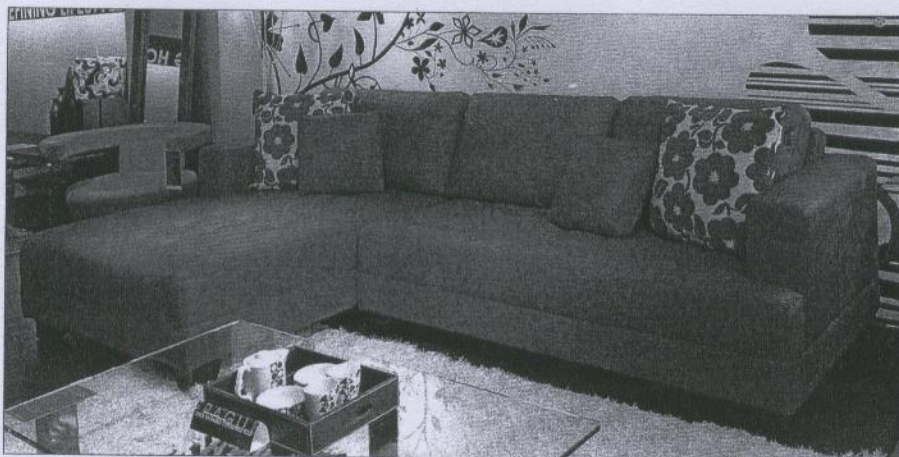
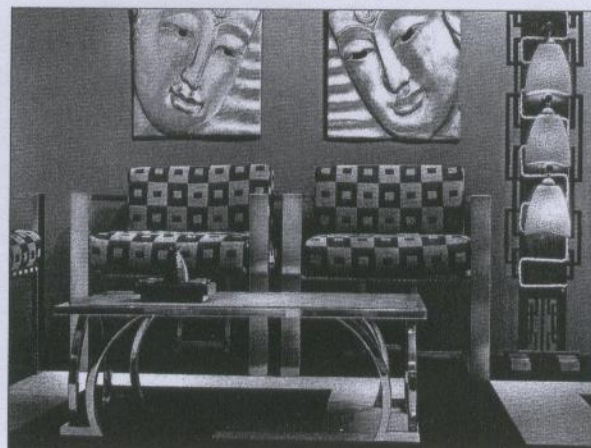


## Show Report



Mondi adds zest to this chaise sectional by doing it in a bright red leather. Colorful print pillows add a playful touch.



Dionic Furniture specializes in avante-garde designs in stainless steel. Seen here is the Verdan collection.

# Singapore sources aim to boost U.S. exports

By Gary Evans

SINGAPORE — Singapore's furniture industry expects to more than double its share of the world export market by 2015 by turning its products into a brand based on design and not low cost.

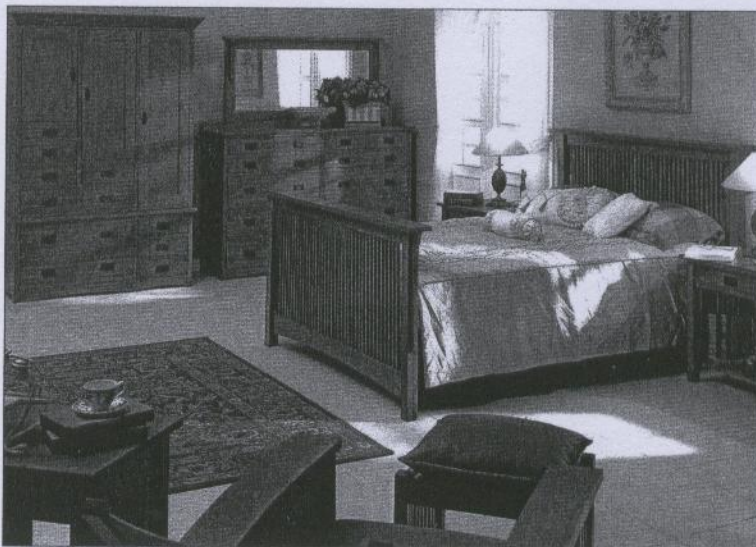
That was the word here at the recent Singapore International Furniture Show/25th ASEAN Furniture Show. Several government and industry officials said they expect Singapore's share of the world market to increase from its 2006 share of 0.7% to 2% — from \$2.4 billion to \$11 billion — in less than a decade.

"The outlook for Singapore's furniture industry is clearly optimistic and buoyant," said Dr. Lee Boon Yang, minister for information, communications and the arts, speaking at the opening of the annual furniture show held in March.

But, he cautioned, "Like other competitive sectors, there is no room for complacency. As furniture manufacturers, you must continue to sharpen your competitiveness to grow the business and win new market share. This is where having distinctive branding and strong design capability could make a huge difference in the future of Singapore's furniture industry."

The industry here has grown by 10% annually over the past five years, according to Spring Singapore, a leading industry group. That's outpacing world furniture growth, which has increased a healthy 6% to 8% over the same period and now accounts for more than \$300 billion.

The United States is one of the key export markets Singapore-based Eurosa is exploring. At the show, it featured this new Arts and Crafts bedroom.



Singapore officials said the industry's growth is driven by a vigorous domestic housing market, consumer spending in the United States and Europe, and growing demand in China, India and the Middle East, which have opened new opportunities for Singapore furniture manufacturers.

A number of exhibitors at the show, which drew 18,361 attendees from 129 countries, said that robust business in emerging countries was taking up the slack left by the fragile U.S. economy and the weakened dollar. Despite what's happening in the U.S., exhibitors at this year's show — from Singapore and elsewhere — remained enthusiastic that the States would bounce back and continue to be a powerhouse importer.

"The outlook is huge," said Luke Jones, managing director

of Halo Asia, which covered its showroom from floor to ceiling with its trademark white faux fur.

"Our target is substantial," he added. "We see the U.S. as the largest market in the world."

Halo sells containers direct to retailers and through U.S. sources such as Four Hands. Recently, Halo has cut the number of export partners with whom it works.

"It was intentional," Jones said. "We were supplying too many wholesalers and competing against ourselves."

At this year's show here, the company introduced more than 300 products, most of which could be sold in the United States. It also touted a new line of wood products made of old beams and recycled nails and metal from demolished buildings in the United Kingdom.

Koda, one of Southeast Asia's largest dining room manufacturers, featured a number of products aimed at existing customers in the Europe and the U.S., each accounting for 40% of the company's output. Some introductions were in wood solids and veneers, which the company said was an "upcoming trend" in both the U.S. and Europe.

In addition, Koda introduced an environmentally friendly range of products called the Hiro collection, which includes sustainable bamboo, water-based finishes and recyclable packaging.

Ernie Koh, executive director of marketing, said the company isn't completely green but is making a start.

"Starbucks will tell you that it's an 'evolution, not a revolution.'"

FURNITURE Today Interactive

For more coverage, visit  
[www.furnituretoday.com](http://www.furnituretoday.com)

Key developments at the show here included the announcement of a new branding effort called Moziac, whose purpose is to showcase Singapore companies for international promotion.

The show also staged a large design event called Platform, a program that provides emerging furniture designers with an opportunity to exhibit prototypes and develop partnerships with international manufacturers and buyers. Lee, the cabinet minister, said that a 2007 National Design Industry Study by Ernst and Young showed that 44% of businesses acknowledge that design gives them a competitive edge (up from 32% in 2005).

Recently, a group of 17 Singapore companies participated in a trade mission to New York, where they exhibited at the International Contemporary Furniture Fair and visited design-oriented retailers to study the needs of the U.S. market.

"It's paramount that our local designers are given opportunities to network overseas and explore international markets," said Neo Nia Meng, vice president of the Singapore Furniture Industry Council and executive director of Four Star Inds. He said the mission and the ICFF provided a "good avenue for marketing opportunities and potential partnerships" for the design-centric companies that participated.