cooking morning we will bring our own Christmas cookies. Some will be baked beforehand, and some of us will bring the dough in order to show how the cookies are made. Our hostess will prepare a light lunch.



DATE/TIME: Monday December 12 at 11:30
In January, we will be treated to a Russian Christmas by our Russian member Irina Ilnitskaya.

Liss R. Laan *For more information, please contact the IF Office.*

R E P O R T S

MONTHLY MEETING

October Monthly Meeting



Truls Hanevold, former Norwegian ambassador to India from 1991 to 2003, gave a very interesting talk about Bhutan. He was accompanied by his wife Leena, who was dressed in a beautiful and colourful *kira*, a typical Bhutanese dress. During his stay in India, Mr. Hanevold went to Bhutan 12 times. In Bhutan, he travelled around the country by car, and also trekked along ancient foot paths. He has considerable knowledge about the country and its people, traditions and customs. It was clear to us that he was very attracted to the country.

Besides showing us a variety of handicrafts that he had brought along, he presented a series of colourful slides of people, nature, buildings, and mountains taken during his

visits, and shared much of his experience with us.

Bhutan is a kingdom in the Eastern Himalayas. The mountains measure up to 7 800 m, most have never been climbed, and are regarded sacred. The highest pass you can cross by car is 3 988 m. Bhutan is a very traditional country, and the national costumes are mandatory. People wear some very special traditional boots. No one wears Western clothes. Most houses have a very distinct Bhutanese architecture. The national flower is the Blue Poppy – very rare.

The country has less than 800 000 inhabitants and Thimphu – at 2 300 m – is the capital and largest city with 60 000 people. To get to Bhutan, you travel by air from New Delhi to Paro by Druk Air, the national airline which operates two aircraft. Tourism is very restricted, so there are only a few tourists. Those who venture in travel in groups through local agencies; backpacking is not allowed.

The inhabitants of Bhutan are very religious and practice a special kind of Buddhism. They also believe in reincarnation. It is very important that visitors respect their beliefs.



The Dzongs are beautifully ornamented buildings/fortresses, often placed on hilltops. Many date back more than five centuries. They dominate all major towns and serve as administrative centres. They are also the venue where major festivals take place. The King has his offices in the big Dzong in the capital.

Over the centuries, there have been several smaller kingdoms within the country. But in 1907, Bhutan became a single country with only one king, when Ugyen Wangchuk was elected as the hereditary ruler. His grandson Jigme Wangchuk ascended to the throne at the age of 19 in 1972.

King Jigme was a modern monarch, educated in England. He promoted modern education, the development of hydropower, tourism, and rural development. He had married four sisters. When Jigme abdicated in 2006, his son – **Jigme**

Khesar Namgyel – took over. He has only *one* wife. In 2008, Bhutan adopted a new modern constitution, political parties and a parliament. Bhutanese boys and girls are very beautiful. They are allowed to decide for themselves whom they want to marry. This has become widely accepted, and in this respect, Bhutan is very different from its neighbours.

Bhutan has diplomatic relations with 18 countries, of which India and Japan are the most important. Only India and Bangladesh have embassies. Norway has entertained excellent relations with Bhutan, mainly because of the work among lepers by the Santal Mission. Leprosy has now been eradicated. Hydropower using water from the Himalayas is the country's most important export product. Norway has contributed to the various projects with much needed know-how.

In Bhutan, both the people and the authorities are preoccupied with protecting nature, keeping the vegetation, and not cutting trees for industrial purposes. The forests are protected. There is no logging and consequently no hillside erosion as in many neighbouring states. Several animals, such as tigers, leopards, yaks, bears, and lions, are sacred.



The population is mainly vegetarian, since they are not allowed to kill. They may, however, on occasion eat meat and fish, but only if the animal has been killed by someone non-Bhutanese. Chilli is an important ingredient in the food, in addition to rice. The local weekend market is the only place where they can buy fresh vegetables. No meat is sold in the market as the slaughter of animals is not allowed. Meat and fish are brought in from India.

Children wear school uniforms, and families usually send one son to study at a monastery at the age of 5, but they can leave later when they want. Monks dance at religious festivals – sometimes wearing masks from the 8th and 9th centuries.

Laila Haegh

ART COMMITTEE

Visit to Japonomania

Thursday October 6, a group of fifteen Forum ladies met to visit the major summer exhibition in Oslo: *Japonomania*, a joint venture by the National Gallery and the Museum of Decorative Arts and Design.

This was the last opportunity to see the Museum of Decorative Arts and Design before it closes. Many of us also enjoyed the sales at the shop there!!

Although divided into two parts, the exhibition presented a common idea: how Japanese art had a deep influence on Western Art in the last decades of the 19th century and the early 20th century.

Japan had been 'terra incognita' for the majority of European artists until 1854, at which time Japan opened its borders after 200 years of isolation. Following this, a quantity of objects flooded into Europe – traditional dresses, fans, boxes, engravings, paper art ... These objects were frequently used by European artists to add a touch of exoticism to their work which remained very European and 'classic' in its composition. However, this first generation of artists (1860 – 1890) did not really understand the complexity of Japanese art and culture.



It was only towards the end of the 19th century that European artists, under the influence of impressionist and neo-impressionist artists (e.g. Monet, Degas, Van Gogh and Gauguin) started to acquire a deeper understanding of Japanese art, an insight reflected in the structure, composition, use of lines, bright fields of

colours and an ideal of simplification in their art. This was a time in Europe during which the boundaries between Fine Arts – painting and sculpture in particular – and Decorative Arts started to become less marked, and it is in this sense that Japanese art wielded a strong influence on the Arts and Crafts Movement, which began in Great Britain in the 1880s.

In Norway, the national themes and love of nature in combination with Japanese impulses constituted a perfect symbiosis. The Japanese influence can be strongly felt in landscape painting but also in textile work and furniture design. In a sense, it seems as if Norwegian artists had a predisposition towards Japanese art.

To conclude, I would like to say that this was an extremely stimulating exhibition with pertinent visual associations that made the subject very accessible: a great success!

Chloé Turlotte

SPECIAL EVENTS

Visit to the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation, NRK

The twenty-eight ladies who turned up for the visit to NRK on October 20 were treated to a most interesting tour; one they will not easily forget. In fact, we will all think of our visit every time we watch or listen to programmes from this public broadcasting corporation – the oldest in Norway.



NRK now comprises 14 radio channels and 3 TV channels, a tremendous expansion since the humble start in 1933, when NRK was founded. Radio came to Norway in the 1920s, but not many people owned a radio set, and many found it strange to listen to sounds coming out of a box in their living rooms. In the beginning, most of the programmes consisted of music played on a gramophone connected to a microphone.

When NRK was first established, the station hired musicians from the Bristol Restaurant to play live in the studio, because it was customary for the public to send requests and the musicians from Bristol had a wide repertory of genres.

These musicians became the forerunners of KORR, NRK's famous house orchestra, still by many considered to be Norway's most versatile orchestra.



The construction of the present premises – the iconographic white radio building at Marienlyst – started in 1938, and was still not finished when Norway was occupied by Germany in April 1940. The Germans must have believed that they would be in Norway for a very long time, because they put lots of resources into completing the plans prepared by Nils Holter, the architect who had won the design proposal competition. In fact, he designed not only the building, but also much of the furniture, in the Functionalist style.

On our way through the corridors, we passed a most interesting wall decoration, which looked like a forest. Looking closer, we could see that it consisted of names. The artist had wanted to use the names of all those who paid the national television licence fee in order to listen and watch NRK programmes legally, but this was stopped due to privacy concerns. So instead the names of all participants in the Birkebeinerrennet (a famous Norwegian skiing competition) were used, since those names were already made public, published in the result lists of the newspaper sports columns!

Inside the radio theatre studio, our guide gave us an interesting description of how radio productions were and are made. In the beginning, radio programmes were speech only, but some actors said you could *hear* the (private) clothes they were wearing or that they felt the need for costumes to get into the mood of the character they were playing. So, if you peep into the studio when a play is being recorded, you may see actors standing in positions around a microphone in medieval costumes for instance!

Sound effects are important to create a proper atmosphere, and we were shown how some of these were made before an archive of digital sound clips was established.

TV came to Norway in 1960 after some years of test productions. King Olav read a speech for the official opening, from his private desk which had been brought to the studio.



Seeing as well as *hearing* a tiny person talking to you through a little box in your living room might have been a strange idea to many, but some came to develop a sense of comfort by having at least *some* company during their otherwise lonely days when the ‘hallo dame’ (female channel host) announced the various programmes and at the end of the day smiled and wished the viewers a good night’s sleep. NRK still offers the service of channel hosts, while other most commercial companies use voice-over only.

We were reminded that in the early years, the daily TV productions only lasted an hour, but many watched the ‘interval program’ of fish swimming in their aquarium – the only reality show of bygone times!

Towards the end of the tour, we were taken to the workshops where many of the backdrops for the different TV programmes are produced. We also visited the studios where shows such as *Lindmo* and *QuizDan* are recorded. You can book free tickets online for productions like these, except for *Nytt på Nytt* which is so popular that there is a charge of NOK 100.- for tickets! We were also given a sneak peek into Studio 2, where the annual big charity fundraising event (*TV-aksjonen*) – this year benefitting the Red Cross – was due to take place on the following Sunday. We also saw the *Dagsrevyen* studio, the main daily newscast still watched by a high number of Norwegians.

The final stop – on overtime – was a visit to the legendary collection of costumes. The singer Nora Brockstedt’s ‘Voi Voi’ costume for the Eurovision Song Contest in 1960, and an enormous pair of trousers in Setesdal national costume style worn by Max Mekker in the Norwegian Sesame Street in the 1990s were among some of the outfits which we were shown from among the more than 200 000 costumes in the collection.

Selma Fergus Skavlan – a journalism student who works part time as a guide at NRK was a most capable and charming guide. All twenty-eight ladies on the tour strongly recommend her should you plan another visit to the NRK and should you have a chance to influence the choice of guide!

Ellen Vollebæk

A R O U N D O S L O

Christmas market in Spikersuppa

Monday – Sunday from November 19 to December 20. Free of charge.

This annual Christmas market is located right in the middle of Oslo, with delicacies and crafts for sale, a Christmas workshop for children (paying activity); Christmas-themed entertainment and a Ferris wheel.



For information, please go to <http://www.visitoslo.com/en/whats-on/events/>

Los Angeles: A Fiction
Astrup Fearnley

The exhibition *Los Angeles: A Fiction* brings LA to Oslo! The exhibition presents 34 artists and 84 authors from the last 50 years. Together, they create a fictive and subjective vision of Los Angeles. The artists are of all ages, from the up-and-coming to the established icons of Californian art history. The literary works comprise selected texts written in and about Los Angeles from the same 50 year-period, collected in a book.



For information, see <http://afmuseet.no/en/utstillinger>

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