

THE PEOPLE, PLACES, EVENTS AND INSTITUTIONS THAT  
CONTRIBUTE TO NORWAY'S VIBRANT ARTS SCENE.

# ART

## OF THE NORTH

From historic and contemporary artists to inspiring cities and districts, art is an important part of Norway's identity, as evidenced by the museums, galleries, festivals and people who celebrate the country's creativity. "I think this idea that art is for everyone, the social democratization of the arts and access to them have been vital for Norwegian culture," says Martyn Reed, founder of Stavanger's Nuart Festival. In other words: You don't need to be an expert to appreciate Norway's vibrant arts scene. Whether you're a novice or an aficionado, here are 10 ways to experience the art of the North.

BY TAYLOR HUGO

ARTWORK AND PHOTOS BY (FACING PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT): THE TRAVELLER BY NIMBERGEN / PHOTO BY BRIAN TALLMAN, MONUMENT TO A DISAPPEARING MONUMENT BY FINIAN MAGEE / PHOTO BY IAN COX, ALIVE BY SPY / PHOTO BY BRANTALLMAN, BY WHILS / PHOTO BY IAN COX, DEERBY BORDALO II / PHOTO BY IAN COX



### URBAN ART

"The future of Norwegian street and urban art is bright," says Reed, who founded the Nuart Festival in 2001 as a celebration of street art, including graffiti, muralism, comic culture and stencil art. Held the first week of September, the event encourages conversation about what art is and can be, as well as give a platform to local artists by staging events abroad and placing artists' work in international collections, such as Berlin, Germany's newly launched Urban Nation Museum for Urban Contemporary Art. "We have a huge network of artists, producers and cultural workers who have come through the Nuart family," says Reed, who is in the process of creating a Contemporary Institute for Urban Art in Stavanger, as well as collaborating with Oslo City Council on various projects. [nuartfestival.no](http://nuartfestival.no)





● **PUBLIC ARTS ORGANIZATION**

Tasked with managing the Norwegian government's collection of art in public spaces, Oslo-based Public Art Norway's (KORO) main goal is to make sure as many people as possible are able to interact with high-quality artwork, facilitating "experiences for those who would never visit an arts institution," says curator Nora Ceciliedatter Nerdrum. This includes the placement of more than 7,000 pieces in 920 places throughout Norway — from universities and courtrooms to offices buildings and railway stations — and Norwegian embassies and consulates around the globe. "Given the vast scope of work involved in the production, mediation and management of art, KORO is a major employer for artists, curators, producers and art consultants," says Nerdrum of the organization's support for artists in Norway. +47 22 99 11 99, [publicartnorway.org](http://publicartnorway.org)

● **ART HOTEL**

Named for its location in Tjuvholmen (Thief Islet), an island in Oslo overrun by robbers in the 18th century, The Thief opened in 2013 with a heavy emphasis on art. The hotel sponsors the nearby Astrup Fearnley Museum and is decked out with borrowed pieces from big-name artists like Jeff Koons and Damien Hirst — and all hotel guests are given free access to the museum with their room keycard. But guests don't even have to leave their rooms to experience great art. Each of the hotel's 116 rooms feature artwork handpicked by Sune Nordgren, the former director of Norway's National Museum of Art, and interactive TVs allow guests to experience "art on demand." +47 24 00 40 00, [thethief.com](http://thethief.com)

● **ARTS PATRON**

Outside of her duties as Norway's First Lady, Her Majesty Queen Sonja is heavily invested in the arts. In addition to her personal interests in photography, ceramics and graphic arts, her private collection — featuring pieces by Scandinavian artists such as Inger Sitter, Anna-Eva Bergman, Kåre Tveter, Knut Rumohr and Jakob Weidemann — has been on display at the Henie Onstad Art Center at Høvikodden near Oslo and Scandinavia House in New York.

To promote the development of graphic art, the H.M. Queen Sonja Art Foundation was established in 2011. Funded by profits from a collection of graphic prints created by the late Kjell Nupen, Ørnulf Opdahl and Queen Sonja herself, the foundation grants the Queen Sonja Print Award — including a nearly \$50,000 cash prize and an educational stay at the Atelje Larsen art studio in Sweden — to one emerging artist every other year.

Last year, Queen Sonja expanded her commitment to the arts with the opening of the Queen Sonja Art Stable. Originally built as the Royal Stables for Queen Maud to keep her horses, the venue had been used as storage since World War II. As of Queen Sonja's 80th birthday on July 4, 2017, it now serves as a space for the public to enjoy art and history.



● **ART DISTRICT**

Located on the east side of the Akerselva river in Oslo, Grünerløkka was once an industrial, working-class district that housed factories. Today it has earned a reputation for being a hip neighborhood filled with cafés, boutiques and plenty of art, with a handful of galleries dotting the streets.

One of the more established spaces, Fotogalleriet (+47 22 20 05 59, [fotogalleriet.no](http://fotogalleriet.no)), celebrated 40 years in

2017. With a mission to have photography recognized and accepted as an art form, the gallery — founded by Dag Alveng, Bjørn Høyum and Tom Sandberg — features a mix of images by established and up-and-coming photographers, and also hosts seminars and lectures with both Norwegian and international artists.

Named for Henrik Ernst Schæffer, a Norwegian teacher from the 1800s who established a grant to

support young artists, Galleri Schaeffers Gate 5 (+47 45 21 80 78, [schaeffersgate5.no](http://schaeffersgate5.no)) opened in 2011. The charming 1890s building offers two spaces — The Vestibule and The Gallery — to showcase two-dimensional visual art. It also serves as a venue for concerts, film screenings and poetry readings.

A 10-minute walk across the Akerselva river leads to Gallery ROM (+47 22 20 88 86, [r-o-m.no](http://r-o-m.no)). Located in a former factory, the gallery explores the intersection of art and architecture. Former exhibitions have included everything from a manmade forest meant to act as an escape from city life to strands of lights, representing pixels in a digital world, that you can walk through and touch.

ET ØYEBLIKK'S STILLSTAND BY VIEL BJERKESET/ANDERSEN / PHOTO BY JENNY-MARIE JOHNSEN



PHOTO BY GORM KALLESTAD / SCANPIX

● **ART CITY**

Surrounded by mountains and spread across several islands in the Atlantic Ocean, the city of Ålesund is a work in and of itself. Destroyed by a devastating fire, it was rebuilt in 1904 and is today known as the Art Nouveau town, referring to the ornamental style of architecture that defines its quaint buildings. Living up to its moniker, the city is also a hub for art and culture. The KUBE art museum in central Ålesund is a can't-miss, with exhibitions and public activities that cover visual and applied art, as well as design and architecture. +47 70 10 49 70, [jugendstilsenteret.no](http://jugendstilsenteret.no)



● **ARTISTS**

From painters to sculptors to photographers, many of the world's great historic and contemporary artists have come from Norway. While countless in number, here are four past and present standouts.

Often referred to as the father of Norwegian landscape painting, Johan Christian Dahl — born in Bergen in 1788 — was admired for his romantic style. Some of his most famous works include “Frederiksborg Castle by Moonlight,” “Shipwreck on the Coast of Norway” and “Mother and Child by the Sea.”

While Dahl captured the landscape of Norway through his paintings, Gustav Vigeland added to it with his sculptures. The Mandal-born (1869) artist's biggest accomplishment is The Vigeland Park. Filled with more than 200 sculptures in bronze, granite and wrought iron, it's the largest sculpture garden ever created by one artist.

Showcasing the beauty of today's Norwegian landscape are photographers like Eirik Grønningseter. The artist combines his passions of photography, biology and photo journalism to capture Nordic wildlife. With birds, mountains, waterfalls and the Northern Lights as only a handful of his subjects, he has been honored as the GDT European Wildlife Photographer of the Year, and his work has been published in “National Geographic.”

Rather than focus on one medium, Stavanger-born Pia Myrvold blends architecture, design, fine art, technology, fashion and even music into her work. This interdisciplinary approach has led to her art being featured in galleries and museums around the world, including the Center for Architecture in New York and Centre Pompidou in France.



PHOTO BY (LEFT TO RIGHT): PORTRAIT OF J.C. DAHL BY CHRISTIAN ALBRECHT JENSEN, ANDERS BEER WILSE / NORSK FOLKEMUSEUM, MYWORLD#SAMBREWEISE

● **ART SCHOOL**

With areas of study ranging from art and craft, design and fine art to theater, dance and opera, Oslo National Academy of the Arts is Norway's largest educational institute dedicated to the arts. Not only has the school graduated notable artists like Beate Gütschow, Espen Dietrichson and Børre Sæthre, it also hosts gallery events so you can catch a glimpse of the next generation of talent. +47 22 99 55 00, [kbio.no](http://kbio.no)



● **SÁMI ART**

Karasjok is heralded as the capital for northern Europe's indigenous Sámi people. In addition to being the home base for Sámi Parliament; NRK Sápmi, the native language radio station; and even a Sámi theme park offering traditional food, crafts and activities, the town of 3,000 people also houses the Sámi Center for Contemporary Art. Here, work of Sámi artists is celebrated through mediums such as photography, video, painting and sculpture. Oftentimes, natural materials, such as birch bark, fish skin and reindeer antler, are used. +47 90 24 40 62, [samidaiddaguovddas.no](http://samidaiddaguovddas.no)

PHOTOS (TOP TO BOTTOM): MULTIPLE STICHES - SIGHT IN ABSENCE // BY ASJAUG M. JULIUSSEN (1953) / PHOTO BY TOR EGIL RASMUSSEN, BY HANNE GRETE ENARSEN / PHOTO BY LIV ENGHOLM



● **ART EVENT**

Since 2000, artists in Norway have opened their studios for art fans to take a behind-the-scenes peek at their creative process and works-in-progress as part of the Oslo Open. With more than 350 participating artists and 9,000-plus attendees, it's the largest arts festival in Norway, spawning similar events in Bergen, Trondheim, Tromsø and Stavanger. In addition to being an alternative venue for artists to showcase their work outside of the typical institutions, the free event also allows attendees to interact with painters, photographers, potters and more in a casual, informal setting. This year's Oslo Open takes place April 21-22. [osloopen.no](http://osloopen.no)

PHOTOS COURTESY OF OSLO OPEN

