

TITLE

Verbiest

House and workshop in a warehouse

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KEYWORDS

Architecture; Transformation; Reuse; Design Process; Sustainability

ABSTRACT

This project addresses the transformation of a large warehouse of about 1000sqm built between 1900 and 1970 in Molenbeek into a single family house and a shared artistic workshop. The project addresses various issues and themes, amongst which the environmental impact of the construction and of the future consumptions. The artefact is not limited to the design outcome but comprises the design process.

Preservation

The demolition works are very limited. All the structures are maintained, in order to limit the waste and to keep the potentials of the place intact. Reuse of the old tiles, of the roof and of the terraces.

Reduction

We calculated that the grey energy of the insulation works suppresses the benefits on the heating energy on the long term. As a reaction, we reduced the heated zones by half. The locally produced hemp insulation and presents one of the lowest carbon footprints available.

Overflow

Following the seasons, two small heated zones take advantage of the vast structures in which they are housed. The modesty of the program in regard of the scale of the existing lies at the heart of the architectural quality of the project. Targeted actions ensure precision, feasibility and appropriateness.

Production

Part of the roof is replaced by an industrial greenhouse with a productive purpose, which takes advantage of the heated volume. The two gardens are planted with a diversity of productive plants and trees.

Construction

The concrete structure needs to be reinforced. The first option of additional concrete beams is replaced by massive wooden slabs of juxtaposed girders, relocating work on the site. The existing beams are supported by wooden columns resting on the existing foundation. Concrete and steel are virtually banned from the project. Aluminum and mineral insulation are avoided.

Resistance

Every decision on the work site is marked by the resistance to the unnecessary, aiming at a rough, essential, intelligible construction. The plasterboard of the roof are replaced by planks, as are the glue-containing panels and waterproofing membranes covering the floor of the greenhouse.

Process

Amongst other ones, these strategies appeared progressively during the design process and the construction site. It is not only about the built reality, but also about the process in which radical changes appear, reducing the environmental impact, relocalizing both production and work, questioning constructive reflexes, and, interestingly, enriching the resulting architecture.