

WHERE WE WORK

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

CREATIVE OFFICE SPACES





"OUR CONCEPTUALIZATION AS 'IDENTITY ARCHITECTS' BECOMES A QUASI-TRADE-MARK FOR STUDIO STAFF AND CLIENTS ALIKE. WITHIN THIS SPACE, THE CLIENT IS INTRODUCED TO AN AUTHENTIC STUDIO PHILOSOPHY WITH NOTHING PHONY ABOUT IT, WHICH MAKES THE EXCITEMENT OF THE CREATIVE PROCESS VISIBLE, AND PRESENTS NEW SPATIAL IDEAS WHILE LEAVING ROOM TO RELAX."

IPPOLITO FLEITZ GROUP- IDENTITY ARCHITECTS

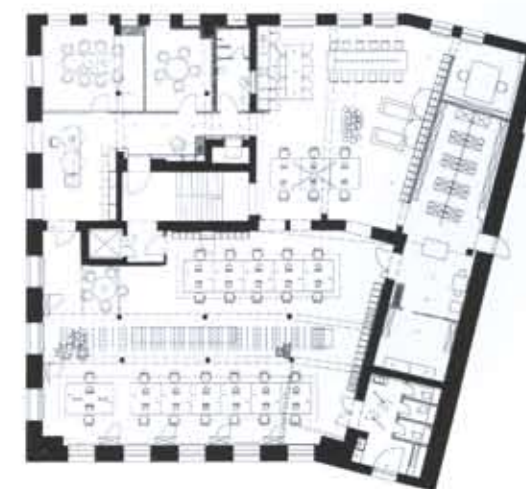
// Stuttgart, Germany

If you described yourself as an "identity architect," then it stands to reason that you'd most likely do your work by starting with a sparkling clean slate and build from the ground up. Ippolito Fleitz Group in Stuttgart took this literally—especially the clean slate part—because they relocated their design studio in a former west Stuttgart industrial laundry facility, circa 1900.

Ippolito Fleitz principals looked for a long time to find a space that reflected the design studio's needs and signature philosophy, but when they happened upon the four-hundred-and-eighty-square-meter site in the five-storey historic building that has survived war and a host of previous tenants, the four-meter-high ceiling and cast-iron pillars evoked a feel that spoke of new identities.

The twenty-seven employees of this agency, which specializes in communicating a company's corporate image across many visual media, employ design as a quest versus a process. They find inspiration in a variety of fields, including art, technology, and everyday life. Peter Ippolito, agency principal, explains, "We add a distinctive character to each concept.

OPPOSITE PAGE, BOTTOM RIGHT: A CLOUD OF DELICATE WHITE LIGHTS HANG ABOVE AN OVAL CONFERENCE TABLE.



FLOOR PLAN



THIS PAGE, TOP LEFT: THE WALLS ARE COVERED FLOOR-TO-CEILING WITH FRAMED STUDIO PROJECTS. // OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP LEFT: AN UPHOLSTERED READING ISLAND IS SITUATED IN FRONT OF THE COMPANY LIBRARY.

A strategy of decontextualization and deciphering, of taking apart and rearranging is a common thread through many of our projects. Looking at things, looking behind them, and the dissension of ordinary things are all major differences in a design process that aims to develop a relevant, unexpected solution that makes a difference."

Ippolito Fleitz personnel spent four months renovating their new location prior to inhabiting it in mid-2008. Tangibility was critical. As Ippolito says, "Our conceptualization as 'identity architects' becomes a quasi-trademark for studio staff and clients alike. Within this space, the client is introduced to an authentic studio philosophy with nothing phony about it, which makes the excitement of the creative process visible, and presents new spatial ideas while leaving room to relax."

The former laundry's size and atmosphere also symbolized the agency's forward thinking, as they continue to expand their team and work base. Ippolito Fleitz's employees come from a multitude of interdisciplinary skill sets, including graphic, architectural, and communication design.

Upon entering the agency, visitors approach a tiled, somber staircase through a heavy metal door, and arrive in a luminous white reception area. A work by the artist Robert Steng hangs on the opposite wall. "This two-dimensional, reclaimed wood object represents a three-dimensional spatial vista, and is a fitting artistic interpretation of the studio's guiding principles," says Ippolito.

The cubic, white reception desk located beneath two large light disks fits seamlessly into the white space. Ippolito offers, "Two elements dissolve the reductionist nature of this space: an abstract wall graphic on the entrance wall to the studio points the way toward the creative department. In striking contrast to the white walls, the floor is fitted with a violet carpet displaying a checked pattern of our own design. This effectively adds a softer, more cosy note to the precise clarity of the reception area."

Adjacent to the reception area is a large conference room, separated from the former by a glass wall. Large windows on two sides of the room ensure sufficient daylight, which filters into the room through diaphanous, white curtains. A cloud of delicate, white, spherical lights hang suspended above the oval conference table. A cast-iron pillar, the exposed service pipes, and the original ceiling have simply





EACH PENDANT LAMP CAN BE OPERATED USING THE COLORFUL FABRIC RIBBONS.



“THE OPEN-PLAN INTERIOR ENCOURAGES CROSS POLLINATION AND CREATIVE INTERCOURSE, FOSTERING AN INTERDISCIPLINARY DESIGN PROCESS AS DIFFERENT TYPES OF DESIGN WORK TOGETHER IN CONCERT.”

been painted white to retain the charm of the original industrial architecture. The small conference room next door is stylistically contrapuntal, offering the perfect setting for private, focused discussion.

A round, white table stands in the center of a deep violet space, where walls are peppered floor-to-ceiling with framed images of studio projects. A window opens to the outside in the guest WC is now back-lit and mirrored to offer a new reflective horizon.

The nucleus of the office is the studio. Ippolito notes that the open-plan interior was specifically selected to encour-

age “cross pollination and creative intercourse, fostering an interdisciplinary design process as different types of design work together in concert.”

Workstations in the main studio area are positioned at intervals along three long work benches. The studio’s two managing partners work at the first, smaller bench, and literally an arm’s length away are a longer bench with twelve workstations, and another featuring ten. Behind workstations are shelving units with magnetic fronts to display work in process or for use during project review and brainstorming discussions. Hanging overhead are individual fabric “ribbons” composed of collected textiles over a forty-year period, and

in as much as they are used as a splash of color, the ribbons also serve a function. By pulling them, the pendant luminaires that suspend over every workstation are turned on or off.

A key aspect of work at the studio is working with materials. This is taken into consideration by a large shelving unit housing the materials library that delineates the space to one side. Samples used in current projects are often displayed on the long shelving unit along the room’s central axis. In combination with sketches, renderings, and plans, this surface becomes a permanent presentation space and a barometer for the progress of individual projects. The shelving wall hides the back office containing a workshop, print station, and archive.

To the right of the materials library, a door leads to the staff washrooms, which are decorated with large-scale illustrations. An exterior door leads to a terrace beneath an old cherry tree, offering outdoor refuge.

There is also sufficient space to unwind indoors. While the studio itself is an epicenter of productive activity, the adjacent salon is all about communication and inspiration. The latter can be sought in magazines and books in the library,

which is housed in floor-to-ceiling shelves behind a large, triptych mirror that can be pushed to both sides. In front of the library is an upholstered reading island created by the company’s product designer Tilla Goldberg.

The most important part of the room, according to Ippolito, is the kitchen, which is allotted great significance and ample space—something the agency learned from numerous projects performed for the housing industry. The open kitchen is orthogonal to the window bank, flanked by a long table. This table is not only full during lunch hour, but also offers hospitality for client cook-ins and larger meetings. Ippolito Fleitz received the 2009 Red Dot Award for Communication Design for the studio’s design, and within this award-winning space, the staff designers cook on a daily basis.

Sustainability is an integral component of many of the agency’s projects, and so regenerative materials were employed when renovating the new space. All carpets are hypo-allergenic and toxin-free. Caparol paints are low-carbon emission, solvent-free, and unplasticized. The second-hand, restored furniture and recycled fabric ribbons and pieces all add to the notion that beautiful accents often come from found objects, further proof that one can indeed design a new identity.