

Image Insights 2007

Chronicles from Malaysia

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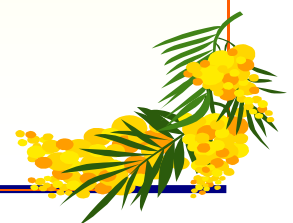
Warmest Greetings!



And thank you for downloading our Image Insights Newsletter! This is a compilation of all our eNewsletters in 2007. Hope you enjoy reading them!

If you have any image stories that you'd like to share with us, we'd love to hear from you! Write to us at: wendy@chap-one.com

Thank you and best wishes always,
Wendy



Sarong Cempedak or Cempedak Long in Hokkien



It was on one of those slow, hot Sunday afternoon when I found myself curled up in my family couch, mesmerized by the rhythmic overhead fan and pondering on what to write for my first blog... when mom, who had been swatting from her beloved kopi-o, suddenly and inexplicably, commented that it's such an eyesore seeing someone in Cempedak Long or Sarung

Cempedak....My! What a way to describe a dress sense!

It seems that when the cempedak begins to ripe, the planters have to wrap each of these heavenly fruit in a casing or a 'sarung' made of flies the whole day long from palm leaves. The fruit will continue to grow while the 'sarung' stays the same and eventually, there comes a time when the fruit outgrows the sarung.

And so, if someone were to say you look like a Cempedak Long, it is really not so flattering as it literally means your clothes are bursting at the seams! So beware!



Is Your Sunday Longer Than Your Monday?



Once upon a time, when scooters were in vogue and P.Ramlee ruled the airwaves, this phrase was coined to courteously point out that one's petticoat was showing beneath one's skirt, which was considered vulgar more than a fashion faux pas....

Now, fast forward to the 21st century,..... when scooters

are still in vogue and god knows who rules the airwaves, showing off one's decorative bra-straps, fanciful panties beneath a very low hipster pants, or even the word 'Calvin Klein' seen on the tip of the underwear is considered 'fashionable'. Manners? That is no longer an issue.

And thus, the trend has come a

full circle and what was once taboo is now fashionable. Amazing how fashion changes the world, isn't it?



"The expression a woman wears on her face is more important than the clothes she wears on her back."

Dale Carnegie

The Flip Side Of The Flip-Flops

One of mom's colleague passed away recently, at a young age. Rumours have it that everyone saw it coming as she has the habit of dragging her feet along, making a loud swish sound, especially with flip-flops.

Sounds cruel I know. But the

lesson to learn here is this - If you like flip-flops, wear it well, wear it properly. Because according to old wives' tale, if you drag your flip flops, you will not live to old age...so beware!



Blonding Of The Asian Hair

My image guru - Ann Reinten, from Melbourne Australia, posed 2 observational questions to us when she was conducting her image course for the first time here in KL. Questions which we found rather amusing, and yet didn't quite have the answers for - Why do Asian girls fancy colouring their hair blond and why do Asian men pull their pants up so high?

One of my earliest memories of beautiful images was that of Marilyn Monroe trying to hold down her bellowing skirt. It was a black and white photo, but



it was very clear that she was blond and the image of that blonde bombshell captivated the world. Blonde was fun, blonde was sexy. Since then, images of Caucasian blond women became prevalent as standards of beauty. We see it everywhere - in advertisements, posters, magazines.

Today, nothing much has changed. Only the world has become smaller, and old inhibitions fade away with time.

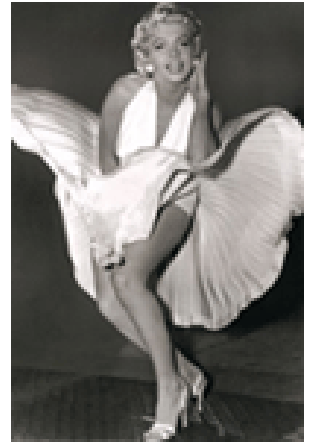
While no one will ever admit it openly, here in Asia, everyone is, still fascinated by Caucasian bodies of both men and women. The general impression is that Caucasians are taller, have more proportionate bodies, and they look more attractive with blonde or

coloured hair.

The fad has reached such high proportions that Asians who used to think that they would look ridiculous as blondes have chosen to have either highlights or coloured their hair some shade of brown.

Pick up any magazine from Japan, Taiwan, Korea, you will see models in coloured hair. Take a stroll into Sungai Wang, and you will see a whole generation of blonds with black eye-brows.

I wonder will it ever come a time when the opposite happens, when Asians take the world by storm, when all Caucasians start dying their hair black and get rid of their double eyelids? Now, THAT will be a sight to behold!



The High's And Low's Of A Man's Pants

And next, we wander further down the memory lane and turn the corner onto the chamber of high waisted pants.

For men who pulled their pants up high, it seems to conjure up an impression that says, 'I am secure, I am content, I have done my job, I have taken care of things, I have control of my life and you will not catch me with my pants down'. On the other hand, for men with low slung

pants, it seems to say, 'I am cool, I am hip, I am hot and... I'll drop my pants in a second'.

The world's perception tend to portray high waist lines as nerdy, stiff and comical. Those guys in 'The Three Stooges' have high waistlines. The Japanese generals in World World II movies have high waistlines. Meanwhile, John Wayne and James Dean wore their pants low.

High or Low...Gentlemen, un-

derstand this. Our eyes seek some form of balance to consider something physically attractive. And as fashion changes, we also see a drop in the waistline. Remember Superman? Notice the difference between Christopher Reeves and Brandon Routh?

So, whatever you do, don't pull your pants up so high and tight to protect the family jewel. It will not drop.



In Vogue With Tudungs



One of our readers requested for us to give some pointers on tudungs. So, here are some fail-safe steps, courtesy of Munawwarah Boutique (<http://www.munawwarah.com>) that will give you instant gratification!

- Play with layers. Munawwarah offers ready-made headscarves. All you need to do is just to slide it through your head. (You really can't get lazier than that.) Instead of 1 layer, use 2 or 3. Try same colour, different shades. Or 1 pattern + 2 solids.
- Twist the side tails of the 2 layers together and flip it to the side. Leave the other side flat on the front.
- Play with colours of the same family – Warm + Warm, Cool + Cool. Example: Warm Red + Warm Beige, Cool Pink + Cool Blue. The higher the contrast, the brighter you will look.
- Get an attractive brooch and pin it on the middle of the scarf or on the side to add interest!
- And last but not least, as what the Ijok Election has taught us all. Commotions and confusion will occur when 2 parties fight tooth and nail to be the winner. You can have only 1 party winning at any 1 time. It's either your tudung or your outfit. So, decide which one you want to show off.

If Vanity Is Thy Name

Not long ago, I was told that an average woman is said to look at her own reflection 55 times a day! I suppose when it comes to the topic of image and vanity, naturally the female species would get most of the blame. All research to date on body image shows that women are much more critical of their appearance than men. Up to 8 out of 10 women will be dissatisfied with their reflection, and more than half may see a distorted image.



Male or female, we are all more obsessed with our appearance than we like to admit. If you are a fan of the Greek Mythology, you would have heard of the story of Narcissus, son of the river God Cephisus. Narcissus was beautiful man, loved and pursued by many. However, though he is of great beauty, his tragic tale ends by him killing himself, because he could love no one but only his reflection in the water. Of course, there were other events that led to this tragedy, but that is another story.

The point is, while it is perfectly ok to be concern about one's appearance, as first impressions DO count, being vain and narcissistic will only lead to a person's downfall.

So, the next time if you catch yourself asking:

Mirror, mirror on the wall, who is the fairest of them all?"

Please just stick up this answer:

"My King/Queen, YOU are the fairest where you are, and no one else is more beautiful by far!"

Then hold your head high, smile and walk away!

G-Strings For Men & VPL's

Did you know that G-strings and Thongs were originally developed with the male anatomy in mind? Some 75,000 years ago, the thongs were already made fashionable by the Khoisans men in Southern Africa. Back here in Asia, our Japanese G-strings, known as Fundoshi, is a popular loin cloth worn during Shinto Celebration. All worn by men.

G-Strings for the ladies first gained popularity as a swimwear in South America, particularly Brazil. Today, Wall Street Journal reports that G-strings, Tanga, Thongs, V-Strings, T-Backs, rake in about \$2 billion worth of business per year!

Despite its popularity, we still hear a constant debate on whether it is safe to wear this skimpy undergarment. Of course there has been cases sited that one is more prone to UTI (Urinary Tract Infections) due to the tightness of the fabric which allows bacteria to transmit easily.

The point here is this: If you have already decided to wear something that is tight and bum-emphasizing, then please learn to wear a G-string. VPL (Visible Panty Line) is unsightly! Period. If the men can wear them, so can you.

And since you are already wearing a G-string, please, for heaven's sake, take care of your own hygiene. Don't wear it for long hours!



Cufflinks Fengshui



I bet you didn't know. That the world's first cufflinks were discovered inside King Tutankhamen's tomb. That was way back during his reign in 1300 BC. The Egyptian King had style. Apart from being a family heirloom, men would traditionally put a strand of hair from a deceased loved one under the glass of the cufflinks as a sign of mourning for his lost. The exact date of the invention of the cufflink is still unknown. Cufflinks were first mention in 1788, and it wasn't until the 18th Century that the cufflinks were mass produced.

Now, anything that combines East and West, Ancient Art and Modern Lifestyle, is always intriguing to the human race. Back here at home, cufflinks and fengshui have started to gain popularity.

For good fengshui, it is believed that one should not choose cufflinks with sharp edges as this is a form of (sha-qi) or Killing Energy. Some say it's good to choose colours that goes alongside your character - Red for Energy, Blue for a Calming Effect. Cufflinks with the 5 elements - Metal, Wood, Fire, Water, Earth engraved on the surface are also considered to be of good fengshui!

Whatever it is, cufflinks, will always be seen as luxurious accessories for men...an epitome of style. King Edward VIII once auctioned off a pair made out of platinum and diamonds worth RM 1.76 million! So, if you still don't own one, get one now! It is the little things that count! Check out some unique cufflinks here at Cufflinks at Nice Cufflinks !

*“Every generation
laughs at the old
fashions, but follows
religiously the new.”*



The Scandalous Halter Neck



Ever wondered what women in ancient China wore as their lingerie? It's the Dudou, or what is now known as the Halter Top.

The Dudou (肚兜) was invented during the Tang Dynasty by Lady Yang GuiFei, one of China's four ancient beauties and also a beloved consort of the XuanZong Emperor. According to history, the reason why Lady Yang invented the Dudou was to hide her "love bites" that was a result from an affair she had with An Lushan.

As Lady Yang was the Emperor's consort, it would, of course be a death penalty for both Lady Yang and An Lushan should the Emperor discover the love marks. So, what is a girl to do? Lady Yang immediately thought of an idea - she took a piece of silk cloth and tied it to her chest to cover the marks...and Voila! The Halter Top or Dudou was born!

As Lady Yang was THE fashion icon of that era, many in the palace copied her act, thinking that Lady Yang did this because she wanted an extra precaution to cover her voluptuous chest. If you have watched the movie The Curse of the Golden Flower, you would have gotten the idea of the fashion during the Tang Dynasty. Little did she know that her little act would change fashion history forever.

Again, what was once upon a time used to hide 'secrets', the Dudou or "Halter Top", is now a sexy garment worn to bare one's figure in public. It would be interesting to hear what Lady Yang has to say if she can see all this now....



*"I don't design clothes,
I design dreams."
Ralph Lauren*

Thank You For Serving Me

Notice that Chinese always tap two fingers on the table every time someone serves them tea? I know I did. However, sad to say that Malaysians hardly practice this act anymore.

The reason behind the fingers tapping act has, as usual a story and a history....

It was said that this act originated during the reign of Emperor Qian Long in China. Emperor Qian Long was one of those Emperors who like to go on trips as a commoner. During one of his visit, Emperor Qian Long visited the southern part of China. As the emperor got tired, he stopped by a tea house for a drink. The emperor then picked up the tea pot to serve tea to his officers.

Now, if they were in the palace, the officers would bow down or 'kau tou' and thank the Emperor for serving them tea; but as they are now in public, doing so would only attract the public's attention and ultimately exposing the Emperor's identity.

So, instead of bowing down, the officers invented a more discreet gesture by tapping two fingers on the table. The movements of up and down by the two fingers were derived as bows or 'kau tou'; a sign of thanks and also a sign of respect and subordination

Since then, this act was then passed on from generation to generation. So, the next time when someone serves you tea, be sure to tap your fingers too!



The Anklet, The Trishaw and No. 37

What do Anklets, The Trishaw and No. 37 have in common? They all point to 1 thing - Social Escort.

I have never worn an anklet in my life. Partly because my mom forbade it. And I never really know why, until now. Good girls, according to mom and grandma, should walk gracefully without any clink-clanking of the feet to attract any attention. Good girls don't hitch a ride with the trishaw man, especially at night, as one only takes the trishaw for nocturnal activities. And No. 37? That was



the room belonging to one of the most well-loved favourite in the red-light district.

Things are quite different though from another corner of the world. The anklets were already in existence in ancient cultures of Egypt and Middle East. Back home, in Indian culture, traditionally, the new bride announces her entry into her husband's house with the tinkling of the ankle bracelet, known as Payal. Apart from their aesthetic value, the basic motive of the anklet is also to draw attention to the wearers' legs and feet.

Interesting isn't it? Same concept, different perception.



1,2 Buckle My Shoe

The shoe horn was created way back in the 15th century. It is believed that the tight-fitting and high heeled shoes in the Victorian period led to the development of shoe horns. Today, out of 50 gentlemen I ask, only a handful uses shoe horn. And of course, the No. 1 reason for not using one is just plain lazy.

If you have the opportunity to stay in any 4 or 5 star hotels, you will find a shoe horn in the closet. There is a good reason for it being there - It's for you to use them.



A shoe horn keeps the shoe open and provides a smooth surface for the heel to move. It allows you to slip into your shoe easily without crushing on the shoe's counter - the vertical portion of the shoe that wraps around the back of the foot. If your shoes cost more than RM300, please take care of them.



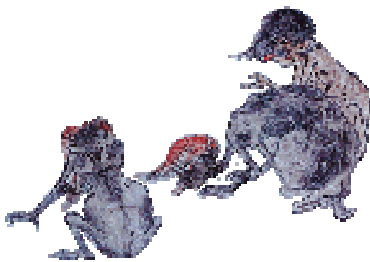
Grandma's Way Of Preventing Corns & Blisters

This I must tell you. One of my students at the Carven Academy of Fashion bought a few pairs of lovely shoes and was busy showing them off to her friends. Then someone asked her to try them on. You'd think she'd bend down and try right? To my utter horror, she brought the shoes up to her mouth and bit them on the front vamp and then on the back end! Why? Apparently, it is believed that if you

bite your shoes first, your shoes will not bite you back. Hence, no problems of corns and blisters later. Go figure.



The Curse Of The Hungry Ghost



Have you ever wondered what Hungry Ghost actually look like? No, it's very far from Casper. And no, it's not your usual long haired, floating, white faced-ghosts. Legend has it that, Hungry Ghosts, due to their greed during their mortal years, have been cursed to stay in the state of perpetual hunger. Hungry Ghosts take the shape of a teardrop, with mouths the size of a needle's eye, necks too thin to pass food and bloated stomachs the size of a mountain! Some even claimed that any form of food that touches their lips will turn into coal!

So the next time, the second you think about piling up your platter with too much food which you will end up wasting, think again before you let greed seep into your head.

Eat With Class, My Dear...



I met Jack Sprat and his wife at a 5-Star Chinese restaurant during the Merdeka holidays. For those of you who have forgotten who Jack Sprat is...You have met him when you were a kid - he was the guy who ate no fat while his wife took all the lard.

But it was not the difference in sizes between the 2 that made me took notice of them. It was rather, Jack Sprat was taking his time, picking slowly on the shared appetizer, savouring its sweet taste. But Mrs. Sprat, on the other hand, was going for the food three times the speed with her chopsticks!

Perhaps it was because the appetizer wasn't the usual salted peanuts, but dried chilli-fried long beans. But the point is this: It is a Fine Dining Chinese Restaurant. It is where a plate of simple Dim Sum cost more than RM10. If you want to dine in an upmarket restaurant, don't gorge down your food and proof to the world you are a country bumpkin!

Chopsticks Etiquette - What You Never Knew

Did you know that Chopsticks were originally twigs from trees? 5,000 years ago, people in China used to cook food in large pots. Hasty eaters would then broke twigs off trees to scoop their portion up. Later on, to conserve fuel, food was then chopped into small pieces just so it could be cooked more rapidly. Till today, the culture of Chopsticks remains in many parts of Asia.

Apart from not waving your chopsticks like a wand, here are a few pointers to Chopstick Etiquette which everyone should take note of:

1) Never stab chopsticks into a bowl of rice.

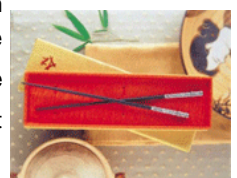
Any stick-like object facing upward resembles the incense sticks that some Asians use as offerings to deceased family members. You ARE still breathing, aren't you?

2) Never beat your bowl with your chopsticks.

Only beggars do this to draw the attention of others. It has long been regarded as a sign of poor upbringing.

3) Don't put your chopsticks recklessly on the table.

Always rest your chopsticks properly and evenly. If you simply throw them on the table, you will bring bad luck to all the diners eating with you. Some believe even death, since "3 lengths and 2 shortnesses" (三長兩短) is the Chinese saying referring to coffin, which is made by 3 long and 2 short pieces of wooden board before the top is covered up.



Where Did Santa Get His Red Suit?



Did you know that Santa was once upon a time depicted as someone tall, thin and elderly? That was when he was known as St. Nicholas, a 4th Century Bishop. Then somewhere during the 19th century, St. Nick had somehow put on weight and turned into a round, pipe-smoking elf-like figure!

But by the end of 1920's, after migrating from Europe to America, Santa was no longer an elf, but instead had turned life-sized! The American Santa adorned a red, fur-trimmed suit, spotted white snowy beard and was pipe-free!

In 1931, our dear Santa got himself the best marketing company ever. Santa became a walking billboard for Coca-Cola. Life-sized, jolly, and wearing the now familiar red suit, Santa appeared in magazines, billboards, advertisements, shops...encouraging Americans to see Coke as the solution to "a thirst for all seasons."

This went on for the next 35 years. The popularity of the Coca-Cola advertisements eventually put a stamp on Santa as an icon of contemporary commercial culture. From then on, the Ho-Ho-Ho Santa's image is also firmly ingrained in everyone's mind!

Life Lesson from Santa? If you want people to remember you, always play with visuals first. Identify what your style is and stay with it! You don't need 35 years. 3.5 months down the road, if people can mentally picture you in a certain style, you have nailed it my friend! This is known as The Power of Personal Branding!

Of Santa, Stockings and Dowry

St. Nicholas was well loved for his kindness especially to children. One such deed became a legend that has survived for centuries and is celebrated even now in a variety of cultures.

There was once a nobleman who had 3 daughters. The custom of the time was that each daughter would need to be provided with a dowry in order to marry. Because they were so poor, the father of the three daughters was contemplating selling his children into slavery.

Luckily, St. Nicholas heard of their plight. On a dark night soon after the eldest daughter came to marrying age, he tossed a small bag of gold through an open window, sparing her a life of misery.

As the second daughter came of age he repeated the deed, again doing so anonymously. As the third daughter came of age, St Nicholas came again. But this time, the window was closed. So, he had to climb onto the roof and drop the sack down the chimney, which eventually landed in the hanging stockings of the girls. Needless to say, all 3 girls got married off successfully!

And so, to commemorate this event, to this day, stockings are still hung by the chimney for St. Nick.

And you thought Santa only bring presents to kids, eh?



"Clothes make the man. Naked people have little or no influence in society."

Mark Twain





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A Kiss Under The Mistletoe

"You must remember this...A Kiss Is Still A Kiss..."

Ever kissed anyone under a mistletoe - The famous "kissing" plant?

The tradition of kissing under the Mistletoe evolved from the Celtic and the Nordic people who believed that the evergreen Mistletoe had magical, medicinal, and aphrodisiac properties. One of Norse most fascinating myths was the death and resurrection of Baldur, a Norse God.

Baldur's mother was the Norse goddess, Frigga. When Baldur was born, Frigga made each and every plant and animal promise not to harm Baldur. But Frigga overlooked the mistletoe plant. The mischievous god-Loki, took advantage of this oversight. Ever the prankster, Loki made an arrow from a Mistletoe twig and tricked Baldur's blind brother into shooting it at Baldur. Baldur died and winter descended on the planet. It was only after he was restored to life by the Gods did things return to normalcy.

Frigga, a surprisingly unvengeful Goddess, then decided no one should suffer again through the Mistletoe, ordering that from then on it should bring love rather than death into the world.

Happily complying with Frigga's wishes, any two people passing under the plant would then celebrate Baldur's resurrection by kissing under the mistletoe.

Want to steal a kiss from someone, carry a mistletoe with you!

