

ZOW Shenzhen

# A successful launch!

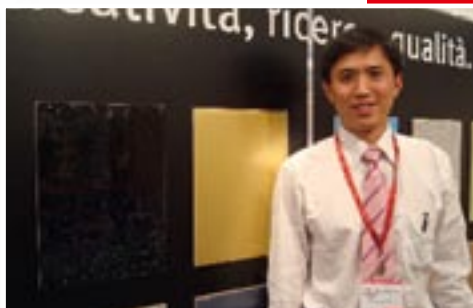
**S**henzhen is the booming city in Southern China. The launch of the ZOW supplier fair for the furniture industry and interior design took place here from 19 to 22 March 2009 – at the same time as the SIFE Shenzhen Furniture Trade Exhibition.

With 8000 trade visitors and around 40 exhibiting companies, the first ZOW got off to a good start. The visitors used the opportunity to find out about the current design trends in the supplier industry and to get to know ZOW. The event was characterised by high spirits, successful business and a pleasant atmosphere, laying the foundation for further positive development of the trade fair.

“The timing and location couldn’t have been better,” said ZOW organiser Peter H. Meyer after the launch. ZOW took place during the “busy” phase of the trade fair season in Southern China, and found the perfect venue at the Shenzhen Convention & Exhibition Center as the partner event to SIFE.

SIFE is the high-end trade fair for the Chinese furniture market and attracts high-calibre visitors to the economic hub on the Pearl River delta each year. SIFE organiser, the Shenzhen Furniture Trade Association, is constantly striving to promote quality in the Chinese furniture market and supports international investments in China with its excellent contacts worldwide.

This year’s ZOW exhibitors mainly came from China, but there was also a number of important companies from Germany, France, Korea, Malaysia, Taiwan and Turkey, thereby proving its international outreach. In addition to China and the neighbouring Asian countries, there was also a host of European and American visitors, who wanted to find out about the latest trends in Chinese furniture design.



Mr. Eric Zhang, Becker Acroma



Mr. Volker Lange (L), Ms. Sabine Rasmussen, and Mr. Thomas Erhardt (R), Pfeleiderer



Mr. Lim Jong Doo, Printech Kr



Mr. Wen Shao Yong, Merrymate



Team at Edging Master Manufacturing

"The ZOW concept was new to the Southern Chinese market and went down well," says Bernd Rademacher, director of Survey Asia.

A multitude of individual services for exhibitors and visitors make the trade fair an attractive meeting place where people like to linger. And because the first event was such a resounding success, the second ZOW is taking place from 19 to 22 March 2010, and not in September, as originally planned. "Most of the exhibitors from 2009 want to come back, and this provides a good basis on which to expand the trade fair," explains Rademacher.



Demonstration at Heico



Display at Cancot



Mr. Bernd Rademacher and Mr. Peter Meyer (R)

**Towards the end of ZOW's Shenzhen debut, the Panels & Furniture team were fortunate to meet with Mr. Peter Meyer, CEO of Survey Marketing + Consulting, and Mr. Bernd Rademacher, director of Survey Asia, to find out their views on the new ZOW location and their plans moving forward.**

**ZOW: Shanghai and Shenzhen**

The decision to start a ZOW show in China started in 2003. When Survey was doing the market research, there were clear signals that such a show should be held in Shanghai, hence the first ZOW Shanghai in 2004, which proved to be a great success.

Not one to rest on their laurels, the Survey team had kept an eye on the Guangdong province and the developments

taking place.

While many furniture manufacturers focused on the export market, there was a growing number of products made for the domestic market. The Shenzhen Furniture Trade Association (SZFA) led by Secretary General, Mr. Oliver Hou, was at the forefront of this movement.

With an energetic organization blazing the way, those familiar with the ZOW concept of removing the glitz and glamour and focusing on the serious business opportunities would understand why Shenzhen became the natural location for a ZOW in the South of China.

Working with the SZFA proved to be great experience for the ZOW team. Mr. Rademacher shared, "We have the same vision, so it made it very easy. They are very up-market quality minded. They try to improve the quality of the Chinese furniture, they try to fight hard against copy cats. They have their own school where they train people in carpentry and furniture. They have their own design and research centre. Everything is aimed at improving the China furniture market. And this is exactly the same philosophy that ZOW has, not just in China, but world wide."

Echoing his sentiments, Mr. Meyer added, "(SZFA is) also involved in the trading of furniture and they understand how furniture should be sold. Additionally, they are also trading domestically. They know that export is good, but it is not the solution for a national furniture industry. This crisis proves them, right. Even the president of the National China Furniture Association is coming here for the big gala dinner. I think he is also realising what is going on and that Oliver Hou and his people are doing the right thing."

When market conditions were better, everyone had hoped for a bigger show, in terms of exhibitors and space. However, both Mr. Rademacher and Mr. Meyer admitted that they were affected by the crisis, just like everyone else. Mr. Rademacher said, "We had bookings and inquiries till last August and September. There were at least 100 companies, and then all of a sudden, there were less inquiries. You cannot help this."

Observant visitors would have noticed that ZOW Shenzhen had an overwhelming majority of domestic exhibitors. "We are, of course, disappointed that we could not attract more overseas exhibitors to this launch," Mr. Meyers stated. "But one of the reasons is probably because they were hit most in the development of the economy."

Instead of waiting for more overseas exhibitors, the decision was made to go ahead with the show. "We could have said that we are going to delay the show because we only have 40 exhibitors. But then it would cause problems one year ahead," Mr. Meyer explained. "It is better to go ahead with it now and see what happens, then one year later, we can build up on

that. At the end of the day, this will give us a better opportunity of getting out of the crisis."

Mr. Meyer stresses that regardless of the country they are in, a majority of the exhibitors would be local. "That is the sustainable basis for our show. Only Russia is the exception to the rule, but even then, the number of Russian exhibitors is increasing."

Looking forward, ZOW plans to grow in the next year. Not only because its basic economics, but also because they hope to encourage more participation from Europe.

"For ZOW Shenzhen 2009, the figures of foreign participants are actually not too far from our goal of 20 – 25 percent." Mr. Rademacher commented. "We are not at 20 percent, but we are close because we have companies from Malaysia, Korea, and Japan. If you add that, you'd get about 15 percent. But I would like to see more Italian and German exhibitors here."

The promising start of ZOW Shenzhen, coupled with their cooperation with the SZFA, Mr. Meyer is confident that more foreign companies will participate in the next ZOW. "We still need to work with foreign suppliers to really show them the value of this venue here in Shenzhen, but I think we will succeed."

Summing up his vision for ZOW, whether in Shenzhen or in Shanghai, Mr. Meyer says, "In 2007, we had the biggest show in China from a ZOW perspective. We had close to 180 exhibitors and a waiting list of 50 so we could have easily hit 200. That would have been a very nice size, and that is what I want to have happening both in Shenzhen and in Shanghai."

"If we can have shows with 700 exhibitors in Italy and Germany, why can't we have those figures here? Our concept has the strength to achieve such figures. If we are consistent in what we are doing, I'm sure we can achieve this goal one day."

One change to their plans is the cycle of the shows between Shenzhen and Shanghai. Originally, the team was planning to bring the ZOW Shanghai show to the spring, and move the Shenzhen show down to the fall.

However, after the success that is being shown, exhibitors are keen to sign again. "Why should we go and say this was a great success, but it won't be around the same time next year?" Mr. Meyer asked.

Although Shenzhen is only a flower that has started to blossom, Mr. Meyer still has Shanghai firmly in his sights. Many already know some of the hiccups that ZOW had gone through in previous shows, but Mr. Meyer remains undaunted, and looks forward to the partnership that ZOW will have with The Jisheng Wellborn Furniture Group (JSWB). JSWB is a market leader in the furniture retail industry in China, having large furniture malls in major cities such as Shanghai and Guangzhou.

"I'm convinced that the JSWB Global Home Furnishing Center will be the centre of furniture business for the Shanghai area both for retail and for trade shows. I have a strong feeling that they are on their way to become the number one furniture trade show in Shanghai, and we will be a part of it. It was a bumpy start, so to say, but in the long run, we are in the right location with the right partners." **PFA**