



HRAIR

**Untitled**  
**Date unknown**  
China ink on paper  
75 x 65 cm (29.5 x 25.6 in.)  
Joseph Raïdy Collection

# HRAIR

## 1946

### Feminine softness and the stallion's exuberance

Hrair Diarbekirian, better known by his first name, was born in Beirut in 1946. Barely graduated from the Académie Libanaise des Beaux-Arts, where he was a student of French painter Henri Fortier, Hrair's first exhibition proved a failure. The second one however, at Gallery One, was a resounding success. From the outset, his two themes of predilection emerged: the horse, Woman – or both. This strange amalgamation combines, on the one hand, a millennial symbol power and virility, with, on the other, softness and delicacy. In Hrair's work, Woman and the horse share sensual curves and a gentle, yet determined, character. Almost always represented frontally, the two evolve within luxurious vegetation and rich ornamentation. Curvaceous motifs, reminiscent of arabesques, connect and separate them across enclosed dreamy spaces. Women wear gracious long dresses ornamented with geometric motifs and fine embroidery, and display languorous, poetic or dreamlike expressions. They rule over the vegetal realm, whether posing next to a bouquet placed nonchalantly on a windowsill or amongst endless vines fused with almost identical hillsides of petals. It is a world of poetry – women and horses pose, walk and unite in mysterious harmony. No one can ascertain who these princesses with cascading strands of hair are, nor can one guess from which myths the stallions have emerged.

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Throughout his career, Hrair also painted religious works inspired by Byzantine art, such as icons of the Annunciation, the Last Supper and the Crucifixion. In fact, the influence of Eastern sacred art – particularly Byzantine and Armenian iconology – strongly permeates his work. He employs rich, deep colors: a royal and divine gold, a maroon at once calm and brilliant, reds, yellows, and lush greens. He elongates bodies, adorns the circular heads with crowns, and creates halos of flowers and light, subtly marrying exuberant colors and elaborate design to the motifs of Armenian religious art.

### EXHIBITIONS AND PRIZES

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*In 1964, Hrair won three gold medals for tapestries he created for the Lebanese Presidential Palace, and in 1965 he won the Sursock Museum's first prize. In 1971 he won a gold medal in Rome and in 1989 the prize for European excellence in Paris. He has been exhibiting Lebanon since the sixties, and taken part in a number of shows throughout the Middle East, in Europe, Brazil and the United States.*



Untitled  
1970  
Oil on canvas  
110 x 150 cm (43.3 x 59.1 in.)  
KA collection, modern and contemporary art, Lebanon