



2025 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.

The EMA Art Museum Award is generously supported by the A.G. Leventis Foundation.



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 a 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 2025 Panel of Judges

Danièle Wagener,

Honorary Director The Museums of the City of Luxembourg, Chair of the Jury, Luxembourg

Annemies Broekgaarden,

Head of Public and Education, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Tijana Palkovljevic Bugarski,

Director Gallery of Matica Srpska, Novi Sad, Serbia

Samuel Gallacher,

Director Scottish Historic Buildings Trust, Glasgow, Scotland, United Kingdom

Karen Grøn,

Director Trapholt Museum for Modern Art and Design, Kolding, Denmark

Sir John Leighton,

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

Louisa Leventis,

Art Historian-Museologist, Director Leventis Foundation, London, United Kingdom

Delphine Munro,

Head of Arts & Culture, European Investment Bank Institute, Luxembourg

Jaroslaw Suchan,

Former Director Muzeum Sztuki, Lodz, Poland

Bernhart Schwenk,

Head Curator, Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich, Germany



Confirmed Candidates

FeliX Art & Eco Museum, Drogenbos, Belgium

The FeliX Art & Eco Museum, situated on the edge of Brussels in Drogenbos, occupies the former homestead of avant-garde artist and farmer Felix De Boeck (1898–1995), comprising a modern museum building, a restored farmhouse, and a five-acre nature reserve. It combines exhibitions of historical and contemporary art with ecological and community-based programming. Led by Sergio Servellón and supported by a small core team and a network of volunteers, the museum engages local residents, schools, and visitors from Brussels through participatory initiatives, educational workshops, and intergenerational activities. The institution has transitioned from a monographic focus to a thematic one, integrating art, ecology, and heritage through projects such as *Futuromarennia*, an exhibition that offered cultural refuge to Ukrainian artworks threatened by war. Its programming includes collaborative mural painting, slow-food events and nature-based learning rooted in the values of sustainability and solidarity. The museum's ecological commitments are reflected in its landscape management, infrastructure, and reuse of materials, while its educational philosophy encourages future-oriented reflection. Though modest in scale, the museum contributes to international cultural dialogue and functions as a civic space where intangible heritage, environmental stewardship, and creative expression converge.



Costas Argyrou Museum, Mazotos, Cyprus

The Costas Argyrou Museum, located in the rural village of Mazotos in Cyprus's Larnaca district, is dedicated to the life and work of local naïve artist Costas Argyrou (1917–2001). Originally established by the artist himself as a space to house his wood, stone, and mosaic sculptures reflecting Cypriot nature, folk culture, and Christian themes, the museum has been under the care of the Cypriot government since 1999. A significant renovation completed in 2023 expanded and modernized the museum, introducing spacious, open-plan galleries organized by material and theme, alongside new educational and temporary exhibition spaces. Staffed by a small team and supported by trustees and freelancers, the museum receives around 5,000 visitors annually, and recent educational programming has been active. The museum's first temporary exhibition, *Kashalos: From Light to Shadow*, focused on a fellow naïve artist and the memory of displacement following Cyprus's division, involving former residents of the artist's village and evoking a sense of shared belonging. Educational efforts center on storytelling, theatre, and hands-on workshops that connect students with Cypriot identity and heritage, using naïve art as an accessible medium. The museum has incorporated physical accessibility into its design and works with disabled groups, while sustainability is reflected in student placements that respond to a broader need in Cyprus for cultural internships. Serving as a cultural focal point for Mazotos and surrounding communities, the museum provides access to artistic expression and dialogue in an area previously lacking such opportunities, with local involvement visible in both governance and public engagement.



Centre Pompidou-Metz, Metz, France

The Centre Pompidou-Metz, opened in 2010, is a flagship of cultural decentralization in France and the first national museum extension outside Paris. Its striking building, designed by Shigeru Ban and Jean de Gastines, has become a contemporary landmark in Metz. Functioning as a *Kunsthalle*, the museum does not hold a permanent collection but instead curates innovative exhibitions using privileged access to the Centre Pompidou's holdings. Its architecture supports large-scale immersive installations, and its programming—bold, thematically resonant, and socially engaged—has helped cultivate a youthful, inclusive atmosphere. With visitor numbers stabilizing at over 300,000 annually, the museum has also achieved notable demographic renewal, lowering its average visitor age from 47 to 36. Around 77% of visitors are from the Grand Est region, but its cross-border appeal is evident in its 24% international attendance from Germany, Belgium, and Luxembourg. Financially, the museum operates on a €13 million budget, 80% of which is publicly funded. Innovative outreach initiatives such as *L'École du Centre Pompidou-Metz*, where 15-year-olds explore creativity with artists, monks, and astronauts, position the institution at the forefront of educational experimentation. It also promotes social inclusion through programmes for neurodivergent visitors, Alzheimer patients, and incarcerated women trained as mediators. Artist residencies and participatory workshops further democratize cultural creation, while sustainability is addressed through scenographic reuse, local sourcing, and partnerships with art collectives. With public programming that challenges colonial legacies and centres LGBTQ+ voices, the Centre Pompidou-Metz has become not just a museum, but a civic space—deeply rooted in its region, yet international in scope, and committed to dignity, participation, and cultural renewal.



Ludwig Museum, Budapest, Hungary

Ludwig Museum – Museum of Contemporary Art in Budapest is Hungary’s leading institution dedicated to contemporary art, housed in the Palace of Arts (MÜPA) and offering expansive views from its modern, accessible facilities. Founded in 1989 following the creation of the Ludwig Foundation, the museum originated from a generous donation by art collectors Irene and Peter Ludwig, whose international collection forms the core of its holdings. The museum emphasizes Central and Eastern European art while also showcasing global figures such as Warhol and Rauschenberg, organizing 8–10 temporary exhibitions annually. Its inclusive approach and commitment to public engagement were exemplified by the 2023–2024 exhibition *Handle with Care*, which addressed the global care crisis through socially engaged curating, participatory art and sustainability. This exhibition, rooted in the museum’s long-standing ethos of social responsibility, reflected on the role of museums as caring institutions responsive to contemporary challenges, and marked the beginning of a long-term outreach strategy. The upcoming exhibition, *Golden Repair*, will continue this trajectory by exploring healing across ecological, social, and emotional dimensions.

National Gallery of Iceland, Reykjavik, Iceland

The National Gallery of Iceland, located in Reykjavík across two buildings, presents Icelandic and international art from the 19th century to today. With a recently established permanent collection in the House of Collections focusing on sustainability, the museum offers thought-provoking exhibitions exploring themes like nature, climate, and identity. The main gallery features rotating shows, such as Christian Marclay’s *The Clock* and exhibitions on art and commercialization. The museum has a dynamic atmosphere, supported by an enthusiastic and skilled team under the leadership of Director Ingibjörg Jóhannsdóttir, whose educational background reinforces the institution’s strong commitment to learning. A key innovation is the



Sjónarafl programme, a visual literacy initiative now integrated into schools and teacher training, promoting critical thinking and art interpretation. With interactive displays, inclusive programming, and partnerships with organizations like the Red Cross, the museum fosters accessibility and social engagement. It organizes activities for children, families, and elderly citizens, and emphasizes sustainability through its exhibitions and design. As a growing community hub, the museum encourages dialogue on contemporary issues and aims to reach every school in Iceland, underlining its evolving role as an educational and socially conscious institution.

Reykjavik Art Museum (RAM), Reykjavik, Iceland

The Reykjavík Art Museum (RAM), Iceland’s largest visual art institution, operates across three distinct venues—Hafnarhús, Kjarvalsstaðir, and Ásmundarsafn—each with its own character and curatorial focus. Together, they present around 15 temporary exhibitions annually alongside permanent displays featuring prominent Icelandic artists such as Jóhannes S. Kjarval and Erró, as well as international and emerging talents. Hafnarhús, located in a renovated harbor warehouse, serves as the main venue for contemporary art and public events. The museum is deeply engaged with the community, organizing over 200 public programmes each year, including multilingual guided tours, participatory exhibitions, and initiatives like “Let’s Join Hands” for individuals with special needs. Through projects like *AbraKadabra* for youth engagement and collaborations with city festivals, RAM positions itself as an inclusive, socially responsive institution. Its commitment to sustainability is reflected in its membership in the Green Producers Club and efforts to reduce its environmental footprint. Underpinned by accessibility, cultural dialogue, and innovation, RAM plays a vital role in shaping contemporary discourse on art and society in Iceland.



Irish Museum of Modern Art (IMMA), Dublin, Ireland

The Irish Museum of Modern Art (IMMA), located in the historic Royal Hospital Kilmainham in Dublin, is Ireland's foremost contemporary art institution. Set on 48 acres, the museum features multiple exhibition spaces, an artist residency programme, a café, a formal garden, and a park used for events. With four independent galleries, IMMA presents ambitious, socially responsive exhibitions like *Art as Agency* and *Hamad Butt: Apprehensions*, alongside residencies and participatory programming. The website offers in-depth access to the collection, complementing the on-site experience. Under the leadership of Director Annie Fletcher, IMMA's strategic plan *A Creative Catalyst for Change* foregrounds accessibility, research, inclusion, and climate responsibility. Initiatives such as the *Living Canvas* digital screen, the *Matheson Creativity Hub* for underserved groups, and a pioneering *Art & Ageing* programme reflect IMMA's commitment to audience engagement and wellbeing. Sustainability is central, with aims to become Ireland's first regenerative museum, highlighted by the annual Climate Festival. IMMA fosters public discourse on pressing societal issues, positioning itself as a site for civic dialogue, cultural diplomacy, and forward-thinking artistic exploration.

Lithuanian National Museum of Art, Vilnius, Lithuania

The Lithuanian National Museum of Art is the country's largest museum institution, comprising eleven branches across Lithuania, with most located in Vilnius. It houses diverse collections spanning international and Lithuanian old art, contemporary works, folk art, and crafts. Under the leadership of Arūnas Gelūnas since 2019, the museum has evolved into a dynamic, inclusive, and internationally engaged institution with over 500,000 annual visitors. During a recent visit, four branches stood out: the National Gallery of Art (20th-century and contemporary Lithuanian art), the Vytautas Kasiulis Museum (exile art), the Radvila Palace Museum (Western European and dissident Soviet art), and the Pranas Gudynas Conservation Centre. The museum is a cultural



leader in the region, offering exhibitions that reinterpret art history and address urgent societal issues—from ecological crises to LGBTQ+ inclusion and the war in Ukraine. Its innovative accessibility program, *A Museum of One's Own*, aims to remove physical and cognitive barriers for people with disabilities. The museum also plays an active role in cultural diplomacy and solidarity, notably through support for Ukrainian heritage and society. Sustainability is promoted through exhibition reuse and educational efforts. Through bold curatorial interventions, public programmes, and community outreach, the museum fosters pluralism, empathy, and critical dialogue, reinforcing its status as a progressive and socially responsible institution.

Stasys Museum, Panevėžys, Lithuania

Stasys Museum in Panevėžys, Lithuania, is a striking new cultural beacon in a city historically known for industry. Opened just a year ago, the museum honours the work of local-born artist Stasys Eidrigėvičius, internationally recognized for his posters and book designs. Housed in a purpose-built, architecturally monumental yet modestly scaled building by IMPLMNT architects, the museum combines functional, accessible interiors with visually engaging exhibitions. Its permanent collection of over 1,000 works is complemented by thought-provoking temporary shows addressing pressing contemporary issues such as war, migration, and climate change. The museum is financially stable, fully city-funded, and supported by a small, energetic team including many professionals who returned from abroad. Over a hundred volunteers contribute across museum operations and give guided tours, fostering a sense of local ownership and inclusion. Educational initiatives, including free programs for children from diverse social backgrounds and collaborations with seniors, underline the museum's commitment to accessibility and social responsibility. Sustainability is embedded through innovative reuse of exhibition materials and shared use of its spaces with other organizations. Stasys Museum stands as a promising cultural catalyst for Panevėžys, aiming to revitalize the city's identity and foster dialogue about its industrial past and future challenges.



Museum of Contemporary Art of Montenegro (MCAM), Podgorica, Montenegro

The Montenegro Contemporary Art Museum (MCAM) is a young institution, re-established in 2023 from the former Centre of Contemporary Art with the Collection of Art of Non-Aligned Countries 'Josip Broz Tito'. Situated primarily across two historic venues—Petrović Castle and the MCAM Gallery (formerly Galerija Centar)—the museum faces spatial challenges but is characterised by a dynamic, multidisciplinary programme featuring works from its own rich collection alongside exhibitions by prominent national and international artists. The museum team is small, predominantly female, and highly motivated, led by internationally recognised artist Vladislav Šćepanović. MCAM plays a vital role in conserving contemporary art across Montenegro and is engaged in an ambitious project to build a landmark new museum by acclaimed Italian architects, though funding remains uncertain. Its innovation lies in blending artistic curatorship with research-driven approaches, notably through the 'Laboratory of Non-Aligned Art' and the ongoing five-year 'Montenegro Today' research project, which documents contemporary Montenegrin artists. Social responsibility is evident through strong national and international collaborations and support for artists, while public inclusion is fostered via guided tours, workshops, and literary events. Sustainability awareness is emerging, with plans for future implementation in the new building. MCAM also contributes to public discourse through a television programme and a contemporary art magazine, actively positioning itself as a cultural hub within Montenegro and the wider region.



EICAS (European Institute of Contemporary Art and Science), Deventer, The Netherlands

Deventer, a Hanseatic city in the east of the Netherlands, now hosts the recently opened European Institute for Contemporary Art and Science (EICAS), a contemporary art museum that brings a modern presence to the historic city centre. Housed in a former secondary school and designed by architect Hans van Heeswijk, EICAS centres its programme on the legacy of the Dutch 'Nul' movement—closely linked to the post-war European ZERO group—and uses this as a platform to explore non-figurative and conceptual art from the 1960s to today. The museum's distinctive feature is its entirely volunteer-led model: over 100 community members manage all aspects of operations, supported by a board and three co-directors, without any paid staff. With minimal funding and an annual audience of 10,000, EICAS nevertheless delivers professional-standard exhibitions, school programmes, and public events linking art and science. By making non-figurative, abstract contemporary art accessible to the general public and positioning it as everyday and inclusive, EICAS encourages visitors of all ages to reconsider their environment and creativity.

State Ethnographic Museum, Warsaw, Poland

The State Ethnographic Museum in Warsaw, Poland, embodies a complex history and a bold contemporary mission. Founded in 1888, it was originally situated within a zoo, a symbolic reflection of the exoticism and racial superiority framing its early collections. Since 1973 the museum occupies a grand 19th-century building in central Warsaw, formally owned by a financial institution. In six months, an extensive restoration and modernization project, funded by the European Union and the Mazovian Voivodeship's Self-Government, will begin, aiming to upgrade both the building and its permanent exhibition with cutting-edge multimedia. Under the leadership of director Magdalena Wroblewska, an internationally experienced art historian and



museologist, passionate about decoloniality, the museum is actively redefining its approach through the “Against Stereotypes” programme. This initiative infuses all museum activities—from temporary exhibitions like “Afrotopias” and “Bleaching” to innovative, critical interventions in the permanent “African Expeditions-Asian Ways” display—with contemporary artistic voices that challenge traditional narratives. The museum’s well-structured, fully English-translated website provides detailed information about its accessibility achievements and challenges, reflecting a transparent and inclusive ethos. By embracing critical reflection, co-creation with diverse communities, and multimedia engagement, the museum positions itself as a vibrant space for dialogue, education, and social transformation in today’s cultural landscape.

Zachęta -National Gallery of Art, Warsaw, Poland

The Zachęta National Gallery of Art in Warsaw, Poland, combines historical heritage with contemporary artistic innovation. Housed in a centrally located 19th-century neoclassical building, Zachęta invites visitors to explore a diverse collection of 3,700 works and a temporary exhibition programme ranging from solo retrospectives to thematic group exhibitions featuring leading Polish and international artists. For over seventy years, the gallery has played a key role as commissioner of the Polish Pavilion at the Venice Biennale of Art and Architecture, demonstrating its international cultural influence. Zachęta integrates multimedia, video, and interactive art supported by modern infrastructure, while its bilingual website extends access through detailed information, educational resources, and a pioneering “Open Policy Project” that offers online access to collections and publications, including explanations in Polish sign language. By challenging traditional boundaries, Zachęta supports experimental and politically engaged art that sparks critical conversations on pressing social issues such as nationalism, inequality and exclusion. The gallery actively fosters participation and inclusion through neuro-designed exhibitions, diverse educational programmes, and outreach initiatives led by community activists like Taras Gembik, who connects with marginalized groups including



homeless and refugee communities. Sustainability is also central to Zachęta’s mission, with major building renovations planned to reduce its environmental footprint, alongside exhibitions that engage with ecological crises. Acting as a forum for public discourse, Zachęta cultivates dialogue around societal challenges, exemplified by exhibitions like “Repeat after me II,” which presents a collective portrait of war witnesses, and “Art must hang,” a sharp critique of the art world that provoked wide public discussion. Through its innovative programming and socially committed approach, Zachęta aims to create a platform where art not only reflects the present moment but helps shape it, politically, socially and emotionally.

Museum of Photography (MUFO), Kraków, Poland

The Museum of Photography in Kraków (MUFO), Poland’s sole institution dedicated exclusively to photography, traces its origins to 1987. Owned by the City of Kraków, MUFO operates across two distinct sites: the newly built MUFO Rakowicka, which houses the museum and its library, and the fully renovated MUFO Józefitów, home to the collections, archives, conservation and documentation departments, alongside a permanent photographic exhibition. The main exhibition, “What Does a Photograph Do?”, showcases a thoughtfully designed, multimedia, and multidimensional exploration of photography’s past, present, and future, complemented by a temporary exhibition dedicated to Zofia Rydet (1911–1997), a pivotal figure in Polish photography. MUFO’s clean and partially bilingual website offers access to an extensive archive of 100,000 works categorized into five collections—non-professional, studio, reportage and documentary, art photography, and photographic and film equipment. The museum fosters an atmosphere that bridges historical depth with contemporary relevance, inviting a very diversified public to engage actively with the evolving role of photography in society, thus fostering critical thinking.



Museum of Modern Art (MSN), Warsaw, Poland

The Museum of Modern Art (MSN) in Warsaw, Poland, is a dynamic municipal institution that emerged in 2005 and recently opened its first permanent home in October 2024. Located on Plac Defilad near the iconic Palace of Culture and Science, the museum's minimalist building by New York architect Thomas Phifer features a striking white concrete façade and high-ceilinged galleries designed to showcase experimental and interdisciplinary projects, reflecting the museum's commitment to pushing artistic boundaries and challenging conventional narratives. MSN's well-designed website extends access through detailed exhibition information, educational programmes, and digital resources, including virtual tours and video content. As a socially engaged institution, MSN curates exhibitions that address urgent contemporary issues such as migration, gender equality, urban inequality, and post-colonial memory, exemplified in its inaugural show "The Impermanent. Four takes on the collection." The museum actively supports participation and inclusion through advisory boards representing diverse communities, tailored educational programmes, and assistive technologies that reach marginalized groups. Sustainability is embedded both in the building's eco-conscious design and in the museum's broader commitment to reflecting on environmental impact through thematic programming. Positioned as a vital civic forum amid rising social polarization, MSN fosters critical public discourse with a programme of lectures, debates, and collaborative events, making it a beacon for cultural reflection and dialogue in Warsaw and beyond.

Museum of Naïve and Marginal Art (MNMA), Jagodina, Serbia

The Museum of Naïve and Marginal Art (MNMA) in Jagodina, Serbia, is a unique institution dedicated to the preservation and celebration of naïve, intuitive, and outsider art. Founded in 1985, MNMA is housed in a charming, historic building that offers an intimate setting for its carefully curated collection of works created outside the mainstream art world. The museum showcases a



rich variety of paintings, sculptures, and artifacts produced by self-taught artists, highlighting voices that challenge traditional definitions of art and creativity. MNMA fosters a welcoming atmosphere that invites visitors to engage deeply with expressions of individuality and marginalized perspectives. Its exhibitions not only present works from Serbian and international artists but also emphasize the social and cultural contexts from which these creations emerge. The museum actively supports inclusion through educational programmes and community outreach, aiming to bridge gaps between diverse audiences and often overlooked artistic practices. Through thematic exhibitions and participatory events, MNMA encourages dialogue around identity, mental health, and alternative artistic expressions. Sustainability and social responsibility are reflected in the museum's efforts to preserve fragile works and advocate for cultural diversity. By championing the value of art beyond academic or commercial validation, MNMA serves as a vital cultural space that challenges conventions and enriches Jagodina's vibrant art scene.

Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery (BMAG), Birmingham, UK

Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery (BMAG) in Birmingham, UK, represents a bold fusion of historical heritage and innovative reinvention. It offers visitors access to a vast and diverse collection spanning fine art, archaeology, social history, and world cultures, with a particular renown for its English Pre-Raphaelite masterpieces. BMAG champions social justice and community empowerment through its pioneering use of a Citizens Jury, involving local residents in shaping the museum's future and ensuring it truly reflects the city's diverse population. By placing citizen participation, inclusion, and cultural renewal at its core, BMAG invites visitors to engage with stories that highlight the richness of Birmingham's people and creativity. The museum actively experiments with new gallery formats and audience engagement strategies, especially in the context of severe funding challenges following the city's bankruptcy. This innovative approach has helped BMAG foster resilience, secure new support, and strengthen its role as a vital cultural hub. Initiatives born from community collaboration have reinvigorated



staff and audiences alike, creating a museum experience that goes beyond traditional models to promote democratic ownership and cultural relevance in a changing urban landscape.

THE RESULTS

Finalists

1. Centre Pompidou-Metz, Metz, France
2. Reykjavik Art Museum (RAM), Reykjavik, Iceland
3. Irish Museum of Modern Art (IMMA), Dublin, Ireland
4. Lithuanian National Museum of Art, Vilnius, Lithuania
5. Museum of Contemporary Art of Montenegro (MCAM), Podgorica, Montenegro
6. State Ethnographic Museum, Warsaw, Poland
7. Museum of Naïve and Marginal Art (MNMA), Jagodina, Serbia
8. Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery (BMAG), Birmingham, United Kingdom



Commendation for Innovative Practices

The main EMA Art Museum Award spotlights and celebrates the achievements of museums in placing the social role of art museums at the centre of their work. The jury looks for evidence of a structural approach that has taken hold over time. However, it is acknowledged that it can take many years for initiatives to take root and flourish, and for change to become embedded in cultural institutions. This commendation seeks to recognise initiatives and projects which show great promise and which are based on innovative thinking and approaches but where the results are not yet fully realised. The aim is to encourage and nurture new projects and to help share best practice, in line with the mission and values of the EMA awards.

1. State Ethnographic Museum, Warsaw, Poland

Judges' Statement:

The State Ethnographic Museum, under its new director, Magdalena Wroblewska, has embarked on a strategy to completely change the perspective of the museum by adopting a programme called “Against Stereotypes” that embraces all aspects of the museum’s activities, from temporary exhibitions to cultural events and the permanent collection. In the latter, it takes a strong autocritical stance by applying what it calls “reparative museology” and by consequently working with contemporary artists and representatives of often marginalized communities whose cultures are represented in the museum. It engages on a European level in discussions about the place and role of ethnographic museums, the history of colonialism and prejudices and stereotypes with the aim to promote a deeper understanding of diversity.



2. Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery, Birmingham, UK

Judges' Statement:

The Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery (BMAG) has developed a radical new vision based on promoting social justice and a desire to meet the real needs of a city with a diverse population that is struggling with some of the most acute issues of poverty and inequality to be found anywhere in the UK. The team at BMAG have shown remarkable resilience and creativity in developing new approaches, including an influential 'citizens jury', to help them provide a safe social space that can inspire hope and ambition and contribute to restoring a much-needed sense of pride and belonging in a troubled setting.



2025 Art Museum Award Winner

Irish Museum of Modern Art (IMMA), Dublin, Ireland



The Irish Museum of Modern Art (IMMA) was established in 1991 in the historic Royal Hospital Kilmainham in Dublin, built in the 17th c. as a home for retired soldiers and more recently used as a British Army rehabilitation centre. The complex includes a central quadrangle with three main exhibition spaces, a mediation area, café, and temporary exhibition building and artist-in-residence studios. Situated on 48 acres, it is surrounded by a formal garden and expansive parkland.

Home to the Irish National Collection of modern and contemporary art, the museum presents a selection of its permanent collection in a visually appealing and intellectually challenging thematic and temporary exhibition that is free of charge, as are its temporary exhibitions that



include contemporary international art. A website offering rich contextual information complements the physical displays.

IMMA gives priority to the visitor's experience as is shown in the museum's structure around departments focused on audience engagement, learning, exhibitions, sustainability, and more.

The institution's social responsibility is anchored in its strategic plan (2024-2028) introduced by its director, Annie Fletcher. Under the title *A Creative Catalyst for Change*, IMMA's mission is outlined as a 1) A Catalyst for Change, 2) a Radically Public Space, 3) a Centre for Research and Innovation, and 4) a Global Connector. These priorities seem to be genuinely embraced by the institution as a whole and their implementation is clearly visible during a visit of the museum.

Innovative initiatives like *Living Canvas*—a large digital art screen featuring contemporary art films and moving image works by Irish and international artists, offer new ways to engage the public.

Participation and inclusion are core to IMMA's ethos, from the *Matheson Creativity Hub*, which provides free creative space for community groups, to the *Art & Ageing Horizons* programme supporting individuals with dementia.

The institution is also committed to sustainability, aiming to become Ireland's first regenerative museum. It employs solar energy, calculates its carbon footprint, and hosts an annual *Climate Festival* that sparks dialogue between diverse stakeholders.

As a meeting point for community and cultural diplomacy, IMMA plays an influential role in public discourse. It will be one of the six sites for Ireland's EU Presidency in 2026. Through exhibitions, public programmes, and strategic partnerships, IMMA positions itself as a space for civic engagement and transformative cultural dialogue.



Judges' Statement about the 2025 EMA Art Museum Award Winner:

The jury of the 2025 EMA Art Museum Award decided that the Irish Museum of Modern Art (IMMA) in Dublin is a worthy winner, praising the museum's innovative programming and highly inclusive engagement strategy.

It shows outstanding commitment to exploring tough contemporary issues around decolonisation, racism, war and conflict, without compromising a dedication to artistic integrity and quality. Irish artists play a key role, but IMMA skilfully weaves together the local and the international in its approach.

The museum systematically experiments with engagement across the whole audience spectrum, with noteworthy innovation on diversity and inclusion.

Positioning itself as a radically public space, community engagement, accessibility and local citizenship are at the core of its mission and its modus operandi, they permeate every activity and initiative.

As their approach seems exceptionally innovative and rewarding, IMMA is a case of best practice for all European art museums, leading by example.