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Museum organisations "appalled" at closing Belgium's oldest contemporary art museum

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Criticism by museum representatives against closure of the Museum of Contemporary Art Antwerp. Found “insufficiently strong”, the Museum is announced to become an exhibition center. Its €130 million new building project was cancelled by the regional Flemish Government, its collection to be moved to Ghent.

The regional Flemish Government has cancelled the €130 million previously announced project for a new building for the Museum of Contemporary Art Antwerp (M HKA) the country’s oldest contemporary art museum.

"As a government, we must ensure that taxpayers' money is well spent," stated the Minister of Culture, Caroline Gennez.

The M HKA site will start being transformed into an international arts centre in early 2026, expected to be completed by 2028. This is part of an overall redesign of the Flemish museum landscape towards competition and internationalization, decided on the basis of a recent performance evaluation suggesting that the museum was “insufficiently strong”.

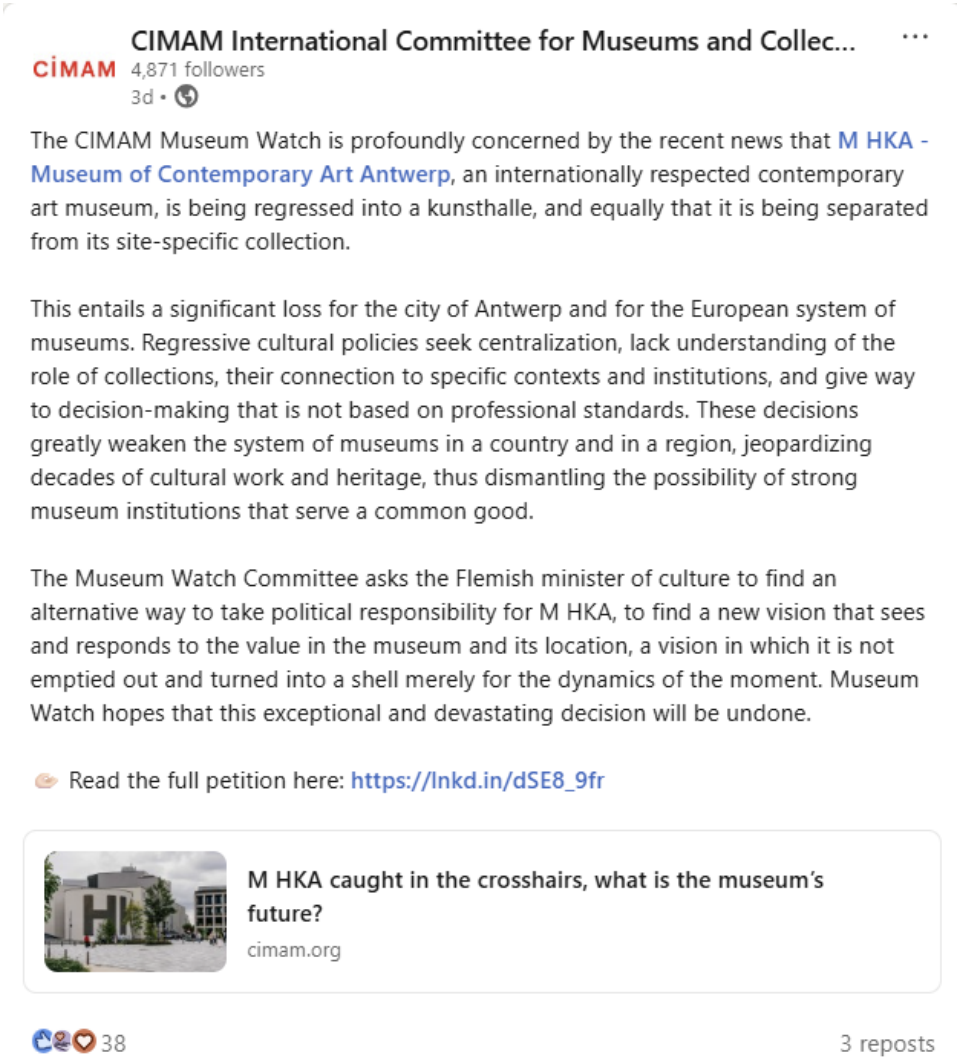
Museum professionals and organisations reacted with criticism against the decision.

Museum representatives urge to "reverse" this "unexpected" and "devastating decision"

The museum organisations call on the Flemish government to undo “this exceptional and devastating decision” and have initiated a petition to “Reverse the decision to abolish M HKA's status as a national museum”.

This is an “unexpected” and “regressive” decision, signaling “a s ignificant loss for the city of Antwerp and for the European system of museums,” said the Museum Watch Committee of the International Committee for Museums and Collections of Modern Art (CIMAM), an affiliated organisation of ICOM.

In their statement they say that this decision is “not based on professional standards” and was taken “without warning”. Their open letter reads that “Despite Belgium’s position of austerity, this is clearly not a budget-saving operation, as the infrastructure funds will now be allocated to other cultural institutions in Antwerp, including the performing arts, opera, a fine arts museum, a conference center and the Antwerp Zoo” (click on image to enlarge).



The Board of L'Internationale Confederation representing seventeen institutions voiced that they are "appalled" by the decision.

Their statement reads that "Following the decision to cancel the museum's new building, on Monday the culture minister further outlined the intention to enact a radical restructuring of the Flemish museum landscape, dissolving M HKA's status as a national museum and handing its collection and function to S.M.A.K in Ghent, then converting M HKA into a cultural centre to begin hosting exhibitions, residencies and programmes by 2028 – with no consultation with M HKA's leadership or its stakeholders".

Find more here

Image by Roger Price featuring Museum of Modern Art, Antwerp. Wikimedia Creative Commons / CC BY 2.0