



PwC's new German HQ

Pricewaterhouse Coopers has just moved into a new state-of-the-art tower in Frankfurt, which will soon become the company's headquarters in Germany as well as the country's fourth tallest building. However, the monolithic architectural structure of Tower 185 belies the lithe organic style of the interiors. Instead of following the conventional route and working with an office designer, PwC awarded the contract to JOI-Design, a leading European interior design practice known primarily for its trendsetting hospitality projects.

The financial consultancy was looking for a design that would differentiate the business and reflect its corporate ideology of being a forward-thinking partnership. The design brief stipulated that the scheme needed to convey an element of clever sophistication. At the same time though, the aim was to break away from the corporate image traditionally associated with financial organisations and to bring instead a fluid, imaginative approach to the interior spaces that would help reinforce the company's position as a progressive consultancy. Since hotel designers are accustomed to making beautiful statements within the constraints of commercial practicalities, PwC recognised the exciting potential for JOI-Design to realise the difference for them.

Work has now been completed in the lower wings of the building, which feature a horseshoe shaped courtyard and flank the 55-storey tower on either side. This first phase included a reception lobby, conference spaces, a small public café counter and a private cafeteria for the company's employees.

The colossal style of the new building's architecture is characterised by clean geometric shapes and straight lines. To balance its imposing masculinity, JOI-Design has introduced graceful curves and playful organic shapes into the interiors in a way that makes a highly personalised statement and reflects PwC's corporate culture. The result is a confluence of form and function.

The focal point of the entrance lobby is an über-hip, UFO-like island, which functions on one side as a reception desk and then doubles on the other side as a café/bar for social events. Made from highly polished glass fibres, the dynamic, glossy white structure has been moulded into a lacy 'web' symbolising a neural network and emphasising PwC's interconnected philosophy and creativity as a leading think-tank of consultants. Sleek white leather barstools line the café side of the desk. Within the centre panel colour-shifting LED lights can be adjusted to varying degrees of intensity, so that the effect can be more subdued through the work day and pumped up to a more vibrant radiance during a reception in the evening. The supple, sculptural

The monolithic architectural structure of Tower 185
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UFO styled island doubles as reception desk and cafe/bar
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design ingeniously sweeps around one of the building's central support columns, transforming a design dilemma into a sexy solution.

One level up, a small café overlooks the ground floor atrium. Frosted glass cladding on the exterior of the bar has been backlit with green coloured LED lights to cast an ethereal glow with even levels of luminosity. Contemporary white leather stools line the bar and are also used at adjacent tables. Scatter tables and white leather club chairs provide nooks for more private conversations.

As a counterpoint to the commanding presence of the building envelope, the décor of the employee cafeteria has been designed with references to nature to encourage a relaxed atmosphere. Walnut parquet flooring and oak wall panels provide a grounding touch, and a feature wall composed of glass panels with cool grey silhouettes of trees has been backlit with alternating green and orange accent lights. For employees who only have time to grab a quick bite, a fast lane has been added to the space

Small cafe overlooking the ground floor atrium
© Simone Ahlers



plan, a niche with bar-height tables and stools, which, while not an individual space as in the main seating area, still has a degree of separation thanks to the curved shelving dividers. The predominance of white finishes throughout achieves a crisp and clean feeling.

In the conference areas, each meeting room is equipped with 'SB Points' – self-service bars, which contain a small refrigerator as well as tableware and cutlery. In a thoughtful detail, the distraction of hosts fumbling in cupboards while looking for items is avoided by the silver symbols on the cabinetry's fascias designating what is held inside.

In addition, PwC asked for quiet rooms to be created within the conference spaces for consult-

Clean crisp lines are achieved within the fast lane
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ants needing to make a private phone call or conduct sensitive research. Since the need for privacy was key, these workspaces were thoroughly sound-insulated. Each room's footprint is quite small, so extra care was taken to ensure proper ventilation. The frosted glass doors have a clear window so that the users do not feel claustrophobic and can maintain a connection with the outside activity.

JOI-Design's plan for the second phase of the project is currently being constructed in the highest levels of the tower and involves offices for the senior management, a sky bar and spaces for special events.

Interior design practice – JOI-Design

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