

Energy switch

BY Nolan Giles



“This is architecture’s ‘new black,’” says CF Møller partner Mads Mandrup Hansen, as he leads me through his Danish firm’s impressive Maersk Tower, newly opened in Copenhagen. “An architect 10 years ago might have said a dream job is designing a national museum but today it’s to be working on major research buildings.”

Annexed to the University of Copenhagen’s Panum building, the tower has integrated landscaping and copper cladding that can move to reduce sunlight – all part of the effort to create something carbon-efficient. But Hansen says the most fun part was creating laboratories that facilitate scientific breakthrough. These open-plan spaces echo Google’s collaborative working environments but instead cater for today’s wealthy science set

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– wealthy because the industries reliant upon their research continue to boom.

In Basel a design rivalry is growing between Swiss pharmaceutical giants Roche and Novartis. The latter’s Frank Gehry-designed HQ is a work of art in its own right. Built for a cool \$2.3bn (€1.9bn), its form divides opinion as much as the drug-maker it houses. In 2015, Roche took things to the next level by commissioning Herzog and De Meuron to design Switzerland’s tallest tower – it is also one of the world’s most sustainably minded high-rises.

Herein lies the real beauty in this new trend of grand architectural commissions. Whatever your opinion on the social impact of big pharma, the thread that binds these buildings together is a focus on breaking new ground in sustainable architecture. A beautiful museum might impress visitors with a spectacular form but the spectacle in these works is design innovation – and it will have a positive impact on our built environment for years to come. — (M)

Tasteful touches

VALENCIA

A new political and economic panorama in Valencia is priming Spain’s third-largest city for a renaissance in design. A recent indicator is the unveiling of the Fundació Per Amor A l’Art, a privately funded cultural centre and scientific research institute within the refurbished art deco walls of a former machinery factory.

Interior architect Francesc Rifé worked closely with Valencia’s Michelin-starred chef Ricard Camarena to design the onsite restaurant. “I believe a restaurant needs to create a bond with each visitor,” says Rifé, who harmonised the use of natural light with wide spaces and plenty of Spanish fittings from Marset, Santa & Cole and JMM.

“As a chef, Carmena understands that gastronomic experiences go beyond cooking, so together we harnessed a sense of spaciousness to create silence, warmth and intimacy,” adds Rifé. As a mark of respect for the building’s industrial heritage a second interior skin of walnut wood and lattice dividers was applied. All of which confirms Rifé as Spain’s go-to guy when it comes to the design of gastronomic spaces, not least with a CV boasting projects for Ferran Adrià’s El Bulli Lab and a host of restaurants from Girona to Barcelona. — LA

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