

Design symbolism in museum architecture



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Altes Museum in Berlin was designed by Karl Friedrich Schinkel in 1830s. The way it has been done influenced many architects' work. From this building, we could feel Schinkel's desire to provide the people who lived in or visited his buildings with subtle spatial experiences and consider the relationship of building with their landscape settings. He diverted the focus of architectural concern away from the design of facades as two-dimensional graphic compositions and towards ideas exploiting the three dimensions of space together with a fourth that of movement in time. This implied a richer and more complex conception of architecture, one that was not merely preoccupied with issues of style and proportion.

When you walk into this museum, the first thing you will notice is broad stairs upwards and 18 ionic columns in elevation. Columns are sandwiched between a podium and an entablature. As you climb the broad steps, you will go through these ionic columns which form an 87 meters long portico with statues along the side. This is the moment you feel you are not only the observer but a part of this architecture or a participant in this spatial experience. There are options for further movement. You could walk through the rotunda which is the heart of the building, and then go into the galleries. Or you could turn left or right then climb up the stairs to the upper level straightly; you could look back through the double layer of columns to the outside or into the rotunda. It is a great in-between space which connected outdoor landscape and inside world. You could literally see through the space, smell the fresh air, and feel the hierarchy and transparency of the layout Schinkel carefully arranged. Also, you could feel you are part of this experience by being in the spatial transition and connection. This building is

not merely a matter of visual appearance and sculptural form but is also an instrument for orchestrating experience, it designed to take people move up and down, inside and outside by stairs, change their view by through columns and levels.

POMPIDOU CENTRE

The George Pompidou Centre in Paris built between 1970 and 1977 by the architect Renzo Piano & Richard Rogers. The building housed arts, books and contemporary recreation. The site of this project was a massive car park. Rogers and Piano won the competition; theirs first plan is to use the half of the space available leaving the rest as a forecourt. The decision actually became the most successful one in the design.

The structure of Pompidou Centre is simple and repetitive. The architects put the functional parts which would normally be inside on the outside of building. All the building façade covered with glass, which both reflex and absolve the city. Six walkways have been installed on every floors facing to the forecourt and the city centre. Outside of the structure frame, the huge escalator was placed which transport visitors up to the fifth level. These two super layers on the frame of the building give the visitor a kind of industrial image. People moving through the transpierced tube to get the floor they want to go to.

It is not only a building with skeletal volume and providing sufficient wall structure but also the huge lattice truss provides the flexibility. The architects decide to build a flexible shelter and provide public space to wait and see, rather than make a monument or cultural space at the first place.

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The forecourt is as important as the building to people. It is a real livable urban space in the dense environment. It also makes the building more belong to the city. The forecourt has a gentle slope; force visitors pass the entrance area slowly. There is no significant separation between the forecourt and the lobby. The ground level is also a huge open space with no columns, where people could feel the continuity of space. The forecourt introduces the centre and the entrance is the continuity of the city. The forecourt also exhibits the “ life” of the city, so too do the façades. The walkways is not only free circulation space, they also reflex the meeting point between the building and the city. So the whole façade is accentually a public space. Different movement is unrestricted and free in this space, from street to the forecourt, the tube to the walkway. Visitors do not need to pay for going into the escalator, for the full experience of the whole sequences. It is so livable. Although, it is a huge scale – almost twice high as the surrounding building, but it is not separated from the city. It is the most popular building for visitors and locals, and also became a monument of the city. People not only come for the facility but the place and the views.

TATE MODERN

Tate Modern is one of the most famous national galleries of modern art in London. It seated at the bank side, linked to St Paul’s Cathedral by the Millennium Footbridge. It was used to be a Power Station, designed by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott and has been regenerated by Herzog & de Meuron from 1994-2000.

The main entrance located at the west side of the building. When you walk close to the building from west, firstly, at your left hand side, you will see a green forecourt with black benches linear distributed. At right side, you would find a ramp downwards, about 18-20 meters wide. Walking down gently, you could see the glazed door and curtain wall and the sign on top, and people would finally realize it is the way in. The height of the door is really low with quite long extension on the top, so while you passing it you could not appreciate fully vision of the inside right away. The ramp doesn't stop here but extends down to the inside. The only different is two meters wide steps along the right hand side of the ramp after passing through the glazed door. While you carry on walking down for couple of steps, you will suddenly get full image of the inside – the Turbine Hall, a huge scale space. The architects leave the whole space purely appear to the visitors. Five-storages tall, 3, 400 square meters space which was housed all the electricity generators of old power station. It is a space for specially-commissioned works by contemporary artists. A liner roof light dropped from the top, continued down to the back wall. This hall has been compared with the Bibliothèque royale de Paris by Étienne-Louis Boullée, about the similar full-length skylight and enormous height above, also the opportunities for people to look the central area from the side. They want to make the space as breezy and easygoing, and display itself at the beginning rather than art. This is also a kind of celebration the architects intend to make before the exhibition. The ramp keeps taking you to the reception area and the front of central stair, a lifted black plate which looks like a bridge cross above. The first options for the visitor is that you could choose to go underneath the lifted area, forwards to the back part of the turbine hall, to the left where is <https://assignbuster.com/design-symbolism-in-museum-architecture/>

the major transport area- the escalators, or to the upper level which connected directly to the north entrance and the river bank. However, the river side entrance seems to be more popular than the main one, mostly because it located right to one end of the Millennium Bridge which connected with St Paul's Cathedral. So people from north bank could actually walk cross the bridge and get into the museum. The other reason probably is because of various activates, there are many people moving along the river bank, also a nice green area with seats provide space to the street performers and vendors. The atmosphere here is much more livable compare to the forecourt of main entrance.

Herzog & de Meuron describe the transition of the entering as “ the moment of breathless wonder”. The thought if they want to bring the observer the feeling of being overawed, of having to catch one's breath before real grandeur, they must led them through the eye of a needle – a tunnel. The ramp is little more than a slightly tightened copy of the access ramp to the Pompidou Centre, but they extend the ramp to twice the length, for at an unexpected point they increase the already vast height of the hall by tearing out the old floor above the cellar, to make the over high hall even higher.

JEWISH MUSEUM

The Jewish Museum in Berlin was built between 1993 and 1998 by the architect Daniel Libeskind.

He called his design for the Jewish Museum Berlin “ Between the Lines.” The floor plan is shaped like a zigzag line and is intersected by a straight line. Empty spaces called voids extend the height of the building at the interfaces.

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The zinc-clad façade is covered by diagonal slashes – the window openings. Three paths cross on the lower level: the Axis of Exile, the Axis of the Holocaust, and the Axis of Continuity, Which leads to the museum's upper stories. Daniel Libeskind said: " What is important is the experience you get from it. The interpretation is open."

As Libeskind said, the experience is the crucial. It is like a story he want to tell. The zinc-clad building attracted people from distance on the street, but there is no entrance. There is also no sign telling people where the way in is. The main entrance of the museum actually located at the old 18th century building. People have to walk into the existing building, pass the reception and finally get to the way into the main part. It is a large entrance at right hand side in untreated concrete with sharp angles. It open onto a staircase that instead of steps to the upper floor as it is to be expected in museum, the staircase goes underground. So the visitor of the museum starts from the foundation of the old building. But architect reveals the suggestion immediately, if you look up, you see the staircase is actually at the very bottom of concrete well that without any functional justification pierced the old building in every level. So people could see the concrete well from all floors up to the eaves. The concrete tower guards the entrance to underground area that seems first sight to be much simpler then the broken-line surface building people seeing from the street. And Daniel thought this is the real heart of this project. They are three corridors. The central island means only two could be seen at a time. It is impossible to have overall vision. It is the axis. An axis is a straight line about which the part of the body or system axiomatically arranged. The three axes here represent the

three major experiences the Jewish life in old days: continuity, exile and death. The lights on the ceiling also accent the idea of axis. Only the straight and longest path leads to the main part of the museum. It leads to a staircase seems to be quite modest, as walking up, suddenly spectacular perspective reveals. Straight-line staircase keeps going up to reach the top floor. Architect frees the space with only one direction- upwards. Great concrete beams stabilized the structure seems have difficulty to hold the building. There are also six different shape concrete avoids in the building, pierced the building in every floor. The only lighting comes from skylight.

The threshold in Jewish Museum is not the space we usually could see. In this case, transition space (the axis, the stair, the avoid, the light) became the most important part to reveal the spirit of this building, a story which the architect wants to share with all the visitors. He also intend to make this building not obvious and leave all those meaning and hidden violence to be explored by the visitors, or more accurately, the participants.

CAIXA FORUM

Caixa Forum built between 2001 and 2007 in Madrid by the architect Herzog & de Meuron.

It is a post-modern art gallery located at the centre of city. It is housed in a converted 1899 power station. The architects decided to demolish the original roof and interiors. They cut away the granite base of the brick exterior walls, creating the illusion that the building floats in midair, hovering over a covered entry plaza. With the addition of two upper stories clad in rusted cast iron and two underground levels, they doubled the building's

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height and increased its size five times to more than 100, 000 square feet. In short, the architects have skinned and gutted the structure like an animal, transforming its tattered brick shell, four withes thick, into an exotic veneer.

The basic strategy of the Caixa Forum design is similar to that to lift the building up and create a shaded public plaza underneath. It is because the condition of the site is quite compressive, with the narrow back streets sloping upward on one side. To cut off the bottom part makes the building more visible and accessible from different directions. When you walk from cross street, no matter from front or back, the first impression is a floating building with different colours and the green wall beside. Take some more steps; you will immediately feel the spectacular using of material. The incredible texture using for the facade and the paving, create a unique image. Several layers revealed on it, the covered plaza made by many triangular panels, the existing part, the top extension with perforated rusting iron and the vertical green standing by the side. Getting under the covered plaza, you will find the surrounding suddenly get dark, and see reflecting ceiling which made by triangular iron-cast panel, the dynamic space with three cores containing which supporting the building and also a fountain by the side. These irregular panels are hung from the upper floor slab, continuing to the central entrance - a spectacular spiral entry with crisscrossing exposed fluorescent lamps on top. So people move from the dark and heavy entry plaza up to the entrance could suddenly feel the sharp contrast between the two spaces. Another key space is the main star - a white curving balustrade of softly finished concrete. This spiral form will take

visitors straight up to the top floor café where could have a veiled view of the botanical garden and surrounding through the perforated cast iron.

Herzog & de Meuron developed the strategy on notions of character and collage. It gives each space its particular sensual and experiential personality. They explored it through different properties of materials and texture, transformation and decay. It created an instantly recognizable icon from distance that is also a space of intriguing complexity while walking into it.

21th CENTURY MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART

The 21th Century Museum in Kanazawa, Japan built by the architect SANAA between 2000 and 2004. It is located in the center of city Kanazawa with complex contexts: town hall, public park, opera house, shopping mall, town hall, kindergarten and residential. People come from many directions for different purposes, for that reason, SANAA planned to give the building a circuital form right from the start. That makes it equally accessible from all directions, without any distinction between front and back. The building has two zones, the museum zone which required admission tickets, and the socializing zone which is free for public. But they are not completely separated. The architects want these two zones to be visually linked, divided only by transparent acrylic doors and courtyards.

The first key element of this building is the outer walls. They are made of glass, reflecting the surrounding landscape. It was designed so that the inside and outside of the building overlap visually in the curved glass surface. Also it offers a 360-degree view of the surroundings. At the same

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time, SANAA decided to use path and courtyard to carve the transition space out, left only the solid – exhibition area. Four major courtyards provide visitor several opportunities to be exposed fully to the natural light. Corridors are like streets, crossing from north to south and east to west, creating links with the landscapes outside and inside. These are also for the public to use for free, unlike the Pompidou Center which set back to create a square for public, this building intend to hollow itself from inside to invite public as participant.

In this building, when the movements of the people inside the building are visible from without, the sequence of events becomes a part of its external appearance. The way they look at events reflects how the architects perceive contemporary situations. They interpret this space by creating elements of contrast and continuity between the architecture and its setting. They thought transparency has a special meaning in this museum. It is not just a way of achieving lightness, information, openness, and illumination, or including human movement as a part of the design. It is about “ the feel of life”.

PHILOSOPHY

A museum is much more than the structure of exhibiting. It could be a physical system of heating and cooling, of lighting and darkening, of moving and staying, of preserving and decaying, of observing and learning. Also, it is a spiritual structure of recording and describing, of hiding and revealing, of bounding and merging. However, it is always a structure for public using; therefore, one of the most important systems would be entering and leaving.

We can't only think about an exhibition room to understand the museum without considering the process of transition.

This kind of transition space is made of lounge, passage, entry, and exiting etc. It could be describe as a system. We could look it individually, but actually they always bound up. We do not perceive sprit of a museum by exhibits. People coming from different directions gather in the same shelter, take some time, walking, looking, listening, seating, eating and leaving. The performance is consistently affected by the architecture, the system. The way of the system operate force us how to perform it in. While we follow the instruction to perform it, different human acts reveal. Ultimately, acts we made make us truly perceive and understand the space.

Neil Leach described the idea of door, is that

The door becomes the image of the boundary point at which human beings actually always stand or can stand. The finite unity, to which we have connected a part of infinite space designated for us, reconnects it to this latter; in the unity, the bound and the boundary less adjoint one another, not in the dead geometric form of a mere separating wall, but rather as the possibility of a permanent interchange.

In museum, the rooms and art objects form only the container, but it is not all about that shell, the content is formed by the visitors. Without that, it's like a painting only with dead surface. In this case, museum is not a private collection, an art review; it is always about the public. That is why we find museum admirable.