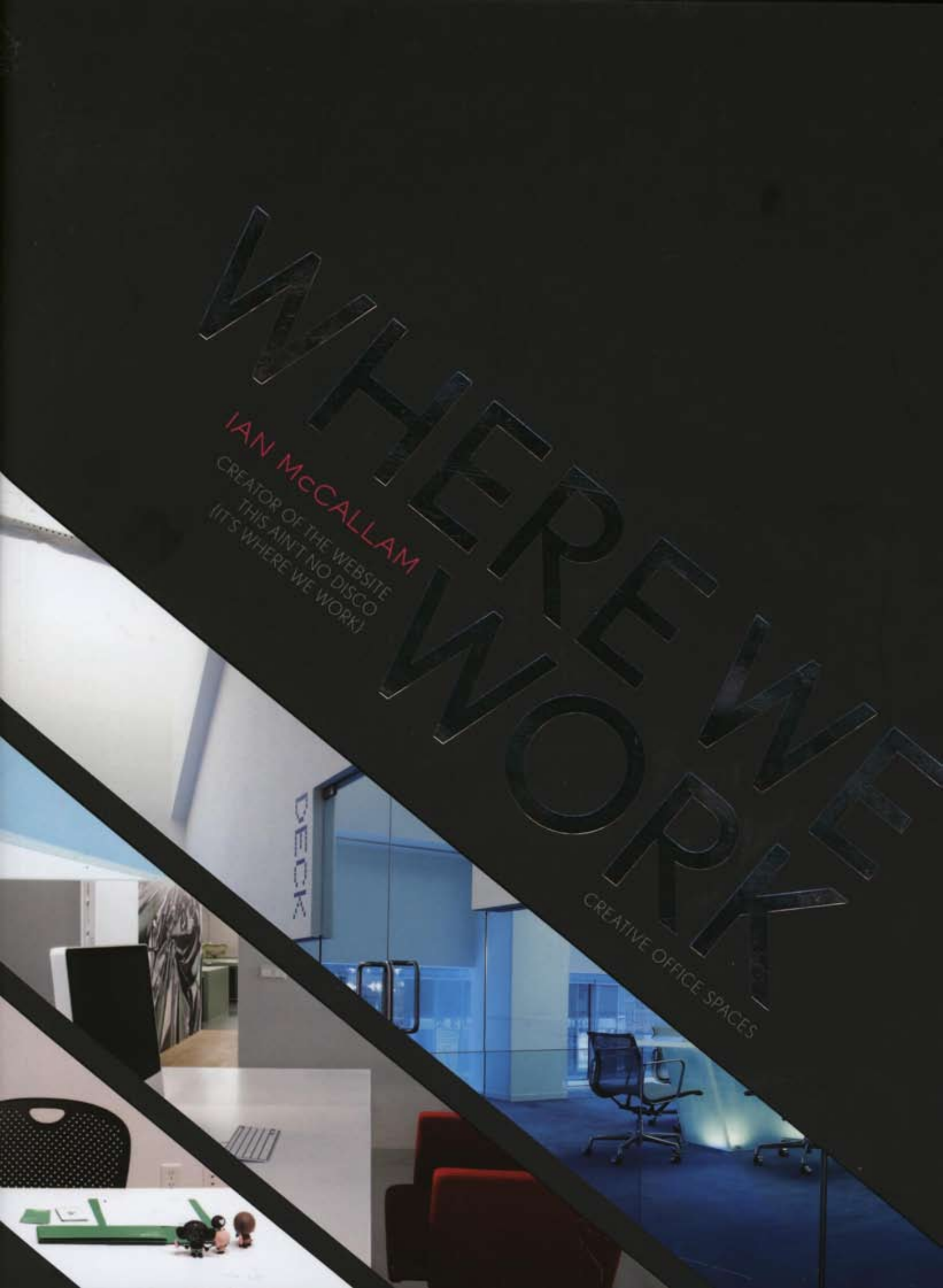


# WHERE WE WORK

**IAN MCCALLAM**

CREATOR OF THE WEBSITE  
THIS AIN'T NO DISCO  
(IT'S WHERE WE WORK)

CREATIVE OFFICE SPACES







A MIRROR ABOVE THE KITCHEN TABLE DOUBLES THE EFFECT OF THE FORTY LIGHT BULBS

“OUR MAIN THOUGHT WAS TO GET THE TEAM CLOSE TO EACH OTHER. EVERYBODY SHOULD BENEFIT FROM THE KNOWLEDGE AND PERSONALITY OF THEIR COLLEAGUES. THE ENTIRE ATMOSPHERE IS HIGHLY COMMUNICATIVE—WITH THE COUNTERPART THAT ON SOME DAYS THE SILENT CORNERS IN THE OFFICE ARE TOO FEW.”

## JOUSSEN KARLICZEK GMBH

// Schorndorf, Germany

When visitors approach the Jousen Karliczek offices from the outside, they can see a roaring fire burning in the brick chimney—a great metaphor for the “burning fire of passion” and the “warm, welcoming friendliness” that the advertising agency desires to bring to life every day in its Schorndorf, Germany, headquarters.

Jousen Karliczek’s twenty-two employees generate creative campaigns, corporate, web, print, and editorial design as well as branding and marketing strategies for their clients from within a workspace that in a previous life housed a leather tannery, along the banks of the Rems River. In 1999, several new companies turned to the tannery as a potential office space site; Jousen Karliczek became the fiftieth lessee, and their neighbors include a theater, an indoor pet obedience school, a furniture store, a jeweler, and a paper-making artisan. The Rems flows within the center of the industrial complex’s ten buildings, crossed by a beautiful bridge that Jousen Karliczek’s staff can see from their windows.

The agency relocated to this new office in May 2007, and occupies 412 square meters. Agency co-founder Thomas Jousen says, “When we started the process, we dreamed of a workspace that is both a functional and effective working area as well as a ‘home’ for our customers and our team. We wanted to communicate that this is the home of ‘brain-



FLOOR PLAN





COLUMNS DIVIDE THE ROOM INTO TWO PARTS: OFFICES AND MEETING ROOMS.



power' and 'passion.' We wanted to create an inspiring oasis, a decent metaphor that represents our attitude, our view of design simplicity and style. We wanted to transport concentration as well as sociability, and professionalism as well as a down-to-earth spirit. It is important that from the outside you can see the entire office through a big window that faces the aisle, generating a lot of curiosity for everyone passing by."

Co-founder Peter Karliczek adds, "We are convinced that design is important for everyone—and that there are some people who just do not know this yet—but everyone is affected by their surroundings. For those people who have to produce creative and intelligent results, the design of the work environment is especially important—it inspires and delights, it relaxes and challenges, it produces enthusiasm, self-esteem, and corporate spirit, and at the same time is functional and effective."

Joussem and Karliczek turned to architects Peter Ippolito and Gunter Fleitz of Ippolito Fleitz GmbH for assistance in bringing their vision to life. Karliczek explains, "After giving Ippolito Fleitz our vision, they presented the first designs, and we were amazed from the very first moment we saw them. Believe it or not, what they built is exactly what they showed us, more or less not changing a single thing. Incredible but true, but Peter and Gunter, and their team, understood exactly what we wanted and transformed our briefing and dreams into great interior design."

Joussem states, "With our limited architectural skills, we knew we'd never be able to meet our very ambitious architectural taste! During these projects and especially the process to design and build our own workspace, we developed a good friendship with both of them...which is a very nice and valuable side-effect."

Joussem and Karliczek had worked previously with Ippolito and Fleitz on client projects, so there was a level of trust. They conveyed to the architects their strong belief in the "separation of powers" or "division of labor," where each member of the team recognizes its strengths as well as its limitations.

Karliczek explains, "When we talked to Peter, the interior designer, we mentioned our design heroes who are mainly furniture designers like Ray and Charles Eames (finally we ended up with some of their chairs in our office...great stuff!), Antonio Citterio, or the architect Rem Koolhaas. In addition we love the brands Vitra, bebitalia, Audi, Mini, Apple (who does not love them?), Bang & Olufsen, the work of Tyler Brûlé or Paul Smith...all these people, brands, and styles inspire our work as well as the sense of our interior design. At least that is how we briefed it...and we are very satisfied with the results."

The end-result office has a distinctive area for clients, another area for the team. These two zones are "embraced" by two very relaxed areas—the lounge with its open fireplace, a foosball table and relaxing sofas on one side, and the kitchen with a large table, sixteen chairs, and forty lamps on the other side. The mixture of these three distinct spaces creates a great balance of work and leisure that works together to function as a very livable environment. Karliczek points out, "The

team loves the workspace, and we are sure that the welcoming atmosphere made it easier for some of our new colleagues to join us, especially because we are not located in a major city in Germany."

Ippolito and Fleitz employed simple and light materials when transforming the Joussem Karliczek interior—dark brown, beige, and white wood and mdf-boards; synthetic, transparent walls in honeycomb structure; huge, 1.52-meter-wide swinging doors; mirrors; and a selection of various carpets combine with the old stone floor that was recently re-sealed with a high-gloss finish. One of the highlights of the office is the prevailing abundance of light. "The scenarios of light are great and very stimulating," Karliczek says.

One of those sources of light is the agency's signature open fireplace, which burns brightly on an almost-daily basis. "We light a fire more or less every day that is not warmer than twenty degrees Celsius, which happens a lot in Germany," Joussem notes. "It's a great welcoming visual for our clients, who can see the fire the moment they approach the office from the outside, and is a great metaphor for the passion and friendliness that we invest in our work."

Joussem points out the team building that goes on at the agency's kitchen table. "We gather around it every single day for a common lunch time. Not the entire team eats together every day, but at least six and sometimes as many as twenty people are there. It is wide, beautiful, and creates a family atmosphere when we gather round."

Karliczek laughs, "We love the 'poodle carpet' in our conference room and individual offices. It's very soft and very comfortable when you walk barefoot on it in the warm summer months, and it looks great and is very easy to keep clean." Joussem adds, "The Polder sofa from Vitra, designed by Hella Jongerius, is a piece that we were dreaming of. It now accompanies a Cité Lounge chair designed by Jean Prouvé and an old sport-box that I got from my school gym. We love this ensemble of new and old and everyday pieces. A lot of our internal and informal meetings happen in here."

Karliczek elaborates on the flow of the "zone" interior, "Our main thought was to get the team close to each other. Everybody should benefit from the knowledge and personality of their colleagues. The entire atmosphere is highly communicative—with the counterpart that on some days the silent corners in the office are too few. In addition there's the mix of impulses that make people creative and effective—meeting areas and desks, zones to chill and zones to concentrate flow into one other. Especially for meetings with our clients, this creates a great atmosphere—the client feels that they are an integral part of the process, that they are in the middle of everything and that they are important."

Joussem observes that motion is a necessary component for good creativity. He says, "We are very happy that the need to walk—for example to see a colleague or to grab some fruit or coffee—makes you stand up and walk very often. We are in motion most of the time. And that is a good metaphor for effective working—keep moving, keep talking, do not stand still."





Communication is key—the Jousen Karliczek office fosters communication and open-mindedness. In addition to the classical desk setup in groups of six, there are plenty of areas and corners where people can meet. Karliczek says, "Talking and thinking together is something you can do perfectly in our rooms. And if you need concentration, there is for example the little six-meter bridge that leads to the next building and that we integrated into our office. It provides a quiet space without a computer for quiet thinking and a fabulous look at the river."

Both Jousen and Karliczek agree that sustainability is an important component of the work place. Jousen states, "We believe that sustainability makes an impression for the client as well as for the employees. The first thing we decided to do was to keep the original stone floor from the factory. We sealed it with an eco-friendly varnish. We also made sure the materials we used throughout the office were eco-friendly, by virtue of our paint selections and choice of woods. Our carpets are made especially for people with allergies. The furniture elements were chosen because of their flexibility and longevity. They are all high quality yet easy to assemble or disassemble in case of a change in location."

The agency is a sought-after location for film and TV shoots, including a cooking show and a "thriller" movie. Flattering, but Jousen says they prefer to invite friends, partners, and clients to creative parties and events within the unique space.

"We want to create things that work and solutions that are effective. We want to produce real benefit for our clients and not just beautiful stuff that doesn't really help them. We want to be constructive partners of our clients that discuss relevant issues at eye level. In conclusion, we love to create things that not only work but that are beautiful! We love 'good design,'" Karliczek comments.

Jousen explains, "We start with a very deep analysis to understand exactly what the client and the task need. One of our strengths are asking the right questions...and producing the right conclusions from good answers. We are able to develop creative solutions that are not necessarily expensive. Very often we go new ways beyond classical paths."

OPPOSITE PAGE: HEAVY CURTAINS CREATE AN INTIMATE ATMOSPHERE.

