Dear artists and curators

Dear audience

LIAF—a legendary festival where anything could happen!
It's not always the size that matters! LIAF is not the biggest, but it is one of Norway's most avant-garde and experimental festivals. A festival that is new and completely different every time. It has new curators and new artists, it moves to new places, and provides new perspectives and experiences by installing art on the ocean floor, on the edge of a quay and high in the mountains, here at Vågan.

Here in Lofoten, artists find a welcoming atmosphere and an environment that lends itself beautifully to innovation and intense creation; a lot of hard work in a short amount of time goes into the preparations for a festival like LIAF.

I arrived here today with great anticipation; it is my first year as Chief County Executive, and my first visit to LIAF. Earlier this year, I have had the opportunity to visit other art projects in other parts of Nordland, but Lofoten has a unique position when it comes to art, and contemporary art, in particular.

Evidence of this can be found in the various Artist in Residence programmes established for artists in Lofoten; they are immensely popular, with many applicants and an international profile. Lofoten attracts artists from all corners of the world—and this is reflected now, during LIAF.

Also, art is by nature international, and in keeping with our time, actively seeking to interact and exchange experiences with other cultures. I am happy to see that Nordland and Lofoten is able to fill this role as a place for interaction and cultural exchange for artists from different countries, and for a local audience interacting with the visiting audience and all the artists.

This year, LIAF has made an effort to reach out, move beyond Lofoten, and the festival has organized events in both Oslo and Venice as part of the preparations for and marketing of the festival. Reaching out sometimes means you have to meet people where they are. It seems like the efforts paid off; LIAF is now well known to a wider audience. Just look at us here today; we have come from near and far. We share a common interest and high expectations.

This year's festival presents many new artworks and a new location, and we must not forget the exhibition at the North Norwegian Art Center, which focuses on the history of LIAF. It is my hope for the festival that it continues to expand and maintains its bold style and presentation.

And to the organizers, the North Norwegian Art Center, I would like to congratulate you on this grand opening. Your tireless, hard work has made this great event possible.
I would furthermore like to thank this year’s curators Matt Packer and Arne Skaug Olsen, thank you for your interest in coming to work here in Lofoten, and for all the hard work you have put into building this exhibition: “Disappearing Acts”.

Finally, I would like to thank all of the artists for their individual contributions, which are sure to leave their marks on the audience. Your art is sure to live on in our memories even after the festival is over.

I wish you all the best of luck with this year’s festival, and I hereby declare LIAF 2015 open!