



# **INTERNATIONAL FORUM**

**OSLO, NORWAY**

**June  
NEWSLETTER  
06/2021**

<b>2</b>	<b>Forum Diary</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>President's Page</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>New Members</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Member of the Year</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Arendalsuka</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>Giant Without a Body, Astrup-Fearnley</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>Reports</b>
<b>12</b>	<b>Groups and Activities Autumn 2021</b>
<b>16</b>	<b>Impressions of Norway H.E. Fazli Çorman</b>
<b>19</b>	<b>Impressions of Norway H. E. Iwona Woicka-Żuławska</b>

**Number 466**



## INTERNATIONAL FORUM

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<b>Activities</b>	Anita Solheim

### Forum Diary

Date	Event	Time	Page
August 18	Ambassadors' Roundtable Arendalsuka	09:00	5
August 26	Nicole Eisenman: Giant Without a Body	11:45	7

### THE DEADLINE FOR SUBMITTING ARTICLES

For the August *Newsletter* is Thursday, **July 29**. Please send your contribution to Elizabeth S. Rasmussen and to

[int.forum@online.no](mailto:int.forum@online.no).

Please visit our website [www.iforum.no](http://www.iforum.no) for updates and the latest information.

## From the President



Dear Members,

Like astronauts returning to earth, we navigate our return to normal life. We went into lockdowns with anxiety. Now as we emerge, we experience “Re-entry Anxiety”. We brace ourselves for the splashdown into the sea of humanity. The sounds and sensations, the crowded streets and malls, the hustle and bustle of normal life seem abnormal.

But just as we adjusted to the stillness of the pandemic, we will adjust to the buzz of normal life, once again greeting family and friends, shopping, travelling, telling stories and relishing dinners cooked by other people. It is in our DNA to adapt in order to survive. With time and without endless virus variants, this pandemic will become a memory of a once-in-a-lifetime experience, as we remember whom we lost, how we ached, why we survived, what we gained, when we understood...what really makes us happy, how little we actually need.

This year too, we conducted an electronic AGM as physical meetings were not allowed. Thank you for your support and especially your vote. Your vote matters. It strengthens our organisation. The Board, Executive Committee, Newsletter, Activities and Office teams handled the pandemic disruption with determination and flexibility. When life returns to normal, there will be new programmes to look forward to, starting with our Ambassadors’ Roundtable, at Arendalsuka, Norway’s ‘must-experience’ and biggest ‘festival of democracy’ during calendar week 33. So, if you can, please visit beautiful Arendal with family and friends.

IF stands on the foundation built by the volunteer spirit of past and current members. Thank you for your contribution and your presence that makes International Forum the colourful mosaic it is.

Have a lovely summer!

*Anita Pratap*

President

*FROM THE BOARD*  
**NEW MEMBERS**



The International Forum is happy to welcome two new members

**MEMBER OF THE YEAR AWARD**



The 2020-2021 Member of the Year Award goes to:

**Gunnel Anita Solheim**

At its last Meeting on May 31, the IF Board examined the nominations sent in by the members and announced the winner. Gunnel Anita is awarded for her remarkable energy, creativity and enthusiasm to accept new challenges, which included in addition to all the activities, making an IF video for the Diplomatic Charity Event and managing our website.

A tribute to Gunnel Anita will be published in the *August Newsletter*. The unique gold-plated IF brooch will be presented to her at the next AGM.

# COMING EVENTS

## ARENDALSUKA

You are cordially invited with family and friends to attend

### GLOBAL OUTLOOK NORWAY

**August 17 at 13:00 -15:00**

**‘Recovery after Covid-19’**



Arendal Kulturhus

Speakers:

**Ine Eriksen Søreide**, Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs

**Nicolai Tangen**, CEO in Norges Bank Investment Management

**Tom Tugendhat**, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, United Kingdom

**Jon Gunnar Pedersen**, partner in Arctic Securities

Moderator: **Anita Pratap**

Read More at: <https://www.globaloutlook.no/program/>

## AMBASSADORS' ROUNDTABLE

### Are we Headed for a World Defined by Strategic Capitalism?

**August 18, 2021**

09:00 am – 10:15

Ballsalen, Gamle Rådhus

Keynote Speakers:

Ambassador of the United Kingdom, **H. E. Richard Wood**

Ambassador of China, **H. E Yi Xianliang**

Panel Discussion:

Ambassador of South Africa **H. E. Selaelo Ramokgopa**

Ambassador of Germany, **H.E. Alfred Grannas**

Ambassador of Turkey, **H. E. Fazli Çorman**

Ambassador of Mexico, **H. E. Ulises Canchola Gutiérrez**

Ambassador of Vietnam **H. E. Le Hong Lam**

Moderator: **Anita Pratap**

Read More at: <https://arendalsuka.no/event/user-view/15537>



Gamle Rådhus

## AMBASSADORS' BRIEFING

**August 18 at 10:20 – 11:00**

Ballsalen, Gamle Rådhus

Leading Norwegian analyst and political editor of *Dagens Næringsliv* **Frithjof Jacobsen** discusses key trends and what to expect in the September elections

Read more at: <https://arendalsuka.no/event/user-view/15539>

## ART COMMITTEE

**Nicole Eisenman: *Giant Without A Body***

Guided Tour at the Astrup Fearnley Museum

**August 26**



- DATE/TIME:** Thursday, **August 26**, 11:45 (for 12:00)
- SIGN UP:** By email to Katarine Plavnik  
or Rosie Løvdal as soon as possible and **no later than August 12**
- PLACE:** Astrup Fearnley Museum  
Strandpromenaden 2, 0252 Oslo
- PRICE:** NOK 105.- by Vipps **591747** or by bank payment to the  
Forum account: 1600 40 36631. **No cash will be handled.**  
Please mention the event in the transaction.  
Entrance to Astrup Fearnley 130.- paid at the entrance  
Max number of participants: 20
- TRANSPORT:** Trikk 12 to Aker Brygge  
Bus 21 and 54 to Filipstad
- LUNCH:** There are many good choices, both at the Astrup Fearnley  
Museum itself and nearby.  
Guests are welcome if space available. Members will have  
priority. Cancellations after the deadline and no-shows  
will be charged.  
For last-minute cancellations, please call Rosi Løvdal,  
mob.: 400 42 012



# REPORTS

## MAY MONTHLY MEETING

### The Impact of Religions in the Middle East Peace Process.

Dr. Trond Bakkevig, a newly retired Archdeacon of the Church of Norway, has been the Convener for the Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land, facilitating dialogue between the Chief Rabbinate of Israel, the Heads of Churches in Jerusalem, and the Supreme Judge of the Sharia Courts in Palestine.

Dr. Bakkevig made it clear that the involvement of the various religious groups is crucial to any peace process in the Middle East. Yet, including them and their representatives in the process has been given scant importance in the political discussions, also in the Oslo agreement.

Key holy sites in Jerusalem's Old City



Muslims, Christians and Jews live parallel but entirely separate lives, even if they walk almost shoulder to shoulder around in the old city of Jerusalem, where they all have their holy sites. The Muslims go to the Al-Aqsa Mosque, the Christians to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and the Jews to the Wailing Wall. Three sets of believers but almost no interaction. Jerusalem is holy to all three religions.

Since they have so little contact, Palestinians and Jews ignore the *other's* history and situation. An examination of schoolbooks used in Palestinian and



Israeli schools shows that the experiences and the history of the *other's* is either omitted or underplayed.

The Jews turn to Jerusalem, no matter where they pray. The city has been a place of pilgrimage for both Jews and for Christians. And Muslims travel to see where the Prophet ascended to heaven to learn how many times a day Muslims should pray and other religious issues. Throughout history, there have been times of conflicts but also times of peace and coexistence.

In 1947, parts of Palestine were divided between Jews and Palestinians. Jordan had the West Bank and Egypt had Gaza. Jerusalem was supposed to be a separate entity, administered by an international board on which the UN should play a role, but this did not happen. The city was split in two, with Israel on the western side and Palestine, or Jordan, on the eastern side. The Old City with the most Holy Sites were then on the Jordanian side and from 1948, the Jews were barred from the Wailing wall, where they had been allowed to pray since the Middle Ages. The Ottoman Turkish Suleiman the Magnificent (1494 – 1566), promised the Jews that they could have access to a 2-3 meter space close to the wall.

In 1967, Israel occupied Eastern Jerusalem and annexed the Old City. The Palestinians consider East Jerusalem their capital, but Israel has been rather unwilling to concede to their demand. 'What we have', says Dr. Bakkevig, 'are two political entities and three religions. And the religious aspects cannot be ignored if you look for a way to achieve peace between Palestine and Israel.'

The leaders must rise above their own faith and try to understand the perspective of the two others and acknowledge that Jerusalem is important to all the congregations. Religious leaders are not the ones who sign peace agreements. Any agreement is the result of negotiations between diplomats and politicians from all parties. However, religious leaders can identify and help remove obstacles to peace, especially when they relate to religions and their Holy Sites.

Religious leaders have unique access to ordinary people. Peace and human dignity are at the base of all three religions. Leaders need to look for commonalities between religions, and help promote peace in the synagogues, the mosques and the churches. The holy sites are often in the 'zone' of the others. Access is therefore a very important issue. Today, access to the Al-Aqsa Mosque or access to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher for the Christians from the West bank and from Gaza, is more or less denied.

After his lecture, Dr Bakkevig answered many interesting questions from the audience.

Gunnel Anita Solheim

## ART COMMITTEE

### Visit to Kistefos Museum on May 25

After the long drought of the Covid year, Inger Melhuus Ræder (Art Committee) arranged for an International Forum group visit to this spectacular sculpture park, located in Kistefoss, Jevnaker, approximately one hour's drive from Oslo. The distance to travel is far outweighed by the pure enjoyment of viewing the 46 sculptures (each year the park adds one or more sculptures) by such prominent contemporary artists as Yayoi Kusama, Fernando Botero, Tony Cragg, Olafur Eliasson and Anish Kapoor.



Our Guide, Even Tungen, led us up and down the sloping paths of this beautiful wooded park, which is intersected by the rushing waters of the River Ranselva. Kistefos was started more than 100 years ago with the establishment of a wood pulp mill by Anders Sveaas. The production stopped in 1955; but in 1996 his grandson, businessman and art collector Christen Sveaas established the park as we know it today.



Many of the pieces on display at the sculpture park are made site-specific and directly inspired by the area, nature and history of Kistefos. In fact, some of the artists were not only directly involved in choosing the settings for their sculptures but also actively involved in their installation.

Kistefos is considered one of Europe's most important sculpture parks for contemporary art. While some of the works are both monumental and profound, others are quite unobtrusive and even playful. And because the sculptures are outdoors, their expression can change with the weather and the seasons.



The Twist - which is a gallery, a bridge, and a sculpture – is considered the architectural masterpiece. This 1,000 m<sup>2</sup> unique building takes a sculptural form as it twists and turns across the river, connecting the north and south sides. But as outstanding as this building is, one should absolutely not leave before visiting the toilets found in the lower level. Suffice it to say, that it is worth the price of a ticket!

Trudy Brand-Jacobsen

### **WALKING GROUP IN NORDMARKA**





## ACTIVITY GROUPS AND COURSES – AUTUMN 2021

*All activities and courses will be organized in compliance with the applicable Corona restrictions. This means that all groups must ensure that the rules for social distancing and other Corona restrictions are followed. Leaders may limit the number of participants for certain groups and activities.*

### **Activities:**

International Forum Activity Groups are formed when one member or a group of members get together and organise an activity. No payment is required, and the activities are open to all members depending on availability. Are you interested? See the contact information below.

If you are interested in an activity that is full, sign up anyway, as there may be cancellations. If you have problems joining an activity because it is full, please contact Gunnel Anita Solheim, as we might consider forming new groups.

**Contact:** Gunnel Anita Solheim.

### **ACTIVITY GROUPS**

**The Norwegian Conversation Group** (norsk samtalegruppe).

**Because of the pandemic, there are no Norwegian Conversation gatherings for the time being.**

This is a group of twenty ladies from India, Colombia, Indonesia, Russia, Peru, Germany, Canada, China, Taiwan, Hungary and Norway. We meet once a month in each other's homes. The intention of the group is to practise speaking Norwegian in an informal setting and to share experiences and interests in our daily life. We have all levels of proficiency.

There is no homework, since the main point is to come together and have fun. The hostess decides if she wants to serve a light lunch or just coffee and biscuits (or cake) after the practice session. We usually meet on Fridays at 11:00. You are very welcome to join us once the restrictions to gatherings are eased!

**We await new instructions from the authorities as to when we can meet again.**

**Contact:** Eva Øglænd or Mona Bækkelund Reinboth.

## **DRAMA READING GROUP**

**In the year 2020-2021 gatherings have not been possible due to the pandemic. We await new instructions from the authorities as to when we can meet again.**

The drama readings are held once a month in a member's home. The plays chosen are both old and new. The dates for the readings are flexible and usually decided a month in advance depending on how many can attend on a certain date. A light lunch will be served between acts.

**Contact:** Suzanne Garman-Vik.

## **INTERNATIONAL BOOK CLUB I**

**In the year 2020-2021 gatherings have not been possible more than three times due to the pandemic. For the rest, the discussions have been on Zoom.**

The gatherings are held on the third Wednesday of the month, either on Zoom or, Corona permitting, in members' homes, in which case the hostess serves a light lunch. We read and discuss books, usually a novel from worldwide literature, chosen by the group. For the autumn, we await new instructions from the authorities as to when we can meet in members' homes again.

**Contact:** Dorota Steensland.

## **INTERNATIONAL BOOK CLUB II**

The same objectives as those of the International Book Club I.

The gatherings take place once a month, and, for the time being, we meet on Zoom due to the Corona restrictions. Heidi Høivik is the Zoom organizer.

**Contact:** Signe Lise Howell.

## **COOKING GROUP I**

We meet once a month and meetings are held at the home of one of the participants on a rotation basis. The hostess decides on the menu and buys the ingredients and beverages, and the cost of the ingredients is shared between the participants. We are waiting for the authorities' recommendations for gatherings on an ongoing basis in the autumn.

**Contact:** Liss Laan.



## **COOKING GROUP II**

Cooking Group II is a smaller group of maximum eight persons. We meet once a month, preferably on a Wednesday, at 13:30. Meetings are held at the home of one of the participants on a rotation basis. The hostess decides on the menu and buys the ingredients and beverages, and the cost of the ingredients is shared between the participants.

We are waiting for the authorities' recommendations for gatherings on an ongoing basis in the autumn.

**Contact:** Gerd Berit Lavik.

## **MONDAY DUPLICATE BRIDGE**

Ris Church is closed due to the pandemic, and we cannot play Monday Duplicate Bridge there for the time being. We are waiting for the authorities' recommendations for gatherings and information from Ris Church on an ongoing basis in the autumn.

**Contact:** Kirsten Whist,

## **MONTHLY WEDNESDAY BRIDGE GROUP**

We generally meet on the second or third Wednesday of the month, depending on the holidays. We are usually 8 or 12 players, on occasion 16. We play duplicate bridge and enjoy a light lunch afterwards.

We are waiting for the authorities' recommendations for gatherings on an ongoing basis in the autumn.

**Contact:** Ida Tschudi Heilemann.

## **PHOTO GROUP**

This is a group for amateur photographers. No special qualifications are required, just an interest in learning about digital photography. We organise 6-8 workshops annually. For the time being, we have the workshops online, on Zoom. Outdoor 'Photo Safari' to nice places in the vicinity of Oslo, is also a Covid-19-safe option. Once social gatherings again are allowed, the workshops will be held at Gunnel Anita's home, from 13:00 – 15:00. The theme in April was "Photographing food".

**Contact:** Anita Solheim.

## **WALKING GROUP**

Kerstin Pettersen will send an e-mail to the group members and inform them of the first walk of autumn 2021. Walking is great exercise and fun for those who like the outdoors. If you are interested, please send Kerstin your mobile number and email address.

**Contact:** Kerstin Petersen.

## **SWIMMING AT LYSEBU**

**The Danish Cultural Centre at Voksenkollen is for the time being closed due to the pandemic.**



When the Cultural Centre can open (hopefully soon), members of the International Forum will be most welcome to swim at Lysebu Hotel and only have to show their IF membership card at the front desk. The fee is NOK 100.- per visit. This is not a group activity as such, but IF members can use this great, newly renovated facility as a group or individually. Any questions?

**Contact:** Anita Solheim.

## **COURSES**

The courses are activities for which the participants pay a **fee** to the teacher.

### **ENGLISH**

Individual courses tailored to your needs. Refresher courses for conversation – all levels. There is no charge for the preliminary test to determine your level of proficiency in English conversation or grammar before taking a course.

**Contact:** Soo Lan Höegh Henrichsen M.C.S.D (Graduate of Liverpool University, Teachers College).

# IMPRESSIONS OF NORWAY

## Ahoy! The Vikings Set Sail for Byzantium - Again

By

**H. E. Fazli Çorman, Ambassador of Turkey to Norway**

On a leisurely family trip to, of all places, ‘The End of the World’ (Verdens Ende), we had a lovely spur-of-the-moment experience of a story from the Middle Ages, brought into today’s world.

On a Sunday, my wife and our son and I decided to make a short stop in downtown Tønsberg during our journey by car exploring nice spots around Oslo. There at the docks, on a crisp summer afternoon, the shape of a large Viking ship caught our attention from a distance. Men were toiling at and around the harbour as if the Viking ship was to set sail the next day.

Curious, we approached the place, since it is quite unusual to see people actually working on a Sunday in Norway! We were greeted by two smiling and friendly persons, who resembled our sketchy imagination of what the Vikings looked like, minus the long beard!



Beautiful traditional Viking carvings on the *Saga Formann*

After a couple of introductory tourist-like greetings, we were shown the ‘Viking-time’ tools and arms in the small room on the dock. We soon realised that one of the men was Mr. Eivind Luthen, in charge of ‘Project Miklagard’ and the Viking longship called *Saga Formann*. He excitedly told us about the history of the relations between Norway and Byzantium (Constantinople), or ‘Miklagard’ as the Vikings called the exotic far-away city that is modern-day Istanbul.

The history comprises the travels to and the continued presence of the Vikings in Constantinople, the merchant trade and cultural exchanges that ensued. Rich maritime archaeological findings from that era continue to fascinate historians and archaeologists.





Map of the route Saga Formann will embark on, through the Volga River



An image that illustrates the history between the Vikings and Miklagard.



Wooden carving next to the Viking Ship *Saga Formann*

It was indeed very exciting to learn of *Saga Formann*'s planned trip next year. The ship will sail from Tønsberg in the summer of 2022 for its final destination: Istanbul. The journey is a re-creation of Viking expeditions via the River Volga to the Black Sea more than thousand years ago. Before it reaches the Russian rivers, it will stop in Gdansk, Grobina, and Saint-Petersburg.

The *Saga Formann* is currently at Tønsberg Harbour but will in two years and thousands of miles away appear at the Rahmi M. Koç Museum, located by the docks in the Golden Horn area of Istanbul – which used to be the city's Imperial Harbour. The expedition is arranged to coincide with the Republic of Turkey's 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations in 2023.

I had heard about the Vikings' presence in ancient Turkey through the famous runic inscriptions on the walls of Hagia Sophia, but I never expected to meet their modern descendants just outside of Oslo. It was indeed a pleasant surprise to meet and see these modern-day Vikings who keep the history and this rich heritage alive and kicking!



## 'Riddle of Silence': A Tale of Norwegian plants

Botanical Art Watercolour Paintings and Text

by

**H. E. Iwona Woicka-Żuławska**

Ambassador of Poland to Norway



*Villrose - Rosa canina*

Coming to Norway, I looked forward to working on new possible links between Poland and Norway. But on a more personal note, I looked forward to see and experience all the beauty of Norwegian nature. I have been using every possible moment to discover Norway's amazing and varied landscapes, the flora and fauna. Walking around Oslo, going to the Fjords, Lofoten and Vesteralen or the Far North was an occasion to savour all the similarities and differences between the distinct regions of my host country and my home country.



*Blåveis - Anemone hepatica/nobilis. Snøklokke – Galanthus nivalis.*

Then the COVID-19 struck. Trying not to concentrate only on the challenges it brought, the restrictions and limitations, I started pouring inspiration – impressions of Norwegian fields, mountains, woodlands, lakes and sea-shores – in watercolour on paper. Those minutes and hours spent researching, sketching, and painting were a great, wonderful escape from the pandemic reality. They transported me into the realm of the small, often unnoticed, plants that surround us. They made me remember and feel the warmth of the sun in the middle of winter darkness. The flowers surprised me with their simplicity of lines, their purity of colours and, at the same time, the ingeniousness and complexity of Mother Nature. The textures and tonal variations, the diversity present in the plant kingdom, is really astounding.



*Geitrams - Chamaenerion angustifolium*    *Blåklukke - Campanula rotundifolia*.

I wanted to know more about my ‘objects’. I started looking for information about their habitat, but also their properties. How were they used in earlier times and now? Have they influenced local art and culture? And finally – are there any similarities between how they were perceived, harvested, and used in Norway and Poland? It appears that, even with all the climate differences, many of them have been cultivated, consumed, used in medicine or folk art in almost the same way.



*Kornblomst - Centaurea montana.*

I was fascinated by almost identical floral patterns found in Polish and Norwegian folklore, including regional dresses. Looking at the embroidery on many beautiful *bunader*, I found the same motifs that are present in my country's arts and crafts. Roses, poppies, harebells, orchard blossom or cornflowers inspired many of the patterns in both countries, as in many others.



*Tyttebær - Vaccinium vitis-idaea      Svart Kråkebær (Krekling) – Empetrum nigrum*

I hope that this presentation will let you peep into the world of small, humble plants from our surroundings. They always remind us of the beauty of the world, the hope linked with the cycles of nature, the renewal brought by spring, the maturity of summer or the abundance of the harvesting season. And the need for reflection and cosiness during harsh winters. A time, when ideas and inspiration are born...



## INTERNATIONAL FORUM

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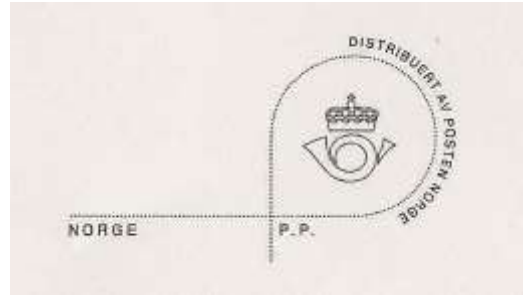
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The Editor and the Editorial Team reserve the right to edit **all** material.

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