

Arts News



COURTESY OF THE ARTIST



ELA BIALKOWSKA, COURTESY OF ALEXANDER AND BONIN, NEW YORK

Left: Huda Lutfi, *House Bound*, 2008; Mixed media, photo collage, and mannequin legs, 25 x 15 1/2 x 6 1/4 in.; Above: Mona Hatoum, *Projection*, 2006; Cotton and abaca, 35 x 55 in.

The Fertile Crescent

August 13, 2012–January 13, 2013, exhibition venues in New Jersey are collaborating on an ambitious exhibition program, *The Fertile Crescent: Gender, Art, and Society*, initiated by Ferris Olin and Judith K. Brodsky, co-directors of the Institute for Women and Art at Rutgers. As the title suggests, the project explores gender roles and the presentation of the female body within the artwork of twenty-six women artists from the Middle East and the Middle East Diaspora. In an essay in the accompanying catalogue (Artbook DAP, 2012), Olin and Brodsky say, “We remembered that phrase [Fertile Crescent] and thought it might catch people’s attention and provoke reflection,” because of its pigeonholing, colonialist assumptions. Their goal was to involve as varied and vivid a group as possible.

At multiple venues throughout New Brunswick and Princeton, the exhibitions present artwork by Negar Ahkami, Shiva Ahmadi, Jananne Al-Ani, Fatima Al Qadiri, Monira Al Qadiri, Ghada Amer and Reza Farkhondeh, Zeina Barakeh, Ofri Cnaani, Nezaket Ekici, Diana El Jeiroudi, Parastou Forouhar, Ayana Friedman, Shadi Ghadirian, Mona Hatoum, Hayv Kahraman, Efrat Kedem, Sigalit Landau, Ariane Littman, Shirin Neshat, Ebru Özseçen, Laila Shawa, Shahzia Sikander, Fatimah Tuggar, and Nil Yalter.

Through a schedule of ongoing programming, featuring a symposium, panel discussions, lectures, and film screenings—including films such as Shirin Neshat’s *Women Without Men* and Marjane Satrapi’s *Persepolis*—organizers address the social, historical, and theological issues shaping women in the region. They explore the vast issues of transnationalism, the environment, sexuality, and the economy. Catalogue essays focus on “The Art of Revolution in Egypt,” “Art, Precarity, Biopolitics,” and “Slipping Away: Or Uncompliant Cartographies.” The scholars and artists grapple with the subjects of fixed identity and geography, and return to, as essayist Gilane Tawadros describes, “art’s slippery, uncompliant nature.”

In Memoriam



COURTESY JUNE KELLY GALLERY, © CHARLES STORER

Sculptor and printmaker Elizabeth Catlett died April 2 at age ninety-six. She used her art to advocate for social change in both the U.S. and her adopted country of Mexico

for almost three-quarters of a century. During the past forty years, museums and galleries have held more than fifty solo exhibitions of Catlett’s sculptures and prints. Born in 1915, Catlett was raised in Washington, D.C. She

graduated with honors from Howard University in 1935 and went on to earn an MFA in sculpture at the University of Iowa. Encouraged by Grant Wood, her painting teacher at Iowa, Catlett experimented with different mediums, creating lithographs, linoleum cuts, and sculpture in wood, stone, clay, and bronze.

In 1946, a grant from the Rosenwald Foundation enabled her to move to Mexico City with her husband, printmaker Charles White. There she joined the Taller de Gráfica Popular, an influential and political group of printmakers. At the Taller, Catlett met the Mexican artist Francisco Mora, whom she married after divorcing White and with whom she had three children. Catlett taught at the National School of Fine Arts in Mexico City from 1958 until her retirement in 1976.

Catlett continued to make art through her mid-nineties, dividing her time between New York and Cuernavaca. The subjects for her stylized two- and three-dimensional figures ranged from tender maternal images to confrontational symbols of the Black Power movement, to portraits of Martin Luther King, Jr., and the writer Phyllis Wheatley. Several of her prints are in NMWA’s collection, including *Singing Their Songs*, one of six lithographs that Catlett made to illustrate the 1937 poem “For My People,” written by her friend, author Margaret Walker.