

ARCHITECTURE & DESIGN

SECTION 3

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Across the Swiss Engadine region, the façades of buildings are enlivened by a traditional decorative technique called sgraffito. We meet the craftspeople preserving the art and using it to tell their stories on the walls of their homes.

SGRAFFITO / SWITZERLAND
Patterns in time

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What would a Christmas scene be without a tree bedecked in baubles? But there is no tacky plastic here. Designer Nika Zupanc found inspiration in the hills around Ljubljana when designing her Christmas collection for Italian firm Alessi.

DECORATIONS / SLOVENIA
On the bauble

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Hoping to add a touch of character to your home or office this winter? We have a few humble suggestions, from a bright brushed-brass sconce and striking three-legged dining chair to high-end audio in a “choir” of petite wooden speakers.

DESIGN / GLOBAL
Objects of affection

Here, we present our pick of design and architecture stories from across the globe, from a self-taught designer in Lyon attracting international attention with his sculptural steel furniture to a new generation of expedition-ready vessels reimagining superyachting for a more intrepid age.



Positive altitude

ARCHITECTURE / FRANCE

In his Alpine homes, French architect Alireza Razavi combines respect for local craft traditions with a sense of awe and humility before nature.

By *Nic Monisse*
Photography *Olivier Martin Gambier*

“Architecture is an interface with the environment, so when I was given the chance to work on a site in the French Alps, accepting was an easy decision,” says Alireza Razavi of Mountain House I, which was completed in 2016. Since he founded his namesake practice in Paris in 2008 (it now has studios in London and New York too), Razavi has become a force to be reckoned with in residential mountain architecture. “With that house, the local building and conservation authorities had to be convinced of the importance of avoiding kitsch and that a renewal of Alpine aesthetics was crucial to the area’s future existence,” he says. “Once that wheel was set in motion, other similar projects came our way.” Mountain House I, with its exposed concrete and timber structure, has since spawned three other projects in the region. “Because there’s a strong sense of craftsmanship associated with Alpine culture, we were more than happy to push ideas further in a variety of contexts.”

A case in point is Mountain House IV, a 1980s modernist home that Razavi recently renovated. The brief was simple: to bring warmth to a striking but tired concrete structure. “I wanted to combine a feeling of mass with Alpine craftsmanship – the essence of



(1) Timber interiors of Mountain House I (2) An exposed concrete ground floor is topped by timber (3) Grand windows invite the outside in

ARCHITECTURE & DESIGN

mountain architecture," he says. The project's architects highlighted the thickness of the outer walls (an essential thermal requirement in the Alps) by creating deeply framed apertures. This also presented an opportunity to work with the area's tradespeople on the stone window ledges, bringing a local aesthetic to the build. "Window ledges are mostly made from ferrous materials these days," says Razavi. "Though it might sound like a minor detail, we pushed hard to make them out of local stone. With all of our mountain houses, we have reached out to people nearby to work with: carpenters, masons, millworkers. Craftsmanship retains the memory of things past. Listening to builders and craftsmen who have always lived in these valleys was a unique experience."

This craft-driven work on Mountain House IV was complemented by a reworking of the interiors to ensure that the windows framed striking views and flooded spaces with natural light. "Unlike a seaside site, where your only view is of the sea, an Alpine plot can be surrounded with stunning views on at least three sides," says Razavi. "That allowed us to establish a hierarchy of openings and experiences."

This theme can be traced in all of Razavi's Alpine projects. With Mountain House I, for example, the architect drew inspiration from the vernacular agricultural architecture of the region, where livestock typically occupies the ground floors of houses and the farmers live above. Razavi created a home that places car parking and ski storage on the ground floor, with bedrooms on the floor above and living quarters with sweeping views of the landscape on



the top level. As residents move through the building, they are treated to increasingly dramatic views. Enhancing this experience is the fact that both the interior and exterior of the upper floors are clad in timber, seamlessly integrating the indoor spaces with the wooded landscape outside.

This blurring of environmental boundaries continued with Mountain House II, which again has large windows capturing fine views. "Much like a boat, these homes have to be a structure that not only protects you from nature but is inspired by it," says Razavi. "It's about sensibly framing views. That's of the utmost importance. Openings should be hierarchically organised, out of humility but also to keep the view precious. That's what building in nature is all about."

(1) Central fireplace at Mountain House IV (2) Stone walls blur the boundary between nature and architecture (3) Exterior details (4) Mountain House II (5) Letting the light in (6) Beautiful and practical features

"Craftsmanship retains the memory of things past. Listening to craftsmen who have always lived in these valleys was a unique experience"



TURNING UP THE HEAT

SAUNAS / NORWAY

In need of a refresh? We take a bracing dip in the Oslofjord before warming up in a newly opened sauna that puts community at its core.

By Rory Jones
Photography Marte Garmann

As the sun begins to rise over Norway's Nesodden peninsula, a short ferry ride from Oslo, chill-seeking swimmers emerge from the Oslofjord and head to a nearby sauna. The Hotspot, designed and installed by Oslo Works, hovers above the water on slender stilts. In the early hours, its shape can be made out by the orange glow of the wood-burning stove inside.

The space opened earlier this year and is a significant addition to the area's communal sauna scene. "It was a local initiative," Francis Brekke, designer and partner at architecture studio Oslo Works, tells MONOCLE. "We decided to enter the work into a small architectural competition in Nesodden, despite never having designed anything this minimal." The 18-strong studio is far more used to working on large, multifaceted projects, including building mixed-use hubs and developing master plans for a university campus. "We got involved purely for the joy of working on a smaller scale and the opportunity to contribute to the area's growing social scene."

The sauna's gently curving form and dark wood colouring make it a striking addition to the landscape. The exterior is clad in axe-cut pine shingles and treated with the Japanese *yakisugi* technique, which involves charring the wood before sealing it with oil for increased weather resistance. A light touch was also taken when it came to the installation. "We realised early on that it was too complicated to put the sauna in place using a crane," says Brekke. "So we adapted our design so that it could be assembled from multiple pieces on site."

The resulting structure complements both the landscape and the desires of the community. The sauna's popularity shouldn't come as a surprise. It's a tradition with deep roots: a recent University of Eastern Finland study dates the origins of sauna use as far back as 10,000 years. The Hotspot caters to those seeking a pre-work or post-dinner swim-and-sweat. "There's no ideal user," says Brekke. "It comes down to a primal thing: a human body experiencing the extremes of hot and cold." oslo.works



Sail of the century

YACHTS / GLOBAL

How the curiosity of younger generations is buoying demand for explorer yachts.

By Liv Lewitschik
Illustration Andrea Mongia

The next frontier in superyachting lies well beyond the shores of the Mediterranean or Caribbean. Sailors are taking to the icy waters of the Arctic and Antarctica on a new generation of expedition-ready yachts that can withstand even the roughest of seas.

"Superyachting isn't just about the glitz of Monaco any more," says naval architect Espen Øino. "Many of today's boat owners are young, daring and sporty, and want to understand the world in new ways. Explorer yachts – vessels designed

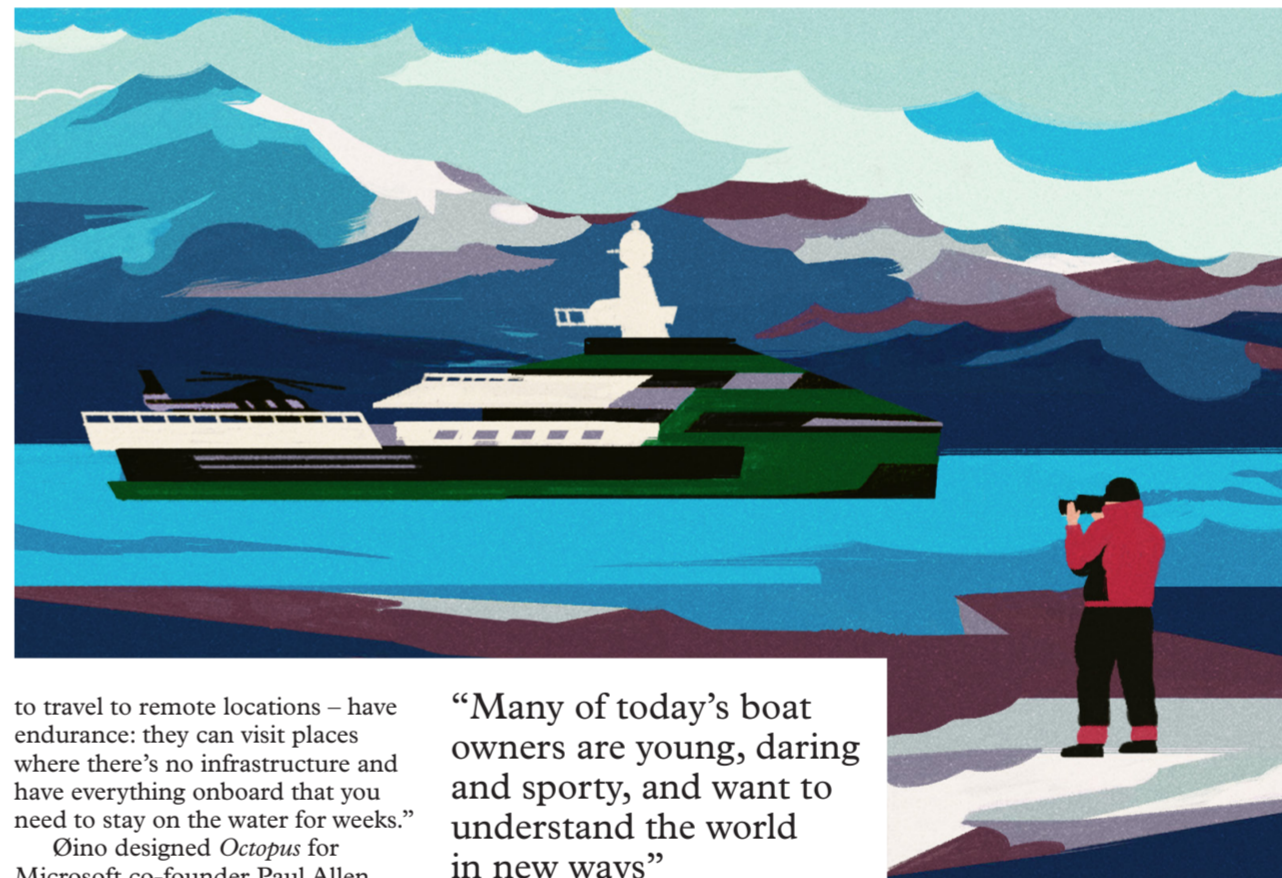
pilots and ski instructors.

The ship set the benchmark for what the explorer yacht could be and others are now following the model. "These are luxury vessels of the highest standard," says Enrique Tintore, a product manager at Damen Yachting. Based in the Netherlands, the firm is currently building a host of vessels inspired by *Octopus*. "There's no compromise when it comes to interiors, dining or comfort on any of the boats, which is what you would expect on a luxury yacht."

hull that allows it to break through thin ice. "We have managed to fit an extraordinary amount of capability into a 58-metre-long ship that still looks and behaves like a luxury yacht," says Tintore.

At the other end of the size spectrum is REV Ocean, a Øino-designed research vessel now under construction in Ålesund. Commissioned by Norwegian billionaire Kjell Inge Røkke, the 194.9-metre-long yacht will have enough room for 54 scientists, 36 crew members and a luxury wing for its owner to research marine ecosystems. The onboard research equipment will include a gondola under the hull, which can map the seabed down to 8,000 metres.

This trend towards science-driven luxury launches will only continue, according to Nick Stratton, chief



to travel to remote locations – have endurance: they can visit places where there's no infrastructure and have everything onboard that you need to stay on the water for weeks."

Øino designed *Octopus* for Microsoft co-founder Paul Allen in 1998; many consider that vessel to have been the catalyst for the new fixation on explorer yachts. "At the time it was a game changer for the industry," says Øino. Built by German yacht-maker Lürssen, with interiors by US-based designer Jonathan Quinn Barnett, the 126.18-metre-long vessel features two helicopter pads and an internal berth for a submarine, as well as a tender from which to explore sea and land. Designed to carry a crew of as many as 57 people, it has room for a maintenance team, chefs, scientists, guides, helicopter

"Many of today's boat owners are young, daring and sporty, and want to understand the world in new ways"

A case in point is *Pink Shadow*, which has interiors influenced by the Werner Herzog film *Fitzcarraldo*. Tintore and his team recently completed the 58-metre-long yacht in partnership with UK-based studio Design Unlimited. It's a small launch by explorer-yacht standards but it can stay out at sea without refuelling for 30 days. Its six staterooms can accommodate as many as 12 guests but it also comes equipped with a cabana-style bar and lounge, infinity pool, helipad, tenders, off-road vehicles, motorcycles and an ice-class

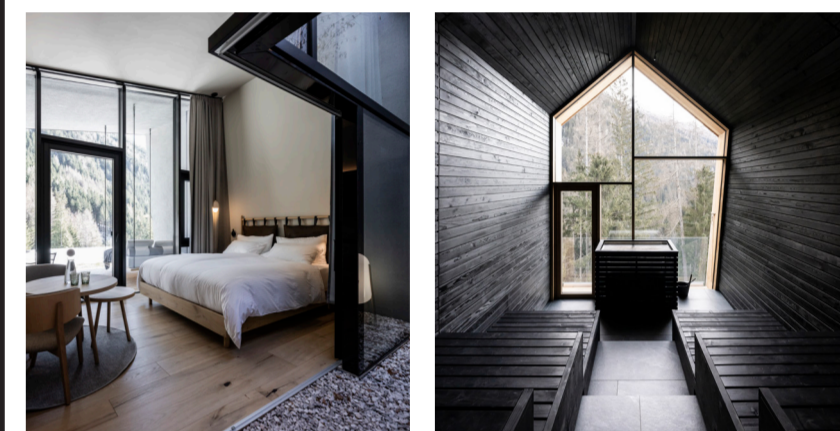
sales officer of Hong Kong-based Simpson Superyachts, a firm that has sold explorer models, despite being a long way from the chilly waters of the Arctic. "The buyers of these boats push limits and have the desire to explore far off the beaten track," says Stratton. He predicts that the explorer-yacht market will double in value over the next five years to \$1bn (€960m). "There is a real need to understand our oceans better as a result of climate change. I expect to see more hybrid explorer-research vessels for this reason."

PEAK PERFORMANCE

HOSPITALITY / ITALY

Hotel design in the Alps often focuses on making the most of the views outside the window. Not all are made to be seen from the outside. A new annex at the Olympic Spa Hotel in Italy's Fassa Valley bucks that trend. We head to the Dolomites to see how the structure has raised the roof.

By Rory Jones
Photography Alex Filiz



When designing and building an addition to a snowy mountain hotel, it's certainly wise to make the dramatic landscape the star of the show. And, in the Dolomites' Fassa Valley in northern Italy, that's exactly what Network of Architecture – or NOA – has done. The Bolzano-based firm has designed a new hotel building with a façade profile that matches the jagged and evocative forms of the range that it inhabits. It's an approach that visually integrates the built addition into the landscape, ensuring that the architecture doesn't draw attention away from the drama of the mountains.

The new annex is part of the Olympic Spa Hotel – a historic hospitality venue firmly rooted in the Alpine recuperation tradition. Here guests are encouraged to soak in the health benefits of the great outdoors. Its owners, the Pellegrin family, who have been in the business since 1963, felt that it was time for a refresh and so commissioned NOA to expand the hotel's footprint.

"To attract and satisfy a high-end clientele, the owners asked for something contemporary, with a mix of comforts," Michele Pascucci, one of NOA's lead architects, tells MONOCLE. The result is a building that has to guest rooms and a gym. It is strategically sited to contrast with the hotel's original main building, which can be reached via an underground path. Noting that this older portion of the resort overlooked the road,

"To attract and satisfy a high-end clientele, the owners asked for something contemporary"

the architects purposefully positioned the new building so that its windows face the pine-covered valley, which slopes down to the Avisio stream. "With the addition, we reduced the [physical and visual] distance between the hotel and the natural surroundings," says Pascucci. "The environment demanded to be taken into consideration."

It's a consideration that is reflected in the new building's irregular, mountain peak-inspired roofline, as well as the interiors, which are clad in oak and larch from the valley. "The sharply angled roof was particularly complex to shape and the windows and curtains had to be cut asymmetrically to correspond with the unique silhouette," says Niccolò Panzani, interior designer at NOA. "But it all aids the seamless connection with the environment."

To further celebrate the immersive nature of the resort, the architects designed a new wooden sauna, which is located in a standalone building accessible via an aerial pathway. Its separation was a deliberate move to ensure that those wanting to sweat out the day must leave the safety of the hotel's four walls and get a blast of the cold air and scenery outside.

"For the Pellegrin family, this design is a bold step," says Panzani. "They're on an entrepreneurial journey that few others in the valley have undertaken." Indeed, the additions are a dramatic departure from the cosy confines of typical mountain retreats but it's a journey that the owners are set to continue: NOA has been commissioned to renovate the public spaces and rooms in the historic hotel building too.

This work, like the new additions, will look to champion the landscape that the hotel is set in – a reminder that architecture doesn't always need to impose its will on its surroundings in order to have an effect on the people who use it.

olympicspahotel.it

