

OCM broadens 'museum' concept for Alto Adige citizens



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Open City Museum (OCM) is a participatory and community-led initiative to promote the arts and a mutual understanding of the diversity of cultures of the people of the autonomous province of South Tyrol in northern Italy.



Arts for social cohesion

South Tyrol, also known by its Italian name *Alto Adige*, is an autonomous province in northern Italy. The province covers an area of 7400 square kilometres and has a population of around 500000 inhabitants. The majority are of Austro-Bavarian heritage and speak German. Around a quarter speak Italian as their first language (mainly concentrated on the two largest cities Bolzano and Merano) and a small minority have Ladin as their mother language.

The percentage of people whose families have migrated to the region is around 9%, suggesting that the already diverse population has further diversified in recent years. The role of diversity thus has a strong influence in all aspects of everyday life and an important influence on youth and cultural policies.

OCM uses the arts as a key instrument to promote social cohesion in the province. It also broadens an understanding of the term 'museum' to include public spaces promoting active citizenship. It is mainly being promoted in the province's capital, Bolzano, and in the municipalities of Bressanone and Chiusa. It aims to involve all citizens, but particularly young people and those whose families have migrated to the region, and to promote mutual understanding through the arts.

Cultural diversities

Funded by the municipalities, the University of Bolzano, particularly the Department of Education, and the private sector, the OCM activities include events promoting inter-cultural education, participatory art, public art initiatives, workshops, exhibitions and talks. To reach as wide an audience as possible, these take place not only in traditional venues such as the local museums or art galleries, but also on the streets and in other private and/or unused spaces.

OCM started in 2011 with a community-led art project 'Cultural diversities in Chiusa'. This was a photo-exhibition featuring people who have migrated to the city. It included tours given by young migrants in their mother languages, as well as a Henna painting workshop and a family photo-session on a public piazza.

In 2013 in Bolzano, OCM organised an arts-based community development project, which concluded with an open-air photo exhibition, in collaboration with the Oltrisarco civic centre. The exhibition combined portraits of unknown people from the archives of a local photographer with portraits of 'new' residents with a migrant background.

Finally, this year (i.e. 2014), OCM is launching a platform to encourage creativity, especially among young people: 'Young Futuremakers' will promote and celebrate diverse forms of active citizenship. For example, there will be a series of artistic outdoor events, organised by young people, in Bressanone.

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