

A close-up portrait of actress Karoline Herfurth. She has light brown hair pulled back, looking slightly off-camera with a thoughtful expression. Her hand is resting against her cheek. She is wearing a dark, possibly black, top with a subtle pattern.

discover
GERMANY
Switzerland & Austria

Issue 50 | May 2017

**KAROLINE
HERFURTH**

ACTING HER HEART OUT

THE
50th
ANNIVERSARY
ISSUE

PLUS

GERMAN ARCHITECTURE
DESIGN OF SWITZERLAND
AUSTRIAN WINE SPECIAL 2017
CULTURE, TRAVEL & MORE

THE MAGAZINE PROMOTING GERMANY, SWITZERLAND & AUSTRIA



Photo: Bruno Klomfar, © picflier.Architekt[en]

BUSINESS PROFILES

The DACH region's innovators

On the following pages, find out what Austria and Switzerland have to offer on the business front.



Photo: © Univ.-Doz.
Dr. Brigitta Balogh



Photo: © Atelier Schmidt



Eco-friendly straw bale architecture with contemporary design

Atelier Schmidt, based in Trun, Switzerland, designs and constructs sustainable houses using straw as its main building and insulation material. Eco-friendly, available in abundance and inexpensive, are only three of the advantages straw has to offer as a building material.

TEXT: JESSICA HOLZHAUSEN | PHOTOS: ATELIER SCHMIDT

"We want to realise sensual buildings that are independent, fair to the next generation and are built, operated and demolished with the smallest ecological footprint possible," says architect and founder Werner Schmidt. Trying to avoid pollutants in buildings is one of the main factors. As is to make builder-owners as independent as possible when it comes to overheads like heating, electricity, water supply or sewages. "Thanks to the deliberately chosen natural materials, we create private wellness oases for body, soul and spirit." Werner Schmidt's inspiration is nature, "but also my former professor at the University of Applied Sciences in Vienna, Hans Hollein". Ecology, craft and invention are at the centre of Schmidt's career: over the years he has built and developed more than 30 straw bale houses.

Straw bale houses might remind people of *The Three Little Piglets* where the wolf

simply blows away a house built of straw, but indeed the construction is very durable; people are still living comfortably in straw bale houses built in the early 20th century. Considering three main ecologically relevant factors in housing – the construction itself, the energy needed to live in a building and the deconstruction – the advantages of straw spring to mind: "To fulfil the aim of sustainability, an insulation material is needed that is eco-friendly and biologically healthy, that needs as few grey energy as possible, and is available in sufficient amounts and is non-hazardous after deconstruction: straw fulfils all these criteria like no other building material," explains Werner Schmidt. A thick layer of straw insulation keeps a house comfortably warm – without needing a great deal of heating. "The quality of life is so much better in straw bale houses compared to conventional ones," says Werner Schmidt. "People liv-

ing in them believe that they will live ten years longer."

Straw can be used for new family homes or holiday residences, as shown at the Esserhof (www.esserhof.com) or industrial buildings like the vonRoll pavilion. For the Complemedis, a company growing Chinese medical herbs, Atelier Schmidt developed a new insulation concept for an existing building using straw for insulation and bamboo for shade.

www.atelierschmidt.ch

