

MALAYSIAN INTERNATIONAL



FURNITURE FAIR

furnish now

The official magazine of the Malaysian International Furniture Fair



FURNITURE 360°

What industry is doing **NOW** to **CREATE** digital, 3D, and APP-related product experiences that **SELL MORE STUFF**



Exploring the Minds of Winners

A **Superhero** Visits **MIFF: Why?**



Design and **Green** Are Critical Issues of **Our Time**

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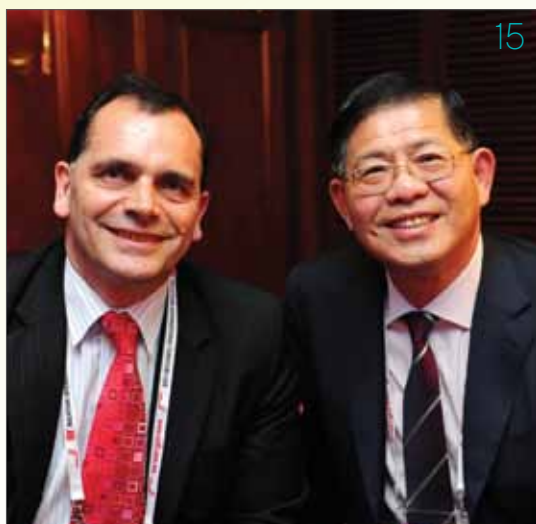
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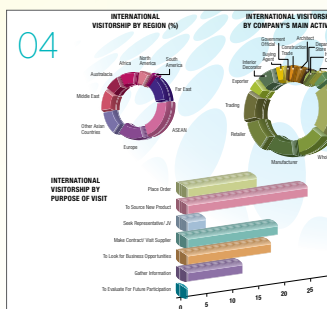
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furnish now

The official magazine of the Malaysian International Furniture Fair

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You're Back—Already



IN the small amount of time that has passed since the Malaysian International Furniture Fair (MIFF) occurred in March, I've noticed an interesting trend: exhibitors are buying up space more quickly than ever before.

As I write this letter, exhibitors already have taken up 40 percent of the total show space for MIFF 2013. Even before MIFF 2012 closed in March, more than 10 exhibitors reconfirmed space for next year. Now more than 100 have reconfirmed.

I'm not sharing this to toot MIFF's horn, but rather as an interesting phenomenon that's occurring. After all, this trend was not occurring in 2010 or 2011, when many exhibitors only began signing up two or three months post-show for the subsequent year's fair.

What has happened?

We believe that because of the encouraging response at MIFF 2012, exhibitors are signing up slightly faster than before. Part of the reason may be our new partnership with UBM, the region's leading tradeshow organiser that acquired MIFF earlier this year. We explain more about that partnership in this issue of *Furnish Now*.

Another reason could be the success of MIFF 2012 itself, which logged record high sales transactions at US\$830 million,

an increase of 6.68 percent over 2011 orders. More overseas buyers also were present, although more importantly, the number of buying companies increased very significantly.

While there may have been fewer representatives per company travelling to Malaysia—likely as a cost-saving measure in the current economy—there were about 15-20 percent more buying companies represented compared to 2011, which likely accounted for such a large increase in MIFF's sales volume.

As you will read in the pages of *Furnish Now*, Malaysian manufacturers have improved drastically over the last 10 years. Designs are more innovative and presentation of those designs is getting better.

In this issue, we focus on digital presentation of furniture in our cover story, which we believe is very important in our contemporary wired age. We feature some no- to low-cost electronic tools that can help exhibitors and buyers launch further into the digital presentation sphere right away.

We also include comprehensive coverage of MIFF 2012 speaker sessions for those who may have missed them. MIFF's latest award winners also share their personal views on what got them to where they are. And of course, we feature more Fabulous Furniture – great pieces indeed from our recently exhibited show furniture. Lots more great reading awaits you in *Furnish Now*. We hope you enjoy.

Best Wishes,

DATO' DR. TAN CHIN HUAT
CHAIRMAN, MIFF



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Official Show Report Malaysian International Furniture Fair 2012 (MIFF 2012)

6-10 March 2012, Putra World Trade Centre (PWTC) & MATRADE Exhibition & Convention Centre (MECC)

This year MIFF posted another record high sales turnover of US\$830 million, an increase of 6.68 percent over 2011 orders of US\$778 million. This outcome, the best ever in the 18-year history of the MIFF, underlined the continued strength and appeal of the annual fair for international buyers despite the lingering global economic worries. The show registered a bigger turnout of overseas buyers of 6,605, an increase of 1.58 percent over 2011, as interest in MIFF, one of the top 10 furniture fairs in the world, remained buoyant.

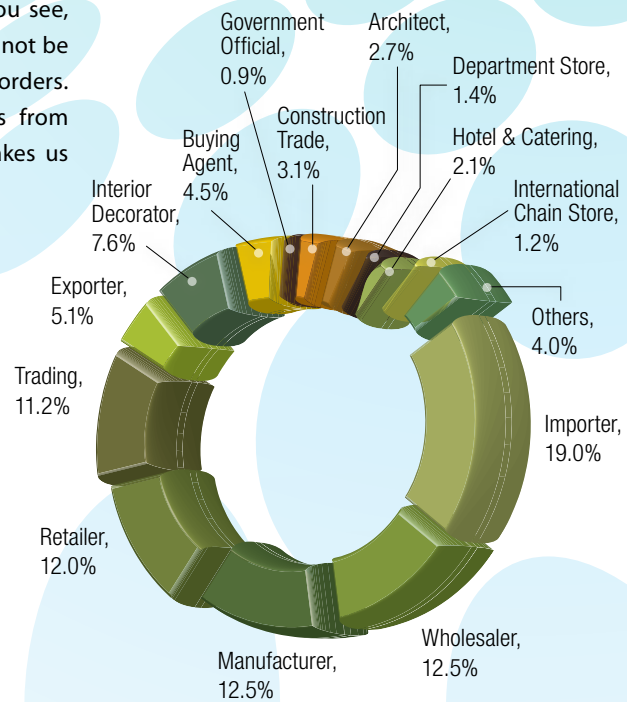
"This year's fair opened very strongly, you can sense the vibrancy right from the start," said MIFF Chairman Dato' Dr. Tan Chin Huat. "This shows that MIFF is still attractive to international buyers and this is very good for our exhibitors. So long as the exhibitors continue to be innovative and offer good value and quality, we will bring in the buyers."

Among the visitors was a 40-member Japanese group led by Mr. Atsumasa Kawasaki, chairman of furniture retailer SH Group, one of the largest furniture chains in Japan. In the group were buyers from areas hit by the 2011 earthquake and tsunami.

Impressed with what he saw, Mr Kawasaki said: "Malaysian furniture has improved tremendously from previous years, hence I have been buying since Day 1. The quality and design coupled with reasonable pricing has made Malaysian products attractive. Another plus point of buying Malaysian products is consistent quality. In some countries, what you see, feel and touch in the booths might not be what is delivered after we placed orders. Thus, we get a lot of complaints from consumers. Buying in Malaysia makes us feel safe."

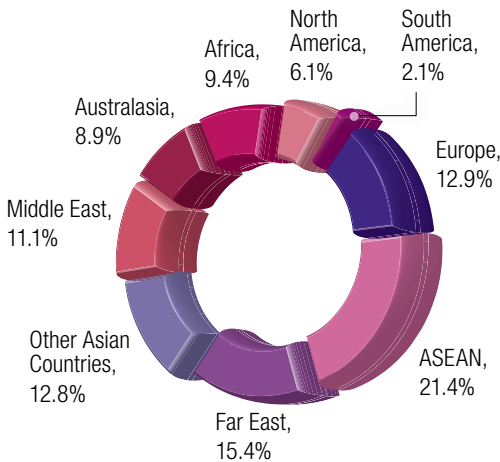
Even before the 2012 show was over, exhibitors were already lining up for MIFF 2013 scheduled from Mar 5 to 9, 2013. Among them were major Malaysia exporters such as Poh Huat Furniture Industries (M) Sdn Bhd, Hin Lim Furniture Manufacturer Sdn Bhd, Shantawood Manufacturing Sdn Bhd, Safari Office System Sdn Bhd, Oasis Furniture Industries, Kinheng Furniture Sdn Bhd and the Taiwan Furniture Manufacturers' Association.

INTERNATIONAL VISITORSHIP BY COMPANY'S MAIN ACTIVITY

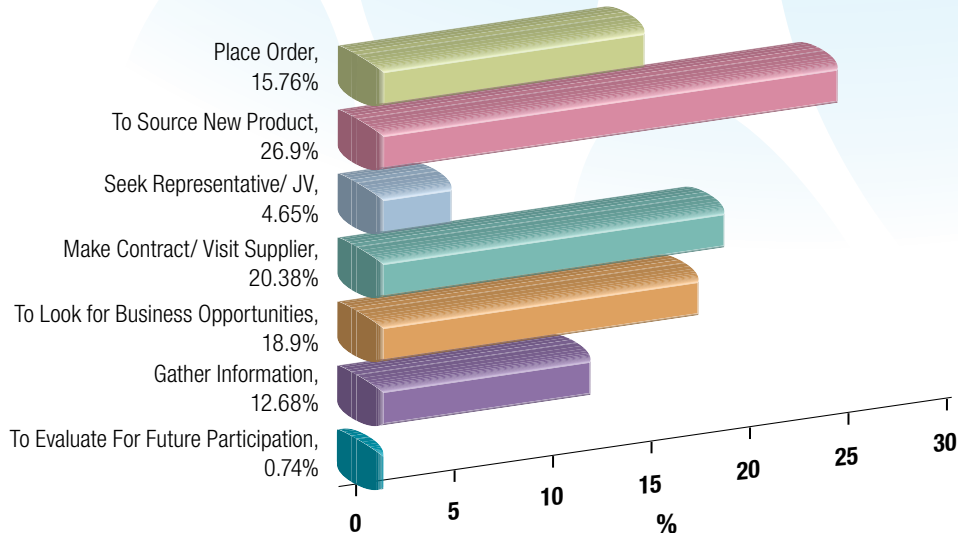


Exhibition size:	75,000 sqm			
Total Export Sales Generated:	US\$ 830 million			
Number of Exhibitors:	Total	Malaysia	International	
	433	294	139 (from 10 countries)	
Number of Visitors:	Total	Malaysia	International	Invited Guests
	19,118	7,368	6,605 (from 140 countries)	5,145

INTERNATIONAL VISITORSHIP BY REGION



INTERNATIONAL VISITORSHIP BY PURPOSE OF VISIT





MIFF Insider

Julian Bowen, owner of Nottingham, U.K.-based Julian Bowen Ltd., has been coming to the Malaysian International Furniture Fair (MIFF) for 10 years, and by now, he knows a thing or two about doing furniture business in Malaysia. We asked him, pictured at left, his impressions about Malaysian furniture, and why he keeps coming back for more.

Furnish Now (FN): What's your interest in Malaysia all about?

Julian Bowen (JB): For many years now we have been buying a lot of furniture from Malaysia. The Malaysians generally speaking produce a quality we're happy with. And they seem to be well tuned to the requirements of the U.K. market, which is fairly specialized. I think the history of the U.K.'s association with Malaysia over many years has opened the country up to understand the requirements of the marketplace.

FN: Have you seen any changes at MIFF over the decade that you've attended?

JB: The [furniture] quality has improved enormously over the last 10 years. We have seen quite a definite trend initiated by Malaysia in design terms. They are far more creative today in design than they ever have been previously. About 35 to 40 percent of our business these days is coming out of Malaysia, and this over the last few years has increased quite dramatically.

FN: So you're pretty well settled buying from Malaysia?

JB: We are not a company that regularly changes suppliers every 10 minutes. We like to find the people with whom we can do business and stay with them indefinitely.

What Other MIFF Insiders Said about the 2012 Show:



"MIFF is good for business to meet customers – current customers or new customers. We have been with MIFF for all years, from the start."

– Amos Lee, General Manager, Asia Tube Industries Sdn Bhd.



"MIFF was better than last year. The buyers that come into my booth – both in terms of quantity and quality – are better. I've been coming to MIFF for 9 years and I've already signed up for MIFF 2013."

– Steven Wong, Sales and Marketing Director, BJ Cabinet Sdn Bhd.



"We have been with MIFF since the first year. We grew with MIFF. I think I will come back next year. Buyers come from more than 80 countries."

– K.S. Lim, Manager, SYF Group of Companies



"Our headquarters are in Freemont, California and we buy a lot of furniture from Malaysia. I was [at MIFF] every year. We go [to MIFF] because we have a lot of our suppliers showing there and we are showing there too. Also, there are a lot of promotional items in Malaysia."

– Kent Bong, Merchandiser, Homelegance Inc.

"I can say that I'm very busy. Until yesterday [on Day 4], I didn't take my lunch. I can say there was very good response to our booth."

– Shoba Balakrishnan, Senior Sales Executive, Oasis Furniture Industries Sdn Bhd.



"MIFF is very good, excellent and marvelous. If we took 100 namecards this year, maybe 80 percent have intention to buy from us. We sold 50 containers already. Last year we sold 10 containers. So we are selling 5 times as much this year."

– Pele Hui, International Trade Manager, Chief Designer, and Factory Manager, Anji Qidi Furniture Co Ltd.



"Most of the office furniture we have seen was excellent. The manufacturers in this category are extremely innovative. Very often we have seen high end products which are internationally competitive."

– Helmut Merkel, Chief Judge, Furniture Excellence Award



"The crowd is quite encouraging. I've been here for two days. MIFF is better than last year."

– C.M. Yong, Marketing Executive of Trade Development, Malaysian Timber Industry Board



MOVE OVER SUPERMAN; ULTRALIGHT IS HERE

QUITE POSSIBLY THE WORLD'S LIGHTEST TRAVELLER VISITS MIFF WITH SOME PACKING TIPS

By Khaw Chia Hui
Furnish Now writer

There's nothing unusual about spending time in airports and planes when you are a regular at furniture trade exhibitions around the world.

How you spend that time though – now that could be unusual.

At least it is for Finn Myhre, who makes George Clooney's character in the movie *Up in the Air* look like a flying pack rat.

Mr. Myhre travels not just light, or even super light. If he were a superhero, his name would be "Ultralight."

You see, Mr. Myhre is wary of checking in luggage or even "buying" weight for his belongings aboard flights. In order to keep costs as low as possible, he has a carry-on that sticks to the 8 kilogram limit.

Bear in mind that Mr. Myhre, who owns Chesterfield Norway AS, which specialises in high-end leather furniture with classical designs, didn't come straight to the Malaysian International Furniture Fair (MIFF) this year from Norway, where he would have originally packed. He came to MIFF directly from another business trip to Turkey.



"I normally charge all my gadgets at night via USB ports on the laptop," Mr. Myhre said. "This helps me save time and space. If the item I want to get is unable to charge via a USB

port, I don't get it."

However, Mr. Myhre's secret travel weapon comes in the form of a jacket. The jacket is specially modified to have 18 pockets where he keeps any items that could not fit into his carry-on luggage.

Like Batman or Spiderman, he doesn't mind when he gets stares. For him, it's not the Spandex, spider webs or Batmobile that draw attention. It's his unusually large jacket.

"As long as I get to travel the way I want and not lose my things, I could not care less about what others think," he added. Wise advice, indeed.

You might call what he carries his luggage, his survival kit—or maybe even his life. But you'd definitely have to call it 8 kilograms. That's how Ultralight rolls.

"Believe it or not, I pack two pairs of trousers, a lot of T-shirts that are light and space-saving, a sweater, a razor and a toothbrush," Mr. Myhre said. "I also have a camera and a laptop. As you might notice I never carry any chargers except for short USB wires."

What? How do you power a laptop without a charger?



We're glad that Mr. Myhre sells Chesterfields too so that he can lounge comfortably when he's not super-packed 30,000 feet above.

And where does Mr. Myhre like to go when he's not fighting the sinister world of luggage weight?

"Since I visited the Philippines way back when I was 18 years old, Southeast Asia holds a special place in my heart," he said.

Malaysia is currently one of his favourite places. He loves the exotic people, food and various places of interest. This year, MIFF also was a pivotal stop for him, right in the middle of his busy season.

"March, April and May is one of the busiest time of the year for me," Mr. Myhre said. "I have to go to many places to check out furniture fairs, visit factories and oversea business dealings."

For him, MIFF is a pleasant place to conduct business, especially because it affords him the opportunity to feel alive.

This year, he stayed at Citin Hotel, right smack in the heart of old Kuala Lumpur along Jalan Pudu.

"I don't believe in staying at luxury hotels, but rather a clean and decent place," he said. "It also gives me an opportunity to experience and people-watch in Pudu."

You wonder whether he's trying to spot overweight luggage hogging up the sidewalk.

In fact, weightlessness apparently makes one hungry, and Pudu is the perfect place for foodies.

"Normally, when I'm done visiting the fair grounds, I would head back to the hotel area to grab dinner," he said. "Malaysian food has always appealed to the adventurous side of me. If you have tasted Norwegian fare, you will agree that Malaysian flavours win hands down."

For those unfamiliar with the Pudu area, it is filled with many delectable

delights such as Chinese, Malay and even Thai cuisine. It is also within walking distance of Jalan Alor, Changkat Bukit Bintang and Petaling Street. Each of these places offers different types of outlets ranging from upscale Western restaurants to the

THINGS ONCE WERE HEAVY!

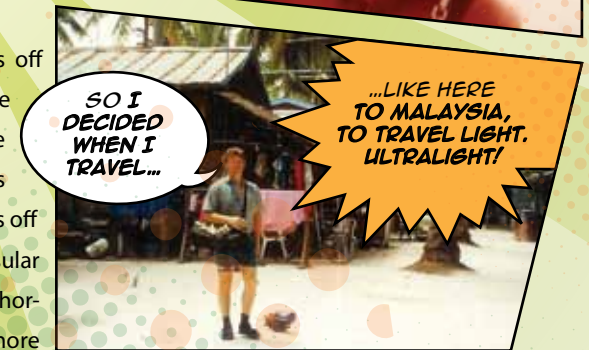
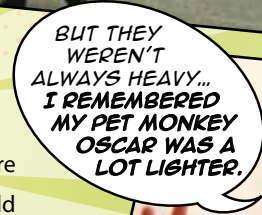
humble roadside stalls, presenting all sorts of unique food items.

Mr. Myhre also likes to saunter around Kuala Lumpur when he has some spare time although he admits that one would need another week just to give the place a thorough walkabout. Unknown to most of his Malaysian associates, Ultralight is an avid diver too.

He dove in Mindoro Islands off the coast of Luzon, and at the White Beach off Boracay in the Philippines. More recently, he has been to Tioman Island. Tioman is off the southeast coast of Peninsular Malaysia, just north of the Johor-Pahang state borders. It has more than 20 diving spots and a rare place where you can see schools of dolphins.

"I love the sea and diving is one of the ways I get away from work," Mr. Myhre said. "For me, Tioman is one of my favourite places. If not for the lack for time in Malaysia during MIFF, I would certainly make a detour for a couple of days there."

On his future visits to Malaysia, Mr. Myhre expressed interest in extending his



These images are of Finn Myhre during his lifetime; artistic license was used in developing the captions.

time come the next MIFF to travel outside Kuala Lumpur. When asked where he might be heading, he said, "I was told Penang is a place for my time."

Just don't take an AirAsia flight there, Mr. Myhre. Max carry-on weight is only 7 kilograms. What could be worse? Kryptonite?



Furnish Now speaks with MIFF 2012 award winners to find out what makes them tick, and win

By Alexandra Wong and Ee-Tan Chow
Furnish Now writers

If the Malaysian International Furniture Fair (MIFF) had a rock star, Swiss architect-designer Daniel Korb would be it.

Since bursting onto the Malaysian scene in 2010, his winning collaborations with TaZ Corporation are one of MIFF's most anticipated events. XF, the company's third consecutive Furniture Excellence Award winner, is but the latest addition to a towering stack of international and local awards for the designer.

"As a child I liked to build and do things with my hands," Mr. Korb said. When he met an industrial design company's owner after school, he immediately offered his services. Unfortunately, as he lacked the qualifications, the boss turned him down. Undeterred, the young man offered to clean his workshop!

Over three months, the boy helped the designers construct models and prototypes, impressing the boss so much that the latter told the young Korb to stay on.

From that small anecdote, one can

guess how Mr. Korb's steely determination defined his eventual success as the driving force of Korb + Korb, the Baden-based company he and his wife Susan, also an architect, founded in 1989. Their design expertise has found expression in architecture, communication and design.

As a designer, Korb is guided by one overarching tenet: to contribute to a better world through the act of creating inspiring spaces with good looking and working products.

While he believes that simple is better, he also feels that we should not be limited by the thinking that the creative process is linear.

"There is not a starting point and [it is not] necessary that one gets straight to the goal," he said.

After more than twenty years, he

Daniel Korb on Simple Determination



Daniel Korb

remains infatuated with the design process.

"Every stage [of the design process] has its own beauty," Mr. Korb said. "When you hold the first piece from a mould in your hand or the parts are assembled to the whole, these are special moments."

His most valuable lesson?

"Don't think, try," he said. "Often we try too little because we think too much."

Sim Chia Yi on Diverse Designing



Just Like Old Times

solve the problem of structure and engineering. But you can be intuitive and spontaneous without restricting to logic, giving you the leeway to generate lots and lots of interesting ideas. You can experiment with new things and different methods. Furniture design is like an art piece."

Pumped up from her victorious debut at one of the world's top 10 furniture fairs, the recent graduate is now giving furniture design career serious thought. The chance to work with industry talents was a big factor.

"In coming up with the winning design, my brainstorming sessions with industrial designer Ee Kang got me to think out of the box to come up with something fun, controversial yet quintessentially Malaysian," Ms. Sim said. "I also appreciated the chance to work with Ralph Ong. Helpful and open-minded, he's exactly the kind of role model the Malaysian furniture industry needs."

As a product design student, Sim Chia Yi created items as diverse as vacuum cleaners and "assistive devices," whatever those are.

Entering the Malaysian International Furniture Fair's (MIFF's) Ideation award, announced last March, was her first attempt at designing furniture.

She won.

"The same design we learn in product design applies to furniture design: You have to find the problem and solve the problem, the fundamental principle in product design studies," Ms. Sim said. "The beauty of designing furniture is you can use a lot more imagination. The creative process goes beyond rigid formula. Yes, it has elements of technicality and you have to



Lim Chee Min on the Hard Life



Lim Chee Min



Hen Hin Furniture Manufacturing's winning shell scheme booth

Lim Chee Min is about to pour some cold water on any of you wannabe designers.

"As a young man, I thought being an interior designer was a glamorous job," Mr. Lim said.

Reality was a different story.

"You certainly don't sit in an office and draw all day!" he laughed.

Nor is it about indulging one's artistic whims and fancies.

"In designing a kitchen, you need to think about your client's health,"

said Mr. Lim, whose company, Hen Hin Furniture Manufacturing Sdn Bhd, won the 1st Prize Best Presentation Award for shell scheme booths at MIFF 2012. "Clients are discerning these days. The material you propose for their kitchen, they want to know—does it contain chemicals that will affect my children's wellbeing? You have to do extensive studies and research to adequately address your client's needs."

The most difficult part of his job?

"Project management, because you must be able to handle all kinds of people skillfully," said Mr. Lim, Hen Hin's project designer.

He explained: "A designer produces a drawing with detailed instructions on constructing a cabinet. Sometimes, the end product may not end up as you imagine after the process of construction. As a project manager, you must justify the discrepancies to the client."

While hardly a walk in the park, managing end-to-end projects successfully offers a satisfaction that money can't buy.

"I love optimizing my creative process to make our clients' dream come true and do my best to involve the client during the idea developing process," Mr. Lim said. "I love to see them smile, which gives me the momentum to stay strong and move forward in this industry. For this moment, I still take myself as a student. Design is a learn-as-you-go career."

While Hen Hin started with and primarily specialises in loose furniture, it recently started an interior design department to capitalise on the increasing stream of walk-in customers who require renovation service. Mr. Lim is a key member of the department.

Chen Chao-Ken on Market Understanding

Some industry people couldn't care less about children's furniture.

That's a fantastic thing for Taiwan-based Tay Huah Furniture Corp., which has filled that niche nicely.

"The children's market is often neglected in our industry," said Chen Chao-Ken, founder and designer of Tay Huah. "But nowadays, parents are willing to pay for a good quality desk for their children. While other children's chairs need to be changed as the years go by, Tay Huah's designs are meant to outlast their growth."

Mr. Chen's Comf-Pro 'Match Chair' won the Platinum award in the MIFF 2012 Furniture Excellence Awards office category in March this year.

Since its establishment in 1984, Tay Huah Furniture has been a pioneer in kids furniture, in particular study desks and chairs.

"Many parents told me after they bought our desks and chairs that the children could better concentrate in their studies," said Mr. Chen, whose innovative designs have been recognised overseas. In 2000, Tay Huah won an IFFT/Interior Lifestyle Living Award in Japan for an environmental-friendly children's chair. Besides the ergonomic and innovative design of the chair, the components can be re-used and recycled.



Match Chair

Mr. Chen said the winning 'Match Chair' at MIFF is a modification of that winning chair.

"I want to encourage young designers to be more innovative, and to come out with new ideas and concepts rather than copying existing designs in the market," he said.

Making a 'Marc' in Outdoor Furniture

By Chan Li Jin
Furnish Now writer



*"Click Here
to see me
demonstrate
my furniture
on YouTube."*



Dr. Marc Koo

It's easy to forget you are talking to a Furniture manufacturer when meeting Dr. Marc Koo, Founder and Managing Director of award-winning, Malaysian-based Laval Furniture.

Dr. Koo describes his products like an artisan, exuding the passion and devotion only master craftsmen possess.

The Mauritius-born former engineer with 25 years experience in outdoor Furniture has since made Malaysia his home. In an exclusive interview with Furnish Now, Dr. Koo reveals his winning Furniture secrets.



What you have in your garden or patio is not just furniture; they are talking points that showcase your taste and personality

Furnish Now (FN): How did Laval get started?

Dr. Marc Koo (MK): When I first moved here, I noticed there were a lot of saw mills where unused wood was just discarded. A friend invited me to start a furniture business and we started making outdoor furniture. In 1980s, we were the largest supplier of outdoor furniture to the U.S., U.K. and Japan. As the competition grew, we developed a niche in high-end outdoor furniture.

FN: What defines good outdoor furniture?

MK: We like unique designs that are non-conventional. What is important in outdoor furniture is to have new designs and work with manufacturers who can work with what you want. We are very design-oriented and our furniture is very durable, some lasting more than 20 years.

FN: Is it difficult to find good designers?

MK: We are well-known, so designers come to us. If their designs are used, they get a royalty cut. I have good designers who are not afraid to try new design concepts using technology to merge materials such as steel and wood.

FN: Is it a problem sourcing for raw materials?

MK: For us, it is not a problem because we use recycled materials. Our production is also small, about 1000 pieces in a year, so we easily find enough materials.

FN: What are the latest trends in outdoor furniture?

MK: We don't follow trends; we set the trend for the market. In recent years, we introduced the trend of making furniture using recycled materials, like an old rain tree or discarded railway sleepers. We want to show new designers we can use anything to create something beautiful.

FN: Does outdoor furniture require special care?

MK: Good quality outdoor furniture needs less maintenance. Generally, you should not put them in the open, but in sheltered spaces. Every year, sand it down and oil it with wax or wood oil. When not in use for a long time, have it covered.

FN: Are your markets limited to tropical countries?

MK: They are also very popular in Europe and Japan, because they have summertime there. These are expensive products, so people buy one or two pieces and place them in strategic spots outside their house as talking points. People are proud to own our furniture, like a piece of art.

FN: What keeps you going after 25 years?

MK: I love what I do; I get ideas when I sleep, I dream about my work. I'm looking forward to better designs next year.



Welcome to the FURNITURE FUTURE

By Matt Young
Furnish Now editor

Many Malaysian manufacturers are getting savvy about promoting products digitally; you should too

In a day and age where every company seemingly has a website, Timber Tone Industries Sdn Bhd doesn't.

"Most do have a website, but [many furniture companies] showcase their old designs," Timber Tone General Manager Teoh Peng Hoe told *Furnish Now* last year. "For me, I might as well forget about it. Showing old designs are useless—it gives the wrong perception about my company."

In 2011, Mr. Teoh said old designs were 'in' online because of the plethora of copycats in the furniture manufacturing industry. Mr. Teoh, who has won numerous Furniture Excellence Awards from the Malaysian International Furniture Fair (MIFF), preferred to keep copycats at bay by giving them nothing Web-wise to work with.

Today, Timber Tone still has no website—not that there's anything wrong with that. Mr. Teoh still spearheads the making of great furniture with much success. But few Asian companies are following his anti-digital lead.

Ignoring copiers and forging ahead, Malaysian companies like Chinfon Furniture Industries Sdn Bhd are showing what can be done in order to lead the way online, digitally and with cutting-edge showmanship to promote furniture in bold new ways.

"Everyone is copying everyone," said Ely Tio, general manager of Chinfon.

"Furniture is like that. It's like a fashion. Once you display it at an exhibition, people will walk through, and [other] designers' eyes are very sharp."

Instead of worrying about that, Ms. Tio is happy to promote the images of her furniture.

That effort led to a major spread of the 'Kayla' bed set in the *Furnish Now*

December issue, when Chinfon's bed was chosen to be part of the "Editor's Presentation Picks," which featured the best local furniture photos from the magazine's perspective.

Chinfon also has a pretty suave website – Chinfonfurniture.com – compared to competitors. Dragging your mouse over various portions of the homepage produces different visual effects, making Chinfon's furniture an exciting visual experience.

"People can see it's very interesting," Ms. Tio said. "It means [we] are putting in effort and creativity. Furniture is not just something that can be displayed at home. It can be displayed as fashion."

Meanwhile, at MIFF 2012, Jane Lee, marketing executive of Oasis Furniture Industries Sdn Bhd, was walking around her booth with an iPad.



'Kayla' bed set

On the iPad, she had a spiffy brochure explaining a new Oasis product: the Achievor chair.

"Do you often use an iPad to interact with customers?" I asked Ms. Lee.

"Sure," she said. "The look is very colourful and it attracts attention. It helps a lot. Many customers then ask me to send the PDF file to them by email."

But Ms. Lee is a talented storyteller too. She didn't simply read from the brochure. She used the iPad to capture my attention, gliding through pages and images while she told her own story about the Achievor, aided by images of horses and saddles in the brochure.

"We describe our chair as a horse," Ms. Lee said. "The horse has to understand

CLICK HERE
TO SEE ME AND MY
iPAD ON YOUTUBE.



the rider. Likewise, when you sit on a chair and feel comfortable with a chair that understands you, you feel better and do things better that lead to higher achievement."

It was therefore a combination of digital showmanship and storytelling ability that allowed Oasis to reach out to potential customers. It apparently worked at MIFF 2012.

"I can say that I'm very busy," Oasis senior sales executive Shoba Balakrishnan said. "Until yesterday [on day 4 of the show], I didn't take my lunch. I can say there was very good response to our booth."

Again, said MIFF Chairman Dato' Dr. Tan Chin Huat, with such visual marketing, copying is not to be feared.

"In those days [some time ago], it would be a most concerning topic for furniture exhibitors," Dato' Tan said. "I think now, it's not such a concern. Things have improved. Many furniture vendors

are second generation. Promotion of them has improved."

But will better furniture pictures—whether they are displayed on an iPad, blown up as still photos in booths, or showcased in a digital catalogue—work?

"I believe so," Dato' Tan said. "Particularly for the home furnishings sector. Office vendors have been producing nice catalogues for many years. Obviously they have had a better response. Home furniture people should be rolling out concepts, like lifestyle concepts. It will work. Show an outstanding product coupled with some pre-recorded video at your booth—that will really attract buyers and make them stand still for a while. We are human beings. We are attracted by these [technology] things when we go anywhere."

Nowadays, videos are easy to create and post on YouTube. Yuki Sugihara, director of Japanese product design firm Atelier OPA, did just that, and received 169,532 hits on YouTube, and counting.

"Seventeen years ago, it took half a day to make a five-minute movie," said Mr. Sugihara, whose major in university was 'Images and Sciences.' "Today, it takes 30 minutes."

"Architectural Furniture," his quickly made YouTube video about foldaway guest rooms and office space, went viral within days.

"I released the video on YouTube on September 19th, 2008 in Tokyo," he said. "One week after, I and [colleague] Toshihiko were in New York. When we checked statistics of it, we were very surprised to know of its 10,000 views. After one month, it recorded 60,000 views. Now the number grows day by day. Sometimes we hear 'I know your movie' from someone we met at an architecture and design conference or exhibition."

The movie also led to magazine and newspaper coverage around the world, including in Hong Kong, Greece, Germany, Israel, the United States and Brazil, he said.

"Then some blog linked to our

page and our YouTube movie, and now, we still have questions about price and shipping costs from all over the world," Mr. Sugihara said.

Furniture promoters from Malaysia to Japan clearly are thinking differently about what they do, and are using modern tools like iPads, YouTube and unique photography to lead the way in the showmanship qualities of tomorrow.



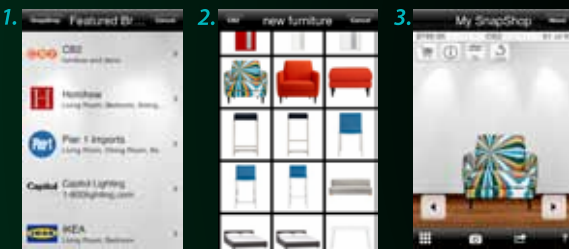
Furniture designed by Atelier OPA unfolds, then folds right back up to save space, and a video about it went viral. [Click Here](#) to see the video.

Great Digital Techniques to Promote Furniture

Websites, catalogues, posters—these are tried and true methods of displaying furniture images to get customers interested in what you sell.

But wake up: It's 2012. There are so many imaging techniques available now that are innovative, and many are low- or no-cost too. You can't afford to ignore them anymore.

Here's a sample of what's at your disposal digitally to show off your furniture in the best new light. And remember, you don't have to be a digital pro to use any of these tools.



There's a difference between seeing a piece of furniture online or at an exhibition, and understanding how that piece of furniture will fit in a showroom or living room back home.

SnapShop can bridge this gap in understanding. It allows you, the vendor, to list pieces from your furniture collection in the SnapShop database. Interested customers can then use their fingers to place your furniture—let's say a couch for example—in their iPhone camera. A picture then can be taken of any living room, den, or even showroom, with this couch positioned in the photo. Once the couch is positioned, customers can change the colour of it, reposition it, reverse it, or choose another couch or furniture item to fit in that space.

So essentially, SnapShop can allow vendors to have an interactive, branded catalog of their furniture that consumers can relate to their spatial surroundings.

The app could benefit both MIFF exhibitors and buyers. Exhibitors could use the app to help buyers better understand how their furniture would fit in showrooms back home. Buyers could use the app to help end consumers understand how furniture would fit in their own living rooms or bedrooms. SnapShop is available at the App Store, or visit it online at Snapshopinc.com.



Microsoft's Photosynth is a set of online tools that allow you to take a virtual 3D tour of a given room or object. In our view, this can be particularly useful for capturing and viewing pieces of furniture or showrooms in 3D.

The tools allow you to capture images in two different ways. First, you can use the "panorama" tool set, which gives a sense of what it feels like to be in one particular place, and then turn around in a 360 degree fashion to see what's around you. Second, you can use the "synth" tool set, which allows you to navigate a place or an object virtually via a series of photos that are taken and integrated.



It gives the sense of walking around a place or object as if you're part of a 3D tour, and witnessing great detail.

[Click Here to See the Photosynth We Created for EURO from MIFF 2012](#)



The founders of Animoto are described as a combination of people who produced shows for MTV, studied music in London and played in indie rock bands in Seattle.

Animoto is their love child. It allows users to create brilliant video animations by merely uploading a set of photos, words and musical choices to the Animoto website or app. In minutes, Animoto transforms these items into animated bliss.

The technology would be perfect for animating a showroom or furniture set, and making it come alive in the minds of consumers. Furniture rocks! Yes it could, with Animoto. Visit Animoto.com to find out more.



Dato' Tan & Mr. Essink launched MIFF 2013 during Buyers' Night at MIFF 2012



Dato' Tan (Chairman of MIFF) & Mr Jime Essink (President & CEO of UBM Asia) at MIFF 2012 Welcome Reception

UBM and MIFF Unite as Partners

By Majella Gomes
Furnish Now writer

MIFF will now leverage impeccable capabilities of UBM organiser

The Malaysian International Furniture Fair's (MIFF's) growth over the past 18 years could hardly have gone unnoticed in exhibition circles, but nowhere is the show's success more evident than in the partnerships that it has cultivated in the last two decades.

"MIFF first appeared on the UBM radar about eight years ago," said Jime Essink, President & CEO of UBM Asia Ltd., the region's leading trade show organiser that acquired MIFF earlier this year. "But like all successful partnerships, it was a matter of getting the timing right before things could fall into place and work out to everyone's benefit."

UBM is present in more than 40 countries worldwide, and helps to connect businesses primarily via trade shows. UBM Asia currently organises 150 trade shows, conferences and exhibitions in Asia, which cover a slew of industries including building, food, hotel and leisure, maritime, water and jewellery.

"MIFF's success cannot be ignored, especially when viewed within the context of the three strong growth areas we have identified in Asia: China, India and Southeast Asia, particularly the ASEAN region," he continued. "UBM already has successful events in Asia, including the

highest-grossing jewellery exhibition in Hong Kong, so it is advantageous to us to add an event like MIFF to our portfolio."

The MIFF-UBM partnership will see both companies leveraging on and complementing each other's strengths. For instance, UBM organises Hotelex, which focuses on hotels. Meanwhile, hotel furniture manufacturers feature quite prominently at MIFF. Participating in another trade exhibition under the banner of the same organiser would therefore be facilitated.

"There is also the UBM brand," Mr. Essink explained. "We are already an established name in exhibition circles on most continents. Being affiliated to us will mean being linked to a reputable organiser, and garner more attention for exhibitors in the markets where they are trying to establish themselves."

Ultimately, UBM's aim is to increase exhibitors' return on investment, besides

improving customer service for buyers and sellers alike.

"Although there is strength in numbers, and coming together under one banner is good, we firmly believe there should not be a dominant player," he stated. "Competition is always good, but industry players should be able to take advantage of networks, databases and other shared resources. This will be facilitated with partnerships like the MIFF-UBM one."

In what direction should the Malaysian trade show market develop?

"If Malaysia wants to catch up with other cities, you will need a new, modern venue," he remarked. "Also, size matters. UBM is now the largest trade show organiser in Malaysia. This offers better and more career opportunities that will attract better talent. We are also expanding into conferences, where content management will be vital."



Seminar attendees line up to hear insights at MIFF 2012

Industry Seminars Explore Hard Questions

MIFF GOES BEYOND DEAL-MAKING INTO THE LEARNING SPHERE

By Majella Gomes and Yeo Li Shian
Furnish Now writers

Besides being a top-10 furniture show in the world, the Malaysian International Furniture Fair (MIFF) delivers some of the best insights into furniture development and design in the region.

Industry seminars are delivered by some of the industry's most acclaimed experts and specialists.

MIFF 2012 saw four such presentations that tackled hard questions like the

necessity of design, and whether the furniture industry can be truly sustainable. Speakers included Klaus Kummer, President & CEO of KDT International Co Ltd, Thailand; Dr Jegatheswaran Ratnasingam of Universiti Putra Malaysia; Noraihan Abdul Rahman of the Malaysian Timber Council, and Chen Neng Xin of Ason Design Studio, China.



idea of furniture upside down, and made fun of the industry.”

Where was Asia in all this? Actually, the Asian culture is totally different.

“Life here happens on the floor,” Mr. Kummer explained. “Asians had little need of furniture until Western influence had spread far enough.”

Today, however, the focus is on creating furniture with an Asian identity, using local resources, including non-traditional materials like leaves and flowers. In Thailand, for instance, water hyacinths, widely regarded as a pest, are being turned into raw material for the furniture industry. In the Philippines, banana leaves are gaining popularity.

“Banana leaf chairs are being sold by Armani stores in Europe,” he divulged.

So, what do designers need to do in order to perform optimally?

“We have to find a way to educate designers to make them deliver what is required,” he said. “Manufacturers and designers both have a lot to offer but they need to talk to each other and find a common platform for mutual benefit. Every designer has an idea but sometimes the industry cannot see it. There is talent everywhere. We have to be able to see, develop and enable it. The capabilities – equipment, technology, human resources – are already available; it is time for Asia to be daring enough to start a new trend.”

Are human designers relevant in the computer age?

“With the Internet, designs can be accomplished in a day,” Mr. Kummer said. “Everything is executed by computers, from design to production. But we need to ask ourselves: do we need these kinds of products? Computers do not tell you what is the right or wrong design; the thinking process is lost. Designers are not stylists. They do not dress products up and make them look good. They deal with the situation and make the best of what is available.”

He said that most of what is considered good design today evolved from designs that debuted in the 1920s and 30s. This was the beginning of the Bauhaus era, when furniture began to be functional and produced for the masses.

“The Scandinavians ‘woke up’ in the 40s and 50s, in the wake of WWII,” he said. “Then in the late 1970s, the Italians began what is popularly referred to as the Memphis Movement, which was essentially a revolt, a rejection of all existing designs. It turned the

Klaus Kummer on Drivers for the

MALAYSIAN FURNITURE MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY



Dr. Jegatheswaran Ratnasingam on GREEN TECHNOLOGY IN FURNITURE MANUFACTURING

It's not enough to define 'green' technology as technology and processes that are environmentally-friendly and incorporate principles of sustainability. Materials used also should be available in perpetuity, said Dr. Ratnasingam.

"Sustainability and environmental friendliness go hand in hand," he pointed out. "If materials are not available in perpetuity, businesses cannot be sustained. Ensuring renewable resources also mitigates the problem of destruction of natural resources in general—not just forests but water supply and soil quality, for example. Everything is interdependent, so there is really a need to conserve the entire ecosystem."

There has been an increasing need for conservation even as global growth slows—

even in Asia—which is widely regarded as the centre of the world's economy. Manufacturing, he said, was always prone to the 3D Syndrome—dirty, dangerous and degenerative—but green technology offers alternatives because its avowed aims are to improve the quality of life, society, energy and the environment.

Unfortunately, Malaysia is about 25 years behind Europe where green building



technology, water and waste management, and the transportation sector are concerned. These are major industrial players in moving the green technology agenda; anything which happens in these sectors creates a major impact on the environment.

One of the problems requiring immediate attention is the unwillingness of retailers to pay premium prices for green furniture.

"Currently, the market does not recognise the value of being green," he continued. "But the market is becoming more competitive, and some manufacturers have instituted green practices in response to market forces. This has been mainly in the use of certified wood, environment-friendly adhesives and coatings, preservatives and packaging. The use of certified sustainable wood, for instance, is the easiest green move that can be adopted by manufacturers. They have started using recyclable packaging too."

Advocating for the adoption of green practices throughout the manufacturing process (including administration and management), Dr. Ratnasingam said that proper legislation was also necessary for a seamless transition to totally green operations.

"As long as legislation is not in place, it will be difficult to move to green practices," he stated. "Currently, conservation is driven by market demand, and cost is high. Buyers prefer cheaper furniture which is not green, so going green is related to cost, procedure and premium. But there is a compelling argument for adopting green practices; manufacturers who have adopted the ISO 14000 standard have reduced their energy use by up to 17%, and substantially reduced waste as well."

Noraihan Abdul Rahman on

THE MALAYSIAN TIMBER COUNCIL'S PROMOTION PROGRAMME FOR 2012/2013

While it's clear there's great value in Malaysian timber exports, this can be hard to comprehend for the average person.

After all, how do you get your head around a number like US\$6.6 billion (or RM20 billion), which was the value of Malaysian timber exports in 2011?

Well, think of it this way...

That figure constituted 2.3% of Malaysia's GDP. It also accounted for 2.5% of the nation's workforce. Now, that seems quite significant, doesn't it?

Armed with statistics like these, the Malaysian Timber Council (MTC) presses on, full speed ahead to sustain, grow and maintain the country's timber industry.

The MTC also has been tasked with seeking out new or emerging markets, and strengthening existing ones. In parallel, it has to provide market intelligence that will be of relevance to Malaysian manufacturers.

"The amount of timber being logged in Malaysian forests will decline in the years to come because of conservation measures, so proper management of this resource is imperative," Ms. Noraihan said. "Wooden furniture makes up 31% of timber products from Malaysia. This goes mainly to Japan, U.S.A., India, Taiwan, Australia, Singapore,



China, South Korea, U.K. and Thailand—the top ten timber markets for Malaysian wood and wood products. We also export to emerging markets like Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Qatar."

In the face of increasingly difficult global constraints, the 20-year old MTC has its work cut out for it.

Its main programmes will consist of arranging for Malaysian companies to participate in trade fairs, missions abroad, and business matching visits in 2012 and 2013. These will be held in more than 25 countries on four continents. MTC also has set up a Raw Material Supply Programme and a Resource & Development Programme, aimed at helping Malaysian manufacturers obtain raw materials as well as develop networks.

"MTC organises more than 230 trade fair delegations annually," Ms. Noraihan divulged. "In 2012 and 2013, we will be participating in fairs in India, Dubai, Thailand, London, France, Qatar, Egypt



and Saudi Arabia. Our missions will be to the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, South Africa and Mauritius, as well as to the U.S., Canada, Singapore, Italy, and Australia. Business visits have been planned for Mexico, Sweden, Poland, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Brazil."

Participants of these activities stand to gain more than just exposure to international markets. MTC is prepared to provide incentives to those who qualify, import assistance and subsidies for freight charges. In addition to all this, MTC organises the biennial 288-booth MTC Global Woodmart, a one-stop platform for buyers of wood products, which will be held at the KLCC Convention Centre from October 4th to 6th 2012.



Through his observation, Mr. Chen noticed that the collaboration between designers and entrepreneurs in the Malaysian context “are only based on creativity, but not overall relationship.”

“Apart from the importance of manufacturers’ readiness in accepting designers’ point of views (and vice-versa), manufacturers should put emphasis on promoting the designers’ brands,” explained Mr. Chen, who has close to two decades of furniture designing experience under his belt.

He added that a great collaboration between designers and manufacturers regardless of where they are from or what beliefs they subscribe to, will contribute to the success of an innovation.

“There have not been too many Malaysian products that have been injected with cultural elements,” he said. “There’s still a lot to work on.”

Chen Nengxin on THE DESIGNER/MANUFACTURER RELATIONSHIP



In the furniture business, it is essential for designers and entrepreneurs to reach a consensus in order to achieve desirable end results which are practical and functional.

Strong business relationships between the two however “should never be confined only to design drafts,” said Mr. Chen, an award-winning furniture designer.

“It doesn’t end there,” the China-based design icon said.

According to Mr. Chen, a good relationship comprises the overall process;

from designing and production to branding and marketing. It requires full understanding from both parties.

“There should be mutual respect between the two to achieve the best results or output,” he said.

By any measure, this is not easy. The biggest challenge in the designer and entrepreneur relationship is how to unify two totally different perspectives into one focused direction.



01



FabulousFurniture
The Furniture of MIFF 2012



02



03

*"I used to sell furniture for a living.
The trouble was, it was my own."*

-Les Dawson, comedian



04

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www.artmatrix.com.my
- 02 Benithem Sdn Bhd;
www.benithem.com
- 03 BJ Cabinet Enterprise Sdn Bhd;
www.bjcabinet.com
- 04 Hin Lim Furniture Manufacturer Sdn Bhd;
www.hinlim.com
- 05 Euro Chairs Manufacturer (M) Sdn Bhd;
www.eurochairs.com
- 06 Ascent Furniture International Sdn Bhd;
www.ascentfurniture.com
- 07 Decor Suria Industries Sdn Bhd;
www.decortrend.com



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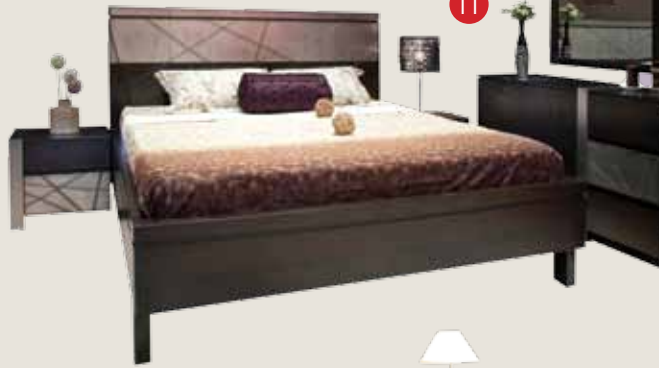
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*“My ideal relaxation is **working on upholstery.** I spend hours in junk shops buying furniture. I do all the upholstery work myself, and it’s like therapy.”*
- Pamela Anderson, model



09



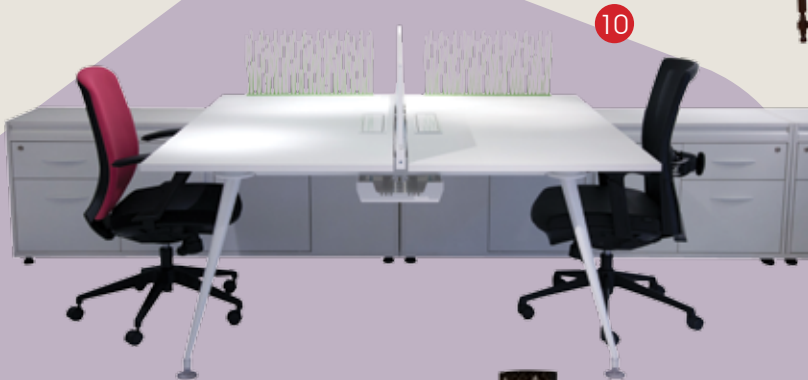
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08



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08 Hume Furniture Industries Sdn Bhd;
www.humefurniture.com

09 Inspiwood Furniture Sdn Bhd;
www.inspiwood.com

10 Intersit Industries (M) Sdn Bhd;
www.intersit.com.my

11 Kinheng Furniture Sdn Bhd;
www.kinhengfurniture.com

12 Kokuyo (M) Sdn Bhd;
www.kokuyo-furniture.co.jp

13 Kuek Brothers Furniture Sdn Bhd;
www.kuekbros.com.my

14 Lanouva
(Sin Lian Lee Manufacturing Sdn Bhd);
www.lanouva.com

15 LY Furniture Sdn Bhd;
www.lyfurniture.com



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*“Know your lines and don't bump into the furniture.”
- Spencer Tracy, actor*



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16 Merryfair Chair System Sdn Bhd;
www.merrychair.com

17 MG Furniture Sdn Bhd;
www.mgfurniture.blogspot.com

18 Oasis Furniture Industries Sdn Bhd;
www.oasis.com.my

19 Poh Huat Furniture Industries (M) Sdn Bhd;
www.pohhuat.com

20 Safari Office System Sdn Bhd;
www.safariofficesystem.com

21 THS Industries Sdn Bhd;
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23 Titov Sdn Bhd;
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27



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*“What do I wear in bed?
Why, Chanel No. 5, of course.”
- Marilyn Monroe, actress*

24 Bowlman Furniture Sdn Bhd;
www.bowlmanfurn.com

25 L.B. Furniture Sdn Bhd;
www.lbfurniture.com

26 Ken Yik Furniture Industry Sdn Bhd;
www.kenyik.com

27 Reliable Furniture Sdn Bhd;
www.reliablefurniture.com.my

28 Woody furniture Industries Sdn Bhd;
www.woodyfurnitureind.com

29 Home Best Ent. Corp. Sdn Bhd;
www.homebest.com



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*"I have never, honestly, thrown a chair in my life."
- Steve Ballmer, CEO*

30 Chernyen Industries Sdn Bhd;
www.chernyen.com

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www.henhin.com

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