

Word into Art

Artists of the Modern Middle East

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Venetia Porter

with contributions by Isabelle Caussé

Foreword by Saeb Eigner



57 Jacob El-Hanani
Three kav

INK ON PAPER, 1997
H 48.3 cm, W 48.2 cm
MOROCCO/ISRAEL/USA
2001 3-30 016

El-Hanani's compositions, drawn with pens, consist of weblike networks of delicate interlocking lines and symbols. He draws his inspiration largely from the ancient tradition of micrography. This was a technique of writing in tiny script, developed in the Middle East by scribes who were able to render entire sacred texts into minute form or create word pictures with lines of script. Some of the finest surviving examples of these are found in Hebrew writing.

EL-HANANI, Jacob

BORN CASABLANCA, MOROCCO, 1947



El-Hanani trained at the Avni School of Fine Arts, Tel Aviv, 1965–9, and the Ecole des Beaux Arts, Paris, 1969–70. When he was six he moved from Morocco to Israel, where

at an early age he began work as a political cartoonist. In 1972, in Paris, he moved away from figurative art, and in 1974 he travelled to New York, where he came under the influence of Minimalism and the American artist Sol LeWitt (b. 1928). El-Hanani's works, principally on paper, display minute linear elements methodically arranged to culminate in elaborate compositions. He values the process of execution and one drawing may take months to be completed. His works have been exhibited extensively in the United States, Europe and Israel, including the forty-seventh biennial at the Corcoran Art Gallery, Washington DC, 2002, and *Recent Acquisitions, Works on Paper*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2003. He lives and works in New York.