

# INTERNATIONAL FURNITURE FAIR SINGAPORE 2006

This year's fair tried to showcase the unusual, but more conventional designs dominated the exhibition.

by devin jeyathurai pictures courtesy of IFFS



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The International Furniture Fair Singapore 2006 took over Hall 1 through Hall 6 of the Singapore Expo from the 1st to the 5th of March this year. Billed as the region's largest and most prestigious furniture trade show, this year's International Furniture Fair (incorporating the 23rd ASEAN Furniture Show) was the largest in the 23 years that the show has been running, with 505 exhibitors from 29 countries spread out over 60,000 sqm of exhibition hall space.

The IFFS is primarily a trade show, and as such provides a venue for manufacturers and designers to show off their latest designs and range of products, in the hope of striking deals with distributors or retailers who will take their products onto the shop floor and then later into the homes of consumers. It also functions an opportunity for networking, and for members of the furniture industry to keep track of the latest trends, the newest materials and even the possibilities of the latest manufacturing methods.

In addition, the Singapore Furniture Industries Council (which organises the fair through a subsidiary) aims to boost Singapore's position as a regional hub for the furniture industry, as well as encouraging new and innovative designers.

This year's IFFS had three design-related highlights: a display of the winners of the 2nd Furniture, Lifestyle, Innovations, Perspectives (FLIP!) Challenge, a design gallery that showed off some of the more unusual pieces already in production, and the results of the Furniture Design Award 2006.

The FLIP! Challenge offered young designers the chance to take apart a wooden garden chair, and reconfigure it into something new and different. The results vary, but the gold award winner, the Wing Chair, is described as "adaptable furniture that can be easily transformed into various forms with interesting functions", and it lives up to that claim.



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The design gallery showed off the originality of working designers. All the pieces were interesting, from the Marga Coffee Cube (with its ketupat inspired sides) to the Loungescape Chaise Lounge, finished in cork with large wave-like curves, designed to be reconfigurable according to need. The Alpha Series furnishings took minimalism to a natural extreme, replacing hands with square notches cut into the drawers, and the Zaku sofa was an exercise in off-centre design.

The Furniture Design Awards had "FLY" as its theme, and offered designers the chance to reinterpret the theme for themselves. These were probably the most interesting pieces on display, because participants did not have to work within many constraints (unlike the FLIP! Challenge) and because these designers really cut loose.

The students category had the most unusual designs, including the Sora stool which collapses into a sculptural piece when not in use; the Spira table and seat set formed out of one continuous spiral of material; and the Vita bench, shaped loosely after an EEG tracing. Other pieces included the Floating Dreams suspended bed and the Disc two-seater/table (functions as either) that gives the illusion of a disc suspended in air.

The young designers category did not disappoint. The efforts of these budding talents included the Streamline chair, reminiscent of the smoke patterns over airplane wings during windtunnel tests and the Flap Flap coffee table -- another structural piece that depicts a landscape wherein two flying creatures interact. There was also the Break stool that played with perceptions of solidity and brokenness, as well as the Loop table with its interesting continuous metal strip that held the entire space together.

Naturally enough, the open category showed off pieces which had the most polish, including the beautiful Spira table with its one-of-a-kind spiral design made out of rattan and teak. Or the Egg Shape Coffee Table, with its shallow depression designed to hold water, together with floating candles or even small fish.



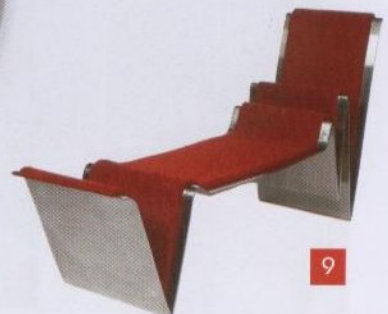
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