



MMCA's long-term vision for 2022-2024

6 April 2022

The National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea (MMCA, Director Youn Bummo) announced the museum's mid- to long-term vision, including four main points of future focus, at a press conference on Wednesday, 6 April 2022.

In the three-year-long "Period of Preparation" between 2019, the year of the museum's 50th anniversary, and 2021, a year in which the museum turned the COVID-19 crisis into an opportunity, MMCA has made remarkable progress to prepare itself for the future. Based on this progress, MMCA has set its vision for the next three years, a period it has christened the "Period of Expansion Ahead of the Next 50 Years," as **"an open museum that bridges regions, generations, and the world."**

The new vision aims to help the national museum, which has long been orientated toward the metropolitan area, to reach beyond and live up to the demands of the current "era of nationwide cultural privilege." MMCA will expand upon the meaning of being an **"open museum"** by bridging the cultural gap between central and regional areas of Korea, interlinking the arts and cultural heritage of the past, present, and future, and connecting not only Korea to the rest of the world but the real world (the universe) to the virtual world (the metaverse).

Period of Preparation (2019–2021): Achievements

Over the past three years, MMCA has accomplished the goal of ► **building its collection to 10,000 works**. This was achieved through the acquisition of some 2,000 works in MMCA Lee Kun-hee Collection (1,488 works) and the Dongsanbang collection (195 works), plus works by master Korean artists such as Park Sookeun, An Choongsik, and Park Saengkwang. (The collection held 8,362 works in late 2018, which grew to 10,916 works as of late 2021.) Considering MMCA's average yearly number of acquisitions is around 100 to 150, made with its collection budget of approximately KRW 5 billion, last year's achievement marked the groundbreaking expansion of the national collection.

Secondly, MMCA has successfully executed the ► **three-year restoration project** of world-renowned artist Nam June Paik's *The More, The Better*. As of April 2022, trial operations of this work are proceeding successfully with the aim of full reoperation, and a feast of Paik-related events is to come, including the archival exhibition *The More, The Better Archive* in commemoration of the 90th anniversary of the artist's birth, the large-scale feature exhibition Paik Nam June Effect, and the academic event "My Nam June Paik" (working title). With these events, the work is expected to set an epochal example of media art conservation.

Thirdly, MMCA has ► **established a footing for art-historical research** by publishing *Korean Art 1900–2020*, an overview of 120 years of Korean modern and contemporary art, and *MMCA Collection 300*, featuring select works in the museum collection, based on the studies of 33 in-house and outside experts.

Fourthly, even amid prolonged closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the museum attracted 120,000 viewers to the online opening of the calligraphy exhibition *The Modern and Contemporary Korean Writing*, and would go on to be selected among the world’s top 10 online museums by major international media outlets, share a roundtable discussion on COVID-19 with 86 countries, and distribute free online educational materials on art to 337 middle and high schools around Korea. On its website, it started offering an online museum, high-resolution images of the museum collection, virtual exhibition tours, and VR experiences of Korean art, actively digitalizing all museum projects to ► **improve the quality of remote public services and provide a wider range of artistic experiences.**

Fifthly, MMCA has held nine collaborative exhibitions with other public art museums, distributed collection management systems to 18 institutions, dispatched archivists and funded the construction of archives, aided in matching artists recommended by public art museums to experts, provided conservational support for 21 works at 21 public and private art museums, and loaned 39 works in the Art Bank to four schools and military camps in areas with limited cultural access. In doing so, it has ► **reinforced its regional cooperative network, reestablished itself as a collaborative museum, and extended its public role as a national museum.**

Period of Expansion Ahead of the Next 50 Years (2022–2024): Points of Focus

Over the next 50 years, museums will have to closely keep up with the pace of society as they transform. They must continue to serve their expert functions of collection, exhibition, education, and research; pursue “scalability” in correlation with domestic and overseas communities; improve accessibility for culturally underprivileged regions; respect the value of diversity; and renew themselves as “sustainable” museums in response to global climate change and technological advancement. To these ends, MMCA has declared the three years from 2022 to 2024 the “**Period of Expansion Ahead of the Next 50 Years**,” and the four main points of its future focus are “**Expansion and Connection**,” “**K-art**,” “**Ecological Museum**,” and “**Digital Innovation**.”

1. Expansion and Connection

From the capital to the regions of Korea, a museum shared by all

■ **MMCA Daejeon as the beginning of expansion**

In addition to the four museums in Seoul, Gwacheon, Deoksugung, and Cheongju, MMCA will be opening a “national art storage and conservation center” in Daejeon (**MMCA Daejeon**) to initiate expansion and open an “**era of nationwide cultural privilege**” with a five-museum system. The new museum will be housed in the old Chungnam Provincial Government Office building, which will be renovated to preserve its status as a work of modern architecture. The building, registered as Cultural Property No. 18, embodies the history and legacy of old Daejeon and will become a meaningful example of urban regeneration mediated by arts and culture through its rebirth as a museum. Mirroring the characteristics of Daejeon, a city of science and technology, MMCA Daejeon will combine the various perspectives of the region and the art world with the aim of establishing itself as an arts and culture hub in central Korea. With its basic design to be completed within 2022 by a new team of construction executives, construction is scheduled to begin in 2023 and end by 2025, with the opening of the museum planned for early 2026. The nationwide expansion of MMCA

to Cheongju and Daejeon signifies the foundation of a systematic network dedicated to the management and research of national artworks in response to changes in the art policy (e.g., payment of taxes by artworks) and the increasingly popular culture of donation. At the same time, it is expected to reduce the cultural gap between the capital and regional areas and promote nationwide access to arts and culture.

■ MMCA Cheongju to reinforce its role as a national artwork conservation center

MMCA Cheongju, which has positioned itself as a hub of arts and culture in Korea's central region, is further strengthening its role as a **general hospital for artworks** as it takes charge of the overall conservation of national cultural assets. To this end, MMCA is using information and communication technologies (ITC) as well as artificial intelligence (AI) to establish basic data for preventative artwork conservation. Using state-of-the-art analytic technology, information about artwork, such as the artist's media and methods of expression, are compiled into big data to serve as the grounds for conservational treatment and scientific assessment. Based on these achievements, the MMCA will continue to hone its expertise through **regularly hosting international academic symposia** to accommodate exchange between domestic and overseas conservation experts and **publishing existing Korean journals on artwork conservation in English**. Moreover, as the only artwork conservation center in Korea, it will run a systematic educational program dedicated to artwork conservation for undergraduate and graduate students in related fields and public and private museum staff to **foster experts in the field of conservational science**.

■ Connecting the country through a regional cooperation network and MMCA Lee Kun-hee Collection tour

MMCA is also further extending the **regional cooperation network** that it has steadily built over the past three years, connecting the country around its branches to actively close the cultural gaps between regions and expand opportunities for cultural appreciation nationwide. Beginning this year, it will regularize and substantialize branch director meetings and working-level conferences. Also, it will work towards strengthening its expertise by holding collaborative exhibitions, extensively sharing its artwork management know-how, supporting the construction of archives, matching artists recommended by public art museums to experts, and participating in professional training. Meanwhile, the Lee Kun-hee Collection exhibition will begin its tour this year with the Gwangju Museum of Art, Gyeongnam Art Museum, and Busan Museum of Art. Over the next three years, it will continue to tour around 10 public museums to bridge the cultural gap between the capital and regional areas and expand opportunities for cultural appreciation.

■ MMCA Korean Art Research Institute to establish a healthy cycle of open research

The Art Research Center at **MMCA Gwacheon** is **expanding and reorganizing to become the MMCA Korean Art Research Institute**. The institute will pursue systemized research projects led collaboratively by in-house and outside researchers and create a healthy cycle of research that leads to publications, public programs, artwork collection, exhibitions, and educational programs. MMCA curators are to draw up research plans and evaluate them on a yearly basis to develop them into projects.

With each museum dedicated to the research of select subjects, MMCA will also renew its identity as a research institute: **MMCA Seoul** will focus on **contemporality**, studying subjects such as the environment, the climate crisis, carbon neutrality, digital media, and gender. **MMCA Gwacheon** will focus on architecture to rearrange its spaces, revitalize its study of Korean contemporary art, strengthen its functions as an art museum in celebration of its 40th anniversary (2026), and design a future museum; it will also focus on **ecology** for eco-friendly and sustainable artistic practices.

MMCA Deoksugung will specialize in **marginalized genres** such as **East Asian avant-garde art**, embroidery, and print to expand on the history of Korean modern art. **MMCA Cheongju** will study select subjects of **conservational science**, and **MMCA Daejeon** will specialize in research on **Science and Art**. The results are to be published as part of the Korean and English versions of the MMCA's periodical **MMCA Studies** and will be reflected in exhibitions, academic events, and educational programs.

2. K-art

A museum at the center of astonishing and imaginative Korean art

■ A new international exchange task force and Korean Art Week

Designating 2022 as the birth year of K-art, or the Korean Art Wave, MMCA intends to actively promote Korean contemporary art and the diverse spectrum of Korean artists to international art scenes by building new platforms and expanding existing platforms. These activities will be linked to Korean modern and contemporary art exhibitions held at leading art museums overseas. First, MMCA will **launch a new international exchange task force** to be a domestic and international hub for K-art. This task force will handle the comprehensive management of the museum's person-to-person exchange projects, such as art researcher invitations and artist residencies, as well as collaborative exhibitions and academic events with overseas cultural arts institutions. This will expand the scope of the museum's international partnership to cover the extended Asian region beyond its current exhibition-centered exchange with the United States, Europe, and Far East Asia. The MMCA is consistently carrying out international conferences and joint research, focusing on global issues such as peace, environmental issues and climate change, and digital technology. This year, as the first step of this global initiative, MMCA, Korea Foundation and Hood Museum of Art at Dartmouth College (United States) are co-hosting **Korean Art Week** (November 2022), during which the English version of *Korean Art 1900–2020*, an overview of 120 years of Korean modern art history that compiles written work by 33 in-house and outside authors, will be published and promoted with a correlated event.

■ MMCA Research Lab to provide better access for overseas researchers

Online, the Korean art portal MMCA Research Lab will be launched to provide overseas researchers and curators extended access to information on Korean art (November 2022). This open-source online Korean art research lab will offer information on Korean artists, artworks, and exhibitions as well as provide access to critiques, theses, and essays, marking a pivotal point in the museum's construction of a network of overseas experts.

■ The expanded online streaming platform, special and touring exhibitions at distinguished institutions around the globe

MMCA will expand its online streaming platform Watch and Chill, launched last year to exchange with four Asian countries, in order to reach major museums in Europe and the Middle East (June 2022). The museum will also participate in major special and touring exhibitions around the globe including the *2022 MMCA Asia Project in Documenta Kassel 15* (Kassel, July 2022), an exhibition of Korean modern art at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (Los Angeles, September 2022), an exhibition of experimental art at the Guggenheim Museum (New York, 2023), an exchange exhibition at the National Art Museum of China (Beijing, 2023), and a touring calligraphy exhibition at the Taipei Fine Arts Museum (Taipei, 2024) to spotlight Korean art and spread the wave of Korean art.

3. Ecological Museum

A future-oriented museum responsive to climate change

■ Declaration as an ecological museum and implementation of practical measures

In response to global climate change, MMCA is preparing to become a sustainable, future-oriented museum by adopting an environmental and social perspective on its operations. It seeks to renew itself as an ecological museum in every way, including in its architecture, collection, exhibitions, educational and academic programs, and publications. To this end, it will ►reflect its response to the climate crisis and the value of ecological sustainability in its operations and policies, ►reduce carbon emissions and waste in response to carbon-neutral policies, ►carry out exhibitions and educational and academic programs with eco-friendly agendas, and ►strive to uphold its ecological responsibilities and ethics as a public institution.

More specifically, it will implement the immediately feasible **Five Practical Measures to Reduce Carbon Emission**, which are as follows: ►establishing an “**ecological exhibition set-up task force**” to deliberate on environmental issues concerning exhibition scenography, materials, and operations, reduce waste, and devise recycling measures; ►**no longer using plastic wrapping** on exhibition catalogs; ►**using eco-friendly and recycled paper** for all types of exhibition handouts; ►reducing resource waste by **minimizing the issuance of paper tickets** in time for the full conversion to an electronic ticket inspection system in October; ►and achieving the phased **reduction of disposable plastic and paper cup use** at the museum by 2024 and encouraging all staff to **use reusable tumblers**. Through the practice of these five measures, MMCA will stand at the forefront of efforts to reduce carbon emissions and waste, monitor and share the effects, and work towards the goal of carbon neutrality.

■ Practice of sustainability through carbon-related projects and workshops

MMCA Performing Arts 2022: Net Zero Museum, scheduled to begin in August, will host practical discussions on what art museums should keep in mind and how they should respond to the current climate crisis. Dealing with the environmental impact of art museums, this project begins by measuring the amount of energy used and carbon emitted in the process of running a museum and holding exhibitions. Inviting outside experts, the project facilitates interdisciplinary discussions on the various ways in which carbon emissions can be reduced and offset in the process of museum operation and exhibitions. The conclusions reached through this project will be applied to the actual operation of the museum beginning in 2023 to create a healthy cycle in which museums deliberate on social issues and participate in related practices. In addition, the **carbon-related workshop** for elementary schoolers, to be held during summer vacation, will guide the future generation to empathize with and experience sustainable environmental practices.

4. Digital Innovation

A museum that connects people anywhere and anytime

■ Trial launch of the Meta-MMCA Digital Twin Museum

MMCA is pursuing overall digital innovation across the fields of research, collection, viewing experience, and services, and with exhibitions that embody the advancing technological environment. This year, the **My Page tab**, which was newly added to the museum website and underwent a complete renewal in February, and the **Digital Twin Museum**, part of the feature exhibition of color paintings *Praise of Life* presented at MMCA Gwacheon in May, will offer visitors new artistic experiences. My Page allows users to self-curate and share artworks and video content; it also offers visualized data of individual users' preferences based on their search history and issues

recommendation alerts when new content is uploaded.

My Gallery will evolve into the Meta-MMCA, a virtual museum space where users can view exhibitions and communicate with each other and the museum. The Digital Twin Museum, which will open alongside the exhibition Praise of Life, will act as the first step. At the Digital Twin Museum, viewers can listen to audio guides provided by curators, chat with other viewers in real time, and zoom in on the featured works using a high-resolution digital magnifying glass, not to mention communicate with the museum through the “Mark Favorites” feature. The virtual museum will also provide schools and households in remote areas and those with limited cultural access opportunities to view exhibitions.

In 2023, the beginning of the advanced stage in the MMCA’s digital innovation initiative, IoT (Internet of Things) technology will be employed to provide customized services such as exhibition recommendations, reservation guides, and viewer review options based on users’ viewing patterns and website browsing history. With its opening planned for the first half of 2026, MMCA Daejeon is designed to be a smart building with automated electronics and facilities optimized for carbon reduction to epitomize MMCA’s role as a climate-responsive future museum.

■ Innovation of research, management, and services with sophisticated digital collection data

MMCA’s artwork collection and conservation system will be upgraded (2022) to enable the extended sharing of resources, while the museum library and records management systems will also be enhanced to largely broaden the scope of access to art materials. In addition, measures to improve legal practices will be studied in order to enable preemptive responses to the emergence of new technologies such as non-fungible tokens (NFT). NFT-related research is expected to open portals to digital innovation such as digital asset management using blockchain technology, digital tagging, and artificial intelligence-aided authenticity verification.

Youn Bummo, director of MMCA notes, “Over the past three years of preparation, MMCA has laid the groundwork for its leap into the next 50 years, and it will be carrying out ever more dynamic and systematic projects over the next three years. MMCA, as an open museum, will take the lead in creating a society that touches and inspires people through art.”

Notes to editors

For high-resolution images of the museum, please follow the link: [here](#)

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