

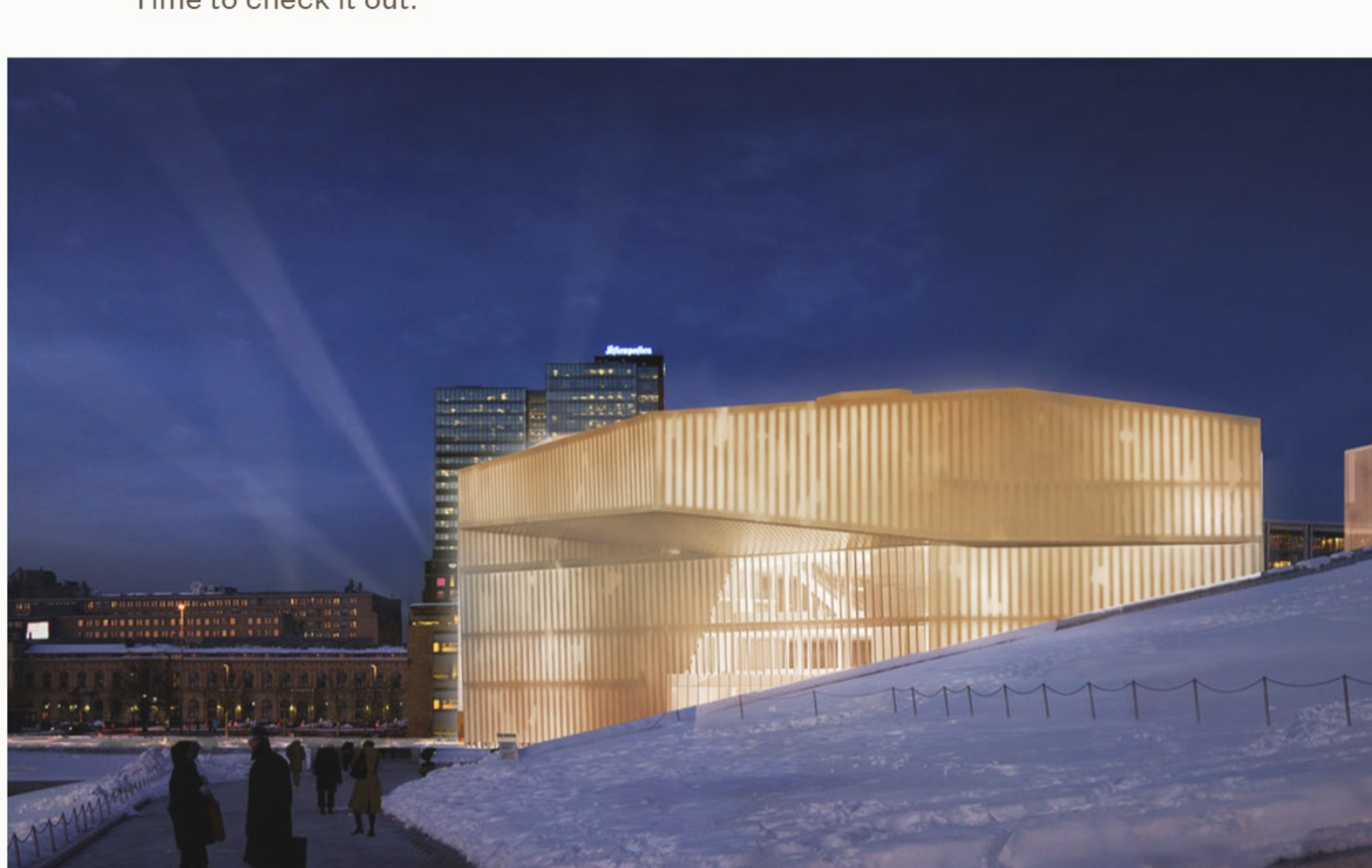
## Unexpected Oslo

IF OUR PLANET HAD A PERFECT PLACE, IT WOULD CERTAINLY BE NORWAY: WITH AN OIL-RICH ECONOMY, A SOLID SOCIAL SYSTEM AND THE HAPPIEST PEOPLE IN THE WORLD (ACCORDING TO THE WORLD HAPPINESS REPORT 2017), THE SCANDINAVIAN NATION IS THE ENVY OF THE GLOBE.



No wonder its capital Oslo is rapidly morphing from a tranquil, dormant city into a modern and cosmopolitan capital. See its booming new architecture: on the heels of the spectacular **Opera House** by Norwegian architects Snohetta and the futuristic **Barcode Buildings**, the waterfront area of Bjørvika is the buzzing theater for a grand plan that will see the completion of **Lambda**, the **New Munch Museum** by Spanish architect Juan Herreros, the new **National Gallery** by Kleihues+Kleihues, and the innovative **Deichman Library** by Lund Hagem Architects (with Atelier Oslo), which will glow at night like a beacon of modernity, by 2020.

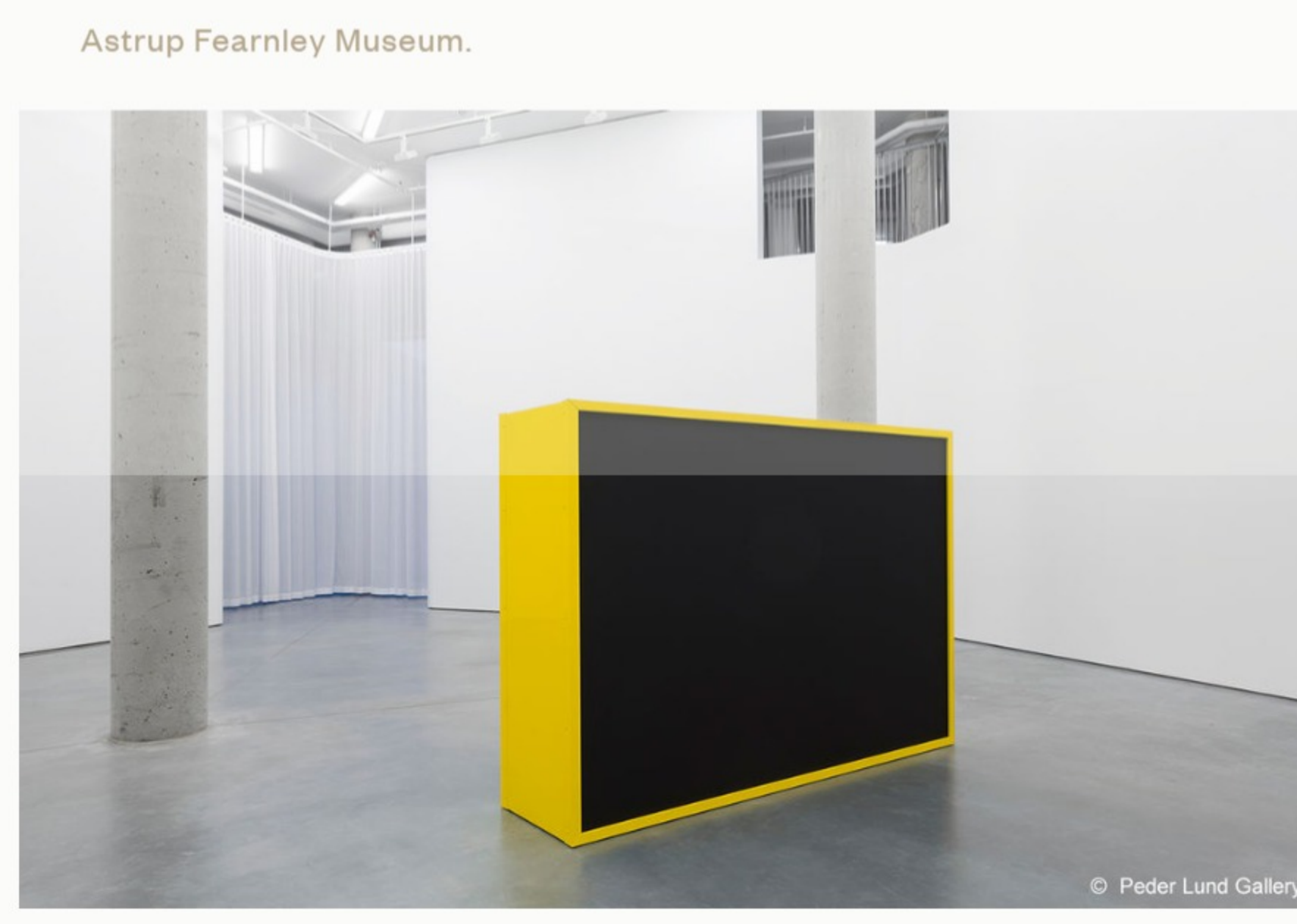
In the meantime multifunctional spaces, trendy bars and hip stores are redefining the urban vibe of the city and reviving once off-limit areas like Torggata. At the same time, the eco-friendly & sustainable Vulkan project, on the shores of the Akerselva river, has breathed new life into disused industrial buildings with hotels, schools, apartments and cultural centers; and the former working class district of Grünerløkka is now a fashionable destination for alternative living packed with street art, vintage boutiques, and lively bars and cafés. On top of all that, Oslo has been nominated European Green Capital 2019. Time to check it out.



Deichman Library.



Astrup Fearnley Museum.



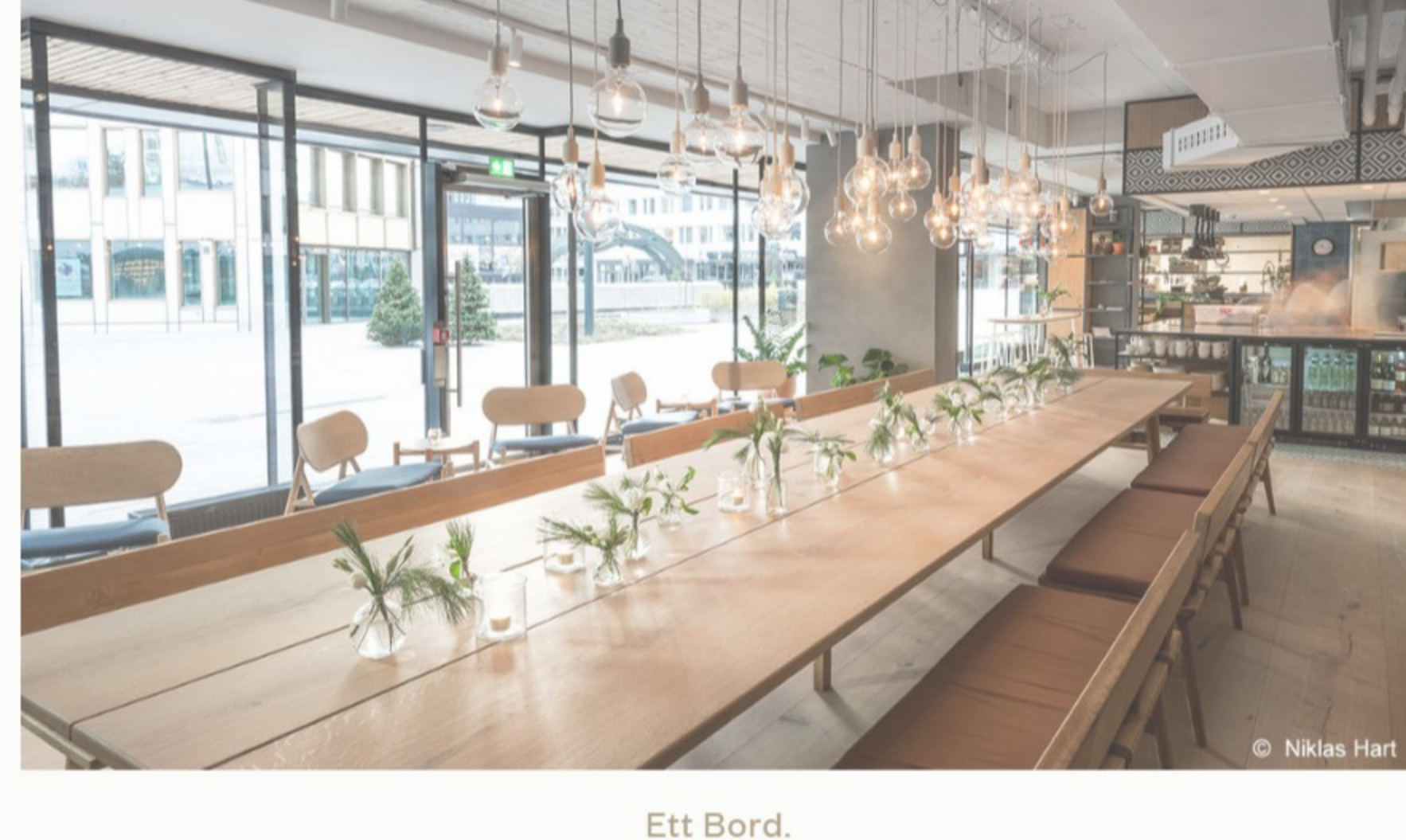
Peder Lund Gallery.

## ART & CULTURE

Head to the former docklands of Tjuvholmen, converted into a modern living/working/leisure district dotted with sea-view restaurants and cafés, for an immersion in contemporary art. Start at the sleek Renzo Piano-designed **Astrup Fearnley Museum** – a treasure trove of pieces by artists such as Damien Hirst and Jeff Koons – which regularly hosts exciting exhibitions. Continue by exploring the area's galleries, among the best in the city. Discover the next Norwegian wunderkind at the **Brandstrup Gallery**, view the work of international stars such as Richard Serra and Doug Aitken at the **Peder Lund Gallery**, or get acquainted with the work of both young and established European artists at **Gerhardson Gallery**, which also has another space in Berlin. Move on to Bjørvika to catch an international contemporary art show at **Kunsthall**, a non-profit space located in the Barcode Buildings. Or admire outstanding contemporary photography (like the amazing images by Jimmy Nelson or Nick Brandt) at **Willas Contemporary** in the city center. To feel the unique creative energy pervading the city, head to **Kulturhuset** in the Torggata area: this multi-storey space (with a bar and a café) hosts debates, story sams, concerts, ping-pong tournaments, movies and shuffleboard games, and attracts an eclectic crowd, from hipsters to housewives. For fresh inspiration, visit **Doga**, a center for design & architecture focusing on sustainable urban development and value creation, and boasting a delightful café serving some of the best vegan food in Oslo.

## EAT

"I grew up with meat and potatoes and little more," says a Norwegian friend, astounded by the present incarnation of Norwegian cuisine. Catching up with the New Nordic and farm-to-table movements, local gastronomy now serves up inventive dishes made with unusual ingredients, and the Michelin stars are raining on the city. Opened last fall by five chef friends, **Galt**, with a six course menu characterized by fresh produce and exciting flavor pairings has already earned its first Michelin star. It usurped the title of "most talked about" from **Maaemo**, the 3-star molecular cuisine giant where the waiting list is months long. Sample home-brewed beer and biodynamic dishes at **Kolonihagen Frogner**, hidden in a courtyard, where the atmosphere is warm and cozy. Enjoy impromptu conversations with new acquaintances and sublime local organic cuisine at **Ett Bord**, where you sit around a big communal table like at a family reunion minus the usual quarrels. And you might even be served by the son of the owner, a local TV star. For a fun stall-hopping expedition, try the **Mathallen Food Hall** in the new Vulkan area. Specialties range from French foie gras and Spanish tapas to Asian woks and Italian pizzas, but it is the stalls peddling Norwegian smoked fish, seafood, cheeses and cured meats from small local farms that are the real stars (there are also two beehives designed by Snohetta).



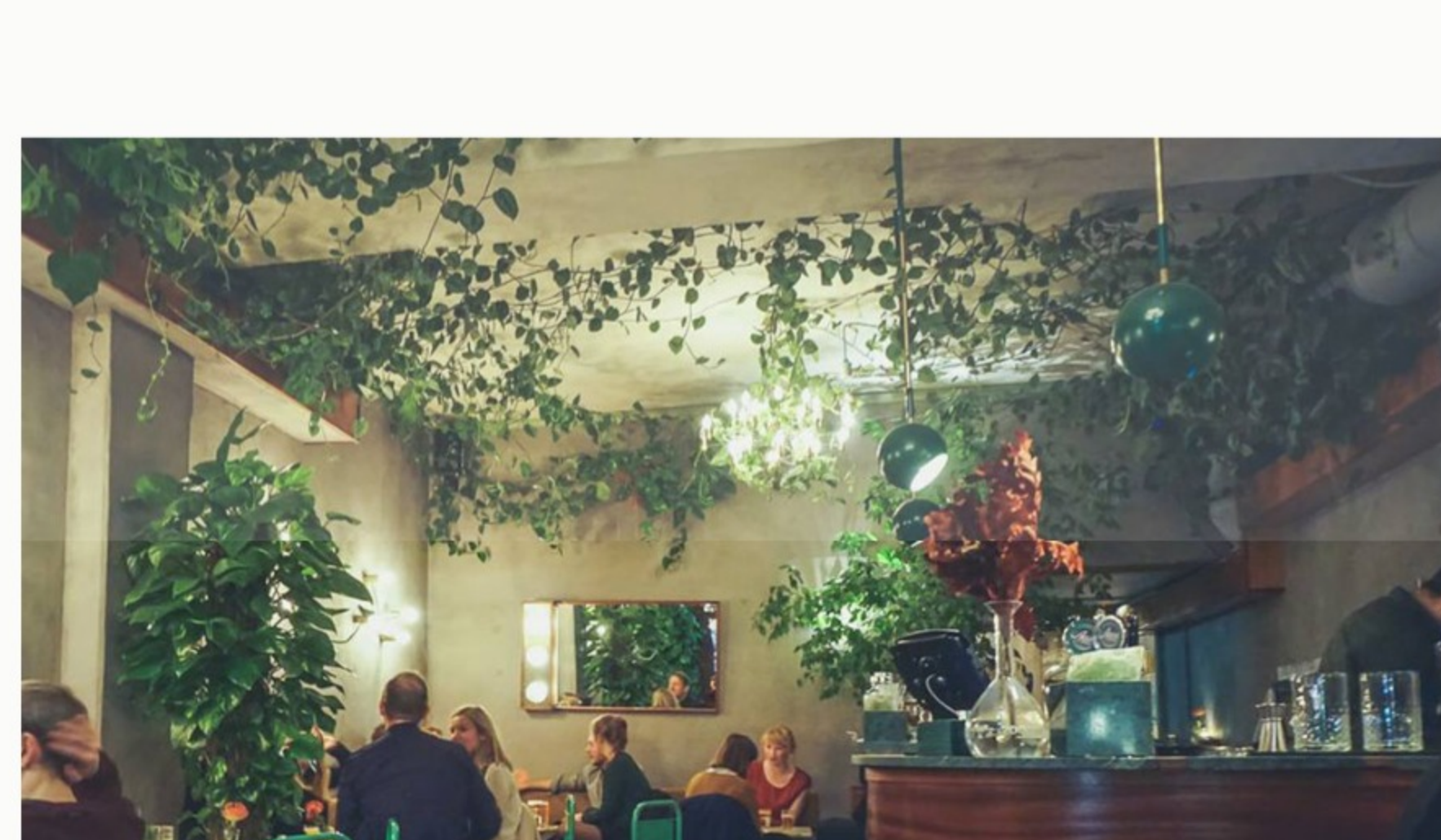
Ett Bord.



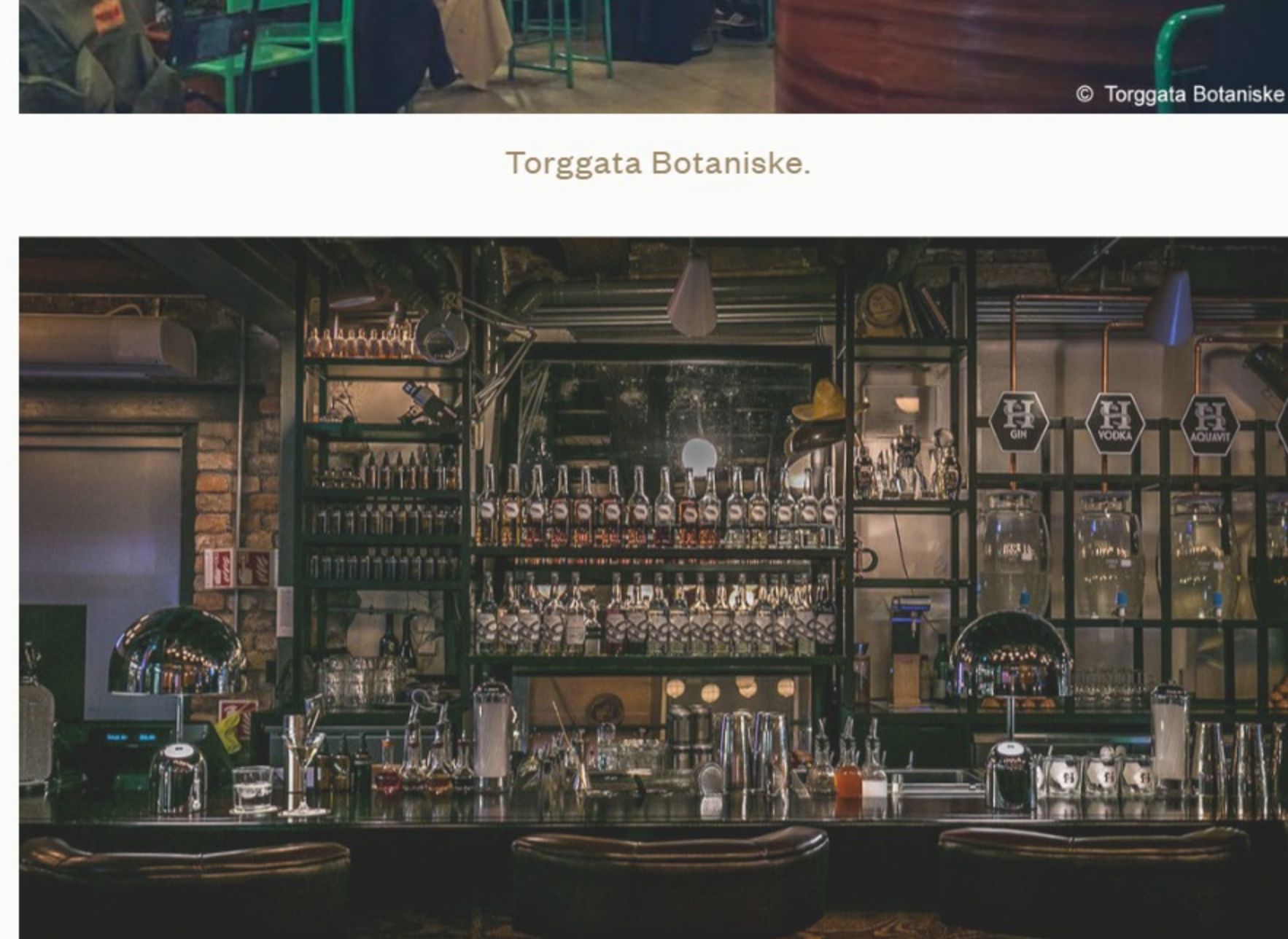
Kolonihagen Frogner.



Maaemo.



Torggata Botaniske.



Himkok.

## DRINK

The cocktail bar scene in Oslo is on a roll, and Youngstorg is the living proof. Take a walk down the lively street of Torggata (and surroundings) and your night will go on forever. At **Torggata Botaniske**, where creepers hang from the ceiling, drinks are prepared with fresh herbs grown on the spot. **Himkok**, rated among the 20 best bars in the world, has its own distillery, and the inventive cocktails are infused with Norwegian flavors such as seaweed, cloudberries and birch. Feel like you have stepped into a retro apartment at **Andre til Høyre**, three rooms with a different atmosphere, where drinks are served from trolleys. It shares its entrance with **Håndslag/Håndslakt**, which houses a butcher, a beer bar and a performance area. For minimalist décor and hip patrons try **Nannas Bar**, one of the new kids on the block. At **Gunnars Generasjonsbar**, open all day, organic breakfast is served until late afternoon: it is the perfect post-party venue to sit sipping a delicious Bloody Mary, and observing the eclectic clientele. In the same area, **Blå**, an unshakable Oslo institution hosting gigs by hip-hop jazz and R&B artists and the best Norwegian DJs is just across the river. **Ingensteds**, a mix between a club and a cultural center occupying a former textile factory, is also nearby.



YME Universe.

## SHOP

Norwegian designers are riding the Scandinavian fashion wave: pick up some key pieces at **F5 Store**, run by three brothers, themselves fashion designers. Or at **Ensemble**, a boutique in Grünerløkka featuring Scandi-labels and selected hip international brands. Wander through the three Snohetta-designed floors of **YME Universe** concept store, Oslo's answer to Colette in Paris or 10 Corso Como in Milan: It showcases sneakers galore, key pieces by the coolest international designers, as well as curated accessories and coffee table books (there is a café as well). For interior design objects, selected furniture, textiles and ceramics, all by Norwegian designers visit **Pur Norsk**, the ideal place to pick up a present (for yourself).



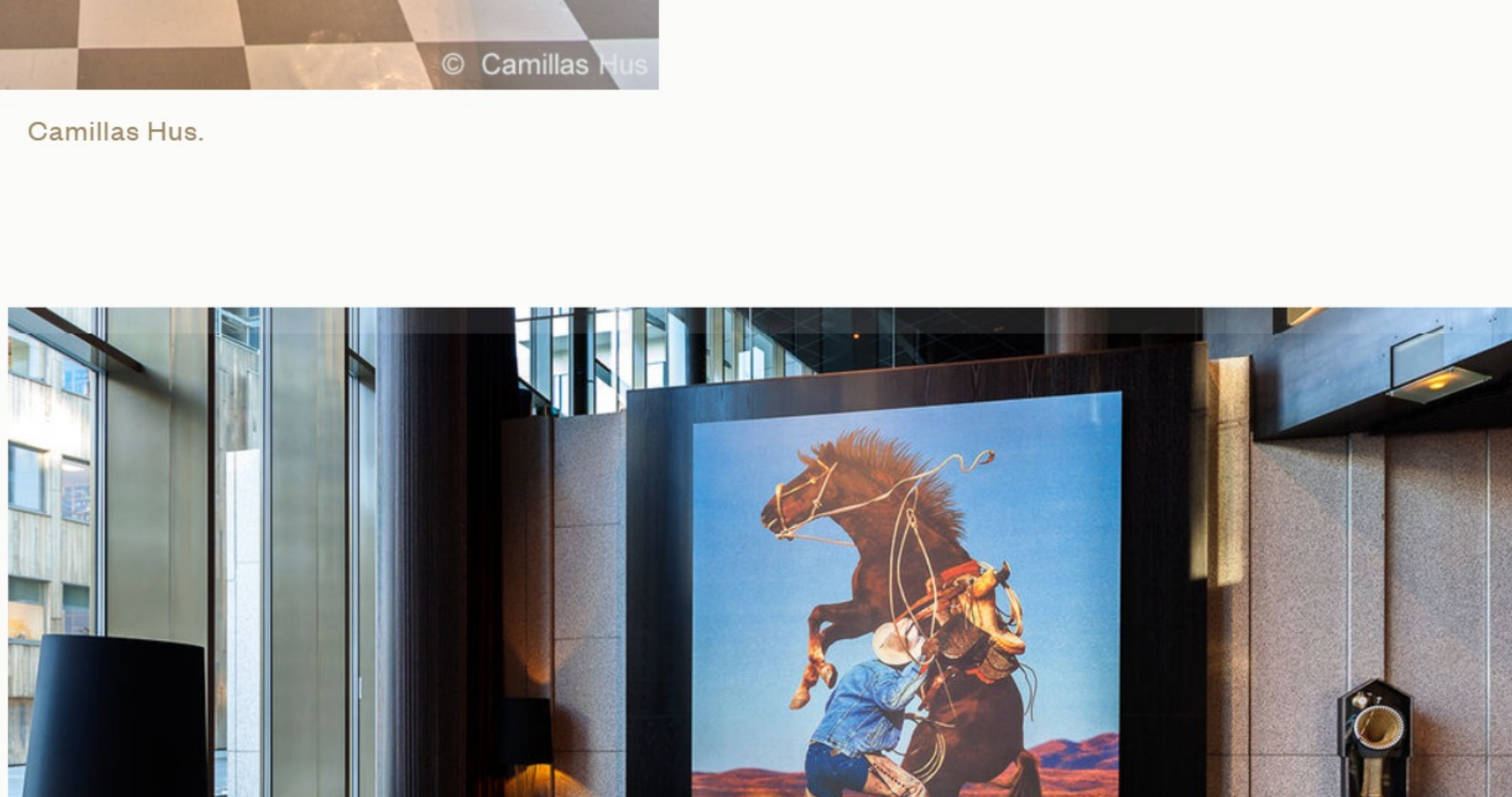
F5 Concept Store.



Camillas Hus.

## STAY

Join the Norwegian smart set and choose the 5 star **Hotel Continental**, run by the same family for four generations: Sunday brunch at elegant restaurant **Theaterkafeen** – loved by local actors and politicians – is a must; or stay at the nostalgia-infused **Grand Hotel**, where the banquet for the Nobel Peace Prize is held. Both hotels are a 5 minute walk from the Royal Palace. There is also a hidden gem in the vicinity: **Camillas Hus** is a delightful 7 room boutique hotel, once the residence of poet Camilla Collett, where each room is decorated with original antiques, and you feel like you are visiting a chic friend (its charming General Manager, Mario Rego De Sousa, has an encyclopedic knowledge of the city). Experience contemporary art from the owner's private collection – curated by Sune Nordgren, the former director of the National Museum – at **The Thief Hotel**, strategically located in Tjuvholmen next door to the contemporary art museum. Different concepts of hospitality, different atmospheres, but the overriding feeling is one of freshness. Like Oslo, the new Scandinavian capital to watch.



The Thief Hotel.

ARTICLE BY

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BACK