

About OCA

OCA – Office for Contemporary Art is a foundation promoting contemporary art from Norway internationally. OCA expands international opportunities and contributes to global exchanges through various activities, including grants and residencies, research visits and network development, public programmes, and publishing. OCA is funded by the Ministry of Culture and Equality and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and is the commissioner for Norway's contribution to the visual arts section of La Biennale di Venezia.

Introduction

OCA is committed to long-term thinking in seeking to expand international opportunities for contemporary art from Norway. This strategic plan acknowledges the national and global circumstances that will inform our activity and outlook over the period 2025–31; sets out the organisational values that determine OCA's operations, interactions, and structure; and defines the three key pillars of activity – Grants & Residences, Programme & Publishing, and Visitors & Networks – through which we will achieve and measure our impact.

To fulfil the objectives, we will combine a farsighted approach with the ability to continuously evaluate projects, and for the organisation to learn, evolve, and seize opportunities when they happen. With this in mind, we will publish an annual activity plan to accompany this strategic plan, articulating how we will further our objectives in the next 12-month period with concrete measures and reflecting on the plan from the previous year.

We are conscious that the impact of our objectives and decisions unfurls over time as artists' careers develop and their opportunities, their focus, and their work evolve – and we seek to include and take into account the long-term artistic development and deferred value that is created when measuring our impact and planning for the long term.

In developing this strategic plan, we have sought to gain a fuller understanding of the needs and expectations of the artists and art professionals that OCA exists to support. We have consulted intensively with our staff and board, with actors in the field of art in Norway and abroad, and with external consultants. We have as well reflected on the findings of recent government white papers, as well as the research conducted in 2024 by MA students at the University of Oslo about how the stakeholders in the art field consider the function of OCA. The strategy has also been determined in part by significant operational changes since 2022, which have contributed to bringing clarity to OCA's long-term objectives.

Most notably, an internal restructuring of OCA has provided a framework through which we have strengthened the funding available to artists - both in increasing the production support for new artworks as well as a clarification of the guidelines and assessment criteria for International Support and ISGIES. A better definition of our three activity pillars has enabled the creation of two new senior positions, Head of Programme and Senior Advisor, International Networks and Visitor Programme. Both internally and externally, we have endeavoured to promote dialogue and transparency, in the knowledge that effective, purposeful communication generates opportunities and opens pathways to collaboration. Through this approach, we have begun to deepen our relationships with grant recipients and with awardees of residencies, and to increase our cooperation with arts institutions and other partners in Norway, the Nordic region, and beyond.

Our position

The future is not a singular path – it is a shifting terrain of possibilities, contradictions, and unexpected convergences. As we continue OCA's journey, we embrace this multiplicity with a both-and way of thinking – welcoming complexity and paradoxes while keeping our focus on how we can strengthen art's position in society, expand opportunities internationally, and contribute to shaping the future.

Since the foundation of OCA in 2001, the cultural landscape of Norway has transformed significantly. The construction of several new major arts institutions, such as the National Museum in Oslo, accompanied by the emergence of new private museums and foundations, has raised the domestic profile of the visual arts and brought significant international attention to the country's artistic and cultural production. The distribution of long-term public funding for artists has stimulated the emergence of strong artistic communities across the country and has provided many artists with the circumstances in which to develop their distinctive and strong artistic practices. Simultaneously, the ongoing digital and technological transformations will continue to affect society at large as well as the art sector in ways that might be surprising and unforeseen - we will lean into this future with speculative curiosity as well as criticality, providing space for both the discursive and everyday use of new technologies.

For artists and arts professionals in Norway, there is consequently more potential for international connectivity than ever before. In these contexts, we endeavour to maintain in close and structured contact with participants in the visual arts fields across Norway, seeking to be attuned to and to understand their evolving priorities and needs. This includes a constant focus on improving our accessibility as an organisation. Working from an artist-centered approach, we also recognise how strengthening curators, galleries, art publishers and other art professionals based in Norway will contribute to the development of long-term relationships and opportunities.

At the heart of our strategy lies an insistence on artistic freedom – not as an abstract ideal but as a lived, evolving condition. The ability to express, to challenge, and to imagine beyond the present is vital for both artists and society at large. We are conscious that our own freedom of action enables us to centre artistic voices, including those who speak courageously about social, political or geopolitical injustices or failings. We actively seek to expand opportunities for artistic expression, and to maintain and develop the conditions in which they can do so.

As a global-facing organisation, we are mindful of the many real and urgent concerns about the planet’s sustainability. In this regard, we seek to be accountable for all our activities in Norway and beyond, prioritising opportunities to minimise our own impact and support or collaborate on initiatives to introduce more sustainable working practices and systems. We are committed to measuring and reporting our environmental impact and communicating our efforts to improve and promote sustainability.

During the period encompassed by this strategic plan, OCA plans to relocate its offices to Kunstneres Hus (Artists’ House) in Oslo, an institution established and governed by artists based across Norway, with a prominent exhibition and events programme. The move will bring OCA into greater proximity with its artist constituents, increasing our accessibility to professionals in the field of visual arts, both throughout Norway and for visitors to the country. Ultimately, OCA’s new premises will be a physical expression of what the organisation makes possible – in shaping the infrastructure that will continue to ensure a central role for art in society.

Our values and principles

We believe that these values and principles are affirmed only through our actions and decision-making. The values will guide our behaviour as individuals and as an organisation. They will inform how we deliver all our core activities, our internal and external communications, and our organisational systems and processes.

Quality & Integrity

- We strive to conduct all activities to the highest professional standards
- We appreciate the value of diverse opinions and perspectives
- We welcome complexity of thought, feeling and action

Collaboration & Generosity

- We connect and collaborate inside and outside OCA
- We celebrate artists and art fields throughout Norway
- We learn from others at every opportunity, and support each other to succeed

Accountability & Trust

- We seek to build trust by being accountable for our actions
- We address sustainability as a goal and a challenge, and are responsible for the impact of OCA decisions
- We evaluate appropriate data to gain insight, learn and adapt
- We champion accessibility, and embed it in our work

Freedom & Imagination

- We endeavour to protect artistic freedom and provide opportunities for freedom of expression
- We make space for imagination, the unknown and new ideas
- We work to strengthen art's position in society, and cultivate public support for art and culture

Our strategic pillars and objectives

OCA's activity is structured across three pillars:

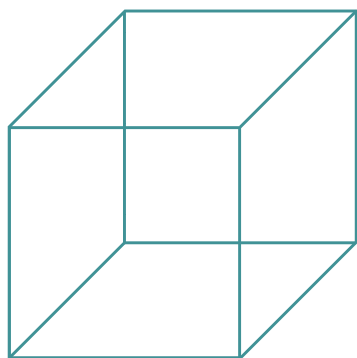


Fig.1

Grants & Residencies

Strengthening international activity

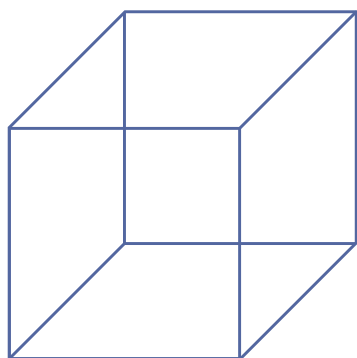


Fig.2

Visitors & Networks

Expanding global opportunity

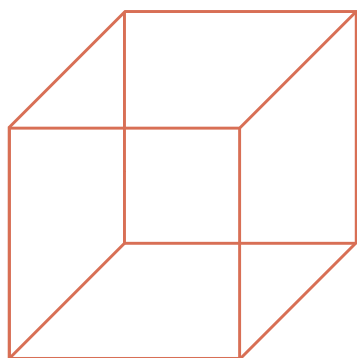
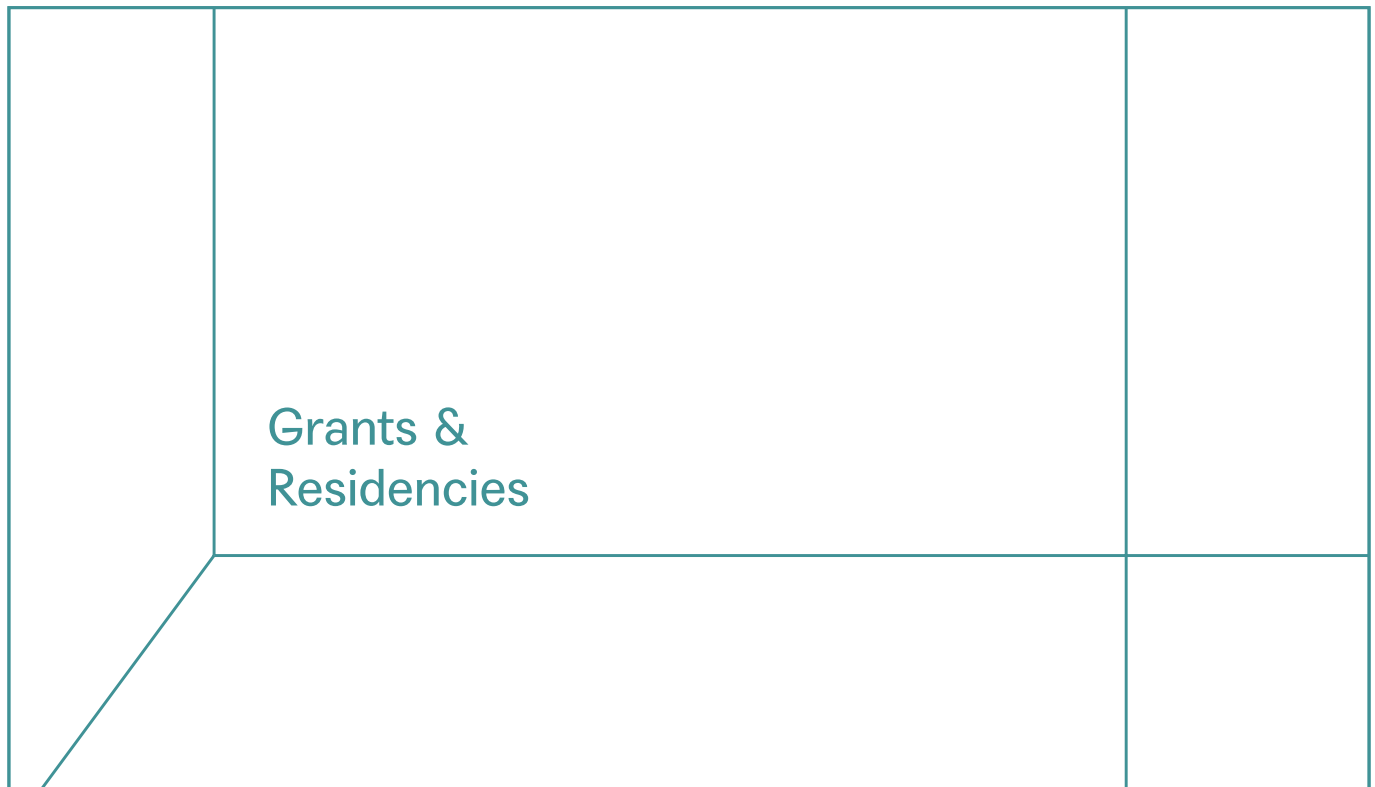


Fig.3

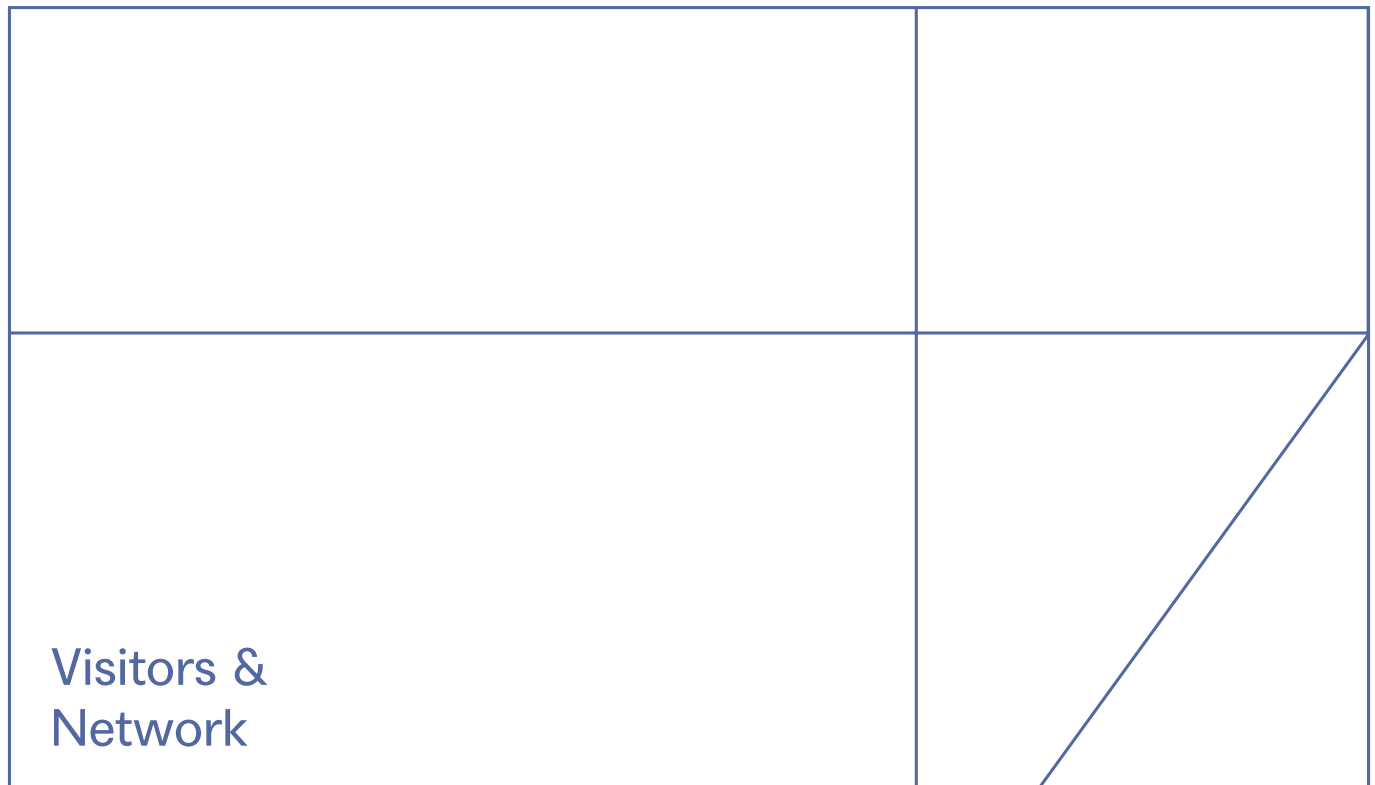
Programme & Publishing

Sparking planetary interest



OCA supports and funds international activities for artists, curators, and art professionals from Norway. Through the support scheme International Support, we provide travel and production grants for artists and curators, and through ISGIES, OCA supports the presentation of contemporary art from Norway by galleries, independent spaces, and art book publishers at international art fairs. In addition to the support schemes, OCA collaborates with and offers artist residencies worldwide. In allocating these resources, OCA endeavors to build trust with artists while supporting artistic risk-taking, protecting artistic freedom, and opening opportunities for career development and visibility.

- Increase funding levels for grant-giving and ensure freedom of action in determining our priorities for funding
- Grow funding and opportunities for artist residencies
- Support and encourage the international participation of galleries, artist-run spaces and art book publishers from Norway, enabling them to centre contemporary art from Norway at events such as art and book fairs
- Conduct meaningful, data-led and qualitative analysis of past grant-giving and residency awards, gathering and applying insights to increase the impact of our funding
- Engage in dialogue with past, present and potential grantees and residency artists to be alert, and adapt sensitively, to their evolving needs, and to allow us to develop the impact of our funding



OCA aims to expand global opportunities by establishing and developing relations between artists and key art professionals from Norway and colleagues in the international contemporary art field. We facilitate tailored research programmes and collaborate with the art field to strengthen networks and open new possibilities.

OCA is purposeful in growing and activating its networks to generate international opportunities for artists, curators, and art professionals — seeking to develop meaningful connections and create a foundation for stronger global collaboration and reciprocity.

- Grow the volume and quality of OCA's networks and visitor programmes, concentrating on relationships that will increase international opportunities and resources for artists and art professionals from Norway
- Build a strong and resilient framework for artist and practitioner networking, both within Norway and internationally
- Sustain and deepen relationships with alumni of OCA as well as with sister organisations globally
- Develop and maintain long-term relations with Norwegian and international museums and cultural institutions
- Communicate and publicise OCA's activity and impact, and forge meaningful relationships with international press and stakeholder audiences.

Programme & Publishing

OCA’s artistic and discursive public programmes connect the contemporary art scenes in Norway with art fields and art professionals throughout the planet. Our programmes and publishing in and beyond Norway aim to spark planetary interest and curiosity through open-ended and multidirectional programmes — continuously exploring new ways of thought and action.

The Nordic Pavilion at La Biennale di Venezia is co-commissioned by OCA, along with Moderna Museet in Sweden and Museum of Contemporary Art Kiasma in Finland. For each edition of La Biennale di Venezia, one of the Nordic commissioners takes the lead role for the exhibition.

- Generate planetary interest and curiosity towards the contemporary art fields in Norway, as well as national and international attention for OCA, through a strong and original annual programme of activities, including events, talks, gatherings and symposiums
- Contribute to new platforms, models, structures and ways to engage with audiences, prioritising those that seek to reach a larger international audience, strengthen the conditions for free artistic expression and shape futures for the planet
- Collaborate with initiatives, institutions and organisations that are contributing to expanding the possibilities of thought, knowledge and action
- Ensure the Nordic Pavilion at the Venice Biennale embodies the artist-centred approach of OCA, by working closely and collaboratively with commissioning partners and with relevant artists and curators
- Expand the national and international visibility and reputation of OCA publishing and publications

Our commitment

With this strategy, OCA continues to build on the work of those who came before us, responds to the evolving needs of the art field, and opens space for new possibilities and unknown futures — creating sustainable frameworks for art to flourish, reinforcing art’s position in society, and contributing to shaping the future together.

