

## Taraiyil – Decolonization of Cultural Boundaries in Visual Arts

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### Abstract:

In the performance work *"Bleeding in Circle,"* I approached Miko to assist me in piercing the metal hooks onto my back before the performance. After a brief moment, Miko stepped forward and said, "Maafkan saya, saya mau salawat" (I am sorry, I need to pray). He then proceeded with an act of salam and moved behind me to recite a short prayer, quoting verses from the Quran. After completing the prayer, he stood momentarily in silence before beginning the act of piercing. However, within Islamic scholarship, it is generally regarded as impermissible for a Muslim to return a full salam greeting to a non-Muslim. This moment of interaction, therefore, presents a striking contradiction—one that is layered with cultural, religious, and performative complexities. Notably, Miko is a Muslim, and I am a Hindu.

This paper explores such contradictions within performance art as a means to redefine its impact on contemporary visual arts practice. Anthropologist Rob Boyd (2012) describes culture as the "engine of human adaptation," a space where individuals navigate and respond to socio-political contexts. Within this dynamic, the body—imbued with cultural significance—is continuously subjected to negotiations with belief systems in relation to 'Others'. It is in this space of negotiation that I introduce the concept of *Taraiyil*.

*Taraiyil* examines how one engages with Others as cultural beings and how the body must be grounded to navigate cultural contradictions. This grounding is an active adaptation that unfolds in real-time through various socio-cultural interactions when engaging with Others. In the context of contemporary visual arts, this concept can serve as a framework for exploring cultural knowledge and challenging established boundaries within visual art practice. Furthermore, *Taraiyil* provides a decolonial framework, addressing the marginalization of indigenous and cultural knowledge of others.

By engaging with *Taraiyil*, this paper contributes to a broader investigation to contemporary visual arts, and advocates for a decolonial approach, encouraging a more inclusive and pluralistic understanding of art and culture in visual arts.