

The initial appeal of the [AC-CA] Paris Champagne Bar competition was the spectacular site located in an area of Paris saturated with a rich history which extends far beyond the boundaries of the city. Images and writing about this area have been exported around the world to such an extent that it represents the epitome of Paris in many peoples minds. We felt this iconic status created a challenge in how we would choose to react to the surroundings, either incorporating elements in order to fit in or rejecting the existing aesthetic and creating something in contrast. The next challenge was the complexity of the site itself. Located on the bank of the Seine River with a major road above, a pedestrian walkway along the river and an existing access stair cutting through the site we realized the building would have to mediate several different access points, level changes and circulation routes. Lastly we felt that the size and relative simplicity of the program was small enough that it would give time for several design iterations before deciding on a final approach and allow for a greater level of resolution than would be possible in a larger, more complex building.



10  
March 2014 ///



Context plan provided by [AC-CA]

[PARIS] River Champagne Bar ///

## CONTEXT

The first consideration we made for this project was what position to take in regards to the existing aesthetics of the area. Being as the site interfaces with the bank of the river and is very close the Ponts Des Arts bridge we had to decided how we wanted our building to interact with these heritage elements. We knew from the start the building would need to be of its own time and we had no interest in recreating the architecture of another era, the choice came down to whether we would match or contrast the surroundings. We examined the work of David Chipperfield because he frequently creates buildings which are connected to heritage structures and generally takes an approach of harmoniously matching the materiality and rhythm of the existing but in a modern interpretation, leaving out decorative detailing and often utilizing modern construction techniques to create larger openings than would have been possible in earlier eras. For another approach we looked at I.M. Pei's Louvre Pyramid. Constructed with a steel cable tensile



I.M. Pei's Louvre Pyramid  
Photocredit: Benh Lieu Song

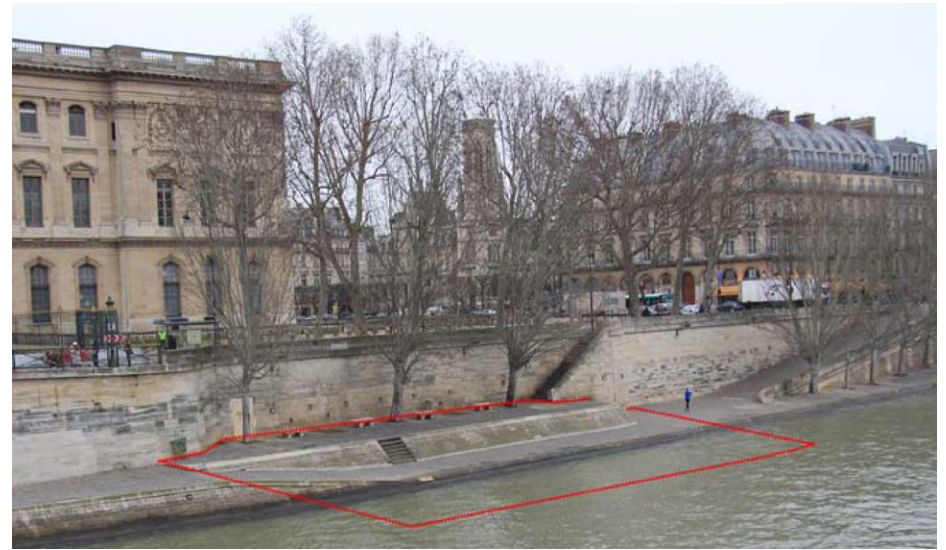


Kaufhaus Tyrol Department Store

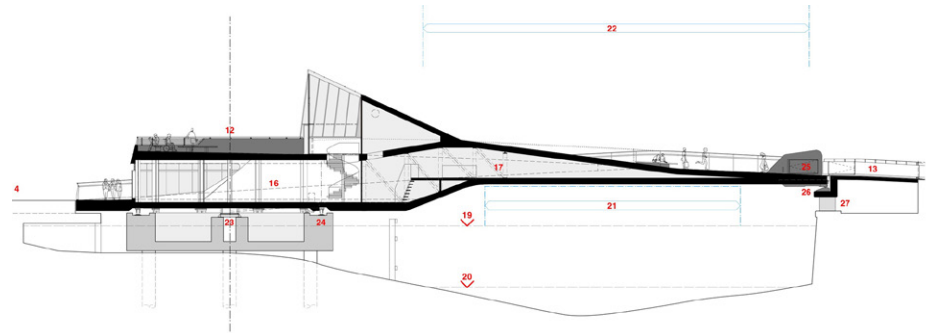
system the pyramid achieves maximum transparency and is the anti-thesis of the thick, load bearing masonry walls utilized in the buildings surrounding it behind it. We ended up falling closer to Pei's approach deciding we wanted our design to appear as clearly separate to the existing constructions in both form and materiality.

## SITE

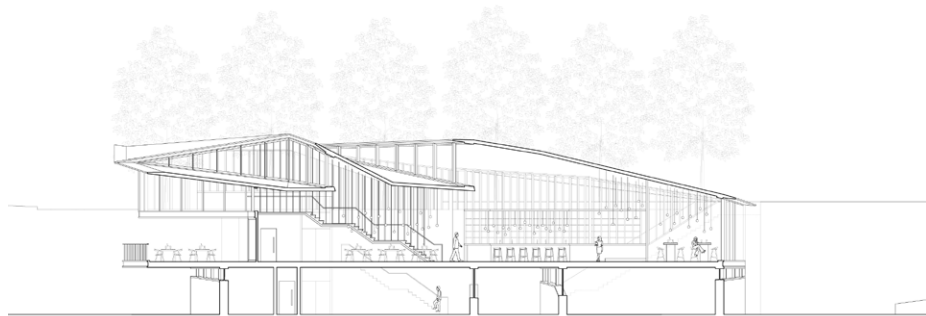
Examining the specifics of the site we found that it is at the intersection of several circulation routes and access points which would have to be mediated. The site currently contains benches and trees and is a popular place to stop to enjoy a meal while taking in the sights. The site can be accessed either from the stairs within the site, a large ramp to the east or from another entry point further away and then along the pedestrian path at the river level. The project brief dictated that the stair within the project boundary had to be maintained and that their needed to be one controlled point of entry. We saw an opportunity in the different levels and access points and began looking for precedents which at once dealt with horizontal and vertical circulation similar to our site. Although not similar in an immediately apparent way we took inspiration in the River Hull footbridge in Hull, UK designed by McDowell + Benedetti. While the fact that the bridge rotates might be its most striking aspect what was more interesting to us was its sectional qualities. The bridge has a lower street connecting level and raised seating area on one side and an intermediate level on the other which is mediated by ramping up to the seating area and providing stairs to the lower level in addition to having a spiral stair internally. In our solution we were inspired by the use of multiple means of egress as well as the introduction of an intermediate level. We decided to locate the main entrance at street level with a minimal presence on that elevation which leads to an intermediary level between the street and riverbank, low enough to appear modest at street level yet high enough to allow passage underneath at river bank level. In plan we shaped the building around the existing stair so that it is still accessible 24 hours to the public, passing alongside and then underneath the building. We felt that this solution satisfied all of the briefs requirements in an effective way because we maintained the existing stair, allowed for street level entry giving the building a street address and car drop-off and didn't disrupt the flow of foot traffic horizontally at the river bank level.



Site boundary provided by [AC-CA]



River Hull Footbridge, section



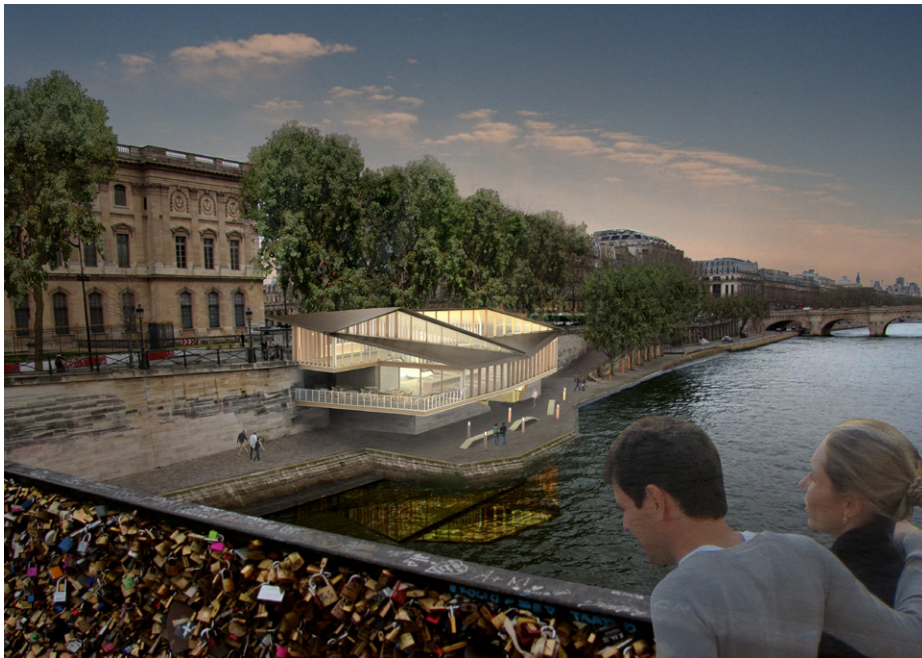
Paris Champagne Bar, section



Paris Champagne Bar, section

## FACADE

How the building appears from the exterior was something stressed in the competition brief due to its prime viewing location from the Pont Des Arts bridge, the Quai François Mitterrand and the tour boats that go up and down the river. We knew that the dining level would be predominately glazed because we wanted to maximize the view along the river so we began looking for examples of facades that worked with extensive glazing in an elegant yet eye-catching way. The work of Kengo Kuma and in particular the Asakusa Culture and Tourism Center which uses deep wooden fins to catch the glow of interior lighting at night and create a dynamic effect as the facade opens and closes depending on your viewing angle. We liked the idea that our design would appear lantern like at night with the addition of the light-catching fins and thought the dynamic effect of the viewing angle would very effective for those passing by on river boats. We also looked at the un-built work of Toronto's Williamson Chong Architects which plays with a similar use of extensive glazing and deep fins. What was appealing about their use is how they vary the frequency of the fins to control the transparency of the building. We employed this same technique by using a dense pattern at street level to obscure the interiors from that elevation where we were trying to minimize the buildings presence while opening up the fins on the river side to maximize views and the lantern effect at night. For the portion of building at the riverbank level we wanted to show a separation from the upper portion in order to accentuate the lightness of the upper portion and make it appear to float. This was done by pulling the lower level in, creating an overhang as well using a more solid, masonry construction to make it read as part of the original river bank.



*Paris Champagne Bar, view from the Pont Des Arts*



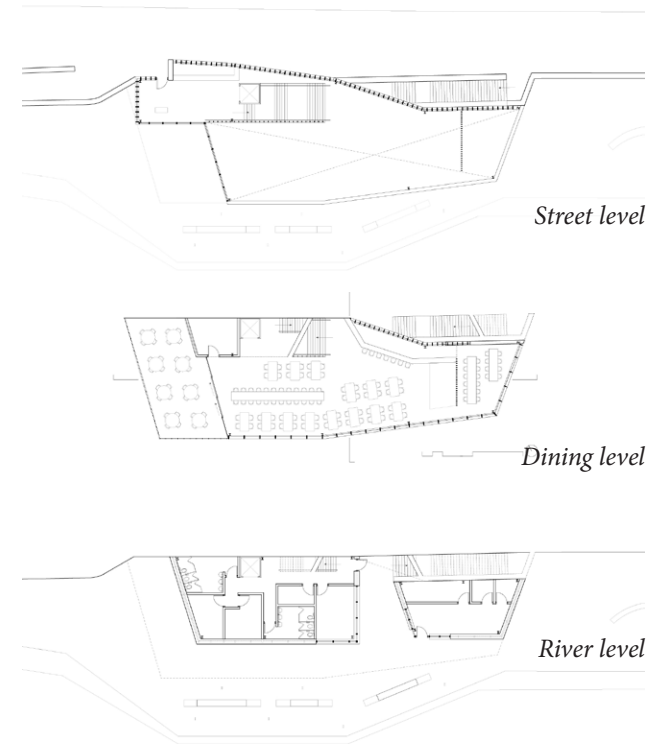
*Williamson Chong's Fox Lake work in progress*



*Kengo Kuma's Asakusa Culture and Tourism Center*

## PROGRAM / INTERIOR

The decision making for the interior of the building started with researching Champagne in its history, production, storage and provision. It is of course a sparkling wine made in the Champagne region of France, set apart from other wine in that it is often associated with a premium or elite status, something that signifies celebration and high class. This most likely dates back to an earlier time when it was associated with French aristocracy. We felt that in our design we did not want to perpetuate the idea of exclusivity so much but instead make the experience less intimidating by creating an interior that felt friendly and inviting while still appearing elegant. We knew when we started looking for bar precedents that we did not want something dark and moody as we needed extensive glazing in our design to make a connection to the river. This is somewhat unusual in bars as most tend to be more internally focused with less emphasis on exterior views. We decided our design should tend to a warm, bright crisp environment and found two interiors that exemplified that: Shenzhen Linehouse and The Feast Yan Restaurant. Both interiors make ample use of wood which adds a warmth to the space and the accents of white compliment it with a crisp, clean feeling. We also enjoyed the hanging orb lights at various heights above the tables, we felt that this created a more informal, whimsical atmosphere.



*Paris Champagne Bar, interior*



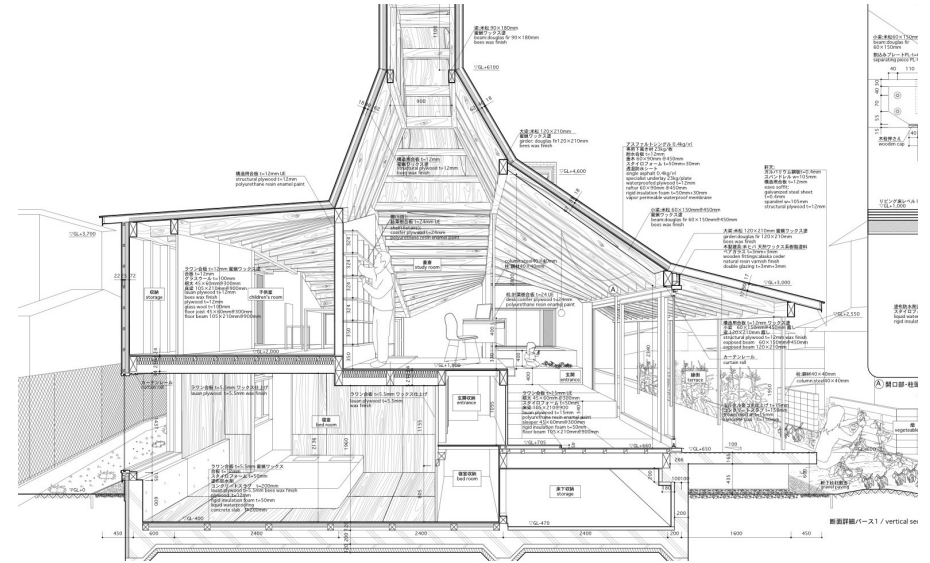
*The Feast Yan Restaurant, Neri & Hu Design & Research*

## FORM / MORPHOLOGY

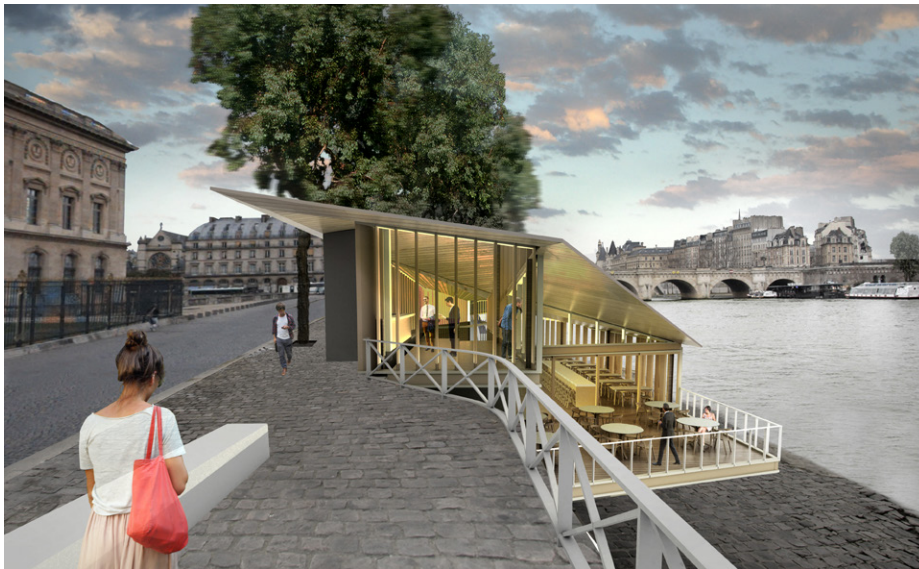
The two goals which were at the forefront of our minds were to one: express the level changes and circulation flows through the building and two: to create a unique form that would appear as an icon along the river. In plan the form was mostly dictated by the boundaries of the site and the requirements of the program distribution we chose. With the many requirements leaving little room for adjustment in the plans we looked to the roof form as an opportunity for expression. We began looking at the roofs in the work of Atelier Bow-wow in the way that the roofs undulate as they pass over different levels and half-levels and felt that a similar approach would be able to communicate the level changes and circulation within our design. From their began a process of iterating the roof design while observing the exterior appeal and the impact on the interior space. Once we were satisfied with the form we began exploring openings in the form of clear stories, taking inspiration from paper folding, pulling apart planes while maintaining the initial sense of flow and movement.

## CONCLUSION

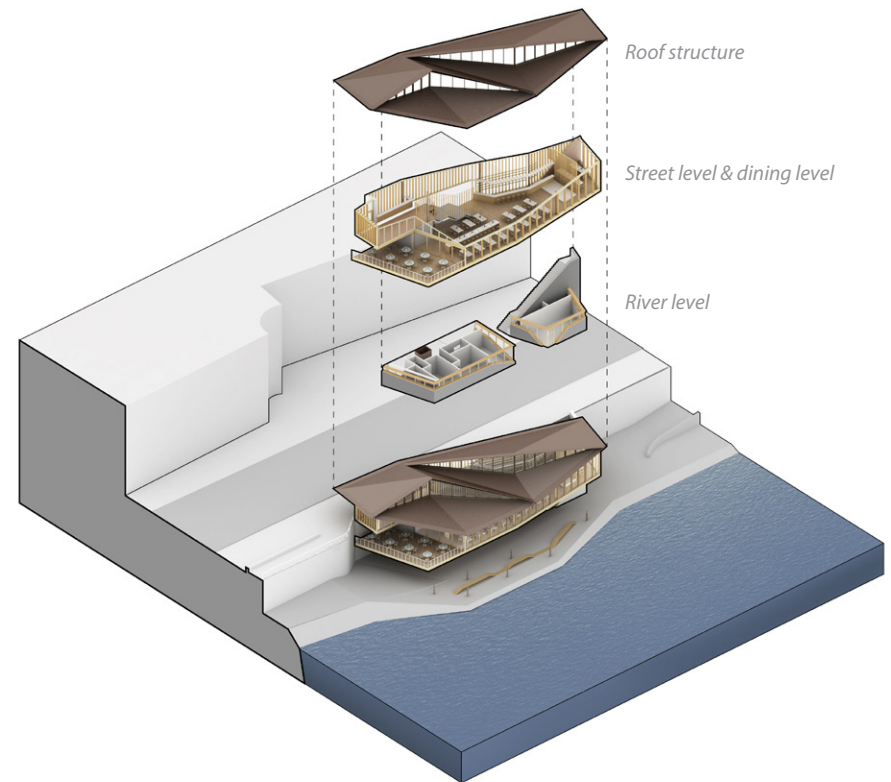
In the end this project was influenced by many strong external factors due to the unusual site and the requirements of the competition brief. Each of these factors demanded separate research which lead away from looking at the bar typology. This process of pulling inspiration from buildings unrelated to the category of bars and restaurants resulted in a building that is very specific to its site but might not be recognized as a bar at first glance. What I've learned from this process is that in some circumstances one must also look outside of the typology for inspiration if the external factors present a larger challenge than facilitating the program.



*Nora House, Atelier Bow-wow*



*Paris Champagne Bar, street approach*



*Paris Champagne Bar, exploded axo*

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