



BULLETIN 03

A public museum is probably not the first location where one would expect heated debate and agitation. Yet, museums are no strangers to fundamental scrutiny, both from inside and outside the institution. As social, cultural and political landscapes change, so does the perspective on public space, which has a direct impact on how we assess its public institutions (i.e. museums).

Without a doubt, we are living in exceptionally dynamic times, as seldom has our public space been so radically altered in such a short period of time.

The on-going pandemic has brought to the fore key elements that might have been collectively overlooked before, such as the impact of an individualist society on mental health or its economic dependence on global movement of trade and travel. When half of the global population is restricted to their homes and travel bans have raised questions about the sustainability of tourism, what are the common values that a public museum should endorse?

When half of the global population is restricted to their homes and travel bans have raised questions about the future of tourism, what are the common values that a public museum should endorse? Should museums continue to be homes of collections and exhibitions (and therefore beautiful stops on the tourist trail) or engage with wider society?

For Museion, the answer lays somewhere in the middle. We want to become more than the sum of our exhibitions and simultaneously secure a sustainable future for the collection. We have introduced new public formats such as the Bulletin and Passage that make the Museum more responsive to the cultural landscape of the region but, at the same time, we intend to boost efforts to shape our international image, tolerance and appeal.

For this particular edition of the bulletin, the work of the American artist Matt Mullican (b. 1951, Santa Monica, CA) has inspired us to look deeper into the relation between art, public space and museums. The first Bolzano exhibition of Mullican in 2001, took place in the previous building of Museion but also incorporated the streets and facades of the city. This ambitious project turned the museum inside-out and demonstrated that the role of public institutions is not restricted to the architectural limitations of a building, but can be experienced in the same way we experience public space and the way we shape a community through collective and visual memory. Today, we are hosting another installation of Matt Mullican at the Passage, *102 Signs for a Museum Fence* created for the fence around the Museion building site 5 years later (in 2006).

This installation is inherently linked to the issues regarding the role our museum plays in modern and contemporary art, and it is our point of departure for the current edition of the Bulletin. We asked the Italian representative of the International Council of Museion (ICOM), Adele Maresca Compagna, to explain her stance on what the role of the museum should be today. As, during the controversial 2019 conference of the ICOM, a group of liberal countries proposed a radical redefinition of the role of museums, and the shock created by this debate is still palpable today. We also asked the artist Egeon and the cultural association Lungomare to share their experiences of contemporary public space. And I would like to direct



your special attention to the contribution of Museion-Ink. This is the creative writing workshop for young adults, that recently used the installation *102 Signs for a Museum Fence* as inspiration for capturing their experiences in words and actions. Last but not least, our colleagues from the library and bookshop have once again come up with some fantastic suggestions for further reading.

I would like to sincerely thank everyone who has helped make this edition possible.

Stay safe,

Bart van der Heide, Museion Director