

DesignSingapore Council, the national agency for design, has been supporting practitioners and firms with a variety of help schemes, including those that help them to expand abroad. In the third of a six-part series, Melissa De Silva talks to some designers and studios that found wings to expand abroad with such help.

# Singapore design to go on show in Milan



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THIS April, a group of Singapore's best product design talent will be in Milan to show their creations at the world's most important design trade show: the Milan Furniture Fair.

The prototypes these designers and studios have conceptualised for the Triennale di Milano at the Triennale Design Museum, on from April 14-19, are based on the theme "The Alchemists".

The theme challenges designers to create something precious from ordinary materials.

The local designers will be the first Singaporeans to show at the Triennale Design Museum.

The project started as a workshop conducted by Milan-based Stefano Casciani and Singapore-based Patrick Chia last October.

Mr Casciani is the editor of architecture and design magazine, Domus, as well as a designer, curator and critical theorist.

Mr Chia is founding director of the Design Incubation Centre at the National University of Singapore (NUS), established in 2006.

He says: "The idea is to build a community of people sharing this experience and realise a certain kind of identity through it."

"Hopefully it will spread so that we have something that can gel design practitioners in the areas of furniture and object design together."

A total of 15 projects, curated by Mr Chia and Mr Casciani, will be going to Milan.

Mr Chia says: "My idea of alchemy is working within our own constraints, not just about the material but the process and constraints within our geography."

"We are influenced by everything. So how do we take something that is referenced everywhere, such as the Japanese, European, and make it our own?"

The participation of Singaporean designers in Milan is supported not only by the DesignSingapore Council but also other design industry parties.

## Some items to be shown

■ **Fool's Gold by Lanzavecchia + Wai**  
Mr Chia says: "Fool's Gold is the idea of people in Lombardy wrapping their cars in gold foil; so he's making some fairly cheap material like galvanised zinc for roofs and wrapping the cars in this foil material."

■ **Pour by Hans Tan**  
A side table poured with resin and colour to form the multi-coloured table surface. Each colour is poured individually with precise control of curing durations in succession so that each colour does not mix with the adjacent one, while creating a single seamless surface.

■ **The Crane and Duck lamps by Studio Juju**  
The Crane Lamp has a total swivel range of 90 degrees, offering the flexibility to create ambient light against the wall or as a directional light while reading. The Duck Lamp can create ambient light or be used as a task lamp. Through the articulation of the lamp neck, the form of Duck becomes functional and expressive at the same time, with a nodding range of 40 degrees.

■ **Textile Transmutations by Tiffany Loy**  
This project is about creating 3D forms on textile surfaces with custom-made instruments. Using heat and steam, and custom-made moulds, the textiles are set into rich textures. The 3D textiles are then trimmed into wearable objects. Mr Chia says: "Her piece turned out very well and it was unexpected in terms of the whole transformation."



Mr Patrick Chia, founding director of the NUS Design Incubation Centre.

PHOTOS: ZINKE AW FOR THE STRAITS TIMES



Ms Wendy Chua, 30, and Mr Gustavo Maggio, 34, are two of the four co-founders of design collective Outofstock.

## Exhibitions help to raise global visibility

A MEETING in Stockholm in 2005 at the global design competition, Electrolux Design Lab, acquainted Singaporeans Wendy Chua, 30, and Gabriel Tan, 32, with Spaniard Sebastian Alberti, 36, and Argentinian Gustavo Maggio, 34.

The connection evolved into design collective Outofstock, which offers integrated solutions spanning furniture, lighting, interior design and art direction.

In 2011, a grant from DesignSingapore Council (Dsg) helped local furniture firm Scanteak to engage the design firm, by paying part of the costs.

The project was to produce a collection for the Japanese market, and the designers spent two weeks in Japan doing research.

They visited over 20 homes to understand the Japanese lifestyle. They learnt, for instance, that many Japanese homes do not have a sofa as space is limited.

The seats around the dining table "multi-task" - they have to be turned around to face the TV after a meal in 2010.

So, Mr Maggio said: "We made dimensions smaller and everything visually lighter."

For example, the Duo Swivel

Bench in the collection weighs about a third lighter than average. It has a hinged wooden backrest that can be adjusted for the person sitting on it to face the table or a TV in the opposite direction.

Other grants have contributed to Outofstock being on the international radar.

It enabled the firm to show at the Salone Satellite at the Milan Furniture Fair in 2007, 2009 and 2010, by offsetting costs including booth rental and prototyping.

"After three years of shows, we have started forming relationships and long-term collaborations," said Mr Maggio.

The grants have also helped the collective to present at trade fairs 100% Design Tokyo and IMM Cologne.

As a result of such overseas visibility, in 2009 renowned French furniture company Ligne Roset selected Outofstock's Black Forest table, inspired by tree branches, for production, after seeing it at the Milan Fair. The table also bagged a President's Design Award in 2010.

The collective's Hues table, shown at the Milan Fair in 2010, was also picked up for production by Ligne Roset.



Scanteak's Duo Swivel Bench designed by Outofstock that can be adjusted for the person sitting on it to face the table or the TV in the opposite direction. PHOTO: OUTOFSTOCK



Mr Hum Wai, who had earlier trained as an industrial designer, received a scholarship from the DesignSingapore Council to pursue a master's degree programme at the Design Academy Eindhoven in Holland.

## Overseas scholarship leads to a partnership

IT WAS a master's degree programme at the Design Academy Eindhoven in the Netherlands that brought Italian Francesca Lanzavecchia and Singaporean Hum Wai, 34, together to set up design collaboration Lanzavecchia + Wai at the end of 2009.

Mr Wai, who received a scholarship from the DesignSingapore Council (Dsg) in 2005 to pursue the degree, earlier trained as an industrial designer at the National University of Singapore.

The design studio has caught the eye of international arbiters of design. Journals such as Newsweek have featured its designs, and the grants were a godsend. Funding gave us the financial mobility to make showing overseas happen."

Later this year, the studio will launch a high-end baby cot system. Baby linens, changing tables and mobile toys for cots are also in the pipeline.

For the Milan Furniture Fair in April, the studio has also been engaged to design the stand for Italian marble company Antolini, which was responsible for the marble cladding on buildings such as the Rockefeller Centre.



Lanzavecchia + Wai beat eight other studios in a contest with its design for the interior of the new corporate AW169 helicopter. PHOTO: LANZAVECCHIA + WAI

■ **A MUCH-NEEDED BOOST**  
As a young studio, the grants were a godsend. Funding gave us the financial mobility to make showing overseas happen.

— Mr Hum Wai, 34, on the presence of Lanzavecchia + Wai on the international stage being supported by grants by Dsg to mitigate the costs of showing at Salone Satellite, a conceptually focused exhibition space that is part of the Milan Furniture Fair, in 2010, 2011 and 2012.

Mr Wai says that for this project, the studio has tried to create "a new expression" of marble, which is usually considered heavy.

He says: "We want to challenge people's perceptions of what marble is."



Munkii's Mr Kelvin Goh says Dsg financing has allowed the firm to tolerate more risk in an untested market like China.

## Cracking the China furniture market

ESTABLISHED in 2006, Munkii is a furniture design firm that makes just two to three models a year.

Its business development director, Mr Kelvin Goh, says: "Munkii is more about creating individual pieces of furniture that shine and demand your attention."

"We rarely create an entire range but focus on pieces we believe will bring character to your space."

Last year, these were the Wang Lounger and the Geek Chair.

The brand's presence at trade shows in Europe, supported by grants from the DesignSingapore Council (Dsg), has gained it exposure in the West. It now has distributors in France, Germany, the United States and Britain.

A large part of its success in Europe is due to its meticulous attention to detail in production.

Mr Goh says grants from Dsg helped Munkii to take eight to nine months to prototype a product when the industry norm is three to four months.

He says: "The cost of prototyping is

high. It can be \$10,000 for one item. But we spend lots of time designing the product and we want it to come out right."

Munkii is looking at the China market and took part in the Guangzhou Design Week trade fair in December last year.

Dsg grants have helped in overseas shows like this.

Mr Goh says: "Dsg financing has allowed us to tolerate more risk in an untested market, China. Every overseas exhibition is very costly, about \$10,000 to \$15,000 per show."

At last year's Guangzhou show, Munkii won two design awards. They were for the Wang Lounger and the Geek Chair.

PHOTOS: MUNKII



Ms Priscilla Lui, 32, and Mr Timo Wong, 33, are the creative duo behind Studio Juju. With the help of a DesignSingapore Council grant, they displayed their works at SaloneSatellite and attracted buyers.

## Furniture-fair route to international markets

DESIGNERS Timo Wong and Priscilla Lui do not see objects the way other people see them.

To them, "coffee table" can be a group of seven petite tables, of different shapes and heights, for instance.

This very concept won them the President's Design Award last year for their Rabbit and Tortoise collection of organic-form tables, created for Italian furniture label Living Divani.

The collection was first exhibited in 2009 at the SaloneSatellite at the Milan Furniture Fair, the most prestigious trade fair in the furniture industry.

Mr Wong, 33, and Ms Lui, 32, met in 2006 when they were working for the Design Incubation Centre at the National University of Singapore, under the tutelage of design director Patrick Chia.

Mr Chia encouraged them to collaborate. The two designers then decided to start a studio together and, in 2009, Studio Juju was born.

With the help of a grant from DesignSingapore Council (Dsg) this year, Studio Juju exhibited its works at SaloneSatellite.

This is a space for up-and-com-



The Rabbit and Tortoise collection of tables, created by Studio Juju for Italian furniture label Living Divani, won the President's Design Award last year. PHOTO: STUDIO JUJU

ing design studios at the Milan Furniture Fair.

Studio Juju caught the eye of buyers from Living Divani and three years later, in 2012, it approached them to create a collection.

Mr Wong notes that the Dsg

## Helping companies design their future

THE DesignSingapore Council (Dsg) can provide funding support for design companies to develop new projects and for seeking new businesses, as well as grants to present collections in key international markets.

■ **You want to:** Present your collections in key markets.  
■ **Grant:** Market Access Assistance (MAA).  
■ **Scheme:** Productivity and Innovation Credit (PIC).

Show at prestigious international trade fairs and other platforms with funding that covers up to 50 per cent of costs that include prototyping; participation fees; marketing, sales and public relations services; and exhibition costs. These are capped at \$30,000 a year.

■ **You want to:** Invest in design innovation.  
■ **Scheme:** Productivity and Innovation Credit (PIC).

Enjoy a 400 per cent tax deduction on your firm's expenditure on qualifying product-design activities each year, from 2015 to 2018.

Businesses can also choose to receive a cash payout of 60 per cent of the qualifying expenditure.

The product design has to result in a new design registration through the Intellectual Property Office of Singapore.

■ **You want to:** Adopt service design innovation in your F&B, retail or infocomm business.  
■ **Scheme:** Design Innovation Assistance (DIA).

DIA is a co-funding grant to encourage Singapore SMEs to use design as a strategic driver for business innovation. It aims to help businesses innovate, create new markets and deliver new value through the creation of new customer experiences, product innovation, service delivery and productivity improvements, and brand differentiation.

The grant supports up to 70 per cent of the design consultancy fees.

For more information, visit [www.designsingapore.org](http://www.designsingapore.org)

Download a QR code reader app to your smartphone and scan this code for more information.