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Caruso St John Architects selected for future-oriented renovation and extension of Kunsthalle Bielefeld

Bielefeld (bi). The City of Bielefeld and Kunsthalle Bielefeld are pleased to announce that, following a multi-stage competition “Caruso St John Architects” have been selected from a to lead the architectural planning for the future-oriented renovation and extension of Kunsthalle Bielefeld.

Built in 1968 to designs by US-American architect Philip Johnson (1906-2005), Kunsthalle Bielefeld is not only a renowned institution for modern and contemporary art but also an internationally significant museum building with an iconic character. The Kunsthalle is Johnson's only museum building in Europe, a significant historical monument, and a landmark, that shapes Bielefeld's identity. The building and its spatial programme essentially reflect the state of the art at the time of its construction period and the requirements of monument protection. The late modernist building, which has been in public use for over fifty years, needs to be modernised to meet the needs of the 21st century. The renovation of Kunsthalle Bielefeld has become unavoidable, not only from an energy and conservation point of view. In order to become sustainable for the future, structural measures must be taken to enable the museum to better meet changing demands and expectations. Both already established functions that no longer meet today's standards need to be improved and new required functions introduced. Since the 1970s, art has developed further with installation, performance, and film, and increasingly large-format art forms have emerged. These can hardly be

presented in Kunsthalle Bielefeld, which is designed as a daylight museum.

As one of the first museums in the new Federal Republic of Germany in the 1960s, Kunsthalle Bielefeld had a room for children's and youth education. Today, education and outreach programmes with goals such as inclusion and participation play a much more important role, for which there is a lack of adequate spaces and infrastructure.. In addition, the museum has to close completely for each change of exhibition, which disrupts access to educational programmes and services (café, library, shop). Today's museums are meeting places for a diverse urban society, offering a variety of experiences. These range from art viewing, discussions, and educational offerings to relaxed gatherings, celebrations, fun, and enjoyment. The 1960s building therefore needs to be updated to meet these diverse new tasks: The creation of new spaces and, at the same time, new spatial qualities are required.

On 19 May 2022, the city council of Bielefeld decided to renovate Kunsthalle Bielefeld with a budget of 40.5 million euros. Since June 2022 on, the Paratus Group from New York has been involved in this process as a consultant for the Kunsthalle in order to sharpen the user requirements. The approach adopted is based on the principle of sustainability, advocating a sustainable, functioning museum. This means spaces that allow for the presentation of increasingly large-format art forms as well as installation, performance, or film. At the same time, spaces must be created to enable a sufficient range of educational offerings and activities related to the "third place", as well as ensuring museum operations that can remain open 365 days a year.

The project size of the planned renovation required an open Europe-wide procedure for the award of planning services in accordance with the applicable public procurement regulations. For the planning services in the field of architecture, this was a two-stage negotiation procedure, in which all applications were evaluated and the most suitable offices were invited to submit a tender.

The public announcement in February 2023 generated a great deal of interest, with a total of 45 applications were received by the deadline in March 2023. After a formal examination of the fulfilment of the defined minimum criteria, 25 valid applications for participation re-

mained from renowned architectural offices from Germany (17 applications), Europe (5 applications), and the USA (3 applications). The evaluation of the quality of the submitted references was based on the principle of the selection of the best.

The remaining applicants were invited to submit bids and participate in the second stage of the process in June 2023. In this second stage, the selected architectural offices were given the opportunity to defend their particular suitability through a presentation.

The decision-making panel, which was bolstered by external, advisory experts - including Prof. Hilde Léon, Muck Petzet, Prof. em. Stanislaus von Moos and Robert Portnoff from the paratus group - was given with free oral presentations on the attitude to Philip Johnson's architecture, as well as ideas for a future-oriented museum of modernity and the present, and an impromptu task.

After considering all the criteria, the contract for the planning services was awarded to the office "Caruso St John Architects", London and Zurich.

About "Caruso St John Architects"

The jury was particularly impressed by the extensive experience of London- and Zurich-based architectural firm "Caruso St John Architects" in dealing with listed buildings and the quality of the museum buildings they have been designed to date. Caruso St. John has been run since the 1990s by architects Adam Caruso and Peter St. John, who have established a special reputation for dealing with historic buildings: from Sir John Soane's Museum in London to a baroque monastery church in St. Gallen, Switzerland.

Adam Caruso is Professor of Architecture at the Swiss university Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule (ETH) in Zurich, Peter St. John at the London Metropolitan University. The office has great experience with museum buildings, including new buildings such as the Newport Street Gallery, New Art Gallery Walsall or Nottingham Contemporary, or sophisticated conversions such as Tate Britain or Liverpool Philharmonic Hall. In Germany, Caruso St. John has been represented, among other things, with the conversion of the Görtz Palais and a new building on the Große Burstah in Hamburg as well as with the construction of the headquarters of the Bremer Landesbank. Even in this new building, the architectural firm carefully works with regional building traditions, resulting in a brick façade that is reminiscent of the Brick Expressionism of the

1920s without being nostalgic. In addition, Caruso St John Architects have been working together with the architectural firm Hild und K Architekten since 2016 on the renovation of the Neue Pinakothek in Munich. The jury was convinced by the careful but always undogmatic way to deal with history, the preference or at least high regard for the task of conversion in contrast to new construction, and finally their great knowledge and experience with art spaces and art itself.

"We have the greatest confidence in Caruso St John Architects and look forward to a successful collaboration. The general renovation is a great opportunity to raise the visibility of Kunsthalle Bielefeld as a significant cultural and architectural centre not only in Bielefeld and the region, but also internationally," says **Pit Clausen**, Mayor of the City of Bielefeld.

Dr. Udo Witthaus, Councillor of the City of Bielefeld, Department of Schools, Citizens, Culture and Sport, emphasises: "With Caruso St. John Architects, an office has been selected that will work on the demanding task of the future-oriented general renovation in cooperation with all those involved. The experience and working methods of the office give us every reason to expect that the Kunsthalle will be transformed into a contemporary modern building while preserving its tradition."

"We are very pleased and proud to have won Caruso St John Architects for the future-oriented general renovation of Kunsthalle Bielefeld as the conclusion of a demanding, Europe-wide tender procedure," says **Christine Harodt**, Technical Manager of the Bielefeld's Immobilienservicebetrieb, the city's real estate service company. "The architects have outstanding expertise in museum construction and the renovation of listed buildings. We are looking forward to the joint process, which will be characterised not only by the management of the Kunsthalle but also by many other protagonists, of making the significant architectural monument Kunsthalle with its high architectural quality fit for the future in the sense of contemporary museum work."

Christina Végh, Director of Kunsthalle Bielefeld, is also pleased with the result: "We are delighted to have chosen Caruso St John Architects. The office has a strong affinity with the arts and has repeatedly demonstrated its ability to deal successfully deal with complex issues related to historical spaces, monument preservation, and history and the museum. We are convinced that

they have the ideal credentials to make our beautiful building fit for the 21st century.”

Adam Caruso of Caruso St John Architects emphasises: “We are delighted to be involved in this exciting project, one of Philip Johnson's most important public buildings, which has become an integral part of urban life in Bielefeld. We are looking forward to the collaboration with the city and the Kunsthalle to restore this important monument and to enable the museum to engage even more effectively with art practices and 21st century exhibitions.”

Alan Ritchie, President of PJAR Architects, New York, formerly Philip Johnson > Alan Ritchie Architects, comments: “I think it is very important for the museum to move with the times. If the architects present the right solution for the Kunsthalle Bielefeld, I know that Philip Johnson would have supported them.”

About Kunsthalle Bielefeld

Kunsthalle Bielefeld was built in 1968 to designs by US-American architect Philip Johnson (1906-2005). It is his only museum building in Europe and a listed building. The iconic building marks an early turning point in Johnson's transition towards a postmodernist form. The collection, which consists of around 5,200 works from the 20th and 21st centuries, focusses on German Expressionism, art from the Bauhaus and Constructivism environment, as well as works of Minimalism and Postminimalism and contemporary art. Temporary exhibitions explore exemplary artistic positions and thus constantly changing current social issues, which are set in ever-changing relationships with works from the permanent collection.