



Furniture Aesthetics

Geese, curves and a Chinese appreciation of furniture

Interview

"Made in China" and "Live in China"

- Warren Gao, General Manager of Woodmark China

Brand News

*China welcomes the Norman + Quaine range
Woodmark brings Montana to China*

Case Study

APEC Australia 2007



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Calligraphy reflects nature

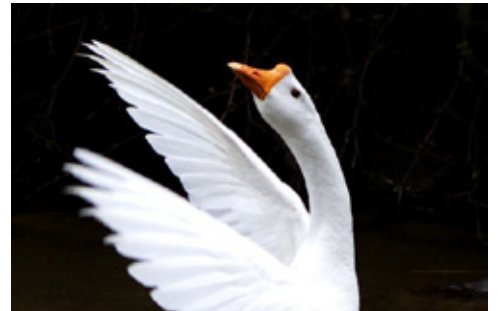
The oriental ideal of beauty lies in the aesthetic of "harmony between man and nature", which has influenced and inspired the traditional Chinese art forms such as music, poetry, drama, novels, painting, and calligraphy through the ages. As an important part of Chinese mainstream culture, calligraphy not only documents the development of a great country but also presents an artwork in itself, with flowing lines. The art in calligraphy is in developing inspiration through the brush strokes, which should never be duplicated. Wang Xizhi from Jin dynasty proved this rule by presenting the character "zhi" in 21 different styles, each with its own shade of feeling, in his famous "Lanting Xu". The calligraphy sage had a special love of geese and always drew inspiration from the creature's gait and gestures. This leads to his well-known one-stroke cursive character "goose" inscription, which was not only admired by ancient emperors but still captures the hearts of modern generations in China and beyond.



Goose's curvy lines

Wang is far from the only the goose lover in Chinese history. Countless paintings document the gentle curves of the bird and reflect the calligraphic strokes. Poets such as Du Fu, Bai Juyi and Li Shangying have all written odes to the elegant bird. One of the most famous is Luo Binwang's hymn:

**goose, goose, goose,
craning to the sky with a flexed neck,
white feathers floating in the spring river,
red foot driving in the green water.**



Though the goose has beauty in its red foot and white feathers, its soft and gentle curve is what inspires us. The simple yet endless lines have cultivated the Chinese appreciation of all things, from Chinese gardens whose paths curve endlessly to present a different view with every step, to Chinese painting rendered by five-colored ink or Chinese music composed with five notes. All provide evidence demonstrating the Chinese love of simplicity – like a gentle curve.

Scholarly Furniture design



While lofty culture such as playing the lyre, chess, calligraphy and painting are associated with scholars and elite, the story of their furniture remains unsung. There are but few artifacts in Chinese history that depict the basic styles chosen by the scholars for the elements of design and décor in their daily life. Modern scholars have scoured the literature and paintings for traces of lifestyle and design in ancient times. Ming-style furniture stands out for its

subtle elegance, simple lines and refreshing style. We are given to appreciate these curves and to reflect on the goose and to appreciate the beauty that lies in the wood's natural texture and this inspires our mind. There is evidence that many scholars pursued the aesthetics of furniture design and therefore, the works reflected smooth, concise lines and reasonable proportions.

Simply the best

After an era of material scarcity in China, people longed for a better life and the energy was transferred to a flourishing development of production and China is now seen as the factory to the world. However, this excessive pursuit of goods has cultivated an over-materialized world. Publishing, media, film and now internet have increased the rate of exchange of ideas. As the world has developed into an international community over the past century, Chinese culture is now influenced by many international ideas, but the strength and simplicity of Chinese designs remains strong and has also inspired designers around the world. More Chinese are returning to the true Chinese culture - simple aesthetics, nature and man in harmony and inner serenity. Simplicity - simple lines of beauty and the human spirit behind it - promotes a modern ecologically-sound fashion. This does not mean undertaking monkish asceticism and denying yourself the comfort of a well-designed couch. Furniture with clean lines and pure beauty brings us relaxation and pleasure today and inspires us to appreciate culture and the environment for a new day.



Interview

“Made in China” and “Live in China”

Warren Gao, General Manager of Woodmark China

What factors made you decide to start manufacturing your quality Danish and Australian designs in China?

Woodmark Australia started manufacturing in China to take advantage of explosive growth here. Due to their manufacturing capacity and lead-time limitations, they faced challenges in delivering their designs outside of Oceania. They were also eager to better serve the Chinese market and its growing demand. The local manufacturing means improved local service, shortened lead times and, of course, the advantage of reduced manufacturing costs available in China.

Some people are concerned about Chinese quality standards. Are you actually able to get International quality from Chinese factories? How do you maintain Woodmark's exceptionally high quality standards?

We have an exceptionally strong team in China. Everyone has been trained in Australia in the areas of product details and specifications, manufacturing processes, techniques and materials. We follow the same Australian standards and whenever we can't source the components to meet our standard within China, we source them globally. Woodmark also selects the factories we cooperate with carefully to make sure they understand our design philosophies and meet our quality requirements.

What about staffing and human resources? Are there ample trained, qualified and loyal staff in China? Have you had to undertake special HR training programs or use special incentives to attract and retain the most talented staff?

All of our employees are recruited through a top local agency. The reason is that local people know the market best. We have attracted very qualified and loyal employees. Woodmark provides the best conditions to let employees feel comfortable and perform their best at work. Everyone works in a fair situation and gets high respect from the company and their associates to maintain an attractive work environment.

There are many obstacles in any international business. What is the largest challenge in setting up in China and how did you successfully overcome it?

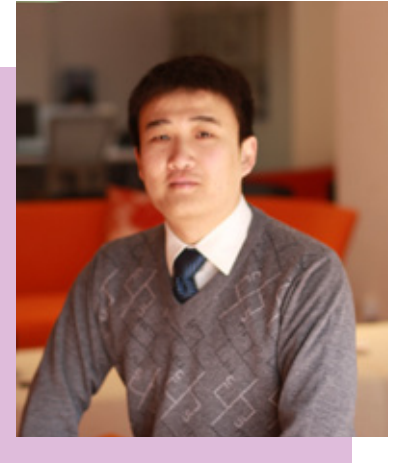
We face many obstacles with an international business here. It comes not only from culture or language, but also from economy, financial and logistics etc. The main challenge I felt was from the market, especially for designed products. Conveying the brand message and function of Woodmark products must be done in accordance with local traditions and customs. We need to tackle language barriers, understand the regional tastes and employ appropriate sales tactics. Fortunately, we are working with a global furniture supplier as a partner that has been successful in this market for more than 10 years, which helped us to overcome a lot of these barriers.

How has Chinese culture influenced your organization in China? Has it also influenced your designs?

Chinese culture, like Confucian values and traditions, does influence our management styles and organizational behavior, particularly in trust building, communication, teamwork, and innovation. As an international company, we continually must take Chinese cultural influences into account when formulating strategy. We also communicate with designers about Chinese culture which sometimes influences the market demand. But so far, our designs are mainly from Australia and Denmark.

Was there anything unexpected in establishing relationships and operations in China? What was your greatest learning experience from entering China?

I would say that establishing a company here was a long process and we need to understand the national laws and local policies or regulations. To be a successful enterprise in China, we have to stay humble, provide high-quality expertise, and learn how to cooperate with the local businesses.



Warren Gao, General Manager of Woodmark China

Cheap forgeries and low-cost fakes are ubiquitous in the Chinese markets. Have Chinese customers started to understand the value of genuine, quality articles and design aesthetics? What are you doing to educate the public and business communities?

The behavior of Chinese customers is changing. They have started to not only look at the outside or functions of the products, but also study the inside quality and design inspiration. Woodmark emphasizes the concept of timeless design in high quality. We normally introduce our products from the inside, such as component materials, technical specifications, etc and explain why we choose high quality material and use certain manufacturing techniques. The customers are interested and receptive and are starting to appreciate the value of having a life-long design product.

Do you feel corporations have a responsibility to the communities they serve? How do you fulfill that need?

As a responsible firm, we want to produce an overall positive impact on the society and contribute to a more healthy and harmonious world. We take good care of our employees and train them. We provide sustainable products and keep the process as ecologically friendly as possible. We want to facilitate cultural exchange between both western and eastern societies.

Brand News

China welcomes the Norman + Quaine range

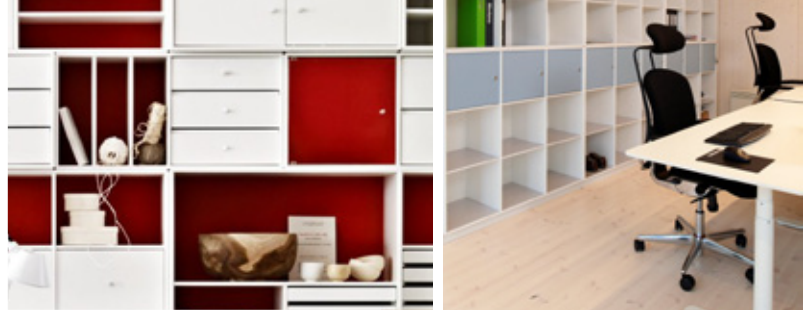


Schooled in the artistic tradition of their parents, interior designer Katherine Norman and industrial designer Caroline Quaine came together in 1989. In seeking items of fine craftsmanship and individual characters, the duo speaks a similar design language of simple aesthetics. Woodmark recognized Norman + Quaine immediately and a strong collaboration developed.

Beyond entrusting Woodmark as their long-term furniture manufacturer, they also introduced a range of young Australian designers to Woodmark, including the renowned Charles Wilson. Born and raised in Australia, Norman and Quaine pursue their passions and have a deep commitment to beautifying their own vast land. However, as a whole-hearted partner, Woodmark believes their work should be brought to more homes and interior spaces outside of Australia. In 2011, the Woodmark China showroom finally revealed the first-localized Norman + Quaine products, featuring Pablo Chair, Grace Chair and Hudson Sofa. This versatile range, developed over the years, has a subtle reference to the proportion and function of mid-20th century furniture. Its simple aesthetic can stand alone or be successfully incorporated into diverse interiors.



Woodmark brings Montana to China



Montana is a place in USA where folks love freedom but it is also a Woodmark design partner. At the turn of 2011, Woodmark become Montana's first dealer in China, distributing its versatile, sustainable and culture-based furniture, with an emphasis upon the unique cabinet range. Established in 1982, the underlying idea behind the aptly-named Montana designs is to provide people with freedom to create their own space. The company and its featured product "Montana" were both created by Peter J. Lassen. The design offers countless different combinations and its 46 solid colors are an important emotional component of Montana. Individuals and corporations alike can express their own style, personality and corporate identity. In addition to the cabinet models, Montana also carries classic works from Verner Panton, such as his first chair "Tivoli" and Wire Cube. Please join our excitement and experience the Montana range in person at the Woodmark China showroom.



Case Study

Project Name: APEC Australia 2007
Location: Sydney, Australia
Interior Design: Living Edge, Australia
Woodmark Product: Eeni Chair
Quantity: 8
Finish: Pelle Positano Mont Blanc leather

