

Press kit

Kunstmuseum
Bern
of the future

The architectural competition
23.8. ————— 24.11.24

**KUNST
MUSEUM
BERN**

**OFFEN FÜR
NEUES**

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**Kunstmuseum Bern:
The winning project from the architectural competition envisages a
distinctive new building with a timeless look and museum square**

Bern, 19 August 2024

The team Schmidlin Architekten (Zurich and Engadine) wins the international competition for the renovation and expansion of Kunstmuseum Bern. President of the jury Thomas Hasler praises the “self-assured architectural language” of the free-standing new building, which fits in well with the UNESCO World Heritage site, and the “clear added value” for the city. An impressive complex of buildings will be created around a museum square that opens up onto Hodlerstrasse and the slope of the Aare. The Kunstmuseum will become a lively place connected to the public space where people can congregate and communicate.

The winning project, named “Eiger”, envisages replacing the 1984 extension, which is in urgent need of renovation, with a free-standing new building that represents permanence with its timeless appearance. There are plans for an attractive museum square in front of the building. President of the jury Thomas Hasler, professor in the Institute of Architecture and Design at Vienna University of Technology, justifies the jury's decision as follows: “The winning project stands out thanks to its urban character in the UNESCO perimeter and its modern, self-assured architectural language. The distinct nature of the new building as a solitary structure that leaves the Stettler Building dating from 1879 entirely separate, and the inclusion of the property at Hodlerstrasse 6 in the ensemble won over the jury. With the creation of a square on Hodlerstrasse and the opening up of the slope of the Aare River, the project creates clear added value for the city and gives Kunstmuseum Bern an attractive, inviting address.”

The international architectural competition, which was launched in July 2022, was held as a two-stage process with a prequalification round. A total of 148 teams applied to participate, 39 were selected by the broad expert jury and panel of specialists, and 11 of these were subsequently invited to refine their project proposal. Three teams then took part in the revision stage. The winners are the young and innovative office of Schmidlin Architekten (Zurich and Engadine), who have previously won the Swiss-Architects “2019 Building of the Year” award for Muzeum Susch (Graubünden).

Safeguarding the future viability of the Kunstmuseum

The architectural competition is based on the basic "Kunstmuseum Bern of the future" concept, which was presented to the general public in 2021. The key elements of this concept include the building complex with the historic Stettler Building, the Atelier 5 building and the building at Hodlerstrasse 6, as well as work to upgrade Hodlerstrasse with a new traffic concept and to relocate the exit to the Metro-Parking car park. The competition programme did not focus on maximising the available space but on the needs of society, in addition to a wide range of other conditions, such as cultural heritage protection, sustainability and monument preservation requirements.

Thanks to new spatial qualities, the winning project will enable the Kunstmuseum to present exhibitions which were not previously possible to hold. In addition, the exhibition space will increase moderately, by around 500 m². Art education activities will also benefit from spacious new rooms with their own access to the new Aare-side terrace. Non-commercial recreational areas and a modern, multifunctional events hall will transform the museum into an inclusive, public place where people can congregate and communicate. Thanks to significant optimisations and simplifications to art and goods logistics, operations will become markedly more efficient and operating costs will remain stable, despite the larger exhibition space.

For Jonathan Gimmel, President of the Board of Trustees of the Kunstmuseum Bern – Zentrum Paul Klee umbrella foundation, the winning project offers convincing architectural answers for new art experiences as well as public meeting places for all, and is consistent with the principles of sustainability. The museum's expansion relies on energy-efficient, climate-friendly solutions – not only during renovation, reconstruction and the construction of the new building, but also during operation once the project has been completed. "We are thrilled to be safeguarding the future viability of Kunstmuseum Bern for subsequent generations with this project."

According to museum director Nina Zimmer, the public and artists can look forward to open and bright premises that enable new high-quality encounters and engagement with art. "The project will create spacious, well-proportioned rooms for art and a wide range of art education activities." Gentle transitions from the street to the building will make the renewed museum easily accessible. The entrance, which is clearly visible from the outside, and the foyer area signal to visitors that they are welcome here.

The winning project is now being refined. In the process, the extent to which the interior of the Stettler Building can be modified will also be clarified. The finer details are being worked out in cooperation with the Office for the Preservation of Historical Monuments, which was represented in the jury by Monument Preservationist Jean-Daniel Gross. From the perspective of the Preservation of Historical Monuments Office, the project can basically be approved and is consistent with the status of Bern's Old City as a UNESCO World Heritage site.



OFFEN FÜR
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Media release
Kunstmuseum Bern of the future
The result of the architectural competition
19 August 2024

Significance for canton and city

Cantonal Councillor Christine Häsler, Head of the Education and Culture Directorate, is delighted about the successful conclusion of the architectural competition. "Canton Bern had two political representatives and two representatives from the Board of Trustees of the umbrella foundation in the competition jury. The well-balanced composition of the jury provided the specialist and political support necessary for the conception of a construction project of this magnitude and relevance."

The renewal of the Kunstmuseum will provide Canton Bern with contemporary and sustainable infrastructure for a cultural institution of national significance: the Kunstmuseum can therefore continue to fulfil its mandate of protecting, caring for and sharing the first-rate cultural assets entrusted to it, offering activities to school classes from the entire canton, loaning works of art to other cultural centres in the canton and providing assistance with questions relating to provenance research. The national and international appeal of the museum is preserved and operation for subsequent generations is secured.

The City of Bern will also benefit from the renewed Kunstmuseum. The redesign of Hodlerstrasse, which has been under discussion for many years, and the upgrading of Bären- and Waisenhausplatz can be coordinated with the renewal of the museum. This offers the opportunity to connect the urban space with the new Kunstmuseum, increasing the importance and appeal of the entire upper part of the Old City.

One-third private funding

The museum renewal is a joint effort when it comes to financing, too: it is to be financed through public sector funds, private patrons, foundations and businesses. The overall costs for the renovation of the Stettler Building, Hodlerstrasse 6 and the new replacement building amounts to around CHF 147 million. This includes expected construction inflation of around CHF 27 million until the complex is opened in 2033.

Costs for the new building amount to approx. CHF 99 million (including inflation) and still correspond to the basis from 2019 which is adjusted for inflation. The Kunstmuseum Bern Foundation still wishes to cover half of the costs for the replacement building with support from Hansjörg Wyss, chairman of The Wyss Foundation, businesses, foundations, private individuals and the Burgergemeinde Bern, while an application will be made to Canton Bern to finance the remaining costs of the replacement building, renovation of the Stettler Building, renovation of Hodlerstrasse 6 and to cover inflation.

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The Kunstmuseum Bern Foundation wishes to commit to its share of CHF 52 million, the majority of which will be covered by Hansjörg Wyss's generous donation of CHF 30 million. Now that the architectural competition has finished, detailed negotiations with donors can begin. Many preliminary discussions have already taken place. Private individuals, foundations and businesses have promised support.

Canton Bern is being requested to assume the costs for the renovation of the Stettler Building and the Hodlerstrasse 6 property, and to partially contribute to the new replacement building. The renovation of the Stettler Building is necessary independently of the "Kunstmuseum Bern of the future" project. The canton must only pay as much for the new building as it would have cost to renovate the extension building constructed in 1984. The canton is also being asked to assume the risk of inflation. As such, the overall costs for the canton would amount to CHF 95 million. As part of the basic "Kunstmuseum Bern of the future" concept, a renovation-only option was also developed as an alternative to the replacement building. Due to inflation, high costs of around CHF 75 million would have to be expected, without creating any added value and without the possibility of acquiring third-party funding to the tune of CHF 50 million for Kunstmuseum Bern.

The next steps

The Cantonal Parliament is expected to make a decision on the project loan for the renovation and expansion of the Kunstmuseum in autumn 2025. Then detailed planning is scheduled to follow. If the Cantonal Council and Cantonal Parliament approve the project loan, the two councils will then make a decision on the implementation loan in 2028/2029. If this is also approved, Kunstmuseum Bern will be renovated and extended between 2029 and 2033 and reopened at the end of 2033.

While the museum is closed for construction from 2029 to 2033, exhibitions and co-productions are being planned in collaboration with a variety of art institutions in Canton Bern.

Exhibition

"Kunstmuseum Bern of the future. The architectural competition"

From 23 August to 24 November 2024, Kunstmuseum Bern will be exhibiting all 39 competition projects.

Admission is free.

Vernissage: Thursday, 22 August 2024, 18:30



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Architectural competition “Kunstmuseum Bern of the future”

Expert jury

Sibylle Aubort Raderschall
Elisabeth Boesch
Tina Gregorič
Jean-Daniel Gross
Thomas Hasler
Anna Jessen
Boris Podrecca
Annabelle Selldorf
Peter Zumthor

Panel of specialists

Alfons Bichsel
Jonathan Gimmel
Alec von Graffenried
Marieke Kruit
Benjamin Marti
Alex Wassmer
Hansjörg Wyss
Nina Zimmer

Further information, FAQ, the jury’s report, competition programme and images

are available on the [project website](https://www.kunstmuseumbern.ch/en/zukunft): [kunstmuseumbern.ch/en/zukunft](https://www.kunstmuseumbern.ch/en/zukunft)

Respondents:

Jonathan Gimmel, President of the Board of Trustees of the Kunstmuseum Bern – Zentrum Paul Klee umbrella foundation
Thomas Hasler, President of the jury
Nina Zimmer, Director Kunstmuseum Bern – Zentrum Paul Klee

Media contact

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The winning team
Kunstmuseum Bern of the future
The result of the architectural competition
19 August 2024

Schmidlin Architekten

The young and innovative office of Schmidlin Architekten (Zurich and Engadine) has experience with complex public construction projects and deals intensively with conversions and extensions to listed buildings in urban and rural contexts. In Susch, in Lower Engadine, the team converted several historic buildings, some dating back to the 12th century, into a museum for contemporary art. The team managed to preserve the protected historic buildings while at the same time creating new exhibition rooms that meet modern requirements. In 2019, Muzeum Susch was selected as Building of the Year by Swiss-Architects. The firm is currently working on the conversion and renovation of the Historic Museum Thurgau in Frauenfeld Castle. In Würenlingen in Canton Aargau, the team converted a late Baroque listed farmhouse in the historic village centre into a cultural centre and added an extension; this houses the public library, exhibition rooms and a hall. In Basel, Schmidlin Architekten created an art gallery on the premises of a former car repair workshop. In 2014, the firm won the award for sustainable renovation and construction in the Alpine region for its restoration of a 500-year-old barn (Stalla Madulain project).

schmidlinarchitekten.ch

Architectural competition “Kunstmuseum Bern of the future”

Statements

“The winning project stands out thanks to its urban character in the UNESCO perimeter and its modern, self-assured architectural language. The jury was won over by the distinct nature of the new building as a solitary structure that leaves the Stettler Building entirely separate, and the inclusion of the property at Hodlerstrasse 6 in the ensemble. With the creation of a square on Hodlerstrasse and the opening up of the slope of the Aare River, the project creates clear added value for the city and gives Kunstmuseum Bern an attractive, inviting address.”

Thomas Hasler, President of the Jury

“The winning project offers convincing architectural answers for new art experiences and public meeting places for all, while remaining consistent with the principles of climate protection and energy efficiency. To keep costs stable and predictable, the plans and project planning are based on a cost ceiling. We are thrilled to be safeguarding the future viability of the Kunstmuseum for subsequent generations with this project.”

Jonathan Gimmel, President of the Board of Trustees of the Kunstmuseum Bern – Zentrum Paul Klee umbrella foundation, member of the jury

“Our audience and artists can look forward to a Kunstmuseum that will enable new high-quality encounters and engagement with art thanks to open and bright premises. The project will create spacious, well-proportioned rooms for art and art education. By opening up to the city and the slope of the Aare River, the project will create inviting, new public spaces in the city. It’s a building just as we imagine it.”

Nina Zimmer, Director Kunstmuseum Bern – Zentrum Paul Klee

“I am delighted, that the Kunstmuseum Bern of the future architectural competition has finished successfully. Canton Bern had two political representatives and two representatives from the Board of Trustees of the umbrella foundation in the competition jury. The well-balanced composition of the jury provided the specialist and political support necessary for the conception of a construction project of this magnitude and relevance.”

Christine Häsler, Head of the Education and Culture Directorate

“The residents of Canton Bern know that Kunstmuseum Bern is a very important cultural institution in the canton. Now the museum will be given the modern infrastructure it so urgently needs to be able to properly display and convey these artistic treasures.”

Benjamin Marti, Member of the Cantonal Parliament, Canton Bern, member of the jury

"Kunstmuseum Bern already has huge international appeal. The planned new building will honour the distinctive and unique appearance of the 155-year-old Stettler Building, thus retaining it for visitors. The area of the new building as set out in the winning project perfectly complements the space and makes it possible to showcase contemporary art even more effectively. This new building will make the Kunstmuseum even more appealing and Bern even more attractive."

Alfons Bichsel, Member of the Cantonal Parliament, member of the jury

"The long-awaited expansion of the museum can finally be realised. The new building will eliminate weak points: even large pieces of contemporary art can be exhibited, and accessibility will be improved. But there will be major improvements to the exterior space, too: the museum is opening up and will connect the city to the area around the Aare. The museum will become an inviting place for all, the interior and exterior will be linked, art will become even more accessible – I am really looking forward to it!"

Alec von Graffenried, Mayor of the City of Bern, member of the jury

"We will be getting contemporary exhibition rooms for art and a spacious outdoor area where people can spend time. An art mile from Hodlerstrasse to Waisenhausplatz square; a place for everyone to enjoy a stroll."

Marieke Kruit, Member of the Executive Council of the City of Bern, member of the jury

"From the perspective of the Preservation of Historical Monuments Office of the City of Bern, the project can basically be approved and is consistent with UNESCO World Heritage status. As is usual with such construction projects, further development is required in the area of urban planning and with regard to the degree of intervention in the protected buildings. Close cooperation with the Office for the Preservation of Historical Monuments is planned as the project progresses."

Jean-Daniel Gross, Monument Preservationist of the City of Bern, member of the jury

"I am delighted to see that the winning project will provide Kunstmuseum Bern and Canton Bern with a forward-looking replacement building that will allow the museum to develop in a modern and internationally competitive way. At the same time, the new public square in front of the museum and the opening up to the slope of the Aare River provide an opportunity to consult with business associations and residents to realise upgrades to Hodlerstrasse that will benefit everyone."

Hansjörg Wyss, Chairman of The Wyss Foundation, member of the jury

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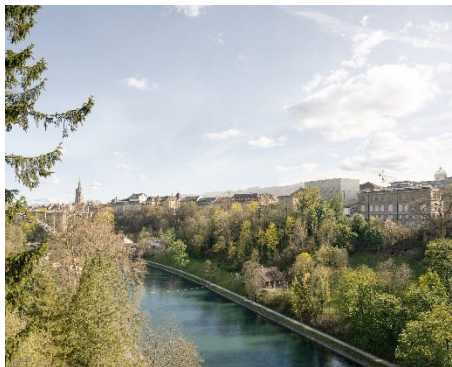
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01
Rendering, winning project "Eiger", view
from Waisenhausplatz
Visualisation: Studio Blomen, Zurich
© Schmidlin Architekten



02
Rendering, winning project "Eiger", view
from Genfergasse
Visualisation: Studio Blomen, Zurich
© Schmidlin Architekten



03
Rendering, winning project "Eiger", view
from the bridge Lorrainebrücke
Visualisation: Studio Blomen, Zurich
© Schmidlin Architekten



04
Rendering, winning project "Eiger", view of
the terrace facing the Aare
Visualisation: Studio Blomen, Zurich
© Schmidlin Architekten

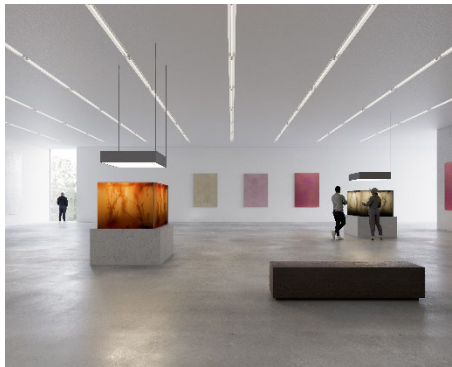
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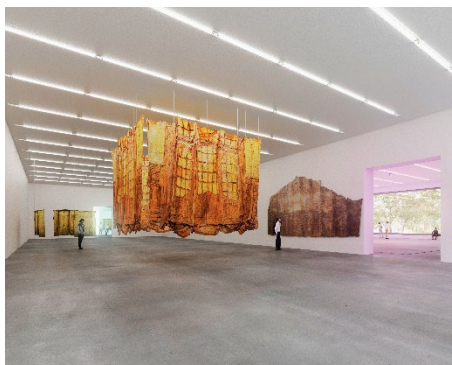
05
Rendering, winning project "Eiger", foyer
Visualisation: Studio Blomen, Zurich
© Schmidlin Architekten



06
Rendering, winning project "Eiger",
exhibition space on the 1st floor
Visualisation: Studio Blomen, Zurich
© Schmidlin Architekten



07
Rendering, winning project "Eiger",
exhibition space with skylight on the 3rd
floor
Visualisation: Studio Blomen, Zurich
© Schmidlin Architekten



08
Rendering, winning project "Eiger",
exhibition space in the basement
Visualisation: Studio Blomen, Zurich
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09

View of the architectural model, winning project "Eiger"

© Schmidlin Architekten

Photograph: © «Bildkultur» - Markus Mühlheim



10

Jury of the architectural competition.
Kunstmuseum Bern of the future

Photo: Monika Flückiger

From left to right: Alex Wassmer, Alec von Graffenried, Peter Zumthor, Jean-Daniel Gross, Tina Gregorič, Annabelle Selldorf, Thomas Hasler, Elisabeth Boesch, Anna Jessen, Benjamin Marti, Marieke Kruit, Sibylle Aubort, Nina Zimmer, Alfons Bichsel, and Jonathan Gimmel