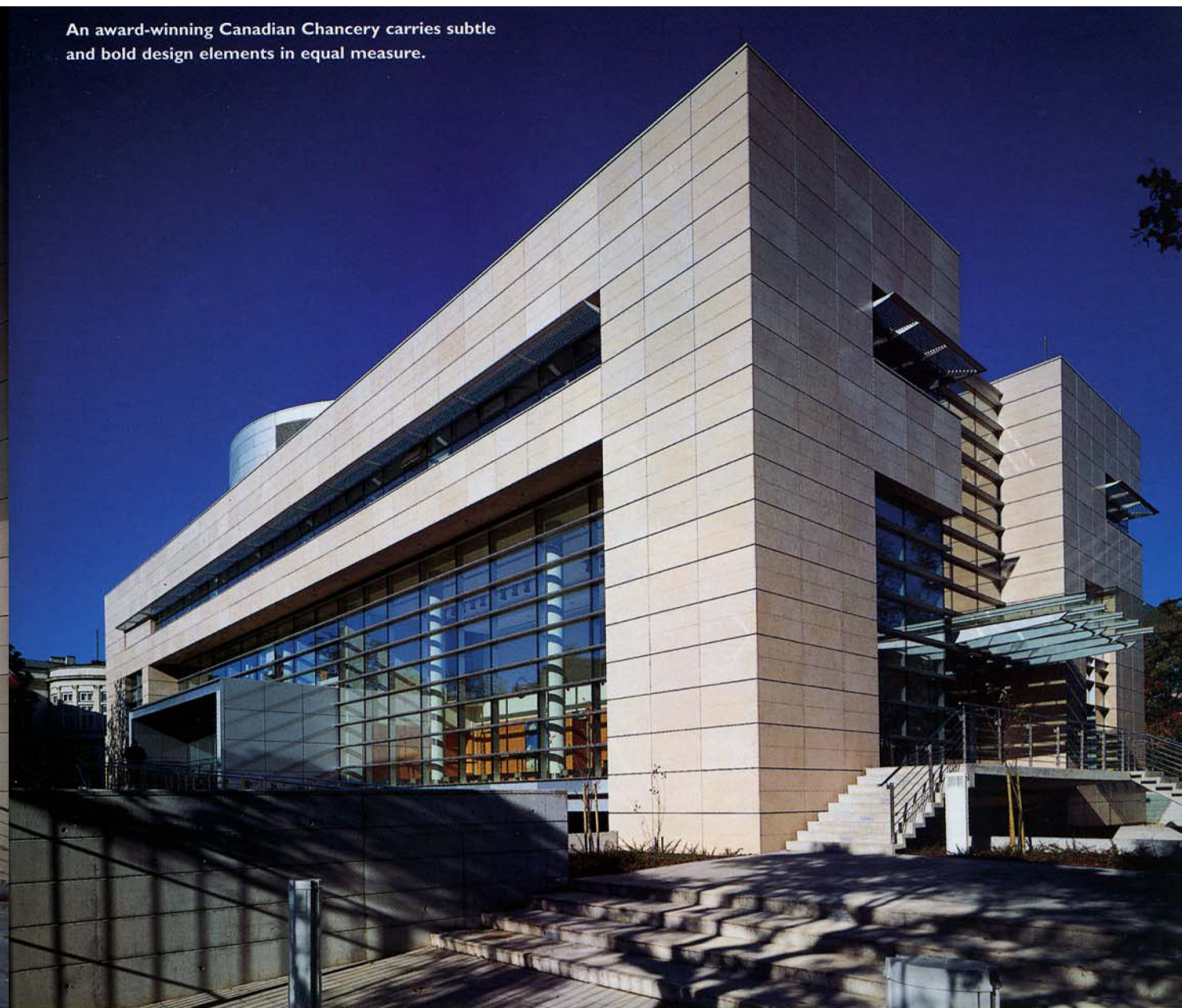


A New Life



An award-winning Canadian Chancery carries subtle and bold design elements in equal measure.



The new Canadian Chancery in Poland is situated in Warsaw's embassy district and has been officially open since October 2001. It is in close proximity to the Parliament building and surrounded by city parks, the French Embassy's compound and 18th century buildings. Its mid-block location fronts Piekna Street with exposure to Matejki Street to the north. On this side, a small city-owned parcel of land delineates the Chancery boundary with a landscaped green space and two driveways that provide vehicular access to the Chancery. The Chancery was developed with a combination of asphalt surfaces, unit paving in areas of pedestrian access, and "soft landscaping" consisting of extant mature trees, new flowering trees, sod and various types of ground-cover. Canadian indigenous plants like prairie grass, and large boulders, emblematic of the Canadian Shield, contribute to the architectural expression of Canada as a country. To this end, simple, modern and transparent design elements seemed the most appropriate architectural media. Materials include French limestone cladding, anodized aluminum and clear glass, while exterior cladding is stone veneer with pre-finished three-millimetre

aluminum panels and custom-designed curtainwall glazing.

The new building replaces a 36-year-old two-storey structure that was designed by Smith Carter architects and then substantially demolished to make way for the new Chancery. Some of the remnants of the original were left intact, including the perimeter foundation wall, footings, basement level structural elements and an existing stairwell between the ground floor and the basement; these were incorporated into the new design.

The existing ground floor has been elevated almost two metres above the adjacent grade to accommodate handicapped ramps which have been designed as a continuum of the building and underscore the horizontality of the whole composition. Stairs on both sides of the building have been detached from it, but connect to it with bridges. The landscaped area below the bridges contain dry riverbed landscaping integrated with the building.

The consular entrance on Matejki Street is accentuated with a large cantilevered portion of the second floor, and also serves as a canopy. The immigration entrance is on the opposite side of the building,

Above left: a large cantilevered portion of the second floor serving as a canopy juts out on the Chancery's Matejki Street consular entrance. Above: the walkout to the terrace, seen from Piekna Street.

echoing the consular entrance and resolved in a more subdued form. Organizing elements providing some compositional directive include the interior circulation stair and the building's main access. The circular movement of the entrance is reflected in the circular movement around the consular three-storey high atrium and the circular mechanical penthouse which responds to the circular forms of the baroque building to the west as well as the Parliament building's circular council chamber nearby. A skylight tops the three-storey atrium as a continuation of the consular lobby. A double-height room serves as an exhibition space and an area for receptions near the immigration entrance. Exposed to Piekna Street, it contains a set of pivot doors which allow inclusion of the waiting area, effectively making it larger. The room also provides a walk-out to the Chancery's gardens, giving

a view of the Parliament building. Passersby on the street can view activity inside, while the double-height back wall is a canvas for large graphics that advertise Canada.

The building has garnered Best Building of the Year by *Polish Business News* in its survey, "Best and Worst Buildings of 2001." In addition, the Chancery received the Mayor of Warsaw Award for the best building in 2001 in the institutional category and the Association of Polish Architects' Award of the Year in 2001. **NM**

Client: Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade
Architect team: Voytek Gorczynski (design and project architect), Jay Bigelow, Hady Lotfy, Paul Marcoccia, Natasha Djordjevic, Kwang Kim, Rosmal Sereviratne
Structural: Quinn Dressel Associates
Mechanical: Hidi Rae Associates

Electrical: Mulvey & Banani International
Landscape: Ferris and Quinn Associates
Interiors: Voytek Gorczynski
Contractor: Billinger and Berger Polska
Area: 3721 m²
Budget: \$11 million
Completion: October 2001
Photography: Wojciech Krynski

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