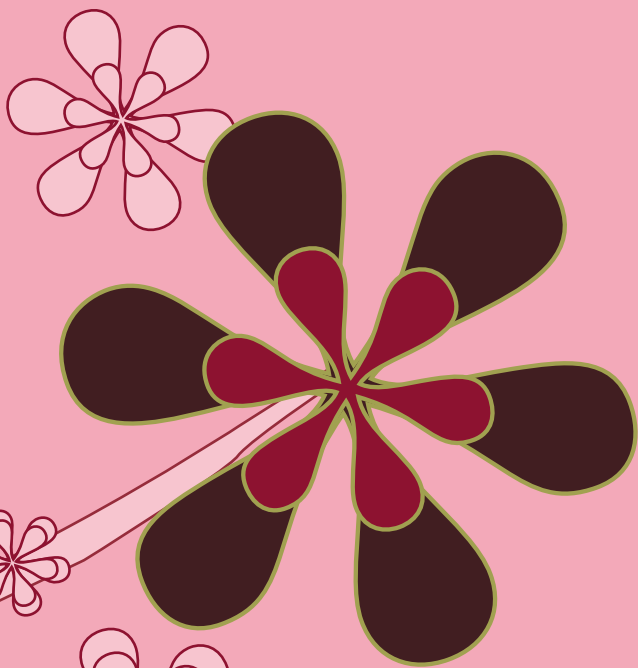


The House of Literature in Oslo



Litteraturhuset

Norway's first and Europe's biggest House of Literature opened its doors in 2007 in an old teachers college in the heart of Oslo. It is now doing service for the greater good of literature and public debate. The purpose of the House of Literature is to communicate and promote interest in literature and reading. The objective is also to inspire a growing interest in Norwegian and international fiction and non-fiction, and to serve as a meeting place for all those who are interested in books and literature. The House of Literature is furthermore an important arena for public meetings and seminars organised by a range of different organisations and institutions, discussing a broad variety of topics ranging from international politics and freedom of expression to cultural matters.



The initiative to found a House of Literature was taken by the Freedom of Expression Foundation (Fritt Ord), which remodelled the house under the supervision of Askim-Lantto architects before handing over operations to the independent foundation the House of Literature. The foundation is led by a board of trustees consisting of seven members, and has a general manager and seven employees.

The ground floor of the house contains a well-stocked bookshop and a café, restaurant and bar. Six different venues are used for presentations, conversation and debate. We apply the broadest possible interpretation of the concept of literature, by providing space for both the breadth of non-fiction literature as well as exclusive fiction and popular literature. The House of Literature has also become an important arena for public debate in the capital of Norway.

One floor focuses on children and youth, with the children's room Sjeherasad open to kindergartens three days a week. We also invite schools to visit us during daytime, while we offer a variety of events in the afternoons and evenings. The House of Literature devotes special attention to reaching out to youths and young adults with immigrant background, especially through workshops during school holidays. In 2009-10, the lawyer and politician Abid Raja, a well known spokesperson on minority issues, has organised so called dialogue meetings for young people of mixed background. Providing these groups with an arena, and thereby helping their voices to be heard, is an important task for the House of Literature.

The entire loft is dedicated to writers and authors. A total of 50 work spaces are available, along with offices for authors and a permanent meeting room for a network of journals and quarterlies. In collaboration with the different writers' organisations, we offer a workplace and meeting place in the centre of Oslo for writers, authors, translators and critics who are in need of such facilities. The workspaces are available free of charge for users, while the allocation of personal offices are made in the form of a stipend for a limited period.

The House of Literature can also offer an author's apartment where foreign authors and intellectuals can live and work in Oslo for a period between one week and three months. The apartment is offered rent free, and by invitation only.

One of the objects of the House of Literature is to foster debate and to serve as an arena for important voices from both the Norwegian and international public domain. In addition to monitoring Norwegian contemporary literature, we attach importance to presenting authors from the Nordic countries and from the rest of the world. The unique and generous support we receive from the Freedom of Expression Foundation puts us in a privileged position and enables us to arrange both major events and events intended for smaller groups with a narrower range of interests. At a time when the role of literature is under pressure from market demands, the House of Literature's aim is to function as a democratic and pluralistic sanctuary.

With the support of the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The House of Literature have organized several conferences and literature weeks. The 2008 conference 'Poet and Activist' gave a cross cultural look on challenges in the Middle East, and has since been followed up by the annual Saladin days, where The House of Literature focuses on cultural and political exchange between east and west. In 2009, we organised a weeklong event on African contemporary literature, in 2010 we held a Haruki Murakami mini festival, and in 2011, a Chinese Literature Week brought fifteen Chinese authors to Oslo and reached out to an audience of 4000 people.

In the spring of 2010, the House of Literature produced its first major scale theatre performance, *Desert Storm*, with the help of Norway's most renowned stage director Stein Winge and a cast of six outstanding actors. The play *Desert Storm*, portraying Saladin's conflict with Richard the Lion Heart during the crusades, was written on commission by the British-Pakistani writer and historian Tariq Ali

and the Norwegian author Thorvald Steen. From before, we have had experience with a play based on the diaries of the Norwegian poet Olav H. Hauge.

The House of Literature is an arena where different institutions, groups, associations and milieus organize their own events. The house has become an important venue for open meetings at affordable prices.

With the help of around hundred different organizers, the House of Literature presents a very varied programme. All activities open to the general public are presented in quarterly catalogues, weekly newsletters and daily at www.litteraturhuset.no.

The founding of the first Norwegian House of Literature was inspired by a German movement. Since the 1980s, houses of literature surfaced in most German cities. Our own house of literature distinguishes itself from the other European houses of literature by its size. With 3500 m² of space available on five floors, the Oslo House of Literature is the largest of its kind in Europe and we are therefore able to house a far larger range of activities than similar houses elsewhere.



Annual numbers for the House of Literature in Oslo

Visitors (audience, café, book store, drop in):
260.000

Audience at events:
110.000

Events (of which 650 open to the public):
1500

Events organized directly by The House of Literature:
350

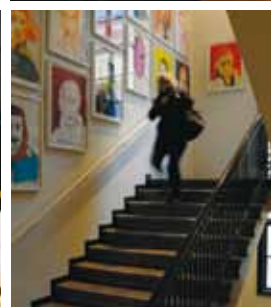
Events for children and youth:
200

Audience, events for children:
13.000

Daily average number of spectators:
300

Daily average number of visitors
(café, book store, drop in):
700







**Previous international guests at
The House of Literature**

Haruki Murakami, Mario Vargas Llosa,
Nadine Gordimer, Ian McEwan,
Ernesto Cardenal, Zadie Smith,
Chimamanda Adichie, Jonathan Franzen,
Mircea Cărtărescu, Ali Smith, Yiyun Li,
Aleksandar Hemon, Xi Chuan,
Amin Maalouf, Xinran,
Julia Kristeva, Dave Eggers,
Bill Bryson, Vendela Vida,
Hanif Kureishi, Tariq Ali,
Siri Hustvedt, Elias Khoury,
Åsne Seierstad, John Irving,
David Lynch and Patti Smith
and more.

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