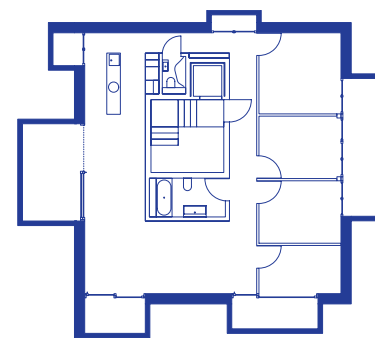


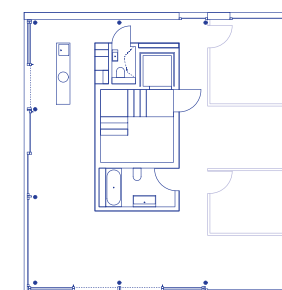


Lukas Lenherr

stacks a variety of housing types



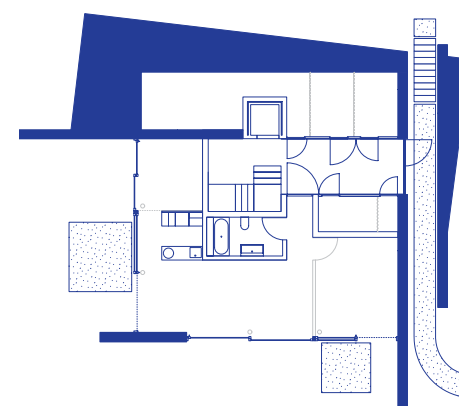
First floor.



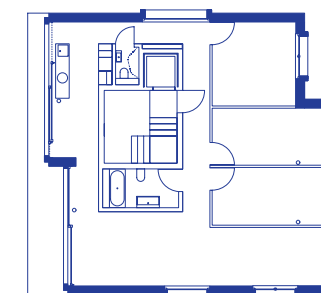
Third floor.



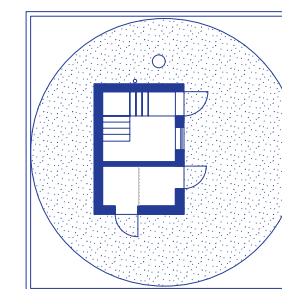
Photo Walter Mair



Ground floor.



Second floor.



Roof.

Text Katharina Marchal

Travelling through suburban Switzerland, you quickly get an impression of randomly coexisting single-family dwellings, bourgeois villas, and high- and low-rise housing projects – side by side and, for the most part, devoid of distinctive urban or rural qualities. Architect Lukas Lenherr, who sees the suburbs as ‘a laboratory for experimental typologies’, has responded to the notion of the ‘little Swiss house’ with a building at the edge of Rapperswil-Jona, a town in the canton of St Gallen. Lenherr’s Five Houses project, based on the principle of stacking, is a vertical collage of Swiss housing types, from traditional to modern.

His point of departure was a ground-floor ‘garden villa’ that features a wire lattice for creeping plants. Atop the villa, a ‘high-rise’ apartment in Misapor

concrete offers occupants spacious projecting balconies on all sides. This apartment supports a single-family dwelling clad in Eternit (fibre-cement) shingles; oversized window frames at this level are reminiscent of 1950s’ flower boxes. The ‘loft’ on the third floor has a glass façade that reveals Lenherr’s column grid. Crowning the lot is a so-called ‘holiday house’, a miniature structure that evokes the image of a white recreational vehicle parked at a camp site. It is suitable for storage or for use as a sauna. Lined in white gravel, the roof terrace that accommodates the holiday house provides all residents with a panoramic view of the neighbourhood and the mountains in the distance.

The large volume takes maximum advantage of its small site, but its mass is subdued by exterior walls that extend and recede, displaying surfaces of different

colours and textures. Balconies and overhangs shade the units beneath them and prevent passers-by from getting a good look inside. In terms of construction and building physics, the challenges lay in consolidating such a wide variety of materials. The placement of insulation alternates – from interior to exterior – from one level to the next. Layouts of the various residences follow the same principle: at each level, space around the bearing core of wet rooms and kitchen was freely divisible thanks to a concrete floor poured in advance of the installation of lightweight walls. According to the architect, ‘Five Houses can be understood as a tongue-in-cheek invitation to more density, social interaction and architectural diversity.’

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