



Press Release

Axel Springer commissions young Berlin team with new corporate architecture

KINZO: avant-garde “Star Wars”- Design for Europe’s publishing giant Axel Springer

- **Leading European publisher commissions KINZO with interior design for BILD**
- **New headquarter for best-selling European tabloid in Science-Fiction-inspired aesthetics – desks shaped like space ships and jetfighters**
- **25 editors at a single table – new design to support communication and workflow**
- **In-depth workflow studies at former BILD premises led to new design**
- **Axel Springer CEO Mathias Döpfner advocated young architects and unusual solutions**

Berlin, 28. Februar 2008 – By moving its editorial staff from Hamburg to Berlin, BILD, Germany’s leading tabloid and Europe’s largest newspaper with over 3 million daily copies, changes much more than an address: Europe’s publishing behemoth Axel Springer strategically relocates its flagship right into the soaring German epicentre of political power, über-cool urban lifestyle, design, fashion and next-generation media. Consequently Axel Springer commissioned the young Berlin-, Chicago- and Shanghai-based architects KINZO with a radically new Corporate Architecture and Interior Design Concept that expresses Axel Springers ambitions for the digital age – and a drastic break with low-key Hanseatic traditions:

KINZO, headed by creative directors Karim El-Ishmawi (34), Chris Middleton (33) and project director Martin Jacobs (35) created an entirely new workspace environment for the editorial staff, that is as surprisingly functional as it is unconventional, and alludes to 1980’s science-fiction classics such as “Star Wars” and “Battlestar Galactica”. As the very core of the future BILD-Production and of the new futuristic office environment, KINZO designed a huge double-winged, V-shaped production table, that will accommodate BILD chief editor Kai Diekmann, his deputy and the head of the online issue at its top end, while the department



directors, art director, photo directors, duty editor and legal experts are gathered at its wings – in total a team 25, seated at a single table.

With this new BILD “bridge” KINZO reflects the organisational structure and production scheme of BILD, adding both a distinctive style and functional ideas to enhance workflow, speed, concentration and communication – the inspiration taken from science fiction space ship design is obvious. However, it was by spying out the editorial production in Hamburg, studying operating sequences, viewing axis and flow of communication and taking gazillions of digital photos that KINZO started to develop the overall design scheme and many new functional details. Karim El-Ishmawi: “During the production and the final phases before going into print the editors have to be in constant contact; articles are permanently discussed, written, cancelled and exchanged in real time; this is why we aimed at gathering the team as closely together as possible, while allowing more elbow room and a general feeling of spaciousness. As a matter of fact, this level of functionality cannot be achieved with off-the-peg office furniture systems. At the same time, we had to tackle the floorplan with its array of central pillars at the new Berlin premises.”

KINZO’s solution was to group the core working groups around the V-shaped “bridge”, with editors sitting both at its inner and outer sides. A V-shape array of ceiling-mounted monitors display the current stages of layout as well as several TV news channels. An aluminium “wing spoiler” hovering across the table supports the PC monitors, allowing the editors to deal with newspaper-size layouts and page-proofs, that used to collide with monitors and processors before. Also, the desktop can be cleared in a second simply by sliding keyboards and other devices underneath the “wing spoiler”. A mat-black channel, nicknamed “black hole”, runs along the middle section, ready to swallow all those cables, plugs and sockets that, at the Hamburg premises, used to pile up to unsightly dust collectors. Yet, the black channel is generously dimensioned to allow a quick fix and exchange e.g. of mobile phone chargers and other devices.

Editorial conferences at BILD are no longer held at round tables, but at a diamond-shape ones instead – not only to fit the required number of people into a relatively narrow plot: KINZO radically banned any round shapes from BILD just as practically any other sort of curves, circles or soft waves, replacing it with KINZO’s signature clear-cut lines and racy tilted angles. While BILD evokes to any German the blood-red logo and extra-large banner headlines, El-Ishmawi, Middleton and Jacobs surprised their clients with a colour scheme in strict black and white. “To draw a Corporate Architecture from a logo or corporate colours would have been



a rather cheap way to go”, insists El-Ishmawi. “Our approach was, while fulfilling the functional aspects, to stress the image of Axel Springer as future-oriented media business. Employees and visitors should see and feel the speedy, energetic and innovative spirit at Axel Springer.”

An energetic feeling should also stir the group of (number) editors that co-ordinate the regional news when they take a seat at their new, KINZO-designed desk: Its outline resembles the shape of a jet fighter, resting on tilted “wing tips” at both sides. Also here, the jet fighter outline is functional and symbolic at the same time. To maximise both style and legroom, KINZO completely eliminated conventional table-legs from its designs, replacing it by folded “wings”, flanks or stainless-steel tapered “skids”. For better look and feel, all table boards have been laminated first and then given an extra lacquer finish. The table boards seem to float some millimetres above the steel “skids”; a shadow gap conceals the joint that is ingeniously placed towards the inside of the table, adding a touch of airiness to the tough editorial life.

Even those tables that are supported by massive flanks on both sides, seem to resist gravitation: KINZO folded the flanks in Origami-manner in a diagonal line, bending the lower sections towards the inside. This also allows to combine a single table with those double desks on “skids”: These groups of three editors accompany both the “jet fighter” and the V-shaped “bridge” like satellites on several floor levels at the new BILD headquarters. By combining large working groups on single “space ship” tables with accompanying “satellites” KINZO enhances the interaction and integration of editorial workflow at BILD, e.g. between print and online editors.

While KINZO streamlined the editorial production for jet fighter speed, “meeting lounges” invite one and all to an equally stylish retreat for a quiet conversation, interview or just a moment to decelerate and relax: Sheltered at two sides, comfortably cushioned at the inside, yet light and airy with a glass front, these lounges are designed as reduced “zen”-style retreats yet in line with the openness and lightness of the overall concept. KINZO also showed sympathy for short-time visitors like couriers by cutting a padded niche into the front offices’ wall cabinet. Here, they can relax for a moment while waiting to meet with a partner or to collect a parcel.

For the outfit of the complete workspace, e.g. floors, walls and lighting – KINZO closely collaborated with Axel Springer’s facility management, supplying and consulting with blueprints and material samples. “The level of understanding and



co-operation between architects, client and his facility managers was just amazing” reports Karim El-Ishmawi, “CEO Mathias Döpfner at the very top, but also the BILD editors and the facility management supported us enthusiastically and helped us with many practise-related ideas. As a designer and architect, you actually couldn’t wish for a better client”. At the same time, El-Ishmawi and his colleagues are fully aware of the impact of BILD as an object of reference. “Axel Springer takes architecture and design as an important element of developing its corporate identity; we value that this European Leader of this industry actively endorses young architects like KINZO, that are actually known for a quite distinctive, cutting-edge approach.”

The new BILD premises are not the first commission to KINZO from Axel Springer. Last Summer, the Berlin-based digital subsidiaries, Axel Springer Digital TV GmbH and the Electronic Programme Guide competence centre Axel Springer Digital TV Guide GmbH already commissioned KINZO with the total design and realisation of their new premises at Schiffbauerdamm, close to the Reichstag. CEO Mathias Döpfner, who graced the office-warming party, was stunned and exclaimed “This office looks like an iPod” – and spontaneously suggested that KINZO design the new BILD headquarters. In this way KINZO’s work became part of a complete overhaul of Axel Springer’s corporate design, to be presented on March 25. A few days before, during the Easter holidays, the BILD editorial staff will move from Hamburg into the new KINZO-styled offices in Berlin.

In the process of developing the designs for Axel Springer, KINZO developed a fully-fledged office furniture program, that is currently being prepared for serial production. As of April 08, the first tables, cabinets and office containers will be available under the name “KINZO AIR”. KINZO insists it thought up the name long before Apple’s ultra-thin notebook. “It seems that the idea of lightness and airiness is quite, well, in the air”, Karim El-Ishmawi smiles, “and as a matter of fact KINZO AIR and the MacBook Air match perfectly”. In Europe, KINZO AIR is distributed by Objektagentur Van Laar in Düsseldorf, noted in the industry as a specialist for avant-garde Scandinavian furniture brands such as (Offect, Blå Station) (www.objektagentur.de).

Having produced some small series of furniture in the past, this is KINZO’s first venture into serious series production. However, with all interior and furniture projects KINZO relies on a special asset: Martin Jacobs had completed a rock-solid apprenticeship as cabinetmaker before he studied architecture. “This know-how allows us to keep an eye on the requirements and the cost of manufacturing at an early stage of our designs” explains E-Ishmawi.



Berlin's Insider Address with international commissions

KINZO is still traded as an insider's address, even though Karim El-Ishmawi, Martin Jacobs and Chris Middleton can boast a long line of international megabrand clients, prizes and acclaim. Audi, Adidas, L'Oréal. Yahoo! and German Pay-TV operator Premiere have commissioned KINZO with brand-, exhibition- and event design worldwide. (Hier sollte man etwas über das Projekt in New York einfügen) With affiliated offices in Chicago and Shanghai, KINZO has already implemented a couple of international commissions.

In 2007, KINZO was awarded with the German Building Research Award. A club and restaurant in Chicago designed by KINZO was praised by the Chicago Tribune as "Club of the Year". In March, the world's largest IT fair, CeBIT at Hannover will be opened by German Chancellor Angela Merkel on a stage designed by KINZO. Inspired by Paris "Banlieu"-Architecture, this set is designed to function as a scenery for a breathtaking "Parcour" extreme sport show, with performers climbing, hurdling and swinging across the set. Next, a spectacular interior fitting of a double-decker coach bus is on KINZO's to-do list.

KINZO's own offices are located at the Alexanderplatz, right opposite the TV tower, in a concrete block dating back to the 1970's GDR era. Residing one floor above a modern-age hell's gate – a garish shopping mall - and well separated by a massive steel door, the team of 5 are dreaming up avant-garde designs in a rather surreal location.

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