

Museums

All together now

From unlikely beginnings, museums have become city glue, something similar to town squares with artwork: places to meet, greet, kiss once on each cheek. Those heavy, gilded doors of yore – once barriers, now thoroughfares – are open for business. Exhibitions are supported by cafés, shops and restaurants; programmers and curators push their museum brands far beyond their buildings' walls; events are everything.

At London's Tate Modern, late-night events turn galleries into parties. Why not? In Miami, the Pérez Art Museum helped regenerate a neighbourhood: where once there was wasteland, there is now public art, palm trees and places to rest. Museums know that when they create spaces for everyone, they're building a community. Come on, people like going out.



I. Zeitz Mocaa Cape Town

Historic grain siloes towering over Cape Town's harbour have been transformed by British designer Thomas Heatherwick into what art aficionados have dubbed "Africa's Tate Modern". Since it opened in 2017, the Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa (Mocaa) has cemented Cape Town's status as Africa's art capital, its nine floors home to works by stars of the continent's contemporary-art scene.

But the building is more than just a showcase for cutting-edge creativity. With an emphasis on providing a platform for marginalised voices, the museum's progressive programming – encompassing panel talks, workshops, performances and readings – seeks to promote

tolerance and foster dialogue that's sorely needed in a city in which prejudice and persecution linger in spite of South Africa's admirably liberal constitution.

Zeitz Mocaa has also catalysed the development of the surrounding area, which for decades was a neglected brownfield site. Today it's a vibrant mixed-use precinct – the Silo District – where eco-friendly offices (which use seawater cooling systems, for example) rub shoulders with residential blocks, restaurants and two hotels. Commercial art-and-design galleries also give museum visitors cause to linger in the neighbourhood.

Without the arrival of the glittering-windowed art museum at its core, it's likely the district would have remained a windswept car park. The project also gives the city's brand a more polished creative halo.



Tate Modern London

Frances Morris joined Tate as curator in 1987 and helped put together the opening displays at Tate Modern in 2000. She became director of the latter in 2016.

There's always been this feeling that national museums serve the nation but I think here, in this space, we really need to be embedded as a local museum. We're literally a space for everybody and we should reflect the demographic of the city in which we live and be a place that people feel is theirs.

Tate Modern had always been open to the north – the riverfront and the city of London – but in a way it had put its back to its local community. That changed with the opening of the Blavatnik Building in 2016, which created access to Southwark and beyond. We are literally a street connecting north and south London. The new building has also allowed us to slightly reinvent the museum in that we have created a space where the divisions and barriers between gallery and public spaces are much more porous.

I think the top-down model is disappearing and we want to enable people to access art in all sorts of different ways as participants, as collaborators, as makers but also in a more traditional sense, as observers. I think Tate will become a place where you encounter works of art but where you also hear stories and histories and experiences that you can relate to from all over the globe.

This will be the one place in the world where you can visit the whole world without a visa. No visas, no language qualifications, absolute equality – a truly civic space.