

Top 5: Marit Benthe Norheim



Marit Benthe Norheim. Photo: Emma Lomell



Who and what do artists draw inspiration from in their work?

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1. The Human Being

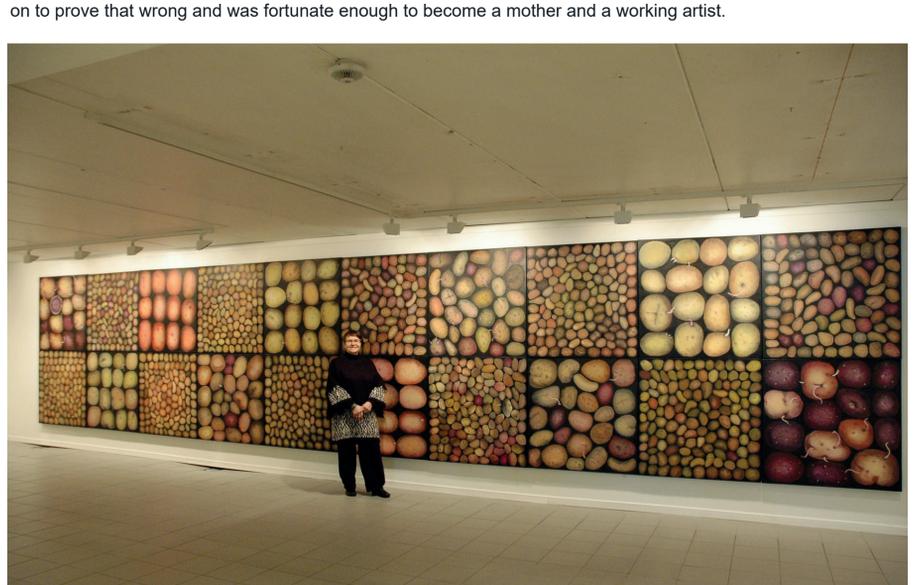
I have always been fascinated by the fact that humans are so uniform - with the same biological ingredients, no matter where we come from - yet no one is identical. There are and always have been incredible variations. Every person changes from birth to death - constantly. We change in conversations and in relation to each other. This never ceases to engage me. Therefore, it is also an endless source of material to draw from.



Image sourced from: <https://www.governmentnews.com.au/we-wont-share-data-census-2016-chief/>

2. My mother

My mother is a painter and often works symbolically with the life cycle using the growth of nature. She lost her own mother when she was born. Therefore, it was important for her to become a mother and grandmother. Her joy in being able to extend the life cycle herself has been a great inspiration for me as a female artist. My teacher at the art academy told us women that if we wanted to be serious artists, we should not become mothers. I decided early on to prove that wrong and was fortunate enough to become a mother and a working artist.



Meta Norheim, Marit Benthe's mother, in front of her artwork "From Ringerike via Troll, Pink and Peik, Astrix, Laila and Beate to Congo." Photo: Private

3. Louise Bourgeois

When I taught at the Central St. Martin School of Arts in London, one of the students told me that his uncle had visited Louise Bourgeois and asked for advice for his nephew who wanted to become an artist. She said that the nephew should get a studio and a car - and then start living his life. Exactly this, that inspiration is drawn from lived life, is what I am concerned with. Regardless of what one builds their knowledge on, as a human being, as an artist - whether it is of internal or external character, small or large experiences - as Bourgeois shows, it can become great art.



Louise Bourgeois, *The Woven Child* (detail), 2002. Stoddard Acquisition Fund, 2005.284, Photo: Christopher Burke.

4. Treasures from Trash and Reuse

I lived in India as a child and experienced that everything could be used and reused. At the age of 6 in Norway, I rummaged through a neighbor's trash and found old shoes for doll beds. I also found a beautiful necklace at the garbage dump with my grandfather, which my mother let me believe was the finest silver jewelry. Many years later, I discovered that it was the chain for the bathtub plug. (Now my niece has created a beautiful necklace out of it.) Since then, I have spent a lot of time at garbage dumps, scrapyards, and thrift stores, where I have found both inspiration and materials.



From Marit Benthe Norheims studio. Photo: Privat

5. Common Human Symbols - Across Cultures

Some of the symbols we have related to in all cultures and at all times are the mythical hybrids; angels and mermaids. As humans, we desire to connect with the elements and have created symbols for this. Something we can understand collectively - wordless narratives, which enable everyone, regardless of background, to find keys to the essence of art. Both angels and mermaids are overused in sentimental, romantic depictions. Despite this, I have always been fascinated by the mermaid and being in another world, in order to endure and survive.



To the left, a fake mermaid at The British Museum © The Trustees of the British Museum. To the right: an angel in the story of Jonah and the whale. The image is from around the year 1400 in the area that is now Iran. Photo: unknown

Marit Benthe Norheim

Marit Benthe Norheim (b. 1960, Norway) resides in Denmark and has created public decorations in Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Greenland, Iceland, and the United Kingdom.

She was educated at the Vestlandets Kunstakademi, Bergen (1980–1984) and the Royal Academy of Arts, London (1984–1987), and is represented in several public collections, including the National Museum in Norway, Kunsthau Dresden in Germany, and Ny Carlsberg Fondet in Denmark.

She is currently exhibiting at the Norsk Billedhoggerforening in Oslo with the exhibition "My Ship Is Loaded with Life". The exhibition runs until March 3rd.