

Ahram Online - Google Doodle celebrates Algerian artist Baya Mahieddine

Google Doodle is celebrating the birthday of late Algerian artist Baya Mahieddine (1931 - 1998), born Fatima Haddad.

Her self-taught style is considered by critics as a mixture of surrealist, primitive, naive, and modern, although she never self-identified with a particular style or movement. At the time, categorisations of art were dominated by orientalism and the exoticisation of the world that Baya was from and which was depicted in her works.

Her work was fresh in how it resisted Western classifications, and was deeply personal, rooted in her childhood and her home. Her works are largely comprised of paintings, although she has many works in pottery as well.

An orphan at the age of five, in 1947 Baya Mahieddine was under the informal guardianship of a French woman living in Algeria named Marguerite Caminat, who was well connected in the literary and art worlds.

Marguerite was visited by the French art dealer Aimé Maeght, who was the first to present Baya's work to the public in a solo exhibition at his gallery in Paris. Baya was 16 at the time, when her exhibition gained notice from renowned writer André Breton, who wrote the preface to the catalogue of the show.

Her work went on to be presented in various exhibitions in France and Algeria, and has appeared on Algerian postage stamps.

After her time in Paris, Baya went to Vallauris working on pottery, where she met the famed Spanish artist Pablo Picasso. She is recognised as an inspiration behind Picasso's Women of Algeria series, as well as an inspiration for Matisse, and Breton.

Upon her return to Algeria in 1953, she married El-Hadj Mahfoud Mahieddine, a famous musician, in an arranged marriage.

She stopped producing artworks between 1953 and 1963, the time of the Algerian War. During these years, she had six children.

She resumed painting in 1963, exhibiting both new and old work between Algeria and in Paris for three decades until her death on 9 November 1998.

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