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Seldorf Architects reveals first images of National Gallery revamp plans

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1/18 Seldorf Architects' proposals would bring more light to the Sainsbury Wing entrance and make it easier for visitors to navigate.

New York-based Seldorf Architects has revealed the first images of its proposed upgrade of the Grade I-listed National Gallery and Sainsbury Wing

Put out for public consultation today (18 February), the initial concepts show how the 1991 Sainsbury Wing, designed by Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown and Associates, will be opened up and the entrance made more welcoming.

There are also plans to create a research centre within the nearby west wing of the 1838 Wilkins Building and to upgrade public realm to bolster the gallery's presence on Trafalgar Square.

Annabelle Seldorf's [US practice](#) was selected from a shortlist including Asif Khan with AKT II, Caruso St John with muf architecture/art, David Chipperfield Architects, David Kohn Architects and

Wetherford Watson Mann Architects to win the job **last summer**. The firm is working with Vogt Landscape Architects, heritage experts Purcell, Kaizen, L'Observatoire and Kendrick Hobbs.

The international search for an architect, organised by **Malcolm Reading Consultants**, sought to find a multidisciplinary design team to 'vastly improve the welcome experience' at the gallery overlooking Trafalgar Square.

The scheme is part of the multi-stage '**NG200 project**' to mark the National Gallery's bicentenary in 2024 and will remodel the Sainsbury Wing's front gates, ground-floor entrance sequence, lobby and first-floor spaces.

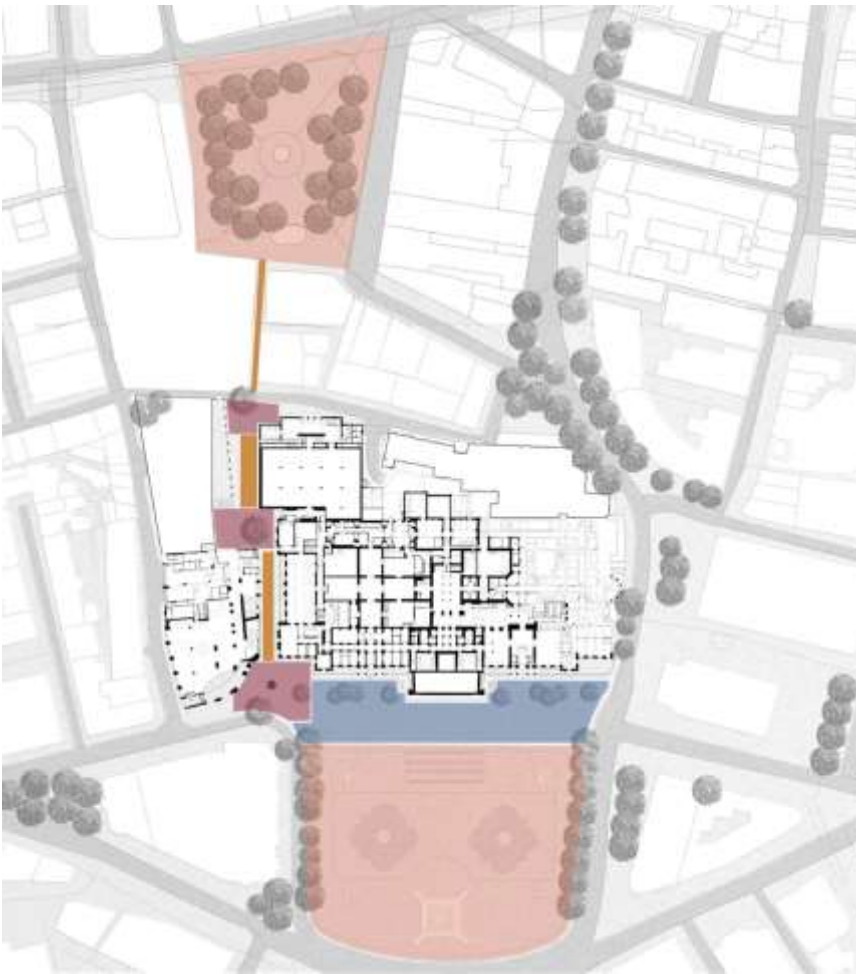
Early concepts show how the building will be 'made more visible and easier to navigate', with the staircase and second-floor gallery opened up and some existing walls and floor areas removed. Areas of existing dark glass will be replaced with clearer glazing to bring more light into a 'revived [and] less cramped' Sainsbury Wing, allowing in more natural light and improving views out to Trafalgar Square and beyond.

According to the gallery, the project will 'future-proof' the gallery for future generations, help reduce its carbon footprint, and encourage diverse audiences.

New routes are proposed through the landmark attraction, including a much-needed connection at the lower level between the Sainsbury Wing and the Wilkins Building, so visitors will no longer need to backtrack through the Sainsbury Wing to exit.

new public square in front of the Sainsbury Wing will be created by incorporating a previously unused area in the south-west corner of the Wilkins building. The new research centre would be directly accessible from this square.

The early plans also feature a 'clearer and more direct' pedestrian route along Jubilee Walk, connecting Trafalgar Square to Leicester Square.



Commenting on the emerging proposals and the launch of the first stage of public consultation, National Gallery director Gabriele Finaldi said: Covid-19 had a catastrophic impact on the arts and culture sector. As we move beyond the pandemic, it's vital that we build on our strengths, respond to challenges and opportunities. Underpinning these proposals is a concrete desire to build the foundations of the gallery's future, consolidating our role as the nation's art gallery. 'With millions of visitors each year, it's vital that we future-proof our buildings and reinvigorate the public realm immediately surrounding them.'

The National Gallery was designed by William Wilkins to occupy the northern end of Trafalgar Square. *The Sunday Times* held an open **competition to extend the gallery on to the neighbouring Hampton Site in 1982** but ABK's winning scheme was ditched after Prince Charles called it a 'monstrous carbuncle' in his famous speech at Hampton Court Palace.

The latest commission is the National Gallery's largest since **Dixon Jones delivered a series of entrance upgrades** from 2000 to 2005.

Selldorf Architects has already carried out extensive engagement with the gallery's internal departments and liaison with external stakeholders.

German-born Selldorf, who heads the 65-strong practice, said: 'The entire design team has worked very hard alongside The National Gallery to develop a brief that celebrates the gallery's historic setting, while also providing a better, more welcoming and inclusive experience for visitors.' Selldorf Architects has worked on numerous gallery projects, including for David Zwirner, Hauser & Wirth and Thaddaeus Ropac. Founded in 1988, the studio can also list the Frick Collection, Luma Arles, the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego and the Smithsonian American Art Museum among its roster of significant cultural clients.

The initial phase of works at the Sainsbury Wing is set to complete in 2024.



Proposed loop connection for the Sainsbury Wing.