Project Information

Museum for Northrhine Westphalia, Dusseldorf, Germany
James Stirling and Michael Wilford
1975 Competition (unbuilt)

Program
Gallery Spaces, 400-Seat Lecture Theatre, Entrance Hall, Security Offices, Refreshment Room, Pedestrian Walkthrough, 406 Parking Spaces

Materials
Reinforced Concrete Structure
Masonry and Stone Veneer
Diffusing Glass

Bibliography
**Driving Concepts**

With the use of simple, solid forms, the Museum in Dusseldorf conveys a sense of authority. The detached portico serves as a kind of a monument for both the museum and the town.

**Monumental Expression**

A major design criteria was to re-design the old Grabbeplatz, increasing pedestrian scale. The plaza is raised, and visitors are encouraged to wander down the Ratinger Mauer walkthrough.

**Re-design of Plaza**

The area surrounding the site has a rich historical background, and many elements were preserved. The facades of buildings that were bombed still stand, and were integrated in the design of the Museum. Connecting with the existing buildings was also of great significance.

**Contextualism**
Stirling balances the monumental aspect of the project with a balance of the solid/void proportions in the site. The scale of the museum is sensitive to the existing buildings, however it manages to stand out completely. He employs materiality and lack of articulation to make the museum unique in its surroundings. The use of the square and circle in both plan and massing help to create a very elegant building. The cubic form of the portico was meant to stand out, and is linked to the cylindrical void of the garden by the walkthrough.
The Museum at Dusseldorf shows many design ideas in plan. Ideas surrounding an urban sequence are seen in the masonry entrance, angular lobby, and circular garden. There is a very clear pedestrian sequence through the museum, following a metaphorical city wall. The cubic mass of the portico is a stark contrast to the cylindrical void of the garden.
The elevations on the museum were kept simple, as not to compete with the facades of the existing buildings. The deteriorated shells of the old structures were integrated in the museum. The raised plaza not only allows for increased pedestrian activity, but also for an additional level of parking.
Light is often a very pressing issue in urban infill sites, as well as in gallery spaces. There are very few windows in the project, emphasizing the solidity of the project. However, light is still drawn in by windows along the floor, peering out toward the circular garden, providing glare-free illuminance.

The portico is lit brightly by skylights, as is the entrance hall, but sunlight is not allowed to penetrate the gallery spaces. The galleries employ mostly artificial lighting. This disparity suggests a relationship between light/dark and public/private. Stirling also suggested buff or ochre stone slabs to lighten up the facades, in the gray surroundings.
Modern Architecture: The block and Slab

Spatial Relationship: Similar foot-prints, different voids
Pedestrian link between old and new

Increased pedestrian scale
Juxtaposition between old facades and new building

Entrance Orientated to approaching traffic
Cylindrical Forms
Cubic Forms
Hierarchy
Use of Existing Facades
Modern Arch: Building to Slab Relationship
Public Circulation