



SHW Group



**ARCHITECTURE/INTERIOR
DESIGN; AUSTIN, TEXAS**

Topic:

*Collaboration
Sustainability*

Application:

*Collaboration/Team
Open Office*

Project Scope:

*60 occupants; 80 workstations;
20,000 square feet*

Herman Miller Product:

*Vivo® Interiors
Meridian® Stackable Lateral Files
Eames® Aluminum Group Chairs
Eames Molded Plastic Chairs
Eames Molded Plywood Chairs*

Program/Service:

Easy OptionsSM Capability

Year Completed:

2008

The Austin studio of SHW Group, an architectural firm for the educational market, sought to create its own highly flexible and collaborative “learning tool.” In the firm’s move to a new location, low, open Vivo work stations and islands of Meridian lateral files that combine storage and meeting options are part of the group’s vision of a learning space.



An adjustable conference area, which is furnished with classic Eames Aluminum Group chairs, may enclose one large space, or it may be divided into several smaller meeting areas with the use of screens.

SHW Group, an architectural firm that specializes in environments for learning, applied its own research to design a space that fosters and supports learning and collaboration. The relocation of its studio in Austin, Texas, gave the firm a chance to create “a space that learns, one that is as agile and flexible as a laboratory and that gives us the opportunity to observe how people work in a collaborative and interactive manner,” says Jeff Sharpe, SHW Group creative director.

The Austin studio wanted an environment that allowed a free and unimpeded flow of ideas as well as one that eliminated hierarchical distinctions. “Initially, we thought we just wanted a bench—something linear and open, but when we explored the idea further, we decided we still needed some type of systems product,” says Jacqui Dodson, lead interior designer.

After a thorough market evaluation, the firm decided that Vivo interiors captured the minimalist, European look, the flexibility, the clean power management, and the personal delineation of space at the very competitive price the firm was looking for. “It has a light scale, very clean lines, and it’s very modular,” says Ms. Dodson.

In the new SHW Group location everyone, from senior management to the newest intern, works from the same Vivo workstations with two users sharing the low-profile, U-shaped workstations. Vivo’s light lines and white-and-silver finishes are a quiet counterpoint to the bold colors and architectural features of the space. In the SHW Group studio even the walls become an avenue for collaboration, as work-in-progress is displayed, evaluated, and discussed. These display walls not only break up the interior space, but they become “nodes of conversation and critique,” according to Mr. Sharpe. “Our work is about the drawings and models, so we need to come together to view them critically and to share ideas.”

Strategically located in the aisles, Meridian lateral files also become a place to meet and share work. Staff can simply turn from their workstations to either stand at a common worktop or to sit at a cushion-top bench supported by a file. Custom openings for storing flat or rolled drawings also create high-performance storage in these multi-use islands.

Additional meeting spaces are tucked away in corners and furnished with classic Eames molded plywood chairs in a rainbow of colors. Formal conference space is located in the



Canted walls where work-in-progress is displayed become “nodes of discussion and critique.” The walls are focal points for collaboration and learning, and they also create a visual barrier enclosing the low, open Vivo workstations.

building core and adjacent to the reception area. With the use of moveable walls, staff can create one large meeting room or divide the space into several smaller meeting rooms. Both Eames Aluminum Group and Molded Plastic seating furnish these areas.

Sustainability was another SHW Group priority since the studio is applying for LEED Silver certification. Both Vivo interiors and Meridian storage are recyclable and are manufactured in part from recycled materials. Both products are GREENGUARD® and Cradle to CradleSM certified. With a minimum of built space in the Austin studio, the furniture contributes to LEED points “in a big way,” says Ms. Dodson.

The bold move to such an open, collaborative environment hasn’t gone unnoticed by other SHW Group locations. “It’s been received beyond our expectations,” says Mr. Sharpe. The new studio demonstrates that an environment can be an effective tool for learning while combining agility, openness, and collaboration at an affordable price. From the display walls to the low, open workstations, “there’s a great transparency to the work,” says George Blume, project designer.

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