

Huguette Caland (1933–2019)

The Lebanese-born, California-based artist Huguette Caland, whose five-decade career reflected an imaginative conception of form and color through whimsically sensual figurative and abstractly surreal paintings, textiles, drawings, and mixed-media works, has died at eighty-eight years old. On the occasion of an exhibition at New York's Institute of Arab and Islamic Art in 2018, *Artforum* contributor Kaelen Wilson-Goldie [wrote](#) of the "formal clarity of Caland's erotic line—her ability to be sexually suggestive, almost comically naughty, while at the same time penning a feminist political critique of beauty, the body, and expectations of a woman's place."

Caland was born in Beirut in 1931, the daughter of Bechara El-Khoury, who became Lebanon's first president in 1943 after the country gained independence from France. Upon his death in 1964, she painted *Red Sun*, an elegy to her father, whom she had nursed through a five-year battle with cancer. Soon after, she enrolled in the American University of Beirut's art program. "Within six years of producing it and a rush of other works, Caland announced, at one of her own dinner parties and to the astonishment of her guests, that she was leaving the country, her husband and her children to pursue her art," Wilson-Goldie [wrote](#) in the May 2013 issue of *Artforum*.

In 1970, Caland moved to Paris, where a chance encounter with Pierre Cardin (she was buying a tie for her husband) led to her producing an haute-couture collection of caftans adorned with drawings of breasts, buttocks, and pubic hair. She found her own body fascinating. "I began to get fat to see how one could live being fat, with a full life and without any restrictions," she told writer Hanan al-Shayk in a 1974 interview. She went on to collaborate with the Romanian sculptor Georges Apostu and the poets Andrée Chedid and Salah Stétié in France before relocating to

California in 1987, though she returned to Beirut in 2013 upon learning her husband was dying and stayed there until her death.

Caland's work was included in the Prospect New Orleans triennial (2014), the Hammer Museum's "Made in LA" biennial (2016), the Fifty-Seventh Venice Biennale (2017), and the Sharjah Biennial 14 (2019). The Drawing Center in New York will stage the first major institutional show of her work in 2020.

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