Alex Seggerman

**Sirry, Gazbia (1925-)**

Throughout her sixty-year career, Gazbia Sirry responded to political, social, and artistic shifts in Egypt. She is well respected for her richly colored canvases and her savvy perseverance in the Egyptian art world. Born in 1925 in Cairo, Sirry came of age during era of the 1952 Free Officers Revolution. After graduating from the Cairo School of Arts Education in 1950, she earned government scholarships for study abroad and local support. Her early paintings are characterised by depictions of strong, imposing female figures of all social classes

In the late 1950s, the backgrounds in her works became increasingly abstract as her interest in non-representational color and line grew. The fading of figures could be attributed to her increasing disillusionment with the Egyptian government. In 1959, the government imprisoned her for several days and her husband for three years due to their alleged Communist activity. In 1965, Sirry earned a fellowship to join the Huntington Hartford Foundation in Pacific Palisades, California, an artists’ colony in the Santa Monica Mountains. The experience introduced her to the American style of abstract expressionism. In 1967, figural representations vanished abruptly from her work. Throughout the 1970s, Sirry painted abstract “cityscapes”, complex grids that evoke urban skylines but are primarily exercises in color and shape. Sirry continues making art in Cairo today.

**References and Further Reading:**

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