

# Icelandic Art Student's 'Living' QR Code Mural Debuts at Bergen Kunsthall After Free Expression Dispute

*Bergen Kunsthall reinstates controversial MFA mural linking to a live digital artwork after institutional pushback raises free expression concerns.*

BERGEN, NORWAY, April 15, 2025

/EINPresswire.com/ -- An artwork that was nearly censored ahead of its unveiling is now on display as a "living" mural at Bergen Kunsthall. Icelandic conceptual artist ODEE's Bergen Kunsthall Project (BKP) – a mural-sized QR code linking to a constantly evolving digital artwork – opened to the public on April 11 after the University of Bergen reversed an earlier decision to block the piece. The work is part of the Master of Fine Arts graduation exhibition at Bergen Kunsthall and can be altered remotely by the artist in real time, meaning its content cannot be directly controlled by the hosting institutions.



ODEE Friðriksson in front of his graduation work, the Bergen Kunsthall Project — a mural-sized QR code that redirects to a living digital artwork the university attempted to censor.

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ODEE

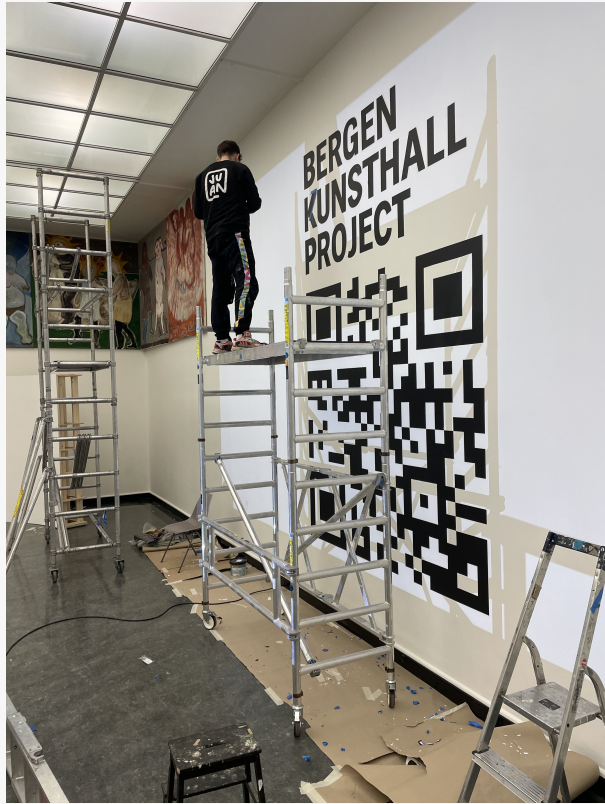
In the lead-up to the show, the University of Bergen (UiB) – a co-organizer of the MFA exhibition – requested to review ODEE's mural in advance, citing concerns it might contain “potentially illegal” content. ODEE (real name Odee Friðriksson) refused to disclose the artwork's content prior to the opening, as a stance against preemptive censorship. As a result, on February 24, university and Kunsthall

officials decided to exclude his work from the graduation show due to the lack of prior transparency. The university additionally required the artist to undergo a Health, Safety and Ethics “risk analysis” before allowing him to exhibit – a condition the artist's legal team criticized as a form of prior restraint on artistic expression.

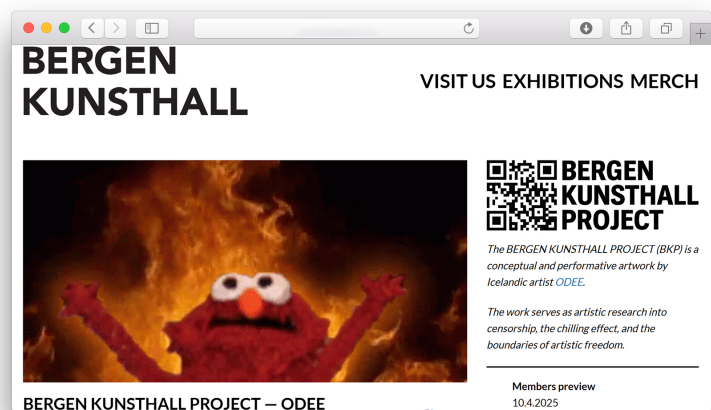
Represented by the Norwegian law firm Advokatfirmaet Sulland, ODEE's lawyers formally objected to the removal of the piece. In letters to UiB faculty in late March and early April, they argued that the university's actions violated [Section 100, Fourth Paragraph, of the Norwegian Constitution](#) and Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights. The letters asserted that requiring an artist to disclose a work before its public exhibition amounted to censorship in breach of national and international free expression protections.

Support for ODEE also came from artistic freedom advocates. Freemuse, an international NGO defending artistic expression, issued a letter of concern on March 18 stating that preemptively censoring the work would violate Norway's commitments under United Nations conventions and Norwegian law. Similarly, the Norwegian Young Artists' Society (UKS) sent an open letter on March 28, calling the exclusion of the student's work a "disturbing attack on artistic freedom" and reminding the institution of its duty to foster critical art rather than suppress it.

In early April, amid mounting public pressure and media coverage, the University of Bergen reversed course. In a letter dated April 3, UiB officials stated they never intended to pre-censor the student and apologized for the earlier handling of the situation. This reversal cleared the way for ODEE's mural to be reinstated in the MFA exhibition at Bergen Kunsthall. The show proceeded as planned, and the artwork was unveiled at the exhibition opening on April 11, 2025, in front of students, faculty, and the public.



Artist Juan Arctic during the installation of ODEE's Bergen Kunsthall Project — painting the large-scale QR code mural inside the main gallery space.



Screenshot of kunsthall.art — the digital platform behind ODEE's Bergen Kunsthall Project — featuring a viral GIF signaling the institutional takeover.

For ODEE, the attempted interference by the institution became part of the art's narrative. "When the institutions intervened, it didn't stop the work; they became the work," he said.

Now installed on the south wall of Bergen Kunsthall's main gallery, Bergen Kunsthall Project appears as a black-and-white QR code mural approximately 2.2 meters tall by 5 meters wide. The mural was painted on-site by ODEE's longtime collaborator, artist Juan Arctic, who previously assisted on ODEE's [We're Sorry](#) project in 2023.

The content of the piece, however, lives online rather than on the gallery wall itself. Scanning the mural's QR code directs viewers' smartphones to [www.kunsthall.art](http://www.kunsthall.art) – a website created by ODEE that mirrors Bergen Kunsthall's official site. This digital "doppelgänger" site is controlled entirely by the artist and serves as an extension of the artwork. ODEE can update the site at any moment from anywhere, altering text, images, and interactive elements in real time without any curatorial oversight. In effect, the physical mural serves as a portal to a living digital exhibition that continuously evolves throughout the show's run.

Because the artwork's message exists dynamically online, any attempt by the host institutions to censor or alter its content is effectively bypassed. Each visitor who scans the code becomes part of a conceptual feedback loop between the physical and digital realms, highlighting the limitations of traditional censorship efforts. The project blurs the line between the gallery's curatorial authority and the artist's autonomy, exploring a participatory, decentralized model of exhibition. Bergen Kunsthall Project effectively functions as a "remote-control" installation within the museum, with the artist able to modify the exhibit's narrative at will.

This initiative follows ODEE's previous conceptual works that engage power structures and public discourse. Past projects by the artist include [MOM Air](#), a 2020 satirical "airline" project that spoofed corporate branding and reached a global audience, and [We're Sorry](#) (2023), a web-based performance piece critiquing corporate malfeasance. Bergen Kunsthall Project continues this trajectory, combining social commentary with an experimental format. Notably, the project received a grant of NOK 40,000 from the Fritt Ord Foundation, a Norwegian freedom of expression trust, highlighting its relevance to free speech issues. ODEE is currently completing his MFA at UiB's Faculty of Art, Music and Design, and Bergen Kunsthall Project serves as his thesis work.

Bergen Kunsthall Project is on view at Bergen Kunsthall in Bergen, Norway, from April 11 through April 27, 2025, as part of the MFA Degree Show. Admission is free to the public during the museum's opening hours. For more information, visit [www.kunsthall.art](http://www.kunsthall.art).

For press inquiries, interviews, additional documentation, or high-resolution images, please contact:

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