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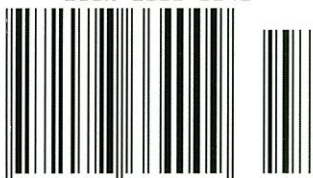
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Material Difference

Commissioned by a legendary Danish fabric company to come up with new uses for an old material, two Asian design firms have produced strikingly innovative pieces of furniture.

Story by Alice Davis



2 Hallingdal 65 is a fabric so successful, so good at its job, that its resulting ubiquity means it often goes unnoticed. Created almost 50 years ago by the celebrated Danish designer Nanna Ditzel, the enduring

wool-viscose textile is humble in its longevity, but as trusty and well-loved as an old Great Dane.

This year, in celebration of Hallingdal 65's virtues and popularity, textile firm Kvadrat invited designers from across the globe to reinvent and reinterpret the fabric, to push the limits of its applications and give it a new lease of life. Thirty-two innovative designs made the cut to feature in a special exhibition, and offerings ranged from a furry caterpillar-esque hammock to a collection of stools made entirely of Hallingdal 65.

Hong Kong-based curator and designer Andre Fu selected the two designers who represented the Asia region. "I was invited by Kvadrat to curate six design talents who offer a fresh take on creativity in their region. Two designers were finally selected for the final exhibition held during Salone del Mobile in Milan", he says. "I believe that their designs are diverse and intriguing in their own right."





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Singapore's Ministry of Design - a multi-award winning firm with the ethos "question,

disturb, redefine" - drew on the high-impact visuals of the pie-chart to create a threesome of poufs with a story to tell. Director Colin Seah wanted to take a localised approach to the project, and was interested in portraying the "unique identity [that] comes from the inherent cultural diversity of the island [of Singapore]."

Resembling inflated satsumas in various states of squashedness, each pouf is divided into sectors of differently coloured fabric. Each colour represents the size of one of the city-state's ethnic groups, while implicitly deferring to Hallingdal 65's unabashed spectrum of colours. The poufs correspond to three different years - 1970, 2012 and 2050 - increasing in size as Singapore increases in people.

However, it's not all mathematics and infographics, as the poufs are bright, playful and practical. "The final product looks fun and inviting - and looks appealing for people to use it. That's important in product design," Seah says.

CLOCKWISE FROM FAR RIGHT: Curator Andre Fu; The Hallingdal 65 exhibition in Milan; Ministry of Design's Colin Seah; Kevin Low of Small Projects; Low's unfurling Chaise Longue; Seah's trio of pie-chart inspired poufs, entitled Demographically Speaking.



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The second design from Asia, a chaise longue in the shape of an unwinding bolt of Hallingdal 65, was sparked

by a eureka moment from Kevin Low. The architect established Kuala Lumpur-based Small Projects in 2002, designing garden houses in the main, and was not planning to accept the Kvadrat call. "It was in the middle of writing a reply to Kvadrat to express my regret at not being able to take on the commission that an idea came to me which felt completely relevant to the nature of fabric. The immediacy of that idea served as impetus for the commission," Low says.

Instead of manipulating the textile to suit the furniture, he wanted to allow the textile itself to dictate the design. "It was important for this occasion that the piece take its form from the fabric. The design stylises an unfurling spool caught mid-flight, with the form of the chaise coming from the spool and its cloth, and the balance of unrolled fabric around its spool kept for future reupholstering."

The design is sophisticated yet ingeniously simple, and also demonstrative of Hallingdal 65's characteristics, as Low captures the softness of the fabric in the undulating curves of the méridienne, and Hallingdal 65's famed toughness in the strength of the structure. ■■■



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