

Influence  
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Architecture, when designed in this way, while designed to be beautiful, is designed to influence people.

The Quadracci Pavilion, the Milwaukee Art Museum's 2004 addition designed by Spanish architect Santiago Calatrava, whose name has become synonymous and interchangeable with the museum, has an influence on our opinions about the museum, the institution and the city. It changes how we feel about the work inside of it. Its silhouette has become a symbol, literally a logo for downtown Milwaukee, but why? Is it because it is our most famous building? Is it because we've chosen to define ourselves with our museum? Is that definition based on the museum's outward appearance or its contents?

The museum's design is truly amazing. Technically, formally, functionally, it is exquisite. More importantly, it is radically different than anything else in the city. It's as though it landed here, settling in after some fantastic interstellar journey. Its radical design suggests, obviously and subconsciously, something about the import of its contents and its administration, its purpose; that these things are, in this building, something "other" than the rest of the city. Something more important, something vital and eternal is happening here, and the proprietors of this place are somehow the wise stewards of this thing so venerated and treasured. This feeling exists by design, by suggestion.

The question is, how powerful is the power of suggestion? All of our experiences with art and architecture affect each other. Where we are, who and when, change an object or an image. It's important, as a critical observer or active participant, to be aware of these things; the things that influence us, the places, the people. Watch out for symbols, idols and logos. They are designed to sway you. Be swayed, if it suits you. Just know that you are, and in which direction.