

The Royal Museum of Fine Arts Antwerp - KMSKA reopens

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Leopold de Waelplaats 2, 2000 Antwerpen, Belgium

International press preview day 22 September 2022 at 10am

Public Opening: 24 September 2022

On **Saturday 24 September**, the renovated **Royal Museum of Fine Arts Antwerp (KMSKA)** will finally reopen its doors. After 11 years of construction and renovation, it will once again welcome the public. **Flanders' leading museum** has been undergoing a radical rebuilding and expansion gaining **40% more of exhibition space**. The exceptional art collection has also been given complete restoration and conservation treatments. The masterpieces will once again resume their place in the museum rooms and from this week, the public will be able to explore seven centuries of outstanding art in a completely new scenography.



Image: KMSKA by Karin Borghouts.

" The opening of KMSKA is the cultural highlight of 2022. Museums are important in a society. They are not only the living memory of generations past, they are also places that respond to developments in society. Museums are at the very summit as beacons of confidence and hope. In these uncertain times, they have an increasingly significant role to play. The KMSKA houses the largest art collection in Flanders. At last, after a long world tour, our Flemish Masters are back home!" - Minister President Jan Jambon

For **11 years**, the KMSKA was closed to the public. During that time, the historic building was renovated and a new pure white volume was added. The new addition is an infill in the historic patios, creating a **40% additional exhibition space**. **Dikkie Scipio of KAAN Architecten** created two worlds in one building. Even before its opening, the museum as a building was already winning awards.

" Renovating and extending a monument is quite a responsibility. It requires understanding the new use, it requires knowledge of and respect for the past and a vision for the future. The overall result is a building that both balances and challenges. The rebuilding was a unique experience, which did not follow the ordinary paths of an architectural project in any way. A great many people contributed, with their hands and/or heads, to the result that we can now celebrate and for which I owe everyone many thanks." - Dikkie Scipio, KAAN Architecten

The Collection

With **8,400 pieces**, the **KMSKA's collection is the largest and most valuable in Flanders**: seven centuries of art from Flemish Primitives to Expressionists with world-famous masters including the largest collection in the world of **James Ensor** and **Rik Wouters**.

The collection is the result of the eclectic tastes of collectors and directors from different eras. The oldest work dates from the early 14th century. While the KMSKA owns art mainly from Belgium and the Southern Netherlands, it also has a good number of international masterpieces of exceptional quality.

" We have resolutely chosen to present the collection within two major periods. We show the old masters in the historic part, the moderns in the new volume. At the pivotal point is situated the artist James Ensor. We have the largest collection of Ensor in the world. He will be allocated an entire wing." - Carmen Willems, general director

" The KMSKA is too often still only associated with old masters. Thanks to the space gained, our fantastic collection of modern art gets the place it deserves. Moreover, we can now display works by James Ensor and Antwerp artist Rik Wouters. We also possess the largest collection of Wouters worldwide." - Luk Lemmens, chairman KMSKA vzw



Image: KMSKA by Karin Borghouts.

An open house

The new museum aims to be a place of encounter where everyone feels welcome. The threshold of the new museum was also brought down to ground level, where it was created an additional entrance. The museum is strongly committed to inclusion and participation. All facets of its operation and programming show that multivoicedness has been thoroughly considered.

*"You can see this in everything, whether it is the wall texts or object labels, the partners the KMSKA works with, the choice of Artists in Residence or the composition of the team. During its beauty sleep, the museum gradually acquired a new DNA. We are proud of that because such a process does not happen by itself. It was a challenging and delicate balancing act. Bold choices were made. We had some important focal points in our approach: we want to invite visitors to look differently and see more. We do this by, among other things, showing artworks in an unconventional way, but also with the Radio Bart project, with Christophe Coppens' *The Ten* and by adding performances by our Artists in Residence." - Carmen Willems, general director*

The KMSKA's baseline is 'The Finest Feeling': it sets the tone. The focus is no longer just on gaining knowledge, but even more on experiencing. The KMSKA wants to give every visitor a feeling that resonates far beyond the museum walls.

"For me, it is important that a museum is committed to experience. In this respect, the KMSKA team has done an incredible job. I would therefore like to invite everyone to immerse themselves in the wonderful world of the KMSKA," Chairman Lemmens adds.

The reopening shows

Three shows will be inaugurated on the 24th September coinciding with the public reopening of the museum.

COSMORAMA - Ives Maes

24.9.2022 - 3.9.2023

The visual artist Ives Maes photographs the heritage of the world exhibitions arguing that the World's Fairs emerged together with the invention of photography. Thanks to the veracity of the medium, organisers were able to provide evidence of their temporary pavilions and he records the architectural remains of these short events and their building sites. These images show an ironic contrast between the utopian expectations of the future and today's urban reality.

MICHEL SEUPHOR

24.9.2022 - 8.1.2023

The largest Seuphor museum collection in the world. The KMSKA has been presented with a splendid donation: fifty-seven lacunary drawings with horizontal lines by the Antwerp artist Michel Seuphor. As a token of our gratitude, we are pleased to display them in the Prints Room. All the works in this presentation are part of the donation of Berckelaers Onverdeeldheid, 2021.

THE MAKING OF

24.9.22 - 3.9.2023

The KMSKA from concept to realisation:

KAAN Architecten drew up the master plan for this impressive makeover. This exhibition is the account of one of the most spectacular periods in the history of the museum. Photographer Karin Borghouts followed the renovation closely and her photos of 11 years of demolishing, building and restoring form the thread that runs through all the steps.

More information about the reopening of upcoming temporary shows on the [website](#).

Countdown to 24 September 2022

It is the final countdown. The most important milestones on the path to the reopening can be tracked on the [website](#) and in social media ([Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Youtube](#), [Tik Tok](#)).

Ticket sales are available [here](#).

The reopening of the Royal Museum of Fine Arts Antwerp (KMSKA) is considered one of the cultural highlights of this parliament and is supported by the city of Antwerp and EventFlanders: a partnership of the Flemish Government and the Department of Culture, Youth and Media, EventFlanders and VisitFlanders, and the City of Antwerp.

About KMSKA

The Royal Museum of Fine Arts Antwerp (KMSKA) is the largest art museum in Flanders. With absolute masterpieces from the Flemish Primitives and the Antwerp Baroque to an extensive collection of modern art with Rik Wouters, Henri de Braekeleer and René Magritte. Jewel in the crown is the world's largest collection of works by James Ensor. On the weekend of 24 and 25 September, the KMSKA will celebrate. We will be reopening the collection to the public and breaking out of our walls with a grand opening festival in and around the museum. Expect dazzling performances, contemporary and interdisciplinary events, surprising crossovers and fun workshops for children, youths and families.

About VisitFlanders

VISITFLANDERS is the Flemish government's official organisation for promoting tourism in Flanders. Sustainable development is a high priority based on the philosophy that tourism should benefit the visitors, residents, entrepreneurs as well as the soul of the destination. The Flemish Masters are an important part of the promotion of Visit Flanders: artists such as van Eyck, Bruegel and Rubens are known worldwide for

their craftsmanship, creativity and technical innovation. James Ensor is one of the later modernist artists to conclude this impressive hall of fame.

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