

At Expat in Denmark, we are entirely fond of Maren Uthaug's tiny figures, which you can enjoy every day on the back page of Politiken under the title: "[Stuff I did.](#)" Reading her strip in the morning make us reconcile with the Danish winter, Mondays, people texting on bikes and much more.

It is Danish humor at its best - but what is Danish humor? It is often described as dry, sarcastic, and as dark as this January day beneath the Scandinavian sky.

Danish humor is being either loved or hated by expats, but very seldom leave people indifferent.

We had the chance to meet Maren in her office for a chat about Danish humor, cultural barriers and much more...



Maren, you describe yourself as being "a product of a Norwegian mother, a Sami father, and a Danish childhood."

Do you think there is a difference between Danish and Norwegian humor?

Danish humor is much blunter and transgressive. You make fun of everything in Denmark: politicians, gender, sex, even your own kids. There is nothing sacred here.



I have been publishing in Norway too in a Norwegian newspaper, drawing about the Sami and the Norwegian culture. It is, for instance, difficult to laugh of Norwegian culture. Norwegians are very proud of their country. They are quite patriotic, so it makes it difficult to ironize about. I

believe my drawings were kind of controversial.

You know, humor depends very much on the ability of the person you laugh about to laugh at herself or himself too.

Otherwise, it doesn't work. Sami satire was not very welcome either even if I am myself half Sami. Norwegian people probably felt that I crossed some line.

If there is something a society is a bit touchy about, it might be tough to make fun of. For instance, I found it quite difficult to make fun of women in Sweden because of the strong focus on gender equality. But again, I am myself a woman; I am a feminist. I can still make fun of myself being a woman and a feminist.

So even in Scandinavia, you have got different cultural barriers concerning humor as well as different understandings of humor. In that sense, humor might be difficult to translate from one country to another.

But I enjoy publishing in Denmark, because I feel that my freedom is complete. There is no censorship at all.



Do you have some personal limits regarding what you make fun of?

Well, for example, I think Bubber is extremely funny. But I do not make fun of him because I ask myself what for? You have to remember that there is a person

behind the public figure and I do respect that. I try to act like a good person, to behave, you know. I have no need or intention to ridicule other people. I am trying to be clever in my humor.

The thing is that I usually make fun of myself first. It is a bit easier to make fun of people when you also make fun of yourself. It is easier to make fun of a group when you include yourself in this group. Like, women.



You often include your family in your strip. How do they react?

Well, they do not always like it. My children sometimes understand the humor in the strip, and sometimes they do not. They often simply think that it is embarrassing.



You have a very distinctive style, which reminds me of Japanese minimal strokes - a simple line but going to the essential. You do not waste time on details, do you?

I got the idea when I found out that I would rather use my sketch than my final drawings. I tend to simplify it much more today than when I started. I think that the more simple the line is, the more efficient

it gets. And I think it fits very well to the format of the newspaper.



How do you feel about translating your strip?

Well, it is tough to translate them into Norwegian or into English. I am not always completely satisfied with the translation. Some nuances get lost. Words and language have a great importance when it comes to humor. So, as an expat, you might consider learning Danish even though you do not plan on staying in Denmark for the rest of your life, otherwise you will lose a great opportunity to understand the Danish culture.



THANKS FOR SHARING,

MAREN!