

# NEW WING OF THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF MODERN ART, NEW DELHI

## Project Data

*Client:* Department of Culture, The Government of India.

*Architects:* TEAM, New Delhi.

*Consulting Engineers:* Central Public Works Department, New Delhi.

*Project Manager:* A.R. Ramanathan, TEAM.

*Completion:* 1996

*TEAM were commissioned in 1987 to design and build the new wing of the National Gallery of Modern Art at Jaipur House, India Gate, New Delhi. They have submitted the following design statement on their project proposal.*

The statements one makes through the medium of public architecture are of enormous importance, since they reflect the prevalent concerns and aspirations of our times. In this particular instance, the new architecture will be in direct dialogue with an existing statement – Jaipur House (the former town house of the Jaipur Maharajah) and the Hexagon, which bear testimony to the ‘Imperial’ era. Public architecture today must take an austere, democratic and progressive stand; but Jaipur House has become a part of our heritage and must be respected as such. There is, therefore, a dual responsibility for the designer.

Consequently, the vocabulary one chooses to put forth – one’s architectural viewpoint – is of paramount importance. ‘Looking good’ in itself is not enough; it is our responsibility to ensure that the architecture does not convey an inappropriate order of priorities. Piecemeal allusions to elements and motifs would be out of context in this scheme; The building must instead use a new vocabulary, based on re-interpretation and innovation, as well as a respect for our heritage.

The vocabulary for bringing about geometrical order and scale in the proposed scheme has its genesis in the design process. The three proposed blocks have been placed orthogonally to derive

maximum possible use of space on this precious site and to keep as substantial a distance as possible between the extension and existing building. This causes a negation of the strong axis generated by the symmetrical built form of Jaipur House, which is in response to the overall scheme of grand urban vistas converging in the Hexagon plan for the Princes’ Palaces.

Architectural protocol demands that this anomaly be set right, to restore parity. The colonnade is an obvious response, but it is incomplete in itself. The entrance ramp therefore serves a dual purpose. It makes a positive, unequivocal statement of entrance to the proposed extension and, more importantly, it restores and reinforces the original axis, clearly establishing in the process the architectural hierarchy – the existing Jaipur House comes first. The two flanks of unspanned columns state the tenuous link between the old and the new and define the central space which celebrates the new order. This central space is exclusively for the pedestrian. It is a space to be perceived from within – not a vista to be admired from a distance. The decision to scale down this space to a more ‘human’ level from the larger vistas of the hexagon is crucial to the architectural theme of our proposal.

The metamorphosis of the inherited order of the hexagon to that of the unambiguous squares of the new proposal is completed by the final reiteration of the central space in the double height entrance of the new gallery, before the new order is established.

## The Site

In Edwin Lutyens’ New Delhi complex, the most important part is the Central Vista complex, starting with the Vice-regal Lodge (Rashtrapati Bhavan) at the head, and ending with Princes’ Palaces. At the bottom is Jaipur House, a part of the Princes’ Palaces. Built by Blomfield in a style similar to other buildings of that period, its distinguishing features are its red sandstone bands and a dignified, austere exterior facade, in keeping with its designation as the National Gallery of Modern Art.

## The Design Approach

The basic approach was to create a built environment which does not disturb the visitor, but creates the right background to view the works on display. A building which is so ‘loud’ that it overwhelms the visitor could be very disturbing to someone who has come for the serious study of the art. The building should retain its dignity and impressiveness even while it remains as a backdrop to the exhibits. The scheme should create an environment in which to view art, without becoming an object of art in itself – and without being a non-descript piece of architecture.

Following the 90° alignment creates a substantial open area between the existing building and the extension. This open space serves as link space between the two. The site area is also used more effectively and in an orderly fashion. The two entrances/exits to the site are maintained and vehicular movement inside the site is restrained along the periphery.

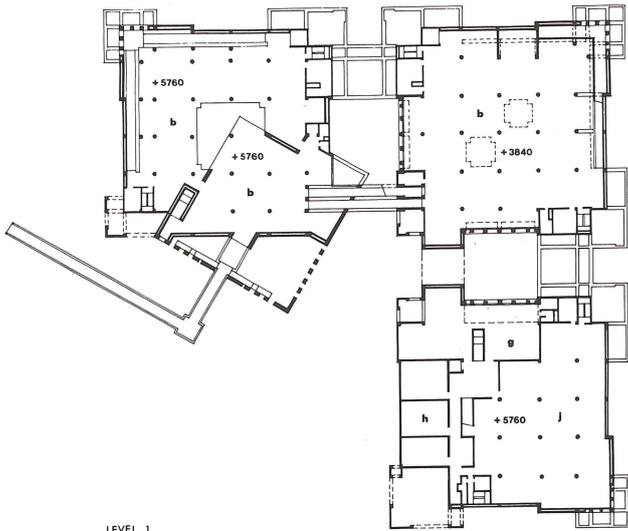
The main entry into the new complex starts with the First Court in the series of connected courts, the volume of which is marked by the raised levels. The intermediate stage of the rotation is indicated in the paving pattern. The entrance ramp also starts from the court. Below, the ramp functions as a covered walkway leading to the same entry point

*Top left: Plan of Level One. Gallery spaces (b) are located in two of the new blocks, while the library (j) and administration facilities are in the third one.*

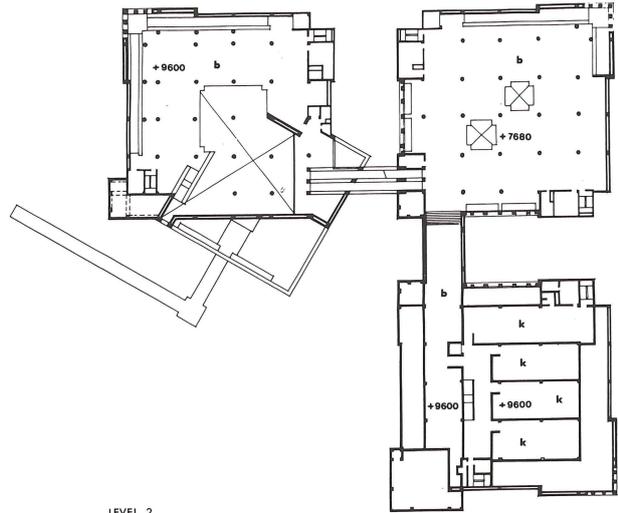
*Top right: Plan of Level Two. Laboratories for conservation and restoration activities with excellent natural lighting are located on the upper level of block three.*

*Below: The site plan shows Jaipur House(a), and the way in which problems of design and urban integration of the new extension have been resolved.*

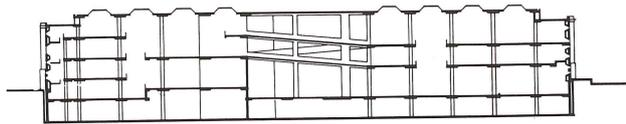
*Centre: Section AA of the proposed extension to the museum.*



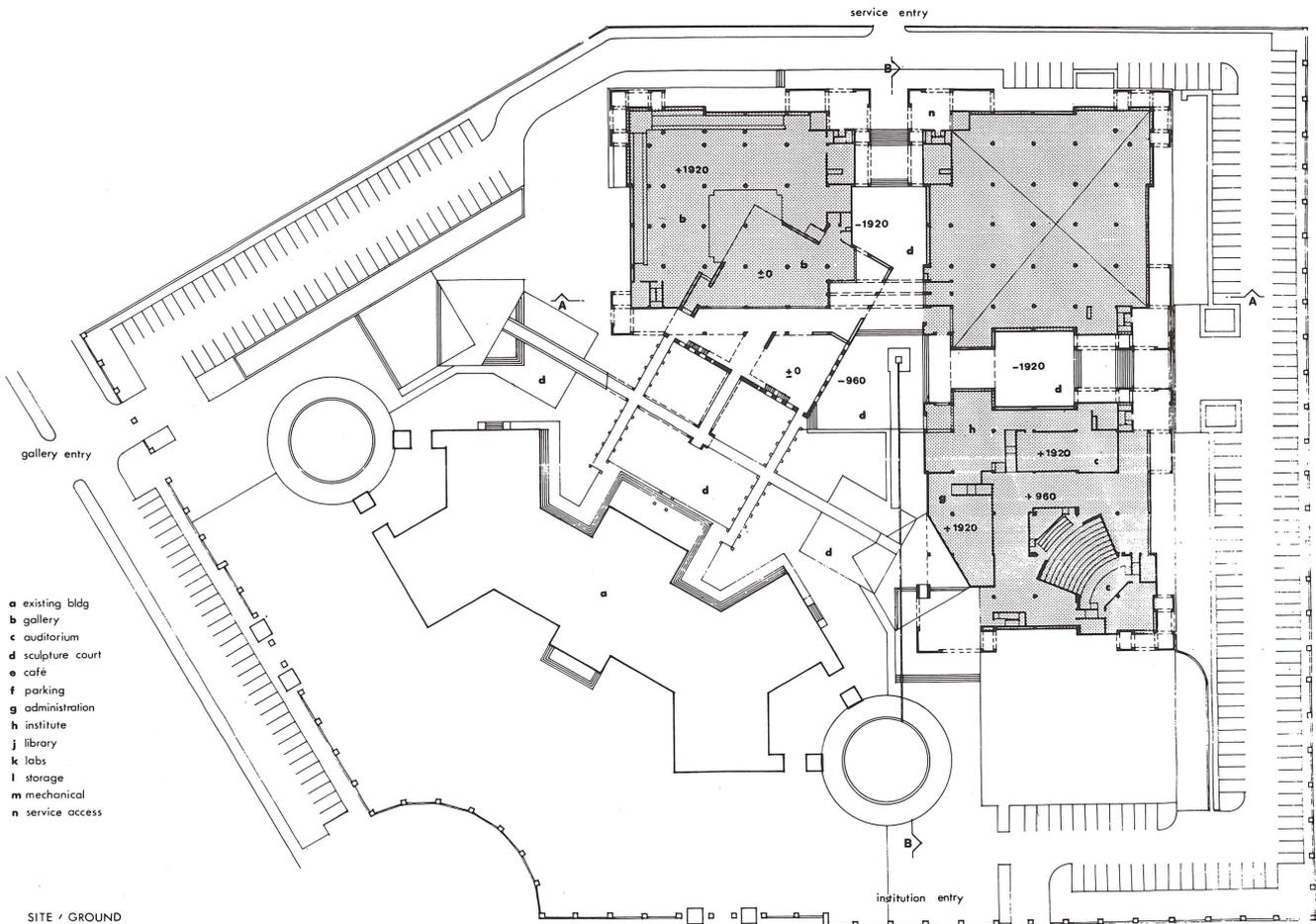
LEVEL 1



LEVEL 2



AA



- a existing bldg
- b gallery
- c auditorium
- d sculpture court
- e café
- f parking
- g administration
- h institute
- j library
- k labs
- l storage
- m mechanical
- n service access

SITE / GROUND

## MUSEUMS

but at ground level and leading directly to the elevators.

In the main courtyard, which is the direct link between the old Jaipur House and the new, the theme of the columns is played through on a larger scale. The ramp also turns here at 90° and goes into new complex, through the largest colonnade as a climax.

The entrance to the museum area for the visitor is at the +5760 level of the first block. This is approached by the ramp from the new main entrance courtyard. From this level one can choose which gallery to visit; it is not very practical to take in an entire museum of this size in one visit.

The top levels of Block 1 and 2 are museum floors and Block 3 has conservation/restoration laboratories at the top-most level, to take maximum advantage of these completely skylit spaces. Blocks 1 & 2 are connected by ramps at half floor differences to reduce vertical movement. Block 3 has the institutional wing, below which is the office for the National Gallery of Modern Art, and further below are the cafeteria and the auditorium. Block 3 is more of an utilitarian block with its own entrance court, whereas the Blocks 1 & 2 are museum blocks. The basement is used for storage, utility services and parking.

### The Structure

The structural system is in a 7.68m x 7.68m grid which is an economical span in a flat slab system. Columns are at the corners of the squares, from which are spanned the main four peripheral beams and the secondary diagonal beams; the rest of the space is divided in triangular coffers which helps to reduce the depth of the overall structure.

The other advantage of the triangular coffer system is the flexibility of the exhibition space; for the bottom face of the coffer ribs and beams would have the double sliding tracks for lights and display panels or walls, as indicated in the drawing. The illumination would be entirely from low voltage halogen fixtures mounted on multicircuit tracks, combined with natural light where possible from skylights or the deep recessed windows.

### Landscaping

The landscape proposal for the new wing follows a very simple concept: an endeavour to retain and create as much of the green as possible and to integrate its landscaping with the existing building. We propose retaining the 60 or so large trees and planting 44 new ones.

We have tried to include as few elements as possible in the landscaping. Large unhindered green spaces and simple

lines defining the hard (paved) area from the green, provide an unobtrusive background for any kind of museum display. Plants and flowerbeds are kept to a minimum. Several areas will be carefully selected for flowering shrubs, e.g. along stone screens, pergolas and in some places along the peripheral walls.

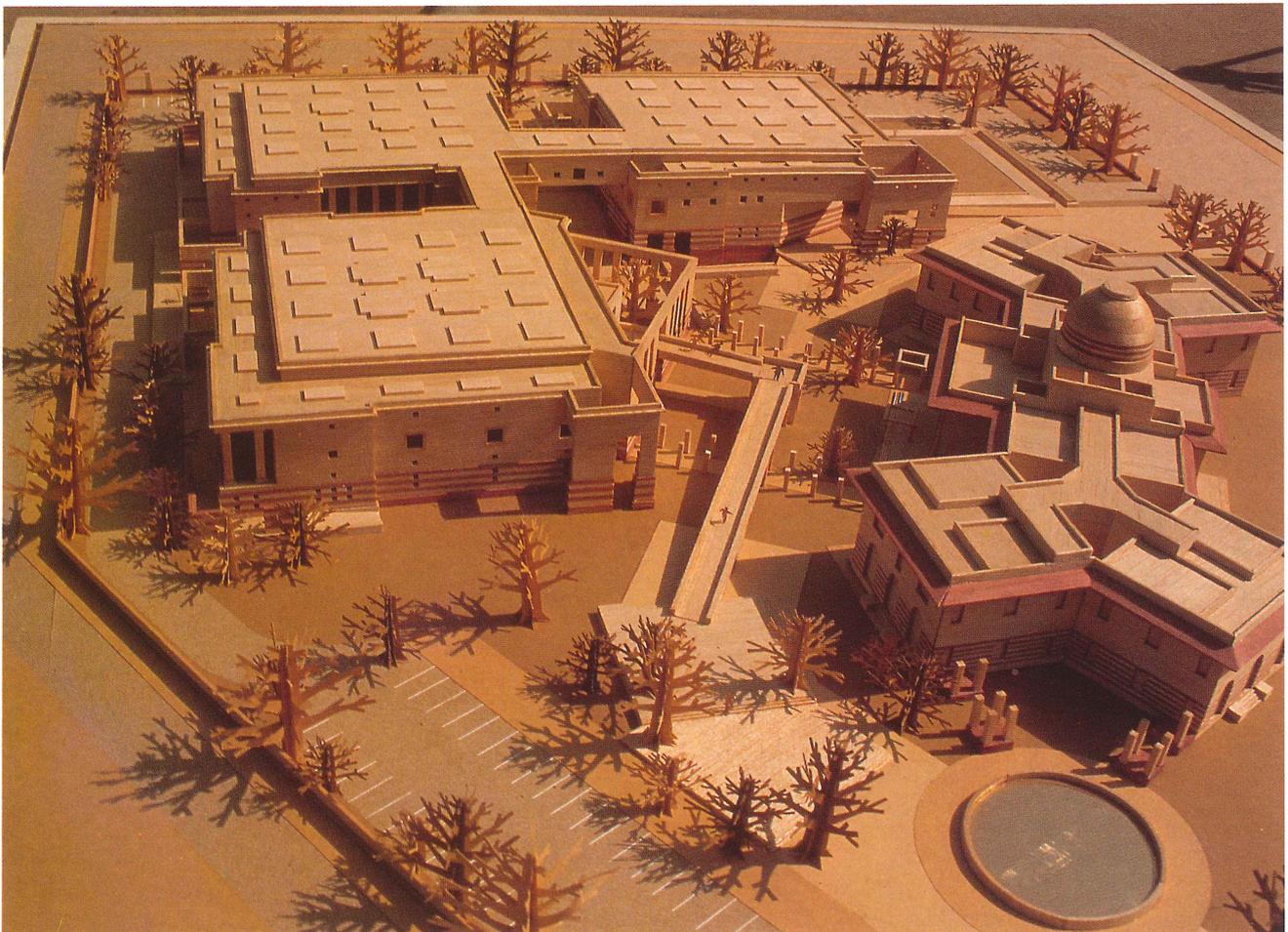
*Opposite top left: The entrance to Jaipur House – a colonial building – now the National Gallery of Modern Art.*

*Opposite centre left: A view of the back of Jaipur House – the existing museum building on the site. Its sculpture garden will be preserved after the extension has been built.*

*Opposite top right: A detail of the model shows the main entrance to the new complex, and the ramp which will take most visitors to the upper level galleries.*

*Opposite below: Arcades at ground level in the courtyard between the old and new buildings enclose the space intended as a sculpture garden.*

*Below: The model indicates the way in which the three new blocks will be articulated around a courtyard formed with the existing museum.*



MUSEUMS

