



## **NeoCon Announces Compelling New Virtual Programming Explores 2021 “Design Anew” Theme**

**(Chicago, IL - February 2021)** [NeoCon](#) is pleased to announce a topical new virtual programming series that builds off the show's 2021 theme "Design Anew" and leads into the in-person event scheduled for October 4–6 at theMART in Chicago. To stay connected and provide invaluable education, networking, and inspiration, starting this spring, event organizers have developed a rich online offering with live sessions from March–May and dozens of expanded virtual modules, including CEUs, taking place throughout June and October—all designed to complement the on-site event.

The March–May schedule will feature two-day programs centered around some of today's most pressing design challenges and opportunities. March will focus on "Designing the Next Workplace," April will shine the spotlight on "Designing Well," and May will explore "Designing in a Digital World."

Lisa Simonian, Vice President of Marketing, theMART, says, "We are all adapting to a new world, responding with fresh ideas on design and its effect on how we live and work. As we continue to virtually connect with the NeoCon community, we wanted to provide educational sessions leading up to the show that are timely, essential, and thought-provoking. The March programming will take a deep dive into the future of the office and of work itself—from exploring the new office ecosystem, examining how other design sectors might influence workplace design, to rethinking how virtual and built environments can merge into one seamless experience."

Details for the March programming series, "A Return to Togetherness: Designing the Next Workplace" are listed below. Subsequent programming will be announced in the coming weeks. For more details and to register, visit [www.neocon.com](http://www.neocon.com).

### **Wednesday, March 24:**

**11AM CDT**  
**"The Office as an Ecosystem"**

Why will we return to offices in the future? While working remotely has proven a success for most companies during the pandemic, people are missing other people: work is getting done, yet collaboration, decision-making and serendipitous creative sparks can prove challenging. In the future, the opportunity to work together in person will place the physical office at the center of a new work ecosystem. This office will be less about a place to work and more about a hub for connection and collaboration across both physical and digital dimensions. Together we'll discuss how the physical workplace will need to evolve from an obligation into a destination, and become an integrated ecosystem of flexible spaces designed for multiple activities. Our conversation will investigate the opportunities as well as the challenges in designing spaces and products for this new office ecosystem: provide insight into how the future of the office is taking shape, contextualized within macro lifestyle consumer shifts that look two to five years ahead; show how to build an efficient long-term strategy to engage with the new future workforce that is being delineated; and explore the products that will not only meet but also help anticipate the needs of such a workforce, as well as the key sectors to invest into.

**Speakers:**

**Gemma Riberti, Head of Lifestyle & Interiors, WGSN Lifestyle & Interiors**

**1PM CDT**

**“The Power of Together: Reimagining our Future Workplaces”**

As our hybrid future of work comes into focus, smart organizations are leveraging unprecedented flexibility and choice that will empower employees to design their own experiences. The hybrid workplace represents an entirely new model, requiring different space types, more integration of new collaborative technologies, and an entirely new connection between employees and management. These changes will cause major impacts on company culture and policies that will require new partnerships and tighter synchronicity across internal organizations. This session will explore the benefits, opportunities, and risks of this new era of the workplace and will arm attendees with the tools and insights they need to navigate this bright new future of work. Learn how Adobe, which was in the midst of the largest workplace transformation in its history when the pandemic hit, is planning for a very different future, one where its employees are at the center of everything they do.

**Speakers:**

**Randy Howder, IIDA, AIA, Managing Director, Principal, Gensler**

**Natalie Engels, IIDA, Principal, Global Workplace Practice Leader, Gensler**

**Eric Kline, Director of Global Workplace Experience, Adobe**

**3PM CDT**

**“The Power of Place—The New Next Workplace”**

COVID-19 will not only change the way we work, it will change how we interact with people and physical objects. As we return to the workplace, we will have to not only rethink the way we engage with the space, but how we interact with each other. A new social dynamic will be created with potential for unease, increased anxiety and conflict. Adding that to the fact that we are living in a world where we are constantly connected, and the in-flow of information seems never-ending, the inability to disconnect is causing a dramatic increase in stress levels amongst workers today. We are also living in a time where exponential change is being driven by advances and rapid development of new autonomous technology. Hence, we are seeing the parallel rise of the machine age and the rise of the human factor. These two streams were already converging in the workplace and changing not only the tools we use, but when, where and how we work as well. Going forward we need to create environments that can help accommodate all and address the physical and social challenges we now face.

**Speakers:**

**Daniel Herriott, LEED® GA, ASSOC. IIDA, Director of Design, Interiors, HOK**  
**Gale Moutrey, Global VP/Brand Experience + Workplace Innovation, Steelcase Inc.**  
**Diana Stanisic, IIDA, ASID, Interior Designer, Associate, HOK**

**Thursday, March 25**

**11AM CDT**

**“How Other Design Sectors Can Influence the Future of Workplace Design”**

The appetite of today's workforce to work wherever and however they want continues to grow. The role of the office is quickly changing from a traditional 9–5 mandate, to more of a hub for collaboration celebrating corporate culture and brand identity. Business owners are searching for new, innovative ways to achieve intuitive connection between employees and this new place of work. As such, the role of designers must adapt and explore new ways of facilitating these new connections. ONE Global Design is a strategic alliance of best-in-class Architecture and Interior Design firms bringing together industry expertise, talent, and thought leadership. This panel of ONE Global Design members will explore how techniques and strategies from other design sectors can better inform workplace design in the future.

**Speakers:**

**Eric Yorath, MFAD, BFA, BCIN, LEED AP, Principal, Figure3**

**Mardi Najafi, Director, Retail Design, Figure3**

**Sherif Ayad, Founder and President, ID & Design International**

**Bob Fox, Chairman and Principal, FOX Architects**

**1PM CDT**

**“Changing Face of Design – How the Design Industry Is Supporting the Workforce Differently”**

In 2020 the world as we knew it shifted. Our roles as designers, architects, technologists and strategists have allowed us to accommodate for this shift by pushing our creativity even further. We are no longer tethered to designing only physical environments for our clients; we are being challenged to rethink the way the virtual and built environments merge into one seamless ecosystem supporting the distributed workforce globally. With the urgency to foster employee engagement, organizations are willing to experiment and reinvent, now more than ever. IA will discuss three fundamental ways it is collaborating with clients through this paradigm shift, and share lessons learned. These include the creation and use of the virtual environment, workplace experience applications, and technology integration into the physical workplace.

**Presenters:**

**Neil Schneider, IIDA, Design Director, IA Interior Architects**

**Guy Messick, AIA, Director of Design Intelligence, IA Interior Architects**

**Tish Kruse, RID, LEED AP, Senior Director of Workplace Strategy, IA Interior Architects**

**Ray Ray Ehscheid, RDI, Associate IIDA, Director of Client Services, IA Interior Architects**

NeoCon 2021 will take place from October 4–6, 2021 at theMart in Chicago. Registration will open in June. 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 both leading companies and emerging talent—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](http://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. As the largest privately held commercial building in the United States, 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.