

## ALIA AL FARSI - THE VENICE EXPERIENCE

By: Martina Corgnati

*Comments on her Venice Installation in "In The Eye of The Thunderstorm" Official Collateral Event*

These artwork is inspired by Rumi's quotes *"Let yourself be silently drawn by the strange pull of what you really love. It will not lead you astray"*.

It consists of two large painting placed in a corner, in a quite dim atmosphere, animated by spot lights that attract attention and force it to focus. The bright colors and the well-marked lines in the paintings remind somehow the orange hues of the Omani sand as well as the strong, vivid contrasts of the desert, of earth and sky. Such landscape's memories lead to spiritual meanings: behind the images it starts a metaphorical journey towards abstract joy and freedom. This is perhaps the reason why both the two painting are covered with a thin organza, white transparent cloth that conveys a feeling of being between real and unreal, reality and dream-like world. This helps, perhaps, one to reverse his/her expectations and to turn towards oneself, allowing a personal view.

The installation is completed with true objects represented in the paintings (shisha/ hubbly bubbly, cigars, local artifacts) spread around, in order to create a three-dimensional feeling of touchable reality, out of one's own vision and imagination.



1) Society Realities (Part of installation exhibited in Venice Biennale 2015), 2014, mixed media on wood, 205x120cm. Courtesy of the artist.

2) Untitled, 2013, acrylic on canvas, 80x100cm. Courtesy for the artist.

# IN THE COCOON OF ALIA AL FARSI

By: Marwa Mady

*"Through art I am trying to define the indefinable of my soul"* Alia Al Farsi

**Marwa Mady (MM):** Tell us more about your background. How does the Omani background influence your artwork?

**Alia AL Farsi:** I was born in and raised in Oman to a reputable family. My parents ensured to give me proper education and equipped me with the driving force to success. Although no one in my family had a career in art, yet my father was an art lover. He was always supportive towards me in achieving my dreams for example, there wasn't any professional art suppliers shops in the city hence he imported them for me

**MM:** When did your first noticed you talent for drawing and do you remember your first painting?

**AF:** I was nine years old; I still remember this painting like it is yesterday. I still have it yet I don't show it to anyone. Maybe one day when I make my book I might put it as the cover.

**MM:** What influences you?

**AF:** My Omani cultural heritage forms integral part of my art and influences all the pieces through colors, traditions and through observing the society I live in.

**MM:** What are the themes of your works, and how did you come upon these themes?

**AF:** As a young artist, I developed my own techniques, vision and methodology exploring and working with colors. AS I matured, I started inoculating my works with motifs on my culture. In general I paint to express myself and I name my artworks accordingly.

**MM:** As an artist, what drove you to get where you are today?

**AF:** Passion to art and passion to perfection. I always believed in my

self and was/still fascinated with the mystic world that colors create. It was only few years ago that I took "The leap of faith" leaving my lucrative job in the government to devote my time and energy to art.

**MM:** Are there any rules, which it holds in the painting? What?

**AF:** There aren't any rules; an artist is a mix of emotions and experiences. I look back to my journey and track the reflections of many shadows of big event into the mirror of my soul. I hold the pen and draw a sketch of the idea that I wan to develop then I start thinking of the approach and the technique that I will use. I exert a lot of energy thinking then, at a certain point that I can't define, I actually start painting.

**MM:** Not a lot of artists can take your leap of faith, do you consider yourself lucky to be able to do so?

**AF:** One makes his own luck my hard work, devotion. You can't imagine how many sleepless nights I spent painting. Sometime when I am done, I am not comfortable with the painting hence I revisit it again and again till I am fully satisfied. Success is a long "endless Road", just last year I had shows in a museum in Vienna, art fairs in London and Basel, a special collaborative show in Switzerland and pinnaced by Venice Biennale and T-Rio Biennale (Three Dimensional Rio De Janeiro Biennale).

**MM:** It is said that without failure you cannot grow and achieve success; how have you experienced failure and what did it teach you?

**AF:** There is an English say "If you fail once, just try and try again and your are not a failure till you stop trying". Of course there is always ups and downs. I believe that failure fuels success. What doesn't break you makes you stronger.

**MM:** Now lots talk about Venice; you are the first Omani artist to ever exhibit officially in the Venice Biennale in 2015. What do you think about being part of this event?

**AF:** Venice, as described by our commissioner, is the "Pinnacle" of the career of any artist. Through out all my career I have been roaming the world exhibiting my art in museums, private galleries and public shows with a "dream", a dream to reach the top place and show case my work in the best international arena of art, "Venice". When I was chosen by the curator to be the first Omani artist (male or female) to be officially in the biennale, it was kind of disbelief for few days; I wanted to make sure that it is official representation and that the Official Collateral Events are equal to countries representations. Once confirmed, it was walking on the clouds.

**MM:** What so you think of being part of the "In the eye of the thunderstorm" exhibition? For example working with other Arab artists etc.

**AF:** Now I can say that I extremely delighted to be part of the Official Collateral Event. For 2 reasons

1. All quality of OCE are extremely good as they are selected through a rigid process versus the countries' representations where I have seen mediocre shows.
2. In the Eye of The Thunderstorm" is the First ever Pan Arab show to have this elite status of OCE: previous experiments in 2013 and 2011 (other than country representations) never got the recognition of Venice's Logo.

**MM:** Why is the Oman your inspiration? Can you describe how?

**AF:** My home land, where I was born, where I lived and still living and where I want to spend the rest of my life in. I am so attached to my land, it is part of my soul, my muse'

**MM:** Do you think viewers from the so-called western world can see the Oman in your work?

**AF:** Honestly, no. Western world will see a coherent body of art produced in the Middle East from Middle Eastern artists without the boundaries created in the early twentieth century. Art has no limits and doesn't stop by a line created by authorities

**MM:** Of what are you most proud?

**AF:** Proud of believing in myself; one of the hardest decision I ever made was to give up my successful corporate career and devote myself to my love (art). I must tell you that I enjoy every second of this decision and try to use my brush rediscovering and expressing my soul.

**MM:** What role does the artist have in a society like the Middle East?

**AF:** In the past art had in integral role in shaping the personality of the society; there we saloons for literature and gathering of artists where a common scene especially in large cities. This has changed in the last few decades, the revolution of technology instead of bringing us closer made us afar, as if each is living in an isolated island. What I Want is to change this. I want, or rather, I aspire to change through art bridging cap between civilizations. Large task indeed yet I like challenges.

**MM:** What do you dislike about the art world?

**AF:** Honestly the art world has become very commercial and based on trends, more like fashion rather than art. I "wish" this could change.

**MM:** Do you think art should serve society? Why?

**AF:** It should, yet it don't: Look at all the art in the world, a lot of biennales, museums shows, art fairs and private galleries. Now look at the TV: endless amount of killing, hatred and insane actions. Do you know that there are 42 conflict zones ridging as we speak. Do you know that from the time we started this interview (an hour) over 7 kids died of mal-nutrition or no-nutrition. Do you know that we WFP (world Food Program - United Nations) need 25cents to feed a kid/day. Finally do you know the amounts the world spends on weapons? I am speechless....

Art should serve the societies to flourish yet it doesn't

**MM:** Would you consider yourself as a feminist artist?

**AF:** Nothing is called Feminist art. That's the false propaganda of media to create a subject to speak about hence selling ideas and making money. There is art and there is no art. Tell me, when you look at a painting, any painting, do you know the gender of the artist?

**MM:** Finally How would you describe you as an artist?

**AF:** Dreamer. I dream of a better place. I paint better places. I am a "Free Soul" who loves fly high in the sky.

## ABOUT THE WRITER

Marwa Mady is an economist by education having a Masters Degree in Public Administration and Economic Development from American University in Cairo. She turned into the art scene in 2005 where she has been a writer, art critic and advising art organizations in the micro economical benefits of investing in art as well as their Corporate Social Responsibilities.



1) Untitled, 2014, mixed media on canvas, 100x100cm. Courtesy of the artist.

2) Untitled, mixed media on canvas, 100x80. Private collection.

3) Johayna, 2011, mixed media on canvas, 208x93cm. Courtesy of the artist.