



Left: Curator Astrid Hilde Semmingsen in front of Bente Bøyesen's current exhibition *Grunnforhold* (presented in Galleri Semmingsen and on Oslo's contemporary art scene in January and February 2017). Bøyesen is a highly appreciated Norwegian painter, working with oil and tempera techniques, merging old handicrafts with modern fine art. Photo: Jens Bredberg. Top right: Christopher Rådlund was born in Gothenburg, Sweden, but is now established in Oslo. You can catch some of his oil paintings and new lithographies in the exhibition *Himmel og Krig* at Galleri Semmingsen (2-26 March). Right: Danish painter Peter Skovgaard's exhibition *Nord du Nord* was on display at Galleri Semmingsen in the winter of 2016. Skovgaard's expressive painting has a natural place in Danish art tradition. He works out of Aarhus in Denmark – this year's European Capital of Culture – and Berlin, Germany.



Gallery of the Month, Norway

Let go of your inner art critic at Galleri Semmingsen

Galleri Semmingsen at Tjuvholmen in Oslo has helped educated Scandinavian painters build a loyal audience through repeated exhibitions in one of the best parts of town. Curator Astrid Hilde Semmingsen, who still believes in passionate communication and direct interaction with her customers, urges everyone – and Norwegians in particular – to let go of their inhibiting opinions about art and let it speak to them in the moment.

By Eirik Elvevold | Photos: Galleri Semmingsen

Tourists from all over the world have started discovering Oslo as a travel destination. For those seeking the Norwegian capital's vibrant art scene, Tjuvholmen – the neighbourhood sticking out from

Aker Brygge into the Oslo Fjord – is a natural stop. While walking through the high-end neighbourhood, which is dotted with galleries and museums of all sizes, you would be lucky to bump into Galleri

Semmingsen and the sprightly woman who has been running it since 1999. "I talk a lot. Some galleries think it's cool to be quiet, but I firmly believe in communicating my passion for art. For a long time, I wanted to be an artist myself, but the more knowledge I acquired the more I realised what sacrifices that lifestyle involves. It might sound old-school, but being an artist really is a sacrifice," says gallery owner and curator Astrid Hilde Semmingsen, who is brimming with contagious admiration for the artists in her stable.

After putting her own artist career on the shelf, Semmingsen decided to help other artists solve a tangible problem: making a name through repeated exhibitions. "In my past job, I sold a lot of expensive graphic works – often to quite young people. And suddenly it dawned on me: all these people who are looking for something unique for their homes don't really have any place to go to discover quality painters. How are they supposed to keep up with the names? There's one exhibition, then the artist disappears. I want to provide an alternative, so I give talents a more permanent arena," she asserts.

Wide Scandinavian scope

The result is a multifaceted collection of Scandinavian art, ranging from the simple and classical to elements of folklore and fashionable glam. "In the upcoming exhibition *Suvenir*, Anne Ingeborg Biringvad will show place-specific installations, textiles and embroidery paintings, using materials and props from the near past to say something about the contemporary. She explores time and memories through different cultural expressions – including Sami – and is really digging deep in popular art," Semmingsen explains, before enthusiastically moving on to the next artist.

"Kristian Evju, on the other hand, represents Norwegian expats. He's hot in London, and I'm not at all surprised. His glam paintings are technically brilliant and have a political edge. Then you have Christopher Rådlund – a figurative Swedish painter who found his place in Norway in the same tradition as Jan Valentin Sæther and Odd Nerdrum, at a time when there was little interest for classical painting in Sweden. Then of course there is the Danish artist Peter Skovgaard – he's one of our bestsellers," says Semmingsen.

Skovgaard got plenty of attention for his colourful glass decorations in Aarhus City Tower, one of Denmark's tallest

buildings, located in the middle of the European Capital of Culture in 2017. "The common denominator for Skovgaard and our whole stable is that they're all very well educated. Their pieces are full of references; they're products of thorough research," says Semmingsen.

Hold your judgement, open your heart

Education is a keyword if you want to understand Semmingsen's unstoppable drive. She thinks Norwegians lack some of the cultural education that is common on the continent and therefore tend to hide behind strong opinions, something she is trying to change one conversation at the time.

"In general, we're not used to consuming architecture, classical music and paintings in everyday life, so we think we have to make strong judgments about it when we first experience it. But we should just let go. I often tell my customers not to overthink things, because finding your own art is like finding a friend or lover. You can feel it," argues Semmingsen, using Norwegian artist Terje Resell as an example. "Resell's expression looks just like a sensitive sketch, but is actually



etched into metal. This technique takes dedication and time, and you can really feel the difference."

On top of engaging with customers, Semmingsen is always searching for partners with an eye for quality to boost her mission of spreading fine art. She works closely with luxury suppliers and puts on exhibitions at renowned conference hotel Sundvolden Hotel as well as at Madserud Gård, home of business accelerator house Agera. Special consultant at Agera, Pia Martine Gautier Bjerke, is confident about mixing art and business in such stately surroundings. "The way we work in Agera has made the historical Madserud Gård a highly creative arena, where interesting people come and go every day," says Bjerke. "That's why it's a perfect location for exclusive events, exciting business projects and fine art. I think we'll see more of this type of cooperation across established norms in the future."

For more information, please visit: www.gallerisemmingsen.no or follow Galleri Semmingsen on Instagram and Facebook.



Left: Norwegian artist Anne Ingeborg Biringvad works with installations and mixed media, using handicrafts as ready-mades. Biringvad's exhibition *Suvenir* at Galleri Semmingsen (9-26 February) is a 'memory exhibition' about different migrations, what we take with us and what we leave behind. Her work has also been bought by KODE museum in Bergen. This textile installation is named *Du kan ingenting ta med deg dit du går* (You cannot bring anything with you where you go). Right: Kristian Evju is a Norwegian artist working out of London. Evju works with drawing, painting and composition in a sublime tradition. His exhibition *Machinations* can soon be seen at Gallery Semmingsen (30 March-23 April). Evju has already exhibited in the US, Germany, Italy, Pakistan and the UK.