



AUB Newsletter

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PROFILES IN ACHIEVEMENT

ALSO INSIDE: Dr Bliss's grandsons share their memories
The splendor of Arabic medicine
London event raises a spectacular \$350,000 for the Medical Center

defective gene from one generation to the next. Slowly, they identified more and more markers, painstakingly narrowing down the possible location of the gene on the chromosome.

In 1989, Huda and Dr. Harry Orr at the University of Minnesota decided that their research teams should collaborate. On the weekend of April 11, 1993, both groups were working on two pieces of chromosome 6 which overlapped in the middle. The gene causing ataxia turned out to be contained in the overlap. Both teams isolated the gene abnormality that same weekend.

After they confirmed their discovery with all ataxia patients, they wrote the paper on their findings within two weeks. It was published in the July 1993 issue of *Nature Genetics*.

Thanks to Huda's work, a prenatal test for ataxia became possible. What is her goal now, after this breakthrough? "To study the function of the gene and the mechanism of neurodegeneration," Huda declares. "With that, we hope to design a treatment, and ultimately a cure."

—after an article in the Houston Chronicle by Ruth SoRolle

Afaf Zurayk (FAS 1970)

Painter

She started painting as a child and found it fun. She hasn't stopped since.

At mid-career, Afaf Zurayk's reputation has earned her several exhibits in the nation's capital, as well as showings in the Middle East. She is engaged in broadening her exposure to other major cities within and outside the US. Her talent has been praised in such prominent publications as the *Washington Post* and the *Washington Review*.

That degree of notoriety is rare for the vast majority of artists. Its achievement requires technical mastery, a distinct vision, and a high level of persistence. Afaf possesses them all...and another, very special ingredient to success. "I was very fortunate to have been

raised by a supportive and inspiring woman," the fine arts graduate said. "My mother, Najla Cortas, encouraged me to pursue the best in my work. She nurtured all my efforts to become an artist." Afaf's mother is also an alumna: FAS, Class of 1937. Her father is the renowned historian and diplomat Constantine Zurayk, FAS, Class of 1928, and AUB distinguished professor emeritus.

Afaf's own relationship with AUB began in 1966. She recalls her years on campus as formative to her as both an artist and an adult. "The quality of an AUB education is such that you are taught to demand the most from yourself," she stated. "The very nature of the University, its emphasis on open-mindedness and liberal thinking in a strongly international environment, was central to my personal and artistic growth. It was that aspect of AUB that most prepared me for my life's work. To be an artist, your mind must absorb and respond to its environment without judgment or censorship."

As an artist, Afaf defines honesty as completely exposing her feelings to the viewer.

After graduating with distinction from AUB, Afaf took her MA in fine arts at Harvard. She then returned to Lebanon and taught art and art history at Beirut University College for ten years. All the while she honed her proficiencies in watercolor, ink and oil, ultimately blending her skills in multimedia paintings on paper. Her first show was a 1978 solo exhibit, followed two years later by a one-woman show at the Goethe Institut. Afaf relocated to Washington DC in 1983, and became arts manager of the Alif Gallery. In 1985, she decided to devote herself to painting full-time. Her first American exhibition took place at the capital's Addison/Ripley Gallery in 1987.

With the 1990s, Afaf's talent is receiving impressive exposure. An array of solo and group showings – at



Afaf Zurayk

Washington's Foundry Gallery, Martin Luther King Library, and Alif Gallery, as well as at the Shoman Foundation in Amman, Jordan – culminated last year with her participation in the "Forces of Change: Artists of the Arab World" exhibit at the capital's National Museum of Women in the Arts.

"The attention to my painting is very gratifying," the artist reports. "But more than that, I take pride in the honesty of my work. By that, I mean the ability to convey myself as completely as possible through the medium of painting. I want people to sense the true reason for what I create: why I select a subject, how it affects me, what it is within me that makes me have a particular reaction to it. It's a process of looking into yourself and exposing what you find to the viewer – not easy, but utterly essential to the integrity of your art."

Afaf's plans for the future? To contribute to the Washington DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities Grants-in-Aid Program as an advisory panel member, visual arts category – a position she was just appointed to in April. Other than that, besides cultivating more exhibition opportunities, she intends to pursue the path she herself would recommend to anyone in her field. "Continued study," she said, "and total commitment. Without it, one can never hope to remain a good artist."

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