

Made Griyawan

“I have been gifted with a curious mind,” says Balinese artist Made Griyawan. “Since I was a child I have always been inquisitive and driven to seek out my own answers to life. As I grew in awareness important questions provoked me. Who am I? Why am I here, and what for?”

“For my answers I look to the world around me, along with reflecting on the world within. I observe people’s behaviour, the rhythms of nature, and learn. I have become a dedicated student in the school of life.”

Made Griyawan is no ordinary artist; he is one of the finest practitioners of the Batuan “School” of Balinese traditional painting. A deeply spiritual man, through his art he shares his values and wisdoms. “Religious perspectives determine how we are different, the spiritual, however reveals that we are all one. This is an empowering philosophy,” Griyawan says.

Born in 1980 in Batuan Griyawan has succeeded in depicting the religious narratives and localized fables of his culture into beautiful paintings that pulsate with life, and are defined by his own signature style. His imagination and ability to create anew, old narratives, as well as innovative storylines challenges Balinese convention, and sets him apart from his peers.

Batuan is situated on a plain flanked by two rivers in the southern central region of Bali, 15 minutes south of Ubud. It’s earliest known record is a royal decree dated 1022. Over the past 3 centuries its artists have played a vital role in performing the rituals of the state that were in high demand from the royal courts of the kingdom of Gianyar. To fulfil the requirements of these ceremonies they became proficient in music, dance, carving and painting. The high concentration of artists in Banjar Pekanddelan, the central part of the area, and previously home to the King’s artists, remains a unique characteristic of Batuan today.

Batuan paintings are held with special esteem within the context of Balinese art. They have endured and evolved through the highs and lows of the ever-changing social, economic and political climate that has shaped the island during the past 85 years. Beginning in the early 1930’s, when foreign influences were instrumental in the changing course of traditional painting, the village artists began to develop a unique style of their own.

Often dark and moody sketches in black Chinese ink, the compositions were generally dense and crowded. The colour ranged from the pure white of the paper or canvas to deeply saturated dark tones, together creating striking contrasts. The imagery, layered in patterns, appeared to pulsate in visual rhythms out from the painting in waves of swirling motion. In the 1970’s the style was revolutionized, the compositions became larger, highly detailed, dynamic and colourful with universal themes. Of all the genres of Balinese modern traditional painting that evolved from commercial demand, this style is the most internationally renowned. It is Made Griyawan’s cultural inheritance.

Lineage and the master pupil relationship has played an important role in the development of Batuan painting. The youngest of three boys, all of who followed in footsteps of their father, the accomplished painter Wayan Taweng (1926-2005), Griyawan was sketching and painting at an early age. Taweng himself trained under one of the foremost artists of Batuan, Nyoman Ngendon (1903-1936).

Drawing is the fundamental element of the paintings, after which Griyawan adds layers of colour, and then completes the work with fine black outlines. The visual impact is strengthened by the relationship of colours, soft yellows and blues, for example, exist side-by-side, conflicting and vibrating against one another. He is sensitive to adding rhythmic black lines that define seascapes and landscapes creating life and motion. Yet all the while the atmosphere is calming; in these works it is Griyawan’s own personal spirit that comes shining through.

The storyline however, is often of the most interest. They may come from his own personal experience and beliefs that he transforms into narratives that involve one or two central characters, often a person or sage who are engaged in the challenges of life and commit to a journey seeking higher knowledge. Recently, both social and environmental themes have been a focus.

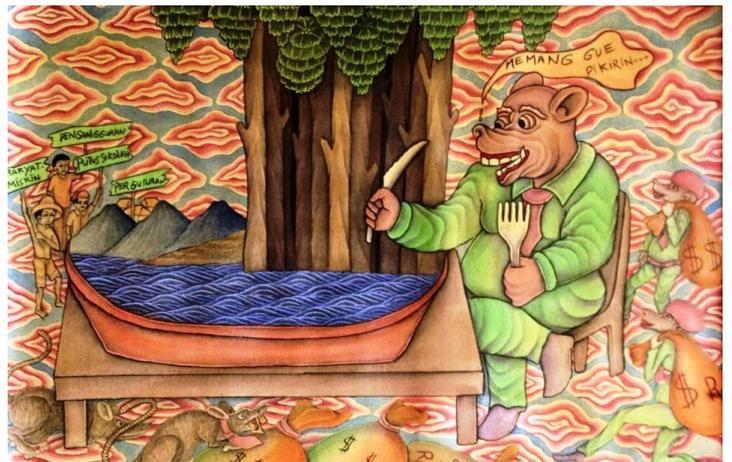
Humour is selectively introduced and plays a vital role in his narratives, which then become playful and light hearted. "I want to make paintings with messages for humanity and of how we must look forward into the future positively," Griyawan says. "I want them to be soothing and to bring people peace."

Significant change in Griyawan's art occurred in 2009. Having fulfilled a sense of competency, stylistically and technically he was determined to explore themes that were more personal, and hence more meaningful as well. As an artist this is where Griyawan began to reveal maturity beyond his age. "As I grow older and more dedicated to my spiritual practise I have become clearer in body and mind; my intuition has become more finely tuned. As a result I am able to receive answers to my questions about life. I then translate these into my work."

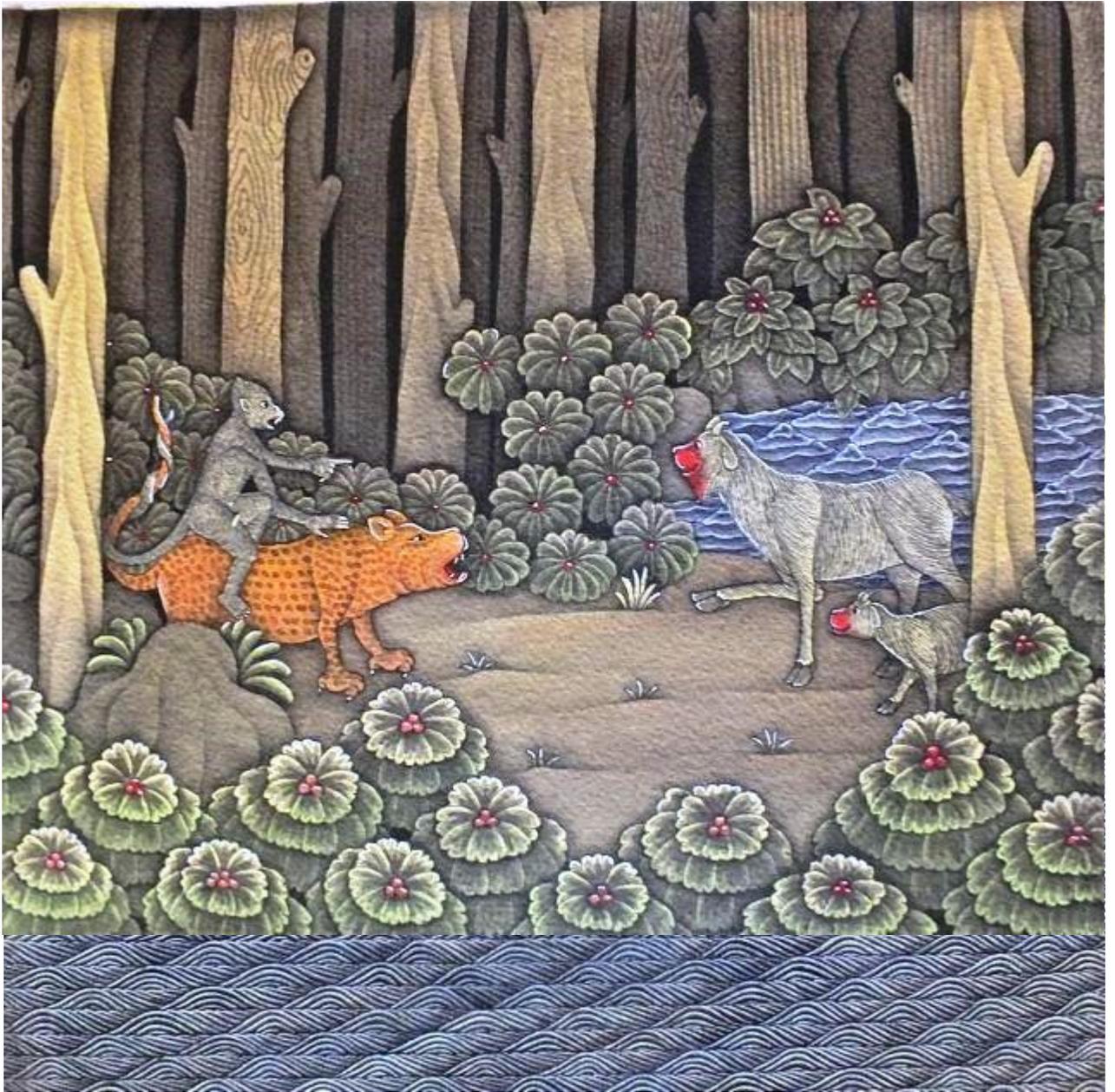
The sense of community is one of the foundations of the Balinese culture, and indeed the art community as well. Griyawan is constantly socially active, not only building networks, yet sharing his skills and good will. In 2012 responding to a belief that Batuan painting was in decline, he, along with other artists were instrumental in the formation of a new art collective: the Baturulangan Artist's Association. There has been a resurgence of Batuan painting and this has been evident in three stunning exhibitions in the museums of Ubud since 2012.

A regular finalist in one of Indonesia's most respected art awards, the UOB Painting of the Year Award, Griyawan has just completed a series of 20 paintings on paper for exhibitions in Tokyo in October 2016. Japanese art lovers have long embraced Balinese painting and over the years Griyawan has made many Japanese friends. He will participate in two events, the Tokyo Art Fair where he will exhibit along with giving painting demonstrations. Following this Griyawan's first solo exhibition will be held at the Omotesando Hills Gallery in Tokyo.

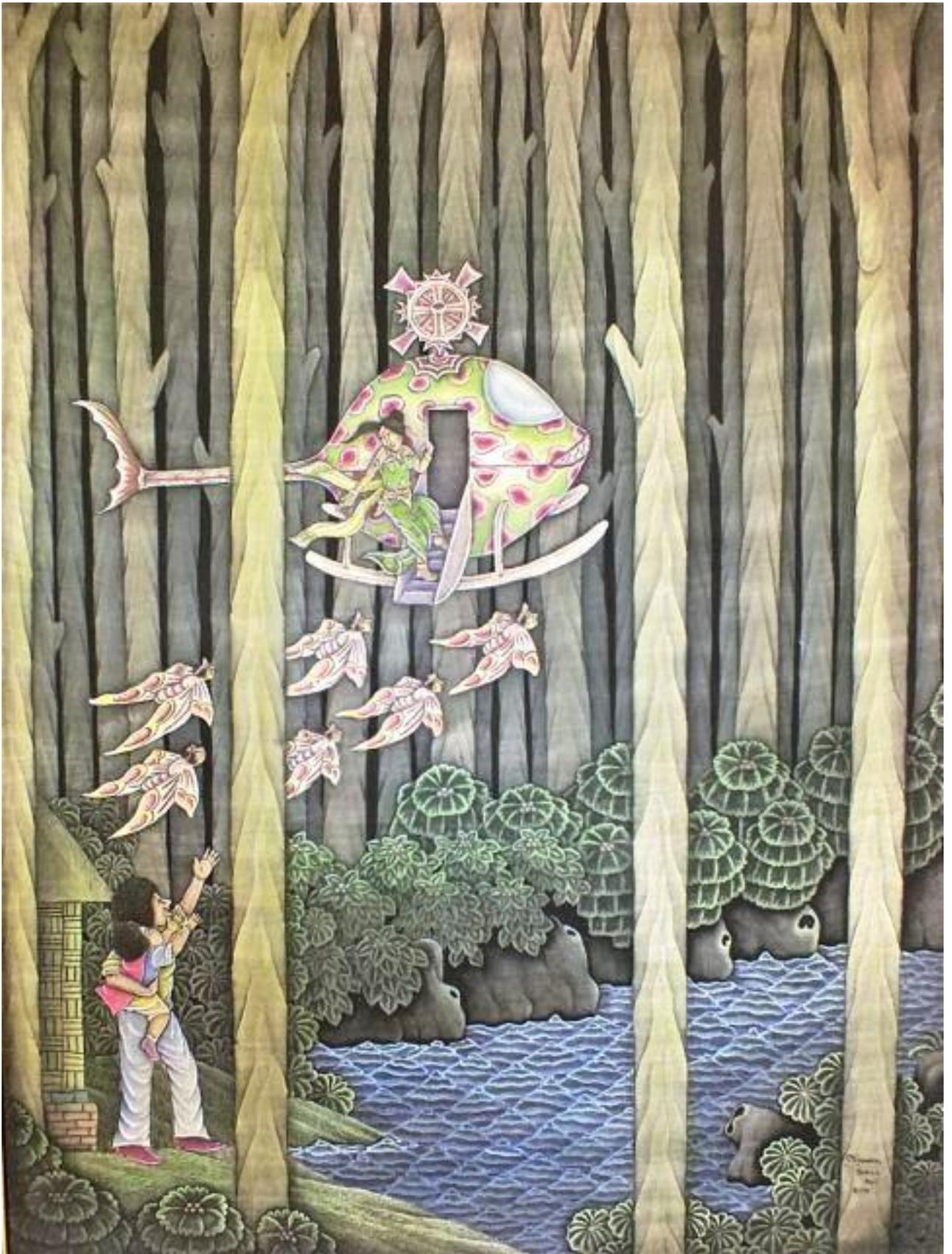
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Made Griyawan - image by Richard Horstman



Swimming in Peacefulness. Made Griyawan



'The Story of the Rajapala'. Made Griyawan