

VELUX®

A HOME IN THE FOREST

Single-Family House in Schrems, Austria







FITTING IN WITH THE SURROUNDINGS

In the village of Schrems, in the vicinity of a mud bath, stands a wooden house - its modest street facade, fitting in with the neighbouring houses, does not reveal the complex spaces of the building behind it. The client, an elderly lady who returned to her home village in Austria after years of living abroad, wished for a place where she could enjoy her retirement.

The entire building had to be designed barrier-free allowing the resident to live comfortably even with a possible disability of walking in the future, and also providing enough space for her friends who would come to visit from around the world.

She imagined a house fitting in seamlessly with the surroundings and tailor-made to fulfil her needs, but she made some unsatisfying design attempts with several planners. Everything changed when she met Michael Nöbauer, an architect specializing in timber constructions.

The client was not the only one to be happy with the outcome; the success of the project was confirmed as the building was honoured with the "Lower Austrian Wood Construction Recognition Award 2019" ("Anerkennung NÖ Holzbaupreis 2019"). The architect, too, is pleased with the project:

"I would move in myself anytime" – says the architect – "the house has so many great spots, also I am satisfied with every detail."

Michael Nöbauer, architect

To accommodate the client's wish for a sloped roof, and still actively use the space right beneath it, Michael Nöbauer came up with the idea of making a gallery on the first floor. This design features a multi-functional space to display the client's paintings, to be used as a library corner, or as provisional sleeping area for guests.

The interior differentiates between a spectacular over-height living room and a separate cosy bedroom area. The building is located close to the street on the top of a sloped site. A broad stair connects the house with the garden and a path leading directly to the mud bath. All existing trees were kept.



Site plan. A sloped plot is accessed from the road in the north. A garden stretches south towards a path connecting the house with the shores of a healing mud bath, visible on the photograph on the right.



EVERY DETAIL MATTERS

The obsession with precise details in Michael Nöbauer's work does not only apply to the design of the construction, but all aspects of comfortable living are also well thought-through.

A closed front façade on the north side protects the interior from the street. Thanks to a glazed vestibule door one has an open view over the interior, the terrace and the garden behind it from the moment of entering the house.

A functional kitchen is tucked under the stair leading to the upper level. As the landlady does not cook regularly, yet needs enough space for dinners with friends, Michael Nöbauer came up with the idea of an additional countertop sliding out from beneath the stair. He also designed all built-in wooden benches, shelves and cupboards, carefully choosing every fitting.

Uncompromising details include puristic all-glass railings and flush mount doors fitting directly into the cross-laminated timber walls without any frames. Even the garage door was custom-designed and a challenge for the construction team: the client and the architect wanted it to be clad with shingles and flush with the surface of the façade for a homogenous appearance.

“One corner of the terrace, close to the bathroom door, is sunny and protected from the wind throughout the year. One can lean against the warm façade and enjoy the warming sun rays even on icy days.”

Michael Nöbauer, architect





SUNLIGHT COMES FROM ABOVE

Michael Nöbauer has worked with VELUX on previous projects and is well aware of the advantages of this collaboration. He often shows nearby houses he designed with roof windows to clients, opening and shutting the shades to prove his point that daylight considerably improves the room's atmosphere.

For a more precise image of a project in planning, he turns to simulation tools provided by VELUX, pointing out that proof is a better argument in dialogue with clients than a mere exchange of opinions. He also discusses daylight distribution diagrams with technology-affine clients: they are always surprised by how dark average rooms are.

Roof windows allow for full privacy and provide an ever-changing play of sun in the rooms. Inside this house, one forgets the neighbouring buildings and focuses on the forest-like garden.

"Here, as in the planning of many other buildings, I have used Daylight Visualizer. Some investors fear roof windows, as they wrongly associate them with technical problems common in the past. VELUX does not only guarantee the best quality of products, but also provides tools for helping the clients understand the advantages of roof windows. Daylight Visualizer simulations allow to compare a room setting with or without roof window and to see the beauty of light coming from above."

Michael Nöbauer, architect







“The client sold her house at the seaside in Spain. Since she moved in, she did not regret it for a second, as she lives in paradise here.”

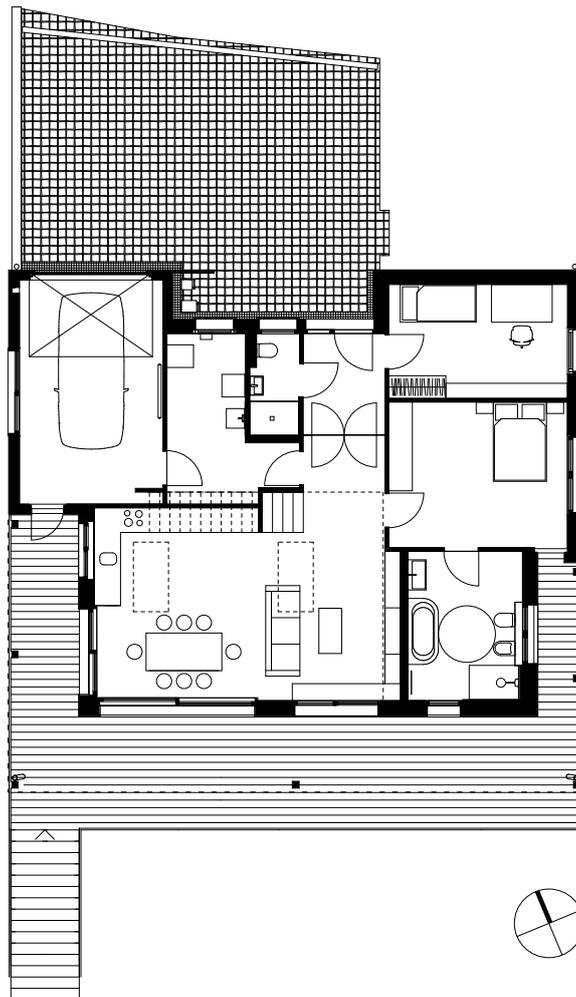
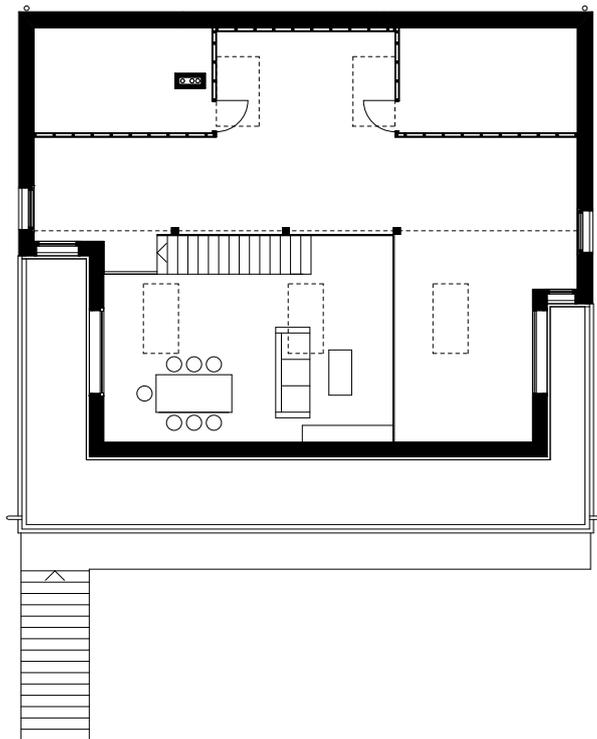
Michael Nöbauer, architect

Gallery floor. An open space provides enough room for work and leisure: there, next to an "exhibition wall" and bookshelves, the landlady keeps her home trainer. Glass railings allow for an unobstructed view towards the living area. On the north sides two rooms, which can be used as additional guest rooms and storage alike.

Ground floor. Front yard, paved in local granite stone, leads to the entrance and the garage. A little porch is protecting front door from the wind and provides a niche for the trash bins.

Gilazed vestibule, from which a guest room and bath can be accessed, opens towards a bright living area. On the east, master bedroom with a en-suite bath, with a direct connection to the garden.

The space under the stair is divided between the kitchen and storage room.



ECOLOGICAL AND LOCAL

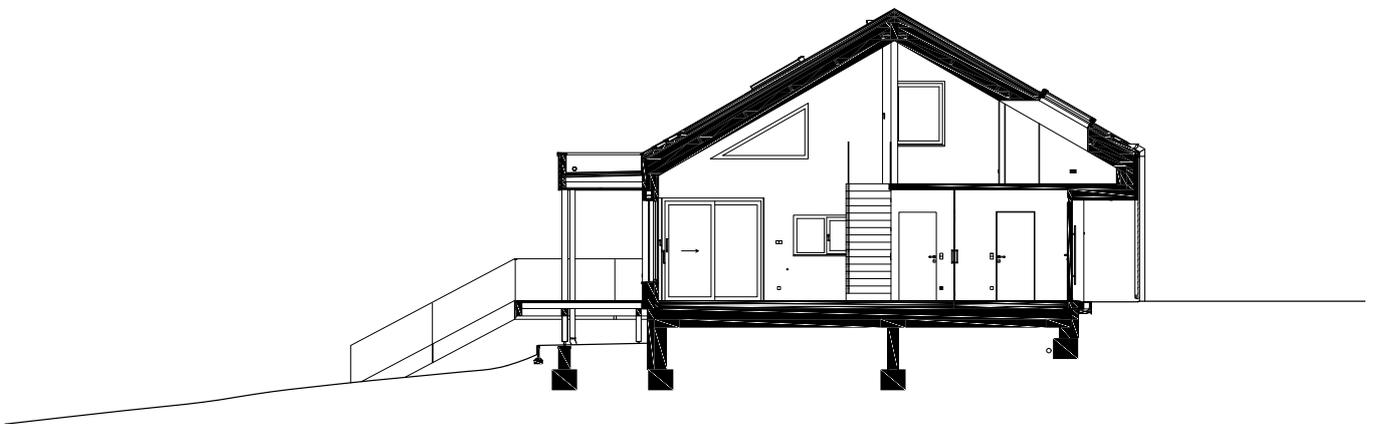
Respect for nature is a trademark of Nöbauer's practice: not only were the trees and sloping terrain kept untouched, but the materials used for construction came from the vicinity. The granite blocks used for the front yard and the countertop of the kitchen came from a nearby stone quarry and all wooden elements, including the larch shingles used for the façade, were provided by local carpentries working with wood from the region.

Michael Nöbauer is convinced of the advantages of solid timber constructions with its many qualities, which is why his designs are radically made of wood.

Massive walls featuring soft wood-fibre insulation protect the inside from the cold and summer heat. Forgoing the usual PE foil allows the house to breathe and adjust to changing humidity levels. Prefabricated load-bearing structure was mounted and planked on-site to ensure perfect detailing of each corner.

The cross-laminated timber floor between the levels did not need an additional layer, nor did the walls: The client, too, wished to build ecologically. The entire load-bearing structure is visible inside. The only white surfaces in the house are the exhibition walls on the gallery: this is where a majority of the paintings owned by the landlady is displayed. Michael Nöbauer went all lengths to reduce the carbon footprint: he saved 280kg of CO₂ just by commuting to construction supervisions by bicycle instead of car. The position of the volume and its openings are designed to maximize energy gain from solar energy and to provide pleasant evening sun throughout the year.

A cantilevered roof above the terrace protects the living room from overheating in summer, yet it allows for low winter sun to reach every corner of the room. Roof windows on the south slope of the roof let much-needed sunlight in during the winter months and remain closed with shutters during hot summer hours - to be opened at dusk for efficient ventilation. The shutters are equipped with a photovoltaic system, complementing the primary energy source of biogas. Low-tech solutions prove to be a perfect low-cost alternative to computer-engineered so-called "smart-homes" by providing maximum climatic comfort without risk of any technical glitches.



Section. The house is standing on top of the slope, its closed front facade protecting the interior from the street. A cantilevered terrace floats above the garden, providing a wide open view on the meadow with trees and the mud bath beneath. A double-height space of the living room enables natural air circulation.

















PROJECT DATA

Project:	Single family house
Location:	Schrems, Austria
Construction period:	2019
Architecture and supervision:	Architekt DI Michael Nöbauer, 3860 Heidenreichstein
Structural engineer:	Zehetgruber & Laister ZT GmbH, 3910 Zwettl
Builder, roofer:	Zauner GmbH, 3920 Groß Gerungs
Windows and doorw:	Lagler Fenster + Türen GmbH, 3390 Melk
Roof windows:	Velux Österreich GmbH, 2120 Wolkersdorf
Garage door:	Guttomat Sektionaltore GmbH, 7540 Güssing
Shingle facade:	Klaus Hainzer, 9900 Lienz - Osttirol
Carpenter:	Tischlerei Michael Weinstabl e.U., 3863 Leopoldsdorf
Glass elements:	Glasbau Bartl, 3872 Amaliendorf
Stone:	Granitwerk Kammerer GmbH, 3943 Schrems Leyrer & Graf BaugesmbH, 3950 Gmünd
Landscape design:	Kittenberger Erlebnisgärten GmbH, 3553 Schiltern
Larch fence:	Ing. Michael Fröschl, 4460 Grein
Photos:	Patricia Weisskirchner



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