

No theme, no private funding and it lasts five years: inaugural Oslo Biennial opens in Norway

The event aims to boost the Nordic city's public arts programme

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Ed D'Souza's 'Migrant Car' parked in front of Eddie King's Furniture and Upholstery Workshop in Grünerløkka, Oslo. Niklas Hart, Hartwork / © Oslo Biennial

The first edition of the Oslo Biennial

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production and interaction with artists.

The biennial operates as part of Oslo's arts budget and this year has received around NOK25m (around £2.2m). Artists have been given large studio spaces

in the centre of Oslo, some that double as exhibition spaces. Its flexible in format, which could change from one year to the next, provides “a structure that allows both artists and audiences to experience public works of art in new ways because it goes beyond a standardised form”, says Per Gunnar Eeg-Tverbakk, who co-curated the biennial with Eva González-Sancho Bodero.

While Oslo is home to numerous commercial galleries, private museums, arts festivals and artist-run spaces, such as the Kunstneres Hus, it lacks a public arts programme, a gap that the curators hope to fill. “We are using this format to push contemporary art into the city”, Eeg-Tverbakk says.

Among the highlights are the Norwegian artist Mette Edvardsen’s performance work *Human Library, Time Has Fallen Asleep in the Afternoon Sunshine—A Library of Living Books* (2010-ongoing), which features performers reciting pieces of English and German literature in 30-minute time slots. The work is inspired by Ray Bradbury’s *Fahrenheit 451*, in which memorising books is an act of defiance.

Other works include the British artist Ed D’Souza’s *Migrant Car* (2019)—a sculpture covered in a photograph of a crashed car in Delhi. The French artist Julien Bismuth’s *Nothing is Small, Nothing is Big* involves actors performing a series of works inspired by political theatre. Meanwhile, the Norwegian artist Øystein Wyller Oddens is presenting his sonic work *Kraftbalanse*, an experimental piano and string composition, in the Oslo City Hall.

The second stage of works in the biennial will open in October 2019 and include works by the artists Adrián Balseca, Marcelo Cidade, Jonas Dahlberg, Anna Daniell and Edith Dekyndt.

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