

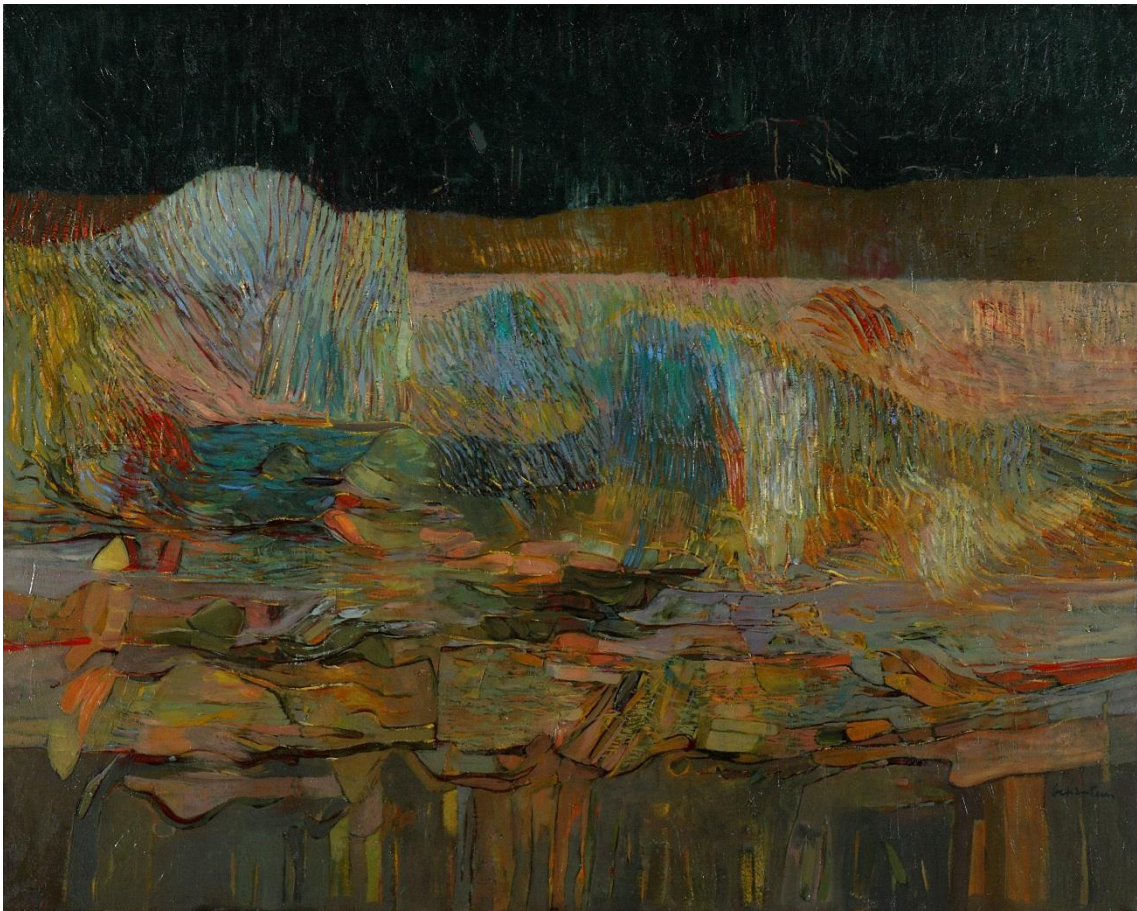
Algerian Modernism

15.11.2021 - 25.02.2022

Abdelkader Guermaz, M'hamed Issiakhem, Mohammed Khadda, Baya Mahieddine, Abdallah Benanteur, Mahjoub Ben Bella, Rachid Koraichi

Elmarsa Gallery is pleased to stage a group exhibition of Algerian painters considered as pioneers in the advent of Modernism. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, with the exception of self-taught Khadda and Baya, these artists attended the Fine Arts School of Algiers or Oran, of which painting studios have been accessible to the natives since 1930. Rapidly evolving into cosmopolitan and dynamic urban environments, they benefit from the creative vitality of the School of Algiers, which is dominated by the advance of abstract and landscape movements. Frequenting the museums and galleries, they are interested in painters who drew their inspiration from this distant "East": Renoir, Cézanne, Matisse and Picasso, Klee as well as Delacroix, Chassériau, Fromentin and Dinet. Algerian artists then gradually become aware of the role that endogenous art forms (calligraphy, arabesque) had played in the revival of modern art vocabulary at the advent of Modernism. Therefore, imbued with European and local artistic models and their strong training and encounters with the intellectual figures in Algiers, they founded a modern art movement 'Aouchem' in 1967, Arabic for tattoo, and initiated the School of the Sign. This presentation attempts to retrace the art practices in Algeria that embody the quest for a plural Algerian identity influenced by its geopolitical identity and singular culture. Artists contested the figurative and narrative vision, felt as foreign to Maghrebi sensibility, and their work reflected the emergence of several tendencies toward naive art and expressionism, non-figuration and the use of traditional signs and symbols.

Abdallah Benanteur
1931-2017

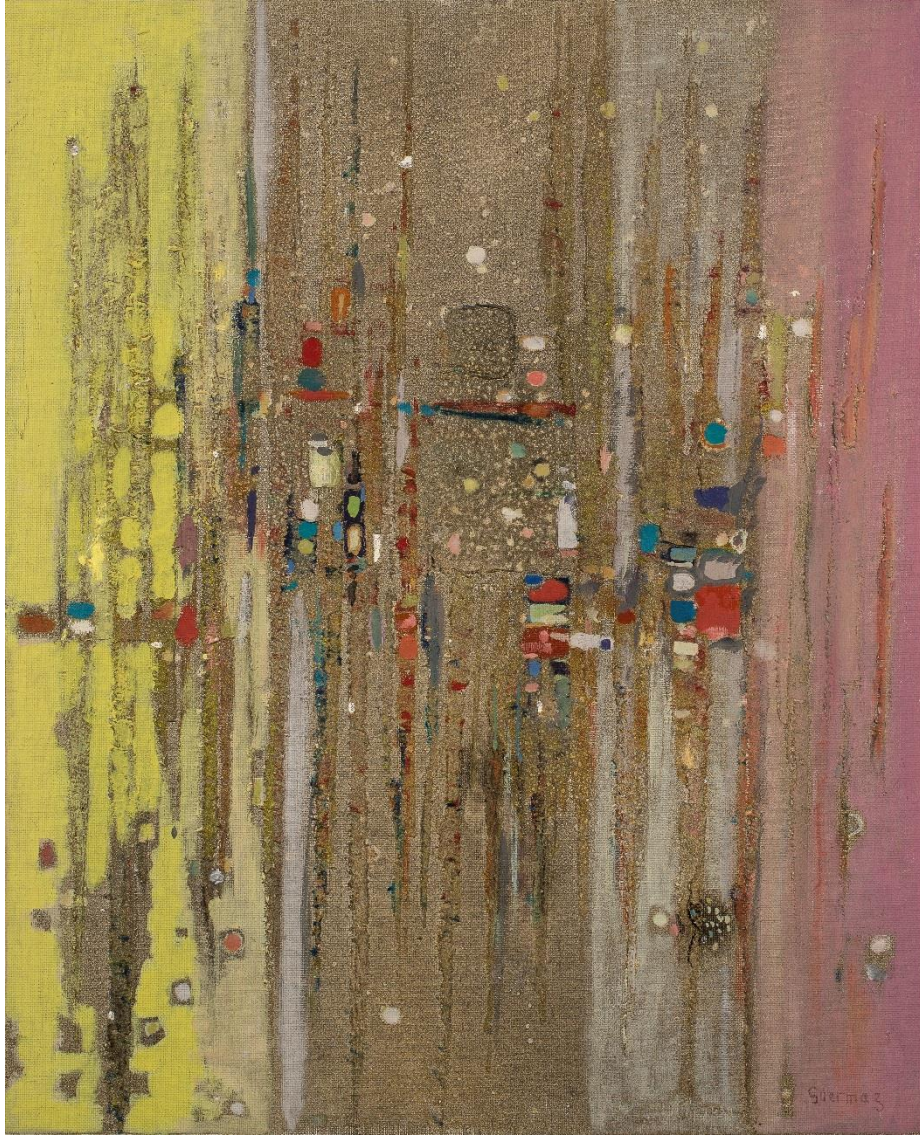


Du côté de chez A, 1976

Oil on canvas, 130 x162 cm

Signed and dated lower center right.

Abdelkader Guermaz
1919-1996



Composition, 1965

Oil on canvas, 54 x 45 cm

Signed lower right.



Métamorphose, Circa 1974

Oil on panel

69 x 56 cm

Signed lower right.



Rayonnement cosmique, 1994

Oil on panel

48 x 61 cm

Signed lower right.



Sans titre, 1950

Oil on panel, 116 x 81 cm

Signed lower right.

Baya Mahieddine
1931-1998



Jeune musicienne, 1975
Gouache on paper, 92 x 73 cm
Signed and dated lower right.



Nature morte aux instruments, 1986

Gouache on paper, 63.3 x 39.8 cm

Signed and dated lower center.



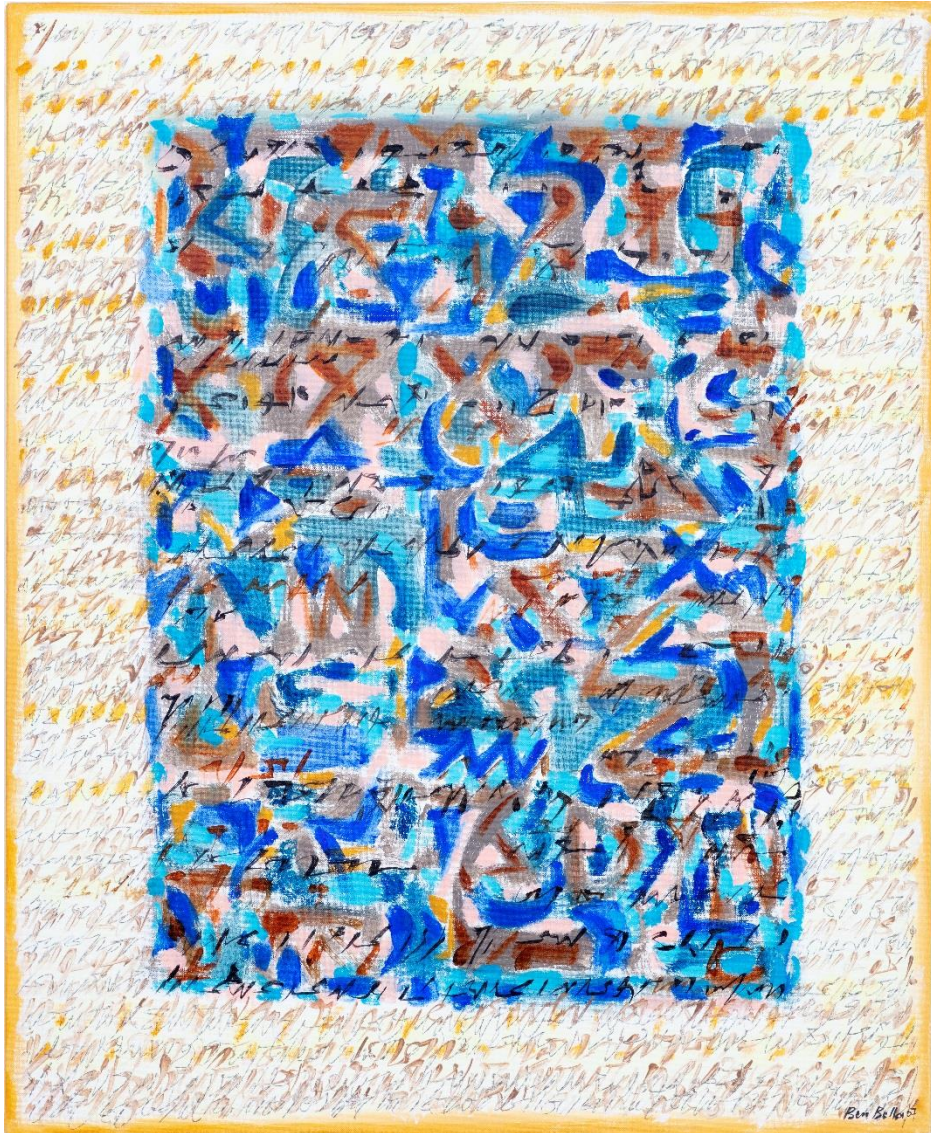
Joueuse de mandore, 1986

Watercolor and gouache on paper

65 x 50 cm

Signed and dated lower right.

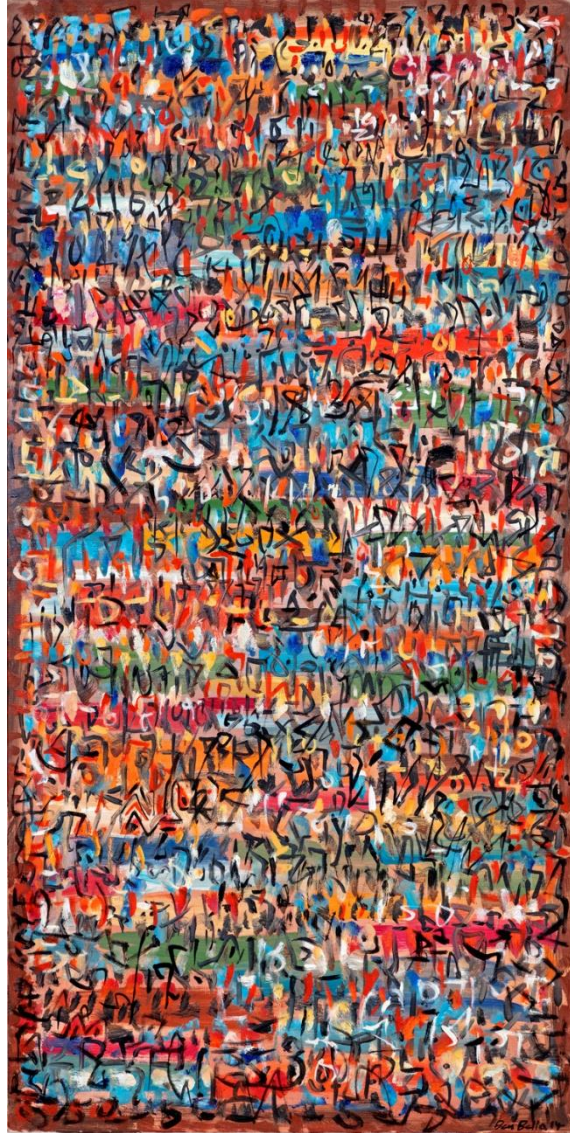
Mahjoub Ben Bella
1946-2020



Traces bleues, 2007

Oil and grease pencil on canvas, 100 x 81 cm

Signed and dated lower right.

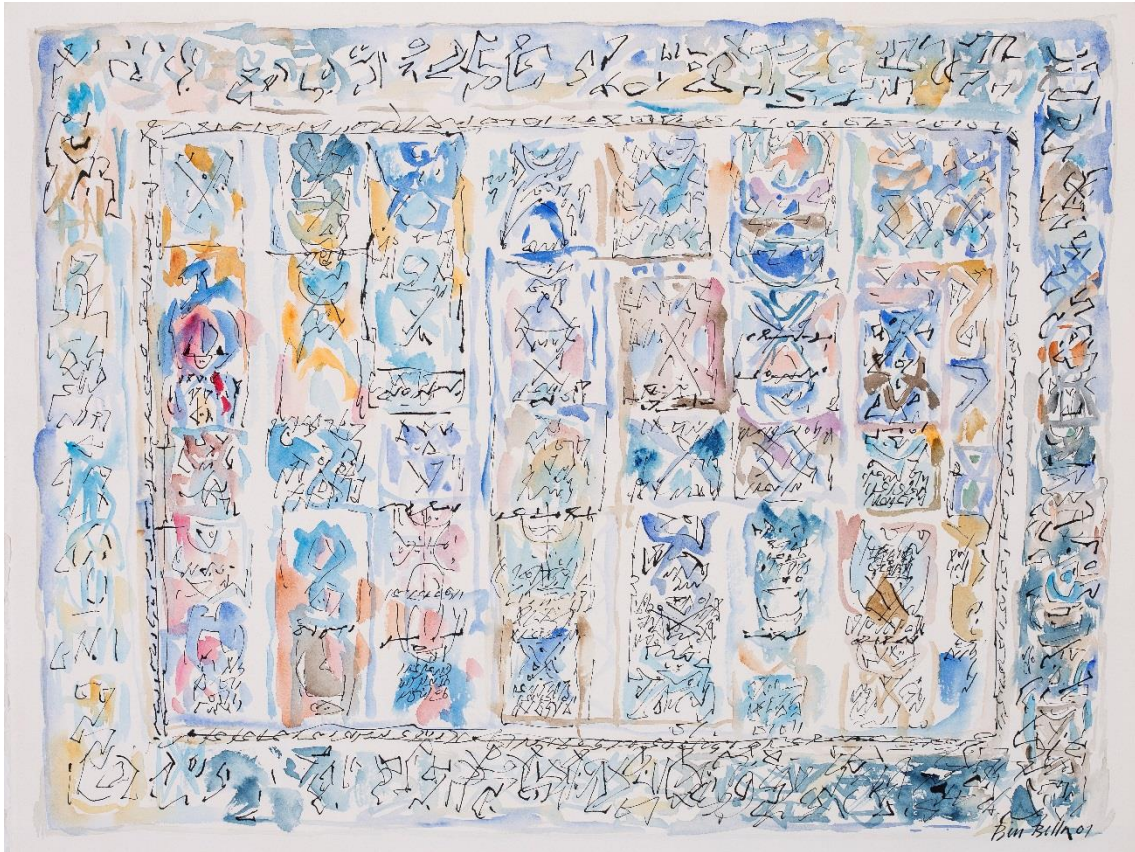


Signes, 2014

Oil on canvas

120 x 60 cm

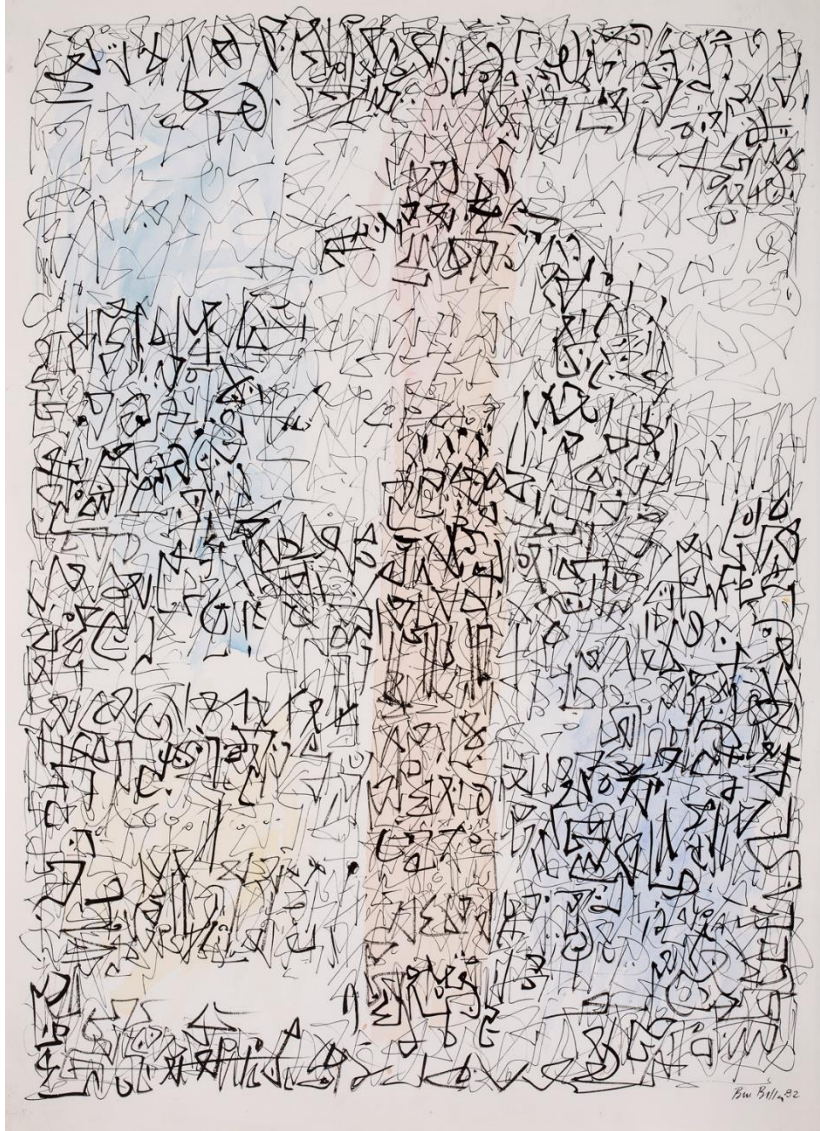
Signed and dated lower right.



Talisman 2, 2001

Aquarelle on paper, 50 x 65 cm

Signed and dated lower right.



Cercle écrit, 1982

Aquarelle on paper

76 x 56 cm

Signed and dated lower right.

M'hamed Issiakhem
1928-1985



Maternité dans un paysage

Oil on canvas, 81 x 100 cm

Signed lower right.

Mohammed Khadda
1930-1991



Brise sur l'Estuaire

Oil on canvas, 110 x 85 cm

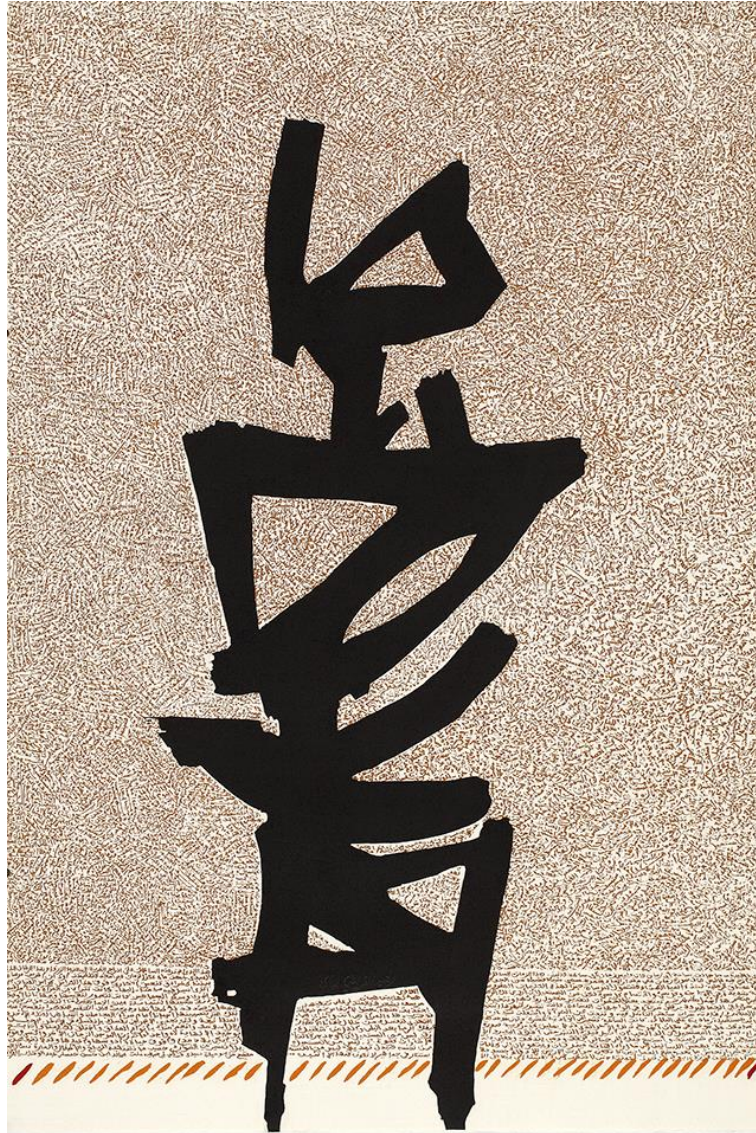
Signed lower right.

Rachid Koraichi
b. 1947



Bronze 1, 2012

Bronze black and gold patina, H. 77 x 44 x 26.5 cm
Signed, dated in Arabic, numbered 1 of an edition of 8,
and stamped by Deroyaume foundry on the base

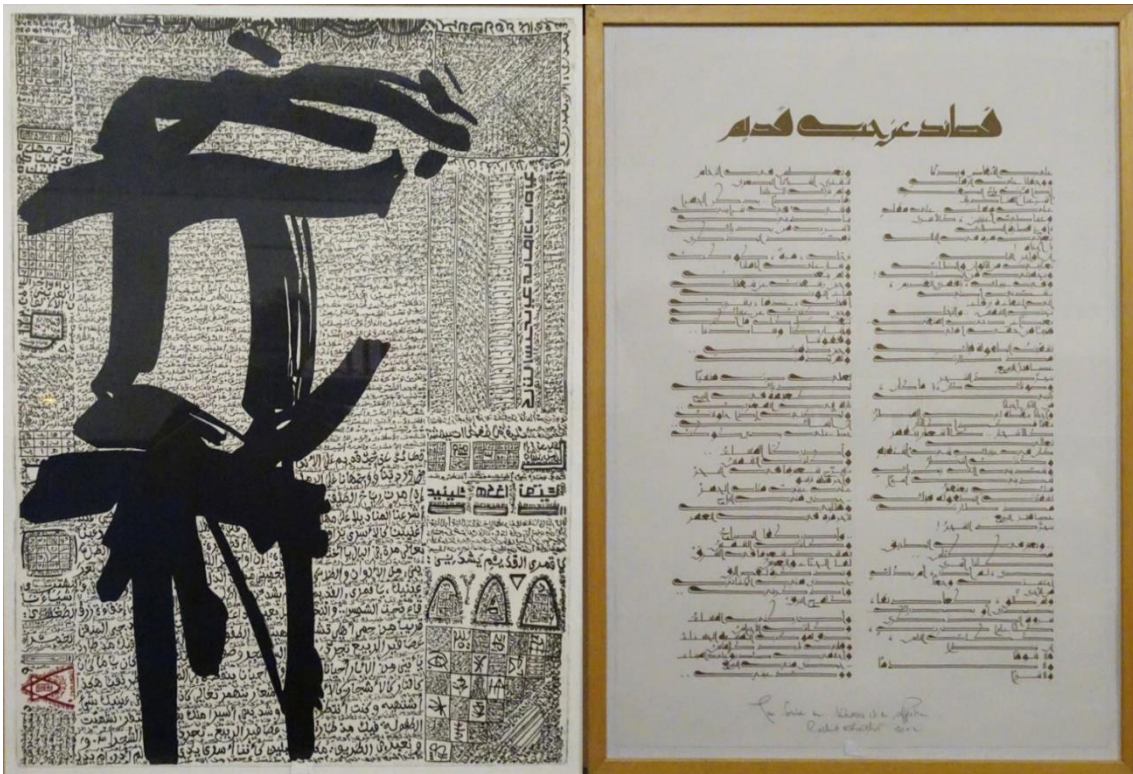


Frise Calligraphique, Circa 1985

Color Etching, 120 x 78 cm

Edition 22/40

Signed lower center.



Nation exil, 2002

Diptych prints

76 x 56 cm each



Les Priants 10, 2015

Corten steel

H. 160 x W. 119 x D. 2 cm

Numbered one in an edition of one

About Abdallah Benanteur (Algeria, 1931 – 2017)

Born in 1931 in Algeria, Abdallah Benanteur is one of the founders of modern painting in Algeria. He was brought up in an Algerian family and a cultural environment immersed in writing, books and illuminated manuscripts as well as in Sufi poetry and Andalusian music. In 1953, Abdallah Benanteur moved to Paris with his long-time friend Mohammed Khadda, and had since evolved in the direction of non-figuration. After a stint at the Académie libre of the Grande Chaumière, still under the influence of Fernand Léger, his paintings became colourful symphonies poetically restoring the atmosphere inspired by the landscapes of his native country. Following his first solo show in 1957, he regularly exhibited in France and in Europe. In 1961, he illustrated Jean Sénac's poetry with his drawings. A brilliant typographer, designer and engraver, he designed, executed and produced his own books. Between 1961 and 1994, he created a hundred of bibliophile books specifically on ancient and contemporary poems, from East to West. Since 1994, Abdallah Benanteur created an exceptional and impressive corpus of over 1400 books based on the texts of more than 360 poets worldwide. There isn't any known artist to this date, who has proved to have so much energy and imagination in the creation of so many admirable and unique books, in such a short span of time.

About Abdelkader Guermaz (Algerian, 1919 – 1996)

Abdelkader Guermaz grew up in Oran where he studied at the Beaux-Arts from 1938 to 1940. Until 1955, Guermaz worked in the figurative style like the 'Peintres de la Réalité Poétique', a French art movement. His early works are typically landscapes and still-lives. After 1955, he started painting abstract works, and was drawn to the avant-garde artists in Paris where he moved in 1961. He became associated with the School of Paris, befriended French artists such as Bissière, Manessier, Bazaine. Subtlety and minimalism characterize Guermaz's artistic approach, giving form to his spiritual meditations and inspiring French art critic Pierre Rey to call him the painter of silence and light. In the 1970's, Guermaz began incorporating modulated neutral fields, punctuated by touches of colour and subtle grid-like patterns, conceived as 'abstract landscapes'. Attaining critical success in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the artist was largely forgotten upon the 1981 closure of the gallery Entremonde that represented him. His work, featured in international museum collections, has been rediscovered in posthumous shows and texts. Abdelkader Guermaz is considered as one of the founders of modern art in Algeria.

About Baya Mahieddine (Algerian, 1931 – 1998)

Self-taught Algerian artist Baya Mahieddine was born in 1931 and died in 1998. As an adolescent, Baya was encouraged by a French couple, living in Algeria, to pursue art. Fabled gallerist Aimé Maeght and writer André Breton, organized her first exhibition in Paris in 1947 at the age of sixteen. Baya's colourful mélange of surreal, childlike imagery, rich in symbols and ornamentations from her Arab-Berber origins drew the attention of Henri Matisse and Pablo Picasso, with whom she later collaborated in his renowned studio in Vallauris. Since, her work has been exhibited extensively in various museums and galleries. In 1982, Baya had an exhibition at the Museum Cantini in Marseilles inaugurated by French President François Mitterrand. In July 1987, she was honored by Algerian president Chadli. In 2018, Grey Art Gallery at New York University organized her first North American exhibition "Baya: Woman of Algiers". Baya's work is the subject of various publications and her works can be found in numerous public and private collections worldwide.

About Mahjoub Ben Bella (Algerian, 1946 – 2020)

Ben Bella's unique visual language is composed of motifs, shapes and colors that emerge out of his treatment of traditional Arabic calligraphy in the European painting tradition. Born in Algeria in 1946, Mahjoub Ben Bella studied at the Fine Arts School of Oran before joining the Academy of Arts in Tourcoing in Northern France, where he lived and worked all his life. He received master's degrees at both the National School of Applied Arts and the National Fine Arts Academy of Paris. In addition to major international commissions ranging from a 1982 mural in Riyadh airport and a 12 km painted course for the 1986 Paris-Roubaix international bicycle race to a portrait of Nelson Mandela at the Wembley stadium in the UK in 1988 and ceramic tiles in the metro station in Tourcoing in 2000. Ben Bella's work has been widely exhibited around the world and acquired by prestigious collections and museums.

About Mohammed Khadda (Algerian, 1930-1991)

Algerian painter, sculptor, and writer, Mohammed Khadda is considered one of the founding fathers of modern art in Algeria. Synthesizing western painting techniques with the fluidity of Arabic writing, Khadda represents a generation of Algerian artists who wove together calligraphic heritage and the formal language of Western abstraction through the 1950s. Forging a distinct Algerian artistic practice became more critical in the aftermath of the country's independence from France in 1962. The political transition influenced the founding in 1967 of art movements known as 'Aouchem', Arabic for tattoo, and School of the Sign, of which Khadda was an active participant along with Baya. Often working with a palette of earth tones, Khadda layer Arabic writing and calligraphy over atmospheric abstract compositions. In 1953, he travelled to Paris, where he spent a decade before returning to Algeria. Khadda was a founding member of the National Union of the Visual Arts,

established in 1964, and participated in producing a number of collective murals during the 1970s. In addition to exhibiting regularly in Algeria and abroad, Khadda illustrated novels and books of poetry for several well-known Algerian writers, including Rachid Boudjedra.

About M'Hamed Issiakhem (Algerian, 1928-1985)

Algerian painter M'Hamed Issiakhem was born in Algeria, in 1928 and died in Algiers, in 1985. Wounded by a home-made bomb in 1943, his left arm was amputated. From 1947 to 1951 he studied at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Algiers, while training in miniature painting with Omar Racim. In 1953, he settled in Paris where he graduated from the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in 1958. During his time in Paris, Issiakhem witnessed the development of abstract Expressionism and other artistic styles, which he quickly adopted. A pioneer of modern Algerian art, he was one of the founders of the Algerian National Union of Arts in 1963 and held exhibitions in Algeria and abroad. Attracted by left-wing ideas, he travelled to Vietnam in 1972 and Moscow in 1978. In 1977, Issiakhem executed a fresco at Algiers Airport. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs published a brochure in Algiers of which Kateb Yacine wrote the preface under the title Issiakhem's lynx Eyes and Americans, thirty-five years of hell of a painter. Issiakhem received the First Golden Simba (Golden Lion) of Rome in 1980, a UNESCO distinction for African Art.

About Rachid Koraichi (Algerian, b. 1947)

Koraichi's sculptural explorations extend across an impressive range of different media, with his installations including ceramics, textiles, various metals and painted work on silk, paper or canvas. Beginning with the intricate beauties of the Arabic calligraphic scripts his work is composed of symbols, glyphs and ciphers drawn from a wide variety of other languages and cultures. Born in 1947 in Ain Beida, Algeria, Rachid Koraichi lives and works between Tunisia and France. He studied at the Institute of Fine Arts and the Superior National School of the Arts in Algeria, before moving to France to continue his further studies at the National School of Decorative Arts and the School of Urban Studies in Paris. Rachid Koraichi was included in the international touring exhibition Short Century, and in the 47th and 49th Venice Biennale, and in Word into Art at the British Museum, 2006. His works have been widely exhibited around the world, and can be found in many private and public collections including the British Museum, London; the National Museum for African Art, Washington; the Museum of Islamic Arts, Doha and many more. In 2010, he contributed works to the Centro Cultural Banco do Brazil's exhibition Isla, (Islam) and The Future of Tradition – The Tradition of Future, at the Haus de Kunst, Germany.

Exhibition Facts

Exhibition: 15 November 2021 - 5 January 2022

Opening days: Monday to Thursday 10 am-7 pm, Saturday 10 am- 6 pm

Location: Elmarsa Gallery, 23 Alserkal Avenue, Al Quoz 1, Dubai

About Elmarsa Gallery

Founded in 1994, Elmarsa Gallery has galleries in Tunis and Dubai, and an expanding European presence in Paris. Specializing in both modern and contemporary art, the gallery represents and supports the career of some of the most influential and recognized artists of the 20th and the 21st century from North Africa and the Middle-East, with a wide-ranging exhibition programme at its two gallery spaces. Active in both the primary and secondary markets, Elmarsa also represents its artists at major international art fairs focusing on African and Middle-East art in Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Paris, London, Marrakech, Miami and New York.

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