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THE HOME OF DESIGN & ARCHITECTURE

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## THE WHITE ISSUE

A CELEBRATION  
OF WINTER

SIMPLE MODERN  
CHRISTMAS IDEAS

DREAM  
ARCHITECTURE



LUXURY ECO LIVING  
INTERIORS  
TECHNOLOGY  
DESIGN

# the sound of music

A professional harpist needed a family home  
in Les Jeurs, Trient, Switzerland

Photography Joël Tettamanti



## HOME PROFILE

A family home with accommodation for two adults and two children, and specifically a music practise room for a professional musician. The house is divided into two volumes to reduce the visual impact where predominantly traditional chalets are situated.

**LOCATION**  
Les Jeurs, Trient,  
Switzerland

**AREA**  
150 sq. m



Traditional buildings in this part of Switzerland are built on a stone base

“THEY ARE ALL ELEMENTS THAT EMBODY THE LOCAL  
VERNACULAR SIMPLY IN A MODERNISED FORMAT”

A Swiss family with two young children dreamt of a mountainside retreat where the only requirement made to the architects was to include a dedicated area in which to play the harp. With such an open brief, architect Simon Chessex decided to interpret the form and scale of neighbouring traditional buildings. “Like the typical Valais granaries, it consists of a stone base upon which a dark timber volume is raised above ground level,” he explains. However, he knew that a single volume would be too imposing on this plot and instead opted for a different approach. “Since the construction of a single, large volume would have disrupted the harmony of scale of the location, the building is divided into two parts. These are connected by the entrance on the mountainside and face the valley at an angle of 45 degrees.” From above, only a single M-shaped silhouette can be seen, recalling the outline of the mountains. From below, the two volumes rising up from the ground are simple black boxes. Two large windows, one in the ground floor living room and the other in the master bedroom on the first floor, frame the impressive local landscapes. The windows facing each other on the two facades create a visual relationship between the two sections of the chalet. The untreated fir wood structure resting on a concrete slab, the vertical, tinted larch cladding, the half-sunken basement and the interior space divided into small elements that play with the different levels are all characteristics that embody the local vernacular simply in a modernised format. And yes, the professional harpist has a space to play her instrument with an entire floor of the smaller volume carved out as a music studio.

Large windows in both volumes frame the impressive views



An interesting feature is the V-shaped front door, created where the two volumes meet



"WE WANTED THE FLOORS, WALLS AND CEILINGS TO ALL BE EXACTLY THE SAME IN ORDER TO FOCUS ONLY ON THE SPACES"

## PROJECT NOTES

**ARCHITECT**  
Lacroix Chessex

**STRUCTURAL ENGINEER**  
Kälin & Associés

**INTERIOR SURFACES**  
Pine

**EXTERIOR SURFACES**  
Larch cladding

## ARCHITECT'S QUESTIONS

**What was specified in the brief from your client?** Nothing specific, just a "regular" home for a "regular" family (two parents and two young children). The only true specificity is a space where the client could play harp (the client is a professional harpist).

**Did the client's lifestyle influence the design in other ways?** The client is from the region. She was born there. Her family lives next door in the small hamlet. She is a "true local", meaning that she knows the site perfectly, the people, the traditions, etc. Their lifestyle did not really influence the design of the house - it's really the extraordinary site that influences the project!

**What inspired the shape of the building?** The shape of the building comes from a precise analysis of the specificity of the site, the questions of scale, of relationship with the ground and the position above the cliffs.

**Is there anything you had to consider when designing for this snowy climate?** Nothing special. It's not really very high (1,300 m), so the snow conditions are not that extreme...

**What living functionalities feature in each volume?** In the right volume there is a music studio on the ground floor and a master bedroom on the first floor. The left hand volume houses the kitchen and living room on the ground floor and the children's bedrooms are on the first floor.

**What material clads the interior? Why did you choose this?** Regular pine wood. We wanted the floors, walls and ceilings to all be exactly the same in order to focus only on spaces (and not materials).