

CIFF OFFICE SHANGHAI

SEPTEMBER 2018



A REVIEW

The City

It used to be said that Shanghai, like Hong Kong, wasn't really China. Vast, brash, noisy, incredibly crowded – and unlike most of China, with a high proportion of foreigners, it has a real international feel. However, with China's ever-increasing flow of population from rural to urban areas, drawn by relatively high salaries - offset by an even higher cost of living - there are now many Tier 1 and Tier 2 cities in China with populations in excess of 10 million, so Shanghai is no longer quite so different. It's a very young city, with what seems to be an average age of about 20. These youngsters are very much like their opposite numbers in New York, London or Paris; they seem happy and self-confident – just like the country as a whole, dressing casually to express their personalities. Some of the “Chinglish” tee-shirt mottos do evoke a smile.

For an English speaker, getting around China isn't difficult. Most signs are in English as well as Chinese, and when you do get lost, there's usually a student who wants to use you to practice their language skills. Shanghai's excellent, fast and extensive Metro system with its wide, spacious, airconditioned carriages is always busy but at times, so overcrowded as to be very unpleasant.

For the casual visitor, some of the most obvious cultural differences between China and the West can be seen on the street. Don't be fooled by people's generally modest dress. Pushing others aggressively out of the way, barging through slower moving pedestrians and queue jumping is the norm, and the decibel levels everywhere are ear-splitting, whether from advertising messages blaring out from everywhere or people bellowing at each other from a distance, oblivious of anyone nearby.

By September, the really high summer temperatures have calmed down a little but even so, after walking around outside in 30 degree plus and very high humidity, the fiercely airconditioned interiors are very welcome.



Words and photos - John Sacks

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The show

The National Exhibition and Convention Centre Shanghai is just vast. With eleven enormous halls, each of about ¼ million square feet, and despite the imaginative multi-level, clover-leaf design of the complex, getting in and out and around is very tiring. Navigation is not helped by appalling signage and information desks staffed with poorly trained staff. Robotic visitor guides may look the part, but most visitors wasted a great deal of time trying to find their way.

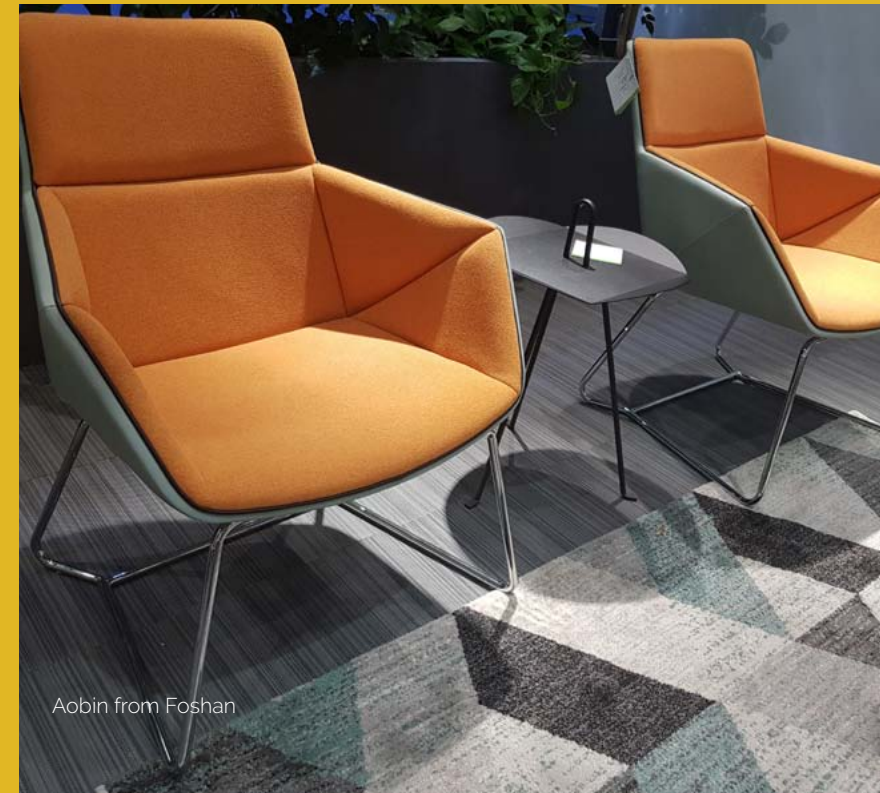
Catering standards were however definitely better than in previous years with much more choice for sensitive western palates.

This year, the office furniture element of what is a general furniture related show was restricted to one hall rather than the two which were used in 2017, but what it had lost in size, the 160 exhibitors made up for in the quality of their stands and presentations. Disappointingly, many of the largest companies were notable by their absence and in some ways, unlike the much larger and more internationally-oriented exhibition in Guangzhou, this show is a more a shop window for manufacturers in Shanghai and neighbouring regions.



The companies

Aobin from Foshan were one of the larger companies showing with some well-designed soft seating.



Aobin from Foshan



Aobin from Foshan



Henglin Chair Industry - Activit Chair

Henglin Chairs from Zhejiang and the Shanghai company, Magik both displayed colourful and attractive seating.



Magik - Classic - Shanghai

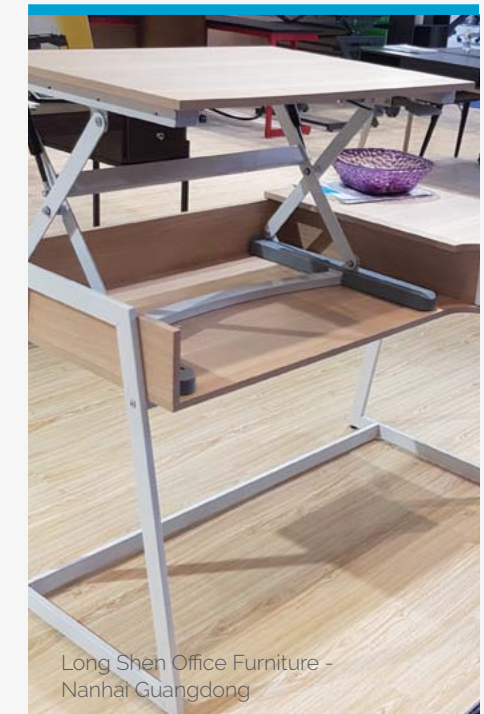
Merryfair from Malaysia had their usual large stand with a wide selection of seating, including the new Spinelley chair.



There were a number of examples of products designed to encourage healthy lifestyles including H2O and their static bicycle and an in-office mini-gym from the Taiwanese company Jia Goang.



Several companies were showing products suitable for home offices such as Dee Star with their Laite home desk, Dunitek from Taiwan and Long Shen based in Nanhai in Guangdong.



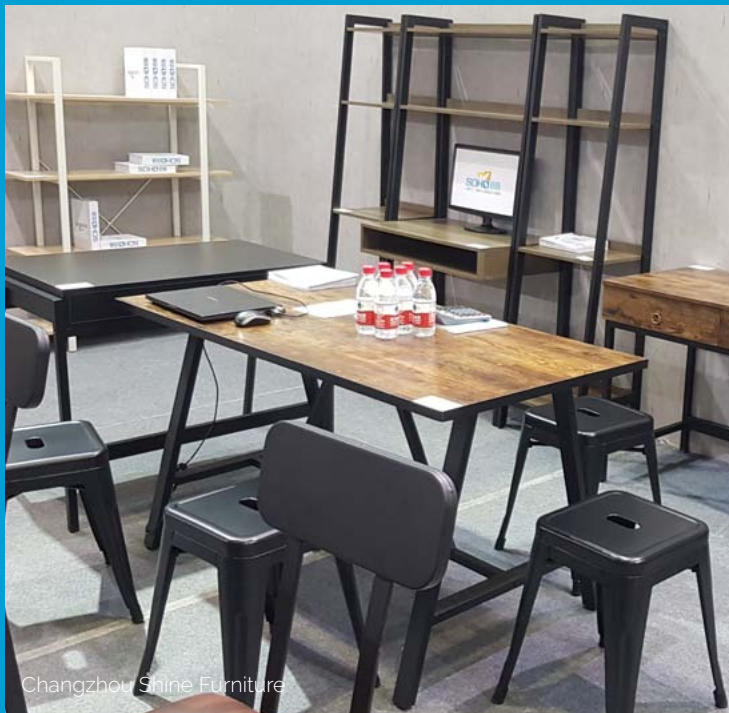
Omni Group out of Yangzhou presented benches including some which were electrically height adjustable and looked very sturdy.





Dee Star Furniture, Shanghai. DESIGN. Hitch by Alessandro Crosera and Partners Designers

Dee Star Furniture from Shanghai were working with European designers including Alessandro Crosera & Partners. The end results were some very attractive, European styled commercial ranges.



Changzhou Shine Furniture



W.A./Mobel-Carpenter, Korea

Changzhou Shine's use of some of the up-to-date textured woodgrain MFCs was notable and the Korean company Mobel-Carpenter soft seating had a lovely modern retro feel.



UE Task Seating

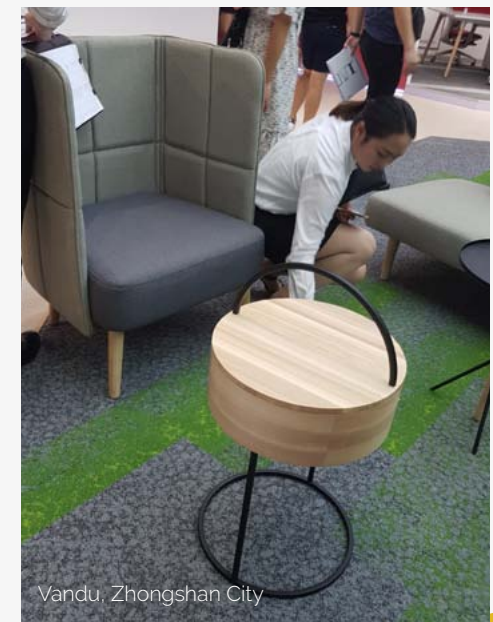
UE Seating from Anji was another company with a massive stand showing some well-designed office seating including muniz task seating.



Novo Workstyle Asia



Shiang Ye Taiwan



Vandu, Zhongshan City

Novo Workstyle, Shiang Ye from Taiwan and Vandu based in Zhongshan all presented modern, western-styled products which had an international feel to them

And finally...

A few exhibitors oddly roped off their stands to prevent easy visitor access and, to Western eyes, it's strange that so many exhibitors still close down in the middle of the day, ignoring visitors, while all the staff eat lunch on their stands.



It was all a bit much for some.





John Sacks

London, September 2018



"Advising office furniture businesses around the world"