



BRUCE CARPENTER

A lust for life and adventure, along with a generous dose of savvy and courage have propelled New York City born and bred Bruce Carpenter around the planet.

The son of a young American soldier who returned home with an English upper class bride, during his youth the aspiring artist balanced between two worlds; one of the idealism and glory of old Britain, the other, the cosmopolitan, creative cauldron that was NYC in the 60's & 70's.

"My parents had a troubled relationship, so I found my sanctuary in art," says Carpenter who was born in 1952. "I was close to the New York art scene during seminal times; I was from the Woodstock generation on the cusp of the Aquarian age, Warhol, the beat poets and the bohemian lifestyle resonated with me. Carpenter became passionate about experimental art and theatre, and channelled his creativity into filmmaking.

Travelling regularly between Europe and the U.S in pursuit of his 'career', in 1974 Carpenter succumbed to the call of the exotic Asia. He sold his camera and flew to Bangkok, journeyed over land through Sumatra and Java onto Bali, spending in total a year and half in Indonesia. Accompanied by a Swiss artist, their itinerary was to scout out wild destinations, create and then document their avant-garde art installations. Their images were to be included in a photography exhibition that later toured throughout Europe.

When Carpenter arrived on the island 'paradise' Kuta was no more than a small village set in coconut groves adjacent to the beach. "There was a handful of homestays with a cast of international bohemian suffers and roaming hippies as the guests," he recounts.

In 1979 Carpenter made Bali his home, between slipping in and out of the country pursuing various research and creative projects, since then he has succeeded in becoming a renowned art connoisseur and dealer, as well as a historian, writer and publisher.

Between 1981-83, long before the *Eat Pray Love* phenomenon of spiritual tourism had hit Ubud, Carpenter, a trained art historian, was co leading research tours to Balinese healers with Dr. Stanley Kripner, an American professor who played an influential role in the study of shamanism. Carpenter's research became the basis of his first book co authored with Dr. Kripner and Denny Thong, the then director of Bali's notorious Bangli asylum for the insane. "Unfortunately," says Carpenter, "the book was not published until early in the 1990's and was doomed into insignificance due to poor distribution."

"Often in life, its not what you know, but who you know," says Carpenter. Through a series of discussions with key figures in the hotel industry in Bali he was to be granted a wonderful opportunity. In 1990 Carpenter co founded the Ganesha Gallery of fine art at the Four Seasons Hotel in Jimbaran, South Bali. At the time a new concept of a high-end luxury resort was being pioneered and a gallery was perceived to be an excellent cultural bridge between the guests and Indonesian modern and traditional art.

Initially the resort attracted wealthy and sophisticated international clientele and with the charismatic Carpenter as the figurehead of Ganesha, his sharp eye for art, and a unique vision for a new model of art galleries in Bali, the timing was perfect and it became an immediate success.

For a 15-year period the gallery held 12 exhibitions a year, an unheard of phenomenon in Indonesian art, confirming it as the fine art gallery in Bali. In its heyday well-heeled guests and local collectors purchased quantities of art, however over the years as the profile of the guests changed, along with events such as the Gulf War, 9/11 and the Bali bombings, and its market gradually faded. This experience for Carpenter gifted him with enormous experience and knowledge, along with connections and an international reputation.

In 1994 Carpenter published his first serious book on W.O.J. Nieuwenkamp, the first European artist on Bali who played an important role in making Bali famous and promoting Balinese art. During his many trips to Asia he also began sourcing and collecting Asian and Indonesian art that he often sold to international collectors to help feed his young family.

“I have a strong instinct for self preservation and am a firm believer in taking full responsibility of your actions to realise your personal dreams,” he states. Often outspoken, always shrewd, as a former model, and friend to many rich and famous, while being a father of two, Carpenter cuts both a dashing and curious figure. His trail blazing journey through life is rich in colourful tales that are steeped in the exotic, mysterious and dynamic, and of course include celebrated names.

In all, Carpenter has written and co-authored over 20 books and numerous articles on Indonesian art, culture and history. However, with the recent release of the book *Lempad of Bali – The illuminating Line*, the first fully comprehensive study on the master of Balinese traditional artist, Gusti Nyoman Lempad (1893?-1978), on the 20th September 2014 at Museum Puri Lukisan, he admits, “this has by far been the most challenging project I have engaged in in my life.”

“As the book concept and project manager my list of tasks was unprecedented. I had to oversee interactions with over 40 institutions and collectors in 8 different countries, each with different requirements, along with dealing with 6 authors, one of whom is dead!” Carpenter says. “Our endeavour was to include the broadest range of Lempad’s works available in the book, therefore the detective work required was unbeknown to us and consequentially enormous.” The beautiful volume of over 420 pages is the culmination of more than 6 years work for the team of dedicated and highly respected academics and professionals.

“Bali deserves to have world class art exhibitions, books and events to create more interest in its immense and unique culture,” Carpenter states.

“I am dedicated to the publication of illustrated books on the traditional arts of Indonesia which have disappeared or are disappearing. We honor the past by recording its brilliance. I also feel it is important to urge young Indonesians to do the same. It is ironic that westerners play such a critical role in the studies of Indonesian art. This should change.”