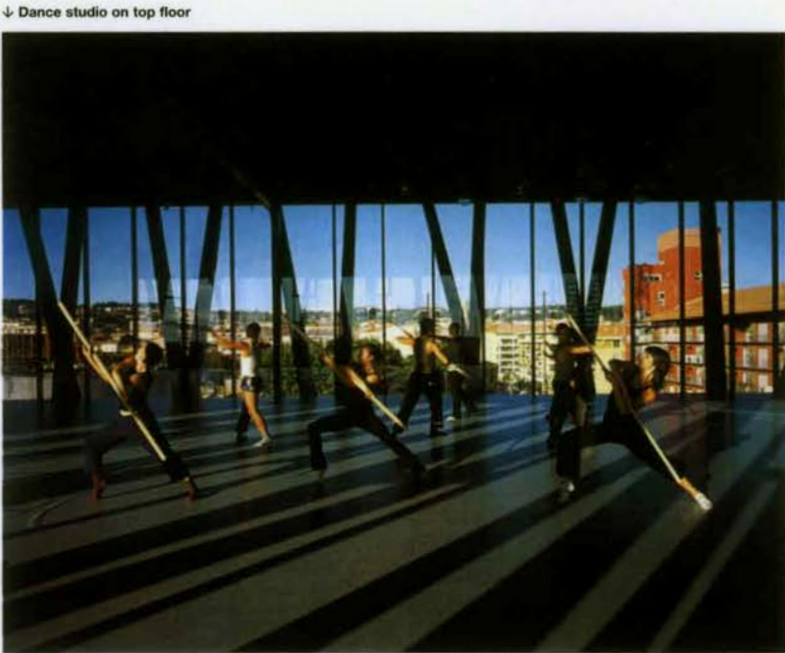


(Dance centre, Aix)
 tain of concrete, partially open, protecting the fragile glass body inside gives no hint of the rigour of the mathematical calculations, the constraints and the difficulties of its execution. The discontinuous transparency allows passers-by to glimpse the movements of the dancers, who, without the context of sound, look like dislocated bodies.
 The CCN has been built as a temple to dance, and its sheath of columns recalls the 'Stick Dance', a ballet Oscar Schlemmer created in 1927: the dancers, dressed in black with white sticks attached to their arms and legs, created abstract, geometric figures based on the movement and displacement of the body. ←



NATIONAL CHOREOGRAPHY CENTRE, 1999-2006
 Architect: Rudy Ricciotti
 Client: Mairie d'Aix en Provence, communauté du pays d'Aix
 Address: 530 avenue Mozart, CS 30824, FR-13627 Aix-en-Provence
 Info: www.rudyricciotti.com



↓ Dance studio on top floor

Museum, Kiev

PCA's design for a centre for contemporary art signals the emergence of the new creative pole in Eastern Europe.

UKRAINE — TEXT: KSENIYA DMITRENKO; PHOTOGRAPHY: BENOIT FOUGEIROL

It was a red letter day for Ukrainian contemporary art when the Pinchuk Art Center opened its doors to visitors last September. Its owner, Victor Pinchuk, one of the wealthiest Ukrainian oligarchs, has consistently promoted himself as a patron of the avant-garde during the last couple of years. Besides comprehensive exhibitions, the most important enterprise of Pinchuk's 'Contemporary Art in Ukraine' Foundation was the formation of an art collection, which by now comprises a considerable number of works by talented Ukrainian and international artists (Sarah Morris, Olafur Eliasson, Oleg Kulik, Olexandr Gnilytsky, Carsten Holler, Arsen Savadov and many others). Pinchuk initially planned to establish a museum in the Arsenal — a huge tsarist military complex built in the 18th century. However, after the Orange Revolution he was ostracized by the new government. The competition for the reconstruction of the Arsenal, won by the Foundation, was cancelled and they had to look for another location. Finally, the Foundation bought six floors in a recently restored group of eclectic buildings near Besarabka, the old marketplace in the centre of Kiev.

The museum debuted with an exhibition of selected works from its permanent collection under the title 'New Space', a designation that reflected not only the quality of the exhibited works, but also the building's standout interior design by French architect Philippe Chiambaretta. The main aim of Chiambaretta's design was, understandably, maximum dissociation from the building's artificial appearance. This was achieved by considerable alterations which allowed for the addition of one more floor behind the historical facade. The architect explains: 'The rebuilt staircase leading to the Foundation space allows us to understand this intervention — the staircase landings do not match the windows — so that the old facade looks like a film set, detached from the floors themselves.' In addition to this, the existing route between floors — via three stairs and two elevators — was abandoned. Instead, two new interior stairs were created in order to facilitate circulation. Technical equipment was hidden in a new, one-metre-thick central wall that divides the plateau in two. Electricity, air conditioning and ducting run through this spine, simplifying distribution to the exhibition halls on either side.

The sense of entering another reality is strengthened by the almost sterile purity of interior in contrast to the colourful and decorated exterior of the building. The only areas of congruence are the alcoves corresponding to the former floors. Covered by vivid wallpaper designed by Michael Lin, a Taiwanese artist who lives in Paris, they are the only spaces in the museum that hint at the external reality.

Reactions to Chiambaretta's design vary. An Austrian architect, to whom I showed the museum as a rare example of contemporary architecture in Kiev, commented: 'there is too much design'. Indeed, in the café on the seventh floor one finds a kind of Zaha Hadid space. But it would be a mistake to see specific elements of design, such as the deformed grid of the main staircase and the metal panels on the walls and window sills, as mere decoration, since they derived directly from the logic of design.

The keynote of this space is movement. The journey begins at the very entrance, where the existing balustrades of the main stair were replaced with a matrix of metal tubes, an intriguing installation rising through the entire height of the building, beyond the visitors' gaze, thus drawing them deeper into the museum. The rooms were designed to emphasize the channelling of circulation. The floor is laid in narrow granite bands five to thirty centimetres wide, following the direction of the exhibition plan. Translucent bands of lighting along the perimeter of the ceilings emphasize the exhibition route, echoing the pattern on the floor. The ventilation grilles are disguised as perforated metal panels displaying abstract graphics specially designed to avoid distracting viewers from the exhibition. The same graphic code is repeated on a larger scale in the interior staircase of the museum where it does not conflict with the works.

Whatever the gossip might be, the opening of Pinchuk Art Center is a very promising event for Ukraine. One can only hope that the museum will retain its image of a creative laboratory and place for communication to become not a MoMa, but rather a société anonyme of our time. ←

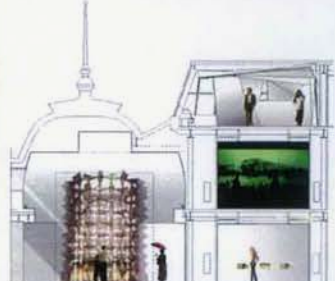


↑ The pattern in the granite floor guides visitors through the exhibition spaces.

↓ Bar on the seventh floor



← Main staircase ↓ Exterior



CONTEMPORARY ART CENTRE, 2005-2006
 Architect: PCA architecture
 Client: Victor Pinchuk's Foundation 'Contemporary Art in Ukraine'
 Address: 2a Basseina St, Kiev
 Info: www.pca-architecture.com, www.c-artpinchuk.org