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## Sotheby's Guide to the Best Art Museums in NYC

By Arabella Bowen

*The world's most exciting arts hub, New York boasts a staggering concentration of museums, galleries, and alternative scenes. Major retrospectives, biennials, blockbuster auctions, and perennial art fairs—including the Armory Show, Frieze, and newly instated TEFAF to name just three—draw art lovers year round. Make the most of your visit with Sotheby's guide to essential New York art museums, including hidden gems and insider tips.*

### MAJOR MUSEUMS

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New York museums house some of the world's best collections of Old Masters, modern, and American art. If you're short on time, focus on the big four—you could easily spend the better part of a day exploring their rich collections.

#### THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

1000 5th Ave, New York, NY 10028 | [Website](#)



THE TEMPLE OF DENDUR AT THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART BROOKS WALKER

With more than two million works of art in its collection, the Met is impossible to see in one go. In addition to significant holdings of Greek, Roman, Egyptian, African, Asian, Oceanic, Byzantine and Islamic art, the Met counts paintings and sculptures from nearly all the European masters, as well as extensive collections of American and Modern art. You could easily spend days here; many do.

INSIDER TIP: Don't miss the annual solo artist commission on the Met's rooftop garden from mid-April to late October.

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THE MET

**Close Up: Four American Period Rooms at The Met**

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## **THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART (MOMA)**

11 W 53rd St, New York, NY 10019 | [Website](#)



PABLO PICASSO. LES DEMOISELLES D'AVIGNON. 1907. © 2004 ESTATE OF PABLO PICASSO/ARTISTS RIGHTS SOCIETY (ARS), NEW YORK. DIGITAL IMAGE (C) 2004 THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART.

The world's finest collection of modern and contemporary art includes some 150,000 works, from innovative European paintings and sculptures of the 1880s to today's film, design and performance art. Completely reimagined and reinstalled in fall 2019, the new galleries put works in dialogue with each other in new and unexpected ways, perhaps most strikingly in the juxtaposition of Pablo Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger* (pictured) with Faith Ringgold's powerful, race-riot painting *American People Series #20: Die*.

**INSIDER TIP:** The new sixth-floor Terrace Café has outdoor terrace seating in season. Chef Danny Meyer's two-Michelin-starred [The Modern](#) on the ground floor prohibits tipping—a rarity in New York.

## SOLOMON R. GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM

1071 Fifth Ave, New York NY 10128 | [Website](#)



EXTERIOR VIEW, SOLOMON R. GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM

The extraordinary design by Frank Lloyd Wright, with its signature spiral ramp connecting six curved gallery floors under a skylit dome, is a draw on its own. But the Guggenheim stays current with artist surveys that take over the entire rotunda, such as recent retrospectives of Hilma af Klint and Agnes Martin.

INSIDER TIP: A unique branch of [Bluestone Lane](#) is located in a former chapel next to the Church of the Heavenly Rest, one block north of the Guggenheim. The updated interiors include brass lighting and antique mirrors, making for one of New York's most original café settings.

## WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

99 Gansevoort St, New York NY 10014 | [Website](#)



EXTERIOR VIEW OF THE WHITNEY MUSEUM

Spread over multiple floors of a Renzo Piano–designed building, the Whitney has reigned as the defining museum of 20th- and 21st-century American art since its founding in 1930 by Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney. From its inception, the Whitney Biennial has introduced many of the most significant American artists and developments of the day—often inciting controversy, always influential.

INSIDER TIP: Walk the [High Line](#) to Chelsea after your visit. The elevated parkway is itself dotted with public art. Descend in the 20s to visit dozens of high-octane art galleries set in former warehouses, including big names like [Hauser & Wirth](#), [David Zwirner](#), [Gagosian](#), and the impressive new [Pace Gallery](#) flagship. Cap off the day with alfresco cocktails in the garden of the [High Line Hotel](#) (in season) or tapas and rioja at [Tia Pol](#).

## SMALL MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES

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Beyond the major museums, New York boasts outstanding smaller galleries and collections to discover. With more time to spare, add these top draws to your must-see list for deeper immersion in NYC’s art scene.

### THE FRICK COLLECTION

1 E 70th St, New York, NY 10021 | [Website](#)



THE FRICK COLLECTION INTERIOR MICHAEL BODYCOMB

This gem of a museum set inside Pittsburgh industrialist Henry Clay Frick's former Fifth Avenue residence overlooking Central Park—one of New York City's few remaining Gilded Age mansions—displays transcendent masterpieces by Giovanni Bellini, Rembrandt, Johannes Vermeer, Thomas Gainsborough, Francisco Goya, and James Whistler, among others.

INSIDER TIP: The Met Breuer's divine [Flora Bar](#) is a short walk from here and hosts a terrific happy hour every Tuesday to Thursday from 5:30pm to 7:30pm. The Frick's collection is also due to move into the Breuer starting in 2020, while the museum begins extensive renovations.

## NEUE GALERIE

1048 Fifth Ave, New York, NY 10028 | [Website](#)



GUSTAV KLIMT'S PORTRAIT OF ADELE BLOCH-BAUER I, 1907. OIL, SILVER, AND GOLD ON CANVAS WWW.BRIDGEMANIMAGES.COM

Established in 2001 in an elegant mansion on Museum Mile, the Neue Galerie presents early-20th-century German and Austrian art and design in a beautiful, intimate setting. Second-story galleries are dedicated to circa 1900 Viennese art, including Gustav Klimt's showstopping *Portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer* (pictured). Third-story galleries feature early-20th-century German art movements, including applied arts from Werkbund and Bauhaus periods.

INSIDER TIP: The superb ground-floor restaurant, Café Sabarsky, is an homage to classic Viennese cafés, complete with period furniture by Adolf Loos and an updated Viennese menu that concludes with Sachertorte.

## NEW MUSEUM

235 Bowery, New York, NY 10002 | [Website](#)



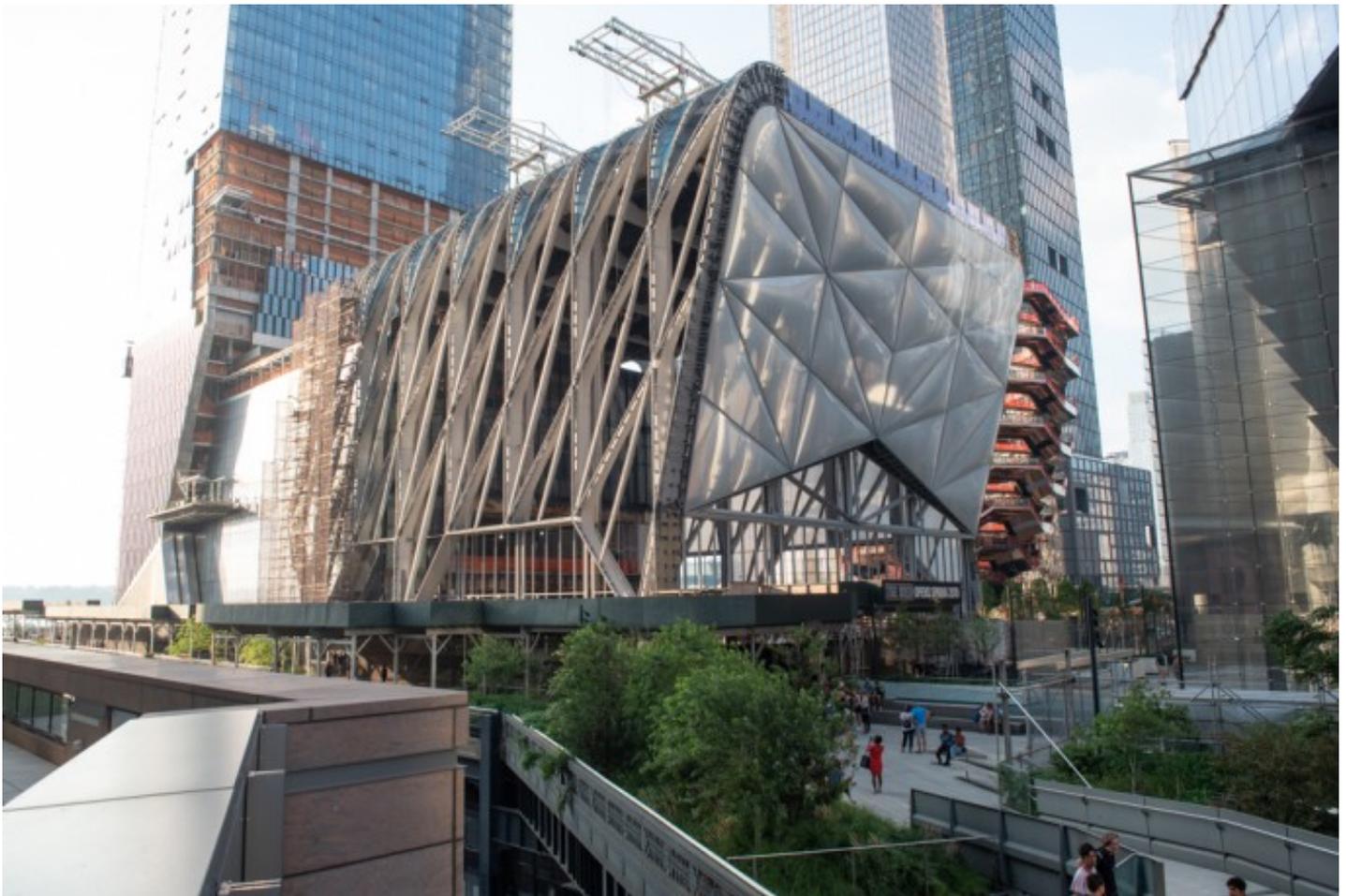
EXTERIOR VIEW, NEW MUSEUM DEAN KAUFMAN

The first and only contemporary art museum in New York City boasts a curatorial program known for its global scope and boundary-pushing themes. Its mission remains “new art, new ideas,” most powerfully represented in its respected Triennial, which debuted in 2009 and regularly features artists showing in the U.S. for the first time.

INSIDER TIP: Duck down the graffiti'd alleyway around the corner to find [Freeman's Restaurant](#), an upmarket tavern with hand-crafted cocktails and American fare.

## THE SHED

545 W 30th St, New York, NY 10001 | [Website](#)



EXTERIOR VIEW OF THE SHED, NEW YORK. PHOTO: TIMOTHY SCHENCK.

Located where the High Line meets Hudson Yards, The Shed debuted in spring 2019 in a forward-looking building designed by Diller Scofidio + Renfro. Its ambitious multi-arts program combines performing arts, visual arts, and popular culture—often all at once.

INSIDER TIP: Head to the sleek, hip [Legacy Records](#) for expert cocktails, a stellar wine list, and northern Italian cuisine from the team behind downtown’s beloved Charlie Bird restaurant.

## **SOTHEBY'S NEW YORK**

1334 York Ave, New York, NY 10021 | [Website](#)



INTERIOR VIEW OF SOTHEBY'S NEW YORK GALLERIES MIKE VITELLI/BFA.COM

Sotheby's flagship New York headquarters occupy a sleek tower originally built for a cigar factory and later occupied by Kodak. Inside, its recently redesigned galleries regularly host free museum-caliber exhibits ahead of major auctions.

INSIDER TIP: A cozy outpost of Sant Ambroeus, the art-world favorite Italian café, is located to the right of the main entrance.

## HIDDEN GEMS

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New York City is also home to many lesser-known but equally fascinating museums worth exploring, often with singular collections in historic residences.

### THE JEWISH MUSEUM OF NEW YORK

1109 5th Ave, New York, NY 10128 | [Website](#)



FLORINE STETTHEIMER EXHIBIT AT THE JEWISH MUSEUM PHOTO: JASON MANDELLA

Founded in 1904, the Jewish Museum of New York is among the world's oldest Jewish museums. It regularly stages intriguing special exhibits in its Gothic Upper East Side mansion; recent highlights include the fashion of Isaac Mizrahi, art of Florine Stettheimer (pictured), and creative influence of singer/poet Leonard Cohen. Its impressive permanent collection occupies the third floor.

INSIDER TIP: The uptown outlet of [Russ & Daughters](#), a beloved New York deli that's been a Lower East Side institution since 1914, is located in the basement. Stop in for a classic New York lunch of bagels and lox before you leave.

## **THE MORGAN LIBRARY**

225 Madison Ave, New York, NY 10016 | [Website](#)



VIEW OF THE THE MORGAN LIBRARY

Once the private library of financier Pierpont Morgan (1837–1913), Mr Morgan’s library, as it was known in his lifetime, occupies a majestic Italian Renaissance-style palazzo built between 1902 and 1906, with three magnificent rooms epitomizing America’s Age of Elegance. Social exhibits curate everything from rare books and music manuscripts to Americana and new contemporary art.

**INSIDER TIP:** The stunning namesake Morgan Library itself (pictured) is accessed through a door at the far end of the ground floor and is worth the price of entry alone.



**Go Deeper: 5 More Hidden Gems in New York City**

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## Further Afield: 5 Terrific Art Destinations Worth a Visit



From Brooklyn to Queens to Upstate New York, these five institutions house exceptional collections of contemporary art, Old Masters, and emerging artists.

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## About the Author

### Arabella Bowen

Arabella Bowen is a writer and editor specializing in travel and culture. She was previously the Editor in Chief of Fodor's and always travels for the art.

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