

VELUX®

IN A GOOD MOOD
A New Attic in Innsbruck, Austria





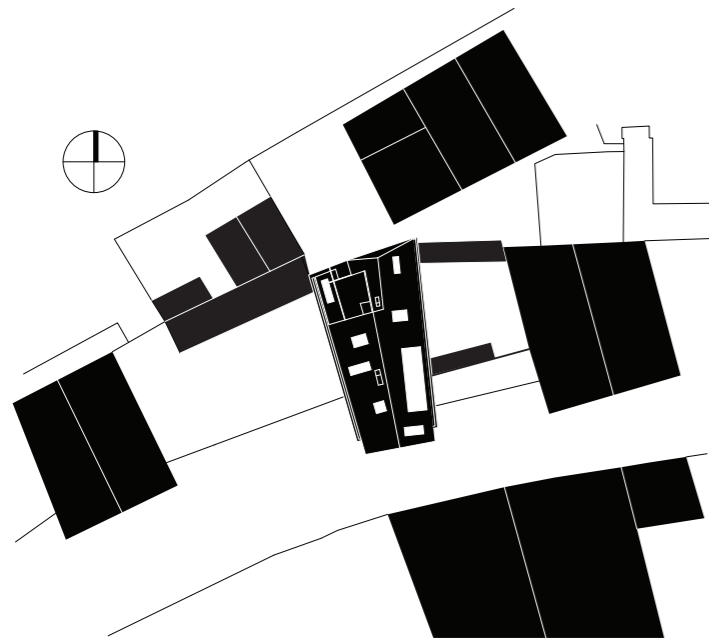
LEARNING BY DOING

Under He und Du, meaning "hi and you" – a relatively uncommon name for an architecture office – hide Christian Hammerl and Elias Walch, its young owners, whos wit, energy and freshness emanate from their work – projects and their descriptions. The names of the projects are genuinely funny and precise; they named Elias Walch's attic extension "gut drauf", meaning "in a good mood", but also being a word play in German, referring to something being placed on top.

"By chance, I came across the opportunity of buying a small, low attic. The only thing my wife and me could afford for our young family. It was the second project we did in our office: started while both Christian and I were employed. Actually, for me, it was also a family project, as we did the entire interior fittings on our own. My father is a carpenter; I learned a bit of the trade by helping him out and in design school, which I have attended before studying architecture."

Elias Walch, he und du

But before it came to interior fittings, the architects had to face a long and complicated design and construction process, with lots of legal limitations and obstacles. The house stands in a protected zone, its walls define the borders of the site. Next to the new attic, he und du refurbished the entry and a part of the ground floor. The new roof has a different shape, though; a cantilever over the narrow street hangs over an old, decorative wooden support element. The attic received a large dormer window, an entrance to a small roof terrace as well as plenty of VELUX windows in various sizes.

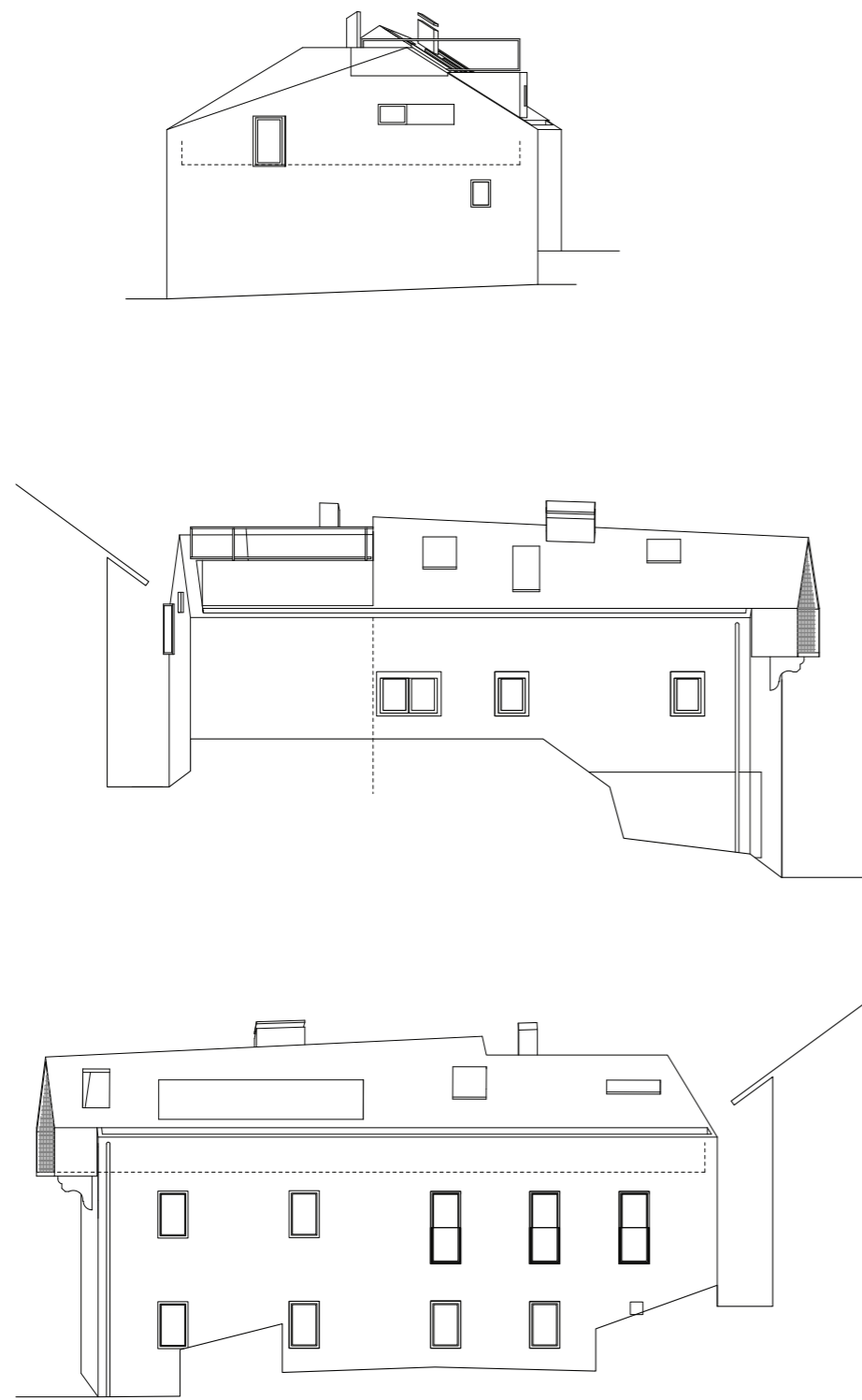


Site plan. The cantilevered loggia is extending as far as the old roof did, in a new interpretation of the roof overhangs, typical for the area. the house is standing on the border of the site, just at the curb, resulting in a setback of the entry area.

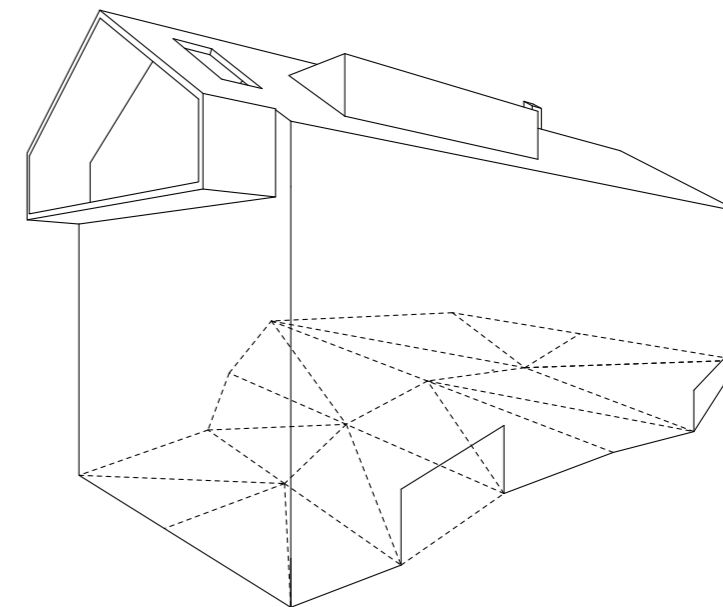
All houses in the surroundings are crowned with gable roofs. he und du's project proves that a traditional form can also have a contemporary character.







Facades. Sloping terrain, multitude of one-storey annex buildings in the courtyards and clear regulations regarding the volume, together with the wish for maximising the inner volume were a challenging task, mastered by the young office in a sovereign way.



"Form follows regulations. We kept repeating the slogan in the office during our battles with authorities. The house stands in an area, where the townscape protection authorities control all details. We decided to remove the existing roof – by exploding – which needed special permission – and replace it with a new one, shaped to fulfill all legal requirements."

Elias Walch, he und du

"Almost no-one can afford those grand houses we look at in design magazines. In our office practice, we always tell our clients that great spaces can be small. They need a lot of light, though, and a connection to the outer world. Thanks to views, even a tiny room becomes generous, as the perceived space consists of the room itself and the outside world. Our family lives in this kind of apartment. We all love it!"

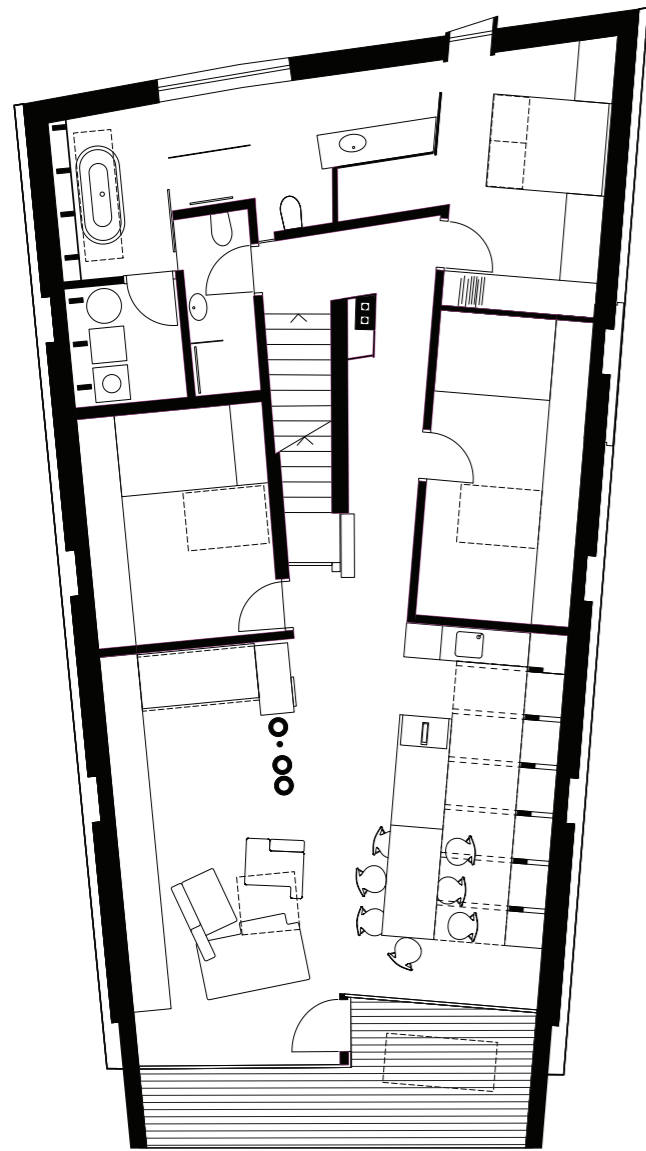
Elias Walch, he und du



ONE SPACE

The entrance to the apartment is on the last regular floor of the building; one enters the living space through a bright staircase, which continues up to the roof. An open space – one can see from one side of the building to the other – is divided between a day and a night part. Each bedroom received a large roof window, brightening up space. The openings are located, wherever possible, in corners of the rooms. Such position enhances the quality of daylight thanks to the reflection on the white wall surfaces. In other cases, the location was chosen to enlarge the space beneath – or to enable looking at the stars from bed in the couple's room. Children's rooms received playful and functional built-in beds and shelves, providing plenty of room to play for the little inhabitants.

The position of the walls below strongly influenced the layout of the floorplan. Also, ventilation, heating and sewer pipes were set. Still, "Gut Drauf" does not remind of a traditional flat. Not even the bathroom is a closed, dark box, but belongs to the continuous, well-lit space.



Floorplan. The entrance to the apartment is one floor below. A new stairway leads up to the habitation area, above it a flight leading to the roof terrace.

In the day area, space is structured by three pipes coming from below and a fireplace. On the left, looking towards the loggia, under a long dorm window, is the heart of the kitchen: a large, wooden table connected to the stove. An innovative but simple idea to make the stove height-adjustable to match the table allows for celebrating dinners in a big company.

The glass wall to the loggia is divided by a door-wide setback in the middle of the room; this intervention not only enabled to differentiate the size of areas according to their functions but also helped to create the illusion of two rooms being one.

A cosy lounge area on the right side is bathed in sunrays from the window above. In the niche in the back – also just beneath an opening – a day bed, at the same time a guest bed and a quiet spot for reading.



"We definitely have enough roof windows here – including one on the loggia. We placed them along to walls, to reflect even more daylight, in zones, where the room height had to be increased, and in those where we wished for direct sunlight and view towards the stars and clouds. Those placed low enough are manual, the one close to the ridge automated. I can open them from my phone, from the office, and come back to a well-ventilated apartment. It's so easy and comfortable: a little automation gives a lot of advantages."

Elias Walch, he und du



"A room with roof windows looks different in each season of the year."

Elias Walch, he und du



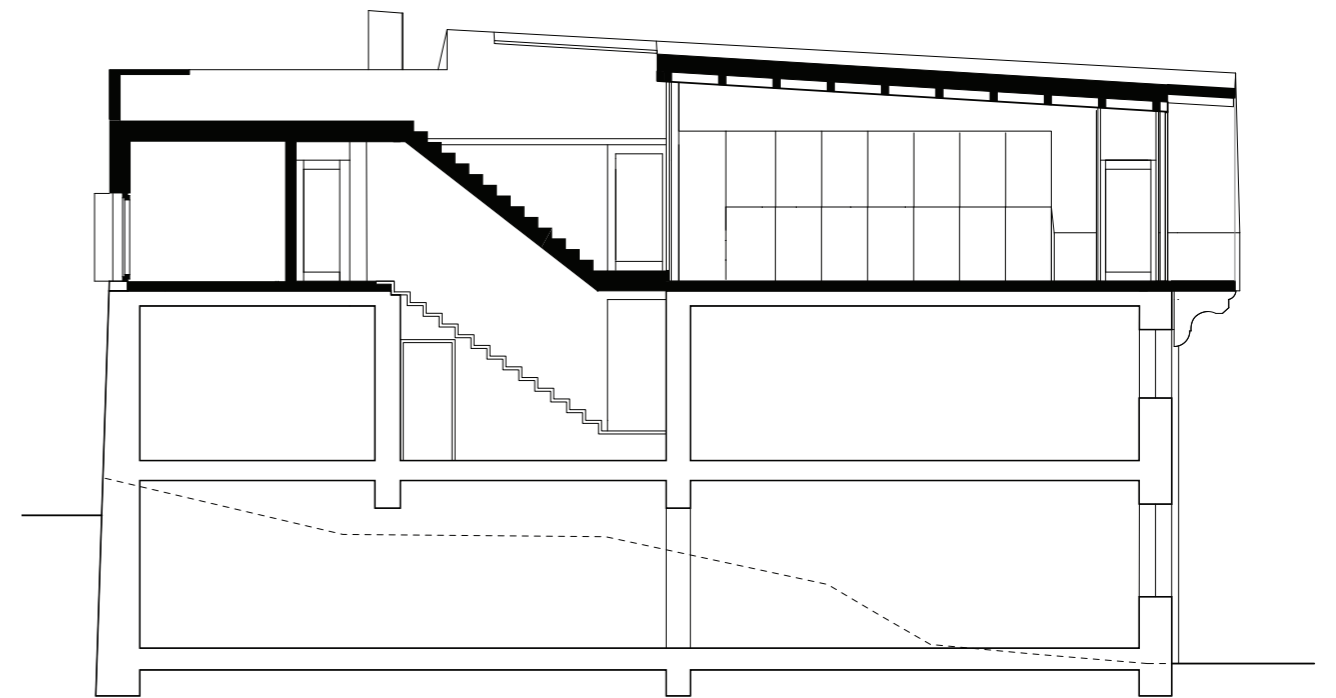
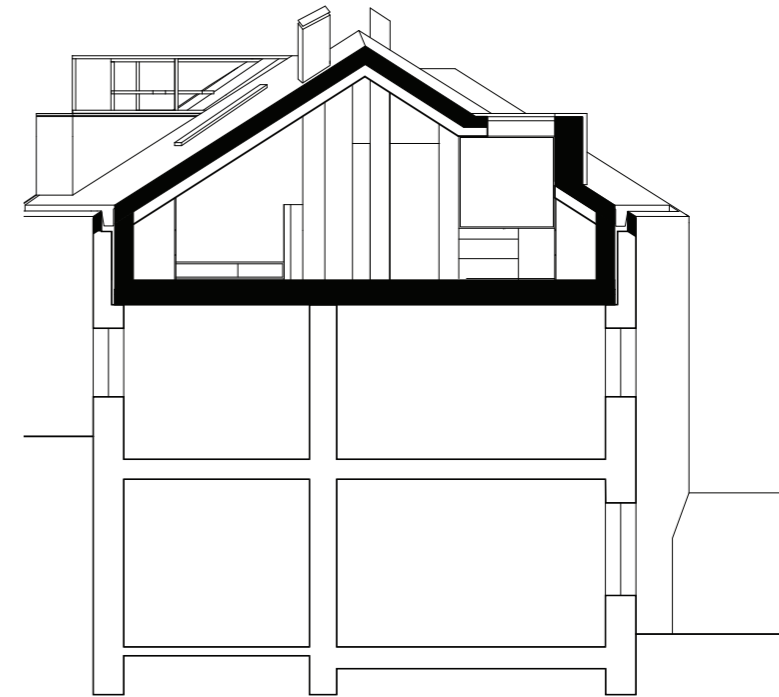
KNOCK ON WOOD

A look at the projects by he und du reveals their preference for wood. Asked, why is it so, Elias Walch recalls his studies at the Department of Architecture in Innsbruck: sustainability was an important topic, which, together with the influence of a charismatic professor teaching wooden construction, resulted in interest for the topic. Elias Walch also mentioned the social responsibility that comes with every house and architect builds.

Currently he und du is working on a project of fifty apartments in the development of the city of Innsbruck. The architects decided in favour of concrete cores and wooden elements in the search for a compromise between all factors shaping the project: functionality, aesthetics, costs and policies.

"In every new project, we suggest the use of wood to the client. Not everyone is ready for this, for several reasons like worries about the acoustics, costs or aesthetic preferences. Wood is an ecologically sustainable material, easy to develop details, also thanks to its thermal characteristics. Especially construction sites in on top of existing buildings profit tremendously from wooden constructions because of two main reasons: material's weight and the prefabrication possibilities, allowing for assembly of an entire floor just within few days."

Elias Walch, he und du



Sections. The extension (marked in black) sits inside the old walls of the house. The volume is sloping down towards the street, to achieve the desired height of the gable.





PROJECT DATA

Project: Attic refurbishment
Architecture: he und du, Innsbruck, Austria
Location: Innsbruck
Area: 138 sqm
Year: 2019

Photos: David Schreyer

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