

# CLERKENWELL DESIGN WEEK

LONDON, MAY 2024



**A Review**

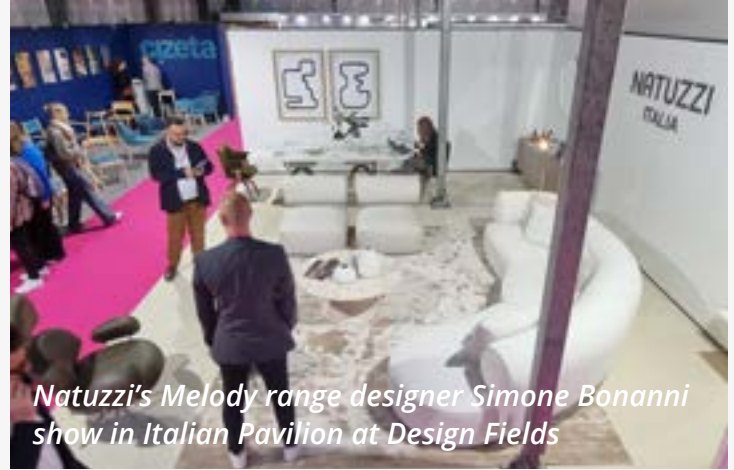
# The Show

Clerkenwell is a compact district, just north of central London, with a population of about 12,000 and a history of small workshops and commerce, focused on the watchmaking and watch repair trades. Over the past 30 or 40 years, the area's emphasis has switched to architectural and design practices, and the office furniture and interiors' showrooms which vie for their custom.

This year's Clerkenwell Design Week 2024 was the 13th, and as always, the show was crowded, noisy, and fun, but with plenty of serious discussion, mixed in with eating, drinking, humour, and catching up with old friends. The weather didn't behave as well as is usual for mid-May, with rather too much rain between some sunny spells, but the atmosphere was as good as ever, and many showrooms reported being very busy, with visitors staying longer than usual, probably so they could keep dry!

Visitors wandered streets filled with more than 160 manufacturers' permanent showrooms, most showing new products and fresh ideas, along with 16 curated exhibition venues, "Design Destinations" ranging from large pavilions to commandeered local spaces such as the Old Sessions House, a courthouse dating from 1779. The Design Week's offerings also included talks and panel discussions.

For the first time this year, there were several international pavilions, amongst them Italy, located in Design Fields. One company included was [Natuzzi](#), which showed their *Melody* range, designed by Simone Bonanni.



*Natuzzi's Melody range designer Simone Bonanni show in Italian Pavilion at Design Fields*



*Gatekeepers sculpture by Duffy London with Berlin-based surface designer Orsi Orban*



## Words and photos - John Sacks

©John Sacks 2024

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, Clerkenwell, London, Wc1X 0ES

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

## Table of Contents

The show	02
The trends	04
The companies and their products	05
The last word	09



*Old Sessions House*

CDW is a show where the visitor needs to be discriminating. Twenty-six hours, over three days, is never going to be enough time to see everything, and advance planning is required if the time is to be well spent. Rest and relaxation after a day's pounding of the pavements is provided every evening by many dozens of noisy, boozy, parties in the showrooms and other venues, some of which kept the neighbours awake until very late.

One of the factors of the show's success is its structural flexibility. Rather than needing to fill an exhibition complex of finite shape and size, it can stretch, grow and contract with exhibitors' demands, year by year.

"The Gatekeepers" sculpture - placed in St John's Gate - built in 1504 as part of the Clerkenwell Priory - was designed by Duffy London with Orsi Orban, the Berlin-based surface designer.



*CDW Thursday evening relaxation*

# The Trends

---

Those who have followed the changes in the office scene this century cannot fail to have observed how the commercial has morphed into the residential. It started with the idea of breakout areas, long before Covid, but the post-pandemic era with its WFH and hybrid working has accelerated the process, so that, if the manufacturers' showrooms are truly representative, the difference between home and office furniture and furnishings is virtually indistinguishable. Although this fashion is very well established here, one wonders if the trend will ever spread from western countries to the more rigid, traditional societies of India, China, Japan, and other parts of southeast Asia.

The domestic influence on commercial furniture meant that there was a vastly increased presence of upholstery, often including soft cushions giving a more cozy, residential feel, as well as soft curves and rounded edges. Showrooms which would previously have featured rectilinear workstations, tables and storage units had frequently replaced, or relegated them to a less prominent role, in favour of sofas, tub chairs and upholstered enclosures.

The other principal influence being strongly promoted was sustainability. There were definitely fewer products made using plastics and polycarbonate materials, and the legs of tables, chairs and storage products were almost invariably manufactured from solid wood or metal tube.

Consistent with the domestic vibe, fabrics were often soft-touch, for example, bouclé, velvet, and suede, and I'm told (I'm colour blind!) that trendy colours included pinky greys, pale beiges and various shades of light blue.

# The Companies and their Products

Since last year, [Boss Design](#) had extended their showroom in Clerkenwell Road and were able to show more of their collection. Here's a lounge setting with *Frida* pods and a *Hart* footstool; and a *Frida* Work Booth.



*Boss extended showroom.  
Loungesetting with Frida pods, Hart footstool*



*Boss Frida Work Booth*

Simon Pengelly designed this *Theo* Collection of shared work tables and open storage for Gainsborough, Lincolnshire-based [New Design Group](#) – one of the many companies with their showroom in converted historic buildings.

There were many displays of square, steel tube and open framework systems, with integrated shelving, planters, cupboards and other accessories. This was [Workstories'](#) *Urban High* version, who also showed their *Slipper* chair from the *Monoo* design team.



*Theo designed by Simon Pengelly  
for New Design Group*



*Workstories Urban High  
modular open framework system*



*Workstories Slipper  
chair from the Monoo  
Design Team*

**Teknion** displayed products from their newly acquired UK furniture maker, **Modus**, including these *Balance* lounge chairs, designed by Jonathan Prestwich.

**Bene's** new, large, showroom on Goswell Road had a striking view and was imaginatively laid out. Products on display included this *Wing* chair and *Ply* table from the Pearson Lloyd-designed *Parcs* range and the *U-Turn* seating option, with table and storage, designed by Christian Horner.



*Balance Lounge Chair from Modus, the Teknion company. Designer Jonathan Prestwich*



*Bisley wood-framed room dividers*

For some years, the long-established, South Wales-based manufacturer, best known for their comprehensive ranges of steel storage products, **Bisley**, have been steadily diversifying their product portfolio. This solid ash-framed room divider, with biophilic attachments, was one example.



*Bene Parcs Wing Chair and Ply Table, from Pearson Lloyd*



*Bene U-Turn seating option with table and storage. Designer*



*View from the Bene showroom*



*BDP 16 Brewhouse Yard*

The companies occupying Brewhouse Yard – named after a brewery located there in the 18th century – have changed over the past ten or so years. The huge red building, number 16, originally the brewery's fermenting house, is now BDP, the Building Design Partnership, a major international architectural and design practice. The large [Sedus](#) showroom is opposite, and they displayed a wide range of soft and occasional seating and tables, including the *SE Living chair* range.



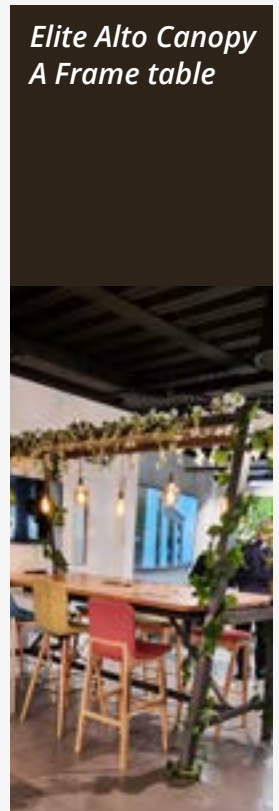
*Sedus SE Living chair*

[Elite Office Furniture](#) from Goole, known until recently for their wide range of workstations and tables, have been steadily expanding into other sectors. This *Alto-Canopy A-Frame table* – again featuring plants – is one example.

One of the most interesting displays spotted at the show was from a new UK manufacturer, [Kabin](#), established and managed by Walter Craven, who presented their light and airy *Kabin 2* workspace; a cleverly designed, soundproof pod with comfortable space either for a two-person meeting, or an efficient and stylish workspace for one.



*Kabin2 workspace*



*Elite Alto Canopy A-Frame table*

[Frem Group's Alina](#) range was another example of the show's emphasis on curvy soft seating for commercial environments.



*Frem's Alina soft seating*

The German company, [Brunner](#), has an extensive range of well-designed seating collections, including these newly-launched *Ray Lounge* chairs and the *Ray Work* meeting chair.



*Brunner Ray Lounge chair*



*Ray Work meeting chair from Brunner*



*Glimakra Barn 235 Open Pod - designer Kauppi & Kauppi- Glimakra.com*

[Glimakra of Sweden](#) specialise in enclosures in a wide variety of styles, including this *Barn 235* open pod designed by Kauppi & Kauppi.



*Davison Highley Elements modular system*

More soft seating, this time the *Elements* modular system manufactured by the long-established family business, [Davison Highley](#), located in the furniture making heartland of High Wycombe.

The Bolton-based manufacturer, [Gresham](#), one of the largest in the UK, launched their *Klyro* lounge seating range, shown here in shades of pastel blue.



*Gresham's Klyro lounge seating*



## The Last Word



*Mobili Nimble adaptable conference table. Mobile. Magnetic whiteboard top.*

Mobili, which sounds as if it's from Italy, is in fact another UK company, from Skipton in North Yorkshire. Their showroom displayed some attractive, innovative products including this all-in-one mobile adaptable conference table system – *Nimble* - designed by Chris Scott. Folding, height adjustable and with a top that doubles as a magnetic white board, it can be wheeled about, carrying its conference chairs as it goes. Very nimble!

Wilkhahn's Alistair Simpson demonstrating incredibly strong arms. Were they his arms, or those of the Andreas Storiko designed *Aline* chairs?



*Wilkhahn's Alistair Simpson demonstrating the strength of Andreas Storiko's Aline chair arms*



**John Sacks**

London, May 2024



"Advising office furniture businesses around the world"