

2009 EUROPEAN MUSEUM OF THE YEAR AWARD

PRESS RELEASE



EMYA 2009: Salzburg Museum scoops the Award in Bursa

The European Museum of the Year Award, organised by the European Museum Forum, has celebrated its 32nd year with a Presentation Ceremony and associated activities based at various venues in Bursa, Turkey hosted by Bursa Metropolitan Municipality.

The 2009 Awards were announced on Saturday 9 May, during a ceremony attended by more than 200 people from 25 European countries at the Club Altin Ceylan, followed by a Gala Dinner. The winners were announced by Dr Wim van der Weiden, Chairman of the Judging Committee and presented by Dr. Yilmaz representative of the Minister of Culture and Tourism of the Turkish Republic.

The results of the 2009 Awards are as follows:

The 2009 European Museum of the Year Award is given to *Salzburg Museum, Salzburg, Austria*. The museum reopened in 2007 in the 'Neue Residenz' built in 1600 for Archbishop Wolf Dietrich and situated in the old city centre. The building is protected and the architects have done a very good job in restoring and adapting it to museum purposes by integrating contemporary architectural elements. The museum management was closely involved in the planning of technical systems which incorporate sustainable lighting and cooling elements in the building. The museographical furniture as well as the audiovisual and electronic media is of a high quality and very creative, but modest at the same time. The storyline of the main permanent exhibition, 'The Salzburg Myth' is self-critical and courageous, whereas the rotating exhibitions of the 'Salzburg Personalities' that show nine out of 200 portraits of important citizens of Salzburg at a time, offer the visitor a variety of sensorial and intellectual experiences. The original concept of the 'Children's World' consists not only of a mystery tour through the museum with special activity stations and a small publication, but also means that spaces only accessible by children have been created throughout the exhibition rooms. The museum management is very committed, and the highly-trained and motivated members of staff of the visitors' service are particularly friendly and helpful. Our judges felt that this museum provides an excellent example of a package of qualities which are highly satisfying, both from a museological and users' point of view.

Specially commended

- Archaeological Centre of Almoína, Valencia, Spain
- Museum of Life Stories, Speicher, Switzerland
- Museum of Modern Art, Istanbul, Turkey

These three museums received a special diploma recognising their excellence in conception, innovative approach to interpretation and attention to the needs of their visitors.

Following the two days of public interviews before the Ceremony, those museums which had passed the first stage of the judging each received a Nomination certificate in recognition of their innovative achievements. The full list of these museums can be seen on the website of the European Museum Forum, www.europeanmuseumforum.eu.

The Micheletti Award for the most promising technical or industrial museum among the current year's candidates goes to the *Museum of the Jaeren Region at Naerbø in Norway*. The judges were impressed by the combination of the Science Farm and the Science Factory, where the main achievement in both venues is the stimulation of visitors' curiosity about contemporary science and technology, offering them the opportunity to take part in experiments and carry out research. The scientific explanations were clear and knowledge of the subjects was gained by hands-on experience rather than long explanations. This museum illustrates a level of creativity and imagination, combined with success in fundraising which should stand it in good stead in the future.

The Council of Europe Award, a bronze statuette by Miró, is given this year to the Zeeuws Museum at Middelburg in The Netherlands. The museum, housed in a 12th-century abbey that later served as a regional parliament, presents regional collections in unexpected visual and sensory contexts, relating the local scene to other parts of Europe and the world. The name of the museum relates to *Zeeuws*, which is a regional language spoken in the Dutch province of Zeeland. The vast exquisite series of 16th-century tapestries is lit with skilful precision, leaving no bright spots or dim sections, an achievement which had taken three years to accomplish. The section relating to the oldest artefacts has a minimalist presentation, while the section dedicated to fashion is impressive and was described by the judges as inspired. The museum's focus on 'excitement, liveliness, interaction' and its appeal to a younger audience was particularly appreciated. This award was presented at a separate ceremony in Strasbourg on 28 April 2009.

The European Museum Forum: what it is and what it does

The Forum is responsible to the European Museum Forum Trust, a charity registered in the United Kingdom (282158), and operating under the auspices of the Council of Europe. In addition to holding the European Museum of the Year Award, it organises Museum Workshops at different places in Europe, publishes a quarterly Bulletin and an annual brochure on the Awards.

Its day-to-day operation is controlled by an international judging committee, composed of men and women influential in the museum and cultural fields and it is a wholly independent body, deriving its income from membership and entrance fees and various forms of sponsorship. It considers that its main duty is to the public, but it maintains good relations with both national and international professional organisations.

The candidates for its Award are new museums, established within the past two or three years, and older museums which have been completely reorganised during the

same period. It receives applications from between 50 and 60 candidates a year, all of whom receive assessment visits from members of the Forum's judging committee, who constitute a European flying squad, which goes from country to country encouraging, comforting, criticising and offering practical advice. This is something new and unique in the museum world. So far more than 1500 museums in 40 countries have taken part in the EMYA scheme.

The Forum considers itself to be European in the most profound sense of the word, a focus of cultural understanding. Its opinions are expressed in plain terms, and its aim each year, in selecting the European Museum of the Year, is to discover and publicise a museum which has succeeded outstandingly well in dealing with the problems that are facing museums everywhere, problems of imagination, money, staff morale, bureaucracy, integrity and professional pride, taste, social responsibility and planning for the future.

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