



The Meural Sketchbook

Conversations, interviews, and articles featuring some of our favorite artists, curators, designers, and more on our blog, the Meural Sketchbook.

Deep Cuts, Episode 1: 100 Years to Recognition

Today marks the introduction of our Deep Cuts series, a set of interviews on all that is underrepresented in the world of art—artworks, artists, museums, and movements included. Each episode, one participant will discuss a topic they chose to bring to light.

Our first contributor is [Joy Garnett](#), a painter living and working in Brooklyn, NY. Today she'll be talking about the Lebanese artist Saloua Raouda Choucair.



Saloua Raouda Choucair. *Two=One (1947-51) (complete with hole at its centre)* © Saloua Raouda Choucair Foundation

Who do you think is one of the most underrated woman artists of our time?

I'm enamored with the work of the Lebanese artist Saloua Raouda Choucair, who was born in 1916 (she's 100!) and lives in Beirut. She remains under-recognized except in certain circles, despite a recent major exhibition at the Tate in London in 2013. I happened to be in London and I visited [the show](#). I was blown away by it. Here is a woman, a genius, who has worked in obscurity for most of her life. After the Tate show, last fall, at the age of 99, her work debuted in New York, at CRG Gallery. She now receives attention, and has been receiving more since the Tate show, but why so late? Why, only at the very end of her life does her "career" begin, as Roberta Smith declares with a bitter tang at the end of [her New York Times review](#)?



Saloua Raouda Choucair in her Beirut studio in 1974. Copyright Saloua Raouda Choucair Foundation, Beirut. Courtesy Agial Art Gallery, Beirut.

Why do you think she has been underrepresented?

Geo-politics: the European-centered world of art, the extremely male dominated world in which we live, which transfers to the art world and art market. This has been the case that has held firm for centuries, until only very recently. And still, even with the fissures and cracks, it holds firm. I'll leave it there.

What about Choucair's work attracts you?

I'm drawn to her work for many reasons. She is Lebanese, a modernist interested in science and innovation. She imbibed European influences and folded them into her own needs and processes. Her abstraction is distinctly Arab. In other words, it is inflected by calligraphy and the architecture of the Arab world. And yet, she created a bridge, somehow, with European Modernism. Her work resonates on so many levels, culturally. I am Arab American, Egyptian, through my mother, who was a photographer. Her father was an important modernist poet and scientist in Egypt in the early-to-mid 20th century. He developed his art during the same period as Choucair. So I feel connected to her on many levels. Choucair studied art in Paris, as did I, and her interests are hybrid, inclusive; her work is infused by design and poetry. Discovering her work was a revelation.



Saloua Raouda Choucair, *Poem* 1963–5 Copyright Saloua Raouda Choucair Foundation

#salouaraoudachoucair #lebanese #art #joygarnett #egypt #paris #newyorktimes #modernist #calligraphy #poet #scientist

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