



1950's Monroe 'Executive' Compometer adding machine is a precursor to the modern calculator.

"If you happen to see us in your neighborhood, do not be alarmed. Most often, we scour junkyards, abandoned buildings and old shop lots for hidden gems," says The Great Indoors (TGI) on its website. TGI, founded by Kevin Lunsong in 2011 in Malaysia, is an online store that salvages old furniture to sustain the local heritage and then out-sources it for commercial or personal usage.

While Lunsong now concentrates on the brand equity, he has a partner, Juwita Jalil, who manages the production part of the business. TGI sources vintage items from all over Kuala Lumpur and across Peninsular Malaysia. The duo rummages through articles for

two basic characteristics — the craftsmanship and the potential for commercialization. Once procured, the articles undergo a labor intensive evolution process through a skilled team of carpenters, metal workers and tailors.

After the whole process, many pieces completely shed their original identity and assume new roles — an old salvaged door converted into a dining table, old window shutters turned into wall decors, shipping pallets into shelving units and so on. A conscious effort to eschew excessive chemicals during the fabrication process helps the company to retain an authentic and vintage look in their furniture.

THE GREAT INDOORS

By Preksha Sharma



Would TGI's concept work in India? Anya Rangaswami can't see why it wouldn't.

A year ago I moved into my very first apartment. Like most first apartments, it was bare. Bit by bit, I attempted to furnish it, painting and decouping steel trunks to turn into makeshift tables, scrounging through streets of junk looking for a piece of cheap furniture I could try to restore. Walking into a store and buying something had proven to be futile. The stuff I liked, I couldn't afford. The rest of it was tasteless or characterless and fairly boring. Not easily disheartened, I logged onto designsponge.com for a dose of DIY enthusiasm and spent the next weekend walking through streets of furniture trying to identify pieces I could sand, paint, distress, upholster and rescue. And when it dawned on me how much time and effort would go into my little project, I went straight home. Sitting on the floor would do just fine.

A few weeks ago, when I came across thegreatindoors.my, my eyes opened wide with awe and greed. It was exactly what I'd been looking for last year. It was exactly what everyone I knew who'd moved into new cities had been looking for. It was tasteful, it was interesting and it was affordable. The only problem was that it was in Malaysia.

One quick glance at the website and as a designer, you can't help but want more. The website is designed beautifully, making The Great Indoors about much more than just furniture. For a second, I wondered whether they designed interiors, spaces or graphics. Essentially, The Great Indoors rents out and sells pieces of furniture and lighting. A lot of websites do this. But what's unique about *this* site is that every piece is a salvaged and restored antique. From industrial





Industrial Pipe Shelving uses salvaged wood from Chinese villages as shelves for piping manifolds.

Reproduced pillow designed using the graphic of 'Rough Rider' cigarettes which were sold in 1953.



Pallet Sofas are made by shipping pallets salvaged from ports.



These chairs from a Methodist Girl's School are speculated to be brought from Australia before 1957.

metal chairs to rustic sofas made of pallets, they have everything to furnish a residential or commercial space.

The idea behind salvaging old pieces of furniture was to sustain the local Malaysian heritage. To me, it seemed like a wonderful idea. They scoured junkyards and abandoned buildings looking for things no longer used and with a lot of love and a little material, turned them into desirable pieces of furniture. Their products retain their antique charm without looking overly grunge and the impeccable finishing on their upholstery and wood makes what was once junk, utterly irresistible. After spending a few minutes on the page, you realize there's something intrinsically likeable about TGI. Instead

Reproduced light bulbs.



Reproduced Chinese lanterns



Thanks to the vintage look of TGI's furniture, many cafes in Malaysia now have elements of a forgotten era in contemporary settings. Through a great rental scheme, TGI allows these cafés to rent and rotate their furniture to suit their current market needs. It works in the case of individual cafés, salons etc. who are trying to etch their own identities and also for those who need it for one-time occasions like plays, events and personal celebrations.

Their passion to save the local heritage persuaded Lunsong and Jalil to take a step further and venture into the construction market. TGI now is also working towards creating convincing commercial spaces in old buildings to help save these buildings from being demo-

lished. "Throughout the process, we look at the historical significance of the property to the surroundings. We then identify which design items need to be preserved while we bring in creative concepts to make the property relevant to our current times. Some heritage buildings are now turned into food & beverages outlets or hotels," they say.

When Lunsong initially started out, the first challenge was to create demand and supply for the products. "At the demand end, we created a very rich retail environment that would educate retail owners about the benefits of renting furniture to combat retail trends. We pushed further by renovating commercial outlets to create an ambiance conducive for their patrons to spend more. At the supply end, we identified



Black industrial pendant lights and industrial caged explosion proof pendant lights for interiors of a restaurant in Malaysia.

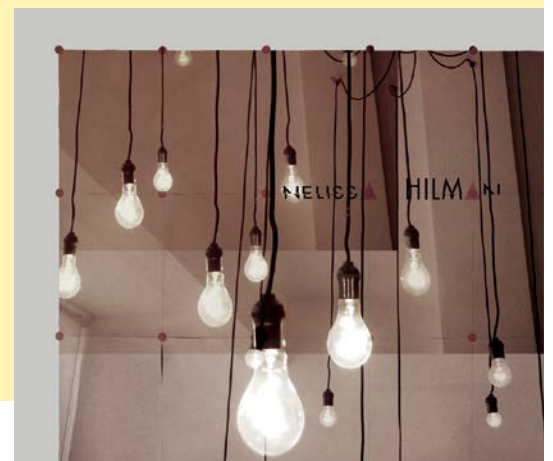
of thumbnails of products shot against a coloured background, they show you spaces where their furniture has been used. What's more, they even advise you on how to design your space and take it upon themselves to fabricate something you have in mind. What I love is that their furniture can be rented if you don't want to make a purchase! This enables small business owners to continuously reinvent and rebrand themselves towards retail trends and customer lifestyles, without incurring huge capital investment. And for young people constantly hopping from job to job and therefore city to city, it makes tremendous sense.

When I thought it was time to stop ogling furniture I couldn't have, I logged off and couldn't help

but imagine how beautiful my home would be if an online store (or service, actually) like this one were around in India. As a culture that has traditionally discouraged wasting, we don't seem to have used much imagination when it comes to furniture. There's no dearth of old furniture and in a country this diverse, no dearth of variety. There's craft and heritage in urgent need of revival and rescuing. All it would take for an enterprising individuals is to get creative and make a start.



Tolix Tall Tabouret barstools with short back designed by Xavier Pauchard.



Shoe shelf created out of industrial wooden crates.

and worked closely with craftsmen to create well-crafted goods," he says. As a result of this, TGI has managed to preserve the local Malaysian heritage items and in the process, keep small businesses alive by making both supply and demand consumers understand their significance.

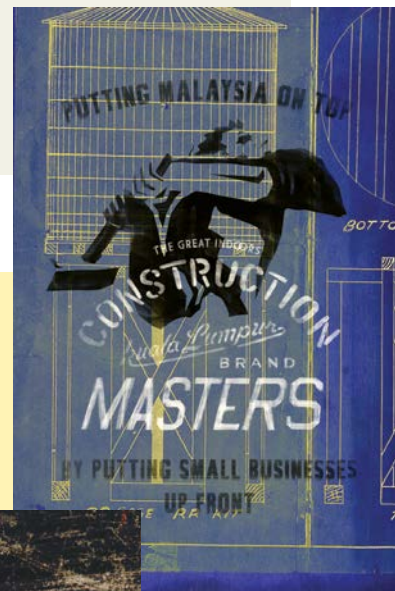
We are not only impressed by the simplicity and ingenuity of the idea but we also couldn't stop thinking about how great it would be if this idea was adapted in India.



Electric kerosene lamps



1920's vintage Shanghai steamer suitcases.



Brochures for Hardware supplies and Construction Calvary

Would it work? I can't see why it wouldn't! With more and more young people choosing to live alone as soon as they start working, the demand for affordable furniture could only increase. And with so many people looking to make their living and work spaces a reflection of themselves and therefore strongly individualistic, an alternative to cookie-cutter boring furniture would be more than welcome.

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Anya Rangaswami is a Bangalore based graphic designer.



Reproduced light bulbs.

1920-22's portable Corona typewriter

