

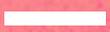


**FRIEDRICH NAUMANN
STIFTUNG** Für die Freiheit.

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#FEMALEFORWARD

**Raphaëlle
Macaron**



Comics Illustrator

The **WOMEN of WEBBON**

~~HOW?~~
~~WHY?~~
~~WHO?~~
~~WHAT?~~
~~WHEN?~~

WOMEN

Empowering women and closing gender gaps in the world are key for economies and communities to thrive. Therefore, the aim of our series "Women of Lebanon" is to give women from very different backgrounds in the country a voice, as we believe that it is important to portray strong women and use their impact to inspire future generations. Thus, this series will cover a whole range of different topics and sectors, from human rights, the arts to business and politics and all the women in the series have one thing in common: they are outstanding personalities who believe in change and the importance of individual responsibility to work for a better society. I am particularly grateful to Nicole Hamouche, the author of this series, who has identified and interviewed the ten women in our series and has worked so hard to make this project happen.

Enjoy reading and we hope that you will get inspired too!

Best regards,



Kristof Kleemann

*Project Director
FNF Lebanon and Syria*





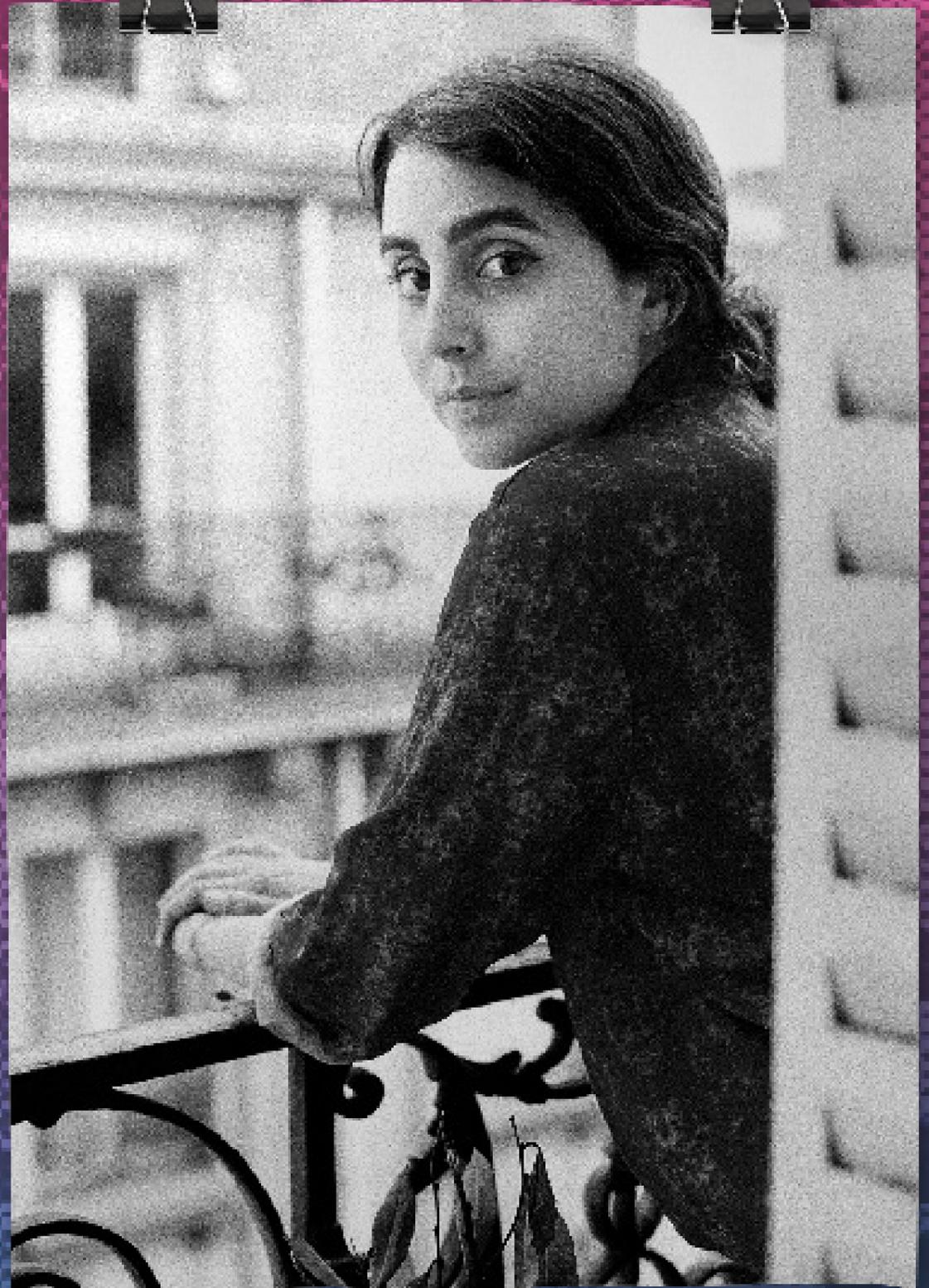
Raphaëlle was born and raised in Beirut, Lebanon where she completed her studies in illustration and comics. Since 2012, she has been working as a freelancer in illustration, comics and design.

She is an active member of the collective Samandal. She loves music, concerts and collects records impulsively. She is currently based in Paris where she is working on her first graphic novel.

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INTER COUNTRIES



RAPHAËLLE MACARON

Modern and humble advocate of a social transition
Comics is a way to appropriate the narrative

by

NICOLE HAMOUCHE

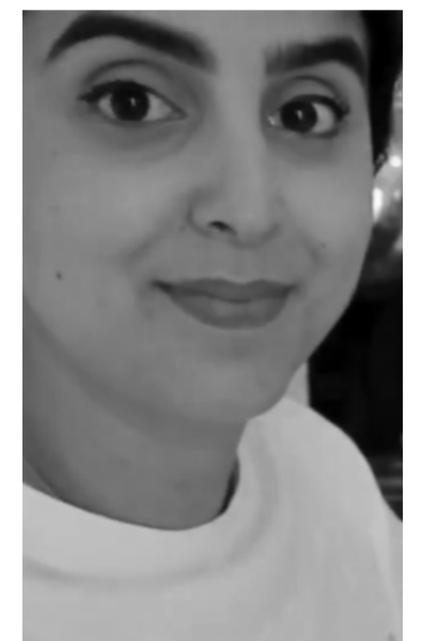
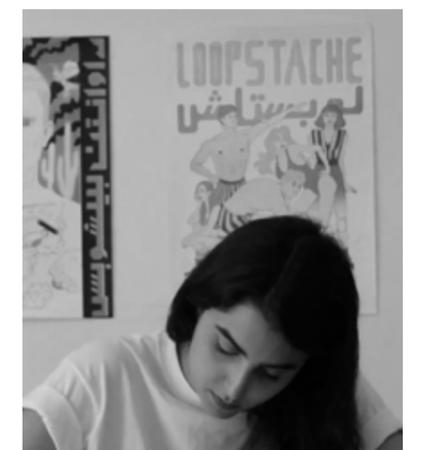
She always wanted to draw and to tell stories and she did. Raphaëlle Macaron, young Lebanese illustrator and comics author, has recently made the headlines in French media when she published a book together with Noël Mamère, ex-candidate to the presidential election in France. *Les Terrestres* a comics that addresses "collapsology"*; is the story of a road trip in France, where the main character meets people whose alternative lifestyles point out that another way of living, responsible and respectful of the planet and based on solidarity is possible. "Yesterday dreamers' have become the scouts of tomorrow's world" says Raphaëlle, especially throughout the COVID crisis that brought higher awareness on environmental concerns. The publisher, Sophie Caillat from Editions du Faubourg, initially approached Raphaëlle for her colorful universe and pop composition. As a young Lebanese established in France since 2016 and having made the choice to live from her art, the artist herself incarnates this "other possible"; her work gives voice and image to characters and places that embody the causes she has chosen to defend.

Even if she was born at the end of the war, Raphaëlle Macaron is impregnated of the post war environment she grew up in, and of today's Lebanon where basic individual rights - social justice, health, retirement - are still unassured: and where one struggles for every day's living. Hence, the discourse on saving the planet somehow seems of relative importance. The artist shared these feelings with the co-author of the book; additionally the general concerns of today's youth were more inherent to Raphaëlle than to Mamère, so the decision was made to have Raphaëlle herself be one of the characters of the book, leading to a deeper inter-generational and inter-cultural conversation within the work...

Comics, through the practice of lightness and derision, allow addressing serious social and political issues in a fun and un-moralizing way. And it is precisely because it is a social and political medium that this art has been drawing increasing attention in the West.

Humble, Raphaëlle Macaron positions herself as the defendant of social justice causes, not only the environment per se... "I am very motivated by the causes I endorse: social justice, feminism, stigmatized minorities... It is all related. I feel the violence of the world in a very strong way, comics are my only way to cope with it, a survival mode, it is a way of romanticizing violence, poeticizing it". She also could have done so through music, one of her biggest regrets as she says. Her love of music made her collect a thousand records and keeps her close to the music scene with which she collaborates; and the figure David Bowie, her idol intruded her first book, *Souffles Courts* and brought her to engage in a conversation with a British publisher whom she met at Angoulême Festival. After the death of her grandmother to whom she was very attached, Raphaëlle felt the urge to isolate herself and write this book, articulated around the condolences in her grandmother's village - condolences gatherings in Lebanon are a microcosm of the Lebanese society. In a couple of months, she had finished the book, printed a hundred copies and went to Angoulême Festival, where she sold the complete stock, setting foot in the international arena and gaining confidence in her art. Unlike the title of her book, *Souffles Courts* ie short breaths, Raphaëlle Macaron has a vision and a long and deep breath.

*The theory of the planet collapsing based on Pablo Sevigne's thesis that announces the end of a world that is disrespectful with the planet and with humanity itself.



Artist Raphaëlle Macaron working at her desk station
- Featured in L'Orient Le Jour's "Génération Orient"



"Les Terrestres" a graphic novel by Noël Mamère et Raphaëlle Macaron (Du Faubourg Editions, 2020)

How did you approach the subject of the environment in your comic?

I didn't want to create a moral guide, because it is lecturing and we are still in a system in which a certain behavior has been anchored for a long time. I also explained to my co-author how I thought the term "the war on climate" was exaggerated...From the perspective of someone who comes from a part of the world that has experienced war per se, terms like this seem particularly violent and somehow disproportionate. And even if the reasoning is noble and is valid, it is Western centric and concerns a privileged society such as the French one: the question of filtering mercury in water is a luxury, many people living in other parts of the world couldn't even think of. It is not necessarily about hierarchy in suffering, but one can't but question what place to give to environmental anxiety when one has experienced

war, violence and the "collapse" of one's country, politically and economically. My experience and the fact that I come from another part of the world enabled me to tackle the subject with more distance and to enunciate it differently. Also, when I shared my growing anxiety about the environment and the planet with them, my parents told me stories of solidarity and resilience during the war; I understood that this way of living is not related to environmental concerns *stricto sensu* but to a broader conception of life.

There is no environmental transition without a social transition. You cannot ask people to recycle and to ride bicycles only, you need to profoundly change a capitalist and corrupt society.

Do you see this social transition happening in Lebanon? How do you relate it to October's revolution and to current transformations there?

I can only think that this is the start of something new; even if the relationship to hope now is very complicated. I try to look at the big picture and I know I am privileged since I am far away to be able to do so. When the blast occurred I felt powerless and wondered what could I do from my position? Beirut was very important for me in my work; I had very few posters in stock. I decided to sell them to the benefit of Beirut. I shared some posts on Instagram and Facebook; demand was higher than I was logistically able to handle through the Facebook and Instagram platforms, so I launched a crowdfunding campaign together with Studio Fidele in Paris – the studio works with the Riso method, a special high-quality printing technique. I raised 92 000 EUR; the biggest part of those funds were donated by international people who had come across

Beirut at some point in their lives, who love the city and wanted to help, mainly people from France, the US, Germany, the UK and Australia. For them, this sale and crowdfunding campaign was more than about me and my work, it was about their love of Beirut, and though many people discovered my work through the campaign, they just wanted to help. Personally, it was important for me to give back a token for their donation. The organization of the whole campaign and the logistics was a month's full time job. I partnered with Impact Lebanon to channel the donations and allocated a small part of it to Helem, the LGBTIQ organization, whose community and service centers were destroyed in the blast, as my stocks included some of my "homophobia is unnatural" posters.



Illustration by Raphaëlle Macaron



Illustration by Raphaëlle Macaron

Do you have new projects in the pipeline?

My main plan now is to work on my book, I feel the urgency to complete it. It is the story of the eighth wonder discovered in Lebanon, an underground grotto that draws a record number of tourists to the country. It follows the life cycle of a specific hotel that is packed. It is ironic: it relates the romanticized view of Beirut from a Western audience in comparison to the Lebanese who live there - the packaging of a city as a product to sell to a Western audience, such as the label *The Paris of the Middle East*.

بيروت



Why did you leave Lebanon, especially since it feeds your creativity?

Because I wanted to work in comics and to live off my drawings. I needed to leave as I needed to broaden my horizon. Even if I constantly feel guilty, I know that with what I am doing from here, I am more efficient than if I were in Lebanon. Being in France has enabled me to broaden my practice and to have greater confidence in my work. I couldn't have done this in Lebanon. Yet, I feel I want to put this privilege of being abroad at the service of my country. Very humbly, I believe that the diaspora has a role to play.

باريس

You directed Topie, an issue of the collective Samandal some years ago, whose main topic was utopia. Can you tell us more about it?

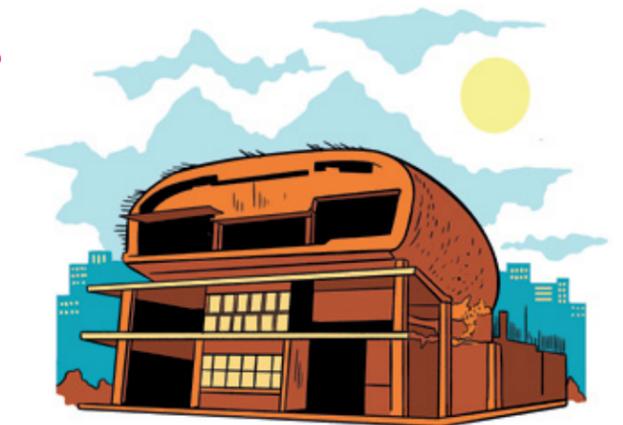
Iwanted to do comics from the beginning and I thought that the possibility of living from it would be scarce. I always felt very lonely in my interests in Lebanon; however, when I joined the collective Samandal in 2014, I realized that there were places in Lebanon where one can express oneself and live one's passion. So for the 10th anniversary of the collective where I was asked to curate and direct that annual

issue - it went by rotation - I thought let's have a book about a perfect world. I submitted the idea of Utopia. I didn't want to manage the artists and wanted them to craft what they wanted to. Everything I received was dystopia and all submissions were linked to Beirut. So finally, I removed utopia to make it *topia*, from *topos*, which is strongly linked to a place; a place rather than a perfect place.



Can we say that there's a comics scene in Lebanon?

There is for sure a scene in Lebanon. There is a growing interest for comics generally speaking as they are more and more used as a political, social and documentary medium. Artists in Lebanon have a lot to say. ALBA curriculum in comics has more students - when I studied, there were only two of us enrolled - and there are more and more initiatives such as Zeez, a recent collective of young authors.



Can one live from comics? Can you share with us on your collaborations and experience as an illustrator?



It is difficult to live off it anywhere. I am privileged to love illustration and to live from my illustration work as well. I am a freelance illustrator and I work with various types of clients; artists, NGOs, the press such as the Washington Post, the New York Times, Society Magazine and So Good. I appreciate the challenge of synthesizing the info into something aesthetic, especially when it is political. I like to have this responsibility and to discover new subjects. As for the work with NGOs, I particularly appreciate it as it is purposeful.

The practice of illustration feeds my comics; and what I like about illustration is the instant satisfaction as it is out there much faster than a book. I also appreciate the adrenaline that I get from it as it allows me to work on several subjects at a time and encompasses a variety of projects.





Learn more about the Initiative at

#FEMALEFORWARD

fnf-europe.org/tag/female-forward/