

## Bali's Ethnic Arts Industry: Crafting Global Identities Amidst a National Tourist Agenda

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Résumé de l'article

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### Résumé

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### Abstract

*This article is based on fieldwork in Tegallalang, a village in Bali, Indonesia, that mass produces and exports Native American dream catchers, Australian Aboriginal didgeridoo, African masks and other "ethnic" objects for the global marketplace. For most of the 20th century and beyond, Dutch colonials and Indonesian nationalists have urged the Balinese to stage cultural production, performance and a particular view of "authenticity" as a means of advancing specific colonial/national agendas. Bali has often been used as an example of a "last paradise" where tradition must be preserved while the rest of the Indonesian state modernizes its political and economic agendas. This article explores Tegallalang's ethnic arts industry as a platform from which the Balinese have been able to counter the stereotypes of a province bound by unchanging aesthetic styles and cultural traditions. While Bali's cultural tourism industry continues to rely heavily upon notions of a Hindu culture unaffected by global processes and modernizing economies, the ethnic arts industry allows local producers to assert more complex, cosmopolitan identities for themselves.*

Prior to departing the United States for anthropological fieldwork in Indonesia, I asked several friends if there were any souvenirs I could bring back for them. I was to conduct ethnographic research on Bali's handicrafts industry, and the region where I would be living and working was well regarded for its handmade masks, wooden statues and shadow puppets. My friends did not specify any particular objects, but invariably requested that I bring back something "authentic," "used by locals" and, if at all possible, purchased from a local market rather than from a souvenir stall or hotel gift shop. After a month of becoming more acquainted with my field-site and noticing what items were popular among local consumers, I identified the perfect souvenir to bring back home: imitation Gucci watches. Needless to say, my friends were not impressed by this cheeky attempt to heed to their criteria.

As Indonesia's premier destination for cultural tourism, Bali has long been regarded as a "last paradise," where aesthetic traditions have endured despite Dutch colonialism, the struggle for independence, nationalization and, more recently, heavy participation in the global economy. Even prior to the formation of the modern Indonesian nation-state, Bali was portrayed to international audiences as a place where aesthetics and material culture are largely informed by ancient Hindu traditions; where every Balinese is guided by a unique cultural "ethos" and possesses innate artistic talents (Bateson 1970; Belo 1970; Covarrubias 1938; Powell 1930; Yates 1933). And although Bali has experienced much socio-political and cultural upheaval over the last century—from Dutch colonial rule; occupation by the Japanese in the Second World War; the massacre of approximately 80,000 Balinese suspected of Communist sympathies in 1965 and, more recently, terrorist bombings at tourist destinations in 2002 and 2005—the Balinese are continually portrayed as a people whose culture remains largely unaffected by such events. When asked to name her favourite travel destination, American fashion designer Donna Karan told *Travel + Leisure* magazine that Bali was her favourite place because: "For me, Bali doesn't change. ... Every place has gone global, but Bali has maintained itself, and that is beautiful" (Kirschbaum 2001: 32).

This article examines how one Balinese community confronts the myth of their culture as ahistoric and tradition-bound, through their participation in the commercial ethnic arts industry.<sup>1</sup> Ethnic arts—also referred to as primitive art,

tribal art or what was briefly called "fourth world arts" (Graburn 1976; Manuel and Poslums 1974; Whitaker 1972)—are often associated with material culture crafted by indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities "without the power to direct the course of their collective lives" (Graburn 1976: 1). Items such as pottery, textiles, woodcarvings, jewellery, musical instruments, etc., are often assumed to have been crafted by the cultural groups from which their aesthetics originate, and are deemed to be more "natural" and "authentic" because of their supposed use of indigenous materials and methods. Furthermore, ethnic art is often perceived as a genre of craft made by peoples from vanishing cultures amidst modernizing nation-state processes (Philips and Steiner 1999: 18-19).

Balinese crafters are no stranger to this popular narrative of the "vanishing paradise": While local craft production has led to a profitable export industry, it has also contributed to an aspect of the tourism and handicrafts sector that may perpetuate myopic views of culture as endangered and immune to change or otherwise "tainted" or degraded by globalization. The Balinese ethnic art and souvenir markets have been especially keen to maintain this narrative of authenticity, largely inspired by the discourse established by tourism. In his seminal work, *The Tourist*, Dean MacCannell (1999) notes that places and events in touristic sites are often portrayed not as they once were, but through a "staged authenticity" that conforms to consumer/tourist desires and fantasies. I would like to expand MacCannell's analysis of staged authenticity to include the handicrafts and ethnic arts markets, where commodities (and their modes of production) are commonly promoted as authentic, traditional and unchanged by modern industrial capitalism. From 2002 to 2003, I conducted ethnographic research in south-central Bali, among export handicrafts producers and vendors who strayed from these conventional types of promotions. By expressing a distaste for crafting Indonesian masks, Hindu statues and other items normally associated with Balinese crafts, an emerging community of handicrafts vendors are asserting a type of cosmopolitanism that signifies a knowledge of aesthetics and trends beyond the Indonesian nation-state.

Once famed for its Balinese-Hindu woodcarvings, the community of Tegallalang has profited from the mass-production and export of items such as Native American dream catchers (Fig. 1), Australian Aboriginal didgeridoos, African masks and other forms of ethnic art (Fig. 2). By participat-

ing in the cultural (re)production of material objects that do not comply with imageries that have long sustained the appetites of tourists, artists, adventure seekers and even anthropologists, I argue that the Balinese producers and distributors of ethnic art are reconfiguring a different type of historical and cultural narrative for themselves—one that acknowledges culture change and the affects of late global capitalism upon their everyday lives. Furthermore, their participation in this segment of the handicrafts industry allows the Balinese to challenge, or at least avoid, the narrow definitions of traditions and authenticity that has informed much of the tourism sector over the last century.

### Crafting National and Cultural Identities

Indonesia is home to the world’s largest population of Muslims, yet it is also one of the most linguistically, ethnically and culturally diverse countries in the world. Since independence from Dutch colonial rule in 1949, the Indonesian nation-state has made various efforts to enforce abbreviated, cohesive representations of its heterogeneous populace (Errington 1998). Guided by the national motto, *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity), the tourism and handicrafts sectors are examples of the more popular avenues used for underscoring national solidarity among a heterogeneous people. Tourist sites such as Taman Mini Indonesia Indah (TMII is a theme park of approximately one hundred hectares located outside of Jakarta) display minority cultures of Indonesia as peripheral, but peaceful members of the Indonesian state. A theme park that allows visitors to catch a glimpse of the archipelago in miniature form, TMII displays selected handicrafts, fashion and architecture of ethnic groups from each province. Exhibits are limited to displays of ethnic wedding attire, regional styles of architecture, musical instruments and dance performances (Errington 1998: 188-227). Whether walking through Taman Mini Indonesia Indah, or viewing dance performances such as the *Cecak* at a tourist venue in Bali, domestic and international tourists are encouraged to explore the diversity of Indonesia, so long as the political conflicts, ethnic violence and religious intolerance that exist in contemporary society (as well as the Java-centric cultural and political agenda of the nation) are deliberately kept under wraps.

Since the 1980s, anthropologists have made more concerted efforts to investigate the various

ways in which Indonesian national culture has been reshaped, reimagined and sometimes invented for public consumption. From national theme parks (Errington 1998), the manipulation and commodification of burial rituals in Tana Toraja (Adams 1997; Yamashita 1994), to “primitive” woodcarvings by the minority Toba Bataks in northern Sumatra (Causey 2003), contemporary ethnographies on

**Fig. 1**  
*Native American-style dreamcatchers.*



what Hobsbawm and Ranger call the “invention of tradition” have underscored the hegemonic processes by which those in power work to control historical narratives (1984). Adrien Vickers (1989) and Michel Picard (1996) have devoted significant portions of their research to critiquing the culture

**Fig. 2**  
*Northwest Coast Indian-style medallion, Buddha Statue and sun mask at a Tegallalang art shop.*

industry of Bali, and how narratives used by tourism promoters have been used to further colonial and national interests (Vickers 1989: 9-10). However, the Balinese handicrafts sector—an offshoot of tourism that has steadily built up its own reputation and separate client base over the last three decades—has yet to be explored with the same level of depth. This article is an attempt to broaden the conversation about cultural production, tradition and authenticity to include material objects that appeal to tourists, but are created in places and by people who may have little or no connection to the sites and cultures they symbolize. I begin by examining the history of the Balinese tourism industry and its relation to the Indonesian nation state—particularly how culture has been represented and commodified over the last century in order to fulfill particular colonial and national agendas. This discussion will be followed by an ethnographic account of a community in central Bali involved in the production and sale of ethnic art. By analyzing interviews, observations and photographic images I collected during my fieldwork in the village of Tegallalang, I argue that the export ethnic arts industry—unlike the tourism sector—allows participants to more freely and creatively articulate their place in a global economy as modern, cosmopolitan agents.

## Imagining Bali

Western knowledge of Bali dates to 1597, when a Dutch fleet landed on the island during an exploratory circuit through the Orient. According to travel logs, Dutch sailors were welcomed with great hospitality in comparison to the more hostile response they received from neighboring islands such as Java. The Dutch were impressed by the enthusiastic welcome and would continue to regard Bali with esteem, praising the lavish Hindu rituals, feasts and performing arts they witnessed. But apart from its resplendent Hindu arts and culture, the island held little interest for Europeans because it offered few resources and land that could be capitalized upon (Picard 1996: 18-20).

Beginning in the 19th century, however, the Dutch decided to consolidate their power in the East Indies beyond Java. They began to infiltrate Bali, taking control over the island one regency at a time. By 1908, after a violent confrontation between the Dutch military and members of the royal family of the Klungkung regency, the Dutch gained full political control (Wiener 1995). Despite this bloody confrontation, in which many members of the royal

family openly committed suicide in the face of their colonizers, the Dutch remained determined to portray the Balinese as unchanging and apolitical; as harmonious and aloof from the serious political matters that were beginning to occupy colonial subjects in other provinces (Robinson 1995: 7). Fearing that the Balinese would become involved in religious/political conflict with their Muslim neighbours or worse, joining forces with them under their shared colonial subjugation, the Dutch began to direct the Balinese's attention elsewhere. Dutch colonials began placing more emphasis on Bali as a pre-modern, "untainted" paradise. Their romanticized portrayals were used in both colonial projects and the nascent tourism industry of the 1920s and assisted the Dutch colonial agenda by reinforcing the cultural distinctions between colonizers and the colonized.

During this time, the Dutch government devised a policy of *Baliseering* (Balization) in which locals were trained in the so-called traditional Balinese performing and visual arts (Robinson 1995: 14; Picard 1996: 20-21). It was hoped that *Baliseering* might restore the island's high culture and maintain peace amidst growing political unrest. Philosophical ideas of nationalism had long been brewing in neighbouring Java, in addition to the religious fundamentalism that was taking hold among practicing Muslims. By secularizing and depoliticizing the expressive arts, *Baliseering* was established largely as a preventive measure for keeping locals from developing ideas about political democracy and social justice for the colonized. The *Baliseering* program was a way for Dutch colonials to create and manage a particular type of Balinese identity—one that was pre-modern, uninterested in colonial matters and less likely to utilize religion as a weapon for political mobilization.

It was no coincidence then, that at this time hotels began showcasing "native dances," in which youths trained under *Baliseering* performed for paying audiences. Tourism in the early 20th century also brought foreigners to settle permanently on the island. Western painters, musicians and dancers came to Bali to work not only on their own creations, but to preserve the so-called "traditions" of the local people. Many of these expatriates settled down in interior villages—supposedly away from the "touristy" and commercialized coastal areas—because they believed that tourism had not yet tainted the integrity of the culture further inland. Over time, interior villages such as Peliatan and Ubud gained local, national and, later, international

reputations for producing the best dancers, sculptors and musicians in all of Bali. Contemporary guidebooks still encourage travellers to visit these villages, if one wanted to capture the “real” or “authentic” Bali, untainted by modernization.

Walter Spies, a German painter well known for his primitivist artwork, was one of the first non-Dutch foreigners to make concerted efforts at “preserving” local artistry under the supposed threat of modernizing (and “Islamizing”) forces. Spies is often credited with introducing painting on canvas to the Balinese. He showed a keen interest in revitalizing the traditional arts such as dance, drama, woodcarving and literature, as well as transforming locals into “professional artists” who could perform for tourist audiences. Along with the *Baliseering* program and tourism, expatriates such as Spies helped to further the image of Bali as the “Garden of Eden” supposedly under threat from Western modernity. By the 1930s, Spies’s residence in Ubud and the village in general became popular destinations for foreigners (tourists, anthropologists, writers, ethnomusicologists and artists) wanting a more authentic glimpse of Balinese life and to set themselves apart from other Westerners (Djelantik 1986; Eisman 1988; Kam 1993; Rhodius and Darling 1980).<sup>2</sup>

By the 1970s, Bali had exploded with the construction of hotels, restaurants, nightclubs and shops. Unlike the tourism of the 1920s and 1930s (which had been more exclusive to wealthier visitors), tourism during President Suharto’s *Orde Baru* (New Order) attracted a diverse clientele including middle-class families, travelling students, retirees and low-budget backpackers from Australia, North America and Europe. As the tourism industry grew to become Bali’s main source of income, related industries sprouted—namely in handicrafts (textiles, woodcarving, basket weaving), religious iconography (Hindu statues, masks, costumes) and furniture. These locally made goods served well as souvenirs as they were affordable and readily available for tourist consumption. This was partly due to the fact that, historically, Balinese regencies appointed villages to specialize in one or two skilled crafts, which were often made from whatever resources were in abundance in a particular area. To this day, communities are still loosely identified by the local crafts that they had once specialized in: foreign wholesale buyers and other exporters will know to go to the village of Batubulan to source soap-stone carvings, Celuk for its silver jewellery, Mas for gold jewellery, Bona for basket

weaving and Klungkung for textiles. In other words, the long-standing history of intervillage craft specialization in Bali was vital to developing the export handicrafts industry because it provided exporters with a ready-made base from which to source products.

### **Tegallalang and the Crafting of Alternative Cultural Narratives**

The search for authenticity is still important in Bali’s touristic discourse; guidebooks often direct tourists to escape the commercialism and over development of Kuta and Sanur beaches toward the regency of Gianyar—an area well regarded for its performing and visual arts. Within this regency is the village of Tegallalang, whose local economy has historically been agriculturally based. Yet since the 1970s, a large percentage of Tegallalang’s residents have been working in the service and hospitality sector—working in hotels, souvenir shops, restaurants and other businesses in nearby Ubud. A handful of hotels and homestays have been erected in Tegallalang, although these are located in the more isolated corners of the village, so as to give tourists a feeling of isolation from not only other tourists, but from the bustle of the export handicrafts industry that has taken over the community over the last thirty years. Tegallalang’s main street is occupied by family compounds, the village market, a post office, a bank, family-run food stalls and stores (*warung*). But the most visible and most prominent features of the village are the “art shops” which run all along Jalan Raya Tegallalang (Tegallalang Main Street).<sup>3</sup> From the traffic of delivery trucks to the art shops, the daily activities of shopkeepers, handicrafts producers and distributors along the main street and the flow of buyers coming in and out of the village during the height of buying season, it is evident that the handicrafts industry has become this community’s largest, most profitable and most popular new source of income.

The origins of Tegallalang’s commercial handicrafts and furniture business can be traced to the local tradition of woodcarving. Tegallalang has always been well known for woodcarving, but only among a small number of families who, for generations, have specialized in carving statues of Garuda—a winged dragon-bird from Hindu mythology (often depicted with the god Shiva riding atop). As is typical of Balinese communities, woodcarving is a skill limited to a select few and

these specialists were responsible for restoring and carving the fixtures and other ornate decor for family and village temples throughout the regency. In the late 1970s and 1980s, the Garuda statues, as well as other Bali-Hindu carvings (masks from the *Ramayana* plays) proved to be popular souvenirs among tourists who passed through the village on their travels north to Mount Kintamani or the northern beaches of Lovina. European, Australian and North American expatriates living on the island began to export the locally-produced handmade goods (baskets, textiles, woodcarving, furniture) and antique furniture found throughout the island. Tegallalang was one of the first villages to participate in the exporting business, especially as many of the expatriates (perhaps inspired by Walter Spies) resided in nearby Ubud. The first to profit were the artisans who had been crafting these objects for local consumption. As demand increased, however, these artisans began training novices and hiring semi- to low-skilled assistants to assist in this new enterprise.

Tegallalang soon became a popular supplier of mass-produced woodcarvings, especially of masks and Hindu statues. Foreign buyers—mostly American, Japanese, British, German, Italian and Spanish—who first began exporting Hindu statues and masks found that their popularity waned by the late 1980s. The Western consumer craze for ethnic and “tribal” handicrafts changed and, as a response, foreigners involved in the business (designers, sourcing agents, wholesale and retail buyers) began teaching locals how to diversify their skills to create objects from “other” cultural traditions. Local craftspeople were trained to make particular crafts based on samples, shopping catalogs, pictures from popular magazines and sketches provided to them by their foreign patrons/clients. By the early 1990s, Tegallalang became a one-stop shopping source for items such as Christmas ornaments, Native American totem poles, African masks and Buddha statues.

Jalan Raya Tegallalang is an approximately twenty-one kilometre-long artery that connects the northern part of the island to the south. It is continuously lined by handicrafts shops on both sides of the road, with little room for pedestrian traffic. During the time of my research, neither the village

of Tegallalang nor the district of Gianyar kept specific records of businesses in the area (including art shops), leaving me to conduct my own survey of the arts shop in Tegallalang; I counted 167 art shops along Jalan Raya Tegallalang. I then supplemented this independent survey with interviews of art shop proprietors, woodcarvers and employees in the village. Through these interviews, I further learned that approximately eighty per cent of those shops were owned and operated by local families, while the remaining shops were rented out to non-local Balinese, or migrants from neighbouring Java and Lombok. My interviews also revealed that more than ninety per cent of the art shop proprietors have limited or no experience in skilled craft production; thus, they source their merchandise at the semi-finished or completely finished stages. The interviews immediately revealed something that I had not anticipated: that Tegallalang’s famous export handicrafts industry is not rooted in a community of artisans who have profited from skilled specialists passing their knowledge from one generation to the next. Only a few families brought fame to the village through their expertise in crafting Garuda statues, and it was the village’s reputation for woodcarving that lured other enterprising Balinese to set up shop in Tegallalang. More commonly, the shops hire skilled woodcarvers to produce their merchandise (and live on the premises) or will buy unfinished carvings in bulk—relying upon various family members and hired workers to do the painting and finishing (Fig. 3). The main activity of art shops is, therefore, sales: greeting customers (“buyers”), presenting them with sample products and negotiating prices and purchase orders.



**Fig. 3**  
An art shop worker applies a finishing coat of paint on wooden candle-holders.

## Seeking Worldliness at Home

Cosmopolitanism, then, in my usage, implies nothing about travel or cultural competence; it is less about being at home in the world than it is about seeking worldliness at home. (Ferguson 1999: 212)

As anthropologist James Ferguson suggests, travel need not be a necessary component in the pursuit of a cosmopolitan identity, especially for those living in the Global South. Instead, cosmopolitanism can be a meaningful category defined by the unique context of a locality. In Tegallalang, the art shops have become spaces through which employees have multiple opportunities to project such an identity for themselves. Whether projecting a cosmopolitan image to foreign clients during business interactions, or demonstrating to friends and other locals that their social connections extend beyond the village and provincial borders, the presentation of a worldly, modern and well-connected self among Balinese art shopkeepers is considered an essential component to running a successful art shop and building one's social capital.

In previous articles (Esperanza 2004, 2008), I have demonstrated how some foreigners who frequent Tegallalang art shops attempt to assert a sense of distinction and superiority over their Balinese counterparts by claiming expertise on consumer trends, popular design and the even the rules of commerce. Peter, a buyer from California who frequently orders from Tegallalang art shops for his boutique said in October 2002:

This is "Wild, Wild East"... and you have to really know that—really, really have to know what you're doing. Because there's no law here, and if you order teak wood and they give you balsa wood, you have to catch them on it. (pers. comm.)

This type of statement—heard from numerous foreign buyers—suggests that Tegallalang is similar to the boomtowns of the American West. The sudden success of Tegallalang handicrafts industry is viewed with skepticism on the part of the buyers who feel that while impressive craftsmanship and good prices are offered, art shop employees and owners are neophytes to the rules of capitalist enterprise and must be watched carefully (especially in regards to fraud, theft and extortion). In interviews, foreign buyers have expressed their reverence for the Balinese as wonderful, hardworking and hospitable people, yet there is frequent reference to them as too colloquial, inherently (and unchangingly) bound to tradition, and at the periphery of the global economy.

Local art shop owners and employees, however, present a drastically different view of themselves. Many have spent their family savings or taken out risky bank loans for the prospect of running a lucrative export business. Knowing that the clientele are most likely non-Indonesians, art shop owners and their employees must have a good command of English to successfully keep abreast of the latest trends and run an effective business. I was impressed during one visit to a shop that specialized in nautical-style decor. When I asked the shopkeeper, Gus, what he called the various wooden lighthouses and ships painted in a rustic blue and white style, he explained that he was a specialist in the "Cape Cod style" of home decor (Fig. 4). In addition to the Cape Cod-styled handicrafts, the shop also had a wide array of other styles, from figurines of Santa Claus and wooden cats to Hindu goddesses.

The ability to source a variety of woodcarvings, to know what types of designs are popular among consumers abroad and to know the cultural significance of these objects is no easy feat. As art shops commonly source their materials from the same suppliers, their salespeople must find distinctive ways to draw in potential clients and convince customers that what they have to offer is better than their competitors. In other words, the more successful art shops in Tegallalang not only have to carry the right goods at attractive prices, but their art shop owners and employees feel that they must also demonstrate a worldliness and knowledge of the industry that is superior to the hundreds of other art shops along Tegallalang Main Street. The type

**Fig. 4**  
*Nautical themed "Cape Cod" decorations, along with wooden cats, Santa Claus and Hindu-inspired goddess statues at Tegallalang art shop.*





of cosmopolitanism performed in the ethnic arts industry and within individual, everyday practices entails signifying affinity with cultures beyond the world of the “local” (Ferguson 1998: 212-13).

Handicrafts producers and vendors whom I interviewed are well aware that they do not have the means to travel and experience the world in the same ways Western buyers have been able to do, but this does not deter them from pursuing modern, cosmopolitan identities at home. For example, art shop employees frequently use English language terms at the shop—either with other Balinese, Indonesians or foreigners. Terms such as “primitive,” “rustic,” “tribal” and even “ethnic” are part of the terminology of the handicrafts industry (but more so for those selling ethnic handicrafts). If a foreign buyer is interested in ordering a wooden bookshelf for example, the shop employee might offer to make the finish more “rustic” if he’s interested in a more antique look. In fact, a commonly used verb among woodcarvers is *mengantik*; to make a new object look antique by applying black shoe polish or exposing it to the flames of a blowtorch to achieve an older, more weathered look (Fig. 5).

The practice of modernity and cosmopolitanism is an important everyday practice in the art shop and beyond. Sales associates and art shop owners demonstrate their modernity through asserting their connectedness as well as their agency in a globalized economy. During my research in Tegallalang, I was a frequent visitor to a wind-chime shop owned by Ibu (Mrs.) Jero. On her desk she maintained a much-valued collection of old Federal Express and DHL invoices from years past. On our first meeting, she immediately showed me

these receipts and addresses. Kept on the one hand for business purposes, the documents also served as tangible evidence that she was well connected to individuals beyond the village. Sitting at her desk during our first meeting, Jero went through every invoice and carefully explained who each client was, including details about their business, their family members and that she remained in contact with them over the years.

Signs that are either painted on windows or fixed over the entrance of each shop serve as other markers of cosmopolitanism. Art shops frequently label their wares using the English language and, if possible, make use of other markers of cosmopolitan distinction. One of the more successful shops in the village is named “Casa Madera,” (“house of wood” in Spanish). The shop owner, a relative of my host family, had spent several years living in Spain and working in various restaurants there. After saving enough money, he returned to Tegallalang and opened a shop that first specialized in wooden Buddha statues, but soon capitalized on the popularity of paintings of African landscapes and Masai warriors (Fig. 6). The use of a Spanish name for the store, the shop owner’s decision to specialize in African-inspired art and the sign on the window that proudly says, *Hablamos Español* (“We speak Spanish”) are but a few of the markers of social distinction and social capital the shop owner uses to attract potential customers—and to signal to fellow villagers that he is well-travelled, modern and cosmopolitan.

The conspicuous display of shipping invoices, foreign-language shop signs and the ability to sell objects that represent a particular style, trend or eth-

**Fig. 5**  
(Below left)  
An art shop worker applies a blow-torch to a CD holder to create an antic (*antique*) finish.

**Fig. 6**  
(Below right)  
An art shop selling African-style paintings advertises to Spanish-speaking clients.



nic group not indigenous to Indonesia are just a few ways that the Tegallalang art shop proprietors and employees consciously assert identities that are not limited to the province of Bali or to the Indonesia nation-state. As Indonesia continues to expand its economic and political goals to better reflect the tenets of an ever-expanding global economy, I argue that communities and individuals—such as those I encountered in Bali—have picked up on this rhetoric to also assert new identities that underscore a type of cosmopolitanism, savviness and agency that tourism tends to suppress. The question that remains is whether Balinese, who assert these stronger identities and positions through the export handicrafts market, are able to wield the level of power and agency needed to make significant changes to their economic, political and cultural livelihoods.

The answers to this question can be revealed in events that have taken place over the last decade. What I have found is that, despite these efforts to engage more actively with a global economy—the economic success of Balinese handicrafts producers, middlemen and vendors is still largely dependent on forces beyond their control. Shortly after the events of September 11, 2001, tourism waned in Indonesia, which also had negative consequences to the export ethnic arts and handicrafts industries as foreign buyers and merchandisers refrained from travelling to the country. My research informants

in Tegallalang still lament over the fact that the village's heydays were abruptly halted by (and never recovered from) 9/11.

## Discussion

The commercial ethnic arts industry provides local individuals with an alternative outlet to break out of the insular gaze of culture. It allows various players—woodcarvers, entrepreneurs and others associated with the industry—to express a uniquely Balinese character while at the same time, assert a more cosmopolitan reputation for themselves and their community. The province's need for an identity that bypasses Java (and the Indonesian nation-state) is implicit in the discourses and actions of Tegallalang's handicrafts industry. In this article, I have focused on various ways in which Indonesian handicrafts producers and vendors try to bring about change in the discourse by participating in alternative discourses, practices and presentations of the self through the integration of new styles taken from “outside” cultures and through the conspicuous consumption and display of goods that are viewed by locals as “modern.” And while the levels of economic, political and cultural agency have yet to be evaluated, the Balinese pursuit of these identities has already been achieved; the very pursuit of such identities is, already in and of itself, modern.

## Notes

1. An ethnic arts or handicrafts “industry” may initially seem like an oxymoron, but I use it here to demonstrate that the mass production and export of handmade goods has now transformed it into a large industry. What may have started as small-scale entrepreneurial endeavours in many parts of the global South, has become a multi-billion dollar global business employing artisans, semi-skilled labourers, middlemen and distribution specialists worldwide.
2. Among Spies's more famous guests were anthropologists Margaret Mead and her collaborator/partner Gregory Bateson. In their publication *Balinese Character: A Photographic Analysis* (1942), Mead and Bateson posit that the Balinese are depicted in *Balinese Character* as schizophrenic, irrational and ambivalent to the social and technological changes that have arrived with Western-style modernization.
3. Local Balinese and other Indonesians use the English term “art shop.”

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