

# NEW MUSEUM THE PINNACLE OF ADJAYE'S SOARING CAREER

By Kyle MacMillan

As David Adjaye awaits the debut of the Museum of Contemporary Art/Denver, his first major public building in the United States, the career of the 41-year-old London architect could hardly be going better.

The barrage of press that has followed him for several years has only intensified with recent interviews in publications, such as *Art & Auction* and *New York* magazines.

In September 2006, Phaidon published "David Adjaye: Making Public Buildings," which incorporated the MCA/Denver, and he was included in "Gritty Brits: New London Architecture," an exhibition earlier this year at Philadelphia's Carnegie Museum of Art.

During a recent Denver visit, he spoke to *The Denver Post* about his evolving career and the new museum.

Q: How important is this project to you, to what you hope to do and to your image in this country?

A: This is the most important project. There are a collection of 10 public buildings that I more or less won between 2000 and 2004. And this was, for me, the last one that pinnacled the set, and it's the one that allowed me to finally build a public art museum. That's something I've been extremely interested in almost from day one in my career but never was able to move into a position to gain a competition.



LONDON ARCHITECT DAVID ADJAYE IS THE ARCHITECT FOR A NEW MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART IN DENVER. PHOTO BY RICHARD LEWIS/AP.

Also, a lot of the early stuff was about working with artists, working within the art world, working with art institutions, so there has been a lot of my own research gained in my own sort of way, and this institution is the sum of that thinking and those strategies.

Q: Has that all sort of gelled? Is that what you have taken away from this?

A: I think this project has taught me lots of different things. One, it has been about a consolidation of a lot of research in the art world. Two, it has been about the ability to collaborate with a like-minded client.

And also it's allowed me to just hone my views about how I want to build a public building. It really has to be seen within the trajectory of all the other stuff, but it stands on its own. You cannot see it as anything referential, obviously, but when you see the other buildings, you really understand (from) where this has come, only because it's all happened so fast.

Usually, with other architects, you'd get one every three or four years or five years. This is sort of all happening at once. It's been almost hyperspeed - learning how to operate in the public realm across different topologies and across different terrain.

Q: Could you compare and contrast this building with other art museums?

A: It is in the trajectory of museum buildings, but it's very much about a museum as an experience. I basically wanted to make a museum which is very much about the way in which you have a relationship with the artwork and the way in which the space cultivates and nurtures that relationship you have with the artwork, as opposed to the other way around.

It isn't about the building as a kind of iconoclastic sort of image. It is a form. It is different. But it's not in that sort of heavy way. It's definitely not that. But it is about a series of what I call adjustments and attenuations, which are about how you can experience this.

Q: It sounds like you were able to do a lot of what you wanted to do within a limited budget. Was that one of the big challenges of this project?

A: The challenge of the budget was a very good focusing device, really, because the challenge of budget meant that value had to be sought out of every room. The value couldn't just be an aesthetic or a pleasurable one. It had to perform environmentally, it had to perform aesthetically, it had to perform from a curatorial point of view and it had to perform just from a building sense, a technologies point of view.

All the public buildings I've done, actually, have been tight budgets. I've not had a relaxed budget yet. I'm waiting for that day. I don't know what it will do to me. It might make a terrible building.

Q: It sounds like you are very pleased with this project.

A: I love this building.

Q: So, it feels good to see the result?

A: I walked around and I came out with just a grin on my face. I was really ecstatic.