



INTERNATIONAL FORUM OSLO

NEWSLETTER

February 2022
Issue No. 472

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Dr Ross Wetherbee

‘Why Haven’t you Noticed the 6th Extinction?’



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Ambassador Jon Westborg on his Sri Lankan Experience



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Margrete: Queen of the North





INTERNATIONAL FORUM

P.O. Box 1505 Vika, 0117 Oslo, Norway

Website: www.iforum.no Email: int.forum@online.no

Visiting address: Kronprinsens gate 3, Victoria Passasjen

Board 2020 – 2021: **Anita Pratap** (President), Sissel Lindeman, Yan Donko, Gulhan Çorman, Wenche Mohr, Elizabeth Rasmussen, Elizabeth Groth Kolby (Deputy) Lien Nguyen (Deputy), Jessie Sandosham (Deputy)

Office Coordinator: Dorota Steensland

Office Team: Patricia Blackwell, Karin Skoglund

Office hours: Please send enquiries by email

Editor: Elizabeth S. Rasmussen

Editorial Team: Elspeth Walseth, Josephine Kamsvåg

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Monthly Meetings Laila Hægh

Berit Lindstrøm

Special Events Mona B. Reinboth

Art Jane Steenbuch

Activities Anita Solheim



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For the **March Newsletter** is **Wednesday, February 16**. Please send your contribution to Elizabeth S. Rasmussen and to int.forum@online.no. *The Editor and the Editorial Team reserve the right to edit all material.*



From the President

Dear Members,

The light returns. The sun shines brighter and longer. We can almost hear nature – not screaming, but singing – ‘Look at the bright side of Life.’ It is tempting to see the symbolism of the return of light and imagine that we are emerging from the dark tunnel of the pandemic into the light of normalcy. Caution must prevail; yet there are positive signs. Immunity is on the rise, vaccination rates are high, test kits available. Provided that we are careful, the situation can improve.

This is a welcome relief from the ‘Stop! Go. Stop! Go.’ phase of our pandemic lives. First, we spend much of our time organising events. Then, we spend as much time on cancelling, refunding, and rescheduling. We hope this cycle of affairs soon recedes into history.

Coming to the present, we have exciting developments. We are co-organising, with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a special screening of the film *Margrete, Queen of the North*. This event is exclusively for the Diplomatic Corps, our members and a few special guests. More details inside.

The screening at the renovated Frogner Kino is a good example of the coming together – as mentioned in the past – of the three pillars of the Forum: our members, CD and UD. It is also an example of the optimism beautifully portrayed in our Last Page photograph: Every cloud has a silver lining.

The pandemic cloud has cast a shadow on our activities. Many opportunities have been lost. But there have been silver linings, too. New opportunities were found, important relationships nurtured. As the saying goes, instead of worrying about what you cannot control, better to shift your energy to what you can create. Besides, as the Dalai Lama advises with a twinkle in his eye: ‘Choose to be optimistic. It feels better.’

Best Regards,

Anita Pratap

President

HOW TO JOIN A ZOOM WEBINAR BY INVITATION LINK

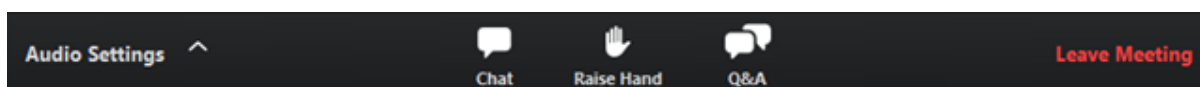
To join the webinar, click the link that the host provided you or that you received in the confirmation page after you registered.

1. Copy the webinar URL link from the email that you have received and paste it into your internet browser. You may also **just click on the link in the Newsletter** that you have received by email.
2. Sign in to the Zoom webinar.
3. **If you are instructed to download the Zoom platform, DO NOT HESITATE TO DO SO! Just click on the download link.**
4. Click on **Join Meeting**.



Webinar controls

When you enter the Webinar, you will be muted. Do not unmute unless you are invited to do so by the host. **Having your audio on during the presentation will create noise in the system.** After the presentation, “raise your hand” and unmute to ask a question. When you have raised your question, please mute yourself and listen to the answer.



Windows | macOS



Audio Settings (only visible if the host hasn't granted you permission to talk): Change your [audio settings](#). You can also click the upward arrow (^) next to change your speaker.

Unmute  / **Mute**  : If the host gives you permission, you can unmute and talk during the webinar. All participants will be able to hear you. If the host allows you to talk, you will receive a notification about staying on mute or unmuting.

Note: You can still access the audio settings by click on the ^ arrow next to the **Unmute/Mute** button.

Raise Hand  : [Raise your hand](#) in the webinar to indicate that you want to raise a question or comment on something that has been said. When called, please click on the **Unmute**  icon at the bottom of your screen.

Leave meeting: Click **Leave meeting** to leave the webinar at any time. If you leave, you can rejoin if the webinar is still in progress, as long as the host has not locked the webinar.

FROM THE OFFICE

Reimbursement for Christmas Meeting

In order to be reimbursed, members need to send an email to the Office, stating their bank account number. The Office does not have access to that information.

We thank you for your cooperation.

COMING EVENTS

FEBRUARY MONTHLY MEETING

Dr Ross Wetherbee:

‘Why Haven’t you Noticed the 6th Extinction?’

February 7



The Monthly Meeting Committee is proud to invite Forum members and guests to a talk by Dr Ross Wetherby, researcher in ecology and natural resource management at the Norwegian University of Life Sciences at Ås outside Oslo. He has published extensively on the subject and has a Bachelor of Science in Biology from the University of Alaska, Fairbanks (UAF), a Master of Science in Ecology from the NMBU and the University Centre on Svalbard (UNIS). He finished his PhD dissertation in 2021: *Veteran oaks, biodiversity and ecosystem functioning in southern Norway*.

DATE/TIME: Monday, **February 07** at 18:45 for (19:00)

PLACE: **Zoom**, click on the link below or copy the link into your browser

URL: <https://uio.zoom.us/j/66197473909>

MARCH MONTHLY MEETING

Former Norwegian Ambassador to Sri Lanka and India

Jon Westborg



Mr Jon Westborg holds a Master of Philosophy from the reputed Cranfield School of Management in the UK. Before entering the world of diplomacy, he worked for the Lutheran World Federation, Save the Children Norway, the Strømme Foundation and the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD). From 1996 to 2003, he served as the Norwegian Ambassador to Sri Lanka, and from 2003 as the Norwegian Ambassador to India.

His speech is entitled ‘Some thoughts about life in Sri Lanka.’

DATE/TIME: Monday, **March 7** at 18:45 for (19:00)

SIGN UP: To the Office by email: int.forum@online.no as soon as possible and **no later than Tuesday, March 1**

PLACE: Vinderen Seniorsenter, Slemdalsveien 72, 0373 Oslo

PRICE: NOK 105.- **Please sign up before you pay.** Payment **preferably** by **bank transfer** to the Forum account: 1600 40 36631 or by VIPPS 591747. No cash will be handled at the venue. Please **state the event and your name** in the transaction (in the KID-number box for bank payments and in the dialogue box for VIPPS).

TRANSPORT: T-Bane 1 to Vinderen. Pay parking until 20:00 in the adjoining area.

GUESTS: Guests are welcome if there is room.

No-shows will be charged.

For last minute cancellations, please call Laila Hægh,

SPECIAL EVENTS

TIMESCAPE 1600-1914

Bygdøy Folkemuseum

Thursday, **February 10** at 11:45 (for 12:00)



Join us on a journey through time towards modern Norway at Norsk Folkemuseum. Meet merchants and public officials who constituted the Norwegian elite, and who, by their trade activities, travels and family opened up for international networks and cultural exchange, shaping daily life and culture in Norway. For more information, see the January *Newsletter*.

The Climate House

March 15



The Special Events committee has the pleasure of inviting Forum members to a guided tour of the Climate House. The house is part of the Natural History Museum at the Botanical Garden.

In the Climate house, you will be introduced to the Earth's climate system, the consequences of global warming, and some of the proposed solutions to the problem and how you as an individual may contribute.

The Climate House provides updated research-based facts on the earth's current climate. It explains the different natural and man-made impacts on climate change, what we stand to lose and what the consequences of various initiatives for the future may have.

At the same time, visitors will gain insight into how they can help stop global warming and what role they may have in the fight against climate change.

The guided tour will last for about one hour.

DATE/TIME: Tuesday, **March 15**, at 10:45 (for 11:00).

SIGN UP: By email to the Office, int.forum@online.no as soon as possible and no later than Monday, **March 7**.

PLACE: Klimahuset, Sars gate 1, 0562 Oslo.

PRICE: NOK 105.- **Please sign up before you pay**. Payment **preferably** by **bank transfer** to the Forum account: 1600 40 36631 or by VIPPS 591747. No cash will be handled at the venue. Please **state the event and your name** in the transaction (in the KID-number box for bank payments and in the dialogue box for VIPPS).

Wait with the payment till you have a confirmed place. In addition, you pay an entrance fee to The Climate House on arrival, adult NOK 120,-, senior NOK 60.

TRANSPORT: T-bane to Tøyen station, Tram no 17, Bus 20, 31 or 60. By car but limited parking facilities.

Maximum number of participants: 15. Guests are welcome if space available.

Members will have priority.

Cancellations after the deadline and no-shows will be charged.

For questions or last-minute cancellations please contact Mona Reinboth by email: mona.reinboth@googlemail.com, or mob.: 948 82 895

ART COMMITTEE

TBS Gallery

February 17 at 11:45 (for 12:00)

The gallery houses a permanent collection of Tore Bjørn Skjølsvik and shows a selection of sculptures, paintings and drawings by the 82-year-old artist. The works include statues and intense portrayals of famous sport personalities, politicians and royalty. If we are lucky, we may be able to observe Skjølsvik at work in his studio. For more information, please see the January *Newsletter*.

PRIVATE FILM SCREENING

MARGRETE: QUEEN OF THE NORTH

March 1, 2022 at 17:00

Frogner Kino

International Forum invites you to a film screening of *Margrete: Queen of the North*. The screening is exclusively for the Diplomatic Corps, guests of the Ministry and members of International Forum. The film has English subtitles.

‘Margrete is masterfully portrayed by Trine Dyrholm. She makes the movie sizzle.’

- L.A. Times



© SF Studios

‘Magisterial camerawork makes candlelit interiors feel as imposing as the sweeping landscapes.’

- Variety

The year is 1402. Queen Margrete I has created a new northern empire uniting Norway, Denmark and Sweden into the Kalmar Union. She rules through her adopted son, King Erik. But a conspiracy involving palace intrigues, family conflicts, jealousies and betrayals threaten the Union. The Danish film is inspired by historical events. Samuel Goldwyn has purchased the rights for US distribution.

The event is co-organised and supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Please **SIGN UP** by February 11 to Anita Prata[p](#). You are most welcome to bring your spouse or a guest.

While signing up **please mention if you are accompanied** by a spouse/guest.

The film is free of charge. Entry by invitation only.

DIPLOMATIC SALON

Thursday, **February 24** from 15:00 – 17:00

‘Norse Mythology From an Asian Perspective’



During her four-year stay in Norway, artist Yan Donko, wife of the Austrian Ambassador and IF Board member, travelled widely, seeing the beauty of Norwegian nature and learning about the country's ancient customs, traditions, architecture and Norse mythology. She uses Chinese art techniques to capture the uniqueness and diversity of Norwegian landscapes and motifs. Yan believes there are differences, but also similarities, between Norwegian mythology and Taoism. She paints a Chinese dragon above the mountains of Lofoten, the sacred tree Yggdrasil, the giant wolf Fenrir, a charming church with a displeased cat in the forefront, and many more, some of which were exhibited last year. Her paintings are framed or mounted as hanging scrolls. One is 20 m long!

At this Diplomatic Salon, held prior to Yan and Ambassador Wilhelm Donko's departure to Bangkok for their next posting, Yan will present certain aspects of Norse Mythology from an Asian perspective.

The discussion will be followed by Austrian wine, goulash and apple strudel.

DATE/TIME: February 24 from 15:00 to 17:00

SIGN UP: To Anita Pratap at int.forum@online.no. Seats on a 'first come first served' basis. **Please sign up before paying.**

PRICE: NOK 55.- for a gift. Payment preferably by **bank transfer** to the Forum account: 1600 40 36631 or by VIPPS to 591747. Please **state the event and your name** in the KID-number box for bank payments and in the dialogue box for VIPPS.

PLACE: *More information by the IF Office*

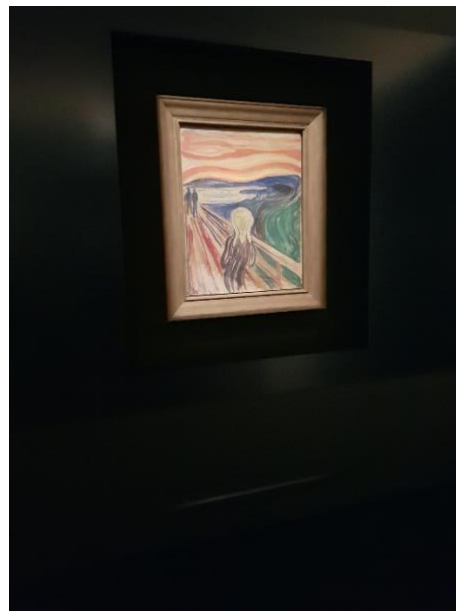
R E P O R T S

VISIT TO THE NEW MUNCH MUSEUM



Walking towards the new Munch Museum on a lovely sunny morning, I look at it with the positive attitude of a newcomer. I think it is spectacular that we have built a museum to Edvard Munch that has such international dimensions, but why does it not have the wow-effect of the Opera and Deichman? The greyness is depressingly lack-lustre, almost threatening.

I was a champion of the Lambda project when it was presented as a building of light. I still think the slant at the top is dynamic and unique, and I look forward to looking out from the restaurant to the backdrop of *The Scream*.



The entrance hall is large enough to cope with thousands of visitors, but the single x-ray machine seems rather inadequate. As we were a group, we were exempted from using the x-ray, which I thought rather lapse security. One of us was found with a small backpack well into the exhibition.

Taking the first escalator, of which there are 13, one for each floor, there is a definite feeling of being in a new Pompidou Centre, but without the piping. The view over the harbour towards Holmenkollen is fabulous and gets better and better for each floor. No greyness there. In fact, you would not believe that the building looks so impenetrable from the outside.

There are a lot of corridors that use up precious space and an unusual number of elevators that take up even more. Entering the main exhibition of Munch therefore comes as a surprise with small cabinets and a low ceiling. The intimacy is very effective. The paintings are all framed in glass, but this glass is like no other. You are hard put to see the glass at all. The goal was to make Munch entirely available to visitors, give a first-hand closeness that you do not find in other large galleries. They have succeeded admirably. *The Scream* is given its own *chapel* with black walls sending it into an appropriately iconic space.

This is Munch on steroids, with some 136 works on show. What a treat!

There will always be paintings, graphic work, and sculptures that we have never seen before. Our guide, Freja, walked us through the most famous Munch paintings, and I hope you will forgive me for not reporting on this very familiar trail. The building was much more interesting!

Escalating up to the floor with Munch's monumental work, one notices that there are still four floors not yet taken into use. Entering the gallery with *The Sun* and *Alma Mater* one can enjoy these works that are so distant in *Aulaen*. Their sheer size is awe inspiring.

The other available exhibition space on each floor gives me a feeling that the building must be very thin in breadth. Quite a strange feeling in such a huge building. They have perhaps avoided the endless number of galleries that wear your feet out, but I was no less tired having done so many floors. A whole floor is dedicated to lithography and woodcuts. You can see the actual plates and learn all about the process.

The exhibit from Ekely is fun. Lots of interesting artefacts from Munch's home, and plenty of objects that are recognisable from various artworks. Do not miss the bedspread from *Between the Clock and the Bed*.

The restaurant and bar are closed due to Covid-19. The building faces 'the wrong way' in my opinion. It stands sideways to the *Scream* background. What a disappointment. I would guess that it was impossible to have such a bastion in front of the bar code. Would Munch be proud? I think so. Imagine having a monument like that built entirely to your memory. Controversy, or not.

Thank you to Katarina Plavnik and Kerstin Petersen for organising this event.

Jane Steenbuch

DIPLOMATIC SALON AT THE SPANISH EMBASSY

‘Why is Edmund Burk Still Relevant?’



Anita Pratap with H.E. Hernández and H.E. Gutiérrez

H. E. **José Ramón García Hernández** holds a PhD on Edmund Burke. This was not what he thought he would do when he started university. He then wanted to study welfare systems and how they could be reformed. So why Edmund Burke? Because of a chance comment by his tutor.

Dr Hernandez was the main speaker at this event, but his speech was followed by remarks by H. E. **Keith McBean**, Ambassador of Ireland; H. E. **Ulises Canchola Gutiérrez**, Ambassador of Mexico; and Mr **José Juan López Portillo**, Counsellor at the Embassy of Mexico in charge of innovation and knowledge economy. H. E. **Betina Alejandra Pasquali de Fonseca** of Argentina and H. E. **Richard Wood** of Great Britain were also present and took part in the discussion that followed Ambassador Hernandez’ exposé.

Edmund Burke’s father converted from Catholicism to Protestantism, maybe because of his profession. As a lawyer it must have been easier to have a more ‘mainstream’ religious view. His mother remained a staunch Catholic. She came from a relatively wealthy family.

Edmund Burke’s philosophy focused on the notions of freedom and justice. His analysis of revolutionary change established him as the chief framer of modern European conservative political thought. In 1765, he was appointed secretary to

Lord Rockingham, leader of one of the Whig groups, the largely ‘liberal’ faction in Parliament, and he entered the House of Commons that year. Yet, associated with the Whigs, he believed in liberalism in a modern sense of the word. His thoughts were avant-garde and he was ‘unfashionable’ to his fellow politicians; always an outsider.

Despite his affiliation with the Whigs, Burke was perceived as a controversial character, a man of contradiction. In 1759, he published *A Vindication of Natural Society* anonymously. In it he questioned the structure of power of the established political elite. He confronted the way the colonies were managed and was against slavery. In addition, he wanted to reform the Common Law and the principle of *habeas corpus*, a legal system based on precedence, not on established codified laws. He came to believe that change must come from within society and that ‘man was born into a context’, that everyone has his or her place in society. Man cannot be reduced to an abstraction. Life is not neutral.



Burke was not fond of change that went against the nature of a functioning society. He resented Rousseau and his rather construed notion of the ‘naturally good man’, whose only happiness could be found outside of society. In this sense, Burke was a conservative man. At least in modern terms. In his own time, this type of political vision remained controversial.

He supported the American Revolution (1765 – 1791), but opposed the French Revolution (1789 – 1799), which was supported by many members of Parliament. He in particular resented the amount of blood-shed in the wake of the French Revolution, which was initially greeted by British politicians with

much enthusiasm. Burke was both hostile to it and alarmed by the English Parliament's reaction. He was provoked into writing his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790). He did not believe in demolition, but in reform of what is already there.

Burke tried to give an answer to the problems of his times, and he was among the first to support democracy in its more modern sense. He criticized not only the voting scheme, he also disapproved of how his contemporaneous politicians worked. He was against the political system's inherent corruption and advocated a representative voting system and Parliament, opposing what his politician colleagues deemed important.

Burke promoted scepticism to preconceived perceptions of reality and politics. And that is probably one of the reasons why he is still so relevant. In his *Reflections*, he uses the metaphor of the 'British oak', which represents a society that has grown organically, a slowly evolving and stable national community. He saw life as 'platoons of temperance and fortitude' in which politics is best conducted within the established order of things. In this sense, he was a man of Aristotelian ambitions, aiming at an ordered cosmos. Burke was above all a pragmatic, someone who embraced different opinions and viewpoints and who looked for a new theory of observation. He understood man and the complexity of society, and his philosophy gives us a tool to read the world today.



At the end of the Salon, we were taken to the dining room in which hangs a huge painting by José Santiago Garnelo y Alda (1866 –1944), a Spanish painter in the Naturalist style and director of the Prado Museum in Madrid. When the Ambassador and his family moved into the Residence, they were truly surprised to find this particular painting on the wall because the painter is Ms

Hernandez' grand-uncle!

A great 'Thank you' to the Spanish Ambassador for organizing such an interesting academic afternoon!

Elizabeth S. Rasmussen

IMPRESSIONS OF NORWAY

MYSTERIES FROM THE DEEP:

Secrets and Revelations of a 300-year-old Irish Shipwreck Discovered off the Norwegian Coast

by

H.E. Keith McBean, Ambassador of Ireland to Norway

Every morning at the Irish Embassy, we scan the Norwegian media for any news items relating to Ireland that might be of interest to ourselves, our citizens in Norway, or to people back home. Very occasionally, we chance upon something that really captures the public imagination.

One such recent occasion was a fascinating discovery a year ago at Mandal, just off the southern-most tip of Norway. Here, the local diving club had discovered – after a search of many years and 300 years after the disappearance – the shipwreck site of an Irish-owned and crewed trading vessel, the *Providentz*. The ship, bound for Arendal, ran aground in the autumn of 1721, in contentious circumstances that were subsequently the subject of court proceedings.



Mandal Diving Club's boat



Irish archaeologist Sarah Fawsitt

The *Providentz* had been waiting off the Mandal coast for better weather conditions before completing its journey but what happened then remains a controversy. According to court records from the period, a local pilot came on-board to help guide the ship safely back out to sea and found the crew drunk. It

is also claimed that the pilot mixed up port and starboard when calling out his instructions. We may never know the true story!



Mr Ragnvald Eeg explains today's catch. Ambassador Keith McBean second from the left.

Remarkably, all of the crew survived escaping unharmed and the anchor, sails and rigging were all salvaged. The cargo of butter, corn, grain, and malt, among other merchandise was lost.



A well-preserved tap



A collection of clay pipes

The ship itself was the property of the Lavits, a French Huguenot family who had made Ireland their home following the revocation of the Edict of Nantes

(1598) by Louis XIV in 1685. In Ireland, they established themselves as important traders in emerging commodities, including sugar. Their influence remains visible today in the name of Lavit's Quay in Cork city.



Beautifully preserved urn, adorned with the head of a Viking?

Many of the artefacts found at the site - the first major shipwreck to be excavated in many decades here in Norway - are in exceptionally good condition thanks to the composition of the seabed in that area.

After months of preparation, a week-long archaeological excavation of the wreck site took place in September last year, which I was pleased to witness.



Admiring the trove in Providentz T-shirts



Collecting artifacts



A cooking pot

Among the many and various items discovered during the course of the dig led by the Norsk Maritimt Museum and the Mandal Dykkeklubb were pipes, jugs, jars and other items that give an exceptionally rich insight into life on board a merchant vessel in the early 18th century.

The discovery of the artefacts, which are planned to be put on display in Mandal later this year, has been covered extensively by NRK (the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation) and by the local media.

All in all, it's an excellent Irish-Norwegian connection that we are delighted to encourage and support.

Full credit to Mandal Dykkeklubb and Norsk Maritimt Museum, with support from Lindesnes Kommune, for taking forward such a wonderful project!

Every cloud has a silver lining.



Nature reflects, inspires and comforts.

Photo: H.E. Iwona Woicka – Żuławska, Ambassador of Poland to Norway

Caption: Anita Pratap



INTERNATIONAL FORUM

Org.no: 994 566 806

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| President | Anita Pratap |
| Editor and Layout: | Elizabeth Rasmussen and Editorial Team |
| Editorial Team: | Elspeth Walseth and Josephine Kvamsvaag |
| Dispatch Team: | Kerstin Petersen, Mona Reinboth, Mette Svadberg, Wenche Undrum, Elspeth Walseth and Patricia Blackwell |

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

Date: February 2, 2022