

MUZEUM SUSCH

INTRODUCING MUZEUM SUSCH

ART AT THE ALPINE PASS

We are delighted to announce the opening of MUZEUM SUSCH. This new institution for contemporary art, founded by Grazyna Kulczyk, is situated in the historic village Susch in the Engadin, Switzerland. This appealing, elongated valley has always been a locus of cultural exchange between borders. Artists and intellectuals have long been fascinated by this landscape and over the years many have chosen to live and work in the Engadin. Drawing strength from this unique environment, MUZEUM SUSCH aims to become a dynamic venue for artistic production and mediation.

RE-READING AND RE-CLAIMING

As well as being home to Grazyna Kulczyk's extensive collection of international art, with its particular focus on Central and Eastern European, postwar art, MUZEUM SUSCH will organize temporary exhibitions, new artistic productions, residencies and events mediating between East and West.

THE INSTITUTION AS PROCESS

The methodology of the institution is to combine a museum with artist's studios, as a venue that will trigger and sustain the ongoing reappraisal of art-historical narratives and the production of new works of art. Artists will be invited to actively shape the museum's identity with site-specific interventions.

CRITICAL MEMORY

Ultimately MUZEUM SUSCH strives to persistently ask and explore new questions rather than merely representing solidified knowledge. The residency programme is a distinctive feature of the institution, bringing together artists and cultural producers from diverse disciplines and providing a forum for debate, cross-fertilisation and innovative artistic activity. An old Engadin house, Chesa Santa, with several bedrooms and a studio space next to the main museum building is devoted to residencies.

ALPINE AND INDUSTRIAL

Grazyna Kulczyk has located the museum in a nineteenth-century brewery. This former industrial premises is currently being enlarged by the Swiss architects, Voellmy Schmidlin. The conversion will be completed by late 2017. Taking the existing industrial structure as their basis, the architects have created a complex museum space by subtly restoring the fabric of the building and introducing circumspect interventions. The museum's labyrinthine character—the brewery was originally built into solid rock—offers diverse gallery typologies that will invite experimental presentations, approaches to art and facilitate exploratory journeys for visitors.

IN PROGRESS

The grand opening of MUZEUM SUSCH is planned for winter 2018. Meanwhile MUZEUM SUSCH is engaging the public in the construction process by organizing events and workshops. Another element of the institution is the connectivity with regional art projects and venues. In January 2017 a first collaboration with Engadin Art Talks will take place.

CULTURAL STATEMENT BY GRAZYNA KULCZYK

ENGAGING HISTORY TO CREATE DIALOGUES

Grazyna Kulczyk sets great store by her role as an “ambassador” for contemporary Polish art, which has long been widely ignored by Western critics and collectors due to the particular political environment of former Eastern Bloc states. Beyond this general ambition, however, her collecting strategy also reflects other key interests: Western artists have been joining the collection, opening up new perspectives and highlighting contrasts between works but also raising questions about the multifarious and complex relations between East and West in general. These expanded perspectives and contrasts within the collection provide the basis for commentary on complex twentieth- and twentyfirst-century global concerns.

WOMEN’S PERSPECTIVE—FEMINIST MISSION

Grazyna Kulczyk, as an independent, creative entrepreneur has a deep understanding and emotional connection to issues women face in their artistic endeavours. Her collection reflects this interest, inviting and encouraging artists’ participation. The collection contributes to the recognition and greater visibility of women artists. One of the central aims of Grazyna Kulczyk’s collection is the redefinition of the canonical and the marginalized.

MONOGRAPHIC INTERVENTIONS

In keeping with its mission as a site of both contemplation and production, the collection will expand by a number of permanently installed, site-specific works by contemporary artists, who will individually engage with the architecture and particular structure. The presentation of the art blurs the division between the permanent collection and site-specific interventions as it is typically seen in traditional museums. Indeed, the works on display will continually interact with both formats. The artist’s residency program will facilitate the self-curated production of ideas, dialogues, and—potentially—works of art, which will in turn shed their individual light on the collection.

CURATORIAL VISION

PRODUCTION AND DEBATE

Fredi Fischli and Niels Olsen are Swiss curators with an international perspective. As local protagonists they connect the fabric of Switzerland's institutional landscape. Their programmatic strategy reinforces the importance of the institution as a place of production and debate. This gives the institution a lively character and allows it to engage with both local and international audiences.

QUESTIONS INSTEAD OF GIVENS

In essence the best exhibitions are about research and asking questions. The collection of Grazyna Kulczyk and her experience in programming exhibitions for the past twenty years give the museum a strong identity. Grazyna Kulczyk's collection, in combination with the museum's underlying cultural mission, triggers the curation and production of the coming projects. Many exhibitions will emerge directly from themes addressed in the collection, such as the dialogue between East and West specifically during the era of the Iron Curtain, the changing status of women artists, and the human figure as a performative entity. In addition to exploring these themes MUZEUM SUSCH will always be open to other contemporary discourses. With monographic exhibitions and interventions other languages will evolve and a diversity within the programme will be achieved.

A MEETING OF GENERATIONS

A core methodology of the curators involves dialogue between the historic and the contemporary. By involving new productions of contemporary artists in dialogue with historic works, re-readings of ingrained ideas can be fostered. The exhibition thus becomes a much-needed medium for asking questions.

KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION

The residency programme has been specifically set up by the curators to promote "production-oriented" projects, combining on-site production and debate. Artists and art professionals will be able to gather at MUZEUM SUSCH to exchange ideas. Another key element is the publication of ambitious books that enhance the connection between debate and production.

ARCHITECTURAL VISION

BORN IN THE ENGADIN

The historic brewery in Susch is unusual in the Engadin, which has few industrial buildings. The architects Lukas Voellmy and Chasper Schmidlin have particular expertise in the renovation and modern intervention of Engadin houses and in designing art galleries. One of the partners, Chasper Schmidlin, is himself from the "Schellenursli" family and grew up in the valley. This local connection played an important part in Grazyna Kulczyk's decision to work with this young, yet experienced architectural practice.

NATURE AND INDUSTRY

Voellmy and Schmidlin carefully engage with the historic structure and the resulting design is a respectful restoration and expansion. Architectural interventions are introduced in a subtle manner. The main additions to the brewery are two large, underground exhibition spaces. These added volumes integrate naturally into the existing structure, since the brewery is itself built into the rocks and is partly underground. Hence, a huge volume of the building is hidden from view. The museum offers 1200 m² of exhibition space and additionally a conference and performance room for around 100 people, library, archive, office, studio space and a concept restaurant.

IMMERSIVE LABYRINTH

The building blends with the image and character of the village rather than contrasting with it. The architecture is introverted and immersive. In a labyrinthine path, the museum offers a variety of very different spatial typologies: from the classic white cube to the rural cave. These different rooms serve as exhibition spaces allowing experimental presentations of contemporary art.

A HIKE BY GÜNTHER VOGT

The surroundings of the museum are as important as its interior. The renowned landscape architect Günther Vogt has designed a scheme that mirrors its internal pathways. An immersive, external path guides the museum visitor and the public through the complex levels of the landscape. Vogt's strategy is not to introduce an alienated garden design but to enhance the existing site. The astonishing rocky backdrop, now revealed by Vogt in all its splendour, crucially plays into the museum's architectural impact.

URBAN AND RURAL

The striking Alpine landscape of Susch is an inspiring environment, with a peaceful atmosphere that invites visitors to linger in contemplation. Yet it isn't as remote as it may seem. Susch is in fact embedded in the urban fabric of Switzerland, and Zurich, Basel and Bern are no more than two or three hours away.

THE MAGIC OF THE ENGADIN

The Engadin has always attracted visitors from far and wide. Leading artists and intellectuals were drawn to the valley and its majestic tranquility in the past, from Rainer Maria Rilke and Friedrich Nietzsche to Giovanni Segantini and Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, and many of their counterparts today are similarly inspired by the magic of the Engadin. In that respect the ancient, regional language Romansh is also a heritage the museum cultivates. The Engadin has a long history as a place of cultural production and now MUZEUM SUSCH will make its own contribution to this rich and diverse context.