Listen to Michael Braungart for an hour, and you’ll feel primed to take on the planet. During his keynote address at IIDEX/NeoCon Canada this past September, the German chemist and co-author of Cradle to Cradle systematically challenged the green lobby that pervades the design industry, while displaying test results showing the toxics levels in some products. At one point, he swept his eyes over the exhibition hall and warned, “It’s all guilt management,” suggesting that we’re a long way from getting it right. Seasoning his message with a keen sense of humour, he challenged listeners to up the ante on green initiatives, and look beyond mere sustainability to create a beneficial footprint rather than simply minimizing it.

So who was hitting the right green notes at IIDEX/NeoCon 2008? Canühome, an 80-square-metre dwelling developed in part by the Institute Without Boundaries at George Brown College, brought eco-living out of the realm of theory and into reality. This emblematically Canadian, canoe-like structure features a passive bio-climate regulation system, a waste water system, and a modular structure that incorporates locally sourced materials and products.

Another pavilion highlight was the Green Patient Room. Spearheaded by Anshen + Allen and the IFMA Health Care Council, the full-scale concept room displayed a range of environmental and health innovations – from night lights by Cooper Lighting that don’t disrupt users’ circadian rhythms, to anti-microbial upholstered furniture by Davis Furniture – with the overall goal of demonstrating a less invasive, more sustainable bio-climate regulation system, a waste water system, and a modular structure that incorporates locally sourced materials and products.

While the green message at IIDEX/Neocon continues to expand, it’s important to have voices like Braungart’s keeping the industry – and consumers – in check.

FOR SOURCES SEE PAGE 121