

## SENIWATI GALLERY



In response to the absence of women artists represented in the galleries and museums of Bali, former Hong Kong art teacher Mary Northmore established the first women's only gallery in Bali.

Along with the help of her husband, renowned Indonesian artist Abdul Aziz (1928-2002) the Seniwati Gallery was opened in Ubud in 1991.

Seniwati - made up of two Indonesian words - *seni* meaning art and *wati* meaning women, is a gallery, art space and artists collective, devoted to the training and exposure of female artists living Bali.

And it is the next generation of artists who are now stepping up to stir the new incarnation of Seniwati, its peers and its budding future members.

"After more than 20 years Mary Northmore has decided to retire as the active leader of Seniwati and she has called upon the group's members to fill her role," says Ni Nyoman Sani 37, who has become a driving force behind the collective.

"A relocation of the gallery was required, yet we also felt that it was a good time to move on. Inspired, the members saw this as an excellent opportunity to reevaluate our vision and fine tune our focus on our future development."

Seniwati has moved to a new location, a house in a residential area of Batubulan that now serves as the gallery, art space and meeting venue. The house was donated Sani, a member since 1994 when she joined as an art student at ISI (Indonesia Art Institute) Denpasar.

Sani, a successful painter, is one of the few Indonesian female artists with an international profile is now attempting to fill Northmore's shoes by becoming the new head of Seniwati.

"During our group meetings we decided to step up our exhibition schedule in venues outside of the gallery as well as art programs for children," Sani stated.

The "Imagination Club" is a new art program that has been devised to invest in the future prospects of the collective. A Sunday open house day for local children to participate in art workshops and develop their creativity is being run by talented 23 years old artist Atmi Kristiadewi.

"It is important that children are given the freedom and encouragement to explore their imagination as they are naturally creative. I am inspired by witnessing the children respond with so much positive interest and enthusiasm," says Atmi, commenting on the workshops that she began hosting in October last year.

"We introduce the children, boys and girls from the ages of 4 – 12 years to techniques of drawing, painting and sculpting, each week in different materials."

"Although they participate in art classes at school we wish to allow them experiences that are outside of the curriculum. It is essential that they have opportunities to see and feel the many choices open to them with which to learn to express their creativity."

From left, Mary Northmore, Art journalist Wayan Suardika and Ni Nyoman Sani. Photo Nyoman Sani



Ni Made Suciarmi, Muter Gunung 2012, traditional paints on treated cotton, 115x140cm



The new Seniwati Art Space Batubulan, photo Nyoman Sani



I.G.A Murniashi, Tanpa Judul, 70x70cm, acrylic on canvas.2003



Seniwati members at the opening 22nd Dec. Mary Northmore third from the left, Nyoman Sani 2nd from the right. photo Nyoman Sani



Jero Puspa, Cherish Love for Peace, 2012, acrylic on canvas.



Gusti Agung Istri Agung, 'Fishermen' 2012, 80x200cm, acrylic on canvas

"I trust that this stimulates young girls to discover their artistic passions and the personal fulfillment that can be achieved, and then go on to crave out a career in the arts. One day they too will inspire the generations of children that precede them to learn about art," she added.

The new Seniwati Art Space was officially opened on Women's Day 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2012, celebrated in a large gathering of members, their families and the local art community. As well as having a permanent collection on display at the Art Space the group is also being represented in two exhibitions, "New Beginnings" at the Griya Santrian Gallery in Sanur, open until the end of January and at the Three Monkeys Restaurant on Jalan Monkey forest in Ubud.

An observation on the collection on display at Seniwati reveals that genres of painting expressed by the 22 members vary greatly. From the Classical Balinese Kamasan style of painting on cotton by Ni Made Suciarni, to the modern/traditional Balinese styles as explored by Ida Ayu Anom, Ni Ketut Ratnasih and Gusti Agung Istri Agung. Members Emi Agus Triani, Adriani, Sri Rahayu and expat Australian art teacher Kerry Pendergrass exhibit more contemporary styles of expression.

Seniwati provides an a much needed platform for the few female university graduates in fine art, as well as younger up and coming artists, to be represented and exhibit their work locally. Having an online presence with the Seniwati website is also an important element in connecting and communicating with the global market.

"Due to family and community responsibilities, it is difficult for women to make a career from the fine arts. Families often discourage female artists from choosing such a path as they see it as not being financially viable," says Sani.

Under the leadership of Mary Northmore, Seniwati has made a positive impact on the development of Sani's career and other artists as well. "It is necessary that we continue Mary's legacy so that women may believe that art is an option," says Sani.

Artist's collectives have historically played an essential role in the development and representation of Balinese art. The first being the highly influential Pita Maha Artists Cooperative founded in Ubud in the 1930's. The Pita Maha successfully oversaw the initial development of Balinese modern and traditional painting and wood carving and forged large international markets that helped develop Ubud into the tourism mecca it has become today.

Seniwati strives for a brighter future for female artists, in particularly the young girls whose talents are too often ignored. Importantly, this recent evolution of the collective is helping to keep alive Northmore's dreams of success for the women artists of Bali.

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[www.seniwatigallery.com](http://www.seniwatigallery.com)