

NeoCon®

REUNITING AT NEOCON 2021 BUZZING THREE DAYS INVIGORATE INDUSTRY

(Chicago, IL - October 2021) NeoCon 2021, October 4–6, was all about coming together again and the high spirits over the in-person, three day show only demonstrated the importance and value of doing just that. With attendance close to 20,000, theMART was abuzz with innovative design, new products, important connections, and the sharing of ideas that is only possible in person. Luminaries including prolific Chicago architects Jeanne Gang and Jackie Koo, and entrepreneur and best-selling author Frans Johansson, delivered thought-provoking and inspiring keynote addresses exploring everything from how to best approach designing public spaces to mend social divides, to how diversity and inclusion drive innovation. The robust educational program also included special presentations, as well as virtual CEU seminars, which are available on demand in the [NeoCon Hub](#) through November 6th.

Underscoring the enduring value of a showroom at theMART/NeoCon, eight manufacturers established new permanent spaces this year in time for NeoCon 2021. The development reflects a steady growth in leasing activity—a total of 16 new showrooms opened since 2019 including ERG International, Extremis, Digilock, Spacestor, Kettal, HMTX Industries, Snowsound - USA, Narbutas USA, Inc., Bernhardt Design, Ethnicraft, KFI Studios, Pedrali, OM Seating, HOWE, Formaspace, and Claridge Products. Additionally, two showrooms expanded their presence, including Watson Furniture and 9to5 Seating.

The 7th Floor Exhibit Hall welcomed a number of new brands to the fold such as Design Pool LLC, Hollman, Miran, Ultrafabrics, Fermob USA, and Designerie, to name a few. Organized into five main categories it was a rich resource for new innovations across a range of vertical markets. This year, 7th floor exhibitors were awarded fourteen coveted Best of NeoCon Awards. Brands that received accolades included Armstrong Flooring, Mantra Inspired Furniture, SnapCab, Framery, SILEN OU, Vestaboard, Dfm, Configura Inc., Scanomat, Reseat, ERGOBOND, APCO Signs, and Koncept Technologies Inc.

As the future of work and the shared spaces of tomorrow continue to be top of mind, NeoCon manufacturers showcased ground-breaking new products that addressed major trends including sustainability, biophilia, neurodiversity, adaptability, and evidenced-based design.

Byron Morton, Vice President of Sales and Leasing, NeoCon, remarks, “As we are still facing challenges and adapting to a changed world and way of living, this year’s NeoCon was proof positive of the industry’s enduring innovation and resilience. The consensus was ‘quality business’ with exhibitors reporting that the in-person format and power of the NeoCon show experience at theMART allowed for meaningful and productive conversations. We look forward to building on the momentum as we prepare for NeoCon 2022 in June in just eight months.”

NeoCon 2021 marked the re-launch of the highly coveted Best of NeoCon Awards. Now in its 30th edition, the winners were announced at a celebratory, in-person awards ceremony on the first day of the show. The highest award of Best in Competition went to DARRAN Furniture, for Honey, a ground-breaking furniture system designed by Mark Müller and Christopher Wright. Unlike any program in the industry, Best of NeoCon Awards are determined by a highly qualified jury of 50 leading architects, designers, specifiers, enterprise clients, and facility managers who judge entrants onsite in the days leading up to the show. IIDA Showroom & Booth Design Competition winners included Hightower in the Small Showroom category and Haworth in the large booth category for their space in the South Lobby. Additional awards ceremonies and inspiring exhibits made for a productive and lively show.

Attendees and exhibitors shared their NeoCon 2021 observations:

“NeoCon was really energizing this year because we were able to not only touch and feel products that are so essential to our projects, but to also connect with our peers and industry partners to have great discussions about how interior design is evolving with the present moment.” - Haley Nelson, senior associate/senior interior designer, HGA

“The attention to detail, color and functionality propelled this year’s displays to a new level. TheMART continues to be a hub for some of the most impressive design minds of our time and it was our pleasure to honor these curations come to life through the 2021 IIDA Showroom and Booth Competition.” - Juror Jamie Calvier, Fitwel Amb., LEED GA, designer + project manager, BOX Studios

“Attending NeoCon is like diving headfirst into the gap between where our clients’ spaces are, and where they’d like them to be. There’s a solution for every design problem, even the ones we don’t know about yet.” - Katie Titi, facility space planner, interior designer, and founder, Katie Titi LLC

“It was great to be amongst our colleagues again at NeoCon—we have all been missing connecting with one another over the past 20 plus months. In addition to bringing people together, NeoCon is a great platform for industry changing products and initiatives. This year, I was most inspired by the introduction of the Interior Design Pledge at the show, a convergence of goals set forth by IIDA, ASID, IDC and *Metropolis*, a commitment to climate, health and equity. These are inextricably linked and I hope that this will push the needle forward for manufacturers to also be on the right side of history. Please join me in signing the pledge [here](#).” - Brooke Horan, studio interior design lead, HDR

“As we expand our presence in North America, and after a year apart from our customers, opening our showroom at theMART was an ideal home for us to host and reconnect with our clients and partners. We hoped to create a casual, relaxed outdoor/indoor atmosphere to share our tools for togetherness and show that there’s a world of possibilities for connection right ‘outside the office.’” - Thomas Wynants, “next boss,” Extremis

“We have been presenting at theMART for almost 20 years and we understand the importance of having a presence here as we continue to invest in our company’s future. The investment in our new and larger showroom reflects our growth, passion, and values that continue to drive us. The larger space allows us to display our broad portfolio of products as well as entertain and host events. This Fall’s NeoCon was a necessary step to transition the industry back to a normal cadence. We can’t wait for next year’s show!” - Dara Mir, president & CEO, 9to5 Seating

“Another milestone in Spacestor’s journey: opening a showroom in the iconic Merchandise Mart, at the heart of Chicago’s design scene. It’s been very well received with hundreds of visitors through the doors on day one. What we’re creating are spaces that are destinations, they’re experiences, and this new design center is a showcasing of our flexible ancillary furniture solutions as answers to current workplace needs. This is all about creating enriching spaces that people want to come to in an attractive and sustainable way.” - Russell Kingston, managing director, Spacestor

“Kettal has been looking for a showroom space in Chicago for quite some time, where we could show our products and gather with the A&D community. Coinciding with the launch of our new Workplace Catalogue, we couldn’t think of a better venue than the Merchandise Mart and NeoCon. We are excited to finally have an address in Chicago and are looking forward to meeting everyone at our

new space in Suite 10-155, where we will be showcasing both the Workplace products and our new outdoor pieces for the 2022 season.” - Carlos Alfaro, export director, Kettal

“HMTX made the decision to move from a temporary space to a permanent showroom to broaden our presence focusing on our commercial brands, Teknoflor and Aspecta. These brands cover a significant amount of Healthcare and Hospitality in the growing commercial market segments. The new HMTX showroom will allow us to build relationships with customers in a more intentional way while showing new products and concepts. Having a permanent showroom at theMART will also provide the opportunity to host customer meetings and small events throughout the year outside of NeoCon.” - Tiffany Davis, Director of Corporate Communications, HMTX Industries

“When the opportunity arose to open our second showroom in the US in the iconic Merchandise Mart, Narbutas was excited to expand our presence in the United States. We are honored to be among some of the largest brands around the world in the heart of the Chicago design community. Our showroom launch during Neocon 2021 that featured some of our newest products has proven to be very successful.” - Natalija Daubarė, president, Narbutas USA

“The opening of Pedrali's permanent showroom on the third floor of the Merchandise Mart has been fantastic. Thanks to Byron Morton, Linsdey Martin, and their employees for the precious support, their enthusiasm and expertise. They were able to support Pedrali's sales team in welcoming the numerous attendees to Neocon 2021. It was a great show, beyond our expectations!” - Monica Pedrali, CEO, Pedrali

“Our NeoCon 2021 experience was so exciting—great to see the energy from attendees and especially inspiring to hear the positive reactions from our design community about Hightower's new showroom. I'm so proud of the time and detailed attention our team put into transforming our Chicago space. We built on the success of our award-winning 2019 debut here at theMART, leading with optimism, adding new textures, patterns, and overall having fun and taking some risks! For any who could not attend NeoCon this year, I invite you to visit hightoweraccess.com for a tour—we're warmly welcoming all, whether it be in person or virtually.” - Natalie Hartkopf, co-founder & CEO, Hightower

NeoCon's online platform, the [NeoCon Hub](#), will feature exhibitor information, programming livestream recordings and Virtual CEU tracks through November 6. Visit [NeoCon.com](#) for upcoming details on NeoCon 2022, June 13-15, 2022.

For showroom, exhibitor, and general NeoCon news, images, and real-time information, follow NeoCon Shows on the following: [Facebook \(@NeoConShows\)](#), [Twitter \(@NeoCon_Shows\)](#), and [Instagram \(@NeoCon_Shows\)](#).

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About NeoCon: NeoCon is the world's leading platform and most important event for the commercial interiors industry, held each year at theMART in Chicago. Since launching in 1969, NeoCon has served as the annual gathering place for the commercial design world's manufacturers, dealers, architects, designers, end-users, design organizations and media. The three-day event showcases game-changing products and services from close to 500 leading and emerging companies—providing unparalleled access to the latest and most innovative solutions. A robust educational program of keynote presentations and CEU sessions offers world-class expertise and insight about today's most relevant topics as well as the future of commercial design. [www.neocon.com](#)

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About theMART: theMART (formerly The Merchandise Mart), located in the center of the sought-after River North submarket, is interwoven into the fabric of Chicago as an innovator in business, technology, culture, art, media and more. It is one of the world's leading commercial buildings, wholesale design centers and the preeminent international business location in Chicago. Encompassing 4.2 million gross square feet, theMART spans two city blocks, rises 25 stories, and is visited by an average of 30,000 people each business day and nearly 10 million people annually. Offering continuous innovation and creativity from leading manufacturers and design forward showrooms, theMART serves as the home to Chicago's most creative and technologically innovative companies.