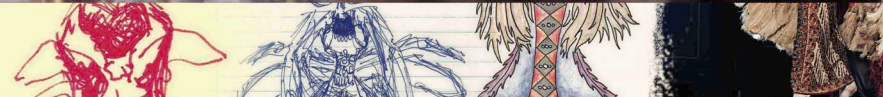


INTERVIEW WITH Alston Stephanus

accessories
JAKARTA, INDONESIA

By Kathleen Sharkey



FASHION Alston Stephanus



and nature, turning the world around me into one-of-a-kind dazzling pieces of wearable art.

KS: When did you start designing jewelry?
Alston Stephanus: It's important to define that I design accessories, not jewelry. Jewelry has a certain code to adhere to, whereas accessories are more versatile. I find there are endless possibilities with accessories and I can be more creative.

As a designer of accessories, I established my company in 2005. I discovered that the materials I utilized in my accessories set me apart from other designers. Using Swarovski crystals, exotic stones, unique beads, and a variety of feathers and lace along with brass and silver, it was clear to me that my imagination was the limit to my creations. Accessories range from the ornate wearable designs to avant-garde runway fashions. My collections have encompassed necklaces, bracelets, earrings, and rings, as well as extravagant brooches, fans, cigarette pipes, and specialty headpieces.

KS: How do you go about designing? Is it a fluid process or do you tend to have a strict design in mind when you start?

Alston Stephanus: First, I conceptualize the accessory I am going to make in my mind. Next, I will construct an abstract mood board that contains an array of colors, textures, and most importantly the materials I imagine will shape the design. This process helps give meaning to the piece. Each accessory I create must have a backstory, and from this story and mood board I am able to generate concept sketches. Finally before making the accessory, I will compile the actual materials I plan to use according to the drawings I have made. If the piece is very big, I will make a partial prototype before making the real thing.

KS: You work with a lot of different mediums (feathers, beads, metals) do you have a favorite medium to work with or does it change from piece to piece naturally? Is there a medium you have never gotten to work with that you would like to work with?

Alston Stephanus: I love to explore the use of all different materials with each piece I construct. Currently, I am in the process of combining an assortment of metals that have a variety of densities. My hopes in using such combinations will enable me to formulate a new hybrid metal. This is actually a traditional Indonesian technique; I am just utilizing it in a very unconventional way. One material I would love to explore for my future accessories would be the use of light. I would also love to collaborate with other fine artists in their mediums to create new poetic installations together.

KS: Your jewelry is very artistic and seems to contain some techniques used by painting masters, do you deliberately use painting techniques or is it a coincidence? I refer generally to your amazing and intricate beadwork resembling pointillism.
Alston Stephanus: It is true that the tiny beads seem closely together on the Kinjeng Gown does resemble pointillism. My original design intention for the Kinjeng Gown was to incorporate Indonesian culture through the use of traditional batik cloth. By following the intricate

I was browsing fashion photographs on the internet one day and I found this amazing headress on Pinterest. It was a stunning piece of art that seemed to harken back to a fashion time plate decades gone by and yet a piece like this could have never been worn in that time, perhaps due to its obvious modern intricacy. I immediately had to look the artist up and as I opened his page (alstonstephanus.com) an explosion of eras firewashed onto my screen. From India and China to France and even an excursion to a galaxy far far away. These pieces of wearable art are so stunning I had to find out more about the designer, Alston Stephanus.

Alston Stephanus has helped designer Anne Avantie create a costume for the Indonesian Miss Universe competitor, who won 2nd place in the costume contest in 2005. He has created the accessories for the Miss Tourism Indonesian and Miss Earth Indonesia. He has also created stunning pieces, for burlesque artists, which harken back to the roaring 20's.

Alston Stephanus has also created numerous pieces for fashion shows, award ceremonies and magazine shoots. His designs are inspired wedding pieces and fashion icons in the forms of crowns, scepters, earrings and other amazing pieces. Then there are his amazing artistic costume designs. Though few they are stunning in their own right, especially his D23 competition piece the Kinjeng Gown. It is through this amazing talent that Alston Stephanus has introduced the world to Jakarta in art and fashion, so I was grateful to get to have an online conversation with him about his art.

KS: Would you mind telling us a little about yourself?
Alston Stephanus: I was born and raised in Jakarta, Indonesia. I spent a majority of my adolescence being educated within the Indonesian school system. As I got older I was afforded the opportunity to both study abroad and travel. I have spent a considerable amount of time living in London and the United States. From these experiences I have developed a deep understanding of global philosophies. These diversified philosophies influence every accessory I create.

KS: Your design statement is "Dare To Dream Differently", what do you mean by this?

Alston Stephanus: My design statement refers to altering tradition in space and time. I take great pleasure in creating abstract accessories that can transcend any size limitations. I characterize my accessories as a mixture of Victorian glamor and Javanese Keraton. For each individual piece I develop there must be a story behind its creation. My primary inspirations come from wildlife, insects,



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patterns of the batik cloth with a mixture of beadwork. I was able to turn a traditional shirt into an accessory that would complete my original concept for the gown.

KS: You have gotten to create some amazing jewelry for some fabulous events, can you tell our readers about some of the pieces you created for these events? Could you also talk about the stunning Kinjeng Gown that you designed this past summer? Are you going to design more clothing fashions?

Alston Stephanus: Some of the accessories I have enjoyed creating include a gender-bending Darth Vader and vintage showgirl accessories. In December of 2016, I had the honor of participating in the Masterpiece Strikes Back: A Fashion Exploration in association with Star Wars in Jakarta, Indonesia. Designing a high-fashion female Darth Vader was a definite highlight for me. I am also the Founder of Sublime Boudoir, a live entertainment company that produces extravagant cabaret-style events. I made several 1920s showgirl accessories for UK burlesque starlet Miss Betsy Rose to perform in Sublime Boudoir's 2019 London production. Betsy's costume and accessories have since traveled to many stages around the world.

I plan on continuing to design accessories, but if the opportunity to merge my accessories line with costumeing

arises, I would graciously accept the challenge. That challenge did come along this past summer when I was chosen as one of fifteen finalists to compete in the 2015 Disney D23 Expo Mousecade costume competition. The category was "Best of Star Wars" and due to competition requirements, it was necessary to produce an entire costume. I do not normally design clothing fashions, just accessories, but I enjoyed this particular challenge. I chose to create a Queen Amidala original design costume called the Kinjeng Gown for my friend Heather Garlin to compete in. Queen Amidala wears her stately gowns with the pride and representation of her subjects from the planet Naboo. She would wear this gown to a royal banquet for the Senate. Inspired by the alluring dragonfly, Queen Amidala is beautiful and able to achieve great effectiveness with grace.

I plan on continuing to design accessories and only clothing when necessary.

KS: Do you have a favorite piece that you have created?
Alston Stephanus: Each accessory has a unique background story. These individual stories give life to my creations. I like to think of each creation as a child, making it impossible to have a favorite.

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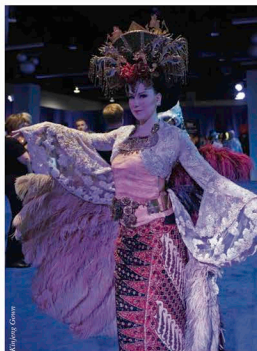


KS: Are you working on any new pieces that you are excited about and would like to share with our readers?

Alston Stephanus: I'm excited to be working towards creating my first exhibition in the Los Angeles area. At this time I am in the beginning stages of exploring story ideas about the traditional Keraton (Javanese Royalty) mythical era. I want to elevate and modernize this genre by potentially incorporating a steampunk element. It is still very early in the developmental stages, so we will have to see where the process takes me.

KS: Do you have any advice for designers just starting out?
Alston Stephanus: I find it helpful to remember this quote: "Be stubborn about goals and flexible about your methods." I believe there is no ideal time to start, just believe in making it happen! Also, remember that you can get inspiration from truly anything.

KS: Would you like to share anything else with our readers?
Alston Stephanus: I love all things fantasy, fairy tale and local folklore related. This year I plan on attending my third Comic Con International in San Diego, California. Last year I started cosplaying and it creatively helped me to expand my design ideas and detail work. I enjoy putting an essence of steampunk into some of my cosplays, which adds an unexpected twist. I am quite excited to debut my new cosplays this summer at Comic Con!



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