

THE FLOW OF TIME

Pham An Hai



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Thavibu Gallery Co., Ltd
Silom Galleria, Suite 308
919/1 Silom Road, Bangkok 10500, Thailand
Tel. 66 (0)2 266 5454, Fax. 66 (0)2 266 5455
Email. info@thavibu.com, www.thavibu.com

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FOREWORD

Jørn Middelborg
Thavibu Gallery

Thavibu Gallery has the pleasure of presenting the current catalogue and exhibition **THE FLOW OF TIME** by the Vietnamese artist Pham An Hai. The exhibition takes place in Bangkok on 21 November – 13 December 2009.

At one level, many of Pham An Hai's paintings may be viewed as cityscapes or landscapes from his home city of Hanoi and its surroundings, or paintings from nature. We can discern houses, buildings and narrow lanes, and also imagine the city in various seasons or time of the day. Some paintings draw one's attention to Hanoi in winter or it can be Hanoi in a red light stemming from the evening sun. Paintings of lotuses and water and mountains also feature in his latest series. Sometimes, there is a tranquil, romantic tinge to the works. At another level, his paintings may also reflect inner landscapes of the soul and heart.

Pham An Hai is a master in the use of colours, and the choice and combination of colours are important features in his works. In his current exhibition, he has ventured into lacquer painting, a traditional technique that has been adopted in Vietnam for contemporary art. Pham An Hai is a unique artist who has shown that abstract works can show deeper meanings than being plain abstractions.

The essay has been written by the art historian and independent curator Shireen Naziree.

I take this opportunity to thank Pham An Hai for his collaboration, and Shireen Naziree for her contribution.

THE FLOW OF TIME

Shireen Naziree

Hanoi is a city of artists - though few have made it their own. For Pham An Hai, this city of his birth has been his endless muse. Through his fervent interest in Hanoi - the makings of which has been a quest since his childhood - has resulted in his ability to mix together the living web of his emotions, memories and the history of the city with the universal language of art. This has become the fundamental mode of his personal vision and expression.

While Pham An Hai constantly relives the complex fictions that are the heart and soul of Hanoi – the artworks in *The Flow of Time* form part of a continuing discourse that shapes his artistic practice. Despite the whirlwind with which the city has changed from its serene past to a centre that has grown to become a magnet for enthusiastic adventurers with the revolutionary hope of a better world – the relationship that links him to his paintings have become symbols of a paradise lost, yet perpetually recreated.

Pham An Hai is well aware of these attachments. However by submitting himself to his visuals, he has sought to capture the radiance of time. As such his artworks have become places of personal experiences that individuals may recognise within



themselves. Through these works Hanoi continues to bear witness to the permanence of a culture and civilisation which is filled with humanism despite the tumults and tensions of history that have affected the lives of its inhabitants. Instead, the richness of colour and the incandescence of time has initiated fresh artistic dialogue and reinforced new significance to his paintings. As colour arouses emotion, the organisation with which Hai imposes the history of Hanoi and moments in time with his personality defines this body of work.

Through the visible language of his painting, Pham An Hai paints the invisible and as such his paintings are a confirmation of space and time. One of Hanoi's unique qualities is that it consists of a blend of both French and Vietnamese cultural overtones that have provided a powerful stimulus for creativity - yet it never suffers from boredom or the disquiet of over-sophistication. The symbolic narrative of the ethereal qualities of time as well as a world of past and present is often fused into a galaxy that at times denotes a flight from reality though he is ever conscious of the changes that are rapidly redefining the social architecture of Hanoi. Certainly the Hanoi of his memory appear, but not at the expense of the present. The vibrant narrative in *Night Street* (p. 28) is filled with the energy that spills over onto the city's streets after dark. In contrast the stillness of morning in *White Street* (p. 32) revokes memories of a serene past that serves as an iconographic anchor, from which his images depart and reappear, which remains in keeping with his world of past and present.



Pham An Hai's reflections on the cityscapes of both old and modern Hanoi, the landscapes of the surrounding countryside and the mountains of North Vietnam are intimate experiences made public through personalised imageries that are submerged in deep sentiment. Blazing reds spell out the heavy heat of summer; subdued blues and the primary starkness of black and white are indications of temperate winters or maybe day and night. Colours are vital to his kaleidoscope diary of self discovery and ingenuity that he uses to define moments of time. While his paintings are bathed in colours that often define his emotional involvement, it is his skilful layering and the resulting textures that are suggestive of the unsettling nature of urban life.

Traces of history and the shifting nature of time have inspired Pham An Hai to extend his artistic practice to include the traditional art of lacquer painting. Through the layering of colours and creation of textures that are the mark makings of lacquer painting, Pham An Hai takes his audience deeper into his cultural world. The art with its skilful knowledge is in itself an experience of an ancient knowledge that has been lifted from the simple skills of a folk tradition into its iconic fine art form. The technical diversity of his works reveals the extraordinary productivity of his practice and his capacity for creativity. What appears as abstract in the pictorial spaces that he has created are special places that denote different levels of energy inviting the viewer to explore their own readings of subjective experiences of time.



Lotus #2, 2008 | Oil on canvas | 100 x 100 cm



Lotus #4, 2008 | Oil on canvas | 80 x 100 cm



Lotus #3, 2008 | Oil on canvas | 100 x 100 cm



Lotus #5, 2008 | Oil on canvas | 100 x 200 cm



Green Field, 2009 | Oil on canvas | 80 x 100 cm



Mountain Landscape II, 2009 | Oil on canvas | 80 x 100 cm



Mountain Landscape I, 2009 | Oil on canvas | 100 x 120 cm



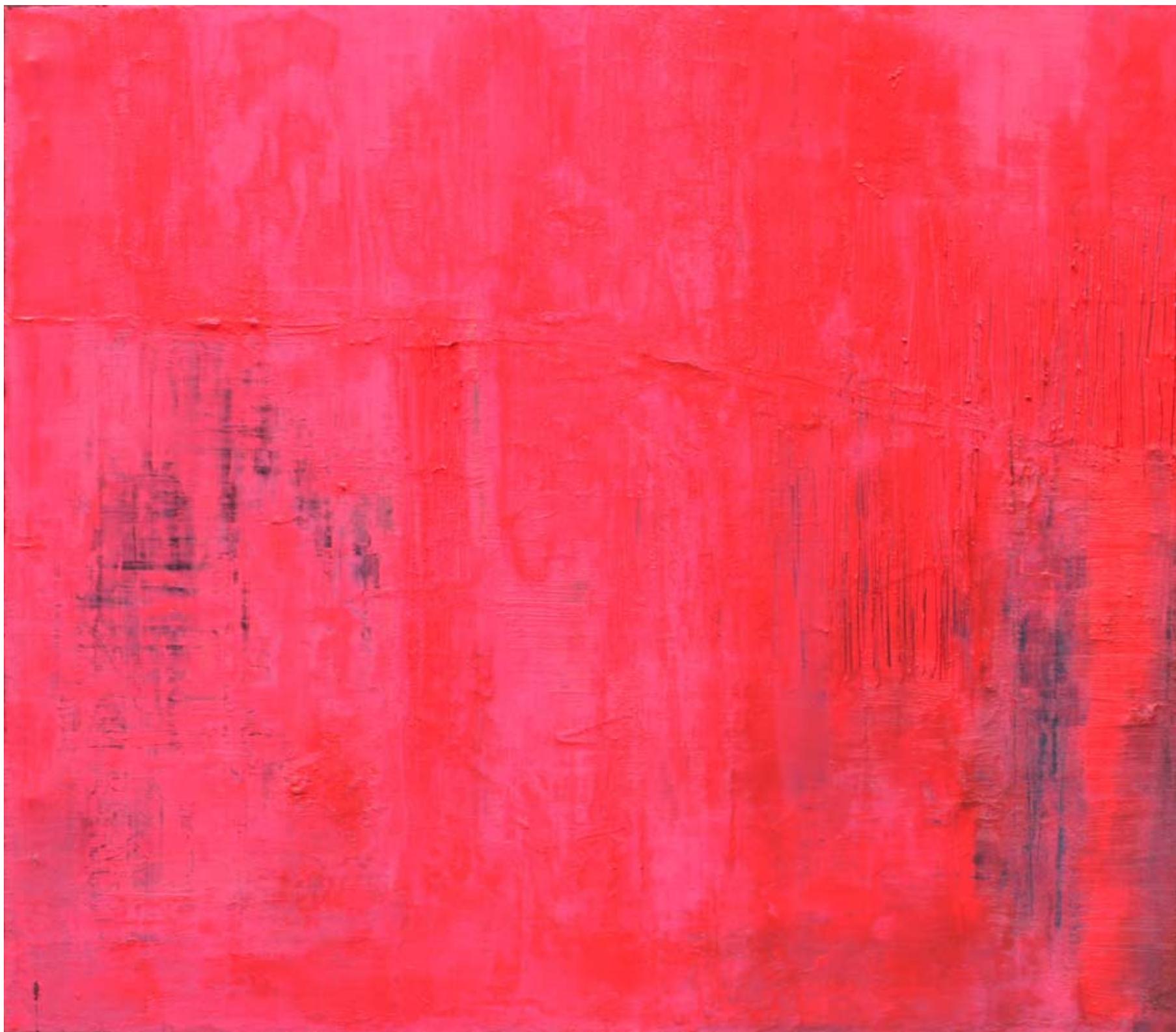
Rainy Day, 2009 | Oil on canvas | 80 x 100 cm



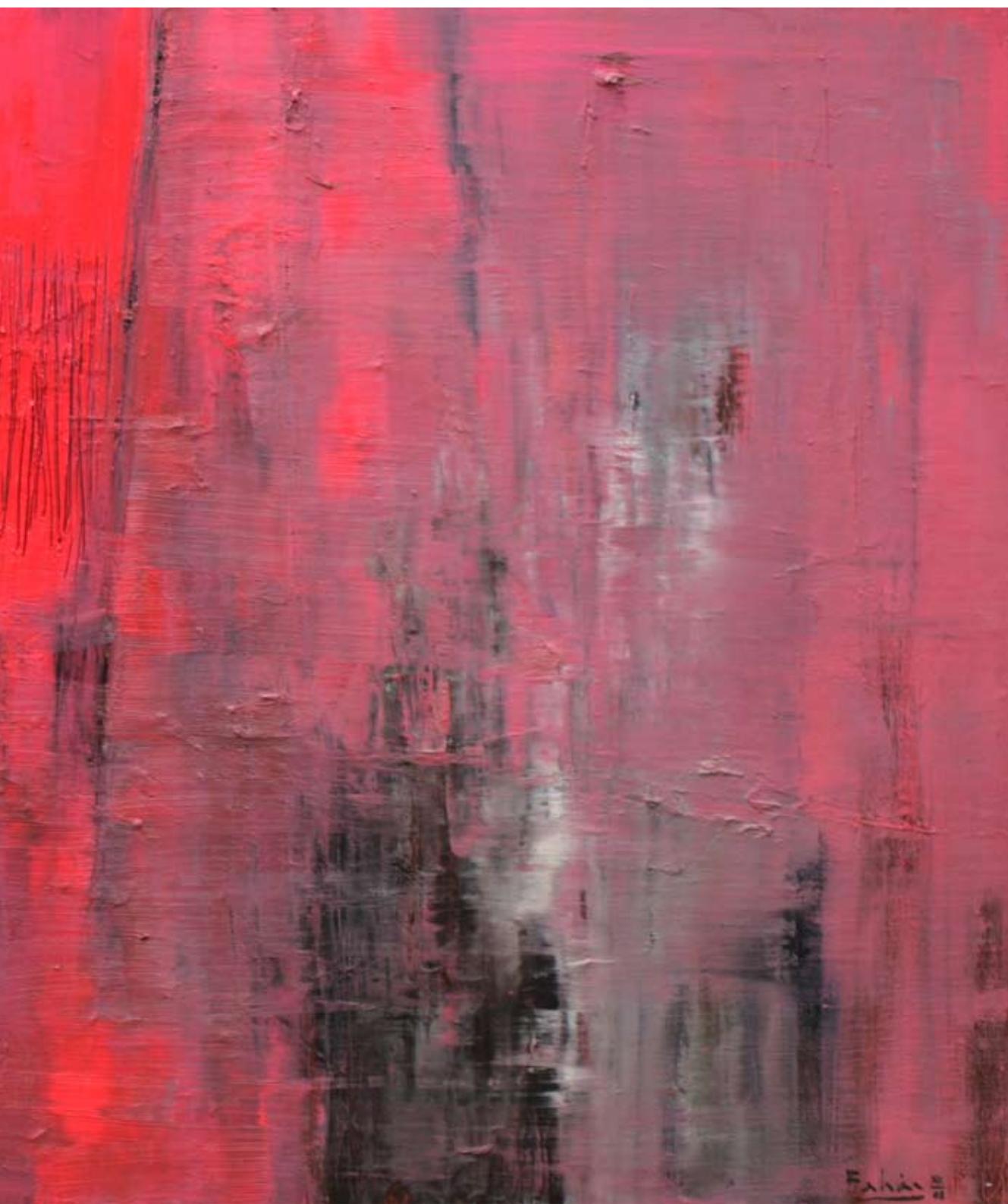
Forest, 2009 | Lacquer on board | 60 x 100 cm



Golden Rain, 2009 | Lacquer on board | 60 x 100 cm



Past and Present, 2008 | Oil on canvas | 100 x 200 cm





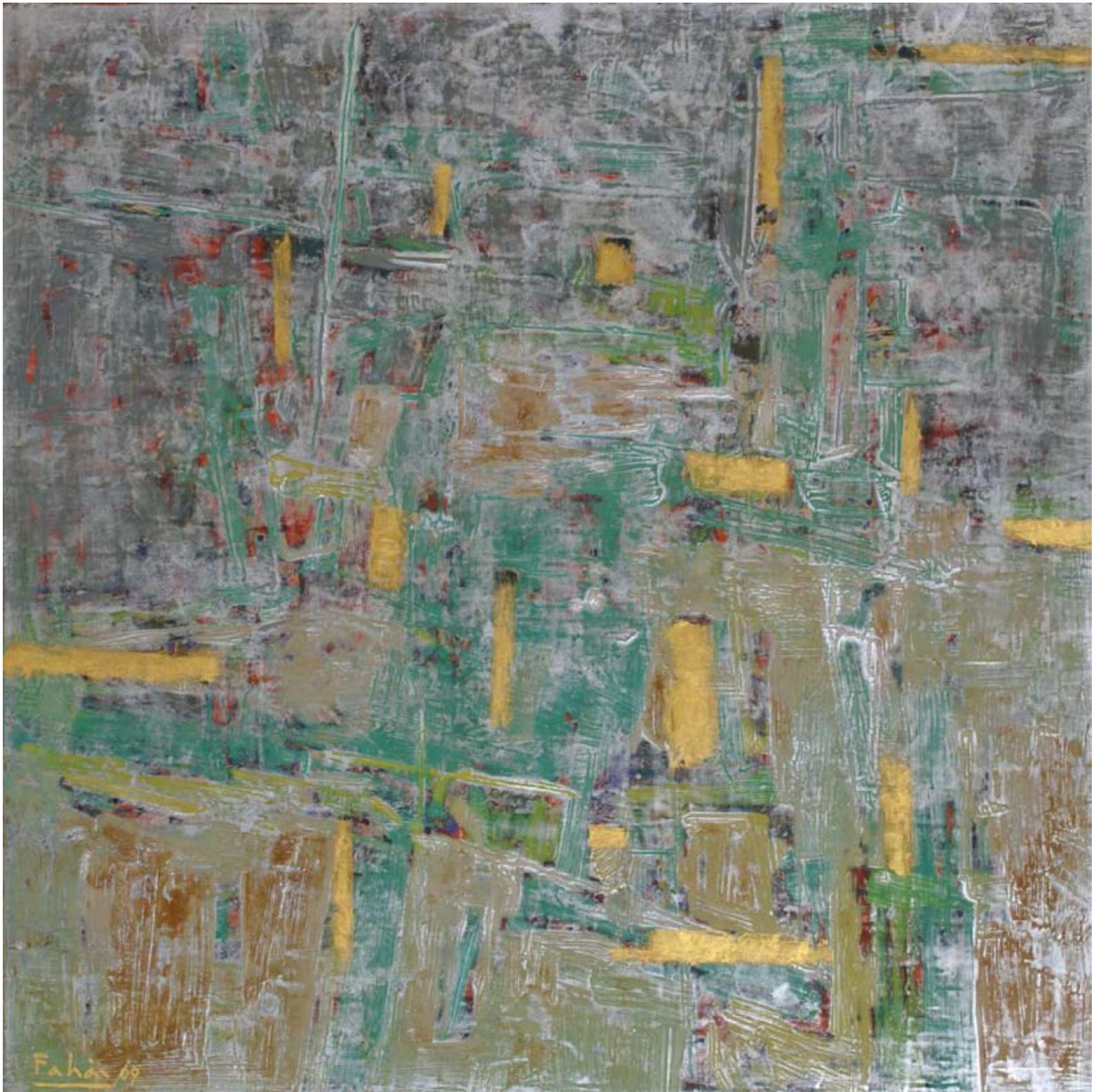
Summer Day, 2009 | Lacquer on board | 60 x 100 cm



Green Street, 2008 | Oil on canvas | 60 x 100 cm



Spring #7, 2007 | Oil on canvas | 60 x 100 cm



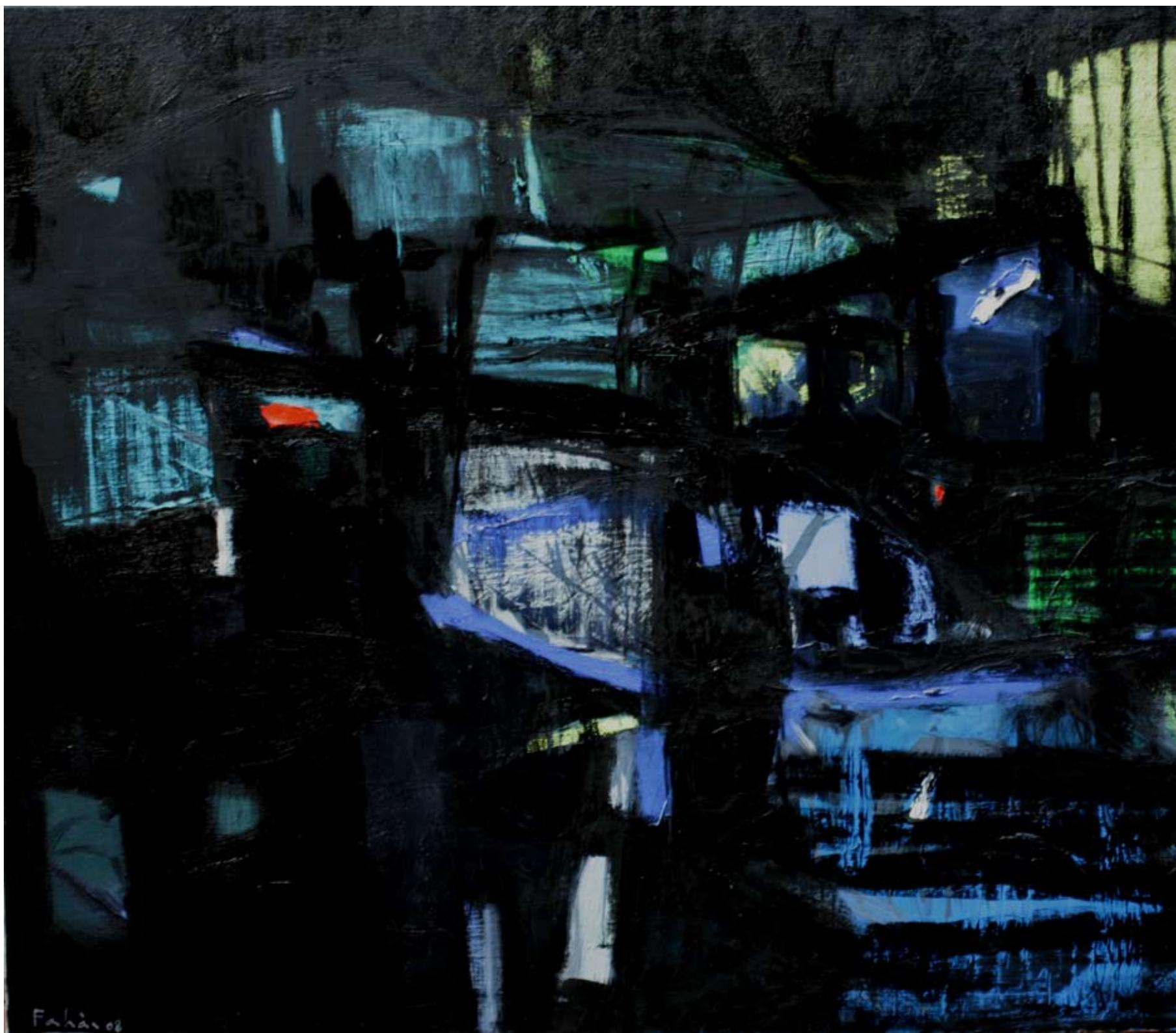
Morning in the Street, 2009 | Lacquer on board | 80 x 80 cm



Old Street in Blue, 2009 | Oil on canvas | 80 x 100 cm



Red Day in Summer, 2009 | Oil on canvas | 100 x 100 cm



Night Street, 2008 | Oil on canvas | 120 x 200 cm





Morning, 2009 | Oil on canvas | 80 x 100 cm

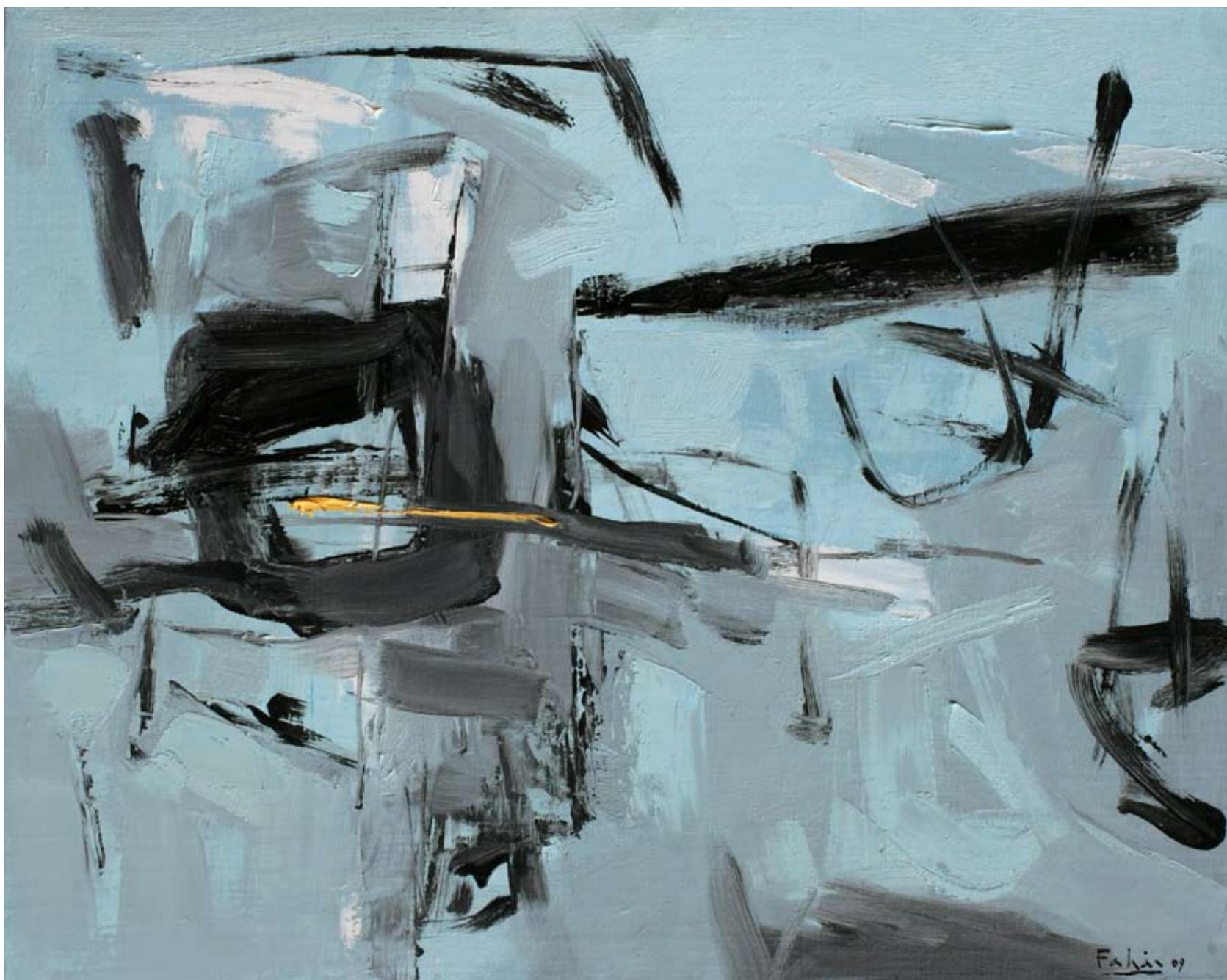


Morning in the Summer, 2009 | Oil on canvas | 80 x 100 cm



White Street, 2009 | Oil on canvas | 120 x 200 cm

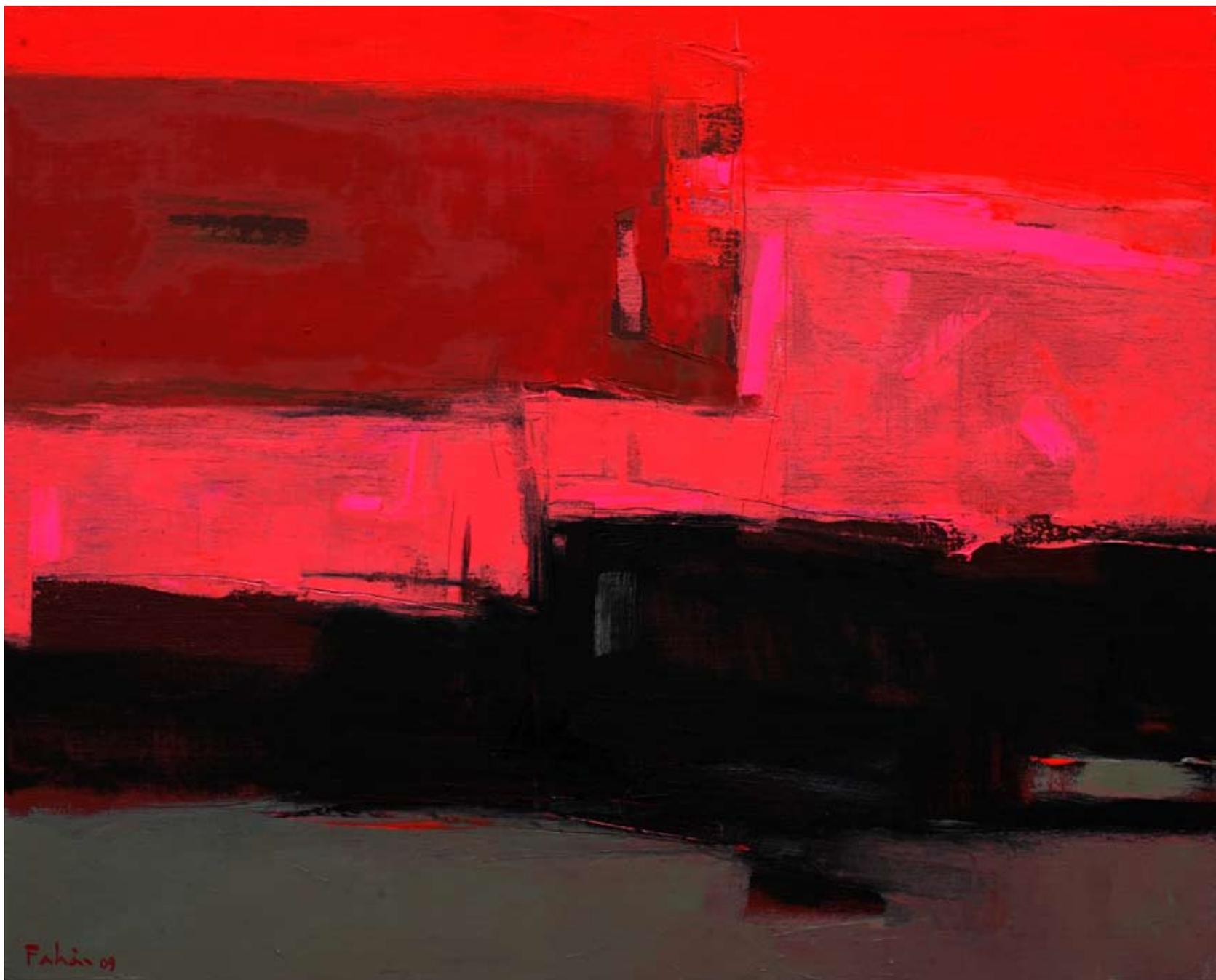




Blue Morning, 2009 | Oil on canvas | 80 x 100 cm



Red Street, 2009 | Oil on canvas | 80 x 100 cm



Old Street #9, 2009 | Oil on canvas | 80 x 100 cm



Woman #5, 2009 | Lacquer on board | 60 x 100 cm



The Flow of Time, 2008 | Oil on canvas | 480 x 200 cm (4 panels)



CHRONOLOGY



Pham An Hai

Born 1967

Master of Fine Arts from Hanoi Fine Arts Institute, 2006

Member of Vietnam Fine Arts Association

SELECTED ART EXHIBITIONS

1992 - 1997

Group exhibitions of Vietnam's contemporary painters by
Vietnam Fine Arts Association & Hanoi Fine Arts Association

1998

- **"Coming Spring"** in Hanoi (group exhibition)
- ASEAN Art Awards Exhibition, Vietnam section
- Group exhibition of Vietnam's contemporary painters by Vietnam Fine Arts Association

1999

- **"View from the Inside"** at Nam Son Art Gallery in Hanoi
- Group exhibition of Vietnam's contemporary painters by Vietnam Fine Arts Association
- ASEAN Art Awards Exhibition, Vietnam section

2000

- **"Structure"** First solo exhibition at Nam Son Art Gallery in Hanoi
- **"Vietnamese Identities"** at Sofitel Gallery in Melbourne, Australia
- **"Together with Children"** at Friends Gallery to help the Children's in Central Vietnam by CRS (USA) & Friends Gallery organization in Hanoi
- National Fine Arts exhibition 2000 in Hanoi

2001

- **"Hanoi with Heart and Soul & Mind"** at Gallery E in Hong Kong
- **"The World's Premier Contemporary Asian Art Fair"** in Singapore

2002

- Group exhibition at Rotunda, Exchange Square in Hong Kong
- **"Fresh Wind"** at Gallery E in Hong Kong
- **"Where the Rivers Meet"** a Vietnam Cultural Festival, Luxembourg & at Universite Libre de Bruxelles, Brussels. Belgium
- **"Abstract View"** at Nam Son Art Gallery in Hanoi

2003

- Group exhibition **"Space Street"** at Nam Son Gallery, in Hanoi
- **"Abstract Oil & Lacquer"** with Cong Kim Hoa at Thavibu Gallery in Bangkok, Thailand

2004

- Group exhibition in Singapore

2005

- **“Vietnam Now”** Group exhibition in Seattle, USA
- **“Vietnam Contemporary Art”** Group exhibition in Tokyo, Japan
- National Fine Arts Exhibition 2005 in Hanoi

2006

- **“Together”** Group exhibition in Chiangmai, Thailand
- **“Dragon & Butter flight”** Vietnamese cultural festival at Museum Victoriano, Rome, Italy

2007

- **“Inside - Outside”** Solo exhibition at Thavibu Gallery in Bangkok, Thailand
- **“Sosabeol International Art Expo”** - Cultural festival in Sosabeol, Korea

2008

- **“Merging the best of East and West”** Group exhibition in London, UK
- **“Post Doi Moi, Vietnamese Art After 1990”** at the Singapore Art Museum, Singapore

2009

- **“The Flow of Time”** - Solo exhibition at Thavibu Gallery in Bangkok, Thailand

AWARDS

Honour Certificates by Philip Morris Company in ASEAN Fine Arts Award Exhibitions in 1998, 1999, 2000

Honour Certificates by Ministry of Culture & Information in Vietnam's National Fine Arts Exhibition 2000

Honour Certificate by Vietnam Fine Arts Association in 2003

Honour Certificate by Vietnam Fine Arts Museum in 2007

MUSEUM COLLECTIONS

Vietnam Fine Arts Museum



B1G1 - Thavibu Gallery has partnered with Buy 1 Give 1 Free, which implies that when you buy an art work from Thavibu Gallery you will automatically give a donation to a charity in the B1G1 network. Donation from one painting purchased provides one blind person with accommodation and shelter for one month. www.buy1-give1free.com



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