



Architecture office Renato Maurizio

A special blend of nature and architecture

Set deep in the mountainous region of the Bergell, an alpine valley in Switzerland on the Italian border, Renato Maurizio's buildings are affected by the surrounding landscape. The use of natural local materials is a prerequisite for him to create architecture free from temporary fashions.

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Alongside the geographical reference, the relationship between a building's interior and exterior is the most important factor in Maurizio's architecture. This allows him to build functional buildings with a high util-

isation value while simultaneously creating culturally meaningful buildings. His unique blend of matching natural sources such as stone and wood with a contemporary and functional use of space have made his

buildings instantly recognisable. Today, many are famous far beyond the valley, with various publications including a dedicated illustrated book covering his work.

Born and raised in the Bergell valley, Maurizio left to work as an architectural draughtsman in Zurich and, after a few years of studying, became a certified architect in 1974. After travelling and discovering his love for drawing, which to this day still influences his architecture, he returned to the valley to work at an architect's office. In 1981, he set up his own office, and while his contemporary buildings initially challenged the traditional idea of architecture in the mountains, his trademark style was eventually recognised as a qualitative building style, and as one that is set to influence generations to come.



Main image, top: Private homes, Maloja. Above, left: Residential project, Sent. Above, right: Residential project, Capolago

Today, Maurizio's architecture office in the village of Maloja near St. Moritz is made up of 14 employees. They are involved in the building projects from start to finish, from project development to project completion, to guarantee a high quality standard is kept to at all times. Although the office takes on public projects such as schools and commercial buildings from time to time, they primarily focus on private projects which fall into three categories: residential buildings using regional materials, renovations and conversions.

Creating new builds using local sources

New residential buildings are Maurizio's trademark, and they all have one thing in common: the use of natural, regional materials that are in harmony with the landscape that surrounds them. His own family home, for example, is clad in stone sourced from the Julier Pass, a material that is not only long-lasting and adapted to the local climate and weather, but one that directly reflects the colours and tactile structure of the nature surrounding it. When planning a new build, Maurizio's aim is to create a modern house based on indigenous raw materials such as stone and wood and imitating the shape of a simple, clear-cut cube, consistent with the prototype of traditional houses found in the Bergell and Engadin. The precise, self-contained structures harmoniously blend into the landscape of the valleys.

Reviving traditions and adding contemporary structures

Renovations, on the other hand, are individually assessed by Maurizio to determine which parts of a structure should be preserved and which parts need to be injected with contemporary style or structures. One example is the renovation of the Boutique Hotel GuardaVal in Scuol, which re-opened in 2009 after eight months of renovation. The hotel consists of two buildings, one of which dates back to the 17th century, the other to the 19th. The purpose was to return the hotel to its original condition while using old structures in new ways as design elements. While one of the houses was stripped back to create a structural unity be-



tween the rooms, the other building's old structures and building components were used to retain the character of the hotel. "Each room is different when it comes to quality and energy," says Maurizio. "Moving around the Hotel GuardaVal is like going on an excursion".

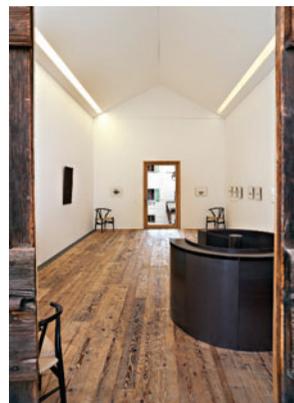


Converting old structures for new purposes

For conversions, Maurizio takes a very similar approach: retaining traditional building styles while adding new, modern elements. This can be seen very clearly in the way that two adjoining stables, situated on Castasegna's main street, were converted into a gallery for contemporary art. When the project began, the stables had not been used for six years, and were to be transformed into a space in which alternating exhibitions could take place. The upper floor, originally the threshing floor, almost five metres high, became the exhibition space, with clean, white walls and ceiling. The disused structure was thus transformed into a functional, contemporary space where regional cultural exchange is sure to thrive.



Above: Boutique Hotel GuardaVal in Scuol
Below: Galerie Castasegna



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