



**RIM EL JUNDI**  
the texture of water



## The Texture of Water

Water doesn't own a visual texture. It is deceitful. It borrows the texture of surrounding things to create an illusion. I know that. I know its texture is illusory, and for precisely that reason, I was drawn to it.

I was looking for a comforting illusion and I found it in the water.

As Beirut ensnared me, (was it the pandemic? The ruin? age?) I became a houseplant sitting on the couch in front of the television. I became indoors and out-of-town. The streets that once made me who I am are no longer mine, and I could no longer venture into them without feeling paralyzed.

I had to run away. I had to find my cocoon, my illusion.

I found it. A time capsule of a country that used to live in Mediterranean bliss. It was a motel build by the end of the seventies. Two small yellow buildings facing each other. From the one I lived in, I used to look at the other building with its sublime staircase and the two palm trees that traveled from California to settle next to it. A scene fit for a movie. Didn't I say it was a motel? Between the two buildings lies a swimming pool. My darling swimming pool.

It is a rectangular shape paved with blue mosaics, that gave the water its color, and brought me back my soul.

I now have to paint with blue.

It's been years now I'm living by the pool. I float in its water then sit beside it in the shadow of a tree that shed yellow flowers over me, and I stare for hours at the surface of the water and its transformations, where the reflections of the surrounding things become a world of illusion and fascination.

Here, I can place my hand on the illusory texture of water.

Rim El Jundi



## ملمس الماء



ليس للماء ملمس بصري، هو مخادع، يستعير ملمس الأشياء التي تحيط به ليخترع ملمساً وهمياً. أعرف هذا، أعرف أن ملمسه وهم ولهذا السبب تحديداً ذهبت إليه.

كنت أبحث عن وهم يريحني ووجدته في الماء.

حين ضاقت بيروت من حوي (هو الوباء؟ هو الخراب؟ هو العمر؟) تحولت إلى نبتة تجلس على كنية أمام التلفزيون، صرت داخل الشقة وخارج المدينة، لم تعد الشوارع التي صنعتني ملكي، وصرت حين أخرج إليها أصاب بالشلل.

علي أن أهرب، أن أجد قوقعتي، وهمي.

وجدته، كبسولة زمنية لبلد كان يعيش في هناة متوسطة، إنه موتيل يرجع بناؤه لنهاية السبعينيات، مبانٍ صغيران بلون أصفر، يتقابلان، المبنى الذي سكنته يطل على المبنى الآخر ودرجه الخارجي المهيب وعلى نخلتين سافرتا من كاليفورنيا لتستقران إلى جانبه، مشهد يليق بفيلم سينمائي، ألم أقل إنه موتيل؟ بين المبنيين ببسين، حبيبتي الببسين.

هي مستطيل مبلط بموزاييك أزرق يعطي الماء لونه ويرد إلي روحي.

علي الآن أن أرسم بالأزرق.

أجاور الببسين منذ سنوات، أطفو في مائها ثم أجلس إلى جانبها في ظل شجرة تنثر علي زهراً أصفر وأحرق لساعات بسطح الماء وتحولاته، حيث انعكاس الأشياء المحيطة عالم كامل من وهم وفتنة.

هنا، أستطيع أن أضع يدي على الملمس الوهمي للماء.

ريم الجندي

## The Illusion of Worlds

*Water doesn't own a visual texture. It is deceitful. It borrows the texture of surrounding things to create an illusion. I know that its texture is illusory, and for that reason I was drawn to it.*

In the words of the artist, water is deceitful, illusory, and it is this slippery quality that draws her in.

In fact, there is slippage everywhere in this work.

For paintings with a lot of trees, I see a lot of concrete, a friend of the artist remarked.

*The Texture of Water* takes the viewer on a journey to escape the world we know, and through that passage leads us towards another. This is not a simple journey out of the city, though it is that. It is equally something more, a personal memento of how to live right now, in this time. El Jundi notes of her process that she begins to observe a certain aspect of the world more closely, with her mind and then in sketches, words. A thought is there, and gradually the series comes, paintings come.

El Jundi is a city girl, self-proclaimed, a hybrid. She paints life as it passes, and her life is here, or there, or on the way somewhere else, always in Lebanon, even if affected by thoughts of escape, migration, movement. She finds her work as it passes through her life. Now, she paints a small parcel of land, an enclave of safety in the village of Aamchit, her cocoon. This world is caught in neat, hot, slices, glimpses. There is no wider world.

*Two small yellow buildings facing each other ... between the two buildings lies a swimming pool.*

There is a pool, the buildings for shade. There are even people, though where they go and come we have no idea. Lives are lived in slices of pool. A group of friends play cards, a woman swims, children lounge, there is sunbathing.

*It is a rectangular shape paved with blue mosaics, that gave the water its colour, and gave me back my soul.*

*It's been years now I'm living by the pool. I float in its water then sit beside it in the shadow of a tree that shed yellow flowers over me, and I stare for hours at the surface of the water and its transformations, where the reflections of the surrounding things become a world of illusion and fascination.*

*Here, I can place my hand on the illusory texture of water.*

Beyond the pool, her retreat from the world, El Jundi finds a way into another, a way to look through the surface into what lies beneath.

An iconography, a search for another reference point, a way to be balanced in the here and now, and also there, in the past.

Here in her Aamchit haven a woman inhabits a swimming pool, an escape to nature that is noticeably a landscape of Lebanon. An escape to nature that is also somehow an escape to another cityscape, though outside of the city. A city girl, even here. She swims in a pool, not the sea. Her paintings show concrete edges, shadows on paving, tiles. Nature co-exists with construction.

There is another element, and another. There are patterns, added insistently to each view. They fit their environs but also lift the viewer from the moment, from sharp blue. And there is gold, an angel, Seraphina, inhabits these works. Saint Seraphina, Seraphina angels, the highest ranking angels of god known for their intense passion and burning love.

In her escape to the past of Lebanon, she travels beyond this century, and into what came before. She seeks a reference point that is regional, local, a reference to balance with every other. El Jundi studied icon painting, sought company in the Byzantine past, found the six wings and four faces of Seraphina among others, allows them to appear.

The large series has a quality that is almost out of this world, the use of iconographic imagery and style lending the work a quaint stiffness, but balanced by her mastery of the paint itself. The detail arrests the eye and the feeling is known. Heat, light, water.

Texture is important, the texture of work in her hands, and again this felt experience is part of a process of allowing something unknown, the emergence of what lies under that reflected surface. Rough woven panels, formed from canvas, dipped in glue, become awkward surfaces for part paintings. Ladders and the woman are icons sitting barely on the woven structures, and point again to the world below. It is a texture of the journey, of how it feels to know, to continue, to feel ones' way through a painting. These woven tiles are visual manifestations of that deep and textured work.

While water may have no texture of its own, something in this work certainly does. Something here has too much texture, and something else has none.

That pool, her pool, the illusion.

Amy Todman  
July, 2024





*Old Sins Cast Long Shadows* | Acrylic & mixed media on canvas | 150x90 cm | 2023

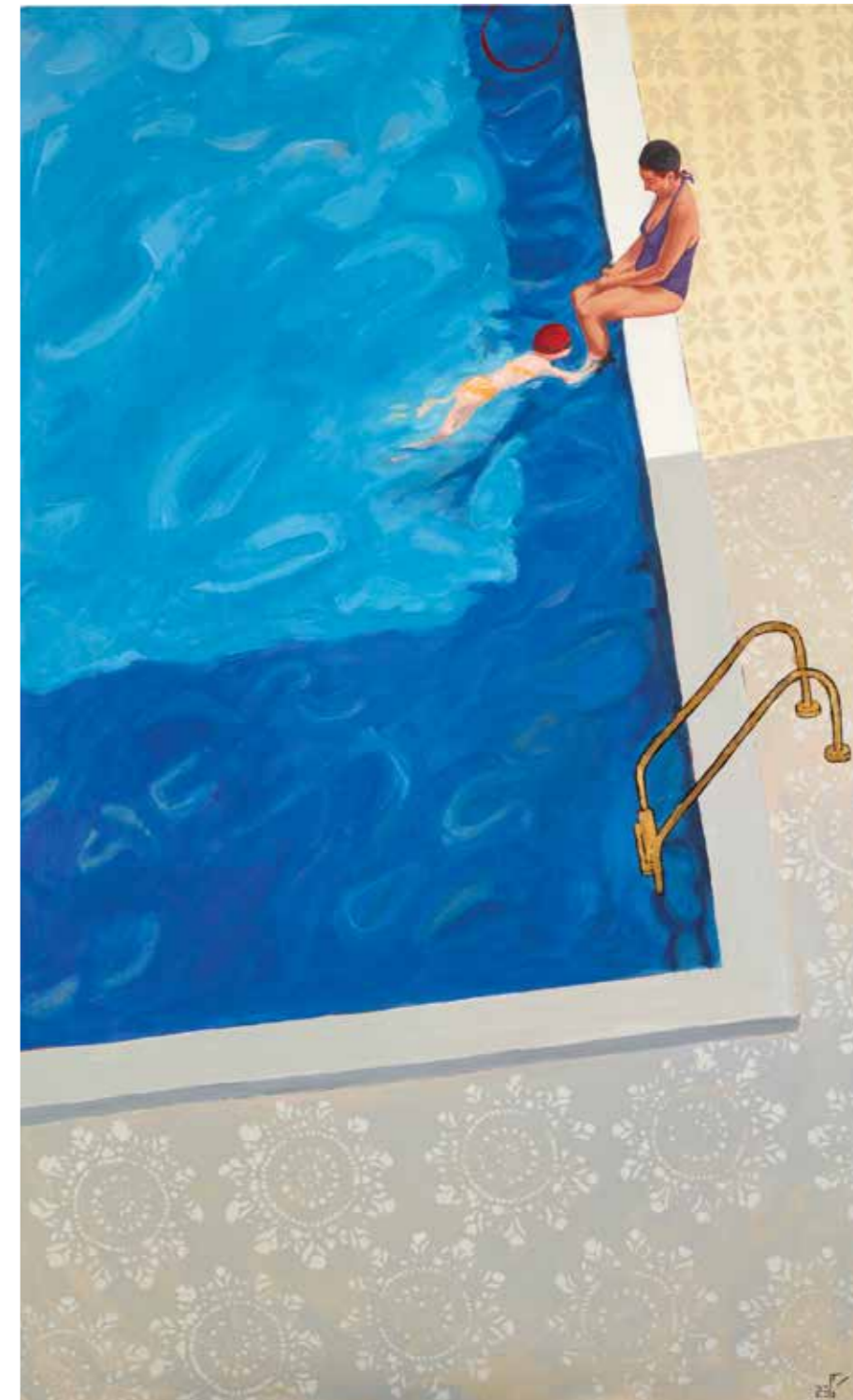


*Sanctuary* | Acrylic & mixed media on canvas | 150x90 cm | 2024





*Sunny Day at the Pool* | Acrylic & mixed media on canvas | 150x90 cm | 2023



*Stay with me, Mother* | Acrylic & mixed media on canvas | 150x90 cm | 2023



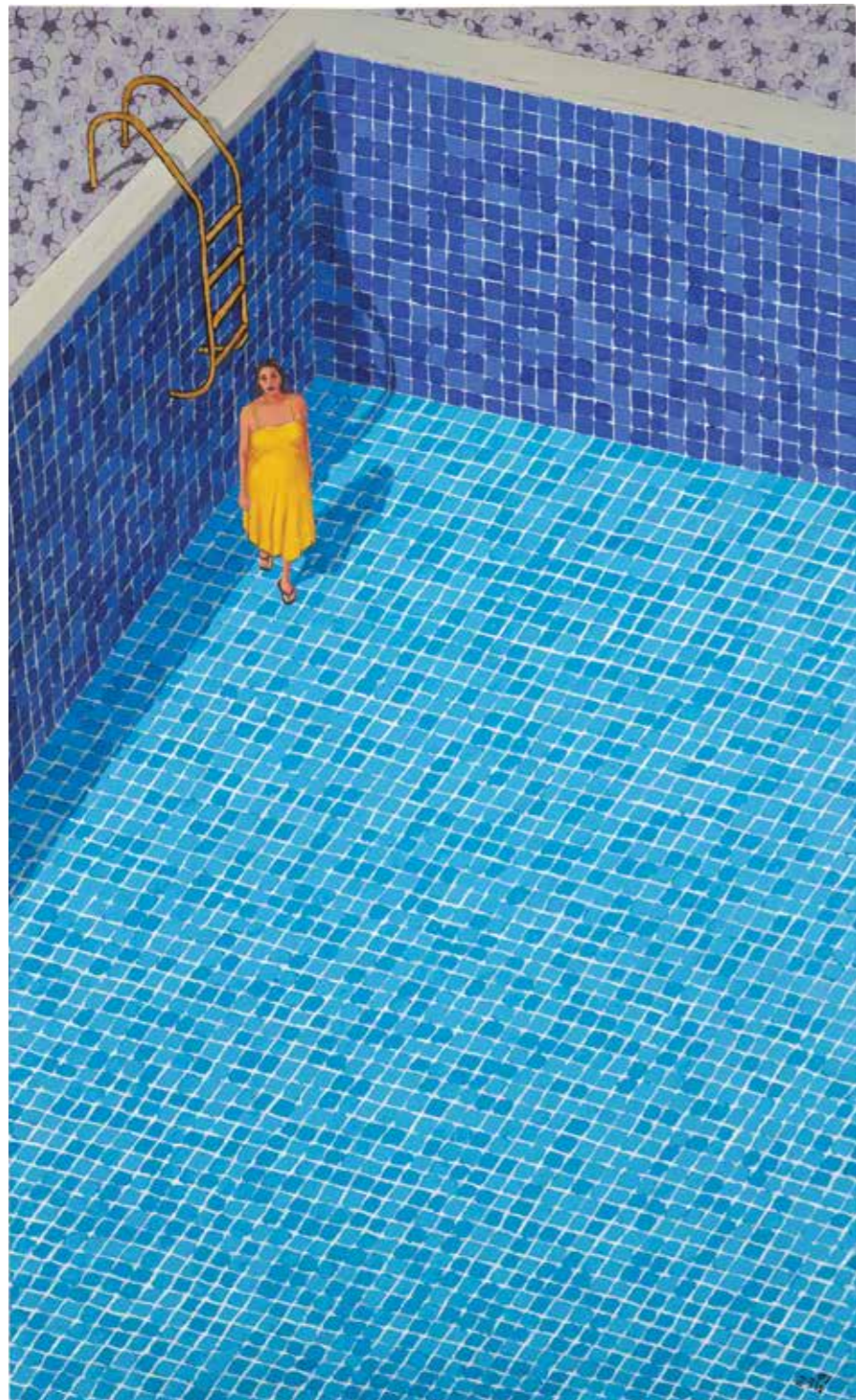


*The Guardian of the Tree* | Acrylic & mixed media on canvas | 150x90 cm | 2023



*A Tree Sheds its Flowers for the Lucky One* | Acrylic & mixed media on canvas | 150x90 cm | 2023





*The Texture of Water* | Acrylic & mixed media on canvas | 150x90 cm | 2023



*Static* | Acrylic & mixed media on canvas | 150x90 cm | 2024





*A Golden Ledge* | Acrylic & mixed media on canvas | 70x50 cm | 2023



*Red Fields* | Acrylic & mixed media on canvas | 70x50 cm | 2024



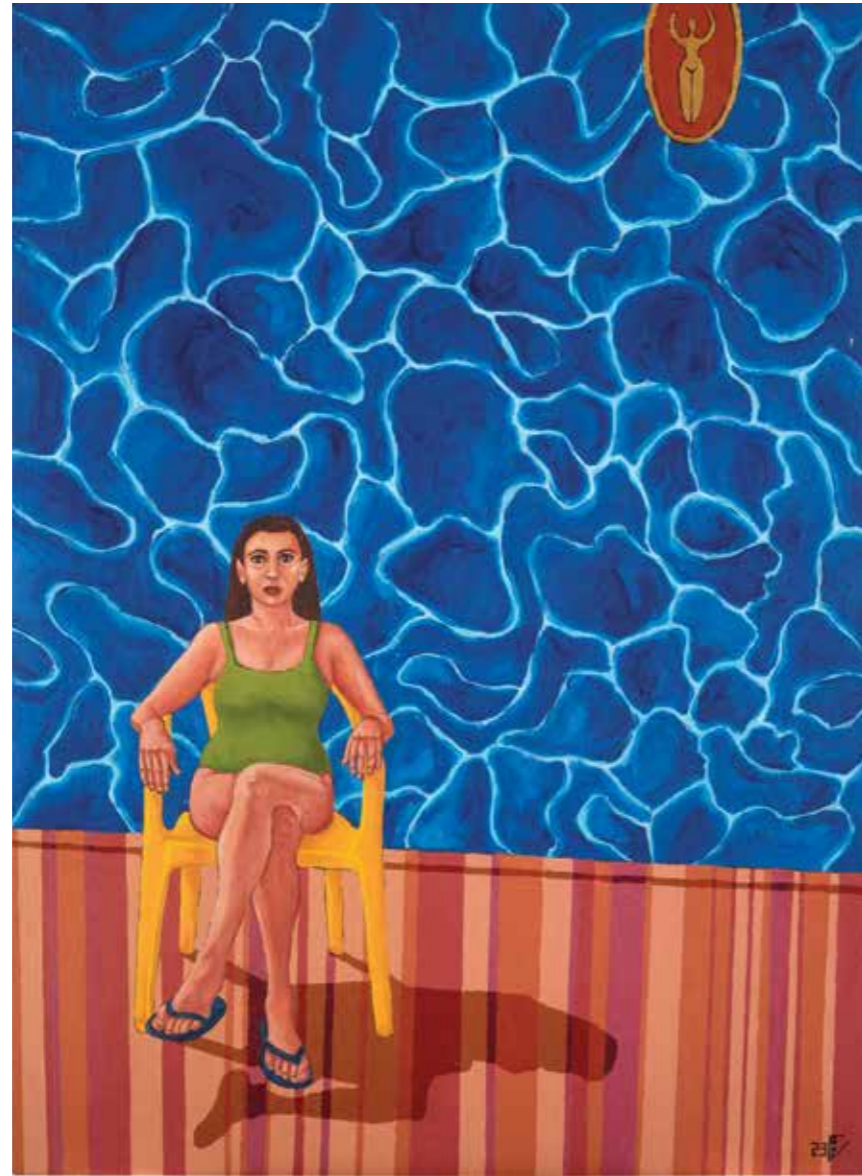


*Pine Trees* | Acrylic & mixed media on canvas | 70x50 cm | 2023

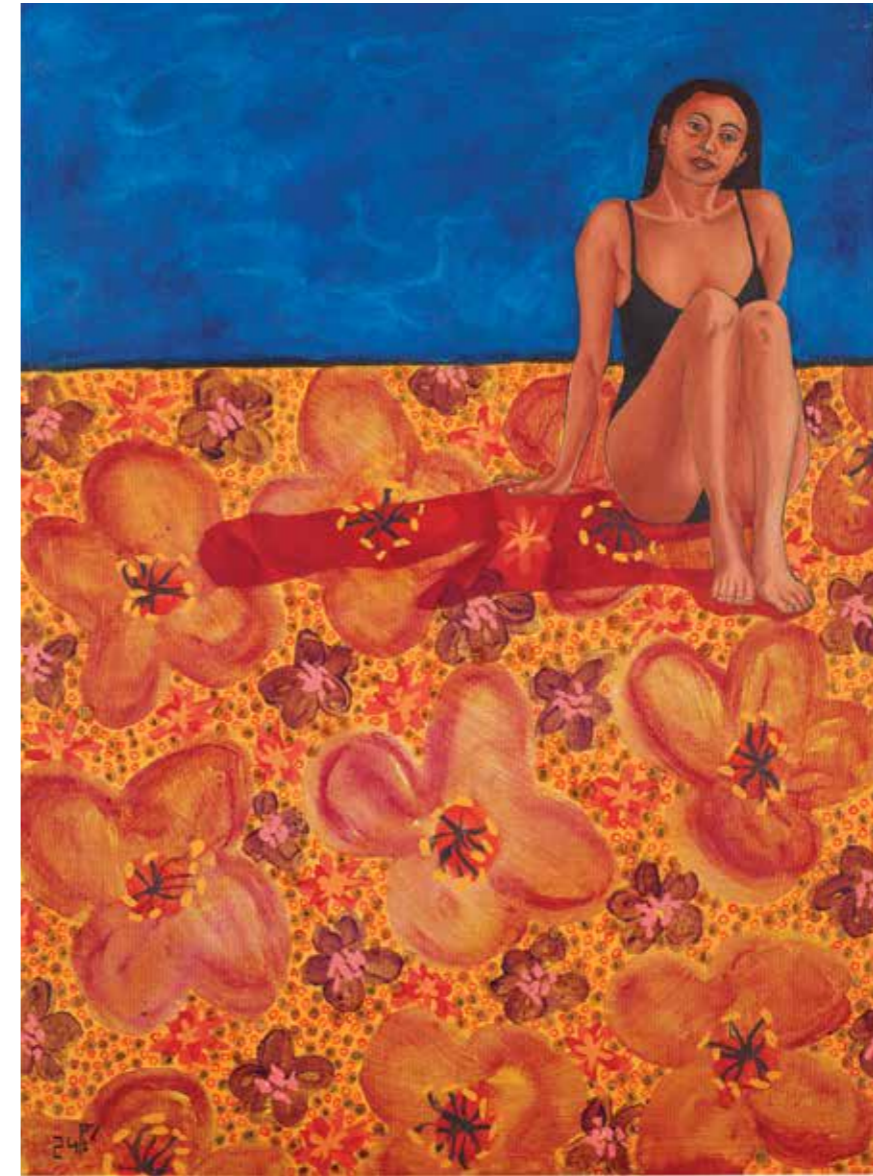


*Bathing Suit* | Acrylic & mixed media on canvas | 70x50 cm | 2022



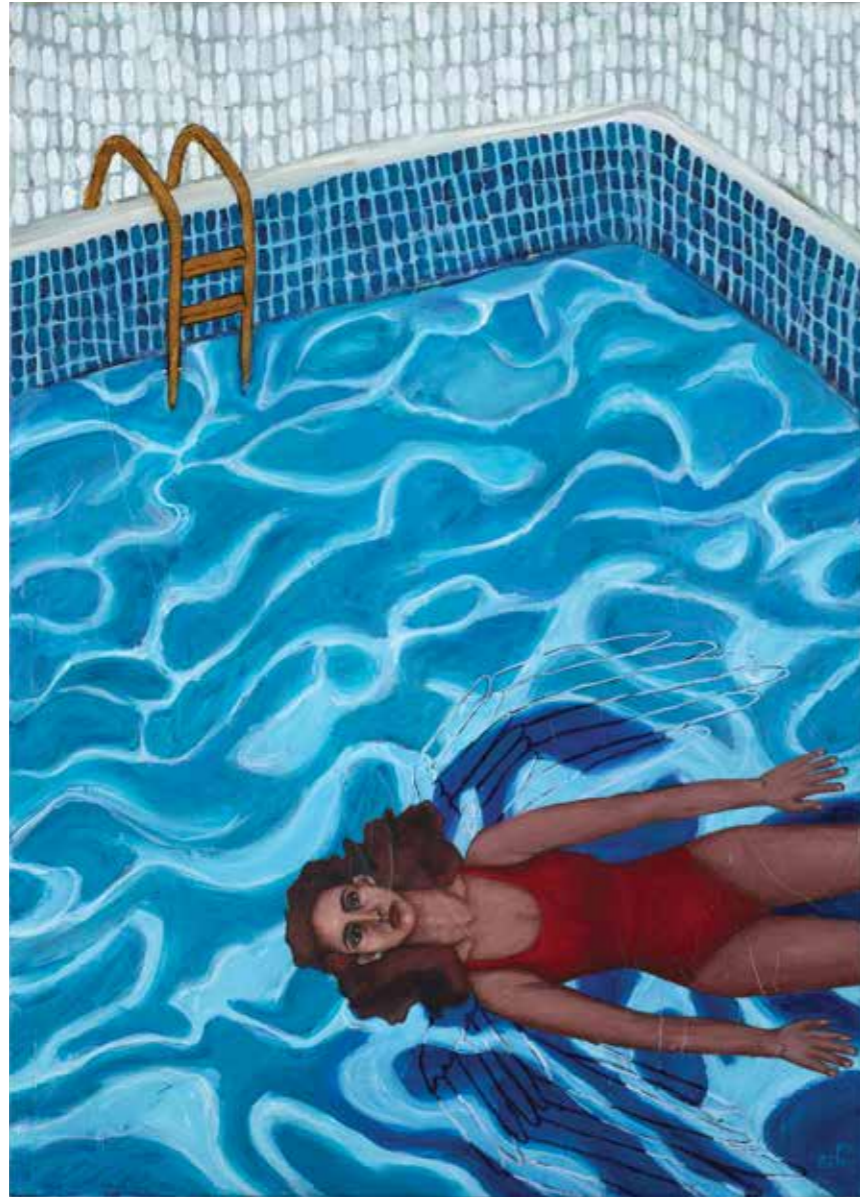


*Light Shadow* | Acrylic & mixed media on canvas | 70x50 cm | 2023

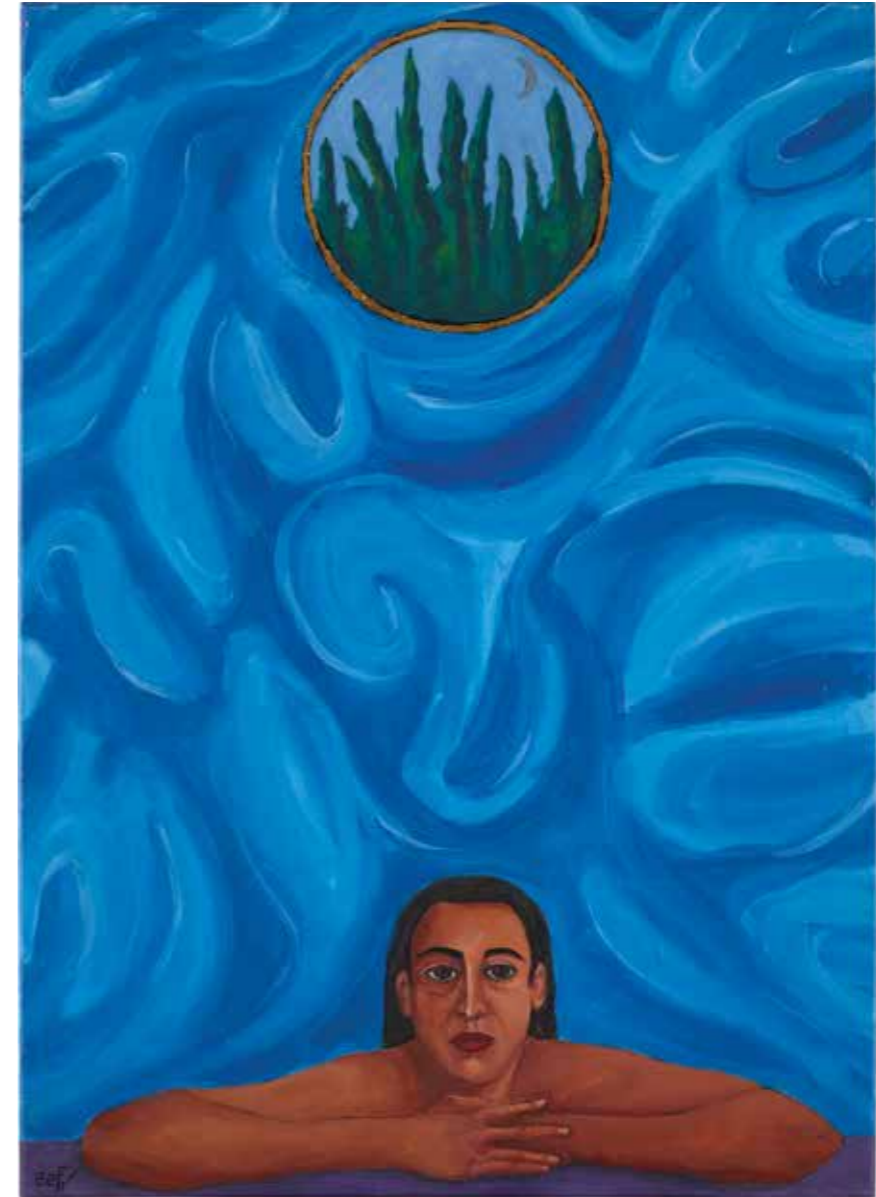


*The Garden by the Pool* | Acrylic & mixed media on canvas | 70x50 cm | 2024



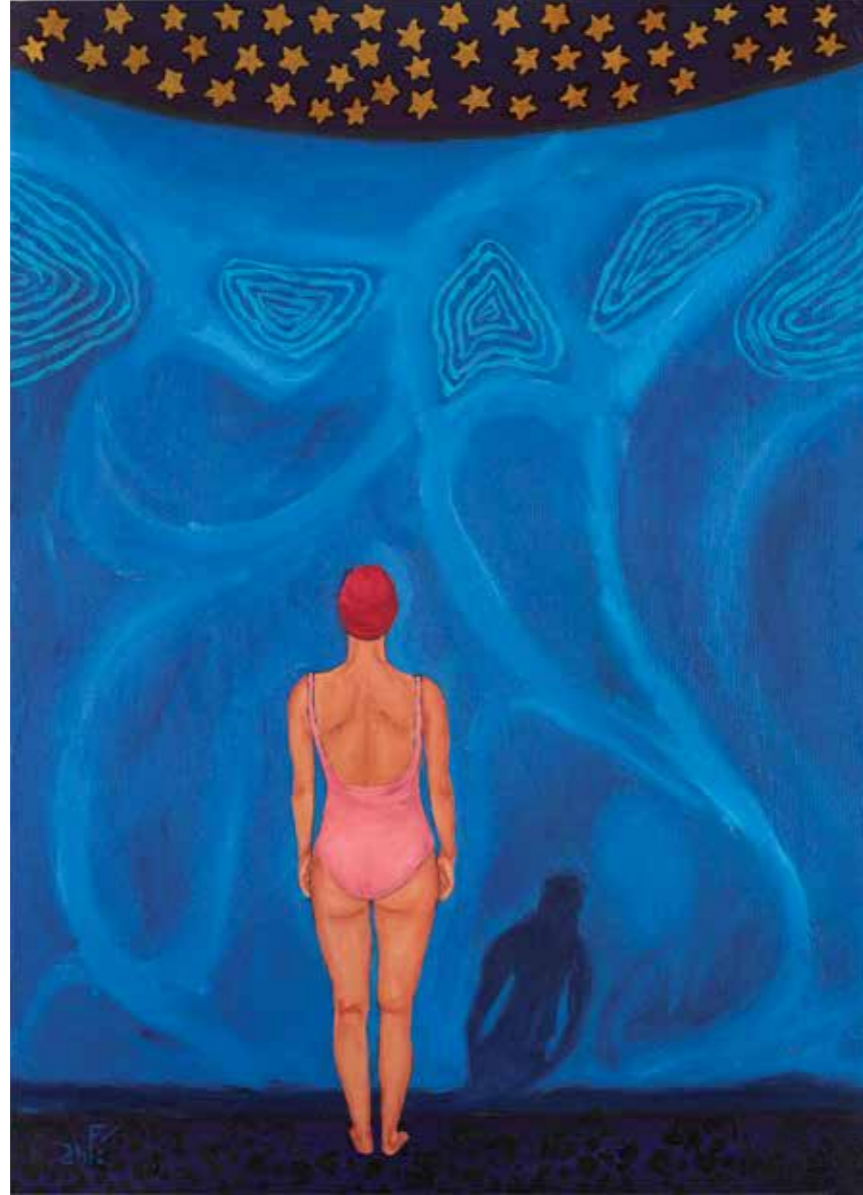


*Floating* | Acrylic & mixed media on canvas | 70x50 cm | 2022



*Cypresses by the Pool* | Acrylic & mixed media on canvas | 70x50 cm | 2022





Night Sky | Acrylic & mixed media on canvas | 70x50 cm | 2024



Yellow Tree | Acrylic & mixed media on canvas | 70x50 cm | 2022





Texture series | Acrylic & mixed media on woven jute | 33x35 cm - 35x34 cm | 2023

Texture series | Acrylic & mixed media on woven jute | 36x37 cm - 31x37 cm | 2023





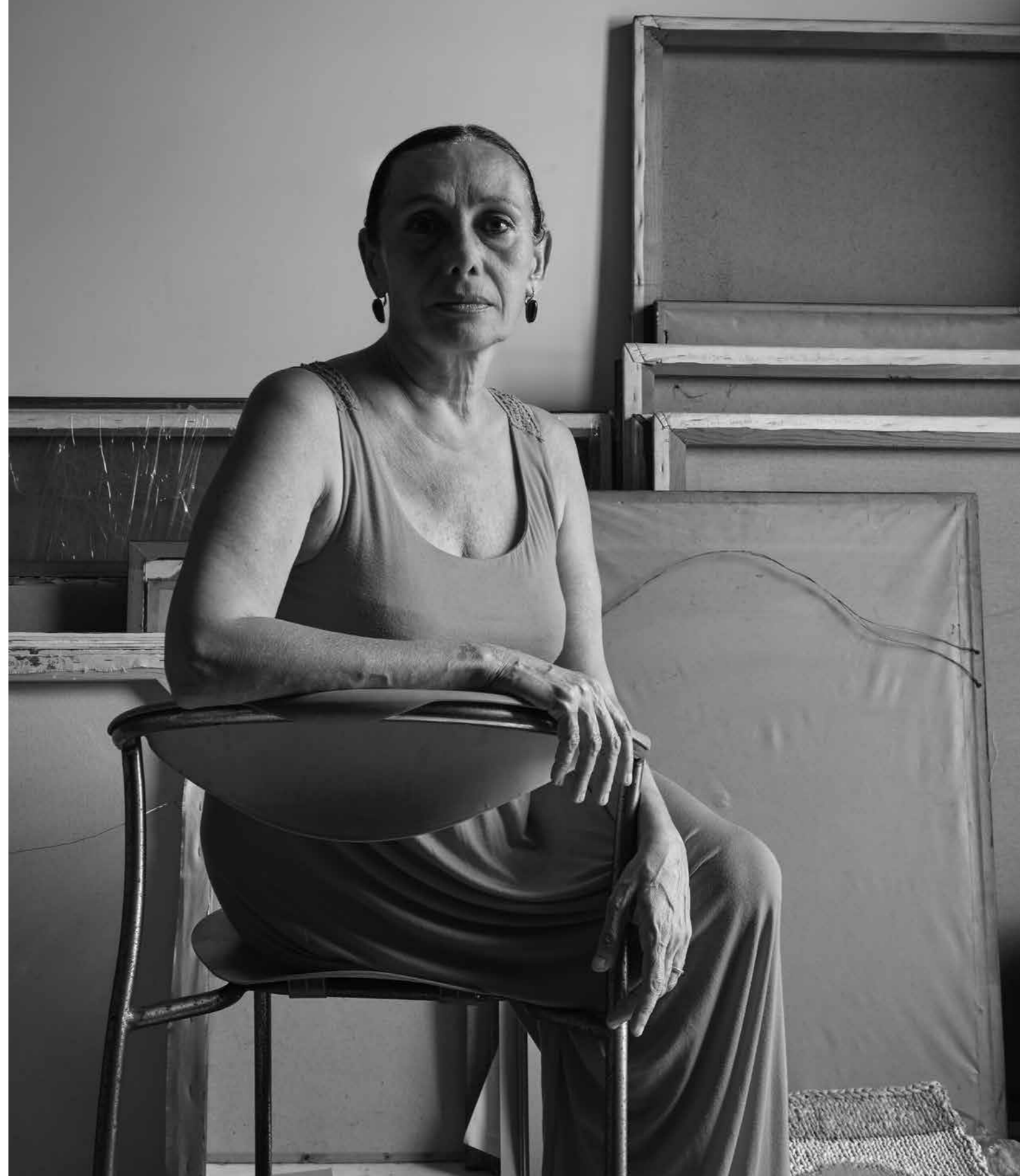
Texture series | Acrylic & mixed media on woven jute | 35x35 cm - 30x34 cm | 2023

Texture series | Acrylic & mixed media on woven jute | 30x37 cm - 32x35 cm | 2023



## About the Artist

Born in 1965 in Beirut, Rim el Jundi holds a BA in Fine Arts from the Lebanese American University (1991) and a Diploma of Higher Studies in Sacred Art from the University of Holy Spirit in Kaslik (2007). Recent solo exhibitions include; Naked Truth (AUB Archaeology Museum with Saleh Barakat, 2024); Time (Agial Art Gallery, 2021); My Friend Bacchus (Dar el Mussawer, 2018); Resurrection (Janine Rubeiz Gallery, 2015); Family Tree (Janine Rubeiz Gallery, 2012); Men (Janine Rubeiz Gallery, 2010) and The Road to the Airport (Janine Rubeiz Gallery, 2008). Selected group exhibitions in Lebanon and internationally include; Intimate Garden Scene (Sursock Museum with Ashkal Alwan, Beirut, 2023); Palais des Pins (Beirut, 2022); SIRYART (Beirut Exhibition Center, 2013); Art Paris with Saleh Barakat (Paris, 2024); Abu Dhabi Art with Galerie Janine Rubeiz (Abu Dhabi, 2009; 2011); Art Dubai with Galerie Janine Rubeiz (Dubai, 2010, 2011 and 2012). In 2005 Rim was awarded the Triangle Art fellowship at the Vermont Center, USA, sponsored by the Ford Foundation, and in 1997 was acknowledged by the Jury at the Alexandria Biennale in Egypt. Rim lives and works in Beirut.



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