

# Mid-Century Middle East

Women and Abstraction

# Menhat Helmy (1925-2004)

Menhat Helmy was born in Helwan, Egypt in on July 11, 1925 as the middle child in a family of seven sisters and two brothers. She graduated from Cairo's High Institute of Pedagogic Studies for Art in 1949 before continuing her education abroad at the [Slade School of Fine Art](#) between 1953–55, where she focused on [drawing](#), [painting](#), and [etching](#). She later studied colored [graphics](#) at [Morley College](#) in London during her second stay in London between 1973-79.

<https://www.blockmuseum.northwestern.edu/exhibitions/2022/taking-shape-abstraction-from-the-arab-world,-1950s-1980s.html> (25 mins)







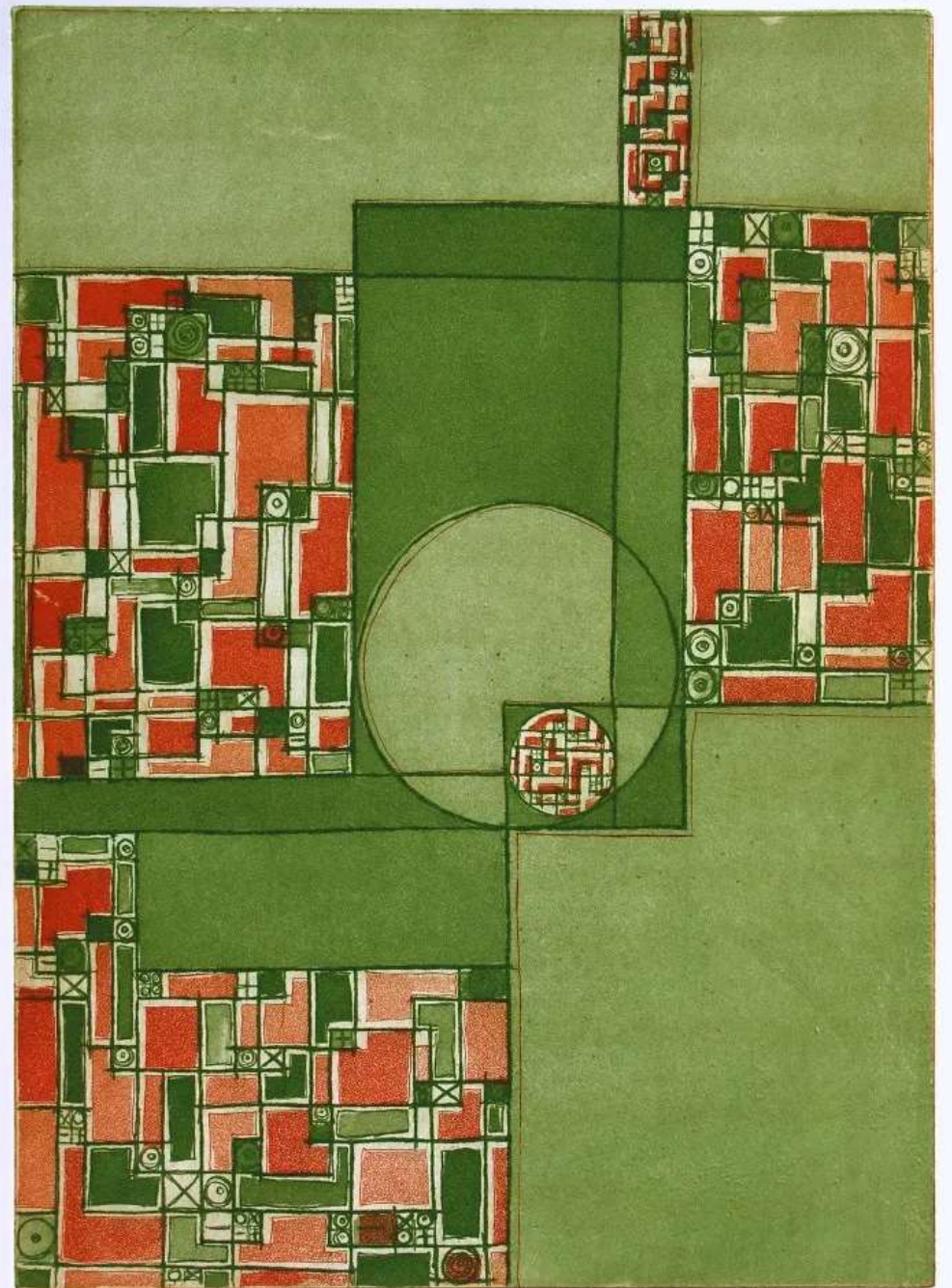
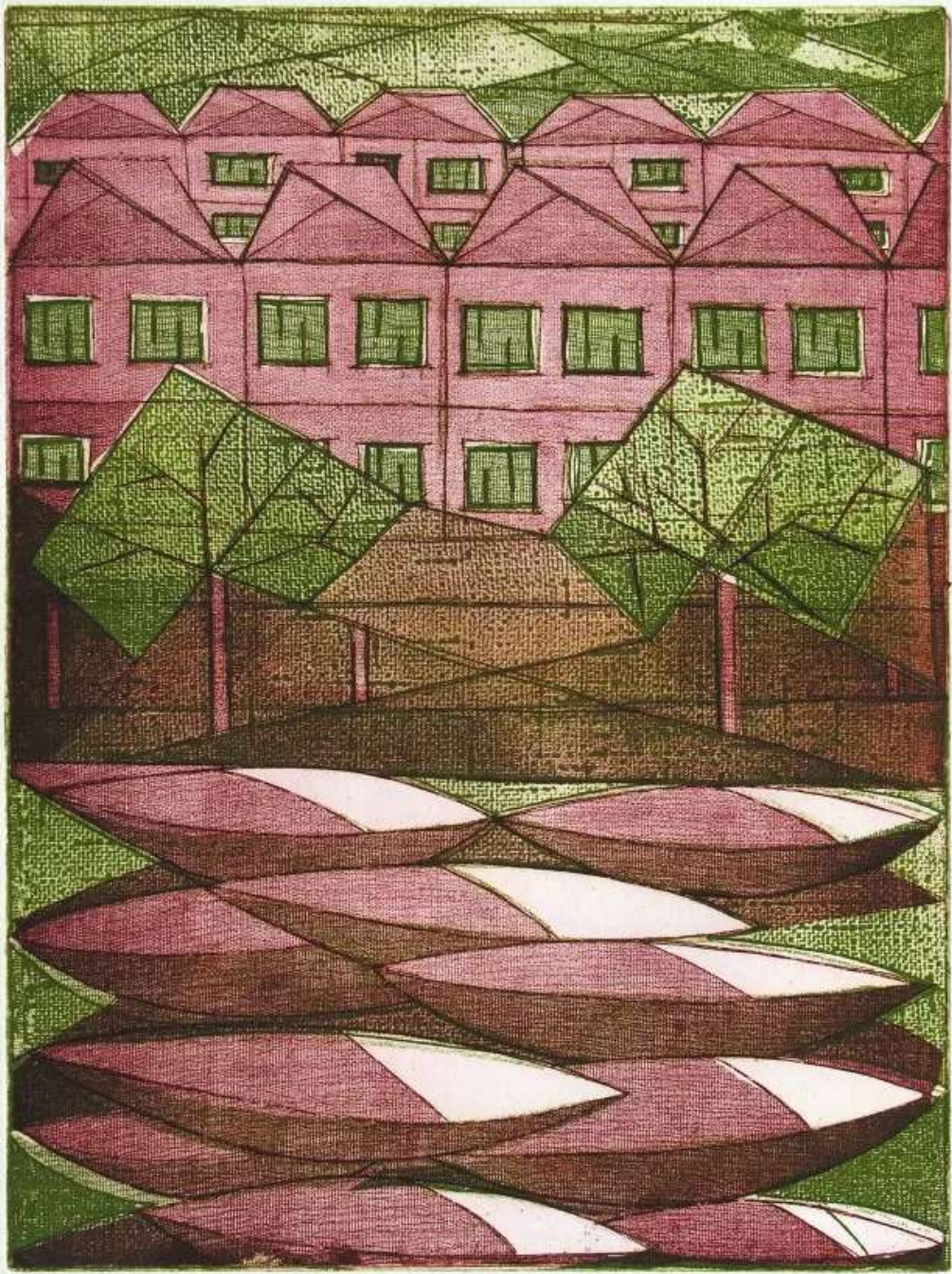




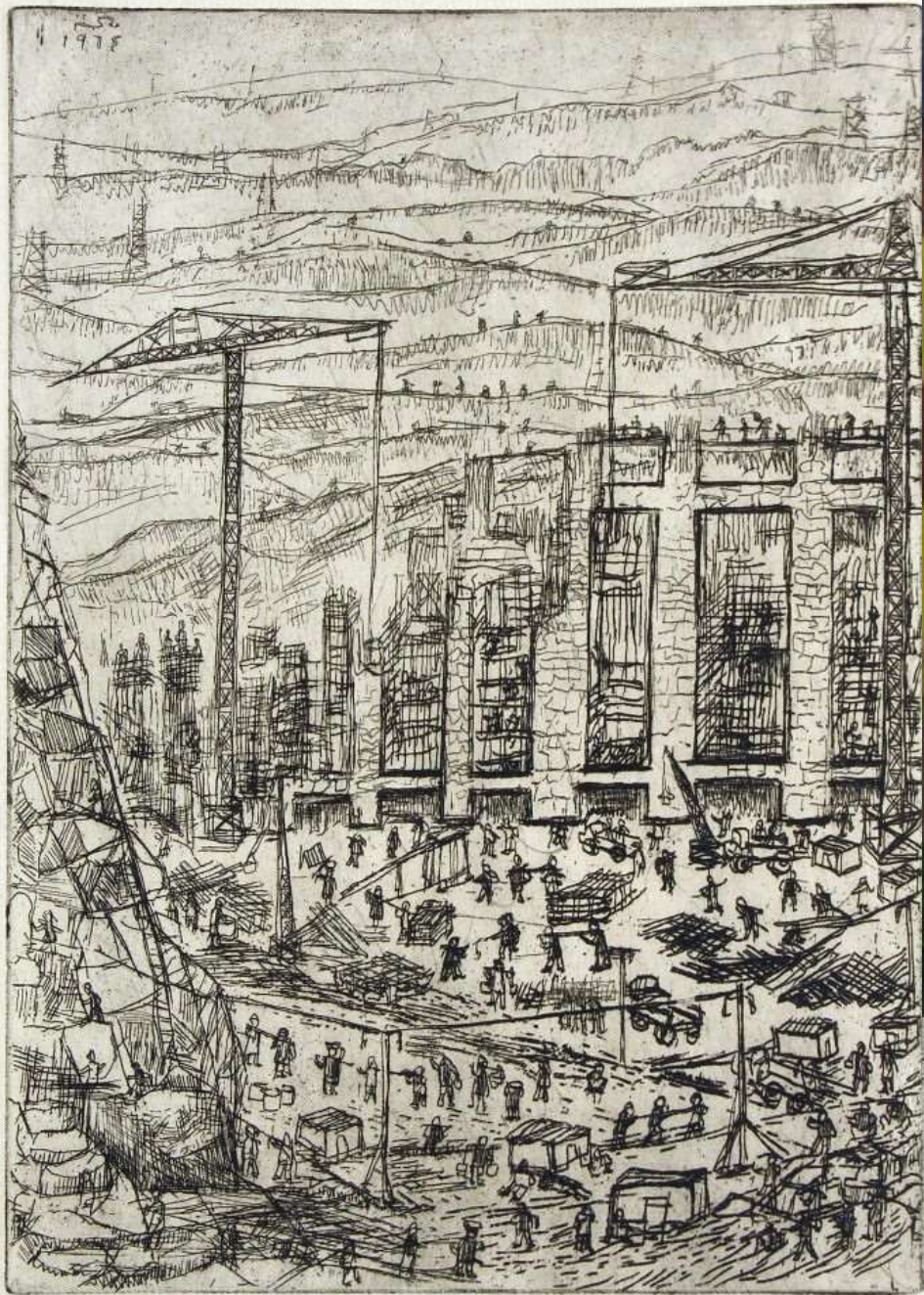














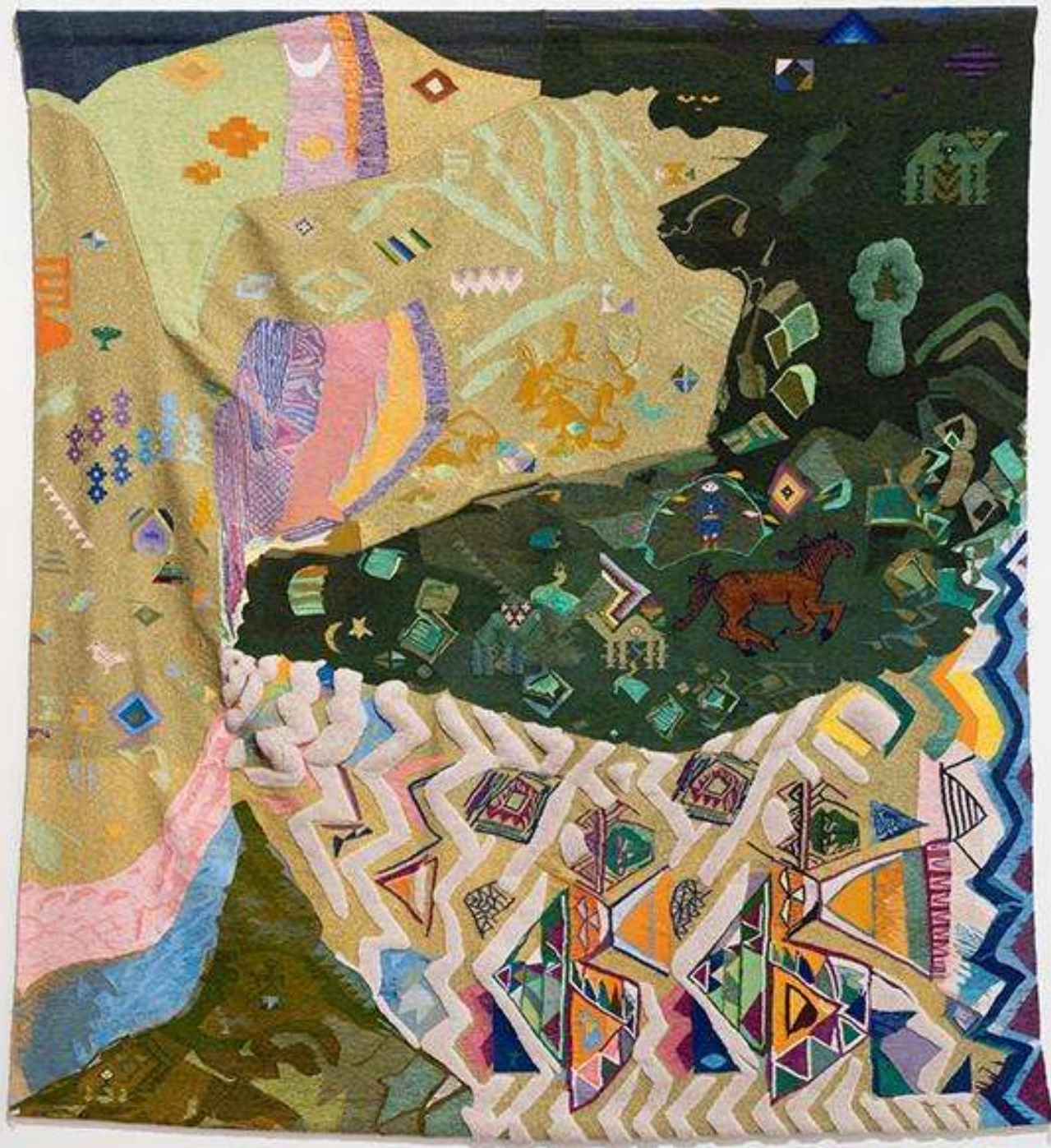
# Safia Farhat (1924-2004)

Tunisian artist, educator, and activist Safia Foudhaïli Farhat's massive fiber works articulate weaving as an expression of the reforming spirit of her time. Dissolving the borders between art, craft, and design, her richly textured tapestries like the vibrant green diptych *Gafsa & ailleurs* (1983) reveal the ingenuity of her approach.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r-JMzE7W4Wk> (4:31)











tunisie.co





















# Samia Halaby

Samia A. Halaby is a Palestinian artist, activist, and scholar living and working in New York. Halaby is recognized as a pioneer of abstract painting. Since beginning her artistic career in the late 1950s, she has exhibited in museums, galleries, and art fairs throughout Europe, Asia, North and South America.

<http://www.ayyamgallery.com/artists/samia-halaby/videos>





















# Ufemia Rizk

Born in Jaffa, Rizk currently lives in Montreal, Canada. She studied at the American University in Beirut, Sorbonne University in Paris, and Fahrelnissa Zeid Royal Institute of Fine Arts where she studied art. At Dawson College in Montreal, she studied sculpture, printmaking, graphic design, computer imaging technology, and web page design. Rizk's art is the creation of an inner world to penetrate the mysteries of the universe. Her paintings concentrated mainly on geometric abstractions are a necessity of capturing and expressing a vision of cosmic forces. Her work is found in museum and private collections internationally. She is the recipient of many awards and distinctions in France and Japan: Medal of the Salon de Paris 3rd International Festival, Osaka; Oscar with Gold Medal at the World Biennale of Modern Art, Lyon; Gold Medal for French Merit; and five other gold medals.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EJcpffAxvcl>









Alfemia Rizk 2021



Alfemia Rizk 94





William R. G.























# Etel Adnan (1925-2021)

Etel Adnan was a Lebanese-American poet, essayist, and visual artist. In 2003, Adnan was named "arguably the most celebrated and accomplished Arab American author writing today" by the academic journal MELUS: Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=odzjLhDDKdc>





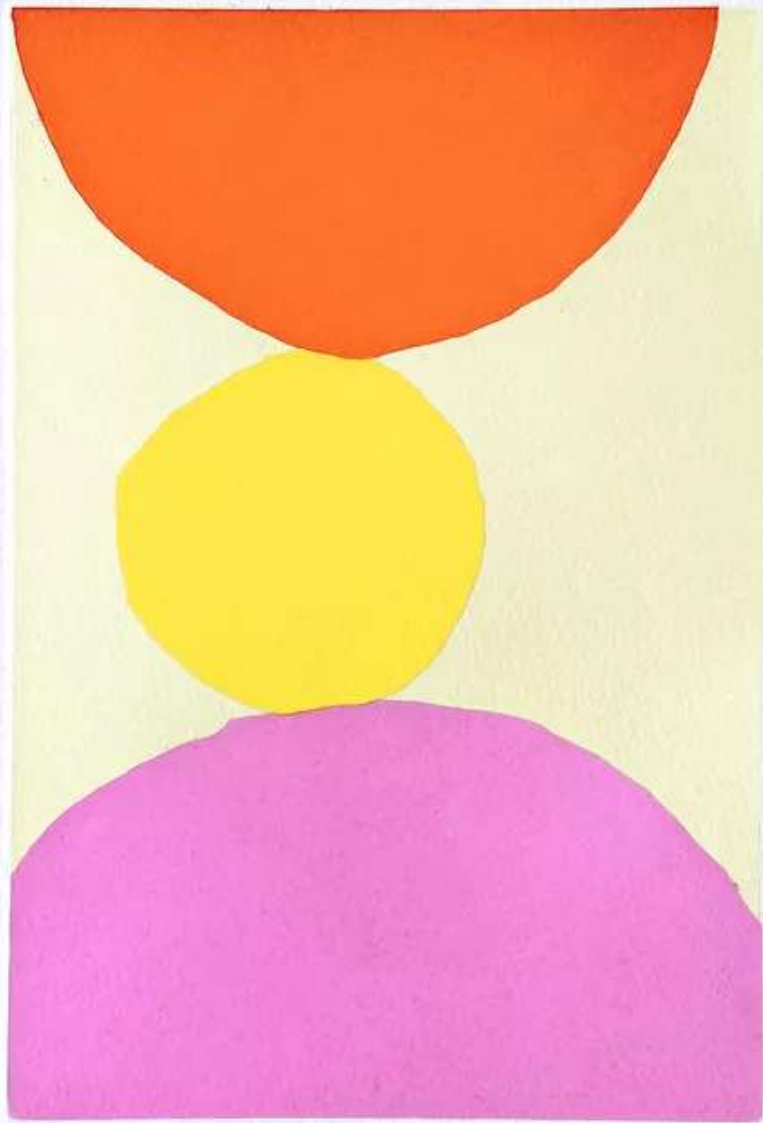












83/100

E. Adnan 21





# Huguette Caland (1931-2019)

Huguette Caland was a Lebanese painter, sculptor and fashion designer known for her erotic abstract paintings and body landscapes. Based out of Los Angeles, her art was displayed in numerous exhibitions and museums around the world.

<https://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-st-ives/huguette-caland>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6lj7vYhgaRI>  
(7 mins)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4vzXI01HjcQ>

















Wang Meng, *Spring and Autumn*, 14th century, silk, ink, and color.



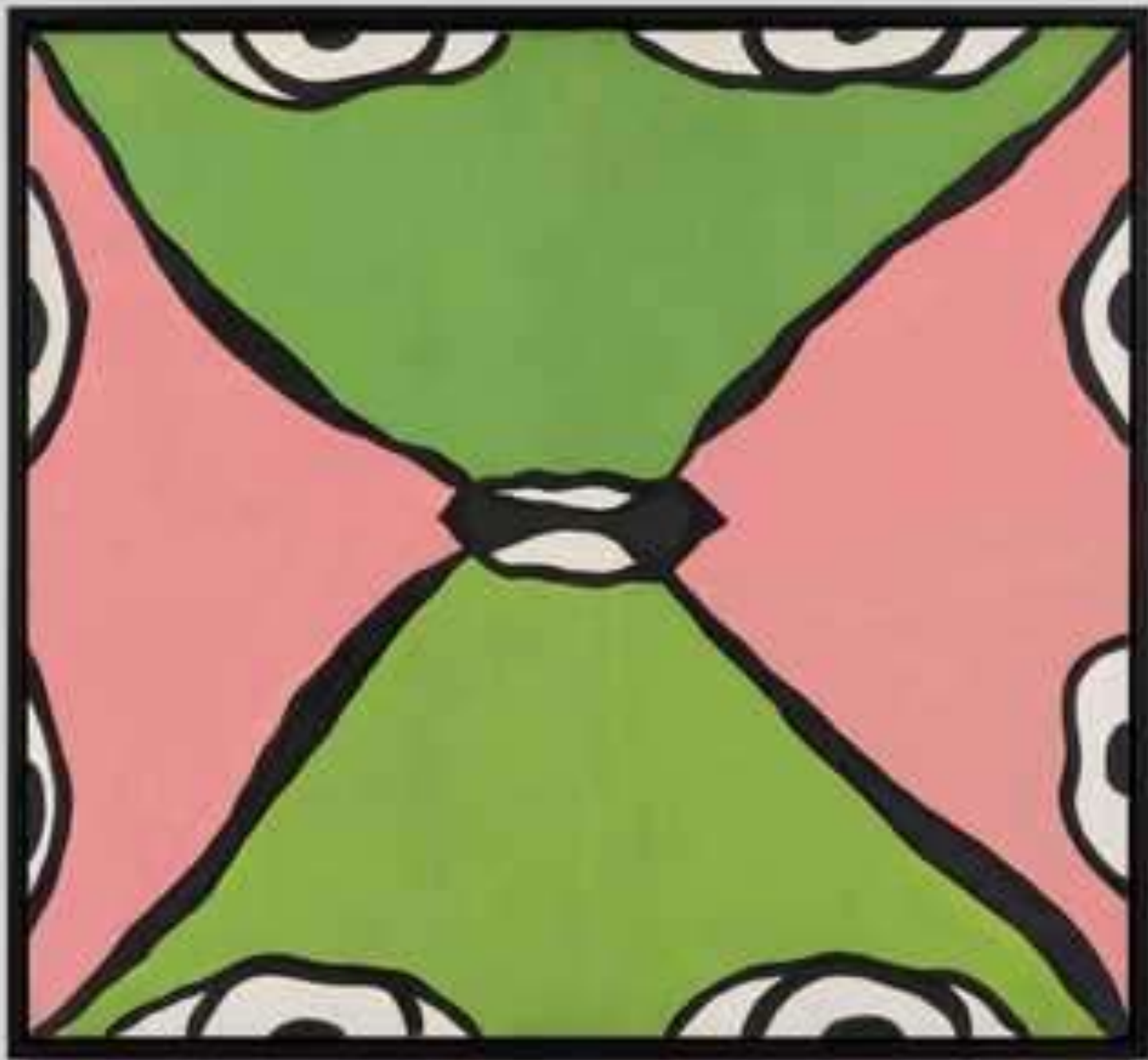


















# Saloua Raouda (1916-2017)

Saloua Raouda Choucair was a Lebanese painter and sculptor.

Born in 1916 in Ain el Mreisa, [Beirut, Lebanon](#),<sup>[3]</sup> Choucair came from a family of doctors, lawyers, engineers and historians.<sup>[4]</sup> Her father, Salim Rawda (1872-1917) was an expatriate in Australia trading herbs and writing manuscripts on their medicinal values.<sup>[3]</sup> When he returned to Lebanon in 1910, he met and married Choucair's mother, Zalfa Amin Najjar (1891-1995), a Brummana High School student who was fond of reciting poetry.<sup>[3]</sup> They had three children: Anis Rawda (1911-1988) was a businessman and a member of the Beirut municipality; Anissa Rawda Najjar (1913-2016) was a social activist, who was married to the late Fouad Najjar; and the youngest, Choucair, became one of the most prominent figures of Lebanese [modernism](#).<sup>[3]</sup> When Choucair's father was in [Damascus](#) as a conscript in the [Ottoman army](#), he contracted [typhoid](#) and died in 1917.<sup>[3]</sup> Widowed early on, Choucair's mother had to raise three children on her own and under difficult circumstances.<sup>[4]</sup> Choucair found inspiration within her mother; aside from being well-educated, a skilled orator and a poet, Najjar had also belonged to various women's associations and was awarded a medallion from Brummana High School upon turning 100.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bB1K4H0vx0g>

























Salgado, R.S. 1961







# Hind Nasser

A Jordanian artist, born in Amman, Jordan 1940. Graduated with a BA in History & Politics in 1961 from Beirut College for Women (presently Lebanese American University). She started studying painting under the artist Fahrelnissa Zeid in 1976.

Upon graduating, one of her most defined aims was to develop the cultural scene in her country, she started teaching and established the Alumnae Club of her College, a Children's Club for cultural activities mainly theatre and arts, The Jordan Crafts Council with a marketing outlet for the traditional and modernized local crafts, and the Jordan Ikebana chapter for the art of flower arranging. She was one of the founders of the National Music Conservatory of the Noor Al Hussein Foundation and Chairperson for 15 years and one of the founding members of the Jordan Museum for archaeology. She trained for marketing and worked as a marketing officer in a Financial Firm for Savings and Loan. In 1995 she started her own project the Jordan Arts & Crafts Center / Artisana. And then she established her own gallery, Gallery 14. Currently, she is working on a project for natural history of Jordan.





# Assignment Suggestions...

- Create an abstract landscape based on where you grew up
- Abstract letters from an alphabet (use your initials) in an artwork.
- Create an artwork with color shapes
- Create an artwork inspired by the colors in one of the paintings in this lesson.
- Create an abstract 2D artwork based on a sculpture.