

ART EXPLORA FESTIVAL



ODYSSÉE
CULTURELLE
EN MÉDITERRANÉE

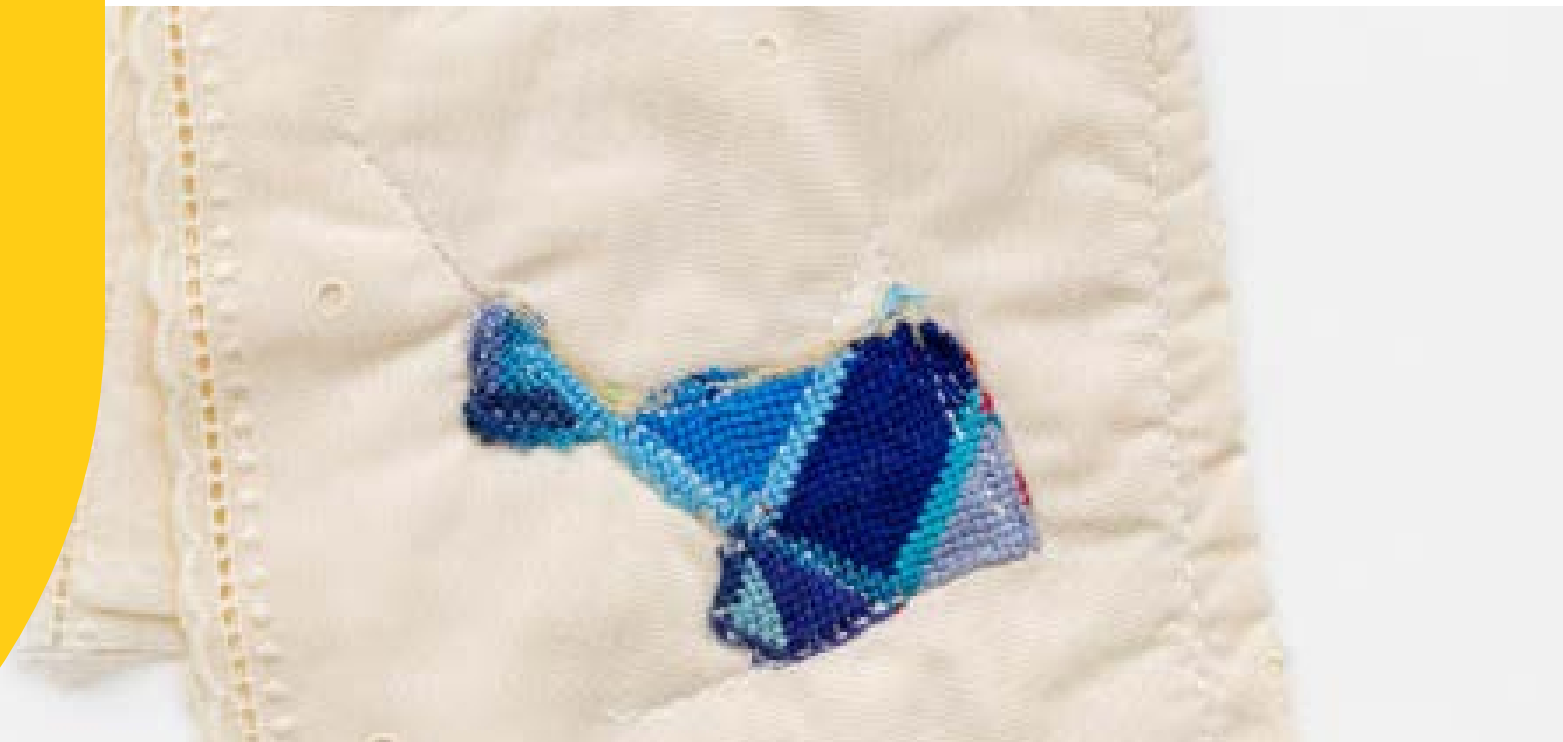
Photo pavilion **UNDERTOW**

Curation: Amanda Abi Khalil and Danielle Mekhoul (TAP)

The title of the exhibition **Undertow / Contre ; Courant** refers to the unwater current, which moves in the opposite direction to the surface current observed at the surface. The exhibition thus explores the Mediterranean Sea, its surface currents and those of the depths: the stories that intertwine there, the human experiences that it binds and rests upon. For it is both a place of travel and exile, of hope and disillusionment, of life and death. The works presented - by artists from different regions of the Mediterranean basin - reflect a diversity of viewpoints that challenge the often-well-established prejudices about the region's migratory phenomena. By giving them space, voice and form, the works reveal the power of these narratives and their protagonists.

Conception/realization: ma-tisse (www.ma-tisse.fr)
Layout and design: Flore Beaudelin

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Catherine Cattaruzza, I Can't Recall the Egges, 2016-2019
Sara Kontar, Therefore I Cut., 2022,
Majd Abdel Hamid, Sketch, 2023





Catherine Cattaruzza - France / Liban, *I Can't Recall the Edges*, 2016 - 2019

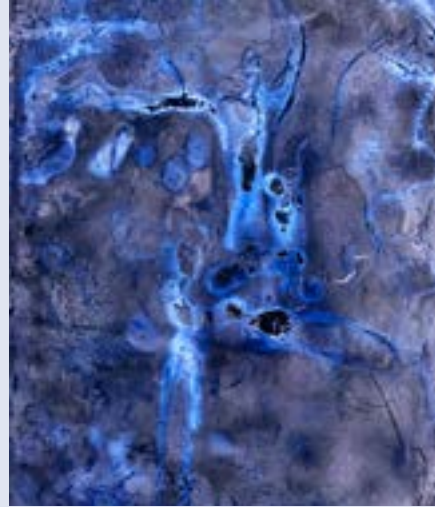
Catherine Cattaruzza has been photographing **Beirut** for several years (since 1992). For this series, she photographed the public **landfill** located facing the Mediterranean. The quantity of waste is so massive that it forms piles which are gradually covered, eventually creating a natural **dike**. The photographs show stretches of sand, cruise ships, and remnants of **ruins**.

? What do you think of the framing of the photographs? What might the amount of waste indicate about the political management of this territory?

Nabila Hamil - Maroc, *How deep is your love*, 2020

Nabila Halim photographs **packages** sent by family members to those who have emigrated. From this, she creates a work that, on the surface, appears paradoxical: materially light, the work, as its title suggests, carries great depth. The ten photographs presented here, like light letters with colorful patterns, ultimately say more than the object sent. They condense the entire symbolism of the «*colis du bled*» (the package from home), which forms a **tangible link** with the family, but also serves as a reminder of the recipient's origins, **identity**, and **culture**.

? The correspondence between family members separated by migration is essential and raises several questions: how does one maintain a personal connection with family while in exile? What kind of collective memory does this intimate correspondence create?



Lara Tabet - Liban, *Marseille/Overflow*, 2022 et *Nitrate 001*, 2022

Lara Tabet uses **water samples** from the Mediterranean and its **bacteria** to create her photographs. The patterns and colors are the direct results of chemical reactions between various materials: the living, light, and photographic impressions. The artist creates a poetic dialogue between the scientific analysis of life, the invisibility of bacteria, and reveals an unknown landscape from the ocean's depths. The sea, long time, and microorganisms are the main components of her work.

? Do you think that bacteria and microorganisms can reveal traces of human presence? Do human movements have an impact on bacteria? These topics are also part of Lara Tabet's areas of interest, as she is trained as a medical biologist.

Randa Maroufi - Maroc, *Liberation de la série Nabila & Keltoum & Khadij*, 2015 ; *Bab Sebta*, 2019

Bab Sebta is, first and foremost, a door—the one that opens and closes the **border** between two countries separated by the Mediterranean. It is the gate of Ceuta, a Spanish enclave in Morocco. It is also the place of trafficking of all kinds of goods (books, clothing, food, etc.) that pass from one country to another. The scene is grave, profoundly human: this daily, repeated trafficking is vital for the survival of many. But seen from above, these actions, which transgress borders and laws, also reveal their power and poetry.

? The film's voiceover narrates the relationship between customs officers and traffickers, and the methods used by the latter to circumvent the law. These objects that pass from one country to another in a semi-legality, are they not a reflection of the men and women in exile? Could the title of the photograph *Libération* also be a symbol of hope?



Bouchra Khalili - Maroc, *Any* (*Straight Stories - Part 2*), 2008

Any (*Straight Stories - Part 2*) is part of a series of films through which the artist Bouchra Khalili explores **exile** and **transit** zones, spaces that are simultaneously full of **hope** and disillusionment. In this video, *Any*, a young Iraqi woman, tells her journey from her home country. We don't see her. The images highlight the **geography of her experience**, here: *Istanbul* and the *Bosphorus*. The city and the strait both appear fully real, and, at the same time, through this voice that narrates them, almost ghostly.

? Observe the images of this tracking shot that travels from the Asian side of the strait towards the European side. What feeling does the movement of the camera evoke? Just before the end of the film, this phrase emerges: "When will I be able to have a quiet life?"..

Majd Abdel Hamid - Syrie, *Muscle Memory*, 2022

Using photographs he takes of the city of Beirut, Majd Abdel Hamid creates a visual memory, reflecting his personal experience of the city. He then extracts patterns (architectural, colorful, etc.), reappropriates them, and embroiders them. Through this process, the artist seeks the pattern that will symbolize Beirut—his identity, in a sense. He also revives a tradition inherited from his Palestinian culture, where each embroidered pattern corresponds to a specific region.

? Majd Abdel Hamid's creative process questions the relationship between an individual and the place he lives in, as well as the connection between subjective experience and collective identity. Is the city the result of the individual stories that live within it, or, conversely, is each individual the product of the place they inhabit?



Imane Djamil - Maroc, *Slow Days in the Fortunate Isle*, 2021-2024

These photographs were taken on the island of Fuerteventura, the second largest island of the Canary Islands in Spain. Between stretches of white sand and the Atlantic Ocean, the island is only 100 km from the Moroccan coast and is part of one of the deadliest migration routes. Imane Djamil uses docu-fiction here to reveal the atmosphere of the landscape and its surreal aspect. The artist is also inspired by the Greek myth of the Fortunate Isles—symbolizing happiness—which over the centuries has been associated with the Canary Islands.

? Whom do you associate with the drawing of the map: a treasure hunt or a travel route? What emotions dominate when facing these photographs: joy, fear, or anxiety? Try to understand why and by what means these emotions are created.