

Contemporary Spanish exhibition spaces¹

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Abstract

The resource paper analyses the contemporary Spanish architecture of museums and exhibition spaces based on different architectural aspects. The increasing number of museums in the last 20 years intensifies the actuality of the theme – contemporary museologists have established a tendency of building new museums. The continuous growth of the number and types of exhibition spaces demand a new way of systematization. In addition, the museum has become a communal and meeting place, which situates the exhibited works of art in a new context, providing wide perspective for examining art, architecture and their connection, and giving a general idea of that in the examined epoch.

The aspects of the analysis developed by ourselves have an approach based on design, completing the existing museological and historical bibliography. The architecture of exhibition spaces is one of the most independent genres and it allows unique forming of space and volume, however, there are strict tendencies that make their classifying possible.

Keywords

museum architecture · exhibition space · contemporary Spanish architecture · Iberian peninsula

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Introduction

The independent forming of space allows the development of architectural principles. From the viewpoint of design, the museum has become one of the noblest (and most popular) functions by today, and it is also regarded as the top of the history based function-hierarchy.

Up to the present, the history of art studied the museums predominantly in terms of museology – analyses were limited to the arrangement of themes and examination of the floor plans. However, as the exhibition spaces more often became the subject of design projects, the architectural aspects were also emphasized. We classified the museum spaces on the Iberian Peninsula according to these new principles, creating a coherent system with knowledge of the tendencies of contemporary architectural criticism, and by applying the achievements of the publications focusing only on some sections of the topic [4, 14, 22]. The system of aspects contains the complete museum architecture, considering that every museum has to be unambiguously categorisable. Our intention was also to create a linear structure of the subcategories, containing the two extremes and the entire spectrum between them. Thus the four analyzing aspects were established: the relationship between building and visitor, building and exhibit, building and past, and building and environment².

The first two categories concern the communication between building and society, and analyze principally the interior and the arrangement of spaces. The visitors route in the museum affects the relationship between the receiver and the exhibited works of art, and the connection of building and object describes the relationship of architect and artist. This two-directional communication (among building, object and visitor) plays a major role in the architectural design of museums.

The other two categories place the building in temporal and

¹The article is based on the essay of "Museo Iberico - Az Ibériai-félsziget kiállítótereinek elemzése építészeti szempontrendszer alapján" presented at Students' Scientific Workshop in 2010 at BME Faculty of Architecture. The original research paper was awarded 1st Prize and the President's Honour Award.

²All images were taken by Anna Kóródy and Zsolt Szendrei. All drawings of the analysis were made after original architectural plans by Anna Kóródy and Zsolt Szendrei.

spatial context, and they focus on the shaping of volumes, analyzing the details, the spatial compositions in the interior and in the exterior, and the adjacent materials. The connection with the past of the site and its atmosphere places the building in historical continuity, and helps to analyze the temporal fit. The examination of the museum's relationship with the environment, with the quarter of the city and with the built and non-built neighbourhood helps us to study the spatial context and to analyze the designer's intention.

Classic historical analysis

The collection of art – according to the modern interpretation – started in the epoch of the Italian Renaissance, when the interest for history and the adoration of the antique world evolved [17]. By the 17th-18th centuries, the exhibition space had become an important part of palace architecture, at this time gallery-like spaces were applied. From the middle of the 18th century the structure of the formerly unsystematic collections changed, the selection and the presentation became attached to the viewpoints of science. In the case of L. C. Sturm's ideal museum plan (1704) the disposition of the exhibitions was also an important part of the concept. In 1753 the British Museum was founded, and with this the word "museum" received its meaning as an institute. In their plans both Boullée (1783) and Durand (1802) applied a theoretical approach when they analyzed the museum as function. In the 19th century several museums were built, by virtue of the rivalry between Berlin and Munich to follow England. After World War II the number of museums started to increase rapidly, and this process is still continuing. The installation space that has appeared recently, is entirely independent from the surrounding world, and controllable in every aspect.

1 Relationship of building and visitor

The classification of exhibition spaces in the case of studying the relationship between building and visitor is based on the degree of freedom of the visitor's route in the museum. This concerns the architectural framework, the permanent built environment that is independent from the installations. The two extreme subcategories are essentially different. With linear progression, as in the historical galleries, the visitor's route is strictly guided. The exhibition is organized linearly along this route, and the sequence is easily understandable, however, this is appropriate for only a few percent of exhibitions. The converse, the open plan exhibitions, gives greater liberty to the visitor, the order for viewing the exposure is the result of sovereign decisions. By rearrangement it can be transformed into other space systems, so practically it is appropriate for the presentation of any field of art due to its plasticity. Nevertheless, the open plan exhibit is not suitable for strict sequenced exhibitions, because the order is not obvious to the visitor. Another subcategory of the disposition of space is a series of rooms, having more flexibility than linear progression. Its special type is the labyrinth-like se-

quence. The neutral disposition of space allows free sequence in the exhibition hall, but it is more defined than an open plan exhibition. The qualities of these categories are not comparable, only certain museums can be judged, because every exhibition demands a different disposition of space.

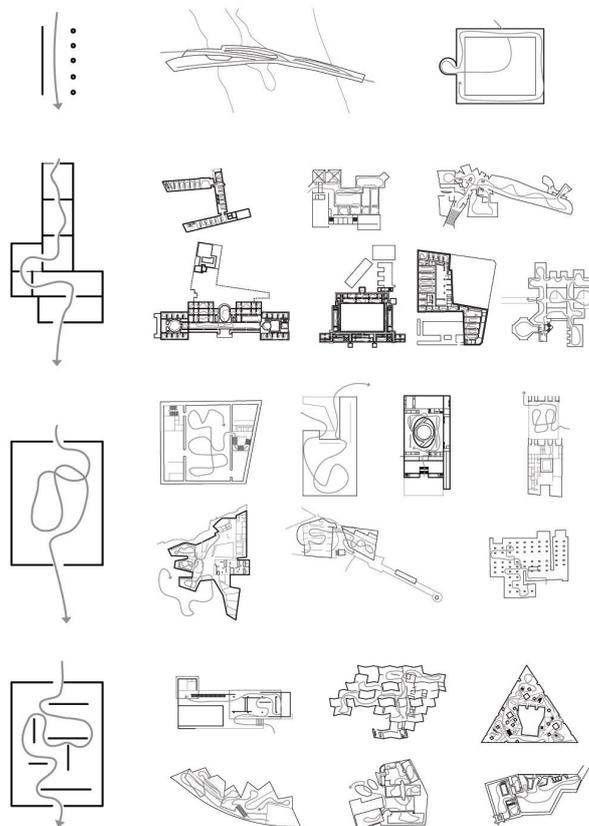


Fig. 1. Relationship of building and visitor

The *Naval Museum of Barcelona* (Museu Marítim de Barcelona) is a less known but appropriate example for the exhibition halls. The museum is located near the harbour, at the end of the boulevard La Rambla, in an intact remaining medieval shipyard fortified at the four corners. The basic structure of the complex is simple: a repetition of long halls with pitched roofs, whose halls are divided by pillar arrays in the interior. Presumably after the collapse of the roof structure a small atrium was formed in the east part, which became emphasized due to the natural light, and loosed the monotony of the repeated halls.

The most interesting part of the contemporary interventions (Esteve and Robert Terrades, 1985) is the passage fixed to the pillars. It provides a general view all over the museum, and intensifies the connection between place and exhibition. The south facade facing the sea was opened up, and a ship-repairing workshop was formed behind it that advertises the museum like a media surface.

The disposition of space in the *Contemporary Art Museum of*



Fig. 2. Barcelona, Naval Museum, 1985. Architects: Esteve and Robert Terrades

Castilla and León (Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Castilla y León, known as MUSAC) is similar but more defined. The building is located in the outskirts of León, and it was designed by Mansilla & Tuñón in 2004. The main aim of the project was to host the avant-garde works of art, and through the selection of the site to revive the cultural spirit in the new quarter of the city. The building's outline is irregular; the proportions undiscoverable from the outside. The basic structure of the rectangular raster was transformed to parallel waving stripes. The extended building is loosed by six atriums, creating a complex space-structure from the modulated system. The free floor plan is not defined by the walls like Mies' floating room but by the inner inclusion-like courts. The spatial relationship allows autonomy for wayfinding so the visitor's route loses its strict guidance. The created small-scale, urban structure was described by Luis Mansilla as "covered, sheltered market streets" [8]. The horizontal volume of the building is divided by counterpointing vertical towers which also help the internal orientation. The emphasized detail of the glass panel covered façade is the entrance enclosure, where the 3000 glasses are coloured. The transparency of the glass depends on the function behind them. Contrary to the translucent, shiny tiles, concrete dominates in the interior, and the different texture of surfaces creates contrast among the walls and the ceiling. The recognizable elements of space and the characteristic light-openings support the orientation inside the museum.

The *Bridge Pavilion* (Pabellon Puente) in Zaragoza is a significant point of museum architecture in Spain, although its architect Zaha Hadid is Iraq-born. The motto of Expo 2008 was "Water - a unique resource", and the pavilion served as a gate for one of the main entrances, joining the two riverbanks of the River Ebro. The function is placed over the water creating a new approach for the architectural idea, the bridge.

The building is a result of a simple transformation, the extrusion of four diamond-shaped sections along a slightly curved



Fig. 3. León, Contemporary Art Museum of Castilla and León, 2001-2004. Architects: Mansilla & Tuñón

path. Only one volume crosses the river, the others form an expansion towards the Expo site. This principle of design is also observable in the inner disposition of spaces, where the exhibition is organized along a linear progression. The spaces where the volumes cross each other are visually and spatially separated from the exhibition spaces in order to help attune the visitor. The Pavilion – like the other buildings at Expo 2008 – presents the idea of sustainable development. The natural ventilation and lighting is guaranteed by various perforations of the tiling which also permits visual connection to the river and the landscape.



Fig. 4. Zaragoza, Bridge Pavilion, 2005-2008. Architect: Zaha Hadid

2 Relationship between building and exhibit

"The museum is the place where art goes to die, moreover, this 'funeral' has less and less participants." – wrote Karen Benbassat in a resource paper, expressing a criticism on contemporary museums with the analogies of 'museum-cemetery' and 'exhibition-funeral'. In her opinion "in the minute when a picture finds its place on a wall, it becomes a simple object and

there is no guaranty that the work will have any cultural benefit, continuity or life inside the museum” [1].

The relationship of exhibits and visitors is not obvious because the process of cultural change is crucial and complex [9]. In ‘vivifying’ the works of art, the role of the architect is also important. The relationship between building and exhibit can be determining; the place of the work influences the effect on the visitor: intensifies or weakens it. A good exhibition space places the pieces of art in a convenient context supporting the artistic meaning, and in some cases enriching it with a new message.

Our system of approach analyzes the interaction of space and object. One extreme subcategory is the space created by the object, when the work generates a special atmosphere by itself. The other extreme situation is when the building identifies with the object, it becomes the subject of interest, and no other exhibit is necessary. Beyond these, three subcategories are classified: the space subordinated to the exhibit, the space dominating the exhibit, and the balance between them.

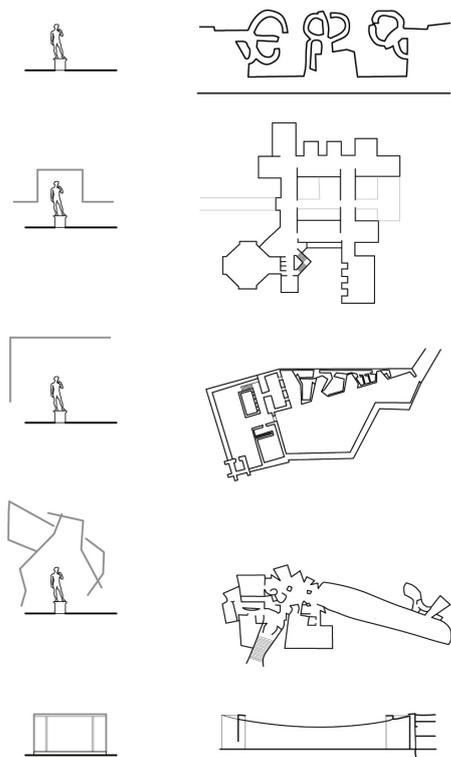


Fig. 5. Relationship between building and exhibit

The exhibit’s domination is observable in the Foundation Joan Miró (Fundació Joan Miró), a museum dedicated to the oeuvre of the painter and sculptor Miró (1893-1983). The museum was built in the ‘Parc de Montjuic’ in Barcelona in 1975, according to the plans of Josep Lluís Sert, and his close friend, Miró. The building is reflecting Sert’s architectural principles: clear proportions, geometric forms, high headroom, indirect natural

lighting and proper spatial disposition to facilitate the orientation and the latitude both for the visitors and the employee.

White walls, sharp geometric forms and half-arc shaped skylights characterize the museum from the outside. The inner courtyard and the roof terrace serve as exhibition space for Miró sculptures – some sculptural parts of the building almost compete with them. But in the interior the building is subordinated to the exhibited works of art, the blank white walls function only as background for the coloured paintings. The balance is harmonious, the neutral basic colours complement Miró’s vivid, colourful works, and the smooth natural lighting also assists this balanced harmony.



Fig. 6. Barcelona, Foundation Joan Miró, 1975. Architect: Josep Lluís Sert

The most characteristic instance of the dominating type of museums is the frequently negatively cited *Guggenheim Museum* (El Museo Guggenheim) in Bilbao. Besides the remarkable variety of forms the spectacular, sometimes sensation-mongering exhibitions explain its popularity. The main aim of the Guggenheim Museum is to rehabilitate the area, to increase the number of visitors and incomes. While according to Léon Krier “the purpose of architecture and construction is usage and not consumerism” [12], here the expressive form overwrites the rational functional order. The ‘experience of space’ is displaced by ‘affording adventures’.

There are several essays about Frank O. Gehry’s building, both positive and negative; Philip Johnson for example called it “the greatest building of our time” [13]. Jeffrey Kipnis in his book ‘Towards a New Architecture’ writes about the principles of the style ‘DeFormation’ referring to Gehry’s architecture [11]. One of his sentences perfectly fits the museum in Bilbao: ‘an emphasis on abstract, monolithic architectural form that broaches minimal direct references or resemblance and that is alien to the dominant architectural modes of a given site, and the development of smoothing affiliations with minor organisations operating within a context that are engendered by the intrinsic geometric, topological and spatial qualities of the form” [11]. It is observable, indeed, that many different associations

can be connected to the unconventional form of the building, from ship to abstract sculpture. The architect mentioned the following prefigurations: Fritz Lang's movie 'Metropolis', the sculptures of Constantin Brancusi, the analogy of a quarry, but first and foremost 'the power of the city Bilbao' [2].

Analyzing the publications that appeared over the last decade, it is conspicuous that significantly more are dealing with the building of the Guggenheim Museum or with the 'Bilbao-effect' than with the exhibitions. This unequal ratio is due to the fact that the installations are perfectly subordinated to the architectural space, and the exhibition space itself has major impact on the visitors than the exhibited objects. The installation of Richard Serra that is exposed in the great hall of the Guggenheim is a good example for this. Walking between the high rusty steel slabs one transforms self and loses the ability of orientation. This feeling is overwritten by the building, because the characteristic ceiling is visible from every spot and so the effect is lessened. As a background to the works, the Guggenheim Museum is dysfunctional, and the relationship between building and object is asymmetric.



Fig. 7. Bilbao, Guggenheim Museum, 1995-1997. Architect: Frank O. Gehry

In contradiction, the *Andalucía's Museum of Memory* (Museo de la Memoria de Andalucía), an architecturally sensitive creation of Alberto Campo Baeza in Granada is a positive instance for the dominant exhibition space. The forms are clear and the disposition of space is easily understandable, with the architect working only with the shades of white. The concrete blade containing the library and the restaurant forms an urban gate and by means of its size and characteristics it has become the symbol of the complex.

The architectural tools are similarly strong inside. The enor-

mous, sunken entrance yard is suitable for outdoor exhibitions, and the great exhibition hall is divided by a monumental oval atrium. This white, dimension-free atrium with the sculptural double ramp inside surmounts the exhibition spaces of the interior, and the concrete blade dominates the exterior and the environment. Although these strong architectural gestures are visible from every spot, they do not interfere with the artistic value of the exhibited pictures. This balance was observable at the exhibition of the photographer Ruven Afanador, the 'Thousand Kisses' (Mil besos), as its black and white posters perfectly completed the simple, white entrance yard.



Fig. 8. Granada, Andalucía's Museum of Memory, 2006-2009. Architect: Alberto Campo Baeza

3 Relationship between building and past

The analysis of the relationship between the building and the past of the building site, places the museum in temporal context. The judgement of old and new values has been significantly changed over time. The rebuilding of an existing edifice is already an attitude, and likewise, the design of a completely new building also carries a message. In the recent past the contemporary rebuilding plans of Hungarian museums built in the 19th century induced arguments in professional and non-professional circles alike. Similar scandals followed the museum extensions abroad over the last decade, because 'the deep emotions are far from the recent architects when they design a new wing for one of the reputable buildings' [16] – wrote a magazine concerning the visual environmental culture. Lately there are more and more such plans, indeed, where the architect uses contemporary tools to transform a museum with history. Several accomplished examples confirm this, from the Louvre Pyramid, Daniel Libeskind's Jewish Museum in Berlin to Chipperfield's Berlin Neues

Museum.

The reason for transforming the traditional museums is partly the decrease in the state's financial support. Besides, the demands and the composition of the visitors, the 'consumer stratum', has also changed. The flexibility, the openness, and public attracting image are more and more important expectations. This task belongs partly to the advertisement management, partly to the organizers of the exhibition, but also to the architectural quality. The tendency of converting inherited museum spaces, which is observable on the Iberian Peninsula, is due to these changes. The transformations and expansions are not the only architectural methods – there are several variations from preserved and conserved buildings to completely new ones. In this section, we have classified the museum's relation with the past according to the degree of intervention.

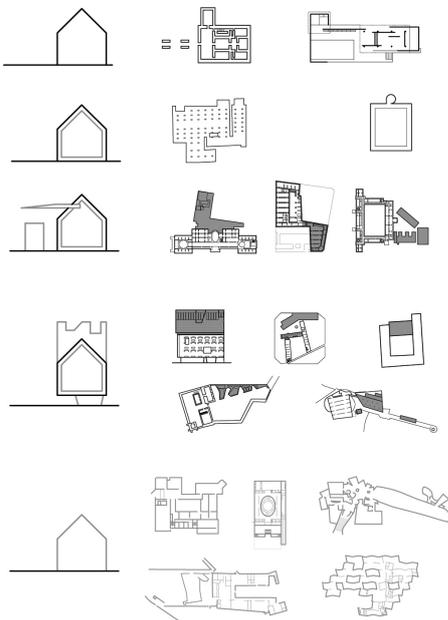


Fig. 9. Relationship between building and past

One of the most beautiful examples of an extension without converting the original wing is Rafael Moneo's work at *Prado Museum* (Museo del Prado). The museum's construction started in 1785 according to the plan of Juan de Villanueva, and it was inaugurated in 1819 as a 'royal collection of paintings'. At that time the building contained one long hall divided by central premises. The greatest transformation of the 200 year long history of the Prado began in 2002. Remarkably the intervention did not affect the Villanueva wing, the required surface was achieved by expansion, which included the dilapidated Cloister of San Jeromino standing in the neighbourhood. Now the renovated cloister hosts the museum's sculpture collection. The natural lighting of the two new lower floors is provided by a glass-covered airshafts skylight lightyard.

The intervention hides in the background, sunk into the hillside, subordinated to the original building. The materials also

reflect this: the red brick – grey granite pairing, which is also determinant in the cityscape in Madrid, respects the elements of the old building. The old and new parts are connected by a glass corridor, but the new unit is also independently accessible from the street, through the brazen gate designed by the sculptor Cristina Iglesias. The connection is situated underground, covered with a green roof that operates as a park at street level.

Owing to the extension, four new rooms were added to the museum hosting the temporary exhibitions. A new auditorium was built, and the reception area and service zone was also increased. A significant part of the new wing is occupied by modern laboratories and workshops used for restoration – a new function that is an obligatory requirement in contemporary museums. The museum's heart is the apse shaped hall connecting the central axis of the old wing with the extension. The interesting shape is emphasized by the special array of beams on the ceiling, and by the muse sculptures from Hadrian's Villa in Tivoli standing around it [16]. The court around the apse loses the middle part of the museum and provides the natural lighting.



Fig. 10. Madrid, Prado Museum, 2002-2007. Architect: Rafael Moneo

The *Valencia Museum of Enlightenment and Modernity* (Museo Valenciano de la Ilustración y la Modernidad, known as MUVIM) reflects on the environment and the past of the site with various approaches. The building in the centre of Valencia is an iconic instance of the contemporary Catalan architecture. The museum designed by Guillermo Vazquez Consuegra (2001) is characterized by irregular geometry, modern materials, sharp lines and clear construction. Originally there was a civic hospital on the site, but the new form ignores this and reflects only on the environment. The extended volume is open in the middle restoring the street formerly crossing the site, and connects the new building with the surrounding urban structure.

Concrete, glass and steel surfaces mark the building, which appear both inside and outside as a communication between interior and exterior. The rough concrete walls and ceiling convey an impression of incompleteness. The different functions are accessible from the central entrance-hall: the permanent and temporary exhibitions, the thematic workshops, the library and the bookstore. The new construction allowed the creation of the ideal situation of light and space. The narrow wings facilitate the use of natural light, and ensure the adequate spacial proportions for the typically small graphics, which do not require a distant viewpoint.



Fig. 11. Valencia, Museum of Enlightenment and Modernity, 1998-2001, Architect: Guillermo Vazquez Consuegra

Major transformations were accomplished beyond the extension at *Caixa Forum Madrid*. The museum is located in the cultural district of the city, near the boulevard Paseo del Prado. The Herzog & deMeuron firm restored the characteristic brick facade of the previous power station, built in 1899, but the petrol station in front of it was demolished to create a small yard and to provide an urban opening. Only the brick shell remained from the industrial building, handled as a bas-relief. After walling up the old windows new openings were cut into the walls, independent from the original raster, emphasizing the contrast of the two temporal layers.

By lowering the street level, the entrance was transferred under the original ground floor, and thanks to the hidden steel supports, it appears as if the building is floating above the covered open space. The extension's speciality is its vertical approach: on one hand with two underground levels and on the other hand with two new floors over the original. The upper parts have rusty steel tiles on the façade, solid and lace-like perforated surfaces of laser cut slabs. The interior is dominated by two kinds of

surface – shiny stainless steel in the area of the entrance and white walls in the exhibition spaces. The stairs bordered with folded slabs of steel leading to the entrance hall are characteristic details of the museum, and also the main staircase with the beautiful, slightly curved stair shaft. The rusty tiling of the façade is visible from the inside only in the café on the top floor. The pixel pattern perforated slabs serve as shading in front of the glass walls. Another characteristic element is the fire wall next to the small square which is covered by a vertical garden designed by Patrick Blanc.

The transformation of the building is drastic; the preserved perimetric walls bear only symbolic meaning because they are not necessary for the structure. However, these surfaces of the façade create the connection to the past and place the museum in the historical continuity.



Fig. 12. Madrid, Caixa Forum, 2001-2008. Architects: Herzog & deMeuron

4 Relationship between building and environment

A building is interpretable only with its environment, but the relationship between them is variable. The architectural behaviour determining the way it fits is influenced by different factors, the analysis of which is indispensable for understanding the context of the building. The fit is related to the character of the environs, to the function of the building and to the intention of the architect. The analysis of the context is especially interesting in the case of museums, because the function claims dominant and iconic appearance, which can be shown in several architectural ways.

Three types of district were separated based on the difference of the architectural approach. We analyzed independently the museums located in a dense, central city structure, in a rehabilitated industrial zone and in a natural environment, as the fitting

is always relative, and the building is interpretable only through reflecting on the character of the environment.

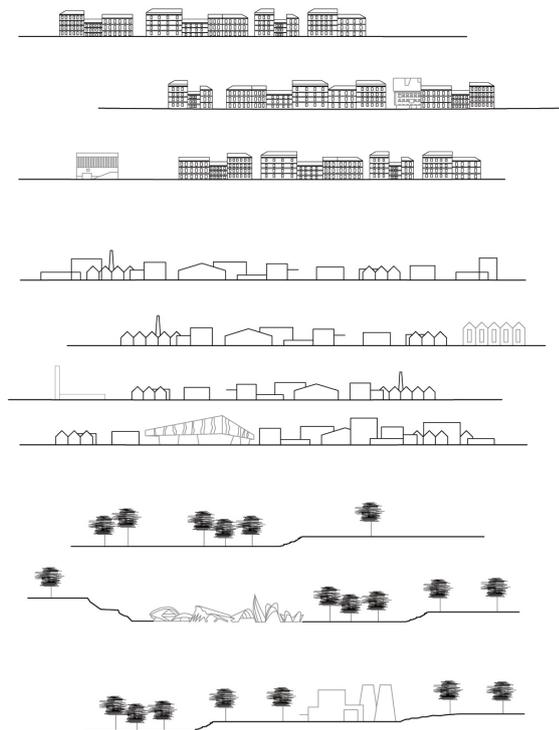


Fig. 13. Relationship between building and environment

Jean Nouvel created a dominant symbol of museum designing the transformation of the *Reina Sofia Museum* (Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía) in Madrid. The recent museum was converted from a hospital built in the 18th century in the neoclassical style. At the end of the '80s José Luis Iniguez, Antonio Vázquez and Ian Ritchie added the two glass elevators to the back facade. The number of visitors reached 1 million by the 1990s which gave ground for the expansion of the museum, with the international competition being won by Nouvel's office.

The architect added three separated pavilions to the original building, which follow the line of facades facing the avenue Ronda de Atocha. The separated blocks are connected with one enormous perforated roof that floats above them supported by slight columns. The roof that is also separated from the moulding of the old wing by a narrow slit, became the trade-mark of the museum and as a symbol shows the fact of the intervention in the dense centre of the city. The new wings and the original building form a triangular court, with a ratio that is similar to the yards in the neighbourhood. This covered open space is typical in the Mediterranean area. The different functions are accessible from this court (library, ticket office, cloakroom, entrance to the museum) that creates a special inner world.

Built in an extraordinary natural environment, the *Principe Felipe Museum of Science* (Museo de las Ciencias Principe Fe-



Fig. 14. Madrid, Reina Sofia Museum, 2001-2005. Architect: Jean Nouvel

lpe) has a unique context thanks to its unusual location. The City of Arts and Sciences (Ciudad de las Artes y las Ciencias) designed by Santiago Calatrava is situated in the dry watercourse crossing the centre of Valencia. The diversion of the river started after the flood in 1957, and resulted in a long park along the whole length of the watercourse by 1980. Calatrava designed ten buildings on the enormous site forming a consistent public zone connected by a pool system and recurring architectural forms.

The environmental context in this case can be examined in different scales. The site itself does not fit organically into the structure of the city, because the watercourse level is separated from the city, and because it was the aim of the architectural approach to create a 'white spot' divided from the city. However, the appearance of the Calatrava buildings is homogeneous when examined in a smaller scale. The whole site is sculpturally formed by mostly white surfaces. Each building has the same emphasis, there is no hierarchical order among them and this is also confirmed by the repetition and the similar sizes. The space among the buildings ensures that they do not suppress each other but intensify the dominance of the unified composition.

On the contrary, the *Maritime Museum of Galicia* (Museo do Mar de Galicia) also standing in a natural environment behaves fittingly, its historical and new built parts are hardly separable. The museum designed by César Portela and Aldo Rossi is located in Vigo in northern Spain, in a bay of the Atlantic Ocean. The main economic activity of the city has been industry – the canning factory later used as slaughterhouse standing on the coast is one of its remaining legacies. A narrow coastline leads from the industrial buildings to the lighthouse. The museum unifies these, adding two new wings to the original.

One of the new buildings stands on the narrow coastline as an extension of the wall bordering the walkway. The other new wing follows the system of the repeated halls that is typical on the seashore. The exterior of the new parts resemble the original volume, but the elaborated details and the great open surfaces



Fig. 15. Valencia, Principe Felipe Museum of Science, 1996-2001. Architect: Santiago Calatrava

signify the contrast between them. Even the usage of materials intensifies this gentle opposition – the noble materials applied in the new versus the industrial quality. The sensitive architectural treatment of the encounter of old and new resulted in a complex that used the remains of the past but handled them in a contemporary manner.



Fig. 16. Vigo, Maritime Museum of Galicia, 1993-2002. Architects: César Portela, Aldo Rossi

Conclusion

The paper analyzed the Spanish exhibition spaces based on four aspects: the relation between building and visitor, building and exhibit, building and past, and building and environment. The system of aspects is comprehensive but not complete; the line of the analysed categories can be further extended. The aim of the study was to create an approach based on design, because the traditional museological and historical classification mostly

ignored the viewpoint of the architect. We developed aspects important for a designer, which interpret the buildings not just as museums but also as public buildings.

Analyzing the museums, exhibition spaces and the World's Fair pavilions, we observed some tendencies that helped the classification. The architecture of exhibition spaces is one of the most independent genres and it allows a unique forming of space and volume, however, these buildings originate in primal types. The observed tendencies are not fixed to the geography of cultural boundaries, although there are some specialities that make the buildings inseparable from Spain. The landscape, the environmental and climatic conditions, the colourful cultural pattern and the possibilities implied in the extant buildings are all determining and intertwined with the Spanish architecture.

Our intention was to create a linear structure with the subcategories, containing the two extremes and the entire spectrum between them. The first two of these categories concern the communication between building and society, because this two-directional dialogue plays a major role in the architectural design of museums. The two other categories place the building in a temporal and spatial context. The connection with the past of the site locates the building in a historical continuity. The examination of the museum's relationship with the environment helps to study the spatial context and to analyse the designer's intention.

The resource outlined the main characteristics of the contemporary museums and museum rebuilding. In terms of the disposition of space the series of rooms is most often applied. This is owing to the numerous conversions, because in their case the traditional disposition of the original wing is frequently followed, and that this is the securest solution from the viewpoint of the arrangement of the exhibition. The dominance of the building was mostly perceptible after examining the relationship between building and exhibit. This design focusing on the building is a characteristic of recent architecture. The phenomenon is connected to the ascendant status of the museum function and to the urban and communal role of the museum becoming stronger. The functional transformation of museum complexes pushed the exhibitions into the background and directed the attention to other programmes and 'experiences' offered by the museum.

The relationship with the past and with the environment reflects the architectural attitude about the built heritage. Nowadays different monuments, even industrial buildings become more valuable, and their cultural recycling is observable – in this case by converting them into exhibition space.

The 'rephrasing' of industrial establishments became almost a trend in the last few decades; a significant part of the analysed museums were created by utilizing an old building. From the viewpoint of the environment, the museum as a public attraction has great importance, and this role often overwrites the architectural fitting. A significant tendency is the intention to be obviously recognizable: the exhibition spaces work as their own advertisements. Those buildings take the subordinated role

which were added to an already iconic museum, for there the old wing carries the message. The assignors are usually appointing such architects whose name is contributing to the reputation of the building.

According to our experiences the success of the museum is not connected to any category in contempt of the observable tendencies, there is no secure method for designing a good exhibition space. The analysis of the four aspects attempts to classify museum architecture in a new way and to describe the tendencies of contemporary architecture with its help.

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