

Norblin Plant, Warsaw:
Transformation of a metal goods factory

For decades, Warsaw's city planners have looked to high-rise buildings as their go-to urban development solution. With the conversion of the Norblin plant into a contemporary office and service district, an attractive alternative concept has emerged. Large industrial glazing units, windows, and doors made from Jansen steel systems, offering high heat-insulating properties, contribute to the authentic appearance of the listed factory buildings.

A stroll around the factory grounds of the 2-hectare former „Norblin, Bracia Buch i T. Werner“ metal goods factory in Warsaw's Wola district reveals an industrial history dating back more than two hundred years. Established in 1820 as a bronze factory, the company quickly developed into one of the largest metal goods factories in Congress Poland, and remained as such throughout the Second Polish Republic. Having been nationalised following the end of the Second World War, production resumed in the destroyed factory, but was relocated to a newly constructed plant in the north of Warsaw in 1982. Back then, individual structures within the old plant facility were already listed as protected buildings. However, even their subsequent use as museum premises could not safeguard their condition: when factory ownership changed hands several times in the early 2000s, and plans to tear down the buildings and construct a new residential complex became known, the Museum of Technology was the first to close its doors, followed slightly later by the Printing Museum. The development company, which had been founded in the meantime under the name “Art Norblin”, nevertheless favoured using the premises in a manner whereby the listed buildings would be retained and integrated. Ultimately, these plans could only be realised with the help of the Polish Capital Park Group property fund, with which “Art Norblin” merged.

Steel systems to fulfil high heat and sound insulation standards

The conversion of the factory premises into an urban office and services complex in the heart of the Polish capital was realised in accordance with plans drawn up by local architectural firm PRC Architekci. The top priority during the refurbishment was to retain the original character of the building complex. The retained factory buildings were restored and expanded to include a multi-storey new build, standing high above the surrounding historic

buildings with an imposing glass façade. The single-glazed steel windows of the factory buildings were replaced with new units, reconstructed in accordance with the original historic designs. To achieve this, the architects used steel systems from Jansen, among others. The entrance area to the food court was fitted with Janisol HI fixed glazing units and double doors were installed; while the windows in this area were also realised using Janisol HI. In other buildings, the industrial glazing units were reconstructed using the Janisol Arte 2.0 system. For the internal doors and fixed glazing units, the non-insulated Jansen-Economy 60 steel system was used. In the food court, which is covered by a single-glazed glass roof, small fixed glazing units from the highly heat-insulating VISS façade system were also used as a thermally efficient means by which to establish a boundary between the building and the interior courtyard. Last but not least, for areas requiring a fire protection closure, fire protection doors were produced using the Janisol 2 and Janisol C4 systems.

Steel systems and services speak in Jansen's favour

The structures described provide only a minor insight into the diverse possibilities offered by construction using steel profile systems. With profile face widths between 25 and 40 millimetres and a construction depth of just 60 millimetres, Janisol Arte 2.0, for example, is the first thermally separated steel profile system for industrial glazing units that can offer a diverse range of opening designs with such a slim design. With Janisol Arte 2.0, high insulation standards can even be fulfilled in heritage buildings, while retaining the original appearance. In particular, the ability to reconstruct the historic pivoting sash in a manner that remained true to the original design really impressed the architects. The many services that Jansen offers, above and beyond the mere product, also speak in favour of the use of the company's steel systems. These include the integration of accessories, processing equipment, system tests, documentation, programs for calculations and material requirement planning, technical consultation, and training courses: As such, technical support for architects and metalworkers is guaranteed throughout all construction phases, with a service that is as professional as it is constructive.

200 years old yet still contemporary

Following the completion of the renovation work, a pedestrian zone now connects the factory buildings to an expansive leisure and catering area with shops, restaurants, a food court, an organic market, and a cinema. In the former workshops, 50 of the original machines have been retained – including a 50-tonne machine for manufacturing wires, metal rods, and objects

made of brass and copper. Following its successful restoration, it is now housed in its own new glass enclosure. In this museum, around 400 silver-plated tableware items and other creations can be viewed, which impressively highlight the output of the former metal goods factory.

Project details:

Client: Capital Park SA, Warsaw and
Madison International Realty, New York City

Architects: PRC Architekci sp. z o.o., Warsaw

Metalworkers: Volcano Windows Sp. z o.o., Koszalin/PL (all historic buildings) and Assa Abloy Mercor Doors, Warsaw/PL (new buildings)

Steel profile systems used:

Windows and doors: Janisol, Janisol Arte 2.0, Janisol HI

Fire protection closures: Janisol 2, Janisol C4

Fixed glazing units: Jansen-Economy 50 and 60, Jansen VISS Façade

System supplier: König Stahl Sp. z o.o., NL Warsaw

System manufacturer: Jansen AG, Oberriet, Switzerland

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