



## RUANG

Daud Rahim has become a key member of the vibrant new generation of Malaysian artists emerging in the early twenty first century- a time marked by widespread optimism that mirrors Malaysia's own coming of age as one of South East Asia's leading players in the global village.

*Ruang*, in the midst of this world of abundant referentiality, presents itself with pared – back elegance, suggesting a kind of relationship between the artist and his spiritual connectedness to his environment whose perpetuation has become a consciousness of itself. Within this seamless and timeless world, the art of Daud presents itself as intellectually sophisticated and philosophically inclined; art that reveals his own profound spirituality and desire and need to preserve his cultural identity. And with this montage upon which he translates his visual vocabulary, he reveals a beauty and mystery of images that could otherwise be veiled by the banality of commercialism.

Growing up in Lenggong, Perak – where he was born in 1973, Daud's world was encompassed in the simple pleasures of traditional village life and the principles of Islamic values. With such rooted in his daily life, he soon understood the tight relationship between the environment and its empowering anonymous spiritual space. He recalls his infinite curiosity with his father's spiritual healing powers and his knowledge of the medicinal use of plants and water as well as the countless possibilities that the environment offered in it's ability to regenerate life. It is this world that has become the nexus of Daud Rahim's artistic practice – a world distant to the to the trappings of the consumer culture and the indifferent urban environment that is fast enveloping contemporary Malaysian society.

Daud Rahim's work improbably melds dreamy, escapist longing with the meticulous research of a botanist. By coupling these two modes of thought, he addresses questions about the relationship of ecology and spirituality with an uncommon visual poetry. Though this fascination is clearly

inbred within his cultural psyche, the work was first more precisely represented during his earlier exhibition, *Visual Invocation* in 2004, wherein the curator, Hasnul Saidon referred to Daud's art within the elemental principles of Eastern spiritual traditions of rhythmic mantras that are meant to silence the mind and being in order to embark upon a deeper state of meditation and thus unveiling the artificial shrouds of "Self".

Attending to the character of these energies, which he largely deployed through the medium of drawing that was carefully juxtaposed with contemporary annotations such as the function of space. Thus Daud would traverse the qualities that were most vital to his artmaking – "*When I put a mark on a paper, there are three qualities, which are very important – the first one is my attitude during the mark-making activities. It is a response to my condition, material and surface and the surrounding environment. Second – is how long it takes and the third are the resulting images.*" With his, the status of *Visual Invocation* seemed to be like a scheme for the future development of his art.

Daud's art remains self - involved.

Though his pluralist output is now far from its development stages, however his is a maturing practice – it remains developmental nevertheless, which is to say sensitive to its ever-evolving environment and wary of over-exposure.

The imagery in ***Ruang*** is rarely subtle; it is hard to ignore the implacable presence of its deeper meaning of "regeneration", or to disavow the implications of physical decomposition of matter that is reborn into fresh forms. Daud's oeuvre is philosophically grounded as a meditation on the mindfulness of fleeting experiences and sensations. Translated into visual terms, such an argument suggests that the act of looking at his paintings should be paramount, as his works demand the closest, most alert attention like his earlier drawings in *Visual Invocation*. Indeed his oeuvre is hard to accurately describe in words and without being given a chance to resist we are drawn into his world of expressionism in which we may feel strangely at home - a world whose visual language provides an allegory for the traditional and contemporary.

Daud Rahim sees himself as a painter in the broadest sense.

He frequently employs various techniques to construct his scenery. The layered character of many of his paintings indicates that there is more going on in them, formally at least, than meets the eye. Daud's paintings embody abundance, both literally through his generous artistic vocabulary and metaphorically -referring to the wealth of inspiration that he derives from his physical and spiritual environment.

Generally Daud only paints at night between the hours of "Ishaq" when he performs his last prayer of the day and "Soebog" the first prayer signaling the dawn of a new day. It is this quiet space that allows him to become more intimately acquainted with his inner being. It is the abundance of this intimate knowledge that fills Daud's paintings.

He approaches each new canvass with assurance and paints with drive and passion that reflects his desire to continuously reconnect with his last painting. In **Ruang**, the fluid process of painting that he has adapted over the last few years has been further refined. His style continues to loosen and the color becomes richer and more vibrant –as if his world has been flushed with nourishment as new growth appears continuously in his world. Daud's work has developed depth and complexity; it is full of feeling and abundant with life.

In **Ruang** one notes a major stylistic change in production, demonstrating Daud's significance as an artist. These paintings that have increased in size are initially color treated through an airbrush technique – the development in process of under painting results in a dramatically changed palette, are further enhanced either through applying layers of surfaces either through very refined brushwork or at times with his bare hands. Alongside this process of application is evidence of a timeless pleasure in color and transparency that is not at all lost in the translation to the mostly large-scale paintings. This process further echo the harmonized connectedness the artist feels for his personal and collective ideals. He describes this process as one that allows him to feel the power of his spiritual environment that resonates through his physical self and thus connecting him to the physical environment - but also importantly to acknowledge the empowerment of his own cultural reclamation

Although Daud's art reflects his deeply reverent self and displays his personal connectedness to his faith and culture – it also reflects other facets of the Malaysian art scene, chiefly the struggles with stereotypes about the art practice and cultural representation of an Islamic Malaysian artist. Daud formulates a specific view that is translated through his paintings – the land is alive and there is life even in a teardrop – and Daud has tried to come to grips with this in all of its subtlety, depth, insight, memory, emotion and spirituality – enacting a visual dialogue that draws out the metaphysical presence within our worldly environment.

Part of the enchantment of Daud's work derives from his mastery of color combined with the set of painterly techniques that he has carefully compiled and that he uses to convey a heartfelt feeling of kinship with his land and personal history. His imagery seems to possess a mystic Tolkienian wisdom and the openness with which he presents his ideas – allows his work to remain fresh – even uplifting.

Shireen Naziree  
February 2007





ASING I ■ Acrylic and Charcoal ■ 77 x 61 cm ■ 2006  
DALAM RUANG – LAPISAN II ■ Acrylic and Charcoal ■ 77 x 61 cm ■ 2006