



JILL CANALES, 3-FORM, DOING PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT IN NDEM

## NeoCon Product Highlights: Final Glimpse

by Robert Allen

**Ed:** *Robert Allen* periodically joins our journal to cover major design expositions and provide a designer's perspective. His education and experience. As a Harvard-trained architect, interior designer and professor of interior design, a furniture designer with a remarkably keen eye for form, function and detail with highly successful products, he brings a perspective that is highly informative. His pieces for us are intended to feature products of particular interest to him, rather than a more general survey. Accordingly, he often finds product that falls outside the larger, well-publicized undertakings and, typically, his observations expand our understanding of these products and of design generally.

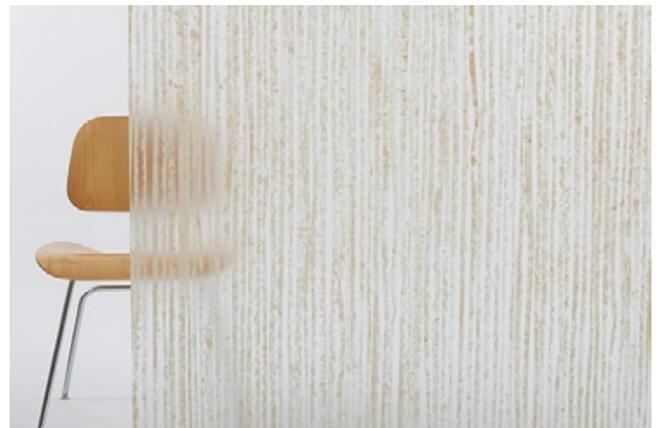
Despite the fact that the "daring" in office product development has somewhat languished in the last five years amidst a cautious market milieu, companies have kept busy filling out their product-lines to match competitors: everyone now has a bench and a residential posture; casegood's and padded island sanctuaries have firmly "come out" into the open plan; and the lift-mechanisms once only found on floors 7 and 8 have now saturated 3, 10 and 11; and the felt....well the felt is everywhere.

That said, the industry has not been static and has instead looked to refinement to distinguish product. The result has rendered some well-considered responses and pleasing products. The month of show coverage and highlights focused on many of the larger award-winning initiatives, but this piece will focus on some of the smaller, quieter and less-audible initiatives. (Products arranged alphabetically by manufacturer.)

**>3-form: Fray, Paper Lane and Ensign;** designers: 3-form Design Team, <http://www.3-form.com>, T:800.726.0126

Ten years ago, the 3-form design team set out to search the globe for handcrafted materials to encapsulate in their laminated Varia Ecoresin panels. As they began identifying unique artisans and working collaboratively with them to develop designs for the panels, they realized that the impact and opportunities these situations posed could far exceed their original intent.

3-form found that, by identifying and working with inspired leaders in these communities, they could make a difference beyond job creation. As its understanding of these communities and their needs deepened, its program produced grass roots community improvement projects that



3-FORM: FRAY

## events

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have become essential 'life forces' in these areas. The company's "Full Circle Program" still focuses on artisan crafts, but the resultant extended commitments have become an over-riding major component in 3-forms' overall corporate mission.

According to **Jill Canales**, VP, Design and Marketing, developing these artisan-crafted products require intensive hands-on work that could not be more logistically challenging. In developing the item being sandwiched in the panels, it's essential that the designs strike a chord with the design community at large. This ensures healthy product sales, which then translate into sustained job creation. Success relies on a magic alchemy among artisan skills, indigenous

materials, and a modern crafted-aesthetic that the 3-form design team brings to the table.

The three products that have come to market this year include **Ensign**, made in a remote village, Ndem, in Senegal, West Africa with a rich history of craft making and art creation, and as Ms. Canales observes, "an uncommonly peaceful and positive outlook." On a trip to the area, the team came across a humble tailor with scraps of colorful remnant fabrics discarded on the floor. Working with the tailors, the team created a chain of color, sewn together from the scraps that, when held up to the light, came alive, remarkable considering the endeavor involves fabric that is produced on hand looms, foot-powered sewing machines and irons heated by coal – and here I sit complaining about my air conditioner!

The region, however, surrounding Ndem had a unique set of problems besides very few local job opportunities. There was limited access to communications technology, virtually no educational opportunities, no electricity, and minimal water supply. 3-form's work has funded multiple projects in the area to remedy the situation including solar water pumps to generate more a consistent and reliable water supply, as well as several programs to improve living conditions in the area. One example is the *micro savings* program. It is a self-sustaining, internal financial support system for the women of the community to build savings and personal independence.

Beyond handing a solution to the community, 3-form has committed to the ongoing education of the people in this region, so improvements become increasingly self-sustaining. 3-form, of course, is not alone in pursuing such programs, but they were one of the first and the depth of their commitment suggests an optimism and direction that not only benefits the company directly, but sets up sustainable models that many companies can adopt. Imagine a world where such activity was the norm rather than the exception.



3-FORM ARTISANS IN NEPAL MAKING FRAY



3-FORM: PAPER LANE



3-FORM: ENSIGN

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>**AndreuWorld: New components for Lineal Corporate;** designers: Liévore Altherr Molina; <http://www.andreuworll-damerica.com>, T: 312.464.0900

Last year's introduction by AndreuWorld of **Lineal Corporate Collection**, an elegant product, was augmented by this year's further investment to round out the line. Over the years I have featured many products from this consistently fine Barcelona-based design group, when covering overseas shows for officeinsight, but I take particular pleasure in seeing such product easily procured in the North American marketplace with the increased presence of groups like AndreuWorld.

Based in Valencia, Spain with their NA headquarters in Chicago, AndreuWorld is a 65 year old company with a long tradition in the craft of producing high-quality furnishings. The Lineal line dates back to the early 90's, but last year it launched **Lineal Corporate** to provide a cleaner, more business-appropriate product for public and office spaces.



ANDREAU WORLD: LINEAL CORPORATE, BU0618 LOUNGE CHAIR



ANDREAU WORLD: LINEAL CORPORATE, BU0783 CHAIR

This year's enhanced collection adds new bases, arm and lounge chairs, as well as features such as a self-return base – the dream of every facilities person's whose charge is keeping spaces such as conference rooms and reception areas ordered. It should also be noted that, unlike many chairs that utilize bases and components that other products share, AndreuWorld develops its own designs, which adds consistency and inherent intelligence to the products that come to market. For example, the bases this year were redesigned from steel to mold-injected aluminum, providing a more resilient, lighter-weight solution that avoids welds and soldered edges.

What I like about this collection is the attention to detail. The injection foam, for example, is planed to a fine radius at the perimeter giving the chairs a streamline elegant stance, while still providing comfort 'inboard' where the occupant is actually seated. I appreciate the commitment AndreuWorld has made to the subtle differences in one product collection, allowing great latitude for designers as they move about a floorplan and relate one area to another without compromising function. The company is also highly committed to sustainability and extensively uses recycled materials while meeting the most demanding tests of endurance such as ISO and ANSI BIFMA level 5.

The design team **Liévore Altherr Molina** is made up of architect **Alberto Liévore**, a native of Argentina. He is joined by designer, **Jeanette Altherr** from Germany and **Manel Molina**, an interior and industrial designer from Spain. Together they hit the ground in 1991 and haven't stopped since, winning awards across multiple industries including Spain's' National Design Award in 1999. Their product is found throughout the industry with Sellex, Arper, Leland, Davis, among many others and is usually first showcased at the Salone del Mobile in Milan every April.

This year **Leland** also had new product from this group, the "**SLAM Chair and Bench**".



ANDREAU WORLD: LINEAL CORPORATE, BU0782 CHAIR

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>**Davis: Blok**; designer: Wolfgang C.R. Mezger; <http://www.davisfurniture.com>; T: 336.889.2009

officeinsight has covered other product **Davis** brought to market at NeoCon 2013, such as the handsome **Elements** pieces, but I felt this product by German designer **Wolfgang C.R. Mezger** also deserved a nod. **Blok** is actually a lounge collection and available in many configurations, from the classic freestanding sofa to lengthy sectionals featuring, elevated tables and handsome runoffs. I particularly like, however, the simple, straight-forward steel legs that work quietly to elevate and reinforce the sofas elegant horizontal presentation, a sympathetic design proposition, but from an industrial design perspective usually difficult to achieve without fuss and compromise.

The product is the work of **Wolfgang C.R. Mezger**, who opened his own design studio in 1983 in Eislingen near Stuttgart, Germany. He and his design team work around the world and have received more than 50 international Design Awards in multiple venues.

His interest in this product was to create a highly customizable platform that works with what he is calling **Palettes**,



DAVIS: BLOK

which are basically 40mm thick particleboard clad modules that serve as a mounting platforms for 30"- or 36"-wide seating and table elements. Enter the Davis site and you will find product numbers assigned to typical palette sizes, but this is only to help the specifier; essentially, the system is open to customization on a 6" module at the discretion of the specifier. The cladding options are sizable and enable the specifier to pair the minimal elements to the particular styling's of the individual space.

The pallet is secured to the solid stock blade legs, which are then braced with steel tubes that run the length of the product. Sound heavy? It is, and the designer is unapologetic. The sofas and benches are seen as strong solid decorative pieces and the inability of users to fuss with their location is seen as a plus. So far the pieces can be as long as 120", but my sense was that longer spans might be negotiable.

The attention-to-detail on the product is also notable. Double or single stitching is appropriately applied and they use carefully modulated multi-density foams to avoid pucker, always an issue on "clean" minimal designs. This product was developed by Davis and positioned as a smart addition to their other expanded programs, "**Palette**" and "**Method**."



DAVIS: BLOK

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>**Decca: Elan introduces the Span, Museum Collection Lounge Chair and Coffee Table;** designer: Brian Graham; <http://www.elanbydecca.com>, T: 612.362.0007

The three pieces featured this year are part of **Brian Graham's** contribution to **Élan**, a new brand introduced at NeoCon 2013 by **Decca, Ltd.** This collection is a portfolio of lounge furnishings designed by an international group of designers around the concept of craft and classic modern elegance for both public and private spaces, across the contract, hospitality, and residential market. Besides Mr. Graham's work, Élan features product by **Lauren Rottet**, **Mark Saffell** and **David Ritch** of 5D Studio, **Mark Hirons** of Cannon Design, and **Jess Sorel** of Sorel Studio.

Overall, I was pleased with the entire collection, but Mr. Graham's product, in particular, caught my eye. His **Span** product is new this year and is described in by Decca as a "platform seating with tailored cushions resting on a bridge of steel." I like that. Mr. Graham's references are evoked by the spirit of the California Case Study houses where Neutra, Koenig, Ellwood and others often strategically situated their homes in dramatic ways using exposed steel elements that would both elevate the home, as well as be celebrate the structure visually throughout the space.



DECCA: SPAN SOFA WITH INSET TABLE VARIATION



DECCA SPAN ARMLESS CHAIR

Although Decca Ltd. is essentially a wood company based in Hong Kong, what Mr. Graham appreciates about working with it is not only its understanding of wood, but its vertical organization, which provides an integrated approach for the metal-work and other materials. The work is done in-house (2,000 employees, over a million sq.ft. of manufacturing capacity and a 35-year history) and the product passes thru the fabrication process as a team effort, with all parties on the same page when it comes to the precision and execution of details.

Mr. Graham describes his **Museum Collection Chair** as a "simple sketch of a chair, rendered here in stainless steel and thin planes of crisply detailed upholstery." He sees it as a piece that could sit comfortably in public spaces and hold its own. It is available in either veneer or upholstered back. What I liked about the chair is the clarity Mr. Graham paid to the support elements versus what is being supported. Certainly others such as **Poul Kjaerholm** in his 1957 **PK** series and **Preben Fabricius** in his **701** work for Walter Knoll



DECCA MUSEUM COFFEE TABLE WITH DRAWER



DECCA MUSEUM LOUNGE CHAIR

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have gone before and made the clear distinction between these two elements, but Mr. Graham's efforts at quieting the visual interplay of these elements makes this piece special.

This year he added the Museum Collection Coffee Table to the grouping. Its genesis grew out of personal needs where he and his wife, Nancy, could not find a table with the scale and flexibility to support the functions they needed for work, relaxing and entertaining. The table sets a glass top into a stainless steel enclosure and is anchored by a lower base that offers both display and storage capabilities. It can be wrapped in either wood or leather and has optional drawers with removable accessory trays to "keep life's realities out of sight when company calls," as Mr. Graham puts it.

All in all, smart product, handsomely detailed and well-executed.

>**Haworth: Prototype "Suite"**; designer: Steffen Lipsky; <http://www.haworth.com>, T: 616.393.3000

Periodically companies use shows such as NeoCon as opportunities to feature prototypes and get market feedback prior to final production. This year **Haworth** featured some smart product designed by German-designer **Steffen Lipsky**, director of Haworth's in-house industrial design group and scheduled to launch in 2014. Named **Suite**, the product will feature a variety of table options for both open and closed office situations as well as storage and free-standing workwall solutions.

What caught my eye was the simply clarity of the design and the almost "blurred aesthetic" the product projected. Was I looking at a small conference or gathering room or an office? I liked the fact that I couldn't decide. As it turns out, in discussion with Mr. Lipsky, this was intentional.

Since the early 1990's, there has been a continuing discourse regarding the merits of closed versus open office planning, hoteling versus permanent office, etc., all reflecting the ever-changing dispositions of companies and how they do business. Horizontal organizations, the internet and

other factors continue to daily fuel the conversation. Designers have blurred the distinction between office and home and collaborative spaces have flourished alongside an influx of floating private sanctuaries. Mr. Lipsky is not the first to question what an office in the future might become, but he does propose some pleasing alternatives that offer both flexibility and thoughtful consideration to current work trends.

The table, out on the floor, consisted of a segmented top, one being treated in a more conventional manner and the other half, more decorative – in this case back-painted glass – and on a lift system. The shapes were not aggressive; this too was intentional.

What would he want to see if he came into an office? "I would rather see a sort of project table, a table that almost resembles sculpture," he said. "A setting where work can occur standing or seated, but in all instances in a relaxed environment." Acknowledging that the office, especially for upper levels of management, tends to be more collaborative meeting space where the focus is aligning strategies and minds versus heads-down work, Mr. Lipsky felt the forms in the space should be inviting, pleasing to approach and informal; as opposed to the more typical confrontational arrangement posed by the user, with guest chairs standing opposite; and a separate meeting area as a second position. By combining a segmented top, with height adjustment feature, he not only reduces the overall footprint of the office, but affects the ability to instantly modify the appearance and posture, or character, of the office.

The free-standing work-wall he sees rather like the little Chinese puzzles with the sliding pieces-with one piece missing-that we all played with as children, a series of movable panels that slide or open and that provide areas for the integration of technology (think Bluescape) and other components. As with the table, it lacks a precise label and consequently can work to support the worker in whatever manner suits the moment.



HAWORTH: SUITE WITH SEGMENT CO-PLANAR



HAWORTH: SUITE WITH SEGMENT RAISED

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This notion, that a designer/space planner could just provide a whole line of spaces in the 180- to 300-sq.-ft range with a neutral table and work-wall, and let the use sort itself out as needs arise and shift, is perhaps not new, but here is smart, clean product well-suited to such a strategy – and certainly an attractive alternative for companies that are daily redefining how they do business and come to market.

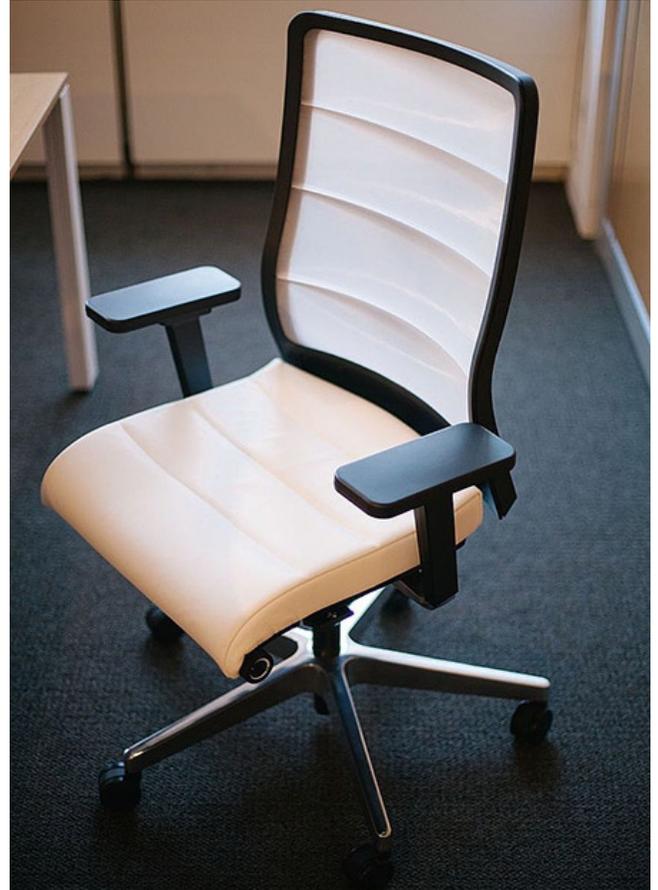
>**Interstuhl: AirPad Task Chair**; designer: Andreas Krob + Joachim Bruske, <http://www.airpad-chair.net>, T: 336.210.0610

Last year, Interstuhl featured the prototype of this chair in the showroom they share with Riviera. It was straight-forward and handsome, but what caught my gaze was the delicate back, beautifully detailed, almost ethereal in its reading. It officially launched this year and again it had the same effect on me.

Designed by the team of **Andreas Krob + Joachim Bruske**, the chair features a membrane mesh backrest material that utilizes a plastic polyamide material primarily used in the automotive industry and chemical and food industries as a filter material. The membrane allows air to circulate and provides an extremely comfortable body climate with no accumulation of heat. The materials flexibility and intelligent segmentation creates soft pressure regulating air bags or pockets that provide support for the body as it cradles the back. The membrane material is resilient and practically tear-proof, fire retardant and is easy to clean with just a mild household detergent.

Additional support is provided by a **Body-Float** gliding mechanism. The back reclines in a gentle glide motion rather than tilting. This geometry is made possible through the reverse cantilevered design of the float mechanism and the four inline skate bearings positioned inside. These bearings roll smoothly back and forth and eliminate “shirt lift” experienced with many synchronous mechanisms. The lumbar area remains supported through the complete range of reclining and the front edge of the seat remains parallel with the floor, important to people of shorter stature. This Body-Float mechanism covers a wide weight range from 99 to 310 lbs. and enables the supporting backrest to be adjusted to the size and weight of each individual, eliminating the need to have several sizes of chairs for different people.

The mechanism also assists the smaller person in their efforts to fight what is often an excessive pressure of the backrest when reclining; and conversely dampens the heavy persons recline by providing sufficient support to prevent falling backward and feeling unsafe. As with other Interstuhl chairs, the seat depth is adjusted by “rolling” out the front, thus maintaining the relationship of the rear of the seat and the backrest to insure proper support during inclination. Options include seat inclination, lumbar support and a headrest. A matching cantilevered side chair with a pivoting backrest is also available. The AirPad is BIFMA Level 3 Platinum rated.



INTERSTUHL: AIR PAD CHAIR



INTERSTUHL: AIR PAD CHAIR, BACK DETAIL

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>**Leland: SLAM Collection**; designers: Liévore Altherr Molina; <http://lelandinternational.com>, T: 800-859-7510

This year **Leland** on also had new product from this Barcelona design group, the **SLAM Collection** that included an extensive line of chairs and SLAM BEAM, all further



LELAND: SLAM SIDE CHAIR WITH ARMS



LELAND: SLAM SIDE CHAIR, DETAIL

examples of this group's prowess in matters of proportion, scale and overall refinement. I was not convinced of the beam application of the chair (it did however garner an Editor's Choice Award so clearly there is not a consensus on that), but the chair and its iteration's were stunning.

The sensual edge-free mono-block shell of the chair is available in three materials, polypropylene, upholstered, and 3D oak plywood and it appears to hover over the floor by incorporating a clever concealed connection between the adjacent leg frames, allowing it to visually float in its position. Designer Liévore remarks, "If it sounds cerebral, it's because it is." The five frame options include aluminum, aluminum with armrest, steel tube, steel tube with armrest, and steel rod.

In the same way the Lineal Corporate from AndreuWorld can be applied to multiple settings, in what the designers refer to as a "family-series concept," so too with this product; several base configurations enable it to have great latitude on the floor in various settings.

>**Museum & Library Furniture LLC: Seattle Chair and Museum Stool**; designer: Tom Shiner; <http://www.themuseumstool.com>, T:240 743 4672

This group had a very small booth on 8 and featured several products in wood that appeared well-made with an attention to detail. What caught my eye were the profiles, especially on the **Seattle Chair**, which were slim and felt very solid. The work of designer, **Tom Shiner**, the slim profiles were achieved by incorporating steel reinforcing



MUSEUM & LIBRARY FURNITURE: SEATTLE CHAIR

and tensioning members. Mr. Shiner remarks, "I am not a purist when it comes to wood joinery." He references the Viking carpenter who built boats with iron spikes and iron oar locks, "Steel is my material of choice to employ in combination with wood. I am intrigued with the potential for enhancing wood's qualities with steel fittings."

I admit to having a soft spot for little stools so it was no wonder Mr. Shiner's **Museum Stool** caught my eye. It's been around, but this was the company's first NeoCon. Certainly in the spirit of **Max Bills**'s iconic Sgabillo, developed in Switzerland for school children back in 1950, Mr. Shiner's stool was developed in 1997 for a German museum to assist seniors and visitors as they engaged in the ever-fluid museum tour discussions.

Mr. Shiner is not a newcomer to the industry. Before founding Museum & Library Furniture LLC in 1997, he earned a bachelor's degree in architecture from Virginia Tech, lived in Europe and worked as an intern for architects in Switzerland and the Netherlands. He studied furniture design at the Royal Academy of Fine Art in Copenhagen and operated his own design firm, working with corporate clients like Brickel Associates, Spinneybeck-Design America, Sikorsky, and others to develop furniture designs. His products for Museum & Library Furniture have been specified for dozens of museums and institutions including the National Museum of American History, Morgan Library, Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, Cranbrook Museum, Hamburger Kunsthalle, Museo Interactivo de Economia in Mexico City, Gates Foundation and the White House, and have won numerous awards worldwide. Mr. Shiner lives with his wife in Bethesda, MD, and in addition to daily studio work, he models furniture in a workshop on a farm in Leesburg, Virginia.

His chair and stool are available in Walnut, Popular, Cherry and Maple as well as the Bleached Ash.



MUSEUM & LIBRARY FURNITURE: MUSEUM STOOL, TABLE

>**Nienkämper: Grip**; designer: Troels Grum-Schwensen; <http://www.nienkamper.com>, T: 800.668.9318

**Grip** is a simple straight-forward table program designed by Danish designer, **Troels Grum-Schwensen** and works off a leg that cleverly grabs a structural rail of customizable length. The rail also provides for power/data ports and can gang if needed.

What I liked about the product is the direct language of its architecture. Just a glance at the table tells you the more weight you throw on the table, the greater the grip of the leg on the rail – rather like a pincer tool – and the greater the table's stability. The legs grip-action enables rapid re-positioning and deployment, depending on the requirements of each situation.

Grip was awarded the Danish Design Award 2012 and was nominated for the German Design Award 2014. Klaus Nienkamper shared that the best remark he recalled hearing during the show. It came from a visiting designer who said, "The table is annoyingly simple; I wish I had designed it." I agree.

It is available in various colors.



NIENCAMPER: GRIP



NIENCAMPER: GRIP INSTALLATION

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>**Nuture by Steelcase: Regard**; designer Steelcase and Nuture Design; <http://www.nuture.com>, T: 800.342.8562

With **Regard**, a new product from **Nuture by Steelcase**, Steelcase tackles product to deal with the requisite waiting period that accompanies every doctors 1-1/2 hour billing program with some local empathy. The product grew out of studies that isolated the key aspects of the waiting process that were being taken for granted and/or overlooked: tight configurations, lack of privacy, limited or no access to technology and inflexibility related to space customization.

No one can argue the healthcare journey is anything but stressful. Patients suffer from spaces designed for an earlier era – pre-“managed” care – when you actually saw a doctor when you were scheduled. Now that the wait is a given, these spaces are not performing. They don’t allow for the requisite integration and ubiquity of technology that’s demanded by today’s work expectations; and the inflexibility of the spaces themselves has a wide range of negative impacts, not-the-least of which is the agitation from wasting time or the embarrassment of having to discuss personal issues in the open.

The Regard program’s focus is on the “in-between” or transitional moments, and proposes to regain control of both the patient situation and space by creating a flexible series



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of components that can be easily configured and modulated to suit specific but varying practice needs.

Acknowledging that no two facilities, patients, or health-care situations are alike, the system provides over 150 components that work in a modular manner and connect to a robust, patent-pending frame system with a single tool. Components are elevated from the floor, eliminating redundant legs and structure posed by individual furniture components and built-in space divisions such as half height drywall elements. Flexible power locations, integrated tables, and caseload elements provide for users and their technology needs.

From a design perspective, what I thought was very smart were the lightweight aluminum sleeves that cleverly cover the attachment assemblies, aimed at removing visual clutter and adding an air of simplicity to the final overall configurations. This closure device enables the individually customized configurations and cobbled-together components to look as though they were designed as a unit, specific to the space they occupy and serve.

**Robert Heitmeier**, General Manager at Nurture notes, “The future of medicine is one that considers every space a health-care space. As consumers assume a greater role in their

own health and wellbeing, the healthcare journey will take on a new dynamic, driven by connections between clinicians, patients, families, technology and space. Patients will be fully empowered to be what we call co-directors, and common areas can play a part in that [discussion]. The space will not go away but it has a great need to reinvent itself.”

Interested readers should visit this YouTube video, “Margaret Alrutz discusses Regard and Design” at [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=85f-wWn5b9s&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=85f-wWn5b9s&feature=player_embedded)

The product is focused and intelligent, and given that the ‘wait’ is here to stay, patients and caregivers should equally welcome the prospects this product proposes.

>**Pellizzoni: Armchair and Pouf 01**; designers Epònimo (Federico Carandini and Alberto Colzani); <http://www.pellizzoniusa.com>, T: 347.221.7878

Here is another product that delivers an interesting take on the dialogue between structure and support. The armchair is simply leather, cleverly configured to be self-supporting, essentially no structure. There is a polyurethane core, but its only there for pillowing out the leather. (Only



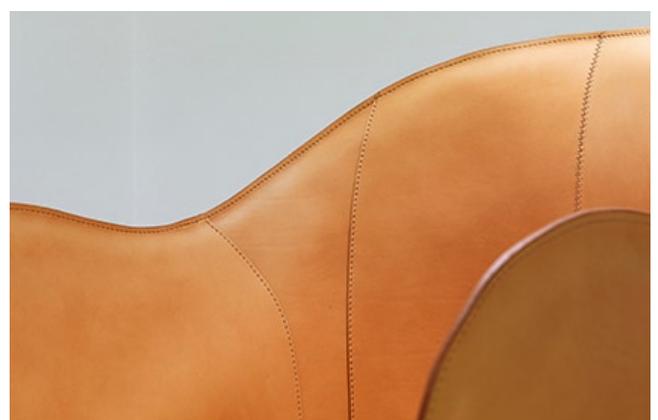
NURTURE BY STEELCASE: REGARD



PELLIZZONI: ARM CHAIR POUF



NURTURE BY STEELCASE: REGARD WORKSTATION



PELLIZZONI: ARM CHAIR POUF DETAIL

after the leather is actually stitched together that the assembly begins to behave as an exoskeleton and provides the structure necessary to support users.)

Why is this feature significant? Well, for one, it's incredibly lightweight, which is opportune for any lounge setting. I also liked the inherent *give* in the product, which is evident the minute you sit down. It flexes and is very much alive. It appears like you're being cradled by sumptuous leather ... and you are. The smaller Pouf 01 is also structurally independent and can serve as both ottoman and additional seating when needed. Both pieces won an Innovation Award at NeoCon 2013.

Both pieces feature the same beautiful stitching found elsewhere in the Pellizzoni line of product and are available in a number of colors. They showed the basic natural version at the show, which I like, as natural saddle-leather only get's better and better with age and use, a trait that would be welcome in all product.

The design group for these pieces, **Epònimo**, opened its doors this year, 2013 and is based in Milan (<http://www.eponimo.it>). It develops furniture products and programs for architects, designers and manufacturers. Its members met while working with Cerutti Baleri; **Federico Carandini** served as both Artistic and Product Development Director there and was trained in industrial design at Carnegie-Melon. He has worked for Emilio Ambasz, ECCO Design and others and also has taught in the US at both Pratt and University of the Arts in Philadelphia. **Alberto Colzani** was trained at the Politecnico in Milan as an architect, but during his ten year term with both Paolo Deganello and Cerruti Baleri, his core competence became turning ideas into products. He is particularly interested in the nexus between production techniques and vocabularies of expression. This product certainly fits the ticket.

>**Sedia System: JumpSeat Wall** and **Mura**; designers Ziba Design and Gino Gamberini & Lamm; <http://www.sediasystems.com>, T: 866.892.6130

This US-based company, founded in 2005, presented handsome auditorium seating solutions last year that firmly established the company as a viable player alongside Poltrona Frau and others. This NeoCon, Sedia System returned with a variation to its product-line that moves beyond its specialty seating audience.

**JumpSeat**, launched last year, grew out of a program that called for a condensed seating situation, occupying 4" of depth versus the typical 12" space that auditorium seats normally require when folded (obviously a plus for passage in any situation). The product is the work of Portland-based **Ziba Design/Labs**, which was founded in 1984 by industrial designer **Sohrab Vossoughi** and is now over 100 persons with offices in Germany and Japan as well.

What makes this product noteworthy this year is how the seat has been reconfigured for wall applications. Originally the seat was floor mounted and had wood descending nearly to the floor. This year Sedia introduced **JumpSeat Wall**. It raises the wood sash off the floor and is wall-mounted (both a plus for cleaning and maintenance). This is significant, beyond auditorium seating applications, because it delivers is a nice-looking seat for all those areas where an "immediate seat" is needed, but their floor presence is an issue. Because it folds flat to the wall, it meets all handicap 4"-clearance criteria and, as such, can find its way into halls, waiting areas and other areas where seating might be needed on an intermittent basis. (Do I hear a chorus resounding outside the ladies bathroom at intermission?!)

The construction that renders the minimal seat is the



SEDIA SYSTEMS: JUMP SEAT



SEDIA SYSTEMS: JUMP SEAT WALL

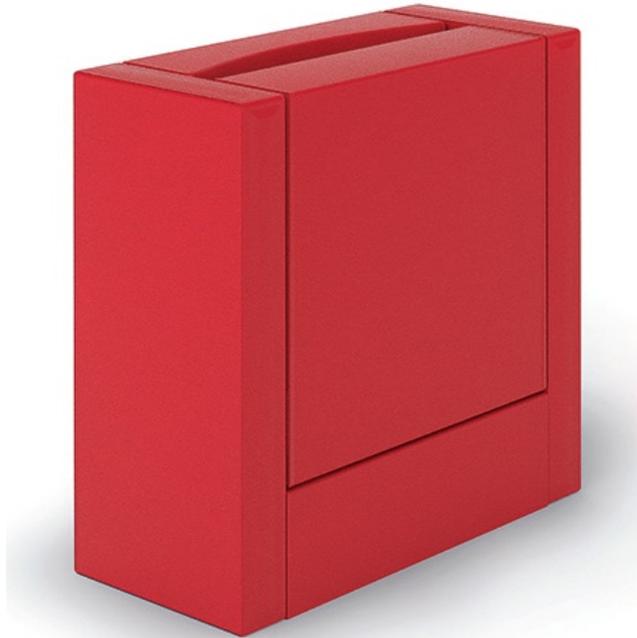
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## officeinsight

same concept as bridges and the human spine cantilever: using thick, rigid compression elements with thinner, more flexible tension components. The compressive and tensile strength of plywood slats laminated to spring steel produce an exceptionally strong and stable folding mechanism within the chair; this cantilever structure enables the JumpSeat to support up to 600 pounds. The seat has an attractive alternating detail at the chamfer on the slats – and yes, they too have a function – to prevent pinched fingers. The product is also available this year in an articulated arm option.

Sedia Systems also featured **Mura**, which has been refined from a past design (1989), and re-launched this year in an improved version that offers new flexibility. This system was designed by **Gino Gamberini & Lamm** and features an integral gravity uplift system that automatically retracts thru a synchronized movement, reducing the volume of the chair, and providing increased available space between rows. The armchair is also equipped with an intuitive reclining mechanism that allows the user to sit upright or recline for added comfort in addition to being suited to flat, sloped or tiered floor installations. ■

**Robert Allen** is 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. He also serves on the full-time faculty at New York Institute of Technology's School of Architecture and Design where his students' work has been featured at the Museum of Art & Design, ICFE and recently the Milan Salone Satellite. He can be contacted at [robertallen@metalhouse.com](mailto:robertallen@metalhouse.com).



SEDIA SYSTEMS: MURA, CLOSED



SEDIA SYSTEMS: MURA, FULLY OPENED