

Bank in Bilbao, Spain

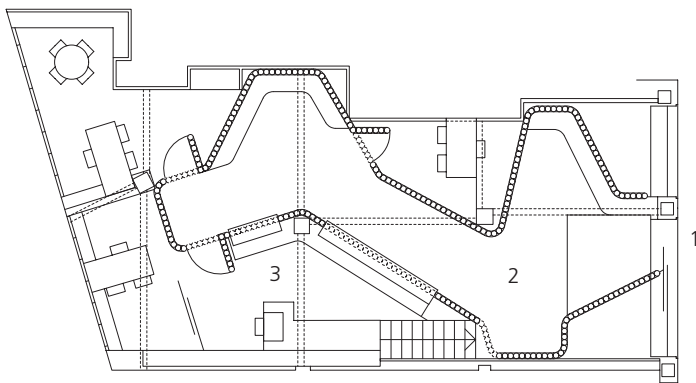


An architectural response to the general call for more transparency in banking was delivered here in Bilbao in the design of a new branch of a Spanish bank. Appropriately the bank specialises in serving the needs of architects. The emphasis was on establishing a visual link between public zones

and private offices and meeting rooms on two floors – ground floor and basement – of an existing city-centre building. Despite the light, transparent feel of the interior the atmosphere remains business-like and ensures confidentiality.

The internal space is divided by a floor-to-ceiling, semi-transparent partition made up of 300 borosilicate glass tubes, each 150 mm in diameter, aligned vertically side by side to form a continuous wall. The glass distorts the view of what is happening behind the partition, while at the same time allowing light to filter through to the customer area and clearly demarcating the workplaces of the bank employees.

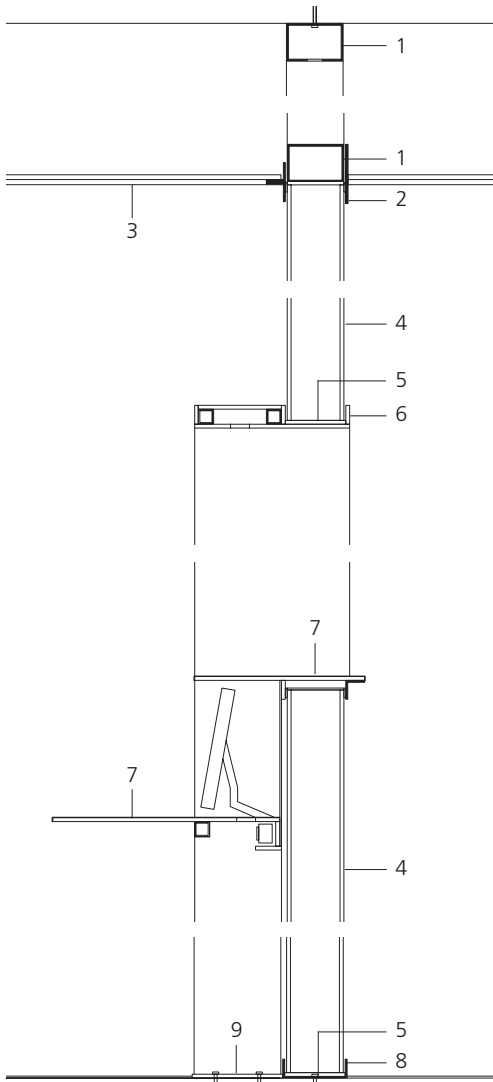
Cleverly integrated doors barely interrupt the continuity of the partition. Only at three points are there openings in the glass skin: where the staircase leads down to a large



Plan of ground floor scale 1:200

- 1 Entrance
- 2 Customer area
- 3 Staff area





Sectional detail scale 1:20

- 1 150/100/5 mm steel profile
- 2 6 mm stainless steel sheet, brushed, welded to steel profile
- 3 2x 9 mm plasterboard ceiling
- 4 Ø 150/9 mm glass tube, borosilicate glass
- 5 10 mm neoprene
- 6 10 mm stainless steel frame, brushed
- 7 10 mm stainless steel plate, brushed, partly covered with leather
- 8 170/50/5 mm stainless steel profile, brushed
- 9 Footplate, 10 mm stainless steel, bolted to reinforced-concrete floor



The colour concept supports the strict division of space: glossy black for the floor and ceiling in the customer zone and light grey in the offices.

meeting room, the archive and ancillary areas in the basement and at the two service counters. A rectangular frame of brushed stainless steel lines the counter openings. Counter surfaces and the benches in the waiting areas are partly covered with leather. Stainless steel (grade: EN 1.4401) is also used on all the connections and brackets on the glass wall. The sinuous line of this partition generates curving spaces for two small offices while also concealing three reinforced-concrete columns from the customers' view.



Bamboo plants growing up from the basement are visible in the glazed street front and in the ground-floor customer area. Stainless steel sheet, bent to shape, was used for the bench wrapped around the curve of the glass partition.

In the customer area, fixtures and fittings were kept to a minimum so as not to detract from the design concept of glossy black surfaces, glass and stainless steel. Even the lighting is indirect, via the glass walls.

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