

Muses, Reimagined

by ANDREW MYERS

Seven major museums in the United States and Europe are experiencing a rebirth this year. Their new designs, additional wings, expanded collections and innovative features are guaranteed to inspire some creative thinking of your own.

For anyone (and that's everyone) who occasionally needs a kick-start in solving the seemingly insoluble, catalyzing creativity or seeking solace from the quotidian, get thee to the house of the Muses. From the Greek word "mouseion" to the Latin "museum" in antiquity, such dwellings denoted an abode for the goddesses, who not only were the personification of knowledge, but also the inspiration for all the arts and sciences.

Since the rise of the blockbuster exhibition (be that defined as the first Picasso retrospective in 1932 in Zurich or the current template derived from the 1976 "The Treasures of Tutankhamun" exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City) to the birth of the starchitect-making-a-

major-statement in 1997 in Bilbao, Spain, museums have moved far beyond their original mandate. By adding varying proportions of education and entertainment to the conservation of collections of scientific, artistic, cultural or historical importance, what were once seen as restrictive bastions of dusty culture have become local focal points and global destinations—generators of ideas, promoters of humanism and often the sites of fascinating fun. But as the home of the Muses, perhaps their most magical mandate remains unchanged: to inspire.

From Los Angeles, California, to Munich, Germany, 2013 saw major museum additions, renovations and re-conceptions. All the better to accommodate musers and the inspiration they seek.

Rijksmuseum and Van Gogh Museum Amsterdam, The Netherlands

After a decade of renovation (and delays) and a cost of close to \$500 million, Amsterdam's famed Rijksmuseum reopened this past April in a ceremony presided over by Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands (who a few weeks later turned the throne over to her son, Prince Willem-Alexander).

One of the world's most celebrated museums, the 19th-century red-brick leviathan, originally designed by Dutch architect Pierre Cuypers, was re-imagined by the Spanish architecture firm Cruz y Ortiz. Among the most eye-catching additions is the new and voluminous entrance carved out of two previously open-air courtyards.

Home to a collection spanning eight centuries of Dutch art and history, and comprised of more than

one million objects of which approximately 8,000 are displayed at any given time in the museum's 80 galleries, the Rijksmuseum is best known for its trove of Dutch 17th-century Old Master paintings by artists such as Johannes Vermeer (four of his 35 extant works are here), Frans Hals, Jan Jansz van de Velde and Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn, whose king-sized "Nightwatch"—the collection's crown jewel—occupies pride of place in its very own room. rijksmuseum.nl/en

Additionally, just across Museumplein, or Museum Square, the Van Gogh Museum reopened in May following a one-year renovation. vangoghmuseum.nl ▶



Photo: Getty Images/Luis Davella



Lenbachhaus
Munich, Germany

The picture gallery for Munich-born-and-based artists and art movements, Lenbachhaus was begun in 1887 as a Florentine-style villa and studio for the painter Franz von Lenbach, acquired by the city in 1924 and expanded twice in the 20th century, in 1927 and 1969 respectively. May marked the completion of its first 21st-century expansion, with a contemporary wing designed by Norman Foster (the formidable British architect of the German parliament and London's famed "Gherkin" office building), augmenting the museum's three historical wings.

Clad in copper aluminum alloy tubes and with the color a contemporary complement to the villa's original ochre hue, the addition took three years to construct and was conceived as a jewelry box containing the museum's renowned collection of paintings by Der Blaue Reiter (The Blue Rider), a group of Expressionist artists established in 1911 in Munich that included painters Wassily Kandinsky, Franz Marc and Paul Klee. lenbachhaus.de

Installation view at Lenbachhaus, Munich, Germany, 2013.

Cleveland Museum of Art
Cleveland, Ohio

Among the most renowned cultural institutions in the United States—with a collection of almost 45,000 objects spanning 6,000 years—the Cleveland Museum of Art concludes a seven-year, \$350 million renovation and expansion project this December.

Included in the campaign were the renovations of the original 1916 Beaux-Arts building designed by Hubbell and Benes and the distinctive striped granite supplement by Marcel Breuer from 1971, as well as the addition of three new wings designed by architect Rafael Viñoly—one contiguous with a 39,000-square-foot atrium crowned with a soaring glass canopy marking the museum's center.

The museum is strong across all major categories and especially so in ancient Egyptian and Asian art. But its holdings in Western art—from the early Renaissance works of Botticelli to Warhol—are nothing to shake a soup can at either. clevelandart.org

Miami Art Museum
Miami, Florida

Designed by starchitects Herzog & de Meuron, erected in a hurricane-fast two years and at a cost of \$220 million, the Miami Art Museum reopens in December, in new digs and redubbed the Pérez Art Museum Miami (PAMM).

Home to a collection of art from the 1930s to the present with a focus on the Atlantic Rim (the Americas, Western Europe and Africa), PAMM will anchor the 29-acre Museum Park overlooking Biscayne Bay, which includes public gardens and sculpture installations, and is part of a wider initiative to transform a new urban district.

Artists in the collection include Carlos Alfonzo, José Bedia, Maria Fernanda Cardoso, Joseph Cornell, Rineke Dijkstra, Sol LeWitt, Vik Muniz, Oscar Muñoz, Odili Donald Odita and Frank Stella. miamiartmuseum.org



Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County
Los Angeles, California

Facelifts and reconstructive surgeries are *de rigueur* in Los Angeles. So, to mark the centennial of the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County (NHM)—the largest museum in the western United States with a collection of nearly 35 million specimens and artifacts covering 4.5 billion years of history—nothing less than a seven-year, \$150-million nip, tuck and augmentation was in order.

Completed in time for a series of anniversary bashes in June, the checklist was extensive. The museum's original 1913 Beaux-Arts building was completely overhauled, 108,000 square feet renovated and reinstalled; a new glass-walled pavilion, cafe and car park were added; and the entire campus redesigned to include a 3.5-acre urban "wilderness experience," or teaching-learning gardens.

New permanent exhibitions include a 14,000-square-foot Dinosaur Hall featuring more than 300 fossils as well as 20 complete mounts of dinosaurs and sea creatures. The NHM also boasts the world's only *Tyrannosaurus rex* growth series, which sequentially shows a 2-year-old T. rex, a 14-year-old T. rex and an 18-year-old T. rex, respectively (the 2-year-old specimen is also the youngest known T. rex skeleton in the world, and the 18-year-old skeleton is among the five most complete T. rex skeletons in existence). nhm.org ▶

Photos: Studio Oskar Elsson, courtesy of Südtiroler Galerie im Lenbachhaus and Kunsthau München ©2013 Oskar Elsson/Liam Fahey (right)

Photo: Liam Fahey



Saint Louis Art Museum

St. Louis, Missouri

Clocking in at more than 130 years old and housing a top-tier comprehensive collection of more than 33,000 works of art, the Saint Louis Art Museum celebrated the end of its three-year expansion in June. In addition to renovating the museum's iconic Cass Gilbert-designed main building from 1904, the \$162-million project produced a new 211,431-square-foot, LEED-certified East Building designed by David Chipperfield (the British architect behind Berlin's extensively renovated Neues Museum).

Its purpose designated primarily for modern and contemporary art, the East Building's most distinctive feature is a natural light-enhancing coffered ceiling,

which crowns 21 galleries (increasing the museum's total gallery space by approximately 30 percent), as well as a new auditorium, cafe and 2,500-square-foot restaurant with a dramatic view of Forest Park's Art Hill on the menu.

Complementing the Lenbachhaus collection 4,770 miles away, the Saint Louis trove is notably strong in 20th-century German art and includes the world's largest public collection of paintings by Max Beckmann, as well as postwar and contemporary artists such as Joseph Beuys, Anselm Kiefer, Sigmar Polke, Gerhard Richter, Andreas Gursky and Candida Höfer. *slam.org* ♦

Photo: Garry Images/Reynold Boyd