

Anna Boghiguan

(Cairo, 1946)

Born in 1946 in Cairo from parents of Armenian origin who had escaped from the genocide, Anna Boghiguan grew up in Heliopolis, a neighbourhood of the city inhabited largely by aristocratic élites and European minorities. After completing her studies in economics and political sciences at the American University, she left Egypt at little more than twenty years of age, initially to travel, only to settle permanently in Montréal, Canada. Here she grew close to music, literature and philosophy, and took her first steps in the world of the visual arts.

Her early works, produced around the end of the 1970s, are collages of cut-outs from newspapers and magazines, with which she marked the start of a highly personal contamination of images and words, gradually honed in her works in later life. Watercolours, pastels, collages, encaustics, writing and later also found objects come together in her works, starting from her early drawings on paper up to her numerous notebooks and artist's books, right up to her immersive installations of the last decade.

The diaspora of her family, the multicultural environment in which she grew up, her Canadian citizenship and her journeys around the world shaped her experience as an artist continually moving around: a condition of personal growth and transformation strongly desired by Boghiguan, yet never imposed. Reflections on the nomadic and precarious life of our times intertwine with her works and clear-minded analysis of migratory phenomena, of colonial expansionism and the cyclical nature of history.

An example is *The Salt Traders*, a large-scale environmental installation produced on the occasion of the 2015 Istanbul Biennale. The work is made up of numerous elements, including large painted canvases hanging from the ceiling, fragments of a sailing boat, piles of salt and sand, maps, drawings and collages. The artist is provided with a starting point by a fictitious anecdote. Boghiguan imagines that, in 2300, the melting of the ice caps caused by progressive climate change has brought back to light the remains of a ship used by ancient Roman traders for the transportation of salt. Along with it, a past re-emerges – one by now almost forgotten by mankind. Salt is thus analysed in its various acceptations: as a chemical compound, as an essential element in the preservation of food, and lastly as a product that marked the founding of trade routes and of contact between different populations. In the belief that historical events are unknowingly linked to one another, Boghiguan draws on a dense network of visual references in order to carry out extraordinary leaps in time. From the conquests of Alexander the Great, founder of her town of birth, she leads the viewer through the explorations of Christopher Columbus and the ensuing trafficking of slaves; starting from Gandhi's peaceful 'salt march', called as a sign of protest against the taxes of the British Empire, she ultimately invites us to reflect on the recent economic crisis which struck Greece.

FACRT