

# Huguette Caland, a Lebanese artist whose paintings celebrated the body, has died at 88.



[Huguette Caland](#), the Lebanese-born artist known for her abstract paintings and sensual line drawings, has died at age 88. Galerie Janine Rubeiz, Caland's Beirut gallery, confirmed her death in a [Facebook post](#) on Monday. A major retrospective of the artist's work at [Tate St. Ives](#) closed earlier this month.

Born in Beirut in 1931, Caland was the daughter of Bechara El Khoury, who in 1943 became the first president of post-independence Lebanon. As a teenager, Caland infuriated her parents when she announced she would marry Paul Caland, nephew of the founder of the pro-French newspaper *L'Orient*. The two went on to marry when the artist was 21. Caland's father died in 1964 and that year, at age 33 and already a

mother of 3, she enrolled in art classes. In an [Artsy profile on Caland](#), her daughter Brigitte is quoted as saying that after the artist's father passed, "[Caland] felt free for the first time in her life" and that his death left behind "a void as well as an urge."

In 1970, Caland moved to Paris in search of an avant-garde arts community, leaving her husband and children in Lebanon. Once in Paris, Caland struggled to find acceptance in the art world; Brigitte is quoted as noting that the cultural establishment felt "she wasn't an artist or painter because all she did was erotic work—which wasn't true, but this was the perception." Around this time, Caland also began designing kaftans, adorning them with symbols that celebrated the body. In 1987, following the death of her then-partner, the sculptor George Apostu, Caland left Paris for Venice, California. There, with the help of her friend [Ed Moses](#), Caland bought property from the California abstractionist [Sam Francis](#), who was on his deathbed at the time.

The Venice house, which Caland gives a tour of in [this video from 2009](#), became a gathering place for artists on the west side of Los Angeles. Despite her booming social life in the arts community and her following in Lebanon, Caland's work didn't receive major attention in the U.S. until recently. Caland was in the 2016 edition of the [Hammer Museum's](#) "Made in L.A." biennial, where her work was widely celebrated. Some considered this a catalyst in her career. In 2017, she was in the Venice Biennale, followed by a 2018 show at the [Institute of Arab and Islamic Art](#) in New York, and finally the Tate St. Ives retrospective from earlier this year. In an *Artforum* review of the 2018 show, Kaelen Wilson-Goldie [wrote](#): "Perhaps most importantly, the careful selection here, spanning more than fifty years, emphasizes 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."