

Past but not gone

A visit to a recent design exhibition leaves **Aneeta Sundararaj** with a new perspective on the endless potential of old furniture

THE furniture on display in the recently launched exhibition at Galeri Petronas, New Olds: Design Between Tradition and Innovation, looks functional and plain. That is when compared with some of the more opulent pieces of furniture in the store next door.

In addition, there is an underlying element of haste in many of the pieces, which was magnified when one of the designers, Daniel Juric, 39, begins the interview with: "We will have to do this fast; we are on a tight schedule."

Thereafter, over a hurried cup of coffee, he explains that the basic concept of this exhibition is that it explores the relationship between tradition and innovation in contemporary design. The 45 designers and design teams from Europe and the US entered into an intensive dialogue about the main themes of the exhibits, namely, material, construction, configuration, production and traditional use. They took a particular object, discussed their old and new aspects and combined them to create a new object altogether. This idea of recycling and redesigning were based on this premise: what is sold to us as new today actually has a historical context.

Juric's contribution to the exhibi-

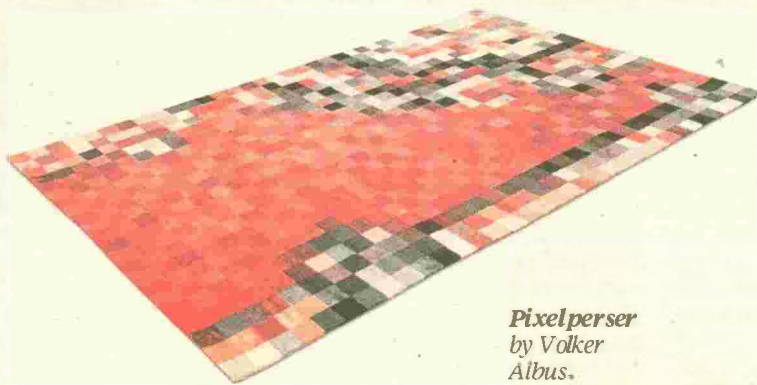
tion is a set of shelves and accompanying coffee tables called, Sampling Sehnsucht (Desire). "The question I asked is this: why do I feel comfortable in my parents' living room when none of their furniture is to my taste?"

He explains that many young people today seem ambivalent towards their parents, particularly if they are in the process of leaving home. They are happy to escape from the rules and regulations imposed by their parents, yet they begin to appreciate the qualities of the reliable home.

With those issues in mind, and memories of playing with Lego bricks as a child, the furniture collection he created does not idealise his parents' world. Neither is it a sarcastic interpretation of what they found tasteful. In fact, what he's created is very respectful of his parents' tastes. Designed like building blocks, they can be stacked together or placed side-by-side. The technology used to piece the shelves together is Velcro tape.

Laura Bernhardt, 33, also a designer, has an exhibit called

POLKA pots by POLKA.



Pixel perser by Volker Albus.

Afroditi. You can't call it a chair, neither is it a stool, sofa or sleeping bag. It looks a little like a gigantic nest. In the description accompanying her exhibit, she says it cannot be categorised using usual terminology for furniture. The closest description for it is a basic form of human and animal housing. The material is thick rounded strips of polyurethane foam which Bernhardt says she knitted together.

Based in Stuttgart, Germany,

Bernhardt says: "When I was a child, I used to play with a 'Wassily' chair. I loved how simple it was and I would build them and transform them into something else." As for the Greek name for her exhibit, she says: "I think of Greece as my second home. I spent all my summer holidays there. Greece has had a huge influence on my childhood. I feel close to nature there."

With chairs to sit on and shelves,

Books by Werner Aisslinger.



Pixel Persian. This is a carpet by the curator of the exhibition, Volker Albus. The carpet is said to demonstrate a manufacturing technique where squares of different sizes are woven to form a whole which then becomes a picture. True, the geometrical grid of the pattern is made



Blow Away Vase by Front.



Afroditi by Laura Bernhardt.



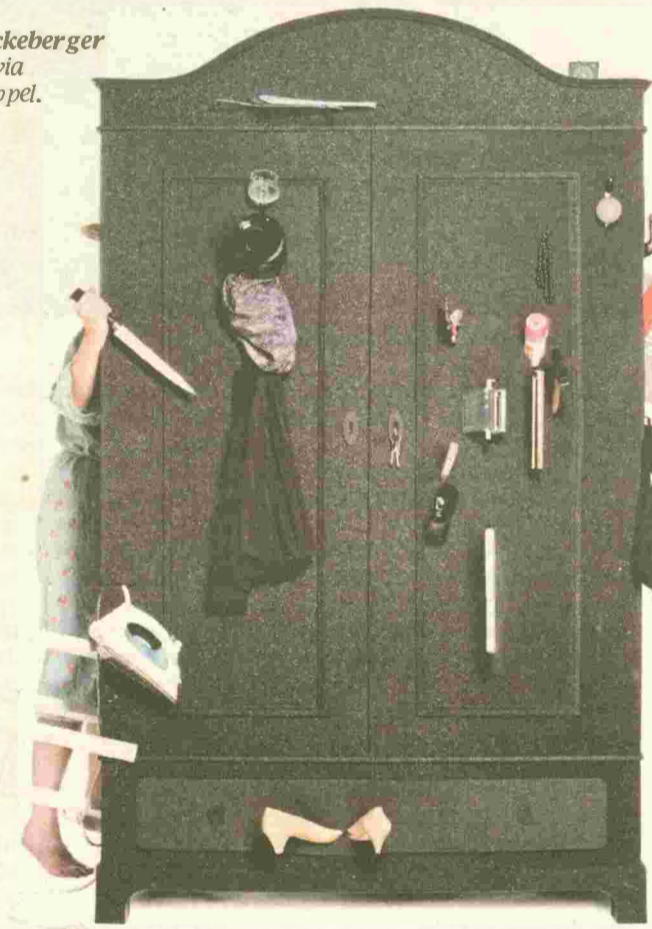
Werkstadt-Kabinett
by Studio
Makkink&
Bey.



Sampling Sehnsucht by Daniel Juric.



Drueckeberger
by Silvia
Knueppel.



explicit in this carpet and, thereby, fits in very well with the culture of the west today.

There are two options for decorations you might want to use should you choose to invest in Juric's shelves. The first is one of Juric's favourite items, the Blow Away Vase. Re-visiting the element of haste, this vase is unlike any other.

Usually, stoneware, porcelain and ceramics will have form and decoration. In addition, they will have a symmetrical shape. What happens when their shape is asymmetrical?

"The question is what happens if the wind blows?" explains Juric. The result is a vase that is, literally, blown out of its symmetry. In this way, the vase itself becomes an ornamental object, thus demonstrating the theme of this exhibition — redefining the relationship between form and tradition.

"When people go on holiday, they bring back souvenirs to remind them of their trip, yes?" Juric asks as he points to an exhibit called, Buildings Of Disaster. "These souvenirs are often images of famous monuments and buildings like the Eiffel Tower or Big Ben. No one remembers the unhappy events."

True, in the text accompanying in exhibit, it is stated as follows: "...These miniatures transport a whole compendium of myths and promises associated with the city that a particular building has come to represent." However, the designer feels that people no longer believe such myths. Instead,

people are more interested in lesser-known buildings which play a role in society. So, he's created a set of souvenirs that represent such buildings.

Animated, Juric points to the first souvenir. "Can you see the Pont de l'Alma road tunnel in Paris, France where Diana, Princess of Wales died as a result of injuries sustained in a car crash? Then look at this one. It's the three nuclear power plants in Ukraine to remind one of the Chernobyl disaster of 1986."

As you leave the exhibition hall, you might find yourself wondering how to remodel your broken rattan chair.

WHAT: New Olds: Design between Tradition and Innovation — a travelling exhibition from Germany which examines the influence of traditional design in modern furniture applications.

WHERE: Galeri Petronas, Level 3, Suria KLCC.

WHEN: Until March 30, 2014.

THE A-LIST

COMPILED BY INTAN MAIZURA AHMAD KAMAL

CHASING SQUARES

Where: D6 Sentul East, 800 & 801, Jalan Sentul, KL
When: Until March 18, 2014 (11am-6pm)
Admission: Free

Contact: www.facebook.com/events/619149044813652/

A mobile photography exhibition curated by Malaysian photographer Zung (The Photoz) that's inspired by mobile photo-sharing app Instagram. A first of its kind in the city, this pop-up exhibition showcases different perspectives of "what we chase in life" by seven local mobile phone



Chasing Squares

photographers — better known as Instagrammers. The framed prints are on sale and proceeds go to stART Society.

GANGGUAN

Where: 67 Tempinis Gallery, 67, Jalan Tempinis Satu, Lucky Garden, Bangsar, KL
When: Until March 22, 2014. Mon-Sat, noon-6pm
Admission: Free

Contact: 012 732 6227 . www.ourartprojects.com

In the two-man exhibition, artists Jun Kit and Tan Zi Hao explore myriad forms of disturbances (*gangguan* in Malay) that plague our existence. Our understanding of social and political markers like 'Bumiputera' and 'tanah air' will be challenged by drawings, videos and

installations on the literal themes of soil and earth.

19TH RIMBUN DAHAN VISUAL ARTS RESIDENCY EXHIBITION

Where: Rimbun Dahan, KM27 Jalan Kuang, Kuang, Selangor
When: Ends March 30. Saturday to Sunday (10am to 6pm). Monday to Friday (by appointment)
Admission: Free

Contact: www.rimbundahan.org/

The arts residency exhibition promises to be interesting. Sabri Idrus, Claire Healy and Sean Cordeiro will show the results of their year-long residency,

emphasising structure plays and Lego seals.

THE BEGINNING OF SOMETHING

Where: Wei Ling Contemporary. Ground Floor, The Gardens Mall, KL

When: Till March 31

Admission: Free

Contact: weiling.shaz@gmail.com

Contemporary artist HH Lim captures moments inspired by the Eastern circle of life. The idea that beginnings already have their endings from the moment they start inspired Lim's theme of man seeking a balance between opposing poles of life.