

RISSIM CONTEMPORARY

Dah Makan Kah?

A solo exhibition by **Azzah Sultan**

August 19th 2023 – September 10th 2023

Gallery Hours: Friday to Sunday, 12pm – 7pm



Dah Makan Kah? (2023), Rissim Contemporary

Rissim Contemporary is pleased to announce our next show, *Dah Makan Kah?* by Azzah Sultan. The exhibition, Azzah's third solo to date and first solo in Malaysia, presents a series of new paintings which explores the profound connection between food, identity, and emotion through a harmonious blend of oil painting and batik fabric techniques.

Nostalgia has an exquisite way of intertwining with culture, wrapping itself around every aroma, colour, and taste that defines our culinary experiences. In Azzah Sultan's exhibition, *Dah Makan Kah?* lies a journey marked by homesickness and a yearning for the familiar. For Azzah, the familiar (*and familial*) meant the comforts of home-cooked meals. In the midst of the global pandemic, separation from her family magnified the importance of these culinary ties. The stress of social-distance was accompanied by a newfound awareness of the significance of the meals that once brought solace, where the art of recreating these dishes became a conduit for self-discovery.

The phrase "Dah Makan Kah?", which translates to "Have You Eaten?" in Malay, functions as a means to ask "How Are You?". This cultural quirk is seen throughout Asian cultures, where your elders will ask if you've eaten as a sign of care and nourishment. This is partly due to the lack of emotional vulnerability in Asian households, where emotions might not always be as freely

expressed, yet there's a particular warmth when asking if someone's eaten. It's a deep and honest concern for a loved one's well-being in the most fundamental way. Azzah Sultan's upbringing in a household where the kitchen was the heart of home left an indelible mark on her art. Memories were woven into the fabric of cut fruits shared throughout the day, the simmering pots that filled the air with warmth, and the conversations that flowed around the dining table. Azzah believes that food is more than sustenance—it is memory and nostalgia encapsulated in every dish.

From the bustling market to the canvas, Azzah Sultan's artistic journey began with a single image: her parents purchasing petai (stink beans) at the pasar (market). This image, brought to life with the intricate patterns of batik fabric, became a starting point for exploring the connections between food, culture, and identity. It is a snapshot of a moment brimming with significance—a reminder that even the simplest exchanges can hold profound stories. As her exploration deepened, the canvas expanded to accommodate an array of flavors - From the vibrant hues of bandung and kaya on toast to the complex textures of manggis (mangosteen) and durian, Azzah Sultan's art is a symphony of flavors and memories, a celebration of the familiar tastes that traverse time and space.

Dah Makan Kah? is a celebration of heritage, unity, and the connections nurtured through shared meals. As her third international solo exhibition and her first solo show in Malaysia, Azzah Sultan's masterful strokes remind us that even in a world marked by distance, the flavors of home have the power to mend hearts and bridge worlds. In every canvas, in every stroke, *Dah Makan Kah?* encapsulates the artist's intimate journey—a journey that invites us to explore our own memories, cherish our roots, and savor the taste of kinship.

Azzah Sultan (Malaysian, b.1996) most recently had two solo shows with *Trotter&Sholer* (2020, 2022). She was awarded back to back residencies with *Pioneer Works* in Brooklyn, New York and has exhibited her work at The New School, Parsons Paris Gallery, S.A.D. Gallery, The Bushwick Collective, BUFU Studios, The Ely Center, Sotheby's Institute, Blackfish Gallery, Chase Gallery, Terrain 12, KMAC Gallery. She has been reviewed by ArtForum, HyperAllergic, and Whitehot Magazine.

Artist Statement



Azzah Sultan at Dah Makan Kah? (2023), Rissim Contemporary

“Pictures of home cooked food sent through WhatsApp, packages of rempah in my kitchen and making teh-tarik to start my mornings: these are the few things that have helped me cope with my home sickness. I believe food plays a huge role of bringing people together, so I started to think about what are the colors, flavors, and smells that I craved.

Being away from home during the pandemic was incredibly hard for me, I was constantly missing my family, stressed about work and didn't pay attention to what I ate. I would reminisce about the food my parents would prepare to make me feel at ease. Every time I tried to make a dish like my mom, I would struggle with the process. I wasn't a master like my mother on how to agak-agak my ingredients.

I grew up in a household where there was always something simmering in the kitchen, and cut fruits and snacks were shared throughout the day. I believe food holds memory and nostalgia, simply being at home and eating my mom's fish head curry makes me think about the past and the various times I've had this dish. I wanted to explore what the process is like when creating a home cooked meal for a family, from the very start of buying the produce in the pasar, to preparing the ingredients in the kitchen and eventually what is consumed. Whatever is cooked and placed on the dining table carries the weight of helping conversations flow.

I started this body of work first with a painting inspired by a picture my parents sent me when they were at the pasar buying petai. Using my interest of batik fabric and batik patterns, I created a scene of produce being bought at the market (a scene that can be chaotic) but I decided to focus on this one exchange. From there it manifested into foods, drinks, fruits and spices I reminisce about when I'm overseas. From bandung, to kaya on toast, manggis, durian, tauhu sumbat, kuih lapis and more; I wanted to capture all of them in a vibrant and loving way. Creating a homage to these delicacies but also making them look appetizing enough to eat from the canvas. This show is a dedication to the food we treasure from our culture, what I hold dear to my heart and that warm fuzzy feeling you get when sharing a meal with loved ones."

Azzah Sultan

Kuala Lumpur, August 2023

For further information on the exhibition please contact info@rissim.com
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