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If he looks like a philosopher, it's because Daniel Korb speaks wisdom into the minds of MIFF attendees about designing great furniture and a great life.

We Are All Designers—Some of Us Are Just Professional

Approaching existence as designers may improve all our lives, including those in the industry

By Shantini Harriet
Furnish Now writer

There are speakers and there are philosophers; when you marry the two, you get Swiss architect and furniture designer Daniel Korb.

"We live in a time of knowledge and I fear that we no longer know what it means to exist," according to Mr. Korb's paraphrasing of Kierkegaard at his Wednesday seminar at MIFF 2011.

That speaks volumes on Mr. Korb's approach to life and also his approach to industry.

Through using metaphors and analogies during his presentation, Mr. Korb's message was clear: "Nothing exists in isolation but everything exists in relation to each other."

Mr. Korb, whose collaboration with renowned American furniture manufacturer Herman Miller

resulted in the multi award winning desking system, "Sense," imparted a fundamental message during his seminar: as intuitive designers, we are the architects of our own future.

"We" indeed.

The Korb philosophy is that we do not have to be experts to change the world; we are all designers. It is by thinking and generating ideas and being inspired by our surroundings, the people in them and their relationship to each other that we will be able to make changes and achieve success, he said.

The message also carries special significance for professional designers.

Since the purpose of design is to add value to any object or product, designers should intuitively dig into their own essence to bring context and purpose to their works to make them relevant, he suggested.

Meanwhile, in the past,

complexity and stick to simplicity, an easier working method that supports them to reap faster rewards, Mr. Korb said. Designers should strive to translate their designs so that they are understood by others and not just the designer, he said. It makes better sense to create something that not only looks good but works well too according to the needs or wants of clients, he said.

"Take care that whatever we do is not wasted; there is no waste in nature", said Korb, borrowing from the Cradle-to-Cradle concept, which involves a global revolution among designers to copy from nature's processes in modern industrial design.

He also explored the term "meaningful spaces" by showing how harmonizing the relationship between different objects in a space gives more meaning to architecture. Doing so connects each object to give a better sense of the space it is within, he said. It is essential for architecture and design to merge so as to connect the vision to reality, and communication is key to bringing both together, he added. It is through design that the industry will see growth, he said.

Furniture designers must be more quality-driven than price-driven since attention to detail is very important, Mr. Korb said. He explained: "When I first came to Malaysia, I had no idea about the country. But the taxi ride from the airport that first time decided me on my attitude towards Malaysia; the taxi was clean, the driver spoke English and he was proud of his country. It told me that he was educated and that his government made sure that he was. Attention to detail."

architecture occurred in the context of design, but with changing times and needs, the understanding of what is important to architecture changed too. There is no right or wrong to what designers and architects do: consider only whether the sum effect mixes its look, feel, touch, et cetera, to make the design or product relevant to its purpose, he suggested.

Designers should reduce