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The façade of the Paul Klee Centre follows the bend in the motorway running in front of it. The same gentle shape is taken up inside the building: the layout of the building is based on a sequence of bends. These bends are emphasized by the soaring curvature and undulation of the three hills, and the interior design matches this geometric pattern. Fresh air flows through slightly bent decorative floor ducts into the large exhibition hall. Of course, the staircase leading to the ground floor is also slightly bent. Röhrlisberger constructed the banister for this staircase with box-type oak veneer panels mounted on a metalwork substructure. It sounds very solid, and yet it is elegant. A hand's breadth above the ground and topped by a wooden handrail with logical construction joints between the elements, the banister appears to be light. Only on closer examination is any curve perceptible. The furniture in the museum shop and the workplaces in the administration department were also made in Gümligen. One of the tables on display is so large that it can hardly be moved, and its construction was a real challenge.

The showcases are modest and without any unnecessary ornamentation. They serve their purpose perfectly, and even if they appear to be plain at first, each one of them is a high-security construction and an element in a system of standardised units. To meet all requirements in terms of security, lighting and temperature, state-of-the-art technology was called for which, however, is invisible. As the exhibits vary in size, showcases of different sizes were required, so the system consists of a wooden base and intelligently combinable glass covers. A special lifting device was constructed for the assembly and storage of the bases and covers. Bernhard Plattner, project manager of architect, Renzo Piano, developed a shelving system for the administration department. In this shelving system, the bend fades in a straight line and a cunning inserts means it becomes invisible. He praises the Röhrlisberger team, comparing the interior design specialists with competitors elsewhere. "We manage construction projects in various countries, and we are deeply impressed by this perfection and reliability. If we arrange to do something on a Wednesday, then the team is there on Wednesday – and they have an unmistakable feeling for wood," he says.

Author: Benedikt Loderer, photos: Dominique Uldry

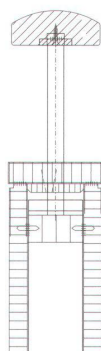
PAUL KLEE CENTRE, 2005

- > Address: Monument im Fruchtländ 3, Bern
- > Client: Maurice E. and Martha Müller-Foundation, Bern
- > Architecture: Renzo Piano Building Workshop (RPBW), Paris, ARB Arbeitsgruppe Bern
- > Interior fit out procedure: Invited competition

> Museum shop with plain showcases.



^ Slightly bent staircase, a hand's breadth above the ground.



^ Handrail cross-section

> Open plan area with staircases in the Paul Klee Centre.

