



INTERNATIONAL FORUM OSLO

NEWSLETTER



December 2023
Issue No. 491

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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 **January Newsletter** is **DECEMBER 11**. Please send your contribution to Elizabeth S. Rasmussen by email and to int.forum@online.no. The Editor and the Editorial Team reserve the right to edit *all* material.



From the President

‘A child is born!’ Around the world, parents and philosophers, prophets and poets agree that these are among the most joyous words spoken. A child heralds what’s new in the world, the best that Life offers. An infant symbolizes love, joy and hope, a new beginning for itself and for its family, a reminder that we all, in different ways, have the capacity to renew.

The newborn links the past, present and future. That tiny bundle is a carrier of traditions. Parents and grandparents, relatives and friends pass on their cultural customs to the baby – through food, chatter, smells, lullabies, weather – clothing it for freezing winters or hot summers. The birth of a baby is cherished in all cultures and religions, an event that connects us all in a universal bond. Equally important is it that every community celebrates the new arrival differently, with their own special songs and ceremonies. The birth of a baby is a celebration of life, in painful contrast to the destruction caused by war.

Every generation wonders, ‘What is the meaning of life?’ There is no *one* answer. It certainly is not about life giving us meaning. Rather, it is about us giving meaning to life, it is about giving something back to the world for having received the gift of life. Perhaps meaning lies in leaving behind something positive – an educated child, a stable home, a smile in someone’s heart.

There is an old Sufi story about an old man dying, sick and alone. A child asks him why he looks happy. He replies that he is smiling at how the seed he had planted has grown into a mighty tree with leafy branches like outstretched arms. He says, ‘I will soon be gone, but my tree will give shade to many weary travellers.’ Small gestures that bring cheer to one or many are what this special season is all about. To give is to love. To love is to know joy. And joy brings hope.

May this magical season bring you love, joy and hope.

Merry Christmas!

Anita Pratap
President

F R O M T H E B O A R D

New Members



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

We are so happy to have you on board and look very much forward to seeing you among us!

C O M I N G E V E N T S

DECEMBER CHRISTMAS MEETING



Monday, December 4 at 17:45 (for 18:00)

This event is now fully booked.

You may buy raffle tickets in advance (NOK 50.- per ticket). Please put your **NAME** and **'raffle'** in the dialog box of your bank transfer to Forum account 1600 40 36631 or in your VIPPS transaction to 591747.

Please bring a small, wrapped gift for the raffle.

We ask our members to kindly be seated by 18:00.

We look forward to a convivial and festive evening with friends!

THE JANUARY MONTHLY MEETING

Monday, **January 8**

Dr Signe Howell



‘Animal spirits, Shamans and Monkey for dinner: Living with the Chewong in the jungle of Malaysia’

Professor Emeritus and International Forum member Signe Howell will talk about her research with a small group of hunter-gatherers deep in the tropical rain forest of Malaysia. Her initial fieldwork lasted 18 months and she has subsequently visited them many times. Signe has a PhD in Social Anthropology from the University of Oxford.

DATE/ **Monday, January 8 at 18:45 (for 19:00)**

TIME: SIGN UP: To Anita Solheim by email as soon as possible and no later than Wednesday, **January 3**.

PLACE: Vinderen seniorsenyer Slemdalsveien 72, 0373 Oslo.

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 Gunnel Anita Solheim on mob.: 404 80 944.

ART COMMITTEE

Tuesday, **January 16**

Magdalena Abakanowicz: *Every Tangle of Thread and Rope*

The Henie Onstad Art Centre



Magdalena Abakanowicz (1939 – 2017) was a Polish sculptor and fibre artist, known for her use of textiles as a sculptural medium and for outdoor installations. She developed a personal artistic language closely linked to the artist's relationship with nature and her childhood memories in Poland, where she grew up isolated on her aristocratic family's estate deep in the forest. Germany invaded Poland at the beginning of World War II. In the same year, the Soviet Union moved in from the east to occupy part of the country. The family was stripped of everything they owned, and the aristocratic family background had to be hidden. Despite difficult living conditions under the communist regime, Abakanowicz was determined to engage on a global scale. Even before 1970, she gained international recognition for her revolutionary installations, and she continued to cross the Iron Curtain more than any other artist, participating in hundreds of exhibitions worldwide.

DATE: Tuesday, **January 16** at 11:45 (for 12.00)

SIGN UP: To Inger M. Ræder by email: or SMS
as soon as possible and no later than Thursday, January 11.

- PRICE:** Please sign up before you pay. Entrance fee is **NOK 150.-** for non-members of the Museum and should be paid individually, preferably online several days before the event to save time upon arrival at the museum.
- NOK 120,-** for the guide, which should be paid in advance. Please make your payment **preferably** by **bank transfer** to the Forum account: 1600 40 36631 or by VIPPS 591747. 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).
- PLACE:** Henie Onstad Kunstsenter, Sonja Henies vei 31, 1311 Høvikodden
- TRANSPORT:** **Bus** 160 (Rykkinn) from Nationaltheatret every 30 min. Get off at Høvikodden bus stop. It is a five-minute walk.
By car: take E18 west and follow the signs. Free parking.
- LUNCH:** There is a cafeteria/restaurant at the Henie Onstad Kunstsenter
- Maximum number of participants: 25
- We need at least 12 participants for the tour to be held.**
- 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 Inger M. Ræder on mob.: 976 88 795

ACTIVITY GROUPS AND COURSES – SPRING 2024

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)

This is a group of 12 ladies from Austria, Japan, India, Colombia, Russia, Peru, Canada, Hungary, and Norway. New members to International Forum are also welcome. 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.

Contact: Eva Øglænd by email, or Mona Bækkelund Reinboth by email.

PHOTO GROUP

We are amateur photographers. No qualifications are required other than being interested in learning about digital photography. The aim is to become a better photographer, learn how to master devices such as camera, telephone, computer, iPad and to learn how to make photo books and greeting cards, or how to post Instagram stories, etc.

We have workshops 4-6 times a year at Gunnel Anita's home or at another member's home from 12:30 – 15:00, or we go on outdoor photo walks. In November, we held two photo-book workshops, and we will have three more in December.

Members of the photo group, as well as other IF members who might be interested in learning how to make photo books, are welcome on **December 6, 11 and/or 18**. The first photo workshop next year will be on January 15, at 12:30 – 15:00 at Gunnel Anita's home in Grønsundåsen 19, 1394 Nesbru. If you are interested, please contact Gunnel Anita and state what you are interested in:

1. Photographing with camera or with smart phone (camera-techniques, taking sharp and/or blurred pictures, lighting, composing the picture)
2. Editing pictures
3. Organizing pictures
4. Making collages, greeting cards or photo books

Contact: Gunnel Anita Solheim by email.

INTERNATIONAL BOOK CLUB I

The gatherings are held on the third Wednesday of the month in members' homes, in which case the hostess serves a light lunch. We read and discuss books, usually novels by international authors, chosen by the group. The reading list will be published at the end of January.

Contact: Dorota Steensland by e-mail.

INTERNATIONAL BOOK CLUB II

The same procedures as those of the International Book Club I. The gatherings take place once a month. As always, we meet in each other's home for a light lunch on the first Thursday of the month at 13:00. The person who suggested a book prepares a short presentation and leads the discussion.

Book Club II has decided to read the following books:

January: Joyce Carol Oates (2021) *The Other You* (short stories)

February: Tsitsi Dangarembga (1988) *Nervous Conditions*

March: Graham Green (1955) *The Quiet American*

April: Valerie Martin (2007) *Trespass*

May: F. Dostoevsky (1880) *Brothers Karamazov*

Contact: Heidi Høivik by email.

COOKING GROUP

Cooking Group 1 has been up and running for many years, I have notes dating back to 1996. Some of the original ladies are still in our group. Since we are an international group, some women are leaving and new ones are attending. As we rotate between each other's private homes there will be limited space most times.

Contact: Liss Laan by email.

MONDAY DUPLICATE BRIDGE

We usually play Bridge every Monday in the players' homes.

Contact: Kirsten Whist by email.

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.

Contact: Ida Tschudi Heilemann.

COURSE IN BRIDGE FOR BEGINNERS

This course was held in November 2023

Currently there are no plans for a follow-up on this. However, if you are interested in such a course, please contact Gunnel Anita Solheim by email.

WALKING GROUP

Kerstin Pettersen will send an email to the group members and inform them of the first walk of spring 2024. 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 by email.

SWIMMING AT LYSEBU

The Danish Cultural Centre at Voksenkollen has nice indoor swimming facilities. International Forum members will be most welcome to swim at Lysebu and only must 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: Gunnel Anita Solheim by email.

COURSES

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

TRADITIONAL NORWEGIAN ROSE PAINTING

Rose painting ('rosemaling') is a traditional Norwegian folk art which goes back to the 1700s and which is still alive in many parts of the country. Morning and evening courses can be organized for large or small groups.

Contact: Vivian Grieg Teisner by email.

IMPRESSIONS OF NORWAY

Norwegian Zen

‘The no-stress, outdoor life in Norway has changed me,’
writes outgoing Ambassador of Poland, **Iwona Woicka-Żuławska**, in her
farewell letter to International Forum



The majestic slopes of Svalbard

All Photographs in this text by © Iwona Woicka-Żuławska. • Captions: Anita Pratap

I came to Norway almost 6 years ago together with my husband Sławek. It was my first posting as Ambassador, and I was quite confident that I would be able to leave a mark on the bilateral relations between my country Poland and the one I was sent to. When looking back at these years, I think that perhaps I have succeeded here and there in shaping our mutual relations. But first of all: Norway just changed me. Yet, I believe that I only realised the extent of the impact this country had on me when leaving it.

First of all, I knew when coming that there are always cultural differences, even between countries that are so close geographically. But then I discovered that the ‘no-stress’ approach of Norwegians – combined with the pursuit of the work-life balance – is at a totally different level in the country of the fjords! At first, to be frank, it was unsettling and even somewhat frustrating! At the end, I found out it would be great to achieve the mythical middle ground – retaining some of the impulsiveness and ‘do-it-now’ Polish attitude, while mixing it with the Norwegian ‘Zen’ attitude, especially in situations that you know that are beyond your control, and which you can't influence or change.

The second thing I learned is the ‘applied slow life’. It is of course very much linked with the Norwegian no-stress approach, but that doesn't mean that you are

not quick in reacting (well, sometimes maybe that, too) but rather that you take things slowly, as they come. And enjoy the small things in life. Mixed with the outdoor way of life (*friluftsliv*) it is a potent formula for well-being and taking it easy. Walking in the woods around Oslo, exploring the different regions and landscapes, enjoying the change of seasons... It is all there, part of the Norwegian philosophy of life.



Where Eagles Dare



Having a whale of a time

At the end, I could really say that I appreciated the calm of winter, the soft light and darkness of wintertime in the North (even the constant need for snow-shovelling didn't change the spirit!), as well as the budding life in springtime, the incredible brightness of the summer months and the amazing colours and crisp air of the autumn! I have enjoyed so many things here! Travelling, looking at the changing landscape, feeling its vastness, but also – discovering the hospitality of Norwegians, especially outside of Oslo (sorry, Capital – but, in each and every capital city, people seem slightly spoiled!) and in the Far North.



Botanical art is one of the Ambassador's passions, which she pursued especially during the Covid-19 pandemic.



I enjoyed having the opportunity to experience so many activities I have never dreamt of trying! Dogsledding (also on wheels during summer), and cross-country skiing; looking at the tail of a sperm whale in the sea near Andenes, at sea eagles fighting over herrings in Lofoten, at walrus close to Longyearbyen; and watching for cute puffins on Lovund Island – enhancing my passion for nature to the next level, and discovering new facts about the incredible flora of Dovrefjell, Rondane, Lofoten or Svalbard. It inspired me to go for improving my botanical painting skills, which at the end led to an exhibition on Norwegian challenging times of the pandemic, for sure!



But the most important things I will take with me forever from my Norwegian times are the emotions and memories linked with amazing events and great experiences, and the friends that I have made there, both among Norwegians, as well as within the diplomatic corps. I have to mention one of the groups which will remain to be closest to my heart: the Female Ambassadors Oslo, those incredible, knowledgeable ladies, whom I had the chance to meet and befriend during my long stay, in the spirit of true sisterhood. Of course, there were also many great male colleagues that I have been privileged to meet and know since 2018. And groups of friends like the International Forum. I will remember all the great discussions we had, the joint events, walks, swims - and cooking!



The Diplomatic Charity Event: Presenting the diversity and delicacies of 55 countries in Oslo

A special place among my memories is left for the Diplomatic Charity Event – the multicultural meeting place, buzzing, enabling us to savour delicacies from all around the world, but also to fund a water well in Africa, as well as an ambulance for Ukraine! All those interactions made me more aware than ever, that regardless of our country of origin, traditions, and religions – we are always humans – feeling, experiencing, trying to make the best of our lives for ourselves, but most importantly for our loved ones, our country, our region, and the world. It gives hope that, at some point, we can overcome the differences that are still there, or rather, perhaps, no longer be controlled by negative emotions, beliefs and presumptions that make us so often succumb to the need to clash with others.

Looking back at our years in Norway, I will remember the laughs – and the sweat – associated with walking on trails with friends, discovering the Far North or Svalbard, falling and getting up while cross-country skiing in a fairy-tale scenery, or just enjoying coffee and waffles together. Of course, the formal, professional events and talks will also be there among the cherished memories, like the concerts and celebrations of national days, the challenging times of the COVID-19, or the opening of the Baltic Pipe and the new links formed between Polish and Norwegian businesses, universities and researchers, or the chance to see in person the place where the first battle won by the Allies happened during WWII.



*The Ambassador with her soul mate and spouse Sławomir Zulawski
at Haukåsen radio station*

However, it is true that the essence of a country is primarily linked with the people you have the chance to know there. And – together with Sławek – we were really lucky to get to know some amazing ones! Goodbye – Vi ses snart, Norge!

R E P O R T S

NOVEMBER MONTHLY MEETING

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

Liv Arnesen: Explorer and Educator

Our November 6 Monthly Meeting featured Norwegian educator and explorer Liv Arnesen, who shared her experiences from her historic expeditions in the Arctic and Antarctic and explained how she has incorporated the skills and lessons learned into educational projects for children, leadership training, coaching, and mentoring.

Born outside Oslo in 1953, Liv began to ski at age 2 and has had a passion for skiing ever since. When she was six, she saw a documentary on Thor Heyerdahl and the Kon-Tiki and declared that she wanted to venture out to all the oceans and ‘meet people of different colours.’ In school she was fascinated by the book *Skiing to the South Pole with Roald Amundsen* and inspired by Ernest Shackleton and Admiral Richard Byrd’s polar explorations. Another role model was Marie Curie, one of the first women to attend the Sorbonne in Paris to pursue her work in physics and chemistry. By the time Liv was 12, it was clear that her dreams differed substantially from those of typical adolescents: not to acquire a husband, house, or car, but to ski to the South Pole!



Crossing the Greenland Ice Cap

In 1992, now a high school teacher with a master’s degree, Liv set off for Greenland (‘my South Pole’) to begin the realization of her dreams. She led the first team of unsupported women to cross the Greenland ice cap. The experience taught

her that to live a life with meaning involves leaving your security spaces and comfort zones. To reach new goals, one must move within a safety zone that is a balance between challenges and skills.

Two years later, as the married mother of three, Liv was ready to pursue her original childhood goal: reaching the South Pole, alone and without support. It was not an easy trip! The Antarctic was like a frozen ocean with drifting waves of snow, a contrast to the relatively flat surface of Greenland. Exhausted by the difficult conditions, Liv kept herself going by mentally imagining that she was skiing in a gallery of modern art, repeating familiar tunes in her head, and

reading poetry each night before sleep. After 50 days of solo skiing over 1200 km, she reached the South Pole on Christmas Eve, 1994.

On her return to Norway, she was asked by the press to comment on having taken the 'shorter route', which was actually a more difficult and less costly route than the one that male teams had previously undertaken. Here Liv detected a bias against her achievement as a woman. She identified the suppression techniques so often used to undermine other people's accomplishments: making them invisible, ridiculing, withholding information, and making one feel 'damned if you do and damned if you don't.'

The disappointing reactions of male colleagues can be challenging for women entering realms usually occupied by men.

In 1996, she was part of a team of 10 to climb Mount Everest, functioning as the press contact for the group. She trained diligently and felt well-prepared. Although she did not make it all the way to the top due to high altitude oedema, she valued the teamwork and the skills it fostered: the ability to listen, the commitment of team members to make each other competent, and the awareness that everyone on the team has 100% responsibility.

Liv was grateful to come home alive after the dramatic climb, though the newspapers seemed inclined to report only the bad news. This experience brought out important factors needed when tackling defeat, including openness, confidence in the team, identifying values, realizing that there is always a bright side, learning a new role, changing tasks, and knowing that honesty brings self-respect. Determining whether a project is a success involves reflecting on what one has achieved, rejoicing in it, and articulating it.

In 1998, Liv encountered a former teacher from Minnesota, Ann Bancroft, who shared with Liv her dream of skiing across Antarctica. The two became close friends. Realizing the educational value of such an expedition, Liv and Ann decided to use the experience to design and market an online curriculum called *Dare to Dream*, based on the joy of having a dream and finding a way to achieve it. They wished to show that to fulfil a dream, it must be converted into a goal. They trained for the strenuous journey by pulling heavy tires totalling 125 kilos through the snow. Their interactive online programme was followed by 6 million children in 116 countries, with Minneapolis as the base. There were five people working full-time on the project. Liv called CNN regularly during the tour to keep in touch with her followers and sent content material for the programme back to Minneapolis a few times a week.

They skied and wind-sailed across Antarctica's land mass, for 8 - 12 hours at a time while towing their heavy sleds of equipment, singing just to keep awake, enduring temperatures as low as -34 C, and coping with a period of 51 days of no wind. Children across the world were invited to create 'wind songs' to encourage them, and the response was endearing. The deadline for completing

the 2,747 km crossing was January 17, 2001, and they arrived at midnight on the 16th.

They had met their four objectives: to be the first to ski across the Antarctic continent, to make the biggest interactive internet programme, to remain friends at the other side, and to have fun.



They then decided to do the same in the Arctic – with an expedition to Canada, Svalbard, and the North Pole. The conditions here, however, were very different from the Antarctic and required another way of skiing, often in melting snow and ice.

Training for the North Pole

They were confronted by challenges not only from nature, but also from wild animals, unfriendly Russians, and the pressures of tourism. After several dramatic episodes and frustrating funding attempts, they were forced to decide not to continue to the North Pole.

However, these two women realized that ‘You don’t need to go to the Poles to be an educator.’

Liv approached the Norwegian Refugee Council to develop an educational programme in South Africa, a school for girls in Rwanda and another in Kenya for boys and girls. Africa was a little too warm for Liv, so they turned to other projects under their organization *Bancroft Arnesen Explore*, with the goal to *Advance Mankind*.

Of particular importance is the access to fresh water. In cooperation with the UN, Liv and Ann invited one woman from each of the seven continents, all of different ages, religions and experience, to participate in expeditions called *Access Water* throughout the continents. The programme was launched on the Ganges River and continued on the Yangtze and included school visits, introduction of art, dance, and storytelling, and educational material translated into nine languages. The next expedition will be in 2024 in New Zealand.

Liv has also been a mentor for women with Breast Cancer. Last May she fronted the 70-kilometer *Expedition Pink Ribbon* over Greenland. The challenging 28-day trip (22 days in terrible conditions!) raised NOK 600,000.- for cancer research.

Her presentation at our meeting, richly illustrated by photographs, slides, and music, concluded with the beautiful video *Antarctic*, which has had 23 million hits. The combination of exploration and education is indeed effective, and Liv

has received 20,000 messages on her website. *Bancroft Arnesen Explore* has ‘a pocketful of adventures for the years to come.’

‘The journey is just beginning’, Liv states. ‘Join us.’



A lively question-and-answer period followed. When asked what was the most valuable thing she’s learned from her expeditions, Liv answered, ‘I learned what is important – and not important – what to spend my time and my energy on.’ She honestly and warmly shared the ups and downs, triumphs and disappointments of her endeavours and how we can extract useful lessons for life from these.

The handmade IF glass bowl was presented to Liv by President Anita Pratat with our appreciation for her talk. We also thank Gunnel Anita Solheim for preparing the maps and information on the Antarctic for our reference during the presentation.

Robin Wittusen

THE ART COMMITTEE

Modern Prophecies – Munch and Goya

The Munch Museum, November 2023



Francisco Goya (1746-1828) was a Spanish painter and printmaker. He is generally considered the last of the Old Masters and the first of the Moderns.

We know him best through his monumental paintings from the Spanish Court and the Napoleonic Wars. One will be disappointed if you expect to see some of these masterpieces at the Munch Museum. They seldom leave the Prado.

This exhibition concentrates on Goya as a printmaker. His series of prints had a great impact on the world he lived in. His brutal and satirical view of the decadence of the Spanish Court and Spanish society, and the horrors of war, shocked his contemporaries. He took a courageous leap in art history away from heroic battle paintings and doting kings and queens and pointed the direction towards Realism. He took on the mantle of social critic and drew or painted with unadulterated honesty. No painter after Goya could ignore his contribution.

There are 100 years between Goya and Munch. All the artists of the Modern period in Europe were very aware of the legacy Goya had left in the arena of social criticism. The Realists portrayed the ordinary people, the labourers, and the harsh life they had to lead. Goya had shown them the way and he became famous again long after his time.



This exhibition includes a large book on Goya which comes from Munch's private library. A parallel is drawn between Goya's *The Witches' Kitchen* and Munch's *Scream*. This is a long shot, but there are many scream-faces to be found in Goya's prints.

Goya satirises the aristocracy and their decadent lifestyle. His *Autumn 1786* painting sets the tone for realism as a new genre of art. The aristocrats loll in a field of abundance while the workers toil away in the dark background. Munch does not use satire in the same way, but also puts a blunt spotlight on the bourgeois corruption of his society and the detrimental effect this has on every individual.

The sleep of reason produces monsters

The Caprices 1799 is a series of 80 prints where Goya packed his criticism into fantasy and satire. Animals and nightmares go hand in hand. This was a medium for his condemnation of the universal follies and foolishness in the Spanish society in which he lived, extravagancies and follies common to all society.

Goya did not sell many copies of his Caprices before they were withdrawn from sale. This was dangerous art in an unstable political period. Humanity as dumb animals (donkeys) as in *The sleep of reason produces monsters*. There is no doubt that we feel that Reason has gone to sleep in our contemporary war-torn world. The complete set here was purchased by Kristiania Kobberstikksamling in 1898. This means that it is likely that Munch saw this version.

Goya suffered a serious illness in 1793 which left him deaf. This marks a radical change in his art. From being a feted court artist, a brilliant portraitist, he turns to being a dark and pessimistic chronicler of a bleak future.

He is tormented by the fear of going mad, and *Yard with Madmen* is a terrifying view of insanity, isolation, and deprivation. Munch's world is a private chronicle of torment and bleakness, after he also had a mental breakdown.

The Disasters of War is a visual protest of the violence of the 1808 Dos de Mayo uprising. These prints are disturbing, macabre, horrific, with an outraged conscience of the futility of war and destruction. The whole exhibition is called *Modern Prophecies*, and nobody knew that the Middle East would explode at the same time.

We are bombarded daily by real-time pictures of the same horrendous suffering. It is almost too much to bear. There are no heroics, no victories, just endless war. *And they are like wild beasts* is on our television every day. *It always happens* is an echo of a poster from WWI called 'My Old Man' where the horses died daily. *There is no one to help them* brings Odd Nerdrum to mind. This desolate landscape created by mad humanity. The series was first published in 1863, 35 years after Goya's death. It was still not deemed politically safe to print these works before then. However, it is very interesting to look at the only surviving bound album of working proofs (1814-1815) that was 'accepted by HM Government in lieu of Inheritance Tax and allocated to the British Museum in 1975.'



And they are like wild beasts



There is no one to help them

Edvard Munch is unexpectedly juxtaposed in this room of war as a prophet of hope. He lived through WWI on the periphery and hoped for a better Europe in the future. *War 1918-19* depicts a horde of misplaced people marching out of the dark and towards something brighter on the other side.



Europa



The seated giant

In *Black Sun over Battlefield 1916-17*, a tree grows out of the dead bodies heaped on the battlefield. A ray of real hope emanates from the lithography *The United States of Europe III, 1916*. An idealistic female Europe rises from an urn in the middle of a battle-scarred wasteland. *Can't I come soon?* she asks in Munch's caption. Well, at least we have achieved a united and peaceful Europe. That would mightily impress both Goya and Munch.

The last room shows a Goya who seems to prophecy the Norwegian world of trolls, and I wonder if Tracy Emin studied Goya's *Seated Giant* before creating the monumental sculpture of *Mother* outside this museum.

Many found this exhibition very depressing. We have so much horror around us that we hardly need more. It is miserable that humanity goes on making the same mistakes repeatedly. The mantra today is always 'Never Again.' It seems we must be reminded of this down through the centuries by all our contemporary artists. Goya was before his time and is, unfortunately, just as relevant today.

Our thanks to Inger M. Raeder for organising this event.

Jane Steenbuch

Love, Joy and Hope



© Sidsel Jakhelln Semb

The birth of a baby symbolises Love, Joy and Hope.

A new beginning that opens up to a wonder of possibilities.

Merry Christmas, Season Greetings, and a Happy New Year to you and your loved ones.

International Forum



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