

About Baya Mahieddine (Algeria, 1931-1998)

Baya was an artist born in Burdj El Kiffan, Algeria in 1931, to a family of mixed Kabyle and Arab heritage. Known for her bold gouache paintings that live in folkloric and whimsical realms, she is considered one of Algeria's most prolific modern artists. Referring to her own style as "Bayaism", Baya is drawn to painting depictions of mothers, children, fauna and flora alongside musical instruments. Her life is considered enigmatic, discovered in 1942 by French art collector, Margeurite Caminat Benhoura while tending to her property alongside her grandmother. Margeurite later became guardian to Baya, fostering her abilities in the arts. In her youth, the artwork of Matisse, Miro and Braque hung on the walls of the Benhoura home, becoming reference for her own studies. She was later introduced to gallerist Aimé Maeght and writer André Breton, who included her in the 2nd Surrealist Exhibition in Paris in 1947, Debuting her first solo exhibition at Galerie Maeght, Paris. In 1948 she started a residency at the Madoura Studio in Vallauris, meeting and collaborating with Pablo Picasso. Since, her work has been exhibited extensively in various museums and galleries. In 1982, Baya exhibited at the Museum Cantini in Marseilles inaugurated by French President François Mitterrand. In 1987, she was honored by Algerian president Chadli. Baya passed away in 1998, and a retrospective was held at the Musee des beaux-arts, Algiers. Baya has reclaimed international recognition with the first North American exhibition by the Grey Art Gallery at New York University in 2018, and a major retrospective held at the Sharjah Art Museum in 2021 as part of the 11th edition of the 'Lasting Impressions' series.