



INTERNATIONAL FORUM OSLO

NEWSLETTER

December 2022
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For the **January Newsletter** is **December 12**. Please send your contribution to Elizabeth S. Rasmussen, email and to int.forum@online.no. The Editor and the Editorial Team reserve the right to edit *all* material.



From the President



This is the season of colour. Red and green and everything in between. According to experts who study such things, there are 18 decillion shades of colour. That is an 18 followed by 33 zeroes. That there can be so many shades is unbelievable. But then, colour is a joyful expression of the largeness of life, its diversity and delicate nuances.

Special to northern winters is the 'blå lys' – the magical blue light that bathes the landscape in a mysterious afterglow when the sun lingers below the horizon. It is almost like being in a soundless, waterless ocean. Blue pulls us in. After all, we live on a pale blue dot in the solar system. Snow completes this picture because white light is the combination of all the colours.

But then there is black, representing the opposite of colour, the absence of life. We carry a photo feature by our artist member Bente Brandt. Her works are drained of colour, a mark of protest at the war in Ukraine, entering its tragic 10th month. After the pandemic, we now co-organize the Diplomatic Charity Event, the proceeds of which will go to Ukraine.

Family, friends, modern science, and ancient wisdom, they all teach us how to cope with loss. Our last Diplomatic Salon, hosted by Ambassador of Mexico H.E. Ulises Canchola, presented *Día de Muertos* or the Day of the Dead, an unusual festival of joy and colour: a powerful reminder that the dead are dead only when they are forgotten. Whether loved ones are beside you or alive in your hearts, hope this month is filled with beautiful light and colour.

Wishing you and your family Merry Christmas, Seasons Greetings, and a Happy New Year!

Best Regards,

Anita Pratap

President



**DIPLOMATIC SPOUSES
ASSOCIATION IN NORWAY**

DIPLOMATIC CHARITY EVENT

Tuesday, December 6

19:00 – 22:00

At the Norwegian Red Cross Headquarters, Hausmanns Gate 7



Beneficiary: Ukrainisk Forening Øst-Norge - Ambulance to save lives

After the pandemic gap, International Forum in collaboration with the Female Ambassadors and the Diplomatic Spouses Association, is pleased to announce that the **Diplomatic Charity Event, DCE 2022**, will be held on December 6 at the Red Cross Headquarters. There will be food and drink from 44 countries; raffle prizes, cultural entertainment and silent auction of art and craftworks from 50 embassies, including the lithograph *Rytterportrett* donated by artist Håkon Gullvåg.

ENTRANCE DONATION: NOK 300 per person

RAFFLE: NOK 50 per coupon

All proceeds from the event will be donated to the Ukrainian project *Ambulance to save lives!*

If you would like to attend, please make your donations *preferably* by bank transfer to the Forum **charity account no: 1600.12.39051** or by **VIPPS 581372** by Friday, **December 4**. Please donate only to this **charity** account and not to the regular IF account. Guests are welcome.

Donations made in advance would help avoid queues at the entrance. Kindly state the **event (DCE), your name and number of entrance and raffle coupons in your transaction**. These can be collected at the venue.

All food and drinks at the venue are free.

About the Charity:

In war-torn Ukraine, medical personnel struggle to rescue the dying and the injured. The Ukrainian Association Eastern Norway - Ukrainisk Forening Øst-Norge - supplies well-equipped ambulances to the war zones. The ambulances are made in Ukraine to provide employment and help the local economy.

FROM THE BOARD

NEW MEMBERS



This month the Board has the pleasure of welcoming seven new members:
We are looking forward to getting to know these ladies. Their interests span widely, and we hope to see them at our events and groups.

We are so happy to have them on board!

COMING EVENTS

DECEMBER PRE-CHRISTMAS MEETING

December 5



The Pre-Christmas Meeting is coming up soon!

According to tradition, we are planning a raffle this year, so we ask each member to please bring a small, wrapped gift. The raffle tickets will be sold at the door by VIPPS. The proceeds of the raffle this year will be donated to Fransiskushjelpen.

This charitable organization was founded 60 years ago by Brita Paus and Fader Castricum. The organization has its headquarters at Enerhaugen in old Oslo, close to St Hallvard Church.

The organisation is not a religious organisation as such, and the employees represent all religions and non-believers, and they meet all users and patients with respect for their individual beliefs and wishes. It offers palliative care for terminally ill patients in the comfort of their home.

Fransiskushjelpen also offers assistance to itinerant drug addicts, and grief groups for people who need to talk to someone after traumatic events, preferably with someone who has been through the same experience. The organisation's mission is 'to meet people where no-one else wants to go, to help face the challenges on the outer limits of life, and to offer time, presence, and competent care.'

Looking forward to a convivial and festive evening with friends!

DATE/TIME: **Monday, December 5** at **17:45** (for **18:00**)
SIGN UP: To Anita Solheim by email: gunnelanitas@gmail.com as soon as possible

For more information, please see the November *Newsletter*.

JANUARY MONTHLY MEETING

January 9

Norwegian secondary homes (*hytter*) and kinship relations



Why are *hytter* (chalets or secondary homes) - so important to many Norwegians? And what may we learn about Norwegian kinship and Norwegian families from studying their beloved and contested secondary homes? Almost half of all Norwegians have access to at least one *hytte*, making secondary homes more common in Norway than in most other countries.

Dr Marianne Lien is a Professor of Social Anthropology at the University of Oslo. In her lecture, she will share her insight into how *hytter* are implicated in both building and breaking family and kinship bonds.

Based on the research project 'Materialising Kinship; Cycles of life at the Norwegian *hytte*', and in collaboration with anthropologist Simone Abram, who is based in the UK, she will provide outsiders with a glimpse of the complexities associated with the *hytte*, as well as some thoughts on how to interpret and handle the concerns and conflicts that seem to be an intrinsic part of owning and sharing a *hytte*.

DATE/TIME: Monday, **January 9** at 18:45 (for 19:00)
SIGN UP: To Signe Howell, by email: as soon as possible and **no later than Wednesday, January 4.**
PRICE: NOK 105.- **Please sign up before you pay.** Please make your 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 in the adjoining area until 20:00.

Guests are welcome.

No-shows will be charged.

For last minute cancellations, please call Signe Howell on
mob.:

THE ART COMMITTEE

Grayson Perry's exhibition *Fitting in and Standing Out*

The New National Museum in Oslo.

January 19



Grayson Perry is one of Britain's most celebrated and internationally acclaimed contemporary artists. This is his first-ever solo exhibition in Norway. An exhibition not to be missed!



In 2003, Perry won the prestigious Turner Prize for his innovative pictorial stories and his incisive satirical depictions of English fine art. He began experimenting with ceramics as an artistic expression in the 1980's.

The exhibition will offer insight into Grayson Perry's artistic practice from the 1980's to the present.

DATE/TIME:

Thursday **19 January** at 11:45 (for 12:00)

SIGN UP:

By email to Bente Skarsgård: as soon as possible, and not later than Friday, **January 13**.

PLACE:

Brynjulf Bulls plass 3, 0250 Oslo.

PRICE:

NOK 263.- for the guided tour. Please make your 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).

No cash will be handled at the venue.

TRANSPORT:

Buses 54 and 30 stop at Nationaltheatret. Trams 13 and 11 and all T-bane lines stop at Nationaltheatret. Tram 12 stops right outside the new National Museum.

Maximum 20 participants.

Guests are welcome if space is available.

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

For last minute cancellations, please call Bente Skarsgård on mob.:

SPECIAL EVENTS

City Scapes – Capturing Oslo

The history of Oslo/Christiania shown by artists

January 26



The Special Events Committee has the pleasure of inviting you to a beautiful and historically interesting exhibition at Bymuseet, the Museum of Oslo at Frogner park. The exhibition illustrates, through paintings, how the city of Oslo/Christiania has changed and developed through the last three hundred years.

Especially three periods are in focus: the time after the city fire in 1642, the industrial revolution, and the time after the dissolution of the union with Sweden in 1905.

In *Cityscapes – Capturing Oslo*, you will get to know the city through the artists' views and brushstrokes. You can enjoy works by well-known artists such as Peder Balke and Edvard Munch, as well as less established painters. The paintings come mostly from Oslo Museum's art collection.

Refreshments are available at the museum's café.

DATE/TIME: Thursday **January 26** at 10:45 (for 11:00)

SIGN UP: To Rosemary Hauge: no later than the deadline **January 17**. Please state your name and event when you sign-up, and 'lunch' if you plan to stay for refreshments at the café, as we need to reserve tables.

PLACE: Bymuseet, Oslo Museum, at the Frogner Manor House in Frognerparken. Frognerveien 67, 0266 Oslo

PRICE: NOK 135,- entrance fee included. Please sign up first and then pay, before the deadline.

Please make your 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: **Public transport** Bus 20 and Tram 12 both stop at Frogner plass, at the corner of the Frogner Park.

Car: Pay parking area in Halvdan Svartes gate close by the Bymuseet, across the street from Vigelandsmuseet.

Maximum number of participants is 20. Guests are allowed if space available.

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

For questions or last-minute cancellations please call Contact Rosemary Hauge by email: or mob. Telephone.

ACTIVITIES

The Walking Group



Picture By Kumiko Larsen

Cooking Group I

First a big thank you to Jennifer for serving us such a lovely three-course lunch, I have already made use of one of the recipes.



The group has a new member: Ellen Anna Bjørnebye. Welcome!

By the time you read this, we will have been to Lene Siger's home in Haslum.

We are also looking into the possibilities of a baking day at Laila's home, I will return with details later.

The next cooking session will take place on **January 25**, probably an outing. I will keep you posted.

Warm regards,

Liss R. Laan

R E P O R T S

OCTOBER MONTHLY MEETING

Dr Ross Wetherbee on biodiversity and the 6th Extinction

The so-called 6th extinction refers to the last of a series of mass extinctions in the history of Earth and is an ongoing process of habitat degradation. The one that most people recognise is the Triassic-Jurassic extinction, or the extinction of the dinosaurs. Our period is known as the Anthropocene Epoch, since the primary global changes to the ecosystem were and are the result of human activity.



Human activity such as agriculture and livestock husbandry have always had an impact on the environment and plant and animal life. The result is the loss of biodiversity.

How do we define mass extinction? How many species or how many individuals of a specific species need to be lost for it to be labelled 'mass' extinction? The answer is roughly a 75% reduction in a species' population over a relatively short time.

Humans and livestock are among the more dominant species. According to the Living Planet Index, there has been a 70% reduction in the number of plant and animal species of all kinds since the 1970s. This alarming rate means that we are now at the beginning of the 6th mass extinction.

Humankind must appreciate the intrinsic value of biodiversity: carbon uptake, nutrient cycling and oxygen production are but some of them. Everything in nature is interrelated and the survival of the species depends on the natural processes that regulate and support life. Even global GNPs depend on a functioning ecosystem.

Habitat degradation in urban environments has been significant in the two last centuries. But why do we not notice the changes? Because of a phenomenon referred to as the 'shifting baseline syndrome' or SBS. The syndrome refers to changing human perceptions of current biological systems due to the loss of experience about past conditions. We simply get used to what surrounds us and think of it as normal. We tend to accept what we are accustomed to, so that our tolerance thresholds are lowered. We simply do not see that there is a problem.

Habitats may change over relatively few years. This is seen in many sea beds and forests. Marine life across the globe suffers from sea bed erosion. In the USA, bison used to roam in large numbers just a century and a half ago. Now their numbers are low because of excessive hunting. Even our forests have lost many of their species. Very few old trees are left.

The oak came to Norway around 7000 years ago as the ice cap retreated. Now the oak forests of Norway have been logged to almost extinction. The Vikings used oak when they build their longboats. In the late Middle Ages, oak wood had become the main material in houses. Norway was once a significant exporter of oak to the rest of Europe. In the early 1500s, water-powered saw mills allowed for a quicker production time. In 1631, the Danish King Christian IV was told that there had been great damage done to the oak forests, and consequently that the income potential had become rather small.

Today, there are only smaller patches of oak trees left in off-piste landscapes in southern Norway, in places that are difficult to reach. In such places, you can still find old oaks. However, since the beginning of the 19th century, spruce and pine plantations have dominated the landscapes.

Globally, forests are declining and the biodiversity that they harbour. However, the ecological degradation has not been evenly or equitably distributed. Scientists talk about environment ‘injustice’ when it comes to deforestation. The rich countries, which stand for most of the deforestation projects and climate gas emissions, are not as impacted as poorer countries. Habitat decline and environmental degradation are related to human rights, and in particular the rights of women, but also to the extraction of natural resource extraction and armed conflicts. We should all be concerned.

However, there is good news.

Ecosystems are resilient. We still have wildlife such as moose and black grouse in Norway, despite the huge change in biodiversity and ecosystem in the last millennium. In the exclusion zone around the abandoned Chernobyl powerplant (the nuclear disaster occurred in 1986), the ecosystem has recovered and certain species such as bison, bears, foxes, deer, and elk have thrived in the absence of humans.

So, ecosystems can change rather quickly, and so can human communities. Human society is based on environmental degradation as we ‘tame’ the nature that we are part of and which we depend upon. However, we now need to develop more sustainable methods of exploitation. We need a better strategy for the future. And, conservation must be international. It must be a global communal effort.

It will probably take us a whole century just to level out the process of degradation. The conservation effort needs to be continuous and

multigenerational. We need to make changes to how we live. Maybe we should not mow our lawns too often, especially in spring, and leave longer grass.



This lecture really gave us food for thought, and there were quite a number of questions. Dr Ross emphasized that conservation starts with awareness and the will to preserve.

Former President Berit Lindstrøm thanked our speaker for an engaging introduction to the concept of the 6th extinction and the vital role of biodiversity in our lives.

Elizabeth Rasmussen

SPECIAL EVENTS

Norwegian Meteorological Institute

We were blessed with beautiful sunny autumn weather for the visit to the Meteorological Institute at Blindern, where members of International Forum and one guest gathered to learn about how weather forecasts are made. We were greeted by meteorologists Solfrid Agersten, Laila Fodnes Sidselrud and Magne Velle, our guides. They showed us around three departments at the Institute:

The garden with the observation instruments, the Data House and the forecast room. We were set up in three groups of 10 and we alternated between departments and guides, spending 15 minutes at each place.



Solfrid then took us to the weather forecast room on the fifth floor of the main building and onto the roof where there is an instrument that measures cloud heights. She explained the different types of weather forecasts: the everyday forecasts that we see and hear on NRK television, radio, and yr.no, or in the newspapers.



There are special alerts for dangerous situations and forecasts for private businesses such as petroleum companies, to mention just a few. The Meteorological Institute also has departments in Bergen and Tromsø that provide weather forecasts relevant to these parts of the country.

The Institute collaborates with NVE (Norwegian Water Resources and Energy Directorate) to predict floods and avalanches.



The third visit was to the Tallhall or Hall of numbers, which contains the many computers that process weather data. It also houses the staff canteen and meeting rooms. At the hall, we were met by Magne, head of communications. This building from 2011, designed by the architect firm Pir 11, is very special and has won prizes. It is a so-called passive house or energy-plus-house, made of climate-efficient materials such as low-carbon concrete and wood. The heat produced by the huge computers is enough to heat both this building and the one next door, and to prevent ice forming on the exterior.



Our guide Magne explained the work provided by the meteorological institute. He said that the main goal was to safeguard life and properties. He touched on many aspects of the institute's activities: severe weather warnings marked red,

orange, or yellow on the weather chart; climate change and ice melting in the arctic; and cooperation and exchange of data with countries all round the world.

He was very concerned with reaching out to the younger generation, many of whom never watch televised weather forecasts. They can look at yr.no on their mobile phones, but do not get the same information as on NRK television. Magne is working on a project to somehow reach them through social media. He ended his talk by saying, 'A weather forecast is only of use if it is understood'.

We feel that we now know a bit more about the technology and the work of the meteorologists behind the weather forecasts. We thanked our guides for a most interesting tour. They each received a gift of a bottle of wine as token of our appreciation.

After the tour, many of us went to Frederikke, the on-campus student canteen, where we enjoyed lunch and a nice chat.

Rosemary Hauge

ART COMMITTEE

Report Visit to the New National Museum



The new National Museum in Oslo received massive criticism for the architectural stronghold that many claimed did not fit into its surroundings at all. Looking at this photograph, and experiencing the building at street level, one can only say that it is remarkable to be able to build such a magnificent museum in such a small space. The courtyard created between the old Oslo West Station (now the Nobel Peace Centre) and the entrance to the museum is an oasis of pure lines and quiet serenity.

The powerful connection between the Peace Centre and the main work of art in the lobby sets the scene for a personal meeting with history. *Pile o' Sápmi Supreme 2017* invites us to view Sami history as part of a global oppression of indigenous peoples. Reindeer skulls with a bullet hole between the eyes hang in a sombre monochrome imitation of the Sami flag.



The museum comprises 55,000 sq. metres. About 50% of this area is used for administration and conservation. Nevertheless, the galleries on the first and

second floor seem to go on forever in an endless vista of pristine perspective. Many of the walls are made of water-blown slate and treated oak that literally swallow sound, so despite many visitors, the acoustics are beautifully muted.



Lighting is also state of the art, spotlighting all the artworks with no glare. I think the museum as a building is the finest art institution I have ever been into. This is a triumph for Oslo and Norway!

Our guide, Elisabeth Johansen, took us on an informative tour of some of the galleries. This museum must be visited many times to take it all in. What is most unusual and very inspiring is the new take on art history that leads us through a far more personalised and relevant view of all the epochs of art.

Instead of marching through rooms following the classical chronology of the eras, we meet titles that awaken new thoughts about each period. *Face to Face* is the title for Roman antiquity. The beautifully lit Roman busts greet us into the museum and smile at us down the ages.

Edifying Sculptures are the original plaster casts of Egyptian and Greek statues that have been drawn and admired by students since the original National Gallery first created them. They were made to edify the people.

Serving the Faith brings religious art to the fore during the Dark Ages. *The Gutenberg Effect* in the Renaissance room offers a new look at the enormous impact of books. *Moods and Emotions* is a wonderful title for National Romanticism as the Norwegian nature comes alive.

We then hopped over to *Life Force* and the post-war period that throws the history of art into a new era. *Fairy Tales* shows all our favourite Nordic paintings and stories in different smaller rooms with a magical atmosphere. *On the Barricades* is the dawning of radically politicised art. Be sure to see these titles in each room and enjoy a refreshing new insight into art history. The National Museum wants us to feel a personal connection, and I feel they have succeeded in this noble goal.

Thank you so much to Bente Brandt and Inger Ræder for organising this event! We will all be back many times!

Jane Steenbuch

DIPLOMATIC SALON

Día de Muertos

The Mexican Embassy November 2

A happy crowd of IF members descended on the Mexican Embassy for an introduction to the Mexican festivity called Día de Muertos on November 2. After a warm welcome by Ambassador Ulises Canchola, IF President Anita Pratap introduced the Ambassador, whom she knew from her Arendalsuka's Ambassadors' Round-Table events. We were then shown into the altar.



The seven-layered Día de Muertos altar

The holiday is derived from the rituals of the pre-Hispanic peoples of Mexico. Led by the goddess Mictēcācihuatl, known as 'Lady of the Dead', wife of the Mictlāntēcutli, the celebration lasted a month. After the Spanish arrived and began converting the native peoples to Catholicism, the holiday was moved to coincide with All Saints' and All Souls' Day (November 1 and 2, respectively). The tradition of wanting to communicate with and remember the dead thus predates Christianity. Today, the old pagan traditions and beliefs have mixed in with Christian traditions. Life and death are closely interlinked and both are celebrated during the Día de Muertos.

The dead are kept alive in the memory of families, and a person is truly dead only when no one remembers him or her.



Mexican Ambassador Ulises Canchola



Food, flowers, fruits and all things loved by the dear departed

The dead person sets out on a journey that takes four days in order to meet the Mictlāntēcutli, Lord of the dead and ruler of Mictlān, the end station of the afterlife. The deceased will be directed to a specific part of Mictlān, depending on who he or she was and how he or she died. Dead babies are often directed to a place with a big tree producing milk.



Families make altars in their homes. The altar or the *ofrenda* may be quite big and elaborate and are usually created for a deceased family member. The altar is intended to welcome the departed to a ceremonial 'meal'. It is very important that the departed likes the food...

The altar has seven possible 'levels' of which the two most important are the first and second, symbolising heaven and earth. The three top levels identify the dead person that is invited to the altar, frequently with photos of the deceased, along with images of various saints and statuettes of the Virgin Mary. The one at the Embassy had Saint Olaf at the top!

The second level is for the lost souls, such as unbaptised children. The third level offer salt, a purifying mineral; the fourth, bread; the fifth is filled with the deceased person's favourite food; the sixth, examples of the year's harvest; and the last level, seeds that will restart the cycle.

The families share a meal with the deceased, and keep the decoration from one year to another. A typical decoration is the *catrina*, a decorated skull, or a figurine with a skull head.

The Ambassador also talked about the literary *calaveritas*, or humorous poems that embody the wit and sense of humor typical of Mexicans and that the world surely could use far more of!



'The Ambassador and his staff really went to great lengths to showcase this unique and colourful and really very comforting tradition of remembering deceased family members. I certainly learned a lot of new and interesting historical and cultural information.'

Nora Nordan



Ernesto Malda introduces the photo exhibition

Anita thanked the Ambassador and presented him with a Forum bowl designed by IF member and artist Victoria Berge.

The Embassy also showcased Mexican writer Tomas Casademunt's exhibition *La Muerte en el Altar* ('Death on the Altar').



Examples of altars from different families

The author has traveled around Mexico, visiting people in the different states in order to photograph alters from the various regions. The altars were very different indeed. White candles were used for children and darker candles for adults. The exhibition was introduced by Ernesto Malda, Head of the cultural section in the Mexican Embassy.

"It was a real treat to visit the Mexican Embassy and to hear the ambassador speak. So much to learn and what a beautiful presentation!"

Jean H. Lundberg

'I will remember this for a long time!'

Birgitt Færden



"We felt the warmth from the International Forum members. Glad to know everyone felt at home. Surely the message 'mi casa es tu casa' (my house is your house) was delivered."

Patricia Leon de la Barra

Ambassador Canchola presented every IF member with the above hand-painted Día de Muertos brooch.

We were treated to traditional Día de Muertos goodies - sweet pumpkin, sugar-coated buns and strawberry-flavoured Atole, a traditional drink dating back to the Aztecs. Delicious!



A great *Thank you* to the Ambassador and his wife for hosting us and to Anita for making this Salon happen!

Elizabeth Rasmussen

CELEBRATION OF THE DÍA DE MUERTOS

International Forum's Diplomatic Salon

November 2, 2022

The Embassy of Mexico

By

H. E. Ambassador of Mexico, Ulises Canchola Gutiérrez

'The veneration of life, if it is true and profound, is also the veneration of death. Both are inseparable. A civilization that denies death, ends up denying life.'

Octavio Paz, 'Todos Santos Día de Muertos', El Laberinto de la Soledad

The Día de Muertos or Day of the Dead is the most important Mexican tradition. During the celebration, we commemorate death by connecting and sharing with the relatives who have passed away. It is also the occasion to strengthen the social ties with those alive and around us.



The origins of this tradition date back to the pre-Hispanic period. In the pre-Hispanic vision, the act of dying was just the beginning of a trip to *Mictlán* (the reign of the death, also known as *Xiomoayan* that the Spaniards translated as 'hell'). For the indigenous people, death did not have any moral connotation. It was not good nor bad. It was neither prize nor punishment. For the ancient Mexicans, the soul's fate was determined by the kind of death a person may suffer and the kind of life she lived. So, for instance, a person that was drowned would be led to *Talolcan* (the paradise of *Tláloc*, God of Rain).

After the conquest of Mexico in the 16th century, Christianity introduced the notion of fear of death, as well as the concept of hell. The Colonial period was a time of syncretism, in which the customs and beliefs of the Spaniards were adopted and adapted to the indigenous culture.

Catholicism is a faith based on the adoration of the dead, since salvation is not on earth but in heaven. The Catholic calendar is ruled by the life and death of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is paired with the celebration of the memory of those who lived and died following His example. Days were allocated to commemorate Saints and Martyrs. In order to commemorate those hundreds and thousands who died in anonymity, the Church promoted the celebration of All Souls' Day in the 11th century. This ritual substituted the obligation of pilgrimage that devoted Catholics should undertake at some point in their lives.

In Mexico, 41 ethnic groups celebrate the Day of the Dead festivities. These ethnic groups are mainly located in the centre and southern part of Mexico, with 20 States out of 32 in the Federation celebrating the festival.

In 2008, Mexico's Indigenous Festivity Dedicated to The Dead was inscribed in the UNESCO List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. The justification was that the Day of the Dead was the product of the encounter of two different worlds (the Catholic-European and the Indigenous-Pre-Hispanic). It has also been the cause and origin of a great many cultural expressions (music, literature, artistic etc). UNESCO notes that 'The Day of the Dead celebration holds great significance in the life of Mexico's indigenous communities. The fusion of pre-Hispanic religious rite and Catholic feasts brings together two universes, one marked by indigenous belief systems, the other by worldviews introduced by the Europeans in the sixteenth century.'

The 'Altar de Muertos' is an iconoclastic representation of the vision held by a community regarding the dead. It is the offering to the dead. It plays a crucial role in the celebration of these festivities: It is the core and heart of the festivities. The altar is made to share the pleasures and joys of life with those relatives already gone.

However, the offering does not only entail elements of love, gratitude and veneration. There is also fear of the tribute earning the dissatisfaction of the dead. A complete offering should entail elements such as flowers, candles, food, alcoholic beverages, and religious images.

A lot of thought, effort and care goes into the preparations for celebrating Día de Muertos. We look at death with humour. That is part of our idiosyncrasy. But it does not mean that we do not fear death. Through symbols and rituals, Mexicans reflect on the finite character of their existence. By way of symbols, we manage not to be afraid of death. We temper our anguish. Once we transform death into a symbol, it stops being an end and becomes a threshold. In order to begin, we need to cease to exist. In order to learn how to live, we keep a closer relationship with death.

That is a way of transcendence.

A PROTEST IN BLACK AND WHITE

‘UKRAINE: This is what I feel’

By Bente Brandt

When Vladimir Putin invaded Ukraine in February this year, I found myself unable to create anything in the vibrant colours that I normally use.

I felt that I needed to comment somehow on what was unfolding, so I decided to make just black and white photographs as an expression of my protest.

The themes reflect what I imagine it must feel like to be invaded, dispossessed, scared and confused...



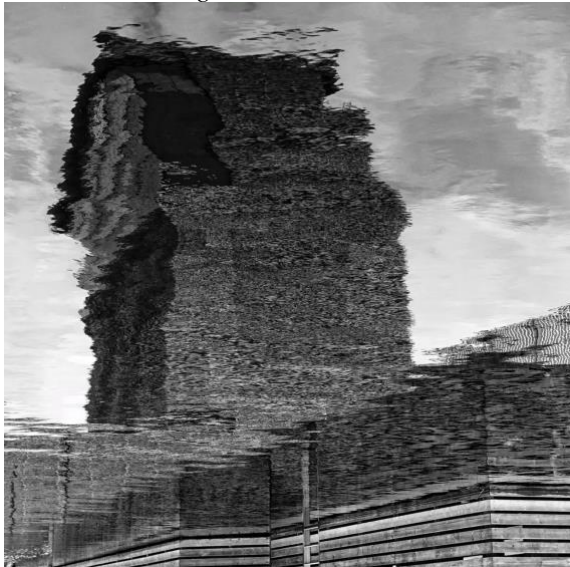
The Beacon



The Long Walk



Chaos



Discord



Resistance



Breathe



Melancholia



Resistance



Awe



The Frontline



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‘The Rat Battle’ – *The Nut Cracker* at the Oslo Opera