

Nuart



The Medeo-based artist Spjå provides a life-affirming reflection on the surface of the harbor of Stavanger, Norway, where the Nuart festival of street art has been held annually since 2001.

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This international street art festival in a Norwegian city is clued in to the complexities of urban expression—and of this moment in history

BY AMEN GARDNER



STRIDE & LITH OF MAY PARADE, says the guide through a harbor town of almost 300 people—youth, old, carrying babies and walking dogs. It's the first time in the history of the Nuart festival, the town's annual independence day celebrations, that the population of street artists, held in the small southern Norwegian city, has been the art world for its thought-provoking curation, which has led to the festival's growth. The festival is a forum for frank, critical conversations about what it's becoming, and what it ought to be. The Nuart organizers that introduce local youth to what insiders call "the chosen" artists to paint murals on walls. The festival, with its goal of keeping street art from becoming too decorative, expects to face challenges as Norway's oil economy leads to a period of harder times and increased unemployment.

At the same time, the festival, with its goal of keeping street art from becoming too decorative, expects to face challenges as Norway's oil economy leads to a period of harder times and increased unemployment. Spend a day or more in Stavanger and you'll see how deeply Nuart is woven into the lives of the town. Around almost every corner there is artwork to be discovered, from an expressionist mural by a local artist facing a kindergarten to the small dramas played out in the town but extraordinarily expressive figures of workmen by Jaume and angel-ribbed businessmen by Isaac Garcia. From the top of a boat in the harbor, headed out on a fjord cruise, you can see works by Jørgen and Ole Holm, from previous years' festivals, rise into view amid the clusters of wooden houses.