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Office furniture made to measure is rare. In most cases, too much work is required for the development of such items and the costs for just one individual project are too high to make it worthwhile. It comes as a surprise to find businesses which nonetheless choose this option. Based in Basel, Novartis commissioned the Zurich interior designer, Iria Degen, to develop tailor-made office furniture for their reception centre built by architect Peter Märkli on the expanding company campus. The design project involved furniture for 260 employees, conference rooms of various sizes, cabinets, closets and lounges on four floors covering an area of almost 6,000 square metres. Iria Degen's aim was to develop a furniture range to suit the large, open layout of the building. At the same time, she wanted to make sure that the new workplaces offered a certain degree of privacy to the staff who had previously worked in individual offices. A difficult task, indeed.

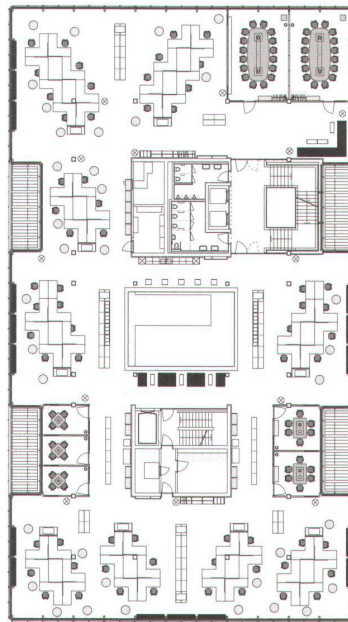
In conjunction with Röthlisberger, the interior designer developed an angular, L-shaped desk made of white plastic boards with two sides of the same length and a movable, integrated partition, which separates the individual workplaces as and when required. Four, six or eight workplaces are arranged diagonally in the room, forming small "islands" which are reminiscent of a cascade of carefully aligned angles. They are framed by cylindrical aluminium containers on wheels which serve as storage cabinets – they, too, are made to measure and were developed with Röthlisberger. Not one single piece of furniture reaches up to the ceiling, so the view across the room is unobstructed. Owing to the interlocked desk arrangement and the storage space in the elements, the room remains open and luxurious, and Peter Märkli's extravagant building can be seen and felt. The building and its furniture merge discretely to form one entity.

Author: Ariana Pradal, photos: Peter Hebeisen

#### NOVARTIS VISITOR CENTRE CAMPUS, 2006

- > Address: Fabrikstrasse 6, Basel
- > Client: Novartis Pharma, Basel
- > Architecture: Peter Märkli, Zurich
- > Interior design: Iria Degen Interiors, Zurich, [www.iriadegen.com](http://www.iriadegen.com)
- > Construction/development of office furniture: Röthlisberger Schreinerei, Gümliigen
- > Kunst-und-Bau: Jenny Holzer, USA
- > Interior design procedure: Invited competition
- > Interior fit out procedure: Invited competition

>The interior design picks up the clear shapes of Peter Märkli's construction.



^ Floor layout with workplace islands.

>Privacy with clear vision in the conference rooms.



^ Workplace islands: A movable partition is integrated in the synthetic resin desktop.