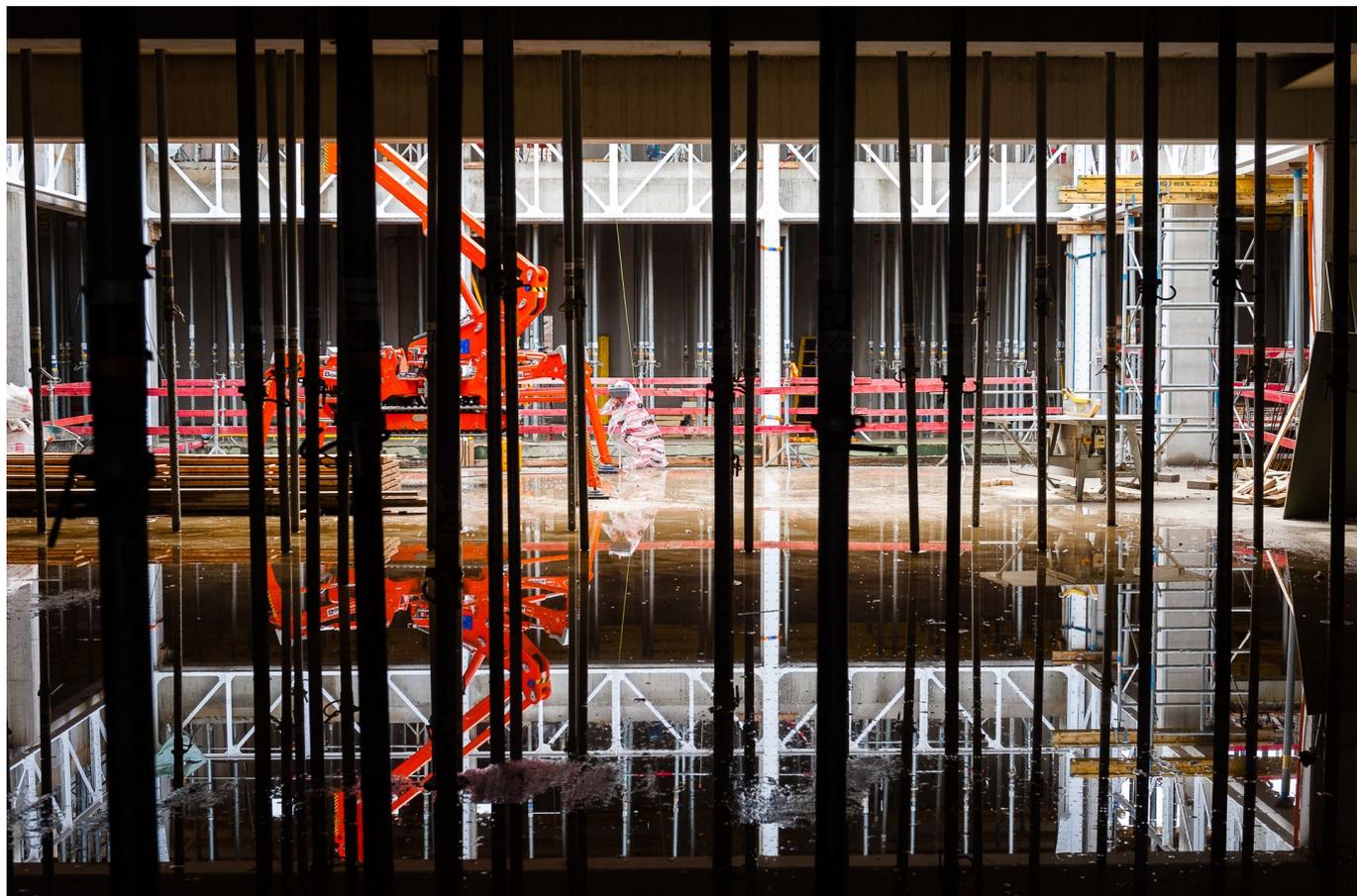


CHAUSSÉE D'IXELLES 63 2017 - 2018

Conversion and extension of an existing retail complex into housing, retail and offices
chaussée d'ixelles in ixelles



Site

Chaussée d'ixelles, 63-65 and rue du Berger
20 1050 Brussels

Services engineer

FTI

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Client

Redevco Belgium

Contractor

Amart

Structural engineer

Setesco

Budget

8 500 000 EUR htva

The CHAUSSÉE D'IXELLES was once one of Brussels' busiest high streets, attracting bustling crowds, big names in retail, and the real estate investors that come flocking with them. At the turn of the 20th century, large commercial projects had already started to squeeze themselves into the tightly built urban fabric, with mixed results. In the 1920's PRIBA developers (once part of the GB-INNOVATION group) secured a large-sized plot comfortably close to the Porte de Namur, and though the design barely fit into the complex site, the result was grand. Plans and sections of the original project unearthed by architectesassoc+ reveal the spatial and structural efforts made a century ago, resulting in a fluid, light-filled, (almost) column-less space fit for a wide array of commercial activities. So from department store to car-dealer then on to sportswear, the structure served and survived them all.

Until recently : for at least the last decade, big names have been fleeing the area, and the once busy neighborhood has significantly slowed down.

PRIMARK's arrival here, ushered in by client REDEVCO, should help change that. But the brand's strong presence and heavy-handed marketing strategies, leading to uncompromising esthetics, have had to reconcile with Belgium's notably strict fire-safety laws. Indeed the CHAUSSEE D'IXELLES project integrates complex rehabilitation issues due to the historic wrought-iron structure covering most of the grand central hall, dutifully restored by the team of architects, engineers, and contractors. architectesassoc+ insisted on not just keeping the delicate trusses, but also on reintegrating the original skylights between them, unfortunately obliterated years ago. For PRIMARK investing the light-filled volume, this is a far cry from the sealed off boxes usually proposed. But the apertures create a newfound relationship between retail space and the outside world, modifying the humdrum shopping experience.

architectesassoc+ was keen on inserting housing where possible, filling in the voids between existing structures and retail with made-to-measure residential infill developed above and adjacent. Here again, natural light is the central theme: the sunny chaussée-side is reserved for south-facing housing, the gloomier side-street north reserved for goods and truck accesses. Well-oriented terraces are carved into existing rooftop forms, and extra volumes added in order to optimize existing space. Material choice echoes the delicate choices made a century ago: translucent U-shaped glass clads all new-build, minimalist white ironwork is used throughout, and detailing is purposefully low-key.

