

Rewind: Huguette Caland as told by Brigitte Caland

"I remember Sunday lunches with 40 people on the table, including artists such as Waddah Faris, Aref El Rayess, Helen El Khal and others. I remember the laughter, the atmosphere was so fun, with interesting, out-of-the-box people. That was all Mom. Everything was poetic at home. Her flower arrangements, which are still so vivid in my mind, were so beautiful; she'd pick flowers from the garden and put them in different arrangements all over the house. We'd moved to that house in Kaslik from Beirut when my grandmother died and Mom took care of my grandfather. When he died in 1964, she started painting and took a course at the American University of Beirut. She knew she was an artist and wanted to be one. This was her way of expressing herself. She built her studio at the end of the property towards the sea; it included a metal chimney that she designed. It was her space, it was beautiful. As children, we were not allowed in there. She had a very defined notion of space and spent all day there, always a workaholic, up at 6 with her paints and brushes until the evening.

In 1970, she moved to Paris where she had a lot of friends, and could express her art. In Lebanon, she was that person out of the norm; in France, she was freer. Her lines changed, she expressed differently. By this time, my parents had separated and there were moments when it was not easy, but it's part of the process of growing. She was so right to leave, to pursue her career, her dreams. She set an example for all of us. I'd lived in New York and then Paris and had seen a number of exhibitions and could evaluate her work and it was in the late 1980s when I realised that she was beginning a serious series, and I told her. As a researcher, I am intrigued by things and noticed a shift and tried to figure out why; you get to know a body of work really well, and you question the reasons that

make something shift from one area to another. She wanted me to work for her; she had a vision and wanted me to do it, to handle the business side of things.