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By Benjamin Sutton
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New York's Swiss Institute buys permanent home on the Bowery

The nonprofit, which has moved around the Upper West Side, Tribeca and points in between since its founding 40 years ago, will open at 250 Bowery next spring

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The Swiss Institute team outside the new space at 250 Bowery
Photo by Lee Mary Manning. Courtesy Swiss Institute New York.

SI

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Free and open to the public

The New York nonprofit Swiss Institute (SI), which has bounced around rental spaces across Manhattan since its founding in 1986, has acquired a property at 250 Bowery on the Lower East Side, and will open there in spring 2027. In the interim, SI has tapped the architecture firm Johnston Marklee to give its new ground floor and basement spaces an accessibility- and sustainability-focused overhaul. As ever, admission to the nonprofit's galleries and events will remain free of charge.

"Owning our own space for the first time in the institution's impressive history allows us to secure the foundation for an even more generative future grounded in experimentation and support of artists," Stefanie Hessler, the organisation's director, said in a statement, adding that "250 Bowery will give SI the opportunity to evolve with emerging generations of artists, expand our forward-looking programming, and contribute to quickly evolving conversations in art, ecology and technology, while reaffirming our commitment to New York City's cultural landscape. Here, we will put down roots and continue to grow."

While SI did not share details about the price of its new space or the budget for its renovation, residential units on the building's upper levels top out at nearly \$5m. The organisation was first opened in a townhouse on West 67th Street on the Upper West Side in May 1986, then moved to a space on Broadway in Soho in 1994, to nearby Wooster Street in 2011, down to Tribeca in 2016, and to its current location in the East Village, at 38 St Marks Place, in 2018. It will continue to operate at 38 St Marks Place until its current exhibitions there close on 5 July.

The move to 250 Bowery will represent a more than 50% expansion of SI's footprint from its current location, giving the organisation 11,000 sq. ft across two levels. Though the space will look different following Johnston Marklee's renovations, it may be familiar to art world denizens as home to the International Center for Photography's museum for several years, from 2016 to 2019.

"Our vision for SI on the Bowery is as a kind of laboratory dedicated to artistic presentations, education and community engagement, while fostering the sense of intimacy that defines SI for us," the architects Sharon Johnston and Mark Lee said in a joint statement. "We are honoured to collaborate with SI in shaping its first permanent home and to contribute to its future on the historic Bowery."

The new location puts SI almost directly across the street from the New Museum, which opened an \$82m expansion of its campus at 235 Bowery in March.

In the interim between vacating its St Marks Place location and moving into 250 Bowery, SI will organise an off-site exhibition by the Zürich-based Polish artist Rafał Skoczek, opening this autumn. Another off-site SI project, the 40th-anniversary group exhibition *Regift*, opened earlier this month at Luma Westbau in Zürich and continues until 6 September.

To inaugurate its new home in spring 2027, SI is organising an exhibition titled *The Environment* and inspired by the experimental film-maker Bud Wirschafter's community-driven participatory art project of the same name from the 1960s. The show will span 250 Bowery as well as public spaces and building façades in the surrounding neighbourhood.