

Ubud Now + Then - Blog

Air Pollution an installation by Balinese contemporary artist Made Wianta created an enormous, and controversial impact at the opening of the inaugural Bali Art Society's Bali Art Fair 2013 – Bali On The Move, Friday 20th September at the Tony Raka Art Gallery, Mas.

Wianta, a renowned senior artist presented a structure featuring dozens of motorcycle exhaust pipes billowing smoke, as well as audio recordings of revving engines, in the entry of the gallery. While some of the audience were repelled by the atmosphere many others donned conveniently provided dust masks and reveled in the scenario of arguably the most contemporary work in the art fair. Notably, Wianta comments on the environmental symptoms engulfing modern Bali in its transformation from the agrarian to the urban society.

Hundreds of members of the local art community celebrated the arrival of Indonesia's newest artist collective – the Bali Art Society (BAS) - established in January 2013 by senior contemporary artists, curators and writers with the goal to raise the profile of the arts in Bali in the local, national and international spheres.

Bali On The Move opened at 3 venues last weekend, and along with Friday's event that showcases the largest display of the contemporary works in the mediums of painting, sculpture, printmaking, photography, installation, video art (new media) and art performances, also on Saturday 21st at the Maha Art Gallery in Renon, Denpasar and then the final opening at Art Veranda in Renon Sunday 22nd September.

Inside the Art Verandah photography was highlighted along side printmaking works, while the evening was punctuated by art performances in the beautiful outdoor garden setting at the rear of the premises.

Exhibition curators Arif Bagus Prasetyo and Wayan Sunarta had the challenging task of narrowing down the field of 200 presented works by individuals and art collectives, to accept 132 based on the quality and freshness of ideas. Senior local artists such as Wianta, Chusin Setiadikara, Nyoman Erawan and German artist Peter Dittmar, who are all experienced international artists, exhibit side by side with young and emerging artists from Bali in the fair that continues until 5th October 2013.

According to Wayan Suarnata in the exhibition catalog, Bali was once considered the barometer, or measure of development and growth of fine arts on a national level, it is nowadays often considered "unsound" compared to Bandung, Yogyakarta and Bandung in Java.

While Arief Bagus Prayseto states, tourism has converted many artists into "art factories" producing commercial art quickly and in large quantities. As a result art is not only threatened, yet has stagnated and it becomes another mass produced product on the shelf.

Denpasar's Lingkara photography group highlighted the talents of Totok Parwata, I. B. Putra Adnyana, Wijaya Utama and D.P Arsa's "We Are Hungry" cleverly emphasized humanities problematic consumptive nature. Other photographic works of mention are by Ari Bayuaji, Vifick Bolang and Indra Widi. While Made Supena, Ping Ping Kurniawan, Imam Nurofiq, A. S. Kurnia, Mangu Putra, Putu Eddy Asmara, Citra and Italian artist and long time Ubud resident Mondo make credible contributions.

Erawan's performance – the Art rotation of Bali – at the Tony Raka gallery questioned what is and who are the contemporary artists in Bali. His freedom of creativity serves as enormous potential source of inspiration to the junior artist of Bali shining the light on the contemporary.

Some will argue that there are very few authentic contemporary artists in Bali, therefore the challenge lies ahead for the artists to be able to remain true to tradition and identity while allowing greater appreciating for media experimentation and innovation without the restrictions of the art market.

This is a landmark event for the BAS achieved at short notice on a limited budget. This Bali Art Fair 2013 is an essential part of the required local art infrastructure that provides fertile conditions for emerging artists to create works that make value contributions to global art.

A discussion on "Art Making in the Global Art Sphere", 30th September at Bentara Budaya Cultural Center Jl. Prof. Ida Bagus Mantra 88-A, By Pass Ketewel and a workshop on "Art in the Realm of the Internet" Sunday, October 4 at the same venue is scheduled.

The exhibition is open daily 9:00 am – 19:00pm at Tony Raka Art Gallery, Jalan Raya Mas, Ubud, Danes Art Veranda, Jl. Hayam Wuruk No. 159, Denpasar, Maha Art Gallery, Jl. Merdeka 18, Cape Tanjung Bungkak, Denpasar. For more details visit www.baliartsociety.com or telephone +6285935082833.