



**Konstnärernas
Riksorganisation.**

On 6 October 2026 The Artists' Association of Sweden, together with the Danish Artists' Association BKF and the International Association of Art, invite you to the Symposium:

The power of art

– Artistic Freedom, Fair Conditions and Democratic Resilience in Europe

PROGRAMME:

Time: 13.00 - 17.00

Place: Malmö, [Konstmuseet i Kungsparken](#)

The invited speakers will talk about the power of art from various perspectives. When authoritarian regimes across the globe become increasingly good at using art and culture for their undemocratic agendas, how can we build strategies to counter that? In these times, we see how the military budgets are increasing, and the rhetoric is getting more and more dystopian regarding external threats / preparedness / defense / willingness to defend the national state. How are artists in Europe addressing these issues, and what actions are taken on a political level to ensure democracy and artistic freedom?

13.00 - 13.10 Welcome and introduction of the day

Sara Edström, chairperson of the Artists' Association of Sweden and Marie Thams, chairperson of the Danish Artists' Association.

13.10 - 14.30 The soft power

Speakers:

[Martin Gelin](#)

[Skinder Hundal](#)

[Sonia Boyce](#)

When authoritarian regimes across the globe become increasingly good at using art and culture for their undemocratic agendas, how can we build strategies to counter that? In his book "Rules of Attraction: Why Soft Power Matters in Hard Times", the journalist and writer Martin Gelin describes how governments in South Korea, Turkey, Japan, Nigeria, as well as Ukraine, France and Great Britain use the power of art to convey an image and a story of who they are.

Skinder Hundal recently served as the Global Arts Director for the British Council, and in 2023-2024, Skinder was the Commissioner for the British Pavilion featuring Sir John Akomfrah.



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The layout:

13.10 - 13.25 Martin Gelin

13.25 - 13.40 Skinder Hundal

13.40 - 13.55 Sonia Boyce

14.00 - 14.30 A talk with Martin, Skinder and Sonia moderated by Sara Edström

14.30 - 14.45 Coffee break**14.45 - 15.45 The hard power****Speakers:**

[Simone Aaberg Kærn](#)

[Kathrin Maurer](#)

In these times we see how the military budgets are increasing and the rhetoric is getting more and more dystopian regarding external threats / preparedness / defense / willingness to defend the national state.

The Danish artist Simone Aaberg Kaern is also a trained pilot. Flying is for her a metaphor for individual freedom. Her projects often take place in open airspace, traditionally an arena of war and politics, but in Kærn's work also a space of unlimited freedom, equality and sisterhood. With topics of gender, war, politics, and identity, often presented in provocative works, Kærn challenges both politicians, the viewer – and gravity!

Kathrin Maurer is professor for culture and technology at the University of Southern Denmark. She is known for her research on surveillance technology, drones, discourses of war, and visual culture.

The layout:

Panel talk moderated by Marie Thams, chairperson of the Danish Artists' Association

15.45 - 16.00 The power of artistic freedom and The power of fair working conditions

The Joint Declaration 'Europe for Culture – Culture for Europe' was co-signed by the leaders of the European Commission, European Parliament, and Council of the EU on 18 June 2026. This marks the first time the EU institutions will unite behind common political commitments for culture. We will give a short introduction to the now ongoing process to make this declaration come into practice with the EU:s Artists' Charter. It will state fundamental principles, guidance, and commitments for fair working conditions.



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16.00 - 17.00 The power of the political imaginary

The Swedish Art Council, together with the Centre for Art and the Political Imaginary, has been organizing the learning project: Artists' organising in times of upheaval, during 2026. The seminar series is based on the art sector in Sweden learning from 5 countries that have experienced transformative political changes in recent years, each affecting the art field differently: Hungary, Slovakia, Poland, Slovenia, and the Netherlands. The seminar series examines which political shifts have occurred, how cultural strategies and cultural policy directions have changed under different political leaderships, and what strategies artists and art organisations have developed to respond to—and act within—these changes.

We will hear from Mick Wilson, Professor of Art, Director of Doctoral Studies at HDK-Valand, University of Gothenburg, and co-chair of the Centre for Art and the Political Imaginary, and two of the participants from the project.

Szabolcs KissPál lives in Budapest, Hungary. His main field of interest is the intersection of new media, visual arts and social issues. He taught and held workshops in eleven countries mostly in Europe, and he is currently an associate professor and head of the Intermedia Department at the HUFA Budapest.

Olja Triaška Stefanović is a visual artist, researcher and Associate Professor at the Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Bratislava, where she leads the Studio of Photography and Critical Practice. Her work focuses on visual culture, political memory, collectivity and the role of photography within socio-political transformation. Working across photography, video and archival research, she examines how images operate within public discourse and the political imaginary. Her projects have been presented internationally, and her work connects artistic research with contemporary political realities in Central and Southeast Europe.

The layout:

16.00 - 16.10 Mick Wilson gives an introduction to the project: [Artists' organising in times of upheaval](#).

16.10 - 16.45 A conversation with Mick Wilson, Szabolcs KissPál and Olja Triaška Stefanović moderated by Sara Edström.

16.45 - 17.00 Closing words

By Sara Edström, chairperson of the Artists' Association of Sweden and Marie Thams, chairperson of the Danish Artists' Association.