

RSHP unveils urban and architectural design for the new Bayeux Tapestry Museum

A sensitive contemporary insertion

Through sensitive scale and disposition of the building on the site and careful selection of materials, the new museum will be woven elegantly into the existing urban 'tapestry' in which it sits. The extension is designed to be a contemporary symbol, drawing visitors to the museum with an iconic design that clearly places its new extension in the 21st century. This new piece completes the existing 17th-century seminary as an unequivocally contemporary addition.

Heritage celebrated and renewed

The former Bayeux seminary's architectural features will be preserved, restored and enhanced. Sensitive interventions retain key heritage elements of the historic ensemble, celebrating these. The project does not seek to return the building to a former "original" state but brings it back to life through adapting it to its new uses. Clearly delineated interfaces between historic and new generate a dialogue between past, present and future.

Geometry, formal expression, organisation

The principal spaces of the visitor experience within the building are legible from the outside, facilitating instinctive wayfinding and contributing to the ease of movement throughout the visit. The geometry of the space housing the Tapestry is dictated by the spatial qualities that characterise the different views that are offered of this spectacular singular object. The visitor's proximity to the details of the embroidery and the panoramic view of the tapestry directly inform the shape of the new building. The extension also resolves the complex geometry of the site, aligning with existing buildings and axes, delineated by the dynamic lines of the roof. This reduces the perception of the building size, reflecting the intimate scale of the houses adjoining the extension and, in its horizontality, the monumental dimensions of the tapestry within.

A visitor experience that embraces the tapestry at every scale

One of the essential characteristics of the proposed architectural and exhibition design concept is the visitor's journey and experience revolving around a single object.

Multiplying the number and varied nature of the visitor's encounters with the Tapestry, revealing it in a different light and from a variety of perspectives is the central driving force of the museum design, offering an experience that takes the form of an orchestrated series of dynamic encounters with the work. The exhibition loop connects the extension and the former seminary, connecting stories and artefacts along the way.

Completing this challenge is the preservation and study of this priceless artifact, a work of art that is unique both in terms of its format and its conservation requirements. This unique status – and the 1,000 years' history of the depicted events and the creation of Tapestry – mean that the space for storage and display of the Tapestry needs to reflect its value as part of UNESCO's "Memory of the World". Taking the form of a pilgrimage, the architecture and functional organisation of the museum are intended to create the ideal conditions in which the visitor can approach the Tapestry, establishing a relationship with it that brings it to life.

"We are absolutely thrilled to have been selected. It's both a privilege, and a responsibility, to have been offered the opportunity to design the museum that will house this unique, fragile, emblematic object. As a British practice with a long history of working in France, there's poetry in being able to contribute to a project that symbolizes the deep connections between our two countries, renewing these bonds and helping the next generations in their rediscovery of the tapestry, itself a unique embodiment of this shared past."

Stephen Barrett, Partner, RSHP



“We are approaching the redevelopment of the Museum with great excitement and passion. This project aims to enhance the legacy of the Bayeux Tapestry and to promote the institution. It is also an exceptional opportunity for our British architectural practice to begin a new chapter in an already prolific and valuable relationship between Normandy and England”.

Theo Pagnon, Associate, RSHP

"Working with RSHP means a shared ambition and responsibility to showcase the Bayeux Tapestry, such a precious textile, in all its universal recognition: as a monumental work of art, as an illustrated account of a key moment in European history, and as a documentary object revealing all the richness of the intellectual and material culture of the 11th century."

Patrick Gomont, Mayor of Bayeux

"In the project proposed by RSHP, we immediately appreciated the intelligent dialogue between the volumes of the former 17th-century seminary and the contemporary setting entirely dedicated to the display of the work, characterised by an architectural gesture of pure lines, which has led to the creation of a completely new visitor experience with the aim to improve the conditions for welcoming visitors to a museum of international renown."

Antoine Verney, Conservateur en Chef des Musées de Bayeux

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Notes to Editors:

About RSHP

RSHP is an award-winning, 180-strong architectural practice, operating globally. The practice’s architecture responds to social, environmental and economic challenges alike, shaping the way people engage with place and, in turn, the planet. RSHP’s design approach is rooted in thoughtfulness, problem-solving and ingenuity, always with adaptability in mind. Social responsibility is at the heart of RSHP, with over £20 million distributed through the practice’s charity to date.

www.rsh-p.com

The design team includes:

RSHP (Lead) – Lead architect
Lympia Architecture – Heritage architect
Bassinot Turquin Paysage – Landscape architect
FL&Co – Museography/Conservation
Atelier Brückner – Exhibition design, Graphics and Signage
Create – Multimedia and Audiovisual design
Reflét – Lighting design
Ingérop – Structural, Mechanical and Electrical engineering
VPEAS – Cost consultants
Kahle acoustics – Acoustics

Quotes design team:

“The new Bayeux Tapestry Museum is being built in the heart of a rich heritage site that it will be able to celebrate to its best advantage. The former seminary will be restored to safeguard it whilst adapting it to its new use. In addition, the project aims to recontextualise the Tapestry as an exceptional object in the heart of the episcopal town of Bayeux, a stone's throw from the cathedral that once housed it.”

Maxime Faure, Lympia Architecture

“The landscaping project will support the ambitions of the future museum. A new setting will highlight the historic site, which is linked to the Aure valley, and will offer visitors a high-quality promenade from the main courtyard to the terraces of the former seminary, where a new space for relaxation and contemplation will be created, inviting visitors to discover the city of Bayeux.”

Grégoire Bassinet, Bassinet Turquin Paysage

“Our scenography transports visitors on a multi-sensory journey through *La Tapisserie de Bayeux*, inviting the visitors to not merely observe the piece but to actively engage with it. Beyond a passive memory, we see the Tapestry as a dynamic catalyst, resonating with the present. We try to communicate the stories through breathing life into the experience, overlaying its richness with light, sound, tactility, materiality, and cutting-edge integrated technology – all seamlessly contextualised and interwoven through the architecture.”

Wassim Melki, Atelier Brückner

“The technical proposals are based around the architectural, landscaping and scenographic project, enabling the integration of the programmatic challenges of the museum's redeployment, while associating strong ambitions for sustainable development. The issues of energy performance, accessibility and equipment operability will be at the heart of our concerns throughout the design and construction phases, to provide the Town of Bayeux and its operating teams with a robust, reliable, high-performance and sustainable facility.”

Alexandre Kirszt, Ingérop

The new Bayeux Tapestry Museum project partners:

