

LOVING TOUCHES

Story by David Messiha

For Dutch product designer Danny Fang, products are not just objects that lead or follow the latest trends or things to make profits. Rather, they are value-added, thought-provoking creations, something he designs with passion. And from that comes his motto: create love, not more.

“My goal is to create products with enough content that people will not get bored of them,” says the Hong Kong-based designer. “Even when time is taking its toll on the product, I want people to feel that it would be a shame to throw the object out because, in some funny way, they identify with the product.”





Best known for his award-winning Gradient all-weather wicker chairs and colourful polycarbonate stackable chairs, the 35-year-old designer pays great attention to maximising the function and aesthetics of a product. And this idea vividly shows in all of his designs. Fang has designed a number of chairs with various structures, as he believes chairs are sculptural products, and it's a challenge for him to make a product that finds its spot in a natural way in its environment.

His Gradient chairs are distinctively hand-woven in a pattern, giving the weave an attractive appearance. The chairs are designed as a vehicle to optimally display the weave. The gradation of colour in the weave transforms the traditional material into a modern, sophisticated product, bringing relevancy to wickerwork in the context of contemporary design. This piece of furniture is highly functional, comfortable, as well as environmentally and socially sound.

Fang's creativity is also evident in the Geppetto chairs, inspired by the fabled story of Pinocchio. The chairs were called Geppetto after Pinocchio's wood carver.

In designing the Geppetto collection, Fang is breathing new life into design apart from traditional wood furniture. These unique chairs are built without nails or adhesives. They are manufactured from a single piece of material, a heavy-duty yet lightweight polycarbonate that makes them light, durable, weather-resistant and easily stackable.

Labelled a furniture designer, Fang, however, prefers not to limit himself to a specific design. Among his achievements are designing chairs that have scooped many awards, as well as designing bags, pearl jewellery and lights. Last year, he worked on two retail concepts for two clothing brands in China and created a collection of bags for young professionals and a watch for a Dutch company. He also plans to do consumer electronics soon.

"I actually prefer to design something new because it forces me to study and broaden my horizons," he says.



Creativity and inspiration are essential elements of every design project, he says. He respects and gets inspiration from different production technologies.

Before moving to Hong Kong in 2007, Fang worked with the design team at Marcel Wanders, a product and interior design studio in Amsterdam. Since then, he has been involved in designing furniture, accessories and handcrafted products. He then started a studio in industrial design and development in Hong Kong. With his company, he aims to help Asian manufacturers distinguish themselves through smart design to increase brand value and margins.

The nice thing about Asia, he says, is that people are open to new ideas. He also sees immense potential in Asia in terms of the design industry.

"There is a lot of knowledge and, on top of that, there is a very strong will to get ahead," he says. The weakness here, he adds, is the lack of ownership and critical thinking, both on the design side as well as the industry side. Yet, Fang hopes for the best.

"I feel that designers can do a lot to change that. I meet a lot of manufacturers who realise the importance of design, but many have had bad experiences with designers. They call them unrealistic and stubborn. These are missed opportunities and I feel the design industry still has a few bridges to cross," he says.

His hard work pays off, as he always sticks to his "create love, not more" belief. "I definitely take my responsibility as a designer seriously – I refuse to make products I don't believe in and I execute my own designs," he says.

