Metropol Parasol

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The Metropol Parasol

At the beginning of the century, the city authorities decided to build parking space on the Plaza de la Encarnacion and no one could have thought that an outstanding structure would be found on that same place. Pre-conducted archaeological excavations revealed that this place used to be an ancient Roman settlement and, in this regard, it was decided to change drastically the future destiny of this place. The city authorities decided to build an archaeological museum. At the same time, they wanted to build a huge complex, which would include a restaurant, a small farmers’ market, and a terrace from which tourists could admire the view of the medieval town.

The Metropol Parasol links the past, present, and future of the city. The Plaza de la Encarnacion in Seville in southern Spain was reconstructed under the project “Metropol Parasol” by architect Jurgen Mayer. In 2004, he won the international competition of ideas. Inspired by the arches of the Cathedral of Seville and rubber plants growing in the city, Mayer developed six “mushrooms” with the “legs” of cylindrical shape made of concrete blocks and gigantic jagged “hats” of wood. In the engineering part of the project, the well-known firm ARUP helped Mayer and his company. Its representative compared the gigantic umbrella with the Eiffel Tower, a symbol of modernity and advanced technology. It became a cultural magnet. Presently, the Metropol Parasol is one of the most important sights in the city of Seville.

The Metropol Parasol is a huge wooden structure, which is located in the old part of Seville in Spain. The futuristic design of the Metropol Parasol contrasts wonderfully with old buildings of this part of Seville. However, this contrast is very harmonious because of a neutral lighter tone of the wooden roof, which softens the cutting edge design of the complex. This unique construction is the biggest wooden building in the world. There are stunning views of Seville from the height of the Metropol Parasol. The construction lasted over six
years from 2005 to 2011. It was to be completed in 2007. However, the complex structure of the overlaps coated with polyurethane wooden beams, the shape of which required the use of computer-controlled machine tools, slowed the progress of work. Finally, this architectural marvel was completed in April, 2011.

The whole structure is made of six umbrellas, which include about three thousand crossed connections. There are no walls or other obstructions for pedestrians under the hexagon umbrellas. There are playgrounds, paths, steps, and fountains. In fact, there is everything to create a unique place for walking and recreation for residents and tourists. In order to build this stunning construction, 8000 wooden pieces that were joined together with glue and steel fasteners were used. The length of this fantastic wooden roof resembling honeycombs is 150 meters and the width is 75 meters. The construction rises above the ground supported by concrete pillars at 28 meters. This beauty costs 130 million dollars. The built-up area is about 5000 square meters and the total functional area is 12,670 square meters (Gengnagel, Kilian, & Palz, 2011).

The main materials used to construct the building are wood with a polyurethane coating, concrete, and granite. The construction was made of high-strength material Kerto-Q presented in the form of plates which were made of Finnish spruce. The plates were additionally protected with a polyurethane coating. There were 3400 plates, each of which had a thickness from 68 to 311 millimeters, required for the construction of such structures. There were 8000 wooden parts, conventional boards of various sizes and configurations that were linked together with glue and steel fasteners. In order to avoid exposure to high temperatures or releasing hazardous fumes, the glued wooden elements of the undulating umbrella roof, gradually growing out of the concrete foundations, are wrapped in a protective layer of a high-quality polyurethane coating.
The materials used for the construction of the community center, in particular their number, led this prominent building to the Guinness Book of Records. The Metropol Parasol has twice won the title of the world’s largest structure made of wood, and the large amount of heavy-duty adhesive to bond materials made it the largest building on glue. The concrete pillars conceal wide stairs leading both up to the platform and down under the ground—to the archaeological museum, where people can see the remains of the Roman city. It is directly under the building market, and the glazing areas in the floor of the market allow the visitors to see the ancient ruins underneath. On the ground floor of the Metropol Parasol, there are a large number of restaurants, bars, and other establishments. On the terraces of the second and the third floors, people can hide from the sun and rain. In addition, there is a splendid view of Seville (Geng nagel, Kilian, & Palz, 2011).

The functionality of the Metropol Parasol lies in the fact that it protects the basic infrastructure of the city from the scorching sun. For instance, museums, parks, restaurants, cultural centers, and other recreational facilities are placed under a huge wooden umbrella. At the very top of the construction, there is an observation deck that opens an overview of the town square. Seville is a city with a rich history and well-established medieval traditions in architecture. However, the Metropol Parasol has become its new attraction, being not just a grand architectural design, but also the widest construction of wood in the world. Because of the stunning size, the Metropol Parasol dominates the landscape of the central part of the city. Being a masterpiece of modern urban planning and a contemporary social and entertainment center in Seville, the Metropol Parasol has already been called a cult place in Spain, attracting visitors not only with a wide range of services and facilities, but also with the unique archaeological finds and the amazing abstract architecture.
References