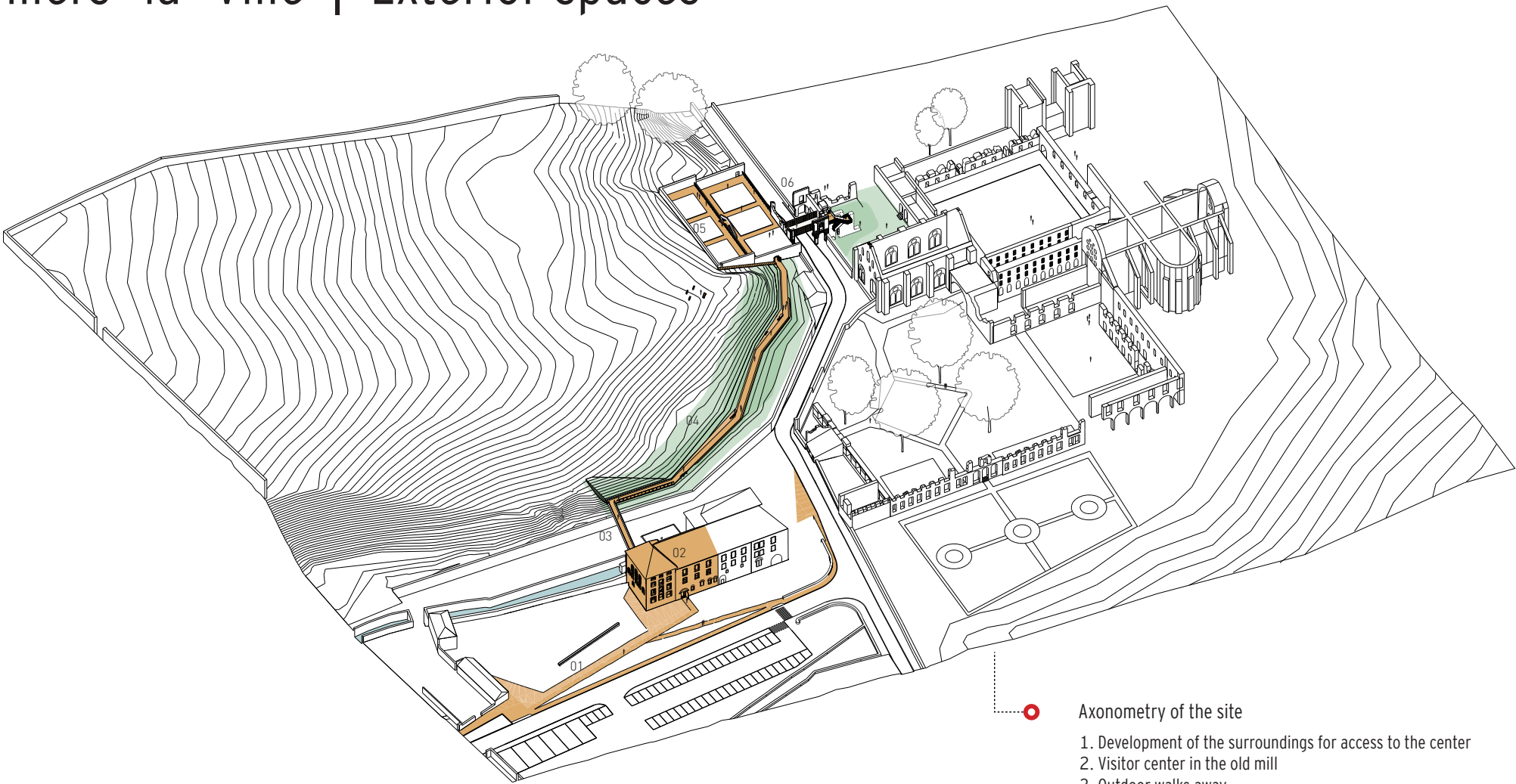


VISITOR CENTRE Abbey site of Villers-la-Ville | Exterior spaces

Binario architectes

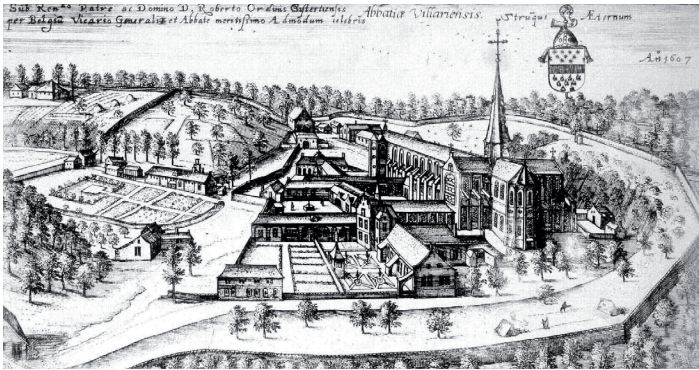
Architect	Binario architectes
Landscape designer	Du Paysage
Scenography	L'Escaut architecture
Typology	Restoration and rehabilitation
Location	Villers-la-Ville (BE)
Client	IPW
Area	780 m2 + outdoors
Cost	3.841.523 EUR
Construction data	2013-2016
Engineering	BESP + JZH & PARTNERS SECA BENELUX
Photos by	François Lichtle

Throughout the years, the Villers-la-Ville abbey site had lost its logic and unity – divided and savagely crossed by a national road – making it hardly legible as a homogenous whole and being solely reduced to the ruins of the holy yard. This incoherent and chaotic layout led to the creation of a masterplan focusing on reuniting the cistercian site. Unlike the former entry which proved incoherent and out-of-place – as it was directly situated in the heart of the ruins – , the new visitors center – located in the old mill and containing several facilities such as a shop, a restaurant, lavatories and offices – offers a solid starting point for the visits and leads the path to a progressive discovery of the ruins. The journey winds through the mill, past the newly rebuilt paddle wheel in corten steel which produces electricity that partly covers the needs of the center. Then, it reaches the opposite hill by a new footbridge, passes through the garden and over a second bridge before finally heading down into the ruins. These sequences, albeit accessible throughout the site, aim at remaining true to the subtleties of the former abbey vestiges and spaces. Moreover, while the tone is set gradually through landscaping and a consistent range of sober materials revealing and magnifying the inherent architectural qualities of this Belgian exceptional heritage – such as corten steel, concrete aggregate, veneer concrete and rammed concrete, as well as wooden paths for bridges both inside and outside of the mill –, a climactic point is reached when, from the new vantage points, breathtaking views of the abbey unravel before the visitors.



Axonometry of the site

1. Development of the surroundings for access to the center
2. Visitor center in the old mill
3. Outdoor walks away
4. Scenic paths in the hill
5. Pharmacy, garden
6. Pharmacy-infirmary: descent into the ruins



/ Engraving 1607

/ Photos of the existing site



Visitor Centre at the abbey site of Villers-la-Ville | Binario architectes (architecture); Dupaysage (landscape design); L'Escaut architecture (scenography) | Category B – Exterior Spaces