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Comédie de Béthune

The completion of the Comédie de Béthune was delayed for over ten years, which is why the building now embraces several architectural eras.

Since the 1980s, culture is considered a priority in the development of the **Nord-Pas-de-Calais** region in Northern France. This should explain why there was such a fuss about the **national drama centre** of the town of **Béthune** in this region. For the history of the **Comédie de Béthune** is almost as turbulent as theatre itself. First housed in a marquee in 1992, it moved into a former powder magazine that had been converted into a studio theatre. But this studio theatre, which is still used as such, was only a stopover. In 1994, Manuelle Gautrand Architecture won a competition for a **new theatre building** for the Comédie on the site of a **former cinema called "Le Palace"** built in 1930. In 1999, this project was completed – and yet unfinished.

Initially, a **second section** had always been part of the plans but could not be realized because of a certain obstructive house. It was not until the latter had been demolished in 2009 that the project came to a happy ending for the Comédie and Manuelle Gautrand Architecture. And while work on the **new extension** was in progress, the existing building was being refurbished. In 2014, everything was finally completed.



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Old Plans reformulated

At a first glance, it immediately becomes clear that this is not the result Manuelle Gautrand Architecture had in mind in 1994. For the existing building and the extension do not resemble each other at all. The existing building presents itself in a **ruby-coloured façade** and a soft finish towards the roof, whereas the annex is **black** and rather edgy. Nevertheless, it is obvious that both belong together for both show the same inscription reading "Le Palace" and a kind of corporate design in the form of a **rhombus pattern**.

Façades

The façade of the former cinema "Le Palace" has been integrated into the first theatre building. But only since the refurbishment in 2009 it also shows the same red colour, as if the theatre had swallowed the small old building like a macrophage. The pattern of large rhombuses is also not missing here. The extension, providing a **rehearsal room and offices** in the first place, is also characterized by this rhombus pattern, as mentioned above. But here, the pattern is not applied with paint but derives from the form of **grooved metal panels**, among which the rhombus-shaped panels are emphasized by opposed grooves.

Embracing different Eras

It does not come as a surprise that the extension does not look as planned in the nineties. I mean, if you had written a pop song in the nineties you would not produce it today the way you would have back then. Personally, I consider it a stroke of luck for the theatre. For, although the existing building had already been great, the new annex enhances the building with contrast and diversity. Along with the old façade of the picture palace, the ensemble virtually unites three architectural eras in a quite exciting manner. Thus, I would suggest for the theatre to build another annex every ten to fifteen years.

Project details

Architect: Manuelle Gautrand Architecture 

Status: completed: 2014

Size: total area: 2.082 m²extension area: 720 m²

City: Frankreich Nord-Pas-de-Calais Béthune

Tags:

France Nord-Pas-de-Calais Béthune Comédie de Béthune Manuelle Gautrand Architecture extension Annex theatre Theater culture

Lien internet : <http://architecture.mapolismagazin.com/manuelle-gautrand-architecture-comedie-de-bethune-bethune>