

Erling Sandmo

Time for History

Tid for historie

Genre: Non-Fiction

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Photo: Universitetsforlaget

This is a book about the writing of history. It is written for a general audience, but of interest to students and professional historians alike. The history of historiography is an established genre, but *Time for History* is unusual in two respects.

First, it is concerned not with the varieties of contemporary historiography, its methods and results, but with the questions that unite the discipline: What can we know about the past? Who is history about? How do we perceive time as distance? What are the implications of the idea that the past is different from the present?

The book deals with the big questions of the writing of history, but it does so by means of example, by wonderful, exotic, and unexpected quotes and stories.

The joy of the past is a recurrent theme of *Time for History*, and an underlying answer to its ultimate question about what history is. History is not just knowledge, study, and work, but also the sense of amazement and strangeness, and the enjoyment of what is lost.

Time for History contrasts these themes with a series of brief essays, each dealing with an image representing the idea of posterity. These images function as a melancholic counterpoint to the main narrative, and they form an important part of the book as a study in uncertainty, erudition, and happiness.

Erling Sandmo is a professor of history at the University of Oslo. He is also a music critic and a popular lecturer and has several book publications to his name. His field of expertise includes criminal history, the cultural history of early modernity, the history of knowledge and the history of classical music.

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