

THE CHALET FROM THE FUTURE

Built on a slope in the Swiss Alps, a mountain home with a contemporary image. With a single facing material, **stoneware sheets** from the latest generation. A grey **monolith** **in the green** Alpine landscape

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INside

ARCHITECTURE

Project by JM ARCHITECTURE



*Positioned at the edge of a slope, the house opens to the valley with a panoramic glazing that 'folds' inside to create a loggia for outdoor dining. The other facades (including the roof) feature continuous cladding in sheets of porcelain stoneware by **Casalgrande Padana**.*



Jacopo Mascheroni, forty years and a life full of success: project manager at the age of 30 in the New York studio of his 'mentor' Richard Meier; a Green Card in 2005 granted by the US government for "extraordinary ability in the field of architecture"; and a place, starting in 2012, among the top 20 emerging architecture studios around the world.

His studio's trademarks? Simplicity, rigor, harmony, expressed in very white, light, almost transparent houses, with essential flat roofs. But Villa Monteban, the latest work (already winner of many prizes) by Jacopo Mascheroni, is something of a departure.

■ *WHAT HAPPENED? A CHANGE OF COURSE IN*



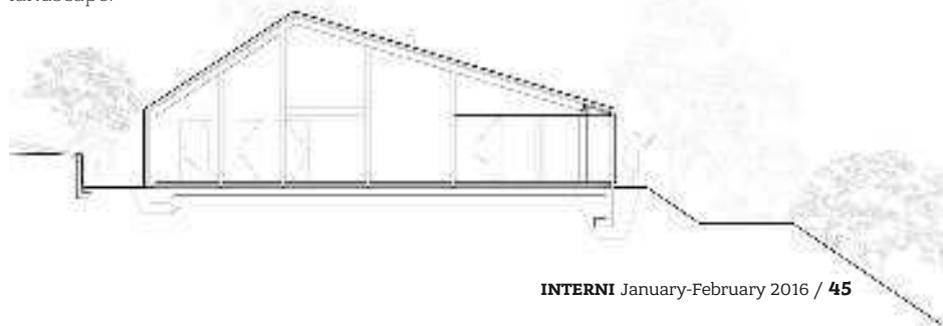
The roof and facades have been designed sheet by sheet to achieve a perfect surface (**Geos Italy**). The same porcelain stoneware (**Casalgrande Padana**) has also been used on the shutters, which when closed (small photo, left) completely vanish into the ceramic pattern. Below, section of the villa.

YOUR COMPOSITIONAL LANGUAGE?

This house has a very singular story. The clients, owners of a panoramic lot at an altitude of 1000 meters in the Swiss Alps, were enthusiastic about the white, luminous works of architecture of my studio, but they had to come to terms with a rather complex situation: the local building regulations are very rigid and impose pitched roofs in a dark grey color to fit into the local natural and architectural landscape (the nearby town of Medaglia, a cluster of houses with slate roofs, visible in the valley). It was a real shock for them, but also for me and my staff...

■ *SO YOU HAD TO FIND AN ALTERNATIVE IDEA?*
Of course. We transformed a constraint into

an opportunity. The idea was to use a single material – ceramic sheets – for the roof and the facades, giving the building a monolithic image, almost a boulder in the midst of nature. With one exception: the southern facade that opens with a large window over the valley, offering a spectacular view of the uncontaminated landscape.





The pale, luminous interiors form a contrast with the dark gray of the outer surfaces. With few exceptions (chairs by **Vitra** and a round table by **Knoll International**, above) the furnishings and lights (**Oty Light**) are perfectly integrated..

■ **A FUTURISTIC BUILDING IN FORMAL TERMS: IS THE SAME TRUE OF THE CONSTRUCTIVE SOLUTIONS?**

Absolutely. We had to work with a pre-set budget, but our clients did not want to do without a home 'made to measure' of high quality, created with attention to details, finishes, materials. Furthermore, the job was to build a home in the mountains, where the climate is harsh, on a slope that is not very easy to reach. This is why we opted for a wooden structure with an insulated framework, made with prefabricated parts to assemble quickly at the site.

■ **WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF ENERGY SAVINGS?**

The new development is that we have used the same layers for the roof and the walls: a double ventilated wall that from the facade bends to form the roof and then descend on the opposite side. The result is a high-performance enclosure.

■ **WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE CERAMIC SKIN?**

The key element of the project is precisely its final cladding in sheets of porcelain stoneware,

bringing uniformity to the profile of the building, also in visual terms. All the facades have been designed with a 'dynamic' pattern made with three different formats, also applied to the shutters, keeping the alignment of the joints rigorously clear. Today, the performance of ceramic almost cancels out the maintenance costs: porcelain stoneware does not change color, does not dilate; it is very strong and conserves its qualities in time.

■ **WERE YOUR CLIENTS HAPPY WITH THE RESULTS?**

I think so, though they were not expecting their home to become a tourist attraction, for people who climb the slope to photograph it...

■ **WELL, IT'S NOT THE FIRST TIME ONE OF YOUR PROJECTS HAS BECOME A FOCAL POINT...**

Probably not: I always remind my staff that the studio won a 'small piece' of the Oscar assigned to *The Great Beauty* because in the film the only contemporary building, in the midst of the wonders of imperial Rome, is precisely one of our projects. ■



The conversation corner shares the same very luminous space with the dining area and kitchen, overlooking the landscape through large windows with insulating casements (**Casma**).

The asymmetrical roof, with six pitches (below), is skewed towards the mountain at the same angle as its slope, to blend into the Alpine context. Left, plan of the villa.

