

Art, Architecture and Nature – The New Museum Building with Park

The Fondation Beyeler has become one of the most popular museums in Switzerland over the past twenty-five years. To be able to meet the future needs of both the art it houses and its visitors, it is currently building a new extension. The acquisition of a historical park adjoining the Fondation Beyeler's existing park to the south opened up the possibility of significantly enlarging both its indoor and outdoor space and so broadening the scope of what it can offer.

A twenty-first-century museum is not just a repository of objects; it is also a social space for people to meet, share ideas, learn new things and regenerate. Cultural events and art education have also become a central part of the visitor-friendly museum. To be able to present not just its active programme of exhibitions but also its steadily growing collection of modern and contemporary art as well as gifts and works on permanent loan, the Fondation Beyeler is planning a new museum building.

At the end of a design study involving eleven international firms of architects, the jury voted unanimously in favour of the design proposed by the Atelier Peter Zumthor. Instead of one large complex, this envisaged three smaller buildings with different material properties that are to be sensitively embedded in the historical park setting. The three new buildings will be irregularly aligned with Bachtelenweg, the lane that runs between the two parks, which is to remain open to pedestrian traffic and bicycles. At the heart of the project is the new museum building for presenting works of art. The second structure is a pavilion to be used for events and as a social space, and the third a service building for administration and art handling.

'The new building project is of great importance to the long-term development of the Fondation Beyeler', says Samuel Keller, Director of the Fondation Beyeler. 'The extension by the Atelier Peter Zumthor will be a unique ensemble of museum buildings with new spaces for art and events and above all a large public park.'

The new museum building "Hansjörg Wyss Museum"

Zumthor's three-storey museum building will have 1500 m² of exhibition space. Its monolithic form takes its cues from the mature trees in the park, and the large windows are spaced so that their views of the natural world outside become an integral part of the galleries. The museum is being built of Jurassic limestone-tamped concrete, cast layer for layer and then tamped so that its irregular, porous surface and warm hues lend it a naturalistic look. Complementing the existing museum, the new building will be used to exhibit even more works of art from the renowned Fondation Beyeler Collection than has been possible hitherto.

Pavilion

The single-storey pavilion is situated in the south-western corner of the existing park. There, its small service tract built of rendered quarry stone will physically connect it to the historical boundary wall of the park. The pavilion will look out onto the old park with a transparent glass facade that on warm summer days can be opened. During the day, the pavilion will be a place for visitors and locals alike to come and read, relax and have a chat. In the evening it will be used for cultural events such as lectures, discussions with artists, film screenings, performances and concerts as well as private events with up to 300 guests.

Service Building

The service building will form the 'gateway' between Riehen and the site of the Fondation Beyeler. Its three upper storeys will house workspaces for some twenty employees, while the ground floor will be dedicated to art handling and the basement to exhibition preparation. The service building and the new museum building will be connected below ground. Echoing the typical construction style of the region's farm buildings, the facade of the service building is to be a simple timber-frame structure. With its materiality of stained oak, it will blend in organically with its surroundings.

New Park

The new park is a creation of Jean-François Caillat, who also designed the Fondation Beyeler's existing park. It was designed as an English-style landscape garden in 1830 and has by and large retained its original layout to this day. With its mighty, two-hundred-year-old trees, it ranks among the most authentic historical parks of its kind in the whole region. Previously private, it will now be opened to the public with the result that the Fondation Beyeler's park will almost double in size as well as gaining direct access to the adjoining nature reserve. The project will therefore enhance the much loved combination of art, architecture and nature for which the Fondation Beyeler is famous.

Peter Zumthor

Peter Zumthor (born 1943 in Basel) is widely known for cultural buildings such as the Therme Vals, the Kunsthaus Bregenz, the Kolumba Kunstmuseum in Cologne and currently the LACMA (Los Angeles County Museum of Art). Zumthor has won numerous architecture awards, including the prestigious Pritzker Prize and the Praemium Imperiale. What makes his work distinctive is his serene architectural language, his subtle handling of materials, the connectedness of his buildings to the landscape and his many years of experience with historical monuments.

Facts and figures:

Building commenced: 2022

Completion of the building is expected to take three years. This will be followed by a phase of official and technical approvals and test operation. An opening date has not yet been set. It will be communicated in good time.

Exhibition space of the new museum building: 1,500 m²

Pavilion capacity: up to 300 people

Park space: 9,500 m²

Estimated costs (acquisition of the property, building and operating costs for the first ten years): CHF 120 million

Financing:

Wyss Foundation founded by Hansjörg Wyss (principal patron)

Thomas und Doris Ammann Stiftung

Daros Collection of the Stephan Schmidheiny family

Ernst Göhner Stiftung

Don Quixote Foundation

Beyeler-Stiftung

Various private donors

Further information on the new building is available here: www.fondationbeyeler.ch/en/museum/new-museum-building

Press images are available at www.fondationbeyeler.ch/en/media/press-images

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Fondation Beyeler opening hours: 10a.m. to 6p.m. daily, Wednesday through 8p.m.