

## **Rafik El Kamel**

### Biography & CV

**Born** in Tunis, Tunisia (1944-2021)

**Lived and worked** between Tunis and Maamoura, Tunisia

Rafik El Kamel was a pioneering figure of modern Tunisian art and one of the first artists of his generation to turn toward abstraction, as part of the “Nouvelles Conceptions” movement that challenged the neo-orientalist figuration of the School of Tunis. His paintings are characterised by compositions conceived as an exchange between space, colour, and light. Throughout his career, he sought to render an inner reality invisible to the naked eye, articulated through assembled and recurring forms that structure his pictorial language and occupy a middle ground between abstraction and figuration. By painting graphic forms in clusters and chromatic fields, he presented a dynamic world, powerful yet fragile, where the equilibrium appears constantly threatened by an underlying chaos ready to claim back its force. Never abandoning abstraction, El Kamel progressively deconstructed the opposition between abstract and figurative categories, shifting attention away from the object itself toward the structures generated by light, shadow, and composition. Through this approach, he described life in abstract terms; by eliminating traces of nostalgia, he expressed a certain solitude in which the artist faced a necessary urge to reveal.

El Kamel’s work has been shown in several international institutions, including the Salon de Mai in Paris; the Biennale of young artists (1977 and 2002), Paris; the Institut du Monde Arabe in Paris, France; Museum of African Contemporary Art Al Maaden, Marrakech, Morocco; the Guggenheim Museum, UAE; Barjeel Art Foundation, UAE; Dalloul Art Foundation, Beirut, Lebanon; and Museum of Modern Art of the City of Paris, Paris, France.

His works can be found in several prestigious collections including the Musée d’Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, France; Guggenheim Museum, Abu Dhabi, UAE; Barjeel Art Foundation, UAE; the Museum of African Contemporary Art Al Maaden (MACAAL), Marrakech, Morocco; and the Khalid Shoman Foundation: Darat Al Funun, Amman, Jordan.

He graduated from the School of Fine Arts in Tunis in 1966. He continued his artistic training at the School of Decorative Arts in Paris. Between 1967 and 1971, he discovered the refined expression of painting during his stay in Paris. Upon his return to Tunis, he taught at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. He was a Professor at Institut Supérieur des Beaux-Arts de Tunis from 1971 to 1998.

In 1984, he was awarded the first prize from the city of Tunis and the first prize from the annual exhibition of contemporary art in Tunis.

### **Selected Solo Exhibitions**

**2016**

Le Violon Bleu Gallery. Sidi Bou Saïd. Tunisia

**2012**

Kalysté Gallery. Ariana. Tunisia

**2009**

Transfigurations. Le Violon Bleu Gallery. Sidi Bou Saïd. Tunisia

**2008**

Kalysté Gallery. La Soukra. Tunis

**2004**

Kalysté Gallery. La Soukra. Tunis

**2002**

Ammar Farhat Gallery. Sidi Bou Saïd. Tunis

**1995**

Kalysté Gallery. La Soukra. Tunis

**1994**

Maegt Gallery. Barcelona. Spain

**1993**

Schauer Gallery. Paris. France

**1990**

Ammar Farhat Gallery. Sidi Bou Saïd. Tunis

**1987**

Fregnac Gallery. Paris. France

**1986**

Gorgi Gallery. Tunis

**1984**

Sidi Bou Saïd Museum. Sidi Bou Saïd. Tunis

**1982**

Renate Seeger Gallery. Munich. Germany

**1980**

Fregnac Gallery. Paris. France

**1976**

Irtissem Gallery. Tunis

## **1966**

Italian Cultural Center. Tunis  
Yahia Gallery. Tunis

## **Selected Group Exhibitions**

## **2023**

Kawkaba Highlights from the Barjeel Art Foundation. Curated by Ridha Moumni.  
Christie's. London. United Kingdom

## **2022**

Untitled 2. Selma Feriani Gallery. Tunis. Tunisia

## **2020**

Untitled. Selma Feriani Gallery. Tunis. Tunisia  
Welcome Home Vol. II. Museum of African Contemporary Art Al Maaden.  
Marrakech. Morocco

## **2018**

Maghreb-Orient des livres. Salon, Hôtel de Ville de Paris. Paris. France  
Les contemporains du passé. Le Violon Bleu Gallery. Sidi Bou Saïd. Tunisia

## **2017**

E-Mois, autobiographie d'une collection. Museum of African Contemporary Art  
Al Maaden (MACAAL). Marrakech. Morocco  
Petits formats. Saladin Gallery. Sidi Bou Saïd. Tunisia

## **2016**

Tajrid(Abstraction). Musée de la ville de Tunis. Tunisia  
Passerelles. Attijari Bank North Urban Center. Tunis. Tunisia  
Masters du monde arabe. Le Violon Bleu Gallery. Sidi Bou Saïd. Tunisia

## **2014**

Solid'ART. Mövenpick Hotel Gammarth. Tunisia

## **2013**

Tajreed. CAP Kuwait. Kuwait

## **2010**

Tunisian Pavilion. World Expo Shanghai. Shanghai. China

## **2003**

La lettre brisée. Museum of Darmstadt. Darmstadt. Germany

## **2002**

Perspectives on Contemporary Arab Art. Kinda Foundation Collection. Arab  
World Institute. Paris. France

**1999**

Quatre artistes tunisiens. Wallonie-Bruxelles Centre. Bruxelles, Belgium - Paris, France - Tunis, Tunisia

**1998**

Skoto Gallery. New York. USA

**1997**

Skoto Gallery. New York. USA

**1996**

Islamic Contemporary Art Gallery. Kassel. Germany  
Kalysté Gallery. La Soukra. Tunis

**1995**

Regard sur l'art contemporain tunisien. Musée-unité d'Art Contemporain.  
Institut du Monde Arabe. Paris. France

**1993**

Peintres du Maghreb. Consorcio de la Ciudad de Santiago de Compostela.  
Santiago de Compostela. Spain  
Méditerranée, jeux de lumière. Ephèbe Museum. Cap d'Agde. France  
Château de Servièrre. Marseille. France

**1991**

Ammar Farhat Gallery. Sidi Bou Saïd. Tunis

**1990**

3 peintres maghrébins. Shoman Foundation. Jordan

**1989**

3 peintres maghrébins. Hippodrome de Douai. Douai. France

**1988**

Quatre peintres Arabes, première. IMA Museum. Paris. France

**1987**

National Museum of Arts of Africa and Oceania. Paris. France

**1986**

Théâtre du Rond-Point. Paris. France  
Villeneuve d'Ascq Museum of Modern Art. France

**1985**

Kuwait Exhibition for Arab Artists (1er prix). Kuwait  
Gorgi Gallery. Tunis  
Centre National d'Art Vivant. Tunis

## **1984**

Centre National d'Art Vivant. Tunis

## **1981**

Irtissem Gallery. Tunis

## **1977**

Youth Biennale. Palais de Tokyo, Museum of Modern Art of the City of Paris.  
Paris. France

## **1974**

Irtissem Gallery. Tunis

## **1971**

École de Tunis exhibition. Tunis

## **1970**

Cité Internationale des Arts. Paris. France  
Salon de Mai. Paris. France  
Palais de l'UNESCO. Paris. France

## **1967**

École de Tunis exhibition. Tunis

## **Collections**

The Khalid Shoman Foundation: Darat Al Funun. Amman. Jordan  
Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts. Amman. Jordan  
Institut du Monde Arabe. Paris. France  
Kamel Lazaar Foundation. Tunis. Tunisia  
Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris. France  
Guggenheim Museum. UAE  
Barjeel Art Foundation. UAE  
Dalloul Art Foundation Beirut. Lebanon  
Kinda Foundation Collection. Riyadh. Saudi Arabia  
Museum of African Contemporary Art Al Maaden (MACAAL). Marrakech.  
Morocco  
Villeneuve-d'Ascq Modern Art Museum. Villeneuve-d'Ascq. France

## **Awards**

1985 First prize at the Kuwait Exhibition for Arab Artists  
1984 First prize for the annual exhibition of contemporary art  
Presidential Award - First prize of the city of Tunis

## **Publications**

Zoubeir Lasram, Rafik El Kamel, Cérès Productions, 1992.

Ali Louati, Daniel Sotiaux, Quatre artistes de Tunisie: Rafik El Kamel, Habib Bouabana, Gouïder Triki, Ahmed Hajeri, Ed. de la Maison des arts, Ministère de la culture, 1999.

info@selmaferiani.com  
selmaferiani.com