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A New Era of Design

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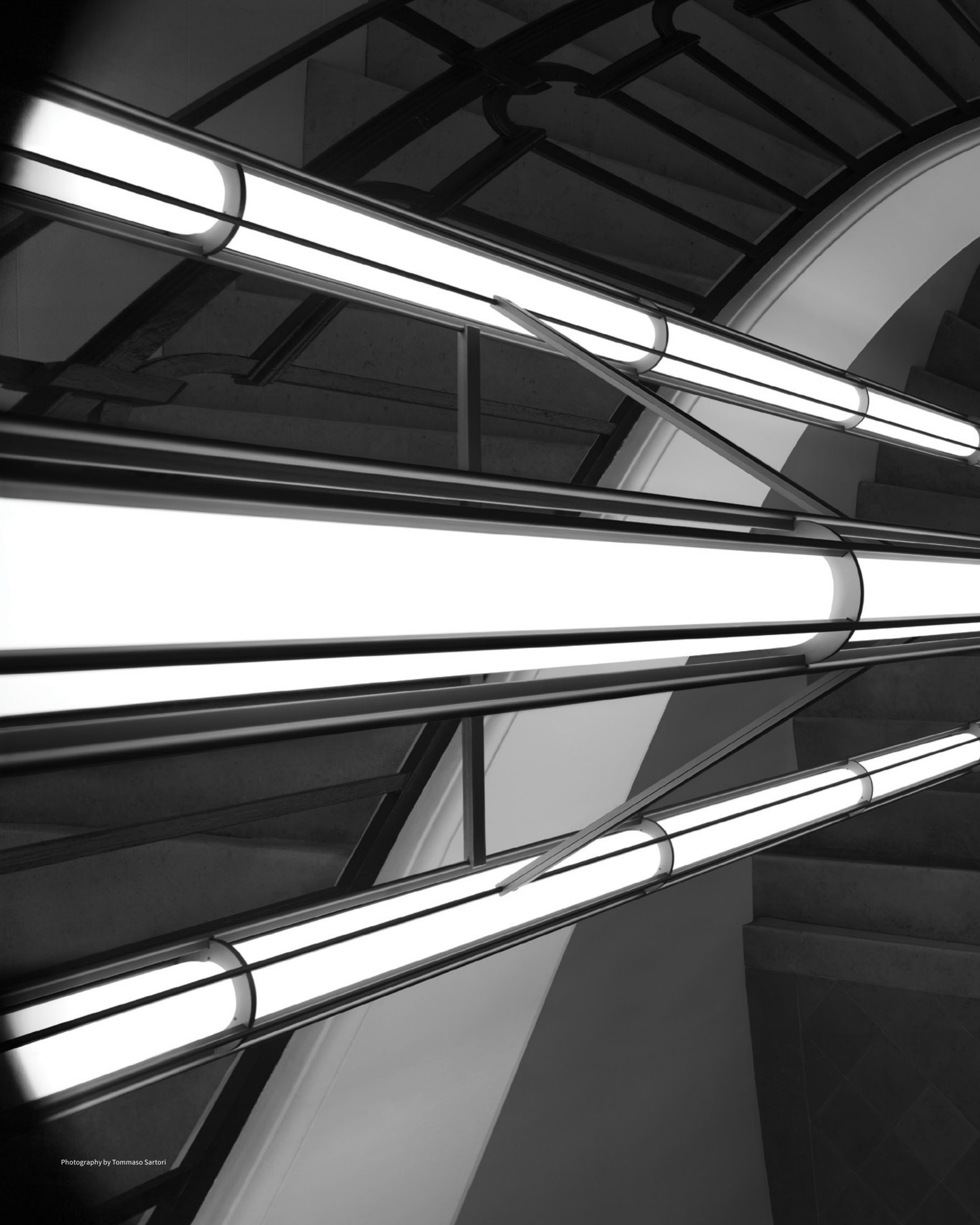
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# A contemporary legacy

The opening of the Bourse de Commerce – Collection Pinault, under the guidance of Tadao Ando and the Bourellac Brothers, marks a new era for contemporary art in Paris

WORDS BY CYRIL ZAMMIT



Photography by Tommaso Sartori

A new gem has been added to the cultural crown of Paris and it is none other than the Bourse de Commerce – Collection Pinault. Set in a historical building in the heart of the city, this new destination has been carefully planned over the course of three years to preserve the stunning legacy of its 400-year history. Now, it is projected into the world of contemporary art.

And because all good things come to those who wait, the postponed opening, which finally happened last month, coincided with the reopening of all cultural venues across France.

“For years, I have longed to be able to show my collection in Paris, the city I love. This is why the inauguration of the Bourse de Commerce – Collection Pinault is of such special and symbolic importance for me. Paris is not only the city of passion; first and foremost, it is the natural home of artists, of their creative genius and their beliefs.”

With these words, art collector François Pinault expresses his vision. The man behind the driving success of luxury brands such as Gucci, Balenciaga, Yves Saint Laurent, Boucheron and others is also the patron who gifted the Palazzo Grassi and Punta della Dogana to art-lovers in Venice. Having been on a quest for the perfect Paris location since 2006, he was refused a former Renault car production plant on an island on the river Seine before being contacted by the Mayor of Paris to evaluate the possibility of taking over the city's former Bourse de Commerce, the Parisian home of an incredible collection of over 10,000 works by 380 artists, from 1960 until today.

It took more than three years to reimagine its interior and immediate surroundings, which have been realised through the combined talents of Japanese architect Tadao Ando, and Lucie Niney and Thibaut Marca of the NeM agency and Pierre-Antoine Gatier.

The immediate surroundings of the building were designed by Ronan and Erwan Bouroullec, who have developed the forecourt of the building opposite its entrance portico, which opens onto the Rue du Louvre. Within this perimeter, the designers had to signpost, both elegantly and effectively, the presence of a new venue, while allowing walkers to stroll freely and rest for a moment. Their goal was to create a signal that a new venue was open. ▶▶






Photography by Patrick Tourneboeuf



Photography by Patrick Tourneboeuf



Photography by Marc Domage



It was also necessary to make the space comfortable by protecting it from the flow of the street; this was done by creating seating using simple forms and materials that are both robust and elegant, while leaving room for circulation and the feeling of being present in the space. As a response, the Bouroullec brothers created a system based on tubular benches made of aluminium bronze – a corrosion and wear-resistant copper-aluminium alloy that possesses the same appearance as bronze and copper. They assembled horizontal and vertical lines by means of ‘ball-and-socket’ forms and legs. The tubes are laid in a curve, horizontally, becoming benches that outline the circularity of the street around the Bourse de Commerce; they then rise to become poles carrying banners and signals. Benches and masts are connected by reclining boulders, which can be climbed, leaned on or used as seating. The brothers wanted a delicate presence to glorify this building; there isn’t much that is needed, except for a few elements of great quality.

Once you push the doors inside, you are suddenly hypnotised by the proportions of the building and its circular shape. In 2015, during a first visit to Paris after a gap of nine years, Ando met with Pinault.

“He suddenly asked me whether I could design a project for him that he was planning in Paris. That project was the redesign of the Bourse de Commerce. Before I knew it, the key members of his project team had assembled in the room. I was stunned by his unexpected request, but I accepted it on the spot.” It became Ando’s largest project in France.

On site, the architect has inserted a 29-metre-wide cylindrical

space, bound by a nine-metre-high concrete wall, into the circular building’s central rotunda. The cylinder will house an exhibition space on the ground floor, with an auditorium beneath it.

Additionally, on the outside, a circulation space has been created in the gap between the concrete wall and the internal façade that was designed by Henri Blondel at the end of the 19th century. Staircases provide access to the top of the cylinder, where a circular walkway is located. The frescoes (140 metres long by 10 metres high) overhead act as the culmination of this sequence of spaces. A team of 24 restorers worked for six months to return it to its former splendour.

Other architectural treasures include a glass cupola from the 19th century, a hidden former engine room and a brand-new restaurant by Michelin-acclaimed chefs Michel and Sébastien Bras on the 2nd floor, overlooking Les Halles and the Pompidou Centre.

Walking around the building, the discreet but beautiful furnishings are signed by the Bouroullec brothers as well as the zenithal light from the cupola, where the French designers added new features, specially developed with Flos Bespoke.

In the entrance hall, the horizontal light welcomes visitors, its interlocking structure composed of tubular elements of Murano glass and aluminium (each measuring six metres), which are parallelly positioned. This installation is suspended from the ceiling above the entrance, in a group of five tubes.

Close to this, a striking chandelier follows in a straight line the curves of the staircase, like a point of gravitation where light dialogues with the architecture. 