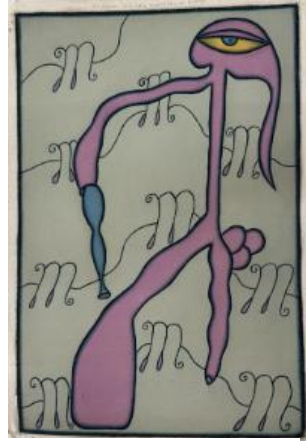


## Nottingham Contemporary Teacher / Group Leader Notes

### I Gusti Ayu Kadek Murniasih 'Murni' *Feels strangely good ya?* Galleries 1 and 2

### Basel Abbas and Ruanne Abou-Rahme *Prisoners of Love: Until the Sun of Freedom* Galleries 3 and 4

27 Sep 2025 – Sun 11 Jan 2026



I Gusti Ayu Kadek Murniasih, *Minuman Habis Sidia Kehausan*, 2001.

In Galleries 3 and 4 is a new immersive artwork created by Palestinian duo Basel Abbas and Ruanne Abou-Rahme. Together, they create research-led sound and moving image work that seeks to document and share Palestinian life and voices.

This new work includes testimonies of former Palestinian prisoners alongside extracts of poems and writing on the theme of freedom. Testimonies share the psychological experience of imprisonment and strategies, such as singing, dreaming and storytelling used to survive, resist and imagine other possibilities.

Both exhibitions celebrate the power of imagination and creativity and the triumph of the human spirit.

#### Themes:

- Social justice, personal and political struggles for freedom
- Archives and testimonies
- Poetry, songs, storytelling and texts
- Democracy and social media
- Triumph of the human spirit
- Creative imagination and freedoms
- Psychology, dreams and subconscious
- Autonomy over one's own body and mind

**Featuring:** Multi-channel immersive film installations, prints, paintings and sculpture.

**Curriculum:** Art & Design, Film, Technology, PSHE, Citizenship, History.

This season we present two exhibitions. In Galleries 1 and 2 are artworks by the late Balinese artist, I Gusti Ayu Kadek Murniasih, also known as 'Murni'.

Her humorous and surreal artworks are shaped by her dreams and subconscious. In her life she experienced personal traumas and struggles, but through painting her rebellious spirit is set free.

### I Gusti Ayu Kadek Murniasih 'Murni' - Galleries 1 and 2

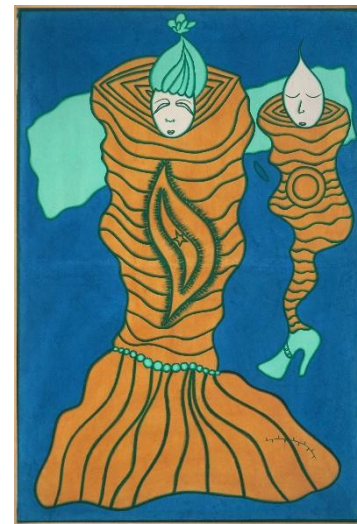
*"I paint to feel I exist."* - Murni



I Gusti Ayu Kadek Murniasih, *Berdandan*, 2002

As you enter Gallery 1, Murni's early work is displayed (on a freestanding wall) alongside artworks by her creative mentors and friends - Mokoh, Mondo and Totol. Together they formed, what they describe as an artistic family.

Her artworks are drawn from all her lived experience, her traumas and joys and fragments of her dreams. She **resisted boundaries** and fiercely pursued the right to paint what she wanted to paint. It is through her strong sense of **creative freedom** and **creative energy** that she reclaims autonomy over her body and mind.



I Gusti Ayu Kadek Murniasih, *Enggak Bisa Tidur Karena Kurang (I Can't Sleep Because I Want More)*, 2002

Please note some of the artworks in this exhibition **contain sexually charged imagery**. These are depicted playfully using bright colours and cartoon-like forms.

The exhibition has been curated to make it easier for school groups and families to navigate the show and make informed decisions about content. Artworks in Gallery 1 are human, animal, plant and hybrid creatures. Artworks in Gallery 2 contain imagery of sexual parts and acts. Visitor guidance notes with sample images are available and our team can also advise.

Murni creates **humorous and surreal artworks** shaped by her **dreams and subconscious**, and a belief that life force is essentially a sexual energy.

Murni is largely a self-taught artist with an incredible creative drive and curiosity. She experimented with different materials and techniques, working sometimes with wood and metal, but it is mainly her paintings that are presented here.

Her work **challenged societal perceptions** of the role of women and tackled taboo subjects of **female sexuality**, desire and power. However, she shunned the work being characterised as feminist, preferring her artwork to be understood on its own terms.

Within her artworks, recurring motifs from her dreams and subconscious can be seen. These include high heel shoes, mermaids and other hybrid human forms, animals, plants and clocks. Shoes can be connected to female sexuality and clocks to mortality. Murni passed away in 2006 at the age of 40, leaving a body of work full of colour, life and energy.

### Basel Abbas and Ruanne Abou-Rahme - Galleries 3 and 4

Palestinian artist duo Basel Abbas and Ruanne Abou-Rahme have created a **new immersive audio-visual artwork** across both galleries for this exhibition.



Basel Abbas and Ruanne Abou-Rahme, Still from *Prisoners of Love: Until the Sun of Freedom*, 2025. Courtesy of the artists.

For this new work, alongside found footage they have collected **testimonies of former Palestinian prisoners**. These testimonies share something of the psychological experience of imprisonment and the strategies, such as singing, drawing on their own imaginations or the poems and writings of others to survive and resist.

Some of the extracts of poems and writing on the theme of freedom appear as text across screens. These include the works of prominent Palestinian poets and the words of Malcolm X.

The mood of the artwork is often gentle and meditative. The film includes scenes and sounds in nature and people reflecting and singing. The focus of the work is the use of **song and poetry as a source of strength, a way to resist and keep the mind and body free**. Throughout the work is an insistence on joy and a sense of people's deep relationship to the land.

The artists use **multiple surfaces, metal, concrete and the layering of works to communicate the emotional and psychological conditions of imprisonment and occupation**. Within this experience, a person's movements and vista of the outside world and the landscape are controlled or forbidden.



Basel Abbas and Ruanne Abou-Rahme, Still from *Prisoners of Love: Until the Sun of Freedom*, 2025. Courtesy of the artists.

Together, they use **new technologies and found online content** to create their work and a vast archive, or what they refer to as a **'counter-archive'** of Palestinian culture and experiences. An act intended to prevent the erasure of **Palestinian voices**.

Sometimes louder, drone-like **sound is used to communicate the psychological conditions of detention**. The **technique of sampling** speaks to the struggles that are ongoing and repeated.

The exhibition space is painted purple, the colour of the desert thistle that grows in Palestine. The thistle grows where the land has been disturbed, often through violent acts, it replenishes the soil and allows other plants to return. The **colour is used to signify resistance**. Ultimately, the **artwork asks us to imagine and to imagine what could be**.