

TheNational

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Cuban artist Jorge Mayet has first gallery exhibition in Dubai

By Anna Seaman



Jorge Mayet's *Cayendo Suave* is part of the exhibition *Nature's Duet*. Courtesy Farjam Foundation.

Without even a single glimpse of his work, Jorge Mayet's story is compelling. The artist, a Cuban exile living in Mallorca, Spain, has a photographic memory that allows him to paint photorealistic landscapes based on scenery seen years ago. He also is a sculptor, creating installations depicting uprooted trees that seem like a metaphor for his yearning for his homeland.

His work is currently on display at The Farjam foundation in Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC).

Are the landscapes in your paintings completely fictional or do you draw inspiration from your surroundings?

The landscapes in my paintings are a combination of many things: the imaginary work is, of course, influenced by natural landscapes surrounding me. I am also aware that I have an ability to retain in my mind, to an almost photographic degree, a large portion of the different elements of which it is composed.

They are all a reference to your lost homeland, Cuba. Is this correct?

It is true that a large part of my work is nourished by memories and experiences from my homeland, but not all of my works are based on the Cuban landscape. I have retained the Cuban essence in my landscapes, for nature is a huge part of Cuban make-up and when interpreted it is romanticised in an almost mystical sense.

One of the most popular pieces in the exhibition is Cayendo Suave, a tree with many feathers tied to its roots. What was your inspiration and thoughts behind it?

Certain trees in Cuba are associated with symbolic mysticism, which comes from links with the Yorubic religion brought over from Africa by slaves. Many people pray and ask the trees for things through offerings, which they bury among the roots. These offerings used to sometimes take the shape of animal sacrifice and to interpret these ancestral rituals in my work I have used feathers, giving the piece an extra dimension, transforming it into a dreamlike vision and honouring the beliefs of my people.

Are they a metaphor for your own exiled position?

Maybe, subconsciously, I live like a tree pulled from its roots and in that way my installations are a metaphor for my life, but on a conscious level, I believe that we have to value each part of this Earth that belongs to us, because it is from her that we are able to live.

Tell me about the technique in making the trees?

The technique is simple. I use electrical cables to construct the tree and its roots. The cable gives me the right amount of strength and support to construct the tree, as well as the flexibility to manipulate it. I then use papier mâché to give the installation its texture and shape and the paint gives it that final touch, which makes the pieces obtain such a similarity to reality. I buy the feathers because they are part-organic and therefore need to be treated and processed, but I also always make sure that they do not come from birds belonging to a threatened species or those in any danger of extinction.

This is the first time your work has been displayed in Dubai and it has been really well received – how do you feel about this?

It is indeed the first time my artworks have been displayed in this type of gallery and exhibition in Dubai, although I have shown my work at Art Dubai before through Horrach Moya, the gallery that represents me in Palma de Mallorca. I am delighted with the warm reception with the public. I think the people of Dubai must have a strong appreciation of nature.

• *Nature's Duet* with Jorge Mayet and Daisuke Ohba runs until July 8 at The Farjam Foundation, DIFC, Dubai