

La Samaritaine sparkles again

In Paris' 1st arrondissement, Vinci Construction France is revitalising La Samaritaine, the celebrated Parisian department store. Spread over four areas, the project combines creation with conservation.

“We are working on four very different types of buildings located on the Rue de Rivoli, the Quai du Louvre, Rue de la Monnaie and Rue de l’Arbre-Sec,” begins Fouad Sultan, construction manager at PETIT, a subsidiary of Vinci Construction France and general contractor in charge of the construction work. The majority of the work is concentrated on the Rivoli section - the demolition of the remaining superstructure (excluding the facade and preserved floors of the Rue de l’Arbre-Sec location) and all the infrastructure (except the preserved vaulted cellars) is under way, while the historical section – housing officially designated as a heritage site - remains. “We’ve installed reinforced bracing for the facades and temporary structures to support the walls while we excavate three basement levels,” says Sultan. Next step: the expansion and creation of the basements themselves. “While we’re in charge of the overall reconstruction of the building, the preserved parts will be refurbished,” he adds.

A marriage of the old and the new

The stability of the Jourdain Plateau building has been secured with the construction of four concrete shafts at each corner of the building, which contain the stairwells. Apart from the original structure of Eiffel-type metal beams and joists which are being carefully preserved, the demolition of the roof and central shaft precedes an important phase of major reconstruction.

“In this part of La Samaritaine, the original structure supporting the historical glass blocks currently rests on structural joists. This is being removed to allow the floors to be renovated, and will be replaced by concrete slabs on prefabricated steel elements,” says Fouad Sultan. Two basement levels and an atrium will be created using this method, while the original facades will be fully restored.

Meanwhile this demolition-renovation-reconstruction approach is also being applied to the Jourdain Verrière section of the store, with the most important aspect being the preservation of La Samaritaine’s centrepiece - the historic glass roof. This will regain its former 1907 splendour, but now featuring electrochromic (or “smart”) glass, installed under a temporary umbrella-like shelter. The removal of the roof is just part of the complete renovation of this part of the building, which also includes the enlargement of the existing basements. “Similar to the Jourdain Verrière building, new walls are being created and the floors fully refurbished in the Sauvage building too. Portable panels are acting as formwork frames to create the concrete walls of the future lift shafts. The entire structure has been reinforced, with the facades preserved for restoration,” concludes Fouad Sultan.