

New Museums Intentions, Expectations, Challenges

MUSÉE D'ART ET D'HISTOIRE DE GENÈVE
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PRESS RELEASE

Introduction

In this exhibition, we consider the “new museum” to refer to the intersection of museology and museum architecture, as the embodiment of what the museum might look like in the future and what its functions will be.

After the financial crisis of 2008, it became clear that so-called mega-museums are not necessarily models for success as a certain humility and return to essentials have come to predominate. In addition to well-known iconic mega-buildings, there are many smaller projects devoted to the specific task of redefining what objects of cultural value worthy of preservation might be.

The “new museum” is faced with many challenges. It must meet the public's expectations and it is required to be a visitor magnet; it has to be a place for ambitious study and conservation of cultural treasures; a reflection of the socio-cultural pulse; an economic attraction hoped to revitalise its urban surroundings; and an iconic landmark. Both innovative and respectful of traditions, the new museum is increasingly expected to be partially or wholly self-supporting rather than relying on state or private funding.

The exhibition *New Museums. Intentions, Expectations, Challenges* invites visitors to examine and envision the ways in which museums influence and shape local communities, how they function as interlocutors for societal change and how they carry intentions for the future.

Narrative of the exhibition

The exhibition is organised around five large topics which are illustrated by 16 museums, either just opened or still in development.

1. Cultural Heritage

Museums play a pivotal role in our society because they shelter and safeguard our heritage and contribute to the re-telling of our history. Formerly regarded as a mere locus of knowledge, today in the Internet Age the museum is being re-defined as a social space and a space for experience and exchange.

China Comic and Animation Museum

Hangzhou, China

MVRDV, Rotterdam

No current plans to achieve this design

Building 32,000 sq. m



Private comic collection, animations and multimedia displays

In the scheme of the history of mankind, comics have only just entered our cultural consciousness. The China Comic and Animation Museum in Hangzhou is intended to tell their history and acknowledge their cultural significance. Stepping away from traditional notions of how a museum should look and what it should be like, the architects focused entirely on the comic as a medium with its own specific characteristics.

National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC)

Washington, D.C., USA

Adjaye Associates, New York/London

Construction 2009–2016, opened 2016

Building 39,000 sq. m

Permanent and temporary exhibitions about African American history and culture

The NMAAHC acknowledges America's often-brutal history and celebrates the lives and culture of African-Americans. It explores their heritage of and shows how history and culture are shaped and informed by global influences. Architect David Adjaye emphasised the roots of African Americans by incorporating design elements borrowed from various African cultures, such as the corona-like shape of the building and the intricate façade.

The Palestinian Museum

Birzeit, West Bank, Palestine

Heneghan Peng Architects, Dublin

Construction 2014–2016, opened 2016

Building 3,500 sq. m

Permanent and temporary exhibitions with archaeological, ethnographic and contemporary art collections

The museum has no desire to seek attention upon itself, but instead it blends into the surrounding landscape, purposefully drawing the attention to its past and its inhabitants. It will show the history of the people of Palestine. As an exhibition space, it seeks to promote Palestinian culture and strengthen international connections.

Kurdistan Museum

Erbil, Iraq

Studio Libeskind, New York

In the design phase

Building 19,000 sq. m

Permanent and temporary exhibits about Kurdish art and culture

The architect Daniel Libeskind designed a museum to display the culture of the Kurdish people that have no country. The Kurdish homeland extends across four countries: Turkey, Syria, Iran and Iraq. In northern Iraq, at the foot of the historic citadel in Erbil, the capital of the autonomous Iraqi Kurdistan region, a museum will one day stand that unites the Kurdish people – at least metaphorically.

Naga Site Museum

Naga, Sudan

David Chipperfield Architects Berlin

In the planning phase

Building 1,400 sq. m

Excavations from the site

The museum in Naga in Sudan's Butana steppe will be small. Compared to most museums we know, even tiny. It will measure exactly twenty metres wide and sixty metres long, and will no doubt see very few visitors a week. But they are not what is most important. Most important are the excavated objects protected from the sun and disintegration in this museum, designed by David Chipperfield Architects without a fee.

2. Urbanism

Often located at the heart of cities, museums act as symbols, sometimes even iconic landmarks. Simultaneously, modern buildings also seek to establish continuity with their immediate environment and they engage with the city through the design of spaces adjacent to or within the building, where visitors' paths converge and informal encounters can occur, ideally as part of daily life.

Sydney Modern Project – Art Gallery of New South Wales

Sydney, Australia

SANAA, Tokyo

Construction 2019–2021, opening 2021

Building 20,012 sq. m

Permanent collection and special exhibitions

Here, one of Australia's largest art museums is entering an extension of its building. SANAA chose to design a very transparent and airy structure. The separate pavilions sit gently on the hills and blur the lines between the museum and the surrounding Royal Botanical Gardens.

Kunstmuseum Basel Extension

Basel, Switzerland

Christ & Gantenbein, Basel

Construction 2012–2016, opened 2016

Building 11,481 sq. m

The museum's permanent art collection and special exhibitions

The new extension of the Kunstmuseum Basel, which is in fact an annexe, is a radical alternative to the many sensational, iconic new museum buildings. As you approach from Rittergasse, it appears to be relatively unimpressive. Rather than presenting an unbroken front, its façade is creased backward in the centre, giving it a playful lightness. What puts the simple structure in league with so many fantastic museum designs is the band of luminous LED lights set into the façade. They can be programmed with texts and graphics, animating the museum at will.

Pingtian Art Museum

Pingtian Island, China

MAD Architects, Beijing



Pending, yet to be realised

Building 40,000 sq. m

Private art collections

Facing the Taiwanese border, Pingtan will be the centre of the Comprehensive Experimental Zone, a trading district symbolic of China's opening to its neighbour. Pingtan is envisioned to be a large city, home to thousands of people. Although the city itself has yet to be built, there are already plans for a museum. On an artificial island in front of the city, MAD architects, famous for their fluid lines and innovative design, created a building for a private art collection.

3. Private-Public Museums

Over the centuries, museums shifted from the private into the public realm, and today museums are mostly regarded as public institutions for the benefit of all. In the last decades, more and more private museums opened. They are often criticised for furthering personal agendas instead of being institutions ostensibly created for the good of society, although this increasing degree of privatisation is giving rise to audacity and to new ideas on how future museums could function.

Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa (Zeitz MOCAA)

Cape Town, South Africa

Heatherwick Studio, London

Opening expected 2017

Building 9,500 sq. m

The Zeitz collection, the museum's permanent collection and special exhibitions

Heatherwick Studio has transformed a grain silo into a cathedral-like building that fulfils a museum's two functions whilst filling people with awe. Created as a private non-for-profit entity, it represents a new trend in museum financing as part of a greater commercial and urbanistic redevelopment of the harbour area. At the same time, its extensive educational initiatives, its strong focus on and support of African artists and its curatorial training programme are in line with directives of publicly funded cultural institutions.

Long Museum West Bund

Shanghai, China

Atelier Deshaus, Shanghai

Construction 2012–2014, opened 2014

Building 33,007 sq. m

Contemporary art and Chinese ancient art

The collector Liu Yiqian decided on an abandoned work site for his second museum. The dramatic connection between an old industrial structure and new architecture, recalling Shanghai's past as a port in the coal trade, resulted in a hypermodern art museum.

Genesis Museum

Beijing, China

Tadao Ando Architect & Associates, Osaka

Under construction since 2014, opening 2018

Building 8,417 sq. m

Contemporary art

The museum is part of a large and ambitious undertaking to develop an area within the affluent embassy district in Beijing. This commercial venture has been defined by the developer as a model for future urban development, following a self-described philosophy of promoting mental well-being and so called “social business”. It reflects a new development trend in China, in which it is becoming increasingly normal for investors to promote cultural projects as part of real-estate expansions.

4. Museums as Commercial Entities

After the “Bilbao effect” heralded by the opening of Guggenheim museum, large museums seemed to have realised that there lies great economic value behind their names, and satellite museums, which draw from the collection, reputation and know-how of the mother institution, are being exported all over the world. As a stream of revenue for under-financed institutions, this strategy also leads to questions of distribution of art and culture.

Guggenheim Helsinki

Helsinki, Finland

Moreau Kusunoki Architectes, Paris

Pending, yet to be realised

Building 12,437 sq. m

Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation collection and temporary exhibitions

In 2011, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation announced that it intended to open a satellite museum in the Finnish capital of Helsinki. Moreau and Kusunoki won the competition with a design based on Finland’s social structures and everyday living habits. The Guggenheim Helsinki was met with opposition and members of the public protested strongly against the project. In November 2016, the city council voted against the museum.

5. Re-development and Cultural Clusters

The deliberate placement of a museum building into formerly unspectacular areas is intended to revive a neighbourhood, a city or an entire region economically and culturally. The development of cultural clusters (including museums but also theatres, libraries, etc.) is a frequently used strategy. These clusters are conceived as a stimulus for touristic and economic growth and can even have a major social impact.

Plateforme10

Lausanne, Switzerland

mcb-a:

Barozzi/Veiga, Barcelona

Construction 2016–2019, opening 2019

Building 12,450 sq. m

Permanent art collection and special exhibitions

Plateforme10 is a cultural district currently under construction, next to the Lausanne train station. Two new buildings will house three museums: The mcb-a (Cantonal Museum of Fine Art), the Musée de l’Elysée (Cantonal Museum of Photography) and the mudac (Museum of Design and Contemporary

Applied Arts). What will arise is a new city centre for the arts, a hub that is intended to attract local and international visitors alike and to liven up a neglected central area.

mudac & Musée de l'Elysée:

Manuel Aires Mateus and Francisco Aires Mateus, Lisbon

Construction 2017–2021, opening 2021

Building 14,056 sq. m

Design and photography permanent collections and special exhibitions

The museum building designed by the Aires Mateus brothers is part of the future cultural quarter Plateforme10. The idea of the dialogue is reflected in the design of the building, which will house two different entities with their own identity, missions, collections and exhibitions.

Munchmuseet

Oslo, Norway

estudio Herreros, Madrid

Construction 2015–2019, opening 2019

Building 26,300 sq. m

The museum's permanent collection of works by Edvard Munch and special exhibitions

Over recent decades, an increasing number of visitors has come to the museum and additional space was needed to exhibit more of its holdings. With the move to the Bjørvika neighbourhood in Oslo's harbour area, the museum will be part of a larger regeneration scheme of the deindustrialised docklands, a project which will see Oslo create a new cultural quarter next to the sea. The high-rise building of the Munchmuseet will become a unique landmark in the cityscape. It will not only attract more tourists to the city but also pose a creative challenge for the neighbouring museum buildings, like the new Nasjonalmuseet for kunst, arkitektur og design and the Astrup Fearnley Museet.

Nasjonalmuseet for kunst, arkitektur og design

Oslo, Norway

Klaus Schuwerk, Kleihues + Schuwerk Architects, Naples

Construction 2014–2019, opening 2020

Building 54,500 sq. m

Art (older and contemporary), arts and crafts, design and architecture

The Nasjonalmuseet is moving into a new building in the harbour area. With these relocations (see Munchmuseet above) a new cultural sector will emerge across the docks. The Nasjonalmuseet will unite four different museums under one roof: The National Gallery, the Museum of Contemporary Art, the National Museum – Architecture and the so-called *Kunstindustrimuseet*, which is dedicated to design and decorative arts. The museum, with its horizontal stone façade, surrounds the old train station and thus creates a new piazza, from which visitors can enter the museum. The new building will be one of Europe's largest museums, occupying an entire block in the city.

Practical information

Curator: Katharina Beisiegel, Deputy Director, Art Centre Basel

Co-curator: Bertrand Mazeirat, Curator, Musées d'art et d'histoire

Contact

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Musée d'art et d'histoire

2, rue Charles-Galland – 1206 Geneva

Open 11 am – 6 pm

Closed on Mondays

Free admission

Inauguration: May 10, 2017

Website: www.mah-geneve.ch

Blog: www.blog.mahgeneve.ch

Facebook: www.facebook.com/mahgeneve

Twitter: @mahgeneve

Colloquium

The Museums of Art and History of Geneva are organising a two-day colloquium on the future of museums that will address simultaneously cultural, social, architectural and political concerns. It has become commonplace to observe the major upheavals affecting the museum world over the past thirty or so years. The demographic changes, urbanisation, digitisation, and globalisation, etc., which have been instrumental in bringing about a rapid redefinition of our relationship to the world, have also been factors contributing to a fundamental shift within the museum world. This could be summarized as the deconstruction, at least in part, of a classical and unchanging museum model. Although this old model tends to die out today, no new archetype has yet arisen to take its place, at least on a consistent basis, and the 21st century museum still appears in need to be defined.

Thursday 1st of June – Museum of Art and History of Geneva

The last decade has brought about new social, political and economic challenges, partly because of the financial crisis and partly because of an increased digitalisation. The demand for change and the need for adaptation are especially visible in museums, traditional harbourers of our culture and knowledge. In the 21st century, collection growth is spurred exponentially by new knowledge and new technology making archaeological and scientific discoveries more accessible, by the need to safeguard collections and by an increase in the production, scale and complexity of works of art to be preserved and displayed. As part of a massive global trend, the new developments in design, technology and the ways of enjoying and learning about culture are changing museums.

Friday 2nd of June – Pavillon Sicali

The architectural and urban importance of the museum in the city is at the heart of interconnected issues which imply social choices, economic hopes and urban planning problems. The museum, as a building, is a multifarious symbol. In several respects, the choice of an architect and the nature of his or her creation are inevitably the subject of heated debate or often fierce controversy. In the end, which of the architectural programme's concerns are of paramount importance for the creation of the museum building? Its integration into the city and its conformity with the urban identity? Its ability to anticipate the future needs of the institution and its users? Can the development of a museum or a museum district actually contribute to the emergence of new polarities and new economic dynamics? How can the optimal interrelation between the architectural and cultural projects be achieved?

Practical information

Thursday 1st of June | 2 pm – 5:30 pm

Museum of Art and History of Geneva

Rue Charles-Galland 2
1206 Genève

Friday 2nd of June | 9 am - 5:30 pm

Pavillon Sicali

Route des Acacias 45
1227 Les Acacias

Free admission

Organization: Musées d'art et d'histoire de Genève

Scientific coordinator: Bertrand Mazeirat, Curator, Musées d'art et d'histoire de Genève

