



PRIME MINISTER GRO HARLEM BRUNDTLAND

Opening of Exhibition of Norwegian Textile Works. Lithuanian State Museum of Applied Art, Vilnius, 19 March 1996.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

The Baltic struggle to regain independence has been called the "singing revolution". Many of the founding fathers of "Sajudis" were writers, philosophers, and artists. The man to lead Lithuania out of the Soviet Union was a professor of music and an expert on the great composer Ciurlionis. Culture and politics joined forces in Lithuania during the struggle for freedom and national self-determination.

This was also the flavour of your message to the outside world. Free and independent Lithuania presented itself with a cultural identity well preserved after decades of foreign attempts to water out traditions and heritage.

It is a pleasure for me to open this exhibition of Norwegian Textile Works. As Norway and Lithuania build new relations, we choose culture as one of our languages. Through cultural exchange we rediscover and define ourselves and others. We find a community of values and heritage, or come across the culturally unique.

Culture is the essence of human endeavour. And artists the listening posts at the edge of perception. This exhibition is a piece of Norwegian culture expressed through applied art. It displays some of our textile works, past and present.

The contemporary works, made by three of our foremost textile artists, have motifs rooted in Norwegian history and traditions. The past works include traditional weavings like the "åkle", which were used as bedspreads back in the old days but now are pinned to the wall as decorations. You will also find pictorial weavings and traditional folk costumes worn on festive occasions.

To assist me in the opening of this exhibition, we have invited two excellent musicians from Norway, Leif Rygg and Einar Mjølunes. They will add traditional flavour by performing folk songs from the Western part of Norway on the "harding" fiddle.

But before they take over with their music, let me thank all those in Norway and Lithuania who helped make this event possible. I now have the pleasure of declaring this exhibition of Norwegian textile works open.