

Jerusalem Celebrates Women in Palestinian Art

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Palestine by Nabil Anani (Staining and Henna on Leather, 1995)

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Themes of land, motherhood, nostalgia, and self-reflection permeate the works of ten Palestinian artists currently exhibiting at *Contemplations*.

Acre – [The Palestinian ART Court – Alhoash's](http://www.google.com/url?q=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.alhoashgallery.org%2F&sa=D&sntz=1&usg=AFQjCNHnG8uxUXg6HwkQaCDasI4chYMI7Q) (<http://www.google.com/url?q=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.alhoashgallery.org%2F&sa=D&sntz=1&usg=AFQjCNHnG8uxUXg6HwkQaCDasI4chYMI7Q>),

fourth collection exhibit, *Contemplations*, is dedicated to women in Palestinian art.

The exhibit showcases the works of ten artists: Nabil Anani, Sliman Mansour, Kamel Al Mughanni, Asem Abu Shaqra, Asad Azzi, Hani Zurob, Sophie Halabi, Samia Halabi, Rana Bishara, and Innas Yassin.

The eighteen pieces were specifically selected to explore the exhibit's chosen theme.

Rawan Sharaf, the director of the Palestinian ART Court, told *Al-Akhbar* that "the choices of artwork were limited to Alhoash's special collection, that of Yvette and Mazen Quity. However, all selected pieces examine the depiction of women in light of the wider theme of the female in Palestinian art."

"The paintings enabled us to analyze a specific aspect of Palestinian visual production by taking into account the influence of the artist's gender and location as well as the piece's production time frame," she added.

This collection features different representations of women. The variations account for differences in gender, location, or time period.

In the paintings of Anani, Mansour, and Al Mughanni, the female symbolizes land, motherhood, and home country.

This group of works represents a nostalgic reflection on the political situation in Palestine and the revolutionary spirit that was dominant in the 1970s and 1980s.

On the other hand, Zurob and Azzi represent the female figure in a new, open way using internationally well-known concepts.

The paintings show women with the faces of mythological goddesses of beauty like Aphrodite or Ishtar.

As for the works of Abu Shaqra and Zurob's painting *Daydreams*, the woman is portrayed in a sensual manner.

In *Four Faces*, Azzi portrays the woman's face through an anatomical examination of its features.

In addition to the male exhibitors, four female artists took part in the exhibit: Sophie Halabi, Yassin, Samia Halabi, and Bishara.

"Since representations of the female figure are generally produced by male artists, at Alhoash we brought in works by female artists and tried to determine the similarities and differences," Sharaf explained.

The female artists' representations of women were clearly self-reflective, none more so than the selected paintings of Sophie Halabi, a pioneer artist with works dating back to the 1930s.

As for Yassin, her painting *Transformations* is primarily concerned with existentialism and spatial representation.

Samia Halabi presents the olive tree in an abstract metaphorical way, whereas Bishara uses henna and tar with all their traditional, social, and political significance.

The Palestinian ART Court – Alhoash in Jerusalem has played a major role in energizing Palestinian visual cultural production.

The Court also works to establish Palestinian cultural and national identity in the city of Jerusalem and to bring its artists into contact with the public.

The *Contemplations* exhibit also contains a series of lectures, debates, and discussions that explore the theme of the show in the context of Palestinian art in general.

Contemplations runs between January 26 and February 29 at Alhoash Gallery in Jerusalem.

This article is an edited translation from the Arabic Edition.

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