

# 2023 EUROPEAN MUSEUM ACADEMY AWARDS

## Art Museum Award

### The Judges' Report





## Confirmed Candidates

### **FeliX Art & Eco Museum, Drogenbos, Belgium**

The FeliX Art & Eco Museum in Drogenbos, near Brussels, is an integrated cultural experience connecting art, ecology, and heritage. It draws inspiration from Flemish painter-farmer Felix De Boeck's legacy and consists of three parts: the art museum that contextualizes the work of De Boeck by organizing temporary exhibitions on avant-garde, modernist and abstract Belgian art, the farm where De Boeck worked and lived and the estate. The museum's innovative approach contributes to various social issues: The museum presents historical avant-garde and contemporary art as a critical lens on society, promoting inclusivity, and offering diverse cultural experiences. It combines De Boeck's heritage with modern social themes. Through partnerships and networking, the museum encourages community engagement, addressing issues such as poverty, social cohesion, and environmental challenges. It actively participates in both local and international networks, serving as a bridge builder. The museum adheres to sustainability standards, experimenting with an integrated approach to movable and intangible heritage. It emphasizes cooperative management, drawing inspiration from historical models of shared artistic work. It reinterprets the legacy of Felix De Boeck by combining the experience of art, intangible heritage and nature and opening it up to a large public. The FeliX Art & Eco Museum aims at developing a sense of community in a bi-lingual and more and more multi-cultural environment.

### **S.M.A.K. Communal Museum for Contemporary Art, Ghent, Belgium**

S.M.A.K. (Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst) opened in 1975 as the first Belgian museum dedicated to contemporary art. It places the artist at the center of its mission, striving for artistic excellence and openness to all. It serves as an experimental laboratory for contemporary art and encourages critical thinking and scepticism. Additionally, S.M.A.K. is committed to fostering social impact through its S.M.A.K. Moves program, making art accessible to diverse and often marginalized audiences, including refugees, prisoners, and people with disabilities. Collaborating with various partners, the museum has developed innovative methods to bridge the gap between art and the public. Noteworthy initiatives include "The Split," where children from various backgrounds took over the conceptual and curatorial aspects of an exhibition, challenging traditional notions of art curation.

S.M.A.K. successfully manages the complex balance between being at the forefront of contemporary art and being inclusive to a diverse audience with varying levels of art knowledge. Their participatory projects like "The Exhibition" exemplify their commitment to breaking down barriers, encouraging innovative thinking, and demonstrating that the process and results of art engagement can be equally important and of high quality.



### **The Basil and Elise Goulandris Foundation, Athens, Greece**

The Basil & Elise Goulandris Foundation, through its Athens and Andros museums, promotes visual arts and engages diverse audiences with a strong focus on inclusivity, sustainability, and social responsibility in Greece. They offer programs for various groups, including those with disabilities, refugees, and the elderly, while also hosting events, discussions, and thematic tours that address social issues. The foundation's commitment to art accessibility and engagement with pressing societal concerns makes it a noteworthy contender for the Art Museum Award. In terms of social issues, the foundation demonstrates a strong commitment to various initiatives by raising awareness about environmental issues through activities like sustainability-focused thematic guided tours or by designing special programs for babies, pre-school children, and parents to encourage early engagement with art. The foundation offers programs and workshops designed for children with autism spectrum disorders, promoting inclusivity and providing specialized guidance. As one of the few venues for 20th and 21st century art in Athens, the Basil and Elise Goulandris Foundation plays a central role in Athens and Greece, not only professionally but socially. Through the best and numerous connections, it reaches far into society. The concern to reach a broad audience is systematically pursued and has an absolutely successful effect.

### **Művészetek Háza Veszprém / House of Arts, Veszprém, Hungary**

The House of Arts Veszprém is a cultural institution in Hungary that is actively contributing to social issues through innovative practices. The aim of the programmes is to position the Veszprém—Balaton region as a cultural-creative area of international visibility through visual arts. Its focus is on presenting the local artistic heritage, artists working here, positioning the House of Arts Veszprém as a visual arts institution receiving international impulses, education on visual arts and art history. The museum has launched the "Female Perspectives" project, aiming to address gender equality and contemporary social concerns. For the 2023 exhibition programme more than 80% of their projects are led by female curators, including individuals from diverse backgrounds, such as single parents, refugees, and LGBTQI+ community members. The exhibitions and programs tackle environmental sustainability, gender-related topics, and inclusivity. They collaborate with international partners, offer art therapy for mental health promotion, and organize exhibitions for homeless individuals. Furthermore, the commitment to inclusion, sustainability, and public discourse enhancement makes them a socially responsible and innovative cultural institution.



### **Reykjavik Art Museum, Reykjavik, Iceland**

The Reykjavík Art Museum, established in 1973 as a municipal institution, is a prominent cultural institution in Iceland, consisting of three distinct locations more or less centrally located in Reykjavík: Hafnarhús, Kjarvalsstaðir and Ásmundarsafn. The museum's mission is to provide a dynamic platform for the public to engage with a wide range of visual arts from the past and present, cultivating an understanding of artistic, cultural, and social contexts. The museum addresses social issues that are at stake in contemporary society, and the participatory projects strive to involve people. The museum actively promotes powerful public engagement, exceptional visitor services, distinctive branding and marketing, and a supportive working environment. In terms of innovative practices related to social issues, the museum has initiated several programs to enhance inclusivity and accessibility. These include guided tours in multiple languages, sign language, and verbal imaging for the visually impaired, as well as initiatives targeting young audiences. They have also collaborated with various communities to tailor their outreach and education programs to diverse needs, such as those with Alzheimer's, autism, and sensory sensitivities. Through continuous development and collaboration, they strive to make art and culture accessible to a wide range of social groups and promote social inclusion. The Reykjavík Art Museum is one of the most important cultural institutions in the capital of Iceland. It is completely dedicated to social commitment and change - in the service of society. It fulfills this task in an outstanding way.

### **MO Museum, Vilnius, Lithuania**

MO Museum in Vilnius is the largest private museum in Lithuania housing one of the biggest private collections of Lithuanian modern and contemporary art. The collection was established in 2009 and functioned as a museum without walls, until 2018 when the building, designed by Daniel Libeskind was opened. The museum actively engages with social issues through art and culture. Their exhibitions challenge prevailing narratives on topics like ethnic minorities, LGBTQ+ rights, and national identity, stimulating vital discussions. MO Museum supports minority communities, making art accessible to those who may not afford it. The museum has received recognition for their unique approach in placing their focus on emotional well-being, emphasizing individual mental health and sustainability. The museum's educational programme offers three different types of programme targeting the development of emotional intelligence, visual thinking and classes that show how art can be integrated in other academic subjects such as literature, history and biology, thus expanding cultural horizons. Sustainability is a core principle, from the design of the building to operations, promoting responsible consumption. Overall, MO Museum's multi-faceted approach makes a significant impact on its community and beyond. At every level there is a conscious and conscientious attempt to put inclusivity at the heart of what they do.



### **Steampunk Transylvania, Cluj-Napoca, Romania**

Steampunk Transylvania in Cluj-Napoca, Romania offers an immersive experience that takes visitors into a dreamlike world inspired by the retro-futuristic subculture of steampunk. It draws on the works of authors like Jules Verne, H.G. Wells, and Mary Shelley, combining fantasy elements to create an interactive experience for visitors of all ages. The visitor experience encourages imagination and dreaming, with an emphasis on recycling and creative reuse of materials. A workshop is placed in the middle of the exhibition, so that audiences can follow the creative processes by watching director „Professor Sylvester“ develop art and scenography in collaboration with artists. New artworks and scenography are continually being build and developed. Steampunk Transylvania engages both older and younger generations, sparking an interest in reading and creative thinking. The impact on the younger generation is particularly notable, as it encourages them to use their hands for creating rather than relying on technology.

### **The Gallery of Matica Srpska, Novi Sad, Serbia**

The Gallery of Matica Srpska is one of the oldest Serbian cultural institutions, established to protect and promote national art. It was founded in 1847, and the collection consists of 10,000 objects of Serbian art from the 16th to 21st century. For the past decade, the museum has been working on creating a “critical museum”. The idea and goal are to encourage social dialogue about contemporary topics, the environment, migration, and social issues by talking about art. In cooperation with institutions and organizations working with people with health conditions or impairments, the Gallery developed ways to engage with exhibitions by introducing tactile graphics, paths and maps, audiodescriptions for blind and partially sighted visitors, guided tours with translations into sign language as well as workshops for people with intellectual disabilities. In addition, various materials and activities were tailored to children, young adults, and seniors. The Gallery of Matica Srpska consistently tackles socially important topics, standing out in its region in this respect and acting as a role model for other cultural institutions there. At the same time, it skillfully builds relationships with local social and institutional actors, as well as various audiences, paying special attention to the inclusion of people with disabilities.

### **Museum Rietberg, Zurich, Switzerland**

Founded in 1952, the Museum Rietberg Zürich is one of the largest art museums in Switzerland. Located in a public park, the museum is dedicated to the arts and art histories of Asia, Africa, the Americas and Oceania and their diasporas. Its holdings comprise more than 27,000 art works, including masterpieces of Indian painting, Chinese ceramics and iconic works of West African sculpture, and over 50.000 photographs. The museum produces 5-6



exhibitions per year, and offers a varied education and outreach program. Its themes and activities emerge from its collections and are developed in close cooperation with institutions, artists and experts in Switzerland and worldwide. The museum engages in provenance research and explores the lives and meanings of objects beyond colonial contexts. It strives to reveal diverse narratives and cultural connections, going beyond the lens of European colonial history and highlighting aspects of creative processes, artistic production and aesthetic concepts in the arts beyond the Western canon. The Museum Rietberg is one of the most innovative institutions devoted to non-European art in Europe. Its original program changes the general understanding of what art is, going beyond the Western European concepts of aesthetics and creativity, and at the same time helps to create a more complex picture of non-European societies and their cultural practices.

### **Art UK, Stoke-on-Trent, England (UK)**

Art UK is a UK-based art education charity focused on making the art in UK public collections accessible to everyone by digitizing artworks and providing educational resources. With over 4 million users in the last year, the online platform connects audiences worldwide with the UK's national art collection. Art UK believes that art should be accessible to all, breaking down barriers of income, education, race, disability, and gender. By providing collections online many barriers are taken away to provide access to art. Art UK strengthens inclusivity by telling diverse stories behind artworks, commissioning content from authors with diverse backgrounds, and highlighting underrepresented artists. They focus on education, offering a number of online learning resources for teachers in order to enhance the visual literacy skills among school children. By allowing users to create and share digital exhibitions and contribute knowledge about artworks, the platform also enables public participation. Art UK's commitment to digital accessibility and enhances public discourse, and thus supports lifelong learning.

### **The Burrell Collection, Glasgow, Scotland (UK)**

The Burrell Collection in Pollok Country Park, Glasgow, Scotland (UK) houses the 9,000-object collection of Sir William and Constance Burrell, originally opened in 1983 and reopened in March 2022 following a major refurbishment and radical redisplay, the museum building is one of the most important twentieth-century buildings in the UK. The Collection includes Chinese art and Islamic art, as well as medieval stained glass and tapestries, paintings by Old Masters and Glasgow Boys, a significant French impressionist collection centred on the work of Degas, and the UK's largest collection of sculptures by Rodin. The Burrell Collection is part of Glasgow Life, the charity that runs Glasgow's public museums, libraries, sports facilities, and other key venues. The charity's primary objective is to encourage participation in culture and sport for all, aiming to positively impact the wellbeing of communities across the city.



The Burrell Collection takes its mission seriously to actively contribute to the health and wellbeing of the citizens of Glasgow. During the renovation process the staff involved users and non-users of the museum to investigate what people needed and expect from the museum. They involved groups of people from deprived and LHBTQ+ communities that co-curated the current presentations. The museum proves to be audience-oriented from its very foundations - from the accessibility by public transport to the service and the approach on site. Learning, education and art mediation are noticeable as the DNA of the museum.

## Preamble

This European Museum Academy Award is dedicated to honour and highlight museal projects that work with art in an innovative, pioneering, and creative way in order to address or respond to current social issues that are a major challenge to our contemporary society. It is about museums functioning as “social arenas” as societally relevant meeting places.

Applications are welcome that are dealing with topics like participation, inclusion, people with special needs, gender equality, democratic process, migration, immigration, racial justice, decolonization, community building, challenges of globalization, sustainability, climate change, health care, resilience to crises like the Covid 19 pandemic.

The award is built upon democratic and human values that should be the driving force for new museal ideas for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is meant to identify new role models of excellence that could function as inspiring paragons of the social role of museums. Eligible to apply are not only art museums, but all other museums and galleries that work with art or art interventions.

### Criteria for the Award

- **Organization**  
Managerial skills; administrative structures; code of ethics; resilience; sustainability; empowerment of the team; inclusion as far as the people working in the museum are concerned; fundraising initiatives; commercial development.
- **Innovation, creativity, inspiration**  
New ideas or innovative and creative practices as far as social issues are concerned (methodologies, technologies, new forms of engaging the audience; digital strategy...)
- **Social responsibility**  
How does the museum tackle the challenges of our current society, show social relevance and responsibility?
- **Participation and inclusion**



Policies and programs that aim at participation and inclusion; educational and/or outreach programs.

- **Sustainability**  
Commitment to sustainability strategy. Sustainability can figure as the main topic or as just one dimension of another topic – or it can play no role at all.
- **Digital strategy**  
Does a distinctive digital strategy play a role in the museum's approach?
- **Network**  
In what networks is the museum involved? From local to international.
- **Public discourse**  
The role of the museum as a meeting place for the community, initiating discussion and exchange of ideas. Does the project stir up public discourse? What media come into play? Do participatory formats play a role?
- **Impact**  
Impact on public discourse - locally, nationally or internationally; the role of the museum as a meeting place for the community, initiating discussion. Does the museum provide a role model that can be used by others? Does the project change the way you think about art?
- **Overall strategy**  
Is there an overall strategy recognizable wherein the competing museum program/approach is embedded? (museology; museography, socio-political context ...)

## The 2023 Panel of Judges

**Mladen Banjac, Bosnia and Herzegovina**

Senior curator, Museum of Contemporary Art of Republika Srpska, (MOCARS) Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina

**Annemies Broekgaarden, The Netherlands**

Head of Public and Education Department, Chair of steering group "diversity and inclusion", Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

**Karen Grøn, Denmark**

Director of Trapholt Museum of Modern Art, Craft and Design, Kolding, Denmark

**Louisa Leventis, United Kingdom**

Art Historian-Museologist, Director Leventis Foundation

**Delphine Munro, Luxembourg**

Head of Arts & Culture, European Investment Bank Institute

**Karl Borromaeus Murr, Germany**

Director / State Textile and Industry Museum, Augsburg, Germany, Chairman of the Board, European Museum Academy

**Bernhart Schwenk, Germany**

Head Curator, Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich, Germany

**Jaroslawn Suchan, Poland**

Jagiellonian University Cracow, Independent Curator and Researcher, Former Director of Muzeum Sztuki in Lodz, Poland

**Danièle Wagener, Luxembourg**

Honorary Director of the Museums of the City of Luxembourg, Chairwoman of the Jury

## THE RESULTS

### Finalists for the 2023 Art Museum Award

- S.M.A.K. Communal Museum for Contemporary Art, Ghent, Belgium
- The Basil and Elise Goulandris Foundation, Athens, Greece
- MO Museum, Vilnius, Lithuania
- Museum Rietberg, Zurich, Switzerland
- The Burrell Collection, Glasgow, Scotland (UK)



## 2023 Art Museum Award Winner

### **S.M.A.K. Communal Museum for Contemporary Art, Ghent, Belgium**

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#### **The judges said:**

The S.M.A.K. has a long tradition of taking on social responsibility and creating dialogue with the civil society. Its important international collection and daring programme of temporary exhibitions puts the living artist in the heart of an innovative, inclusive and outstanding participatory policy that aims at making the best of contemporary art accessible to a public as diverse as possible. Last but not least, it is ready to take substantial risks, going beyond the boundaries of traditional museum practice, to achieve its aims.



S.M.A.K. Communal Museum for Contemporary Art  
Director: Philippe Van Cauteren  
Jan Hoetplein 1  
9000 Gent  
Belgium  
<https://smak.be>