



## Show

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abaca (Manila hemp), arorog and butay (coconut twig) mixed with wood, bamboo, rattan, stone and wrought iron. Other materials used are animal skins, shells, seeds, leaves and tree barks. Even termite mounds have been used in the production of furniture pieces.

Furniture companies have started to produce eco-friendly furniture pieces especially in bamboo.

The absence of some key manufacturers was notable.

## Singapore

The International Furniture Fair Singapore (IFFS), by contrast, was in a class of its own and up there with any global fair in terms of furniture quality, presentation and excitement – quite an achievement in 2009.

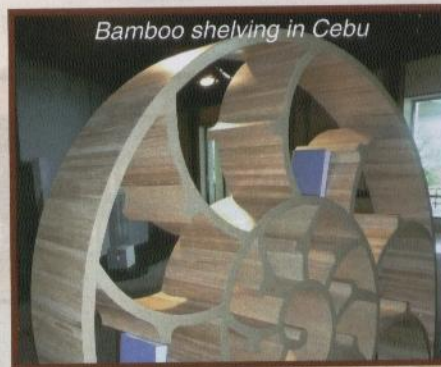
With over 470 exhibitors from 33 countries in 6 halls, including 30% first timers, buyers from all over the world and many from Europe were around; although it remains to be seen how much new business was actually written.

The show bristled with new launches and furniture marketed for its environmental credentials – either from sustainable materials or processes, or its origin in re-cycled materials.

Market leader Koda, as always, had new products to show, with one collection designed by Italian Luigi Garbarino, reported to be well received; and a 15 piece dining/living eco-collection by John Kelly made of bamboo, based on rice straw board and finished in water based lacquer under the brand “Level”.

The dark or light furniture trend was again very evident in Singapore, so stained rubberwood, darkened teak, walnut and “mahogany” were common; balanced by unstained oak everywhere.

Singapore has an industry which is hard to define, as so many companies manufacture offshore in the region, but its driving force is the Singapore Furniture Industries Council (SFIC) with huge government encouragement and a dedication to the development of design skills unsurpassed in the region.



Picture: Turnstone Singapore

The show featured the “FLIP Challenge” entered by students from design schools in Singapore and overseas, in which an American red oak chair was converted creatively while retaining the function of seating.

Also displayed were the Furniture Design Awards and PLATFORM, a launch pad for entrepreneurial designers.

Related design events, such as the design Forum featuring designer Karim Rashid were held. See [www.furniture singapore.com](http://www.furniture singapore.com).

At the show opening ceremony Minister for Trade & Industry, Lee Yi Shyan announced a new three year programme of S\$1.4 million as a design initiative.

## Thailand

The Thai International Furniture Fair (TIFF) in Bangkok was smaller than others with about 200 exhibitors but, according to the organisers, had set out its stall to the same level of international buyers as Singapore – expecting at least 2,000 from overseas.

“Imagine Green Living” was the theme of the show, although the extensive use of synthetic weave in outdoor furniture did not make much contribution to that sentiment.

There were many green products, although none observed as certified, including a great deal of furniture

from plantation rubberwood, acacia and local Thai species including mango.

The show was high on teak, finished naturally, or rather unfinished. The black/dark and light trend was again everywhere, but there was some relief with collections using American hackberry and red alder, for example, as well as many local species.

Furniture design and display presentation was an outstanding feature in Bangkok, and many displayed designs inspired by Japan to which much Thai furniture is sold.

To some extent Thai manufacturers are well diversified from some of the worst hit global markets.

## Vietnam

The Handicraft & Wood Industry Association of Ho Chi Minh City (HAWA) held its Vietnam International Furniture & Home Accessories Fair – VIFA 2009 in the brand new Saigon Convention & Exhibition Center, a much needed and improved facility which now meets the needs of international visitors.