



# CIRCOLO SCANDINAVO

Skandinaviska Föreningens Konstnärshus i Rom

## Strategy plan for Circolo Scandinavo

### 1. Mission

Circolo Scandinavo has supplied artist-in-residence services for Nordic artists in Rome since 1860. The concept has been successful, which is manifested by an annual increase in the applications (373 in 2016). At the moment only every seventh applicant can be accepted to stay in Circolo's premises in Trastevere.

The need for a joined Nordic residence are manifold. Rome is a source of endless artistic richness and inspiration. The Nordic/Scandinavian label carries well Italy, and easily opens connections with Roman artistic circles. Additionally, artists in Circolo's residence get to know other Nordic artists, leading to life-long friendships, as Circolo's valuable portrait collection demonstrates.

The mission of Circolo Scandinavo is to facilitate Nordic artists' access to the roots of European art and architecture, increase interaction between artists from different fields, cultures and nationalities, and to promote the knowledge and presence of Nordic society and art in Italy and Rome.

### 2. Vision

All Nordic countries except Iceland have their own scientific and cultural institutes in Rome. However, they profile themselves as scientific focusing on classical studies in particular. The Nordic embassies on the other hand also have cultural budgets, but these have been significantly curtailed in recent years. It would therefore be rational to increase joint Nordic efforts with the contribution of Circolo Scandinavo, as the Nordic Film Festival in Rome has shown.

So far Circolo has operated with an extremely tight budget. Some 60 to 75 percent of the expenditures are covered by contributions from the Nordic Council of Ministers, while the remaining 25 to 40 percent are coming from private sources and tenants.

The vision is, in addition to extending the residency program, to make the artists able to cooperate internationally and to internationalize their careers and activities on a long term. Professor Paavo Hohti has recently studied the costs and benefits of alternative futures for Circolo Scandinavo (a Feasibility study 29.8.2016). The three alternatives suggested by Hohti were: a) business as usual b) expanded business as usual and c) Nordic cultural centre. For a sustainable future all three scenarios demand more funding, the first one only modestly, while the third one assumed doubling the present resources. The board has for various reasons come to the conclusion that alternative C is not a suitable option for Circolo Scandinavo, since the Board appreciates the present core activity i.e. the residence programme, so high that the Board doesn't want to risk it.

The executive board of Circolo Scandinavo sees great potential in expanding Circolo's activities and resources. The board would prefer a step by step evolution from alternative A to B along the lines of the following strategy.

### 3. Strategy for next ten years

#### a) Premises

The main cost is the lease of the premises. Professor Hohti estimated the total cost of the present premises plus administration to be 4000 euro per visiting artist per month which is high, even in the Roman context. The present long term lease with the Italian Academy of Sciences will end in April 2018. The executive board of Circolo is in the process of looking for more cost effective premises. The new location should be suitable for a more visible presence of Nordic culture in Rome, and be better accessible to the public than now. Since most applications come from artists within the visual art field, the possibility of an art gallery would be desirable.

In addition to the high rent, the reason to the heavy costs per capita is the relatively expensive form of governance of Circolo Scandinavo. Parts of the costs are unavoidable, due to the multinationalistic character of Circolo, but unit costs could be reduced by increasing the volume of activities which well can be carried by present fixed costs. Increasing the artists-in-residency from around 50 a year to 70 or 80 would hence be preferable.

#### b) Governance

The legal form of Circolo Scandinavo is Italian association (riconosciuto). All the power of the association lies in the hands of the members attending the annual meeting, where the executive board is appointed on two-year-long terms. The board then appoints the Director, who manages the day to day activities of Circolo in Rome. Both legal form and management practices have followed Italian legislation and norms. The board has decided to change some of them to follow also Nordic management standards, for example appointing an authorized external auditor, and adjusting the acceptance of financial statements accordingly. The responsibilities of the board and the director will be specified more precisely in the code of management practices.

An association with varying short term memberships may not be the optimal management base for enlarged financial responsibilities, such as a Nordic cultural centre would bring. Professor Hohti is suggesting the Finnish model of National cultural centre, i.e. the foundation. The foundation model is studied according to Italian laws. Circolo's board suggests a joint working group together with the NCM should study the long term future of Circolo Scandinavo. It would be desirable to have a representative of the NCM present, at least as an observer, at Circolo's board meetings.

The one-sided finance structure implies a risk for sustainable continuity, since Circolo has to agree on a long term lease, while the main contribution is decided on an annual basis. Before signing a new long term lease it would be of importance to have a letter of understanding from the Nordic Council of Ministers, securing the long term character of the current form of financing Circolo.

#### c) New activities

The increase of artists-in-residence depends on the new premises and increased funding. There are no other obstacles to grow along "business as usual".

In the evolutionary model there are two natural ways to grow. The first would be – on a project base – annually organize two to three master classes for young artists in i.e. visual art, theatre, dance, film, etc. Intensive master classes for Nordic and perhaps also Italian young artists or

teachers would be optimal for deep interaction within Nordic culture and also between Nordic and Italian culture. This would naturally presume extra finance. The other new form of activity would be to create platforms for lectures on Nordic society and culture.

The main mission of the Circolo is to house Nordic artists in an internordic and international environment, to make specific attempt to further dialogue between representatives of various art forms, and to build bridges between experienced artist and the younger ones just starting on their artistic journey. Moreover, an essential part of the Circolo's work is to provide a platform for intercultural exchange between the Nordic art world and the present-day international melting pot of Rome, and for the diachronic encounter with Italian culture that constitutes the original *raison d'être* for the Circolo.