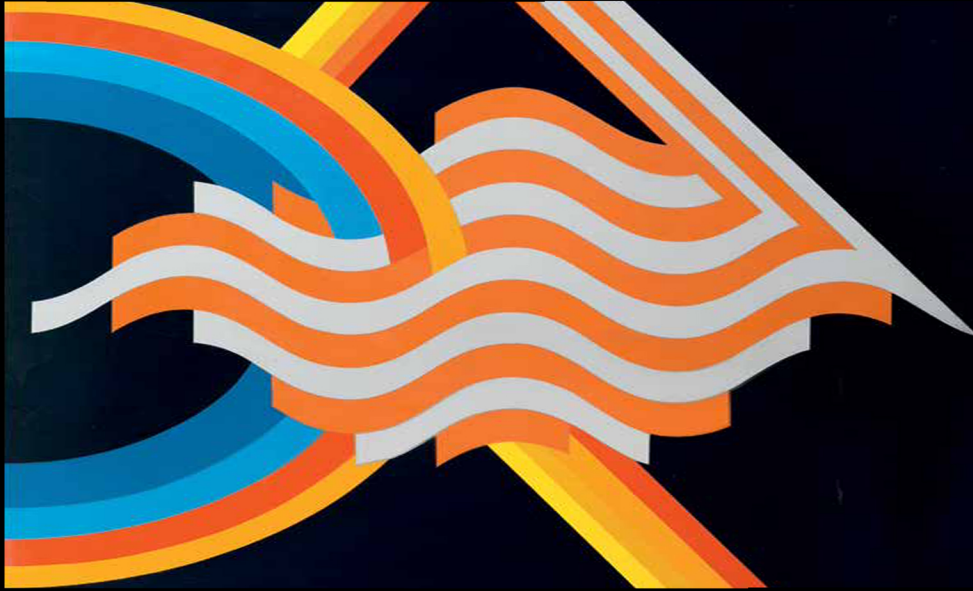


Fall 2022

W 2-4:50 pm



Hannah Feldman

**389-0 Studies in 20th
& 21st Century Art**

Modernism in the Age of Decolonization

This course takes as its premise that, in the decolonizing world across the Middle East, Africa, and Asia, formulations of modern art and literature took primary place in debates about emerging national cultures, attempts to assert anti-colonial solidarity, and, similarly, efforts to define and contour notions of new subjectivities and personhoods outside of colonial paradigms, western epistemologies, normative historiographies, and power dynamics. Taking advantage of the unique opportunity provided by the Block Museum's *Taking Shape: Abstraction from the Arab World, 1950s-1980s*, we will meet as a small group in the museum to tether our study of modernism to the primary objects (artworks, journals, posters, ephemera, and films) in that exhibition and in the Herskovits Collection in the Northwestern Library. Using these on-site primary sources alongside critical essays and literary texts, we will attempt to answer a central question: why, during the 1960s and 1970s when the importance of documenting the realities of colonial rule and anti-colonial struggle was acknowledged as paramount, did artists and writers turn to various non-realist techniques (allegory, mysticism, visual poetry, metapoesis, eg) as formal strategies? Or do we propose a false binary when we situate—as one might in US-European visual and literary cultures—abstraction and realism in opposition? How does the abstract relate to the real and to art and literary histories in other regions, and what might its political purchase be? In what ways do gender or religion intersect with modernist strategy during this period and in this context? Sessions will be discussion based, and we will take advantage of programming around the exhibition—including artist's talks and visiting speakers—to help expand the historical reach of our study. Students will work towards a conference paper to be presented at a professional symposium at the end of the quarter. Readings will be made available as online pdfs but students might consider purchasing the exhibition catalog from the Block. This is a combined graduate and advanced undergraduate seminar. Undergraduates will receive additional support in a TA-led discussion section/workshop.

Required Textbooks: NA

Assessments: attendance, participation, discussions, final project, readings, writing assignments

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