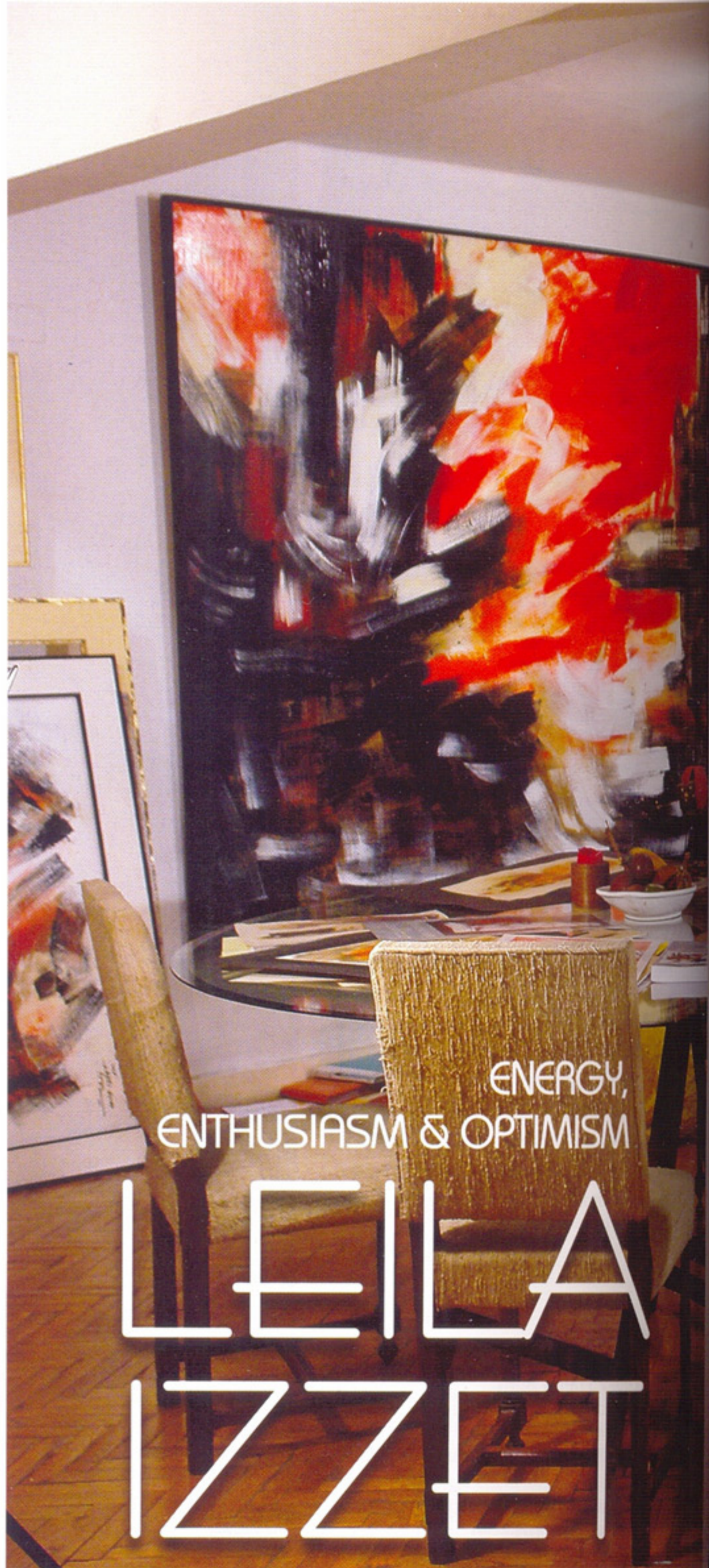


**L**eila Izzet has the vivacity and enthusiasm of a young woman just setting out in life. In fact this dynamic Egyptian painter's remarkable career spans more than forty five years. The pictures shown here are those of a mature artist who continues to surprise those who think they know her; there is no suggestion that her inventiveness has been exhausted. In her earlier paintings she depicted the human form; in later ones she painted dramatic pictures of horses. These still feature in her work as horses have always played a prominent part in her life since she was a girl. Many critics attempted to stereotype her art by saying she only painted horses. She startled the Egyptian art world when she began a long and intensive phase of creating a most amazing series of abstract paintings. This artist defies definition!

*Leila Izzet first studied art in Cairo under Armenian realist painter Achod Zorian in the 1950s. Her paintings of horses were the first phase in her career; later she adopted an expressionist mode which gave way to a productive period of abstract art.*

*Her work was recognized early on as being unusual. The late Kamal El Malakh, a distinguished critic said of her, "she is an authentic Egyptian who evolves while remaining true to her identity".*



ENERGY,  
ENTHUSIASM & OPTIMISM

LEILA  
IZZET





There is no pessimistic side to Leila's personality which probably explains why all her paintings appear so cheerful and positive. Her love of animals is a metaphor for her love of life which she exudes with every smile and gesture. Her love of nature is an equally strong force in her life and is apparent in her paintings. Leila has had her share of misfortunes in life but she has always recovered and become stronger as a result. This resilience is one of her greatest strengths.

Another is her fierce independence and artistic integrity. She paints, as she says, for herself. Her energy is focused on self-expression not on pleasing others. The choice of subject comes from within and is spontaneous; she doesn't plan her work. To her the notion of premeditation is inimical to any true artistic expression whether it is in an abstract mode or in painting a true life figure. The tremendous energy manifest in her work is infectious and explains why many people collect her paintings.

Painting has not always been her first love. There were others especially when she was still a young woman but these were the enthusiasms of a person experimenting with different forms of self realization. She recounts these days with great humor and a kindly but critical eye.

This quality of self-awareness is another of her major strengths and probably accounts for the dramatic and unexpected shifts in her style of painting.

She has never courted popularity with the art world and whenever critics thought they had understood her she surprised them with a new interpretation or form of expression.

Her adoring public are not sure what to expect next.



*Left: This corner of Leila's studio has some of her pictures and the objects that she has collected during her travels. The three masks on the pillar are from different cultures – Indian (top), Japanese (middle) and from Mexico (bottom).*



*Her circular paintings became very popular in the 80s and were frequently used as bases for tables.*

*The abstract painting (on the right wall) resembles a rural scene but that may be just one possible interpretation. The artist hopes the picture will encourage observers into giving free rein to their imaginations rather than a questioning of the intention of the artist.*





Leila Izzet has had solo exhibitions in many cities overseas - New York, Paris and Zurich - and participated with Egyptian colleagues in numerous biennale of contemporary art in the Arab world, in Europe and the Far East. She and other colleagues won an international prize in 1999 at the Biennale in Dobrovnik. This and her different exhibitions keep her name fresh in the mind of the art loving public here. She is currently preparing for another exhibition. Leila lauds the presence of so many new galleries in Cairo and the freedom they give artists to show their work. Freedom of expression is one of her favorite subjects and helps explain her success as an artist.

*Right: This is a picture of a violent sunblast. This representation of fiery energy and illumination is a metaphor of Leila's dynamism and imagination.*

*Left: Leila has always painted nudes - they are a constant presence in her repertoire - and has adapted the style of their representation over the years. This one was painted in the late 60s. The strong lines and dark colors express aggression and possession, emotions that are conveyed by the position of the body and the gesture of the open hands.*

