



# UTEN KOFFERT

## ÅPEN PORT

**Tove Sundt-Hansen / Stavanger 2008**



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## Closed Port? A portrait of the artist in her home town

*Welcome, O life! I go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race.*

**James Joyce** A portrait of the artist as a young man

Thus at the conclusion of this novel, Stephen Dedalus decides to flee from his homeland, from Dublin to Paris, in order to fulfil his calling and be an artist. Distance from home is seen as essential in order to summon up the “uncreated conscience of my race”. This is pure autobiography since James Joyce believed that his country was best served from afar; that one must leave home in order to understand home. An artist must leave the homeland in order to create.

Stavanger Anno Domini 2008 is a year of formidable activity levels for Tove Sundt-Hansen. Her personal goal within the city’s European year of culture can be simply stated – to analyse the state of being abroad and of being at home. A period of hectic travel in the four directions of the compass resulted in the exhibition MED KOFFERT – ÅPEN PORT. Simultaneously and thereafter, she has investigated Stavanger’s soul with a purposefulness and inquisitive eye that is now revealed in this exhibition suitably placed at Frida Hansen’s Hus UTEN KOFFERT – ÅPEN PORT.

Having never been overtly proud of her hometown, Tove Sundt-Hansen decided to research by intuitively gathering together elements of the city and by asking simple questions. Some of these questions were private and personal, others official and impersonal. Some related to favourite walks and public spaces, whilst others concerned Stavanger’s officialdom, its power structures and its coat of arms. The artist’s aim is to face and accept “my Stavanger”; to evaluate the personal Stavanger. The artist’s hometown may then provide a contrast to the smiling city of culture being presented to Europe, with its banners blowing in the wind alongside bracing happy faces.

So what has this study period resulted in? What type of hometown is depicted? Well, a collage of four individual projects assaults the exhibition space. Reality and abstraction; a series of poetic A5 watercolours of the city are exhibited alongside one large dominating abstract painting. Flowers and famous faces; icon inspired flower paintings laden with symbols alongside three charcoal portraits of known city faces. Seemingly Sundt-Hansen’s Stavanger is a fragmented beast with many aspects, and it is our job, the viewer’s task, to infiltrate these four elements and judge their contents.

## Åpen port

Åpen port - Lukket port

en offentlig, og en privat  
en skjult, og en tilgjengelig  
fortid og nåtid

Hva betyr Stavanger for meg?

Født, oppvokst og bor. Her. Min by

Hverdagens kart. Fanger blikket

Stavanger -  
en vev av landskap, mennesker og øyeblikk

Generasjoner. Historie  
Jeg, en tråd i en vev

Kultur - Politikk - Penger  
○ △ □

Skapende grunnformer  
motiverer og driver byen fremover, og fremover

et flerkulturellt samfunn?  
kan blomster snakke?  
er trær lik mennesker?  
forteller vann historier?

Kontraster - Dimensjoner

Stolthet, undring, erkjennelse  
I liten og stor målestokk

Betraktninger -  
Min vei går videre

## 1 Watercolours – The Cityscapes

Produced upon her favourite walks in the city, these watercolours are a direct record of the artist's visual impressions. They lack human content; no cars, no people, no artificial lights, no stress. Rather they present the natural spaces of the city in detail and as panorama. Dominated by trees, parkland and distant towers, these works convey nature's stability and calm. I asked why the works have such a limited palette, why they often appear dark and ominous. Tove Sundt-Hansen replied that both the small size and the limited tones were an immediate reaction to the subject. These characteristics helped her hold a critical distance from the cityscape. It should also be noted that this artist worked with black charcoal and subdued coloured crayons for the first 10 years of her artistic production.

The sketching of nature in watercolour, en plein air, has a long and established tradition. The works of Constable, Turner and then the pre impressionist Barbizon School used this medium extensively to catch elusive visual moments; to depict the ever changing lighting and colour of the landscape. To the modern viewer the distinction between sketch and studio work is now irrelevant, rather it is these works' spontaneity and atmosphere that are important. Yet to an uninitiated Englishman these Stavanger scenes are very private and the titles are often obscure. Nature dominates even though numerous towers in the background show the powerful backdrop of the man-made city. These works show me how little I know the city – how blind I have become to its natural beauty. The simple medium of plein air sketching confirms the clarity of this insight.

## 2 Abstraction – Stavanger 2008

The one major abstract diptych can be seen as a transitional piece, a bridge between the abstract art produced on her travels and her figurative dwellings upon Stavanger. Production of this one work has spanned the complete project, and can be seen as a visual sounding block during the artist's studies. The work is both contemplative and visually energetic. It contains all the seasons and all the contrasts of Stavanger, a beautiful clear blue day then miserable grey days; vibrant spring festival colours beside the black darkness of winter's industry.

## 3 Three Human Faces – Portraits of power

Stavanger was previously a town run by katedral og burs (church and business/money). According to the artist this has changed; today the overriding influences are politics, culture and economics. To illustrate this evolution, again using art history, three portraits have been made of suitable representatives in the genre style of a famed family member who painted a century ago (Carl was brother to

Tove's great grandfather). Carl Sundt-Hansen's evocative and extremely realistic genre paintings of the late nineteenth century were undervalued for many years, however a recent retrospective has helped restore his reputation on the national horizon. Tove Sundt-Hansen has chosen her three favourite works and, in a truly post modern and ironic fashion, updated them. The smiling city mayor has replaced the curious boy of Setesdalsgutt (1904); The current administrative director of Skagen Fondene is a mature version of Liten Gutt i Blått (1888), and, Stavanger2008 director Mary Miller is now the Kapteinens Hustru (1895). The humour and rich social commentary are obvious; does the mayor present us with an alcohol producing grape vine or a stable oak tree? Mary Miller is certainly no-one's servant; she is very much the captain of HMS Stavanger2008, and, poses in a shadow-less spotlight that suggests the insignificance of a circus director. The administrative director heads one of the most powerful economic concerns in the country, yet he is utterly anonymous behind his square shouldered suit and smile – but is posed in the midst of an ominously powerful shadow. These three individuals represent their power structures with aplomb, but their personalities are far less important than the values they represent.

## 4 Flower icons – To Frida

The artist asked for a short residency at Frida Hansen's Hus, where she researched the work of this renowned textile artist (1863-1932). The resulting icon paintings are directly inspired by Hansen's monumental weave "In the Rose Garden" (313x375cm) from 1904. In addition, the house's garden was in full bloom during Sundt-Hansen's stay, and it contains species of rose specially planted to replicate those of Frida Hansen's era. Thus the iconography and symbolism of Frida Hansen's art, house and garden are tightly woven into Tove's miniature paintings. They act as a private celebration of this textile artist, who was also the wife of Carl Sundt-Hansen's brother.

## Closed port or a nomad's glance?

What would a stranger to Stavanger make of this four part exhibition? Surely its compound nature is confusing and disorientating for the outsider. This artist walks a personal route through public spaces; the flower symbols are reserved for the especially interested and the artificial posing of Stavanger's power hierarchy is witty, speculative, but essentially internal. These picture groups are in danger of being alienating and obscure for the uninitiated spectator. Yet in quite the opposite way, Sundt-Hansen's abstract paintings are of a universal nature. The abstract art of MED KOFFERT – ÅPEN PORT contrasts strongly with this exhibition; universal openness as against an analysis of "being home" that involves a conscious manipulation of figurative contents and symbolic meanings.

When we are abroad we approach new places with humility. We carry with us no rigid ideas about what is interesting. One finds a supermarket, its populous and the incomprehensible vocals of the sales assistants unusually fascinating. We are alive to the layers of history beneath the present, and, we take endless photos of them. At home, on the other hand, we are passive and settled in our expectations. How can there be anything new in a place we have been living in for ten years or more? We become blinded by habit. However, it can be proposed that the artist is a natural nomad due to his or her concentration on imaginative processes. Thus if always a nomad, who better to investigate the nature of "home"? Who better to cast a fresh glance at familiar things?

*Every day is a journey, and the journey itself is home*  
**Matsuo Basho** (1644 -1694) Japanese Edo period

Sundt-Hansen has interspersed her foreign travels with her living in Stavanger. As a mental exercise this means that the quantity of real comparisons to her everyday hometown have been numerous during 2007 and 2008. These comparisons have caused the artist to discard her Stavanger habits. Thus she has dwelled at home, rather than lived within the habitual mindset of her Stavanger life. Her art and her life have been focussed by the call of the European Capital of Culture, Stavanger has been analysed by one of its most ardent residents and the conclusion is clear. It is personal choices within the city that makes a place "home".

## Conclusion

We began this short analysis with a citation from Stephen Dedalus (James Joyce). I go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience. It is indeed the reality of experience that shines through Tove Sundt-Hansen's art, be it figurative or abstract. Home, the hometown, is no less captivating if we venture correctly. Repeated viewing, for the millionth time, need not be boring if the glancing eye is always fresh.

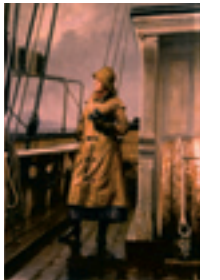
Sundt-Hansen's dwelling in Stavanger, with accentuated curiosity and lack of acceptance, with humility in front of the everyday, has produced varied results and diverse products. Yet the overall effect is one of a portrait, a composite collage of various aspects of the city, personally filtered by an individual imagination; of interest to both native and visitor. Being abroad cleanses the senses and opens the mind, but even though he spent most of his adult life in exile, away from Ireland, James Joyce eventually admitted:

*Think you're escaping and run into yourself. Longest way round is the shortest way home.*

Martin Worts  
Rogaland Kunstsenter September 2008



**I Rosenhaven 1904**  
Frida Hansen



**Kapteinens hustru 1895**  
Carl Sundt-Hansen



**Setesdalsgutt 1904**  
Carl Sundt-Hansen



**Liten gutt i blått 1888**  
Carl Sundt-Hansen



Mulighet i Domkirken  
Informasjon i Breiavannet  
42 x 56 cm. Akvarell



Någe på gang  
Forestilling på Ullandhaug  
42 x 56 cm. Akvarell



Breiavannet  
Mosvannet  
42 x 56 cm. Akvarell



Eg ser på deg  
Du ser på meg  
42 x 56 cm. Akvarell

Nasjonalt skydekke  
Historisk fra Limahaugen  
42 x 56 cm. Akvarell

Brutt rekke rundt Mosvannet  
Kjærlighetsstien rundt Mosvannet  
42 x 56 cm. Akvarell



Skogstun på Ledaal  
21 x 15 cm. Akvarell



Vålandstårnet og enkel utbygging  
21 x 15 cm. Akvarell



Monument på Ledaal  
21 x 15 cm. Akvarell



Port på Ledaal  
21 x 15 cm. Akvarell



Blå knaus i Bjergsted  
21 x 15 cm. Akvarell



Stavanger 2008  
240 x 145 cm. Akryl

**Stavanger 2008**  
Abstraction - Stavanger 2008



Kultur 2008



57 x 76 cm. Kull



Politikk 2008



76 x 57 cm. Kull



Penger 2008



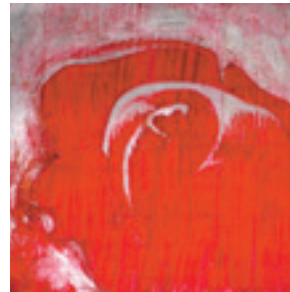
57 x 76 cm. Kull



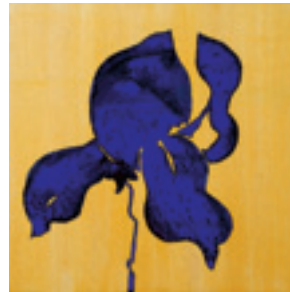
**Budskap**  
15 x 15 cm. Tempera og sølv



**Roser. Hvite**  
**Kjære. Fine**  
**Aande = Blomst**  
15 x 15 cm. Tempera  
sølv og gull



**Roser. Unge**  
**Røde. Tunge**  
**Hjerte = Blomst**  
15 x 15 cm. Tempera og sølv



**Beskjed**  
15 x 15 cm. Tempera



**Gloria Dei**  
15 x 15 cm. Tempera



**Hjerte = Blomst**  
15 x 15 cm. Tempera



**Gullrosen**  
15 x 15 cm. Tempera og gull



**Rosa Mundi**  
15 x 15 cm. Tempera



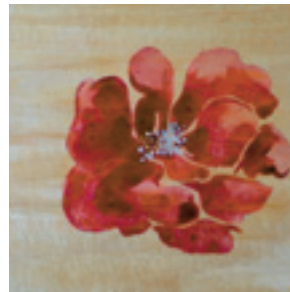
**Madame**  
15 x 15 cm. Tempera og sølv



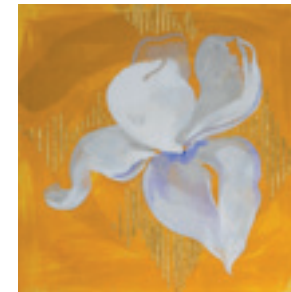
**Inspirasjon**  
15 x 15 cm. Tempera



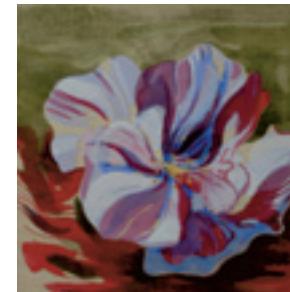
**Punktum**  
15 x 15 cm. Tempera



**Rose Gallica**  
15 x 15 cm. Tempera



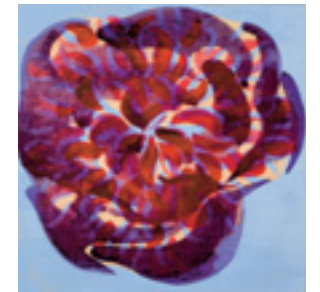
**Iris**  
15 x 15 cm. Tempera og gull



**Polkagrisrose**  
15 x 15 cm. Tempera



**Hundrebladsrose**  
15 x 15 cm. Tempera



**Snål triumf**  
15 x 15 cm. Tempera

## Til Frida

Å male i din mors hus. Enkesetet. I rosehagen

Rosene lyser i skinnen av juli  
Gir ro til min undring i arbeidet

Hvem var du Frida?  
Monumentale vevarbeider, en sta pioner

Er det et fundament av dypere symbolikk  
*I Rosenhaven?*

Roser og iriser  
Tre grunnformer i den bærende komposisjon  
Fire elementer  
10 rosebusker  
8 kvinner. En kneler

Tall, blomster, form, og farge  
Symbolikk

Jeg nærmer meg blomsten, Rosen, dine roser  
lærerikt og duftende

*I Rosehagen*, et bilde på Paradis  
Hvor vi får vinger?  
Er du der Frida?

Takk. For kunstnerisk vitalitet, og for inspirasjon

**Fra Tove**

## Tove Sundt-Hansen

### Utdannelse

Statens Kunstakademi, Oslo

1980 – 1985

### 2003 - 2008

#### Separate utstillinger

Frida Hansens Hus, Stavanger

2008

Galleri Amare, Stavanger

2008

Skiens Kunstforening

2006

Oljedirektoratet, Stavanger

2006 / 2003

#### Kollektive utstillinger

Spinneriet, Hjelmeland

2008

Tungenes Fyr, Randaberg

2005

#### Oppdrag

*Rosa Lyseblå* Teater, DKS og Rikskonsertene

2007

*Hupsjh!* Teater, Gladmatfestivalen i Stavanger

2005

*Et ord er et ord* Lærebok, Møller Kompetansesenter

2003

Fullstendig oversikt på [sundthansen.no](http://sundthansen.no)

### Takk til:

Guro Waksvik for bearbeidelse av norsk tekst  
Martin Worts for engelsk tekst

Alle kjente og kjære som har støttet meg i prosessen: UTEN KOFFERT

Foto: Guro Waksvik  
Design: AL DENTE Reklamebyrå  
Trykk: Spesialtrykk

The background is an abstract painting with a complex composition of overlapping colors and textures. Dominant colors include bright green, yellow, orange, and blue. There are numerous vertical drips of paint in various colors, particularly green and yellow, running down the left and center. The overall effect is one of dynamic energy and layered depth.

# UTEN KOFFERT

**ÅPEN PORT**

**Tove Sundt-Hansen / Stavanger 2008**