

Another Architecture

N°68 June — July 2017

# MARK

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architecture  
in Barcelona**

**24 new houses  
from around  
the globe**

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the Qatar projects**

## *Unwind at Home*

**A house in Poland  
by KWK Promes**



EUR 19,95 GBP 14 CHF 30 CAD 29,50  
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# Continuing

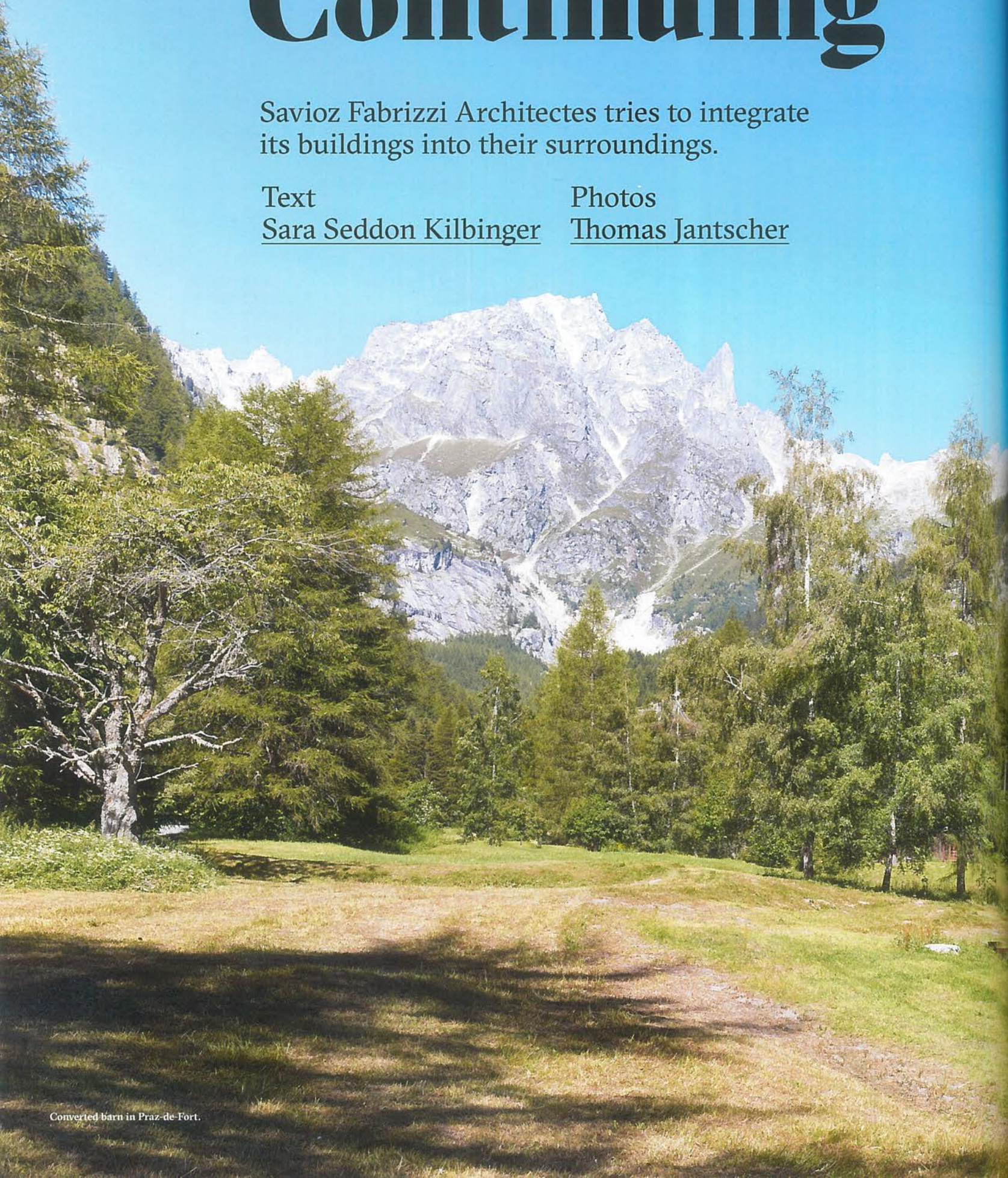
Savioz Fabrizzi Architectes tries to integrate its buildings into their surroundings.

Text

Sara Seddon Kilbinger

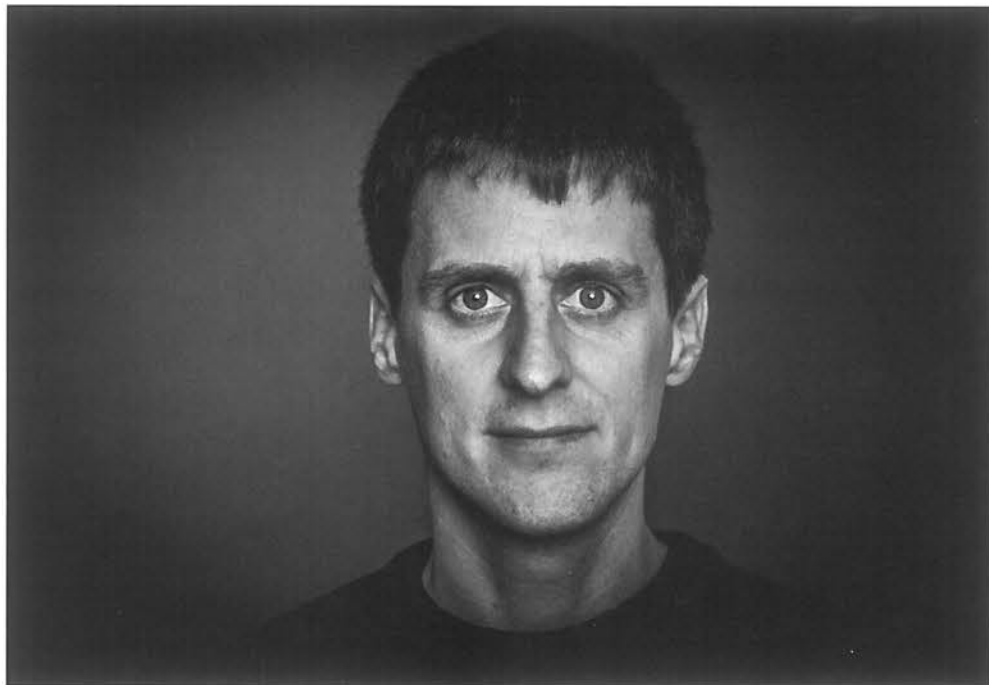
Photos

Thomas Jantscher



# Story





Laurent Savioz.  
Photo Jürg Waldmeier

# Laurent

Savioz and Claude Fabrizio are the cofounders of Swiss architecture firm Savioz Fabrizio Architectes. Hailing from Valais in southwest Switzerland, the men met in 1998 as students at the University of Fribourg, in the Swiss town of the same name. In 2004 they opened their own practice.

From the outside, your barn conversion in Praz-de-Fort gives the impression of being as old as the surrounding landscape, but the building wasn't even on its present site before you transplanted it. What can you tell us about the project?

CLAUDE FABRIZZI: The barn was built in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century at the entrance to Praz-de-Fort, a village in Val d'Entremont in Valais. We dismantled it and rebuilt it a few kilometres deeper into the valley, in Saleinaz. We integrated everything into the barn that was needed to make it habitable.

Our client fell in love with the barn and wanted to give it a new lease of life. Our

goal was to turn it into a comfortable home while respecting its agricultural history. We designed an independent internal structure that gives shape to a continuous space divided over several levels. We chose exposed concrete for the base, a material that resembles the stone initially used for the base. A band of glazing between this concrete and the superstructure enables natural light to reach the basement. After conversion, the home comprises 190 m<sup>2</sup> over three floors.

What challenges did you face?

LAURENT SAVIOZ: The biggest challenge was probably disassembling and reassembling the barn, which was more than 150 years old. Its reconstruction had to be extremely precise to tally with the measurements we took during the dismantlement. Our design had been planned according to those calculations. We also wanted to build a new structure inside the existing frame – one that couldn't be integrated directly into the old frame. Uniting the old and

new structures required a high degree of precision.

The client was pleasantly surprised by the way we exploited the spatial potential of the barn. He also liked the idea of contributing to the protection of the region's cultural heritage. What pleases me is the contrast between the original structure and the warm, modern interior. When you look at the outside of the building, you expect to encounter a similarly rustic interior, so what you actually find is a real surprise. It was our goal from the beginning to blend the two very contrasting styles seamlessly. We didn't want to divide the space into conventional rooms; we wanted half-storeys that would interact with one another.

Contrasting elements seem to be a recurrent theme in your work...

FABRIZZI: We don't always attempt to incorporate contrasts; they're more a reflection of the projects themselves. For example, many

alpine homes in the canton of Valais have timber frames resting on stone bases. The combination – masonry and woodwork – also emerges in our projects.

I love the tranquillity that you feel inside the barn. This location can be cold and windy, but all thoughts of inclement weather disappear once you step inside, where silence and spaciousness offer a welcome contrast to the building's harsh environs. I also love the fact that the barn seems to have always been where it is today. You would never know that it's been transplanted and renovated.

How would you describe Reynard / Rossi-Udry, the house you converted in the old village of Ormône, also in Valais?

SAVIOZ: The rustic dwelling was built in 1860 and altered, gradually, over the years. It has a stone-masonry base, which ascends to meet a new volume: the backbone of the building. A lower part of the base supports a timber structure. The bottom section of the base now contains the living quarters. The sleeping area is raised. The stone backbone extends upwards at the centre, like a chimney, and the entrance is at the rear. The result is a 210-m<sup>2</sup> house spread over four levels.

We covered the stone walls inside with a lime-wash rendering. We preserved the old walls as much as possible, using reinforced concrete where needed, and raised the foundations slightly. Concrete was used to raise the central part of the house on the west side, for the purpose of sufficient height in the attic to accommodate a home office. We demolished the concrete annexe on the north side of the

**'We try to think about the continuity of the building, as opposed to a redefinition of its identity'**

house and rebuilt it to make it more spacious. To the south, bedrooms set behind timber walls are clad in larch panelling, which produces an interesting contrast. A cement plaster applied to outside walls, old and new, makes for a uniform look. We raised the timber volume a little bit and redid all the flooring.

It was especially important to the client to have a warm, inviting interior with generously proportioned spaces for family members. Large windows flush with exterior walls provide fantastic views of nearby mountains, fields and village.

What were your biggest challenges?

FABRIZZI: It was crucial to preserve the existing typology, characterized by wooden elements throughout, and to work with the central stone 'spine' that not only establishes two very distinctive spaces, but also opens and enables them to function in different ways. Our idea was to open up the central area with a double-height ceiling that would breathe new life into the living space and allow people on different levels to see each other.

The client is very happy with the spatial elements of the project, as well as with the choice of materials and the relationship between the concrete and the wood. The materials create strong contrasts and varying ambiances, depending on how the space is used. The client especially likes being able to sit by the window in the living room to read and to look out at the mountains. He can cook while overlooking the vineyard, work in his study with a view of the old village and sleep facing the fields. Unusually large windows

add to his appreciation. He also likes how we rescued old wooden trunks from the attic and turned them into doors for the kitchen island. The timeless contrast between wooden and inorganic elements, a reminder of the time when the house was built, is something we all cherish.

Laurent, what do you like most about the project?

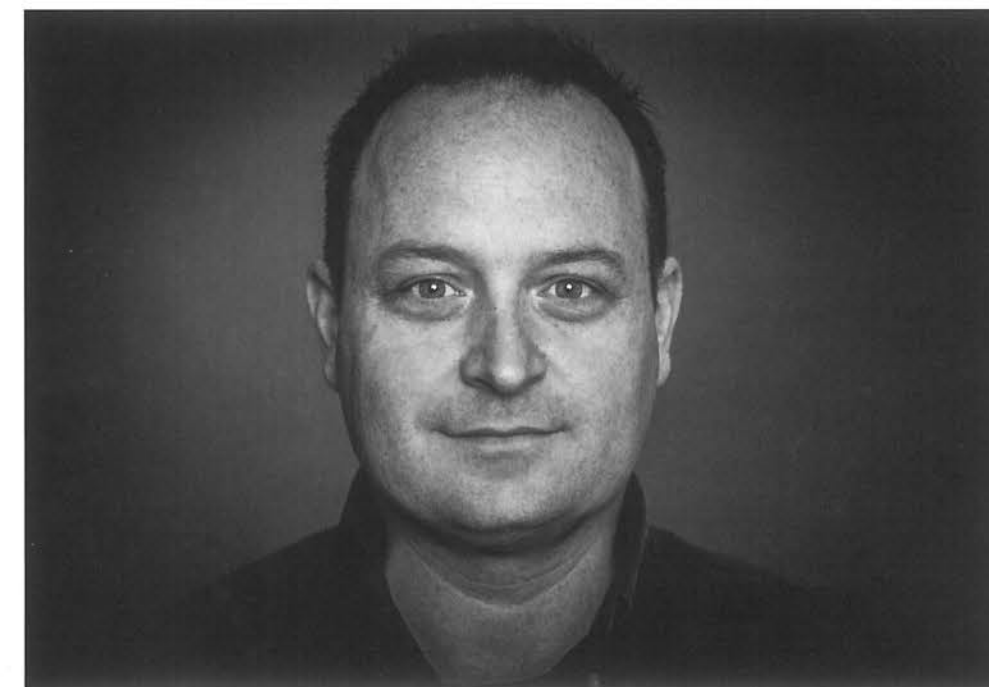
SAVIOZ: I especially like the sensory aspect of the different levels that emerge from the central space – the spinal column, if you like – that hold kitchen, dining room, play area and office. This backbone lends structure to the rest of the house. It acts as a pivot, a point of liaison between the occupants, their activities and the materials we used, from lime-wash to larch, from cement plaster to timber. Materials generate a fierce yet warm contrast, which has been present in the building for more than 150 years.

How would you describe your style?

SAVIOZ: With regard to the transformations we undertake, we try to think about the continuity of the building, as opposed to a redefinition of its identity. Our intention is to understand the origins and the history of a building so that we can maximize its potential. We try not to get involved in projects that jar with their environments. We prefer to work on buildings that can integrate into their surroundings – a philosophy that's also true for new buildings. –

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Claude Fabrizio.  
Photo Jürg Waldmeier



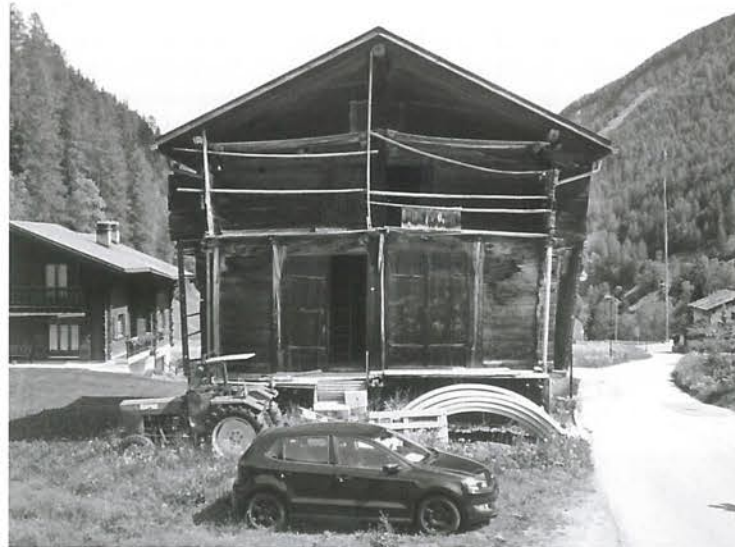
## Barn

*Praz-de-Fort — Switzerland — 2016*

Built in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the abandoned barn was originally situated at the entrance to the village. As part of the conversion process, it was first dismantled and then rebuilt a few kilometres further down the valley. A new independent structure and an internal skin were constructed inside the envelope formed by the old barn. The master bedroom and office, which are the most private spaces, are housed in the volume above the living areas and the kitchen.

The base, which has been reconstructed in exposed concrete, recalls the stone used for the barn's original base. It is connected to the superstructure by a band of glazing that is set back from the external wall to make it inconspicuous. As the only existent openings were doors that lent access to balconies, the architects retained and glazed these apertures, while minimizing the number of new openings to avoid detracting from the character of the barn and to make the house more comfortable.

The barn at its original site.  
Photo Savioz Fabrizzi Architectes



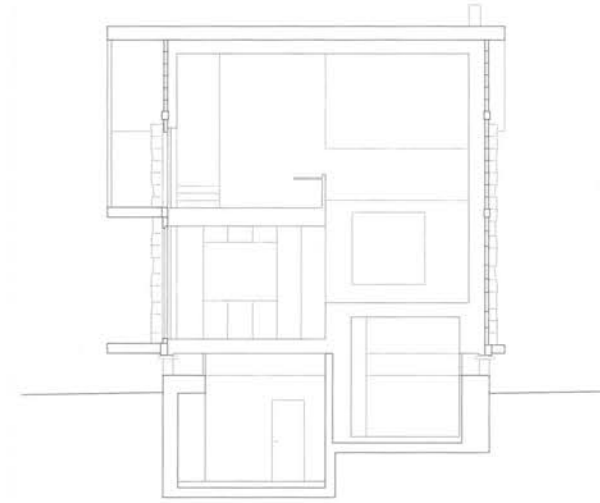
The new internal skin of the barn consists of oak panels.

***'The barn seems to have always been where it is today'***

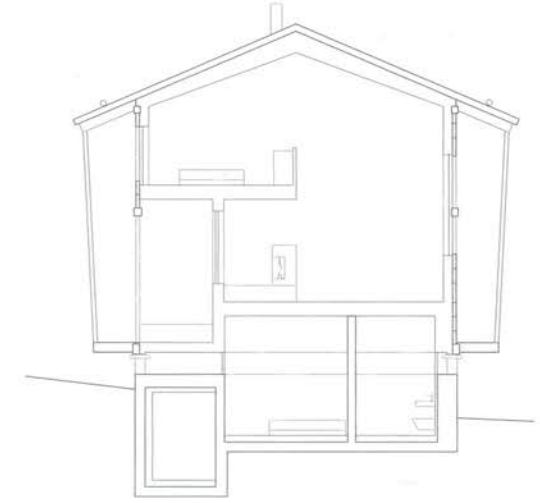


Inside the house, open half-storeys communicate with one another.

Long Section



Cross Section

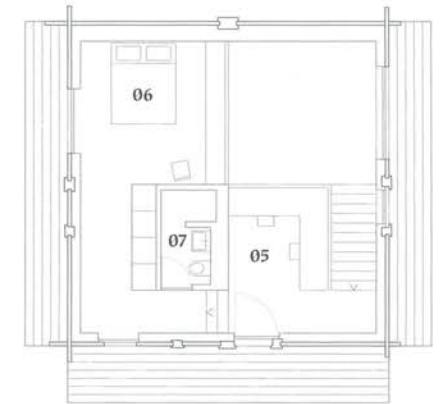


The use of stone in the bathrooms provides a contrast with timber surfaces found in the rest of the interior.



A band of glazing between base and superstructure enables natural light to reach the bedrooms in the basement.

+ 1



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- 01 Terrace
- 02 Kitchen
- 03 Dining
- 04 Living
- 05 Office
- 06 Bedroom
- 07 Bathroom
- 08 Larder



- 1





The house before renovation.  
Photo Savioz Fabrizzi Architectes



Large areas of glazing flush with exterior walls accentuate the inorganic appearance of the house.

## Reynard / Rossi-Udry House Ormône — Switzerland — 2016

This house was built in 1860 and altered over the years. It consisted of a base of natural stone, surmounted by a timber structure. The architects raised the timber volume and altered the base. The stone spine that links the whole project together extends upwards on the east side, like a chimney, and a new, more spacious annexe now appears on the north side.

The structure of spaces in the north section is determined by two partial floor slabs, which open onto circulation and living spaces and create sightlines between occupants at different levels: children on the first floor and their parents in the eaves. The character of the exterior is echoed inside the house, thanks to a lime-wash rendering on the walls and the use of exposed concrete for the floor slabs.

A type of cement plaster applied to exterior walls – those featuring both new concrete and old stone masonry – makes for a uniform look.



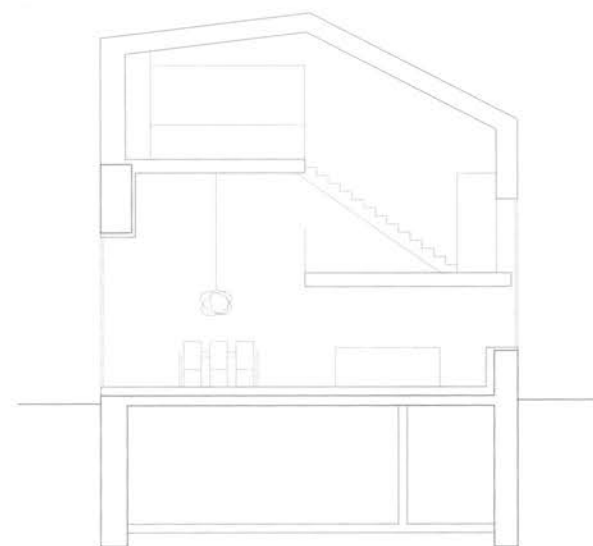
The central area is opened up by means of a double-height ceiling that breathes new life into the living area and allows people on different levels to see each other.

Rooms in the south part of the house are clad in larch panelling, which contrasts with materials used for the rest of the project.

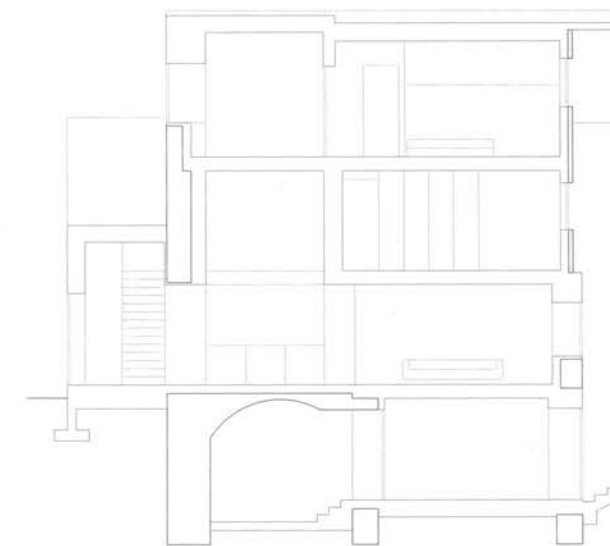


The building's large windows are orientated towards deliberately chosen vistas: the Rhône Valley to the east, Savièse to the north, the mountains of Val d'Hérens to the south and the garden to the west.

Cross Section

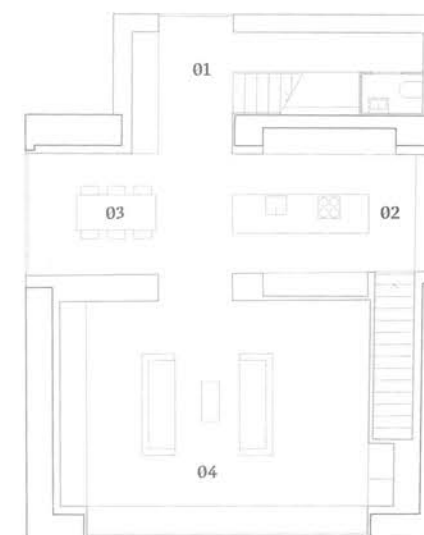


Long Section

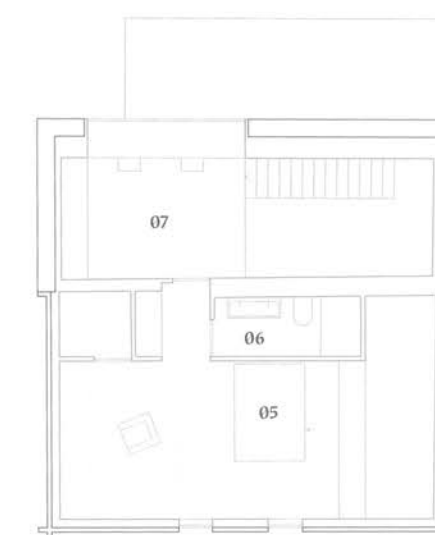


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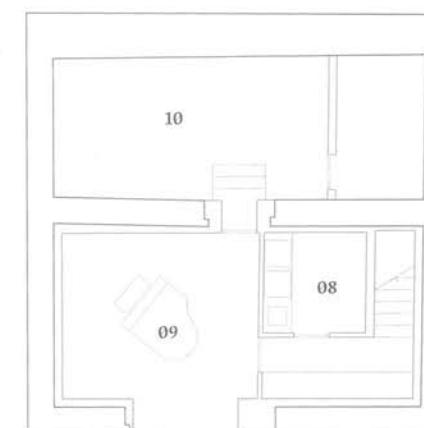
- 01 Entrance
- 02 Kitchen
- 03 Dining
- 04 Living
- 05 Bedroom
- 06 Bathroom
- 07 Office
- 08 Utility
- 09 Music room
- 10 Cellar



+2



-1



+1

