



BEYOND FLOORING

Press Release



Outstanding in form and function: meet IVC's new Flooring Development Centre in Waregem

Anyone driving along the E17 highway recently near the Belgian town of Waregem will have noticed the revamp of an iconic building. Here, Belgian vinyl flooring manufacturer IVC Group decided to turn a vast complex — known for its angular shapes and large pitched roof structures — into its new Flooring Development Centre. As of February 2019, it will be buzzing with energy from IVC's commercial and design departments as well as its customer-centred flooring inspiration space. The group relied on the expertise of Glenn Sestig to bring the paradigmatic building into the 21st century.



“Working with Glenn Sestig and his team has been an inspiring experience from start to finish”, says Cindy Van Moorlegem, marketing director at IVC Group, as she sits down with the Ghent-based architect to reflect on the successful collaboration that kicked off at the end of 2017. However, modernising the property that now houses IVC’s Flooring Development Centre was not without its aesthetic and functional challenges. Originally designed by architect duo J. Verbauwheide and P. Vandekerkhove in the late 1980s, the Brutalist-style building is not only easily recognisable, it’s also registered as a heritage site. In other words, Glenn Sestig had a double mission: to respect the construction’s original distinctiveness while fulfilling IVC’s contemporary expectations.



The renewal of an icon

“The building’s idiosyncratic shape likely was the result of a specific request from the original client,” Glenn Sestig starts by saying. “A simple look at the surroundings makes that crystal clear. All the other complexes along the E17 highway feature flat roofs and straight shapes, while the property purchased by IVC stands out due to its large pitched roof. It’s truly one-of-a-kind and has become iconic locally. Our main concern was to make the design more contemporary and functional by adding or removing as little as possible to the existing structure.”

IVC’s wish list for this architectural balancing act was very specific. “Our production site and headquarters in Avelgem had become too small to keep up with IVC’s worldwide growth”, Cindy recalls. “This triggered us to move our showroom as well as our commercial and design departments – which house around 100 people



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– to Waregem. Meanwhile, our production, finance and logistics activities remained in Avelgem. The new Flooring Development Centre had to become an inspiring place where customers, designers and architects from around the globe can intuitively discover IVC’s latest designs, innovations and R&D developments. We also wanted to have an auditorium, a training centre and catering zone at our disposal, where people can come together in an informal yet stimulating setting. Meanwhile, boosting togetherness and collaboration was also key requirement for the building’s first and second floors: the new homes of our commercial and design departments, respectively.”

“Our main concern was to make the architectural design more contemporary and functional by adding or removing as little as possible.” - Glenn Sestig

A long-overdue upgrade

Keeping IVC’s extensive wish list in mind, the architects first decided to solve some long-standing issues. “The original structure of the building had stood the test of time,” Glenn explains, “but little had been done over the years to keep its outward appearance up to par. We found the property in quite a desolate state: a time-battered construction with blue-painted windows and a mishmash of cladding materials. The pitched roof, for instance, was primarily made of zinc, except for the top element that literally sticks out. In modernising the building, we turned the roof structure into an elegant whole, clad entirely in zinc and featuring large windows.”





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While the exterior presented various aesthetic challenges, the interior came with a major functional problem to deal with. “Heating the building effectively had been problematic from the moment it was constructed”, Glenn continues. “Because of the numerous open balconies on the inside, the warmth would rise into the air in no time. This left employees and visitors at ground level shivering, and people on top floors gasping. In previous renovation attempts, the interior balconies had been closed using building boards — but to no avail. After exploring our options together with our engineering partner, we decided to keep the balconies closed for acoustic reasons and to install floor heating systems to keep the warmth at ground level.”



“Floor heating is more efficient,” Cindy adds, “because no energy is lost through ducts, and the circuits work at relatively low temperatures. But there are many other elements that contribute to the energy efficiency of our new Flooring Development Centre. These include heat recovery ventilation, a free cooling network, solar panels on the roofs of nearby warehouses, and low-energy LED lighting systems with motion and daylight detectors — to name just a few. In fact, the entire building is eligible for LEED certification, showcasing its ‘Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design’.”

“In modernising the building, a lot of attention was given to energy efficiency and environmental design. This even makes it eligible for LEED certification.” - Cindy Van Moorlegem



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Guiding visitors on a quest of discovery

In addition to modernising the building's aesthetics and functionality, creating an intuitive foot traffic plan was also essential. "There are four major shafts in the building", Glenn explains. "We decided to strip these down to the core — revealing their raw concrete texture, so that they are instantly perceived as the building's main pillars. As such, they serve as the main circulation elements and help optimise the movement of customers, employees and other visitors through IVC's new Flooring Development department."



"From the moment they walk in, visitors embark on a physical customer journey", Cindy adds. "As they wait at the reception desk, for example, visual elements and touch screen installations invite them to learn about the past and prospects of IVC Group. Next, our Innovation Corner allows them to discover our recent flooring innovations and promising R&D efforts. After this, visitors step into an area where they get to know our flooring materials."

"From the moment they walk inside the building, visitors embark on a physical customer journey."

- Cindy Van Moorlehem

Artificial realness

This area has been divided into sections using only materials and design elements. Visitors are intuitively guided from one space to the other, enabling them to discover IVC's portfolio. "For starters," Glenn points out,



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“the IVC Commercial Library features modifiable mood boards and sample storage units mounted onto the stripped, concrete walls. Add to that the coffee corners where visitors can take a break whenever they want, and you get an informal yet inspiring studio-like atmosphere. What’s more, we combined contrasting flooring materials into one harmonious floor pattern that can be adapted to feature new IVC floor tiles, and even installed some of IVC’s flooring materials on the walls for an idiosyncratic touch. We also played with the idea of ‘artificial realism’ by allowing vinyl flooring elements enter into dialogue with the concrete environment provided by the walls and shafts.”

“Each section also exudes its own identity”, Cindy adds. “For example, the IVC Commercial Library has the ambience of a modern flooring materials library targeting a broad audience of international designers, architects and project developers. Meanwhile, the Moduleo House has a more domestic feel and displays flooring materials in a way that highlights attainability and comfort. Furthermore, we gather our B2B brands in the Residential Market Place, inviting buyers to compose their own collections with all materials on hand. This space showcases our residential brands and aims to inspire retailers to present the flooring materials in similar ways in their own stores.”



Functional idiosyncrasy

Providing an inspirational setting is also what guided Glenn Sestig in revamping the first and second floors of the Flooring Development Centre. “Here, the goals of enabling collaboration and ensuring the wellbeing of IVC’s



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employees had to reign supreme”, Glenn explains. “In terms of both acoustics and ergonomics, we made sure that the office areas adhere to the highest standards. My team even followed a number IVC employees as they went about their day-to-day jobs in the former office environment to make sure our design doesn’t impede with how they work and collaborate with each other.”

But it wasn’t just about functionality. “Glenn Sestig and his team successfully gave each floor a different aesthetic identity that fits the teams that will be working there”, Cindy adds. “On the first floor, our commercial teams will feel at home in an office area that plays with greenish tones and contrasting materials that blend harmoniously together. On the second floor, however, dark reddish colours set a more intense tone to provide our creative teams with a stimulating setting that’s made to measure.”

“All in all,” Glenn concludes, “the Flooring Development Centre is a telling example of how a building can tie architecture and materials together into one aesthetic whole that brings a company’s vision to life. In IVC’s case, the building has become a place where the international group can truly showcase its innovative efforts in developing technical, aesthetic, comfortable and durable materials to the entire world.”

Originally designed in	Modernised in	Total floor area	Showroom area
1986 by architecture duo Verbauwhede & Vandekerhove	2018 by Glenn Sestig Architects	5,000m ²	1,250m ²

For more visit ivc-commercial.com

About IVC

IVC is the commercial division of IVC Group, part of Mohawk Industries, Inc. IVC creates carpet tile, LVT and heterogeneous vinyl floors for corporate & office, retail, hospitality & leisure, housing, education and healthcare projects. Founded in 1997, IVC Group is Europe’s leading manufacturer of carpet tiles, luxury vinyl tiles (LVT) and sheet vinyl. With 1,600 employees and 10 production units in Belgium, Luxembourg, Russia and the United States, IVC Group produces over 180 million m² of flooring per year.

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