

Five Points in the Pampa

In the small town of Olten, Fuhrimann Hächler built a house that pays homage to Le Corbusier's principles of modern architecture.

Text
Katharina Marchal

Photos
Valentin Jeck

The space underneath the residence functions as a carport.





The space underneath the house can be closed off with a plastic curtain.



The landing of the open staircase leads to the front door on the first floor.

The

Swiss architecture firm Fuhrimann Hächler in Zurich is best known for its designs for renowned gallery owners and art collectors, like the house in Vnà, Graubünden, for gallery owner Eva Presenhuber from Zurich (*Mark 14*, page 144) and the architect and artist's home on Üetliberg near Zurich. They are not only friends with Swiss artists like Pipilotti Rist and Peter Fischli & David Weiss, but also build houses for clients who work in architecture or construction companies and are looking forward to something new. And so, during a pleasant evening with the friendly Sulzer couple, the idea of a house in the suburb of Olten arose. An evening meal, during which the wine flowed abundantly and Cuban cigars

were smoked, led to the property's name: House Cubana. And the result does exude a southern ambience.

At the edge of the small city of Olten lies a new suburb with apartment buildings and row houses along long streets. Detached houses with two floors and an attic dot the terrain on the mountainsides and the forest edges. The clients managed to acquire two adjacent plots for their new house. On the edge of the buildable surface and at the highest point of the plot, the corner location offers an unrestricted view: of the woods on the mountainside and of the city on the side of the valley. 'Staging the view, and the way we make it visible in the building, is very important in

our architecture,' says Gabrielle Hächler. The decision to realize the living and dining room on the most beautiful and highest viewpoint led to the overall design of the house. 'We turned convention around,' says Hächler. 'Living upstairs and sleeping downstairs is more natural and logical.' Moreover, in this way the architects make the most of the building regulations.

Eight rectangular, angled columns and a lift shaft form the legs of a concrete table construction. On top of that rests a prefabricated timber frame construction with a full floor and an attic, which is not recognizable as such because the façade of corrugated steel envelops both floors 'like a raincoat'. The shapes

of the cubist building not only remind one of Le Corbusier's five points, but also of the family house of Swiss architects Albert Frey and Fred Koehler in Syosset, Long Island of 1932. Notable are the parts that protrude from the building volume. The staircase from the bedroom floor to the living area hangs on the outside and is covered with flat plates of titanium zinc. The same applies to the fireplace chimney, which is recognizable from outside in the form of a concrete slab. On the west and east side, box-like windows protrude from the façade like telescopes.

'These added elements provide the strict box with a more playful character,' says Hächler. The spaciousness starts at the

entrance; the open staircase that leads up to the front door is reminiscent of an entrance to a science-fiction spaceship. 'This project needs a client who doesn't shun risk,' says Hächler. The client adds: 'That's only possible if you work with people who understand their profession.' Manuela Sulzer, the owner, is an interior designer; her husband Linus Sulzer is an architect and owns the largest construction management company in Switzerland: Sulzer + Buzzi Baumanagement. From the beginning, both were completely behind this 'special home', known in the neighbourhood as 'the architect house'. Yet the volume seamlessly joins the row of detached houses. It is an exciting prelude to the conventional, >

The staircase from the first to the second floor protrudes from the side as an independent volume. The chimney and the drainpipe were also expressively designed.





Like the custom cupboard around the fireplace, the kitchen was done in light-green wood.



The living room on the second floor gives access to a spacious roof terrace.

restrained architecture of the neighbours.

Andreas Fuhrmann und Gabrielle Hächler not only paid attention to the views of the countryside and the surroundings in their design; they also created a complex interior. The outdoor area under the raised building volume is not only used as a carport by the clients, but also for parties. A curtain of plastic makes it possible to partly close this 4-m-high space. Videos can be projected on a white surface on the inner side of the curtain. Next to the wood-lined storage room and elevator entrance landing, stairs lead upward. Because the opening is in the middle of the building, the interconnected rooms are strung together along the façade. Their large dimensions allow for flexible use.

At this time, the entrance and cloakroom are on the east side, the master bedroom with bathroom, dressing room and small study are on the north side, and a large

laundry room on the west side. All walls are covered with sheets of untreated plywood. On the upper floor beams of pinewood bring articulation to the ceilings. The flooring is also the same everywhere, linking the areas. The beige wood cement fits well with the light wood of the walls and ceilings. A mural by Pipilotti Rist in the open bathroom functions as a landmark in the coherent design. When the curtain in the lady of the house's adjacent boudoir is open, you have an unimpeded view of the forest from the freestanding tub. This room, too, is multifunctional; it can also be used as guest room or library.

On the top floor it becomes clear that the architects have kept their word. The view is panoramic and reaches across the residential area to the other side of the valley. When neighbours come to visit, they are surprised and lament: 'Why didn't we design our house like this?' The architects deliberately refrained

from using glass everywhere on the top floor. The view is centred on the town and the forest. The west and east façades have hardly any windows. The building regulations were exploited by the architects, by extending the maximum surface of the upper floor with a loggia-like roof terrace. With the storey-high wooden panelling and floor boards this outside room looks like a south-facing courtyard. Again, windows focus the view to the north and south. The view when looking upwards is cut up and framed by two sharply angled wooden beams. An awning that takes its example from Spanish patios, made of canvas stretched between multiple points, is in preparation.

The decision to move to the outskirts of a small town was quite a change for the client, who comes from Basel. 'If we're moving to the Pampa anyway, I want to build with Fuhrmann Hächler,' she demanded of her >



'The added elements provide the strict box with a more playful character'



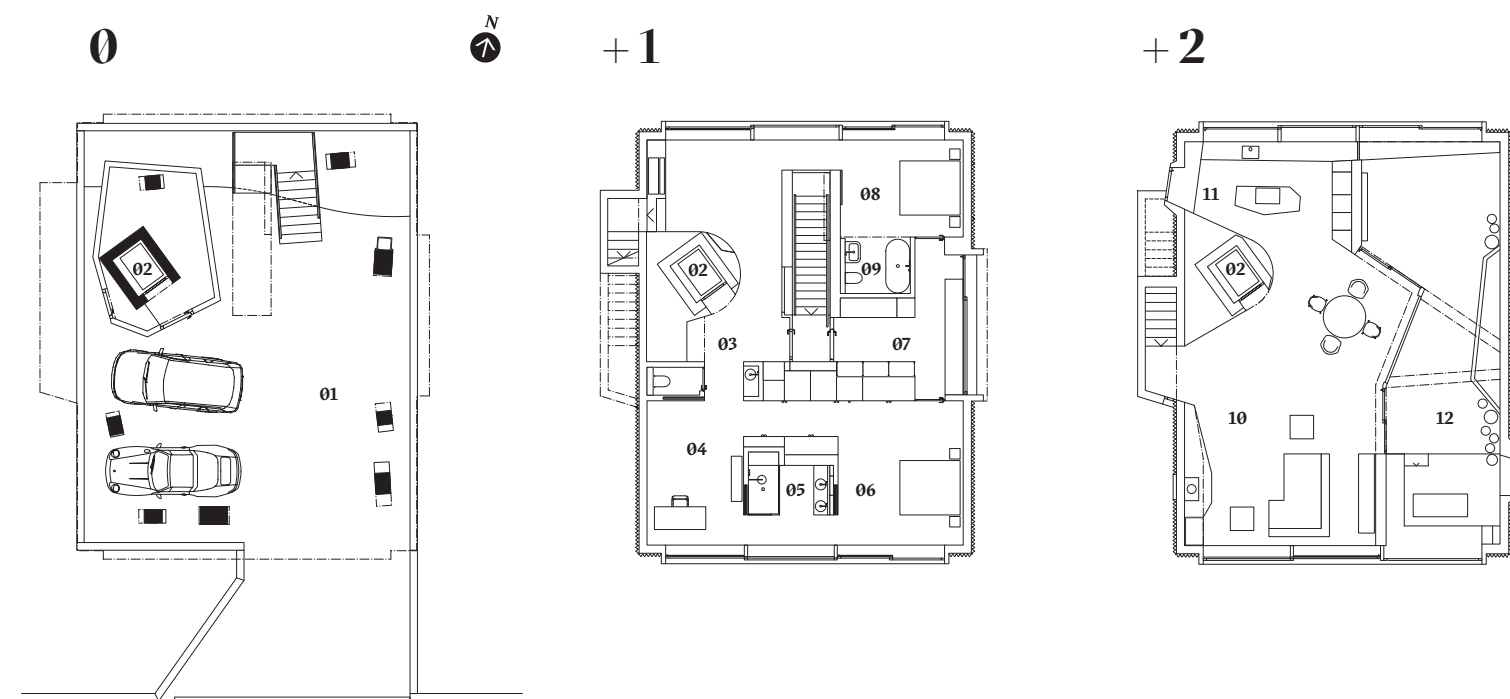
The bathroom in the guest room has a mural designed by artist Pipilotti Rist.

The master bedroom on the first floor has an open connection to the bathroom.



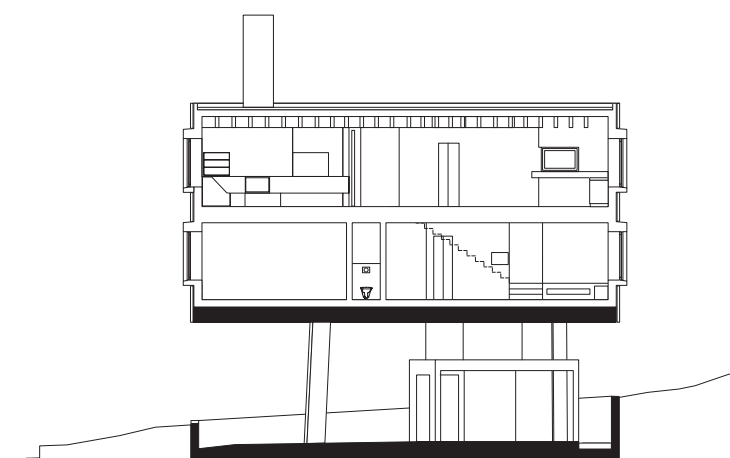
husband. Hächler says emphatically: 'We're proud that we were able to build in a suburb, because Switzerland is densely built up and urban sprawl looms.' One advantage was that the client's company supported the project. Scheduling the building activities precisely made it possible to 'turbo-charge' the undertaking. Planning began on 1 February 2014, and the house was constructed from June 2014 to September 2015. Swift decisions by the clients also made the short construction time possible. The good cooperation resulted in new joint projects. Fuhrmann Hächler is working with Sulzer + Buzzi on the construction of shopping mall Sälipark and senior homes and offices in the centre of Olten. —

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- 02 Elevator
- 03 Entrance hall
- 04 Study
- 05 Master bathroom
- 06 Master bedroom
- 07 Utility
- 08 Guest bedroom
- 09 Guest bathroom
- 10 Living room
- 11 Kitchen
- 12 Roof terrace

Long Sections



'This project needs a client who doesn't shun risk'

Cross Section

