

# WROCLAW CONTEMPORARY MUSEUM

## Policy Proposal

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## **I. Fundamental Principles**

### **1. The Name: Wrocław Contemporary Museum**

The proposed name is a departure from the traditional term "*art museum*", aimed at highlighting the contemporary nature of the intended purposes of the museum. It harks back to the original concept of a museum as a Home of the Muses (including two contemporary muses – cinema and communication – in addition to the nine muses of classical mythology). At the same time, the name sidesteps the kind of policy disputes that can arise over the terms "*contemporary art*" or "*modern art*".

The parallel with the name Contemporary Theater – already familiar to the public in Wrocław and elsewhere – will serve to further its recognizability.

The name incorporates positive allusions to the city's contemporary aspirations, and above all it correlates well with the museum's mission of creating an accessible contemporary cultural ecosystem instead of a traditional institution for collecting and displaying art.

### **2. The Museum's Mission**

The mission of the Contemporary Museum will be to develop and strengthen the community's relationship to contemporary art, improving public understanding of its value through exhibitions and educational programs; expanding and developing its collection; and creating a hospitable environment for participating in art.

Attractive exhibitions and educational and interpretive programs using contemporary means of visual communication will be aimed at a wide range of age groups and social sectors, including artists and the cultural elite, children and socially marginalized groups.

The exhibition space will be paralleled by the Virtual Museum communications space, facilitating new forms of contact and social integration.

The mission of the Contemporary Museum can be understood, in the broadest sense, as forging links between contemporary art and the public, and creating conditions for better understanding of art. Knowledge gained through direct contact with art, acquired through "hands-on" participation and access to insightful commentary, is

conducive to a viewer's self-awareness and self-definition in public space, in private space and in present time.

The Wrocław Contemporary Museum is designed to enhance the image of the city of Wrocław. In culture as in economy, success depends on the effective management of local resources, and the fundamental policies of the museum reflect a focus on the city's strong traditions in the area of artistic experimentation, economic activity and community life, all of which contribute to the synergistic promotion of Wrocław as an example of successful social, cultural and economic modernization.

## **2.1 The Program Concepts**

### **2.1.1 Wrocław's Artistic Traditions**

– **conceptual art:** including Jerzy Rosołowicz, Jerzy Ludwiński (the Museum of Current Art and the Mona Lisa Gallery), Jan Chwałczyk, Wanda Gołkowska, the Wrocław 70 Symposium, Gallery X, Stanisław Dróżdż, Anna and Roman Kuter, Zdzisław Jurkiewicz, the "structuralists" Alfons Mazurkiewicz and Józef Hałas; Waclaw Szpakowski's activity at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – the forerunner of many of these trends; and numerous other representatives of conceptualism and contextualism.

– **photo-medialism:** including the Permafo Gallery (Zbigniew Dłubak, Natalia LL, Andrzej Lachowicz), the Gallery of Current Art (1972-74), the Foto-Medium-Art Gallery, the WRO Foundation's Media Art Center.

– **actionsim:** including Wrocław Sensibilism, Luxus, the Orange Alternative and the 1980s independent culture, samizdat and political art.

– **performance and theater:** Jerzy Grotowski, the Kalambur Student Theater and its International Open Theater Festivals (in the 1960s through 1980s), Helmut Kajzar

– **Lower Silesian applied arts**

– **Wrocław museum tradition:** contemporary art in the collections of the National Museum in Wrocław.

### **2.1.2 Main Partners:**

– the National Museum in Wrocław, the Lower Silesian Society for the Encouragement of the Fine Arts, the Museum of Architecture

### **2.1.3 Prospective Partners for Specific Programs**

– cultural institutions and nongovernmental organizations involved in events for media art, performance, contemporary music and audiovisual art, poetry, industrial art, design, experimental theater, intermedial activities, etc.

## **2.2 The Museum's Scope**

### **2.2.1 The Subject**

Visual arts and related cultural areas.

Presentation of current artistic phenomena and cultural transitions: customs, fashions, communications media, political climates and moral attitudes that help define contemporary awareness.

### **2.2.2 The Timespan**

#### **A) Progressive artistic trends from the mid-1960s onwards**

In Poland the mid-1960s marked the beginning of certain processes whose consequences are still evident in all forms of current art. Conceptualism started to appear in photography, film and theater. New art ceased to fit into the traditional framework of "beautiful art objects". On the one hand works of art became theoretical constructs in which cognitive aspects took a leading role (as in the work of Jerzy Rosołowicz and Włodzimierz Borowski); on the other, many artists commenced a direct dialog with the products of modern civilization, in the form of quotes, allusions and/or the use of new materials and technology (Władysław Hasior, Alina Szapocznikow). The term "art-in-general" was applied to applied art (Magdalena Abakanowicz) and to industrial design (Andrzej Pawłowski). Interdisciplinary art undermined the traditional divisions between painting, sculpture and drawing, and dethroned painting as the main medium of contemporary art. Objects that are neither sculptures nor paintings (such as the works of

Zbigniew Gostomski) began to appear, as well as spatial installations known at the time as *environments* (Andrzej Matuszewski and Edward Krasiński). From these beginnings many other artists moved toward conceptualism and various media forms. Wrocław artistic circles were among the leaders in these processes, as evidenced by one of the most spectacular events of the period: the Wrocław 70 conceptual art symposium.

Contemporary museology is increasingly aware of the urgent need for new curatorial strategies for presenting the avant-garde artistic developments outlined above – strategies that modern technology has made possible. The Wrocław Contemporary Museum will incorporate these possibilities. Unlike the curating of paintings, sculptures or works on paper, what is essential is not traditional "museum expertise", but rather a new approach to the arrangement of the narrative exhibition space – an approach that takes into account the wider cultural context of a work and the new type of relationship between the museum-goer and the museum, the museum and its surroundings, the museum and the artist. The new Museum will present the works of recent decades in a manner unprecedented in Poland in terms of both research and style of exhibition, creating an experience of art that will be attractive to both the professional and the general public. One of the essential elements of the presentation will be the revitalization of the important works of the Polish avant-garde by redefining their meaning in the context of the current art scene.

The proposed "time limits for contemporariness" are intended only as a starting point for the museum's activities and "inaugural exhibition", and may be revised during further policy discussions and/or in the course of the curatorial team's work on specific issues and exhibitions.

## **B) Current art and works created for the Museum**

"Galleries of contemporary art in museums can have only delayed reactions to artistic phenomena; they cannot influence their development. A Museum of Current Art is different: It must provoke artistic facts – accelerate them – be a

place where new art is born – serve as its seismograph as well as its catalyst."  
- from Jerzy Ludwiński's *The Museum of Current Art in Wrocław (general concept)*, Wrocław 1966

Jerzy Ludwiński's assertion, formulated 40 years ago in Wrocław, adequately expresses the intentions of the Wrocław Contemporary Museum to be an active participant in artistic processes.

### **2.2.3 The Region**

- the work of progressive art circles in Wrocław
- Polish art
- Central European and Balkan art, particularly from the V4 nations
- the global art scene

## **2.3 The Collection**

### **2.3.1 The Inaugural Exhibition**

There are no museums in Poland focussing on the most recent art presented in the context of the last half-century.

A good representative collection of Polish art from the 1960s cannot be created "from scratch"; most outstanding works by Polish artists of that period have already been acquired by public collections – a problem that progressively decreases when considering works from the 1970s, '80s and '90s. However, the abundant collection held by the National Museum in Wrocław means that the Contemporary Museum can serve as a repository of selected works. Deposits from the National Museum will allow the Wrocław Contemporary Museum to create a highly worthwhile historical presentation showing the developmental continuity of contemporary art, as well as creating an important counterpoint to the Contemporary Museum's own collection.

For the opening of the Wrocław Contemporary Museum, we are postulating an "inaugural exhibition" consisting of works from the following sources:

- selected works on deposit from the contemporary art collection of National

Museum in Wrocław (see annex nr 1)

- works from the collection of the Lower Silesian Society for the Encouragement of the Fine Arts
- works from the Wrocław Contemporary Museum's own collection (acquisitions to be purchased in the period between the establishment of the Museum and its opening)
  - works on deposit from other sources

### **2.3.2 Expanding and Financing the Collection**

After its opening, the Wrocław Contemporary Museum's collection will be expanded through:

- purchases
- works produced by/for the Museum in the course of its activities
- the Wrocław Art Award Collection: we are postulating a prestigious annual monetary award and the purchase of the prizewinning works
- Ministry of Culture programs (primarily through the Lower Silesian Society for the Encouragement of the Fine Arts)
- deposits from corporate collections, on the basis of strategic cooperation
- gifts and deposits from public and private collections in Poland and abroad

### **2.3.3 The Wrocław Contemporary Museum Collection will encompass the following genres and formats:**

- objects and installations (including multi-screen and audiovisual works)
- motion-picture art: all projected/screen forms, including experimental film and video
- new media: interactive works, communications art, mixed media
- newly-emerging forms of creativity
- other forms of creativity connected with everyday life
- painting
- sculpture
- site-specific works

- drawings, graphics and photographs
- artistic documentation
- archival materials on art history and art criticism

### **3. The Wrocław Contemporary Museum's Activities and Structure**

#### **3.1 Primary Functions**

##### **3.1.1 Collection and Exhibition**

- expansion of the collection
- presentation of permanent and temporary exhibitions
- commissioning and producing works of art
- organization of individual and group art projects (local, national and international)
- national and international exchanges of contemporary art exhibits and artists' residencies
- cooperative artistic, curatorial and scholarly undertakings on the local, national and international level

The Museum needs to have adequate logistic capabilities to accept large and prestigious international exhibits and to co-organize travelling exhibits.

##### **3.1.2 Research Activity**

- researching and documenting the collection
- observation and documentation of the art scene
- observation and documentation of activity in culture and art criticism
- organization of conferences and research projects
- publishing

##### **3.1.3 Conservation**

- ongoing conservation
- development of storage systems in accordance with conservation standards

- development and implementation of new conservation programs for works of contemporary art
- preparing for the expansion and aging of the collection
- international collaboration on conservation standards for contemporary art

#### **3.1.4 Information and Education**

The Wrocław Contemporary Museum will promote a positive image of contemporary art through:

- disseminating knowledge about art
- offering a varied program for public creativity
- the Virtual Museum program
- providing a space for urban art
- organizing amateur art workshops, for various age groups, in connection with the Museum's primary aims and the promotion of its exhibits
- public lectures, concerts, film screenings, publishers' promotions, etc, connected with the Museum's primary aims and the promotion of its exhibits
- establishment of a "Museum School" based on cooperative efforts with the local academic community, addressing topics such as current art, practical curatorial issues and the organization of cultural events

#### **3.2 Secondary Functions: The Museum's Supporting Activities**

- marketing and fundraising
- cultural services
- services for cultural tourism and business tourism
- a restaurant and café
- a multi-media club presenting a range of audiovisual artistic activities
- a book shop
- a Museum shop
- a members' club
- community-oriented recreational and leisure activities

### 3.3 Operational Policy Principles

**3.3.1** The Museum should be divided into several areas with separate entrances to each, permitting activity around the clock and seven days a week.

The exhibition program will include:

- the permanent exhibition
- 5 temporary display modules that can be combined to house larger exhibits
- the entryway display, accessible without entry fee

**3.3.2** Yearly Attendance

- Expected number of visitors attending exhibitions: 60,000
- Expected number of visitors to the Museum building to participate in other forms of activity: 40,000
- Expected number of visitors to the Virtual Museum: 250,000

### 3.4 Organizational Structure

The organizational structure outlined below presents the Museum's target departments, services and functions, to be developed gradually, starting with a small team to be formed following the architectural design competition (see annex nr 3).

**3.4.1 The Board of Trustees** will be the oversight body, assessing and supporting the Museum (to consist of representatives of the organizer or organizers, partner institutions, strategic financial partners, honorary partners and government)

#### **3.4.2 Management**

The Museum will be headed by a Director in Chief, assisted by:

- the Head Curator
- the Deputy Director for Research and Education

- the Managing Director
- the Head Accountant

### **3.4.3 Departments**

The Museum will include the following departments, each managed by a curator:

- The Contemporary Art Research Center
- The Department of Current Art and Temporary Exhibitions
- The Wrocław Contemporary Museum Collection and Permanent Exhibition
- The Archive of Artistic and Scholarly Documentation
- The Education Center
- The Library and Media Library
- The Virtual Museum (the Museum website)
- The Department of Technical Development
- Main Museum Storage

### **3.4.4 Other Organizational Units and Positions**

– including: Building Superintendent and service team; the Exhibition Organization Department; the Technical Crew; the Webmaster; the Visual Documentation Department; the Inventory Department; the Transportation Department; Security; the Publications Department; the Marketing Department; the Fundraising Department; the Building Management Department; the Personnel Department; the Purchasing Manager

## **3.5 Network of Partner Institutions**

One of the Museum's important tasks will be forging a network of national and international strategic partners including:

- cultural and educational institutions
- independent art centers and nongovernmental organizations
- museums and partner institutions in Europe and throughout the world
- museums and cultural institutions in Wrocław's partner cities
- cultural tourism and business tourism agencies

## **4. The Wrocław Contemporary Museum in the Context of Other Museums**

### **4.1 Existing Museums in Poland**

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century the number of museums and collections in Poland has been increasing every year. Coming on the heels of a lengthy shortage of investment in post-war Poland, this is bringing about a fundamental in the function of contemporary art and its perception by the public. Museum buildings dating from the post-war period are still rare in Poland; most are much older structures or adaptations. One exception is the Manggha Center for Japanese Art and Technology, designed by architect Arata Isozaki and built in 1994 on the initiative of Andrzej Wajda.

It can be expected that by 2015 eight to ten new contemporary art museums and centers will be opened in Poland, mostly in newly-built structures. The first will be the Contemporary Art Center scheduled to open in June 2008 in Toruń, designed by architect Andrzej Lach and featuring an exhibition area of about 4500 m<sup>2</sup>.

The Polish public's increasing interest in contemporary art and the dynamic growth in spaces presenting it are very positive developments that weigh strongly in favor of building a Contemporary Museum in Wrocław. At the same time these trends underscore the importance of offering a unique and attractive Museum program and an original and distinctive Museum image.

### **4.2 Advantages of Wrocław as the Museum Site**

- Wrocław's image as an example of successful economic and cultural modernization
- Wrocław's economic potential
- a geographic location that facilitates international relations
- Wrocław's position among cities hosting significant cultural events
- national and international transportation links (to be developed even more in the future)

#### **4.3 Necessary Conditions for the Success of the Wrocław Contemporary Museum**

- rapid responsiveness to new artistic activity
- forging bonds with the Wrocław community and museum-going public
- effective communication with the international art scene
- technical flexibility enabling ongoing development
- programs of activity for varied age groups and social groups, combining creativity with education
- engaging the active participation of children, adolescents and young adults
- combining research with educational programs and community activities
- information management and extensive use of the media
- establishing and maintaining a hospitable image for the Museum

## **II. Principles Related to the Museum Building**

### **1. Urbanistic Advantages of the Chosen Site**

The area surrounding the Wrocław Contemporary Museum is occupied by existing cultural institutions: the National Museum, the Raławice Panorama, the Museum of Architecture and the Academy of Fine Arts. These buildings are situated on the edges of the 5.7-hectare Juliusz Słowacki Park, which is intersected by low-traffic footpaths connecting the aforementioned institutions with recreational sites and tourist attractions along the Odra River, Dunikowski Boulevard and the Old Town Promenade along the moat, with views of Cathedral Island (Ostrów Tumski) and Piaskowa Island.

Also within walking distance are the humanist departments of Wrocław University, Cathedral Island, the old and new University library buildings and the Ossolineum library building. A bit further away are the Town Square and Old Town, the Technical University and a large complex of university dormitories. Another plus is the proximity to important bureaucratic institutions such as the Municipal and County Administration buildings. The architecturally attractive and highly frequented Market Hall is also nearby, as are the popular Dominican Gallery shopping mall, the main Post Office with its Postal Museum, the Sheraton Hotel and the Gothic Church of St. Aldabert.

Still in the planning stages are a Hilton Hotel, the new town center (Plac Społeczny) and a multi-level parking facility to be built on Bernardyńska Street, immediately adjacent to the Wrocław Contemporary Museum and the Museum of Architecture. The parking facility will feature a café and small square with views of the façade of the old church now housing the Museum of Architecture.

Situating the Wrocław Contemporary Museum in this architectural landscape will enhance its appeal as well as its significance as a cultural, artistic and educational institution. A positive synergy will be created as the Contemporary Museum strengthens

the bonds among the existing museums and serves as a characteristic focal point for the whole area. The following features are essential for achieving this effect:

- the Wrocław Contemporary Museum building must be architecturally exceptional, attractive and distinctive; compatible with its surroundings without being monotonous; and simultaneously welcoming and impressive;
- appropriate sight lines and paths for pedestrians and bicycle traffic;
- highlighting the landscaping through the revitalization and outfitting of the existing park;
- the establishment of a sculpture park that will further emphasize the public nature of the museum complex and its value as a recreational and cultural space.

Other anticipated changes in this area include investments by the National Museum, which is planning an attic-level exhibition space for contemporary art within five years, and by the Museum of Architecture, which is planning a new exhibition annex.

Since the chosen location of the Wrocław Contemporary Museum will reinforce existing functions of this area, development projects need to consider its significance to pedestrian and bicycle traffic, including hospitable foot paths to/from public transport stops at Peace Bridge, Plac Społeczny and St. Katherine Street; an extension of the Old Town Promenade; and designated bicycle paths. All of this, along with the Contemporary Museum's accessible location, will make the Museum a magnet for pedestrian and bicycle traffic. In addition, the significance of the whole park will be enhanced by its status as a focal area for the city's pedestrian and bicycle routes.

This setting for the Wrocław Contemporary Museum calls for an impressive entry area from the park side, necessitating the abandonment of plans for a southward extension of Modrzewski Street. In order to adequately display the building from the north, the preservation of the existing open square next to Modrzewski Street is anticipated. This will be significant for creating sight lines from the river side.

## 2. 2. Proposals for the Architectural Design Competition

**The concept of the Museum building and its interior logic should be left to architects.** We propose the selection of the Museum building design through an international competition; in case of an open competition the prize pool should be at least 100,000 euros. The competition regulations should not impose a preconceived idea of the building and should not include excessive limitations or overly detailed directives concerning space management; it should suffice to present the general principle that the Museum building must be adequate for the Museum's aims and activities, and be functional, comfortable and distinctive.

The preliminary plans can call for an area totalling between 15,000 and 20,000 square meters, including underground levels that may extend beyond the plot limits on the eastern side. The division into levels can be left open, due to the different height requirements of spaces for different purposes. The competition guidelines can include the option of a future passageway to connect the Museum to the nave of the church housing the Museum of Architecture.

Some of the important specifics to include:

- an exhibition space of about 4500 m<sup>2</sup>
- a high multi-functional entry area
- a multimedia club of about 600 m<sup>2</sup>
- high-ceilinged storage space of about 3000 m<sup>2</sup>
- about 7500 m<sup>2</sup> for other activities and administration