



SLOW FASHION LAB – INDONESIA

This laboratory offers different perspectives on the way crafters, designers and researchers approach the slow fashion philosophy in Indonesia. By extending the definition of a lab into an organic platform, this platform appreciates and accommodates initiatives that respond positively to environmental issues, human welfare as well as cultural heritage.

Utilizing the perspective of seeing a laboratory as a place to seek knowledge, the *Slow Fashion Lab* offers insights into diversity in investigation, exploration and experimentation. This insight is rooted in the slow fashion philosophy - a philosophy that is based on longer utilisation, better durability, higher quality, ethical production as well as being environmentally friendly.

In Indonesia, there is a legacy of "local laboratories", which maintain a harmony of production with the earth and the culture. The intimate relation between water and the textile industry in the past is reflected on the way Indonesians have named their rivers. The name Citarum River, for example, comes from fabric natural dyes called "*Tarum*", commonly known as "*Indigo*" or "*Tom*" (*indigofera*). The Citarum River was the backbone of the textile industry in the archipelago for nearly a century. The tropical climate and resource of water in Indonesia give this country a wealth of natural dyes, but in 1905 imported synthetic dyes introduced to the Indonesian archipelago's textile manufacturers so that the use of natural dyes was greatly reduced thereafter.

Indonesia owns the biggest water resources in the Asia Pacific region. Twenty one percent of the water resources in Asia Pacific are located in Indonesia. This amount is equivalent to 6% of water resources around the world. Indonesians call their homeland or *Heimat* (Germany) "*tanah air*" which literally means "water" [and] "land". The availability of water in Indonesia helps the production of textiles and supports the domestic garment industry.

The abundance of water sources in Indonesia is one of the key factors that make the productivity of Indonesian garment industry ranking 9th and the textile industry ranking 11th worldwide with a market value of US\$ 15.9 billion (2015). More than 200 international clothing brands are manufacturing in Indonesia and exploit local water resources. Poor sewerage causes polluted water flow. Toxic substances go through the water and are dangerously consumed by local residents. Unprocessed waste colours from the textile production cover the water surface and block the photosynthesis process, thus reduce oxygen in the water, which in return threatens its whole microorganism.

The fashion industry itself is highly dependent on the availability of materials. Almost every step in the process chain in this industry involves water. One cotton T-shirt, for example, requires approximately

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2700 litres of water for its production process. The production of half a kilogram of yarn alone needs more than 50 litres of water. This dependency places the textile industry among the top 10 largest in the world that consume and pollute water.

Responding to this issue, the *Slow Fashion Lab* bridges philosophy and experimentation through the introduction of materials, technique and process, research initiatives, community collaborations as well as a showcase of slow fashion products from emerging labels, projects at universities and an example of Haute Couture designers in Indonesia. The dynamics of the differences between local virtue, traditions and experimentation become important substances in the vessels of knowledge of this *Slow Fashion Lab in Indonesia*.

The use of natural dyes and fibre, research on future fashion, design strategies that support water and energy efficiency in the production cycle, an in-depth understanding of the culture that underlies traditional textiles, waste DIY upcycling initiatives as well as the implementation of slow fashion as a way of life by one of Haute Couture designers are the highlights of this exhibition. Designers, researchers, crafters and labels from Indonesia that are committed to the slow fashion philosophy in this laboratory provide alternatives and fuel hope to join a global slow fashion initiative.

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