

## Helen Khal: Oil Paintings

August 20 - September 5

"With Helen Khal, the world is one big dream."(1) This was the title of a newspaper article announcing the opening of Helen Khal's exhibit of fifty oil paintings.

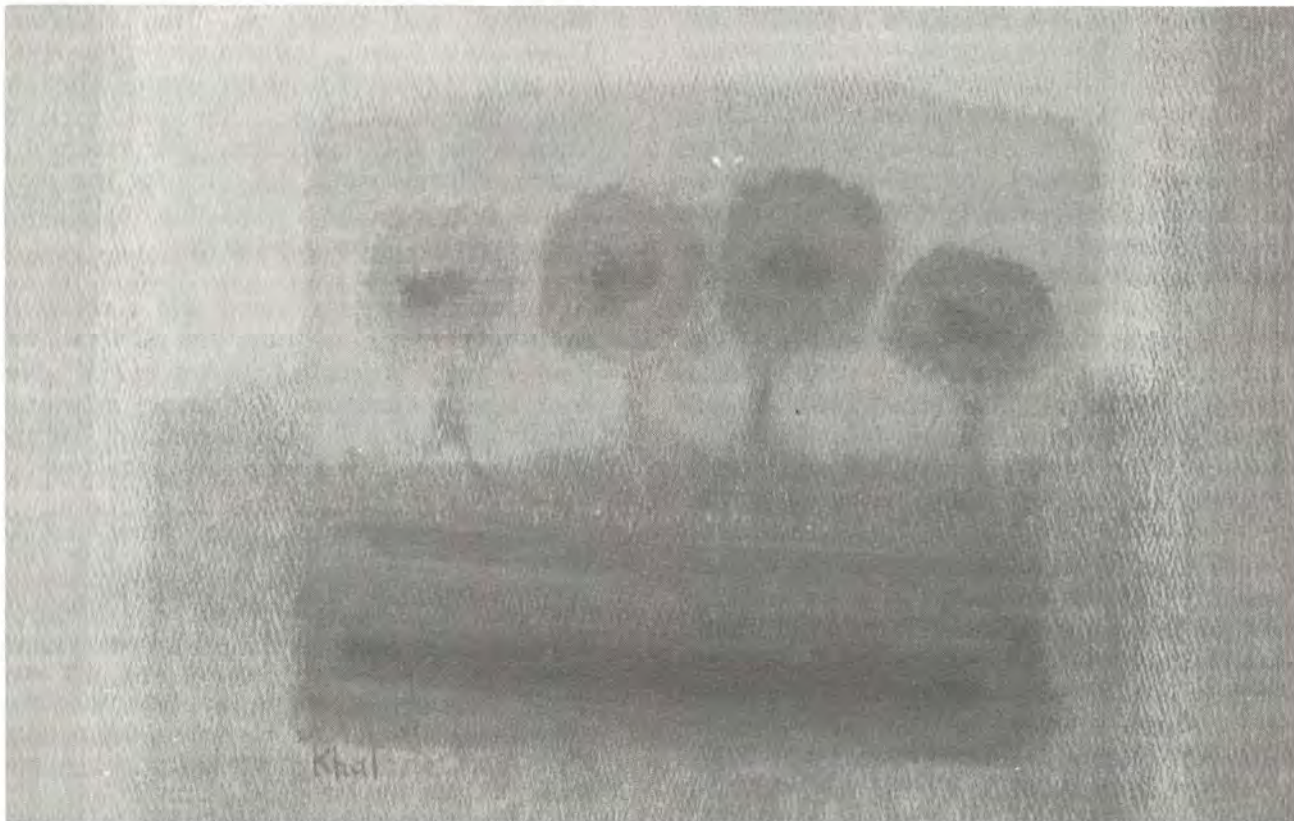
After fifteen years of absence in Washington D.C. the artist held an exhibit in Lebanon. The walls of the Alwane Gallery were decorated with her abstract paintings at a time when art is blooming again in the country.

Her colors are those of the plains, wheat, peach trees and the bottom of the sea. Each painting had its unique taste, fragrance and planet. It tells a cosmic story depicted in a flare, glowing shapes and abstract images. An unexpected journey in an "oasis of emotion" where memory

transcends objective appearances.(2)

Hers are the colors of nature. When she left Lebanon because of the war, she found nature her only condolence. "I was in pain," she says, "I experienced a conflict with portraits and, consequently, stayed away from painting for a long time." (3) When she started painting again, Helen Khal says that she resorted to flowers for a while, moving between abstract and portraits. "But I noticed that my flowers had the qualities of people. I would paint two trees or two flowers dialoging with each other. Hence, I realized that I was communicating with flowers what I could not communicate in portraits." (4)

Helen Khal does not have any paintings of a bouquet or flower arrangement. To this she replies that she is not a fan of flower arrangements or

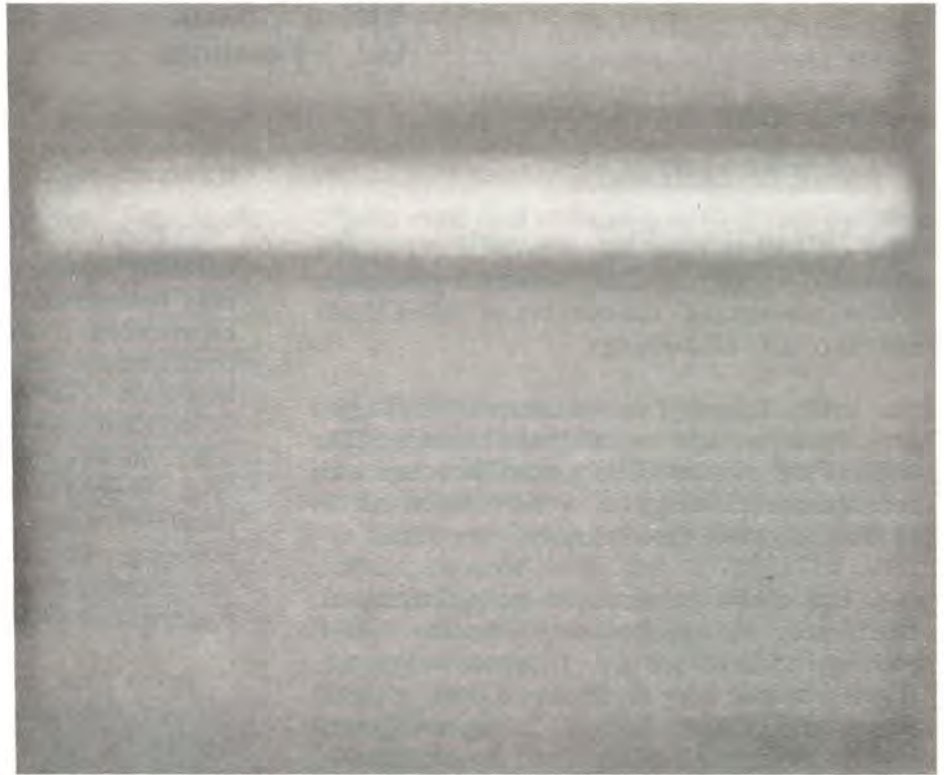




43 RED HORIZON

1974, oil on canvas,  
200 × 200 cm.

The same technique of building up large areas of faintly textured color is used in this large canvas. The presence of a band of light emanating from the center, as in the upper white and pink horizontals, is a new element in Khal's work. Imperceptibly, the light breathes and pulsates as a living presence.



gardening. She says that she is a woman who paints through her femininity.

The majority of her paintings in the exhibit represent foggy images having very light and mysterious boundaries. In the mixture of colors are the elements of a cloud, which the eye attempts to define despite the abstract borders. Shapes are hidden behind the sea of colors.(5)

It seems that Helen Khal's obsession is an expression through colors and her art is a journey in a world of colors. There seems to be very little connection between shape and color. Hence, the subject of the painting is trivial compared to the interplay and balance of colors.

Helen Khal is not only a painter, but an art critic, a poet and an author as well. She is an American born Lebanese. Helen Khal studied art at the Academie Libanaise Des Beaux Arts, in Lebanon, with some of the most prominent artists in the country. In 1963, she created the gallery "Contact" with her ex-husband Yousef Khal. She was an art critic for "Monday

Morning" and taught at the American University of Beirut. Unfortunately, like many Lebanese she had to leave the country when the war erupted in 1976. She has lived in Washington D.C. ever since. She received a hearty welcome when she came for her short visit to Lebanon. The reviews of her exhibit are clear evidence of her popularity.

Helen Khal is a friend and a respected contributor to our Institute, who published her *Book Women Artists In Lebanon*, in 1987. Her book is a reference and a directory of women artists which is highly recommended. If you wish to purchase the book please contact us

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(1)(2) May Makarem, "Avec Helen Khal, Le Monde Est Un Grand Reve" *L'Orient Le Jour*, Daily newspaper, August 20, 1991 (French Reference)

(3)(4) May Menassa, "Helen Khal is Back", *Al-Nahar*, Daily newspaper, August 21, 1991 (Arabic Reference).

(5) Sizar Namour, "Tawahuj Halat al-Laoun" "The Glow of Colors" An Introductory note of Helen Khal's work which was distributed at the Alwane Gallery.