NAMUR 59 2013 - 2018

Heavy refurbishment of an office building with commercial ground floor and rooftop extension on the rue de Namur in Brussels



Site
Rue de Namur, 59 1000 Brussels

Client
L.C.E.B.E.

Structural engineer
Setesco

Services engineer
Cenergie

Contractor
CIT BLATON

Budget
6 500 000 EUR htva

The Rue de Namur traces a long graceful curve through the royal quarter of Brussels, and in so doing gives rise to an animated succession of thriving restaurants and shops, fully embracing its role as connector between the upper and lower parts of Brussels. At the halfway mark on this vibrant axis, heavily sits number 59, a 1970s mastodon in unlikely and striking antithesis to the reigning ambiance : imposing and autistically ignoring all dialogue with its context.

Yet, its position is strategic : just at the top of the slope, thus resolutely materializing street articulation. Adding to this advantage its sound structure and generous volumes, the decision is made to refurbish the building, maintaining its role as purveyor of office space while reconnecting it with its environment. Also, the complete upgrade of the totality of the techniques, as well as the application of low-energy criteria (high-efficiency thermal insulation, airtight detailing, thermal inertia of the concrete, ...), and the replacement of front and back facades, allow the building to attain the desired energy efficiency.

Ground floor activities are re-associated with street life, making maximum use of the effects of transparency, illuminated by a small inner patio hollowed out through the existing structure ... fostering at side-walk level relationships between the outside world and inside activities.

Above, the 1970s brutalist skin morphs : inside, the existing timber imprints left from original concrete shuttering initiate play with a new prefabricated timber facade. Outside, the slim champagne-colored anodized plates, along with other ornamental elements and delicate detailing, constitute a reverent nod to the building's illustrious 19th century neighbors. Finally, the bow windows and full-height bay windows unequivocally connect with the world ... highlighting the intensity of the inside-out relationship.

The volumetry was unmistakably rounded off with a breathtaking rooftop extension, not unlike that marachino cherry atop one's favorite dessert ... pity city authorities rarely take dessert.