

Meet The Women Ruling The Lebanese Art Scene

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September 24,
2019



Lebanon, famous for good food and good parties, but there's so much more to it than that. With galleries and museums spread across the country, and the 10th edition of [Beirut Art Fair](#) having just come to a close, we present you with the Lebanese ladies to look out for in the art world.

Andrée Sfeir-Semler, Founder Sfeir Semler Gallery @sfeirsemler



Andrée Sfeir-Semler, © Roger Moukarzel

Andrée Sfeir-Semler is an art historian who founded her eponymous gallery in Germany in 1985. Twenty years later, in 2005, she opened a second gallery space in Beirut, transforming a defunct factory into the first white cube space in the Middle East. She studied History and History of Art and earned her PhD in 1980. Sfeir-Semler Gallery has been mainly representing conceptual and minimal artists. Since 2003 the gallery has focused on contemporary art from the Arab World and has been instrumental in launching and developing the careers of numerous artists from the region.

Joumana Asseily, Founder Marfa Gallery @marfaprojects



After witnessing the evolution of the contemporary art scene in Los Angeles, Joumana Asseily moved to Beirut in 2006, collaborating with non-profit art organisations including the Arab Image Foundation, Ashkal Alwan and the Beirut Art Center. Realizing that the blooming art scene in Lebanon was calling for new spaces dedicated to idea-based projects, in 2015 Joumana decided to start from scratch and founded Marfa' Gallery in Beirut. The gallery and its projects are built upon a desire of dialogue and collective thinking, with over a dozen internationally recognized artists and exhibitions around the world. From its humble beginnings at the entrance of the Beirut port, Joumana has taken Marfa' to international Art Fairs such as Liste Basel, Paris Internationale, Frieze London and Art Basel, giving the gallery worldwide recognition.

Tanya Traboulsi, Artist @[madame_tea](#)



Austrian-born with Lebanese origins, Tanya spent her childhood traveling back and forth between the two countries. Soon after graduating from fashion school in Austria, she developed a growing interest in photography, around which she now centers her practice. Tanya's work explores highly personal themes of belonging, identity and memory, as well as the sociological stigmas relating to female identity. Tanya's work has been exhibited internationally in both solo and group exhibitions at Bildraum 01, Kunsthalle Wien and Beirut Art Center. Her photographs have been featured in several notable print and online publications like Brownbook, Colors Magazine, Phases Magazine, L'Oeil de la Photographie, Monocle, The Wire and many others, and in 2013, she was awarded The Boghossian Foundation Prize.

Hind Ahmad, Founder Artual Gallery @[hinddahmad](#)



Hind Ahmad studied Art and Visual Culture in London while simultaneously earning a Law degree via correspondence at the Sorbonne University. She came to the conclusion that these two areas of study could act as powerful tools for influencing and reflecting the intricacies of our time. Honing her skills at Christie's, she then joined Victoria Miro before setting up her own art dealing business while managing her father's art foundation. In late 2017, Hind decided that the time was ripe to launch her online gallery, launching her permanent physical space Artual Gallery in Beirut in 2019. The gallery features contemporary work by emerging international artists, fulfilling her dream of promoting an artistic exchange between Western and non-Western societies.

Raya Mamarbachi, Co-founder and Director, Artscoops @[art_scoops](#)



Image Sueraya Shaheen

Raya Mamarbachi is co-founder and director of Artscoops, a marketplace for collectors, presenting contemporary MENA art and objects from artists and galleries; auctions and private sales. Before creating Artscoops, Raya led the digital marketing departments at Publicis in Lebanon and Mac DDB in Qatar, working on large accounts such as Qatari Diar and the Qatar Museum Authority. She has also held positions in both online and traditional marketing at global companies. In addition, Raya started her own online business, simplyzigzag.com, which she later sold. Raya holds an MBA with concentrations in Branding & Advertising from Henley Management College, and a joint MA in Management and Spanish from St. Andrews University, Scotland.

Joana Hadjithomas, Artist @[aboutjoana](#)



Joana Hadjithomas is a filmmaker and artist who often works in collaboration with Khalil Joreige. Self-taught, they became filmmakers and artists through necessity in the wake of the Lebanese civil wars and interweave thematic, conceptual and formal links through photographs, video installations, fictional films and documentaries.. For more than fifteen years, their films and artworks, created using personal and political documents, develop narratives out of stories kept secret in the face of the prevailing history. The investigative process they adopt, together with their exploration of geographical and personal territory, endows their work with a particular aesthetic. Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige's work is constructed around the production of types of knowledge, the rewriting of history, construction of imaginaries, and also around contemporary modes of narration. They draw on their experience of their own country while going beyond its frontiers.

Laure D'Hauteville, Founder, Beirut Art Fair @[beirutartfair](https://www.beirutartfair.com)

French-born, Sorbonne-trained Laure d'Hauteville made Lebanon her second home in 1991. Starting as a writer for Lebanese publications, she has been organizing impactful artistic events across the world for the past twenty years. Between 1998 and 2005, in Beirut, she spearheaded the contemporary art fair ARTUEL, whose popularity reverberated in editions in Dubai, Paris, Moscow, and Las Vegas. Soon after, she collaborated with Art Paris to found the first two editions of the fair (currently known as Abu Dhabi Art Fair), in 2007 and 2008. In 2014, she launched SINGAPORE ART FAIR, dedicated to artists of the Middle East and South-East Asia. D'Hauteville is proudest of her decision to specialize in the contemporary art of the ME.NA. region, which led to the creation of BEIRUT ART FAIR in 2010. The fair celebrates its 10th edition this year with 55 art galleries from 18 countries, featuring more than 350 artists from more than 40 nationalities.

Lamia Joreige, Artist



Polly Thomas © Artes Mundi

Lamia Joreige is a visual artist and film-maker. With a BFA from the Rhode Island School of Design, her practice is rooted in her country's experience, exploring the possibilities of representing the Lebanese wars and their aftermath. Her work is essentially on time, the recordings of its trace, and its effects on us. Her works have been presented in exhibitions and festivals worldwide, including Centre Pompidou, the New Museum, ICP, SFMOMA, Tate Modern, Venice and Sharjah Biennales, FID Marseille, Homeworks and Rencontres Internationales Paris/Berlin, and was featured in a number of books. She was a fellow at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard University for the year 2016–2017 and was shortlisted for Artes Mundi 7, the UK's leading biennial art prize. She is also a co-founder and board member of Beirut Art Center, which she co-directed from 2009 to 2014.

Salwa Chalhoub, co-founder and director of Opera Gallery Beirut, @salwachalhoub



Salwa Chalhoub's passion for art was kindled long before Opera Gallery Beirut came to be, when she began collecting art with her husband. As part of a global network, Opera Gallery's presence in Beirut is important because it counts on signing its own Lebanese artists and launching them into the gallery's global network — pinning the city on the art world's map. She explains: "I wanted to adapt to the economic situation of the country. But I quickly realised that I wanted to raise the stakes. I picked the artists I wanted at the level I wanted, and ever since, we have been more successful. People have more vision, more exposure – they come in here knowing what they want."

Marie Tomb, Founder Le Waw, [@le_waw](#)

An art historian, writer, and curator, Marie Tomb is passionate about disseminating her knowledge of Lebanese and Middle Eastern art. Her prolific body of writing, spanning books, print publications, exhibition catalogues, and academia, includes the first contemporary survey of Lebanese art, *Art from Lebanon: Modern and Contemporary artists 1880-1975*. First trained at Yale University and the Courtauld Institute of Art, Marie received her Ph.D. from the School of Oriental and African Studies in London, where she focused on modern Lebanese art. Together with her writing ventures, she built a multifaceted presence in the Middle Eastern



art world, where she translates her expertise into exhibitions, university lecturing, and being Beirut Art Fair's Editorial Director. Challenging the codes of mainstream local journalism, she founded independent platform for art criticism [Le WAW](#) which explores the regional art scene.

Marine Bustros, Interior Designer, [@mb.designstudios](#)



Marine Bustros specialized in Interior Design while studying at the Lebanese Academy of Fine Arts (ALBA). She, then, went on to take a Master's degree at the Scuola Politecnica di Design (SPD) in Milan. After working with Gatserelia Design in Beirut, she opened her own studio 'mb design' in 2018. Marine's signature style marries together traditional and contemporary materials. When she's working, she likes to create a mood, an entire experience which is immediately in evidence as soon as someone enters a space or catches sight of a piece of furniture.

Zena el Khalil, Artist @zenaelkhalil



Zena el Khalil believes in the positive impact that art can have on the world. She uses visual art, site-specific installation, performance and ritual to explore and heal the war-torn history of Lebanon and other global sites of trauma. Merging art and healing modalities, Zena has been conducting healing ceremonies across Lebanon in spaces that have historically endured trauma and violence, such as environmental disasters, massacres and even the torturing of human beings. Believing in the importance of community engagement with contemporary art, Zena also curates events, workshops and concerts dedicated to healing and reconciliation, through the transformative mediums of ceremony, sound and art. She has spoken at the Nobel Peace Center in Oslo, given several TED talks and her memoir *Beirut, I Love You* has been translated into several languages. Her work has been published by the BBC, CNN, The New York Times and the Guardian.

Nayla Romanos Iliya, Architect and Sculptor, @[naylaromanosiliya](#)



Nayla Romanos Iliya is an architect and artist whose projects include interior design, renovation and architecture. Having lived in Lebanon, Paris, London, Hong Kong and Dubai, Nayla's exposure to cultures developed a strong interest in art, and has been sculpting since 2011. Her sculpture is influenced by her architectural practice, as well as the Phoenician civilisation. Her work can be found in private and public collections in Lebanon and abroad.