

**הבניין: 50 שנה**  
**المبنى: 50 عامًا**  
**The Building:**  
**50 Years**

## The Building: 50 Years

June–December 2021

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Tel Aviv Museum of Art

Supported by



The Tel Aviv Museum of Art is proud  
to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of  
its main building, planned by the  
architects Dan Eytan and Yitzhak  
Yashar. Eytan and Yashar created a  
major building, which was lauded  
by the Italian-Jewish scholar of  
architecture, Bruno Zevi, as a future  
architectural icon in the international  
arena.

The inauguration of the museum  
building on Shaul Hamelech Boulevard  
in 1971 marked the maturation of this  
institution, which was established  
in 1932 by Tel Aviv's first mayor, Meir  
Dizengoff. This building constituted  
the museum's first permanent home,  
planned especially for its needs.  
Over time, it came to be appreciated  
as an outstanding architectural  
achievement on both a local and  
a global level, while successfully  
fulfilling its function in providing an  
optimal museum experience. The  
precise architectural plan forms a  
natural sequence, flowing from the  
entrance plaza through the impressive  
entrance hall and up the ramp, one of  
the museum's signature features, to  
the stunning exhibition galleries. The  
museum building thus boasts both  
streamlined modernist proportions  
and a plan whose flow promotes  
movement between the interior

spaces, whose quality has been  
preserved over time.

As the main building celebrates  
its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, just prior  
to institution's 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary  
celebration, the museum honors  
its past while looking forward to  
the future. The developments that  
have occurred in recent decades in  
the perception of art, in approaches  
to museology, and in the range of  
thematic concerns made accessible  
by the museum to various audiences  
require it to remain flexible in  
defining itself as a cultural institution.  
The successful architecture of the  
museum building supports this  
process of renewal and the ongoing  
definition of the museum's thematic  
concerns and visual characteristics.

On this festive occasion, the  
Tel Aviv Museum of Art has received  
a significant donation from the  
Paulson Family Foundation, which will  
serve to upgrade the main building  
and to enrich the experience of  
museum visitors. In tribute to this  
generous gift, which will support  
the development of museum  
infrastructures as well as ongoing  
activities over the coming years,  
the building will be named after  
the Paulson Family Foundation.

In an attempt to promote urban sustainability and to ensure that museum activities conform to the standards of accessible planning and green planning, we will expand the building's infrastructures while preserving its original character. This ongoing process of renewal enhances the museum's character as a contemporary, dynamic, and lively cultural institution at the heart of Tel Aviv-Jaffa, and as one of the world's leading museums.

Tania Coen-Uzzielli  
Director, Tel Aviv Museum of Art

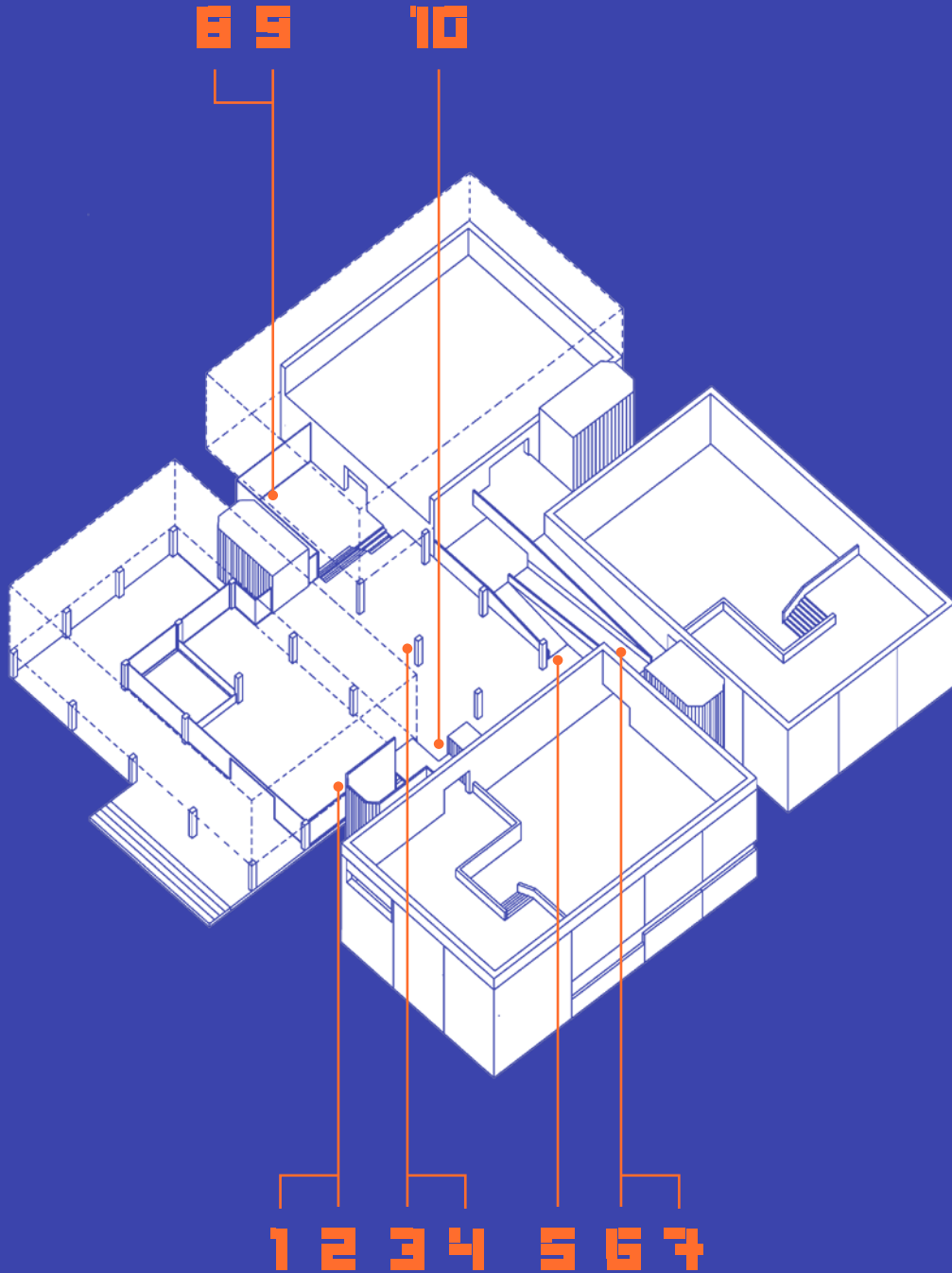
The main building of the Tel Aviv Museum of Art, planned by the architects Dan Eytan and Yitzhak Yashar, was inaugurated in April 1971. The museum was first established in 1932 in Dizengoff House on Rothschild Boulevard, and later moved to the Helena Rubinstein Pavilion on Tarsat Boulevard. The move to its current home in the main building – with its spacious galleries, majestic entrance hall, library, offices and various service functions (laboratories, framing and restoration workshops, and so forth) – transformed the museum into an institution conforming to international standards. The concentric building planned by Eytan and Yashar was based on the museum typology that had first developed in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. By adhering to this architectural program, which is typical of leading museums worldwide, the architects updated the physical infrastructure of the museum in Tel Aviv, enhancing its status and prestige.

This leaflet guides visitors on a tour of the museum that reveals the building's structural components and explores the contribution of architectural planning to the proper functioning of the museal institution. The selection

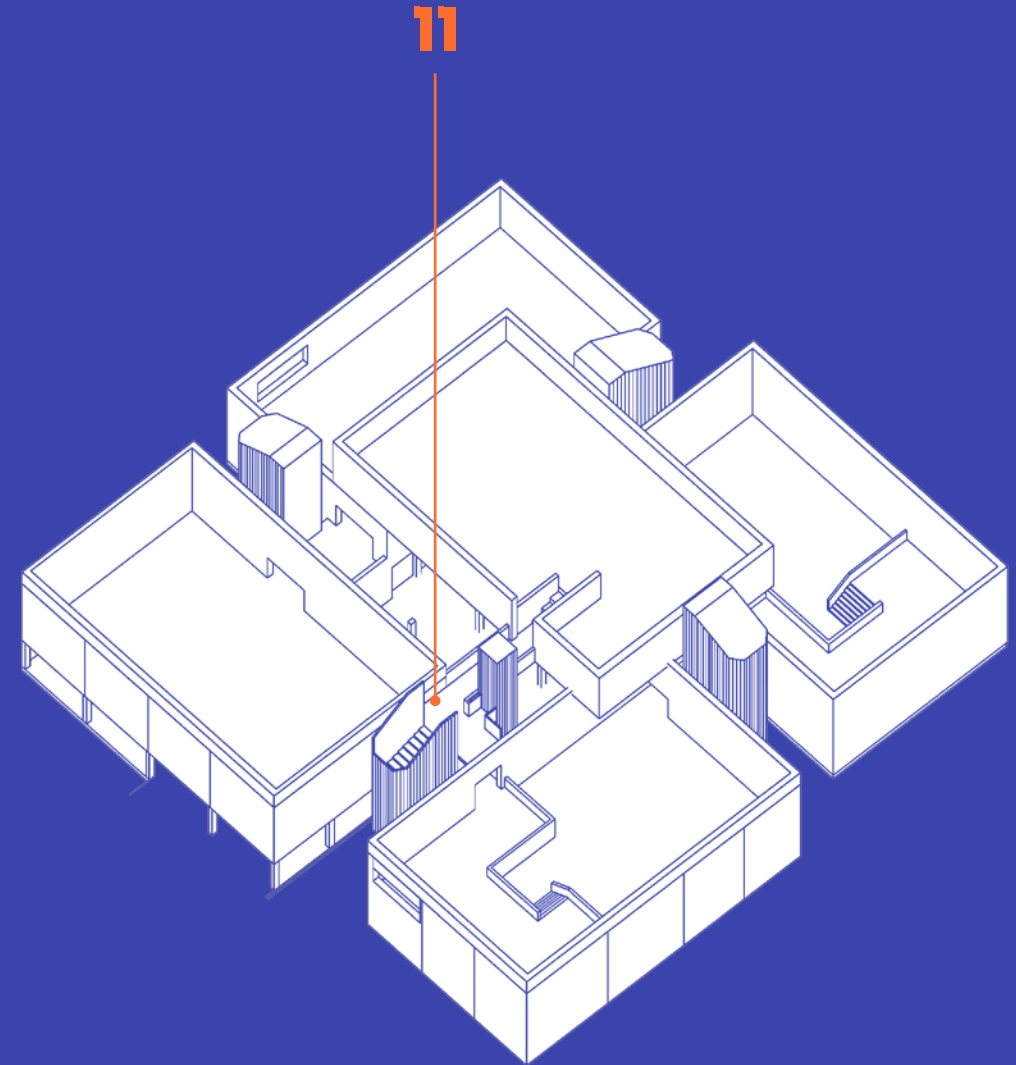
of 11 key architectural points enables visitors to study the strategies employed by Eytan and Yashar to consolidate the museum's various parts into an integral whole. The tour begins in the entrance hall, moves up the ramp to the exhibition galleries, passes through the sculpture garden, and ends in the Azrieli Architectural Archive, which originally served as the museum library. The movement between these points highlights how the spatial organization of the museum's various functions, the gradual entrance sequence and the choice of construction materials come together to create a successful museum building, which earned its architects the prestigious Rechter Prize for Israeli architecture.

Prof. Arch. Eran Neuman  
Director, Azrieli Architectural Archive

## Entrance level and galleries



## Library level



- |   |   |   |                          |    |                                  |
|---|---|---|--------------------------|----|----------------------------------|
| 1 | The Building                                | 5 | The Ramp                 | 8  | The Western Side of the Building |
| 2 | The Relations Between Exterior and Interior | 6 | Windows of Enclosure     | 9  | The Sculpture Garden             |
| 3 | The Entrance Sequence                       | 7 | The Exhibition Galleries | 10 | Combed Concrete                  |
| 4 | The Entrance Hall                           |   |                          | 11 | The Library                      |

# The Building

Inaugurated on April 19, 1971, the main building of the Tel Aviv Museum of Art was the museum's third home. The museum was established in 1932 by the city's first mayor, Meir Dizengoff, in his private residence at 16 Rothschild Boulevard, which was transformed into an exhibition space by the city architect, Dov Hershkovitz. In 1959, the museum moved to its second home – the new Helena Rubinstein Pavilion on Tarsat Boulevard, planned by Dov Karmi, Zeev Rechter and Yaakov Rechter. In 1964, the Tel Aviv Municipality announced a competition for planning a new museum building. The winners were the architects Dan Eytan and Yitzhak Yashar. The building's inauguration ceremony was attended by President Zalman Shazar, Prime Minister Golda Meir, Foreign Minister Abba Eban and Tel Aviv Mayor Yehoshua Rabinowitz.

Eytan and Yashar's proposal was based on four exhibition galleries, arranged concentrically around a large and impressive entrance hall. Between the gallery spaces, Eytan and Yashar located service towers that included functions such as staircases, elevators and restrooms. The towers were cast in combed concrete, which formed a corduroy-like design. The architects located the museum's offices on the third floor, above the entrance hall. The building's configuration is clearly evident when the structure is viewed from the plaza.



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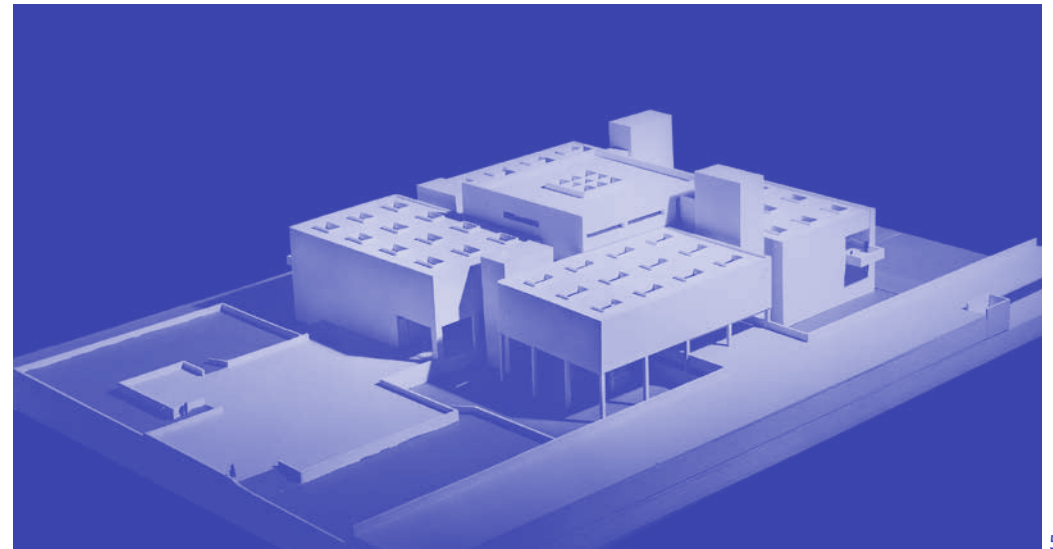
- 1 The main building: view from the south to the front facade, 1970s
- 2 Dizengoff House, Rothschild Boulevard: view from the north, 1948
- 3 The main building under construction: view from the southeast, 1970
- 4 The Helena Rubinstein Pavilion, Tarsat Boulevard: view from the northwest, 1962



# The Relations Between Exterior and Interior



The principles underlying the planning of the main building dictated the construction of a self-enclosed building that communicates only partially with the external plaza. By their very nature, art galleries function as containers detached from the exterior. The building's entrance hall, which is meant to connect the exterior plaza to the interior space, was similarly detached from the exterior due to the concentric arrangement of the surrounding galleries. As a form of compensation, the architects explored different ways of connecting the plaza to the internal spaces. One of the proposals included a terrace on the facade of the Jaglom Hall, featuring the Moshe and Sara Mayer Collection. This proposal was not realized, perhaps because it disrupted the integrity of the "white box" constituting the gallery space. Instead, windows were introduced into the gallery walls. Over the years, following the hanging of vertical curtains over the windows, this connection between interior and exterior was also partially severed. An additional window, set into the western facade of the Sam and Ayala Zacks Hall, was later sealed following the addition of the Marc Rich and Gabrielle Rich Wing in 1999.



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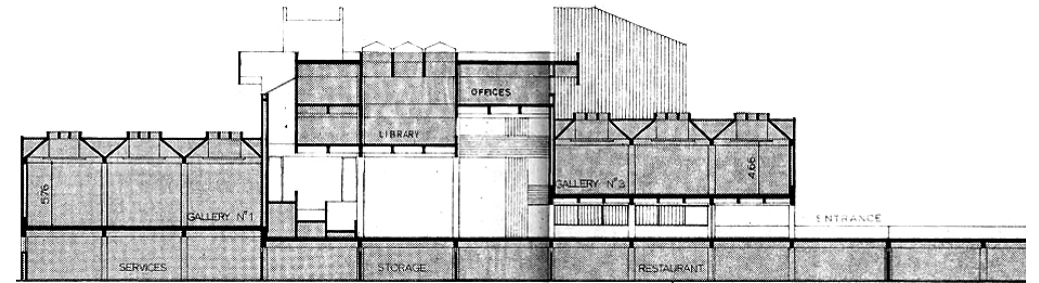


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- 5 Model of the building with a terrace on the facade of the Jaglom Hall, 1965
- 6 The museum plaza and the main entrance: bird's-eye view from the south, 1971
- 7 Bird's-eye view from the southwest, 1970s
- 8 Zacks Hall under construction, 1970

# The Entrance Sequence

The entrance to the Tel Aviv Museum of Art was planned as a sequence that gradually unfolds in four stages. First, visitors walk across the generously proportioned museum plaza, under an open sky. In the second stage, they pass under a low roof, bisected by a glass wall into a low exterior space and a low interior space. Then, after buying tickets at a desk located in the low interior space, they emerge into the soaring 15-meter-high entrance hall. The sequential process of entering the building replicates, in many ways, the sequence employed in medieval Romanesque cathedrals and the Renaissance cathedrals of the 15<sup>th</sup>–16<sup>th</sup> centuries. The entrance to such cathedrals, which are typically located at one end of a wide plaza, similarly involves traversing a plaza and entering a low space, which leads into the building's lofty central space. This progression clearly demarcates the separation between exterior and interior spaces, between the sacred and the profane. By adopting this strategy, architects Eytan and Yashar reinforced the perception of museums as the cathedrals of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.



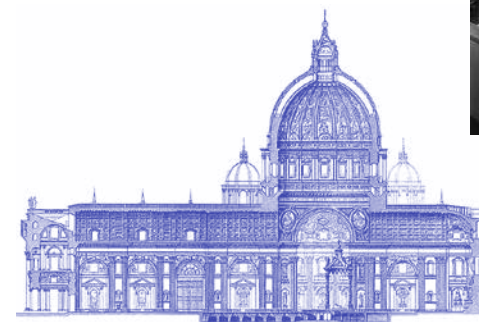
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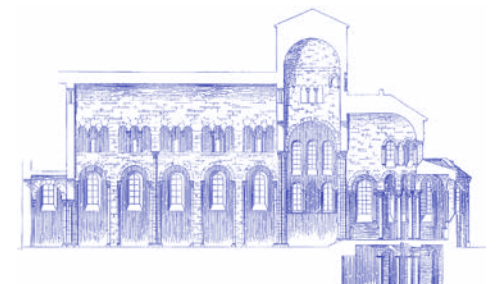
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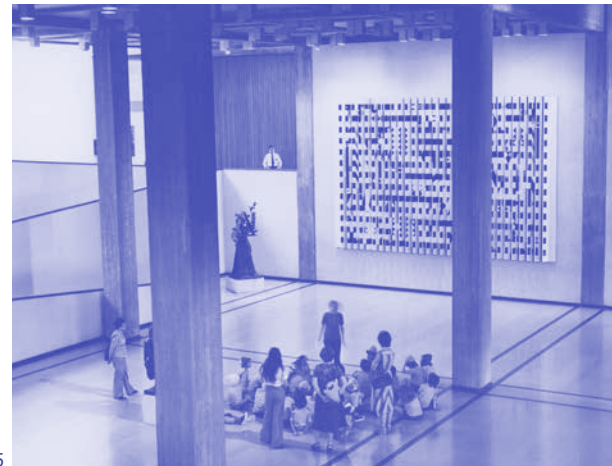
- 9 Longitudinal section, late 1960s (detail)
- 10 Henry Moore's sculpture *Reclining Figure* in front of the museum entrance, 1971
- 11 View from the ramp to the entrance hall, 1971
- 12 St. Peter's Basilica, Rome: longitudinal section (sketch: Jules Gailhabaud, 1853)
- 13 Notre Dame Cathedral, Clermont-Ferrand, France: longitudinal section (sketch: Georg Dehio and Gustav von Bezold, 1887–1902)

# The Entrance Hall

The entrance hall is the building's central public space. In defining its character and location, architects Eytan and Yashar adopted the schema most common in the planning of museum buildings. First implemented by Karl Friedrich Schinkel at the Altes Museum in Berlin (1830), this schema became dominant over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Schinkel planned the entrance hall as a covered space where the public could gather prior to viewing the art; the entrance hall of the Tel Aviv Museum of Art, which is 15 meters high and extends over approximately 900 square meters, was similarly planned as a covered public space where visitors can gather before ascending the ramp to the exhibition galleries. On the occasion of the museum's opening, the walls of the entrance hall featured 20<sup>th</sup>-century French tapestries alongside Yaakov Agam's work *Pace of Time*, which is still on display in the same location. Over the years, two more artworks were added to the lobby: *Homage to Rachel and Dov Gottesman* (1976) by Dani Karavan, and *Tel Aviv Museum Mural* (1989) by the American artist Roy Lichtenstein.



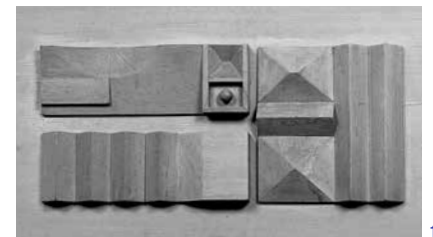
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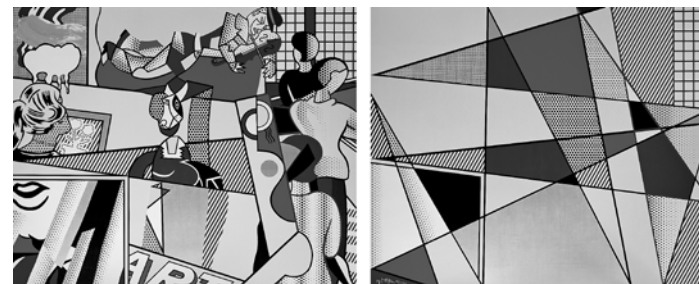
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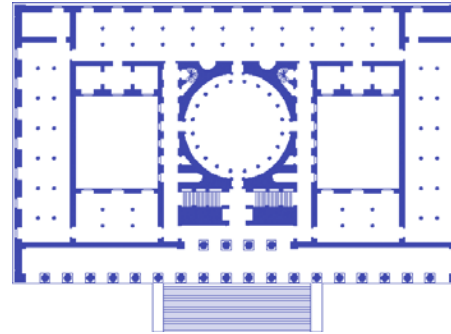
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- 14 The opening of the exhibition "American Art in the Twentieth Century: The Tel Aviv Museum Hosts the Museum of Modern Art, New York," in the museum entrance hall, 1980
- 15 *Pace of Time* by Yaakov Agam on the entrance hall's eastern wall, 1971
- 16 The exhibition "Contemporary French Tapestries": installation view in the entrance hall, 1971
- 17 Dani Karavan, from the triptych *Homage to Rachel and Dov Gottesman*, 1976
- 18 Roy Lichtenstein, *Tel Aviv Museum Mural*, 1989, diptych

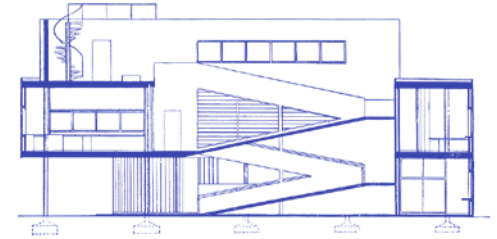


# The Ramp

The ramp rising from the main building's entrance hall toward the upper gallery delineates the beginning of a spiral trajectory, which continues throughout the building's exhibition spaces and ultimately returns to the entrance hall. This sequence reflects the adoption of the centralized schema often seen in the planning of museum buildings: an entrance into a central space, which leads upward and then down again along a spiral path. This schema, first employed by Karl Friedrich Schinkel at the Altes Museum in Berlin (1823–30), was adopted by Frank Lloyd Wright for the Guggenheim Museum in New York City (1959), and appears in many other museums worldwide. The ramp itself alludes to the "architectural promenade" of modernism, whose planning revolves around the axis of a ceremonial procession. The term was coined by modernist architect Le Corbusier, who implemented it in his plan for Villa Savoye in Poissy, on the outskirts of Paris (1928–31).



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- 19 The Altes Museum, Berlin, planned by Karl Friedrich Schinkel, 1823–30: ground-floor plan
- 20 Villa Savoye, Poissy, France, planned by Le Corbusier, 1928–31: longitudinal section
- 21 The ramp under construction, late 1960s
- 22 The ramp under construction: view from the galleries floor, late 1960s
- 23 The ramp: view from the galleries floor, 1971

# Windows of Enclosure



The vertical windows positioned along the staircase leading from the basement level to the top floor housing the museum offices were intended to emphasize the separation between the building's various parts. The structure is composed of four cubical forms that house the exhibition galleries, with vertical elements – small towers providing service functions such as staircases, elevators and restrooms – set between them. Viewed from the exterior, these architectural elements – the cubical galleries and service towers – constitute contrasting volumes. Their material treatment is also different: the galleries were clad in stone, whereas the towers were cast in combed concrete with a corduroy pattern. On the interior, these differences were denoted by means of the vertical windows forming a division between the different volumes. In choosing to locate the service functions in the concrete towers, Eytan and Yashar were inspired by the American-Jewish architect Louis Kahn, who employed a similar strategy in the Richards Medical Research Laboratories at the University of Pennsylvania (1965).



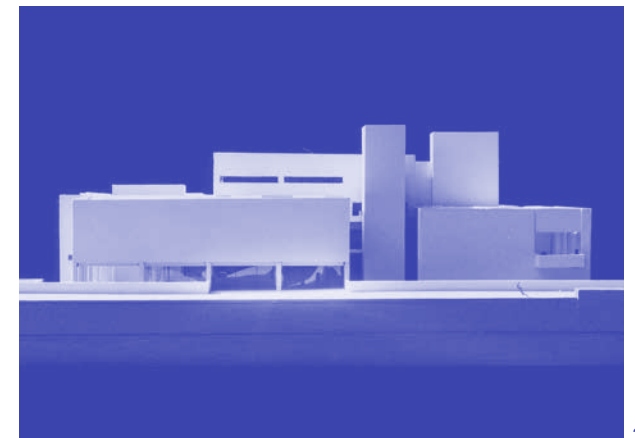
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- 24 Vertical windows beside the elevator shaft, 2021
- 25 Exterior window beside the Meyerhoff Hall's glass wall, 2021
- 26 Vertical windows beside the entrance to the Meyerhoff Hall, 2021
- 27 Model: view from the south to the main facade, 1965

# The Exhibition Galleries

In planning the museum's exhibition galleries, Eytan and Yashar proposed two types of space: single-level galleries and split-level galleries, with a staircase connecting the two levels. The galleries themselves were designed as relatively neutral spaces in the tradition of the modernist "white cube," which is intentionally devoid of a distinct identity. Museum directors and architects adopted the approach implemented in the mid-1930s by Alfred Barr, the first director of the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York. Barr sought to relieve the viewers of unnecessary distractions, presenting the artworks in spacious galleries whose architectural presence went virtually unnoticed. Eytan and Yashar planned the Tel Aviv Museum of Art's galleries, each of which measures about 800 square meters, in the same spirit, striving to minimize the distractions caused by supporting columns. The ceilings were made up of several layers, allowing for the penetration of filtered, indirect natural light.

- 28 The Museum of Modern Art, New York: installation view of the Henri Matisse exhibition, 1931
- 29 The Meyerhoff Hall under construction, 1970
- 30 The Jacques Lipchitz Lipchitz exhibition in the Zacks Hall, 1971
- 31 The exhibition "Art and Science" in the Asia Hall, 1971
- 32 The exhibition "French Masters of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century" in the Meyerhoff Hall, 1971



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# The Western Side of the Building



The external wall on the western side of the Tel Aviv Museum of Art was originally located between the main building and the Marc Rich and Gabrielle Rich Wing, with a large door set in the glass wall leading to the museum sculpture garden. Over the years, as the museum grew to accommodate the expansion of its collection and the increase in the number of exhibitions, new wings were added to the building. The Rich Wing, planned by Dan Eytan and inaugurated in 1999, included two new split-level galleries and storage spaces. This addition did not interfere with the concentric arrangement of the main building, yet it marked the direction of the museum's future growth. In 2011, the museum inaugurated the new Herta and Paul Amir Building, whose establishment was initiated and promoted by Prof. Mordechai Omer, the museum's director from 1995 to 2011. The building's American-Jewish architect, Preston Scott Cohen, arranged the six display galleries around a central space, known as the Lightfall, recalling the concentric design of the main building.



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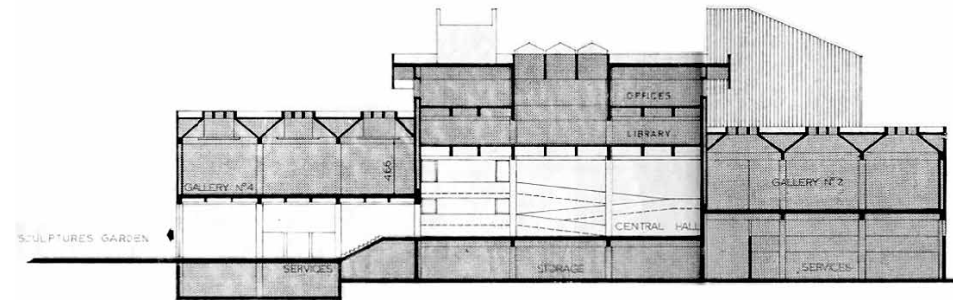
- 33 The museum's western side: glass wall in the passage to the sculpture garden, 1971
- 34 Model of the museum and sculpture garden: view from the west, late 1960s
- 35 A new wing: the Herta and Paul Amir Building, 2011



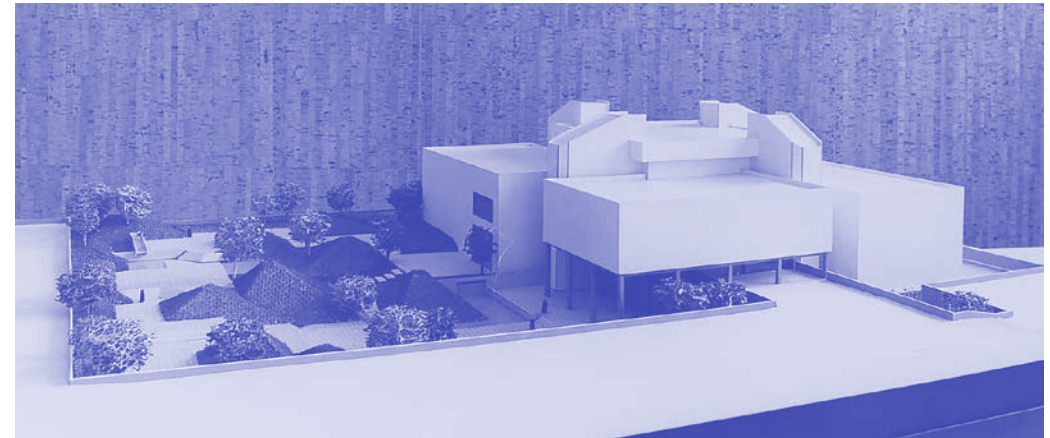
# The Sculpture Garden



The museum's sculpture garden was designed as an outdoor space for exhibiting sculptures and holding receptions, openings, lectures and concerts. The 2,000-square-meter garden was located on the lowest level (-1) of the building's western side. This location provided direct access to the garden, with additional access via an internal staircase leading down from the upper floors. A second, external staircase connects the garden to the plaza level, so that it becomes part of the open public space. The competition for planning the building included proposals for the design of the garden. The landscape architects Lipa Yahalom and Dan Zur were also invited to offer ideas for the design of the garden. Their plan took into consideration not only the garden, but also the surrounding area. When the museum opened, a number of sculptures were placed in the garden area, which remained incomplete due to budgetary constraints, and additional sculptures were added over time. The garden was only completed in 1999, in conjunction with the establishment of the Rich Wing, and was formally named the Lola Beer Ebner Sculpture Garden.



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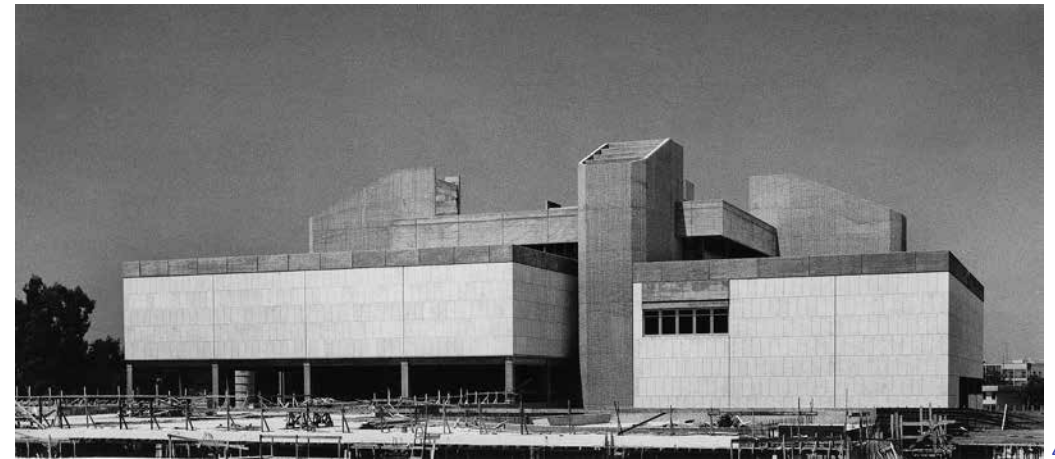
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- 36 The main building: section with the sculpture garden on the left, late 1960s
- 37 Model of the museum building and the sculpture garden: view from the South, late 1960s
- 38 Model of the museum building and the sculpture garden: view from the west, 1965
- 39 The sculpture garden, 1970

# Combed Concrete



The elevator shaft located in the southeastern corner of the entrance hall is the only element in the museum's interior that was built from exposed, combed concrete with a corduroy pattern. On the exterior, the architects used combed concrete to differentiate the small towers, which jut upward, from the cubical exhibition spaces clad in stone. They chose to accentuate the interior elevator in a manner similar to the external towers, thus forging a connection between the building's interior and exterior, and revealing its material makeup while emphasizing its Brutalist style. In the spirit of Brutalism, Eytan and Yashar also exposed the structural columns and beams in the entrance hall and elsewhere within the building. It is worth noting that the structural elements are not exposed on the exterior, but only inside the building.



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- 40 View from the south during construction, late 1960s
- 41 Service tower clad in combed concrete, 1970
- 42 The elevator shaft under construction: view from the entrance hall, 1970
- 43 Touring the construction site: David De Mayo, the museum's interior designer (left), Dan Eytan (center), and Yitzhak Yashar (right), 1970

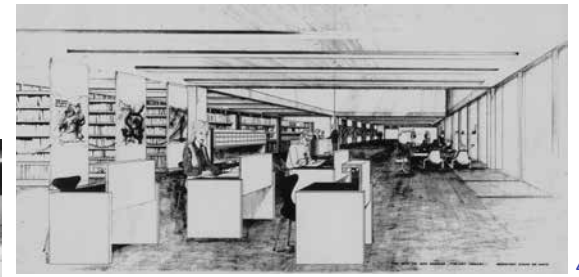
# The Library

The architects located the library on the second floor of the building, dividing it into three areas: a book and periodical section; a section for the traveling exhibitions that presented reproductions of artworks throughout Israel; and an Israeli art archive, which consisted mainly of news clippings related to Israeli art and artists from the local and international press. The 400-square-meter library continues to serve art scholars and aficionados, as well as the museum staff. At the time of its opening in 1971, it contained some 30,000 titles, mostly purchased thanks to a donation from Helena Rubinstein (after whom the library is named). During the planning process, Eytan and Yashar considered opening the space onto the entrance hall, but they ultimately opted to provide acoustic insulation by means of wooden windows, which became the library's most conspicuous design element. With the expansion of the museum and the construction of the Herta and Paul Amir Building in 2011, the library was moved to the new building, and its original space is now occupied by the Azrieli Architectural Archive.

- 44 The library: perspectival drawing, 1965
- 45 The library, 1971
- 46 The library reading hall, 1971
- 47 The bridge leading to the library entrance (today the Azrieli Architectural Archive), 2019



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