

## **SHORT BIO**

***Born into an Armenian family artist Seta Manoukian grew up in Beirut, Lebanon. She was raised in the multicultural tradition of Lebanese society. Lebanon is a dynamic hub of tolerance and intellectual freedom; it has been the scene of fifteen years of a very violent civil war. The city is a double-edged sword, particularly for an artist.***

***The history of the Manoukian family goes back to Aintab, Turkey. Seta's great great grandfather was an Armenian Orthodox priest. Armenian culture is deeply rooted in Christian tradition, the religion first embraced by Armenia in 301 AD. So Seta's religious roots are in Christianity. Seta's grandparents met in Aleppo, Syria. Her grandfather devoted his life to taking care of Armenian orphans who fled Turkey and walked through the desert to Aleppo during the Armenian Genocide in 1915.***

***She began to draw at an early age. Seta's early drawings reveal a sense of composition, a strong artistic hand and an original talent noticed by her first teacher Paul Guiragossian. Seta won the first prize at an art competition organized by the Italian Embassy at the age of seventeen. She was sent to Perugia, Italy, for three months to study art. When Seta finished her studies, her father enrolled her into the Academy of Belle Arte in Rome. After four years in Rome, she graduated from the academy and returned to Lebanon where she finds herself in the center of Beirut in the seventies: 'the Paris of the middle east.' She goes out to parties, dancing, art exhibitions and theater with friends.***

***She saw the poverty, the contradictions around her. She became aware of her own thoughts. She felt her thoughts were fleeting and impermanent. She is only a witness of her own movements. She discovers the superficial I and wants to go deeper, a detachment from the ego. She goes deep inside before she starts painting.***

*Seta spends hours at a café in the center of Beirut. This is the meeting place of artists, writers and journalists. It makes her aware of grave political problems facing her country the region and the world.*

*Seta was teaching at Lebanese University when the Civil War began in 1975.*

*The real casualties of any war are children. Seta goes to poor neighborhoods and volunteers to teach children how to draw and paint often under the bombing. Seta puts together the children's paintings and drawings into two books "War Through the Eyes of Lebanese Children" Published in 1977, and "Taches Rouge Et Blue."*

*These paintings and drawings became a powerful testimony of the atrocities of war seen through the eyes of its innocent victims.*

*After 10 years of war in Lebanon Seta had to flee, in her own words she "started having fears of being kidnapped." She came to LA defeated by war. She was invited to take part in several exhibitions of Lebanese artists in Europe and the US featuring art created during the Civil war in Lebanon. She signs up with Sherry Frumkin Gallery in Santa Monica. "Two from Beirut" a two artist exhibition in 1991 was the first serious introduction of Seta's art in Los Angeles. The exhibitions that followed Seta did solo: "The Practical Use of Desire" in 1992 and "Familiar Fire" in 1995 at Sherry Frumkin Gallery, which featured Seta's new work. The work marks a significant departure from her past figurative paintings created during the Civil War and "T-Shape period." This new work deals with her coming back to life after ten years of war.*

*Seta feels the dryness of the freeways in Los Angeles, which she identifies with her own state of mind, and she has a strong desire to water the freeways. There are hoses and red flowers in her new body of work. She is trying to put out fire inside of her.*

*During the 1995 exhibition “Familiar Fire” Seta comes up with an idea for an art performance, MY FATHER ON THE TREE, based on her dream as a reflection of her experience during the war. The performance was about displacement and the madness of the war.*

*Seta started working on “Organic Shapes” Series, followed by more abstract “Vertical” Series with a vertical line in the center of the composition, representing the masculine aspect of reality, around which the feminine energy, the four elements are engaged in a dance seeking union in a dynamic color configuration arising from the emptiness of the white canvas.*

*She goes deeper into meditation and study of Buddhist philosophy, after meeting her spiritual teacher Bhante Lakkana in the year 2000, from Sri Lankan Theravada Buddhist tradition.*

*While spending long hours in meditation Seta begins contemplating the idea of going to Sri Lanka to further study Dharma: the teachings of the Buddha.*

*In 2005 Seta takes her training to the next level. With the blessing of Venerable Lakkana, she decides to travel to the monastery in Delgoda, Sri Lanka to be ordained as a Buddhist nun. She studies under the tutelage of the Venerable Premasiri, who is the teacher of Bhante Lakkana.*

*Since 2007 her teacher is Venerable Lama Chödak Gyatso Nubpa from the Nyigma lineage of Tibetan Buddhism, he gave her the name Ani Pema Drolma. The retreat center is Ari Bhod in Tehachapi, California.*