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ROYAL MUSEUM FOR CENTRAL AFRICA

TRANSPARENCY OF KNOWLEDGE

Tervuren, Belgium

STÉPHANE BEEL ARCHITECTS

The Royal Museum for Central Africa in Tervuren (Belgium) was recently revamped and extended, using expansive glazing to forge a contemporary identity for a museum whose purpose is rooted in the spreading of knowledge.

The design was the brainchild of Stéphane Beel Architects and it encompassed both restoring a neoclassical building - a work from 1910 by Charles Girault - and adding a new glazed entrance hall in the 96-ha park that surrounds the museum and research complex. To improve the thermal insulation and soundproofing in the halls and galleries in the 20th-Century section, the existing glazed façades - rising almost 6 m - were supplemented with double glazing created using Janisol

Primo profiles that had been reinforced to increase stability. The windows at the ends of the gallery are divided horizontally and vertically into three sections, making VISS Fire EI60 and Janisol 2 EI30 profiles the logical choice, especially as the upper section is curved to follow the line of the vaulted ceiling. This glazing also improves fire resistance and the perceived temperature in the halls. The rotunda space has large double windows made with VISS profiles, while the upper lunette has double profiles to recall the appearance of the windows in the galleries. The project also included extending the section of the museum open to the public from 6,000 to 11,000 sq. m.

The new entrance hall is a steel-and-glass construction housing the ticket office, shop, restaurant, restrooms and even a picnic area for children. The VISS transparent façade ensures lovely views of the French garden and the original building, while the Janisol lift-and-slide doors lead directly onto the park, drawing the exterior into the building.

The Museum was already a key research institute and the refurbishment has served to reinforce its work to generate general and scientific interest in Africa, and increase our understanding of this continent and its past, while forging a sustainable future through partnerships.

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