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The Prestige Preservator: Koman Wahyu Suteja

by [HELLOBALI](#)



Photography by: Gerald Goh

A talented architect with penchant for preserving Balinese contemporary art, Koman Wahyu Suteja is more than just a successful entrepreneur. The founder of Komaneka Resorts spoke to us about his passion, zeal and importance of spirituality. Born and raised from a family who owns a prestigious museum, Koman Wahyu Suteja stepped out of his comfort zone to create his own (incredible) imprint on Balinese world of contemporary art. He evolved the famous Neka Art Museum into Komaneka Gallery, while establishing a series of upscale resorts throughout Ubud. With Hellobali, Mr. Koman sheds several interesting bits about his life; from his background as an avid architect, his effort to preserve the island's artistic masterpiece to the last picture snapped with his smartphone. Check them out on interview below!

What do you think about Bali's contemporary art nowadays? Which new artist that catches your attention?

The contemporary art scene in Bali is always developing and changing, though not in the same speed as before. It takes a lot for artists to be successful, as the situation of the art world is tough and difficult. That is why those who survive are thoughtful painters who are able to explore their practice seriously. My favourite artist is a new artist in our gallery is I Ketut Susasana who is from Tabanan, Bali. We have a couple of his paintings in the gallery. I like his new perspective of Balinese landscape paintings with interesting subject matter.



With his father, the legendary Suteja Neka, after attending an *odalan* ceremony.

Tell us a bit about Komaneka Gallery, what inspires you to build it, and what's its role in Bali's art and culture preservation?

I was born surrounded by art; there were artworks on the wall of my bedroom, my sibling bedroom, living room and all part of the house. Those artworks later became part of Neka Art Museum collection. It was always in the background of my life. However, once I found my consciousness in art, I decided to dig deeper which led me to opening the art gallery in 1997 with my wife, Mansri Trisniawati. It was a space for me to discover and give stage to unknown upcoming artists at the time, such as Pande Ketut Taman, Sujana Kenyem, Nyoman Masriadi and Putu Sutawijaya. A lot of these artists were Balinese born but went to art school outside of Bali. The gallery was a way for them to come back home and exhibit their works in Bali.

As an architect, do you ever read design and architecture magazines?

My wife and I travel a lot, so we are constantly inspired by all the great architecture around the world. We usually find magazines and books in our travel, especially architects and designers from the country we are visiting.

What are your thoughts on the importance of renders in architecture today?

Truthfully, I don't really need it in the way we work. However it is important as a communication language so other people can understand buildings and ideas thoroughly. I use it to show my ideas to my builders and contractors.

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What was the last picture that you took with your smartphone camera; any story behind it?

I took a moving picture (a video) of an outdoor dinner held at Komaneka at Keramas Beach. I love the sense of the space, combination of colors and materials, and the setting by the sea. I've envisioned this when we designed the space and it was great to see it come to life.

As a native Balinese, do you feel the religion or spirituality has played a role on your work?

Balinese ideals and spirituality has inspired my work through and through. Tri Hita Karana guides us towards harmonious design with nature, people and Gods. Through the story of Balinese architecture, including my mother and grandfather from her side who was a traditional architect (undagi) I learned about the value of Balinese architecture.

How do you want to be remembered?

Simply as a good person who are able to empower people to their full potential.

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