PREFARENZEN 2026

A glimpse behind the façades of modern architecture

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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.

What Sets Us Apart?

Identity is a powerful word. We truly become experts—masters, creators, and doers—only when we engage deeply with our tasks, skills, and attitude.

What does this mean for us as producers, designers, innovators, and implementers? As aesthetes, we meet visual demands; as guarantors of quality, we provide durable products; as visionaries, we set the latest standards. Our identity is thus not only the foundation but also the driving force behind growth, progress, and further development.

Tradition also holds a significant part in this. In 2026, we will focus on a product that paved the way for PREFA: 80 years of PREFA roof panels. Eight decades of pioneering work, milestones, and experience. We celebrate this tradition – not out of nostalgia, but to look ahead and thank all those who dared to try something new and challenge the status quo.

This courage is also reflected in the projects we showcase in the PREFARENZEN books and calendars. They come from architects and installers who are deliberately chosen because their work inspires. They create identity – for buildings, for people, for places.

What is your identity? What makes you unique? Perhaps, as you carefully read the following pages, you will find inspiration that reveals your own answers.

If you have also developed an exceptional project that should become part of the PREFARENZEN family, we invite you to share it with us. Because every project tells a story – and every story helps to bring identity to life: in form, colour, and space.

Be inspired and explore how your true identity begins to unfold.

Yours, Leopold Pasquali, CEO

Hotel Hirschen Spa House

Country: Austria
Object, location: Hotel Hirschen Spa house, Schwarzenberg
Category: New construction
Architecture: NONA Architektinnen GesbR, Bezau
Installer: Spenglerei Peter GmbH, Schwarzenberg
PREFA object consultant: Markus Metzler
Roof type: Prefalz
Roof colour: P.10 nut brown

Anja Innauer

»The Bathhouse with Stag and Hooded Roof«

In Schwarzenberg's historic centre, located in Austria's Bregenzerwald region and renowned for its heritage-listed farms and inns, ***NONA Architektinnen*** navigated strict building regulations by using contemporary materials and shapes

There are just about 150 buildings in the rural town of Schwarzenberg. The architects at NONA have their office nearby in Bezau. Anja Innauer, one of the two founders, grew up in this area, renowned internationally for its high-quality architecture and where craftsmanship is held in exceptionally high regard. Everyone knows everyone in the Bregenzerwald, and Pia and Peter Fetz, the owners of the Hotel Hirschen, commissioned NONA architects to extend the well-established hotel with an elegant "Bathhouse". "It wasn't a quick idea, nor was it a hectic planning process," says the Vorarlberg architect calmly. They took their time together until the task was precisely defined and the design was finalised. In alternating phases of pausing and continuing to plan, they worked together on the project until May 2024.

Designing New Forms

Today, the "Bathhouse" blends so naturally into its surroundings that it seems as though it has always been there. For NONA, the architectural addition of the new building to the existing structure was not meant to be a stark departure from the past or a clumsy imitation. Thanks to their similar typologies, colours and materials, solitary buildings in Schwarzenberg have always appeared as part of a cohesive ensemble. The new building is no exception in this regard. It differs in other ways without breaking from the prevailing local building culture. In the Bregenzerwald, wooden shingle façades, wooden shutters, and steep roofs are standard features. However, instead of traditional shingles, the architects chose a façade with vertical, floor-to-ceiling wooden slats that can be manually adjusted via a mechanical system. They also capped the two-storey wooden building with a hipped roof and a dome made of durable aluminium with a flat top.

Additionally, they adapted elements of the existing building for the new construction. For instance, the façade of the 270-year-old main building of the Hotel Hirschen features horizontal structuring with striking cornices. These elements are referenced and simplified in the "Bathhouse," creating a new form derived from an old one.

Based on Individual Design Principles
In Schwarzenberg, a clear sense of proportion characterises the houses and streetscape. Within this sensitive environment, the Bathhouse project was given special importance from the very beginning. Its modified roof shape and strikingly unconventional PREFA standing seam roof in P.10 nut brown, with seams running partly diagonally across the roof, represent a reinterpretation of traditional design language. "It is a 'Bathhouse' that is allowed to follow its own design rules. We were able to prevail in intensive discussions with the authorities and were determined to have this roof for the building," says the architect.

> *"It is a 'Bathhouse' that is allowed to follow its own design rules."*

Finding the Right Partners
The roof plays a vital role because it is visible from nearly all sides due to the hilly topography of Schwarzenberg. The idea of highlighting the roof with unusual standing seams was initially met with scepticism by the artisans. Few could envisage how such a construction could be realised in practice. Working together with the site management, it was possible to turn this unconventional idea into a convincing design. Since the wood of the façade radiates an exceptional warmth, the roof surfaces were to be finished in a warm brown tone. The installation of the roofing demonstrates how well this decision suited the overall concept.

A Measured Offer

The hotel operators are the tenth generation to run the hotel. They took over the property around eight years ago to expand year-round tourism. To achieve this, a suitable wellness offering was to be developed, emphasising essential, unpretentious comfort. The "Bathhouse" itself is intentionally compact for this reason. Two saunas and relaxation areas are spread across three levels, occupying approximately 100 square metres of floor space. The interior spaces are connected by a closed spiral staircase, which conceals the building's technical equipment within its walls. The atmosphere within the building is characterised by the wood of the interior walls, floors, and built-in furniture, which are deliberately left exposed. The operators and architects intentionally avoided loud attractions or artificial effects. An outdoor pool completes the luxurious spa and bathing experience.

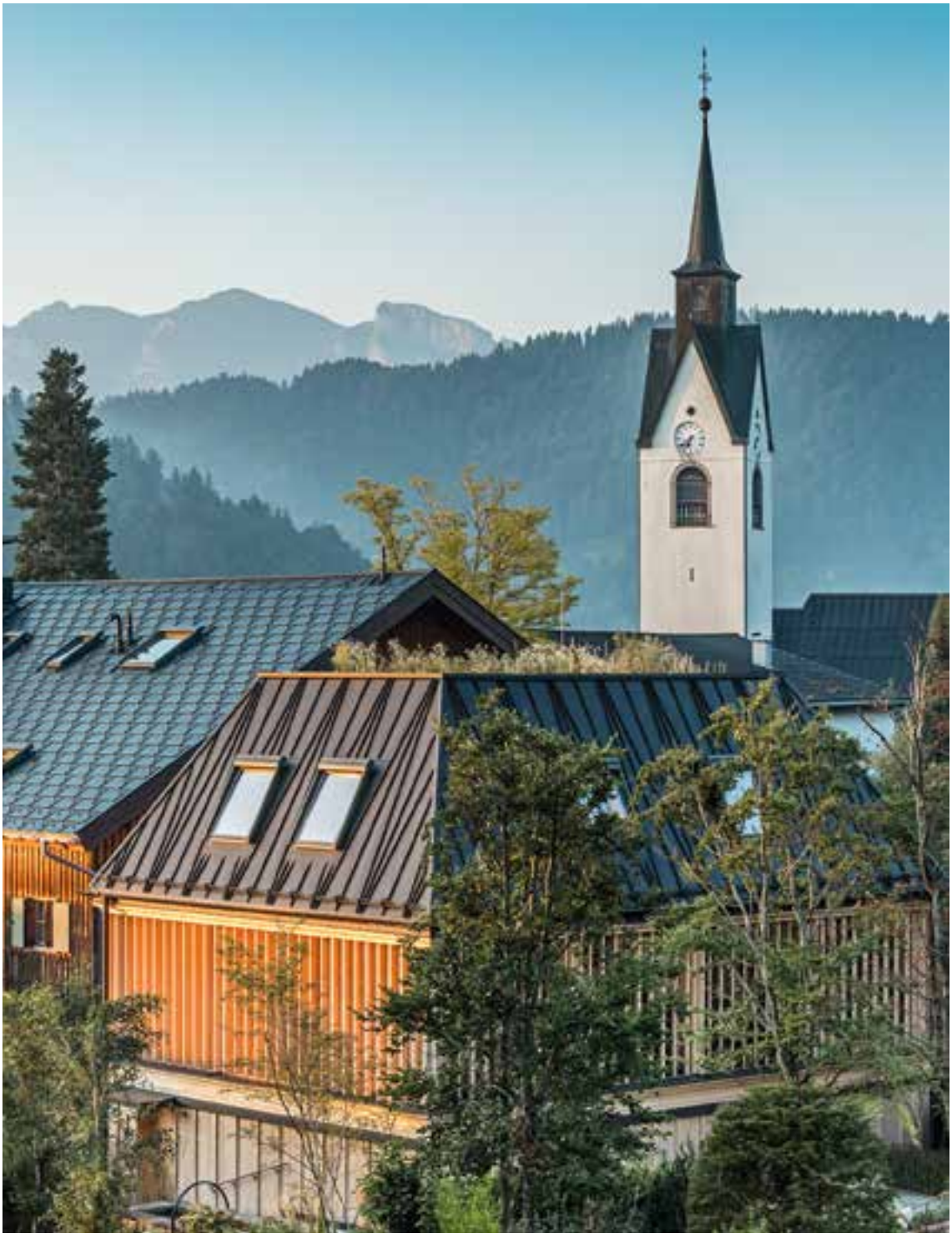
Without Fences, Without Hedges

The Hirschen ensemble consists of three buildings, including the Bathhouse, which are situated close together among other forest houses and lush neighbouring gardens, without clear boundaries or fences. Guests move seamlessly from one house to another, creating a welcoming, family-like atmosphere for the hotel. This made it even more crucial for the architects to design engaging outdoor spaces around the new building. Consequently, the architects involved the neighbours directly in the implementation process. "It wouldn't have worked any other way," says Anja Innauer. "The roof and façade," says the architect, "define Schwarzenberg. Even if the 'Bathhouse' is not in the front row, it remains visible to the public." Discussions about proximity, visibility, and boundaries were integral to the planning process. Ultimately, NONA developed a solution with adjustable wooden slats on the façade that function like a vertical curtain.

Architectural Concepts
The Bathhouse and its versatile slatted façade embody a fundamental attitude of the architects, who also view their responsibility towards open and public spaces. For Anja Innauer, points of debate often arise from differing views on the purpose of architecture. Their goal is to make every architectural change appear seamless. To achieve this, they focus their attention in their designs on the local context, topography, events, and traditions.

The Path to NONA
NONA generally does not conduct traditional construction supervision, but regular visits to building sites are standard. The curiosity about how plans are being transformed into reality is too great. "We are interested in those moments when something becomes visible that perhaps could not have been explained," says the architect. Anja Innauer and her office partner Nora Heinzle have been running NONA since 2016. They have two other employees and have always been eager to build and get involved. The architects met in 2005 while studying in Vienna. At that time, they opened a studio with fellow students, from which they developed NONA.

They still maintain the open-mindedness they had back then in their daily work. The office has a long table where all important activities happen. This is where planning, discussions, designing, and optimisation take place, together with all employees and colleagues. They foster an open yet demanding culture of collaboration. They take commissions from a variety of fields. The architects' portfolio includes exhibition designs, stage sets, as well as renovations, single-family homes, kindergartens, and more specialised construction projects. Many of their projects have drawn attention and received awards. What they all share is meticulous attention to detail and a preference for wood as the primary material for building and design.



The Weather is Nearly More Important Than Time

The Hirschen Inn in Schwarzenberg, Bregenz, combines traditional and modern elements. A construction project is considered a family affair. The architects and craftsmen of the „Bathhouse“ live nearby. And for the friendly managing director of the ***Spenglerei Peter,*** Michael Sieber, it was a matter close to his heart anyway.

It's amazing to walk past things every day that you have created yourself. Many people in Schwarzenberg share this feeling. "I live in Schwarzenberg," says the master tinsmith of the "Bathhouse" at the Hotel Hirschen. "Every time you pass by it brings a smile to your face. It's something to be proud of."

In a small village where everyone knows each other, there is much discussion about new developments. The residents of Schwarzenberg now say that it would have been a shame to simply put a standard tin roof on the building. The "Bathhouse" of the Hotel Hirschen is situated in the line of sight of the village street, albeit in the third row, but its roof is clearly visible from all sides. "The 'Bathhouse' is so iconic for the village, so visible, that its roof couldn't help but be special," analyses Michael Sieber. Technically, it could have been done differently, but then they would have missed an opportunity to showcase the beauty of a roof. "But of course, it was ambitious from the start."

Michael Sieber

Instead of parallel rows, the architects at NONA desired diagonal folds that converged as sharply as possible, drawing attention to the roof. The architects, along with their construction managers Flatz & Jäger, recognised that their idea was unusual but found a passionate supporter and skilled craftsman in Michael Sieber to help them realise their vision.

The roofer and his team split and folded the Prefalz sheets diagonally. They decided against a ridge fold and opted for a cover strip to avoid potentially unsolvable junctions and to avoid having to fold the seams. At the lower points, they minimised the seam spacing to five centimetres, just enough to allow rainwater to drain away unhindered.

The starting point for measuring the panels and their position was the skylights, which had already been planned by the architects. According to Michael Sieber, the planning, including the property consultation by PREFA, provided an excellent basis for the project's execution. This is also likely due to a unique understanding of cooperation and construction quality in the Bregenzerwald region.

Sieber discusses the interesting process of installing the roof, which, with its 60-degree slope, nearly resembles a façade. Due to the steep incline, they attached ladders to the formwork and worked from the bottom up, step by step, on the panels.

Sieber trained at Peter's tinsmithing and metalworking business and remained there after completing his master craftsman's examination. He has been fully responsible for managing the company since 2024. Nevertheless, he sees himself as "120 per cent on the roof and only 30 per cent in the office." Typically, there are four of them on the building sites, two provide administrative support, and his former boss and partner help out from time to time. He aims to keep the company manageable, as he does not want to spend all his time doing paperwork and is committed to a tradition of craftsmanship centred on cooperation between all those involved in the construction process and the client. Ultimately, the focus should not be on his own interests, but on the project as a whole.

Kindergarten and Apartments

Country: Germany
Object, location: Kindergarten and Apartments, Alzenau
Category: New construction
Architecture: Härtner Architekten PartGmbH, Stuttgart
Installer: ASA Schüßler GmbH & Co.KG, Hösbach
PREFA object consultant: Jochen Köhler
Façade type: Rhomboid façade tile 44 × 44, Prefalz
Façade colour: Bronze

Theo and Claudia Härtner

»Focussing on Specialisation«

Daycare centres are public building projects with social relevance. The aim is to create the right space for optimal development. ***Härtner Architekten*** from Stuttgart demonstrate how optimised sustainability and hybrid construction can also create functional synergies with residential construction in Alzenau, Germany

"We definitely wanted the metal façade," says Claudia Härtner enthusiastically. In the rural Wasserlos district of the Franconian town of Alzenau, the façade wrapped around the new municipal daycare centre like a protective shell. Due to the heavy traffic on the adjacent arterial road, it was crucial to find an architectural solution to mitigate noise pollution and environmental impacts. The concept – a façade as a coat – was perfectly implemented with 44 × 44-centimetre PREFA façade rhomboid tiles in bronze. These are low-maintenance and resistant to exhaust fumes and dirt.

Nothing Happens Without Discussion

Nevertheless, it took a lengthy discussion process to persuade all those responsible for the municipal façade project of its high performance. Theo Härtner details the journey from individual decisions to the completion of the building. For Stuttgart-based architects, the "negotiation process" is generally central to their daily practice. This means many aspects of the initial designs would change, even if they commence with a tender process and a clear proposal, as in Alzenau. The project's development was characterised by close feedback with the local authority and future user groups, which shifted the focus from purely spatial efficiency to enhanced spatial quality. Rooms were given a more playful atmosphere, and corridors remained designated as movement zones.

More Teamwork than Experience

In everyday life, this dialogue and discourse-oriented approach to work requires stable resources and a positive working atmosphere, "which is why we are a small, close-knit team," say the two architects. Work involves collective practice, similar to the teamwork of a football team. Over the years, Härtner Architects has specialised in constructing new nurseries, primary schools, learning centres, and their renovation. "In most cases, two storeys are the most economical and ecologically sensible option, but the floor plan depends on whether it is a closed or open educational concept," says Claudia Härtner.

A Whole lot of Hybrid

In Alzenau, the architects applied two distinct construction methods for the hybrid building project, which includes a municipal nursery and staff apartments for a nearby hospital. The load-bearing structure is an L-shaped solid recycled concrete construction for the two-storey nursery. Six small apartments were added as a solid timber structure on a staggered floor. The various floor plan geometries, static grids, and different pipe routes, as well as load transfer through the lower floors, presented a challenge. The aluminium curtain wall façade connects both construction methods, both technically and visually, creating a single building.

Away from the street, the nursery's site borders a beautiful garden. The architects aimed to utilise this and designed the garden façade as a wooden façade with projecting, pergola-like balconies, which also serve as sun protection, escape routes, and, in some areas, play equipment and plant trellises. "We like it when several functions are combined," say the architects, "but funding logic, award procedures and the expectations of local decision-makers often prove to be persistent challenges." The project in Alzenau is a prime example of how difficult, yet also how successful, it can be to combine different functions within a single building.

More than Pragmatic on the Outside
There are practical reasons for the spacious area in front of the building. In the mornings and early afternoons, there is a lot of coming and going here. The area has become an informal gathering spot for parents and children, where people stop for a quick chat. This is complemented by the entrance to the building, which is set back and features an inviting larch wood façade. Inside, after the so-called entrance vestibule, where outdoor shoes are exchanged for slippers, there is a foyer with seating steps and a play staircase. Clear orientation even for the little ones: from here on, it's truly daycare.

More than Functional Inside
The otherwise purely rectangular floor plan gains tension and separates spaces within by incorporating a sloping exterior wall. This creates play areas in the corridor and ensures the sanitary facilities are well-lit and ventilated. The building is defined by sightlines and views that facilitate easy navigation. On the ground floor, there are three group rooms for children under three and a multi-purpose room. On the upper floor, there are three rooms for older children, with adjoining rooms along the garden façade. A fourth group is located in the front building. Two sanitary facilities, located on the long side of the building, maintain its uniform character. Architecturally, this design successfully distinguishes itself from purely functional administrative buildings, helping it blend seamlessly into the small-scale environment.

Colourfulness and Expression
The interior design features a colour scheme that emphasises the materials used. The exposed ceiling surfaces, made of recycled concrete with grey-beige tones, feature traces of formwork panels and slight rust marks, setting a calm tone that highlights the materiality and demonstrates ecological aspirations. Because the ceilings are not fully suspended to facilitate nighttime cooling, their texture remains visible. Wooden floors and sand-coloured fixtures provide a warmer palette, while bold tones are used selectively. Overall, the interior design aligns with the apparent desire for a restrained colour palette, creating a base on which children and educators can add their own accents.

Sustainability Reflected
By utilising recycled concrete, the project contributes to the growing trend of constructing with secondary raw materials in the Rhine-Main area and is regarded as a model initiative. Claudia Härtner, who also serves as a judge in competitions, highlights the importance of considering common perspectives in the field of sustainability. She states that the type of construction genuinely considered resource-efficient or climate-responsive highly depends on the location. Wood, for instance, is not always the sole solution. The combination of two robust construction methods—a curtain wall aluminium façade and straightforward technical equipment—also meets current standards. Through independent ecological consulting throughout the process, well-founded arguments were developed demonstrating that less technology and investment, when applied appropriately, are beneficial both ecologically and economically. "When you look at the entire life cycle, PREFA is simply ahead in terms of energy consumption and recyclability," say the architects about the façade system.

Speaking of Functional Architecture
Claudia Härtner studied in Stuttgart after completing an apprenticeship as a carpenter. She passed the examination for higher civil service as a government architect and now mainly handles the service phases from implementation planning onwards in the office. Her husband, Theo Härtner, who trained at Graz University of Technology and the former Berlin University of the Arts, shapes the design phases. He graduated under Eilfried Huth, which perhaps explains the collective approach at the Härtner office. Their complementary ranges of experience result in architecture that emphasises high utility value, pragmatism, and reliable durability. The architects agree that it would be strange to stop doing this. What do they cherish about their profession? "When the first ceiling is concreted and you see the rooms being created, it's great and still a wonderful experience – and it's wonderful work."

Licensed to Tinsmith

ASA Schüßler has made it into PREFARENZEN for the second time. Once again, with a project in the Franconian town of Alzenau. This speaks for quality and professionalism. One is on safe ground. The collaboration with Härtner Architekten from Stuttgart, on the other hand, was new.

Marcel Schmidt

Receiving recognition through selection for the PREFARENZEN publication truly brings joy, especially for dedicated professionals like young project manager Marcel Schmidt. He learned tinsmithing from the ground up at ASA Schüßler and has worked his way to master craftsman status. Being chosen again is a heartfelt acknowledgement of both the profession and the hardworking team behind it. Additionally, operations manager Siegmar Fried shares how staying motivated and passionate helps meet the rewarding challenges of crafting award-winning work, which goes beyond just planning.

ASA also develops new techniques, but at the Alzenau daycare, the focus was on the craftsmanship and skill of the tinsmiths working on the construction site. “Especially on the street side of the long façade, where the bay windows project at an angle, precise skill was necessary to ensure a tight seal.” The key challenge lies in the small roof sections of the bay windows that taper off and join the façade. Their rhomboid tiles meet Prefalz sheets, which had to be installed to facilitate natural water runoff while keeping a visually pleasing appearance. This area showcases the expertise of the on-site tinsmiths and fitters.

The top floor of the building was built using timber frame construction. However, in a specific area, the components of the shell were five centimetres too far inwards. As a result, the substructure had to be levelled afterwards to create a uniform level for installation without the correction being visible or causing any adverse technical effects. Approximately 3,500 bronze PREFA façade rhomboid tiles, each measuring 44 cm × 44 cm, were installed, with each tile concealed individually using PREFA groove nails on the solid wooden formwork. The numerous building corners feature recessed profiles and standard corner brackets.

Two prototypes were built to a 1:1 scale for architects and those responsible on the client side. The steps taken before arriving at the construction site and the measurements taken before the start of assembly are key phases in the execution for ASA Schüßler. All static aspects and the expansion behaviour of the material are considered in the preliminary planning phase.

ASA Schüßler naturally combines established craftsmanship with digital and technical developments. Drones are also already in use. Although these are not suitable for every task, they make it much easier to measure roofs than façades, which often disappear behind scaffolding during construction. “You have to keep up with the times technologically,” emphasise Marcel Schmidt and Siegmar Fried. A flatbed laser has just been bought — so much for the question of what has changed since our last meeting in 2024.

The current topic at the company is the search for trainees. As part of the Göhler Anlagentechnik group of companies in Hösbach, they can already draw on a wealth of marketing resources. The local press is also on board. Companies present themselves via video on the internet and in schools to get the next generation excited about their trade. “Necessary these days,” say the two. The best place to learn practical skills and planning is in the middle of ongoing operations. And ASA Schüßler has been successfully constructing roofs and façades since 1896, i.e. for almost 130 years.

Detached House: One Shade of White

Country: Austria
Object, location: Detached house, Freistadt
Category: New construction
Architecture: Schneider Lengauer Pühringer GmbH, Neumarkt im Mühlkreis
Installer: Kapl Bau GmbH, Bad Leonfelden
PREFA object consultant: Michael Strada
Roof type: Prefalz
Roof colour: P.10 pure white
Façade type: Prefalz
Façade colour: P.10 pure white

❶ Object-related individual solution

Erich Lengauer and Peter Schneider

»We Strive to Make a Difference «

Upper Austrian architects ***Schneider Lengauer Phüringer*** consider architecture a vital part of building culture, setting this standard for themselves even when addressing seemingly simple tasks. Their award-winning project, One Shade of White in Freistadt, exemplifies this by showcasing how high-quality “normal” construction can be and how engaging “sheet metal” can appear.

The detached house can be viewed with mixed feelings as a preferred housing option in Austria, says Erich Lengauer. "We build detached houses because they should be good ones. That is a true educational mission." The project is located in rural Upper Austria, on the outskirts of the charming town of Freistadt. Freistadt has deep historical roots and has expanded significantly in recent years through new residential and detached house developments. The desire to own a house in the countryside remains strong there. In this context, the architects aimed to make a statement within the architectural landscape: "In this light, our house is a statement that sometimes you need to stand out from the crowd."

Defined by Concept

The name *One Shade of White* suggests a white house visible from afar. It is positioned on a corner plot at the edge of a new housing development. Its form is monolithic and compact, with monochrome façades. It appears somewhat enclosed, hiding the proximity of the dense neighbourhood of single-family homes. Isolated cuts accentuate the structure. A large, elegant dormer window gives the impression that it reaches out to the viewer.

Instead of traditional roof overhangs, it features broad edges on the gables, eaves, and attic to accentuate the white zigzag façade more effectively. This truly is quite special.

Trapeze, Trapeze, Trapeze

The building exhibits a consistent development in both design and technology. Its rear-ventilated façade is both sustainable and durable. In partnership with the tinsmithing and roofing firm Kapl Bau, a tailored solution was created: white Prefalz sheets with a specially designed edge. "A regular irregularity," as the architect notes. This results in a surface that enhances the façade's depth and intentionally sets itself apart from typical plaster façades in the area. Rating? Unique.

An Outlook in Place

The windows are positioned to provide specific views, such as a distant farmstead or a peaceful horizon. This connection to the location, combined with a keen sense of spatial tension, defines the character of the house. Two building structures, one flat and elongated and the other with a pitched roof, join together to form an L-shape through an open space. This creates a sheltered inner courtyard with a covered terrace. The pitched roof is not only a formal element; it also aligns with the interior spatial plan. The owners live under it with their son. In the long term, the living space can be divided into two separate units and used independently of each other. Some rooms open to the roof, and the upper floor is unconventional but enhanced by open attic rooms. The large dormer window – clearly visible from outside – also characterises the interior, which is partly open across all floors, providing a high quality of living.

It Had to be Bright

The building results from an inside-out development, not a random design, and it responds specifically to its surroundings without being obsequious. The materials are subtle and designed to create a welcoming atmosphere, featuring polished concrete floors, light silver fir, and white glazes on wood. Both the interior and exterior feature a minimalist, light colour scheme. All surfaces and built-in furniture are designed in harmony with this concept.

Character Through Everyday Functionality
A functional approach fundamentally characterises the architects' method. They begin with the client's needs and expand outward. "We are interested in spatial sequences, room atmosphere, lighting and, in the case of a single-family home, how to create privacy. The external appearance results from urban planning and landscape considerations being taken into account." The architects' buildings are therefore highly varied. They depend greatly on the client, their preferences, and the surroundings. With their designs, Schneider Lengauer Pühringer consistently respond to various parameters, which does not mean that objective design issues are of secondary importance to them.

Regulating Design?
Despite complex influences, not every building needs to be extraordinary. According to Erich Lengauer, buildings intended for everyday use can also meet high architectural standards, which is especially important in municipal settings, such as nurseries, schools, or fire stations. Why not reintroduce more design regulations in small communities? In the case of Freistadt, there was no design advisory board, and the design specifications in the development plan were minimal. "In the past, development plans were rigorous, which always annoyed us. Today, I see things in a more nuanced way." The role of architecture within public culture must be reinforced. He views *One Shade of White* as part of a broader discussion on how architecture can enhance quality in single-family home construction. How can we build simple houses that are not arbitrary? How can functional daily usability be combined with aesthetic standards? For the architects, one thing is clear: "Architecture must not be interchangeable." However, they are not architectural artistes either, as "our understanding is down-to-earth."

How is Architectural Quality Created?
According to Erich Lengauer, this always involves the interaction of several people: "A good project needs at least two: a capable architect – otherwise everything is in vain – and a client who engages with the architect, allows them to do their work, and at the same time offers their own input so that the requirements are genuinely understood." When asked about competitions, Erich Lengauer laughs calmly: "Competition is actually always part of our work." He can rely on his ten-person team and knows that, with good cooperation, their own architectural language and approach to challenging conventional viewing habits will enable them to win competitions and attract new builders.

Yes to Standing Out
With his two partners and, mostly in close collaboration with the cabinetmaker EA Lengauer, the architect regards himself as a "local architecture provider in the Linz area." The fact that *One Shade of White* stands out here, even to those who cannot articulate why, was considered from the beginning. "Many people say: 'You built that white thing there.' The public perceives architecture. You can sense that it is different. In this way, architects view praise and criticism, for example, on social media, as clear indicators that their buildings are fostering public discourse and advancing building culture.

Zick-a-Zack-ah

It may have been “just” a detached house, but for tinsmith David Thumfart, even small projects provide plenty of opportunities to display his craftsmanship. In Freistadt, Upper Austria, he was commissioned by ***Kapl Bau*** to handle the entire sheet metal façade: from the pointed roof and dormer window to the striking zigzag façade.

David Thumfart

The architects introduced the idea of a PREFA façade early on. However, many factors had to be considered before finalising the choice of materials and design. Ultimately, a bright white, zigzag-folded surface was selected, which adds elegance to the house and explores light and shadow. This clearly indicates that it is more than just an ordinary detached home.

To ensure this effect was convincing, a consistent monochrome design was essential. According to David Thumfart, despite PREFA’s extensive range of products, the colour consistency across all elements is maintained, and the powder coating is durable. “The paint stays on top and the components fit together perfectly,” he says casually.

The friendly tinsmith and site manager is passionate about each of his projects. He particularly enjoys coordinating and developing details as an expert alongside the architects. What he appreciated about working with Schneider Lengauer Pühringer Architects was that they were receptive to his feedback from the field. After all, what looks good on paper may prove unsuitable on the construction site. In such cases, it is essential to apply the technical expertise gained from years of practical experience.

The serrated profile façade presented some challenges in certain areas, which motivated David Thumfart and spurred the development of innovative solutions. During a single machine pass, they edged the strip metal multiple times in opposite directions using a double folder without damaging the resistant P.10 coating. The resulting profile features a series of trapezoids. The finished sheets needed to be fastened as discreetly as possible. David Thumfart suggested a specialised fastening solution for attaching them to the substructure. A bespoke attachment for the cordless riveting tool enabled the precise attachment of façade components, floor by floor. This also facilitated accommodating the expansion of the material.

On one of the gables, the ridge and dormer ends merge smoothly. Here, too, inventive skill was required to craft an elegant and technically flawless solution. “That’s what makes projects like this so exciting – you don’t just follow a set formula, you have to think for yourself,” says the tinsmith. New details were also required for the roof edges, as standard parapet covers did not suit the design.

David Thumfart took on responsibility early, starting with his own van and a small team. Coming from a background as a plumber and tinsmith, he quickly specialised in tinsmithing. Since 2017, he has served as a site manager at Kapl Bau, supervising approximately 15 employees and managing around eight projects simultaneously. Detached houses, such as the Freistadt one, are typical. He especially appreciates the variety of projects, from small wall caps to large structures like the High Five Tower in Linz. These projects demonstrate a wide range of skills across many trades.

As part of the Holzhaider Group, Kapl Bau provides comprehensive master builder expertise, including carpentry, roofing, and tinsmithing services, all from a single source. The company's own plumbing department employs approximately 70 skilled workers. What does David Thumfart particularly value about his work? The young team, which is ambitious, friendly, and down-to-earth. "Everyone here has an apprenticeship and construction site experience, so you stay grounded in reality."

Living at Schäflisteg

Country: Switzerland
Object, location: Residential building, Buchs
Category: New construction
Architecture: Kaundbe Architekten AG, Schaan/Lichtenstein
Installer: Künzli Davos AG, Wittenbach
PREFA object consultant: Marcel Zimmermann
Façade type: Façade shingle
Façade colour: P.10 light grey

Mirko Schneeweiss, André Wille and Thomas Keller

»Residual Areas? Not for Us!«

Kaundbe Architekten from Schaan in the Principality of Liechtenstein have consistently shown their talent for creating impressive architecture on challenging terrain. In Buchs, a charming town on the Swiss side of the border, they thoughtfully added a distinctive residential building to a shopping centre that was in need of renovation, even though it wasn't part of the original plan.

We were commissioned to renovate the Bernerhaus, an inner-city shopping arcade from the 1970s, and to add several storeys. We also built an additional residential block with 13 flats. Thomas Keller is one of the founders of Kaundbe and contributed the "K" to the office name. Now he sits in the office's meeting room in Schaan, wearing a band T-shirt and colourful trainers, alongside his two long-standing partners Mirko Schneeweiss and André Wille. The Bernerhaus already had a strong character prior to the renovation. A new building nearby had to be distinctive yet still blend with its surroundings. The fact that renovating this architecturally interesting passageway became so much more demonstrates the architects' approach: they look at individual potential, consider projects in a wider context, and clearly enjoy building and developing.

On-site in Dialogue

On-site in Buchs, it becomes clear that Kaundbe's suggestion was spot on. They recommended focusing not only on the main shopping street but also on the triangular area at the back, which used to be a car park. The result was a smartly designed multi-storey residential building that adds more living space and injects energy into the neighbourhood with a welcoming threshold area leading into the nearby community. In this small town of approximately 15,000 residents, this residential project truly stands out as a lively addition to the city's fabric —a beautiful example of urban revitalisation, complete with more apartments and a charming ground-floor space featuring a gentlemen's salon and café.

Edge-less Triangle
Despite its triangular floor plan, the new building has no sharp corners or edges. It blends into the stream bed like a smooth pebble. Of course, it differs from the houses in the neighbourhood in scale and shape, explain the architects. But with formal references to the Bernese house and the uniform façade covered with PREFA shingles, they subtly highlight the use of existing elements. “Traditional Swiss detached houses begin directly behind our building, and they are shingled,” says Thomas Keller. The colour of the façade shingles is a shade lighter than that of the classic dark detached house façades in the surrounding area.

Laid in an Arch
The contrast between the different façade materials is especially eye-catching. This lively tension adds energy to the building’s look. Crafted in exposed concrete, the asymmetrically curved arches create a base that feels quite open and inviting. Above, a solid structure with a façade resembling reptile skin and uniform “scales” comes alive beautifully as the light shifts. Is it an interesting new kind of creature, a protective fortress, or a friendly neighbour? The small PREFA façade shingles

in P.10 light grey are not only charming but also easy to install in tight spaces because of their shape. This design detail helps reflect the smooth curves of the structure in the façade.

Arcades Reimagined
The site's unusual position offers a key advantage: an existing underground parking lot with a wide support grid and access beneath the building site. The architects used these supports to carry the residential building's load, where the exterior walls intersect with supports, forming the ground floor arches. "We had to consider the grids economically; this led to the distinctive shape of the arches at their points of overlap, as these were the only load transfer points." The arches resemble vaulted ceilings and display the floor plans on the upper floors. They also shelter the underground parking entrance and serve as the main entrance on one side of the building. The design evokes a classic arcade, with the building's curves and arches making it stand out from the shopping street. Additionally, the decision to build on the existing support structure influenced the façade, which had to be lightweight due to static constraints. Thomas Keller explains that an aluminium façade was chosen for this reason.

Free Floor Plans
The exterior walls follow the street line, which includes a gentle bend or curve, ultimately reflected in the floor plans of the flats. Each of the four standard floors is divided into three two-room flats. Following the building's structure, each flat features a balcony with a panoramic view within the curve. A penthouse at the top highlights the elegant urban character of the building.

From Remnant to Place
The building serves as a mediating element between different scales, uses, and layers of time within its environment. A subtle interplay of geometry, supporting structure, and façade is both precise and poetic. The architects have thus succeeded in contributing to the transformation of the city centre, demonstrating how residual urban spaces can be effectively repurposed locations.

Work Enthusiasm and Corporate Spirit
"The residential building *(Wohnhaus am Schäflisteg)* and the renovation of the Bernerhaus were challenging projects to realise". The architects coordinated over 40 different companies during the planning process and on the construction site. How does Kaundbe manage this? The roles in the office are clearly defined. "We each have our strengths, which is exactly why Kaundbe works so well." The three of them at the management level often offer design, execution, planning, and construction management as general contractors. The architectural firm, founded by Thomas Keller and Mirko Schneeweiss as a public limited company in both Switzerland and Liechtenstein, has often taken on the challenge of creating the highest possible quality in small spaces. Among other things, André Wille is responsible for the execution, site management, and construction management of practically all of the architects' projects. André Wille also trains technical draughtsmen and draughtswomen at Kaundbe and was instrumental in the collaboration with the tinsmiths and façade builders at Künzli Davos AG in Buchs. His job is to implement the ideas of others on the construction site.

No Coincidence
Kaundbe clearly states on its website that "Our services include development, planning and construction." Generally, the company aims to manage as many aspects of construction as possible internally. The architectural outcomes are confidently styled, site-specific, individual, and often unique in their spatial use. The "UND" (TN: and) in the office name is therefore intentional, representing both a programme and an attitude.

Quality Starts with Thorough Preparation

The workshop and office in Wittenbach are among eight company sites of ***Künzli Davos AG***, which operates within the Swiss market. The company is characterised by approximately 300 projects each year, 250 employees, and 145 years of construction expertise. Gabriel Landolt has been the branch manager of the location for three years and is responsible for the areas of timber construction and building envelopes.

For the architects Kaundbe, the light grey façade was realised using PREFA façade shingles in Buchs. "Architecturally appealing, technically a major challenge," explains Gabriel Landolt calmly. PREFA products are well established at Künzli Davos AG. The advantages are obvious to him too: on the one hand, the material is very light and at the same time weather resistant. Visually, it is possible to create a homogeneous surface that is timeless in style and particularly durable. PREFA systems, especially the shingles used in Buchs, are low maintenance, which is also attractive to clients in the long term. "And ultimately, aluminium can be sustainably recycled as a secondary raw material," says Gabriel Landolt.

Gabriel Landolt

Furthermore, projects like the one in Buchs focus heavily on technical details and precise craftsmanship. The accuracy of the substructure is vital for all surfaces and building envelopes. In Buchs, aluminium rails were installed on brackets fixed to the concrete at specific points. These can be measured with a laser, positioned where the quality of the finished concrete shell permits, and enable even the smallest construction tolerances in the insulation layer to be compensated for. This guarantees that the substrate for the individually mounted shingles is flat. The result is a smooth, dent-free surface. With the curved and slightly arched exterior walls of the building, rough unevenness would be highly noticeable. Gabriel Landolt adds: "The preparatory work always catches up with you. If the substructure is not right, the irregularities multiply."
What else was important at Schäflisteg? This type of cladding involves complex connections to other parts of the building and materials. For a project like this to succeed, coordination among the various trades must be precise. Ultimately, Gabriel Landolt was responsible for making sure that processes and installation remained cost-effective. He explains the approach. "Before work begins on the construction site, we analyse the construction progress directly on site. This reduces downtime to a minimum."

What makes the company unique is its internal project management – and that's not just theoretical. Gabriel Landolt, a qualified carpenter and graduate in timber construction technology, has experienced the importance of good planning and leadership firsthand. Close and regular coordination is crucial. Even more vital is trust in the established structure, including project management, installation management, and the craftsmen and technicians executing the work. "Everything stands or falls with the team."

Technically skilled and impressive in its results, the company will continue to focus on façade systems, timber construction, window fabrication, timber module construction, and renovations in both new and existing buildings. As branch manager, Gabriel Landolt is responsible for executing strategic planning. The company consistently carries out market analyses and regularly reviews its business objectives. With four technical divisions, the company is also well diversified, allowing it to better handle unforeseen circumstances. Currently, for example, orders in the single-family home sector are declining, while demand for large timber construction projects, including façade works, is increasing. Künzli Davos AG is well prepared for this. It invests in the ongoing training of its employees and is presently involved in one of the largest timber construction projects in Europe.

Multi-family House with two Flats

Country: Hungary
Object, location: Multi-family house with two flats, Budapest
Category: New construction
Architecture: A Fiúk Építész Stúdió, Budapest
Installer: Richárd Tóth, Siófok
PREFA object consultant: Sándor Forró
Roof type: Prefalz
Roof colour: P.10 anthracite

Dániel N. Varga and Zoltán Kabdebó

»A House That Designs Itself«

Building with ***A Fiúk Építész Stúdió*** – the lads – is truly special. The office run by two Budapest architects, Zoltán Kabdebó and Dániel N. Varga, has a name that is not only appealing but also reflects a collaborative approach to planning. In Budapest's 12th district, they constructed a multi-generational villa for a discerning clientele, making excellent use of material properties and available space.

Set among old trees, elegant turn-of-the-century villa architecture, scattered socialist school buildings and park-like gardens in Budapest's West End, the architects' villa makes a distinctly contemporary statement.

House and Garden

For several decades, the client's family home stood on this coveted plot of land before it was demolished in 2022, and the decision was made to build a new one. A multi-generational house with two separate residential units under one roof was built on the long, narrow hillside plot. The ground floor features an apartment with direct access to the garden. The second, larger flat is located above it, spanning two floors and featuring spacious rooms with targeted views. A large balcony, accessible from the living room, and a roof terrace with a panoramic view of the city bring the outdoors and the surrounding area into the house. On the roof, a slightly protruding cube serves as a master suite and wellness area. It is both a retreat and a lookout point.

Compact with Contrasts

The structure is compact and remains consistently modern in its design. It is divided into two clearly distinguishable volumes: a solid base made of reddish-brown brick and a cube with an aluminium shell resting on top of it. Both volumes create a tension between each other. They do not overlap exactly, but are shifted in the floor plan, creating overhangs, incisions and sheltered open areas. Thanks to subtle contrasts, such as the change in material within individual sections of the façade and differentiated projections and recesses, the villa appears interesting yet serene. The brick façade breaks up the austerity of the clear structure, creating an elegant and enduring effect.

Brick and Aluminium

The choice of materials emphasises the contrast between the two structures. “We generally work with a limited number of materials. In this project, we used two durable and therefore sustainable materials side by side,” notes Zoltán Kabdebó in conversation. He refers to the solid-looking bricks on the one hand and the aluminium cladding of the anthracite-coloured roof structure on the other, which conveys a light, rather technical character. Daylight reinforces this contrast: the brick façade appears sculptural and lively thanks to the subtle rotation and deliberate offset of individual bricks, while the aluminium appears flat due to its smooth surface and the shadows cast by the standing seams. The horizontally laid bricks emphasise the horizontal lines, while the standing seams of the aluminium façade visually strive upwards. The seams run across the undersides, façade projections and the roof, drawing even shadow lines that continue up to the parapet of the base storey.

Technology and Design
Behind the brick façade lies a reinforced concrete ribbed structure filled with aerated concrete. The Prefalz façade, which is also rear-ventilated, was constructed like a roof, with double standing seams at the corners. All transition details were carefully adjusted by hand, and an internal drainage system ensures that no visible technical elements detract from the building's clear design language. The architects value high-quality materials that can be crafted by hand, which is also evident in the interior design, featuring fixtures made of marble, natural stone slabs and light oak in the kitchen, staircase, and bathrooms. Nevertheless, they move with the times. They have automated many aspects of the villa – sun protection, lighting, heating, accessibility and the underground car park door can all be controlled digitally.

Architecture as Relationship
For Zoltán Kabdebó and Dániel N. Varga, however, architecture is more than the sum of design, technology and execution. "At a certain point, a good house plans and creates itself," says Zoltán Kabdebó. This does not mean a loss of control, but rather the ability to listen, observe and react during the design process. It is not only the architect, client, budget, location, building regulations, or building site that influence the result; the building also develops its own language and identity. The two architects see themselves as conductors of a relationship process. Their working method is open, dialogical and quality-oriented. The name of their office – A Fiúk, meaning "the boys" – is no coincidence, but rather an expression of the idea of understanding architecture as a collaboration between equals. Zoltán Kabdebó and Dániel N. Varga approach their collaboration with their clients with the same intensity as they do their designs. They clearly state how things should be built, but also explain when something does not seem sensible to them. "We find that clients often come to us with ideas that are far too clear-cut. For us, it is important that they engage in a joint process."

Architecture Seeks Identity
According to Dániel N. Varga, since Western European architecture was introduced to Hungary, which had previously been dominated by socialism, in the early 1990s, many styles and fashions have been experimented with. As if searching for a new flavour, the new also brought with it a great deal of confusion and misdirection. Hungarian architecture, he says, is in search of a new identity. The fact that the bricks used come from the Netherlands is more of a coincidence. What was decisive was their size, colour and quality. Although they do not speak the traditional Hungarian architectural language with this material, it is precisely this deliberate break that creates space for a new, independent expression.

Architecture is a Product
Despite all their creative ambition, the architects view their work from an economic perspective. Today, architecture is also a product – with a price, value and utility. They reject cheap compromises. They are aware that it is all about sales and a reasonable return on investment. They build for clients who appreciate quality and understand that good design and style are key selling points, but require expertise and experience.

"The Lads" Stands for Community
Immediately after the 2008 financial crisis, the architects launched their own business, focusing on interior design projects. Previously, both had worked for a Japanese Hungarian firm and were already an excellent team at that time. Over time, they further developed their profile, constructed buildings, and, because it provided a welcome change from the long planning and construction phases, entered competitions and won their first awards. However, working together on specific construction projects, such as the villa in the 12th district, remains particularly important to them to this day. This allows them to best realise their quality standards and design ideas.

In the Future?
Today, A Fiúk Építész Stúdió represents architecture that is robust in the face of trends and is created through open collaboration. The future? It is coming, bringing change, challenges and new tasks, everyone agrees. What remains is a wealth of shared project experience and a foundation of attitude, craftsmanship, and the pursuit of architectural identity.

Lightweight, Precise, Indestructible

Holiday homes, sailing yachts, sun loungers – Siófok on Lake Balaton is primarily a popular holiday destination. However, the fact that high-quality craftsmanship is also practised there is less well known internationally. ***Richárd Tóth***, a tinsmith with heart and soul, was one of the first independent master tinsmiths to work with PREFA products in the Lake Balaton region when they were introduced to the Hungarian market in 2003

Richárd Tóth has remained loyal to PREFA products for many reasons. With each new project, he specialises in processing and values the lightness of the material and the well-designed installation system. As a master tinsmith, he bears full responsibility for the waterproofing of a building. Accordingly, he appreciates the advantages of high-quality products that simplify work processes.

For two months, he worked with a colleague on the façade elements, canopy, parapet and balcony cladding of the modern villa in Budapest's chic West End. He knew the client personally. Thanks to his professional expertise and precise execution, he quickly won over the project's architects as well.

One of the most striking features of the flat-roofed villa is the cladding of the broad, surrounding parapet with Prefalz P.10 anthracite. It completes the brick exterior walls, following their projections and recesses. The panels should extend from the parapet and visually blend into a cubic roof structure.

Richárd Tóth

Where the parapet changes direction, the panels are laid out like a fan. In the corners, the standing seams therefore run pointedly towards each other. These short parapet panels must be cut and folded with particular accuracy. The entire appearance resembles a tailor-made suit with carefully crafted seams and a perfect fit. Slightly narrower panels on the façades of the roof structure not only make its construction appear more elegant but also prevent deformation caused by unexpected wind suction.

"You can almost fold origami with aluminium," says Richárd Tóth. He sees himself as a craftsman in the classic sense: someone who has mastered an art with his hands. Nevertheless, machine processing is also essential to him. Thanks to modern handheld machines, he can perform a significant amount of work directly on site, creating folds and connections more quickly and evenly. Fortunately, the days of working with a soldering iron and a bag full of heavy tools are over. Nevertheless, he still needs a good eye for his craft every day.

He continues to develop his skills, as no two days or projects are the same in the tinsmithing trade, he says. He is motivated by the idea that his great-great-grandchildren might see his work. "Roofs and façades, especially those made of aluminium, will still be standing in a hundred years. They have to look perfect and be very precise." Nevertheless, it is fundamentally about understanding how water behaves on surfaces. After all, a house will only stand if its roof is watertight. At least, that's what they say in Hungary among the Bádogos, the tinsmiths.

Secret Koi Garden at Lake Natterer

Country: Austria
Object, location: Glamping retreat, Natters
Category: New construction
Architecture: Lushna d.o.o., Jesenice
Installer: Stavbno kleparstvo JK d.o.o., Tržič
PREFA object consultant: Aljaž Sitar
Roof type: PREFA rhomboid façade tile 20 × 20
Roof colour: P.10 anthracite
Façade type: Rhomboid façade tile 20 × 20
Façade colour: P.10 anthracite

Object-related individual solution

Jaka Ažman and Peter Ličen

»Miniatures and Credibility«

The glamping business is all about relaxation for holidaymakers. However, according to the founders of ***Lushna***, success in creating the necessary cabins requires more than just speed and financial gain. Architect Peter Ličen and marketing specialist Jaka Ažman entered the dazzling world of nature resorts with their mini-architectures in 2011 and have everything under control.

People follow their desires, but sometimes they overlook what they truly need. “We try to focus on the things that we and our customers genuinely need,” begins Peter Ličen. “For us, it is particularly important that the work is well organised, that the employees are satisfied and that production runs on schedule. Our clients, on the other hand, need a truly excellent living experience.” It makes no sense for a hotel guest to be able to cook pasta in their hotel room. The hotel owner wants them to dine in his restaurant, explains Peter Ličen. Yes, for them, design is very much about dealing with a demanding target group, and for developers and investors, it’s always about maximising benefits.

What is Lushna?

The situation with nature resorts in the expanding ecotourism market is similar to that in the traditional hotel industry. Merely offering accommodation is no longer sufficient. With Lushna, they act as a mix of consultant, designer, production company, and “mercante,” meaning a dealer in a whole world of ideas. “Architect” is therefore not quite the right term for him, explains Peter Ličen reflectively. The two company founders, Jaka Ažman and Peter Ličen, along with product developer Ignacio López Sola, initially envisioned having a

comfortable bed in the great outdoors. Unlike others, however, they are also turning this dream into reality on an increasingly larger scale. Some refer to them as "factory boys," joke the two co-founders of Lushna world.

Beginnings and Development

For Peter Ličen, glamour and nature are not mutually exclusive. When they built their first small houses, resembling wooden tents in the forest, the glamping trend was just beginning. Now, Lushna—which means "cute" in a regional, colloquial Slovenian dialect—plays a significant role in shaping this movement. It all started in their own environment. Success came somewhat unexpectedly over time: a first version, a subsequent attempt, another prototype. Then the first articles in magazines and so forth. They created a Lushna village for a Slovenian chocolate manufacturer, followed by a project in the United Kingdom that marked their international breakthrough. Calls from American investors and hoteliers soon followed. Their story is one of true pioneering and adventure. Within a few years, Peter Ličen and Jaka Ažman elevated themselves from simple wooden huts to the glamorous offices of wealthy New York hotel owners. But something else holds even greater importance for both of them.

Scoring Using Values

The large, bright factory hall in Jesenice, Slovenia, where the miniatures are manufactured, smells of wood, and the cordless screwdriver whirs at regular intervals. Two Lushnas of different sizes stand side by side. The wooden frame construction is still visible, without wood fibre insulation, without a façade or roof covering, but already in its compact form. All parts are assembled and tested in the hall, then partly dismantled depending on the transport route and reassembled at the final site. Seventy per cent of orders come from the USA, where the high-quality craftsmanship made in Europe is particularly valued.

What Matters
Almost every hotel room in the world has a television. In nature, at the locations where the Lushnas are found, you don't need one. A panoramic view of a natural spectacle is a key feature of these elegant mini-structures. Without the stunning surroundings and vistas, the Lushna concept would not be feasible. The founders recognise this and therefore prioritise sustainable construction methods and environmentally friendly projects. The aim is to promote environmentally friendly tourism.

Design Parameters of a Different Kind
Each Lushna project functions more like an ecosystem than a single design. The design process mainly focuses on the spatial layout in the second stage. The emphasis is on the emotions and experiences of guests, their wishes and needs, as well as what is necessary to address them. This means that staff, organisational processes behind the scenes, and the appropriate breakfast service are as important to the process as the atmosphere, transport conditions, and topography.

A Principle Becomes an Experience
"Cars are not built to consume petrol, but to enable people to get from one place to another," explains Peter Ličen. And Lushna offers contact with nature, but with every comfort – not a cabin, but a feeling. This is possible because the mini-architectures always follow the same formal and structural principle. Aframe, Petite (bedroom in nature), Chalet, Suite, etc. – the timber frame construction with a compact floor plan for transport by lorry forms the basis for various variations. "Small but spacious" is how Peter Ličen and Jaka Ažman characterise their design objects. And you should always be able to see out of the window from your bed. According to Jaka Ažman, it is this special experience that leads to success in tourism. The key question in development is therefore what needs they can awaken and serve in tourists beyond the everyday. Guests should be able to truly leave their everyday lives behind. For this reason, the two usually advise their customers to forego a kitchen in the small houses.

On the Topic of Competition
Of course, Peter Ličen and Jaka Ažman, along with a close-knit team of timber construction engineers, carpenters, architects, and craftsmen, have been building on the experience they have gathered since 2011. Discipline and active engagement with an international phenomenon and market are constant companions at Lushna. Their early start and interdisciplinary approach have provided them with a significant advantage over competitors. When you look at the expanding range of teepees, barrel cabins, and mobile homes on offer, it becomes clear what Lushna is doing right: it seems as if they aim to do justice to nature as a source of inspiration and beauty through sophisticated design, minimalist aesthetics, and high-quality yet production-friendly technical implementation.

Lushna in Tyrol
For his holiday resort on Lake Natterer in Tyrol, Georg Giner, an enthusiastic host and innovative tourism entrepreneur, chose a site on the edge of the forest to realise his vision of a secret koi garden together with Lushna. Here, too, the right typology combined with the appropriate programme is essential. Seven houses are offered as accommodation, known as 'cabins for couples' or 'chapels of love'. The offering also includes a sauna and the aforementioned koi pond, which is said to have inspired the façade of the houses. For Georg Giner, the small-format PREFA rhomboid façade tiles in P.10 anthracite, with their concealed fastenings, precise uniformity, and durability, resemble fish skin. Slightly offset and twisted around the koi pond, the houses provide a degree of privacy. Facing the landscape, they are not visible to passing campsite guests. Each house features a large glass front overlooking the mountains of Innsbruck's imposing Nordkette or the lush green larch treetops.

Who is Lushna for?
With their minimalist homes set amid natural surroundings, Lushna and Georg Giner are resonating with an entire generation that regularly seeks relief from stressful daily life. The target audience? Travel lovers and couples in their 30s and 40s seeking relaxation – including parents and those without children – have been identified as a stable and expanding clientele for the future.

Switch Off with a View
With "treats for all senses", Jaka Ažman and Peter Ličen craft their own scenario in their usual catchy manner. Before you can relax, you have to "disconnect", i.e., switch off. This is precisely what the two aim to facilitate with ample comfort and a thoroughly luxurious offering.

> *Not a cabin, but a feeling.*

Their product is evaluated through numerous discussions, intensive exchanges with target groups and clients, and extensive market analyses. For now, their approach is turning uncharted territory into glamorous travel destinations. Is there a critical view? Certainly, if you think that even the last beautiful corner of the great outdoors will be fitted with a chic bed and made accessible with minimal effort, then there is a certain destructive aspect. In this context, Lushna only supplies its mini-architectures as part of a concept for developing sustainable tourism infrastructure. Klobuk dol! – Hats off!

Workplace on the Rooftop: A Sense of Freedom

The eight promising-looking houses with small-format façade rhomboid tiles in anthracite, situated in the middle of the Tyrolean Forest on Lake Natterer See, have also caught the eye of Slovenian master tinsmith Janez Kralj. With his company ***Stavbno kleparstvo JK***, he is involved in one of the projects featured in the PREFARENZEN book, following on from 2025.

P.10

Urban Ban and Janez Kralj

"There are still four of us, we work with the same care and attention to detail as always, and we still love giving our all on the rooftops and construction sites," Janez Kralj joins the conversation. Deliberately, little has changed in the business. By 2024, they were already a well-coordinated team, and son-in-law Urban Ban was naturally chosen as a partner and successor.

Now we are seated at the kitchen table. Janez Kralj uses a piece of paper to explain why the tips of the rhomboid tiles protrude about three centimetres from the eaves of the Lushna miniatures and why they are not bent into the façade. On the underside, the tips are curved inwards. Pollen, forest dust, and flower dust would collect in the corners, and water would not be able to run off if the flange were only a few centimetres wide.

The finished surface, enthusiastically described as "fish skin" by client and koi fish enthusiast Georg Giner, gives the houses a rather distinctive appearance. The dark aluminium skin stands out particularly firmly in contrast to the light-coloured wooden façades on the front sides of the houses. Georg Giner insisted on this visual accentuation and the visible wooden edge on the long sides as well. The tinsmiths developed an exceptional detail so that the visible edges could remain uncovered by aluminium. They connected to the façade boards on the front side with a narrow gutter as a shadow gap and for drainage. They left a little space and then folded the rhomboid tiles from the roof and on the long sides in half. The remaining areas were covered like a seamless roof, tile by tile, in a rhomboid pattern.

Janez Kralj and his tinsmiths have installed a well-proportioned roof covering. Considering that the covered area per house measures only about 60 square metres, the delicate design with technically flawless functionality is critical. After all, everything is a little smaller in these houses.

Janez Kralj commuted with the team to Jesenice for about a month to complete all eight houses in Lushna's workshop. Immediately afterwards, they worked together on another project. Like Peter Ličen and Lushna, they pursue the highest quality standards.
Janez Kralj and Urban Ban are enthusiastic detail engineers. They rely on their practical design experience and trust in adapting components to meet specific project requirements. That is why, says Janez Kralj, despite having a full order book, he does not necessarily want to grow his company in the future. In his small team, he still retains complete control over quality and can devote sufficient time to developing details, as coordination and communication within the company remain straightforward.

Naturally, they take pride in their craftsmanship. With twenty-five years of experience in assembly and planning with PREFA, they have built a strong foundation for the future. Their portfolio of reference projects is quite varied. The international recognition of their work, exemplified by projects in Lushna and Lake Natterer, affirms Janez Kralj's skill. The houses stand out as the season's highlights.

New District Vydrica

Country: Slovakia
Object, location: Residential buildings, Vydrica Bratislava
Category: New construction
Architecture: Compass, s.r.o., Bratislava
Installer: Prvá Strechárska s. r. o., Bratislava
PREFA object consultant: Marek Mesík
Roof type: Shingle
Roof colour: P.10 prefa white, P.10 sand brown, bronze

Roman Janata, Matej Grébert and Juraj Benetin

»Urban Space Designed on a Human Scale«

The Slovakian capital, Bratislava, is thriving, making land near the Danube and the old town highly desirable. At the foot of the castle, investors have been creating a new urban vision for years: one that is friendly, elegant, and accessible. Under the historic name Vydrica, an interdisciplinary group of planners is revitalising a district. ***COMPASS Architekti*** is mainly responsible for the urban development and architecture.

> *You have to look at Vydrica in the context of the city's overall development.*

A morning in the new Vydrica neighbourhood: joggers indulge in cappuccinos, elderly ladies with perfect hairstyles enjoy their breakfast, young mothers in bright jackets laugh with their daughters, and clearly feel relaxed and safe. The lively centre of the new housing area is currently still a supermarket specialising in sustainable food. Elsewhere, three excellent restaurants, a few shops, a pharmacy, and a stylish bar contribute to the lifestyle. The first residents moved in at the end of 2024.

Life Based on History(ies)

Historically speaking, the location is intriguing for different reasons. Situated directly beneath the castle, on steeply ascending defensive walls, Vydrica was once a neighbourhood with modest yet lively conditions. In the Middle Ages, it was positioned in front of one of the four city gates on a key trade route and supplied the castle with water and provisions. From the 18th century onwards, the red-light district settled here until most of the houses were demolished around 1960. "At that time," explains COMPASS founder Juraj Benetin, "Vydrica was a kind of trading centre, a bazaar, and the place where those who were a little eccentric lived." With the construction of the Danube bridge in the 1970s, this culturally diverse area was drastically transformed and cut off from the rest of the city. It was only after the political upheavals of 1993 and EU accession in 2004 that the area once again attracted the interest of urban developers and investors. Today, the flats in the neighbourhood are among the priciest in the city. Bratislava's decision to redevelop this specific area aligns with its expansion around the castle hill. The careful restoration of the once-destroyed old town structure has thus become the main aim.

Vydrica is Expanding
"You have to look at Vydrica in the context of the city's overall development," emphasise architects Juraj Benetin and Matej Grébert. Today, approximately 500,000 people reside in Bratislava, a city with a rich political history. Located in the triangle between Vienna and Budapest, it underwent extensive development during and after the socialist era, in stark contrast to its Baroque structure. Bratislava expanded across the Danube, becoming an industrial hub and attracting international investors. Today, it is Slovakia's most important economic centre and wealthiest region and is one of the most prosperous in the EU. Following the socialist prefabricated housing estates, the city focused on a new downtown in the style of a mini-Dubai.

A District in Context
Vydrica provides a different atmosphere. Urban space feels more genuine here and is designed as a valuable city area. Well-planned public spaces characterise the thoughtfully developed urban layout. The initial construction phase already allows visitors to walk around three levels. Once the next two phases are completed, the project will offer about 63,000 square metres of gross floor space with 370 flats, along with retail and office spaces on the 33,000-square-metre site. Only freehold flats ranging from 21 to 200 square metres are planned. Some of them feature roof terraces, most have already been sold, and only a few have been let to third parties so far.

The Human Scale
What initially seems like an exclusive space is mostly open to curious visitors. Vydrica's street areas, including street signs, seating, and litter bins, were designed with pedestrians in mind. Paths and squares are unsealed, using paving rather than asphalt. The size and layout of the high-quality granite paving stones, sourced from a nearby quarry, vary. A sandy base colour gives the neighbourhood a welcoming feel and complements the massive castle walls.

Roofs and Façades in Harmonious Colour Tones
"Some things change when materials come into play," Juraj Benetin interjects. The goal was to create a coherent colour scheme with visible differentiation in the building structures. The soft materiality and monochrome residential buildings, compact in themselves and, with a few exceptions, monolithic in design, are timeless and carefully crafted. Their architecture follows a one-skin house concept, in which the façade and roof appear in the same colour but differ in texture and materials. The four main structures were given 16 façade variations to suggest a small-scale development. The proportions were thus adjusted to a scale that resembles a mature old town. The façade surfaces alternate between clinker brick and fine plaster. Their earthy colours – olive, cream white, beige and sand – harmonise with the castle walls. From the roofs to the balcony railings, everything is realised in the same restrained colour palette, creating a subtle diversity.

Complex Technology
Managing the roofs technically was a complex task, as explained by both COMPASS founders and project manager Roman Janata. "We are proud of the roofs," says Juraj Benetin, because despite the different roof shapes, the challenges of air conditioning, roof terraces, and skylights, as well as partial greening, were addressed. With PREFA shingles in P.10 sand brown, P.10 Prefa white, and bronze, the various colours of the neighbourhood could also be realised on the roof surfaces. Due to their prominent location, the roofs and buildings of Vydrica are particularly visible to visitors of the castle. However, it is not only the building roofs that are visible from afar; the street spaces, some of which are built over the underground car park, also count as roofs and had to be sealed, drained, and secured.

Significant Challenges
Building on a slope, the necessary flood protection on the Danube and compliance with the requirements of the old town conservation area, including the restoration of a historic water cistern, placed additional demands on the entire planning team. The 70-metre-long steel anchors used to secure the slope above the neighbourhood are particularly remarkable. The fact that atmosphere and design were nonetheless emphasised in the planning is the result of close cooperation between the architects and various other parties, such as Šujan Stassel Architekti, SIEBERT + TALAŠ, Marko&Placemakers, 2ka landscape architects and Superatelier. Together, they shaped the character and programme of the new district.

Overall Impression with Minor Scratches.
As impressive as Vydrica may appear, not everything is flawless. Despite its closeness to the riverbank, unobstructed views of the Danube are scarce, and the noise from the busy riverside road remains audible even in the upper levels. The equilibrium between public and private life will be tested once all three construction phases are finished in 2029. Is Vydrica the solution to the city's housing requirements?

The reality is that residents must be able to afford living in the neighbourhood. Nevertheless, the area beneath the castle is now a promising part of the city, rich in history, carefully planned, and designed on a human scale.

Unconventionally Ordinary
After two decades of work, the response remains surprisingly muted, Juraj Benetin observes. "A call from the mayor, two articles in the newspapers and the question of what happens next," he jokes, but he believes that architectural work is less about spectacular moments than about the everyday process. That is why COMPASS invests a lot of energy in the working atmosphere. Despite the usual problems associated with architectural practice, the firm has succeeded in establishing a healthy work culture in which time management is key. Many members of the team have families, so individual working time arrangements are in place. The firm is increasingly experimental in its technical approach and also uses media communication in the design process: VR walkthroughs rather than traditional models are common.

What's Still in Store?
An aesthetic realism influences the architects' designs and master plans. The firm has established itself as a local expert for Bratislava. In 2025, it published a book about the city's potential. "We are THE local studio for Bratislava," it confidently states. The book is another excellent publication, featuring appealing graphics and clear content.

What if One Life isn't Enough?
When things get busy, Juraj Benetin has at least two other lives. The architect is a frontman, a lead singer with a smooth bass voice, and a music legend in Slovakia. This makes him particularly visible and audible. People enjoy focusing on Juraj Benetin, which he takes in his stride, thanks to his media experience. His partners at COMPASS Architekti are just as relaxed about it. What other architectural firm has a rock star as its boss?

Peter Pekár, Tomáš Filo and Juraj Pekár

Roofs Shape the City

Prvá Strechárska translates to "First Roofing Company." Its three founders—brothers Juraj and Peter Pekár, along with Tomáš Filo—strive to become Slovakia's leading firm capable of building any roof with technical precision, creativity, and sustainability. The Vydrica project in Bratislava marks a major step toward achieving this vision.

A model the size of a dining table in the Prvá Strechárska office demonstrates, layer by layer, what a modern roof must accomplish not only technically but also in terms of urban ecology. In an era of climate change, roofs are becoming active components of the city. They are transforming into refuges for animals, water reservoirs during heavy rainfall, and increasingly, usable spaces for people.

The friendly owners of Prvá Strechárska divide their work based on their skills and experience. While studying in Bratislava, they realised they shared the same vision. What started as an idea among friends grew into a joint venture. They began with green initiatives, focusing on photovoltaic systems on roofs. When government subsidies were withdrawn, they reoriented themselves towards other services. They learned how to plan and implement green roofs, roof waterproofing, metalwork, and complex flat roof systems. Over time, they added smaller façade areas as well as more versatile and accessible roof spaces.

"We always start small," says Tomáš Filo, "learning step by step and growing with experience." This attitude shapes every new project. The trio is not only present on construction sites, but also active in development and communication. Juraj Pekár, a trained sales and project manager, frequently engages in dialogue with architects, investors, and the media. At TEDTalk Bratislava or in specialist articles, he discusses urban issues of the future, such as how green roofs can enhance the quality of life in cities within a broader ecological context.

Tomáš Filo is a civil engineer and the team's technical planner. When it comes to details, you can quickly tell which companies work professionally, he says. That's why Vydrica spent six months in the planning phase alone. They repeatedly consulted with the general contractor and architects, thoroughly considered the details, and discussed options. This process was especially important in a sensitive urban context such as Bratislava, where the Old Town is to be connected to a new district.

Peter Pekár recognised the ecological potential of roofs early on. He contributes his craftsmanship and ensures that the joint plans are implemented precisely on the construction site. His attention to detail and his commitment to accurate workmanship characterise every project.

Vydrica demonstrates the wide range of requirements for modern roofs. The supposed pedestrian zone between the residential buildings? It is actually the roof of an underground car park, designed as a public square but with functional waterproofing, drainage, and supporting structure. The roofs on the residential buildings, covering a total of 1,500 square metres, were also technically demanding. Their steep slopes, varied shingle colours, narrow sections between the skylights, and complex connection details at the eaves and ridge points affected the planning and installation. Since nearly all of the flats overlook at least one of the roofs, precision was essential. The installation process lasted a total of one and a half years, with some interruptions.

A crucial moment was selecting the materials. In a joint meeting with all involved parties, the team presented samples of PREFA roof shingles, explained their advantages, and demonstrated optional connections, as well as their feel and craftsmanship. "When people touch something, they understand it better," recalls Tomáš Filo. This convinced even the most critical voices. "We were fortunate to work closely with an investor and a general contractor whom we knew from previous projects and who were open to our suggestions."

In recent years, they have helped design projects that, like Vydrica, are shaping the new face of Bratislava. One of these projects won the prestigious CE ZA AR architecture award. Because architecture creates spaces for people, it is important to the three of them. They see real added value in these spaces extending beyond the rooftops with green areas, terraces, and lounge spaces. It is enough reason for them to take the next steps towards establishing their own architectural firm and increasingly act as general contractors. They plan to start small again, gradually, with curiosity and consistency.

PREFARENZEN 2026

Police Station 43

Country: Germany
Object, location: Police station, Hamburg-Bergedorf
Category: Extension of an existing building
Architecture: Architekturbüro Pflügelbauer & Scheffczyk PartG mbB, Hamburg
Installer: Kohlmeyer Fassadenbau Handelsgesellschaft mbH & Co.KG, Rotenburg/Wümme
PREFA object consultant: Olaf Possel
Façade type: Serrated profile
Façade colour: Medium bronze C33 anodised

Andreas Pflügelbauer and Julian Scheffczyk

»Like Hatching Traced by Light«

Typically Nordic. An elongated, functional brick building from the 1980s now forms the base for the modern extension of the 43rd Police Station in Hamburg's Bergedorf district. With its balanced proportions, the building designed by the architectural firm, ***Architekturbüro Pflügelbauer & Scheffczyk*** attracts attention with its striking new aluminium façade and makes an exciting statement.

Anodised metal surfaces result from an electrochemical process where direct current causes oxidation of the material. This enhances corrosion resistance, wear resistance, and weather resistance, while also adding aesthetic appeal. Architects Andreas Pflügelbauer and Julian Scheffczyk agreed and designed the façade for the 43rd Police Station in Hamburg-Bergedorf using anodised PREFA serrated profiles.

Façade with Glamour Effect

The changing daylight dances vividly across the anodised serrated profile façade of the new building, oscillating between elegance and street credibility. A dark bronze hue was chosen, which accentuates the façade's plasticity. The anodised finish was pivotal in selecting the material, and its lively appearance renders the surface of the new police station façade an inviting presence in an otherwise rough environment neighbourhood.

Decision-Making via Process

Before selecting the materials, the architects visited various companies, had their production methods explained to them, and examined different surfaces. Over the course of seven years of project development, a comprehensive material research initiative emerged, characterised by numerous samples and extensive testing. The PREFA serrated profile, tested in various anodised colours, proved to be a key element in the process. Influenced by factors such as temperature, duration, humidity, and the age of the electroplating bath, the colour nuances vary between batches. This variation was significant to the architects, as it prevents the façade from appearing too smooth and uniform.

Montage and Challenges

Since large sections of the façade wrap around a round structure, only a material that could follow the slight radius was suitable. The two-millimetre-thick PREFA serrated profiles were arranged in rows as 20-centimetre-wide extruded elements. Numerous identical parts were installed overlapping each other, also to conceal their fastenings. The result is a formally uniform façade band, which gains significant depth and character thanks to the anodised surface. They resemble hand-drawn hatching in an architectural drawing. The architects deliberately used visible material joints to enhance the material's dynamism further.

Aluminium – A Rock in the Surf
You won't find the shady police atmosphere sometimes seen in cult German TV series in Hamburg-Bergedorf, even though the building with its interesting aluminium façade would be perfect for compelling film scenes. It stands at a significant crossroads, opposite multi-storey housing estates from past decades. Brick residential buildings, alternating with a petrol station, a car dealership, and several parking garages, form the not particularly attractive backdrop. This makes the new police station all the more striking. It provides the open space with a fixed point of reference and thus marks a gateway to the centre of the district.

Building and Process
The new police station oversees the largest police facility in Germany by area within the Hamburg district, which has a population of around 135,000. Since mid-2024, the renovation and expansion have also considered this fact architecturally. "Admittedly," says Andreas Pflügelbauer, "the road to completion was long and intense." Several political changes and various modifications requested by the clients required the architects to repeatedly rethink and revise their designs. The team even organised an internal competition to test different approaches. Step by step, a design emerged that not only met the official requirements but also developed in terms of its design.

Functional Challenge
The commissioned construction volume increased over time, with more functions added. Between February 2018 and August 2024, more than 4,650 square metres of gross floor space were planned and built. According to Andreas Pflügelbauer, they learned a lot, especially from the specific requirements of the project. Both architects are as proud of their work as they are impressed by the complex functional needs the project involved. Because it was a police station, technology played a crucial role. Security, ventilation, and building systems required complex solutions. At the same time, innovative office spaces for administrative staff had to be designed with as much attention to detail as the sports and relaxation rooms for police officers on duty. Security gates, storage rooms, and equipment rooms were also part of the space plan.

From this, the two architects developed the distinctive curve towards the courtyard as a clear, self-contained shape. This gesture gives the building a unique character that allows it to fit confidently within its surroundings. The curved design is also striking inside, enabling short routes, good lighting, and a modern work environment.

Contrast and Unity
The contrast between the current building and the extension is striking. The new structure slides over the flat bar like a large hinge. A demonstrative glass joint emphasises this impression. The prominent pilaster strips of the existing building contrast sharply with the horizontally structured façade of the extension. This contrast is deliberately softened by the colour harmony of the solid brick walls and the dark anodised aluminium façade. Although not exactly the same, both materials are similar in that they appear to change depending on the lighting, weather conditions, and the viewer's perspective.

Sustainability
Less evident are aspects of the project's sustainability. A solar thermal system has been installed, and the approximately 1,000 square metre roof area of the new building has been greened. With a solid construction that allows for flexible long-term use, the architects hope for durability and an above-average service life for the building.

Found Fulfilment
The architects manage around 20 to 25 projects simultaneously. A third of these are usually actually under construction, while the others are in various stages of planning. They prefer to oversee projects from the initial idea right through to completion, covering all service phases. Although it might be easier to focus solely on implementation planning and avoid responsibility for the warranty, Julian Scheffczyk notes that it is precisely this completion process that he finds most appealing. From the first sketch on paper to the finished building — which they have already experienced in its shell form — Andreas Pflügelbauer and Julian Scheffczyk find enough motivation to remain in architecture.

Together Towards the Future
The architectural firm Pflügelbauer & Scheffczyk has been in operation for 35 years, gradually developing from small-scale projects. Initially, it was heavily involved in commercial construction, such as halls and office buildings for building material dealers. Over the past 15 years, the focus has increasingly shifted towards public contracts, including buildings for the police and fire brigades, as well as nurseries and youth centres for local authorities. At the same time, the architects continue to oversee private building projects. Founded in Hamburg in 1990 by Andreas Pflügelbauer, the firm has been managed as a partnership with Julian Scheffczyk since 2019. Julian Scheffczyk began assuming responsibilities during his studies and is now guiding the generational transition. This introduces new approaches to the well-established practice. “ So, the design and layout are already full steam ahead,” jokes Andreas Pflügelbauer in conclusion. The enthusiasm for collaboration is evident in both architects. Sought and found, one could say.


POLIZEI

Precision at Speed

Walter Kohlmeyer

In the Hamburg area, ***Kohlmeyer Fassadenbau Handelsgesellschaft*** is recognised for its precision and dependability. Project manager Walter Kohlmeyer takes a tour of the factory halls at the Rotenburg-Wümme site, providing valuable insight into this family-run, medium-sized business.

Our way of working demands courage and thorough preparatory work, as decisions must be made early on, despite the high financial risks," explains Walter Kohlmeyer. The company's range of services spans nearly the entire spectrum of façade construction: planning, structural analysis, production, and installation. Most of the workpieces and materials are produced in-house. The company also assumes production responsibility for complex, round, or 3D prefabricated elements, such as those required for Police Station 43 in Hamburg-Bergedorf. The machine park is correspondingly impressive and fully digitised.

Learning processes are carefully assessed, and procedures have been refined over the course of several decades. Walter Kohlmeyer, who has been with the company for approximately thirty years, serves as the project manager responsible for ensuring that processes run smoothly from the workshop to the construction site. In Hamburg-Bergedorf, every façade element was meticulously planned in advance. "We are really good at complex, bespoke projects."

The façade of the police station in Hamburg-Bergedorf features approximately 1,100 square metres of extruded, bronze-anodised PREFA serrated profiles. Clear horizontal dividing lines running all around were crucial for the architects' design, significantly influencing the dimensions of the substructure. Since the building is cylindrical on the courtyard side, the mounting profiles had to be bent to the correct radius. Typically, this process involves lengthy lead times in production, but for Hamburg, it was expedited. Laser technology was employed to accurately level the substructure on-site, ensuring the façade sits a few centimetres in front of the masonry. The large arch of the aluminium façade necessitated further bespoke details. The window lintels and boards, crafted as aluminium sleeves, were also precisely calculated and manufactured in advance, with their dimensions and with the appropriate radii.

The anodised material is popular in Hamburg due to the process-related differences in tone depending on the batch. Together with clients and architects, the company places great emphasis on sampling and colour testing, which reveal colour nuances, material properties, and fastening principles, helping to prevent incorrect decisions. "The process requires time, detailed work, and close coordination, but it's worth it," says the project manager.

Besides environmental sustainability, economic and social factors are also important. The family-owned company also trades in raw materials and recycles scrap metal. It has adjusted to changes in the construction sector: ceramics have become more costly, so composite panels and aluminium systems are now more popular. Due to early investments in training, occupational safety, and certifications, the company is also appealing to major international clients who expect high standards.

Throughout the company's 45-year history, its commitment to its employees has consistently been the foundation of its success. "You support your team wherever you can," emphasises Walter Kohlmeyer. With social responsibility, targeted support, long-term loyalty, and assistance in difficult situations, everyone ultimately benefits.

Maisons Jumelles – Le Rhune

Country: France
Object, location: Double house, Étel/ Belz
Category: New construction
Architecture: Riguidel Architectes, Étel
Installer: CLB Couverture Le Blaye, Crach-Auray
PREFA object consultant: Romain Blavet
Roof type: Prefalz
Roof colour: P.10 pure white, black grey
Façade type: Prefalz
Façade colour: P.10 pure white, black grey

Anne-Charlotte and Jean-François Riguidel

»Les Deux Durables«

With ***Riguidel Architectes***, its founders trust their intuition and focus on sustainable architecture. Connected to the landscape, people, and life by the sea, Anne-Charlotte and Jean-François Riguidel showcase their flair for capturing the wildly romantic, exciting yet friendly atmosphere of the Breton coastal region in the Morbihan department through a residential and holiday home for two families.

The classic crackling of the aluminium façades blends with the sounds of nature on the house's terrace. Amidst the rustling of wind and grass, birdsong, and insect buzzing, every moment feels connected to the surroundings. You could spend hours here without feeling bored.

Two in One

This generosity, along with the proximity to nature, was deliberately designed. Anne-Charlotte and Jean-François Riguidel studied the property and its potential thoroughly, drawing sketches of various structures and repeatedly refining different options before deciding on two houses and constructing them as if they were one. "We take a lot of time for the initial designs," says Jean-François Riguidel. In Belz, France, they used this approach to create a stunning residence that can serve as a holiday home for up to 18 people. Two families, several generations, large circles of friends? The house provides the perfect setting for all this, with plenty of space for different lifestyles and future uses.

Buildings by Topography

The building is called Le Rhune, the hill, named after the highest point in the village, which lies directly behind the house. A former granite quarry left an impressive rocky cliff with a height difference of at least eight metres. Its fascinating topography inspired the two architects to acquire the property.

Reversed and Mirrored

Speaking of topography, the form and functional programme are entirely shaped by it. Every window and large glass surface facing the garden aligns with the views of nature. To enhance the view, the architects even reversed the traditional living layout, placing the bedrooms on the ground floor and the living room, dining area, and kitchen on the upper floor. A gallery under the roof provides an additional bedroom and overlooks the quarry cliff and the dense, wild forest. They positioned two buildings on a connecting base, slightly offset from each other but parallel to the property's outer boundaries. Inside, the layout is mirrored, and the space between the two houses serves both, accessible from both and offering a perfect meeting area.

Double Pack Materials
Granite and slate characterise traditional construction in Brittany. The architects chose aluminium and untreated wood as modern equivalents but remained close to the typical models of Breton fishermen's houses in terms of proportions, scale, and design language. However, the rough-sawn wood of the base façade resembles the lively, typical granite of the region. They also decided against using traditional materials to conserve resources. It may appear contemporary visually, but building with granite and slate in Brittany is no longer sustainable today. Slate shingles now have to be imported from Spain.

Twin but not Alike
The two buildings with gabled roofs were each covered with regularly laid Prefalz seams, each in a different colour. One in black grey and the other in P.10 pure white. Like unequal twins, they are similar in character but clearly different from each other. They were designed to appear monolithic and closed to the street. With the folds running across the eaves and ridge, the architects counter the unpredictability of nature with a certain rational linearity. The black and white also form a tongue-in-cheek reference to the flag of Brittany and the houses in the neighbourhood, "but something new," as it is made of aluminium.

Architecture is Changing
The project in Belz has undergone a process. Originally, it was intended to be the architects' work and residence. They planned many aspects, which Jean-François Riguidel built himself. This is usual for him, as he is a carpenter, interior designer, and architect with extensive training in each discipline. "Our architecture is constantly changing, even during implementation, much remains in the process," explains Anne-Charlotte Riguidel, adding: "Architecture is for everyone. Everyone reacts to light, materials, and spaces." They also communicate this to their clients, for whom they seek clear architectural answers to their needs and questions.

With Quiet Restraint
The firm primarily operates in Brittany. Its strength is rooted in its local origins. This enables the architects to address Brittany's specific climate, landscape, and building traditions without overemphasising them. Accordingly, Riguidel Architectes focuses on architecture that subtly persuades – through clarity, unconventional methods, and a strong focus on people's needs. Instead of loud gestures, the emphasis is on harmonious spaces that not only serve functions but also resonate with people, evoke reactions, and stay in memory. Their architecture is modern yet connected to regional building culture. They present an architecture

that is well-considered, adaptable, and in tune with its environment. No large office, no rigid signature style – instead, a consistently personal and attentive approach to the built environment. For Anne-Charlotte and Jean-François Riguidel, architecture always involves a relationship to the place, landscape, history, and the people.

Taking a Chance on Adventure

"Architecture is needed everywhere," says Anne-Charlotte Riguidel. Immediately after graduating, she decided to move to the coast with her husband. At the time, they were almost the only architects in the region. "We started out very small, but we were always able to decide for ourselves what kind of architecture we wanted to do and how." Both architects grew up on the coast and didn't want to give up that lifestyle. So they simply said, "Let's take a chance on this adventure." Today, they have an international team, work on around 20 different projects at the same time and have so far not limited themselves to any one type of building. They avoid specialising in any particular programme. Their office is now located in a building not far from the harbour in Étel, which was once a sardine factory, then a cinema and later a warehouse for fishing equipment. The architects purchased the then-dilapidated building and gradually converted it into their studio. With a patio, plenty of light and open spaces, they planned the conversion so that the building could later be converted into a residential building. Their philosophy behind this: "Buildings should be adaptable. Because if you want to survive in the long term, you have to allow for change."

Two Houses, One Style

Camille Le Blaye worked for years in his father's company before setting up his own business, ***CLB***, in Crach-Auray near Lorient, France, twelve years ago. In this region on the northern Atlantic coast, he is said to be "one of the best" roofers around. His most frequently used material colour? PREFA 23 – a black grey that, according to Camille Le Blaye, perfectly matches the landscape and building tradition of Brittany.

The project in Belz, completed in 2024, saw Camille Le Blaye and his team cover two houses – one in PREFA 23, the other in PREFA P.10 Pure White. Prefalz was installed with clean lines and consistent tray widths. The only difference between the two houses is the colour. "That's what the architects wanted," explains Camille Le Blaye. It was the first joint project with Riguidel Architectes, and they now enjoy a close working relationship with great chemistry.

The two houses in Belz form a cohesive visual and functional unit. Three sides of the façade are enclosed, while the fourth side opens to nature with large glass surfaces, creating an exciting contrast with the clear PREFA standing seam façades. The flush edges on the eaves, gables, and ridge give the houses a tent-like appearance and evoke a sense of security through their materiality. The internal drainage system and aluminium-framed window reveals further reinforce the minimalist impression.

Were there any challenges during construction? "Normal, everything was normal," says Camille Le Blaye, explaining that it was a new build and therefore easy to plan and implement. Renovations, another core competence of CLB, are often more difficult. In Brittany, dark roofs are very popular because of the traditional slate shingle roofing.

Camille Le Blaye

However, not everyone wants slate on their roof, and building regulations in this regard are currently being relaxed. With its range of products, available in a variety of colours coordinated with each other and in various shades of black and grey, PREFA offers an alternative to traditional roofing.

"Aluminium opens up many possibilities," says Camille Le Blaye. The joints are folded, which allows for weather-independent processing. Two-thirds of the work is prepared in the CLB workshop – an advantage in the increasing summer heat. "This enables us to achieve excellent results without delay," he explains. In the future, he and his team plan to utilise the PREFA Academy to offer their customers a wider range of PREFA products.

Craftsmanship and drive run in the family. His father and two brothers are also roofers. Camille Le Blaye built his company independently. He has always valued finding his own solutions. Until recently, he worked on construction sites himself. Since having children, he has become more cautious and concentrates on managing the business. It is clear that he enjoys having an overview and taking full responsibility.

House Immi

Country: Austria
Object, location: Detached house, Dornbirn/Ebnit
Category: New construction
Architecture: Jürgen Haller Architektur / Baumanagement GmbH, Mellau
Installer: Bejos Berchtold Jochen Spenglerei GmbH, Dornbirn
PREFA object consultant: Markus Metzler
Roof type: R.16 roof tile, solar roof tile
Roof colour: P.10 black

❶ Object-related individual solution

Jürgen Haller

»Less is Truly Quite a Lot«

Architect ***Jürgen Haller*** created a holiday home for a design-savvy couple with a child, which they loved so much that they now reside there year-round. The *Haus Immi* in Ebnit, Austria, showcases minimalist architecture and has a compact ecological footprint. It highlights craftsmanship in woodworking and strong organisational skills.

What seems easy is usually tricky, and what looks simple often involves a lot of effort. This is also true in Ebnit, a mountain village in the Schuttannen above the Vorarlberg Rhine Valley, located in the mountainous south of Dornbirn. Between towering peaks and through rocky gorges, past wooded slopes and through several tunnels, you arrive at the small village situated at an altitude of around 1,000 metres. The journey there is adventurous, spectacular, and winding. After about 20 minutes, the valley broadens again. Your gaze can wander freely once more, seeking tranquillity. And it does find it.

In the Beginning

Haus Immi stands on the edge of the only main road in this idyllic yet rugged mountain village. It is built along a steep slope. Its clients enjoy recalling how it all began: they wanted to move out of the city to the countryside for a while and had their hearts set on a small house with a fireplace. As designers, they could easily imagine working from home much of the time. They aimed to minimise trips in and out of the valley. They met Jürgen Haller on a building culture tour he led. He took their wishes and, without further ado, built a house for the young family that couldn't be more perfect. The key factors were ecological, technical, and spatial sustainability, which are reflected in the house's name. Named after the family's daughter, it blends personal history, pragmatic architecture, and planetary responsibility. The goal of reducing the family's own consumption of resources, energy, and materials without sacrificing their quality of life became the guiding principle for the entire construction.

> *You live with nature. That's how it should be in the Immi house.*

A Task of Sufficiency

As unassuming as this house is, it treats its surroundings with respect. Its star qualities lie in what it leaves out: no four-car garage, no pool, no embellishments or overhangs. Instead, cows look in through the living room window. "You live with nature. That's how it should be in the Immi house," says Jürgen Haller, explaining his design considerations in more detail. Despite the limited budget, it was possible to achieve contemporary environmental protection through sufficiency and to implement regional building culture by using typical local materials, reducing building volume, and employing proportions that blend in with the landscape, in collaboration with local artisans.

Almost 100% Wood
The house's façade ages with the weather. Variations in the greying of the wooden exterior are visible depending on its exposure. Made from wooden slats arranged side by side and turned in different directions, the relief-like façade remains intriguing in all lighting. This reflects the alpine environment, where nature and materials appear differently at every moment due to the influence of light and weather. Wood fibre insulation was used to meet high sustainability standards. The ceilings and walls of the house are primarily constructed from silver fir, a tree that is more resilient to the climate and has a smooth grain.

Skilfully Organised
Despite its compact size, the house provides a high level of comfort thanks to its cleverly organised floor plan and bespoke furniture. Just under 95 square metres are spread over three levels. The entrance, garage, and heating system are logically arranged on the ground floor. The first floor features a centrally located living room, accompanied by an open-plan kitchen and large windows on all sides. A loggia acts as a thermal buffer zone, remaining relatively warm even in winter due to its south-facing orientation, wind protection, and sunlight. This level, where most daily activities occur, is complemented by a small study. Under the pointed roof are bedrooms, children's rooms, and a bathroom. The staircase forms part of a stiffening core, while the ground floor was built in concrete with a partially exposed surface due to earth pressure on the slope. Both upper floors are constructed from solid wood.

Renewable Energy
For Jürgen Haller, living in harmony with nature also means depending on renewable energy sources for power. PREFA solar roof panels are therefore an ideal choice for the project. They utilise the natural source of sunlight to generate energy and are barely visible. Matching the shape and colour of PREFA's R.16 roof tiles, they are not only technically innovative but also visually appealing, fully integrated into the PREFA roof system. In winter, in high alpine terrain, the roof tiles and solar roof tiles can withstand the standard 1,000 kilograms of snow load per square metre in Ebnit. Jürgen Haller installed a geothermal heat pump for heating and hot water, making the house independent of fossil fuels. Three compact geothermal baskets serve as the heat source, with spiral-shaped PE pipes installed in the slope to save space.

Builder, Architect, Carpenter
Jürgen Haller is recognised for his buildings and pragmatic approach to work. As a result, he has built a diverse portfolio and confidently guides his clients through their construction projects. For Jürgen Haller, building also means "getting out of the office." Architecture is not created on a computer; it is realised on construction sites and with people. Especially in Vorarlberg, his hands-on, direct approach is highly valued, along with his close network of exceptional artisans. This also benefited the Immi house. Jürgen Haller emphasises that it is not easy to find craft companies willing to travel repeatedly to Ebnit for a relatively small building project.

Everything from a Single Source
His recipe for professional success is based on hard-earned experience and a conscientious approach. He avoids unnecessary, fruitless meetings and prefers to take full responsibility to minimise error-prone interfaces. Ninety-five per cent of his construction projects are direct commissions. Supported by selected competitions, he covers a wide range of construction projects, from single-family homes to residential buildings. He can also offer all service phases with his team, including construction management, cost control, schedule coordination, furniture construction, and lighting concepts. Based in Mellau, in the heart of the Bregenzerwald, he "designs and realises", as he himself states, his "buildings in a combined architectural and craftsmanship approach – from the initial design to the last screw, often in collaboration with regional craft partners". Everything from a single source!

Immi, Bejos and the Sun

The size of a roof alone does not determine a project's value or complexity. That is why the Vorarlberg-based company Bejos paid just as much attention to the relatively small roof of the *Haus Immi* in the remote mountain village of Ebnit as it did to other sites. A good reason for this, and something that should actually be standard practice by now, is that this roof functions as a solar energy generator and a dependable shield in harsh weather conditions.

The remoteness and winding road to Ebnit had to be considered when selecting materials and the type of roofing. The Immi detached house was therefore to be a construction site with minimal use of machinery, and installation requiring only a few tools. "In Ebnit, we really focused on the essentials of the tinsmith's craft," says master tinsmith Jakob Berchtold, who was responsible for the project, describing the approach taken.

He himself lives in the mountain village. "The proximity to our construction sites and knowledge of the location and weather conditions are often an important, even economic, factor in deciding for or against a contract," says Jakob Berchtold. In Ebnit, in addition to knowledge of the geographical conditions, Bejos approached the project with the same standards of craftsmanship as the architectural firm Jürgen Haller, which was responsible for the project.

The use of solar roof panels also presented an opportunity to add value through energy technology. Since the Vorarlberg timber house is topped with R.16 roof panels and the black solar roof panels are hardly distinguishable in colour from these, the roof covering remains visually uniform. PREFA's solar product is an integrated system – a so-called in-roof system.

Jakob Berchtold

"For us, this eliminated the work of installing a separate solar system, which simplified everything. It required fewer interfaces, which normally pose a risk," says Jakob Berchtold, explaining a notable difference. Electricity generation on the roof also occurs year-round in Ebnit and is integrated into the house's sophisticated heating and cooling system.

Jakob Bechtold is the second generation to shape the Bejos company. It is a family business, says the young tinsmith, who, despite his project responsibilities, still picks up his tools and works on the roof and construction sites himself. With 23 employees, the company specialises in building waterproofing, flat roof construction, and metalworking. They use around 10,000 kilograms of PREFA materials each year. This is enough to cover an area of almost 4,000 square metres.

In the future, it will involve more than just surface area. According to Jakob Berchtold, companies are already adapting their working hours to higher outside temperatures and increasingly using drones for three-dimensional surveying of complex roof shapes. Extensive digital documentation is now standard with the new technology, which simplifies many work steps.

Education Centre Riffian

Country: Italy
Object, location: Kindergarten and Primary School, Riffian
Category: New construction
Architecture: Höller & Klotzner Architekten, Merano
Installer: Andreas Pichler Spenglerei – Kindergarten, Spenglerei Pircher – Grundschule
PREFA object consultant: Reinhold Augschöll
Roof type: Rhomboid roof tile 44 × 44
Roof colour: Bronze, P.10 bronze

❶ Object-related individual solution

Gianfranco Berardesca

»Meeting Point: Education Centre«

In the small South Tyrolean municipality of Riffian (population 1,500), on a high terrace at the entrance to the Passeier Valley near Merano, an educational centre has been constructed that sets new standards: functional, high-quality, locally relevant. ***Höller & Klotzner Architekten*** demonstrate the power that resides in clear concepts, effective planning, and genuine participation – from the competition idea to the lived reality.

Good things come to those who wait – that's how you could sum up the history of the Riffian Education Centre project. The existing building, dating back to the 1950s, was technically and spatially outdated, with the gymnasium from 1997 being the only contemporary addition. A feasibility study was conducted in 2012, followed by a tender. In 2014, the Merano-based firm Höller & Klotzner Architekten won the Europe-wide competition against 116 competitors.

An Office with Attitude

The architects stand for architecture conceived from the location – calm, precise, and enduring. The founders, Thomas Höller and Georg Klotzner, have been working together since 1988. We talk to architect Gianfranco (Gianni) Berardesca, who has been with the firm for many years as a partner and project manager. The company's headquarters reveals a great deal about the planners: the office is situated in a converted hotel in Merano – a place steeped in history that perfectly complements the meticulous working methods of Höller & Klotzner. Almost all of their projects are the result of competitions won in the public sector and are located in South Tyrol.

In the competition for the Riffian Education Centre, they based their design on a subordinate clause in the tender: "The existing building does not have to be preserved." For Gianni Berardesca, who attended school in Riffian, this meant one thing: the old building, which was poorly oriented in relation to the topography, had to be dropped out—demolished, torn down. "The former pupil became a school dropout," he jokes, " but that was the only way to get it right."

The design envisioned two separate structures – a nursery school (construction period: 2019–2021) and a primary school (2023–2025) – connected to the existing gymnasium, which would overcome the challenging height difference of the sloping site through cleverly terraced outdoor spaces.

Architecture for Well-Being

Ten years passed between the competition and the completion. While administrators, tradespeople, and local councillors changed, the architects remained the constant point of contact for everyone involved, including the children. Höller & Klotzner consistently applied the approach they first used for the nursery school to the school building. Standard rooms, classrooms, and staff rooms appear deliberately simple, with an almost minimalist design. "Over time, many things become kitschy anyway," says Gianni Berardesca. The primary school and nursery each extend over three floors, connected by a separate staircase that also leads to the gym, which could be used throughout almost the entire construction period. The internal, accessible layout of the school is clear and spacious, with five core classes forming the centre, flanked by flexible zones for specialist teaching and group work. Rollable tables and shelves, mobile room dividers, and rail-guided blackboards allow lessons to be quickly rearranged. With various seating elements, small islands can also be created for learning or simply for relaxing. Highly insulated façade elements, underfloor heating, and controlled ventilation create a comfortable indoor climate, while rainwater harvesting and the photovoltaic system integrated into the roof set an example for sustainability. Energy-saving LED lighting and sophisticated acoustic solutions complete the concept. A notable outcome of this meticulous planning is that the primary school was awarded the "KlimaHaus School" certification. Many of the standards' requirements—such as formaldehyde testing, acoustic optimisation, and high material quality—were already integrated into the design and implemented in the nursery school. "For us, this was an obvious matter of course," reports Gianni Berardesca, "but it's good that this thoroughness has now been officially recognised."

Focus on Children – and Viewing Relocation as a Celebration

Everyone helped with the move: children, parents, and community workers. Furniture and boxes were carried to the temporary school – and back again. It was no ordinary move, but a real experience: "It's something else when a child can say: I've moved into my school." During the construction phase, the children attended the two site tours wearing helmets and carrying the schedule handed out by Gianni Berardesca, asking lots of questions and showing great curiosity. The kindergarten children's request for peepholes in the construction fence was charming, especially since the kindergarten (moved into in 2021) had been operating during the primary school's construction. "Let's see how many of them become architects or engineers later on," smiles Gianni Berardesca. After the opening, he happily let the children show him around "their" school, giving sincere feedback on what they loved and what they thought could be improved.

Perfect Details Achieved Through Close Collaboration.

The bronze roof plays a distinctive role in the architectural ensemble – a colour that was unusual at the time the nursery was built. "Without PREFA, we would never have been able to achieve this," emphasise both architects and tinsmiths. The tinsmiths created one-to-one scale models of complex details, such as the chimney surrounds and internal gutters, thereby overcoming the challenges. The special roof colour echoes the façade made of in-situ concrete with yellow pigments, reminiscent of clay plaster. The concrete was wet sandblasted, giving it a lively surface. The aggregate – gravel from the surrounding area – literally brings the genius loci into the building. The unique properties of the material ensure optimal daylighting in the bevelled window reveals with a wall thickness of 65 centimetres. The result: rooms with depth, light, and an elegance rarely seen in school buildings. "We are fortunate in South Tyrol to have truly outstanding craft businesses," explains Gianni Berardesca.

A Place for Everyone – and a Symbol of Community
The new primary school is situated on a hillside above an old apple orchard. The outdoor areas are thoughtfully designed: a shared schoolyard, break area, and sports field for football (open daily until 11 p.m.), as well as separate play zones for the nursery. Even after school closes, the area remains a lively gathering spot for children and teenagers, which was a genuine concern for the architects. "Riffian is located on the road and has no real centre, no place where you can send your children in the afternoon without hesitation," says Gianni Berardesca. "I know this because I am from Riffian myself."
The walls facing the schoolyard are set back as an arcade and clad in oak wood, while the seating area for driving school students is protected from the street by wooden slats. Everyone involved in the project relies on such details remaining undamaged. The children's strong identification with "their" school offers hope. The greatest affirmation for Gianni Berardesca came when, after barely a month in the new building, pupils and staff said: "We already feel at home here." The architect reports that the older pupils told him at the opening that they thought it was a shame to only experience the new school building for such a short time.

> *Architecture that Makes a Lasting Impression.*

Conclusion: Architecture that Makes a Lasting Impression

The Riffian Education Centre, designed by Höller & Klotzner Architects, conveys a powerful message: as a landmark in the village and a symbol of appreciation for the new generations, who can enjoy their nursery and primary school years in beautiful local surroundings. These are memories that will have a profoundly positive influence on the children. Initially, the net construction costs of seven million euros, including furnishings, may appear high. However, with this education centre, Riffian has invested not only in a building but also in the daily lives of its children—and therefore in a shared future. Or, as Gianni Berardesca aptly states: "This is a social task that cannot be viewed solely from an economic perspective."

The architectural and technical features can be found on page 140 onwards.

Living Building Culture – Fostering Local Craftsmanship

Two tinsmithing companies collaborated carefully on the Riffian Education Centre, which was constructed in two stages: ***Andreas Pichler Spenglerei*** covered the nursery school in 2020 and performed crucial preparatory work. This was followed in 2024 by the primary school, completed by ***Spenglerei Pircher*** with Wilhelm Lanthaler. Both tinsmiths share their perspectives on a successful project.

When everyone sits down together early on, as was the case in Riffian, everything runs smoothly: architect Gianni Berardesca from Höller & Klotzner Architects, PREFA project consultant Reinhold Augschöll, and tinsmith Andreas Pichler. "We clarified many details together from the outset, which made the execution much easier later on, even at the primary school. The technical experience was, of course, a great advantage here," reports Andreas Pichler, who has been self-employed for over 35 years.
At the architect's request, the roof was made in bronze. The 44 × 44 cm roof tiles were specially manufactured for the nursery in 2020 with a PP99 bronze finish. In 2024, when the primary school was roofed, PREFA introduced the colour bronze in version P.10 (with a more matte appearance and a textured surface, especially UV and colour-resistant) to its range, offering a 40-year durability guarantee for both colour and material.

The roof structures on both buildings are flush with the façade, featuring internal stainless-steel gutters (0.5 mm) and a PVC safety gutter for drainage, as well as welded joints and expansion joint strips. The driving rain and storm-proof rhombuses with concealed fastenings rest on raw formwork.

Andreas Pichler and Wilhelm Lanthaler

The chimney itself was designed so that the trapezoidal concrete chimney, visible from the side, protrudes prominently from the 44 × 44 roof covering without any visible edging. The technically necessary chimney surround was installed as a kind of recessed feature within the roof structure and is drained via a channel. With this special solution, the tinsmiths were able to fulfil the architects' expectations and wishes.

Wilhelm Lanthaler, who lives opposite the school in Riffian, tells us that after visiting the building site, his children eagerly asked why the roof was still missing – they wanted to finally move into "their" new school. "So, of course, I gave it my all," he says with a smile. When children are excited, parents are committed, and craftsmen feel a strong connection to the place, the result is more than just a good roof on an impressive piece of architecture: it is a home for the next generation.

Envirocentre – Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitraa

Country: Slovakia
Object, location: Envirocentre SPU, Nitra
Category: Extension of an existing building
Architecture: Marek Šumichrast + Martin Dulík, Nitra
Installer: Zinn s.r.o., Nové Sady
PREFA object consultant: Matej Porubec
Façade type: Ripple profile
Façade colour: Plain aluminium

Marek Šumichrast

»Architecture: A Machine for Perceiving«

Knowledge, water, waves—these are the first things that come to mind when thinking of the Envirocentre at the state agricultural university in Nitra, Slovakia. Designed by architects ***Marek Šumichrast + Martin Dulík***, the environmental laboratory features a silver envelope made from PREFA natural blank ripple profile. It is like one of those reflections of light on the sea – atmospherically breathtaking.

The Slovak city of Nitra is renowned for the Corgoň beer brand, named after a legendary metalworker, said to have repelled enemy attackers with huge boulders. Anyone who doesn't associate Jaguar, Land Rover, and Europe's future electric mobility El Dorado with Nitra is greatly underestimating the place. Statistics show that Nitra's population has quadrupled over the past hundred years, and the city is becoming increasingly popular with tourists. Unfortunately, the official city images consistently overlook the architectural significance of the socialist era. Its prefabricated buildings, the university with its UFO-like structure, and spacious open spaces on the banks of the Nitra River are omitted from guidebooks, as if they had never existed. The connection between this and the Envirocentre has an architectural background.


SPU FZKI

A Place of Environmental Knowledge
Since Slovakia joined the EU, the country's growth focus has driven changes in its educational and knowledge sectors. The Slovak University of Agriculture (SPU) offers over 50 courses related to agricultural economics and soil science. Reflecting current trends, many research initiatives there concentrate on climate change. It's increasingly important to communicate the scientific and technical links to climate issues to the public. To facilitate this, a specialised building was established on the historic university campus at the end of 2024. This facility serves as a bridge between inquisitive visitors and researchers, offering a tangible and immersive experience that highlights the significance of scientific work on climate change.

The Laboratory as a Walk-in Research World
The core of the Environmental Centre is its hydraulics laboratory. It features two flow channels up to eight metres long, tilting flumes for mimicking wave movements, a rain simulator for analysing fall velocity and angle, and a sand tank for sediment flow experiments – all designed to combine scientific accuracy with the sensory immediacy of a water play area for splashing, jostling, and testing. This playful approach is central to the educational concept, which aims to demonstrate the complexity of science rather than break it down. The laboratory acts as a bridge between research and the public, especially at a time when climate change and resource cycles need to be explained in concrete terms.

On a Personal Journey
Architecture subtly communicates its message without appearing overly instructive. Marek Šumichrast's design seems to invite everyone to "Try it out, explore, stay curious, pursue your questions." His own path to becoming a chartered architect reflects this mindset: after many years of hands-on experience and working on award-winning projects, he earned his qualification. "I felt a strong sense of responsibility for this place from the very beginning," Marek shares. He began his journey at a technical college for construction at the age of 15, worked at architectural firms while studying landscape architecture and engineering, and was on the verge of completing a PhD at SPU. Interestingly, this is also where the Environmental Centre now stands. We find him inside the laboratory, where he explains, " The building keeps the water cycle going for the research tools. Under the floor are the return basins, and over there are the new pump pipes. In the lecture room, the steps almost reach down into the earth, symbolising the connection to the ground," he says with enthusiasm.

Architecture in Context
He realised the new hydraulics laboratory as part of a listed building complex and the first phase of a new urban development plan. Marek Šumichrast's vision will permanently transform the site and the neighbouring settlement, making the laboratory and its research more accessible to visitors, teachers, and students.

Building on the Existing Stock
The client initially planned to replace buildings contaminated with asbestos with a simple hall. Fortunately, the outcome was different. Marek Šumichrast designed something quite innovative yet still bearing traces of personal memories. "The old always seeps through cracks and windows in Nitra anyway," he laughs. For the new research laboratory, he acquired parts of an old pumping station. New walls made of raw concrete blocks are seamlessly but plainly bricked onto existing ones, and retracted steel beams on narrow supports enable the spans of the central research hall. He replaced opaque glass blocks with windows that now offer a view of a lush garden. While the old laboratory had turquoise tiles on the walls, this colour now appears on the floor and radiators of the new one. Architectural elements also feature on the shimmering ripple profile of the façade, reflecting the blurred silhouette of 1930s buildings opposite, thereby creating a new square and street space.

Infinite Shell
A captivating envelope frames the space, connecting the old pumping station with a new, inviting lecture hall in a graceful S-shape. Crafted from two-millimetre-thick, extruded PREFA profiled sheet metal, it has a seamless, almost endless appearance that seems to symbolise the water cycle flowing through the building. Concealed screws and a natural finish allow it to reflect light and weather beautifully, changing over time- sometimes calm, other times playful, and at times robust and technical. This shell transforms the architecture into a "perception machine", creating a welcoming environment that feels close to nature, while also hinting at a technical, scientific mindset.

Referential Urbanism
The urban planning approach of the project extends far beyond a single building. Marek Šumichrast utilised his personal knowledge of the site to design the environmental laboratory as the first component of a new campus extension that connects the listed ensemble and the new centre to the north with the main road. The outdoor space is a crucial part of the architectural concept. An axis links the forecourt, laboratory, lecture hall, and existing buildings to create a "string of pearls." Following this axis, both physically and mentally, leads to the small garden at the rear of the laboratory, where a serene atmosphere dominates. A tree, an open meadow, and a small slope—which functions as a natural amphitheatre in summer—offer a space to relax. From here, a large glass panel provides a direct view of the rain simulator, hydraulic channels, or into the small lecture room.

Architectural Models
Its typological model is less than ten minutes away: the modern main buildings of the SPU, whose design language slightly recalls Pierre Luigi Nervi or Brasília, were constructed during the socialist era. However, while their political significance often acts as a burden, Marek Šumichrast captures the atmosphere of that period for his environmental laboratory. He reinterprets its generosity, spatial flow, and materiality within a contemporary framework.

Buildings Prompt Questions and Offer Solutions
Co-financed by European project funding, the Faculty of Horticulture and Landscape Architecture invested approximately € 2 million in this architectural project. The result is more than just a new laboratory. The Environmental Centre stands as a statement of science and urban life, reflecting the architect's and the client's responsibility towards the location and its history. It shows that transformation does not require radical disruption but involves a confident rethinking of what already exists. Architecture can serve as a medium that connects the past and the future, science and the public, theory and practice. The Environmental Centre is not merely a laboratory; it is an excellent amplifier and communicator.

TeichHausHausHaus

Country: Austria
Object, location: Detached house, Kleinzell
Category: New construction
Architecture: HPSA ZT GmbH, Gramastetten
Installer: HOFA³ Installation und Spenglerei, Vorderweißenbach
PREFA object consultant: Michael Strada
Roof type: Prefalz
Roof colour: P.10 black

❶ Object-related individual solution

Dietmar Hammerschmid

»We Create Spaces for Living.«

Hammerschmid Pachl Seebacher Architekten form a trio, each based in different locations. They have set up their own individual practices in Salzburg, Schladming, and Gramastetten, yet they still produce architecture with a recognisable signature. The *TeichHausHausHaus* in Kleinzell, in the Austrian Mühlkreis region, is unmistakably one of theirs.

Some places have an intangible quality that is hard to describe. They are well designed, welcoming, and accessible. In Kleinzell, architects Dietmar Hammerschmid, Andreas Pachl, and Franz Seebacher have achieved exactly that. Not for the first time, it must be said. For years, the trio have been more than just an insider tip in Austrian architecture. Why? Their buildings all have a naturalness, something completely unobtrusive yet highly liveable. They capture an essence of life and exhibit a clever, convincing spirit. Who would have thought of turning a fishpond in the forest into a TeichHausHausHaus, that is, three houses by the pond?

First, The Pond

The pond was there first. It used to be a fishpond for sturgeon, but later it became shallow and filled with mud. Today, it is a swimming pond with a biological purification zone where you can swim as dragonflies flit around the shore. In winter, when everything is grey, the pond has a calming effect, like a close friend who is simply there without saying much.

Then, The Order Came
The chemistry between the architect and the clients was right from the very first meeting. The plot of land and the project they entrusted to architect Dietmar Hammerschmid had significant potential. They envisioned a small retirement home directly opposite their daughter and grandchildren's residence. The clients also placed great importance on preserving biodiversity and ensuring high ecological sustainability. "I think it's very important to get to know the people you're building for," says Dietmar Hammerschmid. Architecture doesn't need to be elaborate, he explains thoughtfully. But as an architect, you must ask the right questions and listen to do your job. These are questions about life and daily routines. "Not: What kind of window frames would you like? But: When do you get up? What do you eat for breakfast? How many people drop by for coffee on Sundays?" Based on the clients' answers, the architect designed three wooden houses, situated near the water, with ample space for people to gather. "It should have a lightness about it and evoke a holiday feeling."

The Houses
Three volumes with pointed roofs, simply aligned in a row, form an ensemble with a flat garage building. It was completed in 2022 and has since housed a spa and pool area, a residential building, and a retreat house. Between the pool facility and the residential building is a covered terrace with a view of the forest and pond: a sheltered space, neither indoors nor outdoors. It serves as the owners' summer dining area. Perhaps also as the spring breakfast room. Or the "I-want-to-listen-to-the-rain" room. In any case, it is a space that does not seek to be prominent, and that makes it all the more significant. It is a quiet yet convivial place where the architectural concept comes together. The start of an attitude that runs throughout the entire house: inviting, straightforward, and devoid of any architectural pretensions.

Inviting Nature In
The house's permeability in summer is remarkable. Here, walls and windows are thrown open, walkways become natural transitions, and all rooms invite you to explore them. It feels as if the architect and builders aimed to bring nature right to the kitchen table. The large window from the kitchen-diner, overlooking the swimming pond, is also incredibly beautiful. In this way, the house responds to the habits and small desires of its owners and creates a relationship with its surroundings. It appears as if life itself came here first, and the architecture simply followed.

Wood Again and Again
Everything was completed within twelve months. The construction period was significantly shortened by using solid wood walls with cellulose insulation, a vertically slatted façade, and minimal concrete work for a partial foundation slab and garage. "It always makes things easier when you limit yourself to a few materials and incorporate them in a structurally sound way," says Dietmar Hammerschmid. Almost half of the house rests on stilts, partly over the pond and partly in the meadow. The distance to the water surface is about 60 to 70 centimetres, allowing for controlled ventilation and therefore protecting the structure. The interior features natural materials and subtle colours: clay plaster, fir boards, and a blue-tiled stove.

Tone on Tone
The pre-greyed timber façade and the roofs made of Prefalz P.10 black, whose edges are only visible as fine lines, , form a visually and technically cohesive unit. Although the relatively steep roof pitch could have accommodated other materials, the goal was to mirror the linear structure of the façade on the roof. PREFA proved to be ideal, as the verge boards on the gable ends appear notably narrower and more precise. The calm, metallic material thus creates a deliberate contrast to nature without overpowering it. Another challenge was integrating the PV modules: "In the past, tinsmiths used to install the modules with visible supports and brackets. Today, PREFA offers a more elegant solution," says Dietmar Hammerschmid. The options include installing the glass/glass PV modules Prefalz, developed by PREFA with barely noticeable centre and end clamps, or using the PREVARIO Prefalz solar panel mounting system for standard modules.

Architecture does not Hide Itself
The three structures of the house in Kleinzell stand out through their colour, placement, and choice of materials on site. The architects had already experimented with the design language and architectural elements in earlier projects and on their own homes. Building over a pond and on stilts are therefore familiar approaches for the firm. Their confidence in managing the scope of form, construction, and implementation is clear. "Many of our projects, even now, have a relatively small budget. This means that we simply have to think constructively and, in a sense, economically."

> *"It is a space that does not seek to be prominent, and that makes it all the more significant."*

New Reality
A yellow tape with the words "New Reality" lies on the shelf, right next to a plotter, a styrofoam cutter, and a 3D printer. For our conversation with Dietmar Hammerschmid, we drove to his new, or rather old, office. After several years living in a self-built wooden structure on stilts in Gramastetten, measuring just under 70 square metres, he discovered a vacant plot of land on a steep slope in the same village. He bought and developed the hillside plot without hesitation, moved the existing wooden building there, expanded it with a similar structure to create a cohesive ensemble, and established a new space close to nature that reflects the architects' ecologically conscious attitude. From the desk, you can look directly into the crowns of towering trees. Even here, in the new office, untreated and subtly coloured surfaces create a light holiday-home atmosphere.

The Beginnings

The firm's projects have received awards, including "Houses of the Year" and the GerambRose for outstanding building culture. The three of them began their journey in Graz, studied at the Technical University, and subsequently took their first steps as a young firm in a shop on the busy Keplerstraße. However, for Dietmar Hammerschmid, the city was not for him. He wanted his children to grow up in nature and aimed to focus on sustainable architecture in a rural setting. Nevertheless, his time in Graz was significant to him. "Hrvoje Njiric, Roger Riewe, Hans Gangoly, Graz University of Technology and the environment were certainly a good foundation." A foundation for what? The architects avoid imposing their architectural taste on clients; instead, they craft buildings that emerge from discussions and everyday needs. This approach is highly attractive. It's as if they understand what makes life worth living. Architecture is not merely a shell or just material, according to Dietmar Hammerschmid, but "what emerges when everything comes together."

Up and down

The roof of the *TeichHausHausHaus* project, made of black Prefalz, is visible from a distance between cornfields and against a backdrop of tall trees. In this regard, it is quite striking. Its undulating shape links three archetypal structures into one and presented challenges that the firm ***HOFA³*** easily overcame.

Jürgen Hartl

The implementation of the three roofs was closely coordinated with the architects. "We further refined many of the architects' details," says Jürgen Hartl, responsible for consulting and sales in the areas of tinsmithing and flat roofs at HOFA³. The installation direction of the black Prefalz sheets was, of course, predetermined. It follows the roof pitches and appears as if the panels have been laid seamlessly over the ridges and valleys of the three pitched roofs. Technically, however, a different system is behind it, mainly due to the necessary rear ventilation. In the valleys, the panels are interrupted, covering internal gutters for drainage and designed as three separate roofs. A technical balancing act, in other words.

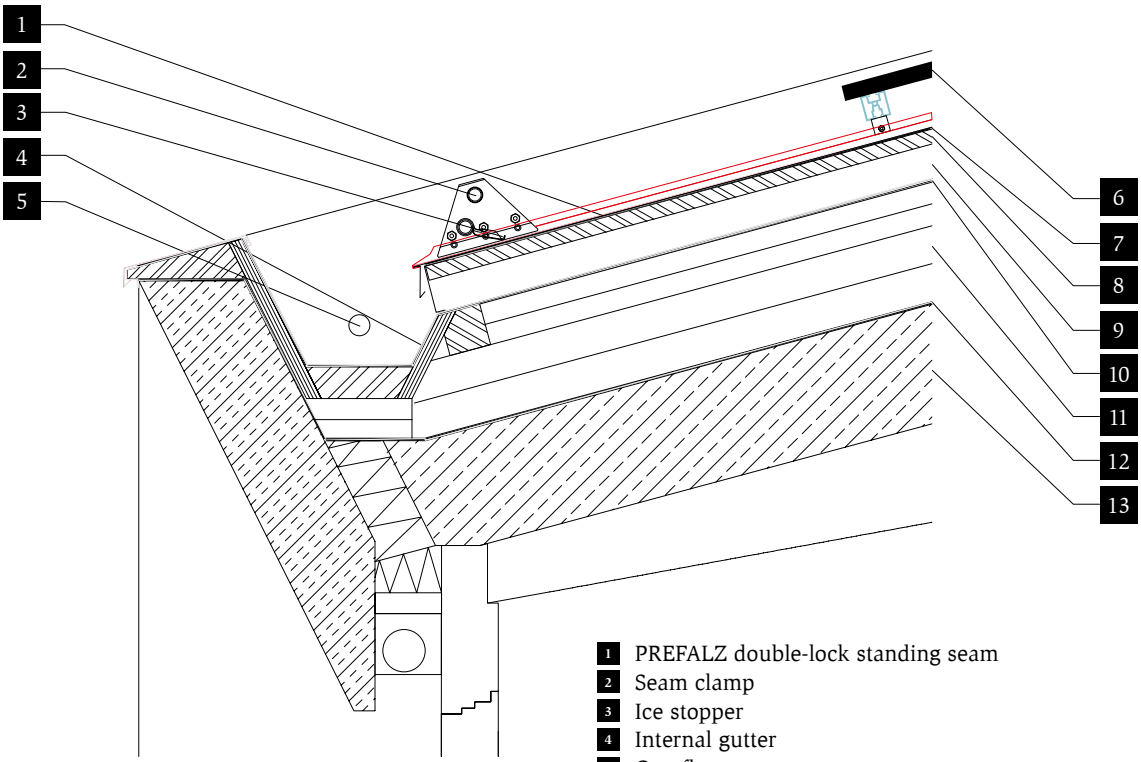
The house in Kleinzell emphasises slender details. Jürgen Hartl dispels a common myth: "Narrow solutions are often easy and clean to implement. This applies to both the width of the flashings and the roof edges. Delicate dimensions are better, especially if you want to avoid rippling."
As sustainability was very important to the client, a PV system was installed on two of the six roof sections. Solar panels and photovoltaics are currently popular – and Jürgen Hartl and his team are no exception. "PREFA Solar systems are perfectly coordinated, and we enjoy working with them."

Over the past 50 years, the business has evolved from a small tinsmithing and metalworking shop to a company with approximately 70 employees. Today, the focus is on flat roofs and façades. "Large projects are very interesting for us," says Jürgen Hartl.

However, the proportion of "large orders" and "small orders" is balanced, and the team learns something new with every project. This means that the order volume is only one of many criteria that HOFA³ considers when deciding whether to accept an order. Tinsmithing is still a profession with a future, and it is extremely important for the entire team to identify with a project. There are simply orders that are well-suited to the team's skills.
HOFA³ is part of the Wimberger Group and is well connected with other trades. It serves as the main contact for private builders involved in new construction and renovation, as well as for commercial and industrial projects. Architects, industrial clients, and commercial customers can rely on its extensive expertise. This is especially beneficial when roofing, installation, and façade trades overlap.
Unfortunately, it is currently difficult to find young people interested in a career in tinsmithing. As a result, the focus is increasingly shifting towards installing standardised systems such as PV systems and adopting more efficient construction methods. Jürgen Hartl finds this somewhat painful. In his view, the trade offers stable prospects, active outdoor work, regular hours, and a high level of personal responsibility. Being a tinsmith is not just a regular job. He still enjoys being "outside," he says. Outside is the construction site, not the office.

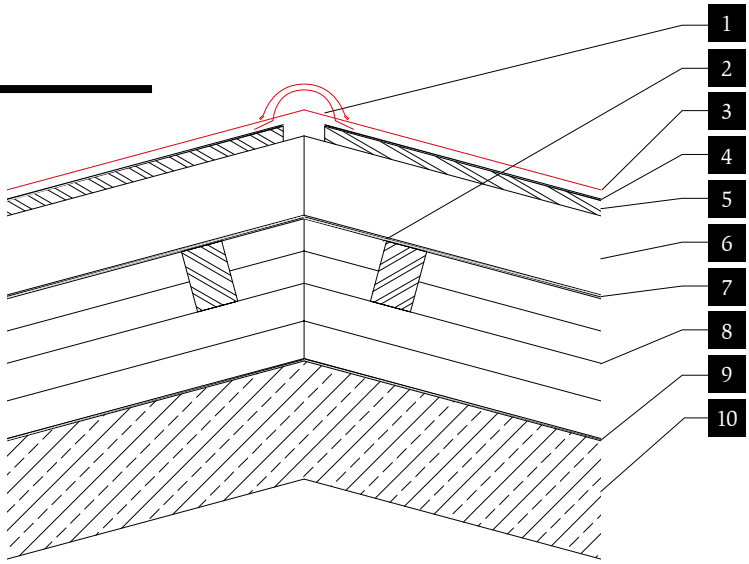
Education Centre Riffian

Eaves Detail



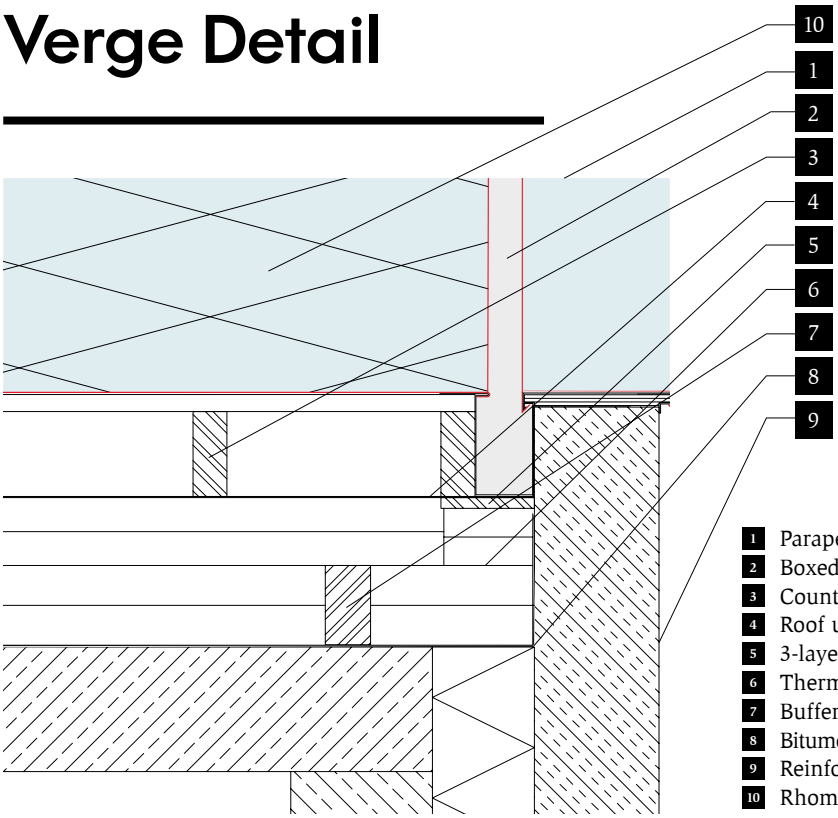
1 PREFALZ double-lock standing seam
2 Seam clamp
3 Ice stopper
4 Internal gutter
5 Overflow
6 Roof integrated solar panel system
7 Separation layer
8 Fully supported substrate
9 Counter battens (ventilation gap)
10 Roof underlay
11 Thermal insulation
12 Bitumenous vapour barrier membrane
13 Reinforced concrete

Ridge Detail



1. Ridge vents
2. Buffer battens
3. Rhomboid roof tile 44 × 44
4. Separation layer
5. Fully supported substrate
6. Counter battens (ventilation gap)
7. Roof underlay
8. Thermal insulation
9. Bitumenous vapour barrier membrane
10. Reinforced concrete

Verge Detail



1. Parapet capping
2. Boxed valley gutter
3. Counter battens (ventilation gap)
4. Roof underlay
5. 3-layer panel
6. Thermal insulation
7. Buffer battens
8. Bitumenous vapour barrier membrane
9. Reinforced concrete
10. Rhomboid roof tile 44 × 44

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