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Modern women: 13 Lebanese female artists in "LEBANON MODERN!" at the Beirut Art Fair 2016

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Exhibition highlights women artists from country's culturally rich modernist period.

The Beirut Art Fair 2016 honours influential Lebanese female artists from the country's modernist art scene of the 20th century with an exhibition titled "LEBANON MODERN!" running from 15 to 18 September 2016.



Beirut Art Fair 2016 logo. Image courtesy the Beirut Art Fair.

Since 2010, the **Beirut Art Fair** has been introducing visual artists from the ME.NA.SA (Middle East, North Africa, South Asia) region to curators, collectors and institutions. The fair continues to thrive and gain both local and international support, with the event welcoming some 21,000 visitors and exhibiting 1,500 works in 2015.

At the helm of the fair's seventh edition is founder **Laure d'Hauteville**, returning Artistic Director **Pascal Odille** and Marine Bougaran as Head of Exhibitor Relations and Director of the fair's "Projects" space. A new space known as "**REVEALING by SGBL**" will promote the region's hottest up-and-coming talent, while "LEBANON MODERN!" shines a spotlight on the country's most significant female artists from the modernist period (1945-1975).





Laure d'Hauteville, Beirut Art Fair Founder and Director.

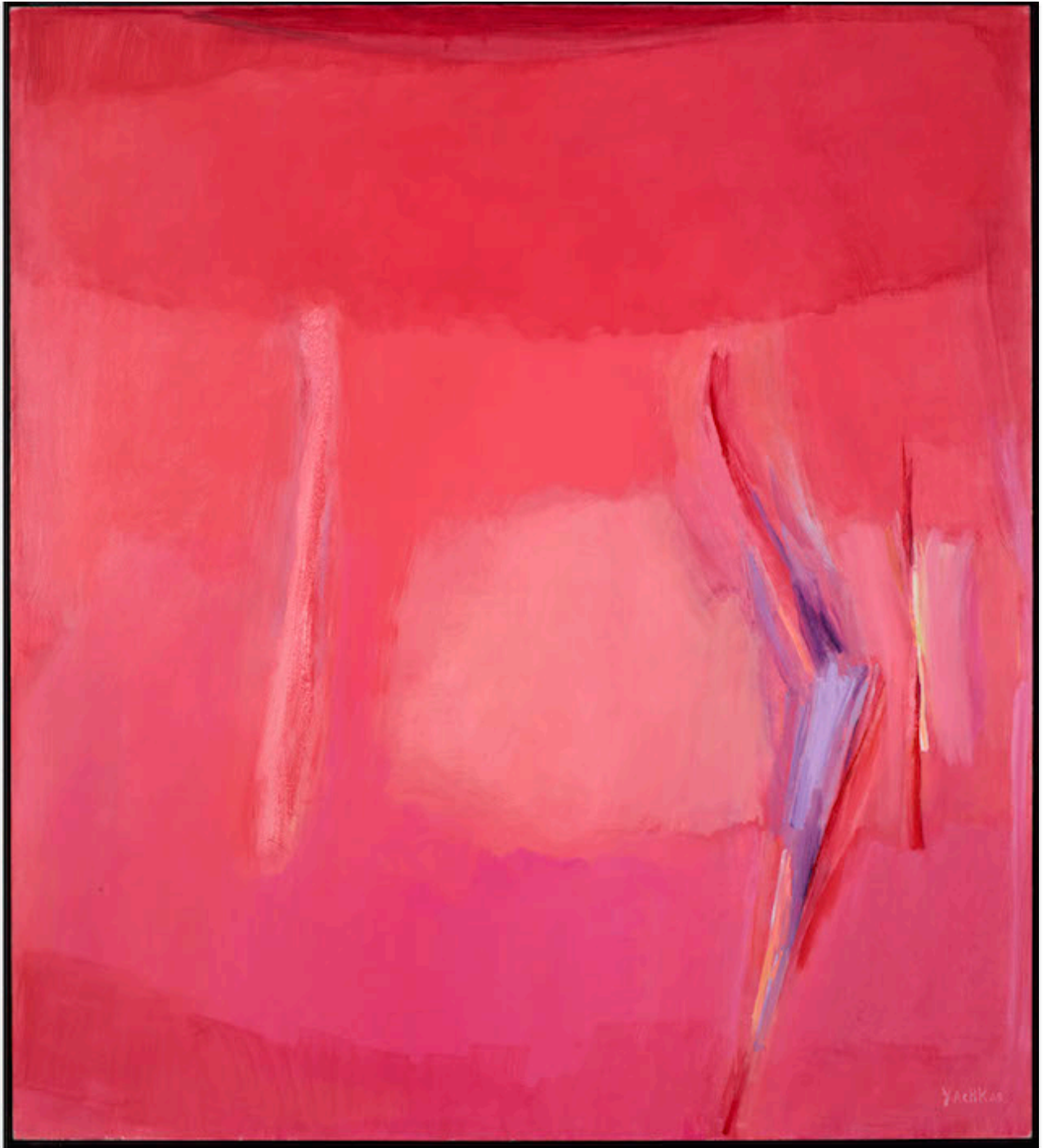
This exhibition offers the public a unique opportunity to view works that are on loan from private collections and the Lebanese Ministry of Culture, as well as an introduction to artists who are, according to the exhibition's press release, **"unknown to the general public"** (PDF download). As d'Hauteville told *Art Radar*, **"LEBANON MODERN!"** represents a generation of artists who have had a marked impact on contemporary art in Lebanon and beyond:

In Lebanon, the standard version of art history has been written by men and for men. And yet a large number of women marked and influenced the landscape of artistic creation in Lebanon from the end of the Second World War to the 1970s. In their own way, they dismantled existing codes and won for their successors the ability to become a part of contemporary history.

The years from 1945 to 1975 were the golden age of the modern artistic creativity in the Middle-East and Lebanon has played a key role and women artists are crucial in this creativity. They were, original, with a strong character, inspired and very much feminine.

Today, honoring Lebanese women artists offers to the public an opportunity to discover the works of these women who injected the Lebanese art scene with a tremendous dynamism, all while looking outward to new horizons, often creating significant links between their country and the rest of the world.

Art Radar profiles the 13 artists in the exhibition, whose works have been found in such renowned institutions as London's **Tate Modern** and the **Centre Pompidou** in Paris and have been exhibited throughout the world.



Yvette Ackar, 'Untitled', 2010, oil on canvas, 145 x 130 cm. Image courtesy Dalloul Collection. © Mansour Dib.

1. Yvette Achkar

Yvette Achkar (b. 1928, Sao Paulo, Brazil) grew up in Lebanon and graduated from the Lebanese Academy of Fine Arts (ALBA) in 1957. Her work was influenced by Italian painter Fernando Manetti and French painter Georges Cyr, and saw her career ascend sharply after spending time in Paris on a scholarship awarded to her by the French government. She returned to Lebanon and spent a significant portion of her life as a painting instructor from 1966 to

1988 at ALBA and the Institute of Fine Art.

Achkar's abstract work is characterised by colour and movement but is largely fragmented. As the artist's biography on Galerie Janine Rubeiz website states, her paintings are "a lesson in counter intuition, without a defined framework of reference".



Etel Adnan, 'Landscape', 1990, oil on canvas, 77 x 91 cm. Image courtesy KA Modern and contemporary art. © Agop Kanledjian.

2. Etel Adnan

Etel Adnan (b. 1925) is probably one of the most internationally recognised Lebanese female visual artists of recent years. Adnan was born in Beirut to a Greek mother and a Syrian father. Speaking a handful of languages, Adnan pursued philosophy at the Sorbonne in Paris and went on to study at Berkeley and Harvard in the United States. Initially a poet, Adnan began creating small-scale paintings to accompany her compositions starting in 1960. Her breakthrough exhibition came in 2012, when her work was shown at **DOCUMENTA (13)**.

Lebanese-American poet and painter Etel Adnan's work often depicts semi-abstract sunny skies and hilly terrain on diminutive canvases. Size can be deceiving, and regardless of her age, both her poetry and paintings pack a punch in

the international art world. **Hans Ulrich Obrist**, the co-director of **Serpentine Galleries**, has called Adnan **"one of the most influential artists of the 21st century."**



Blanche Lohéac Ammoun, 'Paysan Libanais', 1950, oil on canvas, 57 x 50 cm. Image courtesy Collection Emile Hannouche. © Agop Kanledjian.

3. Blanche Lohéac Ammoun

Blanche Lohéac Ammoun (1912-2011) initially studied law before turning her attention to the visual arts. Her work was influenced by two dynamically different instructors – Habib Srour, whose work featured more classical traditions, and Jean Kober, whose training provided Ammoun with a more modern, expressive approach.

Ammoun's artwork often displays a combination of these two paradigms, with a nod to French avant-garde culture.



Huguette Caland, 'Bribes', 1979, acrylic on canvas, 80 x 80 cm. Image courtesy KA Modern and contemporary art. © Agop Kanledjian.

4. Huguette Caland

Huguette Caland (b. 1931) is the daughter of Lebanon's first post-independence era president Bechara El Khoury. Guided by teacher Fernando Manetti and American University of Beirut instructors John Caldwell and Arthur Frick, her

subtle work exploring the female form has been exhibited throughout the world and included in a collaboration with designer Pierre Cardin for his "Noir" abayas (Oriental cloaks) collection.

Caland's interpretations of the female form "oscillate between figuration and abstraction" in a way that is often humorous and deftly erotic.



Saloua Raouda Choucair, 'Infinite Structure', 1972-1974, wood, 120 x 30 x 30 cm. Image courtesy Mr and Mrs Ramzi Saidi.

5. Saloua Raouda Choucair

Saloua Raouda Choucair (b. 1916) began her career as an artist studying drawing and painting with contemporary art pioneers Omar Onsi and Mustafa Farroukh, who were both inspired by impressionist and realist movements. The artist visited Egypt in 1943, where she developed an interest in Islamic art and architecture. From 1948 to 1951, Choucair lived in Paris, where she studied with Fernand Léger. After returning to Beirut, Choucair transitioned to working with sculpture, meshing European and Islamic themes.

Choucair uses a variance of materials including clay, stone and wood in addition to nylon thread or metal wire in her three-dimensional works. She is considered a **pioneer of Lebanese modernism**.



Laure Ghorayeb, 'Untitled', 1973, crayons on paper, 20 x 22 cm. Image courtesy the artist. © Agop Kanledjian.

6. Laure Ghorayeb

Laure Ghorayeb (b. 1931) is a Lebanese painter, journalist and art critic. In addition to her paintings, Ghorayeb has published short stories and poetry, and collaborated with Youssef Khal in the 1950s to revive Arabic poetry through a review called *Shi'r*.

As a journalist, Ghorayeb was especially attuned to the horrors of her country's Civil War (1975-1990). Her artwork draws on and excavates the human condition through the narration and fragmentation of Lebanon's past.



Marie Hadad, 'Petite Bédouine', 1940, oil on canvas, 37.5 x 27.5 cm. Image courtesy Michèle de Freige Collection. © Agop Kanledjian.

7. Marie Hadad

Marie Hadad (1895-1973) was educated at the Ecole des Dames de Nazareth, where she studied French literature and Western art. The artist studied under Polish painter Jean Kober, who also worked with artist Blanche Lohéac Ammoun. Hadad is well-known for her portraits of common people and is often referred to as the "Painter of Bedouins", a semi-nomadic group that lives in the deserts of the Middle East. She holds the distinction of being the only Lebanese artist to exhibit work at France's Grand-Palais from 1933 to 1937.

Although Hadad is most well-known as a portrait artist of Bedouins and peasants, her landscapes are also prized for their keen attention to the nuanced details of nature and "oriental exoticism".



Helen Khal, 'Untitled', 1970, oil on canvas, 100 x 100 cm. Image courtesy the Dalloul Collection. © Mansour Dib.

8. Helen Khal

Helen Khal (1923-2009) was born in the United States to Lebanese parents. Khal studied painting at ALBA (1946-1948) and married poet Youssef Khal. The artist was also an art critic, who wrote for publications *Daily Star* and *Monday Morning*. In addition, she was an instructor at the American University in Beirut (1967-1976). Lebanese painter Aref Reyss convinced her to pursue art in 1960, which resulted in her work being shown in Beirut and abroad. Khal founded Gallery One, Lebanon's first permanent art gallery.

Khal, also known as Helen Karam, approaches art through the female condition, and her work is largely autobiographical in nature. The artist does not title her individual works but prefers to let the audience decide for themselves.



Seta Manoukian, 'The Angels', 1986, mixed medias on canvas, 150 x 170. Image courtesy Emile Hannouche Collection. © Agop Kanledjian.

9. Seta Manoukian

Seta Manoukian (1945) began her creative endeavours as a young girl and was discovered by painter Paul

Guiragossian. After returning from her studies at the Academy of Arts, Rome, Manoukian taught art at the Lebanon University. Impacted by the Civil War that started in 1975, Manoukian's work began to take on a more human, political tone.

Manoukian's oeuvre examines the human condition, in particular, the effect of war upon Lebanese children, whom the artist worked with to create two books on this subject.



Nadia Saikali, 'Magma', 2008, oil on canvas, 80 x 90 cm. Image courtesy KA Modern and contemporary art. © Agop Kanledjian.

10. Nadia Saikali

Nadia Saikali (1936) like many of her contemporaries, studied at ALBA before studying under French American Surrealist painter Henri Goetz of the Academie de la Grande Chaumière in Paris.

Saikali works across disciplines, including murals, in-situ performances and screen prints. Her themes often reflect upon peace and the four elements of fire, earth, wind and water.



Juliana-Séraphim, 'Untitled', 1979, oil on canvas, 54 x 65 cm. Image courtesy Dalloul Collection. © Mansour Dib.

11. Juliana Séraphim

Juliana Séraphim (1934-2005) was born in Jaffa, Palestine. The artist was a painter, draftsman and well-known engraver, who began her training with Lebanese painter Jean Khalifé. Through several bursaries she studied in Florence, Madrid and Paris, and her work has been included in biennales in Brazil, Egypt and France.

The artist's engravings provided Séraphim with international recognition in literary circles, with work in French magazine *Planète* and a series of work "illustrating nine masterpieces of contemporary literature".



Cici Sursock, 'Grand Nu Paysage Blanc', 1969, mixed media on panel, 65 x 120 cm. Image courtesy Emile Hannouche collection. © Agop Kanledjian.

12. Cici Sursock

Cici Sursock (1926-2015) was born in Split, Croatia. She began her training with Serbian painter Ivan Tabakovic at the Academy of Fine Arts of Belgrade and then applied to schools in Iran and Turkey. She found herself in Cairo in 1945 working for British Ministry of Information. In 1947 she married Habib Sursock, an Egyptian of Lebanese heritage.

Although known primarily for her portraits of prominent people, Sursock was also awarded the opportunity to create a sizable canvas at the Beirut Cinema and her work accompanied several written works, including a book of her own poetry.



Bibi Zogbé, 'Fall', oil on canvas, 84 x 60 cm. Image courtesy Collection Emile Hannouche. © Agop Kanledjian.

13. Bibi Zogbé

Bibi Zogbé (1890-1973) was born in Lebanon but moved to Argentina as a teenager. Much like the other artists showing in "LEBANON MODERN!", Zogbé embraced the avant-garde lifestyle and rubbed shoulders with some of the trendsetters of her time. The artist was painted several times by Polish Art Deco painter Tamara de Lempicka and trained under the tutelage of Bulgarian artist Klin Dimitrof.

Zogbé works with bold and bright patterns, based on nature. Favourites are flowers and foliage, bringing to mind the four seasons.

Lisa Pollman

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