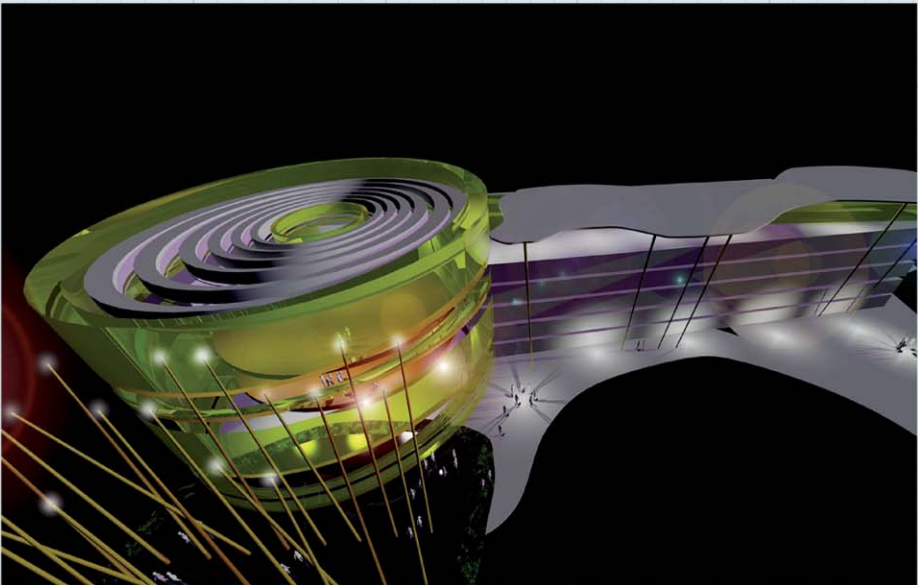


HERZOG & DE MEURON ▼ COME HOME TO VITRA

Herzog & de Meuron is to build an exhibition building for classic furniture maker Vitra. The 3,000sq m "VitraHaus" in Weil am Rhein, Germany, will serve as a public showroom for products in the home collection, and house a reception area, cafe, conference room, museum shop and exhibition space. The furniture manufacturer says that the shape of the building - particularly the gables - expresses the sense of coming home, hence the name.

The showroom will be the first new building on one of Vitra's production sites since a rash of architectural projects for the company between 1981 and the mid-1990s by architects such as Frank Gehry, Nicholas Grimshaw, Zaha Hadid and Alvaro Siza. Herzog & de Meuron previously collaborated on Vitra's Hocker stool.



▲ PENSON PLANS TO BUILD OFFICE FROM SEAWATER AND PLASTIC

London-based practice Penson Architects has released plans to construct five prospective office headquarters ranging from 4,645 to 23,225sq m, using pioneering foam made from recycled plastic and seawater.

The construction method, first trialled in a conceptual scheme for the University of the Arts, London, uses the foam to form layered cores, which are then clad in various materials, such as plywood, to provide rigidity and strength.

CEO Lee Penson says: "Because the composite material is light, very rigid and malleable, longer cantilevers are feasible and in the form that we use the material, very exciting new types of facades are becoming buildable."

The five buildings are part of a site master plan the firm is building for an unnamed developer next to the M20 in Kent. The modular, millipede-shaped office buildings will allow prospective clients to take as little or as much of the property as they want. The 17 hectare master plan - which goes into planning in a year - will also include a 200-bedroom hotel, residential and retirement housing and a conference centre. "It's the big commission I have been waiting for for a very long time," says Penson.

