

The world-famous art collection of Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen has over a period of 170 years grown to include more than 151,000 artefacts: more than 63,000 paintings, photographs, films, pre-industrial design and design objects, contemporary art installations and sculptures, as well as 88,000 prints and drawings. The collection is like a journey through the history of art, from the Middle Ages to the 21st century. This vast collection is highly diverse, is highly respected around the world and is unique within the Netherlands. During Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen's renovation and refurbishment, selected artefacts from the collection will be on show in school classrooms, as well as at other museums and institutions in the Netherlands and abroad. The entire collection will eventually be housed in Depot Boijmans Van Beuningen, which is set to open in 2021.



Artist Impression Depot Boijmans Van Beuningen. Design MVRDV



Museum and Depot Boijmans Van Beuningen. Photo credit: Ossip van Duivenbode



Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen

The celebrated Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen in Rotterdam is currently closed for a large-scale renovation and refurbishment. The museum building has been in need of maintenance for many years and could not continue in its present state, because of asbestos, flooding, fire safety and other factors. This listed building no longer satisfied either the technical or the functional requirements. The asbestos present in the museum had resulted in a maintenance backlog that could no longer be ignored. This, in conjunction with outdated electro-technical and air-conditioning systems, meant it was irresponsible to remain open. The renovation architect will be selected in 2020 and the refurbished museum is expected to open its doors in 2026.

Closed or accessible to the public?

The art depots in the cellar of Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen were unsafe, overfull and outdated. Over recent years these have been emptied and the art has been stored in five off-site depots. Storage of the precious collection of more than 151,000 artefacts in the museum's basement is not an option; the only solution is an external storage facility. The museum's preference (with the financial support of Rotterdam City Council and the philanthropic foundation De Verre Bergen) for a publicly accessible depot – instead of a closed storage facility on an industrial estate – means that its entire collection will be accessible to the public at a single location. This is a world first.

Depot Boijmans Van Beuningen

The world's first publicly accessible art depot will open its doors in the second half of 2021 at the Museumpark in Rotterdam. Depot Boijmans Van Beuningen offers a glimpse behind the scenes of the museum world and makes the whole art collection publicly accessible. Museums around the world usually display just six to ten percent of their collections; the remaining 90-plus percent is hidden in storage. Depot Boijmans Van Beuningen is breaking with this tradition of concealment and will make all these invisible artefacts visible. In a unique and iconic reflective building, specially designed by MVRDV to meet the requirements of this unprecedented building type, all 151,000 artefacts will be afforded a worthy place in the heart of the city. You can immerse yourself in the world behind the scenes of a museum and experience what maintaining and caring for an invaluable art collection actually entails. The 39.5-metre-high mirrored building with its rooftop woodland and panoramic vista will be a new icon for Rotterdam.

The depot's design

With its height of 39.5 metres, the depot's design by MVRDV is as tall as the tower of the neighbouring Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen. The depot is ovoid, a building 'in the round'. Its bowl-like form means that the ground-level footprint is small – maintaining views into and routes through the Museumpark – while the roof is as expansive as possible – replacing the occupied park space with even more open public space in the form of a rooftop garden populated by 75 multi-stemmed birch trees standing several metres tall. The reflective façade is comprised of 6,609 square metres of glass, subdivided into 1,664 mirrored panels which ensure that the design is integrated with its surroundings by reflecting the activity of the Museumpark back to its users and providing a spectacular view of Rotterdam's skyline.

A depot accessible to the public

Visitors to Depot Boijmans Van Beuningen can browse among more than 151,000 artefacts, independently or with a guide. They can also observe conservation and restoration processes, transportation and packaging of works of art. Surrounded by art, visitors are led upwards through the glass stairwell via five large zigzag stairways that are reminiscent of Giovanni Piranesi. As in a closed depot, the works of art are stored as efficiently as possible. Artefacts stand wrapped, hanging from a rack, displayed in a cabinet or exhibited in one of the 13 gigantic display cases that are suspended in the atrium. Prints, drawings and photographs will be stored in enclosed spaces, but visitors can submit requests to view works from these collections. The film and video collection can be viewed in special projection rooms.

The depot's commercial function

Alongside the depot's role as the museum's engine room, it will also serve a commercial function. Part of the building can be rented as storage space for the art of private collectors, corporate collections or other museums, which can in turn open up these spaces for the public. The sixth floor, accessible via an express lift, is situated at a height of about 35 metres and offers breathtaking vistas across the city of Rotterdam. The rooftop garden includes a pavilion with an events space that is available for rent and a daytime/evening restaurant.

An environmentally friendly depot

The art will be exhibited on the basis of climatic requirements, rather than artistic movement or era. Each storage space is provided with a specific climate that is maintained by a climate control system. There are five different climate zones, suited to works of art produced with different materials: metal, plastic, organic/inorganic, black-and-white and colour photography. This method of storing the art collection calls for specific climatic conditions in which the air is not overly cold, warm, humid or dry. The regulation of this climate requires precision and consumes lots of energy. The building has been designed to provide optimal conditions for the art while being as energy-efficient as possible. Where possible, sustainable materials are being employed: the building has LED lighting, a geothermal heat exchanger, solar panels, an innovative system for climate control, and rainwater storage that supplies water for the rooftop garden and toilet facilities.

Facts and figures Depot Boijmans Van Beuningen

- Scheduled to open in the second half of 2021
- The first publicly accessible art depot in the world
- Space for 151,000 artefacts from the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen collection
- Designed by Winy Maas, co-founder of the architecture firm MVRDV
- Ground level and six floors for art storage – with a restaurant, roof garden and panoramic view on the 6th floor
- 39.5 metres tall, with a roof terrace at a height of about 35 metres
- Building's diameter: 40 metres at its base expanding to 60 metres at the top, with 15,541 square metres of floor area
- 5 different climate zones
- 4 professional restoration studios
- Some 1,900 square metres of depot space for rent, intended for private collectors
- Façade: 6,609 square metres of glass, divided into 1,664 mirrors, which can be sponsored
- Depot opening hours: Tuesday – Sunday, 11:00 – 18:00
- Restaurant opening hours: Tuesday – Sunday, 11:00 – late (kitchen closes at 22:00)

Location

Depot Boijmans Van Beuningen
Museumpark 32
3015CX Rotterdam
The Netherlands

Depot Boijmans Van Beuningen is situated in the Museumpark, a 10-minute walk from Rotterdam's Central Station. There are many other cultural institutions in the vicinity: Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Kunsthal Rotterdam, Het Nieuwe Instituut, the Chabot Museum, Rotterdam's Natural History Museum and the Sonneveld House.