



B R U  
G G E

MUSEA  
BRUGGE

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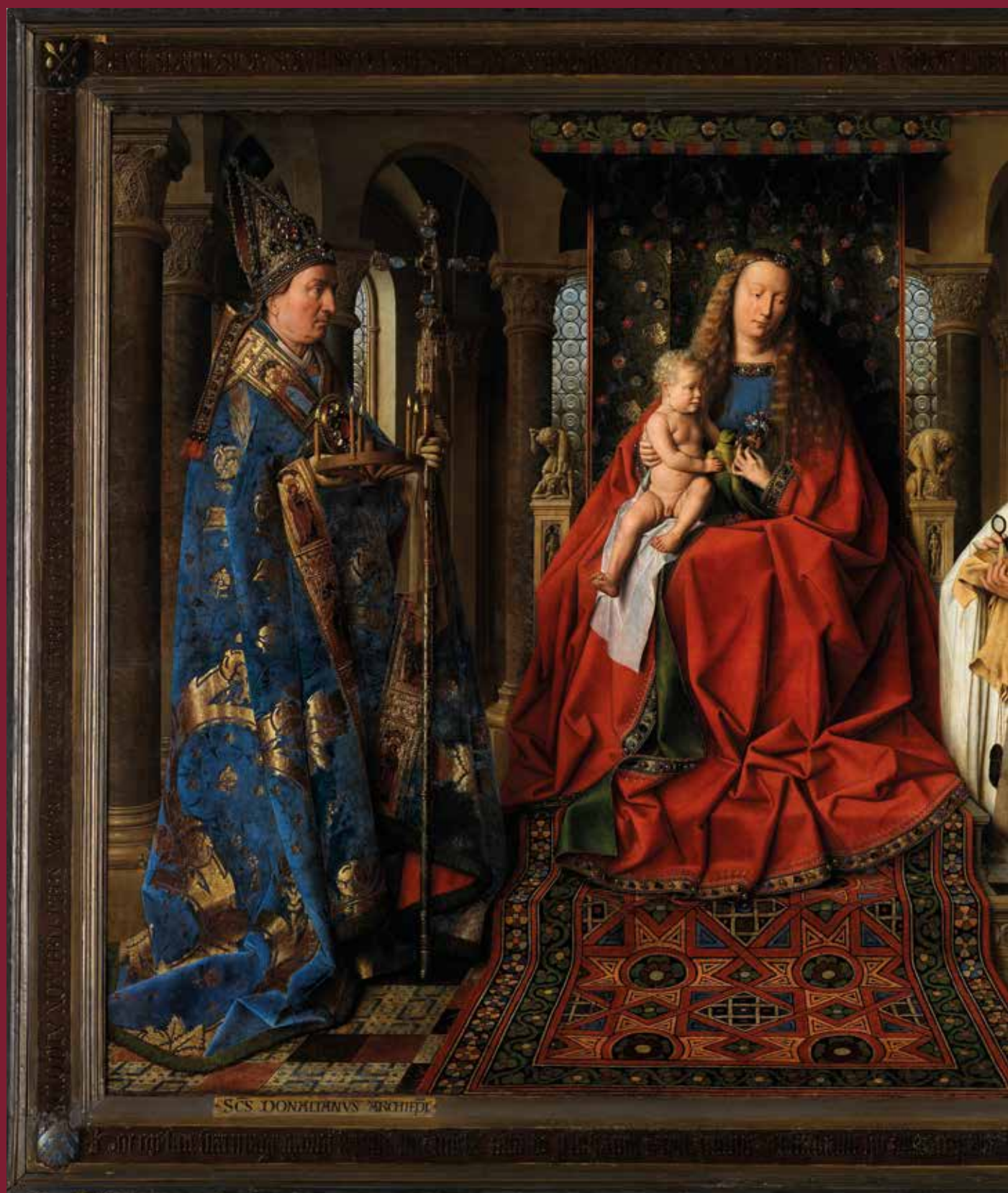
MUSEA BRUGGE

2019 — 2023

ALS ICH CAN

*IF I CAN*







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Building for the future

# FOREWORD

Bruges is a city of many layers that invites your visit and admiration. Musea Brugge – the municipal museums – is an international ambassador for our world heritage city, a treasure trove where Bruges' rich history is brought to life. The combination of historical monuments and objects from rich and varied collections appeals to everyone's imagination as underpin with the city's eventful past. Year after year Musea Brugge welcome hundreds of thousands of visitors from all over the world. The museums' impact on Bruges, its economy and its international reputation can hardly be overestimated. In addition, the municipal museums are of key importance to Bruges' ongoing transformation into a contemporary city of culture.

The museums not only occupy a place in the city's past but are relevant now and today: the people of Bruges are fond of their museums and love the stories that are told there about the collections. The regular and repeated visits of the local populace to the varied range of exhibitions and presentations of the collections in the museums – all of them based on in-house-research – speaks volumes.

The importance of Musea Brugge to our city can hardly be overstated. Supporting Musea Brugge is one of the core tasks of our city council. 'ALS ICH CAN' (IF I CAN) was the dictum that the famous Bruges artist Jan van Eyck painted on the frames of some of his masterpieces. For Musea Brugge it is a fine motto by which to develop its work: 'to the best of our ability'. This booklet is intended to introduce you to what this will mean over the next five years.

Enjoy the read!





# INTRODUCTION

**Till-Holger Borchert, Hubert De Witte and Jonathan Nowakowski**  
**Management of Musea Brugge**

This publication introduces Musea Brugge on the threshold of a new chapter in its long, solid and proud history. Departing from our notable tradition, you will learn about our future plans, both for our collections and our re-organisation. But first and foremost we will tell you why and for whom we are implementing changes, since both aspects are the fundament of our pride.

In the coming years we continue to build upon our strong tradition. But we also want to enhance our operations. From summer 2019 onwards the entirely renovated Gruuthuse Palace will demonstrate our continued efforts to invest in high-quality presentations of our collections which enter into a dialogue with the outstanding buildings they are housed in.

Furthermore, collection care will receive a significant boost: in a few years we will have a custom-fitted storage facility at our disposal, where we can securely stock our collections in optimal conditions and where other regional collections can also be safely deposited.

At the same time, a long-time wish of ours will be fulfilled: a brand-new building will be added to the existing infrastructure of Musea Brugge, an impressive exhibition centre where we will continue to programme internationally relevant exhibitions of the highest standards as we owe it to our reputation.

In order to achieve these and many other objectives, Musea Brugge will be working with a new organisational structure that will undoubtedly reinforce our vigour. To the benefit of the people of Bruges, and that of our many other visitors, our partners and our collections.

We are ready! Are you?





# THE BASIC PRINCIPLES

Mission



Values



## MISSION AND VALUES

2019-2023 constitutes a new period of Flemish Policy. On the eve of the elections, Musea Brugge seized the moment to examine the structure and culture of our organization together with all staff members and a wide range of our stakeholders.

There are four underlying values for the day-to-day business of our organisation. Based on these principles we have developed an overall plan for our future operations (see 4. Objectives & Plans).

We have developed a new mission as one organisation. This is what Musea Brugge stands for.

### OUR MISSION

**Musea Brugge invites diverse audiences to discover, to study, to admire and enjoy, to add meaning and to enrich the significance of its world-class collections. As a prominent player with an international reputation, Musea Brugge provides constant incentives to the evolution of Bruges as a contemporary city of culture.**

### OUR VALUES

#### 1. Musea Brugge welcomes you with open arms.

As a hospitable haven in a diverse world, we engage into a dialogue with a broad public. Our primary focus is on accessibility and on encouraging involvement.

#### 2. Musea Brugge presents quality.

Our valuable collections deserve outstanding work based on the expertise of our staff, both publicly as well as behind the scenes.

#### 3. Musea Brugge shows respect.

We employ our resources responsibly and in a sustainable manner so as to earn the appreciation of our visitors, our partners and our staff at all times.

#### 4. Musea Brugge remains an inspiration.

By building creatively on the wealth of the past while we direct our eyes towards the future, we realize a dynamic and innovative manner of working that surprises and stimulates.

## MUSEA BRUGGE IS ...

### MUSEA BRUGGE STANDS FOR OR REPRESENTS:

- a wide variety of collections with a total of more than 70,000 objects
- an ensemble of historical buildings, 13 of which are classified monuments
- nearly 200 staff members, including those working for subsidiary organizations
- approximately 1 million visitors per year from every corner of the world
- the treasure trove of the Flemish Primitives
- a varied programme of exhibitions, from in-depth presentations of the collection to blockbusters
- a reliable and open partner for national and international research institutions
- world class core collections, with 46 works listed as art works of national significance for Flanders
- its own restoration department, specialising in 15th and 16th-century painting
- Friends of Musea Brugge with more than 1600 members
- its own security staff and its own alarm facilities
- an active loan policy on an international scale, both incoming and outgoing
- a tailored programme for our audiences, with a focus on visitors with sensory limitations
- a thorough knowledge of technical art history and passive conservation
- intangible cultural heritage, with a functioning carillon and mill
- over 100 volunteers
- taking good care of its monuments, with the consequence that at all times there is always one undergoing restoration
- over 100 activities per year, for both general audiences and a specialist public
- providing an extensive training programme for young scholars and trainees (both national and international)
- soon to include a 15th location for international exhibitions

### A RELATIONSHIP OF TRUST WITH FLANDERS

Since 1996, the Flemish government has granted different quality labels as part of its support to museums, which are then classified on a regional or national level. These museums comply with a number of qualitative and quantitative criteria and receive an annual subsidy from the Flemish authorities.

Based on a unified approach, Musea Brugge continues to focus on international appeal and to work in accordance with international standards. In 2017 the Minister of Culture granted us a quality label as a single major museum operating on several sites, an important step in the process leading to the new policy plan for 2019-23.





# THE COLLECTIONS AND LOCATIONS

Concise history



Works of national  
significance



## 200 YEARS OF COLLECTING

Over 70,000 objects, not including archaeological artefacts. This is the total number of items in the exceptionally diverse collections for which Musea Brugge is responsible. The collections have assembled and grown in the course of two centuries. The vast majority of objects are closely connected to the rich history of the city.

Musea Brugge sets up its dynamic work around the entire collection which consists of a variety of sub-collections. We distinguish four main areas of collecting:

- A. The most important core collection consists of the **15th-century Flemish Primitives and Flemish painting of the 16th century**. These panels define the international reputation of Musea Brugge and form the nucleus of the permanent presentation in the Groeningemuseum. Other works, including internationally renowned altarpieces by Hans Memling and Gerard David, can still be experienced in the locations for which they were originally made: the Sint-Janshospitaal, the Onze-Lieve-Vrouwekerk, the Onze-Lieve-Vrouw-ter-Potterie and the Brugse Vrije.
- B. Collections of **European fine art**, more specifically:
  - Neoclassical paintings, drawings and sculptures, mainly by Bruges artists
  - Drawings and prints from the 15th to the 21st centuries in the Print Room
  - The collection of work by Frank Brangwyn, a British artist of the Arts & Crafts Movement
  - The Flemish expressionist paintings from the Tony Herbert collection
  - The world's largest collection of multiples by Marcel Broodthaers
- C. Objects with significant art historical relevance from the **applied arts collections**: tapestries, sculptures, lace, silver, furniture, musical instruments and pottery.
- D. Regional objects – made by craftsmen or industrially produced – from the **folklore collection**, exceeding local relevance.



## THE COLLECTIONS: A CONCISE HISTORY

The story of the Bruges collections starts as early as 1717, when the Arts Academy was founded: every student artist was obliged to donate a work. At the end of the 19th century, the entire collection of the Academy was given to the city. After the Napoleonic regime, this collection included a substantial group of works by the Flemish Primitives. The municipal collection has actively been expanded since the beginning of the 20th century. Purchases, donations, bequests, transferrals and long-term loans all led to the rich and varied collection of today.

Musea Brugge is also responsible for presenting and managing collections owned by third parties: Bruges social services (OCMW) and the Church of Our Lady.

Here are a few of the key dates in the story of the acquisitions:

- 1863: the John Steinmetz collection: prints, drawings, books
- 1892: the collection of the Academy of Fine Arts
- 1927-1937: donations by the artist Frank Brangwyn
- 1955: the collection of the Antiquarian Society of Bruges
- 1973: the collection of the Association of Folklorists of West Flanders
- 1984 & 2010: parts of the collection of the textile magnate Tony Herbert
- 2010: the collection of the Brugse Vrije (Province of West Flanders)
- 2014: the shared purchase and donation of 2000 prints and books from the Bruges collector Guy van Hoorebeke

Musea Brugge continues to expand its core collections. It is with this aim that we have had a specific purchasing fund at our disposal since 1984.





## THE COLLECTIONS: THEIR STRENGTHS

Musea Brugge's collections include popular paintings of international renown, iconic works that are etched into the memory of millions of people. Without doubt, this is a strength in itself.

The diversity of our collections is unique in Flemish context, and this enables us to target a wide variety of visitors. The collections are an inexhaustible resource that allows us time and again to explore new subjects and keep the relevance of the objects up to date.

And, finally, there is an element of "connection": quite a few of objects from the Middle-Ages and later periods are still in the location for which they were originally made. A great many pieces of our collection have intrinsic ties with the history of Bruges and enable us to contextualize them historically. The specifically historic ties are sometimes enhanced by the city's extensive collections of documents kept in the Municipal and State Archives, the Public Library and elsewhere.

### WORKS OF NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

Bruges is home to 72 works that are officially listed as having national significance for Flanders, 46 of which are kept in the collections of Musea Brugge. When an object is placed on the list of works with national significance for Flanders, it has to remain in Flanders permanently and cannot be sold abroad, because it is so important and full of significance in the collective memory. The largest group of listed works consists of Fine Arts from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but musical instruments, sculptures and tapestries have also been registered on this national list.



## 14 LOCATIONS WITH A SOUL

Musea Brugge offers 14 times a unified and unique experience, where the collections and presentations interact with the historical locations in which they are shown. 13 of them are classified monuments.

### HERE IS AN OVERVIEW:

**Five core locations** with regular exhibitions and additional facilities for the public.

1. **The Groeningemuseum** is the Museum of Fine Arts. It consists of the masterpieces of the Flemish Primitives and offers a panorama of Flemish Art from the 15th to the 21st century.
2. **Sint-Janshospitaal (St. John's Hospital)** is one of Europe's oldest hospital buildings. It houses a unique ensemble of altarpieces by Hans Memling and its collection are associated with eight centuries of physical and spiritual care.
3. **Gruuthusemuseum** offers 500 years of Bruges history within a historical palace. The entire museum has been renovated and will open in completely renewed form in 2019. Expect key works from various parts of our collections and from other historical collections in Bruges.
4. **Volkskundemuseum (Folklore Museum)** lets the visitors experience daily life and crafts in the 19th and first half of the 20th centuries. The displays are regularly renewed.
5. **Arentshuis** is a location right on the Bruges museum axis. It houses the collection of works by Frank Brangwyn and there are temporary exhibitions on the ground floor.

**Nine monumental sites**, where the collection, the locations and the experience merge.

6. **Onze-Lieve-Vrouwekerk (Church of Our Lady)** houses such extraordinary works such as Michelangelo's Madonna and Child, the funerary monuments of Charles the Bold and Mary of Burgundy, and also a number of remarkable altarpieces that were originally commissioned for the church.
7. **Onze-Lieve-Vrouw-ter-Potterie (Our Lady of the Pottery)** is a 13th-century hospital complex that houses an important medieval sculpture of the Virgin that was believed to have worked miracles. It offers an impressive baroque church interior as well as an exceptional collection of paintings and sculptures and objects related to its hospital functions.
8. **Stadhuis (Town Hall)** where you can visit the gothic hall and the historical rooms to experience the history of the city council of Bruges.
9. **Brugse Vrije (Liberty of Bruges)**: the former hall of the aldermen houses the magnificent chimneypiece of Emperor Charles as well as several old paintings.
10. **Belfort (Belfry)** is Bruges' most visited monument. With a carillon still in active use and a heavenly panorama of the city from the top.
11. **Sint-Janshuismolen (St. John's House Mill)** is an old mill on the city's ramparts that still works.
12. **Gentpoort (Ghent Gatehouse)** displays the development and defence of the city of Bruges.
13. **Gezellemuseum**: the birthplace of Guido Gezelle offers an introduction to the life and work of this important poet-priest.
14. **Archeologiemuseum (Archaeology Museum)** presents a small selection of archaeological objects and offers an insight into the work of archaeologists.



Musea Brugge combines an ensemble of historical buildings with a vast range of art and cultural historical collections that relate to the rich history of the city of Bruges.





# A SINGLE ORGANISATION

The municipal  
museums



Supporting  
organisations  
and Friends



## THE MUNICIPAL MUSEUMS

Musea Brugge has always been part of the municipal administration. In the past decades, however, three separate groups of museums were established in order to comply in the best possible way with the Flemish cultural policies and to receive government subsidies. The collections focusing on the Fine Arts were clustered around the Groeningemuseum, whereas the Hospitaalmuseum – comprising the old Hospitals of St John and Our Lady of the Pottery – developed a focus on the history of care. The “Bruggemuseum” was finally housed in several historic monuments and presented associated collections. The three groups operated under the responsibility of one director’s office who also was in charge of several centralized departments: collection and documentation (with conservation), operations and safety (with guards), communication and marketing as well as administration and merchandising. The partly compartmentalized structure of Musea Brugge worked well and increased the overall level of professionalization: the collections expanded, a fast sequence of important large scale exhibitions were organized and the results of the staff’s research was made available in numerous publications.

As from 2019, Musea Brugge will implement a new management system. The aim is to change into an organisation without compartmentalisation, one that makes optimal use of the capacities of all its staff, which operates efficiently, and is active on an international scale proportionate to the size of the organisation and the quality of the collection. The most important reason for this restructuring is an increased focus on the public in our work, as well as more effective operations behind the scenes.

### BRUGES: WORLD HERITAGE CITY

UNESCO recognised the historical city centre of Bruges as World Heritage in 2000. This nomination emphasised the intrinsic ties between the city and innovations in painting by the Flemish Primitives. The fundamental impact of artists from Jan van Eyck to Hans Memling and Gerard David on the European art of the Late Middle Ages contributed to the worldwide fame of the city at an early stage.

Now, centuries later, the connection between the collections of Musea Brugge and the city still remains alive. Both our permanent presentations and our temporary exhibitions encourage visitors to look around once they leave the museums. It is from this point of view that we regularly collaborate with the city’s departments of Monuments and Urban Renewal.

## ONE ORGANISATION

A new organisational structure: Musea Brugge is ready for it. From 2019 we shall gradually implement the new model. How does it work?

There is one **executive leadership team** that bears the final responsibility for all artistic and organisational aspects.

- General Director: sets out the long-term strategy for Musea Brugge, with an international focus solidly rooted in a relevant network.
- Managing Director: supervises the daily operations in compliance with procedures and legislation.
- Project Director: prepares the new exhibition hall and the storage facility, in terms of the technical aspects of the building as well as exploitation and business model.

In addition, the executive management controls two business-related departments directly:

The **Department of Visitor Services** is responsible for welcoming visitors to Musea Brugge and for guaranteeing their safety and the safety of the collections:

- Customer-orientation and hospitality.
- Guarding the objects on display.
- Cash transactions.
- Sales assistance.

The **Department of Administration** sees to it that internal operations are transparent and efficient:

- Central administration and coordination of administrative processes.
- Financial management.
- HR and internal communication.
- Reporting on the work to the various authorities and stakeholders.

Three umbrella departments take care of the museum operations:

The **Department of Collections** is responsible for all aspects concerning the maintenance of the collection:

- Research into and about works in the collection, with international communication and foundations in the museum and academic world.
- Acquisition policy, whereby the collection is enriched both by purchases and long-term loans (from private collections in Belgium and abroad) and by means of collection mobility among museums in Flanders.
- The transformation of the museum library and its documentation into a reference library and an open documentation centre (to be housed within the new exhibition complex).
- Conservation and collections management, including operating a conservation studio and the new storage facilities as well as up-to-date facilities in the new exhibition complex.
- Sharing expertise and best practices with other institutions and organizations in Bruges that preserve historical collections.

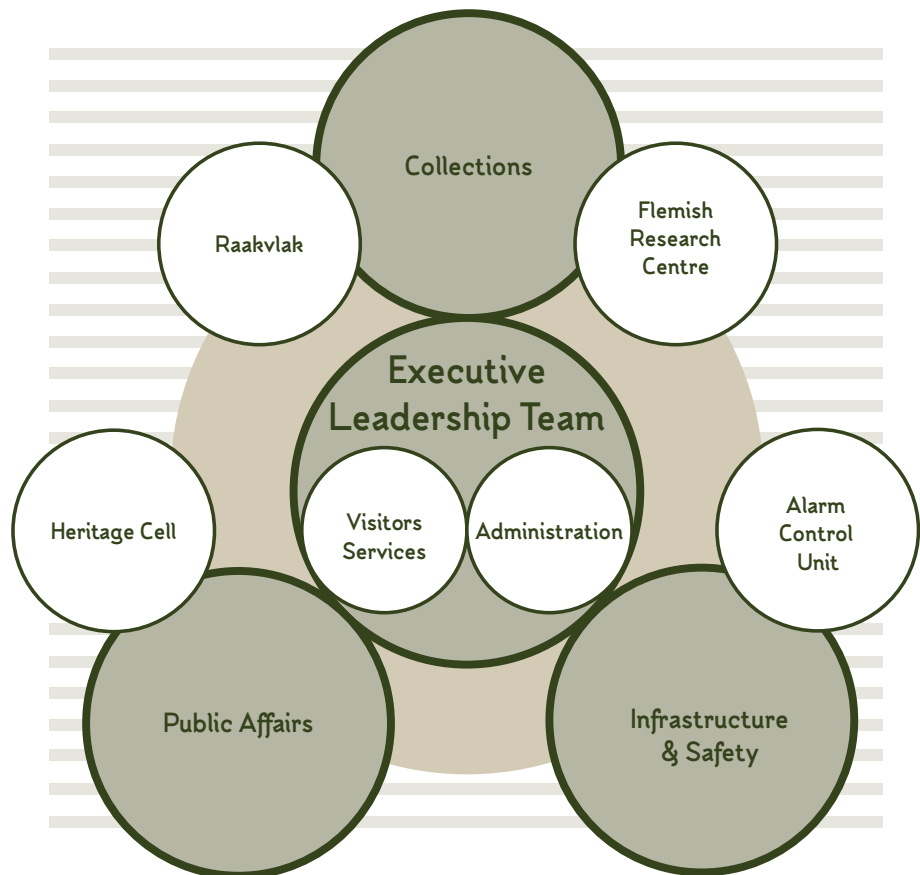
The **Department of Public Affairs** is responsible for everything concerning the presentation of the collections and its communication – physical and digital – with visitors and the press:

- The presentation of permanent presentations and exhibitions, including focused collection presentations from the initial planning stage to the actual execution.
- Transforming the results of research into meaningful information that adds value to the experience of our audiences.
- Participation and engagement of our audiences both by reaching out to visitors and entering into a dialogue with our (potential) public.
- Contacts with the press and public by means of a comprehensive strategy of marketing and communication.
- Raising awareness of the museum, its collections and activities, based, among other things, on research about our audiences.
- The museum shops and merchandising.

The **Department of Infrastructure and Safety** is responsible for:

- Facility management and the good stewardship of the 14 locations of Musea Brugge.
- The electronic and physical protection and security of the objects on display in the locations of Musea Brugge as well as follow-up of alarms.
- All aspects associated with logistics, both day-to-day operations and activities related to specific events.
- Operating an internal security service, including our own alarm control centre.

As one organisation, Musea Brugge operates with simultaneous horizontal processes. Activities such as exhibitions are organized by self-steering project groups, allowing Musea Brugge to implement trans-departmental cooperation: both temporary, related to specific projects and production, and structurally, for example concerning the digital strategy.





## SUPPORTING ORGANISATIONS AND KENNISCENTRUM VZW

Musea Brugge consists of more than its locations and collections. Within the framework of Musea Brugge there are four auxiliary organisations that provide services that go beyond the regular operations of the museum. The Kenniscentrum – explicitly focuses on the international network and reputation.

1. Since 2001, the **Bruges Heritage Cell** has offered support for local communities who are involved with less well-known forms of heritage; it has also helped organisations with collections where the care of heritage is not their core business. As a hub, the Bruges Heritage Cell encourages cooperation, with among other things a focus on digital accessibility (ErfgoedBrugge.be, XploreBruges.be). In 2020, Musea Brugge and the Bruges Heritage Cell will apply together for government subsidies for their role as a service provider on a regional level.
2. The Municipal Archaeological Department has been part of Musea Brugge ever since it was founded. Since then its work has expanded greatly and grew into an inter-municipal and subsidised immovable heritage institute called **Raakvlak**. In addition to Bruges, Raakvlak is active in seven local districts: Beernem, Damme, Jabbeke, Knokke-Heist, Oostkamp, Torhout and Zedelgem. Raakvlak also administers 'De Pakhuizen', a historical storage complex, and under the name 'Aardewerk' carries out archaeological research. Musea Brugge's stone collection is also stored at 'De Pakhuizen'. In turn, Musea Brugge is making the archaeological collection accessible to the public.
3. Since 2010, the **Flemish Research Centre for the Art in the Burgundian Netherlands** has been a hub for knowledge of art and culture of the

Low Countries during Burgundian Times. This provides the link between the academic world and the museum and facilitates cooperation with international partners. This centre initiates research, organises seminars, cooperates on publications, advises researchers, is actively involved in congresses and much more. The Centre cooperates with and on behalf of museums and other institutions in Belgium and abroad in terms of collections that are related to the Burgundian period.

4. The different locations of Musea Brugge are monitored by a central **alarm control unit**, together with numerous other places of interest in Bruges (churches, monuments etc.) and municipal buildings such as the Main Library or the 'Huis van de Bruggeling' (central administration departments). The alarm control unit has been systematically updated to the latest technology, as has the electronic security of several museums. When it comes to security procedures, the unit also provides services to the sites and partners it works with.
5. Lastly, Musea Brugge is supported by the **Kenniscentrum**, municipal non-profit organisation, which facilitates and simplifies processes across the organization related to and academic activities. The members of the Flemish Research Centre for the Art of the Burgundian Netherlands are employed by this organization.

### FRIENDS OF MUSEA BRUGGE

The cooperation and interaction with the Friends of Musea Brugge and their 1600-plus members are based on a long tradition that goes back to 1958. Its forerunner – the 'society of friends' – was already attached to the Bruges museums by the late 19th century.

The Friends help Musea Brugge in raising funds and enriching the collection by means of purchases and donations. They support a variety of activities for the benefit of the museums and organise lectures, guided tours and visits abroad. In addition, they publish a quarterly magazine. The Friends also form a pool of volunteers who, among other things, welcome visitors at the information desk in the Groeninge Museum or work with school groups as workshop coaches.

For its part, Musea Brugge offers its Friends a rich and varied programme of talks, exclusive guided tours and visits to exhibitions.

[vsmb.be](http://vsmb.be)



# OBJECTIVES AND PLANS

Vision

Seven major objectives





## OUR VISION

Musea Brugge occupies a special position in the national and international museum world: it combines an ensemble of historical monuments with a vast range of collections of art and items of cultural history significance specifically related to these sites and to the rich history of Bruges.

Musea Brugge continues to underpin this exceptional quality both in form and content, and to remain attractive to the broadest possible public. In this regard, a top-quality museum experience is part of a contemporary exploration of this World Heritage city.

### WITH THIS AIM IN MIND, WE ACT/OPERATE:

#### On the basis of an impressive **tradition**

Musea Brugge is an institution with a long and solid history. In the course of 200 years, the collection has been substantially expanded, as a result of which our municipal museums have developed an increasingly varied identity.

#### In accordance with the **prevailing rules**

Musea Brugge works within the rules and codes of Ethics defined by ICOM. Research and the public experience are two elements essential to our ambitious organisation.

#### With **combined forces**

On the basis of a high-performance organisation and through meaningful partnerships, we explore new directions so as to put our collections into differing perspectives and continue to challenge the inhabitants of Bruges and the neighbouring region, as well as Belgian and international visitors.

#### And with an **eye towards the future**

Musea Brugge's work is never complete. Thanks to a new organisational structure, new storage facilities and our own exhibition complex, we are reinforcing our basics and making our operations fit for the future.

# 1

## SEVEN MAJOR OBJECTIVES

What are the plans of Musea Brugge between now and 2023? The brief answer is 'renewal', with the purpose of keeping the strong Bruges' tradition up to date. We have grouped our plans into seven strategic objectives. They amount to almost forty operational aims and many other activities. Here is a brief summary. With each objective we also give an answer to one concrete question.

**Musea Brugge enables a broad public to enjoy an optimal museum experience.**

The 14 museum locations, where visitors are warmly welcomed, are the beating heart of the work we do for the public with its variety of backgrounds, ages and interests. Musea Brugge also lowers thresholds for very varied audiences by cooperating with other cultural organisations and events. Thanks to its wide range of public programmes, working formats and the tools employed, Musea Brugge takes initiatives to actively involve people in its work, in both the analogue and digital realms.

**Question: How does Musea Brugge encourage participatory involvement in its collections and operations?**

Musea Brugge has five participatory routes. Considering the nature of its collections, the Volkskundemuseum lends itself to actively involving heritage communities in its daily work. For the Bruges Triennial we focus on the audience co-ownership of art in public spaces. In the renewed Gruuthusemuseum, we quite literally reserve space for participation and use the attic as a place for co-creations. Musea Brugge also systematically engages adolescents by means of our own youth activities. And we see the planning and building of the new exhibition hall as the perfect opportunity to involve local residents.

## 2

**Musea Brugge excels in varied, high-quality, original exhibitions and presentations of its collections.**

To serve its audiences, Musea Brugge takes an international approach so as to insure the highest quality, from a varied programme of exhibitions to an enhanced experience of the permanent presentations. We display our collections in a variety of newly arranged displays and exhibit and interpret the diverse parts of our collection from ever-changing angles. Musea Brugge offers a mixture of exhibitions: from small-scale to international blockbusters, from wide-ranging to in-depth, large and small. We explore our core collections from inventive perspectives, in combination with international loans. And, with the aid of our vast network in Europe and the US, we are planning the programme for the future exhibition hall.

**Question: what is the relation between Musea Brugge and contemporary art?**

We want to enable our collections and sites to enter into intensive relations with contemporary art of a high international standard. A recent example of this – in which we think we struck exactly the right cord – was *Smoke. Ashes. Fable* by the South-African artist William Kentridge at the Sint-Janshospitaal (2017-18). It demonstrated our future ambitions regarding contemporary art – the visual arts and other disciplines – at our historical locations and in the near future also at the additional location called the 'Poortersloge'.

## 3

**Musea Brugge is an academic institution that stimulates and carries out research and makes its results accessible.**

Research is one of our core tasks. Together with the Flemish Research Centre for the Arts in the Burgundian Netherlands, Musea Brugge is developing an international knowledge hub related to our collections of 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>-century art.

We intend to continue studying and inventorising the entire collection, and also to carry out research, engage in a dialogue with academic institutions, its researchers and students. The museum library is a pivotal element in this strategy, as an accessible knowledge centre and national reference library regarding Burgundian culture and European art in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries.

**Question: What does new research into the painting of the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries actually involve?**

Musea Brugge has gained competence and knowledge unmatched by any other Flemish museum when it comes to technical research into the material quality of painting and other works of art (microscopy, infrared reflectography, pigment analysis etc.) and thereby carries out its own in-depth research into our painting collection. For other research projects we cooperate with various partners. A perfect example is the VERONA project (Van Eyck Research in Open Access). Together with KIK-IRPA (Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage), the VUB (Free University of Brussels) and the UA (Antwerp University), the Flemish Research Centre on Art in the Burgundian Netherlands makes globally accessible the most minute details in the work of the great master Jan van Eyck by means, among other things, of macrophotography and the technical description of the materials used.

[www.closetovaneyck.kikirpa.be](http://www.closetovaneyck.kikirpa.be)





## 4

### **Musea Brugge advocates sustainable and high-quality collection management.**

Musea Brugge will be taking major steps in collection management in the next few years. A new main storage facility with offices and work-spaces will be implemented. And the new exhibition complex also offers storage and conservation facilities of the highest standard. We want to do the very best for our delicate collections. Musea Brugge continues to invest in a focused collection policy and facilitate relevant acquisitions. We also continue to advance the security of our collections and implement a restoration and conservation plan to cater to our needs. And of course we are constantly engaged in ongoing digital registration, inventories and information-gathering concerning the collection.

#### **Question: What is the connection between a complete inventory and acquisitions?**

Museums regularly look out for relevant acquisitions: either because they want to have particular works or objects that they do not yet have, or because the purchases add to what is already in their collection and enhance the story they tell; acquisitions fill a gap, they expand on the oeuvre of an artist who is well represented in the collection, they complete a series, provide context etc. But proper consideration of the adequacy of a purchase is only possible if there is a detailed written collection plan. It is as mandatory to know what is already in the collection as to have an insight into the material condition of the holdings. This, among other things, is why it is so important to keep the inventory of the collection well and keep the records up to date. This is a demanding and time-consuming job that is carried out behind the scenes but is the foundation of a working museum. It is for this reason that Musea Brugge continues working intensively on registration and digital inventories.

## 5

### **Musea Brugge is a hub in local, regional, national and international networks.**

Musea Brugge invests in interactive dialogues with a wide range of partners. Members of our staff participate in a wide range of consultancy boards concerned with both political strategies and cultural projects. We cooperate in exhibitions, publications, research etc. We maintain contacts with partners among Flemish museums, cultural organisations and private collectors. We involve them in our work and we are a partner in international museum networks. In addition, we enthusiastically join forces on a local and regional scale to enhance the reputation of Bruges as a contemporary city of culture.

#### **Question: What is the relationship between Musea Brugge and Collectie Brugge?**

The work of Musea Brugge is strengthened by additional links with two municipal institutions with historical collections: the Municipal Archives and the Public Library. The Municipal Archives are a treasure trove of documents on art production, administration and daily life in Bruges's past: many works in our collection can be given meaning and a rich historical context by those archival documents. The Public Library, on the other hand, keeps a remarkable collection of manuscripts and incunables that testify to the craftsmanship in Bruges over the centuries. By working together on digital access to the (Collection of Bruges) we enrich each other's work: ErfgoedBrugge.be.

# 6

## **Musea Brugge is a contemporary organisation with an open structure and culture.**

The new organisational structure makes better use of the wealth of expertise that Musea Brugge derives from its staff. This is accomplished mainly by closer cooperation within our organisation, but also relies extensively on interaction with other municipal departments and the services shared within the municipal clusters of Culture and Tourism. A clear strategy is the starting point, while the business operations are enhanced in a transparent way with a focus on generating additional income. The Friends of Musea Brugge will continue to receive ample support from Musea Brugge in the future.

### **Question: What are the Collection and Infrastructure Funds?**

Since 1984, Musea Brugge has had a Museum Investment Fund, whereby acquisitions are financed by savings generated yearly by a percentage of admission fees. This unique mechanism has been transformed into Funds for Collection and Infrastructure in 2018 and now consists of 40% of each ticket sold. 15% is reserved for the Collection Fund and another 25% is reserved for the benefit of the Museums' infrastructure. By approving this development, the city council demonstrates its long-term commitment to the work of Musea Brugge.

# 7

## **Musea Brugge builds an exhibition complex with international appeal.**

The completion of what will be the 15<sup>th</sup> Musea Brugge site, with its double exhibition circuit, is an absolute priority. It will be outstanding on every score and will reinforce the overall operations of the museums, increase the sustainability of our operational model, and create a new meeting-place that will stimulate the surrounding urban district.

### **Question: Where will the new exhibition complex be located?**

You will read more about that in the next section.





# BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE

Gruuthusemuseum



The exhibition hall

Storage facility



## THREE MAJOR INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

### THE GRUUTHUSE MUSEUM AND ITS SURROUNDINGS: A HOLISTIC APPROACH

The simultaneous restoration of the Gruuthusemuseum and the adjacent Church of Our Lady provided the challenge to thoroughly rethink the museum- and heritage site. Both buildings are monuments and are among the city's most popular landmarks; they form the core of Bruges' Burgundian identity.

In summer of 2019, the Gruuthusemuseum will have reopened with a new museum presentation based on three pillars: the experience of the monumental palace, the relations between the spaces and the valuable collections shown, and, finally, a storyline that gives 500 years of Bruges history a tangible form. The Neo-Gothic building that closes off the Palace square

to the street side will contain additional facilities for both visitors and museum staff.

The restoration of the Church of Our Lady will also be completed by that time, with a new entrance and a modified circuit for visitors.

The visitors' experience of these magnificent buildings will be much enhanced by transforming the surrounding spaces into one single site. Fundamental to this approach is the construction of a contemporary reception and ticket building designed by noAarchitects, which will be a new architectural landmark.

This holistic approach is inspired by the spirit and authenticity of the ensemble. This part of the Bruges museum axis will transform into a new gathering place, a dynamic space for encounter, discovery and experience. Visit Flanders – the Flanders Tourist Office – has recognised the importance of this new Gruuthuse site and has rewarded it as one of Flanders' core attractions.





## A NEW CENTRALISED STORAGE FACILITY

Musea Brugge's sizeable reserves are currently housed in seven different buildings in the historical city centre, none of which were designed as museum storage. The storage spaces are divided up as much as possible by categories of material, since, for example, panel paintings require different environmental conditions from metalware. The objects stored – less than 20% of the 70,000 items in the collection are on permanent display – are kept under the best possible conditions.

In order to offer the highest international storage standards for the entire collection and to raise the quality of the storage conditions to the level of the exceptional quality of our collections, a central storage facility is being newly developed. In September 2017, Bruges City Council purchased a factory building of 6269 square metres and additional ground for this purpose. The majority of the collections of Musea Brugge will be housed there in the near future, as will the offices and workshops where the objects will be handled, prepared and crated for transport.

The new central storage facility will have facilities for the temporary safeguarding of 'heritage in need' and will also function as a regional heritage repository, thanks to the lease payment made by the Province of West Flanders. Raakvlak, including its archeological depot, will also move from De Pakhuizen to the new site outside the city centre.

## THE EXHIBITION HALL: A NEW MUSEUM AND ART SITE

Temporary exhibitions of international quality have been one of the chief accomplishments of Musea Brugge for decades. Despite our tradition and outstanding reputation in this field, we do not have the necessary

infrastructure to mount such prestigious exhibitions in a purpose-built environment. Until now, the permanent presentations had to be dismantled and stored in order to make room for temporary exhibitions, while the museums (or substantial parts thereof) had to close while the exhibition was being installed. In these instances, visitors have been deprived of certain masterpieces or parts of our collections and it is clear that such situations contrast greatly with our effort to create a welcoming experience for our audiences. Furthermore, the less fragile artworks are moved the better and their regular removal and return also means that our disaster and evacuation plans can only be kept up to date with an additional effort.

The need for an independent exhibition infrastructure is evident. The new complex will be built in the historic city centre between the Oude Gentweg and the Nieuwe Gentweg, on the site of a former school. The new building will have two parallel exhibition circuits and includes areas for sharing knowledge (lecture theatre), public activities (educational rooms) and reception (entrance hall). A storage space for the most delicate Musea Brugge collections will also be included, as will workspaces for conservation etc.

In addition, a renovation project is transforming the adjacent Chapel of Our Lady of Nazareth and the Magdalen Hospital – both classified monuments – to house the museum library.

The entire project comprises 6428 square metres, 580 of which are classified. At the beginning of 2018, the City Council of Bruges approved the selection guidelines. By the end of the year, a maximum of five design teams will be selected and will have the opportunity to suggest a design for the new museum site. This procedure will lead to the appointment of one team that will set to work in 2020 in accordance with the design and build principle.

**These are the core aims:**

- An optimal space for exhibitions and connected storage facilities that meet international standards.
- A new meeting-place for the inhabitants of Bruges and those visitors who look for added value in culture.
- To create space for our international ambitions in order to enhance the reputation of Musea Brugge, the city and our region.
- To accommodate first-class exhibitions with plenty of comfort and an all-round experience.

**WITH SUPPORT FROM MANY**

Musea Brugge can already count on financial support from private individuals and companies. Together with the Friends of Musea Brugge, we are trying to attract patrons and business sponsors. An international group, the American Friends of the Bruges Museums, has been set up under the umbrella of the King Baudouin Foundation United States, which is able to issue tax certificates for gifts made by our American supporters: [kbfus.org](http://kbfus.org).

In order to be able to continue our work today, tomorrow and in the near future, we need financial support. The growth of our collections, the restoration of masterpieces and the realisation of dreamt-of projects: Musea Brugge is looking for partners who believe in this as much as we do and are willing to help.



## PICTURE EDITOR



Cover: This detail illustrates the refined artistic skills of the Flemish Primitives in depicting costly textiles and symbolises the exceptional wealth of the collection of Musea Brugge.

Jan van Eyck, 'Virgin and Child with Canon Joris van der Paele', 1436, collection Musea Brugge – Groeningemuseum, 0000.GR00161.I

© Lukas - Art in Flanders vzw, photo Dominique Provost



'The Last Judgement' by Hieronymus Bosch was restored and reframed by staff-members of Musea Brugge.

Detail from: Jheronimus Bosch, 'Last Judgment', ca. 1500, collection Musea Brugge – Groeningemuseum, 0000.GR00208.I

© Lukas - Art in Flanders vzw, photo Dominique Provost



These 15th-century murals are among the surprising discoveries made during the restoration of the Onze-Lieve-Vrouwekerk.

Detail from mural paintings Onze-Lieve-Vrouwekerk, ca. 1400

© Musea Brugge, photo Sarah Bauwens



This remarkable devotional reliquary by Hans Memling has remained in the location for which it was originally made more than 500 years ago.

Hans Memling, 'Reliquary of Saint Ursula', 1489, collection Musea Brugge – Sint-Janshospitaal, 0000.SJ0176.I

© Musea Brugge



Many of the pieces in the collection not only display superior craftsmanship, but also tell us about their original context.

Detail of a master's shield from the Guild of St George in Bruges made by Jan Pieters in 1668-1669, collection Musea Brugge – Gruuthuse, X.O.0092

© Lukas - Art in Flanders vzw, photo Dominique Provost





This recent acquisition – purchased with means from our Museum Investment Fund – broadens the context of the collection neoclassical painters of Bruges.

Detail from: François Joseph Navez, 'Portrait of Théodore Joseph Jonet and his daughters', 1832, collection Musea Brugge – Groeningemuseum, 2015. GRO0001.I

© Lukas - Art in Flanders vzw, photo Dominique Provost



Musea Brugge has one of the richest collections of lace in Belgium.

Band of Binche bobbin lace with floral motifs, early 20th century, collection Musea Brugge – Gruuthuse, XIX.O.0807

© Cel fotografie Stad Brugge



This colorful portrait by Rik Wouters is just one of the works acquired from the ancient collection of the textile magnate Tony Herbert.

Rik Wouters, 'Portrait of madame Giroux', 1912-1913, collection Musea Brugge – Groeningemuseum, 2010.GRO0004.I

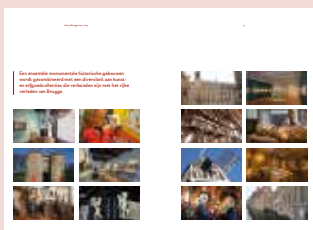
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This stringed instrument belongs to the family of harpsichord and is registered on the list of works of national significance for Flanders.

Spinet, Hans Ruckers, 1591, collection Musea Brugge – Gruuthuse, XXVIII.O.0068

© Lukas - Art in Flanders vzw, photo Dominique Provost



The 14 Musea Brugge sites.

From left to right:

Gezellemuseum, Archeologiemuseum, Gentpoort, Onze-Lieve-Vrouw-ter-Potterie, Volkskundemuseum, Brugse Vrije, Gruuthusemuseum, Arentshuis, Belfort, Onze-Lieve-Vrouwekerk, Sint-Janshuismolen, Groeningemuseum, Stadhuis, Sint-Janshospitaal



The diversity of the collection is a important asset in our work and our public outreach.

Albast-statue of Archangel Michael, 1660-1700, collection Musea Brugge – Gruuthuse, VI.O.0013

© Lukas - Art in Flanders vzw, photo Dominique Provostt



A group of interested visitors is given a guided tour of the archeological storage complex 'De Pakhuizen'.

© Musea Brugge



It is the combination of collection and interiors that create the specific atmosphere at the Volkskundemuseum.

The Classroom – collection Musea Brugge – Volkskunde.

© Musea Brugge



The pharmacy at Sint-Janshospitaal is evidence of its centuries of care for both the body and the soul.

Detail of the interior of the pharmacy at St John's Hospital.

© Musea Brugge



Results of infrared reflectography (IRR) in preparation for the exhibition 'Pieter Pourbus and the Forgotten Masters'.

Pieter Pourbus, 'Last Judgment', 1523-1524, collection Musea Brugge – Groeningemuseum, 0000.GR00110.I

© Musea Brugge / Vlaams onderzoekscentrum voor de kunst in de Bourgondische Nederlanden



Musea Brugge bought one of the installations shown at the Bruges Triennial 2015, a purchase made possible by the Museum Investment Fund.

Song Dong, 'Wu wei er wei' (Doing nothing doing), 2015, collection Musea Brugge

© Cel fotografie Stad Brugge



Plans for the future of the renewed Gruuthuse site.

© Musea Brugge / noAa



During an open-door weekend in February 2018, more than 5500 people visited the recently restored Gruuthusemuseum and learnt about the plans for the future of the new museum and the site.

© Cel fotografie Stad Brugge



The printroom of Musea Brugge holds prints and drawings of high quality from different periods and various artistic trends.

Hendrick Goltzius (after Cornelis Cornelisz. Van Haarlem), 'Phaëton', 1588, collection Musea Brugge – Groeningemuseum, 0000.GR04024.III

© Lukas - Art in Flanders vzw, photo Dominique Provostt





## COLOPHON

### Application for subsidy 2019-2023

On 15 December 2017, Musea Brugge submitted an application for operational subsidies for the 2019-2023 period at the Department of Culture, Youth and Media of the Flemish Government. To compile and write the application was a time-consuming process which involved intensive cooperation by a great many members of staff, as well as stakeholders from our various networks. We would like to thank everyone who dedicated themselves to the work of the various project groups or who contributed input on the basis of their own particular expertise.

Coordinator of the strategic-planning process & coordinating editor: Lothar Casteleyn

Editorial staff: Till-Holger Borchert, Hubert De Witte, Aleid Hemeryck, Anne van Oosterwijk and Ruud Priem

Editors: Inge Geysen and Guenevere Souffreau

### Strategic plan 2019-2023

Concept, coordination and final editing: Till-Holger Borchert, Aleid Hemeryck and Lothar Casteleyn

Editor: Patrick De Rynck

Picture editor: Aleid Hemeryck

For the headings and the frametexts of our Strategic Plan we are proud to introduce a new digital letterfont: the 'Colard Mansion'.

It is inspired by the historical fonts of Colard Mansion, who was a printer of luxury books in Burgundian Bruges.

The digital font was designed by Jo de Baerdemaker, on the occasion of the exhibition 'Haute Lecture by Colard Mansion. Innovating text and image in medieval Bruges' in the Groeningemuseum in 2018.

Lay-out: Communicatie & Citymarketing,  
Cel creatie, Stad Brugge

Responsible publisher:

Colin Beheydt, general manager of the city and OCMW Bruges

Bruges, June 2018

Second revised version July 2019

Musea Brugge is an organization that runs 14 municipal museums. From 2019 onwards Musea Brugge operates as one museum that displays its vast collection in several locations.

What does Musea Brugge stand for?  
What about its collections, its locations and its partners?  
Which values does Musea Brugge represent?  
What are its major objectives and plans for the next five years?  
You can read about all these matters in our strategic plan.

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[www.museabrugge.be](http://www.museabrugge.be)

