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OPUS 18035 by Marie Christine Foucher-Poignant & François Poignant



MM Galleri flagship showroom, Singapore

## The Art of Bending Stone

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When describing natural stone as a material for design or manufacturing, we could use words such as heavy and rigid – both sound accurate in a traditional sense. However, times have changed and a revolutionary new marble technology by MM Galleri is breaking the mold (literally). The award-winning technique of '*bended marble*' has taken decades of passion, research and innovation to perfect. MM Galleri is here to bend the rules of design.

Established in 1992, MM Galleri is specialised in supplying a wide range of natural stone, providing innovative '*bended marble*' solutions to architects, interior designers, furniture craftsman, developers, and home owners in Singapore and across the world. The backstory of how their technology was developed is inspiring because it relates to honouring the beauty of natural materials within the design.

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Photos | MM Galleri



Award Winning 'Bent and Light' project by MM Galleri – a 400 square-metre cave showroom made out of marble

Back in the nineties, Company Founder Peter Tjioe was working in the high-end furniture industry and was consistently surprised to see that marble with veins was being rejected by manufacturers. His viewpoint was that dismissing the natural beauty of these stones was a terrible waste, and that design trends constantly change. In retrospect, he was right, because today Statuario (white marble with distinct grey and gold veining throughout and a striking, bold pattern) is now one of the most popular stone materials in the world. With this seed of thought firmly planted, he started his

quest to overcome some of the challenges associated with manufacturing natural stone.

Forward to 2001, Peter continued to have a fascination with natural stone, and developed the technology to cut stone up to 1mm thick, thus solving the issue of weight. However, slicing it thin made it too fragile, so to give the material a better structure it was blended with other materials such as aluminium or plywood. This meant at this stage of development, it could be used as a laminate for walls and floors. ▶



MM Galleri designs also include fashion items

It wasn't until 2012 when by chance, the 'lightbulb moment' finally happened. While developing a set of three marble dividers with a steel structure in the middle, Peter and his team noticed that the marble could in fact bend. After five more years of research, in late 2016, the '*bended marble*' technique as it's known today was born opening up a world of design possibilities in 3D. Organic designs such as furniture and other unique objects could now be made out of stone. Today, incredible creations even include an onyx guitar and fashion items.

Over the years, MM Gallery have worked on various high-end design projects around the world. Recently they completed a superblock project in Medan. It used 140,000 sqm of stone and took three years to complete.

In Singapore, the flagship MM Galleri showroom is the proud embodiment their work. Their interior design won the Pinnacle Award for *Best Commercial Project* by the Natural Stone Institute in 2018.

Walking into the showroom feels like entering a cocoon made out of marble. This atmospheric design concept was inspired by Disney's movie *Finding Nemo*, visitors to the showroom will find themselves submerged in the art of bended marble technology. In the 400-square-meter cave – aptly named the '*Bent and Light Project*' – the walls are clad over the curves and contours of the chamber to show the extensive ways marble can be used as walls. It seems very fitting to be inspired by *Nemo*, the little fish who ventured out of his comfort zone. When we challenge ourselves to think outside the box, we sometimes make amazing discoveries.