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Cover Page Footnote

I address my acknowledgement to all the artists, art professionals and people that I met between France and Morocco since I started my work on contemporary Moroccan art. I would like to particularly thank my family members and Dr. Sandra Bird for their ongoing support.

Analyzing the Moroccan Artistic Presence at the Centre Pompidou Collections

Sirine Abdelhedi

Abstract

This article highlights the cultural, economic, historical, and political criteria that influence the current international policy of the Pompidou Center, particularly a new interest in non-Western art in Arabic-speaking countries. It focuses on works produced by Moroccan artists that are part of the collections of the National Museum of Modern Art - Centre Pompidou in Paris. It includes a brief introduction to some key milestones in Moroccan art history that help contextualize the research project.

The Context of the Project: Milestones in Moroccan Art History

At the dawn of the 20th century, the destiny of Morocco, like most African countries, could not escape Western colonization. The signature of the Treaty of Fez on March 30, 1912 allowed the establishment of a Franco-Spanish protectorate. The Spanish dominated the Rif region in the north of Morocco, while the French exerted their power in the central/southern parts of the country. Two institutions dedicated to artistic education were created under the colonization system and which belong today to Moroccan authorities. The Ecole des Beaux-Arts of Casablanca opened in 1950 and the Ecole des Beaux-Arts of Tetouan created in 1945.

However, as art historian Toni Maraini (2014) has noted, there is a popular pictorial tradition that did not come to Morocco "in the trunks of colonialism." Morocco has long been and continues to be at the crossroads of different civilizations and cultures. Miniatures, illuminations, arabesques, Amazigh signs, Roman antiquities, and Islamic architecture have inspired generations of autodidactic artists who employ techniques that belong to these aesthetic registers. I mention a few: Mohamed Ben Ali Rbati (1861-1939), Mohamed Ben Allal (1924-1995), Ahmed Ben Driss El Yacoubi (1928-1985), Hassan El Glaoui (1923-2018), Chaïbia Talal (1929-2004), and Fatima Hassan Farrouj (1945-2011). Their productions were wrongly so-called "naïve" during the protectorate. But "naïve" according to whom and in what context? They all started exhibiting from the 1950s in Morocco and abroad.

The years immediately before and following independence (1956) were decisive for the future of contemporary art in Morocco. A new generation of artists benefitted from scholarships to continue their artistic training abroad while others chose to stay in Morocco. When talking about the birth of abstraction in painting in

Morocco, the names of Ahmed Cherkaoui (1934-1967) and Jilali Gharbaoui (1930-1971) are always among the first directly mentioned. Cherkaoui draws on his heritage to create contemporary work. He uses visual elements (usually inspired from the Amazigh alphabet or tattoos) and enlarges them so that the shape occupies the entire space of the canvas. As for Gharbaoui, he chose to express himself through the pictorial gesture. The imbalance in his private life has influenced him as his work is characterized by violent and rapid gestures.

In 1962, upon his return to Morocco, Farid Belkadia (1934-2014) took over the direction of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts of Casablanca. Joined by artists-teachers Mohamed Melehi (1936-) and Mohamed Chebaa (1935-2013) and historians Toni Maraini (1941-) and Bert Flint (1931-), they established an artistic education that takes into account the different aspects of Moroccan culture for the creation of contemporary works. Like many other artists, they have thought about the future of Moroccan art by refuting the ideas that reduced it to naïve art during colonial and post-colonial periods. Their collaboration is at the origin of the artistic movement known as the “School of Casablanca.” Maraini says (2014), “More than a style, ‘modernity,’ thus understood, was a spirit and an attitude. Far from being established like an academy of styles, modern art became the space of questioning and unveiling” (p. 73). They encouraged their students to create outside the academic space and go to meet the public. To challenge the folklorization of Moroccan art defended in neo-colonial salons, they created an open-air exhibition in Jamaa el Fna square (1969) which undoubtedly represents an historical moment in Moroccan history of art.

During that period, quality art and culture journals were born. *Maghreb Art* (1965-1969) was published by the School of Casablanca, *Souffles* (1966-1973) initiated by poets Abdellatif Lâabi and Mustapha Nissaboury, and then *Integral* (1971-1977). In 1971, Pauline de Mazières founded l’Atelier, the first contemporary art gallery in Morocco. She was joined by Sylvia Benhassan and for 20 years (until 1991), the gallery was considered as a reference point not only nationally but for the broader Arab world. In the late 1970s, Mohamed Melehi and Mohamed Benaissa, both originating from Asilah and elected to the city council, initiated the Cultural Moussem of Asilah. This festival of art and culture is organized every year between July and August. Through its programming, the organizers aim to ensure the social and economic development of the city through culture and arts.

Many companies and patrons supported the artists not only by collecting but also by supporting and creating places to spread the visual arts. This is the case of The Office Chérifien des Phosphates, the Foundation Omnium nord-africain (ONA) and its two art villas based in Casablanca and Rabat: the Attijari Wafabank and its art space Actua; and the real-estate group Alliances owned by Mohamed Alami Lazrak and its eponymous foundation which manages the Museum of Contemporary African Art Al Maaden just to name a few.

In 1993, the artist-teacher Faouzi Laatiris (1958-) set up the “Volume and Installation” workshop at National Institute of Fine Arts of Tetouan. He contributed to the training of the most remarkable artists of a generation – the “Tetouan generation” which included Batoul S'Himi (1974-), Younes Rahmoun (1975-), Safaa Erruas (1976-), Mohssin Harraki (1981-), Mustapha Akrim (1981-), etc.

A lot of artists and curators have also created venues for the dissemination of contemporary art and culture. This is the case of Yto Barrada (1971-), who took over the Cinémathèque de Tanger and saved it from collapse; Hassan Darsi (1961-) founded the research center The Source of the Lion (1995) in Casablanca; Mohamed Mourabiti (1968-) initiated Al Maqam, an artist's residence located in the Amazigh village Tahannaout not far from Marrakech; Abdallah Karroum founded in 2002 L'appartement 22, an artist's residence in Rabat; Younes Rahmoun cofounded in 2013 with Berénice Saliou Trankat, a space of residence and creation in the medina of Tetouan.

In 2002, Hicham Daoudi founded the Compagnie Marocaine des Œuvres et Objets d'Art, an auction house based in Casablanca and renamed in 2008 as the Art Holding Morocco. Its area of specialization extends to cultural management. Thus, Daoudi created in 2009 *Diptyk*, an art magazine published in Casablanca and directed by Myriam Sebti and in 2016 the Comptoir des Mines, a contemporary art gallery in the heart of Marrakech. In 2004, Vanessa Branson initiated the cultural event Art Marrakech, which was named The Marrakech Biennale in 2012. Due to lack of funding, its sixth and last event took place in 2016.

At the initiative of His Majesty Mohamed VI, the National Foundation of Museums was created in 2011, and chaired by the artist Mehdi Qotbi (1951-) to manage the 14 national museums of the kingdom including the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art Mohamed VI, which was inaugurated in 2014 in Rabat. In February 2018, 1:54, the contemporary African art fair founded in 2013 by Touria El Glaoui, took place for the first time in Marrakech at the Mamounia. These are a few of the important milestones that set the stage for a discussion of Moroccan artwork as represented through the Centre Pompidou collections that is the focus of this article. A non-exhaustive list of Moroccan artists can be found in the appendix to this article.

The Research Project

Aware of the Euro-American focus of the collections that they manage, the curators in modern and contemporary art museums have been interested in non-Western artists since the late 1980s. The French National Museum of Modern Art (Musée National d'Art Moderne), created in 1947 in Paris, was born from the merger of the collections of the Museum of Living Artists (Musée des Artistes Vivants) and the Museum of Contemporary Foreign Schools of the Jeu de Paume (Musée des Écoles Étrangères Contemporaines du Jeu de Paume). It is, since 1977, established at the Centre Pompidou and considered as the first institution dedicated to promoting contemporary art in France (Quemin, 2007, p. 527).

The Centre Pompidou is a multidisciplinary cultural institution initiated by the French President Georges Pompidou and opened on January 31, 1977. The building was designed by Renzo Piano and Richard Rogers. The Center houses different cultural structures including the National Museum of Modern Art, which gathered together the third most important collection of modern and contemporary art in the world. More than 120,000 works of art are classified within seven departments: photography, graphic art, fine arts, architecture, design, cinema, and new media.

The first director of the museum, Pontus Hulten, made the international exhibition a contribution to the art world (Dufrêne, 2007, p. 509). Early exhibitions marked the beginnings of the museum within the Pompidou Center by tracing the links between Paris and the art capitals of the avant-gardes: Paris-New York (1977), Paris-Berlin (1978), and Paris-Moscow (1979). With shows like *Magiciens de la terre* (1989), “What About China?” (2003), or *Africa Remix* (2005), the institution attests to an interest in the art worlds of the former colonies, as seen through the prism of multiculturalism and diplomatic agreements.

In this regard Catherine Grenier, the former deputy director of the museum, initiated in 2009 the scientific program titled “research and globalization.” The first result of this program consisted of a new display of the permanent collection entitled *Plural Modernities: 1905-1970 (Modernités Plurielles: 1905-1970)*. She announced,

This manifest exhibition, the fruit of research conducted by a large team of curators and young university researchers, is a first proposal for the renewal of the conventional discourse on modern art. It breaks with long years of consensus around a unified narrative, linear and progressive, proposed with slight national variants by all Western museums. This consensus, now in crisis, needs to be updated and re-established on a new basis. (Grenier, 2013, p. 15)

This semi-permanent exhibition—which aims to decolonize art history—is the guiding thread of my study.

In addition to the linearity of the discourse, which is focused on Western and North American art scenes, different observations brought me to think about the topic and to focus on Moroccan artists who are represented in the collection of the museum. First, an increased interest in non-Western artists is accompanied by participation in group exhibitions and acquisitions of their works. Second, the Friends of the Centre Pompidou is a nonprofit organization that aims to enrich the collection of the museum by supporting new acquisitions. An International Circle of patrons was created in 2013 and is organized according to geopolitical areas. It includes a Middle Eastern group (2013) and an African section (2019). Third, on the other side of the Mediterranean, particularly in Morocco, we notice a vibrant, emerging art world as well as the establishment of new institutions that aim to spread contemporary art, such as the Marrakech Biennale (2004-2016), the National Foundation of Museums (2011), the Museum of Contemporary African Art Al Maaden (2016), and 1:54 Contemporary African Art Fair (2018), etc. And finally, a partnership agreement recently signed between the Centre Pompidou and the Moroccan National Foundation of Museums.

Methodology

The main subject of this research project is to determine if the Moroccan artistic presence in the collections of the Centre Pompidou signifies a decolonization of the gaze and of the conventional discourse of art history. As a first step, I identified the role that Morocco plays in the museum’s collection through an inventory derived from the online catalog of the collection. In addition to asking, what were the criteria

set up by the museum staff to complete the collection, especially in a difficult economic context affected by budgetary restrictions, I also studied the dissemination vectors set up by the institution to share its collections with the audience. I then situated the corpus on a timeline and correlated it with historical events and with the development of the art market over the last two decades. This work allows me to analyze how the interest in Moroccan artists is generated and changes. The below inventory compiled in 2018 as part of this study includes the identification of the artists and their works, the acquisition methods, and whether it is a purchase, a donation, or a deposit.

Artists	Title	Created	Technique	Acquired	Acquisition Method
Mehdi Qotbi	<i>Small symphony</i>	1980	Lithography	1980	Purchase
Majida Khattari	<i>Fashion show/performance</i>	1998	Video	1999	Purchase
	<i>Dreams of young girls</i>	2001	Video installation	2001	Purchase
Yto Barrada	<i>The magician</i>	2003	Video	2005	Purchase
	<i>Untitled</i> (From the series The Strait, notes on a useless country)	1998	Chromogenic print stuck on aluminum	2006	Donation from the Caisse des dépôts et consignations
	<i>Untitled</i> (From the series The Strait, notes on a useless country)	1998	Chromogenic print stuck on aluminum		Donation from the Caisse des dépôts et consignations
	<i>Untitled</i> (From the series The Strait, notes on a useless country)	1998	Chromogenic print stuck on aluminum		Donation from the Caisse des dépôts et consignations
	<i>Untitled</i> (From the series The Strait, notes on a useless country)	1998	Chromogenic print stuck on aluminum		Donation from the Caisse des dépôts et consignations

<i>Untitled</i> (From the series The Strait, notes on a useless country)	1998	Chromogenic print stuck on aluminum		Donation from the Caisse des dépôts et consignations
<i>Hill of the Charf - Tangier (Tomb of Ante)</i> From the series Gran Royal Turismo	2001	Chromogenic print		Donation from the Caisse des dépôts et consignations
<i>Municipal Stadium - Tangier</i> From the series Gran Royal Turismo	2002	Chromogenic print		Donation from the Caisse des dépôts et consignations
<i>Ba-Youssef and the yellow tomatoes</i>	2011	Chromogenic print	2012	Donation from the Friends of the Centre Pompidou Project for contemporary art 2011
<i>School table of the greenhouse, educational farm, Tangier</i>	2011	Chromogenic print		Donation from the Friends of the Centre Pompidou Project for contemporary art 2011
<i>Untitled</i> , Subtitle: painted educational boards found in Natural History Museum,	2013 - 2015	Chromogenic print	2018	Donation from the Friends of the Centre Pompidou International Circle - Middle East Group

	never opened, Assilah, Morocco				
Najia Mehadji	<i>Pomegrana te flower</i>	2003	Sanguine on paper	2005	Purchase
	<i>Pomegrana te flower</i>	2003	Sanguine on paper		Purchase
	<i>Pomegrana te flower</i>	2002	Sanguine on paper	2005	Donation from the artist
	<i>Pomegrana te flower</i>	2002	Sanguine on paper		Donation from the artist
	<i>Icarus</i>	1985	Painting, paper pasted on canvas	2010	Donation from the association Camille
	<i>Volute n°2</i>	2008	Gouache on paper	2012	Donation from the artist
Mohammed Melehi	<i>Pulsation</i>	1964	Acrylic on canvas	2011	Donation from Loft Art Gallery
Hassan Darsi	<i>The model project</i>	2002 - 2003	A model and several documentary elements	2012	Donation from Art Holding Morocco
Ahmed Cherkaoui	<i>The coronation</i>	1964	Oil and pigments on canvas	2013	Deposit from the Centre National des Arts Plastiques Purchased in 1964
Farid Belkahia	<i>Tribute to Gaston Bachelard</i>	1984	Dye on skin	2013	Purchase
Hicham Berrada	<i>Report of universal laws #3</i>	2013	Video	2014	Donation from the Friends of the Centre Pompidou perspective for contemporary art 2013
	<i>Presage 11-10-2013-7h36</i>	2013	Video		Donation from the Friends of the Centre Pompidou Perspective for

					contemporary art 2013
Achraf Touloub	<i>Protocolar garden</i>	2014	Installation	2016	Donation from the Friends of the Centre Pompidou International Circle - Middle East Group
	<i>Seated thoughts</i>	2014	Ink and gouache on paper	2016	Donation from Plan B Gallery
Younes Rahmoun	<i>Manzil Jana (Paradise House)</i>	2015	Installation	2016	Donation from the Friends of the Centre Pompidou International Circle - Middle East Group
	<i>Manzil- Markib- Mawja (House- Boat-Wave)</i>	2015	Mixed installation structure and video projection on the ground	2018	Donation from the Friends of the Centre Pompidou International Circle - Middle East Group
Mohssin Harraki	<i>Anwar al- nujūm (Stars Light)</i>	2015	Multimedia installation 4 projectors, 4 multimedia players, 4 digital video	2018	Donation from the Friends of the Centre Pompidou International Circle - Middle East Group

Purchase / Deposit

Donation from the Friends of the Centre Pompidou

Donation from individuals / corporate

Figure 1. Table of the works produced by Moroccan artists and belonging to the National Museum of Modern Art – Pompidou Center Collections.

Data collection was followed by an interview survey with the involved stakeholders: artists, curators, gallerists, etc. I thus identified three groups of works

based on the museum's criteria¹: "Abstraction as an artistic language" (Farid Belkahia, Mohamed Melehi, Hicham Berrada, Achraf Touloub, Mehdi Qotbi, Najia Mehadji, and Ahmed Cherkaoui); "Islam as a source of inspiration" (Majida Khattari, Mohssin Harraki, and Younes Rahmoun); and "Rethinking the environment" (Yto Barrada and Hassan Darsi). In the following pages, I explore the paths of three artists, one from each category, Farid Belkahia, Younes Rahmoun, and Yto Barrada.

The Abstraction as an Artistic Language: Select Works of Farid Belkahia

Born in 1934 in Marrakech, Farid Belkahia has produced a contemporary work closely linked to Moroccan heritage and local craft. At the dawn of the independence of Morocco, he travelled, like many artists of his generation, to study abroad at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris (France), at the National Theater in Prague (Hungary), and at the Brera Academy of Fine Arts in Milan (Italy). In 1962, he returned to Morocco to take charge of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts of Casablanca. He held this position until 1974. Belkahia and the artist-teachers, including Mohamed Melehi and Mohamed Chebaa, abandoned the established conventions and teaching methods spread during the French protectorate in favor of research and practices that take into account the different facets of Moroccan culture. Their collaboration was at the origin of the artistic movement known as the "School of Casablanca."

From the 1960s, Belkahia's personal approach is a continuation of the reflection initiated with the Casablanca group. He explored local heritage to identify different elements such as forms, signs, symbols, and substances that will be the raw material of his visual language. The painter abandoned canvas, easel, and chemical paints in favor of local materials such as animal skin, copper, henna, saffron, etc. The skin became his favorite material for nearly 40 years. Each work is a sensory composition imagined like a puzzle. In order to create a dialogue between the form and purpose of the artwork, Belkahia has visually translated several themes such as the Melhoun (Amazigh poetry), Lalla Mira (an Amazigh queen celebrated by the Gnawa music), the Trance, Jerusalem, the Hand, and also paid tribute to intellectual personalities such as Ibn Battoûta, Antoni Tapiés, René Char, and Gaston Bachelard, among others.

¹ In the online catalog of the collection, each work of art has its own descriptive form. I identified the museum's selection criteria through the comparison of the keywords associated to each work mentioned in its descriptive form on the one hand and the study of the artists' body of works on the other. The comparison and analysis of these information allows me to identify the three main groups mentioned above. The online collection is available through this link: <https://collection.centrepompidou.fr/#/artworks>

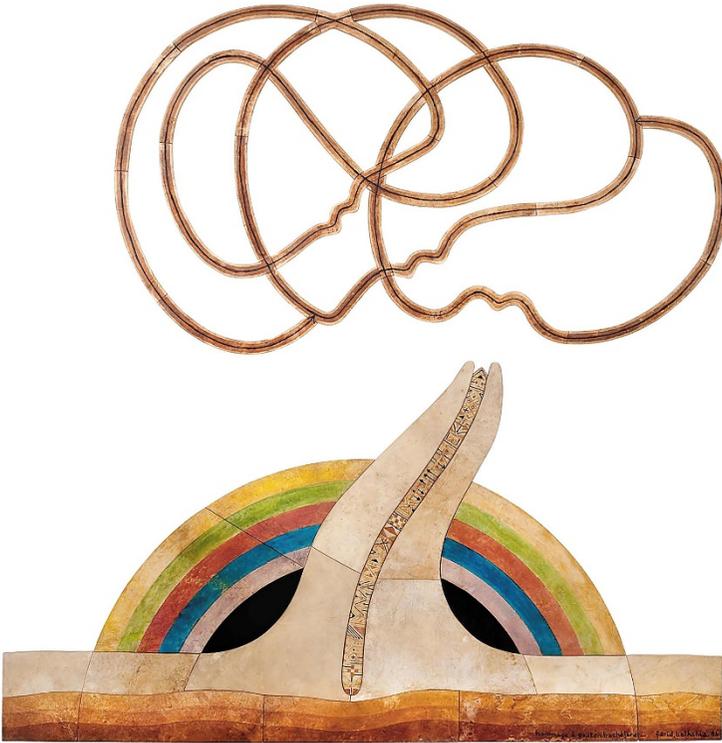


Figure 2: Farid Belkahia, *Tribute to Gaston Bachelard*, (1986), 320 x 296 x 4 cm, Dye on skin. © Hassan Nadim and Fouad Maazouz, Courtesy Fondation Farid Belkahia, Marrakech*

The work, *Tribute to Gaston Bachelard* (1984), was purchased by the National Museum of Modern Art in 2013. As part of this study I met with the curator Michel Gauthier, to learn more about the acquisition process. He recalled, “I knew his work a bit and when we started working on the hanging of the permanent collection *Plural Modernities*, I wanted to meet him. It seemed to me that, apart from *Plural Modernities*, it was a pity that there is no works created by Belkahia in the collection” (M. Gauthier, personal communication, June 2016). The idea of acquiring his work was set up in 2011 when Gauthier went to Marrakech to meet the artist and see the available pieces. He reflected:

Finally, we focused on this work, because Belkahia, moreover, thought it was a tribute to Gaston Bachelard so there was a kind of logic that this work that evokes a French thinker belongs to France. (...) And it seemed

to me extremely interesting by its colors, the fact that it is composed by several elements and that there are signs and arrows on the clouds. The piece is truly representative of the artistic work of Belkahia. ” (M. Gauthier, personal communication, June 2016)

Farid Belkahia passed away in Marrakech in 2014. His reflection on the collective memory and his non-traditional analysis of tradition allowed him to bequeath to humanity a work of universal significance confirmed by the words of Toni Maraini (2014), “In fact, the work of Farid Belkahia—who is one of the leading artists of contemporary Moroccan painting—is there to remind us that creation rises outside or beyond the limits of time, that modernity is multiple and that art is imbued with immemorial symbols” (p. 148).

Islam as a Source of Inspiration: Select Works of Younes Rahmoun

Graduated in 1998 from the National Institute of Fine Arts of Tetouan in Morocco, Younes Rahmoun, born in 1975 in Tetouan where he lives and works, combines artistic practice with a spiritual one. According to Roxana Azimi, “Raised within the Muslim religion, which he rarely sees as a weight or a hindrance, this true believer searches through all the key spiritualities in order to understand the world” (Azimi & Saliou, 2012, p. 2). His work is shown in France from 1999 following his participation in the exhibition: *The disoriented object*, organized at the Museum of Decorative Arts in Paris (France) under the direction of Jean-Louis Froment and *Regards Nomades*, which took place in Museum of Fine Arts in Dole (France).

About Rahmoun’s approach, Frédéric Bouglé (1999) says,

Sawdust, paper, rope, stone, sand, jute fabric, studs, gravel, the materials used by Younes Rahmoun in his installations decline and are repeated like the strident rhaïtas of a jajouka melody. Poor materials but rich in meaning and memory. They secretly reveal magical rituals under the obvious evidence of everyday life. They show the life of the souk, of the medina and of the lonely villages of his native country. (p. 25)

A multidisciplinary artist, Rahmoun explores various media: installation, video, animation, photography, performance, and drawing. His minimalistic work invites a meditation and reflection on the unfolding of life. He translates his everyday experience through simple elements. In his language, universality is perceived through simple geometric shapes, flowers, and natural elements such as small stones. In his work there is a strong presence of architecture and a spiritual reading of spaces of habitation from an individual and collective perspective. Hence, he creates a connection between the external world and the introspective experience in order to communicate a universal message.



Figure 3. Younes Rahmoun, *Manzil-Janna (Paradise-House)*, (2015), 30x30x225 cm (x7), resin. © Younès Rahmoun, Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Imane Farès, Paris*

The installation *Manzil Janna* (2015), whose title is translated from Arabic to English by Manzil as “house and Janna = paradise,” entered in 2016 the Centre Pompidou’s collections thanks to a donation from the International Circle—Middle East group of the Friends of the Centre Pompidou. Composed of seven small white

houses, whose shape is inspired by birdhouses, each is more than two meters high on thin stilts and represents a minimalist intimate space and a high refuge of the soul. The choice to repeat the structure seven times is not trivial. The number seven carries an important significance in Islam on the one hand and the repetition accentuates the meditative action on the other hand. The white color is used to enhance purity. Each house is painted inside in multicolored uniqueness. According to the artist, the spectrum of colors represents the infinity of possibilities, interpretations, etc. Perhaps, the installation invites his audience to an elevation of the soul beyond the seventh heaven, to paradise.

Rethinking the Environment: Select Works of Yto Barrada

The Franco-Moroccan artist Yto Barrada was born in Paris in 1971 and graduated from the Sorbonne in History and Political Science and the International Center of Photography in New York. Since the beginning of the 2000s, she has been conducting a reflection on post-colonial history and the challenges of globalization through a critical look at the Moroccan context. She was working between Tangier and New York before settling in the American city. In 2003, she co-founded the Cinémathèque de Tanger, to which she gave her studio which will serve as artistic residency. Primarily a photographer, Barrada also produces films, installations and sculptures.

In 2006, a set of seven photographic images were donated to the Centre Pompidou museum from the Caisse des dépôts et consignations, consisting of five photographic clichés from the series *The strait, notes on a useless country* and two from the *Gran Royal Turismo* series. Through a photographic survey, Barrada paints a portrait of Tangier. The city is located on the Strait of Gibraltar and it represents a strategic point between Africa and Europe. Barrada confronts different elements that reflect the demographic transformation of Tangier. She documents the local environment and reveals a fragile ecosystem threatened by the increasing urbanization. The emptiness, the abandoned nature or the human presence brings fiction to her visual narratives.

Photography allows Barrada to represent the tragic reality of the world from an artistic point of view and to invite the viewer not only to contemplation but also to reflection (B. Utudjian, personal communication, May 2018). Through her iconographic exploration, she emphasizes the colonization effects in the postcolonial era. In an interview with Sina Najafi, the artist declares: “Morocco is a place where history has been confiscated and replaced by propaganda and repression. The ‘sharing of Africa’ is still a reality; sixty years after independence, we still cannot impose our ideas” (Najafi, 2013, p. 147).

By her documentary approach, Barrada draws up an inventory of the city and tries as much to alert the observer to the fragility of the inhabitants in Tangier and to their environment as she does to raise broader awareness, in the absence of a political strategy that faces the dangers of globalization, of the effects on environmental and cultural ecosystems designed to meet the needs of the dominant West.

Results of the Study

The inventory of the collection shows that the Arab artistic representation within the collection of the National Museum of Modern Art – Centre Pompidou does not exceed 0.5%.² The selected artists are mostly from the Moroccan diaspora. For most, they have studied in Western art schools, they are represented by Western galleries, and they are exhibiting abroad.

Once the works produced by Moroccan artists are identified, we notice that the Centre Pompidou curators are focusing more on the new generation, as if the art history in the kingdom of Morocco is being written right now. The majority of the works do not reflect the traditional art of the country.

The thirty-one pieces acquired are as follows: twenty-three donations, seven purchases, and one deposit of the National Center of Contemporary Art. These data show the important role patrons are playing in the contemporary art ecosystem in France, a country traditionally focused on public funding which is increasingly reduced. In addition to the quality of the artists' work, it seems that the networks and the actors behind many artists play an important role for their recognition and the establishment of their professional careers.

The study of the dissemination vectors set up by the museum to enlarge public knowledge about the richness of the art history shows that: artists from Morocco and the Arab region are not well represented through the temporary exhibitions, the permanent hanging of the collection, the Massive Open Online Course, the mobile app, and the catalogs edited by the institution. It also reveals a confusion in the use of concepts; for example, the historiographies of art combine sometimes Moroccan creation with that of the Middle East and with that of Africa. It should be noted that Morocco is a country of the Arab world but not of the Middle East geographical space. In this regard, there is a lot more work that should be done to clarify the use of different political concepts that impact cultural context.

Regarding the partnership between the National Foundation of Museums and the Centre Pompidou, it involves exchanging expertise “hopefully in both directions.” A turnkey exhibition of works from the Pompidou Collection was organized at the Mohamed VI museum in Rabat during the summer of 2018. Its curator Christian Briend said,

At the end of the proposed itinerary, the visitor may regret not finding artists from other geographical areas than those represented here, starting with the Maghreb countries. (...) It is enough to say how the exhibition

² This result is obtained following the inventory study I conducted in May 2018. The number of works available in the online catalog at the time of the study was 106,947. At first, I tried to identify the artists (79) who represent the Arab scene and their works (365), and then to focus on those who represent the Moroccan artistic scene. The figures obtained indicate that the works produced by artists belonging to the countries of the Arab world represent only 0.3% of the totality of the collection. However, I estimate 0.5% because the entire collection is not available online. The number will evolve according to the site's feed with further digitization of new acquisitions. The scanning process is long and is subject to certain restrictions.

“The Mediterranean and Modern Art” remains dependent on a heritage, that of a collection conveying a European vision of the history of art, that the institution is working today to question by a policy of exhibitions ever more attentive to "plural modernities." (Briend, 2018, p. 21)

It seems that the economic crisis has modified power relations and accelerated the transition to another world relatively not affected by the economic catastrophe. The emergence of new cities as center of the world (Hong Kong, Singapore, Dubai, etc.), the evolution of the art market Christie's (2006) and Bonhams (2007) in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, Sotheby's (2007) in Doha, Qatar, local art fairs like Art Dubai (2007), the newly rich art collectors, and the establishment of new cultural institutions all serve to improve the visibility and presence of non-Western artists within the global art scene. That's why the reduction of the public budget in France (and elsewhere) encourages art institutions to diversify their economic sources and to look for diverse private support. In this way, the interest seems to be not only intellectual but especially economic.

On the other side of the Mediterranean Sea, the civil society and the Moroccan government are involved in the promotion and the development of the artistic scene. However, many actions, frameworks, and responsibilities still need to be defined. Moroccans who are engaged in the artistic domain need to establish a long term efficient work strategy that reviews art education at all levels, establishes art disciplines as a research field in higher education, organizes art institutions, works hand in hand with local partners, refrains from buying turnkey exhibitions from abroad which are very expensive, and instead encourages local Moroccan curators and artists to create more local exhibits, and to think about new teaching methods and dissemination tools adapted to the local context in order to reach a wider audience. Such changes are needed if Moroccan artists are to reach their full potential and deserved recognition. Unfortunately, according to artist Younes Rahmoun, it is largely still the case that “By exhibiting abroad, we are better recognized and more valued at home. It's sad but it's like that” (Gabsi, 2015, p. 545).

Call to Action

Recent progress of museum research based on issues such as acquisition, dissemination, and display are the result of bilateral actions among artistic networks and collaborators on the one hand and the evolution of cultural policies in Morocco as well as in the majority of Arab countries on the other. However, the options taken in Morocco must no longer consider art based solely on Western references, rather it must develop local sponsorship and greater institutional support. In the absence of a cultural management strategy accompanied by a structured education, the Western model and its actors seem to remain, today, the dominant world reference in the art field. While Morocco's recent efforts to define and develop its modern art practices are a step in the right direction, there is greater need for institutional direction from within Morocco (as well as the Middle East and North Africa region) to determine how best to represent itself on the world stage.

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APPENDIX: A non-exhaustive list of Moroccan artists

ABOUZID SOUALI, Mariam	DOUKKANE, Abderrahmane	MARFOUK, Walid
AFIFI, Saïd	DRISSI, Mohamed	MAZIRH, Safaa
AGUEZNAY, Amina	DRISSI, Moulay Ahmed	MAZMOUZ, Fatima
AGUEZNAY, Malika	ECHAKHCH, Latifa	MEHADJI, Najia
AKRIM, Mustapha	ECHAIR, Hassan	MELEHI, Mohamed
ALAOUI, Leila	EL BAZ, Mohamed	MEGARA, Meki
ALAOUI, Rita	EL GHRIB, Khalil	MEZIAN, Meriem
ALAOUI, Yasmina	EL GLAOUI, Hassan	MILOUDI, Houssein
ANDALIBE, Zainab	EL GOTAIBI, Amine	MOURABITI, Mohamed
AREJDAL, Mohamed	EL MAKHLOUFI, Nabil	NABILI, Mohamed
ATBANE, Younes	ENNADARE, Touhami	NAJI, Lamia
AZEROUAL, Mustapha	ERRUAS, Saffa	NEJMI, Malik
BAALA, Mo	ESSAYDI, Lalla	NEMMAOUI, Khalil
BABA-ALI, Younes	FAKHIR, Ymane	OUAZZANI, Abdelkrim
BAKHTI, Mohamed	FARIJI, Mohamed	OUCHRA, Youssef
BALBZIOUI, Yassine	FATIMI, Mounir	OUHADDOU, Sara
BARRADA, Yto	FETTAKA, Simohammed	QOTBI, Mehdi
BATTAL, Rim	GHARBAOUI, Jilali	RABI', Abdelkebir
BELKAHIA, Farid	HAJJAJ, Hassan	RACHDI, Mohamed
BELLAMINE, Fouad	HAMIDI, Mohamed	RAHMOUN, Younes
BELMAACHI, Ghany	HARRAKI, Mohssin	RAHOULE, Abderrahmane
BEN ALLAL, Mohamed	HASSAN FARROUJ, Fatima	RBATI, Mohamed Ben Ali
BENBOUCHTA, Amina	HASSANI, Saad	SAHLI, Ghizlane
BEN CHEFFAJ, Saad	HATIMI, Yasmine	SALADI, Abbes
BENITAH, Carolle	HRIECH, Chourouk	SHIMI, Batoul
BEN LAHCEN, Morran	JOUAL, Soukaina	SLAOUI, Hassan
BENOHOUD, Hicham	KABBAJ, Houda	TABAL, Mohamed
BENZAQUEN, Deborah	KABBAJ, Ikram	TALLAL, Chaibia
BERHISS, Abdelmalek	KACIMI, Mohamed	TALLAL, Hossein
BERRADA, Hicham	KHALILI, Bouchra	TIBARI, Kantour
BINEBINE, Mahi	KHATTARI, Majida	TILSAGHANI, Nour Eddine
BOUHCHICHI, M'barek	KOURKOUNI, Adil	WAKRIM, Zakaria
BOURKIA, Hassan	LAATIRIS, Faouzi	YACOUBI, Ahmed
CHAIR, Mohamed Said	LABIED, Miloud	YAMOU YORIYAS
CHARRAT, Mounat	LAHLOU, Mehdi- Georges	ZEMMOURI, Fatiha
CHEBAA, Mohamed	LAKHDAR, Boujemaa	ZIYAT, Yasmina
CHERKAOUI, Ahmed	LEKLETI, Mohamed	
CHERKAOUI, Larbi	MAAZOUZ, Fouad	
DAIFALLAH, Noureddine	MAIMOUN, Ali	
DARSI, Hassan		