

Atef Maatallah

Guest Artists: Alaeddine Slim, Maher Habib Gnaoui

S'hab / S'mè

May 14 - June 30 2017

2, place du Saf Saf, La Marsa, Tunis

Sunday May 14th

1:00 pm: Opening

1:30 pm: The artist Atef Maatallah will be in conversation with Catherine David, curator and deputy director at the Musée National d'Art Moderne - Centre Pompidou, Paris.

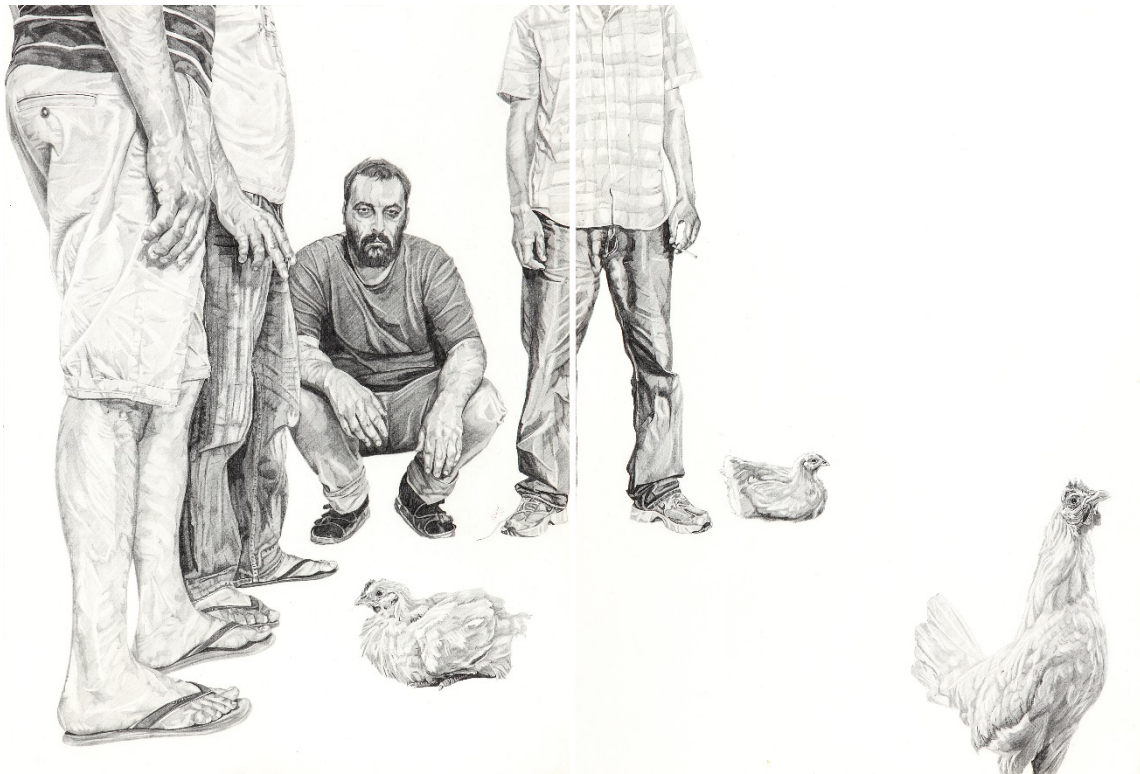
Elmarsa is pleased to present Atef Maatallah's third solo exhibition in Tunis S'hab / S'mè, in collaboration with guest artists Alaeddine Slim and Maher Habib Gnaoui, an account on the personal experience of confinement shared by the three artists. The result is a dynamic visual display representing the conceptual psychological and material connections forged among them ranging from painting to installation. This biographical exhibition gives voice to Maatallah's drawings and paintings in conversation with Slim's and Gnaoui's video, photography and installation works through intimate stories and subverting narratives on the idea of captivity and the effects of power and authority over freedom, identity, religion and sexuality. A critical standpoint of the country's new democracy that yielded no true freedom, instead recognising a familiar sense of alienation in Tunisia's complex realities.

The gallery will exhibit Maatallah's complete series of recent drawings and his new paintings asserting his aesthetic vision that relies on reduction and eccentricity. Maatallah's new body of work delves deeper into an intimate reflection on moral alienation and oppression and the consequences of the deprivation of freedoms. A powerful realistic representation of desolation and hope that reside in the entwinement between the form and the background, the faraway look in the eyes and the horizon, the men and their beds, the sky and the clouds.

Film director of *The Last of Us* and multi-media artist, Ala Eddine Slim will present his new video *Stones* كرسى of a deserted village at the exit of Redayef – a town close to the border of Algeria and known to be the site of important uprisings in 2008, a foretaste of Tunisia's revolution, along with *Rolling Flag* a series of Tunisian flags printed on rolling paper and his

latest series Scan made of prints on transparent paper in light box of scanned areas of skin exposed to violent acts and past trauma on the theme of the body memory.

Multidisciplinary artist Maher Habib Gnaoui presents his most recent installation work Columbarium displaying a series of painted portraits on a concrete structure of vaults lined with recesses for cinerary urns on the stories of living characters whose dreams have been killed and buried by society, along with Vault of Heaven- Download 50,6%, a work based upon a data base of images uploaded on a torrent binary file, the images are manipulated in one touch by the author who decides to give us half stories blocked up by a grey block to smear our vision of what could have been.



Atef Maatallah, 2017, pencil on cotton paper, diptych, 75x100 cm

“The story takes place where the sky, the trees and even the thorns are missed.

A place where we do not know if the guards and doctors have a heart, a mother.

A sky where the troubled, leering and pious men mingle together. Me, the patterns of flowers on the fabrics are my happiness.

The bed and the screen form one body with the wall. Whiteness is now an enclosed space, a cell, an infirmary, a surveillance room and so many insects and things that accompany them.

The anguish of a mother in the face of absence, the happiness of another after a birth, everything has been spread on paper sheets and empty canvases, white as the sky. The heroes are a night watchman, a saint, fellow mates and me.”

About the artists:

Atef Maatallah was born in 1981 in Al Fahs in Tunisia, a city which is at the centre of his work. His work revisits the codes of narrative figuration through a rigorous illustration of everyday images and characters whose haunting glances evoke an air of transience. Maatallah's figurative paintings and drawings reflect a sense of longing, cultivated in part by the use of individuals from his childhood in Al Fahs. A graduate of the Institut Supérieur des Beaux-Arts in Tunis, he has participated in numerous exhibitions in Tunisia and abroad since 2010. Some of the exhibitions include his work at the Institut des Cultures de l'Islam de la Ville de Paris, and in collaboration with the Collectif Zamaken at the Salon DDessin16 in Paris in 2016. Atef Maatallah participated in a yearlong residency at the Cité des Arts de Paris in 2014. He was awarded the first and second prizes for drawing by Paris Contemporary Drawing D.Dessin for two consecutive years in 2015 and 2016. His works are in public and private collections including Barjeel Art Foundation in Sharjah, Kamel Lazaar Foundation in Tunis and the Ministry of Culture in Tunisia. He lives and works in Tunis, and exhibits his work regularly in Tunis, Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Paris, among others.

Ala Eddine Slim, born in Sousse, Tunisia in 1982, is an independent filmmaker working in the worlds of documentary, short film and video art. He studied Cinema at the ISAMM-Superior Institute of Multimedia Arts in Mannouba. In 2005, he co-founded the film production company Exit Productions. In 2016, Slim directed his first feature film, "The Last of Us", which he describes as "a continuity of [my] research into themes that are of importance to me: the problems of borders, imaginary territories, contemporary solitude, vagrancy, the issues of crossing and of the human nature in all its facets." The film made its world premiere at the Venice Film Festival in the Critics' Week section, and was awarded with the Lion of the Future Award (Best First Work of all sections), as well as the prize of the Best Technical Contribution. At the CGC 2016, the film won three prizes, including the Tanit d'Or for Best First Work. The film continues to circulate throughout the world. He lives and works in Tunis.

Maher Habib Gnaoui, born in 1987 in Gabes, Tunisia. He completed a Masters in Arts and Crafts specializing in Sculpture at the Institut Supérieur des Beaux-Arts de Tunis (ISBAT) in 2011. Maher's works are immersed in the universe of urban art whose practices are realized mainly on the walls, buildings, and other structures in the street. The same techniques such as stencils, wall collages and bomb paint are reused by the artist on common objects. His work has been exhibited at the Expo Talan, the National Center of Living Arts (Tunis), the Galerie Talmart (Paris), the B'Chria Art Center (Tunis) and Gallery A.Gorgi (Tunis). He lives and works in Tunis.



Atef Maatallah, La passion de Am Salah, Acrylique sur toile, 200x200 cm



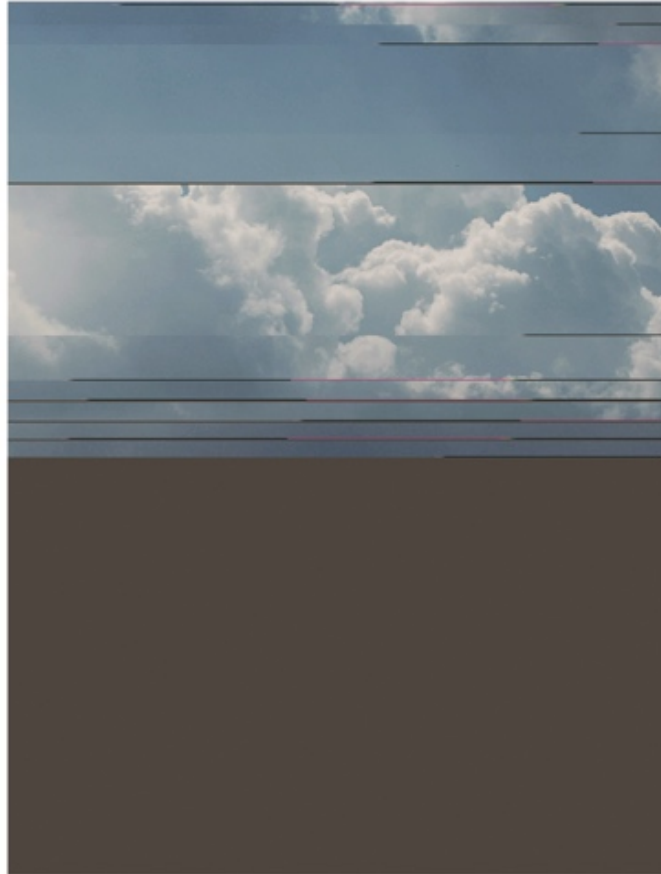
Atef Maatallah, Chambre 6, 2017, Diptyque, Mine de plomb sur papier coton, 57x153 cm



Ala Eddine Slim, SCAN 01-02-03, الحيه للحمه , Scannage, caisson lumineux, 71x40 cm / 110.25x40 cm / 71x40 cm



Ala Eddine Slim, Stones ربي كرسي, 2017, Vidéo, 7 mins



Maher Habib Gnaoui, *Vaults of heaven*, 2017, Download 50,6%, Torrent download print on fine art paper, 34x49 cm

About Elmarsa:

One of the most established galleries in the region, Elmarsa has been operating in Tunis since 1994 and opened their Dubai gallery in Alserkal Avenue in 2015. The gallery's mission has always been to generate interest in Arab art from North Africa, specializing in both modern and contemporary practice. They have participated in every edition of Art Dubai since 2007 as well as a number of other prominent international art fairs and frequently publish monographs on their artists.

Exhibition Facts:

Opening Hours: Monday - Saturday 10 am-7 pm

Location: 2 place du Saf Saf, 2070 La Marsa, Tunisia

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