

**BONN: MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART
EAST MEETS WEST STATEMENTS ABOUT ADAPTED HISTORICAL
ARCHITECTURE
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The last decade, architecturally speaking, will, I am sure, be looked back upon as one the great eras of museums.

The late Victorian era may to some be the high period of museums, but there can be no denying the recent impact of these typologies on post-industrial society. Many architectural masterpieces have been realised, whether renovations, as recycled buildings, extensions or whole new ones. These museums have been exploited politically as the Kings, Queens and sometimes Aces in each city's hand as these cities vie with each other across the western world for attention. Museums have become barometers of a city's, and in some cases of a country's cultural virility.

Since my first involvement with contemporary art gallery design, The Sainsbury Centre in Norwich, (1973-76) where I was project architect working with Norman Foster, my interventions in Europe, as Ian Ritchie Architects or as Director of Rice Francis Ritchie (Paris) have included the extension of the Louvre with I M Pei (the structure of the pyramid and the new sculpture courts); the creation of the Cité des Sciences at La Villette with Adrien Fainsilber; the Ecology Gallery at the Natural History Museum, London, where I have since become architectural advisor, and The Reina Sofia Museum of Modern Art, Madrid. This work could be described as "The Architect's Intervention - Adapting Historical Architecture and the Conservation Dilemma".

We have been fortunate to have been very closely involved in France, and its cultural regeneration during the decade of the bicentenary of the Revolution.

However, of no less importance to me, personally, has been our commitment to Britain, in the cultural domain during the same period. But, in France and elsewhere our design energies have materialised, while in Britain we've only recently, and controversially, realised one cultural project - the Ecology Gallery. I do believe this reflects in some small way the different attitudes towards modernity, and attitudes in and towards Europe.

Museums have a particularly unique characteristic. They have natural and recognisable hierarchy of perception. Most are object based, whether as art, anthropological, ethnological, technological or archaeological. This is the intimate scale, the personal and private contact.

All are, or should be more than mere containers of these objects. This is an internal spatial experience, usually shared with others and very much part of the visitor's objective. Some people consider this as a more important aspect of museum design than the individual display, on the basis that one may become in a relatively short time, intellectually and emotionally saturated after studying only a few artefacts.

Museums should be public architecture. As such they can be perceived singularly as the art and science of building for a specific human purpose, that of storage and exhibition of objects and artefacts. They exist, publicly in their own right. This external part of the architecture conveys the initial image of the museum.

Museums, by their very importance as municipal or national repositories of collective memory are more often than not, sited prominently, and as such are a dominant component and even generator of a particular urban composition.

They are stimuli for regeneration of local areas as well as city monuments, and as important venues for human encounters, especially for visitors.

THE IMPACT OF THE COMMERCIAL MARKET ON NEW AND EXISTING MUSEUMS

The desire, indeed perceived need to attract as many visitors as possible has revolutionised museums in the western democracies. The days when they were frequented by the researcher, the odd school party, the Sunday family are very distant indeed. Today, clean shoes become trainers, the walking stick, the rucksack.

This revolution has had a dramatic impact on the spatial programmes of museums, on the very nature of their organisations and indeed, in many instances, on the very rôle for which they were created.

Most dramatic, perhaps, is the ability of existing museum buildings to simply accommodate the flow of visitors. Seen from a marketing view, there is an apparent trend to hold the visitor within the galleries for a relatively short period, then to ensure they spend at the book store, restaurant and shops, thereby allowing more visitors in and hence increasing the throughput of visitors.

Accommodating these increased numbers has meant, for existing museums, extensions, remodelling, renovation and refurbishment. Entrance lobbies have become "Accueils" - welcome halls, to collect and distribute the visitor; cloakrooms have become "hangers", preceded by security check lines; the ticket desk, information centres and toilet facilities the size more associated with sports stadia.

And all "serious museums" boast their restaurant, cafeteria, temporary exhibition galleries, lecture auditoria, conference facilities. And these in turn, dancing to the "market clock" are available out of hours for private use and city functions.

Temporary exhibition space and marketing leads to more transportation needs within the building. Wider corridors, packaging and unpacking areas, transitory storerooms, increased media space and publications libraries. Truck parking, increased public access and transitory artefacts leads to increased security arrangements and security accommodation. Security leads to more sophisticated technical installations which leads to increased staff and maintenance costs. The upward spiral of complexity, of skilled management resources and, ultimately revenue to compete nationally and internationally, demands very serious appraisal, now. Such a revolution, in the last 20 or so years, if it continues, must lead to a certain level of saturation, and of cultural institutions becoming bankrupt or becoming PLC's quoted on the stock exchanges of the World, and subject to the vagaries of such markets. Museums have become such big business that some of the larger ones are inevitably going to lose all sense of direction and of their intrinsic value.

CENTRO DE ARTE REINA SOFIA (CARS) MADRID

This project has been the subject of long and, at times, heated discussion since the idea, launched about 10 years ago, of transforming the old General Hospital of Madrid into a centre for modern art.

The hospital building was built during the latter half of the 18th century under the supervision of Francisco Sabatini, during the reign of Charles III.

This building, classically Baroque, has a very solid structure and rigid spaces, appearing as "multi-layered barracks". The vaulted spaces on the ground level are, however, extremely beautifully proportioned. Its transformation occurred in 3 acts.

The first act saw the restoration and rehabilitation of the hospital, rescued from demolition by Antonio Fernandez Alba. A parallel programme to create a Museum of the Spanish People on the upper floors by Javier Feduchi and Javier Vellés, introduced the idea of adding an additional floor, which would house the administrative offices.

Act two saw the dividing up of the ground and basement in order to accommodate a café and restaurant (by André Ricard), and auditorium and projection room (Bach and Mora) and shops (Torres and Lapeña). The proposed exhibition gallery did materialise. The building opened to the public in 1986.

The final act to transform the remainder of the hospital into a National Art Centre with a permanent collection was directed by the Madrid architects Antonio Vazquez de Castro and José Luis Iñiguez de Onzoño, and was inaugurated on the 1st November 1990 by Queen Sofia and King Juan Carlos.

The permanent art collection was to be modern. There is still some debate as from what date the collection should begin, but in principle it is from the mid 1930's, and a key painting, Guernica painted by Picasso in 1937 has been transferred here, from The Prado's annexe, effectively giving the collection its starting point.

Guernica is 3.5m high x 7.82m, unpacked.

Castro and Onzoño, proposed to cover the central courtyard to create a central reference space and vertical public circulation to upper floors. This proposal was considered too bold and too risky and was finally rejected, prior to our involvement.

It was at this stage, with works having commenced on transforming the upper "barrack rooms", that we were invited to collaborate with Castro and Onzoño in February 1989.

It transpired that the architects had discussed with several Modern Art Museum directors in Europe the essential characteristics of contemporary art galleries, and the architects' conclusion was that their intervention and architecture should be minimalist. They, and the director of the main contractor Huarte were familiar with our glass structures at La Villette, which were designed in 1982 and completed in 1986.

The positioning of the public vertical circulation towers was subject to urban planning constraints, as was their appearance in front of this listed hospital and how they would relate to the wider context, as well as the detail of resolving the entries into the wall of the hospital.

We were asked to develop the vertical circulation structures as part of the refurbishment of the building. There are 2 towers for public access and one for servicing the new centre. The latter had a particularly unique requirement, to provide a lift to take Guernica in and out of the building. This lift, more a moving room, determined the size of this tower.

Initially, we felt that minimalism dated from the early 60's in art, and that perhaps the La Villette Facades represented a built end game of minimalism. So, in order to address this expressed wish, we investigated the idea of creating complexity from a composition and juxtaposition of individual minimal components.

We also felt that the immense 'gravitas' of the hospital building, and its vertical fenestration, should keep its strength and character, and so the idea of working in contrast to it, thereby reinforcing the building's intrinsic character seemed totally appropriate.

This should also allow the tower designs to have their own character, equally reinforced by the existing building's architecture.

In essence, our concept was to create towers representing modernity (in response to the hospital's new use), suspension, transparency and verticality in contrast to gravitas, solidity and horizontality.

Modernity would be represented by technology - state of the art glass suspension, by the minimalism of the individual components, by being didactic in the sense that the construction and functioning of the towers could be understood, and as an overall composition in the square as symbols of the regenerated hospital.

Their performance was to ensure effective movement for thousands of visitors a day, the aim being to achieve a degree of transparency that reduces visual impact from outside and allows uninterrupted views from inside, both when waiting and, more spectacularly, when riding in the lifts - a pause to make visual contact and re-orientate yourself with the world outside the museum.

Translating these conceptual objectives required in our visual research one further proposition upon which the design of all the elements could be related. This was drawn from the existing building's surfaces and profiles, the walls, the stone window frames, with the singular exception of the circular steel window bars; and also from the intrinsic nature of manufactured materials of which the towers would be made.

Our proposition of planes, we also felt, had a relationship to Guernica, which creates a "collage" effect, composed of black, grey and white "superimposed flat cut outs".

Our first design proposal, attempting to respond to these conceptual directives, also sought a strong "image" component, again interpreted from Guernica, the woman holding the lamp, and the flames emanating from the burning building.

Initially, this form was interpreted as the profile for the main steel columns, set perpendicular to the building's façade, with external lifts running up between them. It was concluded that this was too expressive and the external lifts would be too difficult to maintain.

The exploratory models which we made also reinforced our awareness that the underside of the link floors to the building would be very strong formal elements of the composition, being seen clearly by people walking in the square. Our response was to design them as simple plane surfaces, picking up on the horizontal lines of the hospital.

In summary, all the components of the towers are made of planes; the main steel structure, the floors, the glass, the glass suspension and the internal glass stainless steel fittings which carry the windloads.

The only components which are circular are the suspension rod assemblies (referring to the prison bars of the hospital windows and suggesting a new freedom by 'pulling them apart') and the top structural arrangement from which are hung the rods. The halo is the track for the maintenance cradle.

The basic principle of glass support separates clearly the external system carrying the weight of glazing and the internal system which restrains the glazing against horizontal wind loads.

The entire glass envelope to each tower is suspended by stainless steel rods from roof level.

Each panel of glass is individually supported, so that differences in thermal expansion between steel and glass can be spread evenly across all joints between panels.

Wind loads are transmitted through connectors to adjoining panels and back to the main structural frame. Secondary vertical structural members resist wind loads between floors of the link to the building. The size of each panel is determined by wind load, economic glass thickness, structural module and heights between floors. There is also a geometric ratio between the glass size and the arrangement of the fixings.

Given the demands of a rapid programme, the glazing method uses an established and tested system of glass fixing. The method of suspension is more innovative, but uses simple components designed to allow easy monitoring of quality and rapid manufacture in the quantities required.

Public and professional reaction to the glass towers has been extremely positive. In fact, as yet, we have heard no negative criticism. I believe that their relationship to the existing hospital is successful, and the evident enjoyment people visiting get from both the sensational views and the intricacies of the assembly suggest that as an image, they are entering the collective memory of Madrid.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I would like to put forward the following thoughts about intervention:-.

Intervention: a tentative panoramic manifesto towards adapting historic architecture and conservation at the dawn of the 21st century with particular relevance to museums:

1. Establishing unambiguously the central rôle of the individual museum.
2. Understanding the importance of its collection in the cultural heritage of the country.
3. Developing the architectural concept in response to the collection(s).
4. Responding to our own wider culture, our own time and technology.
5. Being conscious of the solid tradition we are building on, but avoiding nostalgic indulgence.
6. Identifying clearly whether what is required is an extension, a renovation or a transformation.
7. Understanding what is and what will be permanent, and what is temporary.
8. Avoiding improvisation through the training of managers in the art of obtaining excellent advice.
9. Clarifying the rôles of each interventionist in the process, whether it is new building or renovation and ensuring that all unjustified prejudice, be it psychological or professional, is removed, such that all understand that it is our collective cultural heritage, past and future, which is at stake. The future being what we are investing now and based on today.
10. Being sure that both short and long term objectives are realistic and achievable.
11. Being sure to finish what is started by being prudent about programming, but never forgetting that it is the future we are building.
12. If in doubt, don't! "noble sacrifice being the art of leaving things as they are" Gombrich.
13. An architecture of integration (Madrid), an architecture of contrast (Ecology Gallery at the Natural History Museum) and both together (Louvre) are all legitimate responses.
14. Re-examine the value system which has so forcefully put cultural property into the economic market place.