

# Bright spark

Multi-award winning lighting and furniture designer, Stephanie Ng is an advocate of sustainable design and designing systems that have minimal impact on Earth's resources, writes Oon Yeoh

**S**TEPHANIE Ng is a multi-award winning industrial designer who started out in Melbourne but is now headquartered in Kuala Lumpur. Her company, Stephanie Ng Design ([www.stephaniengdesign.com](http://www.stephaniengdesign.com)), offers a range of lighting solutions for both residential and commercial applications, as well as bespoke services in home decoration and design, lighting and furniture.

Ng emphasises embedding emotion into her designs, resulting in products that have a very personal — and artisanal — feel. She's also a strong advocate of sustainability in terms of manufacturing processes, materials and energy consumption. Her pendant lamp line, Luna Lana ([www.lunalana.com](http://www.lunalana.com)), is a good example of this. It uses 100 per cent natural Merino wool and no machinery is used to produce them.

## HOW DID YOU END UP STARTING YOUR COMPANY IN MELBOURNE AND WHY IS IT HEADQUARTERED IN KUALA LUMPUR?

I had done my diploma in industrial design in Malaysia and worked for a while before I decided to pursue a degree in Australia. After graduation, I worked for a glass artist for about a year. We took part in an exhibition at an international furniture fair in Sydney and won an award. That was very motivating for me and got me thinking about starting

my own brand. Eventually I registered a company in Australia. When my visa ran out, I moved back to Malaysia and made KL our headquarters. We still have a business representative in Melbourne who helps us with sales.

## DO YOU PREFER RESIDENTIAL OR COMMERCIAL PROJECTS?

I prefer commercial projects — like hotels, restaurants and bars — because I can experience the end results myself. I can visit those places and see the work that we've done. That's very fulfilling for me.

## YOUR COMPANY DOES LIGHTING AND FURNITURE. WHICH DO YOU FOCUS ON?

Definitely lighting — that's the bulk of our work right now. When we started out, we did a mix of all three but we quickly came to specialise on lighting. Today we're very much a one-stop solution for lighting. We work with architectural firms, interior designers, etc and they come to us for lighting solutions.

## WHY LIGHTING?

It was a niche that we could fill. There are a lot of furniture makers in Malaysia. In fact, Malaysia is known to be an exporter of furniture. But not many companies here specialise in lighting. Besides, I've always been intrigued by lighting. When I was young, I'd look at lights and wish I could be a lighting designer. My interest in lighting was further sparked during my time working with the glass artist in Melbourne. We turned some glass sculptures into lights to create pendant lighting.

## YOU DIDN'T SPECIALISE IN LIGHTING AT UNIVERSITY DID YOU?

I didn't but I learnt a lot from my peers when I was working in Melbourne. After a group of us graduated, we went for many exhibitions together and we did a lot of knowledge sharing. I learnt a lot from my friends about lighting and how to assemble lights.

## ARE YOU STILL LEARNING NEW THINGS ABOUT LIGHTING?

For sure! Every project we do is a teaching experience — we learn how to work better with different kinds of materials, how



Lighting up a Nandos outlet in Tropicana.

CREDIT: LINEAR VISTA SDN BHD



Luna Lana Winter.

to improve our manufacturing process, how to be more cost effective and so on. Each project is a new challenge.

## CAN YOU SHARE WITH US YOUR DESIGN PHILOSOPHY?

I like to say that I add emotion into my designs. The designs are not meant to just look good but to evoke certain feelings. A good example is our Luna Lana line of lamps. These lamps have a lot of personality. When people see them, they're drawn to touching them. They want to touch them or take a picture of them.

## WHAT ARE YOUR VIEWS REGARDING SUSTAINABILITY?

Sustainability was something that I learnt in university in Australia. To be honest, it wasn't a topic of great importance when I was studying in Malaysia. Maybe because we're a developing country and people are very cost-conscious. Overseas, they even teach you how a product can be used at the end of its life, like how can we make use of the components to make other things.

## DO YOU THINK YOUR CREATIVITY COMES FROM NATURE OR NURTURE?

I was always very curious about things and always wanted to create things with my hands, even from young. So that's something innate. But it was nurtured

by my father who was a big advocate of allowing us to experience a lot of different things.

## DO YOU LIKE ENTREPRENEURSHIP?

To me it's sort of a love-hate thing. I'm a creative person so numbers are not my strong suit. It's really outside of my comfort zone. But the business side of things is something you have to deal with if you start a company. By nature I prefer to spend my time on creative pursuits, but these days most of my time is actually spent looking after the business — the whole operation. As a result, my product range is growing very slowly. But there are also fun aspects to business. I like doing marketing and finding new ways to showcase our products — funky ways that no one thinks of.

## HOW BIG IS YOUR TEAM AND DO YOU HAVE AMBITIONS TO EXPAND YOUR BUSINESS?

Currently there are six of us, including me. I'd love to grow the business, especially overseas. I know there are some creative entrepreneurs who prefer to keep their business small and niche but I personally would like us to grow as large as the sales can support us to be.

## WHAT'S HOLDING YOU BACK?

My business acumen mainly. I think I'm one step behind everyone else when it comes to business. But I'm learning every day to become a better business person.

## WHAT DO YOU LIKE TO DO OUTSIDE OF WORK?

I like to do outdoor activities like scuba diving and rock climbing — anything outdoors really. But I also go for things like yoga and meditation. I know these are like polar opposites — the adrenaline rush of outdoor activities and the calmness of indoor stuff. I think I just like challenging the norm of how I normally feel.

