

Asma Ghanem: *Taste of Home*
Iyad Qanazea Gallery
2nd of February 2023

Asma Ghanem is a Palestinian artist, experimental musician, and writer based currently in Chicago, USA. She was born in Damascus-Syria in 1991. Asma has two degrees in audio-visual arts from the International Academy of Arts in Palestine in 2013 (BA) and a master's degree from the University of Fine Arts in Toulouse-France (ISDAT) In 2016. The works of Asma Ghanem are inspired by narrating the personal experience in an imaginative and anecdotal way in juxtaposition of having lived under occupation in Palestine. The most essential contents of her artistic and musical works are connected to her childhood, the concept of homeland, the audio experience of her turbulent surroundings, the world of imagination, and love stories in an occupied place. The artist employs research and content using different artistic techniques such as painting, drawing, music production, experimental music, animation, writing, photography, and video.



A prolific painter, Asma has created the series *Taste of Homeland*, which are paintings documenting the interior spaces of imagined homes and feature the template of still life scenes of food purposefully absent of people. The paintings are resplendent with images of colorful tables centered on the canvas. These tables feature scenes of iconic food, meals and rituals synonymous with Palestinian and Levantine cultures. The various paintings carry with them elements from indigenous practices, heritage combined with a sense of modernity, self-determination and rootedness. The paintings are almost musical in their medley of colors and shapes. Each one of these paintings references cities and their associations of rituals of food, but they also extend and become abstracted cultural motifs that stand the test of time. *Knafeh Table* is an example of a food known to emanate from Nablus the city famous for this sweet dish but it also permeates into become one that is globalized and experienced in various places of the world, hence the Pepsi can wherever Palestinian or Arab culture permeates. *Oranges of Yaffa* and *Ka'ak Al Quds*, also clearly carry the weight of the cities associated to the foods depicted evidently, Yaffa or Jaffa is known for its oranges and the sesame bread known as *ka'ak al quds* is the bread sold on the entrance of Damascus gate in Jerusalem, said to be even the origin of bagels. These iconic still lives become highly political too like the *Watermelon Table*, centered on patterned tiles found in Palestinian and Mediterranean homes. Watermelons have become a symbol that has come to represent Palestine and freedom especially during these turbulent times. Ultimately, these paintings surrounded by scenes of modern kitchens, plastic and globalized pattern tablecloths, and especially depicting scenes of merriment like *Oud and Arak*

and *Wine Table*, carry memories of places that are both modern and are testaments of a progressive spirit of resistance and life.

Asma Ghanem has participated in different exhibitions, art residencies, and workshops worldwide. She won a Special Mention in The Palestine Out competition in 2015 for her photography project “Bodies with notes”. She also won the 3rd prize in The Young Artist Award/The Hassan Al-Hourani Prize in the year 2016 for her experimental music project “Homeland is...”. She also received two production grants from “AFAC” The Arab Fund for Culture and Arts, for her first experimental music album entitled “At Land” which got published in 2017, and for her first publication (a book including a music album and notation scores), which was based on field research in all refugee camps in the West Bank, entitled “Damaged Brains Music” in 2022. In 2021, her documentary film Wall Piano was selected for the Tampere Film Festival, a short film festival held in Finland, which received special mention and the Audience Award. In 2022, Asma collaborated with Disney, Marvel co. She made a series of paintings for the production of “Iron Woman” movie.