

***“Lebanese Diaspora” art exhibition winner Flavia Codsí talks to LERC.***  
Friday 26<sup>th</sup> March 2010

Interviewed by Elie Nabhan

Mrs. Flavia Codsí was a student of Interior Design who worked as a designer and interior perspective artist throughout the Lebanese civil war. Mrs. Codsí is a self-taught artist who has exhibited regularly at the Nicolas Sursock Museum’s *Salon d’Automne*, receiving prizes for the painting *Introspection* (1994), for *Aura* (1995) and *The Three Mounira* (1996).

She became a full time artist around 1999 and has taken part in numerous joint exhibitions and art fairs in Lebanon since 1978 including Makhoul Str. Art Fair, the annual *Salon d’Automne* (Sursock Museum), *Quand les artistes s’amusent* Epreuve d’Artiste, *Women Artists in Lebanon* at the German Cultural Centre, the first *Ashkal Alwan* installation and sculptures exhibition in Sanayeh public garden, *Artuel* Contemporary Art Fair, and *Women by Women* show at LAU.



**Mrs. Flavia Codsí**

Mrs. Codsí has also exhibited abroad at The Biennale in Sharjah, The *Casula Power House* Art Center in Sydney, the *Francophonie Fine Art* in Dubai, *The Artist’s View II* at Cork Street, London and *Arte Clasica 2006 Meeting Cultures*, in Buenos Aires. In October 2009, she auctioned her first painting at Christies International Modern and Contemporary Art Dubai auction. Mrs. Codsí’s solo exhibitions were *Phases* held at Espace SD in 2003 and in 2007 *Fructivores* at *Aida Cherfan Fine Art*, in downtown Beirut.

Mrs. Codsí’s painting *I Love Lebanon* was the first prize winner at the contemporary art exhibition on Lebanese Diaspora organized by the Faculty of Architecture, Art and Design and the Lebanese Emigration Research Center at Notre Dame University, Louaize, held in the Dome, Central Beirut, and running between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2010.



**Mrs. Flavia Codsí First Prize winner for *I Love Lebanon* (Mar. 2010).**

**EN: What encouraged you to paint *I Love Lebanon*?**

FC: I liked the theme of migration, and the Lebanese diaspora. I found it very inspiring.

**EN: What else inspired your painting?**

FC: It was the dramatic situation during the Summer 2006 War. I felt sorry for all the expats who came on holiday to visit relatives and friends and to have a good time. Lebanon was picking up, projects were being planned, there was a bustling prosperous summer under way. Maybe some had planned to settle back or even invest in the country and were suddenly forced to take shelter, to evacuate, as if someone had told them, "The party is over, go back to where you came from." It was a sudden blow as if we were living in a bubble and the bubble burst.

**EN: So you related the theme of migration through the process of evacuation?**

FC: Sadly, this was the time I was most aware of the presence of expats in Lebanon. They were in the news, stressed out, waiting to be repatriated. I felt as if we were all sharing a terrible experience which was war. Some had never experienced it before while others were reliving a war situation that they thought belonged to the past and which might have been the reason they migrated abroad in the first place. For them it was like seeing a ghost which they thought was long gone.

**EN: When did you paint it?**

FC: I painted it this year after I decided to participate in the exhibition and after I captured my idea for the theme.

**EN: Have you exhibited this painting anywhere else?**

FC: No, I painted it just for this exhibition.

**EN: Can you tell us a little about the sadness and resignation of the girl in the painting?**

FC: Living through a war is not joyful, it's sad, it's scary and it makes you cry. One feels completely helpless and vulnerable, your dreams are shattered and there is nothing you can do to change things around. That's the sadness of the girl in the painting.

**EN: It's as if she's waiting in a shelter.**

FC: Yes waiting to be taken out of the situation. It could be a room in a house, it could be a shelter. The painting is symbolic, the torch light represents the power cuts we've always had in Lebanon, the suitcase represents travelling, emigration and repatriation, the tennis shoes are painted on purpose, defining practicality for a situation in which you must be ready to run. The lighting too is painted in horizontally as if it's dawn and she has just survived the night.

**EN: Her face is hidden. Was she crying?**

FC: When an artist paints a painting he leaves it open for interpretation. The subject is anonymous, her face is covered with her hair so there is no expression. The viewer has to use his own imagination, to put his own feelings into the painting, to see what he can identify and come up with his own story

**EN: Why the title *I Love Lebanon*?**

FC: I think to love Lebanon is not without consequences, and it's like loving someone who makes you suffer, someone who is at times very loving and at other times cruel and hurtful, but the painting *I Love Lebanon* is more about being hurt for loving that person.