

WAYAN SILA

"The very first night I slept over at my new studio an owl flew into the garden. It wasn't a coincidence that I noticed it perched in a tree," says Balinese artist Wayan Sila. "This was a special experience and powerful omen. A gift from the Gods to me."



Wayan Sila

The owl is much revered by indigenous cultures and in folklore around the world as a guardian spirit, as well as a wise creature capable of extraordinary sight. Balinese mythology reveals that if an owl visits a family compound while a female member is pregnant this is indeed a positive sign. Burung Hantu literally translates from bahasa Indonesia into the English language as ghost bird; or the owl, the mysterious bird of the night.

"I have a unique connection with owls. It is a potent image that resonates with my heart. I was intuitively led to draw the owl and then I began to include it in my works. It has now manifested into a personal symbolic image, equivalent to the Barong. The owl also encourages me to reflect on the joy that I derive from my family life," says Wayan.

Born in Ubud, 1970, Wayan Silawas inspired by his grandfather, well known local artist Wayan Barwa. From an early age he regularly visited Barwa's studio and gallery, surrounded by the paintings of his Balinese heritage, this was the perfect scenario for a child to learn to draw and paint.



Wayan Sila, acrylic on Canvas, 2012, 45x 60cm.

Wayan soon became adept in the "Ubud Style" of modern traditional Balinese painting. In the evolution of Balinese painting during the last century, from its origins of the Classical Kamasan style that concerned teachings from the Hindu Epics, each village then began to create their own distinctive style.

The Ubud style moved away from the religious and began to be characterized by narratives that involve daily village life and depictions of rural and environmental landscapes. The artists from Ubud were quick to adopt western influences in the 1930's, depth of field, shades of color, localized narratives and the development of the human figure. The Kamasan style was originally a collective work and never signed by an individual. The new personalized and expressive form of Balinese painting has its roots firmly entrenched here in Ubud.



Garden + Bale studio of Wayan Sila.

Wayan's canvases are beautifully composed and resound with an overwhelming sense of balance and harmony. His highly detailed works are first sketched in pencil then outlined in black Chinese ink, finally they are rendered in acrylic paint with a fine kaus bamboo, a small piece of bamboo crafted with a tiny point to apply the medium. A large canvas, 100 x 80 cms, may take up to six months to complete.

"In 1997 I was inspired to include owls in my compositions after seeing a wonderful sketch by a Japanese child."



Wayan Sila. 2012, chinese ink + acrylic on canvas, 60x80cm.

Wayan's relationship with the burung hantu then activated an endearing association with the people of Japan, to whom the owl is symbolic of happiness. He first visited Japan in 2002 and his premiere solo exhibition there was in 1998. Every year since then Wayan has enjoyed the privilege of exhibiting work in galleries, department stores, even in the Indonesian Consulate in Tokyo. He has held over 15 solo exhibitions in Japan, and numerous other exhibitions in Bali, Jakarta, Spain and also at the prestigious Agung Rai Museum of Art in Ubud.

"It's an honor for me to be invited on intercultural exchange programs teaching young Japanese students traditional Balinese painting techniques. I do this each year when I visit Japan." Wayan has since developed a healthy market for his works there and continues to sell to the Japanese tourists who often visit his Ubud studio/gallery.

Wayan's cooperative works with Japanese poet Yoko Jatiasih have been the focus of two books. They initially collaborated in 1998 to create music and poetry for his paintings. In 2004 their first book "Kata Kata" *Echoes From The Woods*, and then in 2010 "Pelan Pelan" were published.

Browsing through these books, the creative synergy between the two is easy to recognize. Yoko's short poems, no more than 6 lines, resonate with an uncomplicated intelligence. Upon the opposing page to the text are Wayan's complimentary images created especially to accompany each poem.

As you contemplate the words essence, as well as study Wayan's images, the mysterious bird of the nights' full round eyes are firmly transfixed upon you. The fusion of words along with the images perplex the imagination, and then defy you to believe their medium is the owl's silent and alluring gaze.

In 2011 Wayan relocated to his new studio gallery in Jalan Bisma in Ubud. Journey 400 meters along Jalan Bisma until the roadside urban development gives way to the effervescence of the padis. Down on the right hand side nestled in the sawah you will find his small abode. Look for the sign on the road then follow the narrow path that divides the green swaying fields to his studio/gallery encircled by the bamboo fence.

Wayan has created a personal space that reflects the elements that enrich and sustain him. Situated in the middle of the yard he has built a bamboo bale which functions as his studio, yet also as a place of quiet retreat. The surrounding garden is abundant with organic vegetables, fruit trees, medicinal herbs, ornamental shrubs and flowers. Indeed, Wayan has created his special own oasis.

As you enter his two Bali dogs are quick to offer enthusiastic toothy greetings. The verdant vegetation is soothing and inviting. I discover two rabbits, four exotic birds and frogs and snakes frequent visitors, so Wayan tells me. Stone carvings covered with brilliant green moss hide among the foliage, shrines and small Hindu temples are adorned with offerings and the sweet sent of burning incense seduces the senses. An outhouse serves as a simple kitchen and two rooms contain Wayan's gallery painting collection and books for sale.

When we observe Wayan's paintings we enter into a beautiful and extraordinarily tranquil world. His owls' peer out from within forests and lush scenes, their big eyes possess a magnetic pull and communicate a language that is deciphered in our hearts. Wayan Sila is a painter of immense sensitivity and his works are vehicles of healing qualities and love.



'Sakura' Wayan Sila, acrylic on canvas, 2002, 60x45cm.