PREFARENZEN 2025

A glimpse behind the façades of modern architecture

PREFARENZEN

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For reasons of legibility, no gender-specific terms are used.
Any personal references that are only in the masculine form refer to men and women equally.

Creating New from Old

We can always create something new from the old, whether it be materials, experiences, or knowledge. When creating state-of-the-art buildings and technologies, we also draw on a rich fund of tradition and heritage.

As in the past, innovative living concepts that create spaces and vibrant communities are emerging. These approaches promote togetherness and offer flexible use options that meet the modern age's demands.

One particularly relevant aspect is the renovation of existing buildings. This is where the art of clever building comes into play: by combining traditional craftsmanship with modern materials and pioneering technologies, we can save resources and preserve beauty. This is how we are impressively shaping the future of architecture without losing respect for the past.

The same respect we show for the environment. Fortunately, we are living in a new era where sustainability and innovation are closely intertwined. In this context, our PREFARENZEN demonstrate how energy-saving structures, eco-friendly innovations, and eco-friendly materials can blend seamlessly.

Looking ahead, PREFA is proud to be an innovative company that pioneers new trends and actively shapes the industry. Particularly notable are our developments in the solar sector: the solar roof tile, the solar mounting systems and the new Prefalz solar module.

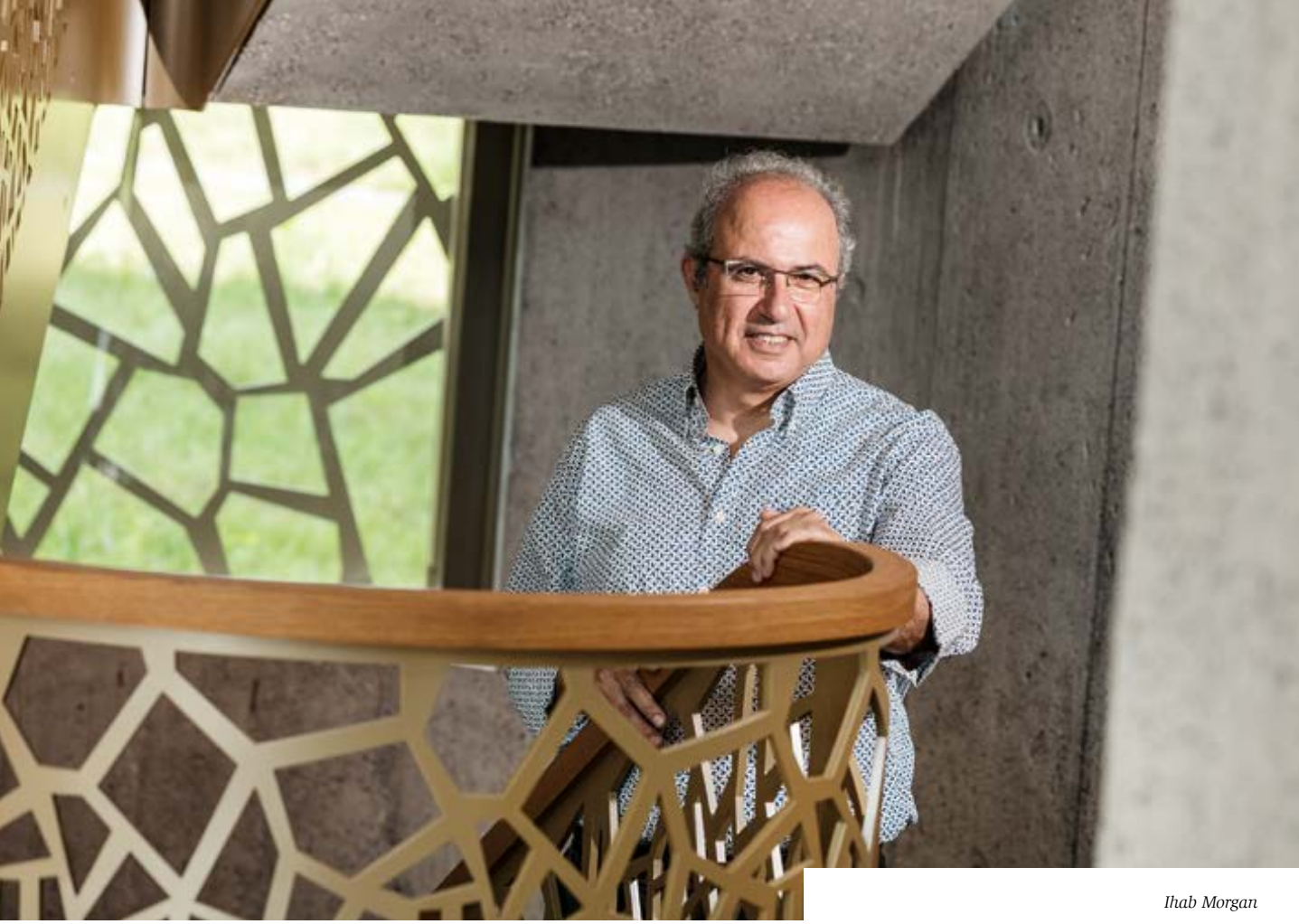
Nevertheless, PREFARENZEN media also show that, despite all our achievements, we never lose sight of the most crucial factor – the human factor. By working closely with you, our partners, we create inspiring construction projects that go above and beyond the ordinary.

Let this book inspire you with projects, explanations, and ideas, and join us in shaping the architecture of tomorrow with creativity and inspiration!

Yours Leopold Pasquali, CEO

Residential Complex Liebwylen

Country: Switzerland
Object, location: residential complex, Schwyz
Category: new construction
Architecture: Townset GmbH, Zürich
Installer: Bless AG
PREFA object consultant: Erich Bircher
Roof type: Prefalz
Roof colour: bespoke colour golden brown



Ihab Morgan

»Empathy Is the Key«

In 2018, the Zurich-based firm ***Townset***, led by architect and urban planner Ihab Morgan, took on the task of realising multi-storey residential buildings on the park-like site of the Felchlin chocolate factory in the cantonal town of Schwyz in central Switzerland. A villa from 1927 is on the same site, which had to be taken into consideration. A transformation had to succeed that combined the traces of the prestigious large-scale industry with the requirements of modern living.

In Central Switzerland, where Alpine peaks alternate with high plateaus and green meadows and glistening lakes make the landscape a holidaymaker's dream, chocolate was and is produced on a large industrial scale. However, the traditional Felchlin company not only stands out with its praline products and couvertures but has also attached great importance to prestigious architecture. It has had its headquarters in Schwyz for over a hundred years. Like other major industries, the Felchlin family built a villa with a park where the business was run for a long time. After restructuring, the company moved to new headquarters in 2018. What remained were the villa, the park, and the space for the *Liebwylen* residential project.

What is *Liebwylen*?

In the town of Schwyz, this presented an opportunity to act in an architecturally sophisticated manner. Architect Ihab Morgan was commissioned directly by the investors. The planning for the 44 million Swiss franc project began in 2018, with over 7,600 square metres of usable space completed in five years until the end of 2023. This earned the project the 2021 ICONIC AWARD from the German Design Council in the "Architecture

and Urban Planning" category. In July 2024, it was nominated as a finalist at the World Architecture Festival 2024 in Singapore, in recognition of the project's high environmental and sustainability standards.

Who is Ihab Morgan?
Ihab Morgan, a calm and reflective type, is an architect and urban planner with international experience gained on major projects in Switzerland, Canada, the USA, and Germany. In addition to this practical experience and two degrees, he also holds a doctorate from ETH Zurich. Despite his work on large projects, he opted for the comparatively modest *Liebwylen* project because he was fascinated by the location in the park, the proximity to the historic Felchlin Villa and the idea of unusual living: "All the signs were in favour of the project." It was also foreseeable that he would have a free hand in terms of design, and he was interested in working with the clients. He explains that the challenges of a smaller construction project in terms of area are no less difficult to solve than those of large-scale projects.

> *"All the signs were in favour of the project."*

How was that possible?
As an architect, you always have to keep an eye on the overall impression of a building project, regardless of the aspect in question, says Ihab. If you allow yourself to make too many compromises, the quality will crumble in the end. For the architect, proactively approaching the authorities and involving the initially extremely sceptical neighbours was a matter of course. A stroke of genius from Ihab Morgan, who was able to recognise and avert many conflicts before they arose thanks to his appreciative manner and empathy. For example, the neighbours opposed the demolition of the architecturally significant Felchlin Villa, which had already been decided upon. Ihab Morgan also emphasises: "The villa is absolutely worth protecting", which is why he supported its preservation against initial plans to demolish it and adapted his architecture to the resulting conditions. In the meantime, people - including the neighbours - are delighted with the newly created ensemble.

Who was it built for?
Five multi-storey residential buildings were built in a circle around the existing villa in the centre of the plot. At 60 percent, the possible building density was fully utilised. Nevertheless, the buildings appear rather loosely placed. The 32 flats, 18 of which are *maisonettes*, are partly rented and partly occupied by their owners. The floor areas vary between 29 and 131 square metres. Employees of international companies in the region and their families, as well as residents of Schwyz, should be attracted by the offer and the architecture.

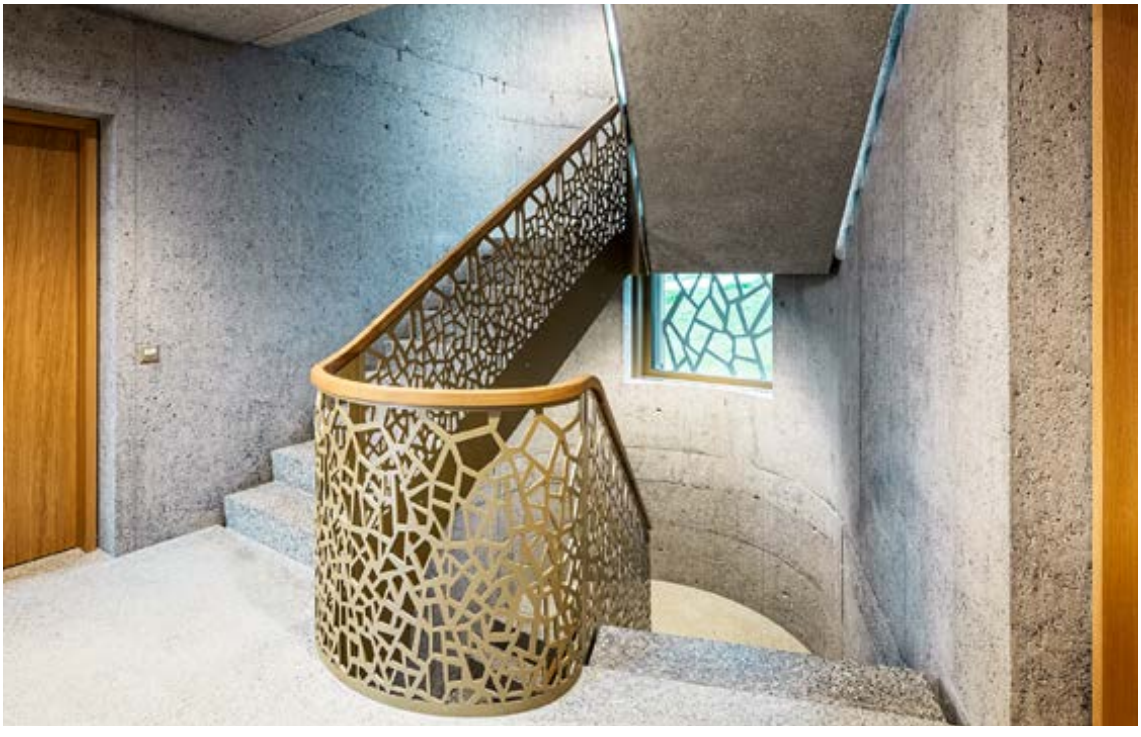
Living with a view
Ihab Morgan positioned the residential buildings so that their orientation celebrates views of the mountains, the park and the old villa. The spaces in between are generous and connect the new buildings with the already loose, villa-like development in the neighbourhood. At first glance, the individual buildings look very similar. The architect designed a basic L-shaped structure that matches the scale and layout of the historic Felchlin villa. Depending on its position on the plot, the architect rotated the structure. Additionally, the architect adjusted the individual buildings to the slope and staggered their number of storeys.

The Basic Type
The polygonal structures of the buildings create unique spatial configurations that differ from traditional residential buildings. “I would have found it a shame if ordinary buildings had been built next to the villa given its magnificent location in the park and on the hillside,” explains Ihab Morgan. The two - to four - storey buildings are each organised around a central staircase, and the rounded walls of the staircase influence the shape of the adjacent flats. The unconventional floor plans and the maisonette design result in distinctive spatial configurations, encouraging residents to thoughtfully arrange their living spaces in a minimalist manner. This approach establishes a fundamental aesthetic through individual room shapes and layouts, which is consistent in all design details and decisions. The three-dimensional puzzle was exclusively developed using a 3D program.

What About the Roof?
The roofscape of the new buildings is orientated towards both the existing buildings and the surrounding mountain silhouette. The architecture and construction method were designed to withstand the changing weather conditions of the Alpine region, including storms and foehns. The roof surfaces are covered with Prefalz, applied to a substructure on cross-laminated timber panels. The continuity of the aluminum panels is particularly striking. Instead of visible aluminium over drainage or flashings, Ihab uses a perforated sheet in the same colour as the roof to conceal the joints. Interestingly, only the ridge lines of the roofs are vertical; other roof lines rise or fall. This geometry had challenging consequences for the 45 circular dormer windows, without which the project would have been much less appealing. In the end, the details of the cylindrical penetration of the roof pitches were solved in collaboration with excellent specialist planners by customising all the roof windows.

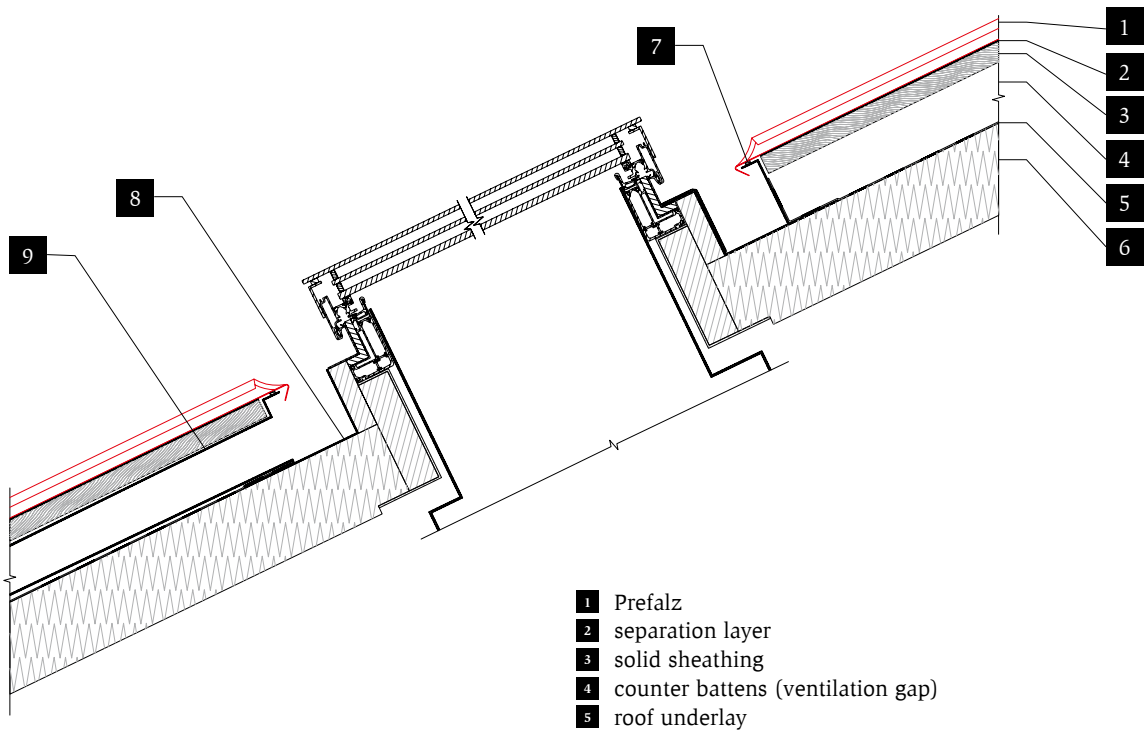
What Is the Value of Details?
Liebwylen is a haptic experience. The façades are simple but well-crafted wooden façades with insulated plinths and strikingly visible fire sections. Ihab Morgan chose steel sheets for the balcony and stair railings to match the honey-coloured façades, with a milled pattern reminiscent of the shadow of a treetop.
The construction details, from materials and colours to the 45 circular dormer windows, were carefully coordinated. Ihab was able to recruit a network of highly qualified companies for this. What makes the difference? He explains that it is important for high-quality architecture that the companies involved work towards a common goal and continuously send highly qualified employees to the construction site.

And Townset?
“Small core, big network,” says Ihab Morgan about his company. They offer consultancy and project development in the areas of sustainability, smart city and historic buildings. Ihab works very much on a project-by-project basis and activates competent specialist planners as required. “We don't do everything ourselves; that just wouldn't be exciting enough.”



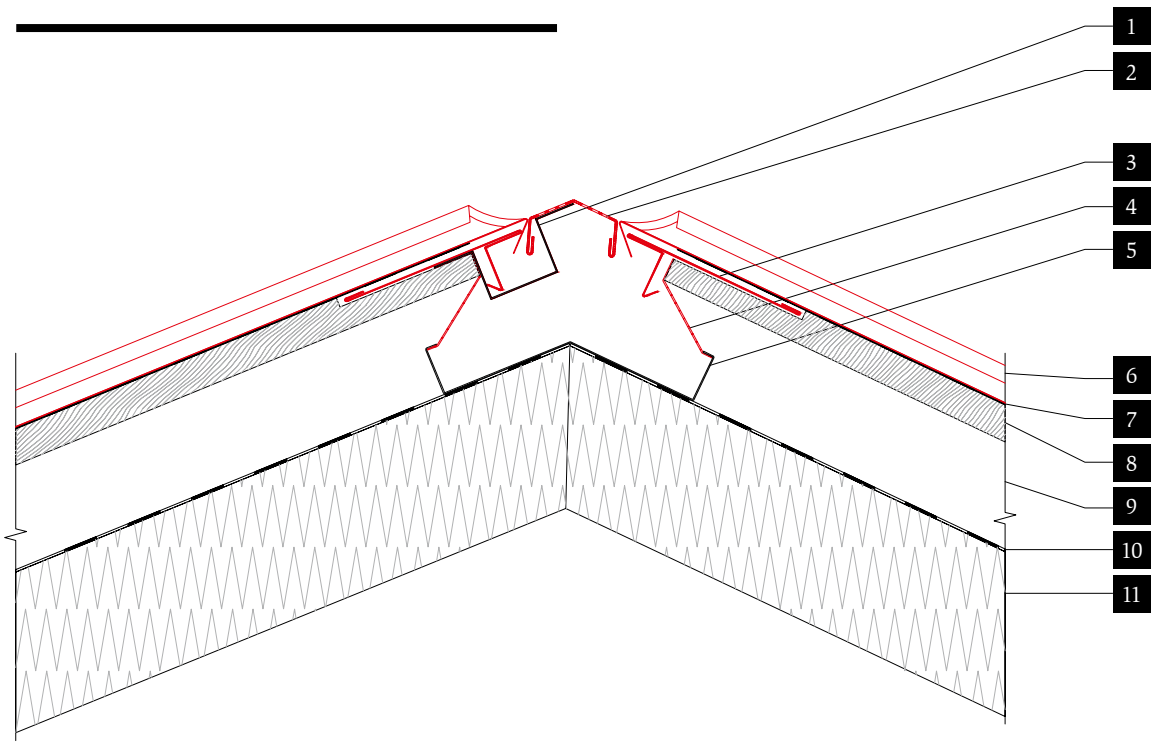
Residential complex Liebwylen

Detail Roof Light



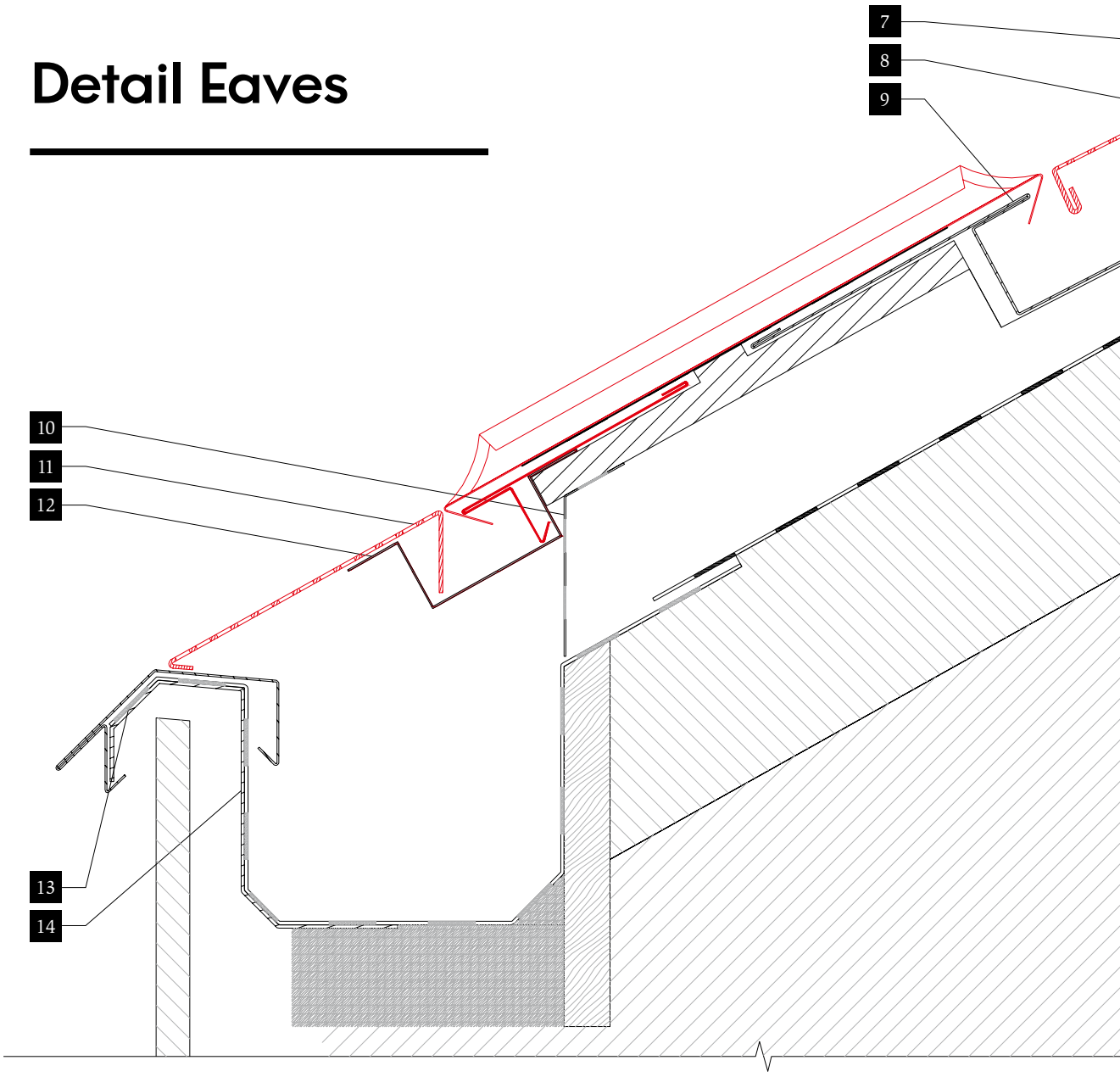
1 Prefalz
2 separation layer
3 solid sheathing
4 counter battens (ventilation gap)
5 roof underlay
6 thermal insulation
7 seal
8 internal gutter (stainless steel)
9 apron of internal gutter down to the eave

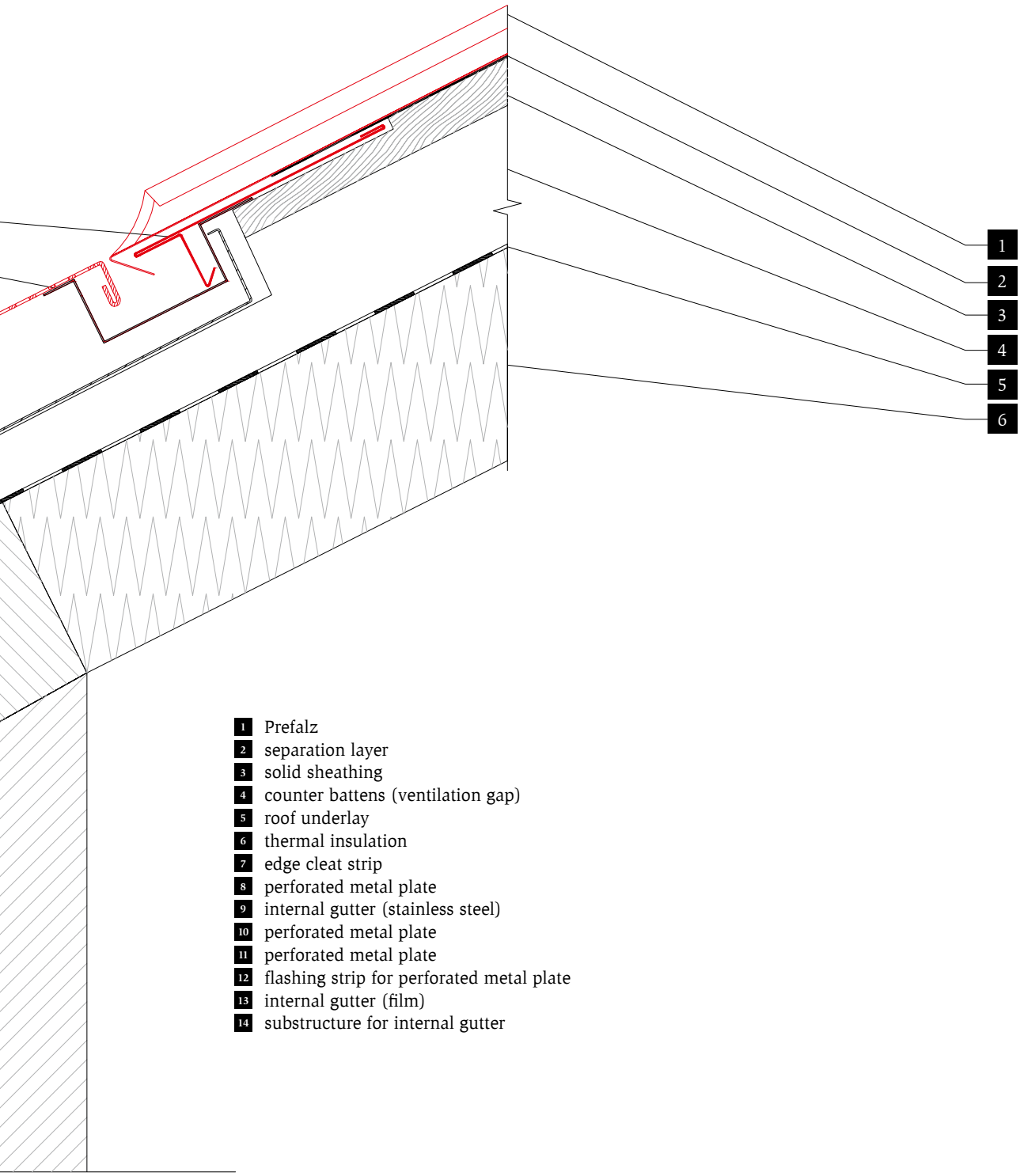
Detail Ridge



1 flashing strip for perforated metal plate
2 perforated metal plate
3 edge cleat strip
4 perforated metal plate
5 internal gutter (stainless steel)
6 Prefalz
7 separation layer
8 solid sheathing
9 counter battens (ventilation gap)
10 roof underlay
11 thermal insulation

Detail Eaves





1. Prefalz
2. separation layer
3. solid sheathing
4. counter battens (ventilation gap)
5. roof underlay
6. thermal insulation
7. edge cleat strip
8. perforated metal plate
9. internal gutter (stainless steel)
10. perforated metal plate
11. perforated metal plate
12. flashing strip for perforated metal plate
13. internal gutter (film)
14. substructure for internal gutter

Geometry meets Expertise

The company is known for roofs and façades on challenging large-scale projects in the region. “I manage the business, including administration, quotations, invoices, communication, duty rosters and staff management. My brother Valentin is in charge of site supervision and project management, while our 20 employees and apprentices are responsible for the technical execution of the orders,” says Gregor Bless, describing the ***Bless*** family business from Erstfeld in Switzerland, founded in 1944.

He used to stand on the roof himself, but with the company's size today, this is no longer possible. The most recent large-scale project, the five residential buildings on the site of the former Felchlin factory owner's villa, was particularly challenging due to the details, with a roof area of around 300 m² each. “The architect had clear ideas. That motivated us to do an excellent job,” says Gregor Bless. “This job has greatly enhanced my skills as well as those of our employees.”

The project was geometrically and technically complex, mainly because of the many different roof surfaces. All five residential buildings have 12 triangular roof surfaces, totaling 60, each with different angles and pitches. Valleys, hips, gutters, and ridges meet at junctions, some of which have five triangular peaks. In addition, the anchoring for the safety ropes had to be integrated at these points. “Such junctions must be able to withstand significant pressure and remain tight in the long term,” explains Gregor Bless.

Gregor Bless

Speaking of “remaining tight”, the roofs made of Prefalz - in golden brown and with the same panel widths throughout - were intended to look like continuous landscapes. The standing seams, therefore, run across several triangular areas, whereas wide, open valleys would have hampered the aesthetic appeal. The architect, engineer and tinsmith worked together to develop a perforated sheet in the same colour as the Prefalz panels, which covers the gutters, valley, and ridge lines. A not uninteresting figure: 1600 additional angle profiles were coloured and installed for this purpose.

There are 45 round dormer windows in the centre of the sloping roof surfaces. The connections of these windows posed a geometric challenge during implementation. The right cut was then crucial. Furthermore, the polygonal structure required internal drainage channels in the eaves, thereby necessitating a sufficient gradient. For this reason, the lintels of the roof loggias run at an angle, resulting in a mutual influence of geometry and technology.

"It was an enormous planning task to correctly implement details such as concealed drainage and the connections for the dormer windows," explains Gregor Bless. Specialist Rinaldo Betschart was called in for the planning. A total of 240 plans were created, which depicted the production, installation and cutting dimensions as well as the adaptation to the actual dimensions. During the planning and realisation phase, the Bless workshop produced detailed models of the transitions and roof surfaces in order to see the effects of changes in inclination. Details were repeatedly discussed and adjusted with Rinaldo Betschart.

Although detailed information was already provided during the tendering process, Bless AG devoted approximately two years to the project. "Perseverance was necessary", laughs Gregor Bless, who is visibly proud of his team. He sees a clear trend for the future: "The future belongs to in-roof solar systems. PREFA has already recognised this. This technology must be promoted so that it can be adapted to all roof surface shapes. A triangular roof surface as a fully utilised in-roof solar surface - that would be perfect."

Residential and Commercial Building new “pick-nick”

Country: Germany
Object, location: residential and commercial building, Dresden
Category: new construction
Architecture: Leinert Lorenz Architekten, Dresden
Installer: Sperber Klempner GmbH & Co. KG
PREFA object consultant: Kai Matuschek
Façade type: custom-made rhomboid tile
Façade colour: bespoke colours olive green, grey green, reseda green, opal green, light ivory, pearl white, light bronze

Object-related individual solution

Dirk Lorenz

»Meissen Porcelain and PREFA Rhomboid Tiles«

"Boom boom, the steam pounds away on the Alex..." – What Alfred Döblin wrote about a scene at Alexanderplatz in Berlin about 100 years ago could apply to Straßburger Platz in Dresden today: it is "crazy loud" and resembles a busy intersection. Living here? It's possible! And with attractive views and outdoor spaces, as the *new "pick-nick"* by ***LLA Leinert Lorenz Architekten*** shows.

> *Inspiration doesn't always have to come from a quiet and peaceful atmosphere.*

Trailblazing routes from Straßburger Platz to tower blocks from the GDR era (430 apartments spread across 15 floors each, in five prefabricated concrete tower blocks with radiant Meissen ceramic panel façades) directly lead past the *new "pick-nick"*. In front of it, a small corner square with trees is occupied by a cult bar. This radically urban area is full of potential and will be loved by those who enjoy observing not just hedges but also the daily lives of others while sipping coffee. Inspiration doesn't always have to come from a quiet and peaceful atmosphere: boom boom…

Urban Toughness

The aggressive takeover of the city by technology is still an issue in the 2020s. Dirk Lorenz, the architect responsible for the seven-storey residential and commercial building on the corner of Straßburger Platz and Grunaer Straße in Dresden, confirms that the location has a certain 'urban toughness', which he describes as an aloofness towards people, yet also as a genuine fascination. He emphasises the location's undisputed qualities: directly opposite the Glass Manufactory, Dresden's largest and most beautiful park – the Great Garden – is within sight, less than three minutes' walk away. The old town is also just ten minutes away. Several local shops, a swimming pool, various doctors, parking spaces, a kindergarten and one of the city's most popular cafés are just across the road. It would be a great place to live if it weren't for the rattling trams and the purring engines of the daily city traffic that pushes its way across the square and the intersection.


28A

Focusing on Quality
In this somewhat inhospitable area, new architecture needs a few tricks to achieve quality. The building in this prominent location sees itself as both a building block in a relaxed and modernist urban structure and as a gateway to the historically influenced city. It's all a question of the correct orientation and façade design, explains Dirk Lorenz. The architects planned for the new structure to have closed façades on the square and northern sides. On the rear and south sides and the front sides, they opened up the building with a high proportion of glass and continuous balconies. This differentiation is emphasised by a circumferential strip of rhomboid tiles made of Prefalz in various shades of green and beige, created by the tinsmith. This ensures that the massive structure is visually divided into several sections without unravelling like a Tetris game.

Façade Design
The rhomboid façade is based on an abstract landscape image. The architects distributed different colours over the surface, such as pixels, with the help of artificial intelligence. On some days, the rhomboid tiles, with their various beige and green coatings, shimmer in the sunlight, creating an interesting effect where other buildings in the area remain colourless and also unimaginative.

The Prefalz rhomboid façade tiles are laid without any profiles along the entire perimeter of the building, thereby enhancing the appearance of a broad, coloured strip.

Attractive Views
The façade strip of rhomboid tiles extends above the top floor to the east, towards Straßburger Platz, and forms a frame that mainly showcases the roof terrace at this point. From this vantage point, you can overlook the Great Garden and, to the south, the glass dome of the art gallery of the University of Fine Arts, also known as the 'Zitronenpresse' (the citrus press). You can also see Dresden's prominent prefabricated concrete tower block axis, which leads directly into the city centre, where you can spot the baroque Residenzschloss and the cathedral. It is indeed an appealing spot, high above the 'urban harshness' of Straßburger Platz. To put it in Döblin's words from 'The Three Leaps of Wang-Lun', but this time more conciliatory: "A gentle whistle from the street. Metallic start-up, purring, crackling. [...] An electric flute along the tracks." How could you not be curious when the purring, whistling, and crackling accompany your stay on the rooftop terrace and in the apartments at the *"pick-nick"*?


picknick

Pragmatic Parameters

In 2020, LLA won a competition with its façade strip and the concept of a communal roof garden, including a playground, and efficient floor plans. The city of Dresden and the investor were instrumental in launching the competition and repeatedly contributing to further preparations. In 2021, the project was started in close coordination with all stakeholders. Today, Dirk Lorenz is proud of how many of the original ideas have been implemented. "We didn't have a general contractor for the project, so the collaboration was much more direct between us and the companies executing the work." This was a significant advantage despite the challenges that arose during the construction project.

Within a gross floor area of 7,898 m² and within a total construction volume of 24,511 m³, 52 apartments between 31 m² and 108 m² were built, realised as one to four-room apartments. Depending on the division, up to four commercial units are possible on the ground floor. Dirk Lorenz does the maths: "Around 150 people live in the *new "pick-nick"*. With an average annual influx of 3,000 people, 20 buildings of a similar size would have to be built in Dresden every year." It is an enormous undertaking, especially given these crisis-ridden times. However, there would be sufficient spatial resources for this in the extensive districts of the GDR era.

Controversial Demolition

The phase that followed the selection process was anything but ordinary for everyone involved, as the project sparked extensive discussions about fostering a sense of community. After the destruction of Dresden in 1945, there was hardly any urban fabric left to preserve. Dresden, in its historical form, no longer existed. The *Gründerzeit* buildings and block perimeter structure on Straßburger Platz had also been destroyed. In the following years, a completely different, modern, socialist-oriented and more anonymous image of urban structures was implemented instead of re-creating the lost structures. The newly constructed residential high-rises and rows no longer framed the area but appeared to float in or be surrounded by it. The radical nature of this can still be felt today and is evident in the diffuse, wide-open spaces, which sporadically blend with the surrounding area. Perhaps such a complete loss of urban identity explains why some people in Dresden today cling to what already exists, regardless of whether it offers sufficient spatial quality for current needs.

Until the new building was constructed, a fast-food restaurant called *pick-nick* stood on the site. Its demolition triggered controversy, even though it had been empty for years. An extensive negotiation process involving an exhibition and other activities led to the acceptance of its disappearance and the emergence of a fresh version. Meanwhile, the new building now features a glowing replica of the cult restaurant lettering *pick-nick,* visible from afar. The original lettering can be found in the Dresden City Museum.

Architects Never Stop Learning

"We have never experienced it that way before either," says Dirk Lorenz, looking back. But as architects, you know you must position yourself, making you vulnerable. A poster from the exhibition is hanging in the architects' office kitchen, a reminder of the wild times. The office is in a small tower block on a former factory site in Dresden Neustadt. Dirk Lorenz, Falk Leinert, and their team have plenty of space here and use classic model-making, 3D printing, and digital tools to visualise their spatial visions. 'We're more than just a design house, says Dirk Lorenz. 'We design constructively and in dialogue with those who execute our work.' Full-scale façade samples were made for the Haus am Straßburger Platz to better evaluate the effect of the different coloured PREFA rhomboid tiles. One of these samples is hanging today on the wall opposite the entrance. The atmosphere is pleasant and clear, oscillating between fantasy and pragmatism. "We like timeless things", says Dirk Lorenz. If it were up to him, it would also stay that way in the future.

Reference: Alfred Döblin: "The Three Leaps of Wang Lun" (1916). Alfred Döblin: "Berlin Alexanderplatz" (1929).

Listening Is Always Worth the Effort

They have already been entrusted with roofs in Gibraltar and façades in the Netherlands, including the Sphinxes apartments by Neutelings Riedijk Architects, and have received multiple orders from across Europe. The over 30-year-old company ***Sperber Klempner*** in Unterwellenborn, Thuringia, is run jointly by father and daughter Sperber and is known for its imaginative, original solutions.

They took on the task of covering the façade of the *new "pick-nick"* on Straßburger Platz in Dresden, officially called *Tower Philosophus II*, with over 8,000 rhomboids in different colours in 2022. "By our standards, the Grunaer Straße in Dresden was small but exciting because we were supposed to implement the architect's creative vision. According to Jens Sperber, the rhomboid tiles on the façade represent a rice field, an abstract but exciting concept. Seven colours, some of which are standard PREFA colours and others are unique, adorn the façade. This was accomplished using rhomboids specially made from Prefalz. Jens Sperber explains that it was important not to lose sight of the bigger picture on the construction site, or else the rice field would have turned into chaos.

The aim was to create a functional façade with a continuous band. "The façade should appear homogeneous, without pockets or angle beads," says the master tinsmith. To achieve this, the window boxes were built as frames, which fully meet fire protection and aesthetic requirements. Coordinating creative ideas with technical requirements required patience and precision from everyone in the team.

When the sun is shining, the façade shimmers in different shades of green. "The beautiful façade is shown off by the sun. The vibrant surface catches the light and gives the building a multifaceted appearance," says Jens, pointing out one drawback: "No matter from which perspective you look at the *"pick-nick"*, you'll always see the GDR-prefabricated concrete tower blocks in the background."

Claudia and Jens Sperber

Father and daughter work together in harmony. Claudia Sperber, a business graduate, is the junior manager and is responsible for business matters. Jens Sperber contributes his decades of trade experience and manages staff. Both are enthusiastic about their work on the construction site and together, they look to the future with optimism.

"The real problem on a construction site is always the time frame," jokes Jens Sperber. You rely on the preliminary work of others and must complete your work within the allotted time frame, even if this means compensating for others' mistakes. He believes that building today is more stressful and riskier because there is less room for real craftsmanship and much industrialised work.

Interestingly, Jens Sperber would also like to see more appreciation from architects for his technical expertise and planning services. "Good architects seek out the advice of tradespeople early on." He criticises the lack of practical orientation in the current training of civil engineers and architects and sees this as a challenge for future collaboration. "You have to be able to listen," is his advice for anyone interested in becoming an architect.

Studio Comploj

Country: Austria
Object, location: studio, Vienna
Category: conversion and extension
Architecture: Berger + Parkkinen Architekten, Vienna
Installer: Alexander Pfeifer GesmbH
PREFA object consultant: Christopher Themessl
Roof type: Prefalz
Roof colour: P.10 bronze
Façade type: Prefalz
Façade colour: P.10 bronze

Tiina Parkkinen and Alfred Berger

»Comploj: Where Production Still Takes Place in the City Center.«

For several years now, globally recognised formats such as the International Building Exhibition (IBA) or the EUROPAN architecture competition have been searching for new options for the productive city. In Vienna's Währing district, this dream is being fulfilled uncomplicatedly and naturally with Studio Comploj, designed by ***Berger + Parkkinen Architekten***, as if it had never been any different. However, the story would not have been the same without the enthusiasm of glassblower Robert Comploj and the architects..

The 1360 square metre plot in the courtyard of Martinstraße 28 in Vienna's 18th district, Währing, was a classic remnant of an idea that disappeared from European cities at the latest with the post-war period, the Congrès International d'Architecture Moderne, and the concepts of functional separation of living and work. Since the middle of the 20th century, cities have been divided into zones of productivity and living, "Separating people's everyday lives into moments", one of which was called "leisure time". The resulting monofunctionalised living spaces have been proclaimed as the ideal. According to the motto "light, air, and sun," the separation led to improved hygienic conditions (who wants to live with the stench of a soap factory or tannery right outside their bedroom window?), but also to a loss of diversity and social meeting spaces. At the same time, mobility increased, and "dormitory towns" emerged in the urban sprawl. Studio Comploj, a renowned glassblowing workshop, is taking the opposite approach and integrating productive work back into the city.

Implementing a Hybrid Life Model
There are traces of past productivity in the neighbourhoods of Vienna. For example, a high courtyard passageway is a clear indication that a workshop or business was once located in the backyard of the block perimeter. Martinstraße 28 has a passageway like that. Since 2023, Robert Comploj, a 20-year veteran of this field, and his team have been crafting glass-based designs and participating in ever-changing, cross-disciplinary collaborations. A thriving community is gradually developing around the hip studio and its protagonists. Alfred Berger and Tiina Parkkinen, brought on board by Robert Comploj, created the spatial environment for this way of working and living. Comploj now lives in the place where he works, as it used to be in the past.

Following the Urban Planning Regulations
The space for the courtyard property was initially designated for commercial use. This means that the City of Vienna also favoured its use as a production facility. Nevertheless, this was a rarity, given the pressure to convert inner-city areas into residential spaces. It, therefore, took courage and assertiveness to push through the idea of utilising the arts and crafts. Or, as Alfred Berger puts it, it was thrilling to have fewer options and be able to balance them well. For example, the urban development planning framework specified that a new building in the courtyard was not permitted. The architects then created a three-part ensemble by converting a neighbouring former car garage, extending it into a sales and gallery space, and reconstructing a small existing building, which is now used as a residential building. The floor area was 566 m², resulting in 760 m² of usable space.

A Small Village in the City
"Studio Comploj functions like a small village. It provides space for everyday life, crafts, trade, living, guests, community, garden, and recreation," the architects point out. The glassblowing furnace, a large forge with a protruding metal cover, is positioned in the centre of the studio as a central point of encounter, full of fascination. Even from outside, from the garden, you can see the productive core of the craft business as the architects arranged and designed the workshop, gallery, garden, and living space accordingly.

Three Become One
A common material language links the three studio buildings, where Prefalz is used in different textures and in different amounts on the façades and roofs to differentiate them. The residential guesthouse is completely clad in Prefalz. The trays running across the façade and roof form a regular, linear pattern, acting as a protective skin. Special details on the gable façade give the building a modern look, as there are no overhangs or striking profile ends. The gallery was provided with a Prefalz roof, and a façade plastered in the same colour. It thus appears to be a reference to the forge inside the glass-blowing factory. The architects emphasise the advantage of using the material on the façade and roof and having a wide choice of colours. As an industrially manufactured product, Prefalz is safe and versatile in its application and has a high guarantee of durability.

> *We avoid bling-bling effects and prefer well thought-out details that manifest in colour or material.*

Designing Without Bling-Bling

Freely inspired by Helmut Lang, Alfred Berger and Tiina Parkkinen elevate the casual to elegance with *Studio Comploj*. Regardless of the situation, they always reject the ordinary, avoid bling-bling effects and prefer well-thought-out details that manifest in colour or material. However, they also advocate for a human-centered approach that is far from any specific architectural style. They strive to keep their design practice open-ended to avoid being pigeonholed into a particular style. "Our primary focus in design is always considering how people will move through the spaces, what they will do there, and how," they explain, highlighting this as their most important design criterion

Competitions as a Tool

The two architects share the same viewpoint when they serve on competition juries. As jurors, they view their role not only limited to the decision itself but also as a way to directly disseminate architectural qualities to those who decide on building projects, usually without architectural training. Alfred Berger mentions in more detail that clarity, consistency, and visibility of a specific spatial idea make a difference in every competition. From his personal perspective, he affirms: "As architects, winning competitions lays the groundwork for collaboration and provides a common ground with the client." As a result, the architects' office continues to participate in many competitions. Their victories and accolades, including the State Prize for Architecture and Sustainability, the Salzburg State Architecture Prize, and nominations for the Mies van der Rohe Award, demonstrate the success of this approach.

The Future of Young Architects

Alfred Berger and Tiina Parkkinen incorporate physical (working) models and material samples, such as 1:1 mock-ups, in their projects. This approach has been valued since 1995 when they competed for the Nordic Embassies in Berlin, and it continues to be important in their current practice. Alfred Berger emphasises the importance of maintaining a connection to architectural practice and encourages younger generations and colleagues not to forget the value of hands-on modelling. "There is no end to architecture," mentions Alfred Berger. "It always continues."

From Otto Wagner to Bronze

Alexander Pfeifer tinsmith and roofing company is a specialist in renovations. The family business has already trained and proven its expertise on the roofs of the Otto Wagner Pavilions of Vienna underground line 6. Around 1500 square metres of roof and façade were covered by the company for Studio Comploj, transforming a backyard into a showcase for the glass art industry.

The experience with the U6 stations is one of the highlights in the Pfeifer roofing company's portfolio. However, *Studio Comploj*'s diverse roof and façade coverings are also among the reference projects that showcase the expertise and vision of the family enterprise. Alfred Fritz was responsible for project coordination, detailed planning, plan creation, construction supervision, and apprentice training. He also attended weekly construction meetings to sketch technical detail drawings and clarify questions and details effectively.

He was particularly impressed by the idyllic setting with the green courtyard and the combination of three construction tasks in one project: metalwork in the conversion of a large garage, roofing with Prefalz in bronze for an extension and the renovation of an existing building with rear-ventilated roof and façade cladding, also in Prefalz bronze. The overall project situation, including how the owners and architects were handled, convinced the company to make an offer. “You have to have a sense of whether a project is good and professional if you want to do your best work,” says Alfred Fritz.

A unique detail of the existing building, now used as a residential house, is the continuous Prefalz covering of the roof and façade. The façade is ventilated from the base up to the zinc grey PREFA half-round gutter. The rear ventilation of the façade is separate from that of the roof.

Alfred Fritz

The air supply grille is attached behind the gutter at the eaves, and the air is diverted via ridge ventilation. Thanks to the skill of the tinsmiths, these details are barely noticeable. The gables were also carefully clad with rhomboid Falzonal pieces and visually connected to the loggias by narrow PREFABOND strips. Finally, Alfred Fritz and his team added brickwork finishes in the same colour and made minor adjustments to the existing buildings in the courtyard.

The Comploj studio was built over a period of nine months in three phases, with three people working on each phase. “I wouldn't want to work without the close collaboration and communication within the team and the exchange of ideas,” says Alfred Fritz, adding that using high-quality materials and tools is essential to achieve the best results.

According to the master tinsmith and managing director, the project has opened new contacts for Alexander Pfeifer tinsmith and drawn attention to sustainable building practices and innovative materials. “For me, technical functionality is crucial, as it forms the basis for durability and safety,” says Alfred Fritz, who chose the tinsmith profession because it daily combines creative thinking and precise craftsmanship.

La Grange à Gaby

Country: France
Object, location: accommodation with restaurant, Engins
Category: conversion
Architecture: Atelier Léger, Grenoble
Installer: Stéphane Clet
PREFA object consultant: Frédéric Dumazot
Roof type: rhomboid roof tile 29 × 29, gutter
Roof colour: P.10 light grey

Noémie Guimbard and Florian Golay

»Participation is Our Guiding Principle«

Atelier Léger is a newly established architectural studio specialising in participatory design, construction processes, and renovations. Florian Golay, Frederic Guillaud, and Noémie Guimbard collaborate with many others to create their architecture. This was also the case in the French mountain village of Engins with a barn 'donated' to the community - La Grange à Gaby – which the architects gently renovated for and with the locals. The roof made of PREFA rhomboid tiles plays an important and symbolic role.

The House in the Centre of the Village

In Engins, locals joke that chickens have one long and one short leg due to the extremely steep topography. The municipal area extends from 600 to 2000 metres above sea level in the Vercors Nature Park near Grenoble. With 430 inhabitants, the village is small and still engages in traditional livestock farming and cheese production. Hiking and ski tours attract weekend visitors from Grenoble in particular.

The village of Engins consists of houses that form a loose village structure along winding roads. Like a village centre, there is a "mairie" in Rue Joseph Coynel, the town hall with a primary school, kindergarten, sports field, church, and rectory. Less than 50 metres away, along the street, you pass a renovated stone barn with a sturdy, light grey aluminium roof adorned with rhomboid tiles. Despite its recent renovation, the building's age is clearly visible. The large natural stones make the walls appear rustic, and the wooden beams, instead of stone lintels above some of the window openings, tell of bygone, less prestigious times.

Architecture as a Process
Years ago, the mayor and the local council of Engins were initially searching for a building to house an everyday shop. When the municipality was given the old barn of the Coynel brothers, which was in a desolate state then, and the architects Noémie Guimbard and Florian Golay took over the project, a lot changed during the project and for the village. With the participation of the citizens, a new search was launched to find a use that would generate income for the community and positively impact local life. The Enginoise needed a meeting place, so after numerous workshops and discussions, it was decided that the old barn would become a so-called "third place" instead of a grocery shop: a hostel for hikers and visitors, which could also be a café and cultural centre for everyone in Engins. Looking back, it was the right decision to make.

You Never Stop Learning
After completing the first step, which the architects carefully 'orchestrated' like thoughtful conductors, the next step involved renovating the 100-year-old barn. They gutted the building's interior and renovated the exterior façade using sealing slurry. They drained the outer walls, reinforced them structurally with ring beams and raised the old natural stone walls by one metre to create additional usable space under the roof. The renovation presented challenges, as with any renovation, Florian Golay mentions. For instance, the wall facing the slope had to be doubled up because groundwater was seeping through the brickwork. Currently, a channel drains water between the wall's two layers and under the house. This was a completely new task for the architects. 'We gain new technical expertise from each project,' Noémie Guimbard, primarily responsible for site management at Engins, says.

Repair Is What We Prefer
It was important to them to be able to distinguish between what was old and what was new, not as a stark contrast but as a harmonious unit – almost as if they hadn't changed much. "The project revolves around modesty, respect, and the appropriate use of modern technology," Florian Golay explains that they prefer to repair buildings rather than build new ones. Noémie Guimbard adds, "We want to improve what already exists, not replace it". "Ultimately, the old and the new should be subtly distinguishable but not in competition with each other," she explains.

Almost an Alpine Roof
What stands out as being genuinely new is the roof, because of its erratic geometry. But this is not the only reason: its light grey PREFA rhomboid roof tiles 29 × 29 reflect the material tradition of the Alpine region. For decades, roofs in and around Engins have been covered with sheet metal, primarily ripple or profiled sheets. The architects opted for an aluminium roof in the spirit of 'as old as new'. The roofing material, therefore, remains traditional metal. Still, the shape and realisation with the use of small rhomboid tiles are structurally state-of-the-art, visually modern, and durable in terms of material properties. They are also robust against seasonally varying weather conditions and adaptable to not-so-straight old barn walls.

Various Uses Under a New Roof
Tightened like a well-fitting cap, the light grey roof with rhomboid tiles protects the old barn. Newly built dormer windows bring light into the interior, which is surprisingly spacious and spatially complex for a travellers' hostel that can only accommodate 20 people. The architects purposefully designed spacious interiors spanning three floors and connected by openings to emphasise the communicative and inviting nature of the project. Three distinct functional units within the building can be separated from one another, enabling it to function as a hostel, a bar, a restaurant, a theatre, and the cultural centre of the mountain village. A SCOP, a social co-operative, runs the place and now even runs a small shop where you can buy products for daily needs and local produce. The barn has thus become a regional showcase and a lively meeting place for locals and visitors.

Participation is the Foundation of our Work
There is a collective approach in every project undertaken by atelier léger, as Florian Golay, Frederic Guillaud and Noémie Guimbard now call themselves. They have a history of utilising participatory design methods, regardless of the local conditions. For instance, in 2017, they collaborated with future residents to construct an apartment block in Grenoble. The five families were actively involved in every phase of planning and construction. Today, the building stands out in the urban landscape with its distinctive slopes. Their current project also involves collaboration with users, builders, and craftsmen.

A Collective Spirit
The architects bring with them social skills and a penchant for architectural adventures that involve intense discussion. It's no wonder that the atelier léger architects don't work together in a traditional office. Instead, they have started and run a coworking space in the centre of Grenoble. For over a year now, they have been sharing the premises of a former architectural office from the 1990s with illustrators, graphic designers, and urbanists. The first thing that catches your eye in this room? It's the large meeting table in the centre with chairs from different eras and an open atmosphere. It could hardly be more pleasant and collective. It’s a beautiful space where architecture is developed with a particular focus on the needs of its users.

Keep it as it is
The architects want to continue focussing on renovations and participatory projects. They will also pass on corresponding methods to students at the École Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture de Grenoble, where Florian Golay and Frederic Guillaud teach together. Ultimately, Noémie Guimbard says, through our projects we are patiently carrying out cultural mediation work for sustainable and people-centred architecture. Florian Golay, Frederic Guillaud and Noémie Guimbard will continue to do so in the future as well.

Diversity is Important to Me

The project in Engins is unique, “because nothing stands out unpleasantly. All the materials fit together so well that it is a very harmonious building,” says tinsmith, ***Stéphane Clet***. Photos of the converted barn quickly found a place on his homepage and show that modern, industrially manufactured products such as the PREFA rhomboid tiles 29 × 29 go well with old houses.

It was Stéphane Clet who shared the story of the chickens with legs of different lengths in Engins. His tinsmith's shop is less than 15 minutes from the barn that Florian Golay and Néomie Guimbard converted into a hostel. “That's quite a distance to travel to a construction site though”, he says, laughing. Stéphane Clet works exclusively in the area, focusing on renovations and smaller-scale repairs. Areas between 280 and 300 m² are typical for him and his team of ten.

Upon our arrival on site, his attention is directed towards the two gables, where a precisely crafted straight roof finish can be seen. By contrast, the walls at the gable ends, on which the roof sits, are anything but straight. “Aligning the existing walls with the new roof was a significant challenge for us,” he explains. Of course, they did such a good job that there have been no structural defects so far. The dormer surrounds have also been a great success: like the roof covered in PREFA rhomboid tiles 29 × 29, they continue the roof pattern vertically.

Stéphane Clet

The geometry of the roof surfaces was an exciting challenge, as Stéphane Clet and his team first had to find or set a straight reference line for laying the rhomboid roof tiles. “We drew the pattern upwards from the eaves on the street side and cut and adjusted the rhomboid tiles piece by piece at the ridge,” he explains the process.

The roof is drained through an external gutter located on its long sides. The fickle mountain weather had already accompanied them during the construction phase. It was partly cold and changeable, with snow coming at some point. The PREFA rhomboid tiles are easy to work with even at low temperatures, but on the roof, you are exposed to the wind and cold, so the work steps require more and more energy from everyone. Being a tinsmith in this region, he could handle it.

Stéphane Clet learned how to work with rhomboid roof tiles at the PREFA Academy five years ago. After that, he also sent all his employees to the training course. “What motivates us all,” says Stéphane Clet, “is an interest in working outside the mainstream.” For instance, standing seam roofing is now so common that the project in Engins, with its rhomboid design, seems essential to him as a creative alternative for the region. He would like to implement more ambitious projects in the future, where the architecture also has a story to tell – as is the case in Engins.

Residential building Van B

Country: Germany
Object, location: residential building, Munich
Category: new construction
Architecture: UNStudio, Bauwerk Capital GmbH & Co. KG, Munich
Installer: Schwaben Dachdeckerei GmbH
PREFA object consultant: Thomas Hill
Roof type: Prefalz
Roof colour: bespoke colour IGP Orange HDP

Sven Disser

»A prototype of modern life«

The *Van B* residential building in Munich's Infanteriestrasse stands out with its soft colour scheme: featuring shades of copper-orange, salmon, and warm concrete grey. Designed by the Dutch architecture firm ***UNStudio*** and realised by the Munich project developer ***Bauwerk***, the building attracts attention with its façade of slanted, stacked bay windows. The colour of the Prefalz roof, provided by PREFA, sets the tone for one of the two basic tonalities to which all other building elements were colour-coordinated.

The architecture of the new residential project near Munich's Olympic Stadium sets "colour bars". Yes, you read that right: colour bars and, thus, also new standards. Two materials, with their colour tones, characterise the appearance of the solid structure and are skillfully used to create an interplay that gives the residential building a sculptural character. Protruding bay elements with curtain-type glass fibre concrete panels look like an exciting sculpture, while the balcony grilles, window frames and the ground floor and attic cladding, finished in a kind of copper-orange, provide elegant, cheerful pastel accents.

PREFA Sets the Tone

One of the major challenges of the project was to coordinate the colours from different manufacturers so that the building would appear to be constructed from only two materials. PREFA played a key role here. The Prefalz panels of the roof cladding, produced in the special colour IGP Orange HDP, provided the colour template that the other manufacturers had to follow. The materials utilised on the ground floor, namely painted steel, and powder-coated sheet metal, as well as aluminium and wooden window frames, which also match the hue scheme, contribute to the harmonious appearance. In order to achieve this effect, samples were sent as a colour reference to ensure a monochromatic impression.

Optical Bridges and Contrasts

Another effect of the selection of materials and colours is that this combination creates in summer a striking contrast with the vibrant green of the large plane tree crowns in Infanteriestrasse and offers a spectacular play of colours together with their various shades of red in autumn. Additionally, the building's colour scheme seems to build a visual bridge to the neighbouring Garden City estate, which is basically the exact opposite of *Van B* with its rural idyll.

What is *Van B*?

The architect described it as a "natural community building". These buildings promote community while bringing different living concepts under one roof. This is achieved through an appropriate building structure and open-use floor plans. *Van B* is available to residents with a work, leisure, and communal room on the ground floor. Bicycle and waste collecting areas, as well as post and parcel box lockers, are also accessible from here. The building's own underground car park is 18 metres deep.

Several residential units are accessible from the courtyard. They feature three gallery floors and extend into the depths. Via walkways and platforms, these "townhouses", which Bauwerk calls Gallery lofts, develop into vertical living spaces that are somewhat reminiscent of a New York underground gallery. These apartments have independent access and a terrace overlooking the courtyard, making them sought-after properties for sale. Five residential storeys are built above the ground floor, with the projecting bay windows on the street side of each flat. A sixth residential storey is the elegant Prefalz-covered attic. In addition to luxurious flats designed in various interior design concepts - a marketing coup that met with great media interest

– the building offers the residents, above all, a shared roofscape. From there, the view sweeps across Munich, creating the sensation of being on a cruise ship bathed in orange.

The Flats
Van B offers 142 flats, apartments, and penthouses ranging from 33 to 168 m². A variety that is also reflected in the prices. The most affordable unit is a 40 m² flat, priced competitively for the Munich market. Additionally, there are 13 penthouses, ten of which have been uniquely designed by well-known designers, offering luxury and exclusivity tailored for an international clientele. It's important to highlight the bold decision to see this project as a media experiment. The flats are unique collector's items that are only sold furnished. They were individually featured in the AD, the "Architectural Digest". An effort that is not necessarily part of an average project developer's portfolio.

Plug-in* and *Multi-Use
The flexibility of the floor plans is one of the central elements of the design. According to the project developer, this aspect was particularly important during the implementation phase. The apartments had to be able to provide different functions: "*Van B* is not only for living in." Therefore, movable furniture, known as plug-in modules, was developed for some of the flats. Initially, four to five furniture modules were planned, but with the Pandemic, the number rose to nine as more and more functions had to take place at home - living, sleeping, working or receiving friends.

An Interactive Space Instead of a Monotonous Area
Most apartments, completed at the end of 2023, are currently occupied and bustling. This can be mainly seen on the street side. The floor-to-ceiling glazed bay windows are lovingly used and designed by the residents like "shop windows". Seeing and being seen is part of the urban lifestyle. Sven Disser, project manager at Bauwerk, mentions that the effect is intentional. The façade should be an interactive level for residents and neighbours to connect with each other. "That is the reason for the excessively protruding bays that feature extensive glazed areas and balconies." The façade thus becomes a meeting zone for and with the residents of the building, transforming a structural boundary into an exciting space for interaction.

The Courtyard and its Amenities
The design of the courtyard façade, which is plastered and stands out due to its unusual balcony shape, is intriguing. The balcony slabs sit directly on the window ends below, providing an exciting architectural accent. The garden side of the building features a semi-public courtyard with a slight industrial touch, as the chimney of an old heating plant can be seen from afar. The leisure amenities in the courtyard are varied, but they are primarily intended for adults. There is a climbing wall, a racing bike trail, bar tables and a barbecue area. Therefore, Sven Disser also refers to the courtyard as a "ring of activities."

Concept Property and Property with a Concept
Munich's real estate market has been overheated for decades. Flats are scarce and usually expensive. Those who can afford it invest and can expect a stable increase in value. However, exceptional project developers are determined to distinguish themselves from the crowd and develop residential designs that go beyond the scope of everyday living. Bauwerk has been doing this for years and is talented at bringing unique and targeted concepts to life. In this context, *Van B*'s proximity to the Olympic Park and a private university for business and creative industries provide significant locational advantages for an upscale residential development that aims to appeal to a more exclusive clientele. The company has an experienced architecture department with which it realises projects by other architects and its own. The company also handles marketing, administration, and long-term property management. "Developing with Bauwerk doesn't just mean building," explains Sven Disser

Excellent Durability and Appearance

Bekim Shala

The master roofer, Bekim Shala, managed the roofing company ***Schwaben Dachdeckerei*** in Bobingen, Bavaria, when the *Van B* was being built. The company consists of a dedicated team of professionals for whom reliability and a high-quality orientation are a matter of course. Close cooperation ensures the efficiency of the orders and high-quality craftsmanship. The *Van B* residential building in Munich offered an excellent opportunity to demonstrate this approach from a structural point of view.

"I became a roofer because I am fascinated by the technical challenge and the precise execution of roofing work." Bekim Shala describes himself as a master roofer responsible for planning and executing roofing projects. Attention to detail, quality and finding the best solutions for his customers are particularly important to him. He intends to develop what seems right today over the next ten years. Being an active master roofer who comes up with innovative solutions for contemporary construction projects, he's keen to broaden his expertise. His employees should benefit from additional training, too, since nothing can be achieved without a team. He stresses the importance of working together and making precise plans in his day-to-day duties. This is crucial for the projects' success and ensures their flawless execution.

Shala and his team successfully completed the roofing work on the *Van B*. When it comes to his experience with the residential construction in Munich and the Prefalz material, he explains that his team carried out all the connections to the skylights and numerous roof hatches and had to clad roof surfaces with different angles of inclination. In this way, excellent durability and an appealing appearance were ensured. The clients of Bauwerk and the internationally renowned architectural firm UNStudio were particularly interested in these two aspects.

Bekim Shala accepted the job because he was interested in the challenge and the opportunity to work with high-quality Prefalz materials. The project scope and the chance to prove his team's abilities were additional incentives. He was intensively involved in the project's planning, checking the technical details and requirements and ensuring that all material and work requirements were met.

The project's roofing took about three months, and the on-site team comprised of six people. Several thousand square metres of Prefalz material were used. One specific problem that had to be solved was adapting this material to special roof geometries, which required precise customisation.

Schwaben Dachdeckerei greatly benefited from the project because it allowed them to showcase the team's expertise and skills. According to Shala, the successful completion of the project reinforced the company's reputation and helped expand its portfolio.

When asked whether appearance or technical functionality is more important, he emphasises that both aspects are essential. However, he adds, “Technical functionality comes first.” A roof must be safe and durable before it can meet aesthetic demands. The goal is always to achieve a harmonious combination of both technology and appearance, especially with sophisticated architecture.

He is passionate about architecture, particularly the functional and aesthetic design of buildings. However, he would not want to switch roles with an architect, as he values the practical work and the direct implementation of plans into reality.

Detached house in Vinje

Country: Slovenia
Object, location: detached house, Vinje
Category: new construction
Architecture: Kombinat arhitekti projektiranje d.o.o., Ljubljana
Installer: Stavbno kleparstvo JK d.o.o. – Janez Kralj
PREFA Object Consultant: Gašper Povše
Roof type: Prefalz
Roof colour: P.10 brown

Blaž Kandus

»Like the House, Like Its Architects«

Near Vinje, in Slovenia, a slope, lush green meadows, tall grass, vast views, and more and more soft hills, in between isolated aesthetic angles, dot the landscape enveloped by the lush beauty that natural surroundings have to offer. Along the way, you will encounter one farm after another and, a little further off, smaller barns that stand out with their asymmetrical roof shapes. In this idyllic setting stands a house that perfectly blends in. The client was looking for a holiday home and a family home combined into one. ***Kombinat arhitekti*** from Ljubljana accomplished this balancing act with carefully placed details while preserving scale, inhabitants, and the environment.

"It was too small for the authorities," says Blaž Kandus, leaning back slightly at the striking yellow table in his office on Rimska cesta in Ljubljana. Blaž Kandus is one of the seven architects from Kombinat arhitekti, who have already attracted attention in various ways with the house on the hillside near Vinje and its roof made of PREFALZ in P.10 brown. According to Blaž Kandus, for example, the building authorities initially refused to grant planning permission because the house did not comply with the development plan due to its compact size. "We gradually convinced the authorities," says Blaž Kandus, "that the reduced size of the restrained timber construction fits in very well with the identity of the landscape. The structure is based on the traditional Kozolecen, which also inspired the different side lengths of the roof." Kozolecen are roofed scaffolding, most commonly found in southern Austria and northern Slovenia, where hay is traditionally dried on wooden racks.

Small in Size - High in Value

The house is 18 metres long and stands lengthways, slightly below the road. From the street, the small wooden building is only 1.5 stories tall. The roof is one of the architectural elements that are placed precisely. It distinguishes itself due to the different-sized roof surfaces and its balanced overhangs, which are both a formal reference and make sense when it comes to timber construction. It has been carefully thought out. "We deliberately didn't choose a fashionable anthracite colour," Blaž Kandus says, explaining the brown roof of the house. As the timber façade is now greying, the roof and façade are coming closer and closer together, making the already compact structure appear even more like a harmonious unit. Despite the simplicity of the building, the unusual hue and the perfect alignment of the panel widths still convey high value to the house two years after its implementation. The roof unfolds its full effect from a viewpoint slightly below the house. Here, it extends across the glazed south façade, which can be partially opened through glass door elements. The coated aluminium, nature-reflecting glass, and slightly greyed wood blend in with the landscape and are pleasantly inconspicuous.

Small but Challenging
The architects intentionally kept the house on the slope simple, but it was not as easy as it seemed. At the beginning of the construction, the hill had shifted, requiring expert opinions, soil stabilisation, and securing. Even so, the project remained within budget and benefited from the relaxed atmosphere of all those involved in the construction. "There exist various architects and clients," says Blaž Kandus, stating that the social, technical, and bureaucratic levels always intersect in architecture, shaping the final result.

A Truly Enjoyable Modern Style
The building boasts a spacious living/dining area with a high ceiling, three children's bedrooms, each with a sleeping gallery, a family bathroom, and a master bedroom with a bathroom in the centre under the roof ridge. This is achieved by subtle changes in height in the house and terrace, along with a clever interior layout. White fixtures, fittings, light-coloured wooden floors, and exposed wooden ceilings create a serene and practical atmosphere. Sliding doors can be opened along the south façade to create an enfilade spanning over the entire length of 18 metres. As a residence for two adults and three children, its straightforward layout lends itself to multiple uses over time.

A Matter of Measurement and Differentiation
The architects have utilised these details to the point and reduced them to create something extraordinary out of the ordinary. For example, there is the area on the street-side façade whose battens have been staggered in rhythm and set apart from the rest of the façade on the ground floor with a different type of wood. Although the area leading to the entrance remains in the vertical pattern, it stands out slightly because its larch wood weathers differently, less quickly than the rest of the house façade. A suggested pergola above this area highlights the restrained differentiation.
Another example is the deliberate variation in height that runs through the house. Although barely visible outside, its primary purpose is to bring the house and its slightly cantilevered terrace closer to the slope. The difference in height between the terrace and the grassy area is thus brought down to a human scale, and the meadow becomes a living room in good weather.

According to Blaž Kandus, as in most of their projects, the scale is key in making decisions. He relates this to both the human scale and the landscape context in Vinje. The house has been deliberately set back and is lower than the treetops behind it.

Combinatorics?

The architects are currently working on revitalising the Centre for Urban Culture in Celje, whose renovation and conversion are being developed in collaboration with future users from the beginning of the planning process. "Programming and buildings are being developed simultaneously," says Blaž Kandus, "That suits us. In a design and planning process like this, you cannot just go in one direction, you must test different variants and combinations." The name Kombinat refers to the idea of not working alone, not always in the same constellation, and being open to changing combinations.

Some Things Should Remain as They are
Blaž Kandus, Ana Grk, Alenka Korenjak and Tomaž Čeligoj got to know each other during their studies and solved design tasks together. They went to Vienna for a while, worked in bigger offices, and returned to Slovenia in the early 2000s. In 2006, they won their first competition, cementing their partnership. Since then, as ***Kombinat arhitekti***, together with Alja Mišigoj, Rok Preskar and Žan Zupanc they have designed and often realised over 365 projects with a sensitive approach. They share office space with studio Prostorož, which makes the collaboration even more intriguing. The bureaucracy of their aesthetically clear architecture is stored in red folders, which add colour to the office shelves in Ljubljana, creating a striking contrast to the yellow table at which Blaž Kandus still sits, content and relaxed. “I hope we will still be working the same way in ten years,” he says.

> *“The reduced size of the timber house blends in well with the landscape.”*

Warm Colours, Soft Roof

The roof of the house in Vinje was only 152 m² in size. It was a small tinsmith's project for ***Janez Kralj***'s dedicated team. During the past 25 years, the team has specialised in using PREFA materials. "The light aluminium roofs are excellent to work with and can be used in various ways," so Janez Kralj explains the benefits of choosing this option.

The family-run workshop in Loka, northeast of Ljubljana, is run by Janez Kralj, the second generation of his family to do so. With Urban Ban, one of his employees, it looks like a third generation is already waiting in the wings. Janez Kralj has been managing the company for 17 years. The fact that they now only use PREFA products is the result of a happy coincidence: in 1999, Janez Kralj built his own house. He was looking for the proper roof. His father advised him to use high-quality PREFA shingles and offered to cover the difference in price compared to clay roof tiles. The challenge of working with a curved roof with all the intricate details left a lasting impression on Janez. The variety and flexibility of the materials are enormous and ideally suited to the tasks they take on, from small single-family house roofs to complex roof landscapes and façade cladding.

For the Vinje project, the symmetry of the panels, meeting high technical and aesthetic standards, was crucial. "This makes building a simple roof fun." Janez Kralj and his three employees were primarily looking for a solution that would save materials and resources in terms of design and one that would be visually appealing. The preliminary planning and the exchange with the architects were crucial in doing this. In Vinje, the panels were to be laid so that each of the seven roof windows was centred on one of the standing seams. Since this was a prefabricated timber construction, the position of the roof windows and panels had to be determined early in the planning process.

Janez Kralj

In addition to the roof cladding, Janez Kralj and his team fabricated the drainage system, the connections to the roof windows and ventilation outlets, and the chimney. They succeeded in impressing the architects with their simple yet effective, detailed solution for the rainwater downpipes.

Janez Kralj believes that demand is currently very high. Customers often request several trends, such as anthracite Prefalz. When Blaž Kandus from Kombinat inquired about the rare colour P.10 Brown, it was reason enough for Janez to have a keen interest in the Vinje project. "The material and colour convey warmth. The architects have thus seamlessly integrated the house into the landscape," says the master roofer with admiration. The house, roof, and surroundings form a single impressively harmonious unit.

With their extensive experience and close relationship with clients, the two tinsmiths see potential in the Prefalz solar panel system. Although only standardised panel widths are used, they believe this is the solution needed to create energy-independent buildings in the future.

Detached house “Toue Cabanée”

Country: France
Object, location: detached house, Le Cellier
Category: Conversion
Architecture: Atelier du Ralliement, Nantes
Installer: ID Couverture
PREFA object consultant: Alexandre Chabot
Roof type: shingle
Roof colour: P.10 nut brown

❶ Object-related individual solution

Clémence Mansons and François Massin Castan

»More with Less«

La Toue Cabanée, the detached house in Le Cellier by ***L'Atelier du Ralliement*** near the western French city of Nantes, is one of those houses that make a particular impression even from a distance. It blends perfectly with its immediate surroundings yet stands out due to several architectural features. The fact that it is ultimately a clever house is evident in the layout, construction, and materials.

Architects François Massin Castan and Clemence Mansons work together with Vincent Laizet as L'Atelier du Ralliement on experimental timber construction projects, which have won awards and are appreciated by clients. François Massin Castan and Clemence Mansons built their own house in Le Cellier to retreat away from the urban asphalt of the city of Nantes. They transformed a somewhat unfavourable environment into a home that could hardly be more harmonious and does not suggest that it is the sum of many restrictions.

Despite the Challenging Beginning

The young builders and architects had to find a way to appreciate the property, which has a steep, moss-covered rock face at its centre. The property is located right next to a plain park-and-ride car park for the local suburban railway line, making it visible to commuters every day. Despite its proximity to the Loire, the river is not visible from the property. Additionally, there was a small house on the property, a type of brick dacha or garden house with a weathered greenhouse. Complete demolition was not an option as it would have meant losing the building rights. Therefore, the plan was to revitalise the property while staying within the footprint of the existing building.

> *“Taking care of what is available also means securing a future.”*

Basic Structure

And that is precisely what was done, in terms of structural sustainability. For the ground floor, the architects preserved the walls of the original garden house, insulated them on the outside and used the existing connections for water supply and drainage for the kitchen and bathroom inside.

Timber studs were placed in front of the walls on the inside to support the two upper floors, each extending more than 25 cm in a cascade-like manner. Built as a timber frame construction, the upper exterior walls are filled with wood wool and insulated. The roof structure is also made of wood. The upper two floors serve as living and sleeping quarters. These rooms are characterised by an atmosphere of restraint and the patterns of the interior walls, which are clad with maritime pine panels.

An open staircase, whose diagonal and horizontal wooden beams perform a static function, connects all three levels to form an uninterrupted spatial continuum. Only the ‘water points’, bathroom, and toilet on the ground floor are separated by a curtain.

Smart Views
The windows of the house are precisely placed. They demonstrate the architects' deep understanding of the environment and their thoughtful design of the building to complement it. The windows offer intentional views of nature, capturing its beauty and blending it into the inhabitants' daily lives. A large square window in the kitchen on the ground floor frames a view of the rock face, which is less than a metre away and overgrown with lichen and moss, resembling a slowly changing painting. From the car park, the house appears closed and reveals little about its internal functions. However, once inside, you forget that it exists at all. The sizable floor-to-ceiling glass panes on the middle floor make the interior barely visible from the gable ends, creating a seamless blend of interior and exterior spaces. Lastly, the roof window allows ample light to flood the interior across the entire house width and offers a view of the treetops lining the Loire. The carefully placed windows guide inhabitants and guests throughout the house with complete confidence: there aren't too many windows, not too few, not too big, or not too small.

Environmentally Friendly Packaging
The architecture of the Cabanée is characterised by simple and regenerative materials, such as natural building materials. The house's façades are clad with willow mats, which are mounted over a black sealing film to give the surface depth and give the corners of the house a soft appearance. It is a material from the DIY store, but it is exciting and experimental when used differently than usual. Its advantages are that it is cheap, easy to replace and repair, and environmentally friendly. It impresses with its natural visual effect, too.

At the Top
The roof slopes are covered with DS.19 shingles in P.10 nut brown, which blend in with the surroundings, like the façade covered with willow mats. From a practical point of view, the shingles are also robust and durable. The roof is so ordinary that the slim stainless-steel chimney is a standout feature on the back of the house facing the rock.

Wildly Romantic Paradigms
Les Toues Cabanées were originally wooden boats with a flat bottom that river fishermen employed on the Loire. The name given to their house by the architects thus means 'houseboat' or, in a somewhat more liberal translation, 'floating hut.' It recalls Henry David Thoreau's hut in Walden, Wittgenstein's blockhouse in Norway by the Fjord, or even Le Corbusier's Le Cabanon in Roquebrune-Cap-Martin (where the renowned architect built there on the scale of his self-designed Modulor). All these buildings have not only big names in common but also the fact that they were designed without great technical effort, with a small budget, and primarily by their users themselves. They were built in a simple way. However, L'Atelier du Ralliement's Cabanée is more comfortable and visually engaging than its counterparts – more reminiscent of Roland Rainer's summer home or Japanese timber-framed architecture. It stands out for its unadorned, material-driven appearance.
This tranquil atmosphere connects the house to its natural surroundings, characterised by trees and rocks. It blends seamlessly in colour, material, and form as if it had grown organically or always been there.

Sustainability as a Guiding Principle
"Taking care of what is available also means securing a future", explains François Massin Castan, winner of the Europan 14: "Villes Productives" award. As an architect in Nantes, François, along with L'Atelier du Ralliement, focuses on creating timber constructions and revitalising buildings for private clients. The positive reception of the concept of simple buildings and the architects' commitment to people and the environment has been confirmed by the receipt of two Prix Régional de la Construction Bois awards. One of the awards was given to Toue Cabanée in the residential renovation category in 2024. The architects are optimistic that wood will continue to be a central element in their architecture as a sustainable building material.

Less but Better

"How do you build in times of crisis? And we currently experience crises in the construction industry with rising material costs, supply bottlenecks, fewer resources and an ecological footprint that is still immensely high," the two architects explain. They are looking for a "less but better" approach i.e. a type of construction that consumes significantly fewer resources and creates more quality with a small budget and effort". The 'build with less' concept is reflected in their commitment to the environment and the reduced space requirements of their projects. The 'less' refers to all aspects of construction except for spatial quality and user satisfaction. François Massin Castan says, "We're looking for people who are interested in trying out this type of design and approach and putting it into practice together. "

The Atelier in Nantes

The phrase 'less but better' perfectly describes L'Atelier du Ralliement and its team. Within a pleasant space of less than 30 square metres, which has been cleverly adapted using built-in furniture, designs are developed, models are built, and projects are planned and implemented. The place is a mix of a former kiosk, an old bar, a workshop, and a planning office. Clients, partners, craftsmen, neighbours, and friends are welcome here. The studio is open to people who come from nearby. Despite its inviting presence, or perhaps simply because of it, it is a place where intimacy and openness have found common ground.

A Very Personal Project

Experimenting, repairing, and engaging — three aspects that perfectly describe Philippe Iacono di Cacito. He draws on a range of life experiences rather unusual for a roofer. He used to breed oysters and shrimp through aquaculture in the south of France before relocating to the north-western coast for love. The architects François Massin Castan and Clémence Mansons inspired him with their project in Le Cellier.

Philippe Iacono di Cacito

"We have known each other for seven years, and five years ago, I simply told François that I would do all his projects for him if he wanted." Philippe Iacono di Cacito, who, with his company ***ID Couverture***, took on the roofing of the experimental single-family house by Atelier du Ralliement, grabs our attention for more than just his braces. He has demonstrated his expertise numerous times. Working with him also seems particularly rewarding, as the two architects convey.

Philippe Iacono di Cacito has taken a path in his craft that is somewhat atypical. He is a tinkerer but also a rationalist. Even though he is working at full capacity, he has minimised his company's logistics. He can also say directly what could be improved in the work processes – for example, material packaging – from the perspective of a small company. He doesn't need an advertising budget or anything like that. He gets recommendations from people and keeps in touch with architects he's already worked successfully with. "Being self-employed means you're seen differently; you plan projects with your customers. The personal connection to the projects is therefore important to me," Philippe adds.

Right from the start, his interest was captivated by the nut-brown roof in Le Cellier. After all, the entire house is an experiment that relies on the craftsmanship of its builders and visionaries more than other projects. The two roof surfaces have an unusual asymmetry, and the elongated window interrupts the PREFA shingle surface almost throughout the entire roof width, presenting a challenge. Over 200 kilograms of shingles were laid on the cabanée.

Moreover, you can't put a standard roof on an experimental wooden structure. So, he had to work out the connections in detail from scratch. This was done in close dialogue with François Massin Castan and Clemence Mansons. The architects insisted that the drainage at the back of the house be organised via a rain gutter, while at the front, which is visible from afar, there would be no gutter. This may also be unusual, but with the recessed façade, it is an unobjectionable decision. It is a low-budget solution that adds aesthetic value, making the cabanée appear less traditional.

The narrow roof overhang on the gable sides is elegantly designed. It provides weather protection for the willow wickerwork façade while indicating that the builders did not intend to appear too minimalistic regarding craftsmanship.

PREFARENZEN 2025

Barracks “Tempesti”

Country: Italy
Object, location: barracks, Corvara in Badia
Category: new construction
Architecture: Claudio Lucchin & architetti associati, Bolzano
Installer: Unionbau AG
PREFA object consultant: Chiara Santamaria
Roof type: Prefalz
Roof colour: P.10 PREFA white
Façade type: Prefalz
Façade colour: P.10 PREFA white

Daniela Varnier and Claudio Lucchin

»Rethinking the "New Normal"«

The logistics and training centre Villaggio Alpino Tempesti in the Alpine village of Corvara, located at over 1,500 metres in the South Tyrolean Dolomites, is where 20 Alpini (Italian mountain troops) and up to 200 training guests gather in both winter and summer. Four new buildings were commissioned to cater to the future needs of these elite soldiers and athletes. The project, led by the architect Claudio Lucchin from Bolzano and his office partner Daniela Varnier of the ***CL&AA*** office, was completed at the end of 2022.

"A modern and innovative army should be easily recognisable to outsiders through contemporary architecture," says Claudio Lucchin convincingly. Instead of following centuries-old military and architectural traditions, Claudio Lucchin's buildings in Corvara feature P.10 PREFA white façades with horizontally arranged seam lines, marking a significant shift in the military's image. Despite initial resistance, Claudio Lucchin and Daniela Varnier succeeded in transforming the Ministry of Defence's static commission to build new utility buildings in the barracks into a new showcase model of Italian military architecture through a successful and adaptable planning process, ultimately giving the military a more positive and lasting image.

The Preconditions for the Project

The design is mainly based on three parameters. Firstly, the architects claim that the building site is located in a sensitive area. They therefore wanted to adjust the dimensions of the building and its design and keep it relatively small. The architects also placed a high priority on the efficiency of the new structures. "The people who work there should feel comfortable", says Claudio Lucchin. There was already a hint of a village structure on site, with a small square in the middle. The goal was to preserve this, resisting the urge to create

an exact replica of a mountain village in Italy. The clients expected traditional and rustic architecture at first. Claudio Lucchin, on the other hand, had a different vision. And, in the end, he successfully implemented the building structure without roof overhangs and the aluminium façade with horizontal seams in the Villaggio Alpino.

Contemporary Architectural Language

How did they manage that? "All of my designs contain a metaphor," explained the architect. A radiantly bright envelope characterises the command centre, gate, and soldiers' quarters. The structure is shaped like a half-house or half-mountain, and the entrance areas are adorned with warm wooden cladding, which is quite unusual for military structures. "Like mountain tops, barely noticeable in the winter, white among the snow-covered slopes and plateaus, and in the summer, standing out in stark contrast to the lush green pastures," says Claudio Lucchin, explaining the image that inspired the monochromatic façades of the buildings.

Additionally, light-coloured surfaces are more climate-friendly, have a high albedo value, and reflect the strong solar radiation at this altitude. This makes the ambient temperature much more pleasant than in the surroundings of dark buildings.

On Site

You can hear a soft rustling in the intense summer sun, almost like a crackling sound. Those familiar with this sound turn to the aluminium façades of the new structures. The Italian soldiers at the military base have certainly seen a lot, but they have only known whispering façades since the end of 2022. The soft sound suggests that everything was done right with the aluminium façade. The Prefalz trays in P.10 PREFA white are laid horizontally in irregular widths. The long sides of the structure are thus emphasised, giving it a flatter appearance overall. The trays are attached to the substructure of the rear-ventilated façade using clips and sliding points due to the expansion of the material, similar to the vertical installation.

> *All of my designs contain a metaphor. Not everything must be sensational.*

The drainage is via internal guttering, enabling a straightforward attic design, thus making the archetypal yet abstracted structures recognisable to lay people as a house, a home.

Design and Construction

The buildings are used as a command centre and administration, one for accommodation for soldiers and athletes, another as access control or gate and one as a warehouse and garage. They are built of timber. Reinforced concrete or other heavy building materials are exclusively employed as statically efficient stair cores. This enables the buildings to meet the extremely high fire protection and earthquake requirements demanded in the mountains and on military terrain. The sustainable nature of the material also played an essential role in the decision on the construction method. Therefore, there was such close cooperation with Unionbau, a general contractor specialising in timber and metal construction. This meant that the same company planned both the metal and timber works. Claudio Lucchin and Daniela Varnier enthusiastically admit that they prefer to be on the construction site rather than sitting in the office and working from there. The impressive Dolomites in Corvara, which easily turn every construction site into a massive stage, may be well the reason for this.

What Remains of Projects

A long list of representative and complex construction tasks showcases Claudio Lucchin's extensive experience. When asked about the importance of the Corvara barracks, which at 2,000 m² is rather small in terms of area, he answers diplomatically. He says that every project is important to him and the office. Not always at all levels and in all dimensions, but Corvara demonstrated that architecture can be used to achieve an image change and turn a situation that initially seemed hopeless into a positive one. In the meantime, the Ministry of Defence is even planning to expand the area in the near future.

Another of his projects, the Hannah Arendt School in Bolzano, completed in 2013, established a typology of underground urban densification that had never been implemented in global architectural work before, demonstrating that a city's underground should be counted among its spatial resources. The urban environment is where Claudio Lucchin and his partners conduct research. ‘In order to thrive in the future and compete globally, cities must undergo radical transformations. They need to use resources differently while still putting people at the centre of their development,’ explains Claudio, describing his interest in the city. He focuses on innovative and efficient residential construction in the context of limited spatial resources in the cities of the future. A passion he shares with Bauwerk, the residential developers in Munich and their design architects UN Studio. Both are featured with their projects side by side in the same book about tomorrow's living, ‘La casa del futuro è adesso’.

Does the Ideal Client Exist?

CL&AA was founded in 2004 by Claudio Lucchin, Daniela Varnier and architect Angelo Rinaldo. Together, they established their architectural firm in the public sector, secured numerous municipal and Olympic sports building contracts, and made a name for themselves. In 2024, twenty years later, proximity to public clients is still vital to Claudio. He emphasizes that the public sector can greatly contribute to ensuring that expertise and people remain in a region, thus avoiding brain drain and emigration. As an architect, you often have the role of communicating the importance and use of spaces to citizens and communities. You must 'think more in terms of normality' than just design. For Claudio, this normality also includes dealing with neuroscience and creativity. Therefore, it is not surprising that he asserts in the very same sentence that "not everything must be sensational" and that "cities require a radical transformation".

Reference: Chiara Tonelli: "La casa 4.0 Nuove frontiere dell'arbitare" (2022).

Within a Brutally Short Construction Time

650 tonnes of wood were used in Corvara, by ***Unionbau***, a company based in Sand in Taufers in South Tyrol, on the site of the former barracks. But that's another story. Simon Patzleiner has been working as a project manager for the general contractor Unionbau AG, with responsibility for timber construction and plumbing, since 2019. In Corvara, he was responsible for the realisation of the entire timber construction and pre-painted P.10 façades.

Ninety per cent of Unionbau AG's projects are public contracts. The company won the Italian military and South Tyrol tender in Corvara in 2021. The highest safety and fire protection standards had to be met since the buildings were system-relevant. Aluminium proved to be the perfect material. Despite global bottlenecks, PREFA was able to supply enough material for the construction of the four new buildings. In this way, 1,700 m² of roof and 2,100 m² of net façade area were completed. "Within a brutally short construction time!" Simon Patzleiner is quick to point out.

"Straight," he exclaims with nonchalance. In Corvara, the Prefalz trays had to be laid horizontally and precisely on the substructure of the barracks' elongated façades, requiring great concentration throughout the whole length. The striking horizontal seams are meant to visually elongate the building volumes and play a key role in the design by creating shadows.

Corvara is located at an altitude of over 1,500 metres and has excellent winter sports conditions but also long, early and cold winters that are unfavourable for the construction industry. The temperatures in the Alpine Village can drop very quickly. "We had to use the snow thrower to clear the roofs in autumn so that we could continue working," mentions the project manager with a somewhat hushed enthusiasm.

Simon Patzleiner

He adds that, in general, the efficiency of the planning, the cutting and the prefabrication of the Prefalz trays in the Unionbau workshops was crucial to the success of the construction site.

"If it is warm today and cold tomorrow, the same piece of aluminium will have different dimensions." Simon Patzleiner himself sometimes needs to explain to architects the effect this material property has on the entire construction. This led to some challenges that they were able to overcome during the planning and execution process. The width of the trays was determined by architect Claudio Lucchin, and Simon Patzleiner was responsible for the detailed planning and implementation of the tightly arranged, horizontal double-lock standing seams. He also coordinated the adjustments to the windows, whose frames, which protrude significantly from the façade, always had to start at one seam and end at another, a few tray widths below.

The statement by Simon Patzleiner, exemplified in his role at Unionbau, that wood and metal "always belong together," demonstrates that planning and construction sites today function as networked disciplines. Digitisation has been an important topic in both metal and timber construction for a long time. And even though Simon does not believe in the great breakthrough of AI on the construction site, he still relies on digital 3D planning in his projects and his cooperation with many different companies. AI can always be a great help, but the craftsmanship and teamwork at Unionbau and with their partners are hardly replaceable.

Alzenau town hall

Country: Germany
Object, location: town hall, Alzenau
Category: extension
Architecture: B3 Architekten, Aschaffenburg
Installer: ASA Schüßler GmbH & Co. KG
PREFA object consultant: Holger Voit
Roof type: PREFABOND aluminium composite panel
Roof colour: bronze
Façade type: PREFABOND aluminium composite panel
Façade colour: bronze

Object-related individual solution

Thomas Schlett

»A Modern Outfit«

A town hall embodies a community's pride and character and can significantly influence the cityscape and the satisfaction of its citizens. But how does this relate to its architecture? Thomas Schlett and ***B3 Architekten*** from Aschaffenburg in the Franconian town of Alzenau in Germany provided the answers to these and other questions.

As you approach the smooth, monolithic structure of the new extension to the town hall in the Franconian town of Alzenau in Germany, questions arise about the image and symbolism of the town's administrative centre. The mayor wanted a 'modern outfit,' so Thomas Schlett and B3 Architekten had to pursue an aesthetic goal from the outset.

Modern Character

The extension is part of a complex that includes the historic town hall – a classically rendered building – and its 1980s extension in sandstone and wood. The building confidently occupies Kaiser-Rudolf-Straße, which runs towards the market square and the church and redefines the street scene with its gable end. With its asymmetrically shaped gable roof, it speaks an elegant language. It is well-proportioned, matching the dimensions of the neighbouring 19th and 20th century buildings, and respectfully takes a back seat. However, its use of materials makes it stand out, as it breaks with tradition. Instead of the typical half-timbered or sandstone façades found in the region, the architects opted for bronze coloured PREFABOND aluminium composite panels. This decision gives the building a timeless character and sets it apart from its surroundings.

Contextualising the Envelope

The architects gave the new structure more than just an individual look with their choice of cladding. "The idea of the façade as a skin was important to me. It should be visible that the layer is folded around the interior of the building." The advantage of the PREFABOND composite panel was that the building edges could be formed without corner profiles. Thomas Schlett and his façade builder developed details that made it possible to fold the composite panels on the long sides five centimetres into the gable façades around the edges of the building without any visible difference between the gable end and the corner of the building. With a wink, the architect admits: "If it had been technically possible, I would have had the entire façade made from a single panel."

Material Prerequisites
Since aluminium – even as a composite panel – is subject to expansion, horizontal and vertical joints and installation as a curtained rear-ventilated façade are required. The premise remained that the joints should be kept as narrow as possible, at around eight millimetres, and a special detailed solution was designed for the roof drainage. From street level, it gives the appearance that the composite panels are folded over the verge and eaves. "Architectural practice is always a learning curve. Over time, you can see what is good more quickly and make faster decisions," says Thomas Schlett, commenting on his persistence when it comes to aesthetics. According to him, the extension should have had neither prominent eaves, dormers, or roof overhangs from the outset. He adds, "Ultimately, you can't decorate a building to death. I've learned over time to pare things down."

Invited, Won, and Developed
Thomas Schlett and his partners from B3 submitted the design for an invited competition in 2019. They won against three other studios. They had different designs for the façade at that time. During the subsequent process with the clients, the idea of a shimmering PREFA façade was brought up, replacing the initial concept of red brick and allowing for a truly uniform appearance. The durability and low maintenance of the material were also convincing, which is a compelling argument for public buildings and keeps the operation cost-effective in the long term. The contrast created by the large-scale appearance in relation to the existing buildings is a highlight and makes the building, which is restrained in many aspects, an eye-catcher. Other elements developed differently after the competition than initially thought. For example, the architects suggested eliminating complicated ventilation and building technology. Instead, they designed a compact window format that ensures air circulation in the building with the help of controllable ventilation flaps.

Public Sector
Five years after the competition, in 2024, the building is now in use as a citizens' office, multipurpose room, information centre and office of the city planning and building control office. Thomas Schlett has nothing but praise for the municipality of Alzenau as a client. He found a competent counterpart in the head of the municipal building department – 'This made the cooperation extremely constructive,' emphasises the architect. After the competition, they participated together in decision-making processes, even redid the room layout, and repeatedly checked and optimised the new building in terms of function.

Type and Qualities
The building is clearly recognisable as an example of the townhouse architectural type. Nevertheless, two large, recessed areas on each gable side are striking. It is glazed on the street side and allows views into the new municipal council chamber. The recessed area at the rear – you can see into the publicly accessible Mühlgarten – is a generous loggia that gives a wedding and multipurpose hall a remarkable spatial quality and makes it a popular place for weddings.

Urban Planning Decisions
You must "deal with the regulations confidently, but also be aware of real needs," says Thomas Schlett. That is why several other parameters shape the structure, which is modelled according to urban development regulations, in line with the spacing. The new building was moved away from the existing town hall, and a path was created between Mühlgarten and the street and the town hall square. In doing so, the architects not only adhered to the small-scale plot division established at this location in the city, but also secured a significant inner-city pedestrian shortcut and air corridor. With the extension, B3 created a new whole that offers more differentiated spatial references than before and thus also enhances the urban fabric.

White Space Atmosphere

Thomas Schlett welcomes us with coffee and cake. “Communication is a core skill for architects and must be uncomplicated,” he says. Even as a teenager, he wanted to become an architect. Today, architecture seems to be both his profession and his hobby.

The architects' office is located on a side street in the centre of Aschaffenburg and was once a shop for paints, varnishes, etc. Large display windows allow glimpses into the office, which sometimes also serves as a gallery, event venue or meeting place for friends. “We have already gained many ideas and even new employees through the openness of our office,” says Thomas Schlett enthusiastically. The rooms are basically a white cube with white furniture, white walls, and white curtains. Colour and interesting textures are brought into the rooms in the form of material samples and project drawings from practice. One would like to work together in a small team, where a lot of direct personal contact is also possible with the clients and the contractors. In the meantime, strictly speaking, the office should already be called B4, since the three architects – B3 – have found a young female partner. The future is secured, perfect!

Licensed to Bond

The tinsmiths and planners at ***ASA Schüßler*** in Aschaffenburg, Germany, who were in charge of the façade of the town hall in Alzenau, honed their bonding technology skills by employing PREFABOND aluminium composite panels and realising the occasional precise edge required by the architect. Everyone involved is proud of the result—the reference is shown with pleasure, and the focus is increasingly on cooperation and creative ideas.

Marcel Schmidt and Siegmar Fried had already completed several projects with the B3 office of Thomas Schlett for the company ASA Schüßler, including some that were outside of normal standards. There was a certain level of trust between the partners. Despite that, they were surprised by the challenge that the architect presented them with in 2022. "Everything looked smooth, sharp-edged, and futuristic." Smaller objects had already been realised using this technique. However, the town hall in Alzenau was still uncharted territory: its dimensions and the demanding details were a "nice challenge", says master tinsmith Siegmar Fried.

Despite that, the company was confident that, thanks to its expertise and machinery, it could meet such projects, their requirements, and technical challenges. Marcel Schmidt says, "What appealed to us was the fact that not all elements of the façade were standardised."

Marcel Schmidt and Sigmar Fried

PREFABOND bonding had never been employed for a project of the magnitude envisaged by the architects. Contrary to the assumption that bonding is a simpler method than traditional riveting or bolting, it was found that the temperature conditions and the associated care in application significantly influence the quality and durability of the joints. A new licence has been issued for using the adhesive in Alzenau. The adhesive should be applied at temperatures between 5 and 30 degrees Celsius to ensure optimal adhesion. As a result, the work was limited to the summer months. "We stood on the construction site with a thermometer, checking when it was warm enough in the morning and not too hot during the day," says Marcel Schmidt.

The project proved to be an exciting learning experience for all those who were involved, with particularly good results. Not only was an innovative bonding technique successfully optimised in the planning phase, but the 28-strong team at ASA Schüßler also solved the issue of the roof and building edges in a particularly elegant way. For example, the architect Thomas Schlett insisted that the façades appear continuous. No joints were to be seen at the building edges for the individual composite panels. As a result, a detail was created that forms a five-centimetre-wide visible edge made of composite panels on the gable sides by pulling the composite panels on the long sides around the corners of the building.

The roof area was treated with the same precision. The internal gutter for roof drainage should not be visible from the street. With a special detail, the installers were able to reduce the inlet gap for the roof drainage to a minimum and implement it in a way that was practically 'invisible' but fully functional.

The longest rain gutter measures up to 24 metres, and the largest panel on the façade of the polygonal-shaped building (no two are the same) measures 3.6 metres. "Material expansion is an important factor here," declare Marcel Schmidt and Siegmar Fried. Marcel Schmidt said that the fact that the composite panels could be milled and folded made the material indispensable at the construction site in Alzenau. "Also, with PREFA, we can be sure that every panel has the same colour – which is important for the homogeneous appearance of the new building," he explains, adding: "The result is impressive."

Refurbishment “Ex Officine Tosi”

Country: Italy
Object, location: mixed-use building, Formigine
Category: refurbishment
Architecture: Ambientevario, Formigine
Installer: GAL s.r.l.
PREFA object consultant: Alessandro Valentino
Roof type: Prefalz
Roof colour: P.10 nut brown

Duccio Randazzo

»A Past with a Future«

The task was both challenging and intriguing. ***Studio Ambientevario*** was to renovate a dilapidated brick building in the northern Italian town of Formigine, near Modena, and prepare it for the future. The architects opted for a balance between contemporary architectural elements and the idea of preserving the historical building structure. The project, which was completed in 2022, transformed the small community's appearance and thrust it into the realm of contemporary construction.


AMBIENTEVA

Formigine has a classic Italian feel. Despite its rural character, the area features narrow lanes with interspersed piazzas that are of interest from an urban planning perspective. It also includes old stone houses with rendered façades, as well as buildings from the years of the economic miracle and the times of industrialisation in northern Italy. For a long time, the agricultural machinery factory 'Tosi Carlo & Figli' played an important economic and social role in this structure until it ceased operations in 1975. About 10 years ago, its subsequent users also left the inner-city production area. At that time, the architects of Studio Ambientevario, Duccio Randazzo, Francesca Cibelli and Elisa Gozzi, moved into one of the abandoned mechanical workshops with their staff and converted it into an architectural office with a sense of the materials and details and a joy in the special features they found there. The empty Tosi administration building next door was also ready to be revived. For this, Ambientevario developed a formal and practical concept, which, as Duccio Randazzo explains, couldn't have been more understandable: the past and the future were to be recognisable in the present using two different materials.

A Flash Idea

Duccio Randazzo explains that they decided how they wanted to deal with the building fabric fairly quickly. "We wanted to emphasise both the past and future of this place, thus showing both aspects architecturally." Wherever they changed the existing structure, metal was to be used to provide a contrast. Hence, even before many other considerations, the architects devoted themselves to the search for suitable products for conversion and extension. These had to be ideal on a technical, constructive, and functional level. After all, the aim was to create 700 m² of spacious and light residential and business premises. Since the new requirements did not quite match the old building, a mezzanine floor was added to the existing structure. "Prefalz is a light and flexible material," says Duccio Randazzo, "and we knew that it would fulfil all the requirements for such a structural adaptation." The choice of material was also important to them because they wanted to

provide clients with realistic answers to questions and needs with their designs.

Use It in a Way That Fits the Location
The planning began in 2019. Duccio Randazzo explains that it took many meetings to implement the clarity in the built result despite the convincing design concept, not without letting on that it is precisely this interaction with property developers, the municipality and companies that is close to their hearts. This is the key to architecture at Studio Ambientevario, changing everyone's perspective on what already exists.

A Cozy Look
Even though it is not a listed building, the architects recognized the value of the brick façades and protected their authenticity as a 'storehouse of history'. The brick walls were thoroughly cleaned using high pressure to avoid completely erasing any traces of the past, but the joints were then replastered. As a result, the walls now appear brand-new despite still displaying the intrinsic worth of the original structure. Destroying the walls instead would have resulted in the loss of their architectural identity.

New Static System
Where structurally necessary, a second envelope was erected behind the existing façades. The original ceilings were structurally reinforced with reinforced concrete and connected to this new construction level. "Similar to a new building, but in close connection with the old one," says Duccio Randazzo, explaining that, in principle, the additions have created a construction system that can withstand future loads. He continues, "Without this, it would not have been possible to place the new attic on the existing walls." A cross-laminated timber construction covers the new floor with evenly wide Prefalz P.10 nut brown trays. The contrast between the roof and the light-coloured walls is further enhanced by dark steel collars around the windows and a steel pergola used as a sunshade. Here, the architects consistently implement their idea of the two materials.

Nevertheless, to ensure that these visual contrasts form a unity, the architects continue the proportions and axes of the old structure in the new roof structure. This shows genuine appreciation for the existing building, the city, and history. Each project begins by studying the existing building and the traces of the former life of the place in the architecture. In practice, the latest technology is also used to measure the existing building with a point cloud to establish an optimal data basis for the planning and execution phase.

Today, it is More Valuable

The renovated former factory office building in Via Giardini, which used to be hardly worth mentioning, now stands out for three things in particular: the neatly laid warm beige brick walls, its nut brown Prefalz roof, whose clean lines contrast with the old building, and the lush, green hanging gardens in front of the windows on the south and street façades.

it also helps regulate the indoor climate in the house's exterior and living spaces. This provides a pleasant living environment both at the time of completion and in the following decades, despite higher temperatures and recurring heat waves. Because of this, many of the studio's other projects incorporate plants as a key element of their architecture. This calls for symbiotic interactions rather than structural segregation. The community of Formigine and its neighbourhood are so enthusiastic about implementing green building practices that a growing number of construction projects are requesting and implementing façade greening.

Community is Where Our Future Lies

"Because Ambientevario has been living in Formigine for 10 years, not just building and working there, we simply know the place and the people well." Formigine, a popular place to live in Emilia Romagna, provided an excellent starting point for the studio's architectural work.

Hanging Gardens

You almost want to rub your eyes because the plants growing out of the loggias and balconies of the façade are so green, even at a summery thirty degrees in the shade. The hanging gardens align with Ambiventario's approach to sustainable design, whereby architecture addresses the challenges of climate change. The lush vegetation not only makes the gable façade an eye-catcher in the small piazza opposite, but in the long run,

They have completed more than 10 projects in the region. They are valued in the community as contemporary architects who, in addition to style, also have a skill for building culture and are, therefore, able to work well with the people and the conditions in the region.

Got a Liking for It

Ambientevario is making a lasting contribution to building culture with its conversion projects. Elements such as the hanging gardens and strong material contrasts have become its trademark. As architects, Duccio Randazzo believes that they have a kind of aesthetic responsibility. “Good architecture is like a seed that transforms a garden”. The future, of course, plays a role in all programmatic and architectural decisions. Architecture cannot be created without a clear vision of the future and knowing the prevailing living conditions. “People follow convincing goals. This motivates us daily and shows how important it is to highlight these with each design”, and the Formigine team couldn't agree more.

A Façade, or Not a Façade?

The company ***GAL***, based near Bologna in northern Italy, has 4,000 square metres of workshop space (no, not a roof area) at its disposal for handling roofs, façades and, more recently, windows and all types of metalwork required in construction. Just handling? Of course not! Above all, the company develops projects in close collaboration with architects and clients. An example? The former Tosi building in Formigine.

Fausto Comastri and Andrea Pasqualini

For almost 56 years, GAL's workshops, located in the small Italian town of Ghiardo di Bibbiano in the middle of Reggio Emilia, have been home to 29 employees and 7 partners. The company's work includes large roofs for schools and public buildings and smaller roofs and façade surfaces for single-family homes and renovations. Fausto Comastri and Andrea Pasqualini are among those who are managing the business. “We are seven managing directors, and each of us has our own area of responsibility,” says Fausto Comastri “This enables us to work on many projects simultaneously and with a high degree of specialisation”.

The building in Formigine, with its striking nut-brown roof – “which is also the façade,” says Fausto Comastri – provided an exciting renovation project. Built on old brick walls, an attic – clad in dark sheet metal – forms the transition to a façade section only 178 cm high, with PREFALZ trays that merge seamlessly into the pitched roof.

Three tinsmiths spent four weeks on site applying their skills and expertise to laying 175 m² of Prefalz in P.10 nut brown. The trays were intended to cover the entire 19-metre-long roof with identical 43 mm standard widths. Since the dormer windows, prefabricated as independent elements and fitted on site, take up the window axes of the existing building, precision in cutting, folding, and fastening was repeatedly required due to the often very narrow connections.

The elegant roof is drained by a gutter on each of its long sides. In this case, too, it was particularly important to the architect Duccio Randazzo that the seams continue visually over the gutter and on the façade in the same rhythm. The round drainpipes create a contrast with the sharp edges of the roof.

GAL has previously collaborated with the architect from Formigine on multiple occasions. The architect's precise and detailed ideas are readily accepted. It's evident that every line and inch is crucial from a craftsmanship standpoint and can either make or break a project.

The two managing directors also expect this spirit from their employees and apprentices. However, the situation regarding new talent is a bit tricky. Andrea Pasqualini explains that the only thing lacking in the area is a school that nurtures promising new talent. GAL is exploring new ways to make roofing work and planning more appealing so that in ten or twenty years, not only will “cheese, cherries, and castles” in Reggio Emilia continue to draw attention, but also the craft of metal roofing will endure.

Middle School Léontine Dolivet

Country: France
Object, location: school building, Cesson-Sévigné
Category: new construction
Architecture: CLARC Architectes, Betton
Installer: Quemard
PREFA object consultant: Romain Blavet
Façade type: rhomboid façade tile 29 × 29
Façade colour: metallic silver

Hugues Launay

»The Cloud Over the Playground«

Brittany, in northwest France, is known for its changeable weather and expressive clouds against a sky that glows with every shade of blue. Hugues Launay, co-founder and architect at the firm ***CLARC Architectes***, knows that the colours of the Breton sky and its changeable nature provide plenty of inspiration for architectural design. For a private client, he designed a school in the municipality of Cesson-Sévigné near Rennes whose exterior was intended to appear as light and changeable as a cloud.

It is not too far-fetched to compare the façade of the Collège Léontine Dolivet to a cloud. 'Conceptually, it's a great match,' says Hugues Launay. Its functional program makes the structure massive in size. Therefore, the architects of CLARC sought a design that would make the building appear lighter and softer. "It didn't take long to come up with the concept of a cloud floating above a massive base," Hugues Launay continues.

Two Parts
Two very different materials were chosen to implement the idea and characterise the educational institution's external appearance: a brownish clinker brick for the base and a light, silvery aluminium façade for the two upper floors.

> *"The metallic effect of the PREFA rhomboid tiles subtly contributes to the exciting effect of the building."*

Mass Reduction
The extensive building volume, clad in a multitude of PREFA 29 × 29 façade rhomboid tiles in a shiny metallic silver colour, seamlessly blends into the changing sky of Brittany. "The metallic effect of the PREFA rhomboid tiles subtly contributes to the exciting effect of the building." Hugues Launay enjoys talking about these rhomboid tiles and their sensational coating. Furthermore, the all-round, detailed pattern simply looks harmonious because it serves as a projection surface for different light moods. The rounded corners of the structure also reduce the sense of bulk. They can be found as an architectural design element in the interior of corridors and rooms.

Functional Design
The Collège consists of 3900 square metres of floor space, which CLARC Architectes organized in a well-ordered, intuitive, and uncomplicated way in terms of functional processes. The architects derived the positioning and shape of the floor plans and the structure from the surrounding environment. They incorporated the slight slope of the property and its location southeast of a roundabout into the design. This made it possible to orient the schoolyard away from the streets and continue the building line of a neighbouring grammar school.

The narrow panorama windows convey a sense of calm and are less distracting for children, says the architect.

What Type of School?
The client had few specific requirements at the outset. Hence, the CLARC office got involved from the very beginning and came up with a school and classroom design that was coordinated with the teaching team. Efficient organisation and visual connections were then fuelled by rational considerations. From the street, a brass-tinted gate leads to the school grounds. The main entrance for pupils is located approximately in the middle of the long side of the building, so that access to the classrooms and teaching rooms is on the right-hand side and access to the school canteen and foyer is on the left.
Since the building was constructed on sloping ground, the school kitchen and delivery areas were arranged in the basement below the canteen. The ground floor was designed as a circulation zone – both inside and out – with an open layout, while the classrooms were conceived in a more introverted way. On the upper floors, there are 16 classrooms and a documentation and information centre (CDI). If there is a need for additional classrooms, 8 more classrooms can be added in a second construction phase, as the municipality is currently experiencing a significant influx of new residents.

Design Premises
All design choices at CLARC include a practical component. The clinker brick on the ground floor façades is robust enough for everyday school life, where balls and school bags are sometimes thrown or hurled at the wall. Similarly, the combination of brown, gold-brass and metallic silver does not follow any fashion trend, since the school building must function for decades. The selected window formats emphasize the division of the building volume already suggested by the façade design, with upright formats being employed on the open-plan ground floor and narrow horizontal windows in the classrooms. 'The narrow panorama windows convey a sense of calm and are less distracting for children, says the architect. Only the CDI opens up to its surroundings with a high glass façade, which makes it visible from the street as a special place of learning. A signal that is received well by students, teachers, and parents. Hugues Launay also reveals that they have received positive feedback from users.

Cooperating with CLARC
C stands for Couasnon, L for Launay and ARC stands for Architecture. The name reflects the company's history. Hugues Launay joined the office, which was headed by Christian Couasnon at the time, immediately after graduating. "I started off as a student trainee and then became a full employee. We shared the same architectural beliefs. Then he retired and suggested that I take over his office." That was less than a year after graduating from college. Today, Hugues Launay works with five employees in a house in the countryside, between cornfields and country roads. The peace and quiet that the place offers is striking – there are no urban distractions, so you can fully concentrate on the planning process. CLARC is a small core team. They draw on expertise from an extensive regional network that has been built up over the years. "We have many public contracts, such as schools, medical centres, or health centres – always contracts in which the public benefit for the people is the focus. Many of them involve renovations". We tend to take on new buildings for property developers with whom we already have a closer relationship, the architect says, outlining his own portfolio.

Little Nostalgia
And he adds: "A small anecdote about the Collège: I was a student at the neighbouring Lycée. So there was also a bit of nostalgia for me in the Cesson-Sévigné project." Hugues Launay outlines his vision for the future of CLARC in a few brief sentences: "More and more commissions, more freedom in architectural design and on a technical level, and less industrialised construction in order to constantly develop architectural knowledge." Yes, that would be ideal.

Pierre Hiblot

THE GOAL: Long-Term Cooperation

The outer shell of the Collège Léontine Dolivet in Cesson-Sévigné is composed of 15,000 small rhomboid tiles shimmering in heavenly colours. That adds up to a total of more than 1375 square metres that had to be carefully planned, produced, and mounted. The ***Quemard*** company from Brittany provided the expertise for the iridescent PREFA rhomboid tiles and the intricate installation process.

Not every company can meet the requirements for the façade of the Collège Cesson-Sévigné. The size of the area to be tiled alone requires sufficient manpower and expertise. Then, there are the rounded corners of the building, which run in gentle arches over the entire construction height. The 'angular' PREFA rhomboid tiles had to be rounded off.

These conditions did not deter Pierre Hiblot, managing director of the family-owned company Quemard, which has been around since 1946. Together with the architects from CLARC Architectes, the company had already successfully completed projects. "Long-term cooperation is valuable", he explains, "and is especially appreciated at Quemard. Good work is when everyone is content at the end and still sees each other as partners".

The metalworking company is situated in Quessoy, in the department of Côtes-d'Armor, Brittany. Local knowledge, particularly about the local market, has played a crucial role in the company's growth and in the development of the managing director. After almost 80 years, the company now employs around 60 people, from site managers and master craftsmen to journeymen, as well as staff in accounting and administration. Both the planning and execution of projects are handled in-house.

In the future, Pierre Hiblot plans to continue developing the company in a traditional manner. Apprentice training and contract work will continue to focus on roofing, industrial construction, and façade construction using various materials. In the region, competition for the processing of PREFA products has been relatively low despite increasing demand. From an economic standpoint, this is a great opportunity to start focusing on PREFA items. Looking ahead, Pierre Hiblot states, "Renovations will also make up half of Quemard's orders." He believes that, together with solar technology, his profession is well-positioned in terms of sustainability.

Library in Olomouc

Country: Czechia
Object, location: library, Olomouc
Category: renovation and extension
Architecture: atelier-r, Olomouc
Installer: OHL ŽS + STRABAG
PREFA object consultant: Michal Trefil
Roof type: PREFABOND aluminium composite panel
Roof colour: black grey
Façade type: PREFABOND aluminium composite panel
Façade colour: black grey

Miroslav Pospíšil

»Red Church, Black Diamond«

Do you know Olomouc? This is where Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart composed his 6th Symphony in 1767, and Ferdinand I, the Emperor, conferred the affairs of state of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy on the eighteen-year-old Franz Joseph I in 1848. This Czech city is where socialist post-war modernism and a Renaissance old town centre blend seamlessly. The Czech Republic's third-largest library was housed here in a church for decades until 2023 when the team of ***atelier-r*** designed an extraordinary extension and a new cultural space for this church.

With an estimated population of 100,000, Olomouc is the sixth-largest city in the Czech Republic. It is known for its university, founded in 1573, and its historic old town, which features many unique monuments and townhouses and has been a listed landmark town centre since 1971. The city centre boasts a mix of architectural styles, including socialist modernism, creating an appealing and fragmented urban landscape.

The Red Church

One of the cornerstones of this colourful mix is the so-called Red Church, which occupies a prominent position on the former *Ringstraße* at the transition between the old town and residential areas. The church building, with its tower, was built in 1902 in North German brick Gothic style and opened as a German Protestant church. At the end of the 1950s, the socialist state took over the building and converted it to store books from the neighbouring Research Library. This temporary arrangement lasted until 2016, when a new building at a completely different location replaced the church as a book depository, and the church space remained empty. What should be done with such a dominant area for which no new functionality was available?


NKOL

New Spaces, New Life
The people of Olomouc did not lack ideas. The nearby VKOL, the Olomouc Research Library, was set to undergo modernisation, with a cultural program to be added. The church was also to be transformed into a lively venue for events, and an architectural transition was planned to connect the library building and the church, providing a primarily functional space and an entrance area. The architects approached for the project were Miroslav Pospíšil and his atelier-r. In previous projects, these architects had already demonstrated their ability to renovate monuments respectfully and creatively handle sensitive building materials.

Urban Context: Some History
Miroslav Pospíšil delved deep into the place's history. “The task was both appealing and exciting”, he says, “as it involved connecting different architectural styles and eras”. The goal was to strike a balance between reconstruction and new construction and, most importantly, reorganise the ensemble regarding space and urban planning. Since the church building is listed, the opportunity to add contemporary touches was relatively limited. For instance, the distinctive façade of the Red Church had to be preserved in its original state.

The material experience on-site
The new connecting building, completed in 2023, joins the former detached church with the research library building. This creates two street scenes with entirely different characters. If you step back from the church onto the forecourt, the extension building’s pointed edges and roof edges are particularly visible. In addition, the irregular stone paving made of boulders accentuates the structure of the new building. At the base points, the dark PREFABOND aluminium composite panels of the façade meet the paving almost seamlessly, giving the impression that the new building is slightly raised, floating in contrast to the earthbound nature of the church walls. Depending on the perspective, the architecture is about the overall impression, explains Miroslav Pospíšil. That is why dark-tinted glass façades contrast with the matt PREFA surfaces in some building areas.

Urban Planning and Interiors
atelier-r placed the church's main entrance in the new connecting building on today's Liberty Avenue. When you enter, you will find a meticulously designed grand hall. Its ceiling features an inverted and irregular cross-ribbed vault, offering a modern interpretation of classical sacred architecture. The walls, made of exposed concrete, reach upwards. A floor-to-ceiling bookcase made of black steel that also incorporates ventilation technology and lighting leaves no doubt as to the function of the space, which serves as the entrance to the library and as a foyer for events with a café, cloakroom, and toilet facilities. Thanks to its elegant height and the transparency of the large glass façades, the space appears light and open, although the extension seems to be instead closed on the outside with its black glass and aluminium façade. On the garden side, the small café has been expanded with a terrace and offers a sheltered, quiet place between the turn-of-the-century townhouses and the red church walls. The interior design of the new building also incorporates the red colour of the church using a floor made of polished, red-coloured concrete. Regardless of where you are in the building, some material or detail always seems to reinterpret the original parameters of the Red Church.


VKOL

The Design Language of the New Building and the Church

Miroslav Pospíšil's design approach involves using architectural elements as a reference in the extension while also adding his own unique touches to avoid a simple reproduction. The building's positioning forms a zigzag pattern between the church and the library, perfectly aligning with the polygonal foundations of the church. The formal quote, with its spatial harmony, can be sensed instantly. The new building's roof mirrors the church's sloping roof with an inward slope rather than outward. The roof covering consists of PREFABOND panels, giving the building a monolithic appearance and making it stand out as a standalone element between the neo-Gothic church and the classicist library. While the extension has a contemporary design, the church has been renovated to maintain its status as a listed building. The church interior, designed as a hall with three apses and a polygonal floor plan, is characterised by high-quality wood and red brick. The large central room with a cross-ribbed vault and side aisles with star vaults can accommodate up to 250 guests for events.

In the Role of a Visionary Architect

atelier-r (s.r.o.) focuses on using materials with a strong emphasis, often varying the surfaces while maintaining a classically modern - almost reformist - architectural style. Miroslav Pospíšil sees himself as a visionary architect, often having to repeatedly convince others of the value of his ideas and visions. For example, he worked persistently for a whole year to ensure that the new building was constructed with a dark façade, allowing the interplay between matte and shiny surfaces to be fully appreciated.

Architectural Creativity

Architects often question whether the spaces in which architecture is designed, planned, and managed influence the design outcome. Miroslav Pospíšil believes the answer is both "yes" and "no". His studio is located in a beautiful villa from the First Republic, previously owned by JUDr. Eduard Šrot and designed in 1924 by Ladislav Skřivánek in the historicist style. The villa, which was in a very poor state of repair, was purchased by atelier-r in 2010. It was renovated and revitalized in the following years, including its elaborate sgraffito façade and the interiors. Miroslav Pospíšil has long been passionate about historic buildings, and today, the restoration and revitalisation of historic buildings are central themes in his work.

Past and Present

The Red Church is another project by atelier-r in which the main idea behind restoring a historic building is to add a new, contemporary substance to the original structure. The studio's many award-winning projects also include the reconstruction of the Renaissance palace of Helfštýn Castle. The Red Church and its black extension are also nominated for the Czech Architecture Prize in 2024. atelier-r sees the symbiosis of the listed building with modern architecture as an opportunity for the future of historic buildings. And, as Miroslav Pospíšil says, "combining it with modern architecture is often the only way to preserve historic buildings."


→ KOSTEL


RECEPCE


ARKOA

The Core Is Just as Important as the Shell

Petr Duda has travelled the world by bike, designed façades throughout the Czech Republic, has been responsible for the façades of the new University Hospital in Olomouc for years, and built a hospital in Vietnam. He could sit back and relax. What motivates him to be so dedicated to shaping architecture tirelessly? The satisfaction of a beautiful job and the valuable, positive reactions to craftsmanship.

The best thing to ask Petr Duda about is the here and now. He can't imagine a day-to-day life without complex professional challenges. That's also why he didn't hesitate to accept the contract for the VKOL when Miroslav Pospíšil asked him. “The VKOL building is located in the centre of Olomouc, and thanks to the result, the completed building is also a reference for us,” he adds.

His company, established in 1990, specializes in steel structures and various types of cladding, including glass, ceramic, sheet metal, and cement panels. It also produces automatic doors and fire-resistant and non-fire-resistant portals. While it used to operate throughout the Czech Republic, the company now focuses solely on the Olomouc region.

The construction of the VKOL took about 1.5 years. The main challenge for Petr Duda was to produce the supporting steel frame construction of the building core so that the steel beams or profiles and the building shell made of glass and PREFABOND aluminium composite panels would fit together despite having different material tolerances.

Petr Duda

The manufacturing tolerances for the supporting steel structure's rolled profiles are in the centimetre range, while the building shell had to be manufactured and processed with millimetre precision.

Petr Duda and his five craftsmen laid approximately 750 m² of composite panels at the library extension construction site in Olomouc. Each panel is trapezoid-shaped, with some panels being curved and glued. “We have the knowledge to cut, shape, and bend composite panels from our training. The workmanship is precise, but the result is always excellent, thanks to the Prefa colour shades.”
As a planner and executor, Petr Duda is primarily concerned with the functionality of the building in most realisations. “In Olomouc, the visual realisation was also important,” says Petr, “Miroslav Pospíšil did not allow any deviation from his architectural visualisation.”
When asked if he would ever want to switch roles with architects, he responds with a calm and appreciative smile: “Because we are focused on bringing the architect's technical visions to life, we are essentially always in the architect's role. And that can be pretty challenging at times.”

School and residential building Rötzergasse

Country: Austria
Object, location: school and residential building, Vienna
Category: extension and conversion
Architecture: HEIMSPIEL Architektur ZT GmbH, Vienna
Installer: IAT GmbH
PREFA object consultant: Christopher Themessl
Roof type: rhomboid roof tile 29 × 29
Roof colour: bronze
Façade type: rhomboid façade tile 29 × 29
Façade colour: bronze

Julia Stoffregen

»The Chemistry Must Be Right«

Redensification often also means thinking outside the box. In Rötzergasse in Vienna, ***Heimspiel Architektur***, with founder and architect Julia Stoffregen, took on the challenge of expanding an entire primary school in an already dense block structure. PREFA 29 × 29 bronze rhomboid tiles deliberately pay homage to the small-scale roof coverings of the neighbouring Gründerzeit buildings.

The two architects, Gisela Mayr and Julia Stoffregen, who together run the architectural firm HEIMSPIEL, met while working at the Vienna-based architecture firm caramel. Supported by their former employer, they founded their own company in 2011. Today, they work with three other architects. “The chemistry has to be right,” emphasises Julia Stoffregen, because in a small firm like HEIMSPIEL, a personal and intensive exchange is essential in the daily work routine. Julia Stoffregen is originally from Germany and moved to Vienna about 20 years ago. At the time, Vienna was considered a stronghold for young, cool architecture firms. “I liked Vienna from the start. It's an aesthetically beautiful city with a Mediterranean way of life.”

HEIMSPIEL: A Home Game in the Truest Sense

The architects specialise in residential and educational buildings, focusing on projects in and near Vienna. This proximity enables intensive support in all service and construction phases. “We are a planning office, but the exchange with the executing companies on site, including on the construction sites, is irreplaceable for our architecture,” explains Julia Stoffregen. A glance at the actual situation is often enough to make important decisions in the planning process. “The ongoing process is precisely why we do architecture.” Direct contact makes it possible to react flexibly to challenges. Several times a week, the architects visit their construction sites to check that everything is going according to plan.

Keep Building Substance
Revitalisation of historical building fabric is a central theme in the work of HEIMSPIEL Architektur, whether in residential or school construction. For Julia Stoffregen and Gisela Mayr , this not only offers great design potential, but it also entails a responsibility towards the city and its citizens. "Preserving and revitalising old substance is not only ecologically responsible but also a cultural task," says Julia Stoffregen. She emphasises that, particularly in a city like Vienna, which is rich in historical architecture, careful development of the substance is of great importance. The durability of the building material and the spatial quality of the buildings make Gründerzeit buildings particularly suitable for revitalisation and long-term use. Designing modern residential buildings for future generations that are sustainable, flexible, and durable without sacrificing spatial quality is a daunting task under today's conditions.

Initial Urban Planning Situation
The expansion of the open elementary school in Rötzergasse in Vienna is an example of their work in the area of densification. The project encompassed the expansion of an existing school within dense perimeter block structures. For various reasons, it was not possible to add a floor to the actual school building or to expand it on the same property. Thus, the City of Vienna approached the owners of an adjacent vacant property to use the two-storey townhouse for the new school premises. Apartments were also planned.

Mixed Use Was in Demand
HEIMSPIEL Architektur developed a concept and some feasibility studies for the densification of the entire property. A mixed-use building with a school and residential area was planned from the outset – an unusual but increasingly popular option. Since its completion in mid-2023, the school has used the ground floor and first floor of the renovated townhouse for team and ancillary rooms for the teaching staff. A new extension in the courtyard houses an assembly hall and seven additional classrooms with a multifunctional zone in front of them. An important aspect was to create a new and barrier-free access to the old school, which was solved by building the assembly hall with a foyer. On the upper floors, nine apartments have been constructed, each featuring a loggia or balcony that overlooks the courtyard.

> *"The ongoing process is precisely why we do architecture."*

Preserving the Past, Embracing the New
One of the greatest challenges was preserving the historic façade of the building on Rötzergasse. The city architect, Carl Steinhofer, originally built it in 1895 as a clubhouse for the Vienna Cyclists. Although the building is not listed, the goal was to preserve it as faithfully as possible. In fact, Rötzergasse is situated in a protected zone where the characteristic cityscape and streetscape are to be preserved.
For similar reasons, the architects chose PREFA 29 × 29 façade rhomboid tiles, which are a modern interpretation of the traditional roof tiles of the neighbouring buildings, for both the roof and the courtyard façade. The window profiles, flashings and railings were also colour-coordinated with the bronze-coloured PREFA rhomboids. "We paid great attention to detail in the planning, even in the tendering phase, and were able to implement all of our key details in Rötzergasse," emphasises Julia Stoffregen.

No Imitations
After a moment's thought, the architect answers the question of how to approach work with old buildings: "Certainly not by imitating or reproducing the old structure." Rather, the aim is to create a timeless elegance that establishes harmony between the historical context and the new building. "What can be preserved according to these criteria will be preserved," she explains. In Rötzergasse, this meant preserving the street façade. The statistics presented particular challenges. The building was gutted, the façade was supported by a new foundation and the transition from the existing façade to the new building was designed with a slight recess – so that the three-storey addition above it appears to be a low-pitched roof.

Future Prospects

When it comes to the future of HEIMSPIEL Architekten, Julia Stoffregen and Gisela Mayr have clear ideas. They want to keep focusing on educational buildings, mixed-use buildings, and reviving old ones. They see it as a huge responsibility and an enormous opportunity to make a positive contribution to society through architecture, particularly in the field of educational construction. Vienna is experiencing a massive influx of people, and each year around ten per cent more new pupils need a place at school. Julia Stoffregen says, "The demand for new classrooms is therefore increasing enormously. These children have a right to the best possible conditions for a modern education. Education is the most important thing we have, and it is an honour and a joy to build for the future by planning schools." Environmental responsibility is also playing an increasingly important role in her work. Particularly in a densely populated city like Vienna, it is important to redevelop and repurpose existing structures instead of demolishing them and building new ones", Julia Stoffregen explains. "Anything else would be sheer madness."

Tricky Cuts

Contemporary architecture relies heavily on the design and technical realisation of façades. The residential and school building in Rötzergasse in Vienna, which attracts attention with its bronze-coloured façade made of PREFA rhomboid tiles in the middle of a Gründerzeit street, confirms this trend. The façade was installed by the company ***IAT***, for which the project for eaves, ridges, loggias, and roof provided 'tricky cuts.'

"The requirements for the extension's façade in Rötzergasse were the same as for a high-rise façade. For this reason and due to increased fire protection requirements, aluminium was chosen," explains Mathias Jalits, site manager and head of sheet metal work at IAT in Vienna. In a small workshop in the Austrian federal state of Burgenland, Mathias Jalits learned the trade of complex sheet metal work and everything it takes to manage large projects at his construction company. He's been leading a team of ten tinsmiths since 2021, and he oversees all standard roof and façade coverings, including their design and execution. For the residential building with a school sports hall in the courtyard, they planned and installed 350 square metres of vertical façade and 250 square metres of roof surface with bronze coloured PREFA 29 × 29 rhomboid tiles over a period of four months.

The design focuses on contrast, giving the street-side façade a linear, continuous, rhomboid-patterned design. The new building appears relatively simple in detail and sets itself apart from the existing Gründerzeit block perimeter. However, it integrates harmoniously into its urban surroundings by referencing existing window axes and eaves heights.

Mathias Jalits

The many transitions and building edges, which required precise execution, were a central feature of the project. The PREFA rhomboid façade tiles were carefully laid over the roof edges and on the courtyard side of the loggias. In order to match the modern angles and corners of the building, the panels had to be precisely cut on-site due to the intricate geometry of the courtyard façade. Another challenge was the eaves solution, which had to fulfil both functional and aesthetic requirements. It was designed so that the rhomboid tile pattern is not interrupted, although there is a small roof overhang that allows for efficient ventilation of the roof and façade via the eaves detail.
The snow guards, which also represent an interesting combination of technology and optics, are striking. For structural reasons, they are mounted on the roof tiles and emphasise the tile pattern and its regularity. They are laid in the R29 2 laying pattern according to PREFA installation guidelines. As the position of the sun changes, their shadows emerge and make the roof appear even more similar to the small-scale rhythm of the neighbouring roofs. The façade rhomboid tiles, in contrast, appear smooth and homogeneous. This transforms a technically necessary standard element into a design tool.

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