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Paris - La Samaritaine heads into the 21st century

The department store is transforming and growing, yet still preserving its classified heritage.

You'll find everything - or almost everything - at La Samaritaine when the department store, which closed in 2005 for security reasons, reveals its new look at the end of 2018 after three years of work. "A wide combination of multi-use functions, architectural forms and construction techniques will be showcased in this project," announced the LVMH group who are leading the development project of the site. A department store, hotel, social housing, creche and 20,000 m² of office space are being developed in the two sections between the Quai du Louvre and the Rue de Rivoli. LVMH's luxury Cheval Blanc hotel, with 72 rooms and suites, will be housed in the architect Henri Sauvage's Art Deco building facing the Pont Neuf, while retail space will occupy the rest of the site, from the lower basement to the first floor, as well as the vast hall under the historic glass roof of Frantz Jourdain's Art Nouveau building. The rest of this building, at the heart of the site, will feature an atrium, illuminating offices, 56 social housing units and the creche, which will take care of 80 infants.

The Rivoli section will eventually accommodate 40 housing units, located in both its new part and the surrounding renovated 17th century buildings. The remainder of the new building will house offices, behind a wavy glass façade designed by Japanese architects Sanaa. This part of the project provoked myriad challenges and appeals, until the *Conseil d'État*, or Council of State, finally granted the building permit in June 2015, resulting in La Samaritaine's renovation work subsequently commencing last September.

Two new basements

Listed in the Supplementary Inventory of Historic Monuments, the old buildings are being completely restructured while retaining their façades. The coloured enamelled ceramic panels, some covered by a layer of stone-coloured paint, have been removed for refurbishment by restoration experts, to be replaced when the building is finished, with the process repeated for the decorative sandstone elements. Inside, the yellow Art Nouveau fresco, which runs along the 5th floor at the base of the glass roof, was detached and stored in a safe place before cleaning. The decorative ironwork of the 1907 Art Nouveau grand staircase will be remounted, while the glass roof will be reinstated in its initial blue colour in its original 1905 frame. But for now, the building is stripped back to basics, revealing its metallic framework of beams and girders, onto which new concrete floors are being poured. "This is currently the most spectacular part of the construction site," says Guillaume Duché, Vinci Construction project manager. Prior to the demolition of the central floor sections to create the atrium, temporary stabilising supports in a metal framework were installed around the exterior of the building. The first floors were reinforced with a five-metre wide concrete layer to surround the building and provide bracing, while simultaneously, two basement levels were excavated under the existing structures.

- Isabelle Duffaure-Gallais

Frame1

- €500 million of private investment
- 36 months of work to open the complex in late 2018
- 10,729 m² of facades preserved and renovated, comprising 74% of the total
- 1,500 workers on the site at peak periods

Frame 2

Client : La Samaritaine

Architects : Sanaa (design), SRA Architects (offices, shops), Brugel Architectes Associés (housing projects, nursery), OAL-Maison Edouard François (hotel design), Lagneau cabinet (heritage architect).

Project Consultants : Egis, RFR (facades, canopies)

General Contractor : Petit (a subsidiary of Vinci Construction France)