

walk

through

firm: *piret johanson studio*
site: *new york*

curves à la mode

The shape of the doorway leading to the lounge at Valtech was sketched freehand on the drywall. ➤



While modeling in Paris,

Piret Johanson was in and out of ateliers, meeting Yves Saint Laurent and Karl Lagerfeld. That fashionable background informed the budding interior designer's two-phase scheme for the New York office of Valtech, a chic multinational that consults on digital marketing for image-conscious clients from Guerlain to Gore-tex. Like a couturier draping yardage on the female form, she spent hours on-site, subtly canting new walls and tweaking the freeform cutouts from her digital elevations.

The initial space was entirely empty when it was handed to Piret Johanson Studio: 3,200 square feet in a 1902 printing plant, later a General Electric Company appliance warehouse. Valtech's landlord restored the exposed brick, while Johansen buffed the battered concrete floor a bit, preserving the industrial character. The 11-foot ceiling she left predominantly exposed.

Her pièce de résistance is a pair of freestanding volumes that together, in plan, create a sort of kidney bean with a slice down the middle for circulation purposes. "Things are never square in nature—think about the baby in the womb," she offers. One volume encloses the reception area and conference room, the other a smaller meeting room and a private office.

Into the convex outside of that office, she carved a niche wide enough for someone ➤



From top: Reception shares a freestanding enclosure with the conference room. Its table is topped in oak.

Opposite, clockwise from top left: Existing concrete flooring was buffed. The 1902 building's first tenant was P.F. Collier & Son, publisher of Collier's Weekly. Fins of laser-cut, painted birch plywood wrap the lounge, with its Gehry Partners stools.



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CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTOM, SCOTT FRANCES/OTTO (2), JAMIE PEREZ

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to recline in. Its undulating form, padded with a long cushion, was inspired by Le Corbusier, Pierre Jeanneret, and Charlotte Perriand's work longue from 1930. Then Johanson added a tiny goose-neck LED sconce for reading.

Drawing on her Estonian heritage, this child of the frozen north used snowy white for insertions both in the original space and in the 2,300-square-foot annex completed two years later for the growing company. "Color would have been too much," she says. The full-height curved fins that form a divider between the lounge and workstations in the annex are painted a uniform high-gloss white. However, they appear to trail off chromatically into shadow as they recede.

"We are shades-of-gray people," she continues. Spoken like a lifetime member of the fashion tribe.

—Craig Kellogg

From top: A cushion turns a corridor's niche into seating. Leather upholsters the conference room's chairs. In the break-out area, employees can rearrange seating made of unbleached paper.

FROM FRONT IKEA: TRACK LIGHTING (RECEPTION). **SAFCO PRODUCTS COMPANY:** CHAIRS (RECEPTION, CONFERENCE ROOM). **DELTALIGHT:** LINEAR FIXTURE (CONFERENCE ROOM), SCONCE (HALL). **KNOLL:** TABLE (CONFERENCE ROOM), WORKSTATIONS, CHAIRS (OFFICE AREA). **HELLER THROUGH ALLMODERN:** STOOLS (LOUNGE). **PLUMEN:** PENDANT FIXTURE BULBS. **ASYA TRADING:** TABLE (LOUNGE), WORKSTATIONS, CHAIRS (OFFICE AREA). **COOPER LIGHTING:** TRACK LIGHTING (LOUNGE, OFFICE AREA). **SAHCO:** SEATING UPHOLSTERY (HALL). **MOLD:** SEATING (BREAK-OUT AREA). **LUCEPLAN:** PENDANT FIXTURES (BREAK-OUT, OFFICE AREAS). **THROUGHOUT BENJAMIN MOORE & CO.:** PAINT. **RICHWOOD TURNING & STAIRWORKS:** WOODWORK. **BUDIMEX GENERAL CONTRACTING:** GENERAL CONTRACTOR.

