

Ahmad Zakii Anwar One Man Show

VALENTINE
WILLIE
fine ART

Ahmad Zakii Anwar: One-Man Show

FOR art to fulfil its fundamental self, it must first and foremost have the power to enthrall and capture.

For the moment forget about the message a painting must carry, or the role an artist may play within society. Strip art of its elitist state, of its investment possibilities, and in the end it can rely only on the pure beauty in its own self.

Certainly, art audiences are sometimes moved by the messages that a work of art may carry - and the concepts they may boast. But more often than not they are confused or even suspicious of that which confronts them in the guise of intellectualism... but less and less today do artists invest in the pure aesthetics of their works of art.

That is not to say that good art must be devoid of an intellectual or 'real' social relevance but rather that the aesthetic shouldn't be lost in the obsession with the aforementioned or often, it seems, the pretence of the afore-mentioned.

Ahmad Zakii Anwar's paintings are absolutely enthralling....captivating.

That is not to say that what this artist is about is mere picture making - far from it. In every painting Ahmad Zakii injects his own brand of intellectualism and a quiet sophistication. In the simplicity of his concepts we are thrilled by the depth with which he marries the message with his pure aesthetic prowess.

And with a cheeky sense of humour to boot.

A figurative painter of exceptional means he lets us know that he loves paint and loves to paint - the delicate play of the brush, the instinctive dab here, the slash of colour there, the single white line carelessly laid across the luminosity achieved in his rendition of flesh.

Then like a dark Rothko he marks flat planes of singular colour into his signature blacks - in his vast vistas of dark in which his figures find their place these hints of colour are immediately swallowed but nevertheless glow with an independent life all their own. Layer after layer of vibrant hue gives way to the intricate detail the artist so lovingly teases onto the form.

We look at these paintings - at their variant, brilliant, colourful greys, their smoking men, their big red sofas and we cannot forget the images. The sense of drama, of theatre within the perimeters of his images are undeniable.

Then there is an almost intuitive understanding of the figure. Each quiet twist of the limb or the graceful turn of the curve of his Balinese dancers; his smoking men as they stand in easy ennui seem to reveal the pure joy of the process of creation - there is an obvious love for the act of drawing as well.

It comes across in the lines on the face, tired eyes seen through masks of smoke, the delightful rendition of hands - always hands, and of course the easy posturing of his actors.

There are few hard edges here - the subjects are always distinct from the sombre surroundings but their edges seem to dance with ethereal texture and colour that add to their luminosity.

As in most of his earlier works, a nostalgic, tentative prescience pervades Zakii's recent paintings, like the memory of a fading dream. The strange potency of the artist's various images lies in the ability to appeal to the senses and evoke the surrounding world without recourse to sentimentality or precocity.

The legacy that he has inherited from his tertiary training in graphic art is a sense of design few fine artists possess or seem interested in exploring. His philosophies of space and perspective and always, composition, are carefully calculated in almost two dimensional terms and then rendered in the most Spartan of renditions making for a visual elegance that is gratifying in its very simplicity.

It is very easy to be drawn to these paintings - they have tremendous appeal.

But the artist never reveals himself quite so easily. Ask him about most of the paintings and their effects and he will explain it away with a shrug and an easy "I liked it that way"... Ask him about his Smoking Series and he will tell you that the paintings started out as a reaction to the adverse publicity smokers experience today.

But the artist enjoys debate and supposition and revels in the reactions of the people who look at the paintings. Talking about one response he recently received, Zakii describes the smoke as a kind of mask - not in any kind of literal sense - but as a reflection of the state of humanity.

It seems to fit in, if a little to conveniently, with the darkness and the shadows that dominate the figurative works as well as the various other devices the artist has begun to use in place of the smoking figure. The series has grown and so has the rationale behind it.

The artist however is as always - cagey - "I liked that analogy, it helped me understand my work as well..." , he laughs.

And it has certainly been a considerable body of work.

Born of an illustrious Johor family, Zakii trained as a graphic designer at the School of Art and Design, MARA Institute of Technology, the author of some of the most memorable advertising images in this region. In many ways the strength of his advertising work lay in the fact that his creative psyche has always been firmly wedged in the door of fine art.

Today, at last, he is completely energised about painting.

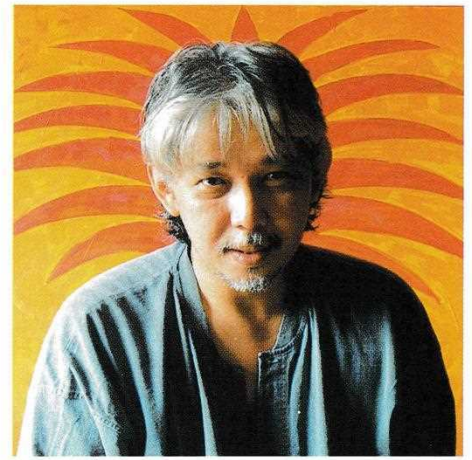
From his stylised versions of the still-life to his tongue-in-cheek play of the erotic through the coupling of various vegetables as well as his continuous fascination with the human figure Zakii's has succeeded in combining a classical rendering of his subjects with 20th century modernist spatial concepts.

The subjects always placed on eye level and on the surface plane of the canvas. A minimum of perspective and dramatic contrasts of hue push the objects into the space of the compositions. Forward of the surface, the subjects push out towards the viewer, then they simultaneously lock back into the overall scheme finding the exact point where the object is seen in its simplest aspect... its clearest silhouette. The use of the diptych is also explored to further heights here - for each viewer it fulfils a different function - creates specific spaces and allows his subjects to move freely through the artist's dark and ambiguous terrains.

Despite this extensive vocabulary of visual styles, something the artist could be criticised for, the core of his diverse expressions and the rationale behind their creation remain undeniably linked to one another.

Ahmad Zakii Anwar: One-Man Show sees the artist in fine form. He continues to explore the figure, he continues to find fascination in the most ordinary of forms like red and blue sofas and in his special way succeeds in making them extraordinary.

These are extremely stylish paintings and they are enthralling.



Ahmad Zakii Anwar

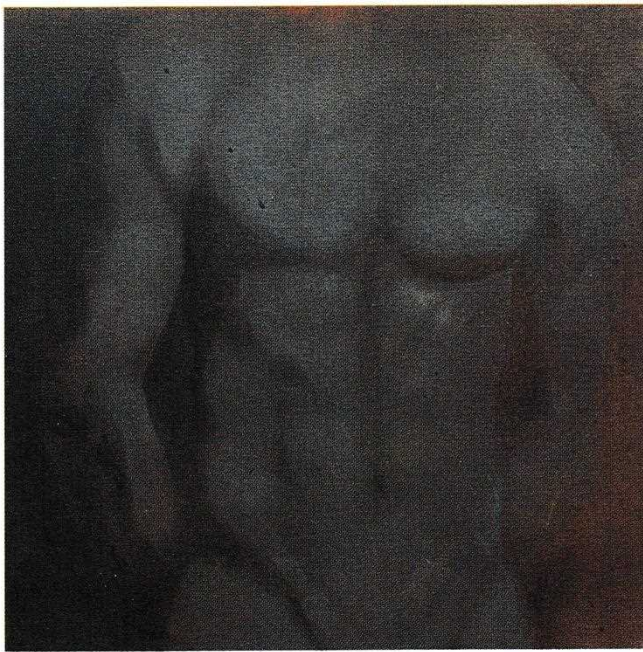
Born Johor Baru 1955

Education

- 1977 Diploma in Graphic Design, School of Art and Design, MARA Institute of Technology

Exhibitions

- 1975 *The Young Contemporaries*, National Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur
- 1976 *National Drawing Exhibition*, National Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur
- 1979 *Salon Malaysia*, National Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur
- 1992 *Islamic Contemporary Works of Art*, Royal Holiday Inn, Singapore
- 1993 *Collection 92*, Malaysian Artists' Association Exhibition, Galeri Petronas, Kuala Lumpur
- Exposure*, Quo Quo, Hong Kong
- Imbaun Ledang*, Maybank Gallery, Kuala Lumpur
- Titian III*, Hanoi School of Fine Art, Vietnam
- The Vietnam Experience*, Maybank Gallery, Kuala Lumpur
- 1995 *Dimension 95*, Malaysian Artists' Association Exhibition, Galeri Petronas, Kuala Lumpur
- GSA II*, Open Exhibition, Gallery Shah Alam, Selangor
- Pursuing a Dream - From the Collection of Rahime Harun*, Galeri Petronas, Kuala Lumpur
- Two-Man Show*, with Oh Chai Hoo, The John Erdos Gallery, Singapore
- Culture Colour Connection: An Exhibition By Six Artists From Four Countries*, Takashimaya Gallery, Singapore
- 1996 *Men on Women*, MIM, Kuala Lumpur
- Karyawan Seni Johor: An Exhibition Of Works By Johor Artists*, Hyatt Regency, Johor Baru and Artfolio, Kuala Lumpur
- 1997 *Dance - Rhythm and Motion: An Exhibition Of Paintings On The Theme Of Dance By Five Artists*, Maybank Gallery, Kuala Lumpur
- Tresors - The International Fine Art And Antiques Fair For Asia*, Singapore International Convention & Exhibition Centre
- Art for Nature: An Exhibition In Aid Of The World Wildlife Fund Foundation*, NN Gallery, Kuala Lumpur



from left to right, top to bottom

Torso 8

1997

Acrylic on canvas

43 x 43 cm

Torso 4

1997

Acrylic on canvas

43 x 43 cm

Torso 1

1997

Acrylic on canvas

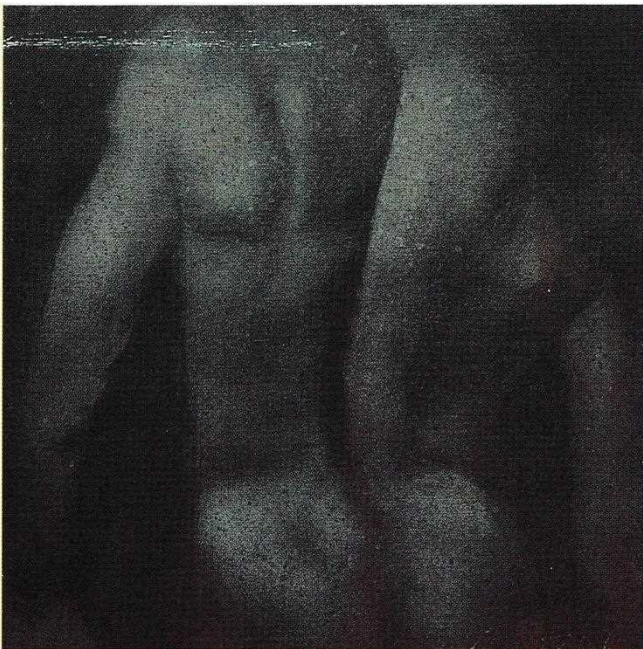
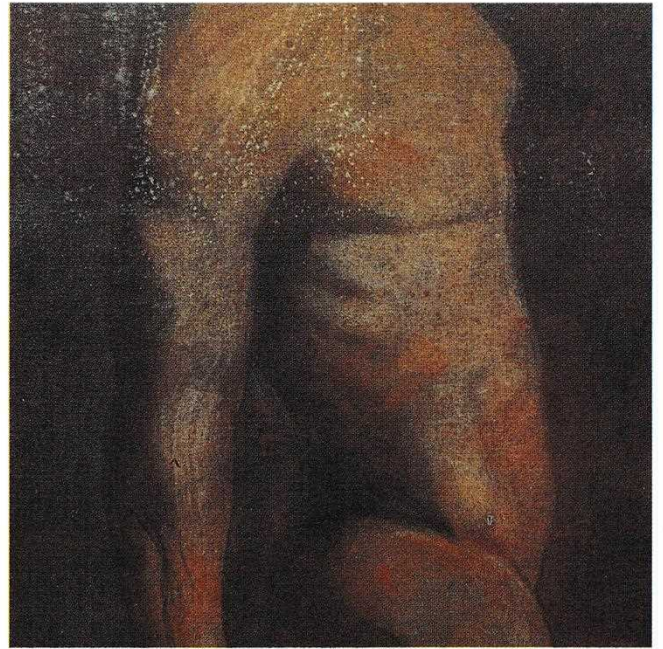
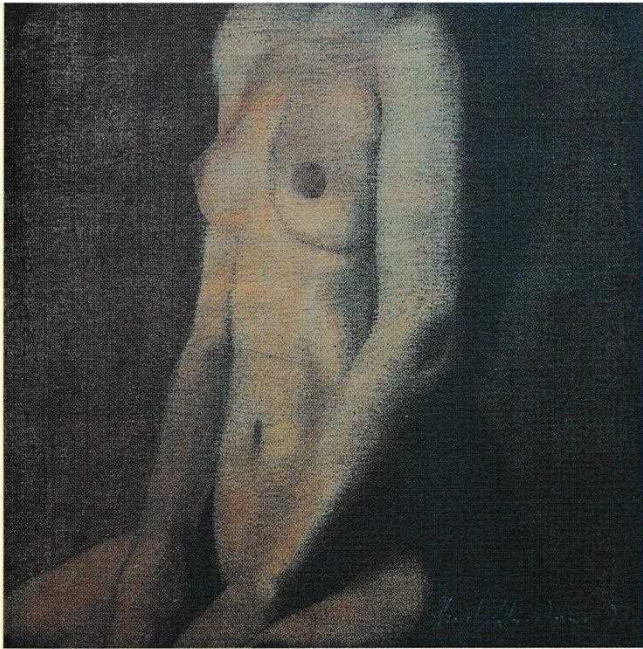
43 x 43 cm

Torso 7

1997

Acrylic on canvas

43 x 43 cm



from left to right, top to bottom

Torso 5

1997

Acrylic on canvas

43 x 43 cm

Torso 2

1997

Acrylic on canvas

43 x 43 cm

Torso 3

1997

Acrylic on canvas

43 x 43 cm

Torso 6

1997

Acrylic on canvas

43 x 43 cm



Probability #1

1997

Acrylic on canvas

120 x 180 cm (two panels)



Probability #2

1997

Acrylic on canvas

120 x 180 cm (two panels)



Dark Interior

1997

Acrylic on canvas

120 x 180 cm (two panels)



12.39

1997

Acrylic on canvas

120 x 180 cm (two panels)



Contemplation of a Mystery

1997

Acrylic on canvas

120 x 180 cm (two panels)

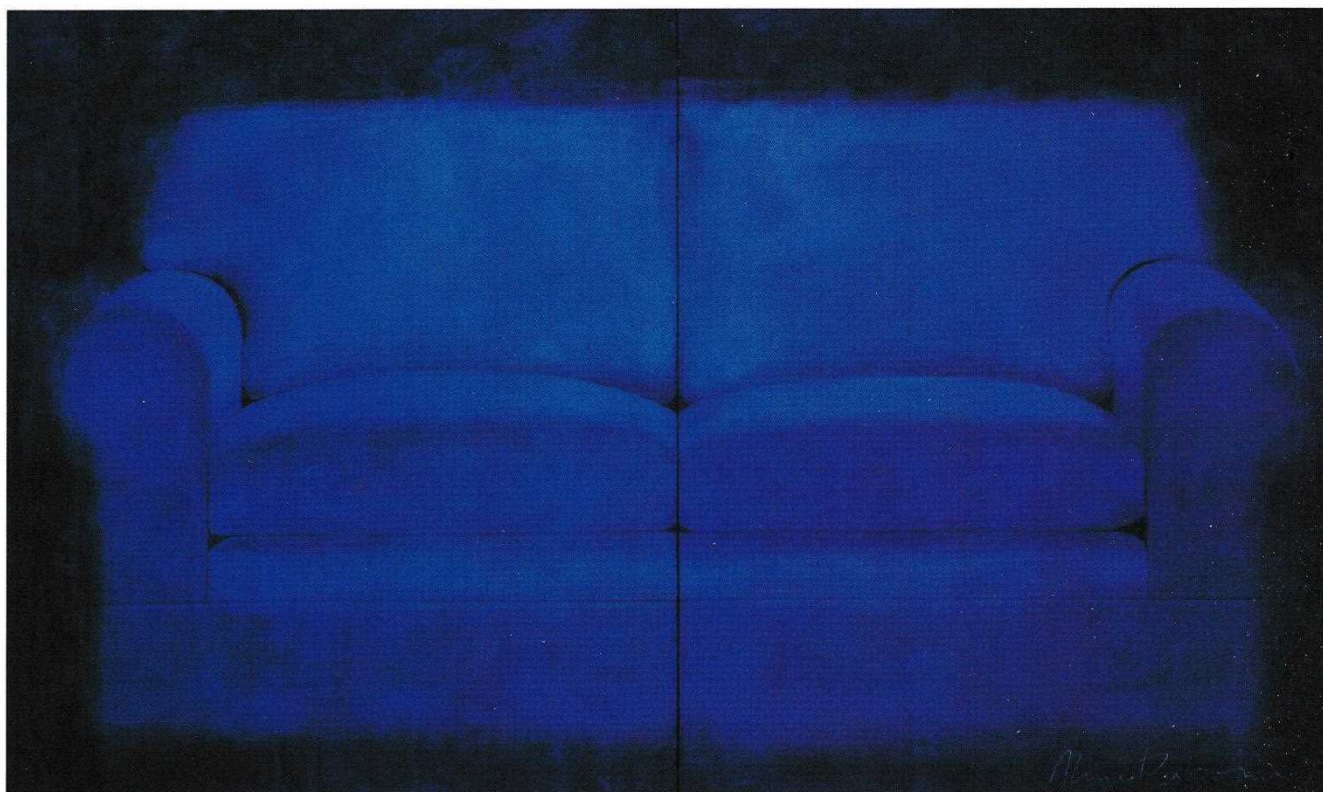


Two Figures

1997

Acrylic on canvas

120 x 180 cm (two panels)

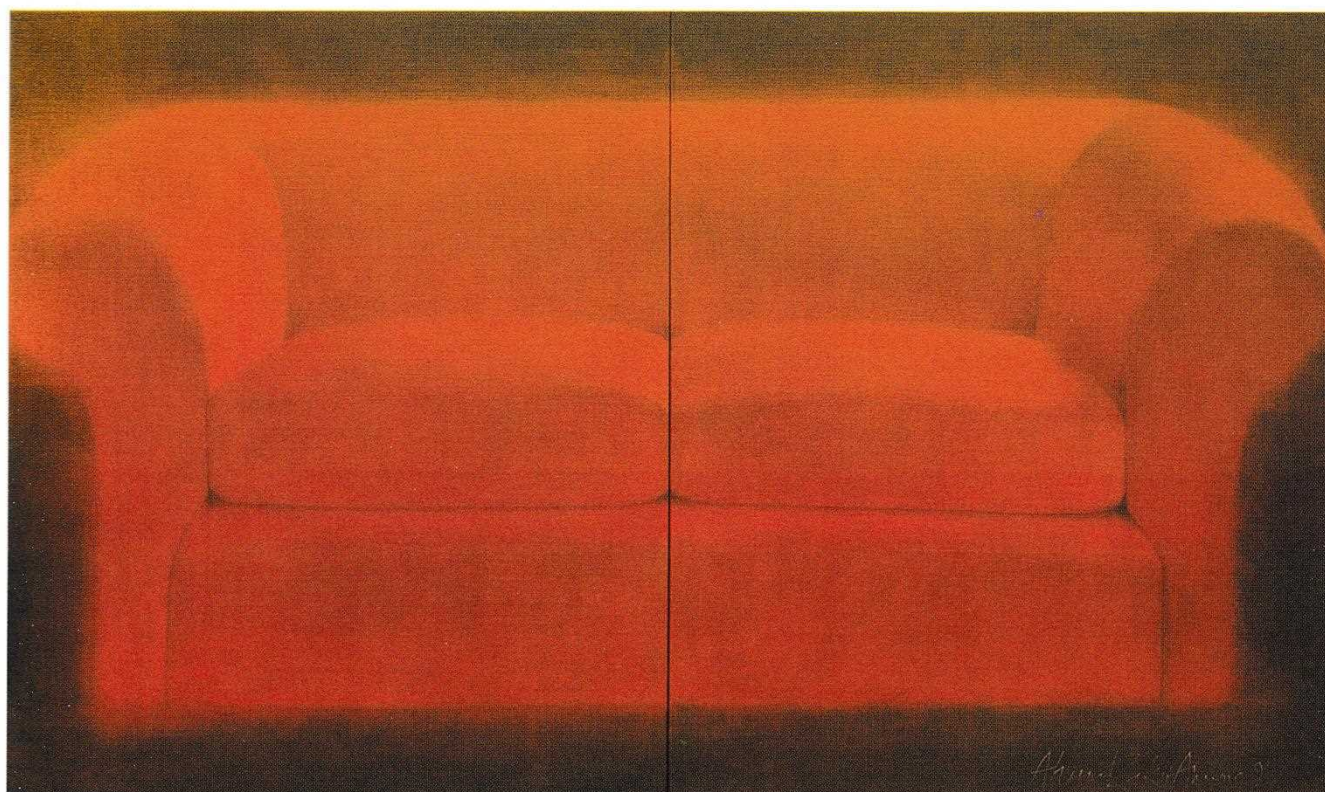


Presence (blue)

1997

Acrylic on canvas

120 x 198 cm (two panels)

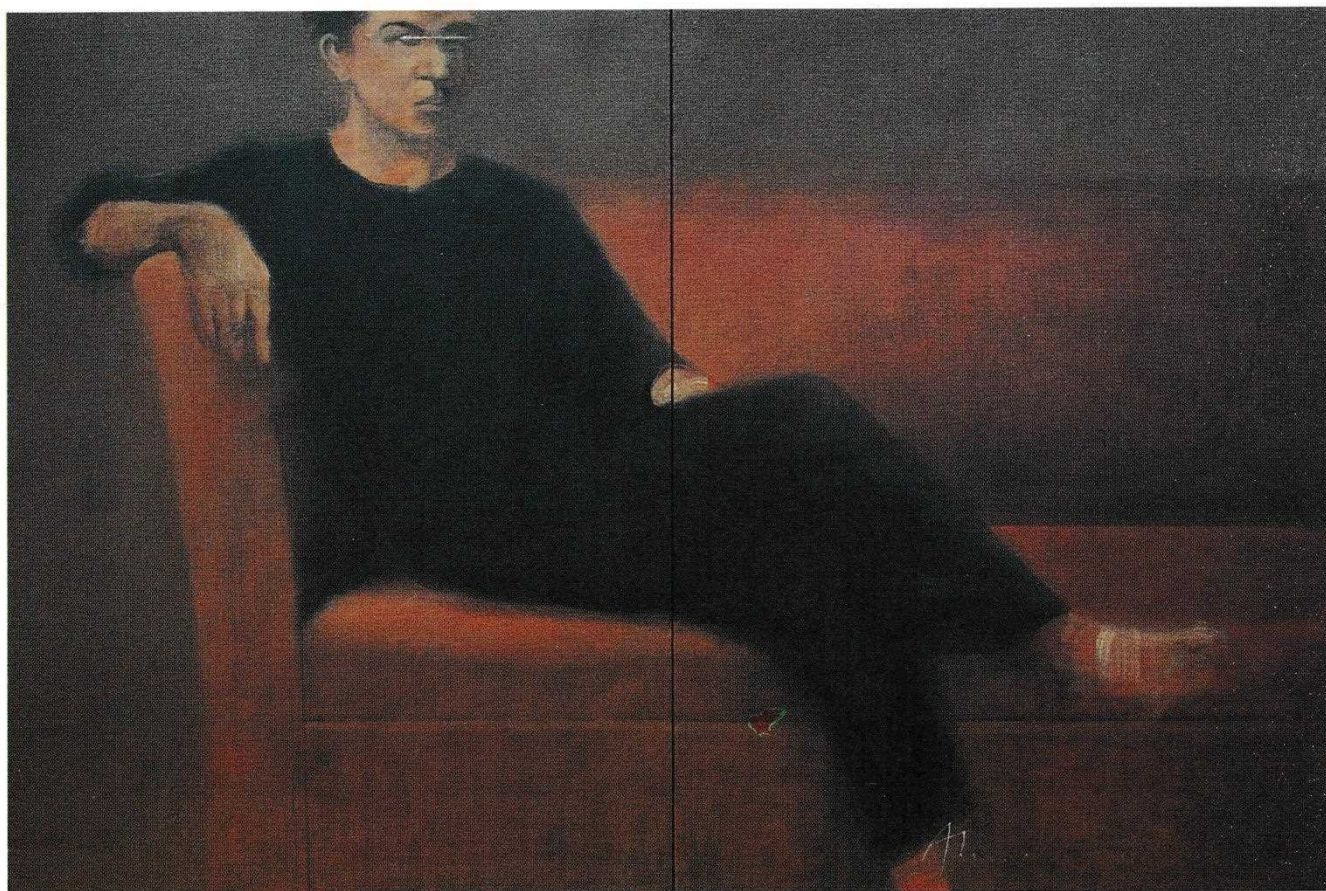


Presence (red)

1997

Acrylic on canvas

120 x 198 cm (two panels)

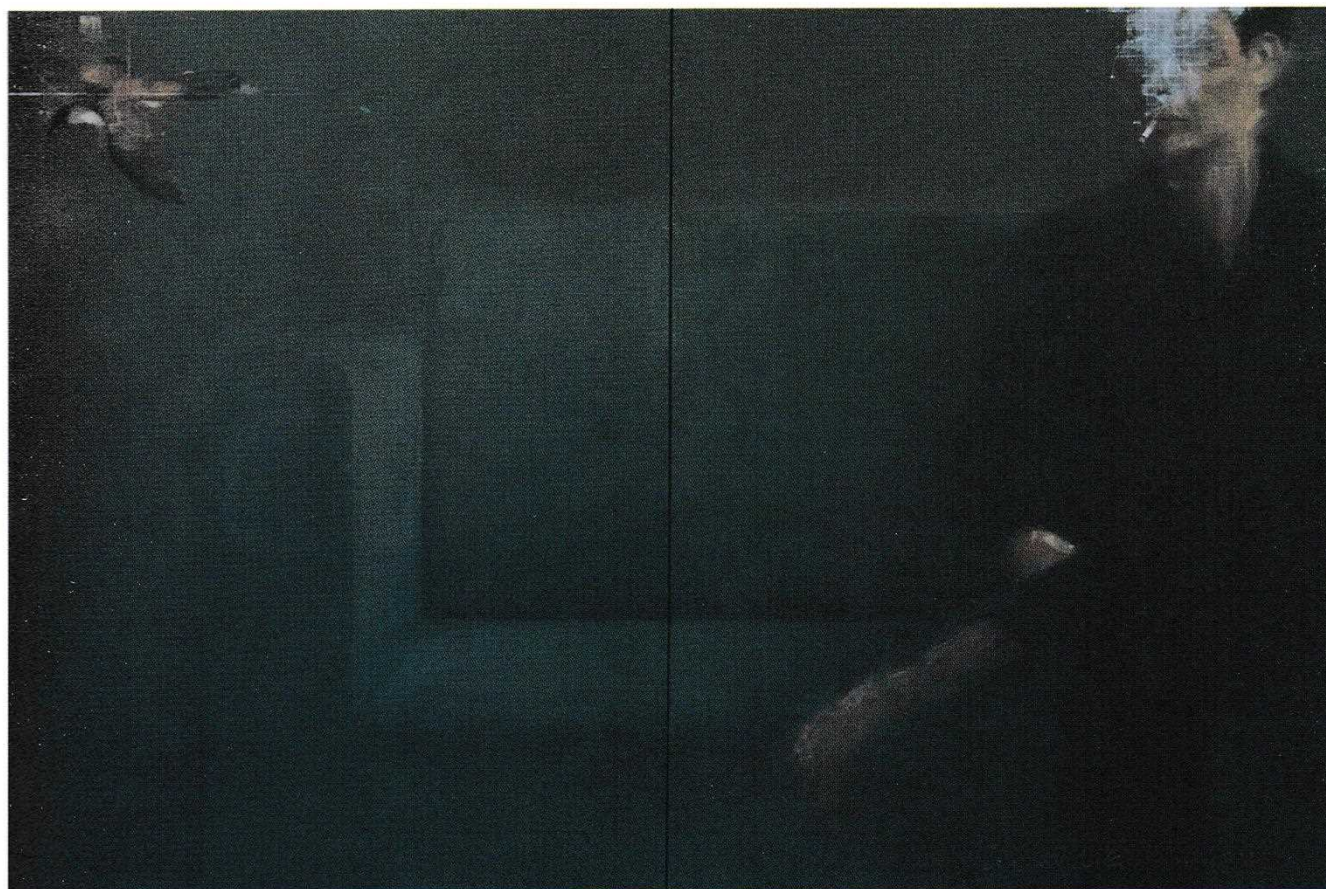


Portrait in Black

1997

Acrylic on canvas

120 x 180 cm (two panels)



Other Technical Aspects

1997

Acrylic on canvas

120 x 180 cm (two panels)

**Parallels**

1997

Acrylic on canvas

120 x 180 cm (two panels)



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Malaysia

Southeast Asian Paintings & Works of Art

This exhibition will be opened by

YB. Datuk Hishammuddin Tun Hussein, Parliamentary

Secretary of the Ministry of International Trade and Industry

on 22nd July 1997, and will end on 9th August 1997.

Curated by J. Anurendra.

