

Contemporary Art Gallery Architectural Design

Sienna Dichiera

I was commissioned by the South Australian Government to design a public art gallery for Adelaide's Light Square, to exhibit the work of Australian contemporary artists. The design was to reflect a striking, artistic visual style; In response, brutalism, and a theme of light and shadow, became inspirations. Multipurpose and highly functional concepts were necessary, as to support an array of exhibitions and maximise space, whilst the client also wished the design to provoke a positive psychological effect on visitors.

Initial explorations into modern art, including my personal experience visiting the Venice Biennale festival in 2019, fuelled a focus on form through my designs, evident through works including Microworld, by Lui Wei, an installation that juxtaposes heavy concrete with soft curves. The honest and graphic characteristics of brutalism present a sculptural quality, with raw materials honoured in a monochromatic fashion that emphasises form and scale. Neo-brutalism revivals, such as The Acropolis Museum designed by Bernard Tschumi Architects, were analysed as they proved successful in substantiating balance through glazing and high ceilings. Furthermore, Japanese architecture was integral in considering the dichotomy of light and shadow. Particularly, architect Tadao Ando provided inspiration in his clever use of light to create rhythm, movement, and emphasis.

My final resolution stemmed from a charcoal drawing, a method that expanded my repertoire of creative concepts that challenged traditional form. Translating the sketch into a floorplan using scale devices resulted in a highly functional design, with large gallery spaces, convenient access to loading dock and storage, and a multipurpose workshop space. The focal point of the central stairwell, inspired by Ando's He Art Museum, provides a journey for visitors to view each of the spaces with a continuous flow, whilst the large void through the centre of the gallery imitates that of TATE Modern designed by Herzog & De Meuron, emphasising the height of the gallery. Light flows effortlessly through the large spaces from skylights and patterned glazing, referenced from LAN Architecture's 'mirror-tower'. The final elevations created meticulously using Adobe Illustrator feature slivers of glazing, creating a harmonious and balanced resolution that supports the playful rounded form, appealing to a demographic of those in their 20s who populate the West End arts scene of the area. SketchUp Pro was used to ensure the floorplan functioned effectively with the elevations, allowing me to evaluate the space in three dimensions. The visual qualities in the architecture also inspired the presentation of the posterboard, which utilises contrast, space, and shape, through bold typefaces and a monochromatic approach.

Each aspect of the brief is met in my final resolution. The small plot is maximised through multiple stories, allowing for large galleries as well as an inviting exterior space. Movable walls create flexibility in exhibitions and functions, and moderate visual complexity, curves, and easy navigation point to a consideration of psychological wellbeing. Minimalist materials are expressed in an eye-catching facade, with a simplistic and highly functional interior to support the artworks displayed. An effective hierarchy of information in the posterboard design grabs attention in a considered and sophisticated manner. The video walkthrough produced demonstrates how the compelling design would function in its environment.

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My highly successful practical resolution is strong in its connection to the brief, the video walkthrough and posterboard articulating a level of professionalism, with rigorous attention to detail. I was able to improve my problem-solving capabilities learning Sketch-Up Pro independently, undertaking additional research on the program and downloading specialised extensions. Constant experimentation of the brutalist graphic style allowed me to overcome creative challenges in producing the posterboard, which is effective in its communication to the client.

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