

# NORWAY

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THE MAGAZINE OF NORWEGIAN BUSINESS, CULTURE AND TOURISM

## **OUTSIDE LOOKING IN**

Norway takes the less-travelled path outside the EU

## **THE LEGEND AND LEGACY OF TROLL**

The world's tallest offshore structure marks a crossroad in Norway's petroleum industry

## **WATER AND ICE**

Sculptor and Picasso protégé Carl Nesjar in his element

## **ADVENTURES IN SAMILAND**

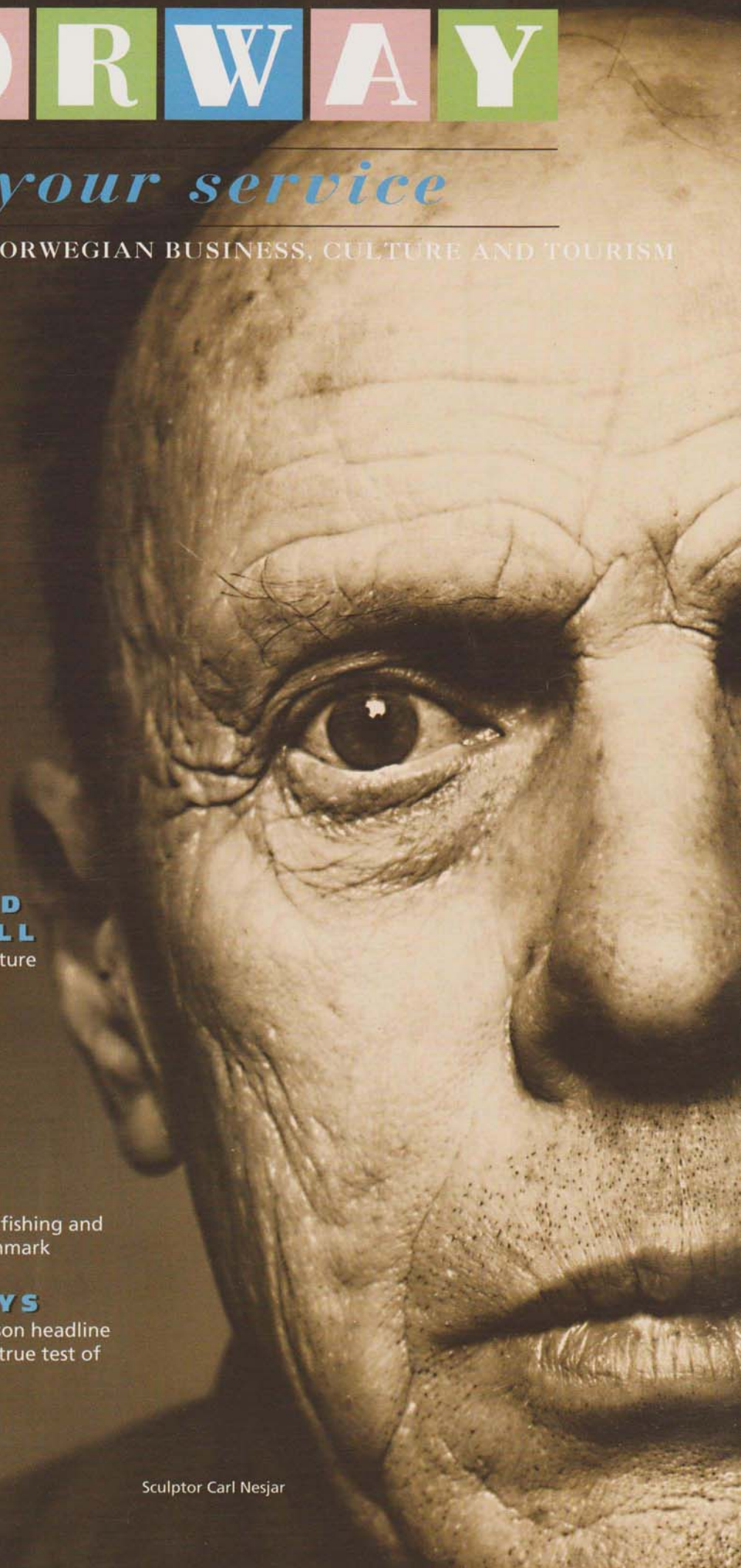
Dogsledding, reindeer racing, ice fishing and snowmobiling in the wilds of Finnmark

## **THE SUNSET BOYS**

Robert Mitchum and Cliff Robertson headline a new Norwegian film about the true test of love, loyalty and friendship

**AUTUMN 1995**

Sculptor Carl Nesjar



# Water & ICE

"It's a mess," Carl Nesjar apologizes, opening the door to his Oslo art studio.

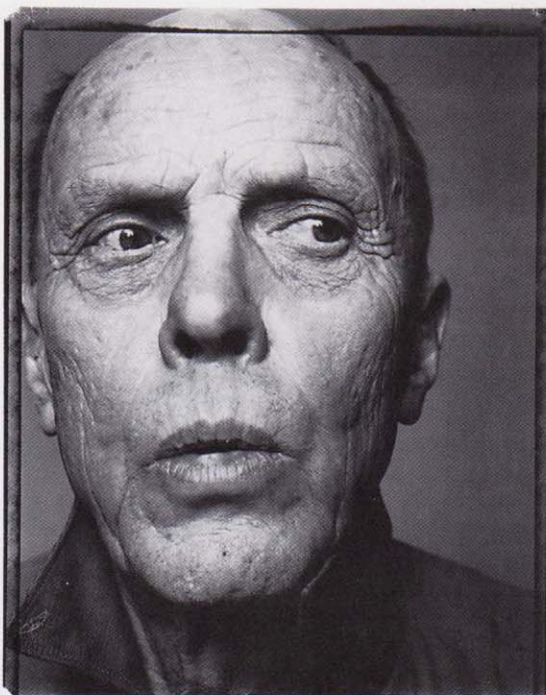
But as a bank of lights flickers and then blazes, what emerges is not disorder, but a garden of won-

ders: big wooden tables, glass prisms, driftwood, rocks and shells, thousands of books and several models of abstract sculpture that, when fully realized, will stand three stories high.

One senses a life of layers. There are cutting implements, steel and aluminium rods, paintings and lithographs propped this way and that, stacks of ice crystal photographs. No sign of the ceramics, tapestries

or 16 mm film that, at various times, were the artist's preferred media. Nesjar says he worries about spreading himself too thin, but he's not going to do anything about it. At 75, he's having too much fun.

"I've always been so damned curious," he says, rolling a fat cigarette and settling into a chair. "I get a lot of requests to exhibit paintings, but I haven't had the time to paint. A man's got to sleep, too."



Victor Bouillet

## Norway's Carl Nesjar In His Element



Carl Nesjar

**A**sk about the giant water and ice fountains for which he is best known, and Nesjar's mind shoots back 4 000 years to a Hittite fountain in Mesopotamia, then to the Winged Victory of Samothrace (originally displayed amid coursing water on a Greek isle) and eventually to his own childhood on the glacier-worn

rocks and shoals of Larvik, a former whaling port near the mouth of the Oslo Fjord.

"The one original idea I had in my life," Nesjar says, finally circling in on his work, "was that you could make fountains that freeze up without falling apart. A fountain all boarded up for the winter is a sad, sad sight."

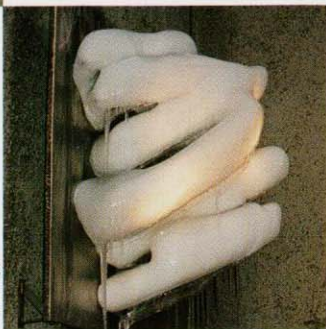
His soaring, geometrically precise sculptures of steel and aluminium are awe-inspiring – but it's the water, the

*(Continued on p. 48)*

**Nesjar's "Northern Lights Fountain" graces downtown Minneapolis, Minnesota.**



# Water & ICE



Carl Nesjar

Rolseth/Lillehammer Foto



At left, most of Nesjar's sculptures let mother nature decide between water and ice. This one, however, at the SINTEF Research Institute in Trondheim contains its own cooling system for year-round ice.

(Continued from p. 47)

ice, the air and the light which define them as great works. The babbling waters of summer turn into silent draperies of winter ice, which can double the sculpture's weight. Nearly as important as the artist's vision are the structural engineers who define his limits.

A forthcoming fountain will incorporate lasers – fruit of a three-year research fellowship at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where Norway's most versatile artist amused himself by shooting laser beams through blocks of ice. Another fountain, for Norway's Glacier Museum in the Fjærland mountains of southwestern Norway, will have cooling elements to make icicles even in July.

## Atlantic Crossings

A dozen such works grace parks, city squares and Olympic arenas in Europe, the United States and Asia. Standing up to 10 metres high and costing up to USD 500 000 each, they may seem the product of a tremendous ego – until you actually meet Nesjar, a tall, angular man with a tobacco-roughened voice who modestly serves Russian tea and homemade cookies to studio visitors. When he speaks English, it's with a Brooklyn accent.

"At age seven," he explains, "we moved to New York, where I went to grammar school. Then I went to high school in Norway, art school back in New York, college in Norway and university in New York."

His Norwegian father was a key structural engineer on New York City's art deco Chrysler Building, which was, for one glorious year (1930), the tallest building in the world.

Ask Nesjar about his artistic influences and, after mentioning his father, he describes 17 years of intense collaboration with Pablo Picasso, mostly in Barcelona, creating huge sculptures and murals in sandblasted concrete.

But keep him talking and the layers peel back. Soon he is back in Brooklyn, a cub reporter for the bilingual "Norwegian News," interviewing Helen Keller. She cries over the scent of a carnation he gives her. Blind and deaf, she takes his questions through an interpreter who taps code on her hand. When she speaks (verbally) of the fjords and waterfalls she experienced on a trip to Norway, it is the young reporter's turn to cry.

## Art of Technology

The encounter enhanced Nesjar's inner sight – a faculty he uses, for example, while crawling on hands and knees across a frozen lake, searching out interesting cracks and bubbles to photograph.

But art is a form of power, and this septuagenarian is no introvert. His vast fountains enthrall every sense. And for him, the strength and pervasiveness of art grow with each advance in computer graphics, laser-based 3-D holography and other technologies.

"One fine day," he says, "somebody will make a holographic sculpture in

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(Above and at right,) Hamar Olympic Hall, the "Viking ship arena" which hosted the 1994 Olympic Winter Games speedskating events, provided the perfect setting for a Nesjar ice creation.

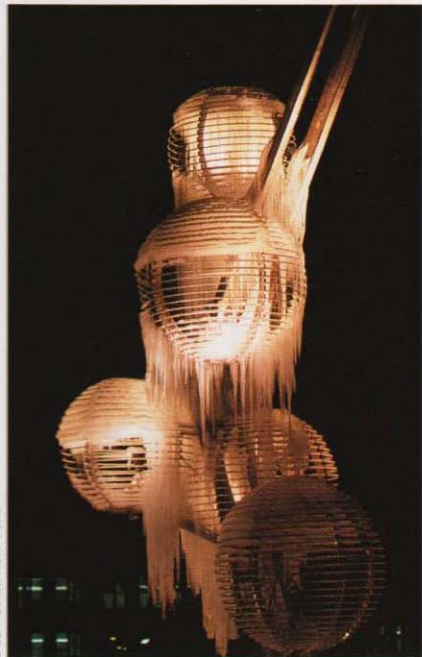
Carl Nesjar



the sky covering half of Manhattan. Imagine the Winged Victory of Samothrace, 50 times as big as the Statue of Liberty!"

For a moment his arms are outstretched, his eyes beaming. What the visitor imagines, Carl Nesjar sees. ■

*Walter Gibbs is an American freelance writer based in Oslo.*



Dean Color/New York

(At right) The young Nesjar at Picasso's side.

Nesjar is today the same age as the Spanish master was when the two artists first met. The 6-metre high sculpture based on the model shown here is on temporary display at Düsseldorf's Kunstmuseum and will return next year to Lille, France.



(At left) Nesjar sculpture at the entrance to the Olympic park in Lake Placid, New York.