

OUTDOOR EXTENSION

OUTDOOR EXTENSIONS PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR RETREAT, IMPROVE WAYFINDING, AND EXPAND THE AVAILABLE SPACE FOR MUSEUM FUNCTIONS. IT CAN BE A SIMPLE VISUAL CONNECTION OR PROVIDE ACTUAL PHYSICAL ACCESS TO THE OUTSIDE.

IT IS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR A RANGE OF SENSORY EXPERIENCES.

CONCEPTUALLY, OUTDOOR EXTENSIONS CAN COMPLEMENT OR CONTRAST THE ADJOINING INDOOR SPACES.

THE ISSUES:

Museum fatigue, wayfinding, and the limitations of space are primary issues in museum design. Several design strategies incorporating outdoor extensions address these problems.

The phenomenon of museum fatigue and the related problem of wayfinding affect the visitors' overall experience of the museum. Losing contact with and orientation to the outside promotes a distortion in the perception of time, overextends the stay and hinders wayfinding within the museum.

How far have I come? How long has it been? Where am I now?

Orientation: reliance on signage and maps for navigating the labyrinth of a museum large or small adds unproductive complexity to the museum experience, increases the amount of information that must be processed, and adds to the original cost of the museum and to its maintenance.

Object Satiation and Physical Fatigue: maintaining a constant focal distance and attention for long periods fatigues the eyes and the brain. As punctuation to the written word and as frames around pictures form meaningful groups of information, so

can outdoor extensions provide a bracketing, a pacing that clarifies the input as it provides physical relief.

Pacing: It all runs together and my feet hurt.

Breaking up the museum experience into shorter events rather than gorging on the whole museum without interruption encourages sampling and short, repeat visits. Glimpses ahead of a wall opening promise a long view, or the knowledge of a special retreat can be a destination not unlike a small pilgrimage or a quest. Besides being a place of rest, the outdoor extension structures the particular museum experience into a path toward a goal through natural limits -- a pacing mechanism.

Never enough exhibition space: What do you do with the donkey? The blockbuster crowd?

The shift to contextual displays and large blockbusting temporary exhibits places a greater demand upon the available space. Besides the actual square footage given over to display, the degree of enclosure and possible crowding is increased. When the context can be borrowed from the outside, e.g. an exhibit about transportation overlooking a shipyard, and some of the activities can actually take place outside, the museum expands its available square footage at a lower cost.

Special showings and promotions can draw large crowds and may include items and activities that do not fit easily into the inside of a museum. Exploiting the out-of-doors, even seasonally, increases the capacity for large special groups, or the special display -- including the donkey.

Serving the Community: Where can you go on a rainy day to get out of the house?

Visiting a museum in foul weather -- whether hot or cold, rainy or snowy -- is an opportunity to get out of the confines of a stuffy office, a crowded classroom, a boring house -- more space, longer views, new experiences. So the museum with a climatically controlled "outside" provides a service to the community aside from its primary goal. Consider the advantages of a sheltered gross-motor play area. This high activity center will be in demand more in foul weather than fair.

The added advantage to sheltered, enclosed outdoor spaces is the dimension of control. Depending upon the nature of the museum, its contents, and its location, enclosing an outdoor space may be, in the long run, less costly than controlling an open one.

QUALITIES AND CHARACTERISTICS:

A primary quality of outdoor extensions is the visual connections between the inside and the outside. They can be reference points in the near and distant view, recognizable elements in the larger setting, or an interior courtyard that provides a physical, internal focal point for orientation with natural light.

Moments of Reflection: Outdoor extensions can provide opportunities for long moments of reflection or short breaks in a series of thoughts. The subsequent relief brought about from this shift in focus and environment is more than visual. Accessible outdoor spaces expand the total variety of experiences available. Shifting the route from inside to out is an easy way to change the temperature, humidity, lighting, aromas, textures, and sounds to provide outdoor rooms for retreat and rest.

Complementary Context: Many indoor activities and displays can be complimented by an immediate extension to the outside. Visually, it can give a depth to thematic displays and reinforce a context. Direct connection to an outdoor room expands the display area without an expensive addition and provides special qualities that the indoor space does not possess.

Whatever the purpose, outdoor extensions offer variety and change: views near and far; connections to the surrounding context, whether a natural landscape or the built environment; microclimates -- shade and sun, breezes and sounds, aromas; privacy, quiet, and retreat; and an important quality for children -- a gathering place; an exercising place -- a place to run and yell.

APPROACHES FOR DESIGN:

Outdoor extensions may take many different forms and provide a variety of opportunities to exploit the surrounding environment:

1. DISTANCE -- NEAR OR FAR:

The extension can be immediate to the building and nearby, or it can be very distant -- such as the view of the Golden Gate Bridge and the skyline of San Francisco from the restaurant retreat in the Lawrence Museum of Science in Berkeley.

2. CONTEXT -- ACTIVE OR PASSIVE:

Near outdoor extensions can be used for visual relief, a change from indoor lighting, close-up viewing, abstraction to reality. Or, it can be a place to use and experience -- activity courtyards adjoining art demonstration rooms as at the Ontario Place.

3. CONTENT -- MAN-MADE, BUILT OR NATURAL:

Most outdoor extensions contain natural elements -- trees, shrubs, grass, sand, water. This provides a contrast, a relief to the non-natural interiors. However, extensions can be man-made and still provide a respite -- the Japanese stone and gravel gardens, a view to a busy harbor, intense human activity.

4. CONCEPTUAL AND CONTEXTUAL CONNECTIVITY TO THE MUSEUM:

Outdoor extensions may contain displays and activities which are a part of a particular display or is integrated into the museum's primary path or an accessible secondary path.

5. INDOOR "OUTDOORS":

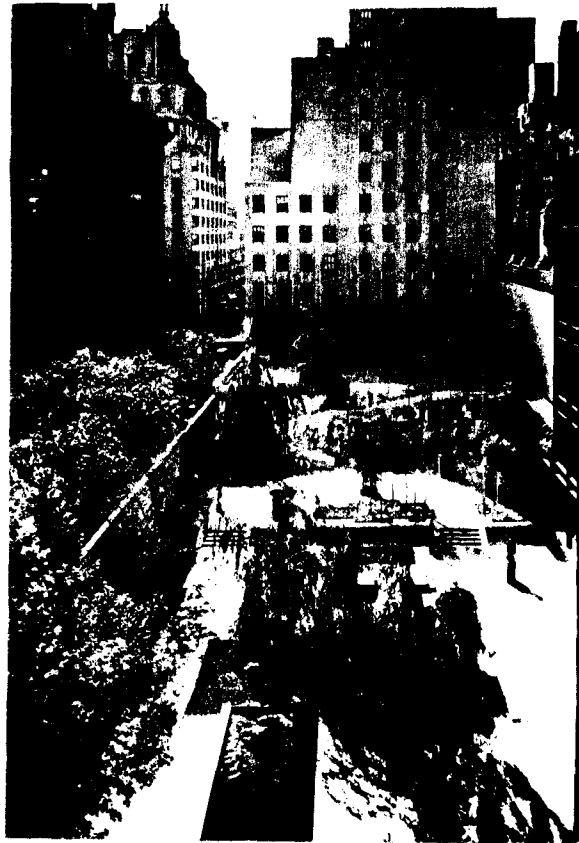
In places of extreme weather or situations that demand a controlled climate, sheltering a parklike environment under a roof within walls, allows year-round, daily use and an openness within the security of the museum.

The enclosed atrium of the Ford Foundation Building in New York is an example of a trend-setter in the design of contemporary public buildings. The civic value has been demonstrated by the many enclosed commercial malls throughout the United States and public buildings in Canada. The atria function as a filtering transition space between outside and inside, a meeting place, a retreat, and a central organizing space. This approach is particularly suitable when there is no pre-existing natural place for an outdoor extension.

EXAMPLES:

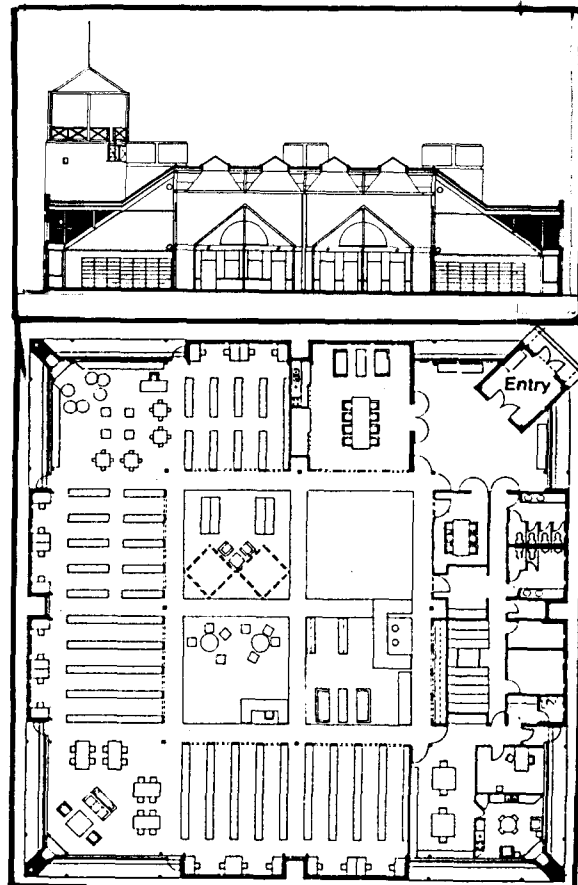
Courtyard
Museum of Modern Art, New York
Philip Johnson & Cesar Pelli
1953/1983

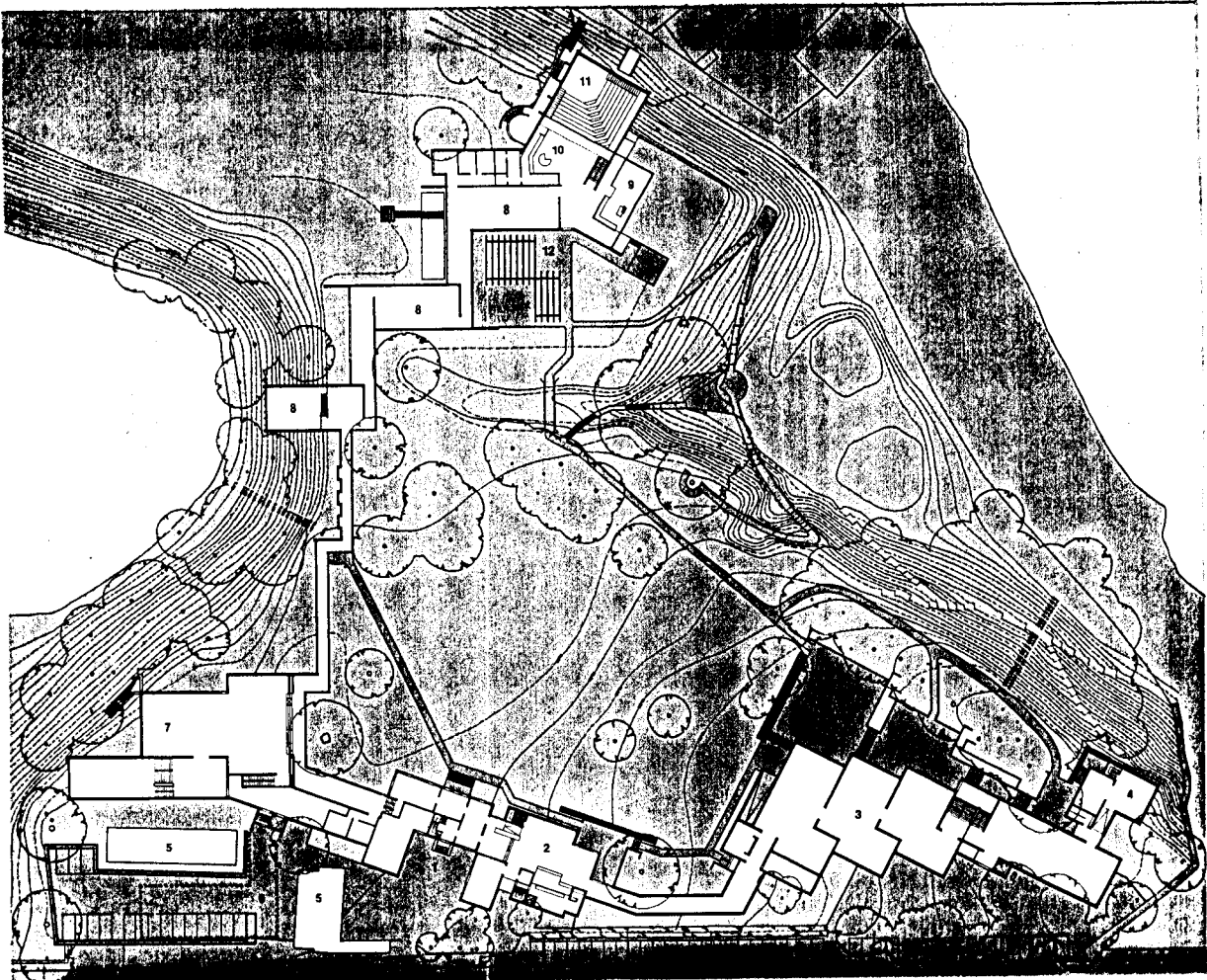
The outdoor sculpture garden doubles as a restaurant during spring and summer days. In the midst of Manhattan, the enclosed court is an oasis, a good retreat for the museum visitor and office workers on a lunch break.



Unionville Library
Markham, Ontario
Canada
Barton Myers Associates

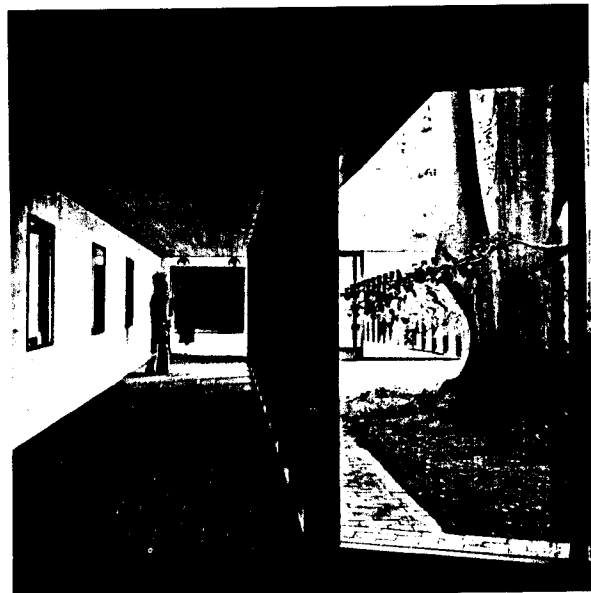
The interior, all-weather plaza combines climatic protection and urban planning. It functions as a central organizing space as well as an urban space.





Louisiana Museum
Humlebaer, Denmark
Jorgen Bo & Wilhelm Wohlert,
1958-1959

The dispersed, campus plan consists of several pavilions connected by enclosed walkways which overlook near and distant landscapes. The views outdoors provide reference points for orientation while the sheltered walkways are walkable retreats between pavilions.



Louisiana Museum

Denmark

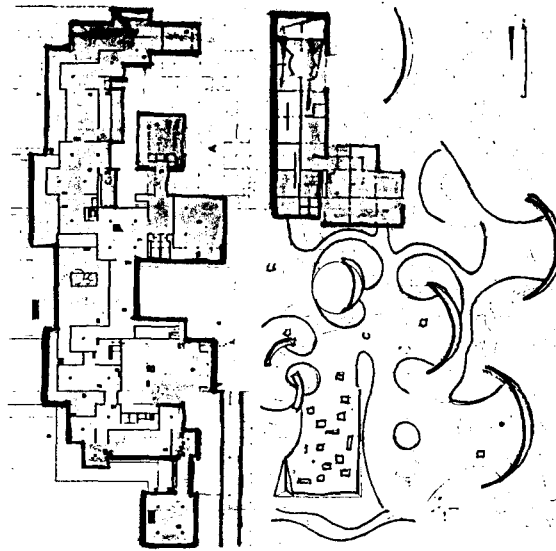
An individual gallery and intimate display areas offer walls of glass to the outdoors. A serene landscape of pond and magnificent trees -- a huge "framed painting" in its own right -- provide an intellectual release from the artwork displayed in the pavilion.



Billy Rose Sculpture Garden

Israel Museum, Jerusalem
Isamu Noguchi 1959-1964

An outdoor "room" that is integral to the path of the museum. It is an extension of the interior display area -- a pavilion without walls and roof, relying on nature as its context.



The Barnyard
Museum Anaretz,

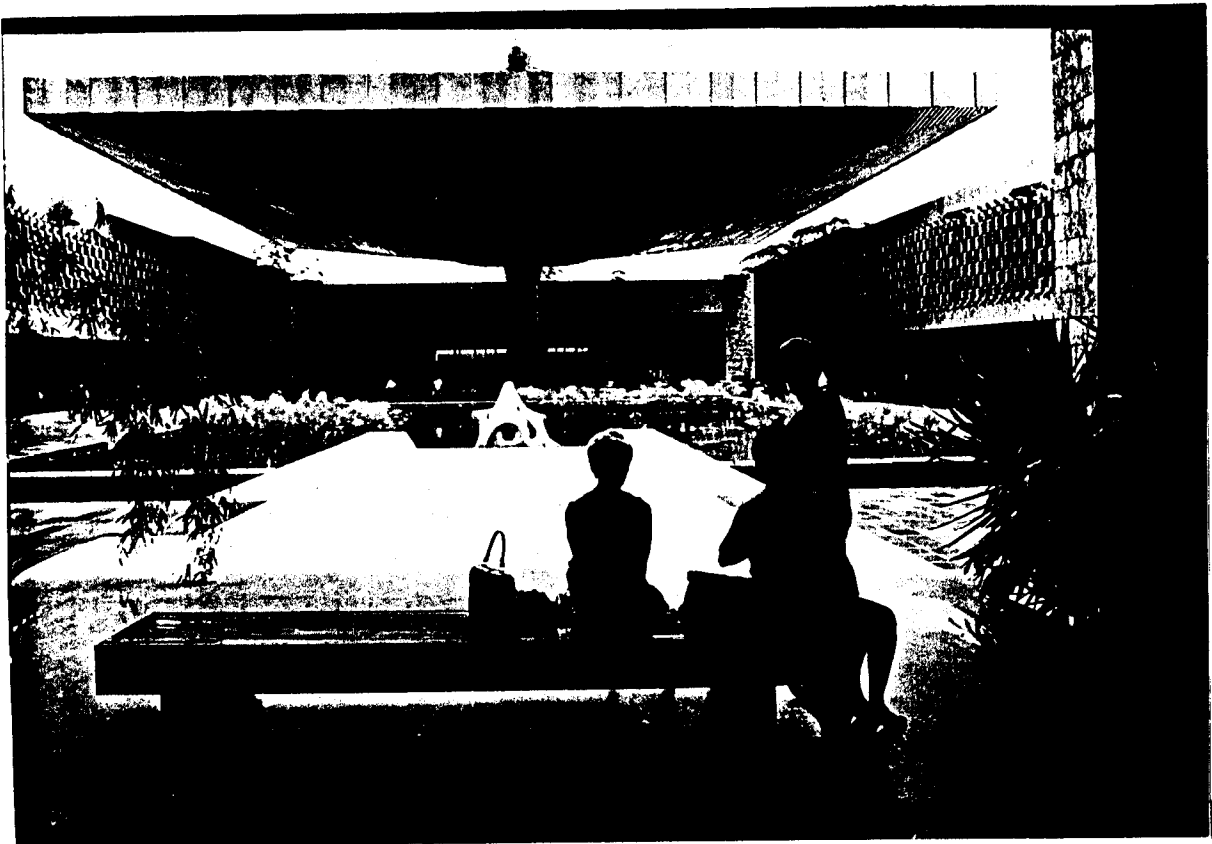
Tel Aviv

Students sitting on haystacks watch the process of treading the wheat with a threshing sledge pulled by a donkey. This area is a utilitarian outdoor room that provides continuity to the adjoining indoor exhibit by exploiting the favorable climate.



Museum of Anthropology
Mexico City, Mexico

The canopied courtyard serves as a central organizing space with microclimatic retreats. The large, dramatic fountain near the entrance serves as a focal point, delineates a space within the larger courtyard and modifies the climate of the courtyard dramatically -- physically and symbolically.



RELATED PRINCIPLES:

- * LARGE SPACES AND SMALL
- * POOLS OF LIGHT
- * RETREAT
- * ENTRY TRANSITION
- * FOCAL POINT