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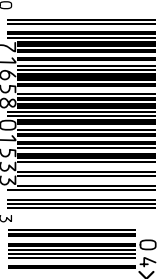
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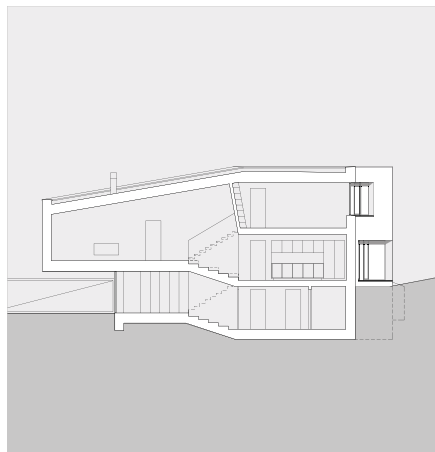


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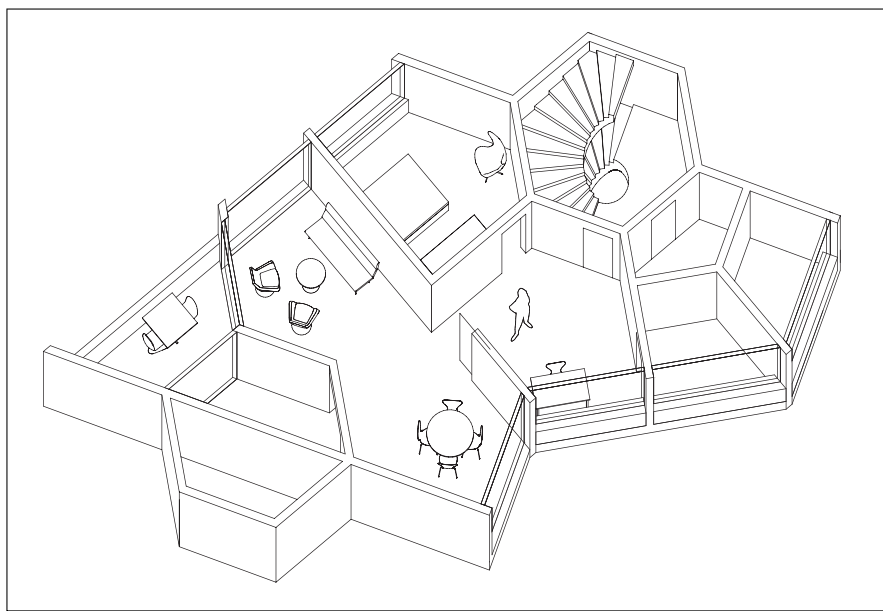


A Simple Plan

SWISS FIRM *KIT* APPLIES ELEGANT EFFICIENCIES TO PROJECTS BIG AND SMALL.

PORTRAIT **MARC WETLI**

When looking back at the Great Recession, architects of the future ought to give special consideration to the class of dauntless designers who launched their practices into its headwinds. Included on the rolls of the Generation of '08: Zurich-based Kit Architects, the triumvirate of Andreas Schelling, Roman Loretan, and Gianet Traxler, each of whom left comfortable perches at established practices to set up



(THIS PAGE) Andreas Schelling (left), Gianet Traxler (middle), and Roman Loretan in their Zurich studio. (OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT) Model of Kit's March District house in the firm's

studio. Rendering of the March house. Rendering of a 2010 proposal for an apartment building in Brunnen. Floor plan of a unit in the Brunnen complex. Floor plan of the March house.



shop on their own three years ago. "When we started our office, with the collapse of the economy, it made me think about what architecture could or should do," says Loretan, 34. "That meant going back to something that was less excessive, more economical."

All three architects cultivated the requisite Swiss restraint while studying at the celebrated ETH Zurich. After that, Loretan and Schiller left Zurich to sharpen their talents—Loretan at Diller Scofidio + Renfro in New York and Schelling at Duggan Morris in London. "We had the idea to collect influences from different countries and bring them back to Switzerland," says Schelling, 32. Returning to Zurich, they took the conceptual strategies they'd learned abroad and grafted them into a design aesthetic the architects sum up in a single word: simplicity.

In proposals for sleek country homes and lustrous civic buildings, Kit manages to marry cosmopolitan cool with a native sense of thrift. This straightforward approach is

getting its real-world debut this season, as construction begins on the firm's first realized project, a private home in Switzerland's March District. Working with a modest-sized parcel, "the trick in the scheme was to minimize the footprint," Schelling says. This task was made all the more challenging by the client's insistence on a four-car garage, as well as the split-level structure's location near the bank of a narrow brook. The firm managed to shoehorn the program into the constricted envelope by literally upending the traditional Swiss house plan. Instead of public spaces on the ground floor and the private spaces above, the two are squeezed side by side in vertical strips. "The complexity is something that comes through the sectional idea," Loretan says. Exposed concrete and broad windows add to the feeling of ease and openness in the house's mezzanine-like living areas.

Though a modest-minded office, Kit has far-reaching ambitions. The architects are

looking to work "in every scale," Schelling says, using their unfussy methodology no matter the size of the project. On the smaller end: The firm's Sofa Weststrasse couch, which features a frame of old-fashioned plywood combined with an upholstered back and a seat fashioned from identically shaped cushions. At the other end of the scale: A new school in Rafz and an apartment complex in Brunnen. Quiet, refined, and densely planned, these projects all demonstrate how the firm's rigorous approach works in even the most complex context.

And they're just beginning. Kit's already at work on its next commission, a nearly 40,000-square-foot residential complex in Berneck. If the studio can bring its standard of simplicity to that scale, then they can bring it anywhere. In any case, they certainly seem to be thinking big—really big. "We haven't done any urban design in the office," Schelling says, "but it's also something we're interested in." —IAN VOLNER