

“The difference is in the
refinement of the door”

Philippe Samyn

Philippe Samyn, Architect & Engineer,
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Slenderness and strength in balance

Secondary elements boost primary function

Every architect knows the famous axiom from Louis Sullivan. Form follows function. And every architect also knows the challenge of bringing that saying into practice. The desire to create a sleek and interesting design must be met with an equal consideration for practicality. It is in striking that perfect balance that you make a winning design.

Belgian architect Philippe Samyn, of Samyn and Partners, found this balance when creating a new fire station in the city of Charleroi. The fire station houses 48 fire trucks which enter and exit at high (and lifesaving) speeds. So the doors are a crucial component of the design. In fact, Samyn identifies the doors as the “the key item of concept” of the final building.

“There are many suppliers who can give you good doors. The difference is in the refinement of the door. Technically and aesthetically. I like refined details and it has to fit with the characteristics of the site,” Samyn says. By finding a door that fit both

his vision and the functional requirements, Samyn was able to craft the building around it as a whole. Defending the specifications of the door was easy because it was the best door for the job, and just happened to add a quality of style. According to Samyn, “our client and the contractor put some more money on this very important item to make sure that the global system would be good.”

The doors allowed Samyn to master the aesthetic of his building down to the finest details. The appearance and functionality of Charleroi would have been drastically different if a door that was not as slim, weather-resistant or fast moving had been installed. Aesthetically it would have failed to live up to expectations and reduced functionality would lose precious seconds in the race to save lives. Specifying details, such as doors, and integrating them from the onset supports a more holistic and realized design from ideation to implementation.

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