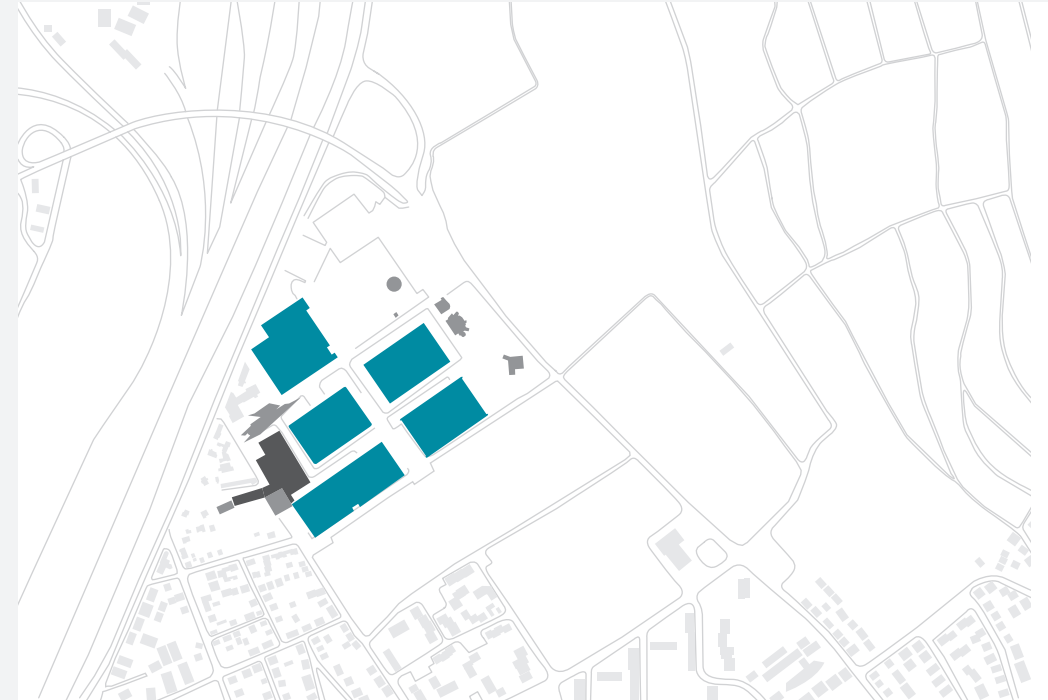
**Vitra**

Founded: 1950
 Number of employees: ~850
 Revenue: 220 m EUR

Vitra Campus

Motto: Come and visit us!
 Founded: 1981 redevelopment

Location: The Vitra Campus is situated some way outside the city of Weil am Rhein in Germany, in the triangle formed by the borders to Switzerland and France. A range of cultures, languages and mentalities have grown together into a common economic area, whereby the wide variety of businesses in the area enjoy both price and tax advantages as well as a diverse consumer market. Centred on Basel, the urban area has a population of around 750,000 and is known for its cross-border economic ties. The area's transport infrastructure is unique in that it includes ports along the Rhine in addition to conventional highway, rail and air routes.



Development: The Vitra Campus is an industrial complex where furniture is manufactured and displayed. The company is exemplary for the diversity of its products, which have been designed by personalities with individual style. The wide spectrum includes established names such as Charles and Ray Eames, deconstructivists like Robert Venturi, and newcomers like Werner Aisslinger. This spirited, almost wild array of products is also reflected in the architecture on campus. Vitra has worked almost exclusively with upcoming architects, resulting in the creation of a prestigious architectural landscape on its factory premises. Vitra's enthusiasm for architecture began in 1981 when Nicholas Grimshaw was hired to develop a master plan for the entire site after a major fire destroyed a significant part of the compound. Three functional factories were constructed as part of a homogeneous plan. Grimshaw's high-tech architecture matched Vitra's image as a company of high technical quality. This corporate identity strategy was challenged in 1984 after the head of the company, Rolf Fehlbaum, met Frank O. Gehry at the installation of Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen's sculpture Balancing Tools on campus. Discussions with Gehry led to a new strategy without a uniform appearance: "Different, but not arbitrary architectures should meet and distinguish this place through their vitality and uniqueness." In this way – in contrast to the



Vitra Campus in Weil am Rhein

surrounding industrial area of Weil am Rhein – the company decided to underscore the purpose of the company through the quality of its architecture.

Programme: A number of buildings, including production halls as well as marketing and exhibition venues, were realised in the following years by international architects who were enabled by Vitra to build their first European projects. Gehry realised the expressive Vitra Design Museum with an associated factory hall, Zaha Hadid created the dynamic fire station, which is used today for events and the presentation of '100 Masterpieces' from the Design Museum collection, Tadao Ando a meditative conference pavilion for seminars and training sessions, and Alvaro Siza a pseudo-purist production hall. Recently this open-air 'architecture museum' has become home to two more historic icons: a Buckminster Fuller dome and a gas station by Jean Prouvé, which Rolf Fehlbaum discovered by chance on a tour through France. In addition to this, Eva Jiricna installed a Network/Living Office in one of Grimshaw's factory halls, where innovative office systems are tested by Vitra employees and new ideas are explored.

Morphology: Vitra has made a lively environment with this contrasting ensemble as well as by interlinking production, culture, exchange and experiment. The result



is no conventional attempt at corporate identity architecture based on brand recognition and power plays, but rather a stimulating architectural landscape, which encourages interaction between employee, product, work environment, client and visitor. This reciprocal relationship has a positive influence on the products, the urban context and the firm's image. In addition, cultural topics are addressed and communicated through the changing exhibits in the Design Museum, the Design Workshops, and through events and tours of the campus architecture that make the company's identity tangible and experiential. The Vitra Campus is a spatial representation of the values of the company, where the brand itself becomes a destination – a magnet with cult status for clients and all those with a passion for architecture and design.

The City of Weil am Rhein: Weil am Rhein is located in the southwestern corner of Germany, close to the borders of Switzerland and France. Two highways form the main transport arteries through the town. However, the most important transport routes are the shipping routes along the Rhine and another highway which turns into a Swiss highway. Another important factor in the region is the Basel-Mulhouse-Freiburg airport, which connects the region with the rest of Europe and beyond.

Fire Station by Zaha Hadid (1993), Canopy between Assembly Hangar by Alvaro Siza (1993) and Manufacturing Hall by Nicholas Grimshaw (1982), and the Vitra Design Museum by Frank O. Gehry (1989).