

## BERCY 2 SHOPPING CENTRE

1987-1990

Paris, France

The supple and aerodynamic form of the building arises from the curves of the motorway junctions surrounding it. The roof, the generating and defining element of the shopping centre, consists of 27,000 perforated stainless steel panels of 34 different sizes.

In Renzo Piano's buildings, the roof always plays a leading role. This is particularly true of the Bercy 2 shopping centre at Charenton-le-Pont, on the eastern outskirts of Paris. The site is in the middle of an infrastructure junction that intersects the Boulevard Périphérique and the A4 motorway. The commission was inherited from another architectural firm, which had already defined the structural grid, provision of accesses, services and parking lots. All these elements could not be modified, together with the schematic division of the interiors strictly modulated to the regulations of the sales spaces. The only element available to the architects' inventiveness was the roof, which also had to have the publicity function of attracting the attention of motorists driving on the slip roads of the surrounding motorways.

The idea was to smooth and round the roof to make it fit the curves of the by-passes like a moulding. The next step was to figure out how to build and assemble such a multi-curved surface. The simplest solution was to use zinc sheets, a common material on the roofs of Paris, but stainless steel was ultimately preferred for the sake of durability. Like the experimental structures that Piano built back in the 1960s, again in this case it was decided to use preformed components. The steel sheets reflect the rays of the sun in a multiple and variegated way, based on their angle, the time of day and season of the year. In this way the covering does not appear an inert mass, but gleams, responds to its environment and changes shape and brightness when viewed by motorists travelling along the highways.

Another factor meticulously studied was the shopping centre's energy consumption. The roof has a ventilated cavity, which slows down the heat exchange with the exterior and helps stabilise the temperature inside, minimising the use of air treatment plants and the shopping centre's energy consumption.

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