

Association of Norwegian Visual Artists – Annual report

The Association of Norwegian Visual Artists (NBK) is a membership organization working to promote and support contemporary visual artists nationally and internationally. With its 20 sub organizations and 3 000 members nationwide, the association represents a significant number of professional artists in a country of 5.2 million inhabitants. The association is as such recognized by the government as a negotiation and consultive body regarding issues related to art and artists conditions.

NBK's main purpose and long term commitment has for many decades been «*to promote and secure the intellectual, social, legislative and economic interests of professional visual artists*» – which means that the major concern of the association is, to relate to the specific problems and challenges the visual artists are facing in their daily work, as artists.

Administrative tasks

The Autumn Exhibition is Norway's longest-running exhibition of contemporary art, organized for the first time in 1882. The exhibition marked the beginning of unionisation of visual artists in Norway. As a national annual contemporary art event the exhibition has received state funding since 1884, albeit is artist-run and juried according to the principles of peer review. NBK hosts the Autumn Exhibition at Kunstneres Hus, where it has been held since 1930.

The works are selected by a jury elected by NBK members, making the juried responsibility of this exhibition the last remaining artist driven one at a national level.

The total number of applications for the exhibition in 2019 was 2 344, and the jury selected 91 works from 74 artists / artists groups. The 132rd Autumn Exhibition was held from September 7th–October 13th, and was seen by nearly 22 000 people.

NBK is responsible for allocating grants from three different sources of funding: Government Grants for Artists as well as grants from the Norwegian Visual Artists Fund (BKV) and the Relief Fund for Visual artists (BKH). The grants are awarded on the basis of artistic quality and activity – by a selection committee elected by NBK members.

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The grant division oversees the grant procedures at an administrative level, including the procedures for both artists' grants and project support.

Billedkunst – a professional journal published by the Association of Norwegian Artists – has a circulation of 3 860 with 4 editions per year. This year has seen the journal reaching a wider audience, with launches of each edition in major Norwegian cities, including panel discussions and artist talks.

In addition to the activities carried out on a central level from the administration of ten people, some sub organizations carry out 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 visual art throughout their region.

Exhibition remuneration

The visual artists associations have an agreement with the Norwegian state since 1978 on the exhibition remuneration for publicly funded exhibitions. The intention of the remuneration agreement is to compensate artists and craftsmen for the display of works in the artist's possession, as well as a compensation for the artist not being able to dispose of the work during the exhibition period. According to the agreement, the remuneration is calculated on the basis of the number of works, the duration of the exhibition and the estimated value of the works. The remuneration is to be paid individually to the artist by the institution exhibiting the works.

Extensive research conducted by the visual artists organisations has revealed that there is a breach of agreement happening on a large scale. The artists are not being compensated for exhibitions.

The Associations of Norwegian Visual Artists are entering renegotiation with the government concerning the agreement, with a new model for exhibition remuneration.

Artists grants

In 2015 the Association for Norwegian Visual Artists suggested the government implement a three-year salary reform for artists work grants given by the State. The plan was to increase the level of each 1–5 year, 10-year working grants and an older scheme called *guaranteed income* – to equal 50 percent of the average Norwegian annual salary. The scheme also stated that the grants should follow the same index rate as the state employees, in the regulations for State grants. Last year the reform finally reached 50 per cent of the average income, and the grants was increased to

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match this year's index rate. However, the need to secure an automatic index rate regulation of State grants remains.

This year saw an increase in state artists grants by 37. NBK has advocated for an increase of 100.

On behalf of the Association of Norwegian Visual Artists,

Ruben Steinum
Chair