

AREEJ AL MANSORY

Visual Artist

- HÄR ÄR JAG

HERE I AM

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Had the privilege to open Areej Almansory exhibition (here I am) Areej who originally from Iraq but she lives in 16 years in Helsingborg. Areej mainly works with abstract painting, but in this exhibition "Here I am" she also exhibits mixed media and video works. It is a strong exhibition and with a strong story. The background to the exhibition goes back to 2015 when Areej was elected as representative of Helsingborg's campaign "I am a cultural aunt". In this campaign took a picture of Areej as a cultural aunt where you see Areej holding the culture card high and she wore the Swedish flag as a veil. Initially there were many positive reactions and Areej started using the Swedish flag as a veil in other contexts when it became a symbol for her appreciation. On the other hand, she had to receive a lot of racist claims on the internet and in social media when she had worn the Swedish flag as a veil on National Day. Art and culture have a unique ability to convey people's stories, experiences, dreams and thoughts. Art and culture also give us an opportunity to see the world with the eyes of others. That is exactly what we can do with this exhibition "Here I Am". It also emphasizes the importance of defending the core principle of culture, which is culture's intrinsic value and independence. That culture can provoke, can provoke debate, can criticize, it can question but it can also give courage to act. Art and culture give voice to more, it gives voice to those who have not. That's exactly what Areej's exhibition "Here I Am" does, it gives voice to more, to those who don't. Let's be who we are. We must always stand for and defend this.

Opening speech by Magnus Lunderquist, chairman of Region Skåne's cultural committee.

