

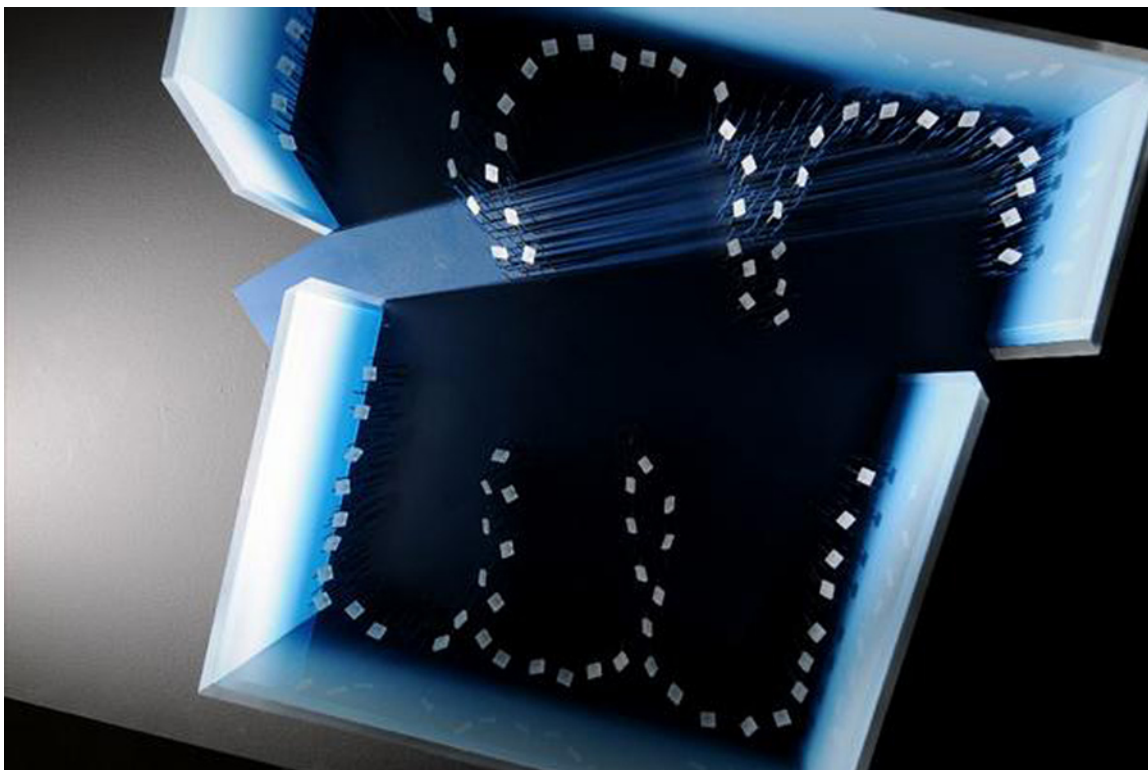
IMMERSION INTO A VISION

ADJAYE'S IDEAS IN PHOTOS, MODELS SURROUNDED BY THE MUSEUM HE DESIGNED

By Mary Voelz Chandler

In 2006, what was then called the Museum of Contemporary Art/Denver broke ground on a new building by London-based architect David Adjaye and moved to a new temporary home near its compact site in the Central Platte Valley.

Adjaye, meanwhile, was expanding his range of projects and awaiting publication of a book that serves as a compendium of his buildings in the public realm, *David Adjaye: Making Public Buildings, Specificity, Customization, Imbrication*.



AN OVERHEAD VIEW OF A MODEL OF DAVID ADJAYE'S NOBEL FIELD INSIDE THE NOBEL PEACE CENTER IN OSLO, NORWAY. PHOTO BY JOSHUA DUPLICHIAN / SPECIAL TO THE ROCKY

It is more than a reference book, though. It also serves as companion to an exhibition that shares the same name (or most of it) and, in a way, brings full circle the opening of his building for what is now MCA Denver.

"David Adjaye: Making Public Buildings" explores numerous projects through three types of models, images and material samples. Imbrication seems like a £10 word, but when viewing the exhibition, it becomes more clear why this term for the application of material in an overlapping way is a part of his vocabulary, literally and literarily.

Installation over three floors of the museum makes a visit to the exhibition a visit to most of MCA. For the most part, this is good.

What's good is that in climbing from the basement to the second floor - or the other way around, if you begin at a pictorial essay on Adjaye's projects - you are surrounded by his first U.S. venture into public buildings even as you are studying others. It's an immersion into thought and perception.

For years, Adjaye worked on smaller projects, such as homes for artists and gallery spaces. When MCA chose him in 2004 as its architect, he had gone more public, with library-like operations called Idea Stores in England, a Nobel Peace Center in Oslo, educational institutions, and larger housing projects.

Those are all in "Making Public Buildings," with its building, core and site models, augmented by images of textiles and sculptural pieces from Ghana, Rwanda and South Africa. For MCA's models - including one that reflects the use of darker exterior glass than originally proposed - the reference to Adjaye's roots in Africa is a three-legged wooden head rest from South Africa.

The only down side to this three-floor installation is that a visitor still will notice detail work in the museum that needs attention. Though much has been completed, some of the metal railings/panels that give an edge to the atrium stand out as requiring more help, crucial in a place that is all about Adjaye's spare aesthetic.

Presumably, that will happen soon. The bottom line is that a tour through Adjaye's creative life is a must excursion for those who have watched MCA grow. It's a chance to study his choices of materials and forms.

Besides, each "building" is displayed on a table Adjaye designed, in the elegant style that has propelled his practice into one that stands up for modernity and a new expression of Modernism. And that's encouraged at any time.