

THE NORWEGIAN VISUAL ARTISTS ASSOCIATION

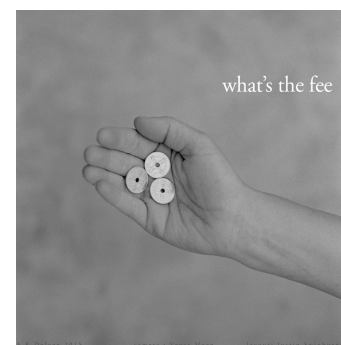
November 2016

The Norwegian Visual Artists Association (NBK) is a membership organization working to promote and support contemporary artists nationally and internationally. It was founded in 1888, inspired by the artist protest movement in Paris, to gain artists influence in the procurement committee of art purchases and exhibition opportunities and to initiate artists grants and scholarships by the state of Norway. This protest movement and the artists organizing themselves to have their voices heard, marks the beginning of the avant-garde art movement in Europe.

NBKs long-term commitment is to promote and secure the intellectual, social, legislative and economic interests of the visual artists. The government and parliament recognizes the organization as a negotiation and consultative body.

The main objective of NBK is to strengthen the arenas for contemporary art and improve the general working conditions for visual artist. Our strategic areas are:

- Professional development
- Policy making
- Programs and education
- Contemporary arts development and networks



AK Dolven, 2015

There are approximately 2,900 members in NBK (Norway has a population of 5,2 million). NBK is composed of 20 sub organizations: 14 regional organizations, 5 nation-wide skill-based associations and the Society for Younger Artists, UKS. Artists will normally be member of one regional organization and one or more skill-based organizations, depending on their artistic practice. An executive Committee of 6 members and a chairperson, which are elected by the General Assembly every second year, govern NBK. The administration consists of 12 employees.

NBK is responsible for the annual state exhibition – Høstutstillingen – the major national contemporary art show held virtually every year since 1882. A national jury selects the artwork for the exhibition. Members elect the jury of fellow artists for a two-year period. In 2016 we count the 129th autumn exhibition. It exhibits 96 works of 75 artists/artist groups, based upon 2545 applications. The autumn exhibition is by far the most visited art exhibition in Norway. <http://www.hostutstillingen.no/home/>

NBK also publish an art magazine called Billedkunst, with 7 editions a year. This is an magazine for professional artist, a journal and a magazine for a broader public. The magazines include news, art criticism, and are an important professional, economic and political point of reference, in the Norwegian art scene.

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NBK also allocates grants from the government, grants for artists programs as well as from funds administrated by NBK. Norway have a law on art purchases (1948) that states that the buyer shall pay a fee of 5% in addition to the price of the art work, provided the price is higher than NOK 2000. These funds are collected and returned to the artists, in the form of grants and scholarships for the new production of art. <http://www.kunstavgiften.no>

In addition to the activities carried out by NBK centrally, the sub organizations carry out extensive exhibition programs in their own galleries, as well as programs with travelling exhibitions on a regional or national level. Some of the skill-based organizations publish their own specialized magazines; and the regional organizations run art centres with an extensive program aimed to promote art throughout their region.

NBK has made several notable achievements in the recent years: It has promoted special tax legislation for the visual artist, increased grant budgets, promoted that visual artists should get paid an artist fee when exhibiting in a government funded gallery space or museum, promoted a legislation for the public display of art and implemented a new state institute for the promotion of Norwegian contemporary art abroad: Office for Contemporary Art (OCA).

Norway have a political conservative government at the moment. The few increases in the state budget, have gone to promote the commercial part of culture and to get private donors to chip in to increase the total of the budget for art and culture. NBK have been working together politically with the other organizations in the visual field of art, The Norwegian Association for Arts and Crafts (NK), Association of Free Photographers (FFF) and Sami Artists' Union (SDS).

FOCUS ON THE ARTISTS INCOME

Grants and scholarships

NBK have suggested a reform to strengthen and preserve the grants we have today, by promoting a 3-year scheme to increase the level of each 1-5 years and 10-year working grants – an increase up to 50% of the average Norwegian income. The scheme also states that the grants should follow the same index rate as the state employees, it being state grants. While the level of these grants in 1963 amounted to 81,1% of the average Norwegian, it only amounted to 40,7% in 2014. This is a steep drop in the real value of each grant. The reform will set a new standard and make sure that the amount is held on an adequate level.

Last year we succeeded with the first year of the scheme, in the negotiation between the government and their supporting parties, which raised each work grant from NOK 210 000,- (23 278 Euro) to NOK 230 000,- (25 495 Euro). The don't know the outcome of the budget negotiations for 2017, but both the supporting parties have taken the scheme into their alternative budgets, so we hope to raise the level up to NOK 250 000,- (27 712 Euro). The negotiation started in fact today!

Paying artists – #Utstillingsavtalen – the Norwegian campaign to get more income from exhibiting in publicly funded galleries and museums

The last two years we have increased the focus on the artist fees in publicly funded museums and galleries, by promoting an increase in their budgets and introducing a new standard of exhibition

contract. Since 2008 we have been working to get exhibition fees (utstillingshonorar) in addition to the remuneration agreement (utstillingsvederlag) we already have with the state, and provide the artists with funding for the exhibition costs.

A pilot program for exhibition fees: In 2013 we got state funding of a pilot program run by the Cultural Department, to test the exhibition fees and make a model on how to measure the fee size and what should count. By now, 24 State run museums and galleries have been pointed out and have been through the pilot program. Each museum got NOK 500 000,- (55 424 Euro) over two years, and the annual sum for the pilot is now NOK 6 million (665 092 Euro) for 12 institutions.

In addition, the institutions are already bound by an agreement between us (the visual artists organizations) and the State, called "Statens Utstillingsvederlagsavtale". This agreement on remuneration is based on a tariff. There are a little over 40 institutions bound by the agreement and which can be implemented in the exhibition fee scheme, after the pilot is ended and a new agreement is accepted. The evaluation of the pilot has begun in October 2016, and we will await the results and then go for a full financed claim, to include all institutions financed by the state. The State have suggested to keep the funding for the exhibition fees in 2017.

Reference group: In 2014, we asked for, and got a reference group for the exhibition fee pilot, appointed by the Cultural Department. Our chairwoman, Hilde Tørdal, was appointed together with Lise Stang Lund of the Norwegian Crafts Organization, director of Sørlandets Art Museum, Lars Grambye and North-Norwegian Arts Centre leader Svein Ingvoll Pedersen. The reference group have formulated a paper to suggest how the exhibition fee can be measured and implemented, with a fixed minimum fee and negotiable fees based on the work.

Remuneration: The remuneration agreement "Statens Utstillingsvederlagsavtale" from 1978, is ready for renewal, and the artist organizations which hold the agreement have all decided in their general assemblies this year, to renegotiate. We are now working to get background information and collect facts, to be sure that our suggestions will benefit the artists and at the same time be easier to use, calculate and understand. The old agreement is based on the prizes of the works in the exhibition, which is very hard for the institutions to budget in advance. It is looked upon as tricky to uphold and we are aiming for a simpler tariff that also are more equal, as we know male artists get higher prices for their works of art than female.

Campaigning exhibition fees in the new standard contract

In the fall of 2015 we made a campaign with the slogan "Lønn for arbeid" directly translated "payment for work". The campaign can be followed on facebook under "utstillingsavtalen", on twitter under #utstillingsavtalen and on the website www.utstillingsavtalen.no. The campaign promotes "utstillingsavtalen", directly translated "the exhibition agreement" and its goal is to make a new standard contract in three steps, and at the same time promote to raise the budgets of the institutions, provided that they follow the agreement:

1. Exhibition fee (Utstillingshonorar)
2. Implement the remuneration agreement we already have with the state called "Statens Utstillingsvederlagsavtale" from 1978 (Utstillingsvederlag)
3. Exhibition expenses (Produksjonskostnader)

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The four artist organizations within visual arts in Norway are continuing the campaign in 2016, but NBK wanted to implement the agreement regionally as well, where the medium sized galleries for contemporary art are and where most of the activity for contemporary artist are being held. These three categories of institutions are called art halls (Kunsthall), art centres (Kunstsenter) and art associations (Kunstforening) and they have their funding from the municipalities and the counties. Some also get funding from the state, and some from The Norwegian Arts.

Other goals

Improve the social security scheme, provide our members with our own insurance policy, promote artist rights and freedom of speech, protect the national and international copyright treaties and agreements, and to facilitate international exchange within the visual arts.

The situation in Norway now

The former Governments goal for the cultural politics has been to raise the economy in the cultural field, - up to 1% of the national budget. This has resulted in a heavier budget for culture, doubling it in the last eight years.

However this increased budget has not improved the conditions for the individual visual artists, in fact visual artists have seen huge cuts in their income – 11,2% between 2008 and 2013. Norwegians in general got in the same period of time a 23% increase in their general income.

We have these facts from a big survey on artist economy in early January last year. Because the visual artists came out as the artist group with by far the lowest income from their work, we have had much backing in facts for our arguments on how to better the situation for professional artists. The politicians are slowly starting to take in the fact that our situation is the most pressing to address and find solutions for.

Since the conservative government won the election in 2013, the cultural budget to promote Norwegian artists abroad have been cut to half its size. The same government began their reign with a proposal to cut all our long term working grants (10-years for established and senior artists), but after a rally started by NBK, and supported by all the other artist organizations of Norway we got the collaboration parties to vote against the cut. Ever since then they have not proposed cuts in grants and the amount and level of support are quite the same as when they started. Arts critics have gotten grants and that is important. As it stands now the current government and the opposition supports artists fees in addition to the standing remuneration agreement, and since this proposal is aimed to better the economy of visual artists, it is about time.

Representation from the Norwegian National Committee, at the General Assembly in Berlin is:

Hilde Tørdal

Chairwoman/President, NBK

The Norwegian Visual Artists Association



"Olympia" by Jan Freuchen, an artistic commentary for NBKs campaign #utstillingsavtalen in 2015.