

# WORKSPACE DESIGN SHOW

ISLINGTON, LONDON | NOVEMBER 2021

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A REVIEW

# The City

Such a feast of delights! So good to be back at an office furniture show which was crowded and busy and fun. Coming across plenty of new companies and interesting, innovative products and, after what seems a lifetime of strange isolation, being able to mix with old friends not seen for such a long time. What could be better?

The Workspace Design Show was held at the Business Design Centre in Islington on Thursday and Friday of last week. London in November doesn't sound very inviting but in fact, the weather was beautiful – dry, sunny, crisp and calm, with a deep blue sky. Islington is adjacent to Clerkenwell – the heart of the UK's office furniture industry with its scores of attractive, well-designed showrooms mixed up with dozens of architects and designers' studios.

The BDC started life at the end of the 19th century as the Royal Agricultural Hall. Its large, covered space with an enormous single-span roof was tailor-made for agricultural shows, some attracting more than 100,000 people. However, after World War II, it fell into neglect, until it was rescued from demolition and restored, opening for life as the Business Design Centre in 1986.



antiques shops all teeming with cosmopolitan crowds of locals and visitors. Pretty streets with restored 18th and 19th century houses are intersected by canals and dotted with small parks.

The show's visitors' spirits and enthusiasm were well matched by the relatively large number of exhibits from over 40 countries. The BDC is not that large a complex, but clever use of the space and the relatively small size of the areas allocated to each company meant that there was plenty of opportunity to discover new companies with fresh products which were not drowned out by the massive presence of the industry majors.

There were few, if any, signs of anyone curbing their natural tendencies to socialise without restriction and it was easy to imagine we were back in 2019 and no one had ever heard of Covid19, pandemic, lockdowns or social distancing.



## Words and photography - John Sacks

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Published by: JSA Consultancy Services

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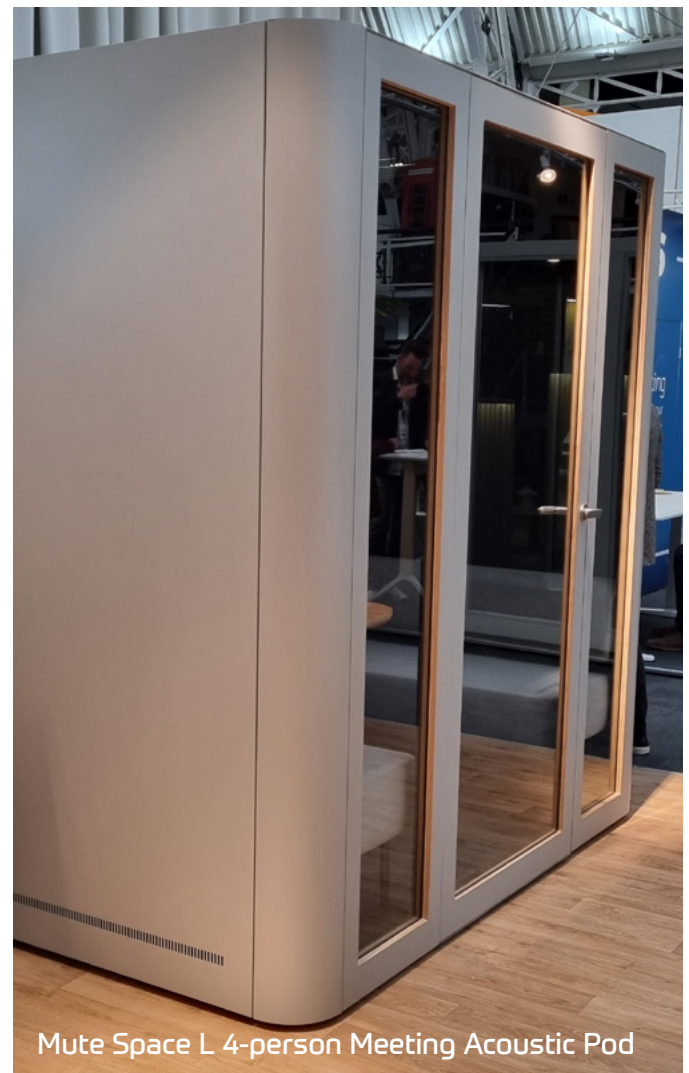
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## Trends & Companies

There was a strong emphasis on sustainability and acoustics, with the clever use of interesting materials and attractive colours. In keeping with the post-pandemic mood, much of the furniture and equipment on display was clearly designed to allow spaces to be used in different ways, much as would be required if an organisation was downsizing or managing flexible working arrangements. **Logovisual's** Thinking Wall System made in north Yorkshire allowed this specialist manufacturer to present a wide range of solutions to clients' demands for flexible, mobile space division combined, with storage space, as well as traditional and electronic presentations.

**Allsfär** (Swedish for sphere) – from Watford - had used recycled PET to create attractive, colourful space dividers, ceiling tiles, artwork and accessories with good acoustic properties. The emphasis was on mobility and lightness of appearance.



Mute Space L 4-person Meeting Acoustic Pod

Like many companies exhibiting, Creative Design Group under the brand **Mute** from Poland take acoustics very seriously. Their wide range of designs including pods, acoustic lighting, screens and accessories showed careful attention to detail and high-quality design and manufacturing.

**Agilita** are a UK importer working with factories in the Netherlands and Lithuania. They also featured pods, screens and accessories in their ranges, but their standout product was Chill, a space saving dual breakout combi.



Chill by Agilita



**Welltek** were a UK business representing a group of companies from Finland including Framery and **Neurosonic** with their Neuron Activation Pod – NAP! – which used gentle motion, low-frequency vibrations and music to induce relaxing dozing.



**The Nook** range of enclosures was in line with other exhibits and the well-used shuffleboard table which sell for more than £10,000 made a pleasant change from table football.



**TC Group** from Bristol presented their new flexing injection moulded Titan ARCo chair in a wide range of colours and styles, aimed at the education sector.



**IOC**, a manufacturer established in 1931 and based in Monza north of Milan showed a selection of pods and this attractive and comfortable enclosure.





The Swedish company, **Abstracta**, which specialises in products managing acoustics in a variety of ways.



Abstracta from Sweden

One company which stood out from the crowd was **Nurus** from Turkey with a selection of furniture from their ranges.



Nurus

**isiMAR** from Navarro in Spain had some attractive café tables and chairs.



isiMAR cafe table and chairs

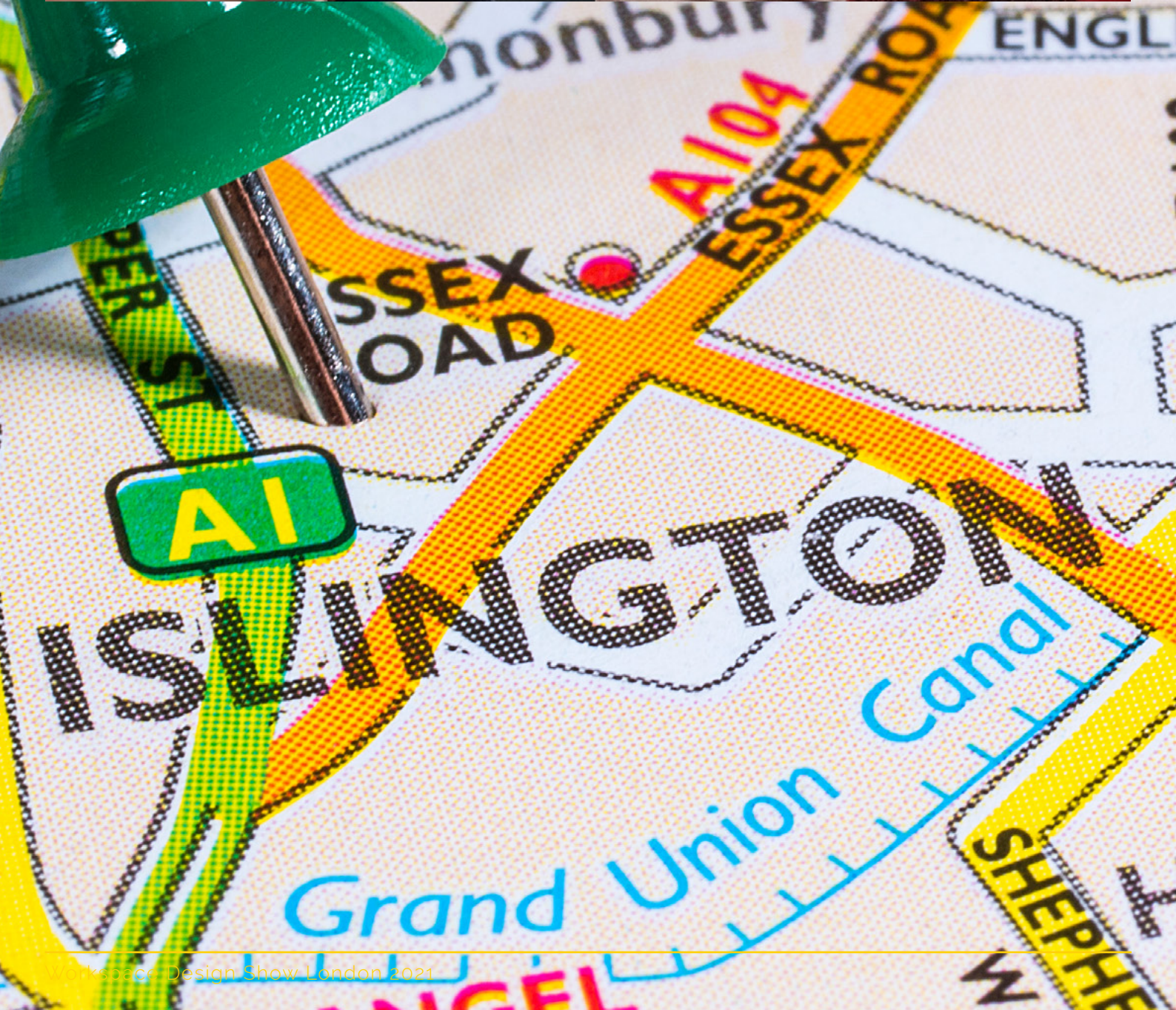
Another Spanish exhibitor was Actiu from Alicante which had used the graffiti of Antonyo Marest as the inspiration for the decoration of some of their seating.



Actiu Seating



There was also a full range of well attended Design Talks on the show floor with topics ranging from how acoustics are transforming productivity to using design to foster sustainability.







John Sacks

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London, November 2021



"Advising office furniture businesses around the world"

