

OK BOOK

What is OK BOOK?

OK BOOK (established 2018) is the in-house publishing arm of OK (Oslo Kunstforening – Norway's very first cultural society and exhibition space). Its goal is to issue publications that stimulate debate on topics relevant to the mainstream visual arts, as well as monographs relating to OK's exhibition program.

WHAT MOTIVATED YOU TO START A PUBLISHING PRACTICE AND WHAT DO YOU LOOK FOR IN A BOOK PROJECT?

OK BOOKS has a two-pronged publishing strategy, which reflects OK's vision as an institution. OK introduces Norwegian and foreign artists to Oslo. In most cases, these artists are holding their first solo exhibitions in Oslo, or even in Norway. We maintain a close dialogue with the artists and provide them with the opportunity to create and present new works.

Through our series of monographs, each publication describes a single exhibition as it appeared in our gallery space, with a record of all the works and how they were displayed in relation to each other, through documentary photographs, lists of works and essays. The design agency Research and Development has developed a design for us that is not unlike a children's book. The oversized format allows a tactile sense of the space as it actually appeared – a physical experience of the exhibition in its own time.

Another priority for OK is our work to improve diversity within the visual arts and through our program of activities to raise questions about the place of art in society. We also attach importance to boosting collaboration with other Norwegian and international institutions. OK works actively to promote the ownership of small- and medium-sized art institutions both by the public and by artists. We also work actively to improve artists' financial situations. Our ambition to produce publications that will stimulate art-related debate is motivated by the current lack of interest among Norwegian publishers in this type of literature. OK BOOK wishes to ensure that the general public, as well as art world professionals, recognize the mainstream visual arts as a distinct field with its own premises and values.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR ROLE IN THE PROCESS OF PUBLISHING A BOOK?

The role of OK BOOKS is primarily editorial. We want to provide opportunities for authors, historians, artists and other professionals to contribute texts that are relevant to each publication. In some cases, this leads us to hand over editorial control, and make our publishing division available for the creation of publications that fall outside OK's usual program. In such cases, we coordinate the graphic design in collaboration with the Stockholm-based agency

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Research and Development and maintain dialogues with relevant partners concerning funding and distribution.

WHO ARE THE AUDIENCES FOR YOUR PUBLICATIONS? HOW ARE YOUR BOOKS DISTRIBUTED?

Our issue-driven publications are intended to contribute to a nuanced and informative debate – particularly aimed towards the public sector – that has the potential to function as a source of information about work with and within the multi-faceted art sector in Oslo and Norway, and not least in connection with debates about cultural politics and decision-making processes. Our publications, and the launch events we hold for them, are relevant for anyone with an interest in cultural debates, whether at a local, national or Nordic level. Not least will they be useful for educational purposes and for use in political processes in a range of sectors (cultural planning, urban development, education, integration, volunteering and so on).

Our exhibition monographs are intended for a wider public of art lovers. The effects of spatial considerations and architecture, as well as the time at which the visit took place, on a visitor's experience of an exhibition, are seldom remarked upon. Our understanding of a work changes according to how and when it is displayed. By focusing on these factors, we hope to contribute to a stronger profiling of each individual artistic practice in addition to providing a longer-term insight into the relevant exhibitions – both for visitors during the exhibition period and people who are interested after the exhibition has been taken down.

WHAT ABOUT THE FUTURE?

Art publications linked to a "narrower" exhibition program and non-commercial institutions obviously face greater challenges than many others in dialogues with potential sources of funding. Despite these challenges, it is our goal to build up OK BOOK to become one of the cornerstones of Oslo Kunstforening, alongside its exhibition program and networking activities. In the longer term it would be desirable to implement a more sustainable financial model with minimal economic risk, and a favorable national distribution system for medium-sized institutions.