

Bali Daily - Dewa Batuan and the Community

Within the history of Balinese modern traditional art, beginning in the 1930's, it was the villages of Ubud, Batuan and Sanur that captured the majority of limelight. However, Pengosekan village, just south of Ubud has its own story, along with the distinction of producing some truly unique artists.

One of these artist, who went on to become one of the icons of Balinese art was Dewa Nyoman Batuan, born in Pengosekan in 1939.

For those who were lucky enough to encounter him, they surely will have fond memories for a meeting with him was always a joy. Batuan was gifted was an effervescent personality, and a radiant smile that matched the twinkle in his eye.

Dewa Batuan had a vision for his village of Pengosekan that manifested into the Pengosekan Community of Artists in 1970. Through his entrepreneurial endeavor he was to help establish a market for the local paintings and thus he was able to help break the social and economic barrier to the welfare of the people in his neighborhood and get many of them out of poverty and hard labor of farming.

Tragically the popular artist, teacher, philosopher and visionary, Dewa Nyoman Batuan was abruptly taken from us on the 14th February 2013.

At Ubud's Museum Puri Lukisan, the Pengosekan Painting Exhibition, titled "Dewa Batuan and the Community" opened on the 14th February, commemorating a year since his passing and paying tribute to the legacy of Batuan. The exhibition continues through until 10th April 2014.

In their foremost days Pengosekan artists began painting in the two dimensional Balinese Wayang style revealing stories from the Hindu sacred texts. Post 1930's saw a boom in Balinese art and a "new" 3D format that gave tales from daily local village life, often characterized by vibrant market and ceremonial temples scenes, a new aesthetic verve.

However the signature style of paintings that evolved from Pengosekan in 1980's was the Flora and Fauna style that depicted Balinese wildlife set in beautiful environmental scenes. These works are often beautifully balanced compositions and the imagery of birds set in lush tropical foliage, for example, seem to flow effortlessly in front of the eye.

"Dewa Batuan and the Community" includes more than 40 works all painted by students of Batuan, and his older brother Dewa Putu Mokoh, both were students of Pengosekan's most celebrated artist Gusti Ketut Kobot (1917 - 1999).

Batuan too made his own mark on the development of Balinese painting in the mid 1970's when he adapted religious tales, along with personal narratives and that of daily life into compositions that followed the symmetrical formats as derived from the Buddhist mandala. The structure of the mandala was a perfect vehicle for Batuan, the award-winning artist who was internationally known, to express his important beliefs and the philosophies of his Balinese Hindu culture.

Two other Pengosekan artists who received great attention from art lovers, collectors, curators and critics were Mokoh and Murni. Mokoh's quirky, yet highly intimate paintings where a complete departure from other known styles of painting at the time. His female student Gusti Ayu Kadek Murniashi (1966-2006) was instrumental in forging new thematic grounds in Balinese art and bravely introduced taboo themes by exploring gender politics. Murni is renown as Indonesia's most important female artist.

Batuan's son, Dewa Putu Putrayasa continues to keep alive his father's tradition of the mandala paintings and this exhibition features one enormous work by Putrayasa paying tribute to his father's life.

In Pengosekan, south of Ubud, Batuan developed a community art space with ample room for cultural events, art exhibitions and teaching art to young artists from his village and also visitors to the center.

However it was his distinctive artistic approach which was to innovate a new style of painting within the various genres that evolved last century after the explosion of creativity that was to change Balinese art forever, as well placing it onto the world art stage forever.

Adopting the principles of the Buddhist mandala, governed by applying all iconography and symbolic information of the painting into order according geometric codes.

The fantastic stories and imagery from the Balinese Wayang paintings, that predate the popular Balinese modern tradition, were given a new format and allowed new life.

Batuan was able to begin to retell the famous narratives, the basis of which are the confrontation of divine and evil forces according to the Balinese Hindu universal philosophy and the constant drama of yin/yang that is played out on a daily basis.



A Tribute to Dewa Batuan by his son Dewa Putu Putrayasa



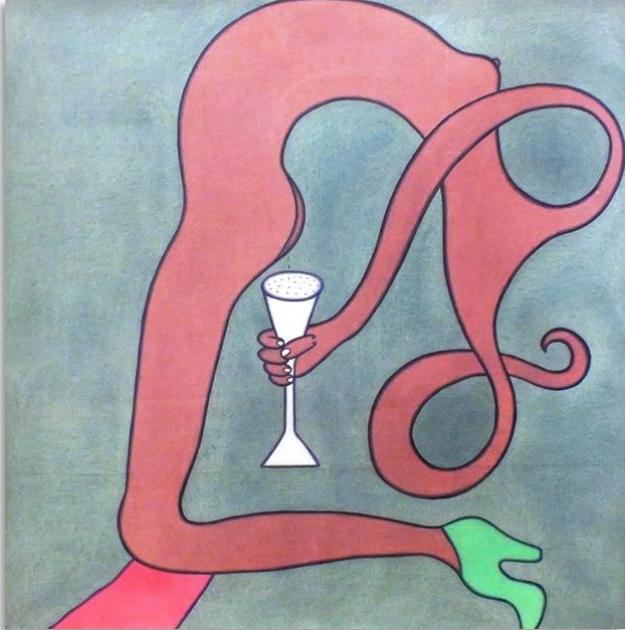
Dwa Nyoman Batuan



Cempaka Dewa Nyoman Batuan



Bebek Dewa Made Bawa, the Pengosekan flora and Fauna Style.



Ni Gusti Ayu Kadek Muriniashi