



INTERNATIONAL FORUM OSLO

NEWSLETTER

February 2024
Issue No. 493

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INTERNATIONAL FORUM

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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 **March Newsletter** the deadline is **February 16**. 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

Dear Members,

‘The Future is Here!’ The words have a nice ring to it, **raising** visions of progress and technological breakthroughs. The amount and speed of change is impacting us profoundly. Google Researcher Blaise Aguera Y Arcas has studied vast data in minute detail for years. He says these changes transform us from Humanity 1.0 to Humanity 2.0. In 1.0, human societies were organized like the primates – humans and apes: hierarchical, family-oriented, nurturing relations that determine individual fates. In Humanity 2.0, societies are big, anonymous and complex. You know only your immediate community and do your little part in the giant process. Human societies resemble ant colonies.

New research shows ants emit chemicals called pheromones – which humans do too. But ants know from the smell of the other ants’ pheromones if it belongs to its own or another colony. So ‘otherising’ people of different backgrounds is ‘natural’. But demonising – which humans often do – is not. Divisions always existed in human societies, but now polarisation is on steroids due to short-term politics, social media, and technology. Instead of appreciating the differences that make us rich and interesting as human beings, we stigmatise and ‘otherise’.

A recent life-affirming event for me was the Kerala Literature Festival in my home state. Attended by 700,000, predominantly young people, it is Asia’s largest. In a rare sight across the world, Muslim girls in jeans, T-shirts and headscarves, volunteer, discuss and attend sessions, side by side, with Hindu, Christian, Buddhist and atheist boys and girls. They maintain separate identities but embody the concept of Unity in Diversity and Peaceful Coexistence. This is also the spirit of International Forum that we all cherish.

The lesson from the ants is cooperation. They ‘otherise’, but then, get on with life. They work together to get the job done. As children we followed how a group of ants carry away crumbs several times their size. None of the challenges we face today – from inequality to climate change – can be tackled without cooperation. This is the collective planetary will to survive – and thrive.

Best regards,
Anita Pratap
President

COMING EVENTS

FEBRUARY MONTHLY MEETING

Major General Kristin Lund

Monday, February 5

Differences in male and female leadership - Experiences from peace operations



Major General Kristin Lund is our speaker at the February Monthly Meeting. She is a retired senior officer of the Norwegian Army, and she was the first woman to command a United Nations Peacekeeping Operation, serving as Force Commander for the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus from 2014 to 2016 and later as head of Mission/Chief of Staff of the UN Truce Supervision Organization from 2017 to 2019. Kristin Lund is a pioneer for gender equality in the military. She was the first female officer in the Norwegian army to be promoted to the rank of Major General.

- DATE/TIME:** Monday, **February 5** at 18:45 (for 19:00)
- PLACE:** Vinderen Seniorsenter, Slemdalsveien 72, 0373 Oslo
- SIGN UP:** To Gunnel Anita Solheim by email as soon as possible and no later than Wednesday, **January 30**.
- 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!
- Cancellations and no-shows after the deadline will be charged. For last-minute cancellations, please call Gunnel Anita Solheim.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Norsk folkedrakt: Hverdagstøy og festdrakt

Traditional costumes: Everyday clothes and festive garments

February 27



The Special Events Committee is pleased to welcome you to a guided tour of the exhibition on national costumes and traditional garments at Norsk Folkemuseum.

We have all seen men, women and children dressed in their beautiful national costumes on May 17, Norway's national day. There is a great variety; each district in Norway has its own special costume. So now it is time to explore the history of these costumes, and the accessories that go with them.

If there is time, we may also have a look at the *Folkekunst* [Folk art] exhibition.

The museum is open until 16:00. Lunch may be had in the museum's café. You can have another look at the exhibition on your own, if you like.

DATE/TIME: Tuesday, February 27 at 11:45 (for 12:00). Please be precise.

PLACE: Norsk Folkemuseum, Museumsveien 10, Bygdøy, 0287 Oslo.
We meet up in the reception area, to the left after you have gone through the entrance.

SIGN UP: Rosemary Hauge by email no later than the deadline
February 20.

PRICE: NOK 185,- This includes guiding **and** entrance fee.
Please pay **after** you have received confirmation of a place on the tour.
Make your payment preferably to the Forum bank account 1600 40 36631 or by VIPPS to 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, in the dialogue box for VIPPS).

TRANSPORT: **Bus 30** to Bygdøy is **recommended**. The bus leaves Nationaltheatret bus stop at 11:29 and stops outside Norsk Folkemuseum at 11:42.

Car: Pay-parking opposite the museum.

Maximum number of participants is **20**.

Guests are allowed if space available.

Cancellations after the deadline and no-shows will be charged. For last-minute cancellations, please call Rosemary hauge.

MONTHLY MEETING

March 4

Christian Borch

‘International Politics - A View from the Inside’



The Monthly Meeting Committee is pleased to announce the March speaker, Christian Borch, one of Norway's most well-known journalists and NRK news anchors. He has a degree in journalism from the University of Oslo and is a graduate from the London School of Economics (International Political History), and a graduate from the Norwegian Defence College.

He served on the Norwegian government's Security and Disarmament Council for 10 years and has been a member of several official councils and committees.

Mr Borch has received many awards for excellence in journalism. For 40 years, he worked as a foreign and diplomatic correspondent and news anchor for NRK. He has written 18 books.

Borch will use his latest book, *Bak Kulissene* (Behind the scenes), as a starting point for his lecture. The book offers an autobiographical *tour d'horizon* of his career as a reporter in the sharp end of international affairs and brings into the open numerous lesser-known relations and conspiracies from the political shadows.

‘The world and what makes it tick is never as simple, clean and ideal as political leaders want us to believe,’ he says. Borch is a fierce critic of the increasing dominance of commercial and financial factors in the past decades, claiming that many democratic governments have lost their grip on the social realities.

As a public speaker, he aims to make his audience observe and reflect on the state of things.

DATE/TIME: **Monday, March 4 at 18:45 (for 19:00)**

PLACE: Vinderen seniorsenter, Slemdalsveien 72, 0373 Oslo

SIGN UP: To Anita Solheim by email as soon as possible and no later than Wednesday, **February 28**.

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!

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

For last-minute cancellations, please call Gunnel Anita Solheim.

ART COMMITTEE

Leonard Rickhard

Between Construction and Collapse

Thursday, **March 7**

Astrup Fearnley Museum



Leonard Rickhard, *Figure Against Red Bird Cabinet*, 2006-2007.

Astrup Fearnley Collection. © Leonard Rickhard, 2023. Photo: Jens Hamran

The museum's first exhibition in 2024 is devoted to the Norwegian artist Leonard Rickhard. Over the years, Rickhard has cultivated a distinctive, easily recognisable artistic style in his body of work.

His figurative paintings are inhabited by solitary figures in intimate interiors, or evocative landscapes in which industrial labour, vehicles and infrastructure from World War II charge the motifs with a peculiar atmosphere.

DATE/TIME: Thursday, **March 7** at 11:45 (for 12:00)

SIGN UP: To Trudy Brand-Jacobsen by email no later than Thursday, **February 29**.

PRICE: NOK 165.- for the guided tour *and* entrance fee.
Please pay by bank transfer to the IF's account 1600.40.36631 or by VIPPS to 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).

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

SPECIAL EVENTS

Please save the date!

Thursday, April 18, at 11:00.

FILMPARKEN AS [Film Park Studio]



The Special Events Committee is organising a guided tour of Filmparken AS, located at Wedel Jarlsbergs vei 36, 1358 Jar, in Bærum.

The Film Studio at Jar is inextricably linked to all Norwegian film history and offers unique facilities for all types of film, photo and TV production.

More details will come in the March *Newsletter*.

R E P O R T S

JANUARY MONTHLY MEETING

‘Spirits, Shamans & Monkey for Dinner: Chewong 1977-79, 2018’

Dr. Signe Howell

Nearly 40 women braved the frigid night air on January 8 to come and hear fellow IF member and renowned social anthropologist, Dr. Signe Howell, describe her research project living with the Chewong people of the Malay peninsula in Southeast Asia.

Dr. Howell – Signe to us – studied history at the London School of Oriental and African Studies and received her PhD in social anthropology from the University of Oxford in 1980. She has had a career as researcher, field worker, lecturer, author and professor of social anthropology at University of Oslo since 1989.

In 1977, Signe ventured deep into the dense rain forest of Malaysia to live and work for 18 months among the Chewong people, a small society of indigenous hunter-gathers. The ethnographic field work was geared toward studying how people live in a totally different setting and what it means to be a human being in such a setting. The process is to observe, to live just as the natives do, and to produce an in-depth scientific description of the customs and lifestyle.

Arriving at the Chewong settlement totally alone, Signe experienced the individuals' characteristic shyness and fear of strangers (first assuming that she was a man!) before they welcomed her by sharing their self-caught fish and self-harvested tobacco. Exchanging food and tobacco, Signe learned, is essential as a way of signifying that someone 'belongs' and is accepted. Her adaptation to life in the settlement was then greatly assisted by a strong and warm Chewong woman, whom Signe later called her 'mother', who shared stories, myths, songs, and rules of life with her. Signe gradually learned – as does a child – to understand and use the Chewong language by watching and interacting with this woman, who became a life-long friend.



Signe's Chewong 'Mother'

The Chewong are peaceful and non-competitive individuals, with few social institutions or hierarchical structures. Equality is a primary value. There are gender differences (such as men being more effective hunters and women caring for babies), but no gender *inequalities*. The various roles played by men and women are respected and have equal value and prestige. Men and women work together in their hunting-gathering and fishing, as well as creating their tools and shelters. Women may cut the bark from large trees in order to use it for walls in their houses.

Signe witnessed how the hunters capture their prey using hand-made 2-meter-long blow pipes loaded with poison darts as their weapons. She learned to dig and replant casava branches, to cut, peel and soak the 'meat', to grate it, press out the water, and bake it in the ground in bamboo, ultimately producing a bread-like staple. This was a once-a-week task that she mastered. In such a primitive settlement the people had few needs. There were no modern medicines or luxury foods, but they were never hungry. Here, the original 'affluent society' meant 'having material plenty and needing low physical exertion in order to satisfy most needs.'

Especially from her ‘mother’, Signe also learned the *cosmo rules*, by which the Chewong live. These are derived from the belief – referred to as animism – that every physical entity, including animals, plants, and some inanimate objects, possesses a spiritual essence, or a soul or consciousness. This worldview assigns



agency and ‘personhood’ to humans and non-humans alike. One must therefore never laugh at or tease an animal, for example. Also, everyone has a moral responsibility towards others. No one must ever eat alone, and spoils from the hunt must be shared equally. Certain foods must be cooked in certain ways and kept separate from other foods – to avoid mortal consequences. Disobeying such cosmos rules could result in disease or other afflictions.

After about six months, Signe was able to listen to and even understand the stories and legends that her ‘mother’ told her, often from long ago and usually centred on ‘non-human humans.’ These legends provided examples of the many cosmo rules for non-violent, peaceful behaviour. Signe collected and published 78 of the legends in one of her books, ‘Chewong Myths and legends’.

She also became acquainted with shamans, the intermediaries between people and the spiritual world. They often perform a kind of healing process learned from their ancestors, to go out to ‘retrieve the soul.’ The singing and drumming involved in the process could extend until dawn. Other ceremonial

experiences for Signe were witnessing the birth of a baby and participating in a wedding – including partaking of the ritual smoking! She had obviously been accepted into her surrounding society now.

The presentation concluded with a comparison of the ‘old’ and ‘new’ in the Chewong culture, as Signe had experienced it in 1977 and in later visits, the last in 2018. By this time, the government was striving to bring the Chewong people out of the jungle by building roads and some housing with relatively modern facilities, creating a few jobs, and establishing an elephant sanctuary nearby for tourists, where bureaucrats live quite differently from the Chewong. To illustrate the contrast, we were shown a photo of a native shirtless Chewong man sitting on a motor bike on a modern road, holding his blow pipe. One repeat visit for

Signe coincided with the first democratic election ever held, to obtain a proper 'head man' for the settlement.



Bathing the Elephants at the Sanctuary

Signe's lecture was a fascinating presentation, with a 40-year perspective, and it was an eye-opener for those of us without first-hand exposure to such a primitive culture. Colourful slides and photographs illustrated Signe's experiences in her field work, and we could feel her enthusiasm, warmth and understanding for these people with whom she lived for 18 months.

During the subsequent question-and-answer period, a member noted how brave Signe must have been when she embarked on this adventure all alone back in 1977.

Signe replied: 'This was something I really wanted to do. So, I wasn't frightened!'

After the lively discussion session, Gunnel Anita Solheim, stepping in for President Anita Pratap, presented Signe with a bouquet and our heartfelt thanks for an excellent presentation.

Robin Wittusen

OBITUARY

Inger Malterud

07-08-1919 – 05-01-2024



Rest in Peace

Inger Malterud was a legend in her lifetime. International Forum's second President left an indelible mark by shepherding the organisation with care and commitment. She is one of the most impactful leaders in the history of IF. Inger died on January 5 at the age of 104. She died peacefully in her bed at her Nursing Home in Oslo.

At IF's 15th Anniversary celebrations in 1994, Inger shared her vision of the organisation she helped to shape: 'I feel that the International Forum should be like a big umbrella. However, it is extremely important that there are strong hands holding this umbrella in place, preventing it from just blowing away. 'There have been many challenges along the way, but it is a matter of pride for all of us that IF is now 45 years old.

A towering figure, Inger did much during her tenure as President from 1981-84 and thereafter as IF's tireless Office Coordinator for many years, to consolidate and strengthen the Forum from its infancy. IF was just two years old when she took over from Grete Frydenlund, our leading Founding Mother. As Sissel Melander, a former President recalls 'Inger held all the threads in her hand. She was wise, clever, knew and remembered everything. Some may have felt a little anxious meeting this strong and decisive lady, but when you got to know her, she was warm and thoughtful.'

In the early days when IF did not yet have an office, Inger opened her flat at Drammensveien 80 and her impressive dining table that could seat 20 – to host IF-meetings. After business was done, she would treat members to her specialties – homemade pastry horns and then, at the end of the IF year, a lunch featuring her delicious fish platters.



The eldest of four children, Inger helped to take care of her younger siblings, a habit she continued well past their adulthood. She was innovative. To help connect newcomers into Oslo, she set up IF's popular Neighbourhood Contacts, whereby members living in the area could organize meetings to get to know each other. This was useful, becoming a lifeline to many new members. When a Christmas market ran out of mittens, she would knit them herself. She always found ways to contribute. As Nelson Mandela said 'What counts in life is not the mere fact that we have lived. It is what difference we have made to the lives of others that will determine the significance of the life we lead.'

Inger was one of the first women in Norway to get a physics degree from Oslo University. She considered her husband's diplomatic career 'a shared honour and a shared responsibility.' Before becoming Norway's Ambassador to Netherlands, her husband Otto Malterud headed the Norwegian Export Council for 16 years.

Inger was hardworking, forceful and strict. She paid meticulous attention to detail, getting annoyed if someone wrote 'Karl Johansgate' instead of Karl Johans gate in three words. She was vigilant. She also disliked waste. She told her grandchildren sternly 'What you take from nature, you eat! Said Patricia Blackwell, our member who knew her well 'As the wife of an Ambassador, Inger knew how to be diplomatic, but she could also call a spade a spade.'

A well-travelled woman, Inger was aware of the dislocation spouses endure when husbands are posted abroad. She was equally aware of the disruptions and loneliness that comes from leaving family and friends behind, experienced by spouses of foreign Ambassadors when they first arrived in Oslo. She shared the vision of IF's founding mothers to create a network to make life easier and enjoyable for them and also for other spouses, who married Norwegians or accompanied their husbands on a business transfer to Norway.

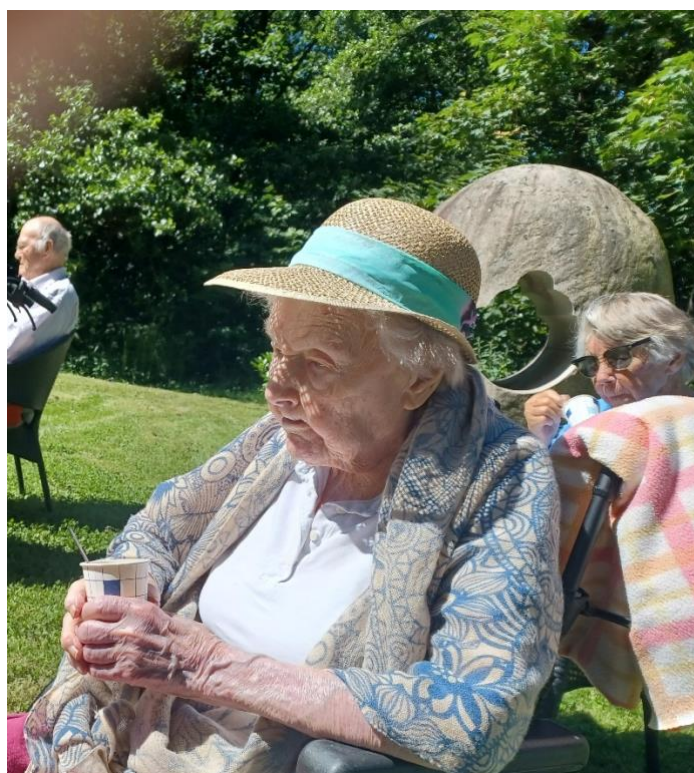
It was not only about interactions between Norwegians and foreigners, but also expanding horizons, sharing and learning about each other's culture. It's a win-win concept that endures until today.

On her 100th birthday, we paid tributes to Inger in the IF newsletter. For her 103rd birthday, I, additionally, reached out to her son Tore to get some reminiscences and advice from her for living a long and good life. Her youngest granddaughter Ingeborg Malterud conveyed her answer, and I wrote in the President's Page then 'We often hear about the *science* of ageing. Inger demonstrates the *art* of ageing.

Asked what her secret recipe for long life is, Inger Malterud replied 'self-caught fish and French red wine'. Clearly, humour, hard work and a hearty outlook are the essence of a life well lived. Getting old is a privilege. Ageing well is a gift.

If Inger had not entrenched the spirit of helping, perhaps there would be no IF today.

Volunteerism is the essence of IF. Our members – who are experienced and talented – volunteer to fulfil our goal of promoting friendship and understanding among peoples of different nations.



As Inger said when IF turned 15, 'Fortunately, enough of our members have been willing to give of their valuable time, energy, imagination or just plain



labour, to keep the wheels rolling.' She was proud that our members kept alive the spirit of volunteerism. At the funeral, flowers and ribbon bearing the words 'With Love and Gratitude from International Forum were laid by Elspeth Walseth and Rosemary Hauge, amongst our finest volunteers.

Posting the news on Facebook, her granddaughter Ingeborg wrote 'A brilliant intellect. A solid, loyal and hard-working matriarch is dead.' In his inimitable style,

Winston Churchill said 'History will be kind to me for I intend to write it.'

History will be kinder to Inger because it will be written by her loving family and the grateful, respectful members of International Forum.

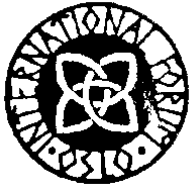


*To
Inger Malterud
With Love
And
Gratitude
From
International
Forum*



An IF Honorary Member for Life, Inger now transforms into an honourable icon, leaving behind many legends. Inger lives on in the hearts of all those who were privileged to know her. Her son Tore said that 'IF meant a lot to her' and we say in deep appreciation 'She means a lot to us.'

Anita Pratap
President



INTERNATIONAL FORUM

Org.no: 994 566 806

President: Anita Pratap

Editor and Layout: Elizabeth S. Rasmussen and Editorial Team

Editorial Team: Elspeth Walseth, Robin Wittusen and Renate Scapin

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

Dispatch: February 1, 2024