



The Banque de France inaugurates its facility in Paris La Courneuve, the most innovative currency management centre in Europe

On 13 November 2018, Mr François Villeroy de Galhau, Governor of the Banque de France, officially inaugurated the bank's new facility in La Courneuve (north of Paris). The 4.5 ha brownfield site formerly occupied by Babcock factories was transformed over a 5-year period by a consortium comprising the Artelia Group and architecture firm Jean-Paul Viguiier & Associés. The fully automated currency management centre will handle all coin flows across the Greater Paris area and about 25% of the bank notes currently in circulation in France, making it the largest facility of its type in the Euro zone. It will also accommodate a section open to the general public in the area dedicated to offices.

The new site embodies the Banque de France's desire to modernise its facilities.

In the context of an extensive programme undertaken to rethink its property portfolio and upgrade its facilities to current standards, the Banque de France wanted its new Greater Paris currency management centre to be an efficient, ultra-secure industrial facility geared to the challenges of today.

A completely new take was given to the buildings constituting the former Babcock & Wilcox boiler factory, which now epitomise and convey the image of the Banque de France's activities while blending into the

urban fabric of the future 'Grand Paris'. Following completion of the works, the new French currency management centre complies with the most stringent security standards and consists of a main building with a total surface area of 17,500 m² and a secondary building (for inspecting vehicles) with a surface area of about 500 m², in addition to outdoor areas covering approximately 20,000 m².

The primary function of the currency management centre is to perform automated inspections of bank notes at very high speeds (target: more than 1.1 billion notes per year, i.e. 25% of the notes currently in circulation in France). Damaged notes are destroyed automatically and potentially forged ones are put aside. This function is complemented by the preparation and delivery of bank note denominations for cash-in-transit operators, to replenish the stocks of ATMs and banks.

The second function is the high-capacity, secure and automated storage of banknotes and coins, which comprises a "strategic" stock in addition to the everyday volumes required to maintain sufficient banknotes in circulation. This stock is kept in a special safe called the "storage greenhouse", which stands at a maximum height of 26 m.

Next to this ultra high-security facility, the site also accommodates the national Cash Management Directorate and its branch for the Seine-Saint-Denis department, which will open to the general public in May 2019 and whose mission will be to deal with excessive debt cases, company ratings, and bank information services. The site will provide optimum working conditions for Banque de France employees: in total, this high-quality facility will accommodate more than 350 people.

A project on the cutting edge of engineering and architecture

Artelia, a leading French independent engineering firm specialising in the fields of building construction, industrial facilities, infrastructure, water and the environment, is the lead firm in a temporary joint venture formed with architecture firm Jean-Paul Viguier & Associés.

Within the consortium, Artelia was in charge of handling technical and operational aspects, the studies and the works, having signed a complete design & construction supervision contract with the Banque de France in November 2013 covering the demolition of the former Babcock buildings (20,000 m²), remediation of the site, performance of the studies, implementation of the works and supervision of commissioning procedures for the entire project. The contract includes designing and supervising implementation of the cash handling and storage processes as well as all the order preparation equipment, including five-axis robots and other logistical and transit installations (boxing machines, bundle sorting machines, etc.). Artelia's assignment also comprises assistance with initial operations at the currency management centre for a period of two years following acceptance.

The team of architects from [Jean-Paul Viguier et Associés](#) conceived and supervised implementation of the architectural and interior designs. Based on a theme of rationality, they take shapes that are connected to the functions of the building concerned. The envelope, roof and facades of the cash management building are the main features of the facility and underscore its industrial nature; the notions of precious objects, noble materials, finesse and top-quality workmanship are highly visible, and the overall dimensions and brightness generate an impressive effect.

Two former buildings of the Babcock factory, one made of brick (dating back to 1923) and the other made of concrete (built in 1987), house the offices and stand opposite the secure unit. They have been restored in keeping with their original features and a connection has been built between them to create harmony between their different uses and functions.

The site as a whole generates a dialogue not just between the different entities but also with their immediate surroundings. It has an open architectural style that contrasts with its function, which requires it to remain impenetrable. More generally speaking, the project is a testament to a topic that is dear to Jean-Paul Viguier et Associés: the relationship between heritage and contemporary architecture.

An emphasis on environmental and social values

Right from the start, the worksite was governed by stringent environmental requirements: all the works were performed in line with a "green building site" approach with selective sorting of waste, including during the brownfield demolition phase. Following the removal of asbestos and lead, this made it possible

to carry out the deconstruction works selectively, which in turn allowed various materials – steel, copper, concrete, bricks, etc. – to be recycled.

Furthermore, the works included a significant social dimension, as a result of which more than 45,000 hours were worked on the site by beneficiaries of workforce integration initiatives.

The entire project (offices and currency management centre) has been certified by Certivea as compliant with French green building standards (HQE © NF). The currency management centre has also been granted level 3 “AFILOG©” (sustainable logistics facility) certification, which adds two logistics-specific targets (working conditions and suitability of the building for the process) to the 14 targets already included in the HQE© certification.

Tristan Legendre, General Manager of Artelia Bâtiment & Industrie, paid tribute to the excellent work carried out by his teams, declaring: “We successfully delivered the project within a tight deadline in spite of stringent constraints related to environmental requirements and the standards expected for this type of facility. We are particularly proud of the result, given that this site sets new standards for the entire Euro zone.”

About Artelia:

Artelia is an international multidisciplinary consultancy, engineering and project management group specialising in the sectors of building construction, infrastructure, water and the environment.

With 4900 employees and turnover of €485m in 2017, Artelia is one of France’s leading groups in the sector. Internationally, the group has offices in more than 30 countries in Europe, Africa, the Middle East and Asia.

Artelia is 97% owned by its managers and employees

About architecture firm Jean-Paul Viguier & Associés:

Jean-Paul Viguier et Associés Architecture et Urbanisme is an international architecture and urban planning firm. Its multidisciplinary teams design and implement projects in line with a comprehensive approach that reaches from urban planning to landscaping and from interior design to street furniture, for public and private offices, residential buildings, facilities and shops.

The firm employs 150 people from 15 different countries, who are supervised by Jean-Paul Viguier and 12 partners. Several of its iconic projects have received international acclaim: the French Pavilion at the Seville World Expo (1992), the headquarters of France Télévisions (1998), the André-Citroën park (2000) and the Cœur-Défense twin towers (2001) in Paris; the Sofitel Magnificent Mile in Chicago (2002); the McNay Museum of Modern Art in San Antonio (2008) in Texas – the first modern art museum ever built by a French architect in America; the Maroc Telecom tower in Rabat (2012); the SFR Campus in Saint-Denis (2013), the Majunga tower in La Défense district of Paris (2014); the Oncopole and University Cancer Institute (IUCT) in Toulouse (2014), etc.

These projects will soon be followed by the recent successful bids for the Europea district in Brussels – reconfiguring the site of the 1958 World Expo around the Atomium building - the head offices for Vinci in Nanterre and Orange in Issy-les-Moulineaux, a high-rise office building in Casablanca, the IoT Valley in Toulouse, and Hypérian, one of the world’s tallest timber-framed residential towers, which will reach 57 m into the sky over Bordeaux.

Jean-Paul Viguier’s works place architecture in a constant contextual movement, integrating a reflection on their relationship with old buildings, as demonstrated by the Reims multimedia library (2002) opposite Reims Cathedral, the Museum of Natural History in Toulouse (2008) or, more recently, the Canadian Embassy and Cultural Centre and the remodelling of Chanel’s flagship store in Paris.

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