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"Villa Libeskind" Takes Prefab to the Extreme

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By Tony Illia

Daniel Libeskind has added a rather unusual building type to his design resume: high-end, green prefab housing. The New York-based architect has teamed up with the German builder Proportion to produce a limited-edition series of 5,500-square-foot dwellings dubbed "Villa Libeskind." A prototype was unveiled last October in Datteln, Germany, on the campus of Rheinzink, the zinc panel manufacturer.



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"This is the first small intimate house that I have designed for an individual or a family, which really reaches into the depths of a new experience of living and architecture," says Libeskind, who calls the residence a "walk-in sculpture."

Sheathed in pre-weathered zinc panels (in blue-gray or graphite-gray) affixed to a structural wood frame, the two-level, four-bedroom residence features Libeskind's trademark sharp angles and asymmetry. It also includes all of the amenities befitting a luxury home: a fireplace, fitness room, wine cellar, and sauna. For the interior design, buyers have a choice between the "Casual style," described as warm and natural, or the "Libeskind style," characterized as cool and sculptural. Libeskind designed both options.

Proportion aims to construct 30 Villa Libeskinds around the globe, although no city will have more than one. Sales are launching in Europe, followed later by the United States. Each house is expected to cost between \$2 to \$3.5 million.

Libeskind's wife, Nina, chief operating officer of Studio Daniel Libeskind, notes that this is not your standard prefabricated home, noting that "Daniel wanted to show that you could do something with the notion of a prefab that was still architecturally ambitious and distinctive, while using the latest technologies."

According to the developer, the house's components will be made in Germany and then shipped to the building site, where construction takes four to five months. Sustainability is central to the design: the house contains a geothermal heat-pump system, under-floor heating, a rainwater collection system, and photovoltaic cells integrated into the zinc cladding, among other green features. The villa is projected to use less than 40 kilowatt-hours of thermal energy per square meter each year.

Proportion hopes to build the first Villa Libeskind in Ticino, Switzerland, on a 0.6-acre site overlooking Lake Maggiore. Asking price for the property and house is \$6.8 million. It's being marketed by WETAG Consulting, an affiliate of art auctioneer Christie's.

While Libeskind's portfolio is thick with commercial and institutional projects, the Villa Libeskind would mark his first completed single-family home. "My approach toward residential design differs because of the scale and intimacy of domestic spaces versus that of large-scale commercial places. It is conceived in terms of personal and not public space," Libeskind explains. "The villa really is a living being that soars in its spirit of spacial interaction with those who are in it."

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