

Sumayya Vally

Founder and Principal
Counterspace

Renowned as an Honorary Professor of Practice, Sumayya Vally stands at the forefront of architectural innovation and cultural redefinition. As the founder and Principal of Counterspace, a design, research, and pedagogical entity, Vally's work seeks to articulate the identities and landscapes of African and Islamic contexts, both rooted and diasporic, with a particular interest in the complex relationships between territories. Recognized as a World Economic Forum Young Global Leader and listed in the TIME100 Next, she has been named as a force poised to redefine architectural practice and canon.

Her pioneering spirit has garnered international acclaim, earning her accolades such as the title of Emerging Architect of the Year at the esteemed 2023 Dezeen Awards, and recognition as one of Financial Times Readers' Women of the Year 2023. Vally's design prowess is exemplified by her commission as the youngest architect ever to design the Serpentine Pavilion in London, which opened to critical acclaim as being one of the most radical pavilion designs to shape the commission.

In addition to her architectural achievements, Vally's role as the Artistic Director of the inaugural Islamic Arts Biennale in Jeddah marked a pivotal moment in the reimagining of the definition of Islamic art. Her innovative approach, rooted in decolonial principles and grounded in the lived experiences of the Islamic world, has earned widespread acclaim and praise for its bold reinterpretation of traditional paradigms.

Beyond her design practice, Vally's commitment to education and knowledge dissemination is evident through her involvement in various academic and institutional endeavours. Her contributions have been recognized with several honours, including an Honorary Professorship from UCL and a gold medal from the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada. Vally's unwavering dedication to pushing the boundaries of architectural discourse and fostering new avenues of cultural expression continues to inspire and shape the future of the field.