

COMPLETELY DOTTY

The de Young's de Young:

Major Design Features

Constructed of warm, natural materials including copper, stone, wood and glass, the new de Young will blend with and complement its natural surroundings. Ribbons of windows will erase the boundary between the museum interior and the lush natural environment outside, and four public entrances will segue naturally from the park's pathways, welcoming visitors from all directions.

The building's dramatic copper facade will be perforated and textured to replicate the impression made by light filtering through a tree canopy, creating an artistic abstraction on the exterior of the museum that resonates with the de Young's tree-filled park setting. The building's copper skin, chosen for its changeable quality through oxidation, will assume a rich patina over time that will blend gracefully with the surrounding natural environment.

The northeast corner of the building features a 144-foot education tower that gently spirals from the ground floor and aligns at the top with the grid formed by the streets of the Richmond and Sunset neighborhoods surrounding the park. A public observation floor will offer panoramic views of the entire Bay Area.

Landscape Design

The outdoor environment of the new de Young will feature a public sculpture garden and terrace beneath a cantilevered roof; a children's garden; and landscaping that creates an organic link between the building and the surrounding environment on all four sides. The landscape design integrates historic elements from the old de Young--including the sphinx sculptures, the Pool of Enchantment, and the original palm trees--as well as sandstone, redwood, ferns and other plants and materials relevant to the site, creating a museum that will be permeable, open and inviting to the public.

The New York Times' de Young:

“The copper façade has a pattern of perforations and dents; the architects sought to bring the outside in with vegetation that penetrates the floor plan.”

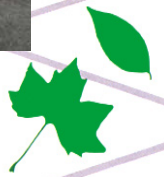


Robert Edwards' de Young:

The building Herzog & de Meuron and Fong & Chan designed is sufficiently weird to be engaging, but the way the museum staff has chosen to spin the architecture contradicts what one actually experiences. I do not understand the cult of natural materials in this country. The idea that wood that has been killed, planed, carved and varnished; stone that has been blasted out of the earth, chiseled, honed, and polished; or metal that has been alloyed, beaten, extruded, stamped, and laser cut has any relation to Nature probably started with the Arts & Crafts movement, but it ought to end now. The de Young building stands above all the vegetation in its artificial park setting—it will never blend even after the polka-dotted copper siding turns green. The only time “warm” glass occurs in nature is when lightning strikes. The only lush, natural environment I was able to see through the ribbons of windows were bleak interior courtyards planted with tropical vegetation or the surrounding the acres of hardtop that form the roofs of the underground parking garages. The Palm trees and the grid of tortured topiaries above the garages are hardly natural. But not to worry, you will most likely enter the museum through one of the brightly painted yet ominous concrete (a material that is as natural as copper and glass) encased parking levels where the museum leaf logo is the only hint of nature and even that is a frightening South Park color, which does not occur in nature. There is no sense of entering the building when one passes through the subterranean corridor.



de Young



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Suddenly one just finds one's self in the now requisite Baths-of-Caracalla great hall. There is a huge window at the top of a wide grand staircase. The exaggerated perspective of what appears to be a stairway to heaven makes an old man fearful of meeting his end. If you do dare to climb up, you will find that the view changes from sky to a hellishly confined pit. Turn carefully around so you don't pitch down the vertiginous stairs and you will have an excellent view of the world's biggest sofa painting, Gerhard Richter's *Strontium*. The artwork is a grid of dots that reiterate the polka-dot bumps on the museum's copper skin. Connecting the dots of the art to the dots of the architecture reduces Richter's monumental mural to accessory status.





Design trumps art everywhere in this museum, which must make children's tours a breeze for the education department. Few kids will notice that the tower top lines up with the street grid outside, but they will have a great time seeing spots everywhere. The steel floor plates in the garages are dotted, the rubber mats at the terrace doors are dotted, and the huge Aboriginal painting by the café is made of dots—what fun! The other motif that gives continuity to the labyrinthine galleries is the LED screen. Art is distorted to fit the proportions of the many video monitors and signage has been designed to fit in a wide rectangle, which reiterates the proportions of the building's dotted copper plates. Oh the *Gesamtkunstwerk* of it all! Labels with tiny photographs of the objects they describe helped me find the art hidden in the overwhelming building design and will no doubt help the kids on their scavenger hunt.

