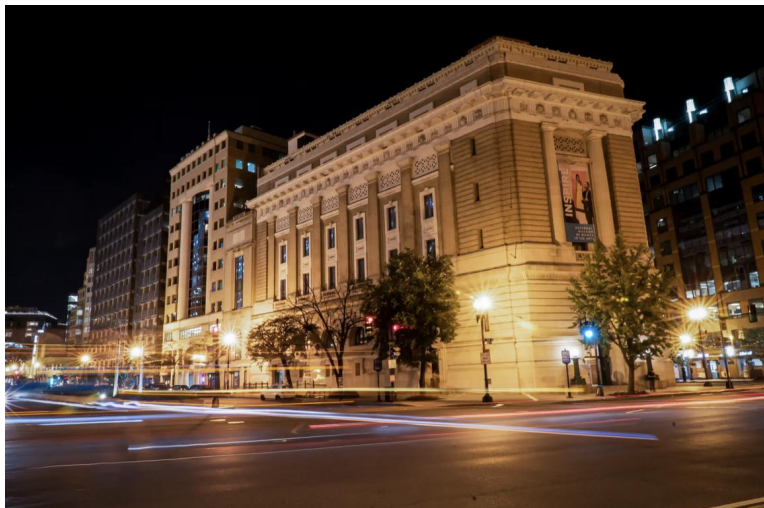


# US National Museum of Women in the Arts to reopen in October following \$67.5m renovation

Benjamin Sutton 15 February 2023

**Described as “the first major museum solely dedicated to championing women artists”, the Washington, DC museum is adding 20% more gallery space**



More than two years after it closed the doors to its Classic Revival building near the White House in order to undergo a \$67.5m renovation, the National Museum of Women in the Arts (NMWA) in Washington, DC revealed today (15 February) that it will reopen on 21 October.

The institution, which bills itself as “the first major

museum solely dedicated to championing women artists”, has been closed since August 2021. Its extensive revamp has included upgrading the building’s accessibility, revamping its research library, theater, gift shop and other public spaces, and

increasing its galleries by 20%. Many back-of-house features have also been upgraded, including improved climate control, security and conservation capabilities.

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<sup>1</sup> National Museum of Women in the Arts, exterior, 13th Street and New York Avenue sides, evening, 2019. Photo by Cameron Robinson.

The renovation, toward which more than \$63.5m has already been raised, was designed by Baltimore-based firm Sandra Vicchio & Associates and involves an extensive transformation and restoration of spaces in the museum's building, a former Masonic Temple completed in 1908.



National Museum of Women in the Arts renovation project, Great Hall Rendering by Sandra Vicchio & Associates, LLC, with Marshall Craft Associates, Inc.

“As both a museum and a megaphone, we advocate for gender equity through excellence in the arts,” museum director Susan Fisher Sterling said in a statement. “Our renewed and reimagined spaces will enhance our ability to share great works of art, engage with our visitors and reach out to new audiences.”

The museum will reopen with a major exhibition of large-scale works by women artists featuring works by Cornelia Parker, Shinique Smith, Joana Vasconcelos, Ursula von Rydingsvard and others. Titled *The Sky's the Limit*, it will include a number of works from the museum's permanent collection that have never been publicly displayed. Other exhibitions inaugurating the renovated museum will include solo shows devoted to the Chinese American artist Hung Liu and a historical survey on the prints of 17th-century French artist Antoinette Bouzonnet-Stella.

The NMWA's founders, Wilhelmina and Wallace Holladay, opened the museum in central Washington in 1987, steadily growing the institution's collection, stature and square footage in the subsequent decades. A year prior to its reopening, the museum's

scaffold-shrouded exterior was wrapped in a large textile work by the Austrian artist Katharina Cibulka from her *SOLANGE* series. Cross-stitched on white mesh, its pink tulle message reads: “As long as generations change but our struggles stay the same, I will be a feminist.” The work was especially poignant in the aftermath of the US Supreme Court’s ruling removing the federal right to have an abortion.

Though the NMWA was very much a pioneer, it now faces the prospect of being one of two national museums in Washington devoted to women’s history and culture. The Smithsonian Institution’s long-planned American Women’s History Museum is in advanced planning stages, with a site soon to be selected.