

brunner ::

banc
DESIGNED
FOR

The University Library Freiburg

banc

DESIGNED FOR

The University Library Freiburg





Dr. Marc Brunner

SUPREME DISCIPLINE

How can we make a contribution with our solutions so that people feel at ease and are comfortable? How can we fill the rooms where people congregate with sense and purpose, and how can we support the intended processes? These are the vital questions that drive what we do. For nearly 40 years, we have been facing these questions, always in a new context, and we have been finding new answers all this time.

As a family business, we manage to do this first and foremost by keeping close to our customers, their requirements, needs and wishes. The direct and personal dialogue with awarding authorities, builders and retailers is very important to us, and we closely cooperate with leading architects and designers.

We have taken the deliberate decision to manufacture our products in Germany; by doing this, we make top quality happen and can make sure that distances are short and processes stay efficient. The human being is right in the centre of all our thinking – as user of our furniture, as employee and partner, as planner and builder.

Thanks to this philosophy, we have become one of the leading suppliers of contract furniture, internationally. We provide top-quality products answering discerning design claims for companies and hotels, trade fairs and congress centres, educational institutions and health and care facilities, and the public sector.

Time and time again, we develop special solutions and new projects resulting from an individual requirement or a specific project. In close cooperation and coordination with our customers, we develop tailor-made products, and we hone and fine-tune them until they are perfect. This we regard as our supreme discipline.

Most of the time, these individual bespoke solutions later turn into successful products in our series. One special edition turns into a solution for the many. Freiburg university library is a project just like that. Not only has it inspired us to create a new product, it has also added a new category to our product portfolio: the modular lounge furniture system banc.





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SOPHISTICATED TO THE LAST DETAIL

Modularity: Maximum Flexibility
banc: Family With Character

CHALLENGE ACCEPTED

IN THE BEGINNING, THERE WAS A TENDER;
IN THE END, A PRODUCT.

Brunner GmbH is characterised by its comprehensive top-quality contract furniture product portfolio. These products answer a wide variety of requirements of how to provide functional and harmonious furnishings of diverse areas, from offices via event venues all the way to health and care. And time and time again, this family-run company has developed individual solutions and tailor-made new products in close cooperation with its customers.

It is exactly these challenges that Philip Brunner, Sales Director Germany, describes as giving him "that extra something". Especially when faced with tight deadlines, everyone outdoes themselves, from the designers to the prototyping team to the upholsterers. In this same vein, the cooperation with Freiburg university library is a project that led up to creating a unique new series: banc modular lounge furniture, functional, sustainable and sporting premium design.

Since way back in 1995, Albert-Ludwigs-University of Freiburg has been a Brunner customer. Time and time again, chairs and tables made in Rheinau convinced the decision makers. However, the building inaugurated in 1978 had over time become somewhat dated. Superannuated building technology, structural flaws and high energy consumption called for a fundamental reconstruction. In 2006, the State of Baden-Württemberg launched an architectural competition to this end, which was won by the architectural firm of Degelo Architekten from Basel, Switzerland, who presented a spectacular conceptual design.

As plans for rebuilding the library became known, the sales team with Philip Brunner and Christine Bürgin tried right away to score with Brunner chairs and tables for the new library as well. The topic of lounge furniture was approached in parallel without direct Brunner participation, but there seemed to be no real progress. The awarding authority was bothered by the fact that none of the short-listed products offered the possibility of properly cleaning underneath them. Moreover, the products lacked modularity.







Yet for a public building which is first and foremost judged by its price-performance ratio, modularity is a guarantor of a long service life. For on the one hand this makes it possible to replace broken elements easily and cost-effectively; on the other hand, the furniture configuration can be adapted to changing requirements at any time.

When the corresponding request for proposal was made public, Brunner after due consideration decided on developing an entirely new product for this project. Together with Stuttgart-based design studio jehs+laub, the idea for banc was created in a very short time indeed, which quickly convinced the university library's director, Dr. Antje Kellersohn, as well. Brunner was given two weeks to construct an original prototype.

Thanks to extraordinary employee commitment, all decision makers of the university and the architects could be invited to the Brunner factory within the set deadline in order to try out the new prototype. During this session, further requirements were stipulated and later realised, so that banc grew into a complete product family including side tables, counter and media integration.

Like many products before, the banc series has by now reached the status of standard product, selling quite well and in the meantime, was completed with easy chairs and bar stools. Its modularity provides an ideal kit of building blocks for architects and planners. Many different configurations can be realised and changed again later, staying flexible all the time. Whether for open communication or screened-off full-concentration work – banc always offers a perfect solution.



Universit
Freiburg

B

ätsbibliothek



SPECTACULAR FROM THE OUTSIDE AND THE INSIDE

FREIBURG UNIVERSITY LIBRARY SETS A BENCHMARK.

Superannuated building technology, constructional flaws and high energy consumption – these were the reasons for carrying out a fundamental reconstruction of Freiburg university library, inaugurated back in 1978. The old building in its central location vis-à-vis the old collegiate building and right beside the municipal theatre was regarded by many Freiburg citizens as an eyesore anyway. The compact steel frame building, sombre and hardly inviting, had – despite its sandstone-coloured coat of paint – always remained a foreign object, surrounded as it was by a neo-classical university building, small terraced housing and perimeter block development.

This was to change. The architectural competition, launched to this end by the State of Baden-Württemberg in 2006, was won by the conceptual design submitted by the architectural firm of Degelo Architekten from Basel in cooperation with Itten+Brechtbühl. In 2009, the excavators rolled in and completely tore down the building; only three stairwells and the underground parking remained. By re-dedicating the underground parking structure as open-access shelving housing 700,000 volumes and as a bicycle garage, and by virtue of the sophisticated construction featuring characteristically tilting façades, architect Heinrich Degelo managed to significantly reduce the building volume – while at the same time increasing effective floor space. The library now comes across as considerably less space-consuming, and the requirement for saving 50% in energy consumption has even been surpassed.

From the outside, the spectacular building with its semi-transparent façade resembles a "cut diamond" reflecting its surroundings, says Degelo. This creates a powerful symbiosis between the building and its surroundings, which seem to merge into one. During the day, the façade continually changes its appearance, depending on the perspective, the time of day and the lighting conditions. At night, the lights – switched on wherever necessary in this library that is open 24/7 – indicate the areas where students read and work, and let the library sparkle and shine.

Inside, the open structure and the large windows make the building well-lit, spacious and inviting. The library, with approx. 3.5 million volumes one of the largest scientific libraries in Germany, is divided into a silent reading room and the so-called "Parlatorium", where teamwork, discussions and relaxed conversations are encouraged. The university students can also use a state-of-the-art media centre. On five floors, a total of 1,700 differentiated work places are available.

Another spectacular feature of Freiburg university library are the elegant banc seating isles and group work places which Brunner specifically developed. A U-shaped supporting frame in different lengths and fully upholstered back elements in three heights constitute the basis for a great variety of configurations. Whether it is for 3 or 36 persons, whether open to all sides or screened-off for confidential conversation – there is the right seating arrangement for every demand. Upon request by and in close cooperation with the awarding authority, the library administration and the architect, the series was complemented by tables, a bar counter and several side tables which have been deployed there since the opening in the summer of 2015.

PROJECT DATA

Location

Platz der Universität 2,
D-79098
Freiburg im Breisgau

Awarding authority

Federal State Baden-
Württemberg (Germany)

Construction cost

53 millions €

Competition

2006

Planning

2009 – 2014

Realisation

2011 – 2015

Total floor space

41.673 m²

Effective floor space

30.600 m²

Gross cubature

158.900 m³





ANYTHING BUT INSIGNIFICANT

THIS ARCHITECTURE DESERVES
TALKING ABOUT.

INTERVIEW WITH HEINRICH DEGELO

The new Freiburg university library was designed and realised by Degelo Architekten, Basel. Owner Heinrich Degelo talks about the spectacular project, good architecture and the cooperation with Brunner GmbH.

What do you think when you're standing in front of Freiburg university library and looking at it today?

When I look at the building, I find that we have achieved a presence that is both discreet and powerful. Also, I'm always surprised how much space around the building has been created in the wake of traffic calming.

HEINRICH DEGELO

born 1957 in Giswil (Obwalden, Switzerland), grew up on a farm. After finishing school, he first completed a vocational training to become a cabinet maker and another to become a draughtsman. Next, he studied interior decoration, product design and building design at the "Schule für Gestaltung" in Basel (Basel Design School).

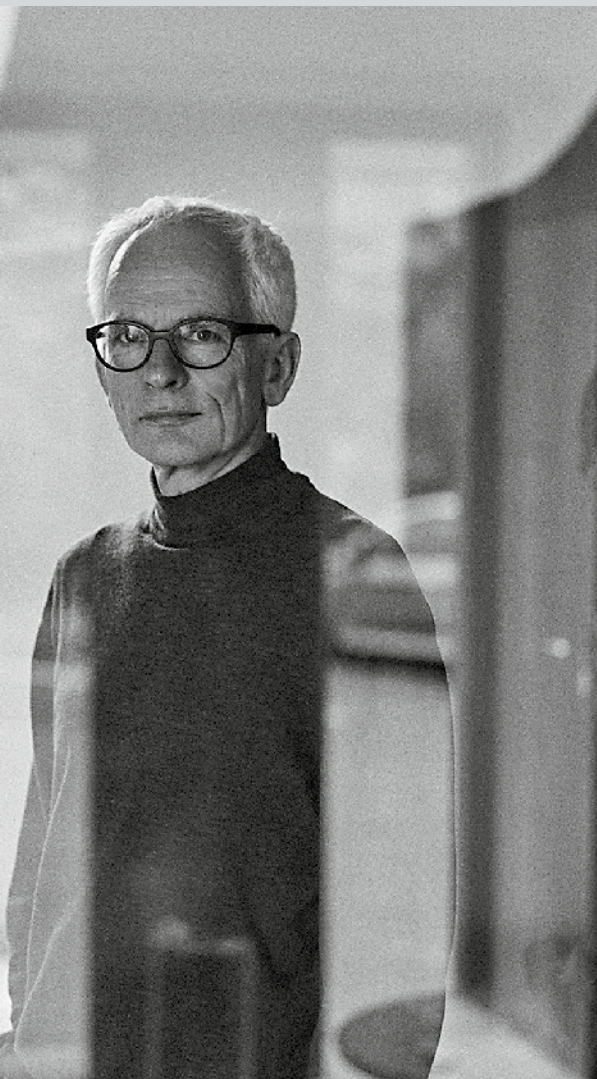
After successfully completing his studies, Degelo first worked with various partners before founding his own firm "Degelo Architekten" in Basel in 2005. With his 14 employees, he has made it his mission to create timeless, good architecture, convincing with surprisingly simple solutions and high quality. His work approach is contextual, taking into account and accentuating important, sometimes even seemingly insignificant, yet always specific given factors of the respective location, the task at hand and the programme.

Apart from many residential buildings, Degelo Architekten designed e.g. the trade fair tower and the Basel Museum of Music, the municipal administration building in Reinach, the Liechtenstein Art Museum in Vaduz as well as the congress centre in Davos. Current projects include building the Grosspeter Tower in Basel (78 m tall) as well as the reconstruction of St. Jakobshalle in Basel.



You tend to describe the library as a "cut diamond". How should we understand this metaphor?

This is true in two respects. On the one hand, the original building from the 1970's was a kind of rough object with a less than cooperative presence in the urban ensemble. It showed very pronounced projections. For the architectural competition, we built a gypsum model which we then ground and honed. By doing this, we carved out a diamond from a rough object. Today's building is considerably smaller and more elegant than the original building. On the other hand, the play of light and the reflections created by the façade design are strongly reminiscent of a diamond's facets. They create a dialogue between the building and its surroundings.



The reason for this can be found in its content; the library is the most public building of the entire university and fulfils a strong interface function between the university and the city, between science and public life. The ever-changing play of light is a beautiful metaphor for the fact that the library has to adapt itself to ever-changing situations.

What was your paramount goal in planning the library?

For me, the most important goal was to make the building communicate better with its surroundings. I wanted it to become a good building, better integrated into the urban ensemble, where people feel at ease in.

PRIZES AND AWARDS

1992

"Eidgenössisches Kunststipendium" (Swiss Art Grant)

"Auszeichnung guter Bauten" Basel (Good Buildings Award, Basel)

1995

"Prix Rhenan"

"Grosser Rheinischer Architekturpreis" (Great Rhine Architectural Prize)

1996

"Silberner Hase" Bester Bau, Schweizer Fernsehen, "10vor10" und Hochparterre

1997

2 x "Auszeichnung guter Bauten" Basel (Good Buildings Award, Basel)

1998

"Auszeichnung ausgewählter Bauten" Kanton Solothurn (Award of selected building in canton Solothurn)

"The Brunel Awards" Madrid

"Auszeichnung guter Bauten" Luzern (Good Buildings Award, Lucerne)

2002

Honorary Mention "Balthasar-Neumann-Prize"

2003

"Häuser Award 2004" 1st Prize

2007

"Best Architects 07" office und administration buildings

2008

"Best Architects 09" office und administration buildings
2 x "Auszeichnung guter Bauten" Basel (Good Buildings Award, Basel)

2009

"Best Architects 10" residential buildings

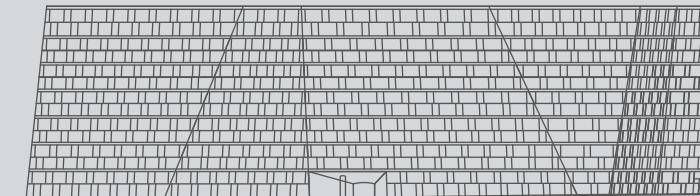
2010

"Auszeichnung ausgewählter Bauten" Kanton Solothurn (Award of selected building in canton Solothurn)

2011

"Best Architects 12" other buildings

"Prix Lumière" SLG



VIEW

Like practically any public building, Freiburg university library has not been uncontroversial.

Does architecture have to provoke?

No, I don't want to be provocative at all. Together with my awarding authorities, I want to create good and long-lasting buildings, but that's something that not everybody judges in quite the same way. Especially when you take a bold step, you always win friends and foes. But if someone only brings forth insignificant trifles, then that will leave everybody cold, because then it's not worth talking about. Then nobody will be interested, that's all.

What is the hallmark of good architecture?

For me, architecture is good if ten years or more after its realisation it is still considered good and current.

Can you plan that?

Even experts have a hard time predicting that. Even in architecture, there are currents of fashion, but that's not a bad thing. The way I see it, by looking at a building you should be able to tell when it was constructed, but at the same time it should be timeless. What is a mere fad and what will stand its ground for a longer period of time is something you can only tell at a certain distance.

What was the cooperation with Brunner GmbH like?

It was very constructive and inspiring. It got me in the mood to continue. It was too bad really when we had finished.

What role does interior furnishing play in your overall architectural concept?

With the university library, there was no classic separation between architecture and interior decoration, since everything, exterior and interior, is public. In this way, both follow the same principles.

Which principles were these?

The materials used were to be deployed both inside and outside in their natural appearance. Wood was to be recognisable as wood, steel as steel, concrete as concrete, plaster as plaster. This leads to a certain restraint in terms of colours. This was a deliberate choice, since colours were to be brought into the library by the books and the people and thus change continually. In addition, the library doesn't have a big budget to repair every little chip and damage right away. That's why we had the plaster walls only impregnated in a way that leaves the plaster visible. If there is some damage, then the surface is still plaster, and the chip is plaster as well. There is nothing else that suddenly appears and mars the overall impression. So you won't get a tattered surface, it's more like a tread-on parquet floor which develops a certain classy patina.

What does that mean for the lounge furniture?

The furniture was to go along with this materialisation. With banc, this goes very well, with its leather and aluminium, which are clearly discernible as such. The discreet classic elegance of this furniture is perfectly integrated into the overall concept.

Why was the decision in favour of banc, the series specifically developed by Brunner, a good choice?

Because of the effect banc has. The seating furniture does not presume to be more than it is, it doesn't aspire to being a design element. They follow the design motto of "a chair is a chair" and represent classic restraint. What's more, the elongated seating isles, open to all sides, emphasise the space and spaciousness of the rooms, while the small, screened-off booths you can withdraw into form a nice contrast to this. There is this interesting interplay of openness and withdrawal.

A library is a house for books.**Which book did you read most recently?**

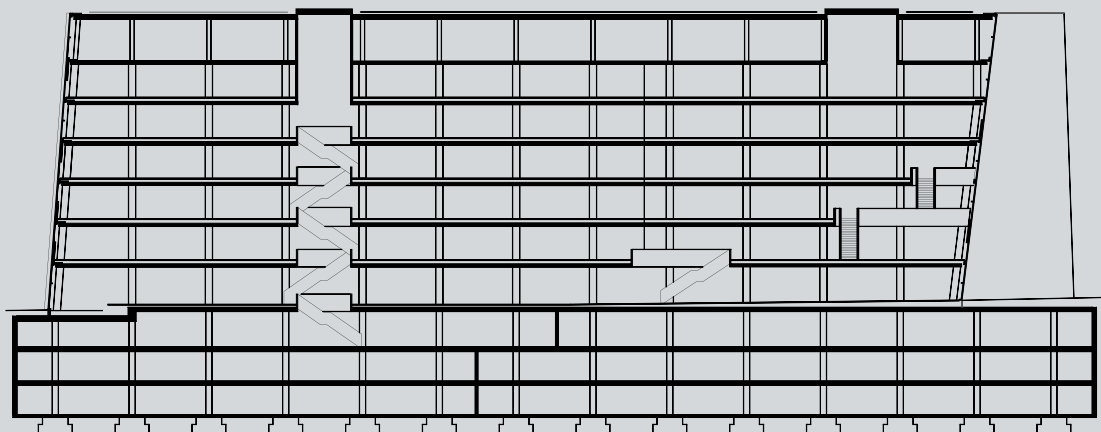
A book about Kowloon City, an autonomous settlement in Hong Kong that was constructed entirely without any building regulations. It was the largest and most intensively used structure ever existing in the world. For political reasons, it doesn't exist any more today, though.

THE ATRIUM

Within the secured area, an interior atrium winds up from floor to floor, making the fascinating world of books accessible. It opens vistas and perspectives onto the knowledge waiting to be discovered.

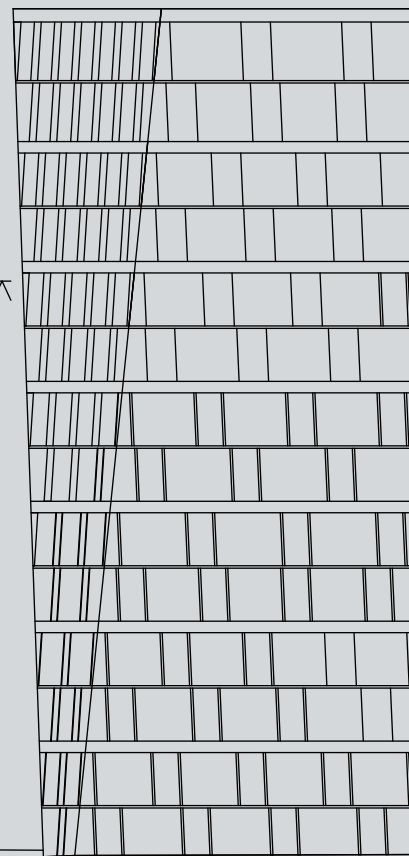






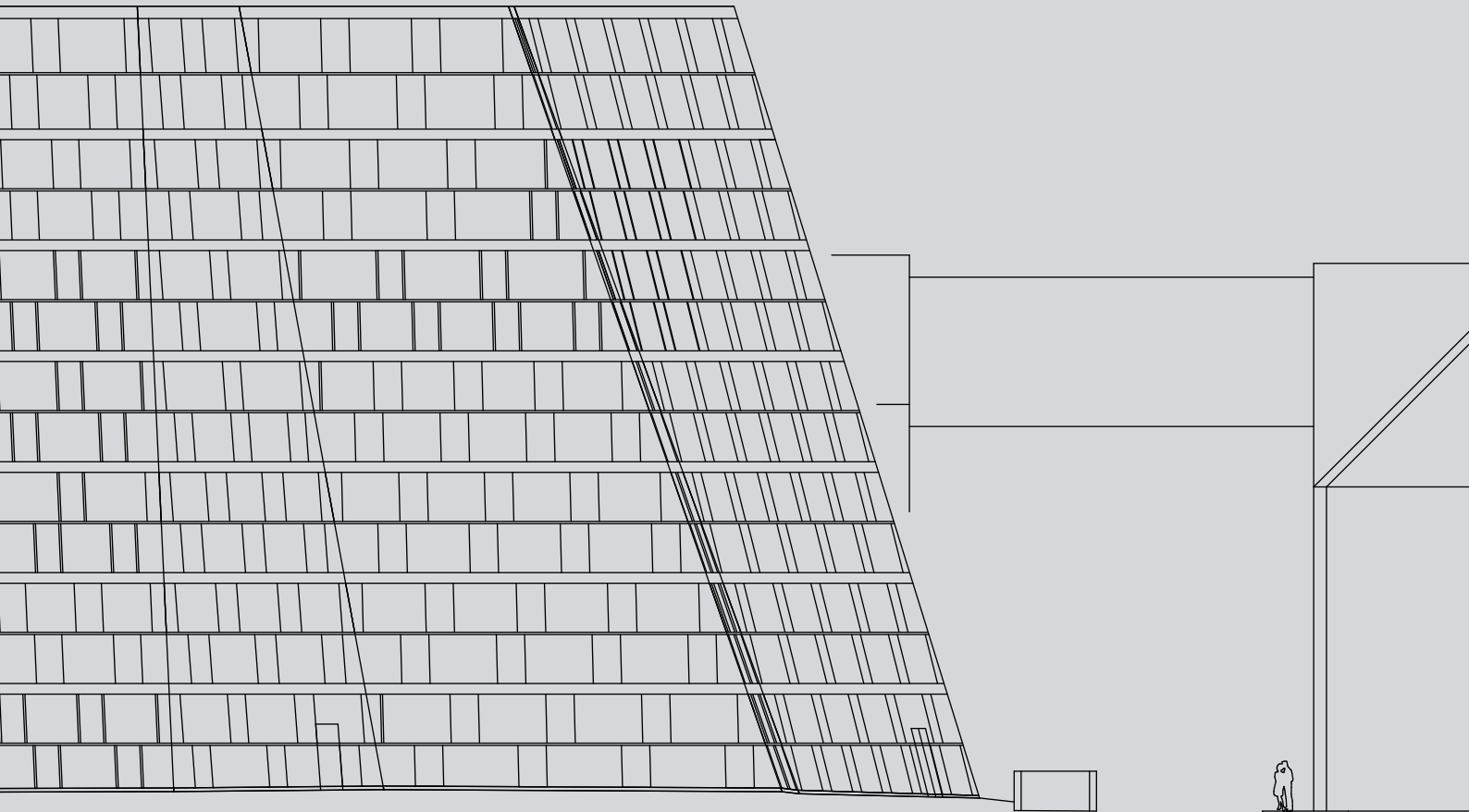
CROSS SECTION

Two atriums cut through the library. One is introverted, in the closed area. The other is extroverted, loosely following the façade, opening views onto the square of the Old Synagogue and the theatre.



VIEW

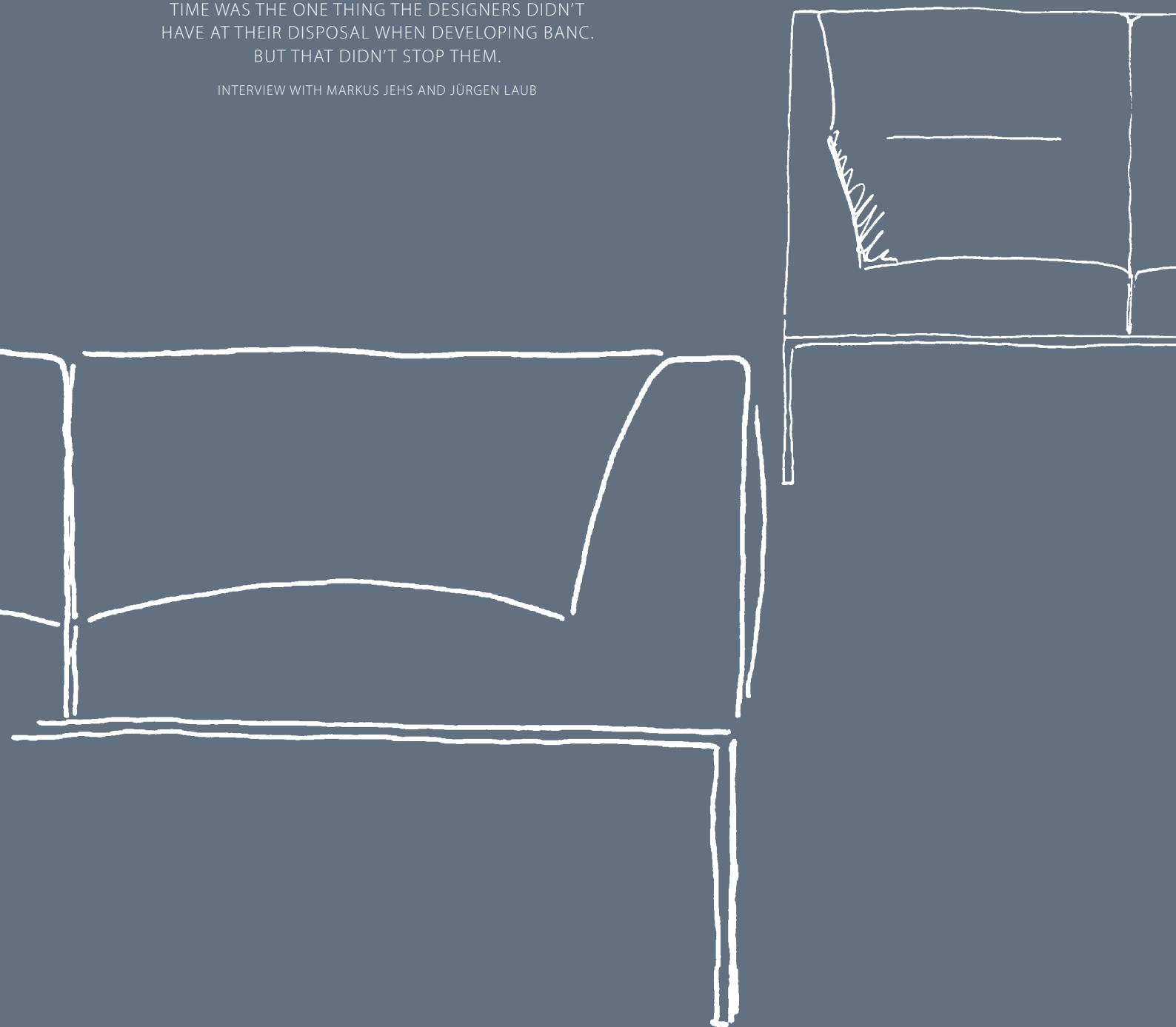
The façade design creates a play of lights reminiscent of the facets of a diamond. The reflections turn the building into a part of its surroundings, and inversely, the surroundings into a part of the building.



TO THE POINT

TIME WAS THE ONE THING THE DESIGNERS DIDN'T
HAVE AT THEIR DISPOSAL WHEN DEVELOPING BANC.
BUT THAT DIDN'T STOP THEM.

INTERVIEW WITH MARKUS JEHS AND JÜRGEN LAUB



Banc is a design by Stuttgart designer double jehs+laub. Markus Jehs and Jürgen Laub explain how they went about developing this lounge system, why it works universally and what they really like about Brunner.

What was your first thought when Philip Brunner told you about his idea to develop a new lounge system for Freiburg university library?

L: Even though Philip Brunner could at first only give a rough outline of the project, I thought it was interesting right away. For up to that point, we hadn't developed a dedicated product for a specific pilot project yet. We understood at once that we would have to develop a really versatile piece of furniture in order to accommodate the many different locations inside the library with their various functions.

J: It was important that this product was not only tailored specifically for Freiburg university library, but that it was to be a starting point for a product programme you can deploy everywhere. As a matter of principle, we only think in terms of products that can be manufactured as a series, not individual solutions. So the challenge consisted in developing a kit of building blocks, as it were, which is just as present, powerful and good as a small unit as in a large constellation.

Which experiences from your more than 20 years of designing helped you in this project?

L: In 2005, we developed a concept for Mercedes-Benz concerning all their showrooms globally, and that was the first comparable task. A small garage in South America was to have the same furnishings like the big centre in Singapore. There were a number of different floor plans and different kinds of architecture, and we developed a system that works for all of them. So in that respect we were well-prepared for the Freiburg university library project.

J: The special thrill about this project was to adapt your way of thinking to a particular role, i.e. the role of the architect who is faced with specific assignments and who constructs a building in which he has to accommodate different zones. It was our goal to provide him with a nice kit of building blocks that enables him to solve all these problems and that is easy to understand.



JEHS+LAUB DESIGNER

Jürgen Laub, born 1964 in Ulm, and Markus Jehs, born 1965 in Stuttgart, met at the University of Design in Schwäbisch Gmünd, where both studied industrial design. During their studies, they became friends and finally, in 1992, even wrote their diploma thesis together.

They founded the design studio jehs+laub in Stuttgart, in 1994. Since then, the two of them have been designing lamps and furniture for Brunner, Cassina, Cor, Fritz Hansen, Knoll, Nemo, Renz and Wilkhahn. In 2005, they developed a design concept for Mercedes-Benz showrooms around the world. Moreover, they designed Suite 606 for the Ice Hotel in Northern Sweden.

The multiple award-winning designers follow the goal of developing long-living furniture. They continue working until nothing can be added and nothing can be taken away any more. That is good design as they see it.

PRIZES AND AWARDS

2006
"iF Design Award"

2007
"Interior Innovation Award"

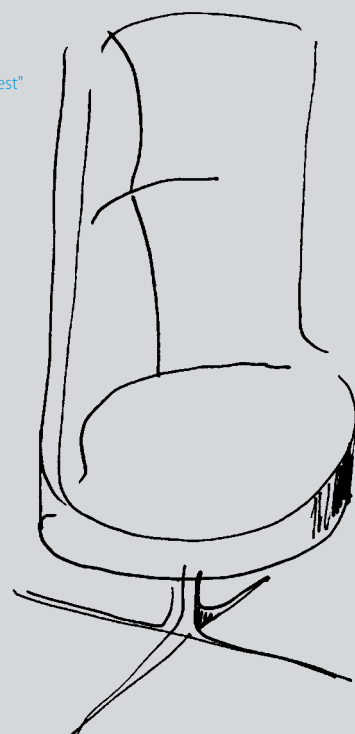
2012
"iF Design Award"

2013
2 x "iF Design Award"
e.g. for hoc stool

2014
3 x "iF Design Award"
"Focus Open"
"Red Dot Award" "Best of the Best"
for the stacking chair A-Chair

2015
2 x "German Design Award"
"iF Design Award"
for the lounge system banc

2016
"German Design Award"
for the lounge system banc
"Iconic awards interior innovation 2016"
for the lounge system banc





»It was our goal to provide him with a nice kit of building blocks that enables him to solve all these problems and that is easy to understand.«

MARKUS JEHS

How did you approach the project?

L: Our starting point was the archaic bench, which also helped give the product its name. It is characterised by transparency and openness. Everybody knows it and understands it. Together with appropriate modules, the concept can then be adapted to a wide variety of requirements. A case in point: banc can be equipped with a high back and thus serve to structure an entire room. Starting with the concrete needs in Freiburg, we developed additional satellites, e.g. a bar counter, easy chairs and different side tables. What's important is that at the end of the day the guiding furnishing principle remains recognisable.

J: Actually, we conceived all individual elements which may already exist somewhere else, from the bottom up.

What was your biggest challenge in developing banc?

L: Everything was supposed to look thin, lightweight and come across as a matter of course while still standing up to the operational needs of an intensively frequented library that's open 24/7. That's why we chose a lightweight yet stable aluminium side panel for the frame

How do you go about developing such an idea?

L: First, there's a sketch, then we do computer visualisations in order to show the big picture. We develop photos or renderings which can be passed on to architects or the Sales department. Since we do this in close cooperation with each other, we are also pretty fast. Once there's the green light for the development, we have models built. Next, the prototypes are built at the manufacturer's facility, and those provide the basis for further decisions.

What makes banc a spectacular piece of furniture?

L: Its simplicity. With these building blocks, everybody can build what they need and like.

J: To be able to make so much out of so few elements, that's really special.

Which kind of architecture has banc been designed for?

L: banc is unostentatious and very restrained in its language of forms. That's why it works in any kind of architecture. It can look good in a castle just as well as in modern architecture.

J: We like to develop products which can be placed anywhere.

L: That's why we spend a lot of time checking whether we have really hit the mark in every respect. Which variant might a different designer be able to add in order to make the product even better. That must not happen. That's why we check each design from all sides. The way we see it, banc is absolutely to the point.

When are you happy with a product?

J: When you can't improve it any more, i.e. when you can't add anything or take anything away.

TANGIBLE IDEA

Only prototypes turn an idea into a haptic experience. Look, touch, take a seat – now is the crucial moment that shows whether a good plan can turn into a great product. Brunner had only two weeks to build the first prototype.



What is the hallmark of good design?

L: Many products are over-designed. They carry around a kind of design flab. Too many ideas, too many details that want to be realised in this one product, and you end up with not being able to discern the real product any more, also because it was designed in a too subjective, too arbitrary way. Most of these designs disappear quickly, which I think is a shame because all that energy that was put into developing and manufacturing the product was in vain. We want to design products that can be manufactured for a really long time, and not fads of fashion.



You have developed furniture for Brunner several times already. What do you have in common?

L: Professionalism. We complement each other perfectly.

J: Another thing we have in common is speed. Jürgen and I sit down at a round table and we can work very fast that way. At Brunner, developments are driven forward speedily, too. You sit down together and quickly reach a decision. That is an advantage of a family-run business with a flat hierarchy. That's also why we were able to develop banc in a very short timeframe.

You once compared your business relationship with that of two detectives from the "Tatort" TV thriller series. What do you mean by that?

L: The interesting thing about those "Tatort" detectives is that their roles are quite opposed, but still they complement each other well. That's also true for us.

CARVING

Development snapshot of the high-back banc easy chair. Designer Markus Jehs takes a close look at the prototype, checking and feeling whether upholstery shape, arrangement and thickness are indeed perfect.

A PERFECT PLACE FOR LEARNING WITH A FUTURE

OPENNESS AND FLEXIBILITY
ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT FEATURES
OF A MODERN LIBRARY.

INTERVIEW WITH DR. ANTJE KELLERSOHN



The new Freiburg university library is one of the largest scientific libraries in Germany. Executive Director Dr. Antje Kellersohn explains why it is also a perfect place for learning for the students, and hence an investment that makes eminent sense.

Freiburg university library was officially opened on 12 October 2015 after 86 days of trial operation. How's acceptance?

Overwhelmingly great. At peak time, we had 12,000 users per day. During workdays, the numbers average between 9,000 and 10,000 users, with increasing tendency. In terms of quality, we're very, very happy. The majority of user feedback is positive. In a couple of places, there is still room for technical improvement, and for some people the library is even too crowded during rush hours. But this will level out over time.

Planned use was 6,000 users per day. Now, there are already many more. How does the library cope with this influx?

Right from the start, the library was planned for 24/7 operation. As long as there are places available during the entire day, we will manage. Should there be times where there are no free places any more, and should this persist, we can readjust by putting up more chairs. The ample, open spatial concept in combination with flexible furnishings enables us to react to changing requirements any time. That means that we are prepared to a certain extent to cope with even rising user numbers. And we're also looking after an additional 60 libraries all over the university campus.

DR. ANTJE KELLERSOHN

Born 1966 in Marburg, doctor of chemistry, took over the position of Executive Director at Freiburg university library in 2008. Before, she was Library Director at the University of Applied Sciences in Bielefeld, and before that Assistant Library Director at the University of Applied Sciences in Münster.

Traditionally, a library is a rather quiet place. With the "Parlatorium", you've added another room to the reading room which downright invites communication. Why?

With the "Parlatorium", we have consciously broken new ground, and we're offering 500 work spaces there. By doing this, we take into account that modern Bachelor and Masters courses require group work. For this, we offer the respective framework which is extraordinarily well received. The forecast floor space area has proved to be right on target.

What concept does a modern library need to embrace in this increasingly digitised world?

A vital criterion is an open and flexible spatial concept which allows adapting to changing requirements. The digitisation of scientific literature is advancing, at different speeds for different disciplines, but the trend is unstoppable. So it may well be the case that some years from now, we will reduce the open shelf space and replace a number of shelves in the reading room by additional user work places.

What was the most important requirement that the new library had to fulfil?

Like I said, flexibility was really a central criterion. The second point was to be able to handle the intensive user influx even when student numbers will be rising. We wanted to create an ideal place for learning which not only provides the necessary literature but that's also top equipped in terms of technology. And it was important for us that the library is suitable for 24/7 operation. That is a priceless advantage for students and accommodates their increasingly differentiated living and learning situations. The Ministry of Finance and the Building Authority required significant savings in terms of energy consumption. This will probably even be exceeded. According to a first analysis, we may realise 60 per cent energy savings.

Compared to other libraries, this university library appears to be downright luxuriously equipped. Why does the investment make sense after all?

Our university library isn't any more luxurious than other new buildings. After all, as a public institution we have to spend tax money in a very conscientious way; what's more, the furniture was sourced within the framework of a EU-wide request for proposals. We've never looked for luxury, but for sustainability. With our intensive 24/7 operation this can only be achieved with top-quality furniture. A case in point: comfortable, ergonomic seating is very important.

»The product banc has realised everything we originally had envisaged and which we didn't find on the market at the time. Thanks to its modularity it is adaptable, expandable and sustainable.«

DR. ANTJE KELLERSOHN

After all, our students often work ten or twelve hours at a stretch in the library. The electric sockets integrated into the lounge furniture also ensure that nobody has to interrupt their work because of empty batteries.

How important is it to feel at ease while learning?

Very important! Numerous scientific studies prove that productivity rises when people feel good at the place they work. That's also true for places where students learn. That's why libraries have always been built with special care and attention, not only to longevity.

When Philip Brunner and designers jehs+laub presented their idea for the lounge furniture series banc to you, you were quickly convinced. What made you enthusiastic about banc?

The product banc has realised everything we originally had envisaged and which we didn't find on the market at the time. Thanks to its modularity it is adaptable, expandable and sustainable. Its quality has convinced us just as quickly as its puristic design which is the characteristic style of our university library.

Freiburg university and Brunner GmbH share a long and positive business relationship. What do you like about working with Brunner?

The intensive and very individual support. The long-standing business relationship and their proximity to Freiburg have made a lot of things easier. What is more, Brunner has always proved very flexible in their reactions to our wishes and demands.

SEEING THE OPPORTUNITIES IN RISK

WRITING SUCCESS STORIES WITH
CREATIVITY, FLEXIBILITY AND TEAM SPIRIT

[AN INTERVIEW WITH PHILIP BRUNNER](#)

Philip Brunner was the driving force behind the banc project. In this interview he explains how the idea took shape, how he convinced the designers, his colleagues and the awarding authority, and how a vision was thus finally turned into a product.

When did it initially strike you that Brunner should develop entirely new lounge furniture for the Freiburg university library?

For many years, Brunner has been providing furniture to the University of Freiburg. When I was handed the request for proposal to supply lounge furniture for the university library, we didn't really have a suitable product in our portfolio. However, the scope of the project was so important that I took a very close look at the request for proposal. And I came to the conclusion that we should and could develop a bespoke product specifically suited to fulfil the library's requirements.





Why wasn't there a product like banc on the market before?

banc is the result of a detailed market analysis. It stands out from the competition because it combines all the benefits we had realised before across various products, in one and the same series. Thanks to its consistent modularity, you can configure large and small, open and closed seating landscapes using elements from one and the same system. It can be enlarged at will and be adapted to changing requirements at any time. That's a decidedly sustainable benefit. For the University of Freiburg, it was also very important that it be easily possible to clean the floor underneath the furniture. Again, a requirement that no product available on the market at the time could readily answer.

HAND-MADE IN GERMANY

Many qualified hands work the sewing machines so that finally each cover fits perfectly. This is how top-quality and long-lasting products come to life. In order to ensure this consistently high quality, Brunner deliberately manufactures its products in Germany.



»Thanks to its consistent modularity, you can configure large and small, open and closed seating landscapes with one and the same system. It can be enlarged at will and be adapted to changing requirements at any time.«

PHILIP BRUNNER

To develop and produce such a comprehensive series as banc from scratch is a big challenge. How did the final decision come about, when you said: "Yes, we can do this!"?

After the University of Freiburg decision makers had reacted positively on seeing the first renderings, it was quite clear to me that we simply had to develop this product. It still was a risk, but above all, we saw this as a great opportunity. We were backed up in this view by the assessment of our Freiburg distributor Office Plus who was involved in the process. They were convinced that banc would not only fulfil all Freiburg university library requirements, but also the requirements of the market as a whole.

Why did you decide to have jehs+laub design this series?

Because thanks to their creativity and their reduced language of forms, which is currently quite the trend, they seemed perfect for what I had in mind. Moreover, after the creative brief, they had at once grasped the task and invested a lot of time into this project on their own accord.

What is characteristic for working together with them?

As industrial designers, Markus Jehs and Jürgen Laub are absolutely "state of the art", and they have a clear view of the future. Their visual designs are very strong, they are open-minded, and they are ready to tackle any challenge and find a viable solution.



How many Brunner employees were involved in developing this product series?

All in all, some ten team members from production, administration, technology and our ad agency were involved.

What is spectacular about banc for you personally?

banc has a straightforward design and is convincing thanks to its construction and its modular structure. It basically works like a set of Lego building blocks for architects, offering endless combinations and layout options. banc is suitable for a wide array of deployment situations, which hits the spot with current office and work environments. Thanks to its sophisticated construction, it offers both a high level of seating comfort and manufacturing quality.

EVERYTHING TO MEASURE

The quality assurance team have great routine in checking each piece leaving the factory for flawlessness and dimensional accuracy. This assures top standards living up to the company's claim to quality.



What makes you particularly proud?

That we have managed to develop a product like this in a very short time and at high investment costs, and that this product now also is a big seller as a series.

What was your biggest challenge?

The tight timeline. Other companies need one and a half to two years to develop such a full-fledged product series. We were production ready after only six months. That is a great team achievement which was made possible only because each and every one believed that we would receive the order.

banc has by now become part of the Brunner product portfolio. How successfully does the series sell?

Very successfully. Since its market launch, we have already made several million euros' worth of turnover with banc, and assembly takes place in a dedicated production hall.



SOPHISTICATED TO THE LAST DETAIL

HOW A NICE IDEA TURNS INTO A GREAT PRODUCT.

At the beginning of any new product, there is an idea – often still rough, vague, more like a hunch. To gradually condense this idea until a finished product be attained, that was the task set for designers jehs+laub. The first sketches drawn by hand were turned into concrete designs on the PC, then into renderings, then these plans were followed by prototypes. Finally and in close coordination with the awarding authority, the architect and the Brunner specialists, these prototypes were grown into a lounge furniture system ready for serial production. banc was born.

SIMPLY AN INSPIRING SYSTEM

Thanks to its modular structure, banc can be positioned completely freely in the room, and it can be combined into any number of spatially structuring formations. Whether for 3 or for 36 people, whether open or confidential – thanks to its U-shaped supporting frame in different widths and the fully upholstered seat-back elements available in three different heights, banc is versatile and can be extended at will. A perfect kit of building blocks for architects and planners.







CLEAR, ELEGANT FORMAL LANGUAGE

Reduced to the max: a delicate supporting frame and a comfortable square upholstered element. They form the basis, transparent and open to all sides. No matter in which direction banc is being designed, whether with or without seat-back element – it always stays true to its clear and elegant formal language.



BEAUTIFUL AND FUNCTIONAL

The banc lounge furniture is equipped with easily accessible 3-fold power strips for charging tablets and mobile phones. They are discreet and blend into the overall impression. So library users can work for hours without having to watch their remaining battery power. Sophisticated comfort: The "soft square" table top with its rounded corners and the excentric column of the laptop table.













EXCITING COMBINATION

The screened-off banc cabin with matching side table form a nice contrast to the open, spacious seating landscapes. This leads to an interesting interplay of openness and withdrawal.

PERFECT WORKMANSHIP

The fully upholstered seat and back elements are covered with premium leather. It is particularly sturdy and long-lasting, making it a perfect match for the hustle and bustle of an intensely frequented library that stays open 24/7. Should there be some damage, then individual elements can be exchanged easily, thanks to the modular construction. The separating seam lends structure to the medium-high and high backs, creating an interesting accent.



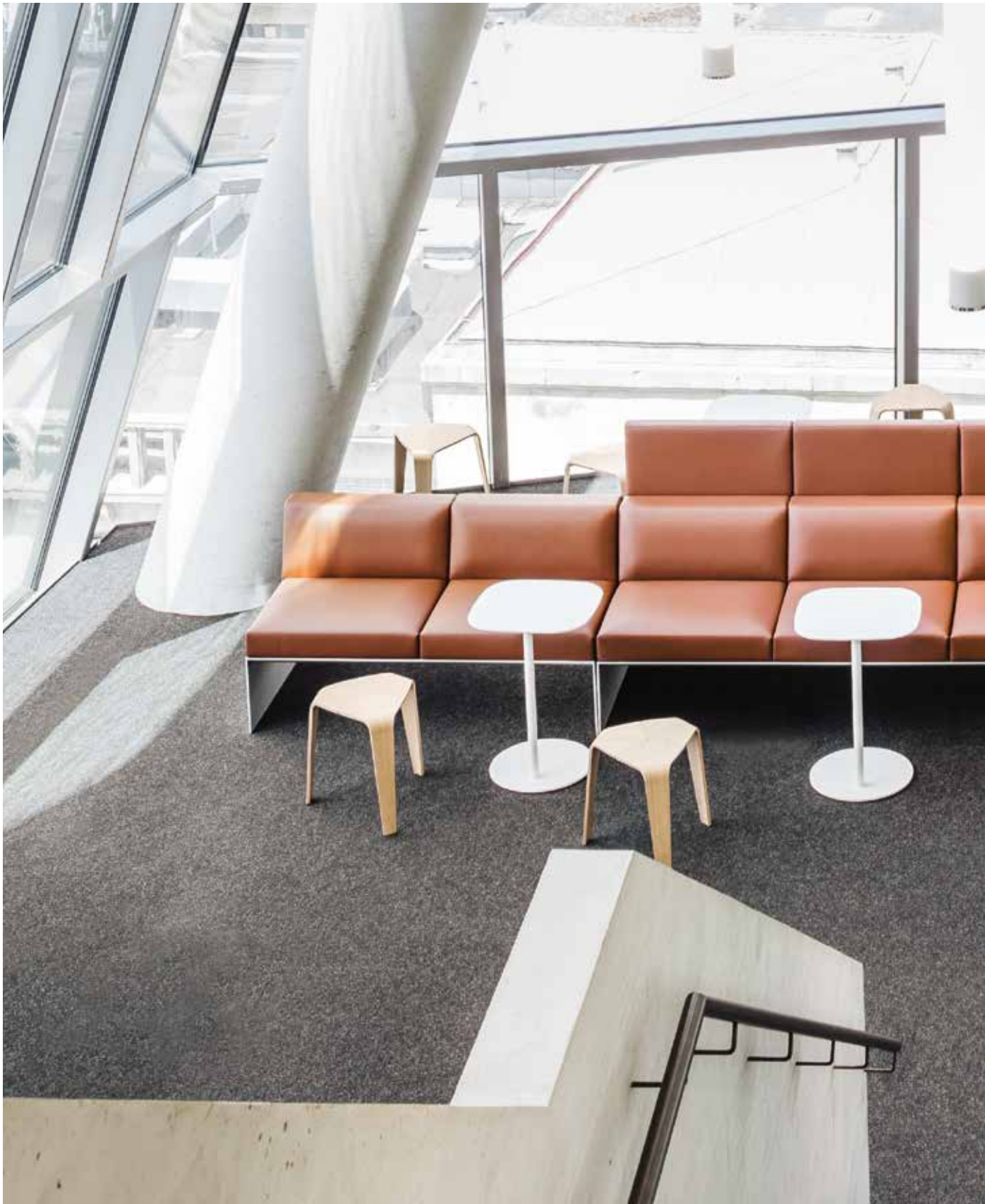






DELICATE, YET STURDY

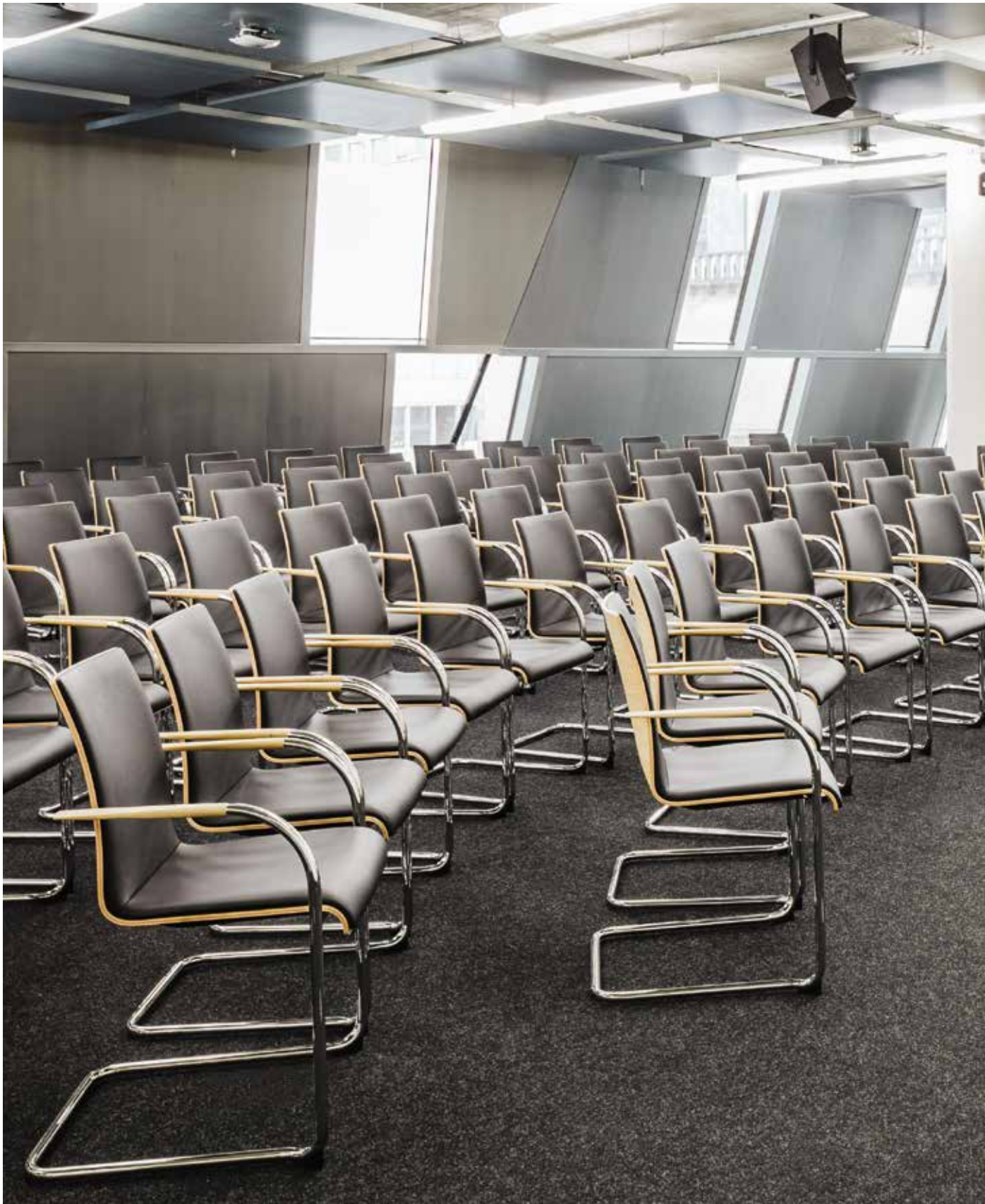
The U-shaped aluminium panel comes across as delicate and reduced to a minimum. Still, it is exceedingly stable, and it is available in three widths. An additional advantage: It is easy to clean underneath. Thus banc fulfils an important requirement by the library administration. The hoc stools made of three shaped wooden parts each, are a perfect match. They are easy to handle and stackable. Moreover, they form an interesting contrast to the square base form of banc.

















MAXIMUM FLEXIBILITY

BANC IS THE PERFECT KIT OF BUILDING BLOCKS:
OFFERING MANY COMBINATIONS AND EXTENSIONS.

MODULARITY

The basis for banc is the archaic bench, which also gave the product its name – an upholstered seating surface open to all sides. No more, no less. On top of a U-shaped aluminium frame, stable yet particularly delicate. This simple and transparent basic module can be extended at will and designed to all sides with completely upholstered back rests in three different heights. Whether as large seating landscapes, completely or partially open and space-structuring, or as small, screened-off booths creating room for calm work or confidential talks. Everything is possible, seating three or thirty. Everything is flexible, nothing is determined. Each element can be exchanged individually. banc is the perfect kit of building blocks that everybody can use to design what they need and like. banc is universal, but always special.







BC-H00

**UPHOLSTERED
ELEMENT
WITHOUT BACK**

Fully upholstered,
seating surface 70 × 70 cm



BC-H40

**UPHOLSTERED
ELEMENT
WITH LOW BACK**

Fully upholstered,
back height 40 cm



BC-H70

**UPHOLSTERED
ELEMENT
WITH MEDIUM
HEIGHT BACK**

Fully upholstered,
with decorative seam at lower
back, back height 70 cm



BC-H100

**UPHOLSTERED
ELEMENT
WITH HIGH BACK**

Fully upholstered,
with decorative seam
at lower back,
back height 100 cm



BC-T00

TABLE TOP

HPL surface,
70 × 70 cm



BC-H40E

**UPHOLSTERED
ELEMENT,
CORNER ELEMENT
WITH LOW BACK**

Fully upholstered,
back height 40 cm



BC-H70E

**UPHOLSTERED
ELEMENT,
CORNER ELEMENT
WITH MEDIUM
HEIGHT BACK**

Fully upholstered,
with decorative seam at lower
back, back height 70 cm



BC-H100E

**UPHOLSTERED
ELEMENT,
CORNER ELEMENT
WITH HIGH BACK**

Fully upholstered,
with decorative seam
at lower back,
back height 100 cm



BC-100

**SUPPORTING FRAME FOR
UPHOLSTERED ELEMENT**

aluminium,
width 70 cm



BC-200

**SUPPORTING FRAME FOR
TWO UPHOLSTERED ELEMENTS**

aluminium,
width 140 cm



BC-300

**SUPPORTING FRAME FOR
THREE UPHOLSTERED ELEMENTS**

aluminium,
width 210 cm



BC-010

UPHOLSTERED STOOL

fully upholstered,
seating height 45 cm,
flat steel swivel frame,
powder-coated



BC-020

UPHOLSTERED EASY CHAIR, LOW

fully upholstered,
consisting of a moulded foam
pad with spring core insert,
seating height 45 cm,
flat steel swivel frame,
powder-coated



BC-040

UPHOLSTERED EASY CHAIR, HIGH BACK

fully upholstered,
consisting of a moulded foam
pad with spring core insert,
seating height 45 cm,
flat steel swivel frame,
powder-coated



BC-060

BAR STOOL

Fully upholstered seating sur-
face, consisting of a moulded
foam pad with spring core
insert, seating height 78 cm,
not height-adjustable,
round tube column, flat
steel frame, powder-coated,
swivelling without automatic
return mechanism



BC-082

COUCH AND SIDE TABLE

Cross-leg frame,,
powder-coated flat steel,
table height 50 cm,
circular table top, Ø 70 cm,
MDF, both sides HPL-coated,
optionally available in oak
veneer



BC-080

SIDE TABLE

Cross-leg frame,,
powder-coated flat steel,
table height 70 cm,
table top size 65 x 65 cm,
"soft square", or circular,
Ø 70 cm, MDF, both sides
HPL-coated, optionally
available in oak veneer



BC-081

SIDE TABLE

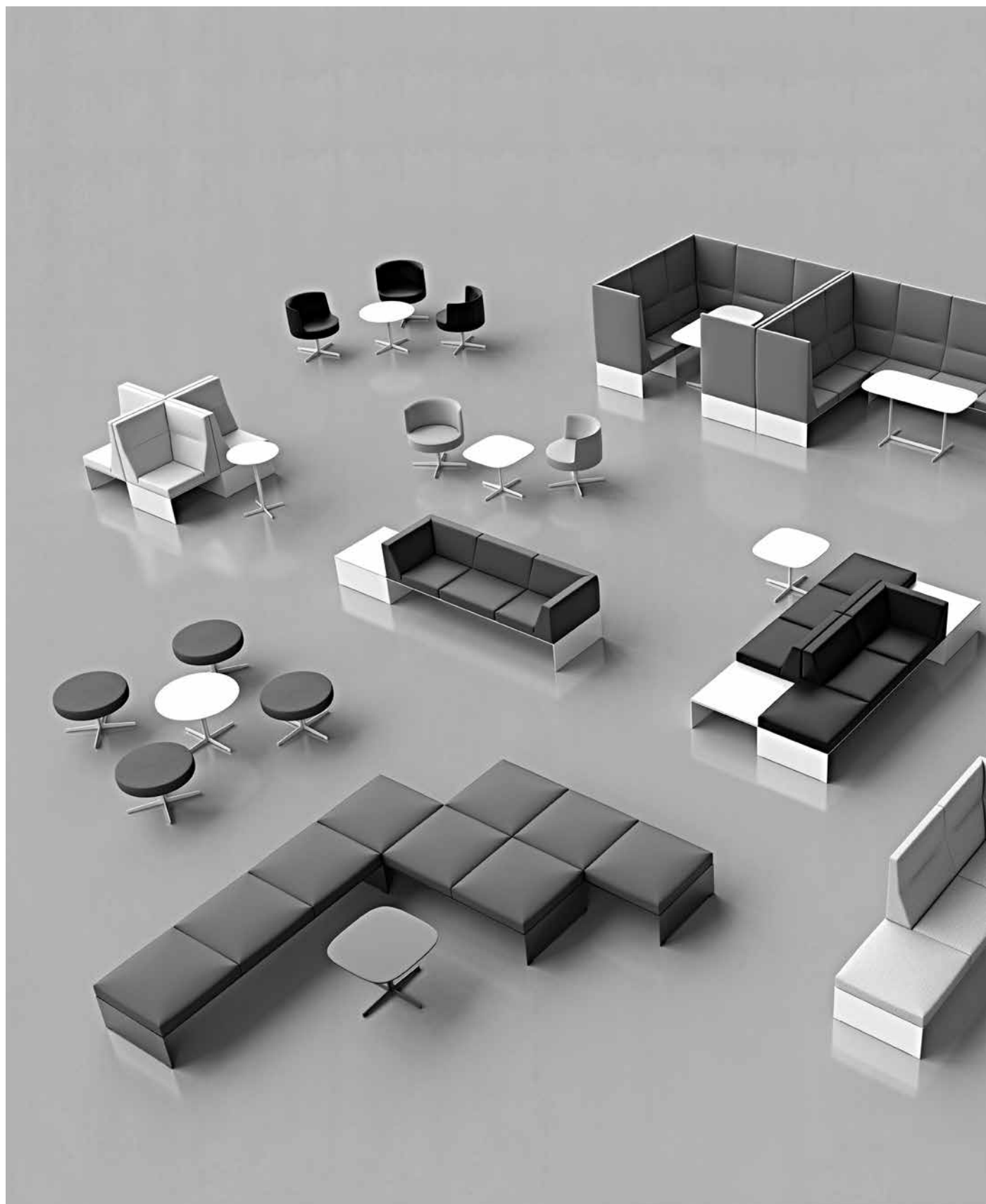
Cross-leg frame,,
powder-coated flat steel,
table height 70 cm,
circular table top, Ø 54 cm,
MDF, both sides HPL-coated,
optionally available in oak
veneer



BC-071

SIDE TABLE

T-base frame with brace,
powder-coated flat steel,
table height 70 cm,
table top size 130 x 65 cm,
110 x 80 cm or 160 x 80 cm
"soft rectangle", MDF,
both sides HPL-coated
optionally available in oak
veneer





FAMILY WITH CHARACTER

WHETHER ON ITS OWN OR IN COMBINATION – THE BANC FAMILY FOLLOWS THE SAME CONVINCING CENTRAL THEME.

BANC FAMILY

banc can not only be combined freely in the room, but it can also be extended in many different ways. Mobile side furniture like tables in different heights and formats, upholstered easy chairs with low or high back, upholstered stools and bar stools turn banc into a lounge furniture system which leaves nothing to be desired. The clear and puristic language of forms can be found in all elements of this series. In addition, circular easy chairs, stools and tables create a felicitous contrast to the square basic surface of the banc upholstered element. Whether the individual elements are combined to form a loose seating landscape or a representative suite – the central theme is always clearly discernible.

ABOUT BRUNNER.

Brunner, founded by Rolf Brunner in 1977, is one of the internationally leading manufacturers of contract furniture. The company focuses on providing solutions for business and hotels, trade shows and congress centres, as well as for healthcare, education and public institutions.

Solutions by Brunner make sense wherever people come together. Sharing a sense of process, of being together and feeling at ease. Brunner can assure this by smart products and top functionality, supporting users in increasing the efficiency of their processes.

Brunner follows the aim of designing furniture for rooms providing an optimal environment for the respective task at hand. In this, Brunner closely cooperates with leading architects and designers. The result: inspiring design of exemplary quality, harmoniously combining a reduced formal language with outstanding functionality and surprising details. Sustainably and seamlessly conceived and integrated into true Brunner design.

Brunner starts by understanding all steps within the customers' processes in order to be able to provide the ideal individual solution. And to answer even very specific requirements by offering a large product portfolio, providing a high degree of flexibility and using the latest technology.

The close-knit sales network assures the necessary proximity to the customer. Internationally, Brunner is represented by three sales organisations: Arro in France, Brunner UK in the UK, and Sedorama in Switzerland. Brunner – a family-owned company located in Rheinau (Baden, Germany) – offers its employees a great environment for personal development, encouraging them to take on responsibility in order to drive the optimisation of processes and products.

For more than 30 years, the Brunner family has led the company, result-oriented, decisive and focussed on achieving their set goals – complying with the highest ethical standards. Always conscious of their important entrepreneurial responsibility towards their region, partners and customers, employees and suppliers.

The fair, friendly, open and direct way of dealing with each other is a hallmark of the success-oriented corporate culture, characterised by mutual appreciation and responsibility. That's why Brunner will not compromise on product quality and work processes, nor on fulfilling the highest demands in terms of environmental protection and implementing health and safety regulations.

Looking forward, the Brunner family is dedicated to delivering personal commitment in management and providing investment for sustainable growth. Conducting trend-setting studies (e.g. on workplace behaviour, ergonomics and health) and implementing the results will assure Brunner's position as one of the leading manufacturers of innovative solutions in the furnishing industry even in the future.

In summary, Brunner is synonymous with clear, functional design, and customer-oriented, individual solutions providing maximum flexibility – exciting, honest, straightforward, sustainable and responsible, for today and tomorrow.

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