

ABOUT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART IN WARSAW

ESTABLISHED

2005

ADDRESS

ul. Marszałkowska 103, in the northeast corner of Warsaw's Parade Square,
across from the historic Palace of Culture and Science

WEBSITE

artmuseum.pl/en

DIRECTOR

Joanna Mytkowska

MISSION

MSN Warsaw is a public institution that collects works of art and studies and disseminates the tangible and intangible legacy of contemporary culture. The museum cooperates with a range of groups and communities, as well as institutions in Poland and around the world. It is a space for dialogue and jointly shaping cognitive and aesthetic sensitivity. It grows along with Warsaw, responds to reality, and arouses curiosity. In its everyday operations, the museum strives to act ethically and professionally, with concern for the environment and social bonds.

HISTORY

Founded in 2005, the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw (MSN Warsaw) is a public institution devoted to collecting, presenting, and interpreting international art made since 1989. With broad interests in the visual arts, graphic design, industrial design, architecture, performance, and multimedia art, the Museum holds more than 1,000 works acquired over the past two decades.

Included in the collection are works by Magdalena Abakanowicz, Alina Szapocznikow, Monika Sosnowska, Cecilia Vicuña, Thomas Hirschhorn, and Wolfgang Tillmans, among others. MSN Warsaw also collects objects of visual culture, including neon signs, posters, and post-internet art, and holds archives from important Polish post-war art institutions such as the Foksal Gallery and the Experimental Studio of Polish Radio. It also retains more than 1,000 avant-garde films.

MSN Warsaw has been operated by the City of Warsaw since January 1, 2023. From 2006–2022, the museum was jointly operated by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage (which financed and oversaw the museum's current operations) and the City of Warsaw (which secured temporary premises for the museum, financed selected projects, and was responsible for construction of the museum's future building). The permanent home of MSN Warsaw, at ul. Marszałkowska 103, was completed in 2024.

COLLECTIONS

MSN Warsaw collects works of contemporary art, executed in a diverse range of media: paintings, drawings, sculpture, installations, films, audio and performative works. These works are shown in temporary exhibitions at the museum's headquarters and branches, and also lent to other art institutions in Poland and around the world. In the museum's storerooms and workshops, artworks undergo study, conservation, and digitization. They are carefully catalogued and divided into specific collections.

Collection 1, numbering more than 2,000 objects, is an emblematic collection for MSN Warsaw's institutional identity. Assembly of the collection began immediately after the museum was founded in 2005 and has been pursued without interruption by the MSN Warsaw team under the leadership of director Joanna Mytkowska. Collection 1 focuses on socially engaged art that explores local and global social processes, the circulation of information, and the technological development of our time. The collection, and the debate surrounding it, provides tools for understanding the challenges of modernity. It also responds to the emancipatory need for creation of non-hierarchical structures for overcoming cultural marginalization. Artworks are acquired for the collection with funds provided to the museum by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage and the Culture Office of the City of Warsaw.

MSN Warsaw's historic collections are works gathered by avant-garde art institutions in the 20th century which joined the museum's resources as a fixed whole. The museum maintains the collections from the Foksal Gallery in Warsaw and the Exchange Gallery in Łódź.

The Foksal Gallery was founded in Warsaw in 1966 at the initiative of art critics Wiesław Borowski, Anka Ptaszkowska and Mariusz Tchorek, and artists Henryk Stażewski, Roman Owidzki, Edward Krasiński and Zbigniew Gostomski. Alongside the Špála Gallery in Prague, the Foksal Gallery was one of the few avant-garde galleries in the communist bloc. The gallery's program called for a departure from the typical presentation of works previously executed in the studio, in favor of processual works. Installations and happenings were created at the Foksal Gallery by such outstanding artists as Tadeusz Kantor, Daniel Buren, Christian Boltanski, Annette Messager and Anselm Kiefer. The Foksal Gallery Collection, which has been part of the MSN Warsaw collection since 2017, mainly comprises artefacts generated by the artists while working on projects on-site.

The Exchange Gallery Collection was donated to MSN Warsaw by Józef Robakowski in 2017. This unique collection contains over 200 works gathered by the Exchange Gallery, an independent art space founded in 1978 by Małgorzata Potocka and Józef Robakowski in a private apartment at ul. Piłsudskiego 7 in Łódź. The Exchange Gallery, which existed until 2022, was an art forum, an event venue, and also an archive.



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ARCHITECTURAL FACT SHEET MUSEUM OF MODERN ART IN WARSAW (MSN WARSAW)

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, Poland (MSN Warsaw) is Thomas Phifer and Partners' first project built in Europe and the Museum's first permanent home since its founding in 2005, when it was established as a collecting institution focused on art created since 1989.

The 213,000-square-foot building is located in Plac Defilad (Parade Square), the largest public square in Europe and a gathering place for Varsovians since the 1950s. Framed by the Soviet-era Palace of Culture and Science on one side and an arcade of shops and malls on the other, the Museum anchors the revitalization of the plaza and serves as a center for new art and ideas in the nation's capital. (The square also will house the future TR Warszawa theatre, also designed by Thomas Phifer and Partners). The construction of MSN Warsaw is financed by the City of Warsaw.

OPENING TIMELINE

A three-week cultural festival with more than 100 public events will begin on October 25, 2024, as the first phase of the Museum's opening, providing a preview of the activities and exhibitions it will offer. During this first opportunity to experience the building, MSN Warsaw's galleries will house large-scale sculptures and installations by Polish and international women artists whose work will be presented in dialogue with the new building.

In February 2025, the Museum will unveil its fully installed galleries in the second phase of its opening, with the first comprehensive exhibition drawing from its collection. In the new building, the entire ground floor of the Museum will always be open free of charge to the public during hours of operation.

ADDRESS

ul. Marszałkowska 103, in the northeast corner of Warsaw's Parade Square, across from the historic Palace of Culture and Science.

DIRECTOR OF THE MUSEUM

Joanna Mytkowska

DESIGN ARCHITECT

Thomas Phifer and Partners, New York

LOCAL ARCHITECT

APA Wojciechowski Architects, Warsaw

DESIGN HIGHLIGHTS

The three-story MSN Warsaw building is organized horizontally and composed of two rectangular forms, in contrast to the verticality of the Palace of Culture and Science. The museum's distinguishing façade, composed of white, cast-in-place concrete, hand-crafted by skilled local craftspeople, expresses the institution's ethos and offers a lasting and timeless presence.

A monumental, classically inspired, double-symmetrical staircase at the heart of the Museum is flooded with natural light, offering a space for social interaction. The openness of the ground floor creates a central meeting point and offers generous views of the city and through the museum. The center space also organizes the entrances to the main suites of interconnected galleries on the two upper floors. Each suite of galleries on the two main exhibition levels features windowed "city rooms" lined in European ash that offer places for pause and reflection and framed views of the city of Warsaw.

Fixed galleries, ranging in height from 4 meters (13 ft) to 7.5 meters (25 feet), are different sizes and proportions. A system of louvres and scrims modulates natural light and activates the galleries throughout the day. The roof—referred to as the building's "fifth facade"—offers continuous diffused daylight into the galleries. The galleries feature elegant but durable terrazzo floors.

A one-meter-high horizontal slot surrounds the entire façade and contains clerestory windows for the research galleries and daylight windows for the administrative office level. A continuous arcade on the ground level serves as a transitional space between the city and the Museum, setting the stage for the experience within.

The ground-level exterior is lined with newly planted honey locust trees that lightly enclose the forum.

DIMENSIONS

Gross Area: 19,788 SM (213,000 SF)

Building Dimensions: 100M long x 40M wide x 26M tall

Cinema Tower Dimensions: 10M x 10M square x 26M tall.

Galleries and Exhibition Spaces: 4,543 SM (48,911 SF)

Gallery Heights:

Level 0 = 5M

Level +1 Research Galleries: 7.5M

Level +1 Experimental Gallery Suite: 4M

Level +3 Monumental and Classical Galleries: 6.2M

MATERIALS

Architectural Cast in Place Concrete

European Ash Wood

Terrazzo

Stainless Steel

Plaster

PROJECT HISTORY

Following an international design competition, Thomas Phifer and Partners were selected in 2014. The project broke ground in 2019.

MEDIA CONTACT

Pac Pobric / Polskin Arts

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MUSEUM OF MODERN ART IN WARSAW OPENING WEEKEND CELEBRATION

From 25 October through 10 November 2024, more than 100 diverse events will take place at the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw (MSN Warsaw). Highlights of the opening weekend celebration include:

The festival begins with a luminous performative parade titled, “the Delegation of Slippery Affairs,” that invites the public to participate in a nomadic rave, a bewitching celebration of the passage between the old and new incarnations of MSN Warsaw from the apartment building on ul. Pańska 3 and heading towards ul. Marszałkowska 103.

For two weeks leading up to the parade, locals and visitors alike visited the MSN Warsaw Pavilion on the Vistula which was transformed into a workshop where guests attended workshops to make inflatable protest tools (“tools for action”) to carry during the parade. All objects will become part of the archive of the museum’s opening.

The musical opening of the museum kicks off on the evening of 25 October with Kim Gordon, icon of the American alternative scene and singer, producer, fashion designer, writer, songwriter, and cofounder of the experimental post-punk band Sonic Youth. Gordon has been called the “conscience” of the alternative rock scene of the 1980s and 1990s, a model for an entire generation of musicians, especially women.

On 26 October, 700 Bliss – an experimental club project by American artistic duo of Moor Mother and DJ Haram who met in 2014 in Philadelphia – will play. The duo shared the vibrant local artistic scene, musical fascinations, and a love for activism. 700 Bliss is a kind of mix of Public Enemy and Merzbow’s sound. The concert will take place in the museum’s largest exhibition space, which can hold 400 people, and it will be broadcast on the façade of the building.

The musical finale of the museum’s opening weekend will be provided by Hania Rani who is preparing a special concert for this occasion. Rani’s work alludes to the sounds developed by American minimalists, ambient music, film scores, and contemporary electronics.

New works for a new building: Agnieszka Polska’s multimedia video *Prophecy*, prepared especially for MSN Warsaw, uses animation and text inspired by speculative literature, systems theory, cybernetics, and science fiction. Short randomly displayed “fortunes” about the future are presented on black-and-white boards modelled on the traditional graphics of silent film dialog. Each passage is processed by an AI model using stable diffusion, creating the effect of slow entropy of the text as it appears and disappears, dissolving into incomprehensible, dynamically generated characters. The work can be viewed for an extended time, as a randomly formed poem, or for a flash when the viewer needs an answer to a question or a clue about the future. In line with the concept of the building’s architect, Thomas Phifer, the white façade of the new museum will also serve as a screen for projecting art, in this case the piece by Agnieszka Polska prepared especially for this occasion. From 14 to 27 October, every day at 6:00 pm, the work will be shown on large screens in the underground passage of the Świętokrzyska metro station. The work was financed by the European Union NextGenerationEU, and Warexpo is also a partner of the project.

A full schedule of events can be found at artmuseum.pl/en/program-1