

Expert in Architecture Rehabilitation 2016 - Belgium

# Sid Studio Architects

Sid Studio Architects is an architecture practice based in Brussels lead by Valentina Carrara. Valentina talks us through the firm and its latest projects.

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ID Studio Architects specialises in the process of integration between old and new. Valentina explains this process and how the firm aims to support clients in creating an innovative and exciting project.

"The major aim of the practice is the capacity of giving added value to the ancient patrimony when nowadays activities are implemented and nowadays techniques are required. This is possible thanks to the respect of the ancient patrimony and the necessity of being able to respond to the technological nowadays needing.

"This is one of the biggest challenges of today's renovation: the harmonious integration of nowadays techniques into the old constructions without letting them losing their charm. This general approach can be seen into the newly launched project Brux-Up: the residential Brussels buildings have a lot of charms but are not properly maintained and the energy consumption is very high. Brux-Up is a project that put in place an exchange operation between buildings owners (or condos owners) to sell their roof to investors that finance the heightening of the building. With the income of the selling of the roof, condos can finance the rehab of the building. This is not only an architectural operation but also a social and political act. Architecture finds its way by studying the relation between old and new. It is not just about developing a penthouse but also rehabilitate the marvellous Brussels patrimony."

As an engineer as well as an architect Valentina explains her innovative approach to each project and how this impacts on the overall outcome.

"Until the 18th century, humanity has always adapted without any problem monuments and cities to their needing. Today the patrimony issue is often an obstacle. My mission is to find a new balance between keeping from the past and building new for the future. My approach when facing an historical building (that can be a depot, a Brussels house from 1920) is like looking into a woman's wardrobe and issuing the following questions: what's worth to be kept? What can be converted? What must be thrown away and how? Can I recycle the waste into something new for the building? I start making order in the building as it would be into a wardrobe.

"Key to the success of every project is a strong understanding of the clients' needs, and as such I always try to understand these from the outset. This is easily said but it is an art. There are clients who are professionals in the real estate world: they clearly set their targets and their taste. My Montessori education has helped me to be emotionally attentive and to be able to adapt myself to the person I have in front of me, which is vital in this profession."

One of the firm's latest accomplished projects was the rehabilitation of the historic Hall of Fish Oils in Tour & Taxis, Brussels. Valentina explains why this particular project is of such interest.

"This innovative project concerns an old Dock next to which the trains came along to unload the products. The open structure has the form of a "banana" and that was used to stock and sell the fish oils. The structure dates of the beginning of the XX century. The roof has entirely been renovated with nature zinc and what I am very proud of is the design that the zinc bands make looking from above: it is like a big cake divided into small slices. Today the fish oil dock is used for events, receptions and parties. This is a typical rehabilitation project: restoration of the existing without keeping everything, adding of some techniques in order to use with nowadays needing."

As a final comment Valentina explains the changes she hopes to see in the Brussels architecture market.

"My wish would be that the public administration recognizes the potential of raising the Brussels houses and facilitate this process through laws and regulations. This happens already in France, Suisse, Austria and Italy. This could invite buildings owners to participate to this big rehabilitation process of the old Brussels patrimony: through the selling of the new entity (that is the heightening of the buildings), the owners can dispose of funds to rehabilitate the underneath building and to raise the energy performances. "Fundamentally I believe that the future of the EU as a whole lies in setting up this process of rehabilitation of the existing patrimony through: being able to throw away but it a good way, reconvert, reuse, densification and simplification of our way of living. The architecture is just a part of this process; other factors have crucial importance like mobility and reduction of consumes. At the end it's better less but good than more but not lasting."







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