Text for exhibition at Lillehammer Art Museum 6 Dec 2025 – 15 March 2026:

An Impatient Desire –
Norwegian Association for Craft Artists 50 Years

By Nina Malterud, curator

In this exhibition I have curated Norwegian crafts from around 1974 to 2000. Many of the exhibited pieces have not been shown in a long time; they have perhaps been forgotten by some and have never been seen by others. I have sought out works that remain artistically relevant, and that have contributed to shaping what crafts can be.

The title of the exhibition, *An Impatient Desire,* derives from a seminar presentation by textile artist Gro Jessen in 1981, where she described the driving forces behind the new craft movement. Impatience and desire were crucial factors in establishing a new platform for contemporary crafts from 1975 and onwards. In this text, I describe the craft milieu in these early years, and how the craft artists' efforts to establish a professional identity and to improve their working conditions also yielded artistic results.

The first decades – stories about crafts and politics

In the winter of 1976, I was elected to the board of the Norwegian Association for Craft Artists (Norske Kunsthåndverkere, NK), in spite of having little experience as a craft artist yet. I was a recently graduated ceramicist from the National College of Art and Design in Oslo, and had had a year's studio internship with renowned ceramic artist Lisbet Dæhlin at Frysja Kunstnersenter in Oslo. In Lisbet's studio, which she shared with several ceramicists, the discussions revolved around current topics such as applied arts (*brukskunst*), crafts and the Artists' Action of 1974 (*Kunstneraksjon 74*). From here, my professional activities, with my own studio at Frysja from 1975, became inextricably linked to the development of NK. Building a common artistic platform and craft milieu and influencing art policies gave meaning to our own work as artists. From day one, we newly graduated craft artists were invited into a professional community with more experienced colleagues. People who were active in NK – centrally and locally – constituted a tremendously energetic "WE". We voiced opinions, we created, established, operated, influenced and criticized.

The establishment of NK on 1 April 1975 did not come out of the blue. "It started with the Artists' Action of 1974",[1] the craft artist Konrad Mehus pointed out in an interview in the first issue of *Kunsthåndverk* magazine. For years, many of the members of the association Norske Brukskunstnere had desired a new direction – from more design-oriented and commercial applied arts to crafts as art.[2] According to the ideology underpinning applied arts, craftspeople were to create models for industrial production,

[1] Interview with Konrad Mehus, then head of the Norwegian Association for Craft Artists' Mediation Centre, in Gro Jessen and Nina Malterud, "Det begynte med Kunstneraksjonen-74…", *Kunsthåndverk* 1 (1980), p. 1.
[2] Within Norske Brukskunstnere, the term «applied artist» (*brukskunstnere*) in 1974 included craft artists (257), colour consultants (4) and industrial designers (12). Those who called themselves craft atists were thus in a large majority. See «Memo from the Norwegian Association of Arts and Crafts 13.11.74», in White Paper No. 41 (1975-76) *Artists and Society* (*Kunstnerne og samfunnet*), prepared by Anne Marie Vadum, Laila Baadstø and Mona Prytz.

guided by ideas from the 1950s about "more beautiful everyday goods". Many of the members eventually experienced this guiding principle as very limiting.

> But the philanthropic and culturally conservative values of the applied arts movement can do little to ensure that crafts in our society today function according to its own values – with professional practitioners.[3]

Some astute members of Norske Brukskunstnere insisted on getting the association to join the Artists' Action of 1974. This was crucial for solidifying the place of craft artists among the artists. In the Artists' Action, 21 artists' organisations stood together on behalf of more than 2,000 members to demand better remuneration for artists. The organisations also demanded a formal right to negotiate with the state, through the Ministry of Culture, about financial matters. The economic conditions for art production were made visible in a way that was entirely new in the Norwegian context.

The schools of arts and crafts in Oslo and Bergen in the 1970s were still influenced by the ideals of applied arts and provided general schooling in drawing, modeling, form, and colour. We, who were students at the time, loudly expressed that we wanted more focus on material, process, and artistic possibilities. Many of us carried the energy of activism with us into the Norwegian Association for Craft Artists (NK).

> The education of craft artists is still characterised by the requirement to make something pretty. No analytical activity is expected.[4]

On the NK board, we had to familiarise ourselves with meetings with the ministry as well as meetings internally within the Artists' Action group, where there were many disputes about organisational structure and mandate. For example, should the Artists' Action participate with its own slogans in Labour Day parade together with the socialist and communist parties? Most of us had no experience. The meeting minutes and newsletters from these first years bear witness to a steep learning curve when it came to building the formal structures and training members in elected positions. There was great self-confidence, but the unity behind the demands was quite fragile. We had many internal discussions about what was reasonable to demand, particularly concerning whether a guaranteed minimum income for artists could be defended.

KUNSTNERNE
KJEMPER —
HVA ER DET
DE KREVER ?

Kunstnerne står i en viktig kampsituasjon. De kan ikke leve av den kunsten de lager, og som samfunnet daglig bruker. Nå krever kunstnerne levelige vilkår som andre yrkesgrupper.

Derfor har de formulert disse kravene overfor staten:

1. Skikkelig vederlag for samfunnets bruk av kunstnernes arbeider.
2. Økt bruk av kunstnernes arbeider.
3. Garantert minsteinntekt til alle yrkesaktive kunstnere som ikke får rimelige arbeidsinntekter fra punkt 1 og 2.

Dessuten krever kunstnerne forhandlingsrett.

Pamphlet from the Artists' Action of 1974

[3]" Notat fra Norske Kunsthåndverkere 13.11.74", in White Paper No. 41 (1975-76), *Kunstnerne og samfunnet*.

[4] Editors, "Hva er nytt og for hvem?", *Kunsthåndverk* 12 (1983), p. 11.

In addition to the political work, from the very beginning, NK also took responsibility for mediating contemporary crafts, primarily through the Norwegian Association for Craft Artists' Mediation Centre (Norske Kunsthåndverkeres formidlingssentral), established in 1976. Formally, mediation activities had to be separated from the political work to qualify for public funding.

As a result of the Artists' Action's demand for increased use of art in public spaces, new institutions were created during the 1970s-80s in collaboration with other artist organisations, such as the Fund for Decoration in Public Buildings (Utsmykkingsfondet for nye statsbygg, now KORO – the agency for art in public space)[5], the Artists' Information Office (KIK)[6] and the Institute for Spatial Art (Institutt for romkunst)[7]. These became important for providing commissions to craft artists. Tighter bonds between the artist groups led not only to joint demands for increased use of art and better financial support, but also to artistic events, such as *Culture Lives!* (*Kulturen lever!*) – a week-long intensive art festival organised by the Norwegian Artists' Council (Norges Kunstnerråd) in buildings slated for demolition at the old Akers Mekaniske Verksted (now Aker Brygge)[8]. All the organisations were invited to participate with exhibitions, performances, and music – what a celebration!

Kulturen som levde på Aker 17.-24.9

Kunsthåndverk 12 (1983)

[5] KORO was established in 1977.

[6] KIK was a foundation established in 1986 by NK, Norske Billedkunstnere (Association of Norwegian Visual Artists) and Forbundet Frie Fotografer (Norwegian Association of Camera-Based Artists). KIK's main task was to collect and disseminate information on Norwegian contemporary art, and to assist public authorities, organisations, and private entities seeking art or artists for various commissions.

[7] The Institute for Spatial Art was a private foundation in Oslo, established in 1989 by the Oslo School of Architecture, the National Academy of Art (Statens kunstakademi), the National College of Art and Design (Statens håndverks- og kunstindustriskole), the National Association of Norwegian Architects, Norske Billedkunstnere (Association of Norwegian Visual Artists), and NK, with the purpose of conducting project work, teaching, and research on the concept of spatial art. On 1 January 2006, the institute merged with the architecture gallery ROM and was named the Foundation Space for Art and Architecture (Stiftelsen Rom for kunst og arkitektur). See Arne Gunnarsjaa, "Institutt for romkunst", *Store Norske Leksikon*, last updated 24.06.2021, https://snl.no/institutt_for_romkunst.

[8]" Pan – Kulturen lever" (*Pan – Culture Lives*), NRK, Oslo, 1983, 45 min, https://tv.nrk.no/serie/pan/sesong/1983/episode/FOLA03000283.https://tv.nrk.no/serie/pan/sesong/1983/episode/FOLA03000283.

“Artist-led mediation” was a guiding principle for NK to do away with gatekeepers and costly middlemen, and propose instead self-directed forms of exhibition and sale. This led, among other things, to the establishment of regional artist centres in collaboration with visual artists, which provided new exhibition opportunities for both artists’ groups. Unique to the craft artists was the creation of studio sales (*verkstedutsalg*) and markets. Groups of craft artists established collective studio sales through renting premises for the continuous display and sale of their own work. By 1981, there were about 20 of these in Norway. They were run by the artists on a volunteer basis, and the profits went directly to them. This ability to show work continuously and under their own direction in turn stimulated artistic work in the studios.

> The studio sales are artist-run mediation outlets and as such they safeguard freedom of expression and counteract detrimental commercialisation.[9]

> What was necessary for us was to gain control over the mediation of crafts to prevent the works and the very concept from disappearing into a vague realm of full- and semi-industrial production, folk art, tourist souvenirs and gift items.[10]

The boards of NK and NKFS were less than satisfied with the coverage of crafts in the press, on TV and the radio, and felt that journalists and critics did not understand the transition from applied arts to crafts as art. We were constantly on the offensive, publishing critical responses. The idea of starting our own publication began to take shape. There were Norwegian models to follow, such as *Ballade* for contemporary music and *Z* for film. Without any experience in edition, a group of us in the Oslo scene formed an editorial board and got *Kunsthåndverk* (Crafts) magazine started in 1980, with funding from NK and the Arts Council Norway. The editorial team championed its causes with a flaming sword and a fundamental belief in the artists’ own voices.

> Today, there is no literature on Norwegian crafts. We ourselves must record what is happening. We must map out where we are at and what our position is, in order to move forward. We must write today’s history, and we must be able to trace the threads both backward and forward. We must show more facets of crafts than just the objects: the thoughts and opinions behind it, the artistic processes and tensions, education and mediation. We must introduce new thoughts and new concepts. This is what we need the magazine for.[11]

> Every question asked, every punctuation mark that is placed, is conditioned by our own work experiences. Other professionals would have approached the topic from a different angle, would have had a different vision for the magazine. Not necessarily worse, but different. We would argue that much of the material we

[9] From a summary at an NK seminar on studio sales across the country, arranged by NK’s Mediation Centre, 21-22 March 1981. “NKFS-Formidlingssentralen”, *NK Nytt* 3 (1981), p. 9.
[10] Gro Jessen, “Når det mulige ikke må stenge for det nødvendige”, exhibition catalogue *Verkstedutsalget i Gabelsgate 15 år*, Oslo: Oslo Kunstforening, 1990.
[11] Editors, *Kunsthåndverk* 1 (1980), unpaginated.

> now present would never have emerged, would never have become visible, if others had been doing the research.[12]

Central to the first years of the magazine was our search for alternative references – we did not stand knocking at the door of fine art. Instead, we would connect with other fields, such as archaeology, folk art, traditional crafts, and duodji (Sámi handicraft). The museums of applied arts had regular columns in the magazine ("News from the Museums of Applied Arts"), and the few relevant art historians from the museums were often used as critics, writers, and discussion partners. These mutually respectful relations between NK and the museums may have contributed to the establishment of the Acquisition Fund for Norwegian Crafts in 1990. Since then, the fund has had a designated allocation in the national budget for the purchase of contemporary crafts for the museums in Oslo, Bergen, and Trondheim. The acquisition committee has always consisted of three members from the museums and four craft artists, always with a craft artist as the chair – a form of organisation that suits everyone involved.

> The fund aims to build a representative Norwegian collection of contemporary crafts. The works are to be purchased with the aim of giving the public access to high-quality crafts to increase knowledge of and interest in this part of our culture. […] A further purpose is to build a foundation for the artistic and art historical research conducted at our universities and colleges.[13]

The professional development project *The Thinking Eye* (1994-97)[14] was an important collaboration between NK and the museums of applied arts. The project aimed "to increase the public's knowledge and insight into the distinctive character of craft art" and "to strengthen the mediation of crafts and the tradition in which the field is situated". A number of seminars were organized, and collections of texts on various aspects of craft art were produced, also featuring international contributions.

Cover images from *Det tenkende øye* (*The Thinking Eye*) publications

During the transition from Norske Brukskunstnere to NK, craft artists found themselves constantly having to explain what crafts were in various contexts. NK's first definition of crafts from 1974 was created, among other reasons, to distinguish it from design and folk art, and was much discussed in the following years. Many practitioners found the

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[12] Editors, "Tidsskriftet er kunstnerstyrt formidling", *Kunsthåndverk* 2-3 (1981), p. 2.
[13] From the Ministry of Culture's guidelines for the Acquisition Fund for Norwegian Crafts, quoted in Jorunn Veiteberg, *Å samla kunst*, Norsk kulturråd, 2019, p. 14.
[14] *Det tenkende øye* (The Thinking Eye) resulted, among other things, in the publication *Det veltalende objekt: Norsk kunsthåndverk, 1975-1997*, Oslo: Det tenkende øye, 1997.

wording artistically restrictive; for example: Is there room for artworks made with unfired clay? What about production outside one's own workshop? What about collaboration between several artists?

> Products of textile, ceramics, glass, leather, metals, and other materials that are shaped and finished in the craft artist's workshop – under conditions where the craft artist is responsible for the process from raw material to finished product.[15]

The definition was revised several times, but members still felt it contributed to limitations and trivialisation. In the 2000s, it was altogether abandoned, a sign that the organisation no longer felt the need to explain itself in this manner.

> The critics have struggled with crafts solely possessing aesthetic qualities [and no function], and have often resorted to somewhat aggressive or exasperated formulations. An example is Gunvald Opstad when he demands that craft artists must "figure out where they want to be in the art world, as craft artists or visual artists" (*Kunsthåndverk* 31). But it's not that simple. In our time, the strength – and weakness – of crafts lies in its diversity. The demand that craft artists must return to the fold reveals a normative attitude, and thus a desire to fence in the field – which, in the extreme, amounts to censorship. [...] It cannot be the task of the historian or the critic to dictate the content of the profession.[16]

There were constant discussions in the professional community's various forums, centrally and locally, to understand and formulate the essence and conditions of crafts (*kunsthåndverk* in Norwegian, literally translating to "craft art"). This happened through seminars, exhibitions, member meetings, and not least in the magazine. The goal was to grasp the unique qualities that distinguished it from both visual art and design. Seminar and lecture titles testify to this:

> What are crafts (*kunsthåndverk*) and what do we want them to be? (Gro Jessen, Bergen School of Arts and Crafts, 1981)
> The creative crafts (Bente Sætrang, NRK, 1983)
> Crafts and their distinctive character (Det tenkende øye, 1995)
> Long live crafts – or not? (Det tenkende øye, 1997)
> Crafts between the present and the future (Villvin, Risør, 1999)
> Threatened, worthy of preservation, or highly viable? (NK Stor-Oslo, 2000)
> Norwegian crafts today – between [traditional] crafts and art (Norske Kunstforeningers landsforening, 2000)
> The space in-between is an open space (Nina Malterud, 2000)
> Does it still make sense to call something craft? (NK Trondheim, 2003)

The themes included, among others, crafts for personal use, architecture and society, and the relationship between crafts, material, and artistic dimensions. Pragmatic

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[15] See 1.5 Definition of Crafts, in "Notat fra Norske Kunsthåndverkere 13.11.74", in White Paper No. 41 1975-76 *Kunstnerne og samfunnet*.
[16] Anniken Thue, "Ingen kattepine tross alt!", in *Det Veltalende Objekt*, Oslo: Det tenkende øye, 1997, p. 65.

desires to clarify positions did not always align with defending artistic complexity and fluidity. In some fine art circles, our claim that functional objects could be art was never accepted. Through the prioritisation of theory and philosophy in the 1990s, both in art academies and fine art circles, the lack of appreciation for physical material and craftsmanship in an artistic context escalated. The experience of being a not entirely accepted artist group was provocative for us, but it was also stimulating to be perceived as alternative and somewhat on the outside.

> […] for a long time already, we have embraced the potential for expression and are well on our way into a type of expressionism unlike anything seen since the pre-industrial era.[17]

> This context of practical use, which is so often met with distrust, yet provides unique, material experiences on multiple levels, and […] that centrifugal force which propels crafts into so many different forms of expression.[18]

> To varying degrees, the works of today's craft artists do not fulfil conventional expectations of function, but they demand that we pause and think. It is in this gap between expectations of function and demands for reflection that we find today's crafts. Here, a distinct space has been created, or perhaps we should rather say an in-between space. With the ambiguous character this position provides, today's craft art fulfils art's requirement for complexity.[19]

Looking back at the documents, programmes, and notes from those years, the discussions can seem inward-looking and repetitive – while also being refreshingly self-critical and hungry for self-understanding, with a willingness to incorporate other professional skills and challenge established concepts of art. The community around NK emerged as one with strong professional energy and appetite. Up until around the year 2000, the production of crafts was still marked by this feverish start-up phase. Through improved working conditions concerning finances, mediation, meeting places, and professional development, the association could offer a sense of belonging to a field, discourse, space of possibility among colleagues, and visibility as a professional group. Gradually, consolidation and further development quite naturally took over. That leads to a different story, so I will stop here.

> There is no doubt that we are now witnessing positive results from the guaranteed income scheme, grants, and the new professional consolidation within the various artistic groups.[20]

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[17] Liv Mildrid Gjernes, "ISEN TYNN: BØRA TUNG…", *Kunsthåndverk* 17 (1985), p. [14].
[18] Gro Jessen, "Når det mulige ikke må stenge for det nødvendige", exhibition catalogue *Verkstedutsalget i Gabelsgate 15 år*, Oslo: Oslo Kunstforening, 1990.
[19] Jorunn Veiteberg, "Eit veltalande objekt", *Det Veltalende Objekt*, Oslo: Det tenkende øye, 1997, p. 126.
[20] Anniken Thue, "Utstilling = Formidling. Men av hva?", *Kunsthåndverk* 7-8 (1982).

The exhibition

An Impatient Desire encompasses 67 artworks by 38 artists. The works were primarily created between 1974 and 2000. The oldest artist was born in 1923, the two youngest in 1961, while the majority were born in the 1940s and 1950s. 28 are still alive.

To choose the works, I have drawn on my own experience in the field, searched museums and private collectors, and sought a fair distribution across materials, techniques, expressions, age, geography, and gender. I have selected works that were important at the time and that still possess artistic relevance. The selection is subjective and is not intended as a canon. Many more artists have made important contributions to the field and their work could easily have been taken in if resources allowed it. Works that have received ample exposure in recent years have not been included in the exhibition either, even if they were highly significant for the early development of contemporary crafts.

Not all exhibited works can be mentioned here, but I will describe some of the artistic explorations that run through the period covered by the exhibition, using some examples.

The craft artists' interest in making objects for practical use took new turns after 1975. Simultaneously, the very concept of function was expanded. The possibilities afforded by various materials and craftsmanship – and new experiments with historical traditions – were explored to the fullest. This led to a broad spectrum of works where references to a history of use were as important as physical utility. Practical considerations from the ideology of applied arts were no longer the only values – meanwhile, craft artists enthusiastically created scarves, shirts, jewellery, cups, and vessels for personal use. The studio sales were particularly important channels for the mediation work because artists could communicate the artistic intentions behind the objects directly to the customers.

As a result of the Artists' Action, there were far more exhibition opportunities and commissions for art in public spaces for craft artists. Along with an increased number of grants, this stimulated work on a larger scale – works that were not necessarily aimed at private sales. Collaboration with architects and public clients resulted in site-specific works and large-scale material constructions.

Shifting within the same artistic practice between everyday functional objects, sculptural works, and larger site-specific pieces was common, as was alternating between works rich in meaning and more formal explorations. The craft artists saw and discussed each other's work and challenged one another to explore new artistic

possibilities. This practice can be described as "*the workmanship of risk*"[21] in David Pye's terms, where risk drives the craft process and results are not guaranteed, in contrast to safe processes and traditions – "*workmanship of certainty*".

Many textile artists who primarily created woven images may today be organised as visual artists, but at that time they identified as craft artists because the focus on material and process was important to them.

The textile artist Gro Jessen (1938-2003), who worked with textile print, had a distinct voice in the magazine and seminars with her passionate engagement and remarkable skill with words Bente Sætrang (b. 1946), also a textile artist and a former student of Jessen, incorporated striped motifs from global textile traditions into works that took the form of fabric by the meter. This was cloth with repeating patterns in lengths that could be cut according to the customer's wishes. Yard goods, also sewn into garments, became a common format for many artists working with textile printing. At the same time, they also worked in pictorial formats, as Sætrang did.

Gro Jessen, "A tree seen by an ant" (1994),
194 x 284 cm
Kode Bergen Art Museum
Photo:
Kode Bergen Art Museum / Dag Fosse

Several craft artists who were already well established before NK was founded showed the way for younger colleagues. Lisbet Dæhlin (1922-2012) was a role model for many. She had been refining white cups for many years. A transparent glaze over a white glaze gave detail, depth, and a refined expression to the blue clay. The cups were glazed twice before firing – by no means a quick and practical production method. Here, expression was prioritised over efficiency. She eventually expanded her production to include sculptural versions of mugs, some also as flat images. These were less functional but had clear references to their function. Her uncompromising attitude became important for many younger colleagues.

[21] According to David Pye, "craftmanship" is defined as "workmanship using any kind of technique or apparatus, in which the quality of the result is not predetermined, but depends on the judgment, dexterity and care which the maker exercises as he works. The essential idea is that the quality of the result is continually at risk during the process of making; and so I shall call this kind of workmanship 'The workmanship of risk': an uncouth phrase, but at least descriptive." (in *The Nature and Art of Workmanship*, New York City and London: Bloomsbury, 2015 [1968], p. 20).

Lisbet Dæhlin, “Jug” (1989) H. 61 cm
National Museum of Decorative Arts and Design
Photo: National Museum of Decorative Arts and Design / Freia Beer

Odd and Kari Gjerstad (1923-2014 and 1925-2022) had been opposed to the applied arts movement ever since they started out on their own around 1950. They created functional objects and sculptural works in clay. Their workshop outside Bergen was for many years a central meeting place for younger ceramicists, including Svein Thingnes (b. 1940). He later became known for his more surreal works and his fearless experimentation with materials and firing techniques. Ceramic artist Yngvild Fagerheim (b. 1942) was ahead of time, showing works whose political themes remain relevant today, such as *Olja Nordmann* (Oiled Norwegian) from 1976. In the next generation was Kirsten Øverås (1953-1985), whose tea pots from around 1980 were connected to the solid stoneware production that emerged in Bergen during the 1970s, inspired by both the Gjerstads and by international guest teachers at the Bergen School of Arts and Crafts.

Konrad Mehus (b. 1941), who trained as a goldsmith, was already challenging conventions in jewellery art and the concept of the wearable object in the early 1970s with his series *Silver Is Tradition* (Sølv er tradisjon). The field of jewellery was soon expanded by several craft artists, who used materials other than precious metals and created forms that were barely wearable. Glass art never had its own dedicated education program in Norway but recruited from vocational schools, particularly in Sweden. Here, Ulla-Mari Brantenberg (b. 1947) became highly influential when, in 1978, she took the initiative to establish the first glass studio in Norway. She began producing individual and expressive drinking glasses and later continued with more sculptural works and installations.

Konrad Mehus, “Dinnertime” (1973),
from the series *Sølv er tradisjon*. H. 16 cm
National Museum of Decorative Arts and Design
Photo: Guri Dahl

Both folk art and craft traditions as well as pre-industrial production methods actively inspired many artists. *Boat Rug* (Båtrye) from 1982 by Aslaug Juliussen (b. 1953) references an old tradition of double-sided woven rugs made to keep fishermen warm in open boats. Finn Alsos (1946-2015) created tiles strongly inspired by Eastern European folk art for a number of public commissions. The tiles were the same size for many years, allowing him to rearrange them to form new compositions – a working method known from the history of ceramic tiles. Folk art was also a crucial inspiration for a new generation of wood artists who were trained in furniture design but chose to pursue artistic expression, such as Liv Mildrid Gjernes (b. 1954). An interest in ornament and pattern was noticeable across all material groups. Rhythm was also implicit in many of the manual gestures used in crafts, such as weaving, printing, building, and hammering.

In summary, the new professional community, the new funding schemes, and the expanded exhibition opportunities unleashed creative energy based on certain common premises. Simultaneously, international contact increased, and new networks and exchanges contributed to an exceptionally fruitful period for crafts. In this way, a solid professional foundation was laid for the work of new generations.

2025 – Fifty years later

“But what do you have to offer?” This was a question from the audience during one of the many seminars on the status of crafts at the Bergen National Academy of the Arts towards the end of the 1990s. The person asking was tired of hearing complaints about a lack of recognition and wanted to be shown what was actually at stake. What we had to offer is something this exhibition will hopefully shed some light on, not least through its juxtaposition with the Annual Exhibition 2025. It may also raise some questions: Was craftsmanship and material knowledge stronger before the 2000s? What happened to functional objects? Have the norms for good craftsmanship changed now that function is no longer the main purpose? Whatever happened to ornamentation? Is conceptual development more pronounced now? Do architecture and construction principles remain significant drivers for crafts? What economic factors influence artists’ practices? Are the various connections between materials, processes, thoughts, and knowledge on the path to creating artistic works actually something specific to crafts?

> I believe we must accept that everyone now borrows from one another and comments on each other's practices and traditions, and that the question of which medium, which practice, which academic discipline, which area within culture – be it poetry, the essay, the novel, philosophy, painting, sculpture, photography, textile art, design, architecture, ceramics, conceptual art, new media, light art, video, film, noise production, classical music, jazz, installation, etc. – is the most advanced, the most original, the most independent, the purest, or holds cultural precedence, must today be deconstructed as ideological positions.[22]

It seems largely irrelevant today to insist on a stable and unified idea of crafts. The time for fiercely defending one's own territory is over. The development of the art field is all about risk, rupture, unrest, rebellion, and change.

Educational programmes have their own history and have evolved from systematic training in specific materials and processes to a more general art education with access to various techniques. The focus on artistic research and PhD positions has provided new spaces for in-depth and cross-disciplinary work. Since both theory and digital media were predominant 20-30 years ago, we now see, among both professionals and amateurs, that physical materials and techniques are again in high demand. But the world is different from how it was in 1975. I hope there will still be room for art that twists and turns advanced knowledge of crafts and materials with the intention of artistic expression.

Nina Malterud (b. 1951) graduated from the National College of Art and Design in Oslo (1971-74) and has worked as an artist since then. From 1994, she was a professor of ceramics at the Bergen National Academy of the Arts, and between 2002 and 2010 served as Rector of the same institution. Subsequently, she has held various roles as a senior advisor at both national art academies and at the Faculty of Fine Art, Music and Design at the University of Bergen, particularly concerning artistic research and PhD education. She had a solo exhibition at Kode in Bergen in 2022 and in that same year, she was awarded the Ulrik Hendriksen Honorary Prize and Appointed Officer of the Royal Norwegian Order of St Olav.

[22] Åsmund Thorkildsen, "Mot kunst", *Kunstkritikk*, 05.05.2006, https://kunstkritikk.no/mot-kunst/.