

A young girl with dark skin and hair is lying in a vast field of trash and debris. Only her head and shoulders are visible above the ground, which is covered in a thick layer of garbage including plastic, paper, and organic waste. She has a somber expression and is looking directly at the camera. A small red mark is visible on her forehead. The background is a dense, chaotic landscape of waste under natural light.

by Jake Croker

Ropana

LOGLINE:

After the death of her father, a 12 year old girl must leave her village that has formed inside of a landfill in hopes to sell her family's cow - told through the art of *shadow puppetry*.

Synopsis

Act I

Antika, a 12 year old girl, lives in a village in the middle of a landfill with her father and their voracious pet cow, Rasa. The waste surrounds the village like mountains.

Like most villagers, Antika's father works as a picker, climbing the "mountains" to sift for plastics to be sold for recycling. One day, Antika's father falls and is terribly hurt.

With his dying breath he instructs Antika to sell Rasa for money to survive. With no other choice, Antika must leave her village behind and try to sell Rasa.



Act II

Along her travels Antika has trouble selling Rasa because plastic and cannot produce milk, so nobody wants to her.

Tika is briefly kidnapped by an evil demon-witch Rangda (who eats children), and saved by a strange Rishi.

Antika and Rasa later meet a ugly squabbling couple beside the beautiful, unpolluted and magical river Ropana which has curse them because of their bad Karma. Eager to improve their Karma, the couple agree to lead Tika and Rasa to a Palace where Tika might have better luck selling Rasa.

Act III

The crew follow the river, come before a great Sultan. Insulted that Tika tries to sell a cow that cannot produce milk, he expels her from the Palace.

News comes of a landslide that has the King's son trapped beneath the garbage, and that the fire demon Rangda is closing in on Prince Airlangga. Antika volunteers to save the Prince. Rasa is allowed to eat as much plastic as possible and frees the Prince just in time.

Overwhelmed with gratitude, the King gifts her a large bag of gold coins. Happy days!



Synopsis (cont'd)

Act IV

Now rich, Antika straps the golds to Rasa's back and they head home. It begins to rain heavily and they must hurry before the beautiful river floods. But sick from all the plastic she ate, Rasa moves very slowly.

When they reach the river, the water is so high that Antika must ride on tired Rasa. Rain continues to pour and washes plastic from the landfill mountains into the river as they cross.

Antika just manages to get to the other side but the swarm of garbage carries Rasa and Antika's fortune away.



Act V

Antika weeps beside the riverbank, Antika finds one of her gold coins beside her and in her despair casts it into the water.

The Rishi reappears before Antika and instructs her to offer her gold to the river Ropana.

When Antika returns home, she is surprised to find that her father's land has become a bountiful rice field again and Rasa is waiting for her, able to produce milk.

Synopsis (cont'd)

Why Ropana?

My inspiration for *Ropana* came when I first came to Indonesia and was told that Bantar Gebang (a landfill just outside of Jakarta) was so big that a village had formed in the center.

In reality, villages surround the landfill. More than 20,000 people now surround the epicenter, which stretches 150 feet high. For many, the landfill offers the only opportunity for work in this region.

The industriousness of Indonesian people is mesmerising. I want to tell a story that brings attention to this delicate subject but one that celebrates that industriousness.

I have no desire to belittle Indonesians with this tale. That is why the story is called *Ropana*, which means “healing” in Sanskrit.



Jakarta's Trash Mountain

"The trash pickers, some trudging up the heap in mismatched plastic boots, use a hooked metal tool called a "ganco" to flip items over their heads and into large rattan baskets strapped on their backs."

- New York Times, 2020

DIRECTOR'S VISION

I believe telling *Ropana* in a similar style of Wayang Kulit traditional Indonesian shadow puppetry will be the most unique and powerful medium.

Character's shapes will take inspiration from Wayang Kulit and plot themes from ancient Hindu text, which Wayang Kulit portray.

But what differentiates *Ropana* the most, **all background sets and "props" will be constructed solely from waste products.**

This choice will intimately connect the audience to the topic of landfills and waste.



Reimagining Classics

Although *Ropana* will take on many visual aspects from Wayang Kulit we will remove puppet strings to create a more seamless viewing experience for modern audiences.

Our production will incorporate techniques from Lotte Reiniger, whose pioneering work was undermined by her gender.

Fun Fact

Lotte Reiniger's [*The Adventures of Prince of Achmed*](#) (1926) is the first coloured animation film, released a decade before *Snow White* (1939).



Rangda

Rangda (*widow*), is a demon-witch of Balinese folk lore. Said to be the discarded Queen, who now feasts of the children.

Notorious for her googly eyes, longed sharp tongue and long curling nails.



She is notoriously caught in a fight with the **Barong**. The two represent the forces of good and evil.

Same is true in the context of Ropana. As a fire rages, due to garbage burning, so too does Rangda's strength.

Photos of at the Mask Museum Setia Darma House of Mask and Puppets
(i) The Barong, (ii) & (iii) of Rangda



Kanwee & Panggus

Famous semi-historical of a Javanese King, Jaya Panggus, and a Chinese Princess, Kan Ching Wee.

The story goes, that after the King had an affair with a Lake Princess, she curse the couple for their bad Karma, and forever more they will remain hideous.

In Ropana, the story is adapted, and the couple act comedic relief.

Photos of at the Mask Museum Setia Dharma House of Mask and Puppets

- (i) Kan Ching Wee
- (ii) The couple before the curse.
- (iii) After the Curse
- (iv) Jaya Panggus



Barong Landung is a traditional puppet from the island of Bali in Indonesia. The story begins with a Balinese king, Jaya Panggus who fell in love with a Chinese princess named Kan Ching Wee who anchored on the north coast of Bali. The king made her a beautiful palace called Balingkang. After a year of marriage, without giving any notice the king went in search of a woman who would give him offspring as an heirloom to his throne.

The king claimed to be unmarried when he met the daughter of Lake Batur, then they married and had a child. At the time of the wedding, they asked the God of Lake Batur not to disturb their marriage.

Kan Ching Wee then followed her husband to Lake Batur. When she met her husband's mother and child, the God realized that they had been cheated because the King had married.

As a punishment, the Gods turned Jaya Panggus and Kan Ching Wee into barong landung and gave Dewi Darian (the Lake Princess) the task of faithfully performing the Galungan ceremony in Bali; these two puppets would tell the people about their story, so that the Balinese people would realize and not follow the same mistake as them. In Balinese tradition, they had two children but only one was born in this story. Their daughter is named Galuh.



Garuda

A mythical creature found in Hinduism, particularly Lord Vishnu's charioteer.

To this day, the Garuda is the national symbol of Indonesia. In homage to Garuda, the Javan Eagle-Hawk is the national bird of Indonesia.

The numbers of feathers are symbolic to Indonesian Independence Day.

In the contexts of Ropana, the Garuda is seen up above as a guiding presence.



- (i) Photo from Mask Museum Setia Dharma House of Mask and Puppets
- (ii) Garuda statue at Garuda Wisnu Kencana Cultural Park, Bali
- (iii) National Emblem of Indonesia – “Unity in Diversity”
- (iv) Javan Eagle-Hawk

Airlangga

Airlangga is a famous, almost mythological, character in Indonesia history.

The only king of the Kingdom of Kahuripan, a kingdom built from a territory of Mataram after Mataram was sacked.

Airlangga gained support, won back the territory and was crowned Raja.

In Ropana, his plays a young Prince concerned with his father's actions. He is a symbol of hope and potential loss of it.

At the climax, he falls under a landslide is trapped beneath piles of garbage. He is saved by Rasa eating her way through the garbage.



(i) Stone engraving of the historical figure - taken from google

(ii) Painting depiction of Airlangga – taken from google

(iii) Image of a Kris dagger – very important in Indonesian history

(iv) Guide in Maros, South Sulawesi – he wearing a Canadian pin when I met him

Locations



Locations



Locations



Thank You!

