

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.

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.

THIS PAGE

Grade level plan

OPPOSITE PAGE

Birdseye view





Winning Entry

Pelli Clarke Pelli Architects

New Haven, Connecticut
with

China Southwest Architectural Design
and Research Institute Corporation, Ltd.

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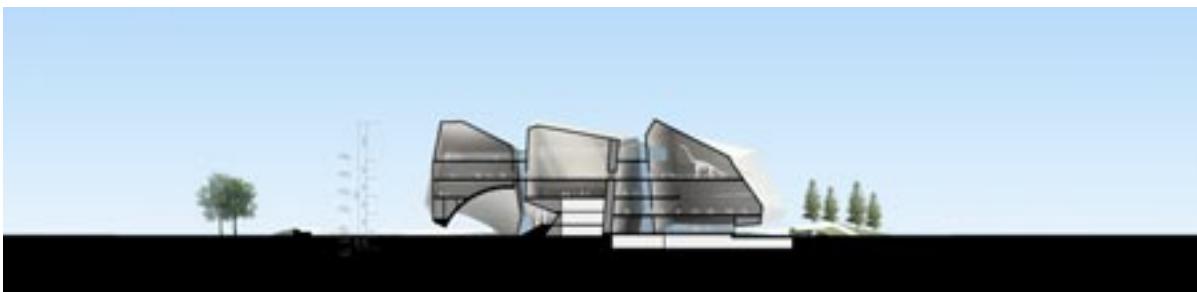
View from street to entrance

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

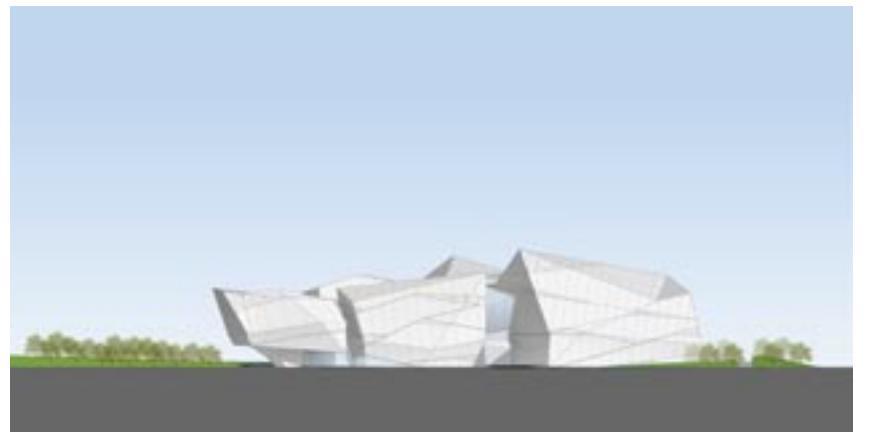
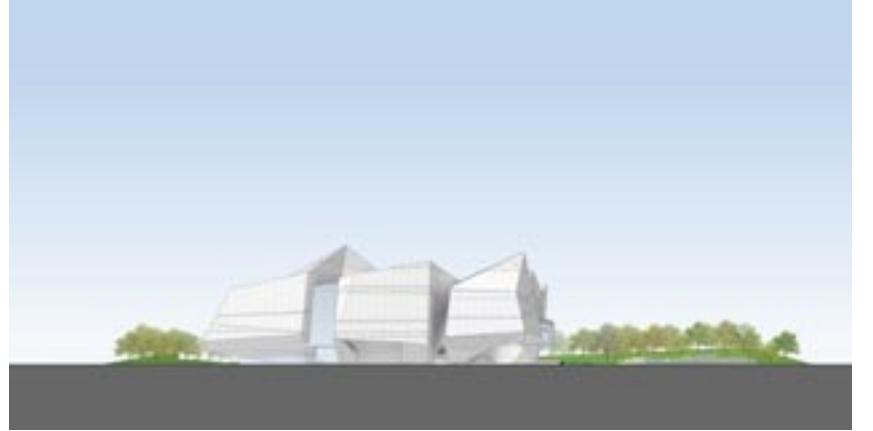
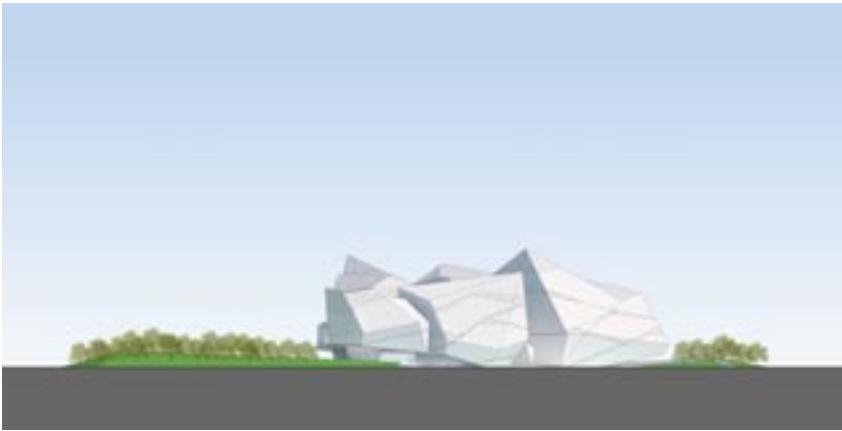
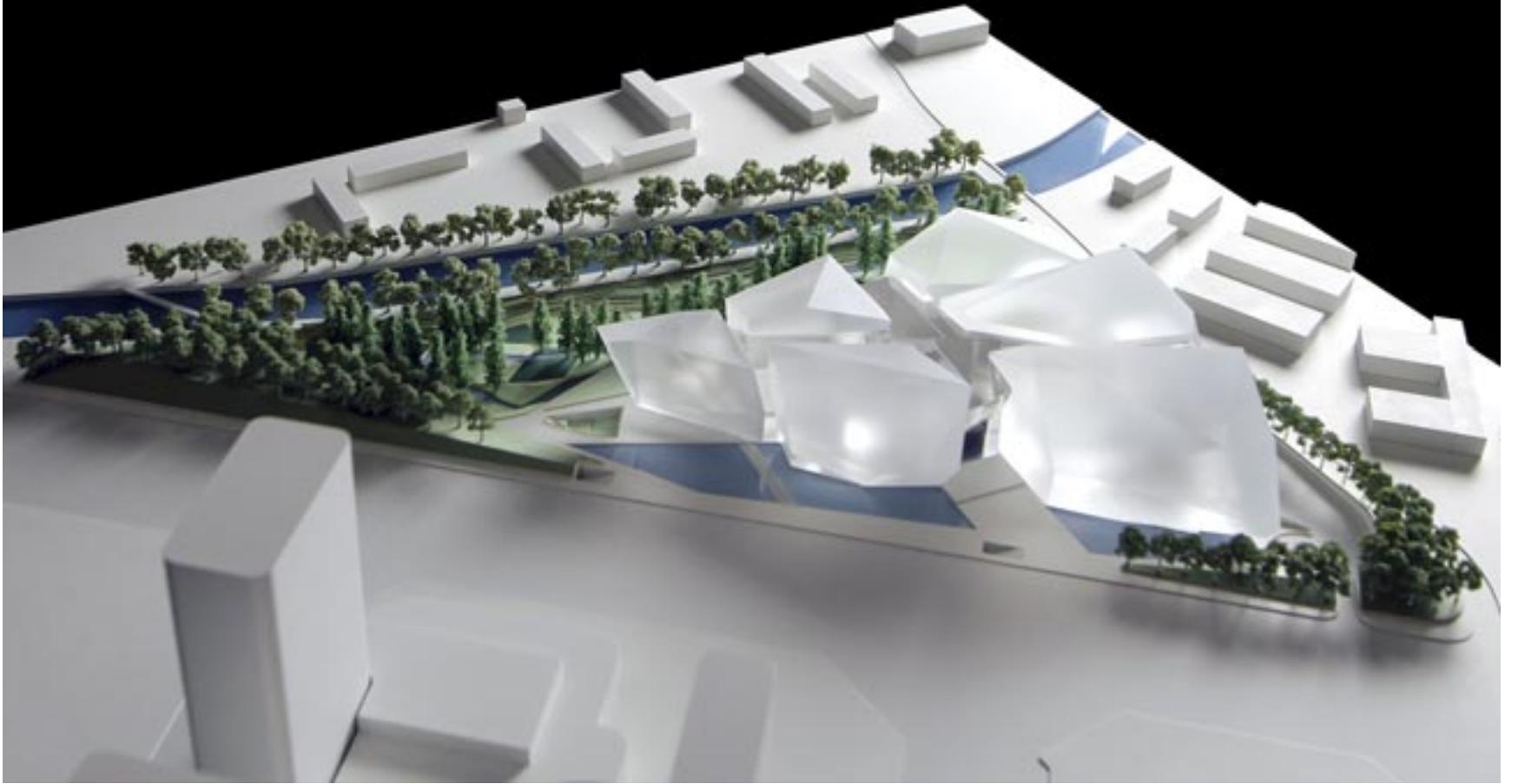
OPPOSITE PAGE, ABOVE

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

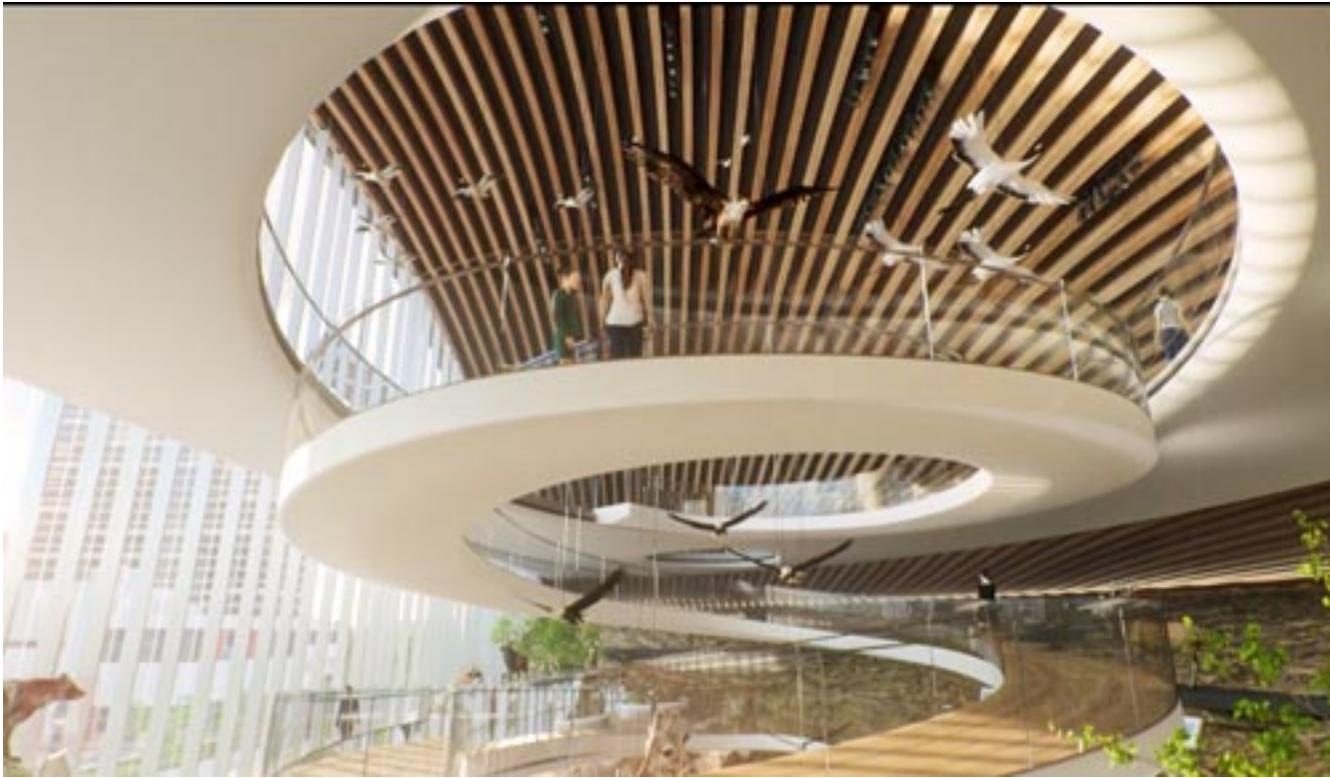
London, U.K.

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

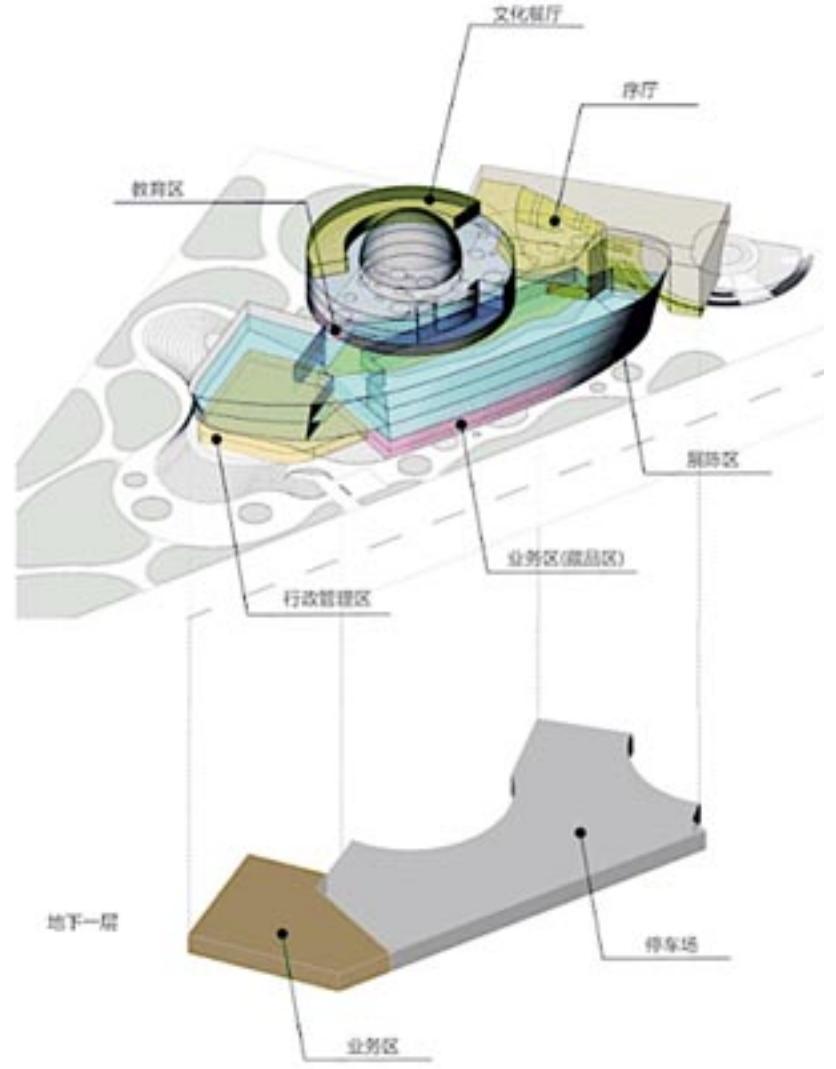
LEFT ABOVE
Birdseye view

LEFT BELOW
Interior street perspective

OPPOSITE PAGE
View from river bank







Finalist

Nihon Sekkei

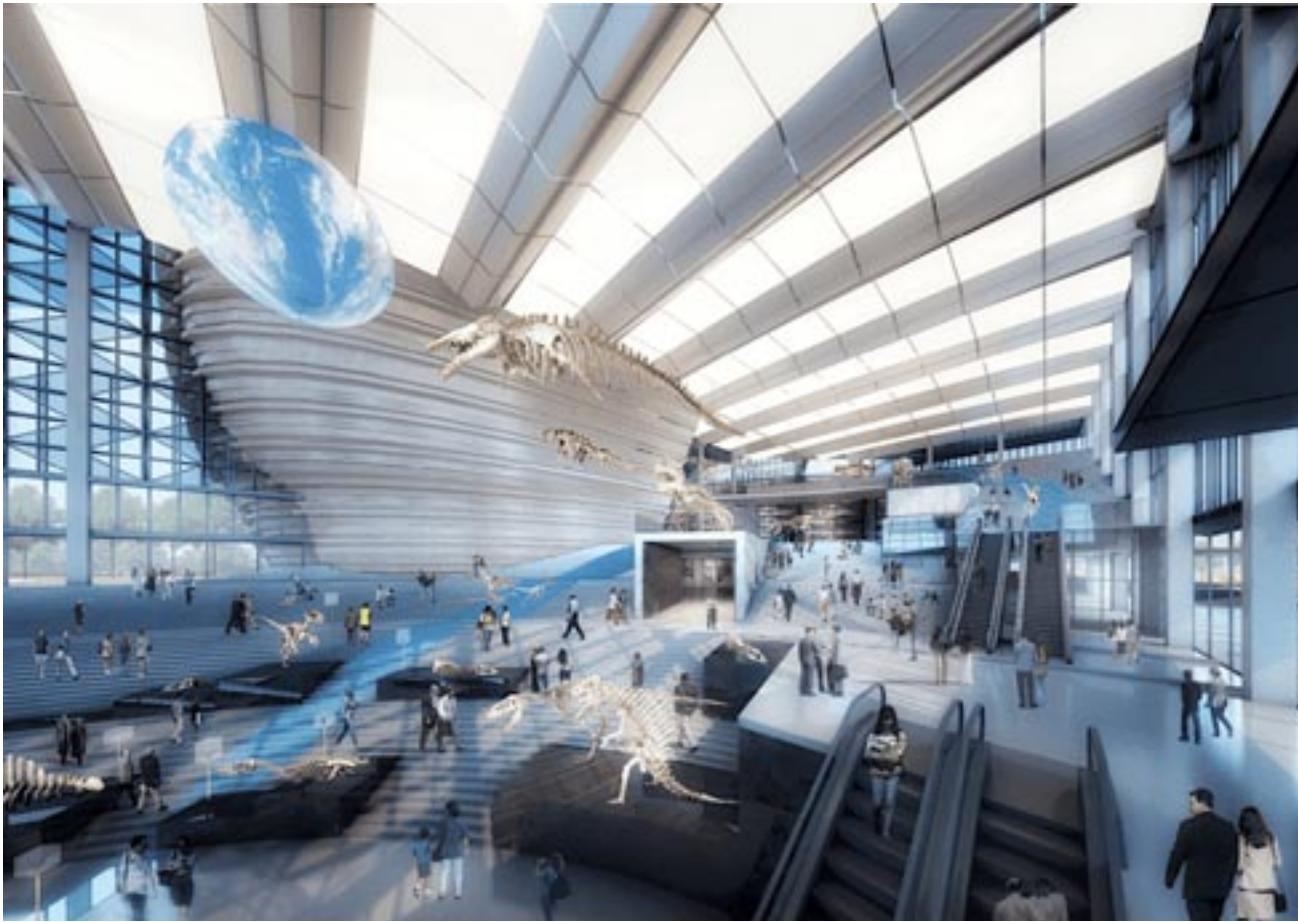
Tokyo, Japan

LEFT ABOVE
Ground level view

LEFT BELOW
Pedestrian perspective

OPPOSITE PAGE, ABOVE
Plan

OPPOSITE PAGE, BELOW
Aerial view and functional diagram





Finalist

Nihon Sekkei

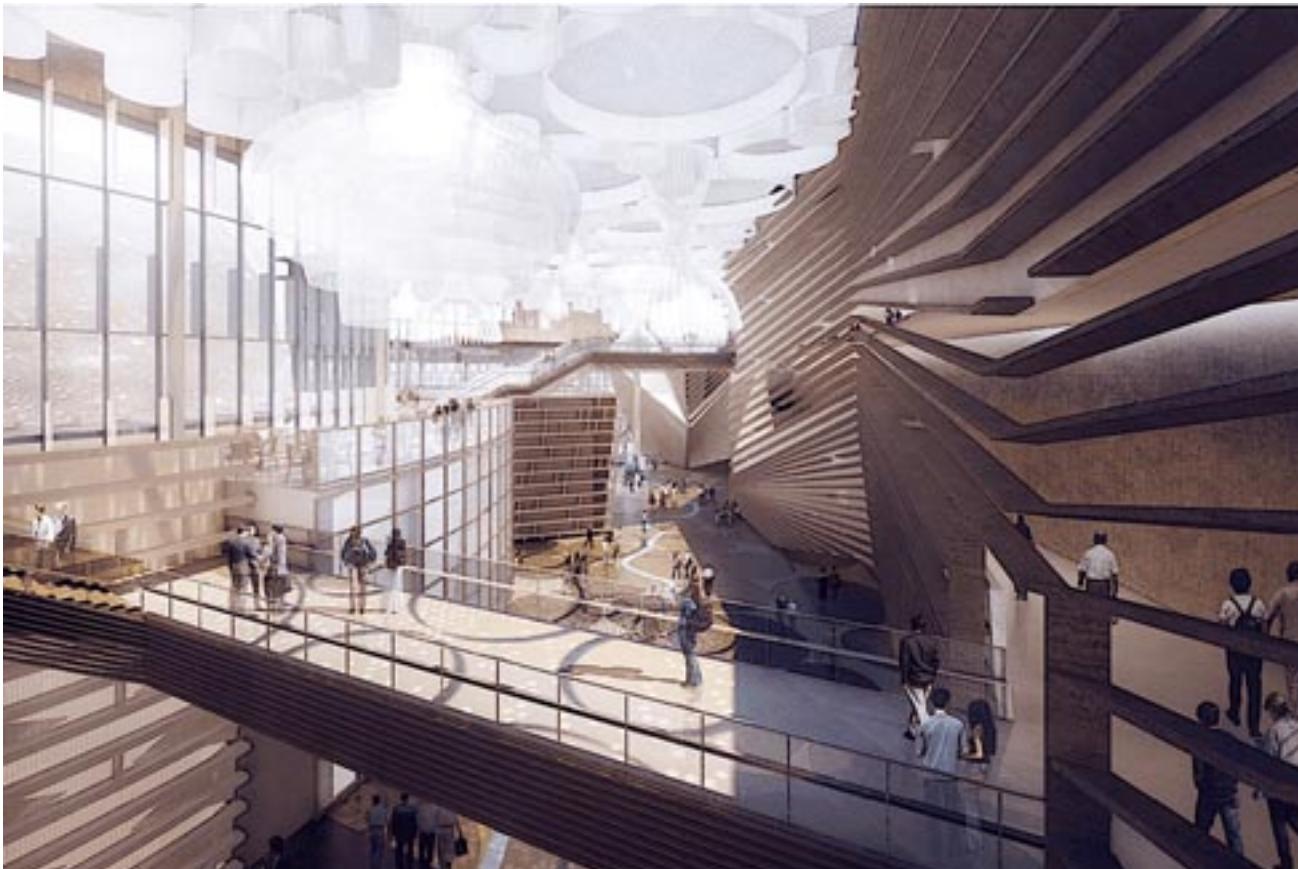
Tokyo, Japan

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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