



## CAMPUHAN RIVER UBUD AS AN INSPIRATION FOR THE ARTISTS

I Wayan Karja

Indonesian Institute of Art (ISI) Denpasar

Email: [wayankarja@isi-dps.ac.id](mailto:wayankarja@isi-dps.ac.id)

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### Abstract

The purpose of this research is to open awareness about the significant history of the Campuhan River in terms of aesthetic, the prosperity of the people's lives, both physically and spiritually. This qualitative research method took place in Campuhan Ubud, due to the limited sources of written data and art artifacts. Data collection was mostly done through direct interviews, books, and the internet. Furthermore, an analysis that focuses on the significance of the Campuhan River as an inspiration for the artists is carried out. Artists with high awareness capture the vibrations of natural energy by creating various styles of painting. Campuhan River has a certain vibration so that many artists are inspired to create paintings in various styles such as the Pita Maha style, Young Artist, impressionism, and expressionism. The implications of the Campuhan River civilization as inspiration are an asset for the surrounding area.

**Keywords:** Campuhan River, inspiration, artists, and painting

### INTRODUCTION

Campuhan River, also known as Wos River, is where two rivers join, west and east. Between the two streams stretch a hill called Gunung Lebah. At the southern end stands the magnificent and beautiful Payogan Agung Gunung Lebah Temple. Campuhan River is the border of Ubud Village (east) and Penestanan Village (west), on both sides of the hill there are beautiful rice terraces. The Campuhan River has a very strategic layout, a meeting point of the two miracle rivers which are believed to be medicine for generations, or Ubad in Balinese terms means healing, and also an aesthetic place for ritual and spirituality practices. The performance and painting demonstration Nuwur Kukuwung Ranu in the courtyard of Segara Danu Batur Temple and Nyapuh Tirah Campuhan (2022) is about water conservation and appreciation initiated by the Puri Kauhan Ubud Foundation. According to the chairman of the Foundation, Anak Agung Gde Ngurah Ari Dwipayana said that the civilizations of the Euphrates and Tigris rivers brought Mesopotamia which is now transformed into today's Middle Eastern society, the holy Ganges River brought the famous Indian civilization, to the Yellow River Yang Tse gave birth to China. In Indonesia, especially in Bali, the Campuhan River gave birth to the Ubud civilization [1].

Based on a local story, there were legend of demons (raksasa) living in caves at Campuhan River. Although known to meditate inside their caves, these demons were man-eaters, and as such, were creating havoc in the surrounding area. This situation lasted a long, long time, until the arrival of the first true humans – that is to say, the first Hindus, followers of a holy man called Rsi Markandeya, a wandering Indian sage [2]. Resi Markandeya



journeyed to Bali, later building his residence at Campuhan River. There he also established the Pura Payogan Agung Gunung Lebah. Water spouting from the riverbank and plants growing there had curative powers, so the area became known as Ubad (medicine) and over time the pronunciation changed to Ubud [3].

Campuhan River is a holy place, the great meeting was held at Gunung Lebah Temple, Campuhan, Ubud, Gianyar Regency, from 17 to 23 November 1961. The meeting, known as the Paruman Dharma Asrama, was initiated by Hindu council (Parisada Hindu Dharma) Bali. This meeting was attended by the Highest priest the most important decision at that time was the issuance of the Campuhan Charter "Piagam Campuhan Ubud" [4].

In addition to these historical events, Campuhan was visited by many artists, some of whom just visited, had lived, were inspired, and painted the natural scenery of the place. The artists who were stunned by the beauty stayed for a long time and some came to paint or just to find inspiration. The arrival of these artists brought a new spirit and a new paradigm in the development of painting. These new works brought Ubud's name to international fame in the field of painting. The surrounding community also enjoys this inspiring creative process as an effort to improve the community's standard of living. Because of the magnetic vibration of it, there are many stories that inspire local, national, and international artists to come and create art works. The author's experience was the first time crossing the Campuhan River in 1970 on his father's shoulder, but the memories of the dirt road of lush trees, walking, meeting Mr. Smit, seeing Spies's House, Bonnet's House, Datuk Lim Chong Keat's House, up and down the cliff, the path were narrow and slippery, everything became a separate memory. An interesting experience when crossing narrow wooden planks that look like holes in the depths of the river is visible, a steel girder bridge suspended by cable of the Campuhan River gorge. It looks natural but aesthetic at the same time and you must walk carefully.

Currently, there are three art museums around Campuhan, namely the Puri Lukisan Museum, Neka Art Museum, and Blanco Museum. The author lives approximately 200 meters from Campuhan River. This research aims to explore and to find a deeper meaning in order to answer the questions, why are artists inspired by the Campuhan River? How is the visualization of painting inspired? And what are the implications as an artist's inspiration in the lives of the surrounding community?

## RESEARCH METHOD

This qualitative research method took place in Campuhan Ubud, due to the limited sources of written data and artifacts, data collection was mostly done through observation, direct interviews, books, catalogs, painting, and the internet. Furthermore, an analysis that focuses on the significance of the Campuhan River as an inspiration for the artists is carried out.

## DISCUSSION

Based on the research process, it was found that the elder Puri Agung Ubud played an important role in developing Campuhan as an inspiration for the artists. Some artists have lived in Puri Ubud before settling in Campuhan. The artists not only directly painted the Campuhan River as an object but used it as an inspiration for their art works that were inspired by the beauty and vibrations of the place and many of them did not leave artifacts in the form of paintings.

### Campuhan River as an Inspiration for the Artist

The Campuhan River Ubud is situated 11 km from the capital city of Gianyar Regency, and 26 km from Denpasar, the capital city of Bali. The soil is fertile and suitable for agriculture, the main livelihood until the early days of the 1980s. Ubud's altitude at 250–360 meters

above sea level, and the 10 square kilometer village provides a perfect place for work and contemplation [5]. After Mount Batur erupted in 1926, it had an impact on

the entire order of life around it which caused the community have difficulties on food and clothing. The stream of Campuhan River originates in Lake Batur, Campuhan has begun to receive international attention, especially for its high aesthetic quality. The expanse of hills and rice terraces on the right and left as well as shady trees, the twists and turns of rivers and rocks and river cliffs in the middle of which stand beautifully, Pura Payogan Agung Gunung Lebah has its own charm and beauty in the eyes of Western artists and locals. Since 1929 until now has been recorded as a strategic place for local, national, and international artists to gather and create art works. Some of the artists who have lived and managed to make a name for themselves in the history of Balinese art are Walter Spies, Antonio Blanco, Rudolf Bonnet, Arie Smit, and others. These four artists have not only influenced the people in Ubud, but their influence is felt on Balinese art in general. Pita Maha was born in an agrarian environment where the combination of East-West and Campuhan was a witness to many of these stories. On November 17, 1961 the high Hindu priest throughout Bali held a grand meeting at Campuhan Ubud. All of this is believed to be due to the strong unity and synergy between the power of the natural spirit. The lure of the locals and the charisma "aura" of Puri Ubud, especially the services of the elders of Ubud Palace, Ida Cokorda Gede Agung Sukawati and Ida Cokorda Raka Sukawati [3].

When the French writer and senior art critic, Dr. Jean Couteau on his first visit in Campuhan on 1971, where Campuhan has no stone bridge, dirt road. There are several bamboo bungalows rented by wealthy "hippies," including Laura Duke Condominas, Daughter of the feminist sculptor Niki de Saint Phalle; Laura lives in Campuhan with her husband Laurent Condomina photographer's son. In Campuhan was born as well Bloom Condominas. They and several others, are people who left France, avoiding the consumptive world, by "taking refuge" in Bali [6].

The artists who have lived, inspired, and even visualized the Campuhan River in paintings and sketches are Walter Spies, Rudolf Bonnet, Miguel Covarrubias, Romualdo Locatelli, Antonio Blanco, Arie Smit, Willem Gerard Hofker, Theo Meier, Laura Duke Condominas, Affandi, Dullah, Srihadi Soedarsono, Fadjar Sidik, Anak Agung Gede Sobrat, Anak Agung Gede Mregeg, Ida Bagus Made, Paul Nagano, Symon, and many more especially Young Artists who took the Campuhan River theme including Made Runia, Ngurah KK, Nyoman Londo, Wayan Pugur, Ketut Soki, Made Sekar, and several others whose works have not been found. Given the many works of art that are sold abroad [6] [7] [8] [9] [10].

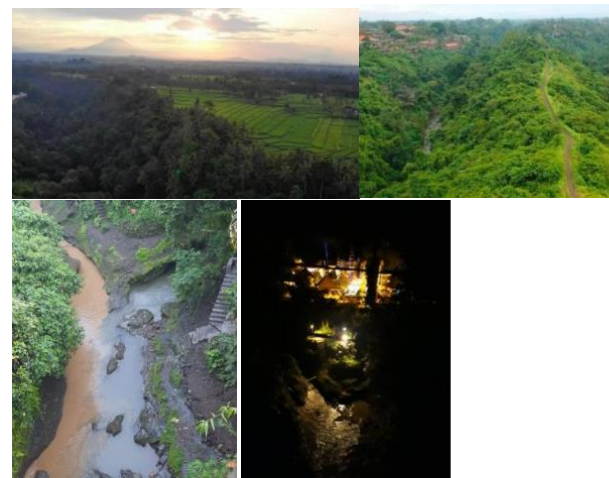


Figure 1. Campuhan area, 2022 [Source: Photo drone]. Figure 2. Campuhan Ridge, 2022 [Source: Photo drone]. Figure 3. Confluence of the rivers, 2020 [Source: Photo by Wayan Karja]. Figure 4. Temple ceremony night time, 2018 [Source: Photo by Wayan Karja].



Figure 5. Temple ceremony, 2018 [Source: Photo by Wayan Karja].  
Figure 6. Cremation ceremony, 2019 [Source: Photo by Wayan Karja].

### The Visualization of Painting Inspired by Campuhan River

However, related to this article, there are several paintings that were studied to explain that the Campuhan River inspired artists, especially painters. Here are some works that can be used as samples in this paper. Walter Spies and Rudolf Bonnet started living as artists in Campuhan but the works of these two artists who took the Campuhan River theme were not found. Likewise, artists Antonio Blanco, Affandi, Anak Agung Gde Sobrat, Ida Bagus Made, and several others had worked in Campuhan, inspired by the atmosphere of Campuhan but no trace of his work depicting the Campuhan River was found. Especially for Bonnet, he mostly uses local people as life models when painting, for example Ni Najas, Ni Radji, Tjemul, and others. The history of the use of models in human painting was started in Campuhan by Bonnet and continued by Blanco who was more impressionistic by using Ni Rondji, his wife as a model.

There are several paintings with the Campuhan River theme in the Neka Museum collection, including works by Fadjar Sidik, S. Soedjojono, Dullah, Paul Nagano, and W.G.Hofker.



Figure 7. Fadjar Sidik, Campuhan, 1952 [Source: Museum Neka Photo Repro by Wayan Karja]. Figure 8. Sunshine at The Neka Museum, 1979 [Source: Museum Neka Photo Repro by Wayan Karja]. Figure 9. Dullah, Campuhan, 1973 [Source: Museum Neka Photo Repro by Wayan Karja].

Fadjar Sidik expresses the colors in this work with rich tones with expressionistic brushwork to capture the flow of water and lushness of the scene. Soedjojono's work showed the landscape view from the entrance area of the Neka Museum overlooking the lush tropical gardens and some of the buildings. Bright sunshine brings out the brilliant colors of leaves and flowers. Founder and director of the museum, Suteja Neka, sits on a chair, adding a human element to the idyllic scene (source: description at the Neka

Museum). Dullah tried to capture the authenticity and naturalism of the place with the earthy color.



Figure 10. Mangku Made Runia, Campuhan River, 1970s [Source: Karja's Collection, Photo by Wayan Karja]. Figure 11. Made Sekar, Campuhan River, 1970s [Source: Collection Datuk Lim Chong Keat, Photo Repro by Wayan Karja].



Figure 12. Ketut Soki, Rice Field [Source: Wayan Karja's Collection, Photo by Wayan Karja]. Figure 13. Nyoman Londo, Rice Field Campuhan [Source: Wayan Karja's Collection Photo by Wayan Karja]. Figure 14. Symon, Bathing [Source: Book *Symon: Property of the Artist*. Bali, Photo Repro Wayan Karja].

Made Runia was one of the senior Young Artist painters, he painted before Young Artists started. He often watched Walter Spies, Rudolf Bonnet, and Anak Agung Gede Sobrat painting in Campuhan [7]. Therefore, Runia's style is different from the other Young Artist's painting, his work rather influenced by Bonnet in terms of form. Made Sekar, one of the painters close to Datuk Lim also painted Campuhan River in decorative colorful scenery. Ketut Soki, one of the most productive painters with a very particular style often used Campuhan River as a subject matter in many different compositions. Nyoman Londo, also one of the productive Young Artist painters often paint the rice field object at the west bank of Campuhan River. Other Young Artist painters like Ngurah KK often refer to the Campuhan River as his subject matter. Arie Smit mentioned that "I never teach the boy but encourage him to paint whatever comes to his mind.....I just encourage them to describe their feelings freely..." [11]. About the Campuhan River as an inspiration, plantation, water, hills, rice terraces, ornate beautiful temple has always been a tremendous attraction for painters from time to time, from classical art to impressionism, modern, and contemporary, water is one of the inspirations that often appears visually in painting.

Walter Spies' bungalow became a Campuhan Hotel, to the south Antonio Blanco Museum, across the road to the west Bonnet's House, to the north of Penestanan Kaja stairs where Arie Smit's studio was located [12], continued by Symon's Art Zoo Studio. Symon, an American artist often took Campuhan River as inspiration and background for his artwork. Symon's found his muse in every permutation of the seven arts, which could be arranged

thus: 1) representation: painting, sculpture, carving, casting, assemblage. 2) Reproduction: screen-printing, photography, block printing, moulding. 3) Performance: modeling, dancing, choreography, theater, film. 4) Sound: rhyme-speaking, singing, running an orchestra. 5) Fashion: clothing, bags, lapidary, costuming. 6) construction: architecture, landscaping, furniture, toyniture. 7) publishing: internet, underground magazines, cartoons, his fanzine arte Buyo, and this book [13].

### **The Implications**

The implications of the Campuhan River in painting, spiritual, ritual, and healing the author started from the early age up to the present. The story of Rsi Markandeya and their grand meeting of Dharma Asrama 1961 initiated by Parisada Hindu Dharma Bali. This meeting was attended by a highest priest issued a charter of Campuhan "Piagam Campuhan Ubud" which explained that 1) Dharma Religion includes the recognition of Veda Sruti as the core of Hindu teachings and Dharma literature Smerti as guidance for moral ethical teachings. Regarding the establishment of Religious Colleges, the establishment of Padmasana temple at every three main village temples, as well as about the Maturation of religious holidays. 2) Dharma Negara (duty as citizen) covers independence, nuclear weapons testing, upholding the five principles of Pancasila, propose to the ministry of religion for Hinduism to be registered formally, fostering the spirit of mutual cooperation, and justifying officers by wearing official clothes to enter and pray (The establishment of Parisada Hindu Dharma).

### **The implications of aesthetic and economic tourism**

The government also increased tourism promotion to America, like the movie "Bali Sorga Terachir" (Bali, the Last Paradise) screened on Hollywood Boulevard. With a help of W.O.J. Nieuwenkamp, in the early days of 1920s, Bali was ready to become an international tourist destination, marked by the opening of Netherlands-to-Netherlands Indies flights. In the early days of 1930s, Bali was reported as being visited by over 1,200 tourists per year (from the about 9,000 tourists visiting the Netherlands Indies). Among them were the celebrities Barbara Hutton, Noel Coward, and Charlie Chaplin (who made a collection of Balinese pornography) [5].

Walter Spies built a Balinese-style bungalow just west of Ubud at Campuhan in 1928. American art historian and dance ethnologist Claire Holt came to Bali in 1930 and researched archaeological sites in addition to contemporary visual and performing arts there and elsewhere in the Netherlands East Indies. In 1924 Andre Rooservelt, cousin of American President Theodore Roosevelt, came to Bali to work as representative for the Thomas Cook International Travel Agency and American Express. Royal Packet Service Company (KPM, Koninklijke Paketvaart Maatschappij) began that year, went back and forth between Singapore, Batavia, Semarang and Surabaya, Singaraja, and Makassar. It also took on passengers, which made it possible for just over two-hundred tourists to visit Bali 1924. Walter Spices finally visited Bali in April 1925 and stayed with the royal family in Ubud. He was enchanted with the island that he had only known until then from Krause's photographs [3].

Bonnet went to Ubud 1929 and met Walter Spies, be friended Anak Agung Gede Sobrat and Anak Agung Gede Mregeg, I Gusti Nyoman Lempad. Meanwhile in 1960, Arie Smit was invited by Tjokorda Gede Agung Sukawati to stay at the former home that Spies had built at Campuhan. Campuhan is a special attraction for artists, especially painters. It began with the arrival of Western artists in the 1920s to get inspiration in Campuhan, finally on 29 January 1936, of the Pita Maha artists association by Spies, Bonnet, Lempad, and Ubud's brother princes Tjokorda Gede Raka Sukawati and Tjokorda Gede Agung Sukawati. The Puri Lukisan (Palace of Painting) with help from Bonnet opened in Ubud 1956 and featured works of art by members of the Pita Maha association from 1936 to 1942 [3]. Arie

Smit had moved to Penestanan, and there the Young Artists style began to blossom with six youths that eventually would grow to a group of forty. He stayed in Ubud for a month and then in other villages.



Figure 15. I Wayan Pugur's painting, House (Datuk Seri Lim Chong Keat) at Penestanan [Source: Collection Datuk Lim Chong Keat, Photo Repro Wayan Karja]. Figure 16. The children of Penestanan(1970s) took a photo with the background of the rice terraces on the west bank of the Campuhan River [Source: Book Peasant Painter from Penestanan Ubud Bali, Photo Repro Wayan Karja]. They are enthusiastic, happy, and proud to be able to paint as well as being able to sell them directly to tourists.

In the aesthetic realm, since 1960s Cecily F Johnston [14], Datuk Seri Lim Cong Keat and others have been collecting paintings by children from Penestanan Village, Ubud District. Datuk was interested because these paintings did not follow the traditional style which is generally taught in schools traditionally. Paintings made freely by the Penestanan children were initially guided by the painter Arie Smit. As a very powerful and world's famous naive painting. The Young Artist's style of painting is colorful and very advanced.

In terms of art facilities there are three museums around (Museum Puri Lukisan, Neka Art Museum, and Blanco Renaissance Museum), many other art galleries, art studios, and tourist facilities. Nearby there were Symon's studio, Datuk Seri Lim Chong Keat's House,

Karja Art Space, Sika Contemporary Gallery, and the Young Artist Penestanan painting community. The water of Campuhan River, both east and west illustrated the creative process to immerse the flow, continually becoming the fusion of religious, healing, ritual, spiritual, aesthetic, and prosperity. As a new spirit of the place in the final part of this description, the author cites Lucy R. Lippard's writing which explains that the lure of the local is embedded in land, history, culture and the possibilities they hold for place-specific, place-responsible "public art" and photography that share the goal of a "humanistic geography" to recover the geographical imagination... and to introduce moral discourse [15].

## CONCLUSION

The explanation above emphasizes that it is not an exaggeration if the Campuhan River can be said as the meeting point of two rivers that bring a new paradigm of Ubud civilization, especially in painting, the blessing of fertility, prosperity, and inner and outer happiness. The Campuhan River has a very strategic topography and layout, Gunung Lebah Temple is flanked by two rivers which are then united called Campuhan. The meeting point is believed to bring miracles for healing (medicine) and as a place to develop rituals and spirituality. Artists with a high level of awareness capture this new earth energy phenomenon by creating various works of painting and sketches. Campuhan River has a certain vibration so that many local, national and international artists are inspired to create works of art. The implication of the development of this civilization is that Campuhan and the surrounding area are blessed not only by farmers whose rice fields

are drained by the Campuhan River, but also artists, art and tourism entrepreneurs, and the surrounding community feel their welfare increased. "The water that flows within us is part of the water that flows in nature and part of the rhythm of life that plays out throughout the universe" [16].

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