

Anchorage Museum at Rasmuson Center

Anchorage, Alaska, USA, 2003–2009

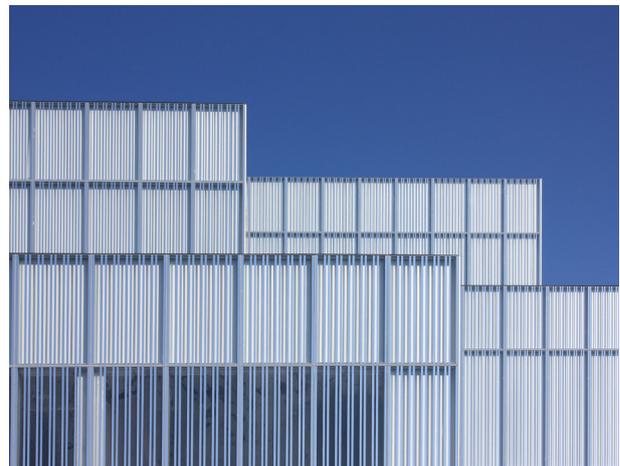
The brief required an expansion of the museum for both front and back of house, transforming the museum experience and providing additional space to collect and exhibit the region's cultural treasures: the art, history and science of Alaska. A key aim for the design was also to enhance downtown Anchorage. Significant new additions to the museum included the Smithsonian Arctic Studies Center, temporary exhibition spaces, a new main entrance and general visitor facilities. The museum also now houses the Imaginarium – a children's science and activity centre.

The new four-storey building is located against the west face of the existing museum and spans the entire width of the urban plot. The form and placement establish a new façade directly facing downtown Anchorage. The pre-existing structure continues to function as part of the museum, working in tandem with the new building, the first two floors of which connect with those of the older, and the existing central atrium is linked to the new via corridors that form circulation loops on both levels. The ground-floor level, which includes among its visitor facilities a cafeteria and shop, is easily accessed by the local community, reinforcing the presence of the museum in the city. All permanent and temporary exhibitions take place on the upper floors. The new plaza in front occupies the remainder of the site, making a further connection between the museum and the city. The plaza is conceived as a garden containing formal and informal spaces, including a birch 'forest'.

Five linear volumes of varying height, width and length make up the composition of the building. The primary form establishes a new edifice for the museum, its height determined by a desire to connect with the surroundings. The programmatic distribution and stacking of volumes forms a pyramid section, with more floor space at ground-floor level for the new entrance and visitor services. The 'shifting' nature of the volumes generates pockets and recesses on the north and south façades, concealing the loading bays.

The glass façade is fritted with a striped mirror pattern, providing views out of and into the museum and reflecting the sky and the surrounding mountainous environment. The extensive use of glass evokes a sense of the openness and transparency that symbolise the museum's new image and mission. The fritting mirrors capture diverse qualities of light throughout the annual cycle, and the glass itself has low iron properties for colour neutrality.

Internally, the concrete structure is exposed and areas are created by filling in the space between the columns. A palette of various materials and colours reinforces the identity of the rooms in the new wing: art exhibition spaces in plaster; ethnographic exhibition spaces, lobby and circulation spaces in coloured metal; and the atrium and cafeteria in coloured, natural timber. The floors are a continuous surface of polished and honed cementitious topping, and the ceilings consist of suspended metal panels with integrated services and lighting.



Date	2003–2009
Gross floor area	8,404 m ²
Client	Anchorage Museum at Rasmuson Center
Architect	David Chipperfield Architects, London
Directors	Franz Borho, Billy Prendergast
Project architect	Mattias Kunz
Contact architect	Kumin Associates Inc.
Landscape architect	Charles Anderson Landscape Architects / Earthscape
Structural engineer	Magnusson Klemencic Associates / BBFM Engineers Inc.
Services engineer	Affiliated Engineers NW Inc./ RSA Engineering Inc.
Façade consultant	W.J.Higgins and Associates Inc.
General contractor	Alcan General Inc.
Photography	Christian Richters

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