BRANDSCAPES

Architecture in the Experience Economy

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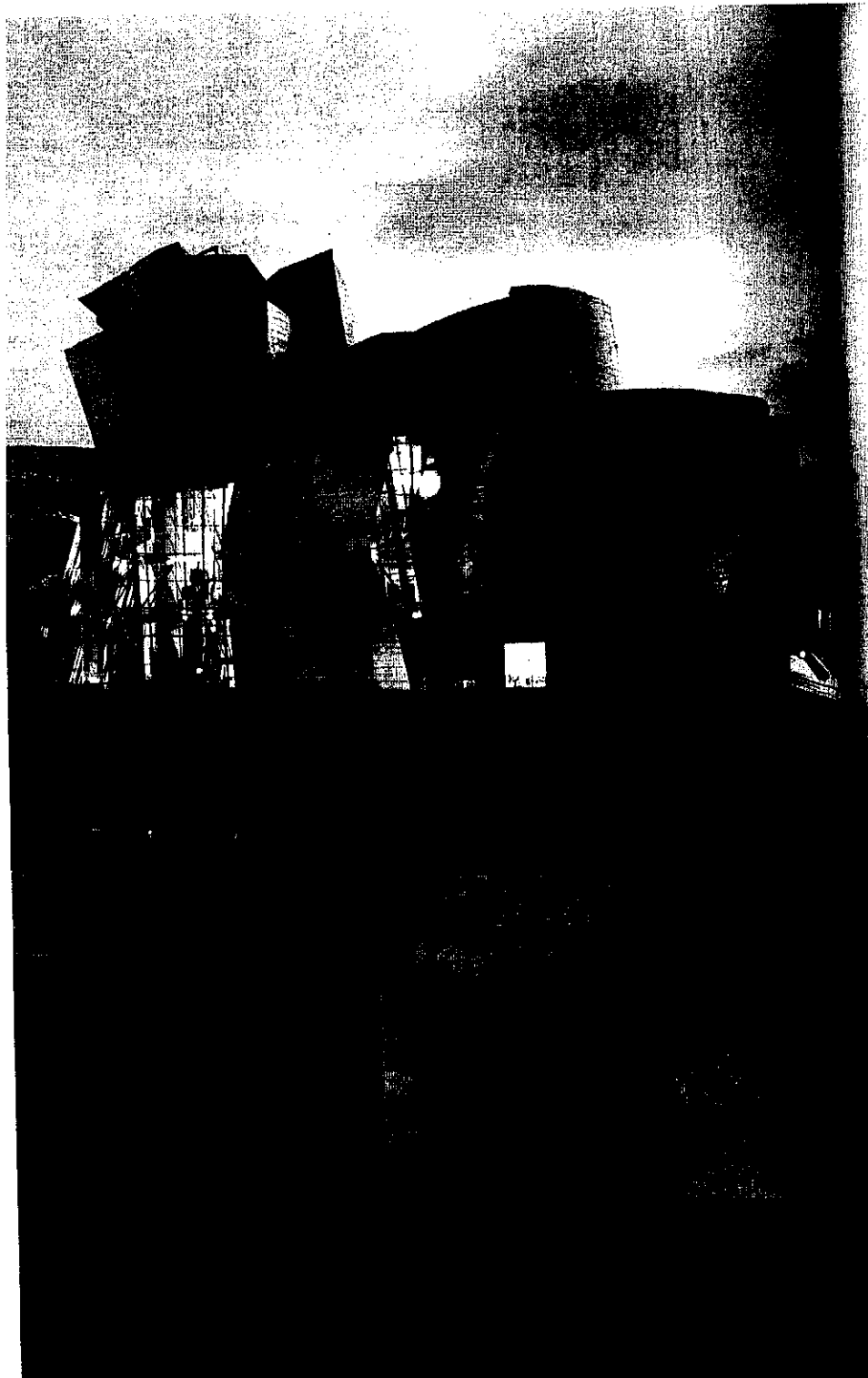


8 Beyond Bilbao

Beyond Bilbao. Artwork: XPEKT/Matthias Hollwich

8.1 Architecture as a Catalyst for Urban Renewal

Following the decline of its heavy industry and the shutdown of steelworks, Bilbao might have become a backward-looking city immersed in nostalgia. Instead, at a time when Seville was inaugurating Spain's first high-speed train and smartening itself up to celebrate its World's Fair, Barcelona was staging its Olympic Games, and Madrid was chosen as the Council of Europe's Cultural Capital of Europe, this port on the Atlantic coast of northern Spain decided to look to the future. Discarding its traditional image as a dismal city with nothing to offer but its financial status as the headquarters of Spain's leading banks, Bilbao embarked on a process of economic and cultural restructuring by employing architecture as a catalyst for urban renewal. With support from the European Union, the Spanish and Basque governments, the regional council, and private enterprise, a wide range of initiatives were launched to transform Bilbao into a city of culture and services. Within this process, Frank Gehry's extravagant design for the Guggenheim Museum played a central role, a bold initiative creating a ripple effect that

Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao, completed 1997. Architect: Frank Gehry, copyright 2004 FMGB Guggenheim Bilbao Museoa; original photograph: Erika Barahona Ede, courtesy of Erika Barahona Ede; artwork: XPEKT/ Matthias Hollwich.

changed the entire city from a declining industrial port into a flourishing tourist destination. Joseph Giovannini, architect and former critic of the *Los Angeles Herald Examiner,* explains the Bilbao effect as follows:

> The history of Bilbao, Spain, stretches back to medieval times, but it wasn't until Frank Gehry's Guggenheim Museum, with its façade of flowing titanium ribbons, that the Basque port on the Atlantic became internationally famous. The fame, however, was not just a serendipitous by-product of a startlingly original design, but the result of a conscious move on the part of city fathers to reposition Bilbao on the world stage. The rust belt city, Spain's Pittsburgh, needed a postcard image comparable to the Eiffel Tower and the Sydney Opera House to symbolize its emergence as a player on the chessboard of a united Europe and a globalized economy. It needed a monument. One building and $110 million later, Bilbao is now a contender as a world-class city, and many of the world's second- and third-tier cities have called Mr. Gehry's office, hoping for a comparable Cinderella transformation.[1]

The idea of using a museum as a catalyst for economic renewal and urban revitalization was conceived in 1991, when the Basque authorities contacted the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation with a proposal to take part in an extensive marketing campaign to revitalize Bilbao in particular and the Basque region in general. The trustees of the foundation welcomed the proposal, for they had approved a long-term development plan to create a number of satellite museums distributed throughout the world. In July 1992, after choosing site and architect, the Basque government and the Provincial Council set up a consortium in charge of the project, which shortly afterward appointed Juan Ignacio Vidarte as director general of the museum. Frank Gehry presented his initial design for the museum in 1993, and construction was completed four years later. In 1997, the museum opened its doors to the general public.[2]

Since the museum opened, it has attracted more visitors each year than the population of the city. The unusual architecture of the building was expected to attract 500,000 visitors to Bilbao the first year; instead, it brought 1.36 million visitors (and $160 million in revenue) to the former shipbuilding town that few had ever come to see before. According to data collected by the museum, 86 percent of the visitors said they wanted to come again. It has been such a success that, by the year 2000, the Basque regional government had more than recouped

its investment of 84 million euros in bringing the Guggenheim to Bilbao.[3] A total of 909,1444 visitors in 2004 proved that the museum and its dramatic architecture continue to be a major tourist attraction. Although the number of visitors has slightly decreased over the years, the Guggenheim Bilbao remains one of Spain's top tourist attractions and has established itself as one of the foremost architectural destinations of the century.[4] Gehry's museum became, according to Jon Azua, a director of the consulting firm Arthur D. Little in Bilbao, "the first symbol and main project that can move all the other projects and decisions to create a convincing vision of the country that we are."[5] Azua claimed that the museum has had an important psychological effect on a city struggling against the loss of its traditional heavy industries: "We recovered our self-esteem. Suddenly, Bilbainos feel that it is possible to reverse the city's trajectory of industrial decline."[6]

While the enormous publicity generated by Gehry's Guggenheim has persuasively countered Bilbao's image as a provincial port city, the most interesting aspect of the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao is its achievement of new, successful economic growth patterns. By successfully redefining the image of the city, the museum prompted a comprehensive urban renewal process—so much so that the transformation of Bilbao and its hinterland reads like a "who's who" of modern architecture. Downstream stands another cultural component of urban regeneration: the Euskalduna Jauregia Bilbao Conference and Music Center, designed by Madrid architects Federico Soriano and Dolores Palacios. In addition to new cultural venues, new transportation projects were also conceived for strategic impact. British architect Norman Foster designed a metro system with futuristic semicircular, fan-shaped entrances that were immediately dubbed *fosteritos* ("little Fosters") by the Bilbainos. Santiago Calatrava, one of Spain's leading architects, designed Bilbao's new airport as well as a delicate footbridge spanning the Nervión River, which runs through the city. Cesar Pelli, who designed New York's World Financial Center, created a master plan for the development of the riverbank and designed an iconic thirty-five-story office tower. There are also plans for a conventional center on the site of Bilbao's old steelworks; and the city's deserted docklands, part of which were reclaimed for the Guggenheim, are to be transformed into a new city park.

Overall, the city's newfound success lies in a combination of innovative cultural and commercial programs, world-class architecture, and the regeneration of older buildings and neighborhoods. With its international roster of star ar-

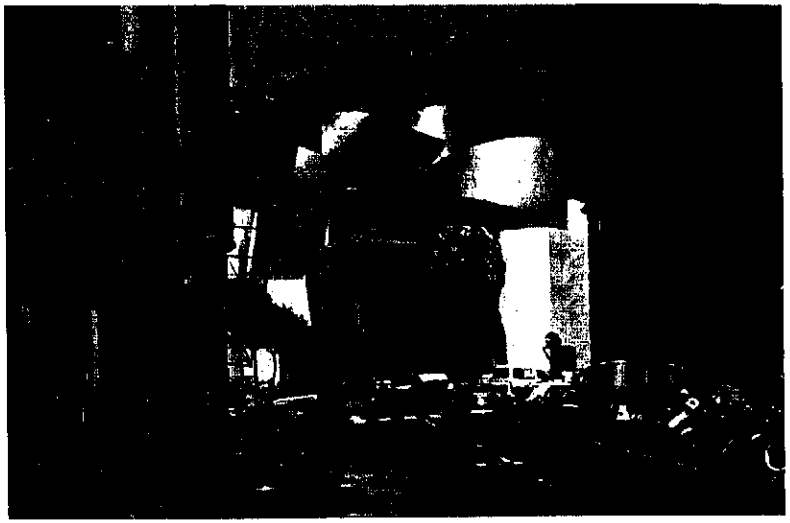
chitects, Bilbao has not only recast its economy but also telegraphed a clear message that the city has opened itself culturally to the world.[7]

8.2 Architecture as Brand Equity

The Bilbao provides a critical benchmark of architecture's potential to act as a brandscape in restoring the image of a city as well as in its capacity to spur economic patterns of growth and urban renewal. The building that Frank Gehry designed for Bilbao cannot be judged only as a museum but must first and foremost be evaluated as a marketing tool: by launching a new image for Bilbao as a cutting edge tourist destination, it also drastically changed the experience of the city for inhabitants, businesses, and visitors alike. In addition, it succeeded in creating a new personality for Bilbao that distinguished the city from the competition. As Hal Foster, professor of art and archaeology at Princeton University, commented in the *Los Angeles Times* in 2001:

> To make a big splash in the global pond of spectacle culture today, you have to have a big rock to drop, maybe as big as the Guggenheim Bilbao, and here an architect like Gehry, supported by clients like the Guggenheim and DG Bank, has an obvious advantage over artists in other media. Such clients are eager for brand equity in the global marketplace—in part, the Guggenheim has become brand equity, which it sells in turn to corporations and governments—and these conditions favor the architect who can deliver a building that will also circulate as a logo in the media. (Bilbao uses its Gehry museum literally as a logo: It is the first sign for the city you see on the road, and it has put Bilbao on the world tourist map.)[8]

Following Foster's argument, the Bilbao effect could be described as a powerful amalgamation of three ingredients—an emblematic icon, a global trademark, and a signature architect—each of which constitutes brand equity in its own right. The first factor is the emblematic architecture of Frank Gehry, whose sculptural scenography is a paradigm of contemporary image-making.[9] Aristotle, a born brander, believed that perception starts with the eye and that the greatest thing by far is to be a master of metaphor. According to Marty Neumeier, president of Neutron LLC, a San Francisco-based firm specializing in brand collaboration, visual associations triggered by the use of metaphors create the basis of



Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao. Architect: Frank Gehry, copyright 2004 FMGB Guggenheim Bilbao Museoa; photograph: Erika Barahona Ede, courtesy of Erika Barahona Ede.

brand icons. Since half of our brain is dedicated to the visual system, it would be a mistake to ignore the power of the icon, which has been pervasive throughout history as a marketing tool signifying greater cultural, political, and economic aspirations. Gehry's Guggenheim building has been so successful as an icon that it became synonymous with the newborn identity of the city, and has become known simply as "the Bilbao." Hence, function takes on a dual meaning in the context of city branding: new museum buildings must perform well as adequate repositories of art, and they are also expected to act as catalytic agents of urban transformation. The Bilbao reveals what we have come to expect of museums today: in addition to their cultural mission, they must be dramatic events. For architecture to become an urban marketing tool, it must provide an identity as an emblem that lends the city a new meaning as a place and must also offer a memorable experience to inhabitants and visitors alike. The Guggenheim fulfills both premises, simultaneously giving the city a new image and providing it with a dynamic interplay of effects that redefine its urban context, both visually and structurally. These effects are achieved in part by the unusual configuration of Gehry's buildings, which not only evoke Bilbao's proximity to the sea with their

metaphorical fluid shapes but also evoke the city's mountain range with their irregular massing that seems to culminate at various points. Using Renaissance planning techniques, Gehry situated the museum so that it can be seen from key points within the city proper. As a whole, Gehry's building is spectacular and eminently visible—a formal configuration set against the backdrop of the city that concurrently creates points of surprise and excitement at the local level. Viewed from afar, the Guggenheim Bilbao's village of forms resembles the mountains above it in the distance. As the visitor draws closer, it becomes clear that the undulating roofline is made of titanium, reflecting the natural setting of mountains and river. The subterranean entrance to the museum, which should be viewed from afar as well as near, is in direct alignment with a major artery, Alameda de Recalde, that bisects the city, ending at the Bilbao's main plaza. This location automatically transfers importance to the museum site by giving it visual primacy at the end of the vista.

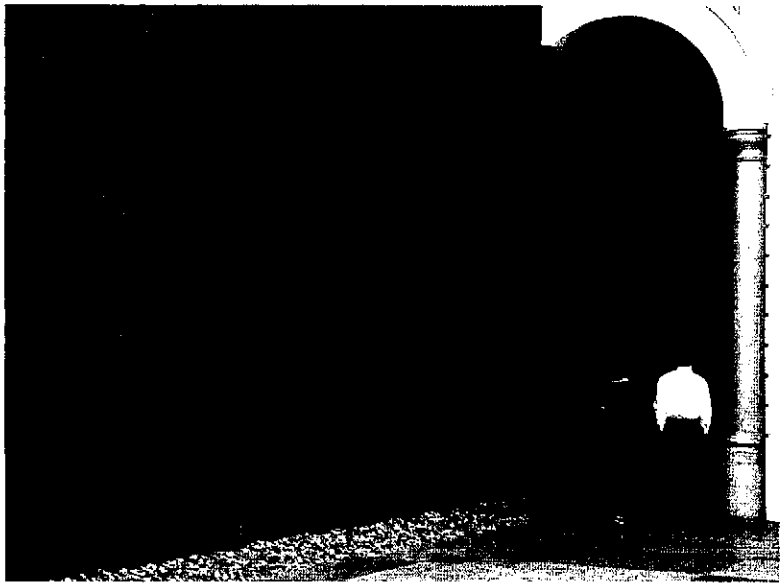
Although the Guggenheim Bilbao's exterior is what most people talk about, Gehry lavished as much care on the museum's interiors, striving to give visitors an experiential environment in which to look at art. People are led directly from the Calle Iparraguirre, one of the main streets bisecting the center of Bilbao diagonally, to the main entrance. A broad flight of stairs takes visitors down to the main museum hall and into the atrium, the center of the museum and one of the most idiosyncratic features of Gehry's design. From the atrium, which serves as a central gathering space, visitors can choose between nineteen galleries. Ten of these galleries are finished in stone and are characterized by a classical orthogonal look. Nine other, irregularly shaped galleries present contrast through their non-Cartesian geometries and the effective surface of the titanium. Through a complex interplay of differentiated volumetric distribution and perspectives, these galleries provoke a continued sense of anticipation, mystery, and disclosure. From the atrium, another flight of stairs guides visitors to the sculptural tower, which integrates the Puente de La Salve into the overall architectural scheme of the building and also provides a public access path into the center of the city. Throughout the interior of the building, Gehry works with imaginative metaphors: while the elevator well evokes the scales of a fish that leaps and spins, the plaster curves crowning the atrium suggest the molded ribbing of a drawing by Willem de Kooning, and the ramped walkways that climb the interior walls evoke a spiraling web of motorways that jot out to the individual galleries. "We followed the line that container and content were given a similar amount of energy. That's why we counted on Frank Gehry. If we wanted a white cube, we

wouldn't have gone to him," Vidarte has said. "The building not only draws people, it provides spaces which are unique to show art. . . . There was a program [of art] before there was a design, so he adapted the design to the program. . . . The program keeps changing, so every time people come they find a different experience, different art or the same art in a different context."[10]

By combining both iconographic and experiential value, the Bilbao Guggenheim has triggered an instant response among the public, the critics, and the media. Its silhouette has been a backdrop for numerous TV commercials, music videos, and fashion shows: Smashing Pumpkins launched one of their CDs there; Simple Minds used the gallery as a setting for their video clip "Glitterball"; and fashion designers Carolina Herrera and Paco Rabanne temporarily transformed the central atrium into a glamorous catwalk to present their collections. The opening scene of the James Bond movie *Tomorrow Never Dies* lands Bond in the city of Bilbao, through which the camera pans until it rests on the gleaming forms of the Guggenheim. The text "Bilbao, Spain" pops up on the screen conveying the idea that the place is now identified with the museum. "Bilbao has become a media event," American architect Peter Eisenman said in a lecture in 1998. He added, "The 'Bilbao Effect' has reminded people that architecture has the potential to elicit unchoreographed responses that reconnect the mind, the body, and the eye," arguing that architects should capture the "energy of the moment" in their designs.[11]

Whereas the museum's emblematic architecture gives an inimitable identity to the city, Guggenheim's established reputation as a widely recognized trademark was an essential factor in providing Bilbao with a global institutional status. With ten thousand works of art, the Guggenheim Foundation holds one of the world's leading private collections of modern and contemporary art. The foundation was set up in New York in 1937 to promote contemporary art and manage the collection belonging to a Swiss-born patron of the arts, Solomon R. Guggenheim. Currently, it operates five museums in the United States and Europe (in New York, Las Vegas, Venice, Bilbao, and Berlin) and has alliances with the State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg and the Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie (ZKM) in Karlsruhe, Germany.

Unlike most other cultural institutions, the Guggenheim Foundation has a long tradition of expressing its identity through remarkable architecture. It is renowned for hiring brand-name architects who emerged from an international avant-garde scene. The establishment of a corporate identity through architecture was spearheaded in 1943, when the foundation commissioned Frank Lloyd



Guggenheim Las Vegas, 2001. Architect: OMA/Rem Koolhaas; photograph: Maya Huber.

Wright to design the foundation's first New York museum on Fifth Avenue, which opened in 1958. Wright's spiral-shaped building was instantly recognized as a twentieth-century icon and since then has served as the institution's identifying logo. In 1976, the Guggenheim began expanding to become a global presence when it took over operation of the Peggy Guggenheim Collection, housed in an eighteenth-century palazzo located on the Grand Canal in Venice. Its expansion has included the opening of the Guggenheim SoHo, in downtown Manhattan (now closed), with interiors by Arata Isozaki; the Deutsche Guggenheim Berlin in 1997, designed by Richard Gluckman; Gehry's Guggenheim in Bilbao in 1997; and the construction of two museums in the Venetian Resort-Hotel-Casino in Las Vegas: the Hermitage-Guggenheim Museum and the Guggenheim Las Vegas (now closed), designed by Rem Koolhaas. The Guggenheim had also planned to build another museum in New York (the Gehry-designed "Manhattan Project" on the East River), but it came to a grinding halt after the attacks on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, and the resulting freeze of all tourist-related business expansion in New York. Furthermore, there

were plans for museums in Taichung, Taiwan (which completed a feasibility study, but the Taichung government may not have enough funds to proceed), and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (which was delayed by court injunction for some time, and eventually the Guggenheim decided not to go forward). The Guggenheim's most recent venture is a new branch planned in Guadalajara, Mexico, where the museum, with consulting firm McKinsey & Company, is undertaking a feasibility study to assess the enterprise's potential costs and benefits. So far, a jury empaneled by the Guggenheim Foundation has chosen Mexican firm Enrique Norten/TEN Arquitectos to develop a conceptual design. The other entrants in a limited competition for the commission were Ateliers Jean Nouvel (Paris) and New York–based Hani Rashid and Lise Anne Couture of Asymptote.

The key figure behind these enterprises is Thomas Krens, director of New York City's Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, who extended the foundation into an ever-expanding network of museums and exhibition centers, with the intention of creating the world's first global art institution. Rather than relying on touring exhibitions through other museums, Krens has built an international museum grid that has marketed the Guggenheim brand to a broader public and to cultural institutions around the world. Although the Guggenheim's headquarters is in New York, the deliberate geographic diversification helps it to save costs when mounting temporary exhibitions; at the same time, it is able to increase its income from corporate sponsorship and keep in circulation the works it owns. Many commentators have described the Guggenheim system as a "franchise" museum, since it operates on the basis of an established licensing system, selling its eminent reputation, art collection, and organizational know-how to locally based operators in various locations who finance the construction and operation of each new museum. The Guggenheim Bilbao is a good example of this institutional network. Whereas the museum is operated and financed by the city of Bilbao, most of its art, organization, institutional principles, and marketing are imported from the Guggenheim Foundation in New York. Thus, while the foundation's administrators created a new European venue to show their celebrated collection of modern and contemporary art, the project has been funded entirely by the Basques. The city authorities provided the land—a disused industrial site in the port district—the autonomous government and the provincial authorities came up with $154 million, and eighty private companies made a contribution of one kind or another. In return, the foundation put its collections at the museum's disposal, handles the management and administration, and organizes most of its exhibitions.

The third component of the museum's brand equity is the signature value of Frank Gehry, who by the time he designed Bilbao had long been established as an internationally renowned architect. In 2001, Hal Foster wrote, "For many people, Frank Gehry is not only our master architect but our master artist as well. Projects and prizes, books and exhibitions flow toward him, and he is often called a genius, without a blush of embarrassment."[12] Gehry's architecture is based on the media's newfound consciousness of architecture and the public's instant recognition of images, a changed world in which the difference between mass culture and high culture, good and bad taste, popular culture and the avant-garde has become almost irrelevant. In a culture of nobrow (where the commodification of culture is a source of status, not of contempt),[13] Gehry's sometimes controversial but always arresting body of work has variously been described as "refreshingly original and totally American" (Pritzker Prize jury), populist, and iconoclastic, making his work "a unique expression of contemporary consumer society and its ambivalent values."[14] Architecture critic Ada Louise Huxtable describes Gehry's work as follows:

> If there are many facets to Gehry's work, there are also several Gehrys. There is the media Gehry as defined and promoted by the press: the casual, laid back Californian whose work is touted as fashionably "pop" or "punk," who uses funny materials—chain link, exposed pipe, corrugated aluminum, utility-grade construction board—in a funky, easy, West Coast way. . . . And then there is the real Frank Gehry, who is all and none of this: an admirer of the quirky, the accidental and the absurd, tuned in to the transient nature of much contemporary culture, while he is deeply involved, personally and professionally, with the world of serious art and artists.[15]

Throughout his career, Foster notes, Gehry has moved back and forth between a "material-formal inventiveness and a Pop-imagistic obviousness"—sampling from a variety of cultural and commercial resources—which eventually led to the lavish "gestural aesthetic" of his recent projects. And gradually, "throughout the 1980s and '90s, Gehry went upscale in materials and techniques, clients and projects: from the improvised chain-link of [his house in] Santa Monica to the recherché titanium cladding of Bilbao, from unbuilt houses for local artist-friends to mega-institutions for multinational elites."[16] In 1989, Gehry won the most prestigious architecture award in the world, the Pritzker Prize, and since then his work has appeared in numerous American newspapers and nearly every architecture or design magazine. Today, the Internet has over four million entries for Gehry's name alone, signifying his eminence as a global brand-name in architecture.

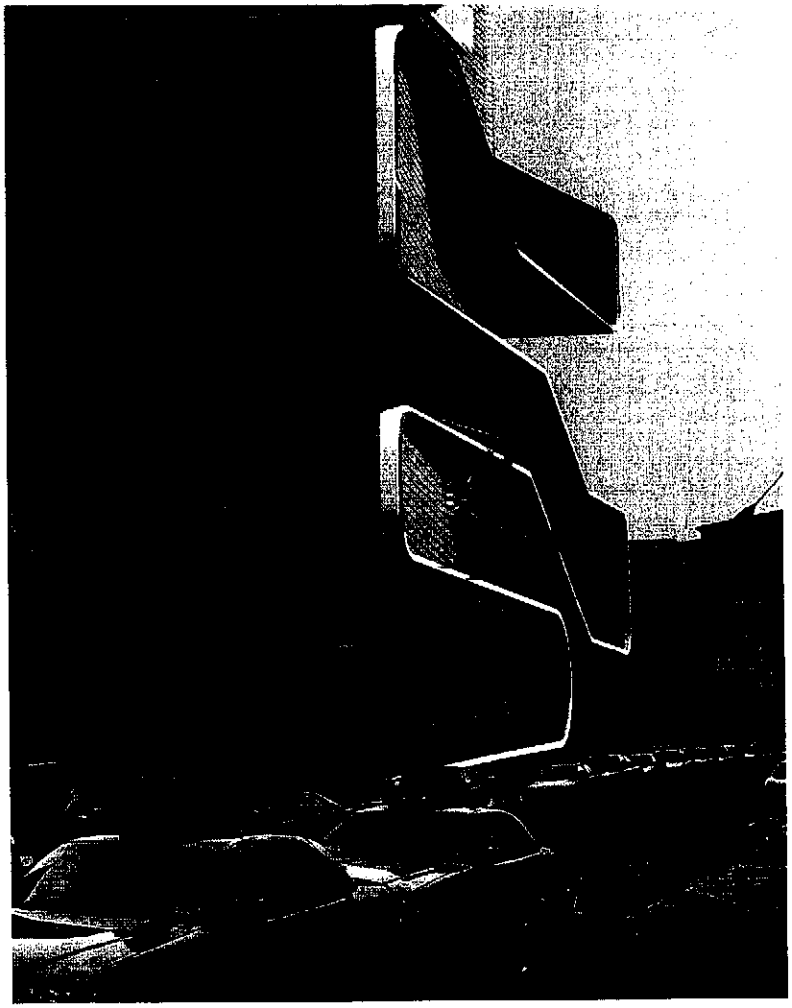
8.3 Architecture as Spectacle

Soon after Gehry's visually pyrotechnic Guggenheim Museum Bilbao opened its doors, its success ignited a building boom among art museums across the United States and beyond. "Since the opening of the Guggenheim in Bilbao in late 1997," Krens has said, "the interest in what has come to be known as the 'Bilbao effect' has grown exponentially."[17] By the year 2000, Gehry's and Krens's offices had received "more than sixty requests to participate in urban development and cultural infrastructure projects from institutions, cities, and regional governments all over the world."[18] There was praise for "bold, emphatically forward-looking" and "dazzling" buildings, for architecture that "takes your breath away" and produces "sweeping euphoria." The concept was simple: as long as a new building is enough of a spectacle, tourism will boom. The *New York Times Magazine* even devoted an issue ("Tomorrowland") to celebrating this effect, which Christopher Hawthorne, the architecture critic for the *Los Angeles Times,* has aptly called the "wow factor." But, according to Hawthorne, "it was Gehry himself who told one of the 'Tomorrowland' essayists that they were simply 'too late.' The trend toward architectural excess, he suggested, is now 'dead in the water.'"[19]

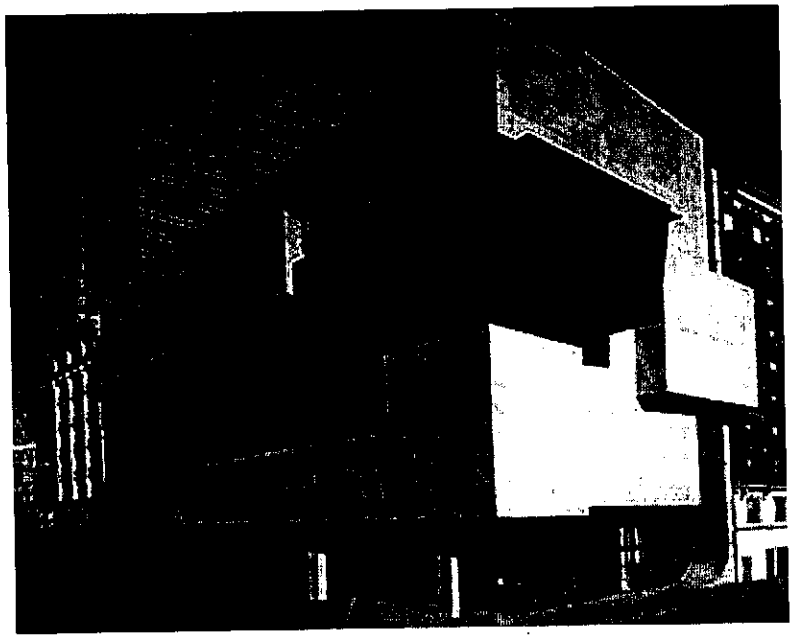
Yet, in the last decade, at least forty American art institutions announced, began, or finished additions or new buildings, and a substantial proportion of these involved architecture as spectacle in the hope of attracting crowds. Robert A. Ivy, editor in chief of *Architectural Record,* explains the phenomenon this way: "Gehry's Bilbao has conflated cultural, economic, and political interests, alerting all to what a dazzling object in the cityscape can accomplish."[20] According to Hawthorne, "even the biggest cities in the world were not able to resist the pull of what architecture critics have dubbed the 'Wow Factor.'"[21] In 2001, Elizabeth Diller and Ricardo Scofidio won a prestigious competition to design the new headquarters for Eyebeam, a center for art and technology on West Twenty-first Street in Chelsea, New York; and an extension to New York's Whitney Museum of American Art was planned by Rem Koolhaas the same year. Both projects soon came to a halt due to financial difficulties. In Hartford, Connecticut, the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, the oldest public art museum in the country,

asked UN Studio to plan an expansion in 2001. Philadelphia attempted to build an Alexander Calder Museum, to be designed by Japanese architect Tadao Ando, but the Calder family ultimately withdrew support. And in Boston, the Museum of Fine Arts, the Harvard University Art Museums, and the Institute of Contemporary Art have announced ambitious renovation and building plans. On the west coast, Bellevue, Washington, boasts a brand-new art museum by Steven Holl (2000), widely acclaimed for his recent Museum of Contemporary Art in Helsinki, while the Los Angeles County Museum of Art planned an extension with Rem Koolhaas (2001), which was later abandoned due to cost and subsequently redesigned by Renzo Piano, scheduled to open in 2007. Meanwhile, in 2001, Milwaukee introduced the first U.S. project by Spanish architect and engineer Santiago Calatrava, an extension of the Milwaukee Art Museum's existing building; and Cincinnati commissioned the first U.S. project by Zaha Hadid, a new building for the Contemporary Arts Center, which was inaugurated in 2003.[22] And there were two new U.S. museum projects completed in 2005: the redesigned de Young Museum in San Francisco and the expansion of the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, both designed in 2001 by Swiss architects Herzog & de Meuron, who are also known for converting a former power plant in London into the monumentally scaled Tate Modern, which opened in 2001.

While some of these projects have been abandoned due to today's fragile economy, they raise the crucial question of whether, how, and to what extent the Bilbao effect should and can be duplicated by using architecture as spectacle. "Suddenly, everybody wants a Guggenheim," remarked one Basque official in 2001. "But other cities will have to find their own projects; not copies of the Guggenheim," he said.[23] Despite attempts to emulate the Bilbao effect elsewhere in the world, very few new museums or galleries outside capital cities have succeeded in getting so many visitors. Anthony Giddens, director of the London School of Economics, who was in Bilbao on numerous occasions to hold seminars on urban regeneration, thinks the Guggenheim effect will be hard to reproduce. "Money and originality of design are not enough," he insists. "The Millennium Dome in London cost ten times as much as Bilbao's Guggenheim and has been a failure. You need many ingredients for big, emblematic projects to work, and one of the keys is the active support of local communities."[24] "The danger is that these buildings are seen in isolation," said Ricky Burdett, an architect who directs the London School of Economics cities program. "The Guggenheim did not fall from the sky. Bilbao's city authorities fought hard for it. It was part of a plan—and the result of a lot of thinking about the future of their city."[25] So



Eyebeam, New York, winning competition entry, 2002. Architects: Diller + Scofidio, copyright 2002 Diller + Scofidio.



Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati, 2001–2003. Architect: Zaha Hadid, courtesy of Zaha Hadid Architects.

where does this leave the promotional efforts of city planners? Joseph Konvitz, head of territorial development at the OECD, believes that local authorities are right to identify and promote new or undervalued assets. But he warns that culture, like any other economic activity, can be a victim of short-term thinking and that dozens of Guggenheims sprouting across the rust belts of Europe and the United States will not solve the problems of inner-city blight.[26]

Thus, in the wake of an era when cultural centers—as inflated imaged of capitalism—acquire the same corporate status as theme parks and sports complexes, the long-term lesson to be learned is not just simplistic mimicry of the "Guggenheim effect as spectacle" but the strategic and deliberate use of architecture as a catalyst to set off economic and social transformations. This, however, cannot be attained by a mindless repetition of a formula (that only worked once, anyway) but—as each city and each region has its own intricacies and circumstances—requires extensive knowledge of local potentialities and conditions. Therefore, it would be a great mistake to think that the Guggenheim effect is a generic recipe that can be duplicated without carefully analyzing the specific needs, conditions, and expectations of the community in question. Addressing this issue, Vidarte noted, "There is the criticism that we are a franchise. But in fact we are exactly the opposite. In a franchise the goal is to repeat. A McDonald's here or in Singapore tastes the same. That's the beauty of it, if that's what you want. But obviously the museum here is not [the Guggenheim in] New York. People don't want to see the same thing again. They want to have different and unique experiences."[27] The challenge lies in using architecture strategically as part of a local condition, rejecting aesthetic notions that are inherently disconnected from the particularities of place. It would be an error to think that Bilbao's success could be repeated by cloning its titanium ribbons (or its designer equivalent) in every culture. The danger of using branding in this literal way is that in paying homage to the original, it inevitably produces homogenization, a flattening of the cultural landscape. Brazilian philosopher, author, and literary critic Eduardo Portella once wrote:

> A cloned culture is an aborted culture, because when a culture ceases to be interdependent, it ceases to be a culture. Interaction is the hallmark of culture. And interaction leads to hybridity, not cloning. With cloning, the one is an exact copy of the other. With hybridity, the one and the other give birth to a new entity, which is different but also naturally retains the identity of its origins. Wherever it has occurred, cultural hybridity has sustained roots and forged new solidarities, which may be an antidote to exclusion.[28]

It remains crucial for architects to consider the latent potential of local institutions in local situations in order to create the multiplicity necessary to maintain a balance between a city's origin and its potential for growth. If we view architecture as a catalyst for realizing a city's shifting aspirations tied to a contemporary expression of its local identity, we need to separate architecture's strategic potential to act as an engine for urban renewal from its formal expression as spectacle. While architecture may quite naturally lean toward a spirit of innovation in prosperous times, in a recession people will opt for more conservative, less attention-getting architecture—for doing more with less. As a possible effect of recent recessions, Christopher Hawthorne observed in 2003, "The tide is turning toward a quieter, more modest, and even introverted brand of architecture.

Arthur & Yvonne Boyd Education Centre, Riversdale, New South Wales, Australia, 1996–1999. Architect: Glenn Murcutt, in collaboration with Wendy Lewin and Reg Lark; photograph: Anthony Browell.

Call it the Om Factor . . . a rhetorical reaction to oversized, over-exuberant architecture: a spare symbolism of quietude and restraint."[29] Symptomatic of this trend is the architecture of Australian architect Glenn Murcutt, who received the 2002 Pritzker Architecture Prize. Murcutt's work emanates from an ethos stressing environmentally sensitive design that responds to its surroundings and climate, and is scrupulously energy-conscious. In announcing the jury's choice, Thomas J. Pritzker, president of the Hyatt Foundation, called Murcutt "a stark contrast to most of the highly visible architects of the day—his works are not large scale, the materials he works with, such as corrugated iron, are quite ordinary, certainly not luxurious."[30] And Pritzker Prize jury chair J. Carter Brown added,

> Glenn Murcutt occupies a unique place in today's architectural firmament. In an age obsessed with celebrity, the glitz of our 'star architects,' backed by large staffs and copious public relations support, dominate the headlines. As a total contrast, our laureate works in a one-person office on the other side of the world from much of the architectural attention, yet has a waiting list of clients, so intent is he to give each project his personal best. He is an innovative architectural technician who is capable of turning his sensitivity to the environment and to locality into forthright, totally honest, non-showy works of art.[31]

This return to modesty, along with an ambition to produce a building commensurate with daily life instead of bigger than it, is commendable; however, the point is not to render a moral judgment on architectural aesthetics but to recognize architecture's ability to act as a catalyst for change within a wider social, economic, and political framework that quite naturally differs from place to place. What may work for one particular community at one particular time may never work for another in quite the same way. In all cases, however, architecture is defined by an inherent publicness and therefore is capable of unleashing enormous potential. It would be a great mistake to resort to fashionable statements and mindlessly follow a stylish call for an "architecture of subtlety," since "subtlety," depending on its definition, may not be suitable in every case for architecture to function as a catalyst for economic development. Whereas in Tokyo and in New York, diffidence may currently be all the rage, it may not yield sufficient visibility in places that need attention and opt for a more radical change. Evidently, a statement of introspection and delicacy would not have worked in Bilbao.

Rather than choose one over the other, which would reduce this argument to a formalist debate about style, architects, urban planners, and politicians should recognize architecture as an engine to reveal and accelerate a city's *inherent* potentials. Only by designing from the "inside out," and not (as seems to be the current fad) "from the outside in," can scenarios emerge that are particular and unique to one specific place. The outcome and expression may be sensational or modest, minimal or radical, depending on the political situation, resident communities, and economic feasibility. For this strategy to work, all the potential components of a given project must be considered together: "its cultural, commercial, and economic impacts; its capacity to influence patterns of behavior; its relationship to local traditions and existing cultural and political institutions; its resources and sources of support; its profitability and scale; its capacity to influence cultural history; and its long-term use and programming capability."[32] In this respect, we need to remember that architecture is not a one-dimensional image. As Krens has warned: "To under-emphasize the communicative potential of architecture, or to ignore specific interactions with cultures and geographies that are not our own, is to make a huge mistake."[33]