Holiday Powers

293 words

**Gharbaoui, Jilali (1930-1971)**

Born in Jorf El Melh, Sidi Kacem region in Morocco, in Jilali Gharbaoui’s short lifetime, he played a major role in furthering the debates around Moroccan modernism. Along with Ahmed Cherkaoui, Jilali Gharbaoui is considered one of the founders of modernism in Morocco. Gharbaoui’s work centers on the gesture of painting itself. Although Gharbaoui worked with both sculpture and painting, he is best for the striking colors and violent brush-strokes of his gestural abstractions on canvas, paper, and wood. Very early works by Gharbaoui are relatively representational or focus on geometric abstraction, but later works are identified by a consistent style of loose abstract work that focuses on the movement of the brush itself. The paintings deliberately highlight the hand of the artist and often build up texture through thick layers of paint, showcasing both the interplay of colors and lines as well as the materiality of the paint itself. He was introduced as part of the “groupe des informels” at the Salon Comparaison in Paris is 1959 by art critic Pierre Restany. Gharbaoui suffered from severe mental illness, and was hosted on multiple occasions by Father Denis Martin at the monastery of Toumliline in the Middle Atlas mountains. He committed suicide and his body was found on a public bench in the Champ de Mars. His body was repatriated to Morocco by André Malraux, and he is buried in Fes.

**References and further reading:**

Filali, Y. (1993) *Fulgurances Gharbaoui*, Rabat: Fondation ONA. (This is a lengthy monograph.)

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Tnifass, A. (2007) *Jilali Gharbaoui: Voyage au bout du rêve*, *1930-1971*, Rabat: Marsam, collection “Regards Obliques”. (This is a short book published as part of a series about Moroccan artists that includes a clear overview of Gharbaoui’s work.)

Zahi, F., ed. (2012) *Regards sur l’oeuvre de Gharbaoui*, Rabat: Bank al-Maghrib. (This is a lengthy monograph with an exhaustive bibliography.)