

*Poetry in
Stone*



Lawrie Shabibi
Mona Saudi

25 May - 16 July 2015

Artist Biography

Mona Saudi was born in Amman on the 1st of October 1945. As a young girl she was passionate for art – a love of poetry and music – Mona Saudi’s dream was to leave to Paris. When her father refused her permission to go to university at seventeen she left for Beirut in defiance, immediately thrown into the vivid circles of artist and intellectuals such as Adonis, Paul Guiragossian and Michel Basbous who were to become lifelong friends. She stayed for a year and held her first exhibition of drawings at Café de la Press in 1963, making enough from sales to afford a ticket to cross the Mediterranean to Paris.

Enrolled in the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, Saudi soon focused her studies on the art of sculpture, inspired equally by frequent visits to the Louvre to contemplate Etruscan, Greek, African & Egyptian art and the Museum of Modern Art where she was immediately taken by Picasso, Miro, Van Gogh, Giacometti, Calder and Constantin Brancusi. While a student at the Beaux Arts she created her first sculpture in 1965 by carving stone. Mona started her own organic abstract style in sculpture that evolved until these days.

Over the last half century, Mona Saudi has been shown in solo and collective exhibitions worldwide, recently at the

Mosaic Rooms in London, and also at venues that include Musee d’Art Moderne, Paris, National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington D.C., the Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris, and the British Museum, London.

Her works are featured in the collections of the National Museum for Women in the Arts, Washington DC, the Barjeel Foundation (Sharjah), The National Gallery of the Fine Arts, Amman, Jordan, the Sharjah Museum, UAE, The Khaled Shoman Foundation, Amman, Jordan, the Sursock Museum, Beirut, Lebanon, Dar Al Athar Al Islamiyya, Kuwait and the Museum of Modern Art, Kuwait, the Ministry of Culture, Cairo, Egypt, the Assila Museum, Morocco, and the French Embassy, Amman, Jordan.

A monumental work by Mona Saudi entitled *Spiritual Geometry* (1987), stands outside the Institut du Monde Arabe in Paris, the only sculpture permitted to grace the surrounding precinct by its architect Jean Nouvel. The Institut also owns two more works of hers.

Recent acquisitions have included those by The British Museum and the Sharjah Art Foundation.

Mona Saudi lives and works in Beirut, Lebanon and Amman, Jordan.

Poetry in Stone

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Lawrie Shabibi presents *Poetry in Stone*, the first solo exhibition in the UAE for renowned Jordanian sculptor Mona Saudi.

Mona Saudi’s sculptural practice stretches over five decades, creating forms full of vitality, beauty and a clear sense of equilibrium. Mona Saudi is a sculptor who lives and breathes her Middle Eastern heritage. One of the very few Arab women artists to pursue sculpture, her achievements and unique style place her as an important figure in the history of modern Arab art. She has lived through times of great political turmoil – including a civil war in Lebanon - and yet her artworks feel timeless and serene.

A central theme of Saudi’s work lies in creating an organic connection through her materials to life itself. To quote the artist: ‘sculpture is a pure exploration of form, an endless process of research and creation where the variations are infinite’. Drawn to the Arabic expression *takween* roughly translated as creation or formation, she named her first sculpture in stone *Mother/Earth* (1965) and frequently returns to ideas of fertility and growth. Always starting with basic shapes, the square, circle, cylinder, rectangle, she goes on to give them a life of their own creating new, graceful compositions.

Featured in this exhibition are seven sculptures from the period 2003 - 2012, showing the breadth and range of Mona Saudi’s vision. To Saudi, born in Amman, Jordan, a long-time resident of Lebanon, studying in Paris, with a mother from Syria and her father’s family originally from the Hejaz, the world has no borders. Her choice of material expresses this notion. She revels in using different kinds of stone from the Middle East: black diorite from Syria, alabaster from Yemen and from her native Jordan pink limestone from Irbid and the distinctive, signature green stone, Jordanian marble, Italian and South American marble, Lebanese yellow stone, Iranian travertine and African granite.

Another important element of Saudi’s artwork is her love of poetry, typified by a series of seven silkscreen prints of drawings made between 1976 and 1980 inspired by the writings of Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish, Saudi’s friend from the early 1970s until his death in 2008. Phrases from *Earth Poem*, *Hymn for the Green*, *Her Image* and *Suicide of the Lover*, become part of the composition of her drawings. Also inspired by Adonis’s poem, the *Petra Tablet*, Mona Saudi created twelve drawings in silkscreen prints in 1996 that glorify the Nabatean city carved in stone. Saudi’s drawings are inspired by poetry and relate clearly to the sculptural forms she creates, with their strong graphic line and totemic imagery.

Works



The Nile Obelisk, 2003

Black marble
53 x 17 x 12 cm
20 7/8 x 6 3/4 x 4 3/4 in



The Seed, 2007

Lebanese marble
25 x 22.5 x 22.5 cm
9 7/8 x 8 7/8 x 8 7/8 in





The River, 2009

Carrara marble
31 x 31 x 6 cm
12 1/4 x 12 1/4 x 2 3/8 i



The Poet, 2011

Guatemalen marble
82 x 32 x 9 cm
32 1/4 x 12 5/8 x 3 1/2 in





Sunset in Pink, 2012

Amman limestone
25 x 22.5 x 22.5 cm
9 7/8 x 8 7/8 x 8 7/8 in





The Seagull, 2009

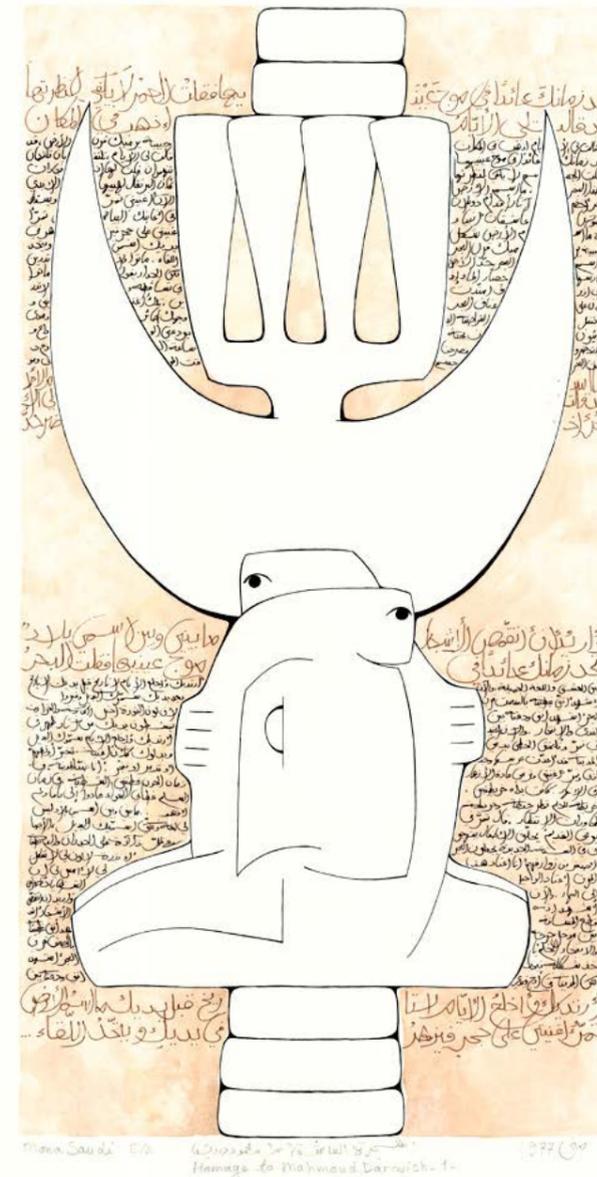
Carrara marble
35 x 31 x 5.5 cm
13 3/4 x 12 1/4 x 2 1/8 in



Growth, 2012

Jordanian marble
36.5 x 36.5 x 22 cm
14 3/8 x 14 3/8 x 8 5/8 in

Homage to Darwish



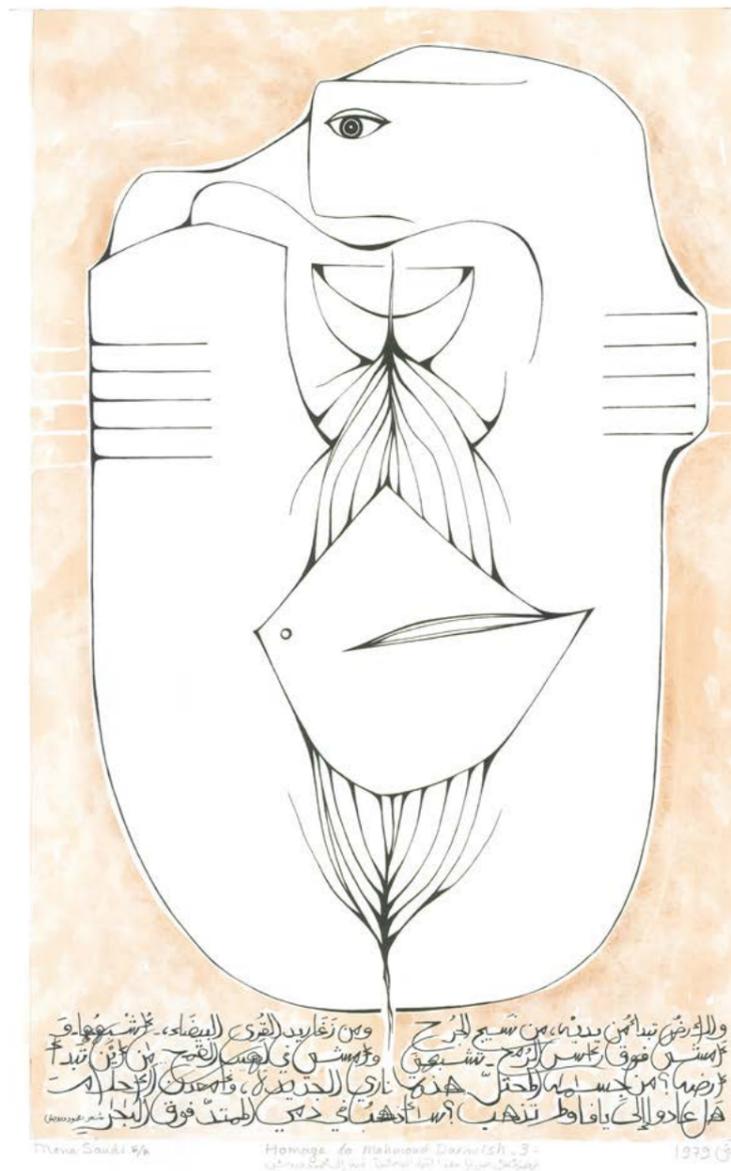
Homage to Darwish I, 1976-80

Silkscreen and watercolour
70 x 100 cm
27 1/2 x 39 3/8 in



*Homage to
Darwish II,
1976-80*

Silkscreen and watercolour
70 x 100 cm
27 1/2 x 39 3/8 in



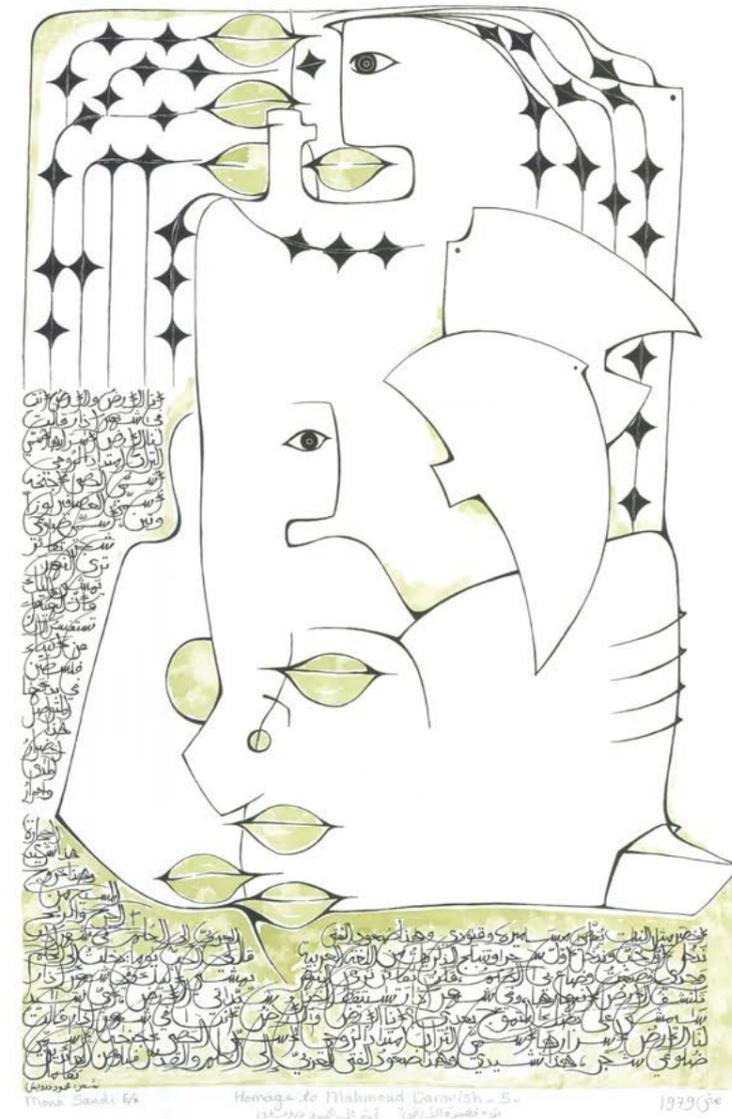
*Homage to
Darwish III,
1976-80*

Silkscreen and watercolour
70 x 100 cm
27 1/2 x 39 3/8 in



*Homage to
Darwish IV,
1976-80*

Silkscreen and watercolour
70 x 100 cm
27 1/2 x 39 3/8 in



*Homage to
Darwish V,
1976-80*

Silkscreen and watercolour
70 x 100 cm
27 1/2 x 39 3/8 in

Artist C.V.

Born 1945 Amman, Jordan

Lives and works between Beirut and Amman

SELECTED SOLO/TWO PERSON EXHIBITIONS

- 2013 Jacaranda Images Gallery, Amman, Jordan: joint exhibition with daughter Dia Batal
- 2012 Artcircle Gallery, Beirut, Lebanon
- 2011 Saint John Perse Foundation, Aix-en-Provence, France
- 2011 Europa Gallery, Paris, France
- 2010 The Mosaic Rooms, AM Qattan Foundation, London, UK
- 2010 Jacaranda Images Gallery, Amman, Jordan
- 2004 Quartier des Arts, Beirut, Lebanon
- 1999 Al-Oudaya Museum, Rabat, Morocco
- 1995 Retrospective, Darat Al-Funun, Amman, Jordan
- 1992 Galerie 50 x 70, Beirut, Lebanon
- 1985 Al-Salmieh Gallery, Kuwait
- 1984 Alif Gallery, Washington D.C., USA
- 1983 Alia Gallery, Amman, Jordan
- 1982 Galerie Epreuve d'Artiste, Beirut, Lebanon
- 1981 Galerie Elissar, Beirut, Lebanon
- 1975 Galerie Contemporaine, Beirut, Lebanon
- 1973 Galerie One, Beirut, Lebanon
- 1971 Galerie Vercamer, Paris, France
- 1963 Café de la Presse, Beirut, Lebanon

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2015 Art Dubai Contemporary 2015, Lawrie Shabibi, Dubai, UAE
- 2014 Abu Dhabi Art, Lawrie Shabibi, Dubai, UAE
- 2012 *Le Corps découvert*, Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris, France
- 2011-93 *Salon d'Automne*, Sursok Museum, Beirut, Lebanon
- 2003 International Cairo Biennale, Cairo, Egypt
- 2001 *Les Ateliers Arabes*, UNESCO, Beirut, Lebanon
- 1997 *Voyage en Jordanie*, Hotel de Ville, Paris, France
- 1996 *Rhythm and Form*, Visual Reflections on Poetry, USA
- 1994 *Forces of Change*, National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington D.C., USA
- 1987 *Arab Contemporary Artists*, Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris, France
- 1981 *Arab Artists*, Kunst Hus, Oslo, Norway
- 1979 *Palestinian Art*, Oriental Museum, Moscow, Russia International Art Exhibition for
- 1978 Palestine, Beirut, Lebanon Colamarini and his Students, Musee Rodin, Paris, France
- 1973-72 *Salon de Mai*, Musee d'Art Moderne, Paris, France

MUSEUM COLLECTIONS

- Sharjah Art Foundation, Sharjah, UAE
- The British Museum, London
- Barjeel Art Foundation, Sharjah, UAE
- Institute du Monde Arabe, Paris, France
- National Museum for Women in the Arts, Washington D. C.
- Dar Al Athar Al Islamiyya, Kuwait
- Museum of Modern Art, Kuwait
- National Gallery of the Fine Arts, Amman, Jordan
- The Khaled Shoman Foundation, Amman, Jordan
- Sursock Museum, Beirut, Lebanon
- Assila Museum, Morocco

OTHER COLLECTIONS

French Embassy, Amman, Jordan
Arab Bank Headquarters, Amman, Jordan
Cairo Bank Headquarters, Amman, Jordan
Jabal Amman, Public Square, Amman, Jordan
University of Science & Technology, Irbid, Jordan
Al Wafa Bank, Casablanca, Morocco
International Sculpture Park, Rashana, Lebanon
Al Hariri Art Collection, Beirut, Lebanon
Ministry of Culture, Cairo, Egypt

PUBLICATIONS

2012 Hommage a Mahmoud Darwish
2011 Hommage a Saint John Perse, drawings for 'Chant pour an Equinoxe'
2011 Petra Tablets, drawings for a poem by Adonis, Arabic & English
2006 Forty Years in Sculpture, monograph showing works created between 1965 and 2005, Arabic, English and French
1995 Le Bourgeoisement du Desert, sculptures and poem by Michel Butor
1992 An Ocean of Dreams, poetry and drawings
1972 First Vision, poetry and drawings
1970 In Time of War: Children Testify

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