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NNA - The art world celebrates a remarkable addition with the opening of the Saloua Raouda Choucair Museum, a tribute to one of the Middle East's most influential modernist artists. Located less than an hour from Beirut, this museum is not just a repository of art but also a living testament to the harmonious integration of human creativity with the natural environment.

Born in Beirut in 1916, Saloua Raouda Choucair was a trailblazer in the world of modern art. Her journey took her to Paris in 1948, where she studied with Fernand Léger and played a pivotal role in the establishment of Atelier de l'Art Abstrait, led by Edgard Pillet and Jean Dewasne. She was among the first Arab artists to exhibit at the Salon des Réalités Nouvelles in 1951, marking her as a significant figure in the global modern art movement. Her artwork has become part of the permanent collections of major museums around the world.

Choucair's work is a unique blend of Western abstraction and Islamic aesthetics, deeply influenced by her interests in science, architecture, mathematics, and Arabic poetry. She is celebrated for integrating the mathematical principles of Islamic art with modern abstract forms, creating art that resonates with both intellectual discipline

and poetic beauty. Her sculptures often reflect the concept of infinitude and the interconnectedness of forms - drawing inspiration from Sufi philosophy and Arabic poetry.

Celebrating Choucair's 108th Anniversary

Opened on June 24, on what would have been Choucair's 108th birthday, the Saloua Raouda Choucair Museum invites visitors to immerse themselves in the world of this pioneering abstract artist and to explore her innovative spirit and profound impact on modern art. As they stroll through the museum and its Sculpture Garden, visitors can engage with the artist's work and appreciate the interplay between her art and the natural surroundings. They are also invited to experience the enduring influence of Choucair's art and its place in the broader context of art history.

"Despite being born and raised in Beirut, Mother was always enchanted by the transparency of the pine tree forest," said Hala Schoukair, the artist's daughter and the president of the Saloua Raouda Choucair Foundation during the opening. "And when she first visited this plot where we stand today, she was so inspired by its trees, plants, and rocks, and immediately designed a plan for it.

So here we are, many years later, inaugurating a museum on this same land that will allow my mother's art to be admired by generations to come."

The Foundation, which safeguards and propagates the artist's rich legacy, has created a space that not only displays Choucair's extensive collection but also houses her personal archives. These archives provide invaluable insights into the artist's thought processes, artistic development, and the cultural and historical contexts that influenced her work.

A Diverse and Rich Collection

The museum houses around 600 pieces, with 500 on display, showcasing Choucair's versatile use of materials as varied as terracotta, wood, stone, fiberglass, metal sheets, brass, bronze, aluminum, plexiglass, and stainless steel. The collection also includes her innovative creations in furniture, carpets, plates, and jewelry, underscoring her belief that art should be intertwined with everyday life.

Designed by the renowned Lebanese architect Karim Bekdache, the Saloua Raouda Choucair Museum is a marvel of modernity and environmental sensitivity. Bekdache's vision aligns perfectly with the natural topography of its surroundings, with the structure appearing to float protectively over the lush vegetation.

The building nestles among the pine trees, maintaining a minimal impact on the landscape, a true celebration of Choucair's philosophy that art should be part of daily life.

"I hope this small country, with the effort of so many Lebanese working on so many fronts and with so many institutions to preserve our heritage and promote our art and culture, will revert to its rightful place as the beating heart of innovation," said Hala Schoukair. "I also hope this small museum we are opening today will play a part in that endeavor."

The museum will be open to visitors by appointment only.

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AGENDA

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