

CIRCOLO SCANDINAVO



2021

Annual Report



CIRCOLO SCANDINAVO

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The board

A needed intersectional approach of art and politics



KOLBRÚN HALDÓRSDÓTTIR, CHAIR OF THE BOARD

Circolo Scandinavo is a unique organization, in so many aspects. It is a community of leading Nordic artists and thinkers, with a long history, originally established around the Nordic libraries in Rome in 1860. For 162 years, it has been a forum for Nordic artists to develop their ideas about life and existence and elaborate on the role of the arts in society. In these early years, it was extremely fruitful to be able to have this discussion under

the influences of the Eternal City, in close contact with colleagues from various Scandinavian countries and from different artistic disciplines. This community laid the foundation for magnificent works of art, in literature, music, visual arts and research, that now belong to our common Nordic cultural heritage. Among those artists were *Bertel Thorvaldsen*, *Henrik Ibsen*, *August Strindberg*, *Selma Lagerlöf* and *Sigrid Undset*.

These names bring a smile to the faces of all those who dwell in the residency of Circolo Scandinavo and the story of them coming to Rome to gather inspiration for their works fills our little community with pride.

It was therefore severely disappointing that the Covid-19 pandemic prevented us from celebrating our 160th anniversary, which we had already planned the festivities for. However, the pandemic's impact did not end there; we had to close the residency from March to September in 2021, due to a mandatory lockdown in Rome, and when we were able to open up again, our activities were significantly reduced. We could only welcome four artists at a time instead of the seven we would have invited under normal circumstances, we had to cancel our *Meet the artists* events, and no meetings were allowed on our beautiful terrace. The pandemic also affected the communication of the board, whose operations were transferred to the internet, board meetings were held on-line and the number of e-mails escalated. This, understandably, posed difficulties for Circolo's new director, *Marie Kraft*, who had to take over the organisation from *Ingo Arnason* under these strange circumstances. This situation made it especially difficult for the board and director to tackle the complex challenges we were faced with.

What were these challenges exactly? They were of an economic nature, due to cuts in the contributions from the *Nordic Council of Ministers* (NCM), whose financial support has, for decades, been the absolute basis of our operations. The reason for the cuts is political; The NCM has a vision of making the Nordic countries the most sustainable region in the world and, to that end, approved a new action plan, titled *Vision 2030*. This ambitious plan calls for new funding within the Nordic collaboration and the NCM decided to finance various new initiatives by cutting back in other sectors and already existing projects. The Nordic cultural sector was not excluded from the cuts.

The board of CS was notified of 20% cuts in the estimated contributions for the years 2021 - 2024, which far surpasses our threshold of pain and, in fact, makes it impossible for us to continue operating the residency in its current form. This methodology of the NCM was actively challenged by the Nordic Artist's Association and by Nordic parliamentarians. At the Nordic Council's session in November 2021, parliamentarians actively spoke out against these sever cutbacks and their concerns were considered, in some regard. The cutbacks in the cultural sector were lessened, however, this did not affect the financial contributions

to CS. To our great disappointment, we were not even compensated for the financial loss we had suffered as a result of Covid-19.

These circumstances have taken a heavy toll and made all the work of the board and staff extremely difficult. We have been in continuous correspondence with the Nordic Governments, the Ministers of Culture and of Nordic co-operation. Those who respond show empathy and understanding, but cannot promise any change in the Nordic budget. Previous decisions of the NCM to finance Vision 2030 is final and projects connected to climate and environmental issues will be given priority.

Let's stop here and reflect briefly on the good intentions of politicians who want to make the Nordic region the most sustainable and integrated region in the world by 2030. They are truly responding to an urgent call of people all around the globe and their vision is therefore widely supported. If Mother Earth is to survive, humankind must respond and change course, an altered behaviour of individuals and organisations is pivotal if we are to succeed in our attempts to save the earth's ecosystems and secure its future. This task is enormous and we need daring politicians to join hands if we are to succeed, but what politicians must realize is the fact that

“The strongest allies on this journey are artists, designers and creative people in general, they are among the most influential people on the planet.”

the strongest allies on this journey are artists, designers and creative people in general, they are among the most influential people on the planet. They are the ones who plant ideas and form public behaviour. We only need to glance through the works of artists nominated to the various Nordic Culture Prizes in recent years to prove that statement; the ideology of sustainable development is a prominent element in the nominated works.

We must encourage politicians to see sense when it comes to these; if their aim truly is a better life for planet earth and all living species, they should be adding to their existing support of vibrant artistic endeavours and cultural projects. That would provide them with a powerful team of creative thinkers and imaginative allies, that would help promote their Nordic vision of 2030.

Kolbrún Halldórsdóttir



Marie Kraft



DIRECTOR

2021 has been one more year of flexibility and creativity to find new ways of organising our daily lives. The pandemic was still around, but thanks to vaccinations and regulations, we were periodically able to open up society and Circolo Scandinavo could organise different activities. When it was not possible to offer or attend public events, we experimented with new formats. The limitation became

an opportunity. When restrictions did not allow us to be outside in the night, the social interaction in the residence became stronger, when we could gather small groups, we made walks together with residents from other institutes and local artists. When the museums and cultural institutions were closed we took advantage of the empty public space and churches and could experience Rome as an open air museum.

Our Meet the artists could take place twice on the terrace, but we also invited curators, professionals and friends for small gatherings where our artists in residence could present their work. Board meetings and the General assembly took place on-line. When society opened up in the summer we were all excited to behave normally again, but we have kept many interesting thoughts in our mind on how to work with art in the society of the future.

The activity of Circolo Scandinavo has since the beginning been twofold: hosting Nordic artists in residence in Rome and at the same time carrying further the Nordic culture and heritage based on a collection of books, manuscripts and art works donated to the association through the years.

I believe that the richness of our activity is how it connects our common Nordic cultural heritage with contemporary artists and their work. Many of our artists in residence explore the Nordic heritage through the books, manuscripts and music in our library, art collection and archive. Even though we were only open for a few visits in 2021, we had the chance to host several scholars, in History or Art, who produce important research on Nordic artists and Circolo Scandinavo.

“Many of our artists in residence explore the Nordic heritage through the books, manuscripts and music in our library, art collection and archive.”

Rome is a city which hosts an exceptional international presence, and Circolo Scandinavo is part of a network of more than 40 foreign institutes and academies. During the year we have started to plan for several larger Nordic cultural events together with the Nordic institutes and Embassies in Rome. We started the academic year by inviting all the fellows at the Nordic institutes to Circolo Scandinavo and our artists in residence have regularly attended the events of our Nordic colleagues.

During 2021 our collaboration with international and local institutions in Rome has allowed us to be part of several cultural programmes of the City of Rome, focusing on topics such as history, sustainability, equality and migration. In this context, Nordic artists and scholars could

attend study visits, excursions and workshops, but also present their own work. We have started to develop our contacts with universities and schools. We work with one course in Public art at the New Academy of Fine arts, NABA. A Master programme in Cultural management chose Circolo Scandinavo as one of their international partners when students organised a presentation of foreign artists in Rome. Our collaboration with the Nordic academic institutes in Rome and Nordic and international universities will enable the development of courses in Art, Architecture, and Environmental humanities. A first summer course in Architecture and Heritage took place

on-line in July 2021 and hopefully the next session will be in Rome.

In spite of the practical and financial difficulties we are experiencing today, I am convinced that Circolo Scandinavo still has an important role to play, by being a place where Nordic artists from all disciplines are welcome to develop their artistic freedom and engagement, offering a platform for Nordic dialogue and collaboration and making Nordic culture and art present in Rome and internationally. The continuity of circolo Scandinavo will depend on a collective effort. I am grateful for all the support we receive, and invite you all to share your ideas and take part in the dialogue on how to go further.





Who we are



What we do

Circolo Scandinavo (Skandinavisk Forenings Kunstnershus) in Rome works to enhance mobility, networking, and production by offering a Nordic residency program in Rome for Nordic professional artists working in all art forms. At the same time, we are a platform for promoting and facilitating Nordic art and culture in Italy. Located outside the Nordic region, *Circolo Scandinavo* gives artists the opportunity to use the residency centre as a Nordic basis for broader international cooperation and exposure. The program is rooted in a Nordic network: political, cultural, economic, organizational and artistic.

At the residency, artists from the Nordic countries are given a space to create their art in an inter-Nordic environment. The current location is next to *Villa Farnesina* opposite to *Palazzo Corsini*, which is known as the home of the Swedish *Queen Kristina*, where she spent the last 35 years of her life and created her Academy for artists and scientists.

In 2020 *Circolo Scandinavo* in Rome had existed for 160 years as the oldest Nordic cultural platform outside the Nordic region. In the early 1800s were “all” artists from northern Europe to travel to Rome. *Goethe* had been there earlier, the Dane *Thorvaldsen* was there and his countryman, *HC Andersen*

“Today *Circolo Scandinavo* is a great example of collaboration between all the five Nordic countries.

was there. On 2 July 1860 the three Scandinavian – Danish, Norwegian and Swedish – libraries situated in Rome, formally merged as “*Circolo Scandinavo per Artiste e Scienziati*”.

Soon Finnish, and later Icelandic, artists could join too – and today *Circolo Scandinavo* is a great example of collaboration between all the five Nordic countries. Through the years a host of outstanding Nordic artists have been connected to the *Circolo* – or stayed there – such as *Bjørnson, Heise, Walter Runeberg, Constantin Hansen, Ibsen, Grieg, Marstrand, Heiberg, Bournonville, Brandes, Strindberg, Lundbye, Hammershøi, Lagerlöf, Johannes Jørgensen, Drachman, Bergsøe, Krøyer, Sophus Claussen, Carl Nielsen, Willumsen, Andersen Nexø, Undset, Pontoppidan, Evert Taube, Vigeland, Laxness, Jónsson and many others.*

Artists in Residence



The Artist Residency's main task is to provide a modern artist-in-residence program in a creative environment where the artist can focus on creating. Creativity is a key component in the Nordic cultural co-operation.

The co-operation will strengthen the Nordic region as an attractive and stimulating place for creators or mediators of art and culture. The need for a joined Nordic residence is manifold. Rome is a source of endless artistic richness and inspiration. The Nordic and Scandinavian label carries well in

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 historic portrait collection demonstrates.

A important number of artists have had to postpone their stay from 2020, and we could only offer residence to a reduced number of the artists who had applied in 2021. The call was open until 1st April 2021 and we received a total number of 124 applications for the period October 2020 - September 2021.

The applications were received directly via our application form on www.circoloscandinavo.it. The selection was made by an CS evaluation board, assisted by Nordic artist organizations and the Director. Artistic quality is the most significant criteria in the selection. In total 59 artists, out of 291 were selected. The number of residency artists admitted varies depending on the granted stay between 1 and 3 months.

Due to the regulations of Covid-19, Circolo Scandinavo could offer three large rooms and one apartment instead of six rooms and one apartment as offered during two years before the pandemic. A total number of 36 artist months were offered at Circolo Scandinavo in 2021. There were several last minute cancellations and changes in the schedule. The artists who cancelled their stay were offered to postpone their residence which filled the schedule of the coming year by more than half the rooms. 24 artists



selected in 2019 were planned in residence for the period October 2021–September 2022. The lower number of artists months offered has led to a lower income of artists participation fees by more and put the budget 2020–2021 of CS in a difficult situation.

	MONTHS	VISUAL	PREFORM.	MUSIC	FILM	WRITERS
DENMARK	13	3	3	3	4	-
FINLAND	4	1	-	1	-	2
ICELAND	7	6	-	1	-	-
NORWAY	8	7	1	-	-	-
SWEDEN	9	2	3	-	2	2
	41	19	7	5	6	4

ARTISTS IN RESIDENCE 2021

JANUARY

Erkka Filander | Poet | FI
Sigbjørn Bratile | Visual artist | NO
Esther Wellejus | Film director | DK
Magnus Westerberg | Writer | SE

FEBRUARY

Sigbjørn Bratile | Visual artist | NO
Esther Wellejus | Film director | DK

MARCH

Ósk Vilhálmsdóttir | Visual artist | IS
Esther Wellejus | Film director | DK
Morten Schantz | Composer | DK

APRIL

Morten Schantz | Composer | Denmark
Ósk Vilhálmsdóttir | Visual artist | IS

MAY

Peter Brandt | Visual artist | DK
Ósk Vilhálmsdóttir | Visual artist | IS
Eva Sommestad Holten | Librettist
and set designer | SE/DK

JUNE

Sarah Gampel | Animator and Film
director | SE
Peter Brandt | Visual artist | DK
Ósk Vilhálmsdóttir | Visual artist | IS
Eva Sommestad Holten | Librettist
and set designer | SE/DK
Magnus Westerberg | Writer | SE

JULY

Magnus Westerberg | Writer | SE
Sarah Gampel | Animator and Film
director | SE

Eva Sommestad Holten | Librettist
and set designer | SE/DK
Esther Wellejus | Film director | DK

AUGUST

Closed

SEPTEMBER

Bjargey Ólafsdóttir | Visual artist | IS
Janne Talstad | Visual artist | NO
Katrín Brännström | Scenographer
and designer | SE

OCTOBER

Mia Makela | Media artist and cultural
historian | FI
Bjargey Ólafsdóttir | Visual artist | IS
Janne Talstad | Visual artist | NO
Katrín Brännström | Scenographer
and designer | SE

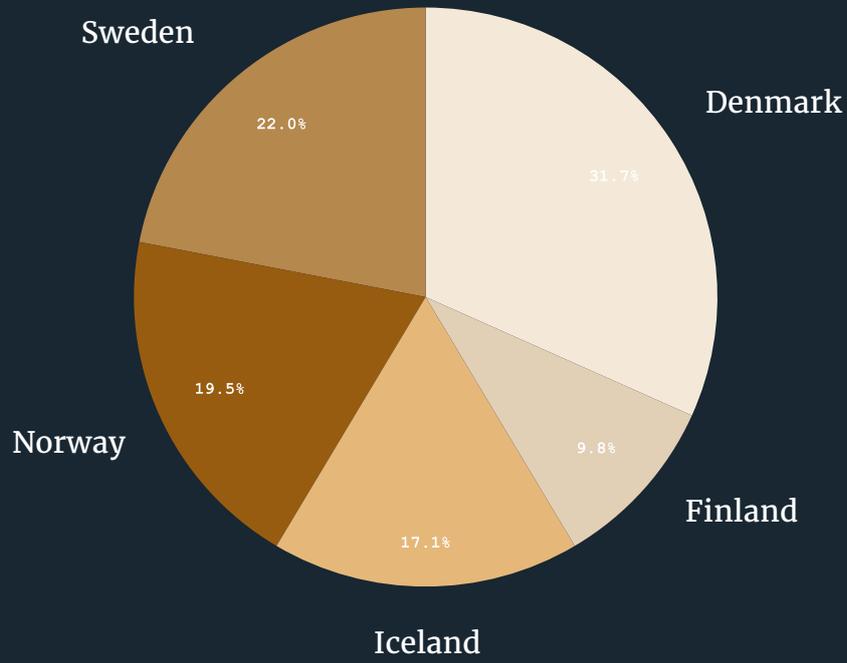
NOVEMBER

Lene Therese Teigen | Writer and
director | NO
Ingrid Aarset | Visual artist | NO
Thuridur Jónsdóttir | Composer and
musician | IS
Peter Martensen | Visual artist | DK
Arto Kivimäki | Writer and translator
| FI

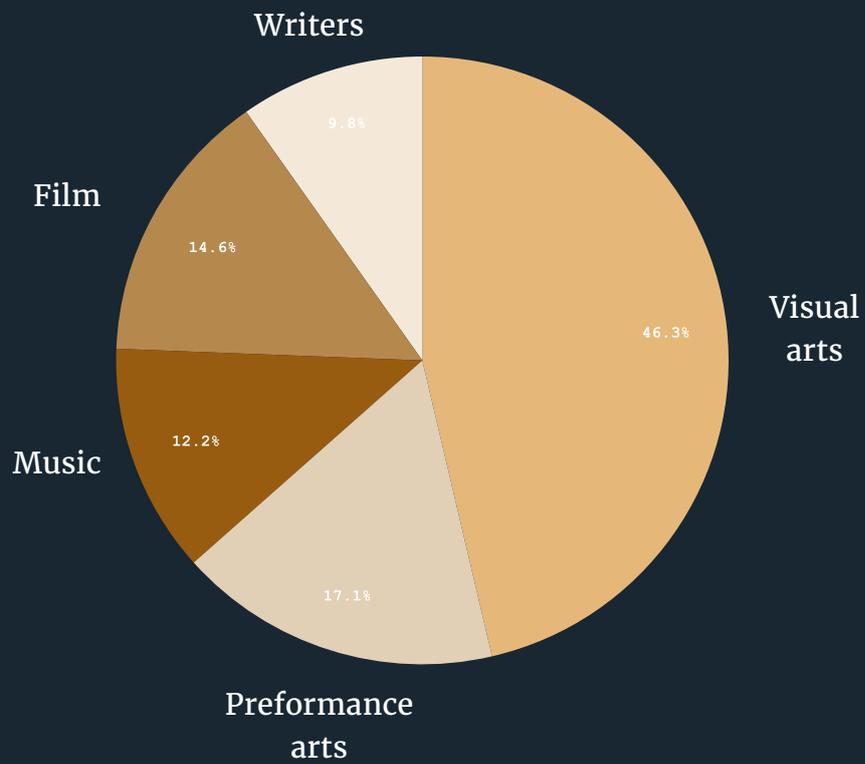
DECEMBER

Alt Går Bra | Visual Artists | NO
Peter Oskarsson | Theatre director | SE
Osmo Tapio Rähälä | Composer | FI

ARTISTS IN RESIDENCE: COUNTRIES



ARTISTS IN RESIDENCE: CREATIVE FIELDS





ASSISTANT AND INTERN

Thanks to a generous support from *Svenska Kulturfonden* in Finland, CS has had the possibility to receive a fulltime intern for many years. Due to the pandemic situation the internship was cancelled in 2020-2021 but from September 2021 we had the pleasure to receive a new intern, *Alexandra Lindström*. With a Bachelor in graphic design and a multilingual background

she has been a precious assistant to the director. Due to the cancellation the year before, CS had to employ an assistant and project manager from January to august 2021. The former director *Ingolfur Arnasson* accepted to assist to the new director on a part-time basis which was good solution to keep up the activities despite the complications linked to the pandemic.



Events



MEET THE ARTIST

Due to the pandemic restrictions Circolo Scandinavo has had to rethink the organisation of all events. To allow our artists in residence to meet Roman public we have offered the artists talks “*MEET THE ARTISTS*” in different formats.

During a few months we were able to invite a general public to a talk on the roof top terrace. When that became impossible we organised closed events with a few specific professional guests such as curators, cultural programme and museum directors.

MEET THE ARTIST 2021

22 JULY

Sarah Gampel
Magnus Westerberg
Eva Sommestad Holten
Esther Wellejus

26 OCTOBER

Bjargey Ólafsdóttir
Janne Talstad
Mia Makela
Katrín Brännström

23 NOVEMBER (CLOSED EVENT)

Livia's Room: Lene Therese Teigen,
Ingrid Aarset and Thuridur Jónsdóttir
Peter Martensen

16 DECEMBER (CLOSED EVENT)

Peter Oskarsson
Alt Går Bra
Osmo Taipo Rähälä



EXCURSIONS

21 FEBRUARY AND 14 MARCH

Walk on the theme “Medieval Rome”
guided by *Frederick Whitling* and *Anna
Blennows*.

24-26 SEPTEMBER

Togheter with *Stalker* we participated
in the 3 day walk titled “*Le vie dell’aqua*”

30 SEPTEMBER

Project Manager *Ingo Arnason* gave
the Artists in residence a guided
tour through the neighbourhood of
Trastevere.

11 NOVEMBER

A day trip to Naples that included a
visit to culture centre *Ex Lasilo*, *Museo
Madre*, the *San Gennaro* catacombs and
the studio of artist *Michele Iodice*.

21 NOVEMBER

A day trip to *Sacro Bosco* in Bomarzo
and *Villa Lante a Bagnaia*.

8 OCTOBER

“Dialogo della natura e di un(a) islandese”
– Talk, discussion and reading by Osk
Viljamsdottir and Ingo Arnason.

15 OCTOBER

Aperitivo for all fellows of the Nordic
Institutes in Rome.

NORDIC FILM FEST 2021

Circolo Scandinavo collected 10
shortfilms for the festival from
around all Nordic countries, to
celebrate 10 years of Nordic film in
Rome.



Projects & Collaborations



THE CULTURAL PROGRAMME OF THE CITY OF ROME

During the year Circolo Scandinavo has been working on deepening previous collaborations and at the same time open up for new projects with Nordic, Italian and international partners. The participation in three projects financed

by the Municipality of Rome continued for the second year. Less restrictions and changes in the schedules made it possible to organise several events both open to a general public and for smaller groups.

Two programmes were organised in collaboration with *Stalker*, a Roman association of artists, architects, scholars and students. *Spontaneamente* offered public events during the municipality's summer programme, *Estate romana*, and Nordic artists and researchers could participate several talks, visits and a three-day walk in Rome in September on the topic of Natural resources and nature in the city.

La Zattera (The Raft) is part of the Municipality's Autumn programme focusing on Contemporary artistic expressions and turning towards a professional audience. *La Zattera* explores the history of foreigners and migrants in Rome through history,

taking specific places in the city as a starting point. A new project *Retake a place, reuse*, invited 5 Nordic artists to be hosted by CS and *Stalker* to work with *La Zattera*. During November and December several talks and visits were organised where all CS artists in residence participated. The third collaboration *Hidden Histories* is developed together with Sara Alberani and Valerio del Baglivo and also part of the summer season, *Estate romana*. The programme offered the artists in residence at CS to participate in several visits to historical places in Rome, to discover the invisible or unknown histories of people linked to the place through artistic interventions, readings, performances, installations, concerts.



RETAKING A PLACE, REUSING A SPACE

Many artists today search for a new relation between the human being and our natural environment in their artistic work. Circolo Scandinavo supports this research in several ways. Rome has always been a city where nature has had a particular presence, and the surroundings offer an amazing environment of nature and cultural heritage. Already in the 19th century when Circolo Scandinavo was founded, foreign artists divided their stay in Italy between the city centre and the small towns in the countryside. Circolo Scandinavo wants to encourage this exploration of urban and rural realities by offering Nordic artists to stay in the centre of Rome but also in smaller settings in Tuscany and Lazio.

Rome and Italy have a long history of organic incremental change, where natural and built environments are constantly readapted to new uses. Specific funding from *Kulturkontakt*

Nord supports the project *Retake a place, Reuse a space*, that takes place in Rome, Umeå and South Iceland during 2021 and 2022.

With support from the Municipality of Rome, a residence in Rome was organised by Circolo Scandinavo and the Roman group of artists and architects, *Stalker* in November and December. The call received 50 applicants and 5 of them were selected to stay in two apartments in the Garbatella district for 6 weeks: *Laura Böök* (FI), *Bjargey Ólafsdóttir* (IS), *Nikolina Søgne* (NO), *Ole Wich* (DK/FO), *Helena Wikström* (SE) and several Italian and Nordic artists and architects explored the memories of foreign communities linked to specific sites in the city. The artists who stayed at Circolo Scandinavo during the same period were offered to participate in the common activities linked to the project, presentations, talks, walks and study visits.

“Rome has always been a city where nature has had a particular presence, and the surroundings offer an amazing environment of nature and cultural heritage.”



RETAKE A SPACE, REUSE A PLACE

9 NOVEMBER

A guided walk through the neighbourhood of Garbatella.

10 NOVEMBER

Presentations at Circolo Scandinavo by architects *Luna Nobile, Olafur Jonsson, and Nikolina Søgne*.

22 NOVEMBER

Lunch and meeting at the culture centre *Ararat*.

28 NOVEMBER

Circostanza I at Ostiense Station.

10 DECEMBER

Site visit to Tiburtina Station with *Matteo Locci*.

11 DECEMBER

Panel discussion in La Galleria Nazionale at the event “*Echoes*” by Arts Management Master students at *Istituto Europeo di Design*.

15 DECEMBER

Guided visits at the Swedish Institute and Danish Academy.

17 DECEMBER

Artist presentations at *Mad'O* in SpinTime

19 DECEMBER

Circostanza II at Tiburtina Station.



ISTITUTO EUROPEO DI DESIGN

The students of the Master program Arts Management at *Istituto Europeo di Design* collaborated with *Circolo Scandinavo* on their final project “*Echoes*”, a podcast series that highlighted foreign artists that lived,

worked and found inspiration in Rome.

Through access to the *Circolo Scandinavo* archives, the students researched artists *Sigrud Undset*, *H.C. Andersen* and *Edvard Grieg*.

EQUALITY IN THE VISUAL ARTS

Together with the Norwegian, Danish and Swedish Embassy in Rome, Circolo Scandinavo organised the two day event *Be Smart Be Equal* on equality on a professional level in the field of the visual arts. The first day was held on Zoom, with presentations by Italian and Nordic artists and cultural organisations. On the following day,

25 Italian and Nordic artists and curators gathered for a workshop on the roof top terrace of CS to discuss what actions are needed in order to produce more equality in the field of the visual arts. The project is financed by The Nordic Council of Ministers and will continue in 2022.





EXECUTIVE BOARD 2021 - 2023

PERMANENT MEMBERS:

Kolbrún Halldórsdóttir | Chair

Theater Director | IS

Lars Strandh | Vice-Chair

Visual artist | NO/SE

**Linda K. Gaarder | Representing
the Nordic Embassies in Rome**

*Cultural Affairs Officer at the Royal
Norwegian Embassy in Rome | NO*

**Ulf R. Hansson | Representing
the Nordic Institutes in Rome**

Director at the Swedish Institute in Rome | SE

**Mia Törnqvist | Representing the
Nordic art organisations**

Dramaturg, Screenplay writer, Translator | SE

Björn Ross

Visual Artist | DK/SE

Lone Falster

Film Director | DK

Sirpa Kähkönen

Writer | FI

SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS:

Christine Aspelund

Visual Artist | NO

Benedicte Christiansen

Musician | DK

The Board



BOARD ACTIVITIES 2021

The board of Circolo Scandinavo held five board meetings and one annual meeting during 2021. All meetings were held on-line. Beside the meetings the board had active communication online about the activities of CS.

The two year mandate of the elected board members ended in 2021 and an election was held at the General Assembly. *Kolbrún Halldórsdóttir* (IS), *Björn Ross* (DK/SE), *Lone Falster* (DK) and *Lars Strandh* (NO/SE) were reelected and *Sirpa Kähkönen* (FI) was elected as

a new member of the board. *Christine Aspelund* (NO) and *Benedicte Christiansen* (DK) were elected as substitute members. The appointed member representing the Nordic embassies was takenover from *Ilkka Nordgren* at the Finnish embassy, by *Linda Gaarder* (NO) at the Norwegian embassy. *Ulf Hansson* (SE) at the Swedish Institute continues to represent the Nordic Institutes in Rome and *Mia Törnqvist* (SE) to represents the Nordic artists national organisations through KLYS.

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