

ART BOX IN THE PARK

a place created for art and the public

THE CITY AND THE BEACON

The Oslo City Hall rides high above the harbour. To its left rises the castle. To its right will rise the new beacon of the National Art Museum. Glistening like ice in the sunlight, and then lit from within and glowing in the darkness, the new museum is more than a structure to contain art- it stands as a new landmark for the city, announcing the national importance of this site within the city, the spirit of city and their pride in the collection.

Simple and strong, yet tall and elegant in proportion, the 'art-box' is like a beacon lifted above the city. Oriented precisely north-south, independent in its alignment from any structure around it, the iconic structure represents and announces the collection. A double layer mesh and glass skin alters in vertical and horizontal detail across the façade. While functioning as a light control and heat gain device, the skin double skin also unifies the structure, allowing it to read from a distance as a singular, crystalline element, floating above the rough landscape.

Efficient, elegant and well lit, all of the gallery spaces are clustered within the skin of the tower. The most open and flexible galleries, temporary & modern art exhibits, occupy the lower floors. Tall and simple, with selective openings, the galleries allow views through and across a series of vertical voids. Above, the art and craft collections are housed in simple gallery spaces interlocking like a child's puzzle, allowing differences within the simple order of the block. Finally, gathered around a masterful grand staircase, the traditional older collection of master-works inhabits a series of top-lit galleries. From within, the cubic form allows an order of progression which is beautifully simple, with hallway circulation dramatically minimised. Views overlooking the harbour, from the connecting escalators and stairway voids, are spectacular. From outside, the order is similarly clear, as the tower, after all, only contains galleries. The 'art-box' simple in form and crystalline in finish, is immediately recognisable.

THE PARK

Norway is known for its landscape and its dramatic natural settings. We celebrate this regional quality, bringing a new landscape into the heart of the city. This glacial landscape is ridged and folded, recalling a geology broken by the fierceness of winter ice. Below the surface of these gardens; service, storage and administration elements of the programme are packed, which cut through to the surface with skylights and roof elements. On its green ecological and densely planted surface, a sculpture garden is created for public use, opening the site to the enjoyment of both gallery and non-gallery visitors alike.

A PLACE CREATED FOR ART AND THE PUBLIC

The societal role of the museum is primary: actively encouraging and inviting participation with the arts at different levels of publicness. The public park provides a new forum for interchange between visual and performance arts and festive events of the city. The lower stepped gardens provide a setting for outdoor sculptures and new commissioned works, and a casual gathering space for city dwellers. Rising above, a more open gathering space is offered by the generous surface of a 'green pier'. Like the well-known outdoor concert venues of many cities, this space will be used for summer art shows and performance events. The lobby itself, inhabited by the café and bookshops as well as a flexible multi-functional hall, provides curators with a semi-public space and a hugely imaginative range of possibilities: sliding screen walls can be relocated to allow a range of uses; from fully enclosed conference space, semi-enclosed exhibition space, fully open theatrical space, which could be shared with events taking place on the green-pier, or a combination of choices. Finally the education and artist spaces inhabit the vital space where the art-box above overlaps the broad public gardens below.