



## Two temples

15

Left  
**Norman Foster & Partners**, Carré d'Art, Nîmes, France 1984–93; seen with the Maison Carrée AD 1–10

Below  
**Norman Foster & Partners**, Carré d'Art, Nîmes, France 1984–93; section through building and square

In the Place de la Comédie in Nîmes and facing the Maison Carrée stands the Carré d'Art designed by Norman Foster and Partners. The temple probably dates from the first century and is among the best preserved Roman temples. It is, to describe it in art historical shorthand, a small hexa-style pseudoperipteral Corinthian temple on a podium. It is built of limestone and has a tiled roof. The Carré d'Art was completed in 1993 and houses art galleries, a library, a roof top restaurant and a very dominant movement space. It is built mainly of concrete, steel and glass. In function, materials and date there is clearly a wide gap between these two buildings. Very similar Roman temples to the Maison Carrée can be found at Vienne, south of Lyon and in Pula on the Dalmatian coast. Only slightly less similar ones are built throughout the Roman Empire over a considerable time span. We do not need very specialised knowledge to recognise a Roman temple when we see one. The Roman temple belongs, it seems, to an architectural tradition which covers a wide time span and which pays little attention to locality. The differences between a temple in Rome and one in Bath in south-west England are very much less than their obvious similarities. The temple of Antonius and Faustina in Rome is, for example, very like the Maison Carrée though a hundred years later. Continuity and only minimal change are the obvious hallmarks.

Norman Foster's much larger building may share certain similarities with his Cranfield University library of 1990 – 95,

