

national museum at vestbanen

SPRING

The consolidation of the National Gallery, Museum of Decorative Arts & Design, Museum of Contemporary Art, Museum of Architecture and the National Touring Exhibitions is an act of cultural renewal. The decision to collect these institutions and deploy them in one place has the potential to create a heterogeneous and vibrant center for the arts that nurtures the cultural as well as the social fabric of Norway. In order to leverage this sense of renewal and transformation, this design proposal is based in the manifold meanings of the term spring. Just as the coming of spring each year signals an environment poised to emerge from a condition of stasis into an explosive period of growth and renewal, we have approached the design of this project as an opportunity to facilitate two key acts of renewal, or transformation. This notion of renewal instigates a design that is emergent, one that is not bound by the physical limits of the site. Renewal promotes a spatial condition that is open, flowing, extending, releasing, springing out into the city, engaging Oslo and its residents.

First, the design explores the challenge of filling a significant void in the urban fabric of Oslo, transforming a key urban space along the fjord. This site sits at the nexus of a complex array of urban forces and conditions and has the potential to seize on its contextual richness and become a significant public place that operates as a social and cultural magnet for Norwegians and international tourists alike. To draw out and exacerbate the complexity inherent in the context, we have organized the functions and designed the building to operate as a rich and varied place that avoids a sense of overbearing institutional control and opens itself to the city and its residents. While the design addresses the serious challenges of preserving and securing the museum's collections, it also acknowledges the value of creating a heterogeneous environment that allows people to engage the place as individuals, make choices and create personal itineraries through the site and, as a consequence, develop a special sense of place that inspires a deep sense of connection and feelings of awe and amazement.

The second transformation or renewal involves the relocation of the varied artistic venues to Vestbannen. This act presents an opportunity to create a moment of cultural and social saturation that is quite rare. Consequently, we have developed the project with the goal of immersing people in a space of saturation, an environment that expresses the richness and diversity of artistic exploration and representation in all its varied forms. We have designed a spatial system that acknowledges the complexity inherent within the sphere of artistic production and the nature of artistic disciplines inscribed within this space. Art can seem at one moment to be clear and understandable and at another time to be ephemeral and fleeting. We believe a building that engages the individual and promotes an active and dynamic experience will serve as an analog for the role art plays in inspiring thought, interpretation and ultimately understanding. The overall goal is to create a place that allows the observer to digress, to discover something about art, or perhaps the building, that they did not intend to encounter.

The act of condensing the individual arts venues into one place should also be seen as an opportunity to create incredible synergy from the interdisciplinary exchange between artists and admirers of art that come from distinct disciplines and may not otherwise have been exposed to one another. We believe the public spaces organized throughout the building represent dynamic opportunities to promote artists and spectators alike to engage each other in intellectual and social exchange with the simple goal of enriching each others' lives. Consequently, we decided not to place art at the center of the site, but rather to define a sense of center with a dynamic set of interior and exterior public places that open the complex up to the city in order to promote exchange and interaction between people, art and the physical environment.

To develop a place that is constitutionally heterogeneous and dynamic, we avoided focusing our conceptual investigation on one overarching condition or idea. Rather, we acknowledged the richness inherent in the building program, the site and the larger social context of Oslo. We approached the challenge of creating a strong sense of environmental richness by simultaneously incorporating the natural setting of the fjord, the built form of the city and the open space of the Radhuspassen, thereby creating a fantastic place that promotes interaction, exploration and recreation.

The design completes the strong field of building mass that runs along Aker Brygge, healing a major void in the urban gridiron. The design also folds the space and activities contained in Radhuspassen by transitioning from a level hardscape to a gently sloping landscaped plane and sculpture garden. This sloping garden is carved away along the edge of Brynjulf Bulls Plass in order to frame the heritage structures that sit at the edge of the site. This act simultaneously establishes a sense of deference for the buildings while also incorporating them into the complex as elements on display in the sculpture garden. Finally, the design incorporates the intense qualities of movement and exchange that characterize the fjord edge along Aker Brygge and Radhuspassen. Movement and exchange are key principles that inform the public spaces of the complex and promote an active social realm. The open green space at the center of the site also reinforces the Fjord's role as a lung for the city by allowing people to emerge from the rigid spaces of the city into an expansive place that provides a sense of relief and an opportunity for recreation, both of which allow for renewal of mind and body.

If the Fjord is Oslo's lung, we have imagined the National Gallery complex as Oslo's cultural and social heart. To reinforce the sense of interweaving between the art and spectators as well as between the Museum and city, we have envisioned the site not merely as a building project, but as an extended landscape that folds three distinct environments together into a spatial system that blurs the lines between urbanity, architecture and the natural environment. We have conceptualized the site as a sanctuary that collapses these varied environments into a dense and dynamic place that makes references to the phenomenal and contextual qualities of Oslo, but at the same time creates an altogether distinct place that celebrates emergence, renewal and exchange, establishing a place that celebrates the potential and energy of spring, creating a place that is truly unique and memorable.

Design principles

Urban Design Principles

1. Extension / completion of Aker Brygge urban fabric.
2. Placement of café and large exterior dining area along waterfront to reinforce current pattern of exterior dining along edge of Aker Brygge.
3. Folding of Radhusplassen into project physically with sloping landscape plan and sculpture garden. Visual connection established by carving away of center portion of site to reveal a dynamic exterior realm defined by a dynamic building edge.
4. Response to open space of fjord through erosion of building along Pipervika edge providing an exterior garden with views of the fjord and Akershus Fortress.
5. Incorporation of Heritage structures into the sculpture garden.
6. Development of a diagram for government office buildings that reinforces the public qualities of the site by sharing an urban plaza and interactive sight lines with library and presentation functions. Articulation of building forms that creates a dynamic gateway to Oslo for travelers exiting the E18 ramp to Dronning Mauds Gate.

Building Design Principles

Volume

The Galleries and Vaults are housed in a relatively solid band of program that extends the building fabric from Aker Brygge, matching the proportions and scale of the neighboring buildings. This mass is clad in a flat seam interlocking metal panel system to accentuate the scale and tautness of these building volumes. As the band progresses along with the exhibition sequence it shifts from traditional massing that meets the ground at Dokkveien to a hovering thin sheet at Dronning Mauds Gate. The elevated mass creates a dynamic urban condition that allows the landscape and sculpture areas to slide under the building, while also allowing a view of the city through the field of columns and truss that give character to the landscape area. The Library and presentation areas are situated in a crystalline glass volume that is captured space between the underside of the hovering plane and the ground at the rear of the site. This marks the intermediate stage of the progression from a grounded mass to a hovering mass. Throughout the art band, the volume is selectively fractured and cracked open to create opportunities for natural light and views from the interior spaces, and to accentuate the relationship between the museum and the expanded landscape.

Galleries

1. The Temporary Galleries have been placed on the ground floor, situated between the Lobby and back of house functions such as Reception & Dispatchment and Studios/Workshops. The Temporary Galleries are flexible and can be combined in a variety of configurations, each of which has a secure corridor connection to the Reception and Dispatchment area to allow for changing exhibits while other galleries remain open. The Temporary Galleries activate the lobby space and make it convenient to visit the museum frequently for travelling exhibits.
2. Permanent galleries have been organized in a sequence starting with the Contemporary Galleries, proceeding to Design, Arts and Crafts and terminating with Older Art. Each floor has large flexible halls as well as smaller galleries that activate the circulation spine.
3. The Contemporary Galleries occur on two levels, with the second level mezzanine space looking over the main Contemporary Gallery. This configuration provides extra tall spaces in a portion of the gallery as well as future expansion space that could be captured by adding a floor structure over the vault space.
4. The Older Art Gallery spaces occupy the top level of the proposed structure. The galleries will benefit from filtered northern light captured by skylights. The separation of the Older Art Gallery from the ground plane reflects the temporal separation between the collection and contemporary life. The connection from Older Art back down to the lobby occurs through a dramatic glass encased escalator that reveals views of the entire central garden.

Vaults

1. Vaults have been located substantially above the extreme flood level.
2. Vaults have been dispersed vertically throughout the museum in order to relate to corresponding portions of the exhibition halls. In all cases, certain exhibition halls can be transformed to act as vestibules for accessing vault space that is to be converted to temporary exhibition space. Vaults are interconnected by back of house secure corridors and a large centrally located freight elevator.

Void

The diverse set of public spaces that frame the site have been folded into the project as a means of capturing the energy and spatial movements embedded within the context. Radhusplassen is addressed by a porous, but defined edge that both completes the wall along Aker Brygge but also allows for passage into the site and up a gently inclined landscape plane. This garden plane allows people to spend leisure time engaged in activities ranging from picnicking to recreation activities, and also provides an opportunity to observe the exterior of the Heritage structures as if they were a component of the Museum collection. Further up the ground plane, the landscape shifts to a combination of hard and

soft surfaces that accommodate a sculpture garden as well as an amphitheater that provides a place for viewing movies projected onto the exterior of the museum. The landscape plane fractures and shifts vertically over the main lobby, defining the taller volume of the temporary galleries on the ground floor. A dynamic skylight placed within the fracture allows natural light to flood the lobby while also allowing people on the landscape plane to see down into the interior public spaces and temporary gallery. Volumes of space including the meeting room, multi-function hall and temporary galleries appear to be objects embedded within and emerging from the ground plane.

Movement / Edge

The dynamic system of movement and exchange along the edge of the fjord at Radhusplassen and Akers Brygge serves as an analog for a dramatic vertical wall that operates as an interface between the central landscape space and the primary gallery bar. The 'living wall' is a thickened zone in which vertical circulation and major movement through galleries is compressed onto the edge, providing a spectacle of motion and energy when viewed from the city. This allows people to become a component of the frame or canvas of the living wall. This area also allows for the display of art in the urban realm through a series of display windows that puncture the skin of the wall. Just as the wall allows people to be seen within the galleries, it also frames a dynamic view of the entire museum complex and City Hall beyond.

Structural System

Preliminary structural analysis suggest a concrete frame for the main gallery building and elevated garden planes, with lighter steel framed elements at key moments to express openness and connection between interior and exterior spaces.

Security

1. Careful management of security zones and circulation systems has been maintained in order to avoid conflicting intersections of distinct security zones. To the best of our ability at the preliminary phase, we have maintained all security requirements defined in Appendix 1.
2. No conditioned spaces have been proposed below the extreme flood level. The sub-grade level(s) are proposed to be structured parking decks and mechanical spaces.

Energy and Conservation

1. Placement of majority of galleries and vaults in a dense mass that minimizes skin and exposure, thus conserving energy.
2. Placement of lobby and gallery partially under green roof, creating natural insulation and a system for harvesting gray water.

3. Use of controlled natural light in circulation and public spaces to minimize use of artificial lighting.
4. Garage space placed in zone of contaminated soil to utilize the space created by removal of soil.
5. Building design aspires to achieve the equivalent of highest LEED rating possible.

Universal Design

The building has been designed to provide accessibility throughout. The primary system for vertical circulation is a moving sidewalk that is accessible and convenient for all persons regardless of abilities. Elevators are used for descent back to lobby.