

I Gusti Ayu Kadek

Murniasih

Feels Strangely Good, Ya?

Large Print Exhibition

Notes

I Gusti Ayu Kadek Murniasih

Feels Strangely Good, Ya?

27 Sep 2025–11 Jan 2026

The late Balinese artist I Gusti Ayu Kadek Murniasih ‘Murni’ (1966–2006, Bali) was a prolific, largely self-taught artist who created a vividly raw body of work that is both confessional and confrontational, humourous and surreal in its nature.

Born in 1966, Murni’s early life was shaped by displacement and hardship.

Despite resistance from Murni, her family sold their land and rice fields to

relocate to South Sulawesi under the Indonesian government's transmigration programme. This resulted in upheaval in Murni's life and disrupted the family's sacred connection to their land.

Following the move Murni worked in various roles such as a domestic helper or a seamstress.

In the 1990s Murni moved to Ubud in a return to her beloved Bali, for a time working at a silversmith before marrying a soldier. Due to health complications Murni was unable to conceive and the relationship with her husband failed, prompting her to file for divorce –

unprecedented for the time. In 1994, after four years, a divorce was granted and Murni began working at the house of the Italian painter Edmondo Zanolini ‘Mondo’ (b.1951), who later became her life partner.

At the time, Mondo was apprentice to renowned Pengosekan painter I Dewa Putu Mokoh ‘Mokoh’ (1936– 2010), to whom Murni also became an apprentice. This was a key moment in establishing a foundation for her later creative output. While Murni initially absorbed Mokoh’s formal qualities her work rapidly diverged in tone and form, revealing a

raw, deeply personal and often emotionally charged inner world.

At the heart of her vision was an understanding of life force as an essentially sexual energy – one that permeates everything. In her home she surrendered to that energy, painting day and night, often waking in the middle of sleep to sketch her dreams, following the subconscious stream of images that demanded to be seen. Drawing from all her lived experience, her traumas and joys, and using fragments of her dreams, psyche and subconscious she made her life art, and art her life. Her work was

liberation, a way of reclaiming the female body. It challenged taboo subjects of female sexuality, desire and power.

Her curious, naturally unconventional and humbly rebellious nature drove Murni to continuously develop her practice and acquire new skills – woodcarving, mask making and soft sculpture. In her life, as much as her transgressive visual language, she lived balancing between what was socially understood as feminine and masculine.

As described in *I See Myself Floating: the art and life of I Gusti Ayu Kadek*

***Murniasih*, Murni's best friend Suarniti recalls that 'when Murni longed to dance, she learned the baris: a pre-hindu ritual dance that was typically performed not by girls, but boys'**

At a time when the female body was often portrayed as merely a muse, or was erased from cultural visibility, Murni painted it unapologetically as the subject. Instead of mirroring the painful patriarchal reality, Murni intuitively muted and merged motifs sourced from her subconsciousness and re-dreamed lived experiences. In her work, fragments

of sometimes painful bodily and subconscious memories merge in half-animal and half-object hybrids. The line between oppression and liberation constantly fluctuates through Murni's use of playful imagery and bright colours. The titles teased and provoked – they dance with absurdity, desire, and sound. Murni passed away in 2006 at the tender age of 40. Her works remain ageless and pulsing with urgency.

RELATED EVENTS

WALKTHROUGHS

Wed 1 Oct, 12pm

Welcome Walkthrough

Explore the exhibition with our team and community partners, Manjit Sahota, Poets Against Racism and Anna Ball, HEAL (Hostile Environment, Art-fuelled Living) followed by refreshments and conversation in the café.

Wed 8 Oct, 1pm

With Annie Jael Kwan, curator and researcher.

Wed 22 Oct, 1pm

Curators' Walkthrough

**Join Nottingham Contemporary's
curators for a tour of our autumn
exhibitions.**

Wed 10 Dec, 1pm

**With students from the BA Fine Art
course, Nottingham Trent University**

12.30 Talks

**12.30pm every Tue, Thu and Sat, starting
Tue 7 Oct**

**Join one of our friendly Gallery Assistants
for a short exploration of one of our**

current exhibitions. For more details visit our website.

Thu 2 Oct, 4.30pm

Teacher CPD Session

An art-making and practice-sharing session in our galleries. For educators of all stages.

LISTENING SESSION

Wed 3 Dec, 7pm

Listening Session with Rahel Stephanie, weaving together music, personal storytelling, and cultural context,

**exploring themes from Murni's work
between tracks.**

FREE FAMILY ACTIVITIES

**October Half-Term: 21 Oct - 30 Oct, Tue,
Wed & Thu**

**Explore the themes in the exhibitions
through making and play.**

Mon 6 Oct, 10 Nov, 15 Dec

**Early Years Sensory Workshops: We Are
Wonderlings**

Explore the world through sensory free play in a safe and stimulating environment.

OTHER EVENTS

Thu 2 Oct, 7pm

111

Three live performances rooted in the expression of Louis Carnell's collaborative record. Featuring Louis Carnell, Wu-Lu, Li Yilei, Juliana Day & Tom Harris.

Wed 8 Oct, 6:30pm

Tender Stones by Lucy Suggate with Cool Company

Live performance exploring the transferable properties of stone, petrification, heaviness and tenderness, presented as part of Nottdance 2025. Suitable for all.

Fri 10 - Sun 12 Oct

Print Fair Contemporary

Over 35 stalls showcasing a wide range of printmakers, illustrators and artists.

Wed 15 Oct, 7:30pm

Mōnad by Alexandra 'Spicey' Lande with MC Jai Nitai Lotus

**A contemporary dance performance
exploring how we approach different
incarnations of the same life, presented
as part of Nottdance 2025. Suitable for
ages 18 and over.**

Sat 25 - Sun 26 Oct

Festival of Resistance

**Join us for a special weekend of
community celebration and solidarity.
Meet community groups and activists,**

**take part in talks and creative workshops
and be part of the action.**

Sat 1 Nov, 10:20am & 1:30pm

**The Show for Young Men by GuestHouse
Projects**

**A funny and tender contemporary dance
performance that considers the
complexities of modern-day masculinity,
presented as part of Nottdance 2025.
Suitable for ages 8 and over.**

Tue 4 Nov, 6.30pm

Jarman Award 2025

**Jarman Award Touring Programme 2025,
followed by an in-conversation with
Morgan Quaintance.**

Fri 5 - Sun 7 Dec

Craft Fair Contemporary

**40 stalls from independent designers
and makers showcasing a variety of
specialisms.**

**For more information about the
exhibition, related events and learning
programmes, visit**

**nottinghamcontemporary.org or scan
here:**



COLOPHON

**We are grateful to all those whose
generosity made this exhibition possible.**

Headline Supporter: Gajah Gallery

**Publication Supporter: Tanoto Art
Foundation**

**The Murni Exhibition Circle: Natasha
Sidartha, Galuh Sukardi, Raja Umar
Jamalullail (The MENAEA Collection)
and those who wish to remain
anonymous.**

**The exhibition is curated by Salma Tuqan
and Katie Simpson, assisted by Klara
Szafrńska.**

Exhibition graphics by Waste Studio.

**If you would like a quiet space to reflect
during your visit, please visit Gallery 0
(room adjacent to Gallery 1). If you would
like to use any alternative forms of
interpretation, we have a range of
accessible versions on our Access Wall**

**beside Reception or alongside the wall
text in the exhibition.**

**Nottingham Contemporary is a
registered charity and dependent on the
generosity of our visitors, partners and
supporters.**