



Morocco | Casablanca

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The White Wave: 20 Years of Moroccan Contemporary Art

Words by **Mohamed Thara, Exhibition Curator.**

"La Vague Blanche" is an exhibition and meeting project between a "new scene" of Moroccan artists, university researchers and art critics concerned with the question of contemporary art in Morocco today. With La Vague Blanche, Gallery 38 attempts a mini assessment through the work of various artists such as: Mounir Fatmi, Youssef Ouchra,

Mustapha Azeroual, Mohssin Harraki, Hicham Matini, Max Boufathal, Randa Maroufi, Amine El Gotaibi, M'barek Bouhchichi, Hicham Berrada, Nissrine Seffar, Amina Benbouchta, Mohamed El Baz... The exhibition attempts to weave links between an emerging scene and established practices. A series of articles tackles the subject with as much diversity as there are works, with the publication of a book based on a corpus of works ranging from the year 2000 to 2020. It allows us to realize the full importance and scope of the issue among a whole generation of artists, who here offer their perspective on the shared historical experiences from which artists have drawn a shared vision of the world. Is there a Moroccan art, or only art in Morocco? The diversity of the material will provide less of an answer than it will document the question."





Amine El Gotaibi – Courant de Désert, 2019, weaving installation, natural wool, 100 x 50 cm (variable height), 1/3 + 2AP

The expression “The White Wave” is used to describe the new generation of contemporary Moroccan artists who emerged in the early 2000s. Escaping the expected order, these young non-conformist artists will shake up the artistic scene in Morocco and thus allow a new conception of contemporary art to emerge by creating contemporary narratives that break with the artistic practices of post-war modernism. They are generally in their thirties, and most of them have studied at the National Institute of Fine Arts in

Tetouan and, later on, in the best art schools in the West, benefiting thus from the best of the best on the international scene. Those we call the generation of hope of the present era, called "postmodern".

At the dawn of the 21st century, one can see that this is a new phenomenon. With the increasing appearance in European and American biennials and international fairs of artists from "non-Western" cultures, we believe that this has benefited Moroccan national artists and those in the diaspora. It can be seen that Moroccan production is no longer a marginal phenomenon on the international scene. Through the exhibition "The White Wave", specific productions will be offered, in accordance with the "national context" and the global evolutions of the economic and social world. There, we can find signed works by Mounir Fatmi, Youssef Ouchra, Mohamed El Baz, Mustapha Azeroual, Mohssin Harraki, Hicham Matini, Max Boufathal, Amine El Gotaibi, M'barek Bouhchichi, Hicham Berrada, Nissrine Seffar, Hicham Benohoud, Amina Benbouchta, Randa Maroufi... All belong to an emerging new Moroccan art scene, an extremely promising, dynamic and politically sharpened "New Wave".

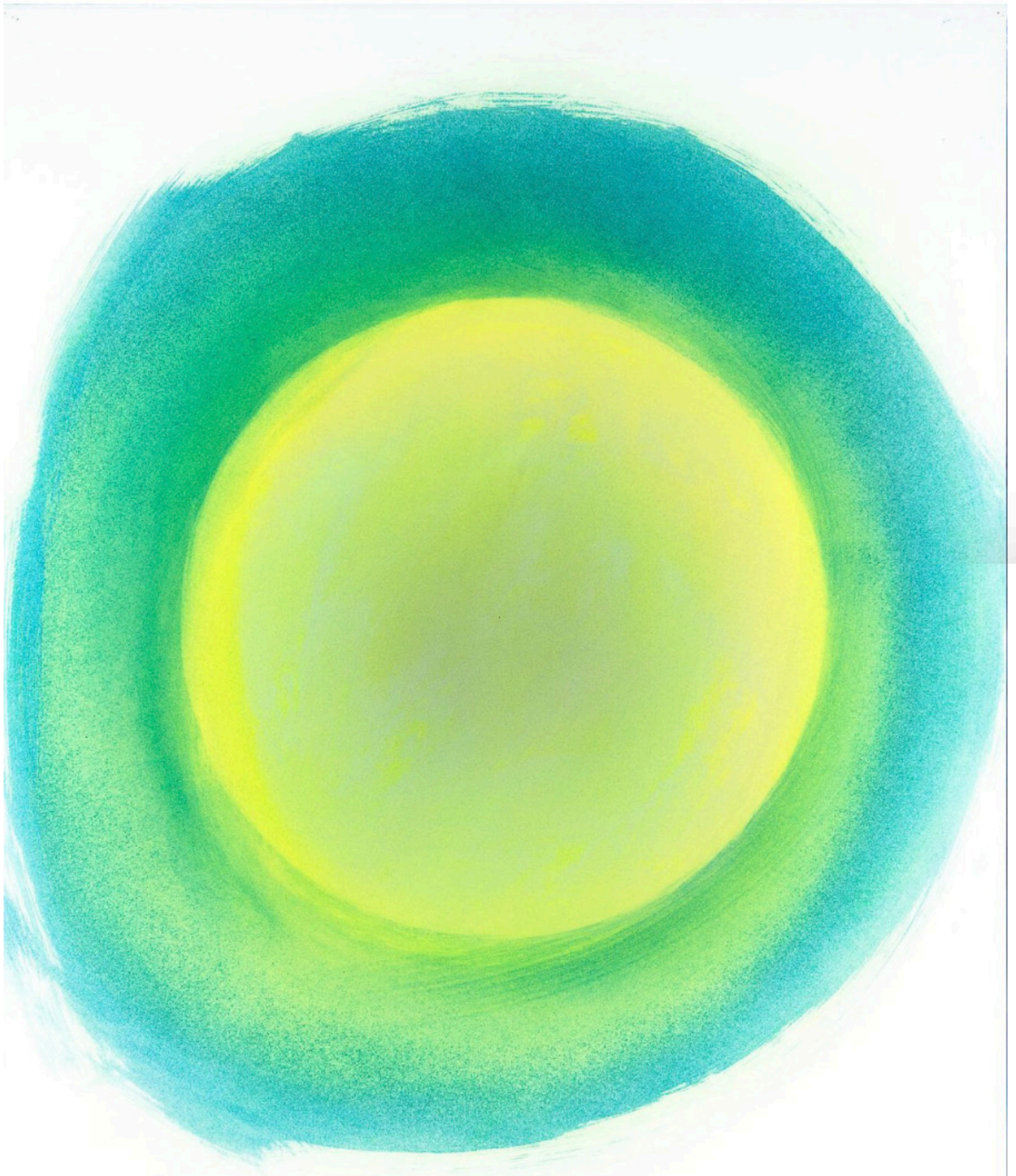




Hicham Matini – Star wars, 2020, mixed media, 180 x 150 cm.

At first glance, it is an overlap of ecstatic works, personal practices, and different discourses at the turn of several references that are articulated around history, autobiography, memory and politics. As such, the works presented crystallize the provisional and singular character of our relationship to the world, a relationship that is precisely restored at the expense of mass effects. For each of these singular representations initiates new visibility of the world, which now takes the human as an indivisible, sensitive and necessary measure. The exhibition focuses on images of moving thought, their surface is in fact animated by a thousand embossed effects. It brings together disturbing works of remarkable interest, whether considered independently or in their relationship with art in Morocco today. Let us say that the initial motivation of this exhibition is to try to define, through art, certain aesthetic and formal

aspects of contemporary art in Morocco at this time in its history.



Mustapha Azeroual – Monade, 2020, photograms in bichromate gum polychrome on cotton paper, a on dibond, unique print for all, 76 x 56 cm.

Undoubtedly, it is not a question of reproducing or inventing forms, but of capturing the forces and symbols that shape or drill the narrative of tomorrow's cultural heritage of ours. The exhibition "The White Wave" asks several questions: "What do we have? "What does it really mean to be a contemporary Moroccan artist today?" ; "How can we produce meaning and singularity, and therefore art?",

A series of writings will approach the subject with as much diversity as there are works, with the publication of a book/catalogue that will allow us to realize the full importance and scope of the issue. It will be necessary to look more specifically at this idea of "New Wave" and to approach it again and again with researchers and art critics who are particularly concerned about this issue and through the work of various artists. Today we have to think of this "new scene" as a community, as a whole and not as a movement. The community take its birth, exists, in its very articulation, from person to person, from being to being, in all that constitutes the living world. We have to think about what this community is (or is likely to be) in the making and in the future. In this sense, art is a way of thinking that is at the heart of the community, between the singular and the plural, a way of sharing that turns out to be a way of thinking. This is the task of "The White Wave": to see and think, beyond ourselves, in sharing with the world that inhabits us and that we inhabit.

The event will try to identify internal orders, multiple

connections between the works and the heterogeneous and fragmentary parts, with a precise, positive and dynamic aesthetic project. In line with the major exhibitions, "The White Wave" aims to promote the artistic values, spirit and enthusiasm advocated by a whole new generation of Moroccan artists. An aesthetic thought of contemporaneity, resolutely oriented towards a multi-disciplinarity.



Max Boufathal – Serment de Democite (1, 2, 3), 2020, car floor mat, 99 x 85 x 12 cm.

It is worth recalling the stakes of this event: according to Marx, the only element that makes it possible to define "human nature" is none other than the relational system established by humans themselves, that is, the trade of all individuals among themselves. By restoring the artist's singularity, the event allows him to regain his place. Faced with the world in the world, he is now ready to bow out of

himself, ready to constitute an area of exchange with others. It is from there that, determined by the choice of the works and their installation, the exhibition is, in turn, the challenge of experience. While each artist opens up to the world and constitutes a family by multiplying singularities, the collective exhibition becomes this space where everyone sees themselves taking part in a common process that goes beyond their intrinsic value. The idea is to present a series of works, each of which seems to engage in a tacit correspondence with the others, like the links in an unbroken chain with implicit links. Each work in the exhibition thus weaves the fabric of a collection in which the Moroccan spectator can lose himself at leisure, and begin his own unusual journey, without a recommended itinerary, according to the assembled works. By making the exhibition space a sensitive experience, contemporary art in Morocco will then find its true density: it will be this place of encounters with the other, a place that will place the viewer within the very sphere of the works, and make him or her experience the circumstances of the world.

The “White Wave” exhibition will take place in gallery 38 area in Casablanca. In gallery space, there is thus a question to be asked about the past and the future of contemporary art in Morocco. It is in this new movement that the exhibition, which comes at the right time to report on this new scene and to offer as complete a panorama as possible of artistic practices in Morocco. We want a collective demonstration that, like a cultural machine, plays a role in

transforming the ways of thinking and seeing Moroccan spectators' art experience. We invite the public to come and seek a new reflection and a new look at singular works of incredible density, which dialogue with each other, thanks to the way they are brought together, in a very simple scenography. The event invites international as well as local critics and academics to build bridges between an emerging scene and established practices. It initiates the debate about the place art has in Morocco and about a country in full mutation and its art history being built-up.

The artists :

Sanae Arraqas, Mustapha Azeroual, Mohamed El Baz, Amina Benbouchta, Hicham Benohoud, Hicham Berrada, Max Boufathal, M'barek Bouhchichi, Mounir Fatmi, Amine El Gotaibi, Mohssin Harraki, Omar Mahfoudi, Randa Maroufi, Fouad Maazouz, Hicham Matini, Youssef Ouchra, Nissrine Seffar, Mohamed Thara and Yassine Alaoui Yoriyas.

The authors of the white wave :

Barbara Bourchenin, Associate Professor of Visual Arts (PRAG) at the Bordeaux Montaigne University, France.

Rime Fetnan, Digital Humanities researcher at Maurice Halbwachs Center (CNRS), Paris, France.

Pauline Guex, Programme Manager and art historian at Photo Basel, Switzerland.

Jamal Boushaba, Art critic and journalist, Morocco.

Caroline Corbal, Independent curator, artist-researcher and

associate member of the (MICA) research laboratory at the Bordeaux Montaigne University, France.

Maï-Do Hamisultane, Writer and psychiatrist, France.

Olivier Rachet, Art critic with holder of an Agrégation higher degree in French Language and Literature and certified in film-audiovisual, Morocco.

Syham Weigant, Independent curator, Morocco.

Chahrazad Zahi, Independent curator and a researcher in art history and architecture at Boston University, USA.