



INTERNATIONAL FORUM OSLO

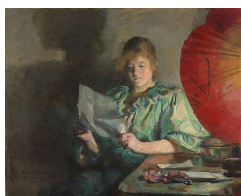
NEWSLETTER

October 2023
Issue No. 489

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If you wish to become a member of International Forum, please contact us by email.



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DEADLINE FOR SUBMITTING ARTICLES

For the **November Newsletter** is **October 15**. 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

The human brain has 86 billion neurons: nerve cells that send and receive messages to the body and surroundings. Not millions, but *billions* of neurons. That's about as many as there are stars in our Milky Way Galaxy! Imagine the immensity of this. And one-third of our powerful brain is devoted to vision. Vision and imagination – often called the mind's eye – are where all great discoveries begin, be they in art, philosophy, medicine or science.

This brainpower explains why vision and imagination have been central to the progress of humankind. But amidst modern-day clutter, we see little, and imagine even less. What can we see or hear of the surroundings when heads are bent, eyes glued to smartphones, ears blocked by ear pods?

A recent book described eleven ways of walking and observing a New York city neighbourhood through the eyes of a geologist, infant, artist, even dog – sniffing away with delight and disgust. Their ground world is also a galaxy. One gram of good soil contains 10 billion micro-organisms representing thousands of species.

Authors and artists often see the world much like children – with curiosity, intensity and freshness, exploring the depths until they find their truth. Great artists awaken our dormant imagination, making us see beauty and pain, reality and mystery. Our upcoming tours to museums will stimulate us to see differently, even 'challenge our prejudices' as the Intercultural Museum aims to do. The Harriet Backer exhibition explores the aesthetics of colour. Munch and Goya transformed art with their modernistic vision of disturbing realities. Midway through his career, Goya suffered an illness that left him permanently deaf. Historians say it also altered his vision of the world and his art turned dark, focusing on social evils. With the power of their deep vision and strong imagination, great artists challenge our perceptions of art and reality.

Our brain's capacity for vision and imagination has brought humanity this far and it will take us further. As IF members, we have the unique opportunity to journey together to experience the power of human stories and timeless art.

Best Wishes,

Anita Pratap
President

FROM THE BOARD

NEW MEMBERS



This month the Board has the pleasure of welcoming five new members.

We are so happy to have you on board and are looking truly forward to see you at our events! Just contact the committee or activity leader of your choice.

COMING EVENTS

OCTOBER MONTHLY MEETING

October 9



‘Why do women live longer than men?’

Professor emeritus Karen Helene Ørstavik from the Department of Clinical Medicine at the University of Oslo will talk about this interesting and somewhat complicated topic. She has published extensively on a variety of topics related to human genetics.

DATE/TIME: Monday, **October 9** at 18:45 for (19:00)

- SIGN UP:** To Gunnel Anita Solheim by email:
by **October 3.**
- PRICE:** NOK 105.- **Please sign up before you pay.** 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:** Guests are welcome if there is room. No-shows will be charged.
- For last-minute cancellations, please call Gunnel Anita Solheim on mobile phone.

ART COMMITTEE

Every Atom is Colour

Harriet Backer at the National Museum

October 19



The Art Committee invites you to rediscover the works of one of Norway's most prominent painters, Harriet Backer. In this exhibition entitled *Every Atom is Colour*, we will be introduced to a large collection of her paintings which

illustrate the life and times of this eminent artist (1845-1932). Many of her paintings are of interiors, but we will also see a number of her portraits, including her only self-portrait, and we can again admire her use of clear and intense colours.

DATE/TIME: Thursday, **October 19** at 11:45 (for 12:00)

SIGN UP: To Josephine Kamsvåg by email:
as soon as possible and not later than **October 12**.

PLACE: The National Museum, Brynjulf Bulls Plass 3, 0250 Oslo

PRICE: NOK 110.- for the guided tour to be **paid preferably by**

Bank transfer to IF's account 1600.40.36631 or by VIPPS to 591747 as soon as your participation has been confirmed. 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 for the guide at the venue.

The entrance fee is NOK 200.- for adults and NOK 110.- for seniors (free entry for National Museum members). The entry fee is to be paid at the 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 or questions, please call Josephine on mob.: 476 36 148

SPECIAL EVENTS

Bogstad Manor and Marble Exhibition

October 26

1814 was a remarkable year in Norwegian history. In the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars, Norway ceased to be a province of Denmark – after nearly 450 years – and was forced into a union with Sweden. Norway was allowed to have its own constitution, the world's most liberal at the time. Peder Anker, the owner of Bogstad Manor and his son-in-law Grev Wedel Jarlsberg were closely involved in the process, and the house was the venue for many political discussions. In November 1814, a dinner meeting was held at Bogstad, at which the Swedish Crown Prince Karl Johan – later to become King of Sweden and Norway – was present in an attempt to constitute the first Norwegian

Parliament. Peder Anker was appointed Norway's first Prime Minister, and his son-in-law Grev Wedel Jarlsberg was given the position of Minister of Finance. The Special Events Committee invites you to join us at Bogstad Gård for a guided tour of the manor with special emphasis on the Marble Exhibition in the new east wing.



Bogstad Manor is beautifully situated on the Bogstad lake in Sørkedalen. The history of the estate dates back to 1649. Today's house is from 1780 with interiors almost unchanged from that age. It was owned and lived in until 1955 by the prominent families Leuch, Anker and Wedel Jarlsberg, who not only ran the estate with its timber and iron industry, but who also engaged in politics both locally and nationally. Today, the estate is owned by Bogstad Trust and managed by the Norwegian Folk Museum.

We are proud to have Ellen Bjørnebye, member of the International Forum, as our guide both at the manor house and the exhibition *Marmorvariasjonene* (variations of marble).

After the tour, we have the opportunity to sit down in Café Grevinnen for refreshments. Please indicate if you would like to stay for a coffee so that we can reserve some tables for our group.

DATE/TIME: Thursday, **October 26** at 11:45 (for 12:00)

SIGN UP: To Mona Bækkelund Reinboth onemail no later than **October 12**. Please sign up before the deadline but **pay only after you have received confirmation** of your participation. Please give us your mobile number when signing up. **After you have paid, please inform Mona Reinboth and state the date of your payment.**

PLACE: Bogstad Gård, Sørkedalsveien 450, 0758 Oslo.

PRICE: NOK 125,- for the entrance and guided tour, to be **paid preferably by bank transfer** to IF's account 1600.40.36631 or by VIPPS to 591747 as soon as your participation has been confirmed. 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).

Maximum number of participants is 30.

Guests are allowed if space available.

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

For last- minute cancellations and questions, please contact Mona Reinboth by email or telephone.

NOVEMBER MONTHLY MEETING

November 6

Educator and Explorer Liv Arnesen

‘In Tailwinds and Headwinds on Expeditions and in Life.’



Liv Arnesen is a former high school teacher, now lecturer, educator, and explorer. Her educational background is Master of Management and Master of Arts. Liv will explain how her childhood dream led to her being the first woman to ski solo and unsupported to the South Pole. She also attempted to climb Mount Everest.

‘When you feel your heart beating hard or your blood running fast, you have found something that is important to you, create a room for it.’

However, her presentation will focus on her educational expeditions with Ann Bancroft, a former teacher from Minnesota. In 2001, they were the first women to ski across the Antarctic Continent unsupported. Together they founded ABE Access Water, offering experimental educational programmes that aim to engage, inspire and empower future leaders to create a sustainable tomorrow.

DATE/TIME: Monday, **November 6** at 18:45 for (19:00)

- SIGN UP:** To Gunnel Anita Solheim, by email:
no later than **November 1**.
- 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:** Guests are welcome if there is room. No-shows will be charged.
- For last-minute cancellations, please call Gunnel Anita Solheim on mobile phone.

COOKING GROUP

Despite a grey and rainy day, 13 Forum ladies enjoyed a lovely lunch at the home of our cooking group leader. The next gathering is going to take place at the end of next month.



- DATE/TIME:** Thursday, October 26 at 12:00
- SIGN UP:** No later than Friday, October 20 to Liss R. Laan.
- PLACE:**
- ADDRESS:**

Maximum participants: 12

Have a lovely autumn everyone!

Liss Laan

SWIMMING AT LYSEBU RESORT POOL



Some **good news for our members**: International Forum has renewed the arrangement with Hotel Lysebu for the use of their swimming pool and wellness facilities. Lysebu has increased their pool rates, but IF members can still enjoy the facilities at 100 NOK per person each time. The pool is heated to 28 degrees ● ! The wellness area also includes a sauna.

Swimming relaxes, lowers stress, and improves immunity, balance and flexibility. After a swim, an afternoon tea or a glass of wine is tempting. It is an ideal getaway with a few Forum friends or just alone for some quality ‘me-time’.

This offer is only for IF members. Family and friends would have to pay the regular rate of 200 NOK per person.

If you wish to use the pool facilities, **please email the office to include your name in the list given to Lysebu.**

Please show your membership card at Lysebu on arrival to get the discounted rate. Like last year, your new membership card is uploaded automatically on the Gnist App (Gnist.com) when you pay your membership fees. CD members who wish to use the facilities, please email: Anita Pratap

Pool Hours: Monday-Thursday – 7:30 to 22:30
 Friday – 7:30 to 16:00
 Saturday closed
 Sunday – 13:00 to 22:30

About Lysebu

Built in 1916 and located amidst idyllic pine forests atop Holmenkollen, Lysebu offers beautiful views of unspoiled nature. The hotel also has a gourmet cuisine and a well-stocked wine cellar. Lysebu was gifted by the Norwegian people to the Fund for Danish-Norwegian Cooperation established after World War II.

Anita Pratap

R E P O R T S

DIPLOMATIC SALON AT THE U.S. EMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE

A Real-Life Workshop on Resilience



International Forum Members with Jane Nathanson

It was a salon like no other, moving and memorable.

The ‘Art and Resilience Salon’ hosted in her home by Jane Nathanson, wife of the U.S. Ambassador, evolved in a spontaneous, unanticipated direction. After her initial remarks on the qualities that build resilience, Jane invited the 23 attending members of Forum to share moments in their life when they have had to be resilient.

Suddenly, a warm, safe space opened up for a special, one-of-a-kind sharing. Perhaps it was due to the cordial welcome by the gracious hostess, or to being cocooned in a beautiful room with pleasing art, soothing fresh flowers all across the long dining table, and the bonding togetherness of a luncheon.

Many described painful tests of life that they had endured. The experiences ranged from deaths or terminal prognosis for loved ones, to sickness, dangerous journeys to unknown lands alone and friendless, to racial prejudice experienced by children, and to careers gone astray.

For those who talked about the heart-breaking situations they had faced, it was a cathartic moment. For those who had not experienced similar tragedies, it was humbling. For everyone it was therapeutic. Those talking and those listening had tears in their eyes – tears of remembrance, tears of empathy.



*A combination of cordial hospitality, the aesthetics of a beautiful room, soothing artworks, and calming fresh flowers opened up a safe space for special sharing.
‘It was moving to hear so many life experiences from all the lovely ladies.
The more we learn and know about each other, the more powerful the connection.’
Jane Nathanson*

Everybody confirmed Jane’s ‘7 Cs for building resilience: *competence, confidence, connection, character, contribution, coping and control*. Resilience is not in your DNA, but it can be learned. Resilience theory argues that it is not the nature of adversity that is most important, but how we deal with it. Resilience is the process and outcome of successfully adapting to challenging life experiences, especially through mental, emotional and behavioural flexibility.

One good way to cope with difficulties is relying on connections. This leads to confidence in the future. Women tend to be more resilient because they are especially good at connecting, said Jane.

Many of the attending IF members have known each other for years, sometimes decades. And yet, we did not realise the depth of the emotions that lay beneath the surface. Genuine human connection is an exchange of positive energy, it makes us feel heard, understood and valued, and it gives us a sense of belonging.

Our International Forum logo symbolises this interconnectedness. Created in 1979, the IF logo is based on an old Viking pattern of oval-shaped leaves interlinked with one another in a continuous flow to represent friendship, unity and interdependence.



*Anita Pratap presenting Victoria Berge's ceramic plate:
'A little sunshine from IF members to Jane Nathanson to brighten the upcoming winter days.'
'I will treasure it as a reminder of my stay in Oslo and all the wonderful people I have met,' said Jane,
who is an art collector and licensed psychologist.*

In this salon, a golden circle of authentic human connection was formed.

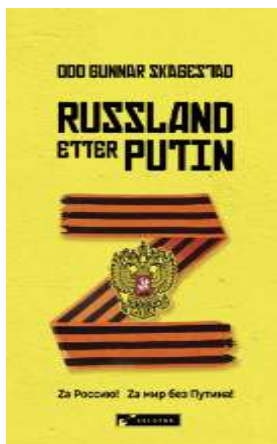
Anita Pratap

MONTHLY MEETING

Former Ambassador Odd Gunnar Skagestad on 'Russia After Putin'



The Vinderen hall was filled to capacity as former ambassador Odd Gunnar Skagestad spoke about Russia now and after Putin, starting by explaining the symbolism of the letter Z and the black and orange striped ribbon of the Order of Saint George, Russia's patron saint. The legend has it that he slew a dragon. He has come to symbolise Russia, and the Dragon is an incarnation of evil, referring to Russia's enemies.



The letter **Z** that we see on tanks and military equipment (and which by the way is not part of the Cyrillic alphabet) stands for 'za', the Russian word for *for*, as in '*for Russia*'. *Za mir bez Putina* in Skagestad's subtitle is a play on words meaning 'For a world without Putin.'

President Putin is set on rewriting history to make it fit into his agenda of expanding and defending the great Russian Empire. He aims to control the past and the present with a view to using history to control the future. The Russian state ideology is upheld by repression at home and aggression abroad. It is always justified by history.

It is extremely difficult to predict what will happen in Russia after Putin, but there is little to suggest that the ideology or mindset will change anytime soon. Skagestad can only hint at possible scenarios. He quotes Churchill: '**[Russia] is a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma.**' For Russian rulers, politics is a power game – a quest for power. It's all about *who* is in power, *who* is the culprit when things go wrong, and what can be done and who can be punished.

The mighty are always right, and therefore justice is exercised from the top and down.



Putin and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz

For Putin, every conflict, every state action is a *zero-sum* game; i.e. there can only be a winner and a loser. Win-win situations are viewed with suspicion.



That is why the Russians are such difficult negotiators. They need to come out on top. Skagestad refers to this behaviour as a 'siege-mentality syndrome'. It dictates the relations that Russia has with other countries.

Russian foreign policy is designed to install fear of the great nation

of Russia. Power must be expressed and displayed. Since the all-in invasion of Ukraine, the rhetoric has hardened and become increasingly aggressive.

In Putin's world, the great Tsars are a source of inspiration, notwithstanding the brutal regimes that they represented. He sees himself as their heir and literally keeps a distance from people he meets, even his own members of government.

This is clear from the picture of him and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz before the invasion of Ukraine.

Putinism or Putin's state ideology has also taken on a religious dimension, supported by Patriarch Kyrill, head of the Russian-Orthodox Church, who has moved the Russian Church closer to the state. The spiritual and political powers collude in a grand scheme. The Church has gone from being an outcast to becoming a real force in Russian politics. Putin regularly appears at Mass and other services to show the bond between him, the state, and the Church.



The Centre was filled to capacity

People say that Putin is not rational, but this is not true. He is rational according to a different cultural reality than the one we have in the West. Skagestad calls the president's behaviour 'strategic relativism'. His actions and conduct reflect the power he wields. And power is the name of the game that justifies itself. *Might is right*. You need to be able to lie and to be lied to and pretend that everything is normal. It is part of the eternal power game.

At times, the power game plays out, not only as a zero-sum game (one winner – one loser), but as a *negative-sum* game, in which the aim is to *lose less* than your adversary. Another important aspect of the power game involves non-credible deniability (the speaker knows that what he says is not true): the ability to deny anything and in that way create confusion. Skagestad claims that Putin is not *the* problem, he is just the tip of a cultural iceberg. He will be remembered differently by different people both at home and abroad.

The main problem with Russia is that it lacks an active, viable and robust civic society and institutions that can be trusted. Russians do not trust their leaders. To create trust and encourage change, the country needs to get rid of its

troubling and violent past. But that is not happening. Stalin, who's been the villain for decades, is now back in new history books as a hero.

Will the young people be able to change things? Will Putin at some point be ousted by his own? The Wagner group's mutiny shows that not all the acolytes are satisfied (and why did Putin not kill Prigozhin right away?). It is not likely that there will be any changes in Russia for a long time. This means that the war in Ukraine will probably not be over in the near future. Remember that the *negative-sum* game plays a role in Ukraine: You inflict more damage on your enemy than he is able to inflict on you. Therefore, Russia may settle for a long war of attrition and Ukraine will continue to depend on help from the West.

The future is difficult to predict, and Russia will not fade away from the news pictures quite yet.



When asked about Turkey, Mr Skagestad claimed that Russians view Erdogan as a strong leader and a man who is both able and willing to wield power. The Turkish president has in general been on a good footing with Putin. Norwegian politicians expected improved relations after 2010 when the agreement on maritime demarcation and cooperation in the Barents Sea and the Arctic Ocean between Norway and Russia was signed. The invasion of Crimea put a damper on the relations. Russia reverted to the usual way of treating neighbours...

Someone raised the question of gender equality. Mr Skagestad explained that Stalin made several amendments to the constitution; however, rights and freedoms are understood very differently than in the West. Putin has slowly destroyed civic society in Russia. And you need a strong civic society to guarantee rights. Putin puts his power at centre and uses it mercilessly. Many women and children are refugees in the West.

A big *Thank you* to the Monthly Meeting Committee for organising the event! Much food for thought!

Elizabeth Rasmussen

ART COMMITTEE

Before Tomorrow

Astrup-Fearnley's 30-Year Anniversary Exhibition



In celebration of its 30-year anniversary, the Astrup-Fearnley Museum is presenting *Before Tomorrow*, featuring over one hundred works from its extensive collection. Our excellent guide Ena Salunovic began the tour by giving us a brief history of the Museum, whose founder, Hans Rasmus Astrup, began collecting modern-day works in the 1960s, focusing on contemporary artists and their works rather than on historical periods. In 2012-2013, the collection was moved to the new Astrup-Fearnley Museum, which was designed by the well-known Italian architect Renzo Piano. He perceived the site not so much as a museum but more as an experiential activity centre. And while the open concept and large spaces lend themselves well to the viewing of installations by the public, they can also present certain challenges to the guides, as was pointed out to us!

This exhibition combines some of the works and artists that have been continually on display at the Museum together with more recent acquisitions and lesser-known works, which are characterised by a new and unfamiliar understanding of 'What is Art?' These works are more conceptual and often draw the viewer in through performative and interactive experiences. From the beginning, AF has focused on the art of the present. Several works in the exhibition deal with personal and collective identities, raising questions of

gender, sexuality and cultural belonging. While many paintings are represented in this exhibition, the role of photography is also very apparent.

Husdikt by Hanne Borchgrevink portrays an abstract house, something we all perceive as a basic necessity for shelter, but this work leaves the viewer with the question, ‘What is it we really imagine when we think of a house or a home?’

In the two photographs *Art Institute of Chicago 2*, *Chicago* and *Nanjing Xi Lu, Shanghai*, Thomas Struth uses the camera lens to bring together ideas of movability and journey. While geography and culture are specific and situational, and exist in a certain time and context, our perceptions are fluid and transitory. The past merges with the present and ultimately with the future and – like the figures in these works – the viewer may one day become the viewed.



Husdikt



Art Institute of Chicago 2

Other recent acquisitions are seven photographs by Wolfgang Tillmans from his *Concorde* project, which he started in 1997. Tillmans, who was a supporter of the European Union, perceived this avant-garde but ill-fated plane as literally and symbolically connecting distant cities in the world: in this case, London, Paris and New York. This dream ended with the crash of the Concorde jet outside of Paris in 2000.

With *Tractor* by Charles Ray, the artist plays with our assumptions about what we really see when we look at an object. Here, although this tractor may look like a tractor, it is – in reality – an example of conceptual art. Ray took apart all the pieces, moulded each individual piece in clay and then reassembled them to resemble a tractor. It may look like a tractor but it’s not what it looks like because it has no utilitarian function. Perception does not always equal reality.

Børre Sæthre’s *My Private Sky* is a perfect example of an immersive and totalising experience of installation art. One feels a conflict between the desire to be drawn into this seductive and mellow blue interior set, where you are greeted by a reclining unicorn, and the feelings of entrapment and claustrophobia created by the backdrop of a repetitive, menacing humming sound.



There are many more installations and works to view that have not been mentioned in this brief overview. *Beyond Tomorrow* is well worth a visit, perhaps even more than one. Hans Rasmus Astrup passed away in 2021; but thanks to his generous endowment, the Museum is able to continue the work that he initiated.

Trudy Brand-Jacobsen

OSLO IN AUTUMN



Akerselva



Akershus fortress



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

Dispatch: October 2, 2023

Daylight Saving Time Ends

Wintertime Starts

Sunday, October 29



On Sunday, **October 29**, at **03:00**, the clocks are turned **back** one hour to **02:00**. Sunrise and sunset will therefore be one hour earlier on Sunday October 30 than the day before.