

Cité Barbusse and Cité de la Motte  
Housing Estates in Aubervilliers,  
Seine-Saint-Denis



Within the framework of a district undergoing urban reconversion, and where Documentation Française (French archives) has recently moved its head office, the Cité Barbusse housing estate (195 housing units) and the Cité de la Motte housing estate (171 housing units) have both undergone rehabilitation works.

Apart from improving the amenities inside the housing units, the works also concerned the facades, a number of the entrance halls and the landscaping around these nine buildings.

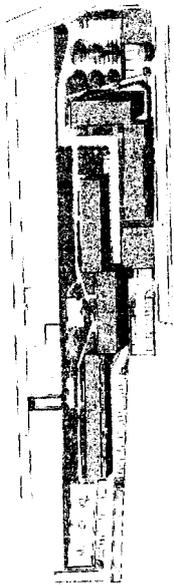
The underlying idea of the works was to change the image of these social housing areas to give the residents a greater sense of pride and respect. This approach led the architect, François Deslaugiers, to partially clad the facades in the Cité de la Motte estate (1970) with a metal finish.

The mosaic finished reinforced concrete of the old facades was replaced by strongly con-

trasting alternating panels of traditional render and stainless steel, punctuated with access balconies clad with "marine" quality plywood and provided with metal balustrades (perforated steel sheet).

Designed to age well, these stamped stainless steel panels provide a satin-finished grooved surface that captures and reflects the sunlight. Laid over rockwool padding, they are attached to horizontal rails (formed steel) and positioned every 1.30 m along the façade (with the bottom of each panel resting on the rail via a joint and screwed in place at the top).

This metal is also to be found on the fences around the garden, the sliding gates giving access and the telephone bollards. Four years on, it is clear that the aim of providing a more residential character to the estate has been successful and achieved by a partial but intelligently thought out restructuring exercise.

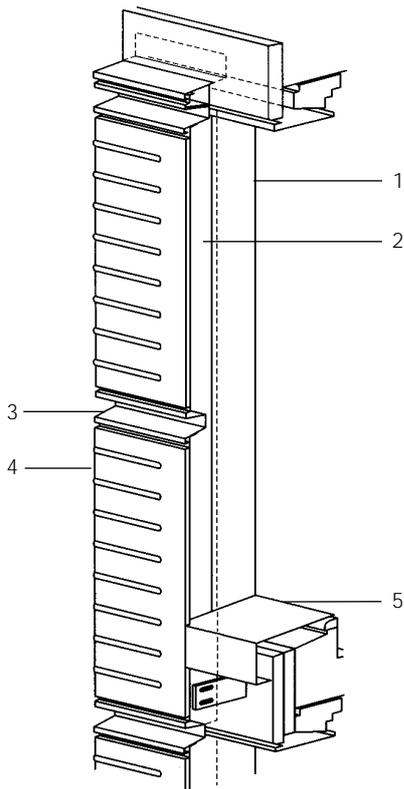


*Within the scope of a light rehabilitation operation, this social housing block was given a stainless steel finish over most of its facades.*



“The panels are stamped from a form, implying set dimensions. But given that, by definition, a building grid is never completely standard, we had to appreciably vary the panel lengths when laying the cladding, although the tops remained fixed.

In order to remove this incompatibility of using stamped panels with variable dimensions, we developed a tooling system, being elements that can be assembled together over their length, but with end components to form the corrugated ends. By using a fairly small module and by varying the number, we were able to create different lengths of panel that had the same appearance as standard stamped panels. If you measure the residual space between the end of the corrugation and the edge of the panel, you can see that the dimensions vary, but the differences are difficult to pick out”. (François Deslaugiers)



Connection details

- 1 Frame
- 2 Closer
- 3 Stainless steel outward lipped channel
- 4 Stainless steel panel, grooved satin-finish surface
- 5 Sill flashing



*Balconies provided with metal balustrades*



*Sunlight seems to shimmer over the grooved satin-finish stainless steel panels.*

“Although the residents showed an initial reticence during the preliminary consultations, they are now highly satisfied with the result, not only because the new façade finishes are well insulated against noise, heat and cold, but also because they are pleased with its modern, horizontal appearance which visibly symbolises their new residential environment”. (François Deslaugiers)

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