

## Press release

Mehdi-Georges Lahlou

*À l'ombre des palmiers*

November 16 2024 – January 18 2025

Mehdi-Georges Lahlou establishes relationships between humans and non-humans within a new ethnoecological narrative. An avant-garde observer of contemporary mutations, he addresses questions of identity, history, migration, religion and cultural domination by integrating living things into the heart of the narrative, rather than considering it as a separate entity.

While the archives of a personal nature – memories, letters, scars, photographs – bear witness to the transformations of history, nature is also the repository of collective memory. In his work, non-humans become witness to migration, oppression and the standardization of cultures.

His photographs, sculptures, performances, tapestries and installations explore the blind spots of memory and history, weaving together social and environmental issues. By linking animals, plants, rituals, archives and symbols, Mehdi-Georges Lahlou defies classification, revealing the hybrid and fluid nature of identities through chimeras. Releasing the aroma of transpersonal experiences, he celebrates the encounter between the invisible and diversity in all its forms – biological, social and spiritual.

The palm tree, central to the artist's work, initiates a contemporary reflection on global migration and geopolitics. Exploited in monoculture for centuries and today accused of replacing primary forests, its fruits (drupe, date, coconut) become complex symbols that combine colonialism and spiritual quest.

With *La conférence des palmiers*, Mehdi-Georges Lahlou revisits Farid al-Din Attar's centuries old initiatory tale "La Conférence des Oiseaux". A ceramic androgenic date tree, with multiple heads and branches, establishes a subtle link between the human body and all living matter. Next to it, on a wall tapestry, a bird of paradise sheds a bitter tear. The fruit of another palm, the coconut, in giant "rosary beads", evokes the movement and adaptation of religious objects across cultures and eras. By revisiting Marian devotion, the artist creates a symbol of migration, demonstrating that sacred objects also integrate and evolve with the territories they cross.

By crossing trade routes and internal wanderings, Mehdi-Georges Lahlou suggests that the answers to questions of displacement and exile are often to be found within oneself, in a journey of perpetual connection.

Alice Audouin

Curator, author and consultant in art and ecology, founder of Art of Change 21

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{ Galerie  
Papillon }

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**Mehdi-Georges Lahlou** – Born in 1983 in Les Sables d'Olonne, France, lives and works in Brussels and Paris

**A few key dates**

2007 DNSEP , Ecole Régionale de Nantes Métropole.

2010 PhD in Arts, St. Joost school of Art Design, Breda, The Netherlands.

2013 *72 (virgins) in the wind*, installation Lynden Sculpture Garden, Milwaukee, U.S.A.

2015 Solo show *Sous les voiles même*, Institut Français de Casablanca, Morocco.

2017 Solo Show *Behind the Garden*, Botanique Museum, Brussels, Belgium.

2018 Participates in *I is an Other/Be the other*, Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, Rome, Italy and in *L'Heure rouge*, Dak'art 2018, Biennale de Dakar, Senegal.

2019 Solo show *Et si rien ne prend racine dans cette oasis*, Museum of Fine Arts de Rouen , participates in *Material Insanity*, Museum of African Contemporary Art Al Maaden -MACAAL, Marrakech, Morocco.

2022 Participates in *Pharaons Superstars*, Mucem, Marseille.

2023 *La Conférence des palmiers*, solo show at Parvis centre d'art contemporain, Ibos, France ; *Extra*, solo show at CENTRALE, Brussels, Belgium ; participates in *Parfums d'orient*, Institut du monde Arabe, Paris.

2024 Solo show *A Botanical Conservation* à Spaces, Cleveland, U.S.A ; first solo exhibition *À l'ombre des palmiers* at Galerie Papillon, Paris.