

ARTS & CULTURE

Firetti Contemporary presents two collective shows for summer 2023



DUBAI: Firetti Contemporary, the gallery located in Alserkal Avenue, Dubai, where art and creative concepts from the region and beyond bond together "encouraging global engagement through creating meaningful and sustainable collections," as the gallery puts it, has announced two collective exhibitions, namely, Roots and Reflections: A Journey through Time and Nature and An Odyssey of Identity, curated by Mara Firetti and Celine Azem, the mother-daughter duo who own the gallery. The works in the exhibitions will be on display till the end of August 2023, and Firetti Contemporary hopes they will provide visitors with immersive and thought-provoking experiences.

Roots and Reflections showcases the richness and diversity of contemporary art, inviting viewers to reflect on universal themes explored by the artists. Through their artworks, we are reminded of the importance of our roots and the ways in which our reflections on the natural world can inspire creativity and innovation.

The show takes viewers on a captivating journey through the works of four contemporary artists

+ Clockwise from top:
Kansime Brian Lister's work *Quest for Authenticity in oil and acrylic on canvas.*

Sylvestre Gauwrit's sculpture named Orchis.

Mara Firetti smiles for the camera.

Celine Azem before an artwork.

from diverse backgrounds. It explores three central themes that are fundamental to the human experience: memory and identity, nature and environment, and innovation and experimentation. Robert Santore's mixed media works delve into the theme of memory and identity, and offers insights into his personal history and cultural roots. Drawing inspiration from extensive travels and experiences, his layered pieces express the complex sophistication of his memories and the events that have shaped him.

He is a contemporary artist who creates paintings and sculptures, and has gained global recognition, with studio spaces in Manhattan, New York, and Montgomery, Texas. After creating large-scale works of art in his downtown Los Angeles loft, his first solo exhibition took place at the Jerry Solomon Gallery in Los Angeles in 1986 - a sold-out show. He has also had solo exhibitions sponsored by various prestigious institutions such as the City of Los Angeles, the Los Angeles Municipal Art Collection and the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art.

The paintings on display at Roots and Reflections encourage contemplation of the complex relationship between memory, identity and the natural world, while also highlighting the role of art in shaping our understanding of the world. They celebrate innovation and experimentation, showcased through the mixed media pieces of Santore and the marble sculptures of Sylvestre Gauwrit. The works push the boundaries of different mediums, challenging viewers' perceptions of art, offering new and unexpected perspectives.

Gauwrit sculpts and designs in marble, stone, metal, bronze and wood, and his works strive to present qualities of sensuality, lightness, dynamism and harmony.

An Odyssey of Identity features the work of six talented artists who delve into the intricate and multifaceted nature of the self. Drawing inspiration from the influential theories of bell hooks (Gloria Jean Watkins), the exhibition explores the significance of compartmentalising existence and acknowledging the ever-evolving assemblages that go into the making of individuality. The artworks showcased reflect the interplay between diverse cultural and social elements that shape our individual experiences.

The display invites viewers to explore the unique perspectives of the artists about the concept of identity, while also encouraging critical examination of the nuanced and multidisciplinary nature of their African heritage. Artists offer their own distinct vision, shedding light on existentialism and illustrating how various aspects of the self intersect and interact in intricate and intertwined ways.

An Odyssey features Boris Anje's captivating paintings focused on the representation and celebration of black bodies and culture. By modifying outfits and incorporating Adinkra symbols (from Ghana, representing concepts or aphorisms), Anje contextualises his subjects in global consumerist culture and African symbolism. His work challenges stereotypes and celebrates the diversity and beauty of black culture, presenting a vision of identity that is inclusive and empowering.

He is a Cameroonian artist who has established himself as a prominent figure in the art world, known for his vibrant and sophisticated portrait paintings. Anje acknowledges the influence of Andy Warhol's Pop culture and admires painters like Tim Okamura, Fahamu Pecou, Amy Sherald and Kehinde Wiley, who treat the black body in their work. Additionally, Collin Sekajugo's mixed media works explore the complex interplay of social, cultural, economic, and political factors that shape individual and collective identities. Born in 1980 in Masaka, in a south-eastern district of Uganda to a Ugandan father and a Rwandese mother, Sekajugo is a community-conscious artist whose artistic practice is rooted in the community. His works explore issues of social, cultural, economic and political identity within the larger circumstances of the world.

Attendees will also be able to view Kansime Brian Lister's exceptional use of oil and acrylic paint, capturing the raw emotions of African men and women in society. His paintings emphasise the experiences and emotions of his subjects, while also bridging the gap between the history of Africa and modern-day Africa. Lister is a highly regarded Ugandan artist whose strength lies in figurative painting alongside visual art, using exceptional skills with oil and acrylic paints to bring to life the rawest and most unfiltered human emotions in his artwork. He tells the incomplete story of African men and women in society, emphasising their unspoken words and capturing their emotions through art: it is a recognition of the tragedies endured by black individuals.

"Experience the captivating journey through time and nature at Firetti Contemporary. Join us in exploring the transformative power of art and its ability to inspire, provoke thought, and forge meaningful connections," says the gallery.

Muhammad Yusuf, Features Writer