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COMMENDED

Family House Seeheim, Germany Fritsch und Schlüter Architekten

Located in a lush green residential area developed around 1900, the site's hillside position commands impressive, distant views of the Rhine Valley. The archetypal form of the gabled house, defined by the development plan, was taken up thematically as a monolithic form that advances beyond the edge of the slope, yet remains in equilibrium.

Contrasting views to the outside have been concentrated and staged with just four large openings across the corners, biting into the monolithic form. Vertical 'cut-out' spaces, with full roof glazing over the dining area and stairs, connect the lower and upper floors. Panoramic openings were made as large as possible in order to capture the magnificent views – a key aspect of the site.

A central aim of the design was to create a homogenous appearance for both the roof and external wall planes. Cladding all these surfaces in copper made it possible to realise this monolithic character in the form of an abstract, sharp-edged geometric volume, while also providing a robust, weather-proof skin. The roof and outer wall surfaces are clad with large, pre-oxidised copper panels, contrasting with the white internal surfaces.

Detailing is handled with care to ensure that junctions and transitions are absolutely flush, while maintaining ventilation across the back surface area. The sharply defined white 'cuts' into the copper-clad mass form a fluid transition from outside to inside. Long-term performance was an important driver of material choice and copper was selected as a durable natural material that would enhance the sustainability of the house.

JURY COMMENTS

The jury responded to the bold geometry of this house, which abstracts the traditional archetype of the gabled, suburban villa. They admired the way the house connected its inhabitants to its surroundings, through a series of glazed cuts in the wall and roof planes. There was evident skill in the way that pre-oxidised panels of copper were used to clad the exterior, creating an elegantly smooth carapace which enhanced the project's inherent sense of formal and material refinement.