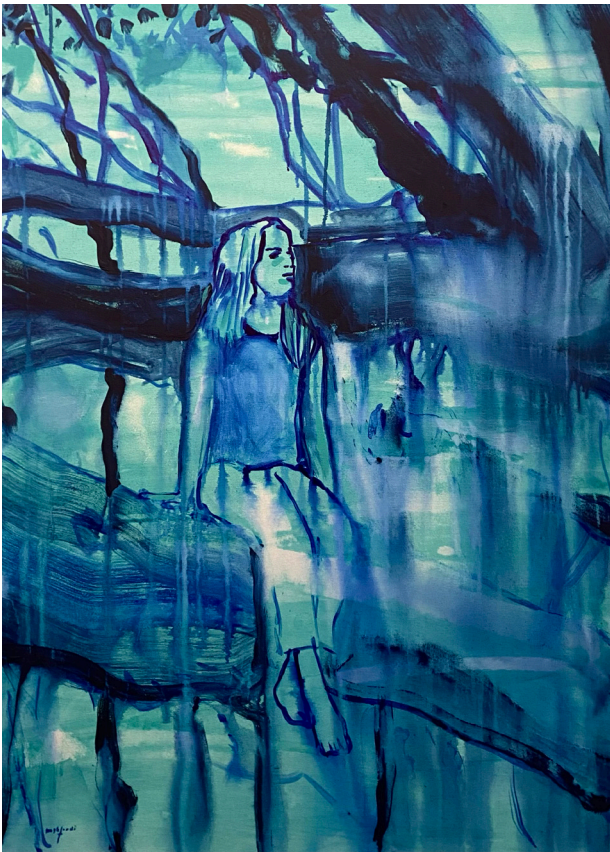


## FOR HIS SECOND MAJOR SOLO EXHIBITION IN PARIS, MOROCCAN ARTIST OMAR MAHFOUDI INVITES THE AUDIENCE ON A JOURNEY THROUGH HIS CHILDHOOD MEMORIES

*AFIKARIS Gallery presents the second major solo exhibition in France of Moroccan artist Omar Mahfoudi. Thus, from December 16 to January 14, The Forgotten Branches brings the visitors of 7 rue Notre-Dame-de-Nazareth in the 3rd arrondissement to a higher ground by inviting them to join him on the 'forgotten branches', a metaphor for childhood, the past and our ancestors. It is in this constant balancing act between past and present, memory and fantasy, that Omar Mahfoudi's work invites the Parisian public to reconnect with their roots and recreate the lost osmosis between Humanity and Nature.*

**16 December, 2022 – 14 January, 2023**



Left. Omar Mahfoudi, *J'aurais jamais dû m'éloigner de mon arbre*, 2022. 120x88 cm. Liquid acrylic on canvas.

Right. Omar Mahfoudi, *Tears in my tree*, 2022. 97x99 cm. Liquid acrylic on canvas.

Courtesy of AFIKARIS Gallery.

1<sup>st</sup> December, 2022 (Paris, France) – After a first solo exhibition at AFIKARIS Gallery in 2021, then located at 38 rue Quincampoix (*El Dorado*, December 11, 2021 - January 11, 2022), Omar Mahfoudi (b. 1981, Morocco) is now taking over the 180m<sup>2</sup> of its new space at 7 rue Notre-Dame-de-Nazareth - which will be the gallery's permanent venue starting in December 2022. If in 2021 Omar Mahfoudi embarked visitors on an initiatory odyssey through the limbo of the unconscious, he now invites them to rediscover their origins by wandering through the meanders of their memories. Thus, from December 16, 2022, to January 14, 2023, *The Forgotten Branches* presents itself as a return to childhood, an ode to escape, imbued with nostalgia.



# AFIKARIS

In parallel to his show, the gallery is publishing the first ever book devoted to Omar Mahfoudi's work. A tribute to their relationship, it brings together more than a hundred works created since the beginning of their collaboration in 2019. This book contextualises the painter's work by confronting it with his cinematographic, pictorial and philosophical influences.



Above. Omar Mahfoudi. *L'orangerie*, 2022. 160x200 cm.  
Liquid acrylic on canvas.  
Courtesy of AFIKARIS Gallery.

While looking through his window, Mahfoudi observes the world and lets himself wander. The tree in front of him becomes an object of fantasy: a portal to multiple horizons and temporalities, where he imagines beings in suspension. At the top of the branches, his characters overlook the world and are carried away by their thoughts. If children climb trees without fear of falling, Mahfoudi taints his work with this same freedom. The silhouettes rise, looking for an escape.

The branches extend towards the heavens while the roots penetrate the depths of the earth.

The figures embrace the dream while reconnecting with their past and origins. It is how Omar Mahfoudi's nostalgic fantasy arises. This dreamlike approach explores the construction of identity as a synthesis of traditions and personal aspirations - and allows his sensitivity to flourish. Carried by his memories, Omar Mahfoudi paints liquid landscapes crossed by solitary characters plunged into a meditative state. They emerge, like ghosts, from the depths of his memory. The swimmer, a recurring figure of his iconography, seems to have left the water of the Strait, driven by the desire to explore new elements.

*"The figures emerge from the water and become part of the elements that surround them, mostly trees. Some time ago in my work, there was a play between presence and absence. Today, there is an osmosis, almost a fusion, between these two beings, reminding us that the tree can be a shelter as well as a metaphor for ancestral life."*

*Omar Mahfoudi*

As the work of Omar Mahfoudi is an extension of his being, the artist gets to explore himself the elements. The water in which his alter-egos venture shapes the line and dissolves the colour. It is both the muse and the creator. The painting *Tears in my tree* - portraying a young boy protected by the branches of a weeping willow - witnesses a subtle interplay between technique and subject. The teardrops arise from the movement of the matter dropping onto the canvas, driven by the water.

At a time when the world was enclosed for health reasons, a need for communion with nature emerged. The lockdown awakened in Omar Mahfoudi a desire for mystical exile. Personal memories and impressions of a past life where humanity lived in harmony with nature tinge this spiritual escape. On the canvas, the bodies on their perched tree rely on these ancestral entities - that seem to support them - until they fuse with the vegetation. The silent sound of the trees seems to plunge the characters into a state of complete peacefulness. It is then in this suspended place, remote from the torments of the world, that the souls can reconnect.

At the end of this journey, where memories and union meet, abstraction gives way to figuration on a

monochrome background. The subjects of the painting *Sans Horizon* foresee a less tortured and brighter future. The absence of a horizon appears like a blank page leading people to live in osmosis.

Mahfoudi's art thus invites introspection and to rethink a more harmonious ecosystem.



Above. Omar Mahfoudi. *Sans Horizon*, 2022. 152x178 cm.  
Liquid acrylic on canvas.  
Courtesy of AFIKARIS Gallery.

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## PRESS CONTACT:

Michaëla Hadji-Minaglou | Gallery Manager | [michaela@afikaris.com](mailto:michaela@afikaris.com)

## NOTES TO EDITORS:

### About Omar Mahfoudi :

Omar Mahfoudi (b.1981, Tangier, Morocco) is a multidisciplinary artist who works and lives in Paris. His art is guided by the poetry of his souvenirs, and gives place to a fantasized imagery, populated with enigmatic and solitary beings.

Working mainly with ink and acrylic, he plays with the movement created by the matter on the surface of the canvas. Thus, in a constant balancing between past and present, memory and fantasy, Omar Mahfoudi's work appears as an absence of obstacle to dreaming.

Omar Mahfoudi's works have been presented in numerous international art fairs such as AKA (Paris, France), 1-54 London (London, UK), ARCO (Madrid, Spain), artgenève (Geneva, Switzerland) and Art Cologne (Cologne, Germany). They will be displayed next January by AFIKARIS gallery at the artgenève art fair (26 - 29 January 2023) in Switzerland.

*The Forgotten Branches* is Omar Mahfoudi's second solo exhibition at AFIKARIS Gallery. In parallel, the first book dedicated to his work will be published.

### About AFIKARIS, 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.

# AFIKARIS

Omar Mahfoudi, *The Forgotten Branches* | 16 December, 2022 — 14 January, 2023

PRESS OPENING: Thursday, 15 December, 3 — 6 PM

PUBLIC OPENING: Thursday, 15 December, 6 — 9 PM

AFIKARIS Gallery

7 rue Notre-Dame-de-Nazareth

75003 Paris, France

From Tuesday to Saturday: 11 AM — 7 PM

Ongoing shows:

*Après la pluie* | A solo show devoted to Moustapha Baidi Oumarou

Galerie AFIKARIS | 7 rue Notre-Dame-de-Nazareth, 75003 Paris

Until 15 December, 2022

Upcoming presentations:

ART FAIRS

artgenève | Palexpo | Geneva, Switzerland | 26 — 29 January, 2023

Solo Show: Saïdou Dicko

Group Show: Omar Mahfoudi, Ousmane Niang, Ozioma Onuzulike

ZonaMaco | Mexico City, Mexico | 8 — 12 February, 2023

EJES Section, Duo Show : Jean David Nkot, Ozioma Onuzulike

[info@afikaris.com](mailto:info@afikaris.com)

[www.afikaris.com](http://www.afikaris.com)