

create

Freedom

How far can we go?

Making the change

Dropping out to jump back in again

Styling: Courage for permanence

Furnishing: Show personality

Work: Maintain a balance

System 180 is a member of  **media.net**
berlinbrandenburg

Imprint



Editor: System 180 GmbH, Kärntener Straße 21, D-10827 Berlin, T: +49 30 788 58 41, F: +49 30 787 09 160
Editor-in-chief: Volker Maier (responsible for content according to the German Press Law)
Design/Layout: Marit Roloff
Editorial office: Stephan Becker, Rainer Janicki, Beate Scheder, Jörg Zimmermann, Elke Jakubowski (final editing)
Translation: trilanguage.com
Illustrations: Martina Wember
© System 180 GmbH, Berlin

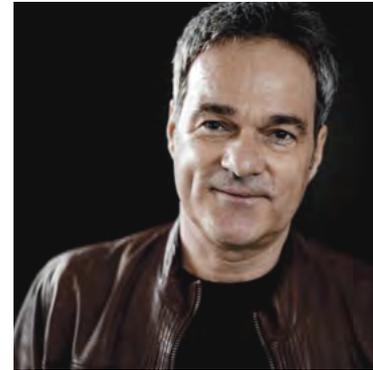
Freedom in focus

Dear reader, as compared to most countries in this world of ours, the country we live in – Germany – is free, democratic and safe. But does that automatically mean that we are also free as individuals? We've come up with a few basic thoughts dedicated to this question (p. 6).

Even in a free country there are a number of – more or less clear – rules and laws that restrict personal freedom. Among these clearly or not so clearly regulated areas is a topic often referred to as “personal styling”. In selecting our wardrobe or in wearing such body ornaments as tattoos, we navigate through a multitude of conventions, dress codes and fashions, all of which may be in or out of tune with others within a multi-layered contextual whole (p. 12).

The question of how we plan our living spaces – our cities and our houses – presents us with a complex body of rules defined by sometimes conflict-prone individual and collective interests (pp. 26 and 18). And even when – within the privacy of our own four walls, for example – we have the opportunity to unfurl our individuality without restrictions, we are all too prone not to take advantage of the opportunity – as to grab hold of the most obvious is often simply too easy (p. 20).

Volker Maier,
Editor-in-chief create



An elementary component of freedom would be to bring the separate life areas of job and family into a comfortable, and therefore healthy balance. The fact that some particular life circumstances can often be better explained by practical constraints than by decisions freely made is something that both employees (p. 30) and the growing number of self-employed know very well (p. 36).

For this reason, the challenge consists in choosing and defending a level of freedom that forms a single helpful boundary for everyone, making it easier for everyone to stay on course (p. 43) – without colliding against or blocking one another. But of course it's not as easy as that...

We at System 180 are working on it and hope that what you read in *create* will entertain you.

Yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Volker Maier". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

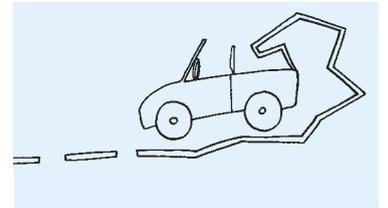
create... freedom

Contents

Essay: Freedom? I just take it

What an open-top convertible has in common with a newly coined geological era and why it's possible that anarchists will be the ones to build the cities of the future. *By Rainer Janicki*

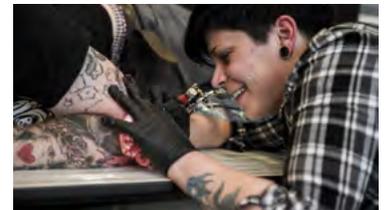
Page 6



Forever different

What differentiation and mimicry have in common and how tattoos serve to communicate, but at the same time to polarise. *By Beate Scheder*

Page 12



Reflections on contemporary architecture

Why good architecture should aim for the art of balance and the values defended by the DETAIL prize.

Page 18





Searching for the perfect piece

Something that unites “Generation Maybe” and the “Best Agers” when choosing home fittings is that they both look for a reconciliation between the desires and the basic nature of the home dweller. *By Jörg Zimmermann*

Page 18



BrainBox

The story of a ten-metre-square cube made of stainless steel tubing and how it can become a think tank for the smart city of the future.

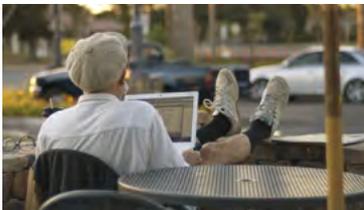
Page 26



On dropping out and jumping back in again

How dropping out can mean opting in and what it all has to do with a wooden bicycle is explained through an interview with the former managing director of System 180, Matthias Broda. *By Volker Maier*

Page 30



Everything in movement

Why freedom and self-control are two sides of the same coin and how work can be made into a productive life task. *By Stephan Becker*

Page 36



On the tracks of our origins

Up and down from crags to caves – how steiner.ag is setting an emblem of mankind's origins in the Neander valley.

Page 42



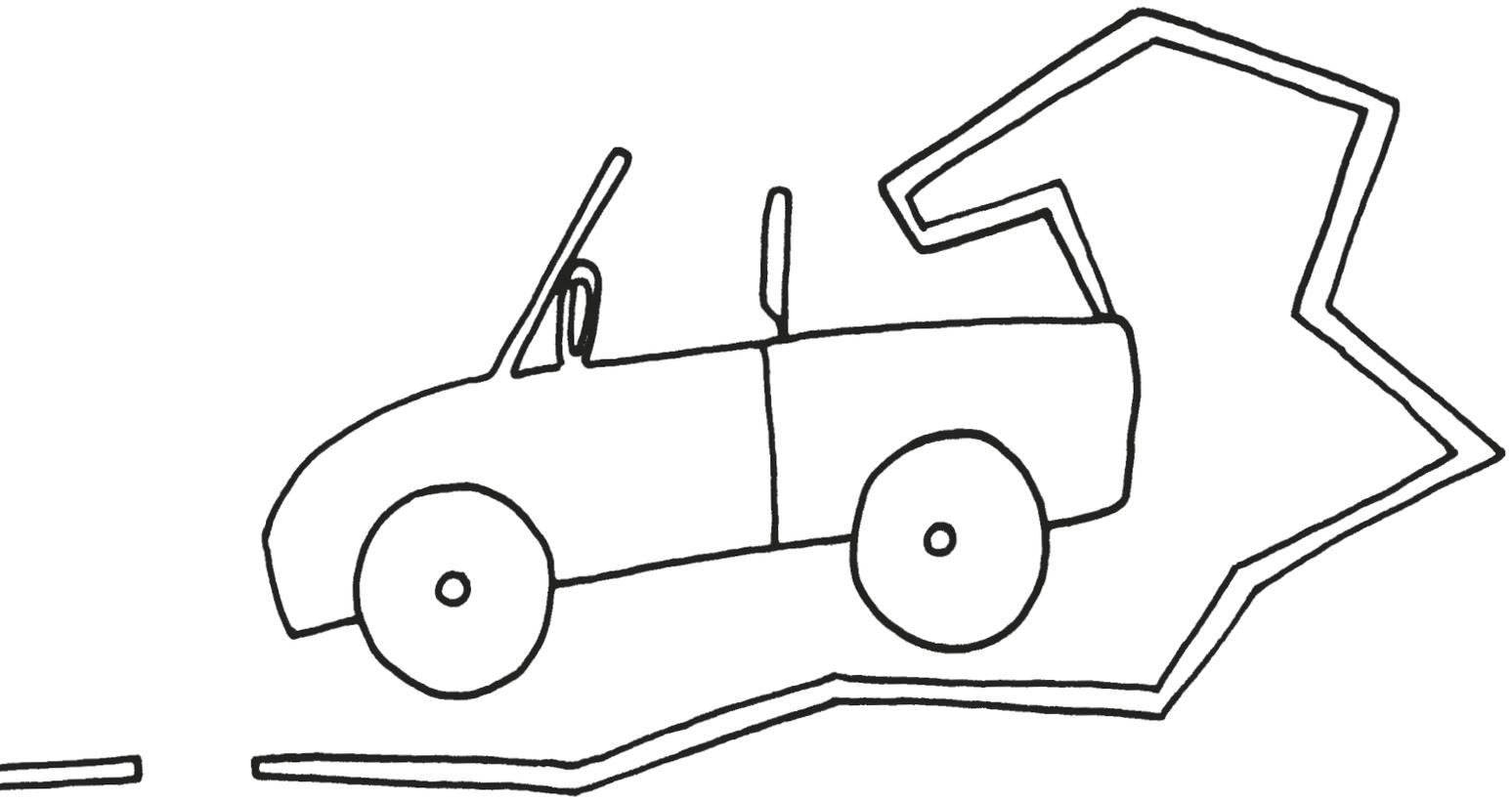
Presentations made to measure

System 180 develops a display system for Adlershof Projekt GmbH.

Page 44

Alright then... can you simply pick up freedom and take it away? And if so, what exactly are you getting? Does advertising, with its constant promises of freedom, end up leading us to anarchy? Then are we really so free...





I just take it

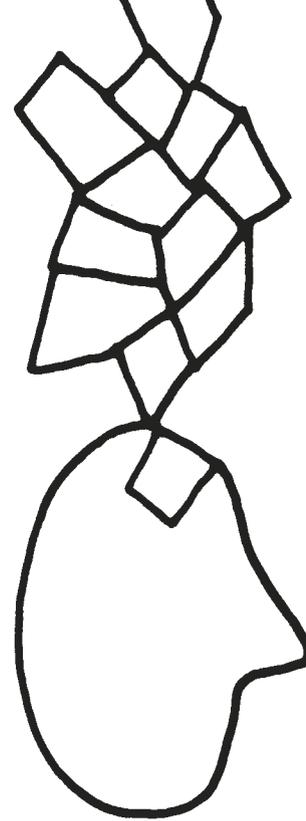
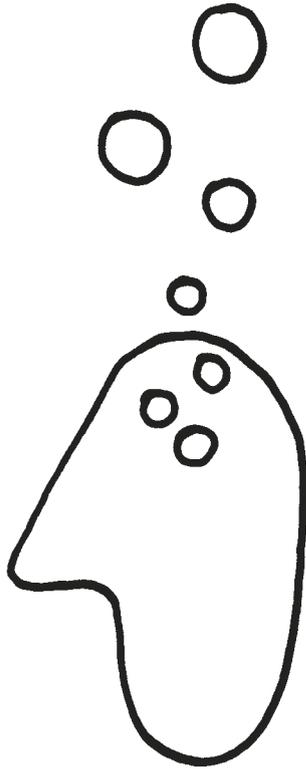
Whether it be ancient, medieval, enlightenment or modern – no human age has yet gone by without leaving behind important thoughts on the topic of freedom. Sometimes it appears as a privilege of the educated or the aristocracy, sometimes as the basic right of every citizen, sometimes as a basic principle of social and economic life.

Freedom is apparently a flexible – one might even say slippery – asset, one that needs to be pinned down clearly. Where would we be if everyone did exactly what they felt like? Or, to put it another way: where does personal freedom start, and where does it end? Even when we define limits on the concept, we can still move within those boundaries with relative freedom. But then are we still free, or would it be more accurate to say we are prisoners of freedom?

Me and the others

In physics things are always clearly structured within a relative system. What freedom means in this context is the freedom that an object has in relation to its environment, as defined by its position in space and its rotation. And this applies to us too... rotating, for example, when everyone wants something from us at the same time, when politicians spin on their own axis as they give their opinion or when we are simply sitting on the big wheel just enjoying the view.

We also have a relationship with our environment: though we typically do no more than drive through it by car. However, we sometimes also see the bigger picture, can define our position and can then, perhaps after the



third glass of wine or beer, begin to tackle the really urgent problems of this world – though strangely enough we never seem to resolve them.

Aside from that, some time ago we took upon ourselves the freedom to influence and change our environment massively, so that we are now leaving permanent traces of our presence on this planet, for which reason geologists have defined a separate geological era, the Anthropocene, though the exact date on which the era commenced is not yet agreed. In any case, mere fact that the era has been defined leaves it pretty clear what our position is.

Trapped in reality

Freedom of opinion, of religion, to travel – anyone who thinks we are free individuals in a free country is disabused of that view by advertising: The term "freedom" is creeping ever more frequently into the sector. Freedom when paying, when configuring a system, in dressing, in flying, in driving a car... You could be excused for thinking that we're

**” Today, everything is flexible.
But does that make it freer?**

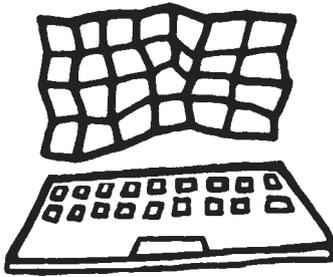
all behind bars and absolutely have to consume more to finally free ourselves.

The bitter reality is that we are indeed unfree. Locked into reality, onto uniformity, to the forces surrounding us. Advertising suggests to us that we can break out, but in reality we can't. And no credit card or deodorant, and certainly no new convertible can help us. It might just be that some of this rush might give us a moment of happiness. But the fact is that the next morning at eight sharp we're back at the office.

So is freedom just an illusion, merely a product of our faculty to think in the abstract, no different to stocks or money or any other imaginary asset?

Some time in the course of mankind's history the thought suddenly occurred: "What if?" "What happened yesterday?" The here and now, in which we had lived up until then, was supplemented by new dimensions, by a yesterday and a tomorrow – in short, by our faculty for abstraction.

Being able to think in abstract means being able to plan. Making it possible to plan our social actions, naturally with exclusively positive purposes, has sadly gradually led to ever greater dependency, to an ever greater loss of freedom: hunter-gatherers ended up becoming sedentary farmers bound to their land, subject to the rhythm of the seasons, whose role was later taken over in the factories by clock-in cards. Though at least when the work day was over we were free. Today, everything is flexible. But does that make it freer? We are long since a step further forward: work and private life are becoming ever more blurred, with gainful work always setting the tune and deciding over free time.

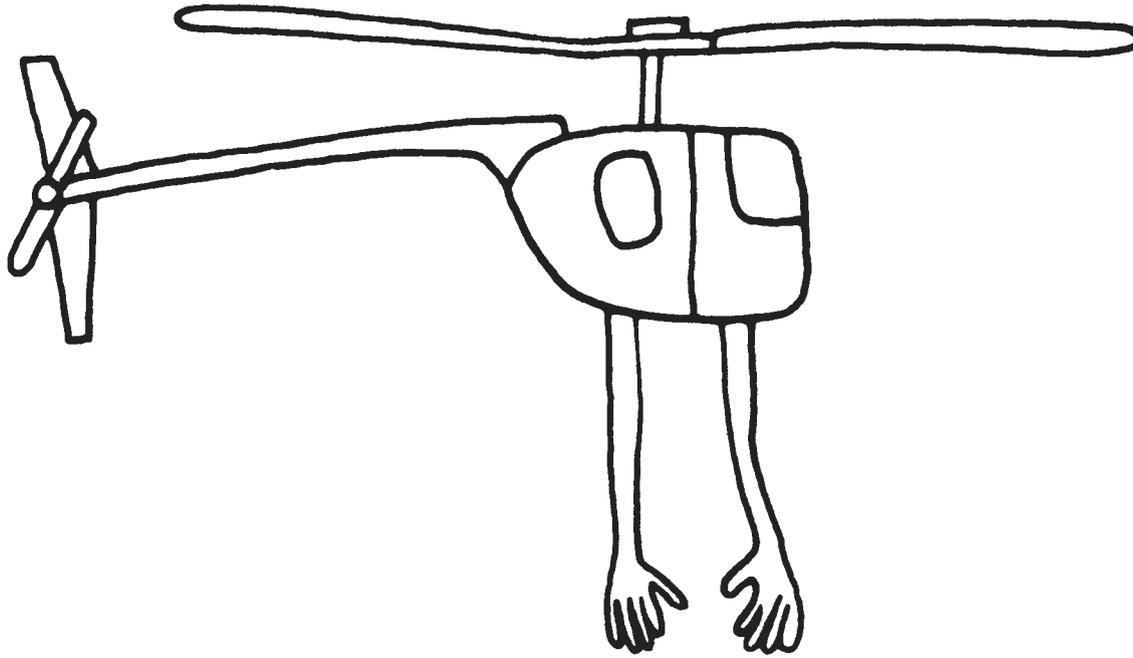


The longing for freedom...

Since human are a passably rational beings, history is full of efforts to achieve freedom – from repression, slavery and feudal bondage, from dictatorships and clock-in cards, but we are all too compliant in submitting to the economic factors in their lives.

Despite this, we still carry the banner of individual freedom around with us, ever ready to fight in its defence. It is not seldom that a discrepancy emerges between our expectations and our reality, between give and take, which can only partially be explained as the result of intolerance. Amongst the uses of individual freedom is to provide an excuse for excluding, restricting or spurning others – even if political theory means something completely different by the term.





Helicopter parents, for example, are quick to appeal to the right to individual freedom when they reveal themselves as total control freaks in relation to their children. Like tyrants, they practice total surveillance – not least with the aid of modern means of communication, which, strangely enough, were developed by the 68 generation, who grew up in precisely the opposite atmosphere – in unrestricted freedom. Accordingly, the “helicopterised” children of today may one day become total anarchists the day they finally decide to break out of their learnt patterns behaviour to do everything completely differently.

” **Where does personal freedom start, and where does it end?**

... ends in the daily snarl up

The future of work and the future of the city are examples of two possible areas that the little anarchists would do well to begin dealing with. Because where we live and where we work are moving ever further away from each other, leaving us stuck in rush-hour traffic twice a day. Either that or we stay cosy in our home office, where work and free time melt even more into each other. Living, working, the city of the future – these topics are the perennial issues for sociologists, philosophers, politicians, planners and architects, none of whom can get any handle on them through conventional ideas.

In the 1970s a revolutionary attempt was made to systematise city planning and architecture using modular construction methods. The meta-city. The basic idea was a building block made out of 4.2 m by 4.2 m by 3.6 m modules, which could be combined together as required. Living, working, shopping were expected to melt into each other once more, resolving in the process various socio-structural problems. But it may be that this was

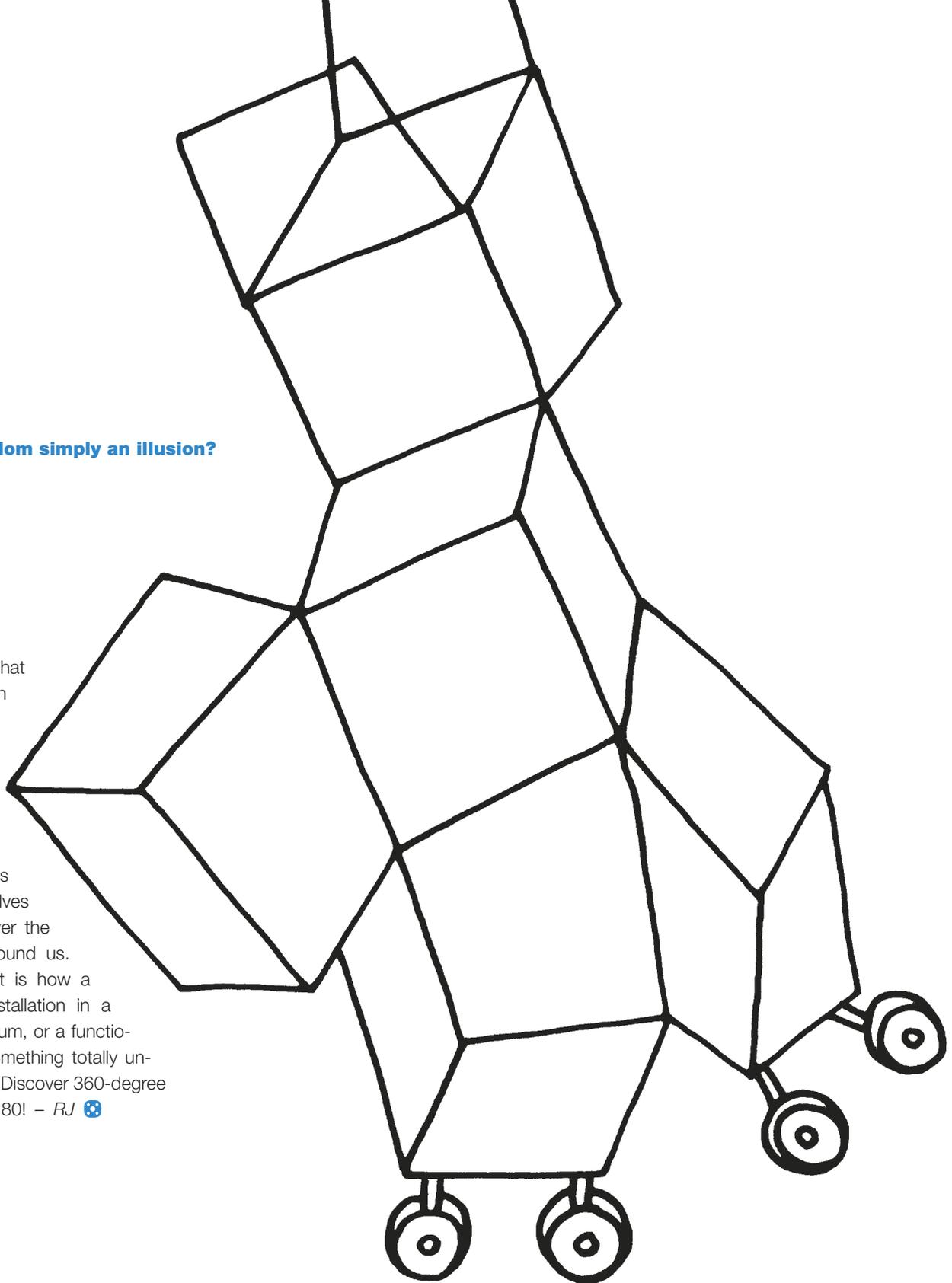
just a consequence of the Western penchant for adopting socialist unitary architecture: the meta-city in Dorsten-Wulfen was demolished little more than ten years after it was built, mainly due to structural deficiencies – but surely also because of a lack of acceptance from users and the high vacancy level in the new suburb.

Freedom is an attitude, not a compulsion

It may be that behind all this there lies a fallacy. Perhaps freedom doesn't lend itself to be pressed into a template, to be in effect decreed. Good intentions often get fired off in entirely the wrong direction. The digital revolution in which we are now living, for example, offers us new fetters through its promise of freedom, fetters which we just compliantly buckle on. Anyone who refuses to take part in this masochism is left on the outside.

” **Is freedom simply an illusion?**

So, can the freedom that is imposed on us within a restricted space not work for us at all? No it can't, because we end up facing boundaries in all directions. On the other hand, yes it can – if we give ourselves the freedom to discover the space available all around us. 360 degrees. For that is how a spectacular spatial installation in a world-renowned museum, or a functional office layout, or something totally unexpected can emerge. Discover 360-degree freedom with System 180! – RJ 🧘





Whether we like it or not, we communicate with our surroundings and express our attitudes and opinions using our clothes, hairstyle and body adornment. But how much freedom do we have in this regard?

When New York trend research agency *K-Hole* first wrote of the concept of *Normcore* in one of their reports in October 2013, many thought they were joking. “Youth Mode: A Report on Freedom” was the title of its manifesto, in which K-Hole opined that being cool is no longer a matter of distinguishing oneself visually from others by having the most individual possible style, but actually by being inconspicuous. According to them, “underground” has degenerated into a bulk commodity. The hip thing was now the sneaker from the chain store, the pair of practical orange jeans and the no-name sweatshirt – things that we had all seen a thousand times somehow without noticing them.

And looking back, one can see that Normcore was indeed very much the fashion in 2014, at least if you take discussions in the trendy feature pages and magazines – with best buy recommendations and all – as your yardstick. Now though, barely a year later, all that is just cold coffee. The anti-trend trend has suffered the same fate as all previous fashion modes. It’s over.

And, when you think about it, it’s not all that surprising. A fashion that emerges out of supersaturation, will end up wearying one in exactly the same way as all the other fashions. Transience is an essential component of any fashion and will in one way or another eventually extinguish its allure. Fashion is constantly reinventing itself. The stuff that’s the latest

Forever

THE IN BERLIN

different

*Sarah Weber, apprentice
"system planner for structural steel
and metal construction"
at System 180*



© Gunner Lillehammer



© Zoe Spawton



© fotolia / Viewpoint

Young people in urban streetstyle
with smartphones



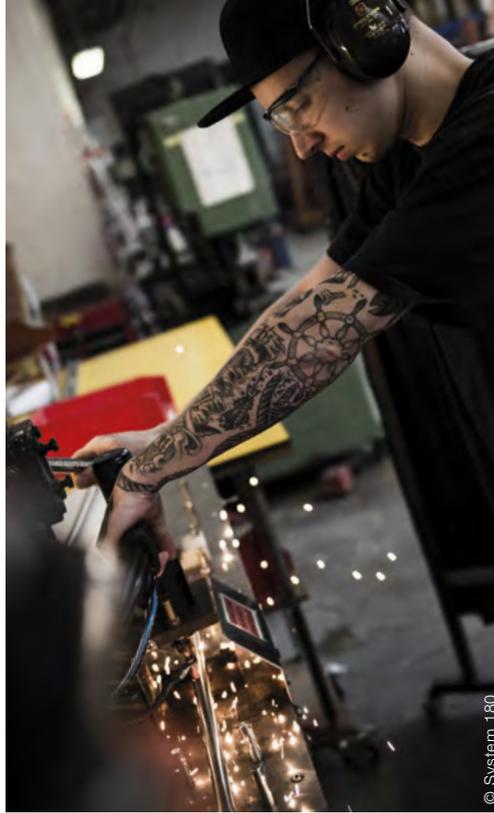
© System 180

thing today is forgotten tomorrow. The person who wants to stay up to date has to either chase fashion trends or invent a new one him or herself. There is no longer any hard and fast fashion diktat, these days there are plenty of options available for individualist and yet trend-aware self-presentation. Complex too are the functions that fashion fulfils in this way: it serves both as a means of demarcation and of imitation. On the one hand one wants to use fashion to be noticed, to stand out from the crowd, but on the other hand one uses codes to express belonging to a group, to allow one to be subsumed into a role – whether that role is conformist or non-conformist. Virginia Woolf pithily sums up these purposes: “... clothes have... more important offices than to merely keep us warm. They change our view of the world and the world’s view of us.”

Adornment that’s forever

Something similar applies to body adornment in general and to tattoos in particular. A tattoo also communicates, often extremely clearly. It differs from clothing fashion, however, on one very decisive point. It’s worn on the skin – and worn forever. No question at all of any transience! A tattoo stays there for life – at least most of the time. Despite this, in Germany alone more than six million people have decided to wear one. And this trend is growing.

One of these people is Sarah W., an employee of System 180 and tattoo artist. She got her first tattoo at the age of 16, an image of her sign of the Zodiac on the back of her neck. After that came all sorts of very personal motifs which she designed herself. She tells us that they are an expression of her individuality. Her body is a canvas, which she uses to bring out her inner self. She claims that she has never sought to set herself apart or to be liked by others. As some stage she began to tattoo other people and was often perplexed when the choice of tattoos followed some leading fashion trend. “Choosing a tattoo is a far-reaching decision”, she says, and for this reason she consi-



Ramón Zarske, electrical systems assembler at System 180

ders it particularly important to discuss the customer’s wishes in advance. “I sometimes ask people to think it over again for two months before agreeing to tattoo them.” The motif should fit well with the personality of its wearer, its placing should also be well chosen, especially if on the neck, the hands for any other extremely visible part of the body. “People should be aware that they can offend people,” says Sarah.

But offending people with a tattoo? Is that really possible? Some sections of humanity have been tattooing each other for thousands of years. Yet body painting has only been acceptable across social boundaries and fashion scenes since the 1980s. These days it is assumed that they are seen almost as the norm. Tattoos are perhaps the best possible example of how the underground has become a mass phenomenon, just as the creative types from K-Hole formulated it way back when. In Berlin practically nobody stares any more when the tattooed Sarah rides on the U-Bahn or goes to the supermarket. Only in extremely conservative places and in a limited number of sectors is it any different. In such milieux tattoos still constitute a violation of the rules. In the police, for example.

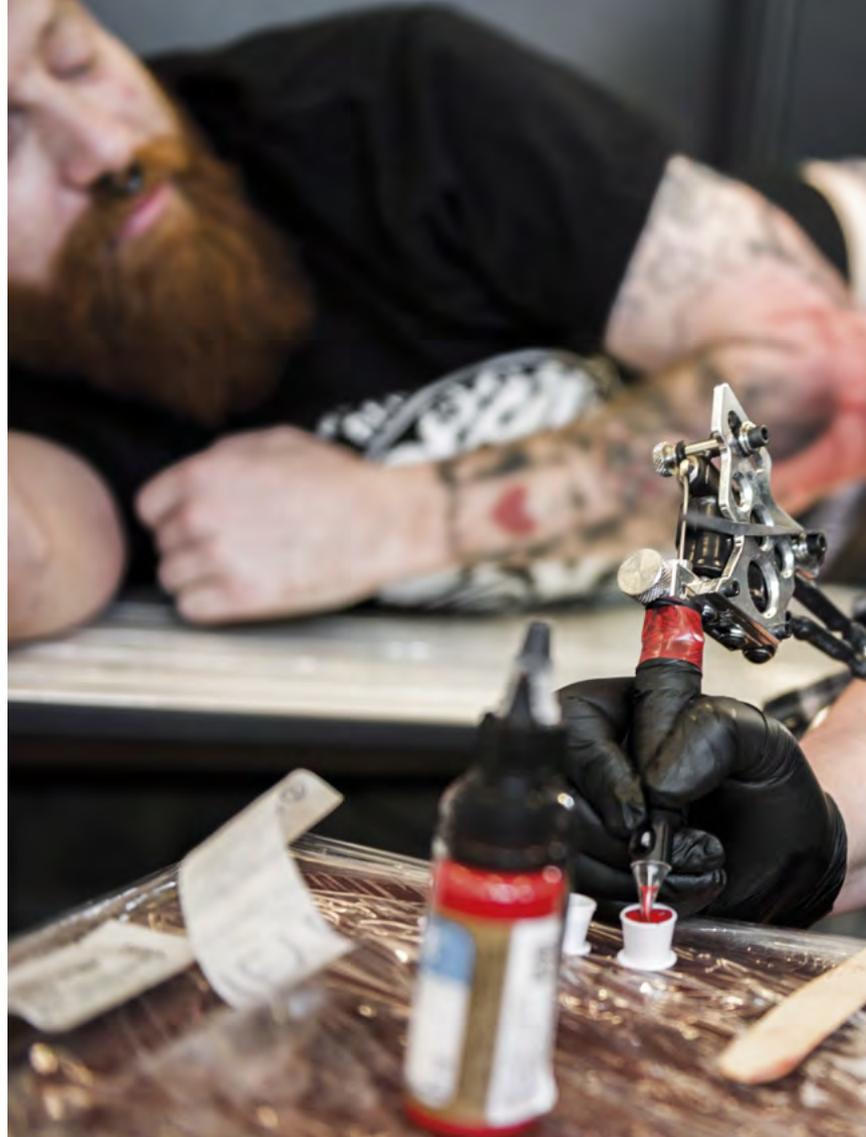
” Transience is an essential component of fashion.



© System 180



© System 180



Last year, the case of a young woman who carried a quote from the Little Prince on her forearm and was therefore not approved for senior officership in the police was dealt with by the Hessian Administrative Court. The appeal by the tattooed woman was rejected. Extensive tattooing is still a taboo in the Police.

Form the margins of society to a mass phenomenon.

Did Sarah ever intend to offend? She did it anyway. As a young lesbian woman in her home village, she fell through the gaps in the local bourgeois sorting grid. "In the beginning I tried to hide it from everyone," she

” A tattoo often communicates extremely clearly.

recounts. But at some point she was no longer willing to do so. And why should she? The problem was in the end one of other people. "I do think that people offend more willingly if they want to get a reaction," she tells us. "But maybe you grow personally too when you accidentally

find yourself at the centre of attention and stand firm despite it all." She began to deal actively with her otherness by simply seizing her freedoms; for example, by holding her girlfriend's hand in public. Her first tattoos, Sarah tells us, were always partly an attempt to communicate with her family. But she didn't succeed. "My mother always just griped about it," she says.



Above left: Tattooing machines and accessories

*Below left and large photo:
Sarah Weber at work on a tattoo*

” These days it is assumed that they are seen almost as the norm.

Despite her individuality, which Sarah puts so much value on, she is nevertheless in line with the history of body adornment, which in our latitudes has always had a close association with being an outsider. The image of the tattoo was closely associated with sailors, convicts, then later members of gangs or particular youth cultures. And that image still resonates, whether we like it or not. So-called “old-school” tattoos, of sailing ships, for example, or skulls and crossbones, swallows or hearts make direct reference to it.

On top of this is the self-destructive aspect of the phenomenon. Anyone who gets a tattoo is voluntarily giving up his or her immaculacy. For women especially, who put themselves to the needle even more often than men these days, it is a way of defying classic ideals of beauty, but

also – and here the ambiguity of aesthetic codes raises its head again – to plunge into whatever tattoo trends happen to be the fashion of the moment.

Currently, by the way, these trends involve symbols of infinity and all things that can be expressed in the form of birds, Sarah tells us. Sooner or later everyone will be just as fed up with seeing them as those old normcore duds. But sadly a tattoo is not so quick to throw off as a shapeless pair of jeans. At least it’s certainly not as easy. In the last resort there is always the laser, which can erase all trace of a person’s old piece of self-expression. And maybe this could end up being the next latest thing: Back to plain old skin. – BS 🍄



A reflection on contemporary architecture



*Danish Maritime Museum, Helsingør, Denmark,
Bjarke Ingels Group*

The DETAIL prize for 2014 was awarded on 20 November 2014 as part of a gala celebration. Representatives of the two prize-winning agencies, *BIG – the Bjarke Ingels Group Copenhagen, New York, Peking and a.gor.a architects* from Thailand, visited Berlin to pick up their awards personally at the event, which was held in the Museum for Communication. Aside from the nominees, guests included other internationally recognised architects as well as figures from academia, politics, culture and industry.

A stated goal of the DETAIL Prize is to highlight the importance of architecture for society. Hanno Rauterberg discussed this goal too in his thoughtful opening speech on contemporary architecture. “Architecture is not a good thing simply because architects think it’s good. No matter how important their trained eye and their constructive imagination may be – it is even more important that they practice the art of balance. Because good architecture is nothing else than this. It must support itself on what was there before it. On what appeals to the popular taste. But if it is not to be simply derivative and sterile, it must also find its own means of expression. It is a balance of convention and obstinacy.”¹ was how Rauterberg put it.

How often we encounter this balanced ideal in daily life is something for each individual to decide for him or herself. We are pleased to echo Mr Rauterberg’s thanks to those who agitate for better architecture. Because buildings are not simply products like any other. They are not just a private good. They always have a social dimension. While they may belong to individuals, they always have a duty to the community, as they leave a mark on our environment and ulti-

mately on us personally too. Or, to put it as Jan Gehl did: “First we shape the city, and then the city shapes us.”

343 Projects from 41 nations were entered for the DETAILPrize this year. What the judges were looking for were realizations characterized by innovative details within a coherent overall concept. The DETAIL Prize 2014, endowed with total prize fund of EUR 5,000, was accepted by Bjarke Ingels and David Zahle of *BIG – the Bjarke Ingels Group*, for their Danish Maritime Museum project, at Helsingør, Denmark.

The jury was particularly impressed with the project’s successful combination of old and new and the way it dealt with the historical context. The DETAIL readers prize went to the *Kwel Kah Baung Migrant Learning Center* by *a.gor.a architects* from Thailand. The prize presentation was the high point of the evening, which was concluded by an informal get together.

Visitors were given an overview of all the nominated works through an exhibition, which ringed the event room. This gave them a glimpse of some of the variety of architectonic production of the present. The works were presented using display stands specially designed for the occasion by System 180. The stands effectively blended in a restrained manner into the impressive atmosphere of the museum.

We would like to congratulate the winners, the nominees and the organisers once again, and are delighted to have supported the event. 🍷

1 “A reflection on contemporary architecture”
Hanno Rauterberg, DETAIL Prize Gala November 2014



Top: DETAIL Prize Gala at the Museum for Communication in Berlin

Centre: Exhibition of the nominated projects

Bottom: Group portrait of the prizewinners, organisers and sponsors.



What's it to be: a flatpack from the discounters or a proven classic?
The cosy and playful versus the clear-lined and minimalist. When you look closer, though, it becomes clear that the choice is anything but free. But the good news is that there is indeed space for individualism when fitting out our own four walls if we just know how to go about it.



© System 180

Overwhelmed by the breadth of choice available?

Searching for the perfect piece

“Who lives here then?” is the title Architektur & Wohnen magazine gives to a series of articles in which the author – basing her judgement on pictures of a living space and the furniture portrayed in them – speculates on the residents, their age, education, profession, marital status and more. The series format depends on the assumption that the dwellers and their furniture have a close relationship with each other and that furniture encodes the life and attitudes of the dweller in some intelligible way – the dwelling place as the reflection of the individual and as a key to their life. If only the connection between living somewhere and simply living were so easy!

We Germans have learnt collectively that the living space one inhabits is connected to one's life. It's been a few years now since furniture giant IKEA first announced their job was “Making a house a home” but instead of sending in the workmen, simply handed us a bundle of assembly instructions. Are there trainees or students these days who don't possess any “Billy” shelves? Well, it's still a rare

phenomenon. And at the same time the clear fact that this popular furniture monoculture meets the needs of young people very well is certainly pretty paradoxical. According to a 2012 study conducted by the Frankfurt Trade Fair, the 20-to-30 age group – which after all forms about 13% of the population of Germany – place a high value on individually designed furniture. Apparently, the concern of younger Germans was to, “communicate a personal feeling”.



© Vitra



System 180 colour decor

© System 180

Personal style in place of mainstream products

So much for what they wish for. In reality, “generation maybe” seems overwhelmed by the variety of choices available to them. The freedom “to choose – by definition without compulsion – from among all the options available and to decide for oneself”, is sacrificed for a place in the queue to the cashier at the furniture discount store. Simply because it’s easier that way? According to the study, practicality, individuality and harmony are the most important criteria in making decisions on furniture. In other words, personal style, “no mainstream products” and functionality. And yet then why do we see this dreary flatpack monotony? Aside from the allegedly low prices, there must be deeper reasons for this contradictory behaviour; because the choices of the older generation seem less than free as well.

” What does good living actually look like?

Do we really furnish our living spaces to suit our wants and needs? Is that soft, cosy sofa we yearn after really an expression or our yearning for security? Does that wall-to-wall shelving represent our love of order? Or doesn’t the design icon in our living room say anything at all about us? The assumption that our choice of furniture follows ideals we aspire to is surely not entirely off the wall. We are presented with world views in abundance in film, on TV, on the Internet and in magazines. Blogs and furniture flyers regularly feed us with images of private living spaces. And these staged settings append seamlessly onto the images provided by our imagination.

In their book, “Wohnen Zeigen”, art historians Irene and Andreas Nierhaus look into the way in which images of living spaces help form our “understanding of interiors”. For the publisher it is clear that “the living space is a stage on which the subject reveals itself”. Displaying one’s living space,

according to the authors, “includes explicit and implicit value judgements and narratives on good and bad living”. But what does good living actually look like? For all our freedom, we seem to follow an unwritten set of rules in our choice of furnishings, rules that attach particular values and attitudes to particular products.

Design icons as signposts

At this point, it might be worth our while to take a look at the “Plastic side chair” by Charles and Ray Eames. Designed in 1950 for the *Low Cost Furniture Design* competition, the chair has risen to the status of a cachet article of furniture since the beginning of this century. It has since become a calling card for design connoisseurship, an object with real collectors’ value. To this day vintage variants of the chair can be found for horrendous prices on the market, despite the fact that the version currently being produced has now almost become a standard in the Western world. Hardly a photoshoot is completed without the presence of this classic, and its ubiquitous presence on early afternoon TV soaps raises no eyebrows any more.

” **Do we really furnish our living spaces to suit our wants and needs?**

Fitting out your personal space with design icons is great fun. And not because these icons can be interpreted as symbols representing who we are. They can be seen simply as prototypes demonstrating quality in form that help us to stay afloat amongst the flood of furniture designs available to us. Whether it’s a minimalist day bed, legendary coffee-house seating or a revolutionary lamp – we use design icons to connect to ourselves with the remarkable in their design, materials and workmanship. As objects, they have secured a place in our consciousness.

According to the Frankfurt study, “nostalgia furniture” plays an important role in fitting out the living spaces of the 50-to-60 age group. For example, particular objects can often be associated with meaningful life episodes or important people in their owners’ lives. And these nostalgia pieces can also play the role of design icons through their added association with the concepts of quality and durability – both of which themes are becoming increasingly important to all age groups.

Centre:
Main office of
Haarwerkstatt
GmbH, Berlin



© iStockphoto/YangYin



© System 180



© mauritiusimages

Finding your favourite pieces

And tomorrow's design icons? A quick look at the range offered by mass producers is enough to provide a guide. In very recent years, young, dynamic companies have been busy broadening the market; their creative staff seem to understand customer needs, because they have already formulated similar needs for themselves. Furniture with all the hallmarks of good design

” **Individuality means social esteem for the younger generations.**

and durable quality is increasingly emerging from workshops that often put a strong accent on skilled hand craftsmanship. The higher prices such furniture commands are justified and do not seem to represent a downside for the buyer – in fact they're seen as a benefit. With a bit of passion and pluck, you can quickly discover one or two new favourites that will go on to lend a genuine and lasting individual flavour for your home. And system furniture too is also an option in this search.



© iStockphoto/rudisill

Long maligned as the boring option, system furniture has once more established itself as an interesting choice. This is possibly because such systems can now provide more than total uniformity: they can now be fitted with customisable elements to suit the needs of the user. Shelves combine well with storage units that can do more than work simply as cupboards, but can be used instead as storage chests, or even as functional parts of a writing desk.

Individuality means social esteem for the younger generations, a prestige that is only increased if the owner has built the piece in question him



or herself. The best system furniture can be seen as DIY designed for practical and individual functionality, and it might even set off an interesting discussion on the social function of furniture. Such a debate was kicked off in 2010 by Van Bo Le-Mentzel through a collection of DIY assembly plans he published under the name “Hartz 4 furniture. Build more buy less,” a title suggesting the book was a DIY manual for the unemployed.



© Julia Maria Max

Central office of Collins GmbH & Co. KG, Hamburg

Examples of such designs include the “24 Euro Chair”, inspired by the relaxed lines of “Carle Chair” by Gerrit Rietveld, the purity of the “Wassily Club Armchair” by Marcel Breuer and the sophistication of the “Barcelona Chair” by Mies Van der Rohe. Almost incidentally, architect Van Bo has managed to draw attention to issues relating to production methods and environmental impacts.

In this case at least we can see that the decision to choose a piece of furniture expresses a life stance, and thus makes a clear personal statement. – JZ 🍷

Planning and visualising with freedom

BrainBox –

A stage for Smart City Berlin 2030

What is the city of the future likely to look like? And how will it be planned? In response to climate change and the digital revolution, the topic of a radical rearrangement of human living spaces now raises its head. The vision of the smart city as a post-fossil-fuel, digitally networked living space for humans in the 21st century has as its goal a city that is both affordable and sparing in its use of resources.

Berlin's political community has declared its intention to create a model smart city. By 2030 Berlin is set to become a European pioneer in urban technologies and intrepid entrepreneurs, activists, researchers and citizens will be providing the living laboratory for the effort. With the ten transformation spaces defined in the conceptual design for city development up to 2030 and a smart city strategy for Berlin, a number spatial focuses and thematic stimuli will be set out for the city.

Berlin's Technische Universität, thanks to the range of its research activities in the relevant specialist areas, has been contributing to the field of smart city innovation for many years now. A prominent theme in this activity is the need to create networks between multiple disciplines. The Technische Universität is thus well positioned as a competent academic partner to support and carry out the planned projects and to grapple with the future challenges facing the city.

BrainBox, was developed by Raoul Bunschoten – a professor at the TU specialising in CHORA city & energy for sustainable city development and town planning – to provide a shop window and meeting point for the city. It takes the form of a 10-m cube, in which the issues of mobility, energy supply and many other urban topics can be collectively re-conceived, planned and presented. Using a multimedia system, a 3D model of the city and a touchscreen work desk, visitors can design their own urban utopias and learn about trend-setting projects in the city.

The space within the BrainBox is defined via a supporting structure made of stainless steel tubing by System 180, into which the necessary technology and projection screen walls are directly integrated. This gives rise to an intricate architecture in which the boundaries between inside and out dissolve and the crossover between actor and spectator flows about freely.

Several exhibitions are planned for the BrainBox installation in Berlin for 2015. For example, during the Metropolitan Solutions show (<http://www.metropolitansolutions.de/>) from 20 to 22/05/2015, CityCube Berlin and in the Atrium of the TU Berlin hosted the Long Night of the Sciences (<https://www.lndw.tu-berlin.de>) on 13/06/2015. The TU project was supported by the European network for innovation on climate issues, Climate-KIC, and the Herrhausen organisation, among many other partners.

You can find further information on BrainBox here: <http://www.chora.tu-berlin.de/>



*Impressions of
BrainBox 2014*

*Right-hand page:
Planning
BrainBox 2015*



Alfred Herrhausen Gesellschaft
Das internationale Forum der Deutschen Bank

CHORA
city & energy



SYSTEM 180
ARCHITEKTUR + EINRICHTUNG



MADE IN BERLIN



Interview with Matthias Broda

Managing Director of System 180
from 1995 to 2012

On dropping out and jumping back in again

Making the change

create: Matthias Broda, you worked as General Manager of System 180 from 1995 to 2012, and have made a decisive contribution to the success of the company today. In January 2013, you passed that leadership role on to your fellow director, Andreas Stadler. What was your reason for that decision?

Matthias Broda: The decision to leave the stage did not happen overnight; it was made after a long process for a range of reasons that together left it clear what the final decision had to be. The most important of these reasons was my 3-year-old daughter Leyla. Another reason was the need to make room for a generational handover that was due for System 180, and was also generated by a little bit of reflection on what one was doing with one's life. That is to say, you think over what you're doing and ask whether it is helping to achieve your personal goals, or whether you need to change something. The topic of freedom also played a role in this regard.

When you first started up in 1995 you were on your own with nothing in your pockets.

(laughs) That's quite true. At the very start I had to scrounge my way through. I can't put it in any other way; when you're starting out and you can't find a bank that'll give you a loan, you just have to sort things out differently. You need friends and partners to help you build up the operation. I urgently needed machines and systems to be able to work with the precision I wanted. Our "mother business" – museum technical equipment – helped me out over a long period and granted me very generous payment conditions.



Matthias Broda,
Managing Director of aceteam GmbH



Today System 180 is very much standing on its own two feet, employing almost 50 people. Our move to Berlin-Adlershof is now set for the autumn. Though our goodbyes will not be easy.

I wouldn't have left the business if this move had already been made. Of course it is not easy to leave a such a company that one has built up oneself, but it was and still is standing on a very solid foundation. I wanted to make a change, and the opportunity presented itself in 2012.

Since leaving the firm, you haven't been resting on your laurels. Your new project is now making the headlines. What exactly are you doing right now?

Everything on wheels has always interested me and I have the feeling that our cities will soon no longer be able to deal with the growing level of traffic they are now suffering. The traffic network is collapsing, and we need alternatives. I started experimenting with electromobility early. Way back then, for example, I fitted an old 1928 model-A Ford to an electric drive to check out how the technology works.

But you're not building cars?

No, we're building wooden bicycles with electrical drives – what we call the Wooden eBike.

How did that come about?

The idea came through our contact with the TU Berlin and their workshop on the subject of bamboo wheels. We built a steel frame for this project as a guide they could use to allow them to cement their frame together. Bamboo did not strike me as the ideal

” **If you can't find a bank that'll give you a loan, you just have to sort things out differently.**



On the project (Source: Eberswalde University for Sustainable Development, HNEE):

ZIM Project “Wooden eBike” with System 180 GmbH



Prof. Pfriem's working group and Berlin innovation firm 180 GmbH have set as their goal to reduce the carbon footprint of a bicycle drastically by 2015, by replacing its metal parts, wherever possible, with natural wood. They also intend to increase mobility by installing electromotive support drive. In a word, the first mass produced wooden pedelec is about to be launched on the market.

Its frame, and also its replaceable front fork is made of ash laminate. After being glued into shape, each individual part is fully processed on a CNC machine. The battery, control and entire cabling can thus be integrated optimally into the frame so that the bicycle's slightly plumpish body is the only clue that the machine contains some hidden pedal support.

The design quality also meant the bicycle being nominated in February 2014 for the *iF Design Award* in Munich and it was exhibited at the Holz-Handwerk-trade fair in Nuremberg in the same year. Another date that the ebike kept was at the 2014 Hanover Fair.

In terms of many technical details our cooperation with the HNEE brought the project a long way to its goal, through tests on materials and adhesives, the development of process solutions and the many results we achieved through using new testing instruments. We also received the cooperation of the University of Hamburg and its associated Thünen Institute, which validated the results of our measurements. Of course, we were always able to count on continual support from students, whether they were working on Bachelor theses, technical engineering projects or as undergraduate assistants.

The aceteam stand at the Berlin Bike Show



material for the purpose, as it had to be specially imported from the Far East. Our search for a suitable material led us to our own native ash.

Then, very shortly after the launch of the prototype for the Wooden eBike at the start of 2014, the awards began coming in. From the nomination for *iF Design Award*, through the *Green Buddy Award 2014* in the innovation category up to and including appearances at trade fairs, such as the Berlin Bike Show, which is currently running. Your ideas seem to be riding a contemporary wave.

Yes, that's right, there is certainly a lot of interest in it. We had lots of interesting conversations at the trade fair and a number of prospective customers. Just today, *Galileo* magazine has asked us for an article and *die Zeit Online* has also expressed an interest. This sort of feedback is, of course, very nice.

So what are your next steps?

We now need to do further work in development. The HNEE, the University for Sustainable Development at Eberswalde, has created an accelerated weathering system especially for the project, which we have been using to test the behaviour of materials and surfaces under a variety of

conditions. We have also designed our own rechargeable battery, which we hope to have ready for mass production in the next few months.

That sounds like a lot of work!

Yes, but it's fun too. We are an excellent team, one that is pushing the project forward with loads of enthusiasm and motivation.

The way it looks now, is the freedom you've managed to achieve is on the way to becoming a bit scarce again?

Right now everything is fine. The most important thing is that we're only a small team, and we're determined to keep it that way. I don't want to shoulder the responsibility for large numbers of employees in the future. When the team grows, each member should have a stake in the company and share responsibility for it. I want to retain my freedom to decide spontaneously to go away with my family for a week. Right now that sort of thing isn't a problem.

” **The traffic network is collapsing, and we need alternatives.**



Left: A 1928 Ford Model A refitted with an electric drive

Centre: The battery array in the Model A

Matthias Broda in 2001 System 180

Have you achieved your goals?

We're on the way there. There are of course a few more development tasks, in such areas as illumination, battery optimisation, creating child seats, luggage carriers, fenders, etc. We need to sell about 100 bikes a year for the project to stand up by itself. But these 100 buyers are just as keen to be found, because what we're offering is not a standard everyday product.

One last question: How much is a Wooden eBike going to cost, and when can we buy one?

Sales are planned to start in May 2015 and prices start at around € 3,400 a piece. Depending on the model and what extras the customer wants, the price can vary widely.

Mr Broda, thank you very much for your time. I wish you the best of luck in the future and much success with your eBikes. – VM 🍀

” We are not making just any old everyday product.





Why freedom is still the future

Everything in movement



1994 was the short summer of anarchy. That was when Jay Chiat announced the age of the virtual office, and Frank Gehry and Gaetano Pesce at the California advertising agency Chiat/Day took no shortcuts. Their goal was no less than to free creativity from the shackles of everyday office life.

Suddenly everything was colourful, nobody had a fixed workstation any longer and instead of paper, workers used powerbooks, which they could borrow at the entrance to the office. Their goal was actually pretty limited since, in principle, employees should no longer have been coming into the office at all. After all, don't the best ideas occur on the couch, in the shower or walking along the beach? As long as the results were right, it was all the same to Chiat what his people did, and he had faith that he'd see more innovation and efficiency. And his changes did indeed generate a lot of movement in the company, though it was very dif-

System 180 metal worker
operating a laser cutter



ferent to what he expected. Within a very short time a daily struggle broke out to secure the scarce resources in which frustrated workers, who in the end stopped turning up for work altogether, certainly didn't prove to be more productive. After only a few weeks, the agency was on the brink of collapse and there was no choice but to terminate the experiment abruptly.

Yet now we have “more freedom, more variety more self-development” – what didn't work twenty years ago, is now the central mantra of our work society. Even the people who get to sit all day at the checkout or in the call centre will confirm the principle, at least as long as the boss is within hearing distance. Indeed it is often actually true: work is now getting done everywhere, at home around the kitchen table and in the café, at the bus stop and in the park. For an entire generation of young freelancers, but also for the employees of many progressive companies, the rigid boundaries of the routine 9 to 5 working day no longer apply. Workers begin early or late, take the time that they need to take, follow their own rhythm, can let work simply be work and can move their office to a new country on a whim. None of this is any problem, as long as the *output* is as it should be. Nothing counts but results, as they say.

” **Work has been done everywhere since time immemorial.**

In mechanical rhythm

It will become clear how high the level of freedom in one's working life is when one compares us against previous generations. Back then work was predominantly hardship and compulsion, to the extent that the word for work has its origin in negativity in many languages. In English the word *labour* comes from the Latin word for *hardship*, while the Spanish *trabajo* has its origins in a term for torture and scourging, and the Russian term *rabota* suggests slavery. As the German word “Arbeit” comes from the hard work of ploughing a field, it seems comparatively harmless. But it does effectively illustrate the existential dimension of this ancient human activity.





For centuries in agrarian societies, the rhythm of tasks to be done was fixed by nature. It was only with industrialisation that the clock-in card established itself as the means of imposing discipline, as people in factories began to be expected to follow the rhythm of the machines they used.

But though it may seem so, even today's world of work does not simply consist in voluntary commitment. Almost everyone finds that they have to adjust to external circumstances, a truth which applies even to artists and authors – or at least those of them who are aware of the power of the market. The only people who are really free are those unaware of the concept of work. Nor do the playground-like layouts that can be seen in many offices make any difference to the situation.

” **Instead of the clock-in card, self-control now runs the show.**

The contradiction is particularly evident where the ideals of freedom and self-realisation are not appealed to to pursue any individual need, but are rather harnessed to achieve business goals.

Even Jay Chiat was only conditionally interested in the satisfaction of his workers: he was primarily interested in tangible economic benefits. Officially, the open plan office is presented as an act of liberation from the isolated work cell, but often what is behind it is the desire of management to reduce floor space needs – utterly at the cost of the well-being of many employees, as has been shown by numerous studies.



© noasha/flickr CC

Working on the dance floor

It becomes even more complicated where instead of freedom the main thing keeping us in line is responsibility. Though everything is flexible and negotiable, workers' performance still has to pass muster. Instead of the clock-in card what now runs the show is self-control – and whereas workers used to have their peace and quiet after the factory hooter sounded – a nagging feeling now remains. On top of this, the trend towards professional self-realisation, which combines very comfortably with café lounges and yoga breaks, has another function. In the competition of ideas, businesses are not just looking for our labour, but want our entire being, including our passions and our creativity. But all rules are repealed, they become fleeting and individual, which is why you think it better to hold your workers on a somewhat looser line. This in the sure knowledge that your employees will still be thinking about work when they're in the nightclub. But the fact that even recovery phases have now become part of the added value chain is not without its consequences. The threat of burnout looms when the pressure of work can no longer be eased.

However, it would be a mistake to mark down our contemporary understanding of work on the basis of this blurring of boundaries. It is good that work is no longer thought of as a scourge, but as a productive life

task that many people do very happily. Add to this the fact that the separation of work from free time is also an invention of recent modern times just as ill-matched to our needs. For craft workers as much as for farmers the interpenetration of the two spheres were entirely normal until the 19th Century, and that interpenetration brought with it a number of benefits. Thus it is an achievement that we can now once more spread our work out as it suits us, so that we still have time in between for leisure and family. More highly regulated models would mean a return to the golden cage, a confession that we simply can't cope with freedom.

In praise of discipline

More important anyway for our happiness in the brave new world of work is another seemingly old-fashioned virtue: discipline. Because the problem is not the blurring of boundaries itself, but the creeping increase in

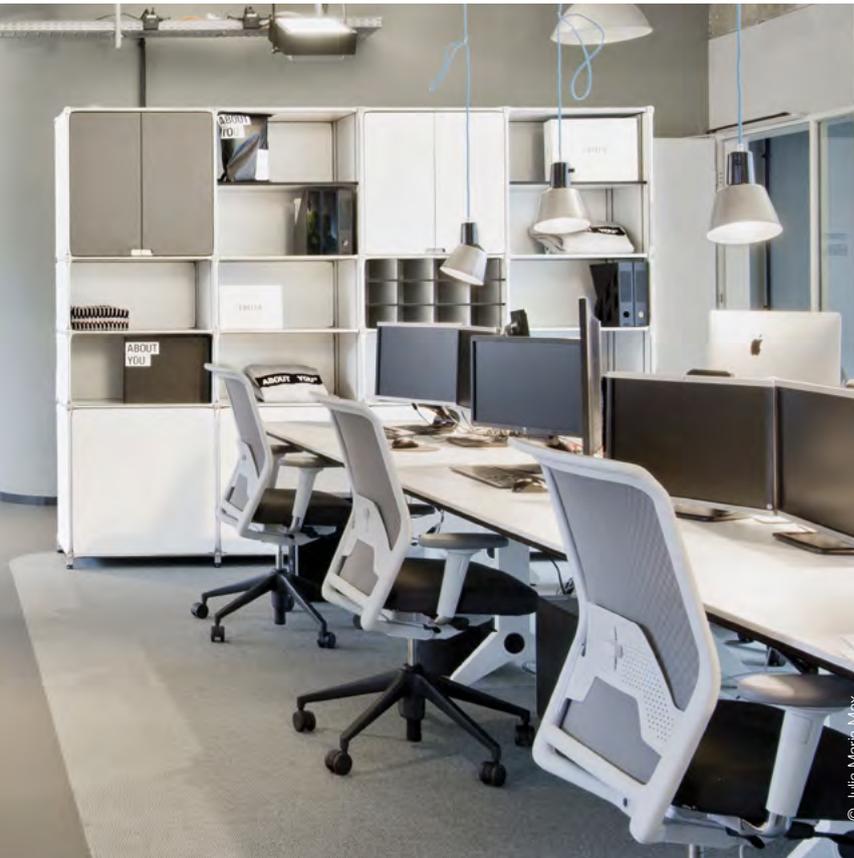


work time that goes along with it. Everything down to the toilet break used to be set out precisely, and yet now we need to make our own rules, rules that we need to obey just as strictly. Feelings of guilt towards the boss are every bit as unwelcome as the similar feelings towards ourselves. We have to learn to say no whenever we want to defend our free space. That doesn't mean reading e-mails last thing before bed need be taboo. But doing so will require compensation somewhere else, and we ourselves are responsible for it.

Working in genuine freedom, in contrast, is only conceivable as a sort of child's play, entirely free of pressure to produce results or to perform. A little as if, as it was in the ancient world, it was not work but only contemplation that made man worthy. But even if we continue to dream of the end of work, it's still there in the meantime as a necessity. And precisely because we still see it in the interim as a meaningful activity, new entitle-



© System 180



© Julia Maria Mex

ments can be formulated in relation to it. All those stupid jobs in services or in manufacturing, for example – is working on them full time the only thinkable formula? Some reward for civil commitment or the introduction of some unconditional basic income might well help to better align the balance between making a livelihood and achieving self-development.

” Where their work is useful to society, people are productive by nature.

But would we still have any desire to experience what until recently was considered a hardship? We can be sure that where their work is useful to society, people are productive by nature. Only that the word would no longer be suitable, as work would begin to appear less and less like work. – SB 🍀

Central office of Collins GmbH & Co. KG, Hamburg

On the tracks of our origins

Neanderthal

Recommendation on the realisation of the competition entries, Mettmann

In September 2014 as part of a tendering process, the *Neanderthal Museum Trust* invited four agencies to develop a conceptual design for a revised treatment of the location where the Neanderthal man was first found. The project formed part of a local initiative named the “Neanderthal Masterplan”. The tender involved the task of making visible the ancient topography of the location and its caves, all of which were irreversibly lost though industrial chalk mining in the 19th Century. To make the former shape of the valley recognisable and liveable once again for visitors, an emblematic construction was needed whose design was capable of taking visitors away from the present and transporting them back into the past. The terrain reserved for this task was itself to be defined by two key features: A marking showing the position of the old caves on the horizontal axis and the presumed height of the caves on the vertical axis.

To experience this height – “to lend the space verticality” as the Neanderthal Masterplan put it – seemed to us such an important aspect of the brief that we thought it almost essential for visitors to actually scale the heights. Our design needed to guarantee an exciting ascent and enjoyable descent. And that is how the idea of the cylinder came about. A landmark with a

diameter of 12 metres and a height of a good 20 metres constructed using three-dimensional trusswork will be explored along disabled-accessible path that alternates on the exterior and interior of the structure. The switch from outside to inside is necessary due to the gradients involved, but at the same time helps to provide an exciting, dramatic experience for visitors. A consistent narrative thread is embedded into the logic of an entertaining walk – this was how we interpreted the requirements set out by the client.

The 20-m “cylinder” is set to become a landmark



© Holger Lilienstrom

*Centre:
View of the “Cylinder”
steiner.ag
Working group for
architecture and design*

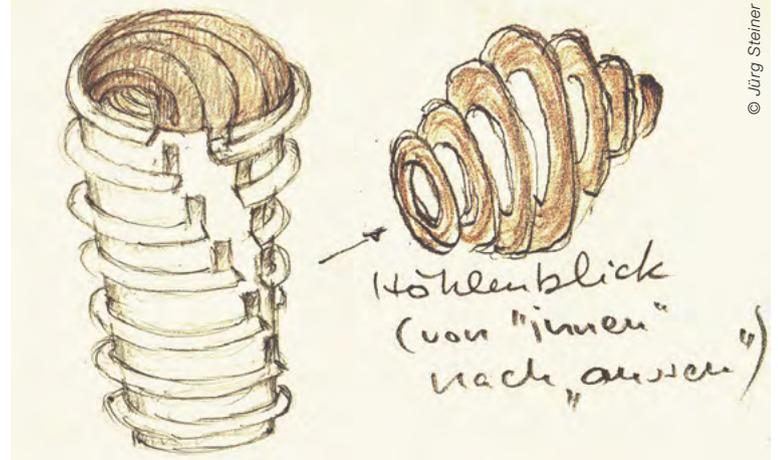


© Holger Lilienstrom

Sketch of the "Cylinder" with
"cave setting" installed

Tender

Inside the cylinder hang the 100 well known images by the Düsseldorf School of Art relating to the Neander valley. Each of these pictures can be lit up from the position opposite it by simply pressing a button, playfully helping to bring across the work of this gallery of 19th Century art. During guided tours, the pictures can also be illuminated either all together or in groups from the base of the cylinder. The rhythmic change from inside to out leads the public to experience a repeated change of perspective



© Jürg Steiner

on their environment. Similarly, simple aids such as the glimpses that the visitors see of the backdrop, Pepper's Ghost effects, anamorphoses and listening or play stops dispersed along the way communicate the topography of the Neander canyon and fragments of memory. Once at the top, one is ready for the highlight of the experience: the cave setting itself. The public get a view of the cave from the inside looking outwards. The scenery has been recognisable over the entire experience – as a curious backdrop that stimulates the visitor's imagination. Like an amorphosis, the full image comes together only from one single viewing point. The original view into the valley from the cave, bounded by the cave walls, might once have been similar to what the visitor sees now. The climb has been worth it.

The advisory commission for the tender recommended that the client test the feasibility of the proposed construction. The client and specialist planners are now doing further joint work on the draft.

System 180 is delighted by the success so far of the proposal and is keeping its fingers crossed for continued progress on the project. 🍀



Customer Neanderthal Museum Trust,
Prof. Gerd-Christian Weniger in collaboration with the district of Mettmann, the city of Erkrath and the city of Mettmann

Draft design Prof. Jürg Steiner, Anna Kasprzyński,
Holger Lilienström (visualisation)

**Structural issues and
Steel tubing construction** Prof. Dr. Yuri Petryna, Berlin
System 180, Berlin

Source www.steiner.ag

Presentations made to measure

A display system for Adlershof Projekt GmbH

*Multi-functional
poster display by
System 180*



There are lots of display systems about. But anyone with special requirements will have to look for a long time before finding something suitable. At the beginning of 2015, Adlershof Projekt GmbH was once again experiencing this enigma. What better reason for getting into contact with a soon-to-be neighbour of theirs at their head office – System 180? We were delighted to accept their invitation to take part in the tender process and were awarded the commission after the tenders had been assessed. So it was all systems go.

A wide variety of events, such as trade fairs and presentations in indoor and outdoor areas needed to be formulated in cooperation with various partners into a complex requirement profile for a highly flexible display system with a long service life.

On the basis of the customer's wishes and a number of System 180 draft designs, a preliminary, ground-breaking prototype began to emerge after a few weeks of a new made-to-measure, modular display system.

The basic element in the system is the reduced-size stand with folding feet. This design makes the display system easy to transport and to store compactly when not in use. Flexibly positionable stainless steel fasteners on the stands allow users to present display poster motifs in a variety

of formats. Such posters are then easily tacked onto the rear side of the fasteners.

Where light conditions require them, gallery lights already available to the project company can be firmly fixed to the stand using a fixation piece specially created for the purpose.

The transparent dispensers that can be attached on either side of the stands to dispense additional information material are particularly practical. There are versions of available for all commonly used DIN formats, including DIN A4, DIN A5 and DIN A6.

Thanks to its modular structure and lightweight design, the display system can be used extremely flexibly and provides an imposing autonomous framework suitable for displaying the widest possible variety of content. The new system celebrated its *Première* at the *Berlin Real Estate Fair BIM* from 25 to 26/04/2015 at Berlin-Tempelhof Airport. 🏠



Technical Data

- Frame in brushed stainless steel
- Footplate in weighted MDF
- H/W/D: 1920 / 730 / 520 mm (extended)
- H/W/D: 1920 / 730 / 70 mm (folded)
- Suitable for posters up to H/W 1800/650 mm in size



More space. More freedom.

Berlin-Adlershof, we're on our way!

The long search is over. We've found the right building for our new company head office. Since the beginning of April 2015, conversion work has been going on in the 7,500-m² building, formerly the production hall of Ideea GmbH at Berlin-Adlershof, next door to Studio Berlin. In "Germany's most up-to-date technology park" we will be close neighbours to about 1,000 companies operating in science, industry and the media.

The goals of our move are manifold. Apart from the most important aim – to keep our location within Berlin – we require a high-quality transport infrastructure for delivery and shipping as well as needing upgraded showroom, storage and production space.

It was by no means easy to give up our idyllic commercial yard in Schöneberg. But the local conditions were increasingly restricting the development of the company.

From September on we will be transferring production and all other departments of the company step by step 17.5 km down the road towards the South-East.

We would like to take the opportunity to thank Adlershof Projekt GmbH and everyone else who provided us with support in searching for a premises and in planning our move.

We are looking forward to moving into Adlershof and to making lots of interesting contacts at the new address. Come and visit us from November 2015 on!

System 180 GmbH
Ernst-Augustin-Straße 3
12489 Berlin-Adlershof

MADE IN BERLIN

For form and function

Outstanding!



The table developed by System 180 in collaboration with the HPI School of Design Thinking, the *Table DT-Line T4*, has won a prize for the second time. In addition to the *Focus Open* silver medal, awarded to it by the *Design Center Baden-Württemberg* for "forward-looking, professional and excellent performance in design," specialist magazine *Das Büro* has selected our table as one of its "Office products of the year". The editorial team awards the distinction to the thirty office products which they "have been most impressed by" over the previous 12 months.

We are delighted to be among this select group, in the company of innovative products by Apple, Samsung, Wilkahn, amongst others. All "BEST OF THE BEST – the 30 best office products of the year" can be seen in the March/April 2015 of *Das Büro – Magazin für Office Excellence*.



*The System 180,
DT-Line, T4*

© System 180

Focus Open 2013
Silver



The modular furniture system

SYSTEM  180

Ask for a brochure now at:
contact@system180.com

360° freedom

Inspired by the idea that everyone should have the freedom to design their own spaces and furniture, Jürg Steiner started to design his “spatial construction system” in Berlin during the 80s. Ever since then we have been further developing the system. But the firm’s central idea – freedom – is still at its centre. **System 180 – Create. Free. Space.**

MADE IN BERLIN

www.system180.com