



OPPOSITE Designed to be at one with its environment, the Müller house is constructed from regional granite and timber. Using these traditional materials architect Arnd Küchel created a modern house amid 3,000 square metres of forest.

ORGANIC FORM

On a rare plot of land in St Moritz, a modern experiment in mountain living is underway. Few residents of Switzerland's first resort have the luxury of starting from scratch on a pristine site in an exclusive residential area. It is skirted by forest, traversed by a stream for fishing in summer, and lies at the base of the Corviglia ski run, so that in winter and early spring a day's skiing begins and ends at the front door.

For Bruno and Bettina Müller and their two young daughters, this enviable location was the starting point for a holiday home planned with architectural precision. At the beginning of their search for a home in St Moritz, they engaged architect Arnd Küchel, who not only found the land but laid down the blueprint for the house and oversaw both its construction and interior fitout. Family friend and renowned Italian designer Antonio Citterio also lent his expertise to the project, and his influence is evident in the beautiful simplicity of the house.

The client brief was that the house should be built using natural materials to harmonise with the environment, and that the very layout would enable the inhabitants to feel instantly at one with the elements outside: to feel that the house was interacting with nature. Küchel devised a house built of stone from the region that comprised a three-storey tower and a connecting L-shaped wing. In the tower are a children's playroom on the ground floor, master bedroom on the level above and living room





LEFT Encircled by fir trees, swathed in a thick blanket of snow and seemingly isolated, the house takes on an enchanted quality during the winter months.

OPPOSITE The traditional Swiss colours of red and white are given a modern twist in the loft-like living room with its pale ceiling of larch beams. The interior was not highly planned but evolved from this simple idea. A large white sofa scattered with checked flannelette cushions is the centrepiece of the room.

on the top level. The adjoining wing contains three bedrooms, each with its own bathroom. Each section of the house is arranged in such a way as to look directly outside to either the natural forest adjoining the property, or the mountains or garden.

Unusually for a cold-climate house, the ceilings are high and the windows are huge, with virtually no curtaining. This allows uninhibited views and gives the impression that nothing stands between the viewer and the scenic beauty beyond. The one concession to practicality is sturdy exterior wooden shutters that can seal off windows from outside elements if necessary. The chimney flue for the living room fireplace has been suspended from above, allowing an unimpeded aspect through a plate glass window to the fir trees. Even this most essential Alpine feature has been made subservient to the nature outside.

To give an impression of warmth to the large-scale interiors, reddish-gold larch wood was used for floors and for beamed ceilings, while creamy-white stucco Veneziano on the walls provided a neutral backdrop for occasional strokes of colour – like the red in the living room, or bright lavender blue in the master bedroom.

As much as possible, though, the room decor was purposely restrained, and the overall effect is one of striking simplicity. With the exception of several key pieces of modern art, there are few other distractions: no collections of local wood-carving on display, no pewter tankards, no antique memorabilia or knick-knacks; only essential furnishings and lighting. The idea is that nature provides the only aesthetic enhancement needed for this elementary, yet highly evolved, mountain residence.



RIGHT A Tricia Guild tulip print covers the
 armchairs in one corner of the living room, an extension
 of the red and white theme. The Müllers have built a
 wooden bird house on the small terrace as a feeding
 spot for birds from the forest. As many as thirty birds
 at a time cluster here during winter, and bright yellow
 streamers deter them from flying into the glass.





LEFT The master bedroom appears to be nestled in the bough of the snow-covered fir trees just outside. From the low-lying bed, the couple can look out into the forest. Decoration has been kept to a functional minimum.

ABOVE A far cry from the cosy clutter of a typical Swiss Alpine kitchen, the Müllers' cooking and eating area is streamlined and fuss-free, with an appealing Scandinavian simplicity. The focus of attention is the view across the valley to the mountains.