

Mother Nature

Center of Topography, Cartography and Planning of the Wallon Region, in the former maternity ward of the Province of Namur.

In a building which was being rehabilitated for a new purpose, I explored the vocabulary of my work in the plastic arts. I was also very aware that this place had seen the birth our three children. The installation has three parts, each in direct relation to the purpose of the new centre.

Staircase and measuring stick: The building's circulation tool, which is the staircase, was confined for a long time to a restricted space, to finally take up a more considerable part of the building. When I first saw the plan of the building, I was attracted to the staircase in the atrium. The straight shutters placed around an empty space, in a huge, well-lit cage, whose ascension is fully visible, creates a monumental effect which emphasises the vertical dimension.

Like a spiral, it is deployed at each level around daylight along an imaginary axis. It symbolises the rising to an elevated high position, while evolving. Naturally, it reminds us the human movement, a baby whose mother teaches it bit by bit how to stand. It symbolises man facing his future, facing the horizon. The staircase is like a graduated measuring stick, with levels, multiple landings, perspectives, stops and breaks, horizontal lines and vertical path.

In a sense it is the strongest link to the building's topography. In my reading of the project, it corresponds clearly with the unevenness of ground. The staircase has four levels, four landings... like the four stages of life:

the playing days, the carefree days, maturity and wisdom.

Four perspectives on the world before one's eyes; four separate horizons. The 12 metre measuring stick, linked closely to the staircase, marks its different levels and landings.

Olivier Duquenne, 2012

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