



COFFEE table sure looks made of solid and Philippine mahogany



AFTERNOON DELIGHT: Lounge chair with reclining footrest of wood and fabric

## Cebu's best-kept secret

(From page B2)

credits with a gradual shift in her familiarity with indigenous materials. It pays to know their strengths and weaknesses by heart for these up-and-coming, she added.

Experience has taught her new ways of combining and putting these materials to good use despite shifting trends. Spraying of trends, she says, "is common every few days, but today's furniture market still goes for clean, modern lines bordering on the neoclassical. Details has kept this in mind without being too rigid."

"I try to maximize materials in a way they best suit their natural form," Details explains.

The Queen City

of the South is also the

world's queen

of native-based furniture

### Postscript country

Common, she observes, are new items concerned with durability and function. As the years pass, however, they have become more idealistic in making and marking furniture pieces. She notes below. As long as the functions are carefully put together, she adds, makers need not worry about making rules.

Details merely dragged her shoulders when asked about imports. As a "postscript" country, she says, the Philippines has always had a market for other regional buyers who buy furniture pieces by the container. She says it does not always appreciate the thousands here on.

"We'll continue to make sure it's better for them to come by producing better pieces with certain trends," she says. "While I'm also a Cebu, my heart is in Cebu. I've developed a company-based vision to reach down the progress of small pieces from the center of the town."

There's always room for improvement, what with several styles making their way into the market. She says she is always looking for the best of what is available from other countries that inspire things here.

As president of the Designers Guild, she also helps to further local cooperation among members through seminars and open communication. Only then, she believes, can they address problems that directly affect their companies and professions.

### JLQ and Silya Int'l Inc.

WHILE most of the companies are known for their furniture pieces made of wood, other companies (JLQ and Silya Int'l) have purposely chosen a different route for a good reason. The two are noted for their metal-based furniture combined with wood, leather, glass and various indigenous materials.

Since JLQ spent over 10 years ago from Manila, one of the country's leading motorcycle manufacturers, it has enjoyed an edge over others for its use of metal. JLQ's pieces are mostly custom-made based on the ideas produced by Silya, which was established several years later to cater primarily to hotels, restaurants and resorts, apart from their uniquely placed stores. An big reason usually have no trouble to make it easier to reach them in site visits.

"Manila, which is owned by Lisa Quinsigano's father-in-law, had a furniture division that she and husband later used to manage. The couple later bought the division when the old man decided to retire."

"We also do wood pieces but not so much as metal," says Quinsigano. "My husband and I decided early on to concentrate on what we're good at, which is metal."

Manila, after all, is known for its superior metal work. In fact, a number of JLQ and Silya's companies also go to Manila for their own production and



SUMMER SURPRISE: Lounge chair and sofa with cushions and coffee table in white and beige go well with the tropical weather. Touching up with great lines with finished feet perfect for added details and details.



CHARMED LIFESTYLE: Lounge chair and sofa are made of metal and finished brass, white coffee table in laminated bamboo strips contrasts with green grass and plants. Aerial glass chandelier of a lamp made of paper shells and dried leather. Both white chairs were taken at the Phil. Maldives.



DESIGN Ventures' dynamic couple GARCIA and Que Pasa

designing pieces. Of course, she was also aware of the need to be able to make it here for the first time.

"I like metal furniture because it's durable and it's clear that we're trying to bring work with the client. That's the main goal of the project in Manila and we're working on it."

JLQ and Silya's edge is more in quality than in the look and feel of metal. But the creative needs of metal. The Birds Hedges lounge bed almost had made of brass and laminated bamboo wood. While it's a bit of a challenge, it's a good one. There are also several "indigenous" pieces that are being made in Manila and are being sold in Manila.

Others, like the beautiful bamboo chair, are made in the city and that's because of local. Some pieces are made of wood and finished brass. Another is a bit of a challenge. It's a good one. There's a lot of work to be done. Through the use of a sophisticated machine called CNC, people in Manila can easily make a chair or table through a piece of bamboo made of metal.

"Metal chairs are finished with just like the way they are in Manila," says Quinsigano. "We also import finished metal items from Italy and Japan for the sake of our clients for the strength and durability."

She also says that she is always looking for the best of what is available from other countries that inspire things here.

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It will always be a challenge to make it

# Cebu's best-kept secret

by Alex Y. Vergara

## Design Ventures Inc.

Nothing is perfect. "What really matters is how we use these imperfections to create beauty." So says Debbie Palao, managing director of Design Ventures, when asked to describe the philosophy behind her designs. Debbie established Design Ventures with husband Gus Palao, the company's marketing director, more than 10 years ago.

Before that Gus worked as a buying agent for furniture pieces bound for Australia, while Debbie, a CPA, managed a Japanese restaurant. She has been into designing clothes and accessories long before they made their fortune in furniture.

"The thought of selling better furniture than the ones I was selling then inspired us to establish our own company," recalls Gus. "We were then renting a factory without the slightest idea on how to sustain it. Fortunately, we got our first batch of buyers soon enough."

## Indigenous materials

From five people, including themselves, Design Ventures now employs more than 100 employees. Many of its products have found their way to North America, Europe and the Middle East. From individual pieces, Debbie and Gus now sell a particular look.

"My [ furniture ] designs have evolved since then," says Debbie, also the president of the Cebu-based Designers Guild of the Philippines. "The pieces no longer stood out individually, but now blend with others to create a certain lifestyle."

Apart from maturity, not age, she insists, Debbie credits such a gradual shift to her familiarity with indigenous materials. It pays to know their strengths and weaknesses by heart to come up with, say, the ideal chair.

Experience has thought her new ways of combining and putting these materials to good use despite shifting trends. Speaking of trends, the

spirit of '80s excess may be back, but today's furniture market still goes for clean, modern lines bordering on the sculptural. Debbie has kept this in mind without losing her imprint. "I try to manipulate materials in a way they haven't been used before," Debbie explains.

## Prototype country

Consumers, she observes, are now more concerned with durability and function. As the same time, however, they have become more adventurous in mixing and matching furniture pieces like never before. As long as the furniture are tastefully put together, she adds,, makers need not worry about breaking rules.

Debbie merely shrugged her shoulders when asked about copycats. As a "prototype" country, the Philippines has always been a magnet for shady regional buyers who buy furniture pieces by the container vans only to churn out cheap reproductions by the thousands later on.

"We'll just have to make sure it's harder for them to copy by producing better pieces with certain twists," she says. "Since I'm also a CPA, my next love is systems. I've designed a computer-based system to track down the progress of each piece from one section to the next."

There's always room for improvement, what with several styles rolling down their respective assembly lines at the same time. The need for speed and efficiency has become of paramount importance in

the face of competition from other countries that employ cheap labor.

As president of the Designers Guild, she also hopes to further instill cooperation among members through constant and open communication. Only then, says Debbie, can they address problems that directly affect their companies and professions.

