



## GARE MARITIME

Neutelings Riedijk Architecten  
Brussels, Belgium 2020

A former railway station in the Kanaalzone in Brussels, Gare Maritime was transformed into an original complex marrying working and shopping spaces with generous public areas for social use and relaxation. The designers of this new concept, Neutelings Riedijk Architecten, preserved the original system of steel roofs from the early 20th century. Using wood and glass, they created a monumental (280 metres long, 140 metres wide, and 24 metres high at its highest point!) yet light structure that invites passers-by. Envisioned as a city district that is protected from weather conditions, the central part of the building, for public events, is paved with 7,500 historic cobblestones, and two halls on both its sides are for pedestrians.

"It has a structure of boulevards and streets, parks and squares, that follows the existing urban structure and the original structure of the building in a natural and logical way," comment the architects. A restoration of the historical elements would not have provided enough space for the new programme. Instead, to accommodate it, twelve new volumes were added to the existing structure. As the architects wanted to keep the original building intact, all newly designed spaces are placed under the monumental roof. The architects explain: "The new pavilions consist of three floors and a 'creative attic' on top. All floors are flexible to arrange, and able to house both offices and shops, workshops, or showrooms."

A large part of the overall impressive visual effect is not only the monumental size but also the brilliantly selected materials. Gare Maritime is the largest project in Europe constructed entirely of Cross Laminated Timber and shows quite a creative use of this material on a large scale. Wood also dominates in other elements like the window frames, entrances, and balconies, all made in oak wood – just like the rhythmical staircase connecting the pavilions on both sides of the side streets.

To fill the space with light, the side and top portions of the roof are glazed. This is also important for the numerous greenery spots within the roofed interiors. The attics are finished with light grey metal cladding, which is a reference to the original station facade's colour. No fewer than 17,000 square metres of solar panels are installed on the highest parts of the roof to also make it a sustainable building. The complex, providing a pleasant area to work, shop, and socialize, contributes to the development of the Kanaalzone district as a whole and preserves its original heritage.

