



Centro Botín

Santander, Spagna
2010-2017

Strongly pushed for by Emilio Botín (1934-2014), the founder and president of the Banco Santander, the Centro Botín is the principal exhibition and cultural venue of the foundation of the same name. The driving force behind a larger urban redevelopment project, the Centre preserves and exhibits the foundation's permanent collection, and hosts temporary exhibitions, educational programs and spectacles in both the new buildings and the new urban park surrounding them.

The design and construction of the Centro Botín has triggered a broader redevelopment of a strategic part of the city of Santander. The site, close to the historic headquarters of Banco Santander and the historic city center, had been in a state of neglect for years but it had great potential: overlooking the sea and adjacent to the historic Jardines de Pareda. The first strategic decision was to build a tunnel to insert a stretch of the road tangential to the site, which impeded the connection between the city and the sea. This not only allowed the inhabitants to regain pedestrian access to the Bay of Biscay, but also made it possible to double the surface area of the Jardines de Pareda and create a new seafront promenade.

The building designed by the Renzo Piano Building Workshop consists of two structures, poetically poised between the mainland and the sea, projecting twenty meters over the water. To avoid blocking the view of the ocean, they are raised six meters off the ground by rows of steel pillars, so that the public space can flow around and below the two volumes. A series of light metal walkways separates the two structures of the Centro Botín, with the layout of a new plaza, while a glazed volume located below the west shell houses the entrance hall, a bookshop, a café and a restaurant.

This building, with an area of 2,500 square meters, set on two levels, is an exhibition space. The galleries on the upper floor are illuminated by natural light modulated by a roof consisting of overlapping layers and aluminum slats. The smaller building, to the east, is devoted to teaching and spaces for live performances. It also contains a 300-seat multifunctional auditorium and rooms for educational activities, art workshops, dance, music and other creative activities. Below the Centro Botín, a specially excavated cavea serves for open-air performances and as a cinema that seats 2,000.



The rounded forms of the Centro Botín are the result of a series of studies conducted with models and on site to maximize natural light on the ground floor and the view from the park to the sea. The building is completely faced with 270,000 circular ceramic tiles, pearly and vibrant, reflecting the rarefied Cantabrian light and the reflections of the water.

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