

The Lebanese Artist Who Introduced Abstract Art To The Middle East - Reader Mode



In the world of art, it is believed that the late Lebanese painter and sculptor, Saloua Raouda Choucair, brought abstract art to the region. She tirelessly created art until the age of 100 and left an impactful legacy to inspire all art lovers in the Middle East.

Born in 1916 in Ain El-Mreisseh, Beirut, artist Saloua Raouda Choucair lived through the ups and downs of Lebanon. She reveled in the golden age when Beirut was known as the Paris of the Middle East. She also saw her city being destroyed and ripped apart by the civil war.

Choucair's *Two = One* was damaged when a bomb hit her building leaving holes and glass shards in the painting.

During her time, she was infatuated with the future, rather than feeling nostalgic as people tend to be nowadays.

In an interview with Tate Modern, her daughter Hala Choucair (also a painter) said that her mother "was always motivated. She wasn't sick of modern times. She wasn't nostalgic. She believed in the future."

Choucair was inspired by the developing world, new designs, and was moved by both Western art and Islamic art.

In the 1940s, she attended *École des Beaux-Arts* in Paris and worked in the studio of painter and sculptor Fernand Léger.

According to Hala, something during Choucair's stay in Paris changed her and shaped the way she did art.

In an interview, Choucair also reflected on her time touring in Cairo, where she became aware of Islamic architecture and Arabic art.

Like many brilliant artists, she became most well known late in her life. At the age of 97, while battling Alzheimer's, her work traveled from Beirut to making its British debut at London's Tate Modern, Britain's national contemporary art gallery of the Tate group.

According to Art News, Choucair's work has been featured in exhibitions at Western institutions in recent years.

Her art appeared in galleries such as the Palais de Tokyo in Paris, Haus der Kunst in Munich, the Whitechapel Gallery in London, and the Centre Pompidou, and the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi.

On what would have been her 102nd birthday, Google made a tribute to the late artist. This month will mark the anniversary of her 104th birthday as she continues to live on and survive through her life's work.

Saloua Raouda Choucair was an abstract art's influencer. She's still recognized for her artistic brilliancy in Europe, and even by Google that made it a point to pay her tribute.

In Lebanon, however, little has been spoken about this Lebanese artistic genius and her remarkable contribution to the world of art. Today, The961 makes it a point to give her some duly *Lebanese* recognition.

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An emerging designer in north Lebanon is taking the region by storm with her unique and bespoke pieces.

Lebanese-born Kinda Hamoui, the owner of Fusion by HK, draws inspiration from her African roots and is prouder than ever to put them on display.

Kinda moved to Ghana before she could even walk. She made her sweetest childhood memories in the west African country from 6 months old until she moved back to Lebanon at 17. She says it's where she discovered her passion.

"It's a country that goes deep in my roots. My great grandmother is fully Ghanaian from the Fante Tribe of north Ghana and so it's in my blood and I fully embrace who I am and where I'm from," she tells The961.

Kinda continued her education in Lebanon and pursued a degree in Graphic Design from ALBA – Balamand, which led her to create her own customized t-shirt business, HK Designs in 2015.

It was her first personal brand, which transformed into Fusion by HK, the line she leads now.

"Fusion was a journey I evolved from customized t-shirts. The birth of Fusion was from my first collection and fashion show, which was a blend of African fabric and culture through fashion statement pieces."

"I just wanted to get a bit of Ghana to Lebanon and give fashion meaning in an exclusive manner where every piece has a story... a story linked to the end-user."

Her designs range from gowns to casual wear and consist not only of Afro-inspired pieces but Western too.

Although she worked hard and took every opportunity she could, she didn't expect her business to boom the way it did. "And I feel it's only the beginning, we still [have] a long way to go!"

She has many plans in store for the future and says, "But that's a surprise, you'll have to just follow my journey and wait and see."