

MONOLITH ON THE MILL POND RECONSTRUCTION OF THE KOTRČ MILL NEAR LIPNICE

Facts

Type of building	Conversion of a mill into a residential dwelling
Location	Near Lipnice, Czech Republic
Owner	Private
Architect	Lucie Kavanová, Prague

The Kotrč mill stands on the banks of a new man-made lake in the forest of Lipnice nad Sázavou in the Bohemian-Moravian uplands. Not only the granite walls of the almost 170-year-old structure are reflected on the surface of the water, according to the words of the architect Lucie Kavanová, but 'the entire valley and the spirit of this place (genius loci)'. The architect from Prague planned to reconstruct the mill into a weekend house, which should also offer the possibility to live there in the long-term. She wrote about the starting condition of the project: "Almost nothing was preserved of the furnishings and fittings of the mill. The water from the mill stream had been diverted a long time ago. Just the rotten shaft protruding from the massive walls of the mill still left the impression that once a mill wheel had stood there."

First of all, natural stonewall gables were built up on the massive building, which is approx. 9 x 8 metres, to give the building its 'face', according to the architect. "This made the house slightly larger, so that it had a slight chance against the endless, high forests of the surroundings." The gables are made of the typically patterned granite for the area, like the metre-thick, old outer walls which, in Kavanová's opinion, "have the loveliest granite shading I know". The roof was then covered without the original cantilevered roof overhang.

New, displaceable shutters made of natural wood lighten up the facades. Their designer describes their effect: "Opened they not only signal the arrival of the owners, but also let

some life into the house, like the colours of nature in the surroundings. In particular, the picture of nature behind the large living room window is like a big TV screen, on which a story can be followed for hours on end." About the interior of the room she says: "The inside of the house forms a dark labyrinth of smaller rooms. A house has to be spacious though, like the endless nature of the environment. And that was also the reason that we freed it of all items of no avail and allowed just its substance to come to the fore – its character".

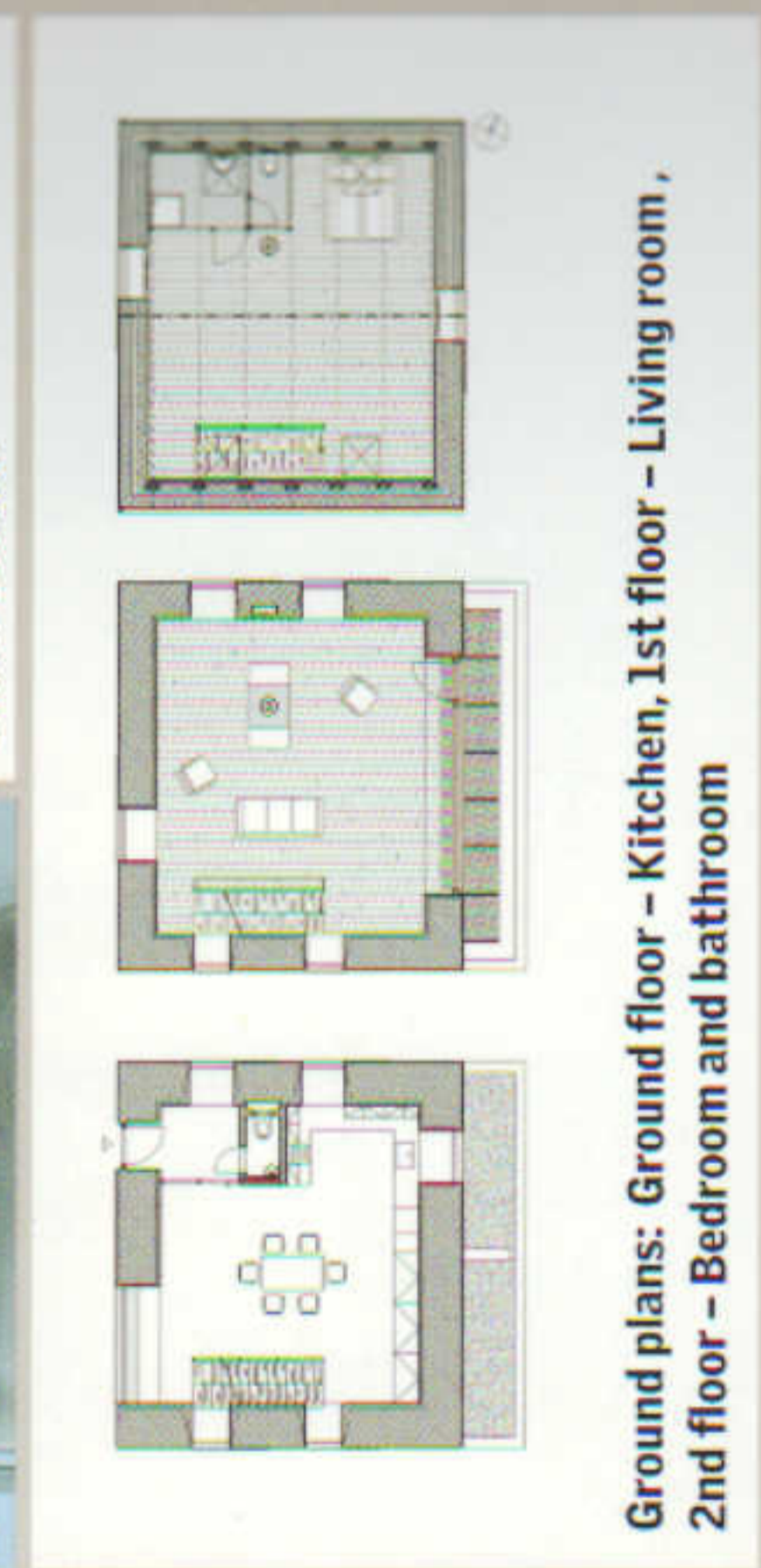
The generously roomy interior has hardly any separating walls and doors. One enters the building through the dining room and kitchen, arrives one level higher in a living room with a stove and finally reaches the bedroom and bathroom on the top floor, which is made light by the skylights. The basement houses a wine store and a room for technical plant.

Reinforced concrete ceilings stabilize the already flawed building, and an additional interior insulation has been fitted behind a facing of plasterboard. The construction methods used for the conversion of the mill are relatively simple according to the type and site of the building. The filigree steel balcony, for example, which extends the living room towards the lake, almost appears provisional. The inner rooms form an unexpected contrast to the rustic outside: All walls are white plaster, a filigree steel-glass staircase leads to the upper storeys, and the bathroom under the roof is merely separated from the bedroom by a glass partition.

1. Through the panoramic window in the living room, it is possible to see the newly created mill pond. From the inside, the filigree balcony railing hardly interferes with the view.

2. A skylight illuminates the upper landing of the staircase. The filigree interior composed of steel and glass presents a striking contrast to the heavy rough exterior.

3. The old stonemasonry of the mill's massive stone gables can hardly be distinguished from the new parts in the upper area. The protruding tiled roof has been replaced by a sheet-metal roof that is almost flush with the wall.



Ground plans: Ground floor – Kitchen, 1st floor – Living room, 2nd floor – Bedroom and bathroom

