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Exit Longdoz

Design for an industrial building in Liège.

R Meurders (377822)

commission: Prof. ir. Hans Ruijsenaars (vz.), Prof. ir. Donald van Dansik, ir. Lex Kerssemakers en Pierre Hebbelinck.

This project impugns the exodus of industry from the contemporary city. It tries to give modern industry a place of its own. The objective is the mixed city in which a large variety of functions and scales coexist. Together they create a diverse urban environment. In my opinion, the ideal city is not a collection of themed neighborhoods. The ideal city is like patchwork, which can be patched over and over again.

The location is a 40.000 m², abandoned manufacturing area. It edges the Autoroute du Soleil, which runs straight through Liege. Partially I deliberately chose the plot because of its industrial past. This way the plot can use the build-up tolerance for industrial activities.

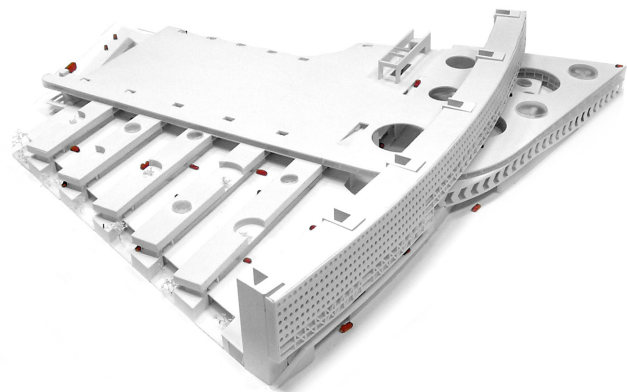
I have searched for an industrial program with a relatively low environment pressure and with a large demand for human resources. Furthermore I have analyzed the position of the plot in the agglomeration of Liege and I have looked at the limited plans of the local government. This led to the following mix of functions: A centre for local and small scale distribution, a production studio with an outdoor event space, a self-service workshop for cars, a hotel and finally housing and offices. I have analyzed and categorized the surrounding area in order to put all functions in place and to make them communicate with their surroundings on the basis of equality, while at the same time I maintained their own identity.

The result is a building, which on the waterside unfolds itself into a highway exit. This exit, which gave the building its name, leads into the interior circulation track in which the visitor will intuitively find his destination. A large and curved slab hovers above the circuit. It houses apartments and offices with shared facilities and it maintains the characteristic vertical section of the corridors of Liege. The hotel is placed outside the initial plot, wedged between two arms of the Autoroute. The recreational spaces of the hotel stretch out over the river tunnel and the swimming pool is situated on top of the tube. It drops with same pace as the tunnel. The largest contrast with the waterside façade is in Rue Armand Stouls. In this street the building scales down to the level of the individual house and transforms the street into a residential street. The large industrial spaces are placed in the heart of the building and Autobrico, the self-service workshop is placed in the back along Rue d'Harscamp. Here it brings back life in the deadly Street.

The roof unifies all the functions below and plays an important role in the design. The roof is, apart from the roof of the slab, completely accessible. It has two important levels. The lower level is on top of the low and light space and is used as a parking deck for the users of the building. The higher level roof is constructed to resist large

loads and it can change into an event deck. It belongs to the studio and meets the want of an outdoor décor in an urban context. Heavy materials are lifted onto the deck with a crane, while cars can access the deck from the internal circuit. This way the deck could also be used as an extra parking space.

Although the complete roof is accessible for the public, it does not belong to the public space. I took in mind the poor economic situation from which Liege is recovering and therefore I deliberately chose for a private development, which would be publicly accessible.



The outside of the building is almost completely clad with black, pigmented concrete. On one side this ironically confirms the rawness of the industry and on the other it makes the building more resistant for smog. The blackish concrete façade is accentuated with shiny metal and colorful graphics. They refer to a modern design and create an industrial appearance.

Despite its undoubtedly strong presence, the building does not want to be an icon for the modern industry. It also does not give in to nostalgic feelings in Liege. Instead it looks forward, and it gives trust to its surroundings, for which it never loses respect. The final design confirms my belief that industry and city can coexist.

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