

## MEDIA INFORMATION

May 2024

PLATO, City Gallery of Contemporary Art, CZ

### **Slaughterhouse becomes city gallery**

**In the Czech city of Ostrava, a dilapidated old abattoir has been transformed into a municipal gallery as part of an award-winning project. The design concept incorporates change as a theme and also creates the required physical openness. With its unique solutions, the project was one of the five finalists at the prestigious EU Mies van der Rohe Awards.**

Ostrava's former municipal slaughterhouse is located in the once densely populated part of the city, which has many gaps and also forms part of the City Centre. The listed building dates back to the late 19th century. It ceased being used for its original function as a slaughterhouse in 1965, when food production was moved to a new plant. The premises were then used for various purposes and gradually fell into disrepair. In 2016, the city of Ostrava bought the demolished buildings and launched an international architectural competition with a view to rebuilding them.

PLATO has already had a site in Ostrava (PLATO BAUHAUS) since 2018, where operations are scheduled to end on 30 June 2024. The new premises will enable the work their to be expanded. The new PLATO gallery for contemporary art is a venue where art is not only seen, but also created. It seeks to reflect the complexity and richness of the world through art. This is based on the idea that contemporary art, like the world, is constantly changing and evolving. The gallery is intended to provide a space for this development that extends beyond the mere exhibition of art. In order to meet the needs of artists, curators and other art professionals, the architects at KWK Promes, led by Robert Konieczny, closely followed the gallery concept when redesigning the slaughterhouse.

#### **Unusual façade solution**

However, the building was actually in an even worse condition than initially assumed. Therefore, the major challenge in the renovation process was to identify the appropriate procedures for the reconstruction. The walls were dilapidated and patchy, with huge holes in many places. The brickwork, almost black with dirt and soot, bore witness to the town's industrial history. KWK Promes and Robert Konieczny, who were selected as part of an architectural competition, ultimately regarded the defects as part of the building's identity. Rather than simply cleaning the façade and refilling the holes with bricks, as the restorer had specified, they wanted to expose the

structure's weaknesses and not hide them. "The building was really beautiful, it reminded me of a brick palace," said architect Konieczny regarding his first impression. "We have viewed defects as something of value that testifies to the identity of this place". Therefore, among other measures, the destroyed bricks were for the most part replaced by bricks salvaged from a collapsed part of the building. All elements of the building that were no longer present have been visibly replaced using contemporary materials. The reconstructed elements are now made of concrete and serve as visible prostheses, as it were. The old ornamentation of the brick walls and the character of the weathered masonry have been preserved. The unique nature of the concept lies in the fact that the concrete elements can be moved as a whole. Thanks to various mechanisms, the six thick concrete wall panels can rotate and open up the exhibition rooms directly to the exterior. They literally allow the art to "extend out" into the space surrounding the building. In this way, they are intended to symbolically and functionally open up the art space to the city and are also to be understood as an invitation. The partially collapsed wooden roofs, covered with dark felt, were replaced with steel structures and covered with a light-coloured membrane. This means that the roofs are less susceptible to heating up. The colour draws inspiration from the concrete used.

### **Consistent revitalisation**

The foundations of the building were also of relatively poor quality, as it is located in an area that was in the past affected by coal mining. They therefore sit on a slight incline. All the more reason why the unique revolving walls required serious interventions with regard to the historic building's initially thin load-bearing walls, which were subjected to enormous forces. Detailed structural calculations led to the reinforcement of critical points of the building with an auxiliary steel structure in combination with micropiles.

In addition to the formal difficulties, there were the strict parameters when it came to the requirements of a gallery and the aesthetic features defined by the architect. In the area of windows and glazed interior walls, these requirements could be fulfilled using various products from Jansen. The filigree steel profiles from the Janisol, Economy 60 and Janisol 2 E130 fulfil both the highest structural and aesthetic requirements. The Janisol line is particularly suitable when it comes to bringing the appearance of a protected building into the present day, while remaining as authentic as possible. It combines contemporary insulation values with an appealingly reserved aesthetic. The different dimensions and geometries of the windows posed a particular challenge, as they were largely used in the old window reveals, but also in the new parts of the building. This called for both round windows and arched windows with different radii in equal measure. Some of these are customised geometries. These were Janisol SG fixed glazings, some of which were customised geometries manufactured in the Sedlák locksmith's shop in Ostrava.

To protect the art from direct sunlight, the new glazing was given a ceramic screen print that makes it appear dark and matt, while softening the light in the galleries in the process. The exterior window sills were specially made to order from ceramic. Their green hand glazing creates a soft colour contrast to the red brick walls.

The gallery of the formerly dilapidated abattoir now comprises five modern exhibition rooms. In addition to the exhibition space, the gallery also has administrative rooms, a café and facilities for the school educational programme and lectures. The area around the buildings has been planted with grasses, wild herbs, shrubs and trees and transformed into a permaculture garden.

## **PROJECT DETAILS**

### **Area of application:**

Windows, interior walls

### **Products:**

Janisol, Janisol 2, Economy 60 (internal); Janisol SG (fixed glazing, exterior windows)

### **Date of completion:**

2022

### **Development/Architecture:**

KWK Promes, Katowice

### **Metalwork:**

Sedlák, umělecké zámečnictví s.r.o., Ostrava

### **Building owner:**

City of Ostrava

**Text:** Nicola Schröder, Konzept-B Zurich

**Photographer:** György Palkó

**Image rights:** Jansen AG, Oberriet

### **Media contact partner for editorial offices:**

Gerald Brandstätter, Konzept-B GmbH

Anemonenstrasse 40d

CH-8047 Zurich

Tel.: +41 (0)43 960 07 70

E-mail: [gbrandstaetter@concept-b.ch](mailto:gbrandstaetter@concept-b.ch)

Jansen AG

Anita Lösch

Industriestrasse 34

CH-9463 Oberriet SG

Tel.: +41 (0)71 763 99 31

Fax: +41 (0)71 763 91 13

E-mail: [anita.loesch@jansen.com](mailto:anita.loesch@jansen.com)

### **PICTURE OVERVIEW:**

The editorial use of the image data is bound to the present property report.



**Pictures 1 and 2:**

All elements of the building that were no longer present have been visibly replaced using contemporary materials. The old ornamentation of the brick walls and the character of the weathered masonry have been preserved.



**Pictures 3 and 4:**

Both round windows and arched windows with different radii were called for in equal measure. Some of these feature special geometries.



**Pictures 5 and 6:**

The reconstructed elements are now made of concrete and serve as visible prostheses, as it were. The generally thick concrete wall panels can rotate and literally allow the art to "extend out" into the space surrounding the building.



**Pictures 7 and 8:**

The different dimensions and geometries of the windows posed a particular challenge, as they were largely used in the old window reveals, but also in the new parts of the building.



**Picture 9**

The Janisol line is particularly suitable when it comes to bringing the appearance of a protected building into the present day, while remaining as authentic as possible.