One of the recurrent problems faced by producers of academic knowledge is its institutional separation from not only the people it is about, but from many of the people who would like to read it the most (try getting anything non-sensational published in the mainstream media). A converse problem is the system of institutional gatekeeping that prevents those without proper institutional credentials (implicit as well as explicit) from joining the disciplinary conversation (try getting something into an academic journal without institutional affiliation, let alone proper referencing style). Bali, because it is as popular among uncertified scholars as certified ones, and among popular readers as academic ones, is a fruitful case study for exploring these contradictions.

Graeme MacRae

Reviewed titles:

The most interesting early scholarship on Bali was in fact done by gifted amateurs – expatriate artists (Miguel Covarrubias, Colin McPhee, Walter Spies), colonial administrators (e.g., F. A. Lienhardt) and eccentric escapes from the stifling normalities of European society (e.g., R. Goris). A few certified academics (Margaret Mead, Gregory Bateson, Jane Belo) did also produce books but ironically almost nobody reads them, then or now. Today there is a constant discourse about the multiple issues that Bali is facing, some (but not all) well-informed and thoughtful. There is also a substantial readerhip of expatriates and thinking tourists hungry for books which translate academic knowledge about Bali into accessible form, but relatively few books really serve this market. Two recent books speak into this in-between market, but from outside the academic arena: Majapahit Style by Made Wijaya and Proy. Magic, Heal, by David Stuart-Fox. Stuart-Fox has credentials as an academic specialist on Bali – author of a PhD thesis and definitive monograph on one of Bali’s major temples Pura Besakih and as highly respected within the academy as outsider. He prefers to downplay these credentials and his career has in fact been largely in the ill-defined borders of the academic world – as compiler of the definitive (pre-digital) bibliography of literature on Bali, long-serving (now retired) librarian of the National Museum of Ethnology in Leiden and freelance scholar writing since the 1970s on Balinese arts, religion, and culture. Proy. Magic, Heal is written deliberately for a popular audience and its subject is a pop-culture phenomenon but it is based on decades of in-depth research. The second author, Made Wijaya, died, suddenly, unexpectedly and tragically, between the writing and publication of this review, which now takes on an element of obituary. He was a veteran of the expatriate community in Bali, tropical landscape designer extraordinaire, one-man multimedia production machine and much more. His book masquerades as a picture book about ‘style’, and yields its erudition lightly, but it is actually a contribution to the study of Javo-Balinese history that deserves to be taken seriously, not least for its innovative methodological approach to interpretation of cultural transmission. Both authors are gifted and well-qualified amateurs (in the original sense of the term) speaking over the fence. But who is listening? To date I can find no reviews of either in scholarly journals and only one of each in other media. This is a loss for us all, on both sides of the fence. In my discipline (anthropology) we frequently bemoan our failure to communicate our (usually inherently interesting) knowledge to non-specialist audiences and I understand it is so in other disciplines. Likewise, scholars outside the academic system who have real difficulty getting their (sometimes well-informed) views heard within the circuits of academic discourse. Some of this fence is structural – an academic recognition that increasingly privileges sophisticated (i.e., theoretically framed) and accountable ‘academic’ values over more everyday ones of readability and accessibility, and in effect becomes a system of gatekeeping. Likewise the mainstream media are, in my experience, surprisingly resistant to contributions of academic knowledge unless they happen to address the sensational issue du jour. But some of it is at least habitual and often it becomes easier not to try. The result is that we are all the poorer – on both sides of the fence. These two books remind us of a greater mission for which we all have some responsibility and that we lose sight of at our peril, especially in a time when universities are,ironically calling for our research to be more relevant and practically accessible as exemplified by the growing media genre of (sometimes well-informed) ‘science journalism’.

Majapahit Style
Wijaya was perhaps the best known of the talented expatriates who arrived in Bali in the 1960s and 70s, many of whom have lived there ever since. He added to his day job as a designer of spectacular and romantic gardens for hotels across Asia, he was a one-man multimedia factory – producing an endless stream of photographs, videos, cultural commentaries, and public satires, much of it cleverly disguised as social gossip. Among all of this he has consistently studied and analysed Balinese architecture and developed a series of arguments about its structural, spatial and aesthetic principles and practices. Majapahit Style (Volume 1) is the latest chapter in this opus magnum, expanding his thinking about Balinese architecture to, but also from, its historical origins in neighbouring Java and beyond. Majapahit Style presents itself, I suspect somewhat tongue-in-cheek, as yet another offering in the glossy coffee-table book genre of (this or that) style. But what it represents is the fruit of decades of research, exploring, documenting and reflecting on architectural, aesthetic and ritual practices, first in Bali, then across Indonesia and further across Southeast, South- and East Asia. The resulting text moves across time and space and between androgyne and analysis, expert opinions and personal ones, assertions and speculations, but between them is a thread of argument, not always explicit, but lurking and systematised, that moves us closer to the evidence of Majapahit material culture, especially architecture, which has largely disappeared from its historical heartland, it lives on in the material design heritage of other places and times – spread across the archipelago and especially in Bali, where aspects of it survive in living traditions of aesthetic and ritual practice. This argument is implicit in the structure of the book, which moves historically from earliest to latest manifestations.

Images of the Canton factories
The port city of Canton (now Guangzhou), China, served as a vital hub in the early phase of modern global trade. In the 18th century, numerous European companies set up shop in the designated foreign quarter of factories and warehouses. Like their peers around the world, Chinese artists adapted quickly to the sweeping social, economic, and aesthetic changes wrought by these mercantile aspirations on a world scale. The resulting artworks – often labeled as ‘export art’ – have long been characterized by art historians as inauthentically hybrid, and thus not deserving of scholarly attention. As a broad category, export art encompasses a great diversity of objects made by artists throughout China in a variety of styles and mediums. These include paintings, fans, textiles, decorative and utilitarian ceramics, lacquer ware, and much more.

Hope Marie Childeirs

Reviewed title:
Paul A. Van Dyke and Maria Kar-wing Mok. 2015. Images of the Canton Factories 1760–1822: Reading History in Art Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press ISBN 9789882808555

This object-oriented volume, co-authored by Paul Van Dyke and Maria Kar-wing Mok, examines representations of Canton via a specific type of Chinese export art, using fresh eyes and new angles. Bookended by an introduction and conclusion, the volume consists of nine chapters: six are chronological surveys, each spanning approximately a decade; the remainder consist of thematic analysis. The introduction provides a succinct history of the founding of Canton’s European merchant district, beginning with the construction of China Street in 1760 (p. xx). The study concludes with the years preceding the Great Fire of 1822, when the entire quarter of factories burned down, thus changing the landscape forever.

The authors train their lens on painted panoramas of the Canton factories, specifically those found on porcelain punchbowls and on two-dimensional surfaces, from small gouache panels to large canvases in oil. Their objective, as referenced in the book’s subtitle, is ‘reading history through
of Majapahit architecture, expands geographically across the vast region of Majapahit influence and architecturally across time and space. In this work, the traditional model of art history is supported, and indeed most compellingly made, by a primary visual text of photographs, maps and drawings, juxtaposed with a wealth of written context and colour, culture, materials, methods, and names. Embedded in this empirical argument is a methodological one: a rather more important for academic consider- 

ation, of the provocative power of comparison of spatial organisation, structural form and especially aesthetic style as a means of analysis and evaluation even a new and comparative method is what makes this work compelling. I will not be surprised if historians and architectural critics find plenty to disagree with, but at least there is no evidence of them having read, let alone reviewed it. I shall leave them to assess the historical veracity of Wijaya’s evidence or its intersections with the established body of Majapahit scholarship, but I think any criticisms in terms of deficits of certified academic practice miss the point, both of its vast empirical sweep and its methodological innovation.

Pray, Magic, Heal

This is an unusual book, 45 years in the making and uneventfully entwined with its (in)famous twin fat, Pray, Love, but it is not what the title might suggest. Stuart-Fox is not another of that extraordinary breed of dedicated Bali scholars who worked in Bali through the 1970s and 80s, became fluent in local languages and for whom deep research into Balinese culture was once a way of life. He knew the late Liyer long before his dubious fame through the fat fame, then in Canton’s history. Further, though the paintings are often unAttributed, and sometimes even within the same artist, they are an equal part of the text.

What makes this book work, is that Stuart-Fox resists the (possibly quite conscious) urge to interpret and tell us what he or what to think about Liyer – despite 40 years’ experience and insight into Balinese culture, he steps back and lets Liyer speak for himself, allowing us to make what will we of the imperfect, inchoate, and sometimes half-baked, but intriguingly honest and magic the mystery and magic of it. The Liyer we meet in these pages is neither mystical, magico religious nor scholar, but an artist who celebrated the village, the everyday, the village craftsmen, with a limited kit of practical tools and a disarming awareness of the limitations of his understanding of the powers behind the magic and healing. My only disappointment is not learning what he really thought about his later years.

Ways of knowing Bali

Both these books tell us something about Bali: one unearthing a one-man pop-culture phenomenon and informing our understanding; the other reflecting on his own biography, back into the tradition from which he was plucked by international celebrity culture. In the process, the reader is educated, gradually working into Balinese ritual, healing and artistic practice. The other (by a one-man pop-culture phenomenon) works at a different level, addressing one of the biggest themes in Southeast Asian history, but by way of an innovative approach, largely self-taught and pursued and expressed with an infectious exuberance. Both are well-written and easy to read, but in both cases, much of the work is done by visual means.

As such, customers expected a certain level of verisimilitude and a recognizable sense of place in these souvenirs objects. In their rich and shifting sources, they also carry much of the volume’s most notable contribution. Chapters 3 and 5 offer brief analyses of the technical circumstances behind the production of the porcelain bowls and the paintings, revealing key disparities between the two media. For example, the paintbrushes are characterized by far less accuracy in rendering a particular moment in time than are the paintings. This may be due partly to the manufacture in pottery centres at some distance from the site, or because the patronage and sales practices demanded more flexibility in content for these utilitarian objects (p. 29).

In contrast, the paintings are shown to be highly reliable in their representations of narrow, identifiable slices of time in the past. Indeed, enough should be said, however, to indicate that visualities are not, as some might claim, that Chinese artists were merely skilled copyists. More engaging is the Chapter 5 discussion about the skilled use of the visual point and perspective by the artists to enhance the expressiveness of the composite and compositional values. The authors assert that “rather than inferring an ignorance of ‘Western’ perspective, the Chinese artists’ work reveals their knowledge of indigenous Chinese ideas of perspective” (p. 49). They provide details of fact and art- 

ings on maps, silk, and reverse painting on glass as examples to illustrate this point, and provide multiple perspectives as used in traditional scroll painting.

The result is an interdisciplinary volume that closely examines object histories and archival context, thus elevating it above the descriptive, evaluative literature of connoisseur- ship so common to this era of art production. It furthermore establishes a vital reference for specialist scholars, such as collectors and art dealers, who work in the field of Chinese decorative art and the beliefs embedded in them.

This book belongs on the same shelf as the Jero Tapakan and the Rucina Ballinger and Lawrence and Lorne Blair, John Darling) which have had proven classics in contemporary academic understandings of Bali. Some of them moved deeper into local Balinese worlds by way of marriage (e.g. Rucina Ballinger) and engagement with their local cultures (e.g. with a limited kit of practical tools and a disarming awareness of the limitations of his understanding of the powers behind the magic and healing. My only disappointment is not learning what he really thought about his later years.

Stuart Fox and Wijaya both had the privilege of living and working in Bali at this time, and since then have had successful careers in other fields to their names. They have written about and repaid these privileges with books that are simultaneously significant contributions to Bali studies and effective translations of expert knowledge into accessible form. One is a model for bridging and understanding, the other offering deeply ground knowledge to the academy for us to engage with. We have something to learn from both books about the way we share our knowledge and understanding.

Macrae Maclay, Massey University.

References

1. Fences are a common metaphor in anthropological cultures such as Australia, where both the authors and the reviewer originate, but are perhaps more familiar to us. The fence, they refer to, is the boundary that separate scholar from scholar, and the fence that borders and boundaries between places and spaces, in this case the well-guarded ones among academic and popular knowledges. A Balinese cognate might be the porous trema of [maus where] that mark divisions between domestic and public, sacred and profane places/spaces.


3. Rio Helmi is absent from this list, only because he occupies a special place between the expat and the local worlds—another fence.

The shortcomings of the book are minor. A number of passages make for rather dry reading, an unavoidable trade-off for a factual and informative work. Any reader who is a bit que- quibbble is the lack of a list of illustrations and no page refer- ences in the majority of captions. These omissions diminish the ability to enter the volume via the artworks themselves – surely a standard starting point for most readers, especially artists, art historians, collectors, and the like. Rather, the arrangement requires readers to access the images through a mostly linear path through the text itself (which does not provide Plate- and Figure-numbers). This discourages casual browsing, ultimately limiting its audience.

The book’s many strengths include its well-organized and comprehensive bibliography, an appendix indexing primary sources pertaining to early company movements, and an appendix listing all the books and films (Lawrence and Lorne Blair, John Darling) which have had proven classics in contemporary academic understandings of Bali. Some of them moved deeper into local Balinese worlds by way of marriage (e.g. Rucina Ballinger) and engagement with their local cultures (e.g. with a limited kit of practical tools and a disarming awareness of the limitations of his understanding of the powers behind the magic and healing. My only disappointment is not learning what he really thought about his later years.

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At first I thought I was going to be like my brother, whom I had had to leave by the roadside a year or two round the corner. He had wasted his breath on singing, and his strength on helping others. But I had travelled more wisely, and now it was only the monotony of the highway that oppressed me—dust under foot and brown crackling hedges on either side, ever since I could remember. In my weak, morbid state, I longed to force my way in, and see what was on the other side. No one was in sight, or I should not have dared to try. For we of the road do not admit in conversation that there is another side at all. I yielded to the temptation, saying to myself that I would come back in a minute. The fence post are on my neighbors side. Does that mean I own the fence and am responsible for all maintenance? Boundary fences sit on the boundary line between two properties. Boundary fences, or division fences, must conform to fencing laws established by local ordinances and CC&Rs. Both property owners own the fence erected between the property lines when both use it. Every state interprets "use" differently. There are three main definitions: Occupancy: use of the land up to the fence. Join for use: the attachment of another fence to the boundary fence. Entire enclosure: the property owner's entire property is enclosed by the attachment of other fencing to the boundary fence.