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OCTOBER 2007

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Eyeful tower

A live/work space by a pair of Swiss architects proves a landmark building for a creative couple

With its outdoor sculpture park and cantilevered balcony, the Turmhaus, or Tower House, certainly makes its presence felt. But these details also have a practical function for its owners, sculptor René Duesel and jeweller Claudia Hueber.

'The owners live and work here,' says Thomas Keller of K + B Architekten, who designed the house. 'The Turmhaus is also their gallery, where collectors come to buy their artwork, so this tower is an anchor point to orientate visitors.'

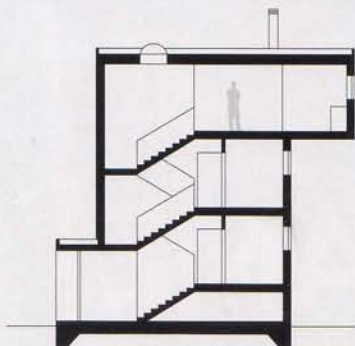
The couple first met Keller when Duesel decorated the interior of a hotel that K + B was working on. When Duesel and Hueber decided to build a home and studio in Buchs, Switzerland, they contacted the architects. The brief was for a simple house with as much outdoor space as possible, both to work in and display their designs. The airy ground floor studio has 4m-high walls and large windows, which are left open in summer so the border between inside and out almost disappears. 'René's previous studio was in an old fish smokery with few windows, so he's very happy with his new one,' says Keller.

Above the studio are a bedroom and bathroom, which are intimate in comparison to the rooms above and below. On the top floor is the spacious open-plan living area, kitchen and balcony, which gives the couple a private outdoor space to enjoy in the warmer months.

'The balcony has a depth of one third of the façade, which was as far out as we were allowed to go with the cantilever,' says Keller. 'It's quite dramatic to sit out there and look at the mountains. It's open on two sides and there's nothing below you, so it feels like you're flying.'

Although living and working in the same building can mean that the gap between work and play becomes blurred, the couple have not found this a problem. 'They say it feels as if they are always on holiday when they go upstairs,' says Keller. 'It's very private, and all they see are the mountains, whereas the ground floor is more public, which suits their working lives.'

Construction of the Turmhaus took place between October



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HIGH SOCIETY

Above, the house's timber-clad exterior, coated with an aluminium-flecked paint, is topped by a cantilevered balcony with mountain views

Left, the three levels allow for gallery space downstairs and more private living space upstairs

and December 2006, and the pre-fabricated, solid wood structure took just two days to erect. The exterior was finished with timber cladding, then painted with an aluminium-flecked paint to give a silvery effect. The rest of the time was spent on the interior. 'The client wanted a shiny, bright pink kitchen,' says Keller. 'We were sceptical at first, but now we think it makes a beautiful contrast to the concrete floors and the wood.' ★

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