

# Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

## The Broad Architecturally Speaking | Part Two

Allon Schoener · Wednesday, November 4th, 2015



The Broad on Grand Avenue in Downtown Los Angeles; photo by Iwan Baan, courtesy of The Broad and Diller Scofidio + Renfro

The Broad might appear to be an architectural anomaly because it does not conform in appearance to most buildings with which we are familiar. As Elizabeth Diller, lead architect of Diller, Scofidio and Renfro, designers of the building, said: “You take the most visible site on Grand Avenue that wants to be about public engagement, and put what is essentially a warehouse storage facility on it – this is counter intuitive. By lifting it off the ground and floating the large mass, while flirting with it visually, we intended to make the collection an artifact in and of itself.”



Exploding perspective of the veil lifting away from the vault, courtesy of The Broad and Diller Scofidio + Renfro

The Broad is a notable precursor of things to come in architecture. In that sense, it can be said to be a true 21st Century building. Exactly *what* does that mean? For centuries, the basic building materials of most civilizations were stone, brick, wood and concrete. In the mid-19th century structural steel was added to that vocabulary making it possible to build multi-story buildings first of a few floors, then dozens and now hundreds. As The Broad testifies, this is no longer true. The Broad utilizes a panoply of traditional as well as new materials and new technologies. Diller, Scofidio and Renfro is not the only architectural firm to marshal the potentials of new materials and new technologies. However, they have achieved a remarkable level of accomplishment in this project.



Veil and vault diagram, courtesy of The Broad and Diller Scofidio + Renfro



Interior ground floor lobby. There are public entrances at both ends, photo by Iwan Baan, courtesy of The Broad and Diller Scofidio + Renfro

As previously stated, the concept of the veil (exterior walls) and the vault (interior collection storage) governs the design of the building. Elizabeth Diller said, “most museums are opaque to the street and inwardly focused. We definitely wanted to break that paradigm by designing a semi-porous system that makes a better urban interface. The views from the gallery are opaque so as not to be distracting, but you never feel entirely cut off from the world. The lobby surface is contiguous with the sidewalk. The pavement literally comes into the building, and there is an open

invitation at the corners.



Third floor main gallery wall and overhead skylights, photo by Iwan Baan, courtesy of The Broad and Diller Scofidio + Renfro

“The exterior surface (veil) is a composite of thousands of individually formed glass fiber reinforced concrete panels giving the building its unique appearance. These panels serve dual purposes as structural elements and as sources of external light. Although the building emits an unusual profile, it is necessary to know about and understand the logic behind its uniqueness.



Detailed section of skylight roof structure. courtesy of The Broad and Diller Scofidio + Renfro

“While the orientation of the building is parallel to city streets, the skylight system is rotated roughly 45 degrees, facing true north for diffuse light throughout the day. Both the skylight system and veil walls are engineered so that, despite the movement of the sun, no direct sunlight will ever penetrate the space. The cellular structure all around acts like a sponge absorbing and transmitting light as needed.”

The Broad collection is a huge amalgamation of what might be called “experimental works of art.” Consider visiting this collection in a more traditional box-like structure that might have been modified by architectural accoutrements? It would be grossly inappropriate! In this particular situation, the architects and the clients have achieved a remarkable degree of harmony which enhances both the art and the architecture.

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