

SCANDINAVIAN CONTACT

Newsletter of the American Scandinavian Society of New York, Inc.

– THE BOARD AND COMMITTEES GET BACK TO WORK FOR OUR NEW SEASON –



THE BOARD TURNED OUT IN FORCE

Standing: Ritva Metso, Vibeke Steineger, Sverker Johanson, Sole Ohberg, Charles Jones, Edith Warner, Leena Scutt, Drew Bernstein, Jan Nytzen
Seated: Elfi von Kantzow Alvin, Peter Hesselund-Jensen, Gunhild Ljung

Labor Day comes. Can the first A.S.S. working session be far behind? On September 9th, running from early afternoon into the evening, Vibeke Steineger, Program Committee Chairwoman, played host at her apartment to the opening meetings of the Program Committee and the Board. First the Program Committee assembled to define the fall program and outline the spring '97 events.

Although everyone was glad to meet again and to catch up



PROGRAM COMMITTEE MEMBERS SET THE YEAR IN GEAR

From Left to Right: Lone Olvik, Aase Holby, Harriet Nilsen, Edith Warner, Ingidjorg Gallagher, Ritva Dellerson, Leena Scutt, Tuula Feineis

on summer activities, an amazing amount of planning was accomplished. Check the calendar for the results.

The Program Committee adjourned to the dining room for wine and cheese and the Board took up residence in the living room. Spirits were high as each committee chairperson gave reports. The American Scandinavian Society was once again found to be in fine shape and eager to be back in the swing.

THE ARTS COMMITTEE ENTERS ITS 18TH YEAR

Last spring the *Contact* featured the A.S.S. Program Committee. The summer issue introduced the Board and its new members. Continuing the trend, the *Contact* is highlighting the Art Committee in this Fall of '96 edition.

Art exhibits and art tours have been a central event on the A.S.S. calendar. The indomitable Elfi von Kantzow Alvin initiated the Arts Program in 1979, when the Society was the New York Chapter of the American Scandinavian Foundation. The Arts Committee has continued, uninterrupted, to present exciting, innovative arts exhibits including the acclaimed September 12, 1996 showing of paintings by the Finnish artist, Kristiina Uusitalo. At first, exhibits were shown in the library at the American Scandinavian Foundation. Since then there have been several venues for the shows including the Frank Bustamante Gallery, the Privatbanken Gallery and currently the Unibank Gallery.

The mission statement of the Arts Program is to promote Scandinavian art in the United States, to increase awareness of Scandinavian art forms and to give new talents an opportunity to exhibit to a Scandinavian-New York audience, which is always on the lookout for exciting, new faces, and consequently enthusiastically supports and encourages the avant-garde.



MEMBERS OF THE ART COMMITTEE
Rolf Stang, Karen Gianelli, Elfi von Kantzow Alvin

This committee is dedicated to choosing unusual artists, not those representing a particular "school." The members make the requirement that works chosen for exhibition reflect a Scandinavian vision. If an individual artist's work sells, the artist gains prestige in the New York arena and the Society is able to cover the cost of mounting and promoting the exhibit. Of course, various foundations and consulates contribute to very large exhibits like that of Ingmar Bergman, presented at the Thomas Nordanstand Gallery in 1995.

The list of former committee members reaches into the twenties in number. Familiar names reveal the major interest the membership at large has had in the contemporary Scandinavian art world. Last year's roster included, Chairman, Karen Gianelli, Ulla Crisman, Margit Lorenze, Betten Pritzler and Ann Sandager, and the driving force, Elfi.

Elfi has had a lifelong adventure with art as a profession and an avocation. Early on she was the first woman scenic designer in Sweden. She designed costumes for the Vasa Theater, was a set designer for CBS TV, and did scenic and costume designing for Broadway productions including *Jane*, *The King and I* and *Harvey*.

There are so many skills needed in evaluating subjects for exhibition and in completing the nitty-gritty of accomplishing the final show. If your inclinations lie in this direction, contact Elfi. The committee welcomes you.



FALL 1996

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

In a couple of weeks I will be winging my way back over the Atlantic from a trip to Copenhagen. My plane will be following a Great Circle line back to the U.S. The trip will take about 7-8 hours. As we move, we will be retracing a much older route. One that was traveled much less comfortably, and one that was completed only after many lifetimes had passed.



At about the time when the seat belt light has been turned off and I have been given my first drink and bag of peanuts, I will have passed over the Sound, one of the great trade routes since ancient times. By the time that I will actually have succeeded in opening the bag of peanuts, I will have traveled over a land and

sea that was once the scene of great life and death struggles between Denmark and Sweden over long forgotten matters.

The Captain announces our altitude, cruising speed and the temperature outside, as we pass near the old Vestfold region of Norway, and Hafsford where old Harald Hårfager won his victory, in the process sending out waves of his unhappy compatriots searching for other places to live rather than accept his rule.

Dinner is now being served, and at about the time we are given our choice of chicken or beef, we will be passing north of the Orkney Islands, where Norse earls ruled, centuries after the Viking kingdoms to the south had crumbled, and south of the Shetland Islands where their descendants still burn replicas of longships in honor of old St. Olav. The Shetlands passed out of the Scandinavian orbit forever, when they were pawned to Scotland in lieu of a dowry. Such is history.

The trays are being cleared away as we pass over the Faeroes, where some peaceful Irish hermits, one day long ago, found that they no longer had the islands to themselves, but would probably have to brush up on their herring recipes.

We near Iceland as the lights go out. We watch a heart-warming relationship movie while we pass over the area where the saga of Burnt Njaal took place. At about the time our hero and heroine realize that they were really meant for each other, we pass over the Denmark Strait, where Erik the Red lost half of his fleet of Greenland settlers to a storm or perhaps an undersea volcanic eruption. The chronicles are unclear, but either way, it was a pretty bad day for old Erik.

As I fitfully try to find a sleeping position in my cramped seat, we pass over sites in Greenland where old Norse colonists waged their hopeless twilight struggle against the dark and cold.

And now we are in the home stretch. Still stiff and sore, I stand in line with toothbrush in hand over Newfoundland and the remains of the settlement at L'Anse aux Meadows. Had the locals there and to the south been a bit more friendly, the language of this continent might today be a blend of Old Norse and native American.

Finally, we pass over Maine, where they found one of old King Olav Kyrres coins, and with that we pass out of the Scandinavian world, a shorter and more comfortable trip than those of our ancestors.

Peter L. Hesselund-Jensen, *President*

A SUMMER'S TALE

That's Hans Christian Andersen, over to the left. We caught him smiling. Every fall, the American Scandinavian Society sponsors a morning of storytelling. This September 12, at 11 a.m., A.S.S. kids of all ages showed up at the Hans Christian Andersen statue in Central Park at 5th and 72nd. Story teller, Diane Wolkstein, told the story of the "Ugly Duckling," new for some but just as touching for those fans who come every year. Her next story was, "Elsie Piddock Skips."



Hans Christian Andersen
oversees
Skip-Rope Contest
winner
Christopher Steineger Perkins
and
Story Teller
Diane Wolstein

This year, we have a story of our own to tell. The "Elsie" story is traditionally followed by a skip roping contest. Our tale takes us back two years, when Christopher Steineger Perkins, then 5 years old determined that he would win the skip rope contest when he was six years old. To that end, he practiced skipping rope almost every day, through winter, spring and summer. Alas, September 16, 1995 and the Hans Christian Andersen skip rope contest arrived, but Christopher missed it.

It's hard to daunt a Viking. This year Christopher skipped his way to first prize. Think about bringing your children or grandchildren (or borrowing some) next year. It's fun on its own and a delightful way to share your heritage.

SCANDINAVIANS AROUND THE TOWN

1996

NOV. 21-23

The Norwegian Seamen's Church hosts its annual Christmas sale.

NOV. 22-23

The Swedish Seamen's Church has its annual Christmas bazaar.

NOV. 23

The Danish Seamen's Church holds its annual Christmas bazaar

DEC. 5 - 7:30 p.m.

The Sibelius Society presents,
"MUSIC FROM FINLAND"
A CONCERT IN CELEBRATION
OF FINNISH INDEPENDENCE -
followed by a reception hosted by the
Consulate General of Finland, at
St. Peter's Church,
Lexington Ave. and 54th St., NYC.

FINNISH CONSUL GENERAL HOSTS EVENING OF ART

Finnish artist, Kristiina Uusitalo has been described as a painter who renders a radiant quality. Elfi von Kantzow, curator of this exhibit presented at the Unibank Gallery says, "My goal is to find unique Scandinavian artists from all of the five Scandinavian countries and give them a chance to exhibit in New York. New York is a very important art center. It rewards me that I can promote artists with something original to say, who paint not just a portrait or water-color, but who know their chosen media and show a personal point of view."

Kristiina Uusitalo, who was born in Sulkava, Finland and now spends part of the year in her studio in New York, exemplifies this kind of meets the above criteria. Art lovers from the American Scandinavian Society attended a special preview hosted by Mrs. Maija Lahtenmaki, Consul General of Finland, on Thursday, September 13. It has been said of Uusitalo's paintings that "there are components of order in her works which draw the viewer in. One perceives a kind of emotional secret language present." Many viewers came away with the feeling they'd like to see more of her works.



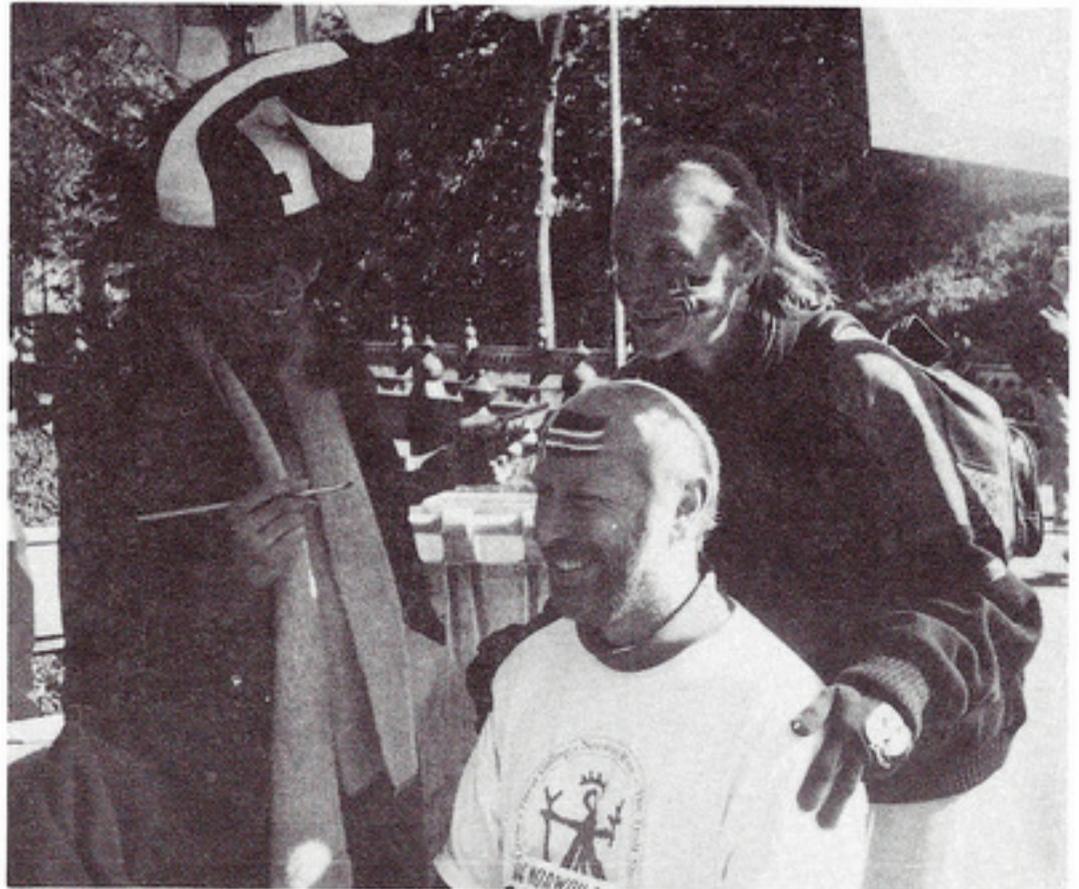
Finnish Consul General Maija Lahtenmaki and curator Elfi von Kantzow Alvin find the exhibit intriguing.

RED, WHITE AND BLUE AT THE RACES

Hundreds and hundreds of runners joined The Norway Run (5K) open to all, Grete's Great Gallop (13.1mi.) for women only, or the Troll Stroll (1/4mi, 1/2 mi) for 2 to 12 year olds, and looped around Central Park on Saturday, October 12. It certainly was a day made for running or cheering. In fact, it was a great day for face painting. A.S.S. members were at the sidelines, face paints in hand. An instructor was on hand so those willing A.S.S. hands caught on in no time flat. Judging by the smiles on the faces of Norwegian Consul Janis Bjørn Kanavin and Grete Weitz, 9 time New York Marathon Champion, they have either just won their race, are delighted with their Norwegian flags, or both.

The runners and A.S.S. face painters were treated with bagels and lox (from guess where?). The crowd prized the Scandinavian treats, including waffles from the Norwegian Seamen's Church. Organized and conducted by the New York Road Runners Club, this could well become an annual event. Keep alert for the A.S.S. flyer in next September's mail delivery. If

you don't care to run, don't miss the fun of face painting. It takes many volunteers to meet the demand.



Mary Eastman paint a Norwegian Flag on Norwegian Consul Janis Bjorn Kanavin. Grete Weitz has 2 flags on her face.

GOOD-BYE, GUNVOR

Gunvor Bull Teilman, born March 14, 1900, died October 12, 1996. She was buried at Raaholt Kirke near Eidsvoll on Monday, October 21.

I was attending an American Scandinavian Society art exhibit at the Frank Bustamante Gallery in 1984. Accidentally, I backed into a lady, almost knocking her over. Regaining her balance, she swung around, stuck out her hand and said, "Gunvor, Graceful in Battle." I grasped her hand replying, "Rigmor, Mother of Royalty." Thus our friendship began.

Gunvor spent her childhood in Narvik, in northern Norway where the aurora borealis, the majestic fjords, the reindeer together with folk lore, were the initiators of her broad bold strokes, her love for huge, grand compositions and her exciting clear color. As a child, she chiseled portraits on slate and sold them for 5 øre. Later she studied in Leipzig and pressed on to France.

In Paris, at the Cafe Dome and at Gertrude Stein's apartment, Gunvor exchanged ideas with Picasso, Matisse, Zara, Hemingway and many others. She attended the Julian Academy and the Grande Chaumiere, studied sculpture with Bourdelle, painting with Andre Lhote and lithography with William S. Hayter.

In 1928, Gunvor married poet, Knut Bull Teilman while they were both acting in an amateur production of an Ibsen play in Brooklyn Heights. During the war years she worked concertedly with the American-Scandinavian Center. She and Nobel prize winner author, Sigrid Undsett directed the work of *Et Fritt Norge*.

Teilman's works have been shown extensively in Europe. In New York City, she exhibited at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Whitney Museum, The Phoenix Downtown and the Cork Gallery, Lincoln Center. The Smithsonian Institution represented her work in its 1983 collection. Earlier, in the 40's, she had been commissioned by Thomas Olsen to help decorate and furnish his offices at the U.S. Time Corporation, Rockefeller Center. This occasioned a full wall mural and a large stone sculpture called, *Night and Day*.

During the 50's, Gunvor joined Edward Hopper in, "Art in Action," a group designed to promote art therapy. It was an idea before its time, with Gunvor at the forefront. As artist in residence at Ekely, Edvard Munch's studio, in 1967, she painted the mural, "The Seven Sisters and the Horseman," which was more that six meters long.

The apartment in which she lived was destroyed by fire in 1970. Only the paintings in the kitchen were salvaged. But Gunvor continued to paint. Currently, the Henie-Onstad Museum is planning to acquire some of her work. Gunvor and her daughter, Herdis, returned to Norway over a year ago.

With deep sadness, I say Good-Bye Gunvor, Graceful in Battle.

Rigmor Swensen - Editor

SIRI HUSTVEDT READS FROM HER NEW BOOK

Siri Hustvedt did a reading and book signing at The Hungry Mind Bookstore in St. Paul, Minnesota in September. She was only forty miles from her hometown of Northfield. *The Star Tribune* refers to her as "Minnesota's hot new novelist." Monday, November 4, she'll be reading from her novel, *The Enchantment of Lily Dahl*, at the residence of Hon. Jan Flatla, the Norwegian Consul General in New York City, just across the East River from her adopted home in Brooklyn.

Hustvedt's mother came from Norway and her father was a professor at St. Olaf College. Her first novel, *Carrie at Baxter Manor*, was written when she was in 5th grade. So writing has been her focus from childhood. Siri's first novel, *Blindfold*, was an international success. The Society co-sponsored a reading for that novel, too.

The *Star Tribune* writes of *The Enchantment of Lily Dahl* commenting, "The heroine is as young waitress at the Ideal Cafe who serves breakfast to a crew of solitary, silent farmers and townies. Lily takes her humdrum customers at face value while spinning adolescent fantasies about Edward Shapiro, a painter in residency at the college. When Lily thinks she's seen a corpse, she begins to bike around town like Nancy Drew in search of evidence. In time we learn that the glamorous outsider is an unfathomable mystery, and destructive passions churn beneath the surface of the local's seemingly two-dimensional lives."

That's an irresistible introduction. Join us at the reading on November 4, 1996.

(See the A.S.S Almanac in this issue.)

IVAR GUDMUNDSSON IS DEAD AT 84

Ivar Gudmundsson, an honorary member of A.S.S. who served on the Board of Directors for many years, was born in 1912 and died in Reykjavik on June 2, 1996.

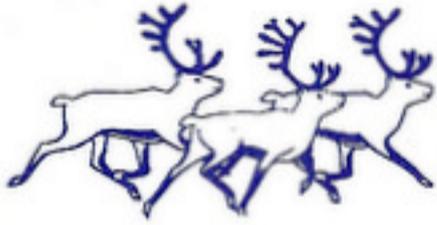
Mr. Gudmundsson was Managing Editor for Morgunbladid, an Information Officer for the U.N., and, in 1972, Consul General of Iceland to New York. Simultaneously, he served as a delegate to the U.N. General Assembly. Many A.S.S. members remember his fine contributions to this organization.

EDITOR'S NOTE...

There is always room for volunteers on any A.S.S. committee. Edda Mangnusson, unheralded but valiant, has been distributing *THE CONTACT*, which includes folding, stamping and mailing. Many hands get the job done quickly and a cup of coffee and some

waffles speed the task along. Please call me at (516) 692-4045 if you can help with the Winter issue.

Rigmor Swensen, Editor



FANS CAN'T GET ENOUGH OF MIKA POHJOLA

On Monday, September 23, a group of at least 20 A.S.S. members joined the Consul General of Finland, Maija Lahteenmaki for the 9 p.m. show at the Blue Note, one of New York's most prestigious jazz haunts. Mika Pohjola, pianist, Matt Penman, bass and Roberto Dani (just in from Italy), drummer, gave an extraordinary concert.

A.S.S. has a proprietary feeling about Mika. He won a 1996 A.S.S. Cultural Grant Award. Those who attended reiterate critic Gary Burton's words, "Wonderful, provocative music which has held my attention from start to finish." It will be interesting to follow his career and hear him as often as possible.

1996

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| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Sept. 12
5:30 p.m. | KRISTIINA UUSITALO RECEPTION - Exhibition Sept.13 - Oct.26 at the Unibank Gallery, 20 West 55th Street. |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Sept. 21 | "UGLY DUCKLING'S BIRTHDAY PARTY," - Storytelling at Hans Christan Andersen's Statue, in Central Park at 72nd St. |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Sept. 23
9 p.m. | THE MIKA POHJOLA TRIO - A.S.S. 1996 Cultural Grant Winner, at the Blue Note, 131 West 3rd St. |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Oct. 12
9 - 11 a.m. | THE NORWAY RUN, GRETE'S GREAT GALLOP, THE TROLL STROLL at the Central Park Mall. |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Nov. 1
8 p.m. | CELIE LINDE - Swedish guitarist at Americas Society, 680 Park Ave. |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Nov. 3
12:15 p.m. | NEW YORK CITY MARATHON - Cheer on 1000 Scandinavian runners. Bring bells, flags and Gatorade. Cups provided. Meet inside Central Park at 94th and 5th. |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Nov. 4
7 p.m. | SIRI HUSTVEDT READING - "THE ENCHANTMENT OF LILY DAHL" at the residence of Consul General Jan Flatla, 417 Park Ave. at 55th St. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Nov. 9
1:15 - 5 p.m. | ARTISTS IN THEIR STUDIOS - Guided tour of art colony in Greenpoint, Brooklyn. Meet at the Norwegian Seamen's Church, 317 East 52nd St. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Nov. 14
5:30 - 8 p.m. | LYRIC ART FROM THE NORTH - Art from four Scandinavian countries. Unibank Gallery, 20 West 55th Street. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Nov. 20
6 - 8 p.m. | WELCOME RECEPTION FOR THE HONORABLE STURLA SIGURJONSSON, CONSUL GENERAL OF ICELAND. Musical entertainment. At the Explorer's Club, 46 East 70th St. |

DEC. 6

★ ★ ★ ★ **THE 1996 CHRISTMAS BALL** ★ ★ ★ ★
THE METROPOLITAN CLUB

COCKTAILS AT 7:00 P.M. • DINNER AT 8 P.M.

Celebrate a Scandinavian Christmas! Toast Finnish Independence Day!

1997

Jan. 18 **SKATING PARTY** - At Wollman Rink in Central Park.

Feb. 12 **RIVERSIDE SYMPHONY** - Playing Icelandic music with violin soloist, Terje Tønnesen.

Feb. **HALDOR LAXNESS**, Icelandic Nobel prize winner for literature, and his book, *Independent People*, will be discussed by Brad Leithauser.



