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Batiactu – press clipping

La Samaritaine's Jourdain Hall is revealed

By Sébastien Chabas
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Visit - After eight months of painstaking renovation work, La Samaritaine - the iconic Parisian Art Deco-Art Nouveau heritage building by architects Jourdain and Sauvage - is being transformed by Vinci Construction and architects Sanaa, winners of the Pritzker Architecture Prize 2010. Completion is scheduled for late 2018.

After a breakneck start to the project in September 2015, the renovation project of La Samaritaine (Paris' largest store, owned by the luxury LVMH group) is entering one of its key phases, namely that of the Jourdain Hall, one of the three structures along Rue de Rivoli and the Sauvage building. In short, this is a meticulous operation carried out by the teams of Vinci Construction and the 2010 Pritzker Architecture Prize-winning agency, Sanaa.

Underneath the large glass roof completed in 1980, the huge yellow Art Nouveau fresco running along the 5th floor of the Jourdain Hall has been taken down, along with the ironwork of the 1907 grand staircase, giving way to extensive and detailed clearing, demolition and underpinning operations.

1,000 workers at peak period in less than six months

Approximately 450 skilled construction workers, including 200 from Vinci Construction, have already been at work for eight months on the 72,000 m² site, with another 1,000 workers to be employed in less than six months for a planned period of one and a half years.

Painstaking stabilisation of the facades

"On the Jourdain side, we are currently in the process of restructuring the floors, and the temporary construction site is under way for the stabilisation of the facades," explains Guillaume Duché, development project manager at Vinci Construction France "Our goal is clear - starting the massive demolition of the heart of the section in a few months' time, and so that's why we are embarking on the disposal and demolition of the roof at level 6."

Assorted structures

The Vinci Construction project manager also recognises the challenge presented by this colossal restructuring. "The biggest issue has been the variety of structures that we've discovered," he continues. "We're working on several buildings and configurations with

different structures. We need to find the joints and the limits between the various historic buildings. "

The glass and steel Jourdain facade

On the urban planning side, Sanaa architects Kazuyo Sejima and Ryue Nishizawa, worked extensively on the existing facades of the building, each of which is marked by "a particular architectural era", notably the Jourdain facade in glass and steel.

"In the end, our most important task is completing the stabilisation work on the Jourdain facade, which will then allow us to go ahead with the demolition," continues Guillaume Duché.

Restoration of architectural elements

Over the last few months, the delicate elements on the Seine side of the vast building and the part under the glass roof have been removed by construction workers and specialised craftsmen. "We have just dismantled the mural on the vertical part, and we will soon be removing the windows," the Vinci team told us. "These elements are currently being restored in Hautefort in the Dordogne. All the pieces will then of course be put back into place at the end of the construction work, over a period yet to be determined, in late 2017 to late 2018. "

The frescoes return to their original colours

The frescoes will be restored, going back to their original hues, while the external steel structure and the enameled panels have also been taken down for restoration.

Underpinning and earthworks on the Rivoli section

Meanwhile, the Vinci teams are at work excavating and levelling in the Rivoli section. "In the Cheval Blanc area, we have started construction on the reinforced concrete core structures for the lift cages and stairwells, and we are currently restructuring the floors on levels 3 and 5," explains Vinci Construction's project development manager.

Logistical and regulatory challenges

Additional major challenges are the very strict fire safety logistics and regulatory aspects for commercial buildings. "We first installed a site office in the immediate vicinity of the construction site to avoid workers moving around the streets, and we created a unique "road" in the basement to facilitate the movement of rubble by lorry," said the Vinci team. "During peak periods later on, there will be 120 lorries driving around here every week."

Restructuring an area of 72,000 m²

Finally, in 2018, there will be multiple shops, offices and a luxury hotel with 72 rooms and suites, together with 96 social housing units and a 60-place creche – not to mention the much-talked-about glass façade, measuring 73 metres wide and 25 metres high, which has been the subject of much ink in recent years.

"This will be the biggest building site in a historic monument in the heart of Paris for the next 20 years," says Marie-Line Antonios, General Manager of La Samaritaine, who is targeting a simultaneous opening date in late 2018. Meanwhile the budget has not changed, estimated at between €460 and 500 million.

Data sheet

Client : La Samaritaine

Client representative (hotel) : LVMH Hôtel Management

General contractor : Vinci Construction France group

Executing project manager : Egis

Architect : Sanaa

Architect, city heritage : Cabinet Lagnea

Architect, office and retail operations : SRA

Hotel project concept and design : OAL, Maison Edouard François

Hotel interior design : Peter Marino

Architect, social housing and crèche : Brugel Architectes Associés

Facades and glass roof : RFR

Duration : 36 months from September 2015, for a simultaneous delivery of all elements scheduled for the end of 2018

Cost: between €460 and 500 million euros