

Alice Mogabgab Gallery presents

A collection

Ceramics by DOROTHY SALHAB KAZIMI (1942 – 1990)

12 January - 26 February 2016

*Drink wine, for one day your body will become dust,
to be turned into vessels, jars, cups, ewers.*
Omar KHAYYÂM (1048 – 1131), *Rubaiyat* ⁽¹⁾

A pioneer of ceramic art in the Middle East, Dorothy Salhab Kazimi, born 1942, died prematurely in 1990, leaving behind a key body of work, now part of the history of modern art in Lebanon. During her short life and career Dorothy Salhab Kazimi, through her talent, passion and tenaciousness brought renewed recognition to the art of ceramics, until then considered mere handicraft.

The exhibition ***A collection, ceramics by Dorothy Salhab Kazimi*** presents thirty-eight pieces by this Lebanese artist, as well as a set of hundred and eighty ceramic tiles, never shown before, and originating from the Sami Karkabi collection. This momentous collection, acquired in its entirety by the Alice Mogabgab Gallery, was established by Mr Karkabi between 1970 and 1990. Selected for their great unity, the exhibited works consist of pots, plates, bowls, cups, jugs, and vases: vessels of life and tiles with circular motifs. The forms are sober and generous, the materials raw and sensuous, the colours subtle and intense. In this way Dorothy Salhab Kazimi's work absorbs the light so as to better reflect the richness of her art.

After studying arts and crafts at the Beirut College for Women (today LAU) and English literature at the American University in Beirut, Dorothy Salhab Kazimi enrolled in 1964 at the Kunsthåndværkerskolen (School of Design) in Copenhagen, and studied from 1966 under the renowned Danish ceramicist Gutte Eriksen. From 1968 to 1970, she taught ceramics in Glasgow, where she deepened her knowledge of the methods of Oriental ceramics influenced by Bernard Leach. Upon her return to Lebanon in 1970 she developed her own techniques from past experiences, from her fascination with Islamic ceramic art and love of excavated objects.

"She was a true and refined artist with a very elegant style, a sensibility nurtured by the best sources because of her complex cultural background: intellectual and artistic, Eastern and Western. This interaction in her art between the intellectual and the instinctual, between East and West, was as total and intimate as the one between the enamel and the clay that results from the firing," says Joseph Tarrab (2) in *Dorothy Salhab Kazimi, The spirit of pot*, Antoine Editions.

⁽¹⁾ Persian poet and mathematician from the 11th and 12th century, author of the famous *Rubaiyat*.

⁽²⁾ Lebanese art critic and author of numerous writings on modern and contemporary art in Lebanon.

The collector Sami Karkabi knew Dorothy Salhab Kazimi very well. From their friendship he recalls some personal memories:

“I met Dorothy for the first time in Beirut in 1971, at the premises of daily newspaper *L’Orient*, who had organised a presentation of ‘artisans at work’. The demonstration of throwing clay given by Dorothy caught my attention in the way one is fascinated to see clay turn into pots or plates. I was not knowledgeable enough to see in this exercise the prospect of a great artist.

In 1972 an exhibition of her work at the Contact Gallery presented not only pots and plates but also pieces that broke out of the utilitarian framework to evolve into object-sculptures. I understood then that an artisan could be an artist too.

It was in 1975 at the occasion of her exhibition in the wonderful setting of *Des Artisans du Liban* at Aïn Mraïseh that I became very excited by the sight of her sculptures displayed facing the sea. I asked Dorothy’s permission to visit her studio.

“So I went to her studio-apartment in Rue May Ziade, composed of two rooms, one large and bright, fitted out with a workbench surmounted by three shelves loaded with enamelled objects as well as others waiting to be so. An adjacent equally bright room contained her precious potter’s wheel and her materials.

She said: “As for the wheel, it has its own rhythm, a circular symmetry. The circles fascinate me: their form is so elemental. Moreover, one can feel the motion of the wheel in a well-thrown pot [...] like the infinite rings or waves in water”. For Dorothy the energy released from the rotating wheel was similar to the Sufi whirling – both lead to ecstasy.

Dorothy employed local clay whose beauty revealed itself in the firing. “Clay, she said, is a very living thing. I try to be honest with this material, to stretch it and explore its potential without compromising it. It has an extraordinary energy and motion; it hits you in the gut”.

How not to think of Omar Khayyâm’s quatrain, written a thousand years ago:

Yesterday, at the market, there was a potter,

Kneading his lump of clay without respite.

My inner ear heard him sigh and whine:

“Brother, treat me gently. Once I was like you.”

Dorothy prepared her enamels from ashes of olive and orangewood, mixed with ferruginous minerals and ochre pigment. I do not know the origin of her blue colour; it may be cobalt. The firing at very high temperatures enabled her to obtain not only very strong stoneware but gave her colours great subtlety. To achieve the colours she wanted, she had to test, analyse and weigh each element.

Although she on one occasion allowed me to help with stacking the kiln, Dorothy was otherwise recalcitrant when it came to taking out the fired pieces. She undoubtedly kept the ultimate satisfaction of discovering her fired enamels for herself. Thus, in her own words: *the most beautiful moments of my life are those of looking into the open kiln and being surprised by my finished creations.*”

About the exhibition

Private view of the exhibition *A Collection*, ceramic by DOROTHY SALHAB KAZIMI (1942 – 1990):
Tuesday 12 January 2016, 6 – 10pm

The exhibition continues until Saturday 26 February 2016.

Open Tuesday to Saturday from 10am till 7pm. Closed Sunday and Monday

Information

Email info@alicemogabgab.com

Tel.: +961 3 210424

Internet: www.alicemogabgab.com

Facebook: Alice Mogabgab Gallery

Ceramic works by Dorothy Salhab Kazimi are exhibited at:

- Dorothy Salhab Kazimi Museum, Roumieh, Lebanon
The museum is open to the public every Saturday from January 12 to February 26, 2016
From 10am to 4pm.
Contact: Mrs. Juliana Khalaf Salhab, 03 776 337, email: jskhalaf@gmail.com
- Nicolas Ibrahim Sursock Museum, Ashrafieh, Beirut
The permanent collection is open from Wednesday to Monday, from 10am till 6pm.
Information: tel. +961 1 202001, email: info@sursock.museum
- Kunstindustrimuseet – Museum of Art and Design, Copenhagen
The permanent collection holds three pieces acquired during the artist's solo exhibition at the museum in 1975.
Information: info@designmuseum.dk; <http://designmuseum.dk/en>

Book available at the gallery:

Dorothy Salhab Kazimi, the Spirit of the Pot

Editions A. Antoine

Text in English and French

160 pages, hard back

Price: 60 USD to the benefit of the Dorothy Salhab Kazimi Museum.

DOROTHY SALAHB KAZIMI

Born in Lebanon in 1942, she died in France in 1990.

Education

1961

Beirut College for Women (BCW, now LAU), Art studies

1963

American University of Beirut (AUB), B.A.in English literature

1964

School of Arts and Crafts (Kunsthåndværker Skolen), Copenhagen, Denmark

1966

Studied under Gutte Eriksen, renowned Danish ceramist, Copenhagen

Professional Experience

1968-1970

Professor of ceramics in Glasgow, Scotland

1971-1982

Professor of ceramics at the Beirut University College (BUC, now LAU)

Ceramic expert at the French-Syrian archeological excavation site at Mayadin Rahba, Syria

Personal Exhibitions

1969

Compass Gallery, Glasgow, Scotland, United Kingdom

1972

Gallery One, Beirut, Lebanon

Mural ceramic (300 tiles) at the Farah Commercial Center, Hamra street, Beirut, Lebanon

1974

Contact Art Gallery, Beirut, Lebanon

1975

Kunstindustri Museet (Museum of Arts and Design), Copenhagen, Denmark

Artisans du Liban et d'Orient, Beirut, Lebanon

People's Gallery, Damascus, Syria

1979

French Cultural Center, Damascus, Syria

1988

Maison des Jeunes et de la Culture, Riberac, France

1990

Ferme de Lussac, Verteillac, France

1991

Hommage à Dorothy Salhab Kazimi, Salon d'Automne, Sursock Museum, Beirut, Lebanon

The yearly "Dorothy Salhab Kazimi Price for young artists" was launched at Sursock Museum

2016

A collection, Alice Mogabgab Gallery, Beirut, Lebanon