

TIMELINE

Developments concerning M HKA since 3 October 2025

This timeline charts the key publicly traceable events relating to M HKA since 3 October 2025, following the publication of the concept note by Flemish Minister of Culture Caroline Gennez on the reshaping of the museum landscape and the cancellation of the museum's new-build project.

It documents how this policy announcement triggered a wide-ranging social, artistic and institutional debate, with responses from the museum itself, the broader arts sector, policymakers, the media, and national and international cultural institutions.

The chronology brings together policy communications, parliamentary statements, internal processes, open letters, opinion pieces and public actions, and shows how the dossier has evolved within a field of tension between policy decisions, institutional responsibility and public engagement.

This document is documentary in nature. It assembles facts, dates and publicly expressed positions in chronological order, without editorial judgement, and will be updated as new relevant developments arise.

[Reading guide](#)

The timeline provides a chronological overview of key events and public responses relating to M HKA since 3 October 2025. The information is drawn from public communications, press coverage and documentation from the actors involved. The inclusion of quotations or viewpoints does not imply endorsement or evaluation.

Friday 3 October 2025

Policy

- The Flemish Government takes note of the concept paper *Redesign of the landscape of Flemish government-run museums and the visual arts*, presented by Flemish Minister of Culture Caroline Gennez (Vooruit).
- The minister issues a press release announcing the termination of the new-build project and addresses the media. “Given that the policy framework and operations of M HKA are currently not sufficiently robust, and in light of the growing uncertainty around construction costs, we have decided to halt the project at this stage.” The budget released by this decision will be reinvested in culture, with a specific focus on Antwerp. The minister frames the decision within a broader reform of the landscape of Flemish government-run museums and the visual arts sector, in which M HKA is envisaged as taking on a new, central role. Job security for staff is guaranteed.
- The Antwerp alderwoman for culture, Lien Van de Kelder (Vooruit), communicates in parallel: “I will involve the Antwerp arts sector in shaping this new narrative for M HKA.” She adds: “I will bring the sector together for a consultation next week.”

Museum (board, directorate and management)

M HKA learns through the press that the new-build project has been halted. The general director and the managing director are informed by telephone simultaneously in the late afternoon, after the press release has already been issued. It is announced at that point that a press conference will take place on Monday, followed by a briefing in Antwerp.

Saturday 4 October 2025

Policy

Minister Gennez defends her decision in an interview with ATV: *“M HKA had become too much of a closed fortress, insufficiently reaching out to the city and to the visual arts sector. We believe this can be done better. There was a great deal of work to be done at M HKA, and at such a moment you need to focus.”*

She outlines what she sees as “the role M HKA should play in the future”: *“Putting art and the artist at the centre, and reaching out to the people of Antwerp, as well as to the many tourists and Flemish visitors who will continue to come to the city.”*

ATV adds that “behind the scenes” there are also claims that the figure of the director is controversial, and that his performance had previously been raised with the department.

Museum (board, directorate and management)

Bart De Baere, general director of M HKA, responds on ATV and VRT News: *“Antwerp already has no bridge, and now it will have no museum of contemporary art either. That is a basic function for major cities, and certainly for Antwerp, a city defined by openness and internationalism, with an exceptionally strong visual arts history.”*

Responding to the minister’s argument that the decision was taken because the museum’s policy framework and operations are “currently insufficiently robust”, he says he finds this remarkable. *“I will retire within a year. We had already intended to start a process to appoint my successor. If there is an issue with policy, you can, if necessary, replace the director.”*

He adds that he wishes to withhold further comment until M HKA has received more information.ⁱ

Sunday 5 October 2025

Media and civil society in Flanders

De Standaard publishes an initial assessment of the evaluation on which the minister bases her decision, questioning whether it was indeed as negative as suggested. The newspaper briefly reports M HKA’s response, which argues that in a transition process it is inherently impossible to calculate everything in detail in advance, and that profound institutional changes require time. The article also

raises the question of what will happen to the site itself, noting that a potentially lucrative asset has been freed up that could be monetised.ⁱⁱ

Monday 6 October 2025

Policy

- In the morning, Minister Gennez holds a press conference in Brussels to present the concept note. Those present include Astrid De Bruycker, Alderman for Culture in Ghent; Carmen Willems (director of KMSKA); Bruno Verbergt (director of Mu.ZEE); and Philippe Van Cauteren (director of S.M.A.K.) — the three institutions designated in the concept note as future “beacons”. M HKA is neither invited nor informed.
- The press release outlines the main lines of the concept note.
- In the afternoon, representatives of the Culture Cabinet (Tom Kestens and Milan Rutten) and of the Department of Culture, Youth and Media (CJM) (Carolien Coenen, Laurence de Bolle and Bart Temmerman) brief M HKA staff during an internal meeting at the museum.
- The Department of Culture, Youth and Media publishes a news item presenting the content of the concept note as established policy (*“The Flemish Government has decided ...”*).

Museum (board, directorate and management)

Around midday, Bart De Baere responds to all media requests for comment with a standard statement: *“Dear Sir or Madam, We live in a democracy in which politicians take decisions. Representatives of the cabinet and the department will shortly provide an explanation to staff. On that basis, we will continue to consult on how best to shape a future in line with those decisions. An interview does not seem appropriate at this moment; our task now is to listen and to consult, with the wellbeing of our staff, the artists and the public foremost in mind.”*

Museum (staff, excluding the board, directorate and management)

- M HKA publishes an initial collective response, presenting a stance of resilience.ⁱⁱⁱ
- In the late afternoon, staff spontaneously decide to convene a meeting, with the aim of drafting a letter to Minister Gennez.

Arts and museum sector in Flanders

- Artist and M HKA staff member Christine Clinckx launches the petition *“Call for Mass Protest: Keep the M HKA Collection in Antwerp!”*, proposing to retain the museum’s functions within a kunstencentrum model, centred on a central depot.^{iv}
- The comments on the petition develop into a discussion platform with substantive reflections. Frank Herman notes that the €35 million promised to the cultural sector would not go to the sector itself but towards supporting financially distressed cities. Philippe Pirotte argues that what is at stake is not only the loss of a museum and a collection, but also a space for artistic risk, urban imagination and historical awareness.^v Ricardo Brey emphasises that every museum has its own unique purpose and identity — its own DNA.^{vi}
- Shortly afterwards, an international petition is also launched.^{vii}
- Antwerp Art, the organisation bringing together galleries and other presentation spaces, holds internal consultations and informs its members about the consultation meeting convened by Antwerp’s alderwoman for culture, Lien Van de Kelder, the following evening at FOMU.

Media and civil society in Flanders

- The unexpected news is widely reported across the Flemish media. In Ghent, the announcement is met with enthusiasm. *“This means that the heart of contemporary and current art will be located entirely in Ghent — and we are particularly proud of that,”* says Astrid De Bruycker, Ghent’s alderwoman for culture (Voor Gent).
- Reactions from the art world are largely negative. The decision *“comes so suddenly and without preparation that it almost amounts to shock therapy. To discard M HKA and strip it of its museum function and collection is far too drastic a move. It is damaging to the city’s profile,”* says artist Luc Tuymans, who also immediately identifies the proposed alternative future plan as problematic.

- Dirk Snauwaert, director of Brussels-based contemporary art centre WIELS, concludes: *“The entire reform of the museum landscape comes across as rather one-sided. It prioritises heritage, nostalgia and Flemish Masters. Contemporary art is left short-changed.”*
- Gallerist Sofie Van de Velde reacts: *“I am in shock. Losing M HKA as a museum can only be described as a loss. Things had not been straightforward there for some time, but we saw new opportunities. Now the programme risks becoming more non-committal: all the frameworks that allow art to be shown in context will disappear.”*^{viii}
- Annick Schramme, professor of cultural management, is also critical: *“Collections in cities are often historically developed; they are not commodities. Museums are also a city’s calling card. They attract large audiences. The idea that you would have to travel to a particular city for a specific art or period of art goes too far for me. It runs counter to the diversity of a city’s cultural offer.”*^{ix}

Tuesday 7 October 2025

Policy

- The concept note is published on the Flemish Government’s website.^x
- That evening, alderwoman Van de Kelder hosts an information session at FOMU, initially announced as a moment to begin reflecting on a new future for M HKA. M HKA itself is not invited. Staff members and artists from the field attend in large numbers; around 250 people are present. The discussion is taken over by representatives of Minister Gennez’s cabinet and the Department of Culture. The plans are collectively rejected, and none of the questions raised receive satisfactory answers.
- A journalist from *De Morgen* publishes a live report of the meeting, which goes online later that same evening.^{xi}

Museum (board, directorate and management)

- At an information meeting of the governing board, the executive team shares with the board what is currently known.
- The management team convenes in an expanded format: not only the executive directors and department heads, but also the two transition coordinators for the move to the new building, the leads of the project groups linked to that transition, and the coordinators of the first two self-organising teams through which an organisational transition had been initiated.
- The chair of the governing board resigns via an open letter of resignation. In it, he writes: *“A collection is not merely a set of works, but a coherence that gives those works meaning. A museum is defined by a profile, which consists not only of a collection but also of a narrative. You cannot export the avant-garde to Ghent. The most important contemporary art story in Flanders – that of Antwerp – will not be given its own place, but will become an appendage.”* He also gives an interview to *De Morgen* in which he says that in his entire professional career he has never witnessed clumsiness on such a level.^{xii}

Museum (staff, excluding the board, directorate and management)

- M HKA staff meet to discuss the letter to the minister. The discussion focuses on substance: what the staff are actually calling for, what the message should be, and how it can be communicated clearly and honestly. The issue is not limited to job security, but also concerns the museum itself and its collection. A spontaneous discussion emerges about possible next steps and about which external stakeholders should be invited to speak out.
- In the afternoon, permission is requested from the estate of Walter Swennen to use his work *Those Who Are Here Are from Here* as the basis for a campaign image and a flyer for the opening.
- Staff publish an open letter calling for transparency, consultation and respect for the expertise built up within the institution, explicitly inviting Minister Gennez to attend the opening of six new exhibitions on Thursday 9 October.^{xiii}

Arts and museum sector in Flanders

Antwerp Art issues its first public statement: *“Antwerp Art supports M HKA. Contemporary art belongs in every city and to every community, and preserving this museum is crucial to ensuring a strong and sustainable future for Antwerp’s art scene.”*

Media and civil society in Flanders

- Manu Claeys, board member of the Antwerp-based artists' residency organisation Morpho, publishes the first of what will become many opinion pieces from civil society in *De Standaard*. He compares the situation to Austria, which with its nine million inhabitants has built architecturally ambitious museums for modern and contemporary art in cities such as Graz, Linz and Salzburg, and to Poland. *"Such museums form an upper layer for galleries, art centres and studios,"* he writes, *"a necessity for cities that do not want to end up as open-air museums."* *"A heart transplant of this magnitude,"* he adds, *"demands careful decision-making and a public debate."*^{xiv}
- *De Standaard* publishes an initial analysis of what exactly constitutes the M HKA collection that is to be transferred to S.M.A.K., and which was intended to become fully visible in the new building. Building on the legacy of the International Cultural Centre (ICC) on the Meir and the Gordon Matta-Clark Foundation, M HKA focused in particular on conceptual art, performance, video and installation. Panamarenko was to have occupied a central position in the permanent collection display.
- The article also highlights a strong focus on art from the former Soviet sphere and Southeast Asia. M HKA manages several collections of diverse origin. Jan De Vree, Head of Museum Practice at M HKA, states: *"The collection is embedded in the Antwerp fabric, which is artist-driven. It was formed and expanded here. You might call it complementary to that of S.M.A.K., but its history can never be erased or detached from its location."*^{xv}
- Karel Verhoeven, editor-in-chief of *De Standaard*, analyses the decision in his editorial. *"Minister Caroline Gennez was confronted with two contemporary art museums that both have their issues. What magic formula leads her to believe that cutting one of the two will result in more gain than loss?"* he asks. He concludes: *"It is deeply disconcerting that Flanders appears unwilling to sustain a vibrant museum devoted to an art form in which we have been world leaders for seven hundred years — neither in its capital Brussels nor in its largest city, Antwerp — and which, in its contemporary manifestations, still ranks among the very best to be seen worldwide."*^{xvi}

Wednesday 8 October 2025

Policy

In the plenary session of parliament, Minister Gennez cites *"a stringent evaluation by the assessment committees, which shows that there is still a great deal of room for improvement and that the assessment of M HKA was negative,"* as the basis for her decisions. *"At the moment when a negative evaluation is issued, and when there are plans to build a museum costing €130 million, and counting, with a management that may not be ready for such a project, you have to be prepared to make choices,"* she states.^{xvii}

Museum (staff, excluding the board, directorate and management)

After the Swennen estate grants permission, several colleagues decide to paint the slogan in large letters onto a second-hand banner.

Museum (board, directorate and management)

In an initial joint meeting, the management team and staff exchange information in order to deliberate together. These meetings will continue on a regular basis.

Arts and museum sector in Flanders

- Antwerp's museums and colleagues of M HKA share their concerns about the reshaping of the museum landscape via social media. They express worry *"that a collection is being detached from the context in which it was formed and through which it acquires meaning. A museum with a permanent collection — a visible collective memory that young artists can position themselves in relation to — is essential for a city and a community."*
- The Royal Academy of Fine Arts Antwerp and Sint-Lucas Antwerp express their support. The Academy writes: *"We thank M HKA and all its staff for many years of collaboration with our students, lecturers and researchers. We look forward to further strengthening this close relationship in the future. We share the concerns of our peers in the arts sector and call on*

people to sign the petition in our bio to keep the museum collection in Antwerp. Hoping for a sustainable perspective for all art students, artists and art workers in Antwerp, we remain open to constructive dialogue.”

- Sint-Lucas writes: “Contemporary art belongs in every city and to every community, and preserving this museum and its collection is crucial to ensuring a strong and sustainable future for Antwerp’s art scene. We are grateful for the collaboration (including through our participation on the board) and for the open-door policy towards our students.”

Media and civil society in Flanders

- In an opinion piece, Pascal Gielen and Nele Wynants, research professors at the Antwerp Research Institute for the Arts (ARIA), University of Antwerp, use the bleak concrete Panamarenko Square as a metaphor for an “efficient” vision of heritage in which heritage is hardened, treated as a static collection and reduced to a business model. They contrast this with the possibility of “a fragile fabric of recent artistic practices in which the art of yesterday reflects itself in that of tomorrow”, arguing that the space where tradition and experiment intersect is disappearing.^{xviii}
- In a contrasting opinion piece, also published in *De Standaard*, Annelies Thoelen, former board member of M HKA and now a board member at KMSKA, points to the potential of a new role for M HKA as an art centre. “A museum like M HKA needs to rub against things; it should show artists working on the cutting edge, addressing the issues that matter now. That spark may well have faded some time ago,” she writes. She sees an opportunity in shedding “the ballast of a collection”, arguing that this would allow the institution to work “faster, more boldly and more contemporaneously.”
- The Dutch magazine *Metropolis M* publishes a feature in which artist Dennis Tyfus speaks of shameless theatre, covert and underhanded ways of operating, authoritarian practices, and a tradition being quietly swept under the carpet.^{xix}

International media

With an article in the American magazine *Art News*, the world’s oldest and most widely distributed art journal, the first international media coverage appears. *Art News* situates M HKA in an international context: “Its collection now numbers around 8,000 objects, and it is known for its closely watched exhibition program, featuring a mix of single-artist surveys and group exhibitions. Recent shows include solos for Nástio Mosquito (in 2024), Dorothy Iannone (2023), and Anthea Hamilton (2022), as well as the 2024 exhibition ‘The Lives of Animals.’ The museum is currently hosting the Kyiv Biennial 2025 and a survey of Pauline Curnier Jardin, with a major Nicola L. retrospective planned for 2026.”^{xx}

Thursday 9 October 2025

Museum (staff, excluding the board, directorate and management)

- M HKA opens its autumn season with six exhibitions. Two of them are situated at the intersection of two international interests of Minister Gennez: Palestine and Ukraine. One exhibition forms part of the Kyiv Biennial, spread across multiple locations in Europe and Ukraine. It focuses on “Middle East–Europe” and features both Palestinian and Ukrainian artists. The exhibition on Solidarity in INBOX addresses similar themes.
- The other exhibitions include the first survey of the French artist Pauline Curnier Jardin; a presentation of the recently donated installation by Uzbek artist Saodat Ismailova; and presentations by Antwerp-based artist Vaast Colson and on the history of the Antwerp art space Morguen.
- During the opening, speeches are given by and for the arts sector, including contributions from the chair of the gallery association, a representative of the neighbourhood association, and artists Luc Tuymans and Nikolay Karabinovych. Staff read out the open letter.
- More than 2,500 visitors attend. Minister Gennez is absent, despite the explicit invitation issued by staff in their open letter of 7 October. Two members of her cabinet are present.

Media and civil society in Flanders

- Fernand Huts, owner of Katoen Natie and founder of the Phoebus Foundation — through which he plans to transform the Boerentoren into an art centre — enters the debate. He states

that an Antwerp without a museum of contemporary art is unthinkable, and that if M HKA were to disappear, he would be willing to help fill the gap. *"The city has a right to that,"* he says. ^{xxi}

- Journalist Danny Ilegems publishes a sharp analysis in *De Morgen*. For years, artists, Antwerp gallerists and visitors have complained about M HKA, while M HKA itself has pointed to chronic space shortages in an archaic building. Now, the Antwerp art world is protesting the Flemish Minister of Culture's plan to dismantle the museum, rightly so, according to Ilegems, because the plan reveals a troubling lack of historical awareness and bears *"the unbearable lightness of a wish dream, as if this M HKA could simply reinvent itself as an internationally significant art centre, and S.M.A.K. could effortlessly grow into the undisputed Flemish temple of contemporary art."* He adds that the plan also carries *"the scent of political horse-trading."* ^{xxii}
- In the same newspaper, sociologist Rudi Laermans dismisses the decision and the concept note as *"a poorly rattling ad hoc legitimization"* of what turns out to be *"a flip-flop policy in the longer term."* *"It is simply crude to decree an overhaul of the Flemish museum landscape overnight without proper justification, without public debate, without consultation with key stakeholders, and without engaging the official advisory bodies and the affected arts sector. This is a partitocratic decision taken over everyone's heads, based on a range of interest calculations,"* he writes. He concludes: *"Democracy is going backwards, and the culture minister of Vooruit is helping to push it along."* ^{xxiii}

International media

- The European museum confederation **L'Internationale**, of which M HKA is a founding member, publishes a statement. ^{xxiv} It points out that the plans fail to recognise the importance of M HKA as a situated heritage institution, one that embeds Antwerp's rich artistic history within multiple contexts. The proposal to centralise collections and heritage operations runs counter to L'Internationale's mission to foster plural histories and perspectives. The organisation opposes the creation of a uniform national collection, seeing in it a fundamental misunderstanding of museum collections, their role within communities, and the relationships they sustain. It interprets the decision as a destructive symbolic act that reduces museums to consumable goods in the service of political agendas, and describes the lack of transparency and concrete detail as deeply troubling.
- Museum Watch, the committee of the ICOM-affiliated global organisation of contemporary art museums CIMAM, also issues a statement. It characterises the proposed decision concerning M HKA as a regressive cultural policy driven by centralisation, marked by a lack of understanding of the role of collections and their ties to specific contexts and institutions, and leading to decision-making that does not meet professional standards. Museum Watch calls on the Flemish Minister of Culture to pursue an alternative approach that starts from the value of the museum itself, one in which it is not stripped out and reduced to an empty shell for the dynamics of the moment. ^{xxv}

Media and civil society in Flanders

De Standaard publishes an ambitious article attempting a comprehensive round-up. The newspaper notes that the plan intended to allow M HKA to finally spread its wings fully by 2030 has suddenly turned into a nightmare:

- Both M HKA and S.M.A.K. had long been regarded as problem cases within the museum landscape: half-finished solutions in which Flanders invested too little.
- M HKA, the first government-run museum for contemporary art in Flanders, emerged from the dynamic activities of the ICC. The young institution struggled to secure a leading position. *"There was a real fight at the beginning,"* says Johan Pas, lecturer at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts Antwerp. *"Jan Hoet in Ghent and Flor Bex in Antwerp fought hard to demonstrate that contemporary art belongs in a classical institution. That created a field of tension. With extremely tight budgets, this turned into a permanent balancing act."*
- M HKA was housed in a former grain silo and developed a regular programme, with strong emphasis from 2002 onwards on research, collection building and archiving.
- In more recent years, M HKA continued to champion artists, but according to a survey by *De Standaard* it became less attractive to audiences, such that *"visitors seeking major surveys of Michaël Borremans, Berinde De Bruyckere or Luc Tuymans have increasingly gone elsewhere in recent years. The programme at M HKA is often described as rigid, highbrow and highly reflexive."* Activist art also proved difficult to realise in practice within the M HKA context.

- This perception resonates with *“visitor numbers that fall short of expectations.”* *De Standaard* cites impressions from the administration, stating that it was able to review the visitor figures, which appear to be roughly on a par with those of S.M.A.K. On other fronts, particularly management, *De Standaard* extensively quotes the administration’s perspective: *“The policy authorities have been monitoring M HKA closely for many years.”* ^{xxvi}
- In the same newspaper, philosopher and ethicist Nicolas Alzetta analyses how the minister’s plans adopt the language of management and marketing. He argues that this reflects a post-political consensus: a form of power that operates solely through procedures and thus evades responsibility. *“How naturalised this has become is evident in the fact that a progressive minister sacrifices progressive ideals in the name of a mercantilist logic of efficiency and visibility. Art becomes a problem of distribution, and even rebellion is now commissioned.”* ^{xxvii}

Friday 10 October 2025

Museum (board, directorate and management)

Three of the four independent board members resign. The two international board members, Vasif Kortun and Eugene Tan, do so publicly, stating that they find both the decision itself and the process by which it was reached unacceptable. ^{xxviii}

Arts and museum sector in Flanders

- NICC, the artist-driven non-profit organisation focused on the socio-economic position of visual artists and on strengthening artistic practice, meets with the minister’s cabinet and publishes statements both before and after the meeting.
- In its first statement, NICC says that the proposed reform is not accepted by the sector and that the sector must be actively involved in order to restore trust in cultural policy. This requires clarity about how the plan was developed and why communication unfolded in this manner. The minister, it argues, will need to acknowledge that the situation was not handled with sufficient care or consideration, but rather in a unilateral and deeply hurtful way. NICC also calls for a clear step-by-step roadmap for the reform as a whole, with meaningful input from the sector and a thorough evaluation process. ^{xxix}
- In its second statement, NICC argues that key stakeholders, including artists, arts workers, curators, researchers, audiences and wider society, have been excluded from the decision-making process, a problem made all the more acute by the strong role of political interests. NICC expresses concern about the preservation of the unique identity and legacy of each institution, and states that it sees no evidence that alternative scenarios were seriously explored.

Media and civil society in Flanders

In *De Standaard*, the question is raised whether S.M.A.K. is ready for its new role. The paper notes that the museum would *“no longer continue to produce exhibitions to the point of exhaustion, but would instead focus more strongly on the canonisation of the Flemish art collection.”* To date, no one has been granted insight into the decision-making process. Two scenarios are circulating regarding the choice of S.M.A.K.: either a political agreement was struck, or the collection held in Ghent was deemed to carry greater weight than that of Antwerp. By the end of 2025, S.M.A.K.’s organisational improvement trajectory will have been completed; over the following two years, a transition phase will begin in which the entire policy framework will be reassessed and vacancies for senior leadership positions will be opened. ^{xxx}

International media

- *ArtReview* publishes an article quoting from the open resignation letter by international board members Eugene Tan and Vasif Kortun. They write: *“Throughout our tenure, we were often dismayed by the government’s dysfunctional, arbitrary interventions and lack of vision, which felt like a persistent, deliberate effort to undermine the museum’s professional practices across different administrations. We were surprised by the lack of sound policy and etiquette from a Western European country with a history of excellent cultural practices.”* ^{xxxi}
- *The Art Newspaper* publishes an article situating M HKA as *“considéré comme l’un des musées d’art contemporain les plus respectés d’Europe”* and Bart De Baere as *“parmi les*

premiers directeurs de musée à élargir la programmation et les acquisitions à une véritable dimension mondiale.” xxxii

Saturday 11 October 2025

Museum (board, directorate and management)

- Bart De Baere gives an interview to *De Standaard* to more broadly contextualise the facts from M HKA's perspective, after having spoken briefly on the radio the previous day. What troubles him most is that the long-awaited catch-up in visual arts infrastructure in Flanders will once again fail to materialise. Over the past seven years, he says, he worked intensively on realising the new building foreseen in the previous government agreement. *“Everything I have done in recent years was about preparing M HKA for a different future. My era is long over,”* he states.
- In parallel, M HKA publishes an opinion piece by De Baere, also in English, to inform the international community. xxxiii The text argues that over the past twenty years M HKA systematically invested in strengthening its museum practice, despite receiving no additional capacity. When the decision to build a new museum was taken ten years ago, the institution launched a series of preparatory trajectories, including in the back office, focusing on collection research, archives and digitisation. The museum had hoped to test this trajectory through an international peer review by professionals from contemporary art museums, as is common for arts organisations, but the procedure remained standardised, with a general committee drawn from the broader heritage field. That committee judged the forty-page plan to be insufficiently concrete — which, De Baere argues, was inevitable given that M HKA was in the midst of an initial transition phase, without clarity about resources and with a director succession imminent. Abolishing an institution on that basis, he concludes, is not a careful or responsible course of action.

Arts and museum sector in Flanders

- Frank De Maegd, former gallerist of Zeno X and owner of an exceptionally significant private collection, writes an open letter in *Metropolis M* arguing that one museum is not interchangeable with another; that M HKA's collection has grown together with Antwerp and cannot be uprooted; that Antwerp had been waiting for years for a new building for its contemporary art museum; and that he would gladly have contributed to it through a major donation. xxxiv
- In *De Morgen*, chief commentator Bart Eeckhout characterises the concept note as *“horse-trading”*: *“a parochial deal between cities and party strongholds.”* He points out that S.M.A.K. itself is also set to disappear — the concept note refers instead to *“the new Flemish museum for contemporary and current art”* — and that progressive city governments in both Ghent and Mechelen, with Vooruit in the coalition, are struggling with mounting debts. He interprets the museum takeovers there as a bail-out of allied local authorities. Antwerp, governed by N-VA, would receive an artistic offer more closely aligned with conservative preferences, while Ghent, as a *“left-wing”* city, would be assigned the more abrasive forms of contemporary art.

xxxv

Sunday 12 October 2025

Policy

Patrick Janssens, Antwerp alderman for Urban Development (Vooruit), confirms on regional television channel ATV that the idea of a new high-rise on the site was linked to the construction of a museum. *“If that does not go ahead, you cannot simply build higher than the immediate surroundings,”* Janssens states. He also denies that a property developer already holds an option on the land. xxxvi

Arts and museum sector in Flanders

The visual arts field holds a first meeting at CASSTL, attended mainly by artists, along with two M HKA staff members. For the first time, possible legal steps are considered, as well as the question of how to secure financial resources for such a struggle. The lack of consultation is raised as a key issue; the possibility of talks with the cabinet is weighed; and actions and a manifesto are proposed. It is decided

to identify a group of representatives who can speak for the arts field and lead actions and communication.

Media and civil society in Flanders

- The current affairs programme *Wakker op Sunday* (ATV) brings together Bart De Baere (M HKA), Luc Tuymans, Annick Schramme (University of Antwerp) and Bruno Verbergt (Mu.ZEE) for a televised debate. Bruno Verbergt defends the concept note.
- Manu Claey's, board member of Morpho vzw and chair of stRaten-generaal, publishes "*15 + 1 sharp questions that politicians, policymakers and culture lovers must not ignore.*" The first asks: "*How does the Flemish Government intend to make the collections of two museums 'more broadly accessible' by closing one of them?*" The second: "*Why should there be room for only one museum of contemporary art in Flanders, when almost every regional city retains its own museum of fine or modern art?*" The third: "*Why was the choice for that single museum made in Ghent, which in many respects — collection size, visitor numbers, network of galleries and artists — is smaller than Antwerp?*" Sixteen questions in total. His call is clear: before dismantling a museum, accountability must first be provided. ^{xxxvii}

Monday 13 October 2025

International arts and museum sector

The director of the Museum of Warsaw writes to Minister Gennez on behalf of the European museum confederation L'Internationale. She emphasises that M HKA has a unique collecting approach, including a strong focus on ephemeral and context-based art. Museums, she writes, "*are more than budgets, administration and logistics. They preserve reflections, expressions and insights that deserve to be shared with the public and with future generations.*" For the international community, she adds, the current process is surprising and difficult to understand, and it undermines trust in democratic procedures and in the value of dialogue. ^{xxxviii}

Media and civil society in Flanders

In an opinion piece in *Knack*, Peter Casteels juxtaposes the closure of M HKA with the continued operation of Antwerp's Deurne Airport, which he finds incomprehensible. The comparison prompts members of the Vliegerplein Citizens' Platform to immediately propose projecting M HKA into the listed modernist airport building. Complete with a Panamarenko wing.

International media

The renowned American magazine *Artforum* reports on developments in Flanders. ^{xxxix}

Tuesday 14 October 2025

Policy

Laurence de Bolle and Carolien Coenen from the Department of Culture, Youth and Media (CJM), together with cabinet adviser Tom Kestens, travel to Antwerp to discuss the concept note with the management team, limited to the managing director and department heads. The general director is not present; he receives a separate invitation for a simultaneous meeting with deputy cabinet chief Milan Rutten at the cabinet offices in Brussels.

Museum (staff, excluding the board, directorate and management)

Staff meet on Tuesday afternoon to prepare for the meeting with the minister on Wednesday morning. As the meeting will take place without the management present, it is prepared on that basis. Staff counsellor Jan Stuyck is asked to help ensure a united approach and alignment in the preparations. It is decided to focus on substantive questions about the concept note and what has been communicated so far, with an emphasis on definitions and written statements, rather than on emotional responses.

Media and civil society in Flanders

In an opinion piece, architect Hans Caarls frames the decision within what he describes as a creeping privatisation of Antwerp's public space. He argues that any new use of the site must remain public.

The coexistence of small and large institutions, from a family-run bakery to a Flemish Museum of Contemporary Art, is what makes urban life meaningful, he writes. *“To dismantle a deeply rooted institution such as M HKA from the top down is a governance-driven assault on everyone who works daily to sustain life together in the city.”*^{xi}

Wednesday 15 October 2025

Policy

Minister Gennez addresses the staff of M HKA, without the management team present.

Arts and museum sector in Flanders

ICOM Belgium refers, in an open letter, to the ICOM museum definition and code of ethics. A top-down decision to relocate a collection, it states, is not permissible. Museum collections must be managed in consultation with the communities around those objects. In the case of the M HKA collection, artists, audiences, experts and professionals may legitimately be regarded as a *“community of origin.”* ICOM calls on the minister to enter into dialogue with this community in order to develop a collection policy together.^{xii}

Media and civil society in Flanders

- Antwerp city architect Christian Rapp announces that he will not seek an extension of his mandate, citing the decision not to build a new Museum of Contemporary Art (M HKA) as a key factor. *“In recent weeks I have had to endure a number of frustrating experiences, with the decision-making around M HKA representing a sad low point,”* he states.^{xlii}
- Inge Schelstraete, art critic at *De Standaard*, reviews the survey exhibition of Pauline Curnier Jardin and concludes: *“Hopefully the museum will still be there when Curnier Jardin, at a younger age than Carol Rama, becomes a Major Name.”*^{xliii}

Wednesday 16 October 2025

Policy

Minister Gennez presents her concept note to the Parliamentary Committee on Culture, arguing for *“a better and more logical distribution of the collection of the Flemish community across Flanders.”* She states:

- *“The S.M.A.K. collection will be integrated into the collection of the Flemish community.” “We want to show our collection more broadly and to distribute it more widely, across Flanders.”*
- *“We want to give M HKA the opportunity to become an international art centre for visual culture, a breeding ground for contemporary practices. There will be space for exhibitions, presentations, residencies, studios, workshops and education.”*
- *“One of the key objectives of this art institution will be to restore the link between the arts on the one hand and heritage practices on the other.” For her, she says, the issue is not institutions but makers.*
- *“Strengthening international cultural policy, including a visual arts component — for example in collaboration with Ukraine, is also part of the redesign.”*

Members of the Parliamentary Committee on Culture put numerous questions to Minister Gennez about the concept note. Many of these remain unanswered.

- Katrien Partyka (cd&v) sets the tone: *“I do not doubt the content, but I cannot pass judgement on it either. We were not invited to the party, so to speak. Parliament arrives when the lights are almost out, the chairs are on the tables and the room is being cleared. At that moment, we are allowed to exchange views. We are allowed to reflect afterwards on decisions, without even knowing how those decisions were made.”* She then poses more than two dozen questions.
- *“The collection is not being taken away from M HKA and put on lorries to Ghent. Nor is the museum being closed or dismantled,”* Minister Gennez adds in the committee.
- *Flemish media report extensively on her statements and counter her remark “Stop spreading fake news” by pointing to the source of the reporting: the concept note itself. What all this will mean in concrete terms remains unclear.*^{xliv}

Arts and museum sector in Flanders

The renewed HISK — which has launched an interdisciplinary post-master's programme after leaving Antwerp, relocating to Ghent and effectively fading away there — expresses its support. It writes:

“Antwerp, which positions itself locally and internationally as an artistic and avant-garde city, cannot do without a museum of contemporary art. Such a museum functions both as a muse and as an engine of the local artistic ecosystem. It acts as a magnet for international artists, art students, art workers and art lovers. Removing this museum would have the effect of a lobotomy. The connection between past, present and future would be severed.” ^{xlv}

International arts and museum sector

- A group of directors of leading European museums, including the Centre Pompidou in Paris, the Ludwig Museum in Cologne, the Stedelijk Museum and the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, and Tate Modern in London, publish an open letter. They express their support for M HKA, which they describe as one of the most respected contemporary art museums in Europe, with a crucial international role owing to the quality of its exhibition programme and its lending policy. They urge continued support for M HKA as a cornerstone of both the Flemish and the international art landscape.
- Ann Demeester, director of Kunsthaus Zürich, publishes an opinion piece in which she recalls Caroline Gennez's 2014 plea for greater citizen involvement in political decision-making, based on a “*stakeholder model*.” Such a model, she argues, can only function through dialogue — whereas the minister's current decision was taken with little meaningful consultation. She writes, among other things: *“When a collection is delocalised, the institution in which it was once shown and where it was born is hollowed out and stripped of meaning.”* *“De facto, a museum with a rich history and deep roots in the city where it emerged is allowed to die.”* *“This is troubling and risks setting precedents for further ruthless dismantling of heritage institutions on the basis of political decisions, carried out in the name of restructuring, efficiency and centralisation.”* ^{xlvi}

Media and civil society in Flanders

De Morgen gives the floor to painters Luc Tuymans and Michaël Borremans. Both are sharply critical:

- *“Problems are being created rather than solved here. Stripping Antwerp of its museum of contemporary art will also be damaging to the city, to the local economy and to liveability.”* *“Everywhere in the world, museums of contemporary art are being built, and everywhere they function as tourist attractions. But Antwerp would effectively abolish its own? That is absurd. In a city like Antwerp, a museum of contemporary art is an absolute necessity.”*
- *According to the artists, M HKA and S.M.A.K. are two different contexts with two different histories, each with its own identity and value. What they do share, they argue, is flawed policy: governance structures with directors appointed for life and boards that resemble little more than political figureheads.*
- *Tuymans ultimately places responsibility squarely with the Flemish Community and Flemish cultural policy, which, he says, has created fragile structures and pursued disinvestment, now resulting in “a restructuring that will once again cost vast sums of money and lead nowhere.”*
- *Both artists argue in favour of a hybrid system of public–private institutions that would be able to operate with far greater independence.* ^{xlvii}

Friday 17 October 2025

Arts and museum sector in Flanders

M HKA is occupied by open classes from the DRAMA programme of the Royal Conservatoire of Antwerp.

Sunday 19 October 2025

Arts and museum sector in Flanders

- The visual arts field holds its second meeting, now under the banner “Museum at Risk”, at Beautiful Planet. Its central demand is a postponement of the decision on the concept note for

contemporary art, originally scheduled for 15 December, in order to allow for in-depth dialogue and to preserve the museum within a new structure.

- Tasks are divided across working groups focusing on legal research, outreach to political parties, communication and social media, actions and demonstrations, field research, public support, research and crowdfunding.
- Four core demands are articulated: We want a museum of contemporary art (in Antwerp). A museum of contemporary art has a collection. A museum of contemporary art of international standing deserves appropriate infrastructure. We want consultation and co-decision-making rights in any reform of Flemish museums.

Monday 20 October 2025

Policy

During the Antwerp city council meeting, alderwoman Van de Kelder comes under fire over Minister Gennez's concept note and its consequences for M HKA and for Antwerp. The following day, the media report extensively on the exchange. *"I expected you to have fought for M HKA and to have said loudly: not on my watch,"* one councillor states. Meyrem Almaci (Groen) draws particular attention with the remark: *"Are you an alderwoman for culture, or an apparatchik of Vooruit?"*

Because the minister had stated that Antwerp was informed, the question is raised: *"Who knew what, and when?"*

Arts and museum sector in Flanders

In a third statement, NICC reiterates its earlier points, emphasising the importance of open debate and collaboration between parties with differing interests. NICC states that it will enter into dialogue with policymakers and explore alternative scenarios, taking diversity as a guiding principle.

Media and civil society in Flanders

- Iñigo Custers, Christophe Van Gerrewey, Beatriz Van Houtte Alonso and Pieter T'Jonck reflect in *De Witte Raaf* on the two architectural competitions for the museum in Antwerp. The conversation took place one day before Minister Gennez announced the cancellation of the project. They note that the design dossiers for the 2019 and 2024 architecture competitions can be consulted on the website of the Flemish Government Architect. ^{xlviii}
- In a letter to the Antwerp City Council, the neighbourhood association Open Zuid responds to questions addressed to it, stressing that this is an unprecedented decision.
- The organisation states: *"If Flanders is allowed only one museum of contemporary art, one could just as well decide that there should be only one football stadium."* With regard to the collection, Open Zuid points to major uncertainties about the extent to which, and under what conditions, parts of the collection might still be shown in Antwerp. It argues that the cabinet is also overreaching by denying the complexity of the collection's legal status and of the depot issue, in which it is the Flemish Community itself that has fallen short.
- Open Zuid further questions what is meant by the statement that *"M HKA will become an art centre, yet will also remain a museum."* *"An art centre is not a museum. It operates differently, with a different staff structure and public profile. International collaboration would disappear. Antwerp already has several art centres. From 15 December onwards, M HKA will also receive instructions from the cabinet regarding programming and operations. The problematic building makes this art-centre scenario financially and technically unviable. By contrast, the new-build project — according to the answer to a recent parliamentary question — was in fact feasible, with construction costs of €75 million including VAT, and with what the neighbourhood association describes as fictitiously inflated contingencies to arrive at €130 million."*
- Finally, the neighbourhood association refers to Minister Gennez's book *De verschilligen*, in which she herself calls for citizens to be made partners in political decision-making. ^{xlix}

Tuesday 21 October 2025

Arts and museum sector Flanders

- M HKA is occupied by open classes from St-Lucas Secondary School of Art Antwerp.

- Representatives of the Antwerp arts field, including Nadia Bijl, Frank De Maegd, Luc Tuymans, Nadia, and Rinus Van de Velde, meet with Caroline Gennez, Patrick Janssens and Lien Van de Kelder. Patrick Janssens does not attend. The meeting yields little in terms of concrete outcomes.

International arts and museum sector

- AICA International, the global association of art critics, protests against the concept note and aligns itself with calls from the Belgian and international art community to reverse what it describes as an arbitrary decision: *“Any plan to centralise the cultural landscape by marginalising institutions and moving national collections without any consultation with the museum, its stakeholders, museum experts or artists is a violation of their cultural rights. The exclusion of citizens from any conversation that will have a powerful impact on the cultural landscape is, by default, a restriction on freedom of expression.”*
- The letter, signed by the President and the Chair of AICA’s Censorship Committee, is sent to the Council of Europe’s Director for Democracy, the European Commissioner for Intergenerational Fairness, Youth, Culture and Sport, Minister Gennez, and Belgium’s Permanent Representation to UNESCO..

Wednesday 22 October 2025

Media and civil society in Flanders

Danny Ilegems analyses the advice of the committee that assessed the policy plans of Flemish arts institutions for the 2026–2030 period — advice to which Minister Gennez referred in order to halt the planned building and the museum operations of M HKA.

- *“Ironically, according to the advice, M HKA scores best precisely in its role as a museum,”* Ilegems concludes. While the overall assessment is *“insufficient”*, the advisory committee draws conclusions that differ markedly from those presented by the minister. The committee describes M HKA as a high-profile institution that carries out pioneering work at an international level in contemporary art, and as a cultural heritage institution that would need to make a significant scale leap in a new museum building, requiring support and guidance from the Flemish government.
- The committee recommends strengthening the organisation and accelerating the appointment of a new general director. Ilegems concludes: *“This is the stick with which Caroline Gennez seeks to beat M HKA to death, rather than doing what is necessary to help it function better.”*¹

Thursday 23 October 2025

Arts and museum sector in Flanders

M HKA is occupied by open classes from the Photography programme of the Royal Academy of Fine Arts Antwerp.

Friday 24 October 2025

Arts and museum sector in Flanders

- M HKA is occupied by open classes from the PXL-MAD School of Arts Hasselt, Department of Fine Arts, and by open classes from St-Lucas Secondary School of Art Antwerp.
- Thirty galleries publish an open letter stating: *“Dismantling this museum without a clear, broadly supported vision for the future is more than a policy mistake. It is a troubling signal that contemporary art is not being properly valued by politics.”* They call for the structural anchoring of M HKA *“as a leading museum of contemporary art, both locally and internationally.”* They further insist that the museum’s expertise and collection must be preserved, and urge investment in infrastructure *“that offers perspective for artists and audiences.”*
- Nigerian–Belgian artist Otobong Nkanga responds to the announced scaling-back of M HKA in an interview given on the occasion of her retrospective at the Musée d’Art Moderne in Paris:

"M HKA gave me my first truly major exhibition. I had been considering for some time donating my performance archive to M HKA. What now? How can we still trust our government?"^{li}

Saturday 25 October 2025

Arts and museum sector in Flanders

With the action "Museum At Risk: Artists Take the Floor", a 25-hour occupation of the entrance hall of M HKA takes place on 25 October.

- The action is broadcast in full via live radio on local stations Radio Centraal and We Are Various. Hosting duties rotate between Duwbeer & Swingsbeer, Stéphane Schraenen, Sorry DJ's (Sietske Van Aerde, Clara Lissens and Emeline Descreux), Inti Van Den Camp, and Ian De Weerd & Thor Salden.
- Contributions, including speeches, performances and music, are made by a wide range of artists, writers, musicians, curators and cultural workers, among them: Particals, Gerard Herman, Imge Özbilge, Cléo Totti, eeefff, Dries Verhaegen, Christoph Fink & Joëlle Tuerlinckx, Caroline Dumalin, Emmanuelle Quertain, Sjoerd Bruil, Ricardo Brey, Philippe Pirotte, Piet Coessens, Elen Braga, Selçuk Mutlu, Gert Verhoeven, Harry Heirmans, Yann Bronder, Laura Herman, Jeroen Stevens, Nicky Du Soleil, Luc Tuymans, Zena Van den Block, Christine Clinckx, Yann Freichels, Victoria Palacios, Wilemijn Zevenhuijzen, The Zangles, Benjamin Verdonck, Ria Pacquée, Kasper Bosmans, Carla Arocha, Solina Lapsus (ijf Boullet, Dieter Durinck, Jan Laroy), Antony Hudek, Yemo Park and Myrthe van der Mark, Robbe De Pestel, Luc Deleu, Hantrax, Laure Prouvost, Guy Rombouts, Myrthe Marnef, Leon Jespers, Joris Van de Moortel, Sorry dj's, Otobong Nkanga, Sara De Roo, Ruben De Smet, Kathleen Weyts, Dušica Dražić, Borokov Borokov, Raphael en Stijn Vandeputte, Ayrton Eblé, dj b2b2b, Messieurs Delmotte, Leo Goiris en Judit Waeterschoot, Chris Hoebe, Dylan Belgrado, Johanna Van Overmeir, Nicolaus Schafhausen, Rachel Daniëls, Lieven Segers, Rik Van Gorp, Casper Engels, William Ludwig Lutgens, Megan Briggs, Jakke Jalink & Pepijn Clement, Tamara Beheydt, Simon Delobel, Allon K, Benny Bang, Yuki Okumura, Marie-Sophie Beinke, Ulrike Lindmayr, Henk Visch, Carla Martin en Erisa Bakkali, Ignace Cami, Kamagurka, Michael Curran, Joachim Badenhorst, Allen-Golder Carpenter (TICK TACK), Kate Mayne, Bent Van Looy, Goedele Bartholomeeusen, Peter Morrens, Vincent Stroep, Rufus Michiels, Zeger Vetter, Sarah Smolders, Guy Van Bossche, Arthur Van de Velde, Hamer Kormeling, Nienke Baeckelandt, Stella Lohaus, Adriaan Raemdonck, Filip Collin, NICC, Fabrice Hofmans, Annea Lyvv Dreisz, Sebastian Vielma Fleischhacker (Terms & Conditions), Dries Willems, Frederick Keteleer (Antwerp Art), Julien Neiryck, Sandrine Morgante, Wim Van Mulders, Inès Eshun, Vedran Kopljar, Koen van den Broek, Ludo Mich, Stijn Ter Braak, Mekhitar Garabedian, Atelier de l'Enjolveur (Roel Kerkofs etc) and Nadia Bijl.

Media and civil society in Flanders

Het Laatste Nieuws publishes an article on the plans concerning M HKA, with the prevailing sentiment summed up as *"You cannot imagine M HKA without Antwerp."* The reader responses are also striking, with people from neighbourhoods such as Deurne and Merksem — who may never have visited M HKA — nevertheless expressing a strong sense that *"this is not right."*^{lii}

Sunday 26 October 2025

Arts and museum sector in Flanders

- Emilia Kabakov writes to Minister Gennez to announce that she will withdraw the major donation she and Ilya Kabakov made to M HKA should the works be transferred to Ghent. The donation includes the installation *20 August 1968*, addressing the Soviet invasion following the Prague Spring, centred on an interactive theatre maquette. The works were donated, she explains, *"because M HKA holds one of the most important international collections of contemporary art from the former Soviet sphere, and because it combines socio-political engagement with an active relationship between artwork and viewer."*
- Emilia Kabakov also notes that she and Ilya Kabakov had previously withdrawn S.M.A.K.'s right to reinstall the well-known *Documenta* toilets, and that S.M.A.K. has already lost works

by Kabakov in the past. She states explicitly that she does not want their work to be managed by S.M.A.K. ^{liii}

Monday 27 October 2025

Arts and museum sector in Flanders

Danny Devos and Tamara Beheydt write to Minister Gennez on behalf of Museum At Risk, emphasising the organisation's four core demands and calling for the urgent suspension of point 5.2.4 (*Transition trajectory for the reprogramming of the current M HKA site*) in the concept note. The arts field, they write, experiences “the closure of one of the two leading museums of contemporary art that Flanders possesses” as “a crisis without precedent in our immediate context.” They state that, in keeping with a tradition of dialogue with public authorities, they wish to extend a hand to work together towards a solution. ^{liv}

International arts and museum sector

- Hans Ulrich Obrist and Barbara Van der Linden write a letter to Bruno Verbergt, who, as director of Mu.ZEE, supports the concept note. They recall the moment of their *Laboratorium* exhibition in Antwerp in 1999, which embodied “a spirit of curiosity, dialogue and institutional imagination” that Verbergt supported at the time. The idea that the Antwerp museum should now be absorbed into S.M.A.K., they argue, is not only impractical but conceptually and ethically untenable. The logic of such a merger is, in their view, professionally, historically and politically incomprehensible.
- Obrist and Van der Linden note that, for the *Laboratorium* archive, they had always envisaged M HKA as the place where it would find its public and institutional context. The experimental history of contemporary art in Antwerp, they argue, can be understood as a reflection on the necessity of a museum of contemporary art in Antwerp — not a Kunsthalle or an ad hoc institution. A museum of contemporary art is a civic space of memory, imagination and renewal, and cannot be separated from its context. The proposed bureaucratic merger therefore represents not a synergy, but a rupture. ^{lv}

Wednesday 29 October 2025

International arts and museum sector

- CIMAM launches a global advocacy campaign in support of M HKA, calling on its members to contribute short texts responding to two core questions: why collections are an integral part of a museum's identity, integrity and public mission, and how they anchor relationships with communities and place; and what ethical and governance risks arise when political authorities attempt to redistribute or remove a museum collection.
- The contributions are published gradually via CIMAM's website and social media channels, with key quotations and voices highlighted to sustain visibility and engagement throughout the campaign. All materials are brought together on a dedicated Museum Watch page, ensuring continued accessibility and reinforcing the collective message of international solidarity.

Friday 31 October 2025

Arts and museum sector Flanders

The marathon broadcast accompanying the action “Museum At Risk: Artists Take the Floor”, which was streamed live on Radio Centraal and We Are Various, is released in full on Spotify. It opens with an introductory segment in which Dennis Tyfus speaks with passers-by including Christine Lambrechts, Christine Clinckx, Vaast Colson, Ken Verhoeven, Kris Van Dessel, Nav Haq and Gerard Herman. The Radio Centraal programming then transitions into the *Museum At Risk* action itself, featuring contributions, talks, performances and music, by some 120 artists and members of the wider arts field. ^{lvi}

Saturday 1 november 2025

Arts and museum sector in Flanders

Kabakov's letter reaches the media and makes a strong impression across a broad audience. ^{lvii}

Sunday 2 november 2025

Arts and museum sector in Flanders

- Museum At Risk holds a meeting at Beautiful Planet, reflecting on constructive ways to engage the M HKA board, parliament, the minister and the alderwoman for culture. Ideas are discussed for a debate or symposium, online actions and broader public visibility. It is decided to draft an alternative proposal: the first outline of a rewritten concept note offering a different solution.
- Museum At Risk addresses a letter to Bart De Wever, Mayor of Antwerp and Prime Minister of Belgium. Referring to his recent visit to the Grand Egyptian Museum in Cairo, they request a meeting and argue that it would be regrettable if Antwerp's leading Museum of Contemporary Art, with its outstanding collection, were absent when Egyptian dignitaries were to pay a return visit to Antwerp. ^{lviii}
- Emilia Kabakov's initiative is followed by other international artists who state that they entrusted their work to specific museums: Anish Kapoor (2 November), Annette Messager as heir to Christian Boltanski (3 November) ^{lix}, and Marina Abramović. The artists invoke their moral rights as the basis for rejecting the proposed operation.

Monday 3 november 2025

Museum (board, directorate and management)

- The governing board of M HKA meets. Bart De Baere returns his mandate as General and Artistic Director of M HKA. The news breaks in real time in the press. *De Morgen* runs the headline: "*The beheading of M HKA: it is becoming embarrassing for Gennez.*" ^{lx}
- The board takes note of the discussion paper on M HKA's governance that De Baere wrote over the summer, and appoints Vankeirsbilck as acting director. ^{lxi}

Arts and museum sector in Flanders

The M HKA management team meets with the museum directors of Antwerp.

Tuesday 4 november 2025

Arts and museum sector in Flanders

- M HKA is occupied by open classes from the Photography programme of the Royal Academy of Fine Arts Antwerp, including a *Soup Session* by Jaka Teršek and Ivan Tomašević.
- The Antwerp Arts Council meets with Antwerp's alderwoman for culture. Representatives are present from Antwerp Art; the visual arts spaces LLS Paleis and Extra City; the two academies; and the performing arts organisations Monty and Trix. They state that there is no confidence in the expertise of the authors of the concept note (Laurence De Bolle, Tom Kestens, Bruno Verbergt and Rolf Quaghebeur), and that trust must be restored if any future trajectory is to have a chance of success. They ask the alderwoman to convey this message to the minister, as the cabinet is currently unreachable. They request a meeting with the minister before 15 December. The alderwoman arranges an appointment.

Wednesday 5 november 2025

Museum (board, directorate and management)

The governing board of M HKA issues an open call for candidates for the position of independent board member. ^{lxii}

Arts and museum sector in Flanders

M HKA is occupied by open classes from St-Lucas Secondary School of Art Antwerp.

International arts and museum sector

Artists at Risk, the international organisation advocating for artists and art in precarious circumstances, describes the situation as “a shocking plan by the Flemish government to dissolve a leading contemporary art museum in Europe, M HKA.” The organisation states:

- *“It is an unprecedented attack in Western Europe that, if not reversed, could set a terrible precedent. Artists at Risk has witnessed and stood alongside institutions and leaders facing attacks on their independence, cultural orientation or even their very existence before — in Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and other far-right governments around the world. Trump’s recent takeover and bullying of major US institutions provides harrowing examples of dystopian future scenarios. Democracy and artistic freedom are under threat. For this reason, we must consider uniting to defend democratic institutions more broadly. Do we need ‘Museums at Risk’ (in the plural), and similar or even wider umbrella movements and platforms?”*
- *“Attempts by politicians to impose drastic changes without broad democratic consultation and approval — as is the case with M HKA — must be stopped.”* ^{lxiii}

Friday 7 november 2025

Arts and museum sector in Flanders

M HKA is occupied by open classes from St-Lucas Secondary School of Art Antwerp.

Saturday 8 november 2025

Museum (board, directorate and management)

The governing board of M HKA addresses a letter to the minister, articulating its concerns and expectations in light of the announced reshaping of the museum landscape in Flanders. It emphasises the importance of a careful process, in which all those involved in museum practice, both within and beyond the institution, are meaningfully and openly included.

M HKA expresses its ambition to develop a future-oriented, hybrid form of museum practice in which heritage and contemporary art are conceived as an integrated mission. This reflects the way M HKA already operates today, and the hybrid approach is also aligned with the ambitions the minister herself has articulated.

At the same time, the governing board calls for sufficient time and due care, so that collaboration with artists, partners and international institutions is not jeopardised. The letter presents dialogue, collaboration and participation as the way forward. ^{lxiv}

Thursday 13 november 2025

Arts and museum sector in Flanders

- The Antwerp group of museums and heritage institutions submits a formal advisory opinion on the concept note to Antwerp’s alderwoman for culture, Lien Van de Kelder. With regard to M HKA, they conclude: *“As the Antwerp group of museums and heritage institutions, we can offer only one clear recommendation concerning M HKA. It would constitute an enormous loss for Antwerp’s museum landscape — and, by extension, its cultural ecosystem — if M HKA were to lose its role and function as a museum of contemporary art. Its history, identity, a significant part of its collection, its artists and heritage communities are inextricably linked to Antwerp. In other words, M HKA has an identity strong enough to stand on its own feet and to function as a fully-fledged Antwerp museum of contemporary art.”*
- The group argues that a hybrid model bridging the heritage decree and the arts decree is perfectly feasible, and that recasting M HKA as a kunsthalle would amount to treating symptoms rather than causes. They see greater potential in deeper integration, rather than in splitting and redistributing functions.

- They also consider the proposed two-year transition period, with immediate financial consequences, to be unrealistic for a transformation of this scope. The five-year term for allocating operational funding is, in their view, far too short to build a new structural operation with a long-term perspective.^{lxv}

International arts and museum sector

- A letter previously sent to Minister Gennez by a broad group of members of the Ukrainian artistic community — artists, curators, writers and cultural workers — is made public. The authors express deep concern about the decision to dismantle M HKA as an independent institution and to relocate its collection.
- They point to the cultural ties between Belgium and Ukraine, noting that M HKA was the first European institution to open its doors with trust and hospitality to Ukrainian artists. Major Ukrainian artists from different generations have exhibited there. For Ukrainian artists, M HKA has been an essential gateway to the European discourse on contemporary art. The signatories refer both to exhibitions and to the fact that, when the war in Ukraine broke out, M HKA was the first to share the *Commitment for Ukraine* statement and to take concrete action. For them, M HKA stands as a symbol of what museums should be: spaces for difficult conversations and platforms for marginalised voices.^{lxvi}

Friday 21 november 2025

Arts and museum sector in Flanders

Museumoverleg XL, the broad forum bringing together national, supra-local and local museums, responds to the concept note. It states, among other things, that “*the proposed reconfiguration of M HKA illustrates how far-reaching the consequences of a top-down redesign can be for collections, staffing structures, heritage communities and urban ecosystems.*” It calls for “*alternative scenarios for this dossier to be examined without prejudice, with respect for history, identity and realistic conditions in terms of funding and organisation.*” Museumoverleg XL expresses its willingness to contribute constructively to the ongoing process surrounding the Strategic Vision Paper on Cultural Heritage.^{lxvii}

Sunday 23 november 2025

Arts and museum sector in Flanders

- Under the title “Museum (without) Shelter”, *Museum at Risk* occupies the entrance hall of M HKA with a programme of lectures on art, ecology and democracy. Experts, artists and researchers share insights and testimonies, with many of the talks focusing on the rich (pre)history of M HKA. The programme concludes with an analysis by sociologist Pascal Gielen, who situates the policy surrounding M HKA within broader recent developments in democracy and outlines possible ways of responding to them.
- Dozens of people gather outside M HKA for the powerful performance *Hands Against the Wall* by Ben Benaouisse, part of the S.M.A.K. collection. Participants are pressed with their hands against the museum wall, adopting the posture of someone being searched. The performance is a collaboration between Ben Benaouisse, Gudrun Somers and Museum at Risk, with support from *De Vrienden van het M HKA* and *The Art Circle*.
- The performance is carried out simultaneously at a contemporary art museum in Brazil, where *De Vrienden van het M HKA* – *The Art Circle* are visiting and bring the action to life together with local audiences.
- Under the title “Ignore the Artist”, performance artist DDV stages a solitary action at the entrance of M HKA.

Tuesday 25 november 2025

Museum (staff, excluding the board, directorate and management)

Delegations of M HKA staff are present at the intersectoral picket of the national strike in Antwerp, with speeches by Inge Hermans (Royal Flemish Conservatoire of Music) and Christine Lambrechts (M HKA).

Arts and museum sector in Flanders

M HKA is occupied by open classes from the St-Lucas KdG Antwerp Master's programme.

Wednesday 26 november 2025

Museum (staff, excluding the board, directorate and management)

M HKA staff distribute flyers during the sector demonstration at the Mont des Arts (Kunstberg) in Brussels.

Arts and museum sector in Flanders

NICC addresses the situation of M HKA and Minister Gennez's reshaping of the museum landscape during its speaking slot at the sector demonstration.

Friday 28 november 2025

Arts and museum sector in Flanders

Danny De Vos publishes an opinion piece in *Knack* in which he evokes the dynamics of the avant-garde in Antwerp. He argues that, sooner or later, all such artistic incubation culminates in the place where it belongs: a Museum of Contemporary Art. He calls on Minister Gennez, in a courageous moment of reconsideration, to carve her tenure as minister of culture into history. ^{lxviii}

Saturday 29 november 2025

Arts and museum sector in Flanders

Danny De Vos's opinion piece is also published in the weekend edition of *De Morgen*. ^{lxix}

Monday 1 December 2025

Policy

From an answer to a parliamentary question she submitted on the ownership structure of the collection, An Hermans (N-VA) concludes that stripping M HKA of its museum function is far from straightforward. ^{lxx}

Tuesday 2 December 2025

Arts and museum sector in Flanders

The Kunsthallenoverleg organises a semi-public discussion in Ghent, using the fishbowl method, on the reshaping of the Flemish museum landscape.

International arts and museum sector

Art News publishes a list of the 25 events that shaped the global art world in 2025. One of them is titled "*Flemish Government Votes to Eliminate Famed Antwerp Museum*." It is not every day, the magazine notes, that a museum appears to be closed without clear justification. There is also positive news for M HKA: the very next item on the list, "*Central Asian Arts on the Rise*," highlights one of the museum's recognised strengths. ^{lxxi}

Thursday 4 December 2025

Arts and museum sector in Flanders

De Wereld Morgen publishes an article in which Tamara Beheydt offers a preliminary round-up of the fallout from the concept note. Under the headline “Culture Shock: The Flemish Museum Landscape Overhauled,” she argues that the proposed reshaping leads not only to large-scale mergers but also to a highly controversial move: the unexpected downgrading of M HKA.

According to Beheydt, the concept note lacks a well-founded vision of contemporary visual art and of the role museums play in society, including at an international level. She identifies the most undemocratic aspect as the way the note was developed: without consultation or participation, followed by a top-down redesign that is then framed as a “*participatory*” transition process.

M HKA, she concludes, should not be erased by policy decisions, but reimagined by the artistic community itself, in a sector where solidarity has been eroded by fear.^{lxxii}

Monday 8 December 2025

Arts and museum sector in Flanders

- Dirk De Wit of Kunstenpunt publishes a discussion paper in which he positions the notions of *museum* and *art centre* in relation to one another. He argues that Flanders’ two largest contemporary art museums, S.M.A.K. and M HKA, are struggling with their museum functions and organisational structures, and have therefore drifted into the terrain of the *kunsthalle*. His starting point is that a museum’s activities should take the collection as the point of departure for exhibitions.
- He also emphasises that collections are instruments for storytelling and connection, going beyond the notion of “*artworks in public ownership*.” The idea of a single, *central* representative collection, he argues, is outdated. What matters instead is that multiple museums tell specific stories through their equally specific collections — and that these collections continue to be developed. Is this “*fragmentation*” or “*polyphony*”? With this question, he opens up a series of discussion points, both for the future of contemporary art museums and for a still undefined art centre.^{lxxiii}

International arts and museum sector

Artistic Freedom Initiative (AFI), a US-based organisation led by legal experts and founded to support artists in situations of risk, addresses an open letter to Minister Gennez. AFI conducts research into cultural and artistic autonomy in Europe and says it is alarmed by the recent decisions affecting an internationally respected institution with a global profile, taken without a democratic process and with potentially dangerous precedential effects.

AFI argues that the ICOM museum definition is being wrongly invoked to justify the policy. When democracy erodes, the organisation notes, cultural institutions are often among the first to suffer from political interference. AFI points to patterns it has documented in Hungary, Poland and Slovakia, where structural reorganisation has been used to reshape cultural institutions in line with political priorities. Such interventions typically take the form of administrative decisions, restructuring plans or so-called *reforms* that gradually undermine institutional independence.

The loss of that independence, AFI warns, is a loss to society itself: of reflection, critique and collective memory. That a comparable process now appears to be unfolding in Belgium is deeply concerning. The future of M HKA, AFI concludes, is therefore not only a cultural issue, but a democratic one.^{lxxiv}

Thursday 11 December 2025

Policy

The Strategic Advisory Council for Culture issues, on its own initiative, a cautious yet clear advisory opinion to the Minister of Culture:

- The sector council observes that the concept note was developed without adequate stakeholder participation and without transparency about the process. It remains unclear which stakeholders were consulted and which were not, resulting in a blurred relationship between the sector as a whole, politics and the administration.

- The concept note makes anticipatory decisions about the outcome of a process that has yet to begin. These pre-emptive moves hinder the possibility of a constructive continuation of the trajectory.
- The Arts and Heritage Sector Council proposes slowing down the process and, together with actors in the field, engaging in structured consultation on the steps that need to be taken before any definitive redesign is implemented, while ensuring that the trajectory is made transparent.

Arts and museum sector in Flanders

- Museum at Risk distributes flyers at the entrance during the opening of Art Antwerp.
- NICC organises a public debate at FOMU, offering artists, art workers and other cultural professionals a forum to discuss the announced reform of the Flemish museum landscape.
- *Mousse* magazine publishes an article by Dieter Roelstraete, in which he reflects from a personal perspective on the specificity of M HKA and the futility of subsuming its collection into S.M.A.K. He describes the decision as a chaotic act of cultural vandalism without parallel in recent European museum history, questions why Flanders should not be able to sustain two museums of contemporary art, and argues that it is alarming that party politics can still exert such decisive influence today.^{lxxv}

Friday 12 December 2025

Arts and museum sector in Flanders

De Morgen publishes an article revealing a damningly negative opinion by the Inspectorate of Finance regarding the decision to cancel the new-build project:

- The note submitted by the Minister of Culture to the Flemish Government is said to contain “*no substantiation whatsoever*”, and the budgetary consequences of halting the project are described as “*entirely inadequately developed*.”
- The newspaper also obtained correspondence showing that Flemish Minister for Budget and Finance Ben Weyts (N-VA) approved the decision at the request of the Minister of Culture, but only on the condition that “*all measures taken in the context of the museum reform be submitted to the Flemish Government and that any budgetary impact be absorbed within the available credits*.”
- The article further reports that Luc Lemmens (N-VA), chair of KMSKA, would like to see “*a close entanglement between KMSKA and M HKA*,” and that an agreement is said to have been reached between M HKA and the chief of staff of the Minister of Culture, referring to a transition period “*during which it will be examined how M HKA can take on museum and arts functions, with an active and accessible collection practice*.”^{lxxvi}

Sunday 14 December 2025

Museum

M HKA surrounds the museum building with fencing and banners on which anyone is invited to draw, write or imagine freely what a place for contemporary art should be, for a city and its community.

Wednesday 17 December 2025

Arts and museum sector in Flanders

De Morgen publishes an article titled “Over Our Dead Body”, revealing the contents of a memorandum from the governing board of KMSKA to the Minister of Culture. KMSKA rejects the proposed division into so-called *beacons* and describes itself as a “*hybrid museum in which old and modern masters are central and enter into dialogue with contemporary art and performance*.” The memorandum argues for the preservation of a museum pillar for contemporary art in Antwerp, with KMSKA expressing its willingness to play a role in this, in consultation with M HKA and the wider sector.^{lxxvii}

Thursday 18 December 2025

International arts and museum sector

L'Internationale Online publishes “The Fifth Estate: On Museums, Public Imagination and the Vanishing Space for Collectivity”, an essay by Philippe Pirotte in dialogue with Els Silvrants-Barclay, reflecting on the status of the museum in the current political climate.

- The authors lament the prevailing fixation on management and efficiency, and argue instead for recognition of the vital, productive relationships between collections, contemporary art, place and collective imagination.
- They compare museums to the *rumah adat* in the Austronesian world: traditional communal houses in which ritual objects embodying collective memory and shared values are kept. At once archive and mirror, these are places where a community recognises itself, reinterprets itself and reinvents itself. This stands in stark contrast to an increasingly transactional relationship to art and heritage. The reshaping of the Flemish museum landscape, they argue, aligns seamlessly with a managerial logic of efficiency. The annexation of the M HKA collection is read as a symbolic seizure of power: collections are merged, and reduced, to a series of so-called *masterworks*, trophies of Flemish cultural pride in themselves.
- Beyond the tension between nationalisation and privatisation in which institutions such as M HKA currently find themselves, the essay insists on the necessity of spaces of collectivity that exist outside both state control and market value. ^{lxxviii}

Arts and museum sector in Flanders

The Anglo-Saxon journal *Afterall*, of which M HKA has been a co-publisher for eighteen years, publishes a roundtable in which it invites a number of arts practitioners to respond from the perspective of museums as infrastructure, understood as a constellation of people, buildings and collections.

- Pascal Gielen speaks about the semi-public function of museums, including their aesthetic and affective dimensions, embedded in their local contexts as infrastructures of cultural meaning, an infrastructure that is now being dismantled.
- Hicham Khalidi points out that such systems are built up over decades and within an ecology. The problem, he suggests, may lie in the visibility of what is being done and in the narrative from which a government operates, particularly in Belgium, where decisions are taken directly at ministerial level.
- Dieter Roelstraete observes that while the logic of political rationalisation still dominates political discourse, the broad defence of M HKA demonstrates that this logic no longer carries social legitimacy, thereby exposing the measure as an undemocratic coup. He notes the international expansion of collection logics of which M HKA is part, and stresses the importance of the specificity of collections, arguing that the Ghent collection would be weakened rather than strengthened by absorbing the Antwerp one.
- Els Silvrants-Barclay argues that M HKA has invested insufficiently in its museum functions and sees a model of museological collaboration as a possible solution. She calls for governance that pays attention to “*infrastructuring work*.” Collections, she maintains, function best when rooted in a place; a centralising Ghent would risk becoming a non-place.
- Anne-Mie Van Kerckhoven and Tamara Beheydt reflect as privileged witnesses. Van Kerckhoven shares that she wishes to donate additional works, while Beheydt emphasises that collections come into being through relationships of mutual trust and responsibility.

Friday 19 December 2025

Policy

The item concerning the concretised plan for the proposed reform of the museum landscape, which Minister Gennez had deferred to the final government meeting of 2025, is postponed once again, this time to January.

Saturday 27 December 2025

Policy

In a year-end interview with *De Morgen*, Antwerp alderwoman Lien Van de Kelder (Vooruit) says she remains constructive and hopeful, arguing that *“there will be multiple display venues for the contemporary art collection.”* She aligns herself with Minister Gennez’s narrative by claiming that *“all Flemish museums recently received a poor report”* and that *“the funds released will go towards the operation of those museums rather than into a large, prestigious building.”*

She also states: *“What tends to be forgotten now is that there was a great deal of criticism of the way M HKA functioned. It needed to change. I sometimes found that museum difficult; I felt less connected to it.”* ^{lxix}

Arts and museum sector in Flanders

Bart De Baere, former general director of M HKA, looks back on the year in two year-end interviews — one in *Humo* (taken up by *De Morgen*), and another in *Gazet van Antwerpen* and *Humo* (also picked up by *De Morgen*). He reflects on two entirely unexpected decisions — the cancellation of a building project prepared over many years, and the dismantling of M HKA itself — as well as on what preceded and followed them. De Baere describes a hastily taken, top-down decision marked by little regard for the human factor and resulting in major destruction of value, with losses for Antwerp and for the visual arts scene.

Monday 29 December 2025

Arts and museum sector in Flanders

ETHCOM, the Ethics Committee of ICOM responsible for the museum definition cited as a basis for the concept plan, sends letters to Minister Gennez, the Department of Culture, Youth and Media (CJM), M HKA and *Museum at Risk*. In these letters, ETHCOM announces its decision to open a formal ethical case to examine the situation.

ETHCOM refers explicitly to the principle of the permanence of museums and to the central role of communities in relation to museums. It requests documentation concerning the procedures and decision-making processes that led to the discontinuation of M HKA as a museum, as well as governance documentation and preparatory materials related to the concept note.

Tuesday 30 December 2025

Museum

M HKA sends a letter to the Flemish Government on the basis of the legal opinion it has obtained.

- It points out that, under the Flemish Government’s own internal regulations, concept notes are instruments intended to actively involve various parties at an early stage of a policy or regulatory initiative, and therefore have no binding force.
- Nevertheless, M HKA argues, unilateral decisions have been taken and actions carried out that undermine its legal position: the cancellation of the new-build project; the intention to turn the current M HKA site into a breeding ground for contemporary arts; and the proposal to scale down M HKA’s collection-managing and museum functions. The concept note is evidently being treated as established policy already in execution, despite the absence of any decretal framework. In doing so, M HKA’s contractual rights and the principles of proper administration are being wholly disregarded.
- According to the letter, the Flemish Community is thereby ignoring and violating not only the principles of legal certainty and legitimate expectation, but also a number of general principles of good governance, including the principle of legality, the right to be heard, the principle of fair play and the duty of due care.
- Any potential transition trajectory, the letter concludes, should be the result of thorough consultation, in which the future of M HKA and its museum function remain explicitly on the agenda.

Tuesday 6 January 2026

Museum

At a well-attended press conference, M HKA, together with *Museum at Risk*, presents the external legal opinion on the concept note for the reshaping of the Flemish museum landscape. The legal analysis concludes that the concept note conflicts with existing legislation, binding administrative agreements and fundamental principles of good governance. For *Museum at Risk*, the right of designation (bestemmingsrecht) is central to the case. The news is picked up by, among others, VTM News, ATV, and The Guardian.

Wednesday 7 January 2026

Media and civil society in Flanders

Chris Dercon — former director of several of Europe's major institutions and now head of the Fondation Cartier in Paris — joins the international voices condemning the dismantling of M HKA in the Klara programme *Pompidou*.

"Transferring the collection also means transferring most of M HKA's funding to another institution — that makes no sense," Dercon says. *"You cannot detach the M HKA collection and the operation of M HKA from Antwerp. I am not someone who believes in cultural identity as such, but what I do believe is that the story of the collection and the story of M HKA are an Antwerp story. And that story speaks very differently in Antwerp than it ever could in Ghent."*

He adds a broader warning: *"As a private collector in Flanders, you now have to think twice before making a donation. And donations are the foundation of public museums — from New York to France, Amsterdam, London, and indeed Antwerp and Ghent."*

Thursday 8 January 2026

Policy

- A second meeting of the Parliamentary Committee on Culture is held on Minister Gennez's concept plan. Katrien Partyka notes that key questions from the first committee session remain unanswered: what the substantive rationale or basis is for the designation of *beacons*; why Hof van Busleyden and S.M.A.K. are to become Flemish institutions; and with whom the concept note was consulted and discussed in advance. She refers to an advisory text on cooperation between institutions in which the concept note and the proposed redesign are not mentioned at all.
- Members of parliament again question the method being followed. Filip Brusselmans (Vlaams Belang) remarks: *"Consultation that begins after all the guidelines have already been set is not consultation, but a briefing."* Gwendolyn Rutten (Open VLD) observes that the fact so many voices feel compelled to speak out suggests that the entire arts sector feels *"backed into a corner."* Once again, the need for openness and consultation is emphasised.
- Minister Gennez states that M HKA will be given a new opportunity, with both artistic and museum functions and guaranteed budgets — a message that is picked up by the media.
- Almost all members of parliament call for formal hearings, and ask whether decisions can be postponed until these have taken place.

Friday 9 January 2026

Policy

It had initially been announced that the project plan would be brought before the Flemish Government, but it is postponed once again.

Wednesday 14 January 2026

Policy

Minister Gennez puts the plans to reshape the museum landscape on hold.

Monday 19 January 2026

Museum

The governing board of M HKA meets to draft a non-legal letter to the minister setting out M HKA's principles for consultation.

Tuesday 20 January 2026

Policy

At the Antwerp City Council's Culture Committee, alderwoman for culture Lien Van de Kelder responds to opposition accusations that neither the city administration, the executive nor she herself made their voices heard in the debate around M HKA. The door to a museum function is open again, she says. She maintains that there has been continuous consultation, and that the dossier now needs to move *"to the workbench rather than the courtroom."*

According to Van de Kelder, "M HKA 2.0" deserves a fair chance. All actors will have to be heard, she says, while acknowledging that the starting point of the entire exercise was a negative evaluation. The trajectory that is now beginning should, in her view, strengthen M HKA across all museum functions. She expresses the hope that M HKA will seize this opportunity with both hands and convince the Flemish Government with a strong substantive plan. For M HKA 2.0, she adds, a new building will not be necessary.

Arts and museum sector in Flanders

M HKA is occupied by open classes from the St-Lucas KdG Antwerp Master's programme.

Wednesday 21 January 2026

Media and civil society in Flanders

The City Council's Culture Committee meeting is covered extensively in *Het Laatste Nieuws*.

Thursday 22 January 2026

Policy

The directors of the institutions concerned are informed about the consultation and decision-making process that the cabinet and the minister intend to follow.

Saturday 24 January 2026

Media and civil society in Flanders

De Morgen publishes an opinion piece by Bart De Baere, drawing on a second advisory report by the assessment committee that has recently come to light, focusing on cooperation between the Flemish government's own museums. That advice runs counter to the Project Plan. Its first key observation is unequivocal: *"The distinct identity of these institutions is widely recognised as an asset for the Flemish heritage field."* It argues that cooperation should emerge bottom-up rather than being imposed top-down.

De Baere notes that the project plan does not start from museum collections, as is common international practice, but from the notion of a *"Collection of the Flemish Community,"* for which the existing museums are now expected to serve as showcases and instruments. A state collection, he argues, can only function as a complementary policy; it is the specificity and autonomy of individual museums that must remain central.

ⁱ 04102025_VRT_nieuws_M HKA-directeur verbaasd dat nieuwbouw is geschrapt__Probleem met ons beleid_Vervang dan directeur

ⁱⁱ 05102025_DS_Waarom de Vlaamse regering het M HKA geen nieuw gebouw gunt

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.M HKA.be/m-hka-reageert-op-beslissing-vlaamse-regering-over-statuuut-en-toekomst/>

^{iv} 07102025_PETITION_OproepMassaalProtest

^v 07102025_PETITION_OproepMassaalProtest_COMMENT_PhilippePiotte_NL

^{vi} 07102025_PETITION_OproepMassaalProtest_COMMENT_RicardoBrey_EN

^{vii} https://www.change.org/p/reverse-the-decision-to-abolish-m-hka-s-status-as-a-national-museum?recruited_by_id=752fc050-b03e-11f0-b4eb-2fc8e05b7074&utm_source=share_petition&utm_campaign=share_petition&utm_term=share_petition&utm_medium=copylink

^{viii} <https://www.standaard.be/media-en-cultuur/luc-tuymans-M HKA-afdenken-nefast-voor-uitstraling-antwerpen/95428886.html>

^{ix} <https://www.vrt.be/vrtnws/nl/2025/10/06/musea-hoogleraar-samenwerken-diversiteit-steden-kunst/>

^x <https://www.vlaanderen.be/vlaamse-regering/beslissingen-van-de-vlaamse-regering/conceptnota-hertekening-landschap-eigen-museale-instellingen-en-van-de-beeldende-kunsten>

^{xi} <https://www.demorgen.be/nieuws/beslissing-gennez-over-m-hka-slaat-in-als-bom-bij-kunstenaars-we-krijgen-al-bijna-heimwee-naar-jambon~bdc1a1c7/>

^{xii} <https://www.demorgen.be/nieuws/alle-vertrouwen-in-de-minister-is-volledig-weg-waarom-geschoffeerde-herman-de-bode-opstapt-als-m-hka-voorzitter~b28426d7/>

^{xiii} <https://www.M HKA.be/hou-de-M HKA-collectie-in-antwerpen/>

^{xiv} <https://www.standaard.be/opinies/een-antwerps-museum-voor-hedendaagse-kunst-is-geen-overbodige-luxe/95641620.html>

^{xv} <https://www.standaard.be/media-en-cultuur/welke-museumcollectie-krijgt-het-smak-van-antwerpen-cadeau/95583909.html>

^{xvi} 07102025_DS_Stel je voor dat Jan Jambon het Muhka had opgedoekt

^{xvii} 20251008_1400_verslag_plenaire_vergadering

^{xviii} <https://www.standaard.be/opinies/in-antwerpen-geldt-beeldende-kunst-geld-ruimte-voor-kunst-vastgoed.-maar-kunst-is-geen-businessmodel/95944337.html>

^{xix} Massaal protest tegen plan om collectie van het M HKA te verhuizen naar Gent – 250 kunstenaars en andere betrokkenen bijeen in het FOMU

^{xx} <https://www.artnews.com/art-news/news/flemish-government-eliminates-m-hka-smak-museum-controversy-1234756101/>

^{xxi} <https://www.gva.be/binnenland/fernand-huts-wil-meewerken-aan-nieuw-antwerps-museum-voor-hedendaagse-kunsten-onze-topstukken-van-nu-waren-in-de-16de-eeuw-ook-hedendaags/96026194.html>

^{xxii} <https://www.demorgen.be/meningen/het-plan-gennez-voor-het-m-hka-abstracte-kunst-die-voorlopig-niet-in-aanmerking-komt-om-getoond-te-worden~b7ef3063/>

^{xxiii} 09102025_DM_De democratie boert achteruit, en de cultuurminister van Vooruit duwt mee

^{xxiv} <https://www.internationaleonline.org/contributions/statement-in-support-of-m-hka/>

^{xxv} Statement | M HKA caught in the crosshairs, what is the museum's future?

^{xxvi} 09102025_DS_Hoe het M HKA uitgroeide tot een bubbel op het Zuid_ kroniek van een aangekondigde val

^{xxvii} <https://www.standaard.be/opinies/de-vlaamse-cultuursector-stapt-mee-in-de-marketinglogica-van-de-regering/96255141.html>

^{xxviii} 251010_ontslagbrief_internationale_bestuurders

^{xxix} Eerste reflectie: Ontmoeting met Kabinet Cultuur op 10 oktober 2025

^{xxx} 10102025_DS_Is het Smak klaar om een baken voor hedendaagse kunst te worden

^{xxxi} <https://artreview.com/museum-professionals-protest-plans-to-asset-strip-antwerps-m-hka/>

^{xxxii} 10102025_TheArtNewspaper_Belgique le Gouvernement flamand annonce son projet de dissolution du Musée d'art contemporain d'Anvers

^{xxxiii} <https://www.M HKA.be/er-was-goed-nieuws/>

^{xxxiv} 11102025_OPENLETTER_Frank Demaegd (Zeno X)_NL

^{xxxv} 11102025_DM_LOPENDE ZAKEN - Koehandel of stedenoorlog De Vlaamse museumdeal doorgelicht

^{xxxvi} Patrick Janssens ontkent dat projectontwikkelaar al optie heeft op grond van Hof van Beroep: "Fake news"

xxxvii <https://www.M HKA.be/vooraleer-men-een-museum-opdoekt-15-1-vragen-die-een-antwoord-verdienen-over-de-toekomst-van-het-m-hka/>

xxxviii 13102025_LETTER_JoannaMytkowska_Linternationale_EN

xxxix <https://www.artforum.com/news/flemish-governments-plan-dissolve-m-hka-sparks-outrage-1234736630/>

xl 13102025_DS_De sluipende verkoop van de Antwerpse publieke ruimte

xli Open brief | M HKA en zijn gemeenschap van herkomst

xlvi <https://www.vrt.be/vrtnws/nl/2025/10/15/antwerpse-stadsbouwmeester-is-boos-en-houdt-er-mee-op/>

xlvi 15102025_DS_Mythologie meets manga_ Pauline Curnier Jardin exposeert in het geplaagde M HKA ★★★★★

xliv <https://www.gva.be/regio/antwerpen/regio-antwerpen/antwerpen/m-hka-kunstcollectie-blijft-in-antwerpen-volgens-genez-het-museum-wordt-niet-gesloten-of-opgedoekt/97951021.html>

xlvi <https://museumatrisk.be/nl/nieuws/statement-hisk-het-museum-als-muze-motor-magneet/>

xlvi 15102025_DS_Ann_Demeester_De brutale manier waarop het M HKA wordt ontmanteld, zou ons danig moeten verontrusten

xlvi Kunstenaars Luc Tuymans en Michaël Borremans over zetbaasjes, dwaze gewoonten en het M HKA – 'De politiek is weer glad vergeten om naar ons te luisteren'

xlvi <https://www.dewitteraaf.be/artikel/much-ado-about-m-hka-een-gesprek-over-twee-architectuurwedstrijden/>

xlvi 20102025_OPENLETTER_TeamZuidVZW

i <https://www.demorgen.be/nieuws/de-negatieve-beoordeling-van-het-m-hka-belandde-op-onze-redactie-dit-is-de-stok-waarmee-caroline-genez-het-m-hka-wil-doodkloppen~b7dd70f8/>

ii 23102025_DS_Otobong Nkanga prikkelt alle zintuigen met expo in Parijs_ "Andere levensvormen dan de mens zullen wél overleven. Dat is hoopvol"

iii https://www.hln.be/antwerpen/dit-is-de-degradatie-van-antwerpen-als-kunststad-zo-zien-lokale-kunstencentra-heisa-rond-m-hka~a74e8886/?slug_rd=1

iii 26102025_OPENLETTER_Emilija Kabakov Opposes Dismantling of M HKA_EN

lii 27102025_OPENLETTER_Brief aan Minister van Cultuur Caroline Genez_OriginalNL

lv 27102025_OPENLETTER_HansUlrichtObrist_BarbaraVanderlinden_to_BrunoVerbergt_EN

lvi <https://open.spotify.com/episode/0xqfPEAMk3fMFFMC5VVweY?si=9275e4ed66524776&nd=1&dlsi=83c25d4d1ab64f88> en <https://wearevarious.com/bosbar/live-from-de-bosbar-live-with-m-hka/>

lvii https://www.hln.be/antwerpen/russisch-amerikaans-kunstenaarskoppel-kabakov-wil-niet-dat-hun-werk-verhuist-van-m-hka-naar-gent-s-m-a-k-verloor-al-twee-van-onze-installaties~a33be5c5/?slug_rd=1

lviii 09102025_PETITION_ReverseDecisionFlemishGovernment_EN

lix 03112025_OPENLETTER_Annette Messenger_Christian Boltanski's Partner

lx <https://archive.is/2025.11.03-201054/https://www.demorgen.be/tv-cultuur/de-onthoofding-van-het-m-hka-het-wordt-genant-voor-genez~b67d0182/>

lxi <https://www.M HKA.be/bestuursorgaan-m-hka-aanvaardt-ontslag-de-baere-en-wijst-vankeirsbilck-aan-als-waarnemend-directeur/>

lxii <https://www.M HKA.be/m-hka-zoekt-drie-onafhankelijke-bestuurders/>

lxiii <https://www.instagram.com/p/DQqpXzvjqM8/>

lxiv chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnpbpcjpcglclefindmkaj/https://wp.assets.sh/uploads/sites/15610/2025/11/20251107_BO_brief_aan_de_minister_conceptnota_DEFAC_ondertekend.pdf

lxv 20251113_Advies conceptnota Vlaanderen

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