

Heydar Aliyev Center — Baku, Azerbaijan

Essay by: Joni Goh (Brooks TTH)

The Heydar Aliyev Center is a auditorium, gallery hall, and museum located in Baku, Azerbaijan that made its grand debut in 2012 as one of the most recognized landmarks in the world. This concert hall plays an integral role in the cultural and intellectual life of the City of Baku. This center represents the fluidity of the surrounding natural topography, strategically blending the building in with folds and flow of the landscape. The soft yet complex design “blurs the rigid line between urban and architecture, inside and outside, flooring versus cladding, and volume versus ground”.³ The Center, designed to stand as Azerbaijan’s primary establishment for culture, expresses the sensibilities of Azeri tradition and progressive optimism of the nation.

During the design process, the most difficult element was developing the building’s skin. Using a plethora of advanced computing programs, Zaha Hadid, Patrik Schumacher, and Saffet Kata Bekiroglu were able to develop the complex parametric design without needing a conventional vertical column support system. The Heydar Aliyev Center is composed of glass-fiber-reinforced concrete panels, steel space frames, and fiber-reinforced plastic to achieve large-scale, column-free spaces that don’t interfere with the fluidity of the space. Given the unique surface geometry, the use of curved “boot columns” and “dovetail” tapering of the cantilever beams are just a few of the unconventional solutions used to ensure structural stability.¹ The structure forms into one voluminous main hall with “three parts fusing around a central atrium atrium and around a courtyard meant three different shell-like protrusions”.² Slits are strategically placed along the interior’s curved surfaces to illuminate and amplify the vertiginous feel of the distorted and grand spaces.

The lighting design strategy of the Heydar Aliyev Tenet was carefully considered. During daytime, the reinforced concrete panels on the building’s skin reflects light, thus constantly altering the Center’s appearance and viewing perspective. The semi-reflective glass fiber offers a great deal of light to enter into the many fluid spaces within the building and gives the illusion of a more expansive interior.² When the sun sets, the interior lighting transforms the Center from the inside out.

Sources

- ¹ <https://www.archdaily.com/448774/heydar-aliyev-center-zaha-hadid-architects>
- ² <https://www.architectmagazine.com/design/buildings/heydar-aliyev-cultural-center>
- ³ <https://www.dezeen.com/2014/07/01/designs-of-the-year-2014-zaha-hadid>

Images

