

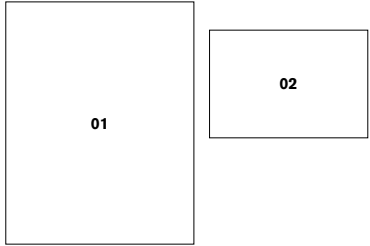


ARCHITECT PETER HAIMERL INHERITED THE HOUSE FROM AN OLD WOMAN WHO HAD NO FAMILY LEFT, BUT WAS TAKEN CARE OF BY THE ARCHITECT'S MOTHER IN THE LAST YEARS OF HER LIFE.

BAVARIAN FAMILY HISTORY

PETER HAIMERL INHERITED AN OLD FARMHOUSE AND MADE IT INHABITABLE.

Text **Sandra Hofmeister** / Photos **Edward Beierle**



01 MOST OF THE OLD FARMHOUSES IN THE BAVARIAN FOREST HAVE BEEN RENOVATED TO DEATH. THIS ONE IS DIFFERENT.

02 FOUR MODERN CONCRETE CUBES WERE INSERTED IN THE OLD STRUCTURE.

Up the hill, left into the curve along the forest’s edge. Suddenly the road ends. There’s no one in sight. ‘It’s up here, we’re already waiting,’ calls a voice from the woods. From between the spruce trees, a curious girl appears to help. I retrace the path a bit. At the chapel, I turn off the field path and on the lonely forest clearing that opens up after about 100 m is an old Bavarian farmhouse. The Cilli.

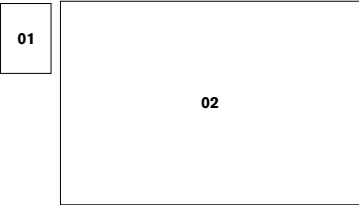
Cilli Sigl, the last farmwoman to live here, died in 1974. Her hamlet deep in the Bavarian Forest was anything but a posh estate. It had three cows and a couple of bare fields; a piece of forest and a mixed fruit orchard in front of the house. Just enough for difficult everyday life and frugal forest living. Cilli and the animals lived under one roof; the only warm room was the sitting room. The attic was used for grain storage. In the meadow in front of the gabled barn was an old oven for baking bread. Originally, the grounds date back to the year 1840; ownership changed hands often and the building was expanded repeatedly. Since Cilli died, the old masonry has fallen into decay.

It wasn’t exactly an ideal point of departure for architect Peter Haimerl, who wanted to renovate the inherited forest house into a holiday home for his family. ‘Everyone advised us to just rip down the old stuff,’ remembers Jutta Görlich, the architect’s co-planner, contractor

and partner. She found Cilli Sigl’s untouched belongings in a sealed chamber: dresses, folded candy wrappers and even an army pistol. Instead of gutting the house, the couple decided to retain as much of its charm as possible, unchanged, to salvage structures and layers, and then to live in the midst of them, in Cilli Sigl’s house. Most of the old farmhouses in the Bavarian Forest have been renovated to death in the past few decades; razed to their foundations and then rebuilt in swank country house-kitsch style. But the Cilli is different – like its owners, who originally come from the area and now return there from Munich on weekends.

The intervention is nearly invisible from the outside. Remnants of old paint are recognizable around old lattice windows. Here and there, plaster crumbles off the wall, and the balcony’s wooden balustrade is composed of simple lathes. The original natural stone masonry is visible in some parts of the façade. ‘It’s an art in itself,’ says Haimerl. ‘Like the way the stones are layered in there, without any kind of filling material. You can’t even do that anymore.’ Only on the north side of the house, facing the slope, does a new, light concrete wall rise up from the meadow. The kitchen is situated behind the large window.

Altogether, there are four modern concrete cubes in the interior. With the exception of the kitchen, whose construction was partially de »



01 THE RENOVATION CONCEPT WAS ALL ABOUT CAPTURING THE SPIRIT OF THE OLD FARMER WOMAN CILLI, HER LIFE, HER HABITS, HER EVERYDAY RITUALS.

02 IN A SEALED CHAMBER THE ARCHITECTS FOUND SOME UNTOUCHED BELONGINGS, AMONG THEM AN ARMY PISTOL.

stroyed, the heat-insulating concrete was placed inside the building's structure in front of the old walls. The four heatable, modern chambers are separated from the original construction yet still allow it to be seen. 'We wanted to make the house liveable, but still retain the old,' is how Haimerl describes his renovation concept, which only clearly crystallized after several designs. The original rooms' doors and ceilings are so low that the architect has to duck his head as he walks around. From the central old hallway, a wooden door opens to the sitting room. The sleekly quadratic space is poured in concrete made of white sand and foamed glass, and monolithically at that – walls and ceilings form a whole. The old walls are visible through the windows and the doors, picture details with a concrete frame that was simply placed in front of what was already there. Laminated layers of plaster bend around in these places; the electrical wiring obtrudes as prominent reliefs on old walls. In the middle of the space, whose under-floor heating is regulated via the wood stove with a fireplace, the original clay flooring is still visible in a quadratic area that opens in the white glazed concrete. The old wooden beams suggest the original height of the space. The »





roof collapsed before the renovation and it no longer had a ceiling.

‘The cool temperatures also belong to the old structure,’ says Haimerl decisively. Only the four modern spaces are insulated and can be heated. The original heating system, in which only the sitting room could be warmed, was carefully expanded without fundamentally changing the structure. Ultimately, even this element was an important part of the house, crucial for its spatial organization and typology, adds the architect. The entrance to the kitchen is through a retained wooden room with an old, wavy clay floor – which looks exactly as it did when Cilli Sigl still lived here. This space had been previously occupied by Cilli’s boarder. Haimerl expanded it with a lowered addition with higher ceilings. Like all the furnishings in the house, the kitchen benches and a table are made out of recycled wood. A wood stove with a cooking surface exudes a cosy heat. A piece of old masonry sits next to a light-coloured concrete wall as if it were a matter of course. ‘The new spaces should work first within the context of the old spaces,’ says Görlich. It’s a concept that the renovation utilizes consistently and that requires the understanding of its dwellers. In the summer, when it’s warmer, the quadratic hatches in the four modern rooms’ concrete ceilings are opened. Sight lines from the clay floor up to the uninsulated roof result, and the

air circulates throughout the whole house. In the bathroom – which had to be installed – the architects held to the simple forms of feeding troughs and finished the elongated concrete sink and bathtub with a thin, interior layer of mineral material.

A steep old wooden staircase leads to the attic in the former grain chamber. Now there’s an open free space under the roof. To the back is an additional concrete box equipped with a bedroom. Its quadratic wooden doors open up like hatches with a gliding mechanism – clearing the view through a narrow air corridor to the outside. ‘The desire to renovate this building was always there,’ recalls Haimerl. After a year and a half of construction, it was finally a success. The house survived its first winter well; the heating concept worked. ‘Houses in Lower Bavaria are a little idiosyncratic. You just have to work with them and go with the flow,’ explains the architect. His renovation concept shows how this plan can work: what is new frames, supports and protects the old, and the old absorbs the new. Cilli’s spirit will continue to blow through the house and live on with its new residents. Even Haimerl and his family have come to good terms with the Cilli. When Fanny, the architects’ daughter is not warming herself up in the sitting room, she likes to play in the clearing and the forest. <

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01 THE ROOMS IN THE RENOVATED HOUSE ARE MEANT TO REFLECT THE TRADITIONAL WAY OF LIFE.

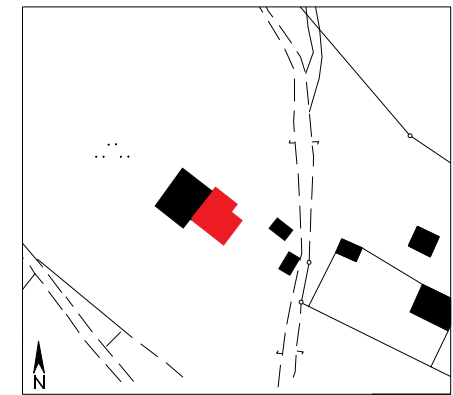
02 THE WOMAN IN THE PHOTOS IS JUTTA GÖRLICH, THE ARCHITECT’S PARTNER, DRESSED IN CHILLI’S CLOTHES, SHOWING THAT THE SPIRIT OF THE FORMER INHABITANT IS STILL ALIVE.





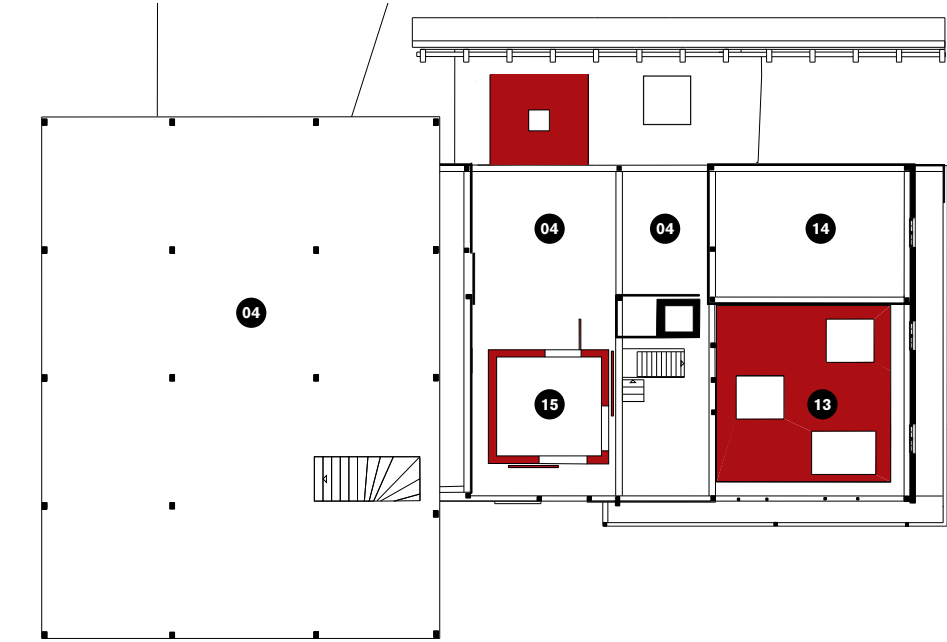
‘WE WANTED TO MAKE
THE HOUSE LIVEABLE, BUT
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— Peter Haimerl —

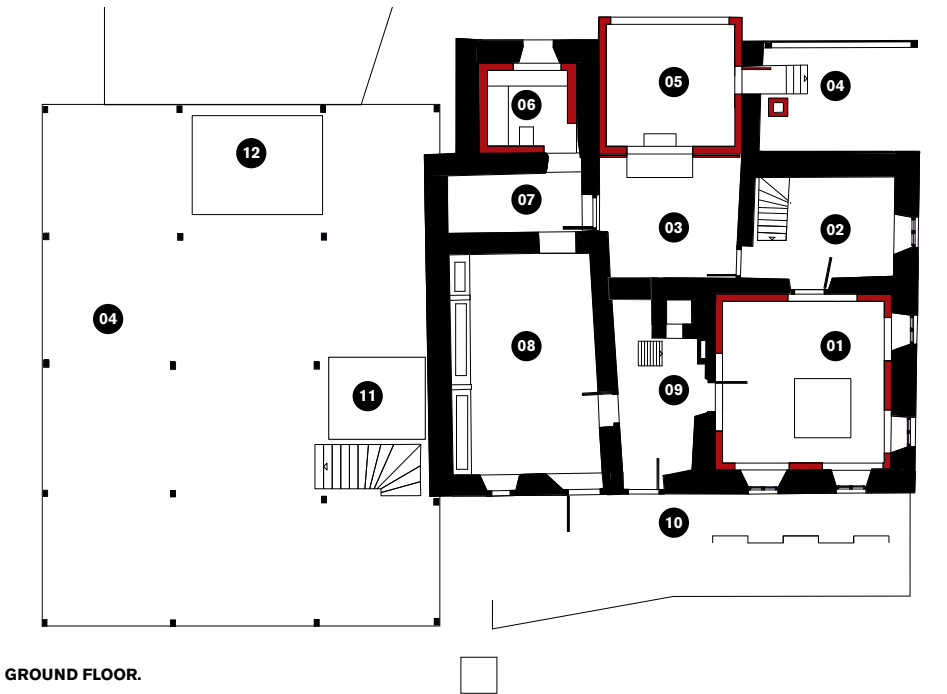


SITE PLAN.

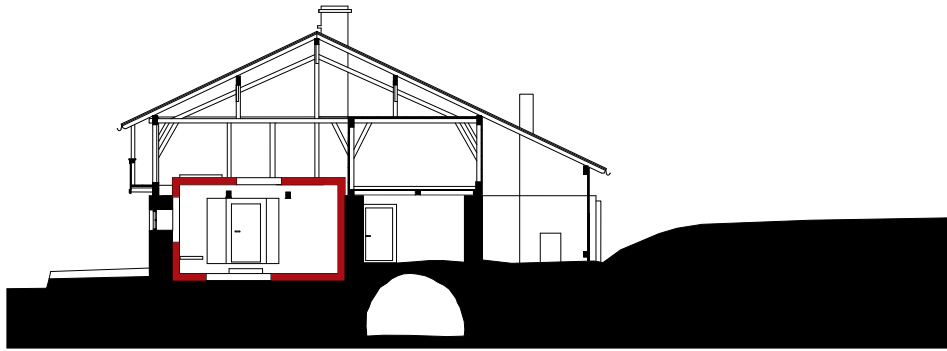
- 01 NEW LIVING ROOM
- 02 SPACE ABOVE THE POTATO CELLAR
- 03 FORMER BOARDER'S ROOM
- 04 STORAGE
- 05 NEW KITCHEN
- 06 NEW BATHROOM
- 07 DINING ROOM
- 08 COWSHED
- 09 HALLWAY
- 10 TERRACE
- 11 PIG STY
- 12 CHICKEN COOP
- 13 NEW CONCRETE FLOOR
- 14 BEDROOM
- 15 NEW BEDROOM



FIRST FLOOR.



GROUND FLOOR.



SECTION.