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## DESIGN CULTIVATION

DESIGN CULTIVATION VISUALIZES THE INVISIBLE IMPULSE OF DESIGN. DC EXAMINES HOW WE CULTIVATE IT IN ARCHITECTURE, THE ARTS & LIFE. DC TACKLES TOPICS FROM GREEN DESIGN, ARCHITECTURAL & WORKPLACE DESIGN, SUSTAINABILITY, VISUAL THINKING, COLLABORATION & INNOVATION. WHAT ACTIONS, ACTIVITIES AND EXPERIENCES CAN BE SHARED TO HELP OTHERS FURTHER THEIRS?

### Wednesday, June 30, 2010



#### Some NEOCON 2010 Highlights



Experiencing NEOCON 2010 World Trade Fair is like no other. With its size you can only see a small portion of the showrooms, attend a smattering of educational seminars and industry events in any one year. It's been a few weeks since I went and I

am only now realizing its impact. The spirit of invention and purposeful design sprinkled with the infectious energy of innovators in design thinking and services struck me most strongly. There was an upbeat mood as well with many whom I met saying business was not as bad as last year, one of the worst of a generation. A quiet determined optimism pervaded NEOCON.

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Fostering collaboration and creating high performance high value workspaces is a reoccurring theme today. This year really energized me with its emphasis on open shared informal workplace furnishings and equipment.



Smart European themed compact, low, horizontal / linear workstations with open collegiality were the norm. 120 degree stations were noticeably absent as were panels of any kind. Hard, reflective surfaces with metals and woods combined with white melamine reigned in many showrooms. I was really jazzed by KI's showroom for its creative installation of a wide variety of workspace strategies. There were open café like areas adjacent to workstations with great access to nearby fully enclosed conference and task specific rooms. It was an unexpected find but very creatively executed. It would be one of the showrooms I would take a client to help them visualize various workplace configurations.



The Steelcase, Herman Miller and Knoll Showrooms were compelling with gradations of workplace solutions on display in mocked up variations as well. I met there with Dan Chong who directs Steelcase's

collaboration with the A&D community and others. I also had the opportunity to see WorkSpring a collaboration / meeting space laboratory a few blocks away from the Mart. I'll write about that in a later post. I especially enjoyed Steelcase's HD video conferencing solution with one installation in a more straight ahead office environment combined with it's Mediascape solution linked with a nearby more informal lounge like meeting space also using the Mediascape product. Steelcase also rolled out a new school chair called Node which looked a cross between metal bar stool resting a on a round shelf on wheels. It reminded me of a cross-trainer shoe for the classroom and that's a deep compliment. Evidently the chair was borne of a research driven effort examining how students actually interacted in classrooms and used their chairs.

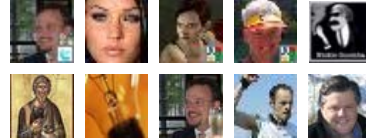
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## Summer in the Northeast

Students moved around organically in their chair with their backpacks scattered on floors. This chair provides a place to store bags and backpacks below the seat and its wheels promote casual interactions and shifting collaborations. It is a little unusual looking though. I have to wonder whether this innovation will lead to further offspring in the coming years.



Herman Miller had markable screens surrounding their spirited “Ball Chairs” which reinforced the collaborative theme. Their Conivia energy and workplace management system also seems to have been more fully integrated into a desktop monitoring

solution making it easy from a user’s perspective to control their workspace. Like Steelcase and KI, Herman Miller also had a full range of open to closed workspaces to tour. Their showroom ceiling was especially inspiring with it’s organic curving open ceiling system which created a really light and luminous visual effect. I was able to meet with Paul Murray their Director of Environmental Health and Safety. He shared with me Herman Miller’s recent action and commitment to get to zero over the next ten years. Zero hazardous waste generation. Zero VOC emissions in the air. Zero process water emission by 2020. They also had a very helpful visualizing tool, really a video which showed how the same furniture could be recombined and configured in multiple workspace configurations. This plainly helped make the case for the value of systems furniture as a long term investment with lots of future flexibility, all depending on the creativity of the users and their designers ability to react to changing workspace demands. I also met with a director of their affiliate Systems Furniture refurbishing program called ReVest as part of that conversation, giving second and third lives Herman Miller Systems, mainly to non-profits. It was a great story.

Any survey of NEOCON is inherently incomplete which is why it’s helpful to return another year for more. In later posts I’ll write about a few of the seminars I attended and speakers I met. The quest for cultivating design continues!

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