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03



## UNMASKED

THE NEW FACES OF  
CONTEMPORARY ASIAN ART  
EXCLUSIVE COVERAGE:  
BLUEPRINT FASHION 2011  
20 EMERGING  
PRODUCT DESIGNERS



# CLASH OF CULTURES

*The artists behind the name Indieguerillas mix, match and mash together cultural influences and artistic disciplines.*

WORDS FARAH WARDANI

In 1999, Santi Ariestyowanti and Dyatmiko Bawono were a young couple, freshly graduated from the design department of Indonesian Arts Institute in Yogyakarta. At the time, the most common path followed by Yogya design graduates was to move to Jakarta and find work in renowned graphics houses or advertising agencies. But Ariestyowanti and Bawono, who would later marry, insisted on staying in Yogyakarta, where they started their own independent design firm. It was a tough choice that often made them feel like they were undertaking guerilla fighting in the harsh competition within the design scene, and thus chose the name Indieguerillas – a portmanteau formed from the words independent, Indonesia, and guerillas.

Their distinctive design style gained popular appeal when they produced an album cover for local band Sheila on 7, who became a chart-topper, and when they handled the layout of indie magazine OUTMAGZ.. These projects led them being invited by Cemeti Art House to participate in their collective exhibitions in 2002. From then on, they began to

consciously explore the art scene more deeply, without leaving their commercial design works behind.

Indieguerillas stands out among others for their consistent style of blending disciplines, often making crossovers between graphic design, media arts, painting and graphic arts. Even though they use digital technology in their works, they have a special affection for exploring manual techniques with a strong consciousness. “In our works, there are times when we really want to have it done thoroughly manual or handmade, releasing ourselves from the undo-copy-paste-delete habits, the instant mentality,” Ariestyowanti explains. “It can be a liberating process to do things that way, being in touch directly with the object and materials. Photoshop helps us to do a lot of things, but we try to balance it by detaching ourselves from the computers many times.”

The great use of design elements in their handmade works is also part of their awareness of not being specifically trained in fine art disciplines, so they try to integrate and apply their graphic design approach into paintings and other works – also with

(FROM TOP) Indieguerillas invite people to laugh at themselves in a contemplative way through their work, *Disciples of the Uncompromising Sacred Rules*; Santi Ariestyowanti and Dyatmiko Bawono, the couple behind the label Indieguerillas.



touches of comics and cartoons. These experiments with disciplines and materials then also led their works to evolve conceptually, by offering plays of iconographies relating to the issues of cultural identity, roots and the globalised generation in Indonesia. This peaked with the series *Fools'lore: Folklore Reload* (2008), their solo exhibition at Biasa Art Space, Bali. Here, icons of Javanese arts like *wayang* puppets blend with bikinis, Pop Art, Japanese Ukiyo-e, marionettes, European comics and many more – all presented in a cheerful yet ironic, adventurous yet contemplative spirit.

Ariestyowanti explains: “There is a strong urge in us to explore our roots, to return or revisit. Everyone here now has become more similar to others, no distinctive character. The same lifestyle, the same products, the same global brands. Who will care about our cultural roots if not ourselves? So we try to make fusions between our globalised self and where we come from. It is like making gateways, hybrid visuals that offer familiar elements on both sides.”

*Fools'lore: Folklore Reload* cemented Indieguerillas on the map as one of the most prominent emerging contemporary Indonesian art collectives. Following this success, they launched *Happy Victim*, a series of products, including garments and everyday items, based on similar concepts – the fusion between



(CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT) *Hunter-Gatherer Society I: Javanicus Vandalicus Sneakerensis*; *Hunter-Gatherer Society II: Javanicus Concolor Sneakerensis*; Jessie wears gown from House of Irsan Black Label Vintage and holds Indieguerillas' mask *Schizophrenia Blitzkrieg #1*; *Portable Art is Good For You* series: *The Devotee, The Hands That Feed, The Congregation*.

local and global. The product launch was accompanied by another solo show at Valentine Willie Fine Arts, Singapore, entitled *Happy Victims*. The phrase stands for their ironic notion of the new generation that often finds itself falling easily into the hands of the new commercial, global commodities. They know they are trapped, but they are happy. For Ariestyowanti and Bawono, it is also a way that they – happy victims themselves – can turn the joke into a reflection.

More recently, they have been travelling extensively. One of their most memorable international experiences was when they were invited by curator Victoria Lu to join the *ANIMAMIX Biennial* at MOCA Taipei (2009), which also showcased the works of artists like Haruki Murakami and Yoshitomo Nara. Recently, they returned from a three-month residency at HEDEN, The Hague, with a project that explores relations between cultural and culinary history, entitled: *Gastronaut: Eatventure LOOKING FOOD!*, which hasn't been exhibited in Indonesia yet. Now Ariestyowanti and Bawono say they are excited by their upcoming residencies and projects, and are looking forward to new experimentations of blending technologies and 'old-school' media. As the 'happy victims' of their works, we share their excitement. [indieguerillas.com](http://indieguerillas.com) 