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COMMISSARIAT
GABRIELLE CAMUSET

SUR LES RUINES, تزهج حجارة الاطلال
LES PIERRES FLEURISSENT
ABDESSAMAD EL MONTASSIR

Friche la Belle de Mai
41 rue Jobin, Marseille
Une exposition produite par Fræme
en partenariat avec Kulte et le Cirva

20.05 — 27.09.2026

SUR LES RUINES, تزهج حجارة الإطلال LES PIERRES FLEURISSENT ABDESSAMAD EL MONTASSIR

From May 20 to September 27, 2026
Opening on May 20 - 5 to 10 pm

Curated by Gabrielle Camuset

An exhibition produced by **Fræme**, as part of the Mediterranean Season 2026,
in partnership with **Kulte** (Rabat) and **Cirva** (Marseille)

Friche la Belle de Mai, 41 rue Jobin 13003 Marseille, 3rd floor
Open from Wednesday to Friday, 2 to 7 pm and Saturday to Sunday, 1 to 7 pm

«What happens when the ways that memories and politically constructed spaces are articulated encounters both the need to know and the right to forget?»

With *Sur les ruines, les pierres fleurissent* (*Among the ruins, the stones bloom*), Abdessamad El Montassir proposes a plunge into the desert and its silenced stories, which he envisions as an archipelago, replete with both human and non-human presences, buried memories, and disjointed temporalities. It is a living landscape where plants, trees, mountains, the sand, and the wind become active witnesses, capable of conserving and transmitting that which the dominant narrative leaves in the shadows.

Originally from the Sahara in the south of Morocco, Abdessamad El Montassir has developed a practice situated at the intersection of art and research, in which the landscape is never a passive entity, but an active participant in its own right. His projects are rooted in an attention to what escapes language: the experiences of humans who cannot, will not, or are no longer able to bear witness, as well as the more discreet ways that non-human entities express themselves through temporalities that elude us. From this space emerge fragmentary narratives, where transmission is constructed through the afterimage of what once was.

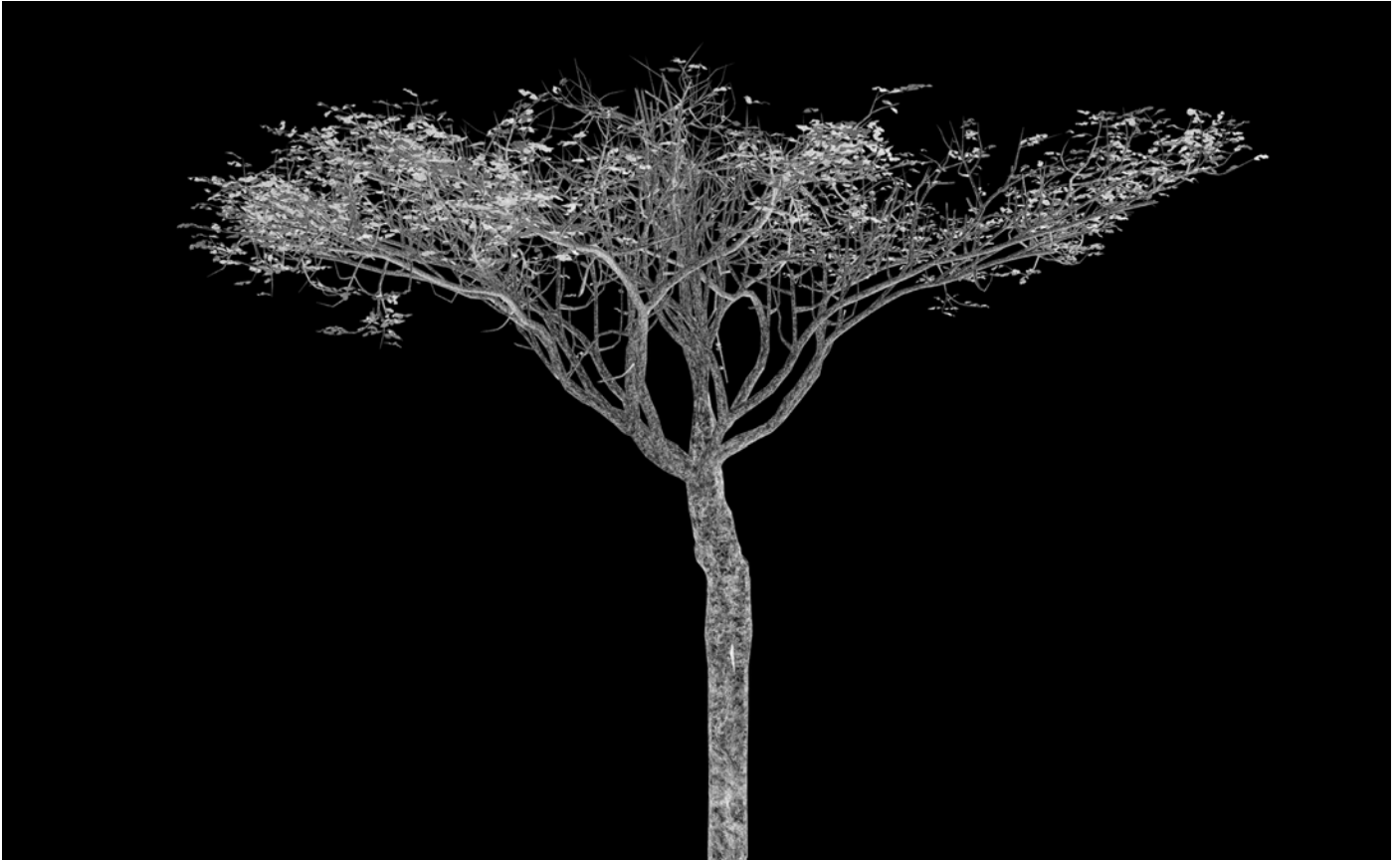
The exhibition *Sur les ruines, les pierres fleurissent* brings together recent works and new pieces that invite us to pause and pay close attention to what the landscapes can reveal to us. It proposes a new reading of desert territories, not as static spaces, but as an ensemble of dignified entities: animals, plants, humans, and minerals.

Abdessamad El Montassir invites us to engage with these fragmented stories, carried by that which persists despite erasure, reminding us that what has not been said has still always been significant. The exhibition therefore takes shape as an experience of listening and perception, asking us to reconsider the manner in which alternative histories are reinvented and transmitted beyond words.

— Text by Gabrielle Camuset

Sadra Kodia

video installation 2K, five screens
10 min in loop, 2025



Abdessamad El Montassir, *Sadra Kodia*, 2025. Video Installation multi-screens, 10min each.
© Abdessamad El Montassir / ADAGP, Paris

A Sahrawi custom holds that “in the vast desert, each acacia is linked to a Sahrawi, and each Sahrawi is linked to an acacia. When a Sahrawi dies, their acacia appears in their eye, allowing their loved ones to bury the body at the foot of its tree.”

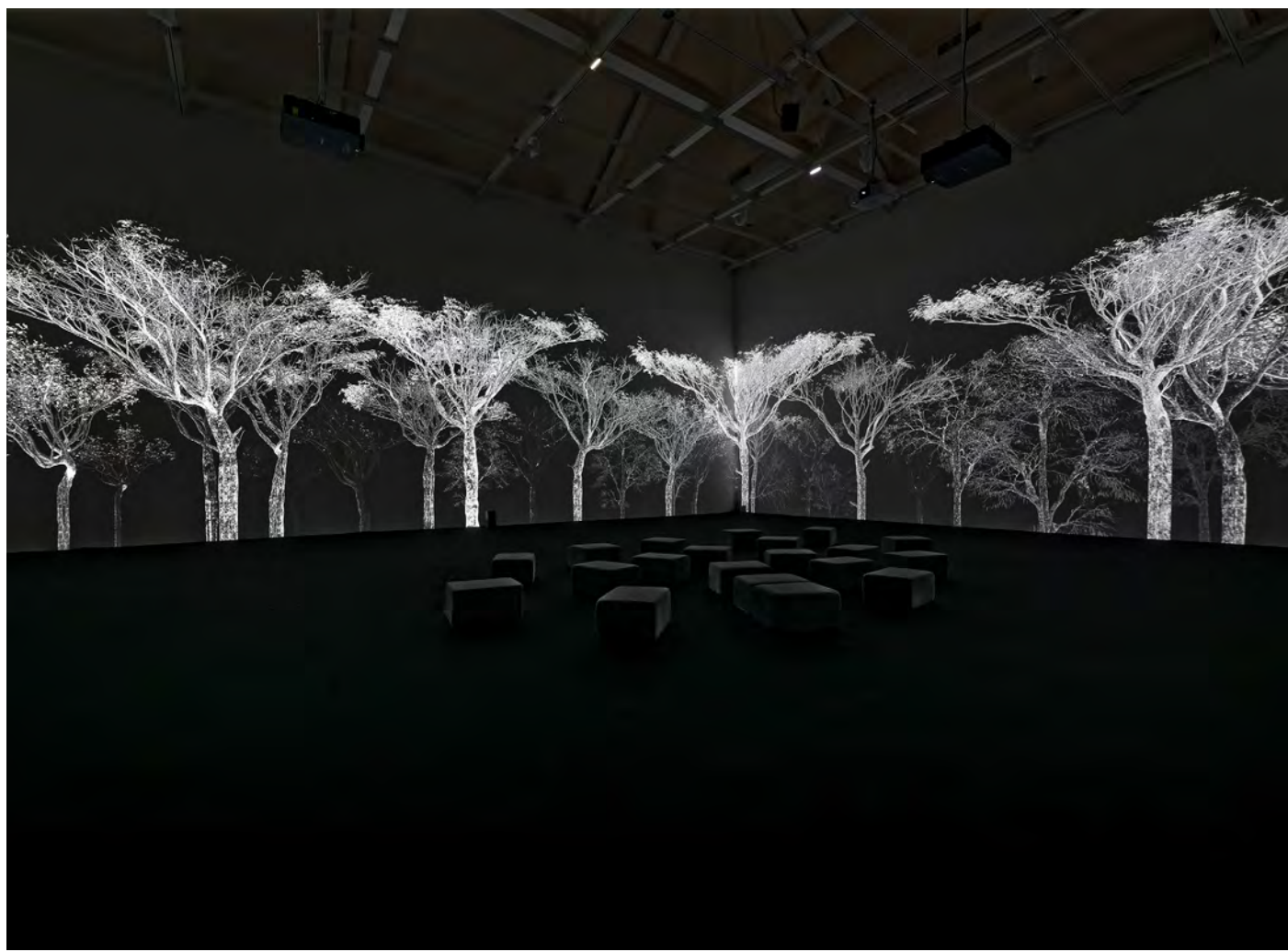
In the Sahara, life is understood as a creolization between humans and non-humans. Each entity is regarded as both witness and narrator in its own right, expressing itself within its own temporality.

Sadra Kodia offers an immersion into a landscape of acacias which, hovering between presence and specter, envelop us through their rhythm. By taking the time to observe, the installation makes it possible to approach their temporality and the stories they convey—a way of preserving testimony when words are withheld and stories are not transmitted.

Sadra Kodia (excerpt):

<https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/1099099178/b481f9e81c>

Project realized with the support of Villa Medici (Rome), Frac Franche-Comté (Besançon), DRAC Franche-Comté, Fondation Louis Roederer, Arts AIUla, and Mécènes du Sud (Aix-Marseille)



Abdessamad El Montassir, *Sadra Kodia* (detail), installation views at Frac Franche-Comté, 2025-2026
© Abdessamad El Montassir / ADAGP, Paris. Photos: Blaise Adilon

Trab'ssahl

Films trilogy Full HD, colour, stereo sound, 2023

Duration: 10 min, 13 min and 8 min



Abdessamad El Montassir, *Trab'ssahl*, 2023. Films trilogy full HD, stereo sound, 13min 30sec each.

© Abdessamad El Montassir / ADAGP, Paris

Silence as testimony, listening as an ethics that grants opacity the power to convey a story in its own right—this is the position from which the *Trab'ssahl* trilogy is constructed.

In Hassaniya, *Trab'ssahl* means “the land of the west” and refers to a large part of Sahrawi territory. It is here—on this land, in this language, within the largely overlooked history of a conflict that has persisted for nearly fifty years—that the project is rooted. It follows three protagonists across generations and territory, whose lives are shaped by distance and the discipline of silence. All live in suspension, carrying within them a demand for reparation.

By confronting the amnesia that hangs over the Sahara south of Morocco, *Trab'ssahl* asks: how can one show what cannot be seen, how can one listen to what cannot be spoken? What becomes of obstructed or confiscated memories? What form can be given to forgetting?

The films propose an answer by listening to persisting presences: the grain of the voice, the poetics of resistance, and the desert itself which, as an active witness, holds stories for those who take the time to pay attention and listen closely.

Project realized with the support of Maison Salvan (Labège), Akademie Schloss Solitude (Stuttgart), ADAGP (Paris), and Bétonsalon – Centre for Contemporary Art and Research (Paris)



Abdessamad El Montassir, *Trab'ssahl*, 2023. Films trilogy full HD, stereo sound, 13min 30sec each.
© Abdessamad El Montassir / ADAGP, Paris



Installation views *Trab'ssahl* in the exhibition «La Linea Insubrica» at Kunst Merano Arte, 2024.
© Abdessamad El Montassir / ADAGP, Paris. Photo : Ivo Corrà

Athar Dakira

Sound piece 5.1.2
22 minutes, 2025

Athar Dakira offers an immersion into the songs of the Harratins—literally “the other free ones,” a name given to enslaved and formerly enslaved people in the Sahara of North and West Africa, where forms of slavery remain widespread today despite being officially abolished. Chanted in shifting, clandestine spaces in the heart of the desert, these songs open intervals for reclaiming rights, identities, and confiscated histories.

The sound piece *Athar Dakira* immerses us in these narratives, whose lines intertwine with sounds drawn from plants and instruments shaped from Saharan flora. In this exchange between human and plant, earth and voice extend one another. The composition unfolds in waves, in an archipelagic journey where silences form the narrative and phrases conceal as much as they reveal.

Sound piece composed in collaboration with Matthieu Guillin.

Project realized with the support of Villa Medici (Rome), Frac Franche-Comté (Besançon), Fondation Louis Roederer, and Mécènes du Sud (Aix-Marseille)

Galb'Echaouf

Video full HD, stereo sound
18 min, 2021



Go and ask the ruins, the desert,
its thorny plants,

Abdessamad El Montassir, *Galb'Echaouf*, 2021, Video full HD, stereo sound, 18 min 43 sec
© Abdessamad El Montassir / ADAGP, Paris

[Trailer *Galb'Echaouf*: Vimeo link](#)

Galb'Echaouf evokes an event that profoundly transformed the landscape of the Sahara south of Morocco, whose history remains largely unknown, marked by trauma and transmitted beyond words.

Khadija, born into a nomadic family, settled in the city to escape the conflict. She invites us to listen to ruins and plants in order to retrace events that words cannot express. Her testimony defines an ethics of transmission in which silence becomes synonymous with action, presence, and attention. Dah's refusal to speak carries equal weight, redirecting attention toward the right to forget. The daghmous stands as a central witness, a storyteller among storytellers. Alongside it, elements and poems respond in their own way. What emerges is a practice of historicization born from the interval between speaking and withholding, inviting the viewer to approach the history of the Sahara as a living relationship with all forms of life—where testimony and memory arise from the bonds between individuals, plants, and places.

Project realized with the support of AFAC – The Arab Fund for Arts and Culture, Institut français du Maroc, Pro Helvetia Cairo, Embassy of Foreign Artists (Geneva), Le Cube – independent art room (Rabat), and Maison Salvan (Labège)



The mountains became blind,

Abdessamad El Montassir, *Galb'Echaouf*, 2021, Video full HD, stereo sound, 18 min 43 sec
© Abdessamad El Montassir / ADAGP, Paris



Abdessamad El Montassir, *Galb'Echaouf*, 2021, Video full HD, stereo sound, 18 min 43 sec
© Abdessamad El Montassir / ADAGP, Paris

Asserfa

Photographic installation, 4 light boxes, 165 x 110 x 9 cm each
2025

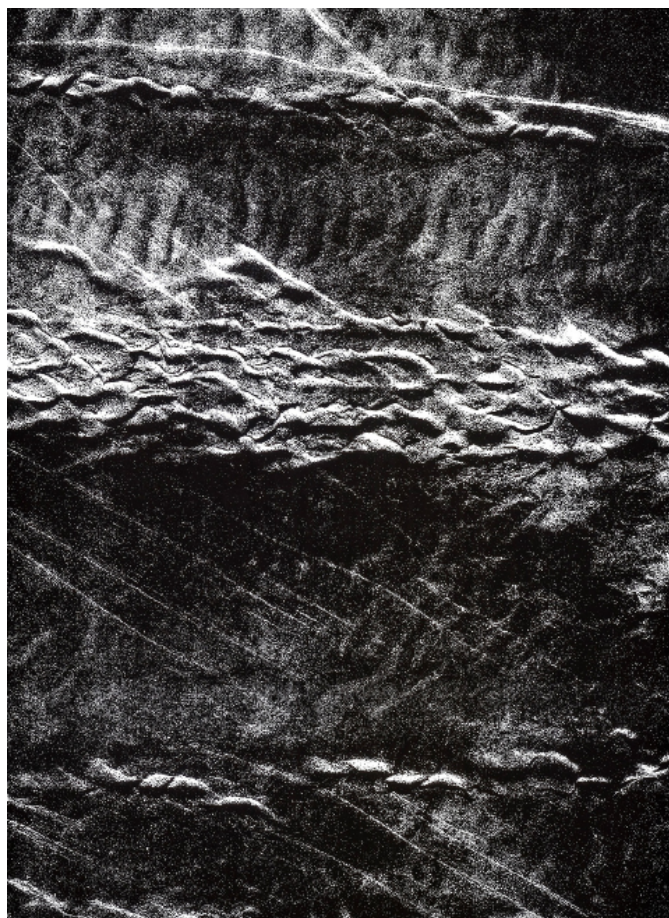
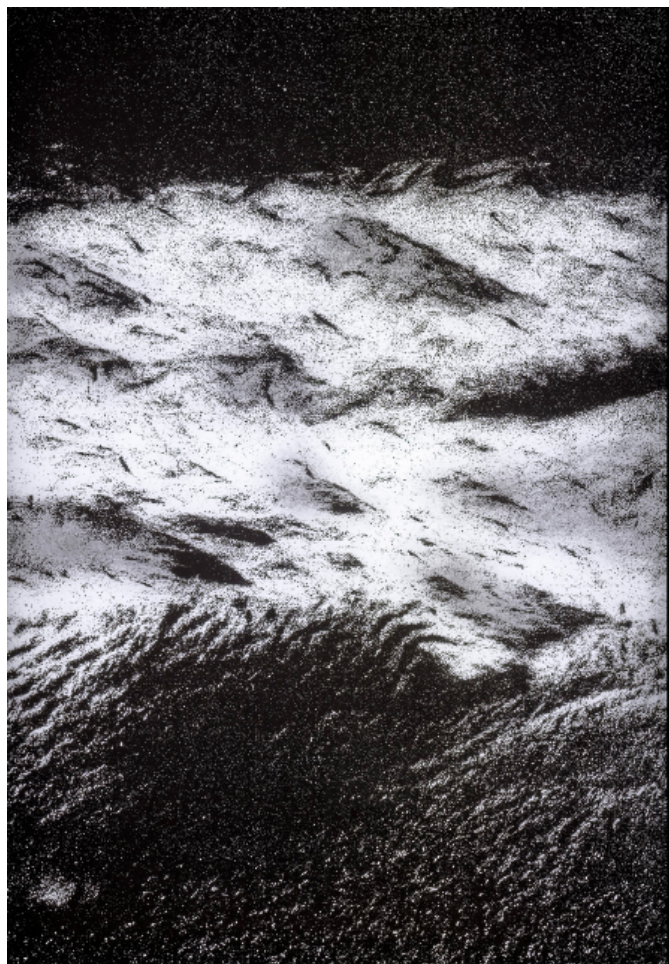
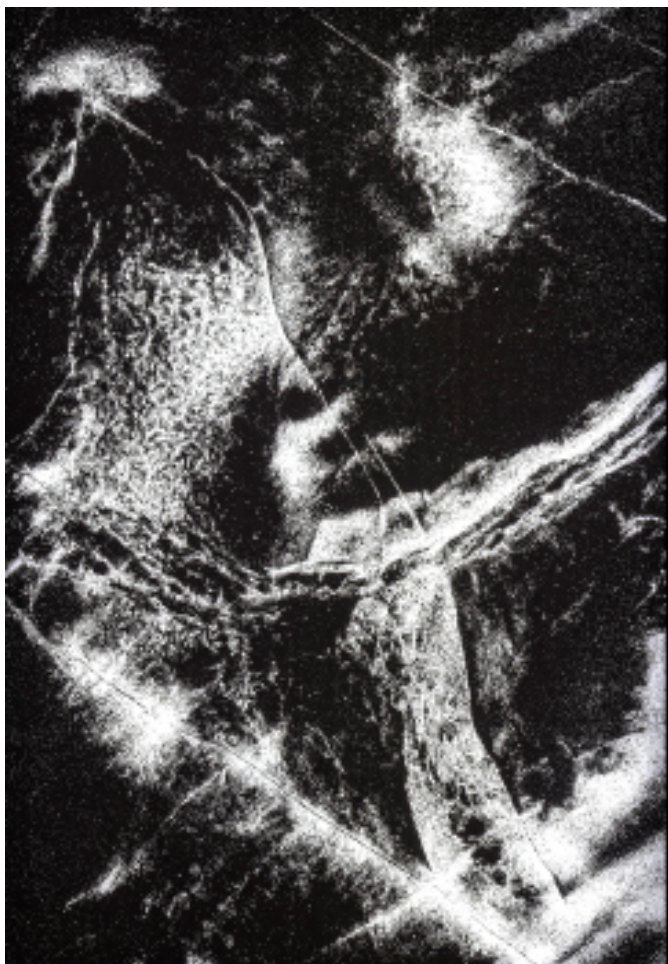


Installation views *Asserfa* in the exhibition «Une pierre sous la langue» at Frac Franche-Comté, 2025-2026
© Abdessamad El Montassir / ADAGP, Paris. Photo : Blaise Adilon

Asserfa proposes a series of landscapes shaped from Sahrawi narratives recounting movements, conflicts, and struggles through topographical descriptions. These landscapes carry within them a way of life lost forever and an untransmitted traumatic history that persists only in the memories of those who once traversed them.

However, the work does not represent the landscape itself, but its transmission: an image shaped by distance, carried by myth, and marked by absence. Each representation acknowledges its own fiction, its inability to restore what has been lost, while opening a space in which individual or collective reminiscences—of what has no official existence—may serve a form of historicization.

Project realized with the support of Villa Medici (Rome), Frac Franche-Comté (Besançon), Fondation Louis Roederer, and DRAC Franche-Comté.



Abdessamad El Montassir, *Asserfa*, 2025, photographic installation
© Abdessamad El Montassir / ADAGP, Paris

Âabide l'kadia

Installation of 10 blown glass sculptures
Variable dimensions, 2025-2026



Abdessamad El Montassir, *Âabide l'kadia*, (detail), 2025-2026, Glass installation, variable dimensions
© Abdessamad El Montassir / ADAGP Paris. Photo : Cirva / Bérangère Huguet

Âabide l'kadia connects forms of Saharan seeds with those of beads once braided into Harratin hairstyles. These beads functioned as territorial markers, referring to archipelagic constructions of the landscape. As such, they contributed to the creation of fugitive cartographies that enabled orientation, reunion, and the transmission of trajectories of resistance.

The installation resonates with these alternative modes of mapping. It calls upon the social struggles led by Harratin communities and their sites of maroonage, paying particular attention to the methodologies of resistance linked to language and landscape that they have developed, as well as to the forms of revendication they express.

Production: Cirva / FRÆME

Realization: Cirva, Marseille (with the collaboration of Alexandre Mouillet, Cyrille Rocherieux, Maxime Rosseel, David Veis, Thomas Paynel, Noëlie Thinon)

Project realized with the support of Frac Franche-Comté (Besançon)

About the artist

Abdessamad El Montassir is an artist-researcher. His projects take the form of immersive visual and sound installations that explore the notion of trauma and examine how experienced, (un)transmitted, or anticipated forms of violence become embodied in bodies and landscapes. El Montassir's approach is interdisciplinary and unfolds through collaborations with scientists, poets, and citizen-witnesses.

A former resident of the Villa Medici in Rome, Smith College in Northampton, and IMéRA – Institute for Advanced Study in Marseille, his work has been the subject of solo and group exhibitions, notably at Bétonsalon in Paris, the Centre Pompidou-Metz, MAXXI in Rome, the National Museum of the History of Immigration in Paris, La Maison Salvain in Labège, and more recently at the FRAC Franche-Comté in Besançon.



Abdessamad El Montassir. Photo : Daniele Molajoli x Villa Médicis

About the curator

Gabrielle Camuset is an independent curator and the founder of the production platform *Sadah*. Her practice, grounded in feminist, postcolonial, and documentary approaches, brings together research, production, and curatorial writing. She conceives and structures frameworks that engage artists, institutions, and territories in sustainable forms of cooperation across the Mediterranean region, with the aim of opening up spaces of recognition for marginalized narratives and struggles.

About Fræme

A resident association at Friche la Belle de Mai since 2001, FRÆME conceives, develops, and implements systems for the production and dissemination of contemporary art. The association produces exhibitions, events, and artworks. As an actor in the art market through the international contemporary art fair Art-o-rama, it also structures its activities around two dynamics: supporting artists' professional trajectories—through residency and workshop programs—and publishing monographic catalogues, alongside a significant range of mediation projects and cultural actions for all audiences. These initiatives position creation as a vector for both individual and collective expression.

Fræme is a member of [PAC-Provence Art Contemporain](#) and [Plein Sud network](#).

Visual identity of the exhibition and poster design: [Akakir Studio](#)

Texts: Gabrielle Camuset and Anja Saleh

About the Mediterranean Season 2026

The Mediterranean Season 2026 highlights the richness and diversity of Mediterranean cultures. It celebrates artists, creators, and emerging talents from these regions, promoting cultural and human exchange. Following a popular and festive opening in Marseille, the Season unfolds mainly across France between May 15 and October 31, 2026.

It extends across the Mediterranean through events connected to artistic scenes, cultural institutions, and the French diplomatic network abroad. The Season aims to highlight youth and diaspora initiatives, support creation and innovation through the circulation of ideas and people, and encourage cooperation between civil societies, particularly with Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, and Lebanon.

Five themes structure the program: speculative utopias, plural identities, contemporary spiritualities, the collective history of migration, and the construction of narratives.

Under the aegis of the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Culture, in connection with the Interministerial Delegation for the Mediterranean, the Season is led by the Institut français under the general curatorship of Julie Kretzschmar.

The Mediterranean Season at Friche la Belle de Mai

For Friche la Belle de Mai—one of the largest cultural operators in the Mediterranean—the Mediterranean Season 2026 is an obvious continuation of a movement already deeply embedded in its project. This Season is the Mediterranean inviting itself—a quasi-introspective gesture, oriented more toward a shared identity than toward otherness.

From May 20, Friche inaugurates five new summer exhibitions presented by Fræme, Triangle-Astérides, Parallèle, and Think Tanger, during an exceptional and festive evening celebrating creation and cooperation across the Mediterranean.

Full program available [here](#).



For more information and press images, please contact:

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Événement organisé dans le cadre
de la Saison Méditerranée 2026



GOVERNEMENT

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