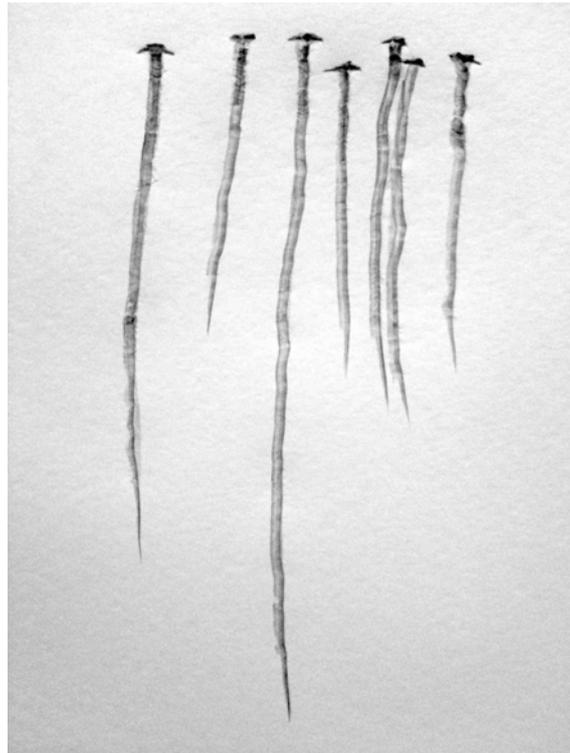


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YAZID OULAB: CONCERNING THE SPIRITUAL IN ART

(XVA GALLERY, DUBAI, UAE – 21 November 2009 – 13 January 2010) On 21 November, the Algerian artist Yazid Oulab will make his debut at XVA Gallery. 'Concerning the Spiritual in Art', is an exhibition curated by Mr. Brahim Alaoui, former Directeur du Musée de l'Institut du Monde Arabe (IMA), Paris: "The works of Yazid Oulab are, for the most part, autobiographical and rich in a multiplicity of meanings, they bear witness to contemporary artistic practice and a spiritual path nourished by the heritage and symbolism of Sufi philosophy. Through his work Oulab tirelessly explores the themes of connection and the handing down of tradition, which are given life in objects that borrow both from religious imagery and the prosaic world of the worker."



COMMENTARY BY MR. BRAHIM ALAOUÏ:

Yazid Oulab's work makes a strong impression thanks both to its spiritual dimension as well as the depth, generosity and scope of its message: "From the West, I have inherited form, from the East, the word." What is surprising about this artist is the paradox inherent in his work: it manages to be radical and contemporary, while at the same time rooting itself firmly in an ancient spiritual tradition, a tradition whose signs are renewed and whose meaning is thus intensified. Yazid is one of a number of Arab artists living in Europe whose mentality is marked by the culture and ties of affection that link the opposing shores of the Mediterranean.

The works of Yazid Oulab are, for the most part, autobiographical and rich in a multiplicity of meanings; his installations, drawings, sculptures and videos bear witness to contemporary artistic practice and a spiritual path nourished by the heritage and symbolism of Sufi philosophy. Through his work he tirelessly explores the themes of connection and the handing down of tradition which are given life in objects that borrow both from religious imagery and the prosaic world of the worker. This is evident in videos such as *Le Souffle du récitant comme signe* (The Breath of a Man Reciting Prayers as a Sign) (2003) with its smoke dance of four incense sticks, echoing the rubaiyat (quatrains) of Rûmi, and *Percussion graphique* (Graphic Percussion) (2004) where, to the sound of a chant, a hand draws patterns in trance-like movements. However Sufism is only one aspect of his formal vocabulary. In 2006, he began developing the theme of the nail, this particular motif referring to the manual work on building sites often carried out by immigrants, as was the case for the artist himself on his arrival in France. Some examples of these nails in chalk, glass and clay are presented here in the form of graphic or sculptural works, and they would also seem to refer to the cuneiform letters of Sumer and Babylonia. For Yazid Oulab, the nail remains the tool that allows us to link one culture to another, memory to the future.



Yazid Oulab is also concerned by the confrontation between urban and natural spaces; this led him to create an installation on the dunes of the Sahara in Timimoun (March 2007) consisting of scaffolding measuring 12m in height, suggesting “a ladder climbing the mountain of illusion”. An ephemeral installation creating a link between mystical speculation in a desert context and the tradition of Land Art. During his period in residence at the Atelier Calder in June 2009, Yazid Oulab took the opportunity of using the space given to him to create a new series of pieces re-examining themes recently developed by him in his work, including rope scaffolding occupying the entire height of the workshop and sculptures made of wire. In the work of Yazid Oulab, these two materials are symbolic of ties and bonds, for what interests the artist is to create a work that links him both to his environment and also to the spectator.

It may thus be said that the work of Yazid Oulab is a story in movement that rises both materially and spiritually and for which he creates objects that symbolically link one culture to another.

YAZID OULAB: BIOGRAPHY

Yazid Oulab was born in Algeria 1958. Yazid Oulab is best known in France where he has

lived and worked since 1983. Yazid Oulab studied at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Marseille. Since 1983, Yazid Oulab has been exhibiting works that are entirely dedicated to the vibrations of the intangible, through carefully orchestrated mystical resonances. After he had taken part in a large number of prestigious exhibitions such as *Traces du Sacré* (Signs of the Sacred) at the Pompidou Centre in 2008, Yazid Oulab joined the famous artists' residence, the Atelier Calder, in France in 2009. His work is present in several public collections in France, in Europe and elsewhere, including Les Abattoirs Museum, Toulouse, France, the Fondation Musée d'Art Moderne Grand Duc Jean, Luxembourg and the Musée National d'Art Moderne (MNAM), Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris. Yazid lives and works in Marseille (France).



Terre cuite et fil à plomb , 2007

Located in the historical part of Dubai, **XVA** is a vibrant art space that exhibits a stimulating array of contemporary paintings, sculptures and art installations. It exposes the works of regional and international artists and designers. Since 2003, XVA has been a meeting point for the cultural community of Dubai, contributing to raise the profile of the Emirate through a rich cultural programme, including the Bastakiya Art Fair which is hosted by the gallery. XVA also encompasses a boutique hotel and award-winning vegetarian café. Visit www.xvagallery.com

Contact details for all press enquiries, interview scheduling and high-resolution image requests:

Rosie Hayes, XVA Gallery Director

Tel. +9714 3535383

Fax. +97143535988

Email: rosie@xvagallery.com

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