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**The Museum of Modern Art**

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**EXHIBITION AT MoMA FEATURES INNOVATIVE DESIGN SOLUTIONS FOR THE WORKPLACE OF THE NEAR FUTURE**

**Six International Design Teams Redefine the Office with Newly Conceived Work Environments and Tools**

*New York, January 2001* - Beginning February 8, 2001, The Museum of Modern Art presents ***Workspheres***, a unique and forward-looking exhibition that examines the changing nature of the workplace and the role of design in creating effective solutions to accommodate these changes. In the last decade, dramatic innovations in the management of time and the balance between private and professional life have caused work to lose its immediate identification with the office as a room or space in a designated building. The exhibition sheds light on many theories about our working future, featuring custom-built models of new tools and environments conceived for the exhibition by six international design teams, as well as selected examples of products and design solutions currently in existence. Organized by Paola Antonelli, Curator, and Sarah Robins, Research Assistant, Department of Architecture and Design, ***Workspheres*** will be on view through April 22, 2001.

"Work has become transportable and ubiquitous, almost a state of mind," notes Ms. Antonelli. "Like a bubble of pure concentration that one can turn on and off with or without the help of tangible tools, work is where you are. The title of the exhibition comes from the concept of the individual workspace as a halo, a private and personal space, that better defines and enables interaction among people and with work tools."

In preparation for the exhibition, Ms. Antonelli consulted with an international advisory group and conducted an in-depth analysis of contemporary work practices and needs. The advisory board consists of Larry Keeley, president of Doblin Group, Chicago, and an expert on design strategy and innovation; Bruce Mau, a philosopher and designer, from Toronto, Canada; Aura Oslapas, designer and consultant on behavioral design, San Francisco, California; and John Thackara, Director of the *Doors of Perception* design conference, Amsterdam. The preliminary research conducted by Ms. Antonelli and the advisory board, along with many unofficial advisors, attempted to achieve a greater understanding of contemporary work practices and needs, in order to set limits, create categories, and delineate briefs for the designers. The topics addressed by the briefs include the reorganization of time and data; nomadic and domestic work; space for creativity, isolation, and relaxation within an existing office; individuality within a corporate environment; and the creation of a new workstation for the official office.

The public's interaction is also an integral part of the exhibition. Research for the exhibition included a survey of work experiences of visitors to the MoMA Web site. The survey may be accessed at

**www.moma.org/survey/survey.html**. Anecdotal excerpts from the wide number of responses to the survey are available in the exhibition and online at **www.moma.org/workspheres/** starting on February 8, 2001.

The participating design teams include Ada Tolla and Giuseppe Lignano, from New York-based firm LOT/EKarchitecture; John Maeda and Joe Paradiso, from the MIT Media Laboratory, Cambridge, Massachusetts, with lead designers Ari Benbasat, Elise Co, Mark Feldmeier, and Ben Fry; Jeff Reuschel and Ronna Alexander, from Haworth, Inc., Michigan, with Brian Alexander from Optika Studios, Michigan, Christopher Budd and Kevin Estrada, Studios Architecture, Washington and New York, and Brad Paley and Hai Ng, Digital Image Design, Inc., New York; Japanese designer Naoto Fukasawa from the Tokyo branch of the international product design firm IDEO; Barcelona-based designer Martí Guixé; and Dutch designer Hella Jongerius from Jongeriuslab.

The resulting models created by each team address the individual workspace and suggest possible improvements in the use of technologies and materials available now or in the near future. Many of the tools and models featured in the exhibition concern personal work environments within the conventional office. Others, including the commissions by Jongerius and Guixé, examine domestic and nomadic work, possibilities that have become increasingly viable as physical presence in an office is no longer so crucial.

In conducting their initial research, Ms. Antonelli and the advisory board found that time and pressure were recurrent themes, generated by the difficulties of juggling work and family, of keeping up with technology, and of coping with a high volume of work. Today, many employers use comfort as a way to build loyalty in a high-turnover market, often bringing the attributes of home into an office space. A new sense of hierarchy is having an impact on architecture, and dress codes have moved in a casual direction. Designers and manufacturers are moving away from muted corporate colors toward more freedom of choice and customization.

"Telework," or work that is executed in locations away from the main office, was initially facilitated by faxes, e-mail, and courier services. According to an article by Michael Lewis that appeared in *The New York Times Magazine* (March 2000), the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics notes that approximately 12 million out of 131 million workers in the United States fit the description of "workers with alternative arrangements." In a traditional employment situation, telework responds to the employee's need to improve the balance between home and work by eliminating or cutting down commuting time, by reducing costs, and by providing increased mobility and flexibility, making for a healthier personal and family life and leaving more time for recreation. It also helps the company maintain loyalty and a sense of well-being among its employees, allows for a better use of the existing facilities, and ultimately increases productivity. The tenets of contemporary telework are applied in the exhibition to the projects that deal with nomadic and domestic offices.

**A Space for Creativity, Isolation, and Relaxation: LOT/EKarchitecture**

The project developed by LOT/EKarchitecture investigates a small modular space suitable for an individual or a team, to be used for creativity, isolation, and relaxation. The theme developed from the idea that startup

companies can flourish despite limited resources and space, and despite a lack of equipment or the infrastructure of a conventional office, as demonstrated by the number of successful business enterprises born in garages, bedrooms, or basements. The designers were asked to make their solution low-cost and modular, a suggestion that anticipates the growth and expansion phases of a business.

For their project, ***Inspiro-tainer***, LOT/EKarchitecture reconfigured the interior space of an airplane cargo container into a versatile space for inspiration, relaxation, concentration, and privacy. The project provides a more flexible character to the workplace by inserting private spaces that allow users to retreat from the traditional office environment. The mobile unit is set on casters and padded with soundproof foam. A preexisting panel facilitates electrical cabling, ventilation, and other climatic concerns. A right angle cut into one corner gives the pod a hinged lid and allows users the option of working in a private, isolated space or in an open unit that enables interaction with people in other containers.

Inside the unit is a reclinable chaise longue that can be manually or electronically adjusted. A desk with a slim-line computer, a keyboard, and a mouse can extend out towards the chair, or be pushed back and folded down against the opposite wall. The pod is equipped with a DVD system, a computer, a stereo, a telephone, a rear projector, and a large projection screen. Additionally, a Plexiglas panel on one wall can allow the screen to be viewed from outside the pod. Two ***Inspiro-tainers***, one open and one closed, will be on display.

**Redesigning Time: John Maeda and Joe Paradiso from MIT Media Lab**

One of the most apparent and widespread problems today is a sense of loss of control over time and information. The project developed by John Maeda and Joe Paradiso examines communication and organization, protocols, and our inherent need to both have and break routines. It addresses the inadequacy and complexity of most current tools that organize and store information and reflects our adventures in the attempt to schedule time. The resulting project, ***Atmosphere***, is a multifaceted communication tool that adapts preexisting technology into a new information interface to manage the scheduling and storing of data. Here, a wide screen presents a large "organic" cloud of information that can be manipulated by three handheld devices mounted on plinths in the gallery. All three devices navigate the same information but at different levels of detail - macro, medium, and micro. The interface design presents information to allow not only the appreciation of discrete entries but also the monitoring of the intensity of work life at all times. The interface has significant potential as a tool for group presentations, organizing data in an immediately visual format, that can provide an alternative to the standard array of folders and windows presented by many of today's computers and organizers.

**Designing a New Work Station: Jeff Reuschel and Ronna Alexander, Haworth, Inc.; Brian Alexander, Optika Studios; Christopher Budd and Kevin Estrada, Studios Architecture; Brad Paley and Hai Ng, Digital Image Design, Inc.**

Several designers from different companies were grouped together because they similarly based their proposals on the use of cognitive processes. The designers of the project ***Mind'Space*** draw parallels between the

characteristics of offices and the functions of the human brain, envisioning a workspace consciously organized to mimic how information is organized in our heads.

For the project, two key cognitive functions of the brain - memory and attention - are identified and embodied in work tools. While memory is about the organization and storage of data and emotions according to a highly personalized system, attention allows one to consciously and selectively focus and filter information.

An example of how memory theories can be applied to the work environment is *Cell Storage*, a 1997 prototype by Haworth's Ideation Group on view in the exhibition. Rather than providing document storage in the horizontal/vertical grid format of traditional filing cabinets, the storage unit presents users with irregularly shaped and positioned spaces that imitate the seemingly disorganized piles of papers frequently found on our desks. The contents of the cabinet are easier to remember because each cell is unique.

***Mind'Space*** applies memory, or the ability to record, store, and retrieve information, to an environment that stores information-rich articles (or "artifacts"). The workspace comprises a surface that seamlessly blends into a video/computer screen that allows workers to recall and retrieve office materials and supplies through visual, olfactory, tactile, and auditory cues.

The project incorporates visual and auditory input buffers that enable a user to control the impact of environmental surroundings. The workspace also separates relevant from lower-priority information and directs the user to it when most appropriate.

**Individuality within a Corporate Identity: Naoto Fukasawa, IDEO, Tokyo, and team**

The issue of managing personalization, customization, and privacy within the workplace has spurred much debate. How does a worker retain his or her own sphere within the boundaries of a larger organization? Taking into account social relationships and human behavior, such as the effects of technology on people's movements, designer Naoto Fukasawa and his team have created work tools for optimal customization of a space within a corporate environment.

The project, ***personal skies***, includes a chair that changes color according to the user's clothing. Additionally, a special device allows users to create a personalized work atmosphere by selecting one of three different "sky" projections. Favorite images of the sky in various seasons and weather conditions or in a particular location - one's home or a favorite vacation spot - can delineate the user's space while sending a visible personal message to the rest of the office, and the three skies featured in the exhibition offer just an example. With this project, spaces within the corporate environment are transformed into individualized niches that can reflect a worker's moods, stylistic preferences, or frames of mind.

**Nomadic Work: Martí Guixé**

Martí Guixé has developed ***H!Bye***, a conceptual project that considers the mental and physical adjustments necessary to work away from home. Based

on consultations with a dietician and an anthropologist, and influenced by the designer's own extensive travels for work, ***H!Bye*** addresses elements necessary to the worker's interaction with new people and places, desire for familiar surroundings, and ability to work well in any environment.

Guixé's project comprises 21 different models of pills that embody psychological, physical, or personal concepts. For example, "Concentration Is Everywhere" is an inedible, hard, and irregularly shaped pill, intended to be rolled around in the mouth during contemplative periods, as one might chew on the tip of a pen. "Relaxation Is Everywhere" is soft and infused with an herbal relaxant, providing a similar effect to chewing gum or smoking a cigarette, while the "Oral Communication" pill gives the user fresh smelling breath. The "Go Crazy" pill is made of a metal that reacts with dental fillings, intended to refresh the mind.

Guixé chose the form of the pill to underscore the needs for portability and ease of use while commenting on the habitual consumption of vitamins for good health and pharmaceuticals in times of sickness. The pills are a poetic reminder of common-sense suggestions and are meant to be dispensed in generic environments such as airports, train stations, and hotels. Two vending machines will be on display as part of Guixé's installation. Visitors can take away with them an illustrated menu card that diagrams and explains the purpose of each pill.

***Domestic Work: Hella Jongerius***

While more people are beginning to work from home, either in their own businesses or as part of a corporate program, home offices are frequently set up in spare rooms not designed to serve as offices. This design brief required that the solution manage smallness, minimal infrastructure, and variable conditions and demands, such as the presence of family members, pets, and other functions typical of the home. ***My Soft Office*** by Hella Jongerius incorporates technology into a series of domestic objects, thereby facilitating a wide range of activities from within the home rather than simply ascribing a traditional office environment to one room.

Jongerius's project exploits the common phenomenon of creative thought while at rest and provides the ability to work from the comforts of the bedroom. For example, "Bed in Business," an extra-long bed manufactured by the Dutch firm Auping, is equipped with a computer screen at the foot of the bed that can be lowered and raised. The corners of the bed can be adjusted to upright, inclined, and horizontal positions. Additionally, a keyboard and mouse are embedded in "Smart Pillows" that employ touch-sensor technology, and complemented by two stereo loudspeaker-pillows.

"Power Patches," compact versions of the bed and pillows, are cushions that encourage lounging comfortably on the floor while working at a computer. The patches are portable and can be used in any room of the house. Cushioned by a soft gel that molds to fit the contours of the body, the patches transform the traditionally rigid method of sitting upright to work at a computer into a more relaxed position that is integrated with domestic life. Moreover, the use of color and textiles helps to discard negative associations about bringing work into the home.

**Current Products and Design Solutions for the Workplace**

The integrated exhibits accompanying the commissions examine experimental and customized work environments such as nomadic offices, domestic offices, official offices, and virtual work environments, as well as work tools that are in use in various countries. For example, many new office spaces have been designed to better stimulate the flow of ideas and creativity. On view is an adapted replica of an office by Hiroaki Kitano, whose team designed the AIBO robot-dogs for Sony; Kitano's design incorporates walls and a rear-projection table made from translucent materials that can be written on.

On view in the First Floor Garden Hall is the MaxiMog vehicle, a mobile home/office space designed by Bran Ferren and Thomas Ritter. Intended for worldwide expeditions in hard-to-reach locations, the SUV and trailer ensemble features a complete global communications system and driver aids that include a 12-camera video system with clearance views all around the vehicle, a computer system that provides worldwide digital moving maps, and other exceptional features.

***Workspheres*** also features new devices and units for information storage. For instance, a modular unit by Snowcrash, a company based in Sweden, integrates interchangeable storage units and a bag system that make it easy to transport files and equipment, facilitating work at both office and home. Likewise, a projected interface by Toronto-based Vizible delineates a new way of presenting stored data. Other works on view address a diverse range of working needs, including privacy for nomadic workers. Jennie Pineus's "cocoons," which can be worn over the head or over the entire body, provide privacy in public spaces, while Eliron Koronyo's *Ground Zero* booth affords an individual with an almost isolated workstation.

A selection of mobile phones indicates new currents in technology, while a display of office chairs reflects ergonomic breakthroughs and increased standards of comfort. A selection of duplicate chairs will be available for use by visitors at the computer kiosks in the exhibition.

***Workspheres*** follows the groundbreaking tradition of MoMA exhibitions that established design as an art form while highlighting its impact on and contributions to contemporary society. Projects at the Museum have included the *Low-Cost Furniture* competition (1948), for which some of the most notable designers in the United States were asked to provide viable home designs for the booming lower middle class; the *Good Design* series (1950-55), devoted to outstanding examples of functional home furnishings and design already on the market; and the *Taxi Project* (1976), a collaboration of commissioned concepts to redesign New York City's taxi cabs.

**PUBLICATION**

***Workspheres*** is accompanied by a major publication that gathers much of the preparatory thinking that preceded the exhibition, as well as a selection of good examples of products and concepts already in existence around the world. In addition to historical and cultural diversity, the publication also addresses such themes as individuality within a work organization, communication design, and the impact of digital technologies. The catalogue includes essays by Paola Antonelli, Larry Keeley, Christopher Budd, John Thackara, and Aura Oslapas, as well as interviews with Bruce Mau, Francis Duffy, and Michael Brill. An essay organized by Kayoko Ota addresses different work styles in four Asian cities, and correspondents from other locations around the world contribute narrations of their experiences. $35, distributed in the

United States and Canada by Harry N. Abrams, Inc.; Outside the United States and Canada by Thames and Hudson, Ltd., London. Available in the MoMA Book Store.

**WEB SITE**
The Museum has opened an online forum to gather ideas and opinions about work habits from a large audience. The public's interaction is an integral part of the exhibition, and responses will be integrated into the overall research for the exhibition. Anecdotal excerpts will also be made available online and in the exhibition in February. The survey may immediately be accessed at **www.moma.org/survey/survey.html**. The official Web site of the exhibition, at **www.moma.org/workspheres/**, documents and expands on the exhibition, and will be launched on February 8, 2001. It contains a complete checklist, images of the exhibits, a bibliography, and new projects.

**PUBLIC PROGRAMS**
A daylong symposium slated for April 20, 2001 will feature a panel of designers, architects, and members of the advisory group. Additionally, gallery talks, slide presentations, and artist talks will be presented in conjunction with the exhibition.

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