

The Urbanized Museum

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Abstract

In the contemporary world of social change, accelerated mobility and plural identities, the creation of open and inclusive environments seems to be a recurrent aim at all levels from cities to buildings and to museums in particular. Through the first-hand study and analysis of current case studies, the paper will argue that museums engage space to express the contemporary museological concepts of accessibility, openness and inclusiveness, and through these to engage visitors in cross cultural informational experiences and social encounters. The spatial nature of the contemporary museum, it is proposed, points to a new concept of the museum, which often aims to be part of the city, both in the sense of how it connects to it and in being internally more like a city, and so a continuation of it.

Keywords: museum space; connectivity; inclusiveness; informational experience; socialization

Introduction

In the contemporary world of social and technological change, accelerated mobility and plural identities, the creation of open and inclusive environments seems to be a recurrent aim at all levels from cities to buildings and to museums in particular. At the urban scale, the contribution of spatial design to these aims is explicitly discussed, through for example its effect on the use of public space, and so on the quality of urban life (see for example Carmona *et al.* 2010; Leveratto *et al.* 2022). This paper will look at its less explored contribution at the level of the museum building, focusing on how the architectural and spatial nature of the contemporary museum affects the way it is experienced as a lively, inclusive and diverse environment.

Being always an expression of a specific time, museums have had a key role in establishing the values of 'a public sphere that has evolved from an aristocracy first to a nationalistic middle-class then, to the mass society today' (Basso Peressut 2012: 26) characterized by increasing complexity, and social and cultural heterogeneity. As symbolic institutions as well as iconic buildings of our times, they aspire to be spaces associated with social diversity and cultural innovation, as well as meeting places, the 'key and increasingly rare sites for a communal experience' (MacLeod 2021: 8).

Interestingly, museums are increasingly described spatially in urban terms and considered as an active part of the urban culture: architects argue that they seek to create 'the richness of urbanism' (Rem Koolhaas as cited in Gendall 2015: 266); architectural historians describe museums as 'testing the limits of the internal urbanism' (Colomina 2016: 80); curators define museum space as the 'covered street' (Serota 2012: 12); artists claim to display 'in part of a city' (Juan Muñoz 2001 as cited in Wagstaff 2012: 35) works contributing 'to new forms of community and sociability' (Frichot 2008: 32). What is distinctive about the spatial morphology of the city is that it leads to what we might think of as urban sociability. The city is made up of networks of linear, one-dimensional spaces, or street systems, which connect all parts of the city to all others; and periodic two-dimensional public spaces, squares or parks, which create local intensifications of activity and cross movement. Streets and squares generate random patterns of movement which bring different people together, regardless of social identity. Urban space, it is argued (Hillier 2014: 103), brings together what society differentiates. This

is in striking contrast to what we find in traditional museum space, where the movement of visitors is organized to reflect, in space, narratives about collections of objects.

How are these theoretical concepts about the museum's role and function given an architectural form in real museums? How can museums feel and work in an urban way? How do they engage space to express the contemporary museological concepts of accessibility, openness, inclusiveness and 'being in the world'? How, through these, do they engage visitors in cross cultural informational experiences and social encounters? These questions are investigated through the first-hand study and analysis of best practice museum cases. The sample includes museums of different scale, from various European countries (with the exception of the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa), with newly built or extended buildings (Tate Modern, London; ARoS Aarhus Kunstmuseum; Ashmolean Museum, Oxford; Museum aan de Stroom, Antwerp; Moesgaard Museum, Aarhus; Musée cantonal des Beaux-Arts, Museum of Contemporary Design and Applied Arts, and Museum for Photography, Lausanne; H.C. Andersen's House, Odense; Munch Museum, and National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design, Oslo; and National Archaeological Museum, Athens). To analyse the case studies spatially, I use analytical tools of architectural morphology that allow us to bring to the surface the role of architectural and spatial design, in combination with data from site visits and informal observations. Through their analysis, the paper shows how the spatial nature of the contemporary museum affects the way it is experienced as an inclusive, diverse and engaging environment, and in particular the way architectural space is organized to create connections: between the building and its immediate environment, manifesting its role as a continuation of the urban space; between the display and the visitor, so that 'meaning can be communicated and experience can be felt by audiences of every kind' (Morris 2006: 22); and between visitors, so that it works as a generative social space.

My spatial thesis is reflected in the structure of the paper that is organized around the spatial concepts of *connectivity* and *unpredictability*, which relate to the way the museum is activated as part of city space and works as social experience; and of the ideas of *spatial embodiment* and *situated meanings*, which relate to the emergence of new spatial typologies and concern its functioning as informational experience. Since a museum rarely represents only one spatial concept, the examination of the illustrative cases through a series of spatial themes allows us to show variations within the same concept. The final part of the paper brings together the findings and proposes that these developments seem to be inversions of the historic museum tradition, so much so that I will argue they point to a new concept of the museum, which often aims to be part of the city, both in the sense of how it connects to it, and in being internally more like a city, and so a continuation of it.

Connectivity

The idea of a close relationship, through spatial and visual links, between the museum and its immediate context, the city in particular, is not of course new. It dates back to the first building specifically designed for the purpose, the Altes Museum, Berlin (1823), and its upper floor loggia which offered a panoramic view of the urban context, a kind of collective space that linked the museum to the city (Basso Peressut 1999: 13). This relationship has developed over time, but what is striking today is the way the link between museum and context is evolving, taking a variety of forms and rendering the relationship more complex and richer.

Establishing continuity with the immediate environment and stressing the museum's permeability and approachability by multiple routes and entrances is not only a recurrent theme in the spatial design of museums but also a favourite expression of their openness, their integration into people's everyday life and their informality. Pioneering and influential from the point of view of this discussion is the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, in Kanazawa (by Kazuyo Sejima and Ryue Nishizawa of SANAA, 2004). Located on a site in the centre of the city, the museum takes the form of a low volume circular building, which, devoid of front or back, can be approached from the city from different directions and through several entrances. Its innovative architectural and spatial design was based on the architects' concept that the museum should be open to the city like a park, in the sense of 'allowing different kinds of people to be together in the same space at the same time' (Sejima, cited in Moreno

and Grinda 2007: 361). The circular form permits the creation of a continuous interior space and the use of glass walls, inside and out, allows visual connectivity between activities in the museum and the public realm, and enhances a sense of encounter, an awareness of visitors' co-presence, inside and outside the building. The idea of a seamless relation between the urban context and the museum's spatial structure as well as its collections also shapes the major new extension of the National Archaeological Museum, Athens, planned as part of an overall refurbishment by David Chipperfield Architects (2023). The extension is designed as a landscape of overlapping rooms with diagonal views, offering permeability and visibility to the objects displayed from the street level, while its roof becomes itself an extended green public space, the common ground between the city and the museum (Figure 1a).¹



Figure 1. National Archaeological Museum, Athens: extending the museum to the street (courtesy of © Filippo Bolognese Images, David Chipperfield Architects) (a); National Museum, Oslo: a view of the 'piazza' (photograph: author © Nasjonalmuseet) (b)

In addition to constructing connections to and from the city to facilitate movement, museums allow routes to pass through, rather than simply lead to the interior. The ARoS Aarhus Art Museum building (by Schmidt, Hammer Lassen Architects, 2004) is traversed by a 'street', an axial space which bridges two parts of the city and connects the entrance space of the museum to the network of streets outside, through ramps at both ends. Via the ramps the city is drawn into the museum (Schmidt 2004: 49). The interior ground floor 'street' is also reflected in the museum exterior by a glass incision that cuts through the compact red brick building along its whole height (Figure 2a). In contrast, in the Museum aan de Stroom, Antwerp, better known as MAS (by Neutelings Riedijk Architects, 2011), the 'street' is a vertical promenade that extends from the entrance to the tenth floor. It is made up of entirely transparent circulation spaces, which are separated from the 'black-box' display spaces and create the rising spiral 'MAS boulevard'. Visitors perceive changing views of the city surrounding the museum, with each floor altering the visual field by 90 degrees. The museum route represents a vertical 'exploration' of the city through movement.

As iconic buildings in the urban landscape, museums are seeking to be not only place-signifying but also place-making, in the sense of defining and engaging a series of well-used public spaces around them (Carmona *et al.* 2010) or creating urban spaces within the building, where visitors' paths converge and informal encounters occur. It is widely acknowledged that Tate Modern succeeded in 'making a very open place which can be activated by its users' (Vogt 2016: 125) by surrounding the museum with an informal landscape, comprising generous public spaces, a large, planted embankment and lawn areas. The idea was to transform the public space into a common ground, a natural space, where people like to go and, once they are there, are encouraged to explore what's going on inside the building. The creation of a new urban public space was also one of the guiding ideas in the new National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design in Oslo (by Kleihues + Schuwerk Gesellschaft von Architekten, 2022), which lies on the waterfront, on a site that was previously one of Oslo's train stations, and is still densely used by people coming from the boats and as a stopping point for trams. This creates a transition between the new area of the city and the older city centre. The

new building, together with the existing station buildings, frame a 'piazzetta' and work as an extension of the urban space (Figure 1b). It is indicative that it is described (as 'piazzetta') through its relation with the neighbouring piazza of the city hall, the Oslo Rådhus (Schuwerk 2017). In a more explicit way, the construction of urbanity was the starting point for the design of the Musée cantonal des Beaux-Arts (MCBA) (by Fabrizio Barozzi and Alberto Veiga, 2019) in Lausanne. The new building takes the place of the former locomotive shed, and its linear volume is framed, on the one side, by rails and, on the other, by an open public space, linked to the existing street pattern. In turn, this space is extended to the public esplanade created around another new museum building (by Manuel and Francisco Aires Mateus, 2022) that houses, on the upper level, the Museum of Contemporary Design and Applied Arts (mudac), and, on the lower level, the Museum for Photography (Photo Elysée). The two museums have a shared entrance as an open space, a natural extension of the esplanade outside. This synergistic combination of buildings and spaces aims to contribute to a sense of urban density by linking visitors' movement in and out of the museum to their paths within.

In all these ways, it is proposed, the interior spaces of the museum become part of the local network of urban streets and spaces, and, at the same time, the continuity of the physical level between outside and inside weakens the boundary between internalized public space and open urban space.

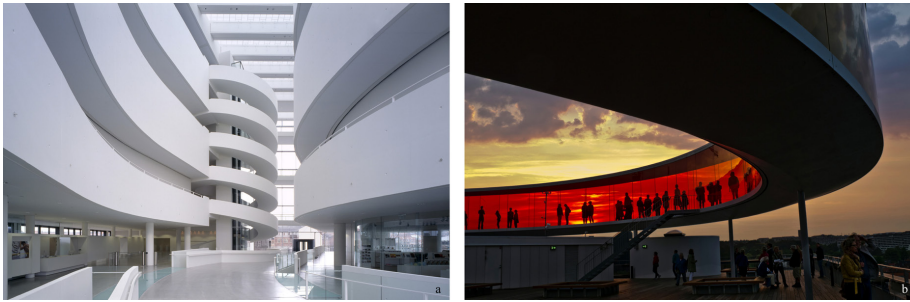


Figure 2. AROS Aarhus Art Museum: the cubic brick building with the vertical glass incision (Photograph: Adam Mørk, courtesy of © AROS Aarhus Art Museum) (a); on its roof, Olafur Eliasson's 'Your Rainbow Panorama' (Photograph: Ole Hein Pedersen, courtesy of © AROS Aarhus Art Museum) (b)

Unpredictability

Over and above linking their layout to local movement patterns, museums can also structure their own internal spaces so that they work like the street network of a city, introducing flexibility and unpredictability in the way space is used and encouraging random patterns of exploration. The layout of the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art (see above) is organized as a system of independent galleries forming the museum's core (in grey in Figure 3), and a network of public spaces, serving a variety of programmes, as an outer zone, with glazed interior courtyards between them. They are all arranged so that glass corridor-like linear spaces, connected at right angles, pass among them, creating lines of sight, some traversing the whole building, others being more localized. The 'urban' nature of this network facilitates orientation and allows visitors to explore and choose at will, actively discouraging a predetermined route and constantly enhancing visitors' awareness of each other. In contrast, the complex of buildings and spaces that make up the extended Tate Modern, London, do not form a system of geometrically street-like spaces, but construct an overall pattern which can be explored as a single topological network, in the manner of city space. The new pyramid building (Blavatnik Building, by Herzog and de Meuron, 2016) adapts and extends the previously inaccessible southern part of the power station, providing links with the existing building (Natalie Bell Building) on three levels (underground, first and fourth). Each building

is a single spatial sequence, and the only spaces that provide choice of routes are the two building entrances. But what significantly increases the degree of choice is the links on three levels that create interconnected rings, and allow the museum to be explored in different ways and the presence of people to be more random (Figure 4).

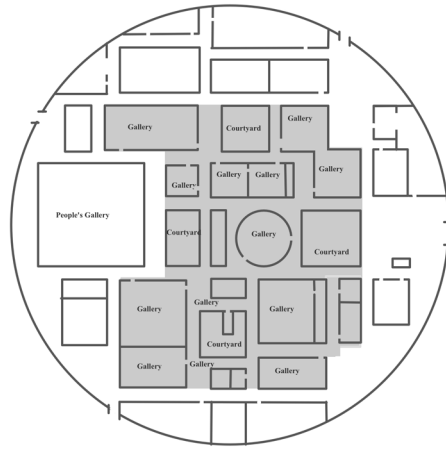


Figure 3. Spatial layout of the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa (based on the museum's floor plan)

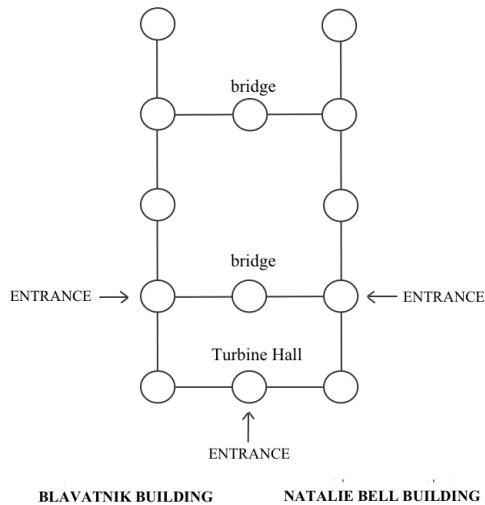


Figure 4. Schematic diagram of the internal structure of Tate Modern

This idea of internal organization in the style of urban space is further emphasized by two recurrent museum tendencies. On the one hand, 'inspired by the vibrant, open public spaces',²

museums increasingly include, in their functional programme, spaces for unplanned activities, either initiated by the museum (as in the case of the third level of the ARoS building, which is transformed into a modern community centre with spaces for informal events and meetings, workshops and film screenings) or by communities (as in the 'People's Gallery' in the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art). On the other hand, museums make the public spaces of the building accessible to audiences independently of the exhibition programme as well as of the museum's opening hours. The outer free zone of public spaces in the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art is an illustrative example, as is the top floor of the MAS, which is entirely dedicated to a panoramic view of the city and directly accessible from the urban level. 'The museum embraces the public as never before' (Chris Dercon cited in Dercon *et al.* 2015: 85) and aims to work as an open space for both museum visitors and urban explorers.

Displays can also extend beyond galleries and occupy the informal space of corridors and courtyards, expanding our sense of possibilities for experiencing art and enhancing the sense of unpredictability in the use of space. In 2006 the ARoS Aarhus Art Museum launched a competition for creating a permanent work of art on the roof of the building. The winning project, Olafur Eliasson's *Your Rainbow Panorama* (2011) (Figure 2b), is a circular walkway in glass in all the colours of the rainbow, creating intriguing contrasts: it is a space at the top the building with a circular shape conceived in relation to the square museum building, and a work of art that maintains its autonomy as an object; it is a space inside the museum as well as outside; it intensifies the view of the city and is visible from the city; and, while offering a collective sensory experience for visitors moving along the walkway and perceiving the surrounding urban landscape through changing colour zones, it transforms the museum into 'a beacon, visible throughout the city' and 'a compass in time and space' for its citizens, 'a lighthouse' (Eliasson 2014: 90-1).

By providing many options for being used and experienced, the museum layout can therefore feel like an urban space, explorable by a mix of people coming with different goals and interests, implying informality and the museum visit as a relaxed activity. In doing so, museum space becomes active in the structuring of social relationships over and above encounters in the public spaces. The museum layout, by shaping visitors' movement patterns, creates varying degrees of co-presence among visitors, and so affects the way they become aware of one another. In that sense, space generates its own form of community, a 'virtual community' based on mutual awareness, prior to active interaction (Hillier 1987, as cited in Tzortzi 2015). The more exploratory the visitors' movement pattern, the more random their pattern of encounter and the more variable their co-presence, rendering the whole experience intensely social.

Spatial embodiment

Beyond contributing to the experience of the museum as public space,³ open and informal, architectural and spatial design can provide the 'stage set' for new forms of curatorial representation, for 'practices geared towards breaking up settled interpretative models, stimulating new points of view, and encouraging different ways of creating culture' (Basso Peressut 2014: 156), including embodied forms of knowledge, immersive experiences and affective engagement. This, it is proposed, is another way in which the museum seeks to engage a wide audience of varying ages, abilities, interests and learning styles.

At an elementary level, museums seek to tell a bigger story, instead of a dominant art history. They extend the global reach of their collections beyond Europe and North America and create new patterns of connection by juxtaposing them spatially. Recently, both in the Centre Pompidou and in Tate Modern, the spatial arrangement of the permanent collections has been used to bring about alternative ways of looking at the history of art. In particular Tate Modern, opting for an experiential (rather than historical) arrangement, proposes an overview of twentieth-century art through broad themes (e.g. In the studio, Artist and Society, Materials and Objects, Performer and Participant) and a dialogue between past and present. One of the original aims in the creation of Tate Modern was 'to make difficult art popular', and, in this, it has been argued, 'innovative ways in which the Collection was and is displayed have also helped' (Smith 2005: 21). By bringing disparate objects, experiences and viewpoints together,

museum space works as a powerful connective space, and becomes an expression of the curatorial intention to show a more connected account of art. This approach also allows the possibility of multiple narratives to coexist and suggests alternative comparative contexts instead of a single way of seeing things.

Perhaps more interesting from a spatial point of view is the approach of the new Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford (2009) and its intention to use spatial design, and in particular visual relations, to express the interconnectedness of cultures, the theme of the display *Crossing Cultures*. The collections, while arranged broadly chronologically and by culture, are laid out in space in a way that leads the visitor to see intricate linkages between times, places and objects, reflecting the idea that cultures interact with and influence one another and share a connected history. The development of this approach is closely related to the spatial design of the building, characterized by the use of glass walls and bridges connecting galleries on adjoining floors and sections. The whole building is conceived around strong visual axes, so that, for example, the visitor can look through a window case of ceramics in the China gallery down to glazed tiles from the Islamic world and across to the Ceramics gallery, where lustre-ware and majolica show a different use of the same tin-glaze technology (Ashmolean Museum 2009: 24-5). The 'interlinking of gallery spaces and the carefully constructed views and vistas on and between floors', argues the Director, Dr Christopher Brown, 'are a powerful manifestation of the [display] theme', so that 'the relationships between galleries are often as important as the galleries themselves' (Ashmolean Museum 2009: 1).

At a deeper level, the design of museum space is used to complement the more rational, information-based content of the display with additional modes of understanding, creating responses which are embodied, sensory and affective. Two spatially innovative examples are the Moesgaard Museum, Aarhus (by Henning Larsen Architects, 2014) and H.C. Andersen's House, Odense (by Kengo Kuma & Associates, 2021). Both reduce textual information and propose instead a variety of modes of embodied non-verbal communication, including architecture and its sensory qualities, as well as the innovative use of technology. In Moesgaard, the display section devoted to the Bronze Age and Iron Age is an open space, organized on three levels as a series of experiences which are spatially separate, but at the same time intricately interwoven with each other. The complex as a whole is essentially an open space divided into sub-spaces, often characterized by curved geometries. A narrative is constructed as each experience builds on the previous one conceptually: the worship of moon and sun at the upper level; the cultural significance of bogs and examples of offerings in bogs, from rings to animals, at the ground level; the human sacrifice, the Grauballe Man, one of the world's best preserved bog bodies and the museum's highlight, at the lower level. Narrative synergies between spaces and levels are experienced through the carefully constructed visual connections between pairs of levels, and further supported by the spatial design. The darkened spaces, the highlighted objects, the uneven floor that gives the sense of walking in a bog, the sounds in combination with the projection of short, animated films on the walls of the building, activated by the visitor, all constitute an emotive atmosphere for the viewing of exhibits (Pallasmaa 2014: 246) (Figure 5a).

Diametrically different in terms of spatial design is H.C. Andersen's House. Seemingly complex, its layout is in effect a continuous ring, a spiraling and descending loop, leading from the highest to the lowest point where a final gallery and a staircase lead back to the starting point. The main galleries are organized as a set of distinct spaces opening onto a connecting corridor, which offers views to the garden outside. By not walking through spaces, but in and out of them, it is as if the visitor has to make detours from the main route to view the displays as things to be discovered. The discrete display units, which are loosely linked under a chronological thread, focus on the hearing of audio narratives, sounds and music, in combination with multi-layered projections of 'immersive' images, animations and graphics, creating a series of sensory environments that substitute for the museum objects (Figure 5b).

So in these two cases, the museum, by privileging the lived over the conceptual or analytic, engages visitors and allows them to use their own resources for experiencing the displays. This meaning making through sensorial and embodied experiences can potentially lead to what has been considered (Witcomb 2010: 41) as a greater degree of understanding through knowledge that is felt as well as understood.



Figure 5. Moesgaard Museum, Aarhus: view of the darkened main space with animated films projected on the walls of the building (Photograph: Medieafdelingen, courtesy of © Moesgaard Museum) (a); H.C. Andersen's House, Odense: the corridor onto which the rooms open (Photograph: author © H.C. Andersen's House) (b)



Figure 6. View of Pipilotti Rist's installation specially created for *The 9 Spaces*, ARoS (Photograph: author © ARoS Aarhus Art Museum) (a); Munch Museum, Oslo: view of the 'Satyricon & Munch' exhibition space (Photograph: author © Munchmuseet)

Situated meanings

Closely related to the tendency for 'sensory forms of knowledge' (Witcomb 2015: 322) is the contemporary focus on subjectivity and experience, which also helps to make the case for openness and inclusion. New forms of art – for example in the fields of video art, light installation and interactive art – deal with experiential processes, where time is a key dimension in viewing and emphasis is placed on engaging visitors with their surroundings in ways that allow for differences in individual perceptions. The works, by being based on a sense of immersion, creating intense and complex experiences of light and colour, and amplifying visitors' physical reality and sensory presence, mark a shift in engagement from 'looking at' to 'being in', and a transformation from the 'viewer' to the 'navigator' (Dyson 2009: 2). So museum space is required to display works where the main part of those works lies in how they are experienced; in effect, the space is required to exhibit something immaterial.⁴ As suggested by the spatial layout of the Moesgaard Museum and as proposed elsewhere in relation to the spatial culture of performing arts museums (Tzortzi and Hillier 2016), this phenomenon seems to interact with emerging spatial typologies, and in particular with the growing emphasis on spatial complexes favouring single enclosed spaces (spaces that are destinations only) to accommodate lived experience, rather than layouts made up of sequence spaces (spaces that are destinations but also passages to other spaces).

The Tanks in Tate Modern (the former oil tanks, enormous concrete cylinders that still retain their industrial feel) and *The 9 Spaces* in the ARoS Aarhus Art Museum (planned and specially designed from the outset of the building's creation) can be seen as two indicative

examples. A key feature of Tate Modern is that it offers different spatial constellations: classical enfilades of galleries in the existing building; shorter spatial systems with dead-ends and spaces standing alone, which are 'likely to encourage more random patterns of exploration', in the new building; and self-contained spaces in the underground circular spaces, the 'Tanks', dedicated to new art. In a comparable way, ARoS dedicates its underground spaces to large-scale installations, projected images or performance work, in addition to the more 'conventional' layout that takes the form of a sequence of spaces supporting a curatorial narrative of some kind. In *The 9 Spaces*, each work tends to take over an entire space and immerse visitors in a different atmosphere, as in the case of Pipilotti Rist's installation, *Dawn Hours in the Neighbour's House* (2007), created especially for one of *The 9 Spaces*: through video, sound and light it makes visitors experience 24 hours in eight minutes (Figure 6a). Significantly, in both museums, the underground galleries are closed, self-contained spaces, open to a common corridor or space, governing access, and characterized by lack of hierarchy.

A different kind of immersive experience was created in the opening exhibition *Satyricon & Munch* in the new Munch Museum, Oslo (by Estudio Herreros, 2021). The museum proposed a fresh view of the work of Edvard Munch by commissioning the Norwegian black metal band *Satyricon* to select, in collaboration with the curators, works from the collection, and compose a piece of music in response (2022). The selected paintings and drawings were displayed in a large, closed and darkened space, which gave the display its immersive and experiential dimension (Figure 6b). As in the two previous cases, the distinct enclosed spaces intensify the sense of containment and enclosure, enveloping visitors in their embrace, and distance themselves from through-movement by providing one permeability link to the other spaces of the complex. These spatial properties can be seen as offering preconditions that facilitate the assimilation and understanding of the intense experiences these spaces accommodate. Additionally, all these cases reflect the contemporary tendency for the diversity of spatial environments and the co-existence of shorter sequences of display spaces offering different narratives, perspectives and experiences.⁵

Discussion and conclusion

It is clear that as the role of museums in society changes, together with museological concepts and curatorial approaches, museum architecture and spatial design are changing with them. The examples discussed in the paper illuminate some of the different ways in which museum architecture can engage space to express the inclusive museum. Through such architectural devices as spatial and visual connections to and from the city, social spaces and urban layouts within and adjacent to the museum, it can create museum approachability and openness, shape an informal environment that encourages random patterns of exploration, and foster visitors' sociability. Museum architecture can also provide the intelligible framework to facilitate choices and give visitors the power to select among different narratives, perspectives and types of experience that co-exist in parallel. It can communicate the idea of cultural connectivity; provide the stage set and the means for experimenting with novel ways of presenting art and cultural heritage and new forms of visitor engagement; and generate situated meanings and experiences created for that specific time and space, which aspire to bring to the museum interior the urban culture with its diversity and experiential dissonance, and so allow for inclusiveness.

These spatial design ideas seem to be inversions of the historical idea of the museum, for example in the sense that, traditionally, the museum was a building that stood out as distinct from the city, both spatially, through such devices as areas separating it from the main urban fabric, changes of level for entrances and lack of visual links to and from the interior, and functionally, by proposing structured experiences with no continuity with or resemblance to what is offered by the surrounding city. In contrast, the cases discussed above point to a new concept of the museum, which aims to be part of the city, both in the sense of how it connects to it and in being internally more like a city, and so a continuation of it. This idea of the museum as city seems also to stand for a certain type of informational experience created by the contemporary museum. Rather than proposing 'a fixed view of culture' and 'monolithic linear narratives', it seeks, like connected and explorable urban space, to 'encompass a

variety of view points' (Gale 2012: 29). At the same time, by rendering dominant collective and shared experiences, it emphasizes the role of the museum as a public building, a social space. The social experience of the contemporary museum becomes richer in the manner of city space. As was said of Tate Modern (Holden 2005: 35),

the people visiting it, and the works of art combine in an interesting dance of value creation: people are moved by what they see and hear in the galleries, while the very fact that there are so many visitors itself contributes to the experience.

We can then suggest that the emerging inclusive transformations of the museum and its context, from the point of view of the relation between spatial design, informational experience and socialization, form part of the new concept of the museum: open to the city and connected to people, that creates perspectives and experiences, rather than transmits specific messages, and seeks to bring people together in a shared engagement with resources and activities and in an informal network of co-presence, both aspects of the experience of diversity and liveliness that characterize urban life – in other words, the museum as part of the city, or the *urbanized museum*.

Notes

- ¹ Ulf Meyer, 'The Temple and the Socle', Word-Architects, 22 February 2023. <https://www.world-architects.com/en/architecture-news/insight/the-temple-and-the-socle>, accessed 3 July 2023.
- ² Tate Modern, 'Future Medina, Tate Exchange, November 2016'. <https://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/future-medina>, accessed 3 July 2023.
- ³ An alternative reading of the museum as a public space is proposed by Eckersley (2022). She investigates how the museum can act as a *dialogical public space*, as a space where ideas and opposing views of the world are discussed, and 'contrasting and varied concepts of belonging negotiated and tried out' (Eckersley 2022: 17). Significantly, for the museum as a public space of belonging, 'the feeling of togetherness and cooperation that a museum radiates', it is argued, 'is important' (Eckersley 2022: 35).
- ⁴ For a discussion on museum design, and in particular new projects such as the Munch Museum, from the point of view of the advocacy of social aims and human values, see MacLeod 2017. Starting out from the idea that 'access to culture and the arts is a human right deeply connected to our health and well-being, sense of belonging, tolerance and ability to engage thoughtfully in a complex world' (MacLeod 2017: 176), MacLeod proposes to rethink museum architecture and how it contributes to what she describes as the creative lives of citizens.
- ⁵ Olafur Eliasson, 'The Experience Machine. The Artist Interviews Himself'. <https://olafureliasson.net/read/the-experience-machine-the-artist-interviews-himself-1995-2015/>, accessed 3 July 2023.

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