



50 years of the Balexert shopping centre in Geneva

All sails out, set course for the light!

This is a neutral machine translated article, executed with the sole intent of promoting the content to English speakers. The original article has been published in French by Batimag magazine number 5 from 27.05.2021, and all rights are reserved to them. In case of discrepancy, the original French Version shall prevail.



Let the celebration begin: Balexert is celebrating its fiftieth anniversary! A symbolic passage that deserves a real makeover and not just a simple renovation or an additional facelift. For the occasion, the famous Geneva shopping and leisure centre has undergone a major transformation, a complete metamorphosis. The complex, which looked like an industrial hall or airport hangar from the 1970's, is no more. Gone is the central lantern which served as a natural light source. To face the future, Balexert is banking on a clean, qualitative and friendly modernity.



Jean-A. Luque

The new roof is covered with EFTE cushions, a material that has been used to wrap the Allianz Arena in Munich and the Millennium Dome in London, for example.

By Jean-A. Luque

From the outset, the stage was set and the stakes were set. "When a major brand wants to penetrate the Swiss market, it tends to favour Glattzentrum in Wallisellen near Zurich for the German-speaking market. For the French-speaking part of Switzerland, Balaxert is generally the place to go," says Ivan Haralambof, director of the Geneva mall. And we want to remain this reference! "Inaugurated in 1971, time has inexorably passed on Balaxert, despite intense renovations and expansion work carried out over the decades (see "Half a century of expansions and incessant modernisation" on p.16).

We had become a bit old-fashioned," says Ivan Haralambof. But with the transformations we have just carried out for the centre's 50th anniversary, we have brought ourselves up to date. "

Almost 60 million francs were budgeted for this ambitious project, which took less than three years to complete. And nothing was left to chance. In fact, absolutely everything was revised from top to bottom. The aim was to unify and renew the centre, whose various additions were sometimes disparate.

The programme, which is not exhaustive, includes changing the roof and all the floors, bringing in natural light, replacing false ceilings and light fittings, updating the railings and signage, transforming the car park locks, etc.

Attractive and functional, even during construction

It was an exciting, atypical project, as all the transformations were carried out simultaneously with the commercial activities of the centre, which remained open. The work began in October 2018, but no store had to close because of the work," says the director with pride. It was a big challenge to remain attractive under these conditions and not to lose customers. We are happy to have successfully met this challenge, because closing a centre like this for years on end is a major social and economic responsibility. "

Among the countless projects undertaken to transform Balaxert, one of the most spectacular steps was undoubtedly the installation of the new metal framework designed by the architects and



Jean-A. Lucque

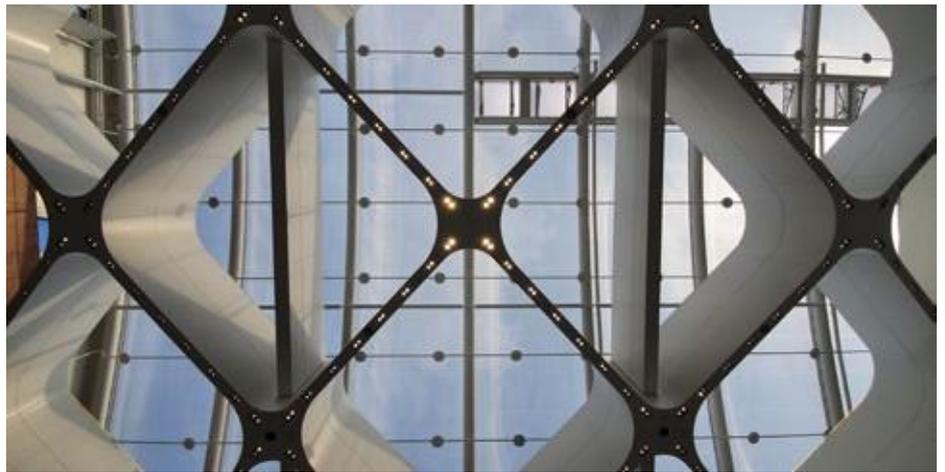
EFTE is a semi-crystalline material, lighter and more efficient than glass. The five layers of EFTE allow for varying transparency and changing light levels.



Blebert

Each of these metal arches weighs 5 tonnes. To install them, the largest mobile crane in Switzerland had to be used, with a telescopic arm of 85 meters!

This is a neutral machine translated article, executed with the sole intent of promoting the content to English speakers. The original article has been published in French by Batimag magazine number 5 from 27.05.2021, and all rights are reserved to them. In case of discrepancy, the original French Version shall prevail.



Jean-A. Lucque

With its pure forms and its luminous floor, Balaxert is beautiful. Particular care has been taken with the lighting, both natural and artificial. The LED strips offer countless variations in colour and atmosphere.

by Hevron SA on the huge central courtyard. The old industrial roof was advantageously replaced by a translucent roof made of ETFE cushions over a total area of 2600 m². Taiyo Europe GmbH was responsible for the engineering, production and installation of the 26 printed ETFE cushions and the corresponding aluminium clamping profiles.

difficult step in terms of logistics. " The work went smoothly, but with a fair amount of anxiety," concedes Ivan Haralambof. In terms of safety, the heavy summer storms added to the stress. And when the arches were flying over the centre early in the morning, I can assure you that we were checking to see if there were any salesmen hanging around in a shop. "

When the 5 tons fly...

These light sails are in fact placed on metal arches, each of which weighs some 5 tonnes. To install these pre-assembled arches," explains Gregory Guerzi, project manager for Balaxert, "we had to use the largest mobile crane in Switzerland, with a telescopic arm of 85 metres and a maximum reach of 100 metres. 100 metres. See these parts being lifted from Avenue du Pailly and put in place 60 m further on, on plinths linked to the existing supporting structure, was impressive. This phase of the project lasted almost four months in the summer-autumn of 2019. Technically, the replacement of the mall roof was the most

Adjustable transparency and brightness

The result is spectacular ETFE cushions. Architecturally, one only has to think of the look of the Allianz Arena in Munich or the Millennium Dome in London to be convinced. But it is above all its qualities as a semi-crystalline material, used as an alternative to glass, that make ETFE particularly interesting. It is lighter than glass, transmits light more efficiently and cost-effectively and is highly resistant to wear.

The five layers that make up the cushions vary according to the light conditions.

HEVRON

FAÇADES HIGH-TECH À HAUTES PERFORMANCES

FABRIQUER DE LA CONFIANCE

CENTRE BALEXERT, GENÈVE

CHARPENTE - FAÇADES - ETANCHÉITÉ
ISO 9001 - 14001 - 18001 - EN 1090
WWW.HEVRON.CH

54377

zanetti
INGENIEURS-CONSEILS

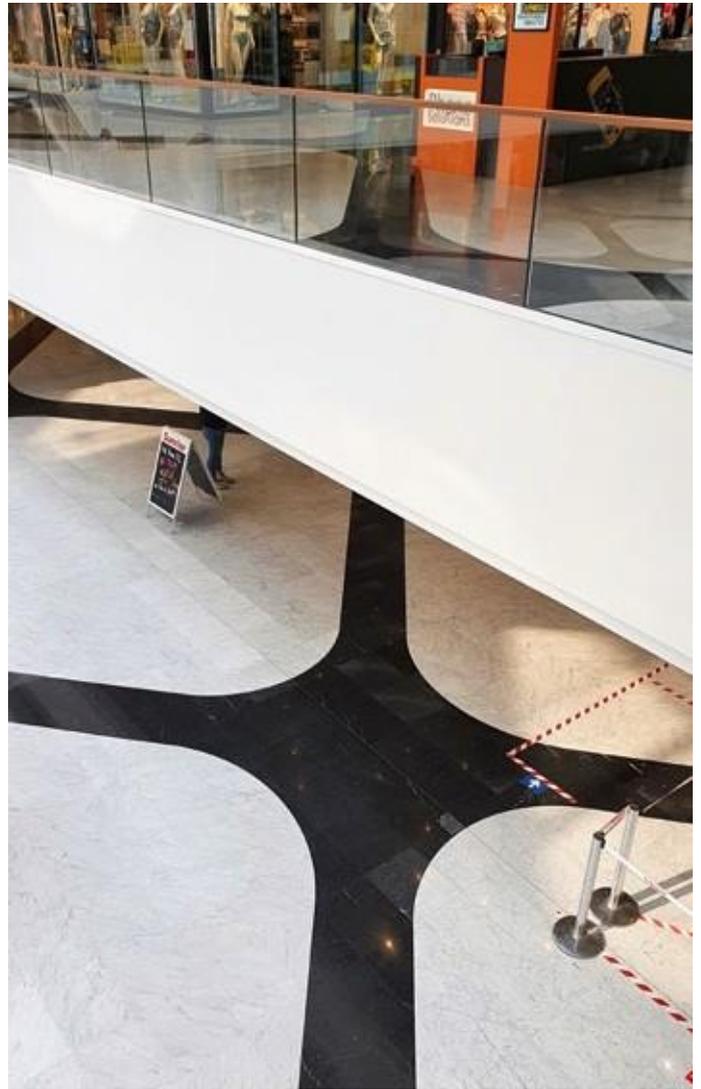
Ingénieurs-conseils
depuis 1977

- électricité
- énergie
- éclairage
- Industrie
- protection incendie
- sûreté

Relooking du Centre Commercial Balexert 2016 - 2021
zanetti Ingénieurs-Conseils | Chemin des Poteaux 10 - 1213 Petit-Lancy | 022 92 92 692 | bureau@zan-ic.ch | www.zan-ic.ch

54330

This is a neutral machine translated article, executed with the sole intent of promoting the content to English speakers. The original article has been published in French by Batimag magazine number 5 from 27.05.2021, and all rights are reserved to them. In case of discrepancy, the original French Version shall prevail.



Jean-A. Luytje

The patterns on the floor, which are also repeated in the ceiling cells, represent an X, a tribute to the original metal structure, a copy of which is still visible in one of the aisles. Also noteworthy is the remarkable work of laying out the tiles, the patterns of which correspond perfectly from one level to the next.

temperature and the position of the sun. The thickness of the cushion and thus its transparency can be adjusted by air pressure. The only drawback to this system is the impressive noise that the driving rain can cause.

Attached to the existing beams, large white sheet metal cells now multiply over the large central courtyard. The effect is striking. Natural light bathes the entire mall. And as if that wasn't enough, new powerful and economical LED lighting is also integrated into the ceiling structure. The electrical work carried out by Zanetti Consulting Engineers has resulted in a varied and subtle lighting and colour scheme.

Signe X

If the new roof is spectacular, what about the complete replacement of the floor over 15,000 m²! The floor is now made entirely of white marble with large black X-shaped patterns, the cells of which are not random

and are in fact a tribute to the original metal structure that still dominates one of the centre's aisles today.

White marble and banana wood for contrasts

As you can imagine, these floors were a real challenge. Xavier Veyrat, General Manager of Masson SA, notes just how difficult this huge project was to carry out: "The main challenge was to carry out the work while the centre was still in operation and open to the public. All the heavy and noisy demolition work had to be carried out at night when the shops were closed. The work had to be done in zones, meticulously, without leaving any traces of dust. Coordination was very important. The layout work was also particularly meticulous so that the pattern on one floor corresponded perfectly to the one on the floor above or below." Marble supplied by Seical, Cermix plaster and mortar, careful finishing... Nothing was too good to be true the new shopping centre.

This is a neutral machine translated article, executed with the sole intent of promoting the content to English speakers. The original article has been published in French by Batimag magazine number 5 from 27.05.2021, and all rights are reserved to them. In case of discrepancy, the original French Version shall prevail.



SEICAL
PIERRES & MARBRES
CARRELAGES
TERRAZZO ÉCOLOGIQUE

« La qualité n'attend pas »

www.seical.ch

Fourniture et Pose
Ponçage, Entretien et Rénovation

54339



JACQUES MASSON SA
CARRELAGES - MARBRES

022 365 48 38
info@jacques-masson.ch
www.jacques-masson.ch

Route de Suisse 95
1290 Versoix

Routede Divonne 48
1260 Nyon

This is a neutral machine translated article, executed with the sole intent of promoting the content to English speakers. The original article has been published in French by Batimag magazine number 5 from 27.05.2021, and all rights are reserved to them. In case of discrepancy, the original French Version shall prevail.



Jean-A. Lupton

The huge banana-wood coloured printed sheet metal veneer around the central hall contrasts with and enhances the giant honeycombs and the dominantly white marble.



Jean-A. Lupton

No detail has been overlooked to make life easier for Balexert 2.0 customers. Streamlined and efficient, the new signage is discreet; nothing to do with the pictograms and the rather crude typography of the past year.

No detail has been overlooked to make the Balexert 2.0 experience as pleasant as possible. New transparent railings with an elegant wood-coloured edging reinforce the impression of brightness of the whole. The wood colour - banana wood to be precise - is a reminder of the printed sheet metal veneer that highlights the central hall and contrasts with the giant cells. The new signage, designed by Moser Design, is clean and effective.

Ahead of schedule and on target

"Two months to go before the end of the work," says the director, "we tell ourselves that the new Balexert is really beautiful and never ceases to attract brands. Of course, we have left our comfort zone and we had to be constantly behind the work. But today, we are very proud: we are ahead of schedule and on track financially. "We'll see you at the festivities and we look forward to the festivities and official the official opening this autumn.

This is a neutral machine translated article, executed with the sole intent of promoting the content to English speakers. The original article has been published in French by Batimag magazine number 5 from 27.05.2021, and all rights are reserved to them. In case of discrepancy, the original French Version shall prevail.

Cermix offers the cleanest, fastest and most discreet solution

Balexert, in Geneva, is the largest shopping centre in French-speaking Switzerland. Over the years, it has even become an institution, a national reference. For its 50th anniversary, Balexert has undergone an exceptional modernisation, a new, brighter face where the floors, in particular, have been a key issue.

This renovation of all the floors was titanic: more than 15,000 m² of surface had to be demolished and prepared. This also meant more than 15,000 m² of factory-cut stone to be laid and floors to be coated with high-performance adhesives and mortars.

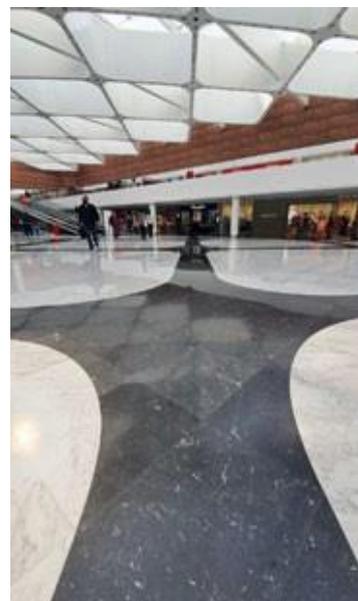
To carry out this exceptional facelift, Balexert called on renowned brands and companies. The most beautiful stones were chosen: Carrara marble. The best specialists were hired: the marble company SEICAL Sàrl and the tiling company Masson & Cie SA. And the best products were chosen: Cermix mortars and adhesives.

Race against the clock

A major challenge had to be met: how to break up all the floors and lay the marble while Balexert remained open every day with its thousands of customers, 120 shops and countless leisure activities. So we had to work at night and very quickly. Especially when it came to redoing the floor in front of the shops. Indeed, between the closing of the business in the evening and its opening the next day, it was a real race against time so that in the morning, the sparkling marble appeared as if by magic.

This is where Cermix's expertise has been particularly useful. Cermiplus Rapid, the quick-setting mortar with improved adhesion, worked wonders. It is true that its characteristics are particularly suited to this challenge. Its curing time is only 2.5 hours and its drying time before use is 6 hours!

Other Cermix solutions, which are just as discreet, clean and fast, were used at Balexert: fibre-reinforced patching (a fast-setting self-levelling agent), Cermicem PAG, Cermicol Extra Flex and Cermifilm (a primer that improves and regulates the porosity of the surfaces). To discover all the characteristics of these high performance products, as well as the complete Cermix range, there is only one address: www.cermix.ch



54375

Talyo Europe
MakMax



UNDER ONE ROOF

54363

SYSTÈME ETFE – TOILE TENDUE – TENSOTHERM®

Viansone SA

Votre spécialiste en systèmes d'extinction contre l'incendie en Suisse romande :
Sprinkler, Déluge, Brumisation, Gaz, Extincteur, Oxyréduction, Engineering

Rue de Veyrot 19 Case postale 56 CH-1217 Meyrin 1 Tél. + 41 22 780 15 15 www.viansone.ch visa@viansone.ch

UNE ENTREPRISE DU GROUPE SECURITAS SUISSE

54329

This is a neutral machine translated article, executed with the sole intent of promoting the content to English speakers. The original article has been published in French by Batimag magazine number 5 from 27.05.2021, and all rights are reserved to them. In case of discrepancy, the original French Version shall prevail.