

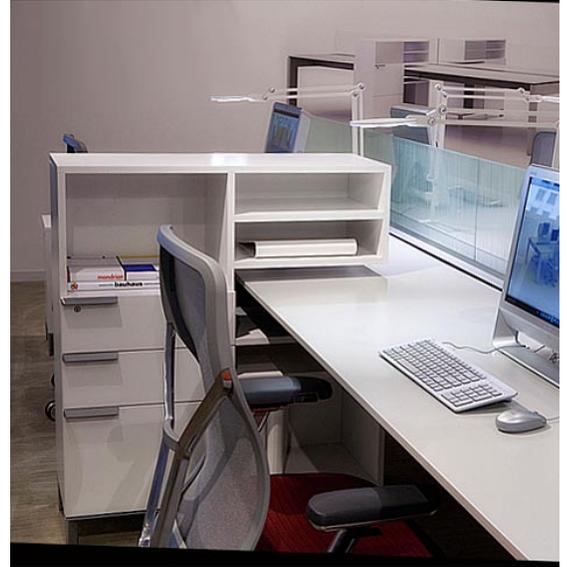
office insight

Robert Allen's NeoCon WTF 2010

Little attention is given in the interiors world to individual differences. Yet, we know that people see the world differently, and we are fortunate to have someone — **Robert Allen**, an architect, and interior designer, a product designer, and a professor of interior design — bringing to our pages his distinctive view of the NeoCon WTF shows.

Mr. Allen, in our opinion, has unusually refined sensibilities, with the eye and judgment of products that most of us do not possess, bringing to bear the experience to judge product suitability in the context of architecture, clients' interior design needs, and a product designers knowledge of engineering and manufacturing capabilities. Combine this with his artistic sensibility, he adds a dimension that, while not all of us share, we may find edifying.

FULL STORY ON PAGE 3...



CITED:

"IN CONFLICTS
BETWEEN STRATEGY
AND CULTURE,
CULTURE ALWAYS
TRUMPS STRATEGY."
—EDWARD FISCHER,
PH.D., CULTURAL
ANTHROPOLOGIST



RIVIERA: K-SYSTEM

Robert Allen's NeoCon WTF 2010

by Robert Allen

Last year I noted the energy and vitality of the show amidst the backdrop of layoffs and slow movement in the industry. This year, although not a year of pronounced contrast in product development, there was again smart product to be seen and a continued sense of optimism. One could feel more energy and the numbers bear that out: a 10% increase in attendance. This is all good.

As in the past, rather than chronicle the year's releases, I focus on product or initiatives that I feel deserve some attention, or may be part of larger initiatives and as such have perhaps gotten lost or overlooked. Here is what caught my eye this year:

>**Riviera/Grupo Permasa: k_system:** Gabriel Teixido (www.permasa.es)

Every year the Spanish group, **Riviera**, features well crafted product and food for thought, but this year the presentation was special: It featured the **K_system** from designer **Gabriel Teixido**, produced by GrupoPermasa, Madrid. The table shown on the next page is the centerpiece of the program. It was stunning. Cleverly conceived in "Z"

sections, the design takes care of the troublesome moment connections and the width of the table is easily modulated by simply adding a larger section without disrupting the architecture of the overall system. Leveling is handled thru a tension bar. The balance of the program was a table and component part system – seen below – that delivers extraordinarily refined bench applications and simply-wrought desking solutions. Nothing was overlooked in the detail of execution throughout the system, a pleasure for the eye.

Benching, in general, was a big topic this year. Although benching – a long single-surface table used as a multiple-station worksurface – has been around as an open-office alternatives for some time, its general acceptance and use (outside of libraries) has largely been confined to Europe and points overseas. Early experiments in this country usually involved imported versions from Unifor, Bulo and others.

Within the past decade, however, other alternatives started surfacing such as **Vitra's Joyn** by the brothers **Ronan & Erwan Bouroullec** and **Knolls' Crinion Open Table** by **Jonathan Crinion**, and every year since there have been new introductions.

events

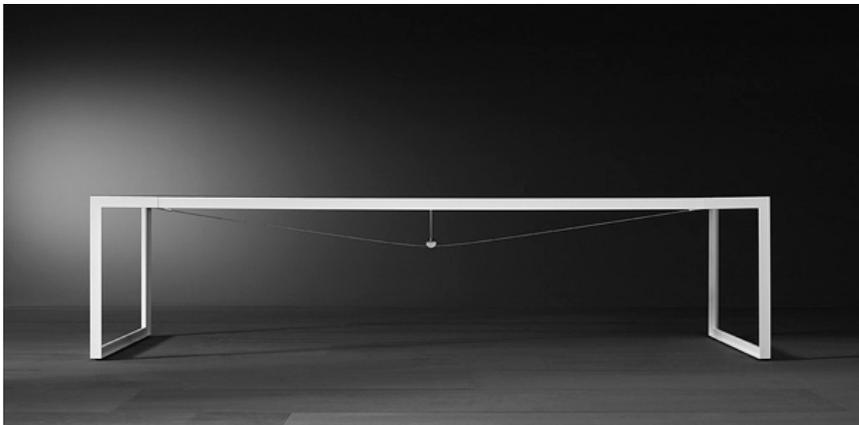
officeinsight

This year benching hit the mainstream and choices everywhere. From a designers perspective, the interesting aspect is how the concept of benching is mutating as it orients and adapts to the North American mindset of open-office cubicles and closed office sanctuary's. Certain systems caught our eye in this regard and in particular, the specifics of the components designed for the system.

It's clear from real estate and communications standpoints why benching is inviting, but from a performance and acceptance perspective, the US has



RIVIERA: K-SYSTEM



THE CENTERPIECE OF RIVIERA'S K-SYSTEM



RIVIERA: K-SYSTEM



RIVIERA: K-SYSTEM



RIVIERA: K-SYSTEM

events

officeinsight



DAVIS: SITE

been slow to embrace this new environment. As a consequence benching systems are beginning to morph or transition into systems and environments that incorporate many of the features long provided in more conventional office product and spaces.

Manufacturers and designers seem to be acknowledging that, at the end of

the day, if the bench and its components fail to meet daily needs and accommodate the users' time-tested work patterns, there will be no buy-in, regardless of how nice the bench looks

or how well it fits into the architectural expression of the space.

Some standouts this year include:



RIVIERA: K-SYSTEM



KNOLL: JONATHAN CRINION, CRINION TABLE



RIVIERA: K-SYSTEM



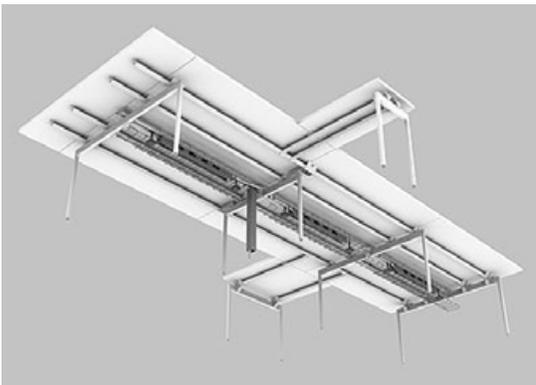
VITRA: RONAN & ERWAN BOURoulLEC, JOYN

events

officeinsight

>**Knoll:** Antenna: Antenna Design/
Masamichi Udagawa and Sigi Moes-
linger (www.knoll.com)

Knoll's Antenna Workspace system features an interesting lightweight structural systems that enables the bench and component system to migrate and reconfigure easily. The system is essentially made up of four panel-free workspace planning types: the Antenna Workspaces Desk; the Antenna Workspaces Big Table; Antenna Workspaces with Knoll Fence (spine-based planning), and Antenna



KNOLL: ANTENNA



KNOLL: SAPPER MONITOR ARM



KNOLL: ANTENNA



KNOLL: ANTENNA

events

officeinsight

Workspaces with Knoll Template (storage-based planning).

>**Knoll: Sapper Monitor Arm** by Richard Sapper (www.knoll.com)

While Antenna effectively matches up to other kit-of-part benching systems such as **Vitra's WorKit: Erik Levy** (www.vitra.com) that we featured last year, what really caught my eye at Knoll was the **Sapper Monitor Arm**, by **Richard Sapper**, introduced last year. Although this is a bit of a digression, with so much inherent visual chaos emanating from benches and their floating monitors, this simplicity of the Sapper Monitor Arm goes a long way to quieting the visual impression.

Having been introduced to the virtues of one monitor arm versus another since their inception – and despite sophisticated marketing efforts, each more elaborate than the previous



ALLSTEEL: STRIDE



KNOLL: SAPPER MONITOR ARM



KNOLL: SAPPER MONITOR ARM

events

officeinsight

**HERMAN MILLER: PROTOTYPE**

– this arm lays it out with no fuss. It is well worked out in form – not overwrought, and actually enhances and brings a sense of purpose and order to the desking product. The red threaded collar, not only serves as a visual punctuation mark, but like the red spot on

a gull's beak where the chicks tap for food, the user is guided here to adjust the monitor up and down: intuitive and easy to manage.

>Allsteel: Stride Storage and Benching Components by Mitch Baker/IDA Design (www.allsteel.com)

This was another bench component program that caught our attention. The **Stride** benching system features an extraordinary spanning system enabling it

GOING VIRTUAL...

Do you admire the mindboggling realism of Hollywood's visual effects, or the realistic interactivity of the latest computer games? Imagine applying that technology for uses beyond entertainment. Imagine visualizing your products long before the first sample is ever created. Imagine viewing them from any angle – changing materials and seeing them interact with different environ-

ments and lighting – all in realtime. Imagine getting cash from customers before you spend cash to produce.

3D visualization makes this possible, and this new paradigm creates infinite possibilities for product design, marketing and sales. The technology is widely used by automakers and is rapidly being adopted in the Color/Materials/Finish, Apparel and Fashion industries.

RTT (Realtime Technology) has been challenging the boundaries of traditional product design and marketing with 3D visualization services for more than a decade. For more information, visit www.rttusa.com.

Material Intersections pod cast co-produced by RTT USA & Art Center College of Design: http://www.accd-cmtel.com/vcmtel_featuredpodcast.html



THIS IMAGE FOR THE INFINITI M LAUNCH CAMPAIGN WAS PRODUCED USING COMPUTERS GRAPHICS (CG) SEVERAL MONTHS BEFORE THE FIRST VEHICLE PROTOTYPE WAS PRODUCED.



FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT RTT, PLEASE CONTACT [MHESS@RTTUSA.COM](mailto:mhess@rttusa.com)

events

officeinsight

to span 185" and this year the company put forward a line of components that nicely enhances the program.

Since early 2000 there has been an ever-increasing trend across the industry to blur the boundary between residential and commercial environments and this product is no exception. This year **Allsteel** introduced vertical elements that both modulate the top and deliver personal space, while

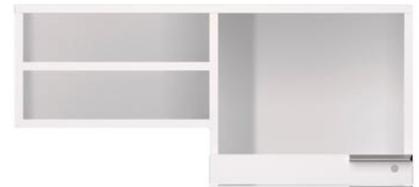
providing for much needed storage and other needs. The language is that of a modern armoire, compactly housing open shelves, generous cabinet space and drawers. The three-tiered unit is cantilevered around the bench allowing the line of the bench to guide the eye, and keeping the user needs within easy reach while optimizing the worksurface. (Nice touch.)

A dual-faced version of the storage is

also available enabling users on either side of a worksurface to have equal access. Material options for these panels include glass and textile coverings, which can be specified in surfaces that allow messages to be tacked on or even written and then erased. They also offer what is referred to as a "Toy Box" (see above), a mobile unit that stows partially beneath the bench. The top slides open to reveal a generous



ALLSTEEL: STRIDE



ALLSTEEL: STRIDE



ALLSTEEL: STRIDE



ALLSTEEL: STRIDE



ALLSTEEL: STRIDE



ALLSTEEL: STRIDE

events

officeinsight

area for file storage. By adding a cushion, it becomes a convenient seat for impromptu meetings.

>**Steelcase: FrameOne** by Steelcase Design Group (www.steelcase.com)

Steelcase also expanded its offerings in this area with extensive offerings in their launch of the **FrameOne** program in the US. FrameOne is a popular solution in Europe, and now a global platform, and like the other players in this desk and bench market, provides a flexible platform, easily reconfigurable and customizable. Perhaps its strongest feature is the capacity to control desk height. FrameOne has four ways to control the height of the stations ranging from simple levelers to telescoping legs and even a crank system located at desktop height (see above) that can take the work surface from 620-900 mm (24-1/2"-35-1/2"). Unfortunately too much of US product ranges between 29" -30" for desk and return height, and for people under 5'-8" that is unworkable, even with height-adjustable chairs – feet do not like to dangle all day. I work at 28-28-1/2", which is a common height for much European product; solutions such as this, that can center within that range of adjustment are welcome

and, in FrameOne, nicely addressed.

Like the other programs, Steelcase has put a variety of features and components together to address the individual user for both FrameOne and **c:scape** systems, with names "Bag Caddy," "Launch Pad," "Functional Screen," "Wave Light," "End-of-Run" panel, RoomWizard, etc. – some that

were prototypes, and others ready-to-order. Pictured above are some of I found engaging.

Answer and **c:scape** systems have been also been enhanced. The Answer system now features 10 enhancements that include additional lighting and storage solutions, frameless glass for visual boundary and increased access



FrameOne Basic

FrameOne Adjustable leg
680-700mmFrameOne Telescopic
620-900mmFrameOne Crank
620-900mm

STEELCASE: FRAMEONE

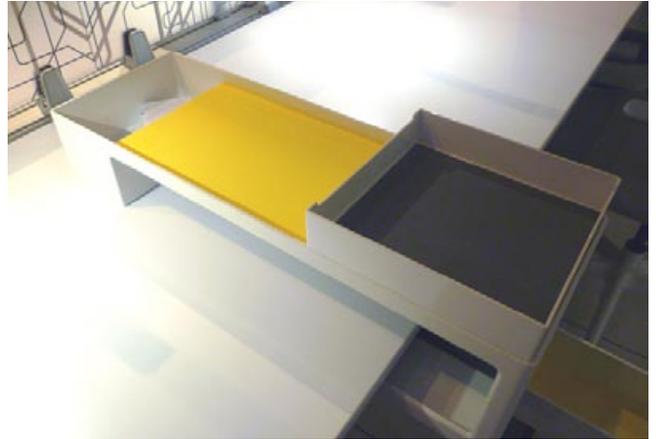


STEELCASE: FRAMEONE

events

officeinsight

to natural light, and panels with new skins that extend to the floor. The c:scape system has been broadened to include new storage and privacy elements.



STEELCASE: FRAMEONE DETAILS



STEELCASE: FRAMEONE: PROJECT



STEELCASE: FRAMEONE: FUNCTIONAL



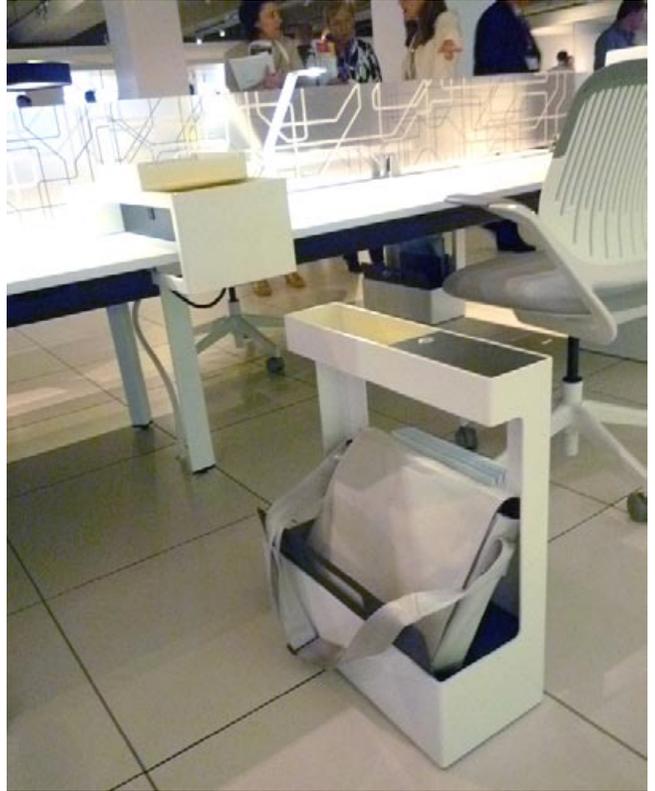
STEELCASE: FRAMEONE: NOMAD



STEELCASE: FRAMEONE: RESIDENT

events

officeinsight



STEELCASE: FRAMEONE DETAILS



STEELCASE: FRAMEONE DETAILS



STEELCASE: FRAMEONE DETAILS



STEELCASE: FRAMEONE DETAILS

events

officeinsight



HERMAN MILLER: VIVO INTENT BENCH/M70

>**Herman Miller: Prototype** (tentatively referred to as “Vivo Intent Bench/ m70”) by Jeffrey Bennett and Nicholas Dodziuk/ CDS Design, NY (www.hermanmiller.com)

Every year companies come to Neocon with new product in prototype stage to solicit market feedback. This is a new cross-platform benching system **Herman Miller** is developing to reach across and link to some of its desking programs such as **Vivo** and **Intent**. We found it stunning – especially the long, low storage/seat elements that were slung in below the bench. They were so pronounced they defined the space without adding visual disruption to the context.

The system also appealed to my Midwestern sensibilities with the exaggerated intersecting horizontal planes

and projections. We also liked the articulated end braces that say *bench* – something the Bouroullec brothers also rightfully seized on in Joyn. These are huge tabletops, so why wouldn’t they want to emphasize that in the

language of the products’ expression; the buttressed vocabulary does just that. The level of detail throughout the station also looked superior. We look forward to the official launch.



HERMAN MILLER: VIVO INTENT BENCH/M70



HERMAN MILLER: VIVO INTENT BENCH/M70



HERMAN MILLER: VIVO INTENT BENCH/M70

events

officeinsight

>**Haworth: Very Task Chair** by Michael Welsh & Nicolai Czumaj-Bront/Haworth Design Studio (www.Haworth.com)

Having just toured the bench programs, much of what makes them stand out was the earnest effort of the manufacturers to integrate across platform lines. This also finds resonance in the chair business. Half the job of a designer used to be finding product across the industry landscapes that could be presented to the client as a unified design statement. Having companies take the initiative is a win-win for both parties: manufacturer keeps the business in the family and, in-turn, the designer has an easier time of it, particularly in the 'aligned'

furniture world they find themselves operating in. The **Very Task Chair** joins the "Very" family of chairs launched in 2008, including the "Very Conference Chair," "Very Side Chair," "Very Seminar Chair," and Very Stackable Chair."

Features of this chair include a large scalability range – from highly ergonomic task to simple comfort. Material choices include 7 mesh colors, 2 trim colors (black, fog) and painted, polished or plastic base, as well as 3 arm styles. Additionally it offers the industry's only asymmetrical lumbar support along with supporting mesh and a fully functional 4D arm, all at a price point for tighter budgets and needs.

>**Keilhauer: The Relax Chair and Tables** (part of Cahoot) by EOOS/Martin Bergmann, Harald Grundl and Gernot Bohmann (www.keilhauer.com)

Another product that has expanded to target a broad-spectrum is the **Cahoot Lounge Series**. Occasionally I can be accused of cherry-picking larger lines, that is, pieces that I felt were standouts within the line. Such is the case with the **Relax** chair and tables. Keilhauer introduced this extensive lounge collection this year to address all the types of activities and interactions that occur in a lounge space where people meet, work and relax. Based on a modular concept, each piece in the Cahoot line has its own function, but all pieces can be



HAWORTH: VERY



HAWORTH: VERY

events

officeinsight

combined in many ways to create flexible lounge landscapes. Cahoot includes side and lounge chairs, sofas,

sectionals, and tables. Some elements are lightly-scaled, movable pieces, for impromptu rearranging, while others

are larger, solid pieces that can define an area within a space.

What I appreciated about the light-weight *Relax* program is the sophisticated way in which each of the pieces within the offering relate to one another, with their varied but inter-related “spoke” architecture, and in turn, how they related to their heavier counterparts, the **Meet** and **Work** chairs and **Notebook** tables. A very strong family of product.

>**Davis Furniture: Site Collection** by Jess Sorel & Otto Williams (www.davis-furniture.com)

Here is another lounge collection that drew widespread attention and praise at the show. Like *Cahoot*, the spirit of **Site** is distinctly relaxed,

KEILHAUER: RELAX



KEILHAUER: RELAX



KEILHAUER: RELAX



KEILHAUER: RELAX

events

officeinsight



DAVIS: SITE



DAVIS: SITE



DAVIS: SITE



DAVIS: SITE



DAVIS: SITE



DAVIS: SITE

events

officeinsight



COALESSE: POWERPOD

residential and integrated. Wire management is cleverly addressed and discrete in the various elements: hidden beneath lozenge-shaped sliding plates, in round center turrets with wire-runs concealed behind cabinets, and in the base unit onto which the high and low storage modular cabinets affix.

For years European companies have been blurring these lounge/living room environments with the workplace and it's refreshing to see it done so well in this US application. The primary wood finishes appear to be oak and walnut with five standard paint finishes. Beside the different table configurations and shapes, the collection includes a bench that can either configure in a straight or serpentine manner. It too has a modular attitude that allows it integrate nicely with the tables and storage units.

>Coalesse: **PowerPod/SW_1 Collection** by Scott Wilson/Minimal (www.coalesse.com)

Last year I devoted a page to **Coalesse's** new lounge collection, **Denizen** by WilliamsSorel, and this year Coalesse featured a lounge collection to augment its product line. Two components caught our eye – one the **PowerPod** which is a portable power source and accessory tray all in one, located on top of the table for easy access. The device can work with both a table grommet or on any work surface where there is no grommet. The accessory tray sits on top of the power source when not in use, providing an organized home for shared materials and tools used in a working collaborative space. It is portable and can be used with any table on the market.

>Coalesse: **Tablet/SW_1 Collection** by Scott Wilson/Minimal (www.coalesse.com)

The second component that caught my attention at **Coalesse** was a tablet that extends off of the table to allow



COALESSE: POWERPOD

events

officeinsight

for the creation of a personal work zone. The tablet allows users to access and use personal devices (laptops, etc.) without changing their relaxed postures and disrupting the flow of a meeting. The tablet comes in two finishes to match the trim.

Another innovation that has surfaced and is finding expression in the indus-

try, particularly in chairs and occasional tables, is the use of the multiple axis CNC machines in the shaping of solid wood furniture.

CNC machines have been around for some time, but only recently are they being used to shape entire pieces in 3D. After the elements of the piece, such as legs and braces are joined,

often using traditional methods of mortise-and-tenon, the piece is then set up and carved using the sophisticated computer-guided CNC 4, 5 and now 6 axis routing machines that can literally shape and mould the entire piece. Over the last few years a number of companies have surfaced with these beautifully shaped pieces.

We'll look at three: Geiger, Bernhardt and Dietiker.

>**Geiger** (www.geigerintl.com) last year featured the **2 by 3 stool** by ai3/Patrick Johnson, Joe Remling, Dan Maas and Lucy Aiken-Johnson, which is now available to the market this year.

–**Full Twist" Guest Chair** by Mark Goetz was added to the stool with several guest chairs utilizing this new technology. A beautiful essay in form, this chair has a very unusual arm that looks completely improbable, but which we found pleasing once seated – restrained and comfortable.

–**A Line and Deft** Guest Chairs by Khodi Feiz is another Geiger addition, two lines by Iranian-born, US industrial designer Khodi Feiz. The pieces have a retro-look at first inspection, but on closer view they have a nice stance



COALESSE: TABLET/SW1



COALESSE: TABLET/SW1



COALESSE: TABLET/SW1

events

officeinsight

and provide a discrete wrapped feel, without feeling heavy or over-wrought. They form a nice marriage between the beautifully shaped wood and the smartly upholstered back.

>**Bernhardt: Corvo** by Noe Duchaufour-Lawrance/Neonata (www.bernhardtdesign.com)

Last year I featured two shaped chairs that caught my eye. The *Atlantic Chair* by Spanish designers Cul de sac, and *Hyde* by London-based Fredrikson Stallard.

They were joined this year by **Corvo**, designed by French designer Noe Duchaufour-Lawrance/Neonata. Like

Geiger's *Full Twist*, *Corvo* is a beautiful essay in wood and its plastic potential.

>**Bernhardt: Curio** by Claudia and Harry Washington (www.bernhardtdesign.com)

Bernhardt also featured the simple

but elegant collection of shaped tables, **Curio** by El Salvador designers, Claudia and Harry Washington. The three legs come together to form the base, and the joint at their intersection is beautifully articulated with a visually expressed joint. The top features a



CNC



GEIGER: 2X3



CNC



GEIGER: 2X3

events

officeinsight



GEIGER: KHODI FEIZ



GEIGER: FEIZ



GEIGER: TWIST



GEIGER: TWIST

carved recess that functions as a smart edge-capture, but also as a surround to take glass or other solid-surface materials as specified.

>Dietiker: Ono Lounge Chair by Matthias Weber (www.dietiker.com)

The 135 year old Swiss company Dietiker introduced this 'shaped' lounge chair this year and it looked so inviting after the day of walking, it was hard to get me out and back on the floor. It too has cousins, the "Ono Chair" released



BERNHARDT: CORVO

in 2008 and the "Ono" Table. It's available in solid beech, oak or walnut and like Geiger and Bernhardt, Dietiker's products are always beautifully detailed and executed.

These shaped chairs and tables, now afforded by these five and six axis CNC routing machines, bring an element of craft back to the industry that has been virtually value-engineered to extinction. Hand-crafting and intricate shaping is virtually inaccessible for mainstream projects and where it does exist, at a reasonable price-point, it is often originating in areas of the world still exploiting low wage workers. Now these products can be made in the US and other developed countries and can again offer the intricate expression that was so coveted in handcrafted product – and at a price-point that is viable to the mainstream contract industry again – just the way it is always supposed to work.



BERNHARDT: CORVO

events

officeinsight

>**Tuohy: Cubist Table** by Norman Diekman (www.tuohy.com)

Another wood product I featured last year was the stand-alone occasional tables, **Cubist Tables**, from **Tuohy** by Norman Diekman and I was pleased to see the team followed through with further variations, by way of taller tables for conference, dining or lobby areas. Every bit as handsome as their children.



DIETIKER: ONO LOUNGE CHAIR



DIETIKER: ONO LOUNGE CHAIR



BERNHARDT: CURIO



BERNHARDT: CURIO



BERNHARDT: HYDE



BERNHARDT: CUL DE SAC, THE ATLANTIC CHAIR

events

officeinsight

>**ITOKI Design: CH Bench** by Jeff Miller (www.itokidesign.com)

Last year I made the acquaintance of **Jeff Miller** while covering floor 7 and gladly featured his nicely designed **BA “Occasional Tables**. These tables, along with this new bench are among now eight products by this Japanese-based, US-built furniture group. As the picture illustrates, this benching system can reconfigure in many ways, providing designers a welcome element to punctuate their planar milieu.

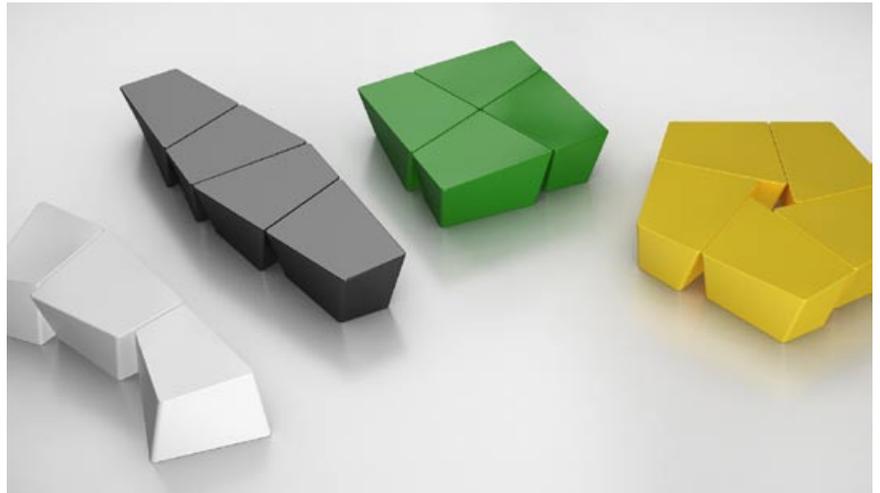
>**Leland International: The Crepe Chair** by Bruce Sienkowski (www.lelandinternational.com)

This year there was a notable plethora of stackable wood chairs – and, curiously, most with warped square seats – ICF Group’s *Campus Air* and Andreu World America’s *Sit* by Lievore Altherr Molina to name a few. But what I liked about **Leland’s Crepe** was in the detail-profile of the chair. Looking at the side of the chair one notices it is thickest where a chair needs to be,

to counteract the moment-pressure of the user; then it tapers to the top and forward edges of the chair seat and back. This is achieved by painstakingly skiving the veneers, then layering and carefully building them prior to the molding process. The net result is both subtle and elegant.



LELAND INTERNATIONAL: CREPE



ITOKI DESIGN: CH BENCH



TUOHY: CUBIST TABLE



TUOHY: CUBIST TABLE

events

officeinsight

>**Gandia Blasco: Flat Chair and Dining Table** by Mario Ruiz (www.gandialasco.com)

Making its outdoor furniture debut, this handsome collection features one-piece frames composed of thermolacquered aluminum and polyethylene in white or bronze. the 36" wide table ranges from 36-84" long.

While the majority of products at the show represent refinement efforts in one form or another, occasionally



GANDIA BLASCO: FLAT CHAIR AND DINING TABLE



GANDIA BLASCO: FLAT CHAIR AND DINING TABLE

innovation surfaces and new concepts are put forward. These innovations don't always surface with the big players, in fact, more often the most interesting innovations surface in the odd corners of floors 7 and 8 and often in the not-so-pretty posts. But these products often provide the genesis of future industry initiatives. I feature two products, the "Flip" Chair by Zero 1 chair and "ON" by Wilkhahn.

>**Zero 1: Flip Chair 1 and Flip Chair 2** by Gardner Klaasen and David Valdiserri (www.zero1.com)

Zero 1 was founded in 2003 by Gardner Klaasen and David Valdiserri as a global sketch-to-container design and development furniture company. This pair has a history in the industry that stretches back more than 40 years. Prior to forming Zero1, each designer owned his own successful industrial design firm. Relocating to Greenville, Michigan, Zero1 is one of a number of companies that look to fill

a void in the marketplace by designing, developing and producing their own branded high-quality furniture products in the United States and at competitive prices.

Zero1's founders have a proven track record of working with other groups prior to forming Zero1. Mr. Klaasen was a lead designer on the first Steelcase Leap Chair and Mr. Valdiserri was the lead designer for the Steelcase Trilogy Series and as a consultant, served as



ZERO 1: FLIP WITH BACK DOWN



GANDIA BLASCO: FLAT CHAIR AND DINING TABLE

the lead designer for various design firms whose clients included Jami, Zoom Seating, Staples, Teknion, Global and Haworth. The first time this design team launched its own proprietary designs under the Zero1 brand included the 2004 Wish Chair by Kimball, 2004 Apt Chair, Steelcase, 2005 Jack and Burton Chair, Turnstone, and in 2006 Pilot Chair, for Bernhardt.

This year, 2010, they launch their own first product, the **Flip Chair**. Flip features a versatile flip-down back, which enables the user to free up valuable work space



ZERO 1: FLIP CHAIR



ZERO 1: FLIP CHAIR

by stowing Flip under a desk or a table at a moment's notice. Out of the box, set-up of Flip takes less than a minute and offers tremendous workspace flexibility. It is smart product, and available at a very reasonable price-point.

>**Wilkhahn ON Office Task Chair** by wiege Design Studio (info@wilkhahn.com)

This product was perhaps the most innovative we saw in the show – we almost walked right past it, as at first glance it just looked like one more over-wrought, over-masculine German task chair. Then we caught someone pitched over and looking as though they were taking the chair with them – precariously perched – then with the



WILKHAHN: ON



WILKHAHN: ON

events

officeinsight

**TUOHY: PRATO**

picture of the kid shown above, on the wall, we knew something was going on that needed investigating. Five years in development, this chair – and I hope I get this right – suggests that the philosophy to-date, of chairs prosthetics and ergonomics – that of providing correct, fully supportive posture ‘vehicles’/ chairs, is not, in fact, what the focus should be, but rather providing fully-supportive chairs that enable the body to move constantly throughout the day.

Wilkhahn’s research and studies suggest that with no motivation to maintain control over our bodies, inactivity leads to degeneration and muscle atrophy – they cite a permanent lack of physical stimulation as the main cause of almost all illnesses – and they go on to say that a lack of exercise and static maintenance of posture hinders metabolism and leads to fatigue, tension, headaches, back pain and in the end skeletal degeneration.

Their engineers developed a new kinematics for synchro-supported, three-dimensional seat and back movements. The core of their innovation is what they’re calling Trimension. It consists of the coordinated interaction of dual mechanics and an extremely flexible seat and back design (Flexframe). Two separately flexible swing plates,

just like two thighs, are connected near to the knees via a rotational axis. In the same position as the hip joints, they form fully flexible suspensions for the seat and backrest. The pivotal sections’ positions and scope of movement follow the knee and hip joints. The result is a completely new flow of movement and in any position, the body’s center of gravity stays in perfect balance.

We tried it and despite the fact that it looked like an unbalanced system, it worked; On is incredibly comfortable and the chair followed us around as we leaned over to access the areas around

us. Adjustment was made by pressing two buttons and the integrated, adjustment system for regulating your own personal counter-pressure (5 rotations for a 45 -120 kg weight range). Once the chair is adjusted to your particular weight and stance, it automatically manages the rest. It will be interesting to see where this advance leads. This is certainly not the first task chair that has had a flexible posture and that moves about, but this was the first I have sat in that had a solid feel, was incredibly intuitive and felt balanced at the same time; all too often one is sacrificed for the other.

**TUOHY: PRATO**

events

officeinsight

>**Tuohy: Prato** by Mark Saffell and David Ritch of 5D Studio (www.tuohy-furniture.com)

There were a number of large case-good launch's this year – certainly a big year for Gary Lee and Partners with their large stations at Halcon and Decca, but the product, from an innovation standpoint, that caught our eye was the new **Prato** casegood program from **Tuohy**. Again, we almost missed it as we were focused on the table in the foreground, when someone began opening panels in the wall behind the desk, and within the minute the entire cabinet was open revealing a full-feature workstation. Many attempts at a quiet work-wall have been attempted over the years but few have pulled it off with any success. Here the clarity of detail is resolved consistent with the formal dictates of the design; and it all works.



TUOHY: PRATO

>**Dauphin: 4+ Chair** by Angelika Mosig, Andreas Notter, Jan Paperhagen, Wolfgang Ott and Roland Zund (www.dauphin.com)

Amidst the multitude of chairs on display each year, I select a few that simply catch my eye. They may not have attributes that set them apart, but they are proportioned nicely or have an interesting way about them. The next two pieces were similar in form, but

very different in character.

The **4+ chair**, named after the four 'plus' designers, is a handsome upholstered piece from **Dauphin**. It can be ordered in contrasting materials and the swivel on the base has an optional auto return mechanism. The promo shots are shown at level – viewed from above the chair has an elegant stance and floats above the floor effortlessly.



DAUPHIN: 4+CHAIR



TUOHY: PRATO

events

officeinsight

>**Hemisferios, S. A. de C.V.: H-SLM Chair** by Javier Cristiani (www.hemisferios.com.sv)

The second chair I elected was similar in form to the Four + chair, but not in character. The work of Javier Cristiani from El Salvador, it follows on the heels of the Lapita Chair and H-SLD Chair shown at the ICFF last year. This El Salvador design group launched the **H-SLM Chair** this year, and it made quite an impression. While similar in the basic notion of providing support thru folded planes, this new design has moved from folded steel plate to molded fiberglass with a stainless base. The piece utilizes a proprietary

paint process that laminates the paint to the fiberglass, which gives it an exterior application. The H-SLM, like its predecessor, is also available in folded steel as well. Wonderful product.

>**Nienkamper Cocoon** by Mark Saffell/ David Ritch 5 d studio (www.nienkamper.com)

Ordinarily I tend to steer clear of retro-looking pieces – and even the company acknowledges reference to the strap chairs of the 50's, the indoor woven reed papas an chairs of the 70's and gives a nod to George Nelson's "Coconut Chair," – but this variation seems like a natural progression and

improvement to that archetype and the detailing and overall execution made it a standout. The seat is a knit mesh, which gives the chair a light transparent look – the mesh is available in 9 standard colors, but it also can be upholstered in any COM. The bent rod frame adds additional lightness to the look of the chair and also ensures that it is easy to move about.



NIENKAMPER: COCOON



HEMISFERIOS, S. A. DE C.V.: H-SLM CHAIR

events

officeinsight

>JANUS et Cie: Café Janus Window Stool and Adjustable Table (www.janusetcie.com)

Every show there are a variety of pieces that fall into the miscellaneous category and this collection of adjustable stools and tables from JANUS et Cie are a good example. Stunning.

>Ligne Roset: T.U. (Table Universelle)™: Philippe Nigro (www.ligne-roset-usa.com)

Designer Philippe Nigro, a Milan-based, French-born designer has developed a set of unique legs with a conspicu-



LIGNE ROSET: T.U.



LIGNE ROSET: T.U.



JANUS ET CIE: CAFÉ JANUS WINDOW STOOL AND ADJUSTABLE TABLE



LIGNE ROSET: T.U.

events

officeinsight

ously expressed vice-like attachment system for integrating with the full-line of **Ligne Roset's** collection of wood tops – from refined to reclaimed floor planks – creating a trestle-top table that can adjust from 34.25"-39" in width, 1.18 - 2.17" in thickness and 78" in length with the addition of another set of legs. The legs themselves are fashioned from laser-cut folded steel with a very low waste factor and finished in lacquer. Fun.

>Philips Lighting: Living Color and Living Color Mini by Philips Design Group (www.colorkinetics.com)

These lights immediately stopped me in my travel path on 7. LEDs completely swallowing up LightFair, to the extent that even lighting designers – I was travelling with one – were guaranteed to be absolutely confused and bewildered by the range of selection and the jumble of packages and components. But here, **Philips** has neatly

packaged the driver and LEDs and utilize the all-important thermal heat dissipating fins as a design element, assuring long-lamp life. The units come with a graphic remote control that carries the ability to create 256 colors and light programs at a touch.

>LEMA: PER PAR PUM by Marc Sadler (www.design-eu.com/lema)

Three tables, stackable, that form a chair. Lacquered metal, in three sizes, all 25" high: 19-3/4" x 19-3/4"; 20-1/2" x 18"; 20-1/2" x 16-1/2" – what's not to like?

>Grace Lee Studios: Waste Bin by Grace Youngeun Lee (www.graceleestudio.com)

Every year, outside the press room, a special presentation is organized of student work or young upstart groups. This year was the, **Furniture Revolution Gallery** and among the various pieces from students was the work of **Grace Lee**, trained at Cranbrook Academy of Art and currently practicing in New York. She exhibited a foot-operated trash bin that I found eloquent.



PHILIPS LIGHTING: LIVING COLOR



PHILIPS LIGHTING: LIVING COLOR



PHILIPS LIGHTING: LIVING COLOR



LEMA: PER PAR PUM

events

officeinsight

>**Nienkamper: Zoodesk Collection**
by Silvio & Mouna Russo/Silvio Russo
Design World (www.nienkamper.com)

Concluding this 2010 tour of the floors, I end with th **Zoodesk Collection** from **Nienkamper**. How great are these! From Italian-born artist and designer Silvio Russo comes stackable stools that include seals, cats and other creatures that combine with an array of interlocking painted plywood panel pieces to create a whole graphic spatial world for

children. And I ask, why don't we get any? From where I sit and observe things these days, I can assure you there would be a whole lot more cohesion and peace in the office if these guys were allowed to venture beyond their park boundaries and out into the jungle at-large. ■

Robert Allen periodically joins our journal to cover major design expositions and provide a designer's perspective. On the full-time faculty at New York Institute of Technology's School of

Architecture and Design and principal founder of the multi-disciplinary design group, Metalhouse, his products and architectural work have received awards and recognition worldwide and are widely noted for providing highly refined solutions to difficult design programs.

Past articles for **Officeinsight** include: [Neocon Highlights '09; '08; Milan Salone Internazionale Del Mobile, 5.15.06 and 5.18.06; Interieur 04; The International Biennale for Creative Interior Design, Kortrijk, Belgium 1.17.05; Orgatec 02, Koln, Gemany-11.25.02](#)

He can be contacted at robertallen@metalhouse.com



NIENKAMPER: ZOODESK COLLECTION



NIENKAMPER: ZOODESK COLLECTION



NIENKAMPER: ZOODESK COLLECTION