

Trailblazers: Highlighting Jordanian sculpture star Mona Saudi's work



- Her pieces can be found in the collections of the British Museum, the National Museum for Women in the Arts, and the Ministry of Culture in Cairo
- A public sculpture of hers stands on the precinct of the Institut du Monde Arabe in Paris

DUBAI: The third in our series highlighting pioneering female artists from the Arab world in honor of Women's History Month.

Last year, the Arab world lost one of its most prolific modern sculptors, Jordanian artist Mona Saudi. She died aged 76 in Beirut, where she launched her career back in the Sixties and Seventies. Saudi, who was born in 1945, had a

fiercely independent streak throughout her life. When she was just 16, she reportedly left Jordan to Beirut by taxi to explore her creativity.

As a child, she dreamed of becoming an artist in Paris. And by 1965 she was studying at the renowned École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in the French capital, where the likes of Jacques-Louis David, Edgar Degas, and John Singer Sargent were alumni. Saudi apparently paid for her tuition through drawings she sold back in Lebanon.



Saudi dreamed of becoming an artist in Paris. (Supplied)

Saudi is most famous for her poetic stone sculptures, which she would begin by creating simple shapes, before branching out into abstract forms that are intriguing to the eye. Many of the titles of her pieces reflect her deep connection with nature and the land. From the 1970s onwards, she also made large drawings, revealing in small writing the words of Palestine's most famous poet, Mahmoud Darwish

The two artists enjoyed an enduring friendship. Long after his death, she was still moved by his writing on themes of homelessness and exile. "Today, when I hear him reciting his poetry in his own voice, I cannot control my tears," she told Arab News in 2020. "He remains alive in our memories and hearts."

Over the years, Saudi's works — which she described to Arab News as mostly being "an embodiment of poetry" — have been displayed in prestigious art venues across the world, including Darat Al-Funun, Sursock Museum, The Mosaic Rooms in London, and Musee d'Art Moderne in Paris. A tribute display of her sculptures and intimate sketchbooks were on display at Art Dubai this month.

Her pieces can also be found in the collections of the British Museum, the National Museum for Women in the Arts, and the Ministry of Culture in Cairo. A public sculpture of hers stands on the precinct of the Institut du Monde Arabe in Paris. She is the only artist who has been granted that privilege and it provides a fitting full-circle moment for Saudi.



Dialogue, 2004. (Supplied)
