

BALI ART SOCIETY

Throughout the short history of Indonesian modern art, artist's collectives have played an essential role in shaping Indonesian contemporary art. In Bali the importance of organized art communities cannot be overstated.



BAS meeting at Tony Raka Gallery
Jan, 2013 - Image Chieko Maeda

The Pita Maha collective was established in Ubud in 1936 by Tjokorda Agung Sukawati, Prince of Ubud, senior local artists and expat Europeans, Walter Spies and Rudolf Bonnet. Its vision was to develop and preserve modern and traditional Balinese Art and to present it outside of Bali. Commercially and culturally, the results had dramatic consequences.

Markets began to open for Balinese artists, soon tourists began to arrive in numbers and an industry evolved to cater for their needs. Ubud became perceived as the epicenter of Balinese Art and Culture.



BAS members Wayan Suanata,
Helmi Haska and Made Bakhti
outside the new BAS office at the
Bali Art Center,
March 2013 - Image Richard
Horstman

Sanggar Dewata Indonesia was the next collective to make an impact. SDI was founded in 1970 during a turbulent period of Indonesia's political history by a small group of young Balinese artists who were studying at the ISI (Indonesian Institute of Art) in Yogyakarta. They were inspired by a vision of freedom of expression in art, through modern theories and techniques.

In comparison to their peers in the creative centers of Java; Yogyakarta, Bandung and Jakarta, organized collectives from Bali, however, recently have had less an impact within the discourse or the Indonesian contemporary art world.

Recent art events to emerge in Bali on a grander scale, the Bali Bangkit 2006 and Bali Biennale 2008 made a short-lived impression on the art scene. The Bali Bangkit was an organization of concerned individuals aimed at assisting Bali during the difficult journey toward recovery after the Bali bombings that paralyzed the island's tourism industry.



Members of BAS at the Bali Art
Center after meeting 15th Feb
2013 - Image Tjandra

Whereas in Java people have been successfully able to organize collectives, facilities, ongoing events, biennales and art prizes that add positively to the national art infrastructure, as well as gaining attention on the international stage. ArtJog, for example, is an art fair in Yogyakarta now in its 5th consecutive year, that has gained much credibility as a world-class international art event.



BAS Members with Director of the
Bali Art Center, Pak Gandhi, Feb
2013 - Image Richard Horstman

Inspired by communal spirit and a vision for a brighter collective future members of the art community in Bali ushered in 2013 with a burst of revitalizing energy – the desire to begin a new era for visual art community of Bali.

A group of senior contemporary artists, curators and writers, locals and expat foreigners, initiated a series of meetings focusing on the development of a new collective - the Bali Art Society (BAS).

“The cultural identity utilized by tourism is that of our traditional artists, and as such our contemporary artists are often misunderstood and ignored. BAS shall strive to increase the attention of the government and the private sector towards the contemporary art community,” says BAS co secretary and Secretariat manager Helmi Haska.

“One of our major priorities is to begin the process to more fully utilize the potential within the visual art community in Bali on a local, national and international level,” he states.

“BAS aims to hold one major exhibition each year in its main program and the regular program shall include monthly discussions, seminars, workshops and events. Importantly, we aim to have a strong social platform and to enhance education opportunities engaging with schools, art institutions and the community.”

Numerous public meetings have held to define objectives and then on the 18th January BAS was officially founded in Mas, Ubud. A meeting at the Bali Art Center on 15th February, which was attended by more than 100 people, introduced the BAS Statute and voted in members of governing committees and departments.

Members of the Board of Trustees boasts some of the most prominent names in the contemporary art in Bali including Nyoman Gunarsa, Made Wianta, Agung Mangu Putra, Komaneka, Jean Couteau and Chusin Setiadikara.

The BAS Secretariat office was officially opened on March 21 at the Taman Budaya (Bali Art Center) in Denpasar, members have donated equipment and funds and now the administration responsibilities have begun.

“With our own office and meeting place BAS is creating a culture of cohesion where members wish to contribute and belong,” says Helmi. “One of our next tasks is to launch our website and via our communication strategy to local, national and global stakeholders create the ‘voice’ of the Bali Art Society.”

Bali has evolved into a unique global village that is growing in cultural and creative diversity, from both within and outside of Indonesia. It is world renown for its distinctive creative spirit that nurtures life and inspires multitudes of people to explore their artistic passions.

Bali is home to a special community of visual artists and now a new opportunity has arisen to consolidate and renew this social, artistic spirit.

“Positive action needs to be started along with the development of a lasting and professional structure as the foundations of BAS,” says Made Wianta, member of the BAS Board of Trustees and one of the founding fore fathers of SDI.

“The most important thing is mutual exchange within the community. I trust that one day BAS can have an event that is prestigious within Indonesia as well as worldwide.”

“I am expecting BAS can grow into an art society with a global perspective,” says senior Indonesian curator and co founder of the mid 70’s Indonesian New Art Movement, Jim Supangkat.

“The Bali Art Society is a group of people who still believe in art as vehicle for values searching, global understanding among people from diverse backgrounds, and in the end can find a frame for cooperation and a richer global life.”

The first discussion in the BAS monthly regular program on communication strategies for art communities was held 2nd May presented by BAS secretary general and art management professional Buratwangi.

For more information go to Facebook Groups Bali Art Society (BAS) & Bali Art Society Bahasa English

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