# Huguette Caland: Tête-à-Tête

145

France, 1970s, photograph by Mustafa Ariss

# Huguette Caland: Tête-à-Tête

Drawing Papers 145

The Drawing Center

# Huguette Caland: Tête-à-Tête

With contributions by

Marwa Arsanios
Mirene Arsanios
Hannah Feldman
Claire Gilman

Contents

# Director's Foreword



The French phrase *tête-à-tête* can be translated to English as "head to head," which gives a somewhat aggressive cast to this figure of speech, conjuring evenly-matched rivals in a debate or in a boxing ring. There is no sense of the softness, the intimacy, or the romance of the words in their original language. Understanding the subtleties of translation and the movement of words or images from one cultural context to another informs our appreciation of the radical eroticism of the work of Huguette Caland. Born in Beirut, she spent the beginning of her artistic life studying at the American University there, and subsequently moved to Paris during a period of political and cultural ferment. The infamous graffito of the French student protesters of 1968, "Under the paving stones, the beach!," expressed not only the new generation's belief that a better system would emerge after tearing up the old one, but also revealed their search for the sensual buried under hard reality. Sexual revolution ran as an undercurrent to the social one, and opened the door for women in Europe and the United States, in particular, to begin to organize around ideals of gender equality.

Caland's sexy, gynocentric drawings perfectly embody this moment of erotic freedom and promise. They are bold assertions of feminine form, and expressions of female desire made manifest in what would become her signature, sinuous black ink line. Caland's lines travel distances across canvas, paper, and even textiles. Strong and unwavering, they are drawn with an astonishing level of control, honed by the discipline of years of instruction, but also driven by a confidence that came early in her career and was all her own. By the late 1980s, Caland had relocated to Venice, California, where the bohemian community of the Los Angeles neighborhood suited her lifestyle and nurtured her work, though her drawings,

paintings, and wearable objects did not necessarily fall into place in the hardcore, popular cultural context of Los Angeles art at the end of the millennium. Her return to Beirut in the last decade of her life inspired her to look anew at Arabic ornament. While these late-in-life works represent yet another chapter in Caland's oeuvre, the erotics of her line remain clearly present in them.

Caland's daughter, Brigitte, has noted that her mother's politics were expressed most strongly in the way she lived. That vibrant life, led in three countries, each with distinct artistic traditions, inspired Caland to create a powerful artistic statement that is personal, but also exemplary of a larger, shared drive for creative autonomy and the freedom to express the jouissance of female bodily pleasure. The Drawing Center is proud to present this exhibition, the most comprehensive of Caland's drawing career to date, particularly at a moment when we are beginning to emerge from a dark and deadly period marked by disease, social upheaval, and economic calamity. Caland's work offers us the possibility of finding joy in the sensual pleasures available to all of us as human beings. In fact, her work asserts that it is exactly these kinds of positive, visceral experiences that connect us empathetically, and in the end, define us in common. Caland's commodious, welcoming body of work is a quintessential example of the unique power of drawing to bring us, in all our diversity, together under the sign of the body and its ability to love and be loved.



The Drawing Center thanks Chief Curator Claire Gilman for creating this exhibition and publication, with the help of the Caland family. We also offer our deepest gratitude to those who supported this endeavor, including the National Endowment for the Arts; The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts; Lisa Silver and Jean-Christophe Castelli; Amy Gold and Brett Gorvy; Étant donnés Contemporary Art, a program of the French American Cultural Exchange (FACE) Foundation developed in partnership with the Cultural Services of the French Embassy in the United States, with lead funding from the Florence Gould Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the Helen Frankenthaler Foundation, Chanel USA, the ADAGP, the French Ministry of Culture, and Institut Français - Paris; Zaza and Philippe Jabre; Kayne Griffin Corcoran; Lisson Gallery; Jane Lombard Gallery; Sarah Peter; Tony Tamer; Saleh and Hala Barakat; Marianne Boesky Gallery; Carla Chammas and Judi Roaman; Tammy and Georges Makhoul; and TOTAH, NY.

–Laura Hoptman, Executive Director

# Curator's Acknowledgments

10 This exhibition has been a long time in the making. It was five years ago that I made my first trip to Huguette's Venice, California, home and studio, and about a year later that I met Brigitte and we officially decided to embark on this journey. And what a journey it has been. I am thankful every day that I was able to travel to Lebanon in March 2019 before recent events made such a trip nearly impossible. I am above all grateful that I had the chance to meet Huguette, whose undaunted spirit and zest for life shown in her sparkling eyes and steady gaze. Thank you Brigitte—and thank you to your family—for warmly welcoming me into Huguette's world. It has been an honor to collaborate on this exhibition with you.

My gratitude also extends to a number of individuals who supported this exhibition in various ways. Thanks to Carla Chammas and Judi Roaman for being my guides in Beirut and to Carla for imparting her extensive knowledge of Lebanese art; Dr. Omar Kholeif, Director of Collections and Senior Curator, Sharjah Art Foundation, for sharing his deep expertise; Aram Moshayedi, for giving me my first in-depth tour of Huguette's work during *Made in LA*; and, last but by no means least, Hannah Feldman, who introduced me to Brigitte and supported this show every step of the way with her unfailing love for all things Huguette. I must also thank Malado Baldwin and Richard Flaata from Huguette Caland's studio, whose knowledge, positivity, and flexibility made curating this exhibition—both before and during a pandemic—a smooth and joyful experience. Finally, my gratitude goes to L'Or Puymartin for allowing us to include her intimate documentary portrait of her grandmother in the exhibition.

Thank you also to the exhibition's lenders, who so generously shared works from their collections and who graciously adapted to the unique challenges of putting together an exhibition during this time. My thanks go to: Connie Butler, Chief Curator, Hammer Museum; Sarah Gnirs, Administrative Coordinator, Curatorial, Hammer Museum; Portland McCormick, Director of Registration and Collections, Hammer Museum; Emma Rudman, Registrarial Assistant, Hammer Museum; Suheyla Takesh, Curator, Barjeel Art Foundation; Sarah Adamson, Registrar and Collections Manager, Barjeel Art Foundation; Sultan Sooud Al Qassemi, Lecturer, Council of Middle East Studies, Yale University; Amira Solh; Pierre Caland; Nadine Majdalani Begdache; Nicole Nagel; Carla Chammas; Viveca Paulin-Ferrell and Will Ferrell; Justin Beal; and Jessica Leventhal Pierce, Project Manager/International Domestic Services, U.S. Art Company, Inc.



Additional appreciation goes to Mirene Arsanios and Marwa Arsanios for lending an invaluable first-hand perspective to this publication. Their enriching conversation highlights the continuing relevance of Caland's work—artistically, politically, and socially. Thank you again to Hannah Feldman, for doing what she does so well, always.

At The Drawing Center, the entire staff deserves my appreciation for demonstrating unparalleled flexibility during these unprecedented times. Thank you especially Isabella Kapur, Curatorial Associate, for staying on top of things throughout this extended process and never letting the ball drop; Olga Valle Tetkowski, Deputy Director, and Kate Robinson, Registrar, for adjusting, and readjusting, and readjusting the schedule with grace; Aimee Good, Director of Education and Community Programs, Rebecca Brickman, Director of Development, and Allison Underwood, Director of Communications, for creative ingenuity in promoting this exhibition and the programs around it; and finally, Laura Hoptman, Executive Director, for unfailing support and for ensuring this show happened even if there were a few bumps along the way.

Finally, I would like to extend my gratitude to The Drawing Center's Board of Directors as well as the funders (listed elsewhere) whose support was essential to the creation of this exhibition and publication.

—Claire Gilman, Chief Curator

# Huguette Caland: Everywhere Is a Corner that Could Be Anywhere Else

Claire Gilman



Any way you look at it, the Lebanese-born artist Huguette Caland took an unorthodox path to artistic success, finally achieving world renown in the years just prior to her death at eighty-eight in late 2019. Born in 1931 to Bechara El Khoury—Lebanon's first post-independence president following the country's liberation from France in 1943—Caland played the role of dutiful daughter, wife, and mother through the 1950s and early '60s, marrying a French-Lebanese man she had known since childhood and nursing her father through a five-year battle with cancer that ended with his death in 1964. That same year, as a married woman with children, Caland declared her intention to be an artist and enrolled at the American University of Beirut (AUB). The AUB art department acted more like a club or salon than a traditional art school, encouraging its members to gather for literary and artistic discussions in the library, and exposing the students to other disciplines through extensive public programs. The school mounted exhibitions of celebrated contemporary artists like Henry Moore and Alexander Calder and imported teachers from America and Europe. One of those instructors, Helen Khal, who was born in Allentown, Pennsylvania, to a family of Lebanese descent, particularly influenced Caland and was one of the few people Caland allowed inside her studio when she was working. Khal led a nontraditional life, engaging in numerous affairs and eventually an acrimonious divorce from her poet husband. Caland's family life was equally irregular. Shortly after marrying, her husband Paul took on a stream of mistresses, while Caland's lover Mustafa moved into the family home. One evening in 1970, at a dinner following an exhibition in her studio featuring work by herself and Khal, Caland made an

announcement: she was leaving the country—as well as her husband and children—to pursue an art career in Paris.[1]

It is understandable that subsequent generations have described Caland as a self-styled feminist, likening her work to that of her outspoken peers like Judy Chicago and Louise Bourgeois. Indeed, shortly after arriving in Paris and taking up with the Romanian sculptor George Apostu, Caland's work took a dramatic turn from abstraction to erotic drawings. First came simple ink drawings of intertwined body parts, caressing lovers, and topsy-turvy personages. Around 1973, these gave way to more abstracted, but equally erotic renderings of curvaceous forms resembling swollen breasts and vulvas, the soft curve of buttocks or puckered lips. Called *Bribes de corps* (Body Bits), these works are all the more surprising given Caland's complicated path toward bodily self-acceptance. Caland ultimately made peace with her large physique, designing and wearing loose caftans that both embraced and undermined traditional Arab dress in being playfully embroidered with schematic images of breasts and female genitalia. As Caland's daughter Brigitte Caland explains, "She saw life through her body, and through the way others perceived her body.... She always said that she didn't like her body but her body served her well...I think she probably meant that it never stopped her from doing anything that she wanted."[2] Caland's feminist bravura likewise propelled her mid-career choices. In 1986, after the death of Apostu, Caland left Paris for Venice, California, and unabashedly infiltrated the macho art community, befriending people like Sam Francis and Ed Moses even as her circle was unable to fully comprehend or appreciate her unconventional sensibility. Caland never divorced Paul and she remained close to him, returning to Beirut to care for him when he became ill in 2013 and residing in her birth country for the rest of her life.[3]



And yet, as her daughter has asserted, unlike her Lebanese contemporaries Etel Adnan and Simone Fatal, Caland was never

---

1 For helpful information on Caland's early biography see Kaelen Wilson-Goldie, "When the Line Is Left to Live on Its Own," in *Huguette Caland: Everything Takes the Shape of a Person*, ed. Aram Moshayedi (Skira: 2018), 8–13.

2 Brigitte Caland, quoted in Tess Thackara, "Now in her Eighties, Huguette Caland Is Celebrated for her Sensual, Feminist Art," *Artsy*, July 23, 2019, https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-eighties-huguette-caland-celebrated-sensual-feminist-art.

3 Much of this information about Caland's life in LA and her relationship to feminist politics comes from conversations with her daughter, in particular, one in May 2019 on the occasion of Caland's exhibition at Tate St. Ives.

an activist. She remained resolutely anti-ideological and did not align herself with specific feminist causes. If Caland adopted a progressive stance, it was in the way that she lived rather than the ideas she espoused; she rebelled in her very manner of being. Indeed, if one looks to her for commentary on the societal role of women, or of Arab and diasporic women in particular, one will inevitably be disappointed. Rather than a Feminist with a particular agenda, Caland is better termed a Humanist whose subject is the ungovernable nature of life itself.

Put differently, instead of celebrating female empowerment per se, Caland's work seems intent on exploding binaries such that the categories male and female, and power and resistance, cease to make sense. Looking at Caland's shifting, intersecting forms, I am reminded of French theorist Leo Bersani and his theory of impersonal narcissism wherein, Bersani argues, we approach the world from a position not of domination or sexual mastery, but rather, of spatial connectedness and situational similitude. As desiring bodies in space, we exist in a relationship of congruity, each of us alike in our quest for fulfillment. Bersani writes: "Narcissistic concentration is thus maintained as self-dispersal, as the simultaneous confirmation and loss of identity in a potentially endless process of inaccurate self-replications.... Far from appropriating the world, the ego at once finds and loses himself in the world."[4] We are akin, in other words, in our shared spatial situatedness, in the fact that we make up the "universal flesh of the world."[5] "Correspondences of form, texture, color and volume trace designs of sameness in our relations with the universe; our bodily being 'touches' multiple other surfaces to which it is drawn" as we find ourselves "within a universe of familiar forms."[6]



It is just so with Caland's images wherein forms touch, reach, and extend toward related forms and figures. In this effort, they rely above all on the mutability of the drawn line. Line is the one constant in Caland's work as it unfolded and developed throughout her career, whether on paper, canvas, sculpture, or cloth. As Kaelen Wilson-Goldie recounts in her essay "When the Line Is Left to Live on Its Own," Caland's drawing teacher at AUB gave students an

---

4 Leo Bersani, *Arts of Impoverishment: Beckett, Rothko and Resnais* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1993), 6.

5 Leo Bersani and Ulysse Dutoit, *Caravaggio's Secrets* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998), 18.

6 Leo Bersani, *Homos* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1995), 120.

assignment that involved placing a pencil at the top of a page and drawing a continuous stream of associations without lifting the point or breaking the line until reaching the bottom.[7] It is no coincidence that Caland's first works upon arriving in Paris were simple black line drawings that took this principle to heart and whose lyricism informed everything she did subsequently, even as she introduced color and paint. For it is in her line that we observe malleability and movement, the push and pull and interconnection that defines her entire oeuvre. "Sometimes it's just a line that says it all," Brigitte Caland has mused.[8] What follows is a brief tour of Caland's love affair with line as she explores, expands, and remains fundamentally true to her belief in art's power to harness the basic human desire for intimate connection.



—

Many scholars date Caland's artistic breakthrough to a painting she made the year her father died. A fiery monochrome entitled *Red Sun* (1964), the painting is seen as a testament to Caland's newfound independence and life as an artist. Still, in its near abstraction, it is also somewhat anomalous and remains connected to Caland's Lebanese period. By contrast, a quieter composition from three years later directly presages the work she would make in Paris and it is with this image that I choose to begin. Executed in black oil paint on canvas and titled *Helen* (after Helen Khal), the rectangular surface is occupied by an angular knee and breast in black outline set against a field of clustered, similarly demarcated ovoids [PL. 1]. We know intuitively that this is a single figure though the zoomed-in torso and knee do not connect in-frame. Instead, what we see are two independent forms separated by the pulsating ovoids and thick black line demarcating them. This is an image of a self that is fundamentally split, one that is literally projected into a space inhabited by forms that are similarly divided and unresolved. The central "figure" dominates the composition and yet, comprised of the same stuff and substance as the forms surrounding it, this centrality appears to be only a matter of perspective, as though,

7 Wilson-Goldie, 8.

8 Brigitte Caland, quoted in Priscilla Frank, "Meet the Octogenarian Artist Who's Been Creating Erotic Art for 50 Years," *Huffington Post*, July 2016, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/exploring-octogenerian-artist-huguette-calands-erotic-body-of-work_n_5789236de4b08608d33464d8.

PL. 1
*Helen*, 1967

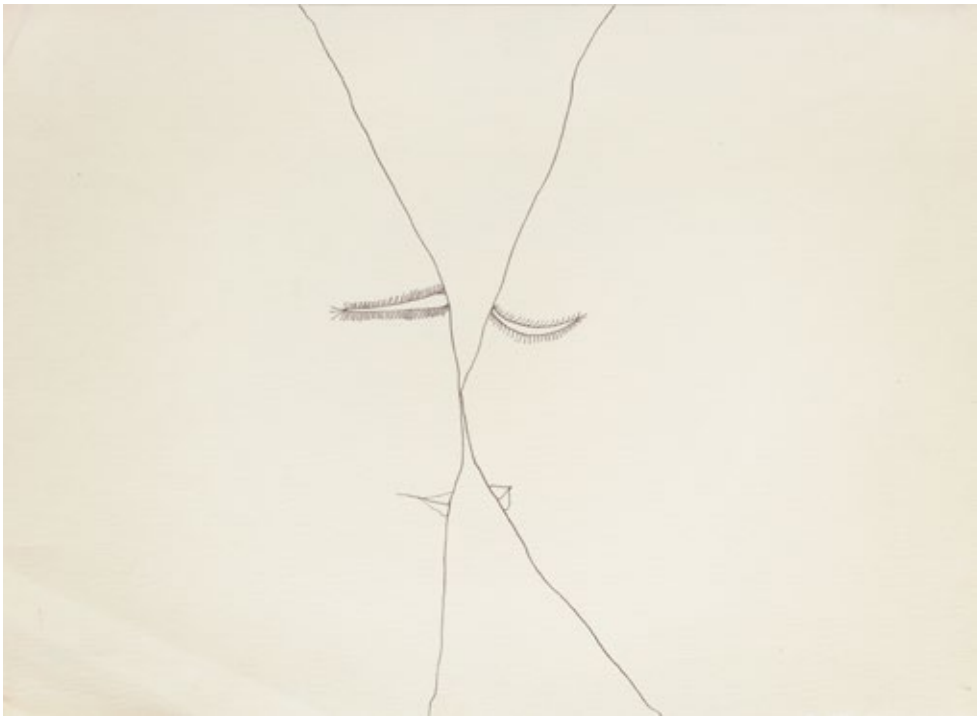
from a different angle, one of the now indistinct ovoids might come into view and assume center stage. There is no empty space on this canvas. Rather, space equals the proliferation of bodies, and selfhood, the projection of one's own image into the maelstrom. In true Bersanian fashion, Caland's painting replaces the notion of hierarchy and control with an awareness that we are part of the world that we see.

Caland's Parisian line drawings pick up where *Helen* left off, depicting individuals from her early life alongside a motley array of anonymous characters. In *Mustafa, poids et haltères* (Mustafa, Weights and Dumbbells) from 1970, Caland's former lover appears in the center of the paper, arms outstretched, his interior a patchwork of errant faces, torsos, and limbs that explode out, filling the bottom left corner of the page, and continuing in a diagonal climb toward the top right corner [PL. 12]. Similarly, in *Parfois Mustafa* (Sometimes Mustafa) (1971), a single garland of faces traverses the paper from the bottom left to the top right with Mustafa's mustachioed visage at center [PL. 23], while in *Paul* (1971), the suited image of Caland's husband stands amidst a rickety tower of bodies and faces (including Mustafa's) that extends vertically from the top of the page to the bottom [PL. 22]. Loaded though they are with personal resonance, these drawings convey physical rather than psychological weight. The figures in these three drawings are like building blocks with Mustafa and Paul simply two of the many characters who make up the drawings' respective compositional edifices. "We are already connected," observes Bersani, "not because you know me, but because we occupy, punctuate and define a common space."[9] Gravitation vs. containment; extension vs. interiority; collective relationality vs. coupling. The most striking moment in *Mustafa, poids et haltères* occurs at the center of the composition as an open palm propelled by a skinny arm emerges from the crowd to land on a flat expanse of belly. This joining of skin to skin, this featured instance of physical contact, can be seen as a microcosm of the drawing as a whole. There is nothing but surface in the drawing because it defines knowledge not in terms of psychological intimacy or mastery but as the non-purposive pleasure of touch.

Caland's use of a simple ink line to describe her subjects reinforces her work's anti-hierarchical intention. Made up of the same basic matter, Caland's figures are relational vs. oppositional in nature. Perhaps this is why so many of her drawings show



9 Bersani and Dutoit, 25.



PL. 2
*Upside Down*, 1971

PL. 3
*Bouches* (Mouths), 1972

multi-figure compositions rather than dyads. In Caland's world we exist, as in Bersani's, in a mobile, shifting collective vs. a targeted, unidirectional social order. In those cases where the artist does depict couples, they are often shown as variants on each other, as in the graceful *Upside Down* from 1971 [PL. 2] and its more fleshed out twin *Bouches* (Mouths) from a year later [PL. 3]. As the two strikingly similar visages lean toward each other, they come together in a position of reciprocity vs. fusion or domination. Indeed, it is unclear whether the two faces actually touch or instead glide gently past each other. It is this movement toward, this gravitational pull, that establishes their connection rather than any kind of possessive closure. Seeing the two compositions together moreover confirms the importance of gestation in Caland's work. It is as though *Upside Down*'s embryonic figures with their tiny mouths and feather-lashed eyes have matured into the sensual beings that constitute *Bouches*. Still, the latter is far from static. The two distinct beings are connected by the way they both exist in a perpetual state of incompletion.



As vital as the figures are in these tender drawings, the space between them is equally charged. In both drawings, the negative space between the faces creates an active shape; indeed, in *Upside Down*, the resulting double V, which here signifies ground, echoes a figure common in Caland's drawings. In *Parenthèse 2* (Parenthesis 2) from the same year, for example, an equivalent V occupies the otherwise blank page, now densely populated with Caland's signature pile-up of bodies and disconnected heads [PL. 4]. Where it was ground, now it is figure or, perhaps more complexly, occupied as it is with puzzle-piece characters, it is a figure *of* or *as* ground. In truth, there can be no distinction between figure and ground in Caland's work because there is no such thing as empty space. Everything is in motion toward or away from something else, and it is the fragile, wavering line "between" where this motion is concentrated and disseminated.

Which brings us to Caland's next body of work, a series of abstracted shapes for which she is perhaps best known: her *Bribes de corps* (Body Bits). This is the series critics most frequently cite when heralding Caland's feminist sensibility, noting the joyful display of pulsating flesh, swelling curves, and rippling folds. Executed primarily on canvas in hues ranging from subtle pinks and oranges to vibrant blues and greens, these works might seem to indicate that Caland abandoned the simplicity of her early drawings for a foray into the sensuality of paint as the more appropriate tool for

PL. 4
*Parenthèse 2* (Parenthesis 2), 1971

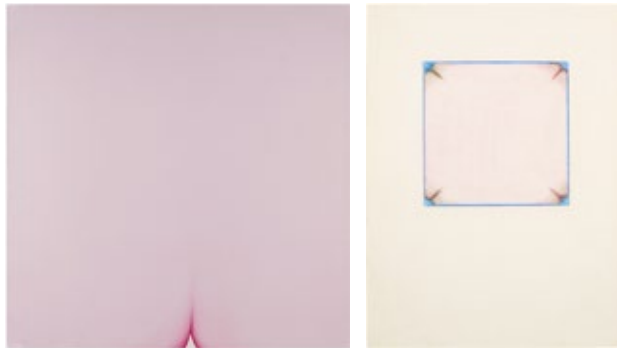


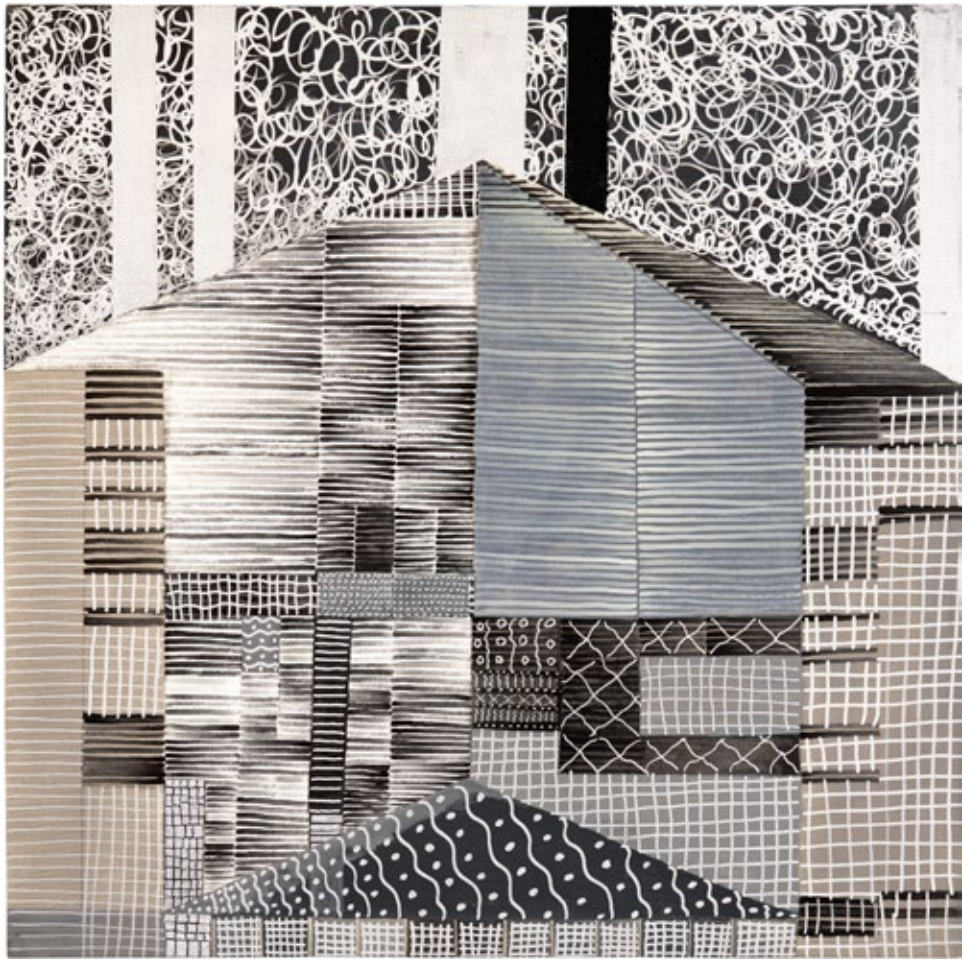
FIG. 1
*Self-Portrait (Bribes de corps)* (Self-Portrait (Body Bits)), 1973

PL. 5
*Bribes de corps* (Body Bits), 1973

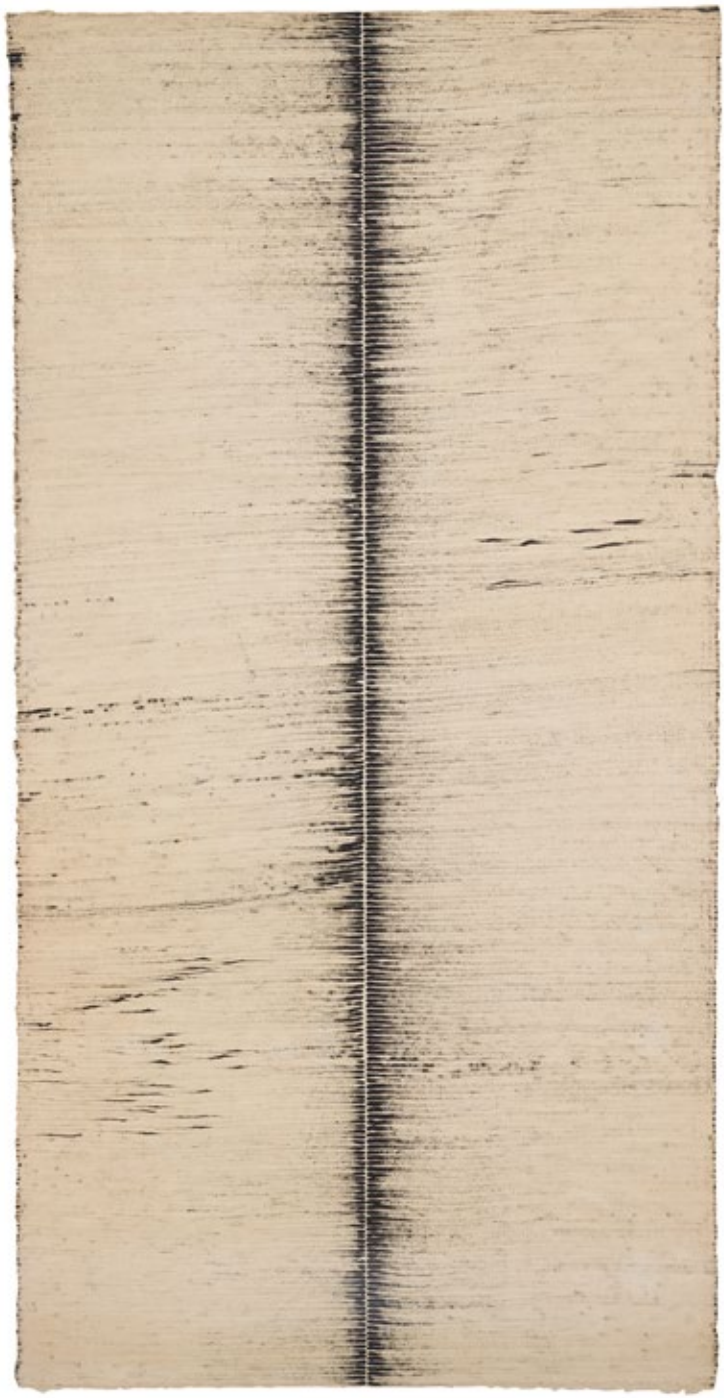


her particular take on physicality. And yet again, what is essential are not so much the forms Caland depicts—although I do not wish to deny the pleasure that results from discerning that what appears to be a pink monochrome is in fact a soft bottom, its rosy crack just visible [FIG. 1]—as her articulation of the way in which one shape shifts and distends to meet another. In this endeavor, it is again the line that provides the charge whether it be the dark, shadowed contour that underscores the thrust of one rounded form against another [PL. 42], or the stark white gap that opens chasm-like between blueish gray "lips" [PL. 25]. Consider too a large-scale canvas in which two mountainous, orange humps are only discernible as such because of the thin blue ground-become-line that separates their undulating inner contours [PL. 33]. It is on and around the line that energy constellates. Here, it is visible as a literal glow that traces the perimeter of the golden mounds as they incline toward each other; there, it is the moiré-like shadow that spreads out and away from the dark articulating crevice [PL. 42]. In other words, it is the space between that bears meaning.

The 1970s and '80s brought a return to paper with the early black line drawings now realized in soft, intimate pastels. These are some of Caland's gentlest works with delicate blues, pinks, and greens defining tender figurative moments: the floating, inclined heads in *Tête-à-tête* (Head to Head, 1983) [PL. 60]; the soft, enfolded figure in *Creature de reve* (Dream Creature, 1978) [PL. 54]. In the 1990s, by contrast, Caland's line began to take on a life of its own. Her playful series *Homage to Pubic Hair* and *Christine* from 1992 are cases in point. Released from its human source, the titular growth in these ink-on-paper compositions is allowed to travel jubilantly across



PL. 6
*Untitled*, 1998



PL. 7
*I*, 1999

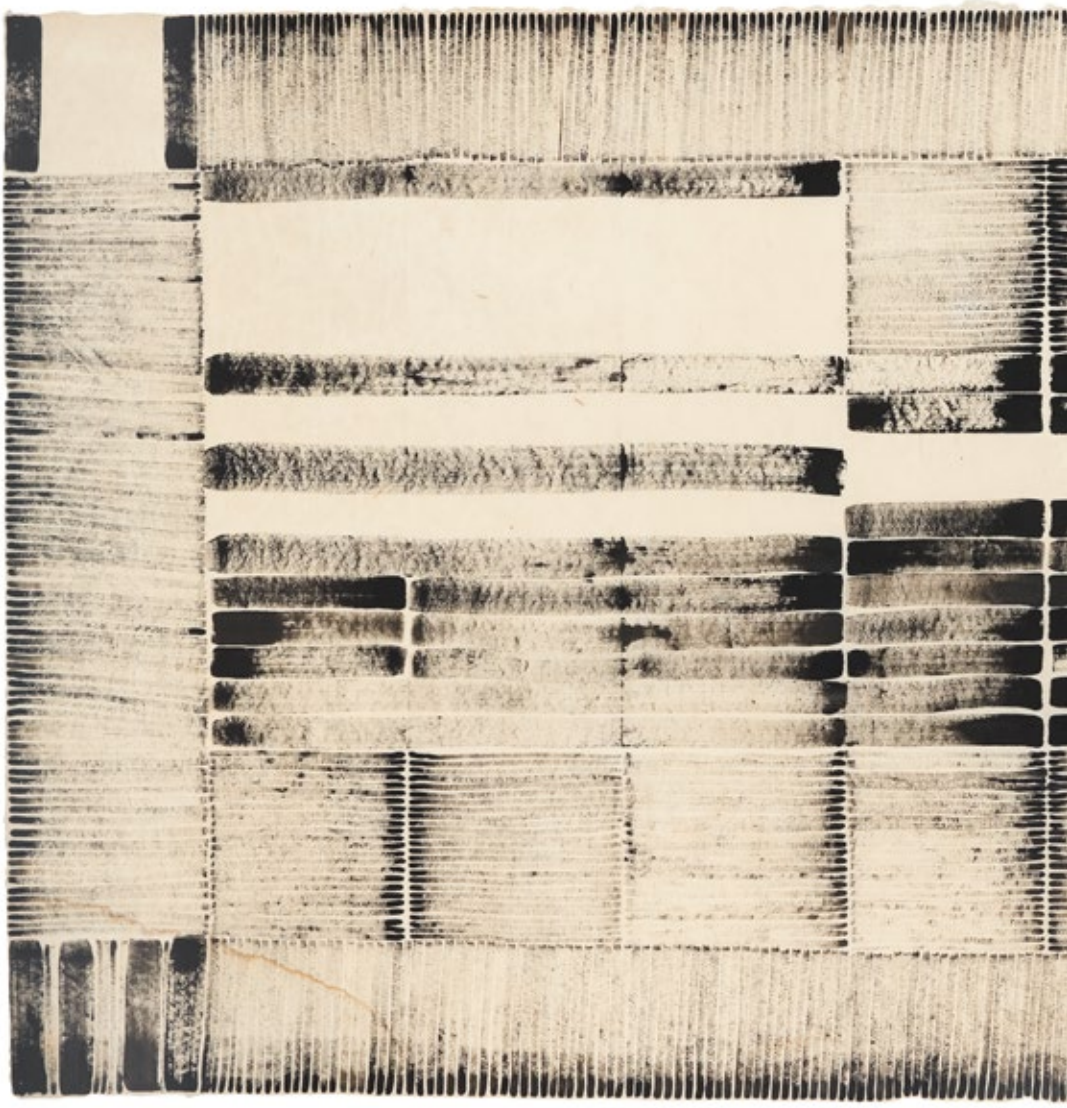
the page. In one drawing, it is suspended on a linear tightrope [PL. 66]; in another, it sprouts on the ends of extended limbs [PL. 68] or bursts forth out of cracks and crevices of colorful bodily composites [PLS. 71 and 73] to appear on the tip of a cherry red nose, the crest of a chin, or the corners of puckered lips. This is sensuality run amok, uncontrolled and uncontained by bodily or social boundaries. Yes, these are images of sexual and physical liberation, but they are also portraits of the fluid connection between bodies more generally. They are representations of insides infiltrating outsides and our discreet selves impinging on others. Above all, they are representations of human interconnection.

In the context, it is instructive to consider two works made a year apart: *Untitled* (1998) [PL. 6] and *I* (1999) [PL. 7]. Where the former—a compendium of Caland's linear gestures including curlicues familiar from the pubic hair drawings, whimsical curves and dots, and horizontal and vertical strikes and grids—is all exuberance; the latter is all restraint. Here, two columns of washy horizontal lines emanate from, and return to, a thin part at the center of the page. This drawing is an example of Caland's *Silent Letters* series in which she mimicked the stacked lines of text in her notebooks using a brush that became progressively drier as she dragged it across the page, leaving a barely-there trace [FIG. 2]. According to Brigitte Caland, this series contains sentiments that Caland wanted to express but also keep close. That is, the *Silent Letters* are Caland's way of acknowledging the urge to express without divulging [PL. 8]. They are her homage to the communicative drive itself, here embodied in the simple fact of the line. In this, *Untitled* and *I* are two sides of the same coin.

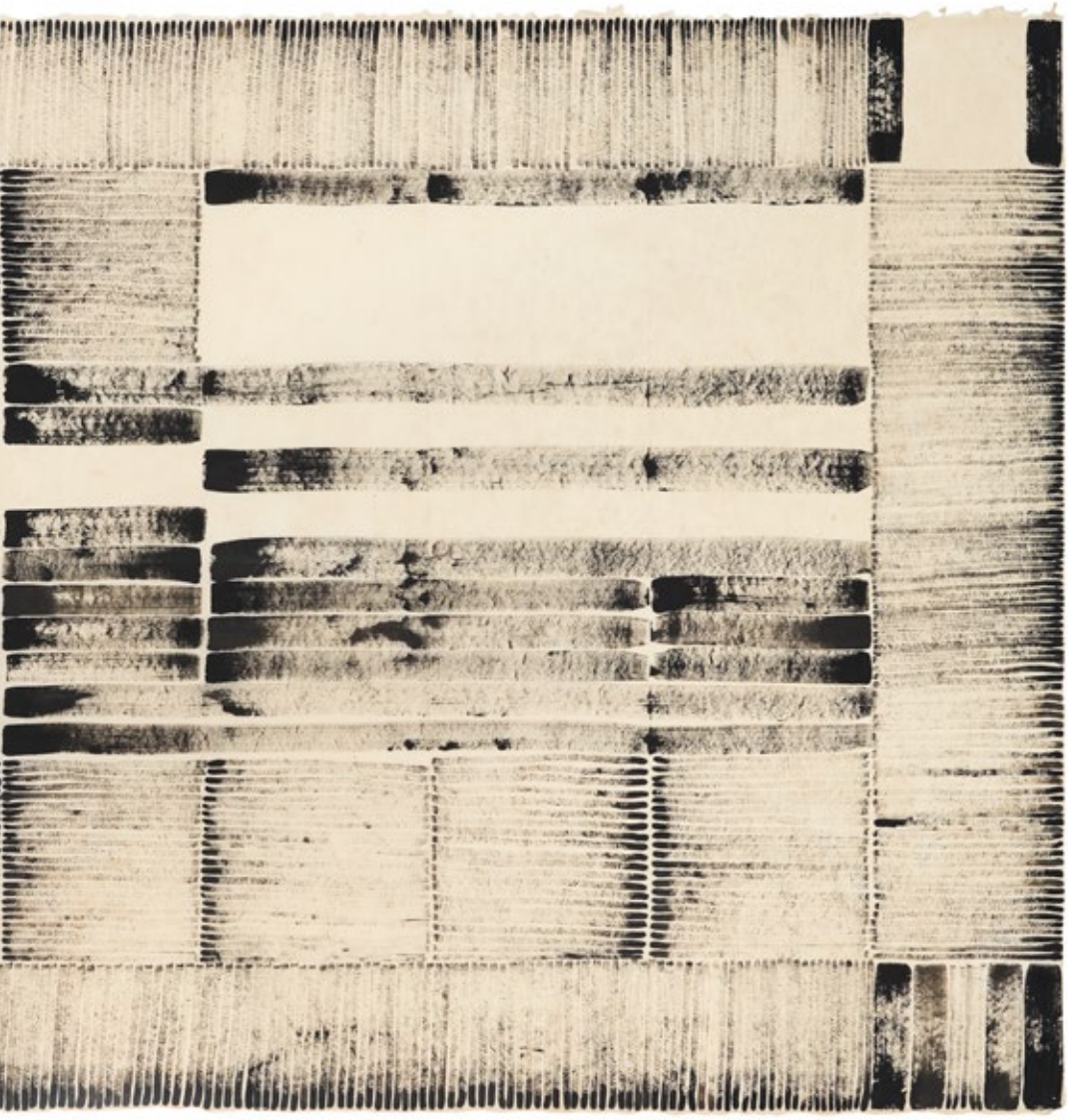


In the mid 2000s, Caland emerged from her *Silent Letters* series with her most marked directional change yet. Now entering her

FIG. 2
Caland at work on a drawing in the *Silent Letters* series, 1996



PL. 8
*Untitled*, 1999



later years, it is not surprising that Caland began to look backwards, embarking on a body of work inspired by Palestinian embroidery and the Byzantine aesthetic of her Middle-Eastern ancestry. In these compositions painted on linen, the curved lines of her drawings and paintings—as well as an earlier focus on legible figures—give way to straighter, grid-like markings suggestive of urban topographies interspersed with curvilinear details invoking fields of flowers and other vegetation. To make these large-scale works, Caland folded and unfolded sections of unstretched canvas, working on one section at a time so that she was unaware of the visual whole. The resulting compositions are rarely continuous or fused, and instead resemble patchwork quilts or bird's-eye views of composite terrains.



Visually, these abstracted, tapestry-like canvases have little to do with the frank presentation of the human body and sexual energy of Caland's early drawings and paintings. Indeed, it is tempting to read this work as a late-stage retreat from youthful provocation and to a certain extent this may be true. And yet, physical intimacy is still paramount in these canvases, albeit less overtly. In other words, what was previously evoked representationally is here embodied in the act of making. These paneled canvases are all about touch, the physical act of folding indexically evident in the bleeding colors that occupy the discrete sections. Lines and colors mingle and repeat in the four quadrants that make up the squarish *Bodrum* (2008) [PL. 93] and *Appleton I* (2009) [PL. 92] respectively, and the striations that comprise the vertically-oriented *City* from 2010 [PL. 89]. Here washy peach and white color-fields dotted with blue star-like formations give way to a structured grid, which in turn is encroached upon by a shimmering network of deep blue and green passages interspersed with silvery lines and cobalt flowers. The movement from one section to the next is much like the dispersal that occurs in the early drawings as the eye moves across the paper via a chain of bodies or outstretched limbs. In both cases, circulation and disorientation—what Bersani terms a "non-sadistic" or non-appropriative type of movement—is the operational mode as self-containment gives way to a kind of explosive activity. The cobalt flowers pop up across Caland's *City* through cracks in the grid and behind silver veils just as noses, heads, and breasts echo each other across the white page of her drawings.

Caland's anarchical spirit is as evident in her later work as it is in her earlier compositions once one comprehends in what this spirit fundamentally consists. Compare, for example, the magisterial canvas *Kantari, la mariée, avril 1952* (Kantari, The Bride, April 1952)

PL. 9
*Kantari, la mariée, avril 1952* (Kantari, The Bride, April 1952), 2010

PL. 10
"*Hi!*", 1973

from 2010 [PL. 9], with the simple 1973 line drawing *Hi!* [PL. 10]. According to Brigitte Caland, this lush canvas with its central figure on a bed of flowers reflected her mother's ideal wedding. In her long-sleeved, high-necked, and high-waisted dress with voluminous gold-patterned skirt, the protagonist is of a different order than *Hi!*'s unabashed nude. And yet, just as the nude leaps onto the page with legs and arms spread wide, so too does the bride graciously extend her arms across the width of the canvas in Caland's signature diagonal thrust, greeting the viewer with the unspoken declaration "I Am Here!" Self-presence is again defined as physical vs. psychological extension (notably, both women's faces are blank). In each case, Caland presents a model of Bersani's non-possessive coexistence. Better yet, to cite Bersani's compatriot Jean Luc Nancy, Caland presents a vision of being "in common" vs. being as "essence." Nancy writes: community as essence "constitutes closure because it assigns to community a *common being*, whereas community is a matter of something quite different, namely of existence inasmuch as it is *in* common, but without letting itself be absorbed into a common substance. Being *in* common has nothing to do with communion, with fusion into a body, into a unique and ultimate identity that would no longer be exposed. Being *in* common means, to the contrary, *no longer having, in any form, in any empirical or ideal place, such a substantial identity, and sharing this* (narcissistic) 'lack of identity.'"[10] Caland's forms and figures are likewise inherently exposed and they are alike in their exposure, that is, in their existing in common with one another. Caland's rebellion lies in her refusal to accept fusion or hypostasis, and to embrace instead the transcendent possibilities that come with opening ourselves to the other in a shared space. Rendered in pen outline against a field of color, *Kantari*'s white-bodiced bride—like *Hi!*'s malleable pen-and-ink protagonist—celebrates the power of line to disrupt continuity and closure, and to confirm the "strange being-the-one-with-the-other"[11] that is at the core of Caland's vision of our shared humanity.



10 Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, trans. by Peter Connor, Lisa Garbus, Michael Holland, and Simona Sawhney (Minneapolis and London: University of Minneapolis Press, 1991), xxxviii.

11 Nancy, xxxix.

# Drawing the Routes and Roots of a Body as a City and a City as It Moves Across Space and Time[1]

Hannah Feldman



*My energy comes from the earth, and gives me wings to fly–*
*I need it more than roots to relate to–*
*I always said I carried my roots on my tiptoes.....wherever I am–*
*Never can get rid of them....But that is time....*
–Huguette Caland, unpublished sketchbook, 1991

The small but growing body of literature on the Lebanese artist Huguette Caland (1931–2019) is clear on three things. For starters, Caland's work is animated by a sensuous, erotic, and perhaps even queer energy that emerges unregulated through the undulating, curvaceous lines that organize her paintings, her caftan designs, her sculptures, and her drawings. It also seems agreed upon and so almost not worth mentioning that the work takes Caland's own physicality—often described as large and desiring—as something of its raw material, finding in the shapes and bulging, plastic contours of physical flesh the opportunity to play, tease, transform, resist, yield, and meld color, line, and space. And, finally, the incessant repetition of Caland's biography confirms that her work is stylistically and materially marked by three distinct periods of her life, each synecdochically registered by the city she called home (and sometimes also by the name of a man, or men): Beirut, or more precisely the suburb of Kaslik, where she was born in 1931, the only daughter of Bechara El Khoury, Lebanon's first post-mandate president (1943–1952) and nationalist hero; Paris, where she moved

---

1 For Kirsten Scheid, who knows about living a de-located life, and whose friendship in a foreign city made me feel at home. And for the people of Beirut, who, scarred like the land itself, continue to fight against decades of the kind of criminal governance that led to the explosion in the Beirut Port on August 4, 2020.

in 1970 at the age of 39, having left behind her three children and husband to embark upon the bohemian life of an artist; and Venice, California, where she moved in 1987 following the death of her Paris lover Georges Apostu. In Venice, she found herself at the social center of the Los Angeles art world, and yet never much attended to as an artist by the group of celebrated men who appeared frequently at her dining table, and in her bed.[2] She was not fully legible in Los Angeles as an artist: not quite foreign enough, but far too exotic to be otherwise locatable. It would seem, however, that now—in the last few years of her life and into the years following her death—she is newly at home, everywhere, recognized as a Lebanese artist, a forerunner of global modernisms, and repeatedly singled out as all but literally manifest in the aesthetic fantasies she traced by pen and brush in her work. Art, she once said, was not a part of her life. It was her life.[3] And, in her death, this is equally true.



To be sure, these things—and not just the biography—are indisputable. And, as one would expect in the oeuvre of an artist who consistently manipulated representations of the body and its parts into shapes now recessive and receptive, now protruding and penetrating, these three thematic or biographical givens—erotics, the body, and the city—appear formally interlaced in the work, which becomes, across the years, a tight nexus of bodies, sexed organs, lovers, colors, and places. What I call her "cityscapes"—real and imagined, but often signaled by the curved containing bay of Beirut's crescent-shaped seashore—live or, perhaps, take persistent shelter in reproductive organs and the various orifice-to-orifice kisses in which they take part, just as bodies not only fragment into parts, but also stretch to become shorelines and urban grids. Like Caland's celebrated body parts and the sometimes sexy, sometimes funny, and sometimes terrifying things they do with and upon each other, the urban fragments in her work—especially the later work—are simultaneously conjoined and striated by the hypnotic flow of the lines that suggest their forms and by the anxious, repetitive hatching

---

2 We see these descriptive analyses from the earliest writings about Caland in the 1970s through to the reviews of the last few years. The recent publication *Huguette Caland: Everything Takes the Shape of a Person, 1970–1978* (Milan: Skira, 2017), edited by Aram Moshayedi, contains the most comprehensive analyses to date, including "Going to Pieces" by Negar Azimi. It is Azimi who associates queerness with Caland, suggesting that her oft-repeated statement that she had grown fat as a challenge to cultural norms is as "queer as it is rare," a sentiment that courses through the insightful readings of the works that follow (15).

3 Helen Khal, "Huguette Caland," in *The Woman Artist in Lebanon* (Beirut: The Institute for Women's Studies in The Arab World, 1987), 127.

marks that can signify spatial division and community while also mimicking the sometimes communicative, sometimes divisive, but always repetitive aspects of language.

Nonetheless, despite its prevalence, the city as form is rarely mentioned in relationship to Caland's work and the way she lived in her work, imaginatively, politically. In accounts of her work, cities only matter, it seems, because she lived in *them*, and they shaped her. But how did she shape them? The erotic drawings her newfound fans liken to "bodyscapes" become home to cities just as cities become home to bodies. We might say that if "everything takes the shape of a person," as a recent monograph would have it, in Caland's oeuvre, so too does everyone take the shape of a city.[4] This is a pretty profound proposal painted for us by an artist who lived large parts of her life as an artist in de-location, in diaspora: transient, migratory, fluid. Unlike dominant theories about diaspora that issue from Paul Gilroy's foundational distinction between "routes" as opposed to "roots" as a defining quality of the diasporic condition, Caland's way of building a space inside the parameters and organs of a body gives us room to think of the diasporic subject as simultaneously both: rooted to the earth, but not to a precise space or place since—as she says above—the roots issue from her own toes. Rather, these roots take "route," but only through "time" and transmogrification, perhaps in the rhythms and convulsions of a city that is simultaneously real, imagined, and entirely utopic. In fact, as much as they suggest the sinuous tug of body parts, the contours of her drawings and paintings seem to forever trace the eroding and resurgent shoreline of Beirut. The flow of her pen, pencil, or brush appears more lyrical than punctuated, as if fondling a form embedded in her own. William Kentridge once remarked that his animated drawings of Johannesburg, in which we see drawing "drawing" itself,[5] are in line, in fact, with how the city of Johannesburg itself has constantly redrawn itself: now meteor hole, now golden mountain, now deep hole into the plundered earth…[6] While the visuals are quite different, as are their inspiration,



---

4 Moshayedi, ed., *Huguette Caland: Everything Takes the Shape of a Person, 1970-1978*.

5 Michael Auping, "Double Lines, A 'Stereo' Interview about Drawing with William Kentridge," *William Kentridge Five Themes* (San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 2009), 241.

6 My thanks to Krista Thompson for directing me to this comparison and for many other insightful comments.

Caland's body-Beirut Bay also reinvents both the artist and the city, conjuncturally aligning the two as the artist's routes take root across time and place.[7]

—

In her early days as a nearly middle-aged, novice art student in the mid-1960s, Caland began experimenting with unending, tumultuous line drawings in classes held by John Carswell, a Royal College of Art-trained artist turned art historian, teacher, "explorer," and curator and scholar of "Near, Middle, and Far Eastern art and culture" who, perhaps influenced by his self-understanding as a follower of the teachings of the Medieval Islamic scholar Ibn Khaldoun, was interested in the movement of what curator Octavian Esanu has called "the pilgrimage of artistic ideas." Carswell, who taught at the American University of Beirut from 1956 to 1976, just after the Civil War broke out, famously asked his students to work for hours on single-line drawings that went entirely uninterrupted until the mark reached the end of the page and the concept being delineated was exhausted, the whole while pens, pencils, and brushes (both ends!) never taking leave of their flat surface.[8] Inaugurated in 1952 by the American artist Maryette Charlton, who had once been a gallery lecturer in the Department of Education at the Art Institute of Chicago, at the invitation of then President William Penrose, and quickly staffed by a number of artists she brought with her, the Department of Art at AUB provided a training significantly more



7 I take the word "conjuncturally" from Doreen Massey, who in turn borrowed it from Murray Low and Clive Barnett's *After Globalisation* (2000). In her *On Space* (London and Delhi: Sage Publications, 2005), Massey uses the idea of "thinking conjuncturally" to dislocate space from any distinct moment in time–scalar or teleological–and instead imagine it as a shuttling back and forth between pasts and futures that conjoin to create what she describes as the "event" of place, which is also, in fact, its "uniqueness" (420). Here I am thinking of the movements back and forth between the body, which is always read as a descendant of Caland's own, and the city it contains and generates, and which, in turn, contains and generates the body likened to her own.

8 For these references and more on the fascinating artwork and career of John Carswell, see the pamphlet produced by curator Octavian Esanu in 2014 on the occasion of *Trans-Oriental Monochrome: John Carswell* at the AUB Byblos Bank Art Gallery and the AUB Rose and Shaheen Saleeby Museum in Beirut, both curated by Esanu. See https://www.aub.edu.lb/art_galleries/Pages/Trans-Oriental.aspx. Kaelen Wilson-Goldie also discusses Carswell's teaching in her excellent essay, "When the Line Is Left to Live on Its Own," in *Huguette Caland: Everything Takes the Shape of a Person, 1970-78*, 8.

FIG. 3
*Une ville*, 1964

in line with American academic models than those of the Beaux-Arts training otherwise bequeathed to Beirut.[9] This is to say that art making was considered a component of an intellectual training based on research and critical thought, not just a training in technique.



At the same time as she was exploring with Carswell's infinite lines, Caland was fexperimenting with the ostensibly more rigid and rectilinear forms of cityscapes—cityscapes that would nonetheless drift into or be interrupted by the recursive frame of the Beirut seashore. Painted the same year as the monochromatic *Red Sun*, with which she announced herself a painter after her father's death, and in which she also demonstrated a fleeting affiliation with the kinds of chromatic visuals that informed the work of Helen Khal, the 1964 work *Une ville* presents hatched and dotted planes of color that fold and twist against and into each other to conjure buildings, hills, streets, and parks pressed tightly as if to form a skyline, and yet also flattened to suggest the land contained—literally—by the diagonal sweep up from left to right that suggests the shoreline of Beirut and that of its northern suburbs [FIG. 3]. It might be, in fact, that the strongly diagonal line that organizes so many of Caland's compositions, urban and otherwise, actually issues from the dimpled curves and swells we see here, the same that form the hollow of Saint George Bay (Bay of Beirut) and wend their way to her hometown

9 See the Bibliographic Note in the Find Aid to the Maryette Charlton Papers at the Archives of American Art, https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/maryette-charlton-papers-6150/biographical-note. In an unpublished interview with Kirsten Scheid (November 26, 2004), Charlton described her hiring cheekily, suggesting that she was having tea with President Penrose during one of several trips to visit her sister, who was also at AUB, when he asked her what she thought of the university and she said, "Well, it's not a university, because there's no art department!" Upon which he pledged to fix that, and hired her to start one.

FIG. 4
*TV City*, 1968

Kaslik and Jounieh Bay just north. We see the recessive curve of a city set against a bay again, for example, in *TV City* (1968) [FIG. 4], in which the same crossed and scored planes of urban fabric reappear from *Une ville*. Here though things get more complicated as the city form sags and splits into two parts separated by a gaping, white, chasmic void that bifurcates the canvas vertically. Each city half is further divided into small, irregularly shaped planes of color that bulge and bend under a doubled compression both vertical and horizontal–as if subject to two bellows–yet remain intact as individual units, secured by the heavy black lines between them. There are few references to human habitat in this TV city: the white laundry hanging on the far left of the painting and the TV antennae that fill the dipping horizon line and give the work its title. These signs also stand the city on its feet, so to speak, pointing to a top even as the little painted shapes of urban fabric deny any such orientation. It would be easy to read this work anachronistically in light of the divisions that literally split Beirut across east and west during the War years, but perhaps a more interesting thing to do would be to allow ourselves to remember, as so many Islamic maps of the tenth through fourteenth centuries remind us, that what we think of as "up," or "north," was not always as such. Our vision cannot regulate the chaos and life in the urban space itself.



Writing about *TV City* in 1976, the painter, critic, translator, gallerist, teacher, and Caland's onetime studio-mate, Helen Khal, whose work cannot be said to usually resemble Caland's in her preference for the softened geometry of color field motifs, suggests that Caland's "bold" use of the canvas white transforms the unpainted areas into "negative spaces of significant visual weight," and that the corresponding compositional arrangement of two parts that "push towards each other"–such as in *TV City*–predicts the formal tensions that Caland will continue to explore, as indeed

PL. 11
*Untitled*, 1993

she did well beyond 1976.[10] But this compositional strategy, born from a city set against a sea, also yields the quasi-violent erotics that dominate the later work. From the right side of *TV City*, it seems as if a wide-open mouth—or perhaps it is an upended boat—reaches across the white bay between the two city parts as if to swallow or perhaps kiss the other side. As this carnal, almost bungee-cord energy infuses other work, it drags with it the allusive and elusive shape of Beirut's shore, the topographical markers of which can't help but suggest themselves as a model for the sloping folds of *Une ville* or the ideological weight of *TV City*'s curving horizon line. In this way, Beirut is distributed as both markedly local and decidedly global, *a* but also *the* city, as it repeats and recurs through Caland's oeuvre.

While these early paintings are not included in *Tête-à-Tête*, they are worth considering in order to think with Caland about the city as home to, if not also an expression of the body's temporalities, its rhythms and senses, and about the body therefore as also an expression of the sociability of the city, a repository of experiences not only one's own. Thought this way, the city is also political, collective, and living. This saves, to some degree, Caland and any reckoning with her work from dwelling on the level of the diaristic wherein the works mean what they mean because she was who she was and lived (and loved) where she did, but the art is nonetheless still stranded as an inert inanimacy when it would seem half of her point is that it is so alive, materially, not spiritually or abstractly, but really.

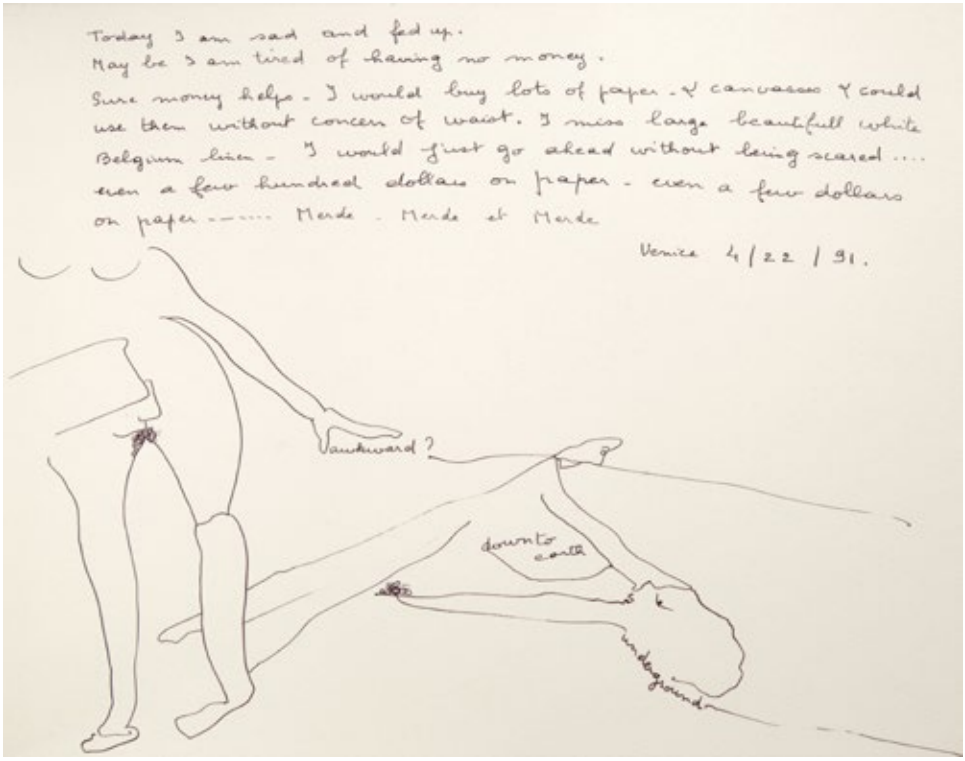


In line drawings such as an unnamed series from 1993 depicting what might be a pubic mound—or might be the frothing mouths of two faces locked in an embrace—the female form subsumes the form of what was, a quarter of a century earlier, the chasmic bay in *TV City*. Jetties and inlets, traced by a gentle line without apparent pause or hesitation, and what might even have been a boat, become noses, lips, hair. The contours of the shore are gently replaced with marks to conjure the spread of a woman's open thighs and the recess of the bay with a vagina [PLS. 11, 74, 75]. In a similar ink on paper drawing from 1970 named, somewhat cheekily, after Caland's lover (whom she kept in Beirut along with her husband Paul), *Mustafa, poids et haltères* (Mustafa, Weights and Dumbbells), a sequence of faces and bodies follows the descending diagonal line of *Une ville*, heads linked to heads to preserve the curves and inlets of the developed Lebanese coast [PL. 12]. And, again, in a sketch from a 1991 sketchbook,

---

10 Khal, 130.

PL. 12
*Mustafa, poids et haltères* (Mustafa, Weights and Dumbbells), 1970




PL. 13
Page from sketchbook (no. 2), 1990-91

anywhere from none to four figures conjoin as one line bleeds into another to trace the more contained perimeter of the crescent Beirut Bay [PL. 13]. In the center of the sketch, a horizontal stick figure reaches out to embrace (or push down) another body, the latter of which reaches out as if to fondle what appears to be the first's pubic hair. The underside of what we might presume to be "her" head is written as the word "underground," whereas the space between her arms, the space between her and him is "down to earth." The question "awkward?" links the two left and right parts of the shore as if in an ironic presentation of the situation that unfolds, which is, indeed, awkward. And not even just metaphorically. Or aesthetically.

It is speculative to be sure, but seems reasonable to claim that throughout all of these pictures, the urban shoreline—a site of containment as Lebanon's outer edge but also one of abandon as the celebrated and often fantasized means of its egress—parallels and comes to stand alongside the primacy assigned to Caland's own body in its significance for shaping her work. One or the other might always be the representation of one or the other, just as a kiss might be a butt, a breast an eye, a head a dick, or the tip of a penis a boob. Bay as body and kiss as urban topography, tropes made only the most explicit in the well-known 1973 ink and oil on canvas composition from the *Bribes de corps* (Body Bits) series [FIG. 5], where the framing pockets of a brightly rendered yellow Bay of Beirut take the shape of faces, their pointy noses contrasted with the open, recessive spaces of what appear to be red lips, one pursed in a half-smile, ready to kiss, while the other sucks, sips, or perhaps spits or births forth the phallic protrusion that was once identifiable as the seawall of the Beirut port. In between, or rather, in the area just behind, an urban plan appears hastily, tentatively sketched out through abstracted lines that depict intersections as splayed bodies,



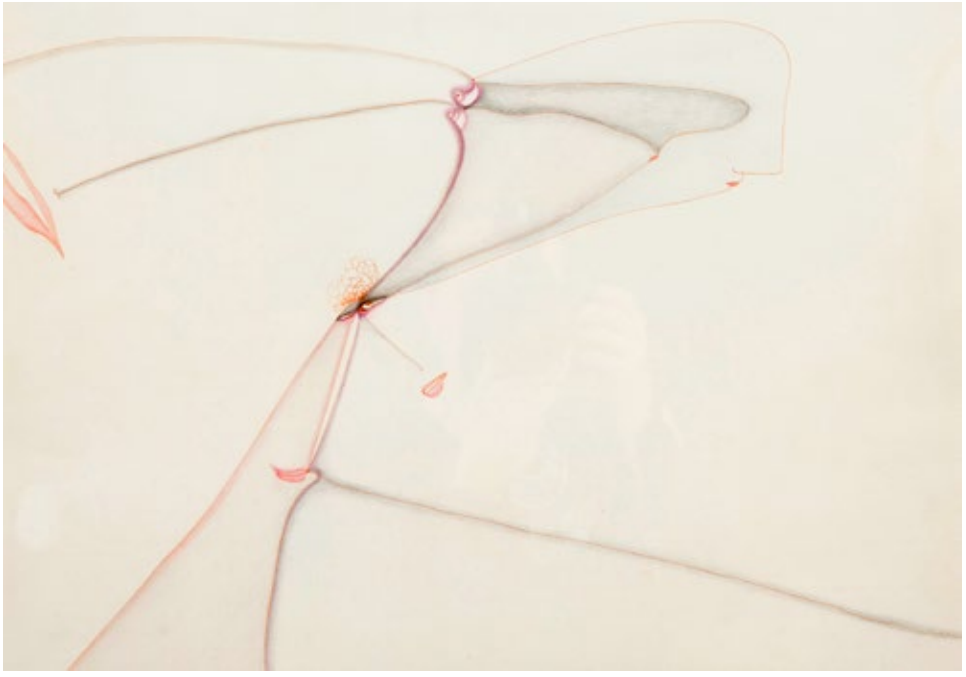
FIG. 5
*Bribes de corps* (Body Bits), 1973

FIG. 6
*Flash*, 1978

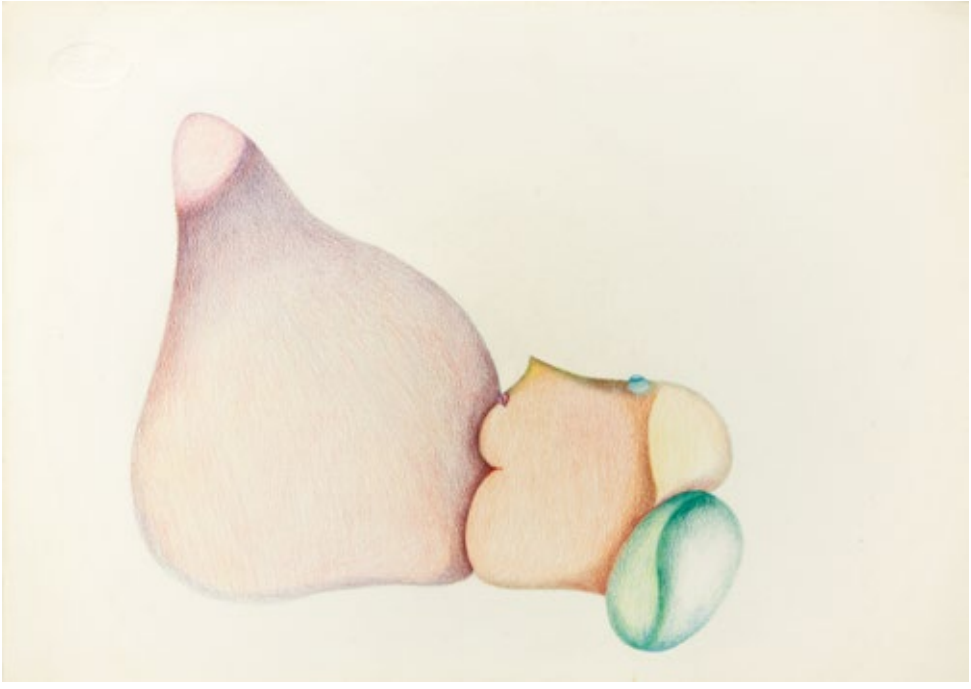


faces as neighborhood demarcations. The city is a body; it is two bodies; it is also filled with bodies. Once again, it would be easy, but perhaps stupid, to try to write this city as a premonition of Beirut's famously divided and ultimately war-burdened status. I don't think that's the case. But this city is clearly a body and clearly, again to recall Kentridge, it draws itself, when it is not drawn by far more pernicious enterprises.

The crescent composition interrupted by the phallic protrusions described above worms its way into other works in *Tête-à-Tête*. In the dusty pinks of *Erotic Composition* (1967–70), it doubles to reveal the contours of the Beirut seashore as a whispered network of delicate lines moving toward and emerging from a throbbing center—part eye, part cunt—that marks the space of the city and dispenses the distinct perpendicular line of the seawall [PL. 14]. But the bayscape here also flips, and so the eye-cunt of Beirut looks also to the left, transforming the exterior of the bay into the interior of the city, but also the reconfigured signs of a woman's body: lips, buttocks. The crescent city bay similarly haunts the radically divergent colored contours of *Enlève ton doigt* (Remove Your Finger) (1971) [PL. 20] through two of the twinned amorphs that project, cartoon-like, into the painted white background, and it lingers, like a ghost, in *Big Kiss* (1978) [PL. 15], where the separate parts of the city assume the shape-shifting forms that proliferate in Caland's work of that time. Here, a puckering mouth becomes the pink swell of two buttocks; the swell of a head or a hill crests into a pink nipple. And, again, this composition similarly animates the wormy blob of *Flash* (1978) [FIG. 6], in which the shoreline bleeds more completely into anthropomorphic shapes that art historians are wont to compare



PL. 14
*Erotic Composition*, 1967-70



PL. 15
*Big Kiss*, 1978

with Philip Guston or maybe even those of the Hairy Who, Gladys Nilsson in particular,[11] but who should be careful not to ignore that grounding, place-demarcating seawall. In each and every instance the insistence on transmogrification signals the refusal of essence, of fixity: a place is not just a topography, a city is not just its site. It is a form, a body, a life. While tracing this motif throughout the oeuvre could prove both endless and perhaps boring, its repetition is precisely part of the point. With each new iteration and transformation of the same line, the referent is transformed, lost, only to be regained the next time. Loss, we remember, is built into every experience of love, and love is what sustains life. Mathematically we could then conclude that loss is essential to life, that it sutures a life across temporalities, spaces, and bodies. So too is loss structured into the city, the shapes and contours of which convulse and flex across time, for better or for worse, as they did on August 4, 2020, when large parts of the city built against the Bay of Beirut, which was both safe harbor to the Port of Beirut but also essential to the compositional logic of so many of Caland's works, were destroyed in an explosion that took the lives of two hundred and six souls. It also caused at least 6,500 injuries, and over $15 billion dollars in property damage. As of this writing, at least 300,000 people are still homeless.

Sometimes, as in *Rossinante Under Cover XII* (2011) [PL. 95], Caland made her familiar Beirut-like crescent fold in on itself, collapse upon and into itself. In this acrylic and ink drawing on canvas, a miniaturized, stylized version of the bay outlined above has fallen deeper into an abyss of grids and dots in black, white, red, pink, and multiple shades thereof. Whatever city we might actually be seeing seems about to be penetrated by a thickly outlined flaccid wedge descending from the top end of the canvas, even as it is somewhat shielded by a vibrating band of red patterns, another shoreline. In another work from this series, *Rossinante Under Cover VIII*, two forms that–for the most determined of viewers–might harken back to those of *TV City* are also penetrated from above by the drooping collapse of a third, loosely oblong shape, which appears–crowned by the upturn of a woman's skirt and as if having engulfed a quickly regenerating body–at once trying to keep the two sides apart and cradle them together [PL. 96]. *Rocinante*: Don

---

11 Thanks to Amy Mooney for the Nilsson reference and for her many other thoughtful comments on an earlier draft of this text.

Quixote's horse and his double, to be sure. Cities are sites of love and desire, even as they are places of alienation, exclusion, and differentiation. Awkward, as Caland also surmised, they are down to earth, but they are also always underground, hiding perhaps, or awaiting to emerge or be birthed from between a woman's legs or a wide mouthed kiss.

We could go on. And on. And.

—

With apologies for an abrupt turn, and a turn moreover to an already well-trod reference, I want to note now that Henri Lefebvre, whom, regrettably many readers might know better than they do Huguette Caland, has a way of thinking about this ambivalent condition of the city. More importantly, I want to note that his conception might not be so far from Huguette Caland's, which was thought elsewhere, at the same time, but in an entirely different medium. Thinking, during and just after the major strikes of the late '60s in France, about the urban dispossessed, Lefebvre fell upon the term *hétérotopie*. For him the term was likely chosen to dialogue with Michel Foucault, who had first used it in his 1966 preface to *Les mots et les choses: Une archéologie des sciences humaines*. For Foucault, *hétérotopies* marked a contrast to *utopies*, which are non-places, virtual, and which "console." A hétérotopie exists in real time and real place, but is other to the world in which it exists, and even to itself; it is *heteroclite*, which is to say that there is no logical order or place to put it or define it in common. For Foucault, hétérotopies, never quite clearly good or bad, "desiccate speech, stop words in their tracks, contest the very possibility of grammar at its source; they dissolve our myths and sterilize the lyricism of our sentences."[12] In *La révolution urbaine*, Lefebvre, however, was not thinking of the hétérotopie in contrast to Foucault's utopic vision or place, but rather as a political category, grounded in urban space, that disrupts what he singles out as the "isotopic"—or singularizing, regularizing—authority of the political city, which creates sameness by, for example, regulating agriculture, commerce, land ownership, and the police, and integrates social life under the consolidating conditions of the market. For Lefebvre, hétérotopies countered the isotopic,



12 Michel Foucault, *Les mots et les choses* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966), trans. *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Routledge, 1989), xix.

or, even more concretely, the specific isotopie that is established power, manifest as "places of identity," "identical places," and what he called "*neighboring* order." Lefebvre's hétérotopies are on the other hand: "the other place, the place of the other, simultaneously excluded and interwoven. *Distant* order."[13] The hétérotopie is that which is within and without, down to earth but beneath and also entirely of. A route that is also a root. For Lefebvre, the hétérotopie was, like the urban dispossessed about whom he was writing, an integrated and essential component of the urban fabric and yet entirely without place in it. Urban life, and moreover, reading the city in which it happens, for Lefebvre, requires dialectical movement between the isotopic and the heterotopic, recognizing how quickly the heterotopic can become consumed by order, and so how much shape shifting and disaggregating is necessary.



That said, in the end, Caland's hétérotopie is not your grandfather's hétérotopie, despite their shared characteristics. Lefebvre's writing on the production of social space teaches that urban life is built in equal parts of infrastructure and on the often-conflicting individual, bodily experiences and the rhythms they produce. Caland's body-seascapes and body-cityscapes sweep aside the abstractions of his reference and fill us with a sensed awareness of a collective body in this matrix, disaggregating desires that themselves are heterotopic in form, external and internal. They show us that the pleasure—indeed, the politics—of urban dwelling lies in allowing these desires to stay that way, and not pinning them down in the buckhole of a particular, individualized city or the contained experience therein that a biographical reading—whether of art or human experience—privileges.

In 2001, Caland and the Lebanese photographer Fouad Elkhoury co-authored a funny little artist book called *Utopia City*, although neither count it as a "work" in their bibliographies, and certainly it has never been published. Here, in *Utopia City*, the artists—one best known (but not exclusively) for his hauntingly beautiful black-and-white photographs of the Lebanese Civil War and its aftermath (1980s-1990s), and the other, a maker of countless numbers of drawings and paintings that underscore the shape-shifting hétérotopie of things as fluid as home and body and city—propose a real world Utopia rooted in transforming the divisions that resonate

---

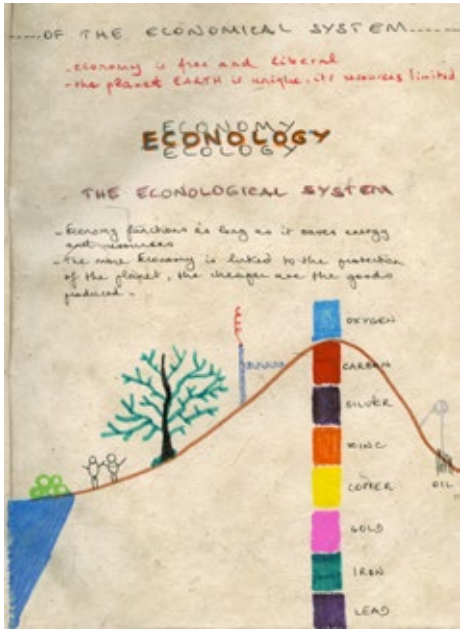
13 Henri Lefebvre, *La révolution urbaine* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1970), trans. Robert Bononno, *The Urban Revolution* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 128. Emphasis mine.

most specifically with what might be read as a localized, Beiruti experience of sectarian and ethnic violence, but also one global and pandemic to the twentieth century writ large. And, here, the book's 2001 date is significant since that same year saw the collapse of the Twin Towers on September 11th and the escalation of global sectarian division. "Why can't we all live together?" "Why do they hate us?"

The book devours the urban grids of Venice, California–where Caland was living–for its forms. Since it was written in 2001, we might also say it's a book about global disagreements and the violence used to address the other, but we can't be sure, since that date also corresponds with the ongoing "rebuilding" of war-torn Beirut. And so too does it correspond to so many other events the world over. The book begins with Caland's recognizable hand and its notable preference for the connecting dash over and above the finality of the period: "We all have utopic dreams–a city where muslims-jews & christians would coexist harmoniously should be more than utopia–." What would happen were artists and writers to designate this an "aesthetic place," Caland wonders, such that "the old stories of their city would speak to them of human rights–equal rights–distancing the problems they had to deal with–for more than fifty years–and with a solid sense of humor erase their painful past." The present, the book suggests, "should not be the victim of the past." As an aesthetic form, Caland and Elkhoury's city plan builds upon the kinds of isolating units that began in the painted and drawn compressed swatches of color from Caland's 1960s city works. These forms become only more and increasingly regularized and gridded throughout later works such as the composition *City* (2010) [PL. 89].

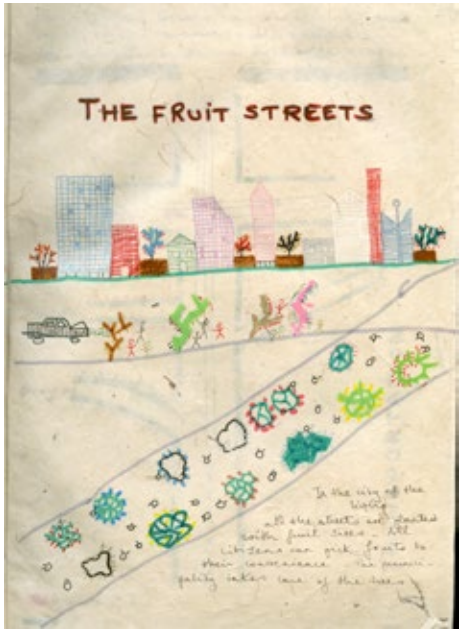


Caland and Elkhoury's "utopia" depends no longer on a fluid exchange and the liminal inversion of what I call "the city drawings and paintings" (a category I hope I've proven includes *all* of her work). Rather, it turns to the division of the city into disparate parts, with three different populations. The "*la ville des extremirredents*" (also written in Arabic) is home to "*les ghettos national-Religieux–*," all those that believe their thinking–"being religious, cultural or national"–gives them "the right to exclude the others." This part of the city is organized into sections that will be in permanent conflict with each other, but which are isolated from the rest of the city by a green buffer zone (marked as stripes of pink municipal parks), planted with "beautiful scented trees" [PL. 16]. The rest of the city is split between that of the "*morts*," and the cemeteries, hatched in gray lines, and the city of the "*vivants*," where live the "*mélangées*," governed by "Rules


PLS. 16–19 (top to bottom, left to right)
Pages from Huguette Caland and Fouad Elkhoury's *Utopia City*


LE THEATRE DE LA DERISION


THE FRUIT STREETS

and Regulations" that protect everyone's rights, which are, counter to the idea of a rule or regulation, to behave exactly as they wish so long as they do not hurt others. Other rules, for example, insist on private gardens from which excess food is distributed to all who wish to eat, prohibit plastic furniture outside, and mandate that all languages shall be spoken. The economy is "econological," and keeps costs low by using "good resources" and respecting the planet [PL. 17]. The "City of the Living" (also written in Arabic) centers around architecture, both domestic and official, and a "Palace of Pleasures" and a multinational "Theatre de la Derision," meant to cultivate the possibility of laughing at oneself [PL. 18]. In this, we find resonances of the city as Lefebvre defines it in another, originally unpublished volume, *Vers une architecture de la juissance*, in which the "quality of urban space is measured not by minimal standards anybody can afford but by aspirations everybody can share."[14] "The Fruit Streets" in "the city of the living" in *Utopia City* [PL. 19]. might well be those that flood the stippled pink planes of *Appleton 1* (2009), the gridded quadrants of which are bridged by blossoming, swelling blisters of rose, magenta, carnation, ruby, fuchsia: flowers, plants, breasts, cunts, food [PL. 92]. The TV towers of mid-1960s Beirut have been chewed through and cast across the plains of the United States, colonizing the space in a body-place unknown to those parts. *Utopia City* might be a map of nothing, or it might be a map of diaspora and the roots that pull it across the time and space of routes.



At the end of the sketchbook cited in the epigraph to this essay, underneath a strongly rendered, thick, almost calligraphic, but unwavering horizontal line across the middle of the page that separates the text from the otherwise empty–silent she once called it–white page dated "Venice, 4/30/91," Caland notes, "Yesterday, Paul and I were married 39 years," a kind of deferred past that is indicative of how her sketchbook entries frame their "todays" between references to the just- and long-passed. Paul was the father of her children, the man she left, but still lived with, when she took another lover, Mustafa, and then left when she went to Paris. They never divorced. She signs-off in a carefully punctuated sequence of thoughts that bring her from city to city, oscillating between contradiction and desire:

---

14 Łukasz Stanek, "Introduction. A Manuscript Found in Saragossa: Toward an Architecture," in Henri Lefebvre, *Toward an Architecture of Enjoyment*, ed. Łukasz Stanek, trans. Robert Bononno (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), lxi.

Happy week-end. sold work – went to many openings – not a lot of people.
discovered a lot about so called “friends”.....
Paris soon – Brigitte is carrying her first child, my first grandson-
I will leave LA as I am beginning to enjoy it most.
Leaving it happily – I will be working in Paris on my first exhibition
I feel I belong here now – and that my home is really Venice.
I love Paris – it will feel good to visit there for the first time
since I have no where of my own for the first time since 1970.....
Callas is singing – I love Callas. I love life –

She belongs in Venice but is happy to leave. She belongs there but has had no place of her own since 1970, when she left Beirut, which means Paris—where she is now returning to work and to meet her grandson—was never hers either. Enjoyment and love mark the cities she has been, and belonged, but it is always temporally deferred: heterotopic and also heterochronic. It is in the love for a beautiful, fleeting sound, however—the sound of a woman’s voice in song—that she finds herself in the present, at home in beauty, in art, loving the thing that goes on, until it doesn’t, and until it too is lost: life. But this, like the roots carried on tiptoes, is time. If Caland were to think us through the time that has again scarred her Bay, we would have to ask what powerful material body she would encourage us to see in the rubble in Marfa, Mar Mikhaël, Gemmayze, Qarantina.... A body convulsing, rising, and wanting. Consuming and delivering, sometimes all at once, but never not at all.

# In Conversation: Marwa Arsanios and Mirene Arsanios

February 22–March 17, 2020



Dear Marwa,

How are you? I'm happy we've settled on an email exchange as the format for our contribution to The Drawing Center's Huguette Caland catalog. I've known about Huguette's work for a while; I mentioned her in a text—an erotic dictionary of sorts—on Beirut that I wrote a while back in which I refer to her *Bribes de corps* (Body Bits), a series of semi-abstract paintings evoking sprawling and pulsating body parts. In Caland's paintings, the body extends outward, spilling straight into the viewer's space. It can't be contained. I've always been drawn to the erotic undertones of her work, the way she engages the female body while formally challenging traditional representations of gender.

I'm looking forward to discussing Huguette's legacy, her contribution to art history in general and, more specifically, the way her art emerges in a Lebanese context. Speaking of which, I woke up today to the news of a case of Covid-19 in Lebanon, more bad news on top of the unprecedented economic and political collapse the country is already experiencing (the outcome of decades of neoliberal policies and privatization, coupled with governmental corruption and outright theft). The virus is coded toward expansion and proliferation, not unlike capitalism. I thought of your parents—my aunt and uncle—who are elderly and physically vulnerable. I thought of their lives: they were born around the time of the country's independence, lived through the civil war, and are now experiencing the disastrous outcomes of decades of postwar privatization. Can't they have a fucking break? Huguette Caland's

father was the first post-independence president of Lebanon, a country in which the nation-state experiment failed dramatically. The virus too works against the logic of set borders and national sovereignty. It is Saturday, February 22nd, and I have a few hours to write while Luka is away with his father. What are you doing and how are you doing?

---

Dear Mirene,

The health workers, domestic workers, and caretakers have the highest risk of contraction. Perhaps the relationship between the virus spreading and capitalism's expansion is in the global class warfare that this system has launched. The virus touches the most vulnerable; so does the economic system that first and foremost considers the caretakers as non-productive laborers of lesser importance. Although the virus has triggered a process of economic degrowth, the most affected groups are caretakers and freelancers who exist precariously, travelling from one city to another in search of work (not unlike cultural workers)—a condition that increases their exposure, as the virus seems to be spreading through travel routes and ports.



To go back to the formation of the nation that you mention, one thing that became obvious is that the myth of the Lebanese nation-state that came about with Caland's father's first republic, and which was built on the myth of the solid bank, the bank secrecy (previously), the colonial bourgeoisie, and the few industrial and banking families, has had many moments of destruction whether in the context of civil war or the Israeli wars, including 1958, 1975–1990, 1996, 2006, and up until the current economic crisis that completely melts the myth of solidity by transforming it into liquid, ironically enough, in the middle of the lack of liquidity (dollars).

I suppose that we cannot see Huguette Caland outside of a certain rebellious bourgeoisie, especially in the current moment. Perhaps it would be too flat to read her work only from that angle, but it would also be too flat to look at it detached from the conditions of the moment that produced her as an artist. The rebelliousness in her work is very linked to her place as a female

sexual being inside the patriarchy of the nation-state formation. Imagine being literally born in the home of the man who would be the first state representative. It would be interesting to read Caland's work as a defiance of the patriarchy (and literally the father-breeder) of the nation-state.

Of her generation, if we want to place her in context, Caland was the most articulate about that defiance in her drawings, paintings, and her caftans. Female sexuality and organs were made visible so the caftan becomes something that shows rather than hides. It's a strong inversion that shifts both the perception of the female body and the very functionality of clothes from things that are designed to hide to things that make visible what was meant to be hidden. This looks like a gesture of defiance from a daughter to her father, a woman to the patriarchy of the state, and the bourgeoise to the bourgeois ethics of her social surroundings.



We can sense a certain desire to melt down solid structures through her organically-expanding, topographical works. Or her drawings of body parts that linger between some form of abstraction that exists in tension with the figurative, and constitutes its own in-between world. A desire to melt down the borders between genres and the solid divisions between what should appear and what should remain hidden, between the abstract and the figurative, and also between fashion and art, a subversion of the functionality of objects.

The libidinal aspect of her work can also be linked to a certain economy upon which the country was built—a frivolous liquid economy that generated and continues to generate money out of existing money, instead of a productive economy. One that does not tax accumulated wealth. Desire is constructed around the drive to accumulate. Not to say that her work is driven by that desire per se, but I am trying to read the libidinal aspect of her work, the drawing of these endless, flowing abstracted shapes and patterns within the liberal economy of the country. It's interesting to think about Caland's work and the relationship between nation-state building, patriarchy, the banks, and liquidity, or the lack thereof. Or maybe think about the painterly abstractions in relation to economical ones, especially in the case of the body depictions or the topographies, land and perhaps property? Consider the flow and liquidity in her work in relation to land, nation-state, and how entangled it is with the liberal economy.

At the end, one important question emerges here: Can we read Caland's work outside of its relationship to the patriarchy? Do we always have to read women's work as defiance?

This is it for now. More soon.

xx m

---

Good morning Marwa : )

I just finished reading a piece by Erin Maglaque in the *London Review of Books* in which she talks about the Florentine Plague of 1630–31—how the city enforced a quarantine, and how the poor were considered "constitutionally incapable of acting in the greater interests of the city" and "physically culpable, their bodies frustratingly vulnerable to disease."[1] The illness reinforces the class divide, as you mentioned in your last email.



To return to Caland, I'm thinking about the family she was born to, how she was the daughter of the first post-Lebanese independence president, how she grew up in the presidential house (1943–52), and how she eventually left her home country to pursue her artistic ambitions and redefine herself outside patriarchal markers: a daughter, a wife, a mother. I've read in many articles that the house she built for herself in Venice Beach had no partitions between rooms and was flooded with natural light. She built the house she wanted to live in, which was both her studio and her home (she also had a pool in which she swam every day). Of all places, she ended up in this historically "bohemian" neighborhood in Southern California, where people live out their fantasies on a land abstracted from its own history of extraction.

I'm trying to locate Huguette in time. How her art responded to the conditions she was in while sustaining a certain kind of abstraction that allowed her to position herself outside and/or above a specific context. In an interview, her daughter Brigitte notes how her mother didn't describe her own art as "feminist." Perhaps she didn't want to politicize her production because that would have

---

1 Erin Maglaque, "Inclined to Putrefaction," *London Review of Books* 42, no. 4 (February 20, 2020), https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v42/n04/erin-maglaque/inclined-to-putrefaction.

meant marking herself in a way that she was probably reluctant to do. Her continuous, unraveling lines seem to have no beginning or end. I'm interested in how she maintains this *légèreté*, a word that is coupled with *joie de vivre* in most of her reviews. Struggle and tension seem to be entirely absent from her art, which by no means lessens its value. But I'm interested in thinking about these qualities in conjunction with the kind of female bodies and sexuality she depicts in her art. Is her use of abstraction radical or is it clouding a messier reality?

To go back to your defiance question, and whether or not her art must be read in relation to the patriarchy: I don't know. I have the sense that she would probably have wanted to avoid such a reading, and her defiance is more playful than oppositional. She seems to take pleasure in her own mischievousness and enjoy the material qualities of her craft. Through her art, she creates a temporal dimension in which she can exist, first and foremost, for herself, on the margins of historical time.



I remain fascinated by the fact that when she left her country, she also left her three children with her husband. She was 39, which is my age now. I just had a son, and while my writing production has been on a hiatus (I have no time at all!), I'm trying to not think of parenting in opposition to my writing. My writing is informed by the conditions of my life; I write precisely about that, and before exiting the messiness of inhabiting both the positions of a parent and an artist, I'd rather stay and fight from where my life is unfolding. However I think that Caland's move was radical in that it was something a man could afford to do but certainly not a woman.

Are you on the plane already? Tell me about Colombia too.

Xo
M.

---

[Dear Mirene]

The lightness of being and the lack of tension you mention is interesting. One imagines the person behind the work with a constant smile. At the same time, I can see a kind of boredom from a certain life mixed with some optimism. It's an interesting

FIG. 7
Saloua Raouda Choucair, *Éclatement*, 1956–58

world she depicts, one that is both floating and very grounded in the maps or abstract territories she creates. Grounded in a female sexuality that is itself only a costume. Maybe a costume for a deeper wound, one that is quite visible in that generation of artists? I mean visible to us today, as that generation had to fight against many fronts at once to claim their spaces as artists. Even now, I still hear some older intellectuals and writers from Beirut talk about Etel Adnan's writings as too "self-indulgent" or insist that she is "not a real writer." Patriarchy and its disciplinary authorities prevail in these kinds of commentaries and perceptions, don't they? Patriarchy tries to fetch authority even in an anachronistic way.



Who can we remember among her contemporaries? Saloua Raouda Choucair, Etel Adnan, Helen Khal [FIGS. 7–9]? Caland seems to have taken a different path, one in which she allowed herself to stage a theater of contradictions—a kind of despair mixed with absolute joy and optimism. I think the others that I mentioned above also fall into very strong abstract language that can be formally associated with abstract art from that moment. Somehow,

FIG. 8
Etel Adnan, *Untitled*, 1973–74

FIG. 9
Helen Khal, *Untitled*, 1954

they all deal with landscapes and territories. In Adnan's abstract paintings it's very obvious, as well as in some of her writings,

as she talks directly about place. Perhaps Choucair was more architectural in her sculptures but the question of territory is in the paintings, which appear like top views of plains. The interesting thing is that they were all designers, or had made some functional art as well: carpets, furniture, jewelry, costumes.

I am not sure if Caland floated above context or if we link her work to her contemporaries and think about it in a history of feminist abstraction. She probably didn't call herself a feminist in order to avoid being categorized. But we can also read her work within that history. Avoiding the naming and categorizing could also be a class issue, as if by being above history, above feminist politics, above class, she can't be pinned down to any place. It falls into the absolute "autonomy of art" question, which doesn't seem so viable anymore. Perhaps, during her time, this move opened many doors.

I wrote this on the plane and today I woke up in Bogota on the first floor of a building on a very busy street in Chapinero. I will go down now.

x m

Hi Marwa,

This craft-like quality you mention in Caland's work and in that of some of her contemporaries is a staple feature of early feminist art, so yes, in that sense she does belong to her epoch. More specifically, I'm thinking about the abstract patterns of Palestinian embroidery, but also a style, which I wouldn't know how to name, that uses very intricate black-and-white patterns and mixes figurative and abstract shapes. I think it is a style that dates back to the '60s and '70s in the work of artists such as Laure Ghorayeb, and is still used by many illustrators in the region [FIG. 10]. I wonder if Huguette was influenced by this style. I'm interested in the feminist abstraction you describe, how and if it can hold a politics anchored in the female body without reducing it to a claim or statement. My sense is that Caland's abstraction dwells on the edge of representation, almost flirtatiously. Her drawings evoke sex organs and body parts without fully representing them. Etel Adnan, I think, is quite different. Her paintings are abstract (while referencing a particular landscape) but her discourse, her politics, and her poetics are all fleshed out in her writings, which in turn provide some context for her paintings.



I'm interested in this idea of "self-indulgence" you mention in response to Adnan's writing. I can clearly picture the men you're talking about. They're all smokers, and if writers, they're extremely attached to their sentences, the acrobatics of grammar, and extent of their historical and political knowledge. Saying that a female artist like Adnan is self-indulgent is punitive, disciplinarian. I think

FIG. 10
Laure Ghorayeb, *Untitled*, 1971

there's a difference between self-indulgence (which does exist!) and implicating oneself in one's art. These men experience some level of discomfort when the self or the body is exposed; too much disclosure is indecent, especially when it addresses gender. They don't seem to understand that rather than reinforcing individualism, the staging of the first person exposes the constructs and mythologies undergirding the self.

I'd like to redirect this conversation to you, since you're a female artist from Lebanon who also has a relationship to drawing. Can you say more about how you insert your drawings within your videos, which have been leaning toward the documentary as of late. I'm thinking of *Who is Afraid of Ideology?* Was Huguette afraid of ideology? Are you, yourself, drawn to this kind of feminist abstraction? It's 11pm and it has been a long day. Going to bed now.



Besos,
M.

---

[Dear Mirene]

I think that the style you can't name is inspired by Dia Azzawi and his drawings. It's funny because he was a very politically engaged artist. He made posters and drawings for the PLFP and other Palestinian organizations. I don't know Laure Ghorayeb's work well but I remember the drawings and illustrations with these endless patterns of connected worlds composed as one entity. I'm thinking also of Jana Traboulsi, an illustrator working in a graphic manner with a clear political message. She is from a younger generation but I see her work in relation to this lineage of drawings and illustrations with a clear political message.

I am now at the airport in Bogota waiting to board a flight back to Berlin. It's been a very intense ten days, but incredible. Since you ask me about my relationship to drawing and abstraction, I would say that I have always been more interested in a kind of social realism, even if scripted or staged, in terms of filmic language. Even my drawings are often more figurative and architectural/spatial/topographical, which doesn't exclude abstraction. Recently I have been more interested in thinking about abstraction and geometry, and trying to go more toward this form of thinking.

But I also find myself going toward so-called "documentary" forms, which, again, is not to say that there is no abstraction in such forms. Abstraction isn't about "looking abstract" or abstracting something from life. Systems, protocols, codes that divide properties and land are all forms or processes of abstraction. The process of translating material into form also entails abstraction. If we think about it in that way, every art process is a process of abstraction. We're trying to figure out how to understand the kind of abstraction present in the work of female artists from Caland's generation, which seems related to concerns about the land, architecture, space, and design of everyday life. And of course with material concerns such as color and text. But could we identify a feminist political project behind Caland's work? Perhaps one that relates to escape, and shaping one's life outside of patriarchal frames? A search for territories, one that ponders the nation and its visual language? This reminds me of Iman Issa's work, which deals with the question of abstraction in relation to nation formation and its monuments. In Caland's case, abstraction is clearly connected to the representation of the female body. Or, as you said, flirts with it. Perhaps in my case, the interest in abstraction comes from a desire to think and reorganize life outside of dominant systems and dominant social abstractions. But can this be an aesthetic intervention into politics?



I am sending you photos of the women seed guardians from Sur del Tolima and Norte del Cauca. They have been resisting big rice and sugar cane plantations, glyphosate, agro-industries, paramilitaries, governments, etc. They are the ones taking care of the planet. This entails both human and non-human bodies, and land, soil, place.

xx m

---

[Dear Marwa]

I'm curious about what it means to be a "seed guardian"—to preserve an ancestral relationship to the land, to protect the knowledge accrued through generations, to assert one's relationship to a larger ecosystem made vulnerable by the agribusinesses you mention. I like the dimension and scale of the seed—something tiny in the

face of such gigantic and greedy industries. I am thinking about the contemporary artist, a peripatetic figure who travels continuously; the art world is very much predicated on transnational movement. I'm also thinking of these women and their relationship to the land, which is a very dedicated form of lifetime companionship. What kind of place is land? I ended up here, in New York, in the United States, a super extractive country with little to no respect for indigenous land and ways of living. I ended up here through a series of decisions, which I don't regret, but now I feel a little stuck because my two countries, Lebanon and Venezuela, aren't accessible to me at the moment. I'm thinking of how far I am or have always been from land, any land, or from a relationship that grounds me to a certain kind of knowledge. My brother is trying to pick up my father's work with the olive trees and oil production in Kour, our father's native village. He feels responsible for it, as if upholding a family tradition or lineage. I think my father expected him to do so, as the only son.



I'm digressing, but perhaps Huguette's departure from her native country was an escape from that kind of expectation. She ended up in a land that is seemingly free from such relationships, a blank slate on which anything and everything can happen (a brutal mythology). I'm also interested in what you're doing because you're looking at ways in which women live, relate, and learn from the land, not only through their labor but through the assertion of a narrative, a feminist claim that actively opposes patriarchy and its various forms of extractions.

Huguette claimed the body but not the land. She claimed a body in exile, one that isn't beholden to the patriarchal structures of her native land. The body carries the history of place within itself, but once in exile, it is also exposed to a multitude of other influences and possibilities. To go back to your point about abstraction, and what kind of political project could be embedded in it, and if that project could be a feminist one, perhaps Huguette, without knowing, was ahead of her time in terms of wanting to escape essentializing gender binaries. Perhaps she was aiming for an expression of bodily desire that isn't representational, and hence that can't be narrowly defined.

Hope you're having a smooth flight. I'm going to bed now.

xo
M.

Hello Mirene,

Yes, I was thinking about these questions while visiting farms in Colombia. As an artist who works in the art economy, traveling to look at the ways other people are fighting for their land is a privilege but also quite problematic when one thinks of how the world is inaccessible to them.

I too feel like I will not go back to Lebanon. My desire takes me to other lands where the fight is more crucial right now. I learn much more from these new places and people about how to be a comrade, organize, think politically, develop strategies, and care for land and small things. There may be a sentimental dimension to my feelings about the lands of my parents, but because I am a woman in a patriarchal system, I don't inherit in the same way my brothers do; I am not expected to keep the lineage. I feel closer to the women who are fighting for their seeds than to the patriarchal system that wants or doesn't want me to inherit its land. At the end, a seed is the most essential thing; an abstraction for everything including history, culture, autonomy, land, food. It's a condensation of all these things in the smallest entity.



To go back Caland herself, who left her native land (as did Adnan and Choucair—although she ended up returning to Lebanon), the image of the artist who travels belongs to a long-standing tradition. In Caland's case, it can be seen as an escape from patriarchy and inheritance, whether artistic or familial. And here we return to our first exchange about the father of the nation, and our understanding of Caland's art as a rupture of that lineage. As if, as a woman, you cannot become an artist if you inherit, but, at the same time, you can only become an artist because you have inherited money or property. On the other hand, inheriting in an artistic sense, or as an artist, entails disobedience—which can take the form of a disobedience to patriarchy.

I really like Caland because of her mischievous disobedience, which is most apparent in her costumes and her semi-figurative forms that you mentioned earlier, all of which flirt with abstraction, theater, staging, appearing, and hiding.

But I also read in her work an attempt to melt hegemonic social abstractions (i.e., the nation-state and its economic and political institutions), to make them liquid through her work and through her aesthetic abstractions.

---

Hi Marwa,

Yes, this is really well put: “As if, as a woman you cannot become an artist if you inherit but at the same time you can only become an artist because you have inherited money or property.” In this way, inheritance doesn’t reproduce patriarchal violence but enables one to find different, more politically compelling lineages. I’ve been thinking about inheritance lately, as in the material inheritance that my father left me, which I can’t access given Lebanon’s financial collapse and the banks freezing funds and assets, but also national and cultural inheritance, such as passing down the Lebanese nationality to my son. Upholding my father’s lineage, if I wanted to do this, is simply not available to me. That “loss” should feel liberating, driving other forms of more emancipatory belongings, and it does, but I also find myself mourning the conditions of my own oppression (which coincides with the passing of my father). Mourning and loss are definitely not dominant affects in Caland’s work. Whatever she lost, she abandoned joyfully, and I think there is beauty in that.

Kisses,
M.

# Plates

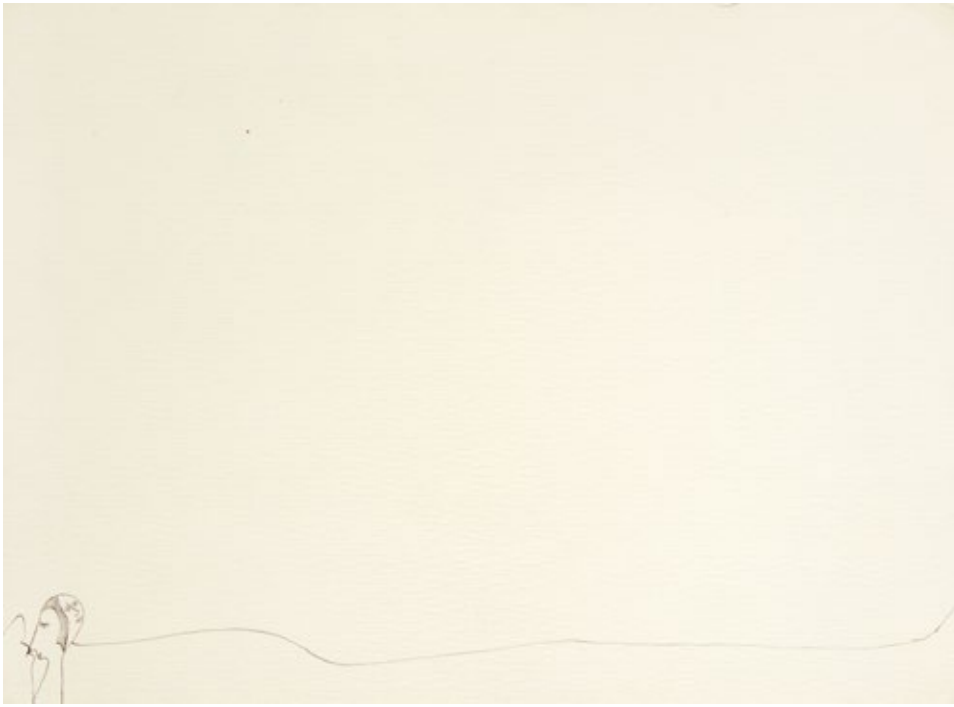
# Early line drawings and *Bribes de corps*



Caland moved to Paris in 1970, leaving her life in Beirut behind and delving in earnest into the eroticism that would become integral to her work into the 1970s and ’80s. During the period between 1970 and 1979, Caland used increasingly delicate linear gestures to render bodies pressed up against one another, faces piled into view, and fluid maps of nude figures, typically in black ink on white paper.

Caland developed her best known body of work, *Bribes de corps* (Body Bits), simultaneously with these line drawings. Continuing an exploration of the body and abstraction, she painted weighty fields of color cleaved by wavering lines—vibrant close-ups of flesh on flesh. In this series, color and shading evoke breasts, lips, and legs that swell and dip like valleys, hills, and winding rivers. Many of these bodies recall the weight of the artist’s own flesh, or the body parts of friends and lovers.

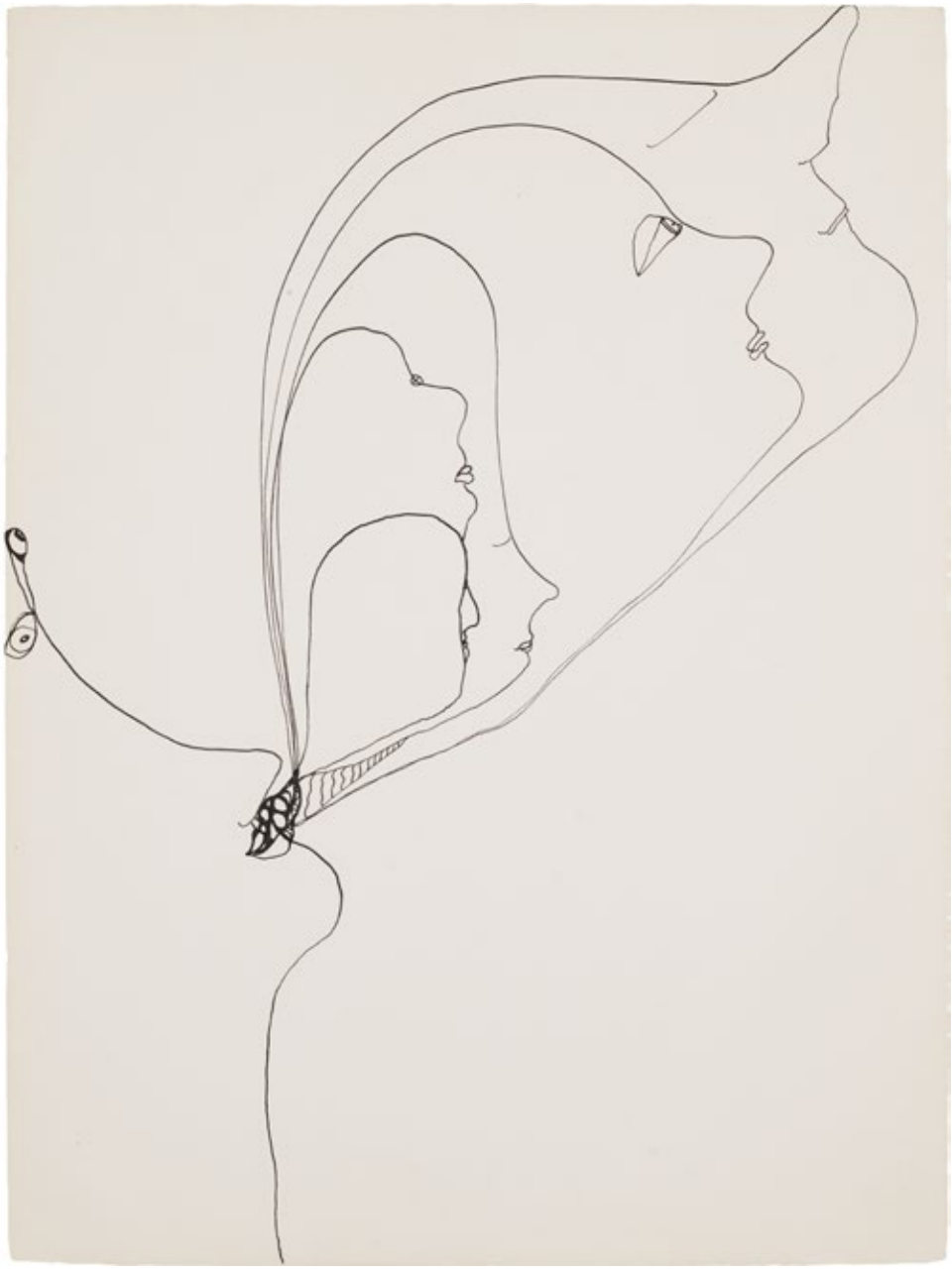
PL. 20
*Enlève ton doigt* (Remove Your Finger), 1971



PL. 21
*Baiser volé* (Stolen Kiss), 1971

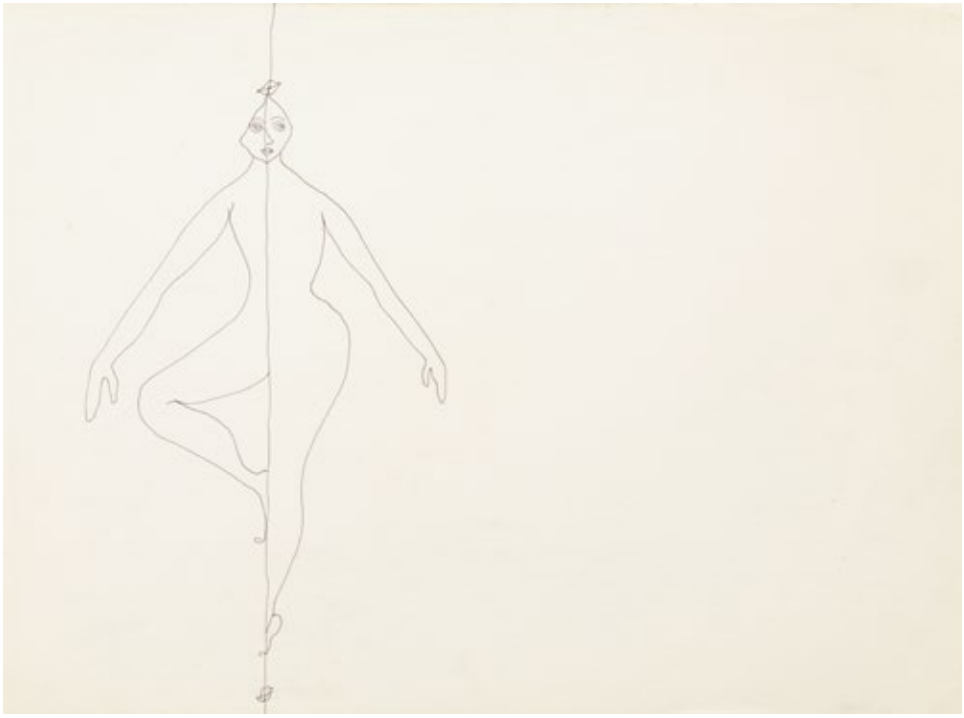
PL. 22
*Paul*, 1971

PL. 23
*Parfois Mustafa* (Sometimes Mustafa), 1971



PL. 24
*Untitled*, 1971

PL. 25
*Bribes de corps* (Body Bits), 1973

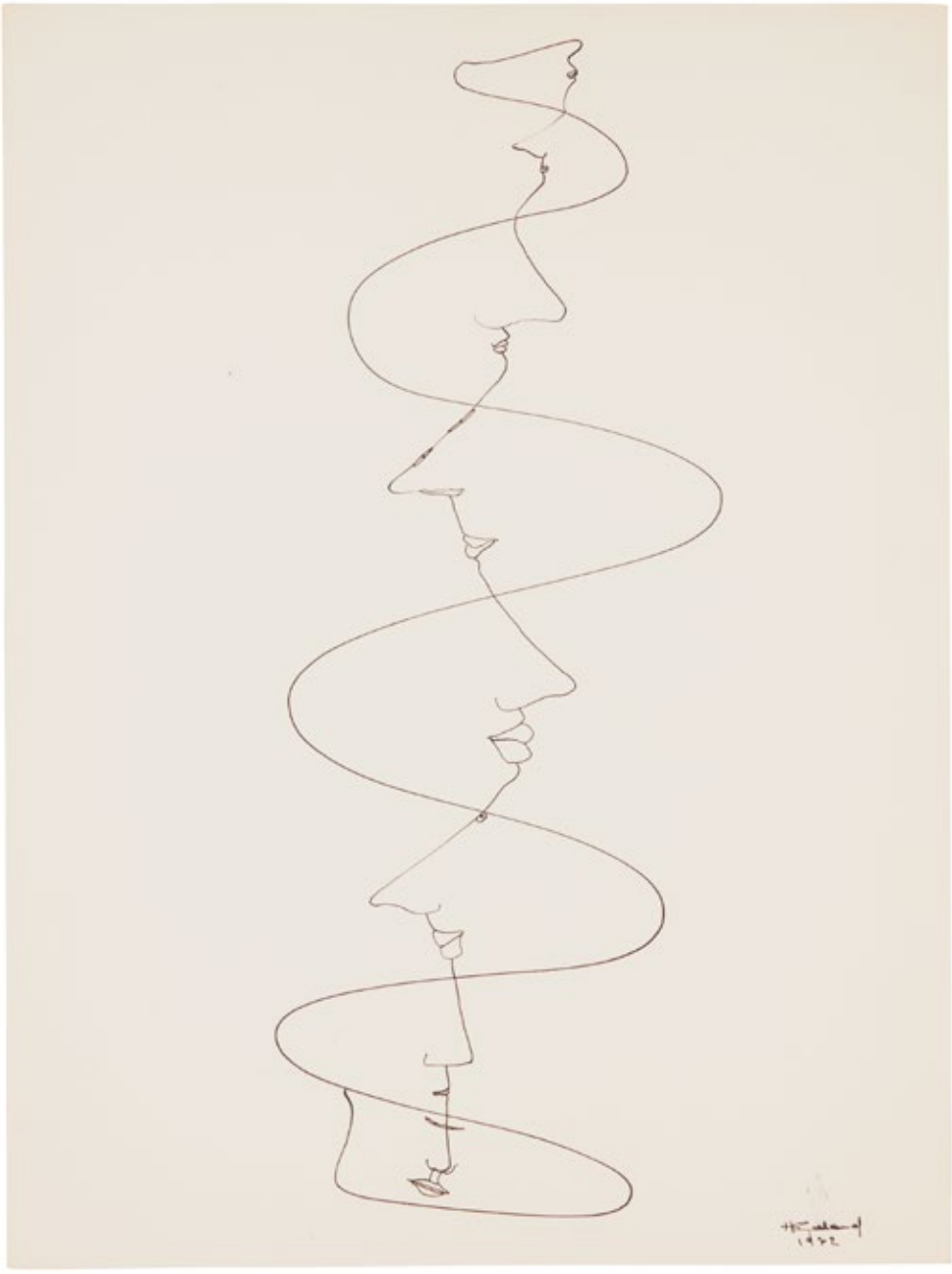


PL. 26
*Moi et moi corde raide* (Me and My Tightrope), 1971

PL. 27
*Untitled*, 1972

PL. 28
*1er Dessin encre de Chine, hiver* (First Ink Drawing from China, Winter), 1971

PL. 29
*Le cirque* (The Circus), 1971

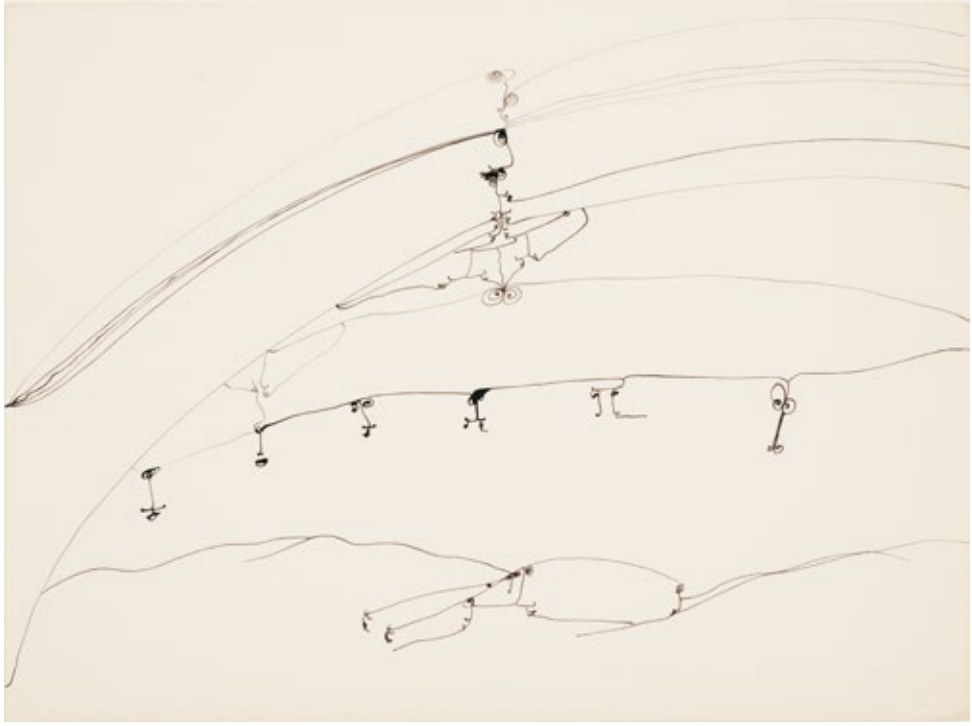


PL. 30
*Untitled*, 1972

PL. 31
*Nous deux* (The Two of Us), 1972

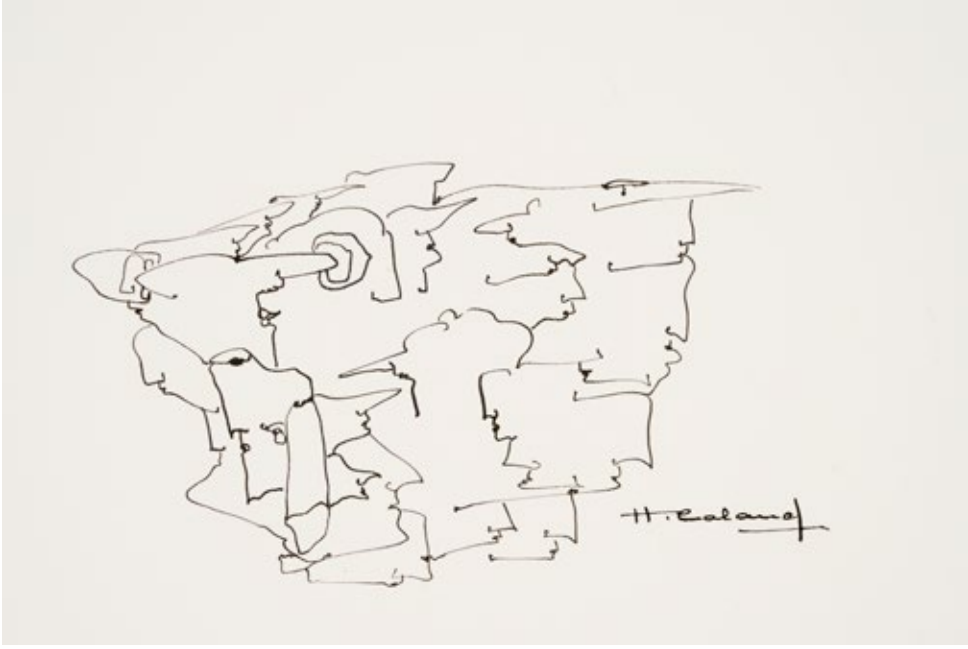
PL. 32
*Bribes de corps* (Body Bits), 1973

PL. 33
*Bribes de corps* (Body Bits), 1973



PL. 34
*Untitled*, 1972

PL. 35
*Untitled*, 1973



PL. 36
*Untitled*, 1972

PL. 37
*Untitled*, 1972

PL. 38
*Untitled*, 1977

PL. 39
*Untitled*, 1973

PL. 40
*Untitled*, 1973

PL. 41
*Self-Portrait (Bribes de corps)* (Self-Portrait (Body Bits)), 1971

PL. 42
*Bribes de corps* (Body Bits), 1973

# Caftans

94 Even as Caland found new ways to join and abstract figures in her drawings, she translated these compositions back onto the body, embellishing the caftans that she wore in defiance of fashion trends and tailoring with the same continuous lines. These caftans, decorated with embracing arms and X-ray-like renderings of nude bodies, caught the attention of French fashion designer Pierre Cardin, who collaborated in 1978–79 with Caland on a line of caftans inspired by the artist's provocative personal style.

PL. 43
*The First*, 1970

PL. 44
*Miroir* (Mirror), 1974 (caftan) / 1985 (mannequin)

PL. 45
*Foule* (Crowd), 1970 (caftan) / 1985 (mannequin)

PL. 46
*Tendresse* (Tenderness), 1975 (caftan) / 1985 (mannequin)

# Color pencil drawings



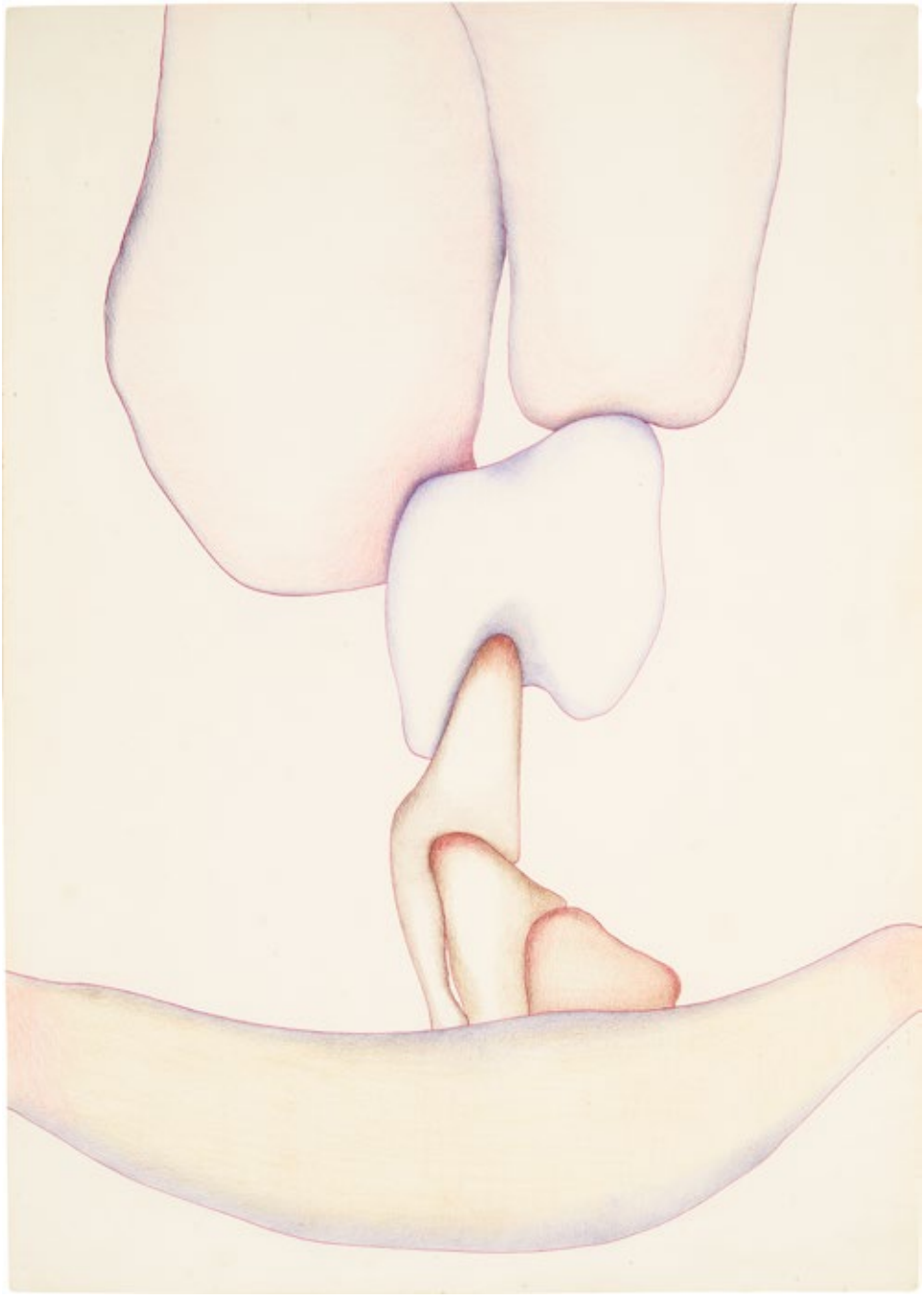
A complement to her *Bribes de corps* series, Caland's series of color pencil drawings from the 1970s and '80s borrow from the same muted palette as many of the artist's paintings from the time. Among these is the 1983 work *Tête-á-tête* (Head to Head) in which two visages in pastel green hover in the upper left corner of the page, face to face, in a world of their own. This face-to-face motif recurs throughout Caland's work, as figures negotiate the relationship between the self and other people, minds, and bodies.

PL. 47
*Untitled*, 1984

PL. 48
*Untitled*, 1985

PL. 49
*Untited*, 1985

PL. 50
*Recliner*, 1972

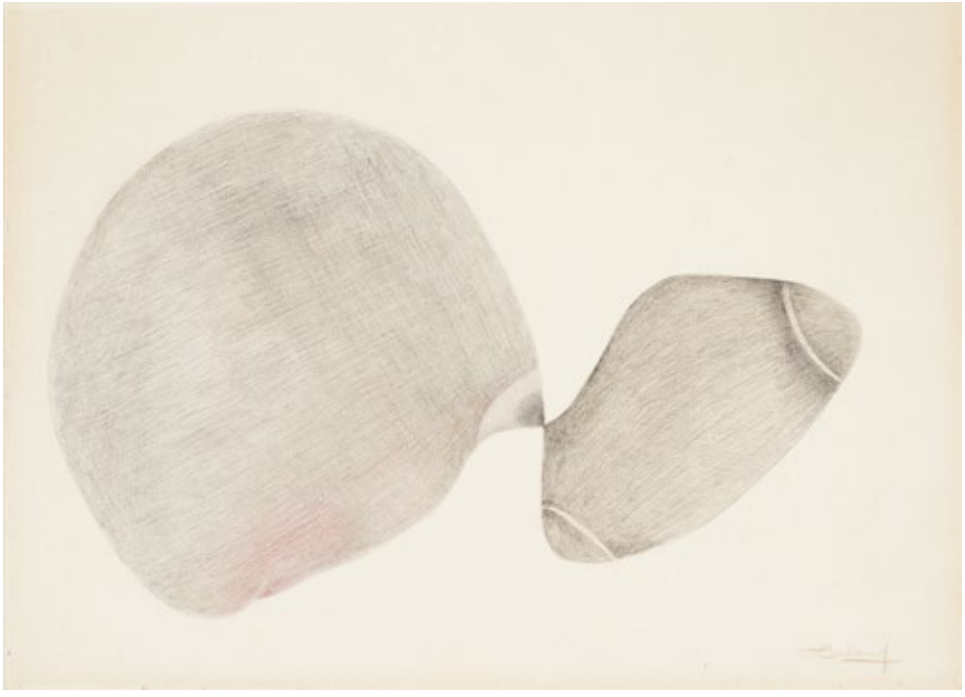


PL. 51
*Untitled*, 1984

PL. 52
*Untitled*, 1978

PL. 53
*Untitled*, 1978

PL. 54
*Creature de reve* (Dream Creature), 1978



PL. 55
*Untitled*, 1984

PL. 56
*Untitled*, 1985

PL. 57
*Untitled*, 1984

PL. 58
*Untitled*, 1984

PL. 59
*Untitled*, 1985

PL. 60
*Tête-á-tête* (Head to Head), 1983

# Sculpture

118 In 1983, while in Paris, Caland met her soon-to-be lover George Apostu. Developing a relationship with the Romanian sculptor—who was himself known for abstract investigations of the human form in wood and stone—she was inspired to explore sculpture. On the surface of the semi-human terracotta forms she created in the early 1980s, Caland painted and incised confident lines, reveling in the tension between tangible form and representational gesture. As she does in her drawings and caftans, in these sculptures she playfully offsets bodily heft by using two dimensional marks and patterns.

PL. 61
*Figurine*, 1983

PL. 62
*Figurine*, 1983

PL. 63
*Figurine*, 1983

PL. 64
*Figurine*, 1983

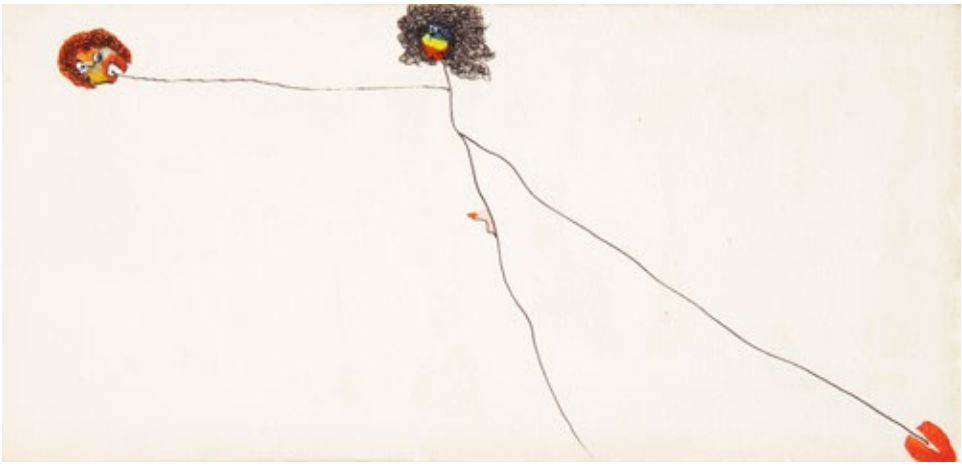
PL. 65
*Figurine*, 1983

# *Homage to Pubic Hair*

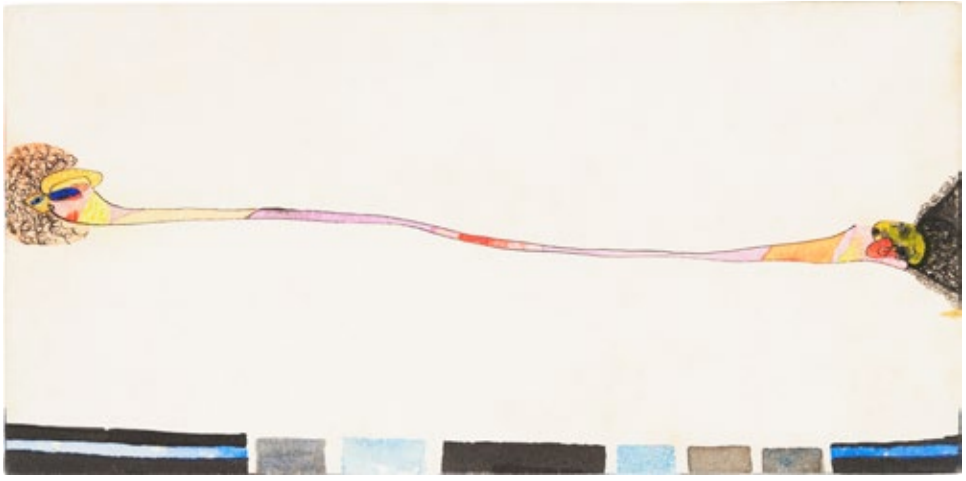


The 1992 series *Homage to Pubic Hair*, executed after Caland moved from Paris to Venice, California, is an exploration of one body part of particular erotic interest. In these works, Caland uses her signature linework to detail gently curling loops and triangles of hair sprouting from fleshy patchwork figures. The washes of bleeding color and wavering figural geometry in the series reveal a direct link between her 1970s pen drawings and her quilt-like mixed media compositions of the 2010s.

PL. 66
*Homage to Pubic Hair*, 1992



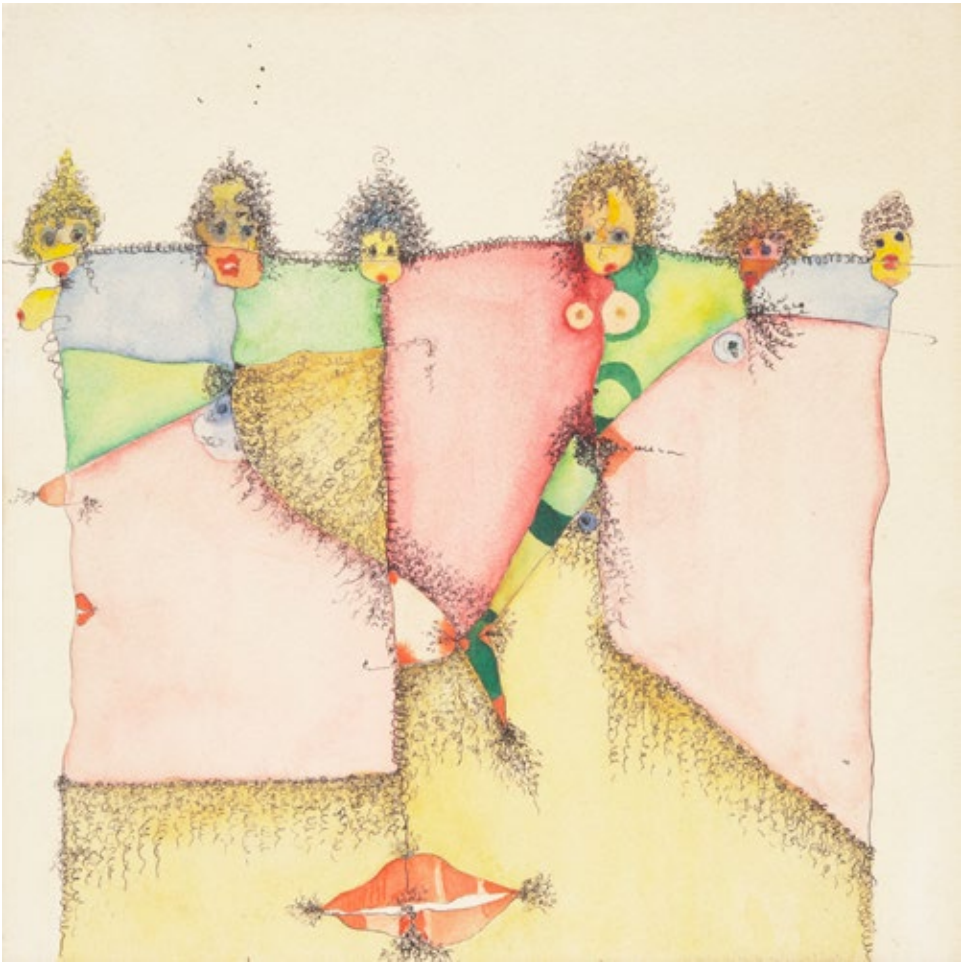
PL. 67
*Homage to Pubic Hair*, 1992



PL. 68
*Homage to Pubic Hair*, 1992

PL. 69
*Homage to Pubic Hair*, 1992

PL. 70
*Homage to Pubic Hair*, 1992

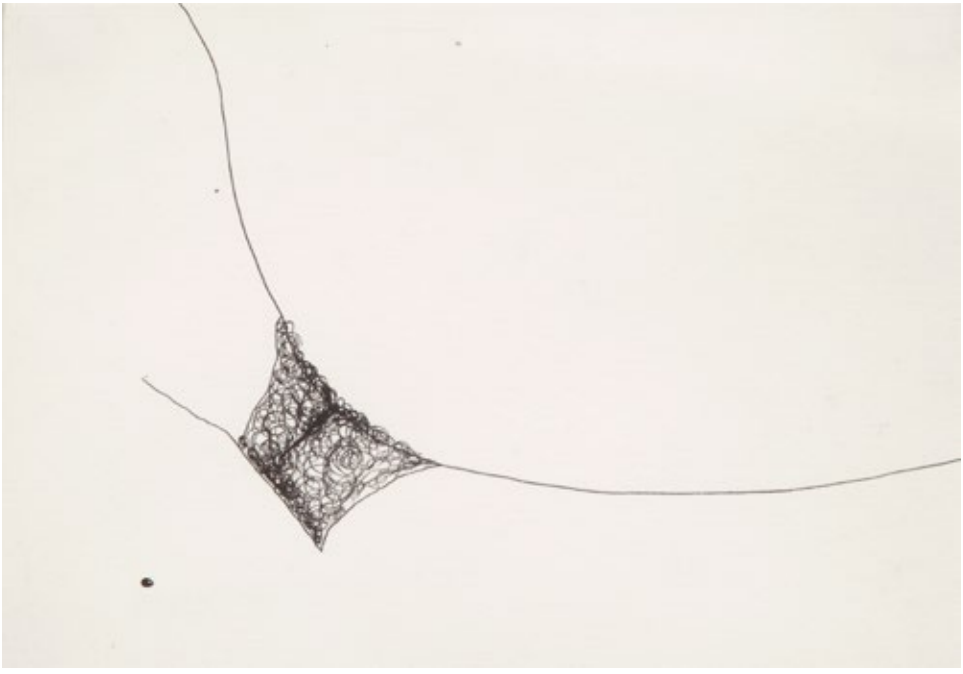


PL. 71
*Homage to Pubic Hair*, 1992

PL. 72
*Homage to Pubic Hair*, 1992

PL. 73
*Homage to Pubic Hair*, 1992

PL. 74
*Untitled*, 1993



PL. 75
*Untitled*, 1993

# Christine

136 Despite her interest in anonymous figures and partial views, Caland occasionally used real people as models. Christine was a model from Los Angeles with whom the artist began to work in the early 1990s, creating both small and large-scale ink drawings that emphasize the model's mass of curls. In this series, Caland captures only what she needs to, trusting her viewers to follow the masterful logic of her lines. In several of the drawings, hair falls around empty faces, which are given articulation by the surrounding curls.

PL. 76
*Christine*, 1998

PL. 77
*Christine*, 1992

PL. 78
*Christine*, 1992

PL. 79
*Christine*, 1992

PL. 80
*Christine*, 1992

PL. 81
*Christine*, 1992

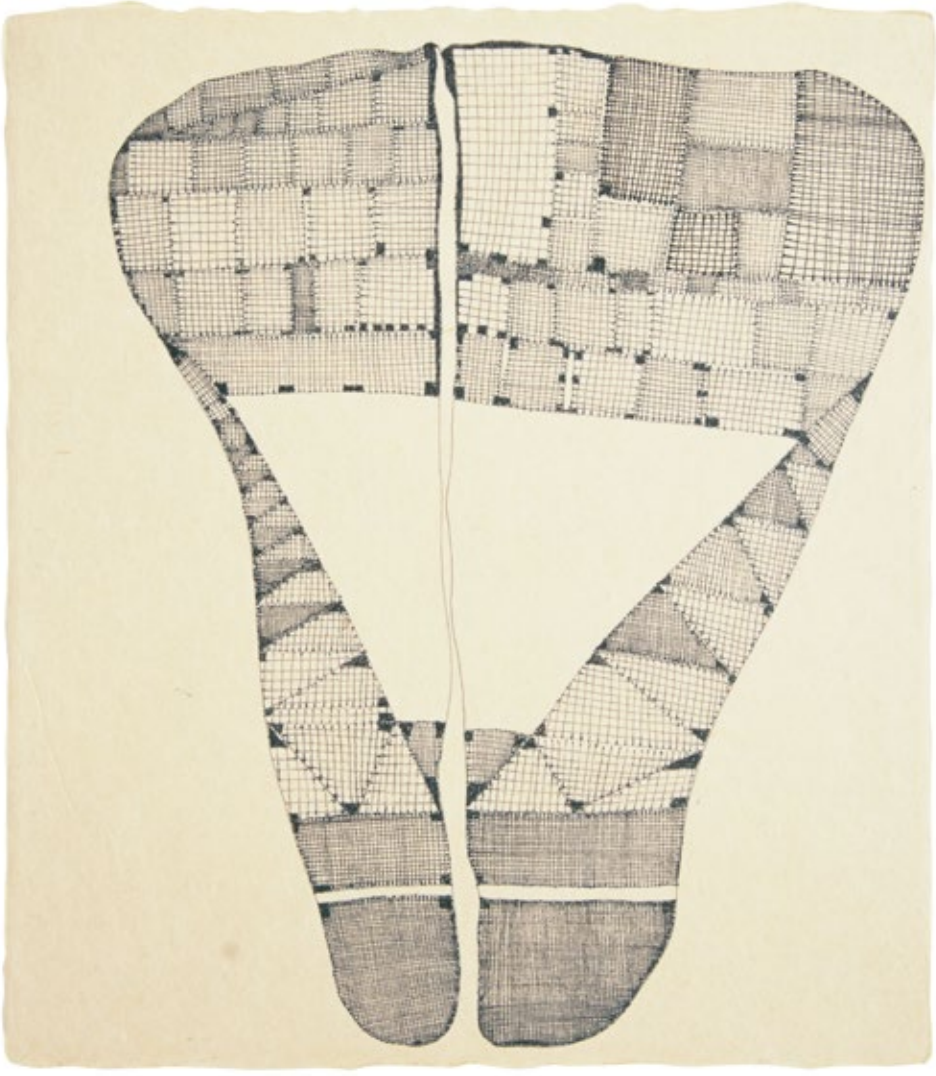
PL. 82
*Christine*, 1992

PL. 83
*Face (Untitled Christine)*, 1999

# Travel drawings

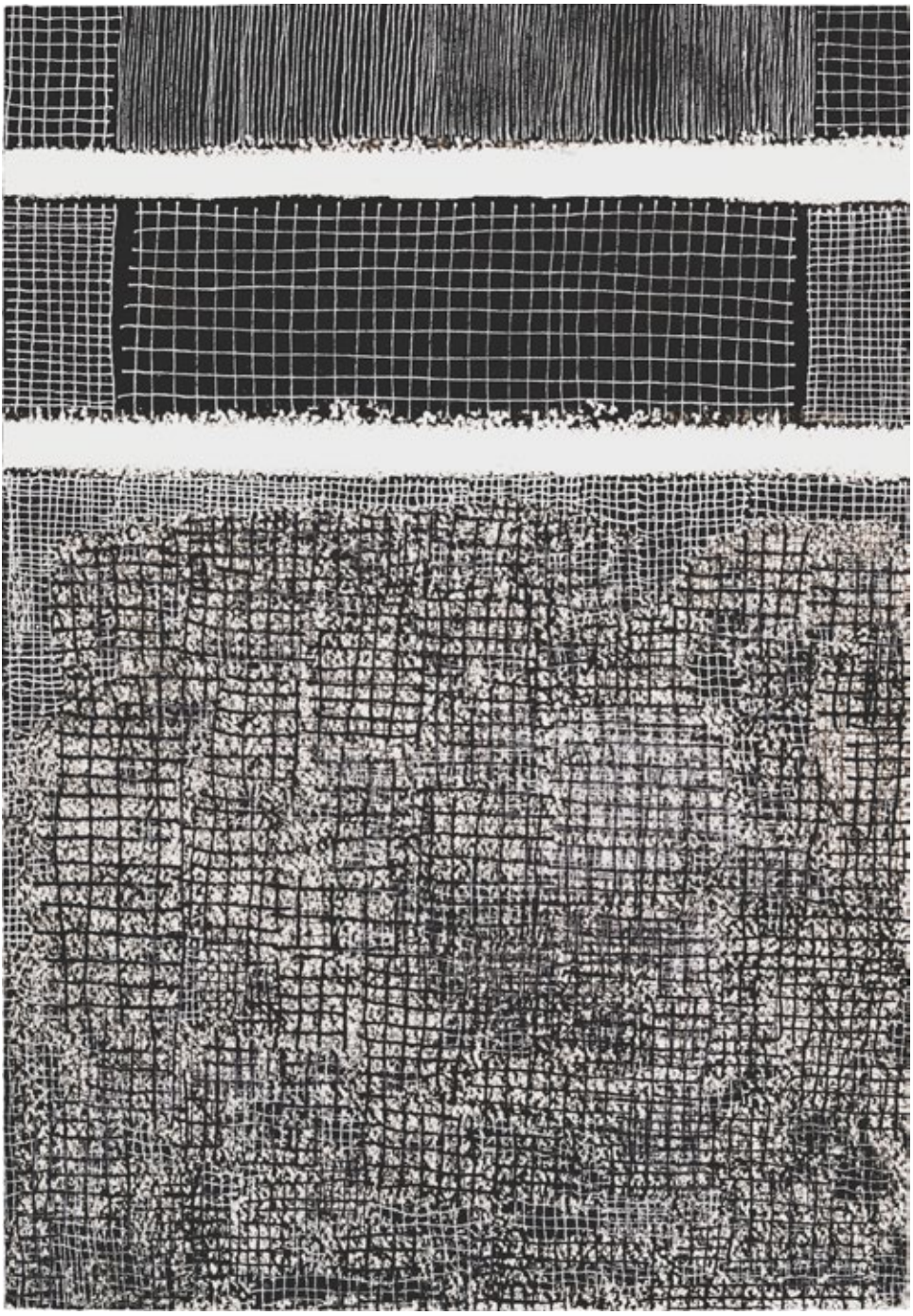
146 Whenever she would travel, whether abroad or on a day trip or errand, Caland would carry with her small pads of paper and pens, which she would use to create abstractions wherever she found herself. Often, these “travel works” were created on sheets as small as playing cards. The tight grids and dots recall the weave of the gauzy fabrics and tapestries on which Caland increasingly came to work in the 2000s and 2010s, which are in turn reminiscent of her early embellished caftans.

PL. 84
*Untitled*, 2001

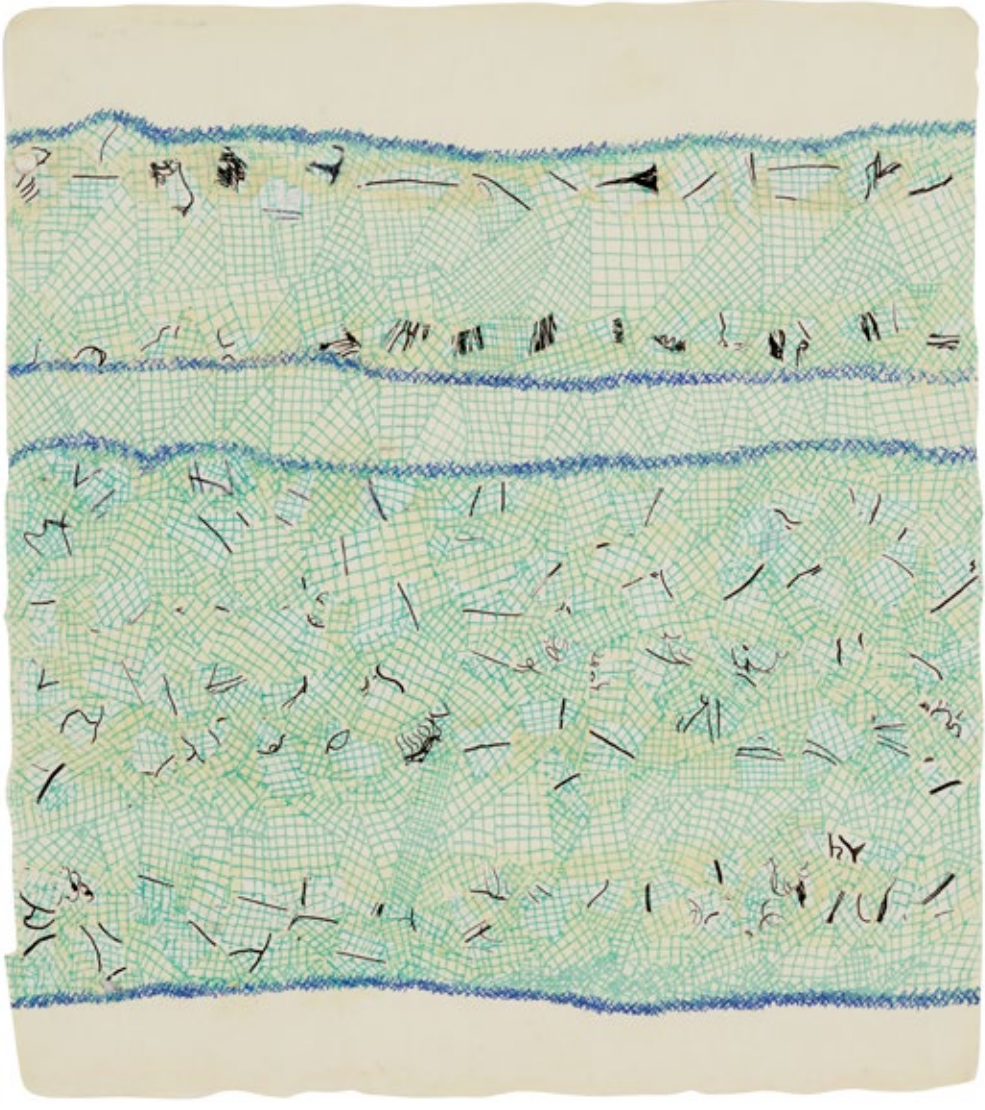


PL. 85
*Untitled*, 2001

PL. 86
*Untitled*, 2001



PL. 87
*Untitled*, 1999



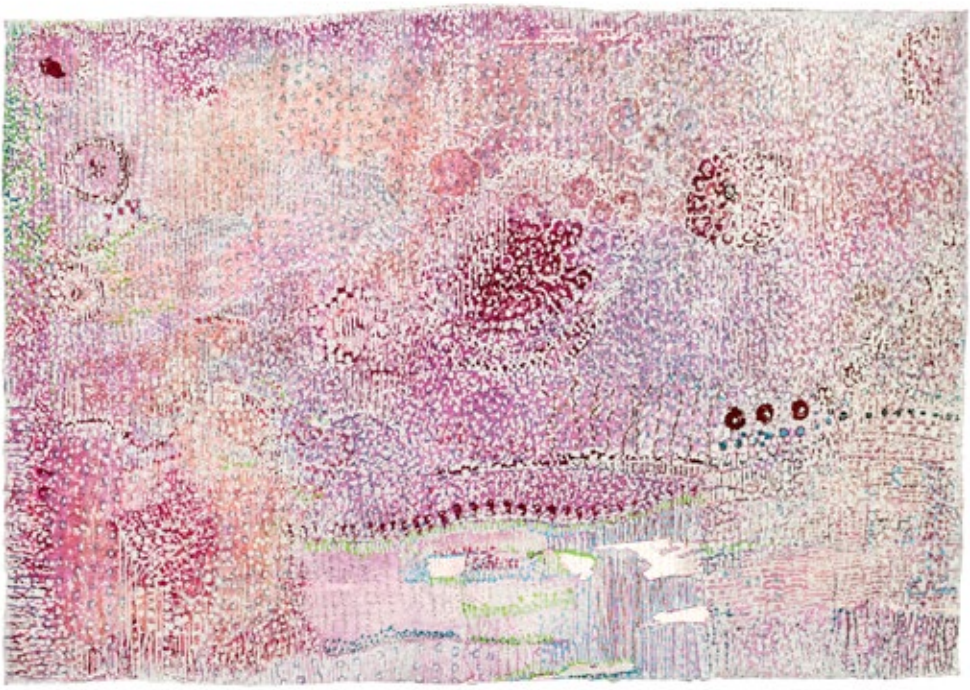
PL. 88
*Untitled*, 1999

# Later Work



In the mid-2000s, Caland began to look backwards, embarking on a body of work inspired by Palestinian embroidery and the Byzantine aesthetic of her Middle-Eastern ancestry. In these compositions painted on linen, the curved lines of her drawings and paintings–as well as an earlier focus on legible figures–give way to straighter, grid-like markings suggestive of urban topographies interspersed with curvilinear details invoking fields of flowers and other vegetation. This work is presaged by the environment Caland created in her Venice, California, home, which, in keeping with her sustained interest in bringing art into life, she decorated with similar mosaic-like patterns. To make these large-scale works, Caland folded and unfolded sections of unstretched canvas, working on one section at a time so that she was unaware of the visual whole. The resulting compositions are rarely continuous or fused, and instead resemble patchwork quilts or bird's-eye views of composite terrains. In the canvases, we see Caland taking stock of her life: "Appleton" was the site of her dream home in Venice, California, and "Bodrum," the name of a boat owned by her brother in Turkey on which she spent months at a time.

PL. 89
*City*, 2010



PL. 90
*Untitled No. 4*, 2009

PL. 91
*Untitled*, 2010

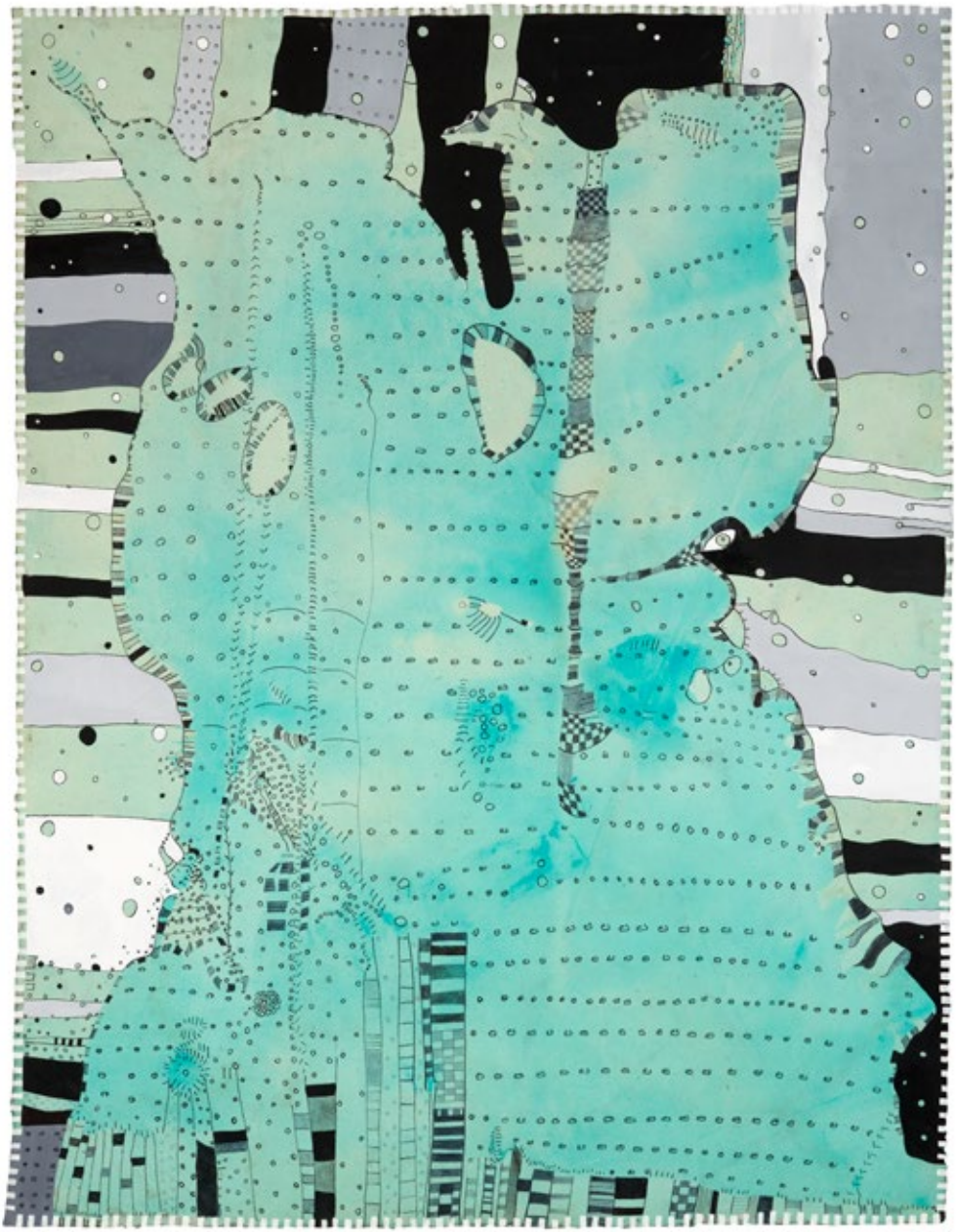
PL. 92
*Appleton I*, 2009

PL. 93
*Bodrum*, 2008

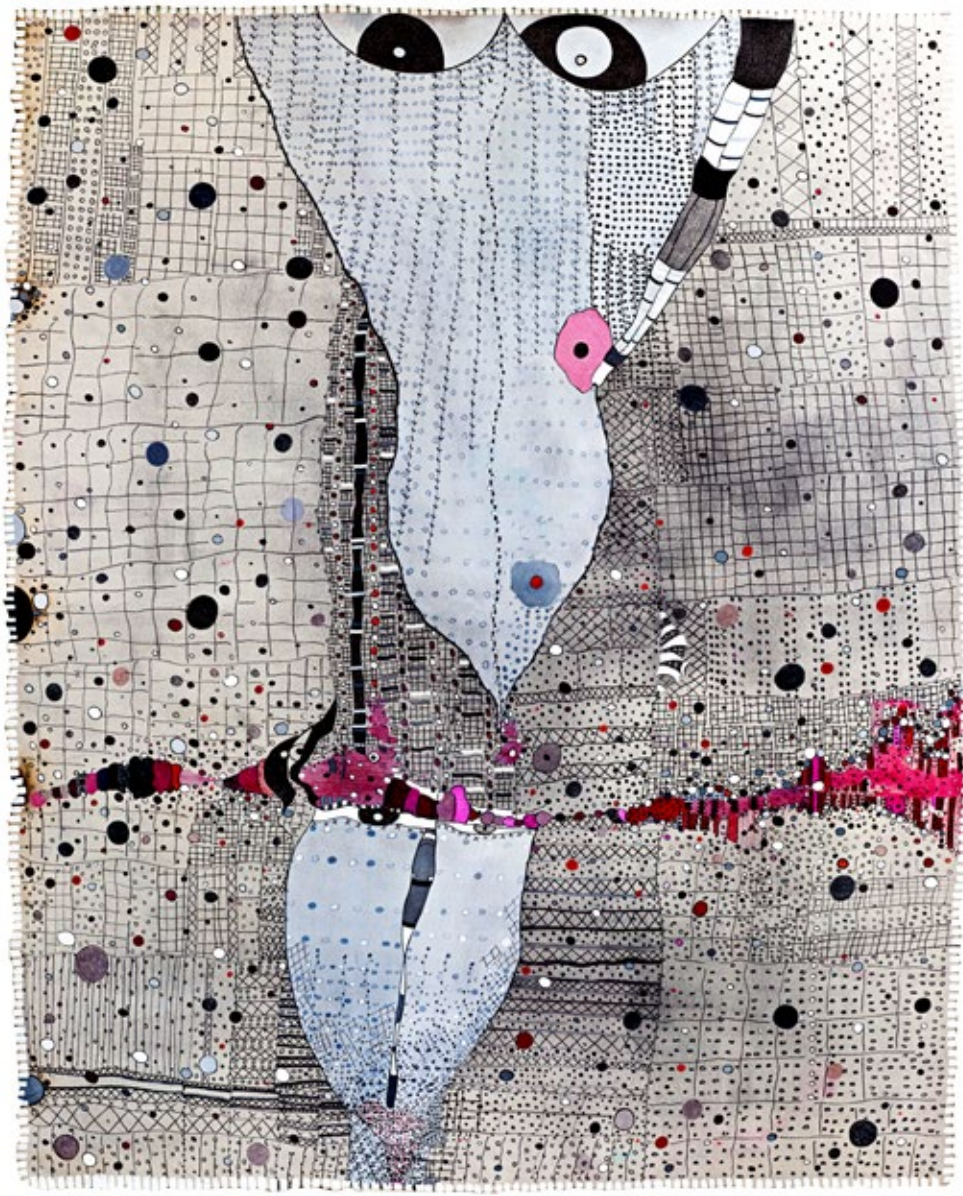
# *Rossinante*



In her *Rossinante* series, named for Don Quixote's downtrodden horse, scale alternates between macro and micro as large disembodied lips and eyes punctuate chains of minuscule dots and X's. This series began when Caland injured her knee, necessitating the use of a cane. Referencing the elderly horse pushed past its limits by its eccentric master, Caland alludes to her own experience of ageing. Meanwhile, the dashes and X's reference cross-stitch, as well as the weave of the many rugs in the artist's childhood home. Despite invoking frailty, these tapestries also foreground the joy and satisfaction of repetitive work—as in embroidery, weaving, or depicting the same shape over and over again.



PL. 94
*Rossinante Under Cover XI*, 2011



PL. 95
*Rossinante Under Cover XII*, 2011

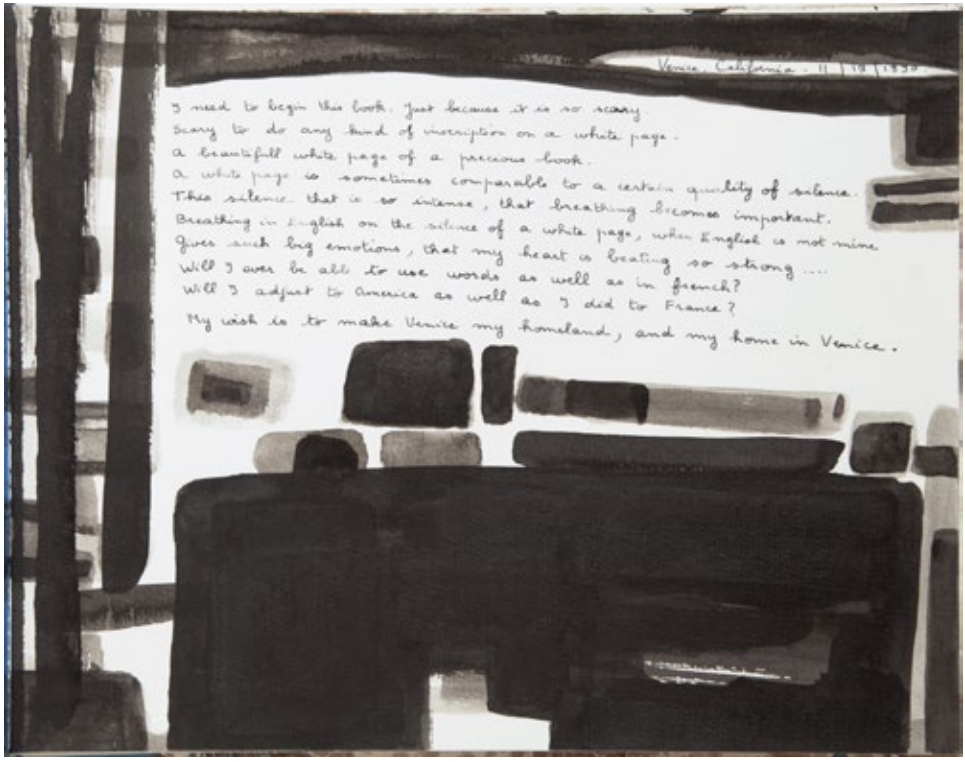
PL. 96
*Rossinante Under Cover VIII*, 2011

PL. 97
*Rossinante Under Cover V*, 2011

# Sketchbooks

Excerpt from sketchbook (no. 2), 1990–91

I need to begin this book. Just because it is so scary.
Scary to do any kind of inscription on a white page.
A beautiful white page of a precious book.
A white page is sometimes comparable to a certain quality of silence.
This silence that is so intense, that breathing becomes important.




PL. 98
Page from sketchbook (no. 2), 1990–91

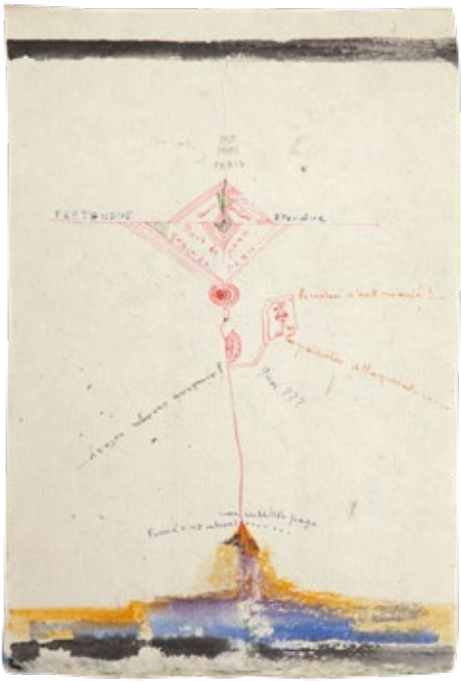
PL. 99
Page from sketchbook (no. 2), 1990–91


PL. 100
Page from sketchbook (no. 2), 1990–91

Excerpt from sketchbook (no. 8), 1992

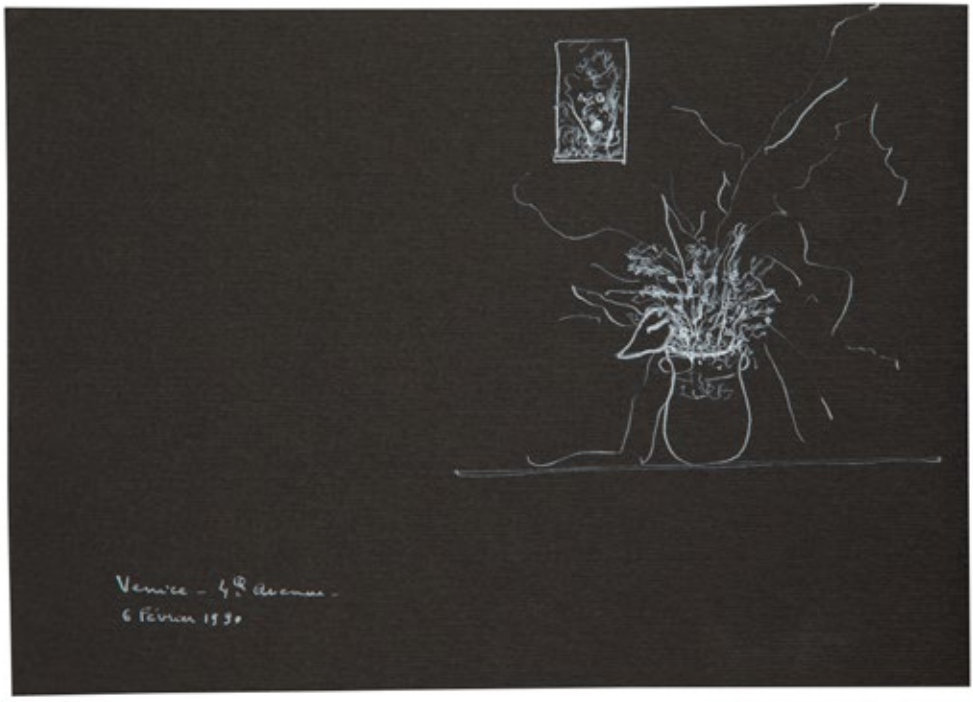
writing-writing-writing-writing-writing-writing-writing -
unrest - unrest. Past loves - past lives and past loves.
life passes - time remains
the tempo passes - the life remains. lines to fill in -
fishing line ... fishing line -
line of conduct - life line, love line -
what does it matter? what does it matter?
a beautiful page - a turned page
a remnant of love -
a zest of desire.
a sexual surge.
a sex on fire.
a heart of fire and flame.

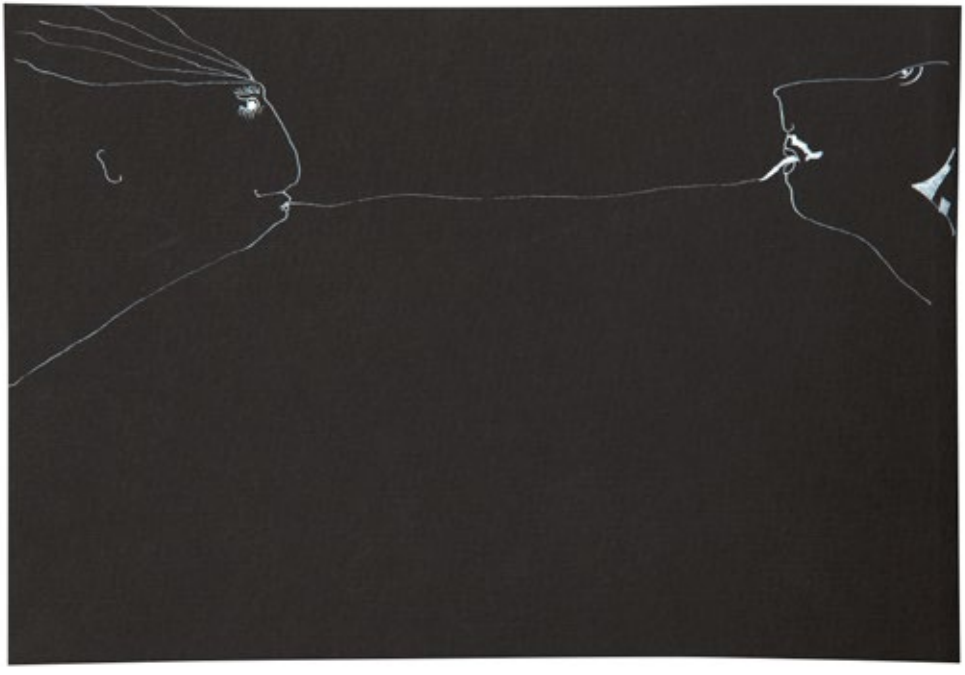
*écriture-écriture-écriture-écriture-écriture-écriture-écriture -*
*unrest - unrest. Past loves - past lives - past loves.*
*la vie passe - le temps reste*
*la tempo passe - la vie reste. les lignes à remplir -*
*ligne de peche ... ligne de peche -*
*ligne de conduite ligne de vie, ligne de coeur -*
*quelle importance? quelle importance?*
*une superbe page - une page tournée*
*un reste d'amour -*
*un zeste de désir.*
*un sursaut du sexe.*
*un sexe en feu.*
*un coeur feu et flamme.*



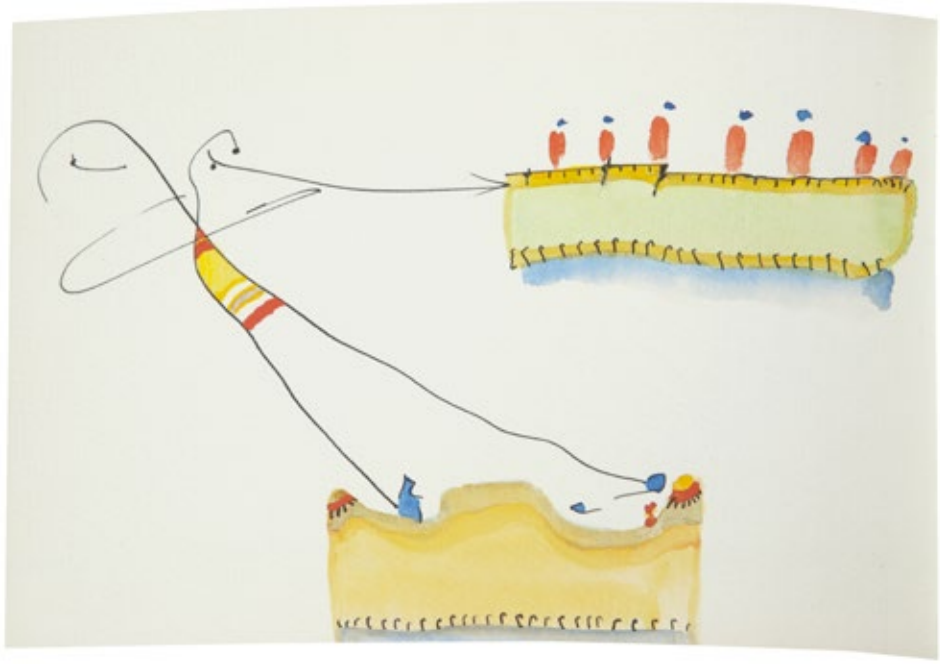
PLS. 101–104
Pages from sketchbook (no. 8), 1992

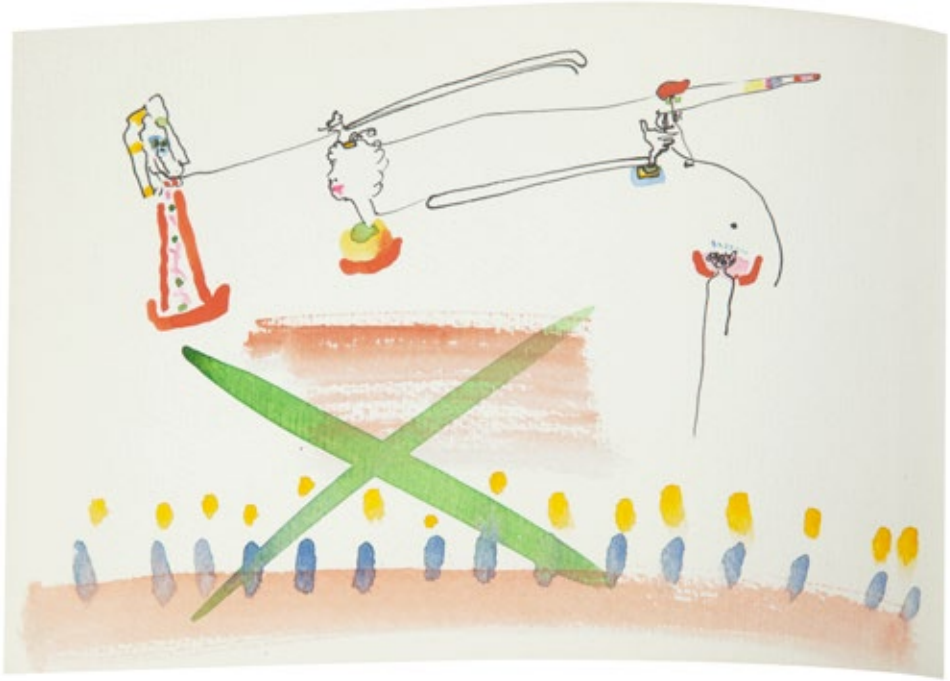
PLS. 105–107
Pages from sketchbook (no. 4), 1986



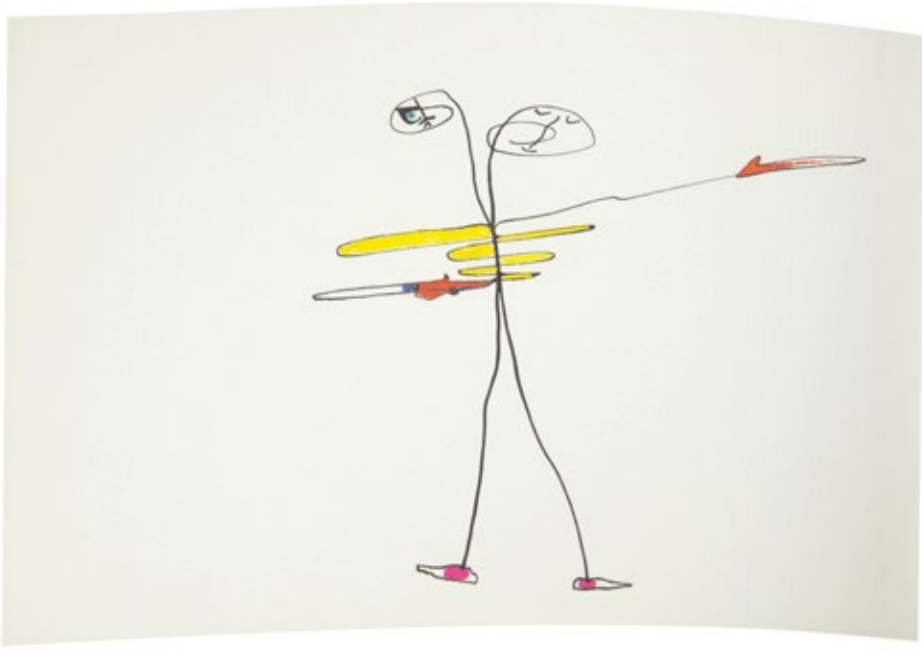



PLS. 108–109
Pages from sketchbook (no. 6), 1990





PLS. 110–113
Pages from sketchbook (no. 7), 1992



PL. 1
*Helen*, 1967
27 1/4 x 34 3/4 inches (69.4 x 88.5 cm)
Oil on linen
Private collection

PL. 2
*Upside Down*, 1971
9 1/2 x 13 inches (24.1 x 33 cm)
Ink on paper
Private collection

PL. 3
*Bouches* (Mouths), 1972
10 1/2 x 13 3/4 inches (26.7 x 34.8 cm)
Ink on paper
Private collection

PL. 4
*Parenthèse 2* (Parenthesis 2), 1971
9 1/2 x 13 inches (24 x 33 cm)
Ink on paper
Private collection

PL. 5
*Bribes de corps* (Body Bits), 1973
9 1/2 x 7 inches (24.1 x 17.8 cm)
Color pencil on paper
Private collection

PL. 6
*Untitled*, 1998
30 x 30 inches (76.2 x 76.2 cm)
Mixed media on canvas
Private collection

PL. 7
*I*, 1999
74 x 38 inches (188 x 96.5 cm)
Ink on paper
Private collection

PL. 8
*Untitled*, 1999
38 x 74 inches (96.5 x 188 cm)
Ink on paper
Private collection

PL. 9
*Kantari, la mariée, avril 1952*
(Kantari, The Bride, April 1952), 2010
99 x 38 1/2 inches (252 x 98 cm)
Mixed media on canvas
Private collection

PL. 10
*"Hi!"*, 1973
9 1/2 x 12 1/2 inches (24.1 x 31.8 cm)
Ink on paper
Private collection

PL. 11
*Untitled*, 1993
4 3/4 x 6 3/4 inches (12 x 17.1 cm)
Ink on paper
Private collection

PL. 12
*Mustafa, poids et haltères*
(Mustafa, Weights and Dumbbells), 1970
12 1/2 x 9 1/2 inches (31.7 x 24.1 cm)
Ink on paper
Private collection

PL. 13
Sketchbook 2, 1990–91
11 x 14 inches closed / 11 x 28 inches open
(27.9 x 35.6 cm closed /
27.9 x 71.1 cm open)
Ink on paper
Private collection

PL. 14
*Erotic Composition*, 1967–70
13 1/2 x 18 7/8 inches (34.3 x 47.9 cm)
Ink and pencil on paper
Courtesy of Barjeel Art Foundation,
Sharjah
Photograph by Capital D

PL. 15
*Big Kiss*, 1978
9 1/2 x 13 1/2 inches (24.1 x 34.3 cm)
Color pencil on paper
Private collection

PLS. 16–20
Huguette Caland and Fouad Elkhoury
*Utopia City*, 2001
13 x 8 7/8 x 1 inches (33 x 22.5 x 2.5 cm)
Graphite, ink, and marker in sketchbook
Private collection

PL. 20
*Enlève ton doigt* (Remove Your Finger), 1971
15 x 30 inches (38.1 x 76.2 cm)
Oil on canvas
Private collection / Galerie Janine Rubeiz, Beirut

PL. 21
*Baiser volé* (Stolen Kiss), 1971
9 1/2 x 13 inches (24.1 x 33 cm)
Ink on paper
Private collection

PL. 22
*Paul*, 1971
13 3/4 x 10 1/2 inches (34.9 x 26.6 cm)
Ink on paper
Private collection

PL. 23
*Parfois Mustafa* (Sometimes Mustafa), 1971
12 1/2 x 9 1/2 inches (31.7 x 24.1 cm)
Ink on paper
Private collection

PL. 24
*Untitled*, 1971
12 1/2 x 9 1/2 inches (31.7 x 24.1 cm)
Ink on paper
Private collection

PL. 25
*Bribes de corps* (Body Bits), 1973
11 3/4 x 9 1/2 inches (29.8 x 24 cm)
Oil on linen
Private collection

PL. 26
*Moi et moi corde raide* (Me and My Tightrope), 1971
10 x 13 1/2 inches (25.4 x 34.3 cm)
Ink on paper
Private collection

PL. 27
*Untitled*, 1972
13 3/4 x 10 inches (34.9 x 25.4 cm)
Ink on paper
Private collection

PL. 28
*1er Dessin encre de Chine, hiver* (First Ink Drawing from China, Winter), 1971
12 1/2 x 9 1/2 inches (31.7 x 24.1 cm)
Ink on paper
Private collection

PL. 29
*Le cirque*, 1971
13 3/4 x 10 1/2 inches (34.9 x 26.6 cm)
Ink on paper
Private collection, New York

PL. 30
*Untitled*, 1972
12 1/2 x 9 1/2 inches (31.7 x 24.1 cm)
Ink on paper
Private collection

PL. 31
*Nous deux* (The Two of Us), 1972
26 3/4 x 30 1/2 inches (67.9 x 77.5 cm)
Oil on canvas
Private collection

PL. 32
*Bribes de corps* (Body Bits), 1973
51 1/2 x 51 inches (130.8 x 129.5 cm)
Ink and oil on linen
Private collection

PL. 33
*Bribes de corps* (Body Bits), 1973
60 x 60 inches (152.4 x 152.4 cm)
Oil on linen
Collection of Viveca Paulin-Ferrell and Will Ferrell

PL. 34
*Untitled*, 1972
9 1/2 x 12 1/2 inches (24.1 x 30.5 cm)
Ink on paper
Private collection

PL. 35
*Untitled*, 1973
19 3/4 x 25 1/2 inches (50.1 x 64.7 cm)
Ink on paper
Private collection

PL. 36
*Untitled*, 1972
9 1/2 x 13 1/4 inches (24.1 x 33.7 cm)
Ink on paper
Private collection

PL. 37
*Untitled*, 1972
7 1/2 x 9 1/2 inches (19 x 24.1 cm)
Ink on paper
Private collection

PL. 38
*Untitled*, 1977
12 1/2 x 9 1/2 inches (31.7 x 24.1 cm)
Ink on paper
Private collection

PL. 39
*Untitled*, 1973
9 1/2 x 12 1/2 inches (24 x 32 cm)
Ink on paper
Private collection

PL. 40
*Untitled*, 1973
10 x 13 3/4 inches (25.4 x 34.9 cm)
Ink on paper
Private collection

PL. 41
*Self-Portrait (Bribes de corps)* (Self-Portrait (Body Bits)), 1971
14 x 10 inches (35.5 x 25.4 cm)
Ink on paper
Private collection

PL. 42
*Bribes de corps* (Body Bits), 1973
19 1/4 x 13 3/4 inches (49 x 35 cm)
Oil on linen
Private collection

PL. 43
*The First*, 1970
54 x 19 x 12 inches
(137.1 x 48.2 x 30.5 cm) (caftan)
Thread on fabric with accompanying wood mannequin with foam
Private collection

PL. 44
*Miroir* (Mirror), 1974 (caftan) / 1985 (mannequin)
54 x 19 x 12 inches
(137.1 x 48.2 x 30.5 cm) (caftan)
Thread on fabric with accompanying wood mannequin with foam
Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, Purchased through the Board of Overseers Acquisition Fund

PL. 45
*Foule* (Crowd), 1970 (caftan) / 1985 (mannequin)
54 x 19 x 12 inches
(137.1 x 48.2 x 30.5 cm) (caftan)
Thread on fabric with accompanying wood mannequin with foam
Hammer Museum, Los Angeles. Purchased through the Board of Overseers Acquisition Fund.

PL. 46
*Tendresse* (Tenderness), 1975 (caftan) / 1985 (mannequin)
54 x 19 x 12 inches
(137.1 x 48.2 x 30.5 cm) (caftan)
Thread on fabric with accompanying wood mannequin with foam
Private collection

PL. 47
*Untitled*, 1984
9 1/2 x 12 1/2 inches (24.1 x 31.8 cm)
Color pencil on paper
Private collection

PL. 48
*Untitled*, 1985
29 3/4 x 22 1/4 inches (75.6 x 56.5 cm)
Color pencil on paper
Private collection

PL. 49
*Untitled*, 1985
15 1/2 x 12 inches (39.3 x 30.5 cm)
Color pencil on paper
Private collection

PL. 50
*Recliner*, 1972
9 1/2 x 12 1/2 inches (24.1 x 31.7 cm)
Color pencil on paper
Private collection

PL. 51
*Untitled*, 1984
19 x 13 1/2 inches (48.2 x 34.3 cm)
Color pencil on paper
Private collection

PL. 52
*Untitled*, 1978
9 1/2 x 12 1/2 inches (24.1 x 31.8 cm)
Color pencil on paper
Private collection

PL. 53
*Untitled*, 1978
9 1/2 x 13 1/2 inches (24.1 x 34.3 cm)
Color pencil on paper
Private collection



PL. 54
*Creature de reve* (Dream Creature), 1978
19 1/2 x 23 1/2 inches (49.5 x 59.7 cm)
Oil on linen
Private collection

PL. 55
*Untitled*, 1984
9 1/2 x 12 1/2 inches (24 x 32 cm)
Color pencil on paper
Private collection

PL. 56
*Untitled*, 1985
9 1/2 x 12 1/2 inches (24.1 x 31.8 cm)
Color pencil on paper
Private collection

PL. 57
*Untitled*, 1984
30 x 22 1/4 inches (76.2 x 56.5 cm)
Color pencil on paper
Private collection

PL. 58
*Untitled*, 1984
30 x 22 1/4 inches (76.2 x 56.5 cm)
Color pencil on paper
Private collection

PL. 59
*Untitled*, 1985
19 3/4 x 25 1/2 inches (50.2 x 64.8 cm)
Color pencil on paper
Private collection

PL. 60
*Tête-á-tête* (Head to Head), 1983
9 1/2 x 13 1/2 inches (24.1 x 34.3 cm)
Ink on paper
Private collection

PL. 61
*Figurine*, 1983
12 x 11 x 5 inches (30.5 x 27.9 x 12.7 cm)
Clay
Private collection

PL. 62
*Figurine*, 1983
14 x 8 x 5 inches (35.5 x 20.3 x 12.7 cm)
Clay
Private collection

PL. 63
*Figurine*, 1983
12 x 9 x 4 inches (30.5 x 22.8 x 10.1 cm)
Clay and acrylic paint
Private collection

PL. 64
*Figurine*, 1983
13 x 6 x 3 inches (33 x 15.2 x 7.6 cm)
Clay and acrylic paint
Private collection

PL. 65
*Figurine*, 1983
11 x 9 x 5 inches (27.9 x 22.8 x 12.7 cm)
Clay
Private collection

PL. 66
*Homage to Pubic Hair*, 1992
5 x 10 1/2 inches (12.7 x 26.7 cm)
Mixed media on paper mounted on panel
Private collection

PL. 67
*Homage to Pubic Hair*, 1992
5 x 10 1/2 inches (12.7 x 26.7 cm)
Mixed media on paper mounted on panel
Private collection

PL. 68
*Homage to Pubic Hair*, 1992
5 x 10 1/2 inches (12.7 x 26.7 cm)
Mixed media on paper mounted on panel
Private collection

PL. 69
*Homage to Pubic Hair*, 1992
5 x 10 1/2 inches (12.7 x 26.7 cm)
Mixed media on paper mounted on panel
Private collection

PL. 70
*Homage to Pubic Hair*, 1992
10 x 10 inches (25.4 x 25.4 cm)
Mixed media on paper mounted on panel
Private collection

PL. 71
*Homage to Pubic Hair*, 1992
10 x 10 inches (25.4 x 25.4 cm)
Mixed media on paper mounted on panel
Private collection

PL. 72
*Homage to Pubic Hair*, 1992
10 x 10 inches (25.4 x 25.4 cm)
Mixed media on paper mounted on panel
Private collection

PL. 73
*Homage to Pubic Hair*, 1992
10 x 10 inches (25.4 x 25.4 cm)
Mixed media on paper mounted on panel
Private collection

PL. 74
*Untitled*, 1993
4 3/4 x 6 3/4 inches (12 x 17.1 cm)
Ink on paper
Private collection

PL. 75
*Untitled*, 1993
4 3/4 x 6 3/4 inches (12 x 17.1 cm)
Ink on paper
Private collection

PL. 76
*Christine*, 1998
81 1/2 x 81 1/2 inches (207 x 207 cm)
Mixed media on triple-weight Japanese Hiromi paper
Private collection

PL. 77
*Christine*, 1992
10 x 5 inches (25.4 x 12.7 cm)
Ink on paper mounted on panel
Private collection

PL. 78
*Christine*, 1992
10 x 5 inches (25.4 x 12.7 cm)
Ink on paper mounted on panel
Private collection

PL. 79
*Christine*, 1992
10 x 5 inches (25.4 x 12.7 cm)
Ink on paper mounted on panel
Private collection

PL. 80
*Christine*, 1992
10 x 5 inches (25.4 x 12.7 cm)
Ink on paper mounted on panel
Private collection



PL. 81
*Christine*, 1992
10 x 5 inches (25.4 x 12.7 cm)
Ink on paper mounted on panel
Private collection

PL. 82
*Christine*, 1992
10 x 5 inches (25.4 x 12.7 cm)
Ink on paper mounted on panel
Private collection

PL. 83
*Face (Untitled Christine)*, 1999
39 x 40 inches (99.1 x 101.6 cm)
Mixed media on paper
Private collection

PL. 84
*Untitled*, 2001
5 1/2 x 4 1/4 inches (13.9 x 10.8 cm)
Ink on paper
Private collection

PL. 85
*Untitled*, 2001
10 3/4 x 9 1/2 inches (27.3 x 24.1 cm)
Ink on paper
Private collection

PL. 86
*Untitled*, 2001
5 1/2 x 4 1/4 inches (13.9 x 10.8 cm)
Mixed media on paper
Private collection

PL. 87
*Untitled*, 1999
10 1/4 x 7 inches (26 x 17.8 cm)
Ink on paper
Private collection

PL. 88
*Untitled*, 1999
11 x 9 3/4 inches (27.9 x 24.7 cm)
Mixed media on paper
Private collection

PL. 89
*City*, 2010
49 2/3 x 36 1/4 inches (126 x 92 cm)
Mixed media on canvas
Private collection



PL. 90
*Untitled No. 4*, 2009
11 3/8 x 16 1/8 inches (29 x 41 cm)
Mixed media on canvas
Collection of Carla Chammas

PL. 91
*Untitled*, 2010
11 x 16 1/4 inches (27.9 x 41.3 cm)
Mixed media on canvas
Private collection

PL. 92
*Appleton I*, 2009
72 x 72 inches (182.9 x 182.9 cm)
Mixed media on canvas
Private collection

PL. 93
*Bodrum*, 2008
72 x 87 inches (182.9 x 221 cm)
Mixed media on canvas
Private collection

PL. 94
*Rossinante Under Cover XI*, 2011
52 x 41 inches (132.1 x 104.1 cm)
Mixed media on canvas
Private collection

PL. 95
*Rossinante Under Cover XII*, 2011
52 x 41 inches (132.1 x 104.1 cm)
Mixed media on canvas
Private collection

PL. 96
*Rossinante Under Cover VIII*, 2011
52 x 41 inches (132.1 x 104.1 cm)
Mixed media on canvas
Collection of Nicole Nagel

PL. 97
*Rossinante Under Cover V*, 2011
52 x 41 inches (132.1 x 104.1 cm)
Mixed media on canvas
Private collection

PLS. 98–100
Sketchbook (no. 2), 1990-91
11 x 14 inches closed / 11 x 28 inches open
(27.9 x 35.6 cm closed /
27.9 x 71.1 cm open)
Ink on paper
Private collection

PLS. 101–104
Sketchbook (no. 8), 1992
8 1/8 x 12 inches closed /
8 1/8 x 24 inches open
(20.6 x 30.5 cm closed /
20.6 x 61 cm open)
Mixed media on paper
Private collection

PL. 105–107
Sketchbook (no. 4), 1986
6 1/4 x 9 inches closed
(15.9 x 22.9 cm closed)
Ink on paper
Private collection

PLS. 108–109
Sketchbook (no. 6), 1990
6 1/4 x 9 inches closed
(15.9 x 22.9 cm closed)
Ink on paper
Private collection

PL. 110–113
Sketchbook (no. 7), 1992
6 1/4 x 9 inches closed (15.9 x 22.9 cm
closed)
Ink on paper
Private collection

Not pictured

Sketchbook (no. 9), 1982–83
9 5/8 x 13 3/4 inches closed /
9 5/8 x 27 inches open
(24.4 x 34.9 cm closed /
24.4 x 68.6 cm open)
Ink on paper
Private collection

Sketchbook (no. 5), 1986
6 1/4 x 9 inches closed /
6 1/4 x 17 3/4 inches open
(15.9 x 22.9 cm closed /
15.9 x 45.1 cm open)
Ink on paper
Private collection

Sketchbook (no. 1), 1985–86
8 1/2 x 11 3/4 inches closed
(21.6 x 29.8 cm closed)
Ink on paper
Private collection

---

Additional Illustrations

FIG. 1
*Self-Portrait (Bribes de corps)*
(Self-Portrait (Body Bits)), 1973
Oil on linen
47 x 47 inches (119.4 x 119.4 cm)
Private collection

FIG. 2
Caland at work on a drawing in the
*Silent Letters* series, 1996
Photograph © Veronique Vial
Courtesy of Huguette Caland Studios

FIG. 3
*Une ville*, 1968
Oil on canvas
31 1/2 x 39 1/2 inches (80 x 100 cm)
Private collection

FIG. 4
*TV City*, 1968
Oil on canvas
39 1/3 x 31 1/2 inches (100 x 80 cm)

FIG. 5
*Bribes de corps (Body Bits)*, 1973
Oil on linen
51 3/16 x 51 1/8 inches (130.6 x 129.9 cm)
Private collection

FIG. 6
*Flash*, 1978
Oil on linen
15 x 18 inches (38.1 x 45.7 cm)
Collection Sharjah Art Foundation

FIG. 7
Saloua Raouda Choucair
*Éclatement*, 1956–58
Gouache on paper
9 1/2 x 12 1/2 inches (24.1 x 31.8 cm)
Image courtesy of Saloua Rouada
Choucair estate and CRG Gallery

FIG. 8
Etel Adnan
*Untitled*, 1973–74
Oil on canvas
32 2/3 x 25 1/2 inches (83 x 65 cm)
Private collection, Lebanon
Photograph by Tarek Haddad

FIG. 9
Helen Khal
*Untitled*, 1954
Oil on canvas
47 1/4 x 47 1/4 inches (120 x 120 cm)
KA Modern and Contemporary Art
Collection
Photograph by Tarek Haddad

FIG. 10
Laure Ghorayeb
*Untitled*, 1971
24 1/2 x 18.7/8 inches (62 x 48 cm)
Chinese ink on Canson paper
Image courtesy of Saleh Barakat Gallery

# Contributors

**Marwa Arsanios** is an artist, filmmaker, and researcher who reconsiders politics of the mid-twentieth century from a contemporary perspective, with a particular focus on gender relations, urbanism, and industrialization. Arsanios has been the subject of solo exhibitions at Skuc gallery in Lujubljana (2018); the Beirut Art Center (2017); Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (2016); Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, Rotterdam (2016); Kunsthalle Lissabon, Lisbon (2015); and Art in General, New York (2015). She was awarded the Georges de Beauregard award at FID Marseille (2019) and the Special Prize of the Pinchuk Future Generation Art Prize (2012). She is the co-founder of 98weeks Research Project. Arsanios received a Master of Fine Art, University of the Arts London (2007) and was a researcher in the Fine Art Department, Jan Van Eyck Academie, Maastricht, The Netherlands (2011–12). She is currently a PhD candidate at the Akademie der bildenden Künste in Vienna.

**Mirene Arsanios** is the author of the short story collection *The City Outside the Sentence* (Ashkal Alwan, 2015) and, more recently, *Notes on Mother Tongues* (UDP, 2020). She has contributed essays and short stories to *e-flux journal*, *Vida*, *The Brooklyn Rail*, *LitHub*, and *Guernica*, among others. Arsanios co-founded the collective 98weeks Research Project in Beirut and is the founding editor of *Makhzin*, a bilingual English/Arabic magazine for innovative writing. She teaches at Pratt Institute and holds an MFA in Writing from the Milton Avery Graduate School for the Arts at Bard College. Arsanios currently lives in New York City where she was a 2016 LMCC Workspace fellow and an ART OMI resident in fall 2017. With Rachel Valinsky, she coordinated the Friday night reading series at the Poetry Project (2017–19). Her next book, *The Autobiography of a Language*, is forthcoming from Futurepoem (2021).

**Hannah Feldman** is a cultural theorist and art historian based in Chicago. The author of *From a Nation Torn: Decolonizing Art and Representation in France, 1945–1962* (Duke University Press, 2014), she writes broadly about art, decolonization, temporality, and the contemporary middle east. She is currently associate professor of art history at Northwestern University where she is also core faculty in Middle Eastern and North African Studies as well as Comparative Literary Studies.

**Claire Gilman** is the Chief Curator at The Drawing Center.

## Board of Directors

*Co-Chairs*
Andrea Crane
Amy Gold

*Treasurer*
Stacey Goergen

*Secretary*
Dita Amory

Frances Beatty Adler
Valentina Castellani
Brad Cloepfil
Harry Tappan Heher
Priscila Hudgins
Rhiannon Kubicka
Iris Z. Marden
Adam Pendleton
David M. Pohl
Nancy Poses
Eric Rudin
Almine Ruiz-Picasso
Jane Dresner Sadaka
David Salle
Curtis Talwst Santiago
Joyce Siegel
Amy Sillman
Galia Meiri Stawski
Rirkrit Tiravanija
Barbara Toll
Jean-Edouard van Praet d'Amerloo
Waqas Wajahat
Isabel Stainow Wilcox
Linda Yablonsky

## Staff

Laura Hoptman
*Executive Director*

Olga Valle Tetkowski
*Deputy Director*

Rebecca Brickman
*Director of Development*

Aimee Good
*Director of Education and Community Programs*

Allison Underwood
*Director of Communications*

Claire Gilman
*Chief Curator*

Lisa Sigal
*Artist in Residence*

Rosario Güiraldes
*Associate Curator*

Isabella Kapur
*Curatorial Associate*

Kate Robinson
*Registrar*

Dan Gillespie
*Operations Manager*

Tiffany Shi
*Development Manager*

Kara Nandin
*Digital Content Coordinator*

Rebecca DiGiovanna
*Assitant to the Office of the Executive Director*

Nadia Parfait
*Visitor Services Associate*

Lucia Zezza
*Bookstore Manager*

Mark Zubrovich
*Visitor Services Associate*

Published on the occasion of the exhibition *Huguette Caland: Tête-à-Tête* at The Drawing Center

Organized by Claire Gilman, Chief Curator, with Isabella Kapur, Curatorial Associate

**The Drawing Center**
June 11–September 19, 2021

Major support for *Huguette Caland: Tête-à-Tête* is provided by the National Endowment for the Arts; The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts; Lisa Silver and Jean-Christophe Castelli; and Amy Gold and Brett Gorvy.

Generous funding is provided by Étant donnés Contemporary Art, a program of the French American Cultural Exchange (FACE) Foundation. Étant donnés is developed in partnership with the Cultural Services of the French Embassy in the United States, with lead funding from the Florence Gould Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the Helen Frankenthaler Foundation, Chanel USA, the ADAGP, the French Ministry of Culture, and Institut Français - Paris.

Additional support is provided by Zaza and Philippe Jabre, Kayne Griffin Corcoran, Lisson Gallery, Jane Lombard Gallery, Sarah Peter, Tony Tamer, Saleh and Hala Barakat, Marianne Boesky Gallery, Carla Chammas and Judi Roaman, Tammy and Georges Makhoul, and TOTAH, NY.

This is number 145 of the Drawing Papers, a series of publications documenting The Drawing Center's exhibitions and programs and providing a forum for the study of drawing.

**Editor**
Joanna Ahlberg

**Design**
Dandelion / Peter Ahlberg and Olivia Boryczewski

**Printing & Binding**
Puritan Capital, New Hampshire

**About the Type**
This book is set in Publico Text (Roman, Italic, and Bold). It is part of the Publico Collection, designed by Ross Milne, Christian Schwartz, Paul Barnes, Kai Bernau, and Greg Gazdowicz, and released incrementally by Commercial Type in 2009, 2013, and 2014. This book also uses Plain (Regular and Italic), which was designed by François Rappo and released by Optimo Type Foundry in 2014.

ISBN 978-0-942324-33-4



First printing

THE
DRAWING
CENTER

Venice, California, c. 2010

# Huguette Caland: Tête-à-Tête

In the late 1960s, at the age of thirty-nine, Huguette Caland (b. Lebanon, 1931; d. 2019) left her husband and children in Beirut and relocated to Paris to pursue a career as an artist. *Huguette Caland: Tête-à-Tête* brings together over a hundred works from the five decades that followed to show how Caland used the candidness and mutability of the drawn medium to explore sensuality and challenge taboos associated with the representation of the human form. Featuring new scholarship by curator Claire Gilman, cultural theorist and art historian Hannah Feldman, and a conversation between artist Marwa Arsanios and author Mirene Arsanios, this comprehensive volume foregrounds Caland's celebration of the vitality of the human body and spirit.

Contributions by
Marwa Arsanios
Mirene Arsanios
Hannah Feldman
Claire Gilman

THE DRAWING CENTER

ISBN 978-0942324334
9 780942 324334