

**spotlight**

Working Together:  
Collaborations Win for  
**Designers and  
Manufacturers**

Page 20

**specialreport**

Re-Inventing  
**Rubberwood**  
Using Technology

Page 24

**coverstory**

Page 12

# *The Art of Business:*

**HeveaPac** creates Win-Win-Win situations



# Letter to Readers

In its 25th year, MIFF 2019 surpassed all previous records. The show attracted more buyers than all years prior – and from more countries and regions than before – all resulting in an astounding USD\$1.01 billion in sales. This, of course, couldn't have been done without our dedicated exhibitors, buyers and attendees – and all those who contributed to make MIFF 2019 such a hugely successful show.

In case you missed it – we recap all of these 'highs' in our MIFF 2019 Post-Show Report (page 02). In this story, we break MIFF 2019 down 'by the numbers' and cover some of the show's most memorable moments . . . including celebrating Muar as the "Furniture City of Malaysia".

Continuing the coverage from MIFF 2019, this issue also recognises some of the winners of the annual awards – arguably one of the most exciting highlights of the show. In the Trophy Room story (page 28), we talk with the winners to learn about the inspiration and journey behind these victories, and what it means to take home these prestigious prizes.

In addition, many exhibitors have found MIFF to be a gateway to a worldwide market. In fact, in the InFocus story (page 08), we speak with some of these exhibitors to learn how the worldwide partnerships and relationships formed at MIFF are shaping not only their individual businesses, but the industry as a whole.

This issue also includes other key stories of utmost importance to today's furniture industry.

The materials behind the designs are predominantly featured in both the Cover Story (page 12) and in the Special Report (page 24). In the Cover Story, we hear from HeveaPac – the largest laminated particleboard shelving RTA furniture producer in Asia – and learn how using MDF and particle boards have generated innumerable successes for the company. Meanwhile, the Special Report looks at the history and reinvention of rubberwood in Malaysia and discusses its role as a sustainable material moving forward.

Collaborations are also of the utmost importance for mutual benefit and success. In this issue's Spotlight (page 20), we detail how designers and manufacturers can work together – partnerships made possible through the Professional Designers Programme (PDP) in Muar by the Malaysian Timber Industry Board (MTIB).

As we move towards MIFF 2020, these stories will continue to shape our future – one that has worldwide market penetration, with products from the most talented designers and companies.

We hope that you enjoy this issue – and as always, we value and appreciate your continued support.

Best wishes,

KAREN GOI  
General Manager, MIFF

## CONTENTS

- 02 MIFF Update**  
Growing Up: MIFF Celebrates 25th Year with Record-breaking Sales
- 08 InFocus**  
Reaching the ASEAN Market Gateway and Beyond
- 12 Cover Story**  
Win-Win-Win Philosophy Takes HeveaPac to Another Level
- 20 Spotlight**  
Working Together: Collaborations Win for Designers and Manufacturers
- 24 Special Report**  
Re-inventing Rubberwood Using Technology
- 28 Trophy Room**  
Awardees Shine Bright at MIFF 2019



PUBLISHED BY:



**United Business Media (M) Sdn Bhd**  
Suite 5-01, Level 5, Sunway VISIO Tower  
Lingkar SV, Sunway Velocity  
55100 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia  
Tel: +603-9771 2688  
Fax: +603-9771 2799  
Email: info@miff.com.my  
Website: www.miff.com.my



**MEDIA MICE PTE. LTD.**  
6001 Beach Road, #19-06  
Golden Mile Tower, Singapore 199589  
Tel: +65 8186 7677  
Fax: +65 6298 6316  
Email: enquiry@mediamice.com  
www.mediamicE.com



## Growing up:

# MIFF Celebrates 25th Year with Record-breaking Sales

by Brooke Herron, Furnish Now editor

**Cementing its status as the industry's largest marketplace in Southeast Asia, MIFF 2019 surpassed previous shows with a record-smashing US\$1.01 billion in sales.**

Following the success of last year's record-breaking event – and the celebration of this year's 25th anniversary – expectations were high leading up to the Malaysian International Furniture Fair's (MIFF) 2019 exhibition. And as the furniture trade show rang in its 25th year, those expectations came to fruition with another huge milestone: Sales at MIFF 2019 surpassed US\$1 billion for the first time in history.

In fact, from March 8 to 11, MIFF exhibitors raked in a record US\$1.01 billion in sales – a 3% increase from

the previous record of US\$984 million in 2018. This increase in revenue comes just one year after MIFF expanded to 100,000 sqm of exhibition space between two venues: the Malaysia International Trade and Exhibition Centre (MITEC) and Putra World Trade Centre (PWTC).

“Celebrating our 25th anniversary with a milestone like this is certainly something that we are proud of. It is the best endorsement of MIFF by the markets, but what makes us most proud is that we continue to place our customers and their business priorities first – even as we are on a strong growth path,” said Ms. Karen Goi, general manager of MIFF.

In addition, the show organiser reported that attendance was also up by 4%, with 20,487 visitors (including 6,112 global buyers from 130 countries and regions). MIFF

2019 attracted significantly more attendees from North America and the Far East than in previous years, while traffic from South and Southeast Asia, Australasia, Europe, Africa and South America remained stable.

Mr. Albert Hsueh, the sales manager of long-time exhibitor Malaysia's RTA Corporation, noticed this increase in traffic – especially customers from the United States. At MIFF 2019, the company showcased Malaysian-made mattresses for the first time and targeted U.S. buyers: “Due to the tax imposed on China-made mattresses, people in the U.S. are looking for other options,” he explained. “It's really great that we are able to meet so many potential buyers at MIFF. We will definitely be back next year.”

“ We have been exhibiting at MIFF for more than 10 years, MIFF reinforces our position in the furniture industry and brings us customers with buying power. Compared to other fairs, there are more visitors to our booth at MIFF. We obtained many new buyers from various countries here as well. ”

- Emily Sow, executive director of Malaysia's Shantawood

### Spotlight on Malaysia

Another highlight of MIFF 2019 was the celebration and recognition of Muar, which has been officially recognised as the “Furniture City of Malaysia”. Products from this southern manufacturing hub are a driving force in the industry, accounting for 70% of Malaysian furniture exports.

MIFF has strong ties to Muar, an alliance that was further strengthened through a strategic partnership between MIFF and the Muar Furniture Association (MFA) in

2013. In fact, more than 200 of the 346 Malaysian exhibitors at MIFF 2019 hailed from Muar.

MIFF is also the biggest export platform for Malaysian wood furniture and office furniture in Southeast Asia, bolstering its reputation as a global procurement hub in the region. These wood products, for which Malaysia is famous, were a big draw for international buyers.

“Many of our customers back in Spain like minimalistic wooden products, and there are various choices at MIFF. Malaysian wood is known for its quality and that is what we are here for,” said Spanish businessman Alejandro Montoya, adding that Malaysian wood products and designs are a big attraction for foreign buyers.

Another international buyer, Benitah Nyonjo of Uganda, also praised the variety of Malaysian wood suppliers, noting that her company, Nina Interiors, had sourced wood-based home and office furniture from MIFF for the last 20 years – and at MIFF 2019, they formed relationships with new suppliers.

In addition to cultivating and boosting local enterprise, MIFF also nurtures new talent. Popular showcases like the Millennials@ Design (MAD) gallery featured ready-

to-market products from Malaysia's best young designers, many of whom were past Furniture Design Competition (FDC) winners.

Meanwhile, other highlights were the Malaysian Timber Industry Board's Tanggam Design Centre and Professional Designers Programme (PDP), which featured products from designers in Malaysia, Italy and Belgium, through a collaboration with Muar.

### A Platform for International Relationships

With showcases across 17 halls, MIFF 2019 saw a total of 600 exhibitors – 30% of which were first-time exhibitors. In the largest category – home furniture – there were 392 exhibitors. Representation across remaining categories included: office furniture (114); fittings and accessories (62); Timber Mart (12); and “other” (20), which included government agencies, associations and publications.

Exhibitors hailed from 14 countries, including companies from Malaysia, China, Indonesia, Japan, New Zealand, Vietnam, Taiwan, Korea, Thailand, Turkey, and the United States; as well as first-time





exhibitors from Romania, Sri Lanka and Portugal.

New exhibitors like Portuguese mattress company Colmol, were especially impressed with the abundance of opportunities to create worldwide partnerships. "Initially, our main objective was to find partners in Southeast Asia, but we were pleasantly surprised that we can find partners from the whole world at MIFF . . . it's incredible," said Mr. André Soares, vice president of sales Europe for Colmol.

Long-time exhibitors also reinforced their dedication to MIFF: "We have been exhibiting at MIFF for more than 10 years, MIFF reinforces our position in the furniture industry and brings us customers with buying power. Compared to other fairs, there are more visitors to our booth at MIFF. We obtained many new buyers from various countries here as well," said Emily Sow, executive director of Malaysia's Shantawood, which produces dining table sets.

Returning buyers like third-year attendee American importer James Holt noticed a tremendous amount of growth, both in the number of exhibitors and the wide range of products to choose from.

"The designs stay fresh and up-to-date. So far, we have struck several

deals, and we are looking forward to more of them," said Mr. Holt. "This is a great hub for us to buy products, especially for importers like us."

This year, just over one-third (35%) of MIFF visitors were importers/exporters like Mr. Holt. Other visitors included: those in manufacturing (22%); wholesalers/distributors (15.2%); retailers (12.7%); interior designers (7.9%) and buying agents (6.1%), plus many more.

Tariq Hassan of Libya said MIFF is a good centre for business for those in the industry like him. That's because in Libya – and although the economy is growing – there is a lack of options, so locals still rely on imports.

By the numbers, just over 55% of MIFF 2019 visitors attended to place orders and source new products; more than 22% were seeking new suppliers; and nearly 19% visited to form business partnerships.

In home furnishings, visitors were most interested in bedroom furniture, with living and dining room furniture a close second. In the commercial sector, visitors were most interested in office furniture and chair, followed by hotel furniture.



“ Initially, our main objective was to find partners in Southeast Asia, but we were pleasantly surprised that we can find partners from the whole world at MIFF . . . it's incredible. ”

- Mr. André Soares, vice president of sales Europe for Colmol



## In Recognition of Success

Beyond the trade show floor, MIFF 2019 offered ample opportunities for networking and business development. The Minister of Primary Industries YB Mdm Teresa Kok was the guest of honour at two of MIFF 2019's leading events: the Opening Ceremony and Buyers Night, where guests socialised among industry players and enjoyed a show with traditional dancing, music and more. Prior to the event, the 25th Anniversary Exhibitor Appreciation dinner was held to recognise the efforts of those who make the trade show a success.

Speaking of efforts – it must have been a herculean task to determine the MIFF 2019 award winners. One of the most exciting awards is the MIFF Furniture Design Competition (FDC), which for the past 9 years has nurtured and celebrated young designers. Other top acknowledgments include the Furniture Excellence Award and the Best Presentation Award.

## Looking towards MIFF 2020

With so many milestones achieved and connections made, it's clear that the MIFF tagline "Design Connects People" is more than just a theme. MIFF 2019 brought together more exhibitors and buyers from more countries around the world than ever before – and together, exceeded all sales expectations.

With design as its cornerstone – and people at its centre – these milestones promise for greater growth for MIFF in the future. The success and momentum from MIFF 2019 has already drawn strong re-bookings from exhibitors, who were satisfied by the continued diversity and high-quality of buyers this year.

**MIFF 2020, 6 - 9 March  
MITEC & PWTC**

**Online visitor registration  
opens from September 2019 at  
[www.miff.com.my](http://www.miff.com.my)**



**“ The designs stay fresh and up-to-date. So far, we have struck several deals, and we are looking forward to more of them. ”**

**- Mr. James Holt,  
American importer**

THE  
SHOW

ufi  
Approved  
Event



MALAYSIAN  
INTERNATIONAL  
FURNITURE  
FAIR 2020

6-9 MARCH  
MITEC & PWTC  
Kuala Lumpur

Leading Furniture Trade Show  
in Southeast Asia

Design  
Connects  
People

[www.miff.com.my](http://www.miff.com.my)

## Reinventing lifestyles and smart designs for global furniture trade

- ▶ **Asia's first furniture show in 2020** With new look, designs and products
- ▶ **Featuring MUAR - Furniture city of Malaysia** World's biggest market place for Malaysian wood and panel furniture
- ▶ **Largest sourcing destination for office furniture in Southeast Asia**
- ▶ **Malaysia and beyond** Welcoming exhibitors from Asia's and other furniture leading countries
- ▶ **Visa friendly Malaysia** Attracting thousands of buyers from 140 countries and regions every year

Featuring :



MIFF OFFICE



MIFF Timber Mart

Millennials@Design



Organised by :



T +60 3 9771 2688  
F +60 3 9771 2799  
E [info@miff.com.my](mailto:info@miff.com.my)

Strategic Partner :



# Reaching the **ASEAN** Market Gateway and Beyond

by Joanna Lee, *Furnish Now* writer

When exhibitors travel to the Malaysian International Furniture Fair (MIFF), they can expect to enter a gateway into the Asian region, especially the ASEAN countries.

During the 2019 show, MIFF celebrated its 25th anniversary – and it was one of the most significant shows in this international event's history.

Exhibitors and buyers visiting MIFF got a closer look of the various types of materials and products that the Southeast Asian region offers, especially wooden and panel furniture.

The ASEAN region is also a growing market with retail sales projected to reach USD\$1 trillion in 2018, according to Frost and Sullivan. The younger population is expected to contribute to the rising middle class, who will drive consumption towards an increase of 75 percent of GDP in 2025, up from 62 percent in 2010.\*

Therefore, it's no surprise that many exhibitors at MIFF have found it to be a place of accessibility and friendly connections, for newcomers and old-timers alike.

## From Europe to the Asian gateway

For Colmol Bedding's Vice President André Soares, the connections at MIFF have been significant. "We decided to initiate business in Asia, and knowing that MIFF is one of the most important fairs around, we contacted them to be a part of the exhibition," he said.

Colmol – a Portuguese, second generation, family-owned business established in 1972 – finally made its way to Malaysia to attend MIFF 2019, thus beginning its journey of exploring connections as a first time MIFF exhibitor. "We were the only Europeans exhibiting this year."

## Making strategic connections

After all these years of providing innovative mattresses of fine European quality, Colmol Bedding took a chance with MIFF, and their expectations were met. According to Mr. Soares, they achieved their main objective at MIFF, which was to make contacts from all over the world.

"We made contact with representatives from around 20 countries or more, from New Zealand to Mauritius Island, from Spain to the USA, and from England to South Korea," he said. "It's been good ever since MIFF, because we are in the stage of setting our first offers. That is the reason I am travelling now," he explained.

One of the highlights of Colmol Bedding's exhibition at MIFF was when Mr. Soares met up with American buyers. "It was our first time meeting up with these buyers and we had a chance to exchange many ideas. I'm pleased as we have a good possibility with the Americans," he said of the buyers who had visited his booth during the four days of the exhibition. Interestingly, even though Colmol has a showroom/office in Las Vegas, USA, MIFF was, ironically,

the meeting point for the European furniture company and buyers from the American continent.

His message, along with his mission at MIFF, was simple: "We want to deliver European quality with the best new technologies in excellent fabrics, the best foam and best spring pockets. In principle, we truly want to show the world that Portugal makes good quality products," Mr. Soares said. At MIFF, he found the platform to do just that.

"We'll try to go into all the markets," continued Mr. Soares.

Making connections at MIFF also resulted in ventures to different parts of the world. While he was so busy during all the four days of MIFF that he had only time for a visit to Batu Caves (a famous landmark in Kuala Lumpur), Mr. Soares soon found himself travelling abroad to follow-up on conversations at MIFF.

At the moment of the phone interview with *Furnish Now*, Mr. Soares was already halfway around the world from Portugal in the midst of a business trip in Seoul, in his first visit to South Korea. Ever since MIFF 2019, he shared he had been making appointments to journey to different parts of the world as a result of the new connections made at MIFF.

**“ Interestingly, even though Colmol has a showroom/office in Las Vegas, USA, MIFF was, ironically, the meeting point for the European furniture company and buyers from the American continent. ”**





“ Since joining MIFF, we have experienced lots of benefits for our company – we can meet new buyers and have the opportunity to create new business relationships with other companies. ”

- Mr. Kurniadi Gunawan,  
CV Beta Foam Industrial

### Business growth goals achieved

CV Beta Foam Industrial from Indonesia was also satisfied with its MIFF 2019 results. The company's owner Mr. Kurniadi Gunawan said they secured about six orders, which spelled a 20 percent growth for their business.

Having been a participant every year since 2014, CV Beta Foam Industrial attended in 2019 with simple goals.

“We knew of MIFF from its advertising during a fair in Singapore, so we started participating in MIFF in 2014 . . . and each time, we try to participate in MIFF by looking at new expectations in business relationships.”

The Association of Indonesian Furniture and Handicraft Industries (HIMKI) estimated the value of Indonesia's export of furniture in 2017 to be at USD\$1.627 billion, making Indonesia one of the top producers of furniture in the ASEAN region.

Mr. Kurniadi, whose company manufactures various types of beds including sofa beds, folding beds, relax chairs, bunk and single beds, said: “MIFF is good for our business and we met our expectations by having orders from new buyers.”

In his sixth time at the fair, he shared how his company has grown from attending MIFF: “Since joining MIFF, we have experienced lots of benefits for our company – we can meet new buyers and have the opportunity to create new business relationships with other companies,” he said.

One of the things he appreciated at MIFF was the simple fact that his

goal of coming to MIFF had been achieved. “Our most memorable moment during the event was when a lot of visitors came to our booth,” shared Mr. Kurniadi.

“Every year, MIFF always presents the best trade show performances during the Buyers' Night,” he said, referring to the gala dinner which featured colourful performances and entertainment, good food and drinks, and networking opportunities for exhibitors and buyers.

That aside, Mr. Kurniadi said he would still recommend MIFF to his colleagues in the furniture industry. “This is because MIFF is a good trade show for meeting other people to create business relationships.”

Looking forward, he said: “We look forward to participating in the upcoming MIFF 2020.”

### Easy access to materials and resources

Joining MIFF for the first time in 2019 as an exhibitor was Mr. Priyankara Basnayake, the director of Damro Exports, one of Sri Lanka's largest furniture manufacturers. Taking time out from his busy schedule to chat with *Furnish Now*, he revealed that this was not his first time at MIFF. “We have been to MIFF in the past 10 to 15 years to source for suppliers,” he said.

According to Mr. Priyankara, MIFF was a good resource in his quest for furniture resources based in ASEAN countries, as well as others.

Taking their turn as an exhibitor

“ To a certain extent, being at MIFF has helped us to connect with people from both around the ASEAN region and globally. ”

**- Mr. Priyankara,  
Director, Damro Exports**

this time around, they kept their outlook to a modest scale while being on the other side of the booth. “This year, we exhibited our particle boards. It is our first time exhibiting our products at MIFF. The response we got exceeded our expectations,” he shared. Being present at MIFF meant building rapport with buyers and suppliers through the years. “To a certain extent, being at MIFF has helped us to connect with people from both around the ASEAN region and globally,” he shared.

Every year, Mr. Priyankara observed that MIFF has grown more organised with an increase in participants and visitors at each show.

“It has been helpful for us to source for materials,” he said.

Still, he said he would recommend MIFF to other furniture exhibitors. “It’s a good option for the manufacturers to showcase their products to the global market,” he said.

## Exchange of ideas, knowledge and opportunities

It was Mrs. Hiromi Hamada’s first time at MIFF, although it was France Bed’s third time exhibiting at MIFF.

“It’s a very big exhibition and in a new building. It’s my first time here, but my colleagues who have exhibited here before said that this year was one of the best in terms of visitor turnouts. MIFF has certainly put a lot of efforts bringing in more buyers this year,” she shared.

It was also a time of crossing paths and discovering tastes and trends.

“We saw many people from abroad and we were very surprised to find out that folks from India really loved our massage beds and power mattresses. I was very fascinated that they liked the massage bed. For our innovative power mattresses, visitors from South Korea, the United States, China and many countries like our mattresses,” she continued.

“We have successfully established contacts with the locals, and were able to visit some Malaysian shops like bed shops and other companies, to talk about our furniture – and that was a really good thing,” said Mrs. Hamada.

One of things she remembered most about MIFF was related to their exhibited product – “cool pillows” – which proved to be a big hit among visitors.

“When you hug the pillows, they make the body cooler. We also exhibited the side sleeper pillow that helps prevent snoring. Those pillows sold well, especially on the last day! Our visitors were very interested in the Japanese pillows. They bought them and we earned some from that,” she recalled with a gentle laugh. “A lot of people who remembered us from last year came back to buy them. So, this was really good for us,” she said.

It was not a surprise when she shared that the pillow buyers were mostly Malaysians who are familiar with the sweltering tropical heat. However, there were further surprises in store for her at MIFF.

“Some of them visited my booth and gave me some Malaysian food. So, I received mangoes!” she chuckled.

“I really like Malaysian food and Malaysian people because they’re so friendly,” she added.

Furthermore, there was also an exchange of knowledge in communication tools. Mrs. Hamada shared how her Malaysian counterparts taught her how to use WhatsApp, which she sees as a quick communication app, much like Line in Japan.

“ It’s a very big exhibition and in a new building. It’s my first time here, but my colleagues who have exhibited here before said that this year was one of the best in terms of visitor turnouts. MIFF has certainly put a lot of efforts bringing in more buyers this year. ”

**- Mrs. Hiromi Hamada, France Bed**





Besides exchanging information about WhatsApp, the Malaysians also invited Mrs. Hamada to visit their shop after the exhibition.

“I was very pleased with the quick communication and how we benefited from the exhibition,” she added, referring to the opportunities gained to visit several furniture shops in Kuala Lumpur post-exhibition.

On the other hand, transportation at MIFF was a breeze for her and her colleagues. She said that adding it helped with time efficiency while being at MIFF and for getting around town.

“Everything is very well-organised for the exhibitors,” she observed.

“ Southeast Asians have power – in their outlook and in purchasing products. They are very motivated, active and of a younger generation. ”

- Mrs. Hiromi Hamada, France Bed



### Southeast Asian possibilities

“I would recommend MIFF for furniture exhibitors, as Malaysia’s location is central in Southeast Asia. It’s a good place to make a show, especially for people who want to reach out to the Southeast Asian market,” she said. France Bed’s products have been catering to the growing aging population in Japan and are reaching a new generation of consumers, particularly in the Asian region.

“Southeast Asians have power – in their outlook and in purchasing products. They are very motivated, active and of a younger generation,” she said.

“I believe the Southeast Asian market is the best market,” she concluded.



\*ASEAN RETAIL: Overview, Trends, and Outlook, with a focus on SGX-listed Companies  
<http://www.sgx.com/retailcluster>

# Win-Win-Win Philosophy

## Takes HeveaPac to Another Level

by **Matt Young and Chow Ee-Tan**, *Furnish Now* writers

It takes more than quality products for HeveaPac to be the largest laminated particleboard shelving Ready-to-Assemble (RTA) furniture producer in Asia.

Executive Director of HeveaPac, Mr. Peh Ju Chai, knows something about that. He co-founded the company in August 2000, growing it from the ground up – from an initial 30 workers to nearly 2,000 employees today. From a humble background to success, Mr. Peh's forward-thinking mindset helped his company become one of the largest furniture manufacturers in Malaysia, and part of a publicly listed company.

Part of this success lies in selecting the best materials. Although some manufacturers use natural materials such as rubber wood, Mr. Peh firmly believed that the functional and durable MDF (medium density fibreboard) and particle boards have a large market – and he was right.

### From rattan to fibreboards

Trained as an accountant, Mr. Peh entered the furniture industry via a Chinese company that manufactured rattan furniture.

"I felt that rattan furniture was difficult to go 'big' because of the raw material. It was labour intensive and we had to train workers to manufacture and produce it. To make a sofa set for example, could take at least three years. And raw

material such as that was getting scarce at that time," said Mr. Peh, a long-time exhibitor at the Malaysian International Furniture Fair (MIFF).

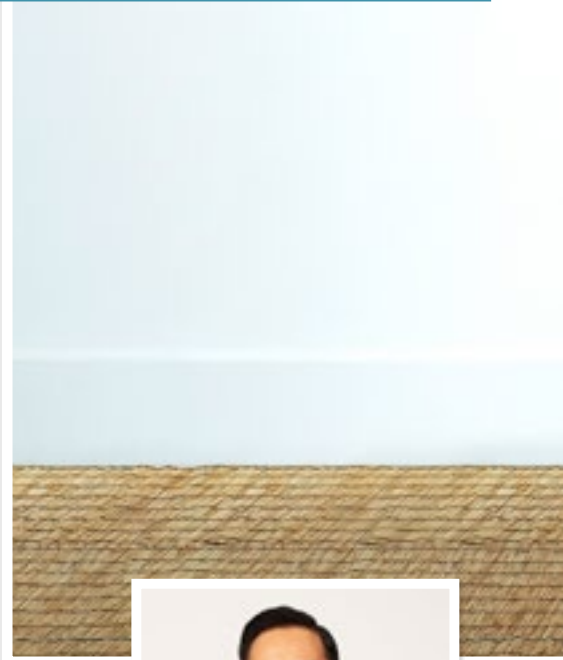
"In order to grow 'big' we needed to use materials that were readily available – such as engineered wood," he said. So, he convinced the company to switch from rattan furniture to other materials like plywood and particle board.

"They are affordable and functional, and the market is big whether domestically or worldwide. After the conversion in the previous company I managed, within five years that company became one of the largest manufacturers in that category of furniture in Malaysia," said Mr. Peh.

Soon, the time came when he had an opportunity to be one of the shareholders and founders of a new company – he co-founded HeveaPac on 30 August 2000.

"HeveaPac had existed since 1987. However, it was not in the furniture business," he said. "I saw that the potential was great at that time . . . I had a lot of ideas on how to grow the company." He started creating a factory and bought machines to manufacture RTA furniture.

Mr. Peh explained that 'Hevea' is the scientific name for rubberwood and 'Pac' means 'readily packed'. "So, it signifies that we are ready to pack our product from rubberwood," he said.



**“ Many manufacturers have neglected the supplier side. They only talk about customers and themselves. To me, the supplier is as equally important as the customer. ”**

**- Mr. Peh Ju Chai,  
Executive Director, HeveaPac**



*HeveaPac's shelving, though minimalistic, was clearly executed by a business artist, Mr. Peh. In that vein, Furnish Now honours HeveaPac with a fictional photo story with artists to showcase their shelves.*

## **BO WU**

*Various Works*

*Bo Wu was born in Beijing, China in 1991. Bo often observed Chinese calligraphy masters in the parks of Beijing, painting large brush strokes with water. He found it fascinating that something so delicate, and which disappeared so quickly, was nonetheless given so much dedication by the masters.*

*Unlike much of his generation, which spent time on their mobile phones, Bo is content to turn his phone off and spend time with brushes and strokes.*

## **The 'power of six'**

When asked about his vision for the company, Mr. Peh says six principles are paramount: transparency, loyalty, sharing common goals, taking care of stakeholders, the workforce and corporate social responsibility (CSR).

"By following these six principles, I believe a company can grow as big as it wants to," he emphasised.

He added that many people talk about the 'win-win situation' for manufacturers and customers. But to Mr. Peh, this is not complete: It should be 'win-win-win'.

"Many manufacturers have neglected the supplier side. They only talk about customers and

themselves. To me, the supplier is as equally important as the customer," he explained.

Next, he touched on the 'smart partnerships principal', where transparency, loyalty and a common goal helps achieve the business's purpose.

"This includes profit, taking care of stakeholders – and very importantly, the staff and workforce – as well as corporate social responsibility," he said.

And when it comes to quality, it must be above average. Mr. Peh emphasised 'consistency', which means that the products' quality must consistently be above average and added that when it comes to design, function, value and trends are key.



### Bo Wu Continued...

*He not only has mastered his craft, but he also experiments with it in all different forms: through both brushes and what is called digital calligraphy – creating new strokes and designs with his computer as well.*

*Bo uses the H1946 Room Divider to both display his work and store his supplies. He says the vibrant red colour of the Divider adds dimension to his work – and like a muse, brings him inspiration.*

#### **Product Info:**

Model: H1946  
Room Divider  
H1800 D400 W1000

### 'Just in Need' delivery principle

Another important principle concerns delivery. "We must delivery on time and be flexible," said.

"In fact, I'm working towards 'Just in Need' rather than 'Just in Time' – which sets the time when you must deliver. But if a wrong colour is placed and there is a need to change, it shouldn't be a problem – which is why I want to work on 'Just in Need' – meaning to be more flexible when it comes to delivery," he explained.

He says the bottom line is that what they produce must be very competitive, with stable pricing. This is especially important when dealing with mass market products.

"My philosophy is very simple. It is also challenging," he said. "I want my customers to know our business philosophy and what we offer, so they can be very comfortable working with us."

According to Mr. Peh, HeveaPac prides itself on being very competitive in the market, in

relation to others. The company is competitive in terms of quality, stable pricing, service, long time supply, as well as in terms of growth.

The competitiveness of their products was cemented in the early days when HeveaPac won the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) Excellence Award in 2004.

### Moving forward and upwards

Now that the company is approaching its 20th year, Mr. Peh says it's time to let their customers know where HeveaPac is heading.

He is a boss who works hard for his returns. "From day one, I've come to office every day. I personally meet my customers, I talk to them and understand their needs. I spend more than 90 percent of the weekends working during my earlier years." He said.

From his low-pay auditing days, to joining a wood-based business in 1987 with a saw-milling Japanese

firm, Mr. Peh has been in the timber exporting business, taking up the role of international trade in both consultant and financial fields.

He admitted that the experience he gained in the Japanese firm was invaluable.

"Once the Japanese feel you are capable or flexible, they ask you to do everything. I worked directly under the chairman of the company. I wasn't only doing work restricted to finance . . . I covered everything," recalled Mr. Peh.

He helped set up many factories from scratch, working as a consultant, until the time that the factories could stand on their own.

Today, he subscribes to total quality management. "I take care of the stakeholders. And I must also take care of the workers and staff in terms of their work performances and their work benefits," noted Mr. Peh.

"The working environment is important, in terms of hardware and software, and the culture of the company. That's when your company can grow," he said.

Then there are the customers who have grown with HeveaPac. "To me, the customers' size doesn't matter. In fact, from my experience, we can grow better with small customers – and we grow together in common understanding," he said.

That said, HeveaPac has secured some of the world's largest chain stores as customers, including names like Nitori, Muji and Wal-Mart.

## SAMUEL WORTHINGTON

*Various Works*

*Samuel Worthington was born in Omaha, Nebraska in 1965. Despite his proper-sounding name, and his country-life upbringing, he dreamed of moving to New York City. He did so in 1985, where he discovered a new world full of concrete and colors.*

*At that time, graffiti was considered a social ill in New York, but Samuel always found it to be uplifting and inspiring. Observing and befriending local street gangs, Samuel gained skill with spray paints.*

*This led to a life of devotion to spray paints as an artist. Although he never forgets his roots among the corn husks of Nebraska, Samuel is a dedicated fan of New York City and Spray Paint artistry.*

*He uses the BNS257 Display Unit from HeveaPac to not only showcase his art, but to also store his art supplies in an aesthetically pleasing and functional manner.*

### **Product Info:**

BNS257  
Display Unit  
H1292 D297 W1200





## YUKIKO NAKATANI

### *Various Works*

*Yukiko Nakatani was born in Tokyo, Japan in 1986. She grew up among the swirls of sights and sounds that is Tokyo. From an early age, with the help of a camera, she sought to convey the enjoyment of these experiences to others.*

*Since then, Yukiko also has traveled the world and also has enjoyed those travels immensely. Hence, she also has sought to convey her experiences of world travel through photography. Yukiko enjoys the darkness and shadows of places, not considering them to be negative factors at all.*

*She also enjoys the light and colours of places near and far. Yukiko's photography depicts the realities of life, but also the beauty in it.*

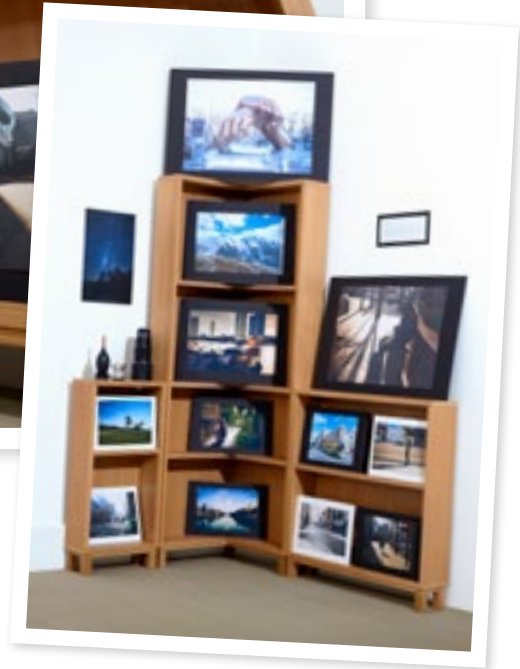
*Yukiko likes to display her photography on the V1753 Corner Shelf, which not only allows her to make the most of her space, but it also clearly exhibits her prints in an interesting and unique way.*

### **Product Info:**

Model V1753

Corner Shelf

H1754 D160 W560



The company's business network stretches globally. HeveaPac ships their furniture to more than 70 countries, and Mr. Peh himself has travelled to more than 200 cities around the world.

As a big player in the industry, Mr. Peh says that at HeveaPac, he still takes care of the quality, design and the growth of their products.

"We cater to small offices, home offices and start-up businesses. My current RTA staples include some simple desks and bookcases," he said, adding that because their products are made from materials like particleboard and MDF board, they can withstand temperatures from -40 to 60 degree Celsius.

While HeveaPac can offer a wide range of products catering to customers' requests, Mr. Peh said his bread and butter is Ready-To-Assemble (RTA).

He summarises his business direction clearly: "My core is RTA furniture, mass production. The price must be very competitive. The quality must be above average and consistent."

Mr. Peh said he always takes the Japanese market as a benchmark.

"I worked in a Japanese firm for nine years and have been doing business with the Japanese for more than 30 years. They are very detailed and their way of thinking is very different," he said.

Here is a boss who works smart and believes in maximising resources.

"I don't believe in working long hours. Our management has to be efficient. I'm in business, not 'busy-ness'. I don't believe in overtime, as one should work efficiently and smartly."

## One HeveaPac in every home

Mr. Peh said that when it comes to products, one must be a specialist.

“The entry level is so low today. And even though many furniture companies are not sustainable, I still see the potential is great in this type of furniture. The demand is still growing because our furniture is functional, basic, affordable and required in every home,” he added.

“I hope that one day every household has at least one piece of HeveaPac furniture. If I can achieve that, the potential is infinite,” said Mr. Peh.

He admitted that the company went through many challenges in the past. For instance, he had to cancel more than USD6 million business deal from overseas.

“That was not the only time that we had to cancel a deal, and sometimes it was due to internal problems,” he said. “Today, challenges persist. The global furniture industry, the brick and mortar stores, are affected by e-commerce.”

Mr. Peh is putting the company back on the right track. Last year he invested more than RM60 million acquiring new facilities and buildings to support the new line of products, which provides more variety to customers.

“Today we have 1,950 workers in our factory, but we are still short of workers. I need 2,300 to operate all the factories most optimally,” he said.

At 60-years-old, Mr. Peh said he wanted to retire a few years ago. But that would have to wait, as he knew he needed to groom and train the talent to take HeveaPac to the next level.

And with these operating principles and keen vision for the company’s products, HeveaPac’s future certainly looks bright.

“ I hope that one day every household has at least one piece of HeveaPac furniture. If I can achieve that, the potential is infinite. ”

- Mr. Peh Ju Chai,  
Executive Director, HeveaPac



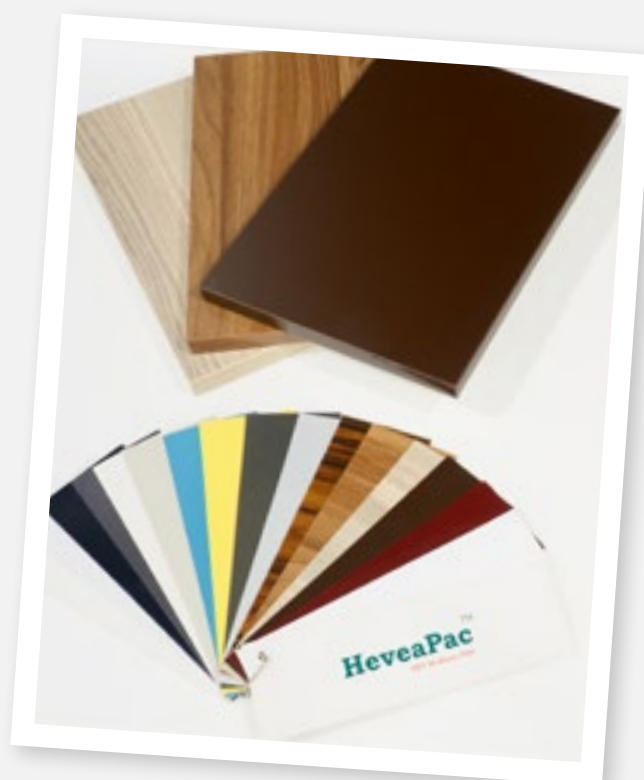
For more information,  
visit [www.heveapac.com.my](http://www.heveapac.com.my)

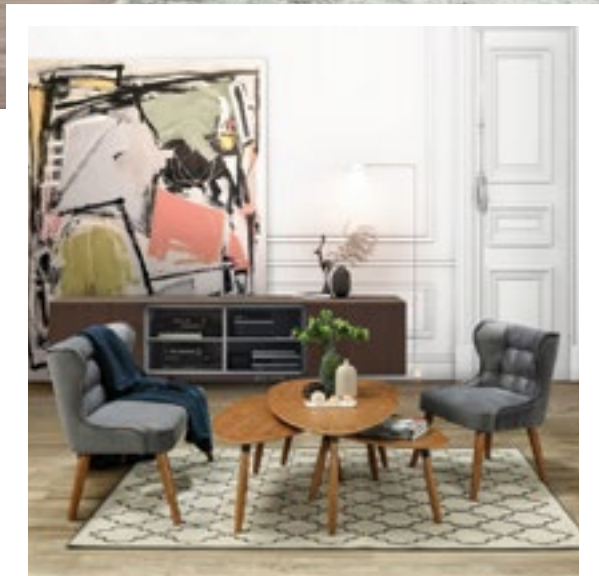


## Venturing into a Range of Kitchen Furniture

Melamine can stand the test of time. It is more resistant and durable, though at a higher price. It is usually utilised for kitchen cabinets and office furniture but would be good for the kitchen furniture as well. In the last 15 years, HeveaPac has been using this material in their range of kitchen products, but only in the carcass (inside part of cabinets).

Now they have newly ventured into using PET high gloss, melamine, natural wood, and UV paint spray panel surface finishing on their kitchen furniture. It's about time Malaysians consider quality in their kitchen furniture buying decisions.





**BEST-BETECK**  
FURNITURE SDN. BHD.

Best-Beteck Furniture Sdn. Bhd.

PTD 10636, Jalan Kempas1,  
Kawasan Perindustrian Bukit Bakri,  
Jalan Bakri, 84200 Muar, Johor, Malaysia.

[www.bestbeteck.com](http://www.bestbeteck.com)  
[info@bestbeteck.com](mailto:info@bestbeteck.com)  
+60 6986 6967

*Bedroom, Living,  
Dining.*



# INCEPTION

WHERE THE INSPIRATION BEGINS...

Come visit us at the

## **FURNITURE CHINA 2019**

9-12 September, 2019

@Pudong, Shanghai

Hall No. **E2** Booth No. **E2D26**

See you there...



**INCEPTION DESIGN & TRADING SDN BHD** (915358-V)  
**INCEPTION INDUSTRIES SDN BHD** (1082462-V)

AL 184B2, Jalan Industri U19, Kampung Baru Sungai Buloh, 47000 Selangor, Malaysia  
t : +(603) 7831 3682 f : +(603) 7846 3693 e : info@idt.my w : www.idt.my

# Working Together: *Collaborations Win for Designers and Manufacturers*

by Chow Ee-Tan, *Furnish Now* writer

Though it was only launched four years ago, the Professional Designers Programme (PDP) has grown by leaps and bounds – and thanks to efforts from local furniture manufacturers and professional designers, the PDP is helping to drive the industry.

The PDP was initiated in July 2015 by the Malaysian Timber Industry Board (MTIB), with close collaboration from the Malaysian Furniture Promotion Council (MFPC) and support from the Ministry of Primary Industries (MPI).

During the three editions of PDP from 2015 to 2017, 13 Malaysian furniture manufacturers participated with both international and Malaysian professional designers. To date, there are 68 prototypes and finished furniture products available in the PDP catalogue – either for further development or immediate commercialisation.

“The PDP is a journey of learning and discovering the talents of both designers and manufacturers,” said MTIB Acting General Director Mr. Mohd Kheiruddin Bin Mohd Rani in an interview with *Furnish Now*. “It is about learning the process of designing and the elements of design, in which we will discover and rediscover qualities such as our strengths, creativity, passion and cultural diversity.”

He said MTIB has spent more than RM3 million on the PDP and the ROI can be seen even now, with more than RM4 million reported export prospects since the programme began in 2015.

“MTIB plans to pursue the research of lifestyle and furniture design to the next level, through the development of design

with international professional designers and Malaysian furniture manufacturers,” said Mr. Kheiruddin. “We want to promote Malaysian furniture as an element of lifestyle . . . how we live and how we envision our lives to be.”

## The TANGGAM Label

As part of their objective to cultivate local talent, Mr. Kheiruddin said MTIB began the annual Malaysian MOBILI Furniture Design Competition (MOBILI) in May 2012. There were 11 finalists submitted by MTIB to the organiser of SaloneSatellite COSMIT, which is also the organiser of i-Saloni.

At the end, five talented young Malaysian designers were selected to participate and showcase their prototypes under MTIB’s TANGGAM booth during the 16th edition of SaloneSatellite in April 2013. They continued to participate in 2014 and 2015, and now, TANGGAM has 16 talented young designers who are ready to collaborate with local furniture manufacturers and international designers to produce furniture design for high-end market segments. The development of these marketable designs by local young designers are grouped under the TANGGAM label.

MTIB has also launched TANGGAM Design Centres in Kota Damansara, Johor Bahru, Kota Kinabalu and Kota Bharu. Through projects that are self-initiated or developed in collaboration with the industry, these centres aim to develop new design methods for multidisciplinary collaboration among participants from different disciplines.

“ It is about learning the process of designing and the elements of design, in which we will discover and rediscover qualities such as our strengths, creativity, passion and cultural diversity. ”

- Mr. Mohd Kheiruddin Bin Mohd Rani, MTIB Acting General Director





*Radius dining set designed by Izyan Syamimi, manufactured by Wegmans Furniture Industries*

## Professional Designers Programme in Muar (PDP in Muar)

Of all the towns in Malaysia, Muar has the largest cluster of furniture-based businesses, comprising more than 80 percent of the RM10 billion furniture export annually. This once sleepy fishing town has now become one of the largest furniture production lines in the world.

"Therefore, it is only natural that Muar gets involved in the PDP in its evolution to be a global furniture market player," said Mr. Kheiruddin.

He said PDP in Muar started in October 2018, when the Muar Furniture Association (MFA) and MTIB met to discuss the future of the Malaysian furniture industry – especially the future of its main cluster in Muar.

"It was then decided that the future will have to be the evolution of Muar towards ODM/OBM and that Muar is ready to embrace that inevitable change," he said.

A total of eight Muar furniture manufacturers and exporters braved this effort for change, with the assistance of six committed designers from Malaysia, Italy and Belgium. The PDP in Muar Showcase presented 16 new and fresh furniture designs at MIFF 2019, all commercially appealing and export-ready.

According to Mr. Kheiruddin, what MTIB anticipates from the PDP are firstly, original furniture designs that enhance product value, and subsequently, prototypes made by the participating Malaysian furniture manufacturers.

He said that currently, eight original designs by professional designers are to be approved for registration by the Intellectual Property Corporation of Malaysia (MyIPO).



## From OEM to ODM/OBM

On the efforts taken for the Malaysian furniture industry to become an Original Design Manufacturing (ODM), as opposed to an Original Equipment Manufacturing (OEM), Mr. Kheiruddin said that MTIB has developed various strategic activities with the main objective of promoting the image of Malaysian furniture and catalysing the transition of this sector from OEM to ODM – and even OBM (Original Brand Manufacturing).

“ODM is a good component to determine a better value in products, and will definitely increase the quality and price. It is the main factor in producing solution-based products, thus manufacturers will have better prospects and better market reach,” he explained. “On the macro level, it will help increase the nation’s exports, with better offerings and more market opportunities.”

Mr. Kheiruddin said MTIB was allocated a fund under the 11th Malaysian Plan to undertake programmes to enhance the quality of design for locally manufactured furniture.

MTIB will have more engagements with other agencies (like Malaysia Design Council, FITEC, MATRADE, etc.) in promoting ODM, and more feedback from the industry in understanding the challenges and issues of furniture manufacturing.

“As indicated by a survey, only 53% of the furniture industry is ODM and OBM. In this context, I urge the industry to employ qualified furniture designers with skills and experience, and who will have a beneficial impact on the companies’ performance through improved sales, higher margins and reduced operating expenditure,” he said.

Mr. Kheiruddin is optimistic that the export performance of furniture products will continue to grow in the coming years: “We need to combine our efforts to strengthen the supply chain, produce new market-oriented, value-added products and explore new markets,” he said. “The aggregation of these efforts will definitely contribute towards achieving the resilience of the timber industry and achieve our long-term target by 2020.”

# PDP Design

## Izyan Syamimi Zainol



Izyan Syamimi won first prize at the MOBILI Furniture Design Competition in 2017, which provided the opportunity to join the TANGGAM programme run by MTIB.

Prior to that, in 2016, when she won second prize at the MIFF Furniture Design Competition – this was the moment she began to further her

profession as a furniture designer, going on to build the furniture brand BASICOLOGY with her partner.

The recent Master of Science graduate in Industrial Design from Universiti Putra Malaysia, has both experience in furniture design and batik design, but fell in love with the former.

A part of PDP since 2018, for PDP in Muar 2019 she created two designs for two manufacturers – a dining set for Wegmans Furniture Industries and a case goods for BSL Furniture.

“Both designs have different significances. The dining set for Wegmans Furniture Industries was for meeting mass production purposes. Meanwhile, the case goods was designed for kids bedroom, and there was an additional idea about furniture for pets,” said Izyan.

“As young designers, being involved in such programmes is a good opportunity for us to have more connections. Instead of hoping manufacturers listen to us, manufacturer’s knowledge is valuable as they have much more experience in the industry,” she said.

On the collaboration at MIFF 2019, Izyan said both she and the manufacturer had thorough discussions before she came out with the concept design. “Such collaboration is very important. When we work with local manufacturers, we have a different vision on how our designs are staged,” she said, adding that designers have good support from the manufacturers at PDP in Muar.

She said designers need to do more prior art research to constantly improve and create novel designs. And to her, the PDP is a good exercise for Muar’s manufacturers, who are striving to move from an OEM to an ODM basis.

“The manufacturer may have a better platform in the industry by having novelty designs. A successful designer is a label and marketing tool that would benefit the manufacturer. With more exposure for novelty designs, the industry will mature and eventually realise the practice of ODM.

“During PDP in Muar, I could see the efforts of the manufacturers working towards ODM,” she added.



Trou case goods designed by Izyan Syamimi, manufactured by BSL Furniture

# gners

## Eric Wong

A qualified architect specialising in furniture design including home furniture, office furniture and education furniture, Eric Wong won an award in the MOBILIA furniture competition in 2016. He has been invited by MTIB to participate in the PDP since 2017, and this year was the third time he was involved in the programme.

“It showed the keen attitude and vigour of the participating manufactures and their capabilities. Overall, it was a pleasant experience to work with the manufacturers and their efforts were notable,” he said.

Eric had two products exhibited in PDP in Muar 2019: the RAINTREE dining set manufactured by Mobilia International, and the FIS sofa manufactured by Rodas Furniture Industries.

“The concept of RAINTREE was to address the common problem for seated users around a long table with

legs at four corners,” he explained. “The RAINTREE table takes its metaphor from a tree with big canopy, and its legs resemble a tree trunk that are positioned away from the table corners.”

Meanwhile, the FIS, derived from the word ‘Fissure’, is a sofa with carved fissures to form the components of a sofa-like seat, backrest and armrest.

“Designers always strive to support platforms like PDP that promote good design. These events can improve the visibility of local designs to the world, whether they’re held locally or internationally,” said Eric.

He said the PDP’s main objective is to provide manufacturers with opportunities to work with professional designers. This adds new perspectives and dimensions to their products in terms of design quality, and subsequently establishes their brands in the global market.

“Ultimately, we hope to create an environment where the whole industry will be more design-oriented . . . with products that are not only be functional, but also aesthetically

pleasant, distinctive and innovative. At the end of the day, we would like to see an ecosystem that spawns more world-acclaimed brands and local designers,” he said.

He said through programmes such as PDP, he hopes the Malaysian furniture industry can gradually mature to a state where more manufacturers will have designs and quality on par with globally leading brands.

“Hopefully, more manufacturers will leave their comfort zones and be willing to evolve their existing operation to collaborate with designers, invest in research and development of the products, and have a perpetual strategy to market the products and rebrand their names,” said Eric.

“People respect and value good design – and designers can contribute and flourish, so that more and more manufacturers will have their own distinctive designs and establish brand names in that direction,” he concluded.



*RAINTREE dining set designed by Eric Wong, manufactured by Mobilia International*



*FIS sofa designed by Eric Wong, produced by Rodas Furniture Industries*



“ Designers always strive to support platforms like PDP that promote good design. These events can improve the visibility of local designs to the world, whether they’re held locally or internationally. ”

- Eric Wong



“ Whatever resources we have, we should protect... Malaysian forests are maintained at 55 percent, not including palm oil and rubber plantations. Of course, we care about our environment and our natural resources. That is why we are promoting less populous species for commercial use instead of premium wood from our forests. We are the saviours of our forests. ”

-Dato' Dr. Abd Latif Mohmod,  
Director General, FRIM

# Re-Inventing Rubberwood Using Technology

by Shantini Harriet, *Furnish Now* writer

The Malaysian wood furniture industry's success owes much to the survival story of the humble rubber tree. From enjoying the spotlight as the world's biggest resource for rubber on the international stage, to its decline to number three and the emerging growth of the oil palm industry, it appeared that the rubber tree had lost its importance in the Malaysian economy. However, like a phoenix rising from the ashes of burnt timber, the rubber tree has reasserted its value.

This full cycle of the rubber tree's lifespan helped drive Malaysian wood furniture from a cottage industry to the multi-billion-ringgit export industry it is today. With the emergence of rubberwood as an alternative source of timber for the wood industry – and value-added products through the efforts of the Forest Research Institute of Malaysia (FRIM) as far back as 1978 – Malaysia is now among the leading producers and exporters of wood furniture to more than 160 countries worldwide.

However, despite its successes in the timber industry, Malaysia has come under fire from environmentalists, foreign media and conservationists about its policies and practices in managing its forests, its usage of dangerous chemical preservatives to treat timber, as well as misconceptions about rubberwood itself.

actually substituting the use of forest timber. Furthermore, because these are planted species, they are replanted after a recycling period for the next cycle, making them 'eco-friendly' as the wood is harvested from a renewable source. These are sustainably managed forests as compared to natural forest timber.

Rubber trees are not planted for wood; they are planted for sap. The timber is a by-product and utilising it for other industries (such as furniture) makes it a sustainable alternative to tropical woods extracted from natural forests.

Research on the ecological impact of rubber plantations has shown improvements in soil properties through enrichment of organic matter from leaf fall and plays a role as a carbon sink. It is thought that due to the extra energy required to produce latex, rubber trees are more effective than teak grown in plantation conditions.

While there was widespread illegal logging in the forests of Sabah and Sarawak (East Malaysia), the Federal Government does not have ownership or full control over of its forests – rather the State Governments do. Despite this, the Malaysian federal government has made an effort to right the wrongs of the past. Working with state legislatures, the government introduced stricter laws to ensure the safety and sustainability of its natural forests, hence the promotion of plantation forests.

For example, the Sarawak state government recently stated that they would continue maintaining 63 percent of forest cover since the forestry sector plays an important role in the state. The government has a clear land use policy for permanent forest reserves and totally protected areas. According to FRIM Director General, Dato' Dr. Abd Latif Mohmod: "Whatever resources we have, we should protect... Malaysian forests are maintained at 55 percent, not including palm oil and rubber plantations. Of course, we care about our environment and our natural resources. That is why we are promoting less populous species for commercial use instead of premium wood from our forests. We are the saviours of our forests," he said, adding FRIM is doing just that using technology to champion its mission.

## A lesson in history

While rubber trees are indigenous to South America (mainly Brazil), rubber tree plantations have existed in Malaysia for over 150 years, when the British in Malaya (Malaysia's name before independence) cleared large tracts of rainforest to create rubber plantations.

It began when Sir Henry Wickham smuggled a few *Hevea* seedlings from Brazil to the United Kingdom, which were then transferred to the Singapore Botanical Gardens – not once but twice, when the first batch failed to germinate. The nine plants that successfully germinated became the planting stock for Malaysia and other Southeast Asian countries.

Since then, it has become the most extensively used timber in Southeast Asia with Indonesia, Thailand and Malaysia as the biggest suppliers. Today, Malaysia exports about RM22 billion worth of timber products worldwide, of which about RM7 billion is from rubberwood furniture.

Environmentally friendly Rubber trees are not native to Malaysia's tropical forests but have always been a plantation species and are considered environmentally friendly. As such, by promoting the use of rubberwood (Peninsula Malaysia) and other plantation species like acacia (East Malaysia), Malaysia is



*Dr. Sik and FRIM Director General Dato' Dr. Abd Latif Mohmod*



## Using technology to fight toxicity

Rubberwood is perceived as a low value timber and is prone to disease and fungus. To make the timber useable as a raw material for the manufacturing of products, it needs to be chemically treated. The conventional method uses preservatives (boric acid) to treat timber against insects and fungi before kiln drying it for commercial use. And it's not just Malaysia doing so, but all producers of rubberwood for commercial use need to do the same thing.

In 2002, the European Union (EU) lobbied for stricter regulations on the usage of boric acids, which resulted in a new regulation that categorised boric acid as a dangerous substance. In 2004, understanding the possible adverse affects this regulation would have on the rubberwood trade – especially to European countries – a committee comprised of FRIM, the Malaysian Timber Council (MTC), the Malaysian Furniture

Industry Council, the Malaysian Association of Bumiputra Wood and Furniture Manufacturers (PEKA), and the Malaysian Wood Industry Association, was established under the mandate of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (NRE) to find alternate solutions. Their instinct on the impending threat was proven right when in 2009, borates as a main preservative for wood treatment were further categorised at a higher level of toxicity, requiring any products treated with boric acid to bear a label stating so.

FRIM has the biggest and oldest manmade tropical forest in the world, and as one of the world's leading institutions in tropical forestry research, it embarked on finding a new method that would be more eco-friendly and negate the use of chemicals to treat rubberwood. A team of researchers headed by Dr. Sik Huei Shing, worked tirelessly on a breakthrough method that

involved the application of High Temperature Drying (HTD) treatment on rubberwood timber as a non-toxic treatment to replace the use of borates.

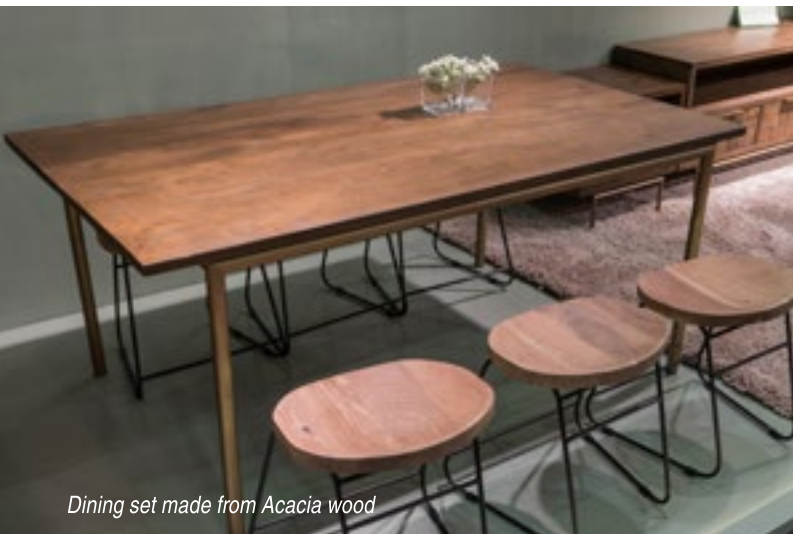
The conventional way requires two processes – first to chemically treat the rubberwood with boric acid in a separate process and then dry the wood in a kiln, so that it is suitable for making furniture.

FRIM's HTD system does away with the chemicals altogether and sterilises the wood at a high temperature, while continuing the process with the drying phase and without having to remove the timber from the kiln.

While conventional treatment and drying takes about 10 to 12 days and is restricted to 80°C, the HTD system only takes about two to four days (depending on kiln chamber size) and uses temperatures from 100°C to 220°C. Not only does the system drastically cut down the drying time,



Bedroom set made from Rubberwood



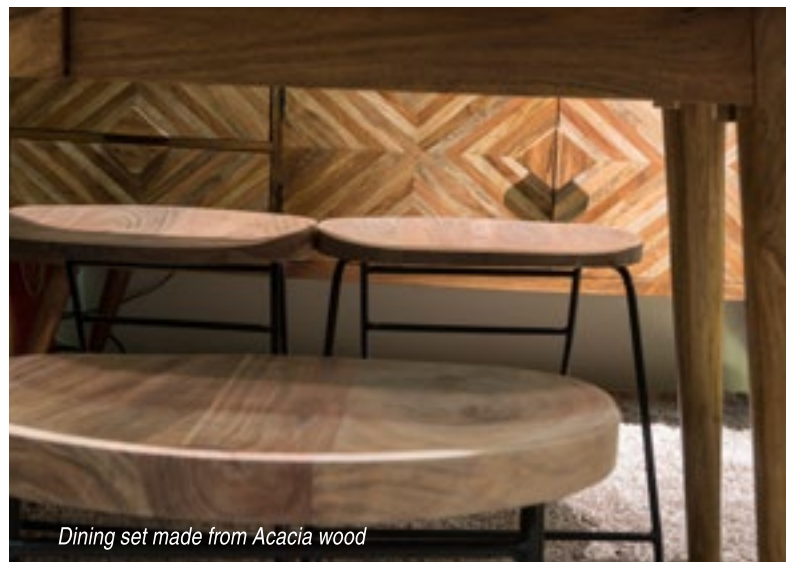
*Dining set made from Acacia wood*



*Dining set made from Rubberwood*



*Bedroom set made from Acacia wood*



*Dining set made from Acacia wood*

but it also enhances the wood features by modifying its properties in terms of colour and density.

Rubberwood is whitish and changes colour to dark brown as the temperature rises, which also makes the wood more durable. It looks and feels remarkably like heavy hardwood and can be mistaken for teak. The system does more than nullify the EU regulation, it now opens up new possibilities for rubberwood to become a more value-added timber than it was before.

Even the sizes of the logs placed in the kilns vary between the conventional method and the HTD system. The conventional method allows for 2 to 5 feet of stripped logs, while the HTD system easily accommodates 6-foot logs with the bark intact, which results in long length and straight and stable premium timber, with the added feature of an antique look (if the bark was not stripped).

Malaysia has a wide range of woods in an established timber trade, including: Balau, Bintangor, Chengal, Dark Red Meranti, Gerutu, Kasai, Kelat, Keledang, Keruing, Mengkulang, Merbau, Nyatoh, Kembang Semangkok,

Kempas, Red Balau, Yellow Meranti, Sepetir, Mersawa and Merpauh. Although rubberwood has become widely used for the furniture industry, other less populous plantation species like acacia and eucalyptus are also beginning to gain notice. These woods will equally benefit from FRIM's HTD system as well, since the system can be used for any wood.

"More than 100 species can be used, and those that are less commercially popular can benefit from this system," said Dr. Sik. Though the procedure is the same, it only needs a few protocol modifications. The idea is to use the system for light to medium woods, making them more durable and attractive, and to replace and lower the usage of precious heavy hardwoods like teak.

The HTD system has already received favourable feedback from many importers and has won numerous awards locally and internationally for its innovative design, functionality and relevancy to the timber industry. Some importers of wood using this technology

# Rubber Tree Facts

**Scientific Name:** *Hevea brasiliensis*

**Common Name:** Rubber Tree, Malaysian Oak

**Origin:** Native to Brazil

**Lifespan:** 25 – 30 years; maturity at 5 – 10 years; sap extraction at 7 years

**Tree Size:** 20-30m tall, 0.3-1m trunk diameter

**Cultivation:** Latex from sap

**Commodity:** Rubber

**Timber:** Rubberwood

**Color:** White to pale cream in colour

**Density:** Light-medium hardwood

**Texture:** Moderately coarse but even, with straight to shallowly interlocked grain

**Properties:** Good woodworking and machining properties including nailing, screwing, gluing and staining. Acceptable durability, pleasant appearance and ease in finishing

**Susceptibility:** Insects and fungus due to high starch and sugar content

**Rubberwood Products:** Furniture, sawn wood, plywood, mouldings, medium density fibreboard (MDF), chipboard, joinery and carpentry, wooden frames, flooring, interior finishing, panelling, charcoal manufacture, pulp and paper, wooden pallets (expedient type), staircase (tread, baluster, steps and railing), ornamental items, door components, cabinet making, tool handles (non impact), ladies shoe soles, toys, fruit bowls, chopping block and bentwood

**Availability:** 20 countries around the world. Mainly in Asia, including Malaysia.

in China and Japan, with trial consignments in Korea, Australia and the United States. Last year, one of FRIM's counterparts received orders up to RM600,000 for 140 tons of HTD rubberwood timber. The system is patented in six countries: Malaysia, the U.S., Thailand, Singapore, China and Vietnam, with two licensees in Malaysia.

Though furniture manufacturers are not involved with the timber process itself, they will greatly benefit from wood treated using the system, as it can create new premium products with enhanced and modified properties, while enabling manufacturers to do their part for the environment by using wood that is chemical-free.

Malaysian furniture makers can leverage the HTD system to include less populous woods to increase their product portfolios, as other woods would also become more durable and have enhanced features. Catering to European customers will at some point bring manufacturers face-to-face with the EU regulation of labelling their products, as the rubberwood used is conventionally treated with preservatives. Rubberwood using HTD will render it as a higher valued wood and make products made with it equally more valuable.

Malaysia should be proud of this home-grown technology, which could play a major role in sustaining not only the forests, but also the timber industry. Dato' Latif said: "Ikea has shown interest in the capabilities of our HTD system. Ikea is very environmentally conscious of its products, so their interest speaks volumes of our system. Rubberwood does not belong to Malaysia alone. It's also big in Thailand and Indonesia. We are trying to ensure that our rubberwood is of higher quality using this procedure."

It would seem in the world versus rubberwood saga, nature eventually does have the last laugh as the humble rubber tree reinvents itself yet again . . . with a little help from its friends from FRIM.

“ More than 100 species can be used, and those that are less commercially popular can benefit from this system. ”

- Dr. Sik Huei Shing



Visit us at **MALAYSIAN  
INTERNATIONAL  
FURNITURE  
FAIR 2020**

Date **6-9 MARCH 2020**

Booth **HALL 8, M805**

Venue **MITEC**



**MASTER GRADE FURNITURE INDUSTRIES SDN. BHD.**

Lot 4007 (Block 2 & 3), Jalan Kebun Sayur,  
Bukit Bakri 84200 Muar, Johor, West Malaysia.

Tel : 06-9869598(O) Fax : 06-9869959

Email : mg.furn.ind@gmail.com (Raymond)  
marketing-mastergrade@hotmail.com (Jeslyn)  
sherminhow.mg@gmail.com (Shermin)  
samuel.mastergrade@gmail.com (Samuel)

Website : <http://mastergradeurniture.com>



# Awardees *Shine Bright*

by Chow Ee-Tan, *Furnish Now* writer

A major highlight of the Malaysian International Furniture Fair (MIFF) has always been the annual awards. With the objective of encouraging designers to conceptualise furniture designs that are original, aesthetic, creative and visionary, the awards are open to all MIFF exhibitors. And behind the coveted awards are a distinguished panel of judges who set the bar high while the industry watches closely.

The results of MIFF 2019 Awards were announced on the third day of the exhibition during a presentation ceremony. The most notable awards included the Furniture Excellence Awards (FEA) and Best Presentation Awards (BPA). The FEA is divided into two categories: Household Furniture and Office Furniture; whereas the BPA is divided into Bare Space Booth and Shell Scheme Booth.

*Furnish Now* features some of the winners of these two awards with the stories behind their victories.

## at MIFF 2019

### *Oasis Furniture Industries*

FEA Platinum Award - Office Furniture Category

No stranger to MIFF, Oasis Furniture Industries has won several awards in the past. And this year, the company was the proud recipient of both the FEA Platinum and Gold awards in the office furniture category.

Both of their winning products were the result of collaborations with local designers. Platinum winner Laborra is a modular space solution by designer Sujak Hasbollah, while Habitué is the brainchild of former FDC winner Lim Bo Qiang and finalist Jasper Lee.

The creation of Laborra began with an idea to develop a modular piece that emphasises the agile, flexible office layout. The Activity-Based Working (ABW) modular space solution can form various combinations, for a healthy and blissful working environment.

The collection consists of modular seating; various writing surface solutions including a tablet, side table, coffee table, high worktable, media wall, whiteboard; a divider and power box; as well as a projector box to support information sharing. It fits into various spaces with an aesthetic design outlook and functionality that supports different activities – from a more formal space to a fun, strategic thinking space.

For Habitué, the design of each piece of furniture is carefully crafted for aesthetics, as well as functionality. The concept is to create a habitat for various activities – ranging from the Hut workstation that brings personalisation to the Caveman private pod series (which not only provides technological features, but also adds aesthetic value to office environment), to the Pine meeting table, designed to liven up to the

office meeting environment to make meetings fun. There is also Canopy lounge seating, which can convert into various modular formations for different degrees of privacy.

Their winning edge, according to Oasis Managing Director Ralph Ong, is in the way they design the solution: "We don't look at it as a product itself, but a solution as a whole. The centre of our designs are human . . . we design based on human behaviour, as well as ergonomics for health."

"For us, the awards show us that our effort and direction are being recognised by the international judges. This gives us a greater motivation to move even further," he said.

Mr. Ong said that their company appreciates the talent found in Malaysia and would like to continue working with local designers.

"Oasis believes that the furniture industry in Malaysia has the strength of resource availability," he said. "For office furniture industries especially, we have the core resources from upstream to downstream to form a complete supply chain. We need to develop a long-term strategy in order to build up the furniture industry on how we create value."

He said they would continue to work with designers from various design schools and welcome any initiatives from these parties for collaborations.

"Designers would be one of the channels to reach the market. That is why we are strongly attracted in working with designers . . . we value their talent and their ideas could create value and abundant wealth to many," concluded Mr. Ong.

**“ For us, the awards show us that our effort and direction are being recognised by the international judges. This gives us a greater motivation to move even further. ”**

**- Ralph Ong, Oasis Furniture Industries Managing Director**



### *Kian Swee Seng Industries*

FEA Platinum Award - Household Furniture Category

BPA 5th Place Winner, Bare Space Booth

Kian Swee Seng Industries believes in having faith in a new generation of local furniture designers and nurturing them.

Because of that, the collaboration between manufacturers and local talent led them to sweet victory at MIFF 2019, where a Scandinavian-inspired sofa/day bed bagged the FEA Platinum Award for the Household Furniture Category.

The versatile and stylish sofa, Sarah, was named after its designer Sarah Moi, a USM product design student who worked as an intern at Kian Swee Seng Industries. Ms. Moi was a final year student and her collaboration with the manufacturer was part of her final year project.

Ms. Moi prefers Scandinavian-inspired design as she thinks the simple and minimalist concept attracts younger buyers. "For the younger consumers, especially young couples today, they can't afford a large home, so we had to think of how to design furniture that is cozy and functional to fit into smaller spaces," she said.

Sarah is not your conventional sofa – it's flexible and can be multipurpose, with a backrest that is removable and adjustable. There are no armrests, rather they are replaced by pillows and cushions.

Kian Swee Seng Industries Managing Director Mr. Ng Lai Kong said he had confidence in his team and that local manufacturers should give opportunities to the young and new designers.

"It is a good thing to work with the younger generation. We should have confidence in them although they are new and unknown," he said, adding that Sarah is now out in the market and is receiving a good response.

"I am very grateful to have been given this opportunity by Mr. Ng. I started collaborating with them while working as an intern, and I feel very touched that they have decided to name the product after me!" said Ms. Moi, with tears in her eyes after the award presentation, adding that she would be very happy to continue the collaboration with Kian Swee Seng Industries.

Kian Swee Seng was established in year 2000 in Muar, and specialises in manufacturing and exporting upholstery sofas, dining sets and bedroom sets. The company is passionate about connecting design lovers of mid-century furniture with a brand-new look, with the most practical and high-quality furniture, supported by excellent customer service, at the most competitive prices.

The company is no stranger to MIFF and to its awards. Having participated six years in a row, it also received the MIFF 2017 Gold Award winner in the same category.



### *Alustil*

FEA Gold Award - Household Furniture Category

A modern kitchen cabinet system from Alustil won the FEA Gold award for Household Furniture Category. The creator behind this winning product is none other than the company's Founder and Managing Director Mr. Tan Jik Hui.

This aluminum cabinet system (named Huracan) is a patented carcass system made in solid extruded aluminium, which accentuates its superiority and durability, and brings together functionality and practicality.

"Its unique storage furnishing system is characterised by a simple, yet creative, design," said Mr. Tan. "Our small storage solutions combine beauty and function, with quality fixtures and accessories."

Priding itself as one of the most durable kitchen cabinet system ever created, the Huracan has a sturdy aluminium cabinet structure and carcass assembly, with state-of-the-art hardware and fittings, and materials with near absolute resistance to water, heat and impact.

The cabinet interior features an edgeless design, which reduces dust build-up – and makes it easy to clean. Plus, its adjustable shelf height with peg holes and shelf pegs, allows for more flexible use.

Mr. Tan said it combines precision manufacturing with design ergonomics, providing solutions for contemporary kitchen spaces. Its function and simplicity fits any stylish kitchen.

The success story of Huracan does not come about instantly. In fact, Alustil has been constructing bespoke kitchen cabinets for years. The brand has been known for using aluminium for producing high-quality items and customisable designs.

For example, its MOD and LUX series are both known for their intricate design, which covers the needs of clients by occupying kitchen spaces perfectly.

To Mr. Tan, the future trend in kitchen furniture is one that gives customers a whole new lifestyle experience, within a class of its own.

He believes that it is both the contemporary and modern design, and the strength and durability of the cabinet, that contributed to winning the FEA Gold Award.

"Winning the award increases our standard and company image, especially in the foreign market," said Mr. Tan, adding that as a first-time winner, this victory was especially sweet.



### *Oasis Furniture Industries*

FEA Gold Award - Office Furniture Category



### *Wysen Industry*

BPA 1st Place Winner, Shell Scheme



### *Kintex*

BPA 1st Place Winner, Non-Furniture



## *Johann & Joann Concept* BPA 1st Prize Winner, Bare Space Booth



Johann & Joann Concept has always been known for its quality furniture design. For MIFF 2019, the company received more recognition by emerging as the Best Presentation Award winner for Bare Space Booth.

“Our booth is modern and space efficient, so we can display our products in a cost-efficient way,” said Founder and Managing Director Mr. Quek Kheng Long about their neat and elegant booth presentation, with soft lighting that accentuated the beauty of the lumber furniture.

He said one of the important criteria was to maximise space usage, so that all the space available would be fully utilized – yet at the same time, presenting lifestyle products elegantly.

Always hands-on in his business, Mr. Quek himself was the key person who personally designed and drafted the whole design and concept of the booth. After that, he worked closely with MIFF official contractors in order to carry it out smoothly.

It took the company three days to setup the booth and another two days to setup the furniture for presentation.

“Our creative concept was ‘back to basic’. We are always practical and realistic when it comes to design, concept and presentation. We always take the needs of visitors into consideration, like ‘how can they know our products?’ We want our

booth to be like a showroom that makes our visitors feel at home,” said Mr. Quek.

“It’s a thrill that we won the Best Presentation Award this year,” he said. “In the future, we will keep our booth designs simple, practical and eye-catching to all visitors.”

He said his team had been very particular and detailed in every aspect when setting up the booth—from lighting, to matching decoration items and the angle and position of the furniture.

“Also, all of our designers spent a lot of time during the booth setup to make sure all the items were properly placed,” he said.

Mr. Quek said winning the award was an important acknowledgement to the company: “It gives us a clear direction and direct feedback from the judges and visitors that we are moving in the right direction.”

Johann & Joann had previously won a Merit Award for Best Presentation at MIFF 2015. The company specialises in quality lifestyle furniture constructed with laminated veneer lumber from Poplar wood, a fast growing and eco-friendly material.

Having participated in MIFF for five years, Johann & Joann focuses on designing products that are good value for money. Its products are also suitable for e-commerce marketing.



### *Step Furniture Manufacturer*

BPA 4th Place Winner, Bare Space Booth

It was a memorable first win for Step Furniture Manufacturer at the MIFF Awards 2019, as it emerged as the 4th place winner of the Best Presentation Award for Bare Space Booth.

Their winning booth presentation was simple yet functional, with a contemporary and modern touch. According to Marketing Manager Suzanne Lei, it was designed with optimal space usage in mind, to facilitate movement around the booth area. The booth was setup by their partner Smart Connect Production.

"We have enjoyed a very good relationship with the contractor as they are always innovative in their designs and their workmanship is considerably detailed," said Ms. Lei. "To them, creativity is important, but their concept to offer visitors an impression of open space with contemporary furniture display takes centre stage," said Ms. Lei.

According to her, one of the reasons Step Furniture Manufacturer won the awards was due to the creativity in using metal frames to create a wider space for sectional presentation.

"Receiving the accolade is truly an inspiration for us to aim for next year exhibition," she added.

Established in 1997, Step Furniture Manufacturer's main business is manufacturing residential wooden furniture. The company has grown into a major player as a wooden furniture manufacturer since 2006, but still maintains its core metal operations.

The company specialises in producing and designing furniture that offers customers the necessary edge in their market.

"We often experiment with different materials to differentiate our products. This in turn empowers our customers with a range of quality and uniquely designed furniture," said Ms. Lei.



### *Inception Design And Trading*

BPA 2nd Place Winner, Bare Space Booth



### *Florence Bed*

BPA 3rd Place Winner, Bare Space Booth

# Johann&Joann®



YOUR e-commerce / online best seller items start here.

**JOHANN & JOANN CONCEPT SDN. BHD.**  
1178162-M

Lot 1812, Jalan Raja, Bukit Pasir,  
84300 Muar, Johor, Malaysia.



TSCA Title VI Compliant

UPS / MOP / 3A PACKAGING

Website  
[www.jnconcept.com](http://www.jnconcept.com)

Email  
[info@jnconcept.com](mailto:info@jnconcept.com)

Fax  
+606 985 7700

Tel  
+606 985 0000

OASiS

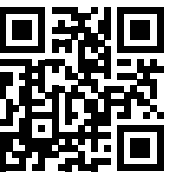
ERGONOMICALLY  
DESIGNED FOR HEALTH



A  
HEALTHY & BLISSFUL  
WORKING ENVIRONMENT

Plan & Design  
with the  
**ACTIVITY  
BASED  
WORKING  
EXPERIENCE**

Design today's offices that serves every moment with **Activity Based Working Experience**. Configuring the office workplace environment with a range of flexible, shared and diverse places for team to work. Generating and preserving the energy flow within the team for ultimate synergy. Work anytime, anywhere, let the creative juice flows freely.



OASIS FURNITURE INDUSTRIES SDN BHD

607 7733292

+6012 7048282

marketing@oasis.com.my

facebook.com/OasisFurniture

www.oasis.com.my

No. 2&3, Jalan Perindustrian Gemilang, Taman Perindustrian Gemilang, Batu 4, Jalan Mersing, 86000 Kluang, Johor, Malaysia

