The Scottish Parliament

Richard Meier & Partners/Keppie Design

Project Team
Richard Meier is both well known and well respected around the world, including Scotland where he has been awarded an honorary fellowship by the Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland. His accomplishments have been recognized with many other awards such as the Pritzker Prize for Architecture, often regarded as architecture’s Nobel Prize and Gold Medals from both the Royal Institute of British Architects and the American Institute of Architects. Richard Meier & Partners has offices in New York and Los Angeles and employs 76 multi-cultural talented professionals.

Keppie Design was established in 1854 by John Honesman in Glasgow. With John Keppie he developed one of the leading architecture firms in Scotland, attracting the talents of Charles Bennie Mackintosh. Keppie is still at the forefront of architectural design in Scotland. A staff of 86 is located in offices in Glasgow, Edinburgh, and Perth. There are few cities and towns in Scotland which do not have Keppie Design buildings.

Richard Meier & Partners and Keppie Design have combined forces to design the new Scottish Parliament building working on a 50:50 basis. Each will contribute its specific skills throughout the design process. Richard Meier will lead the design effort with his reputation for technical and architectural innovation and sympathy to a building’s context and environment. Keppie Design will add the local knowledge. Having completed many large buildings in Scotland they have a working knowledge of Scottish building practices and regulations. Both firms will be involved from the beginning to the end of the project. Richard Meier & Partners project staff will travel to Scotland regularly from start to finish including the very important construction phase. Keppie Design will be available to deal with issues at a moment’s notice.

Buro Happold is a multi-disciplinary practice of consulting engineers with a worldwide practice of over 300. The main office is located in Bath with additional United Kingdom branch offices in Glasgow, London and Leeds. They share the architect’s commitment to the use of natural forces such as daylight and climate to improve the quality of the environment in which we live and work and they have demonstrated the technical expertise necessary to achieve this goal. Today it is possible to use computer modeling techniques to predict the effect of sun, wind, temperature and humidity on buildings in ways which were never before possible. Extremely sophisticated techniques can now be utilized to produce very simple, elegant, and extremely efficient building designs.

The entire team is committed to creating a Scottish Parliament Building that reflects the goals and aspirations of the Scottish people and that will appropriately represent Scotland to the world.
Previous Work

Richard Meier & Partners’ work has received numerous awards including 12 National Honor Awards from the American Institute of Architects. The firm’s work includes major civic commissions such as city halls and courthouses in the United States and Europe, museums, libraries, corporate headquarters, housing, and private residences. They have completed buildings in 13 different countries and working in 5 separate languages. Some of Richard Meier & Partners more well-known projects include the recently completed Getty Center in Los Angeles; The Hague City Hall and Central Library; the Barcelona Museum of Contemporary Art; the Frankfurt Museum of Decorative Arts and the Canal Plus Television Headquarters in Paris. The firm is currently working on the Church of the Year 2000 for the Vatican in Rome.

Keppie Design is one of the leading architectural practices in Scotland. They have a particular expertise in building conservation and adaptive reuse of older buildings. The Royal Scottish Academy in Edinburgh, Gilmourhill Halls for Glasgow University, Craigton House St. Andrews and the Co’Droo Building in Glasgow are notable examples. The last of these won Civic Trust and Europa Nostra awards. Keppie Design has a long record of working on large civic projects such as the Sheriff Court in Glasgow and a number of hospitals including the New Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh and University of Edinburgh Medical School.

Buro Happold is guided by the principle that engineering considerations influence planning and architecture and that good designs result only when there is genuine harmony between the artistic and the practical. Recent projects include Millennium Tower, Glasgow; Theatre Royal, Glasgow; and the Royal Lyceum Theatre, Edinburgh. Buro Happold has received numerous awards from the Civic Trust, Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland, and the Royal Fine Art Commission including Building of the Year for Queen’s Building, Emmanuel College, Cambridge.
The building must command respect through its physical form.

It will represent the goals of Open Government to the world.

Materials can impart a sense of permanence and timelessness.

Stone can be left rough or honed for a very different effect.

The building must respect the existing context but not mimic it.

It should preserve the best of Scotland’s architectural heritage.

Both the work areas and the public spaces should be filled with natural light.

The building should be naturally illuminated and ventilated.

The building should be accessible and welcoming to all.

The organisation and use of a space should be clear upon entry.

Architecture at its best is an integration of human scale with civic grandeur.

The building should inspire all to strive for the highest level of achievement.
Design Concept

This preliminary sketch design for the Scottish Parliament, located at the eastern end of the Royal Mile, consists of four main components in terms of exterior space and built form. The first of these exterior spaces is the proposed Parliament Square that faces onto Holyrood Palace and is bounded on three sides by Canongate, Horse Wynd and Holyrood Road. The second open space, the Queensberry House forecourt, is treated as a landscaped garden covering the MSPs' parking garage beneath. The two main built forms are the Members' Building and Foyer which is triangular in plan and the circular Debating Chamber.

The Parliament Building responds to the topographic and historic features that surround the complex on every side. The entrance to the Members' Building and Foyer from Canongate relates to the open space of the Bowling Green. In a similar way the Parliament Square echoes the forecourt of Holyrood Palace while the Debating Chamber responds to the form of the ancient Scottish circular fort, the "broch" which is unique in being the only exclusively Scottish building type. The Parliament Building will be predominately stone clad. At this stage we imagine that both the stone for the Members' Building and the Debating Chamber as well as the paving of the Square will be quarried in Scotland.

Entry into the Parliament is provided in several ways; from Canongate to the north which allows access to visitors and the press, and for ceremonial occasions entry is under the portico facing Parliament Square. This entry will also be used by MSPs and staff arriving on foot. Members and staff arriving by car will have direct access from the underground parking garage which is entered via a ramp from Holyrood Road.

Along the north side of the Square a stepped esplanade, which accommodates the slope of Canongate, will provide an elevated position from which to view ceremonial events. We imagine the Square will also be used as a place for festivals and other public functions. Accommodation within the building would be flexible enough to allow use during the Festival when the Parliament is not in session.

The Parliament Building consists of a top-lit wedge-shaped foyer attached to an office building. The accommodation for the Ministers is in the upper part of the office building in a two-storey penthouse/loggia which has commanding views to Holyrood Palace and to the Castle. The Members' Restaurant and the Press Cafeteria are housed in a sculptural element at the southern end of the office building. This glazed form faces west and overlooks the forecourt of Queensberry House which as a historical structure is preserved in this design and will accommodate a part of the brief.

This design represents one of many studies that we would make in order to find an appropriate form for the new Scottish Parliament.