

A tale of two regions

Vorarlberg and Graubünden

The Alpine sources of a new architectural regionalism

background photo Oliver Lowenstein



So close, yet so far, Vorarlberg and Graubünden are the two Alpine brothers of European regionalist architecture. Less than ninety minutes drive-time separates the West Austrian county from its Swiss neighbour. In various ways very similar, their geographic proximity provides an on-the-ground case for examining the roots of how, why and in what ways architectural regions are different. As such each community offers a tacit lesson in how grassroots and regional architectures emerge, grow and can continue to develop; a decentralized and in the broader sense, environmental message.

This *Architexts* is therefore devoted to these two regions communities, featuring a tapestry of architects and architectural cultures from these two Alpine architectural shangrilas. Along with the environmental dimension of architectures growing from place, the themed sections look both at Vorarlberg's highly respected practical sustainable building culture set in relation to Graubünden's more poetic, though everyday,



photos (from left) Christoph Kalb and Bregenz Kunsthaus



photo Hans Peter Schwess

Buildings from Graubünden and Vorarlberg

Opposite page from left: Christoph Kalb's Wolfurt housing, Peter Zumthor's Bregenz Kunsthaus from Lake Konstanz, and CukrowiczNachbauer's cultural centre in Hittisau. And this page clockwise from top right: Bearth & Deplazes Red House in Malins, Herman Kaufmann's Ludesch community centre, Valerio Olgiati's Bardil House in Scharans, and Marte.Marte's Dafins house



sensibility. Threaded through the various features a further counter-veiling theme also makes itself visible; that of an architecture of real presence.

Beginning overleaf with an in-depth interview feature on Graubünden's undisputed master, Peter Zumthor (p40) the first half of this themed section also features interviews with Jürg Conzett (p56) and Valerio Olgiati, (p68) Graubünden sons both, and amongst Switzerland's most respected engineers and architects respectively are profiled in in-depth pieces. The new generation of Graubünden architects, including Corinna Menn, Stephan Kurath & Ivano Iseppi, and Marisa Feuerstein, are highlighted in *Generation Grey Zone*, (p62) bringing the story up to date while reminding readers that the regions architectural energies, while changing, are hardly over.

Bridging the two sections, *A River runs regionally* (p76) tackles the regionalist questions the whole special section sprang from; exploring the new dynamics of regionalism in the early twenty-first century through



background photo Bruno Kramar



the voices of many of those involved in both Vorarlberg and Graubünden's respective architectural communities.

While the Vorarlberg section primarily turns to how this small part of western Austria has become one of the leading European eco-architectural regions, as well as pioneering the resurgence in wood in building culture, it begins with Austrian writer, Otto Kapfinger's, essay on Vorarlberg's young Turks Marte.Marte, (p89) who have become the regions best-known young studio to emerge in recent years. From the older generation Vorarlberg's best-known architectural timber advocate, Hermann Kaufmann, is interviewed in *Kaufmann Country* (p94) a piece which also profiles Kaufmann's families influence on this wood culture rebirth. The sustainability theme is also underlined in both Vorarlberg writer Robert Fabach's Christoph Kalb's Wolfurt housing scheme contribution (p100) and in the final piece on how Vorarlberg has played so central a role in the emergence of passivehaus building culture (p103).

Real Presences: An architecture of presence is an increasingly influential strand of the middle European architectural world. Here, threaded through this Alpine *Architexts* section, pieces on three of the practices are also identified as part of this architectural current. These are the *Real Presences I, II and III* pieces – Peter Zumthor, Valerio Olgiati and Marte.Marte.

photos (clockwise from top) Ralph Fehrer, Hermann Kaufmann Bureau, Valerio Olgiati, Bruno Kramar