

THREADS OF LIFE  
ARTISANAL NATURAL DYE STUDIO  
BALI, INDONESIA



## ABOUT THREADS OF LIFE

Threads of Life is about the ancestral worldview of the indigenous peoples of the Indonesian archipelago. We support the continued practice of this wisdom by its custodians, and we share this wisdom with the world. We recognise that this worldview is embodied in and transmitted through the objects of material culture within these traditions, through the ways in which these objects are made, through the rituals associated with their use, and through the oral traditions associated with each of these. We seek to share this wisdom in like manner.

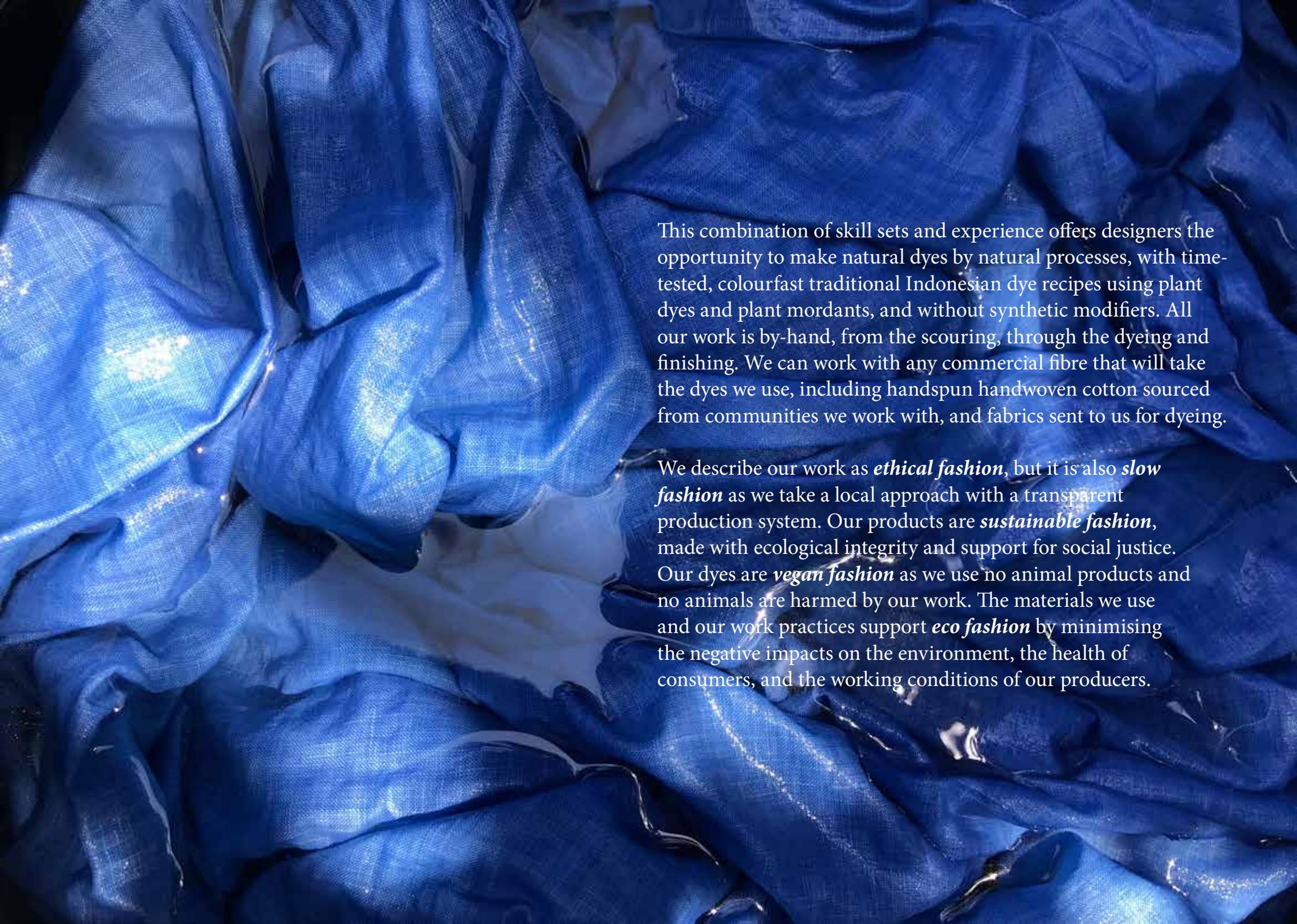
We work directly with over 1000 women weavers on 12 islands across Indonesia, commissioning high-value heirloom-quality textiles and baskets made with local materials and natural dyes, and selling these through our retail gallery in Bali and through our website. The income we bring to the women we work with helps them maintain the dignity of their culture and identity, and make a living while doing so.

We further express our student-hood of these traditions through the production practices of our own artisanal natural dye studio in Bali. Embodying the values and skills we have learned, we hand-make natural dyes by natural processes using sustainably sourced plants purchased from smallholder farmers within communities across the archipelago where we work.

# OUR ARTISANAL NATURAL DYE STUDIO

We employ seven dyers led by Made Maduarta, Komang Sujata, and Wayan Sukadana, who together bring over fifty years of experience to their natural dye practices, both in the studio and in the field. In the studio, they fulfil commercial orders with production practices that privilege quality, consistency and colorfastness. Their field work focusses on traditions that have degraded and are being recovered, documenting local dye recipes and processes, and testing them in the studio before taking suggested refinements back to the communities. In the dye garden, they establish cultivation and harvesting methods to address plant resource scarcity being faced by traditional dyers.





This combination of skill sets and experience offers designers the opportunity to make natural dyes by natural processes, with time-tested, colourfast traditional Indonesian dye recipes using plant dyes and plant mordants, and without synthetic modifiers. All our work is by-hand, from the scouring, through the dyeing and finishing. We can work with any commercial fibre that will take the dyes we use, including handspun handwoven cotton sourced from communities we work with, and fabrics sent to us for dyeing.

We describe our work as *ethical fashion*, but it is also *slow fashion* as we take a local approach with a transparent production system. Our products are *sustainable fashion*, made with ecological integrity and support for social justice. Our dyes are *vegan fashion* as we use no animal products and no animals are harmed by our work. The materials we use and our work practices support *eco fashion* by minimising the negative impacts on the environment, the health of consumers, and the working conditions of our producers.



## OUR DYES & THEIR SOURCES

We have focussed on a palette of indigos, browns and yellows. For the indigo, we have farmers in Central Java, east Bali, and central Flores growing *Strobilanthes cusia*, and farmers in Timor growing *Indigofera tinctoria*. Farmers in east Bali tap coconut trees for the palm sugar we need in the indigo dye recipe. A Forest Stewardship Council-certified concession in Papua supplies *Ceriops tagal* bark for beautiful shades of brown-red, which are fixed with a community-sourced *Symplocos cochinchinensis* plant-based mordant from Flores. The yellow comes from *Artocarpus heterophyllus* (jackfruit wood) upon cloth mordanted with *Symplocos cochinchinensis*.

We make our own pH-neutral soap from cold-pressed *Aleurites moluccana* (candlenut) oil sourced from Timor for use in our scouring and finishing processes. We use our waste water to irrigate our dye garden. At all stages, we are developing transparent and accountable supply chains and production processes.



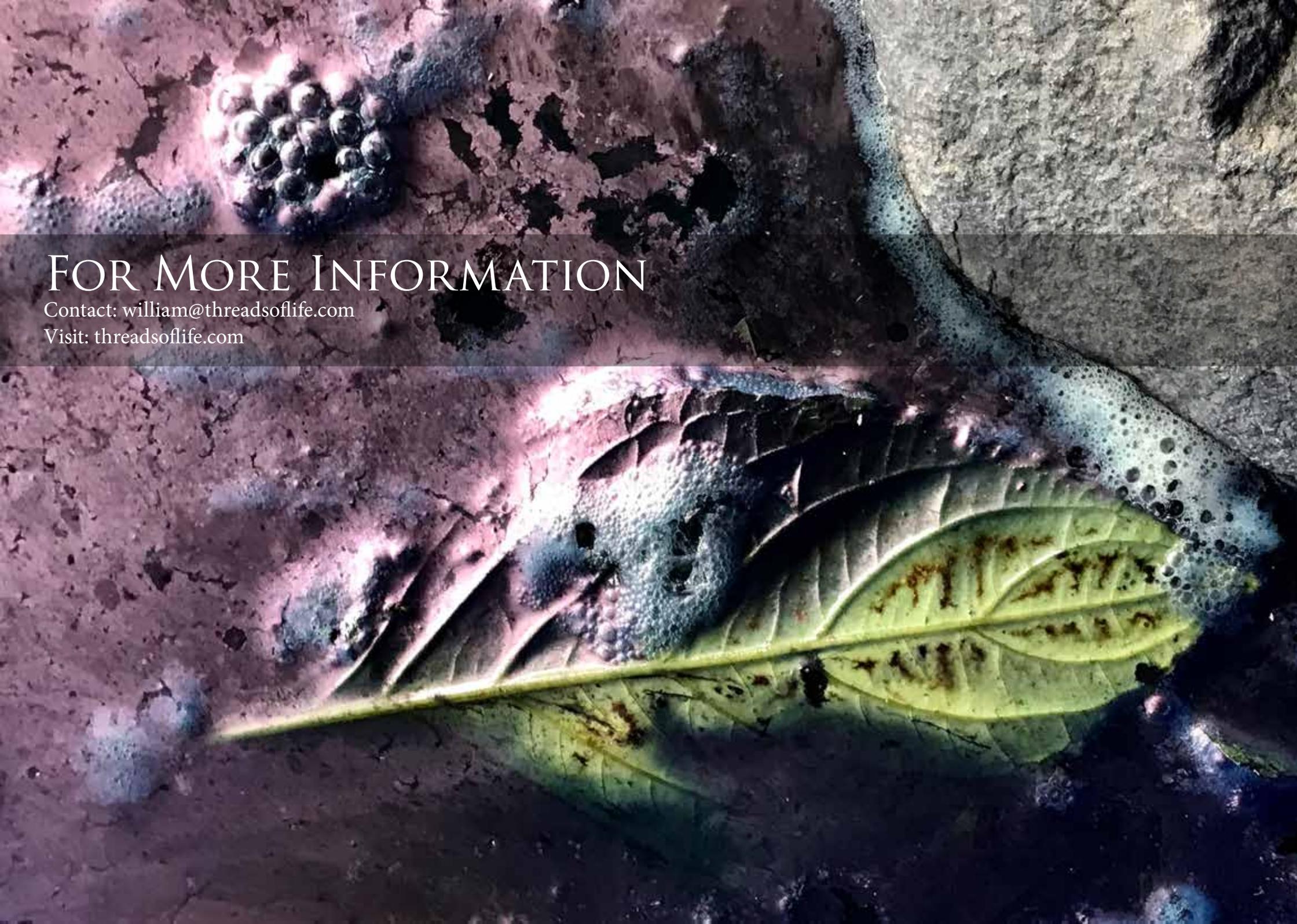
## OUR CAPACITIES & PRICES

We are open to orders from discerning clients who share our values, our sense of quality, our aesthetic, and our interest in a full, accountable and transparent dye-farmer-to-dyed-fabric process.

Prices and production capacity depend on the textile type and cloth size to be dyed as different fibres dye in different ways, and the ease or difficulty of hand dyeing depends on the cloth size. But as a guide, in a month we can dye up to 300 meters of cloth with indigo, 40 meters of cloth with Ceriops brown, and 60 meters of cloth with jackfruit yellow. The limitations of hand-dyeing mean we can dye a piece of cloth up to 3 meters in length.

We charge between IDR 250,000 and IDR 350,000 (USD 15-25) per meter for our dye work.

Our prices are high but in a fashion industry that is profoundly unsustainable, this is the real cost of doing handmade natural dye work by natural non-polluting processes, using plants responsibly sourced from properly paid farmers and harvesters.



# FOR MORE INFORMATION

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