

OFITEC Madrid October 2011 – A Review



Las Ventas bullring, Madrid

Visitors to Madrid for the OFITEC show were blessed with sunshine and showers, some torrential. It was however pleasantly mild and coats, scarves and hats remained generally unworn. The city is large, with great mixture of well maintained and attractively presented traditional buildings - and some stunning modern architecture. Full of world class art galleries and museums, great restaurants and tapas bars, it's a place where the senses can easily reel. Be prepared for late nights though; restaurants rarely open before 9pm and stay crowded until the early hours. "Going on" to a club or flamenco bar can mean greeting the dawn.

The show was held in the Feria de Madrid, one stop from Madrid Airport, on the super fast and spotlessly clean Madrid Metro. The centre itself is extremely modern and very large - 200,000 sq m - and made up of 12 exhibition halls and conference centres allowing several shows to be held concurrently, creating a nicely buzzy atmosphere.



Feria de Madrid

This was a positive because OFITEC itself in one hall of 3,000 sq m was disappointingly small. Last held in 2008, when there were more than 180 companies showing, this time, the economic situation in Spain meant there were but 34 exhibitors, mostly from Spain with a smattering from Italy and Portugal.

The exhibitors had mostly made a considerable effort to put on a good show and some of the stands had clearly been well designed and required serious investment. There were plenty of visitors, mainly from Spain, who were able to see plenty of newly launched products.

Spanish office furniture companies are amongst the most design-conscious in Europe and there were plenty of examples of intelligent, quality design on display.

Akaba from the Basque region in the north of Spain showed *Ados* designed by Miguel Angel Ciganda. A pretty injection moulded and steel chair, stacking up to 55 high and with optional arms and a trolley, the chair was shown in a range of bold, challenging colours.



Ados from Akaba

Inclass from Alicante in Spain's south east on the Mediterranean were another seating specialist company and showed several new products including *neos* from designer Aitor Gracia de Vicuña. This bench range is intended for waiting rooms come in sizes for one to four people and in different finishes.



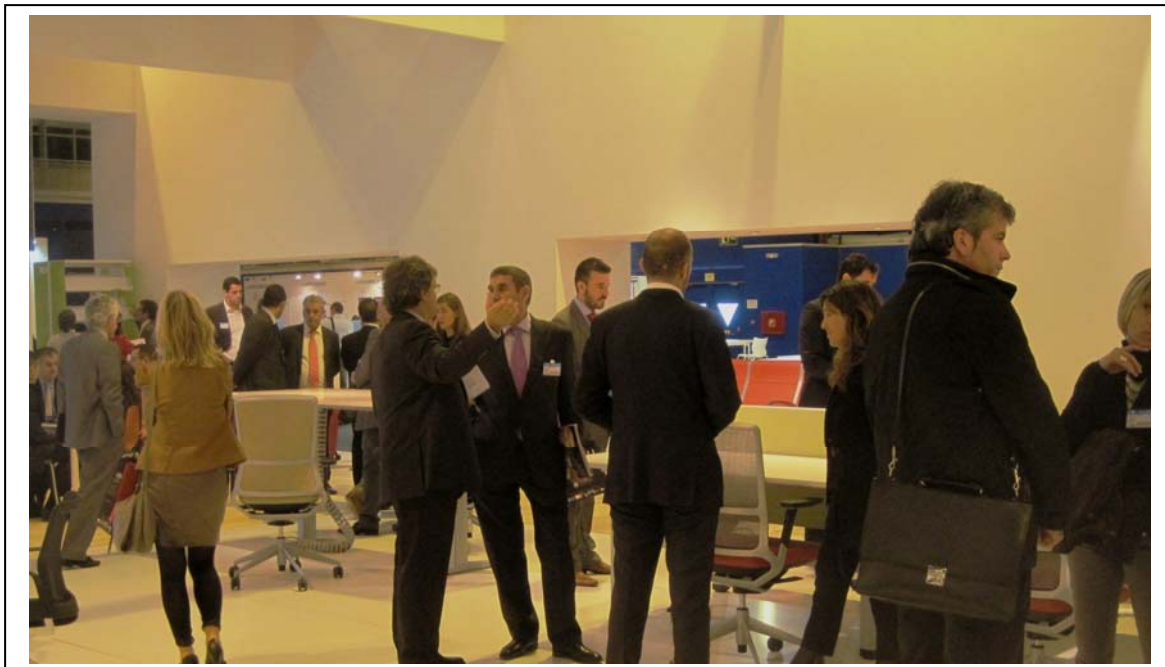
Neos from Inclass



May from Inclass

They also showed *May* by Frances Rife which featured a steel rod frame in black, white, silver or chrome and a variety of finishes for its seat and back.

Actiu, one of the largest office furniture businesses in Spain and a genuinely international company, had the largest and very busy stand at the show – just over 600 sq m. Visitors were able to see several new product offerings from the companies broad spread of workstations, task and auditorium seating including new steel shell beam seating product



Actiu stand



Steel beam seating from Actiu

The only true breakout seating on show – the concept has yet to catch hold in Spain – came from the Portuguese company, **Guialmi**



Guialmi

Another attractive injection stacking chair was presented by Luyando, a small seating specialist from the town of the same name in northern Spain, near Bilbao.



Luyando

As for colours, with a few notable exceptions, blacks and whites predominated. Appearance tended to take priority over comfort and efficiency and there was virtually no technology or props of any kind on display, as if the furniture was to be viewed rather than used. The visitors were as stylishly and formally dressed as expected and, in taking seriously their visit to a disappointingly small show, they worked hard as if trying to repay the confidence the exhibitors were displaying in what is clearly a very tough market.

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