The Museum in Progress

Are we making the world´s longest home renovation show?

When museum doors close,
the story begins.

Click here to watch on YouTube!

What if the moment a museum closes its doors for renovation could become the moment it becomes most accessible?

Across Europe, cultural institutions are forced to shut their doors for rehabilitation of old building structures, and to protect the very heritage they exist to share.

For audiences, closure often means exclusion. For museums, it risks invisibility.

The Museum in Progress reverses this logic.

Instead of retreating behind scaffolding, we open the process itself.

We turn conservation into storytelling, expertise into narrative, and closure into connection.

This is not just communication around a project. It is the project.

The director of the composer homes doing the work

But instead of fast transformations and immediate results, we document something much slower:
Care.

Kode Art Museums and Composer Homes is the second largest art museum in Norway.

We manage seven historic sites in and around Bergen, including the composer homes of Ole Bull, Edvard Grieg, and Harald Sæverud—places deeply embedded in Norway’s cultural identity.

Today, two of these homes are undergoing extensive and necessary rehabilitation. Doors are closed. Access is restricted. Time is required.

Rather than waiting for it to reopen, we chose to act.

Our communication team created a digital series inspired by one of Norway’s most popular entertainment formats:

the home renovation programme.

The director of Kode seems pleased with the work!

Each episode follows the ongoing rehabilitation work. There is no final reveal. No completed transformation.

Only a process unfolding over years, inviting audiences to return, follow, and remain engaged.

A new model for audience engagement

Most cultural institutions communicate outcomes. We communicate the process as the core experience. This shift is the project's central innovation.

By borrowing a familiar narrative structure, we lower the threshold for engagement.

We also borrowed the title of the series: In Norwegian, the title of our series is Tid for komponisthjem, directly translated to Time for Composer Homes, paraphrasing the original and very popular TV programme Tid for hjem (Time for home).

Viewers recognise the format immediately: a home, a challenge, a transformation.

But what they encounter is something different—craftsmanship, research, uncertainty, and time.

At the centre is a recurring host from within the museum, a trusted guide who meets both experts and audiences on equal terms. This continuity builds recognition, emotional investment, and credibility across episodes.

Follow the work as the seasons pass by!

The result is not passive consumption, but sustained attention:

- viewers follow a story that evolves over years
- they learn to recognise the people behind the work
- they develop a relationship to places they cannot physically enter (yet)

This is participation through presence, not interaction alone, but shared time and perspective.

Reaching beyond the museum audience

The project deliberately reaches outside the traditional museum sphere. The concept of “home” is universal. The act of caring for a building is widely understood.

In Norway, home renovation programmes attract broad audiences—many of whom do not regularly engage with art museums.

- viewers motivated by everyday interests
- audiences who are digitally present
- people who would not typically encounter conservation work

As of June 2026:

- 6 full episodes and 10 short-form videos have been produced by the museum´s in-house communication team since August 2025
- the series is distributed on YouTube and in the museum´s newsletter, as well as on Facebook (organic)
- the series has reached approximately 3,700 views on YouTube
- individual episodes have reached up to 750 views

This is not “viral content”. These are not mass-media numbers. They are early indicators of something more important:

That audiences are willing to spend time with slow cultural processes when they are made visible, understandable, and human, and quite often told with a sense of humor
– which can be a bit unexpected for a museum.

Our colleague Uwe actually lives on the museum island of Lysøen

Impact and lasting change

The project demonstrates a fundamental shift in how audiences relate to institutions.

Instead of asking: “When can we visit?”, they begin asking: “How is it going?”.

This change matters. To stay or even become relevant, museums need people to care about us, just as much as we need to care about people.

An excited neighbour of the Lysøen museum

So far, our audiences report:

- greater understanding of why closures are necessary
- increased trust in institutional work
- stronger anticipation for reopening

Its lasting legacy will be:

- a growing archive of conservation in practice
- a new standard for transparency in museum work
- a model for turning institutional challenges into public value

The Museum in Progress began with a constraint
—but refused to accept its limits.

By opening what is usually hidden, slowing down what is usually accelerated, and sharing what is usually invisible, the project expands what access to culture can mean.

Not access to finished spaces. But access to knowledge, work, and time.

When the doors close, the museum does not disappear.
It opens and becomes visible in a new way.

The people taking care of things!