

Turner Contemporary

Margate, Kent, UK 2006–2011

Turner Contemporary is a new gallery in Margate on the north coast of Kent. Its name was inspired by the town's association with the English painter JMW Turner, who exclaimed, '...the skies over Thanet [the north-eastern tip of Kent] are the loveliest in all Europe'. The gallery is located on a prominent seafront, previously a car park, where a guesthouse frequented by Turner once stood.

The new two-storey building is designed to maximise both the dramatic setting between sea and land and the extraordinary light conditions unique to this area that inspired Turner well over a century ago. It is composed of six identical crystalline volumes with monopitched roofs providing north light to the gallery spaces and revealing daily and seasonal light changes. Turner Contemporary offers spectacular views to the sea, connecting visitors to the broader landscape whilst encouraging a sense of participation in the community. The gallery is visible from the railway station across the sandy beach and forms a focal point on the horizon. As the seafront is occasionally flooded, the building has been raised on a plinth and its immediate surroundings provided with a hard landscape.

The public gallery, which has no permanent collection, presents both historic and contemporary works as well as a programme of educational and cultural events with a broad community appeal. The ground-floor spaces include a reception area, a flexible event space and a cafeteria – all of which can operate independently from the climate-controlled exhibition spaces occupying the upper floor. Direct daylight enters the building from the clerestory windows on the north side and diffused sunlight from the skylights above each of the six volumes.

The building is constructed with a concrete frame and acid-etched glass skin. The envelope has to withstand the corrosive nature of the sea, high humidity levels, strong winds and the occasional wave overtopping the building. The façades are primarily of glass with reinforced windows. Internally, the material palette is reduced to hard-wearing screed floors and dry lining to facilitate the hanging of changing exhibitions.

Date	2006–2011
Gross floor area	3,100 m ²
Client	Kent County Council / Turner Contemporary
Design architect	David Chipperfield Architects, London
Director	Franz Borho
Project architects	Holger Mattes, Caroline Rogerson
Landscape architect	Gross Max
Structural engineer	Adams Kara Taylor
Services engineer	Arup
Access consultant	Arup
Acoustic consultant	Arup
Facade consultant	Arup
Lighting consultant	Arup
Quantity surveyor	Gardiner & Theobald
Contractor	R Durtnell & Sons
Photography	Simon Menges

