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- Ready**
 - Office building, Vilnius
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 - An architectural tour of France's 'TGV cities' Marseilles, Bordeaux and Nantes
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Wholesale happiness

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WGV
Kundenzentrum,
Stuttgart,
Germany
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Section

Analysing
specific
aspects of
contemporary
architecture



Comfort zone

Just as mobile phones have brought the intimacy of private conversation into the public realm, so the public interior has been invaded by the private. The quasi domestic comfort offered by more and more airport lounges, railway waiting rooms and office building lobbies is testimony to this.
If you compare what train stations, airports or banks

looked like twenty years ago, with their uninviting furniture and bland lighting, with what the average shopping mall nowadays provides in the way of bright and cheerful places to sit and relax for a while, you can only conclude that there has been a tremendous increase in public realm comfort—just as there has been a considerable increase in comfort in Europe's affluent societies. →



Display window

STUTT GART (DE) — Founded in 1921, WGV is an insurance company with a long tradition. Its head office is in the centre of Stuttgart, in an architectural ensemble dating from various periods. If-group was commissioned to design the new customer service centre on the ground floor of a 1950s building. As well as housing this service centre and the new main entrance to the complex, the 1000-square-metre space located on a street corner needed to act as a 'display window' for WGV. Into the existing fabric (Horst Heer, 1955), the ar-

chitects therefore had to integrate both the public image of the company and a discreet zone for customer service. The ground floor facade spans the corner with curved glass, offering views into the **insurance company's work area**. To reconcile the display function with a discreet atmosphere for dealing with customers, the architects designed 'service islands' against a single illuminated wall. Beyond the entrance, the reception, service and waiting areas flow smoothly into one another, while offering excellent, self-explanatory orientation. The ceiling and the floor, the materials and the lighting are

coordinated in such a way that instead of being on show like a shop window dummy, customers in search of advice can feel at ease when talking with the company's staff. Here, as in many other of their projects, if-group demonstrate sensitivity in handling existing buildings and a timely expression of new usage. (URSULA BAUS)

WGV CLIENT SERVICES CENTRE, 2008

Architect: ippolito fleitz group. Counter and tables: Baierl & Demmelhuber Innenausbau. Furniture/textile wall covering: Seeger Sitzobjekte, Neuweiler. Cylindrical consultation cubicles: Bohle Innenausbau. Client: Württembergische Gemeinde-Versicherung (WGV). Address: Feinstraße 1, 70178 Stuttgart. Info: www.if-group.org

Homelike office in a former factory

BUDAPEST (HU) — Since 2008, the **head office of ProfiPower**, one of the largest personnel recruitment agencies in Hungary, has been located in an old power station on the edge of Millenáris Park in Budapest.

When director Ilona Jankovich and her regular interior designer/artist Jolanda Muilenburg visited the power station for the first time, they both fell immediately in love with the building's industrial charms, such as the large, four-metre-plus tall spaces with lovely arched brick ceilings. The building's owner was already busy on the other floors installing standard suspended ceiling systems and dividing the space up into little cubicles. But Jankovich and Muilenburg were in no doubt that the spatial quality of the original building should be retained in the new, 1000 m² office. So Muilenburg, together with Hungarian architect Krisztina Mádi, designed a central open space that serves as function space and reception. In a second-hand shop they bought various pieces of furniture from the 1960s and '70s and had them recovered. Elsewhere they found rolls of suitable wallpaper from the same era. From a 'red carpet' fixed to the brick soffit, they hung dozens of plastic spherical lamps (Globo and Slide designs). These vary from 30 cm to 120 cm in diameter and are in keeping with the style and ambience of the chosen furniture and wallpaper. Arranged around this central space are

nine interview rooms. For reasons of privacy, the glass dividing walls are covered with a film with a pattern of ProfiPower logo cut-outs. At the end of the central area is a large multi-functional space where Muilenburg installed a circular bar that is well used for the firm's many meetings (such as network events) and during lunch breaks and drinks parties. A large sliding door connects this space with the adjoining seminar room.

Jankovich has since opened a ProfiPower branch in Bucharest where the same homelike interior concept was applied, only this time not quite as exuberantly as in the head office. (EMIEL LAMERS)

PROFIPOWER HEAD OFFICE, 2008

Architects: Mádiláncos Studio (Edit Mäder) & Jolanda Muilenburg (ZZ)
Client: Profipower Kft.
Address: 1024 Budapest Lövőház utca 39
Info: www.madistudio.hu, www.profipower.hu, www.zet2.nl

