

CaixaForum in Madrid



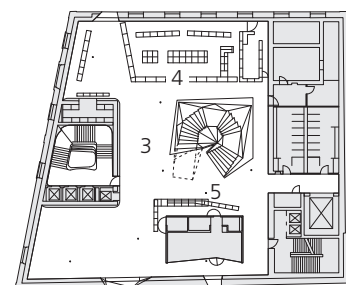
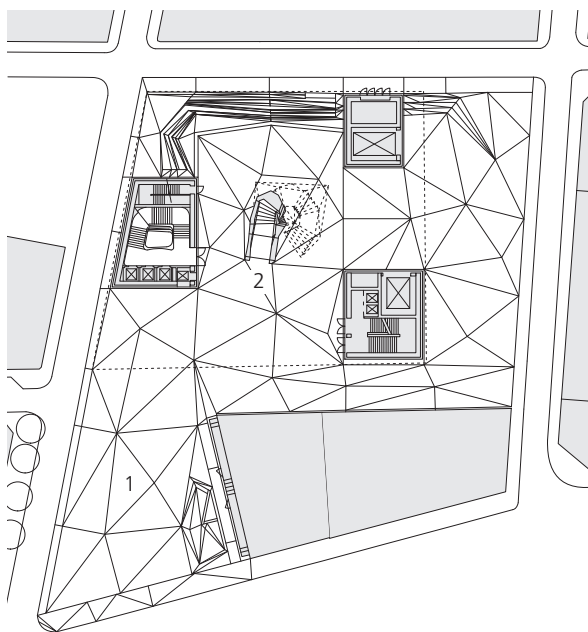


Opened in 2008, the CaixaForum takes its place on Madrid's famous museums boulevard, the Paseo del Prado.

A former electricity station dating from 1899 has been spectacularly transformed into the CaixaForum, an arts and education centre owned and run by the Catalan-based social welfare organisation "La Caixa". The only

part of this old industrial building worthy of preservation, and as a result listed, was its brickwork shell. All the interior structures were removed, a basement level was excavated below ground and extra storeys were added at the top. But the most unusual intervention and the one that gives it its unique architectural identity was the removal of the entire supporting base, creating the illusion that the building is floating. This involved transferring the support for the entire building, including the historic façade, to three internal communication cores. A distinctive rust-red cladding of cast iron panels covers the two-storey upper extension, which, with its sculpted angles and incisions, rises above the neighbouring buildings.

A gently sloping paved plaza in front of the CaixaForum leads visitors into the open, and freely accessible space at ground level, immediately beneath the superstructure of the building. From this relatively low-ceilinged



Plans of ground floor and 1st floor
scale 1:1000
1 Plaza
2 Main entrance
3 Lobby
4 Shop
5 Reception



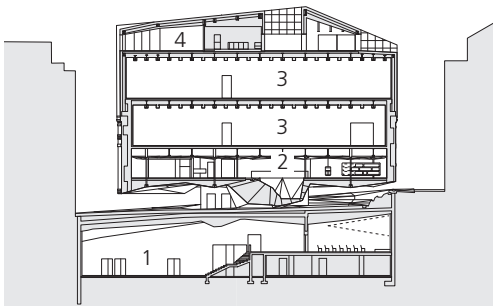
The dramatic spiral staircase leading to the lobby is clad entirely with sandwich panels surfaced with stainless steel.

area, used as a shaded meeting place and entrance area, people can see out onto the surrounding streets. In the middle of this space is the main entrance to the CaixaForum – a staircase leading up to the lobby on the first floor.

The triangular shape of the slabs is the key

motif on the plaza and this is continued in the folded ‘crystal-like’ soffit of the building and the cladding on the walls of the stair area through to the flooring of the lobby. The staircase treads and walls, and the floor of the lobby, are fitted throughout with sandwich panels of stainless steel sheet.

Neon light reflecting off the gleaming matt surfaces further heightens the drama of the entrance situation.



Section, scale 1:1000

- 1 Auditorium
- 2 Lobby
- 3 Exhibition
- 4 Restaurant/café



The 4 mm thick sandwich panels are made up of stainless steel sheet (grade EN 1.4301) backed with a synthetic material. Over 450 triangular panels of varying dimensions were bonded onto screed in the lobby in an almost jointless arrangement. A uniform, non-directional finish, produced by vibratory polishing, and a strip of raised dots on the front edge of the steps provide for the necessary anti-slip surface.

The warm tones of the wooden shopfittings and reception desk generate a pleasant contrast to the otherwise industrial atmosphere of neon and metal.



A large window connects with the outside world and affords a view out over the plaza to the botanical garden opposite.



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