



### A SLICE OF THE GODS

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### KOMANEKA FINE ART GALLERY

#### **HANAFI**

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### WHAT TO READ

#### **Nadi: Trance in the Balinese Art**

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Trance — called *kerauhan* in Balinese, which means 'a state of being entered' — is thought to be the influx of another energy into a person's body, which takes over control of the body and causes a change (or loss) of consciousness.

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On the night before *Nyepi*—Bali's New Year's Day on the solar calendar—the atmosphere in the village of Jasri is edgy with the rite of *perang api*, meaning "fire war." The battle takes place in the dark of night, with all the lamps in the village extinguished. The only light is that of flying fire.

This ritual fire battle—also known by the Balinese terms *terteran* and *aci muu-muu*—is unique to Jasri, a very old village in the district of Karangasem in eastern Bali. According to sacred lore recorded on palm-leaf manuscripts, the villagers of Jasri must hold purification rituals called *ngusaba dalem* on the dark of the moon of the month of Kesanga (usually around March), and the fire battle is to be held at the height of these rituals in even-numbered years. The aim of these rites, they say, is to maintain harmony in the natural and invisible worlds and thereby safeguard the tranquility and well-being of the village.

Several stages lead to the *perang api*. Nine days beforehand is *ngatag nyirit*, during which it is forbidden to hold any religious rituals, even in the home. Six days before, there is a purification rite (*pecaruan nyegaga*) directed at the ground spirits, performed in every temple in the village, in front of every house gate, and at the central crossroads. Three days before, the ritual *nyait cakep* is held in the Pura Bale Agung temple, in which various leaves are cut and pinned for offerings.

And on the day before the perang api, decorations called wang wing are put up at the ten entrances to the village. These are composed of the leaves of bamboo, papaya, pandan, and *liligundi*.

On the day of the fire battle, before sunset, around fifty men set off on foot to Jasri beach, about 500 meters south of the village, to dispose of the remains of the *pecaruan* rite in the sea. This group of people is called *wong belodot* (meaning, roughly, "people who go to the sea") and consists of village temple priests (*jero mangku*), village officials (*prajuru desa*), and a number of villagers (*pengiring*). They dress in white, and wear a strip of palm leaf around their heads. At dusk, the *wong belodot* return to the village. As they reach the Pura Bale Agung it is getting dark. There are no lights on in the entire village.

And now as they come to the crossroads, the *wong belodot* are met by a several dozen villagers carrying flaming torches made of wood wrapped in dried palm leaves. With no warning, and from three different points along the route from the beach, they hurl their torches at the *wong belodot*, who parry with their own torches. When all the torches have been used up, the *wong belodot* are free to continue on to the Pura Bale Agung.

The idea behind this fire attack is that the people coming back from the beach may be followed by demons still lingering after the *pecaruan* purification rite. It is thought that fire will neutralize their harmful effect and prevent them from returning to the village and causing havoc. In the darkness, the atmosphere is tense and frightening.

Once the *wong belodot* have reached the Pura Bale Agung, at around seven o'clock at night, a mass *terteran* "proxy war" breaks out in front of the village community hall. The "battlefield" is the main road, which runs north to south. East-west boundaries are marked by a stretch of palm leaves anchored by *penjor*, festively decorated bamboo poles. As soon as the signal is given, the fire fight gets under way. The bare torsos of the men, young and old, are lit by bursts of fire. Sparks soar like fireflies.

The two sides fight with joyful passion, ignoring their burns. Sometimes a flaming torch misses its mark and flies into the crowd of spectators, causing shrieks of laughter. The fire battle lasts about an hour, with three rounds, and continues until all the torches have burned out.

Original Article by : Wayan Agus

English Translation by : Diana Darling

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## KOMANEKA FAMILY



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**Migrasi Kolong Meja 1**, acrylic on paper, 100x100 cm, 2013

## KOMANEKA FINE ART GALLERY

### HANAFI

*...Hanafi's process of painting is no different from that of a poet creating a poem...*

Hanafi, born in Purworejo, Central Java in 1960, is one of Indonesia's foremost painters. He is known as an artist who tends to process visual elements into abstraction and then gave birth to imaginary spaces in a variety of composition and light; his colors are dark and quiet. Encountering a Hanafi painting, the viewer is given infinite space to interpret and describe the messages within it. The eye moves freely, activating the imagination and igniting the viewer's creativity. It is not surprising that Hanafi works have stimulated ideas in a variety of fields, such as architecture, design, music, and literature.

Hanafi was born into an ordinary family, the son of Muhtarom and Umi Hani. He spent his childhood in Purworejo, in the kampong Baledono, next to a river. Hanafi says that his life has seemed to flow without a plan, just as his paintings seem to occur spontaneously. He studied art at the Indonesian School of Fine Arts in Yogyakarta (now the Indonesian Institute of the Arts). After graduating, he moved to Jakarta, where he found work cleaning floors at the Hotel President and then as a painter of billboards. In the early 1990s he began to devote himself entirely to art. All this, according to Hanafi, happened as if by chance.

If you go into his work more deeply, the absence of design is bubbling everywhere, especially in elements of the form that are processed and used without being worried about basic functions: a line happens without intending to define or delineate something; color emerges without aiming to be the vehicle for a certain emotion; composition occurs without any aesthetic agenda; the forms that appear are not intended as archetypes; and so forth. We seemed to be drawn into a strange colored vortex that is constantly fluctuating. Looking closer, you see that it is the reflection of a psychological situation — feelings that have no name, emotions that have never been felt —

mirroring all that bursts from the deepest layers of the mind.

The goal of artistic creation is to expand possibilities, to deepen feeling and emotion in order to reach an even deeper pool of feeling. In this sense, Hanafi's process of painting is no different from that of a poet creating a poem: it is an art form that excavates the living mystery, that explores the depths of the self and human understanding. On every part of the surface of the canvas, Hanafi seems to relish every stroke of the brush — flowing, leaving a trail of lines forming space with colors muted and dark. The eye is invited to wander, to enjoy forms that are sometimes very foreign, sometimes very close to our private self. In Hanafi's works, everyone is free to arrange the images of each line for his own pleasure. This does not mean that Hanafi work is limited to creating emotions of the moment. The process is very important to him, essential to every work. Before he works on a canvas, has carried out a process of reflection and observation that becomes the framework of a series of paintings.

During one period, he gradually brought out images and signs that were recognizable. Some critics said that Hanafi had finally decided to emphasize the message and leave behind the tendency to "play with form." But in the next stages of development, Hanafi returns to the subject of the line. "I want to liberate the line from all burdens. I want to explore the line as a line that I have never known," he says. The choice of line is derived from thought and ethical decision-making — in other words, the line is treated as an image to complete the painting, not as a line in itself. "Ordinarily, lines create a pattern that will be completed later to become an image, and the line in itself will disappear. This time, I create a block, then the line appears. What is exposed is the line. In this way, it sings." Chromatic colors used are based on the consideration of what will strengthen the impression of the line itself.

Faithfulness to the choice of abstraction does not mean that Hanafi closed to the new. Indeed he is wide open to the new. He is deeply drawn to what is produced by high thought. "Contemporary" is only a term. What is important is the awareness with which he responds to an ever-changing environment. Thus, what produces the art is process and the intensity of the struggle of life.

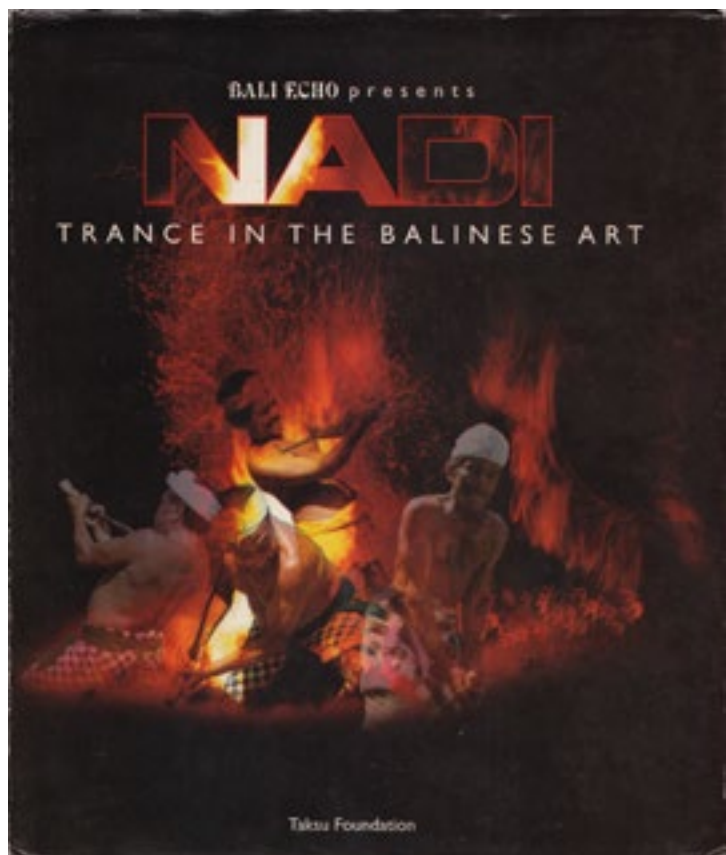
Original Article by : Wayan Agus

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*View Hanafi artworks at Komaneke Fine Art Gallery.*

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## WHAT TO READ

***Nadi*: Trance in the Balinese Art**

...Trance is mysterious, perhaps inexplicable — yet it is not uncommon in the life of the Balinese...

Trance — called *kerahuan* in Balinese, which means 'a state of being entered' — is thought to be the influx of another energy into a person's body, which takes over control of the body and causes a change (or loss) of consciousness. *Kerahuan* is often found in traditional Balinese art performances, ranging from the strictly sacred to the secular performing arts. *Sanghyang* is an ancient sacred dance ritual that always brings an element of trance. In *Sanghyang Jaran* (horse *sanghyang*) a man in trance rides a hobbyhorse barefoot in glowing coals as if he were playing in a puddle of rainwater. *Sanghyang Celeng* (wild boar) charges here and there swallowing objects that are considered to be the source of an outbreak of disease.

Trance often occurs in the semi-sacred dance drama *Calonarang*. It normally takes place at the climax of the battle between the *Barong* (a benevolent dragon-like effigy) and his nemesis *Rangda* (a demonic witch figure). *Rangda* is attacked by a crowd of men with raised *keris* daggers. Her power turns the daggers against the men so that they stab themselves wildly, while the power of the *Barong* prevents the daggers from piercing their skin.

Almost everyone who experiences trance, whether performers or spectators, say that it is difficult for them to recount what happens when they are in this altered state. *Rangda* dancers say that the power of the mask is so great that they remember nothing. Marks from the *keris* daggers are not at all painful. Nor does the *Sanghyang Jaran* dancer feel the heat of the coals.

Most trancers report only feeling a little tired afterwards.

The book *Nadi: Trance in the Balinese Art* by a group of mostly Balinese authors attempts to describe how Balinese experience trance when they are performing their traditional arts — how *kerahuan* occurs at the moment when a sacred energy arrives in a performance. The term *nadi*, according to one source, refers to “the opening of the Third Eye of spiritual perception.” The authors explain that the Balinese perform not merely to demonstrate their expertise as dancers, but that they believe in a special, perhaps supernatural, energy called *taksu* that imbues every movement with power and fascination. Thus it does not come as a surprise to Balinese that trance occurs during performance. The phenomenon of trance is deep in the blood of Balinese life, not only among those who still live in the old agrarian culture but also in modern urban society.

Through this book, we discover the process or steps a dancer undergoes before a ritual performance. The authors evoke the tension, the atmosphere of mystery and awe. The text is accompanied by photographs of moments rarely seen by tourists.

*Nadi: Trance in the Balinese Art* will be of great interest to those who want to know about the inner life of the performing arts in Bali.

*Nadi Trance in the Balinese Art*, authors : Dr. Gde Pitana, Drs. I G B Sudhyatmika Sugriwa, Wayan Supartha, SH, Kadek Suartaya, Iwan Darmawan, Taksu Fondation edition 2000.

*This book could be found at Komaneka Fine Art Gallery.*

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