



Bjerke Tower Block: Thirteen years on the third floor

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Tretten år i tredje etasje
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English sample

Awards

The Library Literature Prize 2023
NORLA Selected Title Autumn 2023



Bjørn Hatterud

Photo: Agnete Bruun

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In *Bjerke Tower Block*, Bjørn Hatterud tells the story of the majority population from the unique perspective of a disabled gay man who begins his adult life scratching out an existence on disability benefits and goes on to become a board member of Arts Council Norway.

For thirteen years, from 2009-2022, Bjørn lived in a tower block in the poor, working class neighbourhood of Bjerke on the east side of Oslo. Bjørn befriended several of his elderly neighbours, such as the traumatised wartime sailor Bjarne next door, and Ester on the ground floor, who grew up among the toxic landfills on the Langøyene Islands in the Oslo Fjord. During the thirteen years at Bjerke, Bjørn overcomes the poverty and social exclusion defining his life, achieving cultural recognition and acclaim as a writer, art curator and public intellectual. In the course of these thirteen years, Bjerke has gradually become an attractive and expensive neighbourhood.

Hatterud reveals some of the untold consequences of Norway's oil wealth for the outlying, low-income neighbourhoods of Oslo. The depiction of Bjerke's sociocultural evolution combines the keen observations of the author with historical facts and personal experiences from his own life.

The book offers a fresh, queered perspective on the Norwegian national narrative, and the critical reception has been overwhelmingly positive. Hatterud writes with precision, insight, and warmth about life and the people he met in the tower block he will soon leave behind.

Bjørn Hatterud has so to speak created his own genre. He has a love for communities that are falling apart – or at least changing.

NRK

The struggle to make ends meet is a taboo subject. Not for Hatterud. Poor health – especially mental illness and chronic pain – are also taboo. Not for Hatterud. Loneliness, above all, is taboo! Not for Hatterud. He marches in fearlessly to explore painful themes ... demonstrating his own and others' prejudices along the way

Dagsavisen

It's almost incomprehensible that someone could be so good at reeling off cultural and sociological considerations, but Hatterud is world-class.

Randaberg24

Bjørn Hatterud

Bjørn Hatterud is an Oslo-based writer, musician, and art curator, who grew up gay and disabled in a working-class family in a rural Norwegian community. He has experienced national success with his first two critically acclaimed books, *Against Normality* (2018) and *Me, Mum and Mjøsa* (2020). In his books, Hatterud writes about his life's extraordinary trajectory, and about how growing up as an outsider led him to forge a pathway into art, literature and non-mainstream culture – the spaces where he discovered identity and freedom. *Bjerke Tower Block* is his third book, which confirms his position as one of Norway's leading narrative non-fiction writers. He has been awarded Fritt Ords Pris (Free Speech Award) and Kritikerprisen (The National Book Critics' Award) for his writing.