



# School of Casablanca

En

ifa Gallery Berlin  
16.2.–12.5.2024

With contributions by: Bik Van der Pol,  
Céline Condorelli, Fatima-Zahra Lakrissa and  
Gilles Aubry, Manuel Raeder, Marion von Osten,  
Peter Spillmann, Abdeslam Ziou Ziou with  
Grocco-Trick 54, Sophia Attigui and Fatine Arafati,  
and Nassim Azarzar

Curators: Salma Lahlou, Director ThinkArt  
Casablanca; Krist Gruijthuijsen, Director  
KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin;  
and Inka Gressel, Co-director, ifa-Galerie Berlin

[www.schoolofcasablanca.com](http://www.schoolofcasablanca.com)  
[@schoolofcasablanca](https://www.instagram.com/schoolofcasablanca)

# Introduction

*School of Casablanca* is a collaboration between ifa Gallery Berlin, KW Institute for Contemporary Art (Berlin) and ThinkArt (Casablanca). It started in 2020 and was realized with the support of the Sharjah Art Foundation, the Goethe-Institute Morocco and Zamân Books & Curating. Drawing from the innovative approaches of the Casablanca Art School from the 1960s, it aims to shed light on a crucial turning point in Moroccan art history after the country's independence in 1956.

During this time, Casablanca radically broke with traditions and developed a completely new self-image in the arts. The Casablanca Art School played a pivotal role in this development with its modern approaches, artistic ideas and new pedagogical methods. Drawing inspiration from the 1919 Bauhaus Manifesto by Walter Gropius, among other sources, it soon became a groundbreaking forum.

The interdisciplinary research, residence, exchange and exhibition project *School of Casablanca* is a collaborative initiative that furthers the legacy of the historical Casablanca Art School in contemporary thought. It seeks to pose questions about their innovative pedagogical and artistic methodologies and their potentialities within the current socio-political climate. It is relevant not only within a Moroccan context but also in relation to critical reflection on the traditions of Western methodology and the shaping of Southern modernities.

*School of Casablanca* highlights a pivotal moment in Moroccan art history that had wide-ranging implications for the entire region. A new civic awareness emerged that impacted both artists and intellectuals seeking to reconsider their social function and visibility in the public sphere. Through this process, the artist became the producer of a

social and cultural project in which art was seen as a space of shared knowledge and experience. The Casablanca Art School was a seminal forum for the development of these ideas and related practices. Its members were united by a keen awareness that a new national culture could only emerge in the postcolonial period if modernity's demands were rooted in Indigenous cultural practices. The school engaged in creating models for rethinking the relationship between art, craft, design, and architecture within a local context.

*School of Casablanca* brings newly commissioned work into a dialogue with archival material that contextualizes the politically troublesome and culturally productive history in which modern Moroccan art was formed. The project revisits and reinterprets the radical ideas and actions of the group of individuals Farid Belkhaia (1934–2014), Mohammed Chabâa (1935–2013), Bert Flint (1931–2022), Toni Maraini, and Mohamed Melehi (1936–2020), who shaped the original school at its peak (1964–69). In doing so, it draws from the spirit of experimentation, discourse, self-organization, and community building embodied by *Souffles*, a now-iconic Moroccan cultural magazine of the time.

Over the past four years, a group of invited international participants—Bik Van der Pol (Rotterdam), Céline Condorelli (London), Fatima-Zahra Lakrissa (Rabat), Manuel Raeder (Berlin), the late Marion von Osten (Berlin), and Abdeslam Ziou Ziou (Casablanca)—conducted research and fieldwork within the city of Casablanca. They formed an interdisciplinary group working in the fields of art, architecture, design, and education seeking to reconsider their social function and visibility in the public sphere. Peter Spillmann (Berlin) continues the legacy of Marion von Osten's groundbreaking research-based exhibition practice dealing with the connection between architecture, urban planning, and colonialism in Casablanca.

The participants shared their process in a public program, created international encounters, and engaged in new conversations. This process flowed into an exhibition across five locations throughout the city of Casablanca, some of which were originally used by the Casablanca Art School, such as l'École Supérieure des beaux-arts de Casablanca and La Coupole du Parc de la Ligue Arabe.

The Casablanca experience is played back into the ifa Gallery Berlin to think through exhibition and education practices that are based on co-learning and long-term exchanges. Education is understood as communication and emancipation. "These considerations also lead to the question of how contemporary cultural practices can be decolonized." (Marion von Osten, "In the Making," p. 15)

What can we learn from this specific social and cultural project? What institutions, including schools of art and design, practices, and forms of learning do we need today? How to reimagine the role and relevance of art and design in society? How do we produce and share knowledge? What is a collective learning process? Can it become a readable accessible public format? How do we rebuild public space and shape a collective future memory?

*School of Casablanca* has intensively worked on these questions to create a dialogical, multidisciplinary, and transhistorical narrative for future reflection, study, and action. The participants further tackle underlying ongoing questions like: Which multiple modernities arose from this transcultural exchange? How do we deal with the power relations present in cultural appropriation? What have been the blind spots of this school? Do hierarchies in creative disciplines still exist? What meanings do we create today with new contextualizations?

# Curatorial

## Statement

“The years 1964–69 were pivotal for the arts in Morocco [...] It is a tangible historical landmark,” explained Toni Maraini.<sup>1</sup> Casablanca crafted its own culture and had defined itself against a colonial paternalism that considered Arab and “Berber” craft traditions as static, archaic, fossilized, and forever unchanged<sup>2</sup>—but also against a new traditionalism held up by the country’s political elite that narrowed the scope of popular art forms to official state ceremonies and the needs of tourism, and in doing so, marginalized, devitalized, and reduced a vibrant and dynamic set of traditions to mere folklore.<sup>3</sup> How much of the history was shared and remembered by the Moroccan public?<sup>4</sup>

The aim of *School of Casablanca* is to both study and reevaluate parts of this sociocultural history for knowledge accumulation, creative experimentation, and social impact; to engage with history, politics and society in our present; and to ultimately

- 1 Toni Maraini, “Note sur les arts plastiques,” *Integral*, no. 3/4 (January 1973), 38–39.
- 2 Mohamed Jibril, “1974, sous une chape de plomb,” in *De quelques événements sans signification à reconstituer*, ed. Léa Morin (Paris: Zamân Books & Curating, 2022), 59.
- 3 Hamid Irbouh, “Framing Morocco’s Crafts,” chap. 1 in *Art in the Service of Colonialism: French Art Education in Morocco, 1912–56* (New York: Tauris, 2005).
- 4 The study of modernism in the South and the art, which emerged from the Casablanca Art School in the 1960s, took place mainly on an international level, and a more local perspective on contemporary and modern cultural production in Morocco seemed necessary. Casablanca seems to offer few independent cultural spaces to visit except for a handful of private initiatives—La Source du lion, founded by artist-art historian duo Hassan Darsi and Florence Renaud-Darsi; L’Atelier de l’observatoire, founded by independent researcher Léa Morin and artist Mohamed Fariji; or l’Uzine, run by journalist and cultural activist Maria Daif, for example.

contribute to a curriculum of strategies. The project examined the city's cultural history in dialogue with contemporary practices that tie into social transformation and expand the notions and spaces for art.

*School of Casablanca* was designed to be research-based, with onsite residencies; participatory, inviting the residents—artists, curators, and researchers, both Moroccan and international—to engage with the audience through creative and discursive public programs; and site-specific, with commissions brought together in the form of an exhibition. Furthermore, it was also very clear from the outset that it had to be collaborative and inclusive by bringing together and recognizing research competencies chosen for their process-oriented practices that look to stage, compose, choreograph, and construct subjective worlds in a way that positions themselves with highly individuated methodologies, devices, and displays. Together they created an open space of possibilities through generosity, openness, reciprocity without prescription, encounters, and contamination—which can be summarized through the concept of “cultural gifting,” beautifully articulated by Mary Jane Jacob analyzing the practice of Bik Van der Pol.<sup>5</sup>

If we believe that (1) the late 1960s signify the beginning of modern art in the recently independent country; (2) this time period fundamentally shaped the field of contemporary culture<sup>6</sup>; (3) Casablanca was the avantgarde of this “unprecedented cultural uprising”<sup>7</sup> across visual arts, film, theater, music, dance, literature, and architecture; (4) the present cannot unleash its full potential unless it acknowledges its debt to history; and (5) the links between past and present are broken, *School of Casablanca* aims to be the conduit through which these narratives might be transmitted and restaged in the present as new or renewed questions.

Salma Lahlou, Krist Gruijthuijsen and Inka Gressel

- 5 See Mary Jane Jacob, "Cultural Gifting" on Bik Van der Pol's website, accessed June 19, 2008, [https://www.bikvanderpol.net/files/book/i\\_3277/Mary%20Jane%20Jacob\\_%20Cultural\\_Gifting.pdf](https://www.bikvanderpol.net/files/book/i_3277/Mary%20Jane%20Jacob_%20Cultural_Gifting.pdf).
- 6 See Ali Essafi, "En attendant 'De quelques événements sans signification'" in *De quelques événements sans signification à reconstruire*, 19.
- 7 Laâbi, "Periphery and Cultural Revolution," 74.



# Abdeslam

## Ziou Ziou

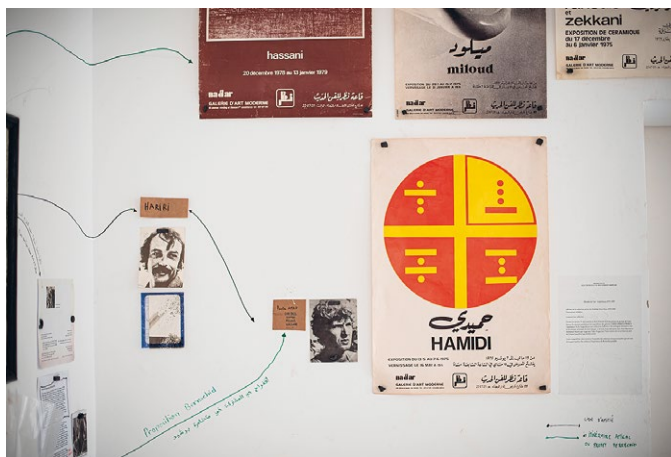
*Berrechid 81: On the energy of an impeded movement*, 2023. In situ installation with archival materials, film, painting by Fatine Arafati and interventions by Sophia Attigui and Grocco-Trick 54

Abdeslam Ziou Ziou is an independent researcher and art consultant whose research focuses on collective art practices and dynamics, pedagogical experiments, and the development of the art world in postcolonial Morocco since the 1960s. He has developed an investigation of an anti-psychiatric experience based on family archives and brings forward this collective endeavor of artists, patients, doctors, hospital staff, and the public to resist normative standards.

In the early summer of 1981, an unusual activity took place at the psychiatric hospital in Berrechid, Morocco. For one week, a group of individuals including painters, writers, directors, and



*Berrechid 81, On the energy of an impeded movement*, 2023. Photography of Mohammed Chabâa's mural painting. June 1981. Archives Dr Ziou Ziou © Abdeslam Ziou Ziou



*Berrechid 81, On the energy of an impeded movement, 2023, exhibition view, L'Annexe de l'église du Sacré-Cœur, Casablanca, photo: Ayoub Bouibaden*

intellectuals were invited to take part in the daily life of the patients. This experience “unlocked” the hospital, a “sanctuary of madness” known all over Morocco, opening it up to its immediate environment. This event produced murals, concerts, discussions, and many other happenings around the site. The citizens of Berrechid were also at liberty to visit the hospital for the first time. The main idea behind this event was to bring to light the conditions of patient care at the hospital and to initiate a movement for transforming the rigidity of confinement, bringing the institution back to life and opening it up to society. This experiment was part of a critical approach to psychiatry spearheaded by Dr. Abdellah Ziou Ziou. By engaging with anti-psychiatry practices and developing a growing interest in popular forms of mental treatment, Dr. Ziou Ziou’s experiment synthesized different forms of mental health care in Morocco. Unfortunately, for various reasons, the project came to a halt and was soon forgotten.

The presentation tells the story of the Berrechid experience. It opens up a space for transmission by looking into and working with the archives of Dr. Ziou Ziou and by inviting artists Fatine Arafati, Sophia Attigui, Sofiane Biyari, Grocco-Trick 54 and Said Rami to respond to these archives.

# Rik

## Van der Pol

*School of Walking*, 2023. Video featuring artists Fatima Mazmouz (17'), Hassan Darsi (20'), Mohamed Fariji (18'), and journalist and cultural operator Maria Daïf (19')

Liesbeth Bik and Jos Van der Pol have worked collaboratively as Bik Van der Pol since 1995. They explore art's potential to produce and transmit knowledge. Their work is based on cooperation as well as research methods that aim at creating platforms for various kinds of communicative activities and activation. They often work on location, using, reusing, and reactivating the work of others—be it from the world of art, journalism, media, or history—and confronting audiences with situations in which the audience seems to have the last word. Their *School of Walking* (2023) posits that the act of walking itself was part of the curriculum of the *School of*



*School of Walking*, 2023, with artist Fatima Mazmouz on November 19, 2022, video (15'), detail © Bik Van der Pol

*Casablanca*—walking being the act of thinking and learning collectively while moving through a shared space and addressing citizenship, publicness and the making of space. Bik Van der Pol see walking as a form of resistance; a seemingly inconspicuous and everyday act of free thought that cannot be controlled or censored. The process of walking can interweave relationships of individuals, communities and the urban texture in the context of larger discussions about decolonization and modernization.

*At the end of this long journey*, 2023.

Bik Van der Pol in dialogue with Bert Flint  
(November 2021, Marrakesh), Video (35')

Bert Flint taught at the Casablanca Art School—which challenged the teaching methods used in the West by highlighting the value of traditional Moroccan arts—from 1965 to 1968. In confronting the material expressions of rural culture, Flint examined evidence of an experience of space and time dependent on a certain way of life and means of production. His research helped shape the thinking of the school's influential artists (Farid Belkhaia, Mohammed Chabâa, and Mohamed Melehi) and the art historian Toni Maraini, including the argument that Moroccan art did not derive from Western art or solely from the Hispano-Moresque tradition—which could be found in urban centers



*At the end of this long journey*, 2023, in dialogue with Bert Flint,  
detail © Bik Van der Pol

like Marrakesh, for example—or, as Flint says in the video, belong to the Near East, as taught in European and Western Universities; but had its own genealogy rooted in the rural and reaching back to the precolonial era in the Saharan Basin. In his home in Marrakesh, Flint founded the Tiskiwin Museum in 1996 to emphasize the fact that people from southern Morocco were all part of the same cultural community, sharing the same natural environment and common traditions. Bik van der Pol conducted several interviews with Flint before his recent death. These conversations are juxtaposed with a documentation of the Tiskiwin Museum after Flint's passing, made by his cousin Joost Flint.

## Céline

## Condorelli

*Integrations (studies)*, 2023. Mural wall prints, window prints, floor prints, carpets, dimensions variable

Céline Condorelli works with art and architecture to develop possibilities for and means of “support,” and to launch broader enquiries into forms of commonality and discursive sites. The resulting projects merge aspects of exhibitions, politics, fiction, and public spaces. For her presentation, Condorelli brings carpets produced by anonymous female weavers from the area around Boujaad into a dialogue with a new composition that resembles a presentation that was part of the Casablanca Art School 1968 student exhibition.

Condorelli reverses the notion of learning by displaying the sources of reference in the foreground, while presenting the results of her own close readings in the background. These rural,



*Integrations (studies)*, 2023, exhibition view, La Coupole, Casablanca, photo: Ayoub Bouibaden

traditional carpets function as inspiration for a continuously evolving visual language of abstraction, while simultaneously questioning the notion of authorship. By proposing a didactic program for weaving and abstraction, Condorelli creates a support structure to look more closely at the ethics around craft and labor. The exhibition space thus becomes a social space where workers, objects, and audiences meet. The rural carpets from the Atlas Mountains are discussed as a sophisticated and artistic practice of abstraction carried out by women. We can understand abstraction as an ancestral practice of experimentation, mostly undertaken by women, largely

forgotten and erased by (art) history. How can we, different actors, read their carpets today? How do the carpets and patterns speak to us? Furthermore a new platform for the fair production and distribution of textiles in Morocco will be created, on the initiative of Alouani Bibi and Salma Lahlou.

# Fatima-Zahra

## Lakrissa

*Turning Frozen Yesterdays into Fluid Now*, 2023.  
Archive documents, text

Fatima-Zahra Lakrissa's research is concerned with what constitutes Moroccan art history during



*Turning Frozen Yesterdays into Fluid Now*, 2023  
Tichichte, Basketry, Pre-Rif region, Morocco, Bert Flint Collection,  
Tiskiwin Museum  
Photo: Alice Dufour © Fatima Zahra Lakrissa



*Turning Frozen Yesterdays into Fluid Now*, 2023, exhibition view, La Coupole, Casablanca, photo: Ayoub Bouibaden

the 1960s and 1970s. She is interested in tracing its different forms and emergence sites (pedagogy, collections, exhibitions, patrimonial and historiographical practices) and its connections with other disciplines (history, literature, archaeology, sociology). Her proposition for *School of Casablanca, Turning Frozen Yesterdays into Fluid Now* (or *How to Intervene in the Frayed Fabric of a Sequence of Morocco's Cultural History*) focuses on the encounter of two researchers in art history and cultural anthropology and the intersecting history of their approaches to popular and traditional art objects.

Bert Flint (1931–2022) and Toni Maraini were brought together in *Maghreb Art* (1965–69), the journal that became the key publication of the Casablanca Art School. The brief existence of *Maghreb Art* did not reveal the differences in their approaches, but the discordancy was eventually addressed to be fixed a posteriori in an article by Toni Maraini. *Turning Frozen Yesterdays into Fluid Now* takes this moment of dissent as its starting point by drawing attention to the context, both theoretical and practical, in which the emerging paradigm of postcolonial art history was debated. At the heart of the display are images (photographic archives) and texts (commentary, collages of articles), which are connected to form a fictional



dialogue between the two theorists of Maghreb Art: a montage of fragments of their published writings from the period 1960–90. It highlights the issue of method and their respective gazes on the objects in question as well as the interpretations they each put forward. The shift in meaning resulting from the transfer from the “field” or “original context” to the museum or school is another issue that is addressed. How did the participating theorists and artists structure a new field of knowledge between artistic and pedagogical experimentation, anthropology, material culture, and art history? What is its critical legacy?

The opposite process, which aims at reinterrogating the social function of art, is addressed by Gilles Aubry, sound artist, musician, and researcher, who has been invited by Lakrissa to consider the contemporary reception of Maghreb Art. By playing on the relationship between artistic expression and context, his work articulates the concomitant processes of the “patrimonialization” of artistic expression, the conversion of art into heritage, and the “resocialization” of art. In addition, the creative practices of the traditional music of Rwais and their transmission of an oral culture are explored as well as the prospect of human/machine co-creation offered by artificial intelligence.

# Gilles

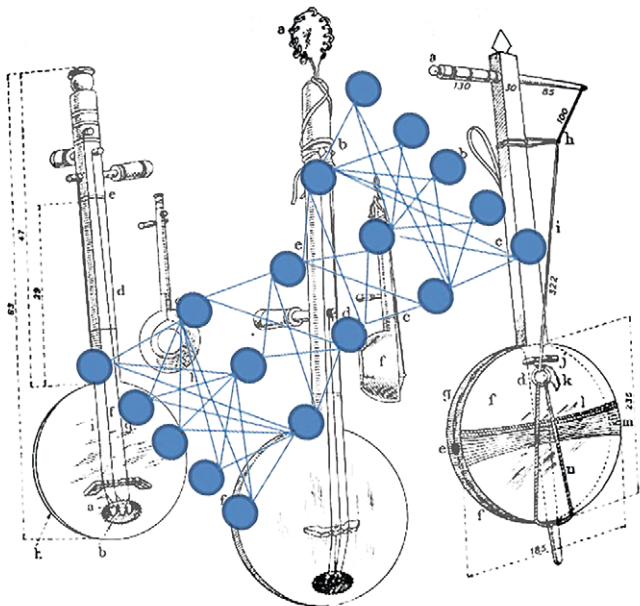
# Aubry

*L'Makina*, 2023. HD video (25')

*Rwais Sound Model*, 2023. Sound installation, single channel audio loop (60')

Gilles Aubry's practice is based on a performative approach to field recording, documents, and historical sources, often in collaboration with other disciplines. He critically addresses listening, sound practices, music, technology, and environmental voices, examining their relations to power structures and ideologies in various contexts.

*Rwais Sound Model* is a sound installation that focuses on the intersection of traditional music and artificial intelligence (AI). The work draws inspiration from "L'Makina" (The Machine), a song about the phonograph composed by the musician



*Rwais Sound Model*, 2023 © Gilles Aubry

Raïs Lhaj Belaïd in the 1930s. In awe of the machine's ability to "precisely reproduce human speech," the poet contemplated whether he should cease to create verses. His troubles resonate with contemporary concerns surrounding AI and machine learning and their increasing presence in our lives. Aubry fed recorded interpretations of the song into a machine learning algorithm for frequency analysis. The model then uses it to create new sounds with similar characteristics, which are featured in the installation. The work poses questions about AI as a nonhuman entity in co-creative processes. It also underscores the limitations of a technology that has yet to fully comprehend essential aspects of human expression such as social mediation and the ethical transmission of information.

# Dator

# Spillmann

*Corresponding with...* (in memory of Marion von Osten), 2023/2024. Film based on archival material, books, poster

Marion von Osten (1963–2020) and Peter Spillmann worked together in different collaborative networks and within the framework of the Labor k3000 collective since 1996. Marion von Osten was an exhibition maker, researcher, artist, and founding member of multiple collectives. Peter Spillmann is an artist, curator, and lecturer whose practice and interests revolve around collective ways of working and self-organized forms of knowledge production and mediation.

The project takes up ideas of self-organized cultural practices that were not only a central focus in many of Marion von Osten's projects but also



*Corresponding with... (in memory of Marion von Osten)*, 2023, exhibition view, ThinkArt, Casablanca, photo: Ayoub Bouibaden



*Corresponding with... (in memory of Marion von Osten)*, 2023, *Bibliothèque de passage*, exhibition view ThinkArt, Casablanca, Photo: Ayoub Bouibaden

the driving force behind the artists of the Casablanca Art School in the 1960s. In memory of Marion von Osten, Peter Spillmann intervened in ThinkArt's space in Casablanca with a new and permanent infrastructure that supports different formats of presentation, exchange, and collaboration, and helps establish an archive that focuses on self-organized activist cultural practices, feminist initiatives and research related to discourses from the region. The documentation center includes themes and discourses derived from the Casablanca Art School, such as the

development of new art forms, art in public space and its mediation, a new pedagogy, the decolonization of art history, emancipation, and self-organization. Additionally, the Center for Postcolonial Knowledge and Culture (CPKC.org) makes various materials, texts, and video documentation from the von Osten estate permanently accessible. A poster conveys this lasting intervention in Casablanca and tells of the making of self-organized project spaces. For the presentation in Berlin, Spillmann examines the teaching methods and practices of Toni Maraini and listens to her conversations with Marion von Osten.

Additionally a prominent role is given to the book *In the Making: In the Desert of Modernity: Colonial Planning and After. A Research-Based Practice*, edited by Sabeth Buchmann, Susanne Leeb and Peter Spillmann about the working method of Marion von Osten. Through the genesis of one of her major exhibitions, *In the Desert of Modernity: Colonial Planning and After*, and other related exhibitions, she recounts modes of research, forms of collaboration, research trips, conceptual and design settings, and encounters. The book opens pathways to parainstitutional and feminist exhibition making. *In the Desert of Modernity* (2008) presented architectural and urban projects developed in North Africa and Western Europe in the context of colonial governance, anti-colonial struggles, and transnational migration; and *Bauhaus Imaginista* (2016–20), opened up a transnational perspective on the history of modernist art and design and introduced the legacies of Casablanca Art School in Germany.

# Manuel

# Raeder

*Mohamed Melehi Manhole*, 2023. Steel Ø 60 cm

*Mohamed Melehi Manhole stencil*, 2023.  
Aluminium, Ø 60 cm

Founded by Manuel Raeder in 2003, Studio Manuel Raeder is an interdisciplinary design studio based in Berlin. Its works span a wide range of formats and explore the boundaries between exhibitions, ephemera, books, type design, editing, publishing, and furniture design, approaching them as carriers of information or experimental devices to document or conceive narratives. For *School of Casablanca*, Raeder explores the relationship



*Mohamed Melehi Manhole*, 2023, steel, 60 cm  
© Manuel Raeder



*Casablanca Street Furniture*, 2023, Parc de la Ligue Arabe, Casablanca, photo: Manuel Raeder



*Mohamed Melehi Manhole*, 2023, Parc de la Ligue Arabe, Casablanca, photo: Manuel Raeder

between industrial production and unique design in collaboration with Mafoder, a company producing manhole covers, among other things, in Morocco and other countries.

Using the wave patterns in the paintings of Mohamed Melehi and Mohammed Chabaâ as reference points, Raeder transforms carpets, paintings and patterns into manhole covers. He converts graphic references to the waves into ASCII (American Standard Code for Information Interchange) code, replaces them with the knotted typeface and creates a pattern then used for

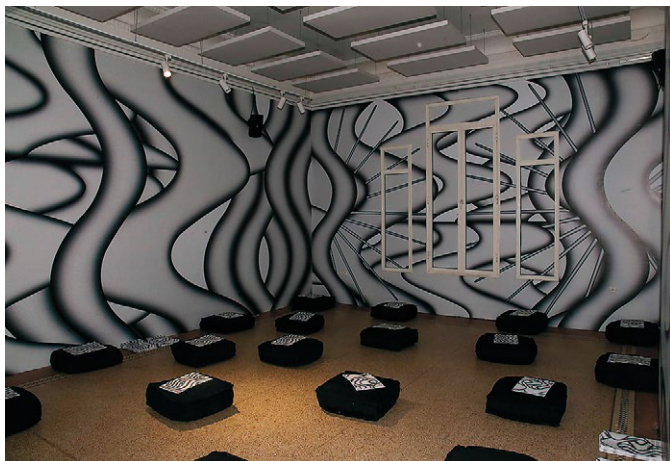
non-slip surfaces on the manhole covers. The symbols used to compose the knotted typeface are the same geometric shapes that appear in the carpets produced in the Atlas Mountains and they correspond to the knots produced by traditional weaving. Using Mafoder's existing distribution system, the project is disseminated in the streets and public spaces of Morocco – and also arrives in front of the ifa Gallery Berlin. In this way, it builds on the founding spirit of the Casablanca Art School: taking art outside and making it accessible and available to all.

# Nassim

# Azarzar

*All Things Flow*, 2023. Poster

Nassim Azarzar is an artist and graphic designer whose practice and interests revolve around imagery and popular imaginaries. His ongoing



*All Things Flow*, 2023, installation with wallpaper and sound, exhibition view, École Supérieure des beaux-arts de Casablanca, photo: Ayoub Bouibaden





*All Things Flow*, 2023, poster, École Supérieure des beaux-arts de Casablanca, photo: Ayoub Bouibaden

research *Bonne route* (2018–) led him to the invention of a visual language that functions as a vehicle by integrating and combining elements from the artist's surroundings from past and present. In *All Things Flow* (2023), Azarzar uses a similar protocol but strictly limits it to one visual motif, the wave pattern, which he interweaves with the urban texture of Casablanca. Using digital tools, his work intentionally distances itself from the flat aesthetics of Casablanca Art School, incorporating volume through light and shadow to produce tactile sensations. A detailed timeline presents in-depth historical research on socio-political and cultural developments in Morocco.

# The Casablanca Art School

Presentation of archival visual documentation from the Casablanca Art School Archive.

Courtesy Zamân Books & Curating.

A display of slideshows is presented in sections titled “Modernist Aesthetics & Popular Art”, “Making Art Public” and “Artistic Practice & Everyday Life”. All texts accompanying the slideshows were written by Morad Montazami and the archive materials were provided by Zamân Books & Curating.

## **Modernist Aesthetics & Popular Art**

At Casablanca Art School (CAS), rural carpets replaced plaster copies and easel painting was set aside, while photography became a new mode of expression replacing the oratory. Arabic calligraphy was also taught, not as a linguistic system, but in the form of pictorial signs, as were traditional arts (carpet weaving, carpentry, leatherwork, pottery, ceramics, wood and plaster carvings, jewelry making, brass and metal smithing, and tattooing) as well as Islamic architecture. New theoretical and practical courses carved out a new place to honor the master artisan in a non-traditional sense, by drawing from a repertoire of gestures, forms, and symbols.

Hence, Chabâa’s teaching method, which was oriented toward the applied arts, would redefine classical calligraphy for use in typography and poster design. Melehi’s painting classes encouraged students to reinterpret the patterns

and visual organization of Amazigh carpets, thus evolving them into mural art (a media he shared with Chabâa). Meanwhile, Flint invited students to explore his collection of popular art and Amazigh jewelry, revealing to them the secrets of its symbolism as well as its plastic potential.

Toni Maraini initiated students into a transversal and previously unseen art history, claiming Africa and the Mediterranean as centers for outreach. Together, they would contribute to the modification of mindsets and formal references for students, whether in the school's workshops or during field research, helping them to rediscover an entire heritage that was notably concentrated in rural areas, the mosques and habitats created by villagers in the Souss and the High Atlas.

The sum of these experiences would give rise to *Maghreb Art*, a journal published between 1965 and 1969, in which all this knowledge would be presented; not only classified and analyzed but also supported by a real aestheticism.

### **Making Art Public**

The CAS is the location where artists Farid Belkahia, Mohammed Chabâa, and Mohamed Melehi laid the foundation for the CAS' practice and first developed the philosophy behind it. They sought to reach as wide an audience as possible—including students, readers, laypeople, the excluded, and the public at large—and to be present in all segments of society, including public spaces (*Présence Plastique* at Jemaa el-Fna Square in Marrakesh and 16 November Square in Casablanca in 1969 and the 1978 Asilah Cultural Festival Moussem), schools (*Présence Plastique* at the Mohammed V and Fatim-Zahra High Schools, Casablanca, 1971), hospitals (the 1981 Berrechid Moussem), cultural magazines (*Souffles* and *Integral*), and architecture (CAS artists and the architecture firm Faraoui and de Mazières collaborated across multiple sites and buildings between 1967 and 1982). They aimed to break free from the traditionalist, institutional, and commercial constraints of their time and to weave their art into the fabric of the city and greater society.

## **Artistic Practice & Everyday Life**

By encouraging a close relationship between artistic and artisanal practices and acknowledging that craftsmanship is always embedded in the ordinary, CAS tutors asserted a living and transversal approach to art, merging ideas from art, craft, design, and architecture, and transitioning from art as a means of expression to art as a production tool. This “productivist turn” included the idea of drawing formal motifs from the ornamental repertoire of vernacular craftsmanship and offering variations on it. Furthermore, the CAS saw itself as at the service of society. With its activities it sought to be integrated seamlessly into community life and to be in dynamic relation with all areas of life. The main idea was that the socialization of art should be achieved through a new politics of art, which proclaimed an art whose forms could be appropriated by everyone and everywhere.

## Colophon

*School of Casablanca* is initiated by KW Institute for Contemporary Art (Berlin) and ThinkArt (Casablanca) in partnership with ifa Gallery Berlin, supported Sharjah Art Foundation, Goethe-Institut Marokko, and Zamân Books & Curating.

### *School of Casablanca*

11.11.2023–14.1.2024

L'École Supérieure des beaux-arts de Casablanca, L'Annexe de l'église du Sacré-coeur, La Coupole, Le Parc de la Ligue Arabe, ThinkArt, Casablanca

### *School of Casablanca*

16.2.–12.5.2024

ifa Gallery Berlin

*School of Casablanca* coincides with the historical exhibition *The Casablanca Art School—Platforms and Patterns for a Postcolonial Avant-Garde, 1962–87*, curated by Zamân Books & Curating, which takes place at Tate St. Ives throughout 2023, Sharjah Art Foundation, and Schirn Kunsthalle from 12.7. to 13.10.2024.

Curators: Salma Lahlou, Kirst Gruijthuijsen, Inka Gressel

Curatorial Assistants Casablanca: Sanaa Zaghoud,

Yasmina Echair

Team ifa Gallery Berlin: Inka Gressel, Alya Sebti, Ev Fischer,

Svenja Wolff, Anna Giannessi, Stefano Ferlito with

Nicolás Mastracchio, Hippolyte Moulun, Keanu Sapadi,

as well as Mila Cano, Anna Ratcliffe, Christian Kießling

Visual identity, graphic design: Marc Hollenstein

Press: Corinna Wolfien, Books Communication Art

Initiated by / In partnership with

**KW**

THINKART

**ifa** Institut für  
Auslandsbeziehungen

**ZAMÂN**  
BOOKS & CURATING

**MAFODER**  
GROUP

**UN—TIE TO TIE**

ifa Gallery Berlin

Linienstraße 139/140, 10115 Berlin

T +49 30 28 44 91 10

ifa-galerie-berlin@ifa.de

www.ifa.de

www.untietotie.org

Opening Hours:

Tuesday–Sunday 14:00–18:00, Thursday 14:00–20:00

Please obtain further information on our public programme on:  
untietotie.org

