

Creating In and Outside the Box

HOK designers get creative, get messy and design their own IRYS Pods

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With creativity front and center in the work people are doing today, spaces that optimize the creative output of teams and individuals are increasingly important. The creative process isn't limited to large group brainstorming and open plan collaboration — having access to spaces for focus work or smaller, uninterrupted conversations is just as crucial to unleashing a team's full creative potential. As workers' varying needs shift throughout the creative process, an ecosystem of spaces is necessary to support their needs. To address this issue, Steelcase partnered with Microsoft to develop Creative Spaces, an immersive collection of spaces that thoughtfully integrates place and technology to fuel creativity.

In a friendly competition at design and architecture firm HOK, designers explored how creativity is applied in the workplace with fresh and inspiring applications connecting Creative Spaces and IRYS Pod, a freestanding enclosed solution for today's workplace.

For designers at HOK, the task was simple. Teams were asked to uniquely design their own IRYS Pod to function as one of the five Creative Spaces originally developed by Steelcase and Microsoft. These spaces were designed to support the different steps in the creative process including focus, ideation, small group collaboration, experimentation and respite. The entries showcased the range of spaces essential to the creative process, as well as the ability of IRYS Pod to meet workers' diverse needs for collaboration, privacy, focus and regeneration.

Designers were given two weeks to design their application — a nod to IRYS Pod's lead time. Their personalized submissions were evaluated on presentation, application of Steelcase and Microsoft research around Creative Spaces, self-expression and creativity. A team of designers from Dallas took first place with their flexible workspace, designed to allow the environment to be easily reconfigured. One judge commended the winners for the versatility of their design, saying, "It was great to show IRYS Pod morph to support varied activities required by different roles."

Whether collaborating, getting into flow or taking a moment of respite after a long morning, the following HOK Design Competition entries suggest a solution can often be found in IRYS Pod.

ONE SIZE FITS ALL

This flexible design utilizes the IRYS pod as a diverse ecosystem to implement the creative ebb and flow of the individual and the team. It transforms seamlessly to welcome different members of the team and their different spatial needs throughout the day. The team drew graphic and color inspiration from a collection of Andy Warhol polaroids, among other things, and their overall solution was based on a real life client. "Each of the leaders needed something very different from the space and we thought it presented a fun creative challenge for the IRYS Pod competition," says HOK Designer Rachel Rouse.

RESTORE POD

This space, modeled after a [Respite Room](#), provides an indoor park-like setting to help people refresh and refocus on the tasks at hand. Outside the “Restore Pod” is the front porch, a small collaborative area for one-on-one conversations or a quick catch up. “The design was based on the need we see for private, restorative spaces in today’s workplace,” says Mary Kate Cassidy, HOK designer. “When the work day gets hectic, this concept for the IRYS Pod provides a calming retreat to nature. The organic and playful finishes of the “Restore Pod” help employees reset their intentions for the day and refocus on the tasks at hand.”

FOR THE CREATIVE

Designed to boost creativity through the use of furniture, materiality and technology, this IRYS Pod encourages the sharing and exploration of ideas. HOK Designer Kloe Katubig incorporated the Microsoft Surface Studio to help people generate new ideas along with vertical real estate to keep inspiring artifacts and sketches nearby. The use of IRYS Pod brings privacy to the open plan, allowing for a Focus Studio to be adjacent to a space for collaboration.

Explore photos and information about each of the Creative Spaces developed by [Steelcase and Microsoft](#). Plus, discover how IRYS Pod meets the diverse needs of workers today.