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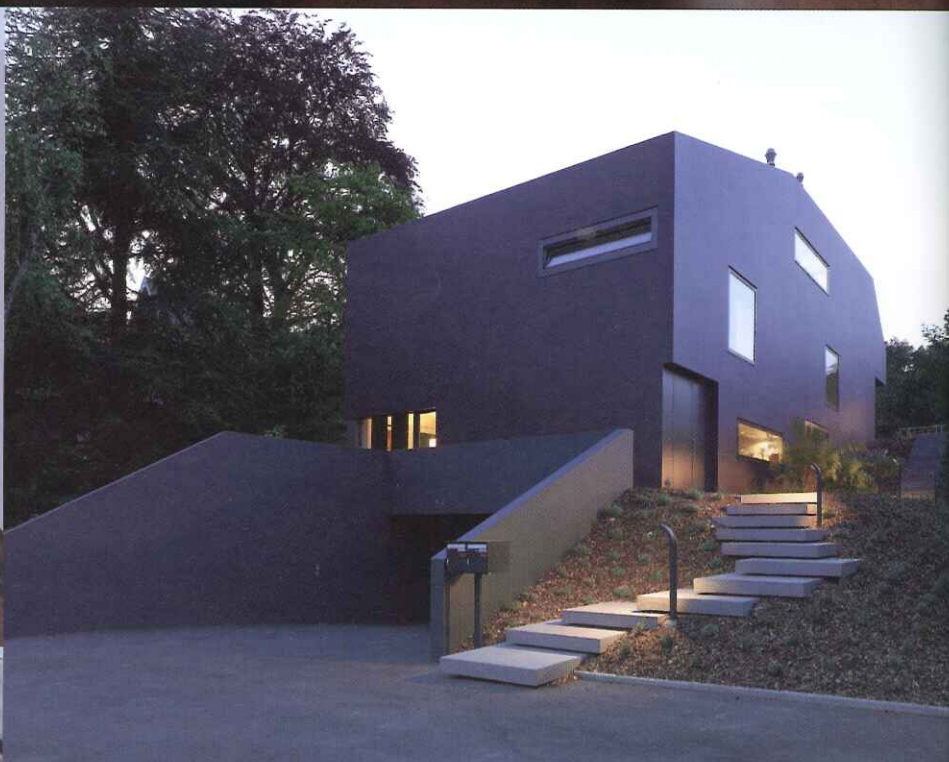
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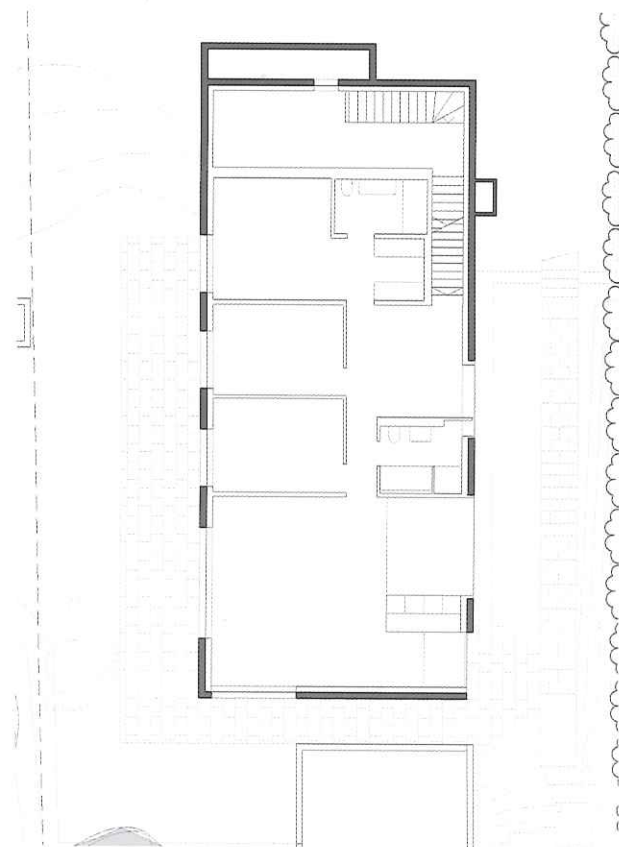
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TOUGH GUY

Schuler Villa

Andrea Pelati Architecte





A dark concrete block has materialised in an idyllic spot in west Switzerland. Designed by local practice Andrea Pelati Architeccte, Schuler Villa is a three-level rectangular chunk with recessed voids; sharp, angular lines; and dour, grey facades.

Because this structure, home to a young family, is surrounded by other residences, a church and an old mansion, and the clients wanted a design that would shield them from prying eyes, the side of the building that faces its neighbours has been largely closed off and has few windows. This has been balanced by opening up the other sides of the building, letting in light whilst maintaining the desired level of privacy.

The house does not appear casual and welcoming on its exterior, but once you're inside, it opens up. And as you would expect from a modern interior, the living areas are bright, open-plan minimalist spaces. A soft palette of white ceilings and walls, contrasted with dark wood floors and stairs, eases the eye into quiet appreciation. Rich brown sofas, cabinets, doors and lampshades add to the monochrome colour scheme.

At grade there is a rental apartment with access to a tree-bordered garden. The floors above are occupied by the owner. The sleeping quarters are on the second level. The top floor houses a large open-plan living space comprising a kitchen, dining area and lounge. The eating zone extends to a terrace that overlooks a park and the landscape of the old village. On the opposite side, the living room opens onto another terrace, with views of the Jura Mountains in the distance and an external staircase that descends directly into the private garden below.

Blending modern, functional structures into areas steeped in old architectural traditions is never easy, but then perhaps Schuler Villa doesn't want to blend in? Perhaps it wants to stand apart from the crowd, the geriatric edifices with their effete cream facades and their soft, pusillanimous lines? Perhaps it wants to celebrate its edgy, in-your-face modernity? And if any of its ageing neighbours should have a problem with that, they can expect trouble.