

## COMMENTARY

# Museum takes a look at . . . museums



RICHARD MEIR / J. PAUL GETTY TRUST

Call it the museum decade.

The 10 years between 1993 and 2003 saw the completion of extraordinary museums throughout Europe and across the United States, and still more are to follow. The exhibition now on view at the Miami Art Museum looks at 25 of these museums — all by architects of great international renown

■ IF YOU GO 13M

— in drawings, plans, computer images, scale models and photographs.

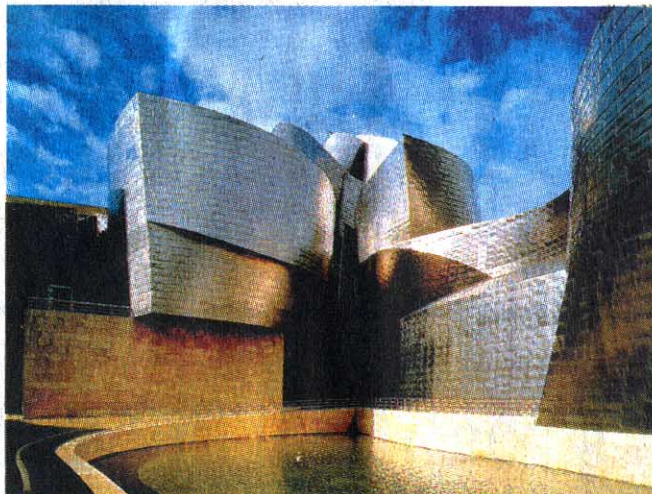
*Museums for a New Millennium Concepts Projects Buildings* is a daunting show, big and densely filled with remarkable images of architecture of enormous artistry and consequence.

• TURN TO MUSEUMS, 13M



ARCHITECTURE

BETH  
DUNLOP  
bdunlop  
@herald.com



DAVID HEALD/THE SOLOMON R. GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM

## BOLD STROKES:

Far left, the J. Paul Getty Center in Los Angeles took architect Richard Meier 13 years to complete; left, Frank Gehry's Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain, is known simply as 'Bilbao.'



# MAM exhibit celebrates greatest museums

• MUSEUMS, FROM 4M

The exhibition occupies MAM's entire second floor and requires a commitment of time and mind to master, but it is well worth it.

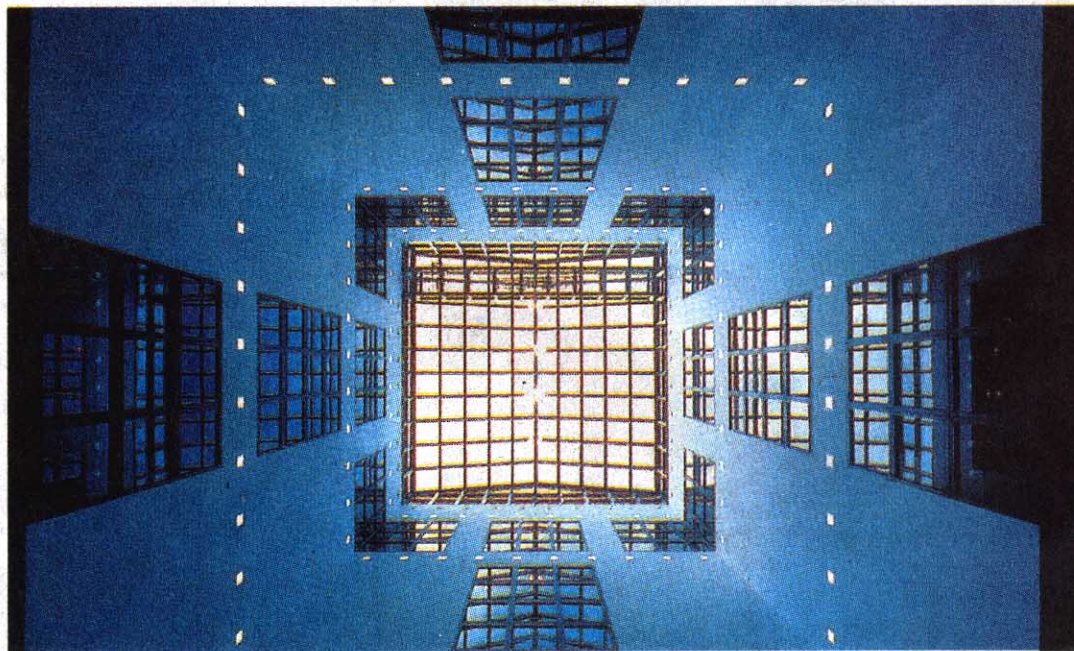
There are offerings from architects of worldwide fame such as Frank Gehry (with his Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain — a building so famous that it, rather than the city, is often referred to as Bilbao), as well as Robert Venturi, represented here by the Museum of Contemporary Art in San Diego, and Richard Meier, who spent 13 years completing the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles.

Daniel Libeskind, the architect who won New York's World Trade Center competition, is represented by his powerful and profound Jewish Museum in Berlin.

Some of the museums (and their architects) are less well known to Americans: Juan Navarro Baldeweg's astounding and ingenious Altimira Cave Museum in Santillana del Mar, Spain, for example; or Vittorio Gregotti and Manuel Salgado's Cultural Center of Belem, in Lisbon.

Though there are eight American museums — including Santiago Calatrava's epic Milwaukee Art Museum, actually a new entrance for, addition to and overall redefinition of an existing museum — it is a Eurocentric exhibition that originated in Switzerland at Art Centre Basel in 2000 and has since traveled widely.

In the capable hands of architect Rene Gonzalez, who designed the installation, and Peter Bosell, who is MAM's assistant director for programs and senior curator, it has been updated and given a



STEFAN MULLER

**GEOMETRIC WONDER:** View up to the glazed roof at the Gallery of Contemporary Art in Hamburg.

new relevance.

MAM, of course, has been given the go-ahead to plan a museum in Bicentennial Park. Thus, this exhibition is not merely an assemblage of images but a starting point for a community conversation about the modern museum.

## MIAMI'S FUTURE

It is possible to look at *Museums for a New Millennium* thematically and critically, with an eye to what might be built in Miami. Once it might have been enough to build a museum, fill it with art, add a tea room or a gift shop. Now we live in an era when enough isn't ever enough.

Museums need to be landmarks, destinations, generators of activity, urban gathering spaces, catalysts for development and regenerators within the city — great expectations based in large

measure on certain truths. The front steps and entrance hall of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York can tell us much about this, as can other museums throughout the world.

The Pompidou Centre in Paris, whatever one might conclude about its success as an actual museum space, certainly proved what a building with ample public gathering space could do for a neighborhood.

Still, it's a confounding mandate. Museums can no longer be temples-on-the-hill, built by and for a tiny elite, but they must serve a larger and more diverse public without compromising artistic standards. The architecture must not be inaccessible, and yet it must be exceptional, enough to draw public interest and attract crowds with architecture that is both part of and apart from the city. All

these are fodder for thought, and the 25 projects on view certainly can lift the level of dialogue.

Gonzalez and Boswell also examined the 25 projects for what they could tell us about trends in architecture. This is tricky business, for architecture is not fashion but construction, and not fleeting but more or less permanent, which means the stakes are much higher. That being said, there are indeed technological breakthroughs — particularly with light controls — that allow architects to explore the use of materials that were once limited, most particularly glass, which is used brilliantly, classically and inventively in many of the museums on view.

## FOCUS ON ART

Other issues to be explored — and one hopes, to become a subject of public discourse in

Miami — include the art museum as a "multifunction" building (with film screenings, performances, lectures and other programming, as well as an array of facilities — bookstores, cafés, gift shops, workshops, studios, multimedia facilities and more); this is museum-as-town-square, fulfilling widespread expectations, and yet, it still needs to be about art, the aggregation, conservation, preservation, exhibition and explication of art.

Interestingly enough, when *Museums for a New Millennium* was put together in Basel, very few of the images were of galleries with paintings or sculpture in them, though a logical explanation might be that this was in attempt to keep the subject as architecture, not art.

Gonzalez and Boswell also updated the exhibition, adding photos of museums completed since 2000 (and including a few gallery spaces when available). The original version included a number of buildings in progress. Not four years later, one of those "unfinished" museums — Steven Holl's Bellevue Art Museum in Washington — has already opened and closed.

Some, such as David Chipperfield's Neues Museum in Berlin, are still in progress, and two on view — including Giorgio Grassi's competition entry for the Neues Museum and Rem Koolhaas' ZKM Zentrum für Kunst und Medien-technologie project — will not be built.

Others have been completed, and to great media attention, among them Zaha Hadid's Contemporary Art Center in Cincinnati; Tadao Ando's Modern Art Museum



## IF YOU GO

*Museums for a New Millennium Concepts Projects Buildings* runs through Jan. 18 at the Miami Art Museum, 101 W. Flagler St., Miami. Hours: 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Tuesday-Friday, until 8 p.m. on third Thursdays of the month, noon to 5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. Adults \$5, seniors \$2.50; free to MAM members, students with valid ID and children under 12. Website: [www.miamiartmuseum.org](http://www.miamiartmuseum.org).

in Fort Worth, Texas; Herzog and DeMeuron's Tate Modern in London.

This is an exhibition that will reveal itself most easily to aficionados of architecture, especially those who travel widely or follow world trends in design, but it is not exclusive or exclusionary. There is plenty to fascinate and engage those less well versed in the subject. Almost every image on view has its own merit.

There is certainly enough here to provoke public debate as plans progress for what is now being called Museum Park Miami at Bicentennial Park. MAM's current space is not yet 20 years old, but it was designed for traveling exhibitions, and not even big ones, if that is indeed a museum goal. This time, the discussion should range far, to architecture and beyond. This time we need to get it right, whatever that takes.



## ON VIEW

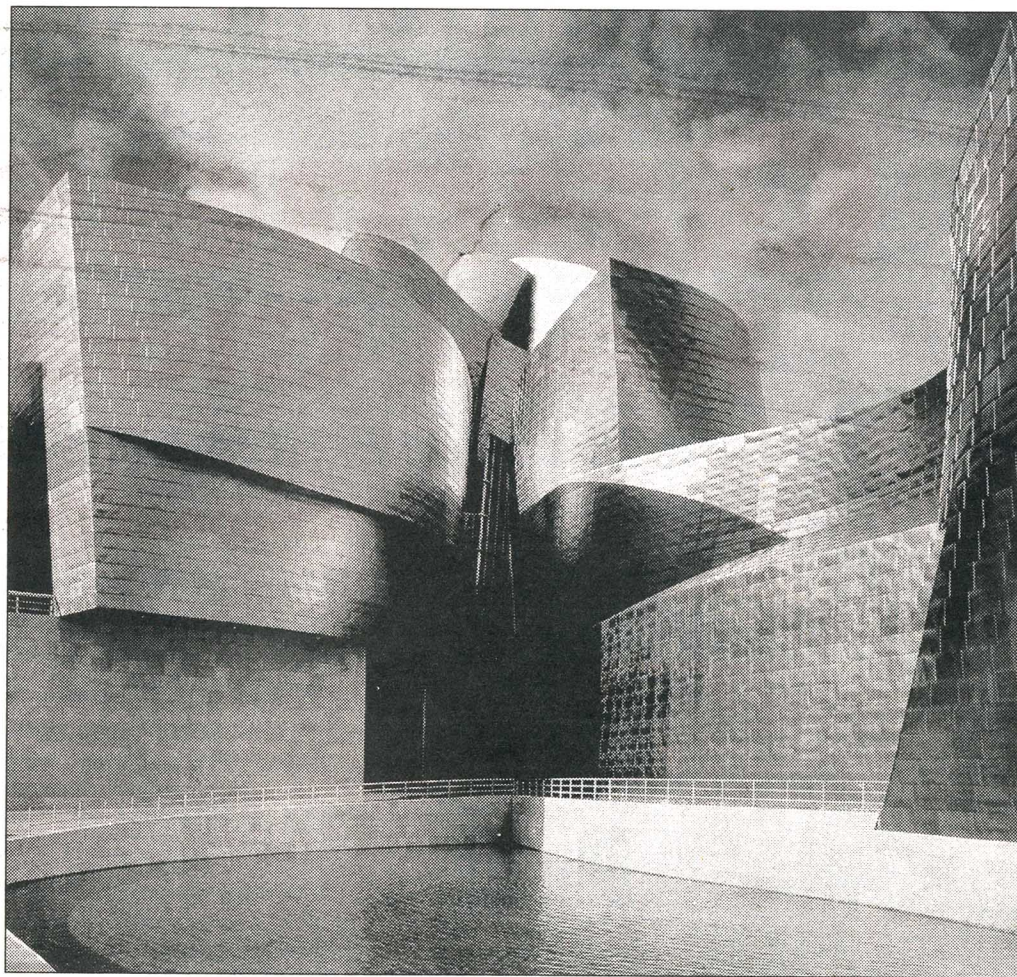
**What:** "Museums for a New Millennium: Concepts, Projects, Buildings"

**Where:** Miami Art Museum, 101 W. Flagler St., Miami

**When:** Through Jan. 18. Open 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Tuesday-Friday, third Thursdays until 9 p.m.; noon-5 p.m. Saturday, Sunday

**Admission:** \$5 for public; \$2.50 for seniors and students

**Phone:** 305-375-3000



**POLISHED EFFORT:** The Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain, designed by Frank Gehry, is a shining example of modern thinking. **Photo/David Heald**

# THE KEYS TO THE CITY

Museum architects' work is look toward MAM's future

BY MATT SCHUDEL  
ARTS WRITER

It wasn't planned this way, but there's an ulterior motive behind the new exhibition at the Miami Art Museum. The designs of 25 art museums built around the world in the past 15 years are the subject of "Museums for a New Millennium," which continues through Jan. 18. Officials at MAM hope they might have a future home just as spectacular.

Voters in Miami have approved a bond issue to turn 29 acres of Bicentennial Park along Biscayne Bay into a museum park. If a second bond issue passes next year, MAM and the Miami Museum of Science could have new homes in a prominent waterfront setting. In that context, the projects in "Museums for a New Millennium" represent a range of ideal visions for the Miami Art Museum of the future.

"I feel like the moon and stars are lining up," says director Suzanne Delehanty, describing the correlation between the exhibit and MAM's own ambitions.

Whatever lies ahead for the museum, the plans and models now on display offer vivid examples of the visual, social and technical possibilities of modern architecture. The exhibition, which originated in Switzerland and



➤ will visit 10 countries by the end of this year, includes the celebrated designs of Frank Gehry's Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain; Daniel Liebeskind's Jewish Museum in Berlin; and Richard Meier's Getty Museum in Los Angeles. There are other projects by such architectural heavyweight as Renzo Piano, Tadao Ando, Robert Venturi and Rem Koolhaas.

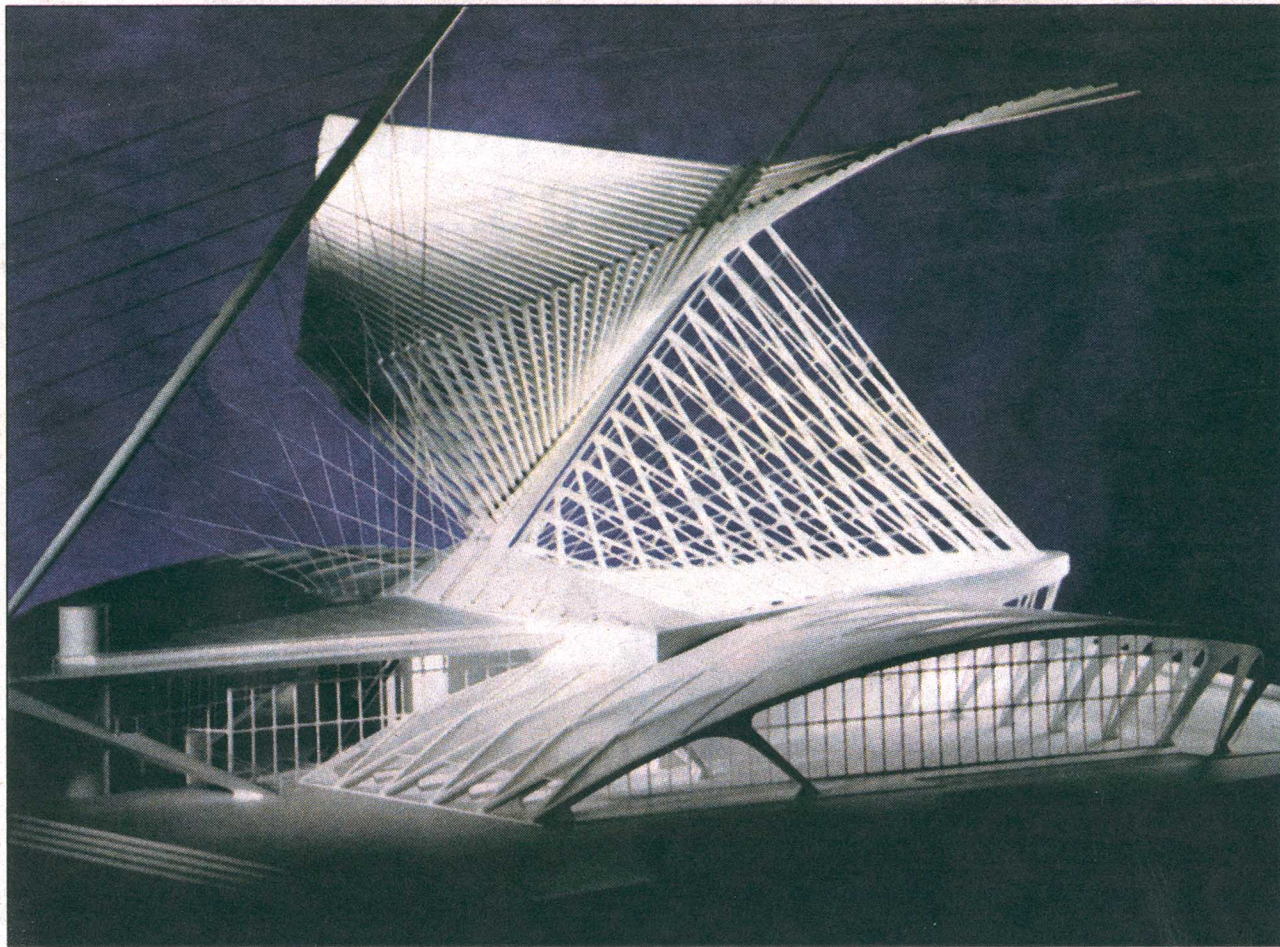
With a beautiful and thoughtful installation by Miami architect Rene Gonzalez, the exhibition is presented more as a tutorial than as a traditional museum show.

"I think an architecture exhibit is supposed to show views and concepts," says Gonzalez, who, in the 1980s, worked with Meier on the Getty Museum. "It was very important for me to have a design that would engage people."

Gonzalez has placed architectural plans and photographs along the walls, as well as a series of 10 panels explaining key ideas behind museum design. The scale models of all 25 museums sit on tables for closer inspection. Above the clear vitrines protecting the models, columns of screened black plastic material reach to the ceiling.

The scrims focus your eyes on the models, compelling you to examine them not just as beautifully made objects but as what they were originally intended to be — the working tools of architects. There are also plastic magnifying sheets in front of some pictures and plans, videos of five museums, plus interactive computer terminals.

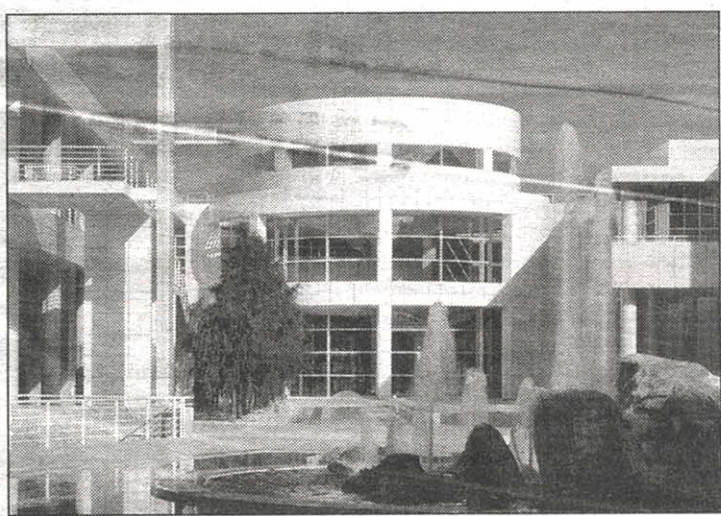
"What we want to do," says MAM senior curator Peter Boswell, "is stimulate a dialogue and get people talking about what they want."



➤ **TAKING FLIGHT:** Milwaukee Art Museum's design is new city symbol. Photo/"Museums for a New Millennium"



## ART



**CIRCLES AND LINES:** Built atop a hill in Los Angeles, the Getty Museum is a major destination. Photo courtesy J. Paul Getty Trust

► Most architects now work with computers. But their hand-drawn preliminary notes are invariably more interesting, showing an idea being born. Steven Holl's sketches of Washington's Bellevue Art Museum evolve from a drawing of a hand with three extended fingers to elegant watercolors of a building in three parts.

Norman Foster's design for the Art Square in Nîmes, France, emerges in hastily drawn initial plans and notes. They also illustrate his concern for fitting his building in the context of the surrounding urban fabric, as well as his architect's ego.

"Without this," he scrawls on one sheet, "there is no building!"

For sheer drafting mastery, nothing can match Vittorio Gregotti and Manuel Salgado's design for the Cultural Center of Belem in Lisbon. The exquisite plans, executed in pencil on paper, contain a humanity absent from even the most imaginative computer-generated drawings.

Some of the projects are quite conservative, such as David Chipperfield's New Museum of Berlin, which places a series of buildings in a tight urban environment, or Alvaro Siza Vieira's Galician Center of Contemporary Art, built beside a Spanish convent. One design, the Tate Modern in London, is a retrofitted power plant.

But most of the plans go well beyond the standard four-walled masonry box. Instead, we see buildings clad entirely in glass, metallic screens or, in Gehry's case, an undulating silver skin that is really sculpture on the grandest possible scale. If nothing else, this exhibition shows how museums have assumed a civic importance unknown in the past.

Ever since Frank Lloyd Wright's spiral design for the Guggenheim Museum in New York in 1943, museums have adopted dramatic new shapes. But the real impetus for new ways — some would say new and crazy ways — of thinking about museums came in the 1970s with Renzo Piano's controversial design for the Pompidou Center in Paris. Piano exposed the beams, pillars, ducts, stairwells and other raw materials of architecture, creating a showcase that became a tourist attraction in its own right.

Since then, museums have become the secular cathedrals of our time. More and more, they are monumental public buildings that embody the most far-reaching architectural thinking of the day. They are meant to do more than just house collections of art: They project a sense of identity not only for the museum itself but for the city in which it resides.

Look no further than the Getty, which has become a tourist destination in Los Angeles, even for people not interested in art. Santiago Calatrava's design for the Milwaukee Art Museum, which features a giant sail that opens and closes, has become nothing less than a new symbol of the city.

"The building is now an icon," says Gonzalez. "It's much more than a building, much more than a museum. It becomes a monument, a landmark of the city."

It's too early to tell whether the Miami Art Museum will take its place alongside these breathtaking designs. But the ideas that enliven this exhibition are enough to make you dream.

Matt Schudel can be reached at [mschudel@sun-sentinel.com](mailto:mschudel@sun-sentinel.com) or 954-356-4689.