

MOUHCINE RAHAOUI



BIOGRAPHY

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MOUHCINE RAHAOUI EST NÉ EN 1990 À JERADA AU MAROC. IL VIT ET TRAVAILLE À MARRAKECH.

Diplômé de l'école des Beaux-Arts de Tétouan en 2017, le travail de Mouhcine Rahaoui explore l'expérience et l'histoire des mineurs de la région Orientale, et plus particulièrement de sa ville natale Jerada. Il propose une immersion dans les méandres de sa mémoire et dans son rapport à la réalité crue d'une ville où la seule façon de subsister reste d'emprunter le 'chemin du lapin', se confrontant à la probabilité de ne pas en ressortir. Selon une légende urbaine, ce serait à travers la rencontre avec un lapin noir couvert de charbon qu'un garde forestier belge serait tombé sur un gisement de charbon à la fin des années 20. Suite à cela les premières exploitations minières ont fait leur apparition dans la ville de Jerada.

Mouhcine Rahaoui questionne l'absurdité de la vie dans son caractère déraisonnable et injuste. Ainsi, dans la mine se confirme la fragilité de l'homme face à l'imprévisibilité de la montagne qui le nourrit et parfois l'engloutit. Mouhcine Rahaoui conte l'histoire de ces expéditions dangereuses et clandestines menées pour extraire le charbon qui fait vivre et doucement consume. Mouhcine Rahaoui se demande pourquoi là-bas, à Jérada, le travail mène à la mort plutôt qu'à la vie.

À travers une série de reproductions, d'installations et ready made, catalogage d'outils du mineur, lampes torche, casques, gants, cordes, dans une dominance de noir, Mouhcine Rahaoui nous infiltre dans l'esthétique du travailleur et nous informe, par un geste viscéral, sur son sort, scellé par la mine comme une destinée immuable.

Le travail de Mouhcine Rahaoui a fait l'objet de deux expositions monographiques : l'une à la galerie le Comptoir des Mines à Marrakech en 2022 et l'autre à la galerie AFIKARIS en 2024. Il a également été présenté à Art Paris, 1-54 London et artgenève.

MOUHCINE RAHAOUI WAS BORN IN 1990 IN JERADA, MOROCCO. HE LIVES AND WORKS IN MARRAKECH.

Mouhcine Rahaoui graduated from the Tetouan School of Fine Arts in 2017. His work explores the experience and history of miners in the Oriental region, particularly in his home town of Jerada. He offers an immersion into the meanders of his memory and his relationship with the raw reality of a town where the only way to survive is to 'take the rabbit trail', confronting the likelihood of not getting out. According to urban legend, a Belgian forest ranger stumbled upon a coal deposit in the late 1920s after having followed a black rabbit covered in coal. This event led to the first mining operations in the town of Jerada.

Mouhcine Rahaoui questions the absurdity of life in its unreasonable and unfair nature. The mine confirms humans' fragility in the face of the unpredictability of the mountain that feeds them and sometimes swallows them up. Mouhcine Rahaoui tells the story of these dangerous, clandestine expeditions to extract the coal that sustains life and gently consumes it. Mouhcine Rahaoui wonders why working there, in Jerada, leads to death rather than life.

Through a series of reproductions, installations and ready-mades, cataloguing the miner's tools - torches, helmets, gloves, ropes - in a dominant shade of black, Mouhcine Rahaoui plunges the viewer into the aesthetics of the worker and informs us, through a visceral gesture, of his fate, sealed by the mine like an immutable destiny.

Mouhcine Rahaoui's work has been the subject of two solo exhibitions: one at the Comptoir des Mines Gallery in Marrakech in 2022 and the other at AFIKARIS Gallery in 2024. It has also been shown at Art Paris, 1-54 London and artgenève.

EDUCATION

2012 - Specialised Diploma in Automated Systems Electromechanics, ISTA Sidi Mâafa, Oujda, Morocco
2017 - National Institute of Fine Arts, Tétouan, Morocco

SELECTION OF SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2024
À l'horizon, une obscure clarté, AFIKARIS Gallery, Paris, France

2023
Enfant des mines, Comptoir des Mines Gallery, Marrakech, Morocco

2019
Labor isn't destiny, Le 18, Marrakech, Morocco

2018
Dasthe Art Space, Casablanca, Morocco

SELECTION OF GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2025
Art Paris, AFIKARIS Gallery, Paris, France
1-54 Marrakech, AFIKARIS Gallery, Marrakech, Morocco
Art Genève, AFIKARIS Gallery, Geneva, Switzerland

2024
1-54 London, AFIKARIS Gallery, London, England
Inhabiting the World, AFIKARIS Gallery, Paris, France
Art Genève, AFIKARIS Gallery, Geneva, Switzerland

2023
1-54 London, AFIKARIS Gallery, London, United Kingdom
Art Paris, Comptoir des Mines Gallery, Paris, France

2017
The Start is Mine, 1x1 Art Gallery, Dubai, United Arab Emirates
Saida Contemporary Art Gallery, Tétouan, Morocco

RESIDENCIES

2019 - Le 18, Marrakech, Morocco
2019 - Sakhra, Moulay Bouchta Ikhmar, Morocco
2017 - FLATTA Land Art Festival, Tangier, Morocco
2016 - Biennale of Marrakech, Marrakech, Morocco

AWARDS / PRIZES

2013 - Regional Prize for Young Painters, Oujda, Morocco

PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

Fondation H, Antananarivo, Madagascar



« Mes œuvres traduisent cette lutte de survie qui se joue dans les mines, où la lumière n'est jamais loin mais reste souvent hors de portée. Pour moi, l'horizon incarne une quête de dignité, d'éthique et de valeurs humaines, malgré l'hostilité de l'environnement.»

“My work reflects the struggle for survival that takes place in the mines, where light is never far away but often remains out of reach. For me, the horizon embodies a quest for dignity, ethics and human values, despite the hostility of the environment.”

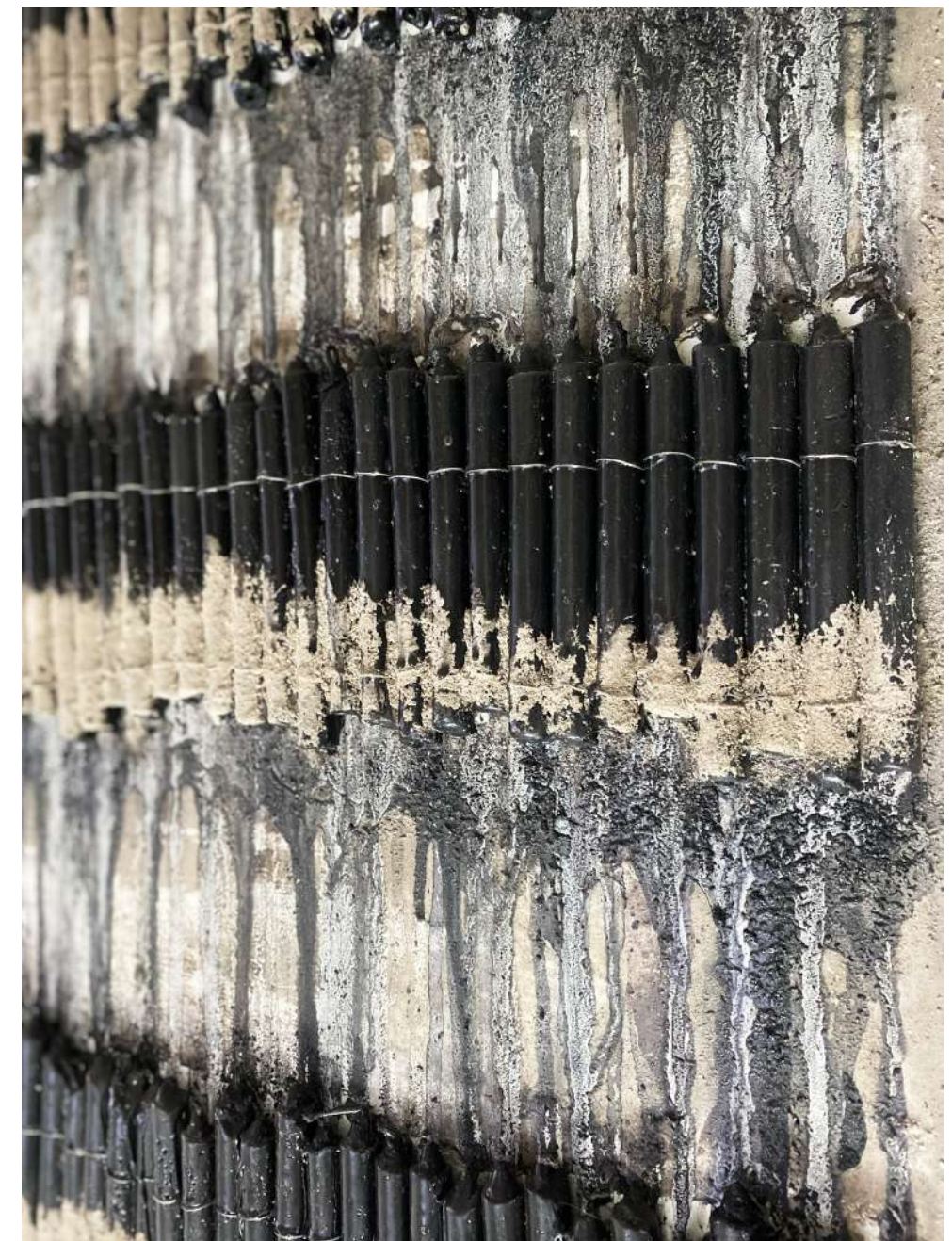


SOLIDAIRE, 2024
Mixed media (coal, wax, glue and candles) on canvas mounted on wood panel
150x150 cm / 59x59 in





SOLIDAIRE, 2023
Coal and wax on canvas mounted on wood panel
150x150 cm / 59x59 in



SOLIDAIRE, 2023
(detail)

The *Solidaire* series, showing white candles lined up and blackened by coal, is a metaphor for miners preparing to go underground, even before daybreak.



DAM AM NAR (BLOOD OR FIRE?), 2023-2025
Mixed media (Coal, glue, helmet and headlamp) on wood panel
172x50 cm each



ABSENCE ET PRÉSENCE (LES TRACES), 2024
Mixed media (coal, resin and wax) on canvas mounted on panel
150x150 cm / 59x59 in



LUMIÈRE OBSCURE 2, 2023
Mixed media (coal, wax and glue)
100x100 cm / 39x39 in



EXHIBITION VIEW
Art Genève, Genève, Switzerland
January 2024

Photo credit: AFIKARIS Gallery



« À travers ce matériau, j'invite le spectateur à plonger dans les profondeurs de la mine. Le charbon n'est pas simplement une matière : il en est à la fois le pigment et le protagoniste. »

“Through this material, I invite the viewer to dive into the depths of the mine. Coal is not merely a substance; it is both the pigment and the protagonist.”



LUMIÈRE OBSCURE 1, 2023
Mixed media (coal, wax and glue)
100x100 cm / 39x39 in



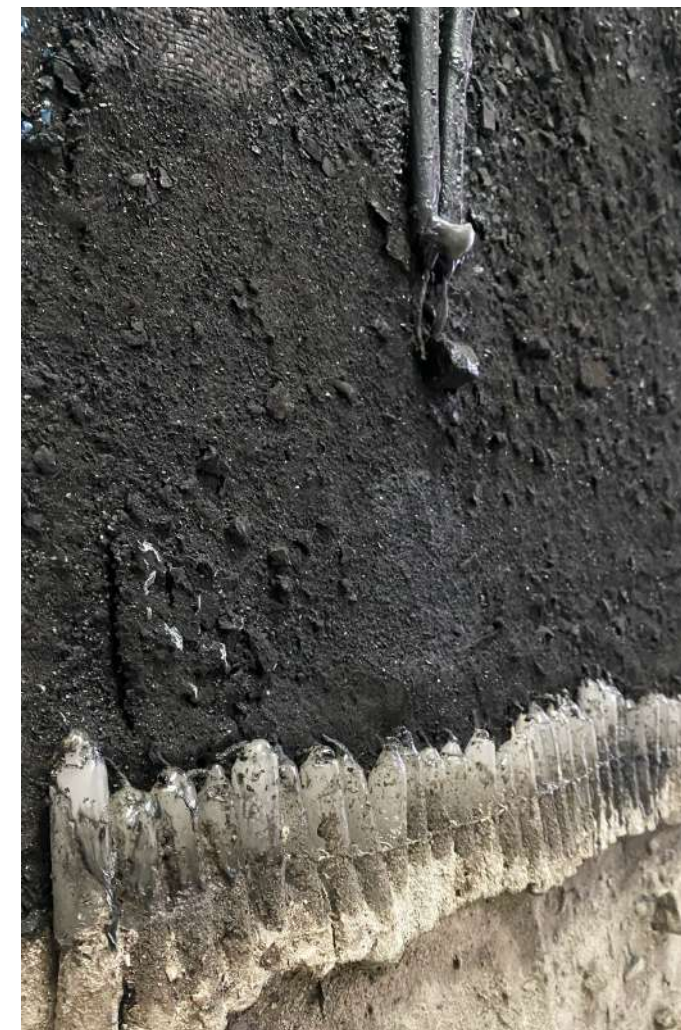


LUMIÈRE NOIRE VII, 2023
Resin, coal and wax mounted on wood panel
150x150 cm / 59x59 in

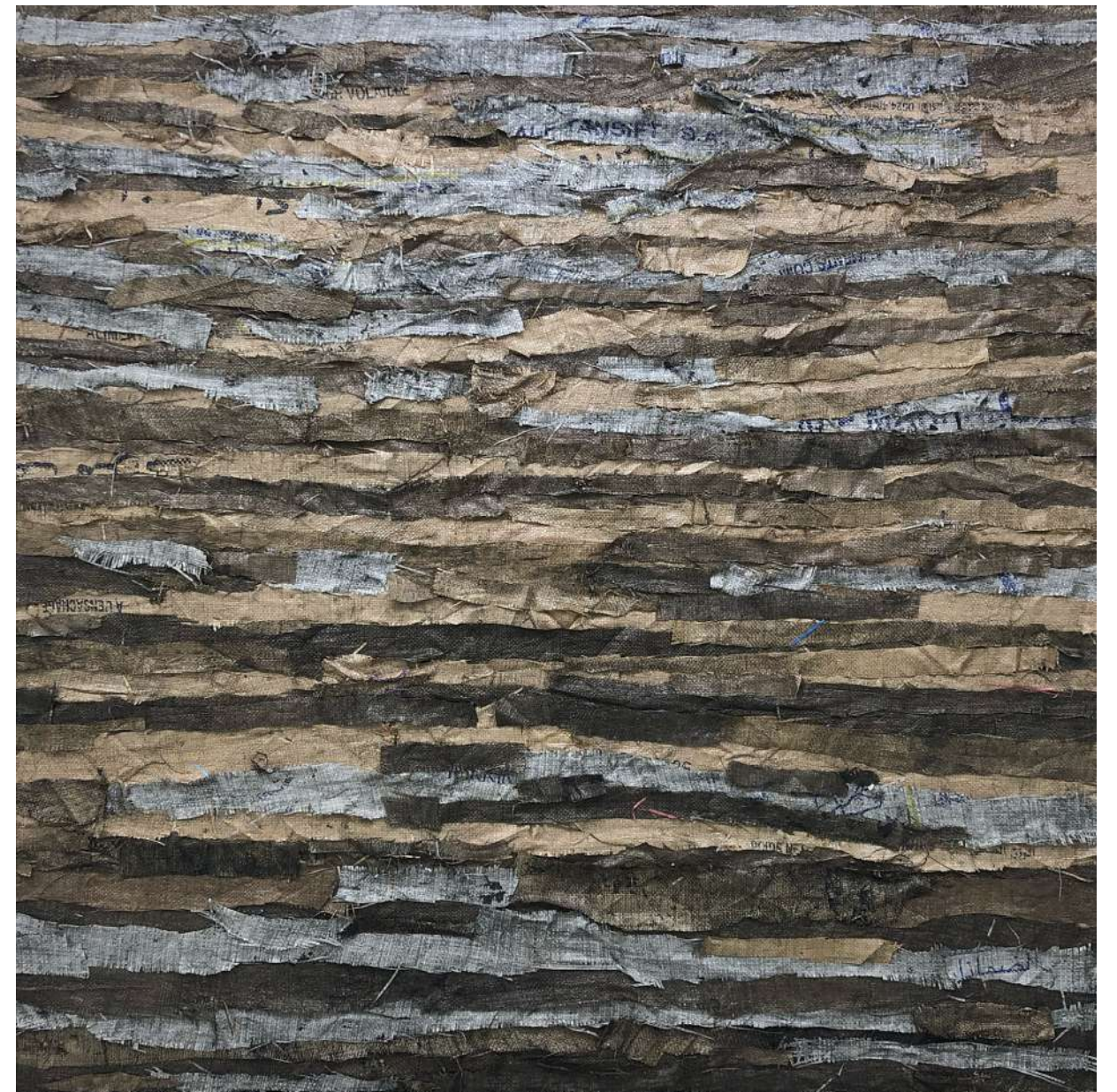


L'MINA, 2024
Mixed media (resin, coal, was, plastic bags of coal) on wood panel
150x150 cm / 59x59 in





MINEUR, 2023
Mixed media on canvas mounted on wood panel
150x150 cm / 59x59 in



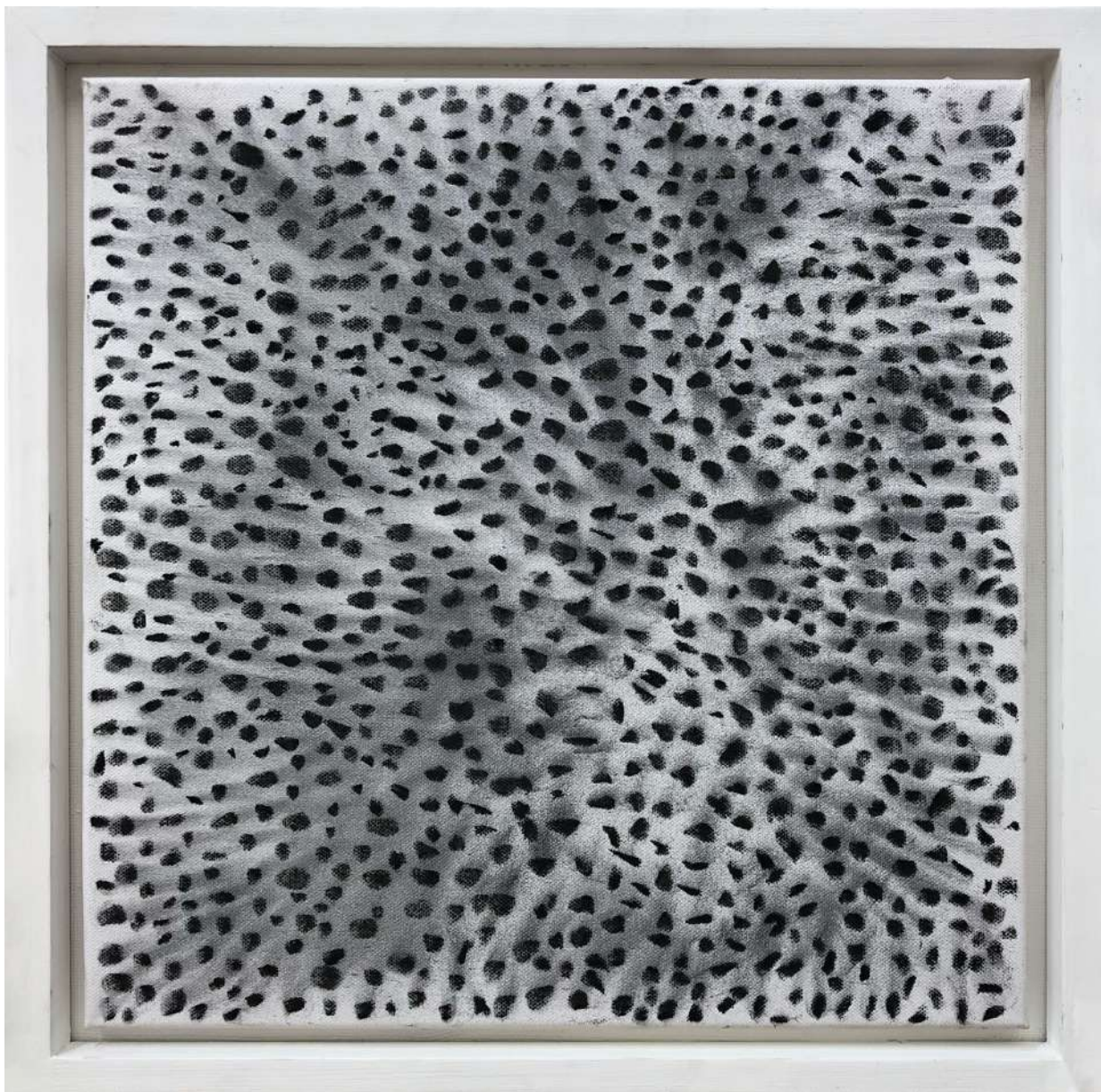
LUMIÈRE DE FILON, 2024
Recycled plastic coal bags on canvas mounted on wood panel
150x150 cm / 59x59 in



POUR LA MÉMOIRE 1, 2024
Mixed media (Paper, wrapped candles and wool thread) on canvas
40x40 cm / 16x16 in



L'AU-DELÀ, 2024
Coal and glue on canvas mounted on wood panel
100x100 cm / 39x39 in



IL A COMMENCÉ PAR UN POINT, 2024
Coal on canvas
40x40 cm / 16x16 in
Framed: 46x46 cm / 18x18 in



HORIZONS, 2024
Coal and rope on canvas mounted on wood panel
100x100 cm / 39x39 in



L'MINA, 2024
Mixed media on canvas mounted on panel
150x150 cm / 59x59 in

« Dans mon travail, la cire et les bougies occupent une place centrale. Elles représentent la résilience et la fraternité des mineurs, cette force qui les lie face aux épreuves quotidiennes. Elles incarnent aussi l'esprit de solidarité qui les unit lorsqu'ils descendent dans les mines, exposant leur vie côte à côte. »

“Wax and candles hold a central place in my work. They represent the resilience and brotherhood of miners, the force that binds them in the face of daily challenges. They also embody the spirit of solidarity that unites them as they descend into the mines, risking their lives side by side.”



MINEUR, 2023
Coal and wax on canvas mounted on wood panel
100x120 cm / 39x47 in



MINEUR, 2023
Mixed media on canvas mounted on wood panel
150x150 cm / 59x59 in



L'MINA, 2024
Mixed media on canvas mounted on panel
150x150 cm / 59x59 in



« Pour moi, le véritable défi de travailler avec le charbon réside dans sa dualité : il est à la fois brillant et fascinant par nature. Il s'agit de cultiver une maîtrise artistique capable de l'exploiter, tant sur le plan conceptuel qu'esthétique. »

“For me, the real challenge of working with coal lies in its duality, which is both brilliant and fascinating by nature. This means cultivating an artistic mastery capable of exploiting it, both conceptually and aesthetically.”



INSTALLATION VIEW
L'MINA, 2024
Variable dimensions



INSTALLATION VIEW
L'MINA, 2024
Variable dimensions

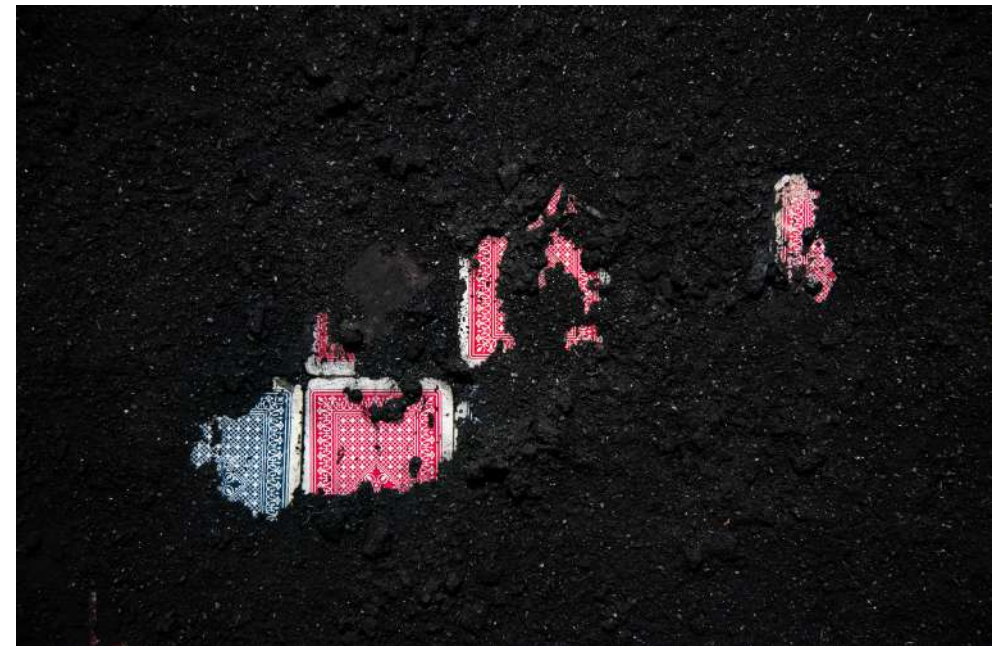
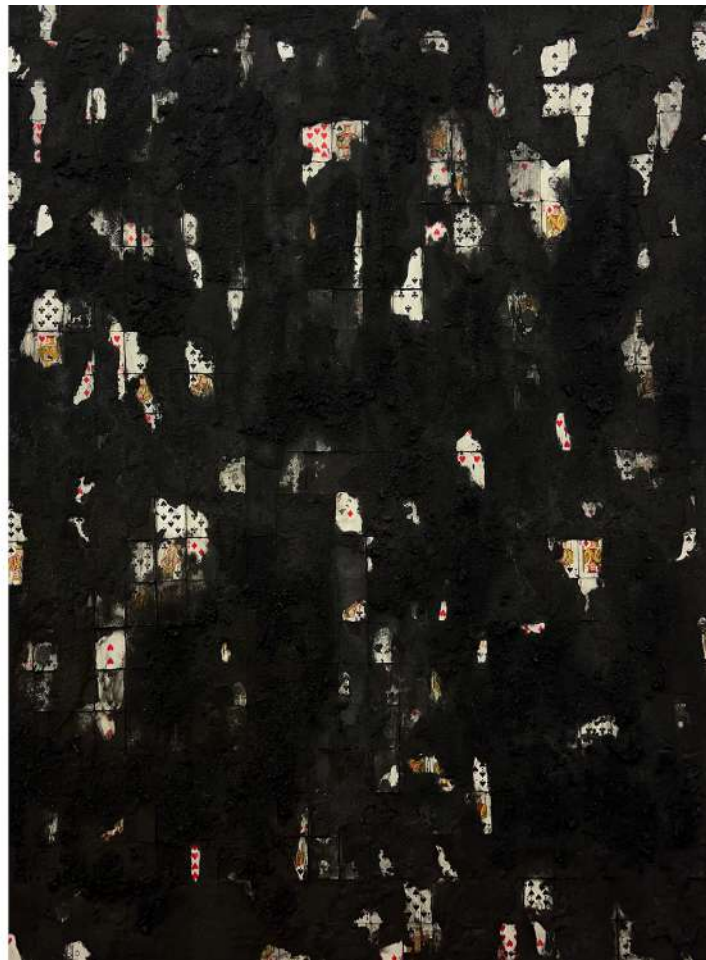


FORTUNE, 2024
Resin, coal and cardboard
15x60x42 cm / 6x24x17 in



EXHIBITION VIEW

À l'horizon, une obscure clarté, AFIKARIS gallery, Paris, France
May 2024



HASARD, 2024
(details)

HASARD, 2024
Mixed media (playing cards, coal dust and glue) on canvas
Diptych
200x150 cm (each) / 79x59 in (each)





INSTALLATION VIEW
L'MINA, 2024
Variable dimensions

CONVERSATION WITH THE ARTIST

YOUR WORK DELVES INTO THE EXPERIENCES AND HISTORY OF MINERS IN THE EASTERN REGION, ESPECIALLY IN YOUR HOMETOWN OF JERADA. COULD YOU SHARE MORE ABOUT YOUR ARTISTIC APPROACH?

I aim to connect my work closely to the miners' experience by reconstructing their daily lives with materials like coal, coal sacks, and wax. These materials embody the harsh reality of Jerada, this 'sacrifice zone' marked by mining. My approach is to repurpose these everyday objects from the workers' lives—not by directly replicating their image, but by transforming their material to reveal glimpses of life and humanity. In doing so, I pay homage to the daily gestures and lifestyles of these workers.

MATTER PLAYS A CENTRAL ROLE IN YOUR WORK, FORMING A UNIQUE AND SINGULAR VISUAL LANGUAGE. COULD YOU TELL US ABOUT THE TECHNIQUE YOU'VE DEVELOPED, IN PARTICULAR USING CHARCOAL?

In my work, the form is entirely at the service of the subject. I've developed a visual language based on the objects, textures and materials that miners use every day: coal sacks, candles, ropes, lamps. This vocabulary intrinsically links the miner to his environment. My aim is to show the reality of this human condition. By incorporating coal directly into my work, not only as a subject but also as a material, I pay tribute to these lives marked by instability and danger, always at the mercy of the vagaries of the mine.

Working with coal is a challenge, because it's a raw material, both shiny and dense. And by combining it with wax, I play with its roughness. I use it as an aesthetic medium to immerse the viewer in the experience of descending to the bottom of the mine. So coal is much more than just a material for me; it is both the pigment and the protagonist of my works.

CANDLES ARE ANOTHER ESSENTIAL ELEMENT IN YOUR WORK. WHAT DO THEY SYMBOLISE FOR YOU?

Yes, candles and wax play a central role in my work. For me, candles symbolize the resilience and brotherhood that bind miners together in the face of everyday hardships. They embody the spirit of solidarity uniting them as they descend into the mines, risking their lives side by side. In the Solidaire series, coal-blackened candles aligned in rows become a metaphor for miners preparing to go underground—even before dawn. They also represent the light that guides these workers through the darkness of the underground tunnels. As for the wax, it represents lives slowly consumed, recalling drops of sweat and tears. Jerada, which is a mining town, is a place where life and death are closely intertwined around the mine, and through my work, I aim to capture this complex reality, both oppressive and fascinating.

YOUR EXHIBITION À L'HORIZON, UNE OBSCURE CLARTÉ EXPLORES A STRONG CONTRAST BETWEEN LIGHT AND DARKNESS. HOW DID YOU INTEND TO EXPRESS THIS DUALITY?

For me, this 'obscure clarity' represents the light of the depths of the mine, the light that illuminates the miners as they descend, but also the glimmer of hope mixed with uncertainty that inhabits the workers of Jerada. The horizon here symbolises their will to resist and their desire for a better future, even if that future remains uncertain. I try to embody this mixture of despair and perseverance in my work, where light and darkness rub shoulders and merge.

I also wanted to show the duality between those who live in the light and those who work in the shadows. My work reflects the struggle for survival that takes place in the mines, where light is never far away but often remains out of reach. For me, the horizon embodies a quest for dignity, ethics and human values, despite the

hostility of the environment.

THE EXHIBITION ENDS WITH AN IMMERSIVE INSTALLATION THAT PLUNGES VISITORS INTO THE DARK, INTO THE HEART OF A FICTITIOUS MINING AREA. WHAT INSPIRED THIS PROJECT, AND WHAT IS ITS SYMBOLIC MEANING?

This installation project grew out of my desire to recreate a mine in order to explore the notion of time and space as experienced by miners in their enclosed, oppressive environment. I wanted the visitor to feel some kind of connection with them: the shadows of flowers projected on the wall recall the invisible presence of the workers, the imprint of their passage. These flowers symbolise the lives sacrificed, between the harshness of work and the fragility of existence.

There's also a video called 'Confession d'amour'. It shows my mother kneading bread. It's an everyday gesture that becomes almost ritualistic, and I liken it to my father's gesture when he wielded a hammer in the mine. The two gestures echo each other. For me, they symbolise repetition and the wear and tear of time, stretched out in a routine that can sometimes be heavy, like a loop that never breaks. I also wanted to play with the idea of darkness: In this video, I reversed the colour of the flour so that it became black, echoing the coal. Of course the darkness of the room evokes the harsh reality of the mines, where light is rare. And then there's the dress of a miner's wife, displayed like a hero's cape. It's a tribute to the women who live in the shadows, who support and carry the weight of absence, waiting and worrying. I like the idea of seeing them as silent heroines, carrying within them the memory and resilience of an entire community.



7, RUE NOTRE DAME DE NAZARETH, 75003 PARIS

+ 33 1 40 33 13 86

INFO@AFIKARIS.COM

WWW.AFIKARIS.COM

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