

Humanities and Social Sciences Campus

Refurbishment of the Humanities and Social Sciences Centre.

CLIENT

University of Grenoble

TEAM

Patriarche Group:
Patriarche (Architecture)
Partners:
Fayat

KEYPOINTS

Conservation of old buildings.
Minimal impact.
Sober architectural design.
Urban campus design.

ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE

High Environmental Quality standard : BBC (Bâtiment Basse Consommation – Low-Energy Building) renovation standard.
Safe materials with low environmental impact.

Located on one of the most beautiful heritage campuses in Europe, the Grenoble University Research and Higher Education Cluster (PRES) has taken advantage of the Campus 2025 stimulus and revitalisation plan launched by the State to invest in new teaching and research facilities.

The buildings are part of a garden city with a strong 20th century architectural and landscape heritage.

We have assisted in the transformation of the campus so that, with its strong heritage, it remains an attractive university centre with 40,000 students.

This involved the refurbishment of four buildings: The Humanities and Mathematics Building (BSHM), the Faculty of Economics (EESS), the Faculty of Law (DROIT 2) and a cultural space (EST).

They host teaching, research and creative spaces that foster the development of connections and ideas.

We wanted to design spaces that conveyed the strong values that have made the Grenoble Campus famous in France and internationally.

Typology
Teaching and refurbishment

Surface area
18,000 m² of floorspace

Construction cost
31.5 M€

Location
St-Martin-d'Hères, France

Status
Delivered 2018

Allocation mode
Design and Build



Intentions – design approach



Our augmented approach to architecture has enabled us to :

- Build a technically sound project that meets all university requirements by leveraging the best resources in construction engineering.
- Respect the environment through a sustainable development approach, integrating into a high-quality real estate setting while aiming for energy efficiency.
- Design projects of outstanding urban and architectural quality, creating an essential campus with a modern, simple, and enduring image.

Our architectural vocabulary is rooted in the principles of modern architecture :

- A design on stilts to create transparency and open views of nature and the surrounding landscape.
- An architectural concept free of artifices, where form follows function to ensure comfort and efficiency.

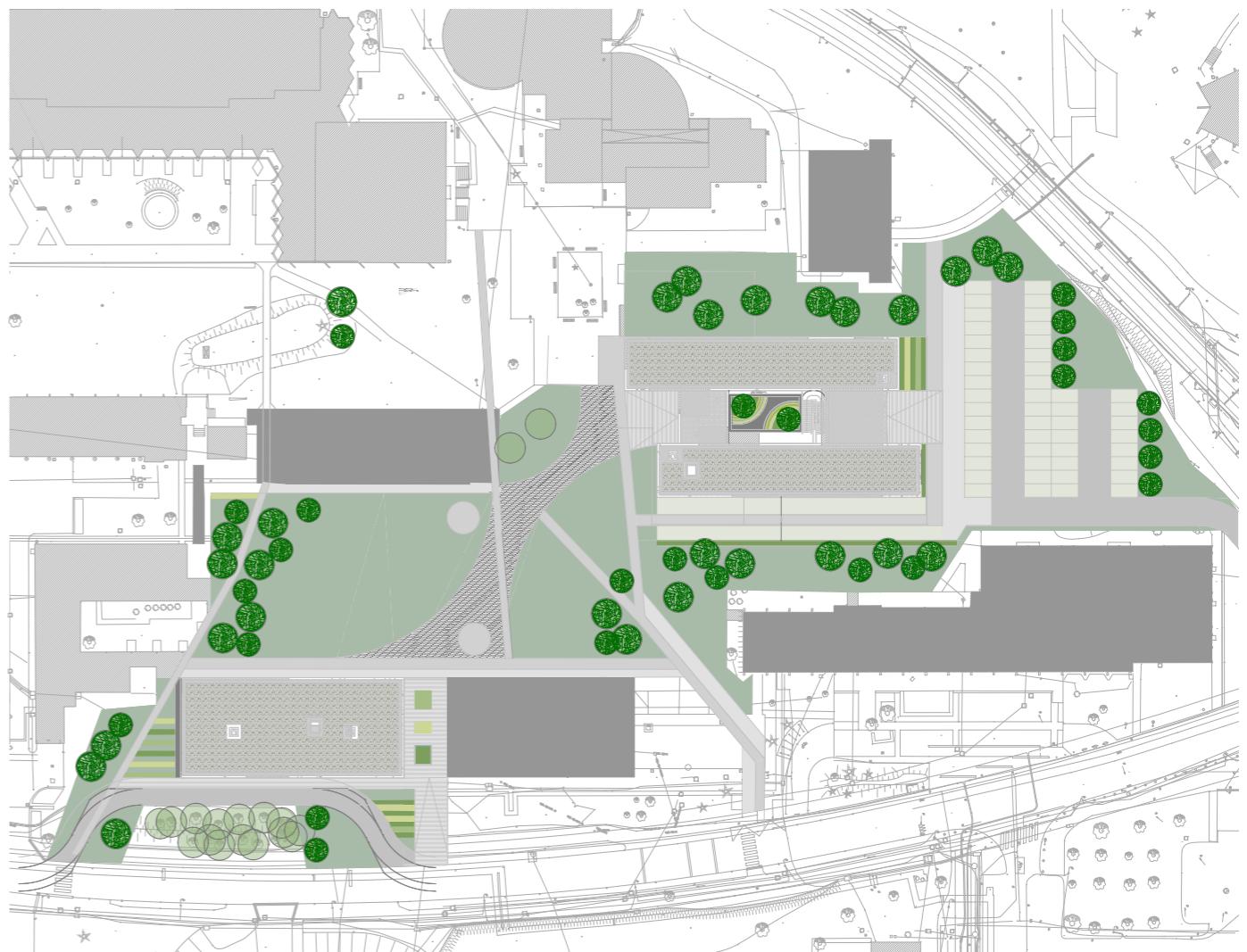
A sober and elegant bioclimatic architecture

The overall urban layout of the designed buildings respects the campus's orthogonal grid. Each one is treated with a unified volumetric approach.

EESS, DROIT 2, and BSHM appear as simple parallelepipeds resting on a transparent base. Each is clad in raw, noble materials with a mineral dominance in tones that evoke nature. Thus, EESS and DROIT 2, forming a coherent ensemble, are covered with natural cement panels arranged according to a pattern that plays with offsets against the openings. BSHM is dressed in terracotta with a design that emphasizes horizontality.

The EST building, dedicated to the performing arts, features façade cladding of raw concrete at the base, polished mirror-finish stainless steel on the street-facing façade, and micro-perforated stainless steel as solar protection—materials chosen for their elegant and enduring qualities.

Openings, perforations, and glazed surfaces are carefully measured within a design approach that promotes bioclimatic performance. The buildings are predominantly oriented North-South so that sunlight can be easily controlled, and each bay is equipped with a shading system for summer comfort.



A beneficial connection with nature

Each building is positioned with minimal ground footprint and a base treatment that respects the surrounding vegetation.

EESS and DROIT 2, together with their neighbors, enjoy a sculpture park. Their refined architecture gives the buildings a delicate presence that enhances the surrounding landscape. The transparency of the ground floors promotes continuity of views through the site.

EESS and BSHM are organized around gardens, placing nature at the heart of the project as an extension of the entrance halls. Interior atmospheres are infused with greenery, creating a seamless continuity between indoors and outdoors.

EST interacts with its environment through reflection, featuring a large mirrored façade set like a contemporary sculpture within the landscaped park.

An architecture to live in – controlled ambiances

The spatial composition of the halls as public spaces is essential in each of the designed projects. They are places of meaningful exchange, fostering informal interactions between teachers, students, and researchers.



Connected halls open to nature make the functioning of each building immediately clear. Plant-dominated atmospheres create pleasant spaces that invite people to pause and engage in friendly exchanges. Bright colors and the use of wood bring a warm and welcoming feel.

Each structure is designed to be convivial and to foster a sense of community.

From the moment of arrival, visitors can grasp the functional organization at a glance. All amenities needed for easy integration are readily accessible..

In every building, the hall connects to the main staircase, highlighted within the overall volume. Communal spaces on the upper floors are consistently grouped around shared central cores.

An adapted morphology

The layout organization ensures efficient functionality. The plan consists of service spaces (fixed points: staircases, restrooms, technical shafts), common spaces (meeting rooms, social areas), support spaces (archives, storage, reprographics), and served spaces such as work areas, training rooms, research zones, performance spaces, and studios. This design, tailored to each specific need, offers maximum flexibility.

Within a modular concept, every function finds its place on a systematically gridded plan, following a simple and legible scheme of vertical and horizontal distribution. Flow and access management is straightforward, for both public and private areas.



Controlled atmospheres – Comfort and efficiency

Access to natural light is essential across all projects. Every room benefits from significant daylight and light factor.

Circulation areas consistently feature visual openings to the outside, achieved through shallow floor depths or layouts organized around patios.

From an acoustic perspective, spaces likely to generate higher noise levels (social areas, halls) are zoned to limit disturbances. Partitions and ceilings are designed to meet expected performance standards for insulation and reverberation.

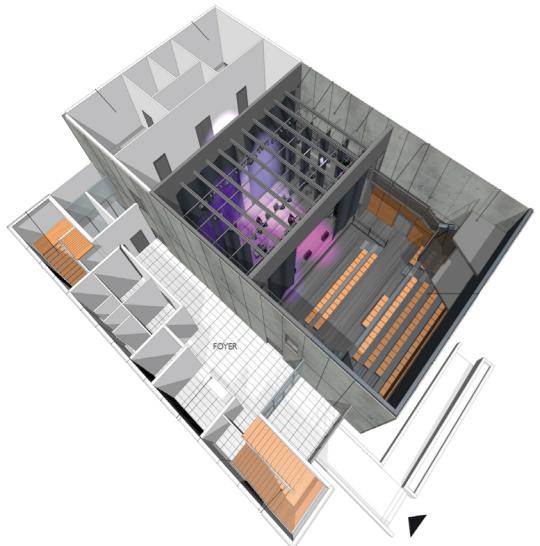
Thermal performance ensures comfort in both winter and summer, thanks to a structural design that provides high thermal inertia.

All rooms are equipped with adjustable solar shading to prevent direct sunlight and operable windows for natural cross-ventilation.

The cultural space – EST

The building serves as an architectural landmark on the campus.

The cultural space is a key feature, highly visible from the central Diderot axis, whether approaching from the south or the north.



Spectator comfort – multiple configurations

The hall is equipped to accommodate 150 people in tiered seating.

The first two rows are arranged in a "pit" configuration, creating the effect of an elevated stage.

From the third row onward, seats are set on a telescopic grandstand.

Visual comfort is perfectly calibrated, with no obstructions thanks to an optimized slope.

The pit can be easily closed using a system of platforms on beams that are simple to handle.

Once the telescopic seating is folded away, the hall becomes completely flat, suitable for various artistic events (performances with audience interaction, graphic arts combined with musical expression).

The stage area can also be repositioned in alternative layouts, such as at the center of the space.



A flexible and well-adapted stage design

The stage, measuring 10 meters wide by 8 meters deep, accommodates a choir, an amplified music group, or a theater troupe. The wings on stage left and right are fully functional, allowing discreet access to the stage.

Storage areas for stage equipment and the set preparation room are combined into a single space, which can also serve as a large backstage area.

Our experience with small venues has led us to this layout, ensuring maximum flexibility without constraining the artists. The space allows for bold preparations for high-quality performances, with a generous backstage area for set changes and technical operations.

The stage tower is equipped with a false grid for suspending battens and rigging, as well as lighting and scenery.

A peripheral catwalk connects the stage to the control room, enabling the installation of front-stage lighting and follow spots.





Campus SHS

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