

# trendsetters

PTW spoke to the Design Challenge 2012 judging panel to find out what latest trends are affecting the airport seating industry. Here's the top six

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## Multifunctional design

■ A key trend identified by our panel of seating design experts is the desire for multifunctional, modular seating options that can be adapted to meet an airport's changing needs. With passenger figures rising, airports need to be able to expand terminals efficiently to meet this demand and having seating that can be easily extended and moved is a great advantage.

Paul Williams, CEO of Zoetig, explains, "The modern airport environment is no longer static and often subject to change due to both physical and commercial factors. The large open space of a modern terminal building is divided up using temporary structures that can easily be moved or replaced. For example, a terminal has many retail concessions that are constantly changing, so the layout of the seating must always change to accommodate this."

Manufacturers such as Zoetig, Brunner and Nurus are creating designs that can be repositioned and adapted to fit around the airport's needs. Zoetig's multifunctional seating range *inFINITE* (see *Infinite possibilities* on page 50) is seamless and can therefore be reconfigured over its 15-year lifetime to respond to changes within the airport terminal. Similarly, Brunner's Plot seating range offers multilevel seating that can be rearranged to accommodate different seating positions and terminal areas. Plot is suitable for both communal areas where the modules can be positioned to face one another and encourage informal communication, and in retail areas where they can be arranged sparsely to allow passengers to easily roam between concessions. Nurus' Caira seating range is a traditional-looking bench unit that has an innovative construction enabling it to be easily and quickly mounted and removed, therefore satisfying the airport's need to expand and adapt to passenger needs. ■



ABOVE: Brunner's Plot is easily reconfigured  
LEFT: Kusch+Co's seating at Paris Charles de Gaulle Airport  
BELOW: Nurus' Caira seating range





LEFT: The HUSH cocoon seat  
RIGHT: Vitra's Alcove Highback Work is great for business passengers



## Cocoon seating

As part of their overall airport experience, passengers are now expecting terminal operators to provide comfortable, private seating areas where they can relax before departure, and not just in the exclusive airline passenger lounges. Seating designers are creating curved and clustered seating areas throughout the terminal that cocoon users and provide peace and quiet away from the crowds.

Airports are now creating 'recomposure' zones, says Arconas' vice president of airport solutions, Lynn Gordon, which are lounge-like areas that allow passengers to spread out and relax. "Incorporating 'clusters' or soft-seating in these areas also

gives terminal operators a great opportunity to experiment with colour and enables them to create exciting aesthetics within the often sterile terminal environment," she adds.

The newest cocoon seat on the market is HUSH, created by Design Museum artist-in-residence Freyja Sewell. Manufactured using 100% wool felt with cushion stuffed with recycled wool fibres, HUSH was recently selected for Grand Designs Live as one of Kevin McCloud's 'Green Heroes'. Users can pull up the sides of the seat to create an enclosed space that can be completely closed to provide total privacy. While the seat is yet to be installed in an airport, HUSH would provide

travellers with the ultimate place to relax and rest and is representative of the future of airport seating. "With so many ways to connect more than ever we also need a way to escape, especially in stressful public environments like airports," Sewell explains.

Business travellers are also demanding more secluded spots where they can work undisturbed and in private. Companies such as Vitra have created alcove seating that provides customers with 'walled' seating areas where they can relax or work. The company's Alcove Highback Work uses three high walls to create a room within a room and offers acoustic properties that block out the noise of the airport. ■

Providing passengers with a sense of the country's social and cultural history and identity is important when designing an airport terminal, and seating plays an integral part in this process. "The airport is a country's business card," explains Vitra's head of Airport Division, Pascal Berberat. "It gives travellers their first impression of the country upon arrival and their last impression on departure. In this world of globalisation and uniformity we sense that airports have a strong desire and wish for a unique identity. The seating chosen for an airport can contribute in achieving the desired identity."

Nurus has also embraced the need to represent a country's heritage through its airport seating, explaining that while other areas of the airport such as retail and food and beverage outlets often reflect the culture of the country, airport seating can be forgotten. "We think that, in every place in the world, the airports should not only be international spaces but they should also reflect the culture of the country and should meet the needs and habits of the people using them," adds Guran Gokyay, managing partner at Nurus.

Many seating designers incorporate colours and materials that are specific to a country's heritage, and others take inspiration from the surrounding landscape to design innovative seating areas that double up as artwork. One such example is a recent installation at Edmonton International Airport in Canada. Kopperscape by Karim Rashid is constructed from fibreglass and LuminOre copper, and represents the Canadian copper penny. It also plays tribute to the Canadian landscape of tall mountains, snowy peaks and rivers. ■



Kopperscape at  
Edmonton International  
by Karim Rashid

## Cultural identity