

MOHAMED LARBI RAHHALI

M'BAREK BOUHCHICHI

VARIATION WITHIN REPETITION

30TH NOVEMBER 2018 – 14TH FEBRUARY 2019

PRESS RELEASE

On 30th November 2018 in via del portico d'Ottavia 13, Rome, Galleria Valentina Bonomo will be inaugurating ***Variation within Repetition*** the very first Italian exhibition of work by **Mohamed Larbi Rahhali** and **M'barek Bouhchichi**.

Mohamed Larbi Rahhali (1956, Tétouan, Marocco)



Among all the occupations he has had, that of fisherman remains, along with the sea itself, Rahhali's great passion, and together with the daily life of the medina in Tétouan, it forms the principle font of inspiration for the artist's work. His works focus on themes such as cosmology and esotericism, alongside human and social issues including survival and solidarity. They aim to generate an art that becomes a playful mix of languages and styles, "creating a fluidity both enigmatic and vital".

From Mohamed Larbi Rahhali's sensitive and poetic vision of the world, new universes emerge, offering the viewer a chance to see the world as he perceives it. Symbols and signs that refer to differing value systems throw new light on memories and the shared colonial history of Morocco and Spain.

Mohamed Larbi paints, draws, glues together and assembles commonplace objects – most frequently matchboxes –, elaborated or simply pieced together to create microcosms that are half dream and half reality.

The simplicity of his chosen medium puts the artist's work into perspective: reducing an entire universe to such a small scale allows him to capture its essence at the profoundest of levels.

M'barek Bouhchichi (1975, Akka, Morocco)



It is words and poetry that characterise Bouhchichi's creative output: his works are inspired by the songs and repetitive movements of the *Imdyazen*, the troupes of travelling poets and actors from rural Morocco who use *Shilha*, one of the three Berber languages spoken in the country. Composed of assembled sticks coated in polychrome metals, his two installations, *Imdyazen#2* and *Imdyazen#3*, fill the exhibition

space. Propped against a wall which is inscribed with fragments and verses of poetry written in *Tifinagh* (an ancient Berber script used by the Sahara-dwelling *Tuareg*), the various elements combine to form lines that are alternately straight and irregular, recalling the patterns and weaves of Berber rugs.

In his use of wood, tin and copper – the materials typical of Moroccan crafts – the artist combines technique and structure, words and form.

Bouhchichi's work is based on the exploration of our inner limits and the human capacity to venture beyond them – beyond the self and out into the world.

In its combination of aesthetic and social concerns, the artist's work underlines the importance, to him, of tradition and history, and his sensitivity to the question of race.

Mohamed Larbi Rahhali was born in 1956 in Tétouan, where he continues to live and work. He graduated from the *Ecole des Beaux-Arts* in Tétouan in 1984. His most recent solo and group exhibitions have included *Microcosms*, Voice Gallery, Marrakech (2018), *Before our eyes*, MACBA, Barcelona (2015), *Here and Elsewhere*, New Museum, New York (2014), *Sous nos yeux. Part 2*, Kunsthalle, Centre d'Art Contemporain Mulhouse (2013), and *Sentences on the banks and other activities*, Darat al Funun, Amman (2010).

M'barek Bouhchichi, was born in 1975 in Akka, a little village in southern Morocco, and grew up in Tiznit, where he graduated in Fine Arts in 1994. He lives and works in Tahanaout, where he also teaches at the Sidi Hssain College. His most recent solo exhibitions have included *Les Poetes de la Terre*, Voice Gallery, Marrakech (2018) and *Les mains noires*, Kulte, Rabat (2016). Among his recent group shows: *Documents bilingues*, MUCEM, Marseille (2017), *Between walls*, Le 18, Marrakech (2017), *Le Maroc contemporain*, Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris (2014).

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