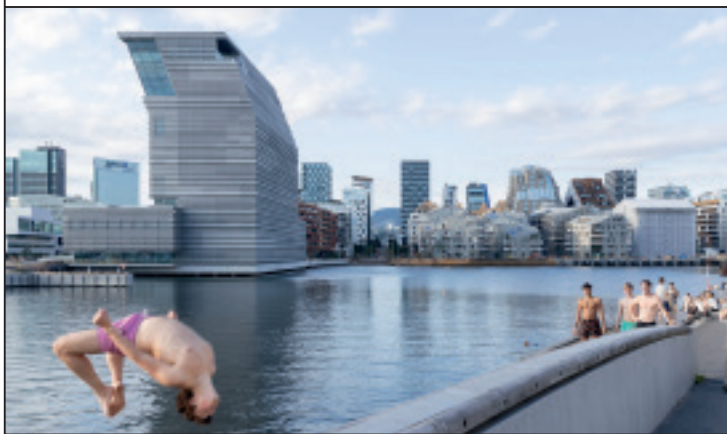


Edvard Munch bequeathed his work to Oslo so that it could be housed in a new museum. This exhibition presents for the first time the whole process of design and construction of the building under the supervision of Estudio Herreros until it was inaugurated in October 2021. The exhibition documents a new way of practising architecture, thinking about cultural institutions and creating the city.

Estudio Herreros

LAMBDA FILES. THE PROJECT FOR THE MUNCH MUSEUM IN OSLO



29.10.2021 – 20.02.2022

MUNCH

[LA VIRREINA]
CENTRE
DE LA IMATGE

Ajuntament de
Barcelona



This exhibition documents the twelve years of work that Estudio Herreros dedicated to the Munch Museum project in Oslo. The exhibition is carried out in cooperation with CentroCentro in Madrid and arc en rêve in Bordeaux and coincides with the opening of the museum in October 2021.

The name of the exhibition, *Lambda Files*, was taken from the pseudonym that protected the architects' anonymity in the international competition and was surprisingly also used by the media until construction of the building began. The files are a large collection of materials documenting the internal history of the project and are of the type that normally never see the light of day. Most firms of architects consider them to be "paperwork" and even redraw the plans for clean publications that deproblematize the design work.

At a time when most museums are rethinking their assignments and their significance for the public, we thought it was necessary to consider a radically different case: that of a museum built from scratch, a cityscape that changes with the emergence of a new architectural element, a cultural facility that takes its meaning from individual and collective uses.

Thus, *Lambda Files. The Munch Museum Project in Oslo* shows how new ways of doing architecture are the result of intense political and social dialogue, of long-term collaborations between a variety of agents. Among the numerous documents, the exhibition presents for the first time the images taken of the building by the architectural photographer Iwan Baan, which show it from a perspective that is not fetishist or objectual but situated and unexpectedly useful.

The exhibition is completed with a set of dialogues in which major international experts will discuss the paradigms that renew the language of architecture and the way of experiencing cities today.

LAMBDA, a city project

In the 1980s, the port of Oslo, which historically had blocked the city's contact with the waters of the fjord, began to be dismantled. The ambitious project to remove from the city plan any barrier to the desired merging of the two environments involved major infrastructure and building works. In the year 2000, the name Harbour Promenade was introduced to describe the collective dream of having a pedestrian and cycling path to run uninterrupted along the urban coastline, and the name Fjord City was coined to describe the city that would emerge from the transformation of the former Port City.

Unlike in similar projects around the world, which reserve a wide strip of public space dotted with facilities, in Oslo the residential, commercial and office city was spread out over the new lands according to a human-scale model. The presence of cars was reduced to a minimum in favour of pedestrians, bicycles and scooters, and new facilities emerged in association with small public spaces. Thus arose the new Central Train Station, the Opera, the Deichman Library and the Munch Museum, among many other projects resulting from international competitions.

In 2008, the call for the design of the Munch Museum was announced. After several unsuccessful attempts, the new project was meant to meet the condition expressed by Edvard Munch (1863-1944) in his will to bequeath all his work to the city of Oslo on the condition that a museum be built to house it. It was also understood that the building erected in the Toyen neighbourhood in 1963 was a temporary construction. A list of 20 architecture firms of all generations were selected to compete for the commission, ten of which had never designed a large museum. The decision would be made by a large international jury with representation of architects, urban planners and the administration. In March 2009, the commission was awarded to the Madrid-based Estudio Herreros firm.

The proposal of Estudio Herreros provides the typological heterodoxy involved in developing a museum based

on the thirteen levels of a vertical development. It aims to express a collective dream against the city's silhouette, with the added value of freeing the ground for pedestrians. The scheme consists of using the exhibition tower and circulatory spaces to link an entrance hall that is conceived as a grand plaza equipped with a recreational public space offering views over the city. The jury's report highlights the urban and expressive nature of the volume in its four orientations; the quality of internal logistics served by the verticality of the section; the coherent definition of the construction systems and subsystems despite the fact that it was submitted to a competition of ideas; and the ambitious environmental proposal that aimed to make the project a pioneering scheme in this field.

Henceforward Estudio Herreros called on a large group of experts from different countries in the specialities necessary to carry out a project of such magnitude (approx. 27,000 m²). It had to design a collaborative work method for a group that included up to 100 people along the whole process.

VOICES, a participatory process

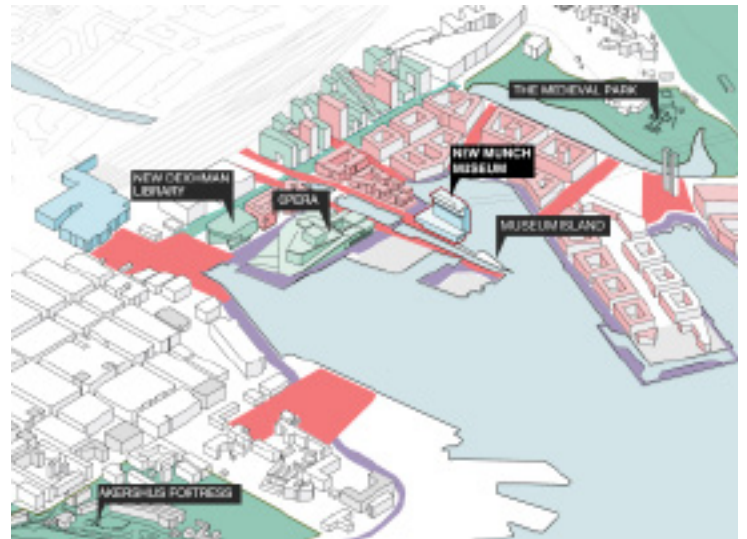
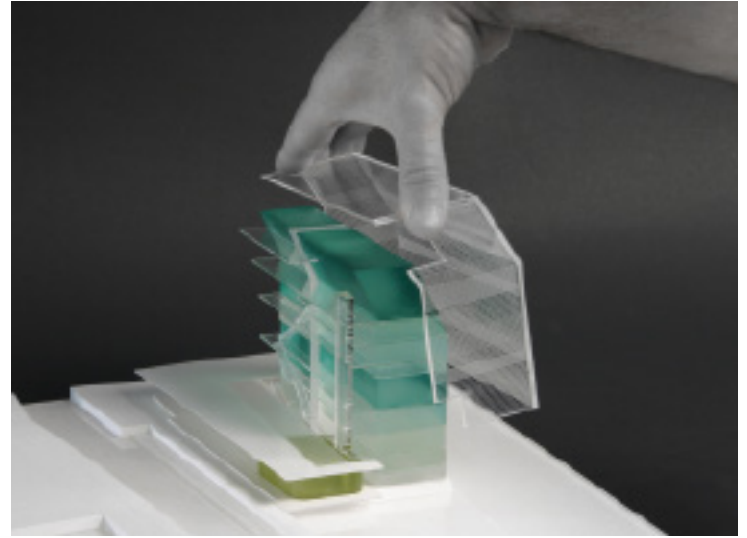
From then on, Estudio Herreros was immersed in a frantic design and construction process in which dialogue and teamwork were far more than just good intentions. The culture of top-down decision-making was discarded in favour of participation and speculative dialogue. This was facilitated by the fact that political discussion and citizen participation were already a common part of Norwegian culture.

All this was accompanied by a regular presence in the press, television, innumerable interviews, presentations and meetings of all kinds, in which the project was subjected to changes and adjustments that gradually determined the final scheme. The conditions in which architecture is practiced in Norway had a major effect on the scheme and the way it was communicated.

Estudio Herreros had to implement a work system in which participation in the public sphere was as important as

the work on the drawing board. It understood that decisions on the project were no longer taken exclusively in-house but often came out of meetings with many participants. The architects therefore had to learn to listen and explain instead of convincing and imposing, to show willingness not to consider the project as closed—in short, to become agents of a multiple conversation in which they did not always have the leading role. This process was repeated on three levels: the professional level of teamwork seeking the greatest coherence between disciplines; the social level in the dialogue with citizen stakeholders both in person and through the media or public presentations; and the political level, because all decisions ultimately had to be sanctioned by the municipal assembly, which can approve or cancel the project at any time of its development. In fact, in the last 50 years countless projects have been cancelled as a result of these processes.

Two events marked this process, which continued with great intensity until the beginning of the construction works in 2014. These were the “Platonian Banquets” organized in conjunction with the exhibition on the work of the firm held at the Rom architecture gallery in Oslo in 2011, and the torchlight parade of 2012 that called for the city to build the museum. The banquets were conceived as a series of talks on the infrastructural content of culture, the institutions and civil society. Without mentioning the case of the Munch Museum, the objective was to explain that the world was immersed in a dialogue on these issues, which culminated in the need to rewrite history and its memory and redefine the concepts of community, all with the intention of showing that the new Munch Museum was already part of that conversation. The torch parade, called by a series of citizens in favour of the construction of the museum, was part of an apolitical demonstration attended by citizens. Their destination was the Oslo mayor’s window, in front of which they requested the end of the talks and commencement of construction of the building. The same people that had put the project on hold by trying to submit it to an audit were satisfied and made this known through this public event.



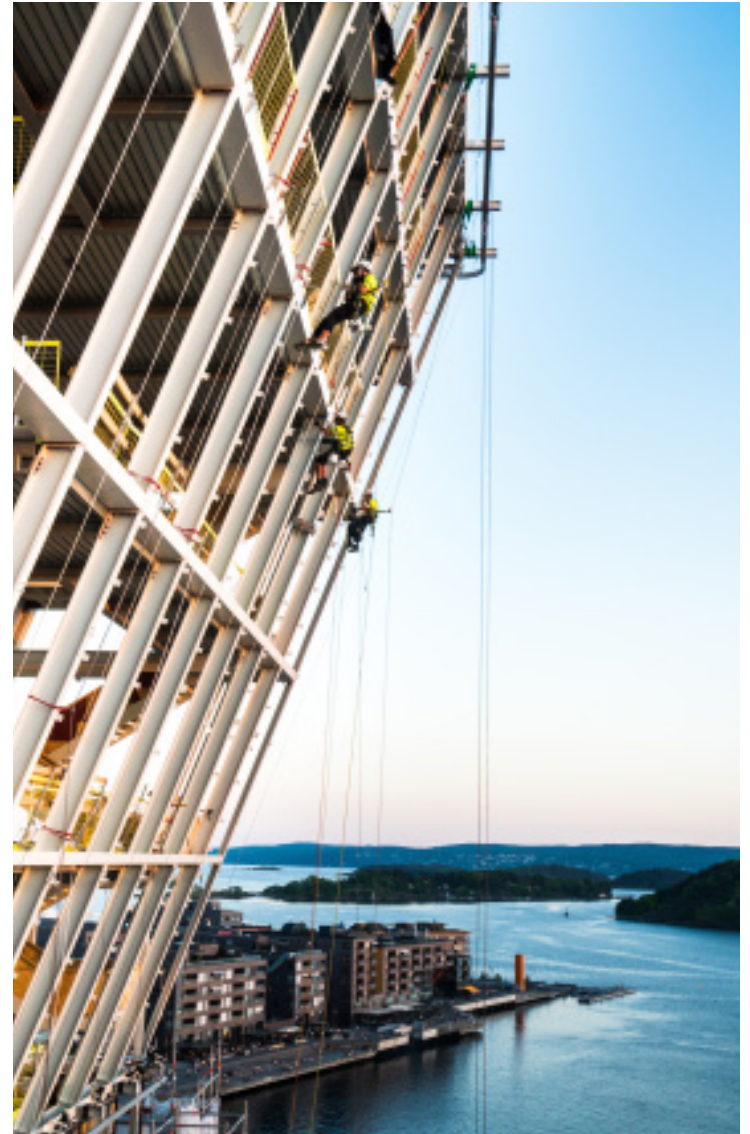
Conceptual model on the densities and transparencies of the building

The OSLO FJORD CITY urban project in which dwellings coexist with cultural institutions in a city for pedestrians and cyclists



© Einar Aslaksen

Crowning of the sliding formwork that raised the structural body of the building in 24 days © Tove Lailuten



The climbing brigade that built and currently maintains the museum's facade © Høyden AS - Thomas Horgen

CONSTRUCTION, an experimental environment

The construction of the Munch Museum was a technical achievement of great ambition with major social and political connotations, and a test bench of all the project phases. The architects took up the challenge set by the Norwegian government's Future Built programme of reducing the carbon footprint of buildings and the traceability of their components by 45% compared with conventional standards. The diversity of on-site trades created a melting pot of nationalities: Ecuadorian formworkers, Polish welders, Catalan carpenters, Swedish foremen, etc. The site was spattered with different languages and radio stations playing vallenato, oberek and rumba. A magical moment was the appearance of the climbers, a legion of young people in love with nature who joined the construction and maintenance of the building, merging the artificial with the natural and showing that the best solutions are not always the most technical ones.

The building was literally constructed on water. The container platform on which it was to be based was actually a landfill with a very poor loadbearing capacity that forced the basements to be eliminated and the building to be anchored to the bottom of the fjord using 40 m piles. The conception of the scheme separating the podium and the tower, and separating the tower into circulations (the dynamic museum) and exhibition rooms and workshops (the static museum) resulted in the coexistence of two structures, one built of recycled steel and light materials, and one built in concrete with low CO₂ emissivity. For the construction of the concrete body, a sliding formwork raised a volume of 65 x 20 x 45 m in height in 24 days, transposing to the architecture a technology associated with oil drilling just when the government was establishing a moratorium on extraction of oil from the North Pole.

The air conditioning systems follow a decentralized scheme based on small units distributed throughout the building, offering versatility in regulation and energy sav-



The MUNCH logo designed by NorthDesign in tune with the building's geometry

ings. The ideal air in the exhibition rooms is recirculated three times through less demanding rooms so that only the spaces containing art are thoroughly acclimatized. The water from the fjord provide the clean energy needed for the building and its entire environment through systems based on temperature difference. Glazing filled with a gas that increases its pressure with heat makes an important contribution to the thermal behaviour of the building, together with the very thick, high-efficiency insulation that controls the thermal inertia of the mass.

Twelve years of design and construction forced the initial sustainable construction plan to be updated to adapt to new trends to keep the building at the forefront of the fight against climate change. The sustainable system presented to the competition based on sophisticated conjunction of the architecture with the installations resulted in an exemplary case of the passive house model, in which environmental success depends on the building, its materials, its inertia and its capacity to regulate itself. The outer façade layer of the undulated perforated recycled aluminium plays an important role, offering protection from sunlight and reducing thermal gains while giving visitors an unprecedented experience of contemplating the city from inside the building. Visitors are thus able to make valuable connections between Munch's art and the history of Oslo, which is revealed in the upward movement of the visit.

CONTRIBUTORS, cross-disciplinary collaborations

Throughout the 12 years that were necessary to design and build the Munch Museum, the architects collaborated with guest professionals who enriched the project and the building with their various creations and works carried under the coordination of Estudio Herreros.

The system mobilized to generate these collaborations was competition between specialists based on specifications for each assignment, with Estudio Herreros sitting on the juries. One of these calls invited young Norwegian design-

ers to make the furniture for the public areas of the building, including the benches in the exhibition rooms. Every museum must have benches from which to contemplate the works, especially the larger ones, but Edvard Munch has some formats that are so monumental that they make these benches essential. The studio formed by Jonas Ravlo Stokke and Andreas Engesvik won the award and carried out a very delicate job of formal, material and chromatic integration of their works into the building.

Tracey Emin's *The Mother* won the invited competition to intervene on the small island at the mouth of the Aker-selva River that completes the scenic walk running along the west facade of the museum. This initiative had already been proposed by the architects in their original proposal when they expressed their desire to give up that part of the project in favour of an artistic intervention, which will now is also complemented by the landscape design by J&L Gibbons.

Museography is a significant speciality in a case like the one at hand, in which the intention is to be neutral with respect to the artistic content and to avoid any servitude of the curators to the architecture. Manthey Kula (Beate Hølmebakk and Per Tamsen) got the commission for designing the installation of the rooms for the permanent collection, which gives a strong spatial character to the exhibition display and being sufficiently versatile and ephemeral at the same time.

Out of a large group of candidates, the London-based creators of identities and brands North Design were commissioned to design the image and graphic treatment of the building, for which they proposed an open work system in syntony with the architecture. Their proposal to reduce the museum's name to "MUNCH", echoing the morphology of the building and the materials distilled to support their proposal, established a very satisfactory outcome that already has travelled around the world.

These projects within the main project have sufficient autonomy to identify their creators and demonstrate how collaboration between generations and fields of action and

between locals and foreigners can generate unexpected opportunities for activity. Dialogue comes to the frontlines to enable everything to coexist in a complex process that was intended to be experimental in the constructive process, but also in the working methods and in the role given to the protagonists sitting at their desks at some time.

In collaboration with:



Curator: Valentín Roma

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