

Lempad, Bali's Greatest Artists

I Gusti Nyoman Lempad (1862 -1978) is an acknowledged icon of the Balinese art with a reputation that is unsurpassed. The culmination of several years of hard work by many people may be finally realized this year by art lovers and the Balinese people with the release of three books and two exhibitions in Ubud, Bali, showcasing the maestro's work.

Considered one of the first modern Balinese artists, Lempad's contribution to the development of Balinese art during its most revolutionary period (1930-1945) is not his only achievement. Prior to the 1920's he was renowned for his innovations in architecture, post 1920's he then began drawing and became famous for his line drawings that were a futuristic adaptation of figures from the Wayang puppet theater.

Revealing artistic talent before the age of 10, Lempad's father Gusti Mayukan, a undagi, or traditional Balinese architect put his young son to work assisting him on his many building projects. Seeking refuge from their kingdom in Belahbatuh, south of Ubud, the teenage Lempad and his father found political asylum with the royal family of Ubud at Puri Ubud. Their timing was perfect as the Puri Ubud was in a process of rebuilding, their skills were valuable and they were made welcome. This began a long relationship, still lasting until today with the Puri Ubud.

Lempad was instrumental in the development of the Pita Maha artists collective that was initially formed in 1936 by the King of Ubud Tjokorda Gede Agung Sukawati and foreign artists Walter Spies and Rudolf Bonnet. The Pita Maha monitored the progress of a new and developing genre of art, Balinese modern traditional art while forging new national and international markets for the local paintings and woodcarvings.

Not only was Lempad responsible for a new style of Balinese art aesthetics which featured elongated and distorted figures, he adopted a sense of space into his compositions that was new and invigorating. He carefully utilized empty areas of white paper in his works that whereby emphasized the brilliance of his figurative line drawings while the balance of composition then became essential. Yet Lempad too was a master sculptor of temple statues, masks, a maker of wayang puppets, and an expert in the making of cremation towers, sarcophagi and nagas. He also helped in the designing and building of the Museum Puri Lukisan from 1953 to 1955, Ubud's oldest and most important art museum.

It was Lempad's natural imaginative and innovative ability in expressing old stories anew, along with the strength of his flowing, pure and defined lines that revolutionized Balinese art. At the time Balinese paintings were characterized by crowded compositions in which part of the surface of the canvas was covered with narrative information and motifs. Lempad introduced a space into his compositions that was aesthetically fresh and strong.

A great lack of literature, no books or meaningful catalogues have ever been published about Bali's greatest artist until Lempad – A Timeless Master was released at Ubud's Agung Rai Museum of Art in June this year. Written by Jean Couteau, the French born Bali historian and art critic and edited by international art experts Ana & Antonio Casanovas. The large format coffee table book features hundreds of images and reveals that Lempad was at once Balinese to the core yet at the same time able to draw lines and have visual ideas that transcended time and the country.

The Lempad for the World exhibition at the Dewangga House of Lempad Ubud opened from 27 July through until 26 August. The opening was highlighted by the release of the book *Lempad for the World* written by Gusti Putu Suteja, grandson of Lempad, senior Balinese artist Ketut Budiana, and curators Wayan Seriyoga Parta and Made Susanta Dwitanaya. What is important about this book is that it is a contribution into the discourse about Lempad from the Balinese people. The exhibition of works on paper by Lempad also revealed his family legacy and included works by his grandsons Gusti Nyoman Sudara, Gusti Nyoman Darta, Gusti Putu Suteja and great grandson Gusti Ngurah Arya Atmaja.

The exhibition “Illuminating Line: Master Drawings of I Gusti Nyoman Lempad” will open at the Museum Puri Lukisan in Ubud, on 20 September and run until 24 November 2014. Seventy of Lempad's master drawings from the 1930-50s, return to Ubud, Bali for the first-ever international retrospective of his art, with pieces borrowed from museum and private collections on four continents. This is the most important exhibition in the history of Balinese art.

The book, *Lempad of Bali*, to be released coinciding with the Museum Puri Lukisan exhibition, is the first comprehensive catalogue of the artist's life and work. At 400-plus pages with about 500 images and reproductions of drawings from 1930-70, it features biographical and interpretive essays by scholars and close observers of Bali's art and culture, Bruce Carpenter, John Darling, Hedi Hinzler, Kaja McGowan, Adrian Vickers, and Museum Puri Lukisan curator Soemantri Widagdo.

While his contribution to the development of Balinese art and architecture cannot be overstated, Lempad was already a brilliant draftsman due his talent for making precise sketches in his role as a *undagi*. It wasn't until later in his career, however that he began to channel his creative skills into artistic designs with pencil, pen and ink on paper.

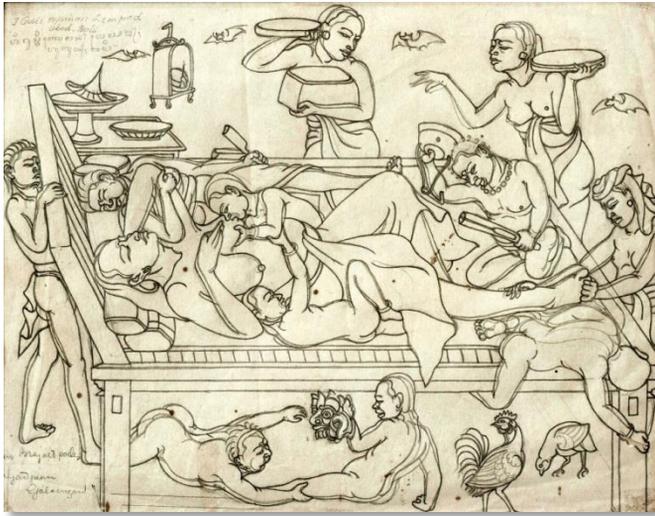
Lempad gained much attention from the local art community along with the foreign anthropologists, researchers and artists who were living in Bali during the 1920-30's. Over his lifetime Lempad completed a body of work that has since been unmatched.

“Illuminating Line: Master Drawings of I Gusti Nyoman Lempad”

Open 20 September continuing through to 24 November at the Museum Puri Lukisan Jalan Raya Ubud, Bali.



Gusti Nyoman Lempad



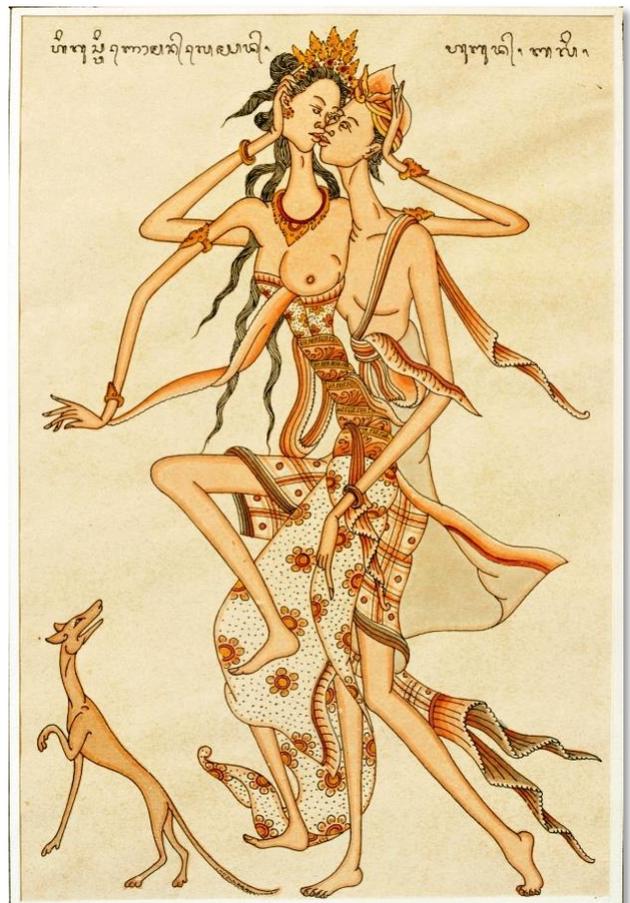
Gusti Nyoman Lempad - Men Brayut - pencil on paper circa 1950's



Gusti Nyoman Lempad - Arjuna Menghadap Dewa Siwa - pencil ink & acrylic on paper



Ni Bawang Vienna Ethnographic Museum



Gusti Nyoman Lempad - Erotic Dancers Ink Acrylic & Goldleaf on paper - circa 1940s.

Lempad for the World

Lempad for the World, an exhibition of works by Bali's greatest ever artist, I Gusti Nyoman Lempad (1862-1978) opened 27 July at Dewangga House of Lempad Ubud. Not only did it showcase works by Lempad, but also that of his family legacy.

The grand occasion was attended by members of the Ubud royal family, custodians of Museum Puri Lukisan, Ubud's oldest art museum, Tjokorda Sukawati and Tjokorda Kerthayasa, the founders of the Neka and ARMA Museums, Suteja Neka and Agung Rai, officials from the provincial and Balinese governments and members of the Bali art community.

The evening was highlighted by the release of the book *Lempad for the World*, written by Gusti Putu Suteja, grandson of Lempad, senior Balinese artist Ketut Budiana, and curators Wayan Seriyoga Parta and Made Susanta Dwitanaya.

Lempad is considered one of the first modern Balinese artists and his contribution to the development of Balinese art and architecture cannot be overstated. Already a brilliant draftsman due his talent for making precise sketches in his role as a *undagi*, Balinese traditional architect, it wasn't until later in his career that Lempad began to channel his creative skills into artistic designs with pencil, pen and ink on paper.

It was his natural imaginative and innovative ability in expressing old stories anew, along with the strength of his flowing, pure and defined lines that gained much attention from the local art community along with the foreign anthropologists, researchers and artists who were living in Bali during the 1920-30's. Over his lifetime Lempad completed a body of work that has since been unmatched.

Themes of the work on display in the exhibition include religious scenes from the Hindu epics the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, local *Panji* folk tales, innovative designs in architectural ornamentation, Balinese dances, erotic art and scenes from daily social life. The works are circa 1930 – 60s and in the small format size 20 x 30 cm. Of special interest are *tetatahan*, in laid works whereby Lempad cut out designs and motifs from pieces of leather that were used in ritual cremation towers and objects.

Numerous works reveal studies created in the process of completing the sketches, along with completed works some finished in acrylic colour, black ink and gold leaf. Various types of paper were used including graph paper, writing paper, quality artist paper often supplied by foreign friends and supporters. The papers condition varies from excellent to faded, crumpled, torn and stained.

Lempad had a very close connection with the 2 most influential sculptures of his era, *Ida Bagus Nyana* (1912-1985) from Mas and *Nyoman Tjokot* (1886-1971) from Tegalalang, and two sculpture are included in the exhibition, '*Men Brayut*' by *Ida Bagus Putu Suarta*, grandson of Nyana and *Garuda* by the pioneer *Tjokot*, that wonderfully emphasizes his unique approach to sculpture.

Followers of Lempad's style are his grandsons *Gusti Nyoman Sudara*, *Gusti Nyoman Darta*, *Gusti Putu Suteja* and great grandson *Gusti Ngurah Arya Atmaja*. Their compositions on canvas and paper are exhibited revealing the influence Lempad had upon their work.

The 160-page book contains many images of the maestro's work along with explanations of the depicted stories, investigation into Lempad's creative process and how to understand his work and its various styles, and information about the generations of family members and their art.

Lempad for the World continues through until 26th August at Dewangga House of Lempad Ubud, Jalan Dewi Sita, Ubud.