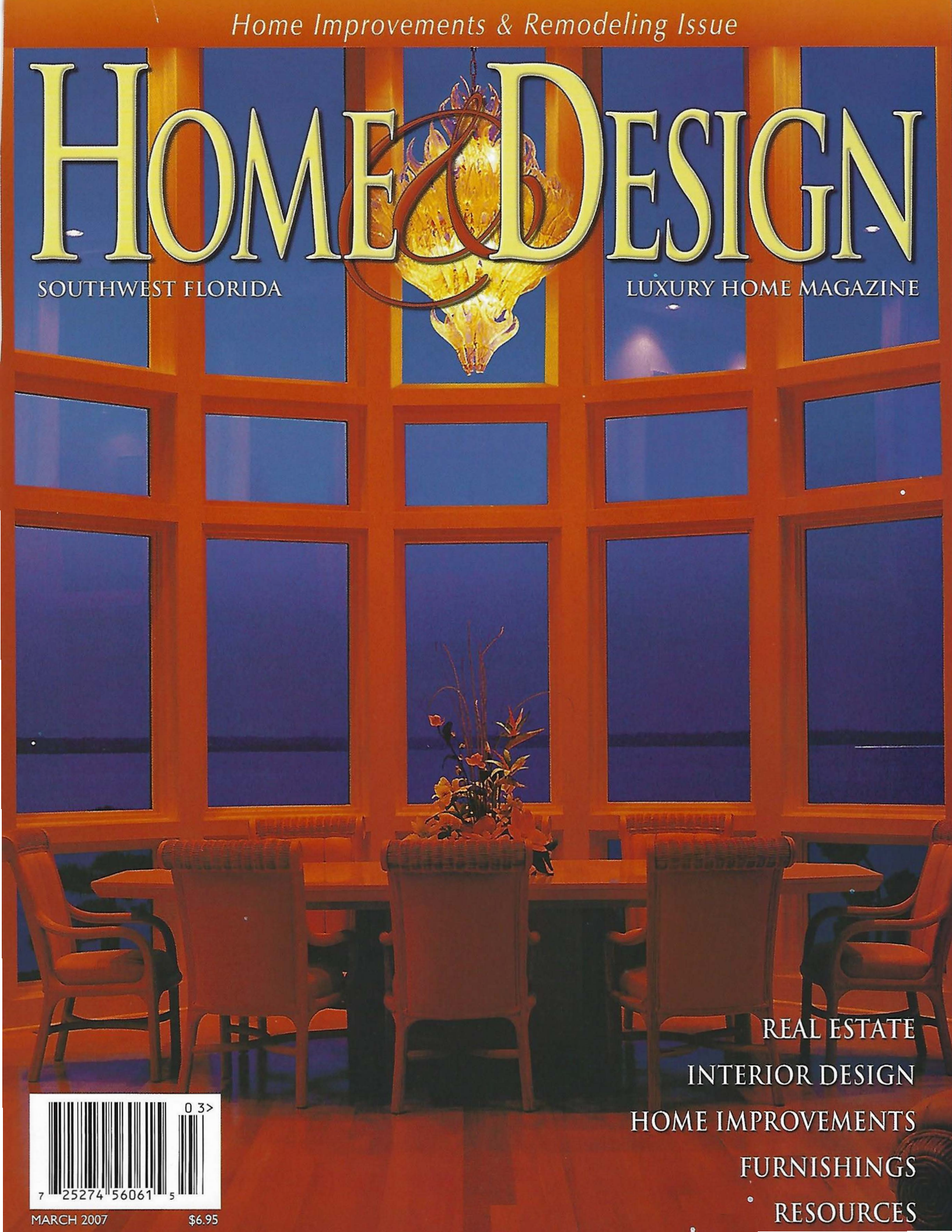


Home Improvements & Remodeling Issue

# HOME & DESIGN

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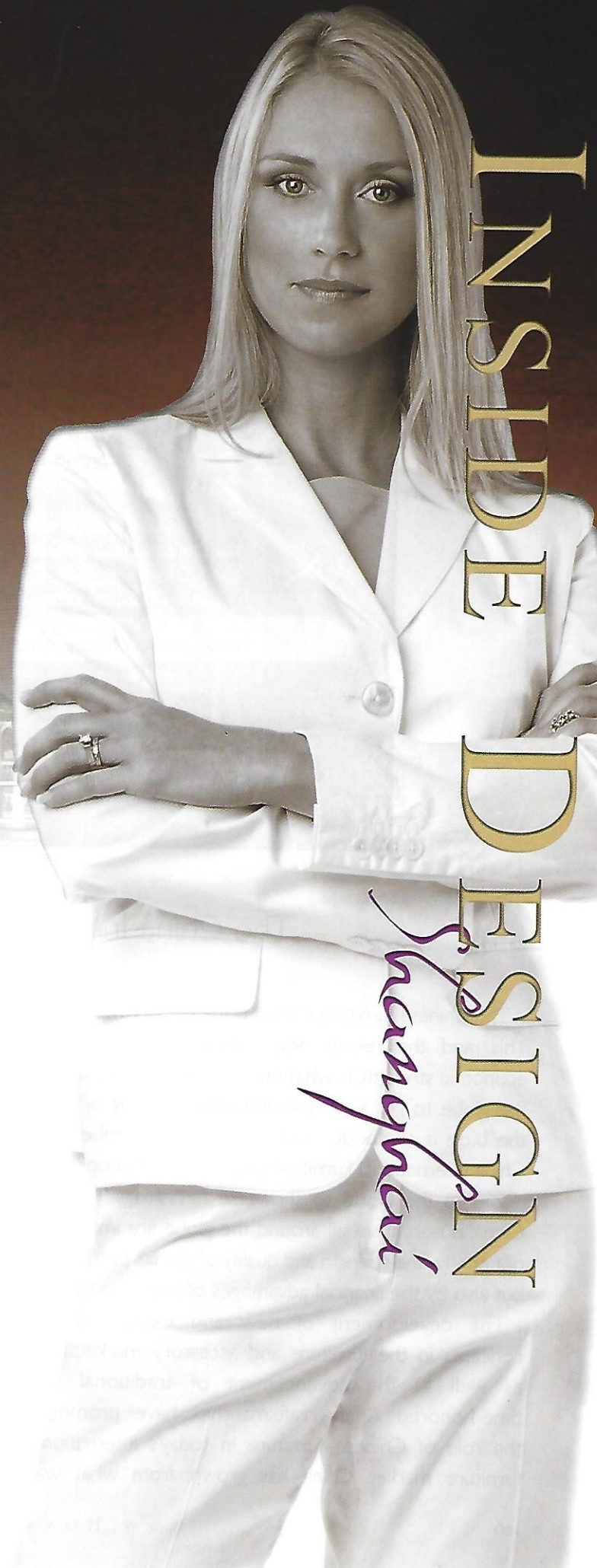
# THE CHINA INTERNATIONAL FURNITURE EXPO IN SHANGHAI

WHERE CENTURIES OF TRADITION  
AND THE FUTURE MEET

by Kira Krümm

Shanghai is renowned as the commerce capital of China. When people go to Shanghai, they are fascinated with the architecture, the history, the people, the culture and the energy that combine to make up modern Shanghai. With more than 15 million people, the city, with its strong French and English colonization and flavorful Chinese citizenship, is truly an international synthesis.

Over the past fifteen years, Shanghai has experienced a cultural renaissance and has become a desired destination. This sophisticated, cosmopolitan city attracts professionals, artists, designers and entrepreneurs from all parts of the world to appreciate its rich past, present and future. Its evolving scene keeps them returning for more. ▶



## The China International Furniture Expo

The Chinese furniture market is the talk of my industry. This, and the recent news about China's growing economic strength, is what inspired me to travel across the globe to get a glimpse and understanding of what the buzz is all about. Once a year, in September, The China International Furniture Expo in Shanghai opens its doors to the world to showcase furnishings made in China. Buyers from all around the globe are impressed not only by the strength and quality of China's production, but also by the financial advantages of buying in China.

The development of new and exciting design concepts in the furniture and accessory marketplace, as well as the advancement of traditional and time-honored Asian craftsmanship, have promoted the role of Chinese furniture in today's international furniture market. China has grown, from what was

once considered an important source, to what many consider a major force in the ever-growing and evolving global furniture marketplace.

*PREVIOUS PAGE – Shanghai is renowned as the commerce capital of China. Over the past fifteen years, Shanghai has experienced a cultural renaissance and has become a destination to professionals, artists, designers and entrepreneurs from all parts of the world.*

*ABOVE – Once a year, in September, the China International Furniture Expo in Shanghai opens its doors to the world to showcase furnishings made in China. Located in three different parts of the city, the Furniture Expo encompasses miles of showrooms and temporary exhibits.*

*OPPOSITE – At the Expo Kira Krümm and Thomas Hooft of H&L Furniture, a third-generation furniture business owner from Belgium, who is one of many European business people that have moved their production facilities to China.*



Today, the phrase "Made in China" takes on a whole new meaning.

Located in three different parts of the city, the Furniture Expo encompasses miles of showrooms and temporary exhibits. I spent a few days satisfying my curiosity, seeking new products and talking to vendors. There were a few that I found particularly interesting for their uniquely different and successful approach to our highly competitive furniture industry.

Many companies are flocking to China in an effort to increase production at a more affordable cost. Rather than source the business out to Chinese factories, many business owners are actually starting up their own production facilities in Shanghai. Thomas Hooft, a third-generation furniture business owner from Belgium, is

one of many European business people that have moved their production facilities to China. What makes his business unique is that the company, H&L Furniture, exports solid oak from Belgium to China to produce their classic, Old World designs. Then their products are shipped back to Europe to be marketed. A truly synergistic connection has developed between H&L's age-old Flemish techniques and modernized assembly. Although this fabrication involves using machinery, rather than handcrafting the furniture, Hooft confirms that his skilled artisans have perfected the process by combining mass production with centuries-old craftsmanship. ▶

Shanghai



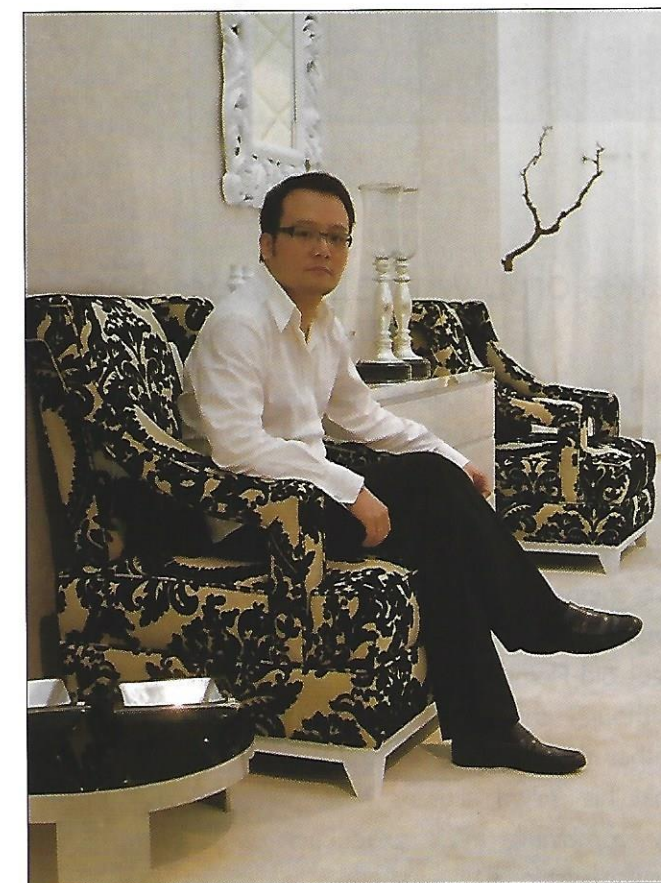
I noticed as I meandered through the showrooms that as much as the European market is turning to China, Chinese designers are still very influenced by European design. We see this European flavor emerging in traditional and contemporary Chinese furniture design. Italian-inspired furniture designed by Bottega's

*ABOVE – Italian-inspired Sofa from Bottega Furniture focuses on the Chinese market, appealing to the customer who is seeking the look of luxury and wants Western flavor.*

*BELOW – A European flavor is emerging in traditional and contemporary Chinese furniture design. Furniture designed by Bottega's "Mr. Jimmy" combines classical Italian designs with a contemporary, avant-garde flair.*

*OPPOSITE ABOVE – Chinese-owned, Tengxinjie, specializes in producing high quality cane furniture using sustainable, raw materials. The clean lines of these designs and tropical textures attract diverse consumers from Asia to the Americas.*

*OPPOSITE BELOW – David Yuan Marketing Director of Tengxinjie furniture, introduces a new line of chairs that merges European and American styling with an Asian sentiment, at this year's furniture Expo.*





"Mr. Jimmy", combines classical Italian designs with a contemporary, avant-garde flair. This style appeals to the Chinese customer who is seeking the look of luxury and desires western flavor. Mr. Jimmy markets his furniture as "being inspired by Italian nobility, but available to those who enjoy the pleasures of a picturesque and luxurious lifestyle". Companies like Bottega are focusing their efforts on the Chinese market for the simple fact that China, with its growing population, is predicted to become the largest consumer marketplace for furniture in the world.

Chinese-owned, Tengxinjie, specializes in producing high quality cane furniture. They keep a close eye on the trends and are constantly seeking innovative designs for new products to compete in both the domestic and foreign markets. One of these trends is to use sustainable, raw materials. According to Marketing Director, David Yuan, "The concept behind this line is the merging of European and American styling with an Asian sentiment, by returning to the natural elements and simplicity of the Eastern principles." The clean lines of these designs and tropical textures attract diverse consumers from ▶



Shanghai

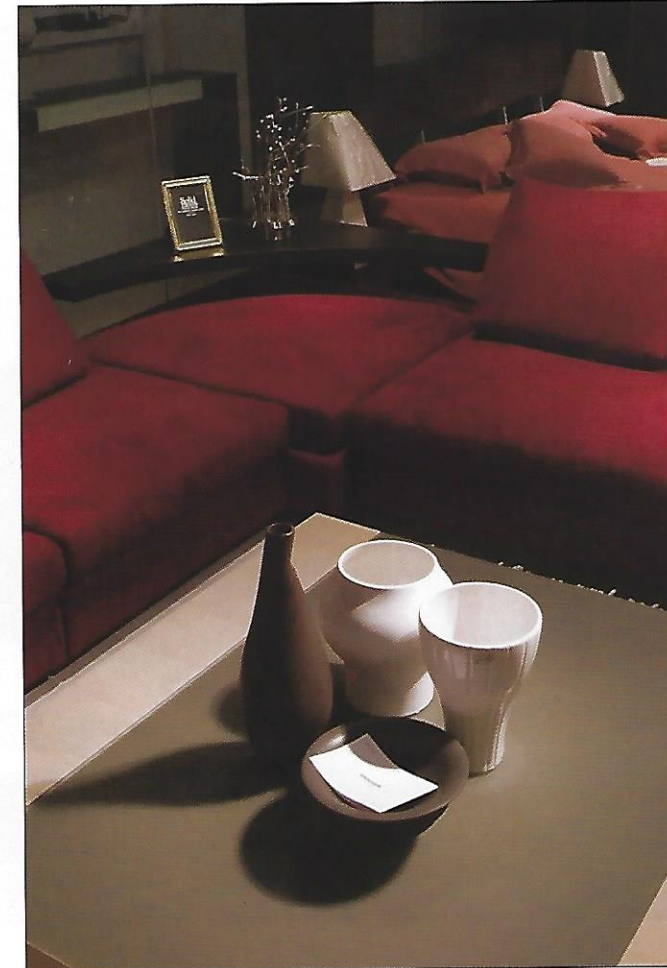


"My furniture is not merely practical but more importantly it is a way of life with nature goodwill and simplicity."

- Zhu Xiao Jie

Asia to the Americas.

One of the highlights of my visit was meeting renowned interior designer, Zhu Xiao Jie. Mr. Zhu owns a contemporary furniture line exhibiting at the show and was one of the judges of this year's Expo. He is also a successful furniture designer with more than 200 employees producing his designs. When I discovered his work, I was immediately impressed by its sensitivity, artistry and attention to form and function. I was honored that he took the time from judging the show to meet with me and discuss his work. He showed me his catalog of unique and clever designs inspired by the materials he uses. "My furniture is not merely practical, but more importantly it is a way of life with nature goodwill and simplicity," states Mr. Zhu. As he shared with me his love for carpentry and design, he also



expressed a strong interest in the world of design outside of China. He believes in globalization and a fusion between Eastern and Western ideas in design. Like many successful Chinese designers his desire is to create furniture that would appeal to an international market. ▶

ABOVE LEFT – Renowned interior and furniture designer Mr. Zhu Xiao Jie took the time from judging the show to meet and discuss his work with Kira Krimm in his showroom at the China International Furniture Expo. Mr. Zhu expressed his interest in globalization and a fusion between Eastern and Western ideas in design.

ABOVE RIGHT – Like many successful Chinese designers, Mr. Zhu's desire is to create furniture that will appeal to an international market.

OPPOSITE – Mr. Zhu's contemporary furniture line exhibited at the show, featured some of his own unique and clever designs, inspired by natural materials.



As a result of the success of the Chinese furniture industry, it is obvious to buyers that the Shanghai furniture market is experiencing rapid growth. But I was surprised to discover huge plans in the works for a new furniture marketplace, that the Chinese claim will make the Shanghai furniture mart the largest, permanent purchasing hub in the world, surpassing High Point, Milan