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ISSUE

Clear vision

Swiss brand Vitrocsa's seemingly frameless window systems conjure up picture-perfect views for minimalism mavens

A large expanse of sliding glass offers far-reaching views at McLean Quinlan's Jackson Hole house in Wyoming, built in 2015
Photography: Peter Cook



Over the past three decades, Vitrocsa's window systems have revolutionised the world of architecture by way of a handsomely minimalist aesthetic, with some of its illustrious past clients including the likes of Dior, Piaget, the Shangri-La hotel group and Lenny Kravitz. Meeting the exacting specifications of international talents such as Norman Foster, Shigeru Ban and John Pawson, Vitrocsa specialises in vast, seemingly frameless windows that cover entire façades with a magical structural imperceptibility. The product is mostly glass and light, with pivoting, sliding and hinging mechanics hidden away in pockets and partitions, each bespoke element precisely considered and engineered to Swiss horology standards.

Company founder Éric Joray built Vitrocsa on Ludwig Mies Van der Rohe's ethos of 'less is more'. Trained in precision mechanics and formerly employed in the watch industry, Joray was inspired by the greenhouses and conservatories where he grew orchids. Ingeniously inverting the classic principles of traditional window construction by enabling glass to support its near-invisible casing profiles, instead of vice versa, his systems have proved transformative for architects and builders. Joray's unique designs are made with fewer intersecting planes, their generous expanses of glass, of almost boundless heights, dissolving boundaries between interior and exterior.

Vitrocsa created its first minimalist windows in Saint-Aubin-Sauges, Switzerland, back in 1992, in a

former watchmaking building that would become the brand's headquarters. All of its subsequent commissions, frequently in collaboration with world class architectural practices, respect light as not just an illuminating source but also a mysterious, magical and intangible force that drives emotions and defines architectural forms, echoing Frank Lloyd Wright's maxim that light is the beautifier of the building.

To celebrate its 30th anniversary, Vitrocsa commissioned a book for gifting to clients and friends of the brand. Designed by Wallpaper*, *Light is More: 30 Years of Vitrocsa* features some of its most noteworthy projects, including creating extra large sliding doors for McLean Quinlan's Jackson Hole house, Chrofi's Lune de Sang Pavilion in Byron Bay, and Foster + Partners' Dolunay villa in Turkey. The brand had worked with Norman Foster previously, originally developing its Turnable Corner system for him for a 2012 project, its innovative roller mechanism giving panels a wide range of movement, including corners.

The company's guiding principle, says Joray, is 'simple sophistication', aiming to creatively and flawlessly blend indoor and outdoor life. The Vitrocsa atelier shares the same spirit, mentality and meticulousness as a wristwatch manufacture or a luxury car marque's workshop. 'It is important to spend time perfecting components that no one will see,' says Joray. 'Because they are part of a whole in which every detail counts.' vitrocsa.com

Above, the Dolunay villa, on Turkey's Aegean coast, designed in 2019 by Foster + Partners, features both pivoting and sliding double-height glass doors
Photography: Nigel Young/
Foster + Partners

Opposite, the Lune de Sang Pavilion, designed by Australian practice Chrofi in 2018, features a wall of glass looking out over the lush rainforest of Byron Bay in New South Wales
Photography:
Clinton Weaver