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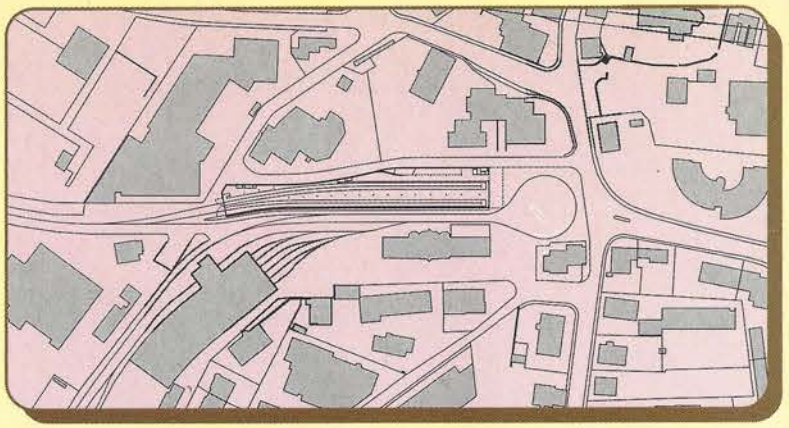
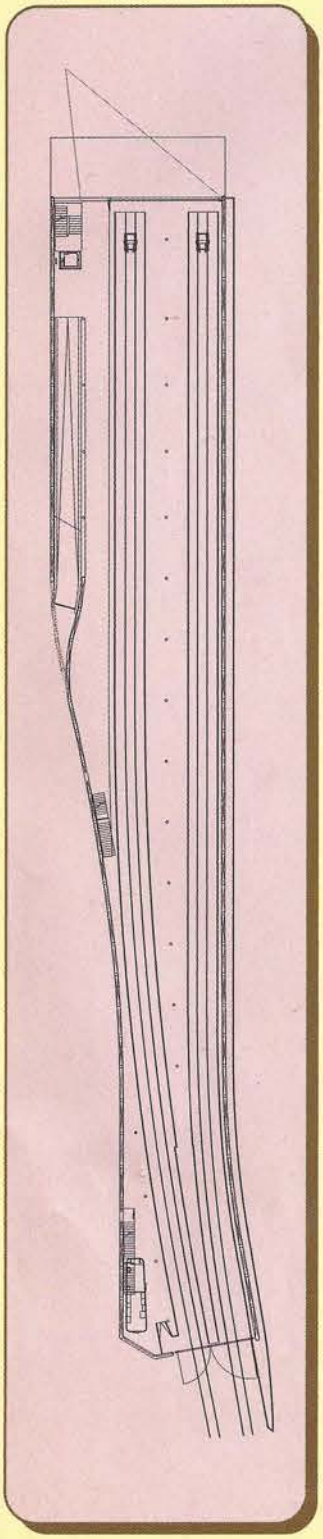
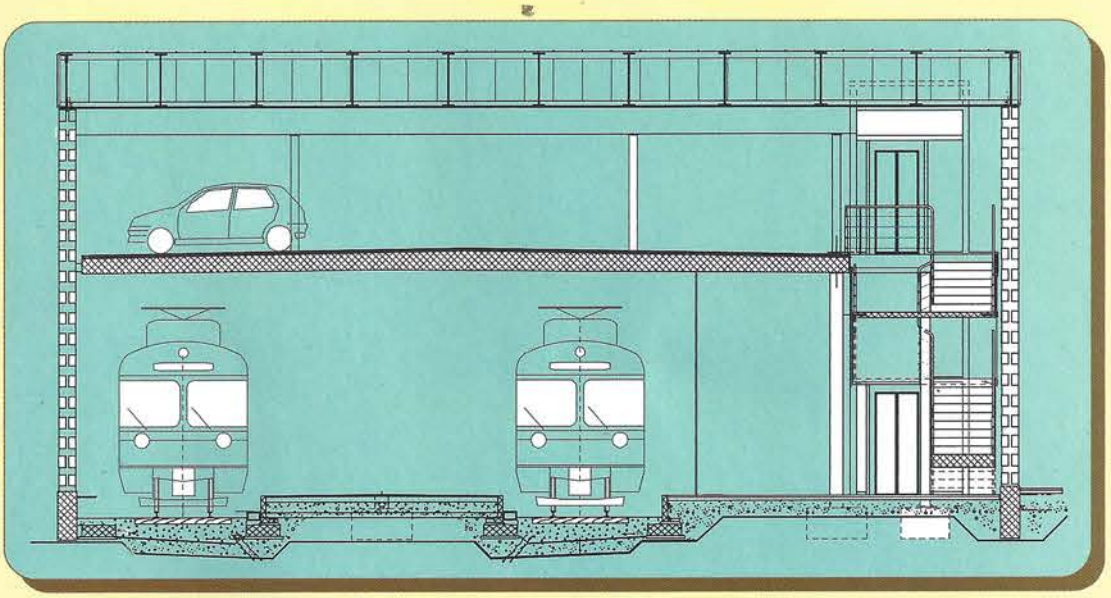
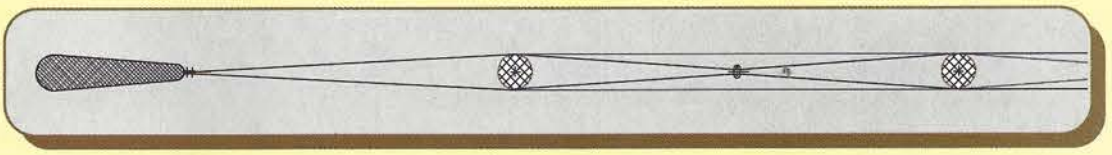


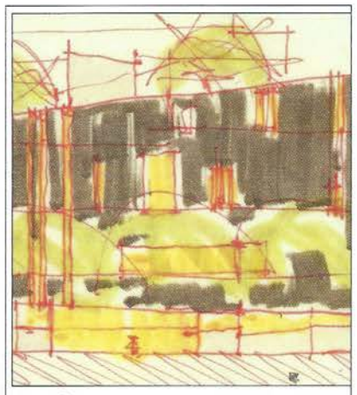






smarch works on the railroad **will bruder** rides into reno **gae aulenti** flies into frisco

practice



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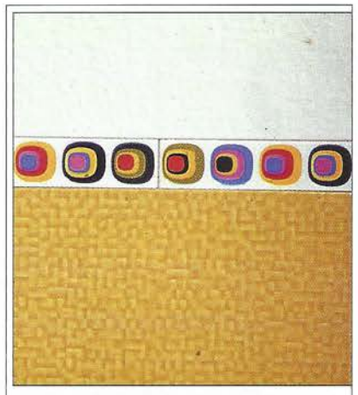

process

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In plan, section, and detail, an open-air railroad station in Switzerland both elevates the public profile of infrastructure and privileges the art of fabrication. Photographs on cover and facing page by Dominique Uldry; above, left: Lars Tunbjörk.

COMING NEXT MONTH
Zaha Hadid in Ohio | David Salmela in Minnesota | Heikkinen-Komonen in Finland | Report from Panama | VAI on Public Space

BEING BRUDER

Will Bruder's new Nevada Museum of Art, like his 1995 central library in Phoenix, cuts a paradoxical figure: Both buildings have conceptual origins in the geological formations of the Southwest. Both appear to have erupted from beneath their sites. But they also share an alien quality, as though they've landed fully realized from an otherworldly place.

In Phoenix, sheets of corrugated copper cladding wrap what appears to be a mesa rising from the middle of the sprawling city. Great glazed façades to the north and south open the building to the rugged Arizona landscape. While in Reno, where his latest design opened in May to much local fanfare, Bruder has mined shapes and textures from the nearby Carson Range (a spur of the Sierra Nevada) and its rocky desert floor. For the people of Phoenix, the architect located the main reading room on the top floor of his library; in Reno, he gives over prime rooftop real estate to a sculpture garden, providing views of the city and its mountainous backdrop.

Bruder's forms can be awkward—ungainly even—in their overt effort to reference context, but in doing so, they remind us of our debt to mother nature; they also simultaneously promote the building arts through unexpected material juxtapositions, manipulated views, lighting effects, and spatial complexities. His intentions are literally in the right place.

THE MYTH OF BLACK ROCK

A GEOLOGICAL ICON OF THE NEARBY DESERT ECHOES THROUGH WILL BRUDER'S NEVADA ART MUSEUM.

BY C.C. SULLIVAN | PHOTOGRAPHS BY GRANT MUDFORD

Reno's newest museum projects an alien image as it straddles a commercial center and a residential neighborhood (this page). Its main façade is a curving, canted expanse of charcoal-colored zinc with slits of fenestration; the vertiginous atrium features a cantilevered stair of sandblasted, perforated steel (following pages).

High above the plain, in the direction of our road, a black, bare mountain reared its head.
—ALONZO DELANO (EARLY CALIFORNIA SETTLER), 1859

Here in Reno, Nevada, Black Rock is an especially evocative phrase. It's a desert, a prominent rise, and a connotation of edge: wilderness, frontier, even counterculture. (A group called Black Rock City stages the annual "Burning Man" event nearby.) It's an icon of the Old West that recalls the hardy people who tamed this mile-high bowl ringed by rugged, snow-capped peaks. And while the image of Black Rock may have inspired Will Bruder's daring new Nevada Museum of Art (NMA), it also helped assure its embrace by the burgeoning arts community in this misunderstood, architecturally rich city. No longer a redoubt of gambling and divorce, Reno brims with $50 million in new cultural projects—satellites soon to revolve around two huge annual events: a month-long arts festival called Artown and the renowned Coeur d'Alene Art Auction of cowboy objets d'art. Underneath it all, and towering on every horizon, is that dark, basaltic ore.

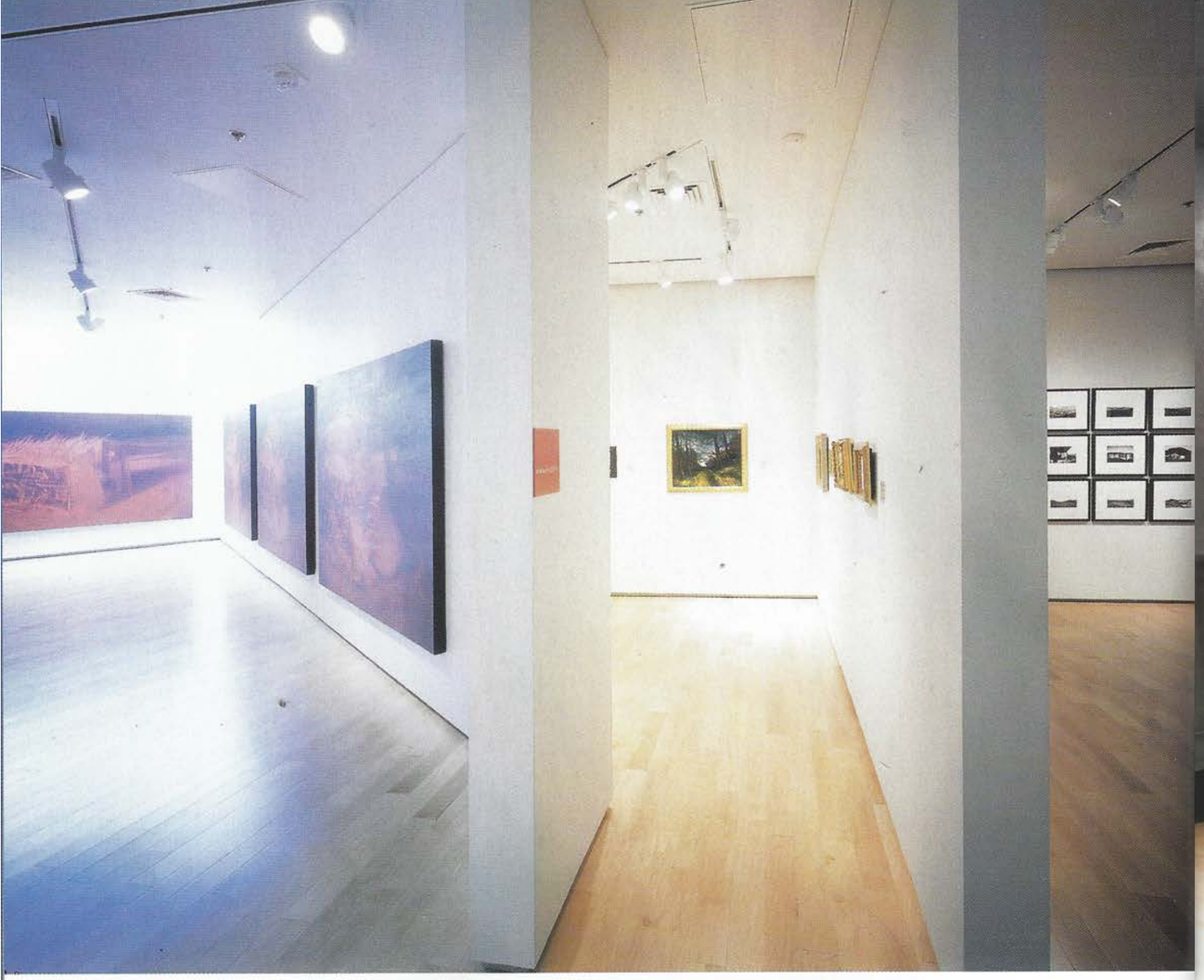
Set on a rise just south of downtown Reno and within earshot of the often-boisterous Truckee River is the NMA's new black rock. Enigmatic and seemingly impenetrable, Bruder's outcropping cleaves to a very real urban-suburban edge. Its prominent northwest-facing corner offers an unfussy sculpture garden and a perceptibly torqued, raked wall of dark wrinkled metal to a neighborhood of 1930s bungalows; to the east, it bumps up against nine stories of banal brick offices that announce Reno's mid-rise financial center. The mute boulder of a building seems to teeter and warp on this boundary, cantilevered over a glazed lobby area on a luminous prop of amber plastic.

ALIEN EDGE

Early on, the majestically curved and twisting western façade, which echoes the sweep of the Carson Range to the west, became critical to Bruder's conception of the museum. The dark, rough expanse suggested a Norwegian slate skin, but a visit to a near-Arctic quarry with museum director and CEO Steven High proved the stone too dear, possibly hiking the $16 million budget by 10 percent. Instead, Bruder works a charcoal-colored zinc skin into a banded collage of standing seams, reveals, and corrugations, its panels converging acutely into window slits for administration, library, and meeting zones (see "The Western Edge," page 48). The warped curve has a life of its own, changing with the viewer's movement by car or on foot (increasingly the mode of downtown transport in this very walkable university town with a budding riverfront). The subtly distorted geometry and handcrafted cladding—and the eroded edges at the roofline and at grade—help lighten the alien structure's apparent mass.

It is a complex and astonishing piece of architecture, one that invites comparison with Frank Lloyd Wright's Guggenheim. Driven by material associations and a disciplined plan geometry, Bruder presents museum-goers with ever-changing views and no two identical conditions. Moving through its cavernous, slightly disorienting atrium, one senses the drama of forced perspective, the heroism of a cantilevered sandblasted-steel stair, the mystery of its varied crevices, skylights, and slit windows, as well as an overall material kinesis—now steel, now glass, now gypsum, now stone. Inside and outside, the building's finished surfaces are meticulously worked over, cropped, pasted, polished, and patched. (The composition suggests a challenging atonal symphony, perhaps, or a collage by Kurt Schwitters: Bruder's effort and thumbprints are evident on the black and white backdrop, affixed capriciously with swatches of bent metal, shards of glass, patches of terrazzo, and bands of window film.) Peripheral views change constantly, as if the building were tweaking the visitor's subconscious, cautioning us to stay awake and not take anything for granted. In many zones, we enjoy carefully framed vistas of the sierra's peaks.

Might such dynamism detract from installed art? "A museum experience is a multifaceted one," says High. "You can't just build serene, tranquil gallery spaces; it's also a social experience, an exploratory experience, and it's individually directed."



A view of the installation gallery, a triangular room for miniatures, and a collection space titled "The Altered Landscape" shows the museum's varied program. Much artwork inside the Nevada Museum of Art fixates on the arid plains and rocky bluffs of the Black Rock Desert, starting in the late 1800s with works by landscape painters such as Frederick Schafer, and more recent photographic works by John Pfahl, Jim Sanborn, and artists from the 1970s New Topographics movement.

On a functional level, the museum layout does well to mediate art-viewing respites and unstructured socializing zones. Glass partitions separate the atrium from gallery spaces, which line the east half of the deformed donut plan; along the western curved wall are meeting and research areas, many with views of the horizon. Bruder calls the interiors "choreographed spaces marking your journey into art"—journeys that end at the NMA in quirky and unexpected ways. Discounting a claustrophobic triangular wedge on the second floor, which hosts the museum's miniatures collection, the surprises are pleasant: A polygonal installation room culminates in a triangular skylight shaft; an exposed steel deck and a corner window energize the contemporary gallery; the largest space, 7,000 square feet for traveling exhibitions on the third floor, has an accordion ceiling and a leaning wall that echoes the main façade's cant and curl.

BACKDROP? NOT QUITE

Bruder isn't being disingenuous when he tells NMA visitors that "art museums are to be backdrops for art," but with this, his first ground-up museum building, he slips his own sculptural work into the self-guided tour. This incursion—like the project's stealthy and dramatic impact on Reno—seemed inevitable from the start. Even before he was hired, Bruder convinced the museum's board to rethink its modest plans to expand on top of its 15,000-square-foot previous home, the windowless tilt-up offices of a title company. Bruder broke ranks from the short list (which initially had included Swiss duo Herzog & de Meuron and San Francisco's Stanley Saitowitz, but two weeks later became just Bruder and Mark Mack of Venice, California) and proposed an entirely new, customized container for the museum's collections on the same site. Demolition would cost only 10 percent of their budget to remodel the original space, he reasoned, as he offered a first design that cantilevered aggressively into the middle of the site's main drag, West Liberty Street. The gamble paid off, and NMA planned more fundraising and bought an adjacent lot to accommodate an expanded, 60,000-square-foot program.

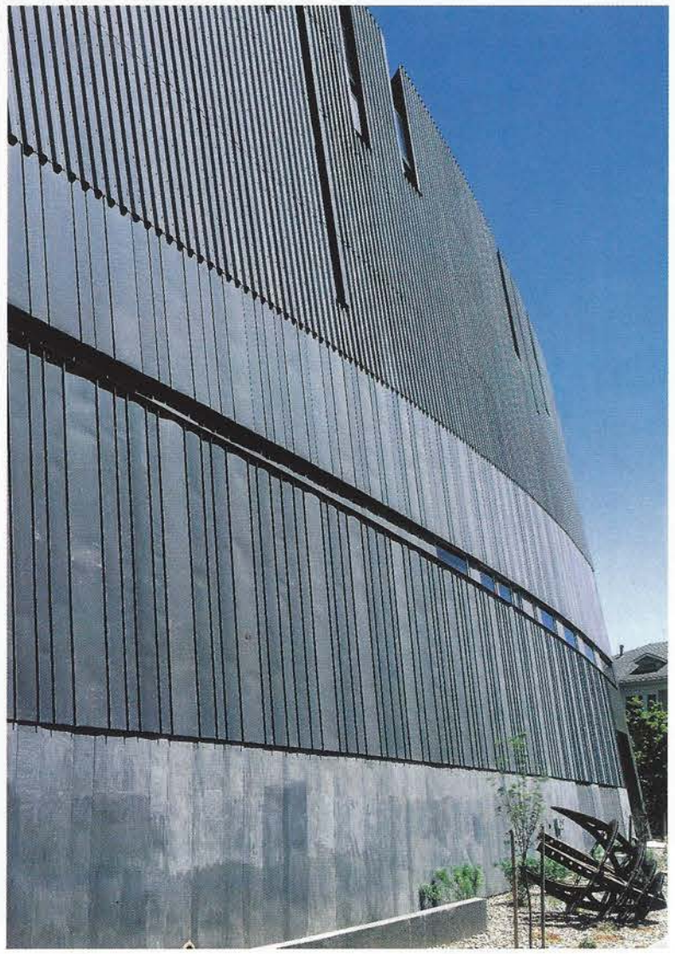
Beyond its dramatically cramped, bright-red entry, the 186-seat theater is comfortable and intimate, opening into plasterboard ceilings and walls that invert the shape of the exterior's curved and straight façades. A suspended backdrop wall floats a few inches above the stage; handrails emerge from the floor and follow gentle but irregular curves. Random seating colors and materials (fabric, leather, velour) help "populate" the theater when used by smaller groups.

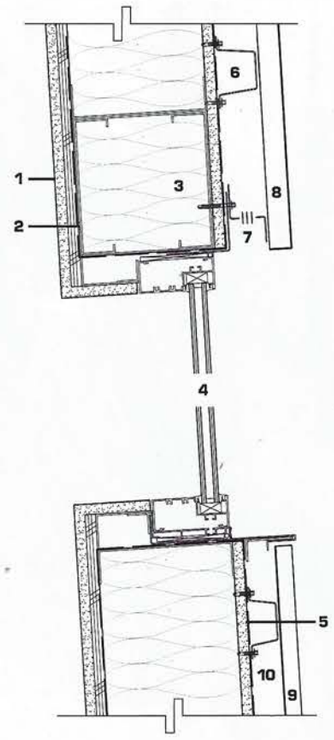
While sheer audacity might partially explain Bruder's iconoclasm, much can be attributed to his influences. Early in his career Bruder worked with Paolo Soleri and Gunnar Birkerts. Today, he may be the only world-class architect carrying on the legacy of Bruce Goff (1904–1982)—and by implication, of Wright—through the investigation of organic forms and materiality. Equal parts sculptor and placemaker, Bruder pushes boundaries not solely for his own enjoyment, but for the benefit of users and viewers. Deferring to natural forces, he translates oblique notions of client and place into inventive armature, sweeping curves, and sensual assemblage.

For the Reno museum, it wouldn't have worked without a sensitive client and an industrious builder. High explains that just a week after retaining the architect, NMA hired its general contractor, Las Vegas-based Clark & Sullivan, for a collaborative "design-assist" delivery to speed construction and "eliminate all change orders," he adds with a chuckle. "Of course, we didn't cut out all change orders, but we knew the museum was constructable and that we could pay for it." The budget changed daily during 12 months of construction. To keep costs in line, Bruder was forced to scale back some of his pricier moves: Popped angled windows fell flush to the walls; elliptical cone skylights became smaller, flat, and squared off. Most disappointing might be the dark stucco finish that now graces secondary façades.

These are but quibbles. The bottom line is that for about $203 per square foot, Reno has landed a sculptural landmark to anchor a budding cultural and commercial nexus. Inside, visitors find at least four memorably whimsical spaces: the quirky, cavernous atrium, the subtly distorted large gallery, a meticulously detailed theater, and a large rooftop sculpture garden with drop-dead mountain vistas. NMA is arguably one of the most valuable experiments in museum space-making built on American soil in a decade. Reno's new chapter in the legend of Black Rock not only holds an urban edge, it yields an edge for a city on the frontier of the art world.

The Western Edge





zinc façade section detail ——— 3.5"

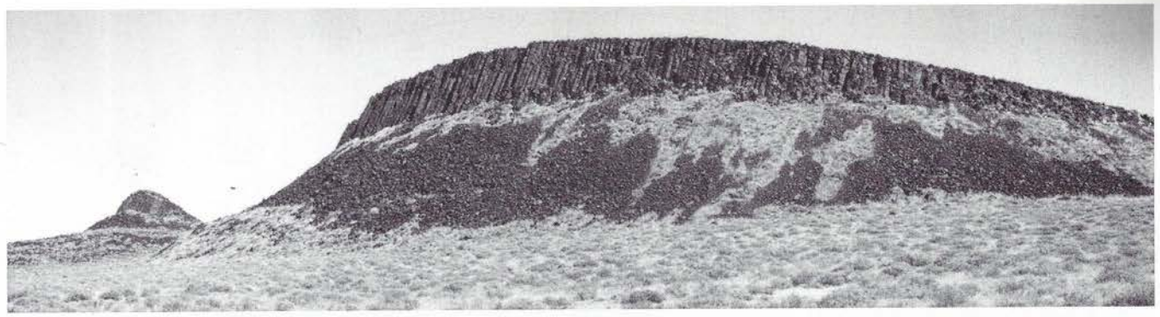
1 gypsum board over fire-treated plywood
2 vapor barrier
3 16-gauge metal stud
4 aluminum window with insulated glass
5 air barrier over gypsum sheathing
6 furring channel
7 perforated zinc flashing
8 box-rib zinc panel
9 interlocking zinc panel
10 air space

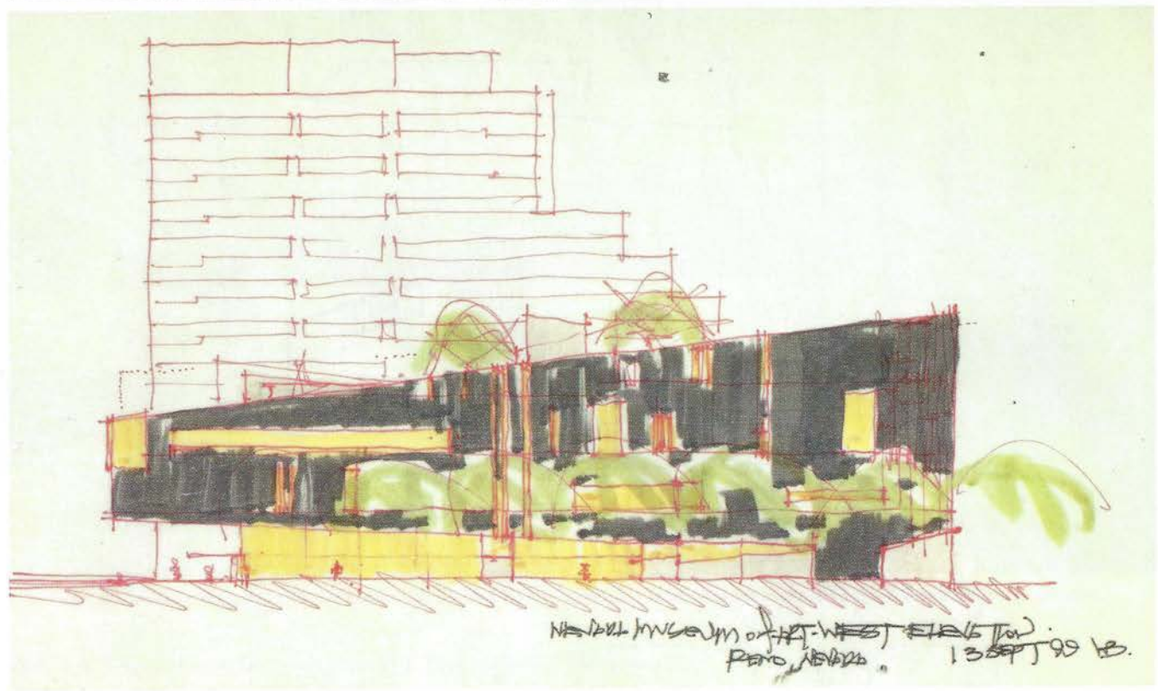
Seen from the northwest, Reno's Donald W. Reynolds Center for the Visual Arts/E.L. Wiegand Gallery, home of the Nevada Museum of Art, is a subtly curving, canted wall patched with swaths of dark zinc cladding. The metal gives the building a brutal, earthy appeal; the complex 250-foot-long torqued façade, broken by random crenellations at the 68-foot-high roofline and a silvery entry appendage at the base, helps mitigate the museum's mass.

The curve is complex. At each of four floor plates, a unique twisting radius describes the smoothly bowed, leaning perimeter. The resulting plane tilts from between 5 and 12 degrees, up to 12 feet out of plumb over the rise. The design team at Will Bruder Architects, Phoenix, resisted the contractor's suggestion to segment the wall, which came midway through construction documentation. The change might have eased construction and perhaps cut costs by as much as $750,000; however, using 1/4-inch-scale façade models to replicate lighting conditions, the architects convinced the museum's directors that the planar surfaces would have compromised the appearance and intent of this highly visible elevation.

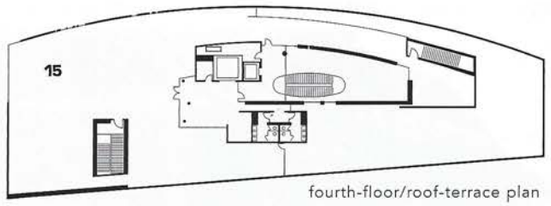
While structurally straightforward—a steel frame braces staggered metal studs, 16 inches on center—the final design required more than 600 pages of steel details. And while it was geologically inspired, the exterior features neither slate nor another costly stone, but rather an unusual metal cladding: preweathered black zinc. Inherently very malleable—an advantage for designers but a challenge for fabricators, especially in cold-weather applications—the zinc sheets easily took on the striations that Bruder envisioned, by means of corrugations, reveals, and standing seams. The final design combines sections of all three panel types.

Technically an alloy, the black zinc has minute traces of copper and titanium, and it weathers to a velvety charcoal color with subtle imperfections in hue and texture. Development of its patina "heals" scratches and stains on the finished surface. To accommodate the high thermal expansion of the metal, sliding clips as well as fixed clips hold the panels to furring strips set on a barrier membrane. Because zinc is most vulnerable to corrosion from its underside, the well-ventilated airspace is critical to the envelope design. In addition, zinc is not compatible with copper or nongalvanized steel, but it can accept contact with aluminum, stainless steel, and galvanized steel.



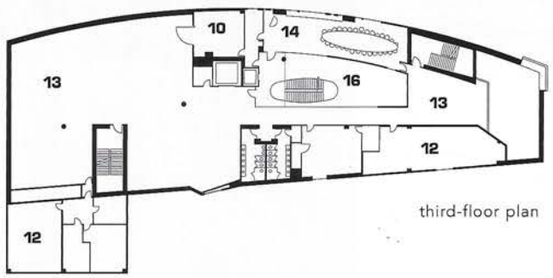


An image of a black-rock mound by the Santa Fe-based artist, Joan Myers, suggests the topography that might have inspired the museum's form (top). A sketch by Bruder shows a revised conception of the museum developed between the competition submission and the final design (above). The resulting form alludes to the organic landscape, with a palette of zinc cladding, insulating glass, and synthetic stucco set on a modest sculpture plaza (below).

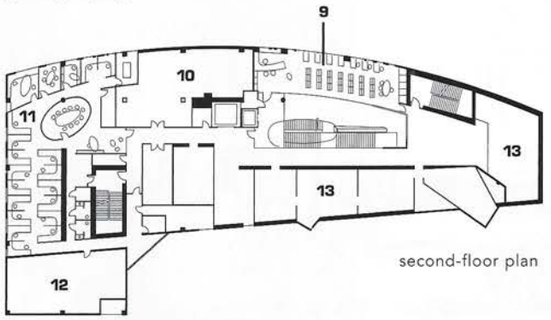


fourth-floor/roof-terrace plan

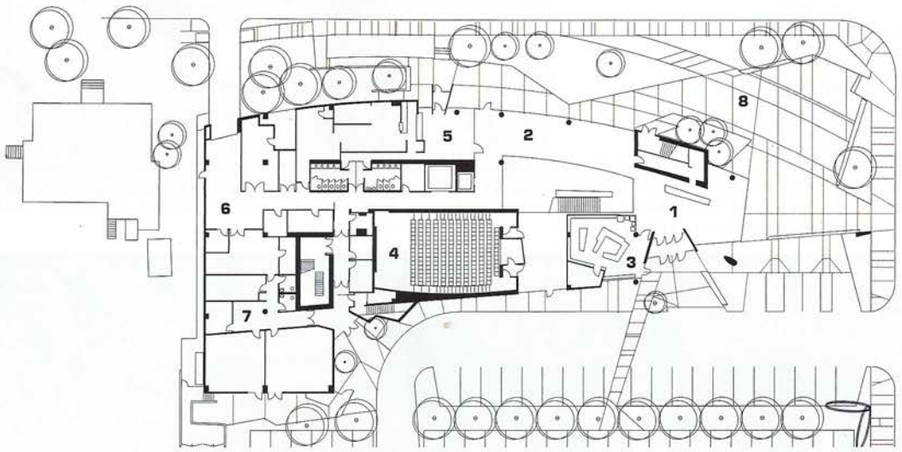
1 entry
2 reception
3 museum store
4 theater
5 café
6 loading dock
7 museum school
8 sculpture plaza
9 library
10 art storage
11 administrative
12 mechanical
13 gallery
14 founders' room
15 rooftop garden
16 atrium



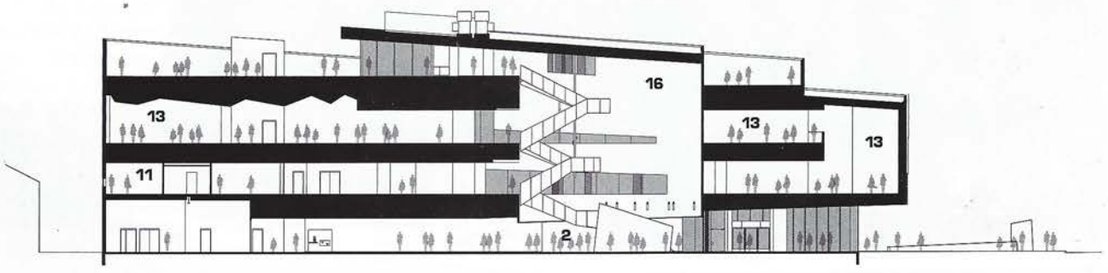
third-floor plan



second-floor plan



site/ground-floor plan 30'



north-south section 20'

The museum's crenellated parapet frames views of the vast and mountainous landscape for visitors to the rooftop sculpture terrace.

Donald W. Reynolds Center for the Visual Arts/E.L. Wiegand Gallery, Reno, Nevada
client | Nevada Museum of Art **owner's representative** | Jeff Erickson **architect/interior architect** | Will Bruder Architects, Phoenix—Will Bruder (lead designer); Rob Gaspard (project architect); Greg Packham (project manager); Ben Nesbeitt, Richard Jensen, Jeff Densic, Tom Cheney, Dominique Price, Eric Weber, John Puhr (project team) **landscape architect** | Stantec Consulting **engineers** | Rudow & Berry (structural); IBE Consulting Engineers (mechanical); Associated Engineering (electrical); Stantec Consulting (civil) **consultants** | Ove Arup & Partners USA (acoustics); Thomas Ricca Associates (food service); Horton Lees Brogden Lighting (lighting); Will Bruder Architects (graphics) **specialty contractors/fabricators** | ASI Sign Systems; Blue Mountain Steel; Burgarello Security; Complete Millwork Services; Custom Architectural Woodwork; Gardner Engineering (mechanical/plumbing); Giroux Glass; Insul-Pro Projects; J/B Enterprises (excavation); J & J Mechanical; Koffler Masonry; Lindell's Painting Service; Lucky Concrete; M&H Building Specialties (EIFS); Network Electric; Omboli Interiors (drywall); Overhead Fire Protection; Peri Landscape; PowerComm (telecommunications); Quantum Audio Visual; Simas Floor; Southam & Associates (metal cladding); Universal Brass (architectural metals/handrails); Western Single Ply (roofing); Reno-Sparks Ready Mix; M-Home (furnishings) **general contractor** | Clark & Sullivan Constructors **area** | 60,810 square feet **cost** | $12.3 million

Specifications
structural steel | Blue Mountain Steel **exposed concrete** | Lucky Concrete **metal/glass curtain wall** | Kawneer **metals** | Umicore/VM Zinc; AnthraZinc **moisture/thermal control** | DuPont/Tyvek **EIFS** | Sonneborn **single-ply TPO roofing** | Firestone **concrete roof pavers** | Westile **glass** | Milgard Tempering; Firelite TGP; Northwestern Industries **fiberglass glazing** | Lentech **skylights** | CSI **doors** | Curries (metal/fire); Weyerhaeuser (wood); PRL (glass) **sliding-door hardware** | Chase Doors **locksets/hinges/closers/exit devices** | Sargent **cabinet hardware** | Sagutsune **pulls** | Forms + Surfaces **ceiling systems** | Tectum; Armstrong; Hardirock; Hunter Douglas **fiberglass ceiling panels** | Lentech **paints/stains** | Benjamin Moore **flooring** | Armstrong Hartco (wood); DalTile (ceramic-tile); Roppe (resilient) **carpet** | Prince Street **furnishings** | Driade; Kartell; Herman Miller; Montis; Stua; R+D Design; MDF; B&B Italia; Burroughs; Lolah; Ligne Roset; Ducharme; Domus; Light Spot; Oriac Design; Goodmans; Office Pavilion; Functions; Limn **lighting** | B.K. Lighting (interior uplights); Contrast, Indy, Wila, Leucos (interior downlights); Lithonia, Zumtobel Staff, B.K. Lighting (task lighting); Hydrel, Lithonia (exterior); LSI Gallery Lights, Top-S, Bruck Lighting Systems, Translite (specialty); Anta, Artemide (decorative fixtures); Douglas Lighting Controls, Lutron Grafik Eye (lighting controls); LSI (ceiling track system) **elevators** | Schindler **plumbing fixtures** | American Standard; Kindred Sinks; Elkay; Grohe Faucets **mechanical systems** | Price Air Distribution **HVAC** | Trane **electrical systems** | GE; Powersmith Transformer