

PRESS RELEASE

entrer:

**Five architectures in Belgium
at the Centre Wallonie-Bruxelles in Paris**
Exhibition hosted by Wallonie-Bruxelles Architectures (WBA)

From 5 November 2015 to 12 January 2016

► **Wednesday 4 November 2015**

Press preview at 4 p.m., by Audrey Contesse, exhibition curator
Vernissage from 6: to 8 p.m.

WBA presents five projects that reflect the diversity of Wallonia and Brussels' architectural output, waiting to be discovered as part of a visual and sound-enhanced perambulation.

Each of these projects, most of which are public facilities set up either within the city walls or away from the city, testifies to the efforts undertaken by architects and their clients and their eagerness to place architecture at the service of a better quality of life for citizens.

Five projects that change *prima facie* purposes and how they are perceived:

a reclaiming of urban spaces through the redevelopment of a brownfield site converted to suit a twofold cultural and commercial purpose, a heritage restoration project aimed at preserving the memory of works of art, the transformation of a public space, sports facilities in unison with the landscape in an exceptional setting as well as a private commission for a small pavilion intended to house and showcase works owned by a collector.

Exhibition curator Audrey Contesse is inviting photographer Maxime Delvaux and sound designer Christophe Rault to put forward their impressions of all five projects. Two of these impressions will be presented in the guise of a video and sound montage set to run independently, and setting off a collection of items gleaned and selected by the exhibition curator from each location and from the architectural practices to highlight the materiality and the pertinence of the projects.

CENTRE WALLONIE-BRUXELLES IN PARIS

THE PROJECTS:

THE ARTOTHÈQUE IN MONS, A CONVERTED FORMER CHAPEL,

architects: ***LEscaut + Atelier Gigogne architectures***

The artothèque, a facility for the storage and conservation of the heritage of the Town of Mons, has been billeted in the Chapel of the former Ursulines Convent, in a classical architectural style dating back to the early 18th century. During the Second World War, the chapel saw its interior defaced, but the architects have managed to transform this sorry condition (involving six concrete floors taking up too much room in the initial volume) into an opportunity, turning the chapel into a conservation site for works of art, in a building of considerable heritage value.

In doing so, they created a vertical fault that opens out across the height and length of the nave by which all three dimensions of the chapel's original interior space are tied together, and into which the new volume holding the artefacts is inserted.

Members of the public are welcomed in the ground floor rooms and at the documentation centre on the first floor, while the three other entities - restoration, management and logistics, spread across six levels - are the reserve of the scientific staff.

Inside the hall, which is the chapel's reception room, the layout juxtaposes digital and virtual consultation technologies and display cabinets that hold physical works of art, which are collection samples.

The fault through which the natural daylight comes flooding in lends added lustre to the old building as well as the new function it now serves, highlighting the string of closed floors that contain the thousands of items kept at the artothèque.

ADEPS SPORTS CENTRE LA FRAINEUSE IN SPA,

architects: ***Baukunst***

The sports centre - multi-purpose hall, administration, refectory, cafeteria, etc. - is embedded in the site and the local area, in a landscape whose topography proved decisive to the project design.

As a self-reliant structure, the building's architecture is intimately entwined with the site's infrastructural quality, based on the construction of retaining walls with a single roof that contrast with the surrounding landscape.

The central and symbolic figure of the site is the "Château de La Fraineuse", a 19th century pastiche of the Petit Trianon at Versailles, and listed a heritage site by Belgium's *Monuments et Sites*. By way of a common bedrock, the project nurtures a dialogue between the past and the present with the château in a way that transcends the notion of a divisive modernity.

The expanses of outside covered areas allow the building to be used for a variety of different purposes, whilst ensuring a permeability between the activities. The central patio that opens out into the sky serves as a central gathering area for the site as a whole, around which the functional programme revolves.

A technical execution that is unique in Belgium - with insulating monolithic concrete that ensures the construction will enjoy a very long service life while boasting high thermal inertia - has been adopted for the main walls.

INTERLAC, CONVERSION OF A DAIRY FARM INTO A CULTURAL AND COMMERCIAL COMPLEX IN DISON, architects: ***Baumans-Deffet***

The project, the conversion of a former dairy farm into a multi-purpose cultural complex with trading premises, is situated on a brownfield site that is currently in the throes of redevelopment but whose fate remained uncertain for a long time. After eight years of little to no interest shown in the site, the Town of Dison sought to lend shape to a project that would qualify for a grant from the European Structural Funds, and to build a new "thematic district" that would also be part of the town.

Interlac is an urban regeneration project that delivers social and cultural added value for the local and regional population. It ensures landscape continuity, creates public spaces, reconstructs an urban connection between the towns of Verviers and Dison and serves as a link between the town centre and the preserved old factory, with housing units completing the existing block.

The industrial building features a rich palette of new functions - as a cultural centre, the home base for the local television broadcasting station, a performing arts venue, a hall that will host trade fairs and exhibitions, alongside recording studios and a cafeteria. This metamorphosis has spawned a hub that clusters media, communication, economic activities and culture in an area with a hard hit socioeconomic profile and acting as a vector of redevelopment and social cohesion.

The unique approach adopted hovers between urban and architectural challenges, between private and public, between anticipation and permanent adjustment.

Phase 2 of the Interlac project -recently completed with a local television broadcasting station, performing arts venue and recording studios, brasserie and events site - is the pinnacle of a process that took fifteen years, during which the architects sought to bring together and reconcile what are basically the commercial driving forces of the private promoter of the site with non-commercially inspired purposes so as to realign all economic, social, environmental and cultural synergies.

M GARDEN, THE PAVILION OF A PRIVATE COLLECTOR IN RENAIX, architects: ***Vers.A***

The "M" pavilion, which was built for an art collector and his wife with a passion for cooking, was designed as an exhibition space that would be complementary to the existing villa, which turned out to be too small to properly exhibit all the works of art held in the private collection.

The site, a plateau overlooking the vast landscape of the Flemish Ardennes, flanked by a small woodland area below is remarkable.

The project is embedded with a sense of humbleness in the face of such an environment, with a squat low building with dark exterior walls in stained timber behind the thick foliage of the surrounding vegetation. The pavilion toys around with the ambivalence between the coarse and rugged outer facade and the refined and precious interior.

The two entities that make up the project- an exhibition room and a professional kitchen-workshop - are separated, pivoting around each other, marking the entrance and making room for a conservatory. This "twist" lends a formal feel to the whole whilst meeting the programming constraints.

PLACE OF LA CAGE-AUX-OURS IN BRUSSELS, PUBLIC SPACE DEVELOPMENT, architects: ***M-SA***

For the past twenty years, the Brussels Region has been working to implement street and district regeneration schemes, referred to as "district contracts". These set out to improve the living environment in a joint effort with local residents and professionals who have signed up to a demanding process.

This is the background against which the emblematic project of the Navez-Portaels district contract was rolled out, which sought to redevelop place Eugène Verboekhoven, known locally as Cage-aux-Ours, with support from the Brussels-Capital Region and the municipality of Schaarbeek.

The square was cut in two, torn apart by the railway embankment that forced users to make a detour. The redevelopment revolved around a steel footbridge which was put in place in 2013, spanning the rail tracks and pulling together the two sections of the square, in a line that connects the town hall with Schaarbeek railway station. This engineered structure serves as a public space and gives users a central crossing across the square and, using a tiered system, offers access to the large and widely used benches.

THE CATALOGUE

The catalogue is intended to complement the actual exhibition, providing further background information on the architectural practices and the projects selected, each of which are presented by a text authored by an international critic (Pierre Chabart, Francesco Della Casa, Sebastian Redecke, etc.) and an interview between the exhibition curator and the various architects, thereby offering viewpoints that complement those of the exhibition curator and the artists invited to the exhibition. The projects are highlighted by way of flipbooks in reference to the architectural visit and in a way that chimes with the exhibition. The five flipbooks included in the catalogue each represent a sequence of an architectural visit of the buildings with photographs by Maxime Delvaux. 248 pages, French and English. Available from bookshops as from 5 November 2015. Price: 20 euros.

'entrer:'

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