

## Challenging wood in wet rooms

Simple, fast and safe - from the drain of the shower to the surface of the wall - wedi designs bathrooms of a monastery

**The Trappist Monastery, an ancient building in Chimay, Belgium, has been a place of prayer and work for the monks of Scourmount since 1862. For visitors who want to share the peace of the monks, a wing of the venerable building, known as the "hostel", is always open. Each of the 60 rooms has a private bathroom, of which 20 have recently been refurbished. The monks decided with a complete, all-round renovation in order to prevent water damage from the old, worn-out drains and pipes. In addition to the new technology, an another, very important aspect needed to be taken into account: the ambience of this very special building had to be preserved. The wooden substructure in the bathrooms had to be protected from moisture with insulation ensured so that the accommodation, like the rest of the monastery, became a place of peace and quiet. Martin Delwart and Serge Urbain, two employees of the client took on the project and implemented it step by step. It soon became clear that the construction of the wooden substructure did not allow for genuine natural stone finish. In search of an equally aesthetic alternative to the blue stone of Hainaut, the builders came across wedi. The products of the Emsdetten based company do not only meet all the building requirements, but thanks to their natural stone look, the carbon black design surfaces of the wedi Top Line harmonize perfectly with the ambience of the monastery.**

### **The challenge - waterproof showers on wood**

Due to the age of the building, the water pipes and drains were badly worn. There was therefore no way around a complete renovation in accordance with the guidelines of the EU standards. In order to integrate everything professionally, the architect Pascale Leroy raised the floor of the showers. The special feature: the structure was to be constructed of wood, meaning that if tiles were to be laid on it, they would have had to be decoupled from the structure as well as the subfloor to avoid cracks and fissures. This is because there is inevitable movement in

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wood, both in the built structure as well as in the wooden subfloor. Olivier Huart, planner of the commissioned company SPIE, could not find a tiler in the area who wanted to take on this challenging project, so he researched for an alternative technical solution and came across wedi. wedi substructure elements made of extruded polystyrene foam seemed to be made for the requirements of the monastery: "They are waterproof, decoupling and insulating," explains Roel Beernaert, technical consultant at wedi. As the Emsdetten based family-owned company was unknown to the planner, Roel presented the suitable products: "Our barrier-free showers are easily adaptable to the individual conditions of the rooms, easy to install and can be used by people of all ages," explains Roel Beernaert. He demonstrated the watertightness of products and the safe protection they offer for the sensitive wooden substrate with a quickly assembled, self-made water box made out of wedi building boards and bonded together with wedi 610 adhesive sealant. "As our products do not only serve as substructures but are also decoupling, the elements could have been tiled as originally planned. I have however, also introduced Martin Delwart and Serge Urbain to our Top design surfaces as alternatives to conventional tiles, which are not only quick to process but are also easy to install. The two were thrilled by the opportunity to get everything needed from a single source," he says.

## **wedi as a complete solution**

During the renovation of the first bathroom, Roel Beernaert was on site to provide advice and assistance to David Audain's team of craftsmen and trained them on how to install wedi products safely and easily. A precisely tailored wedi Fundo drain substructure was used between the wooden beams of the floor construction to guarantee accurate aligning and support of the drain in the ever-moving wooden floor. After the precise installation of the drain, the floor-level Fundo Primo shower element was installed. The big advantage: a precise gradient is integrated into all wedi shower elements during manufacturing, and they are also made of XPS, hence provide reliable protection for the substrate against moisture. In order to secure the remaining floor, the team of craftsmen laid wedi building boards on the entire bathroom floor. Since the material is not only waterproof, but is also decoupling and insulating, all requirements of the client were fulfilled – simply with just one medium.

## **Aesthetic and safe**

After the delicate wooden floor was protected from moisture, the walls and floors

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of the bathrooms had to be designed to fit the atmosphere, both aesthetically and functionally. Here too, the choice was wedi – specifically: seamless design surfaces of the wedi Top Line, which offer a stylish, modern alternative to traditional tiles. In order to cover wedi shower elements optimally, a corresponding design surface, the wedi Fundo Top was selected. Both its size and its gradient are perfectly matched to the corresponding XPS shower element. wedi Top wall elements are ideal for lining walls and floors both inside and outside the shower. Despite their large format, they are lightweight and easy to install. The walls of the shower were covered with wedi building boards in advance to provide waterproofing, decoupling and insulation as well as to form a perfect base for Top wall surfaces. The joints of the building boards were bonded with wedi 610 adhesive sealant, and reinforced with a self-adhesive fibre mesh tape. wedi Top wall surfaces were then direct bonded also with wedi 610 adhesive sealant and a mildew-free silicone in a suitable colour was used to seal the joints between the individual surface elements. Here too, time is saved compared to conventional tiling and waste was not an issue either. The surplus of the trimmed wedi Top wall surfaces was "recycled" in a sensible way – the craftsmen used them as skirting boards. As wedi Top design surfaces are completely coloured, the material forms a stylish transition between the floor and walls. The wedi Top Line however also convinces with its functionality: the high-quality material has a particularly pleasing natural texture and is pleasantly warm to touch. As it is non-slip and antibacterial, it ensures a particularly safe shower experience and increases the hygiene in the bathroom. In terms of colour design, the owners decided with carbon black. The natural stone look of Top design surfaces is reminiscent of the old Belgian Bleu stone tiles and hence fits wonderfully into the ambience of the monastery.

Builders and craftsmen alike benefited from wedi products in many ways during this project. The safe and practical complete solutions from a single source and the sophisticated product features have considerably simplified and accelerated the installation on the construction site. Despite pandemic restrictions, all work got carried out as planned. Now, that a total of 20 bathrooms have been successfully renovated, all parties involved are beyond satisfied. The "hostel" within the Abbey of Scourmont is now open again to all who want to indulge themselves in the seclusion of the Trappist monastery.

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## About wedi

The wedi Group, based in Emsdetten, is a leading manufacturer of innovative system solutions to customise the design of bathrooms and wet rooms during renovation or new building work. With the invention of the building board, Helmut Wedi, laid the foundations for the company success story in 1983. The globally active system provider with production sites in Germany and the USA, employs more than 500 people across the group and is represented in over 50 countries. The sector innovator is currently in its second generation, run by Stephan Wedi and Fabian Rechlin. The system provider specialist regularly brings new products and clever innovations onto the market which are perfectly coordinated and can be of use as individual pieces or combined simply, quickly and safely into a complete system which is 100 percent watertight. The range covers complete construction systems, sophisticated floor-level shower systems, exciting design elements and aesthetic design surfaces, as well as practical system accessories and innovative customer-specific customised modular constructions – with a high degree of prefabrication and integrated technology.

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## Images



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The Trappist Monastery in Chimay, Belgium dating back to 1862, currently offers a home to 13 monks. A wing of the monastery is available as an overnight accommodation for visitors.



A wedi drain substructure element was used for the floor-level showers. The craftsmen installed the Fundo Primo shower element on the top of it. The floor around the shower is laid with wedi building boards to protect the delicate wooden floor from moisture.



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The Fundo Top design surface is optimally matched to the Fundo Primo shower element. It has a matching precise slope and recess for the drain cover.



The owners have chosen carbon black wedi Top design surfaces, as both the colour and the texture are reminiscent of the old Belgian Bleu stone tiles. The surplus of the design surfaces has been cut into skirting boards and hence forms a stylish transition between the floor and walls.



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Fast force: the team of three craftsmen was able to renovate a full bathroom with the wedi shower element, building boards and wedi Top design surfaces within a day.

**All pictures: wedi GmbH**

**The pictures are available for download here:**

<https://www.bluemoon-cloud.de/s/WrBEEAZ9DagKxf5>