

Painted 'kebaya', Bali's new

fashion trademark

Traditional blouses, or *kebaya*, are inseparable from the lives of many Balinese women.

They wear lace, cotton or silk *kebaya*, along with intricate *songket* woven cloth or batik wrapped cloth, at almost every religious ceremony, family and communal gathering. Like thousands of women on the island, Aryani Tedjamulya, is better known as Niniek, an extremely comfortable woman wearing a *kebaya*.

Kebaya is considered the traditional dress for Indonesian women, including the Balinese, said Niniek.

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For Niniek, the *kebaya* is not only compulsory attire, but also a gold mine. Niniek has had a passion for art since she was young. As a child, she was always eager to help her mother make fashion sketches. Her mother, Susilanitya Dewi, is a successful garment producer.

Niniek, a graduate of the Department of English at

Udayana University, has decided to blend fashion and art. She channels her painting skills not on canvas, but on silk fabrics.

A few years ago one of her mother's clients from France asked her to paint on textiles that were to be tailored for beachwear.

"I felt so challenged because I had never worked on textile," Niniek remembered.

It took her more than a year of experimenting with textile painting before perfecting the art.

"I carried out experiments on a large variety of textiles,

but the results were so dissatisfying," she recalled.

Then she chose silk and began painting floral patterns on the fabric. "It was so amazing. The silk material originated from natural fibers. The paintings radiated so well on the fabric," said the mother of three.

Niniek said it took a lot of skill and precision to paint on silk. "Once you stroke your brush and create an object on the material, you can't erase it or you will destroy the fabric."

Producing painted *kebaya* has made her life as colorful as the objects she creates.

"Fresh and colorful flowers always bring happiness to those who see them," said Niniek, who expects that all her clients, including movie stars and local celebrities, feel happy when wearing the handmade *kebaya*.

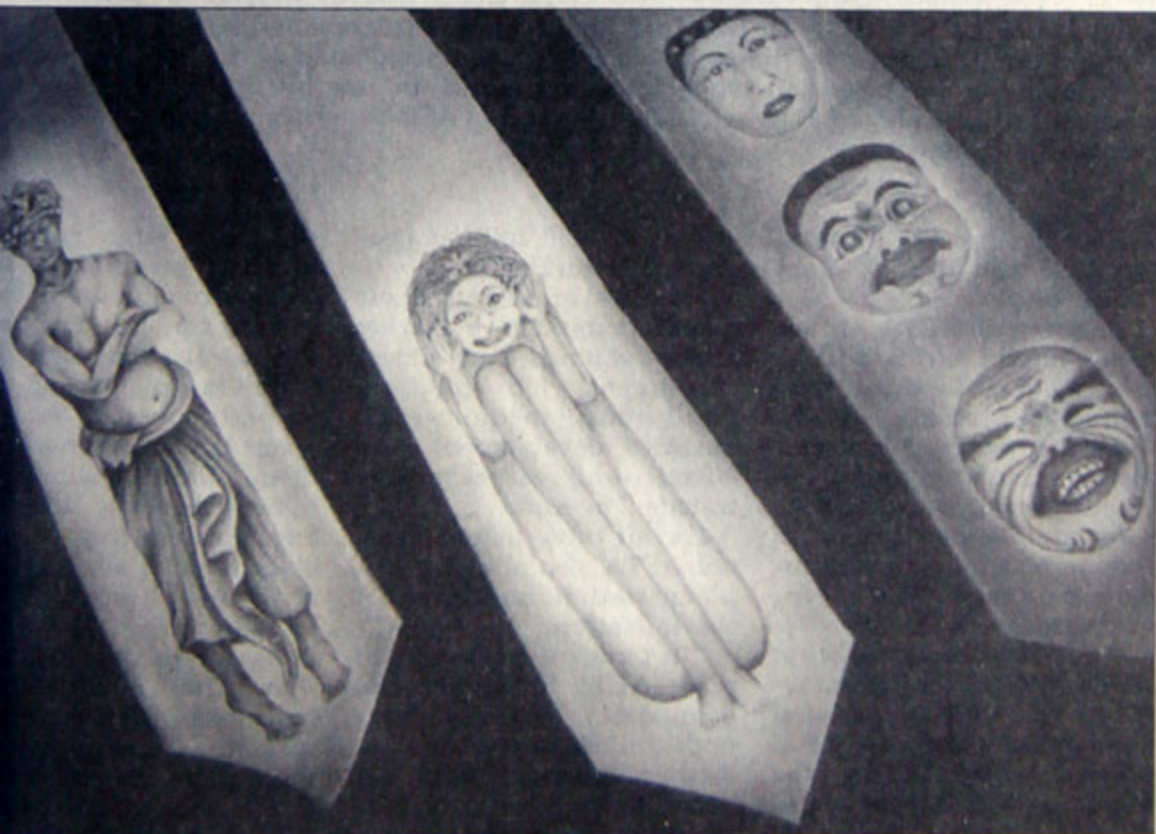
Among her clients are artists Tamara Blezinsky and Vina Panduwina. Even President Megawati Soekarnoputri, who generally wears a *kebaya* to state functions, has reportedly eyed Niniek's unique creations.

Most of her works contain paintings of flowers used in the various religious ceremonies of the Balinese Hindu, such as frangipani, lotus, roses, water lilies, orchids and jasmine.

"Bali is filled with sources of inspiration. I never run out of ideas. I am surrounded by beautiful nature and rich culture," Niniek said.

To maintain the quality of the pieces, Niniek refuses to mass produce the *kebaya*.

"I can only produce around 30 *kebaya* every month and I



From painted *kebaya* (traditional blouses), Aryani also gives ties her touch with traditional Balinese motifs.