

MANSION

BALANCE SHEET

A 'Loud' Family Builds a Bright Home

In an Austrian spa town, a couple erects a villa where an old tavern complex once stood



BY J.S. MARCUS

MARIE VEIS HAS what she calls a “no risk, no fun attitude.” It was this spirit that compelled her and her partner, Roland Hofer, to leave behind their recently renovated apartment and buy a nearby rundown wine tavern that had fallen into bankruptcy.

They had been living not far from the tavern in the upscale Austrian spa town of Baden bei Wien, about 20 miles southwest of Vienna.

The property consisted of a ramshackle two-level, 19th-century house facing the street and a concrete-and-wood pavilion in the courtyard. The tavern owner lived in the house, and drinkers gathered in the rustic pavilion. By 2011, the compound was in receivership, and the couple figured the \$410,700 asking price was a bargain.

Ms. Veis, now 40, and Mr. Hofer, now 39, decided to tear down the pavilion and build a new three-story villa on the property, with a funky, wide-open floor plan and freewheeling finishes. They kept the small historic home, with plans to turn it into a studio later. For now, it is an incongruous gatehouse to the modern home's entrance.

To date, the couple has spent about \$1.65 million on the home, which remains a work in progress. When all is said and done, adds Ms. Veis, they expect to spend about \$2.2 million.

The couple moved with their daughters—now ages 9, 7 and 5—into the new 3,000-square-foot home in late 2015. The three-sided villa borders a newly landscaped courtyard. Other outdoor spaces include a wraparound terrace on the second floor and a rooftop deck with views of Baden's vineyards.

Ms. Veis, a software developer training to be an architect, still has a sizable to-do list, including a basement home cinema and a ground-floor library alcove.

Forsaking touches typical of Baden homes, such as parquet floors and elaborate moldings, the couple also vetoed a popular contemporary amenity: separate rooms for each of their children. Instead, the girls are obliged to share one bedroom until they grow up, says Ms. Veis.

They also skipped a feature that most homeowners would consider a necessity: The ground-floor bathroom and shower have transparent glass walls that allow little privacy but add to the open-plan feel the couple crave.

The glass-enclosed, phone-booth look for the shower and the powder room started out as an improvisation. After moving in, the couple ordered curtains but put off installing them. Now, says Ms. Veis, the plan is to leave the rooms as-is. Visitors are welcome to use more private facilities upstairs, she says.

The couple spent about \$37,550 on the home's three full bathrooms. The second-floor master suite has a free-standing bathtub in the bedroom.

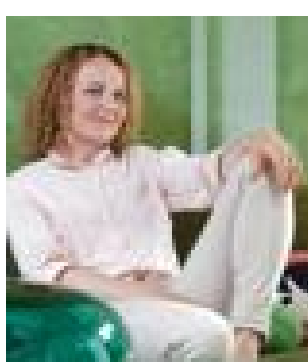
A top floor study has an open, perch-like feel—until its ladder-like staircase is retracted, making it suddenly discrete and self-contained.

Ms. Veis estimates the couple has spent about \$48,000 on the courtyard, which is accessed from the ground floor's wall of triple-glazed, retractable windows. The windows cost \$58,700, which Ms. Veis considers her main splurge.

Ms. Veis, born in Prague, is the daughter of an architect, and at first she wanted to design the new home herself. In 2014, realizing she



INTO THE GREEN Marie Veis, on couch, decided to add a bright green cover to the wall and floor in the villa's wide-open living space to play off the lime-green color of the exterior as well as to muffle noise from the family of five.



OPEN SPACES Marie Veis, left, opted for color on the facade and open interiors.

meant the house needed hanging construction, in which a dome on top is used to spread out the load-bearing duties among several walls, at an added cost of \$23,500.

Mr. Hofer's fondness for cooking meant the \$64,500 kitchen has a wood-burning stove and Gaggenau appliances.

Other choices in décor may seem fanciful, but are also functional. The sleek concrete floors and ceilings can exaggerate noise, so Ms. Veis added a green carpet to the wall and floor, behind and under the living room's olive-green, Midcentury-Modern sofa. The color plays off the lime-green facade outside, while helping to muffle noise inside.

“We are a loud family,” says Ms. Veis, who says her daughters are always “talking, singing or fighting.”

That means the home is “full of go-to spots,” says Ms. Veis. Her current favorite is the pool and outdoor daybed.

There also are a number of no-go spots. The potentially quaint 19th-century house, which visitors can walk through to get inside the villa, is now a workshop and storage space.

Ms. Veis recently has decided to become an architect herself, and she is now an apprentice at Caramel's Vienna office.

She is looking forward to doing more work on the home, but is in no hurry to finish it. She thinks a building should change and grow along with its inhabitants.

“I don't know if architecture ever needs to be finished,” she says.

needed help, she brought in Austria's Caramel Architects, a studio with offices in Vienna and Linz, and they went about completing the design together.

“Marie had hundreds of millions of ideas,” says Caramel's Günter Katherl, who worked closely with her on the project.

The family camped out in the 19th-century house while the new glass-and-concrete villa went up near where the pavilion once stood. Eventually, they plan to connect the two structures and turn the older home into a studio where Ms. Veis can paint.

Some of Ms. Veis's plans had to be modified or postponed, like her idea for a library where there is now an alcove. But many others were executed. Ms. Veis had the idea for the home's textured, lime-green facade, made of weather-resistant caulk that she designed. “It's supposed to remind you of tree bark,” she says.

Her husband's contributions to the project also proved decisive. Mr. Hofer has had many careers, from snowboard instructor to stockbroker to bar owner, and is now a stay-at-home dad.

Following his wishes for a wide-open open plan, the couple vetoed a support column on the ground floor. The lack of the column

SELECT COSTS

Original property
\$283,000Bathrooms
\$38,000Kitchen
\$65,000Outdoor spaces,
landscaping, pool
\$124,000Demolition of
tavern, pavilion
\$8,800Windows
\$109,500New furnishings
\$71,000Heating and
ventilation
\$115,000Electrical work
\$53,000Floors
\$47,000Architect fee
\$88,000

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