



WORLD WIDE WEAVE

Golden veil

The Principal Courtroom of the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg

Sophisticated shapes, created in noble fabrics and elegant materials, have always been an expression of self assurance. In fashion, the crinoline is a timeless symbol of style and elegance, of discreet concealment and overt presentation. Perhaps it was this range of expressiveness that inspired the French architect Dominique Perrault in his design for the ceiling cladding in the principal courtroom of the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg. Like a colossal, overhanging crinoline, a multilayered golden cowl floats beneath the four completely glazed facades. The complex geometry and noble aesthetics of this protective canopy called for much more than conventional materials could possibly provide. Once again, Perrault found the perfect solution in a metallic architectural fabric made by GKD – Gebr. Kufferath AG. Using the gold-coloured anodized spiral mesh type Escale 5 x 1, he applied his reductive design vocabulary to create the magic of the veil.

For over 50 years now, the European Court of Justice (ECJ) has been seated in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. In 1972 – just in time for the first expansion of the European Community – it moved to its own home on the Kirchberg Plateau. There, numerous European institutions as well as various banks, authorities, and cultural and economic institutions form the complex nerve centre of today's European Union with its 27 member states. The extension of the European Court of Justice initiated in 2002 ranks as the most expensive construction project in the history of the country. Two slender towers, 106 meters high, form a landmark which is visible from afar.

These golden shimmering sculptures owe their visual fascination to an anodized aluminium mesh, specially developed for the project by GKD, with zigzag edging that was installed between the window panes in frames also coloured gold. The towers are connected via an underground passage to the original Palais de Justice building, which, after extensive removal of asbestos, has now been completely refurbished and extended.

Gigantic custom-tailored feature

Perrault encircled the old structure of the Palais with a two-storey ring of offices on 14 meter high stilts. Eight glass bridges afford the judges direct access from their offices in the ring to the old building, which is now the new core of the complex. The lower floor is reserved for the new principal courtroom, designed to accommodate 40 judges and 280 spectators under its glass roof. The structural highlight of the courtroom is the gigantic installation of a translucent, golden shimmering, tent-like suspended ceiling that allows the external observer only a veiled glimpse of the trials taking place within. Alone the scale of this circular, three-dimensional construction sets new standards: approx. 10 meters high, up to 19 meters wide and some 28 meters long. 40 trapezoid-shaped mesh panels unfold and overlap from a cup-shaped centre to form a majestic umbrella with parts that seems to float in space. Perrault designed these panels using the spiral mesh Escale 5 x 1 – a metallic fabric made of anodized aluminium spirals and connecting rods. There are practically no limits to the length and width in which this material can be produced. Theoretically, the individual spirals that make up the mesh can be endlessly connected to each other to follow the lines of all conceivable geometries. In an exhaustive search for the perfect solution, Perrault collaborated with GKD to define the exact gold tone and surface properties he wanted for his veil in Luxembourg. Because of the three-dimensionality of the structure, each mesh trapezoid – and

consequently each individual spiral and connection – has a different length, and furthermore the trapezoids are all differently shaped. The mesh panels vary in size from 5.65 to 18.35 meters in length and from 1.10 to 4.50 meters in width. In just two weeks, but with painstaking precision, a total of 1,387 square meters of custom-tailored Escale mesh were attached to the multilayered ring substructure using inserted flat profiles and spring hooks.

Shimmering canopy

Perrault first discovered the particular attraction of metallic architectural fabrics – their textile-like suppleness and their optical permeability – in the early '90s, and has been using the material ever since to express endless variations of his leitmotif of cloaking. In the prestigious object in Luxembourg, too, the reflective metallic skin maintains an ongoing dialogue with the light falling on it and with its surroundings. The mesh seems to dissolve the veiled courtroom, giving it a certain presence of its own while at the same time allowing it to communicate with the surrounding ring structure. With this fascinating interplay of sophisticated past and fashionable present, Perrault imitates a veil, draping the metallic fabric like an airy skin and an elegant piece of clothing with a truly unique aesthetic impact. The result is a shimmering canopy for the principal courtroom of the European Court of Justice that, depending on the angle of viewing and the context, reflects the ambiguity of the place – its transparency and at the same time its opaqueness, a place of hope, and of disappointment. Like the seductive magic of an airy dress – it is elegant and appealing, and utterly irresistible.

5.348 characters incl. spaces



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GKD – WORLD WIDE WEAVE

As a privately owned technical weaver, GKD - Gebr. Kufferath AG is the world market leader in metal, synthetic and spiral mesh solutions. Four independent business divisions bundle their expertise under one roof: Industrial Mesh (woven metal mesh and filter solutions), Process Belts (belts made of mesh and spirals), Architectural meshes (façades, safety and interior design made of metal fabrics) and Mediamesh® (Transparent media façades). With its headquarter in Germany and five other facilities in the US, South Africa, China, India and Chile – as well as its branches in France, Spain, Dubai and worldwide representatives, GKD is close to markets anywhere in the world.

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Photo 1: Like a colossal crinoline, the multilayered golden cowl floats over the heads of those present.



Photo 2: The reflective metallic skin maintains an ongoing dialogue with the light falling on it and with its surroundings.



Photo 3: The elegant ceiling cladding of the Principal Courtroom is made up of 1,387 square meters of made-to-measure Escal mesh.

Photos 1-6 © GKD/ Perrault Architecte

We will be happy to send you the desired images in printable resolution by e-mail.

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Photo 4: The shimmering canopy is a distinctive combination of sophisticated form and elegant material.

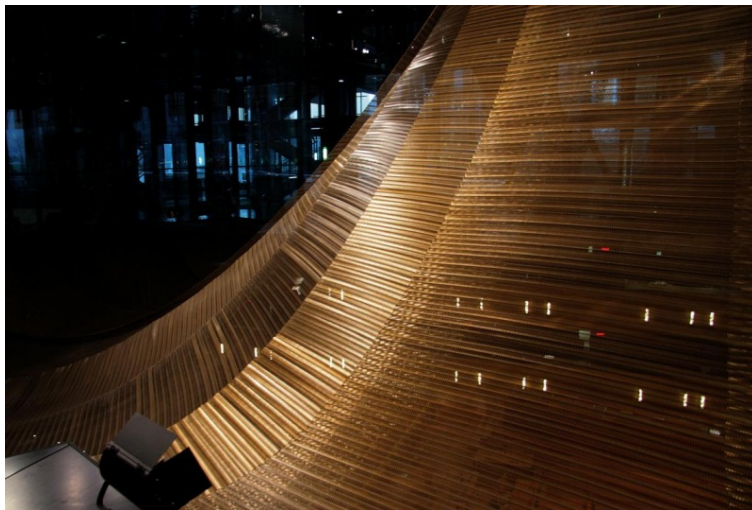


Photo 5: The trapezoid-shaped mesh panels seem to float in space.



Photo 6: The suspended ceiling affords only a veiled glimpse of what is going on inside the courtroom.

Photos 1-6 © GKD/ Perrault Architecte

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