



Art Institute of Chicago The Modern Wing, Main Store

Chicago, Illinois

Designing to a Grid

CHALLENGE

The Modern Wing expansion, by renowned architect Renzo Piano, would mean that the museum was renovating and reinstalling nearly all of its galleries. New entrances and traffic patterns were bound to emerge. Thus, the retail locations needed to be a harmonious part of the visitors' intuitive navigation. In addition, we wanted to follow the grid of The Modern Wing building in order to seamlessly define the development of the retail floor fixture plans, the design of the perimeter casework, and the position of all elements within the store. Our goal was to achieve a sense of lightness and transparency.

SOLUTION

Applying the familiar interior design elements of Piano's museums, we began by emphasizing the axes connecting features at either end. The walls dramatically define vistas to Millennium Park at one end. The grid formed by these major walls was further divided into subset grids on parallel axes, with perpendicular axes to create openings.

To accommodate the museum store's diverse selection of products related to its encyclopedic collections, exhibitions, and activities, we developed a versatile layout that allows for merchandising and fixture configuration changes. The result is an uplifting expression of proportion, order, discipline, and organization, which together subtly communicate the functions and circulation within.

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