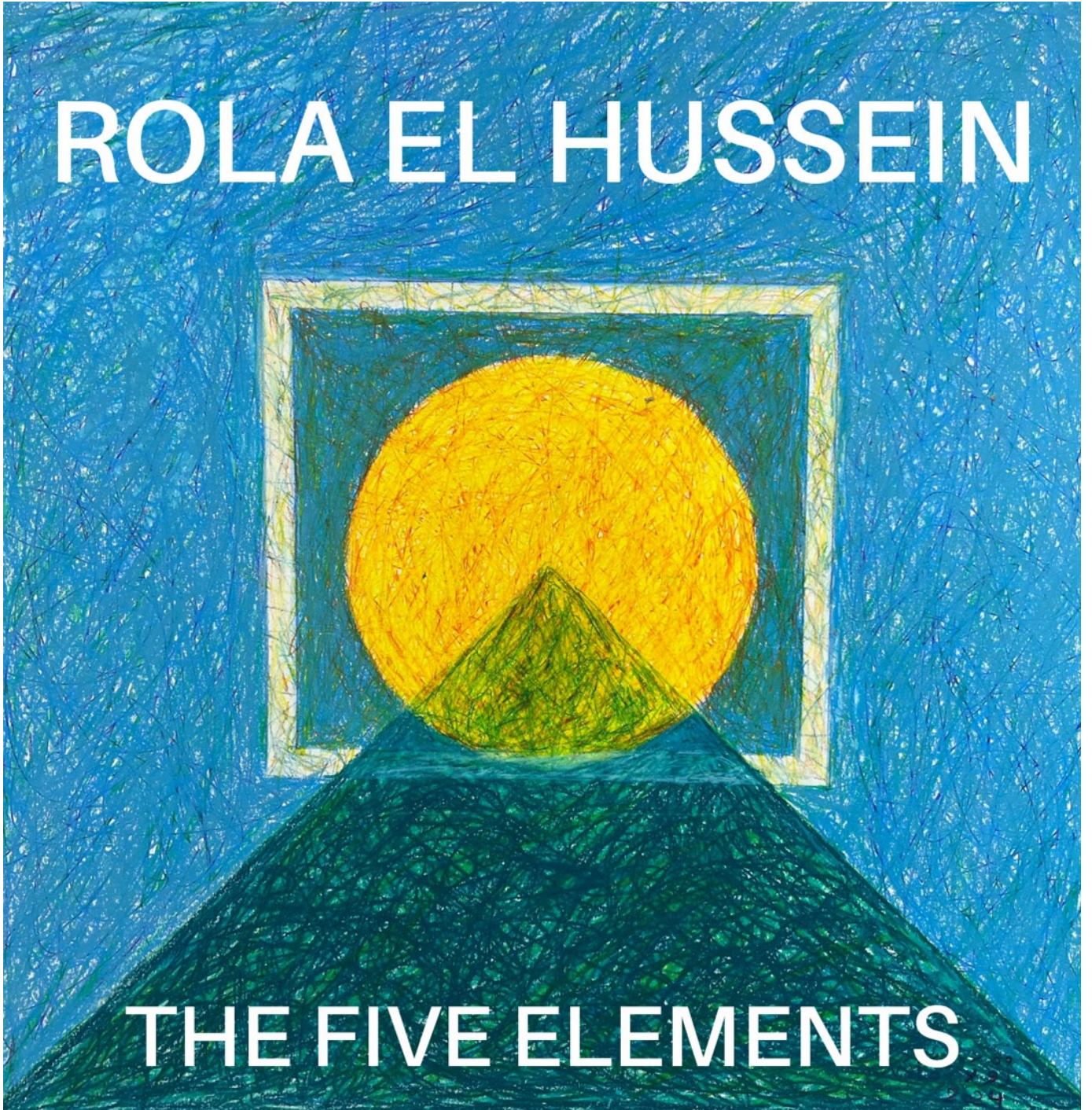




ROLA EL HUSSEIN

THE FIVE ELEMENTS



The Five Elements

This garden and its environs, lying to the South of Lebanon, is the intimate space of Lebanese artist Rola El Hussein. In her vibrant renderings the place appears as a sanctuary, colour fields moving softly but surely into an increasingly abstracted world.

Always finding a focus in the fundamentals of her daily life and routine, El Hussein's view is subtly re-focused, now considering only five of the elements that surround her: sun, clouds, sea, sky, and grass, the intimate characters and daily scenes so evident in her previous work receding as her vision shifts towards the formal elements of what she sees.

Despite her recent foray into a more abstracted reality, there is a hovering quality to this body of work, which seems to flicker between the concrete life of her garden and a more abstract world perhaps at its root. In this, Hussein simultaneously ties the viewer to her place and also moves away from the representation of any particular place. There is a tension in the space between the sun and the circle.

Indeed, for El Hussein, while these five elements originate from her particular daily view, the process of reduction and abstraction begins to strip them of their singular geography. The sky becomes any sky, the sea, any sea, the sun, every sun. Gradually, there is a shift away from a personal relationship with place and towards more formal relationships, the compositional line where the edge of the sky meets the horizon, the movement of clouds as shapes against a colour field, and the abstract interplay of these forms.

To describe the world is not so simple as it sounds, to connect the forms of the world with the experience of living in that world, in that particular place, in this time. Here, there is a quiet tension between a relationship with a specific place, and an awareness of the universality of form, a reminder that place is moving, and yet is here under our feet, is solid and yet can be abstracted, at a remove.

Rola El Hussein, born in 1978, graduated from the Lebanese University of Fine Arts in 2003. Her most recent solo exhibition 'Because the grass doesn't think about its garden' was held at Agial Gallery in Beirut, Lebanon, in 2024, and she has also participated in a number of group exhibitions and art fairs. Rola El Hussein is also a writer and has published two novels and four poetry collections, as well as a number of short stories.



