



ART in Embassies Exhibition
UNITED STATES EMBASSY BEIRUT

Cover picture

Mira Hecht **Untitled #16**, 2009. *Oil on panel, 39 ½ x 36 in. (100,3 x 91,4 cm). Courtesy of the artist, Chevy Chase, Maryland*

ART in Embassies



Established in 1963, the U.S. Department of State's office of ART in Embassies (AIE) plays a vital role in our nation's public diplomacy through a culturally expansive mission, creating temporary and permanent exhibitions, artist programming, and publications. The Museum of Modern Art first envisioned this global visual arts program a decade earlier. In the early 1960s, President John F. Kennedy formalized it, naming the program's first director. Now with over 200 venues, AIE curates temporary and permanent exhibitions for the representational spaces of all U.S. chanceries, consulates, and embassy residences worldwide, selecting and commissioning contemporary art from the U.S. and the host countries. These exhibitions provide international audiences with a sense of the quality, scope, and diversity of both countries' art and culture, establishing AIE's presence in more countries than any other U.S. foundation or arts organization.

AIE's exhibitions allow foreign citizens, many of whom might never travel to the United States, to personally experience the depth and breadth of our artistic heritage and values, making what has been called a: "footprint that can be left where people have no opportunity to see American art."

For fifty years, ART in Embassies has played an active diplomatic role by creating meaningful cultural exchange through the visual arts. The exhibitions, permanent collections and artist exchanges connect people from the farthest corners of an international community. Extending our reach, amplifying our voice, and demonstrating our inclusiveness are strategic imperatives for America. ART in Embassies cultivates relationships that transcend boundaries, building trust, mutual respect and understanding among peoples. It is a fulcrum of America's global leadership as we continue to work for freedom, human rights and peace around the world.

— John Forbes Kerry
U.S. Secretary of State

Introduction

I am pleased to participate in the Art in Embassies program and bring together artists from the United States and Lebanon. It has given me an opportunity to introduce you to American artists who you may not know, as well as to showcase exceptional Lebanese talent.

For five decades, the State Department's Art in Embassies program has encouraged cross-cultural dialogue and understanding through the visual arts and artist exchanges. Art in Embassies fosters U.S. relations within local communities world-wide. This program also shows how art transcends national borders and builds connections among peoples.

Behind every exhibition there's a story to tell. This exhibition shows my respect and admiration for the Lebanese people and highlights the commonalities that exist between the United States and this country. Many of the pieces demonstrate a bridging of cultures – something I hope all of us at the American Embassy advance every day.

I welcome the pieces from my fellow Americans that are part of this exhibition, such as Nan Montgomery's *Scherzo*, as well as two of Mira Hecht's well-known circles works. J.T. Kirkland's special triptych is unique. Its composition on cedar wood surely bridges Lebanese and American cultures.

Bridging from the U.S. to Lebanon, the exhibition features works by two Lebanese American artists who share their vision of the Arab world: *Arab Spring* by Helen Zughuib and *Secured States: The Arab World* by Doris Bittar.

Artworks from Huguette El-Khoury Caland and Yvette Achkar bring my attention to the big questions in life, the relations between oneself and the space that surrounds us. Joseph Harb's *Blue Painting* is an invitation to dive into the blue ocean within, recomposing chaotic questions into an infinite yet peaceful state of mind. Mansour El Habre's vibrant fragmentations of his day-to-day life bring us back to reality. I invite you to explore these questions and pieces yourself.

For almost thirty years I have travelled the world, experiencing new cultures and countries, and living in new homes. This exhibition bridges my world by showcasing great artists from where I have lived and where I live now. It is an honor for me to host the Art in Embassies exhibition composed of works from these Lebanese and American artists. I would like to thank each artist, the Galerie Janine Rubeiz, and especially the wonderful Nadine Begdache, for the loan of these beautiful works of art.

Ambassador David Hale

Lebanon, March 2014

Yvette Achkar 1928

Born in Sao Paolo, Brazil, Yvette Achkar studied at the Lebanese Academy of Fine Arts (ALBA) in Beirut in 1951. She taught painting at ALBA and the Lebanese University. Since 1957, she has exhibited her work in Germany, Italy, Lebanon, France, and the former Yugoslavia. Starting in 1959, she has participated in biennales in Alexandria, Baghdad, Paris, and Sao Paolo, as well as in international art fairs, including Europ'Art Genève, Art Paris at Carrousel du Louvre, ST-ART in Strasbourg, artparis-Abu Dhabi, and Art Dubai with the Janine Rubeiz Gallery. She has received several prizes, including UNESCO, Baalbeck and Ministry of Education and National Fine Arts, Lebanon. She has exhibited her work at Galerie Janine Rubeiz in Beirut since 1993.

www.galeriejaninerubeiz.com



Achkar **L'Attente**, 2007
Oil on canvas, 51 ³/₁₆ x 38 ³/₁₆ in. (130 x 97 cm)
Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Janine Rubeiz, Beirut, Lebanon

Doris Bittar 1959

"I am a multi-disciplinary artist who closely follows history and intertwines it with pattern and decorative structures. In part, my art tests a pattern's veracity to see if it may act as an identifying unit of culture, which I call cultural DNA. Also, because the word 'decorum' is related to the word 'decoration,' I wonder if decoration may be a code for behavior, for how a room should be organized to spur dialogue? Could pattern and decoration be animated into lattices or structures that guide and bridge?"

I was born in Baghdad, Iraq, in 1959, of Lebanese parents. A year later my parents returned to Lebanon. Just ahead of the Lebanese civil war, we immigrated to New York. I graduated from a high school that imprinted me with a curiosity to bridge differences between people. After graduating with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the State University of New York at Purchase College, I worked as a union organizer for five years. My husband and I settled in southern California where we have raised two sons. My Arabic identity began to reveal itself and influence my art-making as significant events in the Middle East unfolded – seemingly without respite. I received my Master of Fine Arts degree at the University of California, San Diego in 1993, and began to exhibit, teach, and write. In 2005, we moved to Beirut during dramatic political shifts. I currently teach in the Visual Arts department at California State University San Marcos, travel to gather the 'stuff' for new projects, work with civil rights organizations, and write."

Between earning her undergraduate and graduate degrees, Doris Bittar completed the Whitney Museum of American Art Independent Study, New York. The recipient of several awards, honors, and grants, she has participated in numerous exhibitions throughout the United States as well as in France, Germany, Egypt, Italy, Mexico, and the United Arab Emirates.

www.dorisbittar.com



Bittar Secured States: The Arab World, 2010

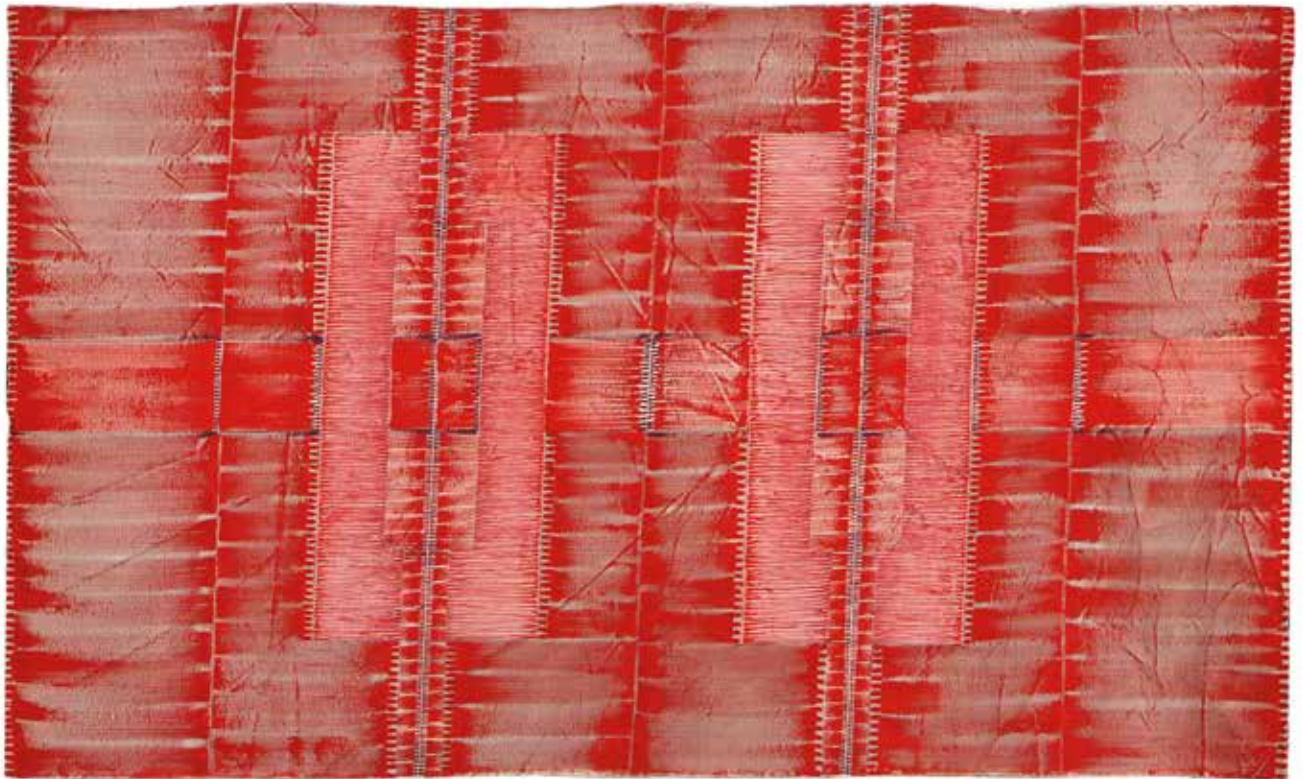
Security envelope patterns and printed tracing paper on tar paper, 40 x 60 in. (101,6 x 152,4 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, San Diego, California

Huguette El Khoury Caland 1931

Born in Lebanon, Huguette El Khoury Caland has lived and worked in Los Angeles, California since 1988. She attended the American University of Beirut (AUB) in 1968. Since 1970, she has participated in both group and solo exhibitions in England, France, Italy, Japan, Lebanon, and the United States. In Lebanon, she has exhibited her work at Galerie Janine Rubeiz in Beirut since 1994. She has participated in contemporary international art fairs with the Janine Rubeiz Gallery: Europ'Art Genève, Art Paris at Carrousel du Louvre, ST-ART in Strasbourg, artparis-Abu Dhabi, Art Dubai, as well as many salons and festivals around the world since 1973 in Paris, France; Baghdad, Iraq; Barcelona, Spain; Venice, Italy; and the United States. Among the private and public collections that own her work, are those of the National Library and Fonds National d'Art Contemporain both in Paris, France.

www.galeriejaninerubeiz.com



El Khoury Caland **Untitled**, 2006

Mixed media on canvas, 57 1/16 x 33 7/8 in. (145 x 86 cm) . Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Janine Rubeiz, Beirut, Lebanon

Mansour El Habre 1970

Born in Lebanon in 1970, Mansour El Habre holds a diploma in plastic arts from the Lebanese University and a Master's degree in plastic arts from the Balamand University, El-Koura, Lebanon. He teaches painting and drawing at the Lebanese University of Fine Arts (ALBA), Beirut.

Since 1993, El Habre has participated in individual and group exhibitions at the Janine Rubeiz Gallery, Beirut; the Europ'Art fair, Geneva (1999); The Artist's View II, Cork Street Galleries, London (2004); and Art-Dubai Art fair (2009, 2010, and 2011). He has also been invited by the Lebanese Ministry of Culture to participate in the International Triennial of Engraving in Rodeos, Greece (2008). His work can be found in private and public collections including those of Audi Bank, Beirut; Solidere Headquarters, Beirut; and the Cité Social, Fameck, France.



www.artmedgallery.com

El Habre **Untitled**, 2013
Mixed media on canvas, 47 ¼ x 39 ¾ in. (120 x 100 cm)
Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Janine Rubeiz, Beirut, Lebanon

Joseph Harb 1964

“Every time I paint I am living in a state of hesitation and grief; in essence this creates new shapes and forms on the surface. I try to capture them, but I can’t.”

Born in Lebanon in 1964, American artist Joseph Harb holds a Master’s degree in drawing and painting from the Lebanese University and was awarded the best painting prize at the Maison du Futur in Lebanon (1998). Exploring a variety of media, Harb creates hesitant forms in his work in an attempt to connect with his ancestors. His *Aquarium* series, for example, is inspired by his dreams in which he imagines aquariums and focuses on the speed of the water and its reflection as shapes and colors dance across the surface.

Harb taught drawing and painting at the Lebanese University of Fine Arts (ALBA) in Beirut and the Holy Spirit University of Kaslik (USEK) until 2000. He has participated in a number of individual and international group exhibitions in Beirut, Geneva, Paris, London, and Chicago.

www.artmedgallery.com





Harb **Blue Painting**, 2013
Mixed media on canvas , 66 ¹⁵/₁₆ x 169 ⁵/₁₆ in. (170 x 430 cm)
Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Janine Rubeiz, Beirut, Lebanon

Mira Hecht 1948

'Spirit is a circle whose circumference is nowhere and whose center is everywhere.' — St. Augustine

"The circle is a vast and mysterious form filled with potential. It is the form of forms: the bearer of the dynamic unfolding of life...A signifier of organic life and the soul, each circle is hand drawn, perfect in its imperfection, inspiring me to try again. The straight line is representative of coordinates in space and universal energy.

Color unfolds organically, without constraint, allowing every work in the series to have a feeling tone of its own. My process, a time consuming one, consists of layering opaque and transparent oil paint, wet onto dry. I use this process of layering, flatness of form and color to create a sense of depth, pattern and movement in the work.



Inspired by my own contemplative practice and glimpses of perfection within the mind's eye, each painting is meant to be a small gesture of exaltation, pointing to joy, connection and wholeness."

Born in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, Mira Hecht is a D.C.-based artist. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from American University in Washington, D.C., and a Master of Fine Arts degree in painting from the San Francisco Art Institute. She shows her abstract paintings both locally and nationally. Her work can be found in several private as well as public collections, including those of Microsoft, Pricewaterhouse Coopers, and the City of Emeryville, California.

www.pagebondgallery.com

Hecht **Untitled #16**, 2009

*Oil on panel, 39 ½ x 36 in. (100,3 x 91,4 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Chevy Chase, Maryland*



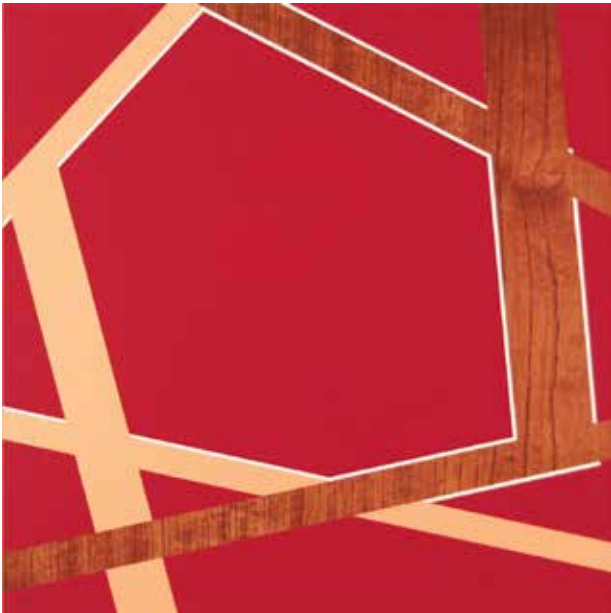
Hecht **Untitled #2**, 2009. Oil on panel, 19 x 16 in. (48,3 x 40,6 cm). Courtesy of the artist, Chevy Chase, Maryland

J.T. Kirkland 1978

"I strive to find clarity and resolution in line, color, and form, while challenging viewers' perceptions of surface and space through simple, precise gestures on wood."

J.T. Kirkland holds a Bachelor of Science degree from Centre College, Danville, Kentucky. His work has been featured in numerous solo and group exhibitions throughout the mid-Atlantic region, and can be found in public and private collections in the United States. The recipient of several awards and residencies, Kirkland is also a curator, an arts writer and editor, a lecturer, and a panelist, and was the Director of H&F Fine Arts, Mt. Rainier, Maryland (2007-2008).

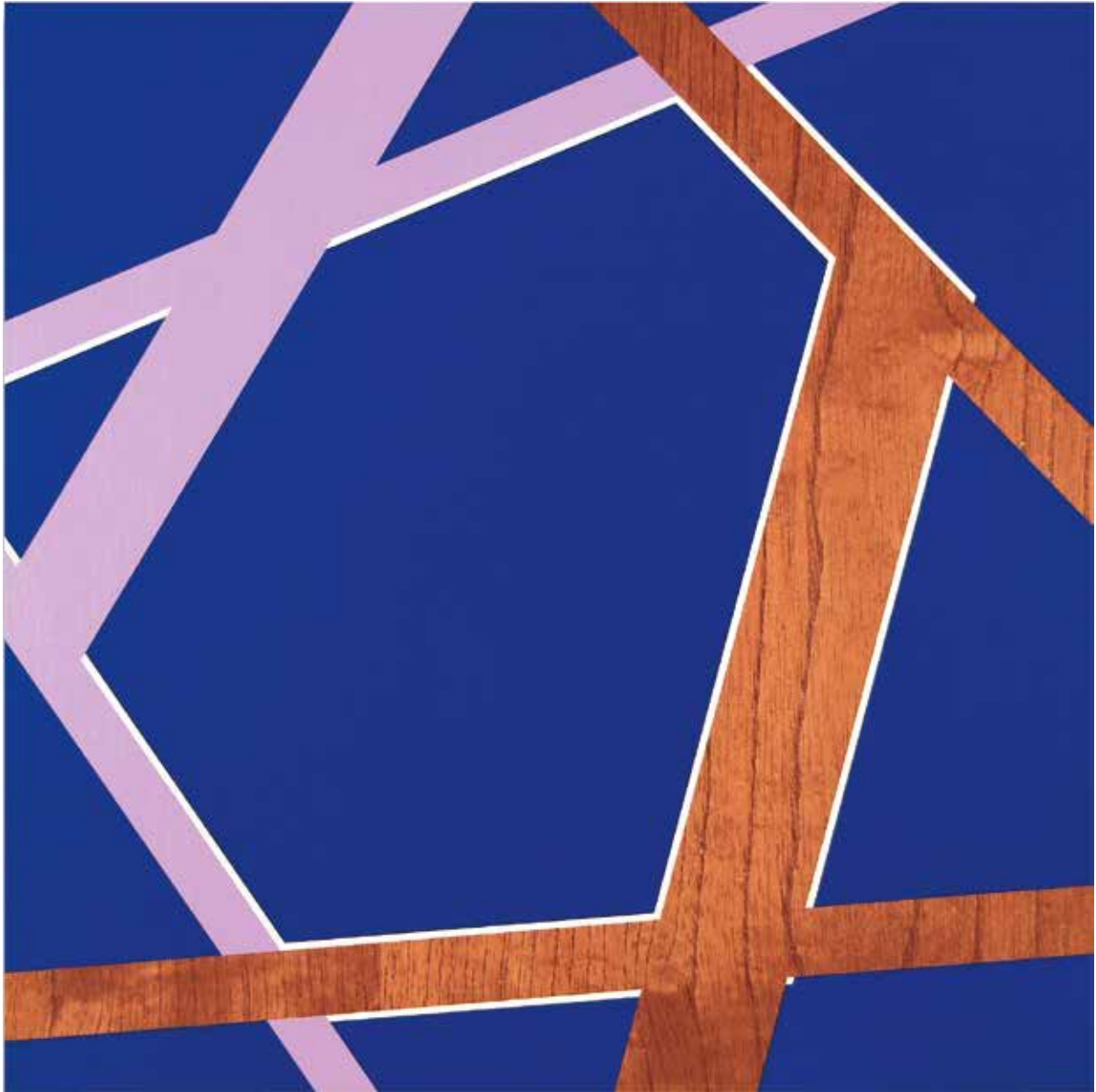
www.jtkirkland.com



Kirkland **On Line I**, 2010



Kirkland **On Line VI**, 2010



Kirkland **On Line V**, 2010

*All 3 pictures acrylic, polyacrylic on Spanish cedar plywood, 16 x 16 in. (40,6 x 40,6 cm)
Courtesy of the artist and Mr. and Mrs. Harry L. Davis, Leesburg, Virginia*

Nan Montgomery 1935

Nan Montgomery lives and works in the Washington, D.C. area. She was born in Boston, Massachusetts, and spent her childhood in rural Vermont and New Hampshire. After attending the Boston Museum School of Fine Arts where she majored in printmaking, she transferred to the Yale University School of Art, New Haven, Connecticut, where she majored in painting with Josef Albers. She graduated from Yale with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree. Moving to the Washington, D.C., area, she attended the Corcoran School of Art. In the fall of 2003, she attended the Julia & David White Artist's Colony in Ciudad Colon, Costa Rica.

Her work is represented in the permanent collections across the Washington, D.C., area: Corcoran Gallery of Art, the Watkins Collection of the American University Museum at the Katzen Arts Center, the Washington Post, the Artery Organization, the American Federation of Teachers, and the Washington Convention Center, as well as in private collections. Committed to abstraction and purity of form, her work is unified in the dichotomies of natural and material, restriction and freedom, hard edge and soft, all consistent with her personal history.

www.nanmontgomeryart.com



Montgomery

Scherzo, 2008

Oil on linen, 60 x 60 in. (152,4 x 152,4 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Washington, D.C.

Helen Zughaib 1959

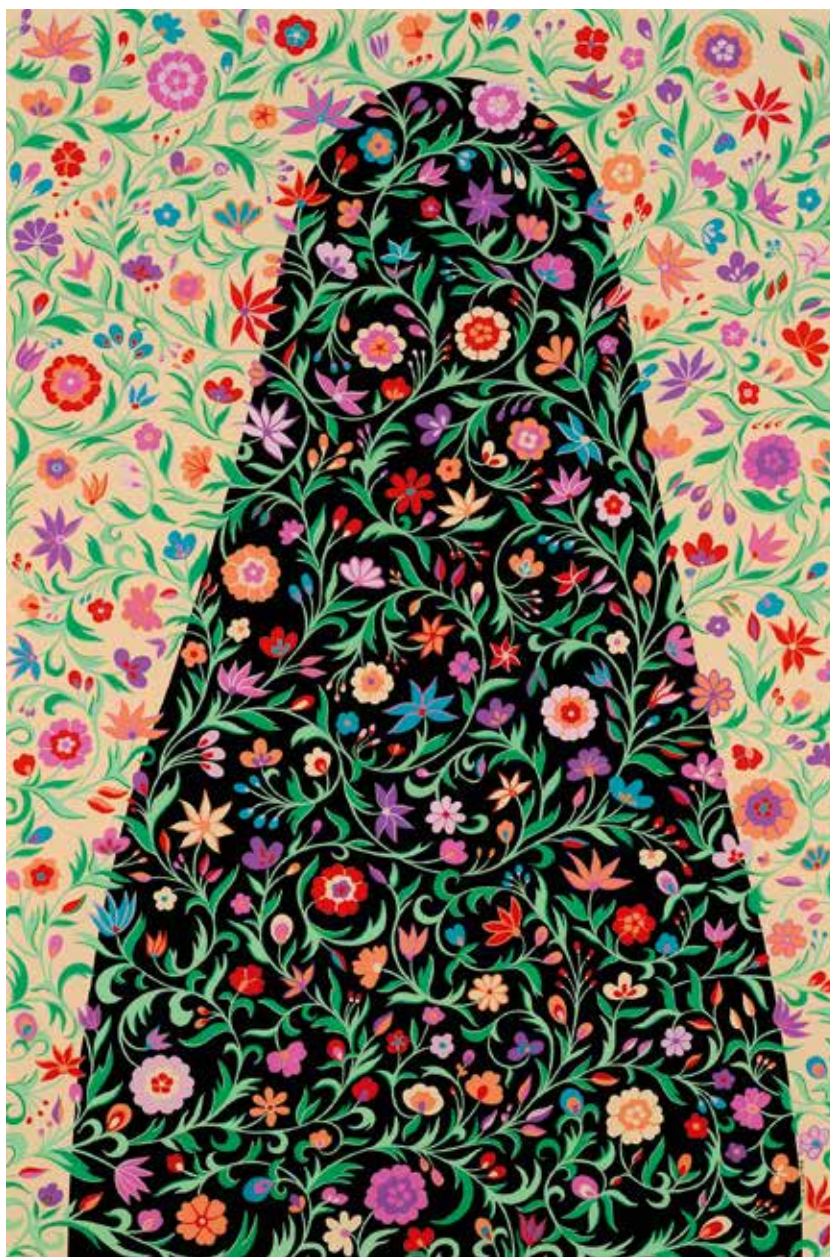
“Hopefulness, healing and spirituality are all themes are woven into my work.”

Helen Zughaib was born in Beirut, Lebanon, living mostly in the Middle East and Europe before coming to the United States to study art. She received her Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from Syracuse University, College of Visual and Performing Arts, New York. She paints using gouache and ink on paper, transforming her subjects into a combination of colors and patterns, creating a nontraditional sense of space and perspective.

Zughaib’s work has been widely exhibited in galleries and museums in the United States, Europe, and Lebanon. Her paintings are included in many private and public collections, including the White House; World Bank; Library of Congress; U.S. Consulate General; Vancouver, Canada; American Embassy in Baghdad, Iraq; and the Arab American National Museum in Detroit, Michigan. In 2008, she served as United States Cultural Envoy to the West Bank, Palestine. In 2009, she was sent to Switzerland under the U.S. State Department’s Speaker and Specialist Program. Most recently, President Barack Obama gave one of Zughaib’s works to Prime Minister Nouri al - Maliki of Iraq, upon his official visit to the White House, and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, gave one of her pieces to the King of Morocco.

As an Arab American, Zughaib feels that her background in the Middle East allows her to approach the experiences she has in America, in a unique way, remaining an observer of both the Arab and American cultures. She believes that the arts are one of the most important tools we have to help shape and foster dialogue and positive ideas about the Middle East.

<http://hzughaib.com>



Zughuib **Arab Spring**, 2013.

Gouache and archival pigment ink on Hahnemuhle German etching paper, 36 x 26 in. (91,4 x 66 cm).. Courtesy of the artist, Washington, D.C.

Acknowledgments

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