


CULTURE

Firetti Contemporary presents Emirati artist Salmah Almansoori's works in Italy

an hour ago 



A work from the I Reminisce in Colours series.

Muhammad Yusuf, *Features Writer*

"Memories are Home" is the name of the exhibition at Cala Del Forte, Ventimiglia, Italy (Aug. 31 – Sept. 28). It features the works of Emirati artist Salmah Almansoori, hosted and organised by FIDAPA Porta d'Italia e Orizzonti and ARTEK, in collaboration with Dubai-based gallery, Firetti Contemporary. Originally from Ghayathi, Abu Dhabi, Almansoori weaves themes of growth and tradition in her works, mirroring the growth of the United Arab Emirates. Her art explores the interaction between environment and identity, emphasising the importance of maintaining one's roots in a rapidly changing context.

The exhibition features four of Almansoori's series, namely, Who I Became, I Was a Forgotten Moment, Unfolding, and her latest composition, I Reminisce in Colours. Each series offers a different perspective on the UAE's changing landscape, while underscoring the need to preserve one's identity during transformations. Who I Became investigates the interplay between her surroundings and evolving identity. By revisiting her hometown, Ghayathi, through documented images and nostalgic memories, the artist examines how spaces shape one's being.

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She sheds light on her personal history, identity, and culture, while transferring photographs onto tiles sourced from places significant in her life, embossing them with the weight of time and memory. The exploration not only captures fleeting individual moments, but also traces her broader journey of growth and transformation. For Almansoori, place is not merely a geography: it is the core of identity formation. She believes that surroundings radiate signals, which are subconsciously absorbed by thoughts, emotions and memories, resulting in the formation of roots, culture, and identity.



Emirati artist Salmah Almansoori.

Her newest series, *I Reminisce in Colours*, examines the diverse landscapes of Ghayathi, from desert expanses to urban advancement; it leads Almansoori to reflect on the city's profound impact on herself. Through painting, she finds a metaphorical place, expressing her experiences and emotions in layers of colour, with each stroke representing a fragment of her journey. Affected by her experiences of moving to Abu Dhabi and embarking on weekly round trips, she began to view Ghayathi from an outsider's perspective.

It sparked her curiosity about the origins of the city's name and its significance, taking her back to the Bedouin who first discovered a source of groundwater in the area, leading to the establishment of Ghayathi as a city of respite. Belonging to one of the pioneering families in Ghayathi, Almansoori reflects on her family's connection to the city and its role as a sanctuary amidst the desert landscape.

I Was a Forgotten Moment is a series of paintings that explores the transformation of abandoned objects. Almansoori reflects on how time integrates these overlooked items into the landscape. She captures their DNA and preserves their narratives through abstract compositions. *Unfolding* focuses on the artist's original hometown, Ghayathi. The series looks into the relationship of place and identity, using mixed media and fabric to explore the tangible and intangible aspects of spaces, with colours manifesting deeply ingrained memories and emotions.

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Almansoori's work, presented in Italy, inspires thoughts on how nations can interlace themselves, while keeping their identity. It is the exhibition organisers' argument that if the artist and the UAE could be forward thinking even as they keep their character, so can Italy and the UAE do the same, with similar practices applying to other countries and peoples also. "Salmah Almansoori's art showcases how cultural heritage and modern innovation can coexist, encouraging global audiences to reflect on their own cultural identities and progress," says Mara Firetti, founder-owner, Firetti Contemporary.

"Despite the rich history and culture of the Western world, there is often a sense of disconnection from the foundational roots of our culture, which can hinder our ability to move forward and fully embrace the future," she adds. "In contrast, we can draw inspiration from the UAE, a nation that exemplifies progress, to propel ourselves out of stagnation and into a dynamic and innovative future." "The United Arab Emirates stands as a pillar of progress and cultural richness, seamlessly blending modernity with tradition. In this dynamic milieu, a new wave of artists, among whom is Salmah Almansoori, leads the charge in capturing the nation's evolution," says Celine Azem, curator and director, Firetti Contemporary.

Salmah Almansoori is an Abu Dhabi-based multidisciplinary artist, born in Ghayathi, Aldhafra, in 2001. Her studio practice investigates the intersections of identity through place, time and memory. She has developed a body of work that includes site-specific installation, painting, sculpture, ceramics, photography, and video. She received her Bachelor of Fine Arts in Visual Art from Zayed University, Abu Dhabi, UAE, in 2023, and has exhibited her artworks extensively in the past few years. She has also participated in numerous group exhibitions, both locally in the UAE and internationally, including Rizq Art Initiative, Abu Dhabi (2024); Firetti Contemporary, Dubai (2024); Duplex AIR, Portugal (2024); NYC CRIT CLUB, New York (2024); Manarat Al Saadiyat, Abu Dhabi (2023); Miza, Abu Dhabi (2023); Dubai Design District, Dubai (2023); Foundry Gallery, Dubai (2022); and Puertas Adentro, Punta Del Este, Uruguay (2022). Additionally, she has been involved in various residencies and programmes, including the Mentorship Programme by Cultural Foundation, Abu Dhabi, UAE (2024); I'm Nobody, Iceland (2023); The Canopy Program, New York, USA (2023); Volume 6, Samt Alternative Art School Residency Program, Dubai (2022); MANGO Residencia Para Artistas, Argentina; and Puertas Adentro, Casa de Artista, Uruguay (2022).