

WORK COMFORTS LONDON

Preface: An office might be somewhere you work but that doesn't mean it can't be comfortable. That's the philosophy of Ilse Crawford, head of design company Studioilse, which is demonstrated by the layout of her studio with a kitchen at its heart.

Company: Studioilse
Location: London
Founded: 2002
Number of employees when founded: 2
Number of employees now: 25
Number of premises: 1
Start-up cost: savings from a year spent setting up Donna Karan's homeware line in New York
Bestselling product: it's more of a mindset or a message: that design can be warm, not cool

Neckinger Mills, a grade II-listed Victorian building in Southwark, was once a paper mill and then a tannery before being converted into mixed residential and studio spaces. With iron columns and Crittall windows, plenty of natural light, an open-plan set-up and occupying a spot a stone's throw from Maltby Street food market, it ticked all the boxes for Ilse Crawford and her design team at Studioilse.

From retail to transport, Crawford's team has a simple mission: to make spaces where people feel comfortable. When it comes to an office she believes that just because it is a place of work it doesn't have to look like one.

The 25-strong team works on a number of projects at any given time so flexibility of working and presentation areas was key in determining the layout. The main studio space is anchored with three oak worktables where the team moves around depending on what they are working on. Sliding walls divide the studio from a library and act as handy presentation boards. Glass screens section off another area for more formal presentations at a large Saarinen tulip table.

The heart of the studio is the kitchen. The team cooks and eats

lunch together here every day and on a Wednesday, Crawford's housekeeper and former chef Patrizia cooks for the team and a handful of guests. For a few hours the studio feels more like a party and guests get to watch as the space seamlessly transforms from work to play – and back again. — (M)

Why it works: The studio uses wood, brass, leather and skins together with built-to-last furniture to convey a sense of permanence; greenery adds life. Though the main studio has large desks where the bulk of the work is done, flexibility for different needs and moods has been written into every detail.



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01 The library has a sliding wall making it a handy space for small workshops and client presentations
02 Architectural models and product samples from former projects
03 Woody corner of the materials library
04 Main workspace, anchored by three long oak workbenches



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