

# ces

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Dear reader,

Many architects and designers have long dreamed of building houses the way automobiles are made: on the assembly line, using prefabricated components, so that they can be affordable, flexible and modifiable at any time. Architecture as a product: fast, efficient and inexpensive.

In this issue of ‘spaces’ magazine, Paul Makovsky, the editorial director of the architecture and design magazine ‘Metropolis’ in New York, writes about the eternal dream of a mass-produced house, an idea which is experiencing a resurgence in popularity. Creating houses and furniture from prefabricated components, without waste and with a minimal impact on the environment, is not just a sensible, logical and economical concept but also remains a challenge. Most importantly, it is an environmental issue. The architects of modernism thought about sustainability long ago.

Sustainability is a term that also characterizes the activities at USM. The topic passes through this issue of ‘spaces’ like a red ribbon, from the cover story about the Remo Bill residence in Grenchen, Switzerland to an inside look at the production in our factory in Münsingen, Switzerland; where we produce our furniture based on very strict, environmentally-sensitive regulations and procedures. For USM, sustainability means, first and foremost, that a solution is not only valid today, but that it retains its validity into the distant future and is thus extremely economical. Nevertheless, every modular system has to keep up with the times and occasionally needs something new. You will find our latest innovations on pages 84 – 87.

We hope you enjoy the sustainable pleasure of reading our new issue.

USM Modular Furniture

# a modernist dream



Prefabricated housing was one of the dreams of many socially conscious architects in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The idea of creating affordable factory-made dwellings constructed from a kit of building parts and completed off-site was espoused by many pioneers of modernism: Buckminster Fuller, Walter Gropius, Jean Prouvé, and Louis Kahn all designed versions of ‘packaged houses’ and failed. In the end, the final results never matched their utopian visions, and their solutions never amounted to more than a few built prototypes. Moshe Safdie’s Habitat 67 in Montréal, Canada – with its prefab concrete modules and where one tenant’s roof is his neighbor’s garden – remains an icon of utopian architecture. Today’s new generation of architects are transforming modular homes into examples of good design and environmentalism, and are convinced they have the expertise to make the concept of affordable, mass-produced dwellings succeed this time around.

by Paul Makovsky, editorial director of *Metropolis* magazine, an architecture and design publication based in New York City

1 Moshe Safdie’s Habitat 67 in Montréal, Canada, 1967

2 Today, Buckminster Fuller’s Dymaxion House, completed in 1945, can be visited at the Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn, Michigan.



Prefabricated architecture is not new. The search for high-quality, low-cost, and adaptable factory-made houses has been around for some time now. As far back as the 19<sup>th</sup> century, home developers in Europe and America offered customers a range of options to outfit their homes, from machine-made bricks to pre-made sash windows and mouldings. Sears, Roebuck, and Co. in the U.S. offered consumers the option of purchasing a traditional-style cookie-cutter home with their ‘House by Mail’ kit from 1908 to 1940. (Sometime in the early 1930s, Austrian avant-garde architect Friedrich Kiesler negotiated with Sears to produce the Nucleus House – an International Style single-family-dwelling concept that never went beyond the drawing stage.)

This ‘architecture as product’ idea looked at producing housing much the same way the manufacturing industry produces cars, airplanes or appliances. If the automobile industry could mass produce their products quickly, efficiently, and relatively cheaply, why couldn’t a similar system be applied to housing? Indeed, some car companies in the 1930s ventured at manufacturing kitchens and bathrooms – with visions of rolling them out, much like the assembly-line automobiles they produced by the hour. The American inventor and architect Buckminster Fuller applied these principles to housing, cars and even to a prefabricated bathroom. His Dymaxion house, conceived in 1927 and built in 1945, was a round, lightweight, and easily transportable single-family dwelling that was supported by a central mast and made of more than 3,000 parts of aluminum. It sold for the price of a luxury car (about \$6,500 in 1946) and could be easily shipped anywhere in its own metal tube. Only two were built, and today, the only surviving prototype is on public display inside the Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn, Michigan.

**3 The Dymaxion House was round and made of 3,000 mostly aluminum alloy parts. It used tension suspension from a central column or mast, and could be shipped worldwide in its own metal tube. Only two prototypes were ever built.**

**4 The General Panel Home in California, designed by Konrad Wachsmann and Walter Gropius during the early 1940s, was made of factory-finished, load-bearing standardized panels, joined together by a device called a ‘wedge-connector’, and put together like an Erector Set toy.**

**5 Private residence in Switzerland, built using ‘USM Haller Mini System,’ 1967**



Konrad Wachsmann (1901–1980), a pioneer in industrial architecture and prefabrication, partnered with Walter Gropius – one of the fathers of the Bauhaus in Germany – during the 1940s to create a modular building system, patenting an ingenious four-way metal connector and later developing an innovative panel that could be used horizontally or vertically as a wall, floor or ceiling.

Wachsmann’s disciple, Swiss architect Fritz Haller, developed the ideas of innovative structural technology further, coming up with a successful blueprint for a steel modular snap-in-place building system that worked on variable scales, from a multistoried building to an office furniture module. Maxi, developed in 1960, combines a structural logic with technical precision with elements based on a modular measurement of 120/60 cm (as seen in the USM Factory in Münsingen, Switzerland). Two years later, in cooperation with engineer Paul Schärer, he translated the principle of his prefab steel system into furniture design, whose main pieces a ball, tubes, and powder-coated panel elements mounted in between a structure formed by tubes and joints. Haller’s other building components systems, the 1967 Mini (including the Schärer residence, which overlooks the USM Münsingen factory) and Midi, developed between 1972 and 1976 (the SBB Training Center in Murten, Switzerland, for example), were used in many private homes and multistory industrial buildings. The idea that buildings can be industrially prefabricated and easily changed according to different user needs by simply disassembling and reassembling today makes ecological sense. For example, a USM pavilion, created 34 years ago for a furniture fair in Hannover, was disassembled, moved to a new location more than 200 kilometers away and reconstructed as a residence in Grenchen, Switzerland (see pages 22–27 in this issue).



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While the dream of a mass-produced house with a modern aesthetic still remains a challenge, today's architects are not simply designing prefabricated structures as a way to save money; they are looking at integrating holistic solutions that marry high-tech platforms with sustainable thinking. 'In every other industry, we've used technology and automation to bring good design to the masses, but we're still building buildings the same ways we have been for hundreds of years,' says Michelle Kaufmann, a California-based architect who has to date built more than 26 prefabricated homes. 'In the U.S.A., we've had this hesitation about embracing off-site technology because of this misconception of all prefabricated being substandard, like trailer homes.' Certain countries like Japan, Germany, Sweden, and Australia, are taking the lead in prefabricated building, where the idea of building a high-end home goes hand in hand with having it factory-built with precision cutting and quality control. Richard Horden's Micro Compact Home, for instance, is a tiny aluminum-clad 2.6-meter cube, that is powered by photovoltaic solar panels and a small wind turbine, allowing the house to generate its own electricity. It is the perfect miniature vacation house, deliverable by crane or helicopter, and is recently commercially available in Germany and the UK.

The new generation of prefabricated houses are being marketed as eco-sensitive and energy-smart flat-packed kits that are easily customizable—much like an Apple computer, with a limited number of options. Call it plug-in-play architecture. And the advances in digital parametrics are heading to a more efficient and flexible dialogue between design and fabrication, allowing for computerized customization that could potentially produce nonidentical objects. Just look at the Loblolly House, designed by Kieran Timberlake Architects, and assembled on-site on the Maryland coast. The house's 3-D construction specs were e-mailed to a custom builder in New Hampshire, who turned out a flat pack of precision-cut panels embedded with all the necessary pipes, wires and windows. Its aluminum frame connects every piece of the house with a simple bolt, making it easy to disassemble and recycle at the end of its life. The architects have also innovatively integrated floor and ceiling 'smart' cartridges, complete with all the ducts, wiring and panels, thereby eliminating construction waste, reducing environmental impact and decreasing labor costs by avoiding the use of different subcontractors. Its latest version, the Cellophane House, is made of recyclable materials with steel frames that snap together, sliding glass windows and photovoltaic cells that allow it to be off-grid.

This summer, both the Micro Compact and Cellophane houses (along with three other prefabricated houses) will be erected in a vacant lot next to the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York, as part of 'Home Delivery,' an exhibition on prefabricated housing. The other houses include a section of a multistory house with floors that fit into shipping containers and can stack together like blocks by Oskar Leo Kaufmann and Albert Rüf; a house for displaced victims of Hurricane Katrina by Lawrence Sass; and a computer-generated house built from a computer program that automates a blueprint by SystemArchitects. (It is not the first time that MoMA has displayed a prefabricated structure. In 1948, it erected a house by Marcel Breuer in its sculpture garden.)

While the architects in the MoMA show aren't exactly household names just yet, even star architects like Richard Rogers, who has proved that radical high-tech structures like Paris's Pompidou Centre and London's Lloyd Building are viable, have entered the fray with their new variations on prefabricated that hold all the promise of easy living at an affordable price. The Pritzker prize-winning architect's prefabricated multi-unit 'Flexi-houses' currently nearing completion in Oxley Park in the UK, are colorful, modern and sustainable. Designed to cost under 60,000 pounds, these dwellings feature an 'Ecohat' roofing system that reuses hot air to provide passive solar water heating, clever floor plans to optimize natural lighting, flat-pack components, and standardized prefabricated service capsules containing the kitchen and bathroom. That adds up to a 70% reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions – the perfect basis for a prefabricated utopia.

Links and references:

Buckminster Fuller Institute: [www.bfi.org](http://www.bfi.org)

The Henry Ford Museum: [www.hfmgv.org](http://www.hfmgv.org)

The Museum of Modern Art: [www.moma.org](http://www.moma.org)

*Loblolly House: Elements of a New Architecture* (Princeton Architectural Press)

Michelle Kaufmann Designs: [www.mkd-arc.com](http://www.mkd-arc.com)

Richard Rogers: [www.richardrogers.co.uk](http://www.richardrogers.co.uk)

**6 Kieran Timberlake's Loblolly House in Taylor's Island, Maryland, 2006**

**7 Richard Horden's Micro Compact Home, 2005**

**8 Marcel Breuer's House in the MoMA Garden, New York City, 1948**

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The final design of a piece of USM furniture is occasionally predetermined. More often than not, individual pieces are configured from standardized elements according to a user's specific requirements, and even today, the finishing is done by hand. All over the world, the resulting forms reflect the changing needs and preferences of think tanks, communications agencies, showrooms, offices and public and private spaces.

# locations

Lugano New Jersey Aesch New York Nicosia Ulm Grenchen Biel Venice Renens Limburg Zurich Feldkirch Athens Munich-Riem Hamburg Coesfeld



# perspectives



The Katz-Wilds, both psychologists, fulfilled their dream by having the Locarno architect Michele Arnaboldi build their dream house, an eagle's nest on Monte Brè above Lugano, Switzerland. The living room offers a magnificent view, together with the kitchen, dining room and a large terrace, which make up the top floor of the house.

In front of the space is a USM Haller unit in anthracite. Christian P. Katz, a specialist for labor assessment and wage systems, values the furniture line's flexibility and consistent functionality.



Thomas Schenk, a fashion photographer, and Priska Mayr, a fashion editor, consider themselves amateur designers. The furniture pieces that have passed muster fill their tastefully appointed duplex apartment in Jersey City, New Jersey, and display their passion for the European countryside and hand-crafted pieces.

‘Everything we have, we bring back from Europe,’ Schenk says. Here, USM Haller shelving in graphite black (above left) house a substantial library, while a wall of USM cabinets in pure white (above right) break up the open-floor plan and provide the ‘serious storage’ that the couple needed. ‘We decided on USM because of how indestructible the whole thing is,’ the photographer says. ‘We live with a dog and just wanted to simplify our lives. Everything is easy and minimal.’





This exceptional private home for a family of four is located in Aesch, Switzerland, in the canton of Basel. The well-known architecture firm Buchner Bründler designed the house as a glass cube with rounded corners. The bedroom level is encased in a perforated sheet-metal shell.



The interior of the house is also unconventional and, as to be expected, even the diaper-changing table was executed in a non-traditional way: using the USM Haller system in light gray. It is stable, strong, easy-to-clean and most of all, can be designed for other purposes when the children outgrow their diapers, at least in the father's opinion. He emphasizes that all of the USM pieces are 'being used in a classic kind of way.'



In 2006, Cass Calder Smith, of New York and San Francisco-based CCS Architecture, converted this studio apartment in New York's Greenwich Village into a one-bedroom. As part of the detailed design plan, he specified a USM Haller table with a laquered glass top to fit with the overall modern and clean aesthetic.

'It is just a good-looking table,' says the architect, who has USM Haller shelves in his home and office. With space at a premium, the table doubles easily as both a work surface and dining table.



For his 75-square-meter (800-square-foot) SoHo loft, Smith selected USM Haller shelving for his entertainment center as well as for storing files and drawing tools. 'It is a nice alternative to wood,' the architect says. 'And since the furniture is modular, I can tweak it and move it around if I need to. I feel like I'm buying something that is recyclable.'

This palazzo in a suburb of Nicosia has experienced a long and illustrious history. It has served as a school and was once owned by the British army. If these walls could talk... The building was in extremely poor condition when Melina Apostolidis Matsi purchased it. Cypriot architect Haris Hadjivassiliou was responsible for the renovation. In discussing his work, Hadjivassiliou says that his goal was to renovate, not to imitate.



The owner of the house uses the glass cabinet to store her exclusive collection of china and glassware, which, she says, is intended for use, not just display.



The broad, open interiors set no stringent boundaries for the two adults and three children who live among elegantly arranged pieces of art and furniture. The white USM pieces, which have been in the family for a long time, fit perfectly in this very special house.



The breathtaking view from the owner's study offers the promise of living at its best. They are high above the lake of Lugano, in an old olive mill. It was a ruin without a roof when the owners saw it for the first time.

But architect Martin Wagner from Carona wanted to create something new instead of just restoring an old mill. The result is a marriage of exposed concrete with age-old masonry, glass, and metal with rough stone. The black USM Haller is a perfect fit for the archaic mood in this room with high ceilings.





# systematic

Someone once referred to this two-story house as a residential erector set. That is because it embodies an age-old dream of architects: To create a structure that can be disassembled, repositioned and then reconstructed. The building made its debut as an exhibition pavilion at the Hannover trade show in March 1974. After that, it spent ten years as a showroom and office for USM in the town of Bühl, near Baden-Baden.

More than 20 years ago, the moveable object and its owner, the architect Remo Bill, found a new home: Grenchen, whose residents were not exactly thrilled about the arrival of this 'exotic creature.' Since then, however, they have grown accustomed to the 'residential greenhouse.'

It is no accident that the building is mostly furnished with USM Haller. The residential cube operates on the same principle as the modular furniture system. The 'Mini' steel construction system used to erect the glass house in Grenchen was designed by the Swiss architect Fritz Haller in collaboration with Paul Schärer.

Remo Bill (no relation to the artist Max Bill) worked for Fritz Haller in Solothurn. When he discovered that the pavilion

owned by his highly respected teacher in Bühl was about to be dismantled, he promptly purchased it. He kept the entire structure stored in a barn until he was able to find the right construction site.

This house is made entirely of glass, with no walls separating its interior from the outside world. Bill, who describes himself as deeply in tune with nature, enjoys the fact that 'in this house, one experiences the seasons intensely.' He does have shutters to block the sun and vertical blinds on the interiors of the glass walls. But he usually leaves most of these elements open. The residents of the house like it, at any rate. 'Ever since our son left the nest, it is just my wife, me and the two cats,' the homeowner says with a smile.







First floor



Second floor

As the floor plan of Remo Bill's house shows, everything in the USM 'Mini' steel-construction system is based on the square. The ground floor was designed as a single room with a freestanding fireplace in the middle of the space. There are no walls; instead, black USM Haller furniture subdivides the living and dining areas. The floor is white marble. A steel staircase connects the lower and upper floors, and divides the floor plan.

The office, the bedrooms and the bathroom are located on the upper floor. The façade is also made of glass. The steel prefabricated walls are adjustable and allow for various configurations. And in the home office, the USM Haller mobile storage unit serves as an additional work surface, unless it happens to be stowed under the USM Haller table.



**Local beauty** In a medical practice that revolves around beauty and making patients feeling good about themselves, one can expect an office that is aesthetically appealing. The loft high above the rooftops of Biel, where the Center for Esthetic Dermatology, or DELC, has been located since February 2006 exceeds that expectation. The building, located in the old section of Biel, was renovated from top to bottom five years ago. Christoph Netthoevel, of Raum Design, also based in Biel, was the project's architect and interior designer.

In the 380-square-meter (4,086-square-foot) space, dermatologist Adrian Krähenbühl and his partner, Christian Heinemann, along with their seven assistants, solve the skin problems of their patients, whom the doctors refer to as clients. One could also call them guests.

The ultramodern consultation and treatment rooms center on the elegant, spacious reception area which is outfitted with glass display cabinets by USM. Beauty, says Krähenbühl, the founder of DELC, is not merely an attractive appearance, but also an expression of a healthy attitude toward life. This explains why he calls his profession 'beauty medicine.' The 50-year-old dermatologist is considered a pioneer in his field. He was one of the first to use laser light, because, as he says, he 'prefers lasers over the scalpel.' Other effective and relatively pain-free techniques have been added since then.

Krähenbühl's first practice was also furnished with USM pieces. That was 16 years ago, and he still values the furniture for the same reasons today. The dermatologist describes the design as pure, classic and beautiful. 'Nowadays, you would probably call it cool.'





Beauty and high-tech come together above the rooftops of Biel. USM Haller black shelving units in various sizes, most on casters, support the work of the dermatologists.



**The Palace of Culture** In September 1999, the Istituto Veneto purchased the famous building on the city's Grand Canal with the ambitious aim of turning it into one of the most active cultural centers not just in Venice but all of Italy. The walls of this magnificent palace have housed quite a few illustrious Venetians since the mid-15<sup>th</sup> century. The building was radically restored in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century when Venice was under Austrian rule. The palazzo underwent a second, formative renovation a century later, under the renowned Art Nouveau architect Camillo Boito. Then came the third major renovation, when the Istituto Veneto moved in and the premises were brought up to date. The building now offers 4,500 square meters (14,764 square feet) of space for meetings, videoconferences, seminars, presentations, exhibits and other cultural activities, not to mention a parklike garden on the Grand Canal. It goes without saying that each room is outfitted with the latest in high-tech equipment designed for every imaginable form of internal and external communication. This center, for the promotion and exchange of literary, historical and artistic expertise, is based on a widespread network of national and international relations that the institute manages in its role as an academy of sciences. Fulvio Caputo, the architect responsible for the renovation, selected USM Haller for the reception area, which also serves as a ticket office and lobby, because, he says, the furniture system's versatility was simply unparalleled. He chose ruby red so that the furniture would attract attention. According to Caputo, its appearance was not to be 'camouflaged' under any circumstances.





# metamorphose



In Renens, an industrial suburb of the Swiss city of Lausanne, architect Bernard Tschumi has transformed a former stocking factory into a design academy. The new Ecole cantonale d'art de Lausanne (ECAL), under the direction of Pierre Keller, is now a 14,000-square-meter (151,000-square-foot) high-tech learning workshop.

The factory-turned-school showcases all the features one might expect of a state-of-the-art design academy. Prototype workspaces are filled with computer-guided precision milling devices and specialized tools affixed to the walls. Computer stations are arranged on rows of tables in loftlike drafting studios. The auditoriums are equipped with wireless Internet, and wide hallways serve as break rooms, classrooms and stages for presentations. Add a large film studio and four smaller photography studios, a printing shop and a specialized library – all in the context of the high ceilings and open spaces of an old factory – and you get a rough idea of the school's new facility.

With its move into this artfully rebuilt, aging industrial building, the design academy, established in 1821, has arrived in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. But how do you prepare a prosaic factory for such a transformation? For Tschumi, a French-Swiss architect with offices in New York and Paris, that was one of the most important questions. His solution was at once conservative and daring. On the one hand, it was important to the architect to retain the building's industrial past. On the other hand, he wanted to create generous areas and spaces that would foster interaction among the students and instructors. For this reason, he left the old supporting structure unchanged and simply encased it in new external insulation and corrugated metal. Inside, he inserted four atriums, which he connected with a long corridor on the ground floor. In addition to bringing abundant daylight into the depths of the factory's floors, the atriums create new spatial relationships. For instance, any of the 420 students on the fourth floor can see who is meeting up with whom on the ground floor or who is exhibiting their work there – and vice versa.

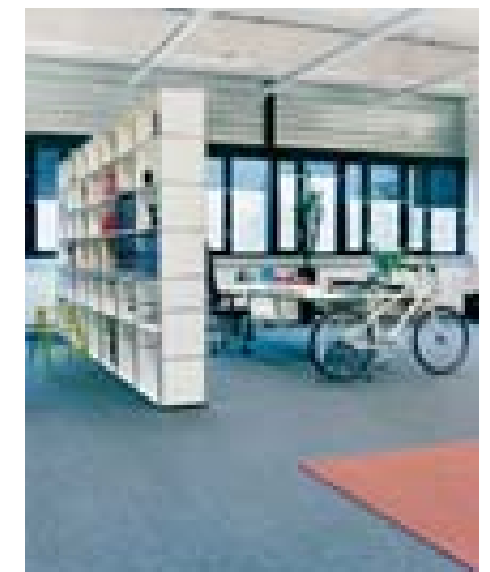
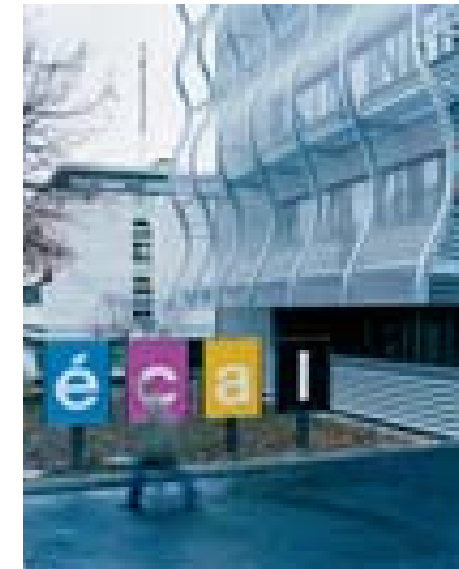
This unpretentious architecture, which is strongly oriented toward interaction and networking, is exactly what Keller wanted. For the 62-year-old director, who has run the school since 1992, linking disciplines, working with partners in the industry and collaborating with museums and schools around the world is his calling. A native of western Switzerland, he obsessively travels the globe as ECAL's ambassador, a design

expert, trend watcher and promoter – whether to set up connections in Dubai, a stage in Shanghai or an exhibition at Art Basel Miami for his school and its students. In Miami, Keller and the 32-year-old head of the industrial design department have organized 'ice cream socials' and even served the treat in little porcelain cones, designed by second-year student Delphine Frey. During his travels, Keller constantly manages to draw attention to his school in unconventional ways as well as apply his charm to persuade international artists like photographer Nan Goldin or furniture designer Ronan Bouroullec to join the school's faculty. As a result of his efforts over the years, ECAL has become a melting pot for the global design scene.

Keller spent the last five years working tirelessly on the 'new location' project. The roaming ambassador managed to talk sponsors into donating a total of three million Swiss francs to support the endeavor. And now ECAL has moved into its new home. The students aren't the only ones to benefit from the reworked spaces and infrastructure; the offices for the administrative staff and instructors, the library and the conference room are elegant and spacious. When it came to furnishings, Keller chose USM. 'The USM Haller Modular Furniture system is aesthetically pleasing, solid and functional,' says the director, 'and it offers an excellent way to work with the large spaces of the former industrial site.' With only a few exceptions, the components and tables fit with the theme of pure white and pearl gray because, as Keller says, grinning, 'it is already colorful enough in our building.' He is convinced that the USM Haller Modular Furniture system, which is virtually a classic, in no way conflicts with the image of ECAL as a trendy, progressive and dynamic design academy. 'The USM Haller system works its way perfectly through all kinds of fashions and design periods – in part, because it is adaptable to all spaces.' Given all the design expertise under one roof, who decided on the furniture system? 'Well, to tell you the truth, things are very democratic here – ECAL has a director, and he makes the decisions!' Keller explains with a wink as he hurries off to his next appointment.







The drafting room (left) is a high-tech learning workshop where future furniture-design classics are created. Creativity is managed and structured in the administrative offices (above left). From the director's office (above right), Pierre Keller guides supertanker ECAL through the shallows.

**The hanging files of Limburg** This magnificent Art Nouveau building, constructed in 1906, has deep significance for Marcus Ulrich Dillmann: It was purchased by his great-grandfather, and his father was born here. What is more, in November 2006, he moved his law firm into its ground-floor offices. Dillmann specializes in labor law involving the church, and he is the chairman of the labor law arbitration office at the Caritas Association of the Limburg Diocese, which includes part of the Rhine-Main region and the cities of Wiesbaden and Frankfurt.

It is clear from the orange Panton chairs in the conference room and other classic Modern pieces around his office that the 38-year-old lawyer is 'in love with design.' Dillmann is also proud of the original splendid cedar floor. USM's bookcases, sideboards, filing cabinets and storage in black – are a perfect fit with this environment. Besides, jokes Dillmann, the color also matches his attorney's robe, which hangs on a tailor's body form in his office.

It is an unusual law firm, and its leader is an unusual attorney, equipped with the rare capacity of not taking himself too seriously. Besides himself, the small firm consists of one other lawyer and Dillmann's mother, who handles everything but the legal aspects of the business.

His wall of books, containing 506 volumes of the Collected Decisions of the Reich Court and the Federal Supreme Court, beginning in 1880, is especially impressive. Even more impressive is the way in which Dillmann stores his files – they hang like men's shirts, in custom-designed USM storage units.



The content determines the dimensions. 506 volumes of professional literature are brought together in a black USM Haller bookcase. The lawyer's many files are stored in hanging file folders in specially made cases.





**Investment protection** A brick building with tall windows and wooden mansard roofs sits in the backyard of one of Zurich's most famous sites, right next to the Bellevue-Platz and a stone's throw away from the opera and the headquarters of the Neue Zürcher Zeitung newspaper. Built originally as a storage facility for a nearby hotel in 1899, it was later used as a furniture joiner's workshop, a warehouse for automobile replacement parts (with three gasoline pumps) and most recently an artist's studio. That was all before the renovation. What does it look like now? A nondescript stairway leads to the third floor, where glass doors open onto a bright 200-square-meter (656-square-foot) room. This is the office of communications agency update AG, founded in 1995 by Hans Ott with only two associates and three small offices. When it came to choosing office decor, Ott took a pragmatic approach: He compared furniture systems and prices and decided on the USM Modular Furniture system. The agency has been steadily growing ever since, adding editors, graphic designers, public relations and publishing experts as well as technicians.

Today, about 20 employees work at update AG, utilizing the most diverse means of communication, though most often the Internet, for their diverse roster of clients. And the white modular furniture system has grown right along with the company. According to Ott, USM Haller is 'investment protection.'

Unsurprisingly, the enterprising founder/owner has found a novel use for the building's first floor: a wine store called Table Wine, where wines and cigars are sold and can be sampled together. For his cherry table and matching wine-bottle racks, he chose USM Haller as well – this time in steel blue. Blue just seemed to be a good fit.



‘USM Haller is  
investment protection.  
It simply goes along  
with every change.’

Hans Ott, CEO, update AG





**The rebirth of the Renaissance** Not far from St. Mark's square, in one of the most interesting building complexes in Venice, there is an extraordinary museum with a library and gorgeous reading rooms. The Palazzo Querini Stampalia has stood on the Campo Santa Maria Formosa, across from the church, since the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Today, it is home to a foundation of the same name. The last private owner, Count Stampalia, bequeathed the family property, including all furniture, paintings and the contents of an impressive library, to his home city. Some rooms still look just as the count left them. The great Venetian architect Carlo Scarpa rebuilt the spaces right after World War II, and in 1993, another famous architect, Mario Botta of Ticino, got down to work as well. The purchase of a new wing of a building on Campo Santa Maria Formosa was the impetus for rearranging the entire structure. Now, the ticket counter, coat check, museum shop and a small cafeteria are located on the ground floor, grouped around an interior courtyard with a fountain. The second floor houses the library and two reading rooms; the library's book depository spans across four more floors and several wings of the building complex. The third floor is reserved for the museum, which shows the Querini possessions and reflects this patrician family's passion for art. Here, you can see work from all the major artists from the early Renaissance through the Rococo period: Giovanni Bellini, Palma il Vecchio, Giovanni Battista Tiepolo and – most importantly – Pietro Longhi. USM furniture in anthracite gray fits just as well in the service areas on the ground floor, such as the cafeteria and the bookstore, as it does in the library, against the centuries-old walls, amid antiquities and Murano glass. The new and the ancient become one.







USM mingles with the Renaissance and Rococo, amid marble and Murano candelabras: At the Querini Stampalia Foundation, famous architects have left their marks. Various stylistic periods, renovations, antiquities and modern design come together exquisitely.





**Borderline** Since 1974, a 185-kilometer (115-mile) border called the Green Line has bisected the island of Cyprus into the Greek-Cypriot south and the Turkish-Cypriot north. The division even runs through the middle of the island's capital city of Nicosia. The political situation has left its mark on the city's urban development: Since no one knows what will happen to this important historic hub, there is hardly any investment in the city center. As a result, Nicosia has continued to evolve primarily along its fringes, and magnificently so. The periphery of the Greek-Cypriot section is home to the Aretaios hospital. 'Because there were no reference points in terms of architecture or urban development in this 'no-man's land,' I decided to create a unique arrangement,' says the hospital's architect, Haris Hajivassiliou. The Cypriot designer created a compact, L-shaped building with a distinct structure that encompasses a cozy courtyard to the south. Like all buildings on Cyprus, it is a bulwark against the Mediterranean heat: the façades are painted gleaming white. On the north-facing side, horizontal bands of windows let plenty of daylight into the operating and consultation rooms. Inside, visitors are welcomed by a refreshing world of marble, glass and USM. 'Thanks to its harmonious proportions, the furniture system creates very little "noise" – it fits in with its surroundings discreetly and, in particular, with my architecture,' says Hajivassiliou, who also uses the USM Haller Modular Furniture in his own office. USM also does not compete with the main feature of the building: the elegant ramp that leads from the entry level on the second floor to the courtyard below. This 'architectural promenade' allows the hospital's patients, visitors, doctors and staff to experience not just a functionally oriented hospital that operates like a machine, but also a place of recovery and contemplation.





Clinical atmosphere – architectural elegance: The head physician proudly presents his new consultation room. The glass ramp makes the hospital feel more expansive and relaxing. It is not just a path to another floor, but also to a place of contemplation.



**Effectively controlled** It was a major investment, and it attracted a lot of attention. In 2005, Bachmann electronic, a company specializing in high-tech control systems, expanded its production and office space by 50%, doubled its production capacity, created 80 new workstations and invested €12 (\$17.5) million in the project. The new facilities were ready for occupancy in 2006. Some of the world's leading firms in the systems-building industry (production machinery, series production and special machine construction) and in energy and environmental technology use Bachmann controls in their operations. Since 1999, Bachmann electronic has been one of the pioneering suppliers of controls for wind-energy systems. The addition, by Marion Rainer, of the Feldkirch-based architecture firm rainer+amann, is flooded with natural light. The core is an open two-story atrium with 300 square meters (3,225 square feet) of space for communication and interaction. For company founder Gerhard Bachmann, the new building is 'a deliberate commitment to the site, with its top-notch employees.' When it comes to occupational physiology, ergonomics and technology, the company's workstations are truly state-of-the-art. On his architect's recommendation, Bachmann opted for the USM Modular Furniture Haller, after having used 'at least 10 different systems' over the last 35 years. Finally, says Bachmann, he has found a system that is both durable and can be expanded at any time. Instead of choosing a trendy color that could end up being distracting, he opted for what some might call an engineer's color: anthracite grey.





Maximum precision requires maximum concentration. State-of-the-art development and production facilities are the standard at Bachmann electronic, in Feldkirch, where employees work with high-tech electronics and computer equipment. To minimize distractions from this demanding work, USM Haller shelving units were selected in anthracite grey.





**Masterpiece of Adaptation** USM Kitos is a table system that can be assembled in countless configurations for all sorts of applications – from conference tables to high-tech workstations and everything in between. This masterpiece of adaptation is created with the help of columns, traverses and support frames, all connected by tension rings. With adjustable height and tilt, it is just as perfect when used as a free-standing table as it is when connected in a series.

The fine art of transformation and the simple elegance of the tables were the critical factors in the decision by this investment company to furnish its Athens offices in with USM’s Kitos tables. The elegant headquarters, constructed by Elias Barbalias, opened in 2000 on the coast road of Glyfada, south of Athens. Glyfada is one of the most stylish suburbs of the Athens metropolitan area. The well-known Greek architect and designer combined a neoclassical exterior with an ultramodern interior. The view of the Aegean Sea from the top floor of the three-story building is breathtaking. Ample use of glass and skylights, as well as spacious conference rooms, contribute to a bright and roomy interior. All floors are made of cork, which is sound-absorbing and easy on the feet. Additional amenities include a small fitness center, a parklike garden with a proper colonnade periphery and a luxurious dining room on the top floor.







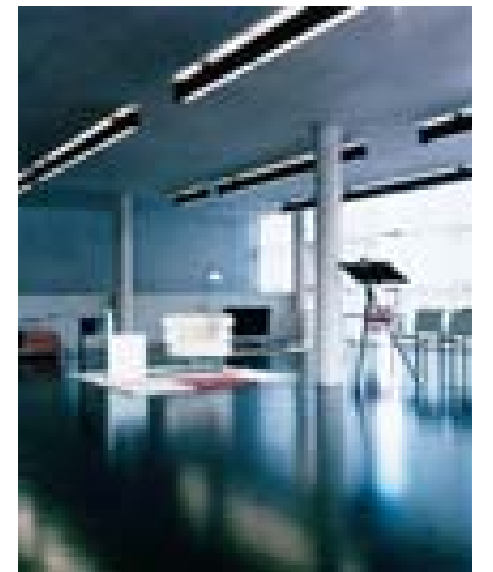
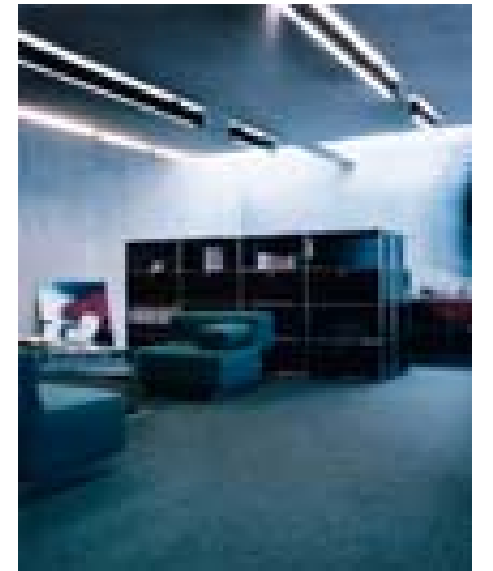
Elegance and spaciousness in the new headquarters of this investment company near Athens: warm colors, cork floors, ample use of glass and light. The USM Kitos table, with transparent glass and black oak tabletops, is used throughout the building, both in the offices and the large conference rooms, complete with the latest in high-tech equipment.



**Classics in good company** In an interview with the magazine Design Report, Oliver Holy said that many of his decisions stem from gut instinct, which, he added, is a feasible management style for a small company. Holy oversees the German company ClassiCon, which employs a staff of about a dozen workers. The name reflects the company's business. ClassiCon sells furniture editions by such design legends as Eileen Gray and Eckart Muthesius. Those are the classics. ClassiCon's other endeavor is the Contempora line by contemporary designers like Konstantin Grcic, the Scandinavian trio Norway Says and Clemens Weisshaar, whom we can all thank for the world's most intelligent barstool. Since 2003, ClassiCon has made its home in a spectacular three-story jewel of exposed concrete and glass in the Munich-Riem industrial district. Architect Joachim Jürke designed the company's headquarters, which houses its offices, warehouse and showrooms. A 200-square-meter (2,150-square-foot) rooftop terrace with a wooden deck offers a fantastic view of the Alps – or, as an architectural critic wrote after the opening, the sort of view 'you might find on the sun deck of a luxury ocean liner that's landed in a field.' Oliver Holy, the young head of the company, started out studying law. But he soon found himself drawn to design, architecture and art – a passion that has stayed with him to this day. 'Whether it is Christmas, my birthday or Easter,' he says, 'all I have ever really wanted is art.' When the opportunity came along to combine his love with a profession, he joined ClassiCon.

There are few doors in his building, either in the showrooms or in the offices. In fact, the transitions are generally fluid. There is a distinction, however, between the spaces out front and those behind the scenes: In addition to the furniture from his own line, Holy's offices are furnished in USM Haller – in sophisticated black. Classics in good company.





Classic and contemporary design as far as the eye can see: ClassiCon insists on using only the best, in both its showrooms and offices. Behind the scenes, USM's black shelving units divide the large space into 10 to 12 workstations.

explain elucidate publicize  
investigate clarify assess  
publish analyze uncover  
comment condense annotate  
research observe interpret –  
vital concentration



The concentrated methods of the Financial Times in Hamburg. This is where news from around the world encounters a variety of work styles. USM Haller mobile pedestals in yellow and anthracite bring a sense of order and calmness in the daily chaos.



**In the nerve center** In the global jargon of journalism, this area is called the newsroom. It is the heart of a newspaper, in this case of the Financial Times Deutschland, which is situated on one of the top floors of a renovated warehouse in Hamburg. This is where the central news desk is located and the front page and page two of the Financial Times are produced. It is also the headquarters of the editors in charge of the current Web site ([www.ftd.de](http://www.ftd.de)). Each section of the paper is put together by teams of four on the so-called 'newspaper books' (also known as newspaper bundles). Fifty people come together in this 250-square-meter (2,688-square-foot) space, and yet there is not a trace of the breathless confusion one might normally associate with the editorial offices of a daily newspaper. Even right before production deadlines, the atmosphere is lively but highly focused.

Is USM Modular Furniture capable of reducing stress? Cosima Jäckel, the office manager, smiles. She and her colleague Isabelle Arnold were responsible for furnishing the new open-floor-plan office, which the paper has occupied since last March. The days of noisy confusion are gone, Jäckel says. According to her, the calm aura has to do not only with the new layout of the editorial offices, but also the furniture – especially the sideboards, which double as room dividers. They are exactly the right height, not too tall and not too short, so as not to interrupt the visual field. In this way, Jäckel says, they provide 'a sensitive division of the space.' At the same time, the two colors that were selected, golden yellow and mid gray, provide a sense of warmth.

Journalists have a well-deserved reputation for being disorganized. USM cannot do anything to change that. Jäckel may not be as powerless but says she will not go as far to mitigate the disorder as her former editor-in-chief, who instructed the cleaning crew to throw away anything that was not attached to the desks.





**Where aviation parts are baked** To put it casually but by no means incorrectly, the well-known engineering company Scholz, in Coesfeld, produces giant, vertical pressure cookers where the bodies of Formula 1 race cars and aircraft fuselages are essentially baked. For those who prefer a more technical version, here it is: An autoclave (Greek-Latin: self-locking) is a pressurized container that can be sealed airtight. Complete autoclave systems and furnaces with process control systems are routinely used in the aerospace, glass and auto-racing industries. Scholz was founded in 1919 by Albert Scholz, the inventor of the rapid lock for pressurized containers. The company's new headquarters, built in 2006, accommodates both the production and administration needs of its 90 employees. Andreas Bodem, a local architect, was awarded the contract for this major project. His two-story administration building centers on a 'contemplative atrium that promotes communication within the building.' Bodem also recommended that the building be outfitted with the USM Modular Furniture system. The owners were persuaded by the overall precision and flexibility of the design. The color choice was obvious: black, like the steel profile sections used for the door and window elements and the railings on the façade.



Light, space and elegance – the lobby's design is streamlined and subtle. The remarkable gneiss-stone floor serves as a stage for USM Haller in black and Le Corbusier's classic LC1 leather armchairs.



In Scholz's new administration building, 90 workstations with large expanses of glass and black USM Haller furniture are grouped around an inner atrium.



The USM furniture systems are modular: Everything can be combined with everything else. Interchangeable functionality extends the life cycle of the pieces and creates almost infinite possibilities for their use. Fashionable trends are rejected in favor of a classic aesthetic. However, the world of USM is dynamic. In 'spotlight' you can see how sustained product development allows the furniture systems to keep pace with the times, as well as how USM actively participates in the cultural world with activities in our international showrooms.

# spotlight

showroom news insight





**Platform for photography** For USM in 2007 and 2008, the international showroom exhibition cycle was characterized, above all, by photography. As in the newly redesigned brochure 'details,' the furniture was the focal point of each photographic staging, with the goal of portraying the furniture systems with a highly aesthetic yet formally diminished quality. The atmosphere of each photo shoot was created in the showroom exhibitions, with scenes similar to those photographed for the 'details' brochure. Lights, tripods and back-grounds bring this immediacy, this special studio environment, into the exhibit. Berlin, Berne, Hamburg, Milan, New York, Paris: We looked for artists who had a connection with their respective cities, both established artists and fresh talent who had never had such a large platform. They all received carte blanche – with two basic conditions: The staging had to have something to do with the city, and the furniture had to be part of the idea. The results can be seen on the following spread.

The exhibitions are on a rotating display in our showrooms: **Bern**, Gerechtigkeitsgasse 52; **Berlin**, Französische Strasse 48; **Hamburg**, Plan 6; **Milan**, Via S. Radegonda 11; **New York**, 28–30 Greene Street; **Paris**, 23, Rue de Bourgogne

Detailed information – [www.usm.com](http://www.usm.com)





**Everything is going to be alright**  
Judith Affolter

A huge construction site that awakes from a long slumber and goes to work with optimism and energy. This is how Judith Affolter sees Berlin. The photographer was born in Switzerland in 1969 and lives in Berlin and Zurich. The tragedy and melancholy of Berlin is palpable in her photographs. The artist captures both qualities with utter directness and immediacy – using her cell phone.



**Familiar Territory**  
Jon Naiman

What is a donkey doing in this nice setting? A horse in a living room? That sheep in the kitchen? New York photographer Jon Naiman lives and works in Zurich. He creates snapshots that make the abnormal seem normal. Familiar everyday experiences are given a new dimension. Expectations are challenged. Can the impossible be possible after all?



**The Wave**  
Sven Ingmar Thies

After several years living in England, Japan and Austria, artist and designer Sven Ingmar Thies is devoted to a topic that is close to home: the Hamburg Harbor. There, the Hamburg native photographs merchants, dock workers, captains, passers-by and tourists. These portraits, hung on thin cables, fill the entire 200-square-meter (656-square-foot) USM showroom. The photos swing gently around the viewer, at eye level and near the ground; together, they form a wave.



**Modules, accumulations, structures**  
Armin Linke

On his journeys around the world, Milan-based photographer Armin Linke documents the phenomenon of globalization and its social and political implications. When choosing his motif, he does not commit to any particular genre – man-made landscapes, megacities, portraits, interiors or technomania. The idea of archiving, however, is always the conceptual background of Linke's work.



USM Haller: electronic locking system

**Save and individualized** USM developed an electronic locking system that would enable employees to easily and efficiently place confidential documents in secure storage. At the same time, it needed to be flexible enough to accommodate possible organizational changes. At first blush, the USM Haller furniture does not look out of the ordinary. But a closer at the knob of the cabinet doors reveals a small black oblong button where the keyhole would normally be. Just behind this button, directly in the center of the cabinet handle, is the brain of the new system, which is operated with an electronic key. The concept resembles the locking mechanism in car doors and is activated within a two-meter (six-foot) radius. If access is authorized, the knob can be turned and the door opened. The electronic locking system is available initially in Switzerland and the EU.

For detailed information and a video, please visit [www.usm.com](http://www.usm.com)



# news

**More selections, more design options** USM has expanded its standard range of tabletop options to suit each individual’s unique taste and style. Our natural wood veneers are now additionally available in natural oak, birch, cherry, pear, and walnut. Natural linoleum tabletops are also offered in beige, red and black. The surface palette is increased with two exceptionally durable and long-lasting materials: dark gray laminate and black granite. In addition, one of the features introduced two years ago for the USM Haller tables is now available for USM Kitos: lacquered glass, which is painted on the underside in one of our eleven standard colors. The USM Haller and USM Kitos tables are well suited for both residential and office settings, now with even more surface options in a wide range of standard sizes and heights. As with all of our products, these recent additions can be integrated into your existing USM furniture for today and years to come.

Detailed information – [www.usm.com](http://www.usm.com)



**A strong finish** Durable, transparent and scratch-resistant, glass has been used in decorative pieces for thousands of years. What is more, the versatile material is both beautiful and easy to clean. Countertop inset glass panels are now available as a finish option for USM Haller furniture. Produced in our eleven standard colors, they are lacquered on the back to seamlessly match the metal finishes of the shelving system – a feature that also increases durability to these heavily used surfaces. The new inserts may also be ordered in pearl gray and dark gray laminate.

Detailed information – [www.usm.com](http://www.usm.com)





**Colorful and environmentally responsible** It would be a mistake to assume that the USM Modular Furniture systems exist only in black and white, even though these two colors are featured prominently in this issue of ‘spaces’ magazine. In fact, green, golden yellow and gentian blue have been part of the color palette for many years. To ensure variety and the reuse of colors, even in reconfigurations that occur decades later, and without bowing to passing trends, USM maintains a standard range of eleven colors. All metal panels – which also include the acoustic elements – are powder-coated. This is done at the main factory in Münsingen near Bern, Switzerland, using an environmentally friendly and protective coating process. The completely solvent-free principle of powder coating is relatively straightforward. Fine synthetic powder is applied with a spray gun to the metal part being coated. The part is electrostatically charged to ensure that the powder adheres to the metal surfaces. Then the powder is baked on in a kiln. In 2007, USM was awarded the ‘Greenguard Indoor Air Quality’ certificate in the Furniture Systems and Tables category for its USM Haller and USM Kitos modular furniture lines. This certifies that both of USM’s product lines release extremely small amounts of chemicals and hazardous substances. The USM products were the first European furniture lines to successfully pass the strict tests performed by the U.S. Greenguard program necessary to attain the certificate. The Greenguard Environmental Institute (GEI) is a world-renowned institute with a focus on the ‘healthy interior environment.’ In the fall of 2004, the project ‘USM and Sustainability’ was completed in coordination with ETH (Swiss Federal Institute of Technology) Zurich. All new features are designed, produced and consistently verified in accordance with the results of this study.

Detailed information – [www.usm.com](http://www.usm.com)

**USM in the home**  
Private residences in;  
Vico Morcote (Switzerland), Jersey City (USA),  
Aesch (Switzerland), New York (USA),  
Nicosia (Cyprus), Ulm (Germany),  
Lugano (Switzerland)

**Remo Bill residence, Grenchen (Switzerland)**  
Single-family home for 4 people  
Furnishings: USM Haller white and black  
Sales partner: Zaugg + Zaugg,  
Derendingen (Switzerland)  
Architect: Fritz Haller, Solothurn (Switzerland)

**DELC (DermaEstetic LaserCenter), Biel (Switzerland)**  
Workspace for 2 medical practices  
and seven employees  
Furnishings: USM Haller steel blue  
Sales partner: Raum-Design,  
Biel (Switzerland)  
Architect: Christoph Netthoevel,  
Raum-Design, Biel (Switzerland)

**Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti, Venice (Italy)**  
Exhibition space (lobby, reception,  
ticket counter)  
Furnishings: USM Haller ruby red  
Sales partner: Centro Ambiente Ufficio  
S.p.A. di Saonara, Padua (Italy)  
Architect: Fulvio Caputo, C and C,  
Venice (Italy)

**Ecole cantonale d'art de Lausanne (ECAL), Renens (Switzerland)**  
Design college, 14,000 square meters  
(151,000 square feet)  
Furnishings: USM Haller pure white,  
black and pearl gray laminate tables  
Sales partner: wohnshop  
projecto SA, Lausanne (Switzerland)  
Architect: Bernard Tschumi Urban Planners  
and Architects  
Paris (France) / New York (United States) and  
Claude Fehlmann AG, Morges (Switzerland)

**Lawyer Marcus Ulrich Dillmann, Kanzlei an der Lahn, Limburg (Germany)**  
Workspace for 4 people  
Furnishings: USM Haller black  
Sales partner: henneveld office GmbH,  
Wiesbaden (Germany)

**update AG, Zurich (Switzerland)**  
Workspace for approximately 20 people  
Furnishings: USM Haller white and steel blue  
Sales partner: Hugo Peters,  
Zurich (Switzerland)

**Querini Stampalia Foundation, Venice (Italy)**  
Work environment for 60 employees  
Periodical room, library, reading rooms,  
bookshop, receiving, multimedia rooms.  
Furnishings: USM Haller anthracite  
Distribution Partner: Joint, Milan (Italy)  
Architect: Mario Botta, in collaboration  
with the professional office of Gemin,  
Castagna & Ottolenghi, associated architects  
in Treviso (Italy)

**Aretaios Hospital, Nicosia (Cyprus)**  
Private clinic with 80 beds,  
15,000 square meters (161,000 square feet)  
Furnishings: USM Haller pure white  
and light gray  
Sales partner: simos karamichalis swiss office  
furniture, Kolonaki (Greece)  
Architect: Haris Hadjivassiliou, Doma  
Architects, Nicosia (Cyprus), in collaboration  
with Vassilis Troulides

**Bachmann electronic GmbH, Feldkirch (Austria)**  
Workspace for 80 people  
Furnishings: USM Haller anthracite gray  
Architect: Marion Rainer, rainer + amann,  
Feldkirch (Austria)

**Investment Company, Athens (Greece)**  
Workspace for 75 people  
Furnishings: USM Haller black, white and  
Kitos tables (various tabletops)  
Sales partner: simos karamichalis swiss office  
furniture, Kolonaki (Greece)  
Architect: Barbalias Elias, Special Building  
Constructions, Athens (Greece)

**ClassiCon, Munich-Riem (Germany)**  
Workspace for approximately 12 people  
Furnishings: USM Haller black  
Sales partner: Designfunktion Ges. für moderne  
Bürogestaltung mbH, Munich (Germany)  
Architect: Joachim Jürke, Munich (Germany)

**Financial Times Deutschland, Hamburg headquarters (Germany)**  
Workspace for approximately 50 people  
Furnishings: USM Haller golden yellow,  
mid gray  
Sales: by USM Hamburg (Germany)

**Scholz Maschinenfabrik GmbH & Co. KG, Coesfeld (Germany)**  
Workspace for 90 people  
Furnishings: USM Haller black  
Sales partner: Akzent im Raum OHG, Coesfeld  
Architect: Andreas Bodem,  
Coesfeld (Germany)

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# space

Functional space Living space Developing space

