

## **I Love Bali – Lukisan Palsu - A Landmark Response to the Controversy Over Forged Paintings in Indonesia**

In April 2012 at the opening of the exhibition 'Back to the Basics' at the OHD Museum in Magelang, Central Java, the most senior collector and supporter of Indonesian modern and contemporary art, Dr. Oei Hong Djien (OHD) exhibited paintings by deceased Indonesian master's that were yet to be seen in public.

Included were works by icons such as Affandi, Widyat, Sudjojono and Hendra Gunawan. However for certain art observers and family members of some of the fore mentioned master's, shock and disappointment was the order of the night. OHD exhibited works of questionable authenticity.

The weeks that followed were rife with uproar in the Indonesian art world, eventually leading to the Fine Art Round Table Discussion in Jakarta 24 May, a meeting of senior art figures engaging on matters that arose at the OHD Museum in April. On request OHD has since been unable to disclose provenance, detailed sequences of notes or source of origin of purchase of any of the suspected works. OHD welcomed independent investigative analysis of the paintings.

The issue of forgeries is not a new subject in the art world. Yet with the Indonesian art world lacking standard criteria, academic documentation and copyright laws relating to fine art, gaps appear that allow fertile grounds for the business of forgeries. Numerous forgeries have changed hands within the country, and no doubt here in Bali too, where art plays an important role in the economy.

In response to this issue has been the release of a book in May at the National Gallery of Jakarta, "Jejak Lukisan Palsu Indonesia" (Tracing Fake Paintings in Indonesia) by the PPSI, the Perkumpulan Pencinta Seni Rupa Indonesia (the Indonesian Art Lover's Association).

The extensively researched 382-page book, targeting art collectors, contains articles by senior art curators, collectors, academics and police representatives, as well as investigations into the practice of forgery, articles by experts and recommendations in identifying fake paintings. The book reveals that the business of forgeries is very well organized and outlines the 3 main practices involved in copying paintings. The PPSI hope the book will serve as input for the government to improve Indonesian copyright laws and that an institution may evolve that serves as a body of information and a forum for discussion that will protect consumers.

What the ramifications of this book will be, at present is unknown. One thing that is clear, however, is Indonesian art history is in danger as there is no concise reference to draw from to clearly define the development of modern and contemporary art in the country.

The international art world is rife with forgeries, particularly by the masters of modern art, who's works at auction over recent years have been subject to extraordinary prices.

Perhaps Jejak Lukisan Palsu Indonesia could stand as a model to the art lovers around the world, those outside the major players in the upper tiers – the gallerists, auctioneers, dealers, and collectors, obsessed with money and power - in a search for truth and integrity?

The PPSI, of course, must be highly commended for their efforts and landmark approach to this issue here in Indonesia. Lets trust the outcomes are all positive.

Balinese traditional paintings have found their way into art collections and museums around the globe. Considered by some local experts as arguably the most undervalued genre in the world (conceptually and financially), the influence that Jejak Lukisan Palsu Indonesia has in the country will no doubt impact upon the Balinese art world in the future.