



Lee Man Fong Bali Scene 98 x 178 cm

## PROLIFIC CHINESE-INDONESIAN ARTIST

Lee Man Fong, a name that reverberates through the annals of art history, stands as a shining testament to the rich and diverse cultural tapestry of Chinese Indonesian artists. Born in 1913 in Guangdong, China, Lee Man Fong went on to become one of the most prolific and celebrated painters of his time, leaving an indelible mark on the world of art. In this regard, KL Lifestyle is pleased to announce an exhibition dedicated to this late artist and the prolific paintings of his forever muse — the Indonesian landscape. This exhibition will see specially-curated artworks that not only showcases the artist's prowess, but also what fuelled them and became his affinity.

Lee Man Fong was a Chinese-Indonesian painter who had his training in China and Western Europe, and lived most of his life in Indonesia, developing a particular style that amalgamated his teachings with a quiet yet passionate vision. His works are highly coveted by many for the fusion of Chinese brushwork and Western techniques which resulted in a richly sentimental yet elegant paintings.

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Lee was born in November 14, 1913 in Guangdong, China, to a family of ten children. Fong moved to Singapore in 1917 and studied at the Anglo-Chinese School until 1929.

After his father's death, it was up to Lee to help support his family, so he began producing images for advertisements. The family moved to Singapore but eventually settled in Jakarta in 1930, where Lee secured a job at Kolff, a Dutch printing company. Steeped in a multicultural upbringing, Lee Man Fong moved to Indonesia in 1932, a land that would become both his muse and his home. His artistic journey took him on a vibrant exploration of themes inspired by his surroundings, blending the traditional Chinese painting techniques he had learned with the lush landscapes, people, and cultures of his adopted homeland.

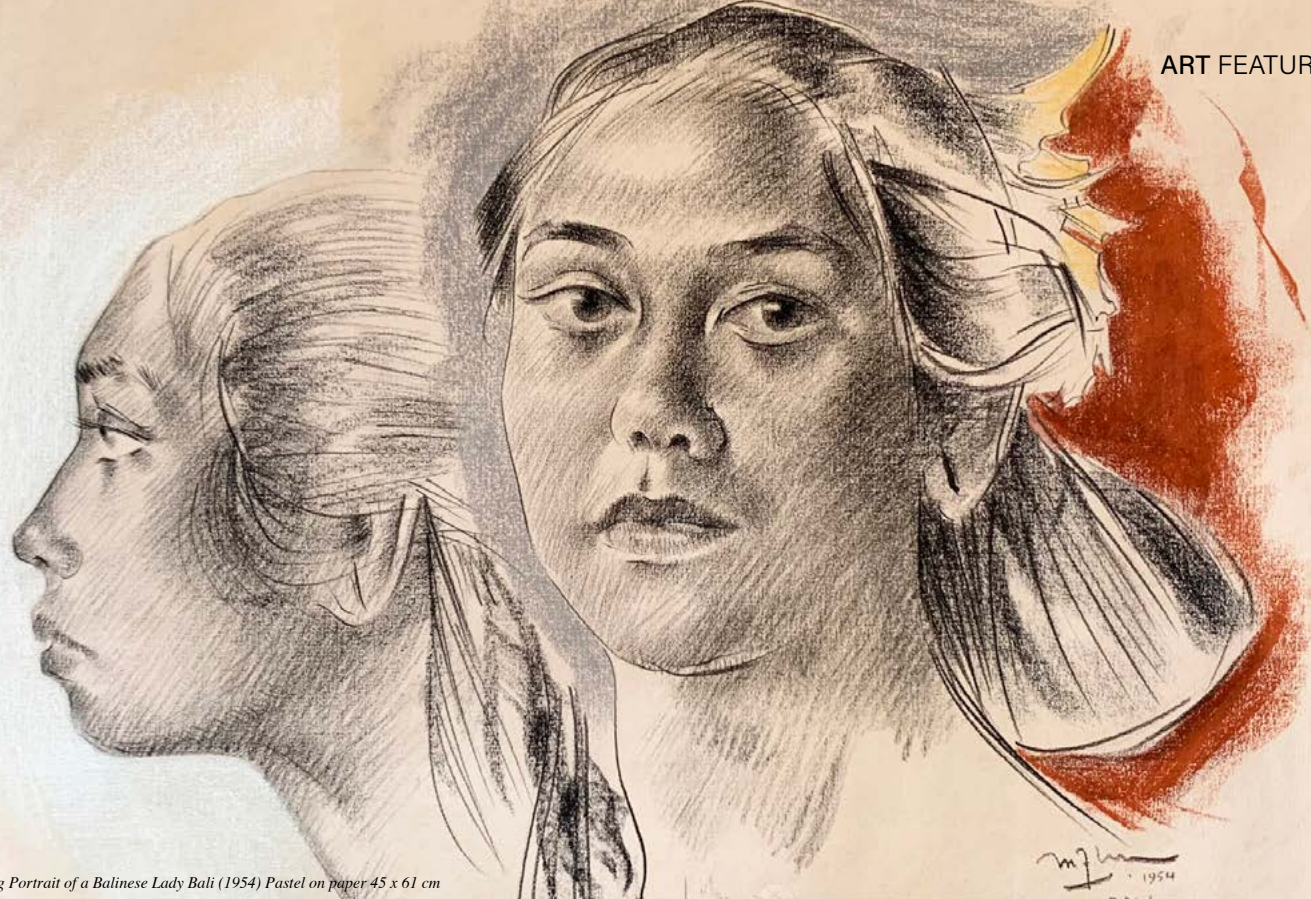
He was married to Lie Muk Lan — a pianist — and his son Lee Rem,

born in 1938, also became a painter who would later exhibit jointly with his father.

His six-year sojourn in the Netherlands from 1946-1952 earned him the prestigious Malino scholarship to study in the Netherlands for three years based on the recommendation of the Dutch Viceroy Hubertus van Mook, for whom Lee had produced a portrait for.



Lee Man Fong, Rojak Seller, Watercolour on Paper, 65 x 40 cm



*Lee Man Fong Portrait of a Balinese Lady Bali (1954) Pastel on paper 45 x 61 cm*

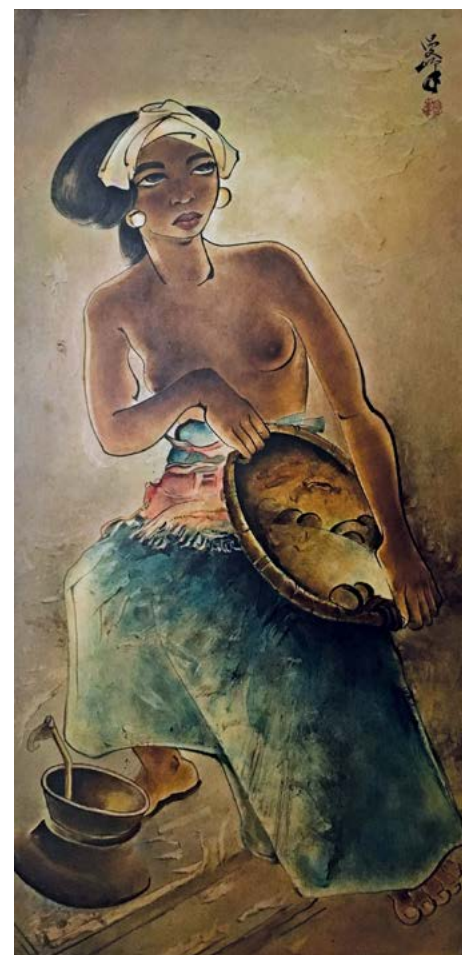
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At that point, Lee became the first non-Dutch artist to be invited to provide works for an exhibition organised by the Dutch East Indies Association. During this time, he was introduced to the techniques employed by the Dutch masters, thus expanding his repertoire of artistic skills beyond classical Chinese painting. Lee, a Rembrandt aficionado loved the works of the legendary artist, especially that of chiaroscuro, and sought to incorporate it into his own works. Dutch genre paintings which portrayed the simplicity of daily life and amplified the beauty of quotidian happenings,

also made an impression on the artist. After 1940 Fong devoted himself full-time to painting. He visited Bali, working briefly there, and held solo shows in Jakarta and Bandung. Lee quickly gained recognition for his paintings of Balinese subjects, many influenced by the work of Willem Hofker. He then held a solo show in Jakarta in 1941, after which he was interned by the Japanese.



*Lee Man Fong Still Life Flowers (Undated) Oil on Canvas 74.5 x 61cm*



*Lee Man Fong Untitled (Amsterdam, Circa 1948) Oil On Masonite Board 87 x 41.5cm*



Lee Man Fong *Cairo Street Scene* (1970, Cairo) Oil on Canvas 95.5 x 127cm

With his growing success, Lee consistently and successfully sold his works at the Hague and the Salon in Paris. Upon the artist's return to Indonesia in 1952, he touched down with an evolved artistic style which integrated Western, Chinese and Indonesian traditions in bold yet delicate compositions. From 1955 to 1961, Lee served as the chairman of Yin Hua Meishu Xiehui (Society of Chinese Artists in Indonesia).

In 1961, his long-time friendship with the late former President Sukarno (also an admirer and collector of his works) earned Lee the position of consultant to the Presidential Palace and chief curator of its art collection for six years. The late Presidents' extensive collection of Lee Man Fong's works inspired the artist and Lim Wasim, to assemble a 5-volume edition of the Soekarno Collection. During this period, Lee was awarded an Indonesian citizenship. In 1967, when Soekarno fell from grace, Man Fong, who was considered close to Sukarno, and alleged to have communist inclinations,

and this resulted in the artist's decision to move to Singapore in 1970. His career continued to thrive, and he was often given lucrative commissions by Chinese businessmen who wanted him to paint animals of the Chinese zodiac.



Lee Man Fong *Untitled* (Amsterdam, 1948) Oil on Paper laid on Masonite Board 69 x 41cm

Circa 1970's, Lee's tarriance to Cairo, Egypt was when the artist started dabbling in oil paintings. His time there inspired him to produce scenes of the Egyptian landscape and thenceforth, a prolific variety of oil paintings. Lee continued to exhibit within Indonesia and was heralded as a major artist of the period.

In the 1980's Lee Man Fong suffered from kidney and heart disease, and became increasingly private. His final solo exhibition at the National Gallery in Singapore was a major success, and he donated its proceeds to the National Kidney Foundation. Lee died in Jakarta on April 3, 1988 at the age of 75.

Lee Man Fong's artistic prowess encompassed a wide range of subjects, including captivating landscapes, expressive portraits, and mesmerising still life. His masterful brushwork, infused with a sense of poetic grace, brought his subjects to life on the canvas, evoking a profound emotional response from viewers. His ability to capture the essence of a fleeting moment, whether it be the play of light on water or the soulful gaze of a subject, was nothing short of extraordinary.

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Lee Man Fong Long Journey - Agra India (1977) Oil on Canvas 62 x 82cm



Lee Man Fong Untitled (Amsterdam, 1948) Oil on Paper laid on Masonite Board 69 x 41cm



Lee Man Fong Sketch for Ancient Street in Cairo (1978) Pastel on paper heightened in whites 44.5 x 66 cm