



"CAMPINGWOMEN" ON TOUR.....to the European Capital of Culture, Stavanger 2008

"CAMPINGWOMEN"

5 large rolling sculptures, by Marit Benthe Norheim www.norheim.dk

with inlaid music by composer Geir Johnson

The main concept and at the same time the inner armature of the construction of the Campingwomen are functional caravans from the 60's and 70's. -The torsos of each of the female figures grow out of the roof such that the caravans function as the women's skirts. Each woman is approx. 4m tall.

The caravan, the camping life, the traveller, the transportable home, memories of cramped spaces with the family close together - cosiness and the holiday, or the explosive nature of these elements - give rise to many associations. - Also to the stories one associates with gypsies and circus folk, the travellers. The woman and the secrets she hides or reveals, also give rise to interpretations.

* This project comprises participation on many different levels by the local population.

Music

One can enter into the skirts of the Campingwomen, where their inner spaces have been arranged individually, and have been filled with music by composer Geir Johnson. His music communicates and intensifies the content and experience of each individual Campingwoman.

The pieces feature the voices of Siri Torjesen, Tora Augestad and Trio Medieval.

The lyrics of the Refugeewomen are written by Mahmout Darwish

Short description of the Campingwomen

1) The Refugee woman is strong - on her way forward - but also vigilant and vulnerable. She has a space of experiences inside of her which also functions as a sort of shelter.* The interior is covered by a porcelain mosaic created by about 400 school children and refugee women from the Stavanger 2008 region. They have worked on a dialogue which



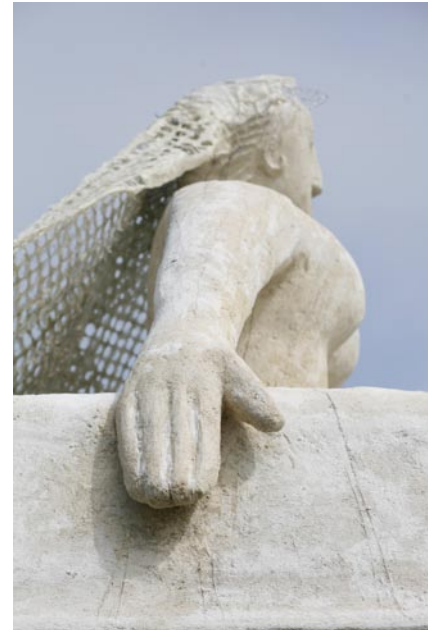
highlights themes of longing and loss experienced by fleeing women and children.

2) The Bride with her romantic and erotic presentation points to the institution of marriage in all parts of the world: an official approved framework which makes it possible to bring forth new generations.* Collected wedding photos, both local and from many other parts of the world will constitute the wallpaper inside the Camping Bride.

3) Virgin Mary has the authoritarian mother's - and protector's - role. She also carries the pain of losing a child. I have built the concept of the protector from the Middle Ages into her story, where she bares her breast to Christ on Judgement Day and begs for mercy for the pathetic people she has hidden in her cape. -But also her pain and strength in the Pieta, where she holds her dead Son. I have laid the dead Christ inside her, modelled into the floor, surrounded by 20 people and spiritual beings.

4) The Siren is life-enhancing - she is extrovert with a fertile and voluptuous body. The Siren entices and tempts/seduces and enjoys her womanliness. -This female power that both attracts and repels. -Which frightens and is fought against in different ways in different cultures - and always has done at all times. Inside the Siren the ceiling, walls and floor are lined with pink concrete with the handprints of many different people. In the centre of her interior there is a freestanding figure modelled in a static position - a person/foetus/phallus?

5) The Campingmama is both powerful and caring, but so overpowering that one is uncertain whether to the good or bad. Control slips away in the two figures which are on their way down head first behind her back. She is wallpapered internally with pictures from camping life.



THE CAMPING TOUR

The journey from Mygdal to Stavanger were a 4-day long trip, that was like one long happening,

The Campingwomen are mobile. They were driven by cars from Marit Benthe's studio in Mygdal, by Hjoerring, Northern Jutland, to Stavanger, with stops in small towns and villages on their way from Denmark to Norway.

We were allowed a speed of 30km. an hour,.

A group of about 30 people, involved in the project in various ways stayed over in Campsites and showed the onlookers the worlds of the Campingwomen.

The people participating in the camping-trip was a mixture of cultural –administrators and craftsmen, artists, musicians, arthistorians and children;- who were all giving their view of the Campingwomen and their contentmatter to the public when we opened their doors.

The Caravanwomen have been bringing contemporary art and music to many people who may not normally get the chance to relate to art.

They have travelled non- stop, organised by Stavanger2008, since they arrived in Norway on the 6th. of May, and have thus visited numerous places in the Stavanger region during the European Capital of Culture year 2008.





Previous collaboration with composer Geir Johnson

I have been preoccupied with the way popular, familiar symbols open up access to the irrational, and have therefore used angels or galleon figures. When combining these with a less accessible form of artistic expression, the contrasts often produce a fruitful result.

On several occasions I have collaborated with the composer Geir Johnson (director of the Ultima Festival). He has composed music for unveiling ceremonies, Galleon figures in Skien (1996), 'The Lady from the Sea' in Sæby (2001), and in conjunction with 'Rosa', an installation at Silo in Seljord (1999). The most extensive collaboration, however, was on the project 'Rolling Angels' which consisted of 16 angel sculptures in concrete, each a little larger than a human being, mounted on wheels and producing electronic noises composed by Geir Johnson. He had also composed a choral work called 'Rolling Angels' which was performed by the Norwegian Soloists' Choir with soprano soloist Siri Torjesen. The project was shown and performed in Oslo at 'Kulturkirken Jakob', in Wick, Scotland at the Northlands Festival, and at the English National Opera in London at the invitation of Mary Miller. 'Rolling Angels' subsequently appeared at Trafalgar Square (at the lighting up of the Christmas tree, a present from the Norwegian people), St Martin-in-the-Fields, Salisbury Cathedral (during the Salisbury Festival), and finally at Sæby church in Denmark. All of these performances happened in 2000 and 2001 (photo documentation can be seen at www.norheim.dk; a video is included).

The most recent collaboration before the Campingwomen was the project Rottejomfruen (The Rat-Woman) commissioned by the organization StøpeSkien (www.rottejomfruen.no). Geir Johnson contributed a sound installation entitled Reise mellom latter og gråt (Journey Between Laughter and Crying), which is now permanently fixed in a tunnel slide moulded into the 7 metre high concrete sculpture. The figure was created in collaboration with 2300 school children from Skien. They made porcelain eyes which were fixed onto the surface of the sculpture. The Rat-Woman was unveiled at a celebration on March 20, 2006, to mark the Ibsen anniversary. The music was performed live on that occasion for an audience of between 5000 and 7000.



The Composer

Geir Johnson (f.1953 i Fredrikstad), cand.phil. in music science.

Director of of the ULTIMA Oslo Contemporary Music Festival, since 1998

He has written approx. 40 compositions during the last 15 years in diverse genres. As a composer he is mainly self-taught.. But studied computer music at Stanford University in 1988-89. And has undertaken several periods of studying also in England and Germany.

He has a varied musical background, having performed both as a performer and as a conductor of choirs and contemporary ensembles. Furthermore, he produced and conducted a series of larger music events during the 1980`s, with works by both Norwegian and internationally recognised composers.

Geir Johnson has been active in the field of concert planning and management, first in the mid-80's at the Henie-Onstad Arts Centre in Oslo, later by establishing the BIT 20 Ensemble and the Music Factory festival in Bergen. In the early 1990's he was one of the founders of the contemporary music theatre company Opera Vest..

From 1989 to 1995 he was President of New Music the Norwegian section of ISCM. Geir Johnson has lectured on central topics in 20th century music at universities and academies, as well as published more than 700 articles and reviews, mostly on issues connected to the contemporary music scene, in more than 80 journals and newspapers worldwide.



THE ARTIST

Marit Benthe Norheim

Marit Benthe Norheim was born 1960 in Norway, and now lives in Denmark.

She studied at the Norwegian State Art Academy, Bergen, Norway, a Travelling Art Academy, throughout Europe including 5 months in Italy, and The Royal Academy of Art (MA), London. This led to her living and working in London from 1984 until 1995. Benthe has given many group and solo shows, and has undertaken several large public commissions in Norway, Denmark, England Sweden, Iceland and Greenland.

Her work is held in the Public Collections of a.o. the Norwegian Contemporary Art Museum and the National Gallery of Art, Norway and the New Carlsberg Foundation, Denmark.

She has been lecturing at a number of Art Colleges, including Royal Academy of Art and Central Saint Martin School of Art, London.

Some of her large public sculptures include local community involvement, and two of them use themes from the female figures of Henrik Ibsen's writings. The first one is "Woman of the sea" at the harbour of Sæby, Denmark. The last one is the "Rat Virgin" from "Little Eyolf" a 7m. tall sculpture covered in a mosaic of porcelain eyes, made by 2300 children in Skien, Ibsens birth place, for the Ibsen Anniversary 2006.

The artists statement

I have always been fascinated by art which is placed in, or is part of, a context (such as a church or a temple); art which is able to communicate, or in some way or another acts as a door-opener; art that can be experienced at many levels, not just through the intellect. By concretizing a thought or an emotion, which is what an artist does when expressing himself or herself sculpturally, the spectator becomes involved in an experience which can have immediate effect, but which may nonetheless take time to absorb. This is the reason why I have chosen to work with art intended for public spaces. To tell a story – my chosen parts of stories adapted for the particular location of a work of art – has been a motivating force throughout a large part of my artistic output. I am also fascinated by mankind's need for rituals, and the value of symbols in relation to this.





KONTAKTINFORMATION

Billedkunstner

Marit Benthe Norheim

Houenvej 52, Mygdal

9800 Hjørring

Telefon +45 98 97 51 55

Mobilnr. +45 30 70 51 46

maritbenthe@norheim.dk

www.norheim.dk