

## **INTERCOM CONFERENCE 2011: MUSEUMS and POLITICS.**

**Tirsdag d. 13.09 – fredag d. 16.09**

Dear Museum Colleagues from almost everywhere in the world!

My name is Christine Buhl Andersen. I'm Chair of the Association of Danish Museums and the director of KØS – which is Denmark's Museum of Art in Public Spaces.

It's a privilege to be here, representing almost all the museums in Denmark, art historical, cultural historical as well as natural historical, from the capital here in Copenhagen to the furthest outposts in the country – as well as museums from the Faroe Islands and Greenland.

Seen from the point of view of our organization, the main task ahead of us is to continuously focus on the museum to become a more obvious and important arena for generating new and relevant ideas for the society we are part of, that is, actually fulfilling the potential we have to address local and international political issues.

Here in Denmark – and in the other Scandinavian countries surrounding us - the question of how museums can act and respond to contemporary political and social issues is becoming increasingly relevant and necessary.

I don't need to remind you that less than two months ago a deranged man in Norway, not so very far from here, killed more than 70 people – most of them politically active children and teenagers.

In his twisted mind, this terrible act was based on the falsification of history and a distorted view of modern society - the history and issues that are basically the daily business of our museums.

How should and could we, as museums, respond to such tragic events?

Denmark itself has a longstanding reputation of freedom of speech and freedom of press but it has also lately suffered from the 'trauma of free speech' - in the light of the controversy surrounding the cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed. Something that started right here, in this little Nordic country, but which is of more universal importance like the tragedy in Norway

has. Do museums have a role to play here too, and maybe even a duty and a job to do?

How should we react? How should we collaborate? How can we bring the philosophy of what museums can do into play?

In connection with the 22nd of July massacre in Norway, the Norwegian, Swedish and Danish Museum associations issued a joint statement declaring the commitment and responsibility of museums to support and defend our democratic values, focus on critical reflection, and work for cultural tolerance in order to counteract those who pervert history to justify their extremist opinions, their use of violence, and their misrepresentation of history.

This is an important signal to send to the world. Many people may see museums as harmless venues for a family outing, but we have an important role to play as a locus of knowledge – the knowledge that has a potential in the local as well as the global society in the ongoing task of developing democracy, tolerance and citizenship.

I hope this conference can be an inspiration and result in the kind of decisions that can make museums even more important players than we are today, thank you very much.