

Mona Saudi

POETIC INSPIRATIONS
FIRST UK SHOW BY LEADING ARAB SCULPTOR



September 24 to October 22 - 2010
The Mosaic Rooms, A.M. Qattan Foundation



Mid-day Sun Eclipse, 2007, bronze, 43 x 40 x 11 cm



The Seagull, 2006, marble, 58 x 42 x 8 cm

My Poetic Inspirations by Mona Saudi

Today, at 65, I am still the child who started dreaming of living a creative life all those years ago, free and solid as a tree. This is how I began: contemplating, writing poetry, and making drawings, curious to know about art and artists. I took long walks through the bare hills of my then very small town, Amman, where our house was surrounded by ancient ruins dating back many millennia, to the age of the Ammonites, the Edomites and the Nabataeans, who were all stone carvers, and I felt and still feel that I belong to these ancestors, and to my Mother Earth.

I dreamt of travelling to Paris to study art but my traditional and religious family would never give me permission, so I left home in secret at the age of 17 and started my life journey. I spent one year in Beirut, where I frequented poets and artists in a city that was culturally alive with innovations in art and literature in the heady days of the early 1960s.

My first exhibition took place at the Café de la Presse in Beirut. A few sales of my drawings and paintings were enough to buy me a ticket that allowed me to get on a ship and sail through the Mediterranean. I was about to turn my dreams into reality in an epic journey accompanied by seagulls and the music of eternal waves.

I joined the École nationale supérieure des beaux-arts, by the Seine, frequently crossing the bridge to visit the Louvre, where I encountered the greatness of our ancient civilizations.

Very early on I joined the Atelier Colamarini of direct carving, and since that time, I have never stopped creating sculptures, which continues to give me the same exquisite pleasure I felt in my artistic beginnings. Mine is an endless research in form, yet in spite of the hundreds of sculptures I have made, I still have the feeling that I am just beginning.

It is rare that I exhibit my sculptures. From time to time, some art lovers knock at my door, to see or to buy a piece, or to commission me to make a large sculpture for a specific site, leaving me the full liberty to create whatever I decide. Abdel Mohsin and Leila Al-Qattan were among these friends, and they commissioned me back in 1986 to create a sculpture for the University of Science and Technology campus in the north of Jordan,



which was designed by Japanese architect Kenzo Tange. Here I created *The Circle of Seven Days*, a sphere of granite of 2.5 by 2.5 meters, which can be rotated on its axis allowing the students to enjoy and experience its physical energy. This long-standing relationship made me decide to hold my first UK exhibition at the Mosaic Rooms, which is part of the honourable A.M. Qattan Foundation in London.

Poetic Inspirations is the title of my exhibition. I relate sculpture to poetry, as a centre of contemplation that creates rich vibrations in space and time.

Poetry has also inspired me to recreate the poems I love by making drawings. In this exhibition, there are drawings inspired by the great Syrian poet Adonis' poem *The Petra Tablets*; by *Song for an Equinox*, one of the last poems by French poet St. John Perse; and drawings inspired by the words of the Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish, glorifying the love for our Mother Earth.

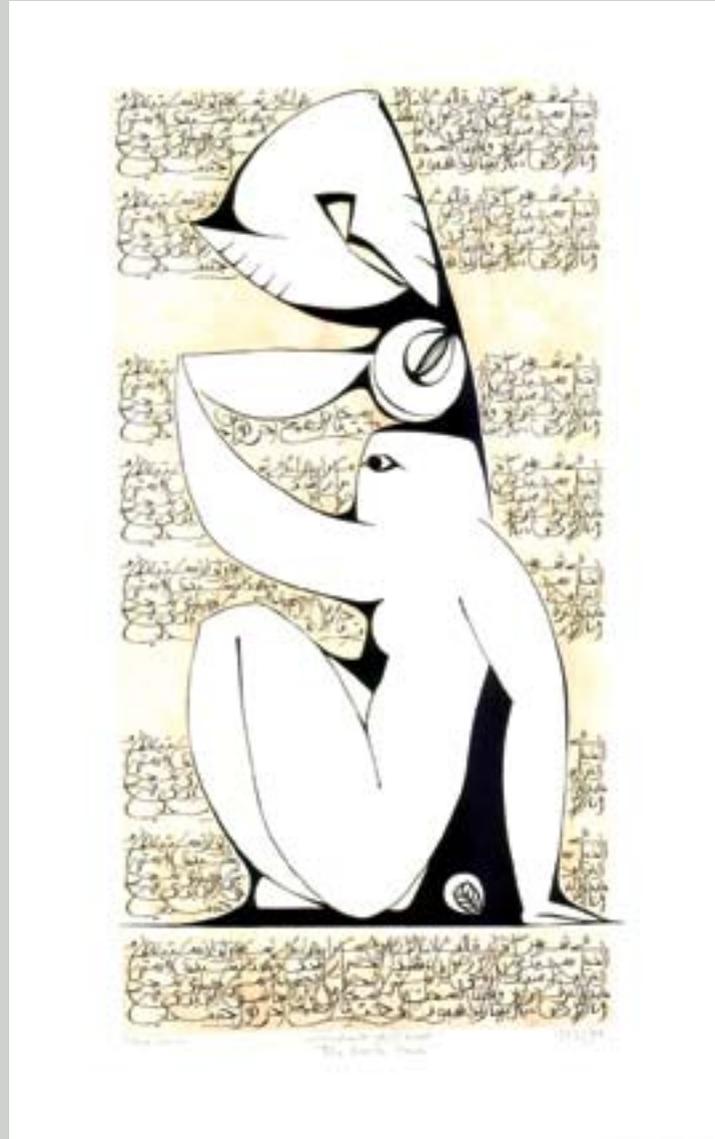
The sculptures exhibited here are a continuation of the trend towards pure abstraction practised in the second half of the twentieth century. They include *Mother/Earth*, a recent piece that recalls my early work and *Human Orbits*, in coloured marble, which relates our Earth to the Cosmos.

The Seagull in marble is reminiscent of the seagulls that accompanied me on my epic journey to Paris, which helped me recreate my life. *My Garden* in Jordanian Jade glorifies the space I contemplate in. *Mid-day Sun Eclipse*, a circle in bronze, is in homage to Barbara Hepworth.

September 2010



The Lover's Tree
inspired by Mahmoud Darwish, 1977
silkscreen & watercolour, 100 x 70 cm. An edition of 50

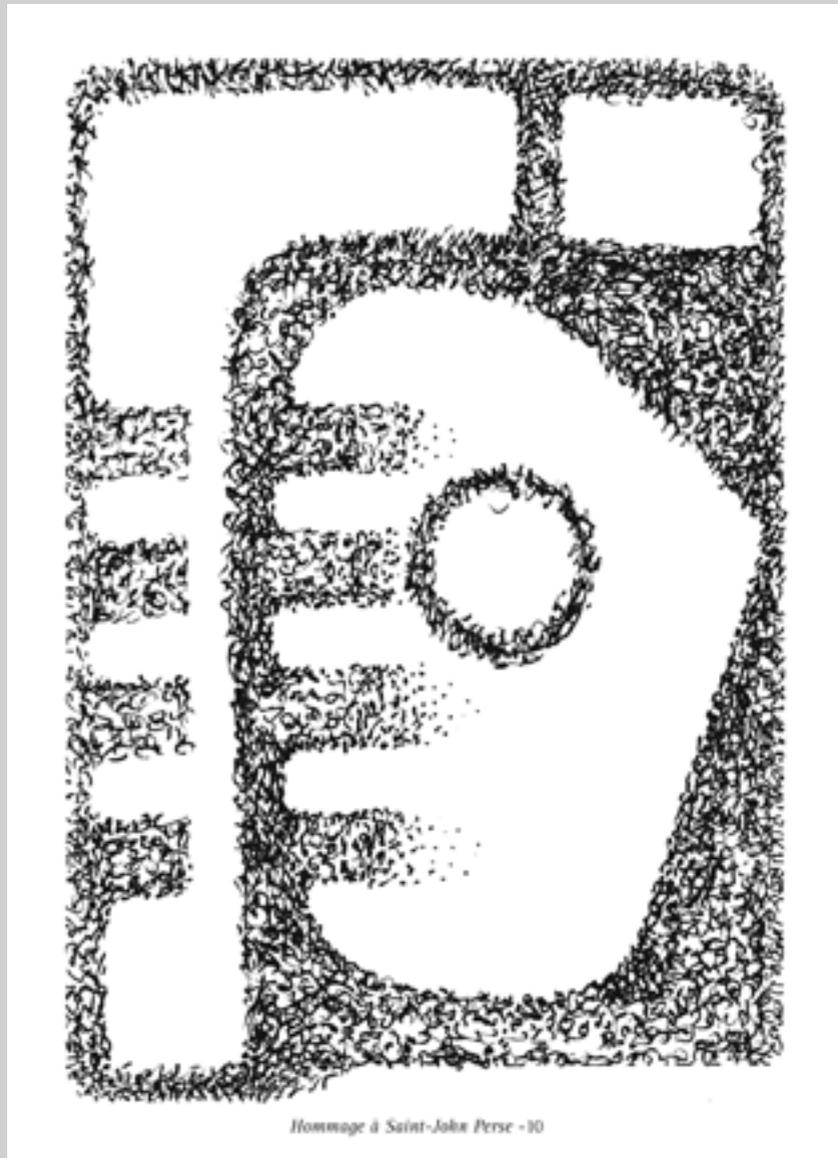


The Earth Poem
inspired by Mahmoud Darwish, 1979
silkscreen & watercolour, 100 x 70 cm. An edition of 50



above and right *The Petra Tablets*
inspired by a poem by Adonis, 1996
an album of 12 silkscreen and watercolor prints, 75 x 52 cm. An edition of 50





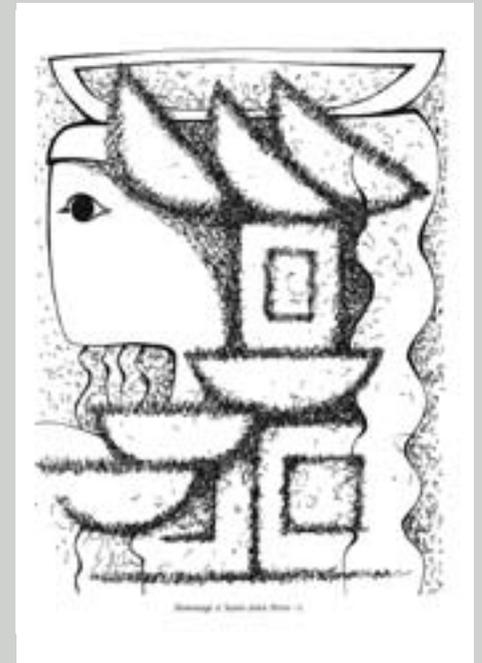
Hommage à Saint-John Perse - 10

“Et le Poète encore est parmi nous ...”

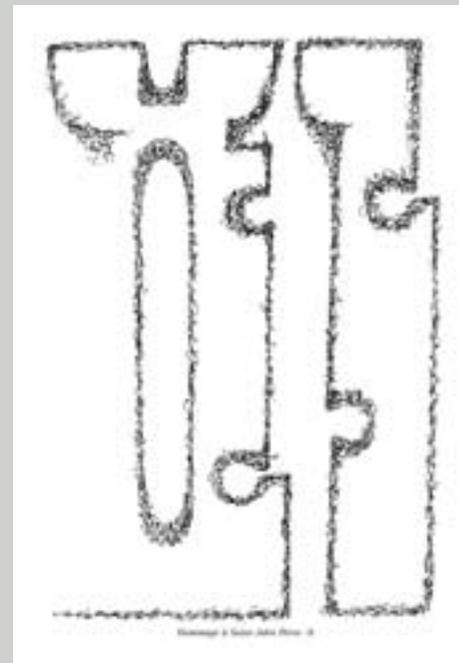
above and right *Hommage to Saint-John Perse - Song For an Equinox*
2009, an album of 13 silkscreen prints
49 x 34 cm. Edition of 77



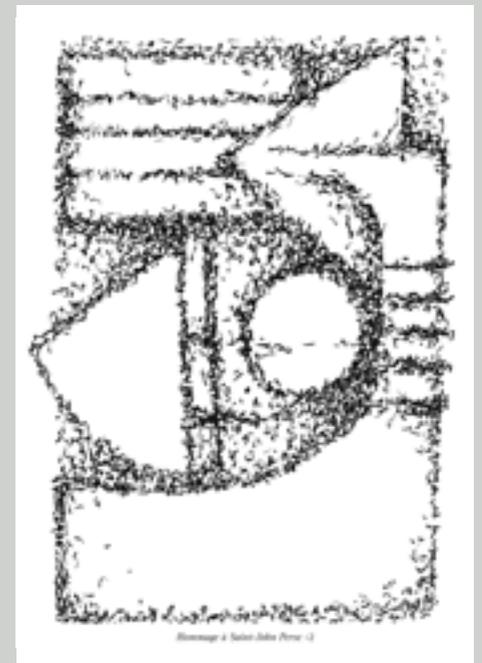
Hommage à Saint-John Perse - 11



Hommage à Saint-John Perse - 12



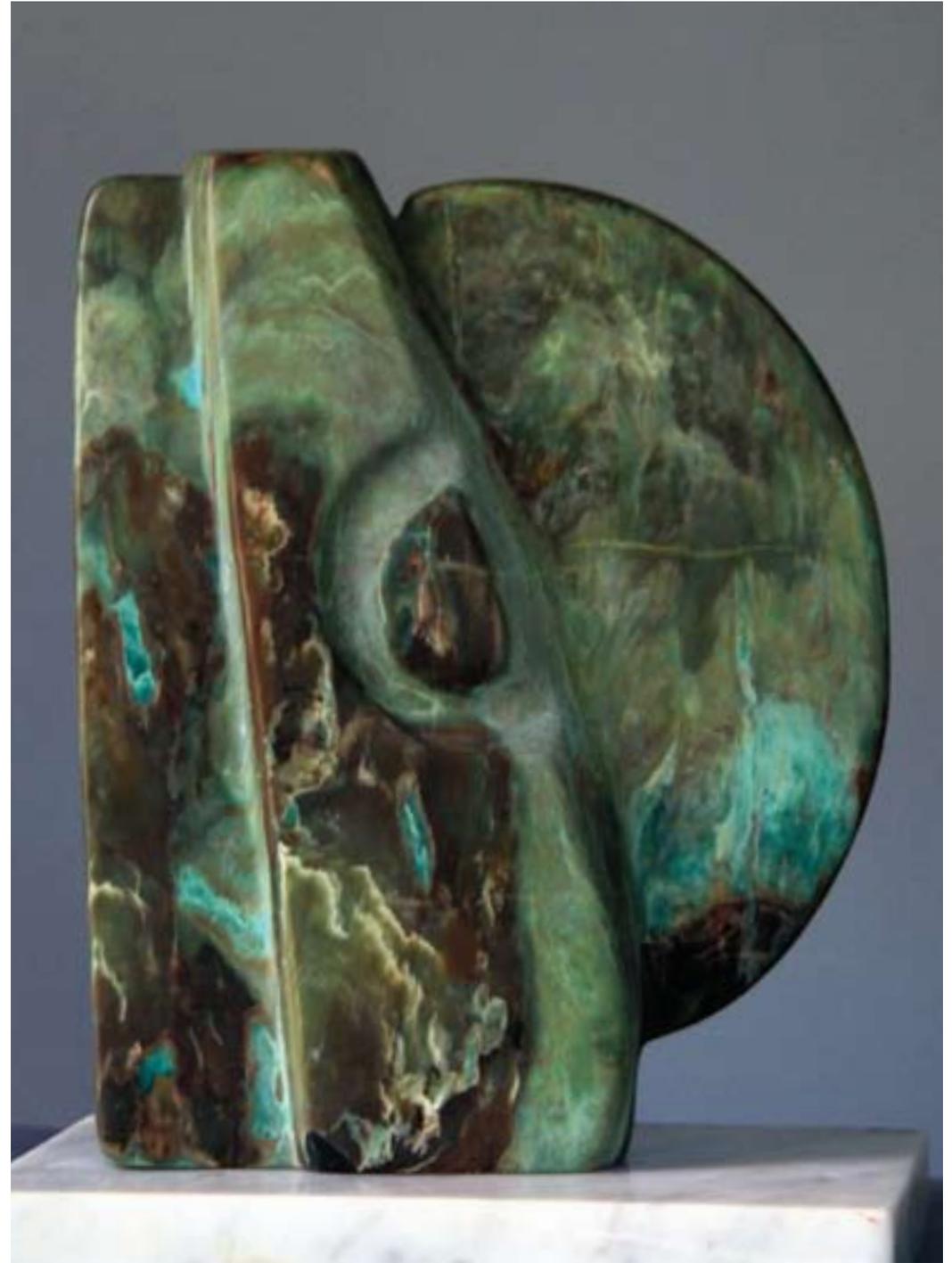
Hommage à Saint-John Perse - 13



Hommage à Saint-John Perse - 14



Human Orbits, 2010, Jordanian marble, 31.5 x 23 x 5 cm



My Garden, 2003, green marble, 29 x 23 x 7 cm

Biography

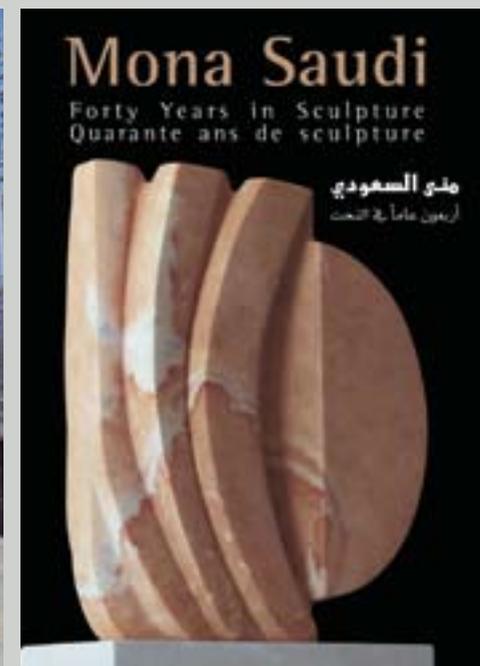
- 1945 born October 1st in Amman, Jordan
1963 stays in Beirut for one year, and holds first exhibition.
1964 leaves to Paris and joins L'École nationale supérieure des beaux-arts, sculpture section.
1967 spends a few months in Carrara, Italy, working with marble.
1968 leaves Paris after the Students' Revolution and goes to work with children in Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan.
1969 moves to settle in Beirut.
1970 publishes *In Time of War: Children Testify*.
1972 publishes *First Vision*, poetry and drawings.
1972 spends one year in Paris, obtains her Masters' degree in fine arts at ENSBA
1976 marries Hassan al-Batal, Palestinian writer.
1978 organizes *The International Art Exhibit for Palestine*.
1978 birth of daughter Dia.
1992 publishes *An Ocean of Dreams*, poetry and drawings
1993 receives the *National Recognition Award in the Arts* from King Hussein of Jordan.
1999-2003 teaches sculpture at The American University of Beirut.
2006 publishes *Forty Years in Sculpture*.

Selected Solo Exhibitions

- 2010 Jacaranda Images Gallery - Amman
2004 Quartier des Arts, Solidère, Beirut
1999 Al-Oudaya Museum - Rabat
1995 Retrospective Exhibition, Darat Al-Funun – Amman
1992 Galérie 50 x 70 – Beirut
1985 Al-Salmieh Gallery – Kuwait
1984 Alif Gallery – Washington DC
1983 Alia Art Gallery – Amman
1982 Galérie Epreuve d'artiste – Beirut
1981 Galérie Elissar – Beirut
1975 Galérie Contemporaine – Beirut
1973 Galérie One – Beirut
1971 Galérie Vercamer – Paris
1963 Café de la Presse – Beirut



Mona Saudi in front of her sculpture *Spiritual Geometry*, Paris 1987. Institut du Monde Arabe



Forty Years in Sculpture, a monography of 272 pages, contains works done between 1965 - 2005

Selected Group Exhibitions

- 2004-1993 Salon d'automne, Sursok Museum – Beirut
2003 International Cairo Biennale – Cairo
2001 Les Ateliers Arabes, UNESCO – Beirut
1997 Voyage en Jordanie, Hôtel de Ville – Paris
1996 Rhythm and Form, Visual Reflections on Poetry – USA
1994 Forces of Change, National Museum of Women in the Arts – Washington D.C.
1987 Arab Contemporary Artists, Institut du Monde Arabe – Paris
1981 Arab Artists, Kunst Hus – Oslo, Norway
1979 Palestinian Art, Oriental Museum – Moscow
1978 International Art Exhibition for Palestine – Beirut
1973 Colamarini and his Students, Musée Rodin – Paris
1973-1972 Salon de mai, Musée d'Art moderne – Paris

Mona Saudi's work features in private collections worldwide, as well as in international museums. She has also created large-scale sculptures for public spaces in Jordan and France.



Mona Saudi at her studio

The Mosaic Rooms

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Parking: One disabled parking space is available by prior arrangement.
Parking metres are available in Lexham Gardens behind the building.



The Mosaic Rooms is an
AM Qattan Foundation project