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As told to Katy Diamond Hamer, 1331 words.

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On connecting people

Art & Culture Attaché Ingrid Moe discusses bringing awareness to Norwegian contemporary art, connecting artists with the resources they need, and why you should always surround yourself with good energy.

You were stationed in New York for eight years as the Cultural Attaché for the Norwegian Consulate. Can you speak about your experience in the city?

Moving to New York in my mid-20s was overwhelming in all the right ways. I'd lived in small Norwegian cities before, and became addicted to this new life with a constant stream of meeting new people and discovering new places. In the last few years I've increasingly divided my time between more busy weekdays working in Manhattan, going to openings in the evenings, while spending lazy weekends in Brooklyn. Most weekends I avoided the subway and frequented the same places in my Fort Greene neighborhood. I'd have lunch at Walters or Colonia Verde and check out the local farmers market, trying to walk slowly. I'd also spend a lot of time planning escapes from the city. I love going to the North Fork, renting bikes and visiting the vineyards there.

You're going back to Oslo to work for OCA (The Office of Contemporary Art). They play a large part in the artist chosen to represent Norway for the Venice Biennale. Would you like to share any thoughts on upcoming projects you'll be working on with them?

I'm excited to begin my work at OCA this fall. The director, Katya Garcia Anton, is dedicated to programs that explore what it means to decolonize art institutions. I will also be in charge of OCA´s visitors program, and am looking forward to exploring Oslo and the rest of the country with curators in town for research.

I remember an event you organized for a group of art professionals at The Modern, the restaurant at the Museum of Modern Art. Can you talk about connecting people? It's something that seems to come naturally to you.

I love connecting people. It's my favorite part of my job. I want all the good people to marry, reproduce, and make our planet a better place. The world's in such a scary state these days; it feels good to focus on the amazing people we're surrounded by every day.

I've been fortunate to collaborate with wonderful artists, curators, and critics through my eight years at the Consulate. Many of them have become good friends. I feel blessed to have been able to support their visions and help promote their work.

In your role at the Consulate, you brought awareness to Norwegian contemporary art and created partnerships between Norwegian artists in New York and beyond. What was it like for you working with artists, galleries, art organizations, and journalists on a global level?

It's always amazing to me how much an event in New York can resonate on an international level. I remember we hosted a symposium at the Guggenheim years ago about the National Tourist Routes—an art, architecture, and design project initiated by our National Roads Administration. A few months later I found myself in the far north of Norway for the opening of Louise Bourgeois and Peter Zumthor's project, the Steilneset Memorial, commemorating witches who were burned at the stake. I met several European journalists there who had heard about the project because they were familiar with the Guggenheim event.

Of course, this is obvious to many, but to me, it took me awhile to realize that what we do here, and the partners we work together with, can really bring a more global awareness to our projects. I've seen this with artists we've worked with, too. For instance, the artist Tori Wrånes was commissioned by Performa to create a new performance (that is still to this day the only work that has ever made me gasp out loud) for their 2013 Biennial. This project helped kick off her career in a big way internationally, and she is now traveling the globe with her performances. It's taught me to really dig in and make sure our projects are realized to their fullest potential, because they can influence an artist's career or the way a project back home [in Norway] is viewed on a global level.

What have you learned or picked up from others along the way—words of wisdom, tips, suggestions, or metaphors?

I was once told not to date in the art world and that was good advice for me at the time. I'm also a huge

believer in surrounding yourself with good energy. New York can be such a draining place, housing costs are insane, the sounds are exhausting, and many people are stuck with employers who expect too much and pay too little. A way of making New York better, at least for me, is and has been to make sure I surround myself with as much good energy from people as possible. This sounds banal, but it has worked for me. A gallerist I know once said she only works with nice people. I try to do the same.

For the kind of work that you do, what are the most valuable resources?

Flexibility is one of the most valuable resources of the Consulate. That, paired with decent budgets. This means we're able to quickly turn around when opportunities arise. And things in New York can move quickly. A new commission might arise, or a curator approaches us about doing research in Norway. It is incredibly satisfying to be able to support projects and people we believe in, without too much bureaucratic hassle. Our network of partners and collaborators are also one of our most valuable resources. I always try to keep up with them on a regular basis, go for coffee, or meet up for a drink to hear what people are working on or what excites them at the moment. Because I am constantly looking for ways to work together to promote Norwegian art and culture, I need to know what is happening in our community and what opportunities might come up.

Do you have a favorite artwork, artist, or genre that you'd like to talk about?

I recently took a year off from work and moved to London to study art history at the Courtauld. This was one of the best decisions I have ever made. I desperately needed some space to think, and I had a seven year itch in my relationship to New York. Studying at the Courtauld opened up a place from which to really look at art again, without always focusing on the context around it. I especially treasured the classes I took on the Italian Renaissance. This is basic art history stuff, but thinking about perspective and scale, and enjoying an artist's use of color and light helped me get a new understanding of the development of art and the different meanings we have ascribed to works over time.

Ingrid Moe recommends:

Escaping to the mountains. I crave the trees and silence I get hiking on my family's farm in Norway. All my anxiety and body aches melt away after a few weeks there every summer.

Swimming. Anywhere. Anytime. I need to be immersed in water. It is the perfect hangover cure. It always brightens my mood.

Being in love.

Strong female leadership. Marta Kuzma at OCA gave me my first job out of college and challenged me in the best ways. I've been lucky to work under three female Consul Generals who have rooted for me and helped me take risks in my work. I'm proud to work for a feminist consulate.

Taking a year off. Not everyone has an employer who lets you do this. I was incredibly lucky this way. I needed a break to catch my breath, I also needed to not represent someone else for a while and just rediscover what my own interests are. This year gave me so much art, energy, and love. And upon my return it made New York feel invigorating and beautiful again.

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Vocation
Art & Culture Attaché

Fact

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