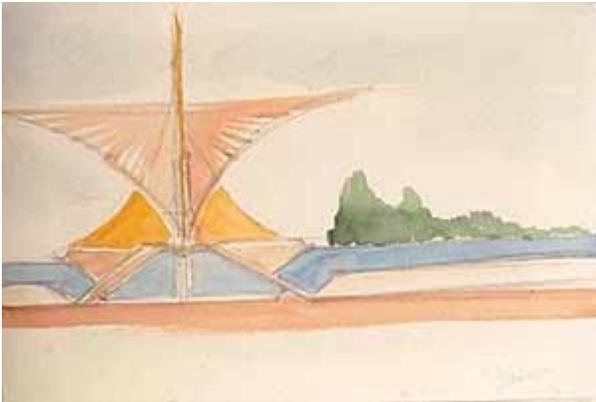


# Importance

By Aimee Keil



The Quadracci Pavilion, completed in 2004 as the new wing of the Milwaukee Art Museum, has easily become the architectural icon for the city of Milwaukee. Built by Santiago Calatrava, it stands out from everything else not only on the lakefront, but in the entire city. The pristine white building, with extreme arches and clean lines resembles a ship with enormous sails, or possibly the wings of a bird, about to take flight over Lake Michigan. Given the name, Quadracci Pavilion, this new addition to the Museum is the first Calatrava construction to be built in the United States and is considered one of Calatrava's greatest works of architecture, something the people of Milwaukee can be proud of.

Calatrava's buildings could be considered a cross between art and architecture. His work and personal style is easily recognizable, in that it consists of large structures usually with a white, concrete exterior of curved, flowing lines similar to what may be found in nature. As an architect he is unique in that he holds a double degree, the other being in engineering. His designs are suggestive of stylized natural objects, waves, wings, skeletal structures and are made possible by new computer modeling technology, allowing him to create the structurally impossible, completely possible. The true purposes of these dramatic contours are usually more aesthetic than structural, but every small detail is planned and as a result elevates every structure to a level higher than anything else surrounding it.

The glowing white building with minimal gardens, and linear fountains demands attention, as if saying you can no longer ignore me. The new wing of the Milwaukee Art Museum is not only structurally and aesthetically different from all other buildings preexisting in the city; it also works as a link to connect the city to the people to the art museum to the lakefront. "For me," Calatrava states, "the project of expanding the Milwaukee Art Museum was an opportunity to help people make the most of an extraordinary situation. Rather than just add something to the existing buildings, I also wanted to add something to the lakefront. I have therefore worked to infuse the building with a certain sensitivity to the culture of the lake- the boats, the sails and the always-

changing landscape. I hope that we have designed not a building, but a piece of the city” (Calatrava).

For the city of Milwaukee the museum as a whole is truly an important building. The nature of a museum is to have a place dedicated to the people. “Art institutions, whether contemplating the past in museums, or creating the history of today in art schools, in contemporary galleries, and so forth are all involved primarily in the art of preservation. We belong to that dimension of society whose primary task is to guard artifacts, guard the manifest part of the evolution of the human mind” (Wateren). It is to be used as a place of study, a place where objects of historical, scientific or artistic interest are kept preserved, and exhibited, far all to benefit. “The great push came in 1793 when the new Museum National du Louvre was founded with the specific intention of making it possible for the people to view the objects collected together, and so to educate them” (Wateren). The Milwaukee Art Museum as well as all museums enables the public to explore collections for inspiration, learning and enjoyment. In a way museums hold the role of a nation’s memory bank. History should be displayed for study not only because it is essential to individuals and to society, but also because it harbors beauty.

Reference:

Santiago Calatrava. 19 July 2001. Milwaukee Art Museum. 19 July 2010 [www.mam.org/](http://www.mam.org/) target="\_blank">[www.mam.org/](http://www.mam.org/) target="\_blank"><http://www.mam.org/info/details/calatrava.php>>.

Wateren, Jan van der. "THE IMPORTANCE OF MUSEUM LIBRARIES". National Art Library Victoria & Albert Museum. July 20, 2010 .