

## My Jakarta: 'I Love Doing This Kind of Thing Because It's for Charity'

Sabrina Pallawarukka | April 25, 2011



Hanneke Mennens. (JG Photo/Sabrina Pallawarukka)

Most Jakartans don't really know the city. Sure, they tell you exactly where their favorite bakso stand is, but they don't know the difference between the National Museum and Museum Gajah (they're actually one and the same), and they've certainly never visited the slums. Hanneke Mennens's Jakarta Memory Game may be just what these people need. Better still, it's all for a good cause.

### First things first, what is Jakarta Memory Game?

It's a fun game for everybody from 3 years old and up. The game consists of a pack of 80 cards bearing photographs of 40 different scenes around Jakarta. Each picture appears on two cards in the pack. You lay the cards face down and then turn over two. If the photos on the two cards match, voila! You win! The person who finds the most paired cards wins. Two to eight people can play the game.

### So, basically I should be able to beat my nephew if we go head to head, right?

No, no, no ... children very often win because they are so focused and excited. It's a very well-known game all over the world and great for brain development in children as well. I love doing this kind of thing because it is for charity and all the proceeds go to help deprived children. I took the pictures and some ladies from Werkgroep '72 helped me do the rest.

### What is Werkgroep '72?

It's a Dutch charity foundation; it runs programs for people in need, whether they be street children or elderly people. It awards scholarships, provides food for the needy and so on. We do everything we can possibly do to help. There's a Web site at [www.werkgroep72.org](http://www.werkgroep72.org).

### What is your role within the group?

I act as a photographer for them on a voluntary basis and take pictures of all their very worthwhile projects.

**These are beautiful pictures for a memory game, did you take them all yourself?**

Yes, I did. To be honest with you I was a studio photographer, mostly for commercials, models. I did a lot of assignments in Singapore. What happened was I worked so much at the studio that the flash lights damaged my eyes.

**Where are most of the pictures taken?**

I went all around Jakarta. To Monas, Bantar Gebang [the landfill site where most of the city's garbage ends up], Glodok, Pasar Ikan, Sunda Kelapa, basically all over the city, I love playing with colors and lines and I took all the little pieces of the city and put them in one box. Like the picture on one of the cards with the little boy brushing his teeth.

**How did you get that one?**

This was actually from a project for the kids at Bantar Gebang. You would not believe that these kids did not know how to brush their teeth. It's difficult for them to make enough money to eat, let alone to buy a toothbrush. So we went there with a dentist and we gave them all little packages with a toothbrush, toothpaste and soap in it and we taught them how to brush their teeth. They were actually really happy about it, it was amazing. And it was great fun for me too because I could capture the moment.

**So eye surgery didn't stop you from taking pictures?**

Everyone who knows me is aware that I am an addicted photographer and I really enjoy working on exciting projects. So the Jakarta Memory Game is like My Jakarta through the eyes of a photographer. I always see the glass as being half full rather than half empty and I believe that everything happens for a reason.

You have worked as a professional photographer and done a wide range of work. What is it about taking children's photos that makes it so enjoyable?

Because it gives you so much back. Children are always happy with how a photo turns out, even though it's not easy to shoot them. You can't tell them what to do; you just have to be patient.

**Who or what do you most enjoy taking pictures of?**

Hmm ... that would have to be when I take pictures of my niece Lynn and my nephews. Every summer when I return to Holland I take their pictures. It's been 10 years and they love it. It has become a sort of ritual between us all. I can really see them growing through my pictures. The nice thing is they really love it as well.

What is the one thing that you would love to change about Jakarta?

I wish all the children in Jakarta or in Indonesia in general could get a proper education, to help them to support themselves.