

2024 EUROPEAN MUSEUM ACADEMY AWARDS

Art Museum Award The Judges' Report



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 21st 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 2024 Panel of Judges

Mladen Banjac, Bosnia and Herzegovina

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

Karen Grøn, Denmark

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

Bernhart Schwenk, Germany

Head Curator, Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich, Germany

Danièle Wagener, Luxembourg

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

Delphine Munro, Luxembourg

Head of Arts & Culture, European Investment Bank Institute,

Jaroslaw Suchan, Poland

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

Annemies Broekgaarden, The Netherlands

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

Samuel Gallacher, United Kingdom

Director Scottish Historic Buildings Trust, Glasgow, Scotland

Sir John Leighton, United Kingdom

Former Director General National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh, United Kingdom

Louisa Leventis, United Kingdom

Art Historian-Museologist, Director Leventis Foundation

Confirmed Candidates

Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten Antwerpen, Belgium

The KMSKA (Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten Antwerpen) in Antwerp, Belgium, embodies a fusion of historical grandeur and contemporary design. It invites visitors to explore a collection of visual art from the Southern Netherlands, spanning the 14th to the 20th centuries, alongside international masterpieces. The nurtures emerging talent through its Artists in Residence programme and serves as a dynamic cultural hub, dedicated to making art accessible and relevant to diverse audiences through a creative and informal approach. By blending humour, a person-centred interpretation, and striking contrasts between its historical and contemporary elements, KMSKA invites visitors to "look differently and see more". The museum actively engages in cultural programming that spans seven centuries, and experiments with diverse engagement strategies, particularly in diversity and inclusion. To encourage deeper engagement, the museum developed "Radio Bart", a mobile studio featuring blind hosts guiding visitors in exploring art through questions that highlight colour, shape, texture, and narrative. This initiative allows guests of all backgrounds to experience "slow art," uncovering nuances and enriching their understanding. Initiatives like "Radio Bart" have proven transformative, allowing KMSKA to build lasting connections with the local community, tourists, and fragmented audiences. Through its unique outreach efforts, KMSKA goes beyond traditional practices, fostering citizen ownership and promoting inclusion while ensuring its relevance in today's cultural landscape.

NiMAC (Nicosia Municipal Arts Centre), Nicosia, Cyprus

Located in a renovated building of the Old Powerhouse in Nicosia's historical center, the NiMAC (Nicosia Municipal Arts Centre) was inaugurated in 1994 and is the oldest and largest contemporary art centre on the island of Cyprus. During its thirty years of operation, the NiMAC has organized and presented more than a hundred exhibitions of modern and contemporary art with the participation of well-known artists from Cyprus and abroad. Many of these were organized in collaboration with museums, art centres and cultural institutions of Europe and other countries. The centre is strongly committed to discussing important socio-political issues: migration, political divisions, post-colonial traumas, difficult memory in the divided country, commemoration of the past, patriarchalism, total surveillance etc. It organizes numerous events aimed at including disadvantaged social groups, activating them and strengthening their voices. Through its activities, the centre also tries to bring communities living on opposite sides of the border – Turkish and Greek - closer together and to work through the difficult past together. NiMAC is an important player in supporting and developing the local art scene, especially young artists and curators. In the judges' opinion NiMAC works hard at playing a pivotal role in initiating public debates on important socio-political topics.

Hugh Lane Gallery, Dublin, Ireland

Founded in 1908 by Sir Hugh Lane as the Municipal Gallery of Modern Art, the Hugh Lane Gallery, housed in an 18th-century neoclassical mansion, is the first known public gallery of modern art in the world. Located in Dublin's city centre and owned by Dublin City Council, the gallery has played a central role in developing the arts and shaping Dublin's cultural fabric since its inception. It now houses one of Ireland's most exciting and internationally acclaimed collections of modern and contemporary Irish and international art. In 1998, the studio of renowned artist Francis Bacon was relocated to the Hugh Lane Gallery after being donated by his heir. This relocation has made Bacon's studio one of Dublin's unmissable art attractions, celebrated for its significance in the art world. The HLG focuses on creativity, community, and critical thinking, aiming to create inspiring opportunities for learning and a sense of well-being. The museum aims to be proactively open to a changing audience, new communities, and a variety of demographics, seeking out and trying new approaches that appeal to visitors. At HLG connectivity with Dublin's communities through artist-led educational programs and initiatives addressing urgent societal topics are prioritized. It emphasizes social, environmental, and cultural sustainability while fostering inclusion and participation. The jury praised the HLG for its rich, socially engaged programme across the departments and teams in the organization. There is a shared set of values rooted in the collection, the arts, and the artists, combined with explorative and innovative approaches to engage and transform the local community, turning the gallery into a space of multiple voices and difficult conversations.

Gallerie d'Italia, Turin, Italy

Since 1999, the Italian bank Intesa Sanpaolo has opened four museums in historic buildings in Vicenza, Naples, Milan, and Turin as part of its "Culture Project." This initiative aims to enhance and share the bank's artistic heritage, safeguard Italy's cultural assets through a restoration program called "Restituzione," and support cultural and artistic activities. The bank's collection of around 35,000 works is distributed among the four museums based on regional significance. While each museum hosts its own exhibitions and events, they are all overseen by the bank's Central Art, Culture, and Heritage Department. For the Art Museum Award, the most recent museum in Turin, opened in 2022, was visited by the judges. On five floors the museum shows parts of their collection of 14th to 18th century art works, furniture as well as temporary exhibitions of commissioned contemporary visual art, mainly photography and video. The Gallerie d'Italia-Torino uses many different and effective ways to engage varied publics to reflect upon and discuss the social, environmental and cultural challenges of our time. For instance, in cooperation with local organizations, the museum regularly organizes public and participatory performances outside the museum. The judges said that the temporary exhibitions are the starting point for a rich pedagogical and cultural programme of events involving discussion with and among a very diverse public.

Stedelijk Museum Schiedam, The Netherlands

The Stedelijk Museum Schiedam, The Netherlands, is a municipal museum situated in a former hospital for poor and sick elderly people, in the historic centre of the town. The museum was founded in 1899 and moved to its present location in a late 18th-century building in 1940. In 2006 and again in 2020 the building was renovated and updated to become more accessible. The museum has a collection of art and objects relevant to the history of Schiedam as well a (mainly modern) collection of art, with works by the COBRA movement being a special highlight. There are various contemporary commissions around the building but much of the art collection is not on display. The museum mounts some 15 exhibitions a year, an impressive achievement with a very small staff. Recent successes include a show devoted to Yayoi Kusama. The application for the Art Museum Award focused on the exhibition *Out of Poverty*. Art, history and stories, which explored the realities of living in poverty in a modern city. Developed with input from people experiencing poverty, the exhibition used discussions and workshops to create themes such as housing, freedom limitations, health, and social relations, connecting contemporary stories with the historical context of poverty in Schiedam. The judges said the museum deserves much credit for their deep-rooted and successful commitment to inclusion and in addressing issues relevant to modern society. The exhibition *Out of Poverty* was an especially bold example of their approach to co-creation and collaboration and serves as an exemplar for others in tackling difficult and sometimes uncomfortable subjects.

Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, The Netherlands

The Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam is a leading museum for modern and contemporary art and design in The Netherlands with a strong national and international reputation for the depth and quality of its collections and its programmes. Funded by the city of Amsterdam, local politics have always played a large role in its history. Dedicated to enriching lives through modern and contemporary art and design, the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam offers a collection, exhibitions, and educational programs that provide insightful perspectives on today's world, addressing key issues that shape society and individual experiences. In recent years, the permanent collection displays have been re-thought and re-invigorated, moving away from the notion of displaying the 'Icons of Modern Art' to a more dynamic and global approach. Since 2020, efforts to diversify the staff have been introduced, alongside a strong focus on transparency and staff engagement. The jury members said the museum stands out for its structural commitment to fundamental change and for its efforts to repurpose its collections and activities towards a more just and optimistic world. With intelligent new displays, a lively programme of acquisitions and exhibitions, the museum has embraced more global perspectives and a wider range of voices and narratives in their efforts to engage and be relevant to the widest possible audience.

Mazovian Museum Płock, Poland

Poland's oldest public museum, the Mazovian Museum in Płock, spans two centuries and operates as a regional cluster funded by the Mazovia voivodeship. It has a strong online presence with a bilingual website launched in 2021. The museum's approach focuses on redeveloping individual spaces and creating new exhibitions, resulting in varying display quality across its sites. Notably, the permanent Art Deco exhibition, opened in 2021, draws from 15 years of collecting and is housed in a restored historic tenement building. The exhibition features decorative arts from the 1920s and 1930s, blending Polish and European styles, and includes themed room displays, fashion, cinema, and a striking red motor car centrepiece. The museum connects *Art Nouveau* and *Art Deco* with the ambition of showcasing 100 years of design. Plans are underway to build a new space for a 1940s-1950s design exhibition, creating a physical link between two tenement buildings. The museum aims to expand its role as a design-focused institution. The judges said that the Art Deco exhibition of the Mazovian Museum in Płock beautifully provides a mirror to modernity and an important historic cultural context with which to better understand Poland in Europe today. The exhibition is an exemplar for the sector in how to both reach different audiences while adapting to immediate needs and stimulate institutional growth while providing a high-quality and informative decorative arts experience.

Sainsbury Centre for the Visual Arts, Norwich, UK

Founded in 1973 and home to one of the finest art collections in the UK, the Sainsbury Centre has always broken the rules to empower art and people. Today, the museum is being reinvented. It is an art museum that is part of the University of East Anglia of which it houses among others the research unit for Africa, Oceania and the Americas as well as the institute for the study of Japanese art and culture that help provide the scientific background for the collection. Radically rethinking the collection, shifting away from the museum as benevolent owner, to one where collections are animate, visitors are emotionally connected, and together they address the most fundamental global questions. Like many art museums with global collections, much of the non-European art is by unnamed artists compared to their European Twentieth century named artist collections. Building on the museum's Living Art vision, the Centre now has an acquisition strategy to address this. The jury praised the museum for carefully investigating its current role in a fast-changing society and putting fundamental questions of people in the centre of the museum's curatorial and educational approach. The museum intends to emotionally connect people with its impressive collection and strives to become a museum as a humanised space of wonder and magic.

Muzeul Național de Artă, Timisoara, Romania

The National Museum of Art is a national public cultural institution located in a historic Habsburg palace in the main square of Timisoara's city centre. In the context of its involvement in the success of the 'Timisoara, European Capital of Culture 2023' programme has received international recognition due to innovative exhibitions which

have created a new milestone of exposure and standards for museums in Romania. MNAT has redeveloped its permanent collection and introduced a cosmopolitan European context, which reflects the identity of Timisoara and the collection itself. The institution is highly inclusive, with a wheelchair-accessible building, pathways for the visually impaired in all galleries, and tours for people with hearing impairments. Their diverse inclusion programs allow the audience to select pieces for permanent exhibitions and cater to all ages and genders, with a primary focus on young people, particularly school children and university students. The judges said that MNAT is a small but impactful European art museum located in the diverse border region of Romania, which reinvented itself in a true democratic way. It has become an open cultural institution whose exhibitions, collection and programs speak to all and everyone on a personal and inviting level.

THE RESULTS

Finalists for the 2024 Art Museum Award

- KMSKA: Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten Antwerpen, Belgium
- Hugh Lane Gallery, Dublin, Ireland
- Stedelijk Museum Schiedam, The Netherlands
- Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, The Netherlands
- Muzeul Național de Artă, Timisoara, Romania
- Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, Norwich, UK

2024 Art Museum Award Winner

Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

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