



**PRESS ALERT!**

**Oslo, Norway: Acclaimed modernist architecture with Pablo Picasso murals to be demolished – if controversial government zoning plan goes through.**

The Norwegian government has decided to demolish The Y-block, a modernist building of both architectural and historic significance. When erected as part of the government quarters in 1969, the Y-shaped building was decorated with integrated works of art by Pablo Picasso.

The Y-block was hit by the terror attack July 22, 2011, but with hardly any damage to the concrete construction and the art works. Prior to the attack, the building, together with neighbouring high-rise The H-block, was about to be listed as protected buildings by The Directorate for Cultural Heritage, with broad support at the highest level of state administration. Today, in the process of rebuilding and redesigning the entire governmental complex, the demolishing of the Y-block has been set by the government as a premise for the new development.

The architectural significance of the threatened building is widely acknowledged. ICOMOS Norway recently stated: “Architect Erling Viksjø conceived the high-rise H-block and the lower Y-block as a whole, clearly connected to similar contemporary head-quarters for democratic purposes (ex. United Nations, New York and UNESCO, Paris). The high-rise H-block was erected in 1958 with pioneering treatment of the sandblasted natural concrete and integrated works by merited modernist artists, including contributions by Pablo Picasso. In 1969 the building complex was completed by the addition of the sculptural Y-block. Its three curved wings define three urban spaces of individual character. Picasso’s ‘Fishermen’ in one of the facades is an epitome of public art integrated within this extraordinary complex.”

In 2015 Fortidsminneforeningen, The Society for the Preservation of Ancient Norwegian Monuments, nominated the Y-block for Europa Nostra “The 7 Most Endangered” programme for cultural heritage monuments and sites in Europe. The building made it to the 2016 shortlist of the 14 most endangered.

In May 2016 Twentieth Century Society chose to present The Y-block as Building of the month.

ICOMOS Norway has confirmed, after undertaking an extensive research, that the architectural and artistic merit of the Y-block, as well as its historical significance, is uncontested. In September 2016 the organisation launched an International Heritage Alert. Read more about The Y-block and the new government complex here.

The governmental zoning plan is now under public hearing until October 31, 2016. The Society for the Preservation of Ancient Norwegian Monuments truly believes that there is still time and possibility to make the government change position in this case. But to achieve this, further international involvement and press coverage on The Y-block is crucial.

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