

editor's letter

paul mcgillick



At the time of writing I am just back from the International Furniture Fair Singapore 2009/26th ASEAN Furniture Show. There were 471 exhibitors from 33 countries, 30% of them for the first time – not bad considering we are in the middle of the GGFC – Great Global Financial Crisis.

It was my first time at the fair, so I was grateful for the invitation from the Singapore Furniture Industries Council – and to the photographer from The Straits Times who snapped me unawares and working hard in the middle of the FI!p Challenge student exhibition.

It is a regional fair and reminds me of the Promosedia fair in Udine in Italy because both are organised by the local manufacturers. It's their fair and so it has a distinctive character. And, as far as Singapore is concerned, the fair needs to be seen within the context of a national strategy to make the island state the design hub of the Region.

The times they are a'changing. And, as we know, when things change in Singapore they do so at the speed of a ballistic missile. This is not to forget that the fair is an international fair with a strong emphasis on the Region. There was a lot of Teak still to be seen, but the really interesting products demonstrated the same kind of marriage of local and international that we see in the architecture published in every issue of *Habitus*. In fact, with Office Planning (a Singapore furniture manufacturer) we saw the ultimate collaboration – between their designers and Karim Rashid for a truly international range of products suitable either for domestic or commercial use.

The fact is, we can look at this phenomenon as a blending of cultures, or as cross-pollination – check out the Hud House in Malaysia, the Terrace House in Singapore or Rirkrit House in Thailand in this issue and see what you think.

These are houses which spring from their own climatic and cultural context, but which are very much houses for modern times. This is no less the case with Melbourne architect, John Wardle – our profile in this issue – whose exquisite houses may seem at first glance straight out of the international canon. But if you look carefully at the planning, materials, finishes and detailing, you will see a highly sensitive response to place: they are every bit as responsive to climate, landscape and culture as the tropical houses.

The truth is, no one ever really blends. It is more like fine cooking or an outstanding wine where all the ingredients remain distinctive yet work together for a single, memorable experience.

On another note, we send our congratulations to the winner of the *Habitus*/Kohler \$10,000 bathroom giveaway, Anne Hayes of Coorparoo in Queensland, Australia.

Also, we have had massive feedback from the first three issues of *Habitus*, most of it very supportive. But we have also had suggestions for improvements and so we are making some design changes to make *Habitus* more reader-friendly. Keep telling us what you think.

Paul McGillick, Editor

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