



MIFF

March 8-11, 2017
PWTC & MECC
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

The Malaysian International Furniture Fair (MIFF) returned for its 23rd edition from March 8-11, 2017. Featuring a record 543 exhibitors from nine countries and regions, the exhibition was spread over two venues, Putra World Trade Centre (PWTC) and Matrade Exhibition Centre (MECC) in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Congregating furniture manufacturers and buyers from all over the world, as Datuk Seri MahSlewKeong, Minister of Plantation Industries and Commodities, said provided opportunities to explore new markets, strengthen existing business relations and forge new ones.

The minister, who was also the guest of honour for the opening ceremony, said, "The furniture industry is a key component of the timber industry and contributes significantly to the nation's export earnings. In 2016, the furniture sector generated export earnings of RM9.5 billion. It is envisaged the furniture sector to register an export value of RM16 billion by 2020."

In addition to networking during a welcome reception on 8 March, seminars by industry professionals were lined up for show visitors. Shinichi Mitsuki from MITSUI Designtec, Japan, spoke on design trends in 2017, while Professor

Dr.JegatheswaranRatnasingam from Universiti Putra Malaysia shared on the use of imported wood resources as a value-adding strategy in furniture.

Philip Yap of PYD Associates, Dr Eric Leong of The One Academy and Tommaso RMasera of Masera Design also engaged show visitors in a panel discussion on design.

PWTC

There are a total of 11 halls at the fair, including China Hall (1 and 1M) and Taiwan Hall (4C). New at this year's fair is the MIFF Office (Hall 2A, 2B, 2C)—a designated area where 130 international companies showcase their office furniture, making it one of biggest showrooms for modern workspace solutions in Southeast Asia.

This grouping of furniture retailers brings convenience to buyers looking to purchase commercial and home office products. Visitors could take their pick from office seating, workstations, board room furniture, storage units and safes.

Pieces on display such as modular workbenches and desk pods signal a shift from a cubically partitioned workspace to a more open and adaptable one that facilitates collaboration.



These pieces also reflect the trend of having residential-style furniture in the office.

MECC

Over 100 exhibitors showcased their latest collections of furniture and upholstery products at the four halls at MECC. A highlight at the venue is a showcase of furniture from the MIFF Furniture Design Competition (FDC) located between Hall A and Hall C. The competition has been a platform for emerging designers to showcase their ideas before an international audience of manufacturers, buyers and media professionals since 2010.

Themed Table2Gather this year, FDC requires participants to incorporate wood into their table and chair set designed for either indoor or outdoor use. Eight finalists displayed their pieces and were present to interact with their audience.

Among the works is Tan Ying Chi's collection named EYE lash. Her contemporary, chic three-piece coffee table set uses solid timber and metal and includes a chair with a wooden backrest that resembles eyelashes.

Yap Xin Yi's Tsumineru collection also stands out with its simple and versatile concept. Modelled on Chinese 'dim sum' steamer baskets, her stackable plywood pieces can not only be easily converted from a table to a stool and vice versa, but they also offer storage space.

Looking Ahead

While the show was still in progress, the organisers have already rolled out plans for next year's fair. Built on the theme Design Connects People, the 24th edition of the exhibition will focus on design and is expected to be able to host more than 600 exhibitors.

Besides PWTC, the event will be held in the new Malaysia International Trade and Exhibition Centre (MITEC), and this increases exhibition space from 80,000 sqm this year to 100,000 sqm next year.

The show's chairman Datuk Dr Tan Chin Huat said the organiser has seen a lot of changes in exhibitors especially those based in Malaysia. According to him, these companies are paying more attention to research and development and are reaping results in the fair.

A new segment in next year's fair is MIFF Timber Mart, a one-stop wood and wood-related material showcase and trading space. Another new addition is designRena, a hall dedicated for Malaysia's best exhibitors to display their products.

MITEC will house the two new sections, Muar Hall, a sofa hall and a section for furnishings and fittings. On the other hand, PWTC will continue to house the organiser office, China Hall, Taiwan Hall and household furniture. **FDM**