**SCIENCE CENTRE, WOLFSBURG, GERMANY**

**ARCHITECT**

ZAHRA HADID

The principal success of this building lies in the consistent quality of internal and external environments; even the subterranean car park expresses the building’s solidity right to its core. All three environments extend dynamic new landscapes that encourage free circulation and the right to roam, controlling vistas and views along the way; either beneath the building to connect industrial north and cultural south, or from within through a series of specifically shaped openings that take on eccentric curves as they slice through the building’s distorted structure. The manner in which the concrete form dramatically morphs to express the notion of continuity is an unprecedented success; when the design rationale deviates from this discipline the building does on occasion lose its conceptual clarity, as is the case with the preferred concrete panels on the south elevation, and where a number of the internalised cones lose their robust self-finished surface in place of a traditional plaster finish. In most cases, however, the building maintains its robust integrity, which is a significant achievement considering the lacklustre quality of most black box exhibition spaces; a curse that this building radically avoids. Roofing the building, however, was always going to be conceptually problematic, and the chosen method has attracted the most significant criticisms: being at best functional (succeeding in resolving distorted geometries, 50m spans, and routing the building’s principal services), and at worst imposing, oppressive and far from cutting edge.

With over 100,000 visitors in the first four months, Phano has been extremely well received, and is well on the way to surpassing the annual target of 180,000 visitors. As the realisation of many late twentieth-century Hadid research projects, it certainly deserves recognition as one of the twenty-first century’s first truly ground breaking buildings, taking its place alongside the work of Scharoun and Aalto on Wolfsburg’s prestigious promenade architecture. ROB GREGORY

**Architects**

Zaha Hadid Architects with Meyer & Brein

**Structural Engineer**

Adam Carr-Taylor with Ingenieurbüro Takan Freytag Lutz

**Exhibition Designers**

Aeon Associates, San Francisco

**Photographs**

Dennis Gilbert/VIEW