alsop + stormer architects (London, Hamburg, Moscow)

vertical and horizontal volumes form an inverted L-shape
vertical block scheme - accessibility and openness emphasized
drama and intimacy away from noise of city
trio of ovoid pods raised above main library floor create an internal landscape
challenges conception of library as "daunting" and "hermetic"
Site Plan (Peckham Rye)

Designed for the London Borough of Southwark, the Peckham Library and Media Centre (at an area of 24,750 sq ft) was designed to bring global attention to a dilapidated and lower-middle class area of London, an effect much like what Gehry's Guggenheim accomplished to revitalize Bilbao. Comprising of a library, study area, computer/multi-media wing, bookshop, children's library, and African-Caribbean literature centre, Peckham has attracted local and international visitors steadily since it opened in 2000.

The library is situated between Hill Street and High Street in the area known as Peckham Rye, creating a boundary for an outdoor plaza area along with the Troughton MacAslan Arch and the Pulse Fitness Centre. The ground level arcade creates a cross axis to the Arch, expressing a "circular hub" for pedestrian access.

The five-story building is a long bar configuration devoting three stories to the lobby and informational services areas. The reading room and stacks are in a double-height space occupying the top to floors. The reading room creates a deep overhang beyond the footprint of the building, providing a large, covered open area for the public in front of the entrance.

Pedestrian Access
The cantilevered reading space is supported by seven one-foot diameter angled concrete-filled steel piloti that elevate the horizontal element 40 feet above the ground. The vertical stack of the offices and the horizontal bar of the reading space form an L-shaped "bookend" that leaves the void of the landscaped outdoor square very pure.

The vertical block emphasizes "transparency and permeability" to reinforce the idea of the horizontal block as its own solid. The ground-floor level is a double-height space containing a reception desk and an interview space for community advice. The four floors above house the multimedia centre as well as staff offices and amenities.
the green pre-patinated copper cladding represents a reptilian skin. It wraps around the front of the reading level as well as along the east and west facades where solar radiation is strongest. Small punctures in the front and side facades allow for light without much heat gain.

CONTAINER

taking advantage of the soft light, the entire north facade is constructed of clear and color glass with operable windows on each floor for ventilation.

skylights in each of the three pods allow adjustable natural light to enter more efficiently than through windows.

the undercroft of the library and the glazed south facade are clad in an external layer of stainless steel mesh panels that appear to undulate before the orthogonal mass of the building.

sculptural columns support the reading room.
the scale of the vertical bar and the floating horizontal bar creates an outdoor void space that behaves as an additional programmatic element.
the cladding and the floor slabs act as a rectilinear container for the more organic forms of the three ovoid pods raised above the mezzanine floor. The disparity in and their structure form suggests that the pods are meant to be regarded as a separate entity, suggesting their importance to the visitors of the library.

the wire mesh cladding and steel columns create a similar experience outside the library to bring the open space to the people of the city.