

Arab Women Artists

The International Council for Women in the Arts (IWCA) is planning the first exhibition of Arab women artists in the United States, **Forces of Change: Artists of the Arab World**. It is a traveling exhibition that includes contemporary works by 70 artists from over 15 Arab countries, presenting an overview of artwork produced by Arab women in the last fifty years, with an emphasis on the more assertive and experimental work of the past ten to fifteen years.

The Exhibition will open at the National Museum for Women in the Arts, Washington, D.C., in February 1994. Among museums lending their collections are L'Institut du Monde Arabe in Paris, the National Gallery in Amman, Jordan, and the Contemporary Art Museum in Tunis. After Washington, the Exhibition will travel to other museums and universities in major cities across the United States, including Boston, Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami and Santa Fe.

ICWA is presenting American audiences with a rare opportunity to see art by Arab women who have gained recognition in their own countries but are relatively unknown abroad. Organized thematically, the artworks represent ways Arab women artists have responded visually and imaginatively to their own culture and to the world. This exhibition should provide a dynamic forum for new dialogue and broader cultural exchange.

Hereby are samples of the work of some of the Lebanese and Arab artists.

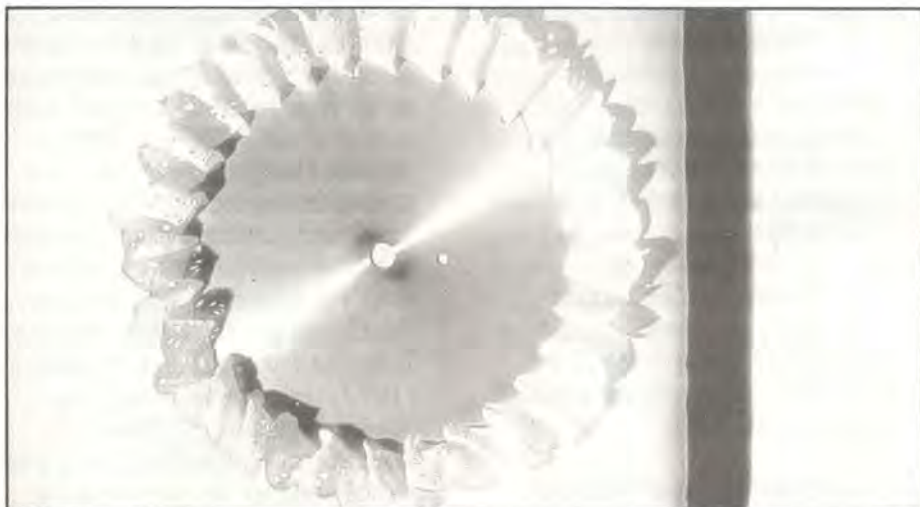


Foule. Huguette Cland (Lebanon) 1970, Long robe.
Photo credit: Bruce Wright. Published by permission of ICWA.

Huguette Cland: Bodies - bustling, pushing, pressing against one another. The physical reality of bodily contact is inextricably from the work of Lebanese artist Huguette Cland. The female body is her primary vehicle. Her depictions of the feminine form in all of its aspects - undulating breasts, curvaceous hips, the public triangle - is daringly defined yet simultaneously ambiguous. Body parts drawn in ink, pencils, pastels or paints, convey a monochromatic tension; supple and organic yet deceptively simple.

**Bayah Mahieddine, Algeria.
Femmes Portant Des Coupes.
Photo: Ph. Maillard.**

Born in an age bridging colonialism and modernity, into a land of national struggle and male domination, her artwork speaks from a difficult present to another place and time. Steeped in turmoil over the Algerian revolution of her youth, she found escape through history and fantasy. These are the foundations of her artistic expression. She mixes mysticism, paganism, and Islamic ornamentation in aesthetic depictions intended to inspire and lend vision.



**Rabia Sukkarieh, Lebanon.
Description of sheherezade 101
38cm square mixed media
works, installed on a single
wall, 11 feet high by 35 feet
wide, to appear as a series of
lines of written text.**

The piece consists of 101 two- or three-dimensional 15" by 15" paintings which are installed 5" apart in one line at eye level. The artist has chosen this order to achieve "humility and intimacy of a small field of vision, to contain the viewer's gaze and to avoid standardization by the square foot or categorization as miniature."

Exhibit highlights

The exhibition brings together 20th century works by women artists from Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestinian West Bank and Gaza, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Sudan, Tunisia and the United Arab Emirates; as well as artists of Arab origin living in the United States and Europe. These artists represent the wide range of ethnic and religious groups that make up the Arab World.

The exhibition includes contemporary and traditional modes of expressions - from installations and video works to figurative painting,

sculpture, ceramics, jewelry and tapestry.

Publications and programs

In conjunction with the exhibit, the following will be presented:

- a richly illustrated interpretive catalog;
- videotaped interviews with selected participating artists;
- lectures and educational programs related to the exhibition's theme; and
- a festival on Arabic films produced by Arab women to be launched by renowned Arab film star Fatin Hamama.

The national museum of women in the arts is the first museum of its kind to celebrate the artist achievements of women from the Renaissance to the present. Its permanent collection, educational programs, extensive library resources and research center are dedicated to this goal.

Funding: ICWA, is a non-profit, tax-exempt organization. All its properties and assets are dedicated to advancing women's arts. ICWA has no formal membership structure and welcomes donations from companies worldwide. Donors will be acknowledged in the exhibit's printed material and will receive the Council's annual report. Please make out and send checks to: ICWA/Arab Women Artists Exhibit, P.O.Box 226, Lafayette, CA. 94549, USA. Tel: (510) 256-0808; Fax (510) 944-9479.