



Four Museums

Carlo Scarpa, Museo Canoviano, Possagno

Frank O. Gehry, Guggenheim Bilbao Museoa

Rafael Moneo, The Audrey Jones Beck Building, MFAH

Heinz Tesar, Sammlung Essl, Klosterneuburg

With texts by Stefan Buzas, Judith Carmel-Arthur, Kurt W. Forster, Gottfried Knapp, and Martha Thorne and photographs by Joe C. Aker, Richard Bryant, Ralph Richter, Christian Richters, and Gary Zvonkovic. 224 pp. with 217 ill., 141 in colour, 204 x 219 mm, hard cover, English

ISBN 3-930698-68-4

c. Euro 59.90, sfr 89.00, £ 39.90, US\$ 69.90, \$A 108.00

To commemorate the bicentenary of Antonio Canova's birth, the Venetian authorities decided to have an extension added to the original museum, and they commissioned **Carlo Scarpa** for this delicate task. Scarpa composed a small, but highly articulated building that is in a strong contrast to the neo-Classical basilica. The subtly designed sequence of spaces is unique even among Scarpa's so many extraordinary museum interiors as the architect was here in the rare position to compose the spaces as well as the placings of the exhibits.

Frank Gehry's Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao is perhaps the most spectacular building of recent years. The building raised high expectations from the outset, as the central element in Bilbao's comprehensive urban renewal programme. Its site between river, railway, bridge and new town makes it a symbol of the Basque metropolis that can be seen from a considerable distance. It is both the heart of the city and a testbed for the arts, representing both public presence and artistic change.

The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, is a unique collection of architectural works – among them the Caroline Wiess Law Building, comprising the original William Ward Watkin Building of 1924 and the 1958 and 1974 additions designed by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, the Lillie and Hugh Roy Cullen Sculpture Garden created by Isamu Noguchi in 1986 – and now the Audrey Jones Beck Building by **Rafael Moneo**. Moneo has proposed a four-story facility directly facing the Law Building and connected to it via an underground walkway. The limestone building occupies the whole site, thereby reinforcing its urban character.

Heinz Tesar's buildings occupy a very particular place on the Austrian architectural scene. There is a creative imagination at work here, which always operates outside the scope of modern routine. The town of Klosterneuburg has become something like an artistic home for Tesar. The Schömerhaus, an office building whose huge oval central hall leaves convention far behind, and the Protestant church, which has a rounded floor plan like a tear-drop, were now followed by the impressive museum he has built here to house 4000 objects from the Essl collection, which includes the most important collection of Austrian art after 1945.

April 2004

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To commemorate the bicentenary of Antonio Canova's birth, the Venetian authorities decided to have an extension added to the overcrowded original museum, and they commissioned the Venetian architect **Carlo Scarpa** for this delicate task. Scarpa composed a small, but highly articulated building that is in a strong contrast to the neo-Classical, monumental basilica. The subtly designed sequence of spaces is unique even among Scarpa's so many extraordinary museum interiors as the architect was here in the rare position to compose the spaces as well as the placings of the exhibits. The placing of the sources of natural light which infuses the plaster surfaces with the softness of real life is in itself a rare achievement and it took an equally rare photographer to record such symphonies in white in all their magic.

There is no doubt at all that **Frank Gehry's** Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao is one of the most spectacular buildings of recent years. The building raised high expectations from the outset, as the central element in Bilbao's comprehensive urban renewal programme. Its site between river, railway, bridge and new town makes it a symbol of the Basque metropolis that can be seen from a considerable distance. It is both the heart of the city and a testbed for the arts, representing both public presence and artistic change. The process by which it was created demonstrates the most recent advances in computer-aided design, and in material manufacture. For a long time design and building were broken down into a large number of individual components. Gehry's museum unifies this process, and is thus able to create fluent links between architectural detail and urban impact.

The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, is a unique collection of architectural works – the Caroline Weiss Law Building, comprising the original William Ward Watkin Building of 1924 and the 1958 and 1974 additions designed by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe; the Lilla and Hugh Roy Cullen Sculpture Garden created by Isamu Noguchi in 1986; the Central Administration and Glassell Junior School Building designed by Carlos Jimenez in 1994; and now the Audrey Jones Beck Building by **Rafael Moneo**. Moneo, winner of the 1996 Pritzker Architecture Prize, has proposed a four-story facility directly facing the Law Building and connected to it via an underground walkway. The limestone building occupies the whole site, thereby reinforcing its urban character. On the inside, visitors can assemble in the dramatic atrium before proceeding to the upper level galleries to begin their itinerary.

Heinz Tesar's buildings occupy a very particular place on the Austrian architectural scene, which is anyway populated by a lot of individualists. There is a great deal of creative imagination at work here, which always operates outside the scope of modern routine. The town of Klosterneuburg, north of Vienna, has become something like an artistic home for Tesar. The Schönerhaus, an office building whose huge oval central hall leaves convention far behind, and the Protestant church, which has a rounded floor plan like a tear-drop, were now followed by the impressive museum he has built here to house 4000 objects from the private Esal collection, which includes the most important collection of Austrian art after 1945.

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049.00 Euro
 079.00 sfr
 036.00 £
 059.90 US\$
 080.00 SA



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© 2004 Edition Axel Menges, Stuttgart/London
ISBN 3-930698-69-4

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Reproductions: Gabor Mooslosky, Budapest, and Bild & Text Joachim Baun, Fellbach
Printing: Druckhaus Münster GmbH, Kornwestheim
Binding: Buchwerk GmbH, Darmstadt

Translation into English: Michael Robinson
Design: Axel Menges