Indonesian art history has an odd relationship with general history writing. Like mainstream history, narratives of art history serve nationalist purposes. Modernism in art is equated with nationalism in the official story of Indonesian art.

Like the major political narratives of history, however, the story of modern Indonesian art cannot adequately accommodate the events of 1965, and nor can it deal with the existence of parallel histories of regional art. An art history that begins with Bali provides alternative understandings of the modern, and the regional in Indonesia. This alternative art history relocates Indonesian art in the global context, illuminates the roles of institutions in the production and commodification of art, and provides a new understanding of the contemporary in art.

Speaker: Adrian Vickers
Professor Adrian Vickers holds a personal chair at the University of Sydney. His publications include Bali: A Paradise Created (1989, new edition 2013); A History of Modern Indonesia (2004, new edition 2012, ); Balinese Art: Paintings and Drawing of Bali (2012), and, with Julia Martínez, The Pearl Frontier: Labor Mobility across the Australian-Indonesian Maritime Zone, 1870 – 1970 (2015). As part of an ARC Linkage Grant on the history of Balinese painting, he has prepared a virtual museum, continuing previous pioneering work in eResearch and teaching.