

THE MIDDLE EAST

TIME



WHY THEY FIGHT

AND WHY IT'S DIFFERENT THIS TIME

The never-ending conflict between Israel
and its enemies takes a dangerous new turn

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STYLE WATCH

THE RATTAN REVOLUTION

GIVEN ITS ASSOCIATIONS WITH DECAYING HILL STATIONS AND HIPPIY HOVELS, RATTAN FURNITURE HAS NOT TRADITIONALLY HAD GOOD PRESS. But in Philippine designer Kenneth Cobonpue, *kennethcobonpue.com*, the material may have found its first great virtuoso. The 37-year-old alumnus of New York City's Pratt Institute has been garnering kudos—most recently a 2005 Design for Asia Award—from his studio in the sun-splashed city of Cebu (a place better known for its azure ocean and impossibly sweet mangos). Now the big time beckons. Brad Pitt recently bought Cobonpue's Voyage bed, pictured; Warner Brothers asked Cobonpue to furnish a casino set for the forthcoming *Ocean's Thirteen*; and distributors from Spain to Singapore are clamoring to stock Cobonpue's sexy, curvaceous designs, most of which are consummate expressions of rattan's versatility. The skin of the lowly vine is used as a weaving material and for binding (some fastening techniques are borrowed from traditional boat building), while rattan's surprisingly sturdy core forms the structure. "Each piece I design has a character and soul born from the inspiration and design process," says Cobonpue, adding that his ideas come mostly from the natural richness of Cebu. One exception is his award-winning Lolah chair, which Cobonpue says was inspired by a softly dented can of Coke. Talk about turning base metals into gold. —By Joan Koh

