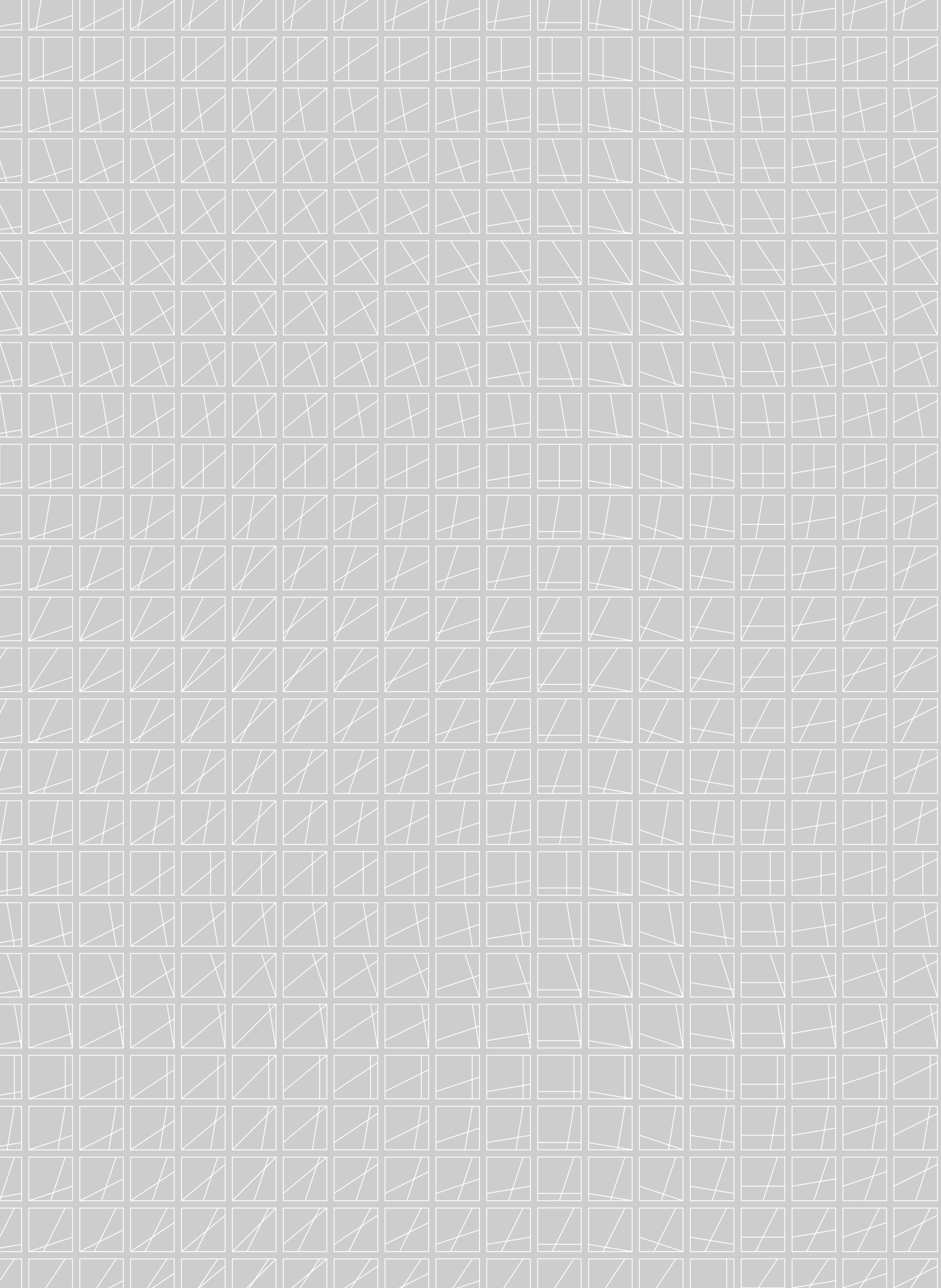


Salewa Headquarters



Salewa Headquarters

by Park Associati

Client
Oberalp S.p.A.

Address
Bolzano

Year
Competition: 2007
On Site: 2009
Realization: 2011

Area
sqm 25.000

Professional Service
Concept
Architectural project,
Site supervision
Artistic Site Supervision
with CZA - Cino Zucchi Architetti

Energy Certifications
CasaCLIMA-Klimahaus, New Certification Sustainability
Work & Life

Artistic Site Specific Intervention
Margit Klammer

General co-ordination and project management
Plan Team GmbH

Civil Engineering
Kauer&Kauer Ingenieure

Project of M&E Fire Prevention
Energytech Ingegneri

Local Architect
Brigitte Kauntz

Cost Evaluation & Engineering
Studio Luraschi

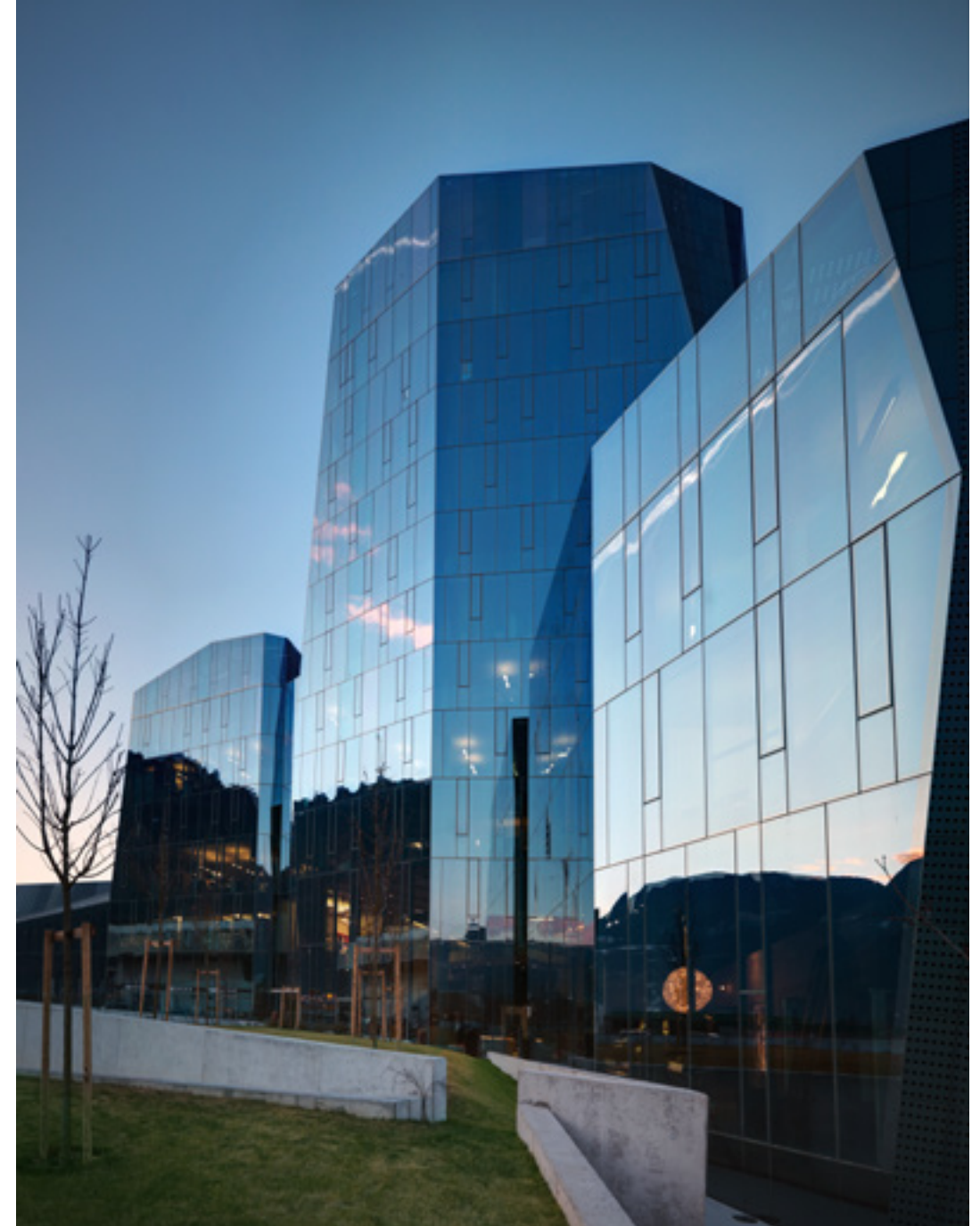
Climbing Hall
Ralf Preindl

Beyond efficiency



The production facilities and the Headquarters combine the efficiency of machines and the themes of human and environmental sustainability with a strongly expressive image aimed at transmitting the cultural philosophy and the brand identity.

Text and interview: Angelica di Virgilio



The idea that industrial constructions, the so-called 'machine' places, had to be essentially devoted to efficiency, functionality and economy was perpetuated for most of the 20th century. Based on a clear misunderstanding of the purpose of the first modern factories, for a long time this belief alienated architecture from this design sector and transformed most of our outer cities into desolate landscapes of production buildings lacking quality.

Yet the large industries that emerged and developed in the first half of the century had, in fact, moved in a completely different direction. Aware of the importance of human capital and thanks to the vision of designers such as Figini and Pollini or Gino Valle, the factories of Adriano Olivetti or those of Livio Zanussi took shape mainly as social places. Ahead of their time, they proved how architecture, meant as 'the stage where our life unfolds'

(Bruno Zevi), could determine a company's success by conveying its values through shapes and spaces. This legacy, which was carried out in the second half of the 20th century by only a few and was abandoned during the sector crisis in the 70' and 80's, has been rediscovered in more recently, along with the acknowledgement of architecture's communicative and representative value.

The new Salewa Headquarters, a company specialised in technical mountain clothing led by Heiner Oberrauch, is a perfect example of this. Designed by Park Associati and CZA, the complex fully interprets the brand's spirit: a dynamic and highly technological centre - just like the company's products - that relates harmoniously to the surrounding environment and is rooted within the area surrounding Bolzano, contributing to the city's economic and social growth.

The Genius Loci of Bolzano



What strongly characterises the building culture of Bolzano, a small jewel of urban life nestled between the Alps and the Dolomites, is the link established over the centuries with the nearby mountains, the dialogue with the surrounding woods, and its ability to be in harmony with the vineyards perched on top of the hills, creating a unique combination of architecture and landscape, culture and nature. This is the genius loci of the South Tyrolean city, which can be found in the ancient castelets, and in the characteristic stone farmsteads with larch shingle roofs that surround the basin, through to the plastered façades livened up by bow-windows of the historical centre – characterised by a strong Austrian heritage – and the low arcades that usher the slow-paced residents and

visitors from shops to cafes. This robust identity has never faltered, even in recent times with the arrival of designers who were asked to interact with the landscape outlined by the high rocks and the surrounding mountain chains. If nowadays Bolzano can rightly be considered a small capital of contemporary design, this is thanks to the sensitivity of the new architects who have been able to interpret such genius loci without renouncing cement, steel and crystal and more fluid and dynamic shapes, far from the stylistic characteristics of tradition. Like a veritable landmark welcoming all those arriving in South Tyrol from the south, the Salewa Headquarters undoubtedly symbolise this interpretive skill.



Combining technology and nature, landscape and urbanity, the buildings celebrate local culture and above all the values of Salewa, which – with its motto ‘pure mountain’ – reminds us that sustainability here is an ethical and social conscience that has been perpetuated for centuries, thus defining an identity that is stronger than any fashion.

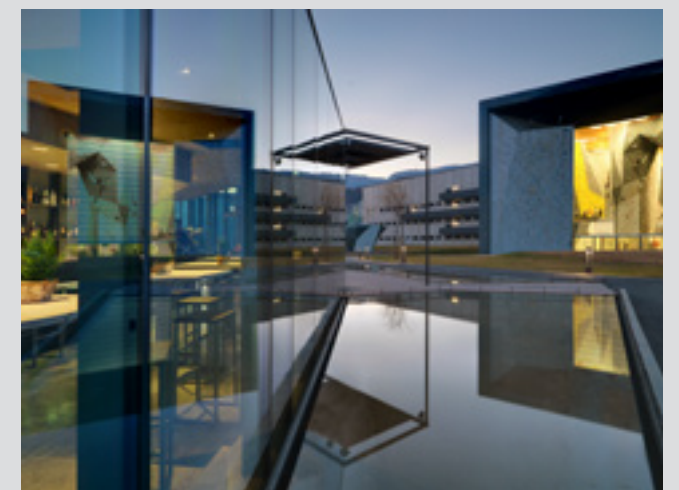
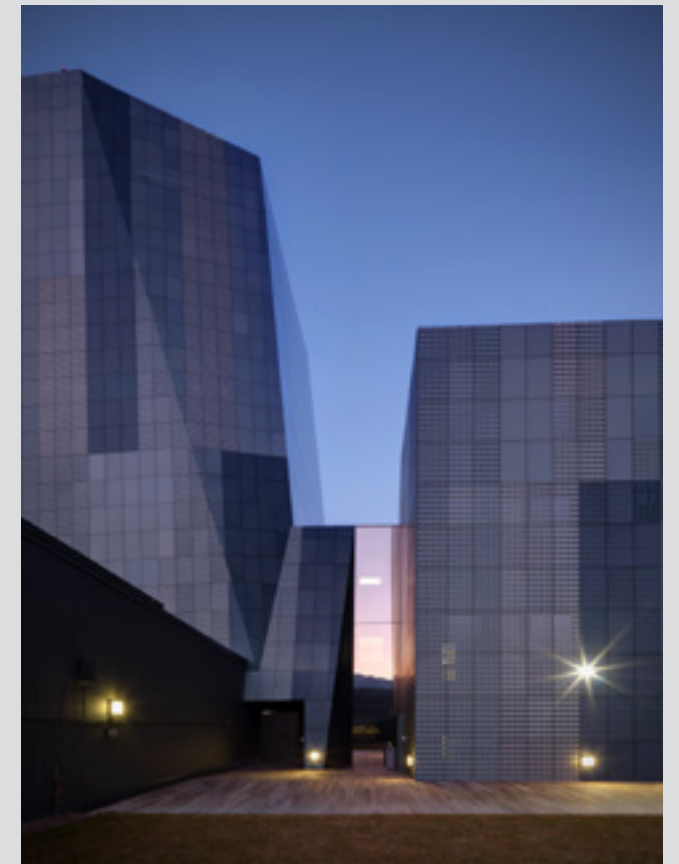
The logic of the setting

Moving away from an easy mimetic design, the project pursues a logic of adaptation to the natural and artificial landscape of the Adige valley, creating a dialogue with the Brenner motorway, with the mountains, with the park and the agricultural fields to the east, and with the urban sector to the north.



In line with the brand's philosophy, Park Associati and CZA offers a complex, sophisticated and versatile architecture that takes into account the physical, social and communicative dimension of both Salewa and the varied context in which it sits. The strongly horizontal and dynamic volumes of the warehouses, arranged to the south and made using a prefabricated structure with microshed skylights, relates to the fast movement of the cars. The three crystal-shaped office towers – the highest being 50 m – bring to mind the surrounding high peaks. The climbing hall, with its wide proscenium, opens up to the surrounding flat landscape. The different volumes are organised around a square created in collaboration with the artist Margit Klammer. Slightly raised from the road, the square is the spatial hub of the foyer, the offices and the showroom, but also a quality urban space opening to the north towards the radically changing periphery of Bolzano. The logic of the setting is also pursued, particularly through the choice of materials. The upper part of the warehouses and three sides of the office towers are covered with a skin made of perforated and interference electro-coloured aluminium panels – a technique used outdoors for the first time. Defined by three colours and five drilling diameters, this surface is a combination of multiple colours varying from grey to blue that blends with the surrounding mountains. As a contrast to this skin, the large glass walls on the north side have no darkening elements and offer magnificent views over the landscape.

This mix of functions, volumes, configuration and surfaces gives the Headquarters a divided appearance, a changeable image and a perceptual structure based on a sequence of landscapes and interpretations that differ according to complexity and context.





Energy design

The Headquarters was designed as a high-tech and, at the same time, environmentally-friendly building.



In accordance with the Salewa group's production philosophy, the Headquarters were designed as a high-tech and, at the same time, environmentally-friendly building.

In this regard, most efforts were devoted particularly to designing the skin, structuring the volumes and studying the heating systems. Supported by metal brackets that allow for a three-dimensional configuration of the aluminium panels which is independent of the underlying support, the skin plays a fundamental role in terms of the Headquarters' image and an equally important thermal function. In fact, it protects the interiors from summer sun irradiation, thus guaranteeing shading, ventilation and comfort, with a reduction of climate control systems.

The double-skin, high-performance windows and the concrete structures also play their part. By exploiting the thermal inertia of concrete and the thermal activation of the volumes, a radiant cooling and heating system was created, using pipes directly

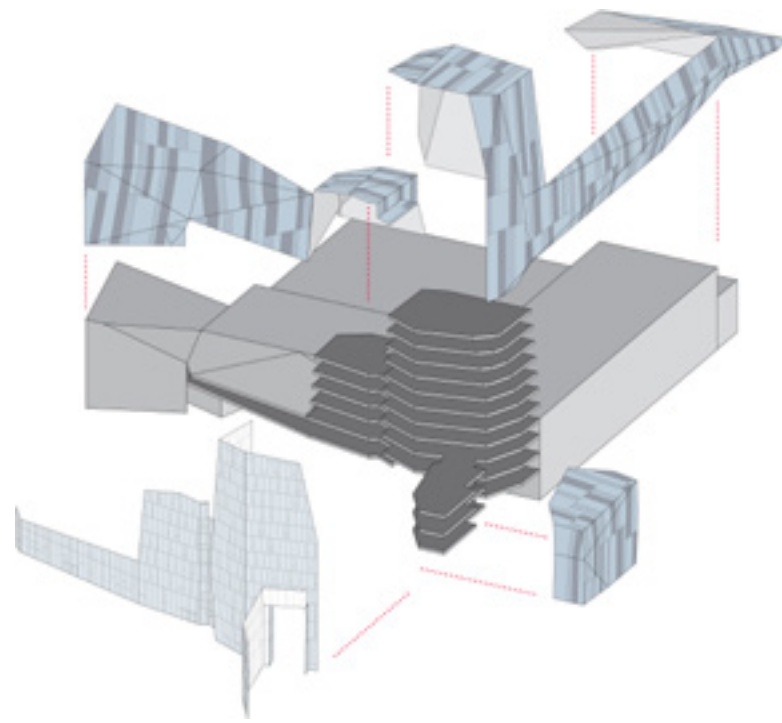
embedded within the slabs that reduce energy consumption but provide the same performance in terms of comfort.

Shielded from the noise of the highway by the warehouse, the roof garden is a quiet place available to nursery children and employees that further reduces the sunlight on the horizontal surfaces.

To these, the additional regulation of the surface temperature, the connection to the district heating network and – above all – the setting up of what is currently the largest photovoltaic system in South Tyrol were added. This result was also achieved thanks to the client's cooperation: Salewa agreed to not have a constant temperature throughout the year, and considered acceptable the idea of wearing a sweater in the office on the five coldest days of the year or short sleeves on the hottest days in the summer up to a temperature of 27 degrees – allowing the warmth of the summer to be felt without sacrificing the employees' wellbeing.

Thanks to these active and passive techniques, the Salewa Headquarters boasts a CO₂-free footprint, with a yearly reduction in emissions of 335 tonnes of carbon dioxide.





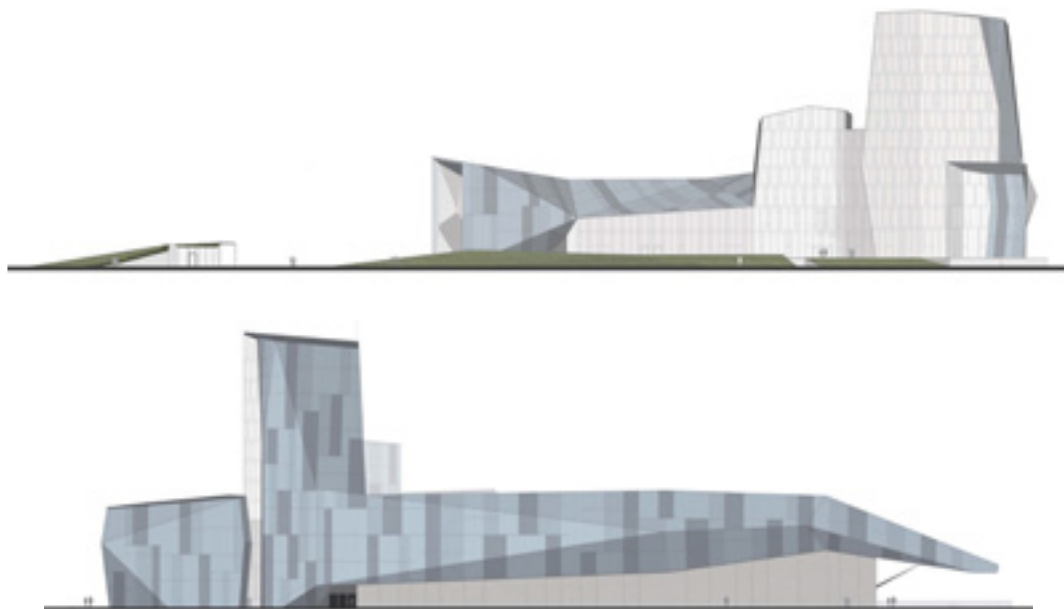
Built in collaboration with Energytech, this system is almost as big as two football pitches and can generate about 500,000 kWh per year, much more than the building's consumption.

The support and monitoring work conducted by the CasaClima Agency was also critical; as well as supplying the building site with the necessary skills and know-how and providing a seal of environmental quality, they contributed to the general image of the building with the "Work & Life" certification – specifically created for Salewa, and helping to establish it as a perfect example of sustainable architecture.

Living Salewa



Conceived not just as an office space, but also as a piece of city servicing the context within which it fits. The entire Salewa project clearly revolves around people: the employees who work for the company, those who share the lifestyle promoted by the company, and those who live in this peripheral area of Bolzano, which have found in the Headquarters a new place for socialising and meeting.



In addition to its emphasis on energy consumption, CasaClima's certification also highlights the importance of high quality workplaces and the social welfare of employees. This is one of the most interesting aspects of the Salewa Headquarters, which is conceived not just as an office space, but also as a piece of city servicing the context within which it fits – a place to be thoroughly lived and enjoyed, with its shopping, its bistro and its climbing. It was the project group's intention to give a clear architectural vocation to additional spaces, which are not meant to perform auxiliary functions but are the focal points of the entire complex. While Park Associati intended the flagship store built inside the building to be the pilot project for the development of over 200 shops for the brand worldwide, the climbing hall is the company's

'business card'. The picture of the 19.5-metre high wall covering 1,850 square metres that can welcome 250 climbers has been seen all over Europe, and has been declared one of Italy's largest, most modern, and undoubtedly most fascinating of its kind. Opposite the climbing hall's proscenium is the bistro, the other public focal point of the entire complex; a veritable haven of relaxation and entertainment not just for employees. The small and partially underground independent building represents the element where the social concept of the whole project condenses. Protected from the road by a hill to which it is anchored through its green roofing, the building opens toward the west and south, onto a small refreshment area partially covered by a pergola, and two expanses of water that enrich the greenery system.

Heiner Oberrauch, CEO Salewa



ADV: You are responsible for the international success of the Salewa brand. Since the '90s, your strategy has been aimed at transforming a German manufacturer of mountaineering equipment into a brand that is recognised among the global leaders of the mountain equipment and apparel sector, with a strong South Tyrolean identity. The new Headquarters in Bolzano have certainly contributed to the development of this new identity. What inspired you to want to invest in a new architecture?

HO: First of all, I am not the only person responsible for the company's success, it's always a collective effort. The construction of the new Headquarters is a milestone in the evolution of our brand and a manifesto of our ideas of innovation and relationship with the environment, in terms of both, its appearance and sustainability. In this case, too, it was immediately clear that a new and innovative project was needed to communicate and implement these values.

From a practical point of view, our ambition was also to bring together the functions of product development, marketing and sales with a logistics and automated warehouse structure that would not just suit our needs, but would be able to serve the company's development for decades to come. No such thing existed in South Tyrol, so it had to be built from scratch. It is for this reason that in the notice of the competition for the new Headquarters we envisioned the inclusion of public or semi-public functions, such as the park surrounding the building, the bistro, the climbing wall, the nursery and the conference hall. These functions called for an innovative project and therefore the creation of a site from scratch.

ADV: What convinced you of the project by Park Associati and CZA? And how does their architecture interpret the Salewa brand identity?

HO: The project was selected by a qualified jury of eight personalities, which included architects, engineers, mountaineers like Reinhold Messner and representatives of our Group. It was therefore a collective decision influenced by the South Tyrolean culture, and not just a business choice. All the projects presented would have deserved to win, because they were all excellent, but the winning project best expressed our identity. After all, mountain climbers like a simple life, but we also wanted to express our need for design, aesthetics and quality.

The design is as sharp and hard as a mountain crystal, and at the same time maintains that functional simplicity that characterises Salewa products. Furthermore, it is able to combine innovative aesthetics and functionality by interacting with the natural context of the mountains and the anthropised territory of the southern suburbs of Bolzano, where the cultivation of apples meets industry.

Our passion for the mountains taught us to respect nature and its inhabitants – whether human or animal. We are proud of the fact that the same environmental care we put into manufacturing our products is reflected in the new Headquarters; for example, through the CasaClima certification, the production of electricity through the photovoltaic system on the roof, and the automated warehouse that does not need to be heated or air-conditioned because it does not require the permanent presence of personnel.

ADV: Do you think that the Salewa Headquarters, can somehow be defined as an iconic building?

HO: Whether this is an iconic piece of architecture is up to others – architects, architectural historians and the public in general – not the proprietor. The Headquarters were a turning point for us. I believe that since their inauguration, the world of mountaineering and those who love the mountains have begun to look at us through different eyes; they have started to understand the spirit that breathes life into Salewa.

So, without a doubt, the Headquarters represent a milestone to us. For example, when we need to explain our creative direction, we use the image of the building juxtaposed with images of the Tre Cime di Lavaredo. It is our way of explaining how we try to create products by combining the best of contrasting elements every day.

ADV: The Salewa Headquarters are a small world made of services not just for employees but also for the city, and in particular for the southern outskirts of Bolzano, which can now enjoy a new park and a bistro open to the public. Why did you decide to open the office space to the city?

HO: I believe it is important that citizens identify with a genuine, local company like Salewa, especially since our 'home' has become a landmark for the whole province. But there is also another reason: my family taught me that we need to give back ten percent of what we earn to society. And that we should spend ten percent of our time helping others. Ours is a family-run company, decisions are taken in terms of generations, not of quarterly financial statements. I think the Headquarters are a generation legacy consistent with the values of our family and the values of the Salewa company.

ADV: Heiner Oberrauch is defined as a demanding but stimulating client. How was the interaction with the Milanese practices? Park Associati prove to be just as "challenging but stimulating"?

HO: Yes, stimulating is just the right word; they asked many questions, they had the ability to listen as well as ask critical questions about whether we really want and believe in what we say... almost like a psychoanalysis session. This established an intense professional but also personal relationship.

Following our motto "positive attracts positive", we tried to also celebrate with the various collaborators, so that there would be a spirit of togetherness and no letters from lawyers, which unfortunately has become usual in the building trade. The architects interpreted our dreams well, they translated them and also made them evolve.

Hundreds of people come to visit the company every month, and many years after the Headquarters' completion we are still featured in architecture magazines.



Photos:
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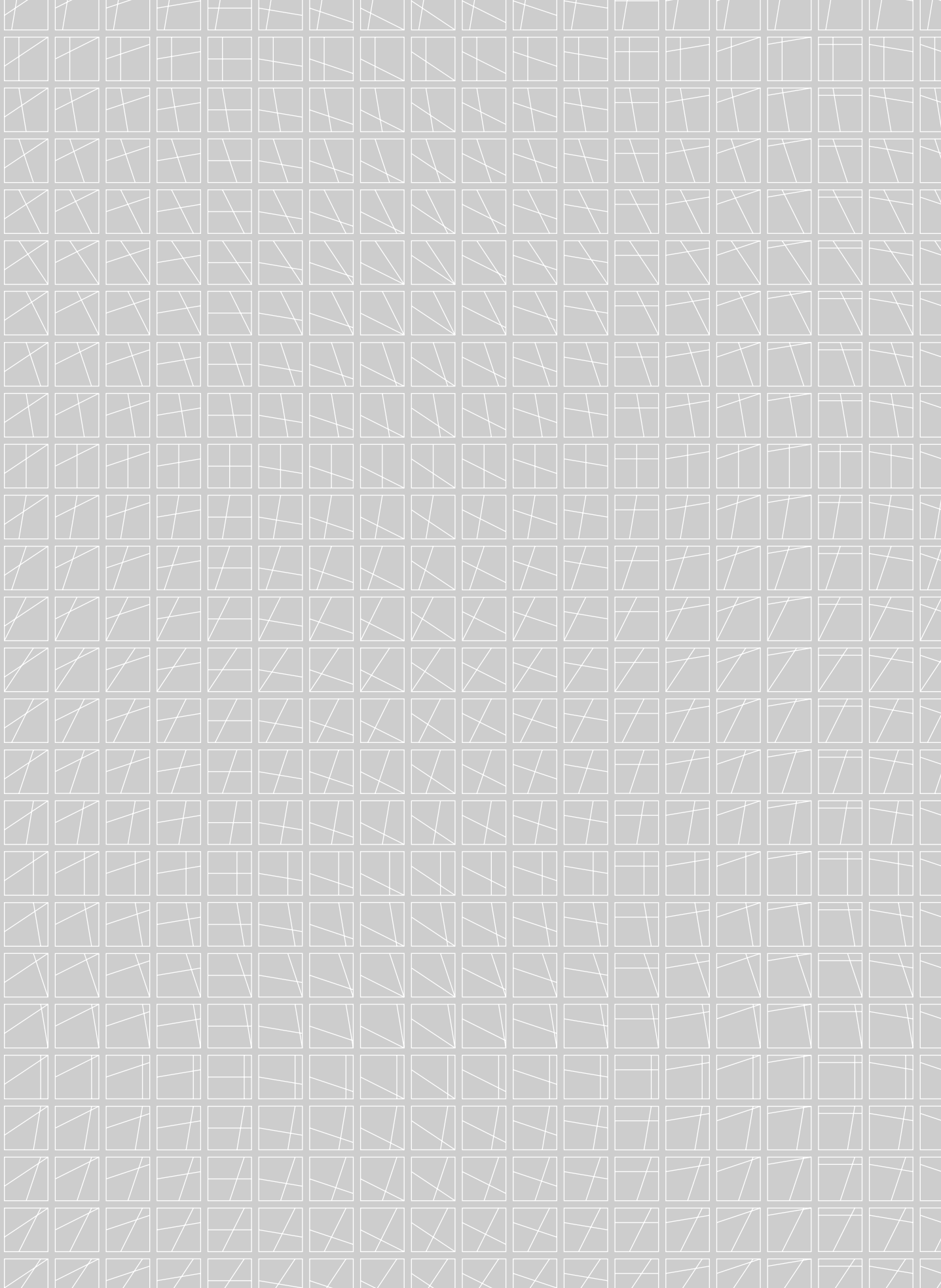
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