

FRAME / BIRKHÄUSER

Dress Code

Interior Design for Fashion Shops

Store
Sigrun Woehr

Location
Stuttgart, Germany

Architect
Ippolito Fleitz Group

Peter Ippolito

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Text

Matthew Stewart

Photography
Zooey Braun

Referring to themselves as 'identity architects', Ippolito Fleitz Group create a fancy and playful atmosphere for Sigrun Woehr's shoe boutique in Stuttgart.

Shoe retailer Sigrun Woehr's eponymous boutiques have taken southern Germany by quiet storm over the past two decades, with their accessible presentation of high-end designer shoes interspersed with sportswear and streetwear brands. It's the type of store where every woman can find something she likes. Woehr's success can be attributed to a good eye and good instincts; her stores have been inseparably influenced by her own identity and personality since their inception. Thus hiring Ippolito Fleitz Group to develop her sixth and final store makes perfect sense, for though the projects that make up the architecture firm's portfolio are diverse in nature (ranging from landscapes to graphic design), the common denominator running through all of them is a deep engagement with the identity of the client. Developing the crown jewel in Woehr's miniature empire was not simply a problem of interior design, says principal designer Peter Ippolito. 'We wanted to position her very well on the market,' explains the architect. 'She's a fancy, playful woman, and the store is very much a product of the atmosphere in the initial discussions we had together.' The store, located on a prime bit of luxury-shopping real estate in Stuttgart, opens on the street with a deep display window. 'We used the depth of the entry to build up tension, to create a space that invites the visitor to go through the door and into a complete new world,' says Ippolito. A narrow slot allows a highly restricted glimpse of what lies beyond.

Inside, a floor-to-ceiling landscape of crisp white display surfaces and powerful accent colours, developed as part of a new corporate-identity package, greets the eye. The interplay of the actual ceiling, painted a deep petroleum blue, and a bright white suspended ceiling sets up the logic of the arrangement. The suspended ceiling, edged in warm yellow, features several cutaway slots over special display areas. 'The slots are guidelines,' continues Ippolito, who says they draw the eye back through the store and past the display stands to a field of green behind the counter, where the new logo adorns the wall. Opposite the counter, the ceiling curves down to form a display wall, also petroleum blue, inset with white powder-coated steel shelves.

The store ends in a curved wall of white display steps. Shelving for shoes also lines the perimeter walls. At the centre of the space, two special display stands offer featured products. Each appears

to be a continuous floor-to-ceiling shape with a horizontal section missing from its centre, creating an illuminated table beneath a curve-edged volume that directs light down on the footwear selected for ephemeral stardom. Slots in the suspended ceiling emphasize the stands, which, like the white counter, were created out of a soft foam material. The team liked the material for several reasons, says Ippolito. 'It has a fashion connotation. It's feminine. On the other hand, it's kind of disturbing. It supports the whole system of tension in the shop - between soft and hard, glossy and matte.'

Ippolito and the design team developed their spatial solution around the corporate identity they were creating. The use of new brand-identity colours was highly calculated - applied only to the ceiling, the suspended ceiling, a band a few centimetres above the floor and one accent wall - proving that less can indeed be more. 'Only focal points far away from the product have colour,' explains Ippolito. Shoes can be notoriously difficult to display: they are small and detailed, and, furthermore, summer shoes (delicate and colourful) vary greatly from winter shoes (larger and often brown or black). The team compensated for these discrepancies with white display shelving throughout, as well as with sensitively precise product lighting.

Apart from logo and colour scheme, the design team also introduced a signature dotted line into the corporate identity, which weaves ingeniously throughout the store, tracing a three-dimensional route along walls and ceiling. 'It's part of the narration, and something people memorize,' says Ippolito. 'It's a different way of combining the elements. It turns the architecture into a bodily experience: sometimes it's far away, and sometimes it's close. It adds a different perspective to the experience.' By turning graphic touches like the line and the fields of colour into living, engaging spaces, Ippolito Fleitz Group bridges the gap between branding and customer experience. The firm refers to itself as 'identity architects', and the retail space for Sigrun Woehr is a fine example of the potential strength of this approach.



Preceding page
Ippolito Fleitz Group created a comprehensive design for shoe retailer Sigrun Woehr, implementing a completely new identity. The results are seen in meandering dotted lines reminiscent of sewing, and in a colour scheme applied both to patches of true ceiling visible behind the floating ceiling and to the accent wall behind the cash desk.



Sigrun Woehr

This spread
The eye drifts to the back of the store and comes to rest on curving tiered display shelves created by Ippolito Fleitz Group as a 'panoramic horizontal ribbon to end the view'.





Opposite
A panel of Sigrun Woehr's signature blue curves seamlessly down from the true ceiling to accommodate accent shelves for featured product display.

Bottom
Central display tables, with forms housing downlights descending from slots in the ceiling, serve as dramatic pedestals for footwear.

- Floor plan
1. Shop-window area
 2. Retail area
 3. Cash desk
 4. Fitting room
 5. Rear of area
 6. Stairs to storage

