MONIA BEN HAMOUDA

Chert
Lüdde

selma feriani



DATE AND PLACE OF BIRTH:
1991, Milan IT

NATIONALITY:
Italian / Tunisian

BFA (Sculpture) at Brera Academy
of Fine Arts, Milan IT (2014)

Currently based between
Milan, Italy and al-Qayrawan, Tunisia

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MONIA BEN HAMOUDA BIO & CV

Monia Ben Hamouda (Milan,1991) is an Italian-Tunisian visual artist.
Represented by ChertLüdde (Berlin) and Selma Feriani (London - Tunis)

Following the belief that each individual is inextricably connected to their family tree and the psychological universe of their ancestors, Ben Hamouda attempts to master her influences in a contemporary and constantly changing landscape. Born into a Muslim community as the daughter of an Islamic calligrapher, Ben Hamouda navigates and confronts her generational heritage through what she calls a shamanic process – creating works that act as gestural exorcisms of the expectations placed upon her by tradition and the politicized present, drawing their power from the urgency of expression. Her visual language, which translates into a broad range of formal approaches, is steeped in cultural-religious symbology and rituals.
She lives and work between Milan and al-Qayrawan.

EDUCATION:

BFA (Sculpture) at Brera Academy of Fine Arts (2011-2014)

SOLO EXHIBITIONS:

Fragments of Fire Worship,
Fondazione Bvlgari - official collateral Event La Biennale di Venezia
Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Venice IT (2026)

Solo show,
Centrale Fies, Dro IT (upcoming 2026)

Solo show,
Gasworks, London UK (upcoming 2027)

Solo show,
KANAL Centre Pompidou, Bruxelles UK (upcoming 2027)

After Totality,
ChertLüdde,
Berlin, DE (2026)

Nor
Barth,Bressanone, Südtirol, BZ
curated by Emanuele Guidi (2026)

Path of Totality,
Museo Casa Rusca, Locarno CH (2025)
curated by Gioia Dal Molin

Post Scriptum,
Centre d'Art Contemporain La Ferme du Buisson,
Noisiel, FR (2025) curated by Thomas Conchou

Ya'aburnee
Selma Feriani Gallery,
Tunis TN (2025) curated by Anissa Touati

Theology of Collapse (The Myth of Past)
MAXXI BVLGARI PRIZE IV Exhibition
MAXXI - Museo nazionale delle arti del XXI secolo
Rome IT (2024-2025) curated by Giulia Ferracci

A new spelling of my name,
Spazio Lima, Milan, IT
curated by Christiane Rekade
(Milano Drawing Week - Collezione Ramo -
curated by Irina Zucca Alessandrelli)

NYX
Il pers. solo w/ Maude Léonard-Contant
Istituto Svizzero, Milano IT (2024) curated by Gioia Dal Molin

About Telepathy and Other Violences
ChertLüdde, Berlin DE (2023)

The Destruction of the Idols of Ka'ba
La Casa Encendida,
Madrid ES (2023) curated by Pakui Hardware

Remarkably Clear, Almost Invisible
Double solo show w/ Michele Gabriele
Ashes/Ashes, New York NY - USA (2022)
curated by Anthony Discenza

Wudu Diorama
Lower Cavity Holyoke, MA, USA (2022)
curated by Anthony Discenza

The eye, the hands, the Lunacy of Lunar Sightings,
Jevouspropose, Zurich CH (2022) curated by Anissa Touati

Hamra,
Ariel - Feminisms in the Aesthetics, Copenaghen K (2022)
curated by Karen Vestergaard Andersen and Helen Nishijo Andersen

Night of Hinna,
ChertLüdde - bungalow, Berlin DE (2021)

Two suns upon Shatt al Jarid,
Pols, Valencia ES (2021)
curated by Nestor Garcia Diaz, Carles Àngel Saurí

Extended protection, Allegoric Defence,
Gallery CC, Malmö SW (2019) curated by Camilla Edström Ödemark

Miranda,
paneproject, Milan IT (2017)

GROUP EXHIBITIONS:

Méditerranée, Odyssées Contemporaines
Villa Datris Foundation, Vaucluse, FR (2026)

Making Fire
Aranya Art Center,
Quinhuangdao CN (2026)

Brera 1776-2026
Salone Napoleonico, Accademia di Belle Arti di Brera,
Milan IT curated by Gianni Caravaggio (upcoming 2026)

Whispers on the Horizon - 14th Taipei Biennial
Taipei Fine Arts Museum (TFAM) Taipei, Taiwan TW
(2025- 2026) curated by Sam Bardaouil and Till Fellrath

The Narrative of Decline
Carbon12, Dubai, UAE (2025)

The Posterity of the Sun
VIMA, Limassol, Cyprus CY (2025)
curated by Ludovic Delalande

64th Premio Termoli,
MACTE Museo di Arte Contemporanea di Termoli,
Termoli, Italy (2025) curated by Caterina Riva

A Soft Edge to Break a Sword
ChertLüdde, Berlin DE (2024)

Survival Kit
Latvian Center of Contemporary Art,
Riga, LV (2024) curated by Jussi Koitela

KIN
Spiritvessel, Espinavesa ES (2024) curated by Sira Pizá

Sex Reenchanted
Heidelberger Kunstverein,
Heidelberger, DE (2024) curated by Mehves Ungan

Refuser les entraves
FRAC Corsica
La Citadelle, Ajaccio, Corsica FR (2024) curated by Fabien Danesi

EXPOSURE
Art, culture, fashion in and out of the showcase
MUDEC Museo delle Culture
Milano IT (2024) curated by Katya Inozemtseva and Sara Rizzo

RENAISSANCE
MUSEION Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Bolzano IT
(2024) curated by Leonie Radine

To Romanticize with Indecision
Cassina Project, Milano IT (2024)
curated by Monia Ben Hamouda and Michele Gabriele

L'autre musée, the treasures of a major contemporary art collection
FRAC Bretagne, (2023) Rennes, FR

Darker, Lighter, Puffy, Flat
Kunsthalle Wien, Wien AT (2023) curated by Laura Amann

My Demons My Angels,
ChertLüdde, Berlin DE (2023)

Olga Fröbe-Kaptein - Deep Knowledge
Kunsthalle Mainz, Mainz DE (2023) curated by Yasmin Naderi Afschar

Retrofuture. Notes for a collection
MACRO Museo d'Arte Contemporanea di Roma
Rome IT (2023) curated by Luca Lo Pinto

The Lying Body: Only the Futures revisits the Past
ar/ge kunst Kunstverein
Bozen IT (2022) curated by Emanuele Guidi

Time is never time at all - IV Club Gamec Prize Exhibition,
Museo Gamec, Bergamo IT (2022) curated by Treti Galaxie

The Age of Identity: a Feminine Lexicon
Museo Salvatore Ferragamo, Firenze IT (2022)
curated by MA Arts Curating - Istituto Marangoni
Coordinated by Davide Daninos, Carolina Gestri, Francesca Giulia Tavanti, Enrico Visani

Museo Diffuso Contemporaneo,
Serralunga d'Alba IT (2021)
curated by Musketeers - coordinated by Clarissa Tempestini

Cry me a River,
Official lounge Artissima, Turin IT (2021) curated by Treti Galaxie

Ducato Prize winners exhibition, Volumnia, Piacenza IT (2021)

Endless Nostalghia,
Museo Pecci Prato, Online / Rome IT (2020) curated by Treti Galaxie

Collagen Shadows,
ADA, Rome IT (2020) curated by Zoë De Luca

Blade Banner,
Sprint & Istituto Svizzero,
Museo Civico di Scienze Naturali, Milano IT (2020)
curated by Dafne Boggeri

NORTHERN LIGHTS,
Alta art space, Malmö SW (2019)
curated by Something Must Break

Superhost,
Like a Little Disaster, Polignano a Mare IT (2019)
curated by Pane + LALD

Love Data - 16eme Biennale d'art contemporain Alios,
La Teste de Buch FR (2019) curated by Irwin Marchal

Unsupported Message Format,
Galerie Valeria Cetraro, Paris FR (2019) curated by Pierre Clement

Swamp Horses,
Spirit Vessel + ALTAN, Espinavesa ES (2019)
curated by Kenneth Alme, Andrew Birk, Sira Piza

WET, Haunt project space, Yogyakarta IND (2018)

Swamp Thing versus Man-thing,
Et.al gallery, San Francisco CA (2018) curated by Anthony Discenza

First I Have to Put my Face On,
Like a Little Disaster, Polignano a Mare IT
(2018) curated by Cristina Gigliotti

Assiette ou Virage et Dérapage,
Something Must Break, Milan IT
(2018) text by Natalya Serkova

StickerSUV, Werkschauhalle
Leipzig DE (2018) curated by Paneproject

H O P E, Universitätssammlungen Kunst
Dresden DE (2017) curated by New Scenario

Trigger Party #6, Marselleria Permanent Exhibition,
Milan IT (2017) curated by Siliqoon

Fantasy Direct vol II, The Wrong - Digital Art Biennale,
Nathan Road, Hong Kong CN (2017)

The Bunt,
Ginny Projects, London UK (2017)

Fantasy Direct,
Yongma Charm Space, Seoul TKD (2017)

Milano Film Festival, Milan IT (2016)

Takeoffs, Bocconi Art Gallery, Milan IT (2016)

VideoEspanso,
RivoliDue Fondazione per l'Arte Contemporanea, Milan IT (2016)

6pm Your Local Time Europe,
Link Art Center For The Arts Of The Information Age,
Brescia IT (2015)

L'intimità dell'immagine come luogo in comune,
Viafarini - CAREOF DOCVA, Milan IT (2015)
curated by Gianni Caravaggio

AWARDS / GRANTS:

Winner; MAXXI BVLGARI PRIZE IV
Maxxi - Museo nazionale delle arti del XXI secolo
Rome IT (2024)

Winner; Fondazione Merz prize (2024)
Artissima, Torino IT

Winner; Italian Council (13th edition)
with Comune di Locarno – Museo Casa Rusca (2024)

Winner; Museion Audience Award (2024)

Winner; Vordemberge-Gildewart Foundation Grant (2024)

Winner; Italian Council (12th edition)
with Stad Wien Kunst gmbh / Kunsthalle Wien (2023)

Winner; Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant (2022)
New York NY - USA

Finalist; Club Gamec Prize VI (2022)
Bergamo IT

Winner; Torino Social Impact Art Award x Artissima (2021)
Torino IT

Winner; Art Business Accelerator Grant
Artwork Archive + Redline Contemporary Art Center (2021)
Denver CO - USA

Winner; DUCATO Contemporary Art prize - Special Award (2020)
Piacenza IT

RESIDENCIES /TALKS / FELLOWSHIPS:

American Academy in Rome fellowship
in collaboration with MAXXI and Whitney Museum, Rome, IT (2025)

Analisi, Distruzione e Rinnovamento
Talk at MAXXI - Museo nazionale delle arti del XXI secolo
with Francesco Urbano Ragazzi and Giulia Ferracci
Rome IT (2025)

Terrae Nullius,
Talk at the American Academy in Rome, Rome IT (2025)

Casa degli Artisti
Studio Residency (2024-2025)
Milan IT

Spirit Vessel residency
Espinavesa ES (2023-2024)
curated by Sira Pizà and Andrew Birk

Talk: Caffè Young Italy:
Young talents in creative conversations: Latvia & Italy
Italian Embassy in Riga, Latvia (2024) Moderated by Jussi Koitela

Beyond Boundaries residency,
Fabbrica del Vapore, Milano IT (2024) curated by Nicolas Vamvouklis

Artist Talk at Kunsthalle Mainz,
Mainz DE (2023) with curator Yasmin Naderi Afschar

The Truth of Reason, the Truth of Feeling
Performative reading event during Zurich Art Week
Jevouspropose, Zurich CH (2022) curated by Anissa Touati

Lower Cavity Residency
Holyoke, MA - USA (2022)

ARI Readings:
Talk at Ariel Feminism in the Aesthetic, Copenaghen DK (2022)

Visiting Professor at Istituto Marangoni - MA Curating Art (2021)
Florence IT - coordinated by Davide Daninos and Francesca Giulia Tavanti

Talk at Artissima XYZ
w/ Ilaria Bonacossa, Giovanna Melandri, Treti Galaxie (2021)

Torino Social Impact Art Award x Artissima (2021)
Residency at Combo, Torino IT

Visiting Professor at Hochschule für Bildende Künste - BFA,
Dresden DE (2021) coordinated by Paul Barsch

Orrido 120 residency,
Swan Station, Buco del Piombo IT (2019)
curated by Zoë De Luca + Something Must Break

Filmidee summer residency
Sardinia Island w/ Martina Parenti & Massimo D'Anolfi (2016)

Academy Awards Residency, VIAFARINI, Milan IT
coordinated by Simone Frangi (2016)

Jury member at Filmmaker Festival, Milan IT (2014)

PUBLIC COLLECTIONS:

Kunsthaus Zürich, Zürich, CH

MAXXI Museo Nazionale delle Arti del XXI Secolo, Rome, IT

Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin, IT

TBA21 Thyssen - Bornemisza Collection, Madrid, ES

Dalloul Art Foundation, Beirut, LB

Frac Corsica, Corte, FR

Frac Bretagne, Rennes, FR

MUSEION, Bozen, IT

Banca d'Italia, Rome, IT

ARTFAIRS:

Art Basel Hong Kong
w/ Sema Feriani
Hong Kong HK (upcoming 2026)

Paris+ par Art Basel
w/ Selma Feriani
Paris, FR (2025)

Sigg Art Foundation at Contemporary Istanbul 2025
Istanbul TR (2025)

ARCO Madrid
solo booth w/ ChertLüdde
Madrid ES (2025)

Artissima
w/ ChertLüdde (2024; 2025)
Turin IT

MiArt
Established w/ ChertLüdde
Milan IT (2022; 2023; 2024;2025)

Frieze
w/ ChertLüdde (2024; 2025)
London UK

Paris Internationale
w/ ChertLüdde
Paris, FR (2023)

ArtBasel
Galleries w/ ChertLüdde
Basel CH (2022; 2024;2025)

Abu Dhabi Art Fair
w/ Sema Feriani
Abu Dhabi UAE (2025)

CATALOGS / BOOKS / PUBLICATIONS:

VITAMIN P3: New Perspective in Painting
published by PHAIDON (2026)

D'ORO Collection
Ed. Unique
published by D'ORO Collection (upcoming 2026)

Whispers on the Horizon - 14th Taipei Biennial Catalog
curated by Sam Bardaouil and Till Fellrath (2025)

Monia Ben Hamouda Path of Totality
curated by Gioia dal Molin
with texts by: Beya Othmani, Övul Ö. Durmusoglu, Sira Pizà.
published by MOUSSE (2025)

(IM)MATERIAL CULTURE(S) AND POLITICS vol II
Contemporary Cultural Tools for Identities in the Making
edited by Federico Rudari and Luisa Santos
Text on Monia Ben Hamouda by Mattia Tosti,
published by Routledge (2025)

CURA44. The Generational Issue
Monia Ben Hamouda - text by Francesco Urbano Ragazzi
ISSN: 20385072
published by CURA. (2025)

Maxxi Bvlgari prize IV Catalog
Essays on Monia Ben Hamouda by:
- Ute Meta Bauer
- Francesco Urbano Ragazzi
- Giulia Ferracci
ISBN: 9788822292298
published by Quodiblet Edizioni (2024)

Gucci Prospetive 3
ITALIANE ANCORA
curated by Eva Fabbris and Giovanna Manzotti
ISBN: 828433_J2500 8486
published by Contrasto - Roberto Koch Editore Srl (2024)

Survival Kit 15 - Measures
curated by Jussi Koitela
ISBN: 978-9934-9228-3-1
Published by Latvijas Laikmetigas makslas centrs (LLMC) (2024)

Sex Reenchanted
curated by Mehves Ungan
ISBN: 9783948096946
Published by Heidelberger Kunstverein HDKV (2024)

RENAISSANCE Exhibition Catalogue
curated by Leonie Radine
Limited edition books by Museion (2024)

MUdec United Vol II
Exposure
editorial direction by Carlo Antonelli
Prodzioni NERO
ISBN 9788880562429
(2024)

Reclaiming Resilience
curated by Pakui Hardware
La Casa Encendida
ISBN 9788409573042
(2024)

Au bord des mondes
Vers une anthropologie métaphysique
by Mohamed Amer meziane

“[...]The emphasis on interstices nods to what Homi Bhabha has called “in-betweenness”: a Third Space of ambivalence in wich cultural symbols, and in turn subjectivities, are not fixed, but rather actively negotiated.“

Vashti Ali, extract from Artforum International, 2021

My visual language, which translates into a broad range of formal approaches - in equal parts drawing, sculpture and painting - rework traditional calligraphic forms into a discordant and compound composition, steeped in cultural-religious symbology and rituals.
Significantly inspired by calligraphy, which stands as an extended part of Arabic culture, as well as on my own personal history, my practice is mostly based on exploring the symbolic, political and traumatic characters of contemporaneity.

My work navigates and confronts the human condition using sculpture as a tool to reinterpret and reappropriate my cultural genealogy, enlightening bonds and connections that we make, inside and outside our blood ties, “composing a metamorphosis that is still under way, where the transformation into a calligram will never be complete, like an Apollo and Daphne made up of signs alone”.

Following the belief that each individual is inextricably connected to their family tree and the psychological universe of their ancestors, my practice attempts to master my influences in a contemporary and constantly changing landscape. Born into a Muslim community as the daughter of an Islamic calligrapher, I navigates and confronts my generational heritage through what I call a shamanic process – creating works that act as gestural exorcisms of the expectations placed upon me by tradition and the politicized present, drawing their power from the urgency of expression.

My practice aims to navigate distances between complex histories–of art, culture, language, and religion–reconciling these polarities through a personal poetics articulated through a syntax of gesture and raw materiality: metal, wood, powdered North African spices, charcoal, fire, serve as conduits through which I channel the divergent forces that have shaped my identity—talismanic performers in a ritual that manifests the struggle between the strictures of tradition and an unbounded urge to self-expression.



Installation View from Fragments of Fire Worship, Fondazione Bvlgari – official collateral Event
61st International Art Exhibition La Biennale di Venezia, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana,
Venice IT 2026.
Fragments of Fire Worship (I), 2026, neon, 350cm x 200 x 15 cm
Photo T-Space
Courtesy the Artist, Fondazione Bvlgari, Selma Feriani Tunis-London and ChertLudde, Berlin

Fragments of Fire Worship,

Fondazione Bvlgari –

official collateral Event
61st International Art Exhibition
La Biennale di Venezia

Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Venice IT
2026

In the context of the 61st International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia, the Monumental Rooms of the Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana host the first exhibition curated by Fondazione Bvlgari, an exhibition project that, through the valorization of a constellation of individual voices, expresses the foundation's eclectic approach.

Founded upon the donation of Cardinal Bessarion in 1468 and designed by Sansovino, the Biblioteca Marciana embodies an idea of knowledge as a living organism, exposed to revision and oblivion. It is here that the two artists intervene with site-specific works that do not merely illustrate the institution's heritage, but interrogate it, transforming the space into a dynamic field where memory and knowledge continue to redefine themselves.

In the Vestibule, Monia Ben Hamouda presents Fragments of Fire Worship, an installation composed of two neon sculptures. The luminous signs, indecipherable and fragmentary, evoke a writing that has lost its communicative function to become gesture, trace, scar. The daughter of an Islamic calligrapher, Ben Hamouda transforms her inheritance into an impossible alphabet, in which light does not clarify but withholds, evoking fire as a force of revelation and destruction. Through an exercise in formal disobedience, neon introduces a vision of knowledge as something in continuous metamorphosis.

In a world shaped by conflict, where the destruction of memory is an integral part of military strategy, *Fragments of Fire Worship* proposes a non-monumental form of resistance. It does not preserve, but exposes; it does not archive, but allows things to filter through. A blaze that does not destroy, but holds. A light that does not clarify. A cult of the unfinished, of the wounded language, of knowledge that survives despite — and within — its constant threat of disappearance.

In the current geopolitical landscape, writing is among the first territories to be occupied: archives destroyed, books burned, languages marginalized, alphabets erased or rendered illegible. Fire returns cyclically as a tool of power — a gesture of purification, a punitive act, a strategy for the annihilation of memory. Yet fire is also what makes things visible, what leaves traces, what transforms without guaranteeing a stable form.
Fragments of Fire Worship moves within this ambivalence: it does not represent the fire, but adopts its logic.

The work takes shape in a time of diffuse combustion — a time in which language is subjected to extreme pressure, words emptied out, weaponized, censored, or turned into instruments of control. It emerges from this friction: from the impossibility of saying everything and the necessity of not remaining silent. The signs that compose it present themselves as active remnants of a broken script, luminous presences that resist translation and clarity as an imposed value.

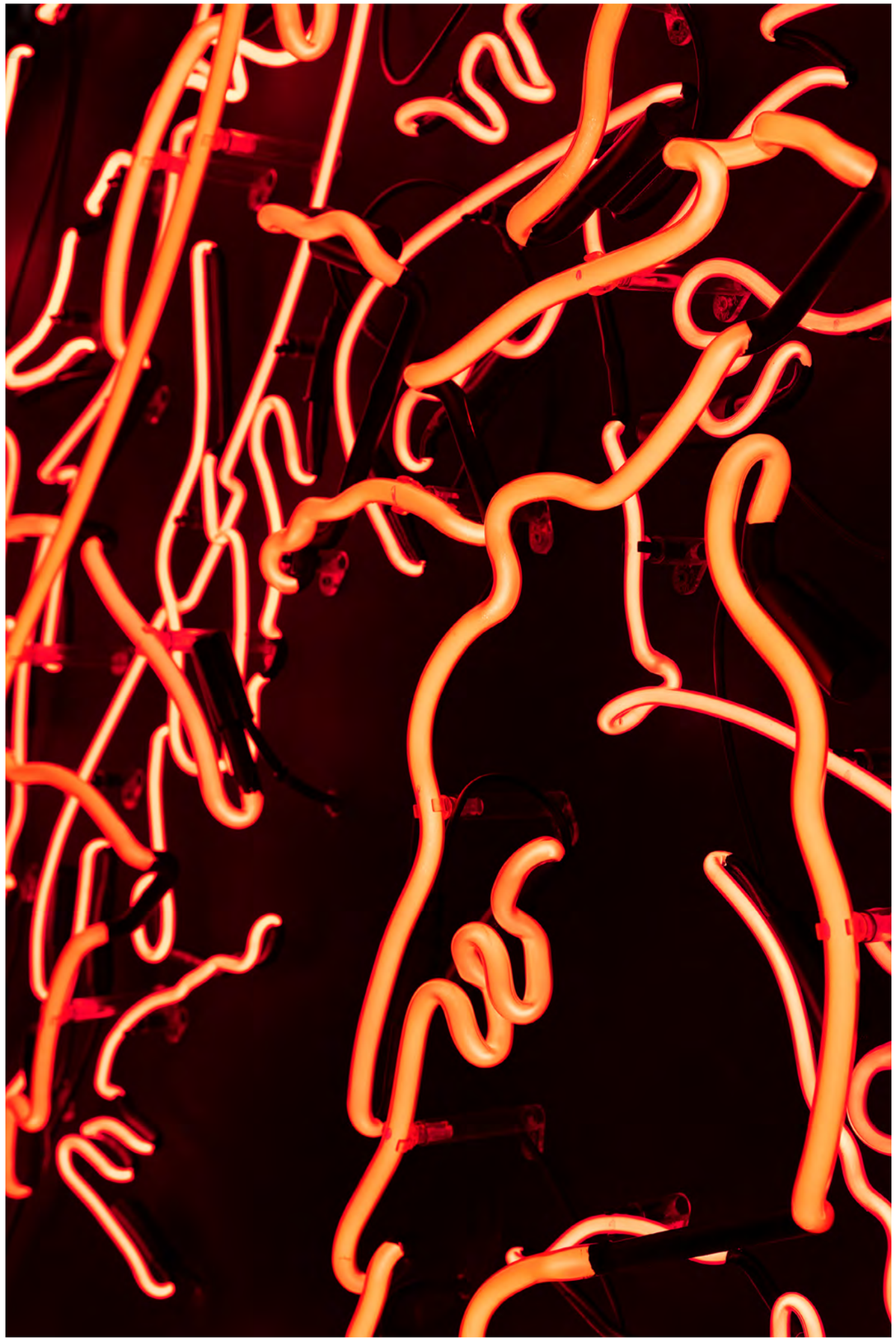
Inserted into a space historically devoted to the preservation of knowledge, the work does not celebrate its authority, but introduces a fracture. In a place founded on order, cataloguing, and transmission, these opaque signs render visible what every archive tends to remove: selection, exclusion, loss. Not everything that exists can be preserved; not everything that is preserved can be read. Fragments of Fire Worship operates precisely within this zone of friction, where knowledge ceases to appear neutral and reveals its exposure to risk.



Installation View from Fragments of Fire Worship, Fondazione Bvlgari – official collateral Event
61st International Art Exhibition La Biennale di Venezia, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana,
Venice IT 2026. Photo T-Space
Courtesy the Artist, Fondazione Bvlgari, Selma Feriani Tunis–London and ChertLudde, Berlin



Installation View from Fragments of Fire Worship, Fondazione Bvlgari – official collateral Event 61st International Art Exhibition La Biennale di Venezia, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Venice IT 2026.
Fragments of Fire Worship (II), 2026, neon, 350cm x 260 x 15 cm
Photo T-Space
Courtesy the Artist, Fondazione Bvlgari, Selma Feriani Tunis-London and ChertLudde, Berlin







Installation View from After Totality, solo show at ChertLüdde, 2026.
from left: Theology of collapse (Fragment XIII), 2025, Mixed media on iron, spices 221 × 120 × 0.03 cm;
Theology of collapse (Fragment XI), 2025, Mixed media on iron, spices, 221 × 120 × 0.03 cm
Photo Marjorie Brunet Plaza and Giorgia Parmisano Courtesy the Artist and ChertLüdde, Berlin

After Totality

Solo show at ChertLüdde, Berlin
2026

At ChertLüdde, Tunisian-Italian artist Monia Ben Hamouda (1991, Milan) presents After Totality, a continuation of her recent exhibition Path of Totality at Museo Casa Rusca in Locarno.

Over the last few years, Ben Hamouda has developed a distinctive artistic landscape encompassing sculpture, installation, and mixed-media painting. Moving between abstraction and figuration, her practice blends together her Islamic and Western cultural heritage, positioning both of her lineages as influences on her work. Within the exhibition, "totality" is observed as a metaphor for the present moment, with the exhibition moving through states of collapse and obscurity, challenging what darkness reveals and withholds. The term was originally taken from the field of astronomy, where the "path of totality" describes the area of the Earth from which a total solar eclipse can be observed and there is a brief collapse of daylight from the moon obscuring the sun. But the word also references the constructed form of totality: that of power and totalitarianism, a term introduced in Europe during the 1920s to describe control over every aspect of public and private life.

In her essay 'Totality: The Color of Eclipse', Anne Carson writes, "Hard to know how to go on, after the reversal of color and defeat of the sun."1 Long feared and mythologized, eclipses have historically revealed how cosmological knowledge operates as power and control. Like Carson, Ben Hamouda turns to this moment of covering-up to describe what is unfolding, using art to navigate collapse, uncertainty, and the possibility of renewal. Against this backdrop, the exhibition opens with Theology of Collapse (The Myth of Past), made from laser-cut steel panels. The title directly links belief itself to total collapse and to a sense of loss rooted in the past. Leaning into the space, the sculpture's intricate designs are reminiscent of both mausoleum and mosque ornamentation. Architectural details traditionally reserved for the burial chambers of the dead become indistinguishable from the decorations found in spaces of worship for the living, creating a delicate balance between one world and the other at a moment that seems to oscillate between the two, when the meaning of life itself is overshadowed by power. Looming over the visitor, a sense of physical collapse is experienced and intensified also through the audio piece playing within the room. It is impossible to ignore the discomfort and awareness evoked by the sound installation as the deep vibrations echo through the gallery. Meant to demonstrate how moments of crisis can profoundly transform language, the audio consists of recordings made between October and December 2023 from two mosques located in Gaza. It creates a haunting soundscape in which religious calls to prayer merge with urgent public security announcements made in wartime, transforming the familiar sounds of the Adhan into an alarming melody. Emphasizing how these sounds shape cultural identity and perception, the result is a powerful commentary on the nature of communication and the emotional strain these warning calls carry.

In the second gallery, fragrant, vividly colored powders have settled over a scene of collapse. With spices traditionally used in medicine, cooking, and ritual practices across North Africa and West Asia, Ben Hamouda coats architectural forms and salvaged wooden beams in dense layers that act as both preservation and protection. These spices form a veil over ogee arches inspired by structures the artist encountered in Spain, referencing the Islamic heritage still found in Europe. The spices extend beyond the objects themselves; scent fills the room, heightening the senses and evoking a resilient presence in response to histories of inhuman suffering. What appears as ruin is counterbalanced by acts of care.

Titled Reversion (Wudu Diorama), the installation also references wudu, the ritual ablution performed before prayer or reading the Qur'an, while insisting on a complete sense of upside-down reversal. In close dialogue with contemporary political realities, Ben Hamouda frames vulnerability and repair as enmeshed. She sees the myth of antiquity as something active and lived through shared heritage. Collapsed architectures thus emerge not as symbols of defeat, but as forms of resistance—revealing cultural heritage as fractured, lived, and continually renegotiated. Within all of this, reversal remains possible, like the moon reappearing after an eclipse.
As if cut directly from the steel sculptures in the first room, the exhibition's final work hangs from the ceiling, with spices scattered below. Drawn from the ongoing series Aniconism as Figuration Urgency, the sculpture engages the Islamic calligraphic tradition of aniconism, borrowing from an ancient strategy of circumvention. Calligraphic brushstrokes echo the visual logic of Arabic script while withholding legibility; the metal forms hover at the threshold of figuration without resolving into either image or text, proposing instead the same rhythm of appearance and disappearance.

It is within such rhythms that the moon becomes a structuring metaphor. The moon marks time not as linear progression but as cyclical return, attuning life to phases of rupture and renewal. As a witness to creation, it functions as a measure that is continually reset. The full moon, in particular, signals a moment of heightened reflection—when illumination is complete yet already turning toward disappearance.
Reading through this cosmology, totality emerges in Monia Ben Hamouda's exhibition not as an endpoint but as a disturbance of perception itself. "Still," Anne Carson writes, "totality is a phenomenon that can flip one's ratios inside out."2 Echoing Carson's words, After Totality insists on the uncertainty of the "after": a duration in which consequences continue to unfold without resolution.











Installation View from After Totality, solo show at ChertLüdde, 2026.
«Reversion (Wudu Diorama), 2025, It's a Windy Day in Tataouine II, 2021,
& It's a Windy Day in Tataouine, 2021, Wood, fabrics, spice powders, 1.70 × 10.50 × 2.35 m
Photo: Marianne Brunet Plaza and Giorgia Parmisano Courtesy the Artist and ChertLüdde, Berlin



Installation View from After Totality, solo show at ChertLudde, 2026.
Rain II (Blindness, Blossom and Desertification), 2025
Mixed media on raw linen (hibiscus, ashes, charcoal, salt, black tea, cinnamon, red soil) 300 × 530 × 4.5 cm
Photo Marjorie Brunet Plaza and Giorgia Parmisano Courtesy the Artist and ChertLudde, Berlin



Installation View from After Totality, solo show at ChertLudde, 2026.
Aniconism as Figuration Urgency (Post-Scriptum IV), 2026, Laser cut steel, spices, 369 × 203 × 0.5 cm
Photo Marjorie Brunet Plaza and Giorgia Parmisano Courtesy the Artist and ChertLudde, Berlin







nor

Solo show at Kunstraum barth
Brixen, Italy
curated by Emanuele Guidi
2026

Kindly sustained and commisioned by Ivo Barth

Monia Ben Hamouda chose to intervene in the central hall of the Kunstraum barth with a unique work that unfolds over approximately forty square meters, detached and parallel to the floor; an emerging, indefinable formation that seems to rise from below to occupy the entire architectural volume, saturating it with forms, colours, and scents, while remaining heavy and anchored to the ground.
It is an assemblage of plates with different contours, thicknesses, and materials, fixed in this configuration for the duration of the exhibition; yet, like a geomorphological structure movement and transformation in potential it will find new arrangements in dialogue with the architectures that will host it in the future.

Monia Ben Hamouda decided to work with brass, aluminium, wood, and glass, after seeing them at work in the factory, during a visit 2025, and recognizing their latent potential. Therefore, the invitation offered the opportunity to open a new trajectory, experimenting with materials and merging them with her most recent conceptual and formal research. The surfaces are, in fact, carved with those curvilinear inscriptions that we are learning to recognize in her work: fluid lines that evoke Arabic calligraphy, yet they are neither writing nor translatable message. Ash, kaolin, and cinnamon powders— also central to her practice— are scattered and settle into stratified layers of varying density.
NOR thus manages to subvert the linearity of time: new, polished, and shiny fragments, carved and furrowed by contemporary technologies, are dusted with ancient powders, carriers of stories, and appear as the result of an extremely slow temporal action. Her engravings enhance the sense of facing what the Western eye has historically claimed to define as “discovery.” Following this “predatory” and “classifying” disposition, the work instead interrogates the viewer about the politics of the gaze, its power relations, and hierarchies.
NOR II (Transhistorical), is, in fact, a large sculpture rooted in its horizontality and proposes—rather than undergoes—the ideal point of view from which to be observed: the public is invited to climb and look from the internal balcony to get a complete vision of its monumentality, which integrates into the architecture, transforming it. This choice reflects Monia Ben Hamouda’s site-specific approach, always seeking dialogue with the hosting space. It happened in 2023 at the Museo MAXXI in Rome, where she challenged the verticality designed by Zaha Hadid, placing the public at the base of a wall suspended between ascent and fall; it happened more recently in 2025 at the Selma Feriani Gallery in Tunis, where nine horizontal canvases became an ‘environment,’ especially when experienced from above. Perspective and proxemics are tools through which the artist transposes the audience into a spatiality dense with her historical, political, cultural, and visual references.
NOR thus activates a history of the relationship between gaze, as a tool of control, and horizontality. From a higher vantage, we adopt an aerial, panoramic, ‘dominant’ viewpoint, projecting it onto the work to interpret and define it. It is the history of geography, as a form of writing imposed on a vast territory, splitting it through linear and Euclidean boundaries; the history of archaeology, which digs the earth to remove artifacts and knowledge to enrich distant institutions; the history of capital, which partitions the domain of the natural to extract rare earths and raw materials.

Not least, the bird-eye view makes us assume the perspective of the satellite eye, the artificiality of the drone, and narrates contemporary territories now reduced into rubble. In the upper gallery, the wall-mounted sculpture Nor (Politics of Disappearance), reads almost like a model—map and representation—in its reduced scale and verticality.

It is legitimate to ask whether all these references and interpretations belong to the work we are observing. The answer is perhaps announced by the title itself: NOR. A conjunction that unites and establishes a relational space through negation. Neither one nor the other of these suggestions is sufficient to define the work in its entirety. A “connective negation” that thus resists the claim of totality and makes coexistence possible. Monia Ben Hamouda describes her work as “a non-language, a non-semantics, a non-territory.”
Not a lack, but the removal of interpretive grids that eases the encounter between multiple categories, practices, and histories. A form of neutrality (from ne-uter: neither one nor the other) that assumes a flooding attitude, blurring boundaries and uniting seemingly fixed identities—as revealed by the use of materials and colours in her sculptural practice.
I leave it to the audience to decide whether this neutrality can resonate in some way with Alexander Langer’s choice of “not choosing,” – a stance that, in this region, has become a deliberate political position.

Emanuele Guidi, 2026





Installation View from nor, solo show at Kunstraum barth, Brixen, Italy
curated by Emanuele Guidi, 2026
Nor II (Transhistorical), 2026; Brass, birch wood, aluminium, glass, ashes, cinnamon, caolin
690 x 600 x 20 cm
Photo Fotostudio_Eheim, Courtesy the Artist, ChertLudde, Berlin and Selma Feriani Tunis/London
Kindly sustained by Ivo Barth









Installation View from nor, solo show at Kunstraum barth, Brixen, Italy
curated by Emanuele Guidi, 2026
Nor (Politics of Disappearance), 2026; Brass, birch wood, aluminium, ashes, cinnamon, 190 x 110 x 4 cm
Photo Fotostudio Eheim, Courtesy the Artist, ChertLudde, Berlin and Selma Feriani Tunis/London
Kindly sustained by Ivo Barth





Path of Totality

Solo show at Museo Casa Rusca,
Locarno, Swizerland
curated by Gioia Dal Molin
2025

"Night," writes the Lebanese artist and author Etel Adnan, "is an exhalation rising from darkness foreign to it: a / long eclipse." In astronomical terms, an eclipse occurs when celestial bodies obscure one another. At night, the sun disappears behind the Earth's horizon. The night as a breath, as a long darkness. Etel Adnan's lines echo in my mind as I sit down to write this text. In Monia Ben Hamouda's exhibition Path of Totality at Museo Casa Rusca in Locarno, there is a room illuminated by two suns, as well as a dark room. A breath in which the night rises. Monia's works have become darker in recent months. For her drawings – made in quick, intuitive hand movements with oil and pastel crayons – she has for some time used black A4 paper instead of ivory. She adds black
charcoal or dark grey ash to the spices (such as light brown cinnamon or orange turmeric) and other natural ingredients (such as red earth or pink hibiscus), which she uses as a palette of colours for large paintings on raw linen. This darkness presses into her artistic practice. At the same time, the question of what art, what an artistic practice can be, keeps cropping up in my conversations with Monia. In a moment of darkness. In the current state of the world.
Path of Totality – this book and the exhibition at Museo Casa Rusca – arose from these questions. The 'path of totality' is the area on Earth in which a total solar eclipse can be seen. The moon completely covers the sun, and darkness descends for a moment. Lunar cycles are of great importance in the Islamic cultural sphere (whose knowledge, traditions, stories, and rituals are a central reference for Monia). The view of the night sky, of the moon, determines the dates of religious holidays such as Eid and Ramadan. I think of Etel Adnan's lines. A dark moment, yet one that lasts. A long darkness. Monia tells me that in 2014, after completing her BA at the Brera Academy of Fine Arts in Milan, she travelled to Lapland, in northern Finland, to focus on her work and her feelings, alone in the darkness of the polar night. And she adds: "Probably I feel the same way now, for different reasons, after 11 years." This book is therefore a situated snapshot. A "crystallisation of a moment," as Monia says. A moment to pause and look inside Monia's studio and artistic practice. And a look at the world, at the political context in which Monia situates herself and her work. "History is happening / right now / outside these walls," writes Monia in neon letters in her installation Monument to Vulnerability IV (Stoning of the Devil) for the Museum of Cultures (MUDEC) in Milan. The 'walls' of this book are meant to be porous. Images and texts come together to form a fragmentary, polyphonic, and multiperspective whole. Path of Totality is also a collaborative project. The authors – Övül Ö. Durmusoglu, Beya Othmani, and Sira Pizà – contribute their perspectives and knowledge to the book. In Beya's dialogic text, Monia and Beya talk about ritual and spiritual practices, about the stories and myths of the jinn (the spirit beings from pre-Islamic culture), and about iconoclasm and how these themes are present in Monia's artistic work. Sira's essay traces the significance of earth, land, and language: the questions of ownership and the longing for belonging (beyond Eurocentric frameworks), and the potential of language – especially in moments of Babylonian confusion. Övül, in her text, dives into the cultural sphere of the Mediterranean (in which Monia moves), a space that stretches across one sea and two shores, where voices, scents, and figures are, precisely for that reason, intertwined and fused. This book is divided into three parts. The choice of paper distinguishes each part visually and haptically. The graphic concept by Melina Wilson and Martin Stoecklin (A Language) ties in with the idea of the book as a moment of crystallisation. The first part shows pictures from Monia's archive. Rough paper under my hands. An immediate immersion. Images Monia gathers from social media, books, and the internet. Interspersed are detailed views of her work, along with a few photographs of Monia herself at work. Printed in black and white and with a relatively coarse grid, the images appear uniform, even though they come from different sources, times, and cultural spheres. They offer a view of the world: a look at the events and moments that move Monia, and a positioning of her as an artist within it. They speak of resistance, rage, and rituals. The images push inwards (from the edge of the page, from the world) into the centre (of the book, of artistic reflection). In our discussions, we deliberately chose to limit the picture credits to one place and one year in order to keep the read-
ing of the images open and to avoid fixed associations. All texts can be found in the middle section of the publication. Looking out into the world is followed by pausing and processing. The paper is less rough; its marbling recalls stone. Meanwhile, the layout of the texts suggests columns, perhaps even architecture. The examination of architectural elements (such as Islamic archways, or a preoccupation with ruins) is a recurring theme in Monia's work. The third part of the book is printed on matte white paper. The illustrations of Monia's works – overall views, details, and installation views – are arranged associatively rather than chronologically. They follow the colours, the textures, or the gestures, for example, associated with the respective works. The images are centred on the book's pages – artistic practice emerging from inner reflection. I would now like to take up some aspects of Path of Totality and of Monia's artistic practice that feel particularly relevant to me at this moment of writing. My reflections meander through the images collected in this book. They follow the visual connections that arise between the pages and seek to situate Monia's artistic practice in the world today – in the summer of 2025. I am also writing here as Monia's companion. We share topics and positions, and I have learned much from her in recent years. Our exchange is shaped by the conviction that our work is (must be) always political, and by the ongoing questioning of how we can (and want to) navigate within the structures of the art world.
I begin with Monia's examination of language, which has run through her work for several years and which for her is always also an examination of her own cultural identity. In her series Night of Hinna, she dyes imitation leather gloves with henna – a reference to the ornamental or floral henna motifs used to decorate hands for weddings or religious holidays, for example, and which linger in Monia's childhood memories. The gloves are shaped to her hands, but are a little too tight. The daughter of a southern Italian mother and a Tunisian father, Monia grew up speaking Italian in Milan. She knows Tunisian Arabic from long summer holidays in her father's homeland. He also introduced her to Arabic calligraphy, in which writing (often religious in origin) transforms into ornament. Monia's installation works with the hanging steel sculptures – such as Hand casting a Spell (Aniconism as Figuration Urgency) or Appearance (Aniconism as Figuration Urgency), or Remains (Aniconism as Figuration Urgency) – emerge
from this preoccupation with the tradition of calligraphy, which in its origins is tied to the aniconism of Islam as a monotheistic faith. It is a mode of making that avoids concrete depictions of living beings and religious figures. According to Islamic tradition, its origins are linked to the destruction of sculptures and paintings in the Ka'ba in Mecca by the Prophet Muhammed. The laser-cut steel shapes are abstract, but in certain places they also borrow from figurative forms. They oscillate between image and writing, between drawing and sculpture. They are reminiscent of precise brush-strokes and are a kind of drawing in space. And they not only challenge my visual perception (trained in the Western canon of art history), but also play with the imperative of aniconism. I see wings, an almost grimacing animal face, paws, perhaps a hand. With these works in particular, Monia has developed her very own



Rain II (Blindness, Blossom and Desertification), 2025
Mixed media on raw linen (hibiscus, ashes, charcoal, salt, black tea, cinnamon, red soil)
530 × 300 cm, Path of Totality, Museo Casa Rusca, Locarno (CH)
Photo by Cosimo Filippini
Courtesy the Artist, CherLudde Berlin, Selma Feriani Tunis/London



Rain II (Blindness, Blossom and Desertification), 2025
Mixed media on raw linen (hibiscus, ashes, charcoal, salt, black tea, cinnamon, red soil),
530 × 300 cm, Path of Totality, Museo Casa Rusca, Locarno (CH)
Photo by Cosimo Filippini
Courtesy the Artist, ChertLüdde Berlin, Selma Feriani Tunis/London

visual language in recent years. She engages deeply with the Arab cultural sphere and with the stories, traditions, knowledge, and mythologies that circulate within it. And she reflects on the narrative and representational potential of art. She addresses the struggle for language in a brutal world. Last spring (Monia and I were working together on an exhibition project in Milan) she told me about the untranslatability of the Arabic word 'qaher', which is often translated as 'anger' but actually stands for a feeling of constant, angry powerlessness. A feeling that settles in the body, in the heart, in the cells over time. For Monia, the installation Burial of all meanings (a converted concrete mixer mounted high on the wall that spreads bright orange turmeric around the room), which we showed in the Milan exhibition in spring 2024, is a conceptual and visual consequence of such considerations. The forms once borrowed from calligraphy – and, in this sense, from a way of depicting language – have disappeared. The limits of (artistic) language. The impossibility of using words to adequately capture emotions and the current state of the world. "Language," says Monia, "is never enough." And she explores the places outside
of language.
For the installation Theology of collapse (The Myth of Past) from 2024, Monia cut out the calligraphic forms as negative shapes from large iron plates. The iron plates form a kind of wall that seems to fall over. In Reversion (Wudu Diorama) at Museo Casa Rusca, Monia uses raw, used wooden beams that evoke
destroyed or decaying architecture, while burnt wood has appeared repeatedly in her work for several years. For example, in Interlude for Revolutionaries (The Destruction of the Idols of Ka'ba) from 2023, or in It's a Windy Day in Tataouine
where she wraps wooden forms echoing Islamic archways in fabric. In these works, Monia always looks to the Arab world and the Middle East. She is interested in the myths and stories from the Amazigh culture, the pre-Arab, nomadic tribes that lived in the area that is now Tunisia. The southern Tunisian city of Tataouine (Tittawin in Tamazight) is an important centre of this culture.
And she explores the religious or spiritual rituals (and their performative character), which often have their roots in pre-Islamic cultures and are based on centuries-old traditions and knowledge: Reversion (Wudu Diorama) echoes the ritual ablution (wudu') that is practised before prayer or before reading the Qur'an. A glance at the Middle East in the summer of 2025 brings us back to collapse. The deliberate destruction of architecture and the eradication of a people. The systematic destruction of civilian infrastructure as a tactic of war that makes entire areas uninhabitable. The images of destroyed and collapsed walls of residential buildings, greenhouses, mosques, hospitals, and schools, and piled rubble have become an iconography of war and colonial violence in recent months. At
the same time, an architectural infrastructure of power and oppression is growing. Walls and fences of checkpoints and food distribution points that massively restrict the movement of people and change the topographies and landscapes forever. Monia is currently also driven by the concepts of ruin and rubble. "The impossibility," she writes to me on WhatsApp a few days ago, "of ruins arising in our time in the romantic sense, as witnesses to a bygone era." What remains is rubble. Rubble as the contemporary ruins of a destroyed community – together with its traditions, its art, its culture. At the same time, however, the rubble also bears messages. Attempts to inscribe the memory of people and buildings onto a collapsed wall. The hope of return: "We will return, like thyme and olive trees". In her exhibition Ya'aburnee, which Monia is setting up at Sema Feriani's gallery in Tunis in 2025, she uses large-format paintings on raw canvas to explore the connection to the earth, to soil – including that of her home country. A homeland where the olive trees still grow, sometimes no longer accessible, living on only in stories passed down and in memory. At the same time, there is also a call for resilience and resistance. Monia's installation with the two suns – The Destruction of the Idols of Ka'ba – also alludes to Star Wars, where the fictional desert planet Tatooine is imagined as a place with two suns, the point described by George Lucas as the farthest from the centre of the universe. The film itself was shot in Tataouine, Tunisia. A mapping of the world that functions according to Western and colonial perspectives. Sara Ahmed, as well as Edward Said, reminds us that the construction of the Orient (and Occident) and the corresponding geographical orientations (for example, the prime meridian runs through London) are Western inventions and demonstrations of power that go hand in hand with an exoticisation of the East. Monia's space with the two suns is therefore also a counter-mapping to such a view of the world. On a wall (in Shu'afat, Jerusalem) is written: "Don't beg for sympathy in a cruel
world. Rise and resist". Gestures of resistance include those of children and young people hurling stones at tanks. Captured in photographs, they have become iconic images of defiance. The gesture of throwing also appears in photographs of believers casting stones during their pilgrimage to Mecca (Ramy Al-Jamarat, the Stoning of the Devil, in Mina, Mecca) to drive away evil.
The examination of the symbolism of images and gestures and the associated question of the representation of people and their resistant or ritual and cultural practices are important to Monia in her research.
Monia hurls spices into her works: chilli powder, turmeric, cinnamon, cumin. The gestures are the same. Since the COVID pandemic, she has often used spices as dyes, being unable to buy paint in her hometown in Milan during the strict lockdown.
For her, the gesture of throwing is also a moment of losing control. It emerged at a time when protesters from the Black Lives Matter movement filled city streets during lockdown, and the raised fist once again became a symbol of angry protest. In the midst of the pandemic, Monia developed Blair. A burning wooden sculpture: the back of the famous statue of Emperor Marcus Aurelius in Rome's Piazza del Campidoglio, a symbol of imperial Rome. Protesters of the Black Lives Matter movement tipped statues of slave traders off their pedestals and spray-painted them as anti-racist gestures. And in recent years, climate activists have repeatedly thrown (washable) paint on the masterpieces of Western art history, in the Louvre and elsewhere. At the same time, the destruction of statues or architectural monuments is also repeatedly used as a tactic of war and as a strategy of colonial control. These and other images echo in Monia's works. Here she questions the meaning of monuments and statues, but also of art itself. They stand for certain cultural practices and traditions. Their destruction holds great explosive power and refers to their symbolic content. For Monia, these reflections extend further: What forms of artistic work, monuments, or symbols stand for the world in which we live today? Which events should they commemorate and in what form? Can art contribute to the creation of 'anti-monuments' that embody the dark times in which we live? Perhaps they are monuments of vulnerability, as they appear again and again in Monia's work. And can artistic works remind us simultaneously of living environments and traditions that are often barely visible today? What forms of artistic practice can be used to preserve histories that have disappeared, houses that no longer exist (where only the keys remain), rituals, or knowledge (whose objects are exhibited in the white rooms of Western museums)? Monia's works have no answers to these questions. But perhaps they point in possible directions to find them.
The spices that recur in Monia's works carry deep significance in many cultures – including the North African cultural sphere of her family – as healing, spiritual, or ritual substances. Cinnamon or turmeric, for example, have a strengthening and anti-inflammatory effect, while chili is used to treat various types of pain. Practices of care and healing are an intrinsic part of Monia's practice and of her works. The burnt wood is dusted with turmeric, and the spices must be replenished in many of her installations. It is an act of care for a shared, yet divided, world. A world in which Amazigh legends are retold and in which the strengthening and healing turmeric brings us through the darkness. Until the two suns rise once more or the moon illuminates the night.



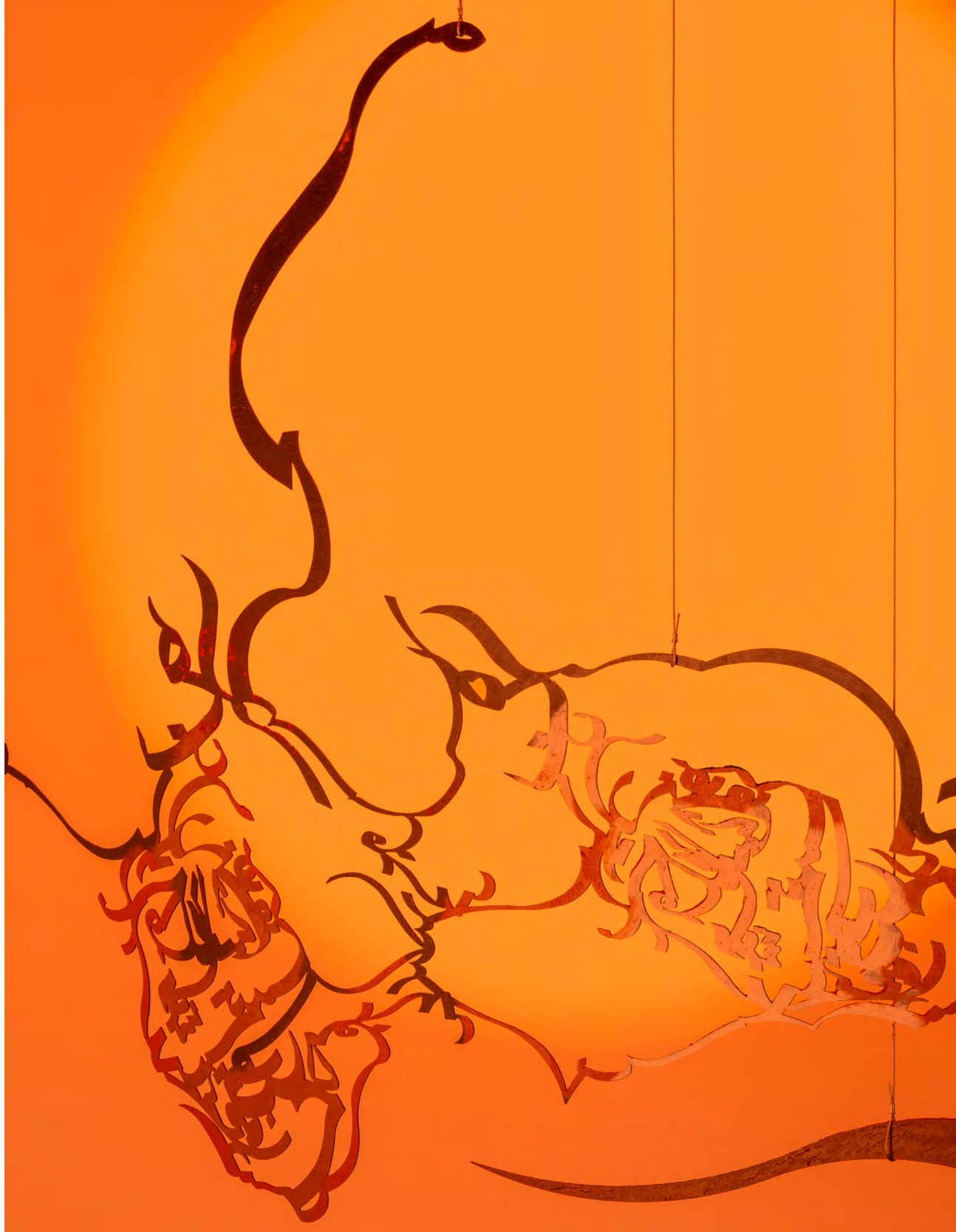




Rain IV (Blindness, Blossom and Desertification), 2025
Hibiscus, ash, charcoal, salt, black tea,
cinnamon, red earth on raw linen, 430 × 300 cm
Photo by Cosimo Filippini
Courtesy the Artist, ChertLüdde, Berlin, Selma Feriani Tunis/London

Rain III (Blindness, Blossom and Desertification), 2025
Mixed media on raw linen (hibiscus, ashes,
charcoal, salt, black tea, cinnamon, red soil); 515 × 300 cm
Photo by Cosimo Filippini
Courtesy the Artist, ChertLüdde Berlin, Selma Ferriani Tunis/London





detail from Hand Casting a Spell (Aniconism as Figuration Urgency), 2025;
steel, spice powder; 226 × 135 × 0.03 cm
Path of Totality, Museo Casa Rusca, Locarno (CH)
Photo by Cosimo Filippini
Courtesy the Artist, ChertLudde Berlin, Selma Feriani Tunis/London









Appearance(Aniconism as Figuration Urgency), 2025; steel, spice powder; 208 × 155 × 0.03 cm;
Remains (Aniconism as Figuration Urgency), 2025; steel, spice powder; 107 × 82 × 0.03 cmPath of Totality, Museo Casa Rusca, Locarno (CH)
Photo by Cosimo Filippini
Courtesy the Artist, ChertLudde Berlin, Selma Feriani Tunis/London

It's a Windy Day in Tataouine II, 2021; wood, iron, turmeric, spices powders; 340 × 85 × 28 cm;
Reversion (Wudu Diorama), 2025; wood, iron, turmeric, paprika, charcoal; variable dimensions.
Path of Exile, Museo Casa Rusca, Locarno (CH)
Photo by Cosimo Filippini
Courtesy the Artist, Chert, Berlin, Selma Feriani Tunis/London





It's a Windy Day in Tataouine I, 2021; wood, fabrics, spice powders, 340 × 85 × 28 cm;
Reversion (Wudu Diorama), 2025; wood, iron, turmeric, paprika, charcoal, variable dimensions.
Path of Totality, Museo Casa Rusca, Locarno (CH)
Photo by Cosimo Filippini
Courtesy the Artist, ChertLudde Berlin, Selma Feriani Tunis/London



Smokes and Penumbras coming from Flag Desecrations (Anthracite) (5), 2025;
charcoal, oil pastels, ink on anthracite paper; 29.7 × 21 cm
Path of Totality, Museo Casa Rusca, Locarno (CH)
Photo by Cosimo Filippini
Courtesy the Artist, ChertLudde Berlin, Selma Feriani Tunis/London



Post Scriptum

Solo show at Centre d'Art Contemporain
La Ferme du Buisson,
Noisiel, France
curated by Thomas Conchou
2025
text by Line Ajan

Out of sight, out of time
On illegibility and untranslatability in Monia Ben Hamouda's work

There will be time to bury the dead. There will be time for weaponry. And there will be time to pass the time as we please, that this heroism may go on. Because now we are the masters of time.
—Mahmoud Darwish, Memory for Forgetfulness, 1982

Out of sight, out of mind. So goes the adage about the inextricable relation between the eye and the mind—between seeing a person or an object, and thinking about them, in a certain way, or not at all. It struck me recently that this generic saying resonates with critical approaches to visuality that have addressed the links between vision and cognition, such as the work of British art historian Michael Baxandall, Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy (1972). In this influential book, Baxandall posited that visual information—including representational techniques like one-point perspective—was processed differently by each viewer's brain, while still adhering to broader historical, social, and cultural determinations. His concept of the "period eye"—a gaze situated in time and space— highlighted the links between epistemology and vision, thereby exposing the historical and cultural biases of Western perception.

By extension, "out of sight, out mind" echoes later postcolonial and decolonial methods of visuality—those interrogating the distorted modalities of representation within Empire (who is entitled to represent whom? To what ends?), as in the opus Orientalism (1978) by Palestinian-American literary critic Edward Saïd. Stretching this loose thread even further, I think: "out of sight, out of mind" also recalls the relational aspect of looking (who is entitled to look? And at whom?) in a world structured by violent imperialist, colonial, and military power dynamics, as illuminated by Martinican philosopher and poet Édouard Glissant in Poetics of Relation (1990), and visual theorist Nicholas Mirzoeff in The Right to Look: A Counterhistory of Visuality (2011).

Swapping "mind" with "time", I situate the work of artist Monia Ben Hamouda within a longer art history of the Arabic-speaking world, discussing it through the combined perspectives of cultural and visual studies, as well as chronopolitics. Spanning painting, sculpture, spatial, and olfactory installations, her work may seem an unusual object for visual studies. Ostensibly material-oriented, her practice indeed centers fragrant spices, charcoal, and metals. These mutable elements affect the viewer's experience over time, creating a break in temporality through materiality.
Yet her work engages another subtler temporal rupture. In this text, I interpret her multivalent practice in relation to strategies of visual violence and imposed chronologies. Ben Hamouda's (re) appropriation of historical and cultural signifiers—as varied as the parietal paintings in the Lascaux caves in Dordogne, Italian Futurism, Arabic script, Islamic calligraphy—is a conscious one. This reclaiming amounts to a disruption of art history as a Western discipline influenced by time as a teleological concept—one tethered to linearity and progress, and that has reinforced racialized hierarchies between cultures.

Indeed, Ben Hamouda mobilizes these codes as images (with "images" understood here as mental conceptions rather than visual representations), mobilizing both their personal meaning, their broader cultural value, and their interpretation by Western or white audiences. In combining motifs anchored in various pasts and places, she opens new

(im)possibilities of interpretation. She deploys a cultural and temporal hybridity that amounts to a form of illegibility. As such, she obscures any fixed reading of these elements, all while foregrounding her own positionality as a diasporic subject.
The essay first considers her approach to the Arabic script and letter as forms, situating it within a broader history of Islamic cultural production, as well as modern Arab and North African art. My conception of the terms "Islam" and "Islamic art and archeology" is nourished by the writings of Shahzad Bashir, Professor of Islamic Humanities, who writes that "Islam functions as an internally diverse but rhetorically unifying factor in world affairs." Following Bashir's findings about both historical and cultural positionalities in relation to Islamic Art, it seemed crucial to me to contextualize Ben Hamouda's work within a longer historical arch, often comparing it to productions from decades, if not centuries ago. As an art historian, I follow Fernando Esposito's recommendations to consider the "chronopolitical role of historians," and to reflect critically on "periodization [which] is chronopolitics, and it is also where Eurocentrism and chronocentrism meet." Moreover, my interpretation is also nourished by research around other post-colonial geographies (namely South Asia), locating the work within practices from the Global Majority more broadly. This allows me to argue that Ben Hamouda's work deftly moves between a willful and subversive process of re-orientalism, to one of illegibility—a strategy I take to be profoundly diasporic and transcultural. Later, I address the transhistorical aspect of her practice, specifically looking at the effects of combining multiple temporalities in the body of work displayed in the exhibition titled Post-scriptum—a Latin expression signifying "what is written after," thus suggesting a futurity anchored in the past.

Approaching the Arabic letter as form: between Hurufiyya and re-orientalism?

Monia Ben Hamouda's sculptural practice is marked by a recurrent use of iron—coiled, pierced and/or laser-cut to evoke the cursive script of Arabic calligraphy. At first glance, the informed viewer and the Arabic-reader might liken the repeated curved and flowy lines of her hanging sculptures from Aniconism as Figurative Urgency (2021-ongoing) and her sculptural panels Theology of Collapse (The Myth of the Past) (2024-ongoing) to the traditional thuluth and diwani styles of Arabic calligraphy. By stretching and abstracting these marks beyond legibility, Ben Hamouda transforms script into silhouette, evoking the very etymology of kh□t, the Arabic word for "calligraphy", which literally means "line."
What resembles a letter becomes more of a form: lines intertwine to trace shapes that are at times abstract, and at others, ambiguously representational. They delineate shadows, delicate human hands, or perhaps animal legs. Approaching Arabic script as form might not seem to contradict the traditional art of calligraphy, used as of the 9th century for "iconographic or ornamental purposes" according to Islamic art historian Oleg Grabar. Nevertheless, as Grabar notes, "whatever its abstract values visible to all, [calligraphy] very much presupposes a full knowledge of the text"—this being the sacred text of the Qur'an, as calligraphy was initially employed to record and preserve its words on buildings and in books.
Consequently, Ben Hamouda's adaptation of the Arabic letter as form situates her practice outside of the traditional craft of calligraphy and its religious significance—not only because her appropriation of the collapses meaning in relation to Arabic, but also because she herself does not fully master the language. The symbolic value of calligraphy (as a cultural form and practice reverberating in the Arabic-speaking world not only for its spiritual breadth)—is still perceivable in these works, as they clearly refer to Arabic language.

In that sense, Ben Hamouda's sculptures can be inscribed within the lineage of Hurufiyya, a mid-twentieth century art movement that emerged in the Arabic-speaking world and its diasporas. With its etymology deriving from harf, meaning letter in Arabic, Hurufiyya drew on Arabic calligraphy's visual vigor and cultivated the use of the letter as a "plastic element."
The premises of the movement can be found in a 1949 text by Syrian-Iraqi painter Madiha Umar who, as a student at the Corcoran Academy of Fine Arts in Washington D.C., researched the history of calligraphy, and decided to "use the Arabic alphabet as a basis for [her] my abstract painting". Hurufiyya spread widely in the 1960s and 1970s, as evidenced by the paintings of the Iraqis Dia al-Azzawi and Rafa Nasiri, the Palestinian Kamal Boullata, and the Algerian Rachid Koraïchi among others. The movement's two principles consisted in "negotiating the letter as a plastic element grounded in the modernist understanding of form, and constructing a modern work of art engaged in its cultural specificity", as analyzed by art historian Nada Shabout.

It is worth noting that the works of these artists varied from pure graphic abstraction (as seen in the work of Boullata) to a more expressionist take on figuration that integrated abstract elements (as in the paintings of Nasiri)—an aspect which resonates with Ben Hamouda's similarly fluid treatment of sculpted metal. This genealogy clarifies the stakes of Ben Hamouda's practice. Like in Hurufiyya, the letter does not interest her as a vehicle of semantics, nor as a mere form, but as an emblem of cultural value. Indeed, the Hurufiyya artists were emboldened by the pan-Arabism and secularism of the period, which led them to take on the letter as a "signifier of Arab identity". For them, the letter-as-form eluded calligraphy's religious past and disrupted the Western archeological fascination with it—an obsessive fetishization that cannot be separated from the colonial and imperialist impetus behind the discipline of archaeology. In these artists' view, removing the religious from calligraphy and semantics from language turned the letter into "a decolonized form."

Code-switching: the trap of re-orientalism, reckoning with the diasporic, and toying with Futurism

Ironically, the legacy of Hurufiyya partially betrayed its decolonial incentive. The very name of the movement eventually became an umbrella-term that not only designated masterpieces of the genre, but also decorative iterations of Arabic writing. The latter circulated as commodities in the Western art market especially in the early 2000s, conforming to neo-Orientalist tropes and expectations. To contextualize Ben Hamouda's practice within this fraught post-colonial landscape, it is necessary to tackle her positionality. Her seemingly formalist adaptation of language inevitably raises political questions of identity, address, and reception—whether by the market or the institutional apparatus. Ben Hamouda is a Tunisian-Italian artist, born in a Muslim community in Milan, who now divides her time between her native city and al-Qayrawan in Tunis. This dual anchoring affords her visibility in both the Global Majority and the West, positioning her squarely within the condition of the diasporic global artist. I mention these parameters as they are essential to understand the address in her practice: from where, and to whom, does her engagement with Arabic script speak?

Crucially, Ben Hamouda chose a language she does not completely grasp as her main motif. In doing so, she playfully treads the fine line of what literary critic and interdisciplinary geographer Lisa Lau has dubbed "re-orientalism." Drawing on Edward Saïd's definition of orientalism as an othering process centering a Western gaze that objectifies its "Oriental" subject, Lau re-actualized it by observing that diaspora cultural production could reproduce similar dynamics. In particular, South Asian writers based in the West often gained disproportionate prominence over "home authors," or locals that wrote from/in South Asia, thus circulating selective cultural images that were generalized as normative. The result, Lau argued, was a new form of Orientalism enacted by diasporic subjects themselves and that "reinforced fables and stereotypes.".

Ben Hamouda's position is more complex. The daughter of a Tunisian calligrapher with roots in Italy as well, she acknowledges that, despite the knowledge transmitted by her father, she grew up "partially outside of both a [Arabic] language and a [Arab] culture," which taught her that this ""outsideness' can be a place of freedom and invention, not only of loss." In light of her familial and cultural belonging, Ben Hamouda recognizes the specificity of her positionality as a diasporic subject: her words (specifically her use of the term "outsideness") resonate with the writings of Indian critical theorist Homi K. Bhaba on the centrality of in-betweenness in cultural identity, namely for diasporic subjectivities. Ben Hamouda also admitted wanting to re-create her own experience of the language: "In my work, I want to bring viewers into a similar position: unable to read or "translate" the language in front of them, but still recognizing it as language."

Beyond this reckoning—which contributes to the resistance of Ben Hamouda's work to the pull of re-orientalism—, it is worth noting that her practice leaves behind a trail of hints that signal a deep knowledge of her subject. In that way, her evocation of Arabic script cannot be labeled as stereotypical. This is evident in the subtle antinomy in the title of her series Aniconism as Figuration Urgency: the wording admits the centrality of aniconism (or the prohibition of figuration), one of the original principles of Islam that fueled the emergence of stylized abstract decorative motifs. Additionally, the title mirrors the findings of Madiha Umar's early reflections on what would become Huruffiya, which traced the origins of calligraphy's centrality in Islamic art to this religious prohibition. These elements point to a cultural literacy that only those in the know will recognize.

Ben Hamouda further complicates and layers her visual and historical repertoire in the panels Theology of Collapse (The Myth of the Past), leaning elegantly on the gallery's walls. A sequence of forms that seem to derive from Arabic script multiply on these four panels. The irregularity of the composition echoes certain characters of Najdi poetry—a vernacular, oral tradition, whose earliest iterations roughly date to the end of the 14th century, but that fully flourished in the 16th century. Citing the structures, rhythm, and themes recurring in pre-Islamic poetry, this tradition is rooted in the Arabic peninsula, where nomadic poets would recite their verses as they moved on the backs of horses. Ben Hamouda's repeated shapes also give the impression of animals in motion, a visual motif that the artist links to the idea of a "travelling language," as exemplified by Najdi poetry. But this motif also recalls a resolutely Western tradition, one that relates to the artist's other culture. Indeed, the reiteration of similar forms to evoke velocity is reminiscent of Giacommo Balla's Dinamismo di un cane al guinzaglio (1912), and the work of early twentieth-century Italian Futurism more broadly.

This layering of multiple cultural and historical references—shifting astutely between Arabic script, Islamic aniconism, pre-Islamic influences, and Western avant-garde aesthetics—crystallizes what I would call a diasporic code-switching. Rather than merely alternating between two cultural registers, her practice multiplies them, folding disparate genealogies into forms that refuse closure. As such, this work enacts a form of "in-betweenness," a central aspect of Bhaba's definition of cultural hybridity, who writes: "It is in the emergence of the interstices—the overlap and displacement of domains of difference—that the intersubjective and collective experience of (...) cultural value are negotiated." It is indeed a negotiation of cultural values, anchored in different somewhat mythologized pasts, that is at the core of Ben Hamouda's Theology of Collapse (The Myth of the Past). The work melds a subversive re-orientalism with an equally iconoclastic appropriation of Futurism—strategies that allow her work to not yield fully the viewer.

By multiplying her cultural and temporal referentials Ben Hamouda, then, foregrounds illegibility as a visual strategy: both Theology of Collapse (The Myth of the Past) and Aniconism as

Figuration Urgency culminate in “the active production of a visible but unreadable image,” to quote Celia M. Britton, a literary critic and scholar of Caribbean literature. Her words explicate Édouard Glissant’s argument on “the right to opacity,” or the willful withdrawal of information from the extractive and totalizing Western gaze. Similarly, Ben Hamouda’s work refuses to render these references transparent: by subtly changing them and then layering them. By deploying illegibility as an artistic strategy, she opens what up what she calls “an active, generative space where the work can exist without the need to be “resolved.” By refusing transparency, she indeed interrupts the extractive logics of both the art market and institutional discourse, positioning her work instead in a zone of continual negotiation and untranslatability. Yet Ben Hamouda’s conception of the “untranslatable” does not adhere to the idea of an irreducible singularity—whether in language or culture more broadly. In fact, her strategy of illegibility could be compared to French philosopher Barbara Cassin’s definition of the “untranslatable” as that which you can never cease to translate, implying a continuous process of adaptation.

Layered temporalities and structures of repeatability: towards the transcendental

Just as she obscures her cultural references, Monia Ben Hamouda blurs her historical and temporal citations. This summoning of historical times appears clearly in the painting series Blindness, Blossom and Desertification (2023–ongoing) and A Burst of Light (2024–ongoing). On the dark brown linen canvas, pigments, and spices with healing effects (such as chili powder, paprika, hibiscus, and cinnamon) are turned into beige, burgundy, crimson, and rust-colored swirls. This earthy color palette and these sinuous forms are quoting the silhouettes of animals drawn in the Lascaux cave paintings.
Yet Ben Hamouda’s work and the Lascaux paintings share more than their visual qualities: she also cites, whether consciously or not, the processes underlying the striking forms. In that sense, this reference signals a double relationship to time: first to pre-historical time, and then to the very temporality of the artwork. Indeed, the Lascaux paintings can be considered as some of the earliest palimpsests in history, wherein multitude of signs, drawn by different makers at distinct moments, are superimposed on their surface. From figures and animals, to weapons specific to the Upper Paleolithic, and even abstract marks, these parietal compositions are the accumulation of different periods, as well various makers. Strikingly, it seems that these painters were careful enough to leave the traces of their predecessors visible, as noted by philosopher Fiona Hughes. Hughes remarks: “it is as though figures were meant to be seen together in the complexity of their relations or, when conditions suggest vision of underlying layers would have been restricted, as if the superimposing forms were constructed so as to leave the underlying figure intact whether it was seen or not (...).” Likewise, Ben Hamouda’s paintings are constructed through multiple strata—of references, matter, and epochs—, ultimately amounting to a layered temporality. Noticing the striking transhistorical similarities between Ben Hamouda’s contemporary works and the pre-historic paintings, I turn to the German historian Reinhart Kostelleck who wrote critically on the politics of time in relation to history and historiography. In his 2018 book Sediments of Time: On Possible Histories, Kostelleck finds both the teleological and the cyclical conceptions of time to be insufficient, preferring instead to acknowledge the relevant aspects of each, and to borrow metaphorically from the field of geology. Indeed, he posits that “Historical times consist of multiple layers that refer to each other in a reciprocal way,” with certain patterns (of form, of thought) acting like sediments. Central to his argument are the “structures of repeatability,” which extend over different periods and generations—of thinkers, makers, and objects. These structures of repeatability allow the re-emergence of patterns, much like sediments circulating between different layers of earth and highlight the transcendental quality of historical productions. Within this concept of (art historical) time, the links between the ultra-contemporary work of Ben Hamouda, and the pre-historic parietal paintings in Dordogne, or 9th century Arabic calligraphy, are not merely citational: they emanate from the return of certain “religious and metaphysical truths.” This statement resonates with the artist’s own description of her working process as one of shamanism, wherein Ben Hamouda confronts the spirits of her cultural heritage through her artistic practice.

A past anchored in futurity

That a body of work, echoing transcultural and transhistorical approaches to art, is united under the title Post-scriptum is telling. Indeed, the Latin expression, meaning “written after,” inherently gestures to futurity anchored in the past—a supplement that disrupts linear chronology by re-inscribing what came before. It thus encapsulates the temporal logic running through Ben Hamouda’s exhibition: a refusal of teleology in favor of layering and recurrence. More than a transcultural strategy, the artist’smelding of references from different epochs also signals a transhistorical approach. This aspect becomes even more evident once we consider these works all together, as one corpus. The space constructed by Ben Hamouda is one where pre-Islamic references, influential for 18th century oral poetry, coexist with calligraphy, whose beginning can be dated to the 11thcentury. This space goes back even further in time, citing what occurred before history, or even, those who have slipped outside of living time. In fact, Ben Hamouda’s interpretation of the expression “Post-scriptum” brings us back to her own conception of her artistic labor as one of shamanism— a metaphysical endeavor then, that is not only concerned with historical and cultural objects, but also persons. Ultimately, she displaces these various signifiers “out of time”, or to put it differently, delivers them from a teleological approach to art, and a reductive vision of culture coming from/speaking of hybridity. Monia Ben Hamouda reminds us that we too can be “the masters of time”.

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Interview with the artist over email, August 12, 2025.
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Interview with the artist over email, August 12, 2025.
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Installation view from *Post Scriptum*, solo show by Monia Ben Hamouda at Centre d’Art Contemporain La Ferme du Buisson, Noisiel, France, curated by Thomas Conchou, 2025
Courtesy the Artist, ChertLudde and Selma Feriani, Tunis/London
Photo Émile Ouroumov



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Making of *Post Scriptum*, solo show by Monia Ben Hamouda
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Monia Ben Hamouda, Theology of collapse (The Myth of Past), 2024
Mixed media on iron, spices; 546x750x0,03cm
View from MAXXI BVLGARI PRIZE IV, MAXXI – Museo nazionale delle arti del Rome IT
curated by Giulia Ferracci
Courtesy the Artist, Fondazione MAXXI, and ChertLüdde, Berlin
Photo Luis Do Rosario









Installation view of Monia Ben Hamouda's work at Survival Kit, group show at Latvian Center of Contemporary Art, Riga, LV (2024) curated by Jussi Koitela
Courtesy of the Artist and ChertLüdde, Berlin Photo Valdis Jansons

Ya'aburnee يقبرني

Solo show at Selma Feriani Gallery,
La Goulette, Tunis, Tunisia

curated by Anissa Touati

Feb 25th – April 19th, 2025

Monia Ben Hamouda's exhibition 'Ya'aburnee' at Selma Feriani Gallery in Tunis is titled after the Arabic concept that translates as 'you bury me', reflecting the selfless wish for a loved one to outlive oneself. Love and sacrifice, omnipresent in the exhibition, explore the complex ideas of language, history and understanding through an installation that spans the three floors of the gallery, combining painting, sculpture and sound pieces, blurring our relationship with space. These recordings from two mosques create a haunting landscape that blends religious calls to prayer with urgent public announcements. It transforms the familiar sounds of the call to prayer into an alarming melody, reflecting a complex interplay between spirituality and the pressing need for information in times of crisis. The installation evokes discomfort and awareness, as the low vibrations resonate throughout the gallery. Ben Hamouda aims to capture the distinct auditory landscape of Arabic countries, emphasizing how these sounds shape cultural identity and perception. The result is a powerful commentary on the nature of communication and the emotional burden carried by these calls in our troubled area.

At the heart of the gallery are nine paintings exploring the narrative construction of art history. Some of them are lying on the floor like so many tombs. Painted by the force of spices thrown onto the canvas by the artist, they evoke familiar scents akin to the soil of a homeland—a place we feel a connection to through a deep call to the land, even if we are not born there. Drawing inspiration from ancient artefacts such as the Rosetta Stone, Ben Hamouda imagines alternative historical narratives and questions our understanding of ancient civilisations as if essential translations had never taken place. The artist alludes to 'prehistoric' art forms, such as cave paintings and pieces of marble carved with a language that has yet to emerge. She suggests that language itself could be treated as a sculptural material, adaptable to fit our diverse cultures.

The Rosetta Stone, which presented familiar yet initially incomprehensible scripts, echoes Ben Hamouda's work in creating a visual language that is simultaneously recognizable and enigmatic. This reflects philosopher Abdelbebir Khatibi's notion of a "plural language" that transcends binary cultural identities. Her approach to linguistic architecture parallels the monumentality of language history. Her use of ancient inscriptions alike embodies the weight of cultural memory and the power of words to transcend time. In the artist's work, language becomes a monument that simultaneously evokes recognition and eludes complete understanding.

Ya'aburnee whispers of an ancestral memory that defies translation, a heritage language both intimate and inscrutable. Jenny L. Davis, an indigenous poet, captures this temporal and cultural chasm with her haunting question: "What song / would you sing for them?". The mosque's call to prayer, rising from the gallery's depths, carries with it the weight of generations—a tapestry of joy, sorrow, triumph, and struggle woven into its ancient rhythms. In this polyphonic landscape of human longing, we find ourselves searching for a common tongue. As the world struggles to find harmony, we're reminded of Babel's fractured legacy, playing out in real-time before our eyes. How do we speak to be understood when the very act of communication seems to push us further apart?



From Ya'aburnee rises a song that still resonates in the vestiges of our ancestors and grandmothers. The exhibition embodies the enigma of recognising a presence that eludes all comprehension. It manifests itself as a tangible tapestry of accumulated history, a visual chronicle that is both palpable and impenetrable. It stands before us like a monument to memory, reflecting the paradox of a language that exists in form but remains shrouded in mystery – a testament to the enduring yet elusive nature of our cultural heritage.

Ibn Khaldun would likely view Ben Hamouda's installation as a manifestation of his cyclical theory of civilizations, where civilisations rise and fall in predictable patterns. The artist's installation, much like Khaldun's concept of dynasties containing the seeds of their own downfall, delves into the decay of cultural and political structures. Monia Ben Hamouda's work, bridging worship and archaeology, resonates with the current situation in Palestine, where the cyclical nature of the conflict has transformed land into sites of historical trauma. It echoes the artist's exploration of attachment to the soil as motherland, raising profound questions about the preservation of identity and memory in the face of dispossession.

'Ya'aburnee' creates a poignant environment that invites contemplation of cultural heritage and the enduring power of love.

View from Ya'aburnee, solo show by Monia Ben Hamouda
at Selma Feriani Gallery, Tunis, curated by Anissa Touati
Courtesy the Artist and Selma Feriani, Tunis/London









Monia Ben Hamouda, Ya'aburnee (Untranslated Fragment I), 2025
Thala marble,106h x 85w x 15d cm
View from Ya'aburnee, solo show by Monia Ben Hamouda
at Selma Feriani Gallery, Tunis, curated by Anissa Touati
Courtesy the Artist and Selma Feriani, Tunis/London





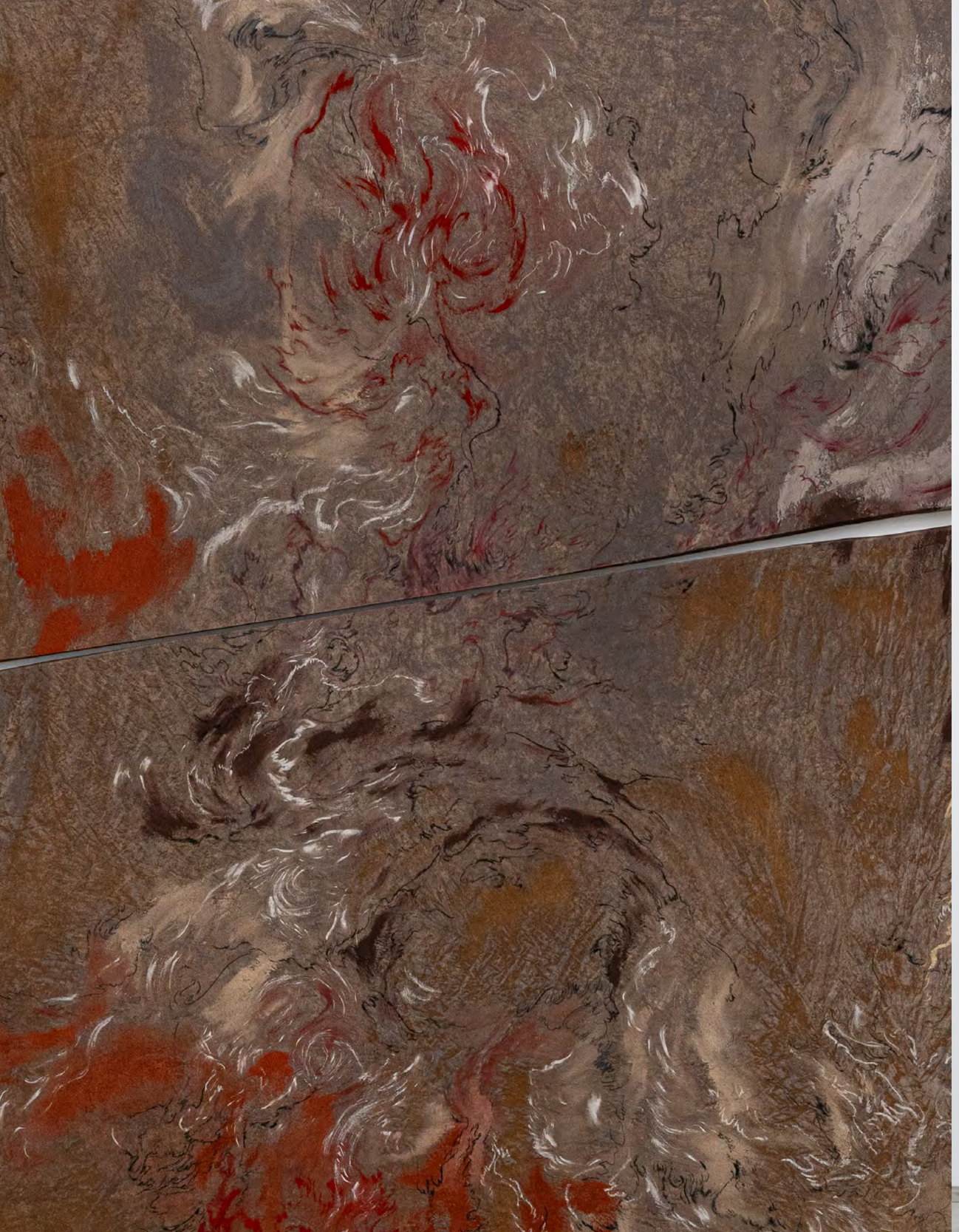


Monia Ben Hamouda, Ya'aburnee (Untranslated Fragment II), 2025
Thala marble,106h x 85w x 15d cm
View from Ya'aburnee, solo show by Monia Ben Hamouda
at Selma Feriani Gallery, Tunis, curated by Anissa Touati
Courtesy the Artist and Selma Feriani, Tunis/London





Monia Ben Hamouda, Blindness, Blossom and Desertification (diptych IV), 2025,
Soil, clay, charcoal, cinnamon on raw linen, 350h x 285w cm
View from Ya'aburnee, solo show by Monia Ben Hamouda
at Selma Feriani Gallery, Tunis, curated by Anissa Touati
Courtesy the Artist and Selma Feriani, Tunis/London





Monia Ben Hamouda, Blindness, Blossom and Desertification (diptych II), 2025
Soil, clay, charcoal, cinnamon on raw linen, 350h x 285w cm
View from Ya'aburnee, solo show by Monia Ben Hamouda
at Selma Feriani Gallery, Tunis, curated by Anissa Touati
Courtesy the Artist and Selma Feriani, Tunis/London

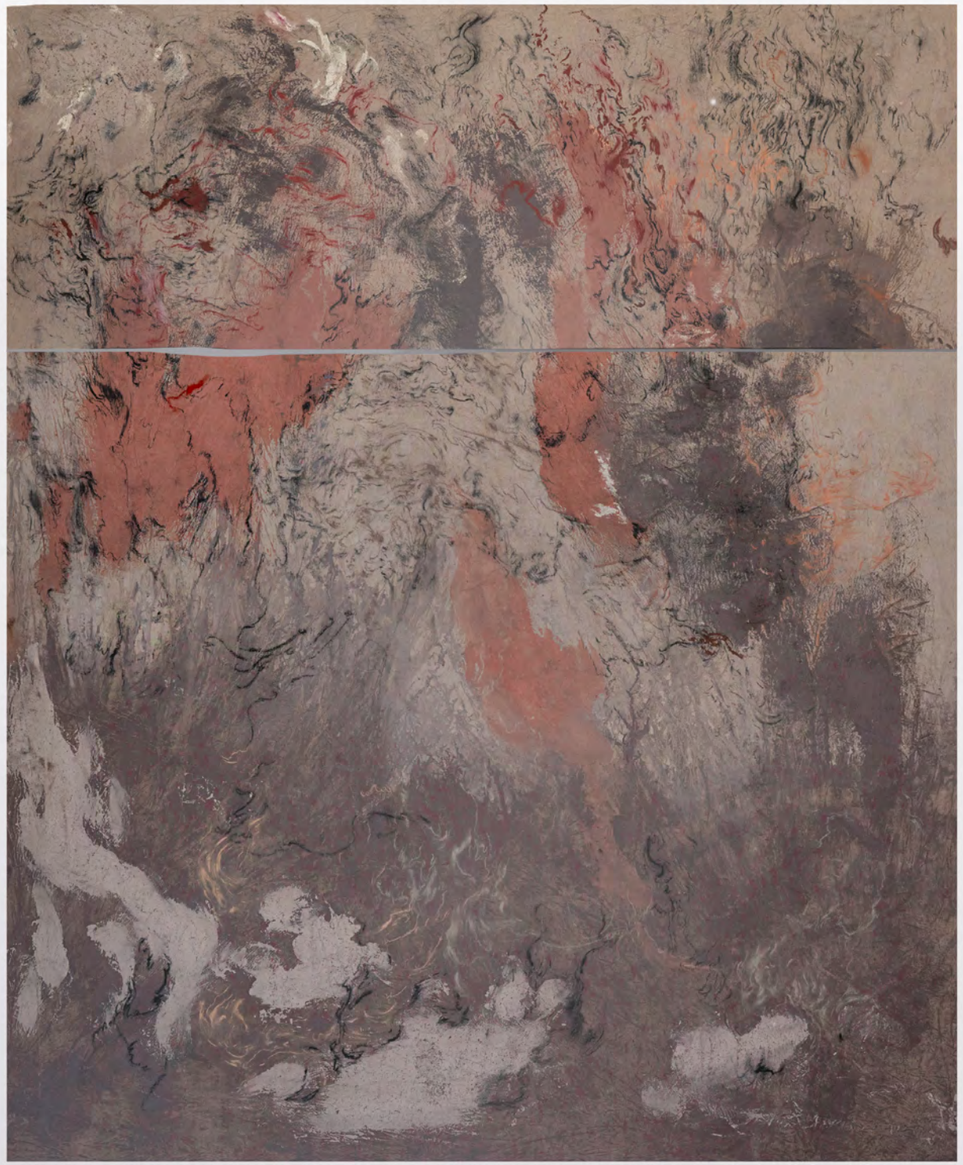


Monia Ben Hamouda, Blindness, Blossom and Desertification (diptych I), 2025
Soil, clay, charcoal, cinnamon on raw linen, 350h x 285w cm
View from Ya'aburnee, solo show by Monia Ben Hamouda
at Selma Feriani Gallery, Tunis, curated by Anissa Touati
Courtesy the Artist and Selma Feriani, Tunis/London





Monia Ben Hamouda,Blindness, Blossom and Desertification (diptych IX), 2025
Soil, clay, charcoal, cinnamon on raw linen, 350h x 285w cm
View from Ya'aburnee, solo show by Monia Ben Hamouda
at Selma Feriani Gallery, Tunis, curated by Anissa Touati
Courtesy the Artist and Selma Feriani, Tunis/London



Monia Ben Hamouda,Blindness, Blossom and Desertification (diptych III), 2025
Soil, clay, charcoal, cinnamon on raw linen, 350h x 285w cm
View from Ya'aburnee, solo show by Monia Ben Hamouda
at Selma Feriani Gallery, Tunis, curated by Anissa Touati
Courtesy the Artist and Selma Feriani, Tunis/London



Installation View from The 14th Taipei Biennial, Whispers on the Horizon, at Taipei Fine Arts Museum (TFAM), curated by Sam Bardaouil and Till Fellrath, 2025 – 2026

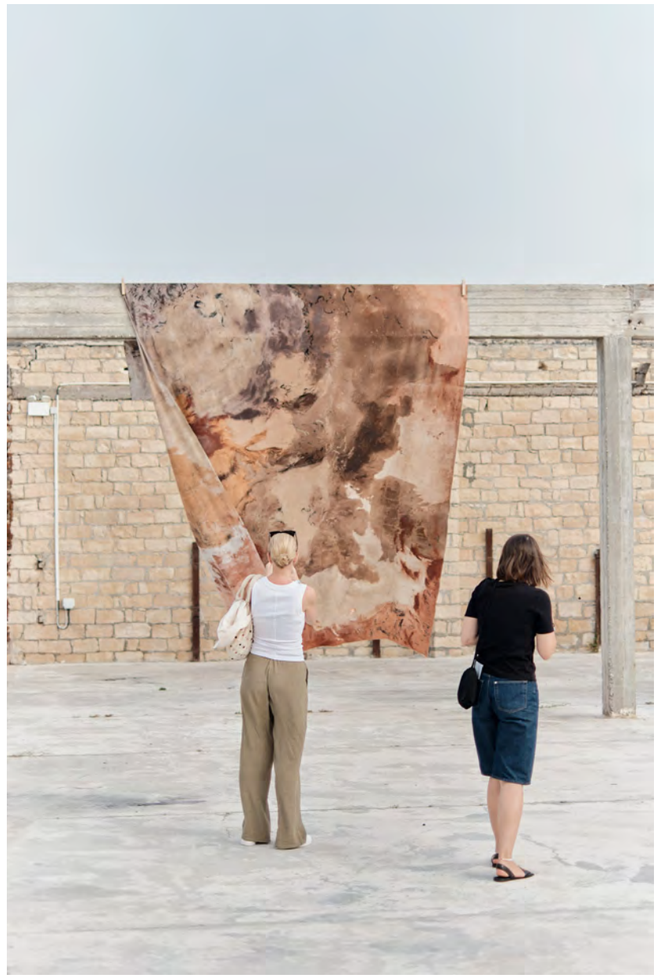




Installation View from The 14th Taipei Biennial, Whispers on the Horizon, at Taipei Fine Arts Museum (TFAM), curated by Sam Bardaouil and Till Fellrath, 2025 – 2026







View from The Posterity of the Sun, 2025, group show at VIMA, Limassol, Cyprus CY, curated by Ludovic Delalande
Courtesy the Artist and Selma Feriani, Tunis/London



Monia Ben Hamouda, Rain II (Blindness, Blossom and Desertification), 2025; Mixed media on raw linen (hibiscus, ashes, charcoal, salt, black tea, cinnamon, red soil); 550 × 345 × 0.1 cm; Installation view of The Posterity of the Sun, VIMA – Cyprus Art Fair, Limassol, 2025. Courtesy the Artist, and CherLudde, Berlin

Monia Ben Hamouda, Rain III (Blindness, Blossom and Desertification), 2025; Mixed media on raw linen (hibiscus, ashes, charcoal, salt, black tea, cinnamon, red soil); 600 × 345 × 0.1 cm; Installation view of The Posterity of the Sun, VIMA – Cyprus Art Fair, Limassol, 2025
Courtesy the Artist, and ChertLüdde, Berlin

Monia Ben Hamouda, Rain IV (Blindness, Blossom and Desertification), 2025, Mixed media on raw linen (hibiscus, ashes, charcoal, salt, black tea, cinnamon, red soil), 445 × 345 × 0.1 cm; Installation view of The Posterity of the Sun, VIMA – Cyprus Art Fair, Limassol, 2026 – Courtesy the Artist, and CherLOgde, Berlin

Installation view of ******, *Monia Ben Hamouda and Alberto Burri SpazioLima, Milan IT curated by Christiane Rekade during Milan Drawing Week, manifestation curated by Irina Zucca Alessandrelli (Collezione Ramo)* Courtesy of the artist and ChertLüdde, Berlin
HIRES_© Giuseppe Miotto - Marco Cappelletti Studio





Monia Ben Hamouda, Smokes and penumbras coming from flag desecrations (Anthracite), 2024; Charcoal, oil and dry pastels on ivory paper; 29,7x21cm
Installation view of *Monia Ben Hamouda and Alberto Burri show SpazioLima, Milan IT curated by Christiane Rekade during Milan Drawing Week, manifestation curated by Irina Zucca Alessandrelli (Collezione Ramo)* Courtesy of the artist and ChertLüdde, Berlin
HIRES_© Giuseppe Miotto - Marco Cappelletti Studio

Monia Ben Hamouda, Burial of all meanings II, 2024
Steel, iron, engine, enamel, salt, 160 x 110 x 120 cm
Installation view of *KIN, at Spiritvessel, Espinavessa ES curated by Sira Pizà*
Courtesy of the Artist, Spiritvessel and ChertLüdde, Berlin
Photo Roberto Ruiz

Monia Ben Hamouda, Rain (Blindness, Blossom and Desertification XVIII), 2024
Soil, rain, charcoal, oil on raw cotton, 320 x 220 x 4 cm
Installation view of *KIN, at Spiritvessel, Espinavessa ES curated by Sira Pizà*
Courtesy of the Artist, Spiritvessel and ChertLüdde, Berlin
Photo Roberto Ruiz





Monia Ben Hamouda, Burial of all meanings III, 2024
Steel, iron, engine, enamel, red soil of Ctalunya, poppy seeds 160 x 110 x 120 cm
Installation view of *KIN, at Spiritvessel, Espinavessa ES curated by Sira Pizà*
Courtesy of the Artist, Spiritvessel and ChertLüdde, Berlin
Photo Roberto Ruiz

Monia Ben Hamouda and
Maude Léonard-Contant

NYX

II pers. solo show at Istituto Svizzero,
Milan NY
curated by Gioia Dal Molin
May 15th – June 29st, 2024

Nyx is the Greek goddess of the night. She was born from chaos and emerges from the ocean each evening. She has lent us her name for this double exhibition featuring Maude Léonard-Contant and Monia Ben Hamouda. The exhibition title, NYX, was conceived during an email exchange with the two artists. An exchange of ideas between Basel, Milan and Rome. The title also draws inspiration from Anne Carson's book Nox, where the Canadian author and poet explores themes of grief and loss, crafting an elegy on her brother's death, even though "Words cannot add to it." Maude shares Anne Carson's Canadian roots and a penchant for cold and ice, and both artists share the poet's preoccupation with language as a (sometimes inadequate) artistic material.
In discussing language, the Roman Nox became NYX. More an image than a word, it embodies the night and the potential of chaos, as well as a creative moment—a resurgence from darkness. For Maude and Monia, the goddess Nyx is also linked to death and healing processes, themes that have preoccupied both artists in recent months, which resonate in their
new works produced for this exhibition. Furthermore, there is a notion that the goddess herself is watching over the exhibition project, perhaps having
once endowed us with the language and words we use to think, speak and write about this project.
Maude and Monia both grew up between languages.
Maude's mother tongue is Canadian French; later she studied in English. Today she lives in German speaking Switzerland, engaging with the German
(that she speaks) and Swiss German of the people around her. Monia is the daughter of an Italian mother and a Tunisian father, and grew up speaking Italian in Milan. She knows Tunisian Arabic from long summer vacations in her father's homeland. For Maude and Monia, their installations, sculptures, paintings and drawings are also a means of communication.
Moreover, the written word was central to the collaborative evolution of NYX. I think we all share a great sensitivity for language. And yet, we all sometimes lack the words to express our emotions or vulnerabilities. This, too, is addressed in NYX.
(...)
The area between Maude's installation and Monia's work serves as a zone of transition, or also contamination. A pivotal aspect in the collaborative development of this exhibition was exploring how the two works engage in a dialogue with each other, how they contaminate each other (in a positive
sense). The turmeric from Monia's work Burial of all meanings leaves delicate yellow traces that mingle in places with the pink-hued medicinal clay and on Maude's sculptures, which, in turn, cast their stories onto the yellow-painted wall.

Monia's artistic works frequently delve into her bicultural and bilingual life (and their associated biases and misunderstandings). Through her father, she has learned about Arabic calligraphy, a prominent facet of Islamic art emerging from Arabic script and the context of image prohibition in Islam, in which texts (often from the Koran) become an ornamental image. For several years now, Monia has channelled her interest in calligraphy into her installations.
She employs laser-cut steel shapes oscillating between image and writing, between precise forms and painterly abstraction, between drawing and
sculpture, and combines them with spices (turmeric, cinnamon or chilli powder) that provide a visual and olfactory context. Her new work Burial of all meanings builds upon these gestures in an even more radical way: the installation, with its fragrant, vibrant yellow turmeric, is created using a concrete mixer.
The shapes and traces of the spice on the wall and floor could only be controlled to a limited extent; the machine's rotating movements suggest a sense of violence. The abstracted characters have vanished.
Their absence is also an expression of Monia's struggle with language, seeking the 'right' words given the state of the world. In a Zoom call, Monia tellsMaude and me about the untranslatability of the Arabic word 'qaher', often translated as 'anger' but actually encapsulating a sense of persistent,
indignant powerlessness in the face of oppression and racism. The limits of language. The impossibility of adequately expressing emotions with words.
For Monia, Burial of all meanings is also a reflection on her own position as an artist, grappling with her privilege of being able to voice dissent with her
voice and through her works, and the frustration of linguistic inadequacies and how statements can be misunderstood, mistranslated or instrumentalized.
The turmeric, with its anti-inflammatory and fortifying attributes, serves as a reminder of moments of healing and care. Similar to Maude, who carefully rubs the tin letters with Vaseline, Burial of all meanings also demands Monia's care and attention—the spice must be repeatedly replenished throughout the duration of the exhibition.
The second exhibition space serves as a kind of counter-space: the grand, sweeping gesture of the large hall gives way here to an atmosphere of intimacy and introspection. Monia's small-format drawings function as exercises of the hand and mind. They emerge quickly from the direct movement
of her drawing hand, guided by intuition and with minimal influence from conscious thought. Perhaps they are an attempt to capture emotions directly
from the body through the hands onto paper.
Maude's two small sculptures—How the heat wilts my silks and Giving her utmost at dressing the dead chicken—are partly wrapped in silk. Their circular forms and entwined feathers echo the lines of Monia's drawings. "Tongues of fire," remarks Maude. Tongues of fire—for memories, experiences and emotions that we cannot always describe with words alone, that find no place in the sometimes rigid forms of our languages. Tongues of fire that speak to the state of the world. Something is burning in my mind, and the turmeric itches pleasantly unpleasantly in my nose.

Gioia Dal Molin, May 2024



Monia Ben Hamouda
Burial of all meanings, 2024
Steel, iron, engine, turmeric, enamel
Dimensions variable

Installation view of NYX. Monia Ben Hamouda and Maude Léonard–Contant
Il pers. solo show at Istituto Svizzero, Milan IT curated by Gioia Dal Molin
Courtesy of the artist and CheriLüdde, Berlin



Installation view of *NYX, Monia Ben Hamouda and Maude Léonard-Contant*
Il pers. solo show at Istituto Svizzero, Milan IT curated by Gioia Dal Molin
Courtesy of the artist and ChertLüdde, Berlin



Installation view of *NYX, Monia Ben Hamouda and Maude Léonard-Conant Il pers. solo show at Istituto Svizzero, Milan IT curated by Gioia Dal Molin*
Courtesy of the artist and ChertLüdde, Berlin



Monia Ben Hamouda, Installation View from RENAISSANCE, MUSEION Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Bolzano IT (2024)
curated by Leonie Radine

Resisting (Aniconism as Figuration Urgency), two elements: 190 × 117 × 0.03 cm / 173 × 145 × 0.03 cm;
About Telepathy and other Violences II (Aniconism as Figuration Urgency), 166 × 138 × 0.03 cm;
About Telepathy and other Violences (Aniconism as Figuration Urgency), 171 × 138 × 0.03 cm;
2023, Laser cut iron, spice powders
Courtesy the artist, ChertLüdde and Museion
Photo: Luca Guadagnini











Monia Ben Hamouda, Figuration Demon (deer), 2025
Iron, spices, clay; 121 x158x0,03cm
Installation view from 64th Premio Termoli, curated by Caterina Riva at MACTE, Termoli IT
Courtesy of the artist and ChertLüdde, Berlin



Monia Ben Hamouda,
Monument to Vulnerability IV (Stoning of the Devil), 2024
Neon, aluminum, spices, 200x145 cm Courtesy the Artist and ChertLüdde, Berlin
Installation View from Exposure – Art, culture, fashion in and out of the showcase –
curated by Katya Inozemtseva and Sara Rizzo at MUDEC Museo delle Culture Milano, IT (2024)





Monia Ben Hamouda,
Monument to Vulnerability IV (Stoning of the Devil) -details- 2024
Neon, aluminum, spices, 200x145 cm Courtesy the Artist and ChertLüdde, Berlin
Installation View from Exposure - Art, culture, fashion in and out of the showcase -
curated by Katya Inozemtseva and Sara Rizzo at MUDEC Museo delle Culture Milano, IT (2024)



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Monia Ben Hamouda,
Monument to Vulnerability IV (Stoning of the Devil), 2024
Neon, aluminum, spices, 200x145 cm Courtesy the Artist and ChertLüdde, Berlin

My Demons My Angels
15th Anniversary Group Show

ChertLüdde, Berlin
15 September – 14 October 2023

On the occasion of the gallery's 15th anniversary, which coincides with Berlin Art Week, the exhibition My Demons My Angels gathers some of ChertLüdde's numerous stories from recent years. To hold a commune for some of the shared hopes, dreams and desires, while also allowing space for the fears, risks and creative uncertainties that bind a cultural space together, the exhibition hosts 27 different positions.

Bringing all the represented artists of ChertLüdde together for the first time, the exhibition celebrates new and existing artworks. Some of the pieces collide in themes, while others explore individualistic and unique paths. The handwritten neon words: "all the time that came before this moment" and "all the time that will come after this moment," flank both sides of the exhibition space. In his fluorescent script, the artist David Horvitz's words announce the open parameters of the exhibition and point to its overlapping trajectories in a suspension between past and future; positive and negative; demons and angels.

On the occasion of this anniversary, Kasia Fudakowski will perform This is not a performance (2014 – ongoing) on the opening night.

Exhibited Artists:

Alejandro Almanza Pereda, Monia Ben Hamouda, Sol Calero, Gabriel Chaile, Stephanie Comilang, Pauline Curnier Jardin, Patrizio di Massimo, Annette Frick, Kasia Fudakowski, Petrit Halilaj, Rodrigo Hernández, David Horvitz, Heike Kabisch, Zora Mann, Rosemary Mayer, Franco Mazzucchelli, Juan Antonio Olivares, Robert Rehfeldt, Vanessa Safavi, Sofía Salazar Rosales, Agnes Scherer, Tyra Tingleff, Vincent Trasov, Álvaro Urbano, Erik van der Weijde, Ruth Wolf-Rehfeldt, and Petrit Halilaj & Álvaro Urbano.

Installation view of My Demons My Angels, ChertLüdde, Berlin, 2023



Installation view of My Demons My Angels,
ChertLüdde, Berlin, 2023

Monia Ben Hamouda

About Telepathy and other Violences

solo show at ChertLüdde,
Berlin DE

Gallery Weekend Berlin
April 29th – June 1st, 2023

As part of Gallery Weekend Berlin, Tunisian-Italian artist Monia Ben Hamouda presents her solo exhibition *About Telepathy and other Violences* at ChertLüdde. Reflecting the cultural influences of her upbringing, the exhibition sculpts forms of communication beyond spoken language and ventures into the psyche with visual semantics that she defines as an iteration of telepathy.

The daughter of an Islamic calligrapher, Monia Ben Hamouda (1991, Milan) addresses her heritage by converging abstract forms of Arabic scriptures with figurative elements. Dominated by visual references from her Muslim upbringing, the exhibition intimately addresses her relationships to art history from the Middle East and Western Europe. Going against the ban on iconography in Islam, known as Aniconism, the sculptures in About Telepathy and other Violences reveal different phases of a moving hand.
Covered in a burst of spice and dust, ten hanging steel sculptures are strung between burnt wooden elements wrapped in cloth and cemented drapes hanging on the walls. The contrasts between the firm form of the chromatic edges, the softened contours of the charred wood, and the hardened fabrics of her 2023 series *Monument to Vulnerability (Stoning of the Devil)* highlight the tension between the dynamic gestures and the static pauses of each work.

The steel sculptures of Ben Hamouda's series *Aniconism as Figuration Urgency* (2021-ongoing) cut across the room with their abstract calligraphic strokes in the twilight of the exhibition space.
Conjuring approaches to the Italian Futurist avant-garde, Ben Hamouda employs strategies of rendering dynamism through the repetition of images. Layered asymmetrically behind each other, the steel sculptures signal movement in the way they gradually evolve to show the action of a hand at various stages of throwing.
Subliminal influences of the Futurist artist Giacomo Balla (1871, Turin – 1958, Rome), who still has an undeniable presence in Ben Hamouda's hometown of Milan, find themselves in her new series of wooden sculptures. Her 2023 sculpture *La mano del violinista (The Destruction of the Idols of Ka'ba)* can be seen as an echo of Balla's violin bow found in his 1912 painting *The hands of the violinist*. At the same time, the works contain traces of Islamic history.

Becoming emblems of all that has been lost, Ben Hamouda's wood sculptures resist being overlooked, calling to mind the iconography concentrated in the Destruction of the Idols of the Ka'ba. Depicted in an assemblage of paintings that circulated in the Middle East and North Africa around 970 AH (1550 CE), the *Destruction of the Idols of the Ka'ba* features the prophet Muhammad and his army destroying pagan idols in Mecca. Ben Hamouda evokes this moment in a more abstract visual language, with the broken wooden limb-like elements stretching outwards from the installation much like the demons said to have fled the ruined idols of the Ka'ba.
Hanging like deconstructed paintings, the series *Monument to Vulnerability (Stoning of the Devil)* represents the three walls waiting at the end of the pilgrimage to Mecca. Destined to resist the ritual of 'stoning the devil' on the occasion of Eid al-Adha, the walls referenced here withstand the force of countless hands in sharp motion.
While the repeated depiction of the hand throwing a stone refers to the ritual observed during the Hajj, it also symbolizes an act of defense against violent oppression in ancient as well as contemporary eras. Held in time, the moments captured in *About Telepathy and other Violences* speak of transformation and stagnation, making poignant connections to the religious and political discourse in the Arab world.

Gathering multiple references from her own upbringing, Ben Hamouda's sculptures are all unified in the exhibition through her use of spices and other powders. Chilli, cumin, curry, henna, coconut charcoal, dried beetroot and salt cast a sandy layer that ripples across the floor and over the sculptures. The spices are the final element in her artistic process, part of a personal ritual tracing back to her paternal family. Used in medicine, cooking and numerous spiritual practices, the spices tap into ideas of healing and recovery within conflict.

About Telepathy and other Violences is an exhibition that deals with the inability to suppress identity, fused with Monia Ben Hamouda's personal heritage and the historical events which continue to shape her life. The visual language created in the exhibition is a personal signature unique to the artist, with the telepathy of the unspoken and unscripted influences emerging within her art. The final act of covering the works in a spell of spices and powders unifies as well as protects the relationships that emerge between the artist, her artworks and her heritage.





Installation view of *About Telepathy and other Violences*,
solo show at ChertLüdde,
Berlin DE (2023)
Courtesy of the artist and ChertLüdde, Berlin

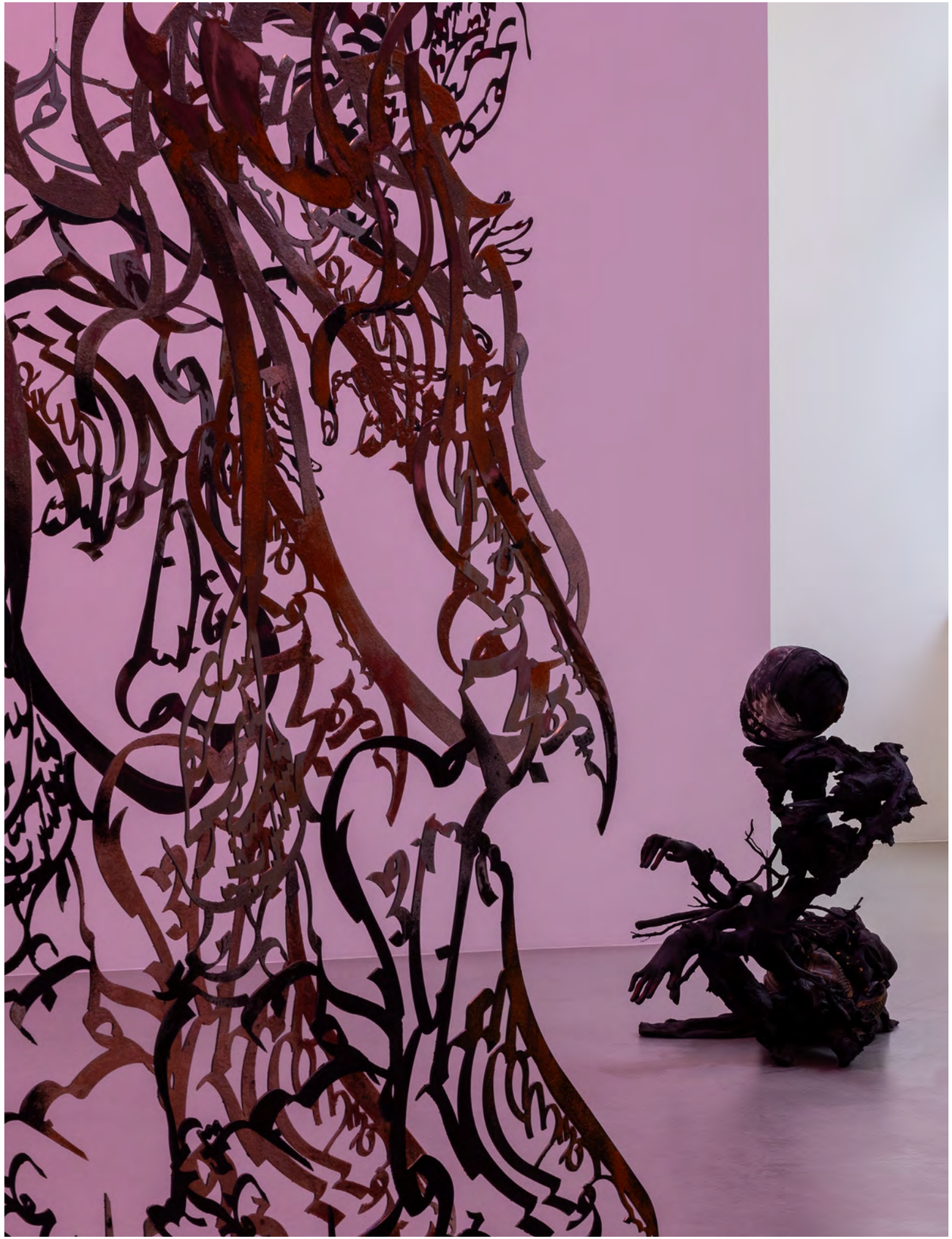








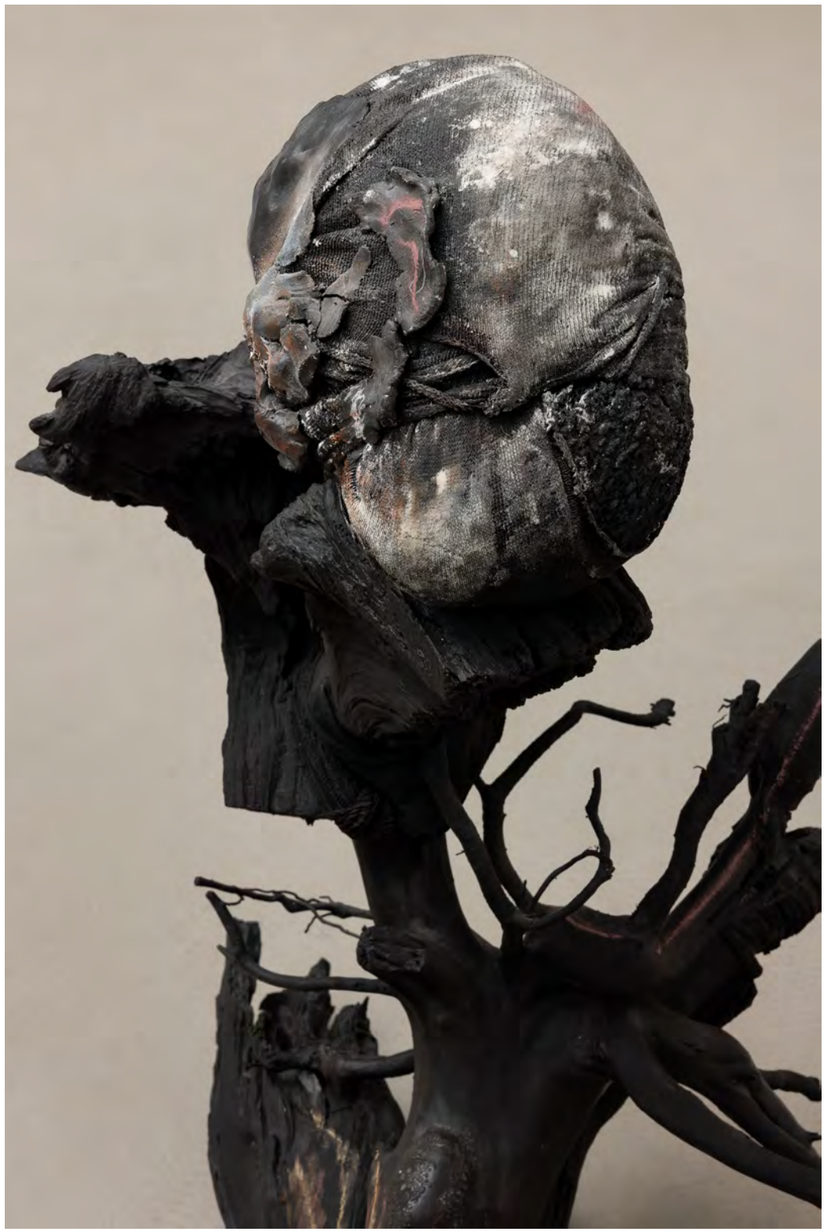












Monia Ben Hamouda,
Interlude for Revolutionaries II (The Destruction of the Idols of Ka'ba), 2023
Carbonized wood, charcoal, fabric, plaster, spice powders
91.5×98×68 cm

Installation view of *About Telepathy and other Violences*,
solo show at ChertLüdde,
Berlin DE (2023)
Courtesy of the artist and ChertLüdde, Berlin



Monia Ben Hamouda,
Persistence of a Storm
(The Destruction of the Idols of Ka'ba), 2023
Carbonized wood, charcoal, lead, spice powders
78 × 78 × 35 cm

Installation view of *About Telepathy and other Violences*,
solo show at ChertLüdde,
Berlin DE (2023)
Courtesy of the artist and ChertLüdde, Berlin



Monia Ben Hamouda,
La mano del violinista (The Destruction of the Idols of Ka'ba), 2023
Carbonized wood, charcoal, violin bow, fabric, plaster, spice powders
150 × 39 × 63 cm

Installation view of *About Telepathy and other Violences*,
solo show at ChertLüdde,
Berlin DE (2023)
Courtesy of the artist and ChertLüdde, Berlin



Monia Ben Hamouda,
Interlude for Revolutionaries (The Destruction of the Idols of Ka'ba), 2023
Carbonized wood, charcoal, concrete, fabric, plaster, lead, iron, clay, spicepowders
146×42×54.5 cm

Installation view of *About Telepathy and other Violences*,
solo show at ChertLüdde,
Berlin DE (2023)
Courtesy of the artist and ChertLüdde, Berlin

Monia Ben Hamouda,
Monument to Vulnerability (Stoning of the Devil), 2023
Wood, charcoal, fabric, concrete, spice powders
186×150×41cm

Installation view of *About Telepathy and other Violences*,
solo show at ChertLüdde,
Berlin DE (2023)
Courtesy of the artist and ChertLüdde, Berlin

Monia Ben Hamouda,
Monument to Vulnerability III (Stoning of the Devil), 2023
Wood, charcoal, fabric, concrete, spice powders
234×150×34cm

Installation view of *About Telepathy and other Violences*,
solo show at ChertLüdde,
Berlin DE (2023)
Courtesy of the artist and ChertLüdde, Berlin

Monia Ben Hamouda,
Monument to Vulnerability II (Stoning of the Devil), 2023
Wood, charcoal, fabric, concrete, spice powders
231×150×46cm

Installation view of *About Telepathy and other Violences*,
solo show at ChertLüdde,
Berlin DE (2023)
Courtesy of the artist and ChertLüdde, Berlin

Monia Ben Hamouda, Denial of a Redwing Blackbird II and III (Aniconism as Figuration Urgency), 2022. Steel, turmeric, chili pepper, paprika, charcoal, 273x 171x0,03 cm
Courtesy the artist and ChertLüdde, Berlin
Retrofuture. Notes for a Collection On the walls: Giovanna Silva, Catabasi, 2020. Print on pvc. MACRO 2023
Ph. Melania Dalle Grave DSL Studio



Un ambiente palinsesto, dove temporalità diverse si sovrappongono l'una all'altra, per riflettere sul ruolo di una collezione pubblica d'arte contemporanea nel XXI secolo. In un'epoca in cui la riproducibilità tecnica ha raggiunto livelli mai immaginati, è utile interrogarsi sul valore dell'originalità all'interno di una collezione e sul modo in cui essa è recepita. Gran parte di ciò che oggi fruiamo e interpretiamo non deriva da un'esperienza diretta, ma è filtrata da immagini o video digitali. Da questo punto di vista le collezioni pubbliche costituiscono un caso interessante: la maggior parte delle loro opere è chiusa in depositi inaccessibili ai visitatori, mentre solo una piccola selezione è messa in mostra.

La collezione custodita dal MACRO, sotto la corte dell'ex Birreria Peroni, è formata da più di 1.200 opere acquisite dal Comune di Roma tra gli anni Cinquanta e i primi Duemila. Si tratta della porzione più recente delle collezioni della Galleria d'Arte Moderna di Roma Capitale e appartiene alla Sovrintendenza Capitolina ai Beni Culturali. Non accessibile di norma al pubblico, la collezione del MACRO è stata ritratta e interpretata dalla fotografa Giovanna Silva per *Museo per l'Immaginazione Preventiva*. Stampate su giganteschi wallpaper, le immagini della collezione nei depositi ricoprono tutte le pareti di questo ambiente. Esse costituiscono lo sfondo e il contesto che i nuovi lavori di giovani artisti italiani andranno gradualmente a occupare nel corso di tre anni – una collezione in fieri che cresce organicamente nel tempo.

RETROFUTURO. APPUNTI PER UNA COLLEZIONE

RETROFUTURE. NOTES FOR A COLLECTION

A palimpsest in space, where different temporalities overlap, to reflect on the role of a public collection of contemporary art in the twenty-first century. In an age when technical reproducibility has achieved levels never previously imagined, it is useful to question the value of originality inside a collection, and the way it is received. Much of what we observe and interpret today is not the result of direct experience, but is filtered by digital images or videos. From this perspective public collections represent an interesting case: most of their works are shut away in storerooms inaccessible to visitors, while only a small sample is actually on display.

The MACRO collection, below the courtyard of the former Peroni brewery, contains over 1,200 pieces acquired by the City of Rome from the 1950s to the early 2000s. This represents the most recent portion of the collections of the Galleria d'Arte Moderna di Roma Capitale, property of the Capitoline Superintendence of Cultural Heritage. Normally off limits to the public, the MACRO collection has been explored and interpreted by photographer Giovanna Silva for *Museum for Preventive Imagination*. Printed on gigantic wallpapers, the images of the collections in the storerooms cover all the walls of the space. They thus become the backdrop and context that new artworks by young Italian artists will gradually occupy over a span of three years—a collection in progress that grows organically over time.

Monia Ben Hamouda

The Destruction of the Idols of Ka'ba

La Casa Encendida,
Madrid ES
curated by Pakui Hardware

From 31 March to 28 May 2023

Monia Ben Hamouda is the second guest artist featured in Reivindicar la resiliencia / Reclaiming the Resilience, the annual exhibition programme in Room A, curated in 2023 by Pakui Hardware (Neringa Cerniauskaite & Ugnius Gelguda), which explores different aspects of resilience: bodies, communities and cultures, and matter.

A new series of sculptures, created specially for this installation, point to a particular moment in Islamic history, when the ban on figuration gave rise to aniconism. Geometric shapes and masterful calligraphy took the place of figurative representations of living beings or divine presence. The Destruction of the Idols of Ka'ba is the most widely known event of aniconism in which prophet Muhammad with an army marched on Mecca and smashed and demolished the pagan idols at the Kaaba. The destruction scene can be found in a number of illustrations that were painted and circulated the Middle East and North Africa around AH 970 (1550 CE). In one of them, a demon is seen escaping from a shattered sculpture. The fragmented bodies of the smashed sculptures, the demons and the verging point between abstract symbols and figuration are brought together by Monia Ben Hamouda into a striking scene. The remains of the former figurative 'idols' are sculpted by burned wood and ceramic, while the steel surfaces of laser-cut demonic figures, suspended from the ceiling, are coated in pigments that derive from natural spices. In the steel figures, reminiscent of skillful brushstrokes, wrestle figuration and abstract ornamentry: a hand, a paw, a head emerge and are swallowed back into the dance of lines.

The Destruction of the Idols of Ka'ba delves into the (im)possibility of representation through the history of Islamic artist resistant to the prohibition of figuration, and through the hybrid heritage of Monia Ben Hamouda herself.

Born into a Muslim community as the daughter of an Islamic calligrapher, the artist navigates and confronts her generational heritage through what she calls a shamanic process. By coating the surfaces of her sculptures and the space around them with fragrant spices, such as turmeric, chili pepper, cinnamon and cumin, or by burning wood pieces the artist evokes ritualistic and medicinal traditions of her cultural heritage, while at the same time emphasizing the almost possessive power of the ancestors. The aromatic scents, the light, scorched wood and calligraphic sculptures create a portal for the viewer to enter this terrain in which cultural history meets the turbulent present. The current waves of violence towards public monuments across the world – the smashing, the burning, the spitting – dismantle, even if symbolically, the long history of oppression. The fragmented wood sculptures in Monia's installation are a hard evidence of the history of human drive for destruction. Only now it is the His-story itself that calls to be destroyed.



Monia ben Hamouda,
The Destruction of the Idols of Ka'ba, 2023
Carbonized wood, charcoal, concrete, fabric, plaster, lead, iron, clay, spice powders
Variable measures

Installation view of *The Destruction of the Idols of Ka'ba,*
solo show at La Casa Encendida, Madrid ES (2023)
curated by Pakui Hardware
Courtesy of the artist and ChertLüdde, Berlin



Installation view of *The Destruction of the Idols of Ka'ba*,
solo show at La Casa Encendida, Madrid ES (2023)
curated by Pakui Hardware
Courtesy of the artist and ChertLüdde, Berlin



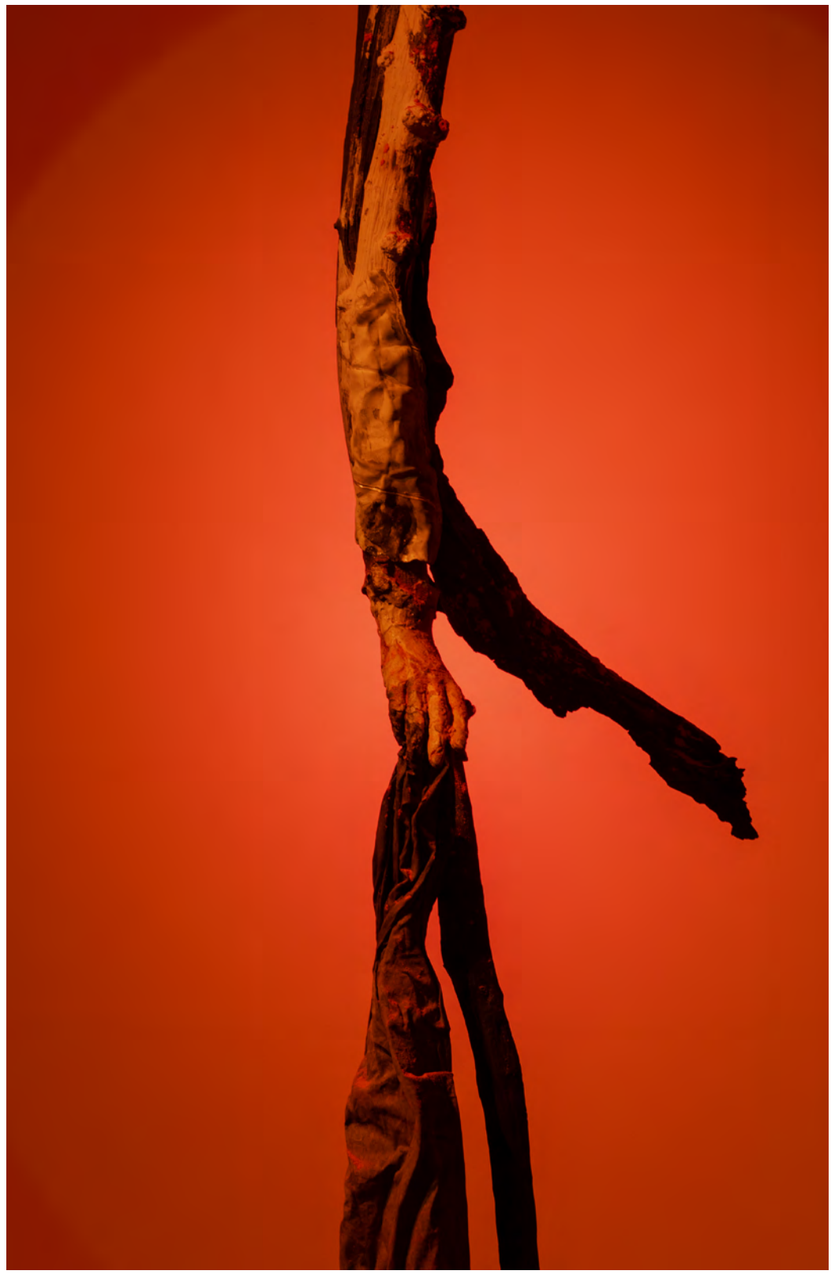
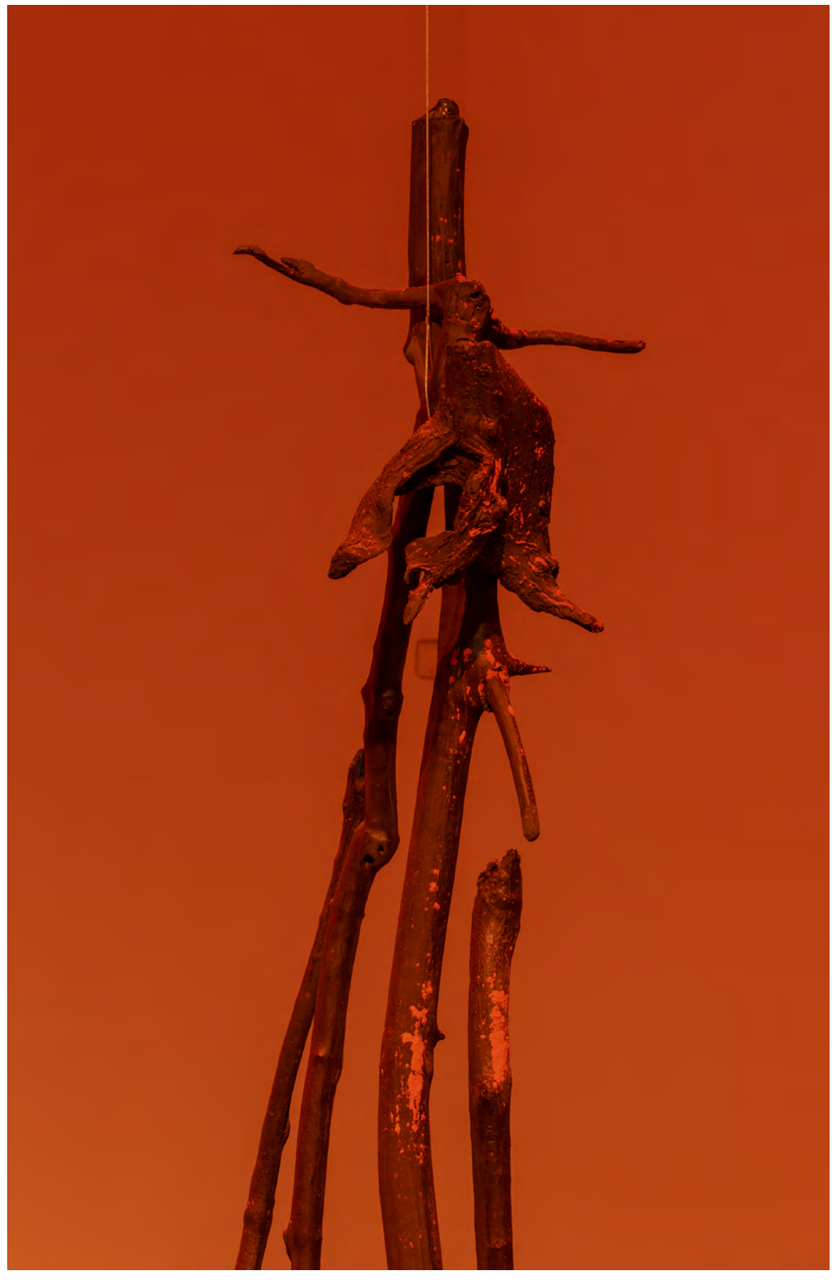


Installation view of *The Destruction of the Idols of Ka'ba*, solo show at La Casa Encendida, Madrid ES (2023) curated by Pakui Hardware
Courtesy of the artist and ChertLüdde, Berlin



Monia ben Hamouda,
The Destruction of the Idols of Ka'ba, 2023
Carbonized wood, charcoal, concrete, fabric, plaster, lead, iron, clay, spice powders
Variable measures

Installation view of *The Destruction of the Idols of Ka'ba*,
solo show at La Casa Encendida, Madrid ES (2023)
curated by Pakui Hardware
Courtesy of the artist and ChertLüdde, Berlin


Monia ben Hamouda,
The Destruction of the Idols of Ka'ba, 2023
Carbonized wood, charcoal, concrete, fabric, plaster, lead, iron, clay, spice powders
Variable measures

Installation view of *The Destruction of the Idols of Ka'ba*,
solo show at La Casa Encendida, Madrid ES (2023)
curated by Pakui Hardware
Courtesy of the artist and ChertLüdde, Berlin



Installation view of *The Destruction of the Idols of Ka'ba*,
solo show at La Casa Encendida, Madrid ES (2023)
curated by Pakui Hardware
Courtesy of the artist and ChertLüdde, Berlin

Monia ben Hamouda,
The Destruction of the Idols of Ka'ba, 2023
Carbonized wood, charcoal, concrete, fabric, plaster, lead, iron, clay, spice powders
Variable measures

Installation view of *The Destruction of the Idols of Ka'ba*,
solo show at La Casa Encendida, Madrid ES (2023)
curated by Pakui Hardware
Courtesy of the artist and CherlLudde, Berlin





Monia ben Hamouda,
In order to me to write poetry that isn't political,
I must listen to the birds, and in order to hear the birds,
the warplanes must be silent (Flying jinn II), 2023
Laser cut steel, spice powders
207x150x0,03 cm

Installation view of *The Destruction of the Idols of Ka'ba*,
solo show at La Casa Encendida, Madrid ES (2023)
curated by Pakui Hardware
Courtesy of the artist and ChertLüdde, Berlin

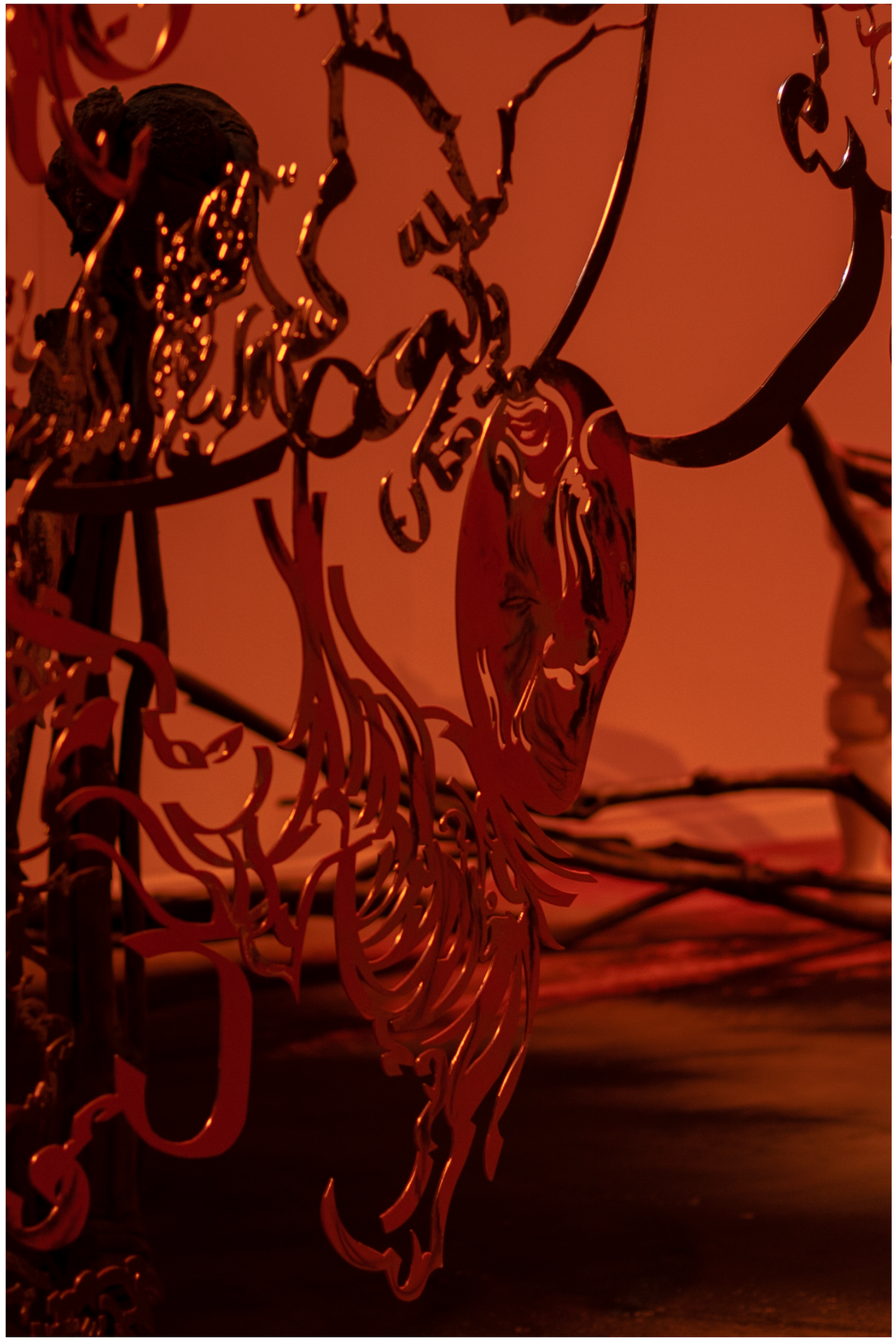




Monia ben Hamouda,
In order to me to write poetry that isn't political,
I must listen to the birds, and in order to hear the birds,
the warplanes must be silent (Flying jinn II), 2023
Laser cut steel, spice powders
186x144x0,03 cm

Installation view of *The Destruction of the Idols of Ka'ba*,
solo show at La Casa Encendida, Madrid ES (2023)
curated by Pakui Hardware
Courtesy of the artist and ChertLüdde, Berlin





Monia ben Hamouda,
Figuration Demon (Conjoined jinns), 2023
Laser cut steel, spice powders
199x164x0,03 cm

Installation view of *The Destruction of the Idols of Ka'ba*,
solo show at La Casa Encendida, Madrid ES (2023)
curated by Pakui Hardware
Courtesy of the artist and ChertLüdde, Berlin

Monia ben Hamouda,
In order to me to write poetry that isn't political,
I must listen to the birds, and in order to hear the birds, the warplanes must be silent (Dancing jinn), 2023
Laser cut steel, spice powders
207x150x0,03 cm

Installation view of *The Destruction of the Idols of Ka'ba*,
solo show at La Casa Encendida, Madrid ES (2023)
curated by Pakui Hardware
Courtesy of the artist and ChertLüdde, Berlin

Monia Ben Hamouda, Installation View from Paris Internationale 2023
ChertLüdde Booth 2.15 18 – 22 October 2023



Monia Ben Hamouda,
Blindness, Blossom and Desertification I, 2023;
Mixed media on linen (Hibiscus, green lalo, ashes, charcoal, paprika, red clay, soil);
236 × 195.5 × 4 cm

Installation View from Paris Internationale 2023
ChertLüdde Booth 2.15 18 – 22 October 2023

Blindness, Blossom and Desertification

The paintings from this series come from a personal urgency to engage with the foundational necessities of art within ritual practices and the environment. Using spices and powders made from hibiscus, green lalo, ashes, charcoal, paprika, red clay, and soil on linen, Ben Hamouda creates textural references to rock and cave surfaces related to art since the dawn of humankind.

These visuals are the result of very quick gestures: of the hand, the throwing of powders, and brushstrokes mimicking Arabic text that the artist has practiced since childhood. The technical skills of the latter draws parallels to the art of calligraphy, wherein the writer keeps a blank page next to the work as a surface to "warm the hand", thus also becoming a mirror exercise of her steel and iron calligraphic works of the series Aniconism as Figurative Urgency (2021 – ongoing).



Monia Ben Hamouda,
Blindness, Blossom and Desertification V (detail), 2023;
Mixed media on raw cotton (henna, hibiscus, charcoal, paprika, red clay, soil);
235×195×4 cm
Courtesy the Artist and ChertLüdde, Berlin





Monia Ben Hamouda,
Blindness, Blossom and Desertification V, 2023;
Mixed media on raw cotton (henna, hibiscus, charcoal, paprika, red clay, soil);
235×195×4 cm
Courtesy the Artist and ChertLüdde, Berlin



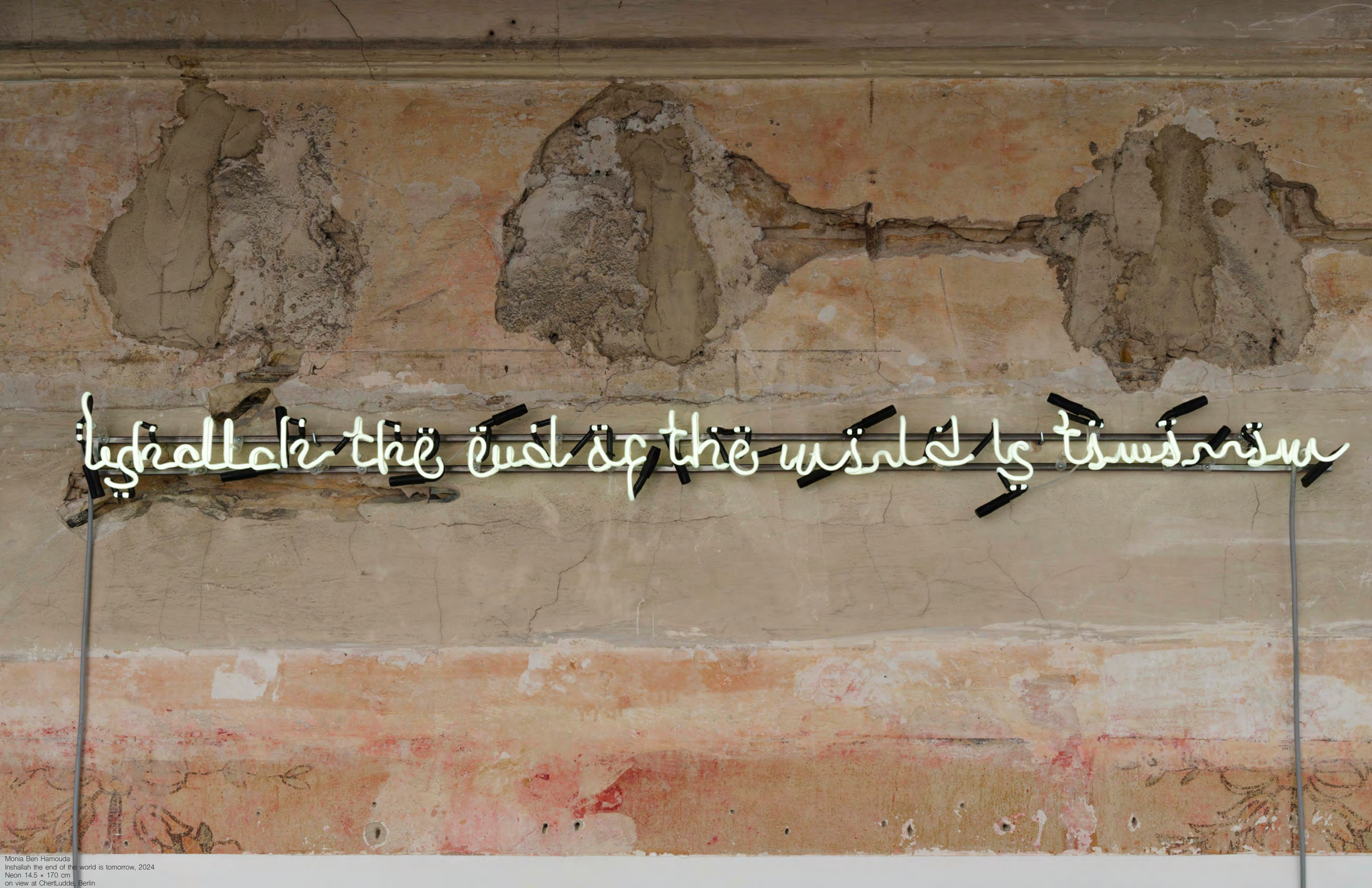


Monia Ben Hamouda,
Blindness, Blossom and Desertification VII, 2023;
Mixed media on raw cotton (henna, hibiscus, charcoal, paprika, red clay, soil);
235×195×4 cm
Courtesy the Artist and ChertLüdde, Berlin





Monia Ben Hamouda,
Blindness, Blossom and Desertification VI, 2023;
Mixed media on raw cotton (henna, hibiscus, charcoal, paprika, red clay, soil);
235×195×4 cm
Courtesy the Artist and ChertLüdde, Berlin



Monia Ben Hamouda
Inshallah the end of the world is tomorrow, 2024
Neon 14.5 × 170 cm
on view at ChertLudde, Berlin



Installation View from 'To Romanticise with indecision',
group show curated by Monia Ben Hamouda and Michele Gabriele at Cassina Projects, Milan IT
2024



Installation View from 'To Romanticise with indecision',
group show curated by Monia Ben Hamouda and Michele Gabriele at Cassina Projects, Milan IT
2024

A film of Niki de Saint Phalle shooting a gun with the closed caption: [Birds chirping].

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Installation view of ChertLüdde at Booth B41, MiArt, 2023
Courtesy of the artists and ChertLüdde, Berlin

A film of Niki de Saint Phalle shooting a gun with the closed caption: [Birds chirping].

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Double solo show
Monia Ben Hamouda / Michele Gabriele

Remarkably Clear, Almost Invisible

Curated by
Anthony Discenza

ASHES/ASHES
New York, NY USA

July 1 – August 14, 2022

ASHES/ASHES is pleased to present *Remarkably Clear, Almost Invisible*, a two-person exhibition by Monia Ben Hamouda and Michele Gabriele curated by Anthony Discenza. The exhibition will be on view from July 1st to August 14th, 2022, with an opening on Friday, July 1st, from 6–8 pm. Gallery hours are Wednesday—Sunday, 12–6pm.

Remarkably Clear, Almost Invisible, Ben Hamouda and Gabriele's first two-person exhibition in the United States, represents the culmination of a two-month stay at lower_cavity, an invitational artist's residency in western Massachusetts. Over the course of their residency, Ben Hamouda and Gabriele worked simultaneously on new works for the exhibition at ASHES/ASHES and on two large-scale installations for lower_cavity's subterranean project space. Both projects speak to and across each other, finding valences between the artists' practices.

Considerations of distance and convergence are at play in both Ben Hamouda and Gabriele's work. For Gabriele, the sensibilities of speculative and dystopian fiction operate as a framework through which an unruly materiality labors to articulate itself. His work embodies a post-human, post-technologic iteration of the Grotesque, wherein all forms of matter—organic and synthetic, animate and inanimate—commingle in a journey towards a chaotic equilibrium; an uncouth paradise in which hierarchies of every sort merge and dissolve. Underlying these concerns is a more epistemological reflection on the unreliable gulfs that lie between perceiver and perceived, between viewer and artwork. Inhabiting a world in which any notion of the human is little more than a vague memory, his creations pass the time in quixotic contemplation of their own hybridized nature.

Born into a Muslim community as the daughter of an Islamic calligrapher, Ben Hamouda navigates distances between complex histories–of art, culture, language, and religion–reconciling these polarities through a personal poetics articulated through a syntax of gesture and raw materiality. The two sculptures presented here are part of her series Aniconism as Figuration Urgency (2021 – ongoing), which applies pressure to Muslim culture's injunction against figurative representation. These laser-cut, spice-encrusted steel works, equal parts drawing, sculpture, and painting, rework traditional calligraphic forms into a discordant and compound composition, teasing the viewer with echoes of deferred linguistic meaning and richly olfactory associations. Her materials (metal, wood, powdered North African spices, charcoal) serve as conduits through which she channels the divergent forces that have shaped her—talismanic performers in a ritual that manifests the struggle between the strictures of tradition and an unbounded urge to self-expression.

– Anthony Discenza



Monia Ben Hamouda, Denial of a Red-winged Blackbird fighting a Jinn (Aniconism as Figuration Urgency), 2022
Laser cutted iron, spice powders 280×153×0.03 cm; Installation view of *Remarkably Clear, Almost Invisible*
Double solo show Monia Ben Hamouda / Michele Gabriele curated by Anthony Discenza at ASHES/ASHES, New York NY USA, 2022
Courtesy of the artist, ChertLüdde, Berlin and Ashes/Ashes, NY





Installation view of *Remarkably Clear, Almost Invisible*
Double solo show Monia Ben Hamouda / Michele Gabriele
curated by Anthony Discenza at ASHES/ASHES, New York NY USA, 2022
Courtesy of the artists, ChertLüdde, Berlin and Ashes/Ashes, NY

Monia Ben Hamouda,
Denial of a Redwing Blackbird (Aniconism as Figuration Urgency), 2022
Laser cutted iron, spice powders 219 × 194 × 0.03 cm;
Installation view of *Remarkably Clear, Almost Invisible*
Double solo show Monia Ben Hamouda / Michele Gabriele
curated by Anthony Discenza at ASHES/ASHES, New York NY USA, 2022
Courtesy of the artist, ChertLüdde, Berlin and Ashes/Ashes, NY

Monia Ben Hamouda,
Denial of a Red-winged Blackbird fighting a Jinn (Aniconism as Figuration Urgency), 2022
Laser cutted iron, spice powders 280×153×0.03 cm; Installation view of *Remarkably Clear, Almost Invisible*
Double solo show Monia Ben Hamouda / Michele Gabriele
curated by Anthony Discenza at ASHES/ASHES, New York NY USA, 2022
Courtesy of the artist, ChertLüdde, Berlin and Ashes/Ashes, NY



Installation view of ChertLüdde at Booth K4, Art Basel, 2022
Courtesy of the artists and ChertLüdde, Berlin

Monia Ben Hamouda,
Aniconism as Figuration Urgency (The spell II), 2022;
Laser cut steel, spice powders, 200 × 110 × 0.3 cm;
Installation view of ChertLüdde at Booth K4, Art Basel, 2022
Courtesy of the artists and ChertLüdde, Berlin







Monia Ben Hamouda, Venus as a River (Gymnasium), 2023
Glass, stone, silicon, china ink, acrilic paint 50x50x35
Installation View from '*Darker, Lighter, Puffy, Flat*', *group show* at Kunsthalle Wien, Wien AT (2023) curated by Laura Amann
Courtesy the Artist and ChertLüdde, Berlin





Monia Ben Hamouda, Venus as a River II (Gymnasium), 2023
Glass, stone, silicon, china ink, acrilic paint 50x50x40
Installation View from '*Darker, Lighter, Puffy, Flat*', *group show* at Kunsthalle Wien, Wien AT (2023) curated by Laura Amann
Courtesy the Artist and ChertLüdde, Berlin

Monia Ben Hamouda

Wudu Diorama

Residency solo presentation
at Lower Cavity
Holyoke, MA, USA

June 18 – July 8, 2022

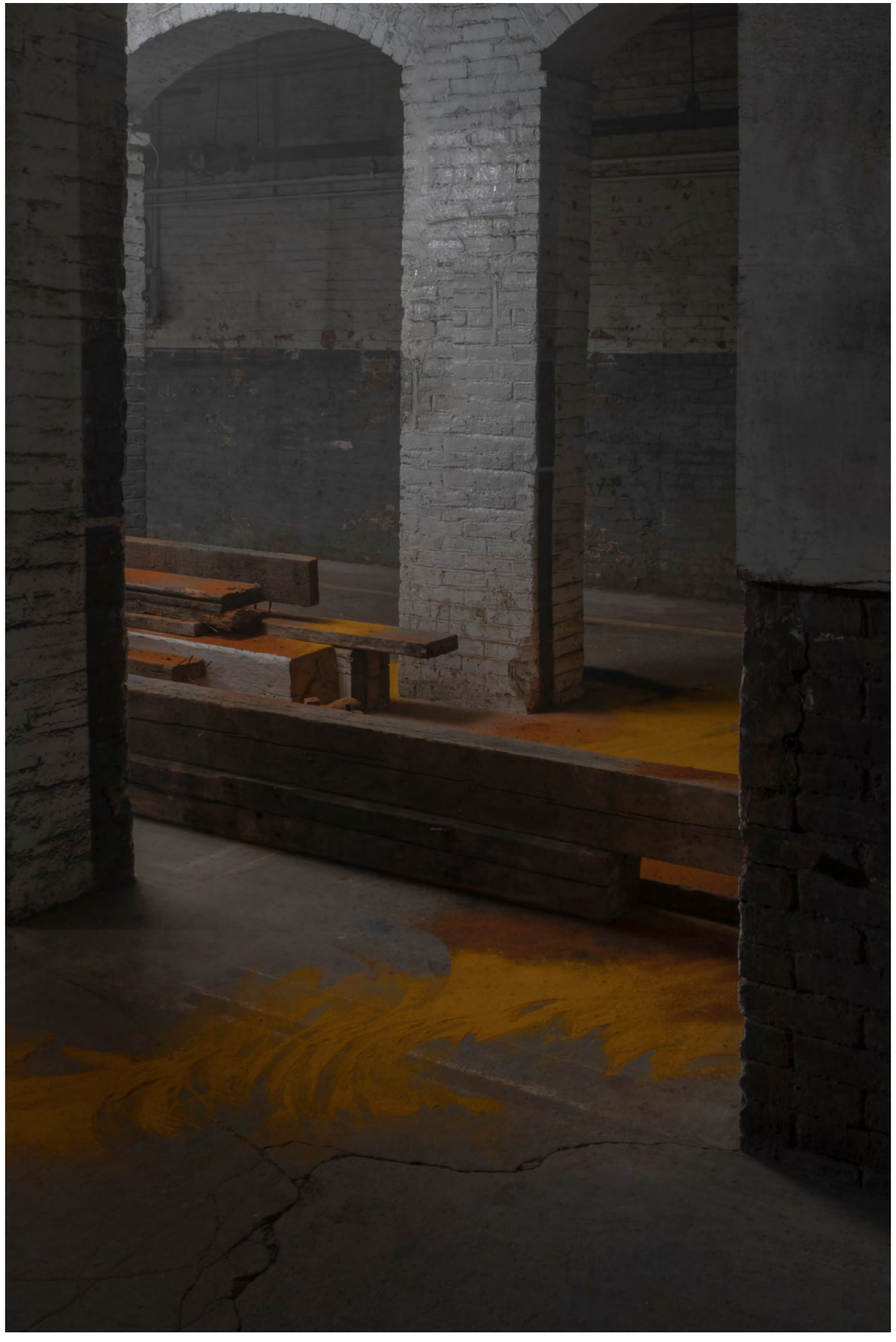
For its ninth hosted residency project, lower_cavity is pleased to present two large-scale installations by Milan-based artists Monia Ben Hamouda and Michele Gabriele. Partners with separate visual art practices who regularly work alongside each other, Ben Hamouda and Gabriele have spent their time developing new work in response to lower_cavity's cavernous post-industrial space and the surrounding environs of western Massachusetts. Conceived and realized over the course of a six-week stay, the two projects speak to and across each other, finding the valences between each artist's practice.

Born into a Muslim community as the daughter of an Islamic calligrapher, Ben Hamouda navigates distances between complex histories–of art, culture, language, and religion–reconciling these polarities through a personal poetics articulated through a syntax of gesture and raw materiality. Following a belief that every individual is inextricably connected to the psychological universe of their ancestors, Ben Hamouda attempts to master her influences against the backdrop of a contemporary, continually shifting landscape.
She confronts her generational heritage through what she describes as a shamanic process, creating works that act as gestural exorcisms of expectations imposed on her by both tradition and a politicized present. Her visual language, which employs a broad range of formal approaches, is steeped in cultural and religious symbology that applies pressure to Muslim culture's injunction against figurative representation.

Her materials—raw steel, salvaged wood, powdered North African spices, charcoal—serve as conduits through which she channels the divergent forces that have shaped her; talismanic performers in a ritual that manifests the struggle between the strictures of tradition and an urge to self-expression. Working with massive wooden beams used in the original construction of the former mill building housing lower_cavity, Ben Hamouda has created a 40-foot-long sculptural construction, Wudu Diorama, that considers linkages between ruined architecture and physical and spiritual protection. Atmospheric haze effects and several kilograms' worth of powdered spices add layers of visual and olfactory complexity to the installation.
A complementary work, It's a Windy Day in Tataouine III (Hammam door), acts as a gestural intervention within obsolete remnants of the building's original infrastructure.

Following the conclusion of their residency, Ben Hamouda and Gabriele will be presenting a two-person exhibition—their first in the US—at ASHES/ASHES in New York City. The exhibition, co-organized by Ashes/Ashes and lower_cavity, will open on July 1st and run through August 14th, with an opening reception on July 1st from 6 - 8 pm. Ashes/Ashes is located at 56 Eldridge Street, New York, NY.

– Anthony Discenza





Monia Ben Hamouda, Wudu Diorama, 2022; wood, iron, turmeric, chilli pepper, paprika, charcoal; 1018 x 150 x 150 cm, variable.
Installation View from Wudu Diorama, residency solo presentation at Lower Cavity Holyoke, MA – USA.
Courtesy the Artist and ChertLüdde, Berlin



Monia Ben Hamouda, Wudu Diorama, 2022; wood, iron, turmeric, chilli pepper, paprika, charcoal; 1018 x 150 x 150 cm, variable.
Installation View from Wudu Diorama, residency solo presentation at Lower Cavity Holyoke, MA – USA.
Courtesy the Artist and ChertLüdde, Berlin



Monia Ben Hamouda, Wudu Diorama, 2022; wood, iron, turmeric, chilli pepper, paprika, charcoal; 1018 x 150 x 150 cm, variable.
Installation View from Wudu Diorama, residency solo presentation at Lower Cavity Holyoke, MA – USA.
Courtesy the Artist and ChertLüdde, Berlin



Monia Ben Hamouda, Wudu Diorama, 2022; wood, iron, turmeric, chilli pepper, paprika, charcoal; 1018 x 150 x 150 cm, variable.
Installation View from Wudu Diorama, residency solo presentation at Lower Cavity Holyoke, MA – USA.
Courtesy the Artist and ChertLüdde, Berlin



Monia Ben Hamouda, Wudu Diorama, 2022; wood, iron, turmeric, chilli pepper, paprika, charcoal; 1018 x 150 x 150 cm, variable.
Installation View from Wudu Diorama, residency solo presentation at Lower Cavity Holyoke, MA – USA.
Courtesy the Artist and ChertLüdde, Berlin

Monia Ben Hamouda, Wudu Diorama, 2022; wood, iron, turmeric, chilli pepper, paprika, charcoal; 1018 x 150 x 150 cm, variable.
Installation View from Wudu Diorama, residency solo presentation at Lower Cavity Holyoke, MA - USA.
Courtesy the Artist and ChertLüdde, Berlin

Monia Ben Hamouda, Wudu Diorama, 2022; wood, iron, turmeric, chilli pepper, paprika, charcoal; 1018 x 150 x 150 cm, variable.
Installation View from Wudu Diorama, residency solo presentation at Lower Cavity Holyoke, MA – USA.
Courtesy the Artist and ChertLüdde, Berlin



Monia Ben Hamouda, It's a Windy Day in Tataouine III (Hammam Door) (detail), 2022; wood, iron, turmeric, chilli pepper, paprika, charcoal; 400 x 150 x 530 cm, variable.
Installation View from Wudu Diorama, solo presentation at Lower Cavity Residency Holyoke, MA – USA.
Courtesy the Artist and ChertLüdde, Berlin

Monia Ben Hamouda, It's a Windy Day in Tataouine III (Hammam Door) (detail), 2022; wood, iron, turmeric, chilli pepper, paprika, charcoal; 400 x 150 x 530 cm, variable.
Installation View from Wudu Diorama, solo presentation at Lower Cavity Residency Holyoke, MA - USA.
Courtesy the Artist and ChertLüdde, Berlin

jevouspropose#13

Monia Ben Hamouda
The Eye, the Hands, the Lunacy of Lunar Sightings

Curated by
Anissa Touati

jevouspropose,
Zurich CH

11 May – 9 July, 2022

For jevouspropose#13, Anissa Touati (French exhibition maker and independent curator) invites the artist Monia Ben Hamouda (*1991, lives and works in al-Qayrawan and Milan).

The Eye, the Hands, the Lunacy of Lunar Sightings is an exhibition about how the behavior of animals and humans changes in relation to the moon. Especially how the vision of the moon is conceived within Monia Ben Hamouda's family and her cultural context. Indeed, the moon and its phases are an important element in the Muslim religion. Ramadan takes place during the ninth lunar month, and the end of the daily fast is marked by seeing the moon. Monia Ben Hamouda remembers it today as a ritual, a ritual of waiting for the moon.
Knowing that in places on earth where the moon cannot be seen, for astronomical or climatic reasons, clouds, Ben Hamouda is approaching the vision of space at jevouspropose as if in search of a signal. She approaches the space by directing herself, taking a guided posture in front of the architecture.
Ben Hamouda says: «I enter a space and look for the right direction. It's a cultural thing. directions, the sky, the moon, it's part of the atavistic way of inhabiting the spaces of my family. Also, in the show, the smell element is for me very related to the architecture, how it remains inside the walls, how the spices can hit you so violently. »

In the exhibition, the other level of reading refers to the elements that, according to Arab and Muslim tradition, give an esoteric vision of religion. The sculptures question how religion coexists with pagan or Berber traditions, and how the boundary between the religious sphere and magical practices is at times unclear.
The Hands relate to figurative parts that we find in Monia Ben Hamouda's sculptures: There are in ffact hands, composed of the calligraphy. Many of these are in the position in which usually the couscous is shelled, a practice that in Arab countries is done by hand. One of the ways through which the evil eye can be made, is to use the hand of a dead person to shell the couscous.
All the works in the exhibition are interconnected and rely on one another. The sculptures can be threatening, be a vehicle of evil eye, but they can also protect us. Inside them, they have the possibility to hurt and to heal. The series also talks about co-dependence, about family, and how within the family there can be different figures, different possibilities and different relationships.
Of how each element of the family can enact violence or cure. These sculptures are therefore a family. They resemble each other, they balance each other, they love each other and they hurt each other.

Anissa Touati on thoughts by Monia Ben Hamouda



Monia Ben Hamouda's Installation view The Eye, the Hands, the Lunacy of Lunar Sightings
Solo show curated by Anissa Touati at Jevouspropose, Zurich, 2022
Courtesy of the artist and ChertLüdde, Berlin



Monia Ben Hamouda's Installation view The Eye, the Hands, the Lunacy of Lunar Sightings
Solo show curated by Anissa Touati at Jevouspropose, Zurich, 2022
Courtesy of the artist and ChertLüdde, Berlin



Monia Ben Hamouda's Installation view The Eye, the Hands, the Lunacy of Lunar Sightings
Solo show curated by Anissa Touati at Jevouspropose, Zurich, 2022
Courtesy of the artist and ChertLüdde, Berlin







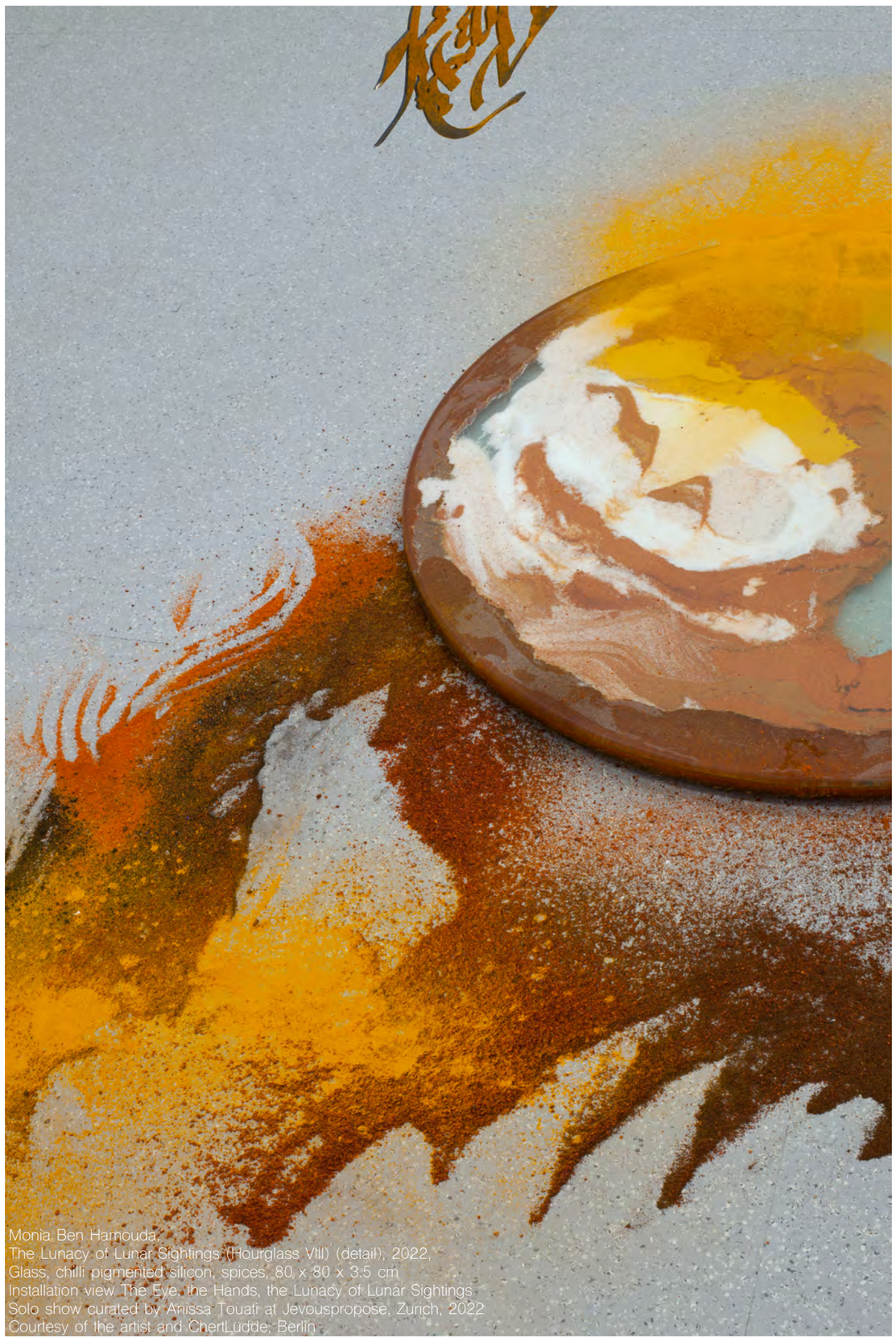




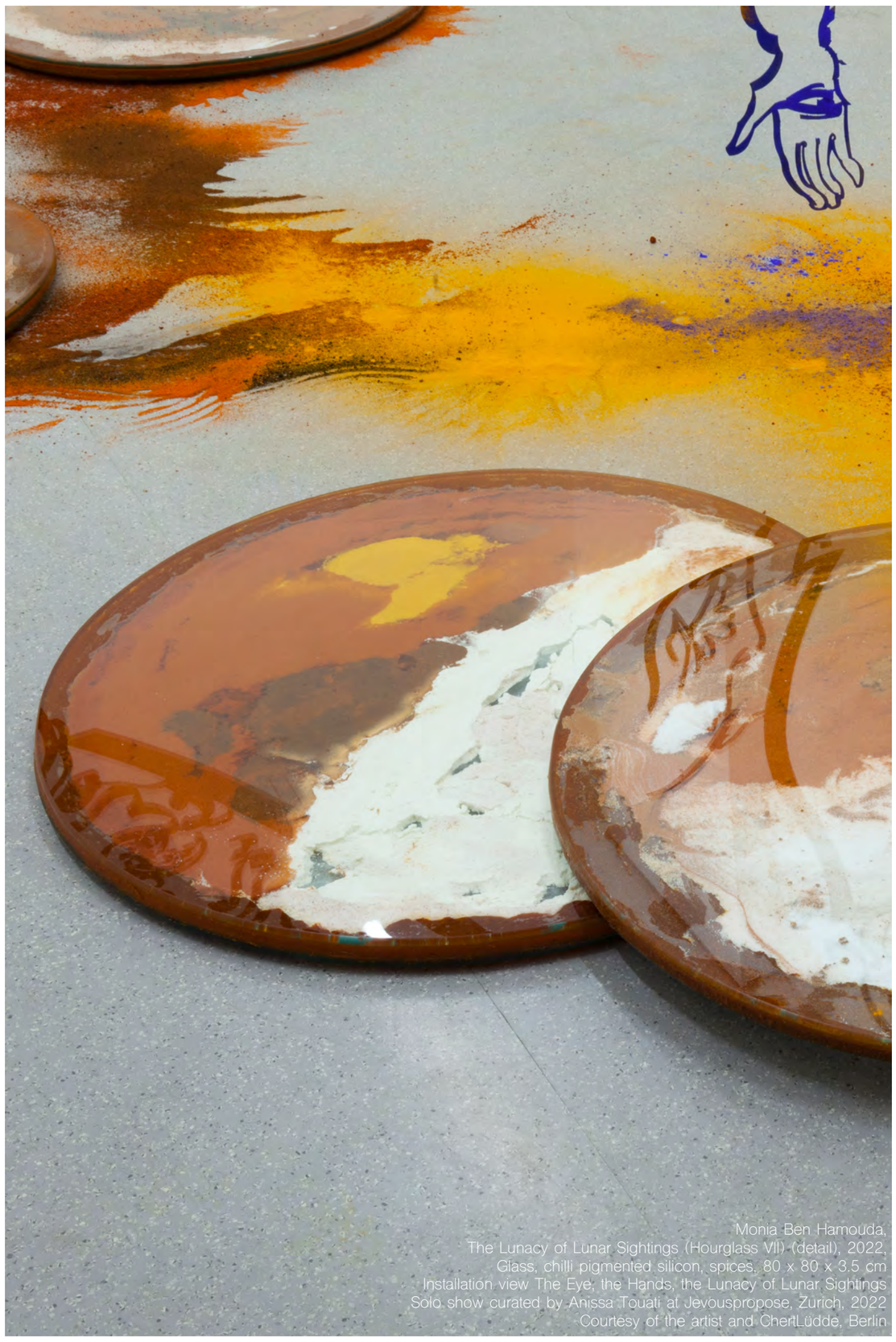


Monia Ben Hamouda
The Luncay of Lunar Sightings (Hourglass III), 2022
Glass, chilli pigmented silicon, spices, 80 x 80 x 3.5 cm
Installation view The Eye, the Hands, the Lunacy of Lunar Sightings
Solo show curated by Anissa Touati at Jevouspropose, Zurich, 2022
Courtesy of the artist and ChertLüdde, Berlin





Monia Ben Hamouda,
The Lunacy of Lunar Sightings (Hourglass VIII) (detail), 2022,
Glass, chilli pigmented silicon, spices, 80 x 80 x 3.5 cm
Installation view The Eye, the Hands, the Lunacy of Lunar Sightings
Solo show curated by Anissa Touati at Jevouspropose, Zurich, 2022
Courtesy of the artist and ChertLüdde, Berlin



Monia Ben Hamouda,
The Lunacy of Lunar Sightings (Hourglass VII) (detail), 2022,
Glass, chilli pigmented silicon, spices, 80 x 80 x 3.5 cm
Installation view The Eye, the Hands, the Lunacy of Lunar Sightings
Solo show curated by Anissa Touati at Jevouspropose, Zurich, 2022
Courtesy of the artist and ChertLüdde, Berlin

Monia Ben Hamouda
Hamra

Curated by
Karen Vestergaard Andersen
and Helen Nishijo Andersen

Ariel – Feminisms in the Aesthetics,
Copenhagen K

April 22, 2022 – June 5, 2022

With the exhibition Hamra, Monia Ben Hamouda creates an intricate sculptural installation for ARIEL, where a series of laser-cut metal structures, coated with vibrantly red colored spices, appears as floating calligraphy. Through Arabic religious and cultural practices, Ben Hamouda's works explore topics such as sociocultural identity, rituals, "fatigue", trauma, anger and politics.
The sculptural work is a continuation of Ben Hamouda's ongoing series Aniconism as Figurative Urgency.
As the title of the series suggests, the works explore aniconism, which in Islamic visual culture translates into the rejection of figurative representations of living beings or divine presence in favour of geometric shapes and calligraphy. The sculptures stand out in the air as calligraphic brushstrokes reminiscent of Islamic / Arabic characters, and yet they remain unreadable, while even assuming pseudo-animal-like touches.

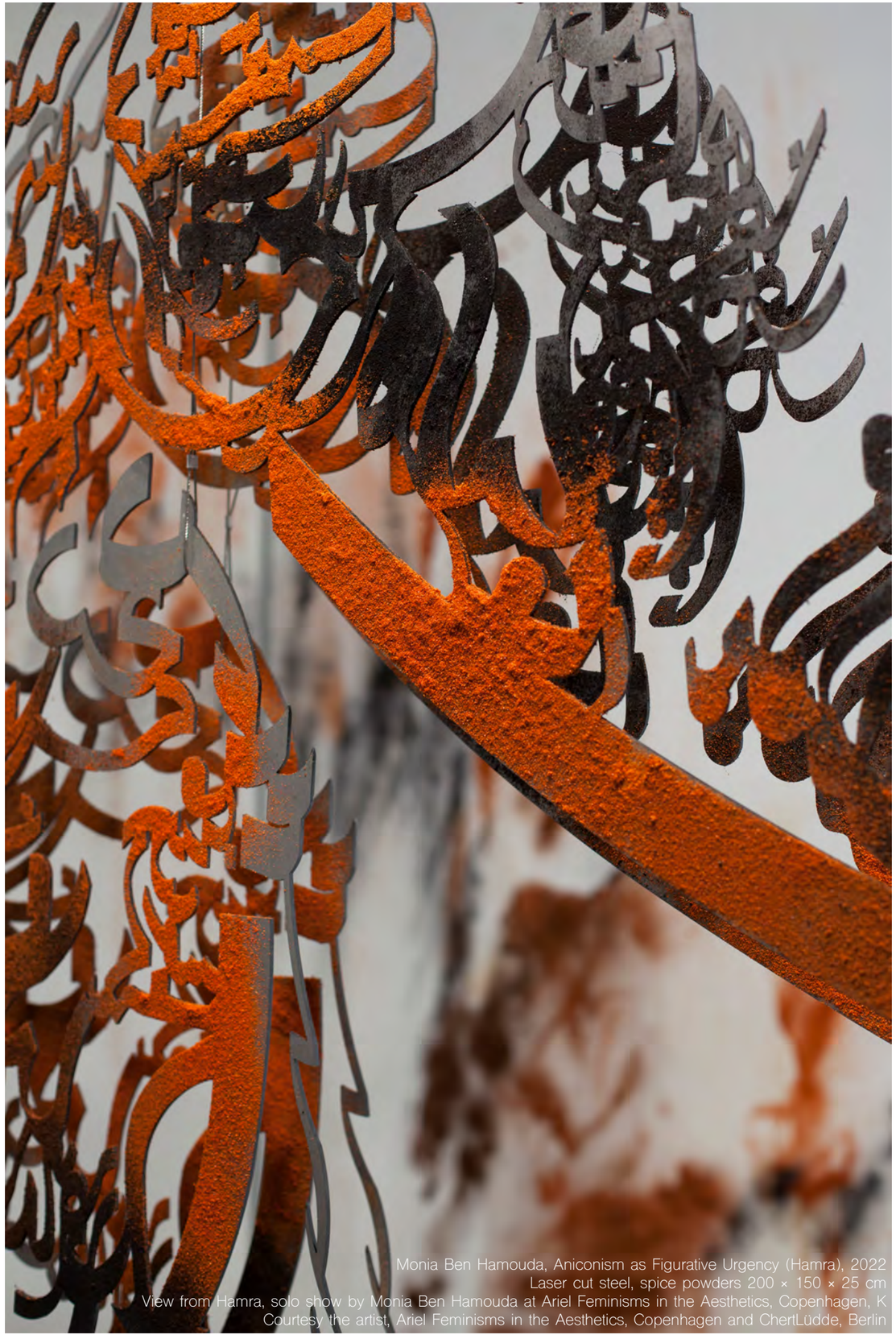
The title Hamra, meaning red in Arabic, connects to an investigation of inflicted trauma and means of ushering in heeling and empathy. The surface of the four-part metal structure, the walls and floor are alternately coated with powdered spices; chilly pepper and paprika, and traces the imagery of the sculpture while also creating a strong sense of each layer being inextricably linked together with the next. All elements are part of the same piece, part of the same sculpture, they are interconnected and rely on one another. Through weaving the lexicon of family traumas – those that in a heterocolonial patriarchy are passed down unequally, and that have to do with geography, geopolitics, language and vocabulary, misapprehensions and violence – Ben Hamouda is interested in how art holds and retains certain energy, how figuration and abstraction reverberate against one another to create emotional static.
In the most physical sense Ben Hamouda reconnects the piece with the color red. The medicinal, ceremonial, culinary and ritualistic properties of the applied spices have been used for protection for thousands of years. Above all the piece connects to the energy related to red; our roots, the material needs, our security, as with the place where you eat, work and live from. However, in Hamra it is also the colour of flags, cultures, wars, pride, power, anger and sudden strength. And curses.

Figuration is present yet absent in the installation. The sculptural form was made from a destroyed sketch of the drawing of a cow. All lines that once formed the body of an animal are now completely different, reaching abstraction. In the belief that humans are inextricably linked to their genetic family tree and the psycho-mental universe of their ancestors, Ben Hamouda reflects on her own roots. It is about the trauma of language, and the trauma of migration processes. Of leaving family behind, and forgetting mother tongues. With Hamra, Ben Hamouda shows us how deeply we are all marked by and influenced by the heritage of our ancestors. In the encounter between contrasting elements, she reveals the peculiar persistence and complex symbolism of human emotions.



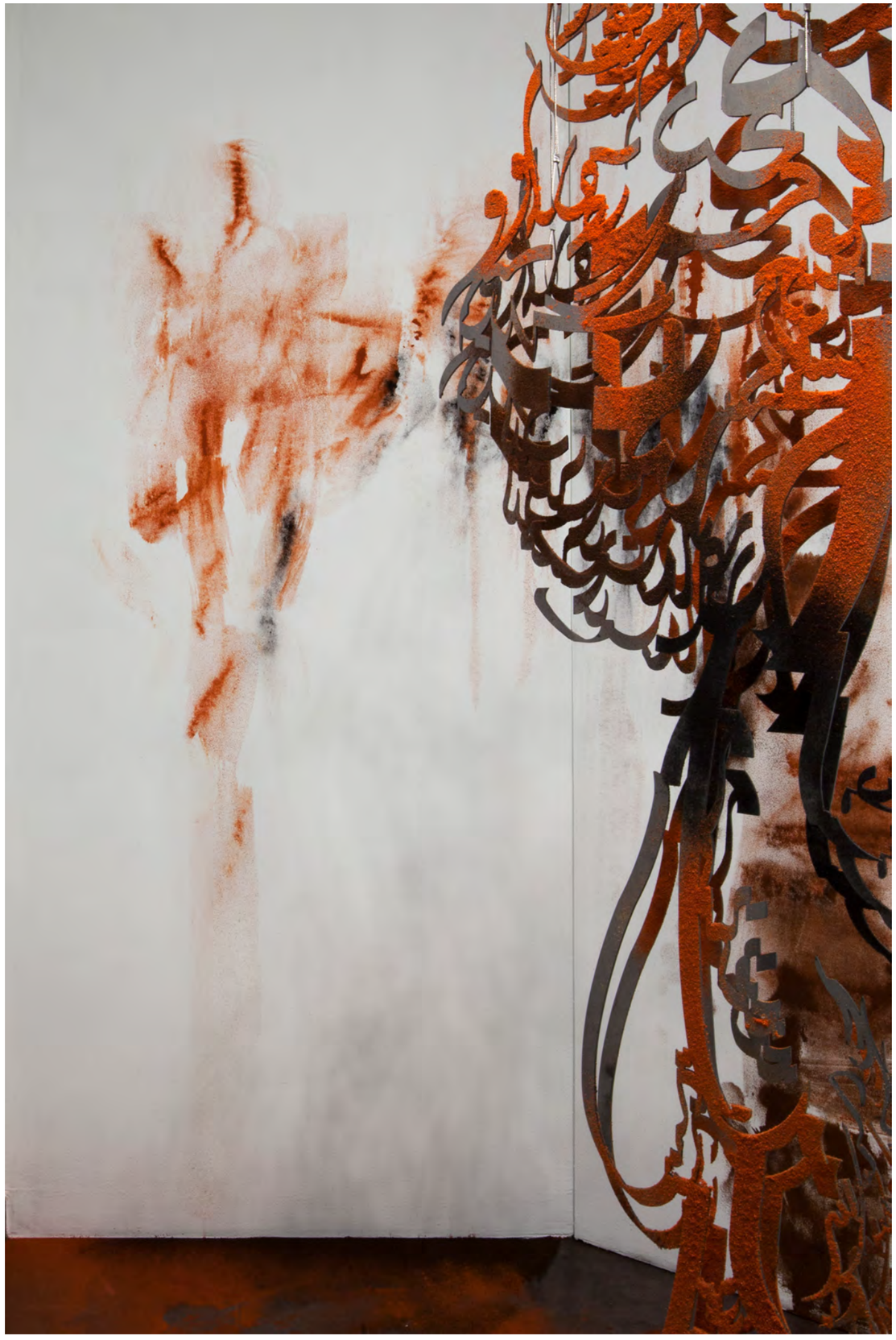
View from Hamra, solo show by Monia Ben Hamouda at Ariel Feminisms in the Aesthetics, Copenhagen, K
Courtesy the artist, Ariel Feminisms in the Aesthetics, Copenhagen and CherilLüdde, Berlin





Monia Ben Hamouda, Aniconism as Figurative Urgency (Hamra), 2022
Laser cut steel, spice powders 200 × 150 × 25 cm
View from Hamra, solo show by Monia Ben Hamouda at Ariel Feminisms in the Aesthetics, Copenhagen, K
Courtesy the artist, Ariel Feminisms in the Aesthetics, Copenhagen and ChertLüdde, Berlin











Miart 2022
w/ ChertLüdde
Booth B48
1st – 3rd April 2022

Miart 2022
w/ ChertLüdde
Booth B48
1st – 3rd April 2022

Installation view from *Night of Hinna*,
at ChertLudde – bungalow, Berlin DE



Installation view from *Night of Hinna*,
at ChertLudde – bungalow, Berlin DE

"In Tunisia, the hinnā night is the night before a ceremony. For me as a child, it was a time of immersion in my family's culture. Saadiya, my father's sister, would prepare the hinnā in a yellow plastic bowl, stained with the dark color of an orange pigment, which she had seen so many hinnā nights. When the mixture dried, she would take small portions and hold it in her mouth for a while, to rehydrate it with saliva, before pressing it onto my palms. A hypnotic gesture that lasted for hours. During the night of hinnā, the tattooed limbs are wrapped in cotton bands or silk scarves to protect the contours of the design and the success of the color. Hands and feet, thus wrapped, must remain motionless without touching the ground throughout the night, after which the bands are removed from the feet and hands and the dried hinnā is rinsed off. What remains is the imprint of that initial dark, full-bodied paste, which will last for many weeks. The sculptures on display crystallize this moment, one night only, not touching the ground, wrapped in a mellow color, and a spicy smell."

Monia Ben Hamouda (b. 1991, Milan) presents Night of Hinnā, a sculptural installation at Bungalow, ChertLüdde. Following the belief that each individual is inextricably connected to their family tree and the psycho-mental universe of their ancestors, Ben Hamouda attempts to master her influences in a contemporary and constantly changing landscape. Born into a Muslim community as the daughter of an Islamic calligrapher, Ben Hamouda navigates and confronts her ancestral heritage through what she calls a shamanic process – creating works that act as gestural exorcisms of the expectations placed upon her by family, tradition and the politicized present, drawing their power from the urgency of expression.

Borrowing from the tradition of Aniconism in Islamic calligraphy, Ben Hamouda uses this ancient strategy of circumvention in *Aniconism as Figurative Urgency (2021)*. Calligraphic brushstrokes that mimic Arabic text yet signify nothing, the iron sculptures are abstract forms that occasionally have the claws and hind legs of animals such as the dog – a creature considered impure, harām, in Islam, but which for the artist possess a strong life energy. Covered in fragrant spices such as cumin, curcuma and curry, the sculptures protect and are protected by their medicinal, ceremonial, culinary and ritualistic properties used for thousands of years.

The series Night of Hinnā (2021) is a questioning of the artist's identity through multiple lenses– that of her innermost self, her Arab family, and the western world. The sculptures, laced with hinnā and drawn in a nontraditional, western design, are scaled to the artist's hands– albeit slightly tight. Like a pair of ill-fitting gloves, Ben Hamouda's dim memory of decorating limbs reflects the paradox of a gesture that feels at once familiar and alien, the ownership of which is the artist's key to understanding her own personal history.

Joan Lee, ChertLüdde, 2021

Aniconism as Figurative Urgency (Thalaathah), 2021
Laser cut steel, spice powders
177×93×0.3cm

Installation view from *Night of Hinna*,
at ChertLudde – bungalow, Berlin DE



Aniconism as Figurative Urgency (I thnan), 2021
Laser cut steel, spice powders
136.7×144×0.3 cm

Installation view from *Night of Hinna*,
at ChertLudde – bungalow, Berlin DE





Aniconism as Figurative Urgency (Wahid), 2021
Laser cut steel, spice powders
183×147×0.3cm

Installation view from *Night of Hinna*,
at ChertLudde – bungalow, Berlin DE

Night of Hinna (Aamti Saadiya) II, 2021
Synthetic leather, henna, iron wire
Dimensions variable

Installation view from *Night of Hinna*,
at ChertLudde – bungalow, Berlin DE

Night of Hinna (Jedda Mabrouka), 2021
Synthetic leather, henna, iron wire
Dimensions variable

Installation view from *Night of Hinna*,
at ChertLudde – bungalow, Berlin DE

Night of Hinna (Aamti Saadiya) I, 2021
Synthetic leather, henna, iron wire
Dimensions variable

Installation view from *Night of Hinna*,
at ChertLudde – bungalow, Berlin DE



Installation view from Two Suns Upon Shatt al Jarid, solo show by Monia Ben Hamouda at Pols, Valencia ES

Monia Ben Hamouda
Two Suns Upon Shatt al Jarid

Curated by
Paula García-Masedo,
Carles Àngel Saurí,
Néstor García

Pols,
Valencia, Spain

Oct 30 - Dec 19, 2021

Like grafts, assembled with orange tree branches and parts of palm trees, forced to stay together, guardians of space.

Monia Ben Hamouda's work weaves the web of tales and memories of her childhood and family history, of Tunisian origin. Her practice conjures an ancestral heritage through ritual, consisting in the way the artist places herself in front of the materials, chooses, assembles and composes them, configuring a process close to the shamanic. In this exhibition, large-scale elements reminiscent of fragments of doors, of architectural elements with geometries that allude to Arab constructions, rhyme the space. They configure between them rooms, voids, spaces that, perhaps, allow to be inhabited, offer shelter, refuge, protection. Identity and the fractures that are present in it, in the stories shaped by the encounter between the inherited, the traditional, the networks of affection given and built throughout life, and the globalized present are expressed here as elements whose material and formal reminiscences let affections and influences ooze in complex and discordant compositions.

Historically, architecture has been a space of physical and spiritual protection, of refuge but also of connection, a device that invokes a transcendence that surpasses the earthly and the presentist. The relationship between spaces in Arab architecture is about combination, repetition and variation, creating a complete interior world, filled with what is necessary for living not only in the real but also in the imaginary. It invokes a beyond, articulated through abstract and meticulous mechanisms that unravel on the most minute scale, in which calligraphy, geometry and the use of color articulate the formal and conceptual fabric of space. The door in some cases summons the sovereign authority, in others it is that element that unfolds in the arch, and orders a way of living based on the filtering of the intimate life and of the visible and the invisible.

Covered with aromatic spices, which carry with them their millenary medicinal, ceremonial and sensorial properties, these large sculptures articulate a previously decontextualized space as a habitable void. And then they unravel, they unfold. On the illumination of the exhibition space appear pieces similar to graphic elements that write in the air, reverberating with the calligraphy of the plasterwork that traditionally springs from the geometries of arches and Islamic doors.

The mixture of elements, identities and scales is subtly evident in another part of the space, invoking the impossibility of purity or control. It suggests a slow time, perhaps alluding to the historical, like an hourglass whose unit of measurement is long scale. It is a frame containing powders inside, spices like those that stain the larger pieces. These move slightly with each change or each time they are exhibited, as if it were a slow migratory movement.

The rhythms deployed in space are articulated on a variety of scales, from pigment to monument, from the movement of the hand to that of trans historical influences. A gradient, the idea of the existence of a link, arises in the irrational line that connects the private with the collective histories, the immediate with what remains.

Paula García-Masedo, 2021





It's a Windy Day in Tataouine II, 2021
Wood, fabrics, spice powders
340x85x28cm





It's a Windy Day in Tataouine, 2021
Wood, fabrics, spice powders
334x130x35cm

Installation view from Two Suns Upon Shatt al
Jarid, solo show by Monia Ben Hamouda at Pols, Valencia ES





Hourglass II, 2021
Glass, wood, spice powders, sand
94x61x5,5cm



Chandelier (Taronger i Palmeres) II, 2021
Wood, wax, fabrics, chilli powder
120x161x110cm









Installation view from Two Suns Upon Shatt al
Jarid, solo show by Monia Ben Hamouda at Pols, Valencia ES





Chandelier (Taronger i Palmeres), 2021
Wood, wax, fabrics, chilli powder
120x161x110cm



Blair, 2020
Fabric, wood, curry powder, plaster, curcuma powder, acrylic paint.
Variable dimensions.
endlessnostalghia.com



Blair, 2020
Fabric, wood, curry powder, plaster, curcuma powder, acrylic paint.
Variable dimensions.
endlessnostalghia.com

"They exist as mandalas, created in order to be destroyed, active only in the process through which they were made. Alive in distant, lost memories, they come to us as heaps of different, inseparable powders, eternally joined, simultaneously exhausted and accomplished."

Treti Galaxie

101 Numeri Pari is proud to present Endless Nostalghia, a project curated by Treti Galaxie with works by Giorgio Andreotta Calò, Monia Ben Hamouda, Michele Gabriele, Lucia Leuci, Namsal Siedlecki.

The project creates a relation between a series of works by Italian artists and the locations where Andrej Tarkovskij (1932–1986) filmed Nostalghia (1983), the sixth and second to last movie by the Russian director, which was also the first realized out of the Soviet Union. The strongly autobiographical picture is filled with a constant feeling of pain and longing for the director's home country, sentiments that are underlined by the framing of the Italian landscapes, that constantly recall Tarkovskij's beloved Russian countryside.

Endless Nostalghia wishes to pull together the personal sentiment of nostalgia expressed in the movie by Tarkovskij and the one universally felt during the COVID-19 emergency lockdown, when it was forbidden to leave the house, cross borders and visit the places we love.

Monia Ben Hamouda's work Blair (2020), conceived for this exhibition, installed in Piazza del Campidoglio, in Rome.
For a brief period of time each place hosted an "impossible" solo show, that only exists through its photographic documentation, highlighting the idealized and detached nature of every communication carried out through digital devices.
The material will be presented on endlessnostalghia.com, a never-ending webpage. Built like a short movie where the passing of time is entrusted to each user's scrolling pace, the website presents in a linear sequence a series of exhibitions that are always different, but grafted onto the same structure.

Among the objectives of this initiative are the valorization and promotion of the territories that hosted the filming of the movie, in order to invite the public to physically visit the location of each intervention at a critical time for tourism and culture, on both a regional and national scale. This is why, over time, the website will be updated with secret contents, suggestions and itineraries that will allow everyone to explore, not only virtually, the chapters that make up the exhibition.

Blair, 2020
Fabric, wood, curry powder, plaster,
curcuma powder, acrylic paint.
Variable dimensions.
endlessnostalghia.com



Blair II, 2020
Fabric, wood, curry powder, turmeric powder, acrylic paint, plaster
160x45x20cm



Blair III, 2020
Fabric, wood, curry powder, turmeric powder, acrylic paint, plaster
75x50x18cm





Gymnasium, 2020
Ink, silicone, acrilic paint,
glass, aluminum,
30x40x40cm

Untitled (purse), 2019
Feathers, branches, fabric, water, plaster.
90x60x20cm

Wore during "Superhost", group show
Like a Little Disaster, Polignano a Mare IT







Prediction, 2019
Olive wood, resin, synthetic clay, fabric, plaster, polish
90x110x100 cm,

Love Data – Alios 16ème Biennale D'Art Contemporain at
Théâtre Cravey Pavilion, La Teste-De-Bûch, France





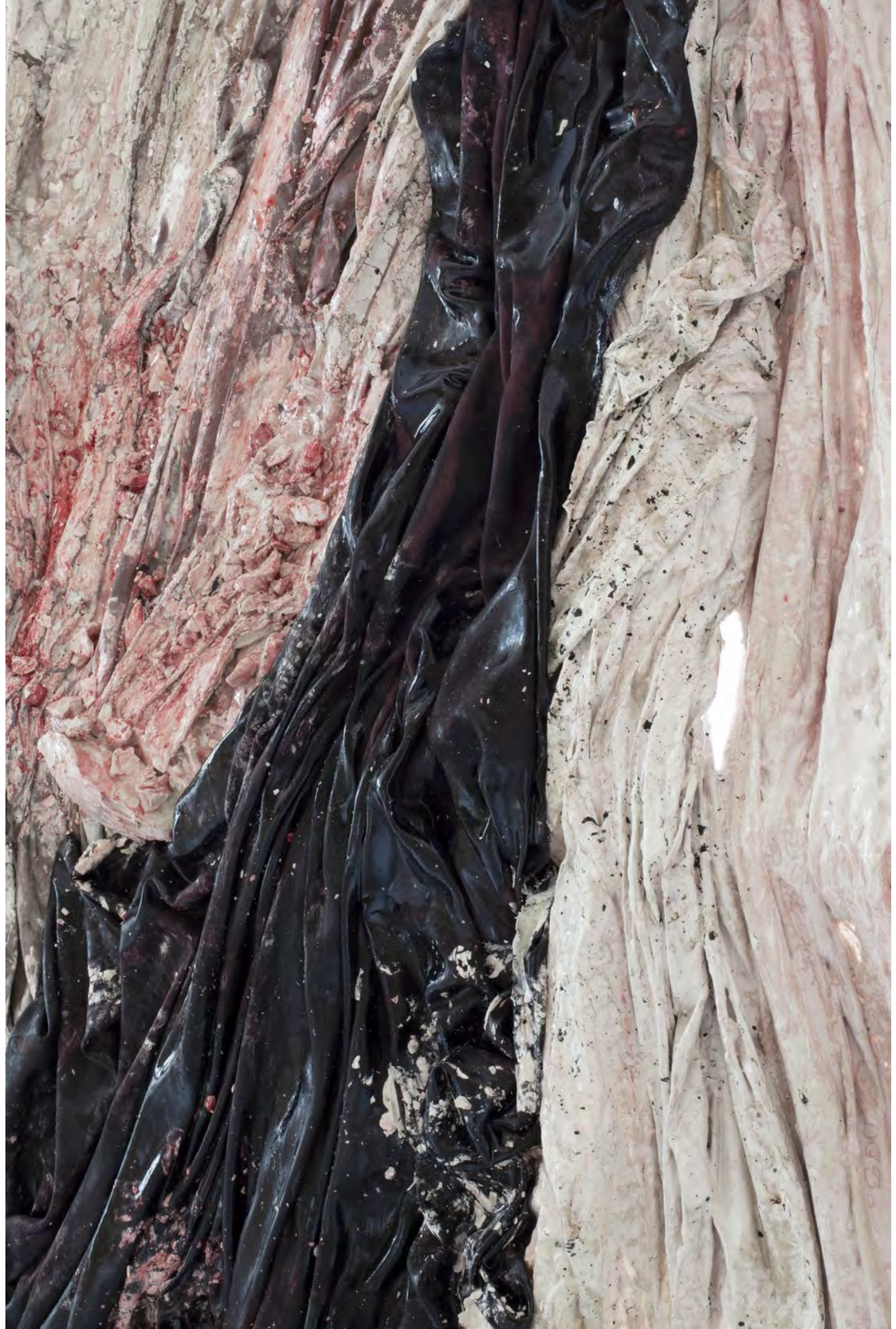






Prediction, 2019
Wood, resin, synthetic clay,
fabric, plaster, polish, concrete,
190x110cm

Love Data – Alios 16ème Biennale D'Art Contemporain at
Théâtre Cravey Pavilion, La Teste-De-Bûch, France







Prediction, 2019
Wood, resin, synthetic clay,
fabric, plaster, polish, concrete,
200x110cm

Love Data - Alios 16ème Biennale D'Art Contemporain at
Théâtre Cravey Pavilion, La Teste-De-Bûch, France



Prediction, 2019
Wood, resin, synthetic clay, fabric, plaster, polish, concrete
190x110cm

Love Data – Alios 16ème Biennale D'Art Contemporain at Théâtre Cravey Pavilion, La Teste-De-Bûch, France




CHOISEUL



Prediction, 2019
Piano, Wood, resin, synthetic clay, fabric, plaster, polish, water,
165 x 210 x 170 cm

Love Data – Alios 16ème Biennale D'Art Contemporain at Théâtre Cravey Pavilion, La Teste-De-Bûch, France









Donna Demone, 2019 – Monia Ben Hamouda + Lucia Leuci
Feathers, resin, clay, oil, glass.
60x40x10cm







Trophy (Extended protection), 2019
Plaster, iron, water, plastic, feathers, cables.
120x45x30cm

Widely reported: the invasion of non-organic matter in soft tissues. Extensions of the senses and emotions as devices designed to fit perfectly in human hands. The intimate relation between bodies and technology, a mixing of fluids with fluids, of bodily matters with industrially derived compounds. The embrace of titanium and polymers that keeps hearts beating at a steady pace as the very idea of being human is slowly disintegrating.
Bodies displayed as intrinsically artificial. Machines displayed as intrinsically human. Borders between subject and object becoming obsolete. This is the end of (hu)-man in the peak of the Anthropocene. This is not the era of ours only. This is the era of human as refugee. This is the shift where we become posthuman.

(Have you ever tried to understand reality without dichotomy and essentialism?)

A political coalition between the line of affinity. Fragile talismans assembled with the promise of power. As humans to reality, they too are linked and forced to remain together, in a radical now where a choice is made in perpetuum; to get closer or to part?
The relation between object-subject blurred. Dynamic premises: you find yourself connected to/ through this object, as it is to/through you. Inseparable, you are in relation to reality. In order to be anchored in reality, you need to accept another order; you need to acknowledge the world as magical.
A reality that is not human-centered, but where Things exist equally. It is in resonance with your own body that the amulets and talismans will gain their power. In the grip of a hand, they will connect to the body as extensions. These seemingly passive objects, intertwined with your own being, intermingled as gateways between your own limitations and the outer-world. Reaching out like tentacles towards the horizon.
Where the world collide in an omnipotent and everlasting commitment.

‘‘ Monia Ben Hamouda’s works demands us to recognise them as -something-, something eerie, something that might not have been present to begin with, but never the less is evoked and conjured. For me, there is really magic in these works. Because these objects meet me on a level where I have to see the world as not only experienced and knowledged by humans, but wild beyond our senses. A world where the atoms and cells and microorganisms of my own body is in a constant flux, and are constantly being replaced. ‘‘

Camilla Edström Ödemark, curator and gallerist, CC Gallery



Lay Down Arms (dog), 2019
Leather sofa, plaster, string, water, plastic,
feathers, sweater. 255x180x155cm

Installation view from *Extended protection, Allegoric Defence,* at CC Gallery, Sweden

Monia Ben Hamouda, Exhaust, 2018
Silicone, pigment, water, wax, plastic, plaster.
100cm approx.

Exhaust, 2018
view at Orrido 120 residency



It was right / Even though it felt wrong, 2017
silicone, water
Variable measures

Installation view from Assiette ou virage et derapage, SomethingMustBreak Milan IT

MONIA BEN HAMOUDA

Chert
Lüdde

selma feriani