



ENCOUNTERS WITH BALI: *a collector's journey*

**Indonesian Textiles from the collection of
Dr John Yu AC and Dr George Soutter AM**

3 May – 13 July 2014

Curated by Dr Siobhan Campbell

Mosman Art Gallery has much pleasure in presenting the unique textile exhibition - **ENCOUNTERS WITH BALI: *a collector's journey*** - selected works from one of the richest private collections of Indonesian textiles in Australia.

Drawn from the collection of Dr John Yu AC and the late Dr George Soutter AM – **Encounters with Bali** offers many spectacular Indonesian textiles never before publicly exhibited.

The exhibition examines the fundamental role textiles played in Indonesian local culture and celebrates connoisseurship and the role of the collector.

Textiles are a guide to Indonesian culture. They are said to be Indonesia's most significant form of artistic expression - in items of everyday, ritual and ceremony.

Traditional textiles have played integral parts in the social, spiritual, and economic lives of the peoples of Indonesia for more than 2,000 years. Created using time-honoured techniques, their rich designs display complex motifs associated with ancestors, fertility, trade, social status and wealth.

John Yu and George Soutter's collection started in the late 1970s when a blue cloth from the island of Savu in Eastern Indonesia caught John Yu's attention in a Sydney gallery. The research and fascination with Indonesian textiles began, igniting a 30 year period of travelling to the country.

Bali provided a gateway to the rest of the archipelago, both as the hub for sales of cloths from the eastern islands, and because of the rich diversity of Balinese fabric traditions. Yu and Soutter took annual holidays to the Island visiting antique and art shops, in places like Ubud, Kuta, Sanur, Denpasar and Klungkung. They were engaging with the art and culture of the Balinese people, guided by their both own research and enthusiasm and others specialist knowledge, developing a deepening appreciation for the sophistication of the different Indonesian textile traditions.

The works in this carefully considered collection - featuring both Ikat and Batik cloths - highlight regional aspects of textile production from Bali and across Indonesia. Some of the pieces are very old and rare, while others, fresh from the looms. Many cloths date back to 200 years, having survived the tropical climate conditions, which makes them all the more scarce.

This exhibition provides both insight into the tastes of two individuals, and a much wider picture of the splendours of Indonesia's arts. Assembling this collection for over thirty years has been a personal journey for John Yu & George Soutter, however their vision for the collection was not for it to hide away for personal enjoyment but be something to be shared.

Dr John Yu's willingness to open the collection and share his passion and enthusiasm of Indonesian textiles for Sydney audiences makes these splendid works now accessible to all members of the public, students and textile enthusiasts. He hopes to enthuse others with a passion for exploring the art traditions of our Asia Pacific neighbours.

A major undertaking for Mosman Art Gallery, **Encounters with Bali: a collector's journey** has been developed with the assistance of curator Dr Siobhan Campbell, a specialist in the field of Indonesian art and textiles.

An extensive Exhibition Catalogue has been published which features updated research on the collection, looking at the region, cultural group, medium, technique and subject for the selected works.

This project reinforces Mosman Art Gallery's commitment to enhancing public access and awareness of private collections and aims to project positive images of Australia and Indonesia in each other's country.

On exhibition: textile cloths, objects and selection of etchings by George Soutter.

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EDITORS NOTE:

DR. JOHN YU AC

Dr. John Yu is a paediatrician who together with his late partner Dr. George Soutter, has had a life long interest in the arts. His career in medicine spanned over forty years. Prior to his retirement in 1998, he was the Chief Executive of the Children's Hospital at Camperdown, and later at Westmead, for over 20 years.

His mother's family came to the goldfields of Victoria in 1867 but when she married, she returned to China where John was born in Nanking. The family escaped from Nanking when the Japanese invaded that city in 1937 and returned to Sydney.

Dr. Yu has been and remains active in many community organisations. He was the Deputy President of the Board of Trustees of the Art Gallery of NSW, the Chair of VisAsia at the AGNSW and served on the Boards of the Powerhouse Museum, Penrith Regional Gallery and the national board of Musica Viva. He has served on the Boards of St Vincent's Hospital in Sydney, the Starlight Children's Foundation and the Malcolm Sargent Cancer Fund.

He was the Chancellor of the University of NSW from 2000-2005, the Deputy Chancellor of the University of Western Sydney, the Chair of the Australia China Council of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Inaugural Chair of the NSW Commission for Children and Young People Advisory Board and a member of the National Australia Day Council.

Dr. Yu was appointed a member of the Order of Australia in 1989 and made a Companion of the Order in 2001. He was awarded the Centenary Medal and in 1996 was named Australian of the Year.

DR. SIOBHAN CAMPBELL

Dr. Siobhan Campbell has developed specialist knowledge of the art and culture of Indonesia and Bali over many years of intense and sustained engagement with this region. In 2013 she gained her doctorate through the Department of Indonesian Studies at the University of Sydney, supervised by Professor Adrian Vickers.

During her research Siobhan was closely associated with the Australian Museum, which houses one of the most significant collections of Balinese paintings from the village of Kamasan – the 'Forge' Collection. This collection was an integral part of her research, which has contributed to an enhancement of knowledge regarding the museum collection and its archival documentation, as well as making a strong contribution to the academic discourse around Indonesian material culture.

In 2013 Siobhan was awarded a six-month fellowship to conduct further research on the collections of Balinese art and textiles at the International Institute for Asian Studies in Leiden, the Netherlands. Siobhan is also a NAATI accredited translator of the Indonesian language.

