

Asia Future

A Peek at Singapore Design



Product Design Edition

On the cover:

Detail of *Ariake* Chair by Gabriel
Tan Design.

Image by Sebastian Stadler

Cover design by in the wild,
with negative pattern of a
simple basket weave detail.

Executive Director's Message

When I first took over the Council last May, I was excited because I saw this as a chance to shape the design landscape in Singapore. After all, design has always been intrinsic to the Singapore story – nothing was left to chance, and many can say that our founding leaders designed our way from a fledgling nation with little chance of survival to the multicultural global metropolis we are today.

It is an exciting time for design now, with the recognition of its ability to create new value for businesses and governments in an experience economy. At the Council, we are glad to be at the forefront of driving this change, and see design being adopted as a mindset for innovation in organisations, to the realisation of desirable products, services, and experiences across the island.

As we take a step back to view the body of design work happening on our little red dot, we believe that we can see a distinctive brand of Singapore design emerging. The Singapore voice can be described by a variety of words. Modern, Asian, multicultural, open, informal, pragmatic. We see a spirit, and less a form. An attitude, and less an archetype. This is because indeed that is what makes us, and we want to share a slice of it with the world.

Which is why we did this compendium.

Here we present 11 design studios and brands who are picked for their compelling and unique brand philosophies. From multidisciplinary to industrial design fields, this is just a glimpse of what is happening on our hot tropical island state. As we say in Singapore, they are *'different different'*, but also *'same same'*. Which basically means that even though they may all be vastly varied in expression, they are ALL in their hearts Singaporean.

Enjoy a taste of Singapore. There is more coming to you.

Mark Wee

Executive Director
DesignSingapore Council

Foreword

As a Design Ambassador—possibly the first in the world—a question that I frequently get is: “What is Singapore Design?”

This seemingly simple and obvious question has prompted a fair amount of soul searching. Many Singaporean designers feel that our culture is so mixed that it is hard to describe. Others feel that our city evolves so fast that it is as if our physical environment shifts at will. All this makes Singapore Design hard to pin down.

Being in Europe makes me look at my country with a fresh pair of eyes. I realised that this diversity, the ever-morphing ability of Singapore, is exactly the soul and DNA of Singapore Design.

Growing up with different races is normal. I have Chinese, Malay, Indian and Eurasian friends with whom I spoke a jumble of all languages, sometimes in one sentence. For me, one meal would be Chinese pork noodles with the next being Malay chicken curry. When my friends and I entered the glorious years of our twenties we got to hike the Sapa mountains of Vietnam, visit friends in Kuala Lumpur, attend a wedding in Manila and experience the temples of Ubud. Absorbing a cacophony of Southeast Asian influences is second nature to Singaporeans.

So is adapting to constant change. Our history, though short, has been nothing short of spectacular. My maternal grandmother came from China as a maid to a rich family when she was only 11 years old; after that she was a *samsui* woman, a term for female labourers who built Singapore’s early infrastructure and wore large red hats. My mother was the first in her family to complete high school. By my generation, my sister and I went overseas for higher education. Today, my children call both Singapore and France home, and traverse each culture like second skins.

Many Singaporeans I know have similar stories. The frenetic pace of progress represented by Singapore’s futuristic skyline is written in our family histories, flows through our blood, and wired into our very design.

Singapore Design, to me, is therefore not an aesthetic. It is a mindset, a way of being. It is being Asian at heart, but global in mind. It is the desire to always seek to make things better, to see constraints not as a problem but as an opportunity to do things differently. It is about remaining hopeful.

I think we all need a bit of Singapore Design in our lives today. Happy reading.

Agnes Kwek
Design Ambassador
DesignSingapore Council

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3. *Straits* sofa table by Ipse Ipsa Ipsum.
4. Work in progress shot of Jarrold Lim Design.

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- 1 by Living Divani
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Right:
1. Jewel *Single Seater* by
Nathan Yong Design.
Image by Nathan Yong Design

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Singapore is 2nd in the World for ease of doing business, according to the latest World Bank annual ratings.



9th most creative country in the world according to Martin Prosperity Institute's Global Creativity Index.



Despite being one of the most water-stressed countries in the world, Singapore has been exporting water purification technologies to its international peers while establishing a sustainable domestic supply.

Singapore, Where Possibilities are Born

Singapore was not meant to exist as a country; there was no glory on our independence day on 9 August 1965.

As a tiny island of 700 square kilometres (or half of London), with no natural resources, no water, and a large immigrant population with no roots in Singapore, we thought we would not survive. Out of these constraints, we created water management systems, education and housing policies, urban mobility systems that eventually got exported to the world.

Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong said: "Design is a core element of our nation-building. Singapore is a nation by design. Nothing that we have is natural, or happened by itself."

This DNA carries through much of the design you see coming out from Singapore—a blend of Asian influences that reflects our cultural heritage, a global market outlook that comes from Singapore's position as a hub between East and West, and a dogged determination to work around constraints and do more with less.

Designated in 2015 as a UNESCO City of Design, we sit on the balance of many dualities: East and West, Traditional and Futuristic, Multiculturalism.

Leveraging the best of both worlds, we present 11 design studios and brands that represent the future of industrial and multidisciplinary design.

ASIAN AT HEART, GLOBAL IN VIEW



in this chapter :

wohabeing
Hans Tan Studio
SCENE SHANG
Studio Juju

Singapore Design is an interlace of Asia.

It reflects Singapore's history as an Asian entrepôt, our population mix of Chinese, Malay, Indian and Straits heritage, and is a product of Singaporeans' ease of slipping into a variety of Asian cultures.

At the same time, English is our main language of business. With 37,000 international companies present in Singapore, we naturally design with a global view. The city is a tropical garden set in hyper-modernity, described by some as so futuristic that it was chosen as the backdrop for HBO's science-fiction series *Westworld*.

So while Singapore Design expresses itself through the curvature of Chinese temple roofs brought to being by Indonesian woodcraft, and sings through the Indian marble inlays in Peranakan designs, at the heart of it is modern urban living. It is equally at ease in a luxury hotel in Bali, as in a Victorian townhouse, a Parisian Haussmannian, or a New York loft.

Left:
1. The *Crab Easy Chair* and
Crab Side Table with *Angler*
Lamp from the wohabeing
Bintan Collection.

wohabeing

wohabeing is a young brand under globally acclaimed architectural practice WOHA co-founded by Australia-born Richard Hassell and Singaporean Wong Mun Summ, which has been designing interior objects contextually for their architectural projects for over 20 years.



This Page, from top:

2. wohabeing co-founders Richard Hassell (left) and Wong Mun Summ (right).
3. Balconies covered in tropical plants and contoured surfaces based on rock formations at PARKROYAL on Pickering by WOHA.

Next Page, from top:

4. Indoor and Outdoor spaces blend together at WOHA's Alila Villas Uluwatu, Bali, Indonesia, influencing the *Ulu* furniture suite.
5. wohabeing pieces are hand-made by expert craftsmen with attention to every detail
6. wohabeing *Diaspora* collection with Halal-certified bespoke fine china brand Luzerne, on a *Ulu Centric* table.

Image Credits

- 1, 6 by Studio Periphery
- 2 by Wong Jing Wei
- 3 by Patrick Bingham-Hall
- 4 by Alila Hotels
- 5 by WOHA



“We have a big interest in cultural connection and representation; it gives people a sense of being grounded and connected to their past.”

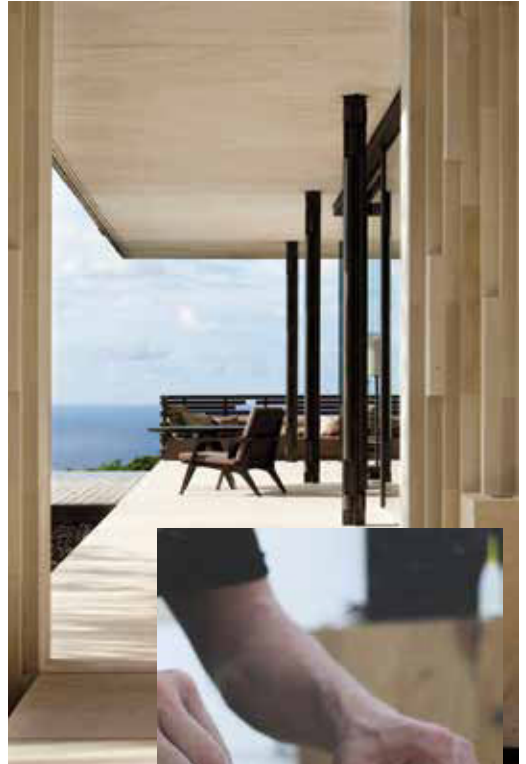
Driven strongly by the firm’s distinctive architectural practice, the furniture and homeware collections by wohabeing intersects heritage and modernism, nature and manmade; the new contemporary symbols of culture today. The brand makes you think about wide-open panoramas, terraces bursting with lush tropical foliage and fusing indoor and outdoor spaces through usage of local materials and inspirations.

“There is more blurring in most Asian cultures between inside and outside environments, especially if they’re in the tropical regions and so the furniture has a certain lightness and airflow around it,” says Richard. The *Turtle Easy* chair and *Ulu* series are prime examples of taking international influences such as Eames’ Pacific Palisades house and localising it through Indonesian culture.

The dignified *Ulu Centric* table is a nod to Asian family values with an integrated lazy susan for communal dining, seamlessly combining ancient Vietnamese *Dong Son* bronze rain drums references, detailed wood craftsmanship and Modernist aesthetics, set against the majestic clifftop of Uluwatu, Bali.

This cultural fluency and flexibility is a blueprint for their hopeful designs for the future. “The objects around us must draw together our cultural history, our sense of place, and our contemporary needs, in doing so, they will be authentic and possess their own unique beauty. We design our objects with care and thought—they need to be meaningful—and of course, delightful.”

wohabeing.net



Hans Tan Studio

Hans Tan is a designer and an educator based in Singapore. His work tiptoes on the boundaries between design, craft and art, leading the visual discourse on identity and culture in Singapore.



Standing in a room full of artefacts, he commands a presence with his unassuming outlook and confidence. Even if the artefacts are as curious as a magnetised 'dough' of 5-cent coins, stacks of Chinese porcelain vases, shelves of plastic cookie bottles filled with parts of prototypes and bits of scavenged materials.

Meet Hans, who is unafraid of challenging old ideas and perceptions about design. He tiptoes on the boundaries of design, craft and art.

Thinking that the porcelain might be similar to those you find in local dollar stores, you will be surprised by how their old-school form can be enhanced when dressed in polka dots or more negative space. *Spotted Nyonya* is a reinterpretation of mass-produced traditional Chinese-Peranakan porcelain wares in Southeast Asia.





“In Singapore, we recognise the need for design to influence all areas of life—making things easier to use and experiences more friendly for people of all demographics.”



By taking a leaf from the resist-dyeing technique used in Batik, a traditional Javanese craft, similar modern industrial techniques were used to create the new dotted pattern. This transforms these dated cultural objects into something new and fresh with contemporary appeal.

“Material culture defines the identity of the people. Personally, one of the most powerful ways is through the way a person behaves and their possessions; to use these two mediums to negotiate topics surrounding heritage and identity. I am not proposing solutions, but to get people to think about it.”

This curiosity draws him to explore materials that we share culture and heritage with, such as porcelain. And with design being a relatively young domain in Singapore, this allows designers like him to practice freely and develop their own language, perspective and approach over time.

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1. Designer Hans Tan's favourite tool is the respirator because donning it signals that he is about to challenge the boundaries of a material.
2. Removing the masking after sandblasting away the original glaze in outdated Chinese-Peranakan porcelain wares.

This Page, clockwise from top:

3. In *Sarong Party 997*, the pattern is appropriated from the Singapore Airlines sarong kebaya Batik.
4. *Spotted Kumcheng*, collection of M+ Museum, Hong Kong. The *Kumcheng* is a traditional Chinese-Peranakan storage jar.
5. *Wallflower (Rectangle)* inspired by ikebana arrangements and baroque still life paintings.

All Images by
Hans Tan Studio

Scene Shang

SCENE SHANG is a contemporary furniture, homeware and lifestyle label based in Singapore with roots firmly planted in a rich Asian heritage. Founders Jessica Wong and Pamela Ting started the brand in Shanghai in 2013, leveraging on their knowledge in architecture and the banking trade respectively.



This Page:

1. The modular stacking SHANG system combining a PAN tray with two HE box drawers and a DENG stool to make a cabinet that showcases traditional craftsmanship and modern functionality.

Next Page, from top:

2. JIA JU Rocking Stool, winner of the ASEAN Furniture Design.

3. Detail of the rattan wicker weave on the JIA JU Rocking Stool.

4. The MING Console Table with ARCH GATE Hanger.

Images by SCENE SHANG



If you place pieces of SCENE SHANG-designed furniture in your home, you get that subtle hint of culture while having it seamlessly blend into your modern-day home.

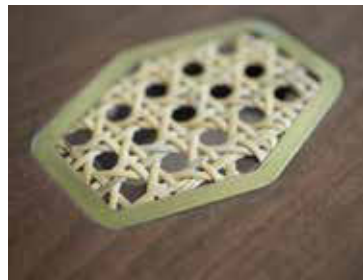
Take the *SHANG* system or the *JIA JU* rocking stool, for example, combining minimalism with the beauty and artistry of Chinese wood joinery. The pastel hues of beech wood with the rattan wicker weaving to remind us of a classic Southeast Asian rocking chair reinvented.

Recently winning the ASEAN Furniture Design Award for this very design, it garnered interest even from the Thais and the local community found themselves able to relate to the design. "They saw it and immediately they went: Yes, I get that, I can use that and I can put that in my home."

Jessica and Pamela bring cultural touchpoints to a contemporary style that is relevant and appealing to modern international audiences. They understand that one might like the Westernised aesthetic of being light-filled, with the furniture being easy to move around. By switching up the type of wood used and other design details, their furniture still carries the beauty of Asian or Chinese traditional construction without being too overbearing.

"The Asian touches came from my recollection of my grandmother's house," Jessica shared while moving between displays excitedly to show some of their designs. "Our grandparents were immigrants and we inherit the lens to be able to see similarities between our culture today to that of their homelands. Through this perspective, our designs are less overwhelming and more palatable to expats who visit Singapore."

shop.sceneshang.com



"We can't just continue the traditions that may not be relevant anymore, so we design homeware to offer a way of life to keep what is precious and make them relevant for today."



Studio Juju

Studio Juju is led by Timo Wong and Priscilla Lui to practice design across disciplines in furniture, products and spaces with a fresh and optimistic approach and strong control of manufacturing.



Named *Rabbit & the Tortoise* collection after a child's fable, you can find the sinuous tables brightening up any indoor and outdoor space. Their curves dynamic and playful, while clean in design. The playfulness and optimism are central to Studio Juju's philosophy, with their experience in Singapore as the initial inspiration.

"We are always morphing different cultures together, taking in influences and throwing them back out. And because we have so many different influences, we become very empathetic to the human experience with regards to design." They pause for thought, before continuing, "In that sense we think it's liberating. It becomes easier to manoeuvre around because we don't have any fixed cultural baggage, so there is a freedom."

With the name Juju meaning 'to give and to receive' in Japanese, the studio takes in the cultural and practical environment their works will become a part of and gives back in their designs. The simplistic and minimalistic outlooks belie the design approach they meticulously take, fitting the old saying 'still waters run deep' completely.

“We simplify the design and the solution becomes something that is appreciated by a global audience.”



“Our designs look poetic aesthetically, and similar to Singapore, they are functionally practical. And while we respect the materiality of things, we are not especially romantic about the process,” the studio shares, their sentences in slow measured tones. Quiet and unassuming but their answers sharp and astute.

Garden Benches may not seem like much at first glance, but the thoughtfulness and didactic nature of the design comes through. Timo and Pris visited the site Gardens By The Bay at different times of the day to identify locations where visitors lingered for research and observations. Designed for extreme tropical weather and unpredictable human usage, it morphs to fit different locations; marrying function and playfulness.

studio-juju.com

Previous Page:

1. The fluid and liberating *Rabbit & the Tortoise* collection.

This Page, from top:

2. A peek into a busy day in the office of Studio Juju.

3. One of the public *Garden Benches* for Gardens by the Bay designed for unpredictable human usage and extreme tropical weathering.

4. *Luxury Towers* are jewellery vessels gently floating in a bubble.

Image Credits

1 by Living Divani

2, 3, 4 by Studio Juju



NEW NETWORKS, NEW OPPORTUNITIES



Above:

1. Gabriel Tan (third from left) with the international team of designers and craftsmen of Ariake collection during a product development workshop he organised in Saga, Japan.



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Gabriel Tan Studio Supermama Nathan Yong Design Lanzavecchia + Wai

When Singapore was founded in 1819 by Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles, his vision was for the small island to be a key node in the British Empire for free trade.

200 years after, his vision still holds. Singapore's economic success as a tiny island state is owed to our philosophy in welcoming people and companies from all over to meet, network and create new markets. It is not a coincidence that companies like Dyson choose Singapore as one of their operation bases.

Our designers reflect this spirit of an entrepôt hub and its entrepreneurship. They connect Asian craftsmen and manufacture with Western designers, or vice versa and create new opportunities for both in the global market.

Called the Garden City, you can think of us as a greenhouse for collaboration, production and networking opportunities within the region and beyond.

Gabriel Tan Studio

Gabriel Tan Studio has designed furniture and products internationally from markets in Japan, Europe and the USA with international labels. Gabriel Tan is also the creative director of Turn Handles, Japanese furniture brand Ariake and Portuguese craft brand Origin.



This Page:

2. *Skyladder* by Gabriel Tan Studio for Ariake collection

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3. *Sahara*, an acoustic product made of recycled wine cork for Swedish brand Abstracta

4. *Charred Vase* designed by Gabriel Tan for Origin is made by Portuguese craftsman João Lourenço in the traditional art of *Barro Preto* or "black ceramics".

5. Gabriel Tan (right) with designers during the Ariake design workshop in Japan.

Image credits

1, 2, 4, 5 by Sebastian Stadler

3 by Abstracta



“Being multidisciplinary is important because it puts you in a position to cross boundaries.”



Gabriel understands markets the way he understands people, like how he understands design—with passion, a shrewd eye and deep respect for the process. Armed with this keen eye for detail and relationships, he nurtures partnerships that go beyond geographic boundaries and timezones. It is no wonder that he has worked across America, Europe and Asia.

He muses that design “is really a very global business. If you want to target a global market you need this insider knowledge.” His design aesthetic emanates a similar sensibility: varied textures flow along modern lines, warm and familiar; specific in its universality as if to say local is the new global. Think intercultural with a global design vocabulary.

So when Japanese furniture companies Legnatec and Hirata Chair approached Gabriel to design a collection to sell in Singapore, his experience told him its success lay in its international appeal. With collaborators hailing

from Denmark, Canada, Switzerland, Japan and Singapore, the Ariake collection began as a week-long, hands-dirty intensive workshop of everyone “sketching at the same table”, culminating in critical acclaim and landing distributors across the globe from North America, Scandinavia, China, Hong Kong to Australia.

Simple at first glance, the devil is in the details for this collection of chairs, tables and shelves. The materials range from leather, canvas, paper to wood while the techniques used are a combination of handwork and advanced machining. Their versatility adds class and subtlety to a variety of interior spaces; adding on to modern lifestyles without inhibition or inconvenience.

 gabriel-tan.com

Supermama

Supermama is a gallery shop with outlets in Singapore and Japan. They collect, create and curate meaningful contemporary giftware. Using culture as a context to design, Supermama is well-known for their signature line of designed in Singapore, made in Japan porcelains.



“Without demand, you can preach about heritage but it just cannot go through with your audience.”

Supermama is aptly named. Husband and wife Edwin and Meiling fight the good fight, running their business from the frontlines, strapping their kids along. A quick chat at the back of a bustling coffee joint is a vicarious exercise in productivity. Consultancy, research and schoolwork are uttered in the same breath. It is this same energy which has propelled the brand to its success today.

Their in-house label *Supermama Porcelain* is a distinct ongoing work, with their *Singapore Icons* collection awarded the President’s Design Award in 2013, the highest design accolade in Singapore. Iconic Singaporean symbols are immortalised in a sea of traditional, Peranakan-inspired motifs. It is part cultural artefact, part everyday item – functional as a tool, beautiful as a display and modern as they reinvent the iconography of the pieces. This ongoing collaboration with Japanese porcelain company KIHARA INC. also revitalised the traditional porcelain market in Japan, where their partners are from, and opened up new marketing and designing opportunities.



Another outstanding collection will be *KOBO*, a project aiming to expose ten makers from the Kanto region in Japan to the international market. This project eventually evolved into a commercial design and crafts label KOBO, featuring works by participating partners of Japanese makers and Singapore designers. From metalworks to bamboo weaving, the variety of work beautifully translates meticulous designs into products users can use, and love.

This choice to strive for global appeal while keeping cultural significance came with a process of reacting quickly, testing often and learning in hyperreal time.

“At Supermama we do a lot of test marketing. We always try to bring similar products close to what we’re going to do. We want to see how they move.” He adds, “you should look at Singapore as a micro-city of the world. I’ve exported a lot of business strategies that worked. We did it in Australia and London.”

Now with plans to take things even further, we can expect more intersections of the traditional and the modern in the works by Supermama.



supermama.sg

Previous Page, from top:

1. Lee Mei Ling (left) and Edwin Low the co-founders of Supermama.
2. Inside Supermama’s concept shop at Gillman Barracks, an art enclave in Singapore. Real-time feedback and market sensing is critical to Supermama’s design and business process.

This Page, from top:

3. Japanese craftsman from Niigata Investment Casting, a participant in *KOBO*, a project that exemplifies Supermama’s skillful collaborations with Japanese makers and producers.
4. Supermama launched the first collection for *KOBO* bringing together Singaporean designers and Japanese makers.
5. Their signature line of *Supermama Porcelain and Singapore Icons* series.

Image credits

1 by Sean Lee

2, 4, 5 by Supermama

3 by Jotham Photography



Nathan Yong Design

Beginning his career not as a designer, but as a buyer and engaging in product development for various companies in Singapore, Nathan now runs his eponymous industrial design consultancy practice and forward-thinking lifestyle and furnishing brand Grafunkt.



Street-savvy Nathan Yong got his start as a buyer and quickly moved into retail, recognising his sensitivity to the demands of the market.

It's not just about crunching numbers, although he does that well. A deep triple-threat understanding of regional manufacturing, business acumen and user-friendly design gives him a winning edge. To know the region like the back of your hand means accessibility to choice materials, craftsmen and contacts that aid business in aspects beyond design. "It's about designing with quality in mind while keeping things efficient in production and material use."

Snapped up by New York's Design Within Reach (DWR), and featured in Hollywood sets, his renowned *Line* collection remains one of DWR's best sellers internationally. Deceptively simple in its elegance, like all the best ones are, the TV console's thin oak-walnut panels conceal entertainment players while allowing remote control signals to reach it; gaining popularity for having both beauty and pragmatism.

His wit, pragmatism and knowledge on good design are what students at LASALLE College of the Arts in Product Design get to tap into, having Nathan as a Product Design Lecturer. Form and function are seamlessly harnessed in Nathan's world. Practical and endlessly versatile, his work eschews trends (without resisting them), determined to problem-solve instead.

Confidently dispensing with the superfluous, his designs are a combination of social, practical and artistic intent. Using Singapore to hone a global market-oriented vision, he appeals to what's really important. "In a way, you need to decide as a designer, what's your strength? What do you want to do?"

nathanyongdesign.com



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1. *Single Seaters* at Jewel commissioned by Changi Airport, Singapore.

This Page, clockwise from top:

3. *Line* TV console designed by Nathan Yong for modern furniture retailer Design Within Reach.

4. *Cuatro* by Nathan Yong Design.

5. *Parachute* lamp for Ligne Roset.

All Images by Nathan Yong Design

“Good design is global, and that goes beyond one’s country of origin. Good design transcends geographical boundaries.”



Lanzavecchia + Wai

Lanzavecchia + Wai (L+W) is a creative collaboration between Italian Francesca Lanzavecchia and Singaporean Hunn Wai and, the award-winning design studio is based out of Italy and Singapore, focusing on research-driven design with a fervent eye for future trends.



This Page:

1. *Pong* table for the *PLAYplay* collection with furniture line *Journey East*.

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2. *Accordion Console* for *PLAYplay* collection.

3. *Together Canes*, walking canes with integrated trays to support the elderly in the *No Country for Old Men* collection.

5. *Scribble* coffee tables for Italian brand *De Castelli*.

image credits

1, 2, 3 by Davide Farabegoli

5 by De Castelli

Embracing geographical distance to harness new narratives across countries, L+W's nomadic existence informs its core identity. The Singaporean-Italian founders tap on each locality's knowledge base and network, allowing them to "deliver informed, contextual and meaningful work on multiple levels."

From design research for Herman Miller to window displays for Hermès, the intercontinental duo pairs the "poetic narratives and refined sensibility for richness" of Italian design with Singapore's "ambition, youthfulness and agency to be truly unhindered."

Their projects are outstanding also due to their dedication to self-initiating works and collections. L+W constantly seeks new demographics within and outside of the current existing ones, innovating to plug the gaps and explored the under explored in the current tech-savvy and ageing world population.



Empathy and nuance are precious at L+W, even in its conceptual moments. Their series, *No Country for Old Men*, consisted of elderly aids aimed at disrupting the clinical coldness of traditional versions. Exhibited at the Salone Internazionale del Mobile, it featured walking canes with iPad attachments and chic reading lamps, amongst others.

PLAYplay, their collaboration with Singaporean eco-friendly furniture line Journey East, is another manifestation of their approachable, forward-thinking ethos. Designed for young home-owners with personality and authenticity, it leveraged on consumer demand toward "cultural narratives of the region". This, as a counterpoint to homogeneous offerings globally.

Even where context is king, their vision proves that common humanity prevails, connecting audiences.

"We have to be brave, rigorous and strong to create impact at scale."

lanzavecchia-wai.com



"You have to embrace geographical distance to harness new narratives across countries."



INSPIRATIONS FOR THE FUTURE





Previous page, from top:

1. *The Canape Collection*,
designed by OLIVIA LEE for
Scottish whisky brand The
Balvenie

2. *Smoke & Ice*, designed by
OLIVIA LEE for The Balvenie

in this chapter :

OLIVIA LEE Jarrod Lim Design Ipse Ipsa Ipsum

Consider these two facts: One, Singapore has one of the highest mobile penetration rates in the world at 153% of our population. Two, Singapore is an island city-state of 742 square kilometres in the tropics and is mostly less than 15 metres above sea level, which makes the country small and low-lying.

Put together, it means that Singapore is probably one of the most susceptible countries in the world to the impact of digital and climate change.

A great deal of our design seeks to answer questions like: how can technology serve humanity? How can our products and way of life be more sustainable? What can we do to access our resources and talents in digital fields to ensure our continued existence?

Humanity as a whole is still searching for answers. Here in Singapore, we know that we have to embrace the future. So we adjust, adapt and learn to thrive alongside change.

Olivia Lee

OLIVIA LEE is a multidisciplinary studio grounded by an industrial design approach. The practice pivots from product to spatial design, research insights to ideation with the goal of creating unique experiences.



This Page:

3. Olivia Lee, founded her eponymous studio grounded by an industrial design approach

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4. *Museum of Wonders*, window display for Hermès

5. *Athena* collection, Olivia's debut at Salone Satellite, Milan

Image credits

1, 2 by Studio Ooze

3, 4 by OLIVIA LEE



Olivia flits between mediums, cultures and inspirations, crossing disciplines and combining technology with ease.

The multi-hyphenate designer attributes this to growing up in Singapore: “observing the customs of others, we are attuned to being sensitive, accommodating and aware. We empathise and we adapt.”

It is this same openness and ability for adaptation that birthed the *Athena* collection. An ode to the contemporary woman, she reimagines the goddess of wisdom as a tech-wielding go-getter in our age of information. Warm pastels and clean silhouettes belie a smart home concept that prioritises materiality and reimagines analog objects for digital habits (think augmented reality incorporated into rugs) through simple twists, design interventions and multiple-functions.



Bringing quirky to a new level, *Museum of Wonders* saw the studio transforming the windows of Hermès into a gallery of absurdist scenes. It placed the timeless works of Hermès at the forefront and retold the history of modern inventions; a love letter to the industrial revolution and the innovative nature of human beings.

With her stride boundless and driven by exploration, Olivia’s works embody curiosity in the new discoveries and rituals that can or are yet to be found. Her world is one that is sleekly navigated only by those who possess the interdisciplinary, cultural vernacular and skill.

olivia-lee.com

“I travel to other regions to understand the parameters of manufacturing and, in a sense, pay respect to the process, to understand and gain human insights as my design is tactile and about craftsmanship.”

Jarrood Lim Studio

Half Australian, half Singaporean, Jarrod Lim grew up with a wide diversity of cultural influences and has worked with Patricia Urquiola in Milan and SCP in the UK before establishing his eponymous design studio in Singapore, working with high-quality regional manufacturing partners and a truly international business perspective.



Symbolic heritage rubs shoulders with contemporary Asian sensibilities, reinforced with a sustainable approach to design. The *Dragon* of Hinika, a sustainable-wood riff on the rocking chair, draws from highly-public, well-loved memories of Singapore's famous dragon playground in the old Toa Payoh housing estate. Elsewhere, a *Koi* chair stretches the idea of fish scales into a visually lightweight, tessellated abstraction that recalls peaceful ponds in Asian gardens. Then you have the Royal Selangor *Crystalline* collection that evokes glamour through geometry and reflective dimensions juxtaposed against natural black walnut wood.

Perhaps this need to straddle markets and histories reflects Jarrod Lim's half-Australian, half-Singaporean roots while underlining his commitment to embracing sustainable Asia-centric manufacturing. There is a

quiet urgency in his vision. "I think Singaporeans are super ambitious. Things are constantly happening in Singapore and we always attempt to do something special, or out of the ordinary."

That way, one is always on their toes, ready to keep innovating the next best thing. Using Singapore as a base and testing ground, Jarrod emphasises the importance of acknowledging the region's manufacturers. He quips that "the quality is still as good as anything you can get in Europe," and his work seeks to prove that while harnessing readily available wood-like bamboo and upcycled teak wood that are sustainable, playing a big part in ecological design.

Jarrod is not settling for simple. Underpinned by a passion for the culture of Singapore and the future, he hopes to create with purposeful consciousness, tapping on proximity, craftsmanship and shared vision within the region to keep innovation possible with a mindfulness of the environment.

jarrodlim.com



Previous Page, from top:

1. Designer Jarrod Lim sitting on his design for Hinika, the *Torii* chair
2. Giving roots to cut flowers in the slip cast ceramic *Stump Vase*



Clockwise from top:

3. Each 'scale' of the *Koi Chair* is individually welded on.
4. *Orion Tables* designed for Italian brand Bonaldo
5. *Pelican*, *Dragon*, and *Elephant*, for Hinika, and a miniature of the *Hi Ho* rocking horse (second from left) in sheepskin designed for Innermost UK and collected by the National Gallery of Victoria, Australia.
6. Working with recycled and sustainability sourced wood is a large part of Jarrod's partnership with his Indonesian manufacturers.



Image credits

- 1, 2, 3, 5, 6 by Juliana Tan Photography
- 4 by Bonaldo

"To me, sustainability is about the idea of designing something well in general that people would want to keep."

Ipse Ipsa Ipsum

Ipse Ipsa Ipsum is the brainchild of Sam & Sara, a furniture brand that aims to redefine living by enabling ordinary people to experience an extraordinary way of life through affordable luxury designs with a rich heritage in traditional Indian craftsmanship.



This Page, from top:

1. *Straits Mirror*, part of the *Peranakan Moderne* collection marrying digital technology and traditional craft
2. *Straits* sofa table with integrated Omni-charging technology, and *Straits* sideboard with sustainable Indian bone-inlay.

Next page, from top:

3. Using technology to enable customisation of each furniture by their customers
4. The Ipse Ipsa Ipsum's modern take on the oversized stainless steel lantern
5. *Pepin Collection*

Image credits

- 1, 2, 3 by Juliana Tan Photography
- 4, 5 by Ipse Ipsa Ipsum



Ipse Ipsa Ipsum is generations in the making. Founder Saurabh's grandfather planted the seeds of silversmithing after serving in the British army in World War II. And the rest, as they say, is history.

Underpinned by a commitment to luxurious, mindful design, their work approaches nostalgia with a contemporary eye and purposeful surprise. Always looking forward.

Their *Peranakan Moderne* collection features gilded curios like a flower-shaped mirror, inspired by antique tiles. It stands out with the mix of Chinese-Indian motifs like phoenixes and the Tree of Life, set against a blue-red wash of traditional Javanese colours, balancing the white background and gold frame. Set in handcrafted bone inlay, what makes this mirror special will be its incorporation of an air quality and ambient quality sensor.

Without compromising on the overall aesthetic, technology is being interwoven together with their work. An advancement tastefully incorporated to welcome us to the future, while preserving the beauty we seek in tradition. To take things one step further, their website invites users to visualise the furniture in their very own bedroom. This farm to fork concept translates origin stories of each material used into the designed richness of the very furniture that joins your home. The user customises and selects the materials, colours and even designs—their own personality made tangible through QR codes and other technological conveniences.

With one foot firmly in the past, and the other halfway into the future, Saurabh believes Singapore is that one place in the world, in Asia, which can truly produce a “new design language that is relevant for the whole world.”

By marrying both past and future into their present products, Ipse Ipsa Ipsum explores the ways in which our rich heritage can be expressed, stretched across permutations that are not only accessible but original.

ipseipsaipsum.com



“As modern life becomes increasingly homogeneous, new authenticity is what I’m looking for. To design with culture is to make out relationships with our own homes more meaningful.”

DesignSingapore Council

DesignSingapore Council's (Dsg) vision is for Singapore to be an innovation-driven economy and a loveable city through design by 2025. As the national agency that promotes design, our mission is to develop the design sector, help Singapore use design for innovation and growth, and make life better in this UNESCO Creative City of Design. The Dsg is a subsidiary of the Singapore Economic Development Board.

designsingapore.org

in the wild

LONDON SINGAPORE

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