

MONA SAUDI: A WOMAN WITHOUT COMPLEXES

Born in Amman in 1945, Mona Saudi completed her high school and left her native country Jordan to discover the world. Her first stop was Paris. There, she attended the «Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts». Her ambition and curiosity pushed her to another country for training. In Carrera, Italy, her major occupation was Art. Finally, she settled in Lebanon in 1969. Since that time, she has been working as sculptress and writer.

Her career

As a sculptress, she draws her own designs in black and white. She is the author of art publications for children as well as for adults. She is the founder of, and responsible for «Qism al Funun-at-Tashkiliyah — Al l'an-ul Muahad — M.T.F.» (Plastic Arts Section)

Her publications include the following Arabic books:

- In Time of War Children Testify, 1970.
- First Vision, 1972.

Mona Saudi has illustrated books for Ghassan Kanafani, Mu'in Bsisso and Adonis.

Her work

Consistency and unity are some of the outstanding qualities of her work. Her style is distinguished by precision, organic vitality and sensuality. Her art reflects her personality which is linked to the natural environment and human relationships.

Being a woman, she conceives herself as recipient and donor. Her art reflects the woman in her, her occupations, her qualities and her character. Woman's work, according to her, cannot be conceived by man. It is a reflection of her feminism. As recipient and donor, Mona Saudi is the woman, the wife, the mother, the mistress and the land. All these elements are innate truths and associated with her inner person.

In response to certain questions regarding women's problems and status, Mona Saudi believes that nothing is impossible for a woman but that some people dispute her position and status in society. Up until 20 years ago, Arab Society — being a closed society — misconceived the position of women. Being in touch with economic, political and social fields, women have recently found ways to prove their capacities and impose their personality in a manner similar to that of Zenobia and Cleopatra in the past.

Concerning the emancipation of women, Mona Saudi believes that women should be considered as human beings, with the right to be free, and the right to choose their way of self-expression. Their emancipation should be a positive one, fulfilled and expressed not only in words, but also in concrete deeds.



Concerning the veil, she believes that it is a custom which humiliates women. The purpose of the veil is to hide women's beauty and body; however, the body is the reflection of the «self». Men should not use the veil to damage the dignity and integrity of women. Instead, they should learn to control their emotions. Whenever the veil is present, the relationship between man and woman cannot be a correct one. Women are not to be conceived as possessions or objects.

Does she have an ideal in life?

Mona Saudi has no special ideal. The individual, the environment, the artist in her, and her own experience form her own personal ideal. She has never had a complex about being a woman. She has never wished to be a man since a man is not considered by her as superior. She is perfectly satisfied and content to be a female.

In patriarchal societies, she says, women are considered as important contributors. This is a world of both men and women, so why should it be a patriarchy? It is a humanistic world, based on equality, so differentiation should not exist. The roles of oppressed and oppressor in daily life, in sexual behavior, or in society must not be present. As a matter of fact, this continual oppression is alive in our society. This will affect the productivity of women vis-a-vis society. Woman is the master only within the framework of her own marital house.

Marriage should be an association of both partners for a betterment of life. Men and women should stand side by side, sharing responsibility, happiness and sadness. With civil marriage and divorce, marriage is no longer considered as a closed institution. Woman with this new exit is able to prove herself and develop her personality.

Living in an old house, full of character, Mona Saudi has her own atelier. Her sculptures and drawings are dotted around the place. Married, and mother of a daughter, Mona Saudi is not trying to impress or influence her young child — on the contrary, she encourages her to make her own decisions. She is against any form of sexual discrimination. If she had a son, she would refuse to treat him differently from his sister.

(Interview given by Mona Saudi to Fatima Shaar and Walid Zahr-el-Din, from the Women's Studies course at BUC, June 1981.)