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A mark of design distinction

By recognising the best in creativity and innovation, the Singapore Good Design (SG Mark) Awards showcases how excellence in design can enrich lives and enhance businesses.



Mr Addy Walcott, associate director at M Moser Associates, designed Beam Suntory's Singapore office to be a place where employees can connect in an organic space inspired by the form of wood barrels used in whiskey production. Photo: lawrencelauphotography

Mr Addy Walcott has always hated long, dreary rows of workstations in an office.

"No one wants to be a cog in a wheel," said the associate director at M Moser Associates, describing the feeling of being trapped in a cubicle. "Spaces should be designed around tasks, and provide choice and flexibility for users. The workplace shouldn't just be about sitting and strapping yourself to a desk – it should be where you build a social bond, and have accidental conversations that lead to something else. That's productivity."

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Mr Walcott has put a lot of thought into designing spaces that make people feel good about working in them, as shown by his winning a Singapore Good Design Award – also known as the **SG Mark** – for the office he created for global premium spirits company Beam Suntory in Singapore.

Handed out by the **Design Business Chamber of Singapore**, the sought-after SG Mark is an award that acknowledges the creative dedication of businesses and creatives, while setting a high standard for quality design and innovation in Singapore. It was launched in 2013 in partnership with the Japan Institute of Design Promotion, which founded the world-renowned **Good Design Award (G Mark)**.

Along with Mr Walcott, two other SG Mark 2020 winners share their design journey and the importance of incorporating sustainability into every step of their practice.

EAST MEETS WEST: AN OFFICE WITH A STORY

Beam Suntory's East-meets-West heritage was a major source of inspiration for Mr Walcott, who relished the chance to bring the company's rich historical narrative to life.

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Incorporated in 2014, Beam Suntory's origins stem from two visionaries: Mr Jacob Beam – who produced the world's best-selling bourbon, Jim Beam, in Kentucky, USA – and Mr Shinjiro Torii, who created the first whiskey catering to Japanese palates and founded the legendary House of Suntory.

Said Mr Walcott: "If you look at traditional Japanese timber-framed houses and traditional Kentucky barns, their beautiful construction of timber and form – there's a similar design language. Also, guided by its 'Growing for Good' vision, Beam Suntory is deeply committed to creating harmony between people and nature, which we wanted to reflect in this space."

The new Beam Suntory office, which won M Moser the SG Mark for Interior Design, features a central front-of-house area named the Enso, which means circle in Japanese, where employees can gather and connect in an organic, naturally-lit space inspired by the form of wood barrels used in whiskey production.

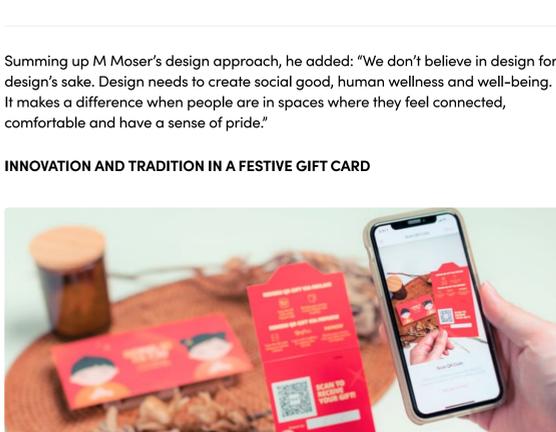
Mr Walcott also incorporated Beam Suntory's history in a mural at the reception area, which is illustrated on etched copper, a metal used for whiskey stills. The mural depicts a flowing brook alongside Mr Beam's and Mr Torii's journeys in whiskey making.

"It's the idea that they're now all united together by this brook, with the landscape showing all their different brands, locations and people," explained Mr Walcott. "Beam Suntory protects and preserves clean water, fertile fields and healthy forests all over the world, so there's meaning in every single element we put in there."

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Summing up M Moser's design approach, he added: "We don't believe in design for design's sake. Design needs to create social good, human wellness and well-being. It makes a difference when people are in spaces where they feel connected, comfortable and have a sense of pride."

INNOVATION AND TRADITION IN A FESTIVE GIFT CARD



The environmentally friendly DBS QR Gift was awarded an SG Mark in the category of Digital Solutions. Photo: DBS Bank

Gifting money has always been a beloved Asian tradition, but the long hours spent queuing at the bank for new notes, the unsustainable paper waste and the recent preference for low-contact options due to COVID-19 have cast a pall on festive occasions like Chinese New Year.

To solve these issues, DBS incorporated technology into a festive gift card that combines tradition with modern convenience. Through the DBS PayLah! app, users scan a QR code on a DBS QR Gift card to load a cash value of up to S\$999 before giving the card to family and friends. The recipient scans the same QR code using DBS PayLah! or PayNow to receive the amount directly into their PayLah! wallets or PayNow-linked bank accounts.

The DBS QR Gift was awarded an SG Mark in the category of Digital Solutions. Said Mr Jonathan Yap, head of Intelligent Banking (Consumer Banking Group) at DBS Bank: "The DBS QR Gift introduces a fresh, digital take on gifting for all occasions, while retaining the tradition and meaning of the physical act of giving and receiving."

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"The DBS QR Gift is also more environmentally friendly than traditional gifting," noted Mr Yap. He pointed out that every year, the printing of new notes for Chinese New Year generates around 330 tonnes of carbon emissions while the elaborate gold-stamping and ink of red packets make them difficult to recycle.

"The QR Gift is made of environmentally friendly paper, is easily recyclable and designed to be gifted on its own – it doesn't require a red packet!"

Following the successful launch of the QR Gift in 2019, DBS has since expanded its use to festive seasons such as Hari Raya and Deepavali and is now encouraging businesses to adopt QR Gift for their employee gifting as well – thus giving Singapore more reasons to celebrate sustainably.

A HUMAN APPROACH TO ROBOTICS



Mr Derek Lim, managing director of We Are Perspective Singapore (left), with Mr Zulraimi Mohamed Monsor, Certis Digitalisation Office manager, Certis Technology (Singapore) and the Certis MARK robot. (Photo: We Are Perspective Singapore)

Robots and airline crew may not have much in common at first blush, but the form of the Certis MARK robot for Certis CISCO Security was inspired by the Balmain-designed kebaya (traditional dress) worn by Singapore Airlines' crew members.

Mr Derek Lim, managing director of We Are Perspective (WAP) Singapore, said: "Our design language for Certis MARK tries to evoke a state of homeliness and familiarity, like the kebaya, to make it more welcoming and approachable. If you look at the robot, the service apron is the part that makes it very inviting and approachable."

The sleek surveillance robot has a screen interface and a seamless drawer with a first aid kit, bottled water and other essentials to assist Certis CISCO Security in an emergency. While deployed, Certis MARK can detect and report security incidents as well as suspicious behaviour and objects.

According to Mr Lim, Certis MARK is made with polycarbonate, a sustainable material that has minimum impact on the environment. It is also designed to be modular. By changing the robot's mounting fixtures, users can remove and upgrade certain aspects of the robot easily.

Along with Certis PETER (a traffic enforcement and patrol robot), Certis MARK was given the SG Mark in the Product category.

Said Mr Lim: "Being a local company, the SG Mark is definitely a good thing. For my clients, it's a marketing tool that tells people – this is a Singaporean-made product and we have an SG Mark. For us, it shows current or future clients that we're practising good design."

Mr Walcott of M Moser echoes the same sentiment: "I think the SG Mark is something that really proves to the client that we do innovate, and are willing to go to the furthest point."

The winners of the SG Mark 2021 will soon be announced. Visit sgmark.org for more about the Singapore Good Design Awards and its 2020 winners.

Brand Studio

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