


Peaks & Valleys

WHEN AN ARTIST TURNS HIS EYE TO A CENTURIES-OLD CHALET IN THE ITALIAN ALPS, THE END RESULT IS A SPARE BUT WELCOMING RETREAT.

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Produced by **KERSTIN ROSE**



A simple silhouette and untreated-wood façade allow the home to blend into its mountainous surroundings.



This living area is part of the open-concept upper level and overlooks one of the peaks in the Ötztal Alps. A massive picture window lets homeowner Othmar Prenner take full advantage of the spectacular view, while a sculptural fireplace is suspended from the ceiling, creating a natural gathering area. **Fireplace**, Focus; **grey chair**, grey **footstool**, Othmar Prenner.



WHEN OTHMAR PRENNER BOUGHT an old farmhouse on a mountain in the northern Italian region of Val Venosta (Vinschgau), the sculptor and designer had only the most vague plans for the property, which consisted of a living room, storeroom and hayloft. “I thought of doing something with it one day,” he says, though he had no idea what — or when. But the opportunity was too good to pass up: the house, which was built in the 14th century, had belonged to his uncle, and he’d known it as a child, having grown up on a neighbouring mountain.

For two years, the chalet sat untouched, without electricity or even running water. Initially, Othmar intended to turn it into a holiday home or studio that he could visit a few times a year, but the more time he spent in his old stomping grounds, the more

attached he became. “At some stage, it dawned on me: this isn’t going to be a holiday home; this is where I’m going to live!” he says.

That’s when his impulsive purchase became a family project: his father, uncle and brother, a trained carpenter, immediately set to work turning the run-down structure into a contemporary escape. The quartet built a modern, gabled addition onto the original shell. An abundance of warm wood tones keeps the spare architecture from feeling cold and heightens the impact of the spectacular snowy views. Othmar designed much of the furniture himself, tinkering with each design until a precise form was matched with optimal functionality.

Now, what was once a tiny, neglected dwelling has become an endlessly inspiring creative retreat for Othmar, who says he never feels isolated in his cosy home despite its secluded locale. “I can’t imagine only living in the big city anymore,” he says.

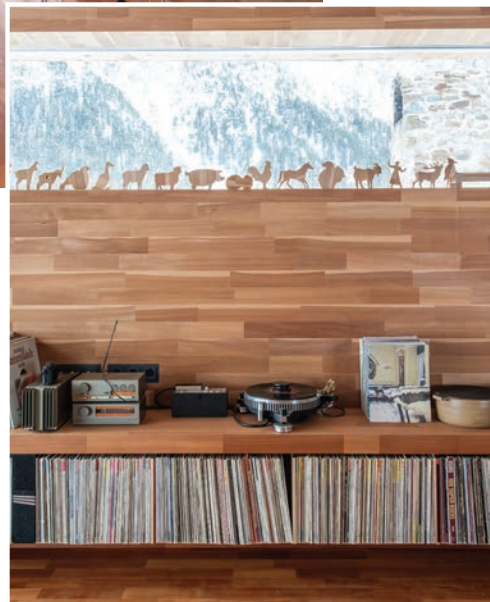


LEFT: Othmar designed the kitchen himself, using local larchwood in a nod to the forests surrounding the chalet. The variegated planks have a modern look and bring dimension to the space.

BELOW: A floating shelf holds Othmar's extensive record collection, adding subtle contrast to the mostly wood space. Whimsical animal figurines — more of Othmar's designs — are a playful addition on the windowsill.

OPPOSITE: The old storeroom was turned into an open stairwell, which houses two wooden catwalks with glass railings. "It was a spontaneous idea," Othmar says.

"I enjoyed walking across the planks so much when we were rebuilding the place that I incorporated them into the design of the house." This one functions as his home office.



"AT SOME STAGE, IT DAWNED ON ME: THIS ISN'T GOING TO BE A HOLIDAY HOME; THIS IS WHERE I'M GOING TO LIVE"

— *Othmar Prenner*



CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT: An oversized window well offers up yet another vista and acts like a frame presenting the view as art. (It's a cosy spot to relax, too). • A chic sitting area in Othmar's bedroom features a mod coffee table that he designed using local marble. • The home was designed with the view to these majestic peaks in mind. • A ledge above the large-scale window was added as much for architectural interest as it was for book storage. • A second living area, this one on the top floor, is an exercise in minimalism. Sloped ceilings and exposed beams are visual references to the home's long history, while a mod sofa tucks neatly into the room's eaves. Plenty of free space lends a meditative quality to this lookout. • The bedroom is panelled in knotty Swiss pine, a rustic move that provides an interesting counterpoint to the more mod panelling in the rest of the home. In one corner, a painting and two oversized wooden bowls create an artful vignette. • The snowy landscape is a cool contrast to the warm woods inside the house.





ABOVE: An imposing bed, made of solid elm and featuring a recessed bookshelf, dominates the spacious bedroom. A large articulated wall light adds contrast, as does the modular chest of drawers, one of the few splashes of colour in the home. Overhead, a panelled ceiling is a rustic take on a classic design move. **Bed, white table, Move chest (far right), painting, Othmar Prenner; wall light, Flos.**

RIGHT: In the bathroom, white walls and a tiled floor create a completely different experience to the rest of the home — fresh, crisp and serene. A wooden tub and cabinets provide a sense of continuity. Recessed hardware and a gently arched ceiling give the room a boat-like feel.



Produced by Jennifer Kopper (Get The Look)

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GET THE LOOK

> A suspended, pivotable fireplace has an artful look and floods a space with warmth. **Gyrofocus fireplace** by Focus, price upon request, CF + D Custom Fireplace Design.



✓ A cosy wool throw lends texture and subtle pattern. **Lambswool blanket** in Charcoal Grey by Tweedmill, approx. \$133, Wool Blanket Online.



✓ This angular wall lamp brings modern edge to a rustic room. **Mantis wall sconce**, \$169, CB2.



< An oil painting, like this 1970s vintage find, adds personality and a splash of colour. **Vintage portrait**, approx. \$323, Shelby Trading Company.

> Rich brown upholstery and an iconic silhouette make this chair an eye-catching accent. **Eames upholstered moulded-fiberglass wire-base side chair**, \$792, Design Within Reach.

