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Court Orders Perm Museum to Leave Hazardous Building

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The Leninsky Regional Court in Perm has ordered the PERMM Museum of Contemporary Art to leave its current structure, the landmark Perm riverboat terminal, due to the hazardous condition of the building.

"At present, we are continuing to operate ... We are also looking for alternate locations to which we could move," PERMM press secretary Tatyana Berger said, Itar-Tass reported.

The court case arose earlier this fall, when the Leninsky Regional Prosecutor General's Office conducted an inspection of the museum and concluded that the former riverboat terminal in which the museum was located was in a hazardous condition and was a danger to visitors.

The building was originally constructed in 1940 by architect Alexander Grinberg and served as a river terminal until the '90s when the decline in riverboat use lead to its closure. The structure was partially used for commercial purposes and then closed entirely,

and gradually deteriorated.

In 2010, the PERMM Museum of Contemporary Art was founded by prominent Moscow gallery owner Marat Guelman and moved into the landmark building, which saw some minimal repairs.

The museum was Guelman's first foray into promoting contemporary art outside of Moscow, a mission he later continued by creating the TverCA Contemporary Art Center in Tver, also in a former riverboat terminal.

Guelman's efforts outside of Moscow have been rocky going — the TverCA center closed in 2012 after the building was found to be in a hazardous condition and the center was unable to raise the 22 million rubles ($669,328) necessary for repairs. The TverCA center suffered from the beginning from a lack of funding and support from the local government.

The PERMM museum has had considerably more success and found support with local authorities, who fired Guelman from his position as director of the museum in June, declining to give an explanation.

Most observers point to the controversy surrounding the exhibit of Krasnodar artist Vasily Slonov's exhibit "Welcome! Sochi 2014" as the main grounds for the firing — the artist's obscene images and mockery of the upcoming Sochi games led local authorities to seek more oversight over the museum.

Now, the decision that the museum's current location is nonviable will result in the second major shift in the past year, after Guelman's departure, if the museum is forced to move. Due to the museum's strong support from government and private individuals, it seems certain that PERMM will not suffer the same fate as the TverCA center, regardless of the loss of the museum's current home.

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