

Einar Bjarki Malmquist

PRECISELY OSLO

Einar Bjarki Malmquist is an architect, at Ola Roald Arkitektur in Oslo, and former editor of Arkitektur N, The Norwegian Review of Architecture. He writes about the work *Minority Groups in Oslo* at The Vigeland Sculpture Park in Frogner Park.

As a former land surveyor, artist Hallsson knows that every measurement one takes suffers an element of inbuilt imprecision, a possible error. As a land surveyor lays out a road in the landscape or places a house, his measuring peg—sprayed blue, green, yellow or red—is always slightly to the left or the right of the peg placed by the previous surveyor. Sometimes the pegs are a few centimetres apart, sometimes almost on the same spot. But only almost. So is it with Hlynur Hallsson's work. Three sentences found on the Internet are now on a wall in Oslo. The themed sentences, like another piece about “minority groups in Oslo,” are written in three different languages, spray-canned in three different colours. Like the pegs of the land surveyor, precision and imprecision intertwine. There is bound to be at least some small difference in x, y or z.

A meeting of ideas and the space of democracy

The agora of ancient Athens was a marketplace, of ideas as much as goods. According to Hannah Arendt, who often mentions that Socrates' objective was to get the citizens to make friends, the aim of the polis—the city—is to bring people together and provide spaces for planned as well as unplanned human communication. Closer to modern times, the history of the Eidsvoll House and its assembly room, a room that became the setting for the bicentenary of the Norwegian constitution, tells us how an arbitrary place takes on historic importance. Democracy needs spaces, public spaces, both large ones and arbitrary small ones, in order to unfold. In Oslo, Hlynur draws attention to a plurality of spaces pregnant for human communication. Reminding us that democracy and its thought exchange must be performed rather than delegated to a bureaucracy. Are we the new surveyors of Oslo?

