The Calce incineration plant
Although domestic-refuse incineration plants have been re-baptised more reassuringly as “energy recovery facilities”, they still attract increasing local-community opposition. Their architectural quality could well play a role in making them more acceptable. In fact, there is a real risk of obstruction of the NIMBY (“not in my back yard”) variety. This originally American syndrome, now well-rooted in France, would have refuse treatment always carried out elsewhere, far from one's own doorstep.

Exactly this phenomenon had to be confronted when planning the construction of a 22 tonnes/hour Energy from Waste (EfW) facility in Calce, near Perpignan, in southern France. Winners of a design and construction competition, entered in association with Cydel (TIRU Group), architects Luc Arsène-Henry Jr. and Alain Triaud proposed clothing the already undulating facades of the building with metal “bands” of even more flowing lines. “The plant must be beautiful, because it represents a proof that society is looking after you. It’s no longer necessary that it declare its industrial purpose, since its advanced technical nature can nowadays be assumed. A sports car shows its styling, not its engine.”

Point taken. With its back against the rock, combining bold artistic gesture and suggested traces of the past, the new centre

Located amongst the vines, the plant is dressed with glass and a glinting stainless steel skin of an overall surface area amounting to 2.47 acres.
stretches over 1,500 metres. The champagne-coloured stainless steel helps the building blend with the ochre-coloured scrubland soil, making its presence more acceptable. To echo the local geology, the site has been laid out with landscaped embankments and a béton brut (rough, exposed concrete) base. The effect is complemented by appropriate planting.

With 10,000 m² of panelling, this use of coloured stainless steel constitutes a first in terms of sheer scale. The 0.5-mm-thick metal sheet is coloured by a chemical-immersion and electrolysis process. The subcontractor who manufactured the tiles developed the 100 necessary modules, of an

The use of “scales”, fixed according to wind direction, gives great freedom of shape to the building skin.
Each strip of panels is attached to the building structure by a modular set of galvanised-steel frameworks.