

Underconstruction

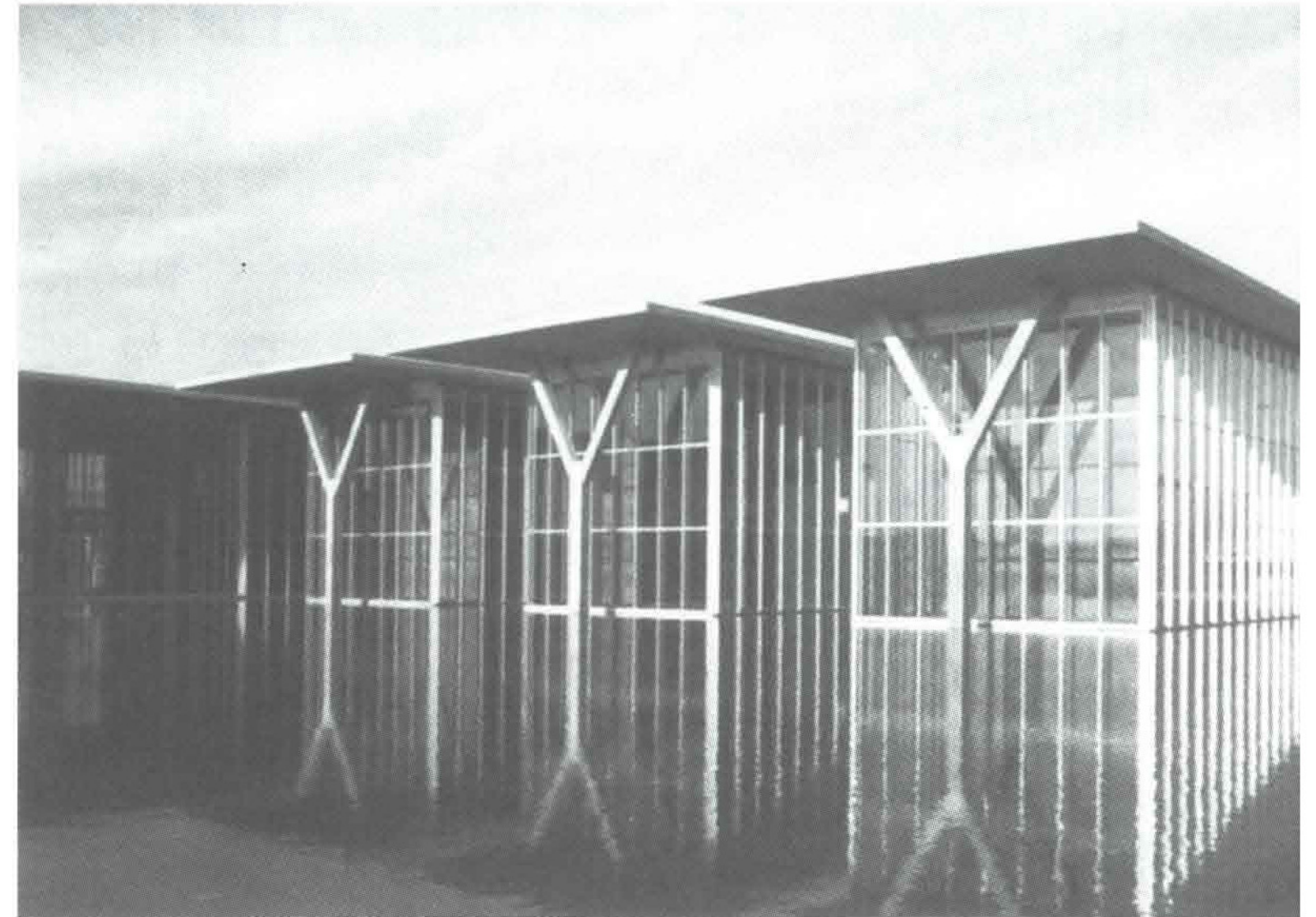
REGIONAL NEWS

Fort Worth Museum Soars

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For those of you wondering what a museum of modern art might look like, presuming it may look and be different than other museum types, a stunning example that beautifully displays top quality modern art – and modern man – is a quick 45 minute flight from Tulsa to Fort Worth, Texas.

The Fort Worth Museum of Modern Art, or "the Modern", as it is affectionately called by locals, opened its doors just last December 14 to a highly expectant and satisfied crowd. Located in the Cultural District, and just across the street from the renowned Kimball Museum of Art designed by the iconic architect Louis Kahn, the Modern has become a magnetic destination spot for locals and visitors alike. The world renowned and highly celebrated architect Tadeo Ando of Japan designed the museum. Ando is known for creating pristinely contemporary structures and spaces within controlled natural settings, resulting in a dualistic reflection of the tension between, and concurrent union of, man and nature. This is his latest and largest U.S. commission to date, and does not disappoint.



The floor plan layout of the Modern offers free flowing movement and viewing choices for visitors to view approximately 50,000 square feet of gallery space – a third of the 153,000 total facility square footage – and more than 26,000 significant pieces of world class modern art (but only a fraction displayed at any one time, thankfully). Its floor plan is organized in five parallel wings of soaring space, loosely reminiscent of the six parallel wings composing the Kimball. Once through an almost banal corporate looking exterior entry facade, one is caught unexpectedly by the explosion of sheer open volume of the rectilinear main lobby, defined by concrete and glass planes far beyond one's reach. One is captivated next by the view straight ahead to an immense wall of gridded glass overlooking an equally immense glassy plane of water outside, held to the same level as the floor. The effect is spectacular, giving the appearance of the polished marble floor metamorphosed into a gently rippling otherworldly material beyond the glass wall. Water and building merge, each reflecting and opposing the other. From that view, one realizes one is within reach of the most recognizable image of the building, which are the sentries of transparent glass box wings floating on the 1.5 acre reflecting pond. From this point the exploration begins through the parallel galleries, light infused by continuous spines of skylights far above. All paths seem to lead magnetically back to the glass box ends, where expansive views of water, earth and sky give balance and visual repose to the viewing of Warhols, Motherwells, Pollacks, Diebenkorns, and other modern masters within. It is also from within each glass enclosure that one is struck with a visual surprise that, combined with the other expert manipulations, make the building design intent fully realized and Ando's philosophical underpinnings fully apparent. Looking across each dividing inlet of water and space into the adjacent transparent boxes, one can view one's fellow visitors peering out at the liquid and atmospheric surroundings, staring quietly at a solitary piece of art, or watching others. Art and man are captured within viewing boxes for display: one static, and the other slow moving kinetic sculpture, and both are reflected in and surrounded by the elements of nature. The provocative tension between man, the man-built and God-made, locked in the age-old struggle for superiority, becomes clear. Clearly displayed as well is the tenuous balance and relationship of opposing forces within which we live, and helped to create.

The Modern is an awe-inspiring study of soaring spaces and planes joined with masterful discipline and grace. The building is stripped of superfluous details and void of visual trickery, yet rich in both detail and visual treats. It is honest architecture in sublime form, doing just the job it was designed to do, but so much more. It fulfills its purpose beautifully as a worthy enclosure for the display of world-class modern art. Yet it is because of the way the building displays the uncertain relationship between art, humanity and nature that ones senses are piqued, ones thoughts are led to things beyond the temporal, and one leaves the Modern profoundly affected.