

# Chengdu Natural History Museum



## Pelli Clarke Pelli Sets Standards for Museum Design

Pelli Clarke Pelli Architects (PCP) in collaboration with China Southwest Architectural Design and Research Institute Corp Ltd. has prevailed over a strong field to win the competition for a Natural History Museum in Chengdu, China. The other finalists included Zaha Hadid Architects, Sutherland Hussey Harris, Nihon Sekkei, Valode & Pistre, and FUKSAS.

Although the project's location of this project is in Chengdu, in a central region of China far from the coastal cities where we are used to seeing competitions for prestigious projects, it is no small community, having upwards of 10 million inhabitants and serving as the urban capital of Sichuan province. Moreover, the competition has brought our attention to the fact that not all hi-tech research is taking place in Shanghai,

Beijing or Shenzhen—all located on or near the Pacific Ocean—but in this far-flung city in the interior. In light of this, the interest of Fortune 500 companies in Chengdu as a prime location could only lead to the next step for the community—raising its cultural profile.

### **The Winning Design**

PCP's winning concept was based at a great extent on the geography of the region. Of the design elements in the PCP presentation, the fascinating model really tells us much about the approach and intent of the team. It was inspired by the natural geological features found in the Sichuan Basin, with the mountains in the background as a product of the shifting tectonic plates that resulted from volcanic activity.

Bordered on one site by the river, what initially might

have been regarded as a limiting factor was turned to a positive by the PCP team. By leaving enough space between the building and the river, a linear pocket park with a water feature was created, thus softening the impact of the large structure from that viewing angle. Part of that feature was the use of wiers to create the meandering path of the water.

### Presentation Strategy

Although a video and a model were part of the documentation submitted for adjudication by the winner, one had to admire the descriptive value of the renderings, which well served to logically act as a supplemental guide for any viewer endeavoring to understand the philosophical principles behind the winning design.

Museumgoers who often experience an overload effect in large museums will not encounter that here. Although possibly not in the minds of the designers in this case, the somewhat fragmented nature of the complex can at least provide some respite visually from the need to do it all at once. And, for visitors, the building's architectural expression and interior organization with its exceptional vistas should at the same time act as a motivation to 'see more.'

For many who never gave Chengdu a second thought about placing it on their itinerary, other than for business purposes, it may soon be time to reconsider. Completion is scheduled for 2021.

### Winning Entry

#### Pelli Clarke Pelli Architects

New Haven, Connecticut

with

China Southwest Architectural Design and Research Institute Corporation, Ltd.

THIS PAGE

Grade level plan

OPPOSITE PAGE

Birdseye view



### Other Finalists

- **Zaha Hadid Architects** (UK)
- **Sutherland Hussey Harris** (Edinburgh, Scotland)
- **Nihon Sekkei** (Japan)
- **Valode & Pistre** (Paris)
- **FUKSAS** (Paris)





*Winning Entry*

## **Pelli Clarke Pelli Architects**

New Haven, Connecticut  
with

China Southwest Architectural Design  
and Research Institute Corporation, Ltd.

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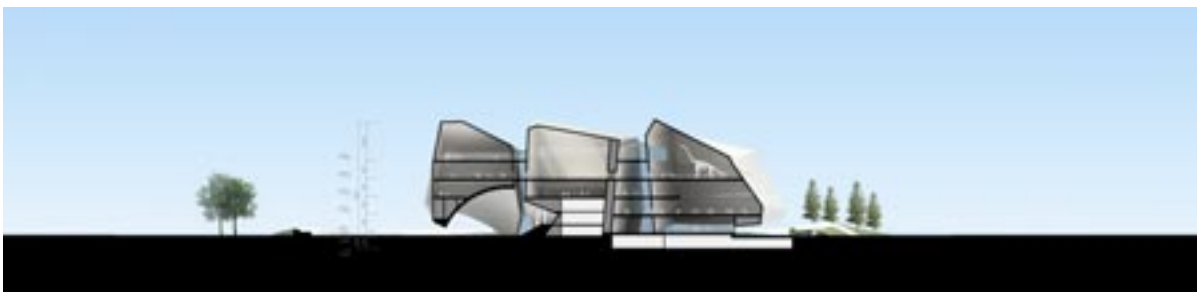
View from street to entrance

LEFT BELOW

**Sections**

OPPOSITE PAGE

View to entrance



*Project Team*

**Design Architect--PCPA**

Senior Design Principal: Fred Clarke  
Competition Project Leader:  
Kristin Hawkins

Competition Team:

David Chen, Cory Frost, Hongxi Yang,  
Ileana Dumitriu, Olivia Huang, Beidi  
Zhang, Craig Borkenhagen, Jie Zhang,  
Tim Fong

**Local LDI--CSWADI**

Competition Team:

Liu Yi, Xiao Bo, Luo Dian, Yang Yang,  
Aaron Shu, Yan Zhang

**Landscape Design--SWA**

Competition Team:

Jim Lee, Ji Hyun Yoo

Exhibit Design--Blue Cadet

Competition Team: Brad Baer, Laura Sutphen

Renderings--Steel Blue, ICON

Competition Team:

O'Brien Chalmers, Travis Schmiesing

Renderings, Animation--ICON

Architectural Models:

Presentation Studios International









*Winning Entry*

**Pelli Clarke Pelli Architects**

New Haven, Connecticut  
with

China Southwest Architectural  
Design and Research Institute  
Corporation, Ltd.

LEFT ABOVE

View to crosswalks in atrium

LEFT BELOW

pathway to exhibits

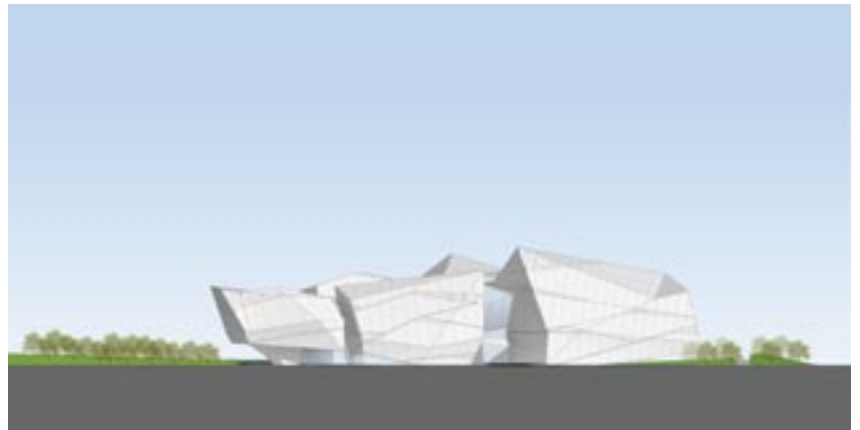
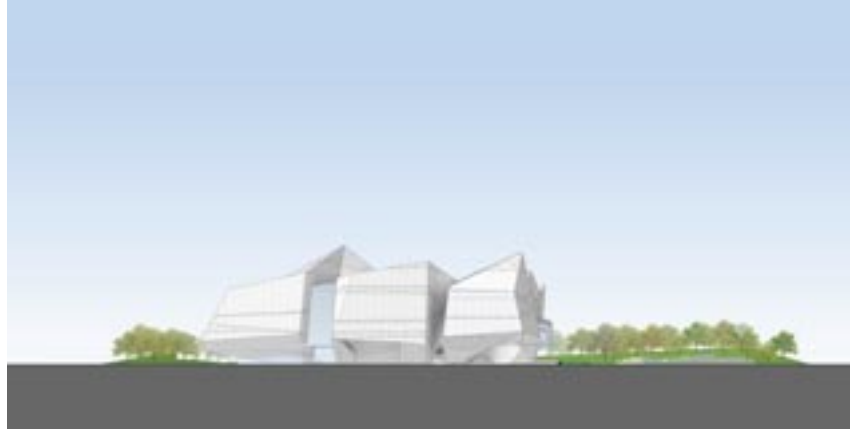
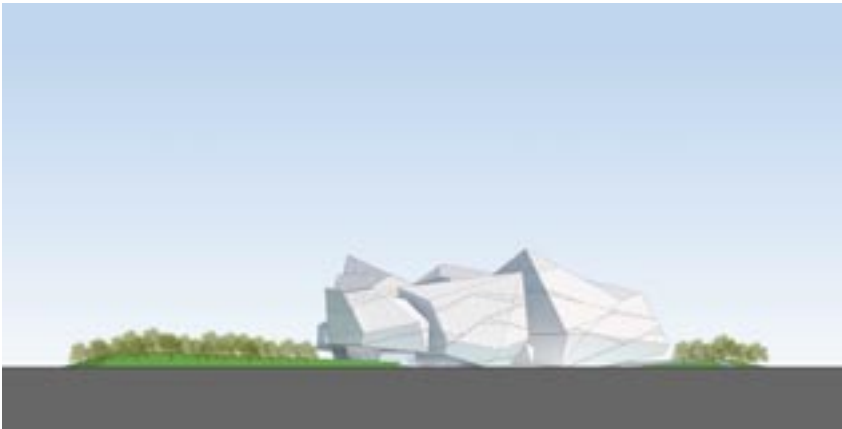
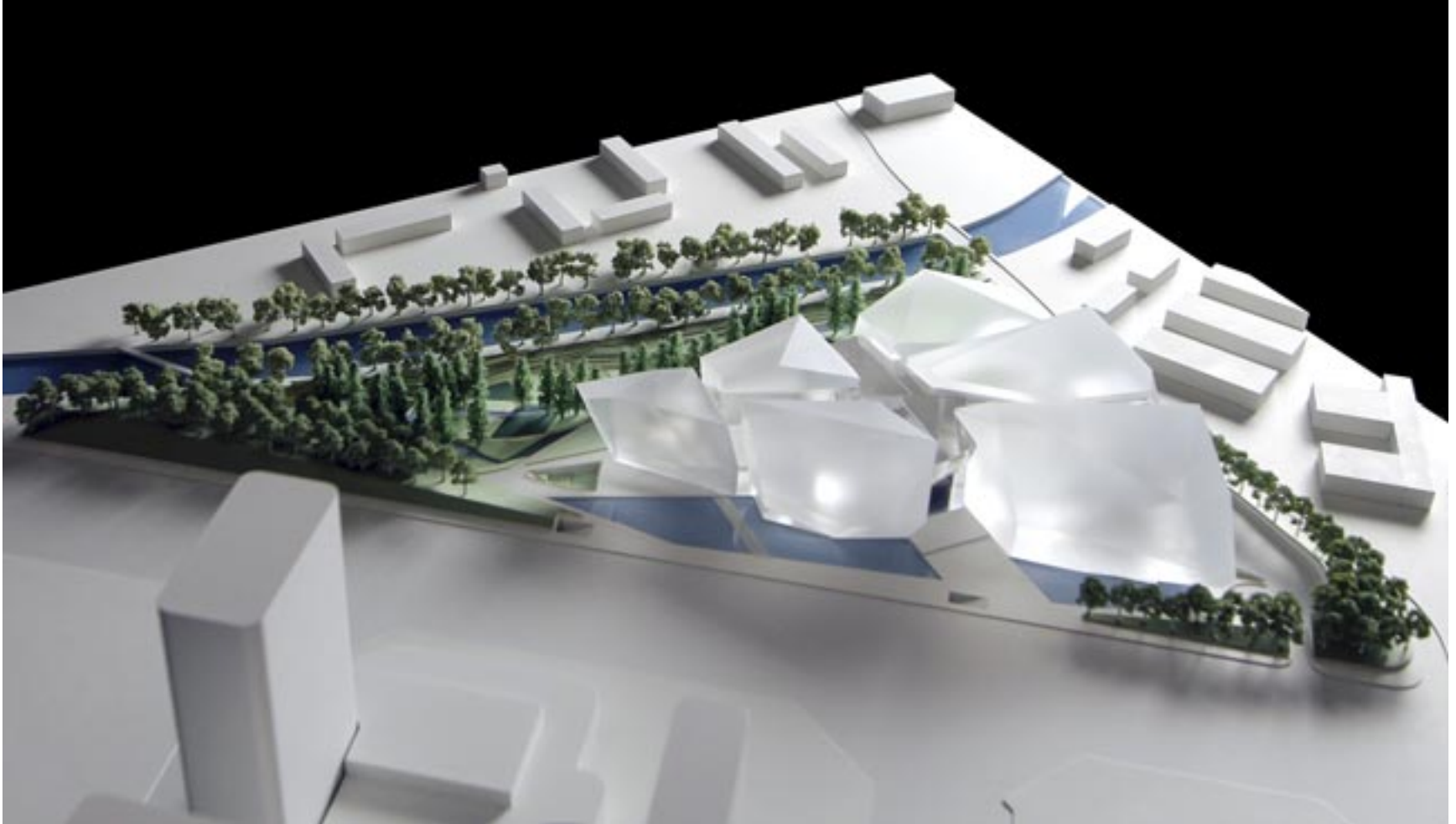
OPPOSITE PAGE, ABOVE

West elevation with view  
to mountains

OPPOSITE PAGE, BELOW

View from river and park







*Winning Entry*

**Pelli Clarke Pelli Architects**

New Haven, Connecticut  
with  
China Southwest Architectural  
Design and Research Institute  
Corporation, Ltd.

RIGHT ABOVE  
Ampitheater

LEFT BELOW  
Interior view to grade level from top

OPPOSITE PAGE, ABOVE  
Aerial view of model

OPPOSITE PAGE, BELOW  
Elevations





*Finalist*

## Zaha Hadid Architects

London, U.K.

RIGHT ABOVE  
View from vehicle  
BELOW  
Facade closeup

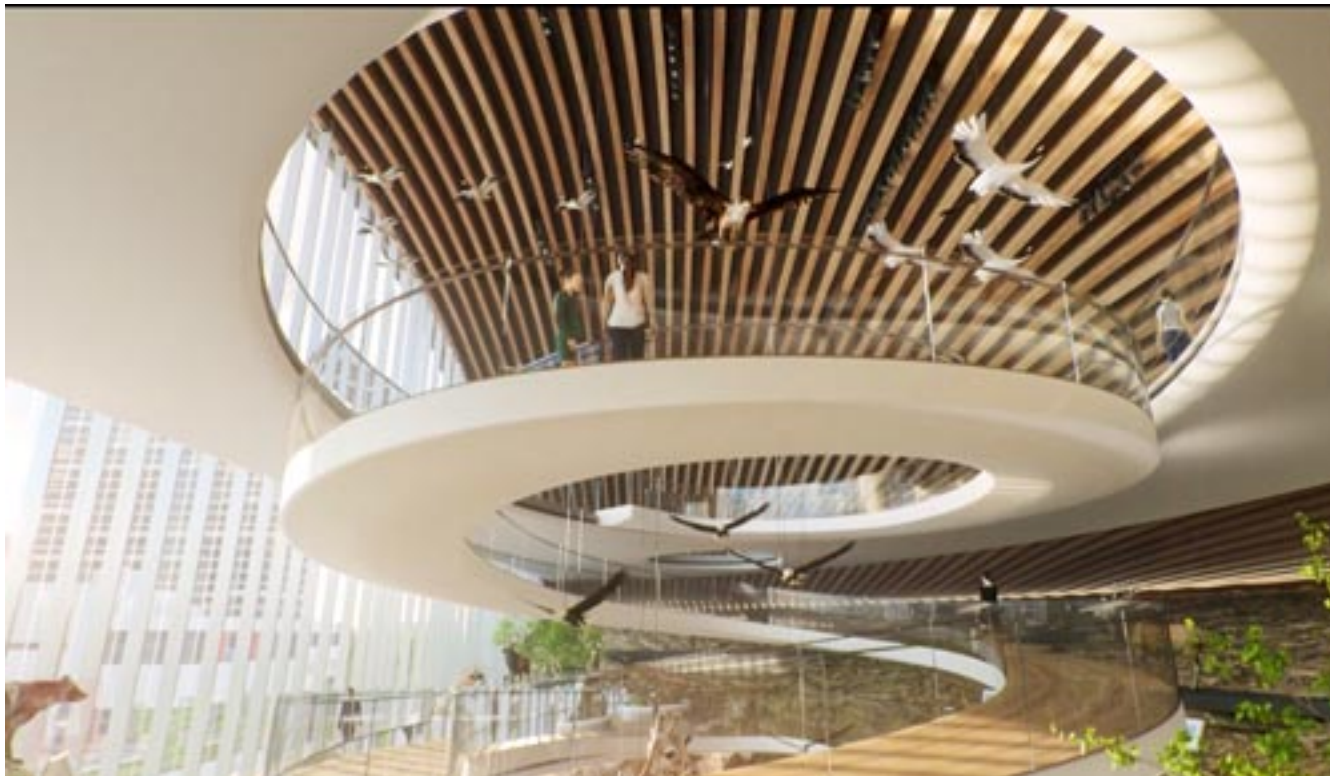
OPPOSITE PAGE, ABOVE  
Aerial view to entrance  
OPPOSITE PAGE, BELOW  
Vehicle perspective to front  
entrance











*Finalist*

**Zaha Hadid Architects**

London, U.K.

LEFT ABOVE  
Exhibit concept

BELOW  
Aerial view from river

OPPOSITE PAGE, ABOVE  
Lounge area

OPPOSITE PAGE, BELOW  
Exhibit area











*Finalist*

**Nihon Sekkei**

Tokyo, Japan

LEFT ABOVE

Birdseye view

LEFT BELOW

Interior street perspective

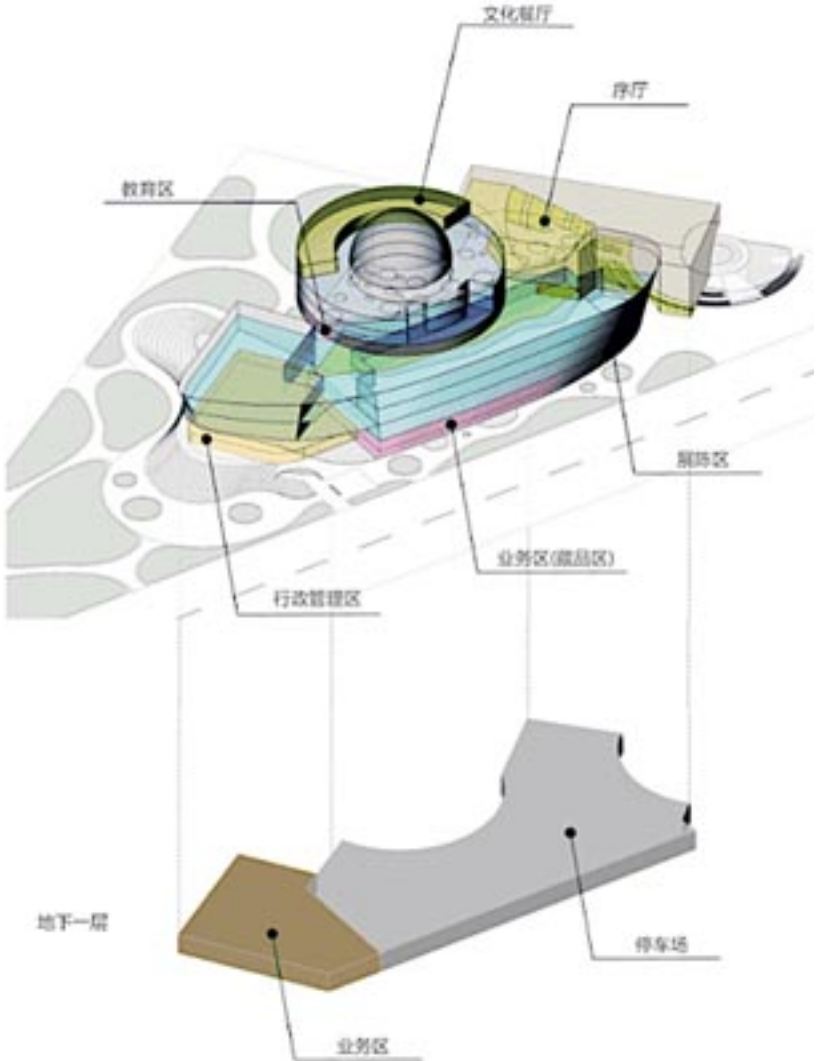
OPPOSITE PAGE

View from river bank











*Finalist*

## Nihon Sekkei

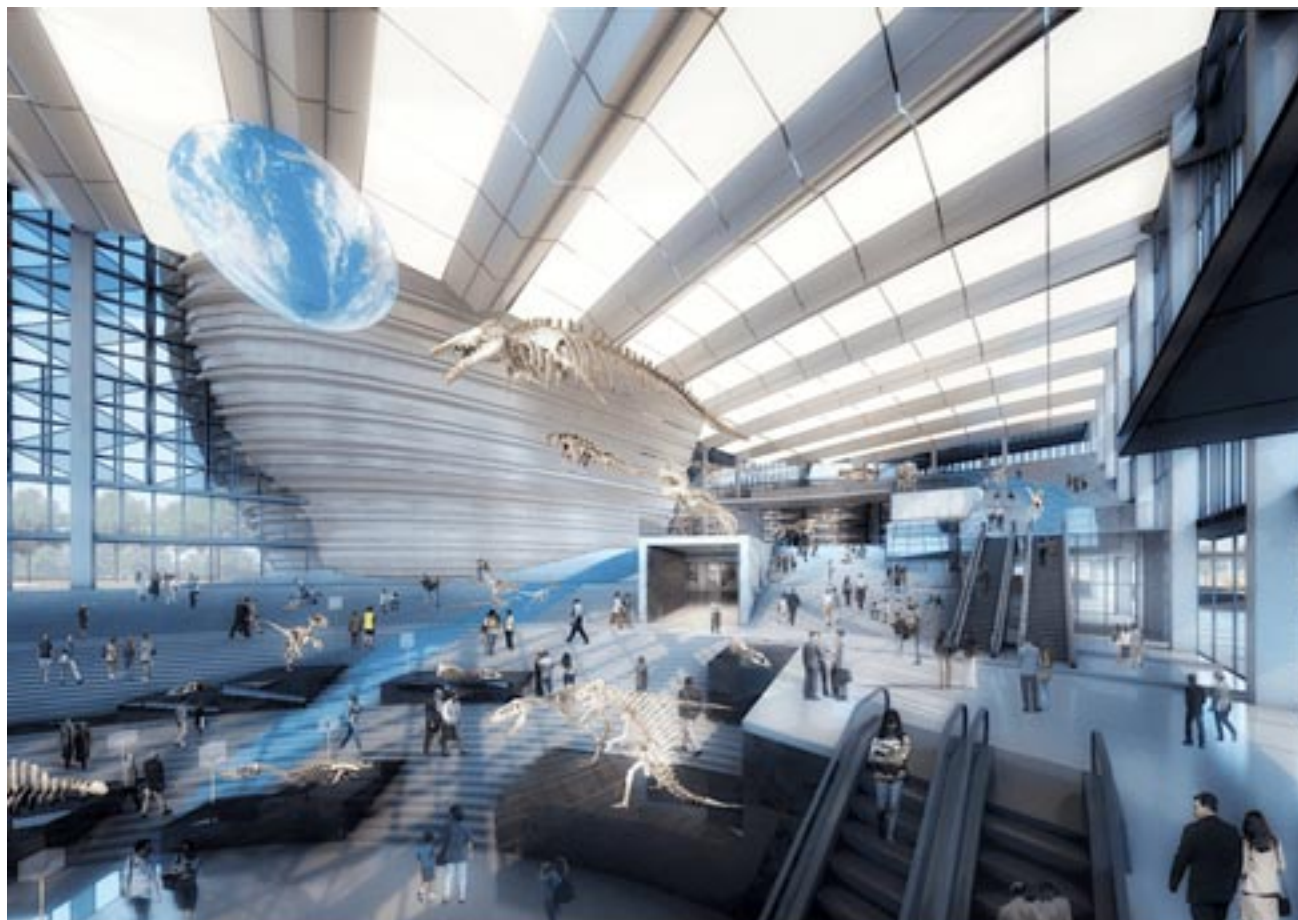
Tokyo, Japan

LEFT ABOVE  
Ground level view

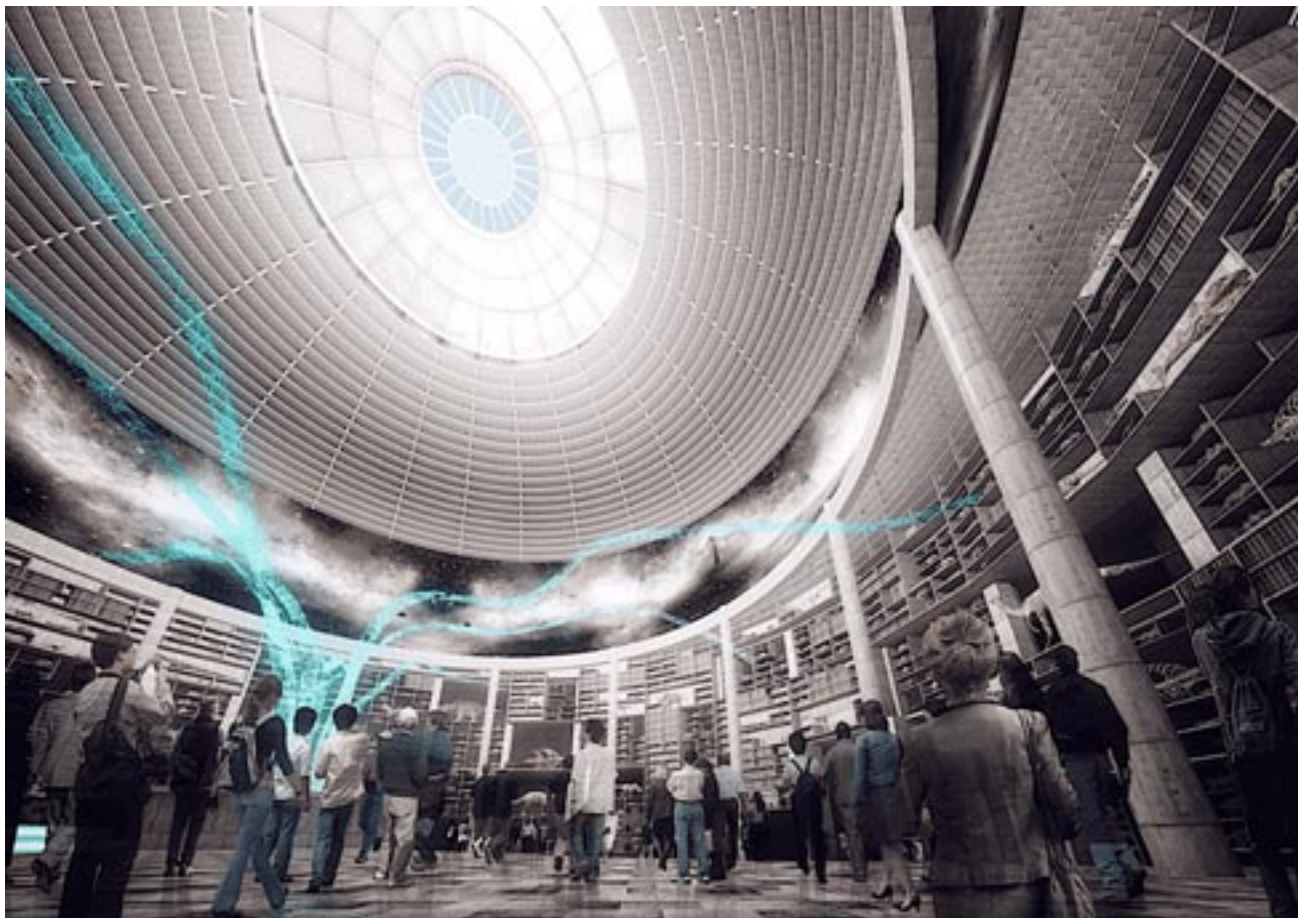
LEFT BELOW  
Pedestrian perspective

OPPOSITE PAGE, ABOVE  
Plan

OPPOSITE PAGE, BELOW  
Aerial view and functional diagram







*Finalist*

**Nihon Sekkei**

Tokyo, Japan

LEFT ABOVE

Interior information area

LEFT BELOW

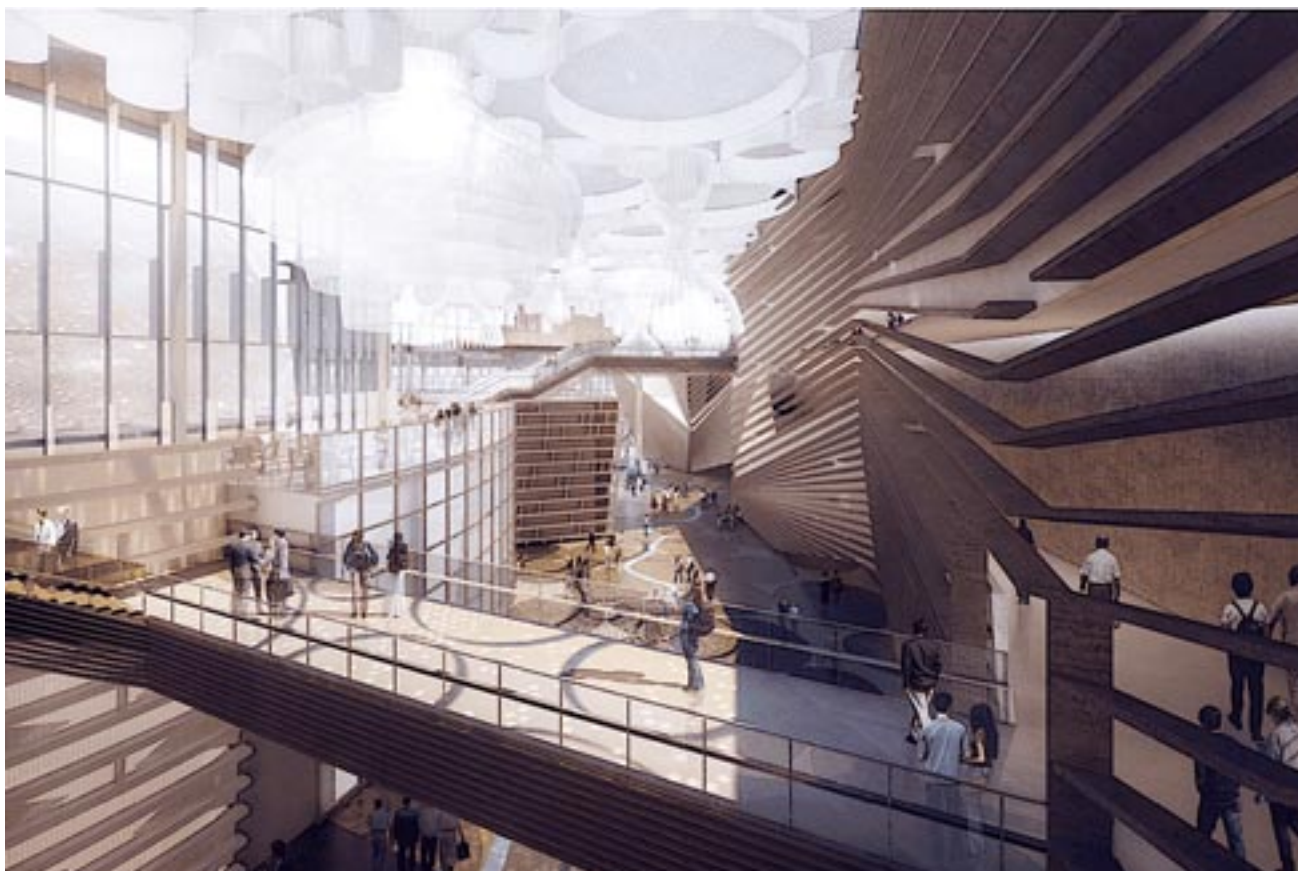
Interior Street view from above

OPPOSITE PAGE, ABOVE

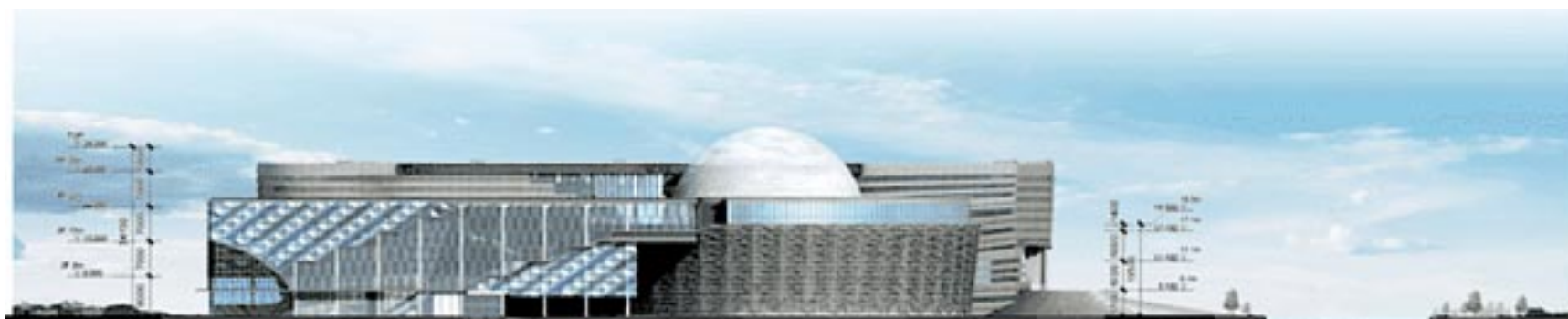
Exterior perspective at dusk

OPPOSITE PAGE, BELOW

Elevations







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