

# ZIRBENSTUBE

SWISS STONE PINE PARLOUR

The project is named „Zirbenstube“ (Swiss Stone Pine Parlour). How did you come to this name and is there a connection to the most people’s attitude when they think of this name?

We tend to give every project a name which is in direct connection to it. This project had a longer development process. In the first phase it was simply not consistent. In a clients meeting we were discussing about materials and suddenly the swiss pine stone came to my mind and directly I was thinking of the word “Zirbenstube”. I introduced the idea immediately and the clients looked at me in a very skeptical way. Of course they connected the word with pseudo-alpine, rustic kitsch buildings. However, for me this word or the material was exactly the missing link in the design process. Because for me it connoted a traditional living space, a parlour in the alpine area. I admit of cause it can also be seen as a winking flirt with the, not to speak of, idiotically dull, utterly superficial contact with traditional materials and processing technologies which we can often see in connection to Austrian tourism buildings as misunderstood native reference.

Besides the main materials wood and concrete you integrated leather to the concept. To what extent do architecture and this material interact?

In a certain way everything is in dependence to each other. Therefore the demands for the leather were the same as for the other materials or for the whole design. The architecture is characterised by its materials and by the surface technologies. We did a long research for example concerning the surface of the concrete slabs. Our construction firm showed a high cooperativeness to provide prototypes which in the beginning did not fulfil our specifications and vision. Finally it was the special concrete recipe together with the processual smoothing, which allowed us to get this surface perfection. We may not forget to mention that the concrete slabs are no precast elements but are made of site concrete.

In contrast to the static elements like wood and concrete, the leather elements are movable. The folding elements for example are not separable from their parking niches. An intended dependence originates. This detail is of course a reference to Märklis house in Grabs. An important point is also that leather with its naturalness creates a relation to wood and concrete. Materials like wood or concrete have their own ornaments, haptics and special characteristics. Concrete, for me, is a very poetic material. So is leather. Each of these materials can also get dirty. They can grow old. If you want to live in this space, you should understand each of these materials. The residents must get involved with it. It is not about the fact to constantly simplify the things.

As material for the folding elements, would there be another material than leather conceivable?

Since we came up with the idea to use „textiles“ we felt that leather was the only right material. Leather does not ask many questions and it leaves nothing to be asked. Everybody has an association with the material. In a certain way leather communicates luxury and at first sight it creates a rupture to the elementary wood or concrete. As mentioned before leather is natural and can age in dignity.

Is it allowed to speak about sustainability in connection with the project and the utilised materials?

It is difficult to relate sustainability exclusively to the material. Even if this may be unpopular, I have in general difficulties with the subject sustainability as it is mostly discussed. Considering a single family house, for example, which is located far away from the rest of the settlement, we can not speak of sustainability, even if the house was built in a high energy standard. Because every day the occupants have to travel several miles by car to run their errands. Generally I miss the social overall view in the discussion.

If you want we can speak about sustainability in three levels. We realised a complete renovation (new windows, ceiling insulation, floor construction). The occupants continue to use the building. There is an interaction between the new heating system and the new (heat store) stove. And above all we find a attitude towards life in general which is based on a fundamental debate about a regional, not to be mixed with a provincial, way of thinking, which can be seen as a contrast to the fast pace of our life nowadays.

There is a strong contrast between the exterior and the interior.

Indeed. From the outside you cannot see what takes place in the inside. This was our intention.

LOCATION Johann-Herbststr. 20, 5061 Elsbethen, Salzburg, Austria  
FLOOR SPACE 93 m<sup>2</sup>  
PLANNING PERIOD november 2009 - december 2010  
START OF CONSTRUCTION february 2011  
COMPLETION june 2011

CLIENT private  
ARCHITECTURE INCL. FURNITURE novakarchitects  
CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT Wolfgang Novak

CONSULTANTS  
STRUCTURAL ENGINEER Marius Consulting ZT GmbH, Salzburg  
BUILDING SERVICES hagen haustechnik GmbH, Salzburg

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