

## THE PROCESS

# Tata by Katrin Greiling

In October 2011, Katrin Greiling travelled to Indonesia, where she stayed for almost three months to develop new objects, along with local craftsmen, made using domestic materials and techniques. Form talks with her about *The Evolution of the Object*, which was financed by the Swedish Arts Grants Committee. The results included the Tata sofa series made of rattan

As a designer, working in rattan was liberating. It was nice to leave the squares and precision behind and instead be able to draw free curves in a way I've never done before.

It all started in Bandung in western Java. One of my assistants introduced me to Tata, a woman who runs a furniture workshop squeezed between dense buildings and surrounded by green mountains. The building was simple – a sheet metal structure above a concrete floor that also serves as a work surface. The air was thick with cigarette smoke, the lighting was bad. But for someone like me, who loves photographing workshops, it was fantastic!

I spent a lot of time in the workshop and became more and more interested in the men who worked with the rattan furniture that was being produced for export. My camera allowed me to get in really close to them, observe the details, and get to know the material's amazing properties. I became fascinated with flexibility, lustre and smell, and the creaking sound when you sit on a piece of rattan furniture.

Tata, named after the woman who runs the workshop, is made by first

creating a skeleton of rattan sticks that are 2–3 cm in diameter. It is built in three stages: soaking, bending by binding it together in a u-shape and finally giving the sticks their precise curve using a gas burner. Then you weave the skeleton with 6–10 metre long, thin, pre-soaked rattan sticks.

Rattan is unbelievably flexible and can be bent in every direction – my starting point was, "Think in plastic, produce in rattan." Finally, the outer and inner shapes are locked together, and tension between them creates amazing strength and stability. It takes about three days to make the smallest piece in the series.

The material on the seat is an industrially produced textile that is similar to neoprene. I love the contrast between the natural material and the technical textiles. I also became increasingly aware of the importance of keeping the cultivation of raw materials within the country, as well as the significance of the material for maintaining economic well-being and a lively craft tradition.

**Anders Modig**





