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heaven can wait

WAITING ISN'T EXACTLY HEAVENLY. Unless, perhaps, it's being done at Wittlinger Hahn Stern Radiologie in the southwestern German city of Schorndorf. To create the illusion of natural light in the center's windowless main waiting area, **Ippolito Fleitz Group** snapped a shot of dramatic clouds, converted it into two black-and-white photomurals, and mounted them on backlit canvas. Then the architects painted the drywall ceiling sky blue.

The radiology center, where MRIs, CRIs, X-rays, mammograms, and ultrasound exams are performed, is in the basement of a new extension to a regional hospital, the Gesundheitszentrum Schorndorf. Ippolito Fleitz is no stranger to the building—the firm's senior-living facility, right upstairs, was what prompted the initial call from the radiology practice.

Peter Ippolito, Gunter Fleitz, and their fellow architect Hadi Tandawardaja approached the 7,800-square-foot space with →



From top: Two backlit photomurals are mounted in the main waiting area at Wittlinger Hahn Stern Radiologie in Schorndorf, Germany. Faux leather upholsters the custom benches and the padded walls, with their integral banquettes.



both the medical staff and the patient in mind. In a facility where daunting technology and high turnover go hand in hand with an emotionally charged atmosphere, Ippolito points out, "You must deal directly with fear and angst." So visual cues facilitating serene navigation commence at the threshold. The entry deposits patients directly in front of the reception desk. Fabricated from Japanese

Clockwise from top left: A partition covered in faux leather divides the reception desk, veneered in Japanese ash. Foil-covered glass fronts the three consulting rooms. Shell limestone paves the main corridor. Patients have access to an office setup with Lievore Altherr Molina chairs.

blond ash, the 10-foot-wide unit is split into two stations by a central divider covered in white faux leather.

Beyond reception are the dreamy skies of the main waiting area. "The wait is often long, due to the complicated nature of the procedures," Ippolito continues. "Our seating provides flexibility, so patients don't feel imprisoned." Circular benches, covered in taupe faux leather, ring four round white columns, two of them structural and the other two added for symmetry. Along the sidewalls, the same upholstery appears on padded walls with built-in banquettes.

The space is generous—on an average day, it holds

up to 35 people at a time. And there are four entry points, allowing the 30-person staff access to all those patients. This ease of circulation and communication eliminates the need for a PA system, with its connotations of "anonymity," Ippolito says.

Offering not one but two waiting rooms is becoming common practice in Germany, which has both public and private health care. Here, the smaller, private room was designed with materials and finishes similar to those found in the larger one. Taupe faux leather upholsters a pair of club chairs facing a padded wall with an integral banquette. Since there are no columns to paint white, →



Ippolito Fleitz introduced white elements in the form of a long lozenge-shape table of lacquered MDF and, directly above, a ceiling fixture of similar proportions. Both the public waiting area and the private waiting room have caramel-colored limestone tile on the floor.

White-speckled black linoleum is everywhere

Clockwise from top left: The private waiting room's club chairs upholstered in faux leather, table of lacquered MDF, and light fixture of MDF and acrylic are all custom. A vinyl wall pattern in the main corridor helps with way-finding. Changing rooms feature mirrors accompanied by shelves veneered in Japanese ash. Linoleum flooring flows through the eight changing rooms.

else: In the reception area. In a room where patients hoping to get a little work done while waiting are provided with a white table and black or white polypropylene chairs by Lievore Altherr Molina. In the main corridor, painted a happy orange scored with a pattern of white lines as a navigation device. In the eight changing rooms, where patients benefit not only from privacy, a luxury in itself, but also from thoughtful details such as mirrors and shelves. In treatment rooms painted a soothing taupe, light brown, mint green, or mauve. And in the three consulting rooms.

Floor-to-ceiling windows

as well as in the private waiting room are made possible by the slope of the site. Some natural light penetrates to the adjacent corridor, thanks to the foil-covered glass fronts, which Ippolito calls "an open gesture." When a radiologist needs to review an X-ray, the glass can be darkened by lowering the blinds that are mounted above the doors. "There's a tremendous amount of work involved in transforming a high-tech space into something that doesn't look it," he notes. To really understand the success of the architects, you need X-ray vision. —Mairi Beautyman

CHAIRS (OFFICE FACILITY): **ARPER**. GLASS FOIL (HALL): **SCOTCH**. CEILING FIXTURES: **VIABIZZUNO**. LINOLEUM FLOORING: **FORBO FLOORING**. MILLWORK: **GLOCK HOLZINNEAUBAU**. LIGHTING CONSULTANT: **LIGHT TECH**.