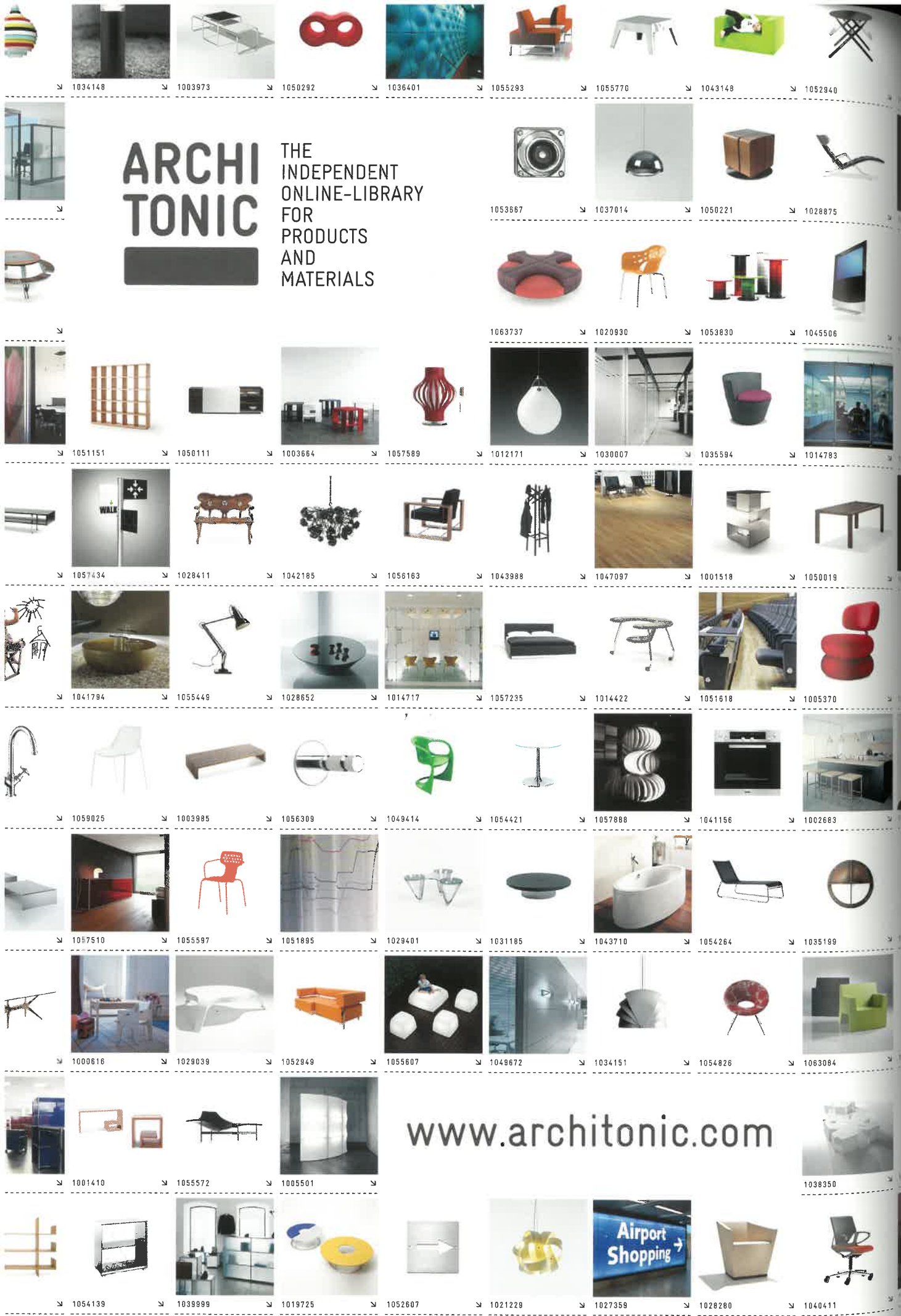


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31/36 Steinach School by Gut Deubelbeiss

Another sharp Swiss box? Yes, the new schoolhouse in Steinach, a village on Lake Constance at the foot of the Alps, is one of those smooth concrete volumes detailed to standards that the Swiss achieve with ease. But, as befits a building for kiddies, the austerity of the building is softened in different ways. Windows of various sizes lend the façades an air of playfulness. And terraces carved out of the volume provide it with the up-and-down profile of a crenellated castle as a child might draw it. All that joviality in subdued grey on the exterior gives way on the first floor to what the architects call a 'forest of colours' in a 'landscape for learning' composed of interconnected classrooms and group rooms. Depending on the nature of the activities and the educational needs, sliding walls and partitions allow spaces to be joined

or separated. For the colour scheme, architecture firm Gut Deubelbeiss enlisted the services of Lucerne artist Jörg Niederberger, who came up with a palette of six pastels. Fifteen colour pairings (one in each room) are derived from this basic range and applied to the vertical surfaces, lending each space a distinctive identity while tying all the areas together. A wilful application of colour for its own sake it is not, however. The chromatic elaboration is the subtlest of allusions to the notions of community and individuality that are at the heart of learning.
www.gutdeubelbeiss.ch

Words Billy Nolan
Photos Walter Meier



Six green shades, variously combined, give each space in this Swiss school a distinctive identity, while also conferring unity.