

The Business of Furniture | June 15, 2016

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The Business of Furniture

June 15, 2016

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### **14** UPFRONT: NeoCon in Full Swing in Chicago!

As NeoCon enters its final day, 2016 is shaping up to be one of the strongest shows ever and more importantly, one of the most crucial in terms of trends that will change the workplace.

### **32** Lawsuit Against Herman Miller Alleges DWR Sale Never Happened

The lawsuit matters because the deal to purchase DWR is a major piece of Herman Miller's plans to turn itself into a lifestyle brand with a reach that stretches far beyond office furniture.

### **36** The Mart Shows Off New Look at NeoCon

The MART's transformative renovation was designed to complement the creative energy and talent of its tenants and visitors.

*< The renovated but smaller  
Mart elevator cabs*



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# The Business of Furniture



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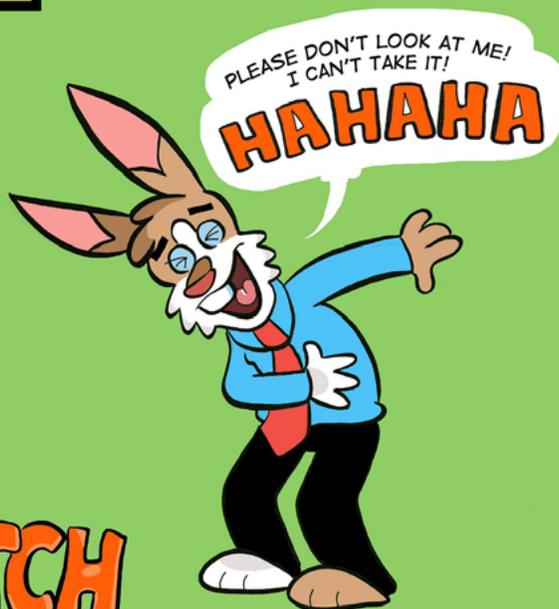
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*Business of Furniture* and *Workplaces* magazine are the go-to sources for keeping you informed about everything that is happening in the industry. From trends that affect your bottom line, to new products that will help your customers work better, to stories that will help you run a better, more informed company.

**ROB KIRKBRIDE, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**

MEANWHILE  
IN CHICAGO...



**HUTCH**  
BY JAMIE COSLEY

@NeoCon®



## What You Should See on the Last Day of NeoCon

Worry no more. The Business of Furniture team was hard at work over the last two days scouring showrooms high and low for the coolest, most innovative and generally awesome products at NeoCon. **BoF Staff Reporting**



*Allsteel has a hit on its hands with Reflect, a lounge product that adds a bit of style to the winged-back privacy lounge category.*



*Steelcase's B-Free Lounge*



*Ki's new Doni chair, designed by Giancarlo Piretti.*

**S**o it's Wednesday at NeoCon, you are sick of looking at the same old furniture, and you want to see some cool stuff on the day when it is actually copacetic to do so. With hundreds of showrooms to choose from, where does a curious industry insider start?

Worry no more. The Business of Furniture team was hard at work over the last two days scouring showrooms high and low for the coolest, most innovative and generally awesome products at NeoCon. To be sure, this is not a comprehensive list (so don't phone Below Press complaining that your product didn't make it), but it gives you a few places to start.

Before you yawn when we mention a plastic shell chair in this list, take a peek at KI's new Doni chair, designed by Giancarlo Piretti. Piretti does it again for KI, creating one of the most comfortable, cool chairs in its category. We like it because it is available as a guest, multi-purpose stacker, tandem, fixed or task seat. Designers will love it because it combines two colors through a two-shot injection molding process (think school or corporate colors). The flex in the back and well-designed seat pan make it a damn comfortable sit. See it at 1181.

Many companies have launched lounge furniture designed to add a little privacy to the open office, with varying levels of success. Allsteel has a hit on its hands with Reflect, a lounge

product that adds a bit of style to the winged-back privacy lounge category. You can't see one of the best features of Reflect, the swivel base that allows you to turn away from noisy situations in an office or swivel toward your co-worker to create a semi-private meeting area. It is a beautiful oasis of calm in chaotic offices. Find Reflect at 1120.

Mid-century furniture is all the rage, but takes expertise to get it right. Jasper Furniture returns to its roots with its new Bourne collection of mid-century inspired furniture. Jasper nailed it with Bourne, a collection of seating, tables and credenzas that would make the Mad Men proud. The company's attention to detail and manufacturing know-how shines through as well. It has some of the most beautiful lines of any product launched at NeoCon 2016. Check out Bourne at 3-111.

It was a big year for really good seating at NeoCon 2016. Haworth's Fern is worth a look, but we like OM's new Truly.™ chair. It is the company's best chair to date and marks a real turning point for OM because it adds some



OM's new Truly.™ chair



*National's Kozmic collection of lounge-like furniture*



*Kimball's Canopy*



*Neutral Posture's Icon*



*Humanscale's Diffrient lounge concept is a follow-up to Diffrient's classic Jefferson Chair*

real design chops to a company that already makes really good seating products. More than two years in the making, Truly.™ is truly good and reason enough to visit them on the seventh floor. We think OM could be another in a growing line of great California-based office furniture makers. OM is in booth 7-4072.

Neutral Posture is another company that continues to refine its seating designs. Its new Icon seat is another step in the right direction for this scrappy Texas firm. Most importantly, Icon is a great sit, comfortable, stylish and robustly built. Designers are going to love the ability to remove the seat cover and replace it when it wears out or the color or pattern gets passé. The seat cushion simply pops off, and the cover can be removed and replaced in minutes. Brilliant. See Icon at 10-153.

We are thrilled that Humanscale went ahead with its Diffrient lounge concept, a spectacular

follow-up on Niels Diffrient's classic Jefferson chair. A lot has been made about the benefits of standing while working, but Diffrient and Humanscale also know about the health benefits of working in a lounge position. The new Diffrient lounge is a prototype, created from the sketches and research from the late designer's studio. It is a remarkable tribute to Diffrient who is sorely missed by the industry. Check out Diffrient's legacy at 351.

The big guys have some interesting products, too. We like how Steelcase's B-Free Lounge rounds out its offering of personal workspaces and lounge products. It is one of Steelcase's most successful European products, and it is finally coming to the North American market. The B-Free Lounge is a simple product that has two screens and cubes to sit on. The pieces all fit together with magnets, making it easy to configure. Note to industry: It doesn't have to



*Focus from SurfaceWorks*

be complicated to be great. B-Free can be seen at 300.

Height-adjustable tables are a dime a dozen, so we were surprised to find Focus from SurfaceWorks in the mix at NeoCon. What makes it special is a soft urethane edge that doesn't cut into your arms when resting them against the table and a kidney-shape front surface. It also has a cool raised lip on the rear of the table that prevents stuff from falling or sliding off the back. Sometimes it's the little things that count. Focus is at 7-4093.

Let's head across the street for a stop at National to see its radically different Kozmic collection of lounge-like furniture. Good for airports, higher education settings or cool corporate offices, Kozmic makes the cut because of its modularity, unique shape and variety of applications in which it shines. It's the kind

of product you are going to love or hate, but National deserves credit for taking a chance on such a different product. Kudos to National for Kozmic. National's showroom is at 325 N. Wells St., suite 110.

We will stay across the street with Canopy from Kimball. Canopy is a simple, curved divider that makes life on a bench or height-adjustable table a whole lot more comfortable and beautiful. And it sure beats looking at or listening to your noisy neighbor across the way. We like the way it uses a curve at the top, which gives the worker just a bit more privacy than they would find in a traditional open office. Canopy can be seen at 325 N. Wells St., suite 100. **BoF**

*-Rob Kirkbride, Todd Hardy and Melissa Skolnick contributed to this report.*





*Jasper Furniture returns to its roots with its new Bourne collection of mid-century inspired furniture.*