

Orgatec 2024, Cologne

October 2024

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A REVIEW

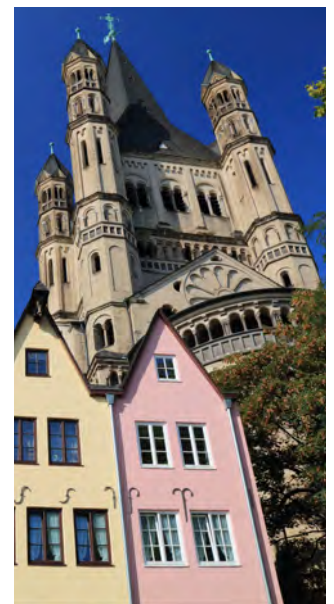
Introduction & Overview

The city of Cologne, and the crowds at Orgatec 2024, were in a celebratory mood last week. The weather was splendid – unseasonably mild and sunny, with hardly a drop of rain to spoil the fun. The show is held at the massive Kölnmesse complex which is celebrating its centenary this year. Eight of its vast halls, connected by wide walkways and escalators, accommodated the 729 exhibitors from 40 countries, which led to some very tired feet for those of the 50,000 trade visitors who tried to see everything in the four days available.

Although the show started quietly on the Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday were very busy indeed. However, judging by the shorter than usual lunchtime queues at the restaurants, the overall visitor numbers were somewhat lower than for 2022.

The organisers had attempted to change the format of the fair by promoting separate areas to focus on themes, such as the circular economy, hybrid workspaces, smart building management solutions and augmented reality. However, from a visitors' perspective, this themed grouping of exhibitors and their displays didn't really work. Almost all of the larger companies' products and activities serve all of these themes, and transcend this segmentation. A lack of clear signage didn't help either.

In reality, the attempt to achieve these three types of groupings – by activity focus, by IBA membership and by nationality with the separate Chinese hall – was never going to work properly, or be understood or appreciated by visitors.



Words and photos - John Sacks

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One major change was, however, evident, with the heavyweight involvement of the IBA (the German Interiors Business Association) which represents the largest German office and facility furniture manufacturers. The result was in the nature of a cartel, with the two largest, central halls being taken over by predominantly German IBA members, giving the impression of them dominating the show.

As well as the usual groupings of exhibitors by their country – including Korea, Turkey, Taiwan – another new arrangement was that almost of the 114 Chinese exhibitors were together, in Hall 10.1, where you felt as if you'd suddenly arrived in Guangzhou! In contrast to Chinese companies at Western shows in the past however, many of their stands were large, impressive, and very well designed.

The overall impression was of many very attractive and well-designed exhibition stands and displays, some of them very large indeed, especially from the largest European companies, costing lots of money, but with very little on display in the way of new product innovations. Some of the largest companies' stands, such as Assmann and König + Neurath, showed virtually no furniture at all, with all their space being used for casual meetings and hospitality.



Dramatic stand design from Vepa – the furniture factory, in the Netherlands

Apart from China and SE Asia, there were very few exhibitors from outside Europe, with notably only four from the USA. Similarly, compared with previous years, there also appeared to be very few visitors from North America, Japan, the Middle East, Australasia, or South America.



A large, attractive stand from Chinese company Anji Deka Office System Co.

One of the very few US companies exhibiting was [Humanscale](#) who showed this beautiful reclining *Function* chair and footstool from Neils Diffrient.

As always, the show was a perfect venue for hundreds, if not thousands, of planned and impromptu meetings and networking opportunities and held every two years rather than annually, it was generally felt that Orgatec is still the "go-to" exhibition to attend.

A busy [Interstuhl](#) stand hosted meetings and discussions. The company had also adopted the power of virtual reality presentations which visitors were finding fascinating.



A busy Interstuhl stand



Schallsauger - LED Lightbox moodmaker

Displays weren't only work-related however. [Schallsauger's](#) LED Lightbox images can dramatically transport you and your visitors to any number of more beautiful locations. And [Gotessons Design Group](#) from Helsingborg in Denmark had provided a padel tennis court which was being very well used.



Different Lounge Chair from Humanscale



Interstuhl virtual reality



Padel Tennis Court

The Trends

The traditional distinctions between furniture and furnishings for commercial, residential and hospitality environments, continue to blur, which was reflected by the furniture on display.

There was more soft seating on show than any other category, and from the shapes and materials, the designers had been having a field day. There continued to be lots of emphasis on acoustics with pods, hub, booths and other enclosure in abundance. Sound absorbing and sound deadening qualities of materials being used was claimed for many, if not most, of the products on display.

Designer Wolfgang C.R. Mezger created these *Single Seat* enclosures for [Wilkhahn](#).

Acoustic pods from the Finnish company [Framery](#) who are tied to Herman Miller in an "alliance partnership".



The *Globb* range designed by Stone Designs. From Actiu, based in Castalla, Alicante, Spain.

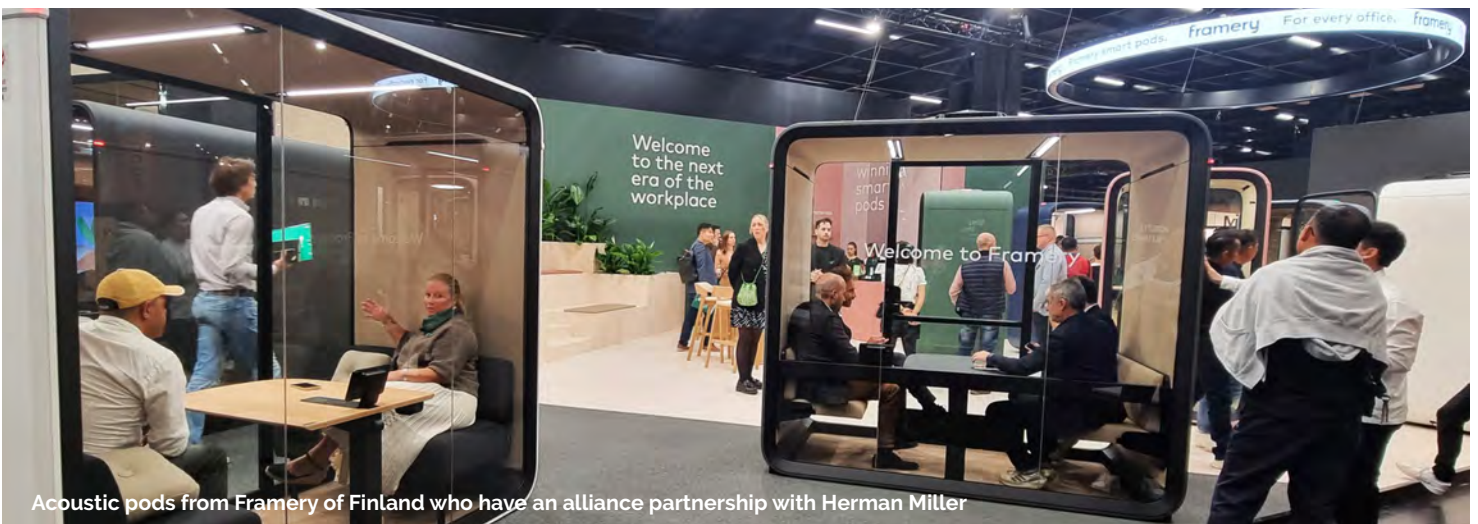


Wilkhahn *Single Seat* designer Wolfgang C. R. Mezger



Flokk

More Nordic representation came from the fast-growing, multi-brand, Norwegian-based group, [Flokk](#), whose display included these easy chairs.



Acoustic pods from Framery of Finland who have an alliance partnership with Herman Miller

Easy mobility of products was seen as a priority to allow for fast and effortless reconfiguration of multi-purpose areas, so many booths, tables, hubs and almost everything else was on wheels.

[Nowy Styl](#), the large and rapidly growing group, had one of the largest stands and products on show included these *Proxy* task chairs and this display of mobile enclosures.



Nowy Styl mobile enclosures

Again, because reconfigurable space benefits from larger open spaces, there was an almost endless offering of mobile, steel-framed shelving units to divide areas and demarcate spaces.

[Ondaretta of Gipuzkoa](#), Spain and their space dividing system.

Like the furniture styles themselves, the colours on display were browns, oranges and beiges inspired by nature, interspersed with some bold primary colours to catch the attention, as with this display of sit-stand workstations from Istanbul-based [Tuna Ofis](#).



Tuna Ofis Istanbul



Nowy Styl Proxy chair

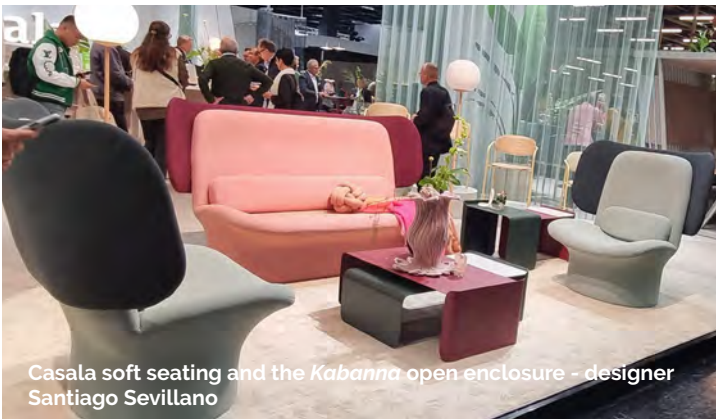


Space divider system from Ondaretta of Gipuzkoa, Spain

The Companies

[Casala](#) had an attractive and busy stand displaying soft seating and their *Kabanna* open-sided enclosure designed by Santiago Sevillano.

[Gumpo](#) from Dingolfing in Germany presented their *Pony* seat and writing table combinations in a range of colours, designed by Relvaokellermann.



Casala soft seating and the *Kabanna* open enclosure - designer Santiago Sevillano

This grouping for casual working and discussion was by [Palmberg](#) of Schonberg in Germany.

The Polish company, [Bejot](#), showed their new *Booi* workstation designed by Maciej Karpiak.



Nurus chairs - marketed by Max in the UK



Pony from Gumpo designer Relvaokellermann



Casual working and meeting area by Palmberg



Booi Workstation from Bejot. Designed by Maciej Karpiak

Max Furniture in London will be distributing seating products from [Nurus](#) in Turkey, including these *Calma* chairs.

This framed collaborative meeting or working group, complete with biophilia, was on the UK-Danish company [Ocee + Four Design](#)'s stand.

Another space divider with storage capacity and foliage – this time from [Werner Works](#) based in Espelkamp, Germany.



Werner Works from Espelkamp Germany - room dividers



FourReal by Ocee + Four Design



Koplus Cabin

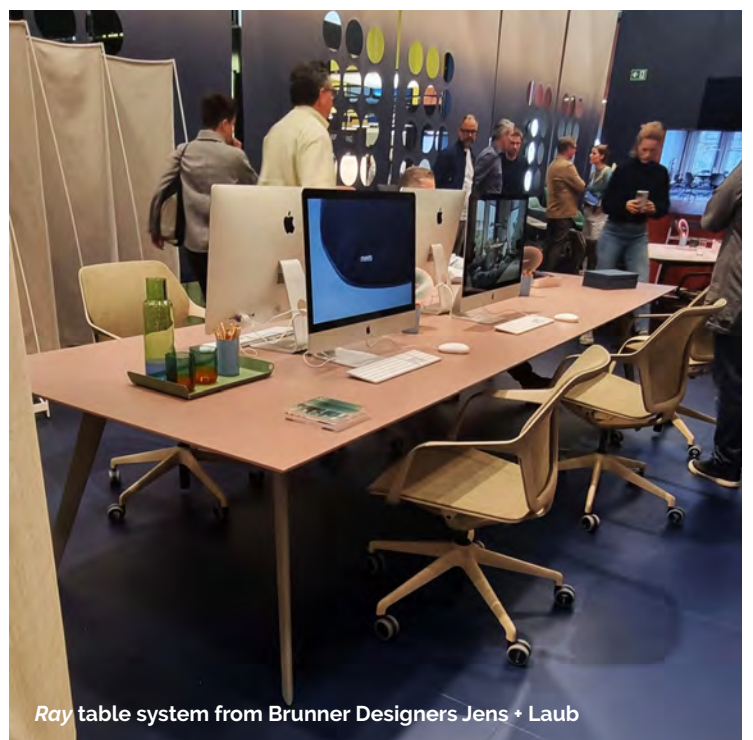


MUSEPoD pods from Haiyan County, China

More greenery, but this time inside a cabin by [Koplus](#) and these cabins, were from the Chinese company, [MUSEPoD](#), headquartered in Haiyin County.

[Bianos](#) from Ankara, were among a group of Turkish manufacturers with attractive products with western European styling. This was their *Bubble* sofa set.

[Brunner](#) had a very large and busy stand featuring the *Ray* table system. They also showed their Oval sectional seating. Both ranges from the design studio of Jens + Laub.



[Monoo](#) from Istanbul is a new company, working with design firm KM34 Interior Design, which presented ranges of soft and occasional furniture.

Belgian manufacturers were represented by [Extremis](#) from West Flanders. They showed their *Panigiri* table and *Sensu* shades.

The Swedish company, [Johanson](#), were another company with an impressive display including *Sketch* seating designed by Farg & Blanche.



Sketch seating from Johanson of Sweden designer Farg & Blanche

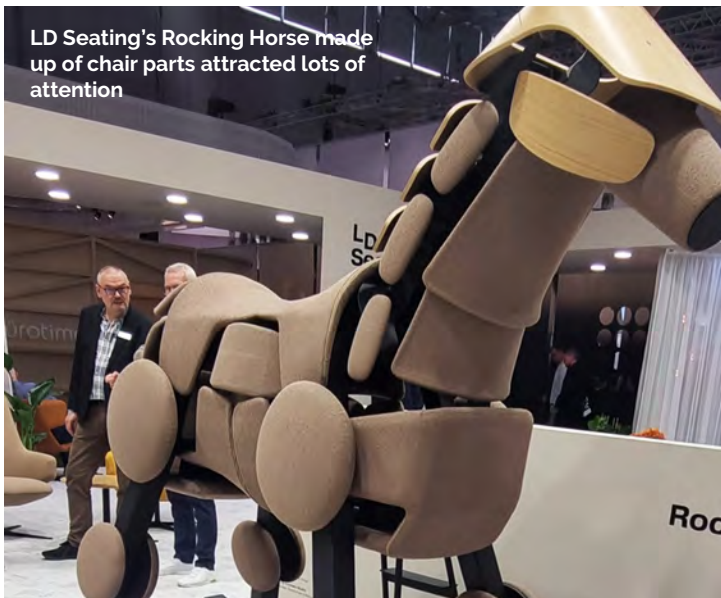


Extremis from West Flanders, Belgium Panigiri table and Sensu shade

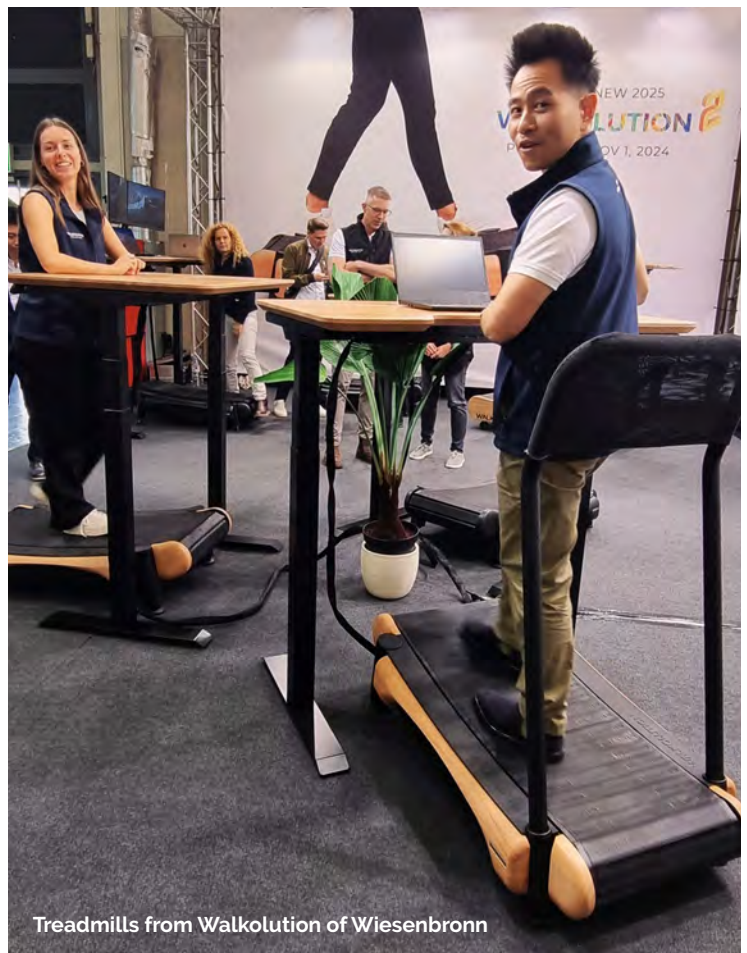
Although there were far fewer sit-stand tables than in previous shows, other companies promoting healthy office life included [Walkolution](#) from Wiesenbronn in Germany with these treadmills.

AND FINALLY.....

[LD Seating](#) from the Czech Republic were catching attention with this giant rocking horse cobbled together from their chair components.



LD Seating's Rocking Horse made up of chair parts attracted lots of attention



Treadmills from Walkolution of Wiesenbronn



John Sacks

London, October 2024



"Advising office furniture businesses around the world"