

## The Artistry and Aesthetics of Prasi by I Gusti Agung Ngurah in Sidemen Village, Karangasem, Bali

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### ABSTRACT

The tradition of creating Prasi is believed to have emerged alongside the tradition of nyurat or writing on lontar leaves. The term Prasi, used to refer to images on lontar or ental leaves (Suwidja, 1979), derives from the root word amarasi, which means to engrave or draw (Alit Artawan, 2013). "Ngarajah" is synonymous with the creation of drawings or images imbued with magical significance; these lines are believed to channel positive energy and ward off evil influences. Emerging from this tradition of "ngarajah," Prasi art is a form of expression that carries magical value and possesses extraordinary allure. Prasi works are one of Bali's cultural art forms currently experiencing a creative stagnation, leading to a decline in the appeal of creating Prasi. The process of making Prasi uses lontar leaves and a pangrupak knife a small, sharp blade used to etch the designs. This pangrupak knife plays a central role in the creation of Prasi works. The enduring presence of traditional artist I Gusti Agung Ngurah is believed to stem from the development of innovative ideas and concepts, which keep his work relevant and in demand in today's market. This is particularly intriguing given that Prasi's work has managed to endure. Through qualitative research and approaches rooted in Aesthetics, Semiotics, and Cultural Studies, this study aims to 'dissect' Prasi's works to determine whether structure, form, artistic expression, aesthetics, and meaning influence their appeal. The research generally seeks to identify the distinctive methods used by I Gusti Agung Ngurah in creating Prasi, particularly when compared to works by other Prasi artists. It is hoped that in-depth research and exploration will reveal the durability and appeal of Prasi works, thereby identifying a Prasi concept that can serve as a guideline and model for Prasi imagery within specific spaces and functions. This study places greater emphasis on forms of creativity and innovation in cultural art, specifically Prasi works. The focus of this research is fundamentally different from studies in other research, and no previous research has specifically and deeply explored and explained the artistry, aesthetics, and meaning of Prasi, its character, and the creativity of its visual forms. Therefore, it is important and relevant to be examined as a dissertation topic.

### KEYWORDS

Prasi, Traditional Balinese, Artistry, Aesthetics, and Meaning

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## Introduction

Prasi works are a form of Balinese cultural art still practiced by several traditional artists in Sidemen Village, Karangasem, as a pastime after finishing their farming work. However, due to the development of the art industry, artists creating this art have become increasingly rare because of the complexity of Prasi works and limited market opportunities. With the growth of the tourism industry, hopes for reviving Prasi works are rising in tandem with the creative developments undertaken by the artists.

Traditional artist I Gusti Agung Ngurah is one such artist who has introduced innovative ideas and concepts to the traditional art form, making I Gusti Agung Ngurah's Prasi works possess a new appeal and are in demand in today's market. This phenomenon is worth studying, as Prasi artworks have managed to endure. It is suspected that artist I Gusti Agung Ngurah employs distinct methods and creative abilities compared to other traditional artists.

Qualitative research employing approaches from Aesthetics, Semiotics, Culture, and Visual Communication Design is used to 'dissect' these Prasi works to determine whether structure, form, artistry, aesthetics, and meaning influence this appeal.

The focus of this research is fundamentally different from studies in other research, and no previous research has specifically and deeply explored and explained the structure, form, artistry, aesthetics, and meaning of Prasi's works.

In-depth research and investigation are expected to reveal the structural form, artistry, aesthetics, and meaning as well as the appeal of Prasi works, thereby identifying the concepts behind Sidemen Prasi works that can serve as guidelines and models for artistic creation.

The objectives and benefits of this research are to uncover the structure, form, artistry, aesthetics, and meaning of Prasi, thereby identifying the appeal, process, and concepts behind the creation of Prasi works that can serve as guidelines and models for the application of Prasi visual imagery within specific spaces and functions. It can preserve and publicize the values and concepts of Prasi works by I Gusti Agung Ngurah in Sidemen Village, Karangasem, Bali. And it can enrich the process and concepts of Prasi works that carry local Balinese elements.

The benefits of this research are, in theory, to advance knowledge related to Prasi and art studies. For the author, it can enhance knowledge regarding Prasi; for the institution, it can serve as a reference source for further research on Prasi.

## Literature Review

Suwidja (1979), *Understanding Balinese Prasi*, is a work that discusses the types of lontar palms best suited for making Prasi, the process of carving images onto lontar using a stylus, the use of wayang forms as a foundation, the technique of drawing Prasi, and annotations on the images. The discussion in this book begins with the selection of materials used in Prasi production, explaining the types of motifs, images, and descriptions of images sourced from various Prasi works. I Ketut Suwija also comments on the works of I Ketut Badung, one of the most renowned Prasi artists in Bali. According to him, several of I Ketut Badung's Prasi works are beautiful, neat, and meticulously crafted. What can be learned from this book is about the types of Prasi art motifs and the works of a, namely I Ketut Badung. The book broadens the author's understanding of Prasi image motifs and serves as a reference for refining concepts [31].

Hooykaas: on Prasi art, a fusion of images and text. Suardana (2015), *Prasi Ramayana, Ravana's Disguise as a Brahmin in the Abduction of Sita*, theories of art history, aesthetics, iconography, iconology, qualitative descriptive interpretive analysis, three works by Prasi Sidemen artists: Ida Bagus Jelantik Purwa, Ida Bagus Raka, and Ida Ayu Budawati [36].

Pradnyanita, (2020) *The Existence of Prasi Palm-Leaf Manuscripts in Tenganan Village, Pegeringsingan Subdistrict, Manggis, Karangasem. Fine Arts and Crafts Education, Prasi Art in Anthropological and Sociological Studies. Ida Bagus Rai Prasi (Traditional Balinese Comics) in the Digital Age: Challenges and Opportunities.*

## Research Methodology

A qualitative research design using data collection methods such as observation and interviews, supplemented by a literature review for analysis. Research Location: Talibeng Village, Sidemen Subdistrict, Karangasem Regency, Bali. Data sources and instruments: research tools (camera, notebook, recorder); selection of informants (based on criteria, experience, and knowledge); data collection techniques (observation, interviews); and literature review (compiling historical facts, deriving theories and approaches). Qualitative data consists of words, actions, or images, as well as documentation; primary data (main, new, original data) is obtained through interviews, and secondary data (secondary or indirect data obtained through others or documents, from libraries, or previous research reports). The research approach employs Semiotics, Art Theory, Aesthetics, and Cultural Studies. This is done to identify the signifiers and signifieds contained within Prasi's works and how the artist I Gusti Agung Ngurah constructs his Prasi works. The primary instrument in qualitative research is the researcher themselves. To conduct interviews, research instruments in the form

of a questionnaire, a notebook, and research tools such as a still camera or video camera are required (Satori, Djaman'an, and Aan Komarian, 2010: 90). The technique for selecting informants in this study uses Snowball Sampling (Sugiyono, 2018:82). Snowball sampling is a sampling technique that starts with a small sample size and then expands. This technique is likened to a snowball that rolls and gradually grows larger. Data collection techniques: Observation is a data collection technique conducted through the observation of research subjects. In terms of the data collection process, observation can be categorized into Participant Observation.

(Participant Observation) and Non-Participant Observation. In Participant Observation, literature review is conducted through books, journals, dissertations, the Internet, magazines, and articles. An interview is a conversation conducted with a specific purpose. The conversation is conducted by two parties: the interviewer, who asks the questions, and the interviewee, who provides answers to those questions.

## Analysis

Traditional Balinese Prasi works are part of the cultural heritage of indigenous wisdom, possessing high artistic and aesthetic value and distinctive characteristics that are highly intriguing. Traditional Prasi works are created on lontar leaves (*Borassus flabellifer*), and their production continues to be preserved to this day. Prasi works contain narratives and images derived from ancient manuscripts, hymns, literature, and the like, written or drawn using a special knife called a pangrupak.

The structure of I Gusti Agung Ngurah's Prasi works is composed of traditional Balinese artistic and aesthetic ornamental elements, including keketusan, papatran, kekarangan, and wayang figures as well as animals, arranged in the distinctive patterns characteristic of I Gusti Agung Ngurah's Prasi style. The form of Prasi I Gusti Agung Ngurah's works features curved lines, balanced empty spaces and content, and a profound, earnest quality, with a dominant presence of wayang figures drawn from the stories of the Ramayana, Mahabharata, Sutasoma, and Tantri.



Figure 1. Rahwana Puppet in Full Costume  
[Source: Personal Document, 2025]

The creative process of Prasi I Gusti Agung Ngurah involves the following stages:

Stage I: 1) Carving the Lontar; 2) Writing on Palm Leaves (with a Pencil); 3) Scratching the Palm Leaf/Carving ((a)Carving Keketusan; (b)Carving the Frame; (c) Writing on Palm Leaves); 4) Ngrupak Speech; 5) Ngrupak Raga Stage II: 1) Ngoleh/Nguas Mangsi Guet and Rong; 2) Mastering Speech; 3) Mastering Physical Aspects; 4) Ngelap Mangsi



Figure 2. a, b, c, d, e, f The Proses Prasi by I Gusti Agung Ngurah  
[Source: Personal Document, 2025]

The artistry of Prasi I Gusti Agung Ngurah's works encompasses depth, intensity, and repetition in visualizing sharpness, balance, composition, wayang forms, and animals in detail, rendered on an arrangement of several lontar leaves. Additionally, he divides the space (rong) with varying dimensional appearances.

The aesthetics of Prasi I Gusti Agung Ngurah's work consist of formal aesthetic elements such as lines, planes, colors, textures, composition, and proportions to create visual appeal. Works by Prasi I Gusti Agung Ngurah.



Figure 3. a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i *Pasi* by I Gusti Agung Ngurah  
[Source: Personal Document, 2025]

The denotative meaning of Prasi I Gusti Agung Ngurah's work is an in-depth analysis of the lines, planes, black and cream colors, textures, planes, composition, and

proportions found in Prasi I Gusti Agung Ngurah's work, in accordance with the Prasi material used in specific proportions and compositions.

The connotative meaning represents the philosophy and guidance on the goodness of life derived from the epics of the Ramayana, Mahabharata, Sutasoma, and the Tantras.



Figure4. a Arjuna and b Dewi Saraswati  
[Source: Personal Document, 2025]

## Conclusion

Based on an analysis using aesthetic, semiotic, and cultural studies approaches, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. The structure and form of Prasi (traditional Balinese comics) with a single theme feature a single figure as the focal point of the Prasi. This presentation differs from previous Prasi illustrations, which typically depicted multiple figures within a single image.
2. The artistic style, or the science of human-made beauty, is dominated by stylization that draws on themes of plants, rocks, and objects such as pepatran, kekarangan, and keketusan, which are composed based on the ideas, concepts, and visions of the artist I Gusti Agung Ngurah. This results in a new appeal that

differs from the works of other traditional artists in the village of Sidemen, Karangasem, Bali.

3. The aesthetics or study of beauty found in Prasi works include larger-scale objects, simpler compositions with empty space, and content that is more clearly expressed through lines, planes, colors, and textures integrated into the objects, as well as themes that are not diverse.
4. The denotative meaning of I Gusti Agung Ngurah's Prasi works lies in the lines, planes, and black and cream colors, consistent with the Prasi materials used in specific proportions and compositions. The connotative meaning reflects a philosophy of moral guidance rooted in the epics of the Ramayana, Mahabharata, Sutasoma, and the Tantras.

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