

by Yvette Nahmia-Messinas

If buildings influence the perspectives of those who inhabit them, the architect who designs a school has a great responsibility. And when the school, the only one of its kind, teaches the Holocaust to students and educators from throughout the world, the architect's responsibility is enormous.

Jerusalem-born architect David Guggenheim confronted this challenge in the design of the new International School for Holocaust Studies. In association with architect Daniel Mintz, Guggenheim has created a public space where students and teachers can meet, learn from each other and develop the perspective necessary to confront their own challenge as teachers.

Walking past the family path, one enters the building from its mezzanine, through the family square designed by landscape architect Dan Tzur. Upon entering the building, the visitor is immediately aware of the abundance of natural light from the building's skylights and the stretch of windows on its north front. These rows of windows provide a panoramic vista of the Jerusalem mountains and accentuate the relationship between the building and its surroundings. Jerusalem stone, used repeatedly in the interior of the building, is an additional element enhancing the interior/exterior relationship. Light wood, metal, and marble create a composition of colors and materials, resulting in an impression of sophistication and elegance.

The building is built on three stories: Classrooms, offices for the teaching staff, a multi-purpose hall, and the cafeteria are located on the ground floor; offices for staff, rooms for workshops, the pedagogical center and the multimedia center are housed on the first floor (the entrance floor); additional offices and research rooms are on the top floor which provides a view of the rest of the school through the building's central open space. Spacious patios, adjacent to the staff offices and removed from the building's public spaces, create islands of privacy and calm.

Most importantly, the atmosphere created by the building elevates the spirit of those who work and study here, and creates a friendly and open environment conducive to education and productive interaction.

The team of architects who joined forces to design this building consists of David Guggenheim, Alex Bloch and Daniel Mintz from Guggenheim/Bloch Architects and Urbanists. However, as expressed by Guggenheim, "We couldn't have achieved these results without the insights and cooperation of the Yad Vashem management." Carmela Carmi was the architect in charge of interior design, Dorit Harel designed all the signposts, and Dan Tzur was the landscape architect.

Jerusalem Stone



View from the top floor



The pedagogical center



View from the ground floor

and Light