

1996

THE ARCHITECTURAL

REVIEW

ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF EXCELLENCE IN ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN



COPENHAGEN CULTURE



1
Entrance to the new art museum is marked by a sculptural oversized gutter, at the glazed cleft of two nearly colliding wall planes.

2
The building is set in a rolling, windswept landscape, on the edge of Køge Bay, outside Copenhagen.

3
The angular protrusions of the roof resemble the bobbing sails of boats.

4
The museum appears in the landscape as a collection of fractured volumes.

5
The entrance courtyard. Massive walls protectively funnel visitors to the entrance beyond.

ART ARK

Copenhagen's new Museum of Modern Art is located outside the city, in a bleak, rolling landscape surrounded by water. From a distance, the building resembles a shipwreck, yet despite its gestures, it has an intriguing material robustness and spatial complexity.



Art gallery, Copenhagen

Architect

Søren Robert Lund

Photographs

Friedrich Busam/

Architekturphoto



Breaking away from the traditionally urban locations of modern art galleries, Copenhagen's new Museum of Modern Art occupies a site south of the city at Køge Bay. The windswept, estuarine landscape is punctuated by rolling dunes and the jaunty profiles of small sailing boats. During the late 1980s, a competition was held for the design of the museum, which was won by Søren Robert Lund, a young Danish architect. The new building opened earlier this year. The museum's primary purpose is to collect major works by Danish contemporary artists, but

it will also show Scandinavian and foreign art, putting Danish developments into a wider context. Apart from visual art, the museum has a wide ranging cultural remit, that includes film, ballet, theatre, dance and music.

Lund's design is a boldly fashionable Deconstructivist *homage* that appears at first sight to have been inspired by Zaha Hadid's iconic fire station at the Vitra complex (AR June 1993). Yet here amid the bleak grassy marshlands, the randomly jagged protrusions of the roof seem curiously appropriate, mimicking the bobbing, angular sails of the

boats that ply around the surrounding waterways and the bay. In fact, nautical metaphors abound.* The partially dislocated volume of the café resembles the ribbed hull of some primeval ship, now eternally suspended in dry dock. Inside the building, the detailing of the conspicuously riveted galvanised steel doors, panels and lift housings prompts comparisons with submarines.

The museum's core element is a cavernous lens-shaped space, 150 m long, that extends through the building. This is the grandiosely titled 'Art Axis', the largest exhibition space in

Denmark. The Art Axis forms the spine of the new museum. On the north side of the spine are a series of orthogonal workshop, gallery and storage spaces. On the south side is a svelte, wedge-shaped volume containing an adaptable theatre, media hall, main lobby and museum shop. Crammed into the interstitial space between the spine and the wedge is a trapezoidal sculpture court and the entrance lobby.

The walls of the Art Axis and the wedge are extruded to form a sheltered courtyard that reaches out into the landscape. The massive canted planes

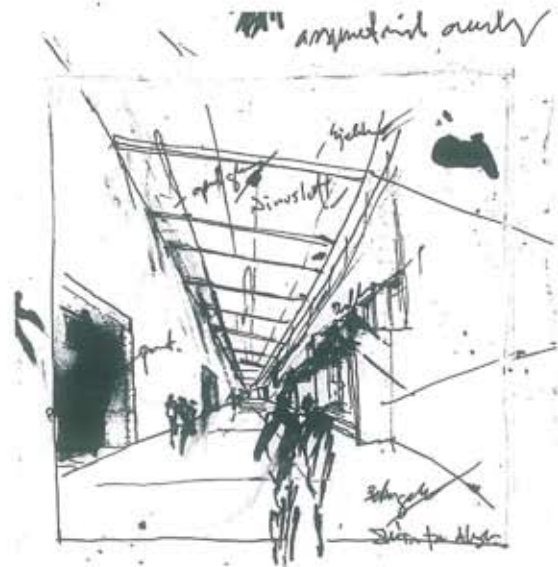


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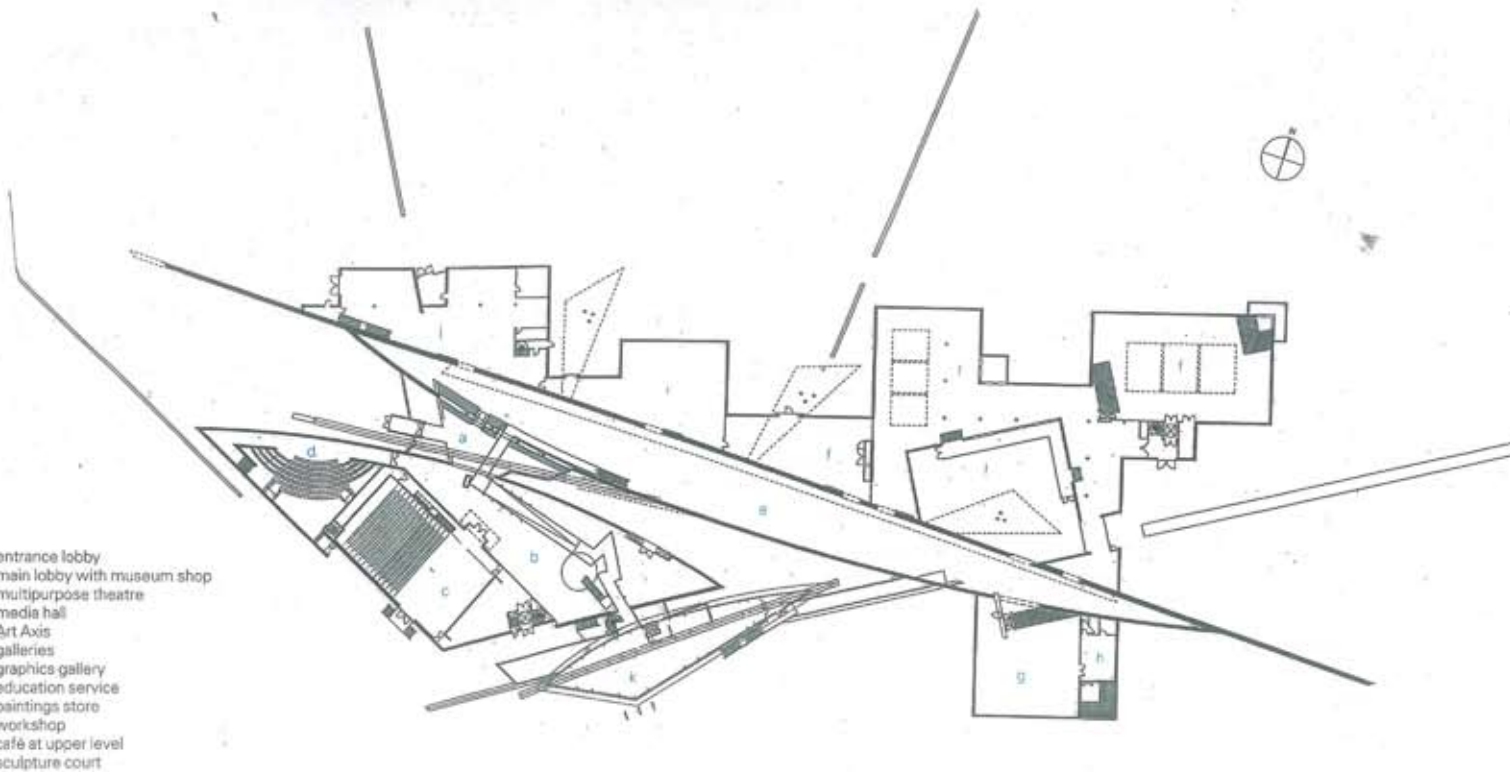


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- 6 The sculpture court, formed in the space between the Art Axis and the wedge containing the theatre.
- 7 The suspended, hull-like volume of the café.
- 8 Flamboyant, zinc-clad canopies above the orthogonal gallery, workshop and storage spaces.
- 9 The main lobby, containing the museum shop, animated by an elevated walkway.



preliminary sketch of the Art Axis



- a entrance lobby
- b main lobby with museum shop
- c multipurpose theatre
- d media hall
- e Art Axis
- f galleries
- g graphics gallery
- h education service
- i paintings store
- j workshop
- k café at upper level
- l sculpture court

ground floor plan (scale approx 1:1000)



longitudinal section

Art gallery, Copenhagen
Architect
Søren Robert Lund



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10
The elevated walkway links the café with the Art Axis.

11
Typical gallery space.
12, 13

The Art Axis, a cavernous space
150 m long which forms the spine of
the museum.







14



15

Art gallery, Copenhagen

Architect

Søren Robert Lund

14

The airy volume of the café.

15

The riveted cube of the lift shaft.

16

A vivid carmine corridor links the Art Axis with the main lobby.

17

The robust detailing extends to ancillary spaces such as the lavatories.



16



17

protectively funnel visitors towards the entrance at the glazed cleft of the courtyard, marked by a sculptural, oversized gutter. From the entrance you can either descend a broad flight of steps into the bowels of the Art Axis to begin a circuit of the galleries, or you can browse in the toplit lobby containing the museum shop. The dramatic, luminous volume of the café is placed at the west side of the museum with views over Køge Bay. It is reached by an elevated, industrial walkway that weaves daringly over the heads of postcard buyers in the lobby and terminates in a flight of stairs that

run down the curved wall of the Art Axis.

Once the circuit of galleries has been completed, you can cut back to the lobby and café through a narrow corridor located at the end of the Art Axis. The corridor is painted a coruscating carmine and one of its walls shafts through into the gallery space. This raw pigment is the only intrusion of colour (apart from the changing artworks) in an otherwise subdued palette of white, grey and black. The massive white walls of the galleries have a powerful elemental quality, emphasised by the presence of heavy, unadorned materials,

predominantly steel and concrete. More overtly, a 36 ton monolith of raw granite strategically positioned in the main lobby provides a geological reminder of ancient, primeval forces.

Since its opening, the museum has proved popular (50 000 visitors in the first three weeks, well on the way to the projected aim of 190 000 visitors for the first year), although perhaps the curiosity value of this strange building in the dunes accounted for this initial enthusiasm. When I visited, it was encouragingly full of Danes solemnly poking around a series of art installations that

varied from the perplexing to the bizarre. Like the art it houses, the building has its occasional silly, gestural moments (the zinc clad canopies on angular supports, for instance) but both in conception and execution it embodies an unequivocal Danish commitment to contemporary culture.

CATHERINE SLESSOR

* The museum is officially called 'Arken', meaning 'the Ark' in Danish.

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Technical partners
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Structural and heating engineers
Carl Bro
Electricity/light
Hansen & Henneberg