RIVA 2014 - 2020

Construction of 139 flats, retail, public staircase and bicycle shelter in Brussels



Site
Quai de Willebroeck 23-26 1000 Brussels

Client
Extensa

Structural engineer
bST

Services engineer
Ingenium

Contractor
Van Laere

Budget
24.300.000 EUR htva

Acoustics
Venac

Bridge
Greisch, for Beliris

RIVA sits on the far edge of Brussels' Quartier Nord district. Stubbonly and since its genesis, the latter seems to have forgotten its toes touch water canal side : even the effervescent Tour&Taxis developments on the other side of the canal, just begging its neighbor to join them, hasn't yet convinced it to make the move. So this is what is at stake for RIVA, sitting in limbo between these two territories : getting the Quartier Nord to acknowledge and build relationships with its neighbors, qualify its watery edges, open up its borders, create conversations, in a nutshell jump.

The soon-to-come parks&plazas along both canal banks separating facing RIVA, replacing the existing warehouses, are a step in the right direction: the change of occupation proposed, from industrial to bucolic mode, is key, crucial and critical here.
So in fact the recently renamed Suzan Daniel bridge connecting our urban protagonists will simply materialize the longed-for leap, itself in fact triggered by the new activities proposed.
Logically, all public space on RIVA is designed to support the desired connection :
pedestrian-first landscaping inviting to stroll, clear definition of public-private divides, accessibility-conscious ramps, user-friendly material choice like wood and soft concrete, and generous steps built like benches for friendly conversations and sunset loitering.
Built forms cluster around the new public amenity, narrow and tense and protective at its bottleneck where the Bolivar Boulevard crashes in coming in from the North, and then wider, welcoming and laid-back when opening up towards the canal, sunset and Tours&Taxis horizon beyond. That sereneness, that slowing down, is what allows conversations to start to happen. An ample bicycle shelter wrapped in see-through timber slats articulates the plaza above with the quay-promenade almost a full floor below at canal level, complete with a timber roof delicately holed out to let flourish the large leafy trees planted inside. This is where neighbors meet, talk and connect.
Staggered 4 to 7-floor volumes frame the new bridge, variable in height in order to get maximum sunshine into RIVA's, and its neighbor's, housing units. Blocks are clearly positioned along the plaza's continuous alignments, with no undefined left-over terrain. Commercial functions on ground floors animate fringes, instilling informal social control of shared space. Above, apartments are mostly double-facing, with large terraces deviated in a double-height staggered pattern to ensure hours-long sunshine and canal views. This rhythmic modulation gives birth to a seemingly haphazard composition (when in fact not), animating facades clad in light-colored limestone. Soft-hued aluminium fixtures and frames are anodized in a warm shade, with glazed railing protecting occupants from the ever-present winds characterizing the canal zone.