

Press release  
Dornbirn, November 2010

## **MAXXI in Rome**

### **Dynamic room sculpture**



B1 | With its expressive structural design, the MAXXI clearly breaks out of the orthogonal urban grid pattern. Its relation to the quarter is maintained by the moderate height development.

Italy's first national museum of contemporary art, the Museo Nazionale delle Arti del XXI Secolo, or 'MAXXI', is an expressive architectural sculpture. The dynamic nature of this embodied form of Zaha Hadid Architects' notion of a 'drift' – of masses and spaces that drift – is underlined by the design elements of natural and artificial light.

Located on the former grounds of the military barracks on the northern edge of the inner city, in between Tiber bend, residential area and storage buildings, the light grey structure of the MAXXI is visible from afar. The overlapping, curved contours break out of the orthogonal urban grid pattern, attracting visitors magically.

The exposed concrete building appears like a huge sculpture with decoratively alternating light and shadow on the wide forecourt. Bright patterns are drawn by sunlight shining into and through the structure, shadow lines wander across the area, interior and exterior are connected subtly. The overhanging structures double up as projecting roofs, guiding the visitor into the foyer, a hall as high as the building, interlaced with crossing stairs, passages and bridges – a Piranesi-style space composed of light concrete and black steel. The dynamic stair sculpture not only connects the five exhibition levels, but also acts as a stage for the flow of movement through the 'vertical piazza'. The structure is flooded with natural light from glass roof to floor, delicately balanced by means of



a specially developed luminous ceiling containing indirect fluorescent illumination that can be added as required. This combined system ensures a homogeneous basic illumination. The architects also used artificial light as a specific design element: 'In the hall, light is an important design element. All the lighting is integrated in the architectural elements, serving as linear structures to emphasise the dynamic layout', explains the architect of the project Gianluca Racana. The stairs and pathways hugging the walls or freely spanning the room are turned into carriers of light themselves. Their translucently shimmering undersides fitted with fluorescent lamps behind light-scattering foil and acrylic glass take on the appearance of boxes of light.

The generosity of the entrance hall, its flowing lines and dynamic character is continued in the exhibition halls. With straight, curved or inclined walls, with corridors, ramps and terraces, the room sequences are as surprising as differentiated. Some gallery parts are introverted, while others open up towards the outside with big glass walls. The halls are parallel, staggered, they cross each other, form cascading levels, meander on in different directions only to meet up again later. The visitor gladly gives himself up to drift along this flowing trajectory through the generous exhibition landscape. Instead of classical cabinets, the curators have a total area of 10,000 m<sup>2</sup> at their disposal to exhibit contemporary art in all sorts of media. Zaha Hadid's complex spatial composition challenges the idea of traditional exhibition spaces and the neutrality of the 'white cube'. The MAXXI makes it possible to set up and experience art in dialogue with architecture in a new way, with stimulating cross references and associations.

The lighting design is correspondingly differentiated. As in the stair hall, natural light plays a major role, responsible for the almost studio-like atmosphere of the top-lit halls. 'We wanted to provide as much natural light as possible. Since most works of art are created under daylight conditions, this facilitates the colours and surfaces to be perceived without falsification. At the same time, it was important for us to create optimal artificial light conditions', Gianluca Racana explains. That is what the complex luminous ceilings are there for. All the technical elements are integrated in the narrow roof girders – steel lattice framework girders faced with concrete elements. They also carry the gratings outside, which serve to protect from the sun and to scatter light, as well as the two glass levels and the dimming blinds. Homogeneous basic illumination is ensured by dimmable fluorescent lamps fitted behind light-scattering translucent acrylic glass on either side of the entire length of the rib girders. Aluminium louvers serve as sunshades, regulated by the intelligent light management system Luxmate Litenet in response to the position of the sun and the required lighting. The system also controls the light output of the luminaires. This ensures a perfect mixture of natural and artificial light that can be adjusted according to the existing daylight conditions. A rail system on the underside of the girders allows additional spotlights to be mounted for point illumination. Beamers and lightweight partition walls can also be mounted there.

The exterior lighting design complements the characteristics of the architecture ideally: on the one hand accentuating the MAXXI as a new component of the city and on the other emphasising its connection to the existing quarter.



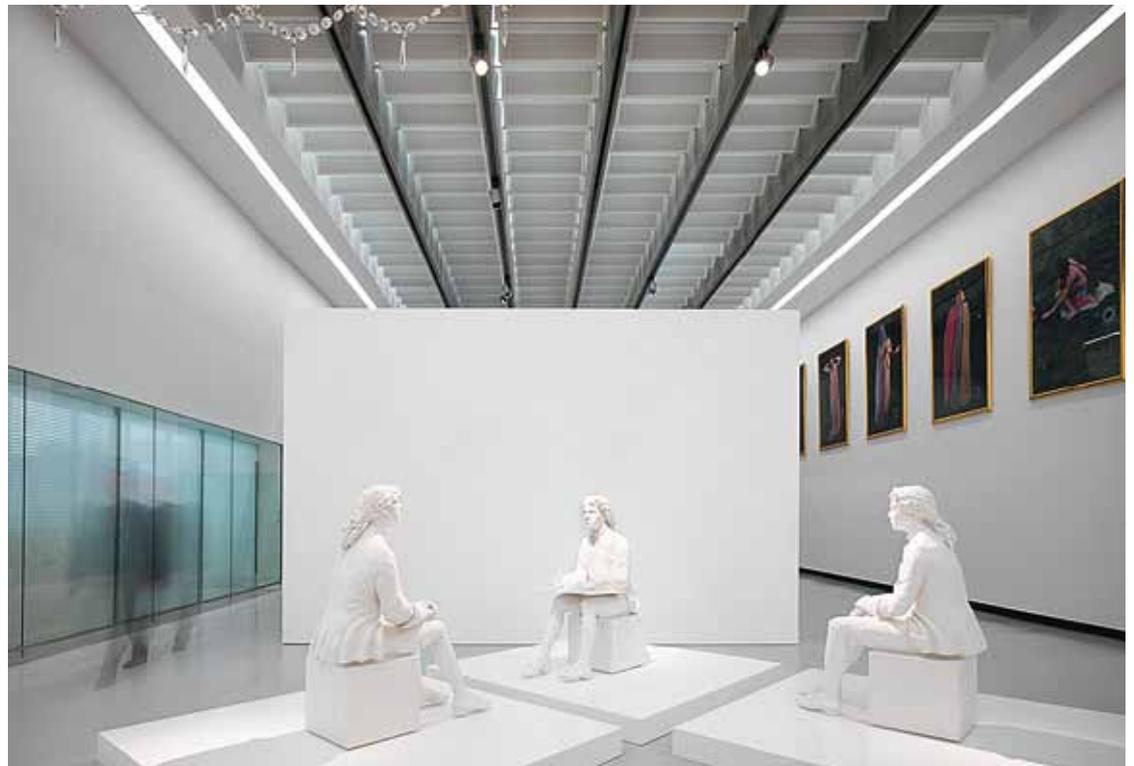
B2 | The soft light not only radiates downwards, but also diffuses upwards through the grating of the steps and pathways. Light bands hidden in the handrails follow the stairs as a source of indirect illumination.

**Fact box:****MAXXI, Rome/I**

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<b>Client:</b>	Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities, Rome/I
<b>Architecture:</b>	Zaha Hadid Architects, Zaha Hadid and Patrik Schumacher, London/UK
<b>Lighting Design:</b>	Equation Lighting, London/UK
<b>Electrical Design:</b>	Max Fordham and Partners, OK Design Group, London/UK
<b>Electrical Installation:</b>	Ciel Spa, Rom/I
<b>Lighting Solution:</b>	Zumtobel Tecton continuous-row luminaires, Vivo L spotlights, Panos downlights, Luxmate Litenet light management system

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B3 | Focussed spots highlight the sculptures and make them come to life by the interplay of light and shade.



B4 | The unusual view of the underside of the parallel roof girders characterises the halls. They look more like lofts than museum rooms. This character is emphasised by the clear light of the fluorescent lamps.



B5 | The lighting is integrated in the ceiling as a continuous light band and also provides an even illumination of the walls.



B6 I All the technical elements are accommodated in the complex luminous ceilings. The general illumination is provided by light bands with dimmable fluorescent lamps fitted behind light-scattering translucent acrylic glass. Spots offer additional point illumination.

More information:



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