

Upgrade

Home Extensions, Alterations
and Refurbishments



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Alpine CLARITY Savioz Fabrizzi Architectes

BASED IN SION, SWITZERLAND



The exterior stone walls of Roduit House were kept but insulation added, and its timber weatherboarding was replaced with concrete that mimics the wood's texture.

It was the stone construction and the proximity of bare rock in the adjacent ground that determined how Savioz Fabrizzi approached this old rural house, which became known as Roduit House. In Chamoson, not far from Sion in Switzerland, the building possessed a unity with its surroundings, and according to the architects, "a very strong mineral character." In renovating Roduit House, which was constructed in stages from 1814 onwards, Savioz Fabrizzi sought to maintain and reinforce this character, emphasizing the existing stone structure, while using concrete for the parts to be replaced, in order to give "a completely mineral feel" to the whole.

The exterior volume was not changed; the stone facades were preserved and lined on the inside with a special kind of insulating concrete,

based on Misapor-brand recycled glass foam. This lining doesn't simply insulate the building. It also forms the new load-bearing structure, which reinforces the old stone walls. Lending a striking, modern tone to the refurbished building, the timber weatherboarding has been replaced by a monolithic wall of insulating concrete with formwork reproducing the texture of the original's timber.

One of the features of the building, which is typical of the Swiss architects' work, is that the old window apertures have been retained. Into these, however, much larger windows were added, increasing the natural light allowed into the main interior spaces, which also allows for improved views of the surrounding landscape. However, this also has an impact on the appearance of the building: the new windows are flush

with the exterior, which minimizes their impact on the volume and shape of the building. It also emphasizes and makes good use of the substantial thickness of the walls.

It is a project that is typical of the work by this small, Sion-based practice. For their work in this mountain region, full of abandoned agricultural buildings, Savioz Fabrizzi—comprising only 10 to 15 employees—has developed an impressive reputation for rehabilitating these ruins. "We work on transformations by choice, and we select the most interesting," says partner Laurent Savioz.

The practice has developed an expertise in transforming old farm buildings, in particular adapting them into dwellings. Their work is aesthetically certain. Roduit House is a strong poetic statement about the enduring, timeless shapes →

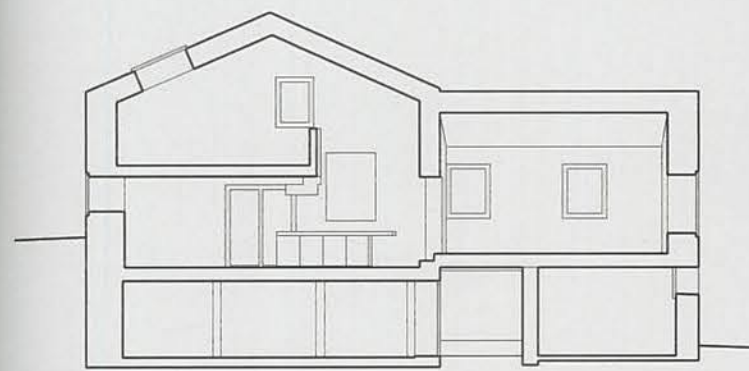


or forms that communicate the idea of home. "We highlight the historical substance, but we also allow ourselves quite strong interventions on the building. For us the building must not be frozen, it pursues its life with its time ... I think that is what our clients appreciate," says Savioz.

Such ideas can occasionally be achieved by controlling very small details. One of the ways in which the practice highlighted the materiality of the stone walls in Roudit House was to adjust the render between the stones on the exterior walls, thereby emphasizing the significance and materiality of each stone. "The slightly recessed joint gives a roughness to the facade

that contrasts with contemporary interventions. We would not have obtained the same effects with mortar that was flush with the top of the stone," says Savioz.

Making such telling interventions requires a wealth of technical virtuosity, but no less important is an equally broad knowledge of the legal structure determining how historic buildings can be adapted. Anyone wishing to refurbish such buildings for habitation in Switzerland is legally obliged to thermally insulate the new envelope. For this purpose, the practice integrated current technical elements—such as the glass-foam-enforced insulating concrete. →



Before modification

Originally a rural house, Roduit House was built in stages in the nineteenth century. It now consists of three adjacent areas on different levels.

As heritage restrictions vary greatly between projects—and especially by the region in which they are located—the practice must be certain about how this will factor into their strategies. For their barn conversion in Praz-de-Fort in the Val d’Entremont there were no heritage constraints, as the buildings were originally designed to be moved.

However, Roduit House was heritage-protected, so the practice had to negotiate all of the legal requirements. But the architects are comfortable with these limits: “It is right that the authorities give certain rules for the preservation of buildings.” And they clearly flourish despite—or perhaps because of—the constraints provided,

respecting the original building and expanding it with purpose, but only when required.

“We have a contextual approach, whether it is a new construction or a transformation,” says Savioz. _____

Exposing the Versatility of TIMBER

Savioz Fabrizzi Architectes

Dates from: ca. 1850
LE BIOLLEY, SWITZERLAND



Before modification



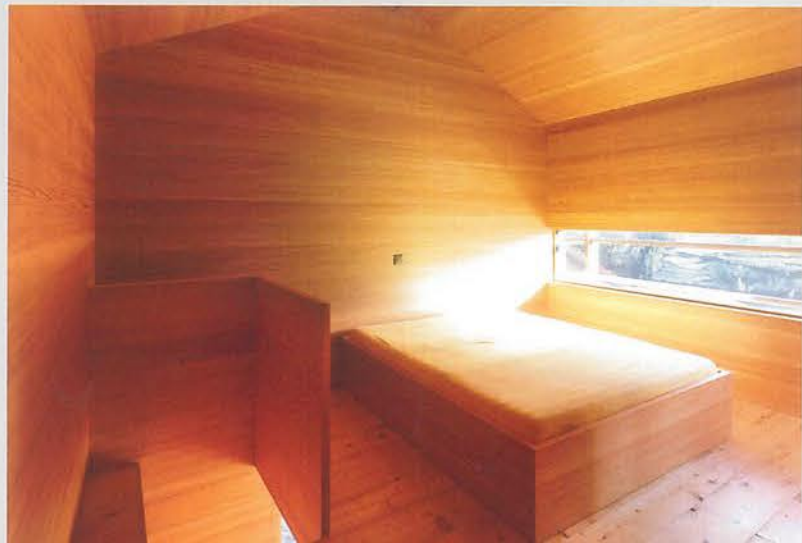
IF THE TRADITIONAL BARN
and stables of the Alpine regions of Switzerland did not already exist, it is likely something very similar would need to be invented. Although many of these were abandoned and unloved for a period of time, the way in which they are now being adapted for holiday residences is incredible.

Indeed, they are the perfect marriage of Switzerland's prosperous winter sports industry with its history and landscape. None have been converted more sensitively than this compact 16-square-meter barn and stable, with a stone base surmounted by a wooden board construction and a gallery for hay storage. →

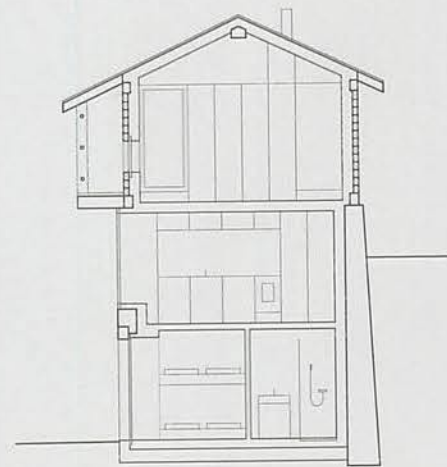




Savioz Fabrizzi kept the entrance of the converted barn on the middle floor; it leads directly into the kitchen and dining area, which has large windows framing spectacular views. Bedrooms are located on the upper and lower floors.



Converted barns are the perfect marriage of Switzerland's prosperous winter sports industry with its history and landscape.



The architects' task was to transform this structure in a way that would take advantage of the surrounding landscape and create a comfortable, contemporary holiday home.

The exterior was left virtually untouched. The entrance on the second floor was retained, allowing the visitor to enter directly into the kitchen and the dining room—the social spaces of the house. This same space also provides a large opening, which offers dramatic views of the valley. The parents of the family were given

a bedroom on the upper floor, while the children's bedroom was placed on the lower floor, where the former cattle entrance was transformed into another opening that brings in plenty of natural light.



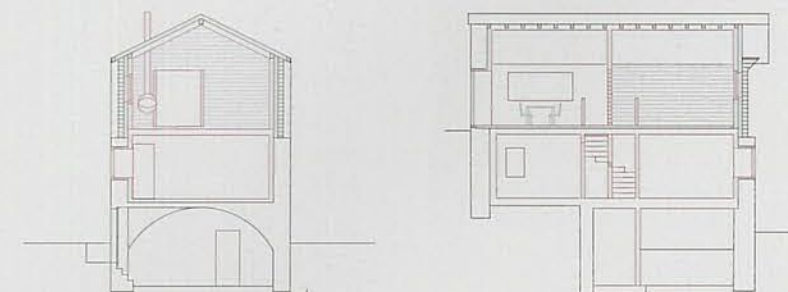
CREATING WARMTH in Swiss Wine Country

Savioz Fabrizzi Architectes

Dates from: ca. 1850
VÉTROZ, SWITZERLAND



The daytime living areas are located at the top of the building, while the sleeping areas have been placed on the middle level.



VÉTROZ, NOT FAR FROM SION
in the heart of the Valais region, boasts 170 hectares of vineyards. The Maison Germanier, which dates from 1850, was originally the home of a winegrower and stands on a beautifully sunny, sloping site among the grapevines. The house consists of a

substructure of rubble masonry with a timber structure above. The stone part traditionally accommodated the areas associated with work and maintaining the land—the wine cellar, tool shed, and so on—while the wooden part provided the ideal premises for the living areas. →



Before modification

The winegrower's house from the mid-1800s combines wood at the top, which was traditionally the living area, and stone at the base, which was formerly a storage area.

The elements of the new project were designed with this traditional division of the building in mind, albeit slightly adapted. The areas used in the daytime are on the upper part of the building, and the bedrooms are on the intermediate level. The varied nature of the structural materials in this building were particularly striking

for Savioz Fabrizzi, so they removed the render of the rubble facades and retained the timber. The house is fully insulated inside, with mineral materials in the stone section—namely cement-bonded particle board and cement screed—and organic materials, such as larch paneling, in the wooden section.



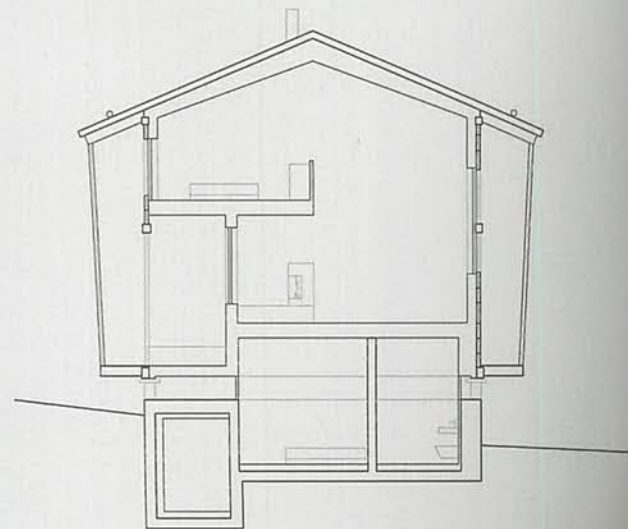
A Surprisingly Sensitive UPROOTING

Savioz Fabrizzi Architectes

Dates from: late 19th century
PRAZ-DE-FORT, SWITZERLAND

BUILT IN THE SECOND HALF of the nineteenth-century, this barn was originally situated at the entrance to the village of Praz-de-Fort in the Val d'Entremont, but it had been abandoned. As part of the conversion process, it was first dismantled and then rebuilt a few kilometers further

into the valley at Saleinaz. This may sound like an extreme act on a delicate old barn, however these buildings were specifically designed to be moved when needed. At the new site, an independent structure and an internal skin was built inside the envelope formed by the old barn. →





The barn, which dates from the late 1800s and which was abandoned before the architects began their work, was taken down and reassembled a few kilometers from its original site.



Before modification

This separation from the external structure creates a rich spatial mix by allowing open half-stories to communicate with one another. The dwelling was therefore treated as a single open and continuous space, organized through a variation of levels. The bedroom and office, which are the most private spaces, were created in the upper part of the barn, above the living areas and the kitchen. The number of new openings was minimized while

the existing door-height openings that gave access onto the different balconies were retained and glazed, creating full-length windows. _____