

The inside gen from ergonomics to materials to lighting with three experts in their own fields, plus 12 pages of the best products around

# ✓ Tech Spec

## THE EXPERTS ▾



### Levent Çağlar

*Ergonomics consultant, FIRA*

Levent heads the ergonomic unit at FIRA (Furniture Industry Research Association), one of Europe's top three furniture technology centres. He is recognised as the key UK ergonomics expert in office and school furniture, and has worked with designers to create some iconic furniture pieces.

### Test Bench 82

The new Airpad task chair from Interstuhl comes under Levent Çağlar's scrutiny for its performance, ease of use, comfort and more



### Jill Entwistle

*Editor & writer*

Jill is an editor and writer who specialises in architectural lighting, following 12 years as editor of Light magazine. She has authored two Designing with Lighting books: Hotels, and Bars and Restaurants, and is an affiliate member of the International Association of Lighting Designers.

### Light & Tech 84

Jill Entwistle presents a round-up of some of the latest lighting products to get their launch at the Arc Show 2011



### Annabelle Filer

*Creative director, SCIN*

Annabelle calls herself an 'architectural deviant with a passion for materials'. She is the creative director for SCIN, the materials sourcing and research company, and prefers to spend her evenings snuggled up to Plastics Federation Monthly and the like, much to the dismay of her family and friends.

### Materials 88

A new generation of materials is proving that less is more – most welcome in these times of austerity, says Annabelle Filer

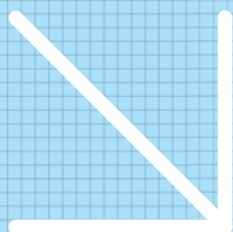
## PRODUCT CATEGORIES

Ecobuild preview 92; Lighting 96; Kitchens & Bathrooms 99; Surface Design preview 101; Surfaces 102; Flooring 105; Office/Contract Furniture 111; Stop Press 113

# AIRPAD TASK CHAIR

BY INTERSTUHL

Ergonomics expert **Levent Çağlar** puts Interstuhl's new Airpad task chair through its paces, and compares it to three main rivals



## ● DYNAMIC SITTING

The unusual positioning of the seat pad's pivot points at the back, combined with the new synchronous mechanism, provides an extremely soothing motion that makes you feel as if you are floating on air. As you recline, the seat pad slides back very smoothly, gradually sinking at the rear, without the seat front rising to lift your feet off the floor. Your back remains in contact with the high backrest throughout this movement. The contoured soft yet firm seat pad enhances your comfort. The optional, continuously adjustable, forward tilt of the seat pad allows you to open up the angle between your thighs and torso as much as you want, so you can make sure you do not slip forwards as you recline. The motion and the open-angle sitting provided by the forward tilt promote increased alertness and reduced muscle fatigue.



THE RIVALS

The rivals chosen have mesh backrests, a distinctive look and promote dynamic sitting well



**AERON BY HERMAN MILLER**

Pioneer in mesh technology for both seat and backrest. A benchmark-seating design icon. Many excellent ergonomic features, including forward tilt. Three sizes. Supplied or retrofitted with lumbar or pelvic support. No headrest.



**ZODY BY HAWORTH**

Mesh backrest with very good pelvic and lumbar support. Small forward tilt with long waterfall. Very comfortable with a distinctive look. Fits a wide range of sizes and weights. Environmentally friendly. No headrest option.



**MEDA PRO BY VITRA**

Mesh back with optional adjustable lumbar support and headrest. Comfortable for upright and reclined postures but no forward tilt. Highly adjustable with wide reclining angle. Characteristic stylish Vitra design.

● **BACKREST**

The innovative design of both the fine mesh and its attachment to the backrest frame give great comfort and a distinctive look. Separate support in four sections and springiness come via three thin bars, curved under tension, set behind the membrane and sewn into it through 1cm-wide horizontal membrane ledges. Lean back and you get firm yet cushioned support as if the backrest were upholstered. You do not feel the bars at all and only realise the backrest is mesh via its coolness and permeability. The frame's curvature defines a lumbar area which can be positioned where needed by raising or lowering the backrest. Even at the backrest's highest position there is no gap between its lower edge and the seat pad. The retro-fittable optional headrest gives comfortable support when reclined but because its height cannot be adjusted in relation to the lumbar area, it may not be suitable for very short users.

● **ADJUSTMENT**

The tension adjustment, unusually driven via a toothed belt, fits a very wide range of body weights. Once you have adjusted the tension to suit your weight, you feel well-balanced as you lean back and forth, but you may need to fine tune the tension for bolt upright or fully reclined positions. You can lock the chair in upright or multiple reclined positions. You increase seat depth by unrolling the front edge to create a longer waterfall, without losing any of its softness. As no gap is formed between the back of the seat pad and the backrest, your thighs and buttocks remain fully supported. The optional 4D armrests have wide comfortable pads that are simple to adjust, and the width between armrest brackets can be altered by loosening the bolts securing them.

● **CONTROLS**

Controls at the sides of the seat pad are easy to reach and use. Small levers for seat height and back lock protrude just far enough for you to operate with your fingertips. It's a pity that the cables from them are visible under the seat. If you have the optional seat depth adjustment and seat pad forward tilt, their control knobs are designed well into the curve of the seat pad and the bright-eyed look of their circular white icons is inviting. Knobs for tension and seat tilt pull out to provide good access although you need to read the instructions to know this as you might otherwise find restricted space for your fingers. Their knurled surface gives a secure grip but can rub your fingers, particularly towards the end of travel. Their icons show clearly the direction of turning to increase or decrease, although you need to familiarise yourself with the direction for increasing forward tilt. The icons for the seat depth are confusing.

● **LOOK**

When seen from the front, the minimalist rectangular form of the backrest frame belies the high-tech nature of the mesh and well-engineered back. Whether you have the white or black mesh, light makes an attractive sheen on it, yet you can see through it almost clearly. This gives the chair a very light appearance. From the side, the flowing lines of the backrest frame elegantly complement the thin curved membrane ledges. The segmented look of the mesh is continued in the seat cushion.

● **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT**

AirPad is more than 98 per cent recyclable, made from a high proportion of recycled materials that are easily separable.

**VERDICT** The transparency of the mesh expresses AirPad's lightness - the floating sensation provided by its smooth motion and the thermal comfort of the membrane. What surprises you is the cushioned and supportive effect of the slender segmented backrest. The innovative and well-engineered AirPad promotes dynamic sitting well, is very comfortable for long periods and fits a wide range of heights and weights. ●●●●●