



Chitra Subijakto:

DRESSING SHE-DEVIL, STYLING THE ARCHIPELAGO



Bouncy, fun and a funky mom of Naradiya (9) and Narayana (7), the multi-talented Chitra Subijakto is not only well-known as the Fashion Stylist for some of those Lux glittering print and TV commercials, but also popular feature films like *Buruan Cium Gue*, *Jatuh Cinta Lagi*, and *Kuntilanak* – Indonesia’s favorite she-devil, just to name a few. This Johnny Depp fan is also one of the key persons behind the birth of *Alun-Alun Indonesia (A.A.I)*. Sitting in the cozy Grand Indonesia’s Warung Kopi one Saturday afternoon, she shares more than just her thoughts and dreams with FRV.

Text: Kathy Petite, Handojo Photos: Ramadhan

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FRV: What's been keeping you busy recently?

CS: Apart from being the Creative Buyer for Alun-Alun Indonesia, I am working on some TV commercials, and feature films like Romantika d'amour, Kuntilanak 2 and Oh My God. Also, participating as one of mentors in Sunsilk Workshop which travels to different cities around Indonesia.

FRV: Tell us more about how A.A.I began?

CS: It all started with a chat with Dea Sudharman of Gedung 28 – an art gallery. She asked me if I had an idea for a shopping center that focused on Indonesian-made items. I thought, how about cool stuff for young people? Fashion and stuff that's made from the Indonesian culture but still looks trendy and fashionable.

FRV: Why did you choose to target young people?

CS: Because most young Indonesians aren't so excited about their own culture. They're usually abroad-minded...which well, we can't really blame because, come to think of it, there's no place where they find cool trendy stuff that is typically Indonesian. For example, this stereotype that batik is just for mums at weddings, and only in brown color. The fact is, it comes in lots of colors too, you know. It can be fun! Like, yellows, greens, reds and many more. So this is what I wanted to display.

FRV: How long did it take to put together?

CS: The talk with Dhea was in December last year. And... here we are, just opened 4 weeks ago.

FRV: You're such a fast runner?

CS: (Laughing) Kinda, yeah.

FRV: And didn't you travel around Indonesia much for this project?

CS: I've been traveling since February. But not all Indonesia yet, though it is my plan in the future. So far, I've just done Java and Bali, and I haven't finished yet as there's still a lot to explore.

FRV: What did you do during the trip?

CS: I talked to the craftsmen and discussed with them about my ideas and showed them drawings of designs I had in mind to see if they could do something for me. It might have been a bag, mat, or something else. You see, the current trend is new rave, with those bold shocking colors, so I asked them if they could do the batik using those colors. So we exchanged ideas and saw what we could do about it.



There are a lot of sections here. You will see antiques, fashion, accessories, a children's section, jewelry, Indonesian designers, dry foods, and lots more



FRV: You traveled in a team?

CS: Nope, just by myself. And it was a hell of a fun! (Laughing) Cruising with the becak by myself, visiting villages, browsing around, observing and talking to people and craftsmen. I loved it! Traveling is fun. I wanna do more. We have a lot to dig up and bring out.

FRV: So what can we expect to see at A.A.I?

CS: There are a lot of sections here. You will see antiques, fashion, accessories, a children's section, where you will find clothes and toys. The traditional toy Congklak for example....instead of coming in the usual brown tones, it is painted in vibrant, happy multicolors so it appeals more to kids. The same thing also happens to the becaks (3 wheeled mini-taxis). We put exciting illustrations and lively colors on it so it looks much more fun. You will also find sections like regional art, where you can find baskets from Lombok, and all kinds of stuff. There are also sections with jewelry, Indonesian designers, dry foods, and lots more.

FRV: And your favorite is?

CS: Dry foods!. Ah. The Hot Spicy Emping Melinjo is to die for! I also love the children's and jewelry section.

FRV: What was the the biggest challenge for you when setting up A.A.I?

CS: How to lure and pull young people here so they become interested in products like this.

FRV: Are you planning to open another branch in the future?

CS: Yes! (A mix of an excited and nervous laugh). We've requested to open one in Bali. Also, Singapore or Hongkong, and probably Japan and London. We're still overwhelmed with the response. Still working on it... let's see.

FRV: When do inspirations come to you? When you're alone or in the crowd?

CS: Hmmmm. Can't say for sure. Sometimes the light bulb is turned on when I look at people, what's happening around the world, what people are mad about, many things. It can come from anywhere, unpredictably. I can look at a painting and the colors inspire me to create or mix something together.

FRV: What about being a fashion stylist? A coincidence or a job you were planning to do?

CS: Accidental. Eight years ago when Sarah Sechan set up Cosmo Girl magazine, she was kind of intrigued with the way I dressed up by mixing up stuff. She offered me to take part and well...that's where it all came from.

FRV: So you actually have no background in fashion?

CS: Nope. I finished my studies in Financial and Banking Management.

FRV: Must be a hectic life with lots on your hands. How do you cure stress?

CS: Bookstores. And looking at my kids.

FRV: What about parties? What was the craziest, most exciting party you ever been?

CS: A Halloween party by Indika! It was so much fun. Everybody came as something. I mean, all of them! You know how rare it is for guests who loyally get dressed for themed-parties. I saw my tall, guy friend donned in a nurse uniform dancing around up there, and I was like, hell...is that really him? That was hilarious.

FRV: Name what's the top of your wish list when you blow out your next birthday candles?

CS: Hmm.....just lying, sunbathing in Bali, with my husband Bimo, watching our kids surfing. Isn't it fab? (Laughing)



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ALUN ALUN INDONESIA

Breathing fresh air to Indonesian heritage, Alun Alun Indonesia comes as a 3,800-squaremeters space, located in the central part of Jakarta – Grand Indonesia Shopping Town, and dedicated to the best of the archipelago. It is where Indonesian cultures are celebrated, presented, and repackaged to youngsters and their folks too.

Come for Batik Limaran, Obin, and Ronald V. Gaghana's creations. Come for delicious jajanan, or Indonesian sweets. Come for the stylish fashion for teenagers and yuppies with an “ethnic” twist. Come for T-shirts with Bung Karno's headshot instead of Che Guevara's.

Alun Alun Indonesia aims to bring out local values with contemporary spirit. Its first opening weeks have received universal praise. Shoppers flocked inside their Warung Kopi to kick back, sipping hot ginger coffee, grazing ongol-ongol (if you don't know what that is you just have to come and try it!). It's the new talk of the town, beating down the buzz of foreign designer outlets. GAP-what?

Alun Alun Indonesia is not this country's first attempt to promote its vibrant culture. After old-school Sarinah and Pasaraya declared “official souvenir malls for non-adventurous tourists”, Sogo Seni had its fame in Plaza Senayan. Yet, the non-contemporary approach resulted in rolling down the Batik curtains, and the site was then used for a Kinokuniya Bookstore.

Alun Alun Indonesia received nods of approval for its strong concept and effort in reaching not only tourists, but also – most importantly! – local MTV generations who are clueless about where exactly is Borobudur. We cannot wait until more products – hunted by Creative Buyer Chitra Subijakto – come from all over the islands, not just Java and Bali. Please, please ... bring it on! **FRV**

Alun Alun Indonesia
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www.alunalunindonesia.com