



Figure 6.4 The Guggenheim Museum in 2004.

of August 1983 that wrought physical and economic havoc. The subsequent 1987 metropolitan plan developed policies for enhancing Bilbao's connections to the external world, increasing mobility within the city, improving environmental and urban quality, investing in human resources and technology and for building a range of cultural facilities. Part of the cultural effort was to create an internationally prestigious museum of modern art. Contemporaneously, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation was looking for a second European site (after the Peggy Guggenheim Museum in Venice) where it could display parts of its collection.

An agreement was reached whereby the Basque administration would pay for the building and the foundation would manage the museum and provide the collection and temporary exhibits. The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum on Fifth Avenue, New York designed by Frank Lloyd Wright

had set a precedent for having an internationally renowned architect design a building for the foundation. After some debate over whether a refurbished Alhóndiga building in the city could suitably house the collection, a decision was made to have a limited competition for the design of a museum to be located on the banks of the Nervión River. The site was in the centre of a triangle whose vertices were the Arriago Theatre, the University of Deusto and the Fine Arts Museum.

A precedent had been set for the use of limited competitions in Bilbao. The Bilbao Metro (known affectionately as *Fosteritos*) design competition was won by Norman Foster (the other entrants were Santiago Calatrava, Architektengruppe U-bahn and Gregotti Associates). The metro opened in 1995 and is now being extended. The architects involved in the competition for the design of the museum were Arata Isozaki (representing Asia), Coop Himmelblau