

But Muchtar



LARASATI
a u c t i o n e e r s
Sunday, 21 June 2026

But Muchtar

Love Beneath the Sun

There are paintings that record the world, and there are paintings that hold it. *Love Beneath the Sun* belongs to the latter — a luminous, trembling vision in which But Muchtar distills one of humanity's most primal intimacies into a language of pure form and colour.

Executed in 1965, the year the artist had firmly re-established himself on Indonesian soil following his transformative studies abroad, this canvas stands as a testament to the rare synthesis But Muchtar had achieved: the energetic freedom of American Abstract Expressionism fused with a deeply Indonesian tenderness for the human figure and the warmth of the natural world. Having trained at the Bandung Institute of Technology under Dutch painter Ries Mulder and subsequently at the Rhode Island School of Design and the Sculpture Centre of New York — culminating in a research fellowship at MIT in 1962 — But Muchtar returned to his homeland bearing a singular vision that would pioneer the development of abstract painting in Indonesia. *Love Beneath the Sun* is among the earliest and most heartfelt expressions of that vision.

The composition is built around an act of pure love. A mother reclines in full, unhurried surrender, her body a softly fractured architecture of warmth and trust as she nurses her child. There is no tension in her form — only the ease of someone entirely at home in the giving of life. Her legs extend outward across the lower register of the canvas, stretching gently yet deliberately toward the great red orb above — the sun, blazing and benevolent — as if offering herself, and by extension her child, to its light and benediction. Mother, child, and sun form an unbroken triangle of sustenance: each nourishing the other in quiet, eternal reciprocity.

Above this tender union, a bird moves freely through the upper field of the painting, its path traced in loose, calligraphic arcs of blue — its song made visible, hovering over the mother and child like a blessing. The bird does not merely witness the scene; it participates in it, its flight a lyrical counterpoint to the stillness below, as though joy itself has taken wing.

Muchtar's palette is masterfully controlled in its apparent abandon. Deep crimsons and Prussian blues press against one another across the surface, while passages of pale ash and white open the composition like the intake of breath. Radiating lines surge outward from the sun, charging the canvas with heat and energy, while the circular motifs scattered across the mother's reclining form echo the fullness of the orb above — roundness as symbol of completion, of wholeness, of love that has no edges. The overall effect is of a world suffused with warmth: not the warmth of temperature alone, but of feeling.

This is not simply a domestic scene rendered in abstraction. It is a cosmological statement. The mother does not merely nurse her child — she is the earth feeding life forward; the sun does not merely shine — it is love made radiant and infinite. Muchtar locates the universal inside the intimate, lifting a single quiet moment of nourishment into something that belongs to all of humanity and all of time. The title itself — *Love Beneath the Sun* — speaks in the Indonesian tongue, and the word love carries more than its English equivalent. It is passion that is unconditional, selfless, and endless; the precise quality of feeling that breathes through every inch of this canvas.

Painted at the moment But Muchtar stood as one of the first batches of fine arts graduates from ITB to have received his education in the United States, and as he was laying the foundations for the Sculpture Studio at ITB and beginning his remarkable career as an educator and institution-builder, this painting captures an artist at a crossroads of worlds — translating the boldness of the international avant-garde into something rooted, human, and unmistakably his own.

Works of this emotional depth, formal ambition, and historical significance from But Muchtar's pivotal mid-1960s period appear on the market with the rarest infrequency. *Love Beneath the Sun* is not only an outstanding example of the artist at the height of his powers — it is an affirmation, rendered in oil and canvas, that the most universal of all human experiences, a mother's love beneath an open sky, transcends language, culture, and time.



BUT MUGHTAR
(1930 - 1993, Indonesian)

Love Beneath the Sun

Painted in 1965; oil on canvas; 100 x 100 cm
Signed and dated on upper right

S\$ 18,000 - 28,000

Provenance: Former Indonesian diplomat for Australia in 1970s

Pick up point: Jakarta



"He eventually developed his own distinctive style and pioneered the development of abstract painting in Indonesia."

Auction
Sunday, 21 June 2026
starting at
4.30 pm (Singapore)/3.30 pm (Jakarta)

Preview
Saturday, 20 June 2026 (2 pm - 7 pm)
Sunday, 21 June 2026 (11 am - 3.30 pm)

Royal Plaza on Scotts
Scotts Suites, Level 2
25 Scotts Road, Singapore 228220

Selected Preview
Friday, 19 June 2026 (11am - 6 pm)

at The Hermitage
A Tribute Portfolio Hotel Jakarta
Menteng Room
Jl. Cilacap No.1, Menteng,
Jakarta, Indonesia

info@larasati.com
www.larasati.com