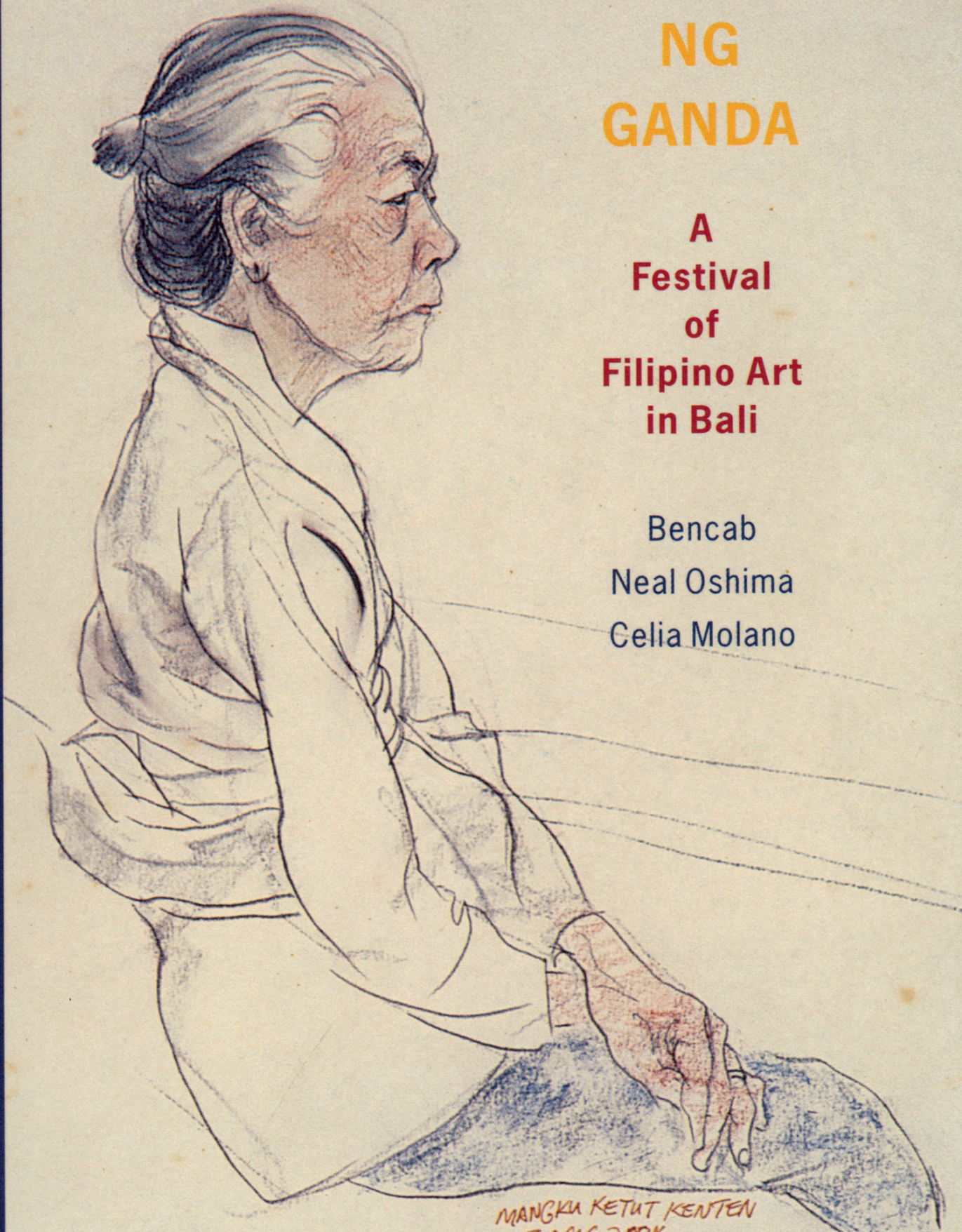


UBUD NG GANDA

A
Festival
of
Filipino Art
in Bali

Bencab
Neal Oshima
Celia Molano



MANGKA KETUT KENTEN
SACUS 2001

VALENTINE
WILLIE
fine ART

BUJENG VILLAGE

KUALA LUMPUR • BALI

Ubud Ng Ganda

Sometime in April 2001, just when Valentine Willie Fine Art was planning a gallery in Ubud, and I was scouting for a house, I bumped into Bencab at his solo exhibition in Singapore. I mentioned my intention to invite artists to come and stay in Ubud and he said he had always wanted to come and sketched in Ubud, just as Rudolf Bonnet first did more than forty years ago.

Bencab was thus our first artist-in-residence in Ubud. He spent three weeks with me in Ubud last August 2001. He sketched and drew our Bali staff: Nyoman, our driver and now gallery assistant, and our housekeepers, Ketut and Komang. They invited our neighbours, and also their relatives and friends to the house so that Ben can sketched them. Pak Suteja Neka, a friend of Bonnet, obligingly came to the house to be sketched by Ben. Nyoman was his personal guide and took Ben around, visiting his *banjar* in Pejeng, to temple ceremonies, even to a royal cremation in Gianyar.

Ben had hoped to sketched female nudes but the Bali of William Hofker and Rudolf Bonnet is gone. Young women no longer wander around topless or bathe naked in the river. I suggested he try the live drawing sessions at Pranato Gallery on Jalan Raya Ubud and so one Saturday, Ben went and sketched nudes, but alas the model that Saturday was a male model. But even so, these nude sketches proved popular with his many collectors in Manila and were in fact some of the first to be sold.

The idea for a festival of Filipino art in Bali actually came from Butch Campos, the President of the Metropolitan Museum of Manila. I curated a show at the Metropolitan Museum in January 2002 and a few rounds of discussion later, I finalized the selection of the artists I wanted to showcase in Bali. I had been entranced by Neal Oshima's photograms of the Filipino *pina* shirt and blouses when I first saw them at Luz Gallery in Manila around March 2000. During the Spanish colonial era, Filipinos were made to wear these blouses and shirts, woven of pineapple fibre, diaphanous and ethereal, so that no weapons could be concealed. Neal's life size photograms or x-rays of actual shirts and blouses, some with exposed knives, are hauntingly beautiful and subversive.

When I was in Manila last January 2002, Luz Gallery was exhibiting Celia Molano's exquisite jewelry. Being a collector of tribal beads myself, I was struck by her use of old beads. Many were Majapahit beads from Indonesia. It turned out Celia had spent some years in Indonesia and had assiduously collected old beads for use in her jewelry design. So in a way, these beads came home, ready again to adorn a woman's neck, ennobling her.

Ben came up with the festival title: **Ubud Ng Ganda** is tagalog for "the height of beauty". Appropriately, Ubud is where he found inspiration for the works on paper exhibiting at The Chedi, Ubud.

Valentine Willie

Bencab's Bali by Cid Reyes

In 1832, the French Romantic painter Eugene Delacroix visited Tangier, upon the invitation of Count Charles de Mornay, appointed by King Louis Philippe as envoy to the Sultan of Morocco. It was a turning point in the life of Delacroix. Thereupon, the whole exotic world of the Orient opened up to the artist - and on his canvases and tons of sketchbooks appeared the intoxicating images of reclining odalisques and harem scenes, arrayed in flowing costumes and ornaments.

Following the footsteps of Delacroix was Paul Klee who, in 1914, on a visit to Tunisia, discovered a whole new world of color.

In his rejection of Western civilization, Gauguin pursued a restless search for a new world of feeling. He left Paris to stay with the peasants of Brittany at Pont-Aven. In 1891, he sailed for Tahiti in the South Pacific and there, for the rest of his life, created his own vision of beauty, entranced by the exoticism of the Tahitian natives. In Tahiti, he found his island paradise. Other European artists have visited Tahiti ahead of Gauguin, but no other artist rebelled against civilized society and convention with such a headstrong will.

Just what is it that impels artists throughout history to seek the exotic and the primitive? Aware of the dulling and deadening suffocation of familiar surroundings, they seek a land, a mental universe that is far and different from that to which they have been born.

What dies hard is the romantic notion of the Noble Savage who lives in an earthly paradise, in a perpetual state of repose, pleasure and innocence, untouched by the horrors of war and perils of technology. Nature is the life-giving force that is the source of Man's renewal and redemption.

In his book, *Bali: A Paradise Created*, Adrian Vickers writes: "It was during the 1920s and the 1930s that the image of Bali as the island paradise took hold. Eager to have the world forget its ruthless conquest of the island, the Dutch government began promoting Bali as a tourist destination. In doing so, they made Balinese culture and village life central preoccupations of writing about the island, so shifting attention to aspects of Bali overlooked in earlier times. Suddenly wild Bali became a tame and attractive Island of Eden."

"Come to me, come to me; Here am I, your special island; If you try you'll find me; Where the sky meets the sea; Here am I your special friend; Come to me,

come to me; *Balihai, Baliyai, Baliyai.*" So the voices ring invitingly in Rogers and Hammerstein's 1949 musical *South Pacific*. With those tempting lyrics, the incalculable fantasy-force of Hollywood, via Broadway, gripped the Western imagination.

To the world traveller, the romanticism envelops the whole idea of Bali as the last paradise on earth: a procession of bare-breasted women, a life lived in harmony with nature, a lush and fertile landscape, the hypnotic assault of colors and sounds in Balinese dance, drama and music.

And so from the late sixteenth century onwards, the travellers came as colonizers, anthropologists, scientists and artists. The enchantment with the island was so intense that many of the artists stayed for long periods of time.

Dutch artist Rudolf Bonnet (1895-1978) helped establish several artists' associations. The Mexican artist Miguel Covarrubias (1902-1957) wrote a pioneering research on the island, illustrated by his own drawings. Walter Spies (1895-1942) created remarkable silhouetted landscapes immersed in deep shadows, but with radiant streaks of light. Willem Gerard Hofker (1902-1981) specialized in dreamily romantic images of Balinese women posed against ruins and temples. The Belgian artist Adrian-Jean Le Mayeur (1894-1958) painted post-impressionistic works of Balinese women at leisure and at work. Arie Smit (b.1916) settled in Bali in 1956, after he had been granted Indonesian citizenship in 1949.

In succeeding decades, scores of artists from all over the world sought inspiration from Bali, in which language, as has often been said, the words "art" and "artist" do not exist. Indeed, Bali transcends the Western concept of art.

From neighboring Philippines, one of its highly-regarded artists has fallen under the visual spell of Bali. His name is Ben Cabrera, but signs his works as Bencab. Because portraiture is an essential strength of this Filipino artist, his vision of Bali centers simply but dramatically on the Balinese human figure. There is, however, a humorous edge to many of Bencab's character portraits. It manifests in the curious intrusion of modern technological gadgetry into an image that is simultaneously ancient and contemporary.

The Balinese models whom Bencab has chosen to portray may well be the descendants of those drawn by Bonnet and Hofker. They are all garbed in the

same traditional attire draped on their bodies, with a crown of frangipani blossoms or a simple headcloth. But Bencab also depicts the contemporary Balinese: with a cellphone, CD player, a motorcyclist's helmet, Nike shoes. After all, who can deny that modernity now permeates tradition?

Bencab has compatriots who have been inspired by Bali. Foremost among them is J. Elizalde Navarro (1924-1999) who has been proclaimed as a National Artist. His renditions of Balinese dances are bristling with brilliant colors and illusions of movement. Another is Roger San Miguel (b.1941) whose canvases are lyrical interpretations of Balinese folklore. Their works now grace the walls of the Neka Art Museum.

Bencab's renown in his native country rests largely on an impressive body of work with the collective title of "*Larawan*". It is a Philippine term that encompasses all three Western concepts of photography, painting and portraiture. The *Larawan* works are based on Philippine colonial photographs and thus, trigger thought-provoking and emotion-inducing reaction about his country's past and present.

Like Bali, the Philippines experienced centuries of colonization, now threaded in its history. Like Bali, the Philippines emerged from its colonial experience - Spanish and American - with its culture, customs and tradition now indelibly tinged by a Western baptism of technology.

In Bencab's Bali: by cellphones, CD players, and Nike shoes.



Bencab
Kasogi shoes and Nyoman
2001
Pastel on paper
80 x 60 cm

The Other Bencab by John L. Silva

We walk up a hill in Baguio and come across native Igorot huts, some clustered together while others are situated alone at higher elevations. The architecture of the huts adheres to the traditional design, a high pitched thatched roof generously spilling over wooden walls almost covering the entrance. For protection against animals and marauders the huts are mounted about four feet off the ground on posts. A bamboo flute is playing wafting music in our direction. A red-cheeked girl wearing a native woven *ikat* blouse smiles as she passes. Tall ferns and thick vegetation surround the huts and one feels one has stumbled into a remote northern Cordillera village, one of a few remaining in these parts of Luzon.

The village though is a ten-minute drive outside Baguio City. It is called Tamawan and was conceived, built, and given life to four years ago by Bencab.

We arrived early that morning to document the final construction of art installations being erected in various parts of the village. The men and women artists, most of them financially sponsored by Bencab were busy erecting and binding their creations, all of them using Bamboo. This would be the annual art festival with Bamboo as the common theme. The simple one room art gallery on the grounds was busy too with artists adjusting their displays of bamboo sculptural pieces, some lit from within by electric lights. When the resident artists finished their installations, Bencab discreetly put the finishing touches to his own creation and laid it, almost anonymously, with the rest of the pieces.

Later that afternoon, Baguio residents, students and young artists would ascend to Tamawan Village and walk the various hillside paths to admire the ingenious use of Bamboo in each installation and to compliment the beaming and exhausted artists. Upon asking how the village has helped their artistic career, they cite, affectionately, Bencab's role in fulfilling their creative projects. One young craftsman, who quietly wove small bamboo mats which later became baskets, spoke about how he felt compelled to continue an art tradition taught to him by his grandfather. If Bencab were not around, he said, he would have had to remain in his village, find regular work and forget the weaving taught to him. Now his works are on display, selling briskly at Tamawan's craft store, allowing him to earn a living and continue a dying craft.

The Bamboo Arts Festival culminated that evening with tribes from the north coming to Tamawan to perform dances accompanied by musicians all playing on bamboo instruments and gongs. In an open courtyard, surrounded by an

eager audience the dancers swayed and turned, both hands raised halfway, fingers clenched except the thumbs which were raised and lowered in time with the music. Not so long ago, these dances were the object of ridicule from Christian Filipinos. Long ago, the tribes were even banned from dancing them. Now, they are danced with much gusto, egged on by an appreciative audience rediscovering their roots. Bencab, the architect of this revival and the artistic output the past few days can be seen discreetly scurrying to and fro with a camera, and like the other photographers, taking pictures of the day for posterity.

The next morning we pay Bencab a visit at his airy, light-filled studio built on a hill with a view of surrounding hillsides, now a patchwork of small houses and neighborhood stores. Baguio, once a colonial hill station for American administrators is now a bustling city bursting at the seams and spreading rapidly to the outskirts, onto Bencab's once verdant hillside. He gives us a tour of his garden and numerous Bonsai trees that he personally trims and guides in growth. We descend a terraced garden and end up in a charming one room native cottage which he uses as a guest room. The construction is impeccable and seamless, a labor of love and thanks from the village artists.

Back in his studio, he is eager to show us his recent drawings of Balinese men and women he made after his first visit there this year. He is, by nature, not one to speak in raptured tones. But his portrait drawings belie his reserved manners. The faces are remarkably true to the stoic yet sensual mixture found in Balinese subjects. Comparisons with the painter Rudolf Bonnet and his muscular subjects with downcast gazes come to mind. Sensuality in that part of the world is different from the Latin flirtation and Christian temptation that Bencab comes from. In Bali, sensuality is a state of presenting a sinewy body with little self-consciousness. It is akin to swimming in an Ubud river in the company of naked local men who have not the slightest notion of Victorian prudery.

I chance on his collection of lime containers for betel nut exquisitely carved in wood and bone reminiscent of Netsuke. He is pleased with my interest, noting enthusiastically, the design of each container. Carved by anonymous artists years ago, these nearly forgotten vessels, have been given a second life as art objects.

Bencab has been a prominent presence in the Philippine art scene since the late sixties. As a collector of antiquarian Philippine photographs, my esteem for Bencab rose considerably when he transformed old historical photographs into

paintings, watercolors, and prints. Their conversion into contemporary artistic images encouraged art collectors to remember our past and to be aware of their own lives in the continuous unfolding of Philippine history.

Bencab in the past decade, has evolved, with little fanfare, into a committed philanthropist. He has built an Igorot village to remind the local residents of their indigenous heritage and as a haven and workshop for local artists. He scouts for and saves endangered rice terraces further north. Charities, big and small, committed to preserving old buildings or helping sexually abused children get financial boosts from donated Bencab paintings.

It all would seem to be a simple matter of giving back, especially for a painter whose works now fetch some of the highest auction prices for contemporary Filipino painters. But in a society where compassion is often contrived as public relations, Bencab's discreet way of investing in budding artists, promoting indigenous culture and preserving endangered landmarks puts many of the larger corporate charities to shame. One could even speculate that as a percentage of income, and their outcome, Bencab's charitable giving may be much more than that proffered by some of the leading *Buena Familias* in the land.

A camera crew has set up their equipment in Bencab's garden and the camera begins to roll. The lanky artist with the trademark knit cap on his head is obliging but uneasy. He does not like talking about himself or engage in ethereal discussions. He would rather be pruning his Bonsai nearby or hurrying back to a waiting canvas. I sympathize with his predicament. Yes, just send him back to his sunlit studio and paint another masterpiece to the enjoyment of all. Then let him expand his Tamawan Village so he can sponsor more artists-in-residence. Don't bother him with another obligatory cocktail party or TV interview. Instead, send him north to save a disused and crumbling stone rice terrace. He and the whole country would be the better for it.



Bencab
Nikadek with cellphone
2001
Pastel on paper
80 x 60 cm



Bencab drawing in Bali



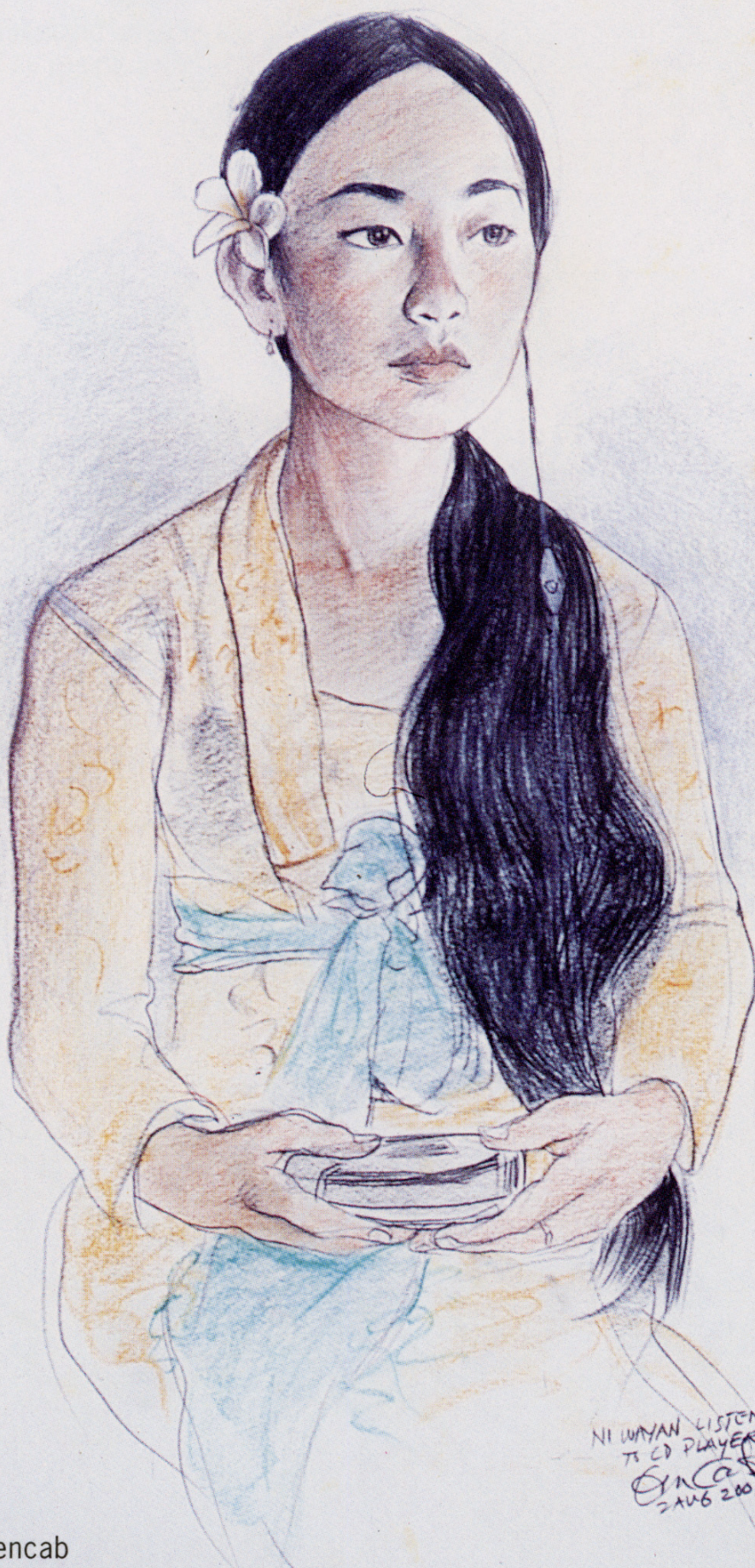
Bencab
Balinese dancer without headdress
2001
Pastel on paper
80 x 60 cm



Bencab
I Made Budi
2001
Pastel on paper
80 x 60 cm

Bencab
Mangku Munik
2001
Pastel on paper
42 x 30 cm

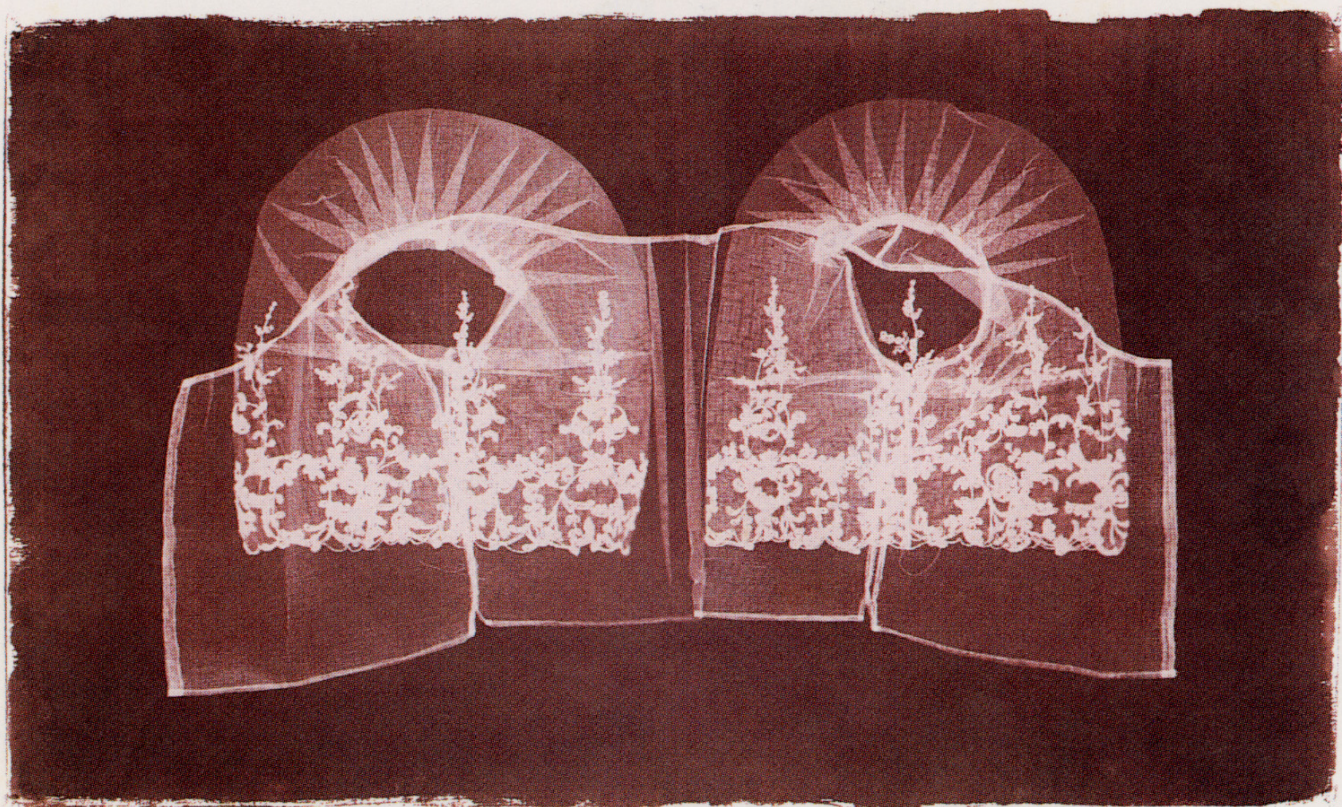




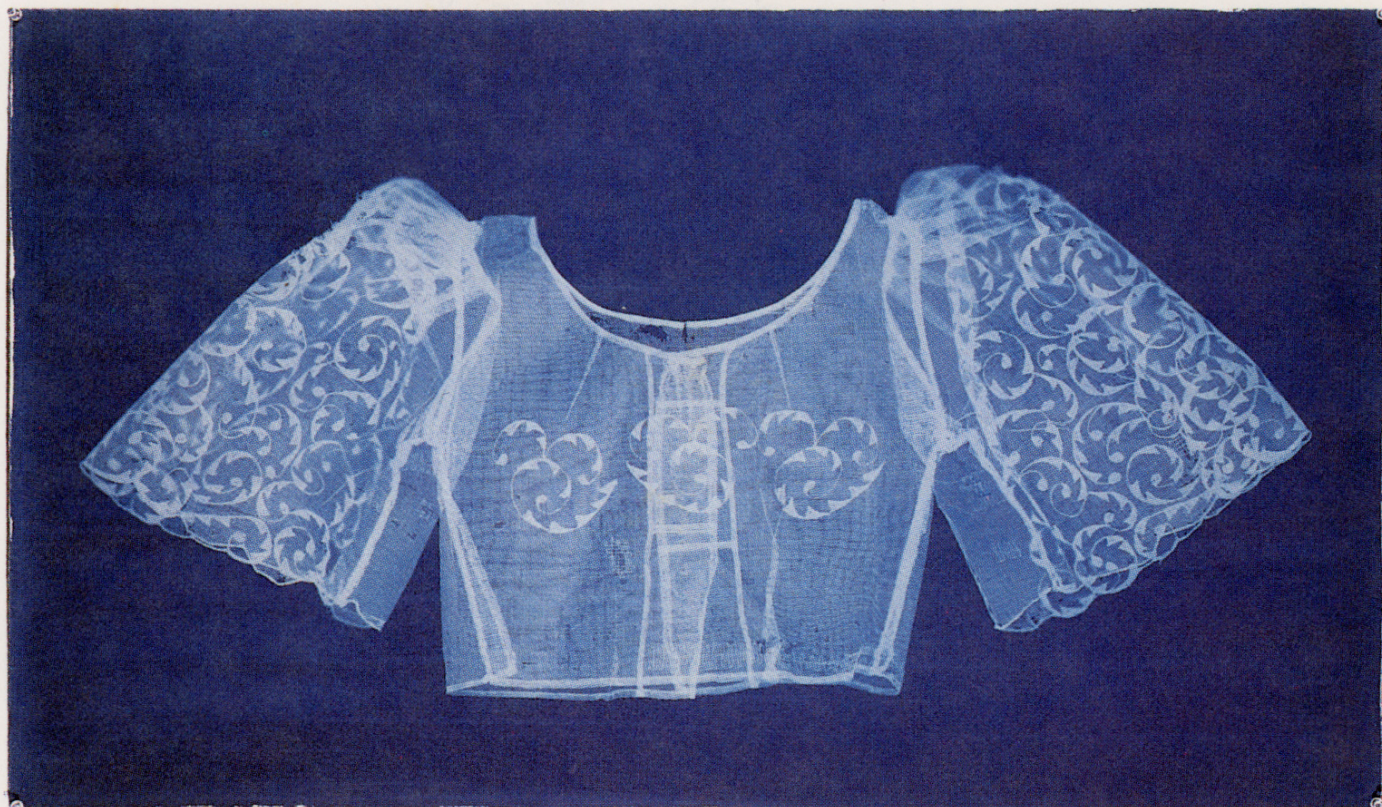
Bencab
Ni Wayan listening to CD player
2001
Pastel on paper
80 x 60 cm



Bencab
Igede-Gebyug dancer
2001
Pastel on paper
80 x 60 cm



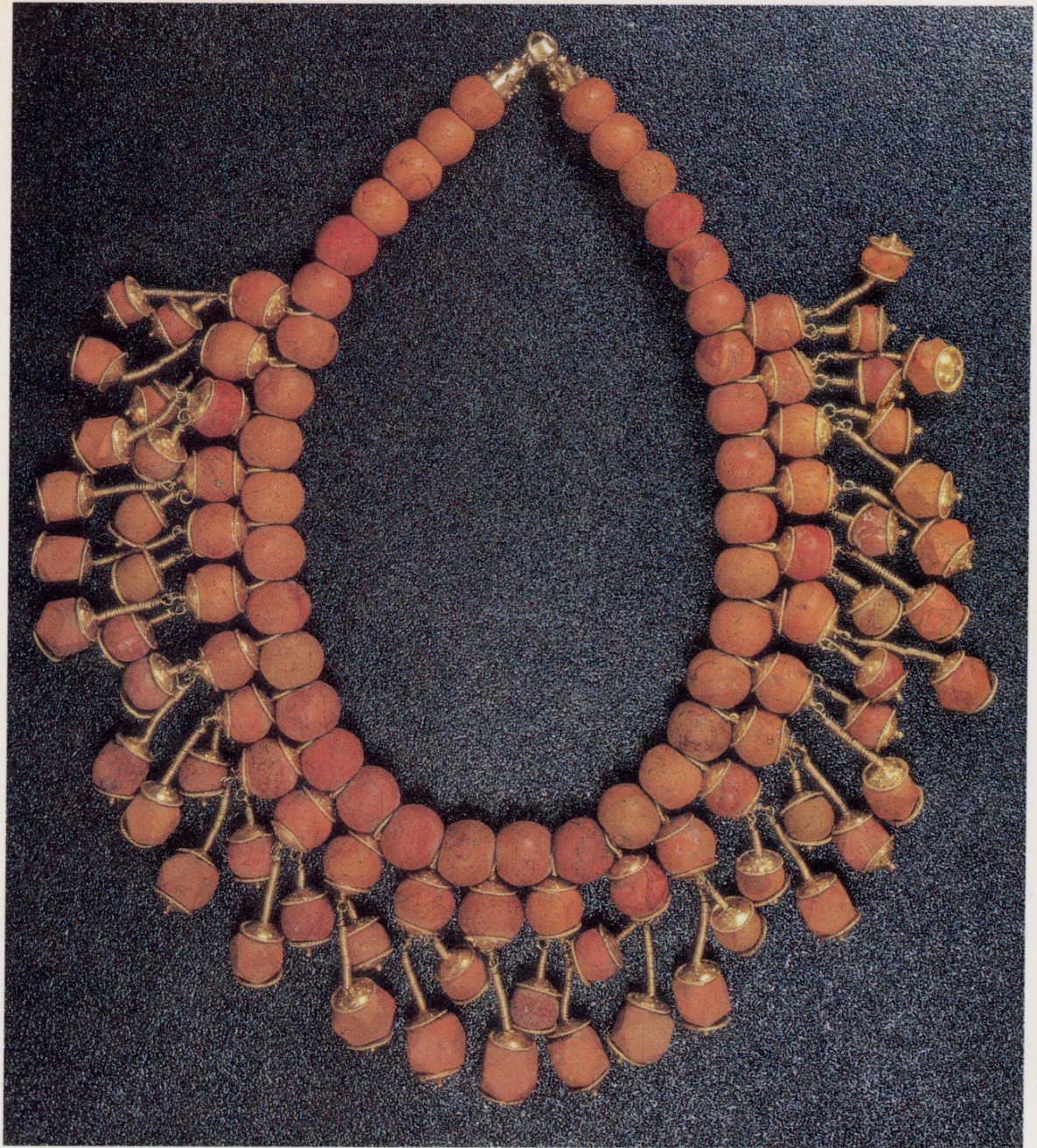
Neal Oshima
"Saya" series
Vandyke brown kallitype/ photogram
66 x 114 cm



Neal Oshima
"Saya" series
Cyano type/ photogram
66 x 114 cm



Celia Molano
Necklace of garnet beads and
antique silver ornaments from
India and Afghanistan



Celia Molano
Necklace of terra cotta beads
from Indonesia and Philippines

Bencab

Born Benedicto Cabrera on 10 April 1942, in Manila, Philippines

Education and Related Studies

University of the Philippines

Selected One Man Exhibitions

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| 1966 | First One-man show, Indigo Gallery, Manila |
| 1970 | Paintings & Drawings, Room Gallery, London |
| 1971 | Paintings, Drawings, Prints, Clytie Jessop Gallery, London |
| 1972 | Larawan, The Luz Gallery, Manila |
| 1975 | Paintings & Prints, Institute of Contemporary Arts, London |
| 1976 | Filipinas Ni Bencab, Faculty Centre, University of Philippines |
| 1978 | Larawan II : The Filipino Abroad, Recent Works, The Luz Gallery |
| 1981 | Ben Cabrera Etchings : 1970 - 1980, Museum of Philippine Art |
| 1983 | Etchings by Ben Cabrera : Glasgow Print Studio, Scotland |
| 1984 | Being Filipino : Paintings, Prints & Drawings, Focus Gallery,
Honolulu Academy of Arts |
| 1988 | Recent Works, The October Gallery, London |
| 1990 | Aftermath, Paintings, Chuck Levithan Gallery, New York |
| 1993 | 101 Drawings, The Luz Gallery |
| 1995 | Bencab's Rock Session, Pastel Drawings, Art Centre, Manila |
| 1997 | Images of the Cordillera, Xerox Art, Metropolitan Museum of Manila |
| 1998 | Larawan III : The Filipina Ca. 1898, Paintings at The Luz Gallery |
| 2001 | Larawan - Portraits from the past, Paintings, Plum Blossom Gallery,
Singapore
Recent Works, Paintings on handmade paper, Village Gallery at
Tam-awan, Baguio City |
| 2002 | Homage to Sabel, Paintings, The Luz Gallery |

Selected Group Exhibitions

- | | |
|------|--|
| 1965 | Aviado, Bencab & Galang, Art Association of the Philippines (AAP)
Gallery, Manila |
| 1968 | Young Artists 1968, The Luz Gallery
Tokyo Biennale |
| 1969 | VI Paris Biennale |
| 1979 | Summer Show, Redfern Gallery, London |
| 1980 | Exhibition of Contemporary Art |
| 1981 | Six Artistes Contemporains Philippines en Europe, Academie
Diplomatique Internationale, Paris |
| 1982 | Five Filipino Artists, The Wraxall Gallery, London |
| 1986 | Artists For Peace, Museum of Philippine Art |
| 1987 | Philippine Printmakers Show, University of Alberta, Edmonton,
Canada (Travelling Exhibition, Canadian Cities) |
| 1989 | Lukisan Pilipina, Cabrera-Zaballero, National Museum, Jakarta
1st Baguio Arts Festival, Baguio City |

- 1991 Il Sud Del Mondo, l'Altra Arte Contemporanea, The Third World & Beyond :
An International Confrontation of Contemporary Artists, Museum of Italy,
Masala, Italy
- 1992 7th Asian International Art Exhibition, Merdeka Building, Bandung, Indonesia
- 1993 Art Philippines : A Celebration, Empress Place Museum, Singapore
8th Asian International Art Exhibition, Fukuoka Museum, Japan
- 1994 9th Asian International Art Exhibition, National Museum of History, Taipei, Taiwan
- 1995 Asian Modernism : Diverse Development in Indonesia, The Philippines &
Thailand, Tokyo, Manila, Bangkok, Jakarta
10th Asian International Art Exhibition, National Art Museum of Singapore
- 1996 Modernity & Beyond, Singapore Art Museum
11th Asian International Art Exhibition, Metropolitan Museum of Manila
- 1997 2nd Taegu-Asian Arts exhibition, Cultural Centre Taegu, Korea
12th Asian International Art Exhibition, Centro de Actividades Turisticas, Macao
- 1998 Collaborative Event : Urbanization, Six Southeast Asian Artists, Bandung,
Indonesia
Alab Ng Puso, Metropolitan Museum of Manila
13th Asian International Art Exhibition, National Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur,
Malaysia
- 1999 14th Asian International Art Exhibition, Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, Japan
- 2000 Guhit, Philippine Drawing Society Exhibition, Jarge B Vargas Museum &
Avala Museum, Manila
- 2001 Collages, Aviado-Bencab-Malang, The Luz Gallery
16th Asian International Art Exhibition, Guangdong Museum of Art,
Guangzhou, China
- 2002 Eros Pinoy, Art Centre, Manila

Awards & Distinctions

- 1962 Second Prize, Painting, Shell National Student Art Competition
- 1963 First Prize, Painting, University of Philippines Student Council Art Competition
- 1967 First & Second Prize, Photography, 20th Art Association of the Philippines (AAP)
Annual Exhibition and Competition
- 1969 Philippine Representative, VI Paris Biennale
- 1970 Thirteen Artists Award, Cultural Centre of the Philippines
- 1988 Kalinangan (Cultural) Award for Painting, City of Manila
- 1991 President, Baguio Arts Guild
- 1992 Gawad CCP Para Sa Sining (CCP Awards for the Arts) for Visual Arts,
Cultural Centre of the Philippines
- 1994 Most Outstanding Kapampangan for Arts & Crafts (Painting) Award, given by
President Ramos on Pampangan Day
- 1993 Chairman, 4th Baguio Arts Festival
- 1997 ASEAN Achievement Award, Visual & Performing Arts, 5th ASEAN Achievement
Awards, ASEAN Business Forum, Jakarta
Outstanding Citizen of Baguio Award for Arts, given by the mayor of Baguio on
the city's 88th Foundation Day

Neal Oshima

Born 1951, New York City. Lives in Manila, the Philippines

Education and Related Studies

- | | |
|---------|--|
| 1994 | Platinum printing apprenticeship with D.M. Kennedy, Santa Fe, New Mexico |
| 1993 | Aspiring Design Conference, Parson's, New York |
| 1976 | University of California, San Francisco, M.F.A. Photography |
| 1975 | Graduate Photography Seminar, UCLA |
| 1974 | Ansel Adams workshop in Yosemite, California |
| 1973 | University of Hawaii, B.S. Anthropology |
| 1972-73 | University of the Philippines, extensive travel in Europe and Asia |
| 1969-70 | Architecture, Wesleyan University |

Selected Solo Exhibitions

- | | |
|------|--|
| 1999 | "Neal Oshima: PHOTOGRAMS," Sepia International Inc. and the Alkazi Collection of Photography, New York |
| 1998 | "Mindanao," Budjiwara, Makati City |
| 1997 | "Philippine Ancestral Houses," Metropolitan Museum of Manila |
| 1995 | "Sari-Sari," Ayala Museum, Makati City |

Group Exhibitions

- | | |
|------|---|
| 1999 | "Personal Visions: A Survey of Contemporary Photography," Ayala Museum, Makati City Collections: The Cultural Center of the Philippines, Manila The National Commission of Culture and the Arts, Manila Private Collections |
|------|---|

Celia Molano

Education and Related Studies

Philippine Women's University, Manila, Philippines

Workshops at the University of the Philippines, Quezon City, Philippines

Lessons with noted painters

Kumaril Swami, School of Shanti Niketan, New Delhi, India

Roelijati Suwarjono, Jakarta, Indonesia

Selected Solo Exhibitions

Painting

1986 Embassy of the Philippines, Jakarta, Indonesia

1986 Hotel Sari Pacific, Jakarta, Indonesia

Jewelry

1987 Liz Gallery, Makati, Philippines

1987 Mandarin Oriental Hotel, Jakarta, Indonesia

1988 University of Delaware, Delaware, USA

1990 The University of the Philippines, Vargas Museum and
Filipiniana Research Center, Philippines

1990 Ayala Museum, Makati, Philippines

1991 Mariposa Gallery, Quezon City, Philippines

1992 Manila Hotel, Manila, Philippines

1993 Manila Hotel Gallery, Manila, Philippines

1994 Rustan's Silver Vault, Makati, Philippines

1995 Metropolitan Museum of Manila, Philippines

1995 Museo de Tarlac, Tarlac, Philippines

1997 Beverly Hills Hilton, Los Angeles, USA

1997 Philippine Consulate General, Chicago, USA

1998 Bowers Museum of Cultural Arts, Santa Ana, CA, USA

1998 Metropolitan Museum of Manila, Manila, Philippines

2000 The Negros Museum, Negros Occidental, Philippines

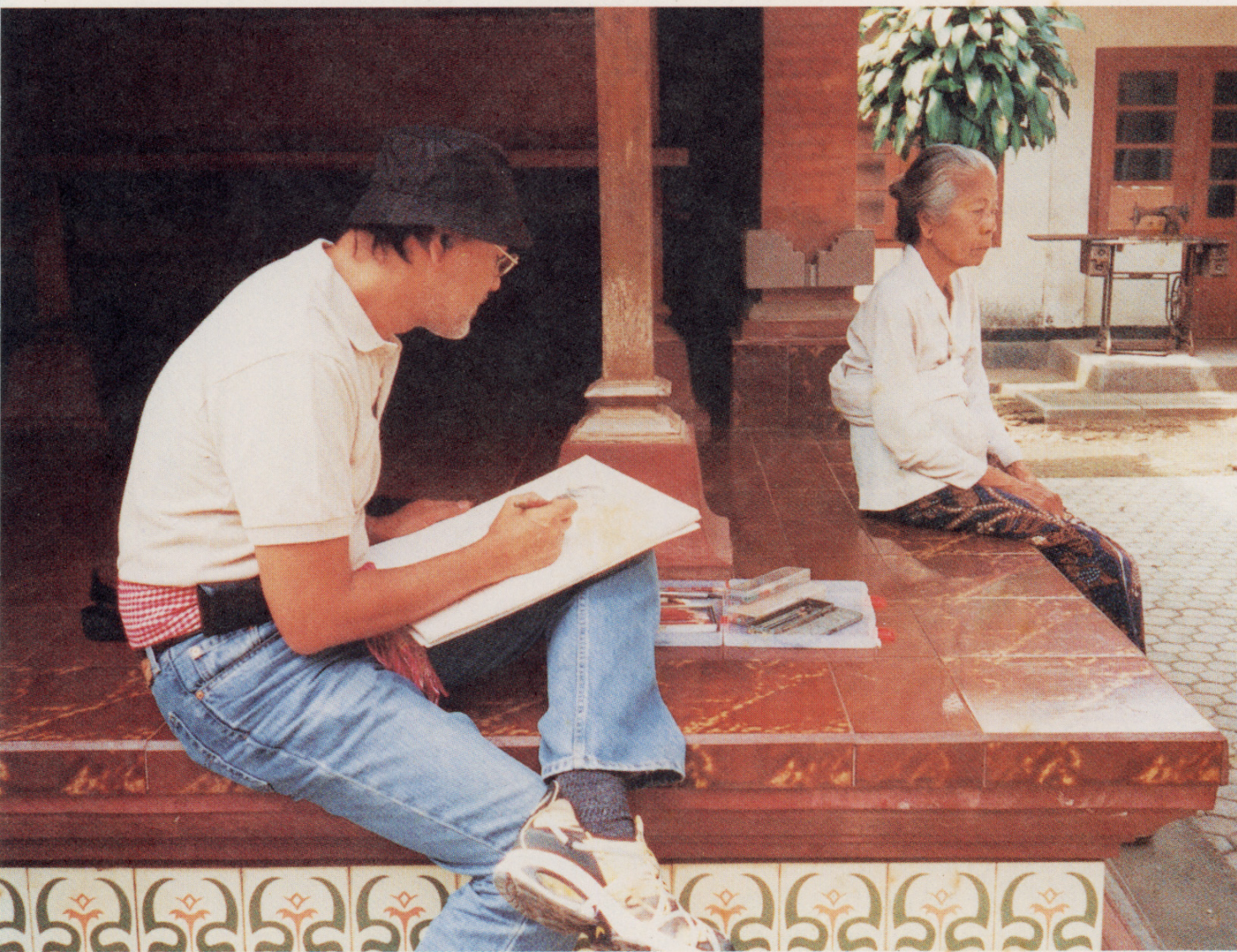
2001 Rockwell House, Sydney, Australia

2001 St Patrick's Sesquicentennial Celebration, San Francisco, CA, USA

2001 Orogemma, Vicenza Oro, Vicenza, Italy

2001 Luz Gallery, Makati, Philippines

2002 The Legian, Bali, Indonesia



cover:
Bencab
Mangku Ketut Kanten
2001
Pastel on paper
42 x 30 cm

Southeast Asian Paintings & Works of Art

Valentine Willie Fine Art Bali
Desa Melinggih Kelod
Payangan, Gianyar
80572 Bali, Indonesia
tel : 62 (0)81-2360 7011
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Bencab in Ubud: Works on paper

7th May 2002 till 9 June 2002

The Chedi
Desa Melinggih Kelod
Payangan, Gianyar
80572 Bali, Indonesia
tel : 62 (0)361- 975 963
fax : 62 (0)361- 975 968

THE CHEDI

Opening Hours : 10am - 8pm, daily.

**Photograms by Neal Oshima and
jewelry by Celia Molano**

8th May 2002 till 9th June 2002

The Legian
Jalan Laksamana
Seminyak Beach
80361 Bali, Indonesia
tel : 62 (0)361- 730 622
fax : 62 (0)361- 730 623



Opening Hours : 10am - 8pm, daily.