

# SINGAPORE TATLER HOMES

THE INSIDER'S GUIDE TO LUXURIOUS LIVING



## ISLANDS IN THE SUN

Homes that embrace the best of nature  
to create a lush tropical paradise

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# DOUBLE POWER

Wong Liang Wei, 30 and Wong Liang Yuan, 25

HAVEN LIFESTYLE

Wong Liang Wei's (pictured right) and Liang Yuan's father, Toon Tung (TT), started a distributorship in bath and bed linen in 1986, a successful venture that later expanded into exporting home furniture to overseas as well. Today, Haven Lifestyle is composed of two brands – Embowood, which specialises in producing handcrafted upholstered chesterfield armchairs and sofas, and Bed and Bath, a bed linen distributor which has also branched off into producing and developing its own regional brands, Horgen, Ann Azalea and Grand Atelier.

One of the benefits that consumers derive from investing in Singaporean brands is the assurance of quality according to international standards. As testament to the superior workmanship and stringent controls in the creation of its seating appointments, Embowood has been awarded the ISO 90001-2000 certification in quality management.

While Liang Yuan has always known he would join the family business after graduation, elder brother Liang Wei was practising law in Hong Kong when he decided to join the company. The duo also have three younger sisters who are still schooling.

**What made you decide to join the family business?**

**Liang Wei (LW):** My father would gently nudge me in this direction during our chats when I was a lawyer in Hong Kong. We have a factory in Penang that makes the chesterfield sofas. At that time, it was clear that we couldn't continue to operate the factory without a management staff to oversee things now and then. My father was nearly 60 and lacked the energy to make frequent business trips. He even talked about selling the business. I couldn't bear to let my father's efforts go to waste.

**Liang Yuan (LY):** There was no question for me as I have always been interested in design and furnishings. I studied business in the university just so I could add management value to the business.

**How different are the challenges you face from the ones your dad encountered?**

**LY:** When our father first started distributing bed and bath linen, he had to spend a lot of time educating salespeople on bath linen and fabric as the market wasn't as sophisticated in the 1980s. At that time, not many people knew about threadcounts or the type of weave techniques and how that translated into the level of comfort in bedlinen. Now our clients are very savvy so we have to be one step ahead of them in terms of knowing about the current design trends and be even stricter with our quality.

**There is no local retail presence for Embowood and all your products are produced for export to other countries.**

**Do you have any plans to set up a store in Singapore?**

**LW:** Yes, we do get a lot of enquiries from local retailers requesting to carry our products so we are definitely hoping to set up a physical outlet here soon. When we first started producing the chesterfield sofas, the local market wasn't so attuned with western classical styles, but it is fast catching up now with more homeowners doing their own research and visiting international furniture fairs. Singaporeans are becoming increasingly well-travelled and more informed when it comes to appreciating good design. We are currently looking for a suitable space for our first Singapore store.

**What changes do you hope to see in the local industry in five years' time?**

**LY:** I hope that local homeowners will start having more confidence in local furnishing brands. Our design innovations and manufacturing standards are just as good as overseas brands. We have seen a spike in recognition and acceptance towards local fashion brands, but people's perceptions towards local furniture have yet to catch up, so that needs to happen.

Embowood's leather-upholstered creations, such as its chesterfield sofas, armchairs and the Louis tub chair below, are handmade by craftsmen at its own facilities in Malaysia and exported to Australia

