

To design a Museum, a Museum of Modern Art in particular, is for an architect the utmost challenge, involving more than the design of the building itself. Such a project is of supralocal importance and is actually an international landmark. It is a tourist attraction on its own and should make proud the city and its residents.

Our aim is to create a unique monolithic building. A piece of art which would house works of art. The volume of the building can be distinguished from a distance and also creates an interesting background for the two preserved buildings. The building's volume as well as the cantilevered surfaces creates a sense of instability and a game of interaction between the new building and the visitor. Our aspiration was the diamond shape of the building to become a landmark for the area.

An important element in our architectural concept and approach was the water. Despite the water's relation with the life, the culture and the history of Norway there are also architectural references. The museum is a building in a shape of an iceberg emerging from the water. The reflections of the building in the water create a magical atmosphere. The modification of the water into ice due to weather chances adds vividness at the building.

Studying the very interesting Norse mythology helped us a great deal both to try and understand the essence of Norwegian art and mentality, and to support our intention for this museum to be an important part in the chain linking modern Norway to ancient "Thule" of legends and traditions. A visit to our building aims at taking one to a higher level of knowledge. All routes of visitors after the initial dive in the water are ascending, either with escalators or with elevators or with a central ascending spiral ramp inside the arc. Museum collections are on all floors. In the area around the arc, the external perimeter of each floor, there is a wide corridor (a foyer) with chairs from where visitors can see the city, the port, the square, through the circular windows of various sizes we opened in the shell. Windows are circular because we imagined them as bubbles of different sizes that make visitors feel they are inside water. All routes are ascending towards a space of knowledge and tranquillity. In terms of architecture, they all lead to the top of the shell of the building, to a glass concave as well as to an elevated plaza with a view over the city. Visitors are expected to go up there following a course of walking, after being taught through modern art, in order to connect, once again, to the city landscape (visitors are now on a level approx. 32m higher than when entering the museum). We want visitors to experience the visit to the museum also in a physical way. To feel that the ascending route through the space, the stroll through collections, the rest at the café and the research in the bookstore and the gift shop have all raised them higher, assisted them in their own personal search. Therefore, another dimension of our building is that of a Temple: a Temple of Art.