

Rudy Ricciotti,
Pavillon 52, Quai
Rimbaud, Lyon,
2011. Photo Mateja
Lux.

REVOLUTION AND SADISM

Rudy Ricciotti

- GC** Darkness emerged soon and reappears often in your work, which is unexpected for a Mediterranean architect.
- RR** Pierre Soulages, this giant of painting, had warned us: 'Black has an interior light.' He lives in the South of France... And so do I!
- GC** Was your Stadium in Vitrolles the first time you employed blackness?
- RR** Yes, it was black concrete and red Mistral. Graffiti concrete: last white page available for writing. It was 1990.
- GC** It seems to state its belonging to the asphalt ribbon of the nearby highway.
- RR** It was a land art situation. Violence done to the site. An abstraction against an abstract site, itself being a cast of red bauxite... A black square on a red background. An approximate Malevich.
- GC** The black interior fits the purpose of a contemporary theatre. Is the dark exterior a consequence of what happens inside?
- RR** No, it is just an autistic tautology: as I said before, a black square on a red background.
- GC** The Stadium was soon abandoned for political reasons. Had the black colour any role in triggering the hatred of the new administration?
- RR** No. Architects hated this rock room even more. The very disturbed French architectural milieu was more 'disco' than 'hard rock', or Bee Gees rather than Black Sabbath.
- GC** Modernist architecture (white, ideologically clean...) does not age very well, while your black box is still impressive in its aban-

doned condition. Is darkness a strategy to cope with the afterlife of buildings?

RR I am not so cynical... However, this abandoned place is not a ruin; it resists vandals and hatred of in-law, cyclist, vegan and politically correct architects. Because it is monolithic, self-contained.

GC Another black building you designed, the Centre Chorégraphique National (CCN), in Aix-en-Provence, employs a different strategy. Its irregular diagrid plays a complex game with light. Did you control its effects through representation or other means?

RR No, I do not control anything. Whatever happens, happens. Only the dictatorship of mathematics directs the forms of this type of project. The structural language of the CCN is the result of reiterated numerical modelling in order to discover which geometry is the most naturally seismic resistant. Its exoskeleton is structural and carries all the elastic dance floors on pre-stressed slabs. However, while I designed and built this project, I understood that rationalism did not exist and that it was just another metaphysical tension.

GC I bet there are very practical reasons also for the dark solution of the Museum of the Cultures of the Mediterranean in Marseille (MuCEM).

RR Yes, mainly the exposure to strong winds, sea spray and salt. This building needs no maintenance. It is made of an exceptionally dense concrete, almost without porosity.

GC The MuCEM's brise-soleil seems to behave in very different ways, according to the observer's positions and to light conditions.

RR Caravaggio, this great perverse aesthete, did understand the use of darkness: by sacralising the periphery, he densified the message of the centre. The MuCEM frames my own anxiety about the landscape.

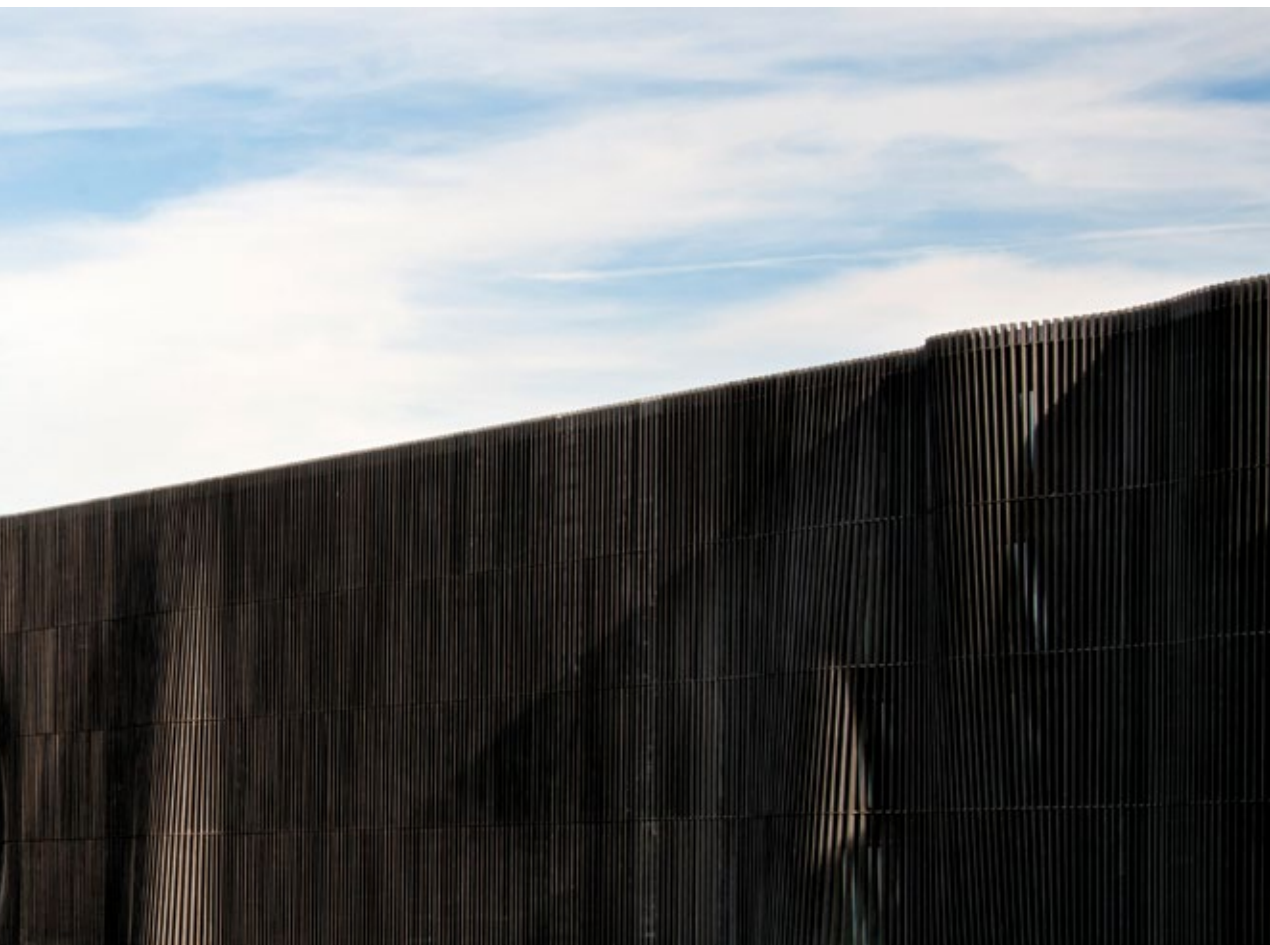
GC Its black lace filters the violent light of the Mediterranean by framing different views. Seen from outside, it recalls appealing transparencies. Is there any erotic intentions in their teasing play with vision?

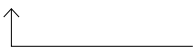


Rudy Ricciotti,
Centre
Chorégraphique
National, Aix en
Provence, 1999.
Photo Jean Claude
Carbonne.



Rudy Ricciotti,
ITER Headquarters,
Cadarache, 2007.
Photo Lisa
Ricciotti.





Rudy Ricciotti,
Museum of the
Cultures of the
Mediterranean,
Marseille, 2013.
Photo Lisa
Ricciotti.

- RR** Yes, it is done so that citizens masturbate all together behind the 'lace' by becoming aware of their mystical destinies.
- GC** One of the projects that struck me the most in your exhibition at the Palais de Chaillot in Paris was the ITER headquarters, especially its black striated sunshade's reaction to light. However, this building is part of a research centre for nuclear fusion. Does its darkness convey secrecy (or menace)?
- RR** It is a paranoid building funded by many countries (including Italy). It houses engineers who will try to get the temperature of a star. It already feels guilty about the upcoming planetary ecological disaster when they manage to reproduce the sun. Therefore, you have understood the whole thing: they are going to fuck everything up, I'm sure. A stream of magma will pierce the earth's crust; it will explode and fall back on Rome. It's a guaranteed catastrophe... A real Chinese syndrome.
- GC** However, it seems to benefit from the dialogue with the natural landscape.
- RR** Thank you for your blessing, but I do not belong to the family of fools or fascist ecologists. The artefact is the answer... to nature; not the blowjob of nature.
- GC** Are your black hues always intrinsic to the construction matter?
- RR** Concrete painting is pornography. The dye I use for black is dry ink and, for the white, goat's sperm. For grey, I use the brains of North Korean political prisoners.
- GC** On the other hand, this sequence of black buildings displays a tendency towards dematerialization, from the almost impenetrable concrete box to a sort of veil made of thin slats...
- RR** If you say so... My focus is rather on research and development. Plasticity and red wine. Revolution and sadism. Love and reason. Sex and existential difficulty. Citizenship and sardines! Anyway, you see the thing. I would add that the metaphysical horizon of the Mediterranean forces us to excess in order to avoid sinking into architectural sympathy. We must refuse the exile of beauty. Excess is a way of participating in this refusal. Being and having an attitude is the real necessity. No matter the colour... But black is always very graphic and very nervous.