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Lombard Freid Gallery Displays Revolutionary Erotic Paintings of Huguette Caland

Erotic, humorous, and abstract—the early works of Huguette Caland are the focus of a new exhibition this fall at New York’s Lombard Freid Gallery. The Lebanese artist’s minimalist works, which were considered radical at the time of their creation—emerging from the cultural renaissance happening in Beirut during the 1970s and 1980s—are revived and reconsidered in the present.

Influenced by Paul Klee and Gustav Klimt, Caland conveyed the essence of feminine sensuality with simple lines and shapes in her series “Bribes de Corps,” which translates to “body fragments.” In these paintings and colored pencil drawings, female forms become soft landscapes; body parts and curves of flesh become mountains and valleys. Though Caland is often linked with contemporaries Saliba Douaihy and Etel Adnan, her work is pioneering for its brash sexuality.

Other works, such as *Exit* (1970) are more overtly sensual, featuring nude couples pressed up against one another; their fragmented, tangled limbs depicted in a stained glass-like mosaic. Art critic Negar Azimi says of Caland’s works such as this one: “Orifices represent beginnings or endings or indeed both as directionality is turned on its head. . . . Bodies are inscribed on bodies—creating delirious palimpsests—as if marking the faces that mark all the encounters of a life.” Other pieces such as *Tete-a-Tete* (1970) impart a sense of anxiety and wonder. While the artist does not like to talk about the meanings behind her paintings, her references to sexuality and identity are inescapable.

Caland has always been interested in embroidery and design, which is exemplified in the exhibition through a set of six caftans. These works are similar to the 100 caftans she created in 1979, in collaboration with designer Pierre Cardin. “This is haute couture, but I painted over it!” the artist once joked. The stunning black and white clothes challenge Middle Eastern notions of womanhood and sexuality and feature her iconic, erotic lines.

—Sola Agustsson

“Huguette Caland: Early Works” will be on view at Lombard Freid Gallery Oct. 30th–Dec. 20th, 2014.



Huguette Caland
Exit, 1970
Lombard Freid Gallery
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Huguette Caland
Tete-a-Tete, 1970
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