



**ADEL BENTOUNSI**

**BURN**

**January 2<sup>nd</sup> to March 31<sup>st</sup> 2021**

**PRESS SHEETS**



## **ADEL BENTOUNSI**

**(ALGERIA, 1982)**

Adel Bentounsi is an Algerian contemporary visual artist born in 1982 in Annaba, Algeria. He graduated from the *Annaba School of Fine Arts* in 2007. In 2013 Bentounsi entered the *Dunkerque Higher School of Arts* to complete his studies.

The artist works on existential questions and tries to interpret the reality translated by the societies from different angles and points of view, mostly religious, political, or social. He believes that creating art is an act of genuine resistance and envisions the work of art as a collection of debris from random accidents.

Adel Bentounsi's artistic practice is extensively wide and exercised in different media, such as photography, video art, performance, theatre, painting, drawing, installation, and graphic art, which he all considers as osmotically intertwined.

Bentounsi's work is part of important Middle Eastern and European art collections and has been shown in North Africa, the USA, France and the Middle East, most notably at the *Dak'Art Off Biennial* (Senegal, 2014, 2016 & 2018), at the *Quinzaine des Réalistes*, *Festival de Cannes* (France, 2016), the *Beirut Art Fair* (Lebanon, 2016 & 2017), at the *Institut du Monde Arabe* (France, 2018), and at the *Wallach Art Gallery of Columbia University* (USA, 2019).

## ADEL BENTOUNSI

### BURN

The art of Bentounsi is ever morphing, a fluid reflection of its time.

Born and raised in Algeria, Adel Bentounsi lives and works between Paris and Annaba, but his eyes are ever moving and recording the life encounters he makes in Europe and the USA, which he later distils and represents in a variety of art forms, ranging from drawings and paintings, to installations and performances. His emotions and ideas sometimes also translate into music and theatre, or film.

The form truly knows no boundary in the artist's philosophy, but rather derives its essence from the subject matter, within the universe of the moment that triggered its artistic creation. Bentounsi described the latter process as series of random accidents, real life encounters, which he then uses to materialize elements of the visual metaphors they translate as into in his mind. By doing so, that which was apparently random slowly becomes seemingly more structured into what I would qualify as poetic expressions of revolution.

For if Bentounsi does not see himself as an *activist artist*, the works he creates and shares with us are nonetheless profoundly engaging. Perhaps it is the fact that he does not overly opine his readings and renderings of the world that surrounds him that leaves the bigger part of the engagement up to us, viewers. In doing so, the artist activates our own criticism, our sense of belonging to something bigger, something intertwined and co-existing.

To me, this is the most subtle form of activism, that which raises our inner question marks.

Introducing Adel Bentounsi's work rather intuitively led to its presentation in various media, brushing on a wide range of subjects which all collide into this underlying idea that a better world, the very one most of us aspire to, must be born out of the ashes of the old one, which still relies on the prejudices of the past.

Bentounsi's work is very contemporary. When it interrogates the past, it is purely as its persisting representation in the present; a present he invites us to rethink, to acknowledge, remember, and then burn.

His drawings, paintings, sculptures, and installations carry with them his own journey but also call to core existential truths that reach beyond their social, political and geographic contexts. In some of the works presented here, like *Arab Bookshelf*, *I don't know how to read*, *CV (Curriculum Vitae)*, or *La (No)*, the artist operates as a conceptual portraitist of a female contemporary Arab world in search of greater modernity.

Other installations like *Muffled Speech*, *The Ladder*, or his series of black and white photographs titled *Emergency Exit* are more universal in nature but converge in their representation of the historic changes currently unfolding throughout the Western world, as well as at the centre of many Muslim societies. Globalization has brought our societies unprecedentedly closer to each other. Understanding each other and ourselves within this context is paramount if we are to share the future. Again, these works rely on poetic symbolism and the artistic language introduced by Marcel Duchamp and propagated by the great many who came after him.

Adel Bentounsi's drawings recurrently appear as surrealistic conceptualisations of emotions, of fundamental truths or of historical wrongs. In his powerful *Négrier (Slave Ship)*, which at first sight resembles a bombshell, but on closer inspection reveals a top view of the infamous slave ships, hundreds of chained up bodies are morphing into a monstrous being, ready to explode.

*Spectacle 01 and 02* are two sides of the same coin, which is also titled *My Skull is not a Football*. With this painting and sculpture of a skull made from a football, the Algerian artist underlines the increasingly massive and overwhelming flow of information (fake or not) which we must deal with on a daily basis in order to understand our world. As a visual allegory of political manipulation through modern media, the ensemble also emerges as a new sort of *memento mori*.

*Mountain of Ash* and *Haraga (The Burned)* are perhaps the most sombre visions in this exhibition. I personally interpret them as manifestations of the fatal promise entertained by the migratory business. Growing inequalities, the age of information, climate change and political instabilities and their economic consequences all contribute to an increase in the migratory flows from the South to the North. These in turn gave birth to illegal and abusive businesses which exploit the weak and feed on those who have no other choice than to abandon their home. These two works on paper are tainted by the darkness of this contemporary history. In *Haraga*, a man is falling into a burning boat. Why would anyone do that, I ask myself. In *Mountain of Ash*, a dark and shiny mass seems to rise like a killer wave in the dead of the night – a vision all too frequent under the Mediterranean moonlight.

His latest encounter was with a pool of mud in which all sorts of animals had left a print of their passage, giving the full picture the allure of a fighting ring. Nature again inspired Adel Bentounsi to create a strong work in charcoal on canvas, which he titled *Bousculade (Jostling)* to represent the distress and the encounter, a testimony to our struggles and trajectories.

So, it is perhaps no coincidence that *Burn* presented itself as a thought-provoking title for this show. Not only because Bentounsi's body of work acts as an invitation to burn outdated ideas to allow new ones to flourish, but also because the artist walked the talk when he decided to burn all his work in 2013, to start anew, to free himself from his education, from his background, and from his own outdated ideas – and like a bird of fire, to be reborn.

Klaus Pas

January 2021



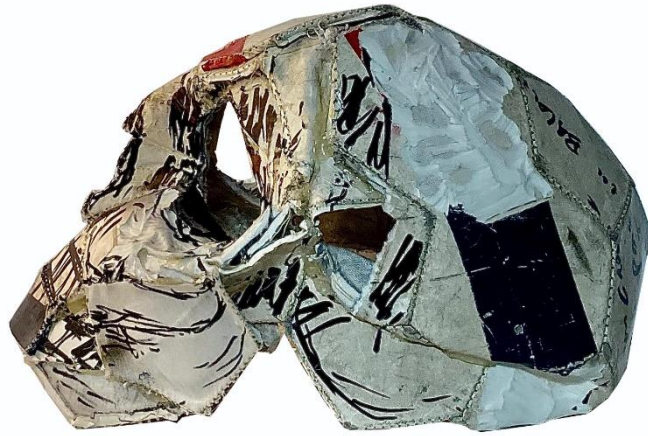


***Spectacle 01*** (2020) – EUR 2'800

Mixed Media on Board

100 x 80 cm





***Spectacle 02*** (2020) – EUR 1'900

Football Pieces Assemblage

30 x 15 cm



*L'Échelle (The Ladder)* (2018) – EUR 7'000

Steel - Edition of 3

300 x 150 cm



*CV (Curriculum Vitae)* (2019) – EUR 6'000

Cooker & Stickers - Edition of 3

20 x 16.5 cm





*Ma Ana Bi Kari' (I don't know how to read)* (2019) – EUR 4'500

Neon Light Installation - Edition of 3, in different colors (+1 AP)

37 x 145 cm



*Bibliothèque Arabe (Arab Bookshelf)* (2017) – EUR 6'000

Library, Kitchenware and Coran - Edition of 3

200 x 140 cm

*Bibliothèque Arabe (Arab Bookshelf)* (2017)

Photograph of the Installation - EUR 150

Inkjet Print on Fine Art Paper - Edition of 30

24 x 20 cm



*Parole Étouffée (Muffled Word)* (2019) – EUR 4'500

Mixed Media Installation

70 x 25 cm





***Haraga (The Burned)*** (2019) – EUR I'200

Watercolor and Glitter on Paper

29.7 x 42 cm

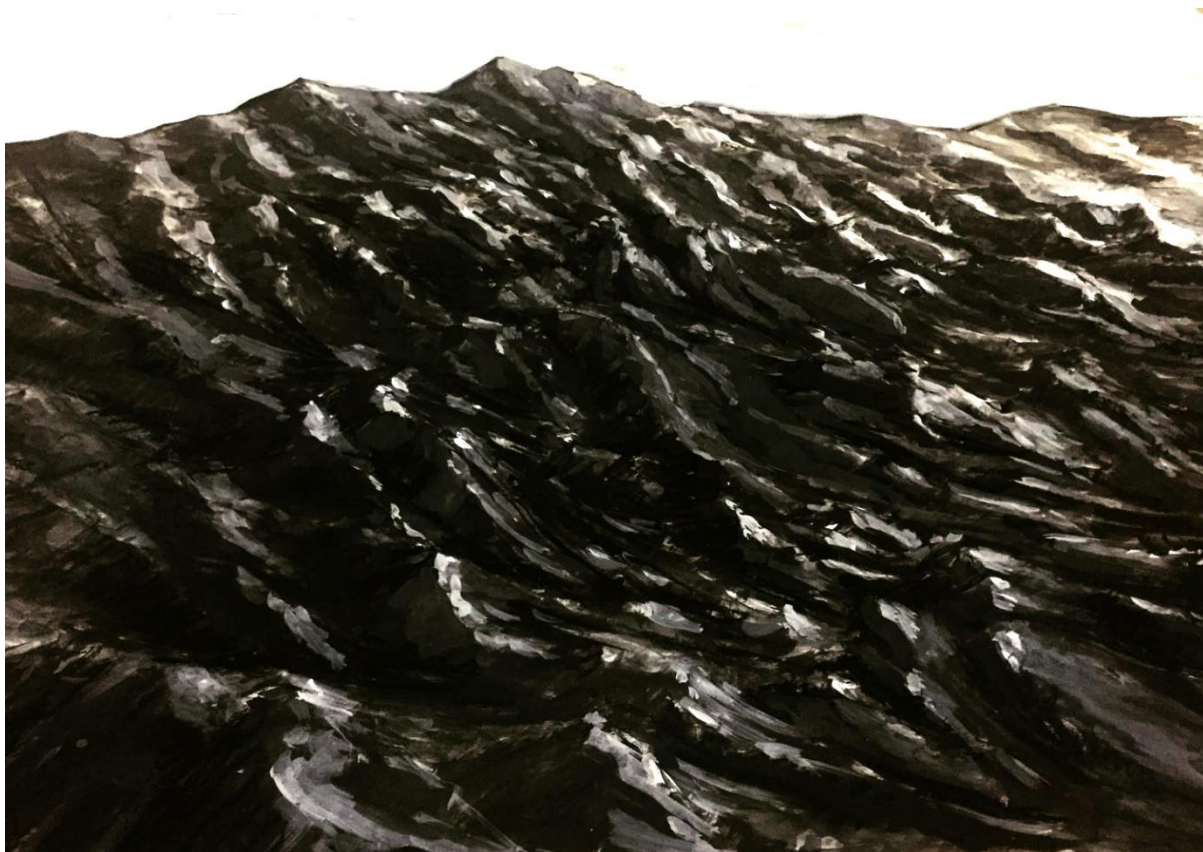




***Les Moutonneux (The Sheep)*** (2019) – EUR 1'200

Watercolor and Glitter on Paper

29.7 x 42 cm



*Montagne de Cendre (Mountain of Ash)* (2019) – RESERVED

Charcoal on Paper

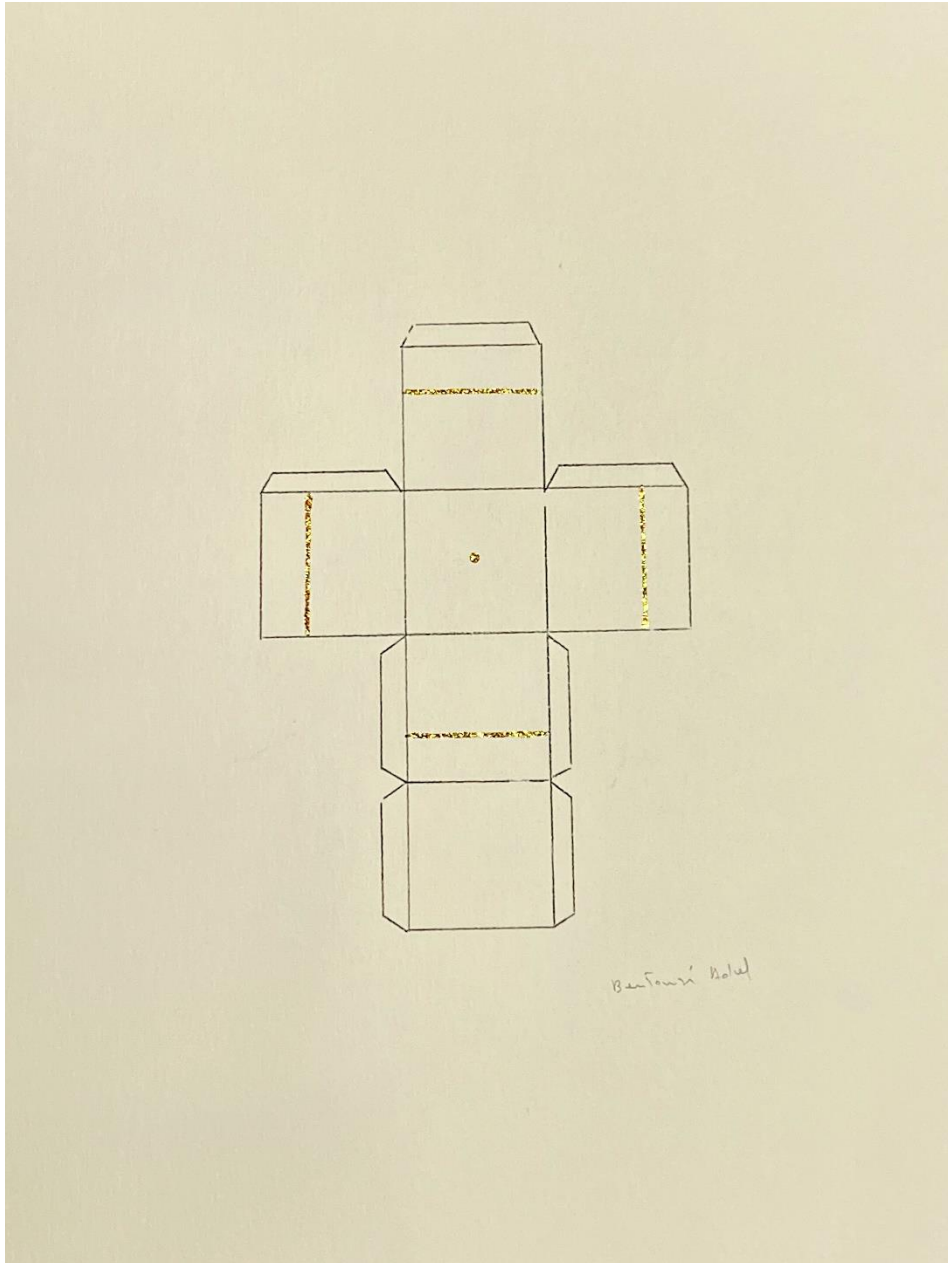
80 x 120 cm



***La (No)*** (2019) – EUR 600

Inkjet Print on Fine Art Paper - Edition of 6

29.7 x 42 cm

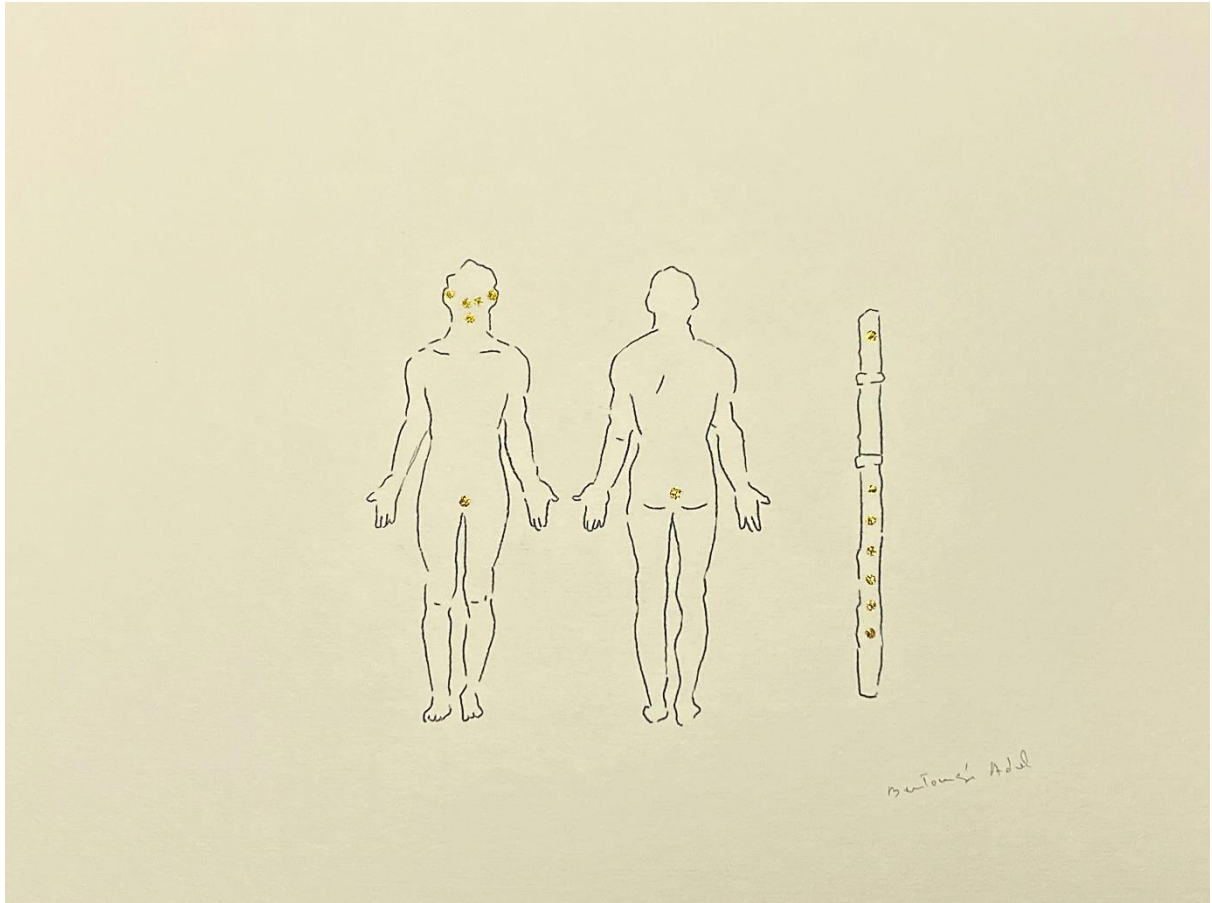


***Maquette d'un Cube (Blueprint of a Cube)*** (2014) – EUR 900

Pencil and Glitter on Paper

29.7 x 42 cm





***Flûte (Flute)*** (2014) – EUR 900

Pencil and Glitter on Paper

29.7 x 42 cm



***Partout (Everywhere)*** (2014) – RESERVED

Pencil and Glitter on Paper

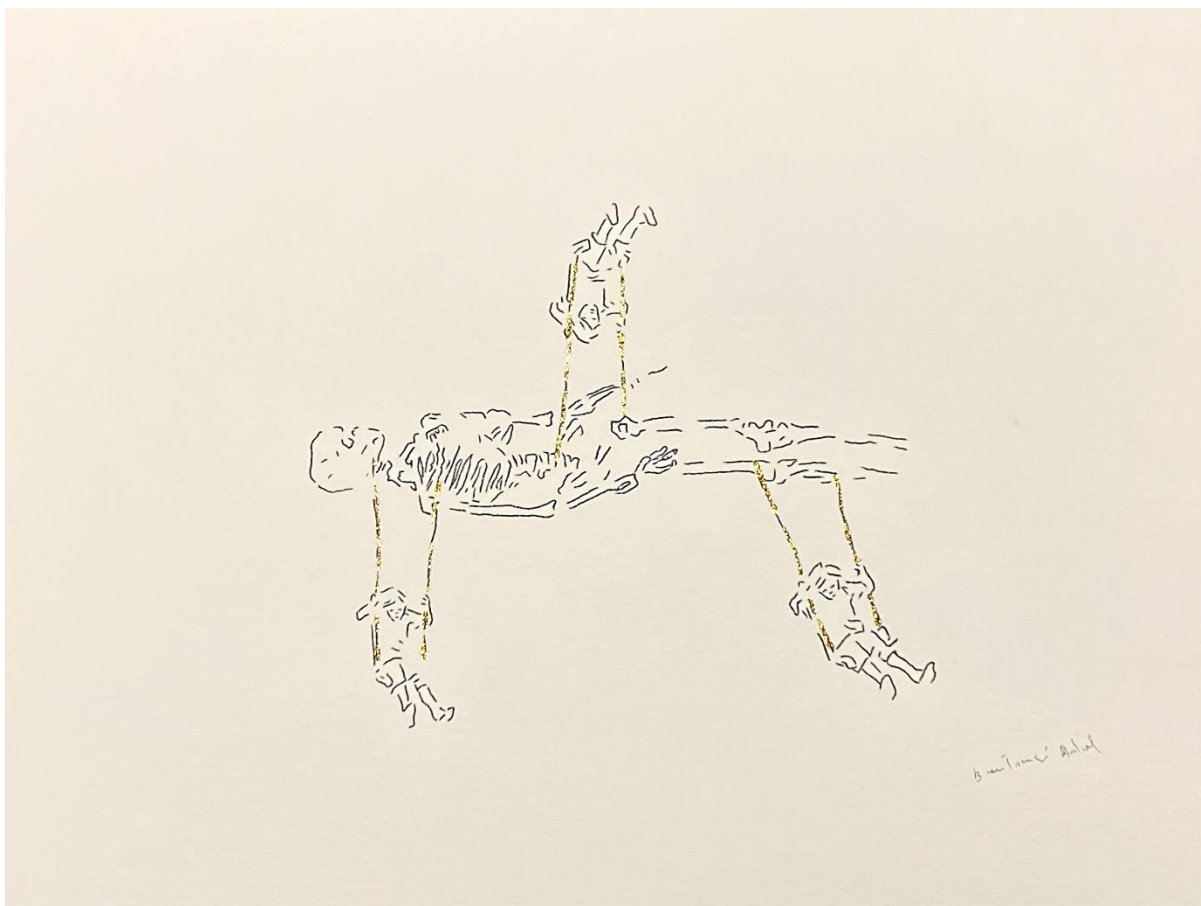
29.7 x 42 cm



***Négrier (Slave Ship)*** (2014) – RESERVED

Pencil and Glitter on Paper

29.7 x 42 cm



***Balançoire (Swing)*** (2014) – EUR 900

Pencil and Glitter on Paper

29.7 x 42 cm





*Issue de Secours (Emergency Exit) 10* (2020) – EUR 300

Inkjet Print on Fine Art Paper - Edition of 30

29.7 x 42 cm



*Issue de Secours (Emergency Exit) 03* (2020) – EUR 300

Inkjet Print on Fine Art Paper - Edition of 30

42 x 29.7 cm





***Issue de Secours (Emergency Exit) 04 (2020) – EUR 300***

Inkjet Print on Fine Art Paper - Edition of 30

29.7 x 42 cm



*Issue de Secours (Emergency Exit) 01* (2020) – EUR 300

Inkjet Print on Fine Art Paper - Edition of 30

42 x 29.7 cm



***Bousculade (Jostling)*** (2020) – EUR 3'000

Charcoal on Canvas

75 x 115 cm



## TO THE EXHIBITION

## ASK FOR PRICE LIST

### SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2021 « Burn » - Kloser Contemporary Art  
2019 « Chuchotement » - Institut Français d'Annaba – Annaba, Algeria  
2018 Residency and Exhibition - Le Relais - Tangiers, Morocco  
2018 « L'Echelle » - Institut Français d'Annaba – Annaba, Algeria  
2017 Contemporary Art Biennial of Beirut – Beirut, Lebanon  
2017 Beirut Art Fair – Beirut, Lebanon  
2016 Beirut Art Fair – Beirut, Lebanon

### SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2019 « Waiting for Omar Gatlatto » – Wallach Art Gallery, Columbia University – New York, USA  
2018 « Un Œil ouvert sur le Monde Arabe » - Institut du Monde Arabe – Paris, France  
2018 Dak'Art OFF Biennale de Dakar – Dakar, Senegal  
2016 Dak'Art OFF Biennale de Dakar – Dakar, Senegal  
2015 « Territoires Arabes » – Constantine, Capital of Arab Culture – Constantine, Algeria  
2014 « Ne pas se séparer du Monde » - Orient'art Express Festival – Oujda, Morocco  
2014 Dak'Art OFF Biennale de Dakar – Dakar, Senegal  
2012 Mediterranean Contemporary Art Biennial – Oran, Algeria  
2008-11 Group shows in more than 35 venues in Algeria

### SPECIAL PARTICIPATIONS

2020-21 « Que faut-il dire aux Hommes ? » - with La Compagnie des Hommes (Didier Ruiz) – Several Venues in France  
2016 Quinzaine des Réalisateurs du Festival de Cannes – with the film « KINDIL », based on an original idea by Adel Bentounsi – Cannes, France  
2015 Residency at FADA – Amman, Jordan  
2013 Residency at École Supérieure des Beaux-Arts ESA – Dunkerque, France  
2013 Best Contemporary Painting – National Award - Société Générale – Algeria  
2012 Residency at Fructose – Dunkerque, France

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