

## At home in the office: Light, airy and contemporary – AFG's new Corporate Centre

**Buildings talk. Their very outline, shape, their colour and the materials they are made from speak volumes about the people living and working in them, about the people who designed them, and about the orientations and aspirations of the companies they are home to. AFG's – Arbonia-Forster-Holding AG – new Corporate Centre is yet another one of those rare buildings that really express the message they were built to convey, and that make explicit the values held and of course pursued by Dr Edgar Oehler, Chairman of the Board of Directors and CEO of AFG.**

AFG's new Corporate Centre is located at the edge of Arbon, in the midst of a landscape of gently rolling hills and in view of Lake Constance. It, just like the person who built it, seems to form an integral part of the surrounding landscape, and gives the impression of being firmly rooted within and of naturally arising from the very ground it stands on. It thus only reveals the elaborateness and many facets of its design upon closer inspection. On entering its grounds, the first view the visitor is presented with is that of a monumental cascade of water issuing from Switzerland's largest fountain, right in front the Corporate Centre's streamlined and straight-lined outline. This fountain is highly evocative of dynamism, of flexibility, creativity and innovative thinking. The sophisticated lighting technology incorporated into the fountain furthermore adds an element of beauty and glamour that makes this fountain truly unique.

### **Light – Creating atmosphere, inciting passion**

At night, when illuminated by nothing else but the vast number of small LED lights fitted inside the fountain, on the panels on its façade and on its internal ceilings, AFG's Corporate Centre turns into the kind of building made of the stuff of dreams – it becomes magical. To Dr Oehler, all of these various aspects of the Corporate Centre's design and architecture are representative of a unique corporate culture. "Light is incredible." were the 66-year old entrepreneur's words on the subject, "It can be put to so many uses – including to create atmosphere and incite passion, create positive and negative environments." The former of which being his clear preference, nearly every room in the building has been equipped with LED lights – although with less of a concern regarding the building's lighting design than the evenness of its distribution over the entire building. During the day, AFG's new Corporate Centre is drenched in natural light that finds its way into the building through its large windows and ceiling openings. This, coupled with the building's overall aesthetics, elegance, contemporary and understated interior, gives it an extremely comfortable and luxurious ambience.

### **Sophisticated surfaces**

The subtle interplay of light and the different colour-nuances used throughout the building give it a sense of vitality that is carried over to the outside as well as find-

ing its continuation in the Centre's grounds. This sense of vitality arises predominantly from the building's monumental glass and aluminium façade, which – depending on the time of day and weather – gives rise to the most fantastic displays of light and shade – making it seem blue at one point, pale grey at another, and even silver or orange under certain conditions. This mirror-effect is generated by the special surface of the Reynobond® Architecture aluminium composite panels used on the building's exterior. The special sheen of these brushed aluminium panels is achieved with a special high quality coating. "The difference between Reynobond® and other products is that Reynobond® is extremely easy to use, durable and has extremely high colour-fidelity. And this is precisely what is behind the fantastically uniform look of our Corporate Centre", was Dr. Oehler's explanation of why he had chosen Reynobond® Architecture Natural Aluminium Brushed panels for the Centre's exterior. However, he was not only already familiar with this product from AFG's production plant in the neighbouring town of Steinach, but was also extremely taken by these panels' brushed surface structure, which absorbs and reflects light in a myriad of different ways, thus creating an appealing interplay of light, colour and texture. The Reynobond® panels were furthermore attached to the building using a cassette system that effectively covers all installation fittings and creates a smooth, uniform exterior. "There is nothing more elegant" – An elegance, he says, that is set to stay with the building for its entire life, because Reynobond® is resistant and immune both to rain and solar radiation. This not only speaks volumes about its quality, but also contributes to the unique ambience these panels create.

### **Communicating without barriers**

However, this brainchild of Dr. Oehler's – who not only planned the entire building, from its very first to its very last construction phase, chose the materials for its various structures, the design of the offices for the Centre's 250 staff, the conference room, staff canteen, three-storey underground car park and landscaped grounds – was also built in order to create a working environment that would positively influence and facilitate communication between the company's different staff, as well as their performance. Dr. Oehler, who, before his present position as AFG's CEO, had also experienced life as a plasterer, developer, editor and politician, literally spared no effort nor costs in the pursuit of this objective – which has been so masterfully achieved – and spent 40 million Swiss Franks on its creation. He thus not only created a contemporary office architecture reference object, but also a vast range of opportunities for integrating and showcasing AFG products, which can be found throughout the building. "One of my aims when I designed this building was to be able to show visitors what we produce. Everybody has a kitchen, doors and windows in their home. But, the way we have incorporated these objects into this building emphasises their beauty, their design and the space around them." They include chrome-steel framed doors, underfloor convection systems that both heat and intelligently air-condition rooms, windows with high-performance, insulated glass, integrated into stainless steel post and beam systems, as well as state-of-the-art kitchen equipment.

## State of the art technology and luxury for all

Looking back, Dr. Oehler is not only impressed by the results of his creativity, but also proud to have had the courage to be guided by principles of generosity. This generosity is reflected all over the building in the high-end materials used in its construction, in his decision to go for an aluminium facade and the advanced building management system. "Everybody – no matter whether young or old – is really enjoying working in this high-tech building. Although predominantly unskilled staff and semi-skilled staff, we don't quite see why they shouldn't enjoy the same level of comfort as, let's say, a banker, insurance agent, or other service provider working in a city, has, because we value them just as much." Or maybe even more so, because AFG's Corporate Centre certainly is hard to beat when it comes to the latest and highest-quality technology and equipment currently on the market.

### Facts in brief:

<b>Project:</b>	Corporate Center der Arbonia-Forster-Holding AG
<b>Address:</b>	Amriswilerstraße 50, Arbon, Switzerland
<b>Architects:</b>	Gisel & Partner AG
<b>Size:</b>	Office space: 4,600 m <sup>2</sup>
<b>Facade:</b>	Unibau, Arbon, Switzerland
<b>Product:</b>	4,200 m <sup>2</sup> Reynobond® Architecture
<b>Surface:</b>	Natural Aluminium Brushed
<b>Fastening:</b>	Cassette system

**Alcoa Architectural Products** in Merxheim / France is a subsidiary of ALCOA, the market leader in aluminium. Alcoa Architectural Products employs 97,000 in 34 different countries, and produces and sells products ranging from composite panels to household foil.

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