

MEDIA RELEASE

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osloBIENNALEN FIRST EDITION

An ongoing programme of art in public space

Conceived by Eva González-Sancho Boderó and Per Gunnar Eeg-Tverbakk

Oslo, Norway

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Autumn 2020 programme

A selection of encounters with art in public space and the public sphere

OSLO, Norway — The biennial team is delighted to announce details of plans for its fall programme, which continues to investigate the subtle and myriad ways in which people encounter art in public space and the public sphere.

The autumn programme begins with the expansion of the OSV. Oslo Collected Works sculpture pavilion in Økern. It now includes a new integrated sound work, Tverrsum, a collaboration with composer Jan Martin Smørdal that pays homage to *Il Porcellino* (The Wild Boar).

The programme continues with the second of *Rose Hammer's National Episodes*, a series of art productions inspired by often unknown aspects related to key events in Norwegian history. The eight-part radio play, *The Radical Flu*, has an unexpected connection with the coronavirus pandemic, drawing parallels between historical coincidences in Norway in 1918 and our current situation.

The addition of handwritten letters offers an evocative new element in Mette Edvardsen's *Time has fallen asleep in the afternoon sunshine*. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the living books have not been available for readings. Instead, the living books have started to write letters to one other. Sent via post, these transmit an intimacy similar to that conveyed between a book and reader (or listener).

This autumn also sees the publication of a book of photographs by Katja Høst documenting the iconic Y-Blokka. The building, designed by Erling Viksjø with integrated artworks by Carl Nesjar and Pablo Picasso, was damaged during the 2011 terrorist attacks and was demolished over the summer.

Also, as part of the ongoing KORO funded project, Dugnad Days, Mônica Nador and Bruno Oliveira will activate *Another Grammar for Oslo* to share the stories of local residents in the traditionally working-class neighbourhood of Sletteløkka.

Further to these encounters, past and current documentation on the activities of the biennial can be accessed via its [website](#). It is also possible to follow updates on biennial programming and artists projects by subscribing to its newsletter [here](#).

osloBIENNALEN FIRST EDITION is financed by Oslo Agency for Cultural Affairs.

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osloBIENNALEN FIRST EDITION autumn 2020 programme

A selection of encounters with art in public space and the public sphere

OSV. Oslo Collected Works | *Tverrsum*

“OSV. is a kind of museum without walls that moves into the traffic and continuously changing surroundings at Økern.”



What is a collection? Where does it begin and where does it end? Urban renewal, zoning plans and heavy construction equipment are readily apparent in much of Oslo, especially in the Økern neighbourhood. This is where you'll find OSV. (Oslo samlede verk, meaning 'Oslo's Collected Works'), in amongst brand-new office buildings and old industrial sites about to be razed.

OSV. consists of a series of pamphlets and a gradually evolving sculpture pavilion where artists Jan Freuchen, Sigurd Tenningen and Jonas Høgli Major explore art collections and phenomena that mark our public space.

In October, OSV. expanded its sculpture pavilion with a new sculpture and accompanying publication. The title of the concrete and bronze sculpture is *Tverrsum* (loosely translated as 'The Addend') and the work features an integrated sound recording, composed in collaboration with composer Jan Martin Smørdal. Smørdal has collected sounds from different sites across Oslo, which have been combined into a composition that will play continuously until the pavilion is eventually dismantled.

Tverrsum pays homage to *Il Porcellino* (The Wild Boar), a copy of Pietro Tacca's original sculpture in Florence, which until recently was featured in the sculpture pavilion. *Il Porcellino* has now returned to its home at Slemdal School in Oslo.

Further information and details on the evolving history and expansion of the sculpture pavilion can be found on osloBIENNALEN's [website](#).

Rose Hammer | National Episodes: The Radical Flu

“The metaphor of the sick body and the healthy body is abundantly used by Fascism; the ‘foreign’ invader (the virus) is responsible for the contamination of a mythic original, ‘pure’ body. Since time immemorial, in every sort of plague, there has been the need to blame an Other for the disgrace of the mainstream community.”



In *National Episodes: The Radical Flu: A Radio Play*, time is turned back to the year 1918 when Norway is experiencing the worldwide epidemic called the Spanish flu (H1N1 virus), while the last shot fired in World War I is imminent and Russia is well on her way into her first year of revolution.

The play starts as the epidemic sweeps across Norway and the rest of the world. Fascism is on the rise, along with ideological metaphors such as the idea that a sick body is a symptom of a sick society, metaphors that are set against notions of a pure, mythical ideal under threat. As the plague spreads, so do these often-authoritarian ideologies.

Rose Hammer describes how the project began: “We started working on this piece in September 2019, after an idea of adapting the 1947 novel *The Plague* by Camus (and the 1965 opera edition by Roberto Gerhard) to the 1918 epidemic of the Spanish Flu that swept Norway and the world. The recent, traumatic coronavirus pandemic gave a twist to the production, turning it into an urgent, real time play, involving the unpredictable and the real.”

In *The Radical Flu*, we meet artists Gustav Vigeland, Edvard Munch and his sister Inger in Oslo (then known as Kristiania) during the first year of the plague, and, over the course of the radio play’s eight episodes, become better acquainted with historical feminists, politicians, clergy, authority figures and other celebrities. The unexpected connection with the coronavirus pandemic draws parallels between historical coincidences in our current situation and in Norway in 1918.

“For this production, *Rose Hammer* carefully considers relatively unknown stories at the origin of mainstream notions of identity, nationality, and history, in order to construct a counter narrative, and to present it following the rules of Brechtian agitprop: with explicit, clearly formulated political positions, non-hierarchical dynamics, and a reductio ad absurdum of notions such as professionalism, virtuosity, and entertainment. The presentations are always site and context specific.”

The series, produced by the collective artist persona *Rose Hammer* for osloBIENNALEN First Edition, will be broadcast via radiOrakel, the world's oldest feminist radio station. Further information can be found on osloBIENNALEN's [website](#) and also via www.theradicalflu.org.

Katja Høst | Y-Blokka (Orfeus)

“Høst’s photographs reveal how buildings age with time and history... these are architectural photographs that allow the experience of time as something irreversible which leaves its imprint... The best antidote to kitsch is an historical awareness.”

—Kjetil Ansgar Jakobsen



What decides whether a building is worth protecting? Over the past few years, debate has raged as to whether the Y-Blokka, designed by Erling Viksjø with integrated artworks by Carl Nesjar and Pablo Picasso, would be torn down or preserved. According to the arguments in favour of demolition, not only is the Y-Blokka “grim” and “brutal,” it would be too difficult to protect against further terror attacks and it does not meet today’s utilitarian needs. Yet before it was damaged in the 2011 terror attack, the Directorate for Cultural Heritage argued that the building should be protected. The arguments in favour of preserving the building declared it a rare example of the Brutalist style of architecture, as well as a unique monument to the age of Social Democracy.

Now, mostly demolished, the Y-Blokka is history.

Katja Høst’s documentation of the building’s final years are now contained within a book of more than 70 photographs, published by Orfeus in collaboration with osloBIENNALEN. Twenty-four of these images formed her work, *Oslo*, and were launched into public space as postcards last October, as part of osloBIENNALEN’s fall programme. These postcards are still available, free to the public, in various spaces around Oslo.

Although Høst’s photographs of the block show traces of the terror attack, it is not the effects of the bomb that are her main preoccupation; she hoped her photographs would raise questions about the meaning of collective memory and how it is perpetuated.

In addition to the photographs, the book features a foreword by Tone Hansen, director of Henie Onstad Kunstsenter, as well as four essays by architect Jan Digerud, historian Kjetil A. Jakobsen, curator Per Gunnar Eeg-Tverbakk, and art historian and critic Line Ulekleiv, discussing the architecture, art, and historical backdrop for this iconic building.

The [book launch](#) will take place in Oslo at Myntgata 2 on Thursday, 5 November, from 5 to 8 pm.

Mette Edvardsen | *Time has fallen asleep in the afternoon sunshine*

“Reading is a solitary affair. Visual art can be experienced collectively. Theatrical art addresses its audience, and music and film appealingly let us choose whether we want to be together or alone in our art experience. Only books insist on solitude, by engaging us one by one. Literature’s negation of the collective is relentless and books will always require time and focus in exchange for their content. The inaccessible nature of literature puts it in a special place in the hierarchy as something exalted.”

—Frøydis Århus



What is a book? Is it the cover, the paper, the typeface, the language type, the sentences or the words? If we turn the question around, we might ask where a book ends. Mette Edvardsen’s project *Time has fallen asleep in the afternoon sunshine* consists of a library of living books, a reading room, an exhibition, a workspace, a publisher, a bookshop. The project was initiated in 2010 and has since 2019 been part of osloBIENNALEN FIRST EDITION. Now a new element is added to the project: the handwritten letter.

Inspired by the 1953 novel *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury, the story of a society where books are prohibited and burnt, so people learn books by heart so they can pass them on orally, in Mette Edvardsen’s *Time has fallen asleep in the afternoon sunshine — A library of living books*, a group of performers have each memorized a book they themselves have chosen. Together, they make up a library of living books, which members of the public can experience in one-to-one situations.

Like books, personal letters are also a solitary affair. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the living books have not been available for readings since last winter, however a new element has emerged in the project. The living books have started to write letters to one other. These handwritten letters sent via post transmit a similar intimacy as that conveyed between a book and reader (or listener). The materiality of a letter, the intimacy of traces left by the hand, and its physical travel through space and time is also emphasised by the personal investment and commitment of both writer and reader. In many ways, these letters stand in opposition to the digital codes that move through fibre cables from screen to screen in the shape of emails. While a private letter, especially one that is handwritten, reminds us that fiction in general could be considered a similar communication from author to reader.

These handwritten letters can be read by the public in the library in Myntgata between 26 November and 6 December 2020.

Mônica Nador and Bruno Oliveira | *Another Grammar for Oslo*

“Play can be considered as a social meeting place in which the rules are set by the players or insiders according to a given tradition. Social conventions such as status, gender and cultural identities are reaffirmed, challenged, tested, changed or reorganized. It is not likely to have a goal in itself; doing the activity is the goal. It may or may not lead to concrete results.”

—Deise Faria Nunes



Who decides which narratives will be preserved for posterity? Our local libraries are full of books, but perhaps very few of them are about a life that resembles our own. Brazilian artists Mônica Nador and Bruno Oliveira’s project *Another Grammar for Oslo* highlights the city’s many, often hidden and invisible, stories.

The artists encourage local communities to use art to explore and share their experiences and life stories through drawing, stencil prints and debates, all culminating in one big story; a story unlike any other. To date, close to 50 workshops have been held in various locations in Oslo.

This autumn, as part of the ongoing KORO funded project, Dugnad Days, Mônica Nador and Bruno Oliveira have been invited to work with the architects Alexander Eriksson Furunes, Mattias Josefsson and Maria Årthun to produce several new workshops in the traditionally working-class neighbourhood of Sletteløkka, and now home to a diverse community of people from a variety of different backgrounds.

Dugnad Days is a collaboration between the residents of Sletteløkka, Bydel Bjerke and the architects to build a community centre in Linderudsletta 13. Through various workshops, *Another Grammar for Oslo* will activate local stories, preserving the history and memories of those involved or affected by the project.

NOTES TO EDITORS

Mette Edvardsen | *Time has fallen asleep in the afternoon sunshine*

The work of Mette Edvardsen (1970, Norway) is situated within the performing arts, dance and choreography. Although her work explores other media and formats, such as video, books and writing, her interest is always focused on the relationship to the performing arts as a practice and a situation. Based in Brussels since 1996, she has worked as a dancer and performer for a number of companies, and developed her own work since 2002. A retrospective of her work was presented at Black Box theatre in Oslo in 2015. In 2010, she initiated the project *Time has fallen asleep in the afternoon sunshine*, which refers to a quote from the Ray Bradbury novel *Fahrenheit 451* (1953), to develop memorisation as a practice and ongoing process. For further details on the subject of Mette Edvardsen's work, we invite you to read Frøydis Århus' essay, *Non-Material Literature*, commissioned for osloBIENNALEN FIRST EDITION, which can be [accessed here](#).

Rose Hammer | *National Episodes: The Radical Flu*

Rose Hammer is an artistic persona consisting of twenty artists created as a response to an invitation from osloBIENNALEN to create a work in public space. *Rose Hammer* aims to escape the logic of the individual artist, becoming instead a transnational, transgenerational, and transdisciplinary persona. The group carefully considers relatively unknown stories at the origin of mainstream notions of identity, nationality, and history, in order to construct a counter narrative, and to present it following the rules of Brechtian agitprop: with explicit, clearly formulated political positions, non-hierarchical dynamics, and a reductio ad absurdum of notions such as professionalism, virtuosity, and entertainment. The presentations are always site- and context specific. *Rose Hammer*, are, in no particular order: Kim Svensson, Emilie Birkeland, Élise Guerrier, Alma Braun, Mattias Hellberg, Niels Munk Plum, Arelly Amaut Gomez Sanchez, Emil Andersson, Alessandro Marchi, Stacey de Voe, Nora Joung, Victoria Durnak, Sara Hermansson, Sahar Seyedian, Qi Tan, Ole-Petter Arneberg, Helle Siljeholm, Per-Oskar Leu and Dora García. *Rose Hammer* is a trans-gendered multi-coloured internazionale femme fatale. Although not exclusively, the name "Rose Hammer" may refer to a) the hammer inscribed on Henrik Ibsen's grave monument in Oslo; b) the former emblem of the Norwegian labour movement; c) the famous quote attributed to Bertolt Brecht: "Art is not a mirror held up to reality but a hammer with which to shape it"; d) the rose symbol which became popular among socialist and social democratic political parties in post-World War II Western Europe. For further details on *Rose Hammer*, we invite you to read Sven Lütticken's essay, commissioned for osloBIENNALEN FIRST EDITION, *The Name of the Rose – Fragments from a Conversation with Rose Hammer*, which can be [accessed here](#).

Katja Høst | *Y-Blokka*

Katja Høst (b. 1972, Norway) holds a degree in photography from Bergen Academy of Arts and Design. Although her work includes landscaping, relational aesthetics and video, photography remains prominent in her production. Social structures and practices, as well as identity, are recurring themes in her work, posing open ended questions as to how we define ourselves and govern our lives, as individuals or as a community. Høst has exhibited in a wide range of spaces in Norway as well as abroad and produced public commissions and projects for the Norwegian School of Sport Sciences (NIH), Litteraturhuset in Oslo, Oslo Central station and in the suburban area of Haugerud/Trosterud (in collaboration with Liva Mork). For further details on the subject of Katja Høst's work, *Y-Blokka*, and Erling Viksjø's other buildings in the Government Quarter, we invite you to read Kjetil Ansgar Jakobsen's essay, *Norwegian Autumn*, commissioned for osloBIENNALEN FIRST EDITION, which can be [accessed here](#).

Mônica Nador and Bruno Oliveira | *Another Grammar for Oslo*

Mônica Nador (1955, Brazil) is a visual artist whose earliest work dates from the 1980s. In 2004, Nador founded Jardim Miriam Arte Clube (JAMAC), a community centre that promotes lectures, workshops, activities and exhibitions among local residents to encourage the development of both cultural and political awareness in São Paulo's Jardim Miriam district, where Nador lives and works.

Bruno Oliveira is a visual artist and an educator. Along with Mônica Nador and Thais Scabio, he is a coordinator for Jardim Miriam Arte Clube (JAMAC) and is currently a PhD Student in Visual Arts with a research background in geopolitics, aesthetic speculation and decolonial visibility in Latin America and the coordinator of the cultural centre Casa 1 (São Paulo/Brazil), which offers shelter to LGBT people expelled from their homes. For further details on the subject of Mônica Nador and Bruno Oliveira's work, we invite you to read Deise Faria Nunes' essay, *The Power of Listening: Diapaxis, Play and Another Grammar for the City*, commissioned for osloBIENNALEN FIRST EDITION, which can be [accessed here](#).

OSV. Oslo Collected Works | Tverrsum

OSV. Oslo Collected Works is a collective comprised of Jan Freuchen (b. 1979), Jonas Høgli Major (b. 1983) and Sigurd Tenningen (b. 1982). Jan Freuchen is a visual artist who works with sculpture, collage, publications and curatorial projects. In 2006, he founded the artist book publishing company, Lord Jim Publishing, which he now runs from his hometown, Kristiansand, Norway. Jonas Høgli Major is an architect based in Arendal. Recent works include a series of installations for the exhibition *Game of Life IV: Prospektkabinettet* at Kristiansand Kunsthall (2019), where he contributed four large-scale installations. Sigurd Tenningen is an author based in Kristiansand. Among recent publications is the essay collection, *Vegetasjonens triumf er total* (The Triumph of Vegetation is Total, 2015). Together, Freuchen and Tenningen are co-curators and co-editors of the publication and exhibition series, *Game of Life* at Kristiansand Kunsthall (2012–2020). For further details on OSV. Oslo Collected Works, we invite you to read their first booklet, commissioned for osloBIENNALEN FIRST EDITION, #1: *Collection: Disparate fragments on the philosophy of collecting. what is a collection? where does it begin, and where does it end?*, which can be [accessed here](#).

About osloBIENNALEN FIRST EDITION

Curated by Eva González-Sancho Boderó and Per Gunnar Eeg-Tverbakk, osloBIENNALEN FIRST EDITION has set up a specially conceived infrastructure to support a ground-breaking new format, with artists invited to work with the city, public space and the public sphere. The programme includes diverse arts projects, concerts, performances, readings, workshops and symposia. The biennial is the outcome of OSLO PILOT, a two-year experimental and research-based project, conceived by Eva González-Sancho Boderó and Per Gunnar Eeg-Tverbakk, which laid the groundwork for the biennial. Both the current Biennial and its grounding pilot have been financed by the City of Oslo, Agency for Cultural Affairs, Norway.

About the City of Oslo's Support for the Arts

osloBIENNALEN FIRST EDITION is a further example of the municipality of Oslo's commitment to art in public space. The cultural agency strives to ensure that professional contemporary art forms part of Oslo municipality's buildings and outdoor spaces to the benefit of the general public. By supporting the arts in their various forms, its goal is to increase the interest in, commitment to and reflection on art and its relevance.

In this context, the biennial has grown out of Oslo's long-standing dynamic of art in public space. For many decades, the city has had an active and supportive attitude to art initiatives that benefit the wider population. This mind-set, based on democratic and egalitarian ideals, remains at the heart of every initiative. The current art scheme ensures that 0.5 percent of funds invested in the Oslo municipality are earmarked for art, which makes it possible for the city to maintain an ambitious agenda in terms of art in the public space. The main objective of the biennial is to strengthen all of the arts in Oslo, while providing local, national and international visibility to Oslo as a city that supports art.

