

Algerian Painting

With artists such as Abdelhalim HEMCHEB, Azouaou MAMMERRI, and later Mohamed BOUZID, Bachir YELLES and Ali KHODJA, Algerian paintings of occidental inspiration were quite remarkable, well before Independence.

Moreover, thanks to the Racims, Algerian miniature and illuminated art forms developed at an accelerating rate. One must point out the role played by Mohamed Racim in preserving Algerian authentic values. His school suddenly expanded with artists such as Mohamed Temmam, Mohamed Ranem, and Hamminouna as well as new generations of artists who drew inspiration and techniques from this art form.

The figurative trend also owes a debt to older artists. Each in their own way, Racim and Dinet have greatly influenced this artistic movement that reflected Algerian traditions, social values and daily life.

Baya and Benaboura are representatives of this so-called “naive” painting, which mirrors the Algerian spirit. Zmirli, Samson, Abdoun and many others also adopted this expression of stunning freshness and simplicity. More refined, the creations of Issiakhem breathed new life into the art world and paved the way for the more abstract works of Khadda, Mesli, Benanteur and Guermaz.

Finally, many other artistic movements flourished throughout the various Algerian regions such as crude art, “El Auchem” (sign painting), and “Essebaghines”, all represented by artists such as Hakkar, Ammar Bouras, Zineb Sedra, Samta Benyahia and many others.

Dalila Orfali, curator of Algiers’ Museum of Fine Arts, characterized the Algerian painting of recent years as follows: “The last decade was defined by the intensification of such trends”

A major revival of artistic activities within the country, dominated by individual techniques, defined the period between the 1990’s and year 2000. As such, symbol-free figurative art forms have made a strong revival.

Djemai, Bourdine, Hafidh, Heinen-Ayech and Chegrane are some of the disciples of this movement. The emerging school of contemporary painting was now spreading to every corner of the globe, carrying a vision which inadvertently rallied historical and cultural heritage patterns such as avant-garde compositions, transient art and others.

Moreover, in the early 1990’s, in times of extreme hardship, women did not hesitate to affirm themselves through their writings, even as others chose to remain silent:

- _ Malika Modadem's "L'interdite," 1993
- _ Mina Bouraoui's "La voyeuse interdite," 1991
- _ Leïla Sebbar's "Le silence des rives," 1993
- _ Assia Djebbar's "Loin de Médine," 1992

Nadia Ghalem was published in Canada, while other writers were published in Paris or Damascus. Visual arts provide a diversified landscape, accessible to all, in fields such as miniatures and illumination (Racim, Temmam, Bendebbag, Ghanem and Sahraoui), figurative art (Yellès, Baya, Ali Khodja and Houamel), abstract art (Issiakhem, Khadda, Mesli, Guermaz and Hakkar. As a matter of fact abstract art is quickly becoming the expression of choice for those wishing to illustrate the obscure.

Many painters decided to concentrate on landscapes, such as Abderrahman Sahouli, Nedjar Bencheikh, Zermane, Hamchaoui and Chaouane.

In the quest for an authentic Algerian pictorial form of expression, some artists were self-taught, some were "naiverealists," and others chose the forms of "photographers."

In the eighties, a new generation of artists such as Sid Ahmed Chabane, Slimane Ould Mohamed, Amar Bourras, Yahia Abdel-malek, Myriam Aït Chehara, and Réda Tebib emerged to enhance artistic expression by using new media such as powders, refined tar, pelts, plants, plastics, wood, and cardboard, thus developing an art form permeated by modern technologies.

One could hardly find a direct reference to the city's landscape in Nadia Laggoune's "Alger dans la peinture."