

Project

# MAXXI: Museum of XXI Century Arts

Location

Rome, Italy

Date

1998 / 2009

Client

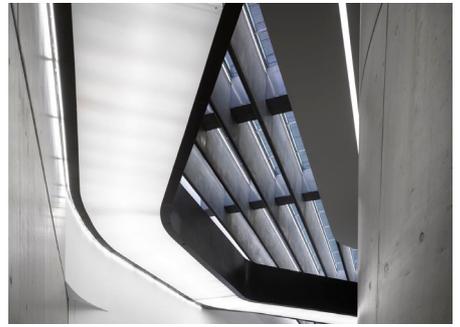
Italian Ministry  
of Culture

Status

Built

Size

30,000m<sup>2</sup>



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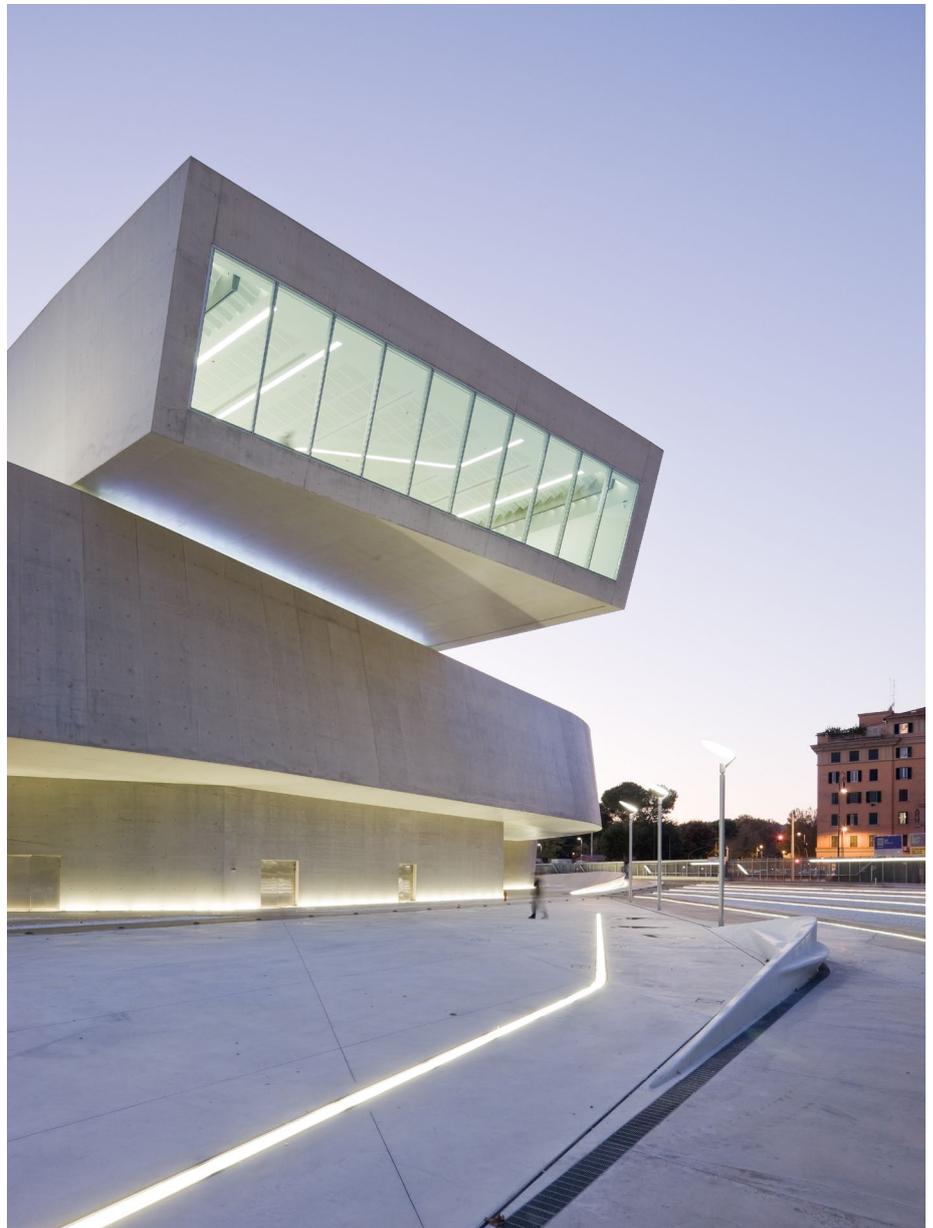
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## Architectural Concept and Urban Strategy: Staging the Field of Possibilities

The Centre for Contemporary Arts addresses the question of its urban context by maintaining an indexicality to the former army barracks. This is in no way an attempt at topological pastiche, but instead continues the low-level urban texture set against the higher level blocks on the surrounding sides of the site.

In this way, the Centre is more like an 'urban graft', a second skin to the site. At times, it affiliates with the ground to become new ground, yet also ascends and coalesces to become massivity where needed. The entire building has an urban character: prefiguring upon a directional route connecting the River to Via Guido Reni, the Centre encompasses both movement patterns extant and desired, contained within and outside.

This vector defines the primary entry route into the building. By intertwining the circulation with the urban context, the building shares a public dimension with the city, overlapping tendril like paths and open space. In addition to the circulatory relationship, the architectural elements are also geometrically aligned with the urban grids that join at the site. In thus partly deriving its orientation and physiognomy from the context, it further assimilates itself to the specific conditions of the site.



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**Design**

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**Project Architect**

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**Planning**

ABT srl  
(Rome, Italy)

**Structure**

Anthony Hunt Associates  
(London, UK)  
OK Design Group  
(Rome, Italy)

**M&E**

Max Fordham and  
Partners  
(London, UK)  
OK Design Group  
(Rome, Italy)

**Lighting**

Equation Lighting  
(London, UK)

**Acoustic**

Paul Gilleron Acoustic  
(London, UK)

**Space Vs Object**

Our proposal offers a quasi-urban field, a world" to dive into rather than a building as signature object. The Campus is organised and navigated on the basis of directional drifts and the distribution of densities rather than key points. This is indicative of the character of the Centre as a whole: porous, immersive, a field space. An inferred mass is subverted by vectors of circulation.

The external as well as internal circulation follows the overall drift of the geometry. Vertical and oblique circulation elements are located at areas of confluence, interference and turbulence. The move from object to field is critical in understanding the relationship the architecture will have to the content of the artwork it will house. Whilst this is further expounded by the contributions of our Gallery and Exhibitions Experts below, it is important here to state that the premise of the architectural design promotes a disinheriting of the 'object' orientated gallery space. Instead, the notion of a 'drift' takes on an embodied form.

The drifting emerges, therefore, as both architectural motif, and also as a way to navigate experientially through the museum. It is an argument that, for art practice is well understood, but in architectural hegemony has remained alien. We take this opportunity, in the adventure of designing such a forward looking institution, to confront the material and conceptual dissonance evoked by art practice since the late 1960's. The path lead away from the 'object' and its correlative sanctifying, towards fields of multiple associations that are anticipative of the necessity to change.

**Institutional Catalyst**

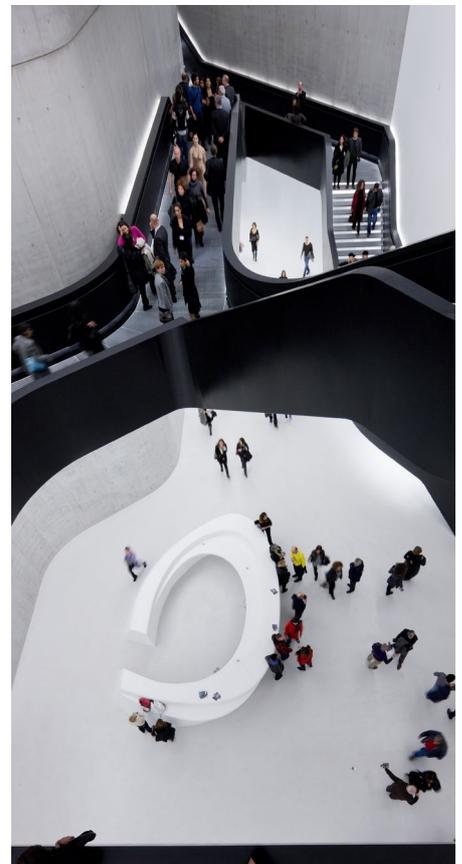
As such, it is deemed significant that in configuring the possible identity of this newly established institution (housing both Art and Architecture), with its aspiration towards the polyvalent density of the 21st century, conceptions of space and indeed temporality are reworked.

Modernist Utopian space fuelled the white 'neutrality' of most 20th century museums. Now, this disposition must be challenged, not simply out of wilful negation, but by the necessity for architecture to continue its critical relationship with contemporary social and aesthetic categories. Since absolutism has been indefinitely suspended from current thought on the issue of art presentation, it is towards the idea of the 'maximising exhibition' that we gravitate.

In this scenario, the Centre makes primary the manifold possibilities for the divergence in showing art and architecture as well as catalysing the discourse on its future. Again, the 'signature' aspect of an institution of this calibre is sublimated into a more pliable and porous organism that promotes several forms of identification at once.



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