

Enji Eflatoun

1924 - 1989

An Egyptian painter and activist in the women's movement, she was a pioneer of modern Egyptian art and considered one of the important Egyptian visual artists.

During school, Eflatoun liked to paint and her parents encouraged her. Her private art tutor, Kamel al-Timisani, a leader in an Egyptian Surrealist collective called the Art and Freedom Group, introduced her to surrealist and cubist aesthetics. Her paintings of that period are influenced by Surrealism. She later recalled that people were astonished by her paintings and wondered "why a girl from a rich family was so tormented."

She stopped painting from 1946 to 1948, considering that what she was painting no longer corresponded to her feelings. Her interest was later renewed after visiting Luxor, Nubia, and the Egyptian oases. During these trips, she had the opportunity to "penetrate the houses and sketch men and women at work."

She joined *Harakat ansar al salam* (Movement of the Friends of Peace), a political organization with affiliations to Communism in 1950. She studied for a year with the Egyptian-born Swiss artist Margo Veillon, and during this period, she made individual exhibits in Cairo and Alexandria and showed at the Venice Biennale in 1952, and the São Paulo Art Biennial in 1956. In 1956, she became friends with and was later influenced by the Mexican painter David Alfaro Siqueiros.

She was arrested and secretly imprisoned during Nasser's roundup of Communists in 1959, but was able to continue painting during her imprisonment. Her early prison paintings are portraits, while the later are landscapes.

In the years after her liberation, she exhibited in Rome and Paris in 1967, Dresden, East Berlin, Warsaw and Moscow in 1970, Sofia in 1974, Prague in 1975, New Delhi in 1979. Her paintings are filled with "lively brushstrokes of intense color" reminding some observers of Van Gogh or Bonnard. Her art of later years is characterized by an increasing use of large white spaces around her forms. A collection of her works is displayed at the Amir Taz Palace in Cairo.