

Orgatec 2018, Cologne

OCTOBER 2018



A REVIEW

Introduction & Overview

Orgatec, which is held every other year in October, is very much alive and kicking. It was a different story two years' ago with many ready to write it off as an anachronism. The show's formula has hardly changed over the years. There is now an APP – a very good one in fact – but its hard to think of many other Orgatec innovations in the past 30 years.

So why was 2018 so successful? The exhibitors – 760 of them – put on a great show. Most of the stands were big, bold and bright. Yes; there were still a few with uninviting, closed-off, forbidding high walls or even rope barriers keeping away uninvited guests, but generally there was an air of welcome, with companies wanting to show off their colourful and attractive wares. Lighting, music and lots of massive display screens were used effectively to draw the crowds.

The products were very eye-catching. Desks, tables and cupboards may be interesting to the professional visitor but there's nothing quite like the bright colours and attractive patterns that modern textiles can give to soft-seating, screens and enclosures. The industry really was wearing its best clothes.

And the crowds there were. Many visitors were from China; there seemed to be fewer than previously from the USA, South Africa and Australia. Total numbers seemed much higher than in recent years and on Wednesday and Thursday especially, some of the stands and the connecting aisles were jammed solid.

Manufacturers will always struggle to justify the massive costs and logistical efforts involved in putting on such a show for just a few days, surrounded by their competitors who are all trying to out-do them. However, with the currently benign economic conditions in Europe, and plenty of new products to display, most of the exhibitors seemed happy to be able show themselves off to old and new customers alike – and reported that, for them, the show was very successful.

For visitors, the sheer size of exhibition area is very demanding. Furniture is very space-hungry, and office furniture companies claiming large shares of their home markets, often feel they need massive stands in order to demonstrate their importance. Taken together, that means the conscientious visitor uses up lots of shoe-leather. With nine halls spread over a large area, just covering the distance is demanding. But the effort was rewarded by the products which frequently displayed a high degree of imagination, flair and design quality.

Judging from the crammed cafés – it's a pity that the menus haven't changed for at least a decade – for many, Orgatec is at least as important for visitors as a massive networking event as it is about seeing companies and touching their products. In common with many trade shows from other sectors, it is probably a combination which augurs well for its future success. Twitter, Facebook and Skype can't compete with that.

Words and photos - John Sacks

©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

5a Wilmington Square, London, WC1X 0EX, England

Tel: +44 (0) 20 7688 1928 E: info@jsacs.com W: www.jsacs.com

Table of Contents

Introduction & Overview	02
The Exhibitors	04
The Trends	05
The Companies and their Products	07



N.A.P. Neuron Activation Pod from Looook Industries Finland

The Exhibitors

The emphasis, unsurprisingly, was on office furniture that looked nothing like office furniture, much of it upholstered rather than "hard" products. The many ways in which offices and office work continue to move away from the traditional rigidity of desks, tables and benches, allows designers to create softer, less regimented products. For the manufacturer, that often means they can be quicker and less expensively to market with new products. Many companies, known for decades as manufacturers of desks and storage, are grabbing that opportunity enthusiastically, as if they are excited to break away from their roots.

At the same time, new companies coming onto the scene have found that the type of products being demanded help them start up and be accepted quickly and cheaply. Customers and their architects are often more relaxed about choosing new suppliers for soft furniture than they are for workstations, storage or task chairs.

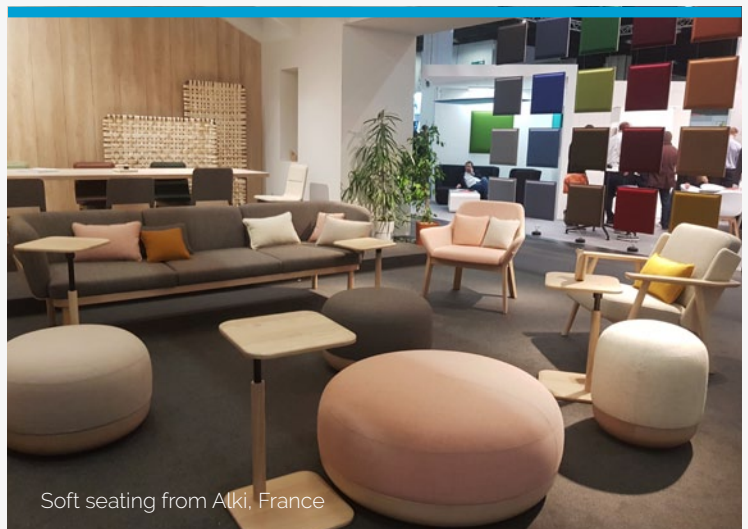
For Orgatec, that meant that there were plenty of new names showing beautiful products, and other older and long-established ones venturing into new sectors, with varied success.

Apart, of course, from German companies which as always, dominated the show, many of the best exhibits were from companies from the Nordic as well as from Eastern and Central Europe. The Czech Republic, Estonia, Lithuania - and notably Poland with 24 exhibitors - were all well represented.

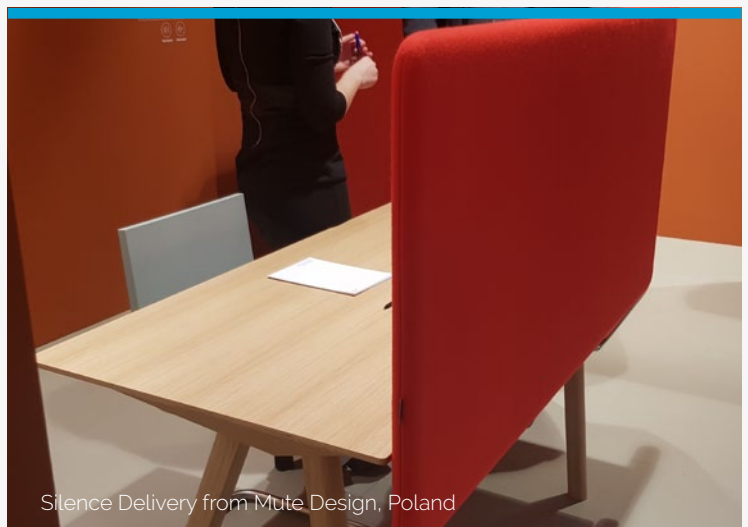
Many of the world's - and even Europe's - largest companies were notable by their absence and it was sad that there were so few companies representing the USA and France. Turkish exhibitors outnumbered those from the UK.



Landing and Sitzbock by RSW for Wilkhahn



Soft seating from Alki, France



Silence Delivery from Mute Design, Poland

The Trends

Furniture to create, and be used for casual meeting areas, was everywhere. Plenty of bright, primary colours were evident but doubtless, some of that was show-related, attention grabbing. Whilst natural wood finishes which had been seeing a comeback, were on show, there were also plenty of other materials being used including plain laminates, compressed recycled plastics, Perspex, glass and, of course, fabrics.



Acoustic, health-related and environmentally-friendly benefits were being claimed by many companies for their products but without internationally accepted, objectively judgeable standards to which product can be tested, much is left to individual judgement.



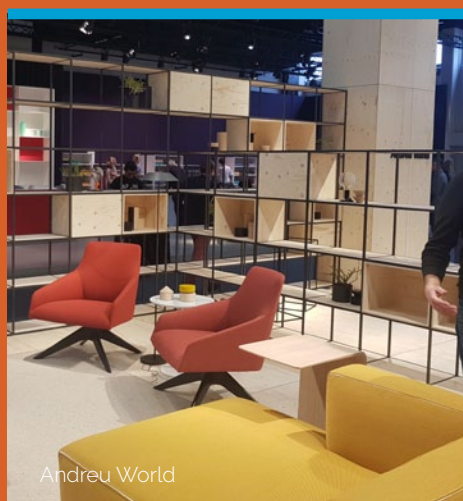


Telephone booths and other larger pods and cabins were everywhere, both from companies specialising in enclosures and from manufacturers better known for more general furniture products. It seemed like a bandwagon on which many manufacturers were jumping and there was talk of one Scandinavian company actively seeking to protect what it saw as infringement of its exclusive design rights.



There were some good examples of modular open shelving units being used for display, storage and space division as well as attractive, organically-shaped, unit seating systems.

Open shelving systems



The companies and their products



Finora by Giugiaro Design for Okamura

Okamura launched a new beautifully engineered chair, Finora, from Giugiaro Design, the creators of the original Contessa chair.



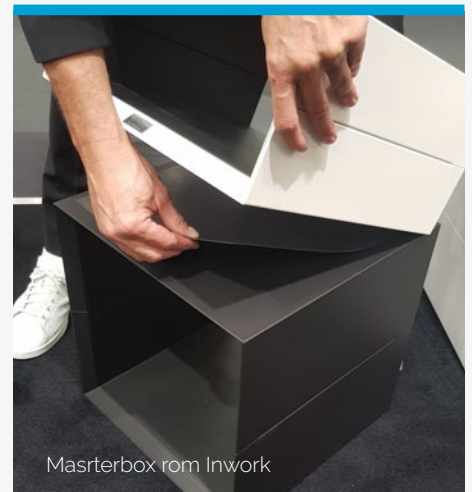
Kokuyo Ing task chair

Also from Japan, Kokuyo showed their new Ing task chair in both conventional and exploded presentations



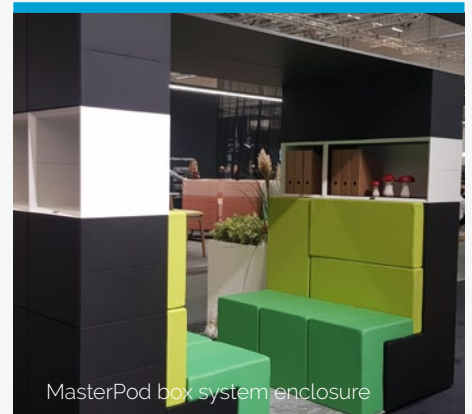
K and N Concept Desk in a box concept

König + Neurath presented the concept idea of a sitstand table in a box.



Masterbox from Inwerk

The German company Inwerk showed their clever new Masterbox system, entirely constructed from 400mm modular steel boxes, connected only with strong magnetic sheets



MasterPod box system enclosure



Green Park Office from Bejot Eindhoven NL

Another type of pod was the Green Park Office from the Dutch company Bejot from Eindhoven.



Halm by Jehs+Laub for Brunner

Halm, designed by Jehs+Laub, by Brunner, who had one of the most impressive collections in the show.



Perspectives – Brunner



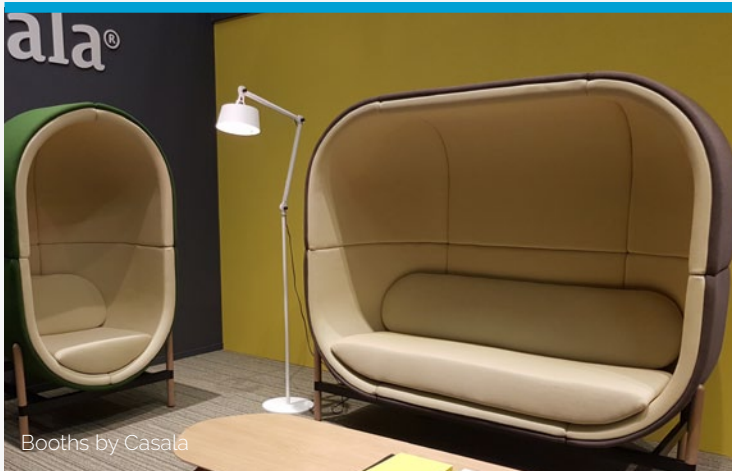
Rookie by Konstantin Grcic for Vitra

Vitra, and companies with whom they work, came together to be the single occupant of Hall 5.2.



Table made from Amsterdam canal plastic.

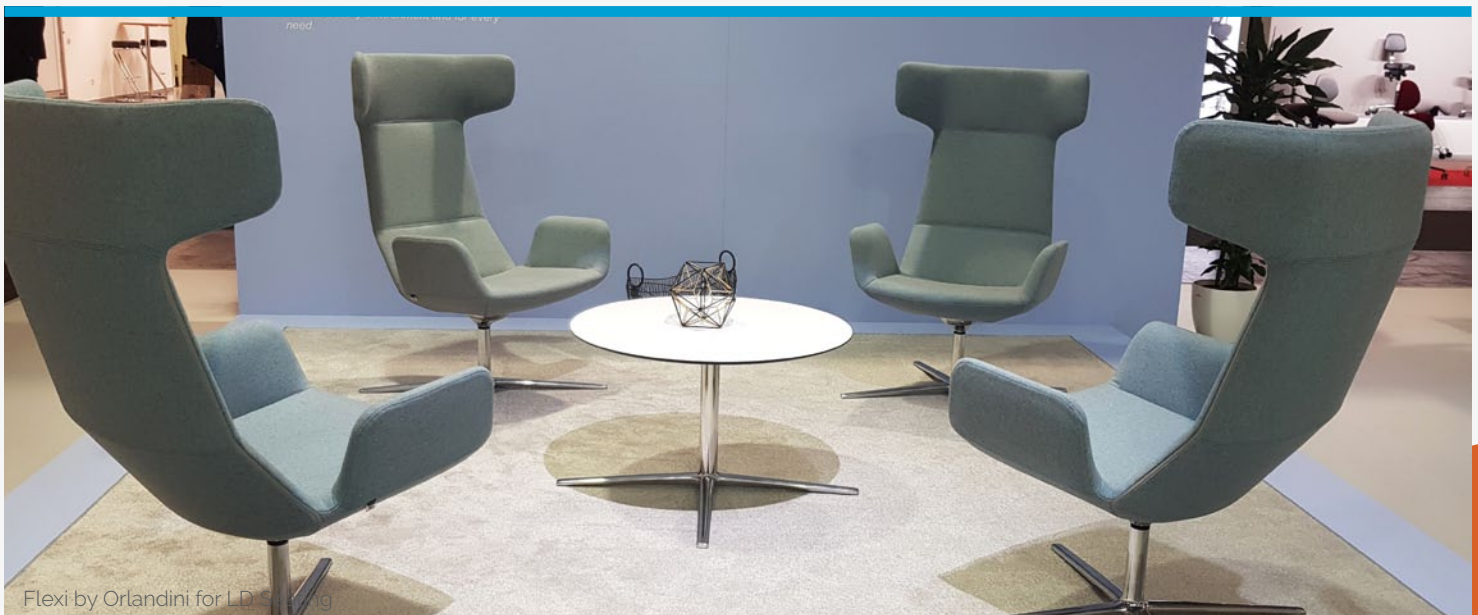
The Dutch company, Vepa, a member of the VDB Group, had a set of interesting environmentally related stories. During the show, they also announced the acquisition of the British office seating company, Nomique.



Booths by Casala



Desk and open shelving system by Italian company, Bralco



Flexi by Orlandini for LD Seating

Home office desk and chair from Burotime



The large Turkish manufacturer, Burotime from Konya, showed a wide range of furniture including this attractive home office desk and chair.



Lapalma's new workstation and open shelving storage system



Lips from Nurus

Another company from Turkey was Nurus who presented a fun rocking seat – Lips.



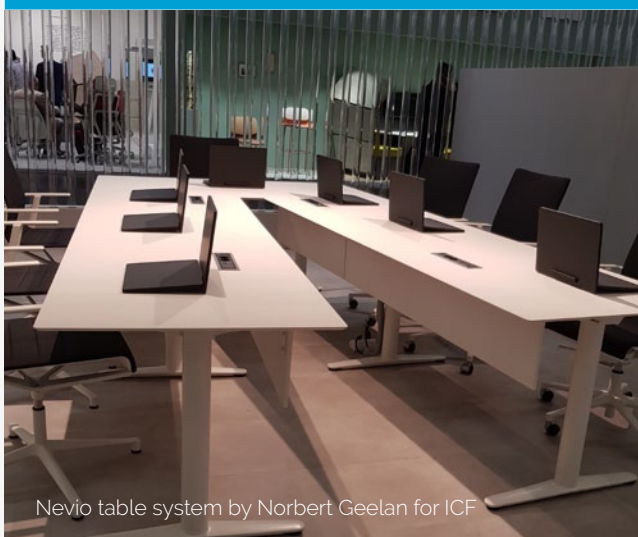
Unifor's modular bench seating and storage system



Molo

Molo, the Canadian company, whose products are entirely made from corrugated paper, showed how their range has been further extended.

ICF from Italy used designer Norbert Geelan to create their new Nevio table system.

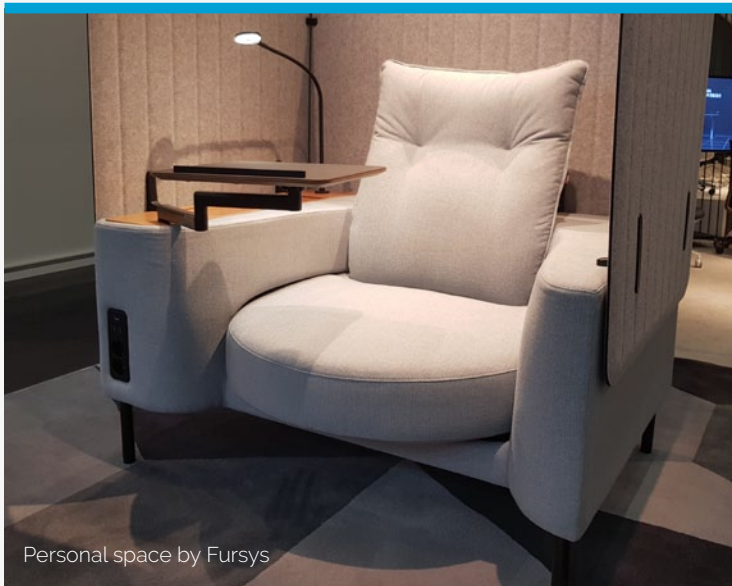


Nevio table system by Norbert Geelan for ICF



Organic Office from Viasit, designed by Pima Kunkel.

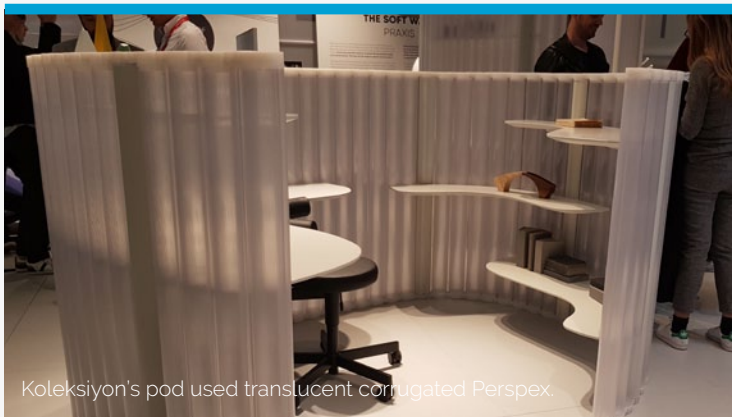
Fursys, the Korean company better known for their task seating, launched a very good looking personal working area, Playworks, designed by Claudio Bellini, reminiscent of Steelcase's Brody. Also from Korea was Bestuhl and their new S50 task chair.



Personal space by Fursys



S50 chair from Bestuhl Korea

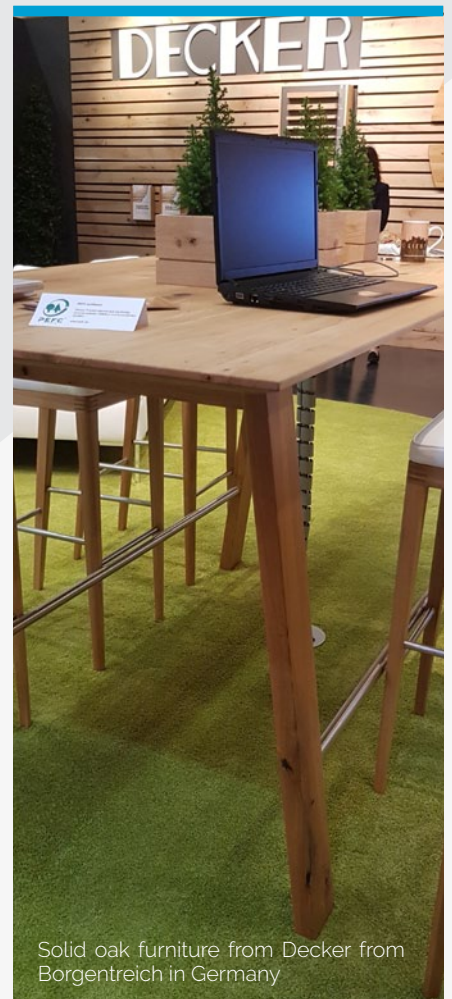


Koleksiyon's pod used translucent corrugated Perspex.

French manufacturers were represented by Sorec, a member of the Eurosit Group, who showed two very attractive products. A classy pod system – S-Pod and a combination high meeting table and screen display unit.



The long-established German seating company Rovo showed their new swivel-seat Twist study and conference chairs.



The German companies, Topstar Wagner from Langenneufnach and Ophelis from Bad Schönborn had two of the more attractive stands at the show



Koleksiyon's pod used translucent corrugated Perspex



John Sacks

London, October 2018



"Advising office furniture businesses around the world"