Project

Housing Development Entrepôt Macdonald, Paris, France

In the northeast of Paris, not far from the Parc de la Vilette, housing blocks, offices and shops have been erected on the structure of a large scale former warehouse. The "Entrepôt Calberson-Macdonald" was built in 1969 by architect Marcel Forest alongside the railway line, today with its striking concrete structure and length of more than 600 metres it provides the outline conditions for an extension and increase in urban density.

The new buildings were erected above the existing structure by the 15 architects offices involved in the project, working within the framework of the urban planning guidelines. The existing building with its characteristic elongated facade facing onto the boulevard has been preserved for the most part and now forms a plinth that links the entire ensemble. To provide the natural light needed the central area of the 80-metre-deep building was demolished down to the level of the roof slab to the continuous ground floor and was replaced by a planted courtyard.

Gigon/Guyer were commissioned to build 84 social housing apartments in the eastern part of the site. The building along the Boulevard Macdonald is oriented north-south and has eight floors, two of which are part of the existing building. Working within the urban constraints of the overall project and the possibilities offered by social housing, the aim was to develop this project as an independent piece of architecture employing a variety of different housing typologies.

The elongated main building and the two vertical courtyard buildings attached to it together form a kind of comb-like plan, with two internal circulation cores positioned at the points of intersection. On the garden side this form helps to articulate the outdoor space, while at the same time creating a facade with a greater length, which can be bent to give the apartments optimal south-east or south-west orientation and which permits a variety of different floor plans. The smaller apartments are single-facing, the larger ones are oriented in two directions, with the kitchen and living room looking onto the quiet courtyard. In the attached elements the ground floor level apartments are two-storey, face the courtyard and have private gardens. The duplex apartments on the two uppermost floors have roof terraces and bedrooms at roof-top level.

Towards the courtyard the facades and the balconies are bent differently in relation to each other and respond to the various apartment types. In this way the design of the facade continues the theme of interlocking indoor and outdoor space found in the main volume. The facade is clad with shiny aluminium sheeting with slender corrugations, which, depending on the light, can make a very different impact and gives the building its lightness. The impression of transparency is strengthened by perforating the parapet panels. These form a continuous band across the entire length of the building, on the boulevard side they are continued in the middle floors, emphasizing the facade's horizontal structure. In front of the balconies the perforated elements fold outwards, screen the French windows and allow the red coat of paint to shimmer through.

On the boulevard side the master plan envisages a facade articulated in horizontal, crystalline and mineral layers – with a striking frame made of lightweight concrete elements that binds the three uppermost floors together. The ground floor is glazed, the materiality of two plinth levels with the wide horizontal bands and finely articulated elements is defined by the existing concrete, which has been carefully renovated. The "infill" of the concrete frame that surrounds the three top floors consists of a finely made vertical mesh of gold anodized profiles with recessed windows and closed areas, as a reference to the horizontal divisions in the concrete plinth. At the level of the second and third floors a large city window opens up the block, offering a view into and out of the internal courtyard and of the lively boulevard.
Credits

Project: Housing Development Entrepôt Macdonald, Paris, France

Address: Boulevard Macdonald, Paris, France

Spatial Programme: 84 social housing apartments, 1–5 rooms (Retail space on the ground floor)

Commission: 2008

Beginning of Construction: 2010


Client: SNC Paris Macdonald Promotion, Paris, France

Architecture: Annette Gigon / Mike Guyer Architekten, Zurich

Collaborators: Caspar Bresch (Team Manager until 2010), Pieter Rabijns (Team Manager from 2011), Martin Schwarz (Project Manager), Eric Sommerlatte

Execution: realisation in cooperation with: DVVD Ingénieurs – Architectes - Designers, Paris, France

Coordination architects/ Masterplan: FAA+XDGA / Floris Alkemade et Xaveer de Geyter Architects, consortium, Paris, France

Technical Planning/ Costs Control/ Structural/ HVAC: Arcoba, La Plaine Saint Denis, France

Construction Management/ General Contractor: Vinci, Paris, France

Gross Floor Area (SIA 416): 10'855 m2

Landscape Architecture: Michel Desvigne, Paris, France

Acoustical: Acouphen, Pusignan, France

Sustainability: Alto Ingénierie, Champs-sur-Marne, France

Construction inspection/ Health and safety coordinator: Socotec, Paris, France

Photography: Philippe Ruault, Cyrille Weiner