

# The confluence of natures in the Toison d'Or

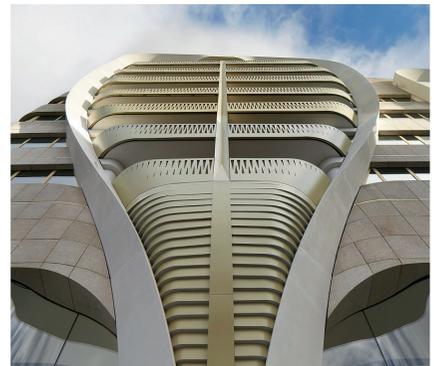


The Toison d'Or project, designed by the Amsterdam chapter of the massive UN Studio network and awarded the BSLC Shopping Award in 2016, is not your usual hybrid project. On paper, it's a typical residential block with a retail space podium. But anyone passing through the Toison d'Or avenue in Brussels cannot help but marvel at the execution.

From afar, the standard building block facade is notoriously broken up by the majestic balconies. Framed as though they were standalone pieces, their dramatic curves and jutting forms draw your eye in, almost to the point as to camouflage the core of the building. The interface between these pieces and the classically straight remainder of the building is accomplished with curving that seems to suggest a warping made by the meeting of these two lines of thought. As for the retail podium, spaces like the Apple Store count on a very large window display space, providing the illusion of a structure within a structure.

The building blocks for this building block are made out of an increasingly popular choice: granite. In particular, the mellow tone of Yellow Vila Real granite, acknowledged for its heat conservation.

The portuguese company involved in supplying and assembling this ornamental stone found a



unique set of challenges in adapting this raw material to the shapes demanded. The cutting of the stone was conducted on 5-axis CNC machine, and a sandblasted finishing was applied to give the stone a smooth texture. As for assembling the materials themselves, extra care was taken in the support of the huge balcony pieces – as they were almost 5 feet apart from the concrete structure, and additional metallic support was affixed to the stone.

This is one of many projects involving companies associated to ANIET – National Association of the Extractive and Manufacturing Industry – which was founded 42 years ago with the mission to propagate this typically portuguese culture of mixing

tradition and innovation in the rock industries, and promoting the demand for materials that already export 70% of its production. Within the extractive and manufacturing sector, the ornamental rock subsector represents half of the total export value.

The main advantages that helped earn this standing refer to the union between innovating technologies and a tradition in stonework mastery. On the other hand, the European manufacturing standards are rigorously achieved, ensuring quality and assurance for every material, all branded with the CE designation. The Toison d'Or itself stands as a spiritual companion to our industry's profile, one more symbol of a joining of two narratives in the very heartland of Europe.