**相聚北欧 | Gathering Together in Scandinavia**

*Harper’s Bazaar China*

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Translated from Mandarin by Pickles PR

In 2023, the 12th MOMENTUM Biennial focuses on collective work under the theme "Together".

The 12th MOMENTUM Biennale 2023 will be held in Moss, Norway, until October 8th. The biennial is organised by the unique gallery – Galleri F 15, Norway's oldest contemporary art institution. Its artistic director, Dag Aker Sveinar, is exclusively interviewed for Harper's Bazaar about the gallery and the biennale's successes and failures over the decades.

**Not an island**

Fifty-three kilometres south of the Norwegian capital, Oslo, lies the coastal city of Moss, where Galleri F 15 is located on the city's island of Jeløya, with a beautiful view of the sea. Founded in 1966, Galleri F 15, named after the address "Fossen 15", is one of Norway's oldest and most prestigious contemporary art centres. Its uniqueness lies in the fact that, despite being called a “gallery”, it is not commercial in nature, but forms part of the Norwegian National Art Museum network.

At the same time, we do not have a collection, but borrow works from art institutions in Norway and around the world for exhibitions, which makes the gallery's exhibition program unrestricted. Of course, as a Norwegian gallery, our exhibitions are correspondingly focused on local artists and groups, both established and emerging. For example, in the past ten years, through exhibitions and publications, we have presented work by Norwegian artists such as Edvard Munch, Bendik Riis and Charlotte Wankel.

Another highlight of the Galleri F 15 is its location. Jerøya is the largest island in the Oslofjord. Its woodlands, beaches and marshes are officially designated as a protected landscape due to their rich biodiversity. The gallery is in a historic area, surrounded by a country farm, and its building, a 19th-century barn manor, is rustic in style. Despite its relative remoteness, over the generations, the gallery has not only built up a reputation for excellence, but also for reaching out to the local community through its art programmes. It has also focused on reaching out to wider audiences through international contemporary art projects, providing a space for open dialogue. In fact, it's not far from Oslo, which makes it easy for tourists to get here. Each year, we have over 30,000 visitors, which is the same as the entire population of the city of Moss. So this is not just an island, but an art destination that connects Norway with the Nordic countries and the rest of the world.

In 2020, Galleri F 15 and MOMENTUM, the contemporary art biennial it organises, merged into a single institution, and I was subsequently invited to become Artistic Director. Since 2009, I have been leading the MOMENTUM Biennale and have witnessed its development for more than ten years. Prior to that, I have worked at a number of art institutions, including the Munch Museum, the National Museum of Contemporary Art and the National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design, among others.

Over the past few decades, changes have been taking place in Moss, as well as in the Norwegian art scene. Firstly, the closure of the pulp mill near the historic town centre of Moss has opened up great opportunities for real estate development in the city's cultural, living and business centres. Secondly, as the cost of real estate and living in Oslo has risen, many people have moved to Moss to commute. This means that more and more people, especially the younger generation, are flocking to the area. Also, the Art Academy has become part of the Norwegian university system, and access to a free education and a wealth of job opportunities make it a great place to live. As art colleges have become part of the Norwegian university system, access to free education and a wealth of job opportunities have made them more international. Finally, the new Munch Museum and the National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design opened in 2021-2022 signalling a shift in Norwegian cultural policy from a relatively decentralised to a more centralised approach. These changes also present opportunities and challenges for Galleri F 15 and the MOMENTUM Biennale.

**“The Nordic Miracle”**

After visiting the Nordic countries in the 1990s, curator Hans-Ulrich Obrist described the thriving contemporary art scene as a “Nordic Miracle”. At the time, the Nordic countries were building up cultural and artistic institutions; the art magazine Sigmund Freiherr was building up its own art centre, institutions were being established in the Nordic countries; the art magazine Siksi was founded and translated into English, with a wide readership. The art market gradually emerged, and the Nordic art collection system began to be established. The first edition of MOMENTUM Nordic Biennale of Contemporary Art, organised by Galleri F 15 in 1998, contributed to this trend.

As a biennale that positions itself as a “Nordic art” event, MOMENTUM provides a platform for many Nordic artists to exhibit and promote themselves internationally. For example, the first edition of the biennale included artists who have now established an international reputation, such as Olafur Eliasson and Elmgreen & Dragset and Eija-Liisa Ahtila, were among the artists who participated in the first Biennale. Until 2006, however, the Biennale was not organised on an entirely bi-annual basis and was not a financial success, which is a pity. TWhat I find most regrettable is that, in 2013, we had to sell the Biennale's space, the MOMENTUM Kunsthall and reorganised it. The exhibition venue has now moved from the old town of Moss to Alby where Galleri F 15 is located. This is certainly a fresh start.

Although I have mentioned that I hope the curators of the MOMENTUM biennale will be Nordic-minded, “Nordic” as a political and cultural concept is constantly changing. One of the first things I did when I took over the Biennale in 2009 was to remove the requirement that it be limited to Nordic artists, which made the Biennale more open. You can feel the change in the titles of the previous exhibitions ⸺ House of Commons (2021), The Emotional Exhibition, (2019), and Alienation (2017). At the same time, I have made sure that MOMENTUM as a biennale can be organised every other year with high quality exhibitions and interesting concepts, which is one of my proudest achievements.

This year, the 12th edition of the MOMENTUM biennale, Together as to Gather, is being held in Moss. Curated for the first time by the art collective Tenthaus and featuring 90 artists, groups and institutions, it is one of Norway's most anticipated contemporary art events.

56 years ago, in the second year of Galleri F 15's existence, the gallery received permission from the Municipality of Moss to use the Alpine Gallery, after the roof of the old mill building in which the gallery was located was blown over.

Fifty-six years ago, in the second year of Galleri F 15's existence, when the roof of the old mill building on which it stood blew over, the museum received permission from the city of Moss to use the main building of the Alby estate as an art space. Today, the annex is also an area open to all visitors, thus creating a large space that is open to the public.

In the future, I hope that MOMENTUM will continue to promote the sustainability of Nordic art, and that my successor will continue to promote the expansion of the Galleri F 15 exhibition space, so that it can continue to flourish.