



STYLEX SHOWROOM

Stylex Showroom Gets Silver LEED in the Mart

by Brad Powell

Chicago is a city of green roofs (why didn't I think of that) and LEED is certainly an integral part of the built environment, so much so that many in our industry are spending almost as much time learning how to save the Earth as improving our own built environment. Sad to say, things have come to that.

According to **Gregory Stock** (see *officeinsight* 1.17.11), we shouldn't worry too much about being unable to think ourselves out of the pending

environmental disasters and, according to Dr. Stock, even the Kyoto accord, for example, is only a drop in the bucket compared to the tides of environmental change. Still, many humans have evolved with a sense of personal responsibility that suggests a certain survival value in the action of individuals in a concerted way. **Robert Thurman**, Dr. Stock's debate partner, seems to find great value in that approach and we agree.

So it is that when a small company such as **Stylex** decides, as it did in 2010, to place a few stakes in the ground announcing what it stands for, we came to attention and saluted. (See *officeinsight*, 6.7.10, *Stylex: They're Golden*) That article introduced the Stylex **SAVA Chair**, a major commitment by the owners, the Golden cousins, to the future of the company and this industry. SAVA is a beautifully



SAVA: LEFT PROFILE



SAVA: FROM ABOVE

CITED:

"YOU CAN LIVE TO BE A HUNDRED IF YOU GIVE UP ALL THE THINGS THAT MAKE YOU WANT TO LIVE TO BE A HUNDRED."
—WOODY ALLEN

tailored ergonomic task/work/conference chair for which Stylex developed its own finely engineered tilt/swivel mechanism.

Innovative, yes, but in a very discreet and refined way, not the sort of splashy, idiosyncratic presentation to pique our need for novelty, but the kind of classic design and thoughtfulness that subtly reveal themselves over time.

In an equally understated way, Stylex did something else remarkable: It decided to redo its showroom and obtain LEED certification in the process. As one might expect, getting LEED certification in the Merchandise Mart, that mighty fortress constituting the world's largest commercial building and built just before the great Depression, is not an easy matter. The Mart itself obtained Silver certification in Fall of 2007 and, with 4.2 million sq.ft., it says it is the largest LEED certified building in the world.

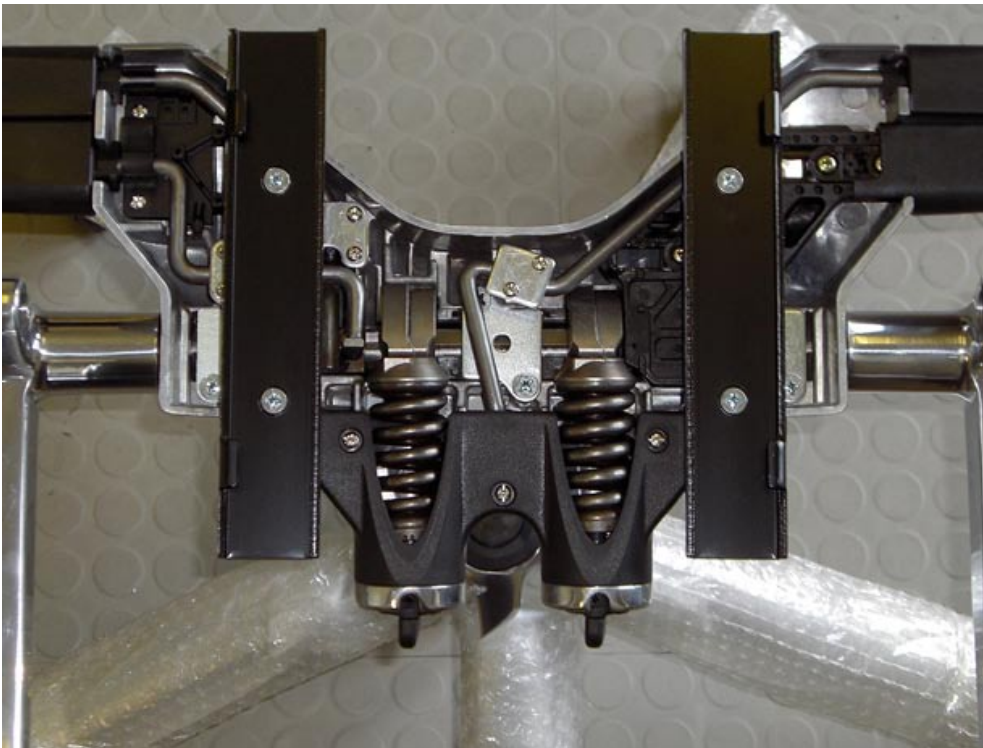
Talk about a drop in the bucket, Stylex's small 2,100 sq.-ft. showroom

on the third floor (#346) is not going to be anyone's tipping point, but the Golden's decided that they were going to do more than their bit, not only in increasing the splash for the SAVA, but also in being counted as an environmental advocate in this industry. So, in addition to a redesign of the showroom, creating a series of *use vignettes*, it went for LEED certification. Last week the company announced that it obtained LEED Silver certification.

By now, many may brush off LEED certification as an "expected," but Stylex's efforts were not just ordinary course of business, particularly for a small company. Of course, with enough money, anything can be done and Haworth's massive – and costly – effort in 2004 achieved Gold certification, to say nothing of the gazillion design awards. But beyond that, the Mart says it has only nine additional showrooms with Gold certification and four with Silver. But all of these were under CI v2.0 or earlier. Stylex's Silver

certification is the Mart's first ID+C v3.0. (Two to three others are in the process of getting certified with the USGBC.) Version 3 ostensibly required that Stylex get credits for water savings, even though its showroom had no plumbing. Initially, the company thought that it would have to bear the cost of replacing fixtures in the common bathrooms, but, after the project started, the Mart was able to determine that the USGBC standards had been amended to provide an exception for spaces with no plumbing. In the end, everything worked out in a reasonable fashion, wear-and-tear notwithstanding.

Stylex has always looked for design talent that dovetailed with its phi-



SOME BASIC TOOL AND DIE WORK YOU CAN UNDERSTAND AND RELY ON



TOM ZUROSKI, EASTLAKE STUDIO



CHRISTINA BROWN, EASTLAKE STUDIO

companies

losophy of a classic, refined aesthetic, combined with a low-key personality. “We found a perfect partner in the design team at Chicago’s **Eastlake Studio**,” said **John Golden**, president of Stylex. “They understood our core goal of presenting a serious level of sophistication and design in a beautiful, simple and sustainable way.” The Eastlake team of **Tom Zurowski**, managing principal, and **Christina Brown**, a young, LEED AP designer, began the redesign by removing the extraneous elements, always a good way to begin. Most important, the designers created meaningful and easily understandable spaces that inform visitors about some of the product uses, in context, while sensibly – for a relatively small space – keeping the inviting storefront approach.

One would think that it would be very hard to do much with a small space, but the Eastlake team actually made it seem much more spacious

and accommodating by using some inventive segmentation, which, through the use of materials – salvaged wood and, particularly, recycled cardboard – did much to catch the eye of passers-by at NeoCon 2010, without distracting from this year’s star, the SAVA, and the other Stylex family members.

Eastlake conceived of the showroom as four zones according to product applications. Only the front and back zones have what we might consider a space divider. On one side of this divider are pivoting panels crafted from recycled cardboard that has been partially stripped to expose its honeycomb infrastructure. (Ms. Brown personally did much of the stripping. Her idea, we suppose, but we like the hands-on approach.) Across from these panels is a display structure built of laminated recycled sheets of cardboard, stacked horizontally for strength and provided with cut-out openings to display the new SAVA Chairs. Interior mirrors line the openings to enable easy product viewing from different perspectives.

Expectedly, Stylex has the SAVA chair upfront, where it begins the

lesson in the SAVA versatility. SAVA’s straight-forward, tailored look fits in anywhere, just like a woman’s simple black dress. In the front half of the showroom, SAVA is used in workstation and conferencing vignettes. In the back, Stylex displays its lounge and multi-purpose seating.

The glass table in the conferencing vignette obviously gives a clear view of SAVA all around. The white workstation grouping shows SAVA, armless in a work-a-day mesh. (See top) If you are thinking of a dainty assistant in an armless, sheer blouse, rubbing against a mesh chair back, don’t worry. Designer **Sava Cvek** has had extensive experience using and working with mesh fabrics, and has engineered a smooth material without the roughness and too-taught edge of some mesh chairs. The mesh totally fits with the smooth tailored look.

In the cafe vignette, a salvaged wood top on a metal frame enriches adjacent chairs, while the lounge is focused on a flat screen television set into a millwork wall of reclaimed wood.

Congratulations to Stylex for getting



BRONZE MESH



SAVA CHAIRS

companies

the LEED certification. According to Mr. Golden, comments from designers about SAVA are aptly summed up by "Wonderful." **Matt Ruder** and the Ruder Group represent Stylex in Chicago and played a part in this process. ■

Websites:

<http://www.stylexseating.com/>

<http://www.therudergroup.com/>

<http://www.eastlakestudio.com/>

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