

## SENSATIONAL BALINESE FEMALE ARTIST, MURNIASIH, MEETS THE PRESS

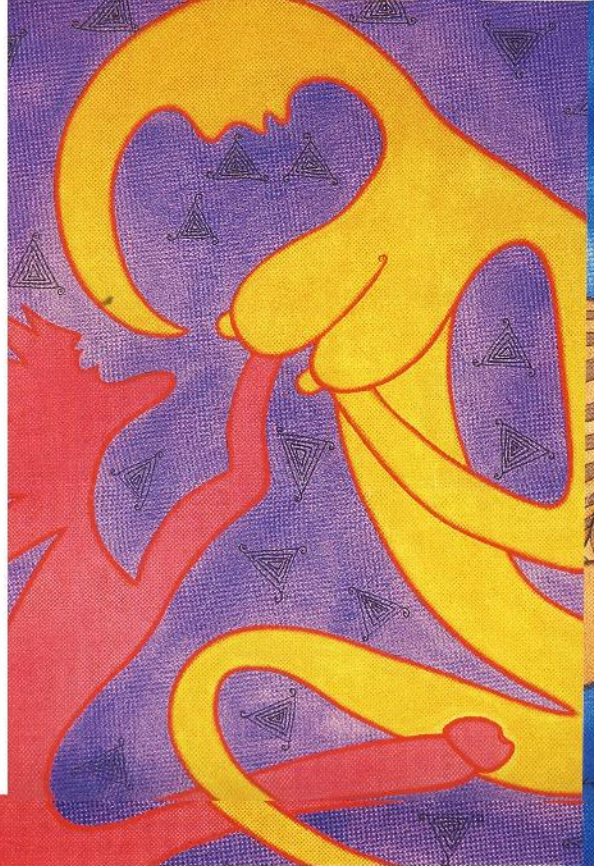
to make masks and I tried dance, and finally I chose painting. I felt more alive when I painted.

### Can you tell us about your life?

Yes, I'm ready to talk about my life from when I was little. I haven't spoken about this to my mother or to my older brothers and sisters. But I want to tell everyone now what happened when I was seven years old. I was raped by my father. Up until now I've blocked it in my heart and in my head, but now I want to talk, I'm ready. I was seven years old, can you imagine? Very small, but I still remember, how my father forced himself on me, with no thought to try to protect me. I saw in his eyes, it was like I wasn't his child. One time I was molested at night, so I went to my friend's house for two days and didn't go home. I didn't just feel pain in my vagina, I felt pain in my head and in my heart, pain that I still feel to this day. My father died seven years ago. Maybe he's here with us now, but that's the story that I have to tell. This all happened thirty years ago. I've read in the *Bali Post* stories from Karangasem, and other parts of Bali, about similar things happening, that happened to me. But these people were able to talk about it immediately. I've held on to this secret for thirty years.

That's why, six months ago I made a "soft sculpture" for the upcoming biennale in Jakarta in September. The soft sculpture represents my body. It's about three metres in size. It's "broken" in the vagina, the heart and the head. I made a hole – I'm sorry I don't want to shock you by what I'm going to say – I made a hole in the vagina, and then in the heart and the head, and I inserted an elephant's penis in each. I used an elephant because at the time when these things happened to me, I felt very small, and I felt like he could do anything to me. I felt powerless. And that is the feeling that I wanted to convey in this sculpture.

I have ten brothers and sisters, and nine of them work in the paddy fields, because we are a simple farming family. Maybe if I hadn't had those experiences with my father, I wouldn't have led the life that I am leading today. When I look at my siblings they are all happily married with children that they love, and they are very content with their domestic lives. I was the tenth child. And I ran away from my family.



# Meeting Murniasih

TEXT AND PHOTOS ADAM FENTON

One of the most talked-about artists on Bali today, Murniasih has burst onto the art scene with paintings and sculptures that are both shocking and thought provoking. In this exclusive interview she reveals for the first time the truth about her traumatic past, the reason it became the inspiration for

much of her work, and her passion to fight for the rights of victimized women and children.

### Tell us how you began painting?

I was very happy to paint from when I was 18 years old. I was born in 1966, so I'm 37 now. Painting was a

way for me to survive, I had no other job. I tried others jobs, like garment making and jewellery making, and then as a designer. But I wasn't good because the silver pieces were too small, and I couldn't see them properly. Then I tried garments but I couldn't thread the needle, because my eyes aren't so good. Then I tried