

Musée des Confluences in Lyon, France

“The Crystal Cloud of Knowledge” brings knowledge to life

The architectural concept behind Coop Himmelb(l)au’s design for the Musée des Confluences integrates its unique location on a peninsula directly at the confluence of the Rhône and Saône: A clearly structured crystal that serves as a public forum faces a cloud, a flexible “soft” space that holds the knowledge of the future.

The Musée des Confluences does not consider itself as an exclusive “temple of the Muses” for the educated elite, but as a public access to the knowledge of our time, as a bridge between science and society. It encourages direct and active use – not just as a museum, but as a venue in the city, as a new urban space. Designed to encompass the core themes of technology, biology and ethics, it focuses on the needs of the modern information society and makes current information tangible to a broad public audience.

The architecture is just as changeable as the knowledge it is entrusted with; it forms a landscape of various ramps and levels where the boundaries between the inside and outside dissolve, until the structure becomes a dynamic sequence of spatial events. The arrangement of the exhibition spaces also follows this movement. Joined by a boulevard, enclosed black boxes and free exhibition areas alternate on two levels – it is an experimental spatial design that deviates from conventional passageways and spurs public curiosity.

The outside structure is shaped by the two components of the “crystal” and the “cloud”. Facing the city, the crystal offers an urban forum and welcomes visitors with a monumental stairway. Its clear and legible forms, featuring a distinctive central funnel, represent the world that we move in every day. As the actual museum, the cloud holds present and future knowledge – a flexible space with hidden streams and countless transitions.

“The museum will drive the development of this former industrial district forward. The entire building floats in the air to allow unobstructed access from the city to the water or to the peninsula,” is how Wolf D. Prix, Design Principal and CEO of Coop Himmelb(l)au explains the concept behind the Musée des Confluences. “I would describe it as a passage concept that creates new urban space, a gateway to the new district.”

The society of the future will be a society of knowledge. But this knowledge can no longer be divided into separate specialized areas. Innovation is created in the spaces between, in the blurred areas, in hybrid and overlapping zones. The

questions of the future are decided in the transitional areas between technology, biology and ethics – the core themes of the Musée des Confluences. In architecture, these themes are expressed by formal mutation, penetration, deformation, simultaneity, resolution and changeability.

The idea of the permanent reinvention of an urban event enables Lyon to perfectly position itself within a regional as well as within a global context.

MUSÉE DES CONFLUENCES PROJECT TEAM

Client: Département du Rhône, Lyon, France, represented by SERL, Lyon, France

Planning: COOP HIMMELBLAU Wolf D. Prix & Partner ZT GmbH

Design Principal/CEO: Wolf D. Prix

Project Partner: Markus Prossnigg

Project Architects: Mona Bayr, Angus Schoenberger

Design Architect: Tom Wiscombe

Project Coordination: Thomas Margaretha, Peter Grell

Project Team Vienna: Christopher Beccone, Guy Bébié, Lorenz Bürgi, Wolfgang Fiel, Kai Hellat, Robert Haranza, Alex Jackson, Georg Kolmayr, Daniel Kerbler, Lucas Kulnig, Andreas Mieling, Marianna Milioni, Daniel Moral, Jutta Schädler, Andrea Schöning, Mario Schwary, Markus Schwarz, Oliver Tessmann, Dionicio Valdez, Philipp Vogt, Markus Wings, Christoph Ziegler

Project Team Lyon: Patrick Lhomme, Francois Texier, Philippe Folliasson, Etienne Champenois, Alexandru Gheorghe, Niels Hiller, Emanuele Iacono, Pierre-Yves Six

Local Architects: Patriarche & Co, Chambéry/Lyon, France (planning); MESA Workshop / Grégory Perrin, Lyon, France (execution); Chabanne & Partenaires, Lyon, France (project management)

Construction Survey Lyon: Debray Ingénierie, Caluire et Cuire, France

Costs: Mazet & Associés, Paris, France; CUBIC, Lyon, France

Structural Engineering: B+G Ingenieure, Bollinger und Grohmann GmbH, Frankfurt, Germany (design)

Coyne et Bellier, Lyon, France (execution); VS_A, Lille, France (execution)

HVAC: ITEE-Fluides, Arnas, France

Security Fire Consultation: Cabinet Casso & Cie, Paris, France

Acoustics: Cabinet Lamoureux, Paris, France

Media Consultation: Cabinet Labeyrie, Paris, France

Lighting Consultation: Har Hollands, Eindhoven, Netherlands

Landscape Design: EGIS aménagement, Lyon, France

PROJECT DATA

Site Area: 20,975 m²,

Net Floor Area: 26,700 m², **Gross Floor Area:** 46,476 m²

CHRONOLOGY

Competition (1st Prize): 2001; **Start of Planning:** 2002;

Start of Construction: 10/2010

Scheduled Completion: 2014

www.coop-himmelblau.at