227 LOI 2006 - 2008

Heavy Refurbishment of a 1970s office building, including interior fit-out for the European Investment Bank rue de la Loi in Brussels.



Site
Rue de la Loi, 227 1000 Brussels

Client
Cofinimmo sa

Structural engineer
TPF Engineering

Services engineer
TPF Engineering

Contractor
Herpain Entreprises sa

Budget
4 200 000 EUR htva

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The city-center of Brussels is characterized by a great number of outdated office buildings erected some 30 / 40 years ago, many of which are still occupied despite dismal conditions, while others sit emptily awaiting new tenants. The Cofinimmo building is of the former sort. The client, having recognized the value of its stable tenants, insisted that all renovations be undertaken with the building occupied, with minimal disturbances to their activities. The logistics of such a project are obviously challenging.

Existing technical equipment and faÃ§ade envelopes proved obsolete, but the concrete structure quite sound. All parties realized that the back part of the ground floors lacked natural light, decidedly confirming a gloomy and unattractive image. So the logical steps taken are threefold : creating some kind of hole at lower levels in order to get light in deep, installing an outer envelope for protection from the heat and the cold, and providing new services (meeting new energy standards).

The visible result is a two-floor garden-side patio, up-to-date faÃ§ades, plus extension of the front faÃ§ades on the top two levels in order to re-establish street alignment while offering magnificent views out onto the Rondpoint Schuman. These levels are refurbished by the studio (with custom-designed timber partitioning) for the European Investment Bank.

The heavily-insulated skin endorses innovative techniques designed hand-in-hand with KYOTEC : timber-aluminum frame-cladding mounted on the existing concrete structure, eliminating de-facto all thermal bridges originally present. Loi227 is a relatively small project, but it integrates for the first time means (prefabrication, air-tightness, insulation, ...) that will later prove to be decisive, reaching passive standards in the studio's future projects. Design here has clearly benefited from Cofinimmo's open-mindedness, the result being a pertinent novel response to a brief none-the-less conditioned by a speculative office market in Brussels where rentals are half those common in Paris or London.