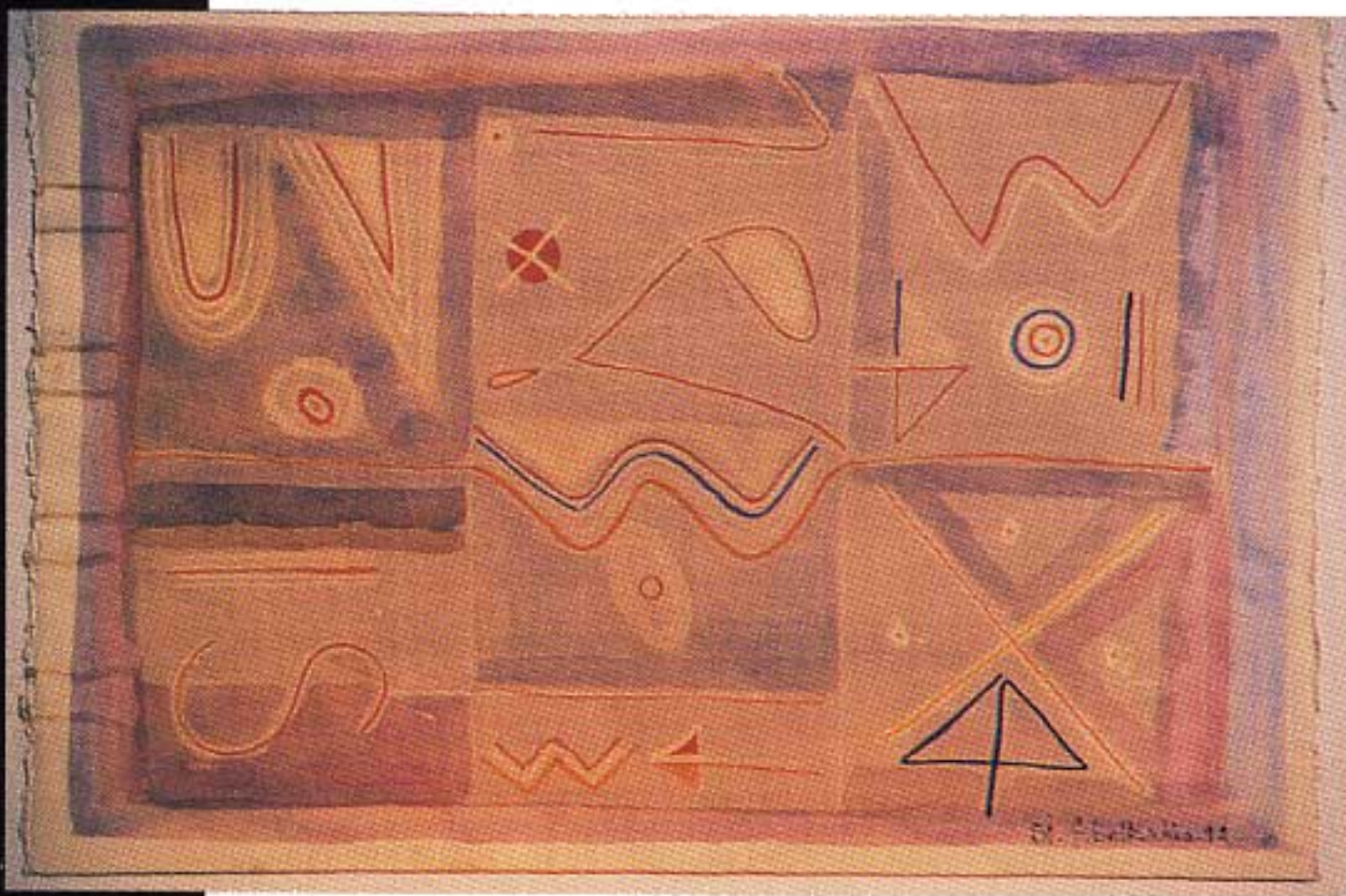


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Watercolors on paper by Farid Belkahia of Morocco (upper), and Afaf Zureiq of Lebanon.

becomes the bridge between the two visual sensibilities of my world," he writes, "...two modes of expression which historically developed in opposite directions."

Boullata recently exhibited "Duets, Quartets and a Triangle" at Darat al-Funun, work that drew upon two years of Fulbright-sponsored research in Islamic geometric art in Morocco.

Born in Jerusalem and educated at the Academy of Rome and the Corcoran School of Art in Washington, Boullata has shown throughout Europe, the United States and the Middle East. Although he has lived in Washington for the past 25 years, his ties to the Islamic world and to his place of birth are strong. "All my work," he writes, "seems to have been done with Jerusalem seen through the mind's eye."

This memory of Jerusalem is constantly renewed through Boullata's geometric precision,

which seeks to bridge the gulf between cultures and times: "Connections emerged between the presence of contemporary works I saw in the Western metropolis and the memory of the geometric art I have seen within the walls of Jerusalem. Centuries ago the same language of geometry was employed in my culture of origin."

In a brightly colored acrylic work titled "Jacob's Ladder," Boullata uses color and geometry to reflect the architecture, tilework and light of Palestine, and uses the title of the piece to evoke the three monotheistic religions. In using the title as part of the work, Boullata does homage to the "word" and its content, thus connecting the verbal imagery of Islamic tradition with the visual tradition of the West.

Not all of Darat al-Funun's artists, of course, are painters. Sculptor Samer Tabbaa has had numerous exhibitions in Jordan and abroad. Born in 1945 in Taif, Saudi Arabia, and educated in the US, Tabbaa now lives and works in Amman. One of his best-known works dominates the Second Circle of the city. There he has positioned a large stone wheel across rough stone supports, with a waterfall cascading over it, so that nature and invention seem to be exchanging energy. Tabbaa is consistent in his choice of an abstract, even archetypal vocabulary. Yet some of his works are highly refined, even painterly, while others are totemic and monolithic.

Moroccan artist Farid Belkahia, who was educated in Paris, Prague and Milan and now lives in Marrakech, incorporates a roughly drawn X as a dominant sign in several of his watercolors. He compartmentalizes the picture plane to accommodate other signs and gestures. With chalky pastels that suggest the fresh plaster of fresco painting, and an economy of line that evokes the primordial quality of cave drawings, the artist seems to recall a mythology that has not yet been articulated.

In contrast to Belkahia's pastels are Afaf Zureiq's moody charcoal and watercolor washes. Educated at the American University of Beirut and Harvard University, this Lebanese artist brings a dark vibrancy to her images. Working in a difficult medium, Zureiq creates a forest of vertical scratchings and strokes interrupted by interplay of darks and lights, transparencies and masses.

An influential artist who does not shy from socio-political messages is Laila Al-Shawa, born in Gaza and educated in Cairo and Rome. She is best-known for "Wall Of Gaza," which was featured in the traveling exhibit "Forces of Change" (See *Aramco World*, January/February 1994). Here, through photographs and painting, she documents the urgency of a people's struggle. Sometimes printing her photographs on canvas, Al-Shawa too incorporates geometry in her images, providing, she says, "a sense of order in a chaotic, torn and divided existence."

Among the younger artists nurtured in part by Darat al-Funun is Halim Mahdi Hadi, born in Najaf, Iraq, and educated in Baghdad. In Ali Maher's office at Darat al-Funun hangs an