**Art “alternatives”**

Concurrently on display in Ubud are two art exhibitions providing “alternative” approaches to contemporary art making, presentation and appreciation in Bali.

“Minimart”, a group exhibition by 13 young local artists at the Sika Contemporary Art Gallery in Sanggingan presents work categorized into 3 specific levels for sale.

“Plastic Attack”, by the G-5 art collective at the Tony Raka Art Gallery in Mas, on the other hand displays art objects made from plastic emphasizing aesthetic values over commercial, while engaging our awareness about this environmentally problematic material.

Why are these exhibitions of significance within the context of Balinese art?

The development of Balinese art over the past 80 years has been hindered by tourism and cultural norms. The advent of Balinese modern tradition art was geared towards foreign visitors wishing to buy souvenirs of Bali, and has become enormously popular. A minority of local artist, by contrast have embraced contemporary art, a genre that began after the 1960’s.

Art making in Bali in the 1920’s began to change from an act of religious devotion to, by and large, having a sole emphasis on the commercial. Adaptation of local narratives along with some western art techniques and advice eventually set the format of how to successfully exchange art for cash.

Balinese abstract art burst out of Yogyakarta in the 1970’s. A handful of talented young artists studying at the then ASRI, now Indonesian Art Institute (ISI) combined cultural symbols with western ideas to create a fresh style of Balinese art.

A poorer version of this abstraction eventually impacted commercial markets along with the decorative and modern traditional styles flooding the shops and art galleries of Bali.

Some of the pioneering abstract artists, such as Made Wianta and Nyoman Erawan have continued on from the 70’s and lead the way for local contemporary artists, especially with their performances and installations. Yet during the 70’s – 80’s no fine art galleries in Bali were willing to exhibit contemporary artist’s as there work was not saleable.

While “Plastic Attack” has little commercial prospects it helps to consolidate the progressive reputation of G-5. One audio work, recorded sounds of crushing plastic, succeeds in igniting our memory as well as imagination. Another, walls of plastic bottles flooded with artificial light creates an unusual, yet strong visual impression. This exhibition encourages the audience to “think outside of the box” to alternative artistic approaches.

The ambience during “Minimart” emphasized a greater sense of community interaction and creativity. Audience mingled with artists in a market like atmosphere, one observer became a participator and received a tattoo by a local artist. Another work focused on the ‘Bali Not For Sale’ movement, raising awareness and money for the Balinese subak agricultural organization.

Artists presenting works classified into three distinctive levels for sale - paintings, sketches and small works and art products defines “Minimart”.

“Minimart” underlines the necessity that young artists must consider other possibilities to generate income. Thinking outside of the traditional format of making paintings, drawings and sculptures, yet in ways of utilizing their ideas and designs into other saleable items such as fashion and accessories, gift cards, utensils, linen and other decorative household items as revealed in the exhibition.

Both exhibitions are a positive sign of the growing contemporary art scene in Bali and the Sika and Tony Raka galleries mush be praised for their support of young alternative artists.

“Plastic Attack” at Tony Raka Art Gallery Jalan Raya Mas 86, Mas, Ubud

“Minimart” at Sika Contemporary Art Gallery, Jalan Raya Sanggingan, Ubud

Both exhibitions continue through to the 5th November 2013.