



NOKO Y3 DZEN - *There's Something in the World*, 2019. Cut up gallon containers stitched together. Variable dimensions. Site-specific work, Vestfossen Kunstlaboratorium.

Modern art laboratory in a historic setting

Situated inside a former cellulose factory, Vestfossen Kunstlaboratorium welcomes visitors to discover contemporary art by Norwegian as well as international artists in a truly spectacular and historic setting. With its unique and rough character, the building itself provides an interesting historical frame for the modern artistic expressions of our time. This season, we are invited to experience a varied programme with the three exhibitions *Kubatana* (33 contemporary African artists), *Natura Morta* (Christer Glein) and *From Evening in Oudenaarde to Summer Evening in Hokksund* (Frits Thaulow).

By Ingrid Opstad | Photos: Nina Ansten and Vestfossen Kunstlaboratorium

Vestfossen Kunstlaboratorium (VKL) is an art centre that exhibits contemporary artwork by Norwegian as well as international artists. Open from May to October every year, the modern art laboratory has a goal to make art interesting and available to everyone. "We believe everyone can benefit from art, no matter their age or taste: that it can have an important effect on your life, and needs

to be easily accessible," says director Lars-Andreas T. Kristiansen.

Looking back at the history of VKL, it is truly remarkable. The former cellulose factory that today houses the art space was founded back in 1886. Later, in 1973, the factory was closed down, and it was empty for almost 30 years, until the artist Morten Viskum bought it

in 2001. "He wanted to create a unique space to display art. Between 2001 and 2003, work was initiated towards transforming the old building into a modern exhibition space," Kristiansen recalls. "It is such a beautiful and historic place – many visitors are blown away by the building itself when they walk through the doors. It creates a great backdrop for the art."



Café Cellulose offers a relaxing and elegant environment in exciting architectural surroundings – the perfect place for a break from exploring art.

Varied programme showcasing contemporary art

Today, VKL is known for being a modern art laboratory. "Our aim is to be literally like a laboratory for contemporary art. In fact, contemporary art can itself be seen as a laboratory for the study of the modern world, taking it apart and putting it together in new ways – first and foremost as themes or metaphors, but also more directly," he says.

Kristiansen is delighted to present this season's main events, a varied programme with three very different exhibitions he believes the public will enjoy. "This is a wide-ranging programme, as reflected both in the themes of the exhibitions and in the cultural and geographic roots of the selected artists," Kristiansen explains.

Kubatana – 'togetherness'

The main exhibition this year, *Kubatana*, is one of the largest presentations of contemporary African art seen yet in Scandinavia, bringing together 33 artists ranging from 25 to 89 years old, representing 18 countries. Four of the participating artists are also taking part in this year's Venetian biennale: Joël Andrianomearisoa, Gonçalo Mabunda, Zanele Muholi and Ibrahim Mahama. The exhibition is curated by the London-based Norwegian gallery owner, Kristin Hjellegjerde, who has brought boundless



Amadou Sanogo (Mali), *Sans Tête*, 2018. Acrylic on fabric, 200 x 160 cm. Courtesy of Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery.



Kubatana is an exhibition with contemporary African artists, curated by Kristin Hjellegjerde.



Gonçalo Mabunda (Mozambique), *The Throne of the Shining Dream*, 2016. Decommissioned arms, 71 x 55 x 93 cm. Courtesy of Jack Bell Gallery, London.

and genuine enthusiasm as well as her enormous knowledge of the field to make it happen.

Several of the artists taking part in *Kubatana* have visited VKL's guest studio in Vestfossen and produced site-specific works for the exhibition. One piece that has already garnered interest is the gigantic, yellow installation on the façade of the VKL building, the creation of Ghanaian Serge Attukwei Clotey.

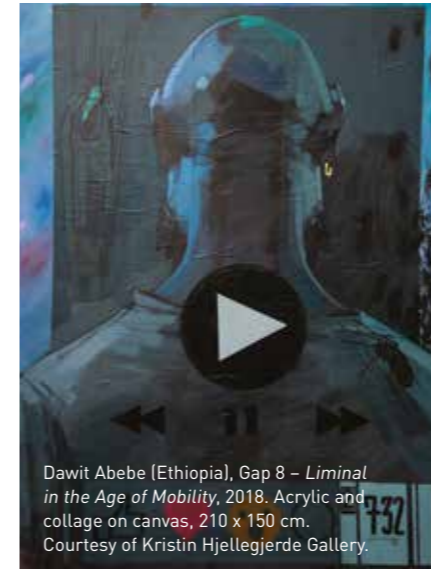
"We are very excited about this exhibition and to show the importance of African contemporary art on an international level," says Kristiansen. "The word *Kubatana* means 'togetherness', which is the feeling Hjellegjerde took with her back from her travels throughout the African continent. It is the hope of everyone at VKL that our visitors will also feel this sense of communality with the artists taking part in this year's main exhibition."

Norwegian artwork on display

At Galleri Star, the public is invited to discover works by Frits Thaulow, one of Norway's foremost landscape painters of the 19th century, through *From Evening in Oudenaarde to Summer*



Aboudia (Ivory Coast), *Untitled*, 2013. Acrylic and mixed media on canvas, 125 x 200 cm. Courtesy of Jack Bell Gallery, London.

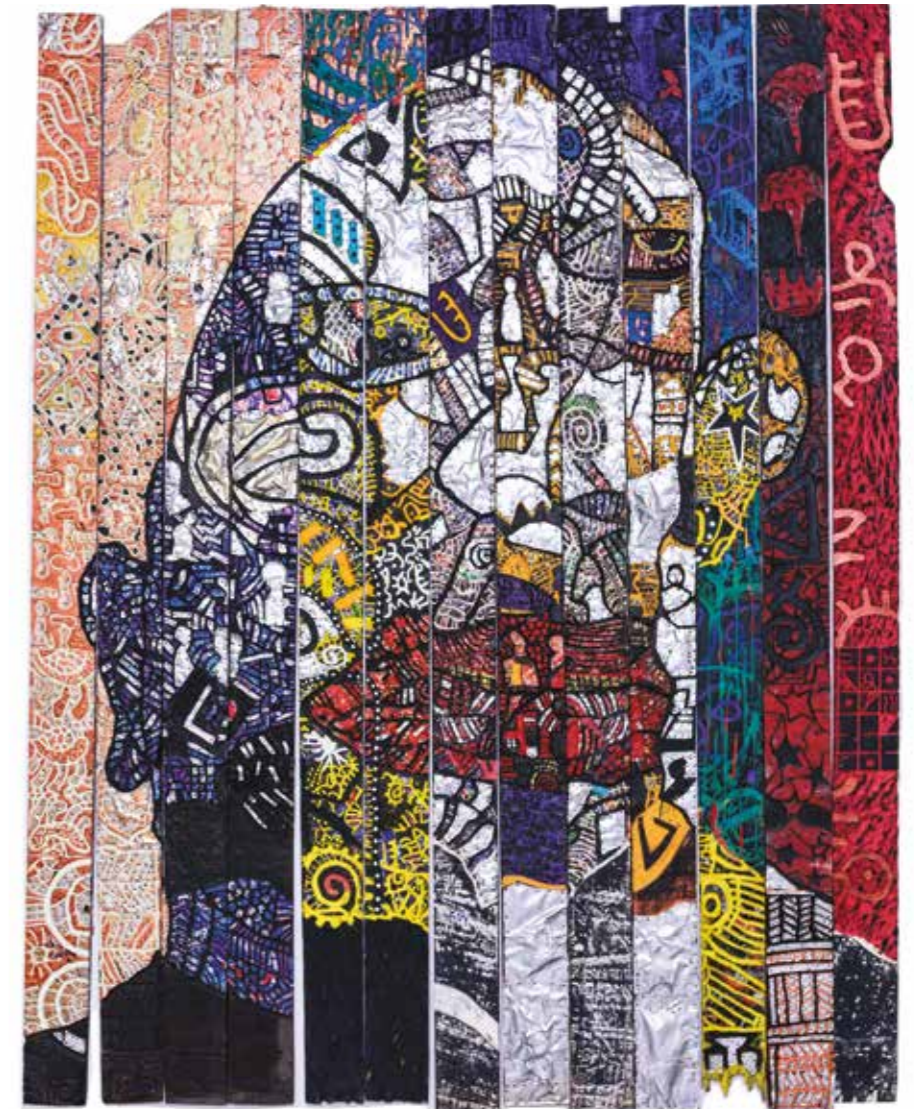


Dawit Abebe (Ethiopia), *Gap 8 - Liminal in the Age of Mobility*, 2018. Acrylic and collage on canvas, 210 x 150 cm. Courtesy of Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery.

Evening in Hokksund. "The art selected includes different Norwegian scenery and even one motif with a local connection, the 1891 painting *Summer Evening in Hokksund*. While Thaulow is still well-known among most Norwegians, the attention devoted to his art by institutions and scholars has been slight, compared with its compass and the recognition it had initially achieved. It is therefore with great enthusiasm that we are able to now make it possible to enjoy his works in an institutional context," says Kristiansen.

Furthermore, in the exhibition hall, the Oslo-based artist Christer Glein is showing his new works, large-scale oil paintings with motifs borrowed from art history, including figures by Picasso and the Norwegian artists Bjarne Melgaard and Sverre Bjertnes.

Since VKL was founded in 2003, it has opened its doors to 32 large and small exhibitions, and complemented these with 16 substantial publications. Today, you can also visit its very own bookstore as well as the cosy Café Cellulose, which offers a relaxing and elegant environment perfect for taking a break from exploring art. "We are still a relatively young art centre that is ceaselessly striving to find ever better ways to promote contemporary art, something we will continue to do while also focusing on expanding our offering as well as adding digital elements," Kristiansen concludes.



Gerald Chukwuma (Nigeria), *'Ishi kote ebu' - The Victim's Journey*, 2018. Mixed media, 213,4 x 170,2 cm. Courtesy of artist and Jon Harald Nilsen.



Serge Attukwei Clotey (Ghana), *NOKO Y3 DZEN - There's Something in the World*, 2019. Cut up gallon containers stitched together, variable dimensions. Site-specific work for Vestfossen Kunstlaboratorium. Courtesy of Gallery 1957. Photo: Nii Odzenma.



Vestfossen Kunstlaboratorium is located in Buskerud, between Drammen and Kongsberg, with easy access both by car and train, approximately 50 minutes from Oslo.

The art laboratory is located inside a former cellulose factory that now contains a 2,500-square-metre space and shows international contemporary art of high quality.

Opening hours:
4 May to 22 September: Tuesday to Sunday, 11am to 6pm.

2019 exhibitions:
The main building: *Kubatana* – an exhibition with contemporary African artists.
The exhibition hall: *Natura Morta* – Christer Glein.
Galleri Star: *From Evening in Oude-naarde to Summer Evening in Hokksund* – Frits Thaulow.

Abdoulaye Konaté (Mali),
Composition bleue orange Aly 1, 2017.
Textile, 222 x 219 cm.
Courtesy of the artist and Blain | Southern.

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