

N° 01

LOOKBOOK

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Dear Reader,

Everything is subject to change and the world of work is no exception. While just a few years ago the office was still the most important workplace, today many people also work at home, in coworking spaces or on the road. Working is more versatile and multi-faceted than ever before. Especially in big cities, creative, culturally driven impulses are forming new hybrid ways of work that could not be more different from a classic office.

Reason enough to take a look behind the scenes: in ten interviews, we get to know the workspaces, work styles, work facets and furniture of creative people across Europe. These personal insights show people who are actively shaping the working world of today and tomorrow.

For us, it was not only a pleasure but a wonderful experience to talk to them and experience their inspirations.

We hope you enjoy browsing and reading – there is so much to discover!

Your team Sedus

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Facets of Work

Work does not automatically mean office. Workplaces are as diverse as the professions and the people who perform them. The personal touch plays a special role, the demand for one's own actions and the desire to make a positive difference for oneself and for others – in facets that could not be more different.

Through crisis via chat

How a Berlin start-up is revolutionising crisis counselling for young people

Psychological problems among young people are increasing. But for many, it is not easy to seek help and support. Often the hurdles that young people seem to have to overcome are simply too high. The Berlin start-up “krisenchat” shows how a digital offering has helped to start vital conversations. Co-founder Melanie Eckert explains to us how the platform makes a real difference for young people with its low-threshold access to professional help.

Text

Bernadette Trepte

Photo

Josephine Seidel-Leuteritz





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1 krisenchat currently works with a community of around 450 volunteer counsellors. There are very few groups in Germany for dealing with mental stress, especially among young people. Therefore, the team solves this mammoth task with a strong community of voluntary commitment, financial supporters and highly qualified employees who care about a job with meaning.

2/3 The first step in the chat: listening, reacting empathetically and helping the young help-seekers to sort out the situation.

The start-up krisenchat was founded in May 2020. What were your motives for this back then?

Even before Corona, there were far too few services for children and young people in crisis. Three of my co-founders, who were only 18 at the time, had programmed an anti-bullying app for schools, which was quickly adapted for what was needed at the beginning of the pandemic. It was clear to us that mental stress, especially for the youngest in our society, would increase drastically in this exceptional situation and that they needed easy access to professional help. That is why we launched krisenchat as a 24/7, anonymous psychosocial counselling service via chat and WhatsApp for young people.

A cornerstone for people in need is certainly a telephone counselling service. Why do you think that the offer does not pick up people of all ages?

Mental stress is unfortunately still very stigmatised. At the same time, we know that 75% of all mental illnesses develop at a young age under 25 and that early help and therapies are particularly effective. The key question is therefore: How do we reach young people to educate them about difficult life situations and motivate them to get help? Because krisenchat was largely set up by very young and committed people, we were able to really integrate their perspective on it. The target group is extremely reluctant to make phone calls and needs its own way of addressing



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these issues. We have specialised in this and offer counselling via messenger, precisely because over 95 % of the target group uses these services every day and can confide in them anonymously.

What concerns and worries do young people come to you with?

The top 3 issues are depressive symptoms, suicidal thoughts and self-harming behaviour. However, young people come to us with all kinds of concerns. These range from heart-break to loneliness to acute danger situations in which our child protection team takes on cases because young people are suffering from physical or psychological violence.

About 2/3 of those seeking help are young women. Why is it so difficult for young men to ask for help? And how do you try to reach them better and inform them about your services?

Psychological problems are generally still very stigmatised – especially among young men. Role models and the assumption that “you have to be strong” or that you have to deal with everything on your own are particularly prevalent among male sufferers. For the most part, society still has very stereotypical images that attribute emotional problems, crises and emotions in general primarily to women. Communicating that it is strong to open up about problems and that men are also sad, hurt or desperate is a long road that we are taking by devoting special attention to this topic. That is why we are also active, for example, on gaming platforms and cooperate with many influencers from the fields of music (rap), gaming, sports and fashion. They can be incredibly important role models, especially for young men.

1 The krisenchat office is located in the heart of Berlin. In addition to the classic workplace, there is also a shared living room and kitchen, which is used for relaxation and exchange.

2 “We deal with crises and really emotionally stressful issues on a daily basis, so self-care is very important and a nice environment is essential”, says Melanie. “In our living room you can play the piano, retreat and read or hang out on the couch together. It is where important ideas come from, but also a lot of nice conversations.”



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What does a “normal” working day look like for a counsellor?

Our volunteer counsellors work all over Germany. They work 2-4 counselling shifts (2 hours each) per month, which they can divide up to suit their own schedules. We have developed our own platform for counselling, which provides guidelines and resources and ensures that we are available 24/7 for our counsellors through a shift pattern.

Most of your team works remotely. How do you make every employee feel like an integral part of the krisenchat team?

We initially set up completely remotely and after a year we realised how important it is to have a place where at least part of the permanent core team physically comes together. It was clear to us that we did not need a classic office, but a place where we like to chat and brainstorm. We deal with crises and really emotionally stressful issues on a daily basis, so self-care is very important and a nice environment is simply good. But most of our daily work takes place remotely and Slack is our most important communication and

information tool. An appreciative approach in written communication, digital exchange spaces and rituals, such as the digital joint lunch, are important elements. In addition we try to get together for several days at least twice a year on offsites. We work together on larger issues, cook together, celebrate and spend time together.

The big meeting table is in the kitchen. Is the kitchen a kind of central meeting place for you as a team?

The kitchen is a central point in every flat or office. It is where we brainstorm things, have important meetings and many people can join us around our long, welcoming table.

In the kitchen, there is a long dining table that is used for communal lunches, but also for team meetings. Spontaneous brainstorming sessions are implemented in a relaxed kitchen atmosphere thanks to the flexible se:lab board with the accompanying se:lab rack.

I really like the fact that it was made with love and passion by a friend of one of the co-founders during his training as a carpenter – so the target group is also present here.

And one last question: You are a psychologist. What do you think the interior of your office says about you as a start-up?

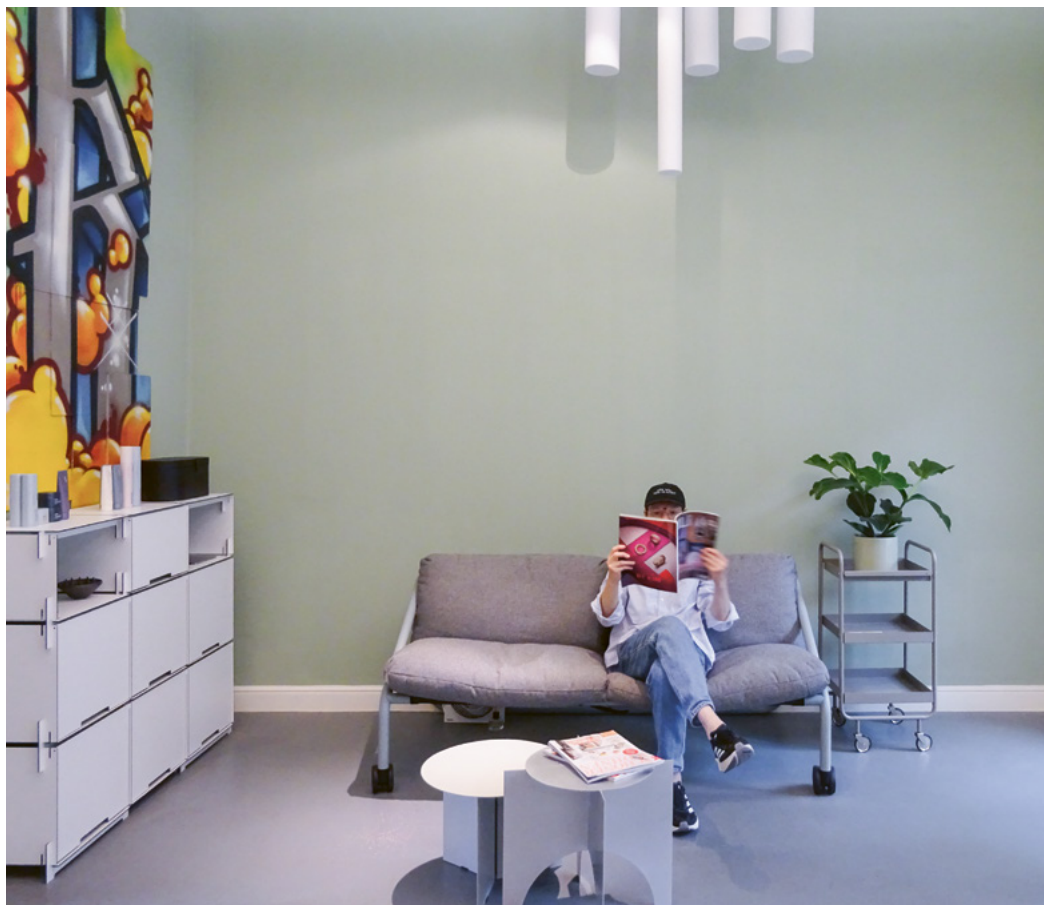
I think it is wonderful when the working environment and the office are filled with life and individuality. Of course, you also need a professional set-up, but the combination of partly private vintage furniture, art and plants ensure that most people feel comfortable with us and also inspired for their work. I am convinced that the furnishings, spaces and light have a positive impact on our well-being and our creative work. It is fulfilling to observe

how the team make the rooms their own and also use them as a community place for dance meditation or other events, even after work, in a self-organised way. We have furnished everything ourselves and as a social start-up we only have limited funds available; this also makes us creative and so the old cinema seats are now no longer just seating options born out of necessity, but a popular retreat.

Who works here?

Melanie Eckert is co-founder of “krisenchat.de”. krisenchat is a psychosocial counselling service via chat. Children, adolescents and young adults up to 25 years of age can contact krisenchat around the clock, 7 days a week, and get in touch with professional counsellors via the website, SMS or WhatsApp. The krisenchat chat service is free of charge for users and is financed exclusively by donations and made possible by sponsors.





Text & Photo
Bernadette Trepte

klaus haare

An oasis of calm in the middle
of the urban jungle

From the outside, you would not think that such a pearl of hair-dressing was hiding behind the shabby façade of this old building in Cologne's Rathenauviertel district. Across approximately 60 square metres, master hairdresser Stephan Klaus Dietzsch has created an oasis of peace, relaxation and enjoyment. In his very own salon "klaus haare" he takes "washing, cutting, blow-drying" to a new level for his customers every day. Stephan explains in an interview what he particularly values in his salon.

Give us a first impression: What three words would you use to describe your salon?

Personal, individual and reduced to the essentials. I want my salon to be a kind of retreat for my clients in the middle of the urban jungle. When designing the salon, I made sure that I created an atmospheric basis with a harmonious colour scheme, that I did not overload the space with furniture and decorative elements, and that I did not overload the eye. Outside, in front of the door, there is hustle and bustle and abundance. In my shop, I want my guests to arrive, relax and simply let themselves be pampered.

What do you do differently from a traditional hair salon?

I have rethought the concept of “wash, cut, blow-dry”. There is no assembly-line processing here. Customers get my full attention. Their wishes and needs are always my main focus. That is why I schedule my appointments in such a way that I do not attend to two clients at the same time, even though that would be possible and certainly the most efficient or economical. There is a lot of traffic around Rathenauplatz, where my salon is located. The noise from shops, restaurants and cafés can be heard everywhere and I have tried to create a counterpoint for my clients. I want to invite them to relax and be soothed right when they enter the shop through the clear, reduced, uncluttered design of my salon. My wish is that after their visit they not only leave the shop happy with a new hairstyle, but they have also taken the time to briefly recover from the stresses of everyday life.



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1 The façade of the old building in Cologne does not look very inviting. But behind the front door is an oasis of calm in the middle of the city's hustle and bustle.

2 Stephan focuses on people. He gives his customers his full attention and never looks after two clients at the same time.

3 The salon's interior is unique. The mix of vintage items, design pieces and functional furniture is what gives klaus haare its special flair.



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1 After entering the salon, customers take a seat on the se:lab sofa. The comfortable model sweetens any waiting time.

2 Stephan uses a height-adjustable stool for his work. The all-rounder provides relief on long working days.

What was important in choosing the furnishings to fit your concept?

The salon is located in an old building in Cologne – unfortunately there are not too many of those left. The architecture, with its high ceilings, exposed beams and large windows already created a certain atmosphere that I could use for the vision of my salon. When I chose the furniture, I emphasised a mix of vintage and new. My dressing chair, for example, is an old barber chair, which is not only very comfortable, but also gives the salon a great flair in combination with the vintage pieces. I specifically looked for pieces of furniture that are practical and functional, which complement the look and feel of the classics and form a harmonious whole with

them. The salon should radiate calm, but also have a stimulating effect. I think I succeeded quite well.

You just told us that the sofa is new. What was in its place before?

That is right. The upholstered sofa is new. Before the se:lab sofa, there was a vintage bench with a woven seat here. It was beautiful, but not very comfortable. I have always wanted a sofa that was stylish, flexible and comfortable. And that is what I finally found recently.

“I want to invite my guests to relax and be soothed right when they enter the shop through the clear, reduced, uncluttered design of my salon.”



What do your customers say about it?

It was clear that the sofa would leave a positive impression. They love it and now even look forward to the occasional wait (Stephan laughs).

While your customers sit comfortably in your office, you work a lot standing up. How does that affect you?

I work about 50 % standing and 50 % sitting. I have a height-adjustable stool that supports me in my work. On long days with up to eight clients, the job is quite physically demanding. That is why it is so important for me to balance out my working and private life by jogging and spending time in the fresh air.

One last question: If you had not become a hairdresser, what would you have done?

For me, there was no real alternative. I love the craft. But since you want an answer, I would probably say carpenter. In that profession, just like in hairdressing, you work with your head, your heart and your hands.

Who works here?

Stephan Klaus Dietzsch has been working as a hairdresser for over 23 years. He opened his own salon at Beethovenstraße 14 in Cologne's trendy Rathenauplatz district about 14 years ago.



A studio as a strategy centre

A former garden arbour in a new guise

Only a few steps separate the residential home from the studio. A building stands at the back of the garden, which functions as a separate workplace. Plain white on the outside, inside there is a lot of thinking, planning and consulting going on. Here, workplace expert Hannah Nardini is in her element: she deals with corporate structures, individual furnishing solutions and takes offices to a new level.



Text & Photo
Johanna Soika

At the workplace of a workplace expert

With her work and the team at WKSpace, Hannah Nardini is dedicated to workplace consultancy and strategy development. It is about creating meaningful and effective recommendations for the ideal future worksite. When companies and clients approach her for help, a whole machine is set in motion. And whether it is downsizing a business, identifying space requirements for a relocation or a change in working environment, it always starts with data collection. Throughout the process, there is a close collaboration with all the people in the company. This includes for example, workshops, to understand the future and operational priorities and to test appetite for change. This provides the basis for further data gathering and the development of a strategy.



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1 The “furnishing memory” can be used to find out preferences and wishes when redesigning work areas.

2 Partner with fur – dog Malfy is a permanent member of the team and also has his favourite places in the studio.

3 Together with husband Phillip Merrick, data is analysed, processes are scrutinised and recommendations are developed. The swivel chair se:air is used at the desk.

In which working atmosphere do you feel most comfortable?

As a team we practice what we preach. We use many different work settings in our own office and when travelling. This means we will work in coffee shops, on trains, client offices and in serviced offices from time to time. We have learnt a lot about what makes activity-based working more successful through our own experiences – plenty of plugs, decent wi-fi, areas that are quiet for phone calls and the ability to work in a comfortable space, from seated to standing.

What was important to you when building and furnishing the studio?

We want to test different products out if we are making recommendations to our clients, so we often have lots of trial furniture coming in and out. As our office is one large space, we have had to create pockets which allow us all to be on a call at the same time

and not disturb each other. For this reason, having great acoustic products, planting and space dividers have been essential to make the space work functionally. In addition to the furnishings in the office, it was important to us that the office was a completely self-contained area. Despite being located at the back of our house, we wanted the feeling of separation and the mindset of ‘going to the office’ each day. During the pandemic, this was so valued to us!

What are your must-haves – what would you not want to be without in your workspace?

Must haves are a decent coffee machine, super-fast wi-fi (we have had to invest in satellite wi-fi), additional monitors to dock into, ergonomic chairs and acoustic products to dampen sound transfer. Our absolute priority is to have a space that is functional and supports our physical wellbeing, and we feel we have achieved this. Aesthetic design is important, particularly as we are on camera most of our working day, so we have been careful to manage our backgrounds.

What do you think will be the most important attributes for a well-functioning/frequently used workplace in the future?

Variety. People want different things from the workplace, and we cannot do a ‘one size fits all’. Some people like to be amongst lots of people and in an energetic, lively space. For them, open plan is perfect. But other people might prefer to focus in areas that are quiet and tucked away. For them, spaces such as booths, pods and private work rooms are more suitable. We need to look at workplace design based upon the people it needs to support. This is what our consultancy process is about.

1 The yellow ducks are representative of the beginnings of WKSpace – they were an important symbol for the process.

2 Where should the journey go? Equipped with a large monitor and a standing table, much of the consultation takes place in interactive exchange.



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“We have learnt a lot about what makes activity-based working more successful through our own experiences.”

What is the “most wanted” piece of furniture of the last two years in new interiors?

Without a doubt – pods! Spaces that support virtual meetings, phone calls and private working but without building walls. There is a desire for multiple spaces to be added quickly so acoustic pods are a perfect solution and one we recommend on every project we work on. They also meet the need for flexibility. Other solutions that are proving popular are informal meeting areas such as a high back booth, dining areas to support socialisation and improved ergonomics such as sit/stand desks.

Sitting or standing? How do you prefer to work?

A mix of both. I like standing for short periods of time or when on phone calls or virtual meetings but I seem to fidget more when I need to really focus so I am better sitting down for these types of tasks.



—— **Who works here?**

Hannah Nardini is one of the UK’s leading workplace strategists who takes a unique and holistic approach to workplace solutions. Her focus is on creating an environment that increases productivity and employee satisfaction.

Home Office Stories

A working world without a home office? Hardly imaginable any more. The home office has become firmly established as a place to work. Many freelancers and creative professionals have set up their own four walls as a permanent workplace. How do you reconcile your private and professional life? “Home Office Stories” provides exclusive insights.



With great sensitivity

Living, working, and enjoying in harmony

When an interior designer and an architect renovated their first house together, it was not always easy. The ideas and approaches sometimes could not be more different. But not so with Elisabetta Rizzato and Denis Stoppiglia. They have created an atmosphere in their home that reflects not only their homelands, but also the essence of both of them. Elisabetta explains to us how they have achieved this.

Text & Photo
Bernadette Trepte

For a first insight: What three words would you use to describe your home and why?

Cosy, colourful, and Mediterranean, because the whole space is very bright and in warm neutrals, with pops of colour in some parts. We also used a lot of tiles, curtains, and finishes which are typical of our native homes. We wanted a place where we could always feel a bit like it is summer and vacation time!

Which colours do you prefer for living areas and which ones for the home office?

I like colours which are warm and not too bright, even if I also love working with pops of bold colours. Our living area is a semi-open space towards the kitchen and there we painted one part of the ceiling in a very bright blue – that is my favourite colour. We also added some green in the arch in the living area – that is

Denis' favourite colour, and completed the palette with terracotta – a tone we both like because it is very warm.

The boundaries between home and home office are sometimes blurred. How do you manage to separate your private and professional lives?

I keep my home office corner tidy and clutter-free as much as possible. I organise my things in a cabinet and use the upper area of the desk to hide my agendas and working materials when they are not in use. At the same time, I also want the home office to fit in well with the rest of the room. That is why, for example, we chose a similar type of wood for the desk surface that we also used for our flooring. This way, the work area is harmoniously integrated into the living area.



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1 On the floor plan of the house, Elisabetta explains to us the status of the renovation.

2 Elisabetta and Denis use se:fit not only for the work area. The height-adjustable stool also looks good at the kitchen counter.



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1 Elisabetta looks directly into the greenery from her home office area.

2 Working while sitting and standing: Depending on the activity, Elisabetta automatically raises or lowers her height-adjustable desk.

You are currently planning your own studio, but now you mainly work from your home office. How have you created an environment in your home that inspires you?

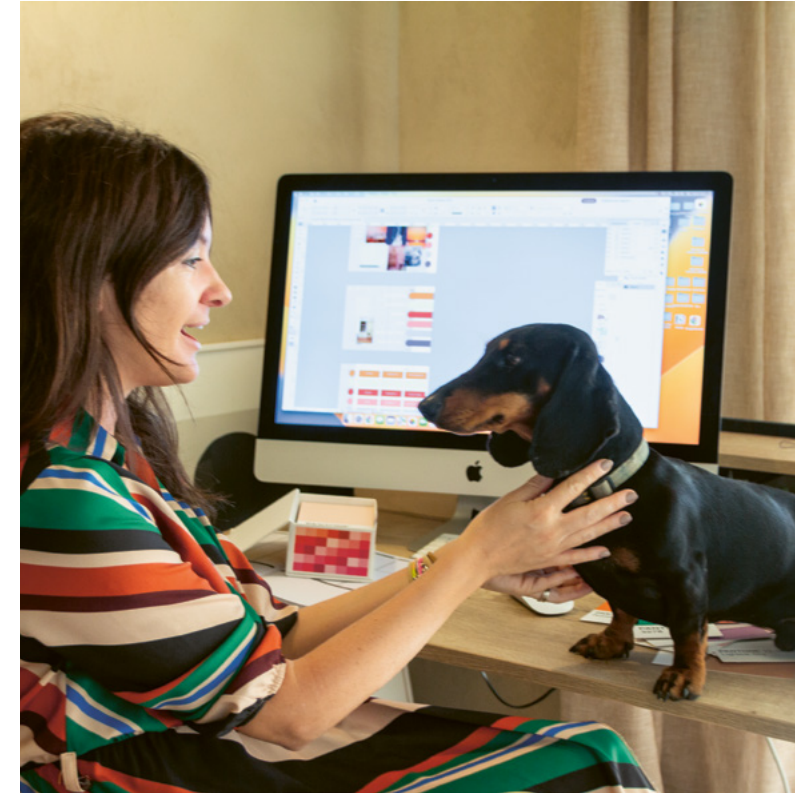
We curated every corner to reflect our own taste with many custom-made elements. The most important factor for me is natural lighting. So, I chose to put my home office corner in front of the large, glazed door-window, so I can also look outside to the garden when working. It ended up being so bright that I had to put curtains up too, but I really love them (Elisabetta smiles).

How do colours and structures influence our perception?

Colours can totally change the perception and feeling we have of a space and are also one of the smartest and more affordable ways to reimagine a space. We should not be afraid of using them!

What do you prefer in terms of decoration, colours, and materials: minimalism or more is more?

I am a colourful minimalist – I love clean and tidy spaces, but at the same time I also like playing with colours and textures. My husband is even more minimalist than I am, but luckily he has accepted that we use colours and decoration in our interior design, and now he likes them too.



—— Who works here?

Elisabetta Rizzato is an interior designer, colour and trend expert and founder of the blog “Italianbark”. On her bilingual interior design blog, Elisabetta discusses architecture, design and developments in the interior design industry. She reaches an international readership with her monthly trend reports, with subscribers from the United States, Asia, Australia, the United Kingdom and the European Union.



Colourful, creative, unique

A home office as a think tank for the latest trends

What would you expect when visiting the home of a trend expert in Stockholm? Light wood, simple, functional furniture and reduced shades? Not at Stefan Nilsson's home. His home office is bursting with strong colour accents, unusual shapes and creative individual pieces. He explains in this interview how the work in his home office inspires his job as a trend expert and journalist every day.

Text & Photo
Bernadette Trepte



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1 Stefan holds digital workshops and lectures at his standing desk. For an upright posture, he also uses the flexible se:lab hopper stool.

2 Always on the go: Beagle Juli is always at Stefan's side. She "supports" him not only when answering emails but also accompanies him to press events in Stockholm.

You work not only as a journalist, but also as a trend expert. When do you consider a new development to be a trend?

Trends are things you want, dream of. They could come from technological innovation or being inspired by something someone else is doing. From the latter point, that is when we talk about being influenced by other people. To me, the most interesting trends are the ones associated with values. What do we think is important? What is status and how does it change?

Trend scouting is part of your job. Where do you find the greatest inspiration? How do you decide whether something is a trend or just a new product?

I do my trend research from four angles: I read statistics (how do we move, how many pets do we have...), I carry out interviews with both influential people but also ordinary people to talk about where we are heading, then I look at history (have we done this before?) and finally my hands on observations, meaning fairs and design weeks. I visit about 15-20 fairs per year and around five to ten trips to influential cities like New York, London, Paris and Milan.

A lot of my trend research is about finding a hunch, a sensation. It feels like there is a change or a shift. I then look at statistics, interviews and my fairs to find examples for verification. I then need to package this so that people understand and agree.

You create mood boards for your expert talks. How have you set up an environment in your home that inspires you?

I think it is essential to move around. I have a "working area" in the kitchen, then a spare room for creative work, and then I do lots of reading in the bedroom. I would say



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it is crucial to get up from your chair, make a coffee and water the plants. Do not sit still for too long.

The boundaries between home and home office are sometimes blurred. How do you manage to separate your private and professional lives?

I realised this question was important at the beginning of the pandemic. We talked a lot about having room dividers and a specific area for work so that we could basically have a start and stop button. "If I sit here, work has





Even in the entrance area, you can discover Stefan's creative streak: Design classics are enthroned on shelves next to self-designed works of art.

started". Today I see the conversation being totally different. They are more about how the wi-fi is working. I expect that we will talk more about chairs and desks for our home office at a later date, but at the moment we are talking more about the rules themselves. The question of whether we should work from home two days a week or not at all is currently more at the centre of attention.

In your home office you have a standing workstation, but also a cosy corner for creative work. What was necessary for you when choosing the furniture?

I have three major work areas. Kitchen, standing workstation and a sofa setting. Everything is there for a specific reason. The majority of writing (emails and articles) is done in the kitchen, the standing workstation is for video conferences and the sofa is for reading. Choosing furniture is about having things you like and which match your personality. I like different kinds of back support. Sometimes

I want to lean forward and sometimes I want to rest. And of course, when you have a video meeting, it looks better to have a good posture.

And one final question: Your home is very colourful, individual and unique. Do you go for the latest trends, or do you tend to choose timeless pieces of furniture that will stay with you for several years?

I definitely pick things that match my taste. I do not choose items that are trendy. I think a common thread is that I have a lot of upholstery. I like softer furniture. It is comforting. But I also want to have things with a strong personality.



Who works here?

Stefan Nilsson is Sweden's best-known trend researcher. He regularly contributes to television, radio and magazines. He is constantly on foot, tracking down new phenomena in furnishings, design, fashion, food and other things we dream about. His blog "Trendstefan" was launched in 2006. In addition to his work as a trend expert and journalist, Stefan is also the owner and curator of "Designgalleriet" in Stockholm.



Casa Feliz

A place where working makes you happy

Green Living, Urban Jungle, City Gardening; living with plants is enriching, changing and cultivating entire cities worldwide. Greenery is also having a lasting impact on the world of work. The plant guru Igor Josifovic-Kemper explains why.

Text
Bernadette Trepte

Photo
Luca Buljevic



Igor arranges his plants on the shelf like a “Vertical Garden”. This not only gives his home office a wonderful green flair: the plants also make a significant contribution to his well-being and at the same time ensure a more pleasant room climate.

Give us a first impression. What three words would you use to describe your home and why?

Personal, tropical, modern. I think our home has a very personal signature with design elements and art that we have chosen consciously. Tropical, because plants are an elementary part of interior design and there is also a lot of Brazilian design and art in our home. And ultimately modern, because we love to combine contemporary elements and mid-century design.

How do you combine home office and urban jungle in your home?

My home office is quite green with lots of plants. For me, plants are not only nice to look at, they also inspire me to work creatively and make me more efficient because they clean the air and thus also increase my ability to concentrate.

What makes up your living and working style? Where are the similarities and where are the differences?

Since my living style is part of my working style, the boundaries are fluid for me. Likewise, my work is always flexible and not necessarily limited to desk work. For me, there is no classic separation between living and working styles, although I have a home office that also serves as a guest room.

How did you manage to integrate your home office harmoniously into your home, into your guest room?

My home office blends harmoniously into my home, as I have deliberately not only focused on a functional home office, but have also designed the room as part of everyday life away from work. It can also be used as a guest room with a sofa bed, and plants add to the cosy feel of the space. I also stayed true to the colour palette of the rest of the flat - so everything remains harmonious and does not stand out as a completely separate home office.

If you had to give your home a name, what would it be?

I call my home “Casa Feliz” on Instagram every now and then. In Portuguese it means “happy home” – and ultimately that is what it is all about: the feeling of being at home, because no matter what the style, you should be happy at home.

——— **Who works here?**

Igor Josifovic-Kemper is a freelance content creator, social media consultant and author. Since 2011, he has been writing about interior design, styling projects and indoor plants on his “Happy Interior Blog”. In 2013, he founded the international plant community “Urban Jungle Bloggers” with his colleague Judith de Graaff.



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1 “I have a penchant for books and individual vintage decorative elements that I have collected over time. They tell a personal story.”

2 For a coffee break, Igor likes to retreat to the cosy kitchen. His dining area can also seat up to four friends and colleagues, thanks to the practical folding TAKEoSEAT stools.



Extraordinary Places to Work

Here today, there tomorrow. Mobile working has brought with it a lot of freedom; people no longer work only in the office, but in coworking spaces, cafés or on the go. It is not unusual for a change of location and new impressions to inspire the productive spirit. That is why the workplace of choice can sometimes be a little more – more extraordinary.



Church meets coworking

An historic building with a new destiny

A place to work, be creative and productive – at first glance you would not guess that desks, team workstations and meeting rooms are hidden away here. Take a second look and the “digitalCHURCH” in Aachen reveals an innovative concept and plenty of space for an inspiring work experience. Managing Director Iris Wilhelmi from “digitalHUB Aachen” provides an insight.

Text

Johanna Soika

Photo

digitalHUB Aachen e.V., Bernadette Trepte

What were the particular challenges in redesigning the church? What was the focus of the interior design?

One of the bigger challenges was the heating concept. Here, our landlord and the architects decided on an attached, second floor with heating in order to heat the nave as energy-efficiently as possible. The focus of the furnishings was, on the one hand, on a high-quality and modern interior and, on the other, on a room layout that simultaneously allows concentrated work but also offers many places for communication, meetings and exchange – such as in the meeting cubes and seating groups.

To what extent has the original structure of the church been preserved and which elements from days gone by can still be found in the building today – perhaps in a different function?

The structure of the church has been almost completely preserved. Only the sacred objects such as the main altar and the organ have been removed. Many elements from days

gone by are no longer used; only the old cupboards in our meeting room “sacristy” come to mind. And the choir area is still the space where the stage is during events and where the speakers stand.

Is the “church” completely out of the church or are there still connections to the archdiocese, priests and co?

We have a close connection to the diocese of Aachen. The diocese is an active member of our association and is involved in our ethics focus group, for example, which discusses ethical issues in connection with digitalisation and AI.

Not many people would associate a church with a workplace. What do customers particularly appreciate about the coworking church concept?

We often get feedback from our coworkers that the church has a special spirit and helps them to be creative and visionary with the large, open nave, but also the many nooks and crannies and retreats.

1 Whether it is a meeting corner at the foot of the bust of Mary or a workstation next to the pulpit - this is where the old and new purpose of the church meet.

2 The concept for coworking in the digitalCHURCH was developed together with Landmarken AG. Young entrepreneurs, start-ups and freelancers in particular like to use the work areas in the large nave.



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There is round-the-clock access to the building and workplaces – are there many early birds and night owls?

There are definitely early birds and night owls. But there are also coworkers who come early and stay late and sometimes even work here at the weekend. Founding a start-up involves many intensive work phases and also the odd night shift, so it was important to us to provide 24/7 access for our start-ups.

Which target group is the offer aimed at and is there a professional group that particularly likes to use the space?

The coworking space is primarily used as a workplace by start-ups. Our medium-sized





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1 The church of St. Elisabeth was built by architect Eduard Endler from Cologne in 1907. Today, the digitalHUB in the redesigned church is a digitisation and innovation centre as well as an important meeting place for start-ups and SMEs.

2 The heart of the church: the long teamwork table where the coworkers find space to work on their projects.

3 If you go to the lockers, you pass the holy water font, which is no longer in use.

member companies use coworking now and then as a change from their permanent office or home office, but more often they use our meeting rooms.

In terms of industries, as a digitisation centre and incubator for digital start-ups, we naturally attract many techies, computer scientists and software companies. But since digital transformation affects companies in all sectors, this is also reflected in our member companies. From software and cosmetics companies to medical technology companies, a wide variety of sectors are represented here.

With reference to times past - is there a special spirit of sharing and cooperation at digitalCHURCH?

There is definitely a special, creative spirit and a spirit of sharing here. I have often experienced this myself, but I also hear it back again and again from start-ups and companies. There is a great willingness to help in our community, which became very clear during the pandemic and also during the flood disaster. Within a very short time, members of our association had issued numerous offers of help. The motto which prevails here is: "Give, Give, Ask".

Floating Spaces

On board of Hamburg's unique coworking space

The concept of living on water is centuries old. In international metropolises such as Amsterdam, London or Seattle, entire residential districts have been floating on the water for years. While floating houses are already an integral part of the cityscape in many places, the office boat "LORE" in Hamburg is a real one-off. We spoke to owner Martin Müller-Wolff about the very special office experience.

Text

Johanna Soika &
Bernadette Trepte

Photo

Sebastian Gundlach &
Müller-Wolff / Winkler GbR





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A gentle swell, magnificent views and top furnishings: that is how many people imagine your workplace. What made you decide to run a floating coworking space?

To be honest, it was less of a plan and more of a coincidence. We ourselves live on a floating house in Barmbek Süd directly opposite an architect couple who designed, built and also maintain the LORE. Their plans changed, they sold up and we continued their office partnership without them.

Feel free to give us a glimpse behind the scenes: Which professional groups particularly like to use the LORE? Is there a trend emerging?

Surprisingly, alternative forms of work like coworking are not at all oriented towards certain professional groups. We have real estate agents, architects, yacht designers, software developers, engineers, communication designers and a crane rental company. However, it is primarily creative professions that come to us and then, at best, develop synergies among themselves.

Hand on heart: What was particularly important to you in the furnishing/design and what role does sustainability play in this?

Sustainability is enormously important to us and we also want to set an example for our tenants. For example, we operate the office boat in a CO₂-neutral manner, e. g. heat and hot water are generated with a heat pump,

where the electricity needs are covered with green electricity and, in the future, with photovoltaics. In addition, there is structural heat protection such as exterior blinds and triple glazing, so that the energy balance is extremely positive. In terms of furnishings, we practice sustainability by using high-quality, timeless and multifunctional furniture that will serve us for a long time.

1 Thanks to the large window front, the work areas are bright and flooded with light.

2 In a harmonious atmosphere inspiration can be found. People in especially creative professions work here.

If you had to name three attributes, what do the tenants particularly appreciate about LORE?

Close to nature: First and foremost, they love the unobstructed view from every desk over the sparkling water, which is reflected in waves on the ceiling and helps them to come up with new ideas. Plus there is a direct connection to nature with water birds swimming by or the occasional rain drop pattering on the skylights.

Familiar: With only 14 workstations, which are exclusively rented out on a permanent basis and not as “flex desks”, we are a relatively small coworking space. Even when someone new comes on board, we make sure that the atmosphere with everyone involved can develop from friendly to almost familial. This has worked very well so far and is very much appreciated by the tenants.



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Beautiful: Our tenants also like the fact that the interior design is relatively straightforward, but also tasteful and comfortable.

And a final question: With a view, in a quiet room or in the hustle and bustle of hip cafés – how do you prefer to work yourself?

Personally, I need all of the above on a recurring basis: a place to rest and concentrate, but also inspiration from others, depending on what kind of work I am doing at the moment. LORE is spatially very versatile: one room with three double tables, one room with two tables for four, but also two soundproof rooms for meetings, phone calls, concentrated work without distractions or even for a power nap.



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1 Fresh air inspires the spirit, they say. From the terrace and with the four-legged se:mood chairs, a magnificent view over the water opens up.

2 Sit back and enjoy the view: se:lab sofa singles on the terrace invite you to take a cosy break.

3 To arrive and feel good is the motto. In the entrance area there is a comfortable seating area as well as a nearby tea kitchen.



Text
Bernadette Trepte

Photo
Zoku / Ewout Huibers & Concrete

Hybrid hotels

The future of work needs space for human relationships

Long-stay hotels are often synonymous with sparse rooms and tiny kitchenettes, located in suburbs. For years, these types of hotels attracted business travellers looking to save money. But times have changed: The new generation of frequent business travellers are looking for places that are centrally located that will have a social connection with their peers. They want a spot they can call their second home. And that is “Zoku”. Zoku has invented a new category in the hotel industry with its hybrid home-office concept and the award-winning Zoku Loft. The hybrid hotel facilitates international living, working and conscious travel for globetrotters, digital nomads and remote workers. We spoke to Veerle Donders, Concept & Brand Director at Zoku, about the design of an extraordinary living and working space.



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1 Zoku Amsterdam is located just a few minutes from Amsterdam city centre in the eastern canal district.

2 An important meeting point for coworkers is the table tennis table. It is used for games, but also for working together.

In your own words: What is a hybrid hotel?

A hybrid hotel works like a 24/7 ecosystem that blends different functions together, each having a potential effect on one another. Instead of only putting heads in beds, hybrid hotels are utilising their square metres much more efficiently by using their space for sleeping, working, eating, drinking and events during different times of the day. The aim is to use each square metre as efficiently as possible. For example, at Zoku we do not have hotel rooms, we have Lofts that act in a hybrid manner: during the day they can be used as a meeting room or workspace, and during the evening as a living space. Our Social Spaces are also used in hybrid form by acting as a living room for our Zoku residents as well as a coworking space for locals and members during the day.

You gave your hybrid hotel the name “Zoku”. What does Zoku stand for?

Zoku is a Japanese term meaning “family”, “tribe” or “clan”. It has been used extensively within Japan to define and coin a sub-cultural phenomenon where people with the same lifestyle would come together. Since bringing people together on a daily basis is our bread and butter, we thought the name was very fitting for our concept.

By creating Zoku you have defined a new category in hospitality. What are the main benefits of staying at Zoku?

Ah, there are many! And of course, it depends on who you ask, since our modern business travellers come for all sorts of reasons and lengths of stay, but let me give you a small synopsis of my favourite two:

First, Zoku is the perfect home base for living comfortably and working efficiently.



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With its award-winning micro-apartments, where instead of the bed, the kitchen table is the most dominant object in the room, Zoku shifts the focus from monofunctional sleeping space to multifunctional living and working space. Next to the Lofts, Zoku’s Social Spaces are ideal for our residents to use as their creative workspace, for meetings and to rub elbows with the local coworking WorkZoku members.

Second, Zoku’s informal and inclusive social atmosphere eliminates lonely business travel. With a curated community of locals and internationals in each location, Zoku provides a soft landing for new arrivals in the

city, providing them with a local social life. Our Community Managers actively engage everybody in-house by organising frequent community rituals (such as our Community Dinners, live music events and Fika coffee breaks) and inspiring events.

What is the main difference between the concept of Zoku and a serviced apartment?

Serviced apartments can be quite spacious and comfortable, as you have a nice apartment to yourself. You get the functionality of a home, but you lack the social interaction you miss when living and working in a city for longer than five days. Serviced apartments





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1 In 2022, Zoku Amsterdam became climate neutral. The greenhouse with roof gardens is just one symbol of the team's sustainable approach.

2 The coworking space WorkZoku is divided into different work zones. Each member is free to choose their personal workspace.

also lack public areas, which is where Zoku's concept differs. Their rooftop Social Spaces bring people together in communal areas for coworking, grabbing a bite to eat, sharing a drink or enjoying some relaxing time in a green outdoor space.

You did a lot of research: What design elements and architectural benefits did Zoku need to have in order to attract the digital nomad target group?

We sure did a lot of research! Seven years of research in fact. 150 Interviews with the target audience, the founding team living as digital nomads to step into their shoes, designing six prototypes of our Loft and testing our concept with over 300 people has helped us truly understand our target audience. At Zoku, our residents find their private life in the Zoku Lofts, which act as a cleverly designed home base where you find everything you need to live comfortably and work efficiently. The space allows you to easily invite others

into your home, since you can eat, meet and play around your large kitchen table, and the space has customisable art frames that can be swapped to taste in the corridors to truly feel at home. Architecturally, everything in Zoku's Social Spaces has been designed to effortlessly bring people together. Barriers between "staff" and "residents" have been reduced to a minimum to allow for a more homely feel. You will, for example, not find the traditional reception desk at Zoku, and instead are welcomed by a large coffee bar table stacked with cakes. In addition, long communal tables and cosy living room nooks easily facilitate connections between strangers.



The Zoku Loft is a flexible home-office hybrid that sets a new standard in the intelligent use of space.

You are expanding the traditional concept of a hotel into a platform by opening your social spaces to the local community. What are the benefits for you and your guests?

First of all, it helps in creating that special social atmosphere. The nice thing about opening up your space to the local community is that you give your in-house residents the opportunity to easily mingle with locals during the day and night, or at one of our many events throughout the week. We believe strongly that food and music connects people, and many locals seem to agree with us! Our locals, the WorkZoku coworking members, also act as a consistent social group of regulars that is welcoming to a newly arriving group of residents. In hotels, people check in and out all the time. Luckily Zoku always has a group of long-stay residents in-house that can cement that community feeling together with the members. Next to this, we can maximise our revenue per square metre by offering memberships in spaces that would otherwise go underutilised.

You are also offering a coworking space for locals. What is the idea behind WorkZoku?

As we are all about building community, we wanted a way for our residents to easily rub elbows with the locals. We have come to know a lot of people in the neighbourhood – many of them local freelancers, small startup teams or solo entrepreneurs who simply missed having colleagues around them and a space to call their “office”. Since these locals love to

be part of an international environment and our residents love to meet them during their coworking day, this was a true win-win. Next to that, most hotels are just that – hotels. As a local, there is not much you can do there and often business hotel lobbies are dead during the day while their guests go out to work in office buildings or for meetings. We thought this unused capacity was interesting to tap into to create a buzzing atmosphere in Zoku’s Social Spaces throughout the day and night instead of only during mornings or evenings. For WorkZoku member perks, they get 24/7-hour access to our rooftop coworking spaces, a discount on food and drinks, free community dinner, exclusive event invitations, access to a private member’s chat, and the ability to register their business to our address.



New Era of Seating

A kingdom for comfort. Soft seating furniture should be comfortable and at the same time create a cosy as well as productive atmosphere. Called a couch, lounge chair, three-seater or even a living landscape, the choice of names show that it is about much more than just seating. It is about comfort while doing – and a new era of sitting.



Text
Johanna Soika

Photo
Sedus Stoll AG

A success story called sofa

From hard stone or wooden benches to the idea of using large seat cushions to what we call a sofa today. A world without this comfortable upholstered furniture? Hardly imaginable. The sofa has made its triumphal march in every respect and for the most diverse areas of use. Whether at home or in hotel lobbies, whether on talk shows or with therapists – the sofa is here to stay.

What do we appreciate about the “office sofa”? Is it the homely look and the comfort it conveys? Or simply the change it offers from the classic swivel chair with a desk? Does its comfortable, soft nature conceal the fact that working is strenuous and sometimes a tough business?

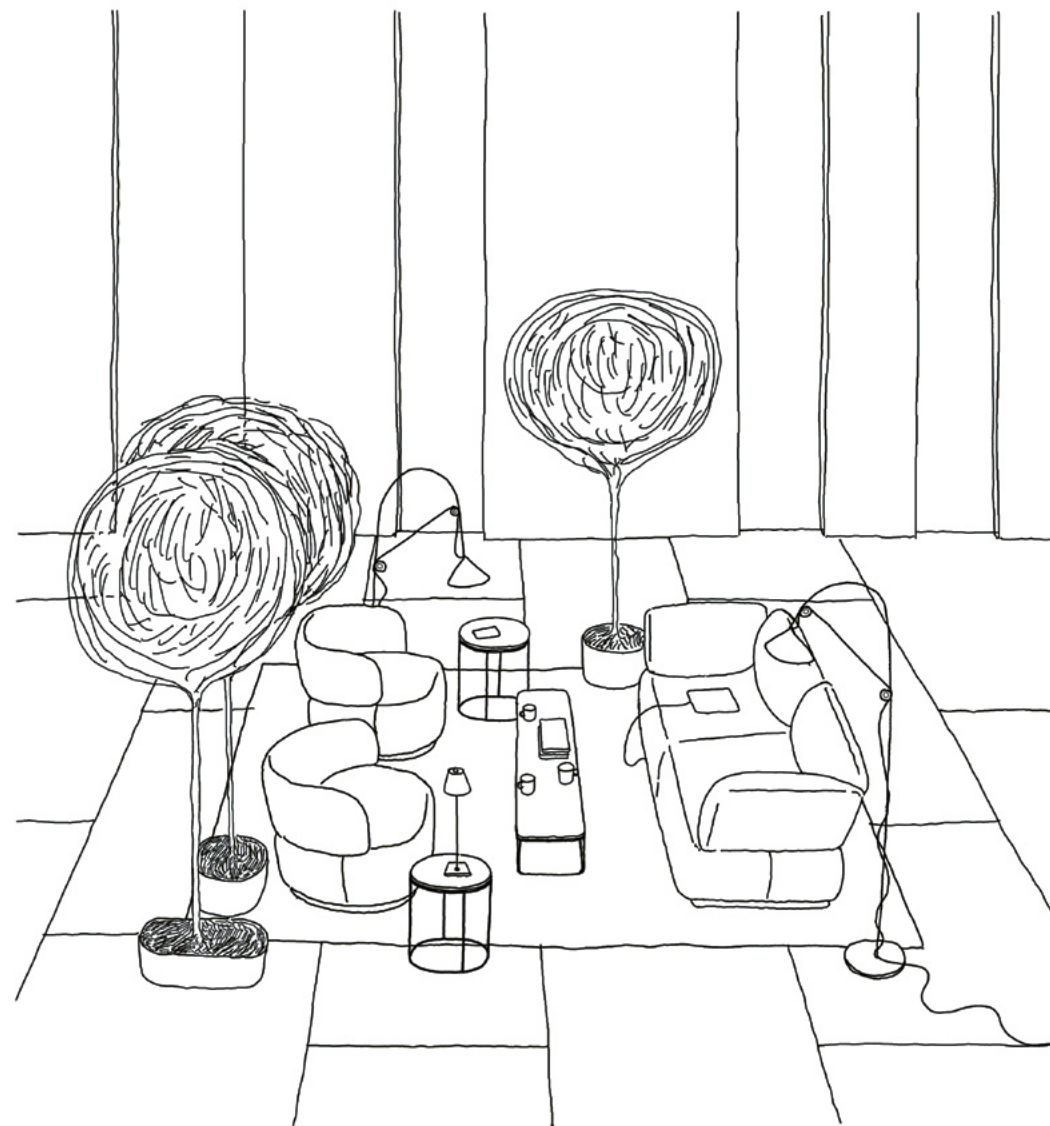
The answers are as individual as the appearance and use of this upholstered furniture. But first and foremost is the fact that the sofa in the office conveys a very special message: it brings the comfort and

sense of well-being that we usually associate with the home – to the workplace! The office sofa is supposed to manage the balancing act between comfortable, casual cosiness and productive, performance-oriented work. Countless designs, shapes, materials, versions in different sizes and with numerous details – the large selection of variants reinforces what has long been clear. It is no longer possible to imagine people’s (working) lives without the sofa. “Soft seating” in the work context is the keyword of the day.

“For some kinds of activity, you do not need a desk”

An interview with Robin Rizzini

Designer Robin Rizzini has taken up the theme of “soft seating” in a working context. For Sedus, he has designed the se:living sofa. In this interview he gives an insight behind the scenes and into recent developments.



Text
Johanna Soika

Illustration / Photo
Robin Rizzini

We would like to get an honest assessment from you: What is the relationship between the sofa and the room in general?

It is a very important relationship. In the world, every object relates to another. The teaspoon relates to the cup which relates to the table creating a sense of scale, proportion and colour balance. The car relates to the buildings which relate to the city, and so forth. In this specific case, the sofa is generally an important presence in the interior and for me, it has to be an object that does not scream to be seen but establishes right away a good relationship with the user. It has to be welcoming and inviting, creating a sense of harmony in itself.

Often the sofa is simply associated with “relax, after work, Netflix & chill”? As a designer, what other functions do you think a sofa serves?

Well, today we function in a different way than just 15 years ago. The world has changed many times and we have witnessed a technological revolution that was unimaginable even at the beginning of the 2000s. Relaxing after work for many people means more work but in a laid-back way. Checking emails until late in the evening and watching Netflix or engaging with social networks is something that we can do using one device only and, more often than not, at the same time... Television is less a priority. They are bigger, yes, but fixed in one position and not so flexible in the end. Flexibility is what we are all looking for and in the case of a sofa, it could be giving the customer the ability to carry out some work on integrated tables and be able to charge your device in a comfortable and relaxing way.

Sofa+office? Yes, it is possible. When did the triumph of the sofa in the office begin and what value has it gained in the working world?

A few years ago a “revolution” in the work environment was starting to grow. Planners, architects and designers were questioning the way people were working, and how they were spending time in the office. If it was necessary to be so desk-dependent. Covid dramatically accelerated this process while adding more seminal themes on the table. The answer is that for some kind of activity, you do not need a desk. Informal meetings or even proper lengthy meetings can be done on a sofa. Conference calls, job interviews, focused work, small group presentations and other light activities too. All these actions can be carried out on soft seating, in the company’s cafeteria or in a dedicated lounge space. These situations and this way of working encourage exchange rather than isolation and are more human-centric and less forced.



—— **Who works here?**

Robin Rizzini was born in Genoa in 1973 and has Italian-British roots. He completed his studies at the Scuola Politecnica di Design in Milan, where he has also been teaching Furniture Design in the master’s programme. In 2006 Robin Rizzini founded his own design office and three years later he co-founded the studio *Metrica*. Robin Rizzini has been an independent designer since 2018.

What is elementary in the design for a sofa to be perceived as “comfortable, convenient, stylish”?

This is intangible. It is a balance of good design, good craftsmanship and years of experience and know-how from both the designer and the company!

What do you think a sofa must have to combine all the characteristics of a timeless classic?

Again, there is no exact rule. But I would say that if a designer can work well with the proportions, the details and the feeling of comfort, he is already in the right direction. Then

you have to be aligned with the company you work with because each company has its own desired language and tradition that needs to be interpreted and not taken in a completely different direction. Last but not least the market today is much less predictable than 20 years ago, a time when you could “plan” to design an evergreen or try to create a timeless classic.

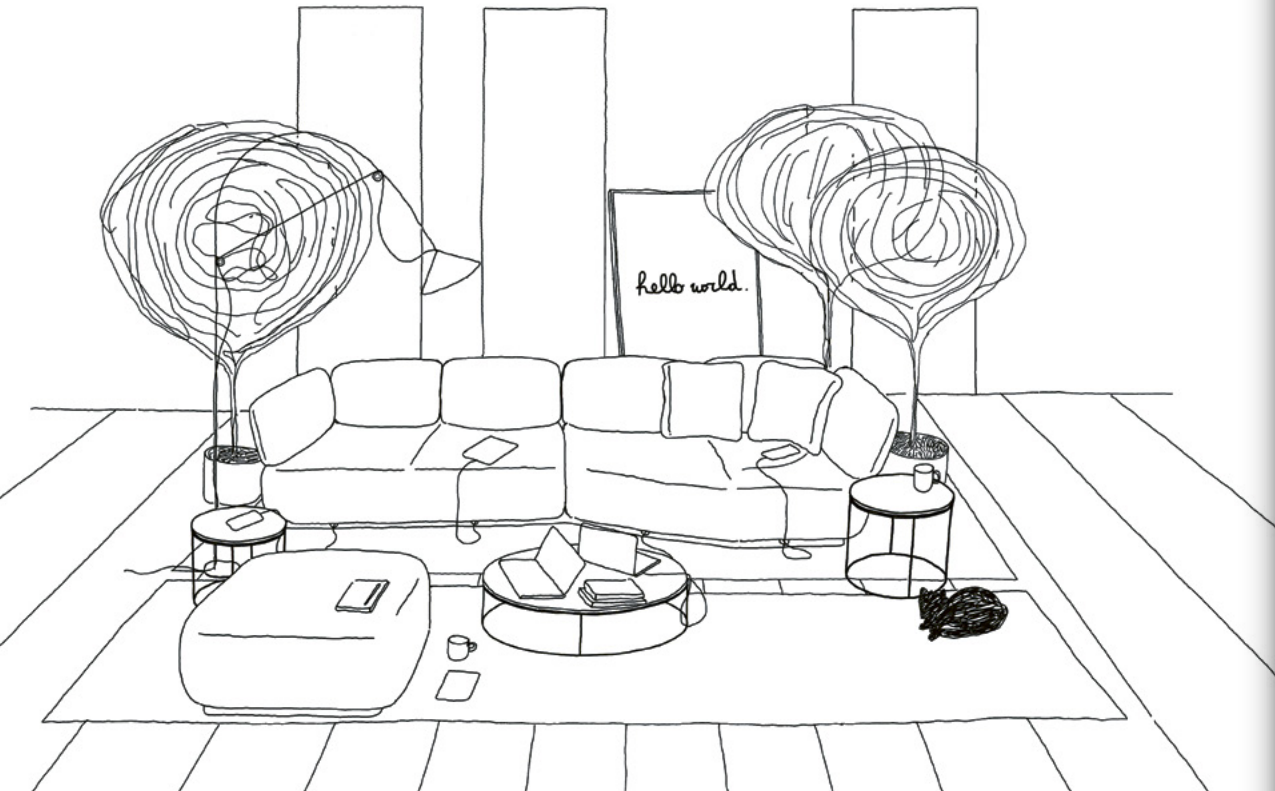
You recently designed a sofa for Sedus. For the company, *se:living* is the first step into the soft seating market. What design elements did you consider in your draft to make the product suitable for the office?

Being the first sofa seating system for Sedus and considering the highly technical heritage of the company I thought it was a good idea to try and keep a balance between a well-proportioned and very comfortable product with the addition of “active” elements like, for instance, connected tables (suspended on the side in case of no armrest). Or with the addition of tables between seats, corner tables and freestanding tables to complete the range of surfaces to be used with the system: from a simple informal meeting to group work or more engaging activities, either in a private office, a public area, a lounge area or a cafeteria.

The system is made up of elements that are all suitable for a contemporary office environment with the added value of introducing double-depth seating for a more informal way to meet and seat, asymmetric armchairs or angled modules for more intimate remote conversations. All models can be equipped with electric and USB connectors.

And a final personal question: What is the best way for you to relax after a long day at work? Maybe on the sofa?

Funnily enough, life brought me to a small apartment in Milan where I lived for a very long time without a sofa. Also, I do not have a television so I never got that urge to sit down and switch on the big screen. What I know is that my ideal sofa would have a lot of space, connectivity facilities and a few small surfaces around to put books, magazines, technology and drinks. My relaxation time is not always the same but I often think about a me-only time with a nice glass of wine and some late-night sketching or reading. Possibly on a terrace overlooking the Ligurian sea!



The evolution of the design as well as the type of use have shaped the sofa in every respect and thus led to new.

A statement for any room

The sofa with a system

The se:living sofa has an important mission: to bring more cosiness and feel-good moments into the workspace. It is exactly the setting needed for productive work or relaxed breaks. As an extra, it offers design and functionality that strike a chord with users. The result: se:living leaves a strong impression without dominating.

Text

Johanna Soika

Photo

Sedus Stoll AG



Informal conversations can take place in many locations. The corner solution with side tables and lateral armrests make se:living a popular meeting place.



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1 Configured as a plant bench, e.g. in open lounge areas, se:living enables communication and interaction and makes those waiting moments more comfortable.

2 In the home office, se:living blends in harmoniously, spreading a sense of well-being and comfort. The corner storage table offers space for greenery or for a laptop, a mobile phone etc.

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