

Design Team Led by Selldorf Architects Selected to Reimagine London's National Gallery

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The National Gallery's 19th-century building fronts Trafalgar Square. Photo © National Gallery, London

[Selldorf Architects](#) has been selected by the National Gallery to design a suite of capital projects to mark the London institution's bicentenary in 2024. As one of the most visited art museums in the world, the National Gallery is collaborating with the New York-based architect "to create healthy, sustainable, and accessible spaces," according to an announcement by the museum this morning, which further expressed its desire for "an environment that is open and inclusive where visitors can feel welcome and reflect as they plan their visit." A major part of the National Gallery's bicentenary celebrations will be a program of inspirational exhibitions and outreach around the country and around the world, under the banner NG200.

Though Selldorf Architects, a 65-person practice founded by Annabelle Selldorf in 1988, has considerable experience designing arts and cultural projects across Europe and the U.S., this is its first museum project in the U.K. The firm previously completed several art galleries, including ones for David Zwirner, Hauser & Wirth, and Thaddaeus Ropac, in the country, as well as the design of the inaugural tent for Frieze Masters art fair in London's Regent Park in 2012, which is still in use.

Notably, many of Selldorf's interventions for cultural institutions—these include New York's Neue Galerie (2001) and Frick Collection, currently under construction—have been in landmark buildings. Similarly, with the National Gallery's 1838 structure on Trafalgar Square by architect William Wilkins, Selldorf's work will comprise remodeling parts of that and the Sainsbury Wing, the Venturi Scott Brown-designed addition that opened in 1991. The project also includes a [provision for a new research center](#), likely to be housed within the existing Wilkins Building.

Selldorf Architects' team includes executive architect and heritage consultant Purcell, Vogt Landscape, Arup engineers, planning and strategy firm AEA Consulting, community engagement specialists Kaizen, food service consultant Kendrick Hobbs, and wayfinding designer Pentagram. They beat out five other short-listed teams, all led by London-based architects: Asif Khan, Caruso St John Architects, David Chipperfield Architects, Witherford Watson Mann Architects, and 2017 Record Vanguard firm David Kohn Architects.

“This is a significant opportunity for an iconic cultural institution to reflect on its ambitions for the future and drive forwards an innovative, bespoke brief that befits its many visitors,” says Selldorf. “the National Gallery is home to one of the most exceptional collections of art in the world and has often led the way for other institutions globally.”

Following a year of unprecedented challenges due to Covid-19, the National Gallery, it says, “wants to build on its strength, inventiveness, and relevance to play a vital role in [Britain's] recovery story.” Due to the pandemic, in 2020 the museum saw a 50-percent drop in attendance as compared to 2019.

In the meantime, Selldorf's design for an addition to the [Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego](#) will open to the public in spring 2022.

Josephine Minutillo has been a contributor to *Architectural Record* since 2001. After practicing architecture for several years in New York City, she turned her attention full time to writing, joining the staff of RECORD as Senior Editor in 2008. In her current role as Features Editor, she reports on major building projects, exhibitions, and design innovation. Her articles have also appeared in *Interior Design*, *Mark, Frame, Surface*, *Azure*, *Whitewall*, *Interni*, *Monument* and *Encyclopedia Britannica*, and she was previously a Contributing Editor to *Architectural Digest*. She has been an invited critic at Washington University in St. Louis, The Cooper Union, Columbia GSAPP, Pratt Institute, The City College of New York, and Yale University.

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