

FOUNDATIONS OF A PARTNERSHIP: Architecture has been part of my day-to-day life since childhood. Perhaps because my uncle lived with us while he studied for his architecture degree. Or because my father managed a company that made kitchens. So I've always been familiar with drawing boards, reduction scales and pencils. I trained as a superstructure draughtsman in an architectural practice, and this laid the foundations for my later career as a designer. And finally, I studied a vocational design course at college; this, plus my subsequent degree in industrial design, gave me an understanding of the nature of objects and how to observe them.

During the architectural history lectures at ETH Zurich, I discovered structures by Andrea Palladio, Mies van der Rohe, Buckminster Fuller, Alvar Aalto and Finn Juhl. I was particularly fascinated by Le Corbusier, his small wooden cabin 'Le Cabanon' on the French Riviera, 'Une Petite Maison' on Lake Geneva and the 'Pavillon Le Corbusier' for Heidi Weber on Lake Zurich. Adalberto Libera made an impression on me with the unconventional 'Villa Malaparte' on Capri, and John Lautner too, with his futuristic buildings around Los Angeles. The 'Eames House' from Ray and Charles Eames' 'Case Study Houses' series cast a particularly lasting spell over me. Undoubtedly because the house was the work of husband-and-wife designers – not architects – and a couple with a similar professional background to myself. When I saw the house for the first time in a publication, I thought to myself: I want to produce something like that when I'm 50. Not for me personally, but a house that sets an example. One that makes a contribution through its aesthetics and its inherent way of thinking. That was my dream.

For years now whenever I travel on business I've been running a form of personal research: I buy magazines in different countries, sometimes specific ones, or I'll just pick them intuitively or at random. I just follow my taste for the unknown, but enjoy these 'excursions' into different areas: fashion, cuisine, art, philosophy, mobility. Once, back in November 2008, I picked up a magazine about women in business. The cover was attractive, featuring Céline Cousteau – a marine biologist like her father – in a silver wetsuit. The headline was: 'Women changing the world'. It appealed to me. Inside the magazine I came across an article about Baufritz and its CEO, Dagmar Fritz-Kramer. Just like the front cover, it inspired me, and it rekindled my dream of a house. I decided to write a letter to Baufritz and tell them my dream. I never received a reply – something that had never happened to me before. But I wasn't too worried, because the most important thing is to keep sketching and writing down your dreams. And never give up.

Three years later I received a phone call – from Ms. Fritz-Kramer. I couldn't believe it – a letter doesn't take that long! But it turned out we shared the same dream: to build a house together.