

Bruce Granquist

The digital map has revolutionized the ease with which people can travel in the modern era. Advances in technology over the eons have had a major impact on the process of making maps, as well. In the 15th to the 17th century, during the Age of Exploration, cartographers (map makers) used maps that had been passed down for centuries to create new ones based on new surveying techniques and explorers' observations. The invention of the telescope, sextant and compass enabled increasing accuracy.

“Most maps today are made by people working in places far away from the areas they map,” says American illustrator and cartographer Bruce Granquist. “From the view point of efficiency, sitting in an office and finding all the reference materials to make a map on the Internet is a positive boon. But without the human touch, I believe the resulting maps are lifeless and sterile.”

In 1995 Granquist, a resident of Bali since 1986, came into possession of the blueprints of the original 1928 Dutch topographical charts of Bali. The fascinating maps revealed details of objects like 'stone fences' and 'pagan burial grounds', yet the most useful particulars, according to him, were the indication of 'walking paths'. “As I studied these charts closely I realized that even though all the topographic features and village locations were carefully noted, the important information lacking was the road system. I had done a number of small Bali maps for several publishers, however I realized that there was a need for a large format and highly detailed map to adequately portray Bali's topographical richness.”

Giving in to “a little cartographic obsession”, over the next 5 years during his spare time Granquist rode around with these blueprints, eventually traveling the entire island updating the Dutch charts. “And as it turned out, most of the walking paths of 1928 became the paved roads of 1995.”

“The process of painting the map was low tech. I used English watercolor paper and French paper, a little bit of drawing, a lot of painting with small brushes and some stippling with an old toothbrush.” No computers or spray equipment were used during Granquist's process. “I wasn't trying to prove a point by staying away from technology,” he says, “At the time I was living in Tejakula, a remote north Bali village with undependable supplies of electricity, and I didn't want to lose a night of work because the electricity went out. I just lit a candle and kept on painting.”

Rendered entirely in watercolor Granquist's map was self-published and printed in the USA in 1999 - the first large format, detailed two-dimensional, four-color pictorial topographic map of Bali. To date more than 10,000 copies have been printed in four editions, while occasionally he donates the use of the map to NGOs or Yayasanans if it is useful to their work. “In the 5 years that I drove up and down Bali's roads I saw so many interesting things, the whole thing was a real adventure. And when I was back to my studio reconstructing what I had just seen on a big piece of paper, working late into the night, I felt lucky to have an opportunity like this. With its amazing landforms, mapping Bali was a cartographer's dream.”

Born near Chicago in 1958, images of the Borobudur temple compelled Granquist to travel to the Indonesia, first visiting Yogyakarta, in 1986, and then on to Bali. His interest in maps, however, began at an early age, “My grandfather worked for a publishing company, and used to bring us big atlases full of maps of places that I had never heard of. I really enjoyed looking through them, spending hours absorbed in the details – the maps really sparked my imagination.”



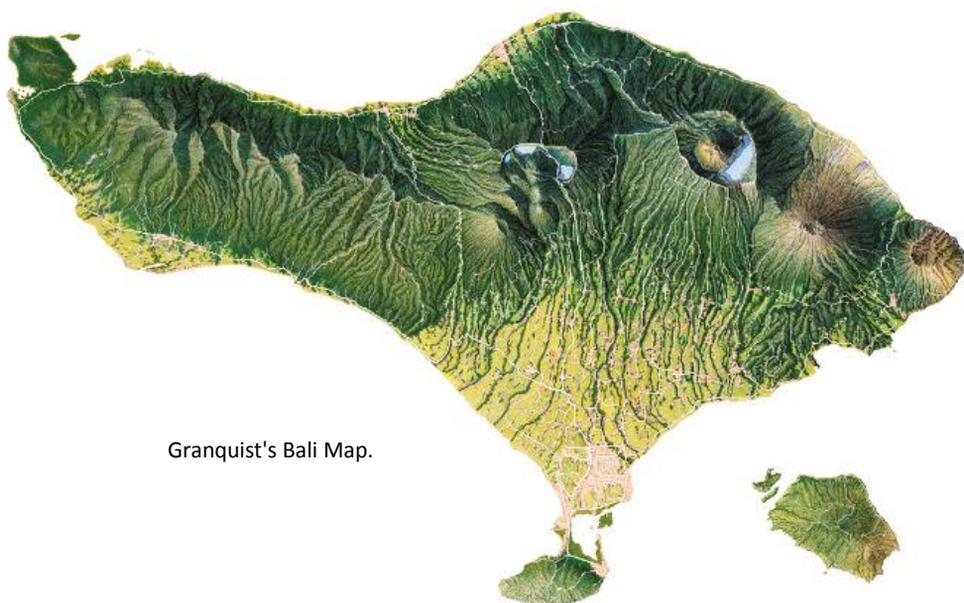
“Nowadays it is very unusual to see a hand painted map, almost all cartography is computer generated. Goggle maps are a good example, they are so complete and full of information. I use them all the time,” Granquist says, yet adds, “They do nothing to make a place seem interesting, or to make a person curious to visit a certain place. I think the challenge of mapmaking is to capture as closely as possible the reality and the specific qualities of a place in 2 dimensions, to make someone want to explore the place. It is very difficult for a computer generated image to do this.”

Granquist, who has a small book distribution company based in Bali, works as a freelancer with publishers and over the past 25 years has contributed art, line drawings, maps and illustrations to more than 25 books. “Most of my illustrations are about natural history and architecture. I specialize in mapmaking, even though I have not studied cartography formally. Maps are challenging – I put prodigious effort into learning how to draw them well, and they have become the most satisfying type of work I do. I have made many maps for private clients, usually resorts and hotels. These are mostly site plans or bird's eye views.” Having studied art at three different colleges, earning an undergraduate degree, Granquist also designs and publish books and researches and write articles.

In December 2012 Granquist self published an art book called *Inventing Art: The Paintings of Batuan*. The project took three and a half years to research, write and design, along with the printing. “What began as a two year project quickly consumed nearly 4 years and involved countless hours of conversations and hundreds of interviews with the artists. It was the most complex yet engaging project I’ve ever done.”

While the intricate and time-consuming illustrations are one aspect of Granquist’s artistic talent, from the opposite dimension comes his passion for abstract art. “Sometimes the long hours in the studio get a bit much to take, so I have developed a way to regain my equilibrium - a personal art project going on for most of my adult life. This is a series of calligraphic abstract paintings which are almost exactly opposite to the illustration and map-making work. They are completely free and self-contained and seem to develop according to their own logic.” Granquist adds, “I steal away about 1 or 2 two hours each day to do this work, it loosens me up and helps me regain my balance. Besides, I really enjoy splashing the paint around and making a mess.”

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Granquist's Bali Map.