



BRINGING THE ARTS TO THE EVERYDAY LIVED EXPERIENCES OF YOUNG CHILDREN

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Abstract: The purpose of this arts-based education research was to explore the complex art forms in Bali, Indonesia, for a cross-cultural understanding of the everyday importance of the arts in the teaching and learning of young children. Five Balinese artists and one Javanese artist were interviewed to discuss their journeys as artists from a young age, their practicing art forms, and perceptions of the importance of the arts in their communities, cultural identity, and in the everyday lived experiences of children. While there is literature on the historical and complex art forms of Bali, giving context to the importance of time and place and hierarchies of the culture, little is documented on the interconnection between the arts as a paradigm that shapes culture and informs an understanding of the arts as important to teaching and learning. This research experience aimed to deepen the researcher's understanding of how the arts are embodied and woven together in Balinese culture, and how this knowledge can be connected to the teaching and learning of children in the Canadian context.

Keywords: art education; arts and children; arts-based education research, Balinese artists, cross-cultural, holistic, spirituality

Artistic expression provides openings for spiritual discussions to become visible as part of the process and validates the search for meaning and understanding of the mystery of being. (Binder, 2016, p. 295)

The arts as a way of being and doing in the teaching and learning of young children, offer a more holistic approach in establishing mindful and creative spaces through mind, body, and soul connection (Bentley, 2013; Binder, 2011, Binder & Kostopolous, 2010; McArdle & Boldt, 2013; Miller, 2007). According to Steele (as cited in Binder, 2017), there is an aesthetic energy, the emotional connection one makes to a work of art observed, from the one who creates or the viewer. Though Steele focuses on children's drawing and the importance of a daily draw, he acknowledges the holism and interconnection of many art forms: "The act of drawing (singing, dancing, playing, and in due course writing) has performed a miracle of internal holistic integration: Form and Content are united in the drawer's mind and simultaneously on the page" (as cited in Binder 2017, p. 10). So why, despite the ample evidence of the importance of the arts in education, are they still marginalized or undervalued in today's educational institutions in Canada and internationally in western contexts (Kind 2017; Pearse, 2006)?

There are many cultures that value and define themselves through the arts. Bali is such a culture in Indonesia. The arts in Bali are built into the rituals, the spirituality of the people, and are viewed more as a totality; a holistic expression of identity and being in the everyday life of the community (Riechle, 2010). While it can be viewed that several of the art forms contain rigidity in learning and practice (Balin, 2006), it is important to consider the personal quality and embodiment each artist brings to his/her art form. This embodiment of the art form reflects an interpretation through the process of art learning, making, and in most cases performing.

The opportunities to not only observe and experience some of these art forms opened my eyes to how many of the art forms functioned and were woven together historically and spiritually in the Balinese culture. This rich experience offered important insights into the interconnection between the arts as a paradigm that shapes culture and identity; informing the importance of the arts as part of the everyday of young children's experiences through different modes of meaning-making (Binder, 2011). Such cultural and artistic experiential understandings offer implications for change when working with children from diverse populations, including Indigenous populations in Canada (Archibald, 2008; Dion, 2009; Kelly, 2016).

"...embodiment of the art form reflects an interpretation through the process of art learning, making, and in most cases performing."

In this paper, I offer conversations of discoveries through found poetry that emerged during the interviews with six artists. These shared storied encounters provided insight into a complex history, culture, the rituals, and spirituality that are defined through

their art (Riechle, 2010). Not only did these interviews inform a cross-cultural understanding of the importance of the arts in the lived everyday experiences of the artists, young children, and communities of Bali, but also offered significant implications for the teaching and learning environments here in Canada.

The Arts in Bali

Though predominantly Hindu, with Buddhism co-existing alongside, many of the arts in Bali are rooted in an Indigenous belief system of strong reverence for the ancestors and animism (Abrams, 1996; Dibia & Ballinger, 2012). Ritual and ceremony play an integral part in the community and viewed through the aesthetic process of painting, stone carving, Wayang (shadow puppets), and mask-carving. Stories shared through Wayang performances of the kings connect the people to their history. Kodi, Foley, and Sedana (2005) discuss Wayang and Topeng (mask) dancing as two of the most important art forms connected to ceremony and ritual. They describe the deep spiritual energy that is generated in the initiation ceremonies of Topeng dancers. In these ceremonies, “knowledge is passed by a torch” (Kodi, Foley, & Sedana, 2005, p. 200), over time, through the preparations of students and teachers, and with blessings. Significant is the use of the Balinese language in the performances; honoring, reinforcing, and sustaining the community’s culture and identity.

Berlinger (2013) describes the arts as a way the Balinese maintain and express the ideals of “balance and harmony” (p. 9). Historically, every form of art, be it music, dance, or a shadow puppet play originates in form and function from ritual and ceremony. This has continued even with more contemporary forms and interpretations. The role of the artist is viewed as one who moves the world of the ancestors to the audience (Berlinger, 2013). For example, puppets and masks are considered to have spirits of their own and the gamelan instruments played go through a purification ritual every 210 days (Berlinger, 2013). One could suggest that life is a ritual.

The arts (painting, dance, drama, mask, music) are embodied in the Balinese life cycle (Riechle, 2010), honoring ancient ways of life (Goodlander, 2013) and through ritual or ceremony retain the sacred wisdom and qualities of intent. While tourism and globalization have at times shifted appreciation and allowed for appropriation of the art forms (Goodlander, 2013), it is the historical contextualizing that situates the significance of the form and function within Balinese art.

Entering the Research

This research journey began a few years before I travelled to Bali as a discussion. Susan Allen, who currently lives in Bali but was visiting her former home, Toronto, suggested the possibility of my coming to Bali to do some work with her and her partner, Susiawan, at Yellow Coco’s Creative Nest.¹ When my sabbatical arose, and I was making plans to visit Australia, Susan was once again visiting Toronto and in the course of connecting, she pointed out I would be very close to Bali, so perhaps I should come, visit, and do some research. On-going conversations occurred as I designed a rich research experience that would include interviewing artists on the island in order to explore their thoughts on the arts

in the lives of children, and their own experiences as children with the arts. The project unfolded organically, and Susan acted as my research contact and translator. She assisted with recruitment and meeting times.

I stepped into the lived experiences of five Balinese artists, and one Javanese artist, who has been living in Bali for over twelve years. Out of the six artists, one was female. The art forms represented were: mask-making (carving), Topeng dance, Balinese dance, painting, gamelan (percussion music using vocals and traditional instruments), and Wayang (storytelling, drama). Open-ended interviews offered the artists the space to discuss their experiences without assumptions (Creswell, 2008; Olson, 2011). Incorporating arts-based research allowed for an emergent, iterative, and interpretative epistemological design (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2008; Leavy, 2015; Rose, 2015). Data collection included interviews, field notes, and journaling. Photographs, video recordings, and sound clips (music) of the artists demonstrating their art forms augmented the interviews.

I created found poetry to weave the threads of the interview responses into collective and individual voices, as well as to include my own voice. Unlike traditional linear interviews, my interviews emerged as non-linear discussions of lived experiences and while questions were answered, the stories and responses shared offered a relational path that meandered back and forth in time, often circular in nature. Butler-Kisber (2002) stated, “creating found poetry is not a linear procedure” (p. 233). She speaks of capturing the “nuggets” from the transcripts (p. 223), what I like to call the heart and spirit of the storyteller. Using found poetry to represent the conversations also offered a holistic approach (Bhattacharaya, 2008), that was narrative and affective (Prendergrast, 2006) and had an authentic way to reflect “the data of human experiences” offered (Falkner, 2009).

I gathered highlights, significant words, and phrases from each interview, from my journals, and from the moments in time that were shared. I crafted and recrafted the individual and multiple voices to create the poesy (Lahman & Richard, 2014). As Prendergrast and Leggo (2007, p. 1470) share:

A poetics of research is always
seeking the experience of
 Withinness, in words, in work
In the world, in heart, in earth
 in body, mind, imagination,
 and spirit.

Introducing the Artists²

The artists came from different backgrounds, from rural and urban settings and reflected an age range of 47-71 years during the time of the conversations. Four artists had taught in the United States for periods of time and are internationally known. The Javanese artist had worked throughout Indonesia and in Toronto, Canada before settling in Bali. It was

a privilege to spend time with these artists and in some cases, to be welcomed into their homes.

I Nyoman Sedana

I Nyoman Sedana (52 years of age) grew up in a rural village and learned the arts (Wayang, dance, mask-making, gamelan) from his parents as a child and in his community. He has been a Professor at the Art Institute in Denpasar, Bali since 1987. He received his Masters and PhD degrees in the United States. He is a teacher and performer of Wayang and dance and a Master Teacher in his performing art forms. We met at an Art Museum located outside of Ubud, Bali.



In conversation with I Nyoman Sedana,³ photo by Susiawan.

My mother

Always training in my house

I was taught by mother, brother, sister

Osmosis

My mother was an opera dancer

Ritual, temple, ritual

Spiritual impact

I performed in the village

At the centre is temple.

I Nyoman Catra

I Nyoman Catra (60 years of age), received his PhD in the United States. He is a performing artist as well as a teacher at the Art Institute in Denpasar. He started his education formally on stage in his 4th year of elementary school. While he studied the performing arts (dance, music, Topeng, and Wayang), dance is his area of teaching and performing. He is considered a Master in his performing art form. I had the privilege of being invited to his home where his wife also joined us.



I Nyoman Catra, photo by Susiawan.

Art was interesting in my life

Dance, play, music, mask dancer, Wayang, Barong⁴

Imitating the old doings as kids

No devices

Playing at night under the full moon.

Dance first in temple

Then I learned

No, no, no one teach me, just natural

I'm playing gamelan, my parents, musicians

The community,

Everything is opportunity.

Susiawan

Susiawan (58 years old) is from Central Java from a town called Solo. He went to two Faculty of Art schools, one in Jogakarta and one in Bamdung (Institute of Technology). While he is well-grounded in Wayang, music (drumming and gamelan), he is a visual artist. After 12 years in Toronto, Canada he has now been living in Bali for over 11 years. He runs Yellow Coco Creative Nest with his partner Susan Allen, a space for children and families designed to nurture creativity and understanding between the Balinese and non-Balinese community through the arts. Susiawan is well-known in Java and in the Ubud area.



Susiawan, photo by author.

Children, arts, important in school
 Art in Bali connected with tradition, religion
 That's very important
 My parents were not artists
 They supported the arts
 My father gave me paper to draw, pencils to colour
 As young child
 I draw for others
 Always drawing
 Art and education is important.

Ibu Ni Ketut Arini.

Ibu Ni Ketut Arini (71 years old) started learning her art form when she was a child in her banyar (community compound) in Denpasar. She grew up with the arts. Her father and uncle were gamelan musicians. She studied dance in the arts high school in Denpasar. She danced for the first time at age 10 in full costume. Ibu N Kiketut Arini got her first studio in

1973 and taught at the Arts High School in Denpasar. Now, her studio is in her banyar in Denpasar where we met. It is the family home that belonged to her father. She mentors over 300 students. Ibu Ni Ketut Arini is a very well-known and respected Master and teacher of dance.



Interviewing Ibu Ni Ketut Arini with Susan Allen, photo by Susiawan.

At age 3

I watched and played

At 10

I get on the table in school and dance

Pretending to be teacher

No musical instruments so

I learned to use my mouth

To make sounds

I learned to speak the sounds.

Time in my banyar

Hearing gamelan in my sleep

Part of the everyday life of the child.

I Nyoman Setiawan

I Nyoman Setiawan (48 years old) lives in the village of Sukawati where he is also now the elder of his village. His teacher was his father. He is a Master mask carver and Topeng dancer. He has the honor of dancing the Five Sacred Masks at many temple ceremonies and teaches mask-carving throughout Bali. Through his mask-carving he teaches the history of the Topeng.

Four years old I danced, and still learning
Before I was born
Coming from the arts community
Watching, always watching, making things
If you want to play
You're going to make a toy
Learn
Control, focus, process.

Made a monkey mask
Sold it, paid
And went to school at 8
I feel I became an artist at 27
Dancing in temple.



I Nyoman Setiawan, photo by author.

I Dewa Tupu Barata

I Dewa Tupu Barata (47 years old) was born in the village he still lives in Banjar Pengosekan (outside of Ubud). He was born into an artist family. His father was the leader of the gamelan group in his village, a drummer, and also a painter. He went to an arts high school to study music and dance. When he found out I had been with Ibu Ni Ketut Irini, I Dewa Tupu Barata got very excited and shared he had studied with her. Currently he travels to the United States each year to teach gamelan.



I Dewa Tupu Barata, photo by author.

At 5 years

I already play
I learn by watching
My father's group
In Bali banyar

I went to arts high school

I specialized in music and dance
Ibu Arini taught me
Dance.

In second grade

I was already teaching
Travelled to villages at 17.

Then

More art in schools and community
Tradition.

Discoveries through Shared Experiences

As the researcher, I had thought I had left assumptions behind. As I entered the interview experience and lived worlds of the artists, it became apparent, this was not so. Upon reflection, this speaks to the nature of research where interpretations and construction of ideas are often changed and transformed through the process of discovery and new emergences.

I landed in Denpasar, Bali at midnight, in a new culture never experienced before. Within 48 hours, I was at my first interview. As mentioned earlier, I was fortunate to have my friend and colleague, Susan Allen, who lived there to connect and arrange the interviews and act as my interpreter when needed. I quickly learned that there was no linearity to the interviews and while I was able to have my questions answered, there was so much more offered through the meandering path of each artist's narrative.

It was a privilege to spend time with each of these artists who, in many cases, graciously invited me into their homes. Often, our sense of time slipped away as the interview became an embodiment of their storied lives. As assumptions melted away and I was invited into their worlds, I entered the everyday sensual spaces of sights, smells, and neighbourhood chatter; the continuous sound of roosters crowing, dogs barking. I entered liminal moments where I was no longer a researcher, but a learner in a very spiritual ancient land.

I found I came in with assumptions,
 the researcher, the outsider
 perhaps unknowingly.
 the surprise of the research,
 the presence of the artists,
 the kindness in their responses.
 the deconstruction of my thoughts.

After two interviews
 saturated with the passionate sharings,
 two academics
 wayan puppeteer, dance,
 mask dancer
 performance, teaching,
 performance, teaching.
 learning from inside, the womb.

School does not embed the arts
 No trained people.
 There is strength in ritual
 spirit and identity
 held together through the arts,
 school does not affect
 the passing of knowledge.

The Arts and Children

My assumption that the arts were important in Balinese schools because of the aesthetic importance of the arts in Balinese culture was dismantled early on in the research. While each artist had quality artistic experiences in school when they were young, there is minimal attention given to the arts in schools today. Many cited changing governments in Indonesia and a curriculum focused on reading and writing as the issue. The competitive trend in the Ministry of Education in Jakarta prioritized core subjects. The arts have since come in minimally and mostly as extracurricular activities. The Ministry of Education in Jakarta is very far away but has long reaching influence. There are opportunities at the art high school and university, but those are more for those going into the arts as a profession.

The importance of the arts in Bali is embedded in community, in the ancient roots and beliefs. This lived aesthetic expressed and taught not only the history and culture of the art forms, but is embedded in their spirituality.

The best lessons for the child
 has three elements
 Satyam is truth aspect
 Shivam is holy aspect
 Sundaram is aesthetic aspect
 Through art you get all three,
 Not just for the brain
 Art is complete.

If you don't learn Wayang
 How can you learn the ancient concept
 of what is nature of politics?
 The ancient concept of time
 The nature of humanity
 Symbol written centuries to centuries
 Crystallized into Wayang.

UNESCO declared Wayang as the
 Masterpiece of the tangible,
 Intangible heritage
 of humanity.

The reverence for the sacred begins before birth. Several spoke of the child learning inside the womb. There is a cosmology described through the arts, that I Nyoman Catra discussed that transcends "school" learning. It is felt that it is taken into the institution and not dismantled because of the community learning that occurs outside of the educational institution and the strength of what is given to and learned by the child. It could be said, there is an education existing outside of the Ministry of Education in Jakarta.

The arts

rhythmical, dynamic, process
focus and more focus
good concentration for child.

Balance

balance between physical and mental.

Meditation.

When we lost our Balinese language

the culture, the Balinese letters

soul of Balinese culture under Hindu rulings

we lost an essential culture of Bali.

Our bodies consist of all the letters.

We as human culture have five great elements

Pertiwi- earth

Apah- water

Teja- fire

Bayu- air

And

Akash- soul.

Each art form

Connection to ceremony

Ritual, karma, to our beliefs

Brahma- God

Atman- Soul

Samsara- Rebirth

Moshka- Enlightenment

The image given for enlightenment, also called liberation, was the described as *the footprint of a bird flying in the sky*.

Guru Reka,

The concept of Balinese creativity

finding balance in unbalance,

balance of vibration and sound

aesthetic of Balinese music

moving one side to get balance in unbalance,

finding equilibrium in disequilibrium

with dance.

Life is like this.

Dancing with Five Sacred Masks



Topeng Kera, photo by author.



Topeng Tua, photo by author.



Topeng Panasar, photo by author.



Topeng Delem, photo by author.



Topeng Sidhakareya, photo by author.

Topeng Keras is the young person, effortful
 Topeng Tua, the old man, awake
 Topeng Panasar shares wisdom, a talking mask
 Topeng Delem is the King, the all-knowing character
 Topeng Sidhakareya, the priest, moshka

Process, purification, learning,
 Writings of Saraswati, goddess
 Of knowledge and creativity
 With Sandalwood water
 On mouth, face
 Permission to dance
 Determined by a special priest.
 Dances come from long time ago.

The arts turn everything into something beautiful.

Children in community
 Change when engaging with the arts.
 Students from many years still follow me
 We danced by the river
 Dance as young children
 We talk, laugh and remember
 Rite of passage, dancing in temple.

Teaching and Learning of Young Children

All of the artists spoke to the importance of the arts in the teaching and learning of young children. What differed was the interpretation of where the teaching and learning took place. There was the view that the banyar was the place that strengthened and supported artistic growth through ceremony and ritual. Rites of passage were present for both boys and girls and while there has been some movement in gender crossing over in the art forms, certain aspects were kept very traditional. Age and life changes, for example, menstruation dictated a young girl's time for dancing in the temple or taking part. This tradition is still not an uncommon one and found in other cultures and religions as well, where a female is restricted at certain times of her moon cycle. I can remember being told that I could not engage in certain practices in the synagogue during this time. Indigenous colleagues have shared that there are certain times where one is not allowed to touch the medicines-tobacco, sage, cedar, and sweet grass.

There was discussion that the arts should be brought into schools to continue the importance of the teachings of the community. It appeared that it was the Ministry of Education's policies and continual changes that prevented consistency and implementation. Several artists still advocated for working with the parents in the community and teachers to enact change.

The teacher is the tool of the system
 Imagination, intuition
 How far can one have the arts as educational tools
 Important.
 The spiritual and the arts important.
 Integrating the arts
 Bringing community together
 Teacher training.

Using natural resources for art
 Batik, natural dyes.
 Support creativity
 Support parents and kids.

I always see the children,
 Especially school –age children
 As the product of the school system
 I feel I have to give them everything,
 First time to meet children is to recognize them
 Say welcome
 Show me your art work.

Working in the community
 Music, gamelan
 Put across balance and well-being.
 Decrease stress of one-sided learning by bringing in the arts
 Bring self-confidence and connection to community.

Teaching in the community
 Children participate in ceremonies
 Arts not inside the curriculum as before.
 Arts need to be taught
 Balances the brain.

When I was young everyone would
 Pick up the guitar and play.
 They weren't taking lessons.
 Art was part of the everyday.
 In Bali, there are lessons for everything,
 Lessons for singing
 You can take a lesson for guitar
 All these lessons.

My Learning and Embodied Knowing



Carving, photo by I Nyoman Setiawan.



Dancing with Ibu Ni Ketut Arini, photo by Susiawan.

Creating a mask with Master mask-maker and Topeng dancer, I Nyoman Setiawan and experiencing the dance form with Ibu Ni Ketut Arini were highlights of my engagement with these artists. By “doing,” I entered into ways of knowing and being as the researcher that would not have happened if I had not had this opportunity. The experiences offered the space to participate in creating through these ancient art forms and connect with the aesthetic beauty and spirit that had unfolded in the shared experiences of the discussions.

Hammer and chisel
 Belonging to ancient hands of past generations
 Becoming one with wood,
 As I flow into the creation.

Awkward student of new dance form
 Patience of the teacher
 beside me
 as I follow the smiling movements
 of body, hands and feet
 To the sound of the gamelan instruments.

I had opportunities not afforded a regular tourist. I Nyoman Setiawan invited me to his banyar ritual to see him dance the Five Sacred Masks. I watched how this community co-existed with both Hindu and Buddhists beliefs, as each priest (male and female) entered in. I was swept away by the sound of the gamelan orchestra, the Sanskrit chanting by his uncle, meeting his father, breathing in the ancient history that surrounded me.

Final Thoughts

Any assumptions and surprises were quickly set aside as the artists and I entered into mutual narratives of understanding and sharing. Initially, I felt internal tensions as the researcher and was conscious of my questions and probing deeper into areas about the ceremonies, and sacred beliefs. I was touched by the spirit of generosity the artists showed to bring me into their lived worlds, cultures, and histories. I also experienced a deep spiritual connection to what was being shared and the art experiences I engaged in. While a complex cosmology, the explanations opened pathways into new insights to be pursued.

I was given a beginning glimpse and experience of some of the art forms of Bali and how they were woven into the lived worlds of children through community and education. The challenges I perceived of my situated self as a researcher from a different country quickly dissolved as the artists and I navigated new holistic spaces of understanding, respect, and relationship.

I was left with more questions. Aware of the caste system that still exists, and the rigid gender divisions in the arts that exist, there is change beginning to happen as more women like Ibu Ni Ketut Arini come forward as strong role models. There are artists like I Dewar Tupu Barata who challenge current attitudes of education to bring focus and confidence to children in need through the arts. Susiawan, who is committed to and

advocates for the arts as central to education. I Nyoman Catra who embodies the cosmology of Bali through his dance and the arts. I Nyoman Sedana who leads by example the importance of the arts in the everyday lives of children to preserve history and culture, through Wayang. I Nyoman Setiawan who through his sacred knowledge of ritual and ceremony in his mask making and Topeng dance engages the spirituality of the children in his and others' communities.

I consider the diverse population of the country I live in and what can be brought to the discourse of education through the arts in the teaching and learning of young children. Important, is to recognize the Indigenous peoples of this country (First Nations, Métis, and Inuit) communities who come from culturally and historically older traditions that "live" the arts as a means of communication, expression, ritual, and ceremony. Critical is how we work with the diverse spiritual and cultural histories of others without appropriation. What *is* our role within this tapestry of cultures?

Challenge

Deconstruct, reconstruct

the heart of teaching and learning for young children

Questions remain

First steps

Relational learning spaces

Connections, interconnections

to communities, our planet

The Universe.

Everyday experiences

Artistic, aesthetic

Cultural histories, identities

Our cosmologies.

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ENDNOTES

¹ <http://www.yellowcoco.org>

² All artists gave consent for their real names to be used. It should be noted that a few are mentioned in journal articles and books on Balinese arts. Culturally it is important to honour their names and would be considered an insult not to “name.” Written and verbal consent was given and approved by the Ryerson Ethic Board.

³ Note the “I” before the male name is a formality. When asked what it means, I was just told it was part of the formal title of respect. Similarly “Ibu” is traditionally attached to the female.

⁴ Barong is a Lion Dance.