



ART

FROM LEBANON

Modern and contemporary artists

1880 - 1975 | Volume I

Nour Salamé Abillama

Marie Tomb

Foreword by Amin Maalouf

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1880-1975

Volume I

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JULIANA SÉRAPHIM

1934 - 2005

Women, fables and flowers

Born in the port city of Jaffa in Palestine, Juliana Séraphim settled in Lebanon with her family at the age of 14. She began studying art with the French painter Georges Cyr and the Lebanese Jean Khalifé. Thanks to grants, she also studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Florence (where she exhibited in 1959), at the Royal Academy of San Fernando in Madrid, and at the Beaux-Arts in Paris.

Séraphim started working for a few years at the UNRWA in Beirut, but early on privileged her career as an artist and illustrator. She was soon noticed in the world of design for her advertising posters, only to start experimenting with calligraphy, juxtaposing it with various materials, then to turn to Surrealism, an artistic vision that allowed her to set free her pictorial subjects and ideas. A vision also in sync with the times, as the nineteen-sixties and seventies were decades of exploration of alternative forms of spirituality and spiritualism, and fighting for freedom, especially for women's rights. These social changes find an echo in Seraphim's two main interests: the woman-flower on the one hand, and a fantastical architecture of towers and mysterious cities on the other. The architecture often shelters this woman – an amalgamation of the human and the floral, a symbol of eternal femininity. The city, with its spirals and arabesques, reveals a very thin and ambiguous distinction between the human and the vegetal realms. The paintings invite the viewer into dreamlike sceneries, part Art Deco, part Surrealist, where princesses can act as haughty as they look sensual, along their poetic adventures and imaginary voyages.

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One of the first women in Lebanon to fully embrace an artistic career and to live entirely from her art, Séraphim travelled often across Europe and the Middle East, and chose to move to France, where she continued to draw women, with soft, rich colors. She passed away in 2005, bequeathing us her heroines, the ultimate guides to discover a world of pleasure.

EXHIBITIONS AND PRIZES

Juliana Séraphim showed her work since the beginning of the sixties in personal exhibitions in Lebanon, France, Italy, Spain and the Middle East. She has taken part in group exhibitions in Beirut, Paris, Washington and Tokyo, in the biennales of Paris and Alexandria, and in the Salons d'Automne of the Sursock Museum. Her works are part of the collections of the Musée du Surréalisme, the Institut du Monde Arabe in Paris, and the Jordan National Gallery in Amman.



Untitled
1988
Oil on canvas
40 x 45 cm (15.7 x 17.7 in.)
Alexa Kiamé Bourji Collection