

Awards

THIS WEEK: 01/18–01/24

Barcelona's Miro Foundation Captures Twenty-five Year Award *Modern Mediterranean masterpiece stands the tests of time*

Fundació Joan Miró (the Miró Foundation), Barcelona's sculpturally Modern museum dedicated to its world-acclaimed Modern artist, has been named recipient of the AIA's 2002 Twenty-five Year Award. The award is conferred annually on a building project 25 to 35 years old that exemplifies design of enduring significance.

Completed in 1975 and designed by AIA Gold Medalist Josep Lluís Sert of the noted American firm Sert Jackson and Associates, Lexington, Mass., the Miró Foundation was conceived to grace Barcelona's Parc de Montjuic, house the internationally renowned works of Joan Miró, and serve as a center for the study of contemporary art.

Master work for architect and artist

Pulitzer Prize-winning architecture critic for the Boston Globe Robert Campbell, FAIA, noted, "The Miró Foundation is the perfect setting for the works of the architect's childhood and lifelong friend, Joan Miró, with whose work Sert was in deep sympathy, and whose colors Sert frequently incorporated into his own architecture. The building is also the culmination of Sert's career-long effort to marry the logic and rigor of the Modern Movement with the vernacular architecture of the Mediterranean, which he loved and admired for being so responsive to climate and culture."

Offering myriad, carefully proportioned spaces of varying sizes and light, the museum features larger galleries for objects that demand distant viewing as well as high-ceilinged spaces



Varied height galleries and carefully controlled light cater to individual works of art.

for vertical paintings and hangings. The architects also designed small rooms suitable for close-up viewing of more diminutive paintings and graphics. The building's sole octagonal volume, rising to the right of the entrance, houses an auditorium on its lowest level. On the floor above is a gallery for graphic works, and on the uppermost level, lighted from above, sits the library. The basement level supports administrative and curatorial spaces.

The volumes of the varied exhibition spaces gain further definition from the rooftop's famed hooded monitors, which also serve to soften the building's Mediterranean-white profile on the horizon. The sculpted monitors admit daylight through diffusing glass and reflect it without shadow to the galleries below. At viewer level, diffused light is selectively fortified by direct daylight entering the glazed walls.

Celebrating the human spirit

"What is extraordinary in retrospect is the significant use of natural light, scale-giving form, a measure of tactility," the awards jury observed. "This in a time when there was an obsession with structural monumentalism and mono-material buildings that yielded scaleless, dehumanized, oftentimes aggressive environments. It is a structure that celebrates the human spirit as interpreted by the artist, in the culture of the place. The tools of the artist; material, color and light, are the tools of



The 1988 addition seamlessly extends Sert's masterpiece.

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the architect," the jury added.

In nominating the Miró Foundation for the award, Henry S. Reeder, FAIA, 2000 chair of the AIA's Committee on Design, wrote: "This is a project that is coherent in its part, and in the relation of those parts to the whole. Its expression grows directly from the essential elements: galleries with lighting monitors, vertical auditorium/library linked by lower circulation elements."

The Miró Foundation, which gained an addition in 1998 by Sert-trained architect Jaime Freixa, has maintained its appearance and design intent in immaculate condition. The foundation continues to serve as a widely visited museum and a center for the study of contemporary art.

The Twenty-five Year Award will be presented at the American Architectural Foundation's 2002 Accent on Architecture awards ceremony March 1 in Washington, D.C. [AIA](#)



Sert's signature monitors define the museum's profile and direct light deep into the building.