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TURN OF THE TIDE

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Design Ideas

Jiun Ho, founder and designer of Jiun Ho Inc, is all about expanding horizons and changing perspectives to create better things

Malaysia is well-known for many things but not as an exporter of interior or product design. At least not until Jiun Ho came along. Born and bred in Kuala Lumpur, the designer has been making waves in the interior design industry in San Francisco where he is currently based. While he has been building his career as a designer over in the US, he has never failed to remind everyone he meets that he is, first and foremost, Malaysian.

Ho went over to the States when he was 18, barely able to speak English, with only one goal in mind: to be a designer. "Growing up, I wanted to be either a pilot or a designer. I loved flying and travelling; I also had a passion for architecture and design. My first toy was a Lego set from my parents," he says.

Ho eventually narrowed down his choices to pursue design at Iowa State University, and then at the International Academy of Design & Technology in Chicago. He worked tirelessly to make a name for himself as a designer, first by working at several design and architecture firms with a focus on office design before striking out on his own. In his first interior design project, he found himself custom-designing a lot of the

furniture that went into the space. This led him to eventually begin designing and marketing furniture in addition to his interior design projects.

"Being Asian in the extremely competitive design industry in America was tough. I was

"The more you see, the more you are able to create"

only 27 with limited experience, so my journey was very rocky," shares Ho. "But my mantra has always been: when you know better, you do better. So I kept learning from my experiences and continued to work very, very hard." So his journey became easier. Ho was nominated for Interior Design's *Best of the Year* in 2010 and his designs have been recognised by esteemed publications such as *Elle Décor*, *Architectural Digest*, *New York Times* and *Luxe*. Further to that, his furniture designs are now displayed in

showrooms worldwide. He has also designed pieces for a string of internationally renowned interior brands.

As a designer, Ho believes in constantly expanding his horizons. "Design is a thought process, a process of taking something that inspires you and then working and playing on that inspiration to create something exceptional and distinctive. I do this whether I'm designing a space or a product," he says. "The most important element of my work is to be able to create and design unique items. I draw all my inspiration from my travels. I have been to 99 countries and aim to visit 100 by the time I turn 40!" It is this adventurous spirit that he imparts to his juniors. "I am a believer that the more you travel, the more you see; the more you see, the more you're able to create. Travel expands your horizons and changes the way you think," he says.

While he goes on making ripples in other lands, Ho still harbours a desire to do something in his home country. "I'm very proud to be Malaysian and I hope I will be able to work on some amazing projects here one day. I have done work all over the world but not in the country of my birth."