

MANUELLE GAUTRAND ARCHITECTURE

LE BELAROÏA HOTEL

MONTPELLIER | | FRANCIA

Scritto Da Manuelle Gautrand Architecture - 24 Ottobre 2019



This is an important project for the City of Montpellier as it holds a strategic position between the city's hyper-centre, characterised by its escutcheon form in plan, and new surrounding districts that have appeared in succession.

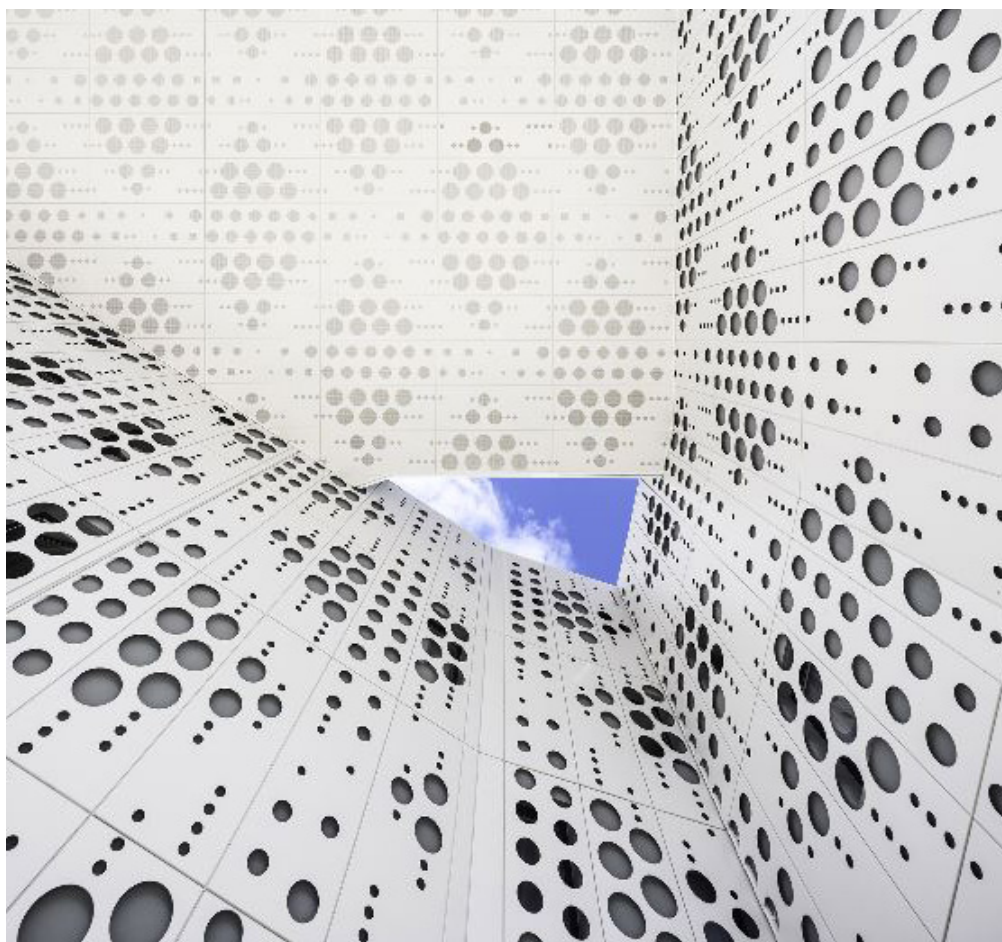
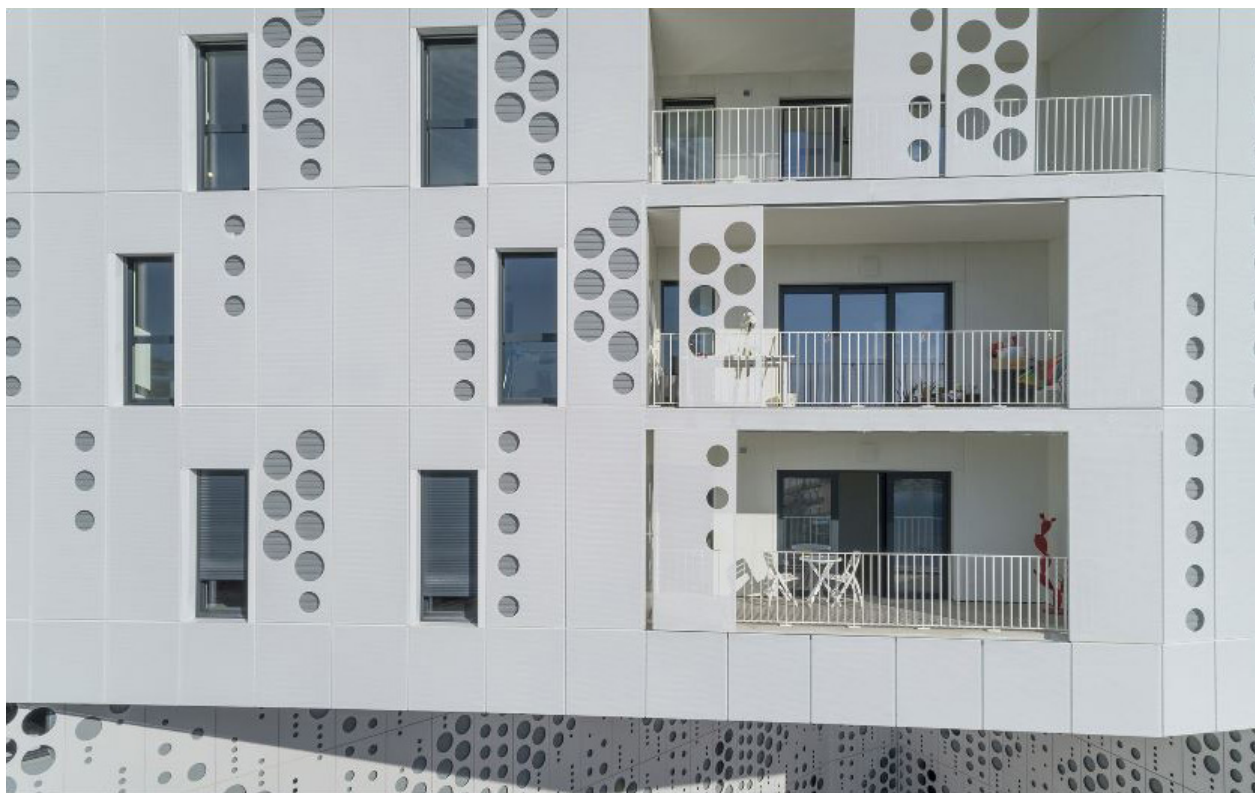
The site is right opposite Montpellier's central Gare Saint Roch train station, and the BELAROÏA is the first building you see as you come out of the station. The north terraces of the station overlook the project. The small site led us to stack up the functions, literally one on top of another, sharing some of the vertical circulation between different elements of the programme.



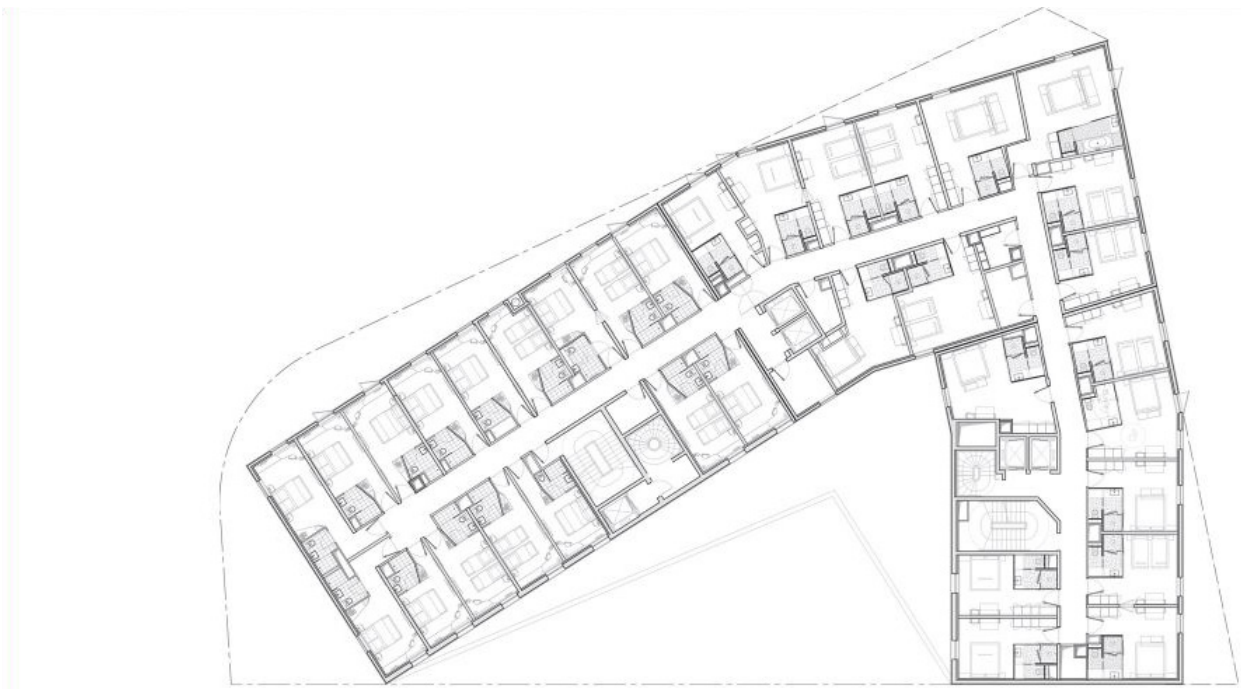








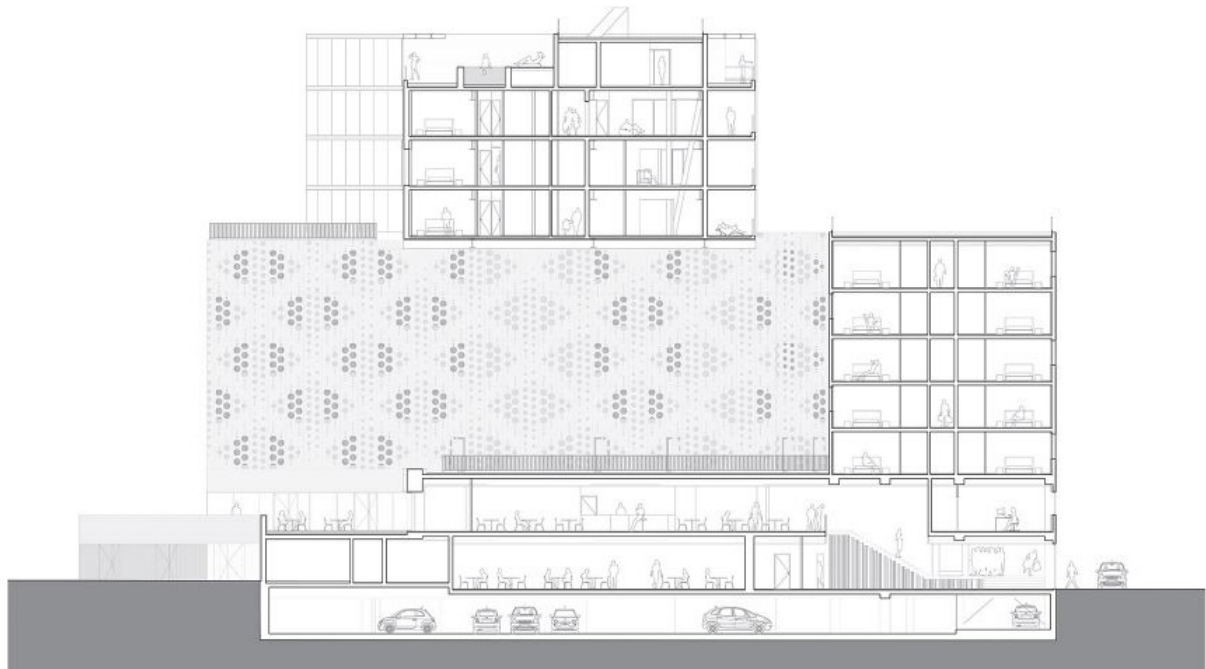
The complex triangular form of the site led us to design a continuous volume with a succession of folds that unfurl along the north and the east facades, topped by a wide bridge along the south facade. At the middle of these folds is set a large hollow volume, orientated to the south and sheltered by the bridge that overhangs it. This magnificent conch shell-like form is an extra element, a meeting place for all the users of the different programmes, a café with a terrace looking out over the train station, which faces us.

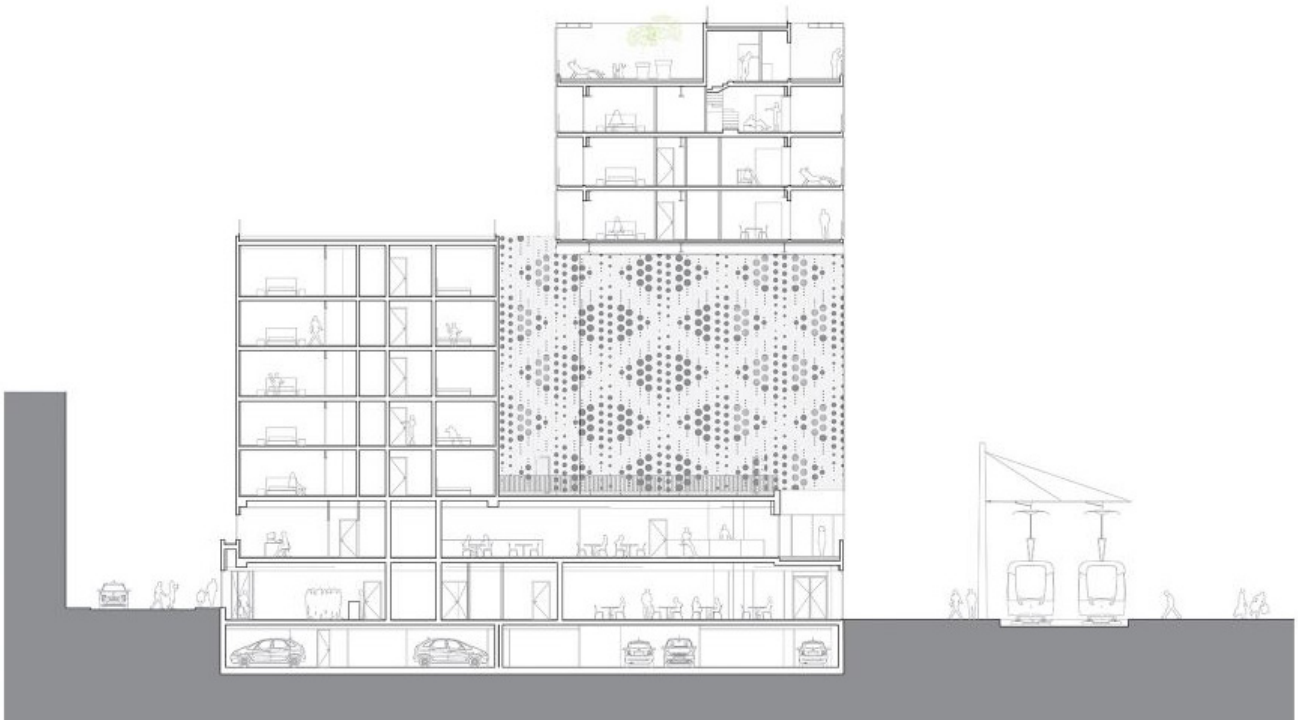




In this particular project, the almost immediate aim was to provide an external space for all the building's users, from each of the different programmes but also from the entire neighbourhood: a neighbourhood characterised by the station and its thoroughfare, by the nearby historic city centre, and by the future programmes that will gradually appear within the development zone.

The ground floor of the project tucks in along the retaining wall of the Pont de Sète road bridge and aligns with the two other edges of the site. It is consequently partially below ground and enclosed along the bridge side, more generously open on the east and south sides, where it incorporates the entrances for each programme.

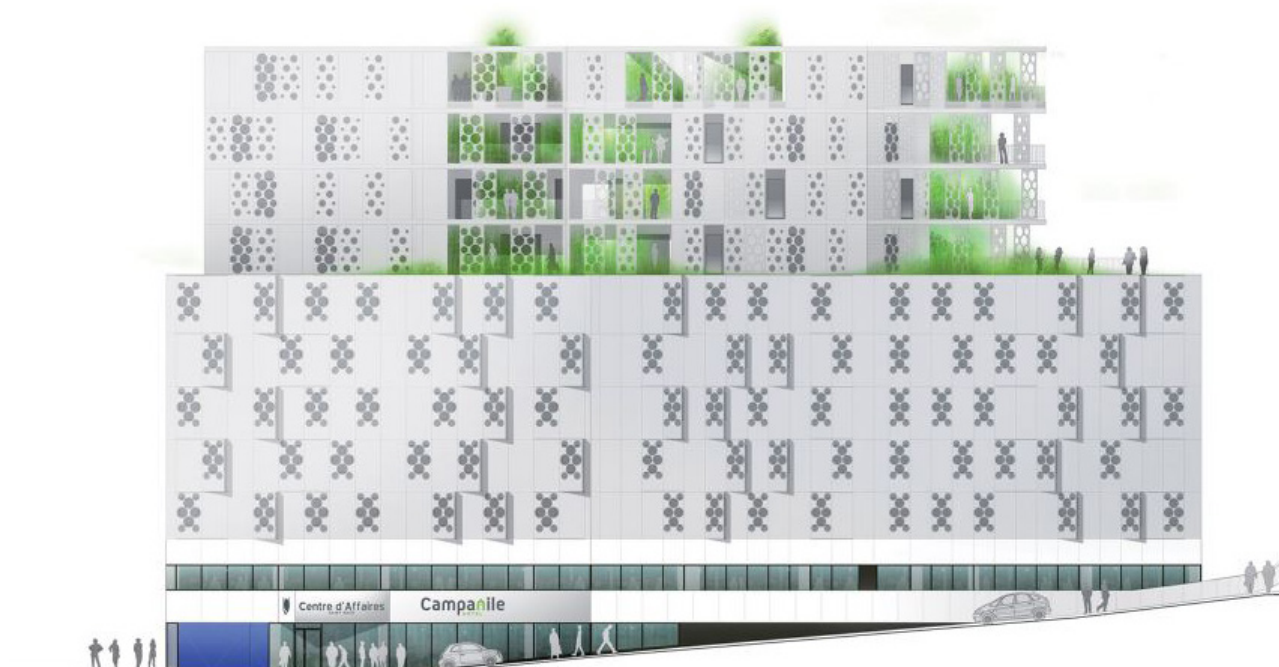
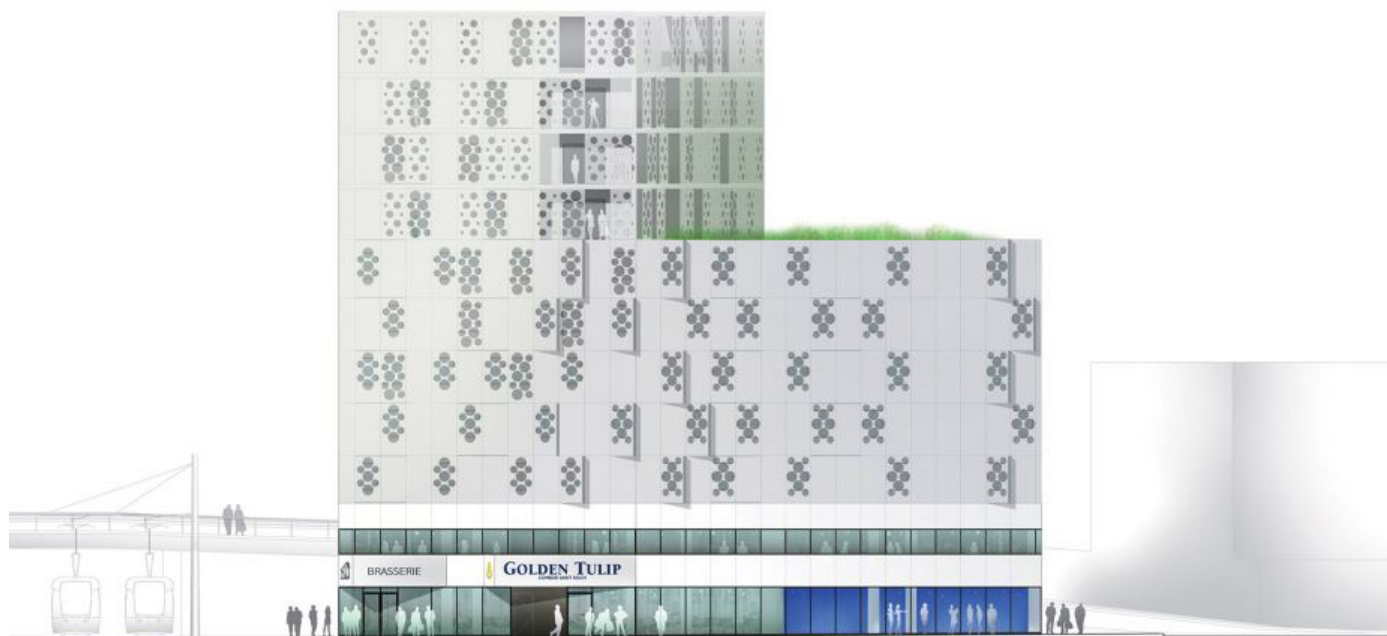




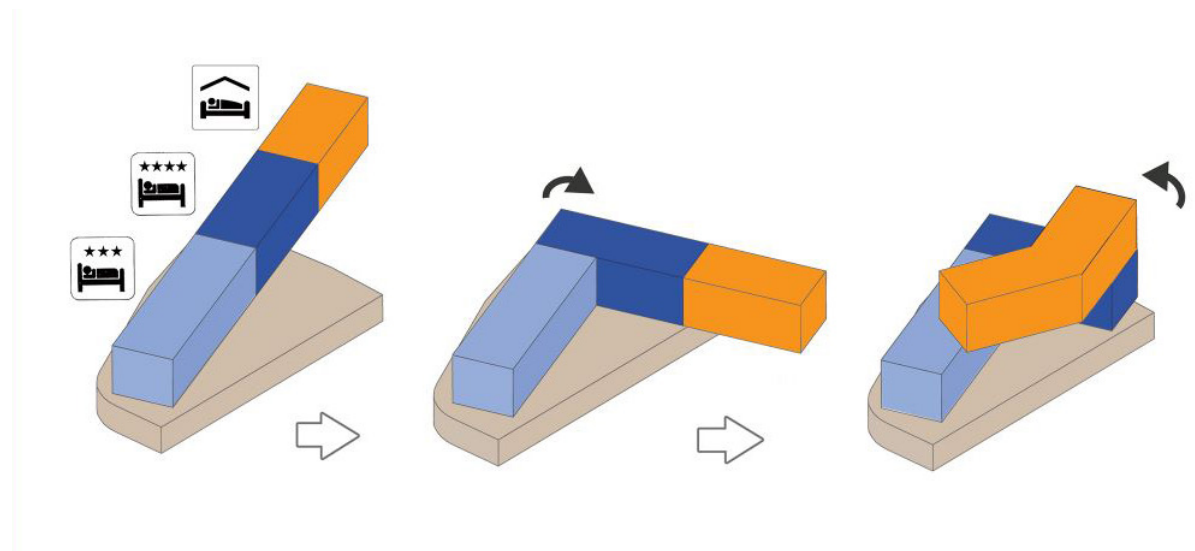
The first floor has a barely reduced perimeter, which, above the entrances to each programme, creates a base of communal spaces: a seminar venue with six meeting rooms, the bar with its magnificent terrace – where breakfasts are also served, and a spa and wellbeing centre.

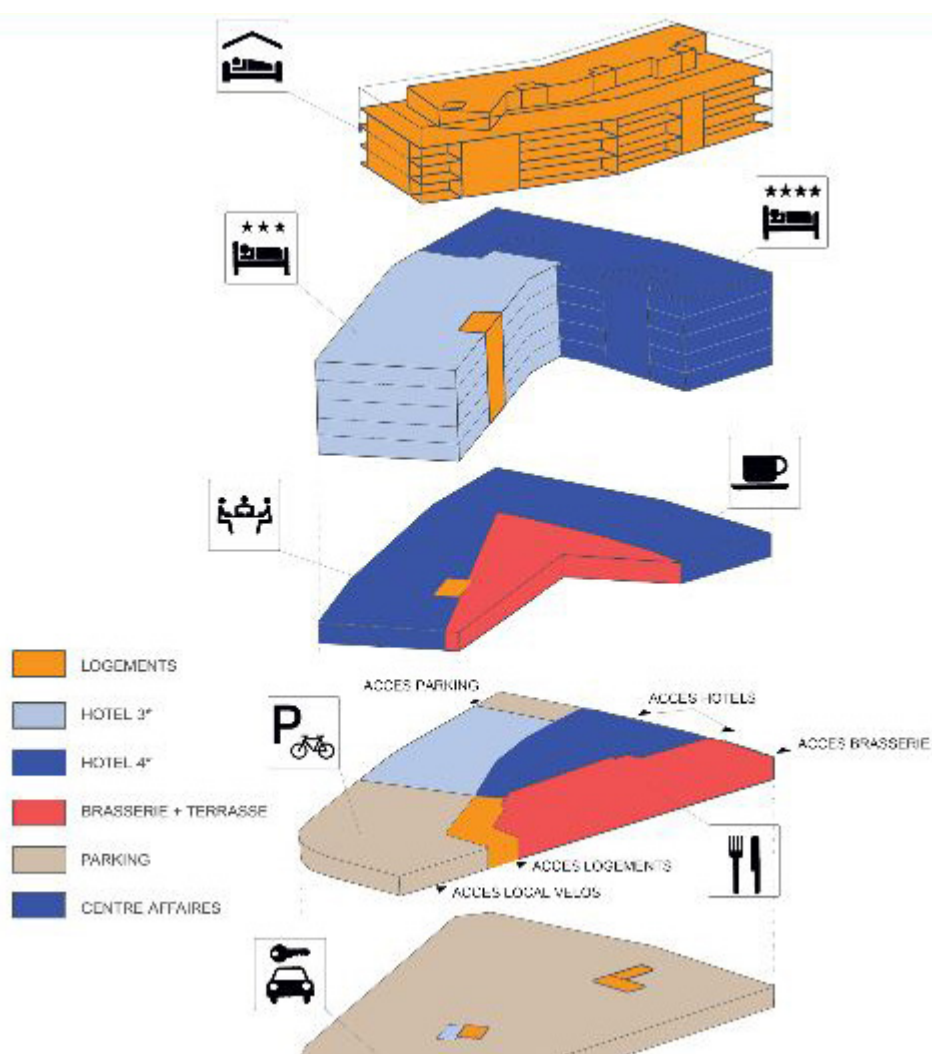
Subsequently the two hotels are found on levels 2 to 7. They are integrated one after the other into a folded continuum, the first fold housing the 82 rooms of the Campanile to the north, the second the 105 rooms of the Golden Tulip. The latter are complemented by several suites over the next 4 floors, some of which are split-level.





In order to mutualise some of the vertical circulation, notably in case of fire, the circulation of the two hotels is inter-connecting in the middle in order to use the same fire escape. Everything in this project has been studied carefully in order to minimise the impact of each constraint, mutualising spaces and services, down to circulation and fire escapes. The project is a three-dimensional puzzle, where each square metre is precious, cleverly used and always assigned to prioritise quality spaces.





Finally, between levels 8 and 11, the last fold of the continuum houses the 12 one- to four-bedroom apartments. Four of the apartments, on the two top floors, are split-level: most of their rooms are on the lower level, with one room (kitchen or bedrooms, by request) on the roof, opening onto an open-air terrace with a swimming pool.

Because of their height (from 21 metres above ground level), the apartments have magnificent views over the city: to the north the historic centre of Montpellier, with the area inland from the Mediterranean in the distance. To the south is a more recent area of the city, with the sea in the distance.

These apartments were not actually part of the programme initially proposed by the City at the time of the competition. But the ambition for diversity mixed with that of creating a lively city block and a symbol of the regeneration of the neighbourhood incited us to incorporate some residential into the project. We didn't want this project to be solely destined for 'transient' users. With the block so close to the station and the anticipation of exceptional views over the city and beyond, it seemed impossible not to give over part of the project to residential. Certainly there wasn't room for many apartments, but it makes it possible to incorporate long-term life and is a reminder that housing, in all situations, remains an essential component of the city: it needs to be everywhere, and should accompany almost any programme.

It is this permanent presence in the apartments, the programmatic Ariadne's thread, that ensures the city's success in meeting today's demands: to be inclusive and accommodate new inhabitants with maximum generosity.

With its great folds, the project does not have main front and back facades, but instead is a continuous loop of successive programmes, all enveloped in the same bright and homogenous material.

High environmental ambitions, among other factors, led us to prioritise very compact volumes, reinforced by an envelope largely insulated on the outside.

All the volumes are covered with a single cladding system to ensure simplicity and unity of form.

On the upper section, this cladding is partly made up of sliding panels to shelter the apartments' terraces, and then on the top floor the generous open-air terraces of the split-level apartments.

CREDITS

Location: Montpellier, France

Completion: 2019

Gross Floor Area: 10,000 m²

Cost of Construction: 19 million Euros

Architects: Manuelle Gautrand Architecture

Contractor: Bouygues Batiment Sud-Est

Consultants

Façade: Ceef

Structural: Verdier

Acoustics: Lasa

Interior Design: Atelier Archange

Photography: © Luc Boegly and © Julien Thomazo, courtesy Manuelle Gautrand Architecture