

# lambda

a city project

How many cities can claim, as Oslo does, to offer crystal-clear water for bathing in their old harbour? Since the 1980s, the Norwegian capital has gradually reclaimed its fjord. This ambitious project required extensive urban refurbishment to eliminate all barriers to merging city and sea. Unlike other similar development schemes, which set aside a wide strip of public space dotted with installations, in Oslo the mixture of residential, commercial and office developments stretches out over the new plots according to a master plan that is very dense but on a human scale. Following this model, new cultural facilities have been constructed in recent years including the Opera House (2008) and the Deichman Library (2020). The new Munch Museum, whose competition dates from 2008, is part of this history. After several failed attempts, City Hall wanted to respond to the wishes of Edvard Munch (1863-1944) in his will, namely to leave all his artworks to the city provided a museum was built to house them. In March 2009, estudio Herreros won the international competition. The Madrid-based firm's unusual proposal was to build a vertical museum on thirteen floors with a ground floor accessible to pedestrians. The building comprises stacked exhibition spaces connected by lifts and escalators to a lobby designed as a huge covered square. There is also a panoramic area open to all on the top floor.

# voices

a participatory process

From the earliest stages of the project, estudio Herreros opts for a design and build process based on participation and dialogue with all stakeholders. This approach is made easier by the fact that political debate and dialogue with the local community are an integral part of Norwegian culture: the project is discussed countless times on TV, in the press and at public meetings. The architects put in place a system whereby the participation of the public and the media is just as important as the design, and they have to learn to listen to opinions and explain their choices instead of trying to impose them. They become the agents of a multi-layered conversation in which they do not necessarily play the main role. This openness takes place on three levels: the professional level, by seeking the highest level of coherence between the terms involved; the social level, via dialogue with stakeholders in the public sphere; and, last but not least, the political level, as all decisions have to be approved by the city council. Two public events reflect how open the project is: a series of public lectures in 2011 and a torchlight procession in front of City Hall the following year calling for an end to negotiations and the construction of the museum.

# construction

an experimental environment

The construction of the Munch Museum involved an ambitious environmental programme. Its architects rose to the challenge of reducing the carbon footprint of the building by 45% and guaranteeing the tracability of all its components, as stipulated in a programme developed by the Norwegian government. Built literally on the water, the museum comprises a recycled steel structure and a concrete core, which translate its programme in architectural terms. The AC system is also optimised: only the spaces containing artworks are air conditioned and small units distributed through the building offer versatile temperature control and considerable savings. In energy terms, the building is self-sufficient. The fjord water supplies the clean energy it requires thanks to a thermal system making use of variations in water temperature. The outer layer of the museum, made of perforated recycled aluminium, also plays a regulating role, protecting the building from solar radiation and reducing thermal gain in summer, while also offering visitors uninterrupted views of the exterior. As they walk around, they can observe the intense connections that exist between the art of Munch and the city of Oslo.

# contributions

cross-disciplinary collaborations

During the twelve years it took to build the museum, the architects collaborated with numerous invited professionals who enriched the project through their contributions. One of these calls for collaboration invited young Norwegian designers to create the furniture for the public areas, for example the benches in the exhibition rooms. Jonas Ravlo Stokke and Andreas Engesvik's studio won the competition and succeeded in delicately integrating its creations into the museum spaces in terms of form, colour and materials. The layout of the permanent collection was designed by the office Manthey Kula, which opted for a certain neutrality in counterpoint to the architectural design of the building. Among a large number of other contributors, the North Design studio in London was commissioned to design the visual identity of the museum. Their proposal to reduce the name of the museum to MUNCH, echoing the morphology of the building and its materials, resulted in an immediately recognisable identity. These distinct commissions within an overall project have the merit of preserving the autonomy of the creatives involved, while demonstrating how collaboration between different generations and disciplines can provide unexpected opportunities for interaction.

## Lambda Files

Munch museum, Oslo  
estudio Herreros

exhibition curatorship : Valentin Roma  
This exhibition is a coproduction between arc en rêve centre d'architecture, La Virreina Centre de la Imatge (Barcelona) and CentroCentro (Madrid)

exhibition  
10 11 2022 → 19 02 2023  
inaugural lecture  
10 11 2022, 18:30



Co-produced by La Virreina Centre de la Imatge in Barcelona and CentroCentro in Madrid, the exhibition **Lambda Files – Munch Museum, Oslo** documents the twelve years of work that estudio Herreros has devoted to the project and to the construction of the Munch Museum of Oslo.

The name of the exhibition, Lambda Files, was taken from the pseudonym that protected the architects' anonymity in the international competition and was surprisingly also used by the media until construction of the building began. Far removed from the typical display of architecture exhibitions, the files are here a large collection of materials documenting the internal history of the project. The latter are of the type that normally never see the light of day, since most offices consider them to be "paperwork" and even redraw the plans for clean publications removing any trace of the innumerable contingencies that accompany the design and the construction process.

At a time when most museums are rethinking their role and their tasks, the exhibition considers a radically different case: that of a museum built from scratch, of a cityscape that changes with the emergence of a new architectural element, of a cultural facility that takes its meaning from individual and collective uses.

Thus, **Lambda Files – Munch Museum, Oslo** shows how new ways of doing architecture can be the result of a political and social dialogue and of long-term collaborations between a variety of actors. Among the numerous documents, the exhibition presents for the first time the images taken by the architectural photographer Iwan Baan, which show it from a situated and unexpectedly useful perspective.

**estudio Herreros** is an architectural practice based in Madrid, with offices in New York and Mexico City. Led by Juan Herreros and Jens Richter, it works on a variety of project scales, having delivered public spaces, housing complexes, cultural facilities, as well as galleries and exhibition designs. Recent projects include the Agora-Bogotá conference centre in Colombia (2017), the new high-speed station in Santiago de Compostela (2021) and the design of the Panama waterfront (2014). In France, the agency delivered in 2020 the Mistral residential complex in the ZAC Cité de la Méditerranée in Marseille and has participated in various competitions. The work of estudio Herreros has been widely awarded, published and exhibited nationally and internationally in various institutions, including the MoMa in New York and the Venice Biennale.

**Juan Herreros** is an architect that holds a M. Arch and a PhD in architecture. He is chair professor at the Higher Technical School of Architecture in Madrid (ETSAM) and full professor at the Graduate School of Architecture and Planning at Columbia University in New York. He has also taught at Princeton University, the Architectural Association in London, EPFL in Lausanne and IIT in Chicago. He was a founding partner of Abalos&Herreros in 1984, which became Herreros Arquitectos in 2005 and estudio Herreros in 2014. His most recent awards include the MadBlue 5 Oceans Award for his environmental commitment.

**Jens Richter** is an architect. After various professional experiences in Germany, the Netherlands and China, he joined Herreros Arquitectos in 2006 and was appointed director in 2010. As a key member of the firm, he was responsible for international projects, such as the new Munch Museum, before becoming a partner of estudio Herreros at its foundation in 2014. He has been an assistant professor at the AKH in Kassel, Germany, and a visiting professor at the Sichuan Institute of Fine Arts in Chongqing, China, the Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing and, most recently, at Aalto University in Helsinki.

# Lambda Files

# Munch museum, Oslo

# estudio Herreros

arc en rêve centre d'architecture bordeaux



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