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What's in *a name?*

When you've got reputation to uphold and a distinguishing approach to design, moving forward can become a double edged sword – you don't want to rest on your laurels nor should you stray too far from the tree. Japanese furniture company Ritzwell has managed this particular balancing act and with it, gained a new friend in Stylecraft.



Ritzwell is a name that, since its inception in the early 90s, has been associated with thoughtful design, careful craftsmanship and enduring style. Since 1992 the Japanese furniture company has continued to fill the market with pieces of a distinct Japanese sensibility. In more recent times, however, they've relocated their headquarters to Milan, in pursuit of a fresh approach to their furniture range, re-imagining – without discarding – their original ethos to address to a modern market.

Ritzwell has been available to the Australian and South East Asian design savvy since 2012 through Stylecraft, a company that likewise prides itself as being a supplier of cutting edge design. Ritzwell brings a unique visual appeal to the Stylecraft offering, sitting seamlessly alongside contemporary pieces and Australian and European designs.

Habitus spoke to Wataru Yano, Director of Sales and Marketing at Ritzwell, about what the future holds for the company and Tony Russell, the Brand Director of Stylecraft, about what it means for the consumer.

"Like music or art, our goal is to make furniture that becomes a part of your daily life, surpassing artificial boundaries of culture and custom to bring peace and tranquillity to people everywhere," says Wataru. Given such a poetic approach and culture of design it comes as no surprise that following their relocation to Italy, the "centre of design" according to Wataru, there was a lot of international and European-specific interest. Ritzwell designs are renowned for their outstanding quality and unique Japanese sensibility as much as for their powerful connection to architecture and design. Noticing them in Milan one year led Stylecraft to pursue a relationship. "We were particularly taken by their beautiful designs and their use of timber," says Tony.



"We believed our clients would appreciate the beautiful use of timber with the quality of manufacture and craftsmanship that is apparent across all their ranges."

Not a company to rest on their laurels, nor one to play it safe when it comes to design, Ritzwell is constantly moving forward. The BLACK&WHITE Collection, launched at the 2016 Milan Fair, is case-in-point.

"Black and white usually look cold and inorganic," says Wataru, "but in the world of Ritzwell design they make a warm combination." A simple, understated balance between form, function and visual appeal characterises the collection and asserts a refined elegance to the overall aesthetic. "The warmth of the colours gently draws out the beauty of the wood, giving new depth to the design," he says. "The release of the BLACK&WHITE series expands the appeal of the collection to clients who are seeking the beautiful timber craftsmanship for which Ritzwell are renowned in a more sophisticated black finish or unique white wash," adds Tony.

Of the new BLACK&WHITE Collection, there are three key pieces that *Habitus* loves.

"The MO Table is a discrete element, silent, but undeniably a significant presence in each room. The perfect balance of shapes and material," says Wataru. Available in two finishes, (black or white), and three sizes (as a dining, coffee or side table), this subtle surface can easily be added to a lounge, living or dining room without upsetting the existing theme. Its solid wood make up speaks to tradition while simple lines embody a modern aesthetic.

The Marcel dining chair, which is striking in its midnight black or white finish, complements the MO dining table perfectly. Modern woodwork brings the focus back to the expertise of the skilled designers and craftsmen who have a thorough understanding of timber and its characteristics. "The natural feel of the basic walnut is preserved, bringing out the warmth of the wood," says Wataru.

Genuine leather belts, fabric cushions and a wooden frame makes the Blava easy chair a cosy seat to relax in and spend a leisurely evening or weekend. Exuding as much comfort in its visual appeal as it does in use, it's a sophisticated piece of furniture that doesn't sacrifice ergonomics. "The more you use Blava the better it will feel," says Wataru. "And as you get to know it you'll appreciate its luxury: the feel when you sit, the organic fusion of leather belts and wooden frame that you'll never tire of."

"Ritzwell are definitely on an upward trajectory with their latest designs," says Tony. "Whilst elements of the Japanese design aesthetic is unique, adding a European sensitivity will certainly broaden its appeal across international markets."

From past to present Ritzwell pieces are designed to grow and age with the user, to build a relationship that surpasses seasonal trends: an ethos that aligns perfectly with Stylecraft. The idea that the consumer learns more about the furniture – and vice versa – as it becomes a part of their daily life and absorbs their habits, is characteristic of Ritzwell's approach to, and culture of, design.



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WATARU YANO

