



## The Inspiration Lake Batur Bali In Painting Practice

**I Wayan Karja**

Institut Seni Indonesia Denpasar, Bali

---

### ARTICLE INFO

Published Online:  
04 March 2023

Corresponding Author:

**I Wayan Karja**

### ABSTRACT

This article aims to inspire, an open space for imagination, stimulation, and appreciation of nature. The Balinese people worshiped nature every day, it becomes part of the daily practice to maintain and preserve natural resources. Painting by Lake Batur has therapeutic effects. The concept behind it is a fusion between theory and practice, the inner and outer world, and remained the author, we are nature. Lake Batur supplied all the living things surrounding the area, it inspired the author to paint. The creation method is carried out in the following stages: 1) Mental preparations; 2) sketches; 3) playing the visual elements; 4) appreciation of the visual experience; 5) aesthetic responses; 6) therapeutic analysis; and 7) creative visualization. As a result, the author feels moved to perpetuate nature in painting with a creative expression to elevate the therapeutic aspects of nature.

**KEYWORDS:** inspiration, painting, Lake Batur, Bali.

---

### INTRODUCTION

Divine nature is medicine, and the practice of painting is one of the modalities of art healing therapy. The island of Bali is known as the Island of the Gods, the island of a thousand temples, and the morning of the world. It is a Lake Batur, can be understood that there are so many places of worship in Bali, not only in nature that is wide open, but almost every Balinese Hindu house has a place to worship God in the form of small altars. Places to worship ancestral spirits and the "Spirit of Nature" are found in many places. There are not only places of worship that are scattered in wide open nature, but also natural objects such as rocks, trees, the meeting place of the two rivers (confluence), crossroads, forests, rice fields, gardens, and almost the entire surface of the island of Bali there is nature worship. For the Balinese, nature is worshiped, celebrated, and nature is glorified in various forms of beliefs. Bali's nature is purified with various forms of ceremonies and offerings, from the smallest to the largest. The island was so beautiful and the people were so authentic and artistic that many international artists came to Bali to work in such an inspiring environment as they continue to do to this day (Peters, 2013).

Witnessing the practice of glorifying nature in Bali, the author was inspired to write and paint directly on the spot. The practice of seeing, contemplating, and clearing the self are steps to mastering the theory and the practice of painting. This process is inspired by a German-born American psychoanalyst and social philosopher Erich Fromm, he

pointed out that "I shall become a master in this art only after a great deal of practice until eventually the results of my theoretical knowledge and the results of my practice are blended into one — my intuition, the essence of the mastery of any art (<https://www.goodreads.com>). I shall become a master in this art only after a great deal of practice" (Cameron, 1995).

One of the sacred spaces used as an object on the edge of Lake Batur. The lake gives the impression of something vast without limits. The green color of the lake water gives coolness, and something very deep and peaceful. In chakra colors, green is located in the heart and is a symbol of peace and love. We are inseparable from nature, our minds, bodies, and our lives depend on the air we breathe and the food we eat. Nature gives us abundant resources, what would we do without nature or the earth? It is the object of this painting because it does not only have an aesthetic aspect and therapeutic vibration. The concept of balance between nature, humans, and God is a very important concept for maintaining a balanced life and a reflection of harmony. This concept is continuously maintained and developed so that its implementation can be maximized and perfected in life. Environmental awareness is ideally closely tied to people's beliefs. This discourse is to remind us that nature, art, and spirituality as a whole must be contemplated as inspirational forces in art and life. In the view of the author, nature is a vast playground that must be preserved and used to build and develop our true nature. It is a place of living and exploring

## “The Inspiration Lake Batur Bali In Painting Practice”

the beauty and the spirit of nature. The painting practice is activated by the author's desire to visualize and deepen the essence of nature. Through theory and practice, writing, and painting, the author would like to share the aesthetic experience with others. The question arose, why does painting in nature has a therapeutic effect? How to capture the essence of nature? What are the implications of it?

### METHOD OF CREATION

This method of creation considers art-based research, and qualitative research with a phenomenological approach, emphasizing the aspects of play, flow, and freedom in art practice. Inspired by a theory by Paolo J. Knill the author of *Principles and Practice of Expressive Arts Therapy: Toward a Therapeutic Aesthetics* (2004). This method is carried out by the creation process as follows: 1) Preparation, observation, and development of imagination; 2) Sketches and use of tools and materials for experimental practice; 3) Playing visual elements, processing, visualization, and execution; 4) Appreciation of creation based on the phenomenon of visual experience; 5) Aesthetic response; 6) Therapeutic analysis based on inner experience; 7) Creative visualization and finished. After carrying out this process, the author's experience, artwork, and article are shared with others. The other possibilities are used for the material of the workshop, where the participants return to themselves with their personal experience in painting practices.

### DISCUSSION

When nature and culture intertwined with aesthetics, they meet in the creation and development of art, religion, and spirituality can enhance the values of inner life and elevate human dignity. Nature has a very significant effect in playing an important role in building human capacities. Incredible mysterious discoveries layered in observation and study of nature. Knowledge of the self and nature results from the interplay of a curious quality that seeks previously unknown possibilities. As a container with the awareness that opens the way to appreciate, explore, and understand the existence of nature. Ideas, intelligence, and emotions are closely related to

each other as a natural network. The highest level of consciousness can be said to be a form of natural wonder. "We" are nature, so nature communicates in circulation on a very large and profound level with itself.

Painting in nature has therapeutic effects. Bali's nature and the philosophical concept behind it are a fusion between theory and practice, the inner and outer world, and macro-microcosmos, practically we can view on daily activities of the Balinese worshipping God. To be one with nature is the main practice both in art and life. The cosmology concept (Karja, 2020) play important role in Balinese art and culture development, and nature is the concept of balancing and harmonizing. The three causes of prosperity, are the balance of human beings, nature, and God (Peters, 2013). Nature and humans become one unit in forming the physical and non-physical worlds, what appears to be objects and what is invisible are in the form of ideas or intangibles. In Bali, in the process of respecting the universe, humans build their civilization by using various forms of visual symbols that exist in the heavens on earth. Offerings are part of the daily symbolic meaning to honor and respect nature. Imagination and environmental awareness are built so that ecologically balanced is always alive around us. We are part of the universe, everything that exists is included in one unified environment. The three parts of the body namely the head, body, and feet, often associated with the low, middle, and high, are a natural structure related to the size of the human body. Awareness of the top of the mountain as the head or highest place, the lowlands as the settlement provider, and the sea as the downstream. To honor the four major directions, east-west, and north-south also considers balancing the cosmic energy. The five elements, earth, water, fire, wind, and ether are the major lesson to learn to balance the cosmos. The six conceptions are very relevant as a philosophical basis: 1) an effort to preserve the God within, self; 2) which is an effort to overcome the ocean of sources nature which is very complex in human life; 3) which is an effort to save forests to preserve forests abstractly; 4) an effort to preserve water sources, lake; 5) efforts to maintain harmony in dynamic social life; and 6) to build individual human qualities.



**Photo No.1** Lake Batur in the morning. **Photo No.2** Mount Agung in the afternoon. (Source: photo: Karja, 2022).

## “The Inspiration Lake Batur Bali In Painting Practice”

Mount Batur is one of the active volcanoes in Bali, its height is 1717 meters above sea level, with beautiful views. Even though it is about 1 hour from the author's studio, often visits Batur, because usually comes to Batur only to pray at Batur Temple. At one point, after quite a long time just staying at home, the author went out with a canvas and happened to stop at one of the small stalls to see the view of Mount Batur. After sitting occasionally, feeling amazed by the vast space and the existence of such a dazzling mountain, it is a great space. As John Updike pointed out, ‘art offers space a certain breathing room for the spirit’ (Hennessy, 2012). This phenomenon of space spontaneously wanted to paint to capture the atmosphere of the mountain and to calm the mind because the mountain feels solid and silent, calm, cool, and peaceful. The author observed the mountain with deep breaths, nature, and the contents in it are indeed extraordinary. There is an internal stimulus to capture and visually freeze the impression of a large and still space. Visually, when observing mountain objects realistically, it is difficult to visualize them, especially in capturing the atmosphere and light because the weather changes so quickly, from sunny to cloudy, overcast, and even drizzling. Such a drastic change in weather is my challenge to paint as fast as possible, brush strokes become fierce.

The process that the author does is mostly based on the impressions of the outside world, which of course cannot be separated from the influence of inner feeling, improvisation, and compositional considerations. All of the above sections greatly determine the author's creative process which is called the practice of therapeutic painting. The following is the process of practicing painting that the author uses the seven main stages:

1) Preparation, observation, and development of imagination. As a Balinese artist, the author can increase appreciation of nature and raise awareness of creativity, as well as increase sensitivity and aesthetic experience. The practice of painting in nature provides many lessons about the complex aesthetics of nature, lots of power, can be drawn into its beauty, aesthetic, and energy. To paint in nature need not only

material preparation but also much more inner preparation. Mental preparation is a need and a must. Natural light and atmosphere are a challenge in applying color and capturing the light reflected from the displayed object. Painting quickly is a test that should be honed to improve skills and increase observation. Observation is a visual, process of how to see, and mentally a meditative process. American photographer Annie Leibovitz mentioned, “Nature is so powerful, so strong. Capturing its essence is not easy- your work becomes a dance with light and the weather. It takes you to a place within yourself” (Hennessy, 2012).

2) Sketch and use tools and materials. The author is interested in painting nature, not only because nature is beautiful and vast, but also because nature has a spiritual power that is believed to be something of the inner creativity of the Balinese. Nature is also celebrated with ceremonies to invoke the safety and balance of the universe. We are all part of nature and we are nature, all our bodies, minds, and consciousnesses are part of the vast universe. All ideas, intelligence, creativity, and emotion, are simply natural forms of consciousness, which affirm that nature is "us". Because "we" in this case are interconnected with the infinite network of universes. The circulation of dialogue between nature and its contents is a form of circular communication and is interrelated with one another, both internally and externally, like the realm of its own shadow. The power of nature which is beautiful gives a very significant influence on the aesthetic thinking and exploration of artists, especially as an inspiration for the creation of works of art. The early chronology of art history explains that the process of creation places contemplation, incubation, and aesthetic experience as very significant stages of creativity in contact with reason. Natural elements such as clear water, flowers, mountains, and space are elements that often appear as subject matter in paintings. There are similarities with the five elements, namely water, fire, earth, air, and space. The cosmological element becomes part of the philosophy and creativity of art. The aspects of creation author start with the sketch, kind of a note for further development.



**Photo No. 3** Sketch of Mount Batur. **Photo No. 4** Sketch of Mount Batur. **Photo No. 5** Sketch of Lake Batur with the temple.

3) Playing, processing, and using visual elements. As an abstract painter who often paints indoors, painting nature is both a challenge and an opportunity. On the one hand, there are many elements of art, including lines, shapes, textures, colors, composition, and proportions that must be considered. Realizing the subjective version of nature and certainly not imitating nature as the eye sees it. Many distortions here and there, mainly caused by limitations in understanding the shape, and some parts do not need to be detailed. The above expression is also in line with the idea of a balance between nature, humans, and God for a harmonious life. Contemplation based on imagination and inspiration from natural elements helps develop artistic creativity. Nature is mysterious, and the most beautiful thing we can experience is the mystery of the mysterious, so play with nature, a big space, and an open arena. The author play acts like an actor in an open space, the arena of nature. Nature as a source of inspiration for art and science brings human consciousness to an abstract level. To capture the essence of nature, from concrete to abstract or in another way, painting practice is a therapeutic process. As a creator and the author places this position as a link between the two worlds, physical and mental, material and spiritual. Likewise, color is part of the elements of painting, color is a bridge between what we see and what is not seen. This bridging process is referred to as the visualization process from what appears to be invisible, or vice versa, from what is invisible to being visible. Paul Klee, a Swiss *artist*, ‘Art does not reproduce the visible but makes visible (Karja, 2020).

4) Appreciation of creation based on the phenomenon of visual experience. Slow down and appreciation is a need. Making details and accents that are strong but exist at a distance is a challenge in itself to hone the skills of seeing, doing, and observing. Nature is the entry point for developing imagination, inspiration, contemplation, aesthetic experience, art, and spirituality. Contemplation of nature can increase cosmological understanding and awareness. Balinese nature is also depicted symbolically, most religious symbols are open to the use of representations of nature created by artists as personal interpretations. The goal is to deepen understanding of life through reference to the invisible, abstract world. Therefore, the development of nature-inspired painting using various forms and expressions gave birth to works of art that are naturalist, impressionist, expressionist, symbolic abstract, and spiritualist abstract. Nature opens a space for imagination, something that is very valuable for us, especially in spying on the universe, and far beyond what we realize. Invisibly, nature is working all the time to carry out the natural processes of life. Appreciation both for nature and the art practice is a precious thing. English art critic, philosopher, and author John Ruskin pointed out, "nature paints for us, day after day, giving infinite beauty."

5) Aesthetic response. In recent developments, the discussion of aesthetics is no longer a very important topic in the world of art, especially in the development of academic discourse, aesthetics is increasingly being neglected. The context for the creation of this therapeutic painting is the context of psychology, art, and aesthetics that resides in the mind, the soul that creates it. For this reason, the author considers that aesthetic responses with various considerations of related artistic elements are an important part of painting practice in this therapy. Beyond that, the aesthetic insights of academic art and therapy become part of the needs of human life, part of an inner expression that can refresh and awaken the creativity of a living soul. Art is related to feelings, aesthetics is a feeling that penetrates the soul. Art and aesthetics are an important part of emotion, the basic emotions that can change human life on many levels, physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. The nature and formal elements of line, plane, shape, color, and texture with consideration of composition, proportion, balance, focus, light, and perspective, are an important part of natural painting. Considering aesthetic elements is part of this process, as considering interpretation, opening imagination, establishing stillness, and finding the sanctity of the soul.

6) Therapeutic analysis based on inner experience; painting in this case is not only related to the physical or material world but rather formed of images in the inner world. In Balinese terms, it can be seen as a physical-mental being, tangible, and intangible nature. Although art draws from natural sources for inspiration, deep contemplation can touch the deepest feeling and thinking, and go to the soul. Contemplating clean water, silence is generally a thought focused on drinking water and health. However, in a healthy mind, imagining clear, calm, peaceful water is material for self-reflection which becomes a torch for the silence of the soul. Clear and still, water affects the mind, and moves, surging water also has a psychological effect, and smelly dirty water will also shake the mind. Water as one of the natural elements is associated with various symbols and mythologies. Calm and clear thinking in the process of creating works of art also finds depth, clarity of concepts, and high-quality values. Nature as subject matter for painting explores the deeper meaning and wider perspective by composing the line, shape, color, and texture. One artistic contemplation purifies the mind and spirit and is a purely aesthetic activity it is healing.

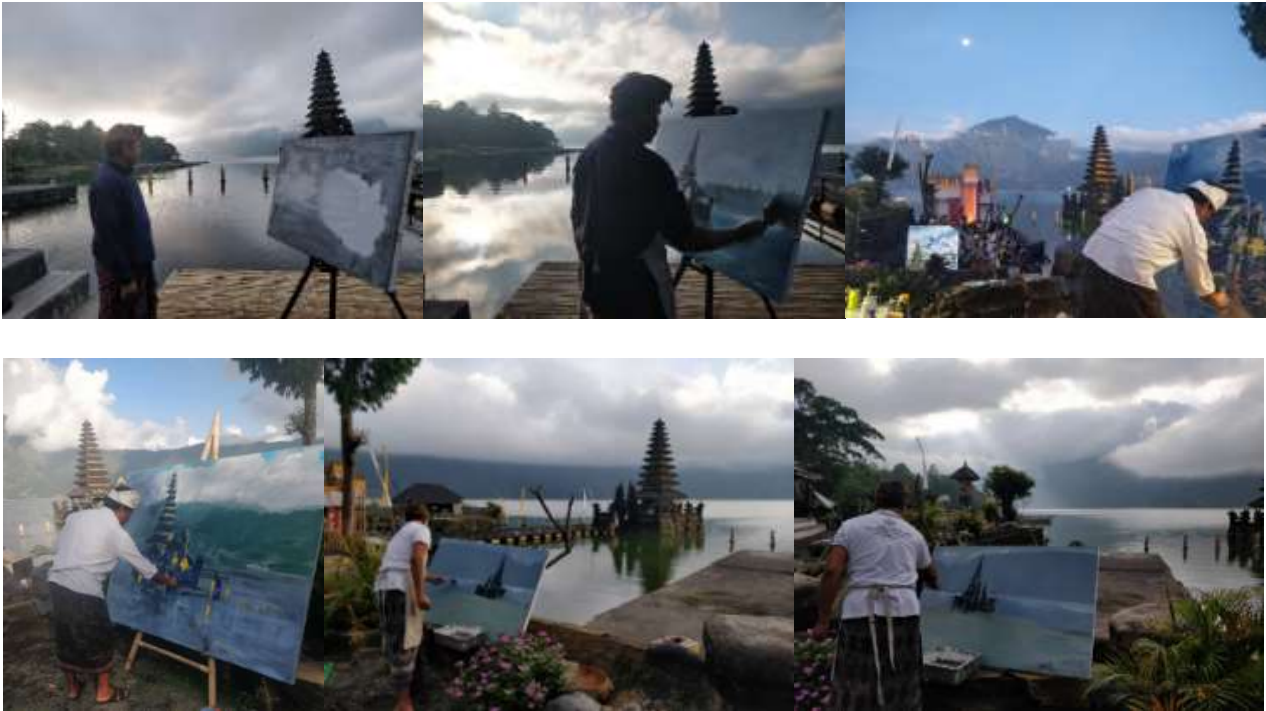
7) Creative visualization; this process is complemented by inspirational visualization as explained by Sakti Gawain, the four basic steps for effective creative visualization, 1) set your goal; make a clear idea or picture; 3) often focus on it, and 4) provide positive energy (Gawain, 2002: 22-23). The Lake Batur in the Balinese is based on imagination the symbols of balance and harmony between the universe,



## “The Inspiration Lake Batur Bali In Painting Practice”

humans, and nature. Visualization is in tune with the vibration of beauty and harmony. Over time, the direction of the cosmic symbol, *Pangider Bhuwana* has been used as a chart of Balinese cosmology (Karja, 2020). Originally this color mandala took the east direction as the beginning, the sun rises. Because at the beginning of human civilization, the majority of the world's tribes honored the Sun God. The sun rises as a sign of the beginning of life, east, so the rotation of

nature as a symbol is clockwise for positive energy. The moving energy and rotation of the color to the right will form a swastika, a symbol of rotation in Balinese cosmology. It is therapeutic, positive energy, a fusion of macro-microcosmos that creates harmony and is useful to consider in painting practice, the painting process, and the art itself is healing. “Do your practice and all is coming.” (Sri K. Pattabhi Jois).



**Photo No. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11.** Working in the progress of painting practice at the courtyard of Lake Batur Temple.

After the process, as the implication the author wrote the artist's statement to verbalize the process of painting practice as follows: “The light flashed on the edge of Lake Batur, in the courtyard of Pura Segara. Nature depicts the universe of the gods with the splendor of the most beautiful colors radiating brilliantly. In the distance, the smoke of the mist moves gently higher and higher as if moving away from the earth, closer to the realm of the gods. Watching all that is born from imagination, contemplation, and fantasy. The shape of Meru is curved towards the sky, as a woven relationship between water, motherland, and one with space in a great energy-guarding unit. The breeze of the evening wind spreads the beauty that emanates from the sparkle of the colorful transformation of the dynamic motion of the shadows of the water lake. All blend like the traditional spirit of nature that entertains. The atmosphere of the divine nature is meditative, but I wake up and dissolve in the soft movement of lines and colors, the painting of the atmosphere, the rhythm of building shapes, witnessing the full moon, and thank God for the grace of Hyang Maha Dewi, got goosebumps, imagining the visual nature of the gods, the spirit of the universe penetrated the feeling. The frozen feeling of meditating, being silent,

eternally breathing on canvas.” Shaun McNiff (1992) pointed out, art as medicine demonstrates how the imagination heals and renews itself through this natural process.

Furthermore, Dr. Vijoleta Braach-maksvytis an internationally accredited senior registered yoga teacher, yoga therapist, Ph.D. in Biophysics, research scientist career, and Clinical Neuropsychologist, and art lover commented that “Divine Realm and Karja’s paintings. Sipping the shades of sunset red, he stretches the colors into a canvas horizon, a backdrop to the glistening of lights plucked from reflected leaves and shiny puddles, from damp-earth darkness and sun-spun seas. Sometimes nature coaxes the unexpected from him. A single steady stroke arises, or waves of water washes, or hidden hollowed layers, all merging from the colors he carries within himself; colors wrapped around a lifetime of offerings and *Nawa Sanga*, flowers and compass directions which breathe their air and light and divinity, seen and unseen. And amongst this, as the confines of expectations begin to shed, he shapes and shades the merging of the volcano-lake-sky trio onto the canvas, and yellow-green flecks that breathe the heat of newly harvested rice fields, and

## “The Inspiration Lake Batur Bali In Painting Practice”

the dappled light- breath caught in white-flowering branches cooling the glimpse of a sparkling creek disappearing into shadows. Nature in Bali palpates the soul and draws your thoughts into ephemeral wafts of the divine or roaring chasms

of chaos. Touch this in his canvas, where you can fall into the night with all its sounds and secrets, and then leap, simultaneously, into the outer and inner universe of one’s being.” (Braach-maksvytis, 2022).



**Photos No. 12.** Lake Batur Temple in the morning. **Photo No. 13.** Lake Batur Temple in the evening. **Photo No. 14.** Mount Batur in the afternoon. **Photo No. 15.** Mount Batur eruption.

Likewise, intangible things, but energy and spirit have interrelated power and strength in managing life in a polarized world. In Bali, natural forces as part of the relationship between human consciousness in worshiping the universe give birth to symbols. Respect for offerings is a belief in the welfare of the natural environment in Bali. Cosmological awareness fosters a belief in the forces of nature, humans are a very small part of the cosmos, and planet Earth is a very small part of the great dynamics of the macrocosmic universe. The author being deeper conscious lives in nature learns from nature and loves nature. Also. Learn from the great master Vincent Van Gogh's quote in terms of nature, ‘keep your love of nature, for that is the true way to understand art more and more’ (Hennessy, 2012).

### CONCLUSION

Nature is visually very beautiful. Beauty can lead the author to enter into the soul, the deepest conscience, to solve life's problems, The way to get out is to go within to the Self. Painting in nature has a therapeutic effect, the practice of painting nature creatively is a tremendous way of dealing with stress and tuning in to help self. The view and open space at mount Batur and the lake are healing and open imagination.

The author captures nature in form of painting practice both based on outer perspective and inner development. The fusion of the two is useful to develop theory and practice, and the outer guide the inner to develop the open imagination in the aesthetic realm. The process of making it is enjoyable, so the process is also as important as the final result. The implication is fulfilling the inner need, energizing, empowering, and opening a new way of seeing both the inner perspective and the outer. This aesthetic experience is healing to the author and hopes through the result of painting and/or practice with a small group of people will experience the same with others. To close this article the author quotes John Muir, “in every walk with nature one receives far more than he seeks.”

### REFERENCES

1. Cameron, Julia. (1995). *The Artist's Way: A Spiritual Path to Higher Creativity*.
2. Gawain, Sakti. (2002). *Creative Visualization*. California: Nataraj Publishing.
3. Hennessy, Alena. (2012). *Cultivating Your Creative Life*. Beverly, Massachusetts: Quarry Books.

4. Karja, I Wayan. (2020). *Kosmologi Bali: Visualisasi Warna Pangider Bhuwana dalam Seni Lukis Kontemporer*. Denpasar: UNHI Press, 2020.
5. Karja, I Wayan. (2022). “Color Healing the Balinese Mandala Color in Painting Practice.” *International Journal of Social Science And Human Research*. Volume 05 Issue 05 May 2022.
6. Knill, Paolo J., Ellen G. Levine, and Stephen K. Levine, (2005). *Principles and Practice of Expressive Arts Healing*, London and Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
7. McNiff, Shaun. (1992). *Art As Medicine: Creating a Therapy of the Imagination*. Shambhala Publications.
8. Peters, Jan Hendrik, and Wisnu Wardana. (2013). *Tri Hita Karana: The Spirit of Bali*. Jakarta: Kepustakaan Populer Gramedia.
9. Vijoleta Braach-maksvytis. (2022). “Divine Realm and Karja’s Painting.” Sydney: an unpublished commentary.