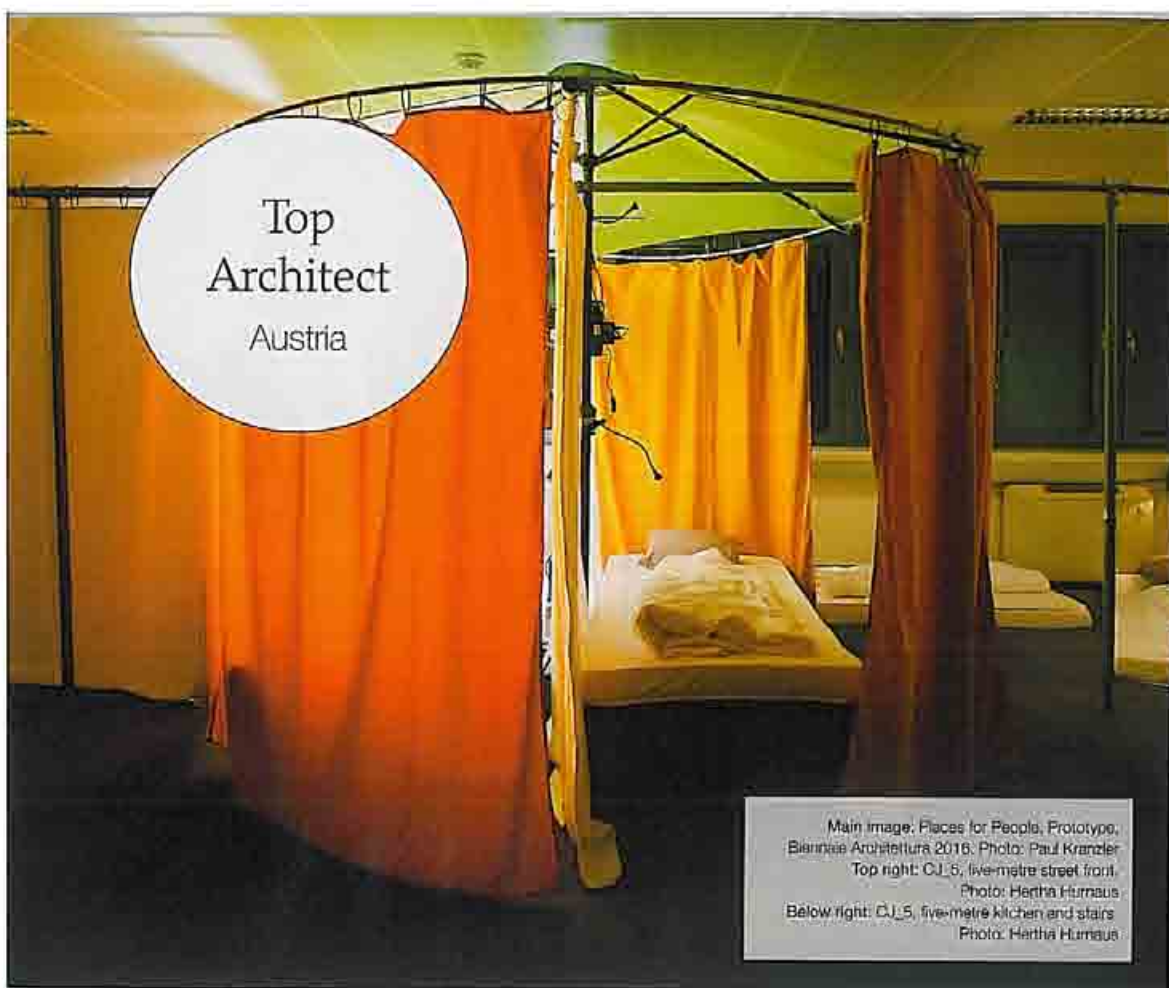


Top Architect Austria



Main image: Places for People, Prototype, Biennale Architettura 2016. Photo: Paul Krandler
 Top right: CJ_5, five-metre street front. Photo: Hertha Humaus
 Below right: CJ_5, five-metre kitchen and stairs. Photo: Hertha Humaus



Sense and sensitivity: Caramel architects tackle urban densification with an open mind

Caramel architects' motto 'each project is a new challenge' stands for inventive quality. From modern housing to the educational sector, from art projects to innovative social design, everyone and anyone asking for an innovative yet functional design language will be pleased with the inspired answers that Caramel architects provide.

TEXT: CORNELIA BRELOWSKI

Private housing solutions are a special field of interest for Caramel architects, to much national and international acclaim. Whether a bungalow or apartment house, Caramel architects offer unusual and inventive floor plans for each, as well as a streamlined, yet unique, style. Their designs are easy on the eye and always feature surprising functional details.

A heart for design is visible throughout their projects and Caramel architects' lecture series, courses, and art projects are providing a spark of innovation for everyday architectural life. They inspire through both design solutions and technical improvement. Just recently, their innovative 'EVA' software was launched in collaboration with SWAP architects. This new digi-

tal tool speeds up the layout process by offering multiple solutions at once, of which the architect can choose from.

Caramel architects are Günter Katherl, Martin Haller and Ulrich Aspetsberger. The trio launched their own office in 2001 and ever since they have been highly successful in combining a joyful, constructive approach with a professional attitude. This year, they were chosen to be one of three Austrian representatives at the Biennale Architettura di Venezia - the most important architectural exhibition worldwide. The decision was based on their constructive problem-solving attitude towards urban densification, lately

shown with their award-winning House CJ_5 in Vienna.

The abbreviation CJ_5 stands for 'Cooking-Jockey-5m'. It is named after the kitchen unit which, same as the whole house, is only five metres in width. The CJ_5 floor plan thus had to be constructed on a plot measuring 5x35 metres. By integrating the aspect of density constructively into the building's design itself, Caramel architects have created a family home which shows functional creativity in every nook and corner. Vast wall surfaces provide for a sense of space. The construction is one of Caramel architects' creative solutions for a rapidly growing city with rising prices and less and less space to build and live on. Thus, it is a positive and constructive answer to an open question that nowadays urban society is bound to tackle. The CJ_5 house did not only pave the way to the 2016 Biennale in Venice, it has also won both 'best house 2015' and an AIT award for innovative architecture.

For the Architecture Biennale in Venice, Caramel's task was to design the 'refugee camp', using a vacant office building in Vienna. Safeguarding privacy, as in marking a place where someone can rest undisturbed by external influences was, for Caramel, the first and most important subject of their "intervention".



Rather than posing a limitation, the time limit became a constructive part of their thought process. Starting with a minimal design repertoire, Caramel first developed elements for dividing up the space and then creating some privacy in the former open-plan offices. This simple formal language was extended to the design of the communal areas. A central criterion of Caramel architects' design is that all elements can be rapidly dismantled and easily reassembled in a different location.

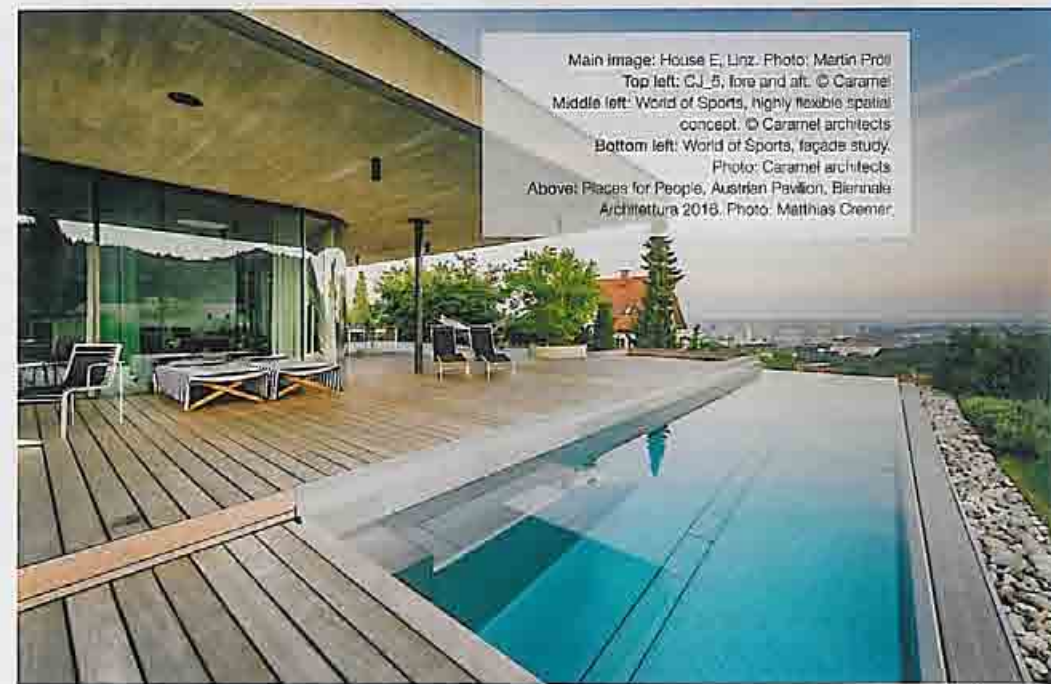
Another challenging task in the field of private housing was recently tackled with 'House_E', a family home in the Linz area. Situated on the periphery of the city, the plot is subject to local building regulations that limit each storey to 200 square metres of floor space. Since an additional storey was not desired for the living area, the whole building was instead built six metres above street level. This simple but effective "trick" allows for a better view of the city even from the ground floor, as well as a barrier-free access to the garden. Merging the inside with the exterior, this family house for five has it all - and the space appears far more expansive and allowing than the initial regulations suggested.

Caramel architects also cover larger projects through participating in international competitions. Successful exam-

ples are the 'Wi-Fi Campus Dornbirn', the 'Science Park Linz', the Krems federal school centre and, last but not least, the 'World of Sports' headquarters in Germany. With a multitude of worldwide architecture prominence taking part in this international competition, Caramel have received the commission as general planner. They impressed with a revolutionary and highly flexible spatial concept for the office building layout for 1,600 employees; like a flexible racking system, the different functions of the building are grouped around a three-dimensional 'indoor garden'.

Caramel form a creative hub of architectural idealism, paired with a good sense for space and modern living.

www.caramel.at



Main image: House E, Linz. Photo: Martin Pröll
 Top left: CJ_5, fore and aft. © Caramel
 Middle left: World of Sports, highly flexible spatial concept. © Caramel architects
 Bottom left: World of Sports, façades study. Photo: Caramel architects
 Above: Places for People, Austrian Pavilion, Biennale Architettura 2016. Photo: Matthias Cremer