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SALOUA RAOUDA CHOUCAIR



SCULPTOR

1916 - 2017

Biography

The day Saloua Raouda Choucair started to draw; she was already involved in sculpture. She was born in Beirut in 1916. Since childhood she has manifested the same interest for art that she has shown throughout her primary, secondary and university education. Saloua Raouda Choucair began her career in the studios of Mustafa Farroukh (1935) and Omar Onsi (1942). Between 1945 and 1946, she studied at AUB (Philosophy). In 1946, she was in charge of artistic activities at the Arabic Cultural Center in Beirut. In 1948, she went to Paris and studied sculpture, lithography and fresco techniques at the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts with Saupique. She also attended the Académie de la Sculpture de Chaumière. While in Paris, Choucair visited the studios of Fernand Leger, Hadju, Martin and the Atelier de l'Art abstrait of Jean Desvane and Edgar Pillet, all of whom were to have an important influence on her work.

Two exhibitions of paintings in Paris in 1951 constituted the output of this period. Some critics have said that her painting is reminiscent of a sculptor's production and that her art would shatter the walls of an exhibition hall. This type of painting does indeed require a huge space. The critics also point out that Saloua Raouda does not accept teaching with servility but she adapts it to the needs of her temperament. They add that with time she will surely acquire the flexibility that she refuses with youthful determination but not without pride. In 1962 sculpture became her main preoccupation and through it she explores the various genres of modern art.





Composition with Arches on Red, Gouache on Paper, 31 x 47 cm (1962 - 65)

Choucair participated in many collective exhibitions in Lebanon, Paris, Belgrade, Rome, Brazil, Brussels, Baghdad and Tunis. From 1935 to 1945, her work appeared in the Realistic Art exhibitions of AUB. It also featured in the Spring collective exhibitions sponsored by the Lebanese Ministry of Tourism and Education, in the Salons of Sursock Museum (1961, 1962, 1965, 1966, 1967, 1968, 1974, 1982 and 1984), and, since 1971, in the yearly Salon de Mai exhibitions in Paris. In 1950, she was one of the first Arab artists to participate in the Salon des Réalités Nouvelles in Paris.

She has also had many one-woman shows including ones at the Arabic Cultural Centre, Beirut (1947); Gallery Colette Allendy, Paris (1951); Ecole Supérieure des Lettres, Beirut (1952); UNESCO, Beirut (1962); Gallery Contact, Beirut (1977) and at Gallery Mountada, Beirut (1988). In 1974, the Lebanese Artists Association sponsored an honorary retrospective exhibition of her work at the National Council of Tourism in Beirut. Choucair has been awarded many prizes over the years including the Palace of Justice award, Beirut (1965), several awards from the Sursock Museum: the Prize for Sculpture (1965-66), Third Prize for Sculpture (1966-67), First Prize for Sculpture (1967-68), and Second Prize for Sculpture (1968); the National Council for Tourism Award, Beirut (1966), the Alexandria Biennale Award (1968). In 1972, she won an appreciation award from the Ministry of National Education in Lebanon. In 1985, she won an appreciation prize from the General Union of Arab Painters. In 1988, she was awarded a medal by the Lebanese government.

Saloua Raouda's art is the opposite of facile. Her paintings display an architectural structure. Her sculptures reveal a futuristic architecture which changes in space and time to the extent that the characteristics of traditional architecture are obliterated. Indeed the forms of Saloua Raouda's sculptures always create a certain surprise, since she utilizes different kinds of artificial material. This means that her art is always ready to soar towards new dimensions of scientific investigation.

Her works have no difficulty finding their way to the West.





Rectangular form module 1950, 55 x 66 cm, Private Collection Ramzi Saidi

Michel Fani, Dictionnaire de la peinture au Liban, Editions de l'Escalier, 1995.

Article English and French:

Saloua Raouda Choucair se lance dans la peinture en se joignant, d'abord, aux ateliers de Farroukh et de Onsi. Lorsqu'en 1947, elle exposa pour la première fois ses oeuvres, elle ignorait qu'elle était peintre d'avant-garde et faisait de l'abstrait. Depuis, elle a beaucoup voyagé, poursuivi ses études artistiques à Paris et aux Etats-Unis, organisé diverses expositions au Liban et à l'étranger, et obtenu plusieurs prix. Elle a finalement trouvé sa voie dans la sculpture, la manière la plus efficace, lui permettant de mieux s'exprimer.

Saloua Raouda Choucair, ne recule devant aucune technique ou matériau; le bois, la pierre, le plexiglas, les fils de nylon ou métalliques, l'email, l'or, ne lui sont point étrangers. Elle recherche la vibration des formes avec une liberté totale d'expression. Ses "poèmes" sont des éléments modulaires qui peuvent être conjugués différemment entre eux. Chacun est en lui-même une sculpture, leur superposition, leur emboîtement en sont une autre. Cette multiplicité des possibilités d'emploi permet l'intervention et la participation du public. Ses combinaisons rayonnantes exécutées à l'aide de fils métalliques ou en nylon forment un espace aéré où la notion du vide dans la sculpture devient essentielle.

Cette abstraction volontairement géométrique, inspirée de la philosophie de l'Islam, est une recherche de l'originel, du pur, du noyau, de l'Absolu... Il s'agit d'un art constructif où la couleur et la forme sont indissolublement liées par leurs qualités intrinsèques et architecturales dans une expression idéale de rapports et de proportions.

Lamia Chahine

Saloua Raouda Choucair first took up painting by joining the studios of Farroukh and Onsi, and when she first exhibited her work in 1947 she was unaware that she was an abstract avant-garde artist. Since then she has traveled widely, continuing her art studies in Paris and the United States, holding a number of exhibitions in Lebanon and abroad, and obtaining several prizes, She has finally found her true vocation in sculpture, for her the most efficient medium permitting a maximum of self-expression.

Saloua Raouda Choucair has no fear of experiment either in technique or in material and has worked in wood, stone, and plexiglas, with nylon or metallic thread, with enamel and with gold. She seeks vibration of form in total freedom of expression. Her "poems" are modular elements which can be fitted together in different ways one with another; each one is a sculpture in itself yet their mutual juxtaposition interlocks to form a third. These multiple possibilities of interaction enable the public to be brought into active participation. Her radiant constructions worked in metal or nylon thread form an airy space where the idea of the void in sculpture becomes essential.

Inspired by the philosophy of Islam, this deliberately geometric abstraction is a search for all that is pure, original, the central core, the Absolute. It is a constructive art where color and form are indissolubly bound together by their intrinsic architectural qualities to become an ideal expression of relationship and proportion.

Lamia Chahine

Article by William MATAR

Salwa Raouda-Schoucair was born in Beirut on 24th of June, 1916. With her, plasticity is fundamental. There is union of the greatest suppleness and the greatest rigidity, of geometry and of sensuality, of deep-ingrained conviction and of soaring impetus, of obstinate certainty and of attentiveness to every new approach.

Salwa did several realist portraits of Onsi, her master, who influenced her to devote herself to painting from a philosophical starting-point to take up the gauntlet thrown down by the denial of one of her instructors of an Arab artistic identity. She took up sculpture after a period of abstraction during the 'fifties, in order to find there a language both visual and tactile and a refusal to go too far in the kind of speculation whose terms geometric abstraction would deny, so ending discussion.

Salwa spent the years 1948 to 1951 in Paris, where she had originally intended to go for a few months only, and returned still more convinced of being on the right road. On her return to Beirut she continued with work born of the esoteric shift of her convictions in the logic of geometry. She followed the development of her sculpture according to her tendency, adding a refinement of reality freed from folklore. Her use of Arab motifs such as calligraphy and rigorously defined repetitions were connected both with mathematics and with ancestral heritage, while speculation and reason formed the background of her thought.

Raouda-Schoucair used sculpture as a material projection of her interior world, which painting could achieve only superficially. She revealed the influence of French culture on her work resulting from her stay in Paris rather than of a wider modern European view. She widened her approach to the city and to art and justified the need for an understanding of the abstract in the Orient. She was concerned with the Druze adaptation of culture and with the geometry of Arab calligraphy as well as to its historical tradition. She further considered how European abstraction could be integrated into a different culture. After the 'fifties, her sculpture went ahead of her painting.

Her shows always conveyed a lesson, being intended to clarify her work for the general public. Between 1947 and 1962 she exhibited at the Beirut Arab Cultural Center, the Colette Allendy Gallery in Paris, the Beirut Center of Higher Studies, and the UNESCO Palace in Beirut. In 1974 there was a retrospective exhibition at the Beirut National Council of Tourism.

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[Saloua Raouda Choucair Personified the Spirit by Helen Khal \(https://www.onefineart.com/internal-page/Saloua-Raouda-Choucair/saloua-raouda-choucair\)](https://www.onefineart.com/internal-page/Saloua-Raouda-Choucair/saloua-raouda-choucair)

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Sculpture in Wood, 30 x 60 cm



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Rapture of Revelation, Wood, 68 x 33 x 15 cm (1985 - 87)

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Moving Dual, Wood, 20 x 12 x 7 cm (1978 - 80)



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Linked Dual, Wood, 16 x 20 x 30 cm (1985 - 87)



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Secret of a cube, Wood, 84 x 60 x 60 cm (1960 - 62)



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Module, Wood, 39 x 22 x 20 cm (1980 - 83)



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Ode, Wood, 132 x 35 x 17 cm (1966 - 68)



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Lignes droites, Grés, haut: 150 cm, 1965 - Straight lines, Sandstone, height 150 cm, 1965, Collection: Sami Karkabi



([uploads/artist_work/plastic-nylon-1-2017-02-13-10-08-01.jpg](#))

Lignes droites, Plastique et fil de nylon, haut: 65 cm, 1971, Atelier de l'artiste Straight lines, Plastic and nylon threads, height: 65 cm, 1971, Artist studio



([uploads/artist_work/aluminium-canvas-1-2017-02-13-10-08-49.jpg](#))

Structure spéciale, Aluminium, toile métallique, haut: 200cm, 1974, Atelier de l'artiste Space structure, Aluminium, mettalic canvas, height 200 cm, 1974, Artist's studio



([uploads/artist_work/fiberglass-polyester-1-2017-02-13-10-09-40.jpg](#))

Lignes libres, Polyester-fibre de verre, haut: 55 cm, 1959, Atelier de l'artiste Free lines, Fiberglass-polyester, height 55 cm, 1959, Artist's studio



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An advertisement banner for the 50th anniversary of the Royal Oak watch. It features the text "The Royal Oak 50th" in white, "Geneva / 6 May" below it, and a teal "BROWSE & BID" button. To the right, it says "PHILLIPS" and "IN ASSOCIATION WITH BACS & RUSSO". The background shows a close-up of a hand holding a Royal Oak watch with a blue dial and gold case.