



"THE PHYSICAL SPACE OF THE AGENCY SHOULD SAY EVERYTHING ABOUT ITS CHARACTER, EXISTENCE, VISION, AND WORK ETHIC. PUTTING TOGETHER YOUR OWN WORKSPACE IS SIMPLY A LOT OF FUN. WE ENJOYED ALL THE FREEDOM IN THE WORLD, IN THE TRUE SENSE OF THE WORD..."

## BLOOM PROJECT

// Munich, Germany

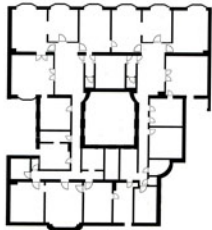
The historic house in Munich, Germany, where Hans-Peter Hösli and his colleagues work as the Bloom Project, was built in 1916; over the door, chiseled into the stone, is a sentence in German that when roughly translated means "built during the 'iron years' to remain as our home, weathering any storm."

Bloom Project has operated in "this old house," which was constructed in the traditional Munich style, since the company's founding in 2004. Originally, their offices were located on the second floor, but since March 2008, Hösli and company have occupied the entire first floor, after renovating all of the rooms in the *belles étages* style—French for "beautiful space."

The 620-square-meter space is representative of Bloom Project's approach to creativity—their leitmotiv or company theme is "communication beyond the norm," because they believe that creativity only comes into play when you leave the known behind, and step out into unknown territory.

Hösli, who serves as Managing Director of Bloom Project, explains, "Everything we create has the goal of delivering a certain message when all is said and done. We make effective communications, and not simply art for art's sake."

Hösli and his colleagues had two distinct design goals when they decided to renovate the house: 1) make the branding of Bloom Project a living entity in the creative marketplace,





and 2) preserve the beautiful old-style stucco ceilings and antique parquet floors. Hösl adds, "It was important to us to find new ways to interpret this house for life in today's world. We wanted to span the traditional with the modern, where the traditional isn't covered over, but you bridge the gap between the historic construction and innovative modern design. We tried to interpret it with current style and an understanding of how we work, plus convey a sense of who we are. It was very desirable to demonstrate that Bloom Project means a lot more to us than just to feature our brand, color, and logo in our surroundings—we want clients and guests to understand the essence of what we do."

Bloom Project's inspiration for design, and in particular for the renovation of the house, is derived from many different directions. Employees engaged in many discussions about what Bloom is and how the agency's colleagues work together. "And then, of course, as German creatives, we're very influenced by the Bauhaus design movement," says Hösl. "That classic design philosophy expresses clarity, simplicity, and a commitment to the premise that 'form follows function.' And for us even today this is absolutely valid, both in our creative work and in our workplace."

Bloom Project staff worked very closely together with their friends and design collaborators at a branding design agency in Munich known as Tulp. Hösl says, "We've completed many client projects with the folks at Tulp—we understand each

other completely. So it made sense to consult with them on the design and renovation of this house, because our close relationship means that we could trust the Tulp visionaries to create the three-dimensional world of Bloom."

This collaborative effort resulted in a renovation to create work rooms as well as "living rooms" and inspiration rooms. "At the end of the day in this place, big ideas should first come into being, and then thrive and prosper," Hösl offers.

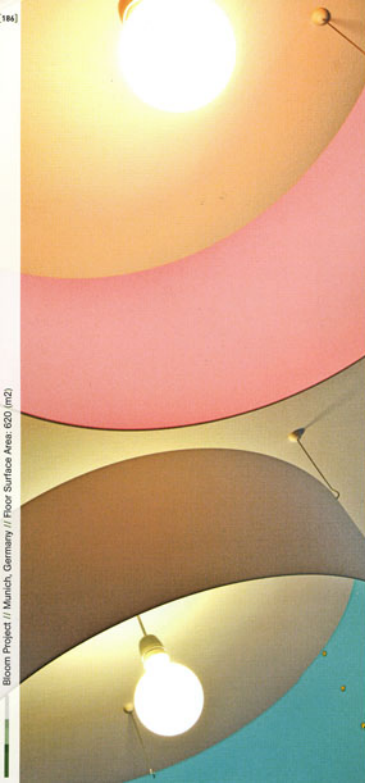
He elaborates, "An agency's space should represent something to its clients—it should reflect the agency's image. The interior design of a creative company should make an impact on the client, and the effect of that interior can't be underestimated. Clients expect surprises, or 'aha' moments from Creatives, and part of that surprise is conducting business in rooms that inspire."

Hösl, like many creative people, recognize that agency employees don't always function in a 9-to-5 world, so the need for comfortable spaces to relax, think, and work is essential to the health of the agency, as is ownership of the site. "The physical space of the agency should say everything about its character, existence, vision, and work ethic. Putting together your own workspace is simply a lot of fun. We enjoyed all the freedom in the world, in the true sense of the word, to actu-



OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP LEFT: SOME PHOTOS FROM BLOOM'S VAST PHOTO ARCHIVE ARE DISPLAYED ON FABRIC WALLS.





**"YOU CAN SEE THE WHOLE WORLD IN ONE TABLE. IF YOU TAKE A FEW STEPS BACK, THE ENTIRE TABLE LOOKS LIKE A BIG, GLEAMING, COLORFUL STAINED GLASS WINDOW OR AN ANALOG PIXILATED ART PIECE."**

alize our vision of what a work environment could be. There was no push or limit from outside forces—no constraints or boundaries on what we could do, other than our own ability to decide on what to include."

The Bloom Project is unique in that the agency owns a huge historical news photo archive containing nearly five hundred thousand "retro" photographs and images on slides. Hósl explains, "We use this huge pool of pictures as our 'creative quarry,' out of which we get inspired to come up with new ideas for client campaigns and exhibit projects. Over the years, the photos have become part of the true brand element of Bloom, so naturally when we planned the interior design of our space, they couldn't be omitted."

Any visitor to Bloom will come across the archival pictures everywhere—they act as an integral architectural feature. Hósl says it goes way beyond a simple display of art on the walls—which does happen, and specific photographs encased in traditional frames are swapped out periodically—but the agency has embraced the archive, incorporating it into a critical design component.

Hósl says, "For example, our divider walls in the offices are literally 'bejeweled' in that they contain a number of slides that are backlit. So these photos from the archive experience a second life as they are transformed into wonderful light-design objects. At every workspace, each employee has at his or her own wallpaper stripe in a Bloom design; these stripes feature individual picture frames, so the person can select photos from the archives and swap them out from time to time, for inspiration."

Bloom's conference table is a big square glass table that echoes the "bejeweled" divider wall theme: thousands of slides from the archives are set into the table's glass. Hósl describes, "The table is lit underneath, so whoever sits there can always discover a new image or take away a fresh idea—it's fun to find photos of Lady Di riding a horse, or the band Depeche Mode in London from 1982, or pinups from the 1970s. You can see the whole world in one table.

OPPOSITE PAGE, BOTTOM RIGHT: A CONFERENCE TABLE IS LIT FROM UNDERNEATH AND DISPLAYS A SMALL SAMPLE OF BLOOM'S PHOTO ARCHIVES.

If you take a few steps back, the entire table looks like a big, gleaming, colorful stained glass window or an analog pixilated art piece."

The house's historic wooden parquet was restored by hand at meticulous effort. Desks and cabinetry are constructed of wood and powder-coated steel. Glass and acrylic is used for the light walls and tables.

To arrive at the final design decisions, Bloom Project staff met on several occasions to speak candidly about how they actually worked in the agency. Through that process, they discovered that many ad hoc meetings took place in the course of a day.

"We realized that people will just sit down together spontaneously at some desk. We don't go into a conference room or employee lounge for every meeting. So we designed our desks especially for this unique 'Bloom meeting culture.' Our desks are open to all sides in the room—nothing is placed against a wall, and so it's inviting for everyone. And the best thing is that nobody ever bumps their knee on the back side of the desk!" Hósl laughs.

Several common rooms function as think-and-work spaces for the thirty colleagues at Bloom. The employee lounge can accommodate from two to eight people, who can collectively sit, work, play, think, sleep, eat, or watch TV in a relaxed manner.

The Bloom Project is very proud of its commitment to sustainability. The antique oak floors were sealed using an environmentally friendly sealant. The entire lighting plan utilizes energy efficient lamps with bulbs that are readily available in any store, versus special-order bulbs. "And naturally we adhere to the whole strict *Deutscher's Mülltrennung*, which is the German philosophy of garbage separation!" Hósl explains.

Hósl likens the Bloom Project offices to a constant photo exhibit, thanks to the ever-changing images available from the archive. Because the agency feels connected to the photos they display and from which they draw creative inspiration, every year they invite clients, friends, and neighbors to the house for a retro-photo exhibition.

Hósl calls the Bloom Project a "360-degree advertising agency" that also helps clients develop new forms of communication, particularly with innovative exhibit concepts at the point-of-sale or at trade shows. He says, "We've enjoyed great success with our displays. The idea behind this is to break expectations—to positively surprise people. Instead of a typical POS promotion, we staged a large rotating exhibit with an artistic approach. We installed this in twenty European flagship stores. Everything that we create for our clients has to speak to our credo of 'beyond the norm'—that goes for advertising campaigns as well as films and websites. And also of course for us, and our space."