

The Giant B

A striking blue glass façade with "Imera" colored glass by Schott Desag, determines the quality of the light in the latest extension to the National Science Museum in London.

The new wing could hardly be more imposing or in greater contrast to the existing Science Museum complex. Since June 2000 a huge blue glass wing has provided an attractive counterbalance to its baroque façade. The architect responsible for this transparent addition, Charles Colett of MacCormac, Jamieson, Prichard of London, has succeeded in meeting a wide range of very different requirements. The 10,000 square-meter open space contains exhibition areas, an IMAX film theater, plus catering and retail facilities under one vast roof.

Functional aesthetics

In particular the blue glass façade of the Wellcome Wing called for intelligent design combined with expert technical skill. It was essential to cut down the daylight without making the exhibits appear blue, while also retaining the transparency of the glass.

Fancy a stroll?

Anybody visiting London should take a quiet stroll in the streets around the Science Museum. In Chelsea for example you will find contemporary art galleries rubbing shoulders with antique stalls and flea markets. The fashion-conscious are catered to here as well. Many top-name designers have set up shop in and around King's Road. The special charm of this part of London, which with its narrow alleys and low houses seems more like a village, is a virtual invitation to take a stroll.

After an exciting day exploring the contrasting elements of London, you will probably want to climb aboard one of the city's red double-decker buses and take a ride to the Borough High Street. When you get there pop into the George Inn, London's only surviving galleried Coaching Inn. In the summer you can enjoy a pint of ale in the cobbled courtyard. In the winter you'll find it more comfortable to sit inside in one of the several bars in front of a typically English open fireplace.



A range of tests were conducted to find the right glass laminate, which could guarantee that the exhibits would not be at risk from exposure to sunlight.

The test phase lasted almost three years, until finally the optimum solution was found. The product chosen was an insulating glass made by the German firm Okalux of Marktheidenfeld. This comprises one pane of clear float glass, an 8 mm thick pane of blue "Imera" colored glass by Schott Desag, and a special reflective louvre system in the air space between the two panes of glass. This solution meets both the design requirements – the light throughout the whole space is very soft and diffused – and it has also proved to be extremely energy-efficient. Optimum control of the daylight by the louvre system saves on heating and lighting costs.

Information coupled with fun

The various exhibits in the new wing cover a broad scientific spectrum from the end of the 20th Century and provide a visionary look into the science of the future.

The Robot Aquarium blends harmoniously with its blue environment. Inspired by the perfection of nature, the specialists developed the Robot Lobster. It has the mobility, sensitivity and stability of a real lobster and is used to defuse old mines in murky waters.

"Mice on morphine", on the other hand, airs a highly charged medical and sociopolitical topic. An animal protein is presented here, which American scientists plan to make available to human beings in the near future.

The special feature of this protein is that it reduces the body's tolerance limits to medication, alcohol or other drugs – an active substance can achieve its full effect with only minimal dosages. If only low quantities of a substance have to be taken, its side effects are minimized. This research project could provide a new

The vast transparent blue glass facade with its "Imera" colored glass provides a very soft and diffused light inside the building.



weapon in the fight against the problem of addiction.

Date with science

The Science Museum was originally built between 1909 and 1913. It houses discoveries and achievements since the beginning of the industrial age. "Puffing Billy", the oldest surviving steam locomotive built in 1813 is found in the Land Transport section, early models of rockets in the Space Gallery and showpieces of the history of aeronautics in the Flight Lab. They provide a



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fascinating impression of Britain's industrial pre-eminence since the 18th Century. There are daily performances by actors portraying famous scientists and giving visitors the chance to see important discoveries being made before their very eyes. Children can give their imagination free rein in special display areas in the basement ■

The Science Museum presents discoveries and achievements from the beginning of the industrial age in an appealing and exciting way. At the same time, it provides a visionary look into the future.



The new wing at London's Science Museum brings together modern science and aesthetic and futuristic architecture.



Further information on the Wellcome Wing, the Science Museum and various virtual animations can be found at www.sciencemuseum.org.uk/wellcome-wing/splash_ie.html

Opening hours: Monday–Sunday 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Admission: adults £6.95, students £3.50, children free; from 4:30 p.m. entrance free for all

Where: Exhibition Road, SW7, Underground to South Kensington
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