

THE
STORTING
ART AND ARCHITECTURE







The Storting – Art and Architecture

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THE ARCHITECTURE



The Storting – the Norwegian Parliament – emerged as a political institution in the course of a few hectic weeks in the spring of 1814, when the Norwegian Constitution was adopted at Eidsvoll. However, it would take a further 50 years before the Storting would have its own building, following a lengthy tug-of-war about its location and architectural design. As it stands today, the distinctive assembly building towers above the terrain and communicates confidently with the nearby Royal Palace.



From a bird's eye view, the Parliament building's ground plan is highly symmetrical and is designed as an H shape with two semicircles on the cross-axis. The main façade looks out across Eidsvolls plass. To the left the small, triangular Stortingets plass and to the right, Wessels plass, where the yellow building houses the twelve specialist committees. To the right of Wessels plass is the so-called Storting Block, five buildings that house the administration, the archives, the library, and offices for the parties and the Members of Parliament. (Aerial photo: Fjellanger Widerøel/Archives of the Storting)

The Storting's many buildings

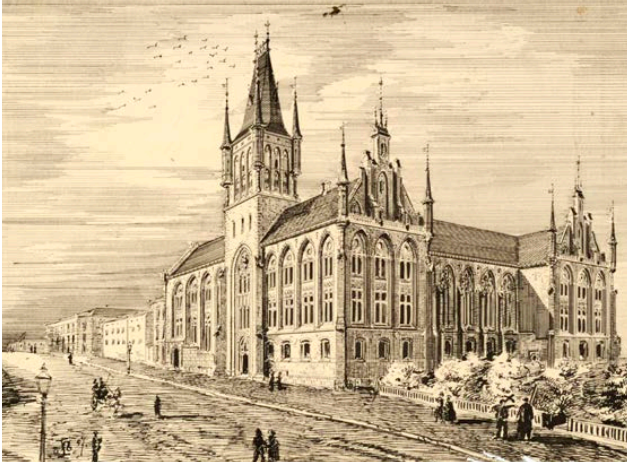


The University of Oslo's Old Banqueting Hall, was the Storting Chamber from 1854 until 1866. The university buildings were designed by the architect Christian Henrich Grosch (1801–1865) and erected between 1841–1854. (Photo: UiO/Francesco Saggio)

The Storting met for the first time in the autumn of 1814. At this time there were few buildings in Christiania (today's Oslo) that could house an assembly of 79 men. The choice fell on the auditorium of *Christiania Cathedral School*, which was to be the meeting place for the Storting for the next 40 years. When the *Old Banqueting Hall* at *Det Kongelige Frederiks Universitet* on Karl Johans gate – the main street – was ready in 1854, the Storting moved its sittings there. Only in 1866 could the Members of Parliament move to their own, purpose-built premises. At that time the Storting shared the building with the State Audit Office, the National Archives and the Mapping Authority. In 1949 the Storting finally acquired exclusive use of the building. In the same year a competition was announced for extensions and alterations to the Parliament building. The low building housing the National Archives on Akersgata was torn down and replaced in 1958 by the four-storey office and committee building that stands there today. The need for more space led to the purchase of a total of five buildings opposite the Parliament building at Wessels plass. This quarter is today known as the Storting Block.



Christiania Cathedral School's auditorium in was where the Storting met from 1814 to 1854. The adjoining library served as the Lagting Chamber. The original Baroque building was erected in about 1640 and taken over by the Cathedral School in 1719. In 1799–1800 the school was modernised and these two rooms were built according to designs by the Danish architect Carl Frederik Ferdinand Stanley (1769–1805). The old Storting Chamber was reconstructed at Norsk Folkemuseum, the Norwegian Museum of Cultural History, in 1914, and in 1916–18 the Lagting Chamber was also moved to the museum. (Photo: Bjørg Disington/Norsk Folkemuseum)



The Storting could have looked like this: Wilhelm von Hanno and Heinrich Ernst Schirmer's original winning design for the Storting building – with towers. From a drawing in *Illustreret Nyhedsblad* 1857. (Photo: The National Archives)

THE ARCHITECTURAL COMPETITION

Up until 1869 the Storting only met for a few weeks every third year, but discussions had been going on for a long time about the need for the national assembly to have its own representative building. Nonetheless, other buildings, including a residence for the King and premises for the university, as well as buildings for a prison and a hospital, were given priority as the young Norwegian nation was creating a representative capital city. The Parliament building was part of a larger development plan for the city. As a result the discussions concerned both where the building should be located and what it should look like. In the period from 1836 to 1857 twelve different proposals for the symbolically important location were discussed: from *Akershus fortress* via *Tullinløkka* to the government's proposal to build on the site of the Palace Park (number 5 on the map on the opposite page). Shortly after that, however, the Government changed its mind and instead purchased Karl Johans gate (number 8 on the map). In 1857 the Storting gave its consent for the building to stand here, right in the city centre, looking out across to the Royal Palace.



Emil Victor Langlet's design for the Parliament building and the H-shaped floor plan. The drawing is from the invitation to the laying of the foundation stone on 10 October 1861. (Photo: The National Archives)

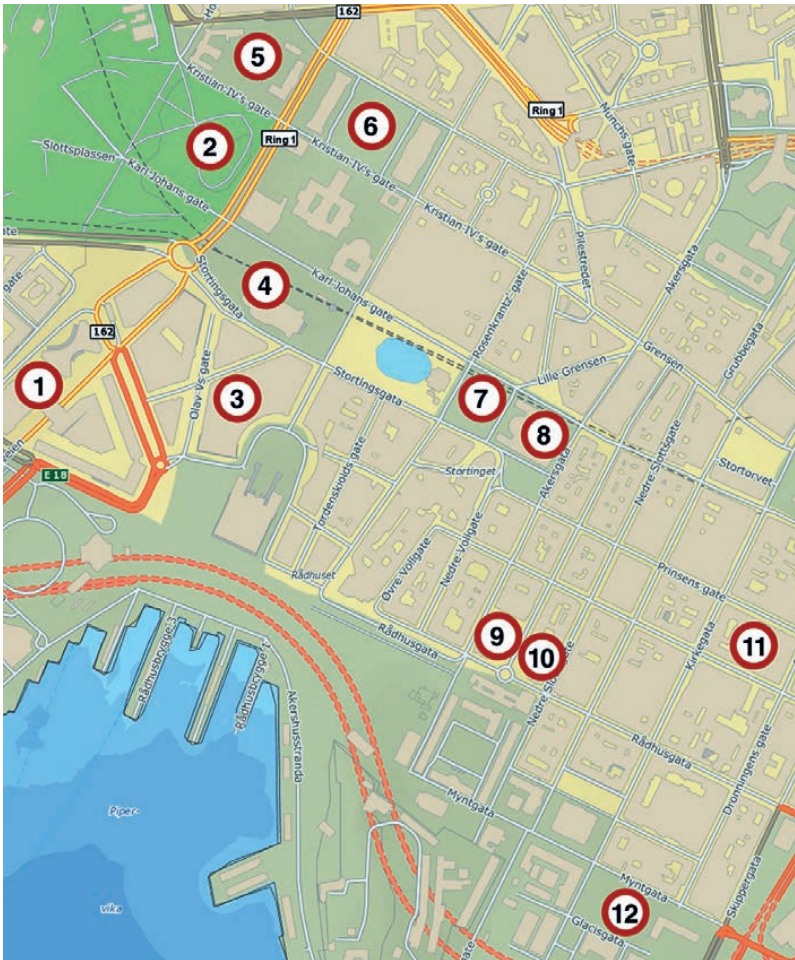
In 1856, the Ministry of Finance announced an architectural competition for both the sites (numbers 5 and 8). The competition was won by two of Norway's leading architects, Wilhelm von Hanno (1826–1882) and Heinrich Ernst Schirmer (1838–1883), with a design for a neo-Gothic Parliament building with high arches, towers and spires on Karl Johans gate. However, both the neo-Gothic winning design and the location were called into question.

Before the Government sent von Hanno and Schirmer's winning design to the Storting for its formal approval, the Swedish architect Emil Victor Langlet (1824–1898) came to Norway in February 1857, straight from his study tour of Italy, and was permitted to put forward a design. Even though his design was submitted after the deadline, it was exhibited with the other competition drawings. Eventually, a majority in the Storting rejected the original winning design and agreed to erect a Parliament building on the lines of Langlet's drawings. However, since Langlet was a young and little known architect, it was decided to hold a further round of competition before the building could begin. The Ministry of Finance asked the established Danish architect, Professor Christian Hansen (1803–1883) to draw up a proposal for the Parliament building.



Christian Hansen's reworked design for the Parliament building. From a drawing in *Illustreret Nyhedsblad* from 1860. (Photo: The National Archives)

Hansen's proposal was never a real challenge to Langlet's design, which was regarded as highly original and having no immediately recognisable models. The building emerges from so-called historicism, which borrows and mixes stylistic elements from different historical periods. Nonetheless it is difficult to identify specifically Norwegian elements in the building, although it coincides with a period of increasing interest in Norwegian history, particularly from the Viking era and the Middle Ages. Later generations have attributed Norwegian elements and values to the building, but the artistic styles that are most prominent are largely classical and European.



Map of modern Oslo showing the twelve different proposed sites for the Parliament building.

(Source: The National Archive's internet exhibition: "A Parliament building with towers and spires?")

Graphic: Graphics Department, the Storting

1. Ruseløkkbakken
2. Slottsparken (The Palace Square)
3. Klingenberg
4. Studenterlunden
5. Slottsparken (The Palace Park)
6. Tullinløkka
7. Huseiertomten (now Eidsvolls plass)
8. Carl Johans gate (current location)
9. Artilleristalltomten
10. The old University Library
11. Departementsgården
12. Akershus Fortress

THE ARCHITECT OF THE STORTING

Emil Victor Langlet (1824–1898) was a Swedish architect from an originally French family. He was educated at *Chalmerska Slöjdskolan* in Gothenburg, studied architecture at *Kungliga Konsthögskolan* in Stockholm and at *L'École des Beaux-Arts* in Paris. Towards the end of his study tour of Italy in 1853–1856, Langlet developed his winning design for the Norwegian Parliament.

Langlet also created the designs for *Studentersamfundets hus* (the Norwegian Student Association's house) in Universitetsgata (1861) and *Nissens Pigeskole* (a girls' school), both in Oslo (1860),

the Drammen Stock Exchange (1867), Drammen Theatre (1869), Fredrikstad Town Hall (1861) and a number of private residences. Langlet was influenced by Romanesque-Lombardic architecture and had a particular fascination with central-plan churches and buildings where the floor plan is symmetrically arranged around a circular or cruciform-shaped centre space. He was also interested in theatre buildings, both ancient and modern. The Parliament building bears the imprint of all three of these fields of interest that initially might not seem to work together, but which Langlet joins together in an architectonic unity. After nine years in Norway, Langlet in 1866 made his way back to Sweden.

THE ARCHITECTURAL STYLES OF THE STORTING BUILDING

Historicism – the main building from 1866

Historicism is used to describe a period in 19th century art and especially architecture that is characterised by reviving and copying the styles of previous eras, including Gothic, Renaissance and Baroque. As with the Parliament building, a number of these styles could be used at the same time, and therefore this period has at times been called, somewhat derogatorily, an "era of stylistic confusion". In Europe this period lasted from about 1820 to 1890, while in Norway it was particularly evident from about 1850 to 1900 and in church architecture through to about 1940. As a result of new technical innovations with cast iron and cement, the various historical styles could be copied, enlarged and freely combined.

Historicist buildings are not just replicas of other buildings, but often borrow characteristic elements that are assigned certain attributes: Gothic was regarded as particularly suitable for church buildings and neoclassicism for banks, schools and universities.

Functionalism – the 1959 extension

In marked contrast to historicism we find *functionalism*, which sets out to rid itself of superfluous decoration. The style is recognisable from the close link between the use of an object and its design. Within the architecture, the building's use and construction are expressed in the design. The style is characterised by large surfaces, straight lines and geometric shapes.

The exterior



The façade of the Parliament building facing out towards Eidsvoll's plass. (Photo: Vidar M. Husby/Archives of the Storting)

THE FAÇADE

The most eye-catching part of the Parliament building is the symmetrical main façade with the semicircle in the middle. Langlet wrote that he had used the two wings that extend out on each side to “resemble outstretched arms to welcome the representatives of the people, or with them the entire nation”. The large semicircle reflects its function as a meeting place for Norway’s national assembly behind the large, Romanesque, round-arched windows.

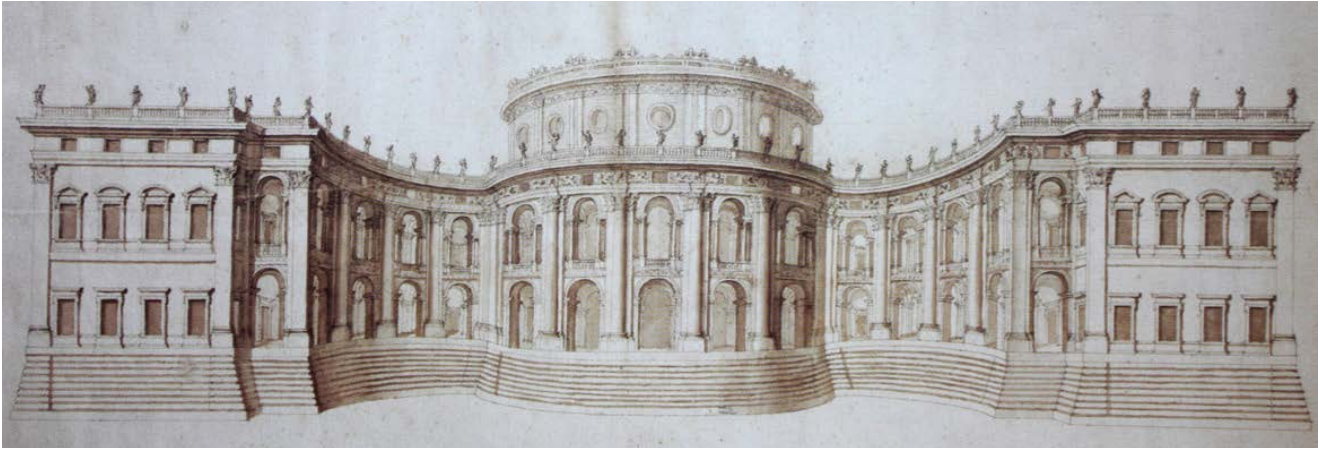
Langlet was determined that the exterior architecture should reflect what was happening inside the building. He was the first parliamentary architect to make visible the building’s function as a political meeting place by allowing the semicircular shape of the Storting Chamber to be visible from the exterior as well.

By putting together round and rectangular shapes, Langlet creates strong movement between light and shade in the body of the building. While some surfaces reflect the sun with their light yellow tiles, other surfaces create shadows and contrasts. The semicircle is, on closer inspection, not completely round, but is made up of nine broken surfaces divided into three levels. When we stand in front of the façade and look upwards, the façade rises up in nine large, Romanesque arches crowned by narrow, round windows that together make up the ground floor. If we allow our gaze to follow the façade further upwards, we see that each arch has a corresponding arch on the floor above which is divided into two smaller windows, crowned with a rosette. On the uppermost floor, which rises above the roof of the side wings, there are three smaller windows in each of the semicircle’s nine broken surfaces. In this way the arches become smaller and more refined on each floor. It was probably this tripartite division that

made contemporary critics compare the Parliament building with the Colosseum in Rome, where the three classical orders of pillars stand on top of each other and divide the façade into three levels.

If we look at the multi-angled semicircle as an isolated building element, it also suggests a link with church architecture, particularly the round baptisteries which can be seen in Florence. Langlet had studied central-plan churches in Northern Italy and borrowed elements from there. From Northern Italian church architecture, there is a huge leap to the roof of the Parliament building, where Langlet took his inspiration from a French circus tent. Langlet borrowed the construction and design from the architect Jakob Ignaz Hittorff (1792–1867) and his *Cirque d’hiver* in Paris. This is a brick building with a roof that imitates a circus tent. To complete a building inspired by a baptistery with such a surprising element as a circus tent roof is typical of historicism.

When we look at the façade of the Parliament building as a whole, it seems as though one of Langlet’s strongest influences was the design by the master of the Baroque, Giovanni Lorenzo Bernini (1598–1680), for the never realized east façade of the Louvre in Paris (1665). The Parliament building has much in common with Bernini’s composition, with a semicircle in the middle and wings that spread out on each side. It is probable that Langlet was also aware of Louis Le Vau’s (1612–1670) design for the façade of *Vaux-le-Vicomte* in France. The semicircle there, as in the Parliament building, is a dominant element that stands in contrast to the rectilinear wings at the side.



Giovanni Lorenzo Bernini's design – never built – for the east façade of the Louvre in Paris from 1665. (Photo: Erich Lessing Archives, Wien)



The Colosseum in Rome, built in A.D. 80.



Battistero di San Giovanni, octagonal baptistery in Florence built between 1059 and 1128.



Jakob Ignaz Hittorff's Cirque d'hiver in Paris from 1852. (Wikimedia Commons)



Louis Le Vau's Château de Vaux-le-Vicomte 1658–1661, Maincy, France.

THE MAIN ENTRANCE

Løvebakken – or Lion Mount– derives its name from the two lions that flank the entrance (see page 42 for more information about the lions). *The Lions Hill* outside Stockholm's Royal Palace was probably a model and an inspiration for the double ramp that binds the different building elements of the façade together and leads us up to the main entrance. Today there is just one door in the centre, which leads in to the Entrance Hall, but originally all nine arched entrances had doors and on ceremonial occasions

you could drive in from the ramp right up to the main staircase by horse and carriage. Before the 1950s, when the doors – which are now windows – in the semicircle were moved outwards to the outer edge of the façade, there was an exterior arcade where all the entrance doors were equally large and there was no central marking in the façade. A lack of accentuation of the central axis is typical of historicism.



*The protruding centre part of the façade facing out across Karl Johans gate marks the end of the cross-wings. The three doors are the public entrance to the Storting Chamber.
(Photo: Hans Kristian Thorbjørnsen)*



*The façade facing out towards Wessels plass.
(Photo: Hans Kristian Thorbjørnsen)*

THE WINGS

The wings at the sides of the building have a calm and restful appearance with their neoclassic design, and stand out from the dynamism of the curved façade. The façade facing out towards Karl Johans gate has three large doors in the centre part, which are the public entrance to the Storting Chamber. Under the three large windows is the balcony from where the President of the Storting – the Speaker of the Assembly – waves to the children's parade on 17 May, Norway's Constitution Day. Facing out towards Wessels plass, on the ground floor there is just one small gate, previously the entrance to an open central courtyard. Above the entrance there are windows similar to those in the façade on the opposite side and behind these windows is the Storting restaurant.

MATERIALS AND DECORATIVE ELEMENTS

Because the Parliament building consists of so many juxtaposed shapes, it is ultimately the use of materials that binds it together: the yellow brick with details in grey brick and light lilac stucco. The foundation wall and some of the decorative elements on the façade are in granite. What inspired Langlet above all to use yellow and grey brick was his study of church architecture in Italy. At the time it was maintained that the yellow brick was both honest architecture – because the building material could be seen – and also maintenance-free and economical. Even though yellow brick was unusual at the time, it was the actual design of the building that aroused the most wonder and also outrage.

CRITICISM AND PROBLEMS WITH SPACE

Schirmer and von Hanno's original winning design for the Storting building was criticised for its similarity to a church. The decision to select Langlet's design for the Storting was controversial, and the building immediately became the object of criticism and even ridicule. The building's architecture was so unusual and difficult to place that it may seem as though the associations had been given free reign. Critics of the time thought that the building looked like a prison, a wood-burning stove, a vaulted storehouse, a sentry box, the Colosseum in Rome, a medieval fortress, a church and a theatre.

After the Second World War space became a pressing problem. Once again there was a long debate, and a series of different solutions were proposed. The most radical of these suggested building a new Parliament building elsewhere in the city or pulling down the existing building and erecting a new one on the same site. Somewhat less radical were the suggestions to extend and alter Langlet's Parliament building. The art historian Robert Kloster said that "the Storting building has been an unappreciated structure. It is certainly a building of quality and of major architectural interest". The Prime Minister Einar Gerhardsen, on the other hand, thought that the building was "probably the most inappropriate and impractical in the world, not to say the ugliest". After a lengthy debate the parliamentary majority decided to retain the existing building, but to carry out the necessary extensions and alterations to enable the Storting to continue to perform its work here.

THE EXTENSION

There had previously been proposals to extend the Parliament building in both 1932 and 1938, but the decision to demolish the low, two-storey building on Akersgata which had housed the National Archives was taken in 1946. The building was replaced by a four-storey office and committee building, as part of a larger programme of restoration and alteration work in the period from 1951 to 1959. Nils Holter (1899–1995) won the competition for the new extension. Holter is regarded as one of the most significant Norwegian architects from the middle of the last century. The functionalist form of the extension creates tension both by standing in contrast to Langlet's building and at the same time adapting and subordinating itself to it.

The old wings and the new building are linked together by the grey-pink granite and yellow brick. The elongated hexagonal windows of the original building are also recognisable in the link, but in a simpler form and without any decorative framing. Rectangular, wooden window frames divide the façade of the extension into a grid of light granite, creating the impression of a functionalist office building. The monotony is broken by a light, almost unnoticeable, oblique angle in the façade. Functionalism as a style emphasises connection between the use of the building and its design. It is interesting to see that the idea is not completely unlike Langlet's idea, even though the building is of another time, with a simpler, more subdued expression. The biggest difference is that Holter's architecture has rid itself of the ornamentation and borrowed elements that were at the core of Langlet's architecture.

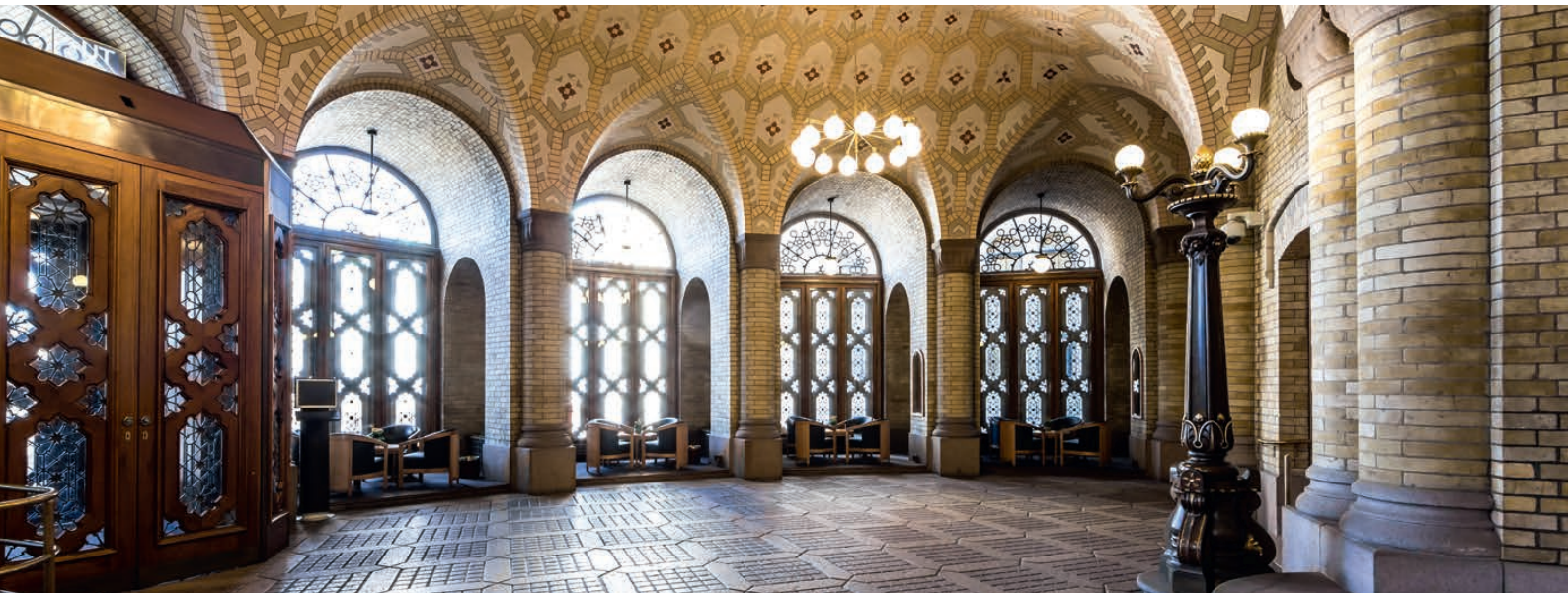


The extension facing out across Akersgata, which was completed in 1959, has a façade of light granite, highly-polished black labradorite stone and yellow brick. (Photo: Hans Kristian Thorbjørnsen)



Up until 1949 the National Archives were located in the low building facing Akersgata. This was demolished in 1951 to make room for a four-storey office and committee building. (Photo: Archives of the Storting)

The interior



The vestibule at Løvebakken copies the semicircular design of the Storting Chamber. (Photo: Hans Kristian Thorbjørnsen)

THE ENTRANCE HALL

The Entrance Hall follows the semicircle of the façade. The space provides a smooth transition between the inside and the outside, and once again we see the yellow brick from the outer wall. The demi-columns that spring out from the arches of the arcade support the ceiling. The ceiling is constructed of plastered brickwork and the decoration is a geometric pattern with simplified flower and leaf ornamentation. The floor is made of granite and is laid out in a rectangular pattern.

Before the alterations in the 1950s there was an exterior arcade that became part of the vestibule's interior when the doors – now windows – were moved out to the outside of the façade. Here there are now small sitting areas. There was also a grand T-shaped staircase that led straight up to the main floor. Today you enter from the vestibule up the two steps that remain from the original staircase and through a barrel-vaulted corridor into the Staircase Hall.



The old grand staircase was a T-shaped staircase that led straight up to the main floor. (Photo: Archives of the Storting)



Only two steps remained of the old main staircase after the alterations. (Photo: Hans Kristian Thorbjørnsen)



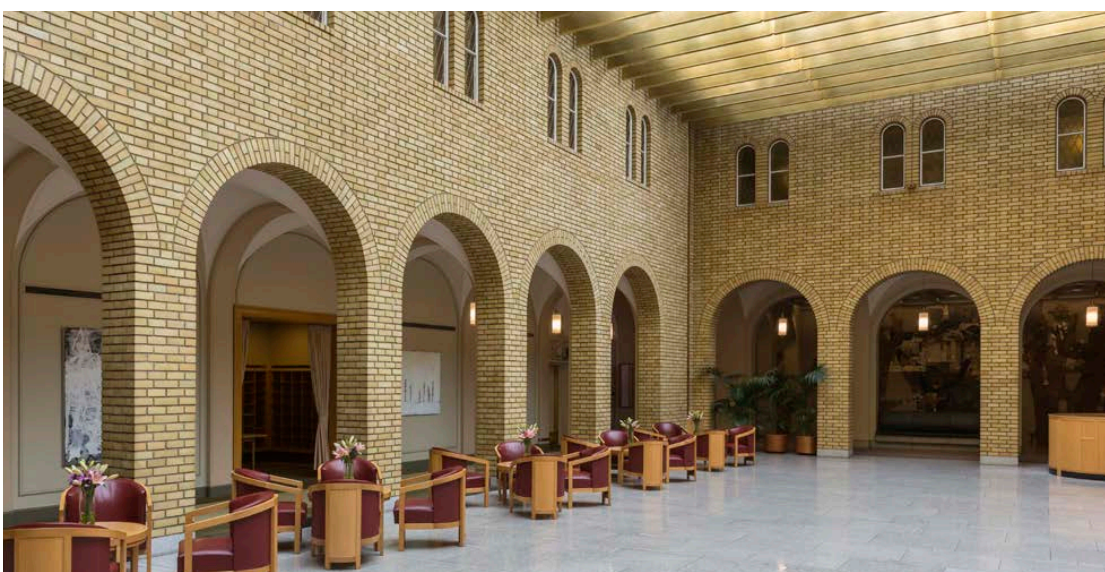
The Staircase Hall. To the right, halfway up the staircase, there is a memorial to the dead and the fallen from the First and Second World Wars, and to the Norwegians who have lost their lives in peace-keeping operations since 1945. (Photo: Hans Kristian Thorbjørnsen)

THE STAIRCASE HALL

Trappehallen – the Staircase Hall – is the result of the alterations in the period from 1951 to 1959. The room resembles a mediaeval courtyard surrounded by walls on four sides. These walls with their different arched openings resemble four different façades that look out on a courtyard. Before the alterations this room was an open courtyard. It was dominated by a large chimney as the building was previously heated by coal. Architect Holter decided to use the yellow brick in this room as well and brought in the same materials that are used in the vestibule and the façade. As in many mediaeval courtyards there is a majestic staircase that leads us up to the main floor. The new staircase lies to the right of the entrance and does not follow the symmetry of the building but creates a cross-axis. This staircase replaces the old main staircase that led directly up to the main floor.

THE CENTRAL HALL

The architectonic centre point of the Parliament building lies on the second floor of what was a former courtyard and is known today as *Vandrehallen* – the Central Hall. When the alterations were completed in 1959 it became the place for the Members and the press, complete with cameras and microphones, to meet after debates had ended in the Storting Chamber. In contrast to the Staircase Hall, this is a space where one has the feeling of being outside, as daylight streams in from the glazed roof. During the 1950s alterations, the walls with the large windows were opened on three sides, and what remains today, are pillars that support the Romanesque round arches. Consequently, the old corridors with cross-vaulting form an ambulatory on three sides of the room and resemble a mediaeval cloister. From here you enter into the older parts of the building: the Storting Chamber or the Lagting Chamber, the restaurant or the offices.



The Central Hall is the place where the Members meet journalists, with their cameras and microphones, at the end of debates in the Storting Chamber. (Photo: Hans Kristian Thorbjørnsen)



The Storting Chamber has room for the 169 Members of Parliament as well as members of the Government. (Photo: Hans Kristian Thorbjørnsen)

THE STORTING CHAMBER

Design and floor plan

The Storting Chamber is unique in its mixture of different stylistic elements. Today it seats the 169 Members of Parliament and any members of the government present. The room itself has a floor plan like a Greek theatre, where the Members sit in a semicircle built up on seven levels. An ambulatory with pillars supports the public gallery, replicates the shape of the chamber. Everyone sits facing the President of the Storting who chairs the sittings from a raised podium below Oscar Wergeland's painting *Eidsvold 1814*. From the podium you can look out across the assembly and through the large round arched windows that symbolically open the Chamber to the people outside. If you look out through the windows, there is a fine view across the square outside – *Eidsvollsplass* – and up to the Royal Palace.

Parliament buildings – designed to house elected assemblies and facilitate their debates – emerged as a new type of architecture in late 18th and 19th century Europe. In England there had been a long tradition of rectangular assembly chambers – a design that goes back to the Roman senate building *Curia Julia* at Forum Romanum. However, it was in Paris that the new design for Parliament buildings emerged. Assembly chambers with a semi-circular design were adopted after the French Revolution in 1789. They took their design from the theatres of antiquity and created a pattern for many parliaments in Europe.

Construction, style and colour

The overall design and floor plan of the Chamber are of the French, continental type, but the interior decoration is inspired by the Gothic, the Swiss Chalet Style and by the modern glass halls of the 1800s with pillars and girders in iron and steel. In these



The Storting Chamber photographed some time before 1875. (Oslo Museum/unknown photograph)

types of architecture the different building elements are visible. The effect of the bare architecture is not only decorative, but also reveals how the wooden construction buttressing the roof. The pillars that support the public gallery and the roof, are composed of a bundle of smaller, linked elements, known as bundle pillars.

The ceiling can also be seen as a variation of a Roman Velarium – an awning – that unfolds like a fan above the assembly. In antiquity an awning was drawn across the amphitheatre to protect the public from the burning sun. The decorative elements in the roof are based on such an awning, and the ribs of the fans divide the ceiling into white areas. The white areas are painted with rows of oak leaves. At the outer edge of the ceiling, the light, decorative patterns on a red background are reminiscent of the Norwegian “dragon style”. There is a slight rise in the ceiling where the chandelier hangs. Langlet had in fact intended there to



Interior from Borgund stave church. (Photo: Jiri Havran)

be a bigger rise, making the ceiling look like a tent. So it was not just on the outside that the roof was inspired by a circus tent. Due to the risk of fire, this "tent" did not achieve the intended design, and the six-sided area thus became just a small rise. Along with other gas lights, the huge chandelier that hangs down from this area was converted to electric light in 1917.

The visibility of the structural elements in the Chamber is modelled on the European Gothic style. Historicism in Norway took much of its inspiration from the wooden architecture of the stave churches, which were regarded as a unique Norwegian expression of European Gothic. Wooden architecture accordingly dominates the interior of the Chamber. Details are highlighted using gold leaf. Another recognisable element from stave church architecture is the St Andrew's Cross. The cross creates stays and handrails between the pillars in the public gallery. The location of the gallery on a floor above and opening out towards the Storting Chamber may bring to mind galleries in churches, while the ambulatory below the public gallery may be thought to resemble the ambulatory around the altar in a church.

During the alterations in the 1950s, the Storting Chamber was extended by moving the wall with the four recesses behind the podium four metres (the width of the old staircase) inwards towards the Central Hall. This was done to make room for more Members, whose number had been steadily increasing over the years. The extension was done by copying as closely as possible the original architecture, materials, ornamentation, colours and fittings. Hence the extension is scarcely noticeable. The walls were originally painted in a pale, almost white colour with red and yellow stripes. The Storting Chamber was redecorated for the



The Royal Throne with the thrones of the Queen and Crown Prince. They are used at the State Opening of the Storting every autumn. (Photo: Archives of the Storting)

centenary of the Norwegian Constitution in 1914. It was painted dark red and detailing was emphasised using gold leaf. The red and gold give the Chamber a royal character, and this works well on the one day each year when the Chamber is converted into a throne room.

The Storting Chamber as a throne room

For the State Opening of the Storting at the beginning of October each year, the Storting Chamber is converted into a throne room. The podium and the rostrum are temporarily removed, and a Royal Throne with a velvet canopy is installed for the arrival of King. The King reads the Speech from the Throne on the state of the nation, which is the Government's programme for the coming year.

The King traditionally presides at the State Opening of the Storting, but it is unclear how long the throne chairs have been in use. The Royal Throne and the chairs of the Queen and the Crown Prince are so different in style that they can hardly be from the same period. One theory is that the Royal Throne was made for the throne room in the Royal Palace in Oslo, while another maintains that it was made for the coronation of Oscar I at Nidaros Cathedral in Trondheim – an event that never actually took place.



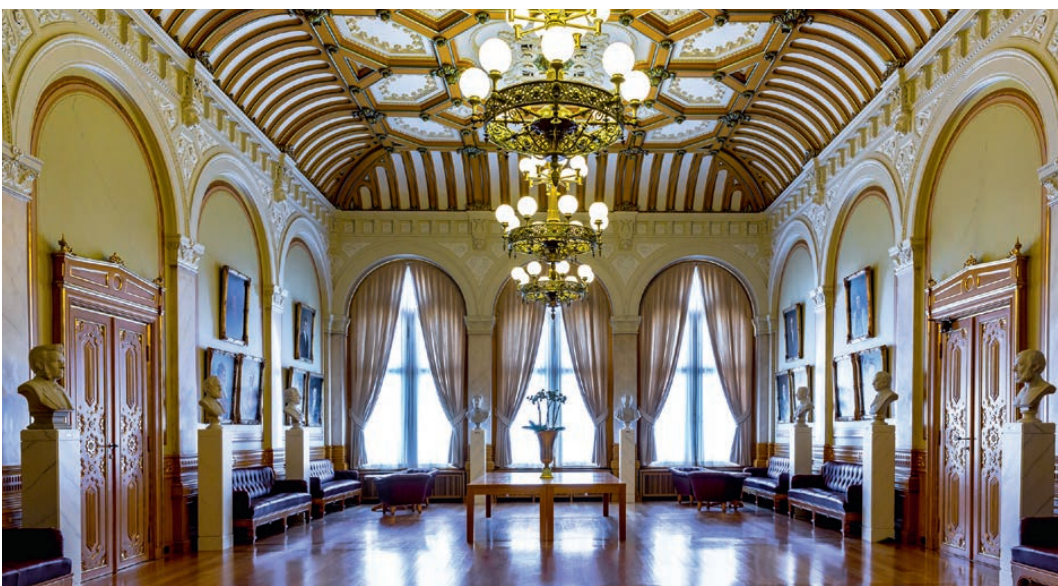
The Lagting Chamber as it looked when it was in use with the President's chair beneath the anopy. (Photo: Vidar M. Husby/Archives of the Storting)

THE LAGTING CHAMBER

The Storting has always been unicameral, until 2009 it would divide itself into two departments – the Odelsting and the Lagting – in legislative matters. The Odelsting would meet in the Storting Chamber and the Lagting in the Lagting Chamber. The floor plan here is the same as in the Storting Chamber but there is no public gallery that follows the semi-circular outline of the Chamber. Instead, the seats for the public and the two galleries are integrated into the wall behind the podium. Above the podium is a canopy, but the President of the Lagting's chair, which used to stand beneath it, has been removed now that the Chamber is used for other official events. The architectural elements in this Chamber are much simpler than in the Storting Chamber. The green colour is original. On the outside the Lagting's semicircle is smaller but otherwise identical to the semicircle in the main façade.

THE EIDSVOLL GALLERY

The Eidsvoll Gallery derives its name from the portraits of the founding fathers from Eidsvoll – the so-called Eidsvoll Men (see pages 28 and 29) – that were commissioned for the centenary of the Norwegian Constitution in 1914. This used to be a combined working, reading and smoking room, but is today mostly used for public receptions. The interior is one of the most richly-decorated in the Parliament building, and the room has a number of elements that are inspired by the architecture of antiquity. The walls are divided into round arched areas, which create a cohesive arcade around the entire room. The round arches rest on stucco marble pilasters that stand on marked bases in the parapet. The room gets its character from the intricate coffer ceiling with plant motifs surrounded by a powerful geometric framework. Where large paintings hang today, there were previously mirrors that reflected light from the gas lamps and made the room seem larger.



The Eidsvoll Gallery used to be the informal meeting place until the Central Hall was built. (Photo: Hans Kristian Thorbjørnsen)



The Historical Hall resembles a crypt and is used today for various exhibitions. (Photo: Hans Kristian Thorbjørnsen)

THE HISTORICAL HALL

The Historical Hall lies below the Lagting Chamber and consequently has the same semicircular floor plan. This room originally had whitewashed walls, but during the alterations in the 1950s the whitewash was removed by sandblasting. It was then that the vaulted construction's red bricks with details in yellow and column capitals in granite came to light. The Historical Hall had originally been a mezzanine floor used by the National Archives. The huge, powerful columns run through the floor parquet and down into

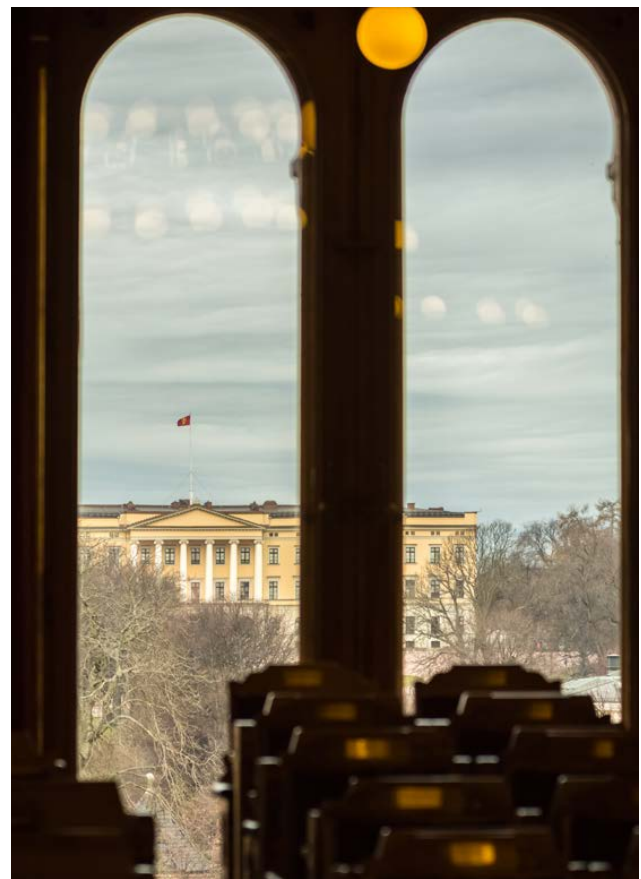
the ground floor below. These columns, which create a central space with an ambulatory, together with the vaulted roof, give the room a crypt-like atmosphere. In this way the interior becomes a natural continuation of the semicircle's outer similarity with a baptistery. Once again we can clearly see an expression of Langlet's interest in church architecture. What break the associations with a subterranean crypt are the windows which let in the daylight. Today the room is used to display the Storting's history and temporary exhibitions.

*The people's palace and the
King's palace rise
above each other!*

*As free as neighbours the two
stand, looking each other in
the eye.*

Henrik Ibsen: *Storthings-gården*, prologue to the formal performance at Kristiania Norske Theater on 10 October 1861 as part of the celebration of the laying of the foundation stone for the Parliament building.

The Royal Palace seen from the President's chair in the Storting Chamber. (Photo: Hans Kristian Thorbjørnsen)



THE WORKS OF ART



The Storting has a collection of significant works of art, which – together with the monumental architecture – is intended to demonstrate the importance of the institution. Members and visitors alike are constantly reminded of its vital role in Norway's history and of the people who helped create the political system that Norway has today. At the same time, some works of art also serve to draw the viewer's gaze beyond the capital city and out towards the distinctive landscapes of Norway.



Oscar Wergeland (1844–1910): "Eidsvold 1814" hangs behind the podium in the Storting Chamber. At a sitting of the Storting on 20 May 1885, the President of the Storting announced that the painting had been "hung above the President's chair because the donor wanted to have it in place and ideally before 17 May." (Photo: Hans Kristian Thorbjørnsen)

The Storting's art collection is the result of gifts from both private individuals and institutions, loans from the National Gallery (today the National Museum), commissions – often in connection with anniversaries and renovations – and a number of purchases. Today the collection contains just less than 800 paintings, lithographs, sculptures, handicrafts and installations.

During the first 50 years in its own building, the Storting did not think it necessary to purchase any works of art. The collection was initially formed by bequests of portrait paintings and busts. Individuals, organisations or party groups thus wanted to honour outstanding politicians and ensure that future generations would remember them. These bequests were not primarily thought of as works of art, and the artistic quality varies somewhat. It was only in 1914 that the Storting took the initiative to purchase works of art. The 1914 centenary of the Norwegian Constitution was marked by honouring the most significant of the 112 Members of

the Constituent Assembly at Eidsvoll with portraits in what is now known as the Eidsvoll Gallery.

The second major purchase of works of art coincided with the renovation of the Storting building in the 1950s. A competition was held for three monumental works of art to decorate the new parts of the building: the Staircase Hall and the Central Hall.

It would take another 30 years before the Storting agreed on a permanent arrangement for overseeing its art collection. In 1990 the Committee on Works of Art of the Storting met for the first time. The Storting decided then that its art collection should not aspire to be a representative cross-section of Norwegian art history – that is the responsibility of museums – but rather consist of selected works of Norwegian art of high quality. 550 of the collection's approximately 800 works of art have been acquired since 1990.

The history paintings – face to face with history

The best-known paintings in the Storting building are linked to important events in the history of Norway: from the Constituent Assembly at Eidsvoll in 1814 via the dissolution of the Union with Sweden in 1905 to King Harald's taking the oath before the Storting in 1991. Seen together, these pictures tell the story of how democracy developed in Norway. At the same time, they also remind Members of the Storting of their historical responsibility.

Even though the works of art show little evidence of being part of a systematic collection, many have a political and representative significance that links them closely to the history of the Storting. When the Storting acquired its first work of art in the middle of the 1800s, there existed a clear hierarchy at the art academies. The history paintings ranked highest in terms of significance and prestige, followed by portrait paintings and landscape paintings.

The history painting presents mythological, biblical and historical events, often portrayed through dramatic scenes. History paintings were traditionally regarded as the highest form of Western painting, and their privileged position was due in particular to the high demands that were placed on the artist, who had to interpret the mainly written sources and transform these into an image that captivated the viewer's mind and senses.

Today history paintings have lost much of their significance, but the three categories of history paintings, portraits and landscapes are still useful when we consider the works of art in the Storting building.

We will look at the history paintings chronologically based on the events that are depicted, rather than when the pictures were painted, even though the time of their creation is often just as important.



Oscar Wergeland: "Eidsvold 1814", detail showing Christian Magnus Falsen reading out the proposal for what was to become the final article of the Constitution. (Photo: Terje Heiestad/Archives of the Storting)



Oscar Wergeland: *"Eidsvold 1814"*, 1884–85, oil on canvas, 285 x 400 cm. At the bottom left of the painting are the words "Commissioned by army doctor L. Ring painted by Osc. Wergeland 1885". (Photo: Teigens Fotoatelier/Archives of the Storting)

"EIDSVOLD 1814"

Norway's most famous history painting had, in its day, a very specific political significance, which was, however, quickly forgotten. Placed centrally in the Storting Chamber, the picture showing the men who wrote the Norwegian Constitution in 1814 is now a national and historic symbol.

In the middle of the painting stands "the Father of the Constitution", Christian Magnus Falsen (1782–1830), who is reading out a proposal for what was to become the final article of the Constitution. Some 70 of the 112 Members of the Constituent Assembly are present. They are shown true to life in different postures. The majority of them are listening to Falsen, but there is one clear exception: Wilhelm Frimann Koren Christie (1778–1849), the man in the red jacket to his right who is known as "the Defender of the Constitution". The Constituent Assembly's permanent secretary is the only one looking directly at the viewer. The two main characters are in the very foreground at the edge of the frame. The angled perspective leads the eye towards the Members, who are sitting on rows of wooden benches at either side of the chamber. In the background, the large window draws the gaze out towards a spring landscape bathed in sunshine. The sparsely furnished chamber is decorated with garlands of spruce twigs, and on the wall to the right is the portrait of the King of the Danish-Norwegian Union, Christian IV (1577–1648).

Oscar Wergeland was a history painter who trained at the art academies in Copenhagen and Munich. Wergeland's aim was to

render the historic event at Eidsvoll as realistically as possible. However, 70 years after the actual event took place, he had few visual reference points. Wergeland spent considerable time searching for sources in order to accurately depict the personalities, interior, clothing and details. The painting, which can also be seen as a reconstructed group portrait, is carefully staged and tightly composed, but the painter has nonetheless taken a few liberties. More recent research has shown that the chamber looked rather different. The painting was Wergeland's masterpiece, but the interpretation of its political message has changed over time.

In 1882, when Wergeland first sketched the painting, Norway was due to hold parliamentary elections. A contentious topic in these elections was the question of access for Government Ministers (at that time appointed personally by the King) to the Storting and a possible amendment to the Constitution. The painting *Eidsvold 1814* depicts a specific day in 1814, namely 11 May, the day when the Members debated and adopted the final article of the Constitution. According to this final article, the Constitution may only be amended by a two-thirds majority. Consequently the painting may be interpreted as contributing to the argument against amending the Constitution and in favour of preserving the power of the King and the Ministers appointed by him.

In the first sketch of the painting from 1882, the curtains are drawn, but in the final version the curtains have been pulled aside. The window is also open, letting in light and fresh air. Figuratively speaking, the Assembly has opened itself up to the world and is letting in new notions about the sovereignty of the



Oscar Wergeland: "Eidsvoll 1814. Sketch", 1882, oil on canvas, 41.5 x 60 cm. In the first draft of the painting, the permanent secretary to the Constituent Assembly, W.F.K. Christie has not yet taken his place on the podium. (Photo: Jacques Lathion/The National Museum)

people, separation of powers and civil rights that were known from the American and French constitutions, amongst others. A fresh wind is blowing across Norway, and new freedoms are being enshrined in the Constitution. Through the window we can also see a farmer ploughing his field, as any farmer could have been doing at Eidsvoll in May 1814. However, in a painting that took three years to complete, no element appears to be random. Like the farmer, the Members of the Constituent Assembly are breaking new ground and sowing the seeds of the new democratic system, the defence of which is the main message of this painting.

The painting was commissioned by Lorentz Ring (1832–1904) and bequeathed to the Storting. Ring was an army doctor, landowner and businessman. He sympathised with the political right, who at that time opposed a stronger parliamentary system. When the painting was placed in the centre of the Storting Chamber in 1885, behind the podium, it had already lost its original political significance, as Government ministers had been meeting in the Storting since 1884. Given that the contemporary political message was no longer relevant, the significance of the scene came to lie in the long-term consequences of Norway obtaining its own constitution. The painting is the oldest depiction we have from this historic event and is composed in such a way that two assemblies meet: The Constituent Assembly at Eidsvoll and the Storting currently in session. Hence every meeting in the Storting Chamber is also a meeting where Christie's watchful gaze reminds today's Members of their obligations to promote and protect the democratic values of the 1814 Constitution.



Eidsvoll House. The hall where the Constituent Assembly had their meetings, restored to the Constitution Bicentenary in 2014. (Photo: Trond Isaksen/Statsbygg)



CHRISTIAN FREDERIK

This portrait shows Prince Christian Frederik (1786–1848) of Denmark-Norway at the time of his appointment as Vice-Regent of Norway. The original version of this portrait was painted by Friedrich Carl Gröger in 1814, and the Storting's copy is very close to the original. The Prince is depicted as a handsome young man in his late twenties with fashionable locks of hair across his forehead, a black neckband and a grey, single-buttoned uniform with a green collar. The uniform belonged to the Akershus Sharpshooters, a regiment of which Christian Frederik was commander. The Prince's uniform bears the epaulettes of a General, and on his chest are the silver cross of the Order of the Dannebrog and the star of the Order of the Elephant.

Christian Frederik was the heir apparent to the Danish-Norwegian throne when he was appointed Vice-Regent of Norway. When the Treaty of Kiel required the King of Denmark to relinquish Norway to the King of Sweden at the end of January 1814, the prince formed a plan to ascend the Norwegian throne himself. A meeting of Norwegian notables at Eidsvoll on 16 February 1814 gave no support to this plan, however, and Christian Frederik was persuaded to summon a Constituent Assembly. On 17 May Christian Frederik was unanimously elected king of the self-declared state of Norway. The *Folketing* – the Danish Parliament – gave this portrait to the Storting on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the Constitution in 1964.

Daniel Hvidt (1889–1975): *“Christian Fredrik”, 1964, oil on canvas, 62.5 x 51.5 cm. Copy of Friedrich Carl Gröger’s (1766–1838) original from 1814. (Photo: Teigens Fotoatelier /Archives of the Storting)*



Christopher Rådlund (1970–): *“Eidsvoll 19 May 1814”, 2001, oil on canvas, 108 x 155 cm. Copy of Peder Balke’s (1804–1887) original from the 1830s. (Photo: Hans Kristian Thorbjørnsen)*

Mathias Stoltenberg (1799–1871):
"From a sitting in the old Storting Chamber in Christiania Cathedral School", 1830s, oil on canvas, 59 x 69.5 cm. (Photo: Jacques Lathion/ The National Museum)



“EIDSVOLL 19 MAY 1814”

19 May was the day when Christian Frederik accepted the crown and took the oath as King of Norway. Jacob Aall, a prominent Member of the Constituent Assembly, describes what happened: “Following him [King Christian Frederik], the Storting and all those present swore the Oath of Allegiance to the Constitution and the King - a scene that was both solemn and moving. The Norwegian flag [The Danish flag Dannebrog with the Norwegian lion in the top quadrant nearest the flagpole] flew outside the window of the Chamber and three 27-gun salutes rattled across the mountains”. The moment of this salute is depicted in the painting, even though it becomes slightly lost in the larger landscape. All this took place in front of the Eidsvoll Manor, Carsten Anker’s home and the main building of the Eidsvoll Ironworks. The Akershus Light Cavalry and an infantry battalion are also shown. Since it was Ascension Day, the Assembly Members then went on to a service in Eidsvoll church. 39 days had passed since the Members had met at the opening service on Easter Day, 10 April.

Peder Balke was a Romantic artist who painted dramatic and large-scale compositions. The small figures in the foreground lead the viewer into the painting, while the historic event is surrounded by mighty nature in the form of towering trees.

The Constitution marked a break with absolutism and 400 years of Danish rule over Norway, heralding the beginning of parliamentary democracy in Norway. 20 years after the signing of the Constitution, Balke painted this picture in 1834. The painting was first exhibited in the Oslo Exchange, where it still hangs today. In 2001 the Storting commissioned the Swedish-Norwegian artist Christopher Rådlund (1970–) to paint an exact replica of Balke’s painting.

“FROM A SITTING IN THE OLD STORTING CHAMBER IN CHRISTIANIA CATHEDRAL SCHOOL”

This painting depicts a sitting in Christiania Cathedral School’s auditorium, where the Storting met in the years between 1814 and 1854. As mentioned earlier, the Storting building was not completed until 1866. Through the door in the background we can glimpse the adjoining library chamber where the Lagting met. (The Storting has always been unicameral, until 2009 it would divide itself into two departments – the Odelsting and the Lagting – in legislative matters.) These two rooms were rebuilt at the *Norsk Folkemuseum* – Norwegian Museum of Cultural History – in Oslo after the Cathedral School’s building was pulled down in 1914.

Mathias Stoltenberg is best known for his portraits and landscape paintings. In this painting, Stoltenberg depicts the old Storting Chamber’s architecture and the Storting at work. It is not known whether the painting shows a specific sitting, and the people in the painting have not been identified. The President is sitting on the podium in front of the assembly, and there are members of the audience in the gallery. It is possible that the painting shows the assembly voting, as we can see a row of Members walking to and from the podium, where the votes are cast. Members sat in alphabetical order by name according to the towns or counties from where they had been elected. This was a system that was established at the Constituent Assembly in Eidsvoll. Up to this day Members are seated in the Storting Chamber by county, and not by party. Little is known about the circumstances of this picture, including whether it was painted on commission. The former Minister of Culture, Lars Roar Langslet, donated the picture to the National Gallery in 1993. Today it is on permanent loan to the Storting.

“PRESIDENT OF THE STORTING CARL BERNER READING THE 7 JUNE DECLARATION”

At first glance, this painting, which hangs side by side with the portrait of Johan Sverdrup in the Eidsvoll Gallery, looks like a conventional portrait of Carl Berner (1841–1918), the President of the Storting. However, it captures the historic moment when the President read the declaration that dissolved the 91-year long Union with Sweden. The event took place on 7 June at 10.35 in the morning with all 117 Members present in the Storting Chamber. The sitting lasted just 25 minutes, and only Prime Minister Christian Michelsen and the President of the Storting spoke. Berner is shown standing at the podium with the manuscript of the 7 June Declaration in his hand. The artist Christian Krogh has composed the painting in such a way that the figure of Berner is an echo of Christian Magnus Falsen, who can be seen standing behind him in Wergeland's painting from Eidsvoll. Both men are holding historical documents in their hands. Berner is marked by the solemnity of the occasion and shows no outward sign of joy over the fact that Norway has become an independent nation.

The painting was a commission and was given to the Storting in 1906 following a private collection led by the Liberal Sofus Arctander, the artist Frits Thaulow and the editor of *Verdens Gang* newspaper, Ola Thommessen.



Christian Krogh (1852–1925): “President of the Storting Carl Berner reading the 7 June Declaration”, 1906, oil on canvas, 273.5 x 174 cm. (Photo: Teigens Fotoatelier/Archives of the Storting)

“KING HAAKON TAKING THE OATH BEFORE THE STORTING”

In 1905 there were many Members of the Storting who were in favour of Norway becoming a republic, but when the Union with Sweden was dissolved, Norway established itself as a monarchy. Among the princely candidates to become King of Norway, the Storting finally chose Prince Carl of Denmark (1872–1957). He was a particularly attractive candidate for two reasons: He had a young son who would guarantee succession, and he was married to the daughter of King Edward VII of the United Kingdom, Princess Maud (1869–1938). In this way Norway secured the support of the United Kingdom. The pair and their son Crown Prince Olav came to Norway on 25 November 1905. The following day they went to church, and on Monday 27 November the new King took the oath before the Storting.

In Harald Dal's painting from 1967 the King – who had assumed the name Haakon VII – is standing by the throne in the Storting Chamber. The King is shown at the moment when, with his right hand raised, he is promising “to govern the Kingdom of Norway according to its Constitution and laws, so help me God and His holy word.” Queen Maud, like all the ladies of the Court, is dressed in white. In the foreground are the Members of the Storting. Behind the Royal Throne, and acting almost as an extension of the Storting Chamber, the painting *Eidsvold 1814* is visible.

The composition of the painting is very similar to a black and white photograph by Anders Beer Wilse. 50 years after the event, the painter Harald Dal had to use photographs and descriptions from those who had been present. In 1905, *Aftenposten* newspaper wrote: “Such a wealth of magnificent colours has never before been seen at any ceremony in the Storting.”

Dal was not only intent on providing a historically correct rendition of events, however. He also wanted to give the historic moment a modern expression. Through his characteristic crystalline style he builds up the composition through a series of narrow, flat planes that cut through each other at different angles. In this system the colour planes meet and break like light through a prism. Dal was given the commission to paint this important event in 1955. The painting was given by the Storting to King Haakon to mark his Golden Jubilee as King of Norway. The version that hangs in the Central Hall is a later variant, which the Storting purchased from the artist's widow in 1975.



King Haakon VII taking the oath in the Storting Chamber 27 November 1905. (Photo: Anders Beer Wilse/Oslo Museum)



Harald Dal (1902–1972): *“King Haakon taking the oath before the Storting”*, 1961–67, oil on canvas, 130 x 185 cm. (Photo: Hans Kristian Thorbjørnsen/BONO 2014)

“KING HARALD V TAKING THE OATH”

King Harald (1937–) succeeded his father as King of Norway in 1991. Four days after ascending the throne, the King came to the Storting. The painting by Anne Vistven shows the procession that took place on 21 January, with the royal couple led by the Lord Chamberlain. To the back left, some of those present in the Storting Chamber can be glimpsed and to the right we can see the two most important figures from Wergeland’s painting *Eidsvold 1814*. It is not clear whether the royal couple are entering the Storting Chamber or on their way out again after the King taking the oath. What is clear is that Vistven depicts King Harald on the threshold of his reign. The King, followed closely by Queen Sonja, who is dressed in black as this was a period of Court mourning, is on his way into a new era and a new role. The transition between the two chambers, at Eidsvoll – where the Constitution was adopted – and in the Storting building, is erased in the painting, and two important historical events are linked to each other by drawing together the present and the past.

Vistven adopts a simplified, figurative, artistic style. The painting is composed using big lines that lie beneath the arrangement of the composition and bring the different elements in the painting together. The lion rampant – a national emblem – has stepped down from the royal coat of arms and become a lioness. Like the Queen, she is accompanying the King on his path and in his duties. The painting has a parallel in the Storting’s gift to the royal couple to celebrate their 75th birthdays in 2012. Two versions were painted, one which hangs in the Royal Palace and this one, which the Storting purchased from the artist and which now hangs in the Central Hall.



Anne Vistven (1974–): *“King Harald V taking the oath”*, 2012, oil on canvas, 210 x 150 cm. (Photo: Halvard Haugerud)

The portrait collection – face to face with history

Portraits make up a large part of the Storting's art collection. Paintings and busts ensure that politicians who left their mark on contemporary events – and some kings – will be remembered and honoured also in the future. Many years later, however, it can be easier for us to recognise the artist who created the image than the politician who is portrayed.



Agnes Hiorth (1899–1984): "King Haakon VII", 1972, oil on canvas, 103 x 90 cm. (Photo: Archives of the Storting)

KING HAAKON VII

King Haakon VII (1872–1957) – the first King of Norway after the dissolution of the Union with Sweden in 1905 – is dressed in an admiral's uniform and we can see the contours of his sword down to the right. The King is depicted sitting face on, in a relaxed pose. The portrait is typical of Agnes Hiorth's style, which is characterised by a sketch-like interplay between the figurative and the abstract. Hiorth has strongly emphasised the pure artistic qualities – oil paint, colours and brush strokes – as the main elements in the portrait. This creates a form of impressionism. The colours in the background are largely confined to the Norwegian national colours of red, white and blue as readable symbols in a royal portrait.

The portrait, which was commissioned by the Storting to mark the centenary of the birth of King Haakon VII, was unveiled in the Staircase Hall on 3 August 1972. The portrait in the Storting is a smaller and reworked version of the one that Hiorth painted for Oslo City Hall twenty years earlier. Apart from the background colours and the likeness with the monarch himself, there are no elements in the picture that tell us that we stand before a portrait of a king. The absence of outward pomp and traditional royal symbols in the painting match the low-key simplicity of the Norwegian post-war monarchy, but also direct our attention to the ageing King's face as an expression of the personality behind his role as head of state. At the same time, this downplayed and almost intimate portrait stands in stark contrast to the more traditional royal portrait of his son.

KING OLAV V

The portrait of King Olav V (1903–1991) is a conventional depiction of a king in all his majesty. The picture is full of traditional royal attributes: The King is shown in a general's uniform with sword, the collar and star of the Grand Cross of the Order of St. Olav and a number of medals. As a clear symbol of majesty, he is standing in front of a gilded throne. Unlike the portrait of King Haakon, this is painted with greater emphasis on an exact portrayal of reality and shows the king in his official role. The artist Jan Thomas Njerve says that he tried to paint a portrait of his model that was as true to life as was humanly possible.

The portrait of King Olav was commissioned by the Storting to mark the monarch's 80th birthday in 1983. It shows him during the State Opening of the Storting, which takes place each year in early October, the day after the Storting has constituted itself.



Jan Thomas Njerve (1927–): "King Olav V", 1983, oil on canvas, 115 x 93 cm. (Photo: Archives of the Storting)

KING HARALD V

Norway's present King Harald V (1937–) is depicted as a general wearing the army's black dress uniform. He is wearing the Grand Cross of the Order of St. Olav, the dark blue sash of the Grand Cross of the Royal Norwegian Order of Merit and a number of medals. The King is also wearing a sword and white gloves, and is holding his uniform cap under his arm, as is the practice when indoors, King Harald's uniform corresponds to that of his father's in the portrait that hangs next to this one.

The portrait does not capture a specific moment, but portrays a dignified monarch in a highly realistic style of painting. The King's gaze does not meet that of the viewer. The portrait shows a wise and dynamic head of state who is looking out into the distance – or perhaps turning his thoughts inwards. The painting owes a debt to traditional portraits of kings and emperors. By painting the King at an angle ever so slightly from below, the subject is elevated even further.

This painting completes the series in the Staircase Hall of the three Kings who have ruled since the dissolution of the Union with Sweden in 1905. The artist Tore Juell was selected by the Storting's Presidium to paint the King's portrait after various artists had been assessed. One of the artists proposed by the Storting's Art Committee was Håkon Gullvåg, who has a more personal and less realist style. In the end the choice fell on a portrait with a precisely drawn realism that looks more like the Storting's portrait of the King's father than of his grandfather. The portrait of King Harald was unveiled on 7 June 2000, 95 years to the day after the dissolution of the Union with Sweden.



Tore Juell (1942–): "King Harald V", 2000, oil on canvas, 120 x 88 cm. (Photo: Odd Harald Kvammen/Archives of the Storting/BONO 2014)



Top: Henrik Sørensen: *Jonas Rein*
 Left: Anders Svarstad: *Georg Sverdrup*
 Right: Oluf Wold-Torne: *Valentin Sibbern*



T: Eyolf Soot: *Even Thorsen*
 L: Edvard Diriks: *Christian Adolph Diriks*
 R: Olav Rusti: *Wilhelm Frimann Koren Christie*



T: Hans Heyerdahl: *Nicolai Wergeland*
 L: Mimmi Falsen: *Christian Magnus Falsen*
 R: Harriet Backer: *Peder Anker*



Henrik Sørensen (1882–1962): “Jonas Rein”, 1914, oil on canvas, 91 x 71 cm. (Photo: Hans Kristian Thorbjørnsen)

THE EIDSVOLL GALLERY

Until the centenary of the Constitution in 1914, all the works of art in the Storting had been gifts. The Storting itself did not take the initiative to purchase works of art. As part of the centenary celebration of the Constitution, the Storting commissioned works of art for the first time. It was the Office of the President of the Storting – the forerunner to the current Presidium – that proposed to allocate resources for what would finally be 18 portraits of “the most prominent members of the Norwegian Constituent Assembly at Eidsvoll”, and – following a proposal by the Constitution Committee – “a couple of farmers’ representatives.”

The Office of the President set up a committee to select the artists for the commission. The committee consisted of the artists Eilif Peterssen and Christian Krogh and the architect Carl Berner. The artists had to be on display at the National Gallery in order to be able to take part. An exception was made for Mimmi Falsen, who was allowed to contribute a portrait of her grandfather, Christian Magnus Falsen. Since the task was to portray men who had died long ago, the artists made use of paintings from the time of the *Eidsvoll Men* – the Members of the 1814 Constituent Assembly – and in some cases more recent photographs.

The artists solved this historically important task in two different ways: Some painted more or less exact replicas of earlier paintings. Others used as the point of departure older depictions and created portraits with a more modern expression. The first category resulted in slightly drier renditions of better portraits, while the latter category produced paintings that were instantly



T: Christian Krohg: *Jacob Aall*
 L: Halfdan Strøm: *Herman Wedel Jarlsberg*
 R: Eilif Peterssen: *Peter Motzfeldt*



T: Hans Ødegaard: *Tollef Olsen Huvestad*
 L: Christian Krohg: *Lauritz Weidemann*
 R: Fredrik Kolstø: *John Hansen Sørbrøden*



T: Otto Valstad: *Teis Lundegaard*
 L: Arne Kavli: *Diderik Hegermann*
 R: Ludvig Karsten: *Jens Schow Fabricius*
 (Photo: Hans Kristian Thorbjørnsen)

greeted with strong criticism both in the Storting and in the press for their mixture of historical models and modern form. Jappe Nilssen wrote in *Dagbladet* newspaper: "It is clear to see that the task has not proved to be particularly inspiring amongst the different artists and the result is, with a couple of exceptions, truly pitiable." Henrik Sørensen's painting of Jonas Rein was one of the exceptions, and Nilssen thought that it was "interesting". *Tidens Tegn* newspaper went as far as to call the portrait "superb".

Opinions were divided in the Storting about the results, and during a debate on 9 June 1914 Wollert Konow from Hedmark commented that Jonas Rein looked more like "an exhumed corpse". Johan Ludvig Mowinckel did not agree and thought that they were looking at an inspired work of art, not just a portrait. Konow was not satisfied with Ludvig Karsten's portrait of Jens Schow Fabricius either. Konow maintained that the artist had made Fabricius "who had not a single enemy in the world" look like "a drunken old fighter or pirate." It also took time before the family of Fabricius agreed to allow the picture to be displayed, and only after the artist had undertaken the "necessary corrections" to the portrait. The painting of Admiral Fabricius was also much debated in the press and received harsh treatment. "One cannot blame the Fabricius family for refusing Karsten's picture", wrote the critic in the Danish newspaper *Socialdemokraten*. In 1917 the three final paintings – of Diriks, Huvstad and Weidemann – were added to the gallery, and with the 18 portraits the room has aptly changed its name to the Eidsvoll Gallery.



Ludvig Karsten (1876–1926): "*Jens Schow Fabricius*", oil on canvas, 91 x 71 cm. (Photo: Hans Kristian Thorbjørnsen)



Christian Horneman (1765–1844): “Georg Sverdrup”, 1813, pastel, 54 x 47 cm. (Photo: Archives of the Storting)

GEORG SVERDRUP

Georg Sverdrup (1770–1850) is portrayed by the Danish artist Christian Hornemann. The portrait is the oldest work of art in the Storting’s collection. It is also the only contemporary portrait of a Member of the Constituent Assembly in the art collection of the Storting. In line with the Romantic ideals for portraiture, Sverdrup is depicted with a gaze that does not just look away from the viewer and towards the distance, but also turns inwards. He is wearing the fashion of the day, and his face is fringed by thick, curly hair and sideburns. The use of pastels as a medium gives a gentle gleam of light over the face and texture to the clothing.

Sverdrup played a central role in the foundation of the first Norwegian university, and he became professor of Greek, Latin and Philosophy when it was founded in Christiania (now Oslo) in 1811. Sverdrup took part in the Meeting of Notables at Eidsvoll on 16 February 1814. This meeting advised Prince Christian Frederik to arrange the election of a constituent assembly in order to decide the form of government. Sverdrup has since been given much of the credit for having persuaded Christian Frederik to give up the thought of seizing power and claiming the throne as his rightful inheritance. Sverdrup strongly supported the principle of the sovereignty of the people, which meant that all legitimate state power must come from the people themselves. Sverdrup’s descendants donated the picture to the Storting in 1981. Georg Sverdrup was also the uncle of the future Prime Minister, Johan Sverdrup.



Christian Krogh (1852–1925): “Johan Sverdrup”, 1882, oil on canvas, 270 x 170.5 cm. (Photo: Teigens Fotoatelier / Archives of the Storting)

JOHAN SVERDRUP

Christian Krogh painting of Johan Sverdrup (1816–1892) in 1882 coincided with a time of conflict both in politics and in art. Sverdrup was a short man and therefore painting a full-length portrait of him, somewhat larger than life-size, was a challenge. Krogh’s solution was to paint Sverdrup in entirely black clothing against a completely black background, so that the only elements that can really be seen are the body’s most expressive parts: the face and the hands.

In the same year as the portrait was painted, Norway held parliamentary elections. The major issue at stake was whether or not government ministers should have access to the Storting. The background to this was that the political Left, with Sverdrup at its head, wanted the government to meet the democratically-elected Members the Storting Chamber. The Left won a resounding victory in the 1882 election (gaining 63 per cent of the vote). The Government stood down after being charged with impeachment, and the parliamentary system was further strengthened.

At the same time as this political battle, a debate was also raging in the Norwegian art world. The conflict was about the right of artists to take part in the selection of works of art that were to be displayed to the public. This resulted in the very first annual Autumn Exhibition of art selected by artists themselves, which was held in 1882. The portrait of Sverdrup was included in this exhibition and received wide recognition. In 1884, the same year that Sverdrup became Prime Minister, the Autumn Exhibition was granted state support for the first time, and it continues to this day. The painting was a gift to the Storting in 1895.

CHRISTIAN MICHELSEN

Christian Michelsen (1857–1925) is posing comfortably in an elegant pale suit and straw hat in this full-length portrait. Despite its informal nature, the picture was always intended for public display. From a technical perspective, it is also a more modern painting with an impressionistic breaking-up of the picture surface: The background consists mostly of flecks of colour. Henrik Lund had studied French art. He was inspired by the French artist Édouard Manet's way of painting, and his continuation of this led to Lund being regarded as a neo-impressionist. The portrait of Otto Blehr (page 32) was painted by Edvard Munch several years after Lund painted the portrait of Michelsen. However, the similarity with earlier full-length portraits by Munch – with the same composition and materials – is clearly present in Lund's painting. Lund was also called "Munchian" because he was so strongly influenced by Munch's art.

Christian Michelsen played a central role in the process that led to the dissolution of the Union with Sweden in 1905, both as a member of the government and as Prime Minister. Today the portrait of Michelsen hangs in the Eidsvoll Gallery, next to the painting *The President of the Storting Carl Berner reading the 7 June Declaration*. This is a suitable location: Michelsen drafted the 7 June Declaration and led the negotiations on the terms and conditions for the dissolution of the Union in Karlstad, Sweden. The portrait of Michelsen was painted in 1908, three years after he had led Norway out of the Union with Sweden. The National Gallery bought the portrait that same year and lent it to the Storting in 1916, which then bought it in 1921.



Henrik Lund (1879–1935): "Christian Michelsen", 1908, oil on canvas, 242 x 133 cm. (Photo: Teigens Fotoatelier/Archives of the Storting)

ANNA ROGSTAD

Anna Rogstad (1854–1938) was the first woman to sit in the Storting when she met as the Substitute Member for Jens Bratlie on 17 March 1911. Like many other members of the women's movement, Rogstad was a teacher. The introduction of limited suffrage for women in 1907 also led to women being eligible for election in politics. In 1909, Rogstad stood for election for the Liberal Party on the list for the Gamle Aker ward in Christiania (today Oslo).

Eyolf Soot was from the school of fervent naturalist painters of the 1880s. He has depicted this pioneering woman standing in a powerful posture with her right hand on her hip and her left resting on the back of a chair. Rogstad's gaze is fixed beyond the edge of the painting. By combining the primary colour red with the complementary colour green, Soot abandons naturalism. The background becomes two fields of colour whose complementary colour tones boldly push Rogstad out towards the viewer. The portrait, which was the only one of a woman in the Storting until 2000, was donated with the following letter: "As a reminder of the first time that a woman was a Member of the Storting, we would like to send the Honourable Storting a portrait of Miss Anna Rogstad from Norwegian women." A total of fourteen women signed the letter dated 17 March 1915, including the Labour Party politician and women's rights activist Fernanda Nissen, and the artist Harriet Backer, who painted the portrait of Peder Anker that now hangs in the Eidsvoll Gallery.



Eyolf Soot (1859–1928): "Anna Rogstad", 1914, oil on canvas, 109 x 80 cm. (Photo: Teigens Fotoatelier/Archives of the Storting)



Edvard Munch (1863–1944): “*Otto Blehr*”, 1927–30, oil on canvas, 190 x 100 cm. (Photograph: Hans Kristian Thorbjørnsen/BONO 2014)

OTTO BLEHR

Otto Blehr (1847–1927) was a Liberal politician and twice Prime Minister, latterly from 1921–23. To commemorate Blehr’s 80th birthday in 1927, some of his friends, including the former Minister of Foreign Affairs Arnold Ræstad, had persuaded Edvard Munch to paint a portrait that was to be offered to the Storting. Munch worked on the portrait over the winter and spring of 1927, but it was still not finished when Blehr became ill and died in July that year.

The portrait shows a towering figure standing quite nonchalantly, with one hand in his trouser pocket. The canvas is painted roughly with sketch-like strokes and blue and turquoise as the dominant colours.

The portrait was formally donated to the Storting in 1935 as a gift from friends who had collected the necessary funds. The portrait was originally intended for the Eidsvoll Gallery and had been hung there provisionally. However, Munch was not particularly satisfied with the company of the other portraits and wrote: “Michelsen is a good picture but there is a long streak plastered up the wall” and continues: “There are black pictures from the Inquisition in darkest Spain, on the one side the judges – and on the other the victims of torture. The green and blue colours in my picture will brighten it up.” Today the portrait hangs in the new Committee Building. Munch would probably have been more satisfied with that, as he wrote this about hanging pictures in the Eidsvoll Gallery: “I am always afraid of hanging [pictures] in these types of assembly rooms - to me they look like tombs with these portraits on the walls.”



GUNNAR KNUDSEN

Gunnar Knudsen (1848–1928) was an engineer, shipowner and captain of industry. He was the Liberal Party’s greatest reform politician and parliamentary leader, but is perhaps more well-known for his two terms as Prime Minister (1908–10 and 1913–20). He was also Minister of Finance in Christian Michelsen’s Government, but – due to his republican views – stepped down over the choice of the new King in 1905.

When this portrait was painted, Severin Segelcke was faced with the same challenges as the artists behind the Eidsvoll portraits that hang in the same room. He had never met Knudsen and had to paint the deceased politician from photographs, earlier portraits and descriptions of his personality. The result is a powerful portrait of the Liberal politician. He is wearing a morning dress and standing with his left hand in his pocket. In his right hand he is holding a paper. Knudsen is staring directly at anyone who dares to look at him. The painting has been done in a detailed, almost photographic style. The composition is similar to Edvard Munch’s portrait of Otto Blehr, even though the painting technique is very different. Segelcke was a military officer and was more or less a self-taught painter. He was commissioned to paint the portrait by the Liberal Party – at that time called *Norges Venstreforening* – which donated the picture to the Storting in 1939.

Severin Segelcke (1867–1940): “*Gunnar Knudsen*”, 1939, oil on canvas, 162 x 100 cm. (Photo: Hans Kristian Thorbjørnsen)

KIRSTI KOLLE GRØNDAHL

Kirsti Kolle Grøndahl (1943–) was elected to the Storting for the Labour Party in 1977 and was a government minister from 1986 to 1989. In 1993 she became the first female President of the Storting and retained this prominent position for two terms up until 2001. When Kolle Grøndahl became President, 35 per cent of the Members were women, but among the many portraits in the Storting's collection, Anna Rogstad – the first female Member – was still the only woman portrayed. The Parliamentary Committee on Culture – chaired by Grethe G. Fossum from the Labour Party – asked the Presidium President's Office to rectify this imbalance. The Advisory Committee on Works of Art was given the responsibility to invite three artists to paint portraits of prominent women in politics. In 2000 Liv Heier was commissioned to paint Aase Lionæs, while Hanna Høiness was to paint Claudia Olsen, and Sonja Krohn was to portray Torild Skard.

Since the Second World War there has been a tradition that Presidents who have held office for two parliamentary terms should have their portrait painted after they leave office. For Kolle Grøndahl, it was important that her portrait was painted by a woman in order to help even out the predominance of male artists in the Storting's collection. The choice was Trine Folmoe, a former pupil of Odd Nerdrum – one of Norway's most famous figurative painters.



Trine Folmoe (1964–): "Kirsti Kolle Grøndahl", 2005, oil on canvas, 118 x 80 cm. (Photo: Hans Kristian Thorbjørnsen)

SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC ICON

Einar Gerhardsen (1897–1987) was elected to the Storting from 1945 until 1969, and was Prime Minister three times for a total of 17 years. He has been called "the Father of the Nation" for his efforts in building modern Norway after the Second World War.

An icon is usually a painting done on wood using imagery from Orthodox Christianity. This picture's somewhat paradoxical title can therefore be seen to play on the notion of the portrayal of a "political saint". Instead of being painted on wood, this icon is a woodcut. The caricature-like portrayal of Gerhardsen, which nonetheless is not a true caricature, is highly simplified and only the really essential characteristics are included: the characteristic profile with the high forehead and pointed nose. It is easy to be reminded of the monumental stone sculptures on Easter Island, but according to the artist, it is the ancient Cycladic art from the Eastern Mediterranean that is the inspiration for this woodcut. The picture was created by Tom Gundersen in 1991 and purchased by the Storting the following year. The picture was not a commission, but plays with the portrait genre. The symbolism of the decorative frame makes it more like a conceptual portrait than a conventional depiction of a person. The small grey figures in the frame are a direct impression of wooden shapes created for casting by machine: a reference to industrial society. The artist has said that he was more concerned with Gerhardsen's role in the Labour Party's modernisation project than with his personality.



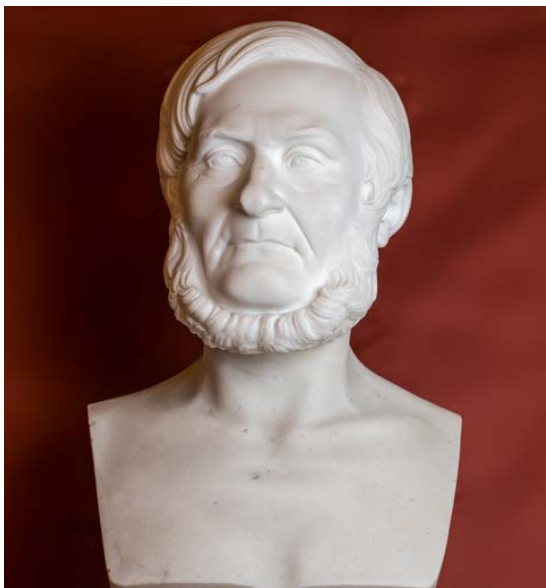
Tom Gundersen (1951–): "Social democratic icon", 1991, coloured wood cut, 168 x 131 cm. (Photo: Hans Kristian Thorbjørnsen/BONO 2014)

THE BUSTS IN THE EIDSVOLL GALLERY

Compared with the many paintings hanging on the walls in the Parliament building, sculpture forms just a small part of the art collection. The busts in the Eidsvoll Gallery portray – in the same way as many of the paintings – prominent Members of the Storting, Prime Ministers and government ministers, and owe their greatest debt to the Graeco-Roman tradition of sculpture. Upon closer inspection, however, there are distinct differences in the execution of the busts.

Brynjulf Bergslien has portrayed *Ole Gabriel Ueland* (1799–1870), the leader of the peasant farmers' movement, with a naked upper torso and delicate facial features. This portrayal is typical of the classical Greek tradition of idealised portraits. The classicist Julius Middelthun, for his part, has depicted the professor and Member of the Storting *Anton Martin Schweigaard* (1808–1870) in

something resembling a Roman toga. The bust has been executed with an emphasis on realism, though with somewhat idealised facial features. Here the artist has taken his inspiration from the Roman tradition of emperor portraits, with the toga linking the subject to his high political office. Christen Daae Magelssen's bust of the civil servant and Member of the Storting *Christian Birch-Reichenwald* (1814–1891) also follows the Roman tradition. With a fluttering cape and hair caught by the wind, the dramatic, almost Baroque bust appears to reflect Birch-Reichenwald's stormy political career and the battle with the King of Sweden over his right to appoint a Governor General for Norway. Continuing the Greek and Roman pattern, Jo Visdal has portrayed the Conservative politician and Prime Minister *Emil Stang* (1834–1912) in the clothing of the time, with double-breasted jacket and cravat. Visdal's bust owes much to the Biedermeier style of the time, with its realistic portrayals of distinguished citizens in fashionable clothes.



Brynjulf Bergslien (1830–1898): "*Ole Gabriel Ueland*", marble, 65 cm.



Julius Middelthun (1820–1886): "*Anton Martin Schweigaard*", ca. 1875, marble, 60 cm.



Christen Daae Magelssen (1841–1940): "*Christian Birch-Reichenwald*", marble, 52 cm.



Jo Visdal (1861–1923): "*Emil Stang*", 1922, marble, 58 cm. (Photos: Hans Kristian Thorbjørnsen)

JOHANNES STEEN

Gustav Vigeland has sculpted the bust of the Liberal Prime Minister Johannes Steen (1827–1906). The rendering of the head is realistic while the neck merges into the plinth, where traces of Vigeland's working of the materials – his handprints – are still visible in the final result. The creation of the bust began with a sketch, and it was then modelled in clay or plaster before being cast in bronze. Steen was an old man when Vigeland depicted him, and he is shown in a realistic way with wrinkles and lines. At the same time this is a psychologically powerful depiction. Steen was President of the Storting before he led two governments, from 1891 to 1893 and from 1898 to 1902.

Around 1900 Vigeland created some 100 busts of many of the important personalities of the time, often at his own initiative. His motivation was twofold. Modelling such busts enabled him to develop his technical skills, but at the same time he could also sell the busts to public institutions and private collectors. The bust of Johannes Steen was created on Vigeland's initiative in 1904 and purchased by the Storting the year after Steen's death in 1907.



Gustav Vigeland (1869–1943): "Johannes Steen", 1904, bronze, 41 cm. (Photograph: Hans Kristian Thorbjørnsen)

WILHELM FRIMANN KOREN CHRISTIE

Outside the Parliament building stand four sculptures that are intimately linked to the history of the Storting. We have already made the acquaintance of three of the figures depicted in the form of painted portraits: In Wessels plass there is a full-size statue of *Johan Sverdrup* sculpted by Stinius Fredriksen. Below Løvebakken – the Main Entrance – facing out towards Eidsvolls plass, stands Per Palle Storm's bust of *Christian Michelsen*. To the right of the main entrance at Løvebakken is a full-size figure of *Wilhelm F. K. Christie*, the first President of the Storting, which was unveiled on 16 May 1989 as part of the 175th anniversary of the Constitution.

Christie was the permanent secretary to the National Assembly and became President at the first extraordinary Parliament in the autumn of 1814. The artist Kristian Blystad (1946–) has chiselled Christie out of red-flecked granite. The first President of the Storting is holding the Constitution in his right hand. Christie is due more than a little glory for the fact that Norway's independent position was largely preserved in the Union with Sweden through the revised Constitution of 4 November. His input during the negotiations with Sweden in 1814 has led him to be known as "the Defender of the Constitution". For this reason the Storting decided to honour his memory with a statue on the occasion of the 175th anniversary of the Constitution.

EIDSVOLLS Plass – FROM PAST TO PRESENT

The sculptor Kristian Blystad, who created the monument to Christie, also won the competition to design the monument to *King Christian Frederik* that stands in Eidsvolls plass. As part of the Bicentenary of the Constitution in 2014, it was a gift from the Government to the Storting. This brought to an end a debate that had continued for more than a century about a national memorial to Christian Frederik.



Kristian Blystad (1946–): "W.F.K. Christie / 1778–1849 / First President of the Storting", 1989, granite, 336 cm. (Photo: Hans Kristian Thorbjørnsen/BONO 2014)



In 1936 a full-size model of Wilhelm Rasmussen's (1879–1965) "Eidsvoll's Column" was erected on a trial basis in Eidsvoll's plass. However, rather than Harald Hårfagre on horseback, a lion was placed on the top. (Photo: Archives of the Storting)

There were plans to erect Wilhelm Rasmussen's so-called *Eidsvoll's Column* in Eidsvoll's plass. By 1939 about half the column had been hewn in granite. When the Second World War broke out, however, the work came to a complete halt, and after 1945 the half-finished column languished in a shed for a long time. Ideology was one of the main reasons for this. Rasmussen had been a member of the Norwegian National Socialist Party – *Nasjonal Samling* – which collaborated with the German occupation during World War II.

Finally in 1992, after the Storting as the owner had relinquished its claim, Åmund Elvesæter, a hotel owner and member of the wartime resistance, erected the column next to his hotel in the small hamlet of Bøverdalen. The column was composed partly of the original granite and partly of modern concrete. At 34 meters the column is twice the height of Gustav Vigeland's *Monolith* in the Vigeland Park in Oslo. The column is clearly inspired by *Trajan's column* and *the Column of Marcus Aurelius* in Rome and is decorated with reliefs from different periods of Norwegian history, from the battle of Hafslund to Eidsvoll in 1814.

PRESIDENT OF THE STORTING CARL JOACHIM HAMBRO

A bronze sculpture of *Carl Joachim Hambro* (1885–1964), twice President of the Storting in the 1920s to 1940s, has also been erected in Eidsvoll's plass. Kjell Grette Christensen's sculpture gives the impression that Hambro has just stopped for a moment, perhaps during one of his famous speeches. The plinth upon which he is supporting himself can be understood as a lectern. If you go up close to the sculpture you can see how the artist has developed his subject. The laborious design of the sculpture, first in clay and plaster and then cast in bronze, is evident from the traces of the working process that are visible in the final product.

Hambro organised the flight out of Oslo by train for the Storting, the Government and Royal Family on 9 April 1940, the day of the

Nazi German invasion of Norway. He also drew up the so-called Elverum Authorization, which gave the Government the power to safeguard the nation's interests following the invasion once the Storting had broken up. The sculpture was originally commissioned for the 50th commemoration of Germany's occupation of Norway on 9 April 1940 during World War II, but the statue was not unveiled till 1994.



Kjell Grette Christensen (1940–): "President of the Storting Carl Joachim Hambro", 1994, bronze, 380 cm. (Photo: Nye bilder.no/ BONO 2014)

The Landscape – art as decoration

The Norwegian landscape and its interplay between man and nature are reflected in the works of art in the Staircase Hall and the Central Hall. Norwegians pride themselves on their close relationship with nature, which has made the Norwegian landscape a recurrent theme in Norwegian art. These landscapes portray different parts of Norway – from Reine in Lofoten via the high mountains and Hardangervidda to the Oslo Fjord – and bring them into the Storting building.



Sissel Blystad (1944–): "Landscape", tripartite tapestry, 2005, centre part: 3.7 x 7.5 metres and each side: 3.7 x 2.3 metres.
(Photo: Hans Kristian Thorbjørnsen/BONO 2014)

"LANDSCAPE"

Sissel Blystad's three-piece tapestry *Landscape* dominates the Central Hall and covers a total of 47 square metres. The work of dyeing the wools and the weaving took place in Stockholm, based on pasteboard drawings by Blystad. The three sections hang together in a panoramic landscape with fragments of sky, mountains, water, buildings, boats, fields and meadows. The artist alternates between the figurative and a more abstract interpretation of nature. Here are blood-red sunsets, deep green forests, blue seas, yellow desert sands and the browns and blues of the high mountains, in fine contrast to the yellow brick of the wall. The artist has said that she wants the work of art to be "a breathing space for the soul in a stressful parliamentary day".

Landscape was unveiled on 9 May 2005 as part of the Storting's centenary celebrations of the dissolution of the Union with Sweden. Today Blystad's tapestry is one of Norway's most visible works of art as it can be glimpsed in the background when

politicians are being photographed or interviewed by the media. With robust wools and synthetic colours, the tapestries are designed to withstand flash photography and the sunlight that pours in to the Central Hall.

Originally Karin Holtmark's three-part tapestry *The Passage of the Sun* was displayed in the Central Hall. It was unveiled in 1964, but the strong sunlight that pours in through the glazed roof, caused Holtmark's sun to gradually fade more and more, and in 2005 it was replaced with Blystad's work. It is also interesting to compare Blystad's tapestry and her artistic inspiration with Holtmark's composition, which shows sunrise, the working day and sunset against a background of the changing seasons. While Blystad offers a breathing space in her art, Holtmark's ideas were derived from the optimism found in post-war Norway and had a clear positive outlook and didactic purpose.



Else Hagen (1914–2010): “Community”, 1959–66, stone mosaic, approx. 500 x 900 cm. (Photo: Hans Kristian Thorbjørnsen)

“COMMUNITY”

In 1958 a competition was announced, open to Norwegian artists only, to decorate architect Nils Holter’s new Staircase Hall and Central Hall. The architect played a central role in promoting the competition and selecting the artists. Holter felt that the works of art should be subordinate to the architecture in their expression, location and use of materials. Of the three winning works of art, however, only one is still in its original location. This is Else Hagen’s mosaic *Community*, which can be found on the wall of the

stairwell between the Staircase Hall and the Central Hall. The materials in *Community* are golden, yellow-brown and black pieces of slate from Otta in Norway, white and pink marble from Italy and glazed tiles in striking colours. The alternation between figurative and abstract parts is contained within a tight, tripartite composition.

In early drafts and sketches, Else Hagen wanted to create associations with an urban society and at the same time “provide a feeling of growth, nature, trees or human beings, where the blue birds of thought and imagination can flourish”. These intentions are retained in *Community* with an abstract, but recognisable figuration in the two flanking panels. The central panel is more abstract. To the left, two elderly people are holding a bird protectively between them, while a young couple on the right are letting it go. A young couple in contrast to an elderly couple, both intertwined with trees, gives associations with the cycle of life. The artist herself said that she wanted the mural to express “a handing on from one generation to the next” of values and of preserving security in society. In the central panel, Hagen had originally planned “a city, a machine for dwelling, living and working in” but during the course of the six years it took her to complete the stone mosaic, “all visible traces of houses, cranes, boats and industry disappeared” and Hagen has moved over into abstraction in this part.



Detail section of “Community”. (Photo: Hans Kristian Thorbjørnsen)

“SISTERS OF LIBERTY II”

Arne Ekeland's painting in the Staircase Hall is a continuation of his preparatory sketches for decorating the central hall of Oslo City Hall from 1937. At that time, the canvas's political message about class conflict did not go down well with Oslo Municipality, but 50 years later a similar version was given a central place in the Parliament building. When a competition for the decoration of the Staircase Hall and the Central Hall was announced in 1958, Ekeland took part but was not successful this time around either. However, in 1987 the Storting granted funds for the purchase of *Sisters of Liberty II* from the artist, who made it a condition that the painting "should be hung in a prominent place in a public building where it can be seen by many". Since neither the National Gallery nor the Museum of Contemporary Art had room for it, it was suggested that it should hang in the Storting.

In 1991 *Sisters of Liberty II* was hung in the Staircase Hall on a trial basis, while the work of art that was there - one of those that had won the original competition in 1958 - was being restored. This was Nils Flakstad's work *Norway*, a wood relief that represented fishermen and farmers. The whole work was made of lime-wood. It was a discreet work of art that was subordinate to the room and almost merged with the yellow brick of the wall. It was never returned to its original place, as in 1993 the Presidium decided that Ekeland's painting should be displayed there permanently.

Sisters of Liberty II depicts European workers marching out from an industrial area and taking with them prisoners who are emerging from their gaol and breaking free of their chains. The workers and freed prisoners are heading to a meeting with African farmers. In contrast to the vast, industrial, alien city, we see on the right an African village where everyone seems to belong and knows their place. The workers and the farmers share

the same ideology about equality and freedom, symbolised by two large, red books. They meet at the feet of the two female figures. The white woman, according to the artist, represents knowledge and technology, while the black woman who represents the produce of the earth, is holding what the artist calls "research equipment". This can be interpreted as a symbol of technology's potential, for good and evil, for freedom and also for oppression.

Apart from the political content, the painting pays clear reference to the history of art. The inspiration for the decorative, multi-coloured hillside where the crowds have gathered is taken from Byzantine mosaics. We can see ideas from the Renaissance in the form of the monumental and the uniform, muted colouring. Ekeland had been on study tours to Italy, where Michelangelo's frescoes in the Sistine Chapel and the *Judgement Day* fresco in particular had made a great impression on him. The composition of *Sisters of Liberty II* closely resembles a judgement day scene where the Lord sits in judgement, and human souls are weighed on scales. Here the two female figures have taken the place of the Lord in the composition, and the scales have been replaced by the aforementioned "research equipment". The different peoples meet at the women's feet, but here they are free from judgement.

The painting portrays a vision of human liberation through the class struggle. Ekeland's depiction of the proletariat is neither a romanticization nor a realistic depiction of the working class, but an expression of a political vision. Stylistically, Ekeland's picture belongs to the main trends in Norwegian art at that time with the emphasis on the simplified, the decorative and the monumental. With symbols and a theme taken from a Marxist standpoint, however, Ekeland occupies a more isolated position in Norwegian art history.



Arne Ekeland (1908–1994): *Sisters of Liberty II*, 1958, oil on canvas, 290 x 529 cm. (Photo: Hans Kristian Thorbjørnsen)



Hans Fredrik Gude (1825–1903): “From the Inlet of Christiania”, 1874, oil on canvas, 98 x 140 cm. (Photo: Jacques Lathion/The National Museum)

“FROM THE INLET OF CHRISTIANIA”

On the walls of the arcade that spans two sides of the Central Hall there is a “gallery” with regularly changing works of art. Two of the paintings here are on loan from the National Museum and are on permanent display, however. The majority of the works of art on loan from the National Museum are of an age and value that make them simply too expensive for the Storting to purchase. Among these is Hans Frederik Gude’s *From the Inlet of Christiania*.

One of Gude’s most popular subjects was the Christiania Fjord (today the Oslo Fjord). The sun is hidden behind fine-weather clouds and the indirect light is strengthened in the reflection on the surface of the water. Gude achieves a powerful lighting effect by juxtaposing dark elements such as boats with the light surfaces of the small waves. The effect approaches that of a realist painting, but the canvas is a staged composition with the required contrast of the Romantic style between captivating nature and the diminutive human figures. Furthest out toward the horizon to the left the plume of smoke suggests that we find ourselves in the transition between the age of sail and the age of the steamboat. The dominant sailing ship may induce sadness in the viewer over the beauty of the era of the sailing ship, soon to be gone.

Gude was the most famous Norwegian painter of his time. As a teacher, Gude was respected by three generations of Norwegian artists and he influenced many of them through his teaching as professor at the academies in Düsseldorf, Karlsruhe and Berlin.

One of the students in Karlsruhe from the autumn of 1869 was Otto Sinding.

“FROM REINE IN LOFOTEN”

Otto Sinding is known as the Lofoten painter since his most famous paintings take as their subject this archipelago in the North of Norway. In the winter of 1881–82 he made his first study visit there. The result was a number of paintings of the Lofoten landscape, largely completed in his studio at home, but based on sketches drawn while there. For this reason the word Munich appears at the bottom left of the painting together with his signature and the date. *From Reine in Lofoten* shows the little fishing community that lies in the shadow of the high mountains. The sun is setting, the fishing fleet has lowered its sails and dropped anchor. It is late winter, and smoke is coming from the chimneys.

Sinding achieved great success with his landscapes from Lofoten. His imagery has a strong dramatic tone. He plays on the contrast between mighty, impressive nature and the little houses and people who have found their place and their occupations there. Gude was Sinding’s primary influence, something that is clearly visible in many of Sinding’s landscape. This links him to a German late-Romantic and academic school of painting.



Otto Sinding (1842–1909): "From Reine in Lofoten", 1883, oil on canvas, 104 x 155 cm. (Photo: Jacques Lathion/ The National Museum)

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THE NORWEGIAN LION AND “LION MOUNT”



The lion as a symbol of courage and strength is known across cultures and ages. The king of beasts became a symbol of sovereignty as long ago as the time of the Egyptian Pharaohs, who were depicted with a lion’s body and a human head. In the Storting building, lions guard the Main Entrance and also adorn the Storting Chamber as an emblem of the Norwegian state.



TO THE LEFT: *The Norwegian Lion in the coat of arms as it looked in 1844.*

IN THE CENTRE: *The coat of arms with the lion, designed by the artist Eilif Peterssen (1852–1928) in 1905.*

TO THE RIGHT: *The Norwegian coat of arms in its current official form was designed by Sverre Morken (1945–) in 1992.*



The two lions of Christopher Borch (1817–1896) have guarded the Main Entrance of the Storting since 1865. (Photo: John Greiner-Olsen/Archive of the Storting)

THE NORWEGIAN LION

The lion is often used as a symbol for the king and his authority on coins, flags and coats of arms. The coat of arms of Norway is one of the oldest in Europe and has its origins in the 1200s, when a lion rampant was used as an emblem for the Sverre dynasty of kings. In due course the lion came to be used as a symbol for other royal Norwegian dynasties. The golden lion on the coat of arms of Norway is now called The Norwegian Lion. In about 1280 the lion rampant was equipped with a gold crown, and an axe with a gold shaft and a silver blade between the front paws. The axe was the symbol of the martyrdom of Saint Olav (995–1030). By including it in the coat of arms, this symbolised that the King was the lawful inheritor and descendant of Norway’s “eternal king” and Norway’s patron, Saint Olav. At that time there was also a need to give the Norwegian lion greater distinctiveness by equipping it with an axe, as many other rulers also had a lion motif in their coat of arms. Throughout the unions with Denmark and Sweden the design of the coat of arms changed in line with different styles, but the content has remained the same for more than 700 years.

THE SCULPTURES ON “LION MOUNT”

Lions have often been used in sculpture as a symbol of power and in order to inspire awe, especially at the front of public buildings. The sculptor Christopher Borch (1817–1896) designed and modelled what he called “the good-natured” lions who guard the Main Entrance to the Storting, but it was prisoners from Akershus fortress who carved them out of granite. One of them was Gudbrand Eriksen Mørstad, who had been sentenced to death for murder, but whose sentence had been converted to lifetime penal servitude at Akershus Fortress. After completing the lions, the story has it that he was pardoned in 1872 for “services to Norway’s National Assembly.” In Norway today, the lion rampant with the axe is a symbol for the King and the state, while the good-natured recumbent lions have come to symbolise the Storting in people’s minds. The term *Løvebakken* – Lion Mount – is often used as a synonym for the Main Entrance and the Parliament building as a whole.



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Cover: Part of Anne Visten: "King Harald V taking the oath", 2012.

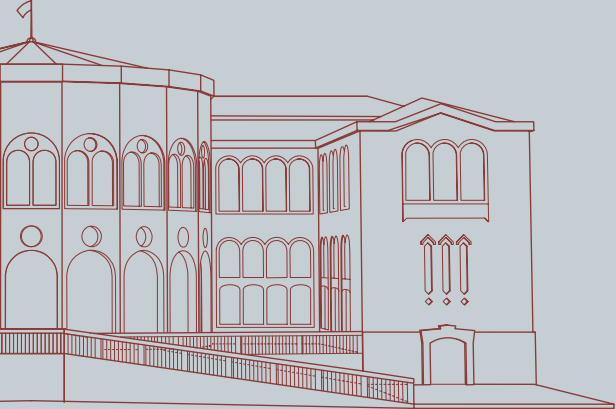
(Photo: Hans Kristian Thorbjørnsen)

Page 2 and 3: The ceiling of the Storting Chamber.

(Photo: Vidar M. Husby/Archives of the Storting)

Page 43: Detail from the royal throne
(Photo: John Greiner-Olsen/Archives of the Storting)

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