



CONTEMPORARY BAMBOO

Bamboo's strength and elastic properties make it an important traditional material within all aspects of Indonesian culture and ideal for the design and production of a wide range of household objects and furniture. The durability and longevity of bamboo makes it a material that is suitable for the construction of buildings, furniture and everyday items. While bamboo is recognised as an important aspect of traditional Javanese arts and crafts it has yet to be recognised as a viable material from which to design and produce contemporary furniture items in Indonesia for the international market.

In its undertaking the project explored the material properties of bamboo, its use in traditional construction techniques and its potential as a laminated material that can be used as an alternative to scarce timber resources in the production of furniture. Beyond the physical reinterpretation of the material, the project established an approach to contemporary design which maintains a cultural identity that is particular to Indonesia while addressing the needs and desires of the global market in furniture design. To this end the research explored the concept of 'cultural hybridization'. These issues were synthesised through the development of a number of contemporary furniture designs that employed bamboo as a laminated material in innovative ways.

Through the consideration of western woodworking techniques with traditional Javanese culture and traditional artisans' skills, the project exposed the potentials within the bridging of cultures, technologies and skills through the act of design and offered a new perspective on the conception of furniture design which uses traditional culture and skills in combination with modern ideas to create products which fulfil contemporary lifestyle needs.

The RMIT Masters by Project was undertaken from my position as an Interior Design lecturer at Sebelas Maret University, Surakarta, Central Java. In this position I see my role as one which is vested with the responsibility of researching, developing and teaching ways of how designers may work in Indonesia. This project serves as an important case study in a way that designers can apply traditional materials and craft skills in the production of contemporary designs for urban needs and a global marketplace. The project used the knowledge gained from a western education system and its modern technology to develop a case study for the collaboration between Indonesian designers and traditional artisans in producing contemporary furniture for global markets.

In this process it has become clear that the contemporary designer's role goes far beyond creative design thinking based on market demands. Rather the responsibility of the contemporary Indonesian designer is to consider that their designs and products are managed to meet the social, economic and ecological sustainability for future generations. Good design is seen as an act which preserves and conserves the indigenous potencies of craftsmanship, values the identities of distinctive cultures, and views material as a precious resource. In this case the role of the designer involves the bridging of the traditional and contemporary worlds and shaping how local resources such as bamboo can be used in both environmentally and culturally sustainable ways.



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