

# LANDMARK

A LANDMARK ATTRACTS ATTENTION AND ESTABLISHES A PHYSICAL OR SYMBOLIC REFERENCE POINT FOR THE MUSEUM EXPERIENCE. A LANDMARK CAN BE A PLACE, A BUILDING, OR AN OBJECT. IT IS IMAGEABLE, MEMORABLE, AND SIGNIFICANT.

## THE ISSUES:

Museums serve the public, but public usage of the museum determines to a large extent the survival of the facility. Larger "head-count" is a major concern and a legitimate goal for museums.

Although attracting visitors and receiving community and private support depends ultimately upon the quality and nature of the museum program, having a unique image increases its visibility, attractiveness, and "presence" in the community and beyond.

A museum with landmark qualities has also benefits that accrue from a positive self-image. The results of an internal pride are expressed in the attitude of the staff and radiate on the museum's activities.

The reputation of a museum, whether through its programs or through its physical image, can play a larger role for a neighborhood and a city. The design of the building can make the headlines and be a source of civic pride; however, the advantages of designing a building for a reputation alone can present big problems in balancing use with looks. When dealing in tradeoffs of the utilitarian and the aesthetical, in the long run, how well the building works in its entirety far outweighs the possible benefit of a unique form.

## QUALITIES AND CHARACTERISTICS:

Landmarks vary in their form and character. However, they achieve their status through some, or all of the following characteristics:

\* Physical prominence -- establishing its importance in the landscape and serving as a visual guide to attract attention and woo the uncommitted; dominant, unique, overwhelming, out of scale, incongruous -- a petunia in an onion patch.

\* Symbolic Imagery -- whether as an abstract, evocative form or in an important association with an historical, prehistorical, or current event.

The St. Louis Arch is an example of a symbolic design. The site of the Cannery Row Aquarium integrates historical relevance and a connection to nature.

\* Memorable and Distinct -- to aid in recall and separation from similar symbolic and concrete landmarks -- bold, aloof, touchable, contrasting its surroundings.

\* Compelling and Exciting -- stimulating the imagination by providing a connection to another time and place or a place not otherwise accessible; providing a connection to a visceral experience such as the image of a roller coaster that evokes a feeling of anticipation.

#### APPROACH FOR DESIGN:

The qualities of a landmark can be achieved through the design of the building's envelope, of an interior experience, or an object or event that is permanent or temporary, external or internal to the building:

##### 1. ONE-OF-A-KIND FORM:

The form of a building can make it noticeable and memorable. Although the materials and colors of the East Wing of the National Gallery of Art are the same as its neighbor, the spectacular form is identifiably unique and compels visitors to touch. The touch sets up an intimacy between visitor and building that transcends the formal nature of the museum's programs.

Pompidou Center in Paris is incongruent with its neighbors in every respect -- form, materials, colors and usage -- and it is indeed very noticeable.

## 2. SHIFT IN SCALE:

Something out of place, out of scale, bigger than life, or miniaturized catches the eye and focuses the imagination. Oversized objects and large things fascinate children and adults alike. At least within the Western culture there is a preoccupation with "the tallest" or "largest", or "most" of anything. The Empire State Building is known to the world primarily because of its height. It is clearly one of America's best landmarks.

Yet, not to be overlooked is the something small and special. The tiny filling station shaped like a Chinese pagoda can overwhelm the huge factories of its context.

## 3. SYMBOLIC IMAGE:

The building form, some of its elements, or a separate object that is associated with it can evoke emotions and create mental associations from its own special powerful imagery or those that are connected to traditions, folklore, a special cultural element.

The Shrine of the Book, at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem exhibits the remains of the Dead Sea Scrolls. The structure recalls the shape of the jar's cover in which the Scrolls were found. The form of the building is derived from an historical event. It gains its status through its contents and its imageability from its form and placement within the complex of pavilions.

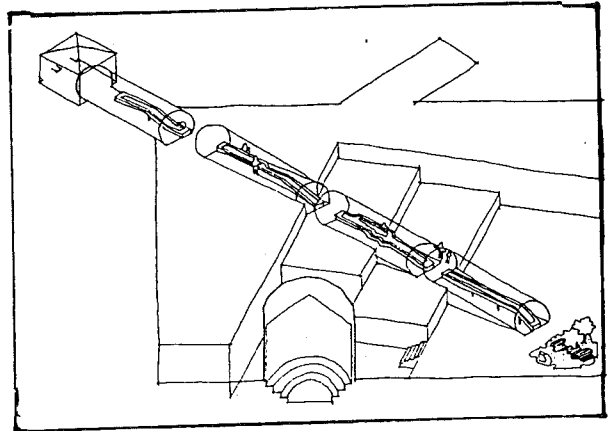
## 4. PLACEMENT:

Prominence can bestow landmark qualities upon a place or an object. And a landmark that is prominent serves as a visual guide.

EXAMPLES:

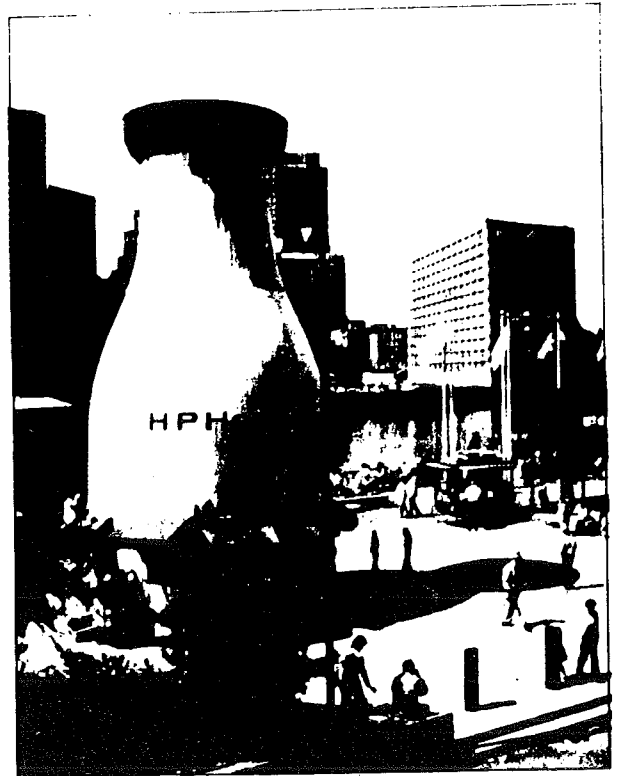
Brooklyn Children's Museum  
Hardy Holzman Pfeiffer Assoc. 1975

The novelty of the internal organization -- especially the unique entry sequence creates an unforgettable experience. A neon-lit, dark, corrugated steel culvert surrounds the circulation ramp. A stream of flowing water adds another sensational dimension.



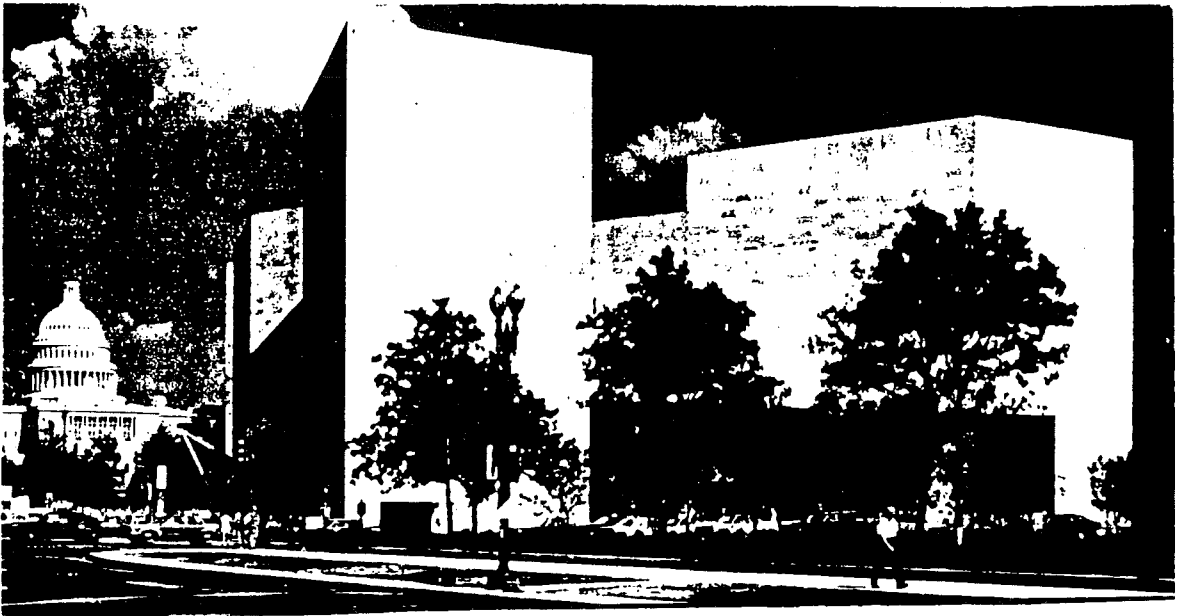
Boston Children's Museum  
Dyer/Brown and Associates 1979

The exaggerated scale and special character of the oversized milk bottle in front of the converted warehouse make it recognizable. It serves as a symbolic sign and a visual guide. Doubling as a snack bar makes it intimate -- related to the individual on the waterfront plaza.



Mona Lisa at the Louvre, Paris  
Leonardo da Vinci

Better known than the Louvre, this painting overshadows the building and institution which houses it. The La Gioconda unfailingly attracts hordes of visitors every year and clearly plays the role of a landmark.



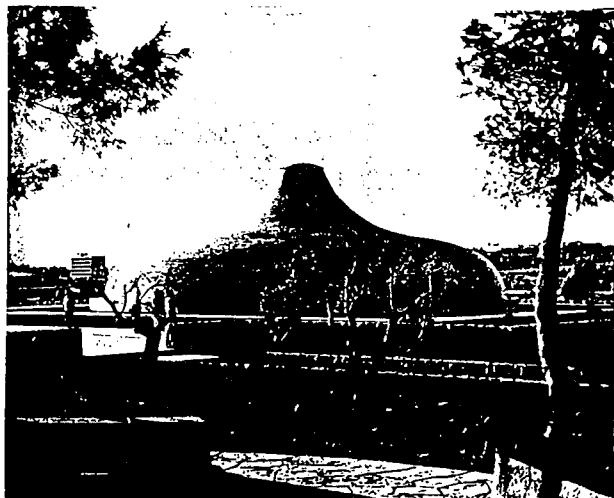
The East Wing  
National Gallery of Art  
Washington D.C. I.M. Pei 1978

The spectacular external and internal form of this building is powerful and thrilling to the touch. The form is supported by a most prominent location and the physical and conceptual connection to the well-known West Wing of the Gallery.

The Shrine of the Book  
The Israel Museum  
Kiesler & Bartos

Jerusalem  
1965

Both the contents and the unique form of this "building" give it a landmark status. It is a powerful symbol within the museum and beyond.



RELATED PRINCIPLES:

- \* A PREVIEW
- \* THE RIGHT LOCATION
- \* FOCAL POINT