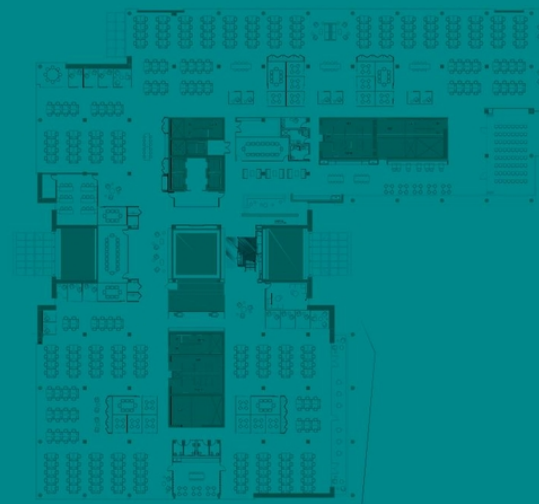


# Cisco Meraki

For the fourth-floor expansion of Cisco Meraki, Studio O+A's design details make an impact: like custom wood finishes and a bright teal and aqua color scheme that nods to the nearby San Francisco Bay.

By Lydia Lee  
Photography by  
Garrett Rowland

# Studio O+A revisits its original design for the offices of a fast-growing tech company



## Cisco Meraki

Architect and Interior Designer  
**Studio O+A**

Client **Cisco Meraki**

Where **San Francisco**

What **55,646-square-foot  
fourth-floor expansion**

Cost/sf **Withheld  
at client's request**

For a full project source  
list, see page 100 or visit  
[contractdesign.com](http://contractdesign.com).

How do you create a workplace that can expand gracefully as a company grows? San Francisco-based Studio O+A confronted that design challenge head-on when working for a repeat customer: wireless networking company Cisco Meraki. Studio O+A, which designed the office a few years ago, was recently commissioned to handle the expansion. "It's rare to have the chance to go back and revisit a project, but here we had a great opportunity to see how we could improve things after a few years of occupancy," says Studio O+A's co-founder Primo Orpilla.

Before tech behemoth Cisco acquired it in 2012, Meraki was a quirky startup of engineers who liked to hold meetings in a yurt inside their vintage warehouse office in San Francisco's Mission District. Rapid expansion led the company to seek new digs in a modern six-story office building in the city's Mission Bay neighborhood. In 2013, Studio O+A designed the first two floors of Cisco Meraki's new office, and later a third. Last year, it came back to tackle a fourth floor.

## Workplace 1.0

In the initial project, Studio O+A emphasized a range of working environments, part of the de-corporatizing approach to design that the firm has become known for. "We wanted the employees to have as much control and choice over their environment as possible," Orpilla says. "They can reconfigure their workstation to be in a line or a horseshoe shape. They can also take their work and move to different parts of the building."

On the "L"-shaped floors, the design team interspersed desk areas with open lounges, sunken

conversation pits, and yurt-inspired octagonal booths. To retain a sense of Meraki's original environment within the sleek new setting, they incorporated a number of wood finishes, even adding an exposed wooden ceiling to the lobby and custom tables from MASHstudios. The color palette emphasizes aqua and teal to complement the views of San Francisco Bay.

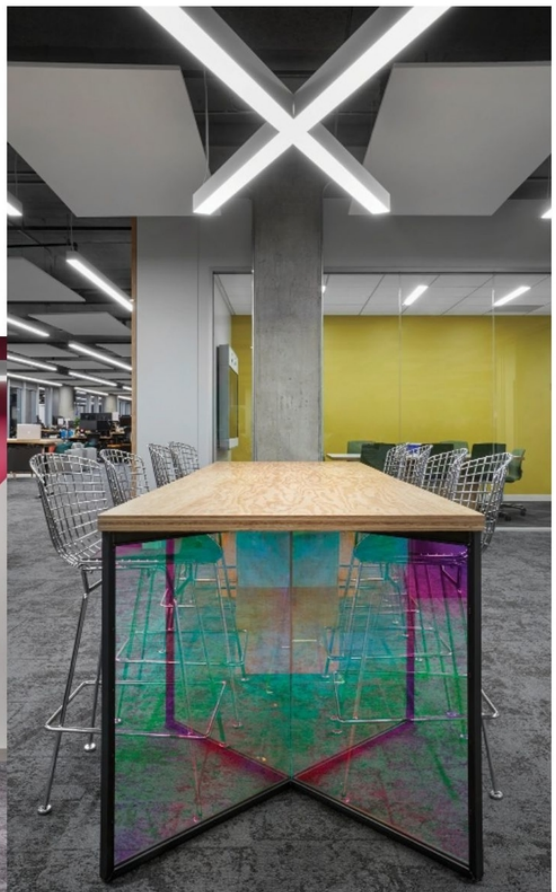
## Iterative improvement

Cisco Meraki grew rapidly, and many of the office's lounge areas became co-opted by desks. As employees "hacked" the space to create their ideal environment, it also became cluttered; tall racks of networking equipment, personal furnishings, and team flags hanging from the ceiling mingled together with workstations in idiosyncratic configurations that would give most facilities managers pause.

So when Studio O+A returned to design the expansion in 2017, it anticipated the company's future increase in headcount. The nearly 56,000-square-foot floor currently holds about 400 people but is designed to accommodate up to 500. "The idea is still to provide the flexibility of different work areas, but we had to plan ahead for filling in those spaces," says Joseph Rodriguez, design director at Studio O+A. "So instead of putting those different work environments among the workstations, we put them along the main circulation routes. There are a dozen places that they can infill, but it's also very clear where they can't."

The circulation routes are strongly defined by lining up the meeting rooms and enclosed booths,

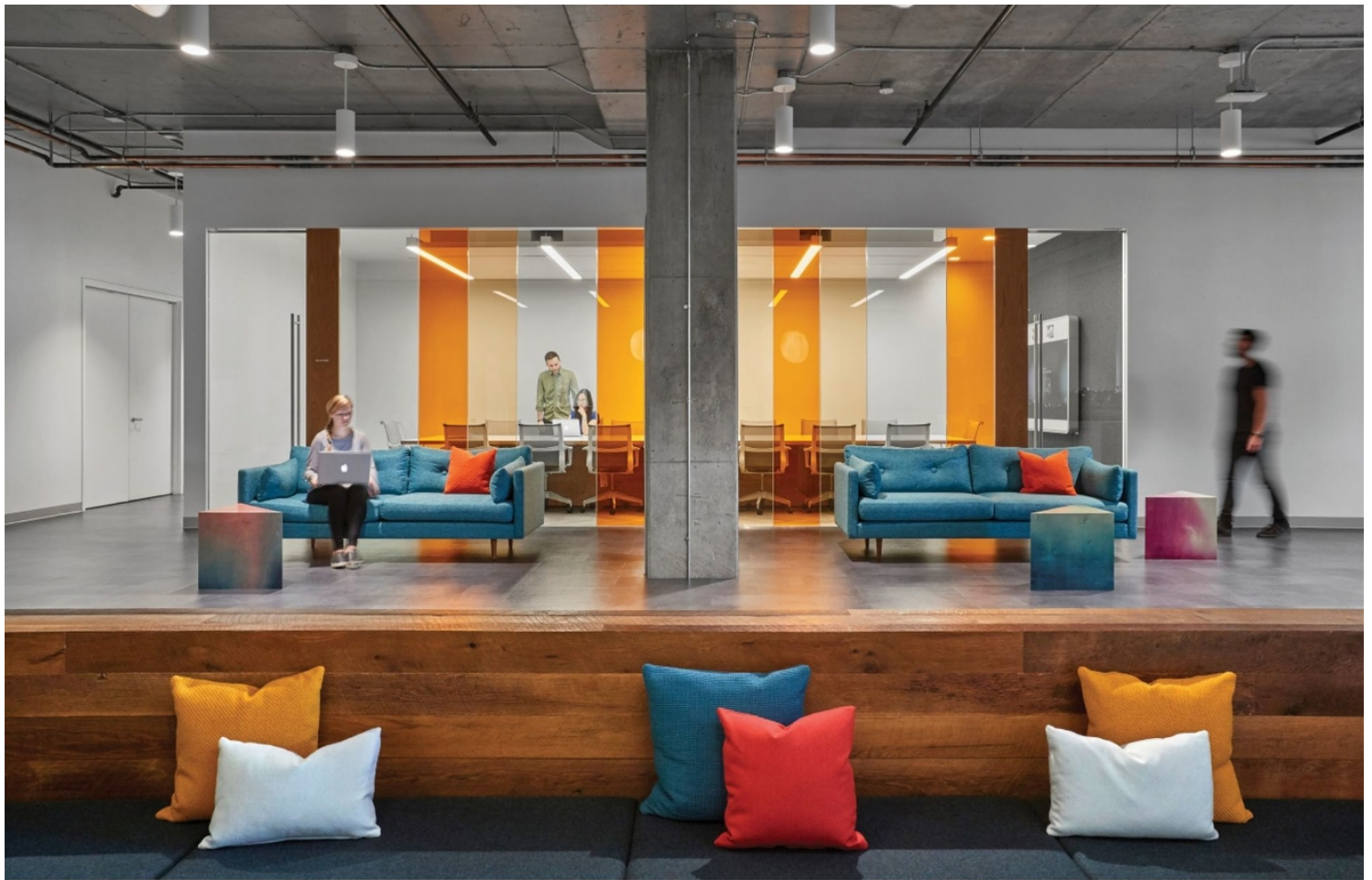




A range of different working environments and modular workstations are set up along main circulation routes, where bold graphics and colors help visitors find their way, while Interface FLOR carpet tile keeps things simple on the ground (this page). For the expansion of the fourth-floor space, Studio O+A designed with growth, fun, and flexibility in mind, hence the bright colors, sunken conversation pits, and quiet rooms that are off-limits to technology (opposite page).







#### Key Design Highlights

Bold graphics along circulation corridors enliven the space and help employees and visitors orient themselves within the office.

Walls of built-in storage help reduce clutter in the open workspace.

Raised floors allow spaces to be easily reconfigured.

Consistent flooring throughout creates a cleaner look and gives the occupants more personal flexibility in how to designate space.

keeping the two main axes of the floor distinct.

Using the layout to define space allowed the designers to simplify the flooring: on the earlier floors, the circulation route is designated by wood, while the workspace has carpet, and the lounge areas have cork flooring. On the new floor, everything is covered in the same Interface FLOR carpet tile, save for areas with food. "It became clear that the delineation of floor space was going to get hacked anyway, there was no point in changing the surface treatment," Orpilla says. "People should be able to do whatever they need to make their work more productive."

The design of the new floor acknowledges that the perfect space may be one that its occupants can perfect for themselves. Raised floors in the whole building allow for easy reconfiguration of workstations. To provide more storage, the design team added a wall of built-in cabinetry to each workstation area—with doors that became an alternative place to hang team flags. Another new feature: a designated "quiet room" that is off-limits to technology. Studio O+A furnished it, but since then someone has added their own chair to enjoy the view. ☛

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