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MUSEUM MANIA

A critical look behind the scenes

plus RESIDENTIAL SECTION:
LOFTY LIVING

Like a glass hinge, the entry cone (this page and opposite) connects with and sets itself apart from the other components of the Roppongi Hills complex.



Gluckman Mayner connects high culture with commercial development at the new **MORI ART CENTER** in Tokyo

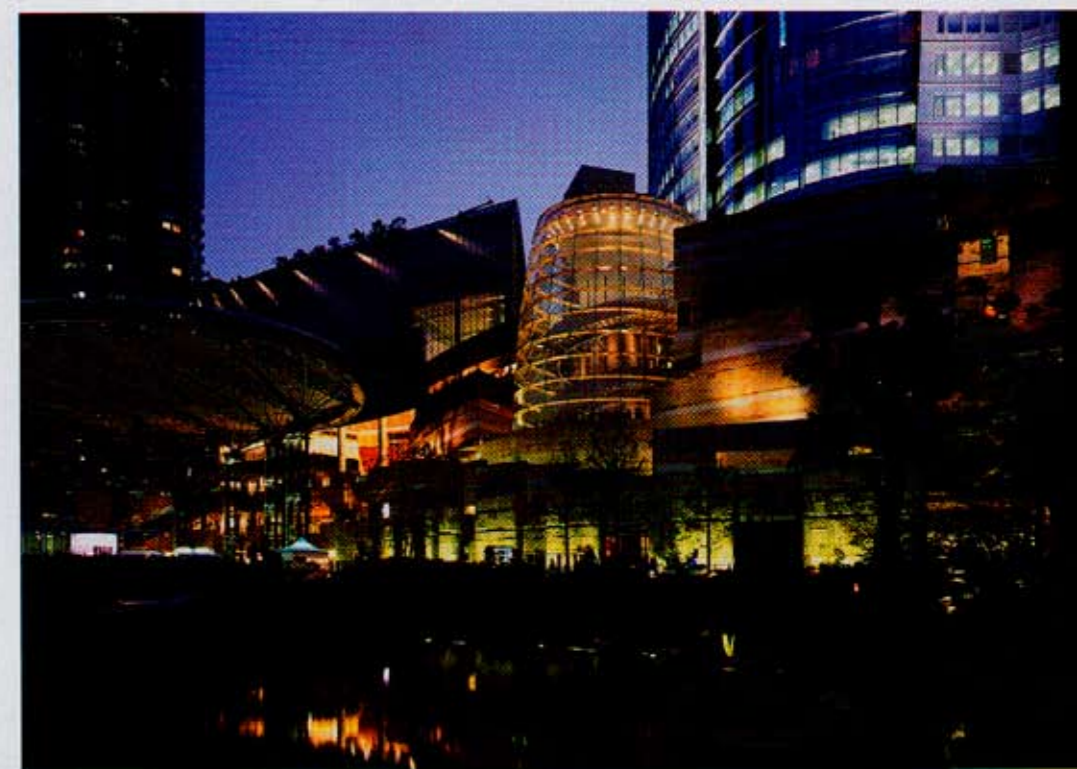
By Clifford A. Pearson

How do you create a distinct identity for a museum tucked inside a 54-story office tower? How do you even call attention to such a cultural facility when it is but one small piece of a \$2.5 billion development that includes 220 shops, 840 units of housing, a nine-screen multiplex cinema, a 380-room luxury hotel, a Japanese garden, and an 800,000-square-foot broadcasting center, in addition to the 4-million-square-foot office tower in which it resides? Those were two of the challenges facing Richard Gluckman, FAIA, as he designed the 100,000-square-foot Mori Art Center at Roppongi Hills in Tokyo.

Like a diminutive cherry sitting atop a high-calorie architectural sundae, the museum occupies the 52nd and 53rd floors of Roppongi Hills' bulging office tower, the centerpiece of a 28-acre development whipped up by an eclectic band of design chefs—Kohn Pedersen Fox (KPF) (master plan and office tower), Jon Jerde (retail complex), Terence Conran (apartment towers), and Fumihiko Maki (broadcast center). Some observers have criticized Roppongi Hills for being too big—even for Tokyo's dense and chaotic urban fabric—but it has been a smashing success with the public. According to the Mori Building Company, the project's developer, 26 million people visited the mixed-use complex in the six-month period after it opened last May. In comparison, Tokyo Disneyland will attract about 25 million for the entire year.

"We needed an iconic element to identify the cultural component of the plan," states Gluckman. So his team at Gluckman Mayner Architects worked with structural engineers Yoshinori Nito + Dewhurst Macfarlane and Partners to design a 100-foot-high entry pavilion at the base of the office tower that grabs attention with a 60-foot-tall, shingled-glass cone. The pavilion takes visitors from the vehicular drop-off and shopping-plaza levels at the base of the complex, up three-to-five floors to a 70-foot-long bridge that leads into the Mori office tower. Once inside the office building, visitors can get information about the museum, then catch express elevators to the 52nd floor, where the museum proper begins. Dedicated to Modern art starting from the mid-20th century, the museum has an international focus and a special emphasis on the work of Asian artists.

Emerging from Jerde's stone-clad shopping center and sitting in



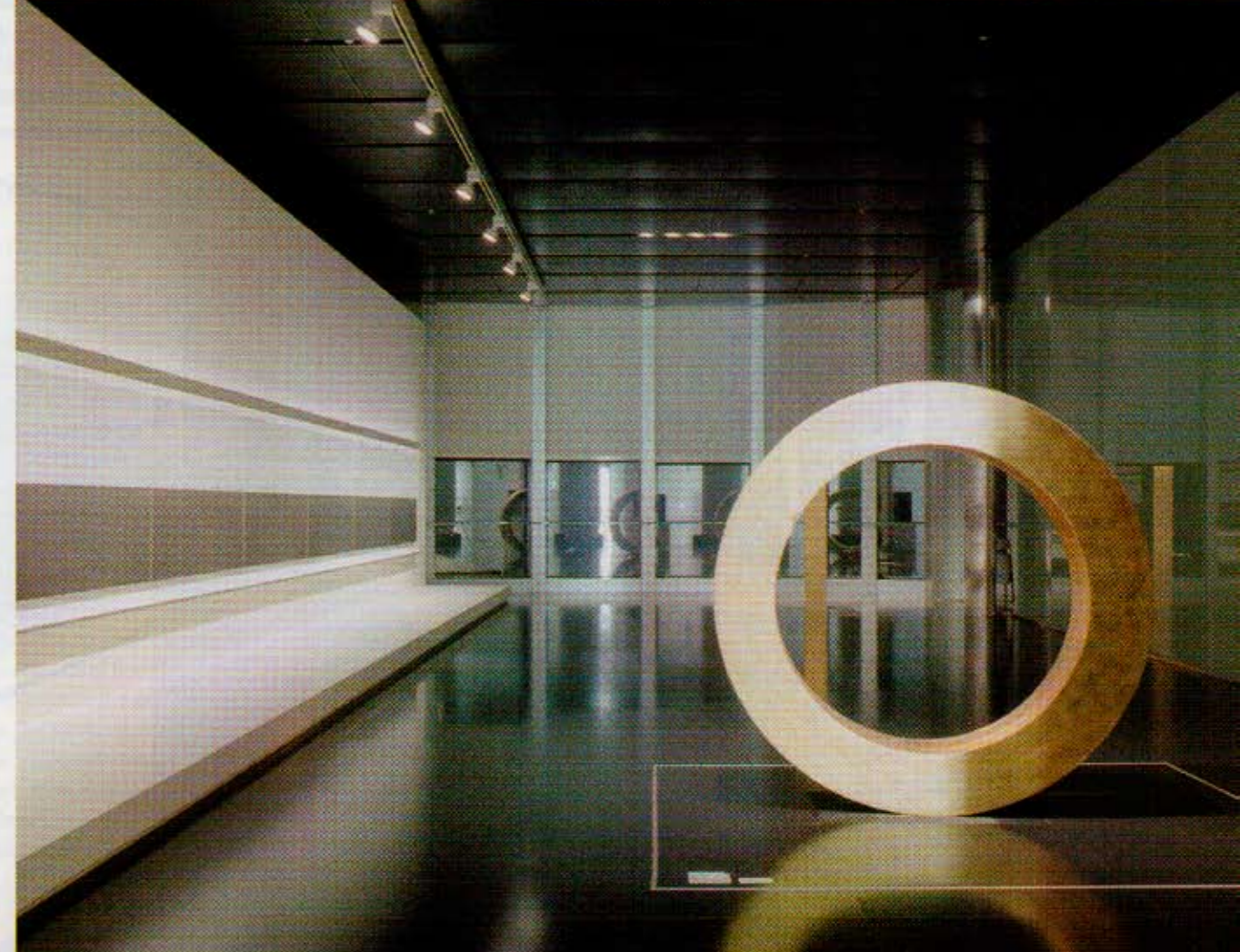
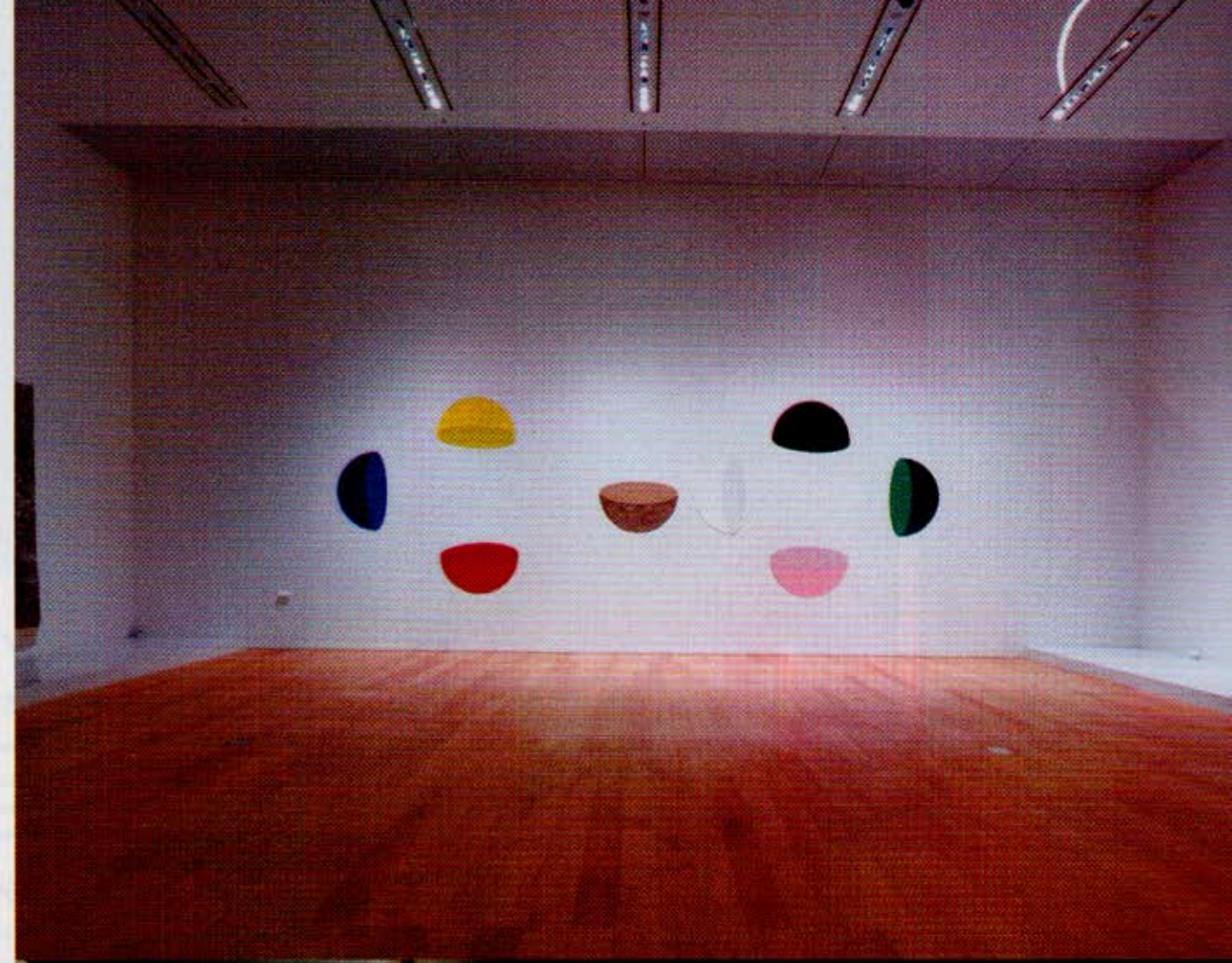
front of KPF's steel-frame office building, Gluckman's glass cone asserts its own style: crisply tailored Modernism with touches of technological daring. During the day, it offers views of the 17th-century-style Japanese garden just to the east, and at night it glows like a lantern. In its center, a concrete-clad funnel structure contains elevators and provides the building's main vertical support. Canted glass rectangles swirling around the core, however, deliver the necessary razzle-dazzle. Like a giant hoopskirt, the lightweight glass-and-steel facade is held in place by a diagonal net of three-quarter-inch cables that suspend and stabilize nine-tenth-inch

Project: Mori Arts Center, Tokyo
Architect: Gluckman Mayner Architects—Richard Gluckman, FAIA, principal in charge; Sam Brown, Dana Tang, project architects; Anya Bokov, Eric Chang, Celia Chiang, Mark Fiedler, Carolyn Foug, Bobby Han, Alex Hurst, Julie Moskovitz, Taro Narahara, Jasmit Rangr, Kaori Sato, Suzanne Song, Esther Tsoi, project team
Local architect: Irie Miyake Architects & Engineers

Engineers: Yoshinori Nito, Yumi Fujikawa + Dewhurst Macfarlane and Partners, Kozo Keikaku (structural); Altieri Sebor Wieber, Kenchiku Setsubi (mechanical)
Consultants: Shozo Toyohisa and Kilt Planning (lighting); 2x4 (graphics)
General contractor: Obayashi, Kajima (joint venture)
Prime contractor (glass cone): Asahi Glass Building Component Engineering Company



A central atrium connects the two museum floors (opposite, top) and a floor below that houses a membership club (opposite, bottom). The museum exhibits Modern art in 32,000 square feet of galleries (this page, top and bottom). Gluckman used quiet materials such as light maple flooring and painted gypsum board in the galleries so the setting wouldn't overpower the art.

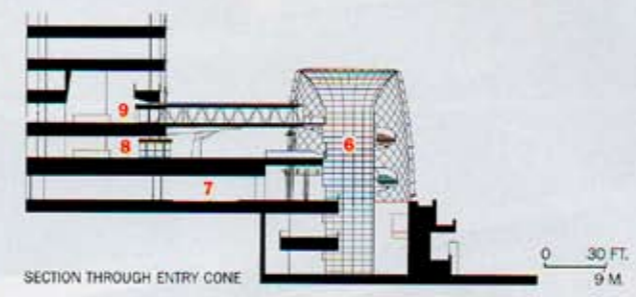
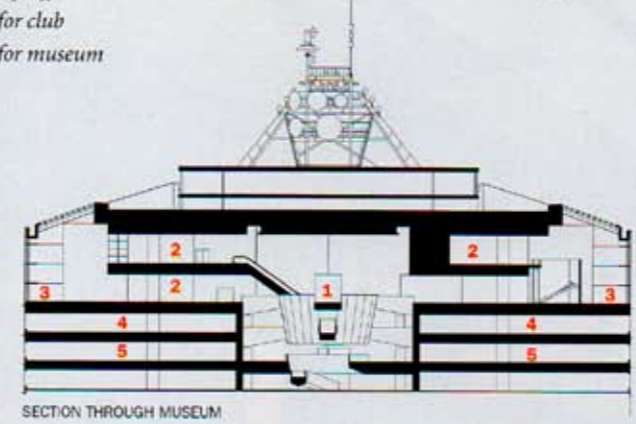
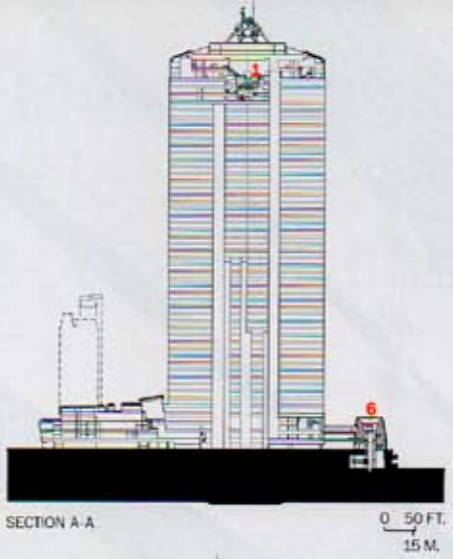


Gluckman worked with KPF to redesign the office tower's curtain wall on the top floors, reducing the size of the mullions while expanding the glass panes (this page)

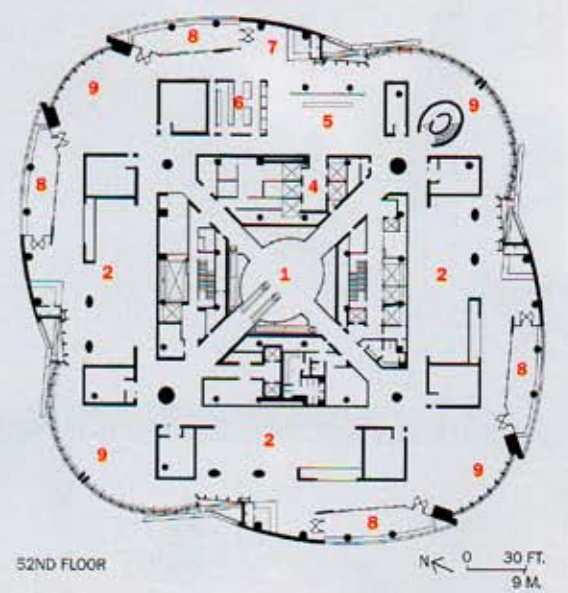


PHOTOGRAPHY: © MORI BUILDING

1. Atrium
2. Gallery
3. Observation
4. Membership club
5. Offices
6. Entry cone
7. Taxi drop-off
8. Lobby for club
9. Lobby for museum



1. Atrium
2. Gallery
3. Art and technology gallery
4. Elevator lobby
5. Arrival lobby
6. Museum shop
7. Café
8. Terrace
9. Observation



horizontal steel rings. Glass shingles printed with a translucent ceramic frit rest on the elliptical conical structure, overlapping each other and providing an enclosed but not completely sealed environment. A continuous spiral stair animates the space between the core and the facade.

Known originally for the art galleries he sensitively inserted within 19th-century buildings in New York City, Gluckman took a more assertive approach here at the Mori museum. Although the 35,000 square feet of display spaces on two floors occupy clean, orthogonal galleries that don't distract from the art, the museum's public areas use bold colors and striking materials to set themselves apart from the rest of the office tower. For example, a 63-foot-high central atrium stands out with its impressive walls of roughly cut red Indian sandstone, while circulation spaces employ thin planes of brightly colored glass that tease the eye. Such muscular gestures were necessary to help orient large numbers of visitors, many of whom arrive on the 52nd floor looking for Tokyo City View, the observation deck that surrounds the museum on all sides.

Orchestrating the procession of spaces—from entry pavilion through two floors of galleries—was critical to the success of the museum, says Gluckman. After arriving on the 52nd floor, visitors can go to the three side-lit galleries on this level or move up the escalator in the central atrium to the top-lit main galleries on the 53rd floor. While he

designed the L-shaped main galleries as quiet spaces with maple floors, Gluckman also created a pair of translucent glass boxes at opposite corners of the floor—twin spaces for the display of new-media art. These “art and technology galleries” penetrate the two-story-high space of the observation deck, stretching the visual reach of the museum to the surrounding city and providing the opportunity for curators to find innovative ways of projecting new media on the building's curtain wall.

To create the right context for the museum, Gluckman worked with KPF to redesign the office building's curtain wall where it wraps around the observation deck, employing the central atrium to connect with a membership club one floor below. Reaching out while distinguishing itself is part of the high-rise balancing act that this small museum pulls off with style. ■

- Sources**
- Tempered laminated glass (for cone):** Asahi Glass
 - Steel (for cone):** Toa Tekko Construction
 - Stainless-steel fittings (for cone):** Tripyramid Structures
 - Lighting (for cone):** Yamada Shomei

- Back-painted glass wall panels:** Nippon Sheet Glass
- Translucent glass:** Asahi Glass
- Indian sandstone:** Ando Marble
- For more information on this project, go to Projects at www.architecturalrecord.com.