



## PRESS RELEASE

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### THREE NEW INSTALLATIONS TO DISCOVER AT MACAAL FROM 8 FEBRUARY

*Statues Also Breathe* by Catharsis Arts Foundation, *Crazy Lines* by Yassine Balbzioui, and *Ilā Turāb* by Fatiha Zemmouri.

The **Museum of African Contemporary Art Al Maaden (MACAAL)** is honored to present, on **8 February 2026**, three new installations alongside a new selection of works from its collection as part of its permanent exhibition.

***Seven Contours, One Collection***, inaugurated in February 2025, brings together approximately one hundred works from the **MACAAL** collection to explore seven major themes, including decolonization, spirituality, ecological issues, and Afro-diasporic movements. Through a diversity of mediums, including painting, sculpture, photography, video, textiles, and installation, ***Seven Contours, One Collection*** creates a dialogue between modern and contemporary artists such as Josèfa Ntjam, Sammy Baloji, and Chaïbia Talal, affirming MACAAL's commitment to making African contemporary art accessible to the public.

Within its permanent exhibition, **MACAAL** dedicates three spaces to temporary installations that resonate with the museum's themes. The **Atrium** hosts ***Statues Also Breathe***, a collaborative sculptural project by artist **Prune Nourry**, accompanied by a documentary retracing its creation. The museum staircase is transformed by ***Crazy Lines***, a site-specific installation by **Yassine Balbzioui**. The **Artist Room** will house ***Ilā Turāb***, an immersive and ephemeral work by **Fatiha Zemmouri**.

#### **STATUES ALSO BREATHE : A WORK OF MEMORY AND COLLECTIVE RESILIENCE**

MACAAL presents ***Statues Also Breathe***, a major sculptural project celebrating the power of the collective. Supported by **Catharsis Arts Foundation**, this installation was born from a collaboration between the **Department of Fine and Applied Arts at Obafemi Awolowo University** in Ile-Ife (Nigeria), students from across Nigeria, female potters, the families of the girls from Chibok, then schoolgirls, who went missing following the Boko Haram kidnappings in 2014, and artist **Prune Nourry**. Anchored in

Ile-Ife, the historic cradle of Yoruba civilization, this project reactivates the ancestral tradition of terracotta applied to the human figure, particularly through the representation of sculpted heads. Conceived as an indivisible whole, the work consists of **108 sculptures** made from local clay, inspired by eight initial portraits and modeled by a multitude of hands. It invites visitors to pause before the silent strength of this clay army, led by **Prune Nourry**, offering a moment of contemplation and reflection.

Beyond aesthetics, ***Statues Also Breathe*** carries a distinct educational and social mission. On one hand, the transnational collaboration places the Nigerian university at the heart of the creative process, ensuring a lasting transmission of knowledge. On the other the work acts as an act of memory: the collection of sculptures pays tribute to the Chibok schoolgirls and stands within a global struggle for girls' education and the refusal to forget. The installation is accompanied by a documentary film that gives voice to the mothers, survivors, and participants, making the narrative an essential component of the work. **Catharsis Arts Foundation** supports this project so that it remains a lasting tool for dialogue and reparation around the world. After presentations in Lagos and internationally, the project continues its journey in Marrakech, reaffirming the museum's commitment to an artistic dialogue that is both poetic and socially conscious.

### ***CRAZY LINES : A VISUAL COSMOLOGY BY YASSINE BALBZIOUI***

Conceived specifically for MACAAL, ***Crazy Lines*** transcends the scope of a classic installation to establish itself as an artistic integration at the heart of the architecture. **Yassine Balbzioui** takes over the museum staircase, a place of transit, deploy an immersive work conceived as a space of transition, inviting the visitor to traverse his universe, where the gaze settles as much as it wanders. Produced between December 2025 and January 2026, this intervention demonstrates the artist's mastery and the density of his personal cosmology, the result of preparatory work conducted during his residency at **MACAAL**.

The installation combines **murals, oil paintings, and sculptural framing** in a dense composition evoking the idea of a set design or staging. The painting spills out of frames to occupy the space, extending the narrative and placing the visitor in a position akin to a theater spectator. The mask, a recurring motif in the artist's practice, becomes here a visual constant rather than a sign to be interpreted, referring to a performed, sometimes caricatured humanity, where characters seem locked in their own roles.

Each element of this work functions autonomously while interacting with the whole, constituting a coherent ensemble. The diversity of materials and the precision of the arrangement reflect a rigorous approach, where ***Crazy Lines*** fits effortlessly into **MACAAL**'s architecture, accompanying the visitor's natural movement and transforming a passageway into an inhabited space that invites one to stop and observe.

## **ILĀ TURĀB : A FLOOR INSCRIPTION BETWEEN EARTH AND CROSSING**

Presented in the Artist Room by **Fatiha Zemmouri**, *Ilā turāb* is a floor-based intervention composed of an earthen inscription rendered in Arabic **Diwani** calligraphy. The installation brings into relation two fragments of a sentence—**min turāb (“from the soil”)** and **ilā turāb (“to the soil”)**—whose lines intersect and overlap within the space.

Created *in situ*, the work unfolds as an invitation to silence, offering a meditative accompaniment to a circular movement. Beginning in a dense area of soil, the script is heavily layered and becomes partially illegible. As one moves through the space, this density gradually decreases: the signs begin to emerge, and the phrase *ilā turāb* becomes increasingly legible, structuring the progression toward a central point. Here, writing departs from the sign to become matter and sediment. Language turns into soil, drawn back to the ground by a form of gravity. Reading is experienced through walking and through the body, across variations in density. **The work opens onto a sensory experience of return to the earth, without religious assignment, connected to burial, silent memory, and transmission through gesture.**

The soil, used as the sole material, retains its texture and fragility. Part of it comes from the **Tahanaout** region, and another part from *Dans les bras de la terre* by **Salima Naji**, exhibited last year in the atrium of **MACAAL**. Conceived as a welcoming “house,” that work symbolized Mother Earth as the common origin of all human beings. *Ilā turāb* thus takes shape as a gesture of homage, extending a material drawn from a previous work into another context, through a different form of writing.

### **ABOUT MACAAL**

The Museum of African Contemporary Art Al Maaden (MACAAL) in Marrakech is a private non-profit museum. One of the first of its kind on the continent, MACAAL is dedicated to the promotion of African art through various education and exhibition programs that allow it to cultivate the interest of broad audiences. Through the acquisition and exhibition of works by both established and emerging artists, the museum fosters the understanding of contemporary African art and showcases the creative energy and cultural diversity characteristic of the continent. MACAAL displays art from Morocco and its neighboring countries across different mediums. Beyond its permanent collection, exhibitions highlight art that opens a dialogue with the continent and present both African and international artists.

### **ABOUT CATHARSIS ARTS FOUNDATION**

Catharsis Arts Foundation is a non-profit based in New York City, founded in November 2023 by sculptor Prune Nourry and journalist Claude Grunitzky. They foster public interest in healing through art across collaborative projects, exhibitions, conversations, workshops, concerts, and more. Through their work, they build a platform that uplifts marginalized voices, nurtures mutual understanding, and generates lasting virtuous circles.

### **ABOUT YASSINE BALBZIOUI**

Born in 1972 in Morocco, Yassine Balbzioui is an artist whose practice spans painting, drawing, performance, and installation. Trained at the School of Fine Arts in Casablanca, then in Bordeaux and California, he developed a unique visual language nourished by this multiculturalism. Although he defines himself primarily as a painter, his work is characterized by the omnipresence of the mask and hybrid figures, questioning notions of identity and transformation. His work, at the border of reality and fiction, invites the spectator to question societal norms and our relationship with nature, as evidenced by his performances and pictorial series exhibited internationally.

### **ABOUT FATIHA ZEMMOURI**

Fatiha Zemmouri develops work based on raw materials, closely linked to the natural environments from which they originate. Her research takes the form of installations, as well as more autonomous pieces, where matter is engaged in situations of tension, balance, and transformation. Through restrained gestures of extraction, displacement, and balancing, matter is shifted from its initial state and placed in relation to the site. The works are constructed within an economy of means, attentive to forces of gravity, tension, and fragility, inviting the visitor to a physical experience of space and time.



View of the exterior of MACAAL, © Ayoub El Bardii