

# CLERKENWELL

DESIGN WEEK LONDON 2018

## A REVIEW

**Published by**

JSA Consultancy Services

**Author**

John Sacks





Clerkenwell in the sunshine

©John Sacks 2018

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, copied, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without the prior written permission of the copyright owner, or in accordance with the provisions of the Copyright Designs and Patents Act, 1988.

Published by:  
JSA CONSULTANCY SERVICES  
4-5 Gray's Inn Square,  
Gray's Inn,  
London, WC1R 5AH, England  
Tel: +44 20 7688 1928  
E [info@jsacs.com](mailto:info@jsacs.com)  
W: [www.jsacs.com](http://www.jsacs.com)

01

**Clerkenwell Design Week**

This show gets better and better.

02

**Trends**

So many companies are trying to break out of their moulds.

03

**The Companies**

An in depth look at the exhibitors and their products.

06

**And finally...**

Clerkenwell at its best.



# CLERKENWELL DESIGN WEEK

This show gets better and better. London was at its very best – gloriously warm, dry and sunny which helped create a perfect, relaxed, happy atmosphere for the crowds of professionals who enjoyed mixing business with pleasure. Clerkenwell is one of London's buzziest areas – a distinct village in the centre of the city – and visitors are spoiled for choice when it comes to eating and drinking. Originally the home of hundreds of workshops supplying the local manufacturing and wholesale diamond and jewellery merchants, the area is now a typical mixed-use, central London area with apartments, offices, showrooms and entertainment. This district is of particular relevance for the many designers and architects whose presence has drawn in the hundred or so office furniture and interiors showrooms that now predominate. The mix works well, allowing clients to be shown a wide choice of relevant products very efficiently.

Rising rent levels, fluctuating corporate fortunes and new entrants to the UK market have led to increasing competition for any space that only occasionally becomes available. New showrooms open and others relocate or remodel all the time. It's often difficult to keep up with the changes but in the run up to CDW, the pace of change becomes frenetic. This year, Humanscale didn't quite finish setting up their new showroom in time, Poltrona Frau and Haworth split their previously jointly occupied two-floored show space and Dynamobel closed down. As well as the permanent showrooms, there were many classy pop-up locations.



Lleyn sheep from Wales outside Camira



Art in Koleksiyon's showroom



Origami in CBS' pop-up showroom

For showtime, the vast majority of the showrooms sign up to the well organised, high profile, online and on-street, group marketing for Clerkenwell Design week by Media 10, which draws thousands of visitors. Sadly, some companies, notably some of the majors, take advantage of the footfall but decline to pay the relatively modest contribution. They really should set a better example.

As well as the showrooms, there were several groupings of exhibitors displaying their wares in temporary tented areas, outdoor green spaces and commandeered buildings which are usually used for other purposes. These arrangements allow newer, smaller businesses, many of them very small indeed, to present their often very attractive and innovatively designed furniture and furnishings to a critically receptive audience, hungry for new names and ideas.

The organisers gave out maps this year which made navigating the show somewhat easier, but the sheer scale of the event was such that although the three days were probably enough to skate round all the exhibits, that ceased to be the case if, like most attendees, you regularly became side-tracked by discussions with the many people with whom you wanted to engage.

## TRENDS

So many companies are trying to break out of their moulds. Some have been driven to escape to sectors where the Asian competition is a little less fierce and the margins are somewhat better. Companies, such as Verco, Gresham and Spacestor, known for decades for their task seating or desking are now offering soft seating, tables, enclosures and breakout furniture. To their credit, they are generally ploughing new furrows rather than slavishly following others, helped by the fabric, laminate and other suppliers who are actively responding to the needs of the architects and designers.

Spurred on by specifiers, manufacturers are fast moving away from offering only a restricted range of finishes for their ranges. Desks in white, grey and a couple of woodgrains? Task chairs in red, black and blue? Not today. It's almost as if the finish is more important than the product and manufacturers' lives are increasingly challenged by architects' imagination being given free rein.

New open shelving systems were seen in abundance usually from steel, for example Sixteen3, or solid timber – Coleman from Spacestor. They were seen doubling up as space dividers, creating enclosures, picnic areas, plant display units and coat racks. All ideally suited to the hundreds of co-working sites which have flooded into London and so many other cities.

Wood – real and artificial – was everywhere and much of it looked really good. One lovely example was a Foster-designed solid oak high table and stools for Benchmark. Most tables, standard height and high level, had wood legs, no matter what material the top was made from.

Retro-styling was everywhere encouraged by London's highly competitive co-working companies which continue to gobble up whatever suitably located and vaguely reconfigurable space becomes available.



Sky-Frame in the 'Project' Area simulating space orbiting



Ice Cream Cab



Healthy eating in the Steelcase showroom



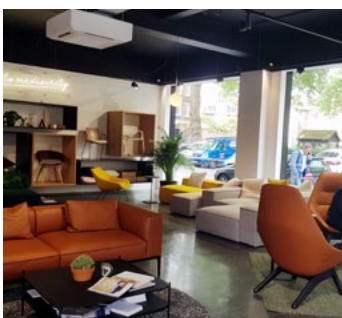
Silq chair from Steelcase



Sixteen3 Calvert Open Shelving System



'Working Girl' seating from Deadgood



Allermuir Showroom

## THE COMPANIES

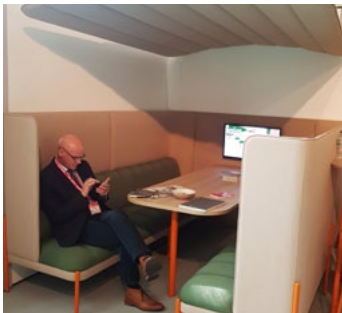
**STEELCASE'S** new *Silq* chair with its minimalist controls appears to be aimed at the multi-user market, attracted plenty of attention.

One of the smaller companies in the Project grouping in the garden of St James' Church was UK manufacturer **SIXTEEN3**. Their well-designed *Calvert* frame system was one of several examples of open shelving around the show.

**DEADGOOD** were in the same area showing their *Working Girl* seating.

**THE SENATOR GROUP** were in their new, very large, showroom complex overlooking the gardens of Charterhouse Square, close to the area's Smithfield meat market. One of the group's brands, *Allermuir*, showed furniture with a distinct homely style in their ground floor area.





Dams Kastaway designer David Fox



Office Pod from Isle of Wight

There were plenty of enclosures on display of all shapes and sizes. **DAMS**, better known for traditional workstations, had called on designer David Fox to create *Kastaway* for them; **MEETING POD'S** version was reminiscent of London's Underground tunnel.



Dynamic Office Solutions Bus



Dynamic Bus Interior

**DYNAMIC OFFICE** cleverly placed a London double-decker on a disused car park space to show off their furniture.



Boss Design Atom Simon Pengelly

**BOSS DESIGN'S** busy showroom had an extended display of the Simon Pengelly designed *Atom* range which is helping the company extend its product offering.

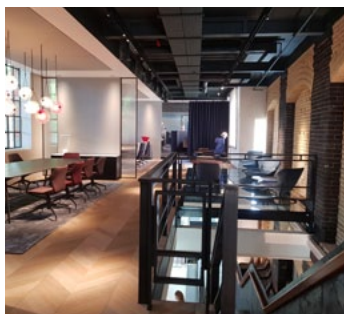


Fold by Connection Seating

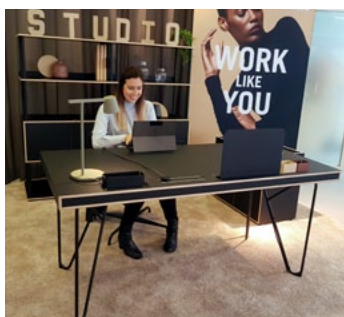
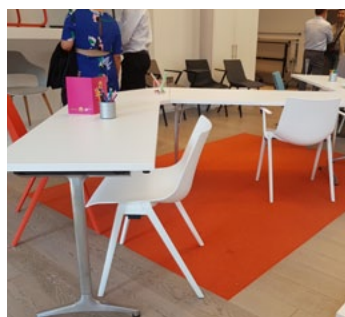
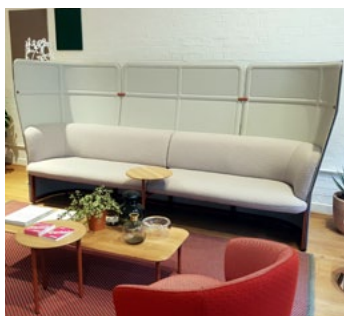
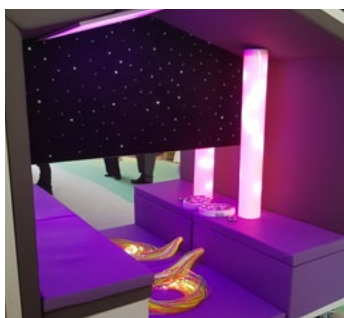


OCee Design Billo by Roger Webb

**CONNECTION** were another company extending their sector coverage. Their new *Fold* system used raw plywood to create a mixed storage and casual seating system. The rapidly expanding **OCee DESIGN** presented *Billo* from Roger Webb.



Brunner showroom

Cellular from Brunner  
designer ArchirivolttoBene Studio Designer  
Thomas FeichtnerMax tables and Aula chairs  
from WilkhahnHaworth Showroom -  
Patricia UrquiolaSensory Nook by  
Ambispace

**BRUNNER** had renovated and extended their already large space, now on three floor and presented their *Cellular* range of enclosed short-term working areas designed by Italy's Archirivoltto.

**BENE'S** new *Studio Desk-System* looked right for today, and the *Max* tables and *Aula* chairs from **WILKHAHN** were very stylish.

**HAWORTH'S** enlarged showroom, now once again occupying two floors, showed the holistic influence of leading designer Patricia Urquiola.

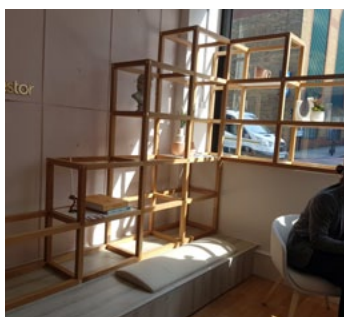
**AMBISPACE** were using one of **NOOK'S** enclosures to show how the use of calming sound and light can help treat those affected by conditions such as autism.



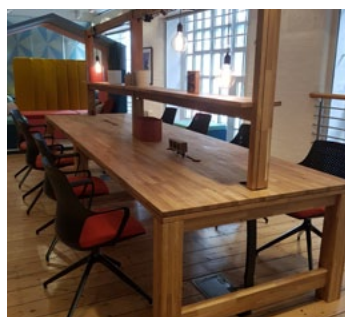


Edge Design David Carter

It was good to see David Carter – such an industry stalwart – in his Pledge (rebranded **EDGE DESIGN**) showroom - looking so well and enjoying the buzz of the show.



Coleman from Spacestor



Butchers' block solid oak table and overhead

Attractive and imaginative use of solid wood was demonstrated by **SPACESTOR**, **GRESHAM** and **BENCHMARK**.

## AND FINALLY

For the industry professionals, of which there were many, there is something very enjoyable and unpressurised about wandering the area, criss-crossing the narrow back-streets, drifting in and out of showrooms, sampling tasty nibbles and sparkling wines, while indulging in dozens of conversations with various levels of seriousness.



Clerkenwell Green - relaxing in the sunshine



---

**John Sacks**

JSA Consultancy Services, London.

[www.jsacs.com](http://www.jsacs.com);

[info@jsacs.com](mailto:info@jsacs.com);

T: +44 20 7688 1928

May 2018

---