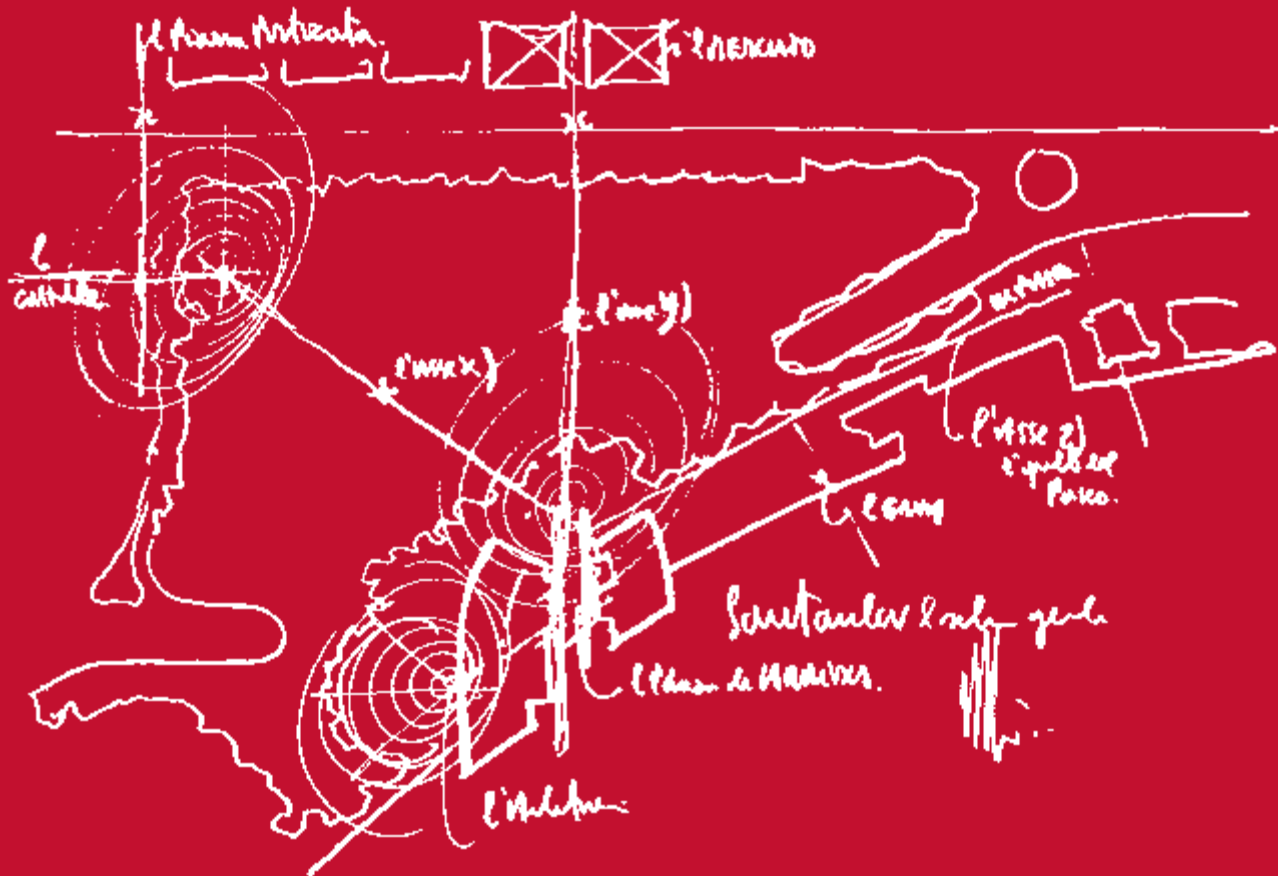


Renzo Piano Building Workshop

# Botín Centre

## Santander





In the summer of 2014, when the Botín Centre opens in Santander, half a century will have passed since Marcelino Botín and Carmen Yllera set up the Marcelino Botín Foundation to promote the social development of Cantabria.

After all these years, the Botín Foundation has become the leading private foundation in Spain.

The Botín Centre will be first and foremost urban because the prime objective of this project is to create a new public space connecting the city centre to the bay, giving back to its residents one of its most emblematic areas. Thus, the idea is to generate a new civic place that fertilizes, through culture, the life in the centre of the city. A space allowing citizens to engage in a multitude of activities all year round.

In addition, the Botín Centre will generate economic and social development. The construction of the building will create 1,400 jobs, 900 of these within the Autonomous Community, besides 650 permanent positions arising from the need to receive the 200,000 people expected to come to Santander annually to visit this new cultural and artistic space.

This is, moreover, the most important project in the history of the Botín Foundation. It is to date our most social project, the one with the greatest prospects of generating cultural and economic wealth. It is our most global project, considering that its educational and artistic activities will have an impact not only in Spain but in the whole world. But it is also our most local project because its primary aim is to empower, through the arts, the life of Santander.

The Botín Centre will be a cultural centre, but also an innovative educational centre that puts art at the service of society.

For a project of such importance, the Botín Foundation decided to go to the best architect in the world. Since the 1971 competition for the Centre Pompidou in Paris, Renzo Piano has demonstrated not only a technical capacity and an exceptional ability to play with light and create unique settings for living art, but also a commitment to excellence of a truly extraordinary kind. This, together with a magnificent team and work method, is what will make this project for Santander not only Renzo Piano's first great work in Spain, but, in all certainty, also the best work of his career.

Emilio Botín







I feel happy and honoured to be doing this project for the city of Santander and for the Botín Foundation. Happy because it fits into my personal path of designing cultural centres that are open, tolerant and accessible to all, from the Centre Pompidou in Paris to the Auditorium in Rome, the Beyeler Foundation in Basel, the Morgan Library in New York and the Art Institute of Chicago: all of them urban places much appreciated by people. Honoured because in taking on this project I assume an enormous responsibility towards Santander and its citizens. So it is that I have tried to listen to all voices and heed all desires.

This is a project in three movements.

First is to free up an area heretofore serving the port and used for parking, and construct a tunnel to eliminate the vehicular traffic that isolates it. The second step is to enlarge the centenary Pereda Gardens, doubling its area and stretching it all the way to the shore. With no more hindrance between the old quarter and the port, downtown Santander will once again look out to the sea. Finally, the third movement involves making the edge of the pier the landing spot of something resembling a small aircraft from space, posed in an overhang over the water: the cultural centre, a centre for art, music, books, education and cultural exchange.

The building does not touch ground; it hovers. Only the reception areas actually land, but this ground-floor space is returned to the city through a raised plaza and a bridge suspended over the sea. In this way, the building does not appropriate space and block views of the shore, neither for one walking through the park (since the building is raised as high as the treetops) nor for onlookers on the upper floors of Santander's buildings (since its volume is smaller than the trees).

The Botín Centre will have two interconnected volumes clad with a light-toned ceramic skin reflecting the changing light of the water.

The building will have the important social and cultural function of fertilizing the city's public spaces, thus confirming the supremacy of the urban as a place of civilization. It is for this reason that the centre must go up in the heart of the city. These kinds of cultural amenities are appreciated by people and can become symbols of civic life and pride only when they are open and located in proximity to the community.

Renzo Piano

# Botín Centre The Place



2012





Images of the Bay of Santander



2012

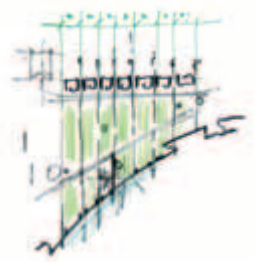


*The project for the Botín Centre endeavours among other things to regain for the city of Santander, for everyday public use, the vast port spaces that are situated in the old Albareda pier, an urbanistically strategic enclave facing the sea that up to now had been reduced to a parking lot serving access to the ferry.*

2004



# New Urban Space



Building implantation as shown in the final model



Options for acting on the environment





<http://youtu.be/LoqF9BaGCzg>

*With the objective of connecting the city's old quarter to its maritime front, the project proposes to partly bury the adjacent road underground, thereby*

*giving continuity to the public space by means of the historic Pereda Gardens, a park where the building blends in visually because its height does not surpass the immediately*

*surrounding treetops. Opening on to its urban context and to Santander's bay, the new Botín Centre will rise at the centre of the park, levitating over the sea.*



Model of the environs and the building's location

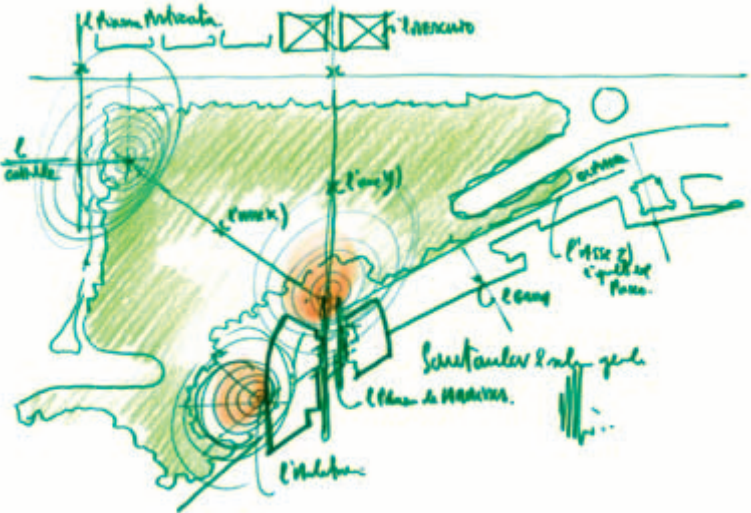
# The Building's Integration in the Pereda Gardens



Definitive perspective from the Palace Pier



Definitive implantation of the building in the environs





*The greater part of the Botín Centre's programme is accommodated in two volumes that connect with the city of Santander by means of a circulation spine*

*that is raised over the garden, held up by pilotis, and doubles as a pier over the water. The implantation and height of the building allow it to fully blend into its environment.*

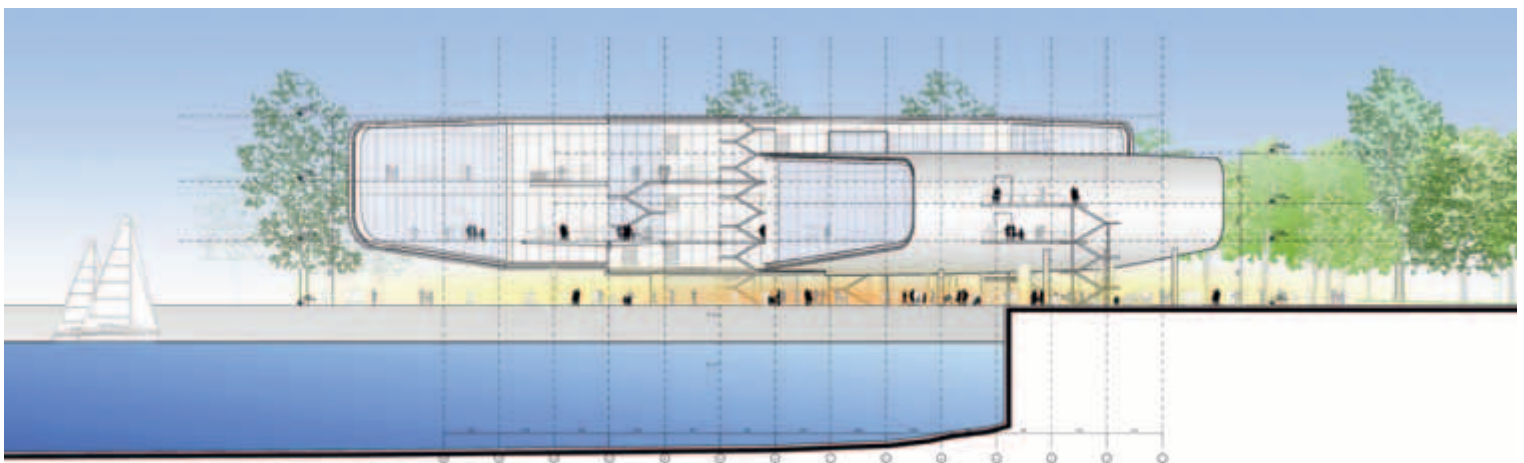


Perspective of the park. View of a pedestrian approaching from Plaza de Pombo



Perspective of the Park. View of a pedestrian approaching from Plaza Porticada

# The Building

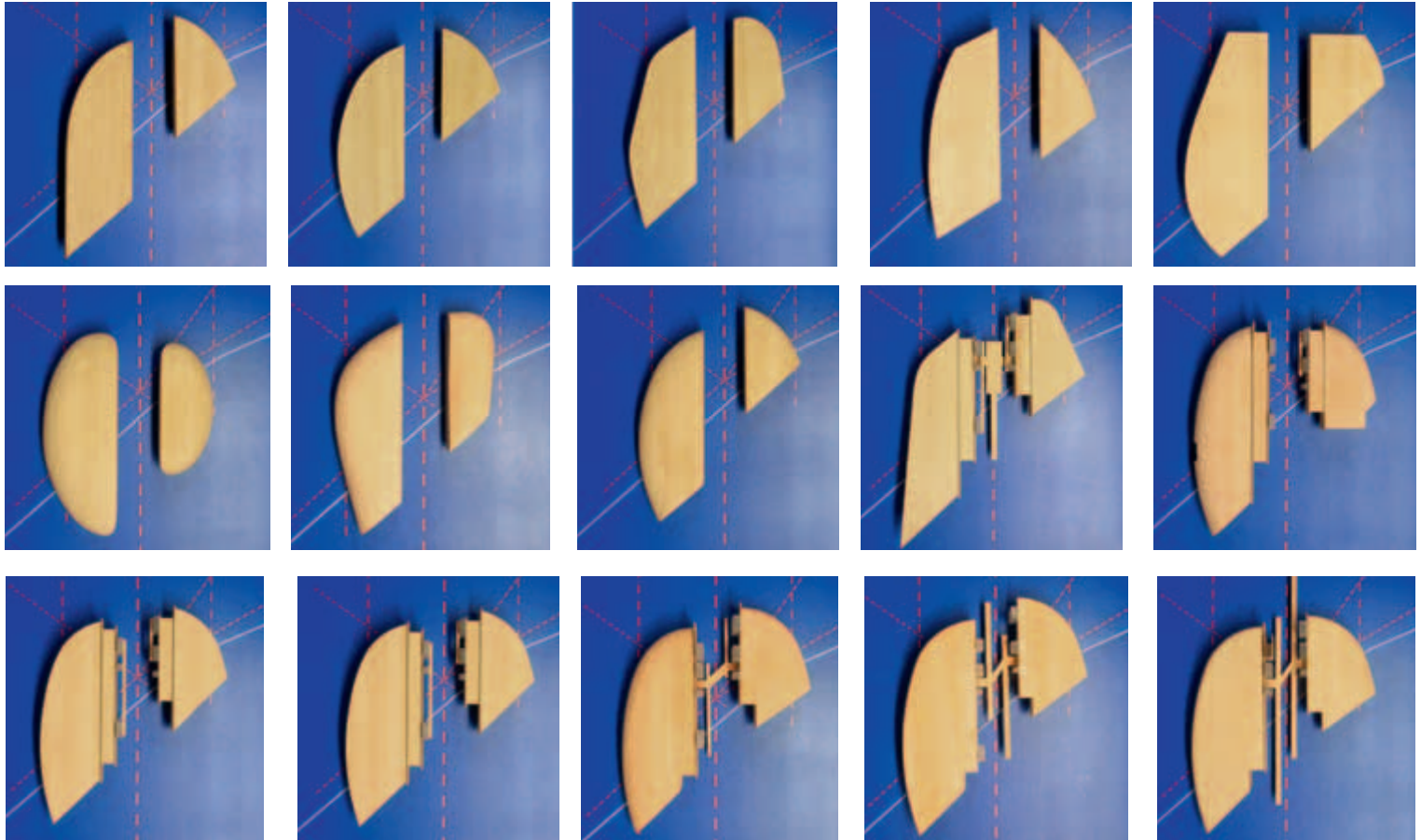


Definitive east elevation



*The lobe shape of the two volumes which comprise the building resulted from a process of volumetric testing that was carried out with a series of models. Resembling*

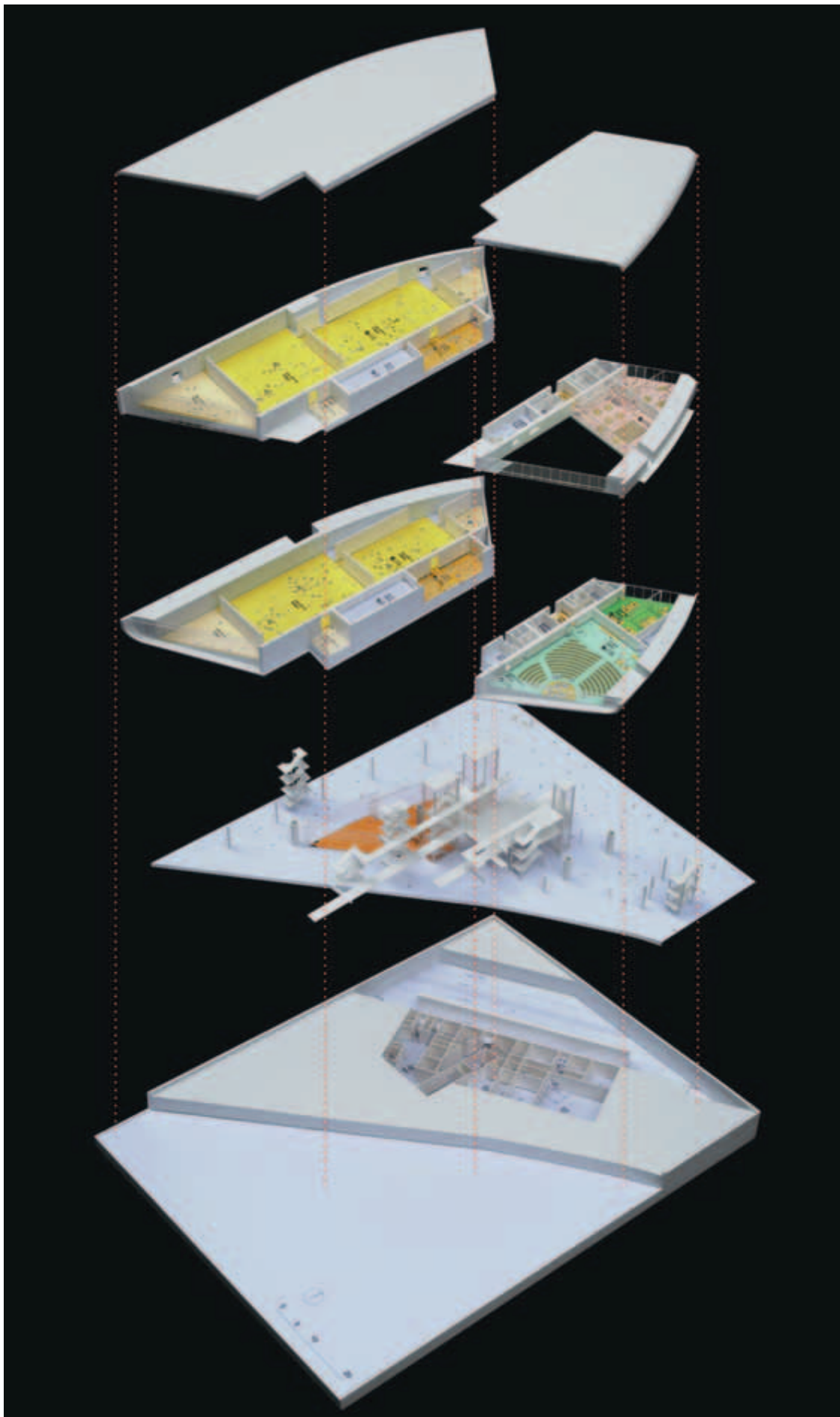
*the shells of mollusks, both constructions are raised off the ground and are faceted at the far ends, freeing up ground and opening on to views of the garden and the sea beyond.*



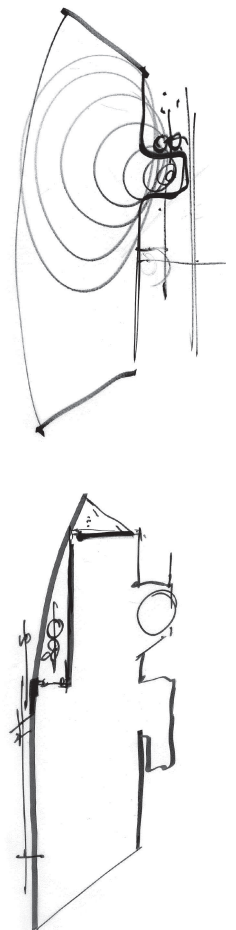
Evolution



Perspective from the Pereda Gardens



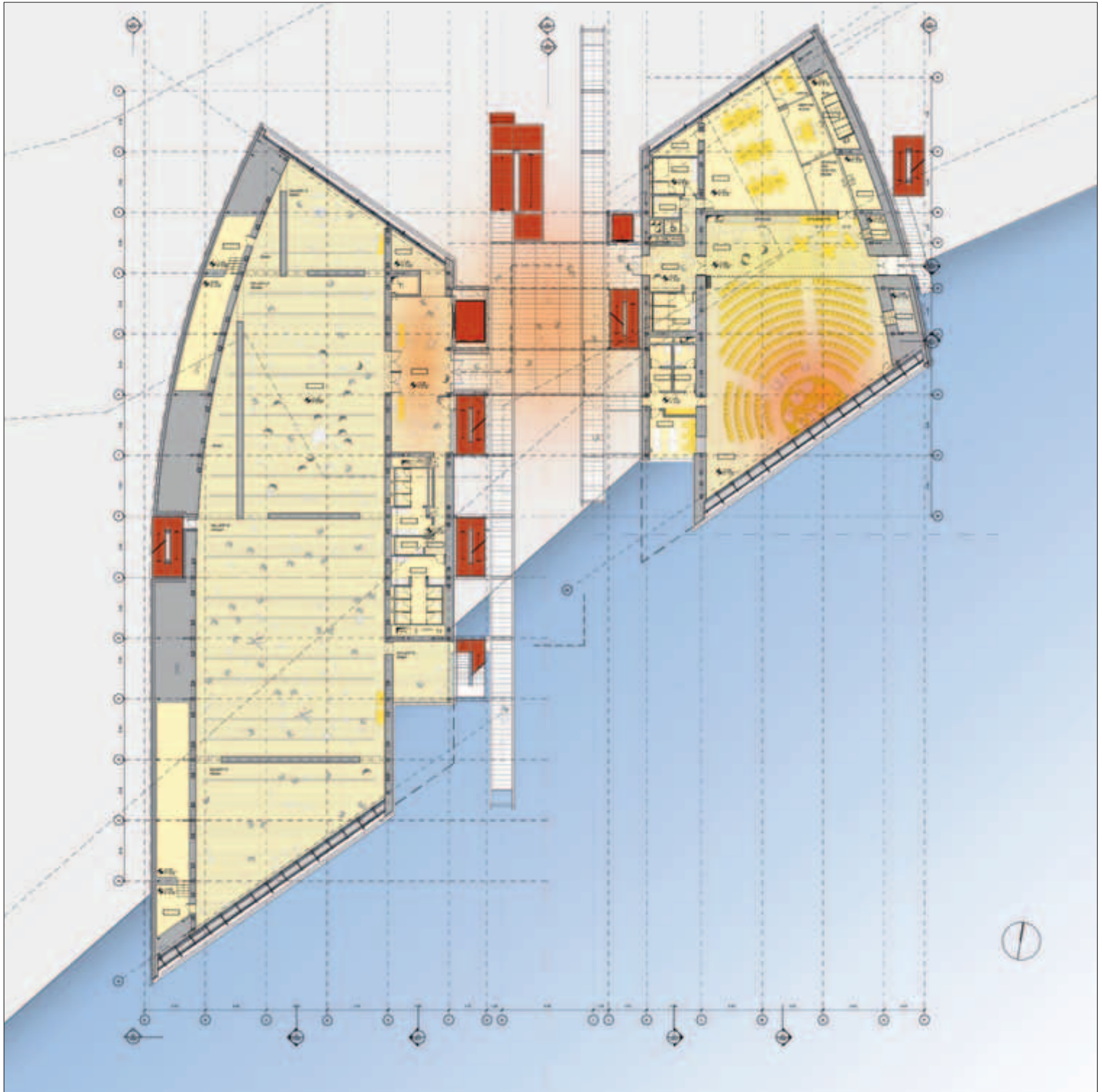
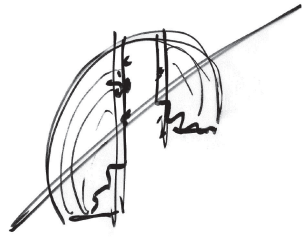
Definitive configuration by levels



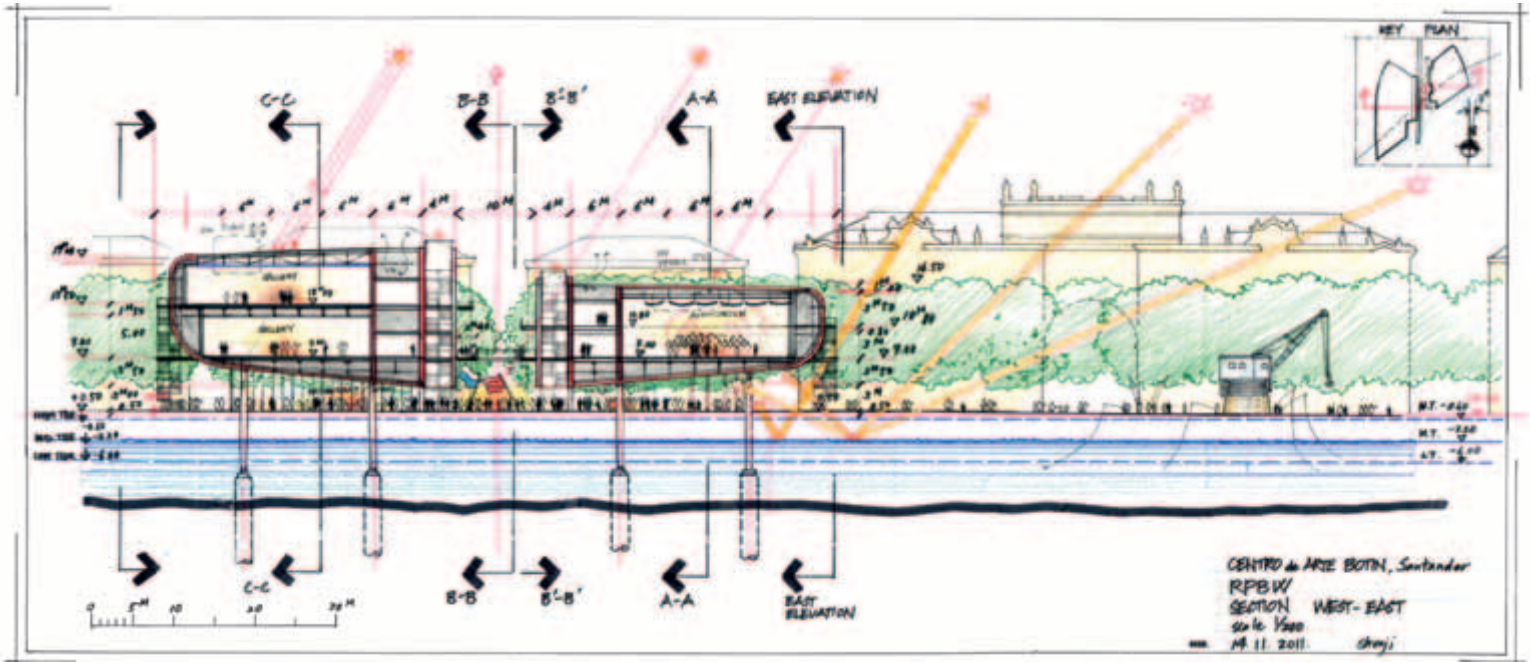
*Stratified vertically, the building's exhibition programme is distributed in the two lobe-shaped main volumes. Beneath them stretches public ground that serves to give continuity to the Pereda Gardens, all the way to the sea. The loading dock and storage facilities are placed underground, connected to the subterranean street.*



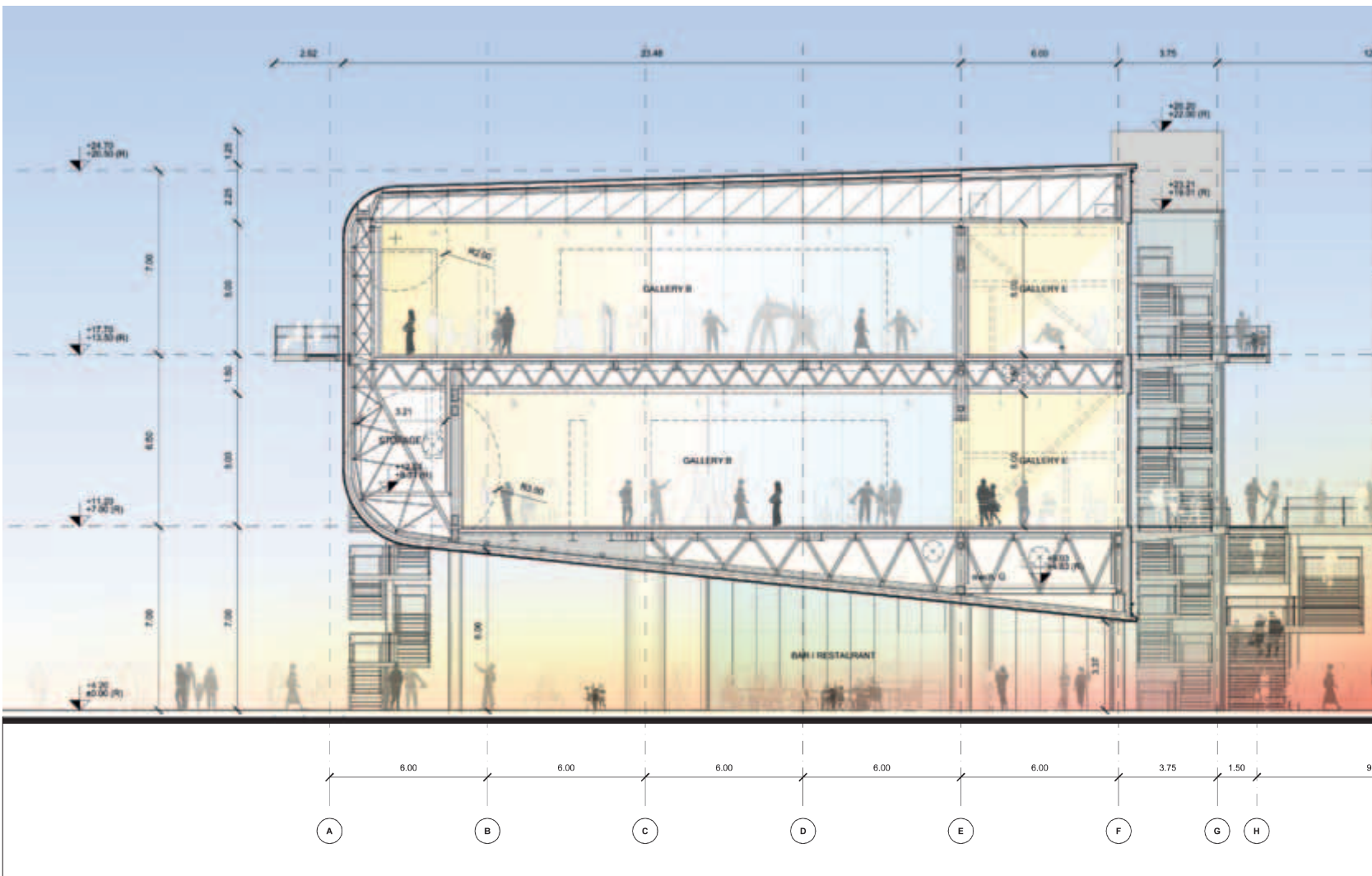
*Connected to the park and venturing into the sea, the main floor of the building contains an auditorium and a large exhibition space besides the access and other common zones.*



+1 Definitive floor plan of the main level

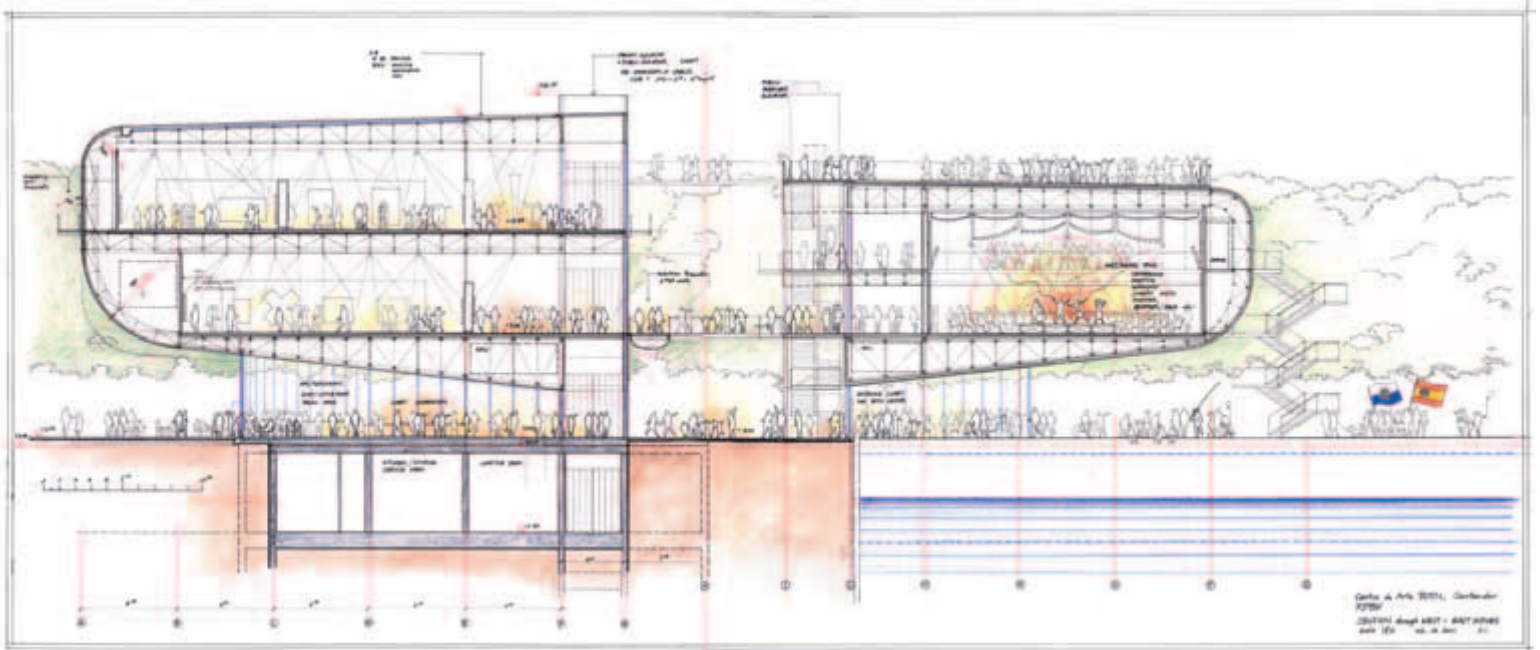


Transversal section (14 November 2011)

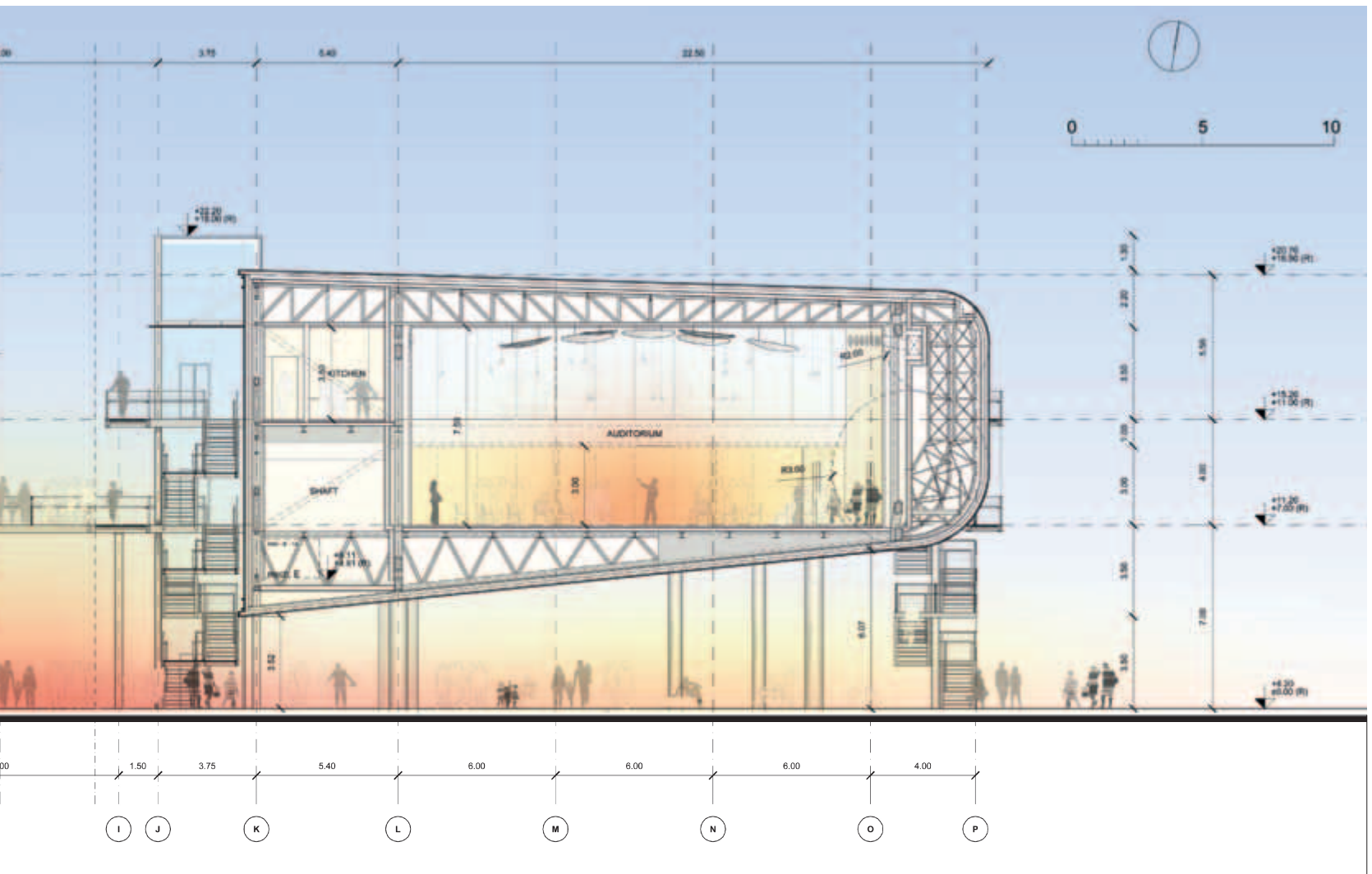


Definitive transversal section. The building creates a covered floor with views of the Bay of Santander

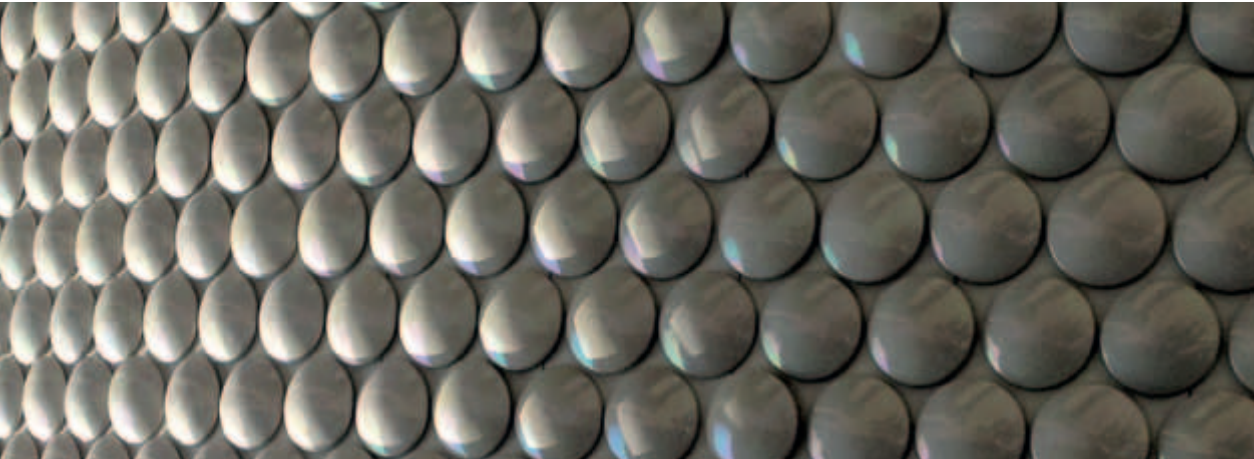
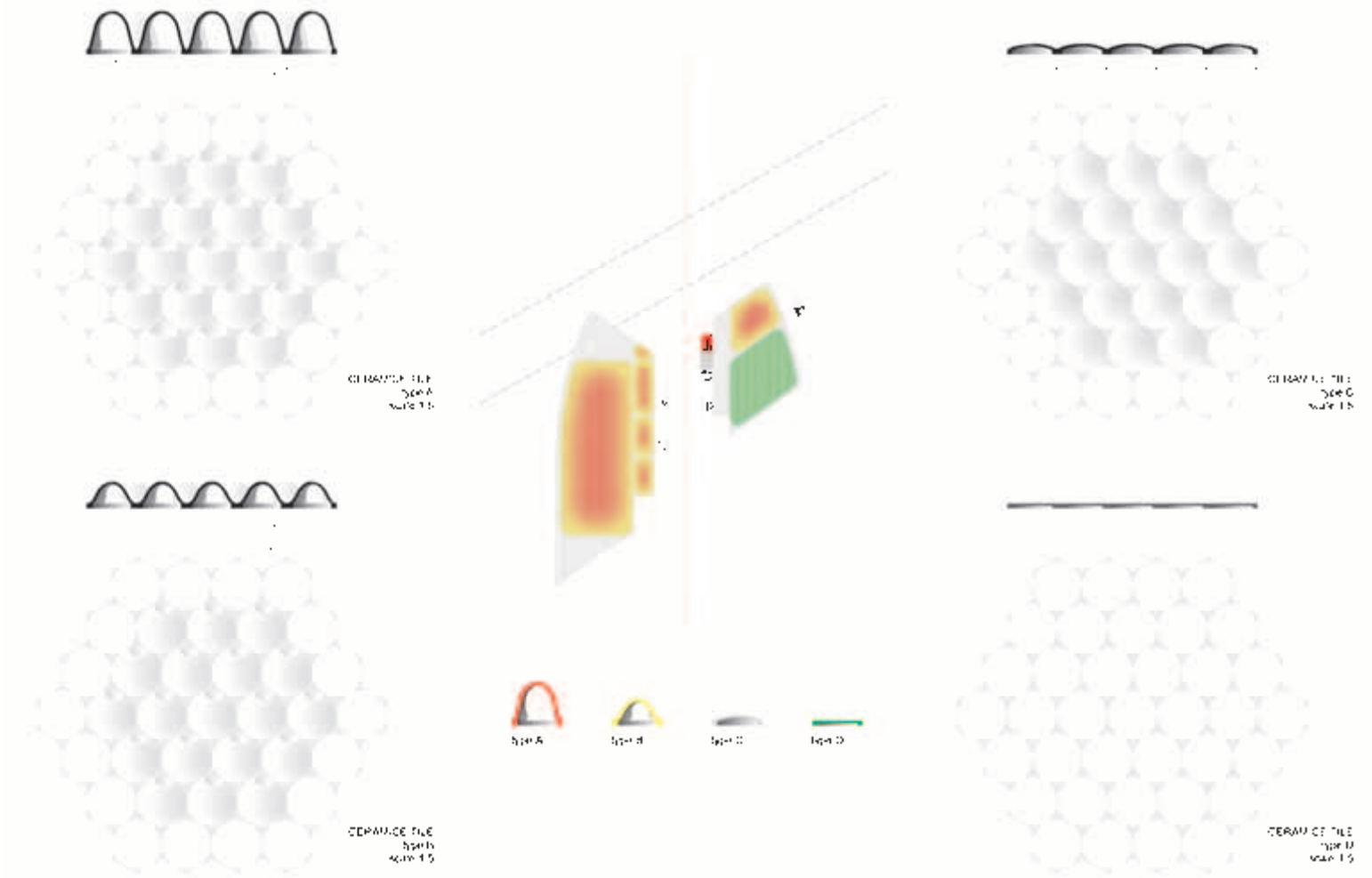
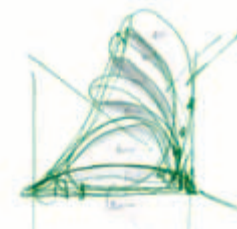




Transversal section (2 December 2011). The new Botín Centre will levitate over the sea

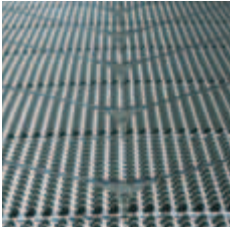


# Construction Details



*Inspired by textures found in the natural world, the tessellated pattern that wraps the surface of the Botín Centre building is formed by round ceramic pieces whose sections vary to adapt to the different requirements of each part of the external envelope, in the manner of the specialised cells of an organism.*





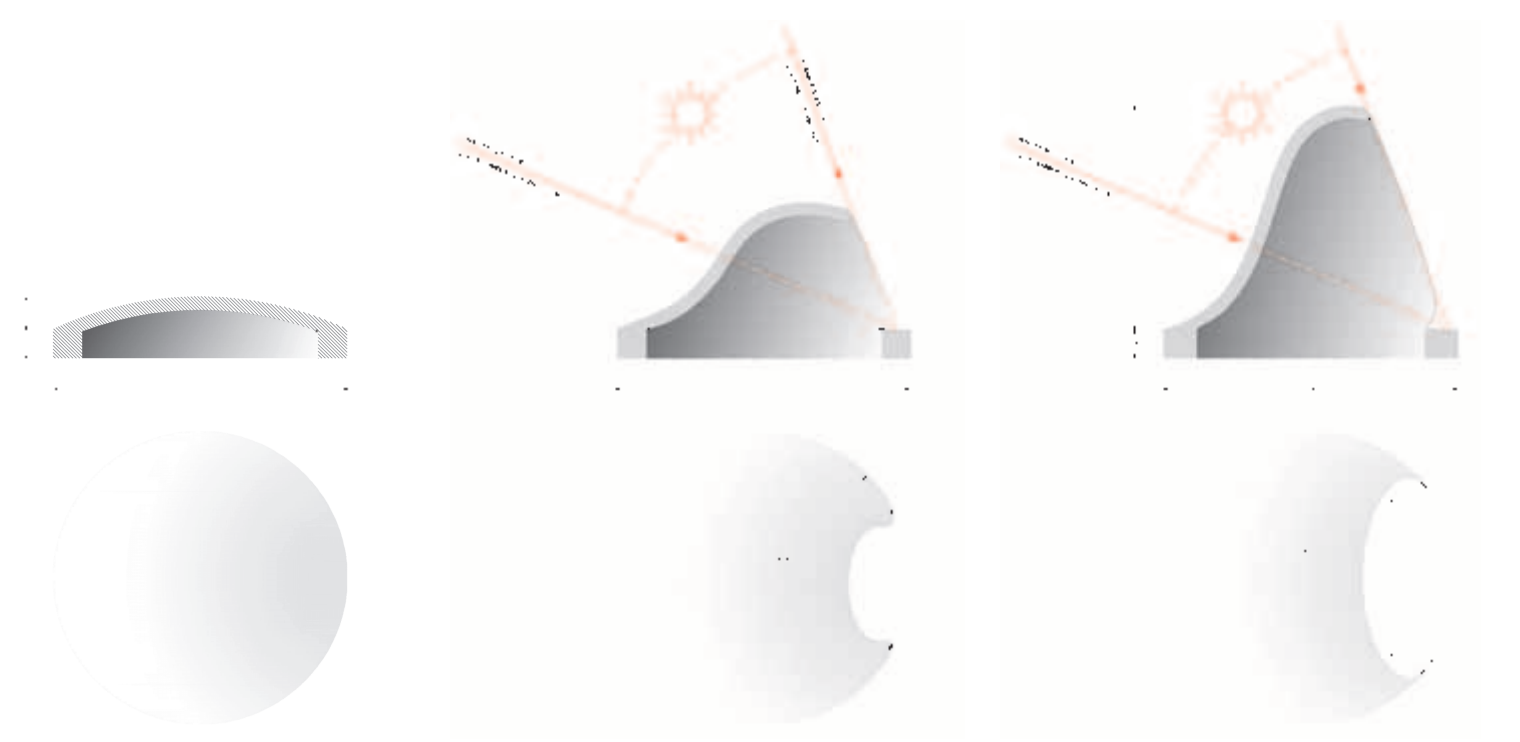
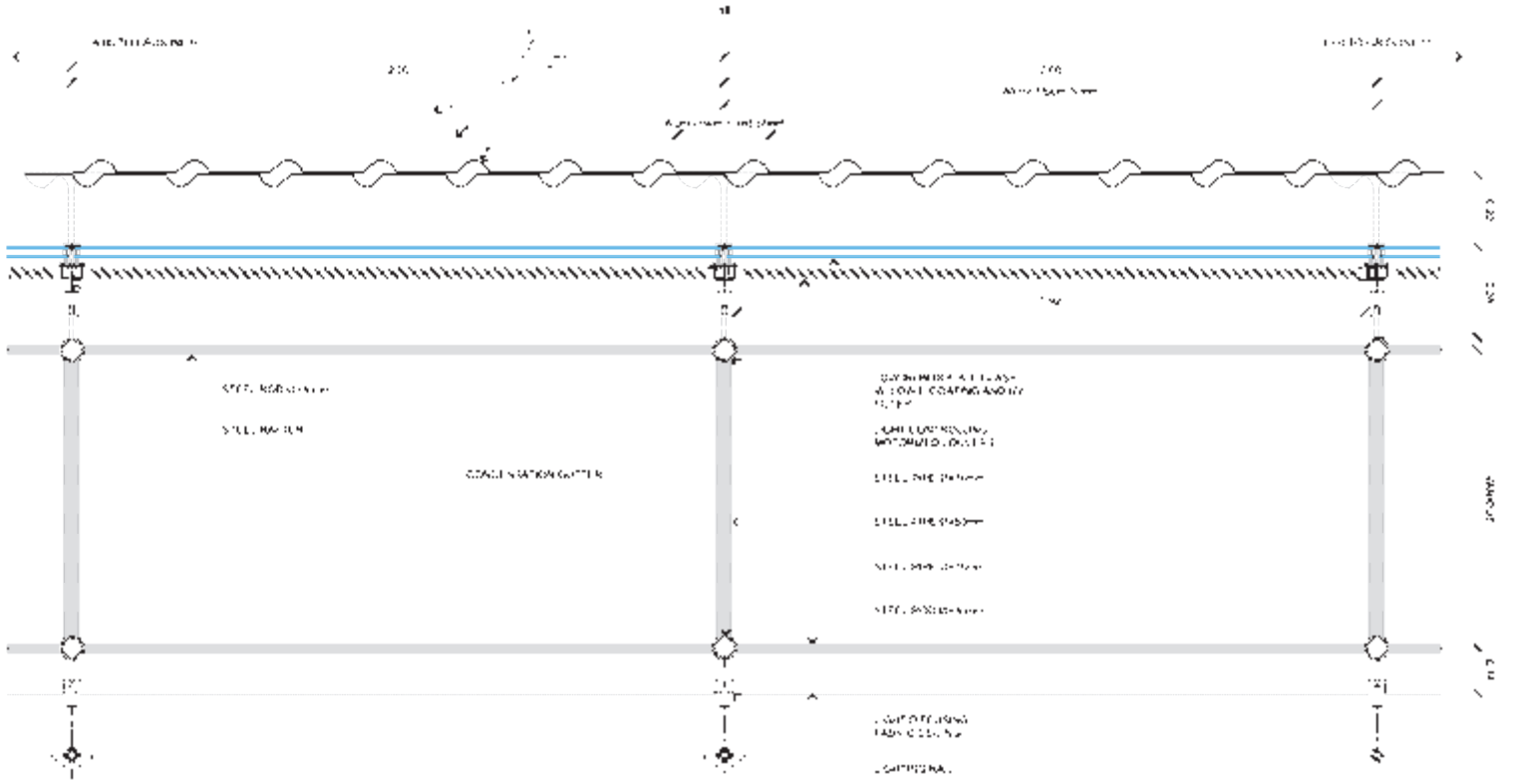
Nasher Sculpture Center



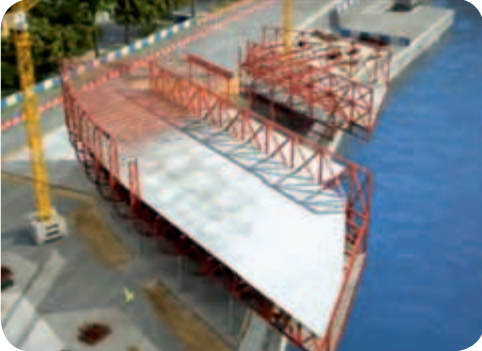
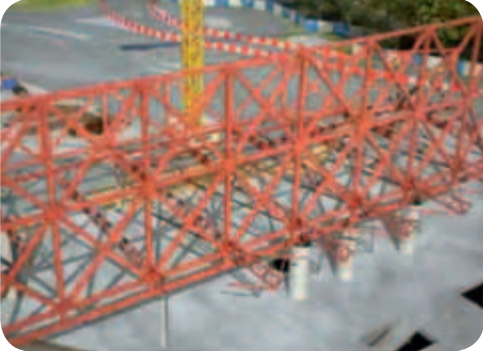
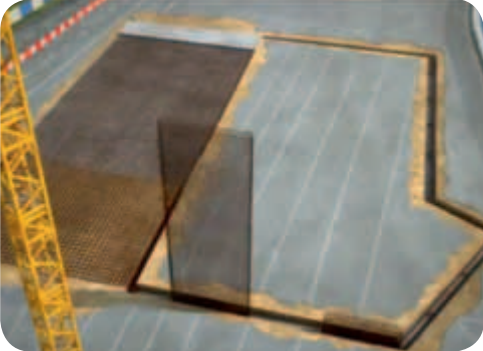
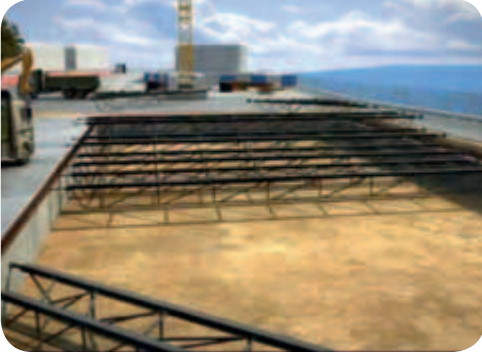
High Museum of Art

The exhibition zones of the building will be lit by means of ceramic pieces acting as north-facing sensors of natural light. The system takes inspiration from that

used in other museums that Renzo Piano has previously carried out, such as the Nasher Sculpture Center in Dallas, Texas and the High Museum of Art in Atlanta, Georgia.



# Construction



Video of the construction of the Botín Centre © OHL





<http://youtu.be/fxfaik1B-6M>

*The construction phase of the Botín Centre project began with a ceremony marking the start of building works, held on 19 June 2012 and attended by Emilio Botín, Renzo*

*Piano, the President of Cantabria, the Mayor of Santander, the State Secretary of Culture and Juan Miguel Villar Mir, president of OHL, the company that will erect the building.*



Ceremony marking the start of building works, 19 June 2012



*A public exhibition held during the design development phase of the project gave citizens the opportunity to acquaint themselves with the forthcoming building.*

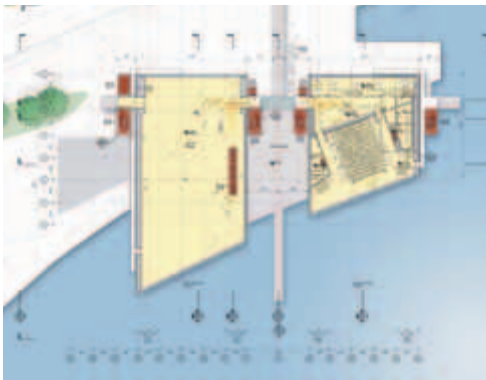
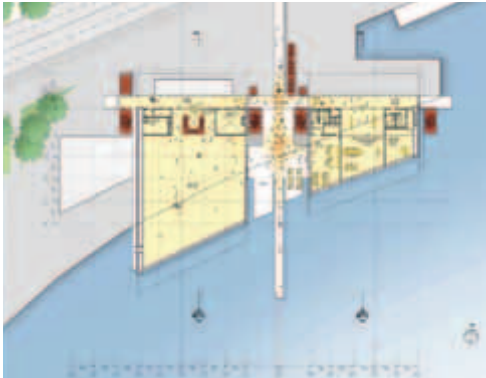
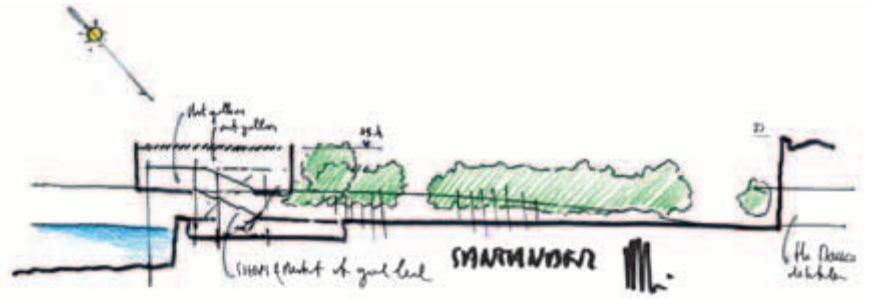
# The Initial Project





The original project proposed joining the city's urban core to its maritime front by shifting traffic along Paseo de Pereda in a northern direction, an option that

eventually gave way to the construction of a tunnel bound to improve circulation in the area by allowing the Pereda Gardens to stretch on all the way to the sea.



## The Arts Programme of the Botín Centre

**Research, education and dissemination are the three principal missions of the Botín Foundation, which has a consolidated international presence in the field of the arts and music.**

The Art and Culture area of the Botín Foundation comprises all activities falling under the arts, music and conferences. The collaboration here of leading professionals ensures high quality in the content of the Foundation's cultural programme, which already has a consolidated presence in the international art scene.

In 2011, the first concrete steps were taken to create the Botín Centre and, in so doing, promote the Foundation's work in this area while making not only Santander, but all of Cantabria, a major cultural axis in Europe.

In 2011, too, the Art Committee named Vicente Todolí, former director of the Tate Modern, as president, and Udo Kittelmann, director of the Nationalgalerie of Berlin, and Manuela Mena, Chief Conservator of the Department of 18th-Century Painting and Goya at the Prado Museum, as members.

Research, education and dissemination are the main axes of the Foundation's Art and Culture area. In 2007 it initiated a line of research directed at fostering and spreading knowledge about drawing in Spanish art, no doubt one of the more interesting and fertile facets of our art since the 17th century, and it has since produced several catalogues on the drawing oeuvre of key artists like Eduardo Rosales, Antonio del Castillo, Pablo Gargallo, Alonso Cano, Mariano Salvador Maella or Bartolomé Esteban Murillo.

Since 1993, the education thrust of the Botín Foundation's Arts Programme has been focused on grants and workshops. To date, 146 artists have benefitted from the Arts Grants given for training, research and creativity support, not to mention those that have been awarded for the study of Museum Management and Exhibition Curatorship.

Many established and prestigious artists have come to Villa Iris to conduct Arts Workshops for young artists from

all over the world. Some of the artist-teachers that the Botín Foundation has welcomed for this activity are Juan Uslé, Gabriel Orozco, Julião Sarmiento, Mirosław Balka, Antoni Muntadas, Jannis Kounellis, Mona Hatoum, Paul Graham and Lothar Baumgarten.

The exhibitions, essentially consisting of the Foundation's own collections, are linked to the objectives and work of the department, and are the main vehicle for bringing the Foundation's Arts project to the public at large, following two lines: exhibitions on the artists who are the objects of research on the drawing medium, and training via the Itineraries Series, which year after year presents the creations of grant holders and the exhibitions put together by the workshop directors. This programme is then completed with exhibitions of an international nature as important as 'Paul Klee: Berggruen Collection', 'Jean Michel Basquiat' (2008), 'Dynasty and Divinity: Ife Art in Ancient Nigeria' (2009), 'The Cosmos of the Russian Avant-Garde: Art and Space Exploration 1900-1930' (2010) and 'María Blanchard: Cubist' (summer of 2012).

The Botín Foundation's art collection reflects the evolution and approaches that have marked its activities in the course of forty years. The collection has been growing year by year since 1993, specialising in contemporary art. It includes pieces by the workshop directors, artists with consolidated careers, wide experience and generous didactic vocations; and creations of artists who have received Arts Grants from the Foundation.

Finally, the Botín Foundation programme incorporates activities promoting the field of music, such as diverse Thematic Concerts, the Autumn Series and the Young Musicians Series, as well as activities aimed at general cultural dissemination, including conference series on a wide range of topics.





# The Botín Centre's Educational Programme

## Arts, Emotions and Creativity

**The Botín Centre of Santander sets itself the educational task of giving access to the arts, conceived as an instrument with which to develop emotional intelligence and creativity.**

There are two key aspects of the development of the human being that we sometimes neglect, leaving them to chance instead of consciously and expressly working on their evolution and enhancement: the capacity for emotion and the capacity for creation. Both accompany us at each step we make since the day we are born. Emotions are the motor of our lives; thanks to them, we are alive and we relate to one another. Our capacity to create, in turn, is what enables us to invent, evolve and solve the problems that come our way, and so is instrumental to our personal and social well-being.

To date, however, these aspects have not been sufficiently taken into account in the educational field, which has fundamentally centred on knowledge acquisition and rational, logical, cognitive development. We have left emotion and creation in the hands of informal education, in the hands of intuition. For some of the most important aspects of our life we have been left to learn all on our own, or with little guidance. On one hand no one taught us to identify, understand, express and regulate our emotions and those of others, and with this comprehend who we are and what we feel, and manage our relationships with others. On the other hand we have not cultivated our capacity to create, to give mental or physical form to a new idea, to an artifact, to something that did not exist before and that, almost mysteriously, seems to suddenly exist.

Moreover, they are connected. It is in fact emotions that make us create, that spark the creative process, and that to a large extent motivate it. And artistic creation is the best example: What is it but an emotion that the artist – the creator, so to speak – wishes to convey in a poem, painting, piece of music or installation? What is it but an emotion that good art stirs in us when it comes our way?

Emotions, hence, are in the origin and

in the effect of the creative act. And emotional intelligence is the ability to recognise and manage emotions. To be more creative. Emotions, creativity and arts: the three interrelated elements with which the Botín Centre in Santander endeavors to build its educational programme.

The Botín Centre sets itself the educational mission of awakening the creative attitude and capacity of people so that they will want to improve their lives and environments, and know how to. And its strategy for this is as follows: 1) give them access to coexistence with the arts, so that they first use them as 2) an instrument for developing emotional intelligence, and subsequently so that 3) knowing how to manage the emotions that have been aroused, they will turn them into a motive or impulse that stimulates and activates their latent creative capacity.

At the Botín Centre we want to teach people how to use – yes, use – the arts to develop a manner of thinking that sets in motion a creative process of the kind that makes them explore new ways of doing things, turning problems into opportunities for growth and ultimately contributing to improving their personal well-being and that of their environment.

This educational mission is just one of the channels through which the Botín Centre hopes to address its final objective: to give rise to a new place of encounter in Santander, one located at a point where the urban core meets the bay, from which to enrich the life of the city through the arts. And, in this way, generate economic and social development and wealth.

This objective is the *raison d'être* of a project that is creative per se and that itself has origins, why not, in an emotion. That which fifty years ago spurred Marcelino Botín and Carmen Yllera to create the Botín Foundation and put everything they had at the service of the social development of Cantabria, their region.



## In Conversation

Richard Ingersoll interviews Renzo Piano (2 December 2011)

**After weighing up the different reactions to the project's initial proposal, Renzo Piano has developed the final version, which is discussed in this interview with the critic Richard Ingersoll.**

The new cultural centre planned for Santander promises to interject a much-needed catalyst into the city's public life. Renzo Piano's office, which up to now has only designed one minor project in Spain, was selected to design the project. The program includes a two-story art gallery, roughly 2,500 square metres in area, a polifunctional space seating 300, an educational space and an exterior public square. Furthermore, the site lies within a 10-minute walk from the central train station, two major parking structures and the municipal park.

Piano presented a preliminary design to the citizens of Santander in September 2011, and now has developed the final version. Unlike many architects who work with fixed ideas of style and form, Piano works best when his projects are challenged. He listens carefully to criticism and displays remarkable elasticity, frequently revising his projects with great leaps of imagination, a process that is occurring in Santander. Richard Ingersoll interviewed the architect in his Paris office in early December of 2011, reviewing with him the latest models and drawings of the Botín Centre.

**Richard Ingersoll:** The site for the new cultural centre, while centrally located and next to a park, presented several problems that in the first version of your project led

to some extreme solutions, such as the 150-metre-long passerelle crossing over a traffic artery, which was used as the principal entry.

**Renzo Piano:** If you want to have a vital cultural centre, it must remain in the heart of the city. As in most seaport cities, the scale of modern container shipping forced operations to new zones away from the centre, leaving a prime empty space along the bay front. The problem remained: how could we unite the embankment with the existing triangular park that was separated from it by a major street? We initially suggested closing the road and rerouting traffic in a northern direction, but the city planners found that idea unrealistic. So we decided to jump over the road with a gradually rising footbridge. Because in our first design we placed the building next to the Grúa de Piedra, about 100 metres north of the position we are currently working on, the bridge stood on axis with the great arch of the historic Bank of Santander headquarters.

**RI:** In the final design the road has been depressed and covered over, allowing a continuous landscape from the park to the embankment. You then relocated the building to a more central spot in this enlarged park. But now that the roadway no longer poses a problem for the connection across the park to

*The Botín Centre is one of a long line of cultural centers that Piano has built around the world, starting with his emblematic opera prima, the Centre Pompidou in Paris.*



the entry of the cultural centre, why maintain the bridge as the principal point of access?

**RP:** The bridge in the initial project pierced through the building as part of an articulated steel scaffold for stairs and elevators that we liked to call the *pachinko*, a Japanese pinball machine. This skeletal device helped to clarify the separation of the volume for the art galleries from that for the auditorium, allowing a certain autonomy for the two parts of the programme. Then we got the idea of pushing the elevated walkway beyond the body of the building another 25 metres so that it shot over the water as an elevated boardwalk – a nice place to take a walk or perhaps even go fishing! The client was particularly fond of the bridge in the first design, and we all liked the idea of its extension over the bay, but it's true that now, without the problem of the road, the bridge does not make as much sense. As the design continues to evolve, the bridge will probably be dropped, but I am fairly certain that we will maintain the jetty sticking out over the water and keep the principal entries up on this level. If we remove the footbridge, of course, we will gain a much better space on the north side of the building for a beautifully scaled piazza. In this northern part, the two volumes have been sliced off

obliquely to form a sort of embrace on the space as people arrive from the park. The decision to move the building site south came after a thoughtful comment from one of our critics in Santander, who suggested that an axis to the central market would make more sense in terms of civic life than one pointing to Martillo street, close to the bank, and the client felt the same way. As to radical choices, the move to

transform the road into a 200-metre-long tunnel was of course more extreme than the initial footbridge concept – and will cost nearly 20% of the budget –, but in doing so the size of the city's park has been doubled! And the historic centre of Santander will finally have a direct connection to the waterfront.

**RI:** This seems a remarkable gift to the city, in that while not everyone may necessarily feel



Centre Pompidou, Paris

*The dialogue between interior and exterior breathes the air of other projects by the Genoese architect, such as the Nasher Sculpture Center in Dallas and the High*

*Museum of Art in Atlanta. For its part, the way the exterior is defined through an open-air amphitheatre was present in the Parco della Musica Auditorium in Rome.*

represented by a cultural centre, most people approve of parkland. Now that you have doubled the size of the park, it seems like a prime opportunity to work with this landscape – perhaps something exhilarating like Chillida’s landscape leading up to the *Peine del Viento* in San Sebastián.

**RP:** Chillida, of course, is no longer with us. I met him many times and would have loved to have worked with him. The existing park is a 19th-century design with a few fountains, a gazebo, a bandstand, lots of trees and some sculptures. While not very special, it is well-loved by the citizens, and I would hesitate about changing

its design. But there does seem to be a great opportunity here for a new landscape between the embankment and the trees, a space nearly as large as the original park. For right now we are considering how to maintain an atmosphere of luminosity. Even if Santander is officially on the Atlantic, the bay, and our site looking south, has a gentle Mediterranean feel to it, and Spain belongs to Mediterranean culture. There is something mystical about how the light in such places reflects off the water and how people are engaged by it. One must be careful not to compromise this simple relationship between the hard surfaces and the light



Parco della Musica Auditorium, Rome

bouncing off the water. That’s the quality we want to celebrate. One of the new ingredients in the program that we are working on involves an outdoor amphitheatre, set into the embankment west of the building, an area that can seat more than 2,000 people and be used for concerts, showing films or just lounging. We would improvise a screen dropped from the elevation of the cultural centre. We want the outdoor theatre to be something like the one we built in Rome at the entry to the new concert halls.

**RI:** Let’s discuss the form of the buildings. It seems obvious that your client and the city of Santander aspired to keep up with the other prominent Cantabrian port cities: San Sebastián got Rafael Moneo’s Kursaal while Frank Gehry’s Guggenheim produced the famous ‘Bilbao effect’, instantly merchandizing the city. The first version of your project in Santander seemed very modest in comparison: two boxes raised on stilts that partly extend over the water. Is the new design intended to be more iconic?

**RP:** We actually started designing the project so that it would not be visible from the city fabric! We considered how one looks across the park and raised the volumes on steel legs four metres off the ground, the same height as the tree trunks in the park, and then stopped the volumes from going higher than



Nasher Sculpture Center, Dallas



22 metres, level with the tops of the trees. So I suppose our strategy was the opposite of the Kursaal or the Guggenheim. How many Bilbao effects can you have after all? I frankly don't understand why there should be such a distinction between the idea of a project and its execution. I have always felt it is better to start with the way something is going to be made and how it is going to work, rather than starting with its formal outcome or significance. From the start we were seeking a solution of lightness and antigravity, so we placed the volumes on slender steel poles. But we decided to change the flat orthogonal volumes of the first design, not because of the way they looked but because they blocked the light at the ground level rather than reflecting it. This led us to the idea of rounding the edges and tapering the shapes of the volumes.

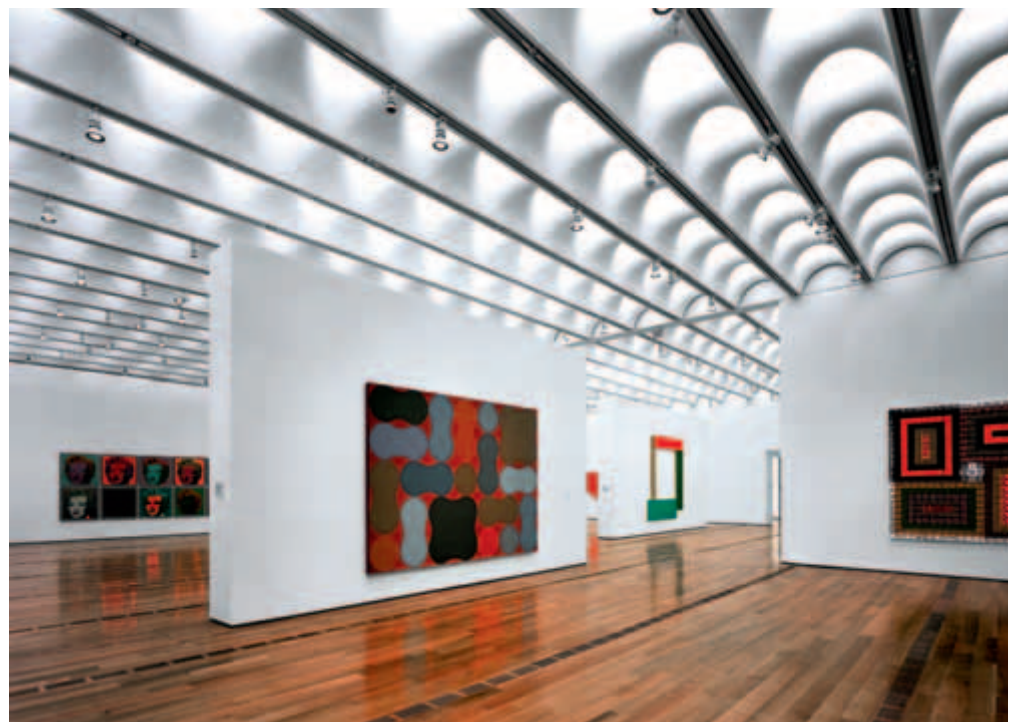
**RI:** The two volumes in the final project are perched on stilts and partly extend over the water, but have now acquired rounded, shell-like shapes. They seem more metaphorical, analogous to several images, looking like sea shells or like the hulls of a ship. The way they stand over the water on stilts reminds me somewhat of the typical *tchanqué* houses used by fishermen in the Arcachon region of southern France, which appealed greatly to Le Corbusier in his quest for piloti.

**RP:** In a way these new volumes are like spaceships that have just landed. We do not want to give the impression of great size or arrogance, in fact we decided to reduce the size of the project by a third, now roughly a total of 6,000 square metres. We are seeking another effect, an objective that infuses most of my office's work: luminosity and lightness. We have kept the buildings raised off the ground so that people can freely walk under them toward the water. Then we rounded off the corners, creating a continuous wrapper from the underbelly to the roof, so that the light will be better diffused beneath the structures – the rounded

surfaces from below catch the light the way the curving surfaces of a ship's prow reflect against the water. The project now appears like a boat that has been split in half and raised off the ground.

**RI:** In almost all your works you move from problem-solving, considering context and program, to solutions with technical innovations. The new idea for Botín Centre, the one that I think will establish its character, involves a mantle of shaped ceramic tiles that is draped around the outer elevations.

**RP:** I was with Pierre Boulez, the great maestro and patron of IRCAM (Institut de Recherche et Coordination Acoustique/Musique),



High Museum of Art, Atlanta



Offices of *The New York Times*, New York



Expansion of the Morgan Library, New York

last week, and still at his age he insists that music is made from sounds, that one must get into the basic molecular structure to be truly creative with one's art. I also often think of Jean Prouvé's methods when we are developing a project. It is not enough to know what a building is going to look like, you must think of it first from an organic point of view, considering the component parts and how they are going to be joined. It seems to me that Santander, despite its privileged coastal position, has many gray days, and to keep things bright I proposed that the surfaces of our structure should be covered with white tiles that will appear

bright during foul weather. I don't know if in the end they will be truly white. The idea is more like the shimmering quality of mother of pearl, so an off-white with a bit of pink might work well. The tiles will be about as large as the human hand and thus they can be applied easily to the curved surfaces. There will altogether be around 360,000 pieces, and we are really thinking of them as analogous to the cells of the human skin. We want them to breathe like the skin. They are flat on the belly, acquire a mound as they continue on the sides, and as they move toward the top, the cells begin to swell up and open, allowing the optimal light from the

north to diffuse through them into the galleries. For the moment the tile comes in four different profiles. We have already experimented with ceramics shaped into light-capturing hoods on the roofs of the Nasher Sculpture Center in Dallas and the addition to the High Museum in Atlanta, but in Santander they will become a much more organic part of the building's skin.

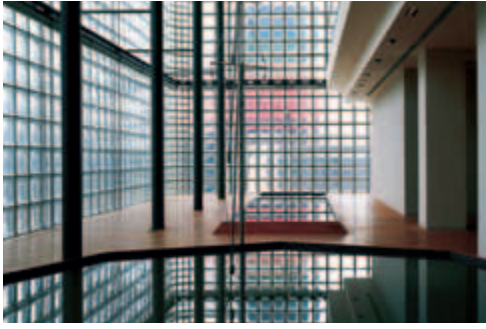
**RI:** The filtered light seems an excellent idea for the galleries, but I can imagine a lot of glare coming in through the great planes of glass on the shorter ends of the structures, especially on the south...

**RP:** One always has to consider the time of day and the time of year, and realize that there are only a few critical hours for southern exposure. For the auditorium we believe it will be thrilling for an audience to watch speakers, actors or musicians performing against the backdrop of the bay with its traffic of ships and treasure of natural events, such as clouds against the water. We first tried such an idea in Parma for the city's new auditorium, set inside the shell of an old sugar factory. The glass will actually be a double layer with an inner pocket which offers both thermal and acoustic benefits, and in the hollow between the two planes of glass we will install the mechanical shading devices to control the glare or completely darken the hall when necessary.



Paganini Auditorium, Parma





Hermès Building, Tokyo

For the gallery side we will rely on the experience we had at the Beyeler Collection near Basel, where some of the galleries open with fully glazed facades to the south. The galleries in Santander will not be organized with permanent room divisions, and thus we have basically two immense loft spaces which an artist can install as a single room or a curator can subdivide into many smaller spaces with temporary walls as needed. As at the Beyeler, it is a good idea to place sculptures near the great panes of glass, as they will not be endangered by the light, and as in the auditorium, we will have the option of dropping shades between the panes of glass if one desires to block out the light. The new art space in Santander has an excellent President of the Art Committee, Vicente Todolí, who appreciates the openness of the space. Designing for contemporary art displays requires maximum flexibility, and thus the fewer permanent walls, the better, and as in all modern buildings, the infrastructure and servicing should be one's first thought. We have tucked all of the machinery into the bellies of the structures like ballast on a ship. But aside from this, we like to think that the possibility of having the variable factor of natural daylight brings something mystical into the experience of spending time with art works.

**RI:** Both sides of the Botín Centre can be used independently, having separate entries, but the possibility remains that this upper level boardwalk between the two sides becomes an interesting socializing space, even if you are not going to enter. Don't you think that the catwalks connecting them are too small? Couldn't there be a more generous landing?

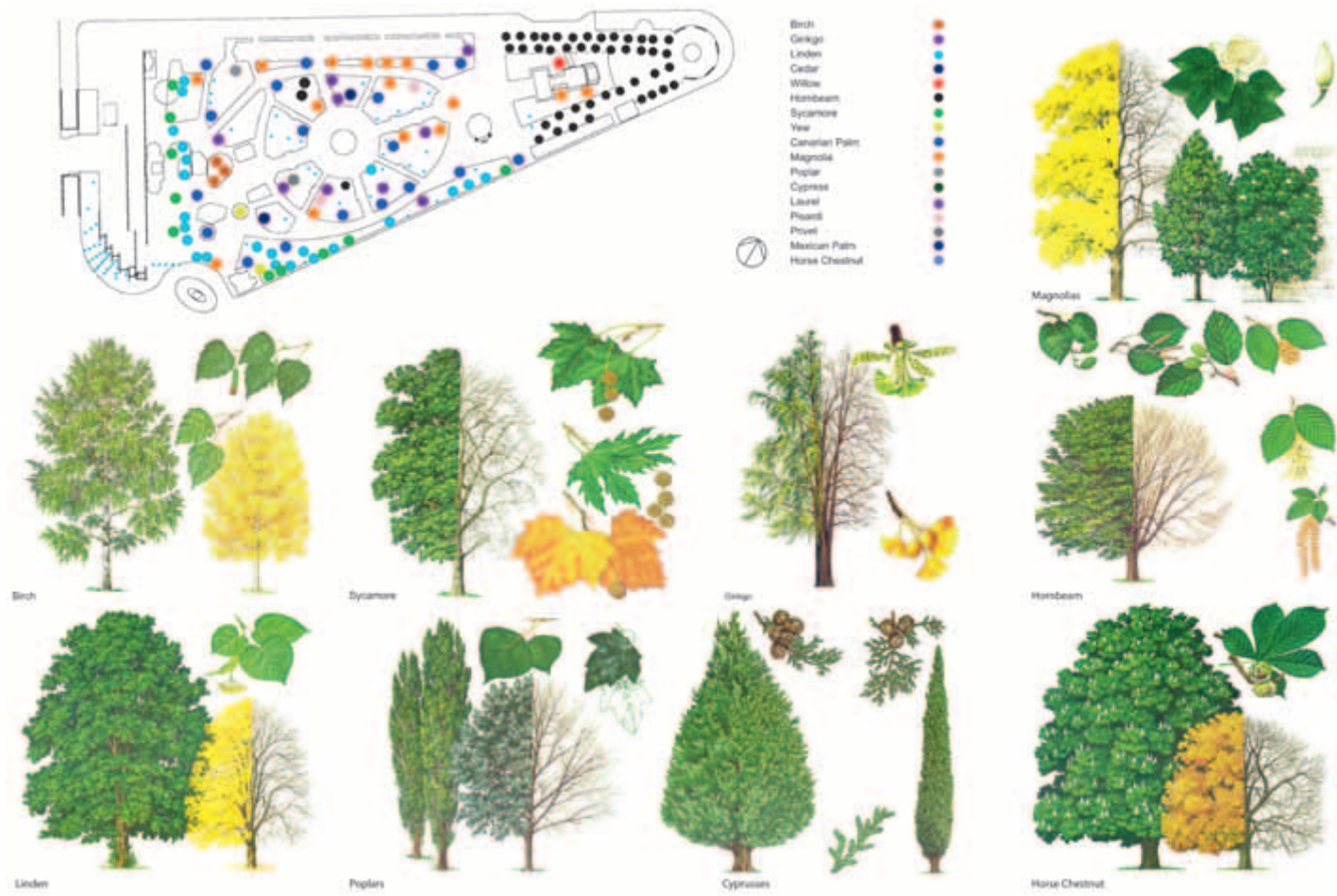
**RP:** I don't want to repeat how concerned we are with luminosity, but we have always considered this pinball machine between the two sides as something very open and transparent, so that the light can come through to the spaces underneath. But perhaps there

*The luminous ambience of the Botín Centre and its extraordinary lightness will come from the transparency of glass, a material used with mastery in some of Renzo Piano's most exceptional works, including the offices for The New York Times, the Morgan Library, the Paganini Auditorium, the Hermès Building and the Beyeler Foundation.*

needs to be a larger gathering place on that level. We could pave it with glass beams! In Tokyo we made the Hermès building almost entirely of glass blocks, giving it a crystalline effect. The drawings that we have produced so far should not be considered as the definitive project, but as a series of signposts helping us to work out like artisans the details, before we begin construction. Santander will have its new cultural centre and a substantial new addition to the park as well, and I hope that people will not come here seeking Bilbao, but recognize something that is appropriate for Santander because the buildings work well and feel right.



Beyeler Foundation, Riehen





Fernando Caruncho

## The Pereda Gardens in the 21st Century

**In the general context of the intervention, landscaping takes on a highly important role, conceived as it is as a nexus creating a continuity between the new building and the old park.**

Associated with the project for the Botín Centre is the idea of enlarging the Pereda Gardens, which essentially consists of exalting the landscape of the Bay of Santander. Turned into an inherent part of the gardens, this landscape will be the park's principal asset; that is, once the road separating it from the sea has been eliminated and replaced by a tunnel underneath. The gaining of parkland that results from stretching the gardens all the way to the bay will serve to enhance each and every part of the project, ultimately creating a complex of enormous scenic value. The bay landscape is what will ultimately give life to the project, hand in hand with the Pereda Gardens surrounding Renzo Piano's building.

In this expanding and improving of the gardens that is a part and parcel of the construction of the new Botín Centre, all that which the park has grown and nurtured through time will be preserved and enhanced. By this we mean the plant species that grow in it, but also the landmarks and monuments that safeguard the memory of the Pereda Gardens. In this way the general objectives of the operation will be met. These are: 1) to link the city and the park to the existing landscape; 2) to preserve the memory of the place, respecting its main landmarks; and 3) to give the gardens a new splendour befitting the dreams of our 21st century.

How do we meet these objectives? This question can be answered in a run-through of the interventions to be undertaken, moving from the city to the sea: first, by superposing a right-angle grid on the existing urban scheme, expanding the scheme over the park, and opening the gardens to the landscape of the bay and to the building itself; second, by drawing an oval on the garden grid and using it to connect all the park spaces; third, by raising Renzo Piano's building, on pillars, to the height of the treetops, in such a way as to open

up views of the landscape, framing and enhancing perspectives towards both the sea and the mountains in the background; and finally by conceiving the building as an architectural forest, with the idea of painting the pillars the color of the trunks of the surrounding trees, chromatically blending the construction into the garden.

Having tackled the primary objective of linking up the park, the city and the building with the landscape as guiding thread, in the manner of the backdrops of Perugino in his Madonna images or of Botticelli in other famous paintings, we will focus on the memory of the place, something we hold in genuine respect and admiration because it is an expression of history, of the moments of splendour that this Cantabrian land has had. An old public garden must always preserve and exalt the landmarks of social and individual memory that connect the past to the present and the future. This is what the project aspires to do: merge present and past in the aesthetic forms of the 21st century, opening them to the future.

To recap, the current scheme of the Pereda Gardens will be superposed by a grid that enlarges the city, in such a way as to create perspectives that connect it to the landscape and to Renzo Piano's building for the Botín Foundation. Over this grid, in turn, the geometric figure of an oval will stitch together the various parts of the garden, unifying all the paths. The purpose of the oval is to provide the gardens with an alternative network of paths, one that complements the orthogonal scheme, as well as to give the park an internal rhythm of its own through the arrangement of masses of plants that will open and close in areas of shade and light, in such a way as to offer views of the new building for the Botín Foundation, and through it, also the landscape of the bay, so that it is ultimately this, the bay landscape, that gives the complex a sense of meaning and truth.

## **Credits**

### *Project*

Client: Botín Foundation.  
Author: Renzo Piano Building Workshop,  
in collaboration with Vidal y Asociados.  
Project management: Bovis Lend Lease.  
Consultants: Fernando Caruncho, landscaping;  
Tyspa, engineering; Gleeds, costs;  
Arup, facade, consulting and installations;  
Prado y Somosierra, environmental consulting;  
Dynamis, engineering of lower passage;  
Müller-BBM, acoustics;  
Bovis Lend Lease, LEED consulting.  
Constructor: OHL/Ascan (joint venture)

### *Publication*

Publisher: Botín Foundation, 2012.  
Design and production: Arquitectura Viva.  
Printer: Artes Gráficas Palermo.

Botín Centre, Santander.





# Botín Centre

Santander

January 2013

