

Herman Miller Introduces Overlay™, Designed by Birsel + Seck

A system of freestanding, sub-architectural walls, Overlay brings new functionality to the open floorplan.

Organizations don't always have the time or money to reconfigure their offices, even when it's obvious that an updated space would help people work more effectively and help the organization accomplish strategic goals.

With the introduction of Overlay, Herman Miller gives organizations a way to accommodate changing needs for space without the cost of prefabricated walls or the burden of traditional construction. With just two people and in about two hours, Overlay can be relocated with minimal disruption to an office.

The movable walls can be used to create freestanding rooms, give shape to open spaces, or simply divide areas. A three-sided workspace can become a designated area for impromptu meetings or collaborative work, for example. Or four Overlay walls can create an enclosed meeting space—complete with a door—that offers some visual and acoustical privacy.

Overlay also brings visual clarity to open-plan offices. Drawing inspiration from urban planning concepts, Ayse Birsel and Bibi Seck designed Overlay to create a pattern of integrated but distinctive settings that help people navigate the workplace. A sea of workspaces without clear divisions can look and feel chaotic. Overlay makes spaces legible by defining areas where people can go to collaborate, catch up, or hunker down and work alone.

Overlay's quiet aesthetic can be turned up or dialed down—outfitted with a variety of textiles, laminates, glass, white boards, or custom materials—to reflect the character of an organization.

While developing Overlay, Birsel and Seck thought a lot about dichotomies. Their design research showed that people do their best work when they're alone in a buzzing room full of other people also working, like a café. They realized that people want to see and be seen as part of a community, even if they're working alone. They also found that people are most productive with some ambient noise, but not when they can hear the specifics of a conversation.

Overlay reconciles seemingly opposite needs and wants—open yet closed; alone yet together; clean yet messy. As Birsel says, “if you can make any two opposites co-exist, you can have your cake and eat it, too.”

When it comes to the office, Overlay makes the unthinkable, possible.

About Herman Miller

Herman Miller is a globally recognized provider of furnishings and related technologies and services. Headquartered in West Michigan, the 112-year-old company has relied on innovative design to solve problems wherever people work, live, learn, and heal. With recognizable designs as part of museum collections worldwide, Herman Miller is a past recipient of the Smithsonian Institution's Cooper Hewitt

National Design Award and has been ranked number one on Contract Magazine's list of "Brands that Inspire" for four straight years. Known and respected for its leadership in corporate social responsibility, Herman Miller has earned numerous global sustainability and inclusivity awards including the Human Rights Foundation's top rating in its Corporate Equality Index for 11 years in a row. In fiscal 2017, the company generated \$2.28 billion in revenue and employed nearly 8,000 people worldwide. Herman Miller trades on the NASDAQ Global Select Market under the symbol MLHR. www.hermanmiller.com/about-us @hermanmiller on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter

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