

THE JOSLYN



Prix Versailles names seven to World's Most Beautiful Museums list for 2025

By Josh Niland | May 5, '25 12:01 PM EST



Grand Palais restoration in Paris, France by Chatillon Architectes. Photo: © Simon Lerat / GrandPalaisRmn

The newest update to the Prix Versailles World's Most Beautiful Museums List is out for the competition's 11th edition. Seven outstanding new cultural spaces from Asia, the Americas, and Europe emerged through a rigorous process that assessed their aesthetic qualities and ability to promote ecumenical aims at a moment of "clear need" to connect with other cultures globally.

According to the selection jury, each winner is "the product of meticulous, long-term work based on a rigorous, artistic design that was developed at the initiative and in service of an authentic approach focused on heritage and scenery." The 2025 list includes designs from Kengo Kuma, Snøhetta, DLR Group, and Chatillon Architectes.

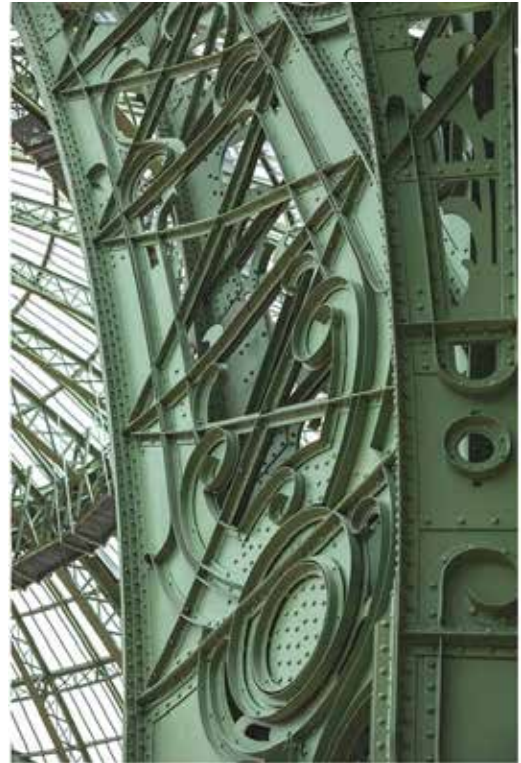
In a press release, Jérôme Gouadain, the Secretary General of the Prix Versailles, adds: "By fostering their own special ambiance, tailored to each site's specific mission, these places deliver singular experiences to their visitors, encouraging them to open their minds both outwards and inwards."

Three of the museums will later be granted World Title distinctions. They are to be joined later by the staged announcement of other World Selections category winners beginning in June and running through November.

Grand Palais in Paris, France - Chatillon Architectes



Grand Palais restoration in Paris, France by Chatillon Architectes. Photo: © Simon Lerat / GrandPalaisRmn



Description: "Originally built under the supervision of architect Charles Girault for the 1900 Paris Exposition, the Grand Palais stands out as one of the jewels of Paris, the museum city. It was raised in the space of just three years, thanks to the tireless efforts of hundreds of laborers and some forty-odd artists, featuring sculptures, mosaics and frescoes that imbue it with an otherworldly atmosphere. More than a century later, an extensive restoration project was led by Chatillon Architectes, once again involving hundreds of workers. Its enormous 17,500 m² glass roof continues to bathe the space in natural light today. But behind its dusty coloured façades and its green metal framework, the Grand Palais has been transformed into a place of discovery and sharing, where the arts, innovations and immersive experiences intermingle. Inside, the upper gallery running around the entire interior has been preserved and enhanced. That walkway serves as a real promenade that establishes a striking link between the building's past, present and future, simply by means of its architecture which can be admired there down to the last detail, giving visitors an educational vision of the history of Paris."

Saka Museum in Bali, Indonesia - Mitsubishi Jisho Design



The Saka Museum in Bali, Indonesia by Mitsubishi Jisho Design.
Photo: SAKA Museum

Description: "What if luxury could become culture? Since July 2024, Saka Museum – tucked away inside Ayana Bali, a hotel complex overlooking Jimbaran Bay – has answered that question with a resounding 'Yes! Devised by Mitsubishi Jisho Design, the new museum embodies the Balinese philosophy of Giri Segara, the sacred balance between mountain and sea, symbolising the interconnected forces of spiritual power and life's continuous transformation. That principle is reflected in the sloping roof, which visually bridges the mountains and the ocean, while the reflecting pool surrounding the museum mirrors the shifting moonlight in a metaphor for introspection and renewal. [The] Museum houses archival documents and historical objects, while its exhibitions showcase the island's living traditions, including the contemplative philosophy of Nyepi, the Balinese Day of Silence. Here, both contents and container are one with their environment. An architectural marvel in the service of timeless culture."

Adeum in Seoul, South Korea - Kengo Kuma Associates



Adeum in Seoul, South Korea by Kengo Kuma Associates. Photo: Seojeon Cultural Foundation

Description: "Making a musical instrument out of a building is a challenge that has been faced by many architects over the years. With Adeum, Kengo Kuma has exceeded the goal of mere sound by creating an architectural instrument that allows visitors to reconnect with nature by engaging all of their five senses. The façade deploys a dense, vertical array of bright aluminium pipes to capture the coexistence of order and disorder found in nature, as well as the ephemeral beauty of natural light. As visitors navigate through the forest of aluminium tubes and down the valley of stone steps, the hard exterior gradually gives way to an entrance made of fragrant cypress. The aroma and warmth of the wood stimulate the senses while drawing out a feeling of intimacy with nature. Offering a unique, multisensory experience, Adeum combines visuals, sound, wind and scent into a cohesive whole – a gesamtkunstwerk that serves as a place of rest and contemplation."

Kunstsilo in Kristiansand, Norway - Mestres Wåge Architectes, Mendoza Partida, and BAX



Kunstsilo in Kristiansand, Norway by Mestres Wåge Architectes, Mendoza Partida, and BAX. Photo: Alan Williams

Description: "In Kristiansand, Mestres Wåge Architectes has transformed an immense, industrial portgranary – comprising 30 grain silos – into an internationally renowned cultural venue, in a huge architectural gamble that has more than paid off. Located on the waterfront, this extensive 3,300 m² three-storey building dating from 1935 has been the largest museum in Southern Norway since May 2024. Housing the world's biggest private collection of Nordic art, Kunstsilo offers panoramic views of the region's spectacular coastline from the rooftop. But the most spectacular part of the building is its gigantic silos, which attract natural light, underscoring the monumental scale of the structure. Like a concrete cathedral, this place inspires a sense of grandeur and poetry, all amplified by the towering staircase, which provides for an ascension that lends itself wonderfully to meditation."

Diriyah Art Futures in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia - Schiattarella Associati



Diriyah Art Futures in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia by Schiattarella Associati. Photo: Hassan Alshatti

Description: "Designed by the Roman architectural firm Schiattarella Associati, Diriyah Art Futures – the first museum on the Arabian Peninsula exclusively dedicated to digital art – literally appears to have emerged from the earth. The connection between traditional architecture and new technologies offers visitors a sense of Nabataean vertigo, in which they can no longer tell what's more important, the container or its contents, the building or the collections. To fulfil its ambitious programme of exhibition galleries, research labs, artists' residencies, an auditorium, a training centre and more, Diriyah Art Futures is actually a series of separate, streamlined spaces designed to seamlessly blend the urban and agricultural elements of Wadi Hanifah. The concept, which is both contemporary and typical of the region, establishes a pleasing balance between construction and nature, tradition and future. In other words, it is a boundary structure but with open ramparts: fresh, shady areas created by narrow, deep passageways directly inspired by the spirit of the place."

Cleveland Museum of Natural History in Cleveland, USA - DLR Group



Cleveland Museum of Natural History in Cleveland, USA by DLR Group.
Photo: © Kevin G Reeves

Description: "The new architecture of the Cleveland Museum of Natural History is intended to reflect Northeast Ohio's rich geological history. The challenge for DLR Group, which managed the renovation and expansion of this more than a century-old museum, was to reorganise a varied complex into a coherent contemporary structure. Inspired by the glaciers that carved the Great Lakes, the architect stylised flowing white alluvial forms in a single, continuous concept to unify the various parts of the facility. Set on remarkable landscaped grounds, the museum recounts the history of life on Earth, with the Visitor Hall at the centre showcasing its most iconic specimens. When architecture becomes an expression of the natural world, it fosters a sense of wonder and discovery. That primary mission of any museum is magnificently deployed here in Cleveland."

Joslyn Art Museum in Omaha, USA - Snøhetta



Joslyn Art Museum in Omaha, USA by Snøhetta. Photo: Nic Lehoux

Description: "The Joslyn Art Museum in Omaha, Nebraska, embraces paradox. On the Central Plains of the Midwest, in the eastern part of the Great Plains, the museum was founded in 1931 using Sarah Joslyn's donation to the city to fund free public access to the arts, with the intention of documenting 5,000 years of human creativity and the diversity of the world's cultures. The campus features three remarkable structures: the 1931 Joslyn Building, an Art Deco masterpiece created by the father-son team of John and Alan McDonald; the 1994 Walter & Suzanne Scott Pavilion, the first American commission for Norman Foster; and now the 2024 Rhonda & Howard Hawks Pavilion, designed by Snøhetta. The paradox stems from the fact that, in contrast to its immediate environment, the contemporary addition by the Norwegian architectural firm seems to defy the ages, just as the Art Deco pavilion made no allusions to Roman conquest. And the result is spectacular. The Joslyn now provides an overview of all the twists and turns of US history and all the hopes of humankind for the next 5,000 years."