

CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURE

Neo-Modernism, Richard Meier
Deconstructivism, Bernhard Tschumi, Coop Himmelblau, Daniel Libeskind,
Zaha Hadid, Peter Eisenman
Rem Koolhaas
New Formalism, Frank Gehry

Week 15

NEO-MODERNISM:

KEEPING THE FAITH

NEO-MODERNISM: KEEPING THE FAITH

Since 1965, when Modernism was pronounced dead, a few hard-liners have tried to keep geometric abstraction alive.

Architects like Richard Meier, Charles Gwathmey, I.M. Pei, Tadao Ando and Arata Isozaki continue to use sleek International Style surfaces, highlighting pure space and form.

But they face a problem:

When what used to be radical went from reviled to revered, and then deteriorated to old-hat, how could its disciples resuscitate it?



Neo-Modernists for whom applied ornament remains blasphemy, had to look in a new direction.

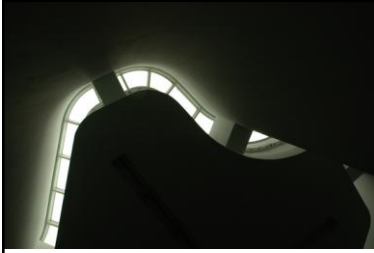
RICHARD MEIER: WHITE CASTLES

Eskimos have countless words for snow, and Richard Meier's architectural vocabulary encompasses hundreds of shades of white. His hallmark is the Euclidian white box —sleek, slick, and shining like an ice palace. The formal purity of the International Style roars to life in Meier's hands.



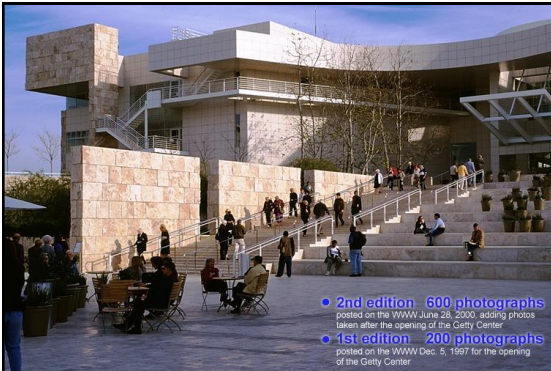
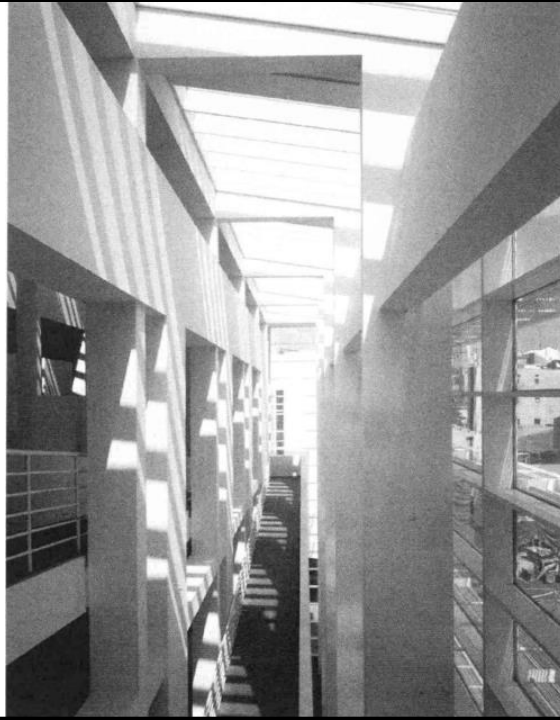
Like some remnant of Le Corbusier, Meier's structures seem to exist as autonomous objects making no effort to integrate with their surroundings. Their machinelike clarity and industrial materials, like steel pipe railings and glass blocks, reinforce the impression of precision and underlying geometric order.





Barcelona Museum of Contemporary Art ,
Richard Meier, 1987-9

Meier (b.1934) does more than just refine Modernism to crisp perfection. His complex manipulation of masses, carving space and light almost palpably, produces an energized interplay between outside and inside. Meier called it a "dialectic of open and closed." Space and natural light circulate expressively through irregular forms in gridded layers.



Meier's 1997 masterpiece, the Getty Museum, shines like a temple complex on the Acropolis, high above the Los Angeles freeway. The buildings, with their ribbon windows, off-white cladding and pipe-railed stairs, are virtual quotations from the International Style canon. "Beauty molded by light" is how Meier describes his work.

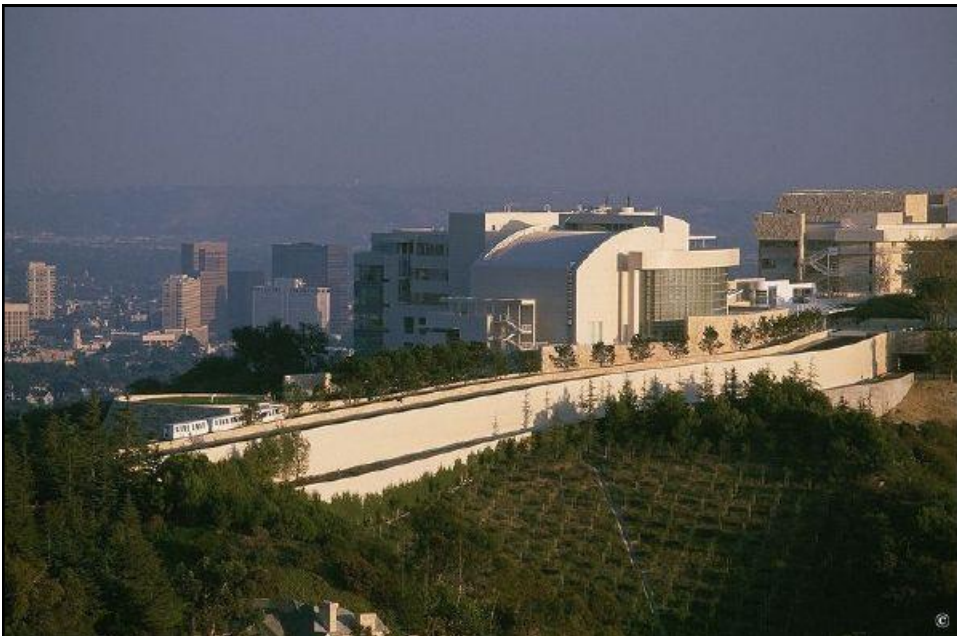
J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, by Meier, 1997

Located on a hilltop near the ocean, the \$1 billion museum complex attempts to embrace both nature and culture. The brightness and openness of the travertine-clad campus recall the horizontal emphasis of early California modernists like Schindler and Neutra. Meier displays his international style obsessions like gridded geometric forms and layered spaces enlivened by natural light.

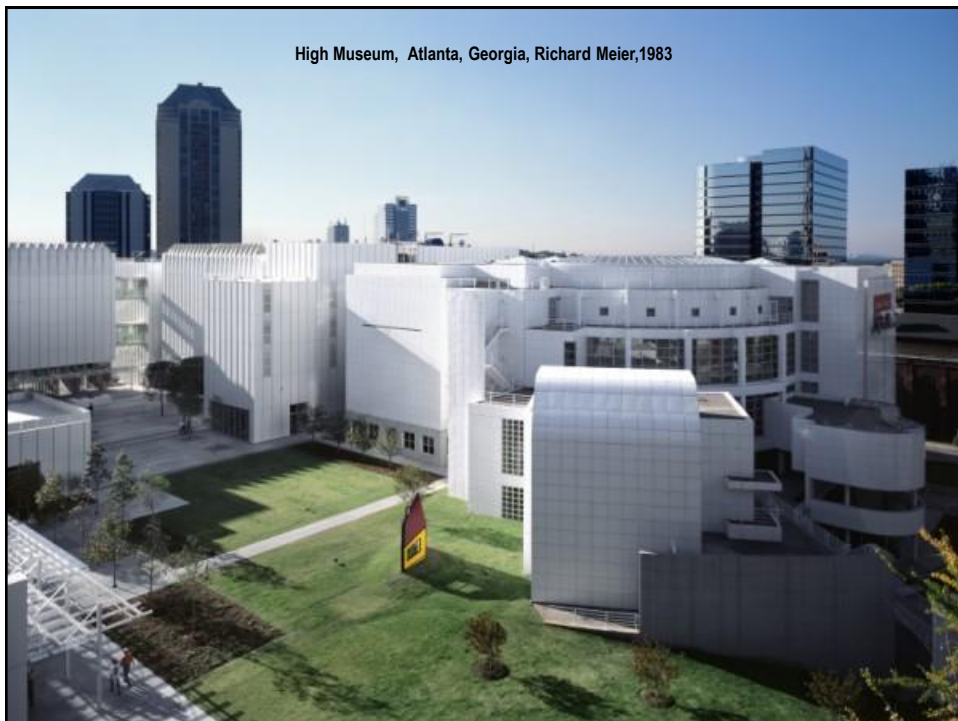




Getty Center, Los Angeles, California, Richard Meier, 1997



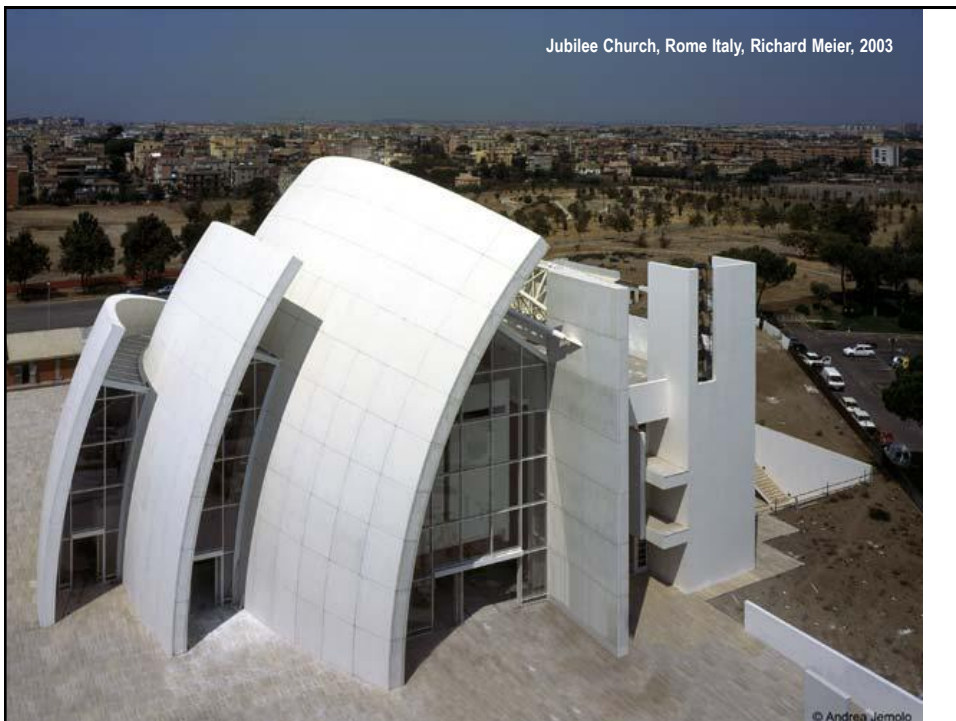
Getty Center, Los Angeles, California, Richard Meier, 1997



High Museum, Atlanta, Georgia, Richard Meier, 1983



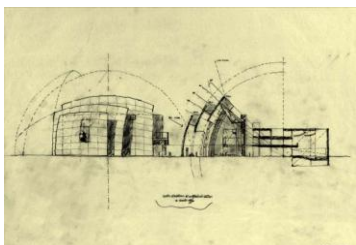
The Athenaeum, New Harmony, Indiana, Richard Meier, 1979



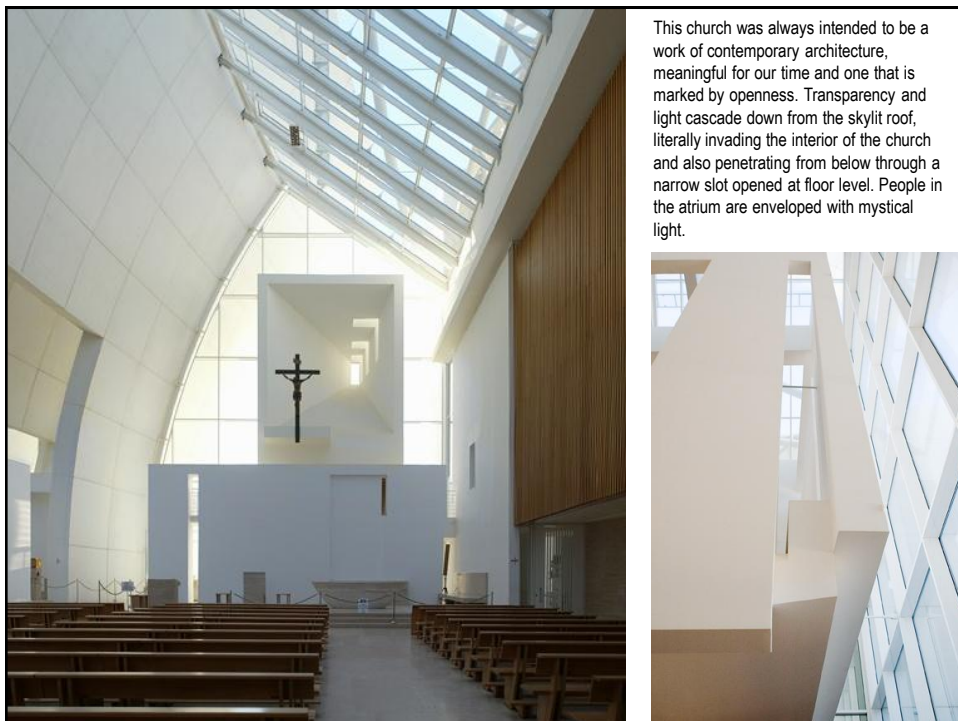


Jubilee Church, exterior views, Rome Italy, Meier, 2003

Richard Meier: Light is the protagonist of our understanding and reading of space. Light is the means by which we are able to experience what we call sacred. Light is at the origins of this building. I am reminded of H.G. Gadamer's words in *The Relevance of the Beautiful*: We only have to think of certain expressions like the play of light and the play of the waves where we have such a constant coming and going, back and forth, a movement that is not tied down to any goal. That the sense of freedom and movement both in human festivities, and also in natural phenomena as the play of light may be seen as fundamentally theological.



In the Jubilee Church, the three concrete shells define an enveloping atmosphere in which the light from the skylights above creates a luminous spatial experience, and the rays of sunlight serve as a mystic metaphor of the presence of God. The Jubilee Church is not a traditional church.





DECONSTRUCTIVISM

NEW DIRECTIONS

NEW DIRECTIONS: DECONSTRUCTIVISM

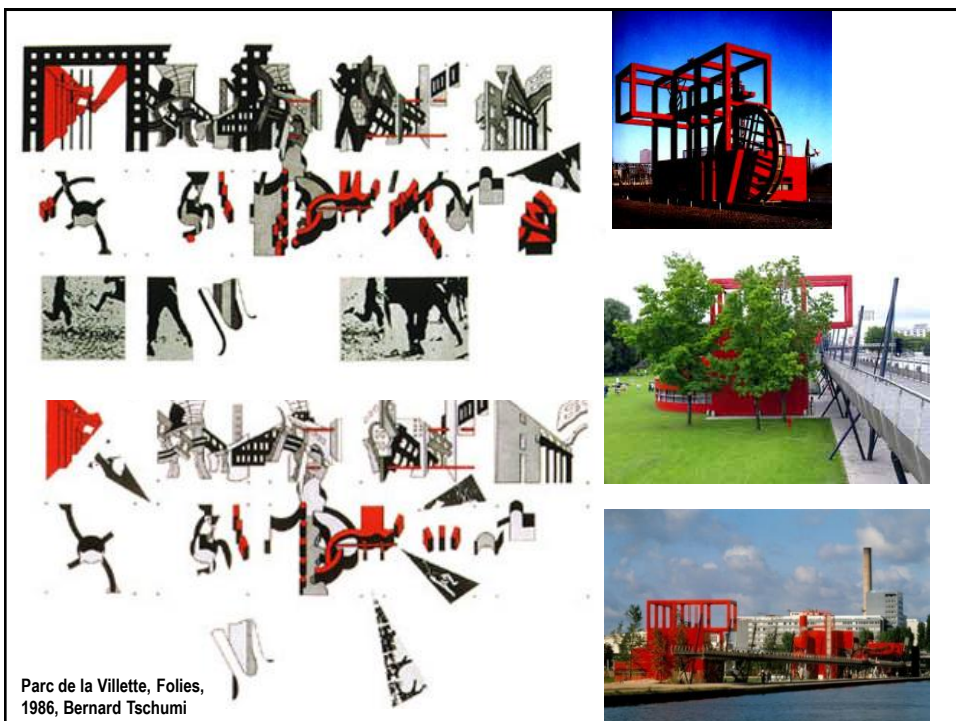
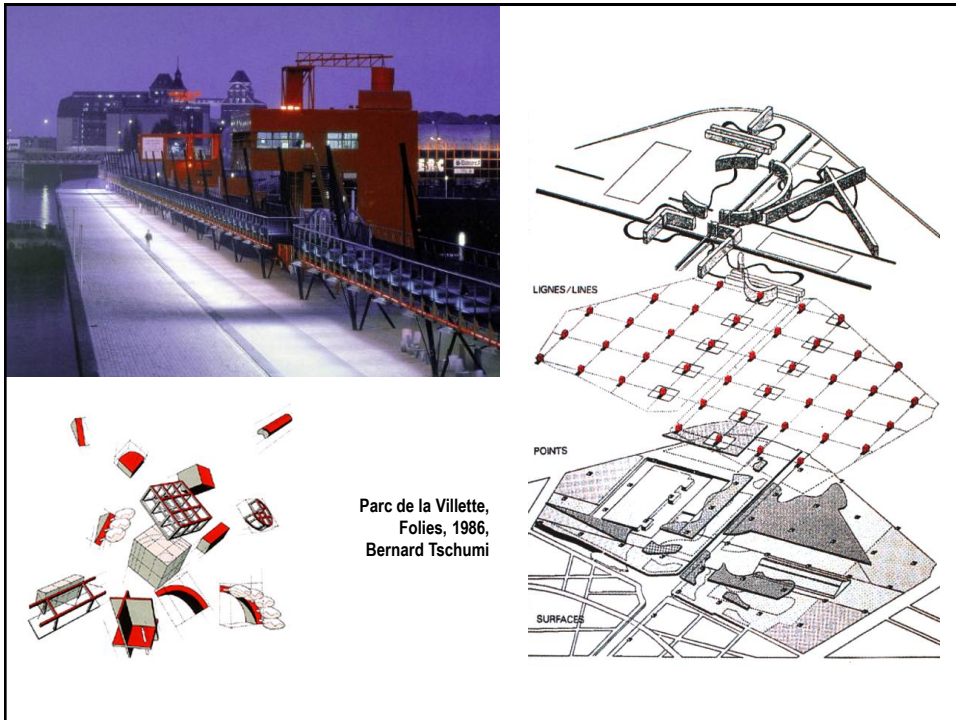
- By around 1990, Post-Modernism have been done to death. The next mediagenic movement to pop up was Deconstructivism. Its credo was "Form follows fantasy," as one of its adherents, Bernhard Tschumi quipped. Based on literary theories of French philosophers like Jacques Derrida, Deconstructivism is readily identifiable by projecting roofs, crooked walls, asymmetry and leaning columns. Imagine smashing a conventional building with a hammer, splintering walls and roof into a jumble of sharp angles. *Voilà* — typical Decon dwelling.
- **The literary theory of Deconstruction holds that there is no fixed accessible truth, only chaos and multiple interpretations. The architecture spin-off simulates an appearance of chaos with dizzy, diverse perspectives. Vertigo and confusion are the desired responses. Deconstructivist architecture include the works of architects such as Zaha Hadid, Peter Eisenman, Rem Koolhaas, and Daniel Libeskind, as well as the punk designs of the Viennese firm Coop Himmelblau.**
- Decon reflects a work out of whack. Its fragmented discontinuous forms represented the uncertainty of contemporary life after the downfall of the Soviet Union, Berlin Wall and 1987 stock market. Decon architects speak of the concept of "disturbed perfection," symbolized by elements that seem randomly stacked, bent or tumbling.

BERNHARD TSCHUMI



Decon follies (like Tschumi's pavilions at La Villette in Paris) seek to promote dislocation, not provide cosy shelter. Decon is mostly paper architecture, in which many of designs published in magazines are clearly unbildable: girders projecting at weird angles into air, beams that pierce space like pins in a voodoo doll, and columns without function seem to violate laws of gravity.

The designs create non-sensual sculptures for an irrational world. "Making things fit doesn't make sense anymore," the Swiss-born Tschumi said.

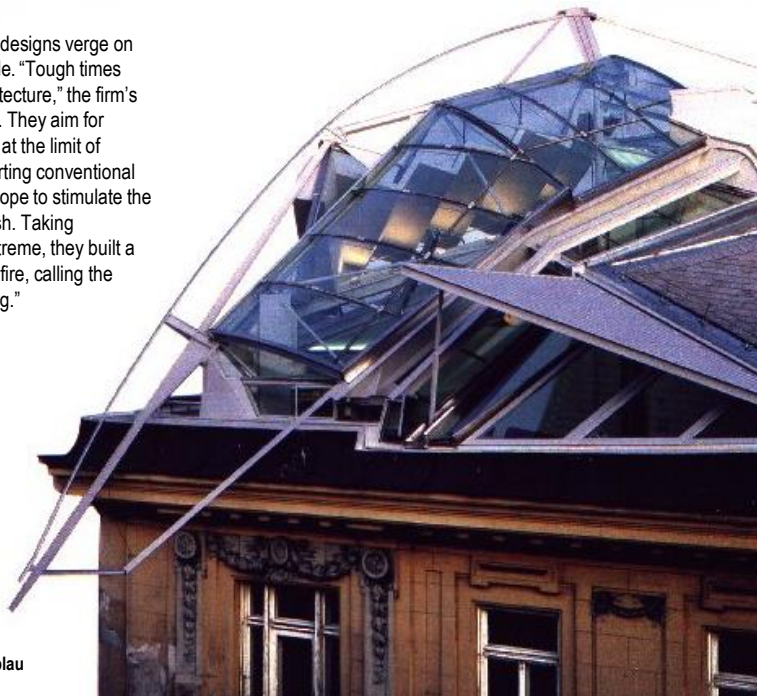


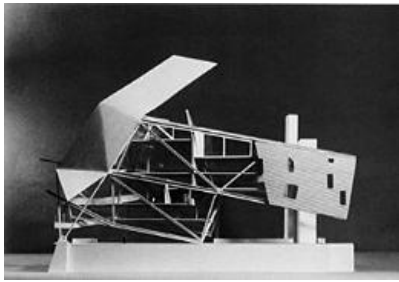
COOP HIMMELBLAU



Coop Himmelblau's designs verge on the incomprehensible. "Tough times demand tough architecture," the firm's principles have said. They aim for transgressive forms at the limit of feasibility. By subverting conventional expectations, they hope to stimulate the viewer to react afresh. Taking aggression to an extreme, they built a tower, they set it on fire, calling the project "Blazing Wing."

Roof arrangement,
1985, Coop Himmelblau





Apartment building, 1986, Coop Himmelblau

Drier House, 1995,
Coop Himmelblau



BMW- Welt, Berlin



DANIEL LIBESKIND

(b. 1946) is an American architect, artist, and set designer of Polish-Jewish descent.

CITY EDGE, 1987, Daniel Libeskind



Jewish Museum, Berlin, 1989-99

The original Jewish Museum in Berlin was founded on Oranienburger Straße in 1933. The Nazi regime closed it in 1938, and it wasn't until 1975 that an "Association for a Jewish Museum" formed to resurrect the old museum. After an exhibition on Jewish history opened there in 1978, the Berlin Museum, which chronicled the city's history, established a Jewish Department. Soon thereafter, discussions for constructing a new museum dedicated to Jewish history in Berlin began.

In 1989, the Berlin government announced an anonymous competition for the new museum's design. A year later, Daniel Libeskind's design was chosen for the commission for what was then planned as a "Jewish Department" for the Berlin Museum. While other entrants proposed cool, neutral spaces, Libeskind offered a radical, zigzag design, which earned the nickname "Blitz."



A section of the "Void," which cuts through the Museum's main building.

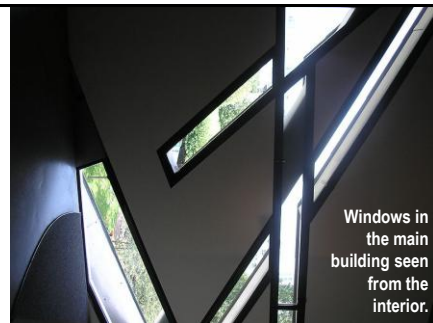


Shalechet (Fallen Leaves) in a section of the "Void."

The museum adjoins the old Berlin Museum and sits on land that was both East and West Berlin before the Berlin Wall fell. The Museum itself, consisting of about 15,000 m², is a twisted zig-zag and is accessible only via an underground passage from the Berlin Museum's baroque wing. Its shape is reminiscent of a warped Star of David. A "Void," an empty space about 20 m tall, slices linearly through the entire building. Menashe Kadishman's *Shalechet (Fallen leaves)* installation fills the void with 10,000 coarse iron faces.



The intersection of tunnels underneath the museum.



Windows in the main building seen from the interior.

An irregular matrix of windows cuts in all orientations across the building's facade. A thin layer of zinc coats the building's exterior, which will oxidize and turn bluish as it weathers.

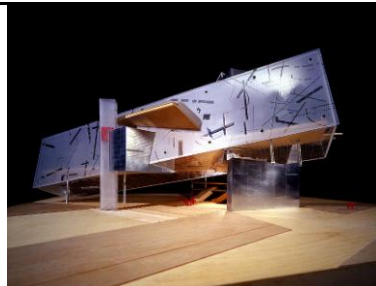


Inside the Holocaust Tower.

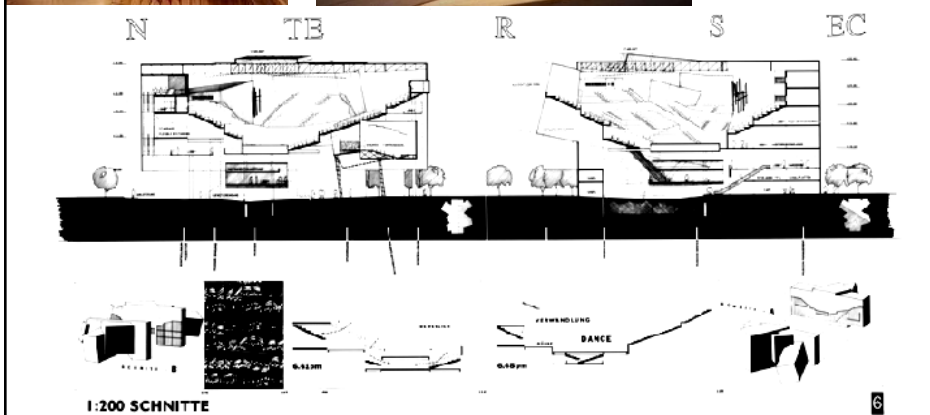
The Garden of Exile, viewed from above.

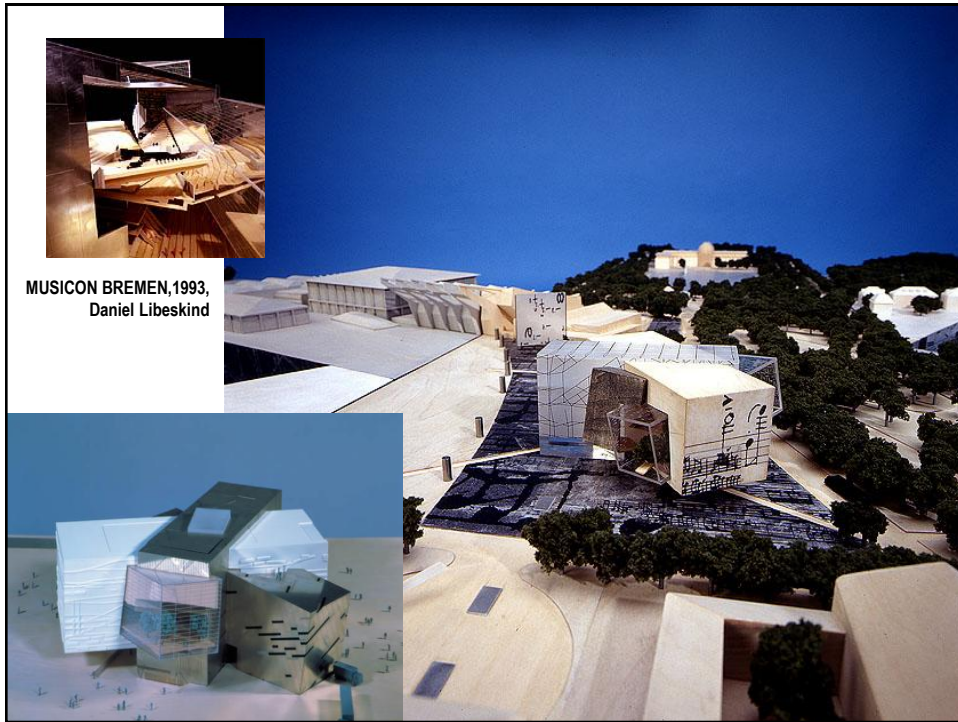


A second underground tunnel connects the Museum proper to The Garden of Exile, whose foundation is tilted. The final underground tunnel leads from the Museum to the Holocaust Tower, a 24 m tall empty silo. The museum consists of three spaces. All three of the underground tunnels, or "axes," intersect and may represent the connection between the three realities of Jewish life in Germany, as symbolized by each of the three spaces: Continuity with German history, Emigration from Germany, and the Holocaust.



MUSICON BREMEN, 1993,
Daniel Libeskind



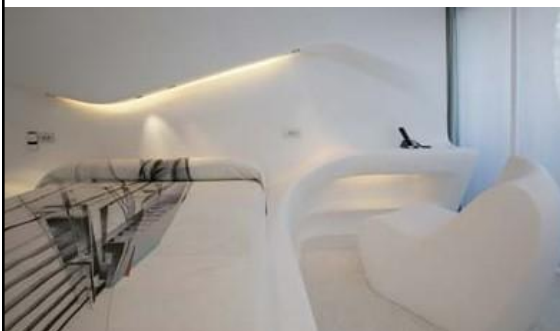




Zaha Hadid



Ice storm, interior, Zaha Hadid



bedroom, interior, Zaha Hadid

At the age of eleven in her native Iraq, Zaha Hadid (b.1950) decided to be an architect. During her training in London, she became obsessed with the unfulfilled potential of Russian Constructivists, pioneers of Modernism in the 1910s and '20s. "We can't carry on as cake decorators and do these nostalgic buildings that have an intense degree of cuteness; we have to take on the task of investigating modernity," Hadid told an interviewer.

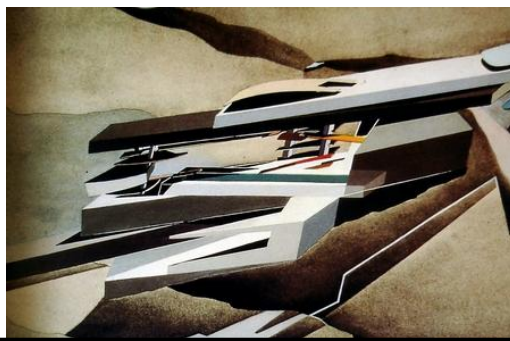


Dancing
Towers



Peak Competition, 1982, Hong Kong.

This goal led her to express "danger" in her designs. At first, she was known primarily for her hallucinogenic sketches—nightmarish architectural fantasies. She calls her drawing style "exploded isometric projection," an analogue of our unstable society. Hadid typically exaggerates scale and perspective to create a feeling of menace exerted by a building, not to mention hair-raising disregard for gravity. In one competition entry, Hadid proposed a cultural center where visitors entered through an air valve. (She won fourth prize).

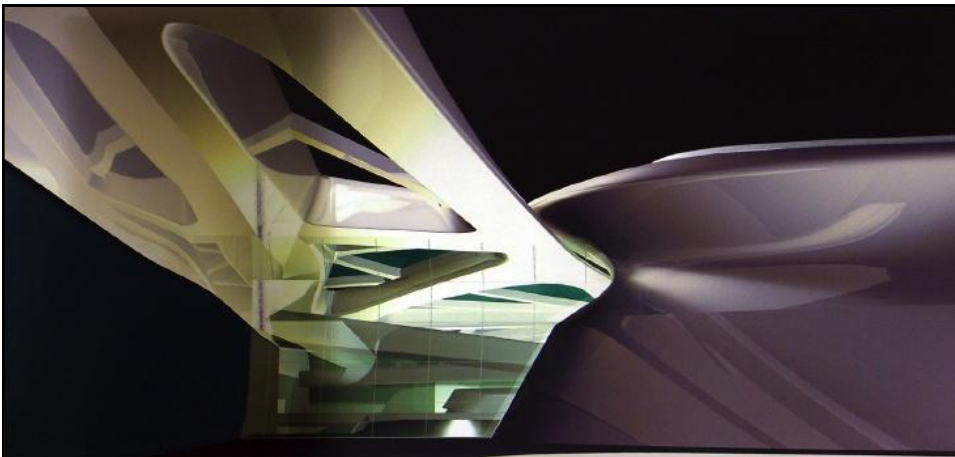


Centre for Contemporary Art, Cincinnati

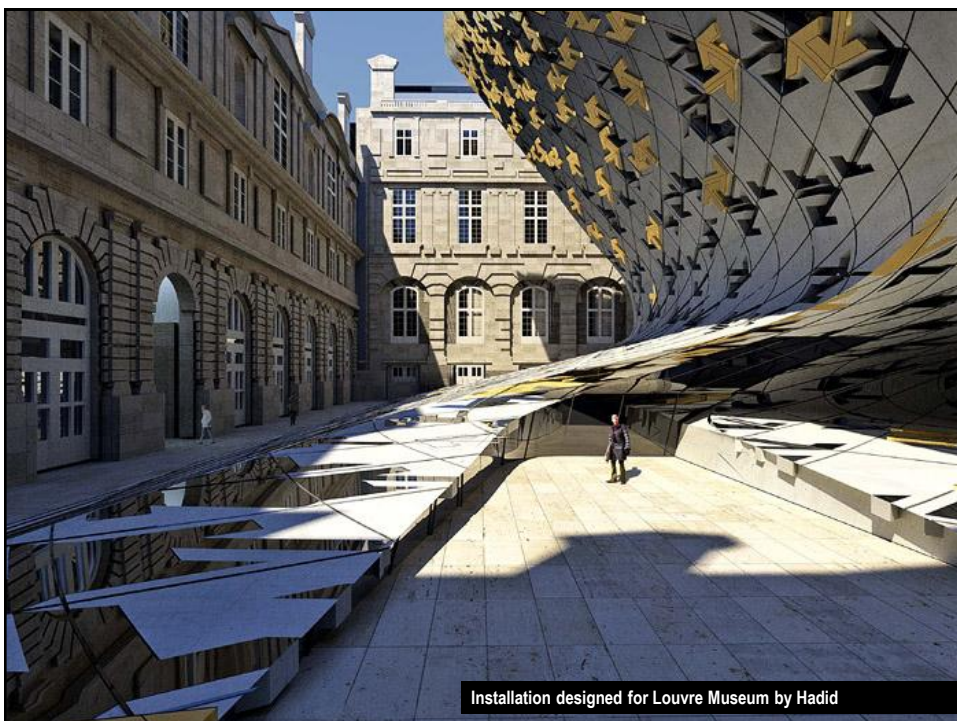
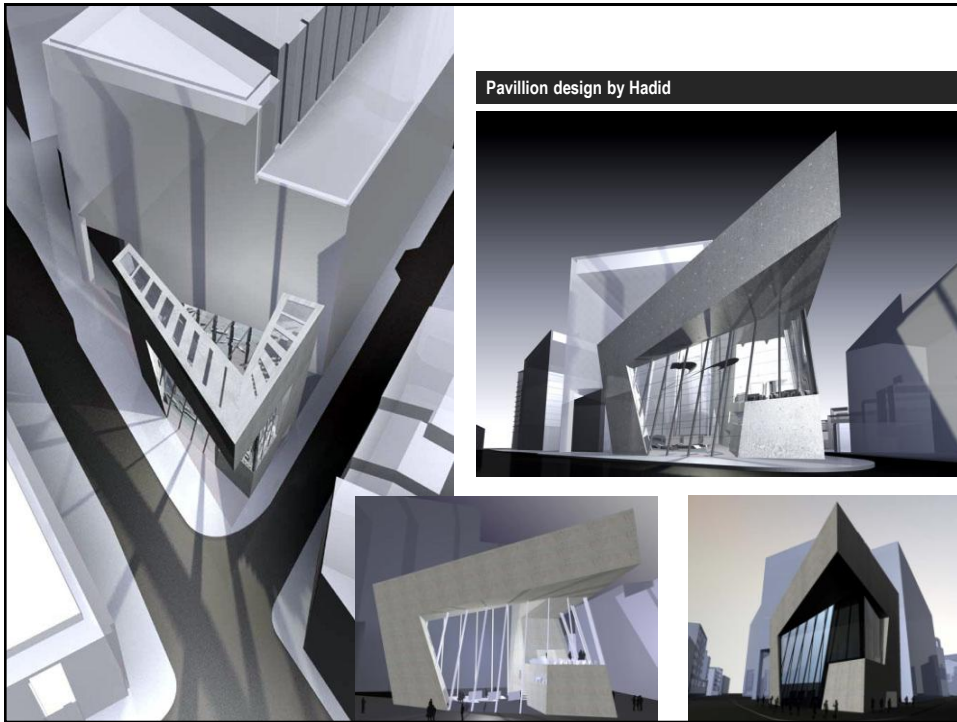
"This whole idea of liberation from gravity is not because you are flying around in the air, but because you are freed from confining laws and conventions, and can make a fundamentally new kind of space," Hadid explained in a 1992 interview. Her free forms and slicing axes convey a sense of thrust like the sharp fins of a 1950s Cadillac. Her diagonals and dislocations compromise what Hadid futuristically calls "planetary architecture."



Centre for Contemporary Art,
Cincinnati



Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum
Taichung, Taiwan (2004)
Stained glass paint, acrylic and vinyl on chrome polyester
2000 x 900mm

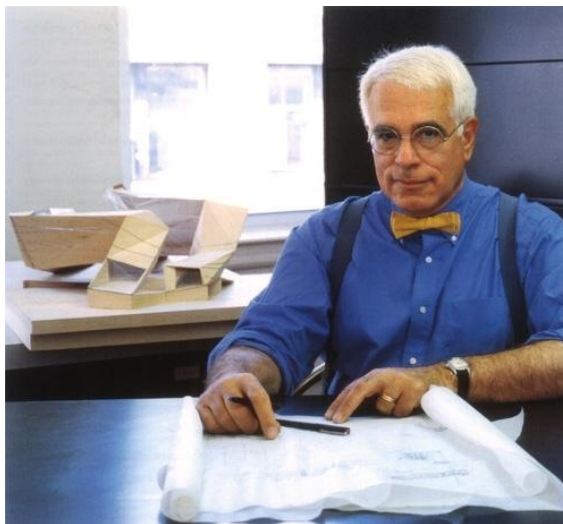


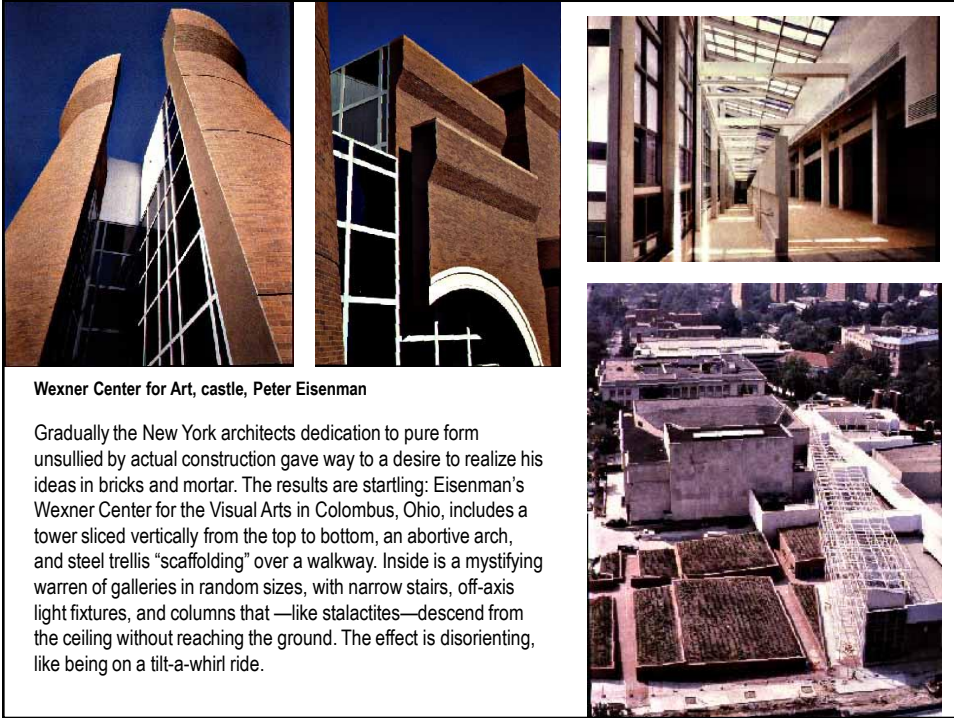


EISENMAN: WITH ALL DELIBERATE CONFUSION

The chief Decon theorist was Peter Eisenman (b.1932), who described buildings as made of disparate “texts” unable to be resolved into a whole. In the heady days of Deconstructivism’s birth, he called himself a “post-functional,” saying “My best work is without purpose— who cares about the function?”

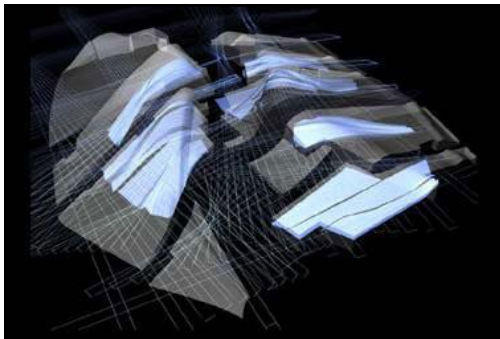
At first he was more into conversation than construction. Eventually he built several uninhabitable houses designated by Roman numerals to showcase his theories. House VI (1978) has a master bedroom with a floor split by a fissure where the marital bed would go. The void, for Eisenman, symbolizes the vacuity of contemporary culture. (Within ten years, the house had to be completely renovated by its owner.)







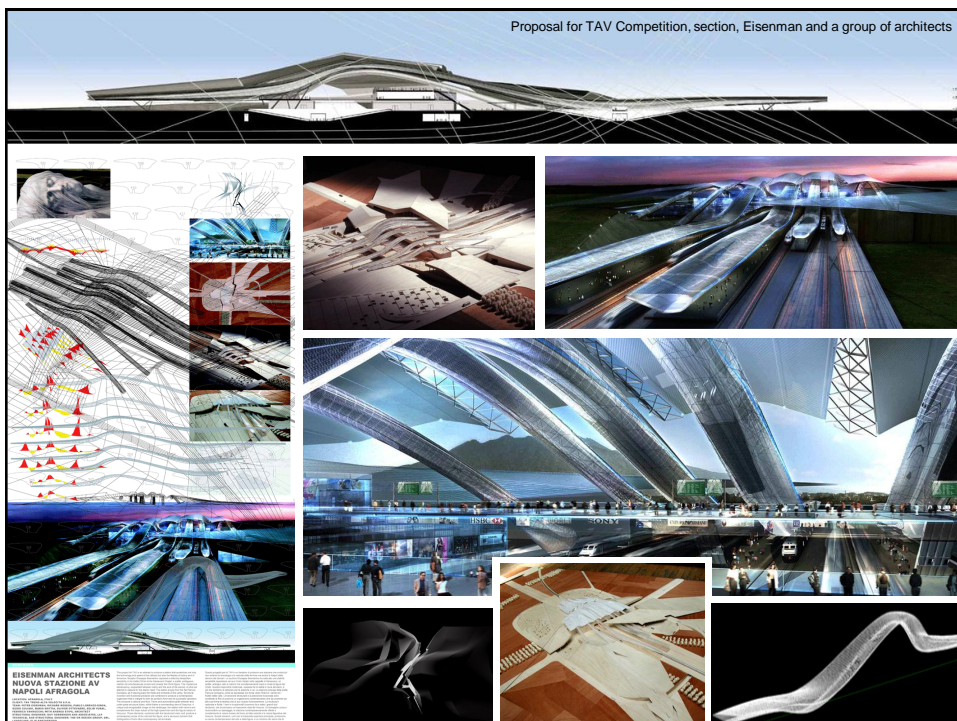
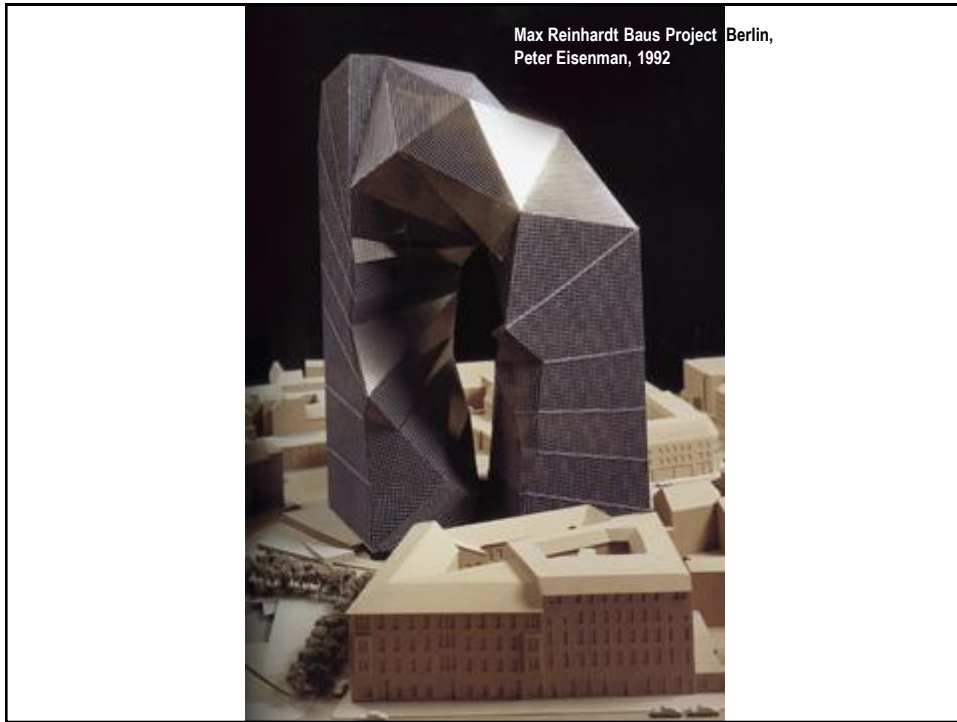
007 Eisenman Architects, model of Teatro de la Musica, Spain



Intensely cerebral, Eisenman was an eminent provocateur in the 1980s, the high priest of Deconstructivism. Notorious for having two psychiatrists—one on the East Coast and one on the West—his neuroses and high anxiety are translated directly into his work. At the end of the 1990s, Eisenman entered a new phase. Enthusiastic about the capacity of computer-assisted design to generate expressionistic forms, he leapt on the bandwagon of sculptural form. To explain why he dumped Decon, Eisenman said, "There will always be four walls in architecture." he hoped to create a "fluid architecture" with a "gelatinous quality" evoked by computer morphing.

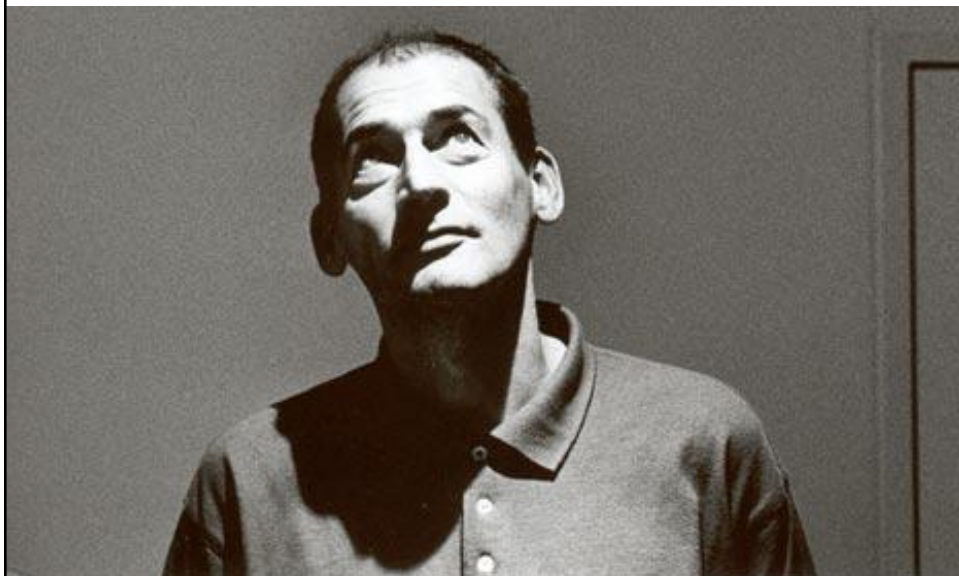


Ciudad de la Cultura de Galicia,
Peter Eisenman,
Competition





REM KOOLHAAS: THE CULTURE OF CONGESTION



The Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas (b.1944) believes architecture should be a dangerous, risk-taking enterprise. His vision of dynamic between an architect and the megalopolis informs his work. Koolhaas's book *Delirious New York* (1978), praised the chaotic energy of the city. Congestion and excess, he speculated are the glory of urban life. He wants architecture to capture this exhilarating sense of being out of control, an almost erotic ecstasy. (In a famous image in the book, Koolhaas showed the Chrysler Building and the Empire State Building snuggled together in bed.)

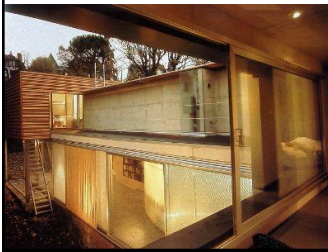
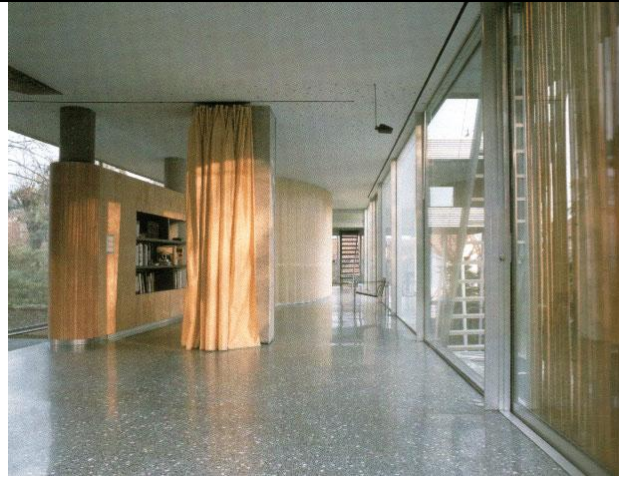


Although considered a leading Decon in the late 1980s, Koolhaas is unclassifiable. His small body of built work comprises Neo-modernist residences, à la Corbusier. His surreal 1992 Kunsthal in Rotterdam did have exhibitionistic twisting geometry, but for the most part he avoids both the bogus historical appliqué of Po-Mo, and the angst of Deconstructivism.

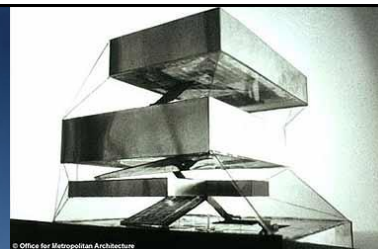
Koolhaas's hallmark is the inventive use of inexpensive industrial materials like plywood and plastic. He seeks to preserve the immediacy of improvised sketching in his inventive designs. An urbanist and thinker as well as builder, Koolhaas has a hybrid cast of mind that puts subversive kinks into Modernist forms.



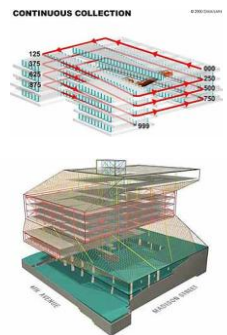
Villa dall'Ava, St. Cloud, Paris, By Koolhaas, 1991
Irregular forms and slanted lines show Koolhaas's Deconstructivist tendencies.



Villa dall'Ava,
St. Cloud, Paris,
By Koolhaas, 1991

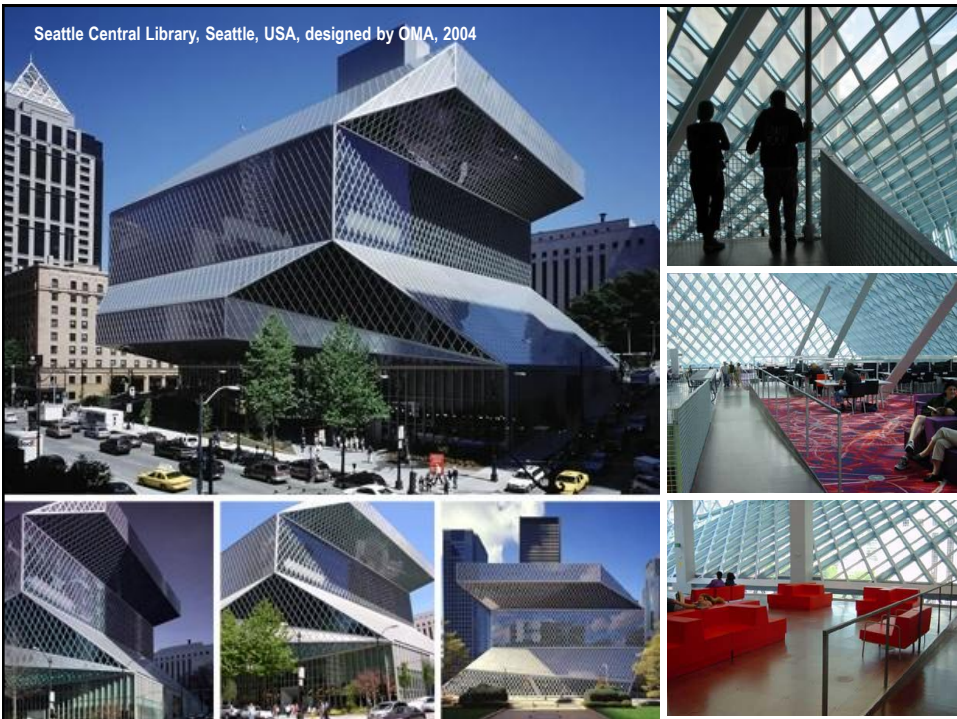


Seattle Central Library,
Seattle, USA, designed
by OMA, 2004





Seattle Central Library, Seattle, USA, designed by OMA, 2004

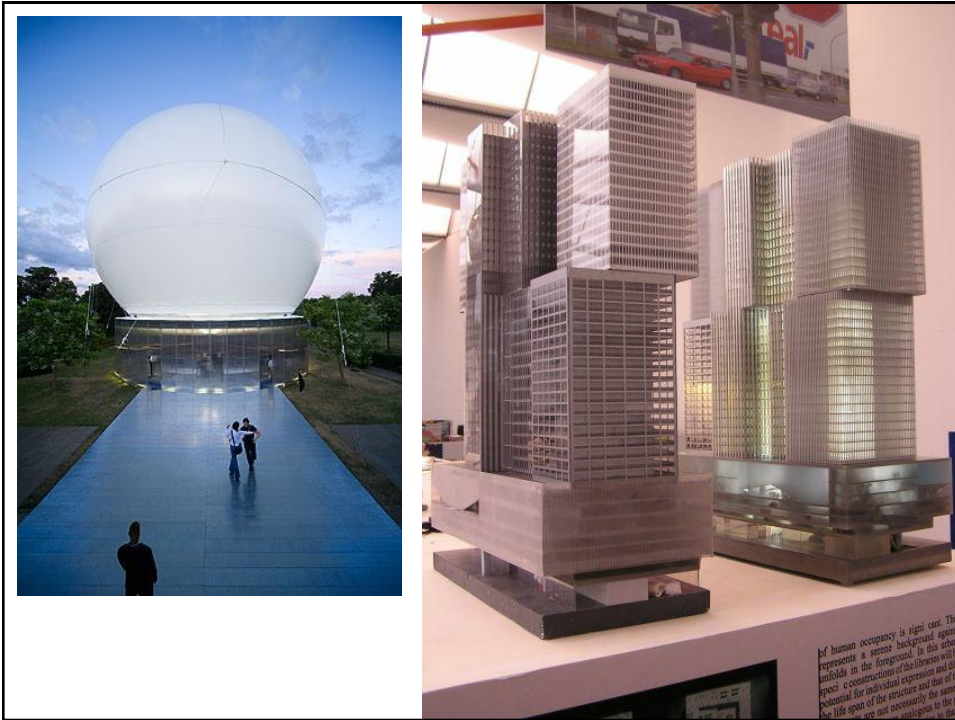




Netherlands Embassy in Berlin, Germany, opened in 2004.



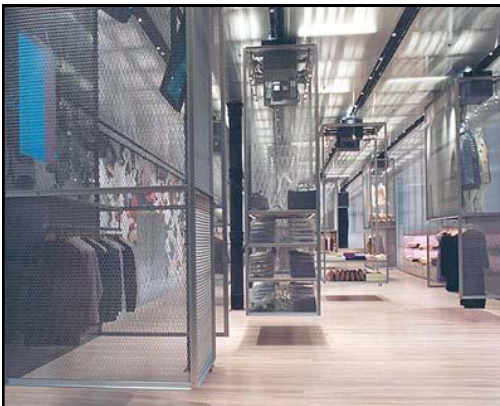
Netherlands Embassy in Berlin, Germany, opened in 2004.



Prada Shop, Soho, New York City,
by Koolhaas

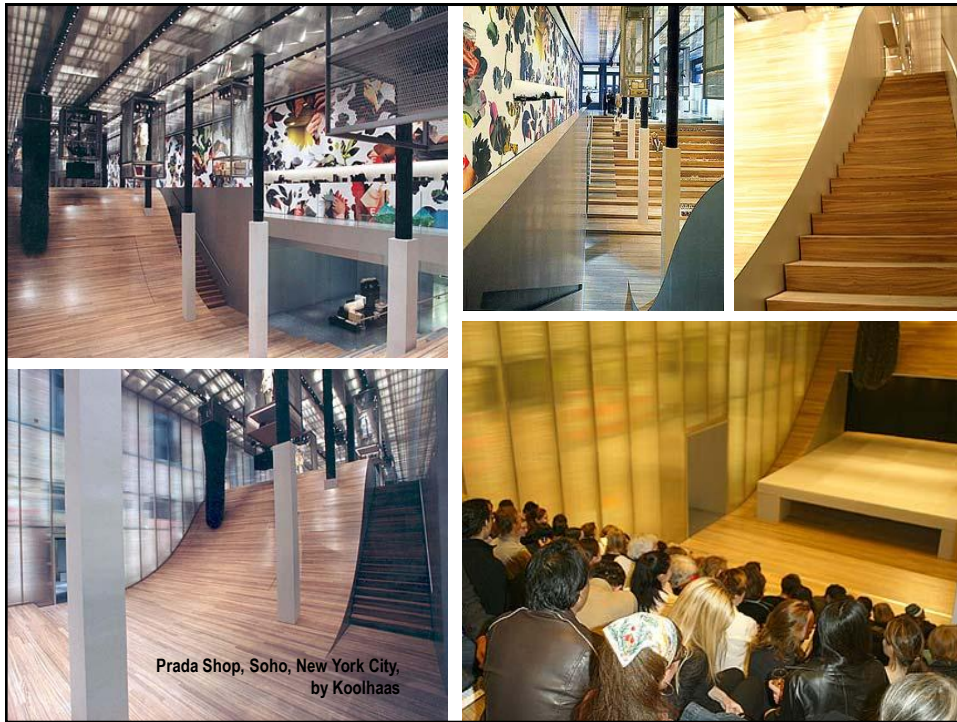


Prada Shop, Soho, New York City,
by Koolhaas



Prada Shop, Soho, New York City,
by Koolhaas

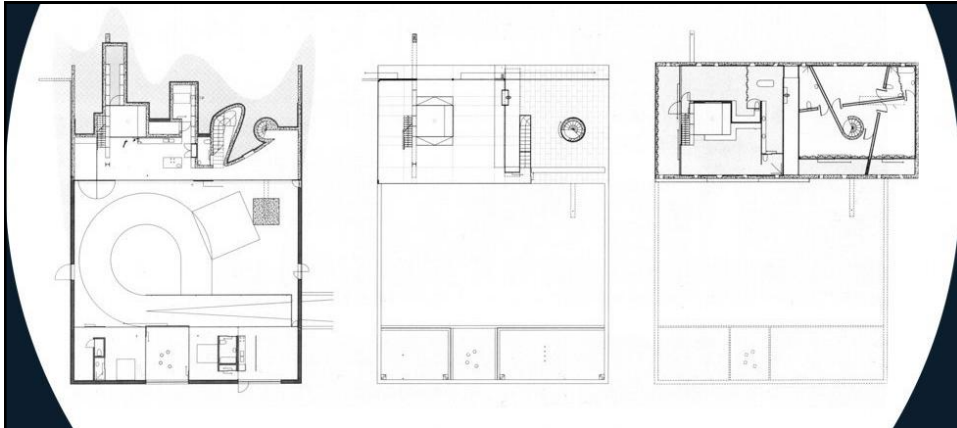




'MAISON À BORDEAUX' BY REM KOOLHAAS

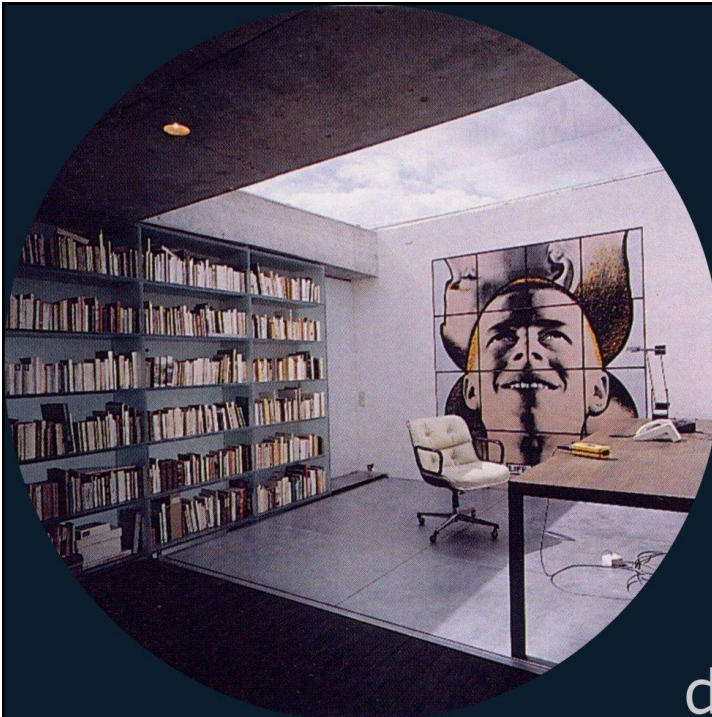
A wealthy married couple with three children lived in a very old and beautiful house in Bordeaux in France. For many years this family was thinking about building a new home, planning how it could be and wondering who the architect would be. Suddenly, the husband had a car accident and almost lost his life. Now he needs a wheelchair. The old beautiful house and the medieval city of Bordeaux had now become a prison for him. The family started to think about their new house again but this time in a very different way.

The married couple bought a hill with a panoramic view over the city and approached the Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas in 1994. The husband explained to him: "Contrary to what you might expect, I do not want a simple house. I want a complicated house because it will determine my world."



Circulation in the new house.

Instead of designing a house on one floor which would ease the movements of the wheelchair, the architect surprised them with an idea of a house on three levels, one on top of each other. The ground floor, half-carved into the hill, accommodates the kitchen and television room, and leads to a courtyard. The bedrooms of the family are on the top floor, built as a dark concrete box. In the middle of these two levels is the living room made of glass where one contemplates the valley of the river Garonne and Bordeaux's clear outline. The wheelchair has access to these levels by an elevator platform that is the size of a room, and is actually a well-equipped office. Because of its vertical movements, the platform becomes part of the kitchen when it is on the ground floor; links with the aluminium floor on the middle level and creates a relaxed working space in the master bedroom on the top floor. In the same way that the wheelchair can be interpreted as an extension of the body, the elevator platform, created by the architect, is an indispensable part of the handicapped client. This offers him more possibilities of mobility than to any other member of the family—only he has access to spaces like the wine cellar or the bookshelves made of polycarbonate which span from the ground floor to the top of the house, and thus respond to the movement of the platform.



Experiencing the house.

Koolhaas designed a complex house in itself and surpassed the conventional, in every detail. For example, the top floor rests on three legs. One of these legs, a cylinder that includes the circular staircase of the house, is located off-centre. Although this displacement brings an instability to the house, it gains equilibrium by placing a steel beam over the house which pulls a cable in tension. The first question that the visitor asks is: what happens if the cord is cut? Koolhaas has created a structure which, equal to the life of the client, depends on a cable.



Experiencing the house.

This arrangement provides the middle level with an uninterrupted view over the surrounding landscape, and an effect that is intensified with the highly polished finish of the stainless steel cylinder which incorporates the stairs, and makes it disappear into the landscape. The middle level is a balcony where the top floor floats above. It is a glazed space which allows the wheelchair to confuse the nature outside with the interior of the house. In contrast, the same landscape receives another treatment from the top floor. The view appears restricted and predetermined, framed by circular windows placed according to whether one stands, sits or lays down.

e



Experiencing the house.

Inside the house the family experiences Koolhaas's interpretations of life's instability and dualities. In regards to the husband, he has experienced this instability and is now part of his own self. In the same way that the umbilical cord belongs both to the mother and the baby, and gives it nutrition; the elevator platform connects the husband to the house and offers him a liberation.

f

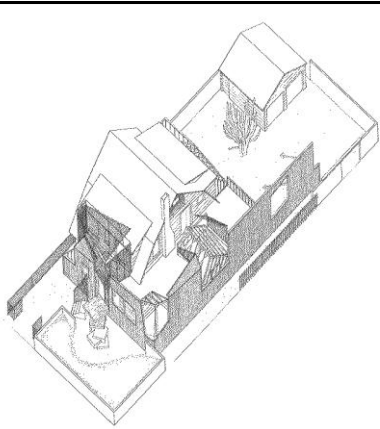
NEW FORMALISM

ARCHITECTURE AS SCULPTURE

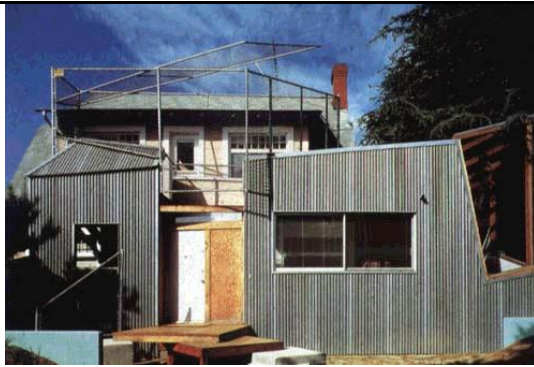
- Complex curves used to be confined to nature. The came computer driven design and manufacturing, which straightened out curve related-technical problems. With great success software developed to design Mirage fighter jets has been adopted to three-dimensional architectural modeling. This breakthrough freed the designers' imaginations, permitting sculptural architecture to blossom.
- Computer programs churn out detailed designs and plans—even for unconventional geometric forms. Contractors consult sophisticated 3-D computer models that illustrate irregular shapes. Detailed precasting guidelines helped fabricators. Digital design allows the architect uncompromising control and a streamlined construction process at reasonable cost. Cyberspace is transforming living and working space.
- **After the minimalism of Neo-Modernism and abstraction of Deconstructivism, sculptural architecture brought liberation. Functionalism took a backseat to the search for new forms undreamed of in the history of our built environment.**
- **Pionerring architects like Koolhaas, Frank Gehry, and Eric Owen Moss dream up idiosyncratic forms that looks like nothing so much as giant sculpture.**



FRANK GEHRY: THE ART OF ARCHITECTURE



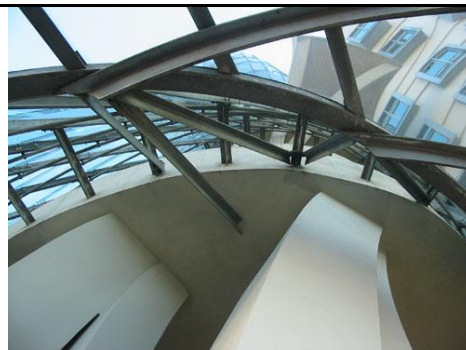
Frank Gehry House, Santa Monica, California





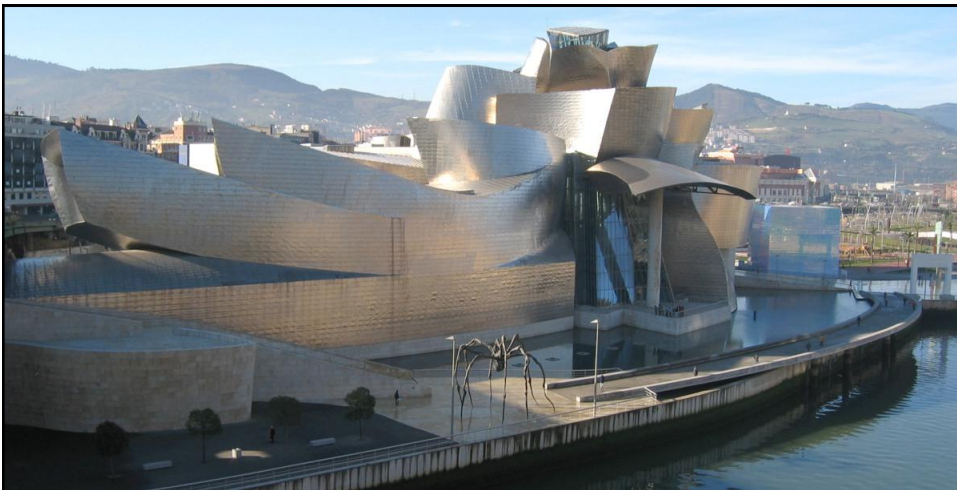
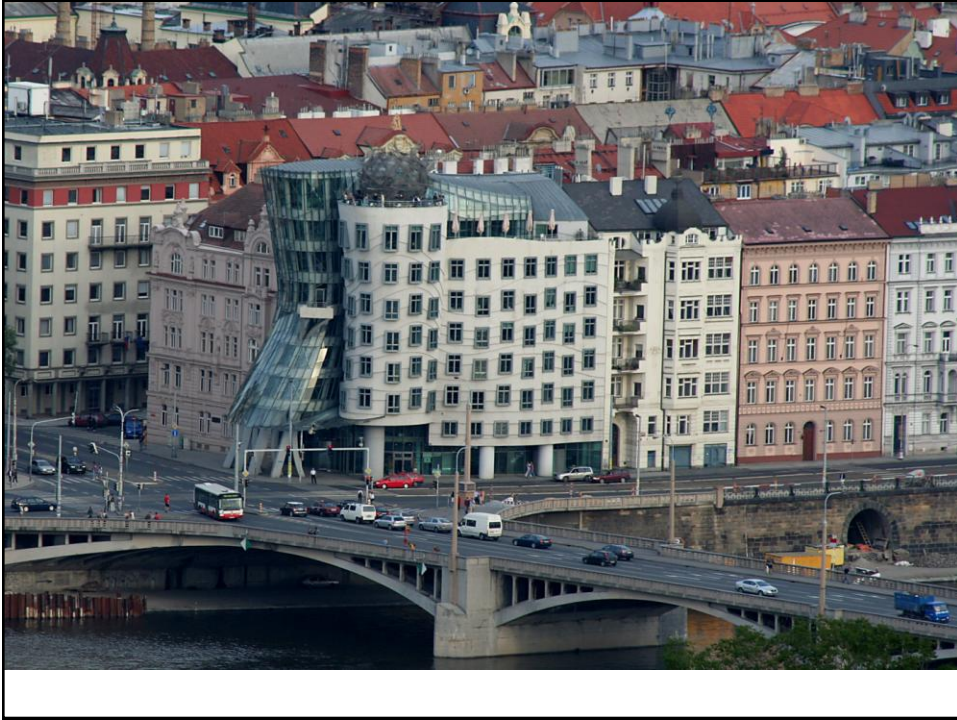
**Dancing House, Ginger and Fred,
Prag, by Gehry, 1996**

The site of Gehry's Dancing House was originally occupied by a house in the Neo-renaissance style from the end of the 19th century. That house was destroyed during bombing in 1945, its remains finally removed in 1960.



The building is an example of deconstructivist architecture, with an unusual shape. It reflects a woman and man (Ginger Rogers and Fred Astair) dancing together





Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao, Spain, by Gehry, 1997

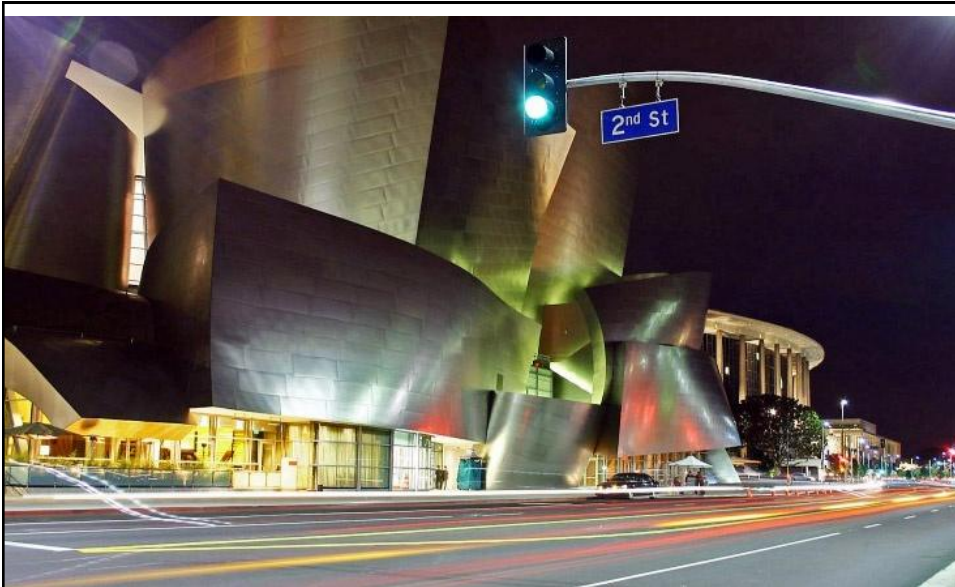
In his own words:

Frank Gehry commented on the rolling curves of his work, "It is not just space— it is a kind of sculpture." Taking "the license to be outrageous and to explore is the way to get someplace." At Bilbao, "I took the soft shapes of notch further," he says, "almost taking shapes into a liquid state like a waterfall." He aims for "ephemeral" form, where "you won't be able to hold any form in your mind. It will constantly change, depending on your angle of view."

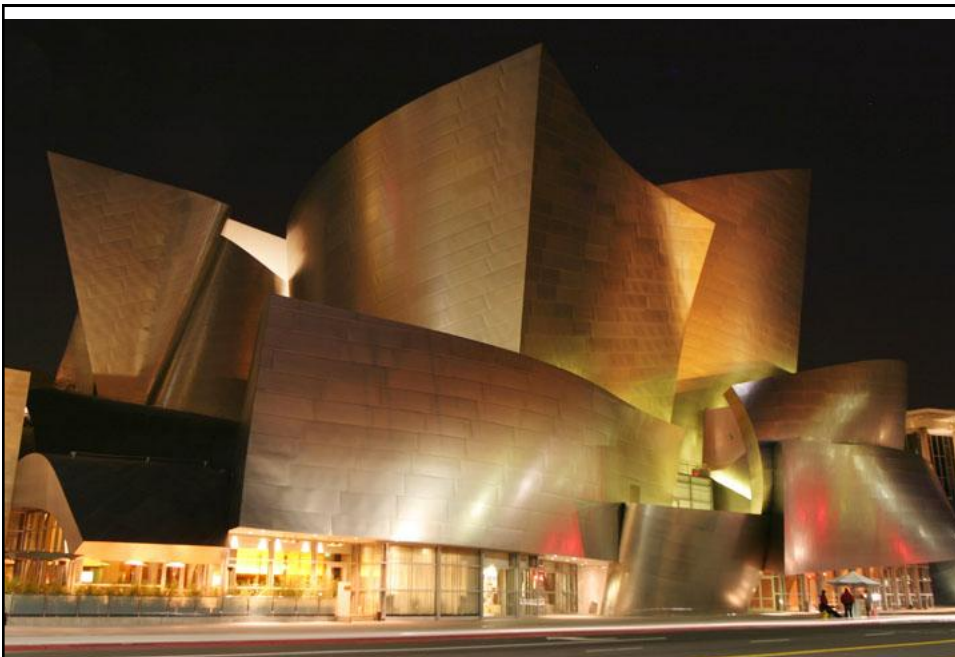


Details from Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao, Spain,
by Gehry, 1997





Disney Concert Hall



Disney Concert Hall

