

AFIKARIS

FRANCO-ALGERIAN ARTIST NASREDDINE BENNACER SHOWS AN ENSEMBLE OF INTIMATE WORKS ON THE PATH OF HIS ROOTS AT PARISIAN GALLERY AFIKARIS

AFIKARIS Gallery seals its first collaboration with Nasreddine Bennacer by presenting a solo exhibition of the artist. From 11 March to 15 April, Je remonte la trace de mes pas settles as an autobiographical narrative and testifies to the diversity of the artist's practice through a set of works on Japanese paper, installations, sculptures and photographs. The exhibition unveils a dozen works created between 2017 and 2023.

Curated by: Grégoire Prangé

11 March – 15 April, 2023



Left. Nasreddine Bennacer. *Go with the Flow I*, 2017. 237x160 cm. Gouache on Japanese paper mounted on canvas.

À droite. Nasreddine Bennacer. *Sans titre*, 2020. 160x120 cm. Gouache on Japanese paper mounted on canvas.

Courtesy of AFIKARIS Gallery and the artist.

1st March (Paris, France) – From March 11th to April 15th, AFIKARIS Gallery welcomes for the first time the French-Algerian artist Nasreddine Bennacer (Guelma, 1967). Bennacer moved to France in 1991, at the beginning of the black decade, and for more than twenty years has been developing a practice mainly focussed on drawing - in which he explores the different materials, tools and processes - while also trying his hand at photography, video and sculpture. Although he does not seek to construct an argument or convey a message in his work, it is a form of necessity in the face of the world's evolutions, a poetic impulse against adversity, a movement, perhaps. It also crystallises something deeply intimate, a quest for identity in a pendulum movement, a hybridity, and an inner revolt.

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On the wall, Berber characters fade away on a vaporous background (*Untitled*, 2020-2023). As the paintings progress, they gradually disappear, melting into the fog, just like memory fades away in ignorance. Through this series, one senses the evocation of the memory deficit perceived in Algerian society, and within the artist's own family: although the child of a Kabyle mother, this history is not transmitted to him, and thus fatally disappears. But at the same time, it leaves its mark, intensely: the forgotten language escapes by the current, and is sedimented in the depths of the sea.

The sea sediments memories, languages and forgotten dreams. It is also the liquid border that connects and separates the wall and the horizon. In *Je respire sous l'eau* (2019), writing turns into indecipherable signs. It evokes the last letter of a Syrian migrant who never reached the shore, awakening the memory of this tragically missing child. He writes:

"Thank you, O sea, which welcomed us without visa or passport, thank you for the fish that will share my flesh without asking me any questions [...]"



Au-dessus. Nasreddine Bennacer. *Manzil*, 2023.
Gouache sur papier japon marouflé sur toile. 220x220 cm.
Courtesy de la galerie AFIKARIS et de l'artiste.

Carried away by the waves, the child becomes one with the fish of the sea. And the fish in the sea become one with the castaways of the world, swirling like a huge column, moving as one body to escape predation. In *Go With the Flow I* (2017), the swirling bench embodies the vital drive that sees lives, languages and histories come together. Here again, hope and violence, escape and sedimentation.

On the ground, a remnant of a beach where the sea washes up in the foam of hopes. On its sand walks the one who seeks (*Je remonte la trace de mes pas*, 2017). As one tries to find one's trace on the beach swept away by the winds and the tide. As one goes up the meanders of a jostled memory. As one travels along the path, in search of an identity that never stands still. As one sets out on a journey, into the past but towards the future - "I follow the tracks of my footsteps, in the hope of finding where I come from".

One enters Nasreddine Bennacer's work as if into a diary. Page after page, we read his research, his reactions to the world's pulsations, to history and its consequences. As in a diary, there is no demonstration or explanation, the work is not didactic or even metaphorical, it does not articulate but whispers in signs and symbols, in the spontaneity of the drawing. A search that comes from within, that the paper receives and develops in turn.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

About Nasreddine Bennacer:

Nasreddine Bennacer experiments with and mixes different techniques and media: ranging from drawing to sculpture, painting to installations, depending on which medium is best attuned to his thinking. The impact of his work relies on observations delivered in an instinctive and trenchant style. His work derives from complex and disarming situations, sometimes tinged with violence. Behind a scrupulous and often poetic aesthetic, the artist denounces a world increasingly hostage to manipulation and rationalisation.

Nasreddine Bennacer's work has been exhibited in institutions in France as well as at international fairs in Dubai, Miami, Moscow, London, Istanbul and Paris.

About Grégoire Prangé:

Grégoire Prangé is an art critic and exhibition curator. Graduated with a diploma from Paris 1 University, Ecole du Louvre and ESSEC, he co-founded the collective Jeunes Critiques d'Art in 2015 and the confederation YACI - International Young Art Criticism in 2019. He currently works at LaM, Lille Métropole Museum of Modern Art, Contemporary Art and Art Brut.

About AFIKARIS Gallery, Paris :

Founded in 2018 by Florian Azzopardi, to promote emerging and established artists from Africa and its diaspora, AFIKARIS Gallery opened a dedicated Paris-based gallery space in 2021. Engaged in promoting cross-cultural and disciplinary exchange, AFIKARIS acts as a platform for artists to engage with the wider public. A mirror onto and space for reflection on the contemporary African art scene, it provides artists with a space to address the topical local and international issues at the heart of their art.

The AFIKARIS programme includes group and solo exhibitions, art fairs, publications and institutional partnerships. In 2023, the gallery opened its artist residency on the outskirts of Paris. The residency is a place dedicated to creation, at the disposal of the artists working with the gallery or who wish to develop a project for a future presentation with the gallery.

Nasreddine Bennacer, *Je remonte la trace de mes pas* | 11 March — 15 April, 2023

PRESS & VIP PREVIEW: Friday 10 March, 3 — 7 PM, Saturday 11 March, 11 AM — 6 PM

PUBLIC OPENING: Saturday 11 March, 6 – 9 PM

AFIKARIS Gallery

7 rue Notre-Dame-de-Nazareth

75003 Paris, France

Tuesday – Saturday: 11AM — 7 PM

Upcoming presentations:

ART FAIRS

Drawing Now | Paris, France | 23 — 26 March, 2023

Solo Show: Salifou Lindou

1-54 New York | New York | USA | 18 — 21 May, 2023

Saïdou Dicko, Salifou Lindou, Mallory Lowe Mpoka, Emma Odumade

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