

# Absam Primary School

Project Competition 2013

1<sup>st</sup> Prize, Construction 2014–2016

Dialogue with the Alpine Landscape

All moved in! The extension of the primary school in the Tyrolean municipality of Absam was completed in September 2016. After one-and-a-half years of construction, kids are now frolicking around in the two-story kindergarten. The first sport classes are already taking place in the triple gymnasium, and sweet sounds are floating down from the new music school under the roof of the historic primary school building.

There wasn't much space for the new building in the 7000-person community of Absam, the "village of the Olympians" in the Hall-Wattens region, just 20 minutes by car from Innsbruck. So the architects Schenker Salvi Weber – the only ones among the 20 competition participants – decided to situate the sports hall underground and, for structural reasons, build the two-story kindergarten atop in a lightweight wood frame construction.

## Harmonious Dramaturgy

The new kindergarten complements the 110-year-old historic primary school to create a protected and inviting schoolyard against the picturesque Alpine backdrop of the Karwendel mountain chain. Its built volume matches the modest scale of the village and the children and integrates seamlessly into the existing ensemble. In keeping with the surroundings, the two-story wood building is clad with scratched plaster.

*"We chose to use scratch plaster as façades with mineral plaster with window trim frames are typical of the village character in Absam. An overall harmonious dramaturgy in such a historically grown rural context was more important to us than making a bold new statement. It is especially nice to see that the schoolyard has already become something of a new village square for community get-togethers or the summer cinema."* (Quote: Schenker Salvi Weber)

## Inside the Kindergarten: A Playful Learning Landscape at a Child's Scale

The interior of the passive house promotes a philosophy prevalent in the work of the architects. Here the rooms are structured into a harmonious spatial continuum, a playful learning landscape at a child's scale with a diverse range of attractive views both to the outside and inside, horizontally and vertically.

The house accommodates 120 kindergarten and 24 nursery places, which are distributed throughout eight group rooms. Different sized perforations in the façade have soffits you can sit on and offer framed views to nature literally "at eye level" – both for the little ones as well as adults. Niches, community spaces, open and intimate room sequences alternate and flow into one another. Their functions can be modified as desired by the supervisors through doors, curtains, and sliding panels, fostering spaces for smaller groups, creative games, or the afternoon nap while maintaining a good overview of all activities.

The nucleus of the kindergarten is the circulation and orientation space, a wide stairway with a wrap-around gallery and umbrella-like skylight cones for artificial and daylight. It flows directly into a community dining area and combines with the eight adjacent children group rooms into a big, bright shared space, a fluid learning and playing landscape, where all spaces are equally weighted

## Material and Color Concept of the Kindergarten

The color and material concept – pastel colors with oiled oak wood furnishings, solid oak parquet floors, felt curtains, and light-brown wood wool acoustic ceilings – is consciously reserved, just like the high-quality oiled oak furniture designed by Schenker Salvi Weber and manufactured by regional handcraft businesses. The solid wood children’s tables and chairs were made by the Tyrolean furniture company Hussl.

*“We wanted to create spaces as functionally flexible as possible and without too many fixed borders. The materials and colors should communicate warmth and comfort and step back to serve as an ideal background for the creativity of the children, who will anyway add their own personal touches of color.”*

(Quote: Schenker Salvi Weber)

## Bright Subterranean Triple Gymnasium

The material concept of the kindergarten is continued in the underground 44 x 22 meter triple gymnasium with white wood wool acoustic ceilings and warm oak for the window frames, doors, handrails, and spectator stands. As a dominant accent, the architects selected the raw haptics of exposed concrete and bright mineral ceramic tiling, emphasizing a subterranean, mineral, and cavernous quality.

A 20-meter-high climbing wall for the bigger kids – which stretches from the lowest floor up into the kindergarten above and is dramatically lit by skylights and windows on different floors – interlocks below and above. Views through, in, and up and interwoven spatial sequences were again important themes for the architects.

*“The surrounding gallery and the many perspectives lend the sports hall a bright and open character despite the location underground. An important element for the spatial impression is the band of skylight windows along the complete length of the hall, which not only provides daylight but also a sensual connection to the sky, the above, and the schoolyard, where, in turn, its perimeter serves as a bench for the children.”*

(Quote: Schenker Salvi Weber)

With its walls and floors clad in wood the gymnasium seems like a container embedded in the exposed concrete. It can be partitioned (1/3 to 2/3) to meet all sport and competition standards. The excavation work for the gymnasium was a technical challenge as it abuts the foundation of the old primary school. The large reinforced steel T-beams for the sports hall had to be dimensioned in such a manner that they could be prefabricated and transported on the narrow access roads of the village.

## Music School under the Roof

The sports hall is connected to the primary school via an underground passageway. Under its historic hip roof a music school is housed on a mere 550 square meters with six rehearsal rooms and a large auditorium furnished with a generous, space-saving seating surface as opposed to chairs.

*“The design idea was inspired by the existing roof construction. A skylight runs southwards and northwards respectively, forming an interlocking skylight structure which staggers toward the representative auditorium at the end, once again generating splendid connections with the outside.”* (Quote: Schenker Salvi Weber)

Schenker

Reference is made to the materiality of the kindergarten and gymnasium here as well. The warm oak wood combines elegantly with the white painted roof structure, and the acoustically-effective, white-glazed laths create a bright and festive atmosphere, making the smaller spaces seem all the more generous.

[Download link](#) for the Press Kit (photos, press text, credits, CV)

You can use the photo and plans free of charge upon naming Schenker Salvi Weber Architekten and the photographer Bengt Stiller (copyright). Please contact us if you require more photos.

The architects are always available for personal interviews, detail questions, and statements.

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Weber

## Weitere Zitate

*“The new children’s center in the heart of the village now satisfies all of the requirements of the new Tyrol early education and childcare act. Both the tight 18-month construction time plan as well as the costs were maintained and fulfilled with the utmost accuracy.”* (Quote: Mayor of Absam Arno Guggenbichler)

*“For us it is a pleasure to see that what we planned on paper is now filled with life, that the children have settled into the rooms, and that our floorplans, spaces, and detail solutions are working so well and serve the people who use them. That is precisely how we see our task as architects.”* (Quote: Schenker Salvi Weber Architekten)

### P R O J E C T D E T A I L S

- Commission type:  
EU-wide invited competition,  
general planning
- Award:  
1st Prize
- Client:  
Municipality of Absam  
Immobilien GesmbH & Co KG
- Location:  
Absam, AT
- Competition:  
2013
- Construction:  
2014-2016 (18 month)
- Gross floor area:  
total: 4090 m<sup>2</sup>  
Music school: 548 m<sup>2</sup> (3F)  
Kindergarten: 1.261 m<sup>2</sup> (GF + 1F)  
Triple Gymnasium: 2.280 m<sup>2</sup>
- Building costs:  
9,0 million EUR
- Energy efficiency:  
Passive house standard
- Team:  
Bettina Doser, Sophie Gerg,  
Teresa de Miguel, Thomas Morgner,  
Hans Reumann, Barbara Roller,  
Tiago Santana, Michael Salvi,  
Andres Schenker, Verena Theil,  
Tina Tobisch, Katalin Tóth,  
Rowena Ullrich, Thomas Weber

### S U B C O N T R A C T O R S

- Structural engineer; wood  
construction.  
Merz Kley Partner
- Structural engineer; reinforced  
concrete / geotechnics.  
ZSZ Ingenieure ZT GesmbH
- Building physics:  
IBO - Austrian Institute for  
Healthy and Ecological Building
- Construction management and costs:  
Die Bauleiter
- Building technology:  
Moser + Partner Ingenieurbüro
- Light design:  
Designbüro Christian Ploderer GmbH
- Landscape architect:  
DnD Landschaftsplanung
- Photography:  
Bengt Stiller