



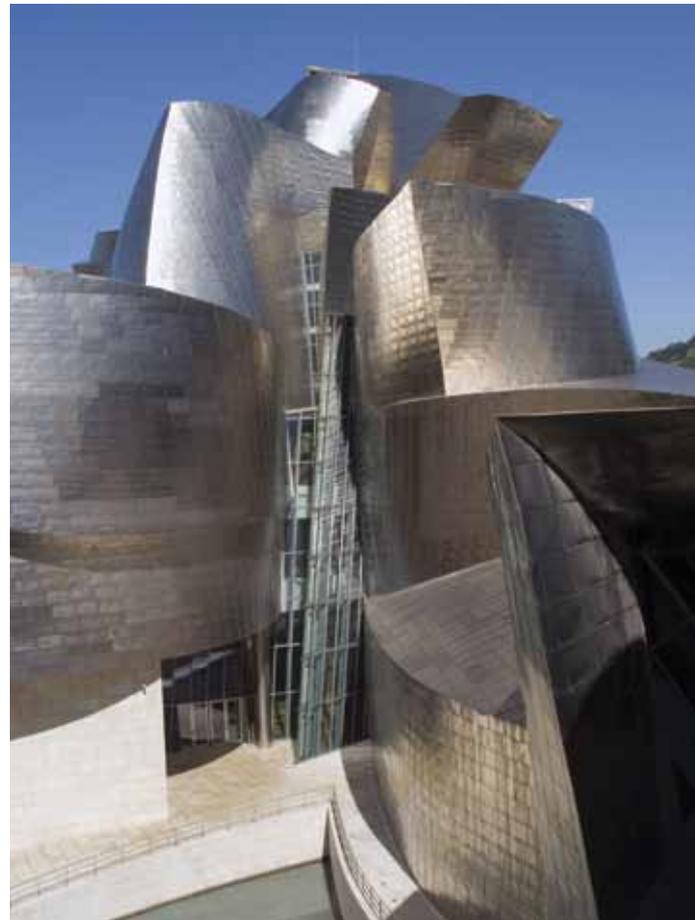
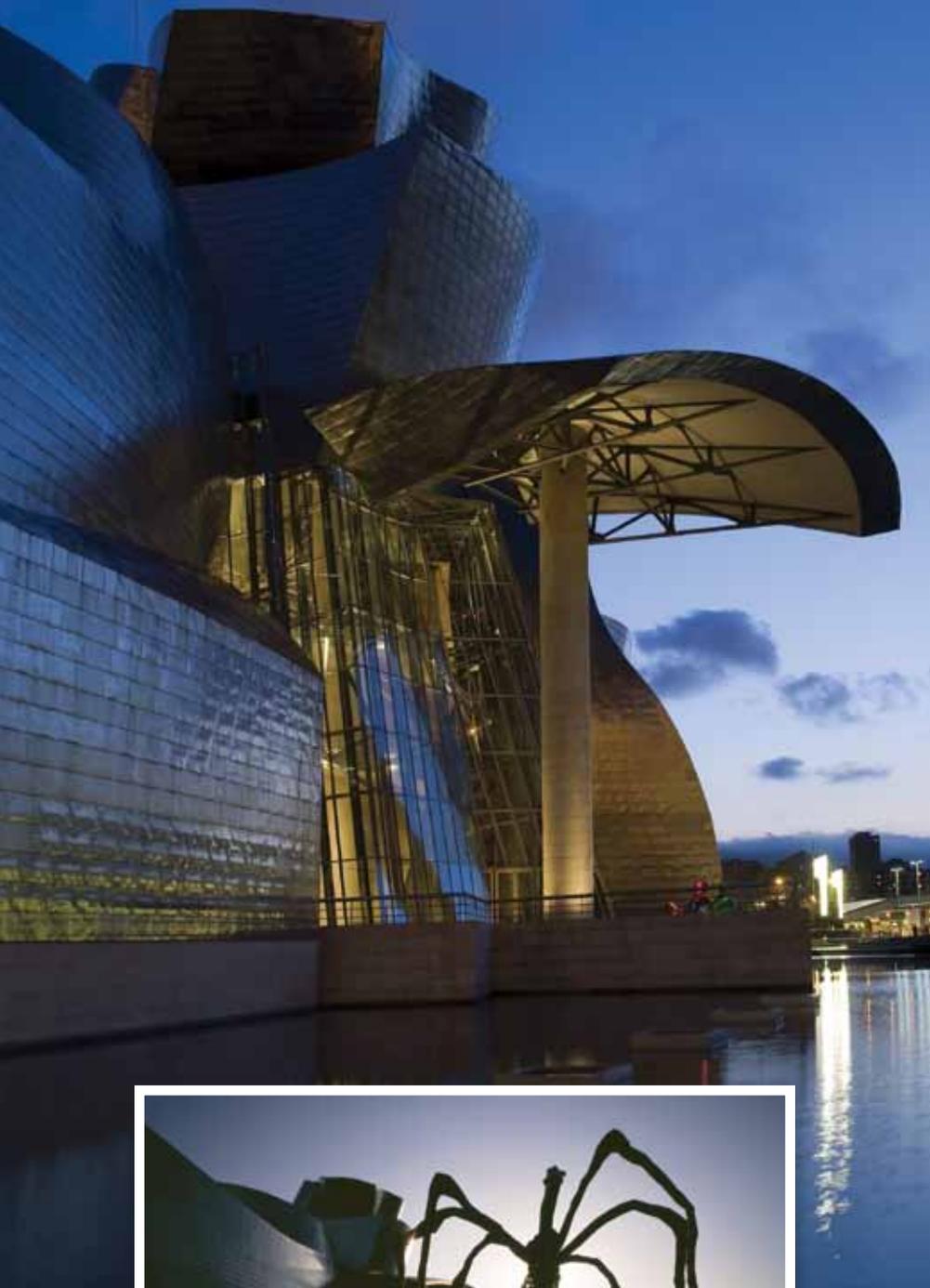
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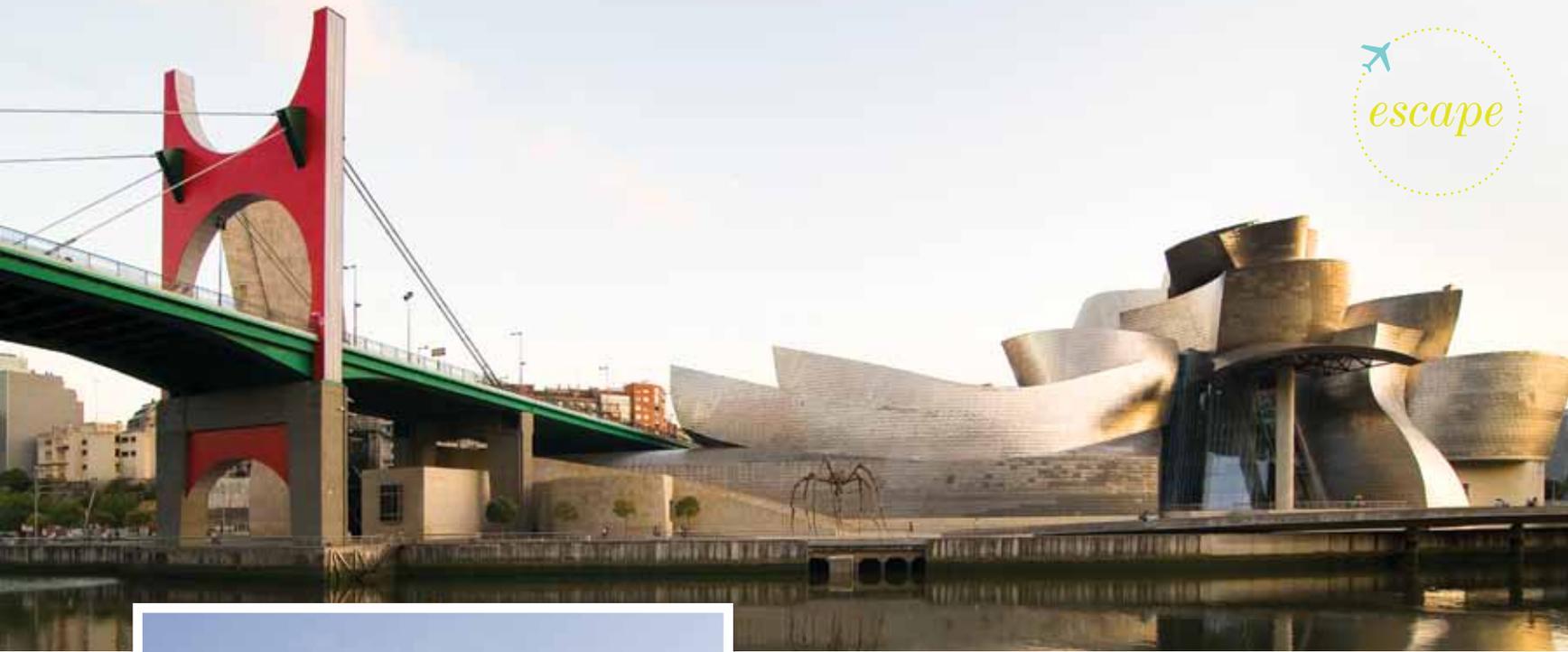
# marvels

Story | KATHRYN HUNTER

From the awe-inspiring Guggenheim in Spain to the towering Burg Al Arab on the shores of Dubai, the world's most acclaimed architectural wonders are true works of art.

 *escape*





©FMGB, GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM BILBAO, 2013, PHOTO: ERIKA ED

## GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM BILBAO

Unique and otherworldly, Frank Gehry's Guggenheim Museum Bilbao is an icon of contemporary art and architecture. Smooth shapes armored in gleaming titanium mimic the fluidness of movement and life, reminiscent of a school of fish.

The structure's seemingly impossible curves were achieved via cutting-edge computer simulations. At the project's outset in 1991, Gehry was 62 years old and technological advances had finally caught up to some of his most ambitious ideas.

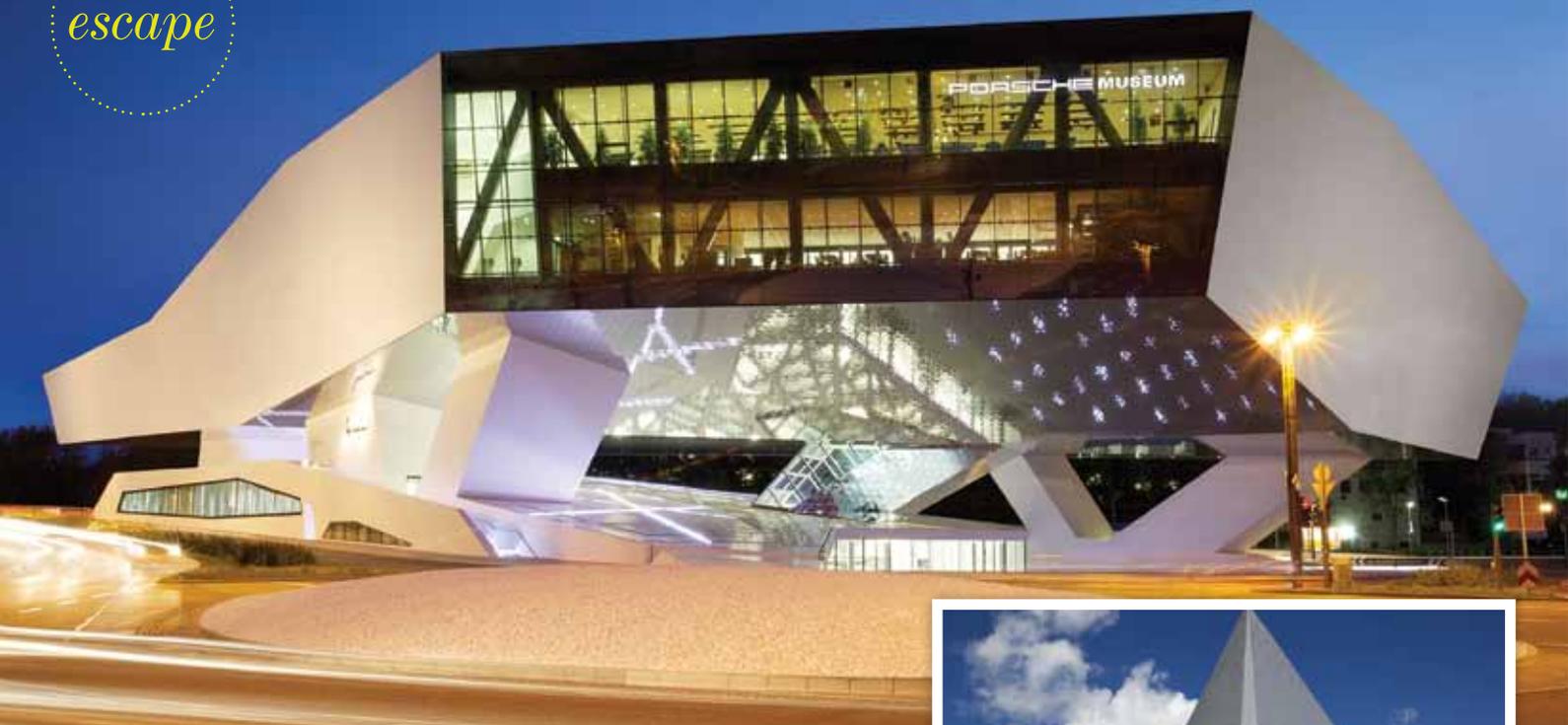
Before the museum's opening in 1997, Bilbao was not a common tourist destination, despite the city being Spain's fourth largest and an important industrial center. Making Bilbao famous almost overnight, the museum has drawn more than 10 million visitors to Basque Country.

Like the network of other Guggenheim museums around the world, Guggenheim Museum Bilbao unites

remarkable architecture with great artworks. Visitors come to see the museum's celebrated collection of mid-20th century to present-day art, and also to view Gehry's famous building for themselves, a structure whose dramatic design has been accused by critics of upstaging the artwork it contains.

Built along the Nervion River in the city's old port, the museum presents many faces. From the street, the structure is designed to blend with its urban surroundings. From the riverfront on the opposite side, it makes no pretense at modesty, resembling the prow of a majestic boat. And if one were to take a bird's-eye view from above, the building appears to be the shape of a blossoming flower. Regardless of vantage point, it's a sight to behold.

Avenida Abandoibarra, 2  
Bilbao 48001, Spain  
[guggenheim.org/bilbao](http://guggenheim.org/bilbao)



## PORSCHE MUSEUM

Paying homage to its roots, the Porsche Museum is located in Zuffenhausen, the small suburb of Stuttgart, Germany, that has been Porsche's headquarters for more than 70 years. As sleek and unmistakable as the vehicles it houses, the Porsche Museum immediately catches the eye.

The Viennese firm Delugan Meissl Associated Architects designed the bold, futuristic structure, which opened in January 2009. The asymmetrical exterior, reaching a height of about 75 feet, is a bright white, with a large glass front and a contrasting layer of polished metal between the two main portions of the building. The large, upper section of the museum seems to levitate, supported by three V-shaped columns. Below, the base structure contains the foyer, museum store and several restaurants and cafes, and a glass stairwell connects it to the exhibit hall above. Inside, with

the exception of some exhibit backgrounds, the museum's interior is a cool, stark white.

An immense gallery space of drivable art, the Porsche Museum houses roughly 80 production and racecars, including legendary models such as the 356, 550, 911 and 917. The configuration of the museum gives one a sense of speed and lightness. From the entrance to the exhibition area, visitors can choose to go directly to the museum's central exhibit or follow a chronological path through the building, experiencing all the key moments of the carmaker's history, from its start as a small design bureau to the world-renowned brand of the present day.

Porscheplatz 1, D - 70435  
Stuttgart-Zuffenhausen,  
Germany [porsche.com/  
international/aboutporsche/  
porschemuseum](http://porsche.com/international/aboutporsche/porschemuseum)





## ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM

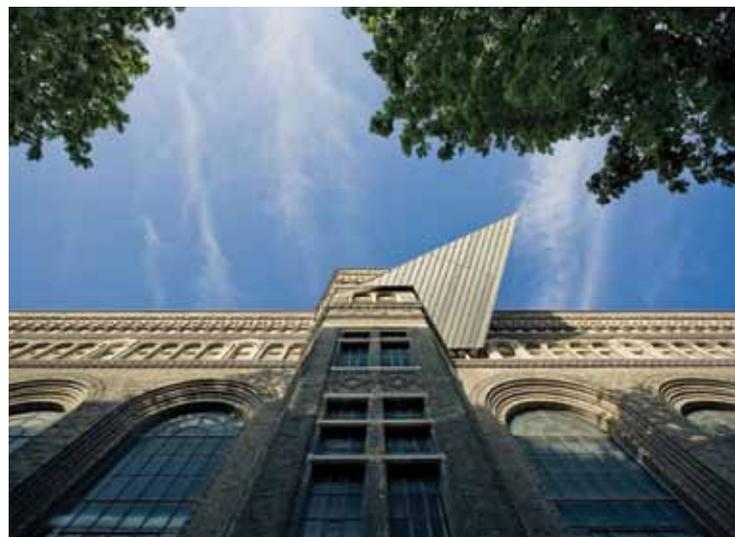
Traditional and contemporary architecture come together at the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto, Canada, one of the world's leading museums of natural history and world cultures. Completed in 2007, the Michael Lee-Chin Crystal—an ambitious and dynamic extension to the historical museum building, parts of which were built as early as 1914—seems to explode from the front of the museum, a monument of glittering glass that beckons the passerby inside for a closer look.

The interlocking crystalline shape, designed by Polish-born American Daniel Libeskind, added 100,000 square feet of exhibition space, a new entrance and lobby, a retail shop and three restaurants. A marked contrast from the existing architecture, the extension was meant to improve and augment museum facilities, but also to give the museum an air of approachability and modernity, a sense that the ROM reflects the present day as well as the distant past.

Clad in champagne-colored anodized aluminum, the structure's exterior changes according to the conditions outside, shimmering in the sunlight or glowing after dusk under the city lights. Natural light filters in through its many windows to illuminate exhibits. Offering a glimpse into galleries on other levels, intersecting spaces between the structure's five crystal sections create special atriums. The "Spirit House," a large void between the east and west crystals with bridges crisscrossing the space above, invites museum visitors to rest and reflect.

Like Libeskind's other famous structures, such as the Jewish Museum Berlin and the extension to the Denver Art Museum, the Michael Lee-Chin Crystal challenges many conventional ideas.

100 Queen's Park  
Toronto, ON, M5S 2C6  
[rom.on.ca/en](http://rom.on.ca/en)





## DANISH ROYAL PLAYHOUSE

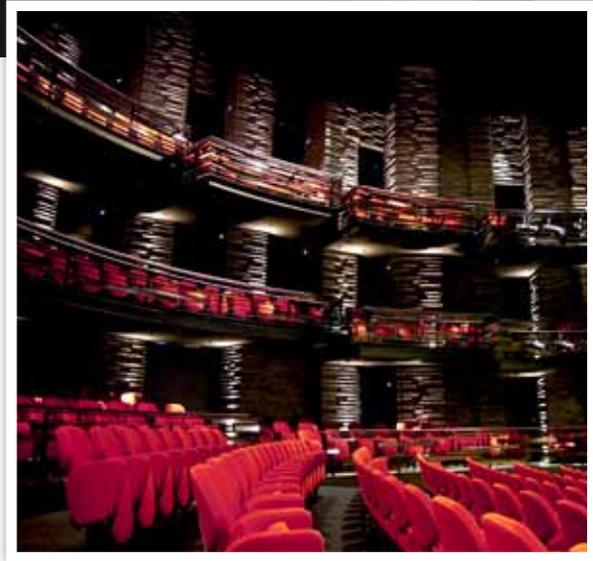
Where Copenhagen's historic Frederiksstad quarter meets the city harbor and the sea, the Danish Royal Playhouse extends out over the water. The new theater, completed in 2008, is Denmark's center for dramatic art. With its brick, copper and glass design, the structure is at home among the traditional storehouses of the harbor, yet also stands out as one of the city's most striking contemporary structures.

The beauty of the theater's design lies in its functionality and purity of form. The handiwork of Danish firm Lundgaard & Tranberg Architects, the structure has an air of simple elegance. A wide oak-plank promenade wraps around three sides of the building, providing access to the theater's large, airy foyer, as well as panoramic views of the waterfront. Three stages offer a seating capacity of 1,000, as well as special lighting and acoustics. The glass roof level floats prominently above, housing

facilities like the rehearsal and dressing rooms, and is in turn topped by the theater's copper-clad scene tower. The building also features many sophisticated alternative energy systems, from thermal active slabs and natural ventilation to systems that repurpose seawater for heating and cooling.

The area surrounding the theater is in itself a living stage. Some of Copenhagen's other popular attractions are nearby, such as the Copenhagen Opera House. By day, the theater's public promenade is lined with pedestrians, cyclists and sightseers; when darkness falls, theatergoers mill about, and the whole structure shines with light. Even if you don't have tickets to the evening's performance, the scene is well worth a visit.

Sankt Annæ Plads 36  
DK-1250 Copenhagen K  
[kgjteater.dk](http://kgjteater.dk)





## BURJ AL ARAB

Dubai's landmark hotel, Burj Al Arab, is a feat of extraordinary imagination. Built to resemble the sail of a traditional Arabian dhow, the hotel stands at a height of 1,053 feet on a manmade island 919 feet from the shore, where its impressive shadow falls over the water rather than the other resort properties on the beach.

Burj Al Arab officially opened in December 2009. No expense was spared in its construction. Reclaiming the island from the sea was a costly two-year endeavor, and erecting the hotel structure took roughly three years. British architect Tom Wright of WS Atkins was responsible for the hotel's unique structural design.

A slender causeway, traveled by the hotel's chauffeur-driven fleet of Rolls Royces, links the island to the mainland. Visible from virtually anywhere in Dubai City, Burj Al Arab is a national icon. The graceful curve

of the steel exoskeleton and the structure's soaring mast frame the fiberglass sail, defining the building's exterior. The high-tech sail tempers the sunlight entering the building's many windows and projects a brilliant light show at night.

The structure's interior design is one of spectacular excess. The atrium lobby, said to be the tallest in the world, is flanked by gold columns and features an enormous fountain at its center. The hotel's 28 double stories contain 202 luxury suites and 6 award-winning restaurants. With its vivid color palette, custom carpets and rugs, imported marble floors, gold leaf embellishments and imaginative waterfalls, Burj Al Arab is evocative of a sultan's palace or a modern-day Arabian fairytale. ✦

Dubai, UAE  
[jumeirah.com](http://jumeirah.com)

