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Las Vegas Library and Lied Discovery Children's Museum. Antoine Predock, Architect

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Las Vegas Library and Lied Discovery Children's Museum
Antoine Predock, Architect



above:

Night view toward downtown
Las Vegas from the main entrance
with the Birthday Room in the
foreground. The parking area is
shaded with a grid of palm trees.

opposite:

View toward the Science Tower
and Discovery Museum. The main
library offices (right) and children's
library (left) look into the water
garden.



Las Vegas Library and Lied Discovery Children's Museum

(continued)

Las Vegas is a crossroads city. You have to get past the glitz to understand that Las Vegas has a history that begins with a palpable and visible geologic time. The surrounding mountain ranges expose layers of strata suggesting ancient upheaval. Over that is the layer of Native American occupation: the Paiute tribe. The next layer is that of the Spaniards.

There is a trail called the Spanish Trail that leads from Las Vegas into New Mexico. The most recent historic trail is the Mormon Trail, which links the West coast, San Bernadino, to Salt Lake City, passing through what was to become Las Vegas.

The trails converge at a natural spring in the northern part of Las Vegas. The crossroads is associated with the spring and its nearby meadows. (Las Vegas, in Spanish, means "the meadows.") An adobe brick fort stands by the water at the crossroads. The site for the library and children's museum is adjacent to this fort and thus has a strong natural relationship to the earliest settlements. The library/museum building is also a crossroads building. Its angular alignment receives oncoming visitors in ways that recall the convergence of trails. The sandstone wedge of the common administration area is an arrow, pointing north toward Sheep Mountain.

(continued on page 14)



above:

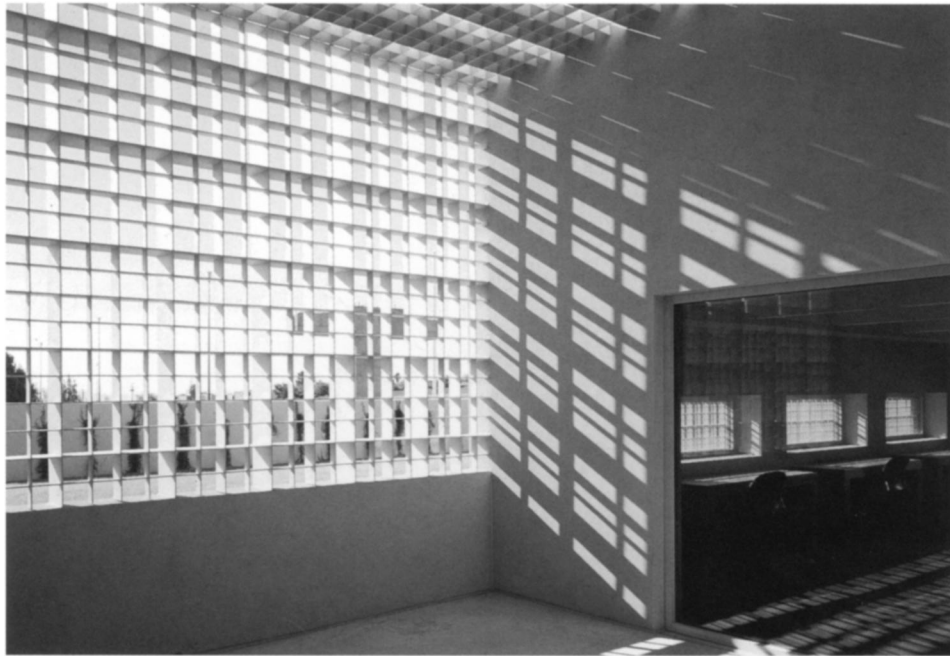
View within the children's library.

opposite, above:

One of the sun-shaded exterior reading courts off the main floor of the library.

opposite, below:

Overview of the second level children's library and stair from the lobby.



Las Vegas Library and Lied Discovery Children's Museum

(continued)

The pieces of the building diagram pragmatic relationships as well as links between earth and sky. It is as though the building began as an orthogonal building until the "north arrow" wedge blasted through and sent the building askew. This skewing allows unrestricted circulation and creates a triangle of three courtyards within.

Upon arrival, the visitor is guided along the long north-south wall into the vaulted, tunnel-like entry. Water is discharged from apertures at the base of the wall. The presence of water is felt immediately; it is an elemental guide into the building, evoking the original presence of water on the site.

The water, which is recirculated, enters the building from the base of the wall and reappears in the central courtyard. The path of the water leads the visitor to this interior "oasis": a combination of palm and orange trees is irrigated by the channels of the water system. The low-lying eastern portion of the building is the library. The large mass to the west houses the galleries. These sections of the building are connected by trellised courtyards.

The predominant material, other than sandstone, is stucco, the same white-hot color as the ground in Las Vegas.

At the far end of the barrel-vaulted children's library is the puppet theater/storytelling room. A triangulated mirrored chamber is inset into its faceted glass apex to create a giant kaleidoscope that reflects a fractured vision of Las Vegas and the landscape beyond. An electronically operated partition covers the opening, sealing the space for puppet performances.

The hundred-foot concrete science tower drills through the children's library and connects to the museum.

The cone-shaped "birthday party" room resembles a party hat punctured by irregular light apertures. These holes are located on a spiral determined by the Fibonacci series.*

**The Fibonacci series is determined by taking the sum of the previous two numbers: 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, etc. As the series progresses it approaches the proportions of the golden section.*



above:

Moon-lit view of the facility
from Las Vegas Boulevard.
The central library offices are in
the sandstone tower to the right,
the library, with exterior reading
rooms, is to the left.

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