**Bali A.C.Ts**

The development of contemporary art in Bali has been hindered by the mass tourism. For the record, what is contemporary art?

Contemporary art is considered to have arisen during the 1960’s, after the phenomenon of modern art and its lineage that began in 1880’s with the Impressions movement in Europe.

It involves the creation of painting, sculpture, installation, video and performance art. Experimentation with new mediums is a vital part of its innovation.

The role of the contemporary artist in observing and responding to existing trends and events in our immediate world functions as a critical ‘sign post’ in modern culture. The most relevant contemporary art raises issues and asks questions.

Balinese art - post 1930’s - refers to paintings and sculpture that, by and large have been produced for commercial reasons. Labeled as modern traditional, this art was manipulated from the rigid formats of the two-dimensional religious Wayang Balinese art to appeal to the tastes of foreign visitors.

It is true to say that the development of modern traditional Balinese art is contemporary as it contains western influences, the use of modern materials, as well as including contemporary local narratives.

However tourism and the commodification of the art merely tags it as traditional. Its aesthetic qualities are unique as well as rich, and importantly enormous markets for this work have been created.

The cultural identity of Indonesia is modeled on the traditional and this has been successfully marketed for the tourism sector. Contemporary art is generally neither understood nor appreciated by the local population.

There has been little if any attention by the Balinese government to contemporary art. While in the private sector, except for the Sprites Art and Creative Biennale 2013 and the stalwart commitment by the Bentara Budaya Bali Cultural Center, owned by the Kompas Gramedia group, there is little infrastructure other than the galleries, art collectives, some of the art museums and art institutions.

A new initiative by the Indonesian government Ministry of Tourism and the Creative Industry has led to the development of a unique contemporary art program in Bali that will kick off on the 17th October in Ubud. Bali ACT - Art and Culture in Tradition will feature many exhibitions and events in galleries and artists studios throughout Bali until 22nd November.

The opening event at the Agung Rai Museum of Art in Ubud will be officiated by Mrs. Marie Pangestu, Minister of Tourism and the Creative Economy – Indonesia. The evening will be punctuated by a performance by Balinese artist Nyoman Erawan and an exhibition of works by senior local artists Nyoman Gunarsa, Made Wianta, Made Djirna, Made Palguna and Erawan.

The next day a seminar, “The Development of the Fine Arts in Culture and Tradition” will be conducted at the Indonesian Art Institute in Jalan Nusa Indah, Denpasar, which will include presentations by senior cultural identities Agung Rai, Jim Supangkat, Rizki Zaelani, Jean Couteau, Warih Wisatsana and Prof. Ahman Sya.

On the 19th October at Bentara Budaya Cultural Center, Jalan I.B. Mantra, Kewetel as a part of the Bali ACT a workshop, “Art Projects & Entrepreneurship” will be held for art college and vocational school students, facilitated by Mrs Irma Damayanti and leading Balinese artist and art educator Wayan ‘Suklu’ Suajana.

Following these main events will be a series of exhibitions and events

showcasing the talents of local and foreign artists in the mediums of painting, sculpture, photography, digital art, installation, video art and performance.

The Indonesian government has pledged to continue this event again in 2014 and the local contemporary community has good cause for celebration.

For more information go to: [www.baliact.info](http://www.baliact.info) or FaceBook – Bali Act