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6 Passage Sainte-Avoye
75003 Paris France
+33 (0)1 45 26 92 33
contact@galerieallen.com

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TAREK LAKHRISSI

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TAREK LAKHRISSI

Tarek Lakhrissi (born 1992 in Châtellerault, France. Lives and works in Paris) is a French artist and poet with a background in literature who explores sociopolitical narratives and speculative situations of transformation and magic through text, film, installation, and performance.

Lakhrissi has been exhibited internationally in galleries and institutions including Palais de Tokyo, Paris; Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney as part of the 22nd Biennale of Sydney; Wiels, Brussels; Palazzo Re Rebaudengo/ Sandretto, Guarene/Torino; Manchester International Festival; Mostyn, Llandudno; Tinguely Museum, Basel; HKW, Berlin; Shedhalle, Zurich; Fondation Ricard, Paris; Palazzo delle Esposizioni, Roma as part of the Quadriennale di Roma; High Art, Paris; La Verrière, Fondation d'enterprise Hermès, Brussles; Kevin Space, Vienna; Hayward Gallery, London; Auto Italia South East, London; Fondation Lafayette Anticipations, Paris; L'Espace Arlaud, Lausanne; Zabriskie, Geneva; Fondation Gulbenkian, Paris; Veda gallery, Florence; CRAC Alsace; Kim?, Riga; Artexte, Montreal; La Gaité Lyrique, Paris; and SMC/CAC, Vilnius.

Lakhrissi's artworks are held in private and public collections such as Defares Collection, Netherlands; Fondazione Sandretto Collection, Italy; Fondation Lafayette Anticipations, France; CNAP, France; FRAC Aquitaine MÉCA, France; FRAC Grand Large, France; IAC Villeubane, France; FMAC, France; Nicoletta Fiorucci Foundation, UK and Italy and Mauro Mattei Art Trust, UK and Italy.

His forthcoming exhibitions include solo exhibtions at Flatland Projects, Bexhill-on-Sea, UK; Confort Moderne, Poitiers, France; Collective, Edinburg, UK and a duo exhibition with Tai Shani at Clima Gallery, Milan, Italy. as well as group exhibitions Mécènes du Sud, Montpellier, France; Centrale Fies, Dro, Italy; Kunstverein Braunschweig, Germany and UKS, Oslo, Norway.

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TAREK LAKHRISSI

Born in 1992, Châtellerault, France.
Lives and works in Paris, France.

EDUCATION

2019 – 2020 Post-graduate programme ÉNSBA Lyon
2010 – 2015 BA/MFA Literature & Theatre, Sorbonne Nouvelle Paris III

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2023 Flatland Projects, Bexhill-on-Sea (UK)
Confort Moderne, Poitiers (FR)
Collective, Edinburg (UK)
with Tai Shani, Clima Gallery, Milan (IT)
2022 Revenge Fantasy, Frieze Art Fair / Vitrine Gallery, London (UK)
Manette (Joystick), with Neila Czermak Ichti, Artorama / Nir Altman, Marseille (FR)
2021 A, Letter, with Charlie Godet Thomas, Ballon Rouge, Brussels (BE)
I wear my wounds on my tongue, Kunstverein Kevin Space, Vienna (AT)
My immortal, Mostyn Art Gallery, Llandudno (UK)
Perfume of Traitors, Vitrine Gallery, London (UK)
2020 This Doesn't Belong to Me, Palazzo Re Rebaudengo, Guarene (IT)
2019 Serpent Dream, Zabriskie, Genève (CH)
Caméléon Club, La Galerie CAC, Noisy-Le-Sec (FR)

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2023 Mécènes du Sud, Montpellier (FR)
Centrale Fies, Dro (IT)
Words Don't Go There, Kunstverein Braunschweig (DE)
Moon in your mouth, UKS, Oslo (NW)
Art Genève, Klima Magazine, Genève (CH)
2022 Portals, Galerie Allen, Paris (FR)
The Voices of the Tempests, Somerset House Studio, London (UK)
Breathing in Babylon, Kanaal 40, Amsterdam (NL)
Parallel Visions, Palazzo Re Rebaudengo, Guarene (IT)
Habibi, les révolutions de l'amour, Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris (FR)
PROTOZONE 8: QUEER TRUST, Shedhalle, Zurich (CH)
Home is where the Haunt is, Des Bains Gallery, London (UK)
Biennale Matter of Art, City Gallery, Prague (CZ)
BANG BANG, Tinguely Museum, Basel (CH)
Des corps libres, Studio des Acacias, Paris (FR)
Tactiques du rêve augmenté, La Verrière - Hermès Foundation, Brussels (BE)
100%, La Villette, Paris (FR)
Echoes, Haus der Kunst, Munich (DE)
Hand to your ear II, Emalin Gallery, London (UK)
A forma dos futures, Casa da Escada Colorida, Rio di Janeiro (BR)
2021 BIENNALE, Kunsthal Charlottenborg, Copenhagen (DK)
Ordained, Horny & Horned, VEDA, Firenze (IT)
EXTRA WORLDING, Shedhalle, Zurich (CH)
Avoidance, Futura, Prague (CZ)
Bonaventure, 22nd Ricard Foundation Prize, Paris (FR)
Une journée en utopie, Familistère, Guise (FR)
The Shape of Futuros, One Gee Fog, Geneva (CH)
Proto-Club 2: (be)longing, Shedhalle, Zurich (CH)

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Poet Slash Artist, Manchester International Festival, Manchester (UK)
Flying on the raven's wing, Horst Festival, Vilvoorde (BE)
Abundance, Het Hem, Amsterdam (NL)
Yes a falling tree makes also sound, Kling&Bang, Reykjavik (IS)
The many face God·dess (3/3), Maison Populaire, Montreuil (FR)
A plusieurs, FRAC Lorraine, Metz (FR)
Hard to Love, Centre Wallonie Bruxelles, Paris (FR)
Un même monde, MAGCP, Cajarc (FR)

2020 Living just enough, Goodman Gallery, Cape Town (ZA)
Quadriennale di Roma, Palazzo delle Esposizioni, Rome (IT)
Anticorps, Palais de Tokyo, Paris (FR)
Imposture, IAC, Villeurbanne (FR)
Infinie Liberté, Salle Saint-Martin, Souillac (FR)
La Clinique du Queer (2/3), Maison Populaire, Montreuil (FR)
Risquons-Tout, Wiels, Brussels (BE)
Sâr Dubnotal, CAC Bretigny, Bretigny s/Orge (FR)
Your friends and neighbors, High Art Gallery, Paris (FR)
NIRIN 22nd Biennale of Sydney, Museum of Contemporary Art Australia, Sydney (AU)
La pleine lune dort la nuit, Musée d'art contemporain de la Haute-Vienne, Rochechouart (FR)
I am from nowhere good (1/3), Maison Populaire, Montreuil (FR)

2019 Cinders, Sinuous and Supple, Espace Arlaud, Lausanne (CH)
3hd 2019: Fluid Wor(l)ds, Postscheckamt, Berlin (DE)
FIAC Paris, Grand Palais, Paris (FR)
Le couteau sans lame et dépourvu de manche, CRAC Alsace, Altkirch (FR)
Kiss My Genders, Hayward Gallery, London (UK)
Tainted Love (south club edit), Villa Arson, Nice (FR)

2018 Give up the Ghost, Baltic Triennal 13, Kim? Contemporary Art Centre, Riga (LV)
Le Colt est Jeune & Haine, DOC!, Paris (FR)
Talismans ; Le désert entre nous n'est que du sable, Fondation Calouste Gulbenkian, Paris (FR)
Tainted Love, Confort Moderne, Poitiers (FR)

2017 Give up the Ghost, Baltic Triennal 13, CAC Vilnius (LT)

RESIDENCIES

2022 Lafayette Anticipations (FR)
2020-2021 Maison Populaire, Montreuil (FR)
2020 Wiels, Brussels (BE)
Workspace, Brussels (BE)
Sophiensaele, Berlin (DE)
CN D, Pantin (FR)
2019-2020 Post-graduate program, Fine Art School of Lyon (FR)
2019 Bundanon Trust, Illaroo (AU)
Artspace, Sydney (AU)
Kunstencentrum Buda, Courtrai (BE)
Workspace, Brussels (BE)
Les Subsistances, Lyon (FR)
Accomplices, Mophradat, Delphi (GR)
Cneai, Pantin (FR)
2018-2019 La Galerie CAC, Noisy-Le-Sec (FR)
2015-2016 Artexte Gallery, Concordia Univeristy, Montreal (CA)

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TEACHING / CONFERENCES/ WORKSHOPS

HEAD, Geneva (CH)
Beaux-Arts de Paris (FR)
ZhDK, Zurich (CH)
ESACM, Clermont-Ferrand (FR)
ESAAA, Annecy (FR)
Slade Art School, London (UK)
Het Nieuwe Instituut, Rotterdam (NL)
ENSBA Cergy (FR)
Bétonsalon, Paris (FR)
Maison Populaire, Montreuil (FR)
Doc, Paris (FR)
Espace Khiasma, Lilas (FR)
Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris (FR)
Université de Strasbourg (FR)

SELECTED PERFORMANCES

2022 BEAST!, Shedhalle, Zurich (CH)
BEAST!, Festival Move, Centre Pompidou, Paris (FR)
BEAST!, HKW, Berlin (DE)
BEAST!, Tinguely Museum, Basel (CH)
MISS ME ?, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (NL)
2021 Sick Sad World, Grand Casino of Knokke (BE)
Sick Sad World, Wild Gallery, Brussels (BE)
Sick Sad World, Fondation Ricard, Paris (FR)
2019 Performing Unfinished Sentence, CRAC Alsace, Altkirch (FR)
Our Lady of Bastard Grass, with Ghita Skali, Printemps de Septembre, Toulouse (FR)
conSpiration, with Loup, Festival Jerkoff, Carreau du Temple, Paris (FR)
Mes pensées, exactement (My thoughts, exactly), with Eden Tinto Collins, INHA, Paris (FR)
Innocence is blocking me, Hayward Gallery, London (UK)
32 of October / 32 octobre 2018, with Ghita Skali, La Galerie, CAC, Noisy-Le-Sec (France)
Different Alibis, Auto Italia South East, London (UK)
2018 Différents Alibis, Lafayette Anticipations, Paris (FR)
Blouse Bleue, Festival Jerkoff, Point Ephémère, Paris (FR)
I don't understand what you are saying but I love you, PointCulture, Bruxelles (BE)
I don't understand what you are saying but I love you, Gaîté Lyrique, Paris (FR)
Blouse Bleue, Live! #1, Le Confort Moderne, Poitiers (FR)
2017 The Readers, Baltic Triennal 13 GIVE UP THE GHOST , CAC Vilnius (LT)
Can you spell your name please ?, Baltic Triennal 13, CAC Vilnius (LT)

COLLECTIONS

Defares Collection (NL)
Fondazione Sandretto Collection (IT)
Fondation Lafayette Anticipations (FR)
CNAP (FR)
FRAC Aquitaine MÉCA (FR)
FRAC Grand Large (FR)
IAC (FR)
FMAC (FR)
Johns Hopkins University Collection (US)
Nicoletta Fiorucci Foundation (UK / IT)
Collection of Mauro Mattei Art Trust (UK / IT)

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AWARDS

Zurich Art Prize 2022 / Nominee
22nd Ricard Foundation Prize 2021 / Nominee
Matsutani Occident 2019 Prize / Nominee
PSC Art Prize / Nominee
FoRTE Grant / Awardee
DRAC Nouvelle-Aquitaine / Awardee

SELECTED INTERVIEWS / ARTICLES / REVIEWS

Mousse Magazine (Hans Ulrich Obrist)
Frieze (Philipp Hindhal)
BOMB (Laura Brown)
Flash Art (Caroline Elbaor)
Burlington Contemporary (Theo Gordon)
Art Monthly (Jade Barget)
Performa (Daniel Blanga Gubbay)
PW (Sarah Johanna Theurer & Elena Setzer)
Subbacultcha (Niloufar Nematollahi)
Blok (Dina Akhmadeeva and Adomas Narkevičus)
Salt (Nia Thomas)
Contemporary & (Ibrahim Cissé)
Widewalls (Balasz Takac)
L'Officiel USA (Margaux Bang)
ACMI (Shelley McSpedden)
Sydney Herald Morning (Linda Morris)
Mada Masr (Ash Moniz)
BerlinArtLiknk (Johanna Hardt)
Fondation Ricard (Thomas Conchou)
Les Inrocks (Ingrid Luquet Gad)
Beaux-Arts de Paris (Madeleine Planeix Cocker, Fabrice Bourlez)
Lafayette Anticipations (Madeleine Planeix Cocker)
Revue Critique (Caroline Honorien)
Numéro (Ingrid Luquet Gad)
The Steidz (Critina Lopez)
Hypotheses.org (Lina Merad)
Vanity Fair (Olivier Bouchara)
Numero (Ingrid Luquet Gad)
Vice Belgique (Romain Vennekens)
Les Inrocks (François Piron, Ingrid Luquet Gad, Josèfa Ntjam)
Artpress (Thibaut Hofer)
AOC (Léo Guy-Denarcy)
Palais de Tokyo (François Piron)
Wiels (video)
Zero Deux (Antoinette Jattiot)
Numero (Matthieu Jacquet)
Figure Figure (Lou Ferrand)
Slash Paris (Guillaume Benoit)
La Nouvelle Revue Française (François Piron)
Manazir (Joan Grandjean)
Beaux-art Magazine (Maïlys Celeux-Lanval)

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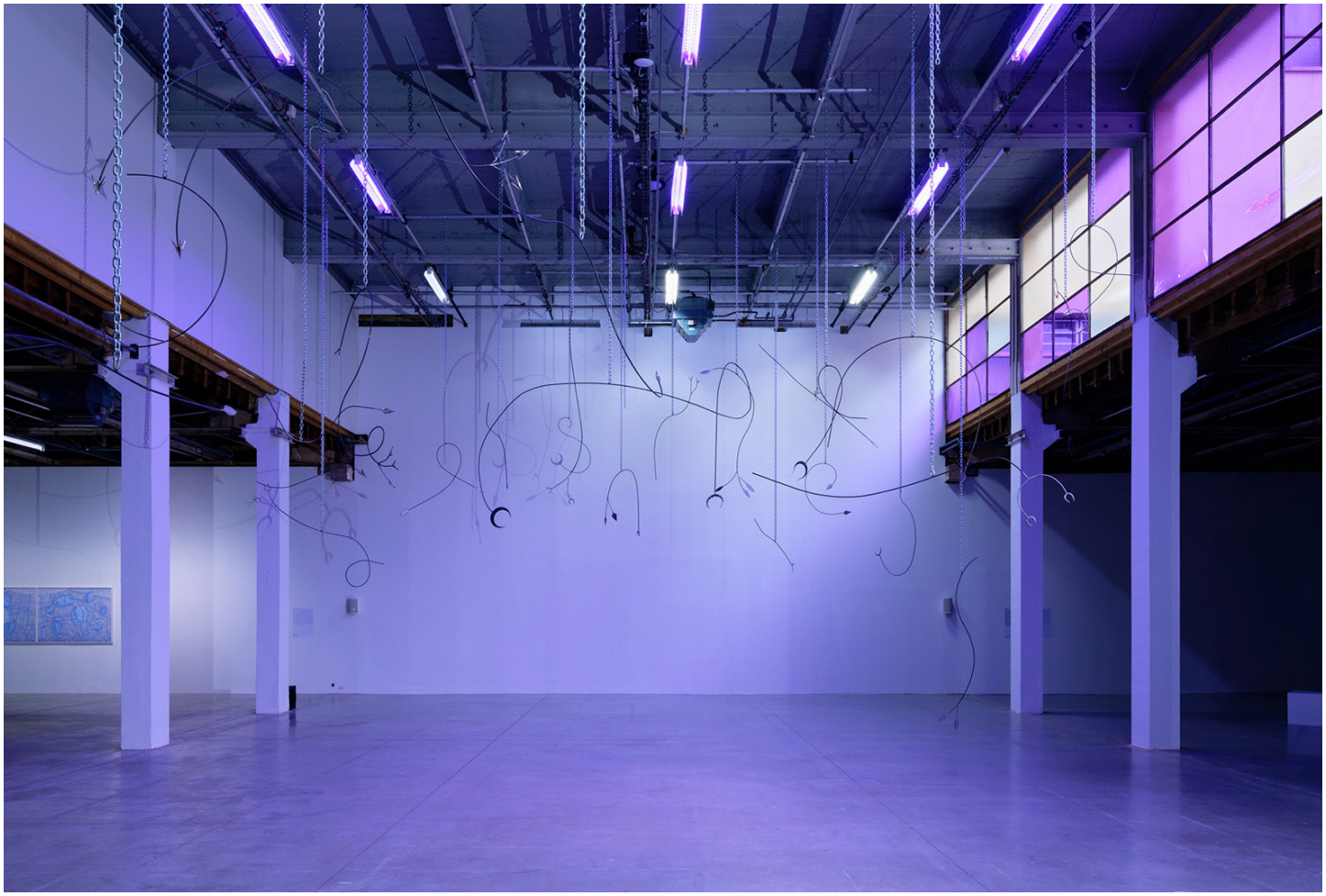
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SELECTED INTERVIEWS / ARTICLES / REVIEWS (CONTINUED)

Time Out (Zoé Kennedy)
Quotidien de l'art (Pedro Morais)
L'Officiel Art (Margaux Bang)
Slash Paris (Léone Metayer)
Les Inrocks (Ingrid Luquet Gad)
Grazia (Pedro Morais)
Le Beau Vice (Elisabeth Lebovici)
Beaux-Arts Magazine (Julie Ackermann)
Les Inrocks (Ingrid Luquet Gad)
Les Inrocks (Ingrid Luquet Gad)
Libération (Judicaël Lavrador)

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TAREK LAKHRISSI
Unfinished Sentence II, 2020
30 metal spears, chains, colour filter, loud speakers.
Soundtrack in collaboration with Ndayé Kouagou.
Variable dimensions
Exhibition view, Anticorps, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, France.
Courtesy the artist
Photo: Aurélien Mole

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TAREK LAKHRISSI
Unfinished Sentence II (detail), 2020
30 metal spears, chains, colour filter, loud speakers.
Soundtrack in collaboration with Ndayé Kouagou.
Variable dimensions
Exhibition view, Anticorps, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, France.
Courtesy the artist
Photo: Aurélien Mole

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TAREK LAKHRISSI
BEAST!, 2022
Performance
Exhibition view HKW, Berlin, Germany
Courtesy the artist.
Production: Tinguely Museum, Basel / Centre Pompidou, Paris / HKW, Berlin.
Photo: Carla Schleiffer

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TAREK LAKHRISSI
BEAST!, 2022
Performance
Exhibition view, Festival Move, Centre Pompidou, Paris, France
Courtesy the artist.
Production: Tinguely Museum, Basel / Centre Pompidou, Paris / HKW, Berlin.
Photo: Hervé Veronese

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TAREK LAKHRISSI
BEAST!, 2022
Performance
Exhibition view, Bang Bang, Tinguely Museum, Basel, Switzerland
Courtesy the artist.
Production: Tinguely Museum, Basel / Centre Pompidou, Paris / HKW, Berlin.
Photo: Carla Schleiffer.

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TAREK LAKHRISSI
Coeur Brillant, 2023
HD video, colour, sound
14 mins
Courtesy the artist.
Production: Maison Populaire, Malfamé Productions & Beursschouwburg France/Belgium
Photo: Le Massi

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TAREK LAKHRISSI
I'M HORNY XIII, 2021
Plexiglas, resin, paint, chains, polycarbonate plates, screen
120 x 90 x 0.5 cm
Exhibition view VEDA, Firenze, Italy. Curated by Cédric Fauq.
Courtesy the artist.
Production: Horst Arts & Music.
Photo: Flavio Pascatori.

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TAREK LAKHRISSI
I'M HORNY VI, 2021
Plexiglas, resin, paint, chains, polycarbonate plates, screen
120 x 90 x 0.5 cm
Exhibition view VEDA, Firenze, Italy. Curated by Cédric Fauq.
Courtesy the artist.
Production: Horst Arts & Music.
Photo: Flavio Pascatori.

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TAREK LAKHRISSI
A horn is a thorn is a horn, 2021
Plexiglas, resin, paint, chains, polycarbonate plates, screen
120 x 90 x 0.5 cm
Exhibition view VEDA, Firenze, Italy. Curated by Cédric Fauq.
Courtesy the artist.
Production: Horst Arts & Music.
Photo: Flavio Pascatori.

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TAREK LAKHRISSI
Diffrent Alibis, 2019
Performance with Harilay Rabenjamina, Christelle Oyiri and Ndayé Kouagou
Exhibition view, Auto Italia South East, London, UK.
Courtesy the artist
Photo: Katarzyna Perlak.

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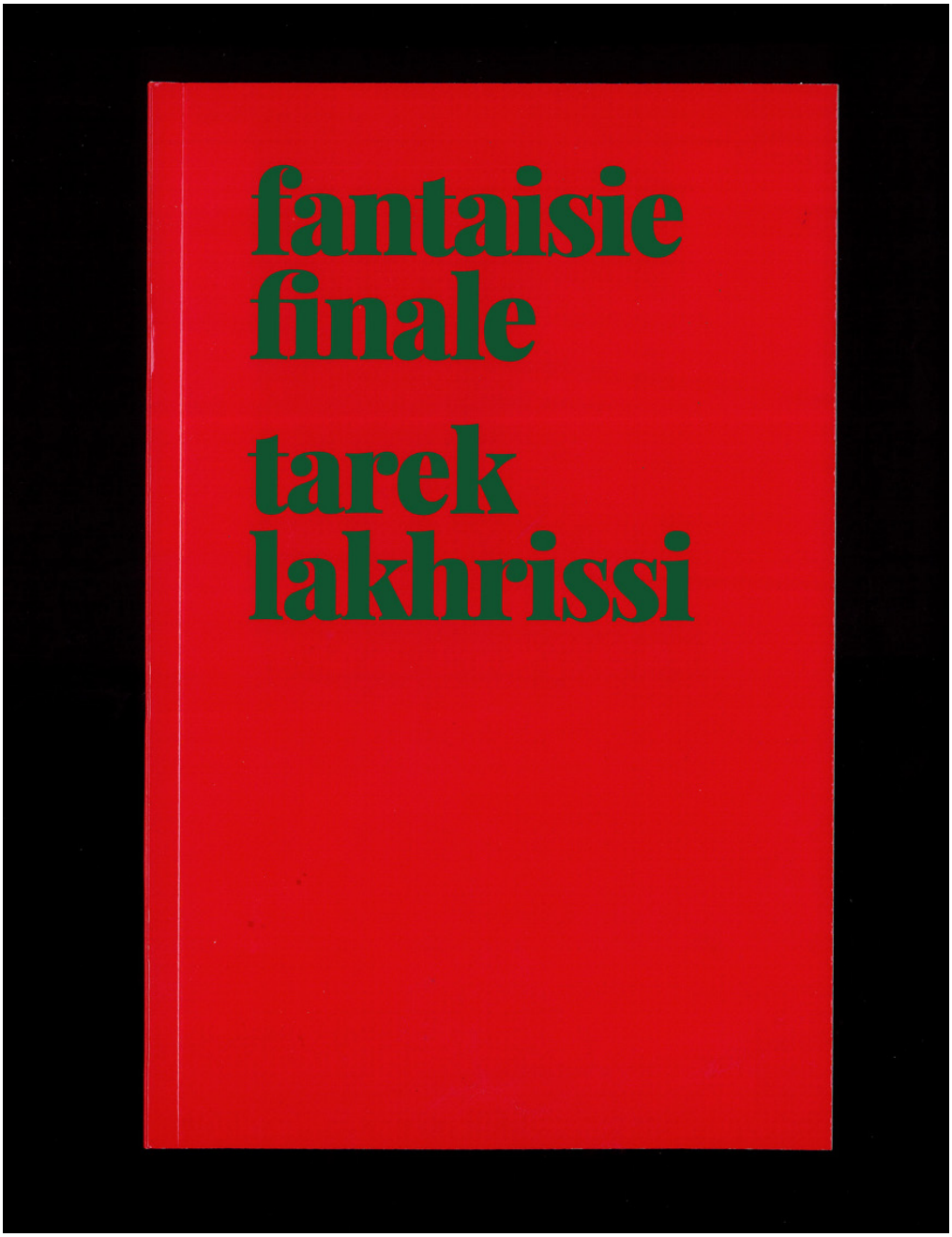
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Diffrent Alibis, 2019
Performance with Harilay Rabenjamina, Christelle Oyiri and Ndayé Kouagou
Exhibition view, Auto Italia South East, London, UK.
Courtesy the artist
Photo: Katarzyna Perlak.

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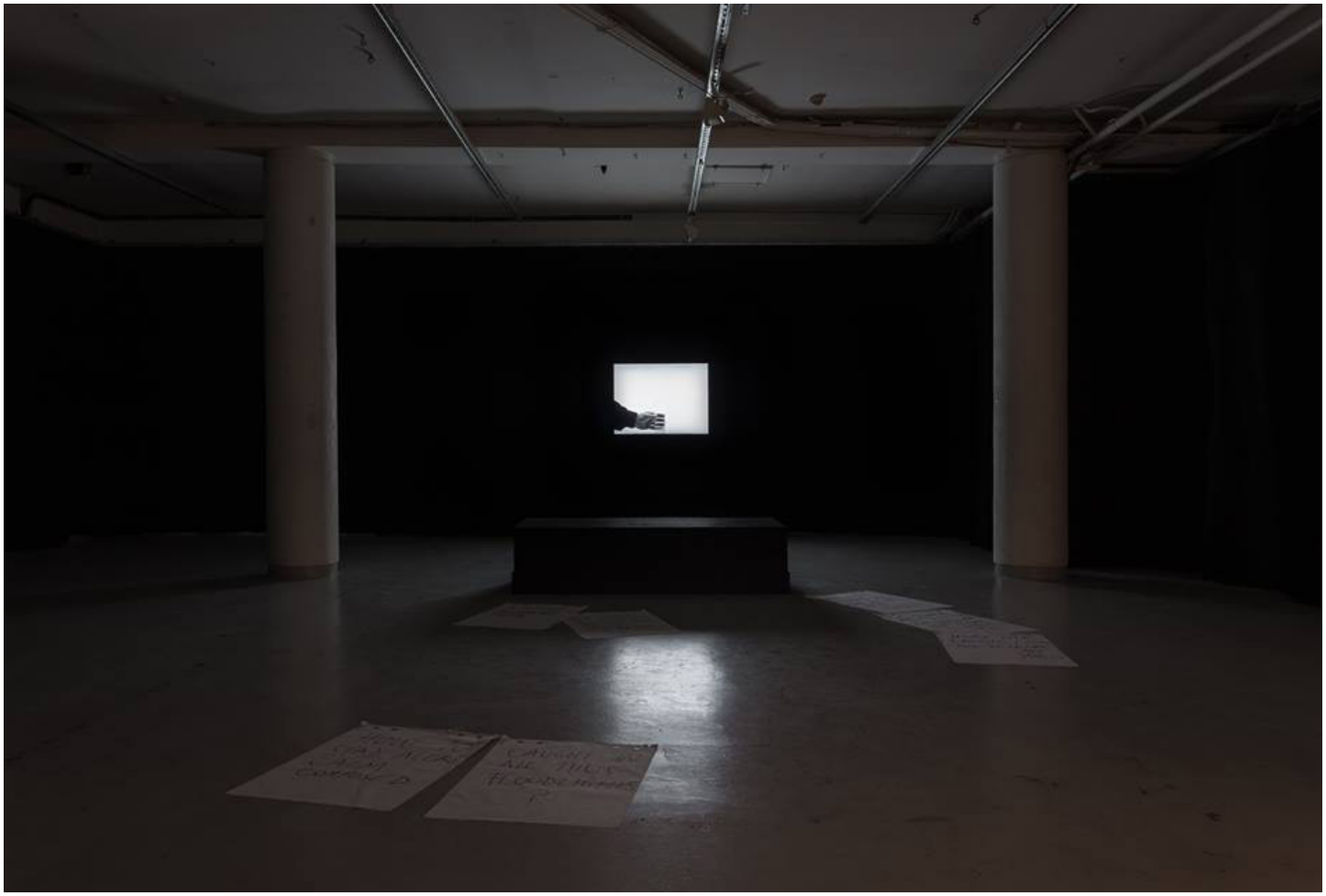
TAREK LAKHRISSI
Diffrent Alibis, 2019
Performance with Harilay Rabenjamina, Christelle Oyiri and Ndayé Kouagou
Exhibition view, Auto Italia South East, London, UK.
Courtesy the artist
Photo: Katarzyna Perlak.

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TAREK LAKHRISSI
Fantaisie finale, 2019
Book, limited edition, bilingual; english/french
13 x 20 cm
210 pages
Editor: Victorine Grataloup
Graphic designer: Martin Desinde

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TAREK LAKHRISSI
Hard to Love, 2017
Video
Exhibition view, Baltic Triennale 13, CAC,Vilnius, Lithuania.
Curated by Vincent Honoré
Courtesy of the artist.
Collection CNAP
Collection FRAC Grand Large Hauts-de-France
Photo: Andrej Vasilenko

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TAREK LAKHRISSI
Exhibition view, *I wear my wounds on my tongue* (2021)
Kunstverein Kevin Space, Vienna, Austria
Special thanks to Arnaud Schmitt.
Photo: Maximilian Anelli-Monti

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TAREK LAKHRISSI
Tongue Song V, 2021
Resin
81 x 25 x 4 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Vitrine Gallery
Photo: Maximilian Anelli-Monti

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TAREK LAKHRISSI
Tongue Song III, 2021
Resin
78 x 32 x 8 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Vitrine Gallery
Photo: Maximilian Anelli-Monti

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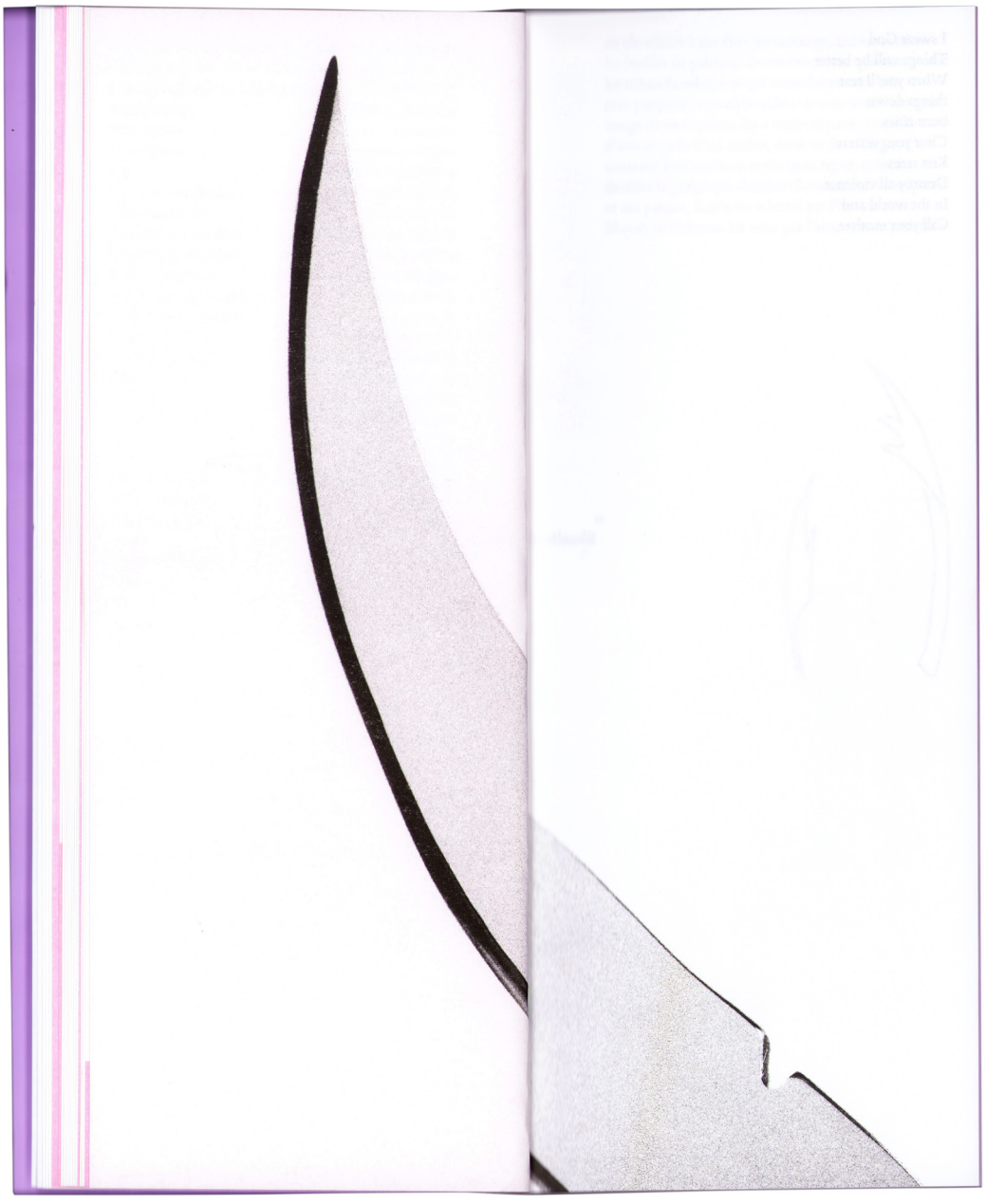
TAREK LAKHRISSI
Innocence is blocking me, 2019
Performance
20 minutes
Exhibition view, Hayward Gallery (Purcell Room), London, UK
Courtesy of the artist.
Photo: Takis Zontiros

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TAREK LAKHRISSI
Innocence is blocking me, 2019
Performance
20 minutes
Exhibition view, Hayward Gallery (Purcell Room), London, UK
Courtesy of the artist.
Photo: Takis Zontiros

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TAREK LAKHRISSI
LE SANG ! / BLOOD !, 2022
Book of poetry in French and English. Risograph printing.
Published by Lafayette Anticipations
82 pages.
26 x 11.5 cm
Courtesy the artist and Lafayette Anticipations – Fondation Galeries Lafayette, France

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TAREK LAKHRISSI
DEVILISH BOY, 2022
Blown glass
80 x 22 x 22 cm
Courtesy the artist and Vitrine Gallery
Photo: Margot Montigny

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TAREK LAKHRISSI
MISS ME? 2022
Performance
in collaboration with Yara Saïd (music) and Avoidstreet (style)
Courtesy the artist.
Curated by Charl Landvreugd, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, Netherlands.

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TAREK LAKHRISSI
Perfume of a Traitors, 2021
Steel and steel chains, green filter
Variable dimensions
Courtesy the artist and Vitrine Gallery, London and Basel.
Photo: Jonathan Bassett

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TAREK LAKHRISSI
Perfume of a Traitors (detail), 2021
Steel and steel chains, green filter
Variable dimensions
Courtesy the artist and Vitrine Gallery, London and Basel.
Photo: Jonathan Bassett

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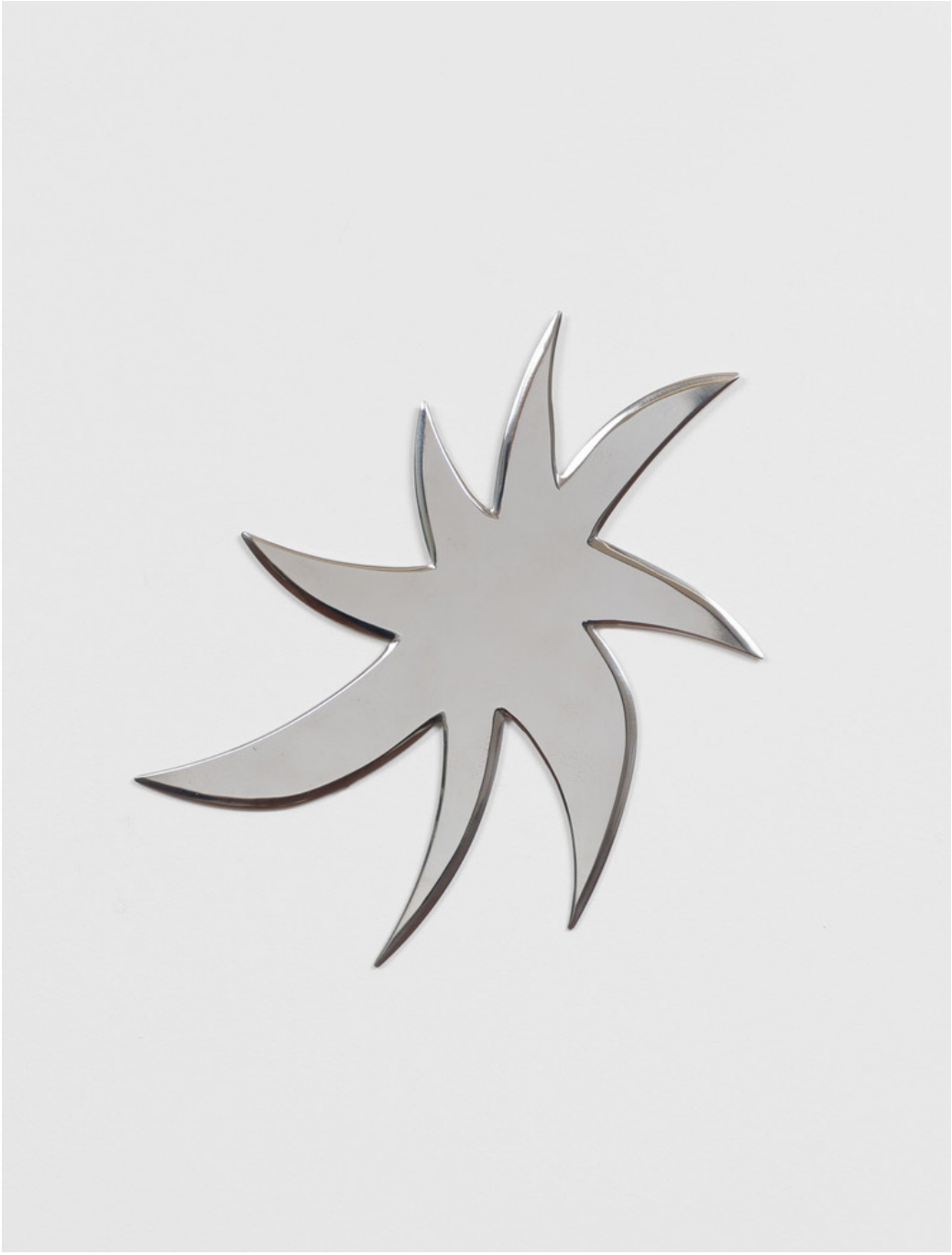
TAREK LAKHRISSI
Perfume of Traitors II, 2022
Stainless steel
Variable dimensions
Exhibition view, Emalin Gallery, London, UK. Curated by Gabriella Nugent.
Courtesy the artist and Vitrine Gallery London/Basel
Photo: Stephen James

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TAREK LAKHRISSI
Betraying Him, 2022
Stainless steel
31 x 4.5 x 0.5 cm
Courtesy the artist and Vitrine Gallery London and Basel
Photo: Stephen James.

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TAREK LAKHRISSI
Perfume of Traitors II, 2022
Stainless steel
Courtesy the artist.
Collection Nicoletta Fiorucci Foundation.
Photo: Stephen James.

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TAREK LAKHRISSI
Distorted conception of few revenges, 2022
Cut and polished steel, blown glass
204 x 74 x 8 cm
Courtesy the artist and Vitrine Gallery London and Basel.

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TAREK LAKHRISSI
Cerbère, cerbère !, 2022
Cut and polished steel, blown glass
135 x 128 x 8 cm
Courtesy the artist and Vitrine Gallery London and Basel.
Collection of Mauro Mattei Art Trust, UK and Italy.

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TAREK LAKHRISSI
Revenge Fantasy, 2022
Eight weapons, glass and metal
Variable dimensions
Photo: Isabelle Arthuis
Exhibition view, Tactics of Augmented Dreams, La Verrière, Brussels, 2022.
Courtesy the artist.
Production: La Verrière, Fondation d'entreprise Hermès

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TAREK LAKHRISSI
Revancharde, 2022
Cut and polished steel, cut glass
116 x 32 x 1 cm
Courtesy the artist and Vitrine Gallery London and Basel.

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TAREK LAKHRISSI
Sick Sad World, 2021
Performance
Photo: Rembert de Prez.
Exhibition view *Risquons-tout*, Wiels, Brussels, Belgium.
Courtesy the artist and Théo Démans.
Production Wiels, Brussels, Belgium

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TAREK LAKHRISSI
Sick Sad World, 2021
Wood, styrofoam, fabric, metal, polyether foam, polyurethane, pigments, acrylic plaster, performance.
90 × 250 × 250 cm
Courtesy the artist and Théo Démans.
Production Wiels, Brussels, Belgium

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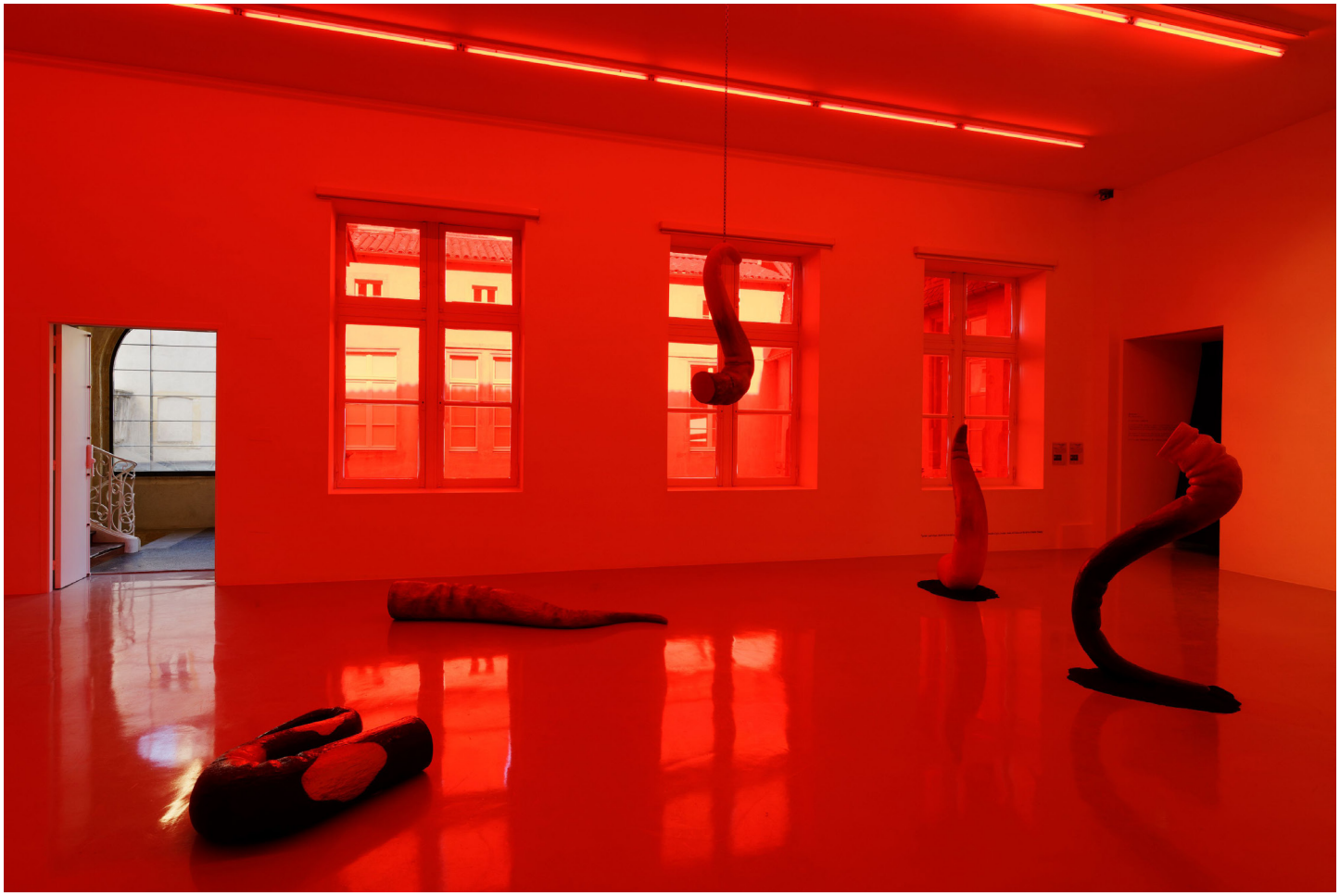
TAREK LAKHRISSI
SPIRALING, 2021
Video, colour, sound
7 mins
Courtesy the artist.
Defares Collection, Netherlands
Production: Haus der Kunst, Munich, Germany

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TAREK LAKHRISSI
A Frame for The Art of Losing (extract), 2021
HD video, metal frame with unfinished spears, CGI: Sybil Montet; Music composer: Victor da Silva
1 min 20 secs
Courtesy the artist
Photo: Aurélien Mole

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TAREK LAKHRISSI
This Doesn't Belong to Me, 2020
Polyurethane, metal core, epoxy resin, chains, black earth
Variable dimensions
Exhibtion view, Frac Lorraine, Metz, France.
Courtesy the artist.
Collection Fondazione Sandretto Collection, Italy
Production: Fondazione Sandretto with the support of Nuovi Mescenati.
Photo: Aurélien Mole.

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TAREK LAKHRISSI
This Doesn't Belong to Me, 2020
Polyurethane, metal core, epoxy resin, chains, black earth
Variable dimensions
Exhibition view, Palazzo Re Raudebengo, Guarene, Italy
Courtesy the artist.
Collection Fondazione Sandretto Collection, Italy
Curated by Bernardo Follini.
Production: Fondazione Sandretto with the support of Nuovi Mescenati
Photo: Domenico Conte.

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TAREK LAKHRISSI
This Doesn't Belong to Me, 2020
Polyurethane, metal core, epoxy resin, chains, black earth
Variable dimensions
Exhibition view, Palazzo Re Raudebengo, Guarene, Italy
Courtesy the artist.
Collection Fondazione Sandretto Collection, Italy
Curated by Bernardo Follini.
Production: Fondazione Sandretto with the support of Nuovi Mescenati
Photo: Domenico Conte.

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TAREK LAKHRISSI
Unfinished Sentence II, 2021
Metal, chains, colour filter, loud speakers.
Soundtrack in collaboration with Ndayé Kouagou.
Courtesy the artist.
Curated by Juliette Désorgues,
Exhibition view, *My Immortal*, Mostyn Gallery, Llandudno UK.
Photo : Mark Blower

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6 Passage Sainte-Avoye
75003 Paris France
+33 (0)1 45 26 92 33
contact@galerieallen.com

galerieallen.com

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6 Passage Sainte-Avoye
75003 Paris France
+33 (0)1 45 26 92 33
contact@galerieallen.com

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MATTO

'Now I am Obsessed with Devil Horns: Tarek Lakhrissi', Matto Magazine Issue 6, November 2022

NOW I AM OBSESSED WITH DEVIL HORNS
TAREK LAKHRISSI

To witness Tarek read his poems was to witness him perform. The same words that one has read just a moment before in his book *Le Sang ! / Blood !* became something else when spoken by him. He was present, as if he was not reading but talking to you. Yet in fact all the words were there, written. And as his poetry was shifting between French and English, it made me wonder what language allows us to say. Or perhaps, what we allow ourselves to say depending on what language we speak.

I'd like to start by asking you about the work *I wear my wounds on my tongue*.

When I lived in Brussels, I was reading Justin Chin, a queer Malaysian-American poet who wrote this poetry book called *Bite Hard*. It is about his experience as a queer Asian-American – about isolation, sexuality, disease, love and death. I was very amazed by his ability of writing such raw and intense poems, of being so emotional. The sentence "I wear my wounds on / under my tongue" broke my heart and rang a bell for me, especially when you have a twisted way of speaking French. The tongue became my trickster tool – a tool exuding betrayal. We are always shifting the way we talk, I talk differently to my mother and my students. The tongue is so powerful and really hot. I love how this organ is connected to eroticism, power, language, monsters, tricksters, code switching, tastes – all in one. I just wish that at some point in my life, when I'll grow older, I won't talk anymore and I will share some telepathy skills with plants, dogs and my loved ones.

Would you be able to explain your work the same way in Arabic as in English?

That's a good question because my (broken) Arabic is basic, not formal. I don't think I would be able to. When I speak about my work in English I feel much more comfortable than when I am talking about my work in French, as I am always very careful about which word to use. But I do think there are liminal spaces in my Arabic that I do find stimulating. And this says so much about fragility, colonial consequences, stories of displacement, and also about the story of my family becoming a myth, and within this myth trying to find answers through hyperboles.

I think of Etel Adnan who was born in Beirut to a Syrian father and a Greek mother, and who would speak Turkish at home and be educated exclusively in French. She wrote extensively about the complexities of language, and also of moving to California and starting writing in English. She spoke often about her relationship to the Arabic language. I have recently read in one of the series of conversations with Hans Ulrich Obrist from ten years ago her discussing the great poets of the Arab world, who would display their poems in public space, on the walls, on the trees.

Etel Adnan is a huge influence in my way to understand language, symbols and the potential of poetry. Her book *The Arab Apocalypse* is a masterpiece. She is so mystic in her approach to storytelling, war, and obviously emotions. In my poetry book *Le Sang ! / Blood!* two types of poems have been printed facing each other, like my two selves, looking at each other in a very weird and tender way. *Le Sang!* originates from poems that I wrote maybe seven years ago, they are written in French, and are politically engaged with anger, despair and also love. *Blood!* are poems in English instead and they are intimate, about sex.

Some of your poems are just a sentence, or have a single word per line. It made me think of how much can be said with so little. I thought of Yasmina Reza saying: "The secret of writing, for me, is to remove, to prune like a rosebush. I will find as much air and clarity as possible for the facts to occur. I'm looking for air."

I use Notes on my phone, I write down what I am thinking, and sometimes just one word can be it. The older I get, the more comfortable I feel to express myself, and my poems get shorter and shorter. When I was fourteen, I was writing diaries. I started writing at an early age but this was just for myself. I was expressing my emotions, my experiences as a queer Arab guy living in the suburbs. I started to discover different authors like Jean Genet and Marguerite Duras. With poetry, I find ways to go straight to the point in a sense, but always in a cryptic way. I guess I do this in order to make space for breathing.

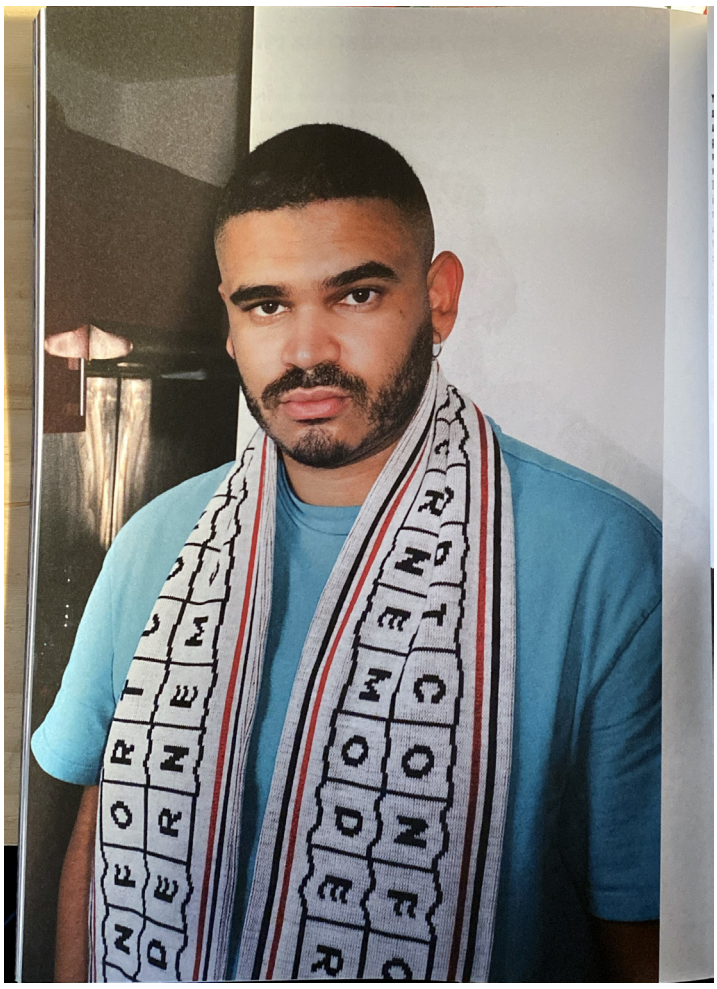


Tarek Lakhrissi photographed at his apartment in Paris, France, 2022 by MATTO Studio

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6 Passage Sainte-Avoye
75003 Paris France
+33 (0)1 45 26 92 33
contact@galerieallen.com

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Your sculptures and installations reveal a certain inclination to simplify expressions and language – like this one word in your poems. So there is one sign, one icon-symbol which is recognizable. Like the tongue, the wings, the crescent moon, the spears.

I am trying to make connections. All my sculptures and installations always derive from poetry or literature as they are creating a specific narrative. I like to trust signs and symbols. Now I am obsessed with devil horns. In the exhibition *Antibodies* at Palais de Tokyo, the metal spears were related to the idea of defense. I loved *Xena: Warrior Princess* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* in the 90s and early 2000s, I think they were one of the first feminist characters in a TV series; in second one there was also Willow, who was one of the first ever female gay characters. For me it's an example of how representation can change your life. All the spears, hanged in the air and becoming threatening, were creating a sentence, impossible to read or to finish.

Can you talk about your first trip to New York City ? I read it was transformational –

I went to New York City basically without telling my parents when I was sixteen! I went with a friend who got the tickets for us from someone I didn't even know, but she was eighteen so I could go with her. Retrospectively, when I think about it, everything was messy and surreal. We were staying in an amazing hotel in the middle of Manhattan but she was staying at the hotel the entire day so I was just walking in the streets trying to meet people. It was a turning point in my life, because I felt like I was existing in other words and other ways, more than my previous experiences in the suburbs. I felt like my queer body of color was seen and was answering to the atmosphere in such new ways. Everything looked familiar in the public space because of the TV shows I was watching. I was so obsessed with *Law & Order* at that time.



What was your relationship to language when you were growing up?

In this area where I lived, a small town in France, in the suburbs, people created their own specific slang between French and Arabic, and other types of "verlan" expressions that are important to me and to the way I create my own code. The creation of this code has also allowed me to leave much more room for fiction and "fantasy" in my everyday life. Codes are magical, there is something infinite in codes, and, in some ways, this vertigo keeps me hopeful, full of desire for the world, for a better world. When I moved to Paris and I decided to study language, literature, and theatre – I understood that there was power in language. To be accepted as a person of color in France, I had to change my way of talking. I knew that I was much more accepted because I was speaking "proper" French.

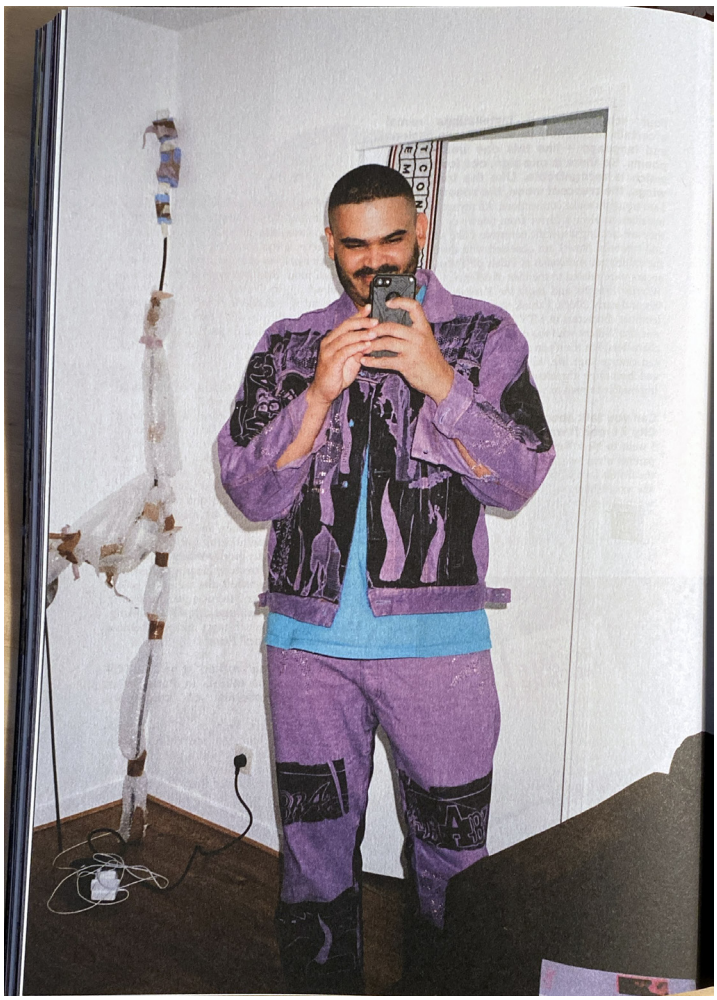
For six years you worked at an LGBTQ+ bookstore in the Marais in Paris. What are your memories of customers, encounters?

Amazing customers. First of all, I was lucky enough to work with the best colleagues who became friends. Literally, I was a part of an iconic institution in French queer history and I don't think I was very aware of that. This bookstore, Les Mots à la bouche, in the early 80s literally created the gayborhood called Le Marais – which is a now just an open-air mall with less and less queer people. In some ways, working there helped me out to shape my personality, gave me a lot of confidence, I had the opportunity to meet Nan Goldin or Virginie Despentes. Even though it was a renowned institution, a lot of work had to be done, especially to create a specific index on topics related to gender, queer, HIV, decolonization.

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75003 Paris France
+33 (0)1 45 26 92 33
contact@galerieallen.com

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Unfortunately, this looks like an era that is now a bit over. My friends and I were hanging out at Les Souffleurs and Le Dupleix. Now every time I go back there, I feel everything has changed so much and become just a bourgeois-luxury-touristy nightmare. That's also why the bookstore had to move to Saint-Ambroise in the 11th arrondissement, which is a great way to reflect on locations, queer neighborhoods in Paris and decentralization. I had a lot of moving and intimate conversations with customers, I think it was my favorite part of working there – these conversations.

What are you currently reading?
Nisha Ramayya's *States of the Body Produced by Love*, that is such a masterpiece. A beautiful combination of spirituality, prose, and poetry.

Do you feel like the experience of working in the bookstore and having those conversations translated to your art practice somehow?
Yeah, obviously, working there helped me to grow in a political space. I think it helped me understand the world differently, through my readings on activism but also through encounters. And I think it made me realise I wanted to write and build my own narrative. And create a good connection.

What is a good connection?
Being honest and true with what you want to say, not trying to hide anything.

Do you have this kind of conversation with your students?
Absolutely, to me it's important to talk about what it means to express ideas, how to navigate the violence within the art world, and stay true to yourself – or if not, to play with that. I think we all have very strong intuitions but we don't necessarily listen to them. Also how do you want to sell? Pragmatic questions like those are rarely discussed because you always are supposed to talk about concepts. I'm interested in how to be an art practitioner, a cultural worker, how to be aware of what are the responsibilities related to making art. I personally never went to an art school, which is a blessing and a curse. I see how it can be liberating for students to see people like me, coming from the margins. And thinking about pragmatic strategies.



Is there a new project you are working on right now?
I'm working on an ambitious performance, actually coming from my book called *Beast!*. It's a co-production with four institutions, the Tinguely Museum in Basel, the HKW in Berlin, the Shedhalle in Zürich, and the Centre Pompidou in Paris. It's gonna be about me reading poetry during a night of rituals, while calling for a secret beast. I am collaborating with Makeda Monnet, a soprano singer, and Victor da Silva, an electronic music composer I have worked with several times. The talented Inner Light Collective are creating the costumes. I'm going back to the roots of poetry, to what it means to just recite poetry to the public. I am also looking at how the figure of the monster or the beast associated to queer and BIPOC communities can be reappropriated in an empowering way. I'm also working on a sculpture about self-defense and I am making a queer horror movie.

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75003 Paris France
+33 (0)1 45 26 92 33
contact@galerieallen.com

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MOUSSE

A Heart Pierced by an Angel's Spear: Tarek Lakhrissi, Mousse, Hans Ulrich Obrist, 5 July, 2021

A Heart Pierced by an Angel's Spear: Tarek Lakhrissi

Tarek Lakhrissi in conversation with Hans Ulrich Obrist

05.07.2021 READING TIME 23′ SHARE



Unfinished Sentence II, 2020, *Antibodies* installation view at Palais de Tokyo, Paris, 2020
Courtesy: the artist; Palais de Tokyo, Paris; VITRINE, London / Basel. Photo: Aurélien Mole

"I want to disrupt the way language is formed," notes French artist Tarek Lakhrissi, referring to a practice rooted in literature, "through experimental codes, with a specific interest in conversations about gender, race, and sexuality." In his installations, performances, films, texts, and sculptures, Lakhrissi engages with the sociopolitical, aiming to introduce transformative narratives—thresholds conceived as in-between spaces opening up the possibility of utopia. Taking inspiration from pop culture, his research on queerness, emotions, spirituality, education, and empowerment points to the creation of spaces of sharing, of community.

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75003 Paris France
+33 (0)1 45 26 92 33
contact@galerieallen.com

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MOUSSE

The following conversation was born out of two dialogues between Lakhrissi and Hans Ulrich Obrist, which took place on January 23, 2021 together with Claude Adjil, curator at large at Serpentine Galleries in London and at Aspen Art Museum; and on April 2, 2021, with Lemn Sissay—co-curator of the show *Poet Slash Artist* at HOME, Manchester, July 2–18, 2021—, Kwong Lee, and Katherine Wilde, respectively artistic advisor, producer, and associate producer at Manchester International Festival.

HANS ULRICH OBRIST
Tell me about your background and how you began to engage in the arts.
TAREK LAKHRISSI
Before entering the art world, I was involved in literature. I studied literature and theater in Paris, working in a queer bookstore called Les Mots à la Bouche for six years. It's been now almost four years since I started to be invited to do art shows. But the foundation of my practice is always text, poetry, books, notes. I start with something that comes from words.
HANS ULRICH
That first work experience was important for you.
TAREK
Exactly, it allowed me to spend so much time with books. Being part of that store—which was obviously a political space and a cruising/friendship one—also gave me the possibility to organize a couple of conferences with important figures in the French decolonial scene, such as Léonora Miano, Todd Shepard, Karim Kattan, and Abdellah Taïa.
HANS ULRICH
Who are the people who inspire you at the moment? Or, to phrase it differently, following Alexis Pauline Gumbs's concept of "thinking with someone," who are the people you are thinking with?
TAREK
I'm thinking with José Esteban Muñoz, who has had a big influence on philosophy and art history with his books *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (2009) and *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* (1999). More recently I am looking into Tavia Nyong'o. But also other writers, especially Jean Genet and Marguerite Duras. For the piece *Unfinished Sentence II* (2020), conceived for the group show *Antibodies* at Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2020), I was mostly influenced by Monique Wittig, a French lesbian writer. For this project, I was commissioned to produce a new work based on her novel *Les Guérillères* (1969), a striking story about women who want to create an insurrection against men. I was so obsessed with her writing—an attempt to build a whole new language—very experimental, contemporary, coded, and weird. *Unfinished Sentence II* was inspired by a question of fate in search of a new language, a sort of impossibility of language that is very stimulating to me. And Elsa Dorlin's *Se défendre: Une philosophie de la violence* (2017) was a huge inspiration for my show *This Doesn't Belong to Me* at Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo in Turin (2020).
HANS ULRICH
What about poetry, considering that you are also a poet? Who are the poets you're thinking with?
TAREK
I'm obsessed with Jean Genet. And this may sound cliché, but I'm very inspired by Pier Paolo Pasolini as well as the French poetry of Arthur Rimbaud, Charles Baudelaire, and Stéphane Mallarmé. Recently, one of my biggest inspirations is Kai Cheng Thom, a trans Chinese Canadian poet and mediator involved in the transformative justice movement, whom I met when I was living in Montreal five years ago. We were going to parties but also activist demonstrations together. At that time, Michael Brown had recently been assassinated in Ferguson, so North America was very intense in terms of political uprising. I really love her writing, to which I feel very close because it is all about ancestors, spirituality, but also healing and care and how to create a whole genealogy of bodies and memories and feelings. I am currently discovering Ariana Reines, while rereading the Egyptian Surrealist Joyce Mansour.
HANS ULRICH
Please, tell me more about your project at Palais de Tokyo.
TAREK
Unfinished Sentence II is an installation of thirty metal spears with sound and light. Their distorted shapes create a language, a code, interacting with the space, because depending on your physical position, you see them differently. Basically varying alphabets, letters, and words. The purple filters on the windows are an homage to the 1970s French feminist movement

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75003 Paris France
+33 (0)1 45 26 92 33
contact@galerieallen.com

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Mouvement de Libération des Femmes, since purple was their political color, while four speakers blast a soundtrack eighteen minutes long composed by Ndayé Kouagou. I wanted to create an installation that was very dreamy, encouraging self-reflection, like a star constellation, but at the same time—threatening.

HANS ULRICH

This makes me think of Luce Irigaray, who describes the ecstatic experience using the image of a heart pierced by an angel's spear.

TAREK

Fantastic. It's interesting because there's definitely a spiritual atmosphere in the work, a mystical aspect. The installation was quite monumental when you were in the middle of it. Lots of emotions and energies came from the spears—the ghosts of the female warriors— but also from the light and the shadows they cast.

HANS ULRICH

How about the soundtrack?

TAREK

It is inspired by *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, one of my favorite TV shows, and also some ambient music, very trance. I was extremely touched by seeing people in the installation. They were sensitive and emotional, and that was the whole point of the project. Through the vibrations and the energies coming from the spears, I wanted to create a kind of experience close to a miracle.

HANS ULRICH

You work with installations—multisensory, one could say—but also with videos. What is their role in your practice? Are they separate from the installations or part of them?

TAREK

They are usually separate because I like thinking of my videos as movies. Obviously they are shown and presented in galleries and art spaces, but it's very important for me to see them as independent. I directed my first short movie two years ago, and now I'm working on a new one, produced by a cinema production company. A documentary was the first artwork I shared with the world.

HANS ULRICH

What was the film about?

TAREK

It's called *Diaspora/Situations* (2017), and composed mostly of interviews I did between Montreal, London, Paris, and Brussels with queer activists and artists of color, talking about their experiences with racism but also homophobia and sexism. It was an intimate movie that I shot on my own with all the cameras that I could find at that time. It ended up being in festivals, and is now also part of the collection of Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore.

HANS ULRICH

Could you talk about *Out of the Blue* (2019)?

TAREK

Out of the Blue is a movie I directed during my first residency, for my first solo show, *Caméléon Club* at La Galerie CAC, Noisy-le-Sec, two years ago. It's a futuristic movie, but the idea was to work around the question of the threshold, a very important concept for me. How traveling in different spaces—to come back to Muñoz—and entering thresholds as in-between spaces opens up the possibility of utopia. At that time, I was shocked by the extreme-right concept *grand remplacement*, which I think we can translate as "white genocide."It is a term invented by the journalist Renaud Camus, who claimed that in the future there will be too many Arabs and Blacks in France, stealing power and dominating the whole country.

HANS ULRICH

It's a white supremacist, nationalist, extreme-right conspiracy?

TAREK

Exactly. I wanted to make a movie about *grand remplacement*, questioning that theory through futurism, fantasy, and humor, from a queer and of-color point of view. There is a scene where the main character, Mejda, goes to the cinema as the world is collapsing. Some UFOs kidnap all white, straight males, like CEOs, and Mejda ends up trapped in the cinema reciting a poem about self-acceptance and the bitterness of truth.

HANS ULRICH

I remember when I moved to France in the early 1990s, Camus was often quoted by artist friends for his novel *Tricks: 25 Encounters* (1978). For example, Roland Barthes wrote his preface. He then suddenly turned into an extreme right-wing writer?

TAREK

Absolutely. He was an icon of gay literature, such a big inspiration for so many authors and thinkers, and so the way he changed his whole agenda and discourse is very troubling and disturbing. But I guess there is a connection between glorification of

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+33 (0)1 45 26 92 33
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environmental issues but also social justice. It was for me very important to think about a project like this in France, for free, open to everyone. My idea is to invite artists and also activists to give workshops all linked to feminism, antiracism, and language, because in France there is this big problem especially right now in the universities of not being allowed to talk about decolonial, queer, and feminist subjects because it's considered anti-republican. It's crucial to resist that idea and create spaces of sharing, empowerment, and conversations. To create circles as a way to learn differently, resolve conflicts, build communities and healthy environments. This is quite ambitious. I might fail but I am happy to start somewhere, and to learn.

HANS ULRICH

This is really interesting in relation to the multiple histories of knowledge advanced by Sylvia Winter. Also the great book *Dub* (2020) by Alexis Pauline Gumbs could be very useful for your school the way you just described it.

TAREK

Finding ways to continue my work in relation to alternative education is key for me right now, also in relation to social justice communities.

HANS ULRICH

That's beautiful. Who are the artists you consider your peers, in Paris and elsewhere?

TAREK

It's definitely not linked to Paris. I have a weird position because I don't come from the art world so I don't have a background to share. For me it is very important to create communities and groups, and right now mine is much more international because France can be limited. I have connections with other artists I met in New York when I was living in Montreal or in the Netherlands, as well as in Italy and Germany. I feel like right now I'm very close to two artists, Ghita Skali and Josèfa Ntjam.

HANS ULRICH

What is the common ground in terms of your artistic practices or interests?

TAREK

We have a strong connection to ambivalence in narratives as a way to disrupt language and power dynamics. We hate labels, and we want to create new languages and new narratives, which are very needed.

HANS ULRICH

Are there some other artists maybe not in that close circle but who you also feel close to?

TAREK

There is Lydia Ourahmane, and also Sophia Al Maria that I really love. And obviously Wu Tsang, WangShui, Jonathan Lyndon Chase, and Korakrit Arunanondchai.

HANS ULRICH

Tell me about the project you are participating in, *Poet Slash Artist*, that I am curating together with Lemn Sissay as part of the Manchester International Festival 2021. It's an exhibition composed of works by poets who are also visual artists and visual artists who are also poets. The exhibition will take place inside HOME's gallery but also treat the city of Manchester as a gallery, with commissioned posters installed in public spaces. It's fantastic that you are participating.

TAREK

This is wonderful. I'm really excited to propose *Hard to Love* (2017), which tremendously fits in this double linguistic and visual dimension. It is a video about love, but also about losing and finding language and trying to search back for the language to articulate love.

HANS ULRICH

Do you already have ideas for the poster or billboard?

TAREK

I am collaborating with Jehane Yazami, a French Moroccan graphic designer and a dear friend of mine. My idea is to create three to five very simple posters, titled *Problems, Poems, Powers, Posters*, that focus on one word and a symbol, which is basically what you see at first, and then if you come closer you can see a poem written therein. It implies a double approach to the text, a double movement of seeing the word and the symbol. This idea relates to questions around the power of language in *Hard to Love*, how poetry can be performative in public space, how one word can just grasp your intention. We wanted also to work with astrological/tarot card aesthetics, following the spiritual aspect of my poetry.

HANS ULRICH

When I moved to London, I remember posters in shops and streets by the English poet Christopher Logue, a pacifist associated with the British poetry revival. The posters were beautifully designed and contained poetic and political messages. They bring poetry to people who might otherwise not encounter it.

TAREK

That's so great. I think in Manchester we can

6 Passage Sainte-Avoye
75003 Paris France
+33 (0)1 45 26 92 33
contact@galerieallen.com

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definitely change someone's day.
HANS ULRICH
Someone's day or maybe even someone's life! We always hear that too many people are excluded from art and poetry because they're hidden behind the doors of institutions. I feel it is important to go beyond those walls and create potential chance encounters for people who might never go to a museum. But let's talk about the future. What are your next exhibitions after the group show in Manchester? Do you have any solo shows coming up?
TAREK
I'm having a solo until August 22 at VITRINE, London, titled *Perfume of Traitors*, a tribute to Jean Genet and the question of betrayal—which, almost like a philosophy, can be an instrument of freedom. I think about the life of Jean Genet, how he first betrayed Jean Cocteau in Paris and then also basically broke faith with his own whiteness by supporting the Black Panthers, the Palestinians, the Algerians. Jean Genet is one of my biggest inspirations also because he is ambiguous, ambivalent, contradictory. I first read his texts when I was seventeen.
HANS ULRICH
There's a very funny story that Cerith Wyn Evans once told me. Jean Genet had an affair with a man who later married a woman somewhere in the United Kingdom, and who asked Jean Genet to be his best man. At the wedding, when the two witnesses had to step forward and sign the document, the wife's one signed his name, adding "Policeman," and Genet signed "Jean Genet, thief."
TAREK
I love that. This is very him—he was so serious and funny at the same time. I love how he created his own myth by lying, by inventing stories about himself.
HANS ULRICH
I read in the press release for *Perfume of Traitors* that there's a connection between the show at VITRINE and the installations you did for CRAC Alsace (*Unfinished Sentence*, 2019) and Palais de Tokyo. "The metal sculptures are able to be wielded, but considered failed or useless because of their blunted manufacturing. In the process of designing these sculptures, Lakhrissi wanted to reveal that the one lodged in the back, a gesture to the saying 'stabbed in the back,' a violent synonym of betrayal."Can you talk about this?
TAREK
The show was based on the controversial concept of betrayal and the symbolism of knives. They're distorted and so they become useless, almost turning into jewelry. Playing with the words, I say that these "blades" are my "babes." They're hanging on steel chains, and every knife has a specific name, becoming basically a poem, for example "Betraying Community," "Betraying My Name." I feel like betrayal is an amazing concept because everybody is capable of causing harm, and that's fine. Let's talk about it, and let's create spaces of accountability—protection but also hard conversations. I feel like working on blades but also spears is a way to perform self-defense, because we all need strategies to betray sometimes, at least to survive in a hostile environment. I always think about this quote by Audre Lorde: "We were never meant to survive." So that's why we need to create strategies of self-defense, also using different tools like poetry, to spread word and to find—I guess a community. We all need a community for protection. At the same time I felt, on occasions, that I needed to find resources outside of these communities. A funny anecdote is that when I first did the installation with the spears at CRAC Alsace, I told the director that I wanted the spears to be very close to the people. She told me, "But they can hurt." This is the point. I want these pieces to be simultaneously threatening and nonviolent. To come back to the idea of betrayal, the best betrayal that you could do to a weapon is to turn it into jewelry. This is what I'm doing; I try to force them to become other. I'm very interested in that transformative process, the material representing the human experience of being transmuted, wired, and also flaming.
HANS ULRICH
What are your next shows after this exhibition?
TAREK
I'm working on a new project in the context of Horst Festival 2021, an event that integrates electronic music and contemporary art in the Brussels suburbs. It will be about new strategies of self-defense within the articulation of resin sculptures of horns, thorns, and poetry texts. And I've been working on a new video called *Spiraling*, commissioned by Haus der Kunst, Munich, coproduced in collaboration with Shedhalle, Zurich. The video is about a close friend performing inside the museum, addressing the spiral as a poetic movement in relation to pole dancing and inspired by Felix Gonzalez-Torres's *"Untitled" (Go-Go Dancing Plat- form)* (1991), which happened exactly thirty years ago.

6 Passage Sainte-Avoye
75003 Paris France
+33 (0)1 45 26 92 33
contact@galerieallen.com

galerieallen.com

thirty years ago.
HANS ULRICH
I must ask about the 22nd Pernod Ricard Foundation Prize 2021, for which you have been shortlisted.
TAREK
For the occasion I'm going to show the first version of *Unfinished Sentence*, the sci-fi movie *Out of the Blue*, as well as the performance *Sick Sad World*. But there are so many other projects. For instance, I'm working on a new project called *The Art of Losing*. It's a movie set in the future about a young Arab guy who's fleeing the police and hiding in a museum. There he meets animated objects, ghosts from the past and the future, specifically go-go dancers with dinosaur heads. It's basically a sort of Ulysses journey, but in the museum. It's a protective space, yet at the same time a weird one, similar to a horror movie setting. I'm also address- ing questions related to objects stolen from Africa, in Benin specifically. And other topics, mostly in relation to France's police brutality, but also gay sex fantasies.
HANS ULRICH
So it's not a contemporary museum, but one with historic, stolen artifacts.
TAREK
Yes, I'm still working on the representation of these artifacts because I want to do something very specific involving two young painters. The project is based on the poem "One Art" by Elizabeth Bishop (1976), the first lines of which read: "The art of losing isn't hard to master; so many things seem filled with the intent to be lost that their loss is no disaster."
HANS ULRICH
I am also curious hear about your commission at MOSTYN in Llandudno.
TAREK
I'm opening a solo show there in July 2021 titled *My Immortal.*
HANS ULRICH
The last book by Pierre Klossowski—whom I often saw in Paris in the early 1990s—was *L'Adolescent immortel* (1994), a theatrical version of his famous *The Baphomet* (1965), but it's an unrealized project. Following the very interdisciplinary approach of your work, you bring together films, culture, text, and performance at MOSTYN. At the same time, you connect the present, the future, and also the past by referring to the seventeenth-century English poet John Milton. The show has also to do with the question of what makes or is a queer community. Can you tell me a bit more about the project you're preparing?
TAREK
My aim is to examine what kind of heterotopia the queer community is. When I was traveling, whether in Australia, Canada, Morocco, or the United States, I always met ephemeral queer communities that became instantly my family. It could have been one moment, one night, two weeks, one month, ten years. I want to pay tribute to this experience, conceiving these ephemeral moments as "immortal" ones. Because although fleeting, they become part of you, part of the narrative around yourself. At MOSTYN I'm going to show for the first time a series of photographs that I took in Sydney just before COVID-19 happened. I was there for the Biennale of Sydney, and I remember one specific day when I had been invited to the gay cruising beach by Justin Shoulder and another queer artist I'd just met at a party the night before. For me, that was a moment suspended in time and in space. I took pictures of them that I will show in the exhibition. If we think about my hanged installations, I feel like I am likewise trying to reproduce a moment in time and space that is suspended. I'm also going to work on new metal sculptures. One will be two angel wings and another will be composed of ten metal plates where ten poems will be revealed. I wrote them in the last two years during the different lockdowns and they speak about romance, sadness, sexuality, emotions, home, and family. One of them is called "As a Part of Survival" and reads: "As a part of survival / I try to stay close to you. / You were standing by the tree / and I was under the shadow / waiting for you with velvet gloves and golden earrings. / You were dressed in Nike sportswear / and I came close to you / to kiss your head and then your neck. / You became a coyote with pearls around your neck and I sang a million of sad songs." Lastly, I'm going to bring the *Unfinished Sentence* installation from the Palais Tokyo.
HANS ULRICH
It sounds amazing. In the interview you did with Laura Brown, you talk a lot about the manifesto. [2] I'm interested in this format because I imagine the twenty-first-century manifesto, compared to the twentieth-century one, as having to do with listening. Something Etel Adnan always says is that we need to learn to listen better.
TAREK
I'm starting to write a couple of versions that are

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basically actions and advices that I give myself, like mantras. For example: “Today no fear. You will not be scared.” Or “Don’t know, don’t care.” I was initially trying to think about a possible way to write a manifesto, and I realized that my version would be scattered, akin to my poetry, and there I have to find it. I’m currently reading *Bite Hard* (1997) by the Asian American gay poet Justin Chin, which is unbelievably beautiful and quite unknown. He speaks a lot about his own sexuality and his body being fetishized in the gay community but also in the US context. It’s raw, straightforward, sensitive. I started to read it out loud and I almost cried because it’s so powerful. I feel there is a strength in this text associable to a manifesto. This is what I love about poetry: every poem becomes a manifesto.

HANS ULRICH

Following Rainer Maria Rilke’s *Letters to a Young Poet* (1929), my last question is: What would be your advice to a young artist?

TL

Stay twisted, persistent, and emotional.

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Flash Art

Flash Art

• REVIEWS

15 September 2021, 9:00 am CET

Tarek Lakhrissi "My Immortal" *Mostyn / Wales*

by Caroline Elbaor



1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Tarek Lakhrissi, "My Immortal". Exhibition view at MOSTYN, Wales, 2021. Photography by Mark Blower. Courtesy of MOSTYN, Wales.

Initially trained with a degree in literature, the French-Algerian artist Tarek Lakhrissi identifies as both an artist and poet, and the work is deeply rooted in the power of language. Each project stems from a piece of canonical writing, whereby Lakhrissi reimagines text as a weapon against political or social marginalisation, specifically within the queer community. This idea of language as defence bleeds into a reflection on contemporary queer identities, and self-defence as self-love. The new commission at MOSTYN draws from both the song "My Immortal" by the 2000s American band Evanescence, and John Milton's classic 1667 poem, "Paradise Lost," to question the meaning of community—again, with a focus in particular on the queer community—and its stability, or conversely, vulnerability. (He also regularly references 1990s pop culture, citing subversive icons like the era's TV heroines 'Buffy the Vampire Slayer' and 'Xena: Warrior Princess,' who both

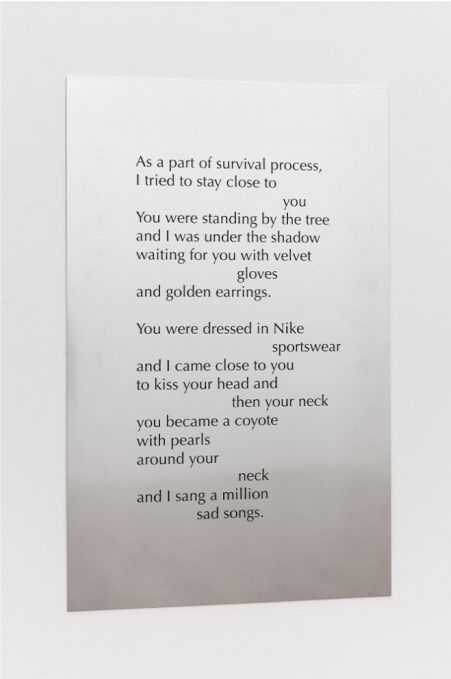
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excelled at protecting themselves in the face of adversity, throughout his work.)

Comprised of film, sculpture, and text, the exhibition is presented as one singular installation spanning the gallery spaces, with the press release describing the project as a "battleground." Indeed, much of Lakhrissi's work is concerned with the theme of warfare, with violence appearing in descriptive language (i.e. text as a "weapon" / language as "defence"), allusions he makes ("warrior" princess Xena), and in the physical art object itself (sword as sculpture).
Here, Lakhrissi succeeds in creating a war of forces through the juxtaposition of tender poetry inscribed on metal plaques paired alongside sculptures of spears and angelic wings suspended from the ceiling. The plaques tell stories — "you were born into a world that was not made for you" / "so you grew up around charismatic stars with toxic dynamics"— that lament a traumatic past and evoke one's empathy, while the object instead invokes a sense of momentum in an ability to self-defend.



1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Tarek Lakhrissi, *To kiss your head*, 2021. Engraved Aluminium. Photography by Mark Blower. Courtesy of the artist and VITRINE, London/Basel.

Based on the Greek myth of Icarus, who died upon drawing closer to the sun, *Gay Angel I* and *Gay Angel II* (2021) seem to imply that the fight is futile. Elsewhere, *Unfinished Sentence* (2020) continues to rally; citing French feminist Monique Wittig's 1969 novel, *Les Guérillère*, in which female insurrectionists combat a male army, the sculptural installation serves can be interpreted as an homage to endurance. All of these works are embedded in a sound piece of the opening themes to Buffy and Xena, in what becomes a fully-rounded, nuanced atmospheric meditation on tension in finding peace against internal and communal conflict.

In addition to his own poetry on view, "My Immortal" is packed chock-full with literary references, demonstrating Lakhrissi's close alignment with language and the written word. Using the work of others as a springboard, he is able to cleverly produce his own careful commentary on love and the human condition—a desire to connect—through the lens of the queer community. Ultimately, "My Immortal" contemplates whether or not to keep pressing forward post-trauma and pain, and through this experience, one leaves Lakhrissi's installation with the answer being a resounding yes.

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Numéro

Les oeuvres poétiques de Tarek Lakhrissi, armes d'une réécriture de notre réalité, Numéro Art, Ingrid Luquet-Gad, 26 July, 2021

Les œuvres poétiques de Tarek Lakhrissi, armes d'une réécriture de notre réalité

NUMÉRO ART **26 JUILLET 2021**

Chaque saison, *Numéro art* propose avec la maison Gucci un aperçu des jeunes talents de la scène artistique française. Aujourd'hui, focus sur l'œuvre pluridisciplinaire de Tarek Lakhrissi, explorant aussi bien la sculpture que la vidéo, la performance que la poésie, investie d'un ardent désir de déconstruction des savoirs, de transmission et d'émancipation.

Portraits par **Lee Wei Swee** .
Réalisation par **Samuel François** .
Texte par **Ingrid Luquet-Gad** .



Sweat-shirt en jersey satiné, GUCCI. Boucle d'oreille personnelle
Coiffure : Chiao Chenet avec Oribe chez Bryant Artists. Maquillage : Lloyd Simmonds chez Agence Carole.
Assistant réalisation : Arthur Callegari

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Les formes de Tarek Lakhrissi sont volatiles et lorsqu'elles se montrent, c'est toujours pour mieux s'absenter. Il faudrait d'emblée préciser qu'il n'y a là nulle préciosité de l'inframince, pas plus que de politesse de l'effacement : ce serait encore concéder au centre ses pleins pouvoirs, et à la norme sa permanence. Au contraire, lorsque, pour sa première exposition personnelle, l'artiste tapisse le sol de sable (*Caméléon Club*, 2019), qu'il vient suspendre ses lances et ses pieux à hauteur de visage (*Unfinished Sentence II*, 2020) ou qu'il darde dans l'espace des queues tranchées de salamandre (*This Doesn't Belong to Me,* 2020), c'est bien de désidentification qu'il s'agit.

Ces trois installations sculpturales récentes de l'artiste, respectivement présentées lors d'un solo à La Galerie, CAC de Noisy-le-Sec, et d'expositions collectives au Palais de Tokyo à Paris et au CAC Brétigny, ainsi qu'à la Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo à Turin, distillent alors autant de stratégies qui, à la résilience, allient la ruse. Né en 1992 à Châtellerault, passé par un master en études théâtrales à Paris et à Montréal avant d'officier un temps à la librairie parisienne queer Les Mots à la Bouche, Tarek Lakhrissi est aujourd'hui installé à Bruxelles. Son parcours, à l'instar de l'esprit qui infuse chacune ses pièces, il le construit par imbrications et cercles concentriques : de médiums d'une part, parcourant le film, la vidéo, la performance et l'installation; de scènes d'autre part, s'entourant de présences allié.e.s passées et présentes, réelles et fictives.



Détail de l'exposition "This doesn't belong to me" de Tarek Lakhrissi à la Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin (2020). Courtesy of the artist, Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo and Vitrine. Photo : Domenico Conte.

Dans le cadre d'*Unfinished Sentence II*, l'artiste convoquait ainsi dans le même souffle, et sur le même plan, la pionnière des *gender studies* Monique Wittig, autrice notamment des *Guérillères* (1969), et les héroïnes des séries télévisées des années 90 *Buffy contre les vampires* ou *Xena, la guerrière.* Mais, chez l'artiste, le procédé prend plus largement valeur de méthodologie. Ainsi de sa langue, cet idiome venant oraliser le palimpseste, tour à tour poétique et argotique, louvoyant entre l'anglais, le français et l'arabe, ne capturant rien d'autre que l'empreinte d'un contexte, l'indice d'un passage, le bruissement d'un corps. En 2019, Tarek Lakhrissi publiait *Fantaisie finale*, son premier recueil de poésie, mais c'est également par des formats performés hybrides qu'il fait sonner sa langue – une langue – lors de la navigation Internet vidéoprojetée de *Blouse bleue* (2018) ou du karaoké Y2K (des années 2000) de *conSpiration* (2019).

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Mais c'est peut-être un workshop, pensé comme une "école d'automne", organisé mi-octobre à la Maison populaire à Montreuil dans le cadre de l'exposition collective "I'm from nowhere good", qui cernerait le mieux sa pensée, et sa pratique. Mêlant master class et ateliers de création, porté par des intervenant.e.s de sensibilité queer, décoloniale et féministe, le format, une forme en soi, fournissait autant d'outils d'émancipation à la question de l'atomisation des savoirs que des manières de se rassembler, ailleurs et autrement.

L'artiste Tarek Lakhrissi fait partie de "Des corps libres. Une jeune scène française", première exposition collective de Reiffers Art Initiatives présentée du 5 au 28 mai 2022 au Studio des Acacias, Paris 17e.

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Tarek Lakhrissi, "Unfinished Sentence II" (2020). Détail de l'exposition "Anticorps" au Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2020). Courtesy of the artist, Palais de Tokyo and Vitrine. Photo : Aurélien Mole.

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BOMB

Bitter Is the Truth: Tarek Lakhrissi Interviewed by Laura Brown, Bomb, Laura Brown, 19 May, 2020

Bitter Is the Truth: Tarek Lakhrissi Interviewed by Laura Brown

Film, performance, and sculpture that imagine exorcism as liberation.



Installation view of *Tarek Lakhrissi: Unfinished Sentence*, 2019, CRAC Alsace, France. Courtesy of the artist. Photo by Aurélien Mole.

I first met Tarek Lakhrissi some months ago in the northeast of France where the border meets Germany and Switzerland. He had covered the windows of a room in purple film and suspended a series of spear-shaped objects from its ceiling. It was a quiet threat to anyone walking through. The installation was filled by ambient, cinematic music composed from the soundtracks to *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Xena: Warrior Princess*. This was shown as part of a larger, two-year research project initiated by CRAC Alsace into the work of Monique Wittig, who was born nearby.

Lakhrissi has long adopted futuristic strains of imagination. His work deals intimately with the codification of language onto human subjects.

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Fiction and cinema tend to be central to this process. Lakhrissi's thirteen-minute, sci-fi tale *Out of the Blue* (2019) is currently part of the 22nd Biennale of Sydney. As the world changes, the main character recites, "Bitter is the truth, you will have to get used to it ..."

—Laura Brown

Laura Brown
What have you been working on recently?

Tarek Lakhrissi
I've mostly been writing and reading. I wanted to write a text in the form of a manifesto. It's based on this question of refusal as a way to think about art. I've been wondering how I can defend myself and how to find the space to be offensive. What different weapons can you use to protect yourself? I'm trying to be more in confrontation and to have more space for conversations. It's hard to always put love in the middle of complicated conversations, and it's important to be ready for the apocalypse.

LB
What prompted this manifesto?

TL
It started maybe four or five years ago. I had this conversation with a lover. He was talking about going to this camp with other queer folks, Asian American folks like him, to start building weapons to defend themselves from transmisogyny, racism, homophobia, sexism. I remember thinking, "What the fuck? That's so real." I'm one hundred per cent for it. I had this image of queer folks being in the forest, armed and ready.

There's this amazing book called *Se défendre* by French writer Elsa Dorlin. She talks about witches and also slaves—all the different ways that minorities started to defend themselves. This also connects with my installation at CRAC Alsace, *Unfinished Sentence* (2019). It was an attempt to create weapons that are failing weapons, that are threatening but also beautiful. And when Elfi Turpin told me about Monique Wittig's book *Les Guérillères*, I was like, "Oh, my god, are you serious?" Each piece started to connect with the other.

LB
How did you go about designing the spears?

TL
I started really simply by sketching out different spears like a teenager bored in the classroom. And then I started researching medieval weapons and also weapons from Africa from different tribes. I was also thinking of the spikes on weather vanes that you see on top of churches, which turn to give direction. With the space in mind, it became obvious that the spears would be hanging.

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Installation view of *Tarek Lakhrissi: Unfinished Sentence*, 2019, CRAC Alsace, France. Courtesy of the artist. Photo by Aurélien Mole.

Tell me about the performance that I missed.

TL

It was part of this installation. It was very romantic. It was a fusion in three modes of different things I wanted to do and a feeling I wanted to create. The first part was mostly improvised dance movements with the spears. I was trying to connect with them in a very intense way, trying to find a relationship that could be hypnotic. And with the music sped up, finding moments of trance. I didn't expect it, but it was so emotional. I felt that there were very powerful presences in the space. I was wearing a wig, perhaps also as a way to inhabit a spirit. It could have been Monique's spirit but also maybe another warrior; we don't know. But it also gave this super emo tone.

LB

A return to emo!

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TL

Exactly. In France, there's this new trend among Arab teens influenced by this very emo rap group named PNL. The young guys have long, straightened hair. It's very melancholic, very self-reflective. It's also very political. There's this attitude of: we're not like you; we're savages; fuck you! Which speaks a lot to me. In the second part of the performance I sang a PNL song called "La misère est si belle." It's like Lana Del Rey's "Pretty When You Cry." It's actually the same exact song in a way, although her version is less political.

In the third part I asked that if someone was fluent in English could they come and join me. Right before the performance I'd written a text called "Potential Threat," which I read and asked someone to translate live. It's about death, basically. It was important that somebody else was saying it. Another voice, another body. There was also a soundtrack, which gave a very cinematic experience, as if it was a voiceover. I think that triggered something special in the space. People in the audience were crying!



Installation view of *Tarek Lakhrissi: Caméléon Club*, 2019, La Galerie CAC, France. Courtesy of the artist. Photo by Pierre Antoine.

LB

Wow. What are you showing in Sydney?

TL

It's my sci-fi movie called *Out of the Blue*, which is based on this question of the threshold. At first it was influenced by the suburbs in France where I'm from. It's a space where I feel like everything is possible. Just the way that people walk and interact in the streets, how people present themselves. I feel much more safe and comfortable there than in the center of Paris.

I was also very focused on José Esteban Muñoz's writing about the threshold. He talks about photographer Kevin McCarty's images of the Chameleon Club. It's two clubs in a mall in Ohio. If you open the door and go in, there's a punk club; then you open another door, and there is this corridor to a gay club behind it. Muñoz wrote that between the two there is a threshold. A space where there is utopia and possibility. This

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LB

And the first time you installed *Out of the Blue*, the title of the show was *Caméléon Club*.

TL

Yes. There was a really bright orange color everywhere that gave a kind of spaceship mode, but it also looked like a club, a very corny club. The space felt like it was in another world with orange light like an eternal sunrise and orange sand. And then *Out of the Blue* was installed in a small room with typical cinema seats.

The main character goes to the cinema and falls asleep. When they wake up someone's telling them: "The UFOs are here and they're kidnapping all the big CEOs ..." There is this popular theory in France of Le Grand Replacement: this fear that we as blacks and Arabs will be the majority in the future. That we will take all the power. I wanted to make a movie about this joke and about the possibility of existing in the future, because we are not welcome in the future, just as we are not welcome in the present or in the past.

I had a lot of fun doing this movie. In the final scene, a character, who happens to be the "chosen one," instead of giving a big show of triumph delivers a beautiful poem. In the end, the only feeling that lasts is melancholy. I feel there's a need to restore melancholy as a way to understand our behaviors, our choices. Melancholy is so important and so creative to me. It stems from my childhood in banlieue. It's the basis of my work and how I feel in the world.



Film still of *Tarek Lakhrissi: Out of the Blue*, 2019, color digital video with sound, thirteen minutes. FRAC Aquitaine (collection). Courtesy of the artist.

LB

What comes after *Out of the Blue*?

TL

I'm currently working on the second part of the film. It's not very clear yet. I'd like to think about a possible way out of the apocalypse: the end of the world as a possible moment of exorcism or liberation for queers and people of color. My current research is inspired by different modalities of "fantasy." *Afro-Fabulations: The Queer Drama of Black Life* by Tavia Nyong'o is a very powerful book that echoes a lot of Muñoz's work.

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75003 Paris France
+33 (0)1 45 26 92 33
contact@galerieallen.com

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TL

It's exorcism as a performative practice. I was always intimidated by the power present in language. It was a kind of survival process: understanding how to speak well, how to be very elegant, how to be careful and be polite. Now I'm thinking about the reverse. I'm in this new process of lying. Lying as an act of refusal or escape. For me, lying is a political act. It's a collective practice.

Tarek Lakhrissi's work can be seen at the 22nd Biennale of Sydney on view in Sydney, Australia, until June 8.

Laura Brown is a writer, editor, and curator living in New York.

Tarek Lakhrissi Laura Brown 22nd Biennale of Sydney Elsa Dorlin Monique Wittig
Tavia Nyong'o José Esteban Muñoz film performance sculpture

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6 Passage Sainte-Avoye
75003 Paris France
+33 (0)1 45 26 92 33
contact@galerieallen.com

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In Conversation with Tarek Lakhrissi at the 22nd Biennale of Sydney (NIRIN), ACMI, Shelley McSpedden, 5 May, 2020



Still from 'Out of the Blue', Tarek Lakhrissi, 2019

< STORIES & IDEAS

Tue 05 May 2020

In conversation with Tarek Lakhrissi at the 22nd Biennale of Sydney (NIRIN)

ART INTERVIEW

Shelley McSpedden
Curator



Curator Shelley McSpedden spoke to the French artist and poet about his work, 'Out of the Blue' (2019), and his experience of participating in the global exhibition.

ACMI is proudly supporting Tarek Lakhrissi, who is participating in the 22nd Biennale of Sydney (NIRIN). ACMI curator Shelley McSpedden met with Tarek on the eve of the Biennale opening to the public, to ask him about his work and his experience of participating in the global exhibition (please note: due to the impact of coronavirus, much of the exhibition has since moved online).

Tarek Lakhrissi is a French interdisciplinary artist and poet who works on the performativity of language and the construction of identity. For the Biennale he presents a cinematic installation of his work *Out of the Blue* (2019) at the Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA), Sydney. Drawing on a rich tradition of queer futurity, *Out of the Blue* is set in a radical moment in time, when established political, economic and cultural structures are under imminent threat from alien invasion. Rather than presenting this as an apocalyptic vision, Lakhrissi's film meditates on the nature of transition itself.

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Shelley McSpedden: Can you tell us a little about *Out of the Blue*?

Tarek Lakhrissi: *Out of the Blue* is a film that I produced and have shown previously, but for the Sydney Biennale I have created a new full installation for the movie. The installation consists of a blue velvet curtain, sectioned off, then some seats and blue lighting.

SMc: So, the whole idea of the threshold is exaggerated through the installation?

TL: Exactly.

SMc: Can you tell us a little bit about the significance of that, the threshold?

TL: Well I think it's quite interesting to also read *Out of the Blue* in relation to another work showing at the MCA. Joël Andrianomearisoa has done a large-scale installation with curtains, black curtains through the whole gallery space. It's kind of invading every room, every artwork in the gallery. The work is very beautiful and hangs like dark black urns, hanging from the ceiling. So, when you get into the space it is like you are in a labyrinth. And that is perfect because I really, really wanted to create this same atmosphere. In the space you will encounter a lot of these black curtains, at some points on the right, you will see a blue light with a blue velvet curtain and then you enter the space of my work and you are in the dark. Kind of like a cinema. A room where you can view the movie.

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75003 Paris France
+33 (0)1 45 26 92 33
contact@galerieallen.com

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SMc: So, your work emerges out of this other labyrinthine space?

TL: Exactly. I'm really happy that my work speaks to other installations and artworks in the Biennale. When we (Tarek and Joël) first met, we were discussing our projects and it was funny that we literally had the same ideas, the same vibes, even though our works are different. He's an artist that I really like, so I was really happy that we both had the same kind of intuition.

I feel like the bonus of the Biennale is creating immersive spaces. I really wanted to create my own space where you can watch a movie, enjoy your time, lose track of time and are literally immersed.

SMc: I guess one of the interesting things about a Biennale is that your work is seen alongside other works and that's a really important dynamic, how those works speak together.

TL: When you work on an event like this, you work with a curator, mostly with an exhibition team and a curator, like Brook Andrew. But it's also quite interesting, especially when it's a group show like this, with so many different artists, to also have spaces and connections with other artists. I love the Biennale for that, because you really meet other perspectives, other people, other philosophies.

SMc: NIRIN, the name of this edition of the Biennale, means 'edge' in the Wiradjuri language. Brook Andrew has done an incredible job of bringing voices that often get seen as existing on the periphery onto centre stage. In some ways that almost seems to fulfil the fantasy of *Out of the Blue*: the work's premise is that all the leaders of industry and CEOs have been abducted by aliens, leaving space for other, more marginalised people to come to the fore.

TL: This work actually began during my first residency on the outskirts of Paris. And I also come from the outskirts of the city. I grew up in an area that is mainly poor, mainly with people of colour. So obviously when I was in that space for the residency I was like "Okay, I want to work on the specifics of this kind of space". And for me, my first intuition was thinking of those spaces as transitionary spaces, where the future can actually exist, where utopia can actually happen.

The work was also really nourished by a couple of different texts. I've been very influenced by two authors. One is Audre Lorde, the black feminist and poet. She wrote a beautiful poem called 'A Litany for Survival' and in this poem she states, 'We were never meant to survive', which is basically a statement about how different bodies, and especially racialised, queer, trans bodies, were not supposed to be part of the plan.

SMc: That has huge resonance here in Australia, for First Nations people.

TL: Yes, I love this connection because obviously the French context is totally different but there are also connections to slavery and colonial history. There are some connections to make around questions of how to survive; how to be; how to exist in a space where you're always at the periphery, when you don't have the right to be in the centre. Okay, but what does it mean to be the centre? Do we really want to be in the centre anyway?

And the second reference is José Esteban Muñoz, who is a Cuban American theorist. He wrote a book called *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (2009) and in that book he talks about this beautiful space that is the in-between space between two clubs. One is a gay club and one is a punk club. He uses this expression,

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6 Passage Sainte-Avoye
75003 Paris France
+33 (0)1 45 26 92 33
contact@galerieallen.com

galerieallen.com

like, this is the actual space of utopia, this in-between, this corridor between the two clubs. I think that this is a beautiful idea, because I feel like a lot of things are actually happening in these transitionary spaces. Like corridors, like halls, like the corridors around the whole of this hotel that we are in now. Like airports, these in-between spaces.

SMc: Yes, these passageways that allow movement, where things are not fixed.

TL: Exactly, and I like creating a movie that's actually based on that and also one that is giving more spaces and more freedom to people of colour. All of the actors in *Out of the Blue* are my friends. None are professional actors, I just invited close friends in to work on the project.

SMc: Thinking about those kinds of literary references, the theorists and writers and poets that you've referred to, you yourself studied literature, so what drew you to the visual arts?

TL: It was an accident.

SMc: All the best things happen by accident.

TL: Right. Yeah. I first studied literature and I was also studying theatre at the same time. I'm very influenced by artists like Robert Wilson, and the opera Einstein on the Beach has been very important for me. I'm really obsessed with this opera.

But at that time, I was also working in a queer bookstore in Paris. So, for six years I was also a bookseller and this experience was a changing point in my life because I was able to meet a lot of people and have access to a lot of books, a lot of things that I didn't have access to before.

I was obviously always interested in art. I was always going to exhibitions. I was always obsessed with cinema; I was going to the cinema all the time. And France is quite amazing for that because there's still a lot of very independent cinema. Even in very, very small cities. So, I had the chance to grow up in a space where there was a cinema and theatres.

Becoming an artist was an accident. I was in Montreal for a year. I made this documentary (*diaspora/situations* [2017]), based on interviews with activists and artists. I was quite surprised because it was a very intimate documentary that I did for nearly nothing but eventually it got a lot of attention. So, I ended up travelling extensively with this documentary, and at some point, some curators came to me and asked if I wanted to create a new work for an exhibition they were doing. They said that they had seen that I'd done poetry and stuff like that, so I got a lot of pretty amazing opportunities.



Sorour Darabi in a still from Tarek Lakhrissi's 'Out of the Blue'

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6 Passage Sainte-Avoye
75003 Paris France
+33 (0)1 45 26 92 33
contact@galerieallen.com

galerieallen.com

SMc: You work as a poet and a writer and an artist. Do you see those practices as fluid and all part of the same thing? How do they feed into each other?

TL: Every project I do is based on text. It's always text first. I think poetry and language are my first two obsessions before visual arts, before moving images or anything else. For me, it just makes sense to start with a text or a poem, and then come to a culture, or performance or movie. It's just very natural, in a way, and it's also a way to experiment with other languages, because every language is complex. I feel that there is an intersection between all the aspects of these different mediums. I'm inspired by so many different things. I'm not just interested by a painting from the 17th century. I love pop culture, I love music, I love it all. And I hope that I fuse all of these different languages.

SMc: It's interesting, thinking about what we were talking about earlier in relation to passageways, and transitory spaces. That idea of language applies to this as well. I'm thinking about how you can translate many things into different languages but there are certain things that can't be translated. Your works are presented in both English and French, is this a significant feature of the works or just something you do to reach more people?

TL: Well I'm French. So obviously French is my first language and I'm comfortable with it. But language is increasingly interesting to me because English is very different. As a foreign language, it helps me be more outside of myself. And weirdly, sometimes I feel much more comfortable in English because English is also much more interesting in terms of hearing and feeling. It is a language that works really well for that. As an example, it is quite normal in, let's say, the American tradition of queer theory to start with your personal life and then out of that come to some universal concepts, come to some idea of the universal. But in the French political tradition, it's forbidden! You really don't do that. You really have to always have a universal point of view. And it is considered taboo to start off by talking about your personal life because it is considered trivial. But I'm like, No! Everything is political and your personal life, your intimate experience can be political. For me, it's weird to just avoid that, and treat them like two different things. So English is useful for those different kinds of things.

SMc: It offers a different kind of approach and perspective?

TL: Yeah, it just allowed me to be more free in a way, which is much more complicated with the French tradition, which is so very heavy when you just want to experiment, if that make sense?

SMc: Yes, sure, I understand there must be a lot of pressure having that weighty cannon on your shoulders.

You've been described as a queer Arab French artist. We're living in a time, well at least in Australia, when we seem to be living in a strange cultural moment where in some ways we are very progressive, there is high visibility of gender fluidity and diverse sexualities seem to have become more accepted but at the same time our political landscape appears to be becoming increasingly conservative, with the threat of a backlash against the ground already made. Is there a similar dynamic happening in France? Are these kinds of political dynamics informing your work or the way that you are thinking about your practice?

TL: Yes, France is also a very interesting country right now because of the issue recently with, not the Oscars, but the César Award (the highest film award in France).

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6 Passage Sainte-Avoye
75003 Paris France
+33 (0)1 45 26 92 33
contact@galerieallen.com

galerieallen.com

I'm not sure if you have heard about that, but Roman Polanski received the award for the best director and a few actresses –responded in a very direct way, in a very a radical way. For example, the actress Adèle Haenel, an openly queer woman in the French cinema industry, left the ceremony when Roman Polanski received the award.

It was huge in France because there was a real backlash as Haenel stepped out and expressed her anger. Also, the master of the ceremony (Florence Foresti) is a big French humourist, and she also didn't come back on stage after that. She was meant to entertain but she didn't come back on stage, in protest. There was also this black artist, Aissa Maiga, who gave a speech about the lack of diversity in the French cinema, especially towards Blacks and Arabs. So in France right now it's quite interesting because there's a lot more discussion on these issues. So, of course, I'm inspired by that. There is a lot more opportunity for people of colour, for queer people of colour, for women. It's quite new that high-profile people use their voices and visibility to talk about these issues. In France it is quite difficult because it can affect your career. You can also be endangered if you speak too loudly about these issues. So, I feel like it's quite interesting right now what's happening in France and I'm really happy to be there.

SMc: Right, so it feels like a productive moment.

TL: Yeah, it feels good to also not be on your own. I lived in Canada for a year and when I came back from France five years ago, I was really full of energy and ready for political change, but I felt sometimes out of place because there is not a strong culture of queerness. I mean there are, of course, activists, there are a lot of things happening on that front. But it was very complicated to have a space to speak up. So, I'm happy that now this is happening much more.

SMc: One of the big themes in *Out of the Blue* is the apocalypse. Right now, it feels, well definitely in Australia, like the end of times. We've just had the mass bushfires across the country and now coronavirus has hit and it feels as if there's this looming existential threat. I wonder, do you see this as a moment of potentiality? What role does the apocalypse play in your work? What's your interest in it?

TL: I think we're fucked! I think we are really fucked, BUT we still have time to do things. Our age is weird because when you think about ecology and environmental issues, we face resistance because we think in terms of the economy, and action requires a clash with capitalism. I feel like it's really hard for countries from the north to actually be actively aware, to be actively conscious about what is happening and how we affect other countries.
So that's why in the movie (*Out of the Blue*) I'm using the fantasy of the end of civilisation as a way to have another perspective, another point-of-view, other possibilities. Maybe a more optimistic vision of what that could mean. But obviously, this is a fantasy, it's not real. I feel like the movies are a perfect site for fantasies, especially political fantasies. I've been very influenced by different filmmakers like the Japanese American filmmaker Gregg Araki and the Canadian underground filmmaker Bruce LaBruce, but also, other more political filmmakers. I feel like futurism and queer futurism can help us to speak about what's actually happening now.

SMc: Yes, it gives us an opportunity to reflect on our moment through the fantasy of what could be.

TL: Exactly. And this is why I love futurism and this question of the end of the world was more like a pretext. Because obviously, when it is the end of the world you can step back and be like, "Okay, what can we do?" "Who am I?" You start asking a lot of existential questions.

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6 Passage Sainte-Avoye
75003 Paris France
+33 (0)1 45 26 92 33
contact@galerieallen.com

galerieallen.com



SMc: You have been very busy doing events for this preview week of the Biennale. Have you had a chance to see some of the other works?

TL: Yesterday, I got a chance to see Mohammed Bourouissa's installation at Cockatoo Island (*Brutal Family Roots* [2020]). He has done this beautiful installation based on the language of plants and how plants are actually living creatures that can also produce music. So, there is a live environment where there are a lot of Acacia. The trees and a beautiful yellow carpet, that references the Mimosa flower. So that is also another immersive installation, where you can even just lay on the floor and listen to the music. There is also beautiful spoken word poetry that you can hear in three languages; English, Aboriginal and Arab. It's a real stand out for me.

SMc: And what's happening next? What are you doing after the Biennale?

TL: After this I'm going to take a break. After that, I do have a solo show in Italy, which is funny. It's the perfect moment to have a solo show in Italy! It is with this private foundation called Sandretto in Turin. I also have a performance project with, actually the main character of the movie (Sorour Darabi, who stars in *Out of the Blue*), who is a dancer. We do have a duo together scheduled for a pretty big festival in Brussels. So those are the two things I have coming up next, of course, I have a lot of different things happening after that.

SMc: Well we wish you luck with those projects. Thanks for speaking with me today.

Visit the Museum of Contemporary Art's website to learn more about *Out of the Blue*.

To see some of Tarek's work visit his Vimeo page.

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6 Passage Sainte-Avoye
75003 Paris France
+33 (0)1 45 26 92 33
contact@galerieallen.com

galerieallen.com

Love and resistance with Tarek Lakhrissi and the Poet Slash Artist exhibition, Salt, Nia Thomas, 29 August, 2021



By: Nia Thomas 29th August 2021 ARTS

Love and resistance with Tarek Lakhrissi and the Poet Slash Artist exhibition

"Things are going pretty well at the moment," Tarek Lakhrissi tells me over the phone as he leaves his Paris studio. He's getting ready for an upcoming solo show titled I wear my wounds on my tongue which opens in two weeks at Kevin Space in Vienna. The installation draws from the work of queer Asian American writer Justin Chin and is about 'tongues, desire, languages and youth culture'.

Lakhrissi is having a busy year. He currently has a solo show at MOSTYN Gallery in Llandudno and is one of the artists involved in Poet Slash Artist, an exhibition celebrating the intersection of poetry and art. Curated by Lemn Sissay and Hans Ulrich Obrist, Poet Slash Artist is currently on display at HOME as part of Manchester International Festival.



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6 Passage Sainte-Avoye
75003 Paris France
+33 (0)1 45 26 92 33
contact@galerieallen.com

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"I was pretty moved by the invitation," Lakhrissi says before reeling of some of the names he joins in the impressive line-up including Etel Adnan, Lubaina Himid, Xu Bing and spoken word poet Isaiah Hull who is from Old Trafford.

The artists and poets were asked to create new pieces of work which could be displayed as posters and pasted across Manchester.

Exhibiting outside of the traditional gallery space was an important element of the show, curator Hans Ulrich Obrist tells me. "The places where exhibitions are usually encountered remain invisible to a large section of society – we can't assume that all people visit museums," he says.

Obrist is the director of the Serpentine Gallery in London and has curated a show for almost every edition of MIF. "I've always been very excited to work in Manchester," he says when I ask what keeps drawing him back. "For me it's a city which has such an amazing potential to bring different disciplines together."



Tracey Emin for Poet Slash Artist at MIF 2021 | Photo: Fabio De Paola

This fluidity of practice is specific to an "emerging generation of artists working in the poetry scene and in the art scene," Obrist says. Lakhrissi's practice, for instance, spans poetry, video, sculpture and performance art.

Lemn Sissay joins Obrist in curating the exhibition and emphasises the need to think beyond the binary of poet or artist. He speaks with passion on this point when we talk over the phone: "The point is to celebrate the rebel soul of the artists [...] by blurring the line, slashing them, Poet Slash Artist."

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6 Passage Sainte-Avoye
75003 Paris France
+33 (0)1 45 26 92 33
contact@galerieallen.com

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The exhibition isn't about "artists who tinker with poetry or poets who tinker with art," Sissay says. It addresses why these art forms are separated in the first place.



Isaiah Hull for Poet Slash Artist at MIF 2021 | Photo: Michael Pollard

Part of Lakhrissi's contribution to the exhibition is a series of six posters titled PROBLEMS POEMS POWERS POSTERS made in collaboration with the visual artist Jehane Yazami. The imagery is inspired by tarot cards and the words are from poems Lakhrissi wrote during lockdown. His poetry comes from a very personal place, drawing on love, longing and queerness.

Whilst deeply intimate and drawing on his personal experience, Lakhrissi is keen for his words to connect to a universal audience.

"We all need poetry and we need more poetry," he says. "My whole life, all the people I have met, either writers, poets or artists, have all been saved in some way by poetry."



Tarek Lakhrissi's POEMS PROBLEMS POWERS POSTERS, 2021

Lakhrissi's work is interesting because he draws from so many different sources. Pop culture and queer theory, British Romanticism and video

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6 Passage Sainte-Avoye
75003 Paris France
+33 (0)1 45 26 92 33
contact@galerieallen.com

galerieallen.com

games are all given equal footing and channelled through words, images and sculpture. This is something which his artwork at HOME, contained within six posters, doesn't necessarily give space for.

His solo show at MOSTYN, however, gives a real sense of the fluidity of his practice. The title, My Immortal, is taken from a 2003 song by American rock band Evanescence and the show explores queer resistance and community.

The warmth and intimacy of his words are juxtaposed against the cold, flat metal plates on which they are etched: *As part of the survival process, I tried to stay close to you / You were dressed in Nike sportswear and I came close to you to kiss your head and then your neck.*

"The whole message [is] about queer, ephemeral counterculture becoming immortal," Lakhrissi explains. Fleeting memories and accounts of queer love and kinship are engraved on the metal of the plates to memorialise them.



Tarek Lakhrissi, Unfinished Sentence II, 2020 | Photo: Mark Blower

A contemplative soundtrack complements the tenderness of Lakhrissi's words. The piece is by artist and close collaborator Ndayé Kouagou and it merges the theme tunes from Buffy the Vampire Slayer and Xena: Warrior Princess.

I ask Lakhrissi about the importance of these strong female characters like Buffy and Xena. "When you grow up as gay or queer, you identify with strong female characters. I was so empowered by these visions of strong female leaders," he says.

It's no coincidence that the characters he focuses on are warriors and slayers. The themes of battlegrounds and conflict continue in the next two rooms where curved metal sculptures of warped spears are suspended from

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6 Passage Sainte-Avoye
75003 Paris France
+33 (0)1 45 26 92 33
contact@galerieallen.com

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the ceiling and partially bathed in purple light.



Tarek Lakhrissi, Tracey Emin, Renee Gladman, Vivienne Griffin and Lubaina Himid for Poet SLash Artist at MIF 2021 | Photo: Fabio De Paola

The battleground is a microcosm for the times we find ourselves in. We discuss the ongoing pandemic and the bush fires ravaging Europe, and even as we speak the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan is still unfolding. Throughout, however, Lakhrissi remains optimistic, there is a determination in his voice.

Through community and sharing resources 'we can [better] cope with the disaster of capitalism but also racism, heteronormativity and all these dominant systems which work to make us feel disempowered.'

I end by asking him whether wider society can learn from the ways in which queer communities operate. "I do think that queer communities are always in advance – observe the enemy and are at the bottom of the hierarchy which gives us more vision in terms of how things could go and how things can turn out," he says.

Poet Slash Artist is being exhibited at HOME as part of Manchester International

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6 Passage Sainte-Avoye
75003 Paris France
+33 (0)1 45 26 92 33
contact@galerieallen.com

galerieallen.com

The Sydney Morning Herald

Aliens invade the Sydney Bienalle, The Sydney Morning Herald, Linda Morris, 16 December, 2019

Aliens invade the Sydney Biennale



Linda Morris

December 16, 2019 — 12.00am

In H.G. Well's famous science fiction novel *War of the Worlds,* aliens from Mars attack London and defeat all military resistance.

Paris-based artist, poet and writer Tarek Lakhrissi imagines a world in which aliens have landed on Earth and kidnapped the CEOs of the world's biggest companies.



French artist, poet and writer Tarek Lakhrissi will present Out of the Blue at the Museum of Contemporary Art for the 22nd Biennale of Sydney. RHETT WYMAN

Is it the last dying breaths of capitalism, a feminist conspiracy or US-driven marketing ploy to revive Roswell or the X-Files?

The line between reality and science fiction is explored in Lakhrissi's cinematic performance installation *Out of the Blue*, which receives its Australian premiere at the Sydney Biennale in March.

The film considers the fate of the city's alienated like Lakhrissi - Arab and queer, growing up in Paris' outer suburbs - who are locked out of future possibilities.

"I know nobody will improve themselves in my place constantly waiting for the alignment of the stars while acting in the moment," the artist quotes to camera. "Bitter is the truth. You have to get used to it."

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6 Passage Sainte-Avoye
75003 Paris France
+33 (0)1 45 26 92 33
contact@galerieallen.com

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Lakhrissi's film is one of 90-plus artists creatives and collectives that will participate in the Biennale titled *Nirin*, the Wiradjuri word for edge.

Some artists were creating work directly responding to the Biennale sites such as Cockatoo Island and the Art Gallery of NSW by bending and moulding ideas and space inspired by existing objects on display, artistic director Brook Andrew said.

Wiradjuri artist Karla Dickens will present an immersive installation that comments on the disproportionate number of Indigenous women in Australian refuges and correctional centres.

Lawrence Abu Hamdan (Jordan/Lebanon) will present *Once Removed*, an audio visual work that features a young historian who is the reincarnation of a 16-year-old soldier who died in 1984, during the Lebanese Civil War. Abu Hamdan was one of four winners announced for this year's Turner Prize after all shortlisted artists requested that they share the award "in the name of commonality, multiplicity, and solidarity".

Lakhrissi who did not formally study art, graduating from Sorbonne with a degree in literature, says he uses language and fiction to point to uncomfortable truths.

This work, to be presented at the Museum of Contemporary Art, had been inspired by films such as *The Matrix*, *X-Men* and *Under the Skin*, as well as the auteur David Lynch, and Japanese science fiction writing.

Entering the enclosed cinema space, visitors will have to pass through a blue velvet curtain. The threshold suggests the suspension of reality, but also acts as an allegory for the way we live in bubbles . . . or spaceships.

GALERIE
ALLEN

6 Passage Sainte-Avoye
75003 Paris France
+33 (0)1 45 26 92 33
contact@galerieallen.com

galerieallen.com

For any further information please contact:

Joseph Allen Shea
joseph@galerieallen.com
T: +33 (0)1 45 26 92 33

6 Passage Sainte-Avoye
75003 Paris France

galerieallen.com