Jessica Gerschultz

201 words

**Belkhodja, Néjib (b. 1933 Tunis, Tunisia—d. 2007 Tunisia)**

Néjib Belkhodja was a Tunisian artist credited for leading a new direction in Tunisian modern art in the 1960s. He attended the *Lycée Carnot* and the *École des Beaux-Arts* in Tunis. Along with artists Nja Mahdaoui and Hédi Turki, Belkhodja was influential in his pursuit of abstraction and an “authentic,” “universal” visual grammar and formed the *Groupe des Six* in 1964. He rejected what he perceived to be the aesthetic limitations and “folkloric” dimensions of the *École de Tunis*. Rather, Belkhodja sought to rearticulate *tunisianité*, Tunisian cultural patrimony, within an international language of modern art. Throughout his career Belkhodja’s artwork united the geometry, signs, and symbols of the *medina* of Tunis with the forms and rhythms of Arabic script. Belkhodja’s focus on the *medina* led his work to be called “urban constructivism” by writer Ali Louati. In addition to paintings on canvas, he created mixed media works and reverse-glass paintings in the 1970s and 1980s. Belkhodja exhibited widely in Tunis and abroad from 1956. He participated in biennales in Paris, Palermo, and Alexandria and received prizes in Tunisia, Italy, Egypt, and France. In 1991 Belkhodja and Iraqi artist Dia Azzawi exhibited together at the *Galerie des Arts d’el Menzah* in Tunis.

**References and further reading**:

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