



INTERNATIONAL FORUM

OSLO, NORWAY

**March
NEWSLETTER
03/2017**

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Number 419



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Forum Diary

DATE	EVENT	TIME	PAGE
March 21	Special Events - Norway Designs	09:15	4
April 4	Irma S. Jæger, Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter	11:30	5

From the President



Dear members,

I suppose that many of you are now looking forward to the arrival of spring, and that some of you will be abroad to avoid the rest of the winter. We have already enjoyed a couple of days with spring in the air, but the cold weather seems to have returned with the possibility of snow. Normally, this kind of changing weather is typical of April, but then again, in terms of weather, nothing has been normal this winter... Nevertheless, let us hope that we can look forward to a long and beautiful spring!

Talking about spring, the March programme started as usual with the Monthly Meeting and a very interesting presentation of some truly wonderful scenic Norwegian tourist routes by Mr. Per Ritzler from the Norwegian Public Roads Administration. Many of us who got a spring-like feeling when he presented all the fantastic trips that we can take in the various parts of Norway. He introduced us not only to the beautiful nature along the routes, but also to the fantastic architecture of the different service buildings, cafés and bridges, all constructed in harmony with the surrounding nature.

I also hope that many of you have taken advantage of the varied events that have been arranged for the month of March by the different IF groups and committees. *Many thanks!* to both the Special Events Committee and the Art Committee for organising the interesting visits to Norway Designs and the National Gallery. I admire the creativity of the members of the various committees; we all owe them our gratitude!

As I'm sure you all appreciate, the International Forum depends on volunteers to help with the Office and administration, so if you would like to participate in any way, please let us know. As former President Berit Lindstrøm once said: 'Without volunteers to run the International Forum, there would be no Forum.'

Let me close by reminding you that this year's Annual General Meeting will take place on June 12. Please reserve the date! It is important that members attend the meeting to show that we are a vital and energetic organisation!

So, enjoy what's left of winter as well as Easter in April!

Siri S. Frigaard
President

FROM THE BOARD

Formal notice of the Annual General Meeting, to be held on Monday, June 12, will be sent out in the *April Newsletter*. This will be slightly later than usual due to the late Easter, therefore notice is hereby given that members' proposals for discussion at the Annual General Meeting must be submitted to the Board before **Friday, April 21** (Statutes § 3.2).

Siri Frigaard

COMING EVENTS

MONTHLY MEETING

Due to the Easter Holidays there will be no Monthly Meeting in April. The next Monthly Meeting will be on Monday, May 8.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Norway Designs, not just a shop!

Tuesday, March 21

For more information, see the February *Newsletter*.



THE ART COMMITTEE

Irma Salo Jæger: A Journey in Jæger's Universe of Colour Henie Onstad Kunstsenter (Art Centre)



Irma S. Jæger

Jæger's starting point is that colour is as essential for human beings as the air we breathe. Without colour, she says, everything would be grey.

The Finnish-Norwegian artist Irma Salo Jæger (b. 1928) has been a prominent figure in the Norwegian art world since the 1960s, and is still going strong! This retrospective exhibition shows 60 of her artworks, and moves from figurative to non-figurative, from monotone to bright radiant colour. The necessity of colour is apparent as the viewer moves through her *oeuvre*.

After a long grey winter, let us get together and celebrate an explosion of colour! Be surprised!

DATE/TIME: Tuesday 4 April – 11:30 for 12:00

For more information, please contact the IF Office.

ACTIVITIES

Cooking Group

NB! Wednesday, March 22 at 12:30

Thank you to Betty for hosting the last cooking morning in a Latin American way. At the next cooking morning, we will be learn about Indonesian traditions and make some lovely food!



TIME: Wednesday, March 22 at 12.30

SIGN UP: Sign up to Liss R.

For more information, please contact the IF Office.

Monthly Wednesday Bridge

The bridge in April will be held on Wednesday March 19 at 10:30 at the home of Siren Grønlie. Her address is Ullernkammen 25, 0380 Oslo. You are most welcome! Inger Støtvig.

For more information, please contact the IF Office.

Indoor Golf

The Indoor Golf Group has resumed activities for the winter season 2017. We usually start with a coffee. We have a special price for balls, and private lessons can be arranged. All levels of golfers are welcome – also beginners– so, please do come along!

TIME: Thursdays at 10:30

PLACE: Fornebu Indoor Golf Centre, Snarøyveien 69, 1367 Snarøya (the old aircraft hangar)

PARKING: Free parking 3 hours for International Forum Members. You only need to get a small yellow card to put in your car window together with the ticket from the paying machine which is free for our members

CONTACT: **Anne-Sofie Trosdahl-Oraug:**

For more information, please contact the IF Office.

*** New Book Club ***



We have now a new Book Club, as the International Book Club cannot take in more participants for the moment.

If you are interested in participating in this New Book Club, please contact Signe Lise Howel. *For more information, please contact the IF Office.*

Anita Solheim

R E P O R T S

MONTHLY MEETING

The US Presidential Election

Barbara Ødegaard has been a volunteer for Democrats Abroad for many years. She shared with us her experiences at the Democratic Convention and at the caucuses, which are organised at the American Lutheran Church in Oslo whenever there is an American presidential election. Both Republicans Abroad and Democrats Abroad use the same church as their base, but on different days.

As prescribed by the US Constitution, the US Presidential election is held every four years, on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November. The process begins with the respective parties' primaries and caucuses. While most states hold primary elections, sixteen states hold caucuses. Instead of going to a polling place, voters attend local private events run by the political parties, and vote there. Presidential election primaries and caucuses are two different methods of accomplishing the same basic thing: to allow the members of each political party nation-wide and abroad select their party's presidential candidate.



Primaries and caucuses also select the delegates to send to the party's national convention, at which a final candidate or nominee is chosen. The nominee then announces his or her Vice Presidential candidate. The candidates for the two main parties campaign across the country and try to explain their political views and platform to voters. They also participate in public debates with candidates from the other party.

At each party's national convention – held in the summer before the presidential election – the parties select a presidential candidate based on how party delegates vote at the party's convention. The Republican and Democratic Parties in each state select delegates to represent the voters of that state at the Party's Convention.

Barbara was involved in President Obama's campaign in Oslo in both 2008 and 2012. The American Lutheran church in Oslo was made available on several

evenings for American voters abroad to register and vote. The votes were counted and sent back to the US. UPS often offers free delivery of the ballots to make sure that the overseas votes arrive on time for the primaries and caucuses in the various states.

During the general election, Americans cast their vote for their presidential candidate at the polls; however, the tally of the popular vote does not determine the winner. Instead, the President is elected indirectly by the members of the Electoral College. Citizens vote in their state to choose a slate of ‘electors’ – pledged to vote for a party's presidential and vice-presidential candidate. A state's entitled allotment of electors equals the number of members in its Congressional delegation: one for each member in the House of Representatives plus two for the Senators.

There are 538 presidential electors selected on a state-by-state basis, as determined by the laws of each state. The number of electors varies from one state to another, but the total number is the same number as there are members of the Congress (the Senate and the House of Representatives). The District of Columbia has no congressional representatives because it is not a state but a federal district. Since 1961, the District has had three electors who cast their votes according to the result of the popular vote in the state.

Since the total number of electors is 538, a presidential candidate needs 270 votes (half) to win! Except for the states of Main and Nebraska, all states have adopted a ‘winner takes all’ or ‘general ticket’ system – in which the winning candidate gets ALL the votes from a particular state. This system can therefore create a situation in which a candidate may win the popular vote, yet lose the presidential race because he or she lost the electoral vote. This is what happened to Al Gore in 2000 and to Hillary Clinton in 2016.

The preparations for the election usually start in the spring of the year before the election. Those who are interested then announce their intention to run for president. During that summer (one year ahead of the election) and until spring of the election year, the primary debates of the parties are organised.

From January to June in the election year, the political parties in each state hold their primaries or caucuses. New Hampshire is the first state to hold primary elections, and Iowa is the first state to hold a caucus. Voters from both parties can register for the election and cast votes in the primaries. These votes decide who will be the delegates at the party convention, at which the presidential candidate of the party is formally chosen.

From July to early September, the political parties hold long primary debates and nominating conventions. The electors chosen during these primaries will cast their votes to decide who will become their party's nominees for President and Vice President. However, the choice of each party's candidate is usually clear before the primaries.

Between September and October, the presidential candidates from each party engage in presidential debates, participate in campaign rallies, and explain their politics to the general public. There are also debates between candidates from the two parties.

On the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November, registered voters in each state cast their ballots to choose Electoral College electors. In December, on the first Monday after the second Wednesday, the electors cast their votes in the Electoral College. Voting takes place in the capital of each state. In early January of the following year, Congress counts the electoral votes, and the Speaker of the Senate announces the winner.

Barbara has been a volunteer for the Democrats both in Europe and in the US. She has caucused in Oslo three times. During the 2008 election, the Democrats Abroad held its vigil at the Grand Hotel, and people were very excited about Barack Obama's chances of winning. When Barbara left the rally in the early hours carrying a life-size photograph of him, many Norwegians, including the taxi driver, asked to take a photo of themselves beside it.



Anita Solheim had baked in the colours of the USA

Barbara's experiences campaigning for President Obama has allowed her to meet Americans from all over the world. The Democratic campaign and convention are dependent upon a huge number of volunteers who are assigned to groups and functions. On one occasion Barbara was in the 'tech group' and was the volunteer from the farthest away, little peripheral Norway. The other volunteers struggled with her surname – Ødegaard. As one volunteer put it, 'I just can't remember her name, but it sounds a lot like "Oh dear God".' And that became her nickname. Such a very sweet memory!

Irene Chang

INTERNATIONAL FORUM EVENT AT THE MUNCH MUSEUM

Emma and Edvard: Love in a Time of Loneliness



On Wednesday, February 1, about 126 members of the Diplomatic Corps and members and friends of International Forum attended the special event hosted by the Munch Museum in Oslo. The event was the result of Anita Pratap's initiative. She also very expertly led the panel discussion.



Stein Olav Henrichsen, Mieke Bal, Jon-Ove Steihaug. Photo by Sidsel J. Semb.

The Director of the Museum, Stein Olav Henrichsen, and the chief curator, Jon-Ove Steihaug, explained the future ambitions of the Museum and the perennial

relevance of Munch's work in a modern perspective. Mr. Henrichsen talked enthusiastically about the new Munch Museum currently being constructed in Bjørvika not far from the Opera House.

Mr Steihaug introduced Ms Mieke Bal – celebrated artist and renowned European scholar of literature and culture – who specializes in narrative theory. Her writing is thoroughly interdisciplinary and ranges from literature and visual culture to theology and biblical studies. She has curated the current comparative exhibition in which she draws a parallel between the world of Munch and the life of Emma Bovary, the main character in a novel by the French classic author Gustav Flaubert (published in 1856). Emma Bovary, a country physician's wife takes a lover in order to escape the banalities, emptiness and loneliness of her boring provincial life.



Mieke Bal and Anita Pratap

Ms Bal explained her special journey with Emma and Edvard. She explained how she had worked with Michelle Williams Gamaker on the *Madame B* project, which consists of an immersive video installation that illustrates the link between capitalism and romance, the bond between capitalism and emotions, and the commercial aspects of romantic love.

Ms Bal drew a parallel between Munch's work and her video installations, explaining the kinetic qualities of many of Munch's works: the motion and fluidity in his paintings and prints, and of course, the main theme, the sense of loneliness, isolation and alienation, even in the company of others. Ms Bal has succeeded in creating an audio-visual interactivity between film, text and painting, illustrating the relationship between Munch's work and Flaubert's text.



A special *Thank you!* to Anita Pratap for her wonderful initiative and elegant moderating, and to the efficient IF volunteers who ensured that everything went smoothly and according to plan!

Elizabeth S. Rasmussen

SPECIAL EVENTS

The Oslo Stock Exchange

On a chilly grey day in February, thirty eight ladies and one gentleman gathered at the premises of the Oslo Stock Exchange (Oslo Børs) near Bjørvika. The classical building, with its temple-like façade, tells us that this is a place where serious business is done. We all assembled in the large entrance hall, elegant with columns, marble and a sweeping staircase. The sound from a large group of ladies exchanging greetings and chatting seemed slightly misplaced in these dignified surroundings!

After we had registered, Per Eikrem, Director of Corporate Communications, appeared and welcomed us to Oslo Børs. He took us into a beautiful room, the original Stock Exchange, in the oldest part of the building. This room is now used for meetings. We all stood around admiring the exquisite colourful decorations in the ceiling, the magnificent chandelier, the elegant wallpaper, the furnishings and portraits, while Mr Eikrem told us about the history of the building.

The Oslo Børs, first known as Christiania Børs, was founded in 1819. At first, it rented some office space but soon needed its own house. Architect Christian H. Grosch, a dominant figure in Norwegian architecture in the first half of the 19th

Century, and considered to be the “father” of Norwegian architects, was commissioned to design the building, which was then erected on the site of Christiania’s first public park, Grønningen (The Green). Built in classical style, it is Oslo’s first monumental building. It was completed in 1828, and Oslo Børs opened in 1829. Later on, in 1911, three wings were added, forming a square with a garden in the centre.



In 1987, the garden area was roofed over and built in, to form the room where today’s trading activities take place. An exciting detail on a wall in the original room seemed to be a clock. However, this was no clock at all, but a *wind-rose*, which – connected to a weather-vane on the roof – shows the direction of the wind. This information was important because the arrival time of sailing ships loaded with goods was affected by the direction of the wind, something which consequently affected the price of the goods. Mr Eikrem also demonstrated the ceremonial brass hand-bell from the old days, which is still rung whenever a new company is listed on the Oslo Børs.

Today, there is concern about development plans for the adjacent area. The Oslo Børs building stands on underground floats, and deep excavations in the ground nearby might affect the water level and cause the Oslo Børs to sink...

We then went into an adjoining room used for lectures. Mr Eikrem told us that Oslo Børs was privatised in 2001. The largest shareholder is Den Norske Bank. In the following talk about Oslo Børs, Mr. Eikrem emphasised that the correct phrase today is not ‘stock exchange’ but ‘security trading’. Today, all transactions are carried out digitally through computer networks, so trading is noiseless and completed ‘in an instant’.

Oslo Børs cannot afford to buy all the necessary technical equipment alone, so it co-operates with the London Stock Exchange on technology and common trading systems. We were presented with some head-spinning figures: for example, at Oslo Børs alone, **five thousand** transactions are completed **per second**, and the turnover per day is four to five **billion** NOK! Luckily, there is a built-in security system, so if an investor mistakenly presses too many 0's, the computer will detect this and instantly cancel the transaction.



The wind-rose

Oslo Børs has a world leading position in relation to energy, shipping and seafood industries, due to Norwegian expertise. Oslo Børs is active in an international market controlled by international rules and regulations compliant with European Union standards. It works with Norwegian investment banks with world class expertise and placing capacity, and also international investment banks. Investors look to the Oslo market for access to high-quality Norwegian and international companies. Oslo Børs can offer efficient stock and bond markets in terms of the listing process, the raising of capital and infrastructure.

As you can imagine, many questions were put to Mr Eikrem, since this was unknown territory for many of us. Nonetheless, he seemed to appreciate our interest and answered our questions readily, commenting that we were a very active group! Wenche Mohr, the leader of the Special Events Committee leader, thanked Mr Eikrem for giving us such an interesting talk, and presented him with a gift of wine.

Many thanks to the Special Events Committee for arranging this event.

Rosemary Hauge

ART COMMITTEE

Gallery Walk in Oslo

Twenty-five eager art lovers turned up for our February gallery walk. We started at Kunstnerforbundet – a gallery of contemporary art – where we had a short but useful introduction to the various artists. Two artists that really distinguished themselves from the crowd were Tore Hansen, a minimalist who paints stick elks reminiscent of Giacometti, a motive from where he lives deep in Finnskogen (Forest of the Finns - about 150 km north-east of Oslo); and Vanna Barlow, whose detailed drawings on paper, some of them three-dimensional, were both delicate and disturbing.



We then proceeded to Willas Contemporary to have a look at black and white photographs by Jan C. Schlegel. Schlegel has travelled and photographed ancient tribes in Africa, an experience that inspired him to photograph *modern*, mostly European tribes. Some of the body decorations were quite extreme albeit proudly displayed.



The third gallery we visited was Q8. In vivid contrast to the black and white photographs of Schlegel, we were met with a wall of colour with such a thick layer of paint that we could smell the turpentine. These paintings were the work

of a young up-and-coming Norwegian artist called Yngve Benum. Not easily forgotten!

Last stop was Blomqvist and Marian Heyerdahl's new work in polished steel and very tactile polyester. Her references read like a book and one really must go and see the exhibition to study the intricate and very beautiful shapes that she makes.

We were well received indeed in these very intimate galleries, despite our being a rather large and cheerful group, so a big 'Thank you' to all the curators!

Bente Brandt

'Murakami by Murakami'

Exhibition at the Astrup Fearnley Museum

Japanese contemporary art is breaking visitor records in Oslo, and demands attention through sheer vibrancy and size. The beautiful graphics, silk screens, silent landscapes, drifting birds and meditative hazes, that we associate with Japanese art, have suddenly been replaced by wild colours, infantile characters and fantastical creatures that overpopulate Murakami's vast canvases. His message is staring at us through nuclear eyes.

Only the Japanese have experienced the devastation of nuclear weapons, the degradation of self-identity and a loss of cultural roots and individuality. From the ashes, they have created a unique mix of Japanese and western culture, and have spawned a global empire of *manga* (cartoon) and *animé* (animation). Mr DOB is as recognizable as his western twin, Mickey Mouse.

Murakami uses his considerable knowledge of Japanese art and history to poke western culture and global consumerism in the eye. His *super flat* technique is his own original mode of expression, lying flat on a traditional *Nihonga* background of scraped pigments and powders that belong to the meditative hazes of earlier Japanese art.

His Buddhist Arhats (monks) look like monstrous ET figures with yin and yang and Zen circles spinning in their heads. Mr DOB has yin and yang symbols in his ears and nuclear symbols on his mushroom cloud head. Minimalistic Zen circles representing strength and rebirth compete with the ridiculous statues of *3m Girl* and *My Lonesome Cowboy*.

We are staring cultural loss in the face and are silly enough to fall over ourselves to buy the numerous Murakami consumer goods that contribute to our headlong wave-surf into Murakami's *Flames of Hell*. There is hope in the fact that Shiva dances in the flames and is reborn, and that the Zen snake bites off its own tail and starts the circle of life again.



Murakami sees himself as a Creator in his own right, made eternal by Louis Vuitton. We enjoy the intricacies of his works and the riotous colours, and we can look at *Metempsychosis*, the final meltdown, smiling at the sugary fantasy of nuclear angst. We are going to enjoy the ride, whatever happens.

With thanks to our eminent guide, an Iranian artist named Karen, and to Kerstin, Jutta and Katarina for organizing this event.

Jane Steenbuch

Issued by the Board of the International Forum

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