

Zandra Rhodes x Kraftangan Malaysia 2015

By Aziza Gheblawi

In a world where designers and trends come and go, only a few have stood against the test of time by remaining as daring and unique from the day they first set foot in the mystical and fabulous world of fashion. One of the longest reigning fashion icons in the world is Dame Zandra Rhodes whose garments catapulted London into the international fashion circuit as part of the new wave British designers in the 1970s through her unique approach to garment construction seen in her use of printed fabrics commanding garment shapes, reverse exposed seams, and stylistic use of bejeweled safety pins and tears – an ode to the punk era. Rhodes' creations till today continue to test the limits with her use of bold, dynamic, and colorful designs.

Born in Kent, U.K., Zandra was first introduced to fashion by her mother who was a seamstress. She carried on with her love of fashion by studying at Medway and then at the Royal College London, majoring in printed textiles. Since her debut in the 70s, Zandra till today remains a force to be reckoned with her innovative designs both on and off the runway. Just like her beautiful designs, Zandra herself is a walking piece of art with her brilliant pink hair, dramatic theatrical makeup, and art jewelry.

Zandra has designed for numerous celebrities and icons including: Princess Diana, Princess Michael, Freddy Mercury, Diana Ross, Helen Mirren, and Ellen Burstein. Apart from that, she has also designed for Opera sets and costumes for The Pearl Fishers, Magic Flute and Aida. Zandra's vintage dresses can be spotted during the Oscars, and her

print designs continue to influence the world's designers.

In 2003, Rhodes founded the Fashion and Textile Museum London featuring an exhibition of her life's work titled: "Zandra Rhodes, a Lifelong Love Affair with Textiles". Her collection has been exhibited all over the world in major cities including: Milan, Melbourne, Mexico City, Boston and Kuala Lumpur.

Some of Zandra's works such as handbags, bed linens, tights, and socks are produced under license. Other works such as jackets and kaftan tops are for Jacques Vert, Ethical fashion for People Tree, garments for Vogue McCall patterns, and prints for Westminster. Rhodes' latest collection is for Kraftangan of Kuala Lumpur, which includes the use of well-known traditional designs like batiks and songkets (brocade) coupled with vibrant printed chiffons.

The Zandra Rhodes and Kraftangan Malaysia collaboration was an initiative by Mr Dodi Mohammad of Tradisi Busana PR Sdn Bhd, who is also the creator and organizer of the Kuala Lumpur Fashion Weekend events. Dodi organized the presentation and exhibition of the works of Zandra Rhodes-Kraftangan Malaysia at the London Fashion Week in September 2015. The program featured Zandra's latest Spring/Summer 2016 collection featuring vibrant colors of pinks, oranges, and blues representing the natural elements in exclusive batik and songket for an imaginative daywear and eveningwear.

The Zandra Rhodes Collection will also be presented at the Kuala Lumpur Fashion Weekend 2015, an annual event organized by KL Alta Moda Sdn Bhd (wholly owned by Tradisi Busana PR Sdn Bhd) from 8 – 15 November 2015 at the Malaysian National Visual Art Gallery. Aiding Zandra with her latest collection is Mr. Rosli Mohd Don, local Malaysian craftsmen under Kraftangan who specializes in batik design.

Since the 19th century, Malay craft has grown tremendously by gaining attention from notable royal households as well as from the general public who have proudly showcased the intricate details of the designed items from hand-woven clothing to embellished accessories. In 1979, Kraftangan Malaysia was set up in a quest to strengthen the growth and development of the Malaysian craft industry providing a platform for its local craftsmen to develop their craft and displaying it to the public.

Kraftangan Malaysia is one of Malaysia's largest supporters of the arts through several initiations to develop as well as promote and expand Malaysia's craft industry. With a vision of being the leader in the growth, development, and promotion of a stable yet competitive craft industry, Kraftangan has remained committed to its cause by raising awareness of the use of local crafted products by developing quality products fit for the market. Apart from that, they've also expanded their market as well as provided the necessary tools and platform needed by their craftsmen.

Recently, Kraftangan appointed Yang Berbahagia Puan Hajah Zuraida Mokhtar as the General Director of Kraftangan Malaysia. Puan Hajah earned her Degree in Finance from

Indiana State University, U.S.A. and later earned her Masters in Business Administration (MBA) from Southern New Hampshire University, U.S.A. She has been working with Kraftangan for a long time, and hopes to continue with Kraftangan Malaysia's mission by becoming a platform that will serve as a reference resource that will benefit both the general public as well as for its local craftsmen.