

**I Gusti Ayu Kadek
Murniasih**

Feels Strangely Good, Ya?

Large Print Wall Labels

Gallery 1

Creative Companions: I Gusti Ayu Kadek

Murniasih 'Murni', Edmondo Zanolini

'Mondo', I Dewa Putu Mokoh 'Mokoh'

and Dewa Raram 'Totol'

'We were a family, a dedicated family.

We were all in love with each other,

supportive, open and respectful of each

other and each other's independence. So

the question of influence and diversity

was just a part of it, something that came naturally.'

– Edmondo Zanolini

Though often described as mentor-protégé, the relationship between Murni and Mokoh was one of mutual respect rather than hierarchy.

Mokoh did not formally train Murni, but rather, they painted side by side in a dialogue as equals.

Mokoh's artistic foundation – rooted in the Pengosekan school that emerged from the village of Pengosekan (south of Ubud, Bali) – was based on the exploration of the simplicity of the line.

This style influenced Murni's early experiments with form, however, she pushed this visual language into new emotional and psychological territory.

Drawing on her own life experience as a Balinese woman navigating loss, love and social constraint, she transformed

Mokoh's softer lines into bold, more provocative images. Mondo and Murni's sense of freedom encouraged Mokoh to indulge his own fantasies, expanding the possibilities of his visual storytelling.

Another member of this intimate creative circle was Totol. Born during the Japanese occupation of Indonesia, his name 'Raram' echoed the sound of warplanes circling overhead, an onomatopoeic memory from his earliest

days. Totol struggled with traditional modes of communication but found his expression through painting.

Working primarily in black and white Chinese ink, he developed a personal symbology, often featuring figures in military dress.

Together, Mokoh, Murni, Mondo and Totol formed an unconventional artistic family. Though their individual styles varied, their works at times

revolved around shared motifs and themes. Sometimes these emerged from photographic prompts used to spark creativity; at other times, they arose spontaneously, through conversation or intuitive play.

Gallery 2

Motivation, Motifs and Materials

‘I paint to feel that I exist.’

– I Gusti Ayu Kadek Murniasih

Murni chose not to be bound by the codes of femininity which surrounded her – she did not dress like a Balinese woman, go to temple or make daily offerings to the gods and spirits. She was unafraid to be different and claimed agency over her body, beliefs and path. Out of this refusal, she developed a visual language of radical honesty that

**speaks boldly of a woman's right to
possess her own body and mind.**

**Through her work Murni declared her
freedom, asserting autonomy in a world
that rarely afforded women such rights.**

**Her paintings are filled with recurring
symbols: high-heeled shoes, butterflies
and watches. The high heel – her earliest
motif – was never just a shoe. It was both
feminine and phallic, symbolizing the
duality of the Lingga and Yoni, ancient**

symbols in Hinduism representing the divine masculine and feminine energies.

The shoe, worn and penetrated by the foot, could also pierce – it was sharp, dangerous. The watch, beyond marking time, became a poignant symbol of mortality.

In one series, she painted torsos with objects such as paintbrushes or tubes of paint between the legs – self-portraits in disguise. Elsewhere, she gave form to

**sublime acts of masturbation, not as
erotic display but as spiritual assertion –
a woman reclaiming pleasure, pain, and
power on her own terms.**

**In 2004, at the age of 38, Murni was
diagnosed with late-stage ovarian
cancer. A year later, when it became
clear that Murni would succumb to her
illness, she designed her last
masterpiece; four wrought iron**

**sculptures resembling torso shaped
birdcages pierced by scissors, knives
and sharp objects. She chose the
durability of iron as a final act of defiance
against mortality itself.**