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The official magazine of the  
Malaysian International Furniture Fair

JUNE 2014

## SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIPS

**Exhibitor success  
stories through MIFF  
collaborations**

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**There is  
Power in  
Design**

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**MIFF  
TOP  
BUYERS  
in Focus**

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# LETTER TO READERS

## Furniture Industry: Cooperation through MIFF

*MIFF: Bridging furniture buyers and manufacturers for long-term business partnerships*

Over the last 20 years, the Malaysian International Furniture Fair (MIFF) has been connecting buyers and exhibitors in the furniture industry. Every year, UBM Malaysia hosts MIFF not only to provide a wider platform for exhibitors in the furniture industry, but also to create a platform that will cater to furniture buyers worldwide.

Here are some examples of what happened at MIFF 2014 when buyers and exhibitors connected:

A Parisian buyer looking for furniture for a French Island and Africa found the best trade fair with interesting products to be MIFF.

A buyer from India, a recently booming market for Malaysian furniture, found quality products of competitive prices at MIFF.

A veteran exhibitor that grew together with MIFF is one the fair's most supportive clients.

A first-time exhibitor testing the waters of the global furniture market became a new exporter through MIFF.

The overall success of MIFF as a promotional platform depends largely on the full support and cooperation of each and every exhibitor—not just during the show itself but also for marketing activities that we, the organiser, initiate both before and after the show.

As the organiser, we always ensure to meet the best expectations not just among our exhibitors but also for our buyers as well. Many exhibitors join MIFF every year and are proactive in their collaborative efforts with MIFF, getting involved in MIFF-related marketing efforts that highlight both the manufacturer's furniture design and quality, and their company's creativity and open-mindedness in business. These are just some of the reasons why furniture buyers worldwide come to MIFF every year.

This *Furnish Now* issue highlights some of MIFF exhibitors' efforts in partnering with MIFF and participating in our marketing strategies that has led to their individual business successes. They were not afraid to take risks and have taken our business partnerships to the next level. Indeed, there are great lessons to be learned from their stories. Read this issue's *Cover Story* (page 4-8) to find out more.

MIFF has been around for two decades, and we continue to cater to the furniture industry and help expand Malaysia's furniture industry to a wider global market. In our *Special Report* (page 12-16), we have highlighted some buyer profiles. We believe that by finding out what they are looking for at MIFF and what makes them come back yearly, we will bring future MIFFs to greater heights.

We are grateful to our exhibitors whose full support and cooperation allowed the entire show to succeed. Moreover, we thank the buyers for continuing to make MIFF a huge part of their furniture business.

MIFF is the furniture industry's bridge in helping create lasting business partnerships between buyers and exhibitors. We look forward to working together to create even stronger bonds at MIFF 2015.

Best wishes,

**KAREN GOI**

General Manager, Furniture and Interiors  
UBM Malaysia

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# Malaysian International Furniture Fair 2014 Nets More Buyers and Record Orders

**A**t its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition held from March 4 to 8, the Malaysian International Furniture Fair (MIFF) 2014 drew more buyers and record orders.

In 2013, the fair attracted a total of 18,397 visitors from 140 countries and regions with sales of US\$854 million.

This year, the five-day show extended another solid year with estimated sales of US\$892 million and a 6% jump in attendees to 19,472 visitors including 6,171 international buyers from 141 countries and regions.

The turnout of the international and local buyers has created more business

opportunities to the 503 exhibitors from 13 countries and regions who packed the Putra World Trade Centre (PWTC) and Matrade Exhibition and Convention Centre (MECC) with their latest range and wide-variety of products.

The outcome underscores the continued strength and relevance of MIFF as the leading and most business results-focused global furniture trade show in Southeast Asia.

The above statistics is demonstrative of the growing interest from global buyers, distributors and planners recognising the value and versatility of Malaysian produced furniture for commercial and retail use.

**80,000** sq.m.  
EXHIBITION SIZE

**US\$892** million  
EXPORT SALES GENERATED

**503** NUMBER OF EXHIBITORS

353 MALAYSIA

150 INTERNATIONAL FROM 12 COUNTRIES

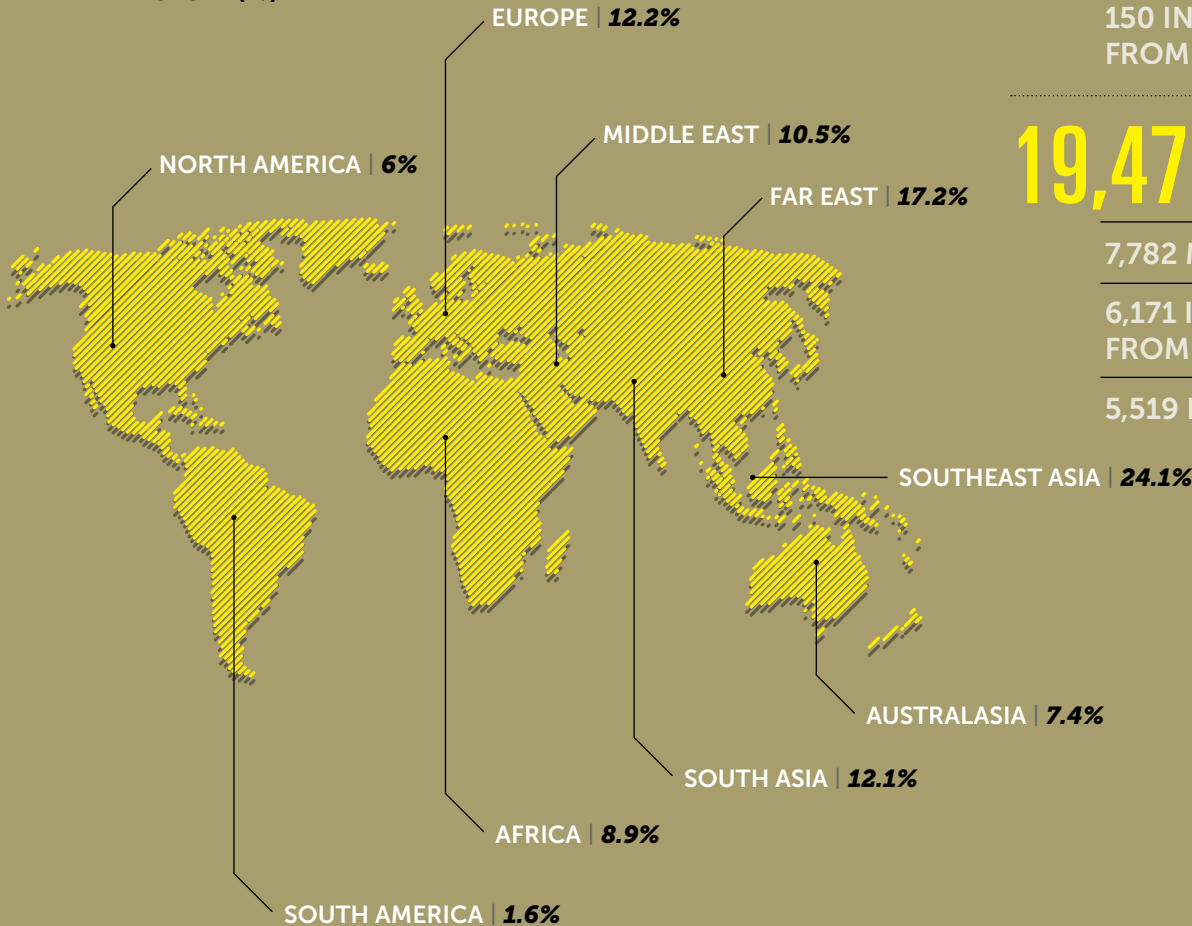
**19,472** NUMBER OF VISITORS

7,782 MALAYSIA

6,171 INTERNATIONAL FROM 141 COUNTRIES

5,519 INVITED GUESTS

## INTERNATIONAL VISITORSHIP PER REGION (%)



# TOWARDS A BIGGER, BETTER MIFF



*How MIFF exhibitors  
contribute in delivering  
successful fairs*

BY GLORIA D. GAMAT  
Furnish Now editor\*

Hosted by UBM Malaysia, the 20-year old Malaysian International Furniture Fair (MIFF) remains at the forefront of the furniture industry shows globally, being the No. 1 Southeast Asian Furniture Fair.

Malaysia's wood-based furniture industry continues to play a pivotal role in the country's economic growth, especially in terms of export revenues. The fact that furniture aficionados worldwide flock to Kuala Lumpur for MIFF year after year is a true recognition that the quality, design and competitive cost of Malaysian furniture is at par with global standards.

What is MIFF's formula for the show's success? The formula is really basic: the cooperation and support of the exhibitors are the key elements that the organiser needs in delivering a great MIFF event. This cooperation extends beyond show participation and into the realm of year-round marketing, advertising and other initiatives in order to promote their products and MIFF participation.

While UBM provides a promotional platform for the Malaysian furniture industry through MIFF, the exhibitors and their yearly showcase determines the success of the show. After all, at the core of every MIFF event are the exhibitors—the manufacturers and suppliers whom buyers come to for their furniture businesses. Furniture buyers from around the globe come to MIFF every year, from those who come to check out the Malaysian market and what it has to offer to those who explore new furniture designs with an old business partner.

MIFF exhibitors are encouraged to be proactive in their yearly show participation, whether it be in terms of bringing in breakthrough products, promoting their MIFF showcase through the media, or simply by actively collaborating with show organisers in various promotional activities.



#### OPEN TO NEW IDEAS

*Kinheng Furniture's* open-minded attitude and willingness to try out new things to improve business ventures have proven beneficial to this MIFF regular exhibitor.

According to the MIFF team: "Working with them is a breeze. Whenever we need to meet Mr. Chai Kin Pheng, the founder, we just go to the Chinese restaurant situated right beside Kinheng's factory where they serve simple but delicious home-cooked meals—a conducive place to have friendly discussions. Kudos to the team for being so efficient as well. In our experience with them, they never sit on a matter and make you wait. They act swiftly, just like their boss. Mr. Chai is a straightforward man. If you ask him, 'Do you like this booth? Do you want to join the exhibition?' he will tell you to give him one or two days to think it over and he keeps his word. Yes means yes, and no means no."



Kinheng Furniture has always demonstrated a positive and receptive attitude to new marketing ideas introduced by MIFF.

*“Not all manufacturers are willing to see that there are intangible benefits. But our job is to keep on trying.”*

Kinheng Furniture has always demonstrated a positive and receptive attitude to new marketing ideas introduced by MIFF. The company is game to go ahead as long as they see the value. When a makeover project was introduced to Kinheng (Furnish Now, December 2013 cover story), the company was eager to experiment and contribute new ideas.

#### COMMITTED TO TALENT AND DESIGN

When Mr. Choo Ghee Kien, Director of *Supreme Tropical Furniture*, was first approached by the MIFF team to sponsor a prototype for the MIFF Furniture Design Competition (MIFF FDC), he was not very interested. The response was not entirely surprising for the organiser because finding a prototype maker is always a huge challenge.

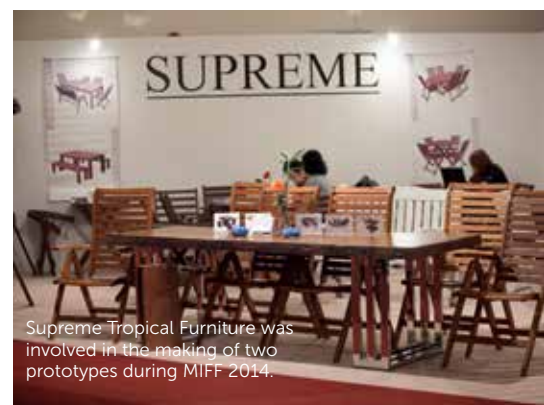
Making a prototype requires the furniture manufacturer to reorganise its setup, which can have a substantial cost impact, especially if the design is unconventional and the company has to go out of its way to make it happen.

"In essence, you are asking the manufacturer to invest their time and money into a venture that is not generating tangible profits," according to the MIFF team. "Not all manufacturers are willing to see that there are intangible benefits. But our job is to keep on trying. So despite his initial response, we continued inviting Mr. Choo to our events. We were very happy when he finally drove all the way from Klang to attend one of our sharing sessions. We explained the reason behind what we were doing—to create more talent to fill the designer gap in the industry. Mr. Choo was at last convinced and agreed to be a sponsor."

In the process, the MIFF team got to know Mr. Choo a lot better—he was not at all the disinterested person he was initially mistaken for. He was quiet because his mind was always thinking of the next step. He is also very passionate and dedicated to his cause. From the moment he said he wanted to help, he went all out.

On top of producing the required prototype, he made a series of miniature stools to complement the primary one, as a decorative item. Not many people would go the extra mile. Although he didn't win in the competition, the loss only whetted his appetite to rebound the following year.

During MIFF 2014, he was involved in the making of two prototypes. His efforts paid off when XSR won a lot of praise from the judges and clinched the Best Design award. MIFF is seeking to work with someone like Mr. Choo, someone who constantly seeks new designs, improvements and challenges. Customers like Mr. Choo of Supreme Tropical Furniture keep the MIFF team motivated. ❖



Supreme Tropical Furniture was involved in the making of two prototypes during MIFF 2014.



TFMA, headed by Mr. Ruca Chien (right), puts a lot of effort in creating a good creative showcase at MIFF.

### CREATIVITY RULES, AT ALL TIMES

The Taiwanese people may be infamous for their smiles, but the MIFF team attests that working with the **Taiwan Furniture Manufacturers' Association (TFMA)** is a pleasure: "They are truly a dream customer: what they promise, they deliver. Payment is always prompt. The Taiwan Furniture Manufacturer's Association (TFMA) definitely ranks as one of MIFF's most efficient customers ever. One of the qualities we admire most about TFMA is their creativity. Under the guidance of their dynamic chief, Ruca Chien, they put a lot of effort in creating a good showcase and as a result, TFMA is one of the top draws at MIFF, with their attractive booth."

Every year at MIFF, TFMA is one of the few—if not the only—booths that has their staff outfitted in tribal costumes. They feature different costumes every year. Because Taiwan has many tribes, the association tries to give visibility to different ones every year. At MIFF 2014, TFMA sponsored MIFF's Instabooth, which definitely added some fun and pizzazz to the event.

But then the creative ones are sometimes not that easy to convince. It took the MIFF team two to three years before getting **Inception Design**,



Oasis is known to the MIFF team for their efforts in putting their best step forward to introduce new designs.

a relatively new company based in Malaysia, to join MIFF for the first time this year.

"We've been observing them over the years and they always come up with new designs for bedroom and dining furniture, which is something that we want for the show from all exhibitors," according to the MIFF team. "We thought Inception Design could bring new flavour to MIFF."

The company's products, designed by the owner Philip Khor himself, combine traditional Malaysian design with a modern, contemporary approach. When Inception Design finally joined MIFF, the company was more concerned about what they would be getting out of the furniture fair than worrying about the costs and pricing, to the delight of the MIFF team.

Mr. Khor is also very hands-on in terms of the booth design, always taking care of every minute detail.

"You could see how much effort he put into it—from the decoration to the lighting and even the bed sheets," the MIFF team said. "Another thing we remember most about them is that Mr. Khor is really friendly, and his overall attitude is very good."

Indeed, each visit to the company's booth at MIFF is an opportunity for learning something

new. Mr. Khor is a furniture exhibitor who is always generous in sharing the latest trends in the furniture industry and giving out tips to the MIFF team on how to improve the show and the furniture market.

### SUPPORTING INNOVATION

**Oasis Furniture** is one of the most loyal exhibitors at MIFF, according to the MIFF team.

"Mr. Ralph Ong, managing director, is a very open-minded person who has never hesitated sharing his ideas and thoughts as an exhibitor with us," the MIFF team said. "Since the first edition of the MIFF Furniture Design Competition to this year during MIFF FDC 2014, Mr. Ong has always showed his willingness to invest his time and funds for the young designers to bring innovation to the Malaysian furniture industry."

Mr. Ong supports the concept that innovation is an integral part of the industry's growth. The company remains one of MIFF's loyal prototype sponsors. Oasis is known to the MIFF team for their efforts in putting their best step forward to introduce new designs and their unceasing assistance in that area whenever required.

Mr. Ong, an always active participant in MIFF events, never allowed distance to come

in the way of making it to the event, even if it meant travelling at wee hours from Kluang to Kuala Lumpur. His tremendous support in all MIFF-related events is truly endearing.

"Oasis tops our list of most punctual exhibitors in terms of payments," the MIFF team said. "To say the least, we have always enjoyed working with them and it is truly a delight to have such an actively participating exhibitor in the show. We will continue to nurture this professional relationship with Oasis."



When Inception Design joined MIFF, the company was more concerned about what they would be getting out of the furniture fair than worrying about the costs and pricing.

*“They are truly a dream customer: what they promise, they deliver. Payment is always prompt.”*

## POSITIVITY AMIDST CHALLENGES

In the beginning, the MIFF team always had some communication gaps with **Gamma Wood**. Gradually, a year after inviting them to the events and activities, their relationship grew to the point that Gamma Wood has chosen MIFF as their preferred yearly show. Prior to MIFF, Gamma Wood used to participate in other shows.

“Mr. Chong Soon Keat of Gamma Wood is one of our sources of inspiration,” the MIFF team said. “He has faced a lot of challenges but has emerged successfully despite that.”

Gamma Wood used to supply furniture based on orders from local furniture manufacturers. The company used to subcontract in order to export. Slowly, the company changed their business direction and eventually became the exporters. Adapting to market changes and striving amongst the strong competition that the industry offers has never been easy. However, Mr. Chong has always stayed positive throughout his journey. How he bounced back from difficult phases in his business truly demonstrates his resilience and positivity against challenges.

When Gamma Wood faced some difficulty in business, Mr. Chong didn't stop there. Instead of giving up, he went the other way and improved the company's production, design and business strategy. Instead of blaming others, Mr. Chong opted to find ways in fine-tuning his current business practices. At the end of it all, his positive attitude of dealing with business problems and challenges really paid off.



SMT Stone believed in the organiser's efforts and in the process, got good business outcomes during the show.

“His thoughts and positive vibes have always impressed us,” the MIFF team shared. “He is like a mentor whom you can comfortably share thoughts with about different things.”

Although Gamma Wood offers a mid- to high-end range of products, they have done a really good job with their furniture designs this year. At MIFF 2014, their business doubled compared to last year's. Being a designer by talent, Mr. Chong always adds his professional knowledge, skills, and techniques to all of his products. The outcomes are truly impressive.

## RELATIONSHIP BASED ON TRUST

A newbie at MIFF 2014, **SMT Stone** has benefited tremendously in their business by joining MIFF. The company placed their trust in the organiser by actively responding to MIFF's advertising and promotional programme, sharing their product photos and information, and advertising, among other activities. SMT Stone believed in the organiser's efforts and in the process, got good business outcomes during the show.

“At the end of it all, his positive attitude of dealing with business problems and challenges really paid off.”

A newer client specialising in the processing, cutting, trading, and mining of marbles and limestones for 23 years, SMT Stone had never exported until recently.

“SMT Stone is a newer client,” the MIFF team shared. “Apart from local shows, they have never joined any international trade and export exhibitions before. From the first time we met, they kept saying they are not prepared for this unfamiliar market. In 2012, when we contacted them they were unsure because they were not ready for the global market. In 2013, they finally said that they are ready and would like to explore this market.”

MIFF is the first international exhibition that SMT Stone ever participated in, and the company is happy with the good services received from the team. Appreciative of MIFF team's hard work, Mr. Andrew Khoo and Ms. Mevis Chai of SMT Stone—always trusting MIFF team advice and supportive of MIFF endeavours—are perfect examples of how collaborative efforts between organiser and exhibitors can bring fruitful business outcomes.

## SHARING BENEFITS THE BUSINESS

**BM Furniture** is one of MIFF team's favourite exhibitors. Mr. Chang Jee Tong, the owner of BM Furniture, believes that sharing his full MIFF experience with the organising team is of huge importance in achieving success as a MIFF show exhibitor. ...»



Gamma Wood has chosen MIFF as their preferred yearly show.



BM Furniture is an MIFF exhibitor that promptly provides feedback to the organising team.

“After the show, BM Furniture will share their experience with us,” the MIFF team said. “They will tell us their observations during the show such as: how is the visitor flow in their booth, how is the market trend, etc. They give constructive comments.”

BM Furniture is an MIFF exhibitor that promptly provides feedback to the organising team. This feedback involves every MIFF-related event and marketing effort, and how the company benefited from those activities. Most importantly, BM Furniture is very honest and open in sharing their thoughts on how those individual activities can be improved, not just for the benefit of the MIFF show itself, but for the benefit of the show’s exhibitors. This feedback system exemplified by BM Furniture promotes healthy communication and better business pursuits between exhibitors and the organiser.

#### GROWING WITH MIFF

**BJ Cabinet Enterprise** is a company that grows with MIFF. Not only do they closely follow what the organising team is doing for the show’s success, they have benefited from all MIFF-related activities.

“BJ Cabinet is our diehard supporter—they have participated in every single MIFF initiative possible (seminars, prototype sponsorship, advertising, etc.),” the MIFF team said. “They are a good paymaster and support every plan we have—definitely the first supporter—in terms of advertisements and prototype making.”

BJ Cabinet’s marketing director, Steven Wong, started out from being a marketing executive.

When the MIFF team says, “Steven, we need your help,” he won’t say no. He will

“Although they are always very busy with their own production, still they are willing to develop new designs and go through the whole process of developing prototypes with the students.”



BJ Cabinet Enterprise is MIFF’s diehard supporter.

always say yes. From a mere TV cabinet maker, the company now manufactures children’s furniture, living room cabinets (lifestyle solutions) and has started to sell ‘concepts,’ not just furniture. Despite the success and business growth, the company remains humble and is willing to learn.

BJ Cabinet was once a very small company and grew from 30 sq. m. when they first joined MIFF more than 10 years ago, to an exhibit space of 150 sq. m. today.

#### NURTURING STUDENTS

**Poh Huat Furniture Industries** is the first company that stepped forward to become the MIFF Furniture Design Competition diamond sponsor for two consecutive years. By doing so, they have contributed tremendously to the furniture industry. In addition, Poh Huat has always been supportive and continues to be supportive of MIFF’s efforts in nurturing young designers. The company has always been helping the industry through MIFF by developing prototypes.

“Although they are always very busy with their own production, still they are willing to develop new designs and go through the whole process of developing prototypes with the students,” the MIFF team said.

Poh Huat is generous in sharing their knowledge and resources with young talents. Poh Huat never hesitated in relaying their input (materials, knowledge and the whole process of designing and manufacturing) to these students. After all, nurturing and mentoring the talents of today’s young designers will benefit the furniture industry as a whole.



Poh Huat Furniture Industries has always been supportive and continues to be supportive of MIFF’s efforts in nurturing young designers.

Over the last two decades, MIFF has been building a never-ending bridge from the Malaysian furniture industry to the global market. As we have illustrated, there are various ways exhibitors can gain business success through MIFF. More collaborative efforts and continuous support are certainly welcome and needed in order to achieve a bigger, better and more fruitful MIFF. ♪

*\*With valuable contributions from Furnish Now writers: Alexandra Wong, Chin Pei Ling, Diana Uy, Joanna Lee, and Ruchi Mahajan Ranga.*

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# The Italian Taste in Interiors: Like a War of Designs

BY CHIN PEI LING  
Furnish Now writer

When we think of Italian interior design, we think of highly sophisticated and luxurious designs soaked in contrast and harmony. We can imagine checkered, black and white flooring with perhaps, contrasting modern, red furniture against an ancient building frame.

**B**ut for renowned Italian architect and interior designer Enrico G. Cleva, Italian interior design is "like a war."

"It's the fight between the white and the red and the black," Mr. Cleva said at an interview during MIFF 2014 after his seminar on 'The Italian Taste in Interiors.' "The fight between colours and materials—it's not a fight, it's a war!"

In his seminar, he took the audience through a journey of Italian style with a series of images from catalogues and his own projects. One of his projects included the Moleskine headquarters in Milan, which was renovated from an ancient factory building. Cleva bursts with passion as he spoke of interior design and how it permeates through everything we do.

"All of us spend our lives in interiors. You're always 'in something.' Being in a good interior is really different than being in a bad interior," Cleva said. It's no surprise then that Cleva's own home became his 'drawing board.' He admitted to designing the interiors of his own home. His wife is also an architect and interior designer. Together, they are owners of Milan-based architecture and planning firm *Enricocleva&Co.*

"My wife and I had 'periods,'" he said. "We had a black-and-white period and a coloured period. Once, I inherited some carpets from my grandmother that were brown and blue. My wife is gifted with something, and I am gifted with something different. We always like to discuss. We fight a lot. But never in



Moleskine's Headquarters in Milan (designed by Mr. Enrico G. Cleva) where the brick building of "Conceria Pacchetti" Factory from the early 1900s got converted into a large, modern office while retaining some of its ancient design.



Another design by Mr. Enrico G. Cleva: "Sail in the wind" Country Villa in Northern Italy combined tradition and modernity through ancient stones and new materials. A large sail of concrete and glass runs alongside the main building, connecting the three floors and perfecting the building that is situated in a windy area.



ideas. We have the same ideas [in design]. I work on her ideas and she works on my ideas," Mr. Cleva said with a chuckle. He added that he has a lot of antiquities from his family in his home, stemming from the Italian's love of home and family life.

"Italian design pieces cost ten to twenty times more than Malaysian designs but they are still selling," Mr. Cleva said. "I think it's because the idea behind it lasts. I have in my house tables and chairs that are 40 years old. They are still perfect, and very comfortable."

Mr. Cleva is so passionate about art that his first salary was used to buy a sculpture.

"Others buy a car, a telephone; I bought a sculpture," Cleva said with a laugh. "Art is an absolutely necessary interior."

Cleva brought this passion along with him to MIFF 2014, which he attended for the first time.

"The energy, the power of this fair is absolutely positive," Mr. Cleva said. "I couldn't imagine something more interesting, more creativity-nourishing. It has a different vibe and I love difference. I love to see how other people work. Of course, the venue is a bit

of a challenge to navigate. But then again, the fact that there are more exhibitors than space is something absolutely incredible. It means good business, it means that it is well-organised, people are coming back—both the buyers and exhibitors—and that's a success. You see immediately that this is a successful fair. I'll come back next year, of course."

In comparison with Italian interior design, Malaysian interior design still has lots to learn. Cleva offers his advice.

"You need to use your designers," Mr. Cleva said. "They understand the people, the taste, and what's going on here. They also need fresh air—and that's where international designers come in. The second step is marketing—marketing makes the value of what you are doing. There's a lot of rubberwood here. But what are the qualities of rubberwood? Can you work in a green way with rubberwood? It's always (about) how you communicate what you're doing."

When asked to sum up Italian interior design in one sentence, Mr. Cleva said with absolute confidence: "It's the best way to improve the quality of life." ㄐ

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# MIFF TOP BUYERS IN FOCUS

*Understanding buyers' perspectives for business success*

BY GLORIA D. GAMAT  
Furnish Now editor\*

The Malaysian International Furniture Fair (MIFF) has been catering to international buyers from the moment the world noticed the global potential of the Malaysian furniture, not just in terms of design and competitive pricing, but also in terms of quality and after-sales services that often continue to exceed global standards.

Still, what individual buyers are thinking can get lost in the shuffle of big business. Nonetheless, what each and every buyer thinks has value both to fellow buyers, and also to exhibitors yearning to improve. At MIFF 2014, *Furnish Now* sought out buyers to dig deeper into their perspectives on not just what they bought, but also into their buying and selling strategies and how they utilise their MIFF purchases in their respective businesses. Understanding their perspectives and business strategies help buyers, the Malaysian furniture industry and even MIFF itself improve and cater to the expanding global furniture marketplace.



“People need interesting products. Each year I enjoy the products and the organisation. I travel to different countries and I found the best organisation and reception here in Malaysia—not in China and not in France.”

— PATRICIA MICHEL

#### WHY RELATIONSHIPS MATTER

In the middle of every buyer's journey, there is MIFF. Twenty years is a long time—long enough to establish lasting relationships in the furniture business arena. Relationships matter in business pursuits, and this factor has played a huge role throughout MIFF's history.

For example, MIFF veteran Ms. Patricia Michel of Harth Commerce International (France), who has been attending the fair for 10 years, shared her thoughts on why she keeps coming back.

“I like the exhibition a lot because all people are friendly, and there are a lot of choices in furniture,” she said. “This year, I think the furniture is more beautiful and there are more designs to choose from.”

Although her company is based in Paris, Ms. Michel is not buying furniture for the Parisian market.

“The furniture I'm looking for is for a French Island and for Africa,” she said. “People need interesting products. Each year I enjoy the products and the organisation. I travel to different countries and I found the best organisation and reception here in Malaysia—not in China and not in France.”

Working with an old firm who has been in the business for 145 years has an element of discretion to it; thus she cannot reveal how much furniture she orders each year at MIFF.

Even though many factories would like to partner with her company, “At this point it's difficult to work with new factories,” she said. “I prefer to work again with the same factory and I prefer to continue with the same factory. They have good products and excellent operations.”

The circle of trust built together with suppliers and factories goes a long way in the furniture business. Through word of mouth—even in today's digital age—good business relationships push forward and can last for years to come.



Such is the case of Mr. S. Jaifar of Sunshine Furniture (India).

Relatively new to MIFF, Mr. Jaifar, a buyer of Malaysian home furniture, shared: “This is our fifth time attending MIFF, and I am glad that I took the opportunity to come here personally after hearing good things about it from my peers, because I find that the quality of goods here is top-notch; the prices are attractive as well.”

Mr. Jaifar usually buys through an agent and so far has never received any wrong shipment. He's attributing that fact to not just luck and taking precautions, but to a policy of working only with people that he trusts.

“So far we have no complaints about the shipments,” he said. “I am proud to say that we have a 100% clean record in that aspect.”

#### BUYING: THE WHAT AND THE WHY

On his second day at MIFF 2014, Mr. Muzammil S. Hameed of Al Satter Trading and Cont. W.L.L. (Bahrain) was combing through all the exhibitors despite having a few regular suppliers that he already patronises. ⇨

“Even if they don't have a certain product, they are willing to bring it in from other suppliers. Thus, they become a one-stop centre that makes trading a very easy process.”

— MUZAMMIL S. HAMEED





“When I come to MIFF, I usually go for steel furniture and office furniture,” Mr. Hameed said. “I find that they have good furniture products and can produce to meet my specifications. Even if they don’t have a certain product, they are willing to bring it in from other suppliers. Thus, they become a one-stop centre that makes trading a very easy process.”

Although he has been doing business with his regular suppliers for about 15 years, he would occasionally spot a supplier that shows potential. This year, for example, he found some Taiwanese booths that showcased eye-catching furniture that caught his eye.

As a manufacturer of sofa sets in the U.K., Sling (UK) Ltd. tends to buy their component parts in Malaysia. They are also on the hunt for Malaysian bedroom sets. In the past five or six years of purchasing at MIFF, the company has built a good business relationship with a few factories in Malaysia.

When asked to share their buying journey at MIFF, Mr. Salam Khan of Sling (UK) Ltd. responded: “The selection of our partners starts at the exhibition. Many times it’s the product and many times, it’s the person. Sometimes you select a good product but if from an uncooperative seller, that doesn’t work.”



“I’m happy with the variety of the display and trends. The number of containers I buy every year varies—depending on whether I like the design—but 10 to 12 containers easily.”

— BHAGWAN SINGH

There are two factories in the Penang area that Sling (UK) Ltd. develops products with. The company’s good business relationship has reached the level of brainstorming product development ideas with their suppliers on site, to come up with something specific for the company’s market.

This system has worked out for Sling (UK) Ltd and their suppliers.

“To date, we haven’t had any major problems,” Mr. Khan said. “We’ve always had minor problems but the factories deal with that. They do account for it and hold themselves responsible.”

The company comes back to MIFF every year, mainly to look for new products and they also benefit from new international exhibitors each year. For Mr. Khan and his company, there is not one criterion to consider for buying furniture.

“It has to be the price and quality together,” he said.

Neighboring developing Asian countries are becoming new customers for Malaysian furniture as well.

India, for example, is an upcoming market for the construction industry, often due to renovation of reclamation areas. For companies such as Décor India Pvt. Ltd., this opens a business opportunity for furniture to help furnish apartments, towers, banks and hotels. The company buys a lot of Malaysian furniture because the products are reasonably priced.

Despite the increase in pricing every year, the company doesn’t seem to mind too much, putting that aside as part of a normal global trend.

Speaking on behalf of Décor India Pvt. Ltd., Mr. Bhagwan Singh shared: “I have been attending the Malaysian International Furniture Fair for the last six to seven years and I’m happy with the variety of the display and trends. The number of containers I buy every year varies—depending on whether I like the design—but 10 to 12 containers easily.”

Additionally, Mr. Singh acknowledges that MIFF helped his business a lot and that there have been a lot of developments since he first attended the fair. Of particular interest to Mr. Singh are the new furniture designs showcased at MIFF each year.

“There are always new items, new designs, and every year we find a completely new set of markets when it comes to design,” he said. “In particular, we’re trying to find economically and ergonomically designed furniture for apartments. There are people who take a lot of pain in developing these designs.”

As a buyer of office and home furniture, Ms. Alice Karugaba of Nina Interiors Ltd. (Uganda), placed a year-round order of about 95 containers from Malaysia alone through the people she met at MIFF 2014.

Her company has one branch in Uganda and a retail shop in Kampala. Nina Interiors have marketers who go all over the streets, offices and homes to market the products.

“To sell more, first you must ensure that the basics are there: quality, price, and efficient manufacturing process. You have to make sure that every shipment is problem-free because if anything happens, the communication process will be complicated.”

— S. JAIFAR



They've done well so far and the company has grown since 1994.

Sharing her MIFF buyer journey, Ms. Karugaba said: “I've been coming to MIFF the last 18 or 20 years. Every year, either there are new players or older players bringing new models, which are very pleasing to me. Unfortunately, the prices have continuously become higher, but otherwise there are sellable items. Today, we found some good quality items but at a very high price. We are going to buy them anyway, and we're going to try our own market and see how we fare on it.”

An increasing trend in prices doesn't seem to be the main issue in the case of Ms. Karugaba.

With her company's long business track record, she has a big market to sell the products bought through MIFF.



#### ENSURING HASSLE-FREE BUYING

Al Satter Trading purchases at least USD \$1 million worth of furniture from Malaysia every year for the simple reason that Malaysian suppliers have good products.

While the company is doing business for about 15 years with regular suppliers they met at MIFF, how do they evaluate a new supplier to ensure that first shipment is smooth?

Speaking for the company, Mr. Hameed, responded: “Normally, when we see a product that we are interested in, we may make a visit to [supplier] factories, to see for ourselves if they have the capacity and capability to produce what we want on demand. That's how we evaluate.”

Another way is to buy in small quantities first, using the buyer company's technical specifications as guide. One or two containers are considered low volume, according to Mr. Hameed.

MIFF first-timer Mr. Khaled Ullah of ALM Distribution (United Kingdom) recommends not making any final deals until visiting the factory.

“That's one of the ways I avoid failure and fallback [plans] in the business,” he said. “Due diligence is a must.”

Mr. Ullah further shared: “One thing I normally do is get a QC company, which is familiar with the market. Then they go and do supplier verification by checking company documents and making sure the company name that the supplier has given is the actual name on the government documents. They do an Internet search as well to see if there is any bad report or bad feedback. Yeah, that's the first thing we do with a new supplier. We never had fallback [plans] by doing all that.”

Looking for upholstery items, leather beds, PU beds and sofas, the company found MIFF to be a great source of such furniture products to help their business. Before MIFF, their only source was China.

“We used to attend the CIFF, a Shanghai fair,” Mr. Ullah said. “MIFF has its own qualities. I found that Malaysia has a lot of much better choices for the items I'm looking for.”

Meanwhile, Mr. Ranjith Laksiri of Drape Lanka (Sri Lanka) thoroughly examines the seller's factory before he puts in an order.



“If I select a seller, I always—first of all—go to the factory,” he said. “Visit the factory and see their process—how they do the production. What are the raw materials going into production? All these things I make sure of first when I go there, looking at the whole production part and then checking out their logistics. If I'm happy with their system, only then will I select them as suppliers. If I feel the factory is not capable enough to handle things, before the shipment I will go back again and re-check everything. That's my normal style.” →



Mr. Laksiri first came to MIFF in 2009 and has done business with various suppliers at the fair, including suppliers from China. He's been coming back every year since then.

"At MIFF 2014, I found suppliers of outdoor furniture," he said. "For our hotel projects we came to source different items here. I see most of the old faces back again, whom I know very well. But I have gotten some new suppliers and I have come across so many new people, with whom I think I can discuss things and negotiate subsequently. That's why every year I make sure I come to MIFF to see who the new players in the market are."

For Mr. S. Jaifar of Sunshine Furniture (India), that reselling part is relatively easy. The company sells the furniture to their own outlets and showrooms, and the bulk goes to other places in India.

"We sell high quantities in Kerala," Mr. Jaifar said. "To sell more, first you must ensure that the basics are there: quality, price, and efficient manufacturing process. You have to make sure that every shipment is problem-free because if anything happens, the communication process will be complicated. It is difficult to rectify a shipment problem when you are dealing with each other remotely."

From the buyer's point of view, like in Mr. Jaifar's case, it is indeed logistically complex for the company to send the items back when wrong shipment happens. Sunshine Furniture makes sure that the supplier is reliable from the start. As a company policy, they tend to favour reputable brand names and companies that have a track record of at least 10 years.

Still, sometimes your gut feeling is an important aspect of MIFF business.

"When I go to a booth, I see the products, how I'm received, how we discuss things, and if I feel I can work with the people, I will make a deal with them," said Ms. Karugaba. "So far, I've not had any problems with any Malaysian company. I send my money and my goods are sent."

A buyer's journey at MIFF eventually leads to sincere, trust-based business relationships with exhibitors.

"Even when hackers stole my money, we were able to recover it with the help of the exhibitor," said Ms. Karugaba. "He helped me recover the money and I'll always be grateful to him. All these years, everything went quite well."

Speaking of hacker-related MIFF buyer story, Mr. Naseem M. C. of Home City Furniture L. L. C. of U. A. E. had something to share as well.

"One time, a tragedy struck. A hacker from Malaysia attacked the supplier's side, which caused an email to be sent to me, asking me to change the bank that we usually use," he said. "Unfortunately, I didn't have any experience so I believed it. So I transferred the money to my 'supplier' and lost over US\$43,000. The supplier was very upset because it was a big amount. But this is my very good supplier from Muar, and we still continued our relationship like family friends. And now, I'm paying back the \$US43,000 by adding an extra US\$1,000 for every container that I receive from them. After that I filed a case and they caught the person, a hacker in Malaysia who had counterparts in Hong Kong."

Based in Dubai, Home City Furniture is a furniture wholesaler supplying the GCC countries (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, U. A. E.), and just recently, Nigeria and India too, but in smaller volumes.

For Mr. Naseem, the main reason for coming back to MIFF every year is the established relationships he has with his suppliers in Muar, Johor and Penang.

"I'm still in business with my existing suppliers here because of the established relationships," he said. "We're like a family. Ever since I started in 2005, I haven't broken off with any supplier. The quantities ordered may fluctuate, but we still continue our relationship like good friends." **h**

**"The main reason for coming back to MIFF every year is the established relationships I have with my suppliers."**

**- NASEEM M. C.**

*\*With valuable contributions from Furnish Now writers: Alexandra Wong, Chin Pei Ling, Diana Uy, Joanna Lee, and Ruchi Mahajan Ranga.*



# There is Power in Design

*Conquer the world of furniture  
one powerful design at a time*

BY ALEXANDRA WONG  
Furnish Now writer

Malaysian culture has a rich repository of ideas, which makes it a natural source to look to for design inspiration. But we should not let ourselves be limited by what we are familiar with, pointed out 2014 MIFF Furniture Design Competition Chief Judge Philip Yap. Mr. Yap, who has successfully reinvented himself from graphic designer to one of the region's most successful furniture designers, credits his success to a lifelong immersion in Malaysia's cultural diversity.

**P**ast records are just a guideline for ideas," he said. "We are living in a globalised world. Look at the population who grew up in the Internet world. They see culture and style everywhere.

Young designers must study this global trend. Think international style. Think out of the box of national, culture and nationalism elements. Design a product that can instantly catch the attention and feeling of the current lifestyle of the consumer market. Even a renowned household brand like Ashley is going beyond American classics like shakers or Windsor chairs."

A word to design students: "Very often, I saw design ideas generated from an element – a flower, dress material, or something you see on the road," he said. "Hence in the 50s, we had tulip- or egg-shaped chairs and this is the first step of design teaching. But design has become more sophisticated. Gone are the days where we have to embark on one simple concept. Good design must have risk, soul and a clear direction. To conceptualise ideas in a global context, first understand the styles of different markets that we want to penetrate. Designing furniture is not just the furniture itself."

## **"Create more bridges between institutions and practitioners."**

National events like MIFF provide a good start for Malaysia towards becoming a furniture design nation because they provide a platform between talent (upcoming designers) and the talent seekers (furniture manufacturers). Unfortunately, there aren't enough of them.

"There are many colleges in the nation providing design-based courses but we need more direct links to the market," he stressed.

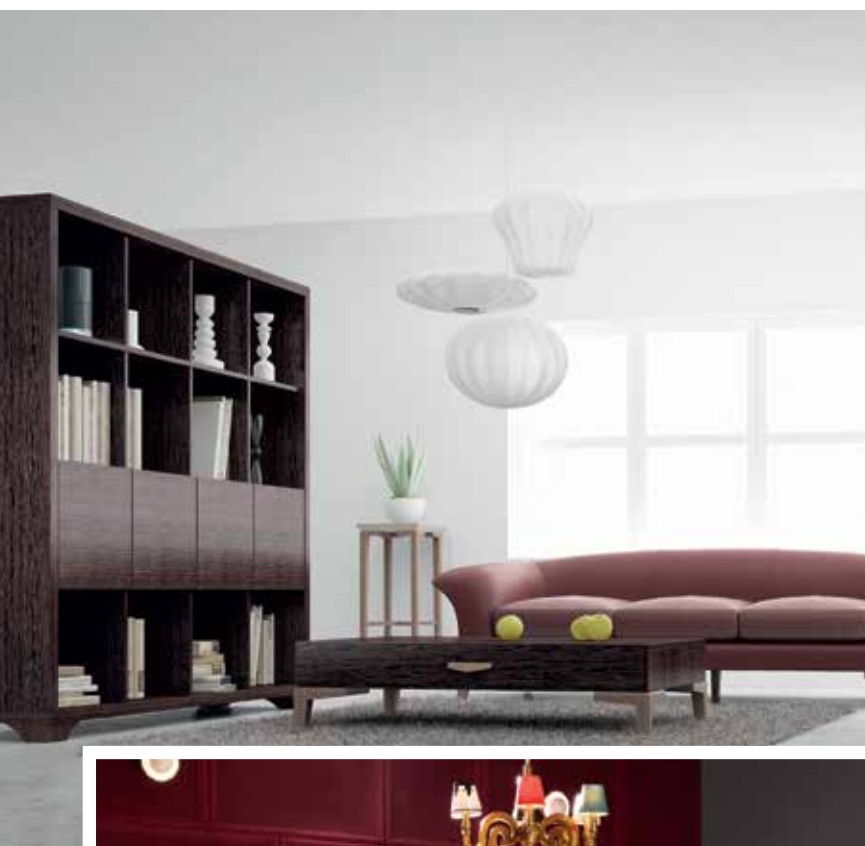
Over the past one year, being in the position of MIFF FDC Chief Judge, Mr. Yap had the opportunity to attend seminars in private and public colleges linking industrial practitioners and the institutions – but they were too short and too few to lead to anything concrete.

Citing Milan as an example of institutional engagement, he pointed out its potential as a platform to nurture design because it receives so much visibility.

"Experimental design is very well documented by the press," he said.

## **"Tap the talent in other disciplines."**

Philip was still in the advertising industry when he became involved in the furniture industry. He was often asked whether he used Autocad. ...



Bohemian inspired living room designs by Philip Yap

“For the furniture industry to reach its potential, it is important for us to see beyond furniture design.”

— PHILIP YAP

“I would say, I don’t,” he said. “And I still don’t today because a designer is someone who understands the artistry, marketing and positioning of a product—not the person who gets involved with the details of engineering drawing.”

To Philip, good design is a cross-fertilisation of different ideas and disciplines, engineering and material. In his company, his team consists of engineers, visual presenters, and woodwork and hardware specialists, while Mr. Yap plays and provides leadership in meeting the client’s different requirements.

“We should concern ourselves with how we can gather specialists in various disciplines under one roof or create sufficient interest among these people, that one day, an architect would say, I want to design furniture, so I want to get to know the application required, the right material, etc.” he said. “An architect could give you a new way of looking into

furniture. The expertise and background of a company owner often determines the direction of his R&D team. If he is an engineer, you’ll find that the designs are a lot more engineering inclined. If he is a fashion guy, he may have a colourful style. It’s fine. Unfortunately, we in Malaysia still ask students, do you know Autocad and 3D engineering software?”

**“Use technology as a marketing weapon”**

Take advantage of the ubiquitous presence of modern technology to influence and duplicate ideas and concepts, he said.

“You can simplify a complicated world if you use technology wisely,” he said. “The iPhone or Samsung in your pocket can be a training tool for your head office to send to you and to make sure you read and get through the training every week. The video of a new product can be sent to you with simple guidelines with a uniform promotional message to your customers.”

Bottom-line, Mr. Yap said that for the industry to move forward, furniture companies need to integrate the diverse elements that can make them a strong brand for the future.

“Think about the global context because we are together in one world, never closer than before,” Mr. Yap said. “For the furniture industry to reach its potential, it is important for us to see beyond furniture design.”

For MIFF 2015, the Furniture Design Competition has been launched with the theme: *Living Furniture, Global Perspective*. Join 2015 MIFF FDC and let your designs shine for the whole world to see. H



# Learning from the Pros, Mostly

*How veterans and amateurs march the road to success through MIFF*

BY DIANA UY  
Furnish Now writer

**W**ith age comes experience and wisdom. Established exhibitors at the Malaysian International Furniture Fair (MIFF) very much represent the wise, although they are not necessarily old.

As long-time participants of the show—some of them have been there since Day 1—they have a few lessons and tips to share with young entrants, rookies and newbies alike. Taking to heart the pieces of advice from those who have gone down the road and back could spell the difference between success and failure.

Each experienced exhibitor has a unique story to tell that might vary in degrees of hardship and struggle, but they all once upon a time started from scratch at the furniture show.

Melvin Chay, business development manager at Euro Chairs Manufacturer, remembers



how much of an amateur the company was as one of MIFF's very first exhibitors some 20 years ago.

Mind you, the company has been in the business since 1976, almost two decades before MIFF was founded. But that first day, according to Mr. Chay, they were like fish out of water.

"On Day 1, we started with focusing on pricing of the products," Mr. Chay said. "We thought that customers would buy the products because of it. But we later realised that although it's still one of the key points, [pricing] is not the only [important] thing."

Similarly, Thomas Lim, CEO at Hin Lim Furniture, had some reality check the first time he joined MIFF about 16 years ago.

"We were immature in many ways [when we started]. The way we displayed the items, the staff uniforms, the forms, the invoices... everything was a mess," Mr. Lim said.

Mr. Lim added that due to their inexperience in exhibition at that time, Hin Lim Furniture, then already 21 years old as a company, was giving all the wrong impressions to customers—from the pricing to the costing and expectations.

"Slowly, we learned how to make catalogues and how to present ourselves. We learned to approach customers, how to identify the genuine customers from the not-so-genuine," Mr. Lim said.

Mr. Chay and his team, on the other hand, eventually learned to strategise in succeeding MIFF shows, focusing on introducing what the company is all about first before telling customers about their products and their usage.

"We learned not to focus too much on pricing, not to give them out during the exhibition," he shared.. ⇨

Euro Chairs improved on their designs each year as well. Their recent products, for instance, have become simpler, focusing a lot on usage, practicality, and of course, creative pricing. If you look at the products being displayed now compared to 10 to 15 years ago, they're very different.

"We have to be sensitive with the trends worldwide like environment and technology," Mr. Chay said.

According to the Euro Chairs executive, technology, especially the arrival of social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter, has changed the way people do business now. It will be futile to ignore the very thing that's shaking up everyone.

"People like to share on these technologies," He said.

Thinking out of the box and into the future is another way of standing out at MIFF.

"Invest in developing new products," Mr. Chay said. "People might not use the products now but in the future they probably will. Always look at the future."

Nearing 40, Euro Chairs is now present in 63 countries around the globe.

Meanwhile, Mr. Lim said having a good, creative team at the company's core is important in attracting customers. The Hin Lim CEO advises new exhibitors to look at what others are doing and treat every day as a new day.

"Critically look at everyday results," he emphasised. "The show is very dynamic. Keep track [of what's going on around you], evaluate and change strategy [if you have to]."

Mr. Chay advocates patience.

"The results will not be seen immediately," Mr. Chay said. "Be positive, be creative, be patient come up with good ideas then you will succeed."

He adds: MIFF is a good platform to introduce young companies and their products to the worldwide audience. "We get buyers from around the world; that's why until now we are here. It is improving every year—from the turnout to the quality of buyers," Mr. Chay said.

### The young speak out

Still, Kent Goh, executive director and COO at Eonmetall, said there are advantages to being relatively new entrants to the marketplace. He believes that they are far more creative compared to their predecessors.

"We think of other ways of more than traditionally selling," Mr. Goh said. "We are in touch with the trend, we know the market, we dare to change things and we are more aggressive."

Mr. Goh's 180 Degrees Rack, a one-year-old brand under the 15-year-old company Eonmetall, joined MIFF for the first time this year. The 31-year-old started the brand after realising he could do more with his father's original industrial racks.



*“There is a unique advantage in working side by side with companies having several years of experience, know-how and background.”*

— KENT GOH, EONMETALL

The story goes that Mr. Goh brought a few racks to his café and couldn't set them up. So he went back to his office in his dad's company and called for an emergency meeting with his production team. To make a long story short, they developed new sets of colorful racks that can be used and displayed at home.

The young innovator said part of his business savvy is seeing things from a different angle. He recognises that he is fortunate to have something solid and reputable, like his old man's firm, to work on in the beginning and eventually, create something new and better.

There is a unique advantage, he said, in working side by side with companies having several years of experience, know-how and background.

"You get to compare traditional ideas with new ideas," Mr. Goh said. "The 2nd generation companies, so to speak, learn how to maximise the strengths of the old platform."

It's almost like learning from the been-there-done-that folks at MIFF, but incorporating more creativity and innovation in their business strategies. With that, and keeping up with the trendy designs that the modern furniture market requires, newer exhibitors have started to penetrate the global furniture market through MIFF. h





## DELANO FURNITURE INDUSTRIES (M) SDN BHD (471716-x)



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- Amino Paper

### Main Product

- Youth Room
- Kitchen
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- Bathroom
- Living Room
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- Philippines
- New Zealand
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# Furniture Design Competition Alumni:

# WHERE ARE YOU NOW?

*Winners from yesteryear share what they've been up to, and how the competition helped them.*

BY ALEXANDRA WONG  
Furnish Now writer

Is winning a MIFF award a surefire ticket to success and fortune? Furnish Now tracked down alumni of MIFF Furniture Design Competition [formerly known as Ideation Award] from Singapore to as far as the United Kingdom to find out. Here's what they said....



## BERNIE QUAH PAIK CHOO

Year: **2011**  
Winning design: **Samarata (1st Prize)**  
Current job: **Founder of Sketch Post Studio**  
([www.sketchpoststudio.com](http://www.sketchpoststudio.com))

The first winner of Ideation Award is also one of MIFF's most successful alumnae.

From her encouraging MIFF win at the tender age of 19, Ms. Quah went on to establish herself as a high-in-demand graphic recorder. For the uninitiated, doodlers of data are illustrators who transform live seminars, workshops, and speeches into fun, impactful visuals that capture the essence of the message.

"Graphic recordings simplify complex ideas to engage people, making ideas stick," Ms. Quah said. "Illustration has always come naturally to me as a child. I found my skills valuable as I attended conferences and began illustrating notes."

The knowledge gained through working with other industry professionals during MIFF was useful in her experiment with different mediums.

"Winning MIFF definitely helped build my confidence as a designer."



## ANGIE NG YONG HUI

Year: **2011**  
Winning design: **Bunga Raya (3rd Prize)**  
Current job: **Interior designer in Kech Design Studio**

For Angie Ng, the affirmation she received from MIFF was instrumental in putting her on a design journey, which is one full of 'sweat and tears.'

Only 19 when she took part in the Ideation Award, she lacked the confidence to go the distance. However, the recognition from emerging a winner in a major competition helped to change all that.

Exposure on the international stage soon paved the way for other design competitions: "I was so thrilled to be one of the representatives from Malaysia to attend the 2011 World Design Expo & International Design Alliance (IDA) congress in Taipei," she said.

Winning the MIFF award was also a great story to whip out during job interviews. She believes it was a key factor that helped her land her current job.

## PRISCILLA LOK AI FANG

Year: **2013**  
Winning design: **Ketupat (3rd prize)**  
Current job: **Interior designer in Petaling Jaya**

Proving that MIFF news has international reach, Ms. Lok was delighted when she saw herself in a Japanese newspaper after winning the award.

"The prizes are not as important as the visibility and the increase in my self-confidence after receiving the award," Ms. Lok said. "Some local and oversea manufacturers gave me good comments and feedback on my design. Their feedback means a lot."

"The training from impressing the judges and confidence from winning a competition can help you present yourself better in an interview and during the recruitment process," Ms. Lok said, and that in turn gave her an advantage in the job market.

"I will always be grateful to MIFF for adding some vibrant colour to my portfolio," she said.





**SIM CHIA YI**

Year: **2012**  
 Winning prize: **Just like Old Times (1st prize)**  
 Current job: **Industrial designer at DBIM (formerly known as Brite)**

Beating out 177 entries with a clever wok-shaped chair that integrated traditional culture and contemporary lifestyle, Ms. Sim received plenty of media coverage—and offers from manufacturers to design their furniture—after her FDC victory.

So why did she turn them down?  
 “As a designer I want more flexibility,” she explained. “I chose the path that creates more opportunities rather than being tied up to a sole manufacturer.”

Nevertheless, the competition was an invaluable opportunity to gain first-hand insights into the competitive design industry, before plunging into it herself.

“I got to understand how we can, through design, contribute to, shape and change the economy,” she said. “I could see why the industry and government were providing platforms and opportunities for designers.”

Every designer dreams of having her own brand. Demonstrating a long-term vision that belies her youth, Ms. Sim has set up her own brand, Missim Design.



**KOK WEN YEE**

Year: **2013**  
 Winning Design: **Unity Table (Joint 1st prize)**  
 Current position: **Pursuing a Bachelor of Arts in product design at Universiti Sains Malaysia; graduating in September 2014.**

Like Ms. Kong, joint first prize winner Kok Wen Yee also was wooed by furniture manufacturers eager to leverage on her talent after the competition.

“The best one was a chance to work as a furniture designer for a company in Washington DC,” Ms. Kok said.

Since she was still studying, she did not accept any of the offers. However, she is keeping her options open for the future.

“The best thing about the competition is seeing your design being built in real-life, and also recognised by so many people,” Ms. Kok said. “I really enjoyed the entire process, from design to construction. It is such an educational experience.”



**CHING EU WAYNE**

Year: **2012**  
 Winning Design: **A-Fashion Chair (3rd Prize)**  
 Current job: **Interior designer in Singapore**



The Ideation Award may be held in Malaysia, but its effects definitely go global. After winning third prize with his entry, Mr. Ching posted pictures

of it online and was pleasantly surprised to receive emails to collaborate on a lighting/furniture project from overseas companies.

“Ideation Award is an opportunity creator, whether it's a good start to your first job as a designer or something more long-lasting for your future,” Mr. Ching said.

After graduation, he chose Singapore as the place to kickstart his career and the Ideation Award attracted the attention of an established company which had set their eyes on young talents.

“The knowledge and furniture expertise I picked up from the manufacturers also helps me to manage clients and job sites, beyond just the design process,” he said.

**EMMY KONG PEK KEI**

Year: **2013**  
 Winning Design: **Unity Table (Joint 1st prize)**  
 Current position: **Pursuing a Bachelor of Arts in product design at Universiti Sains Malaysia; graduating in September 2014.**

Not only did Ms. Kong win big at MIFF FDC, she was flooded with offers after the competition, which included an internship at a distinguished furniture company. But the highlight must have been a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to collaborate with a manufacturer that came with her first trip to Europe.

“It was by far, one of the most unforgettable and humbling experiences I've had,” she recalled. “I had an amazing experience helping the manufacturer for his exhibition in Europe last autumn. I learnt how to develop an idea and furniture from scratch to the end product, create marketing strategies and manage sales with clients from different countries.”

Her experience provided her with a better understanding of the furniture market – and what she needed to make it globally.

# MIFF 2014 IN A FLASH

## MIFF 20th Anniversary Celebration



Deputy Secretary General (Ministry of International Trade and Industry) Mohd Ridzal Sheriff checking out the MIFF anniversary wall.



(from L to R): UBM Asia President and CEO Jime Essink, MIFF Chairman and Founder Dato' Dr. Tan Chin Huat and UBM Asia ASEAN Business Managing Director M. Gandhi, cutting the 20th anniversary cake at MIFF 2014's welcome reception.



UBM shows appreciation to partners and exhibitors and presents souvenirs to endorsing bodies, loyal exhibitors and partners.





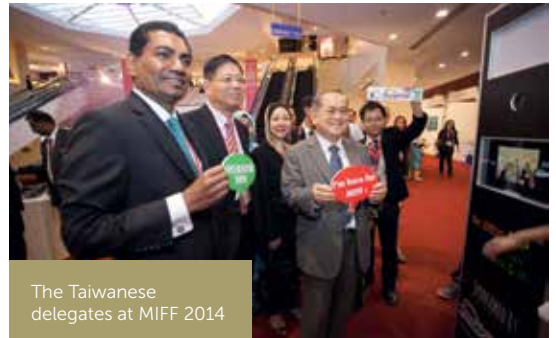
Dato' Ir Hj Hammim Samuri, Minister of International Trade and Industry (middle) at MIFF 2014



The Korean delegates at MIFF 2014



Datuk Seri Douglas Uggah Embas, Minister of Plantation Industries & Commodities, visits MIFF 2014 exhibition halls



The Taiwanese delegates at MIFF 2014



The Belgian delegates at MIFF 2014



The Japanese delegates at MIFF 2014



Mr. Mark Rozario (2nd from left), Guest-of-Honour at MIFF 2014 Prize Presentation Ceremony going around the exhibition halls

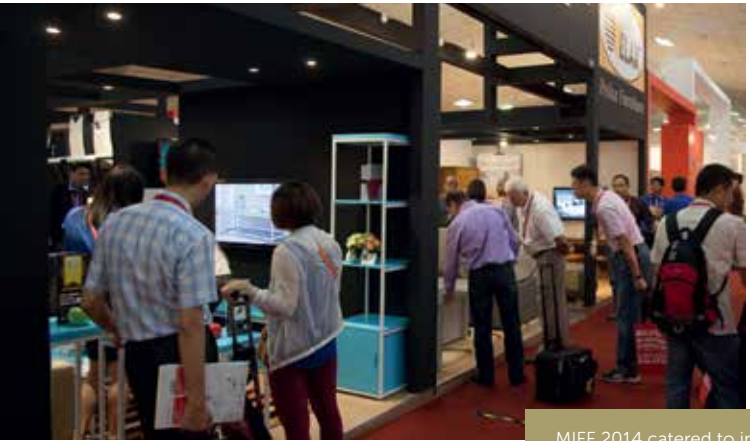


*The Happy Buyers and Exhibitors at MIFF 2014*



So far, so good! Happy furniture buyers at MIFF 2014 check out their favourite exhibitor booths. MIFF's 20-year existence has led to long-term relationships between buyers and suppliers.





MIFF 2014 catered to international and local buyers. This year, MIFF received 19,472 visitors including 6,171 international buyers from 141 countries and regions.



### The Busy Crowd at MIFF 2014





Mobilia International



Simewood Product

**Fabulous Furniture at MIFF 2014**



Sarawak Timber Industry Development Corporation



Yee Guan Furniture Manufacturing



Platinum Award: ROVER by Merryfair Chair System



Zenith Projects Technology



Lencasa



Loft Furniture



Artmatrix Technology



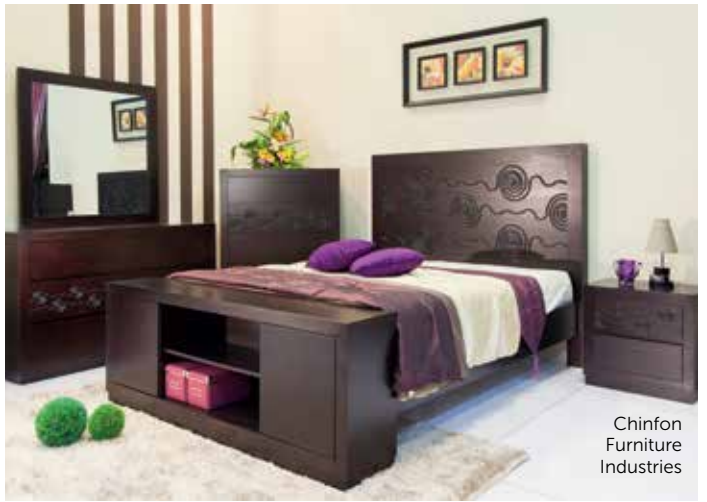
Yeo Aik Wood



PT Indorack Multikreasi



Acacia Home Furnishing



Chinfon Furniture Industries



Silver Award: GLADIOLUS by Omega Sofa



Kimyee Furniture Industries



Nexus Office System



Benithem



Deep Furniture



Lifestyle International



Platinum Award: COLPOD by TAZ Corporation



Distinctive Fine Furniture



Sern Kou Furniture Industries



SJY Furniture



*Golden Moments at MIFF 2014 Buyers' Night*



MIFF 2014's Buyers' Night catered to the fair's international buyers. Themed 'Golden Night', the show's highlight included mascots in golden costumes, awesome acrobatic pole dancers and a photo booth.



# MIFF Goes Interactive!



The MIFF instabooth was a big hit among MIFF buyers and visitors alike.



Visitors and buyers enjoyed using the newly launched MIFF app which enhanced their whole fair experience.



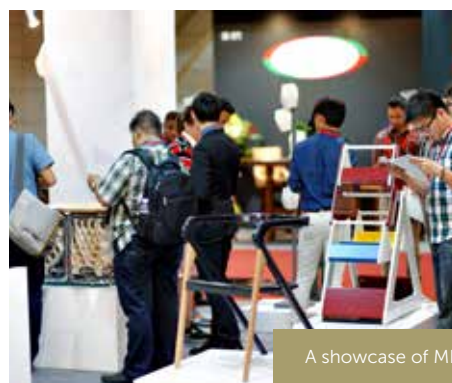
# MIFF Furniture Design Competition 2014



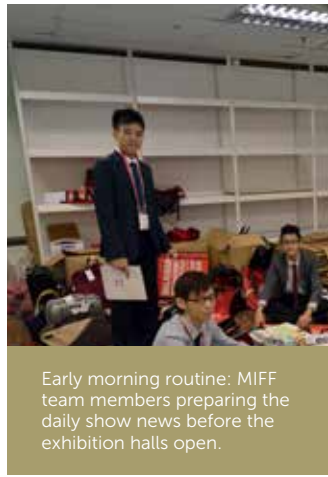
MIFF Chairman and Founder, Dato' Dr. Tan Chin Huat posing with 2014 Furniture Design Competition's top 3 winners.



The Furniture Design Competition (FDC) Hall at MIFF 2014, showcased past and present winning pieces.



A showcase of MIFF 2014 Furniture Design Competition's winning pieces.



## Team MIFF 2014 in Action!

Early morning routine: MIFF team members preparing the daily show news before the exhibition halls open.

Time for that group photo! Team MIFF 2014 would like to thank everyone, for making the fair a success...



At work and at play...MIFF 2014 team worked together to deliver a successful show and 20th anniversary!





## Forest Research Institute Malaysia's HTD™ Technology Well Received by Global Industry Players at MIFF 2014

BY GLORIA D. GAMAT  
Furnish Now editor

**A**t the MIFF 2014 seminar series, Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM) scientists Dr. Tan Yu-Eng and Dr. Sik Huei Shing presented the institute's award-winning U.S. patented high temperature drying technology (HTD™) for rubberwood.

Developed and patented over the last 10 years, this green technology for treating rubberwood eliminates the use of borates, enhances timber stability and cuts down the processing time from about two weeks to one to two days. This chemical-free and environmentally friendly technology only involves a single stage procedure wherein the green rubberwood is converted to dried lumber for further downstream manufacturing.

FRIM obtained the patent for HTD™ from the United States in March, and from Malaysia in October 2013.

The development of HTD™ was developed in response to the European Union's (EU) call for some wood treatment chemicals, particularly borates, to be assigned to the "Repro-toxic Category" under the Dangerous Substance Directive 67/548.

The FRIM booth at MIFF 2014 has definitely attracted the interest of the global furniture industry.

Even MIFF furniture buyer Mr. Alfred Toussaint, Jr. of Nova Technology Partners Inc. (U.S.A.) was impressed by FRIM's technological expertise.

"MIFF was totally new to me," he said. "I was very, very impressed with not only the diversity of furniture here but I was even more impressed by the technical capabilities of organisations such as the Forest Research Institute of Malaysia. They are extremely knowledgeable. I wanted an education in not just furniture but forestry. I could not have found a better place."

Showcased at the recent MIFF 2014, the new product, High Temperature Dried Rubberwood Sawn Timber (and its HTD™ Drying System) received various enquiries from the global furniture industry players who attended the fair.

More information on this breakthrough technology can be found on the FRIM article published in MIFF 2014 Day 1 show news (available at MIFF website: [www.miff.com.my](http://www.miff.com.my)). *h*



Dr. Tan Yu-Eng

*“This green technology for treating rubberwood eliminates the use of borates, enhances timber stability and cuts down the processing time.”*



Dr. Sik Huei Shing



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