

Huguette Caland: a life in lines, love, and liberation

A sweeping retrospective at Madrid's Museo Reina Sofía traces the Lebanese artist's journey from political heiress to boundary-breaking force in contemporary art

This website uses cookies

We use cookies (including third-party cookies) to provide you with the best possible online experience and to tailor content to your interests. By clicking "Accept all cookies" you consent to the storage and reading of information on your terminal device. Likewise, you consent to the further processing of the collected and read personal data and its possible transfer outside of Switzerland and/or the European Union, for example USA. For detailed information on the use and management of cookies, please click on "Cookie Settings". By clicking on "Reject non necessary cookies", you reject the use of cookies that require your consent. You can change your cookie settings in the "Cookie settings" section at any time.

[Cookie policy](#)

Cookies Settings

Reject non-necessary cookies

Accept All Cookies

and pass it on to me. I miss it because the complicity was fun.' Some of these impromptu drawings feature in the late artist's first European retrospective, 'A Life in a Few Lines', opening at Madrid's Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía on February 19.



Huguette Caland, Drawing II, 1978. Courtesy The Estate of Huguette Caland and Mennour.



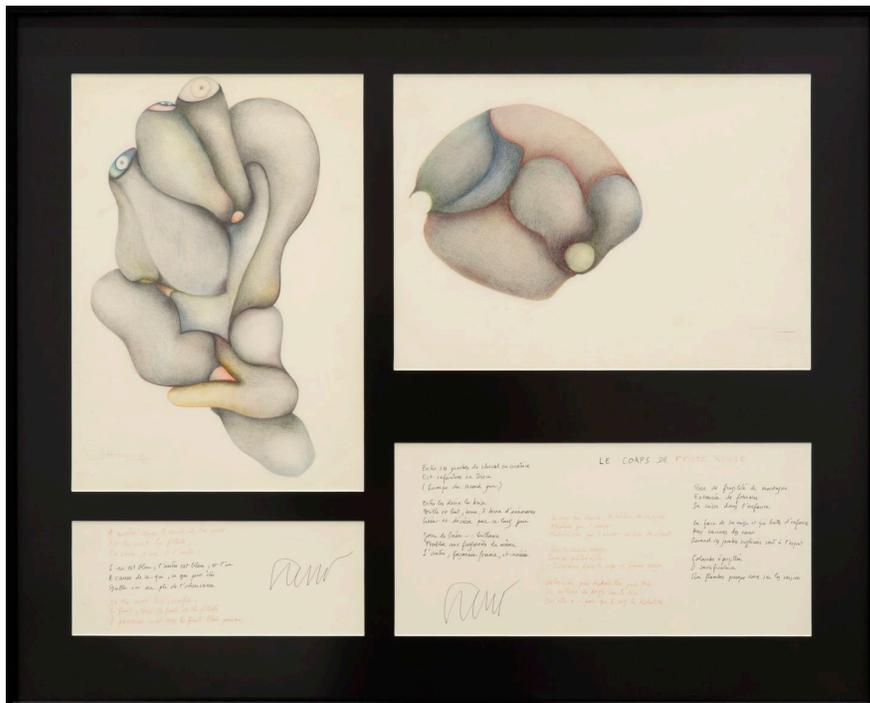
Huguette Caland in France in the 1970s. Photo by

This website uses cookies

We use cookies (including third-party cookies) to provide you with the best possible online experience and to tailor content to your interests. By clicking "Accept all cookies" you consent to the storage and reading of information on your terminal device. Likewise, you consent to the further processing of the collected and read personal data and its possible transfer outside of Switzerland and/or the European Union, for example USA. For detailed information on the use and management of cookies, please click on "Cookie Settings". By clicking on "Reject non necessary cookies", you reject the use of cookies that require your consent. You can change your cookie settings in the "Cookie settings" section at any time.

[Cookie policy](#)

page through to its end. Many of Caland's works made in Beirut in the 1960s echo this practice: it is in the kisses, noses, and mouths rendered in minimal lines.



Huguette Caland, Corps (avec Salah Stétié), 1978-1985. Courtesy The Estate of Huguette Caland and Mennour.



Huguette Caland, Siamois, 1973. Courtesy The Estate of Huguette Caland and Mennour.

This website uses cookies

We use cookies (including third-party cookies) to provide you with the best possible online experience and to tailor content to your interests. By clicking "Accept all cookies" you consent to the storage and reading of information on your terminal device. Likewise, you consent to the further processing of the collected and read personal data and its possible transfer outside of Switzerland and/or the European Union, for example USA. For detailed information on the use and management of cookies, please click on "Cookie Settings". By clicking on "Reject non necessary cookies", you reject the use of cookies that require your consent. You can change your cookie settings in the "Cookie settings" section at any time.

[Cookie policy](#)



Huguette Caland, Bribes de corps, 1973. Courtesy The Estate of Huguette Caland and Mennour.



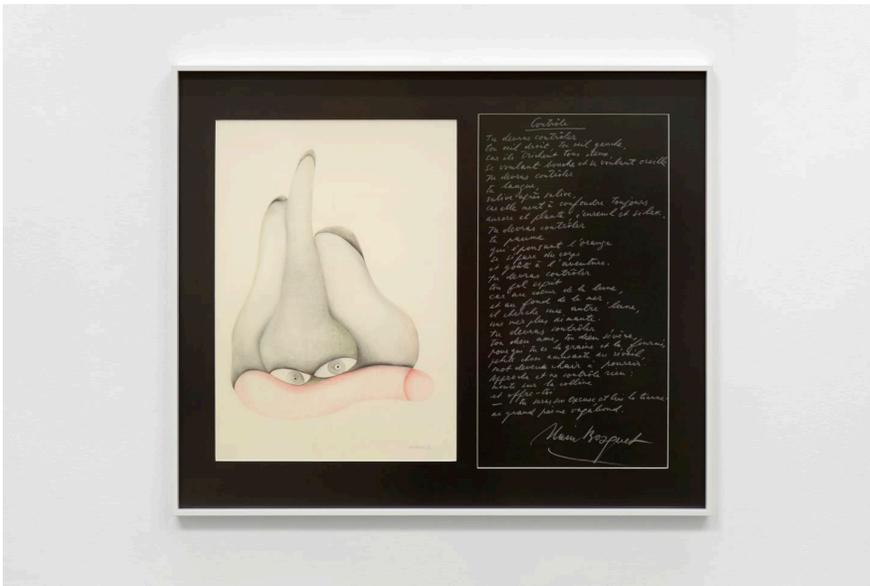
Huguette Caland, Bribes de corps (Pink Feeling Blue), 1973. Courtesy The Estate of Huguette Caland and Mennour.

This website uses cookies

We use cookies (including third-party cookies) to provide you with the best possible online experience and to tailor content to your interests. By clicking "Accept all cookies" you consent to the storage and reading of information on your terminal device. Likewise, you consent to the further processing of the collected and read personal data and its possible transfer outside of Switzerland and/or the European Union, for example USA. For detailed information on the use and management of cookies, please click on "Cookie Settings". By clicking on "Reject non necessary cookies", you reject the use of cookies that require your consent. You can change your cookie settings in the "Cookie settings" section at any time.

[Cookie policy](#)

The 'Bribes de Corps' series is also how Hannah Feldman was introduced to Caland. The curator of Reina Sofía's 'A Life in a Few Lines' had seen Caland's work before at **Jane Lombard Gallery** in New York in 2014, but it was not until she attended a lecture by Dr. Omar Kholeif, (now the director of collections and senior curator at Sharjah Art Foundation) at the University of Chicago in 2016 in which he showed an image of Caland's *Self-Portrait* – an oil on linen painting of, well, a giant pink bum – that she found the connection. 'Huguette found me when I needed her. I needed to rediscover beauty, playfulness, and joy in artwork,' says Feldman, who knew Brigitte from her research in Lebanon, went on to consult for Caland's show at The Drawing Center in 2021, and headed to Beirut, where she met a then-frail Caland. Then came the Museo Reina Sofía's invitation to curate Caland's retrospective, Spain's first. Like Brigitte, Feldman is hoping the show will shed light on lesser-known series, or in her words: 'not just the libertine and cosmopolitan, but rather, those that explore the experience of diaspora, loss, movement, selfhood, collectivity, and even age, not to mention her roots in Lebanon, her interest in Palestinian *tatreez* (embroidery) and also, her curiosity about Phoenician and Byzantine visual culture and lettered forms.'



Huguette Caland, Corps (avec Alain Bosquet), 1978. Courtesy The Estate of Huguette Caland and Mennour.



This website uses cookies

We use cookies (including third-party cookies) to provide you with the best possible online experience and to tailor content to your interests. By clicking "Accept all cookies" you consent to the storage and reading of information on your terminal device. Likewise, you consent to the further processing of the collected and read personal data and its possible transfer outside of Switzerland and/or the European Union, for example USA. For detailed information on the use and management of cookies, please click on "Cookie Settings". By clicking on "Reject non necessary cookies", you reject the use of cookies that require your consent. You can change your cookie settings in the "Cookie settings" section at any time.

[Cookie policy](#)



Exhibition view, 'Huguette Caland, Les années parisiennes (1970-1987)', curated by Sylvie Patry assisted by Léo Rivaud Chevaillier, Mennour (47 rue Saint-André-des-Arts, Paris 6), 2024. © Huguette Caland. Photo. Archives Mennour. Courtesy the estate of Huguette Caland and Mennour, Paris.

Feldman, whose show will follow a chronological order 'with some interruptions,' is all too aware of the delayed appreciation of modernists from the Arab world and Iran, but delighted all the same with the attention that Caland's work has been receiving in recent years. In December, Mennour gallery in Paris staged an exhibition in collaboration with her estate showcasing almost 50 works that Caland produced in Paris. None were for sale, and some of those will be exhibited across 12 galleries at the Museo Reina Sofía alongside loans from Tate Modern, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Museum of Modern Art, New York, the British Museum, and other public and private collections around the world. The Israeli military's invasion of southern Lebanon last October and subsequent

This website uses cookies

We use cookies (including third-party cookies) to provide you with the best possible online experience and to tailor content to your interests. By clicking "Accept all cookies" you consent to the storage and reading of information on your terminal device. Likewise, you consent to the further processing of the collected and read personal data and its possible transfer outside of Switzerland and/or the European Union, for example USA. For detailed information on the use and management of cookies, please click on "Cookie Settings". By clicking on "Reject non necessary cookies", you reject the use of cookies that require your consent. You can change your cookie settings in the "Cookie settings" section at any time.

[Cookie policy](#)



Huguette Caland, Assurbanipal, 1986. Courtesy The Estate of Huguette Caland and Mennour.



Huguette Caland, Big Kiss, 1978. Courtesy The Estate of Huguette Caland and Mennour.



This website uses cookies

We use cookies (including third-party cookies) to provide you with the best possible online experience and to tailor content to your interests. By clicking "Accept all cookies" you consent to the storage and reading of information on your terminal device. Likewise, you consent to the further processing of the collected and read personal data and its possible transfer outside of Switzerland and/or the European Union, for example USA. For detailed information on the use and management of cookies, please click on "Cookie Settings". By clicking on "Reject non necessary cookies", you reject the use of cookies that require your consent. You can change your cookie settings in the "Cookie settings" section at any time.

[Cookie policy](#)

There could have been more material to include, another round of revisions to the hefty catalogue. ‘The toughest thing has been accepting that there had to be limits,’ says Feldman of the exhibition that presents about 300 works – some of which had to be restored. From interviewing studio assistants, family members, friends, and others who knew Caland, Feldman says the chats all felt ‘fated’ and that ‘there’s a certain sensibility to her work that is so transformative.’ There will be a lot of literature on Caland too – in addition to a museum catalogue, there is one that Mennour is publishing on its recent show, alongside others by Brigitte and Kholeif. Feldman is also curating another exhibition of Caland’s work that opens at the Arts Club of Chicago in April, along with another catalogue. An online catalogue raisonné is also in the pipeline, but because its subject was a life-loving, gift-giving artist, there are many works whose locations are unknown.

Brigitte recalls her mother’s lunches in Beirut that would bring together the cultural intelligentsia. Caland’s Madrid show will do the same, gathering her studio assistants from California, Beirut gallerist Nadine Begdache, Shirine Nakhal of Galerie Janine Rubeiz, beloved family and friends, and a whole new audience that will no doubt be inspired by an artist who was bold, adventurous, and hungry for life. ‘I love every minute of my life,’ Caland once said. ‘I squeeze it like an orange and eat the peel, because I don’t want to miss anything.’

Credits and captions

Huguette Caland

‘A Life in a Few Lines’

From February 19 to August 25, 2025

Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid

For over two decades, Myrna Ayad has written and edited for books, magazines, and dailies on visual art and culture from the Arab world and Iran. A frequent panelist, jurist, and moderator, her role as an independent cultural strategist allows her to work on projects for the luxury sector, government entities, private companies, and non-profit organizations.

This website uses cookies

We use cookies (including third-party cookies) to provide you with the best possible online experience and to tailor content to your interests. By clicking "Accept all cookies" you consent to the storage and reading of information on your terminal device. Likewise, you consent to the further processing of the collected and read personal data and its possible transfer outside of Switzerland and/or the European Union, for example USA. For detailed information on the use and management of cookies, please click on "Cookie Settings". By clicking on "Reject non necessary cookies", you reject the use of cookies that require your consent. You can change your cookie settings in the "Cookie settings" section at any time.

[Cookie policy](#)

Editors' picks: 7 shows not to miss, from punchy paintings to bold collages



As winter continues in the northern hemisphere, the Art Basel Editorial team recommends top exhibitions ...

[Read →](#)

How I became an artist: Raphaël Barontini



On the eve of his exhibition at Palais de Tokyo, the Parisian painter retraces the journey that took him...

[Read →](#)

From London to Kolkata: 5 young artists of South Asian heritage you need to know



Soon on view in Hong Kong and beyond, their work explores memory, nostalgia, and our longing...

[Read →](#)

ART BASEL

[Our History](#)

[The Team](#)

[Careers](#)

[Contact us](#)

INITIATIVES

[Overview](#)

[The Art Market](#)

[BMW Art Journey](#)

[MGM Discoveries Art Prize](#)

[Art Basel Shop](#)

APPS

[Art Basel for iOS](#)

[Art Basel for Android](#)

LEGAL

[Terms of Use](#)

This website uses cookies

We use cookies (including third-party cookies) to provide you with the best possible online experience and to tailor content to your interests. By clicking "Accept all cookies" you consent to the storage and reading of information on your terminal device. Likewise, you consent to the further processing of the collected and read personal data and its possible transfer outside of Switzerland and/or the European Union, for example USA. For detailed information on the use and management of cookies, please click on "Cookie Settings". By clicking on "Reject non necessary cookies", you reject the use of cookies that require your consent. You can change your cookie settings in the "Cookie settings" section at any time.

[Cookie policy](#)