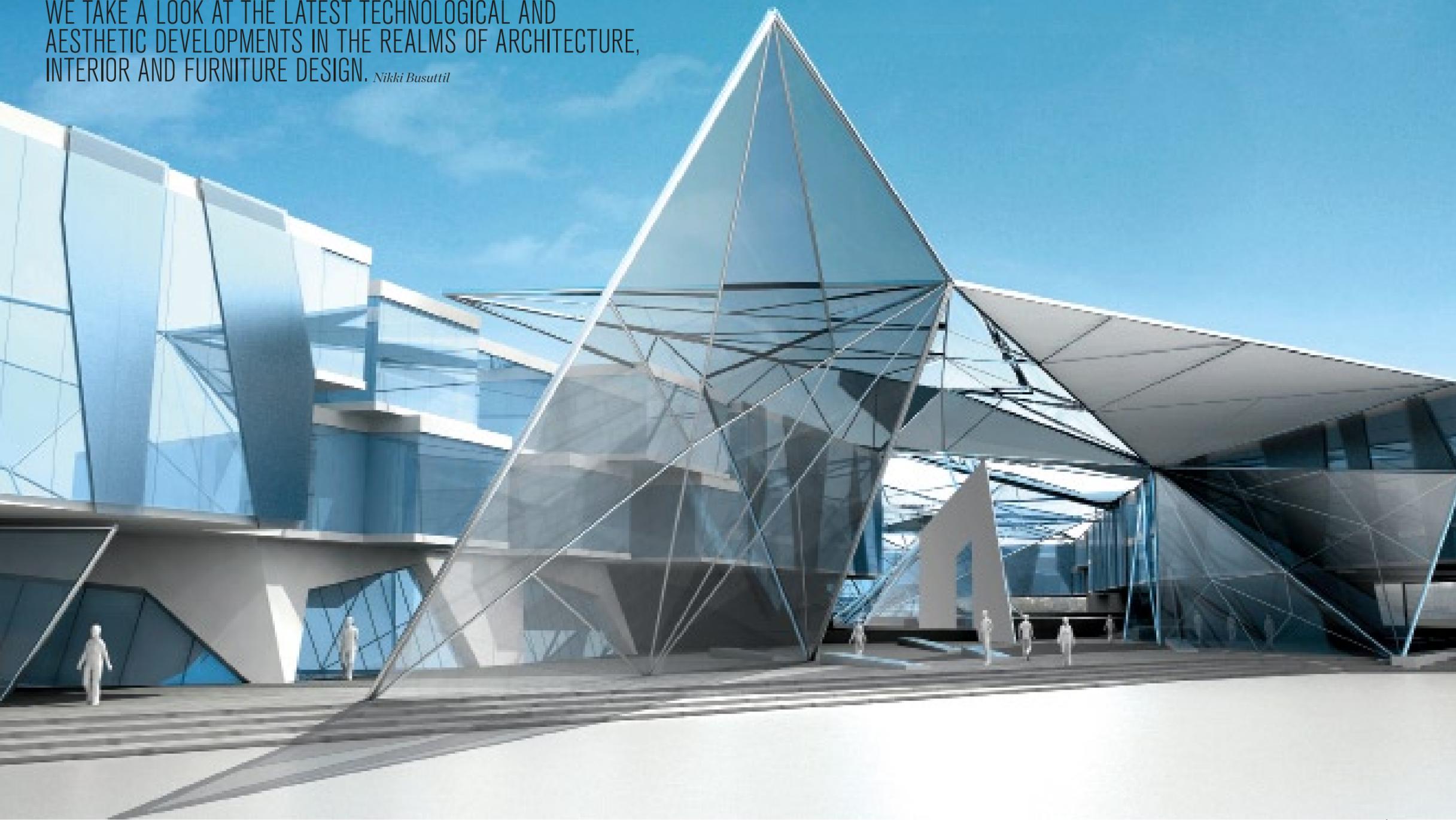


THE FUTURE BY DESIGN

WE TAKE A LOOK AT THE LATEST TECHNOLOGICAL AND AESTHETIC DEVELOPMENTS IN THE REALMS OF ARCHITECTURE, INTERIOR AND FURNITURE DESIGN. *Nikki Busuttill*



Lilanz Creative Center, Xiamen, China



Burj Khalifa, Dubai

The Illinois concept
by Frank Lloyd Wright

IN 1956, VENERATED American architect Frank Lloyd Wright sketched out plans for a future city; one that stretched a mile into the sky and could accommodate 100,000 people. There would be parking for 15,000 cars and office space to keep the entire structure running cohesively. Named The Illinois, his visionary concept was proposed as a solution to the increasing congestion of urban environments, and a way of containing people vertically in order to preserve as much land as possible for nature to take over.

While mankind came one step closer to realizing this vision technologically with the Burj Khalifa, the philosophy of a perpendicular city for an entire population is still a long way off. But the fundamental concerns being addressed by The Illinois – space, ecology, environment and practicality – are very much the driving factors behind design of today... and the future.

CREATING STRUCTURE

With the continual increase in population migration to cities, these social hubs are set to experience exponential change. Experts say either one of two things can occur to cope with the rise in urban population: existing cities can increase in size to accommodate the sheer numbers, or new cities can be created, as we are witnessing in China currently.

Dr Saeed Zaki, managing director for Design Worldwide Partnership (dwp), says, "The future of urban planning will be a combination of socio-economic planning, sensitive to the needs of the population, while ensuring minimal impact on the environment. More cities will embrace sustainable urban development with the emergence of eco or green cities."

dwp is an award-winning architecture and interior design firm that has some 12 offices in ten countries. It's a company under the impression that more and more high-rise, tech-driven developments are to come, in order to minimize the ecological footprint of large-scale building projects.



Istana Phuket, gfab



Park Ventures, Bangkok



Istana Phuket, gfab

"WE SEE AN INCREASED DESIRE TO LIVE CLOSER TO THE CITY AND THE ACTION, UTILIZING SMALLER PLOTS" Gary Fell, gfab



Samujana Villa, gfab



Samujana Villa, gfab

"AS TECHNOLOGY ADVANCES, ARCHITECTURE MAY WELL DISAPPEAR ALTOGETHER AS AN INTELLECTUAL AND ARTISTIC DISCIPLINE, BURIED FOREVER IN 'STYLES' A USER CAN SELECT FROM – PERISH THE THOUGHT" Gary Fell, gfab

"Cities of the future are increasingly going to be compact, but with higher densities," Zaki prophesizes. "Urban infrastructure will need to thus be more technology-driven."

These thoughts are echoed by Gary Fell, architect and founder of gfab architects (www.gfabarchitects.com), which has projects throughout Asia. "We see an increased desire to live closer to the city and the action, utilizing smaller plots. Energy use and conservation is also increasingly important, and we assume building design will therefore become smarter, taking advantage of passive energy-saving techniques, as well as recycled or recyclable building fabrics." He states that his clients are becoming ever more environmentally conscious, with a definite tendency towards natural cooling and light choices.

Picture self-sufficiency within one space; sky gardens and parks. Take, for example, the latest high-rise to hit central Bangkok, Park Ventures, set to open September 2011. This 34-storey mixed-use development by Univentures PLC touts itself as an 'Ecoplex',

with more than 25 percent of the project area devoted to green space. Throughout the building, systems have also been implemented to minimize energy and water consumption by up to 30 percent.

As a member of the US Green Building Council (USGBC), dwp actively encourages their team to qualify under the LEED (Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design) Green Associate Certification – an internationally-recognized building rating system. The eco-champion for their Thailand office, Sylvie Meunier, notes, "Architecture in the digital era is more than just creating shapes and forms. We are able to make more informed choices regarding parameters, such as position, climate considerations, air and sound pollution, topography, local resources, fauna, flora, and lifecycle analysis, as well as all types of user and cultural preferences and requirements. These factors, together with eco concerns, are all automatically integrated into each project."

But what the more distant future holds for architecture is not so certain. Gary

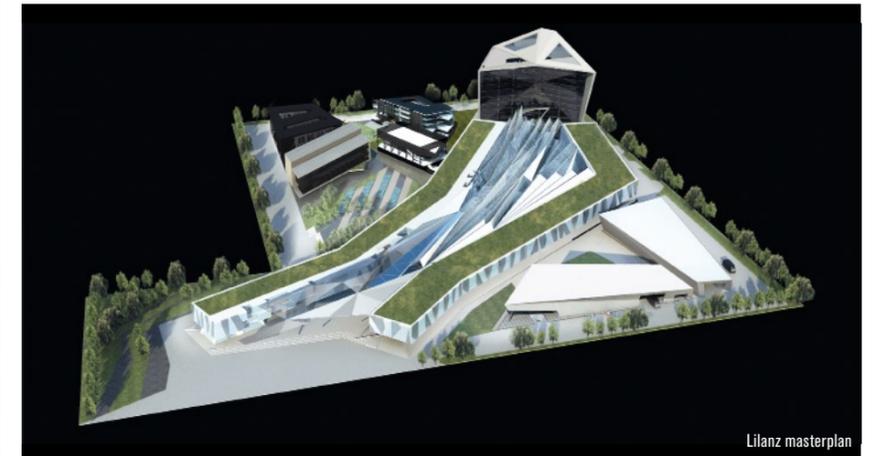
Fell of gfab laments what is to come of his profession. "We can only see our role becoming less and less important in the future," he says. "As technology advances, architecture may well disappear altogether as an intellectual and artistic discipline, buried forever in 'styles' a user can select from – perish the thought."

Thai designer Cholatit Thanadsilapakul, director of architecture at Jarken (www.jarken.net), also expresses sorrow: "The economic crisis' considerable impact on architectural jobs and billings around the world illuminates the fragility of this profession."

Appearing more upbeat about the future of architecture, CEO of dwp (www.dwp.com) Brenton Maureiello states, "Architects are looking at the environmental and societal impact of their buildings and are increasingly sympathetic to the human element of their designs. In the last 15 years or so, trends have been towards star architects, creating iconic, almost self-aggrandizing edifices. I think that is changing."



“LILANZ CREATIVE CENTER IS A DESIGN STUDIO, ART PIECE, BRAND ICON AND FASHION PLATFORM SET TO BECOME A CULTURAL LANDMARK” Jordy Fu



Lilanz masterplan

CROSSING OVER

Prominent architect and designer Jordy Fu (www.jordyfu.com) sees the boundaries between the various design disciplines becoming increasingly blurred. “There will be no boundaries in the future – fashion, art, design, architecture, interiors and branding are all one,” she states. Jordy advocates that once a matter of building functional boxes and filling them, architecture and interior design have evolved into inspirational spaces that evoke emotions. “They can also be the greatest source of advertising for a brand in work or public environments, taking a brand to another level,” she reasons. Good examples of this are found with the increasingly large number of luxury brands – Prada, Chanel, Hermès, Bulgari – whose stores are as famous as the goods they produce.

A fine example of this outside the world of retail is dwp’s Lilanz Creative Center; a 70,000-square-meter masterplan and architecture project in Xiamen, China. “It’s a design studio, art piece, brand icon and fashion platform set to become a cultural landmark,” says Jordy. “Design must respond to people’s needs, and not just one at a time.”

Architecture, for most, is a less disposable side of design that requires a great deal of consideration before investment. It may well be the most expensive toy in a lifetime’s sandbox of purchases. As such, architects have a great responsibility to design sustainable buildings that stand the test of time and fulfill multiple emotional, physical and functional desires, whether for commercial, lifestyle or community purposes.



Lilanz Creative Center, Xiamen, China

INTERIOR CONSIDERATIONS

Factors affecting the exterior are also of concern indoors, and some strongly argue that the two should always go hand in hand. Sasivimol Sinthawanarong, interior design director at Jarken, states: “Our working philosophy is permeated with one cohesive design and management thread, from construction to decoration, surfaces to door handles.”

Workplaces, commercial facilities and homes are all seeing a trend to more tech-savvy

environments, especially at the high-end, but this will probably spread more and more to the masses, as time progresses and technologies inevitably become less expensive and thus more accessible.

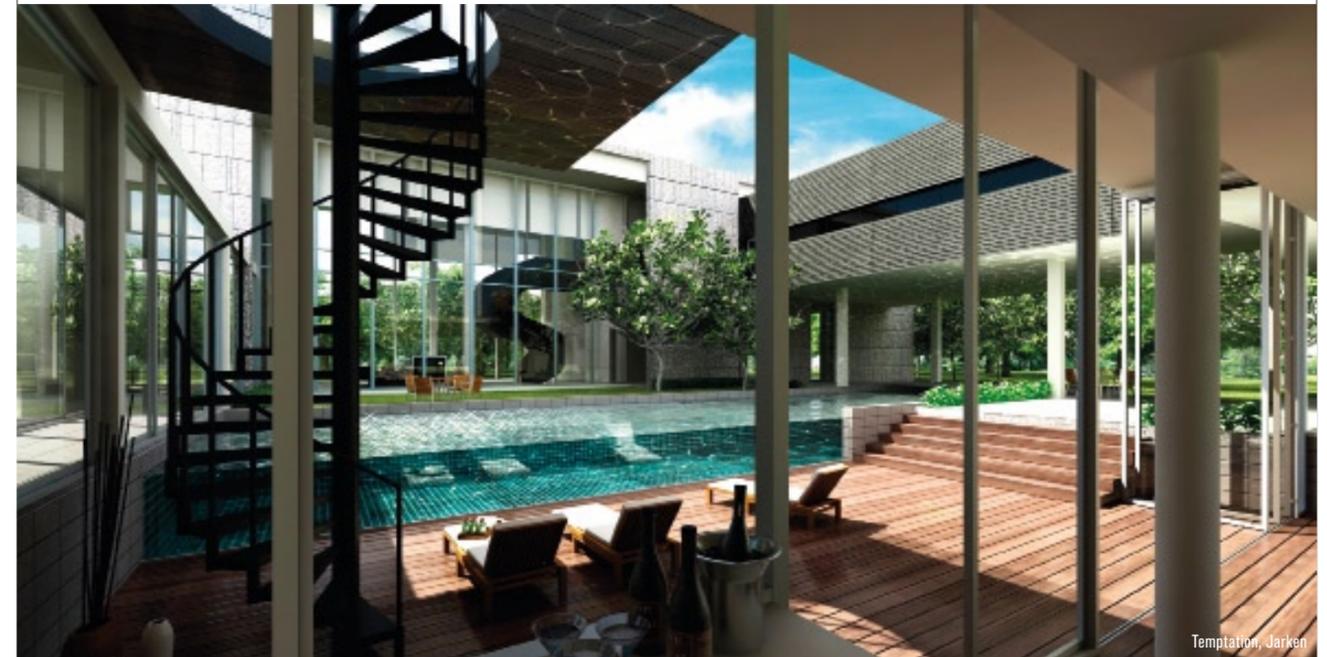
Lighting and audio-visual systems merge with wireless technologies and we are already seeing smart homes and offices. Scenes from futuristic films of the past no longer come across as far-fetched and unattainable. With the trend to paperless offices verging on a necessity, storage space could all but disappear in the workplace of the future. An increased amalgamation of technology and form of interiors is likely in the near future,



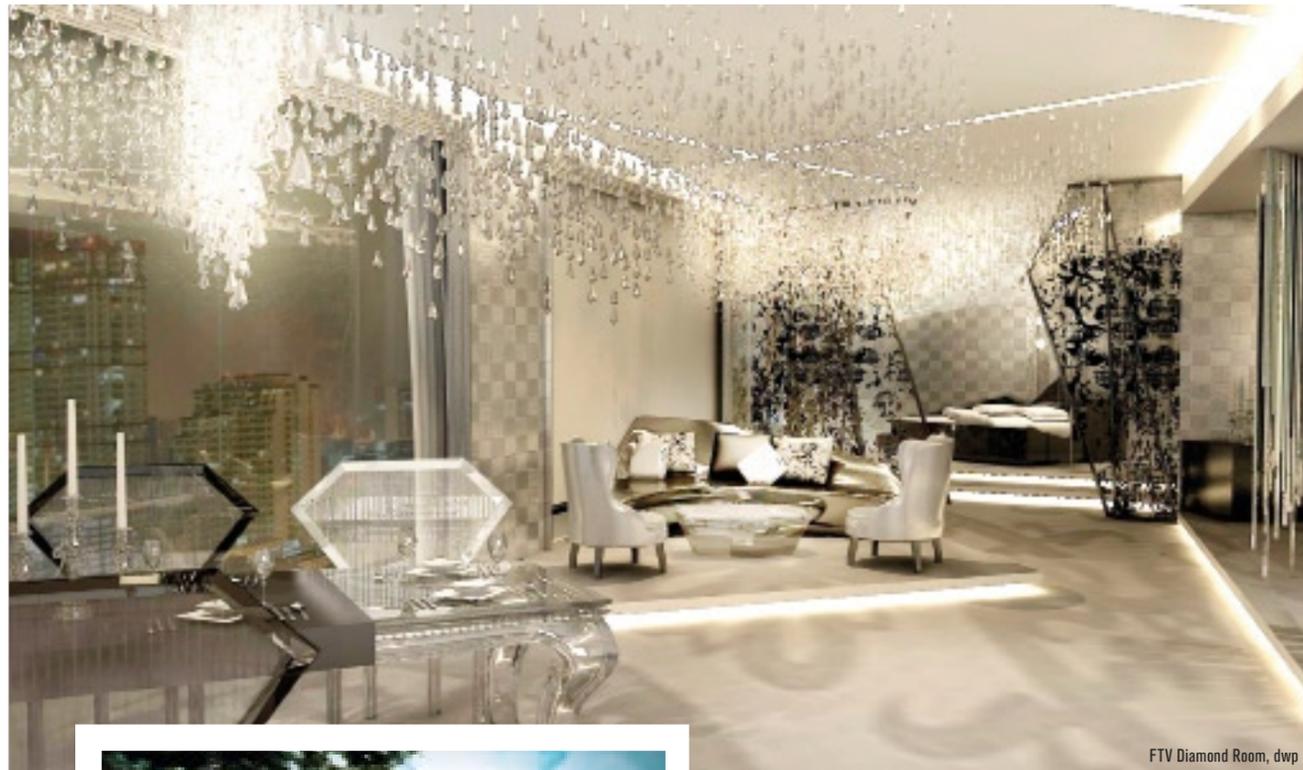
Prada, Tokyo



Jordy Fu



Temptation, Jarken



FTV Diamond Room, dwp



Temptation, Jarken

“GOOD DESIGN SHOULD NOT JUST MEAN CREATING SOMETHING BEAUTIFUL... IT MUST HELP IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF OUR LIVES”

Sasivimol Sinthawanarong

which may do away with many present interior design considerations.

“Designers should be leaders of change not followers,” says Sasivimol. “Good design should not just mean creating something beautiful that looks good, but must instead balance different behaviors, to help improve the quality of our lives.” Examples of this come in the designs we are seeing from large consultancy firms, which often have the interior fittings and fixtures reflect the exterior of a building: large expansive windows for increased natural light and the possibility to maximize natural ventilation, as well as increase the apparent size and functionality of spaces.

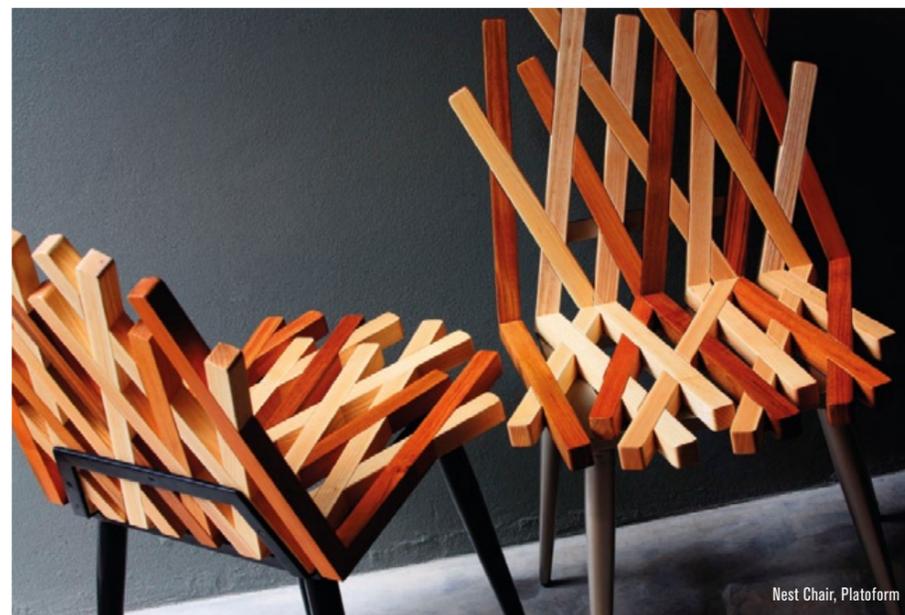
Civic buildings are no longer soulless grey vessels, but a reflection of community or national pride and diversity, aiming to capture the essence of the people represented. Traditionally cold and clinical healthcare facilities have also seen a major shift towards total well-being experiences, with the emergence of new constructions and cost-intensive renovations, such as at Bumrungrad International, which is better likened to a



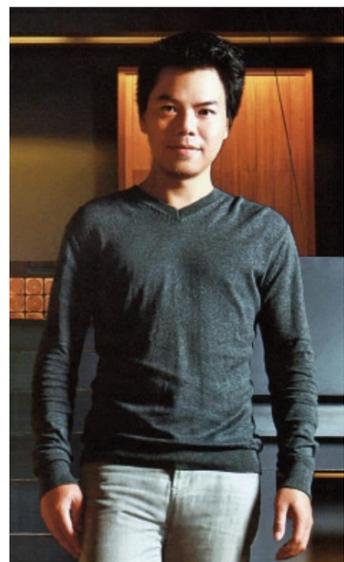
Chairs by Florian Baptist Gypser



Concept sofas by Florian Baptist Gypser



Nest Chair, Platform



Rush Pleansuk, award-winning Thai furniture designer

profitable five-star hotel than a conventional hospital.

The specifics for homes are still very much a personal choice for interiors, but large high-rise developments are seeing very organic interiors, where spaces flow seamlessly, also bringing the outdoor experience in. Design experts have definitively passed the post-modern box period and are in a time of organic, fluid forms. “There is a definite trend to minimal freeform interiors, with clean lines, hidden panels and cordless, uncluttered environs,” remarks dwp senior interior designer Jon Sealey. “White spaces are often a popular choice, providing a blank canvas on which individual personality can be expressed.”

Ecological trends are as much a concern for what people are putting in their homes as they are for the energy it consumes and how it's constructed. Says Florian Baptist Gypser, head of Design Studio Gypser (www.gypser.com), which creates modern, organically formed furniture: “the future of design will be driven by corporate environmental responsibility of both the designer and the manufacturer of any product in the market. The so-called recent

‘eco-trend’ will emerge into a new industrial standard that demands more in-depth information about the manufacturing process and materials [of a product].”

Making options more viable, pliable and endless are new materials and techniques, such as CNC manufacturing, Corian (an artificial stone) and 3-form (a versatile resin), allowing for literally any form to be shaped and incorporated. Bed Supperclub, a popular Bangkok nightclub designed by Orbit, is a perfect example of the flexible use of Corian, in shape and form. The advancements alone in material development, for which Thailand interestingly is blazing a trail right now, have produced astounding results, especially in composites – the reference site www.materialconnexion.com is an excellent resource for in-depth information here.

Florian expands on the relationship between technology and design. “To cross technological know-how from opposed industries and materials will spur the development of hybrid systems which support surprising new solutions to designers and manufacturers. The major future trend my industry will see

is the fusion of ecologically sound materials and mass production in order to serve a huge market with high-quality ecology-based products at a competitive price.”

Even natural woods are undergoing scientific research, to ensure durability in all weather conditions and eradicate issues of shrinkage and stretching, especially for outdoor or bathroom areas. Award-winning Thai furniture designer and specialist in wood, Rush Pleansuk (www.platform.com), comments: “The most important role of the designer is to create new and sustainable choices. I like to add value to the product by utilizing new technology, innovative ideas and handcrafted elements.”

Sustainability and cross-discipline collaboration, by all accounts, are the buzz words for the future, whether in the realms of urban planning, architecture, interior design or even furniture design. All appear to be in agreement that this is a major concern that can only soar, having an impact right down to the nuts and bolts of each domain. Queue sustainable, recyclable, natural, tech-driven future design. 🌱