

PRODUCT SPOTLIGHT:

San Juan Ventures/Kandis Wrigley

We sat down with Kandis Wrigley, owner of San Juan Ventures, in her lovely and serene Chicago showroom that defied the relentless pace she keeps running an International business across many time zones. Her friendly and supportive team made our visit complete with a tour and even helped with a purchase for a personal collection. With a privately owned new factory in Bali, Indonesia that considerably outsizes her previous location, and includes an American team of 7 executives and project managers, along with artisans and factory workers, she creates a team of excellence on two continents, along with an enviable atmosphere. She pays the health insurance for them all, which is virtually unheard of in the Asian marketplace, and works hard to create lasting relationships.

Bringing products that are expressive of style and personality, the intent is to garner notice in a space. They are the high impact element; the wow factor!

We are most impressed on how you started your successful business in 2003 from the ground up. Can you share your story of how San Juan Ventures came to be?

SJV began in my dining room among a dinner discussion with friends. We've been very active in the hospitality market for about 6 years. Now we're really focusing on cultivating relationships with the wonderful brands we've had the pleasure of supplying, Hilton, Marriott, Four Seasons, Peninsula Hotels, and Thompson Hotels among many others and on expanding our high end residential clientele around the world.

Are you seeing a particular design aesthetic that is more prominent today?

Today's design aesthetic, as seen in all aspects of design from fashion to interiors, seems to be embracing design that makes people happy. What I mean is, there is less focus on it being

"today's most unique design" and more emphasis on incorporating all the design elements that bring that person to life. This involves tastefully incorporating design from many time periods, many geographical locations, and spanning many generations. We are also noticing there is a re-invigoration and appreciation for artisans and craftsmanship in the industry that's exciting to see.

Inspiration comes in many forms and we are always intrigued by the external influences that drive people, their designs, and their businesses. How is your team inspired?

The understanding that design has many outside influences was the impetus of our weekly "creative session". Though we work in a creative industry, sometimes we can get lost in the day-to-day execution and miss out on the ever-changing design environment in which we thrive. So we started having weekly full team meetings



(even including our accounting department!) during which people share images and inspiration that sparked their interest that week. This inspiration could be from fashion, marketing campaigns, architecture, interior design, other product development, patterns, photography...anything! From there, we discuss what it was that impacted that person, and explore other avenues this inspiration could be adapted to, including ways that it could be incorporated into SJV design.

Sustainability and preservation are more at the forefront today. How does San Juan Ventures incorporate it into their design process?

We work very hard to give our clients a peace of mind and a confidence that we will do everything we can to attain the highest possible sustainability standards. It's not an easy line to walk for any manufacturer in Indonesia or any other third world country, but we invest considerable time and resources to keep our commitment. We are FFC certified and go through an exhaustive audit with the Department of Forestry every year. We always include a sustainable option in our quotes; for example, Managed Forest FSC material vs. new Teak.

The most interesting item San Juan Ventures has fabricated....

Though it is still in the design stage, I think our most interesting fabrication is in the works. The designer, from the creative Lauck Group in Dallas, Texas, wished to embrace the owner's intense love of the outdoor environment through the building, to be seen while inside and even more, from the outside. The feature is a 4-story tall fabricated tree that "grows" continuously through the building! It will be a total of 50 feet tall, fabricated from Teak or Suer pieces.

The most challenging item to be produced.....

We had a residential project that featured slabs that were produced to resemble screens with holes. In Indonesia, slabs of wood with holes become firewood! Ultimately, some of the negative space had to be machined and although this seemed like the simplest of requests, the artisans in Indonesia considered it substandard! They perceive value differently.

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Do you personally design any items?

Me personally? Joke! *(Editor's note: This was the first answer I received from Kandis with a wide smile.)* I am actually the big picture/strategist of my company, but work closely with a great team of architects and designers who are very dynamic and expressive in helping our clients develop their design intent for a project. We group Skype with our Bali team of designers weekly to discuss each project in the pipeline.

Can you tell us a little about your team and workplace dynamic? Do you have any fun or unique company culture aspects that you've created in the past 10 years?

I'm most proud of the family team environment and the flexibility that I strive for in our offices, both Chicago and Bali. I am a firm believer that you get back what you give to people and they don't abuse the privilege. We offer liberal vacation and can work from home when unique circumstances arise like home or family emergencies. We have fun gatherings like rooftop lunches in Chicago and grilled fish dinners in Bali and participate in the many Bali festivals and holidays. Our Bali factory even has a Temple to respect the stringent religious culture.

Editor's note: Just before press time, Chicago experienced an arctic cold front. We checked in to see how they were braving it at SJV and it would seem they found a fun and proactive approach to their circumstances!

We had to close the showroom due to plummeted temperatures to -40 in Chicago because our furnace broke. The team even showed up with parkas and ski hats one day. While we awaited repairs, my Design Director offered her downtown apartment as SJV headquarters and declared it a pajama party. I forewent flannel for the Zsa Zsa Gabor look complete with satin, cashmere, fur, heels and jewelry. We accomplished as much that day as we would have in the office!

(Now that's how you handle freezing temperatures with style!)

Do you have a favorite item in your personal collection?



I adore the Lychee Root table showcased in the entry of our Chicago showroom!

An influential person or celebrity's home that you would like to see your products in?

Christina Ong (wife of the owner of Como Hotels – encouraged me to take my first trip to Bali and influential in my business path. She has exquisite taste!), Maya Angelou (American poet), Thom Yorke (front man for Radiohead, environmentalist), Gwyneth Paltrow (enjoys design, cares for the environment, has her own blog).

Any advice to our Designers on custom pieces? How can they best work with you and San Juan Ventures?

We work very closely with designers to create what ever their vision is. The challenges are the time it takes for the quotation to turn around since it is largely custom, (this can be 14 – 21 days) the materials sourcing process, which includes my team on motorbikes and boats all over Indonesia to find these beautiful materials. The multiple festivals and Holidays in Bali also play a role in continual interruptions to our “western” flow of business but we have learned to accept them as part of the mystique and romance of the products which are well worth the wait!

A friend of mine, Holly Hunt, traveled with me to Indonesia and experienced firsthand the process we go through of finding the local artisans, communicating with them, and the frustrating amount of time and energy that goes into making a custom product with true craftsmen. It certainly keeps life interesting! On the plus side, we had a wonderful time at Como Shambhala, which is an amazingly soulful, spiritual resort/spa. I highly recommend it!

New Products we should be the first to know about?

Our current design project is a collection of feature walls that will tell a graphic story of life in our two SJV locations, Chicago and Bali. This feature wall design collection uses inspiration from photographs, maps, buildings,







transportation, etc. from both areas. We are thrilled to be launching this collection in February!

Personal

How do you recover from a long day at work?

Just being home and not traveling is relaxing! But I love to exercise, meditate, and ride horses.

Favorite Vacation Spot....

I've travelled extensively, but my favorite is still Bali. Even after all the years I've spent there! There's so much beauty and it's relaxing. It puts you in a different atmosphere, has a different energy, and you must adapt to their schedule and way of operating. Even while working, I appreciate the unique qualities that make it special. In close proximity, you can have a nail salon, a beautiful Temple, and then on the side of the road, a spice and vanilla vendor. It's fascinating. I feel very at home there.

Your personal home decor...

Eclectic

Favorite personal style...

Casual, easy, uncluttered and clean lines ■

NOTE: Look for local Chicago hot spot recommendations from Kandis and her team on our website! www.elliesojourn/survey





San Juan Ventures and Kandis Wrigley have shared their personal photos from Bali with Ellie Sojourn. Coupled with a list comprised with help from Kandis and her Bali staff of where to stay, eat and sites that shouldn't be missed. We must say, Bali has quickly moved to the top of the list of our dream vacation spots! Enjoy the scenery!

STAY, EAT, SEE, PLAY IN: BALI

PHOTOS: PHOTOS COURTESY SAN JUAN VENTURES





Hotels:

1. **Como Shambala:** www.comohotels.com/comoshambhalaestate
2. **W Hotel Bali:** www.whotels.com/Bali
3. **Karma Kandara Resort:** www.karmaresorts.com/find-a-resort/bali/karma-kandara/
4. **The Bugalri Hotel:** www.bulgarihotels.com/en-us/bali/the-resort/overview
5. **The Four Seasons Hotel Ubud:** www.fourseasons.com/sayan/

Restaurants:

1. **Metis:** www.metisbali.com
2. **Sardine:** www.sardinebali.com
3. **Mozaic:** www.mozaic-bali.com
4. **Sarong:** www.sarongbali.com
5. **Warung:** www.alilahotels.com

Cultural Sites:

1. **Ulu Watu Temple**
2. **Tanah Lot Temple**
3. **Ubud Town**
4. **Hiking Mt Agung Volcano for sunrise**
5. **Visit to a Balinese healer:** www.balihealers.com

Hotspots:

1. **Ku De Ta:** www.kudeta.net
2. **Potato Head:** www.ptthead.com
3. **The Rock Bar:** www.ayanaresort.com/rockbarbali/wp/
4. **Townhouse Bali:** www.thetownhousebali.com/main/
5. **Mint Bali** www.indomint.com

Other places/things of interest:

1. **Amed for shipwreck diving**
2. **Sideman for endless rice paddy views**
3. **Cooking classes**
4. **Indonesian cultural classes**
5. **Yoga retreat in Bali**