Design Team

Rafael Violy Architects + Reiach and Hall Architects

Rafael Violy Architects is an internationally recognized practice with offices in New York, Tokyo and South America. Founded in 1982, the practice of 70 professionals provides comprehensive services in building design, urban planning and interior design. It has established relationships with engineering practices which operates within the office. Rafael Violy Architects has successfully completed large scale projects in New York, Tokyo, Paris and South America. Its preference is to operate in the "fast track" mode in which the design and engineering is fully integrated with the construction so that the project can be financially completed with the lowest cost. This approach has led to the introduction of the concept of the "design manager" into the planning and design of each project. Cost control and scheduling are regarded as essential components in the design process.

Reiach and Hall Architects is an Edinburgh practice with 24 members founded in 1965. In the past 33 years it has established its reputation for delivering refined and elegant buildings on time and within the established budgets.

The practices will be integrated in the office of Reiach and Hall. The workload and responsibilities will be seamlessly carried by the unbroken practice. Rafael Violy Architects will have direct and exclusive control of the design process. The firm's workload will be linked to allow Mr. Violy to devote full time to the design of the Scottish Parliament. Mr. John Speney, the Senior Partner at Reiach and Hall Architects, has the responsibility for administering the project team. Mr. Ewan Brightman has worked with Mr. Violy for 20 years and will serve as Project Manager, a position he has held on every major project produced by Rafael Violy Architects.

The project will be finely documented on computer in two and three dimensions. This will improve coordination and decrease the time required to review and rework the work in progress. A full model shop will be operational to provide detailed three dimensional representations and mockups of design concepts and details.

Project Organization

As indicated, Rafael Violy will have exclusive design control. John Speney will administer the team and Mr. Ewan Brightman will stand as Project Manager. To increase accountability and efficiency for the documentation of the project, the entire architectural, structural, mechanical, electrical and engineering firms will be established project office with the architect in Edinburgh. Other consultants will be located in office in Edinburgh. The fact that the team is located in Edinburgh will ensure precise coordination and quick response to design and implementation issues.

What we will create is a practice whose unique focus and responsibility is on the realization of the Scottish Parliament.

Organization Chart

THE SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT

Design Methodology

Architectural design is a collaborative process, which should transform buildings into significant contributions to the culture. This process depends on client, person and context, and on the intelligence with which decision making is managed. This process is not linear, nor should it be hierarchically structured. Instead, it should be advanced by the interaction of the various disciplines and the client (together on an interrelated field of issues). In order to promote the organization of this process, it is essential to explore design alternatives to improve the quality and value of design. The design process is to be managed by a matrix which represents the interrelated character of the decision making process. The evaluation of these alternatives should be made with a comprehensive physical description of the architectural name that each alternative implies. This move is not a scientific analysis to discover "the solution" for the project, rather is a platform to provide a discussion, promote creativity and enrich responsibility.

The alternatives presented in our first interview were the result of different approaches to the site strategy as described in the brief. They were based on three building typologies: the street wall building, the slicing podium, and the building. All of them were based on the condition that the building should promote "democratic transparency" through its openness, and "permeative place making" through its traffic density. The design proposal, presented in the last floor panel, is an evolution of ideas contained in each of these earlier sketches, more rigorously related to the gradient and the site topography to determine the level to which all alternatives should be defined.

Potential changes to the site, its expansion to the east, or the removal of the Queensberry House), reorders to the programs and the intervention of the client and the communities involved, will expand the matrix of alternatives and redefine the criterion for evaluation.

The design of the Scottish Parliament should result from a process in which the national spirit is interpreted in an active and efficient forum.

Project Mission

A Building for the People of Scotland

The people of Scotland voted democratically for a devolved Scottish Government to be housed in Edinburgh. A new government occupying a new building will enter the next millennium, marking the end of a period of almost 300 years without a symbol of nationhood.

We think this goal should be achieved through imaginative and contemporary design that, while reflecting new architectural standards, grows from the qualities of the fine Edinburgh setting. The building should be approachable, easily legible and operation-efficient to be worthy of the aspirations of the People of Scotland.

Urban Analysis

The Urban Response

The understanding of the urban structure of the town of Edinburgh provides the framework for the design of the building and the definition of its symbolic role.

The lower development of Canongate and its connecting route between the historic core remain as the spine from which the town evolved. This can be perceived from the multiple vantage points that enhance the topography.

The renewable character of Edinburgh's urban fabric remained consistent throughout the neo-classical intervention of the New Town because it is based on a number of urban design typologies which are correct. These typologies are still valid and can be used to organize the response to the site.

Patrick Geddes believed that in order to really understand Edinburgh and its people one should "go to its highest point, look down upon it and all will then be revealed".

Geddes implemented his vision in the Old Town as the top of the Royal Mile which offers the visitor and the people of Edinburgh the opportunity to look out on the city and its surrounding countryside.

This philosophy encapsulates the notions of "reading and participation" which are essential to the understanding of both the geographical and socio-political origins of the city and its governing process.

We believe that having access to the decision making process, while preserving the wider reality of the landscape, reinforces the connection between the government and its sources.

The Scottish Parliament

The Scottish Parliament

The Scottish Parliament

The Scottish Parliament

The Scottish Parliament

The Scottish Parliament

The Scottish Parliament
Design Process

1. The Wall Building

A building that continues the street wall of Canongate, defining the southern extension of Haymarket Park into the site. On this courtyard, opening to the views of Edinburgh Castle, a transparent object contains the Debating Chamber.

2. The Covered Plaza

A block building concentrated on the east side of the site defining an interior plaza within which, through a series of mechanical lifts, the chamber becomes a multipurpose space suitable for different functions as it was in the Parliament Hall. The main core of the building is a contemporary reinterpretation of the structure designed by John Scott in 1637 for the Parliament Hall.

3. An Object Building

An object building terminates the eastern end of the Royal Mile in a circular form that provides an architectural order to an otherwise undefined townscape condition. A sense from the highest elevations of the site allows the public to reach a new vantage point in Edinburgh, encircling the Chamber visible from afar.

Townscape Precedents

- Edge and Streetwall
- The Courtyard
- The Close
- Ramps and Vantage Points
The Party

The building party acknowledges these recognized townscape precedents to organize its mass. The Canongate urban edge wraps around the symbolic volume of the Parliament Chamber opening the southeast corner and the views towards the Palace. This turning element creates a zone along with the west wing of the building, rearticulating the gateway condition of the Royal Mile and recalling a mix of the formative structure of the town. A courtyard in the original position of the Greensward Garden, becomes the main public access of the building.

The slope of Royal Mile is captured at the downhill elevation of the site and transformed into a gentle ramp that leads the public to the top of the building. From there, the people can observe the business of the Parliament in the context of its largest geographic and urban settings.

The transparent volume of the Chamber becomes an accessible icon, which represents the open nature of the new Scottish Government.

Building Organization

Segregated Circulation and Security Criteria

Segregated horizontal and vertical circulation achieve the reconciliation of openness and accessibility to and within the site. The various users enter the building from opposite directions. MSP's, staff and official visitors from Canongate.

The public, the press and the service deliveries from Haymarket Road after clearing security access within the building is via the concourse areas where separate vertical circulation zones are located. The Canongate ramp to the roof terrace can be reached by security cleared visitors by the former Queensberry House.