

A HOUSE IS A



In an apartment building by Camenzind Evolution in Zurich's Alstetten quarter, the modern tenant can show his identity to the world.

Text Katharina Marchal
Photos Peter Wuermli



'TODAY'S INVESTORS SUPPORT EXPERIMENTAL PROJECTS'

In Zurich, apartment buildings are sprouting from the ground like mushrooms, especially in the peripheral districts. But today's investors – unlike those involved in earlier building booms – are supporting projects marked by diversity, individuality and experimentation. A good example is a property with the intriguing name Kiss, an acronym for *kompromisslos* (without compromise) *individuell* (individual) *süss* (sweet) *sauer* (sour).

Erected at a busy intersection in Zurich-Altstetten, the seven-storey building is an attention-getter. Noticeable are its curves, the rolling transitions at ground floor and roof levels, slightly oblique exterior side walls, a façade of beige stucco, and a multicoloured patchwork at the rear of the complex. A seemingly random scattering of variously sized windows gives the façade what Stefan Camenzind of Camenzind Evolution calls 'its own face on a noisy, exhaust-filled street. In situations like this,' he says, 'building regulations stipulate ventilation of living rooms and bedrooms through a side of the building not facing the street.' The solution was to use as much glazing as possible on the south-orientated back of

the building, with its colourful fabric blinds and projecting balconies clad in various materials. As a result, the front and the back of the building reveal life inside the residential block in different ways.

In most cases, units in a conventional apartment building are uniformly designed: white walls and parquet floors or wall-to-wall carpeting. 'In our opinion,' says Camenzind, 'the needs of users have changed.' The architects and their client, Swiss Life, concentrated on the modern working world and developed a project that combines an architectural concept with a marketing strategy. It starts with the name of the building and ends with the way in which the units are rented.

A feasibility study was conducted based on the Sinus Milieu model, a method used in social research to successfully market products by subdividing society according to preferences, lifestyles and attitudes. 'You can build apartments in the same way you develop products,' says Camenzind.

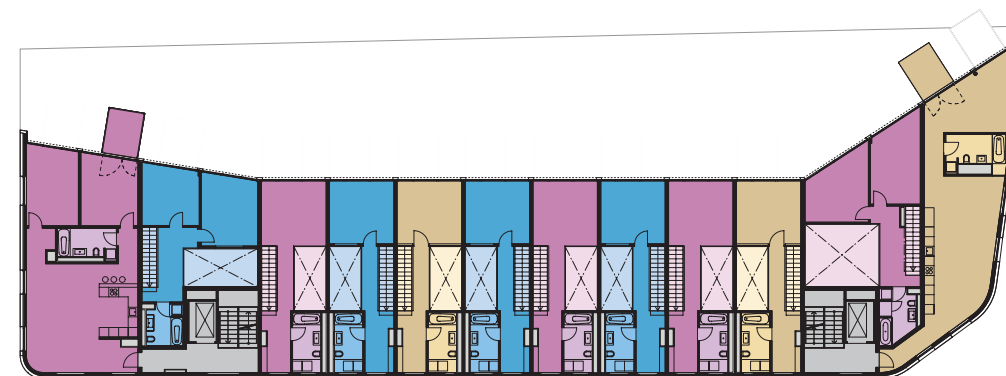
There are many examples of how such studies are employed in the world of business. Evidence-based design (EBD) or user research helps to modernize the

workplace and provides information on people as users in ordinary professional environments. Camenzind has applied concepts from the development of office projects to the residential sphere. 'We aimed at a specific target group for this project,' says architect Silke Ebner of Camenzind Evolution, 'just as if we were developing a product.'

Every apartment is thus a product. The interior design is *prêt-à-porter* for the modern tenant. The target group is made up of youngish one- to two-person households with a mid to high income and a contemporary, future-forward lifestyle – a definition that, according to the Sinus Milieu model, includes some 44 per cent of the Swiss population. The complex has a total of 46 units: 2.5- to 4.5-room maisonettes and single-level apartments. The young urban trendsetter has a choice of three interior designs: funky, industrial and classic.

A 2.5- or 3.5-room maisonette with a 'funky' interior is meant to appeal to 'the culty, insiders, snowboarders and ocean hoppers'. In a mix of German and English, the letters in Kiss are represented by *kultige, insiders, snowboarders* and >

Curious to know which type suits you? Take the test (in German) at kiss-zueri.ch/nc/wohnen/typen-test.html

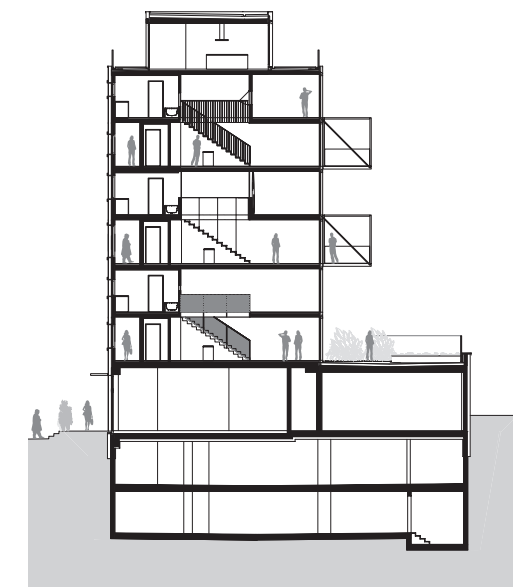


Fourth floor.



Third floor.

■ Funky
■ Industrial
■ Classic



Cross section.

Front and side exterior walls are pierced by a seemingly random scattering of variously sized windows whose sashes tilt in different directions. The wall at the rear is dominated by blinds whose colours correspond to the three 'identities' the building offers its tenants.





The colours in the corridors refer to the three apartment types.

'YOU CAN BUILD APARTMENTS IN THE SAME WAY YOU DEVELOP PRODUCTS'

◀ *seehoppers*. Three portholes above the bathtub offer a view through the apartment to the balcony. A huge work of graffiti decorates a wall in the open-plan living area, and a concrete stairway with a balustrade of stainless-steel mesh ascends to the bedroom. In the kitchen, the cabinets and synthetic-resin floor display the same shiny, wine-red surfaces.

The 'industrial' interior blows a Kiss to 'clear, industrial, excellent and congenial' (*klar, industriell, souverän and sympathisch*). Underscoring the cool international look are a stairway of black-painted steel lined with horizontal rails, backed by a bare-concrete wall; seamless resin flooring; a bright-blue, double-height wall in the kitchen; and chromed-steel kitchen appliances. Rust-toned panelling enhances the bathroom and WC. Upstairs, a cosy timber-clad bedroom opens to the void via a wooden shutter.

The 'classic' unit – a high-end variation of the standard apartment typology – is for those who are 'cultivated, international, subtle and style-conscious' (*kultiviert, international, subtil and stilsicher*). 'Parquet floors and matching light tones in kitchen, bath, living and

dining rooms exude a casual freshness,' according to the description. Gleaming kitchen cabinets and furniture highlighted by mirrors with decorative golden frames complement oak floors with a matte-varnish finish.

Marketing and renting these units are also part of an up-to-date operation that takes place on a Facebook page set up for this purpose. The indecisive visitor is invited to take an online 'type test'. 'Yes, I tried it to see which apartment type would suit me,' says Stefan Camenzind. (Results indicated that either 'classic' or 'funky' would be right for him.) He was surprised at the explicit requests of people applying for specific apartment types. 'Sometimes I felt like Santa Claus,' he says, laughing. 'The process reveals a need for showing one's identity in the form of a designed living space.' It's a manifestation of the adage 'Show me how you live, and I'll tell you who you are.'

Like a piece of clothing, these interiors can be adapted to new trends and styles, thus fulfilling the demands of a sustainable apartment complex whose skeleton was built to last 100 years, whose mechanical systems should function

for up to 20 years, and whose tertiary structure – the spaces used by tenants – should survive for a maximum of ten years. Despite the individuality of the three types outlined here, the majority of the maisonettes have nearly identical floor plans, and all apartments have a balcony or a terrace, which creates a basic sense of community.

Although double-height spaces provide the maisonettes with added value, making these units a cut above the standard single-level apartment, the rather static layout – an access gallery on the interior of the building, bathrooms facing the street and living areas at the rear – is a detriment to the design and a hindrance to tenants who are prevented from participating fully in the urban environment. It will be interesting to see whether they continue to prefer the individuality offered by Kiss as time passes – or perhaps yearn for the tried and true: white walls, parquet floors and wall-to-wall carpeting. ◀

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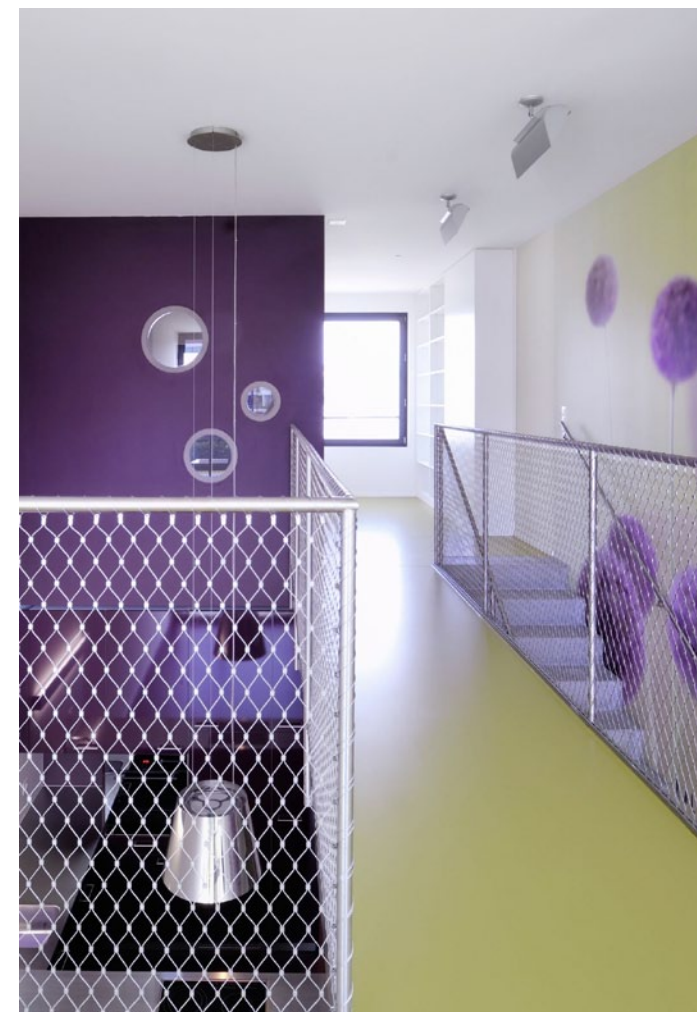


In the kitchen, the cabinets and a synthetic-resin floor display the same shiny, wine-red surfaces.

Funky

The 'funky' unit is supposed to appeal to those who are:

- Kultige (culty)
- Insiders
- Snowboarders
- Seehoppers (ocean hoppers, or travellers)



Three portholes above the bathtub provide a view of the entire apartment.





Concrete walls and a steel staircase add to the maisonette's industrial atmosphere.

Industrial

Terms used to describe the 'industrial' unit are:

- Klar (clear)
- Industriell (industrial)
- Souverän (excellent)
- Sympathisch (congenial)



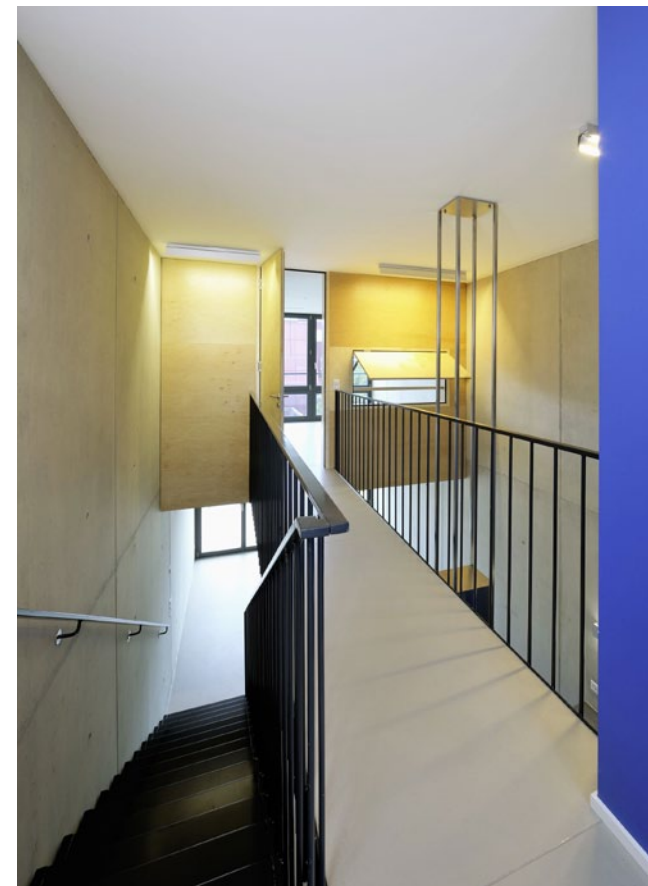
Classic

The 'classic' type is for tenants who are:

- Kultiviert (cultivated)
- International
- Subtil (subtle)
- Stilsicher (style-conscious)

The classic apartment is characterized by oak finishes.

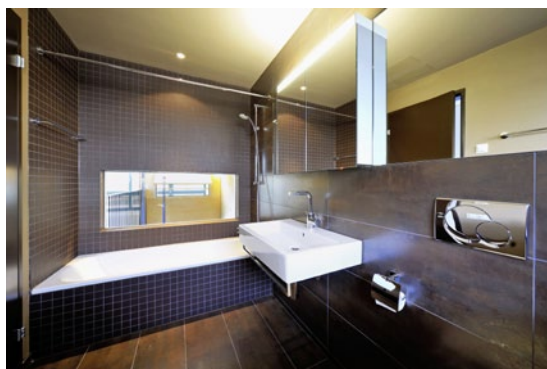
**'SHOW ME HOW YOU LIVE,
AND I'LL TELL YOU WHO
YOU ARE'**



The cosy timber-clad bedroom upstairs has a homey ambience.



'Light tones exude a casual freshness,' according to the architects.



The bathroom features rust-coloured wall panels.

