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ROUND EUROPE

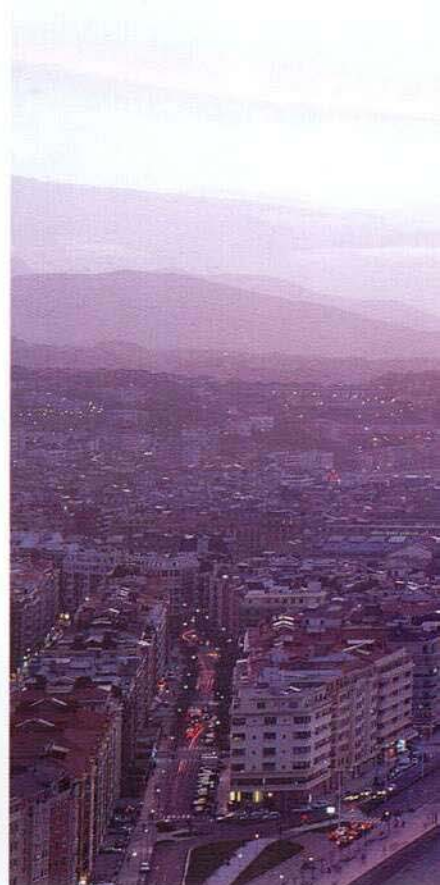
• Richard Meier and Renzo Piano are designing new stores in Düsseldorf and Cologne for clothing retailer Peek & Cloppenburg. Meier was chosen for Düsseldorf following a limited competition with Josef Paul Kleihues, Gustav Peichl and Michael Graves. Piano's building in Cologne, due to open next



spring, was a direct commission. Meanwhile in Munich Meier has completed the Siemens hq. In the late 80s he built an office/laboratory complex for the company but only now has his first Siemens project, won in competition in 1983, finally been realised.

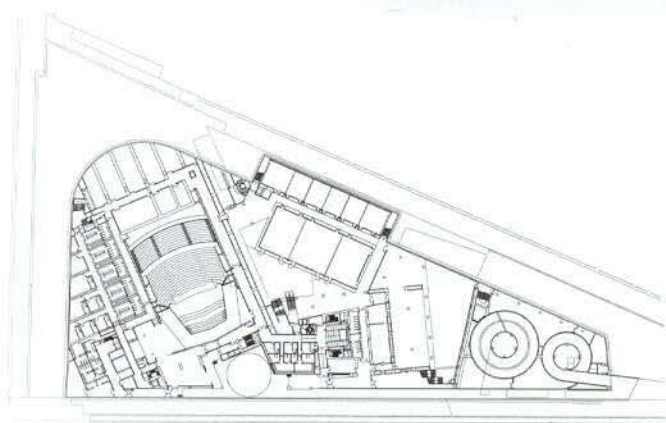
• Paris is to have a new architecture and heritage centre. Prime minister Lionel Jospin and culture minister Catherine Trautmann gave the go-ahead for the £29m project, which architect Jean-François Bodin will install within the east wing of the Palais de Chaillot. Architectural historian Jean-Louis Cohen will head the centre, which will present architecture from the 11th to the 20th centuries. Opening is scheduled for 2003. Meanwhile Jean Nouvel has been chosen ahead of Peter Eisenman and Renzo Piano in the Quai Branly competition and Toyo Ito has won the competition for the Fondation Cognacq-Jay hospital.

• Edouardo Souto de Moura is to design the new tram system in Oporto. The £530m Normetro project, which is due to be completed within five years, involves the construction of two new lines in the city centre (13km) plus renovation of two lines in the outskirts (50km). Some 70 per cent of the cost will be met by the EU.



SAN SEBASTIAN

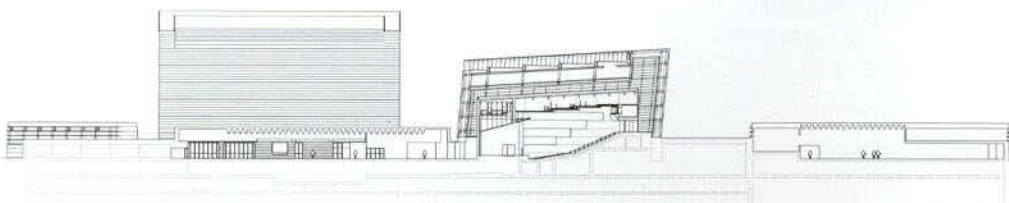
Rafael Moneo's competition-winning Kursaal has opened. Photos: Duccio Malagamba



Few cities are endowed with more favourable natural settings than San Sebastián. Located near the French border in northern Spain, it stands on a sweeping bay at the point where the River Urumea meets the Bay of Biscay.

In 1989 the city held an invited competition for the Kursaal, a new complex comprising an auditorium and congress centre. Chosen ahead of Juan Navarro Baldeweg, Mario Botta, Norman Foster and Arata Isozaki, Rafael Moneo's

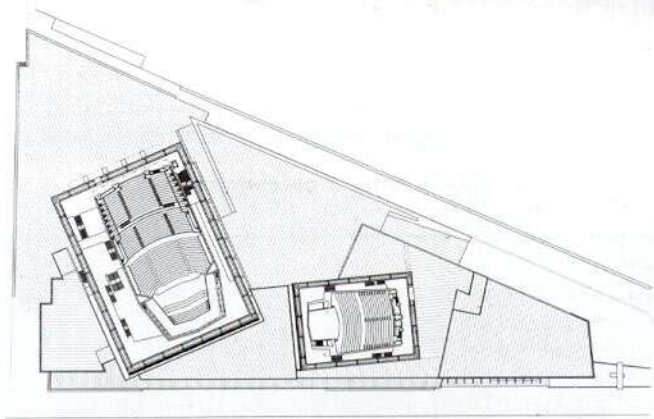
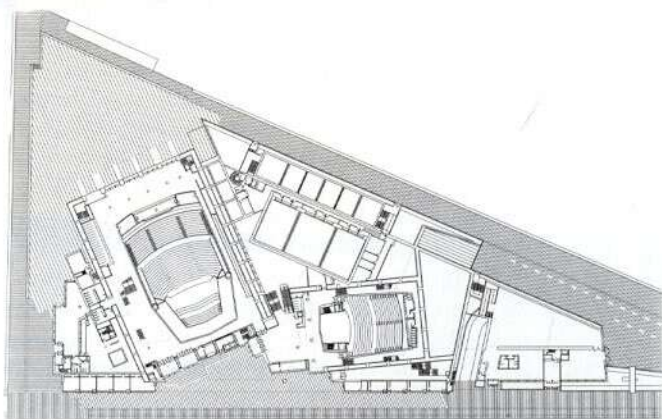
winning scheme expresses the two main elements of the programme as autonomous volumes, 'like two gigantic rocks stranded at the mouth of the river', forming part of the landscape rather than belonging to the city. Clad in



The immediate impression of the Kursaal, writes Michael Winter of Fitzroy Robinson, is that both its massing and location, squeezed between the river estuary and sweeping sandy beach, seem perfect for such a significant building. The concept of two huge glazed boulders set upon a plinth of building blocks like a beach works especially well. Echoes of Sydney Opera House, both in the drama of the site and the idea of

exposed auditoria above a sober base, are perhaps not surprising – Moneo worked on the opera house in Jorn Utzon's office in the early 60s. At night there is an extraordinary welcoming glow, beckoning from afar, although the entrance itself is rather low-key and almost uninviting. The interior – like a labyrinth of subterranean caves with little light or views out and simple, if not basic, finishes – gives an overpowering feeling. To my

mind the spaces above the plinth work better, as does the idea of a solid box set within a glazed box, with circulation areas between. Within these spaces the main stairs provide an enjoyable sequence of movement, giving access to each level of the auditorium. But overall these public spaces feel somewhat clinical and soulless, with vast areas of timber cladding and flooring and a monotone translucent light entering through the glazed

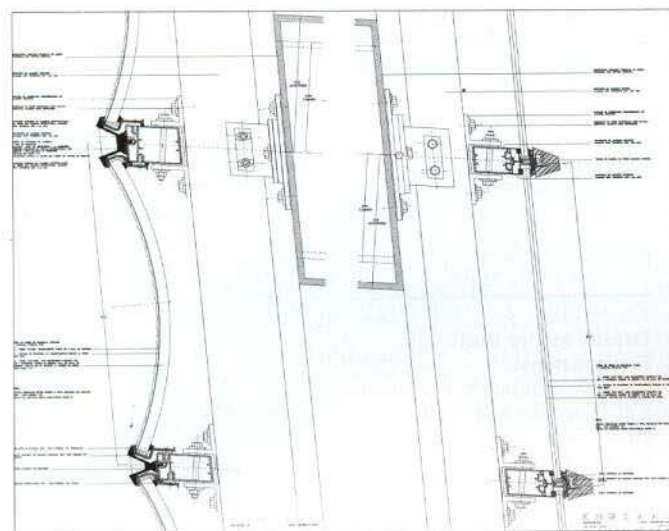
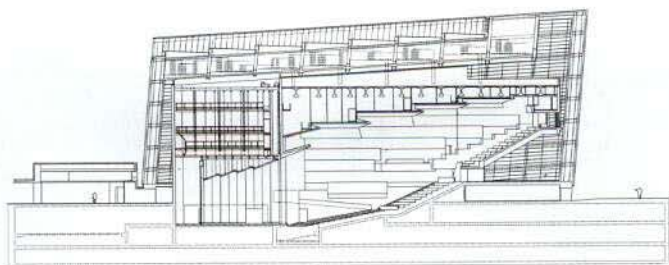


opaque glazing, the twin volumes lean romantically towards the sea. Other facilities in the £38m building – exhibition halls, meeting rooms, offices, restaurant, green room etc – are located within the terraced podium.

The larger of the two volumes contains the 1,828 seat auditorium, set asymmetrically inside the glass prism and seeming to float within it. Visitors entering the foyer are led up to the highest level, where the sea can be viewed from

facade – although when you do eventually find a window, it provides a magnificent framed glimpse of the sea and the world beyond. In contrast the theatre and auditorium spaces are pleasantly simple and modern – and the promenade cafe is a particular pleasure. Overall, however, I left with a slight sense of disappointment, not least because both the concept and distant prospect had promised so much.





a single window.

The double skin, a steel skeleton clad inside and out with laminated glass, defines a neutral, luminous interior whose only contact with the outside world is through the foyer window. Outside, the glass surfaces create a dense, opaque, yet changing mass by day, and a mysterious glowing source of light by night.

The proportions and dimensions (65 by 46 by 22 metres) of the auditorium were based on acoustic considerations, with a volume per spectator of some 10 cubic metres. Similar criteria were followed in the 624-seat

Section An aluminium framework attached to the steel structure supports an extruded aluminium profile, to which are fixed the curved laminated glass panels with a silicone sealant. The curved panels, faced with 4/5mm Flutex, measure 2500 x 600mm.



congress hall. Here the asymmetry is less evident, but the view to the sea is just as spectacular.

The platform provides entrances to the auditorium and congress hall, as well as informa-

tion and ticket booths and access to the 500-space car park below. This plinth, opening onto the Avenue de la Zurriola, serves as the meeting space between the cultural centre and the city.



Project team

Architect: Rafael Moneo; project team: Luis Rojo (project arch), Ignacio Quemada, Eduardo Belzunce, Fernando Iznaola, Collette Creppell, Jan Kleihues, Luis Diaz Maurino, Adolfo Zanetti, Robert Robinowitz, Juan Beldarrain, Pedro Elcuaz, Imanol Iturria; mechanical: JG Assocs; structure: Javier Manterola, Hugo Corres & Assocs, Jesús J Cañas; acoustics: Higinio Arau.