

## Experience Bali through Life Drawing

Stepping off the plane at Denpasar, my senses are assaulted with the sight of cars, motorcycles, shops, fumes and congestion... but as I head towards the mountains, driving through small villages towards Silungan (7ks south of Ubud, the cultural heart of Bali) I sense an ancient presence, from a time when Paradise existed, permeating my very being.

I'm on my way to Pondok Saraswati to join others on a marathon life drawing adventure. I've been before so I know I'm going to have delicious moments relaxing in a tranquil setting side by side with the Balinese working in the rice fields. I'm looking forward to enjoying moments of pure indulgence with my inner self, taking in the sounds, the smells, the sights, the tastes and physical sensations, living in the present.

I know that once the body is revitalised, with a little help from a Balinese massage from one of the many trained massage therapists in Ubud, I will be ready for life drawing. I'm looking forward to a few days of relaxation before the marathon begins.



Life drawing happens in a beautiful "studio bale", five minutes from Pondok Saraswati, a magical space that soothes the soul. It is here that my journey really begins. Enter the models and artists.

As one, the group commences to express through life drawing. Not all of us are professionals, some are just commencing on our journey into life drawing. This doesn't matter, to quote Peter, "Artists don't draw to hang a picture on the wall, they draw to make an enquiry."

Thus at the end of each "sitting" artists and models (some models are artists themselves) wander around, look and learn from the many individual and unique styles before us.

"Those lines express integrity", "I love the way she pushes the medium around and plays with the paper." "I work with surface like I work with clay, I just keep building it up." Throughout the week there is an 'energy of oneness', the balancing of minds and the meeting of cultures, sharing our experiences and our styles. Each is in tune with the other.

Does the journey finish there? No, it continues. There's the quick stop to the art shop for a smoother paper or a paper suitable for pastels. Then there is the 2B conte—what a mark that makes on the paper. So many drawings to keep we have run out of "fixative". Then there is Nyoman's food – a choice of eating out or staying home. Nyoman is Manager of Pondok Saraswati. Nyoman makes your stay in Bali memorable. So, do we eat out or eat at home and maybe finish the day with a game of "balderdash"?

Of course, one night we must eat at the Jazz Cafe and listen to Balawan and friends, a gymnast on the guitar. We must also immerse ourselves in the mysteries of Bali's moralities and cultural values by watching the "Kecak Dance" of Peliatan, Ubud, Gianyar, Bali. And of course eating out means experiencing the grandeur of the ravines, the tranquility of the lotus gardens and the history of Balinese culture. For some of us there are the early morning walks—the "Four Village Walk", the "Water-works Walk", and the "Rice Field Walk".

So much to do and see - temples to visit, the gong factory (be careful— you may come home with a ceremony bell or even a large "gong"!), and a sunrise over Padang bai. Then there's more life-drawing at Pranoto's gallery (take a look at Pranoto's Website, [www.pranotoartgallery.com](http://www.pranotoartgallery.com)), Balinese massages and let's not forget the shopping. The Bali experience is expansive.

It's not long before the journey is over and with a heavy heart I say farewell to friends and to a way of living that can only be experienced at Pondok Saraswati, Silungan, Ubud, Bali.