

MUSEUM OF THE CITY Steven Holl Architects

PROJECT: Museum of the City, Cassino, Italy

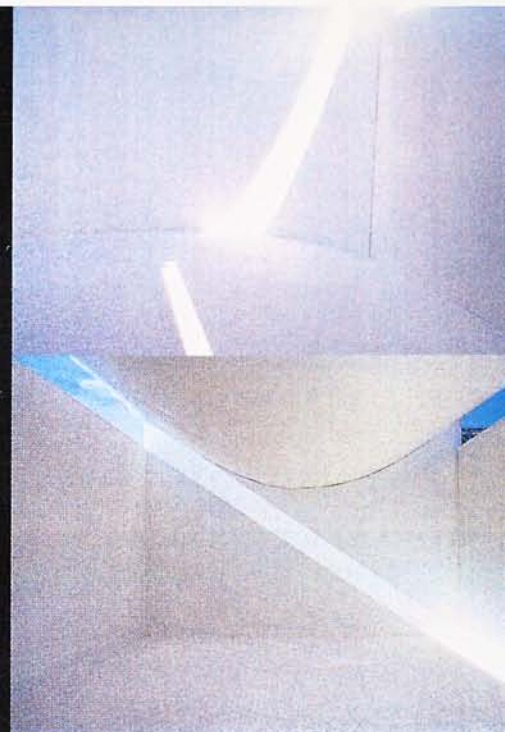
SITE: Located 120 kilometers south of Rome in a mountainous region, the city of Cassino was heavily bombed in World War II and hastily rebuilt after the war. A new cultural and historical museum will be sited in the Appenine foothills on land that currently serves as a fairground. The museum frames a town square with new housing blocks to the north and southeast, and a new theater to the east. It is sited to take in views of Monte Cassino, a 6th-century monastery that was destroyed by Allied bombers and rebuilt.

PROGRAM: The 12,000-square-foot museum will include permanent and changing exhibitions devoted to the history of Cassino and to contemporary art. The two-story building will house seven galleries devoted to the city's pre-Roman history, Roman civilization, the Medieval era, destruction during World War II and reconstruction, contemporary art, and changing exhibits on art and culture. Artifacts from Cassino's monastery, an icon of the city, will be housed in a special gallery. Offices, a café, storage, a museum store, and other support spaces will be incorporated.

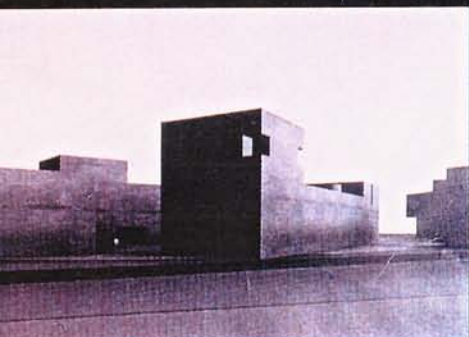
SOLUTION: The architect designed a linear, two-story building, V-shaped in plan, embracing a courtyard. A rectangular wing pointing north off the V's northernmost leg houses a café on the ground floor and a gallery above. The building, to be clad in

local stone, appears as a solid facade without windows from the ground level. Light enters the galleries through a variety of skylights, cuts, and apertures, some in the roof and walls, others appearing as notches cut out of the corners. At the building's southernmost point, a double-height gallery offers views toward the Monte Cassino monastery.

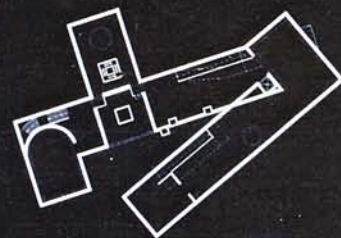
Holl treats the galleries as laboratories for analyzing the different qualities of daylight as it changes throughout the day. Sunlight is manipulated by variously shaped apertures placed in different locations along the walls and ceilings of galleries.



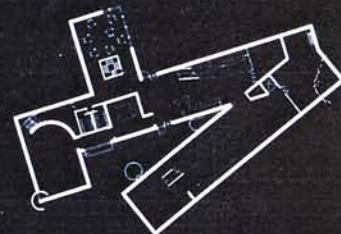
Interior studies of gallery lighting at different times of day



Model view showing south elevation

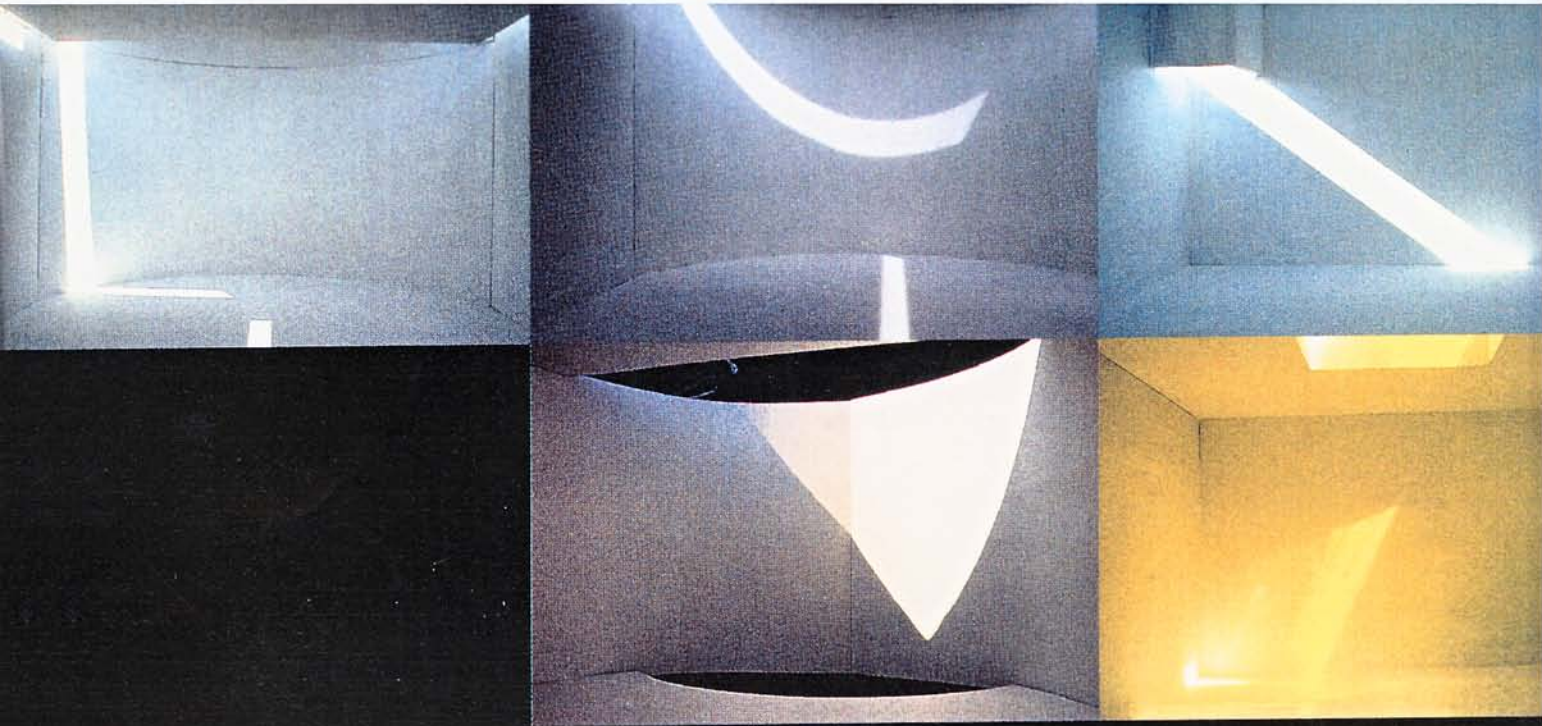


Level 2 plan



Level 1 plan





GRAHAM: *I like the light. And I like the simplicity of the exterior where there are no apertures other than the doors.*

HAWKINSON: *This project recalls Carlo Scarpa, but it's also reminiscent of James Turrell.*

PREDOCK: *The progression of the different openings evokes a journey through light.*

RAWN: *He has also studied light over different times of the day.*

HAWKINSON: *Its plan is similar to that of Alvaro Siza's Center for Contemporary Galician Art in Santiago de Compostela, Spain—it's similarly sited on the edge of a park.*

NORTEN: *This is a building that has great possibilities. I think it's way above average. It's not excessive. It's simple.*

Model view from south

