

get- ting it right

Performance + People + Planet

By Douglas Quenqua

ANNETTE STELMACK, ALLIED Member ASID, LEED AP, an independent designer and sustainability consultant in Denver, has been trying to design sustainable interiors for nearly 30 years. But until recently, trying was sometimes the best she could do.

“Ten years ago it was a nightmare finding sustainable products,” she recalls. “Really, there was nothing out there.”

Blame technology, blame an indifferent public—heck, blame the designers. Whatever the cause, environmentally friendly products—especially ones that didn’t sacrifice style—were hard to come by until relatively recently. Demand among architects, designers and clients simply wasn’t there, so manufacturers weren’t making it a priority. Just ask anyone who worked in a plastic- and asbestos-lined workspace during the 1980s. But things change.



Acuity Chair by Allsteel, Industry Partner of ASID/

The Acuity Chair by ASID Industry Partner Allsteel "hits the sweet spot" between aesthetics, affordability and sustainability, says Mike Veal, the company's vice president of sustainability. Acuity represents a commitment to sustainability throughout the manufacturing process and the life of the product.

- The Acuity retails for about \$1,500
- The chair is 90 percent recyclable
- Made from more than 26 percent post-consumer recycled material
- More than 50 percent of its original materials contain recycled content
- Uses renewable wind energy credits for manufacturing

- The chair won Cradle to Cradle Silver certification from McDonough Braungart Design Chemistry
- The chair won Scientific Certification Systems' Indoor Advantage Gold certification
- A take-back program ensures the Acuity will not end up in a landfill at the end of its life cycle.



SmarTouch Window Lock by Milgard/

Milgard Windows and Doors did not set out to make a window lock that would make life easier for people with arthritis or other disabilities. "Our engineers were working to make a lock that was secure but easy to open for the general population," Emily Ness, marketing specialist with Milgard, says. Once it was done, "we were playing with some samples here in the office and someone said it would make a good candidate for the Arthritis Foundation Ease-of-Use program."

- SmarTouch won the 2007 Arthritis Foundation Ease-of-Use Commendation
- The Industrial Designers Society of America and *BusinessWeek* honored the lock with the 2008 International Design Excellence Award.
- SmarTouch boasts easy one-touch operation
- Windows with SmarTouch can open or close with minimal effort
- Easy to use for those who suffer from arthritis or other hand and arm injuries
- SmarTouch is recessed into the window frame for a sleek, streamlined look
- The lock's recessed position makes it possible to tell from a distance whether the window is secured

"There are probably more than three dozen organizations now that help to qualify a product from the point of view of sustainability, and every day new products are coming on board," Stelmack points out. "The number of products has grown exponentially. It's phenomenal."

So, what's changed? Plenty, though not everyone agrees on when the shift began. Some point to the "sick building" syndrome that swept through the United States in the 1980s, making office workers aware for the first time of the impact their workspaces could have on their health. Others point to the drumbeat of media attention on global warming in recent years, making everyone more willing to spend money on "green" products. And some think the spike in building-related asthma complications have taken their toll on the public consciousness.

Whatever the reason, furniture, carpets, paints, even light bulbs that marry style and sustainability, are more available than ever before, ushering in a golden age for designers who want to create eco-friendly spaces that also inspire.

"I am now seeing lots of innovation, and lots of manufacturers are getting more and more interested [in sustainability], and more excited about it because they know it's important to us," says Claire E. Tamburro, ASID, of design firm Austin Kuester in Alexandria, Va.

But sustainability is only part of the story. The desire for social responsibility that is sweeping the design community today extends to making lives better for clients across the board. And there is no shortage these days of stylish products that are as beneficial as they are beautiful.

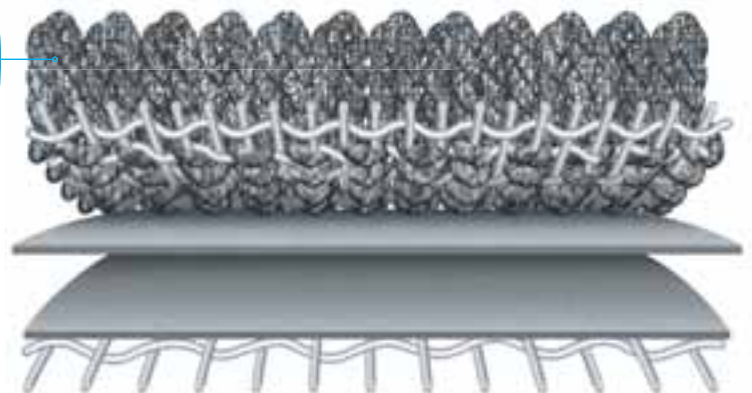
"We have 76 million aging baby boomers out there who are going to need a place to help care for aging parents or family members," says Michael A. Thomas, FASID, CAPS, president of Design Collective Group in Jupiter, Fla. "And these are



Integra HP RE Carpet Backing by Mannington Commercial/

Sometimes what makes your life easier can also make it better. Take, for example, Mannington Commercial's Integra HP RE carpet backing, which was designed to improve mobility for hospital patients who rely on wheelchairs, but turns out also to eliminate a serious health risk.

- Enables seamless carpeting between rooms, allowing easier mobility for people who use wheelchairs or other assisted walking devices
- Eliminating seams also eliminates a significant gathering place for bacteria
- Contains a minimum of 10 percent post-consumer recycled content
- Backing is fully recyclable via Mannington's LOOP carpet reclamation program





Nala Chair by Brandrud and Herman Miller, Industry Partner of ASID/ Hospital furniture is not generally associated with cutting-edge design, but ASID Industry Partner Herman Miller's Nala chair could change that. Designed with patients and caregivers in mind, this stylish, beautifully contoured chair moves in unique ways to accommodate patients with limited mobility.



- Nala's suspension system reduces the effort required for patients to stand up
- The chair's back and seat operate as a single unit, opening up as the patient reclines and pivoting at the ankle, knee and hip
- Unique motion gives the patient a place to rest his feet as he stands up
- Back legs contain a pair of wheels that allow the chair to be moved easily
- Arms swing up and out of the way for ease of use by patients and caregivers

people who really have a higher education and deeper pockets; they travel, they have a higher design aesthetic," creating a market for high-end aging in place and other health care products.

In fact, many designers today insist that the line is blurring between sustainable products and those that benefit aging or disabled populations. Some say that line never existed in the first place.

"There is absolutely no separation for me between universal design and sustainable design," says Victoria Schomer, ASID, LEED AP, principal of Green Built Environments in Asheville, N.C.

"You cannot extrapolate one from the other," Leslie Shankman-Cohn, ASID, CAPS, of Jill Hertz Interior Design in Memphis, Tenn., agrees. "You want that energy efficient light bulb so you don't have to change it as often. You want low-PVC products because someone older or with respiratory problems needs to breathe easier. All of these issues pertain to all of us."

To honor the commitment to social responsibility displayed by today's designers, ASID ICON presents five products that make a difference, reflecting the industry's desire to preserve natural resources and reduce waste while making it easier for all people to live life unencumbered.

The products we have chosen to highlight are an award-winning office chair that's as sleek as it is eco-friendly; a streamlined window-locking system that aids arthritis sufferers and ensures safety; a line of vibrant paints made from earth-friendly mineral powder; a carpeting system that eliminates a previously invisible—but potentially fatal—risk to hospital patients; and a hospital chair that moves with a patient's body, reducing the effort required to stand, sit or transfer from a bed.

Some of these products are the result of years of research into saving energy or helping people age in place. Others were developed with an eye on style and only later revealed their benefits to the earth or a population in need. But all represent the new wave of social responsibility among today's designers, a trend that promises to change not only how designers do their jobs, but how we all live in the 21st century. **i**

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Polychromie Le Corbusier by kt.Color The Polychromie Le Corbusier line of paints was born when Swiss paint manufacturer kt.Color set out to discover the secrets of turn-of-the-century architect Le Corbusier. kt.Color founder Katrin Trautwein researched extensively to re-create the colors as accurately as possible. The result is a line of paints that are brilliantly colorful—and drawn directly from the earth in a low-impact process. "Our philosophy is to use as little as necessary," explains Trautwein.

- Created in an exclusive partnership with the Fondation Le Corbusier, based on the architect's original color palette
- Polychromie paints use the same mineral pigments that Corbusier used in the mid-20th century
- Raw, natural earth pigments are made from colorful clays found in the earth's crust, using the least amount of energy to grind and process