

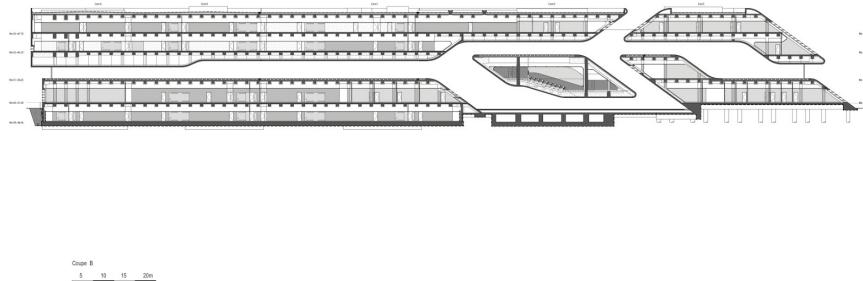
# Zaha Hadid Architects in Montpellier, France

2012-11-02



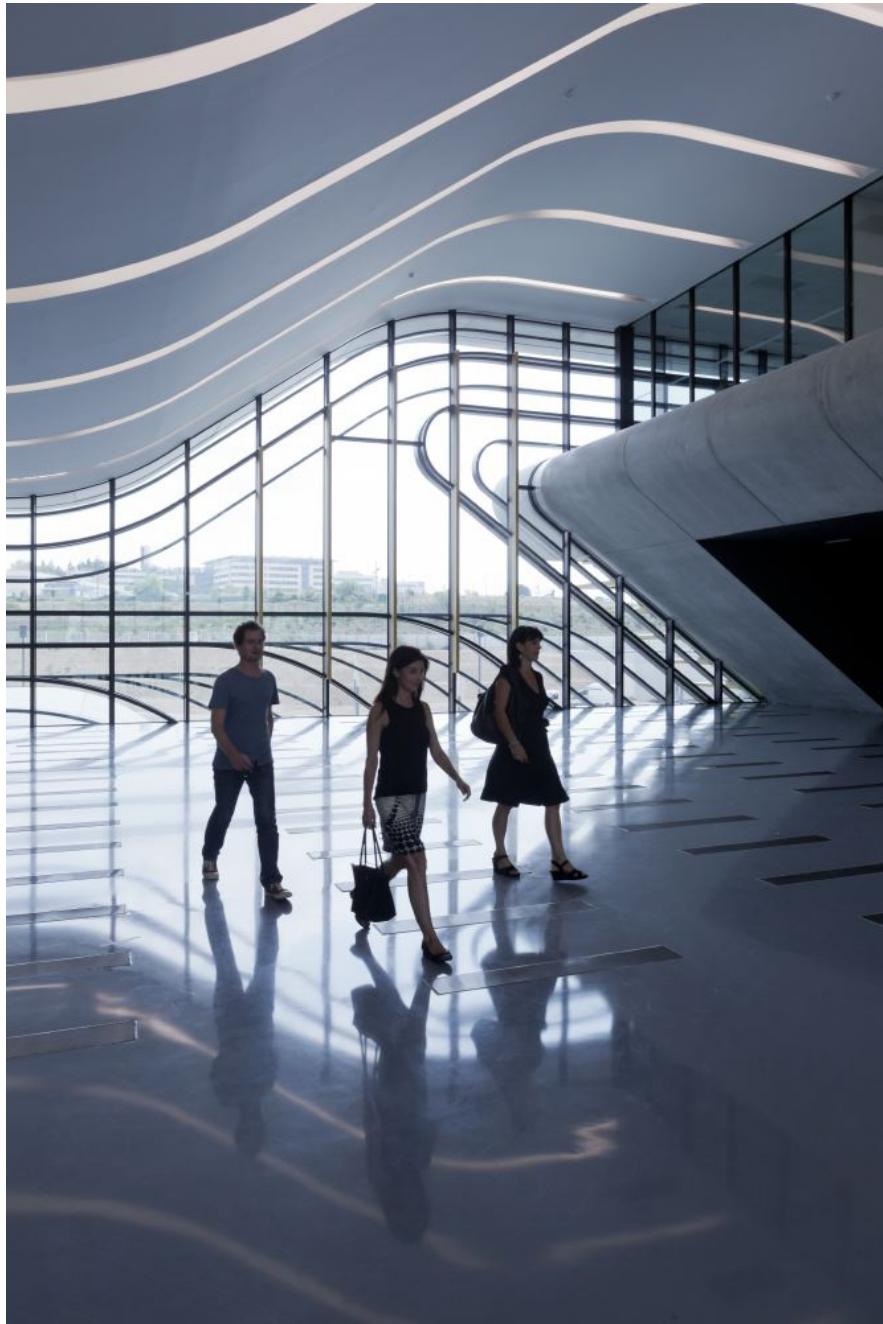
[Zaha Hadid](#) designed the new [pierresvives](#) building. Photo: Hélène Binet

The [pierresvives](#) building, in Montpellier, France, is the new home of three institutions for the department de l'Hérault: the archive, the library, and the sports office. Designed by [Zaha Hadid Architects](#), the four-story building is clad in concrete and glass, with horizontal gold-colored fins highlighting portions of the glazing.

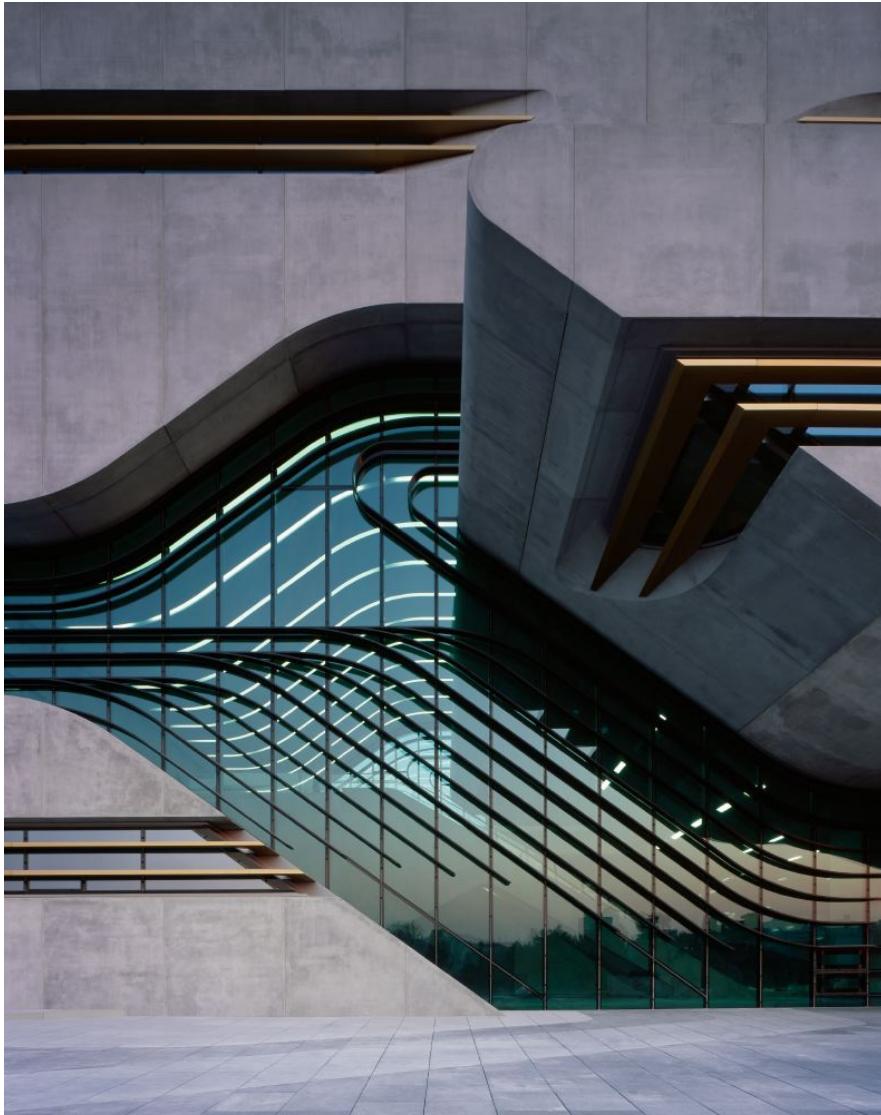


*pierresvives* section drawing looking east. Image: Zaha Hadid Architects

The 35,000-square-meter (376,000-square-foot) building is clearly perceived from a distance as a single structure, and from close up, three parts can be discerned in the facade. Dynamic ribbons of glazing, detailed with Hadid's iconic branching-lines motif, serve to separate portions of the facade, which is predominantly finished in concrete. This glazing is expressive of major circulation elements, including corridors and atriums, and plays some role in suggesting boundaries between the three major pieces.

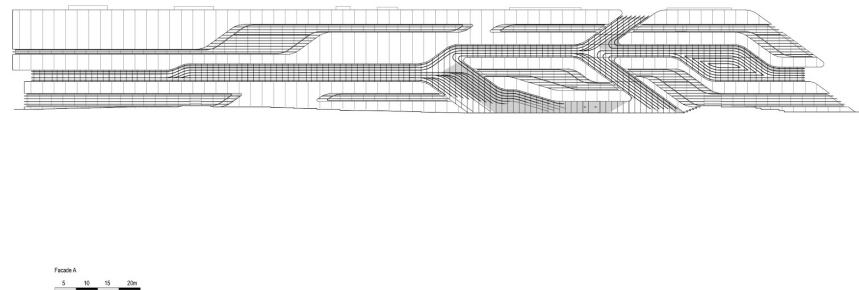


*An upper-floor lobby inside the pierresvives building, near the auditorium volume. Photo: Iwan Baan*  
Hadid uses the metaphor of a tree laying on its side to describe how the facade expresses the building's programmatic disposition, and this is where the branching lines in the glazing help to reinforce the comparison.



*The glazed entry lobby facade. Photo: Hélène Binet*

The archives are located toward its northern end, where the facade is more solid and trunk-like; this piece occupies about half of the building's length. Next comes the library, near where the porosity of the facade begins to increase as a horizontal ribbon of the glazing branches out. And near the building's southern end, where glass surfaces dominate the facade in more small pieces, are the offices for the sports department.



*West elevation drawing. Image: Zaha Hadid Architects*

Above ground level, the three functions of the pierresvives building remain strictly separate.

An auditorium and smaller meeting rooms are expressed within a rounded parallelogram on the western facade. Cantilevered a substantial distance over the main entrance, this multistory volume is connects on three sides, as well as above and below by lobbies, atriums, and other circulation areas.



*The cantilevered auditorium volume shelters the building entry. Photo: Iwan Baan*

Another division within the building is that of public and private spaces. Public areas are concentrated on the building's long western entry facade, and private spaces are positioned to the east.

The building has a heavy cast-in-place concrete structural system, built entirely on concrete pilings, that in its northern half supports the archive's storage loads of up to 1.5 tons per square meter (280 pounds per square foot). Steel trusses were used to support long spans above the entry hall. Precast concrete panels are used on both the facade and throughout the interior.

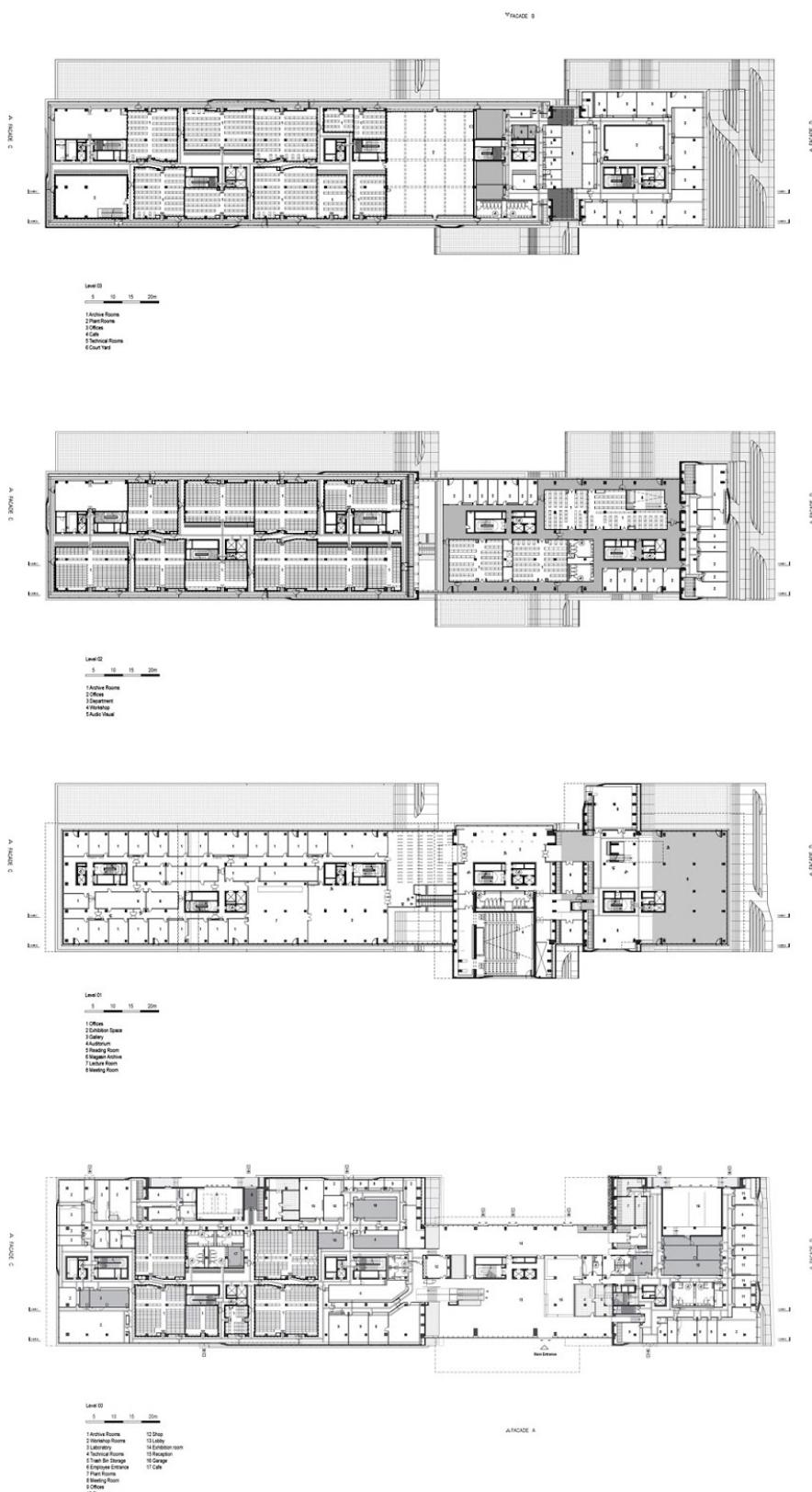
Arup reports that a total of 1,153 concrete precast panels were created for the building. Of that number, 1,018 panels, in 833 distinct types, were used in the construction of the facade. Thanks to variations in panel dimensions and thickness, each panel weighs between 5 and 18 metric tonnes (between 5.5 and 20 U.S. tons).



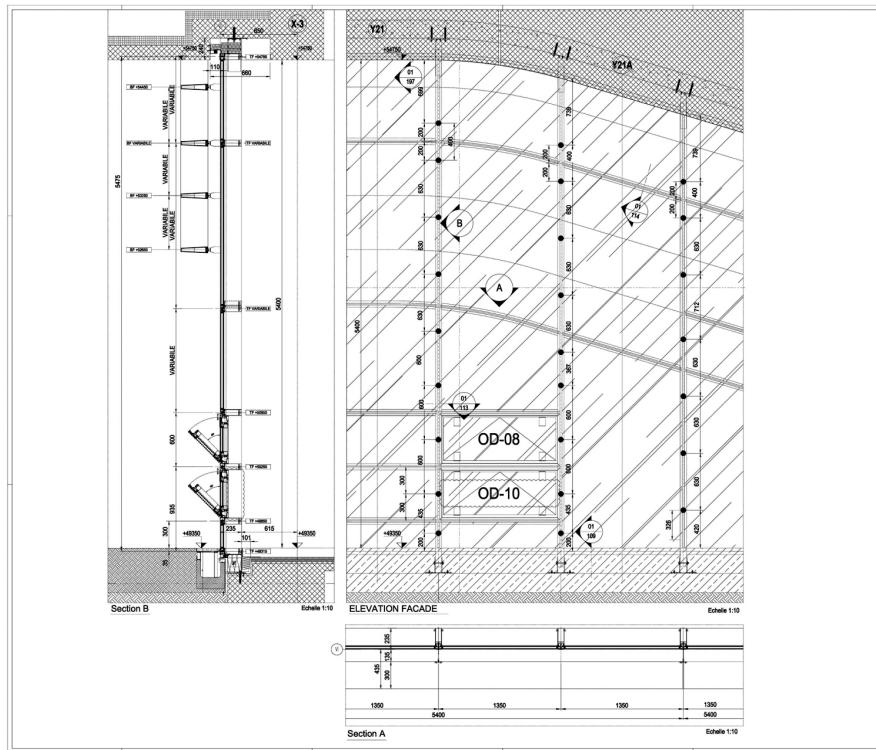
*Over 1,000 concrete panels comprise the facades of pierresvives Photo: Hélène Binet*

## Project Credits

- **Architect:** [Zaha Hadid Architects](#)
- **Architectural Design:** [Zaha Hadid](#)
- **Project Architect:** Stephane Hof
- **Project Team:** Joris Pauwels Philipp Vogt Rafael Portillo Jaime Serra Renata Dantas Melissa Fukumoto Jens Borstelman Thomas Vietzke Patrik Schumacher Kane Yanegawa Loreto Flores Edgar Payan Lisamarie Villegas Ambia Karouko Ogawa Stella Nikolakaki Hon Kong Chee Caroline Andersen Judith Reitz Olivier Ottevaere Achim Gergen Daniel Baerlecken Yosuke Hayano Martin Henn Rafael Schmidt Daniel Gospodinov Kia Larsdotter Jasmina Malanovic Ahmad Sukkar Ghita Skalli Elena Perez Andrea B. Caste Lisa Cholmondeley Douglas Chew Larissa Henke Steven Hatzellis Jesse Chima Adriano De Giannis Simon Kim Stephane Carnuccini Samer Chamoun Ram Ahronov Ross Langdon Ivan Valdez Yacira Blanco Marta Rodriguez Leonardo Garcia Sevil Yazici Hussam Chakouf Marie-Perrine Placais Monica Noguero Naomi Fritz Stephanie Chaltiel
- **Local Architects**
  - **Design Phase:** Blue Tango
  - **Execution Phase:** Chabanne et Partenaires
- **Structural Engineer:** Ove Arup & Partners
- **Services Engineers:** Ove Arup & Partners (Concept Design) & GECIngenierie
- **Acoustics:** Rouch Acoustique Nicolas Albaric
- **Cost:** Gec LR, Ivica Knezovic
- **General Contractor:** Vinci Construction (Nanterre)



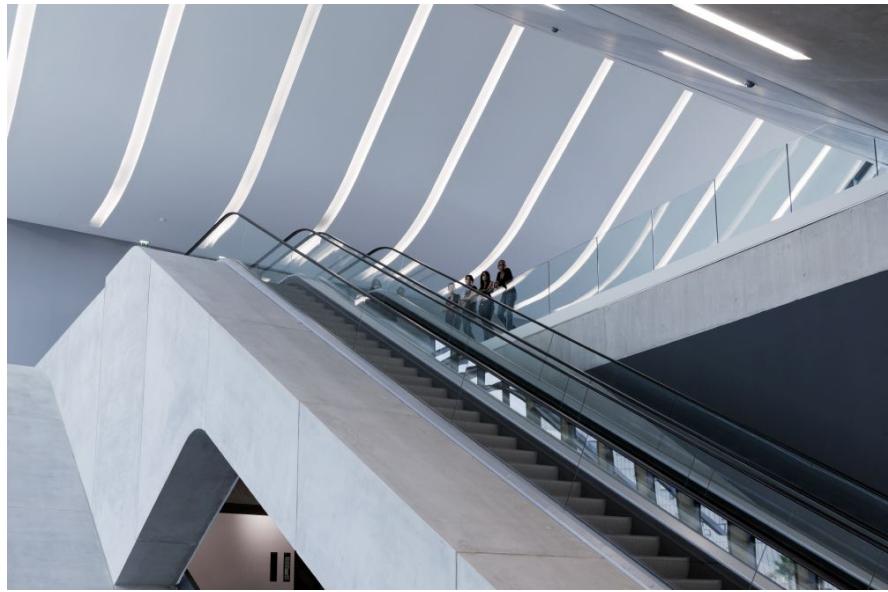
*Floor plan drawings. Image: Zaha Hadid Architects*



*Detail wall section, plan, and elevation at the front wall of the entry lobby. Image: Zaha Hadid Architects*



*Second-floor escalator landing near the library. Photo: Iwan Baan*



*Looking up from the lobby. Photo: Iwan Baan*



*The concrete auditorium volume projects through the glazed facade. Photo: Hélène Binet*

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Source: Architecture Week People & Places Blog