NEW LONDON ARCHITECTURE PRESENTS
IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE BRITISH COUNCIL FOR OFFICES

THE OFFICE – LONDON'S WORKPLACE

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NLA GALLERY, THE BUILDING CENTRE
26 STORE STREET, LONDON WC1E 7BT
WWW.NEWLONDONARCHITECTURE.ORG

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Herman Miller
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HOW IS OFFICE WORK CHANGING? WHERE SHOULD WE BE DOING IT? IS NINE-TO-FIVE AN OUTDATED CONCEPT IN THE AGE OF THE LAPTOP, MOBILE PHONE, BLACKBERRY®, BLUETOOTH AND WIFI?

TODAY, WE CAN COMMUNICATE AND CARRY OUT OFFICE TASKS FROM THE BEACH, STARBUCKS OR UNDER A TREE IN OUR LOCAL PARK. BY ALL ACCOUNTS, THE IDEA OF STAFF CONVERGING ON ONE OFFICE SPACE AT ONE TIME SHOULD BE A THING OF THE PAST, YET MILLIONS OF WORKERS CONTINUE TO DO SO.

TECHNOLOGICAL, DEMOGRAPHIC, SOCIAL, ENVIRONMENTAL AND SECURITY ISSUES AFFECT WHAT OUR WORKSPACES ARE LIKE; THEY RAISE QUESTIONS ABOUT WHETHER THE DEMAND FOR NEW OFFICE SPACE WILL CONTINUE AND HOW DEVELOPERS SHOULD REACT TO CHANGING TRENDS.

THIS EXHIBITION PROVIDES A GLIMPSE INTO WHAT SOME INNOVATIVE COMPANIES ARE DOING TODAY AND WHERE THE NEW WORKPLACE OF THE FUTURE IS HEADING.
The word 'office' stems from the Latin officium, and, interestingly, this was not necessarily a place, but an often mobile 'bureau'. Fast forward to the sixteenth century, and the Uffizi buildings in Florence, for example, were constructed by the Medici family as a government office building for their financial empire - the word 'Uffizi' means 'office' in Italian.

Over the past 100 years or so, however, the office as a place where people come together in a social setting has diminished. For this we can chiefly thank Frederick Taylor and the Principles of Scientific Management (1911). Taylor broke down complex tasks into discrete, repetitive activities and instigated surveillance and strict management control. In short, he thought workers were lazy and needed organising, with the office becoming where they came together to use specialist equipment like typewriters, then telephones, computers, copiers, printers and fax machines. This, effectively, was Dilbert in his cube.

The next totally opposite movement was the Burolandschaft in 1950s Hamburg, which sought to increase communication and provide for more open, egalitarian environments. Since those times, from the 1980s on, we have seen and are seeing the networked office, a huge change as big as the Industrial Revolution where the major drivers for the workspace have been technology, along with systems furniture, building block modules, and our growing understanding that work does not necessarily happen (only) at the desk.

The future office looks like it will become more mobile still.