

Bentara Budaya Bali – A Cultural Icon

An inappropriate education system along with cultural barriers were among the contributing factors that hamper Indonesian people from being globally competitive, said Sonita Lontoh, chairwoman of Indonesian Diaspora Foundation recently during the Indonesian Human Resource Summit 2013 in Nusa Dua.

Indonesian cultural observers state that the Suharto New Order Regime (1967-98) was instrumental in curbing the natural processes of the open and enquiring mind eventually leading to this “brain drain” within Indonesian society. Recently respected Indonesian intellectual Goenawan Mohamad emphasized the situation in the national news and current affairs magazine Tempo, stating, “We have an (Indonesian) elite that is basically illiterate.”

While it may be argued that the real needs of modern 21st century Bali are overlooked by the Balinese government and the corporate sector, what is clear, however is that a progressive education system is needed to develop the future generations of Bali.

Virtually unknown to the expatriate and greater local communities, and off the radar of the tourist masses, one outstanding cultural education institution - Bentara Budaya Bali - works tirelessly to highlight both the diversity and richness of Indonesian culture along with modern cultural expressions from outside of the country.

The program at Bentara Budaya has a strong emphasis on youth education providing various workshops and seminars conducted by local as well as international experts in their creative fields. Events range from discussions, art exhibitions, traditional performances, film festivals, to poetry and book launching occasions, and Bentara often collaborates with national and international groups and institutions to present events.

From humble beginnings in 1982 in Yogyakarta, Central Java the Bentara Budaya institution began serving the Indonesian society to accommodate and represent the culture of the nation from all walks of life, backgrounds and different horizons. Centers in Jakarta, Solo, Malang and recently in Bali, opening in September 2009, have been established by the Kompas/Gramedia group from Jakarta, Kompas being Indonesia’s oldest and most respected newspaper.

The management of Bentara Budaya is under the careful eye of the renown poet and writer Warih Wisatsana along with the support of his small army of young and dedicated volunteers. The venue features an amphitheater for performances accommodating up to 300 people, while the large exhibition pavilion includes a stage and enormous wall space ideal for exhibition and performances.

Indonesia has a unique literary history and this is catered for by an extensive library housed in the Jakarta center along with a collection of important foreign literature. Highlighting the need to invest in local history the institution also owns an important collection of over 500 paintings by Indonesian masters as well as an assortment of antiques and cultural artifacts.

A special event in September in celebration of 75 years as a performer of the Balinese dance maestro, Ida Bagus Blangsinga included special performances of the classical Balinese dance Tari Kebayar Duduk workshops and a photography art exhibition. The exhibition by the Lingkara photographic community of Denpasar and guest artists focusing on Blangsinga highlighted the talent of local contemporary photographers; works by ‘Totok’ Parawata, D. P Arsa Putra merit special mention.

The upcoming group contemporary art exhibition “Personality In Commuality” beginning 29th November through to 7th December by artists from the Tabanan regency of Bali will feature some of the leading artists of Bali, such as Made Wianta, Nyoman Nuarta, Putu Sutawijaya, Gusti Nurata, And Gusti Nengah Sura Ardana.

Amongst the gaps within the cultural infrastructure of Bali the Bentara Budaya institution provides an invaluable educational service and is a modal of integrity and positive inspiration.

www.bentarabudaya.com