



# 蔡演国：办公室造梦者

## Cai Yanguo: Dream Furniture for the Office

文/雷娜 by Lei Na

**玛**祖铭立集团成立于1996年，致力于为高端客户提供品质与设计俱佳的办公家具整体解决方案。自2001年起，公司与德国著名家具企业Kusch+Co建立了合作，迄今已与八个德国高端品牌结成了战略合作伙伴，并在中国建立生产基地，以精良的德国品质为中国制造护航。公司创始人蔡演国先生表示，对于设计、环保、品质和创新的追求是玛祖铭立成长的动力，这让他们赢得了诸多客户的信赖，也成为了业内最具口碑、最为环保的企业之一。

**T**he founder of Matsu Group, Mr Cai Yanguo is among the pioneering Chinese entrepreneurs who have combined a global mind-set with national pride. His office furniture company, which he began in 1996, boasts “made in China” products for the Chinese market that integrate the high-quality design and manufacturing standards of its German partners. Aiming to target high-end local clients, in 2001 Cai began working with the renowned German furniture company Kusch+Co, and since then has established strategic partnerships with seven other high-end German brands.



Matsu's products, whose design aesthetic incorporates the elements of simplicity and comfort that also feature in many classical Chinese furniture pieces, have won over both Chinese and foreign companies, including Alibaba.com, BMW-Brilliance, and Roche. They can also be found on CEIBS' Shanghai Campus; the white dining tables and sled-shaped chairs in the school's cafeteria are made by Matsu.

Cai says one needs a craftsman's heart to succeed in the furniture business, as it requires an appreciation for both quality and design, and a determination not to compromise on either. Matsu has managed to stick to its principles through changes in market environment, and fierce price wars with its competitors, while also continually striving to improve on its designs and develop innovative office furniture products that can meet the needs of both businesses and people.

In this exclusive interview, *TheLINK* spoke to Matsu Founder and President Mr Cai Yanguo about what inspired his business model and his company's innovative approach to design.

### Pursuing Superior Quality and Design

***TheLINK:*** What inspired Matsu's decision to focus on high-end clientele?

**Cai Yanguo:** Matsu was founded in Guangdong in 1996, when there was fierce competition in the market. I began to make frequent inspection tours of German enterprises, as I wanted our products to make a difference. I was awed by the Germans' fine craftsmanship and their extreme pursuit of quality. I still remember attending an exhibition in Germany with a heavy suitcase whose wheels had broken. The German security guards there said scornfully, "Whoa, this is made in China!" Honestly, it made me feel uncomfortable, and I was determined from then on that we must produce both high quality and superior design. We never waver from that. Our products are always truly green, durable and never out-of-date.

银杏树是玛祖铭立的象征,它的图案频繁出现在玛祖铭立的上海旗舰店中。在金属质地的外墙上,铺满了银杏叶形的镂空图案,阳光穿过孔洞,在地板上投下无数金色的光斑。“古柏高枝银杏实,几千年物到而今”,一句古诗印在透明玻璃上,犹如静静地停留在半空之中。展厅里陈列着许多极具设计感的办公家具,如折纸一般简净优美的高脚椅、用iPad操控的多媒体会议桌、可以随意组合的休闲沙发、纤薄如银色直尺的LED灯具,屋顶混合着工业和后现代的设计元素,与质地精良、别具匠心的办公家具融合在一起,为整个展示空间增添了一份梦幻感。

成立十八年以来,玛祖铭立的产品已经赢得了国内外众多企业的信赖,其中不乏阿里巴巴、华晨宝马、罗氏制药等知名企业。在中欧国际工商学院的上海校园中,餐厅里的白色餐桌和雪橇椅、教室里Profession系列培训桌椅也是由玛祖铭立出品。既代理德国的高端品牌,也开发中国的原创设计,令玛祖铭立在学习和包容中逐渐形成了自身的风格,简约舒适、沉静内敛,抛却一切不必要的界限,也不以彰显浮华阔绰为目的。公司创始人蔡演国先生表示,做这个行业需要秉持一颗匠人之心,以优良的品质和设计为出发点,一以贯之,矢志不移。无论市场风云如何变幻,价格之战如何激烈,玛祖铭立始终坚持着这个信念,力求为客户勾画出近乎唯美的办公空间,并不断探索工作与生活如何融合这个永恒的主题。

下文是玛祖铭立总裁蔡演国先生接受《TheLINK》杂志独家专访。

## 追求品质与设计俱佳的产品

《TheLINK》:是什么契机让玛祖铭立确立了成为高端办公家具供应商的发展方向?

1996年,玛祖铭立成立于广东,当时的市场竞争非常激烈,我从1997年开始频繁地飞往德国,去考察当地企业,想做一些不一样的产品出来。德国人的精湛工艺和对品质的极致追求让我深感敬佩。记得有一次,我去德国观展,用手提箱带了很多资料,结果轮子坏了,站在一旁的德国保安嘲笑说,原来这就是中国制造啊。当时心里其实不太舒服,从那以后我下定决心,一定要做品质与设计俱佳的产品,再也没有动摇过。因为只有品质和设计俱佳的产品才真正绿色环保,这样的家具经久耐用,而且不会过时。

《TheLINK》:迄今为止,玛祖铭立已与八个德国高端品牌建立了密切的战略合作伙伴关系,请问您选择合作伙伴的标准是什么?

首先我们不担心质量问题,因为德国公司对品质的要求都很高。我们的选择主要还是从类别上考虑。德国的家具企业都不大,很多是家族企业,会专注于某个领域做到极致。我们的八家德国合作伙伴在产品上没有重复,有的专门做椅子,有的专门做多媒体会议桌。我们会选择在某个领域做得最好的企业进行合作,将它们的产品集合起来,为中国客户提供办公家具的整体解决方案。此外,我个人对设计也非常注重,如果这家公司的设计能够打动我,可能我就会想要和他们合作。





**TheLINK:** Matsu has established strategic partnerships with eight high-end German brands so far. How did you decide which companies to partner with?

As German companies generally have high standards for quality, we don't have to worry about that so much; we mainly choose based on categories. Many German furniture providers are family businesses that are not too large, are focused on one area, and are the best in their category. There is no overlap in the business lines of our eight German partners; for example one makes chairs, while another makes multimedia meeting tables. We choose the best companies in different areas and combine their products to provide office furniture solution packages to clients in China. I also have a good understanding and appreciation of design; if a company's design can impress me, I will consider collaborating with them.

**TheLINK:** There are fewer customers in the high-end segment of the market where you are now positioned. Will you eventually try to expand into the mid-range and low-end markets?

We'll stick to our focus. I have no plan to change, even if it means it will be more difficult for us. Chinese companies today periodically jump into the muddy waters of price wars; we are a company committed to quality and design so this affects us deeply. But we can also make some relatively inexpensive products by exploring ways to lower our manufacturing costs through the choice of materials and by changing structures. There is an increasing amount of new materials that can be utilised, so I believe we can find ways to lower costs. However, we will still follow our principles when doing so; we'll never lower our quality standards.

### Innovation in Office Concepts

**TheLINK:** Matsu's "M-Office" Future Office Centre opened in Shanghai in November 2012 featuring its revolutionary M.A.T.S.U. office philosophy: Mobile, Adaptable, Thoughtful, Social and Unique. Can you give us more details about this?

The concept is about the "mobile office", which has

**We'll stick to our focus. I have no plan to change, even if it means it will be more difficult for us."**

been *en vogue* for more than a decade in Europe; Matsu is the first Chinese company to introduce it into China. We've analysed data which show that the sales staff of a company will spend, on average, no more than two hours a day in the office. This means there is very low usage of the office space expenditure the company is making for these employees. The mobile office concept allows these employees to work outside the office in public places like coffee shops, while providing them with specially designed closets in the office where they can store their private property. In addition, some of the public areas in the office can be partitioned into small meeting rooms that can be conveniently utilised both for department meetings and brainstorming sessions, as well as work space for the sales staff when needed. This can reduce a company's office space needs by 50%, drastically lowering the cost for office rental, so it's an effective way to improve performance. This M-Office configuration is very suitable for companies dealing mainly in trade and sales.

We've put a lot of consideration into the details. M-Office works best for sales offices, where everyone has their own cubicles, though they are not very big. We have study areas where books and public reference materials can be located. In a traditional office, employees can borrow reference items and keep them in their desk drawer. However in the M-Office, you must put things back where they belong; this also makes the office neater.

For employees who need to spend long hours at their desks, like designers, we have created areas for work that requires concentration, where even if someone needs to make a phone call others will not be disturbed.

《TheLINK》:选择走高端路线意味着承受“曲高和寡”的压力,请问未来玛祖铭立是会坚定这一方向,还是会尝试拓展中低端市场?

我们会去坚持这个方向,不会有任何的改变,即使坚持意味着承受比一般公司更多的煎熬。现在中国企业之间动不动就打价格战,对于我们这种注重品质与设计的公司影响很大。但我们会尝试做一些价格相对便宜的产品,会从材料、结构等方面研究如何节省成本。如今新材料的应用日新月异,我相信可以找到很多办法降低成本。但我们的原则是,绝对不会降低对质量的要求。

## 办公理念的创新

《TheLINK》:2012年11月,玛祖铭立“M-Office”未来办公中心开幕,革命性地推出了M.A.T.S.U办公理念,即mobile、adaptable、thoughtful、social和lunique(移动化、可适化、体贴化、社交化、个性化),能否向我们具体介绍一下?

一言以蔽之,这个理念就是“移动化办公”,这在欧洲已经流行了十多年,玛祖铭立是第一个将它引入中国的公司。我们曾经做过统计,一家公司的销售人员,每天在办公室的时间不会超过两小时,这意味着公司为这些员工投资的办公空间,其使用率是非常低的。假如采取移动化办公的方式,让这些待在公司时间较短的员工能够带着电脑在类似咖啡厅的公共区域内工作,而将私人物品存放在员工专属的储物柜中,同时在公共区域分割出一些小型会议室,方便召开部门会议、进行头脑风暴之用,这样一来,办公空间的利用率可以提高50%左右,能够为公司大幅节约办公室租赁成本,并有效提高工作效率。这种M-Office的办公方式,非常适合以贸易、销售为主的企业。

《TheLINK》:但是作为上班族还是有点担心,我的私人物品怎么存放?个人空间会不会受到打扰?

这些细节我们都有考虑到。M-Office的办公理念偏重于销售办公室,在那里每人都有自己的储物柜,但不会很大。我们还设有一些学习区域,用于存放书籍和公共资料。平时大家借阅资料,用完之后可能会随手放进抽屉里,但是在M-Office就必须放回原处,办公室因此会更加整洁。对于那些需要长时间伏案工作的员工,比如设计师,我们会为他们开辟出专注工作区,那里比较封闭,可以让人专心致志地工作,即使打电话也不会影响别人。

《TheLINK》:听说玛祖铭立即将在M-Office旁边建造创意中心,探讨办公与生活如何融合的主题,这是否意味着玛祖铭立将发布新的办公理念?

我们在德国有个合作伙伴叫Nimbus,是欧洲最领先的LED照明灯具制造商。这家公司的老板每个月固定有一次和员工们一起在办公室做饭吃。这种融合工作与生活的方式,是一个非常值得借鉴的创意。现在我们也希望就工作与生活的关系做一些研究,例如,我们会和一家做厨房设备的德国企业合作,为办公室增添一些更加生活化的元素;也会在新的建筑中集成绿色能源的循环系统,探索办公环境中的低碳生活理念,未来还会推出更多的创意。事实上,如何融合工作与生活,同时契合中国人的传统习惯,这是一个永恒的主题,值得不断探索下去。

**TheLINK: It's been reported that Matsu will build a creativity centre beside the M-Office Future Office Centre, in order to explore how the needs of businesses and people can be more harmoniously combined. Does this mean that Matsu is planning to create some new office concepts?**

We have a German partner, Nimbus, who makes the most advanced LED lighting in Europe. Every month the head of the company cooks dinner in the office with his employees. This combination of work and lifestyle is something worth learning from. We are now hoping to research more about the relationship between work and lifestyle. For example we have plans to work together with a German company to make kitchen equipment to add a touch of home, such as ovens and smart coffee machines, to our office configurations.

We also plan to introduce more original concepts in the future. In fact, how to combine work and personal environments according to traditional Chinese culture is an ever-green theme, and we will continue exploring this as well.

**TheLINK: Many Chinese cities are facing serious pollution problems, and many workers have long commutes to their jobs. Surely a comfortable office will make them happier on the job.**

Yes, and we are doing R&D into things like the temperature setting for office air conditioners, and air purification. We want employees to feel very comfortable at work, the same as when they get back home. If there is an opportunity, I'd like to have input on this from CEIBS' alumni and professors. In fact, office space is a very important factor in the efforts of an enterprise to persuade employees to stay.



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《TheLINK》:现在城市里污染很严重,上班族在路上奔波也很辛苦,如果办公室很舒适的话,确实可以提升人的幸福感。

是的,像办公室空调的温度、空气净化化的程度等,我们都会加以研究。我们希望让员工在办公室感觉非常舒适,就像回到了精心布置的家里。如果有机会的话,我期待与中欧的校友、教授们就这方面进行探讨,其实在一个企业发展的过程中,如何才能留住人才,办公空间也发挥了非常重要的作用。

## 跨界合作与兼容并包

《TheLINK》:玛祖铭立曾经在上海旗舰店举办了王小慧的“无形”纳米摄影艺术作品展,正式宣布了玛祖铭立与王小慧艺术中心战略合作的开启,请问未来这种合作会以什么形式深入进行下去?

我和王小慧老师是好朋友,我也非常欣赏她的作品。王老师是旅德艺术家,而我们企业与德国也很有渊源,我时常想,她的作品中那种极致的现代性与我们的产品是非常契合的。刚好当时她有一组作品,是通过高倍显微镜去拍摄纳米,发现了其中令人震撼的美感。于是我邀请她在玛祖铭立的旗舰店展览了这组作品。我们也在思考未来更多的合作机会,比如共同推出限量版系列家具产品等。

《TheLINK》:玛祖铭立在为不同企业提供办公家具解决方案的时候,是如何做到与建筑的风格相融合的?

我们习以为常的流程,房子造好了,再做室内设计,然后将家具放进去,其实很难让家具和建筑之间搭配得非常完美。而国外的设计理念是从内到外的,首先思考用什么家具,再设计室内空间,最后想象建筑的样子,我认为这是更先进的观念。我从事这个行业很多年,总觉得无论是东方还是西方的,只要有好的东西,我们就应该尽量学习和融合,这也是玛祖铭立的发展策略和文化主张。

《TheLINK》:在明清时代,中国人制造的椅子曾达到审美和舒适的极致,而如今我们在设计方面更多是向西方学习。您觉得在未来,中国在家具设计领域是否还会出现可以流传下去的经典作品?

我相信一定会的。其实中国的设计师已经做了很多努力,也有很多好作品出来。有民族感的中国设计师一直想做一件事,那就是用作品传承中国传统,同时体现很高的审美品位。我曾经读过王澐的报道,他是一位新疆的建筑设计师,获得了2012年的普利兹克建筑奖。他将中国传统元素和现代建筑风格相融合,做出了一些很有意思的作品,我觉得他是中国建筑艺术家的杰出代表。未来中国这样的设计师会越来越多,当然也包括家具设计师。







王小慧女士与蔡演国先生  
From left:  
Artist Wang Xiaohui  
and Cai Yanguo

## Cross cooperation and compatibility

**TheLINK:** Matsu hosted the “Invisible” Nanometre Photography Art Show for Wang Xiaohui in its Shanghai flagship store, to herald its strategic cooperation with Wang’s Art Centre. What’s next in this collaboration?

Ms Wang and I are good friends, and I like her work very much. She is a Chinese-German artist, and our company has close ties with Germany. I often think that the modernity expressed in her artworks fits with our products. It happened that she had done some pieces that involved filming a nanometre through a high-power microscope, revealing its stunning beauty. So I invited her to give this show in Matsu’s flagship store. We’re thinking of more ways to cooperate, for example we may release a series of limited edition furniture together.

**TheLINK:** When providing office furniture solutions to different companies, how does Matsu blend its products with the unique architectural styles found in various offices?

Traditionally the interior design and furniture is added to a house after it is built. In fact you cannot have a perfect combination of furniture and architecture this way. In many places abroad, the design begins from the interior and extends to the exterior. They first consider what furniture should be used, then they design the interior

space, and then finally they imagine how the structure will look as a whole. I think this is a more advanced concept. I have been in this business for many years, and I think no matter whether an idea is Eastern or Western, it should consider different aspects and include some blending, which is also part of Matsu’s company culture and development strategy.

**TheLINK:** During the Ming and Qing Dynasties, Chinese-made chairs were considered the epitome of aesthetics and comfort; now we are learning more from the West. Do you think there will be some new Chinese furniture designs that will become lasting classics?

I believe so. In fact Chinese designers have been making great effort, and are creating many wonderful works. Chinese designers with a sense of national pride have been wanting to do something that continues Chinese traditions in this business, and represents a very fine, aesthetic style. Wang Shu, a Xinjiang architect, was awarded the 2012 Pritzker Architecture Prize. His work combines traditional Chinese elements with modern architectural styles and he has created many interesting works. I think he is an outstanding representative of China’s architects. In the future there will be more designers like him, including furniture designers of course.

( 图片提供 / 玛祖铭立 Photographs by Matsu )