PEOPLE BEHIND INFORMATICS

_an exhibition in memory of   _Ole-Johan Dahl   _Edsger W. Dijkstra   _Kristen Nygaard

_introduction

"...it is the human being alone whose past is the object of our discourse and questioning..."

Thomas Mann

Science is done by people. No matter how trivial this sounds, this is often forgotten, especially in the case of technical sciences, such as informatics. We are looking for the individual behind the work, not the "private person" with the habits of "everyman", but the creative individual, the "genius" acting behind the scientist's work.

In this exhibition we attempt to give a short overview of the life and scientific work of three great computing scientists: Ole-Johan Dahl, Edsger W. Dijkstra and Kristen Nygaard. All three were born around the beginning of the nineteen thirties and died in 2002. All three were among the brightest stars of early informatics (or computing science).

All three were strong individuals with very different views and styles. However, they also shared a number of similarities. They were uncompromising in their unremitting search for ever better solutions. All three were well and broadly educated and it seems that this education, despite the narrow focus of their work, provided the foundation for unprecedented results.