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Four PH Design Brands Are Joining Paris' Maison&Objet for the First Time

MANILA, Philippines; August 2019 – A collective of like-minded Philippine designers and manufacturers is heading to Paris for the premier interior design trade show Maison&Objet, happening at the Paris Nord Villepinte Exhibition Centre from September 6 to 10.

Gathered under the theme Kindred: A Design Collective and the creative direction of Rita Nazareno and Gabby Lichauco, 13 Philippine design brands—CDO Handmade, CSM Philippines, E. Murio, Finali, HaloHalo, JB Woodcraft, Nature's Legacy, Schema, Southsea Veneer, Tali Handmade, Vito Selma, Weave Manila and Zacarias 1925—are representing the country and are bringing proudly-Filipino designs to a global audience.

While most of this year's participants have previously shown at Maison&Objet, four are joining the prestigious design event for the first time: E. Murio, HaloHalo, JB Woodcraft, and South Sea Veneer.

Heritage furniture maker E. Murio has produced over 40 years' worth of finely-crafted furniture, home interiors, and accessories. Working with tropical woods, bamboo, rattan, and grass weaves, as well as metal and leather finishes, E. Murio's timeless, tropical designs echo its Spanish and Asian roots.

Infusing fresh ideas and innovative designs to their traditional pieces is creative director Tisha de Borja-Samson. As an architect and interior designer, her expertise in the field bring new designs, techniques, and concepts. "We haven't joined an international show in many years," de Borja-Samson shares, "We felt that it was time to reenter that market—and having Rita Nazareno and Gabby Lichauco curating and supporting us made it possible."

For their presentation at Maison&Objet, E. Murio is bringing in pieces from their rattan and bamboo collection called "Unadorned" which features simple, functional, yet exquisitely made, everyday objects.

Another industry veteran is South Sea Veneer. Based in Mabalacat, Pampanga, South Sea Veneer—an offshoot of family business Betis Crafts—has had years of experience in exporting their products to countries like Japan, Australia, and the U.S. Their participation in M&O, however, will allow their contemporary woodwork to be appreciated by a whole new international market, particularly the European set. Known for their expertise in various wood craft techniques translated onto wall décor, bed frames, chairs, tables, cabinetry, and even tabletop décor, what sets South Sea Veneer apart is their mastery of marquetry or veneer inlay.

Initially working as a sub-contractor and manufacturer for other brands, Alona Bituin-Sinsuat, South Sea Veneer's Chief Operating Officer and design department head, established their own product line, whose select pieces will be exhibited at Maison&Objet.

Following Kindred's theme of focusing on smaller decorative objects, South Sea Veneer will showcase their nesting trays made with lahar casted in resin and wood covered in faux shagreen, as well as decorative bauble boxes made of mappa burl veneer.

JB Woodcraft, sister company to South Sea Veneer is also a subsidiary to core family business Betis Crafts. But unlike South Sea Veneer's clean, modern lines, JB Woodcraft specializes in intricately carved wood. Founded in 1972 in Betis, Pampanga, the brand established itself as the leading exporter of hand-carved components and furniture. Bold, ultra-detailed, and life-like, JB Woodcraft's skilled artisans, at the helm of Leslie Bituin-Mendoza, hand-carve each design from old-world romantic filigrees that fill entire bed frames to more contemporary pieces that feature a single carved element. Their collection for Maison, however, is all about accent pieces, like a floral wreath mirror or tabletop candleholders, made more contemporary with a sleek black finish.

The youngest brand of the group is HaloHalo. Established in 2013 by the brother and sister team of Rocco and Cara Sumabat, HaloHalo is a lifestyle brand based in Manila. Much like the local delicacy it is named after, HaloHalo is a *mélange* of handbags and home accessories made with various materials and unlikely combinations.

They initially designed large multipurpose tote bags aptly called *Bayong*, made out of recycled plastic *banig*, that could be used for grocery runs, as a planter, or even storage. While the traditional *banigs* we have come to know are made with brightly-colored weaves, HaloHalo recreated their version in muted tones and fine patterns, lending it a more contemporary feel. After a sold-out first collection, the brand expanded their line to include smaller totes with leather straps and fun bungee cord details, to home and outdoor accessories like roll-up travel mats or poolside recliners—all made with their signature *banig* material.

For their first international trade show, HaloHalo will showcase their time-tested pieces, like their *Sopa* ottomans. Also made with their recycled plastic *banig*, these ottomans come in various shapes and sizes that can be stacked or styled together. The brand has also collaborated with E. Murio, providing their signature *banig* on the latter's dog houses and small furniture pieces. "We love everything E. Murio makes and it was such an ease working with their team that we hope to continue this collaboration," says Cara.

Catch these four labels and see more of their world-class designs at the DesignPhilippines presentation in Hall 5A Unique and Eclectic Signature, Booths M40 – N39 at Maison&Objet.