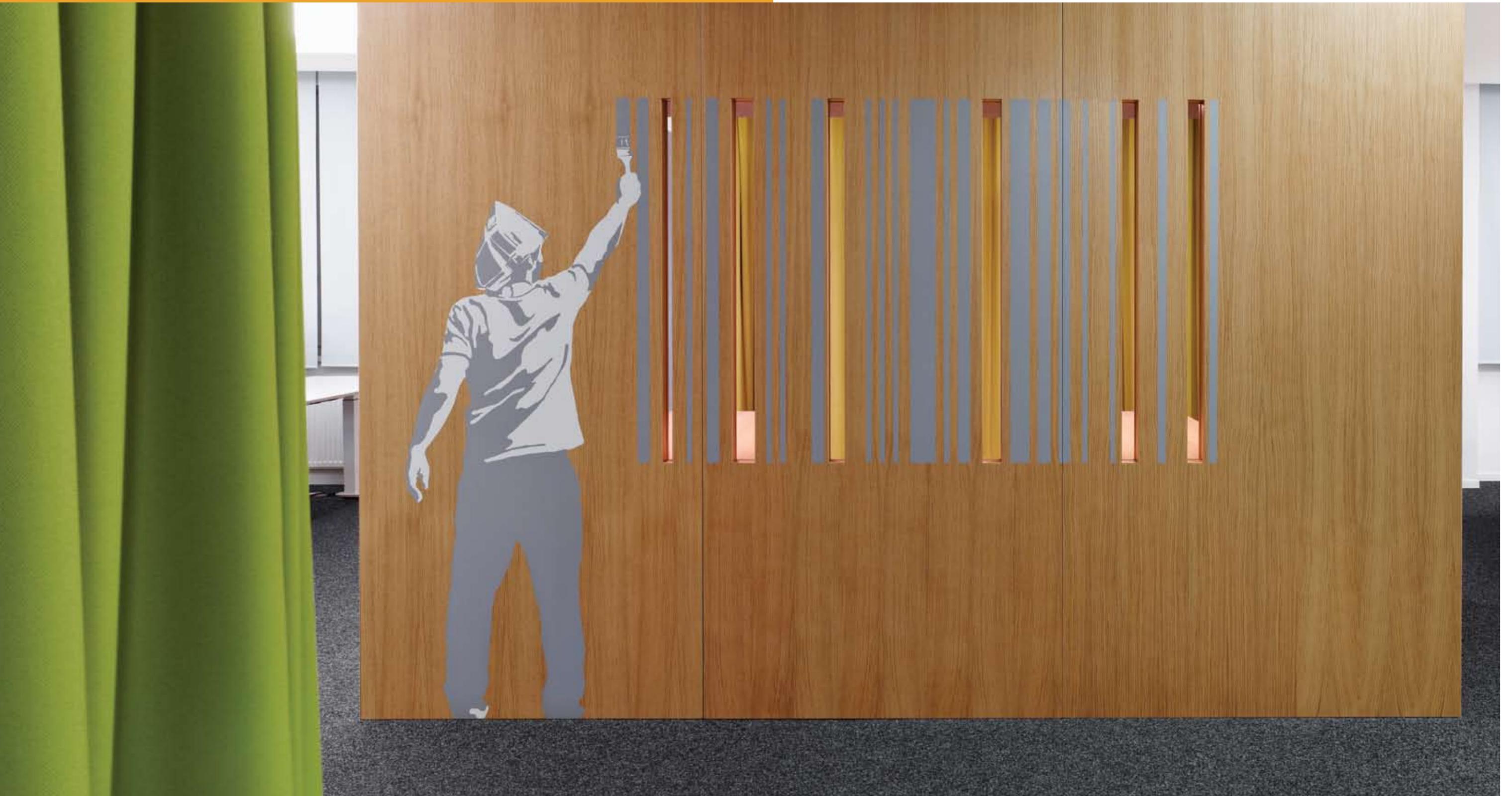


# get with the programs

Scope Office for Architecture helped the German software giant SAP reboot

text: *mairi beautyman*  
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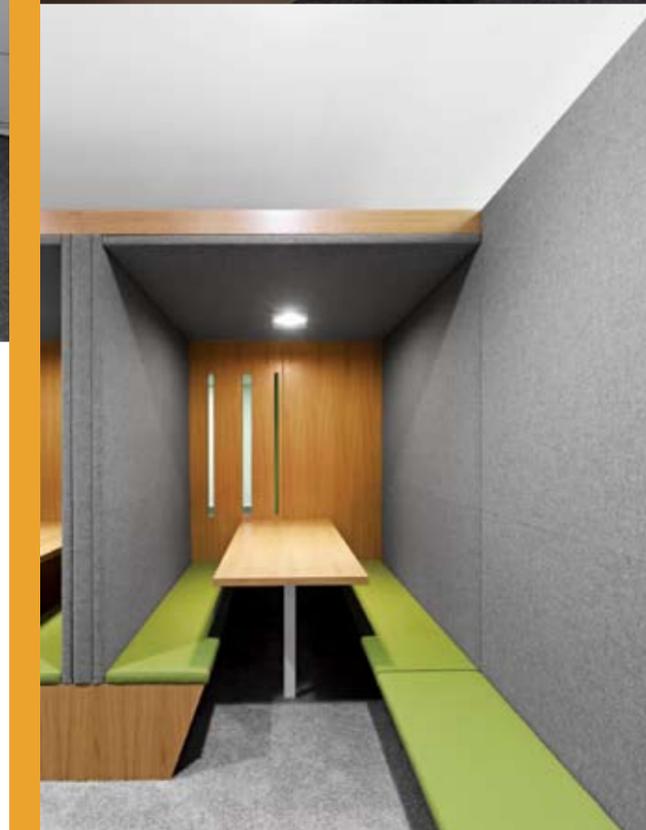




**To develop** computer software, programmers require solitary focus as well as intense collaboration. Which makes for a catch-22 when it comes to office design. How do you foster communication, read *a lot of talking*, yet allow nearby staff to concentrate, no earplugs required? Solving this conflict for the German software developer SAP, founded in 1972 and now headquartered in the southwestern town of Walldorf, are various iterations of meeting spaces, retreats from office chatter. The idea for these spaces helped the unknown Scope Office for Architecture land the SAP commission, the firm's first, in a competition. As one of the world's largest business software companies, SAP employs nearly 12,000 in Walldorf

alone. "The new office is a pilot that could roll out for programmers in the whole company," Scope principal Mike Herud says. He and principal Oliver Kettenhofen held workshops at SAP to zero in on such needs as the ability to switch from personal desktop to shared computer screens—hence the programming rooms for pairs of staffers to share temporarily. The 16 programming rooms are enclosed by three walls and a heavy curtain, rendering them mostly soundproof. Meanwhile, the eight meeting pods, for varying numbers of people, have entirely open fronts. None of this would have been possible without gutting the interior, two identical H-shape levels totaling 58,000 square feet. Scope squeezed the most out of the ceiling height by

removing panels, carving out soft shapes, and lighting them with fluorescent fixtures. Then it was time to reinvent everything below. "Beforehand, SAP had a lot of separate cells, three or four people sitting in one room, and the communication between the teams was not very good," Herud says. Thus, the new plan is resolutely open. Those walls that do exist are mostly white, as are height-adjustable desks. Woodwork is clear-varnished oak. Task chairs are pale gray. Carpet is black felt. "It doesn't actually look like carpet—it could be asphalt," Herud notes. "The polyester is very strong." But minimalist is not to be confused with too serious. A print depicting a school of cartoon fish is mounted behind what



**Previous spread:** At SAP in Walldorf, Germany, Scope Office for Architecture spray-painted a graffiti-inspired figure on the varnished oak enclosing three sides of a meeting pod. **Opposite:** Chairs by Studio Makkink & Bey create a break-out area. **Top, from left:** Painted lyrics from Mozart Season's "Cold Tears With Coffee Cake" back a coffee bar's counter. A screen-printed image of a circuit board appears on the tinted window of a programming room for two-person teams. **Bottom, from left:** Cotton upholsters the benches and walls of a meeting pod with a custom oak-topped table for 12. A smaller version seats six.



would otherwise be a standard-issue glass writing surface in an office area. The image of a circuit board appears on the glass front of a programming room. On the oak enclosure of the largest meeting pod, a spray-painted figure appears to paint additional lines. "He's somewhere

between a rebel and a construction worker," Kettenhofen explains, crediting the artist Banksy for the inspiration. Aside from Kettenhofen and Herud being street-art fans themselves, inserting edgy graphics was an appeal to the youthful spontaneity at SAP, where the average em-

ployee age is slightly under 39.

In addition to the meeting pods and programming rooms sprinkled among the workstations are "face to face" break-out areas. That means paired seating, for example rockers by Charles and Ray Eames or high-backed love seats by Ronan & Erwan Bouroullec. They sit on cushy rugs, beneath chubby hand-blown pendant fixtures, to create conversational intimacy.

The connector of each level's H is the most communal zone. To one side are a library and, raised on an oak platform, a meeting area. The Corian counter running along the platform's edge can be used in different ways, Kettenhofen points out: "You can either sit in a



- 1 PROGRAMMING ROOMS
- 2 MEETING PODS
- 3 BREAK-OUT AREAS
- 4 FOOSBALL ROOM
- 5 LIBRARY
- 6 MEETING AREA
- 7 COFFEE BAR

**Opposite top:** Cotton-wrapped MDF acoustical panels detail the ceiling in the billiard room. **Opposite bottom:** Carpet is polyester felt.

**Top:** Pendant fixtures by Inna Vautrin hang above tables by Peter Gaebelein and Birgit Gämmerler and chairs by Hee Welling in a coffee bar. **Bottom, from left:** A Corian counter, accommodating a structural column, demarcates one side of a meeting area. Ronan & Erwan Bouroullec's love seats furnish this break-out area.



chair on the platform or stand on the carpet.” Scope also used Corian and oak for the counters in the coffee bars on the opposite side of the connectors. Painted, in a cheeky move, on the wall behind the counters are lyrics from Ella Fitzgerald’s “Black Coffee” and Mozart Season’s “Cold Tears With Coffee Cake.”

Only über-conservative German offices lack a game room these days, and SAP headquarters has two, tucked in corners between the connector and a leg of the H. In the room with the foosball tables, Scope clad the ceiling and a sidewall in larch planks interspersed with panels of green-painted insulation that Herud

describes as “a really rough material, normally used for parking garages.” Similarly notable is the ceiling treatment in the billiard room. Above the red table, hexagonal acoustical panels interlock like honeycomb, helping to absorb the cheers during highly competitive tournaments. All in a day’s work. 🍷

#### PROJECT TEAM

**MIKE MÜLLER:** SCOPE OFFICE FOR ARCHITECTURE.  
**HENN-PLANUNGSWERKSTATT:** LIGHTING CONSULTANT.  
**SCHMID DESIGN:** GRAPHICS CONSULTANT.  
**K+P:** ELECTRICAL ENGINEER. **GN BAUPHYSIK FINK-ENBERGER + KOLLEGEN INGENIEURGESELLSCHAFT:** ACOUSTICAL ENGINEER. **PIT PLANUNGSTEAM:** MEP.  
**ERNST BOHLE:** WOODWORK. **INGENIEURBÜRO STEHRENBURG:** PROJECT MANAGER.

#### PRODUCT SOURCES

**FROM FRONT PROOFF:** WING CHAIRS (BREAK-OUT AREA). **OBJECT CARPET:** CUSTOM RUGS (BREAK-OUT AREAS). **FOSCARINI:** PENDANT FIXTURES (BREAK-OUT AREAS, COFFEE BAR). **XAL:** RECESSED CEILING FIXTURES (COFFEE BAR, MEETING AREA). **VITRA:** ROCKERS, LOVE SEATS (BREAK-OUT AREAS), CHAIRS (OFFICE AREA, PROGRAMMING ROOM). **IRIS LICHT:** PENDANT FIXTURE (BILLIARD ROOM). **ZEITRAUM:** MIRROR (BILLIARD ROOM), TABLES (COFFEE BAR), STOOLS (FOOSBALL ROOM). **VIABIZZUNO:** SCONCES (BILLIARD ROOM), PENDANT FIXTURES (FOOSBALL ROOM). **MAHARAM:** PANEL FABRIC (BILLIARD ROOM), WALL COVERING. **DPHELIS:** CUSTOM FILE CABINETS, DESKS (OFFICE AREA). **HAY:** CHAIRS (COFFEE BAR). **THROUGHOUT KVADRAT:** CURTAIN FABRIC. **ANKER-TEPPICHBODEN GEBR. SCHOELLER:** CARPET.



**Above:** Reclaimed larch planks meet painted insulation panels in the foosball room, with its stools by Formstelle.

**Opposite top, from left:** A partition supports a counter while concealing support spaces and stairs from the office area. Each meeting area sits on an oak platform. **Opposite bottom, from left:** Antonio Citterio designed the chairs in the programming rooms. In an office area, a glass writing surface also protects a fish print.

