

Legal Zeitgeist

Lawyers in many countries were once strictly prohibited from publicising their services. To such respectable members of the community, advertising was an act beneath their station. Since the rules have been relaxed, many legal firms are run along unashamedly entrepreneurial lines. What's more, business cards, brochures and websites point to their first flirtations with visual presentation. Interior design has also been discovered as a key to shaping corporate identity and, as such, a marketing tool. Two office refurbishment's by designer Sylvia Leydecker for legal firms in Germany are evidence of this shift in style. Gone is the musty atmosphere of a profession once so fond of pomp and tradition. Clients entering Stahl Krafzig & Partner in Hagen are greeted by a Ferrari-red reception desk, its gloss surface lacquered to perfection by a car mechanic. Words like Lösung and Gewinnen in large red letters on the off-white wall behind the desk remind clients of what they can expect here. Leydecker enjoyed less freedom at Schlüter Graf & Partner in Dortmund, since the firm had already chosen light grey as its corporate colour. The interior follows suit and simply uses light and glass to create a feeling of transparency. Glass partitions, sandblasted in places for privacy, make narrow corridors seem wider. Plain white walls and ceilings, light grey doors and floors the colour of anthracite provide a neutral setting that is offset only by luminous patterns projected on corridor walls. The reception desk itself looks like a huge cube of crushed ice: a perfect foil for the receptionist's corporate uniform.