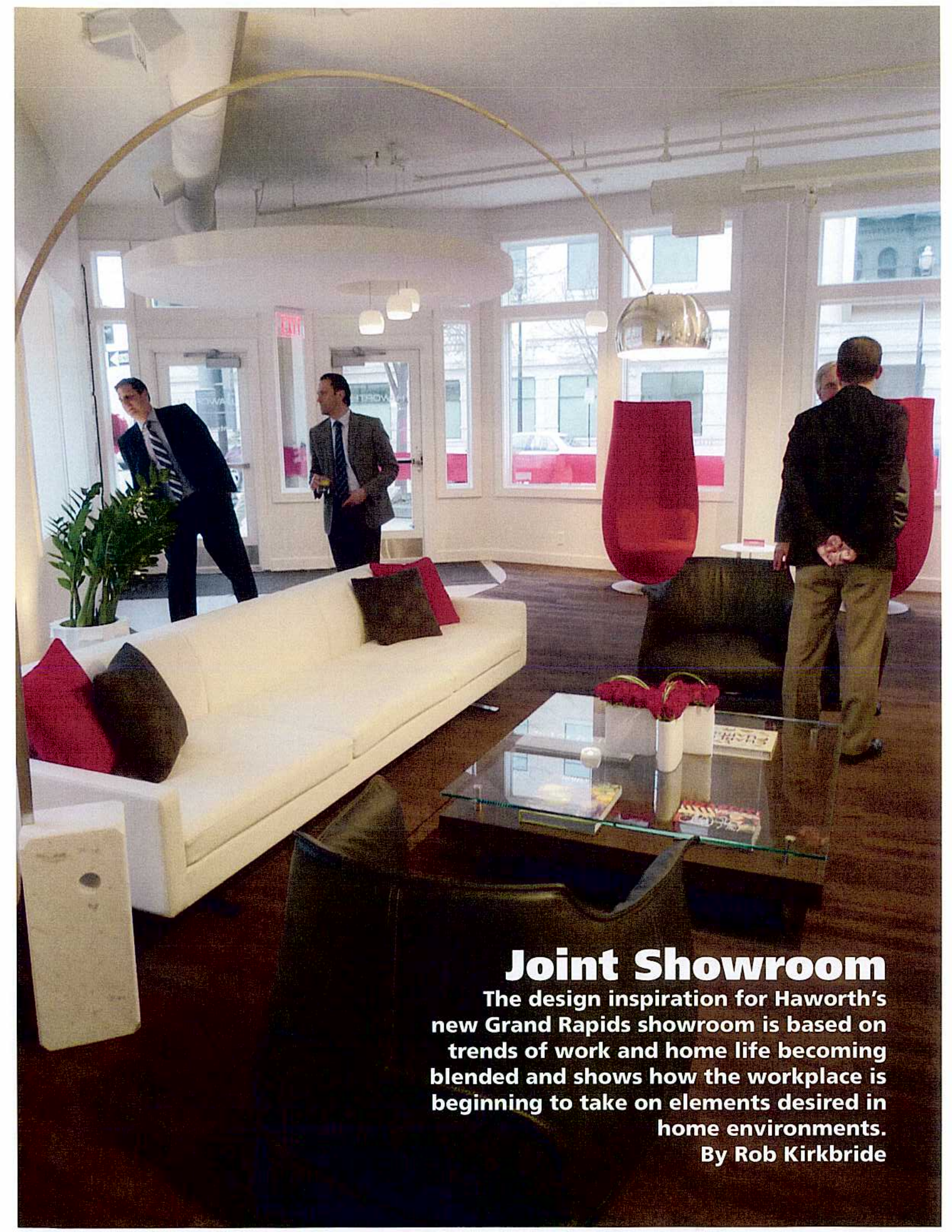




Haworth partners with dealer to open Grand Rapids Showroom



Joint Showroom

The design inspiration for Haworth's new Grand Rapids showroom is based on trends of work and home life becoming blended and shows how the workplace is beginning to take on elements desired in home environments.

By Rob Kirkbride



Haworth and its West Michigan dealer Interphase held a grand opening for their new joint showroom in downtown Grand Rapids on one of the highest profile corners in the city. The showroom anchors the MoDiv retail incubator, a space filled with mostly local retailers that are too small to have downtown spaces of their own.

Interphase President Randy DeBoer is pleased to have such a high profile space in the city. The showroom is located at the corner of Division Avenue and Monroe Center. Monroe Center is considered Grand Rapids' unofficial Main Street and is home to the Grand Rapids Art Museum, Rosa Parks Circle (a

Maya Lin-designed park) and a host of retail shops.

The showroom occupies the ground floor of a historic Grand Rapids building and has expansive windows that front both Monroe Center and Division Avenue. It will serve as Interphase's main showroom, but it will also be used as a flexible space by Haworth workers who live in Grand Rapids and occasionally want to work closer to home. The space also will be used to host parties and receptions in Grand Rapids.

"The calendar is filling up fast," DeBoer said. "People really want to use this space. It is a very different concept than we have ever been part of before. I think the space really compli-



ments what's going on in this area including the new City Flats Hotel (an eco-friendly boutique hotel). It is also just down the street from the Civic Theatre.

"It is an opportunity to show our customers how a space like this can be useful to their clients and show who we are and what we can do. As a workspace, this is pretty non-traditional."

The showroom sports Haworth's red, white and gray color scheme that matches its headquarters and some of its other showrooms. As one enters the showroom, there are two striking red high back Tulip chairs from the company's Capellini brand. A white leather sofa is bracketed by a pair of black

chairs, all from the Poltrona Frau brand. A glass and wood coffee table works as the centerpiece.

The space is punctuated by a standing height Very work table. One corner of the showroom has a multimedia center made with Haworth's Planes collection that supports a flat screen television and is surrounded by four mobile work lounge chairs. A red wall is the focal point of the room and it is offset by white shelving and credenzas.

The design inspiration is based on trends of work and home life becoming blended and shows how the workplace is beginning to take on elements desired in home environments. The space is divided with kitchen, living room, library, foyer and office areas. Though not quite complete, in these spaces, Interphase and Haworth will have resources available for designers and clients to work on ideas for workspace solutions with material samples from the Haworth surface collection, as well as 3-D rendering capabilities. The space will be used to host events and informal collaborative meetings and contains touchdown stations, allowing corporate staff to work remotely in downtown Grand Rapids. The space was scheduled to be open by November, but construction delays put the project off by a few months.

Haworth Chief Executive Officer Franco Bianchi said he is happy his company is knocking down the "hidden wall between Grand Rapids and Holland." "We love the idea of being part of Grand Rapids," he said.

Haworth is the only major office furniture maker with a showroom in downtown Grand Rapids, though Steelcase is part of GRid 70, a collaborative space that is shared with Wolverine World Wide, Meijer and Amway. Steelcase's West Michigan dealer, Custer, is located on the edge of the downtown area. DeBoer said he has heard rumor some of his local competitors might be looking for space in downtown Grand Rapids.

Bianchi said DeBoer came to him with his vision for a space in downtown Grand Rapids that would capitalize on the creative buzz in the district. "I'm very glad he did," Bianchi said.

Interphase will continue to maintain its other offices located on Eastern Avenue in Grand Rapids and in Traverse City.

"As Interphase Interiors celebrates the 30th anniversary of being Haworth's exclusive dealer for Grand Rapids, this project marks a new step for us," said Randy DeBoer, President of Interphase. "It's going beyond our prior involvement in projects that have marked the resurgence of downtown and actually brings us downtown. We look forward to being a part of this vibrant community."

Bing Goei, president of Eastern Floral, one of the tenants in the MoDiv incubator, said the space is a microcosm of the global economy with international businesses like Wolverine World Wide sharing retail space with local businesses. "These companies may be large or small, but they are all working together to improve the local economy."

Grand Rapids Mayor George Heartwell helped cut the ribbon to open the space and praised the companies who took space there. "More and more people are moving downtown to work and live," he said. ¶