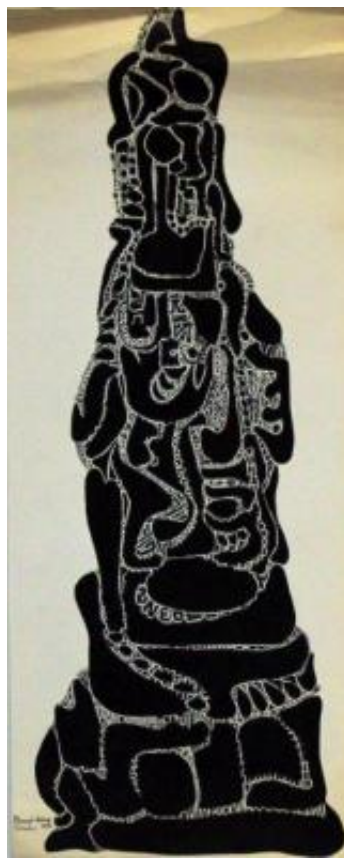


The Doors of Perceptions: An All-Women Drawings Show Defying Gender Stereotypes Etel Adnan, Huguette Caland and Laure Ghorayeb

Nélida Nassar 05.31.2016



Laure Ghorayeb, Untitled 1974; Chinese Ink on Paper; 35 x 14 cm

Art is one of the few things in the world that transcends different cultures, age gaps, genders, and class levels. Appreciation for the skill it takes to create a piece that speaks to a large group of people is something that can be cherished across time and space. What is more impressive than being able to produce this kind of content is being able to create exquisite pieces time and time again, even during the last part of one's life and beyond. It's that high standard set by three women, three Lebanese

artists: [Etel Adnan](#), [Huguette Caland](#) and [Laure Ghorayeb](#), who have produced memorable art pieces well into their 80's that "The Doors of Perceptions" attempt to decode and elucidate.

Despite all the blatant restrictions of society these three women artists have created their own mark in the art of the Middle East and internationally. They have received the required education and hands-on experience to become good artists. They also defy the seminal art historian Linda Nochlin's article and assumption "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" Rather, each of them despite the lack of opportunities for women in art has created her own niche. Their success was not mediated and determined by specific and definable social institutions, be they art academics, systems of patronage, mythologies of the divine creator, artist as he-man, or social outcast. It was rather determined by sheer talent and hard work.

These exceptional three artists do not attempt to resolve the troubling paradoxes of existence. They are at once lyrical and menacing, rational and mystical, dark and light-filled. Life and death, in their work, are inextricably intertwined. This show on paper evaluates the career of these highly influential women and focuses not only upon the impact of their early work but also on the import they have exerted on a generation of younger Middle Eastern artists.

Featuring some 32 drawings 10 by [Adnan](#) dated from 2016; 9 by [Caland](#) from the nineties, and 13 by [Ghorayed](#) from the eighties. The exhibit repositions the three artists' work within the history of recent Lebanese art, examines its shifting critical reception, discusses the artistic context in which their work was made, and analyzes how their drawing marks underpins some of their earliest explorations as well as their similarities. An exhibition of the three artists drawings has been previously presented at Art Dubai 2016 with fewer pieces.

I know one is expected to make distinctions among the various works of an artist, that some are more successful than others. But in these three artists's case, and probably in most cases, it's beside the point. The work

as a whole is a continuum, and each work along the way is a point in the continuum that contains the past and the future, neither of which exists except as the present.

[Nadine Beghdache](#), [Janine Rebeiz gallery](#) owner advances a thematic justification for the show. It proposes to trace, through the drawings of these 3 women of the same generation, an alternative strand of art history, a history of hands-on, largely studio-produced drawings. This has gone against the grain of male-dictated art fashion for nearly 70 years, from the era of Abstract Expression in the 1950s, through Minimalism of the 1960s, and on to strains of Conceptualism that continue today. [Beghdache](#) affirms "one of the objectives of this exhibition is to put forward the role of women in the art movements that were taking place in the past century. To also raise the attention to the shifts these artists were undertaking in using "drawings" as a direct mean of expression of their private and personal expression." [Beghdache](#) reiterates her love for drawings and her predilection of showing this medium, if only it was economically viable....

The [gallery](#)'s thesis remains loose and elusive. It doesn't define a particular style, or a set of ideas about what it means to be a woman or an artist, or both. But it does define, as demonstrated in the work gathered here, the shared reality of an experimental impulse with materials and forms that has proved incalculably influential. And what a splendid show the demonstration of that reality makes.

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