



International Spy Museum

Washington D.C. , USA

The Commission [of Fine Arts] members commended the project team for an exceptional design and program, observing that the museum will contribute to the transformation of this part of the city.

Thomas E. Luebke, US Commission of Fine Arts



Location
Washington D.C., USA

Date
2015-2019

Client
The Malrite Company

Construction cost
\$162 million

Area
140000sqft (13006m²)

Client Representative
The JBG Companies

Architect of Record
Hickok Cole Architects

Structural Engineer
SK&A MD

Facade Engineer
Eckersley O'Callaghan

Landscape Architect
Michael Vergason
Landscape Architects Ltd

Exhibition Design
Gallagher & Associates



The International Spy Museum forms part of RSHP's masterplan for L'Enfant Plaza in Washington DC, and creates a new home for the privately-owned Spy Museum previously located in a 19th Century building in Penn Quarter.

As a cultural building, The International Spy Museum generates activity and interest within a neighbourhood noted for large scale government office buildings. Consequently, the new Spy Museum acts as a catalyst for the regeneration of 10th Street, initiating and reinforcing the intentions of the National Capital Planning Commission SW Ecodistrict Plan.

Drawing its inspiration from the techniques of espionage, the building 'hides in plain sight'. Its exhibition space is contained in a dramatic, louvred 'black box' with inclined translucent walls, articulated by bright red fins. The pleated glass veil, which is fritted on the south orientated panels to reduce glare and reflections, is suspended from red columns on the outside of the black box.

This veil encloses an atrium, a ground floor lobby and a circulation in the form of a grand staircase. Behind this veil, the prominent façade of the box angles out over the street and public space to one side, breaking the building line to create a disruptive landmark at the crest of 10th Street, visible from the National Mall at one end and Banneker Park at the other. This provides a continuation of public realm from 10th Street through to the new office buildings within the Plaza.

Above the double height lobby, and the three floors of exhibition and theatre space contained within the box, are two further floors of set-back office and event space, inconspicuous from street level, with a roof terrace giving views across Washington DC's cityscape and waterfront. Lifts at the rear on the building serve all levels, and visitors are invited to pass down the atrium grand staircase above street level and exit the museum via the ground floor retail area, contributing life to the façade.