

## Speech to the students

To all our new students: “Welcome!” And to all our returning students: “Welcome back!”

It is my pleasure to be able to speak to you today on behalf of the Student Council. I hope you don't mind listening a little bit longer before we let you go to become better acquainted both with one another and with the Academy.

Attending KHiO comes with a certain prestige, something you no doubt heard throughout the summer and will no doubt hear again. Even before we begin our studies, we are perceived as being among the top practitioners in our respective fields – and in many cases this is entirely true. But that does not mean that the school won't shape us, or that we won't in turn have the opportunity to shape both it and the wider society we will become part of after graduating. It sounds corny, but KHiO may sometimes seem like a bubble – an energetic, stressful and magical bubble, full of art, architecture, crafts and all form of aesthetical experiences. And as with all such bubbles, this one floats around within a certain context, usually alongside other bubbles – I won't delve into quantum mechanics here, but you can certainly say that I am an enthusiastic backer of the so-called bubble theory. This theory postulates that the entire universe is in practice full of many different bubbles – it's a bit like the Dr Suess story *Horton Hears a Who!*, where we all live within our own universe, surrounded by the universes of other people.

During your studies here, the members of the Student Council will be here for you, so that you can be safe within your own bubble, be encouraged to engage in other people's bubbles, and not least reach out to all those people who may be disconnected from the bubble that KHiO can be. Our new rector recently remarked that “art will save the world”, and this is a notion that I whole-heartedly support. Art is not just about interpreting Verdi's famous arias in a new way, emulating the architecture of Sverre Fehn, expressing joy through pottery or revolutionising the role of Hamlet. Saving the world through art pertains to what artistic research really is all about – namely art that is *created*. You create a painting, you create a bench, you create a choreography.

For some, the bubble that we live inside is difficult to come to terms with. As recently as two weeks ago you could read about this in *Morgenbladet*. An article there argued that the academisation of art education may stymie artists and thus also stymie the education of future artists. KHiO came out well from the article, because we have not gone down the same academic path that many other educational institutions within the field of art have. We still cling firmly to the belief that art is *created* and that we should not have to defend the methodology behind this art. To be sure, you should be able to explain a work of art, stand by it and champion its qualities, but defending a work of art is not what our education is about. **Rather, it is all about creating art.**

As your liaisons to those out there who may be unaware that we create art, we at the Student Council want to shed light on all this, both in public and less public debates. We want your years at KHiO to be the building block that makes you dare to create art and continue to do so. This is why we take on the work of doing all of the “boring” tasks and helping ensure that your time here will be as fun and educational as possible. Don't get me wrong: The more the merrier, and we want everyone to participate in student democracy

through the various student committees – especially at the current moment, when the democratic model is in peril in many parts of the world. Without student democracy, there are no guarantees that our art bubble will endure or that it can be shared with others. In Norway, the right to student involvement in higher education is enshrined in law – this is a right that we shouldn't take lightly. We therefore want as many of you as possible to be part of the team and participate in the student committees at your various departments. This is crucial in order to ensure our continued right to self-expression and to prevent injustice – and if such injustice is not being committed here, we should keep in mind how fortunate we are that we are able to train as artists, to be represented in the Academy's highest bodies, and to fight so that those who do not have such an opportunity can get it.

Even though the bubble in question is our own, it's not just about us. If art is to save the world, we also have to show our art somewhere, and there are many who still have to struggle to find a venue where they can do just that. There aren't that many of us who sit on the Student Council, but if only a few of you join the team and help strengthen student democracy, we might be able to build new, safe venues where more people dare to express themselves – where a multitude of bubbles meet, and where art can actually save the world.