

OMAR MAHFOUDI



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OMAR MAHFOUDI WAS BORN IN 1981 IN TANGIER, MOROCCO. HE LIVES AND WORKS IN PARIS.

Omar Mahfoudi grew up not far from the Detroit, where he discovered painting within his family circle, then the drawing by personal experiments. But it is at the age of 12 that young Omar develops his gaze and his gesture at the Catholic school of Tangier where he signed up for art history and plastic arts courses.

First his paintings were very marked by the presence of matter, Omar Mahfoudi turned to the fluidity of the liquid acrylic and the ink giving him space to compose and play on the border between figuration and abstraction. His intellectual omnivorousness that reflect on his interest in the process of filmmaking, is noticeable in his work as much by the references which are slipped in his paintings, by the plays of framing, colorimetry and luminosity present in his pictorial work.

His life experiences, his personal research and his cultural knowledge feed his poetic and humanistic creations.

Omar Mahfoudi plays with the presence and absence through the void that fills his works with a mystery alongside a form of existential solitude. His compositions can be distinguished sometimes by lush vegetation, a desert biome; shadows, sometimes by soothing figures, in a washed-out atmosphere oscillating between lost paradise, melancholic twilight and unfathomable nights. Thus, in this constant balancing act between presence and absence, figuration and abstraction, tension and appeasement, Omar Mahfoudi composes a painting that is as oxymoronic as it is cinematic.

His work has been presented at numerous international events, such as the 1-54 fair in London, United Kingdom, artgenève in Switzerland and Art Cologne in Germany.

OMAR MAHFOUDI

b.1981

Tanger, Maroc

Lives and Works in Paris, France



SELECTION OF SOLO SHOWS

2023

I was Dreaming of the Past, Atelier 21 Gallery, Casablanca, Morocco

2022

The Forgotten Branches, AFIKARIS Gallery, Paris, France

Art Cologne, Rodolphe Janssen Gallery, Cologne, Germany

2021

El Dorado, AFIKARIS Gallery, Paris, France

Waiting in the Oasis, Gallery AFIKARIS x AMA, Cap-Ferret, France

2019

Les Égarés, Centre d'art du château de Trousse-Barrière, Briare, France

Africa Now!, Retoandri Gallery, Zürich, Switzerland

Botanica, Conil Gallery, Tanger, Morocco

2018

Tanjawi, Point Éphémère, Paris, France

2015

Tanger 1981, Gallery Formato Comodo, Madrid, Spain

Le Purgatoire Gallery, Paris, France

SELECTION OF GROUP SHOWS

2023

Artgenève, AFIKARIS Gallery, Geneva, Switzerland

BRAFA, Rodolphe Janssen Gallery, Brussels, Belgium

2022

Voisinages, Atelier 21, Casablanca, Maroc

1-54 Paris, Paris, France

Artgenève, Geneva, Switzerland

2021

1-54 London, London, United-Kingdom

Quitter la ville, AFIKARIS Gallery, Paris, France

2020

Une nouvelle génération, Galerie Abba Ababou, Rabat, Morocco

2018

NEUE > WELTEN, 52Lager Gallery, Zürich, Switzerland

2017

AKAA, Paris, France

La Collective, Fondation Montresso, Marrakech, Morocco

2016

Expectativa y Memoria, Cerculo de Bellas Artes, Madrid, Spain

2015

Salon Marocain, Fundacao de Serralves, Porto, Portugal

ARCO Madrid, Madrid, Spain

Désordre, French Institute of Tanger, Tanger, Morocco

2014

Maroc contemporain, Institut du monde arabe, Paris, France

Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, United States of America



LES ÉGARÉS, 2018
Acrylic and ink on canvas
100x100 cm / 39x39 in

Men and women in the forest or young bathers alone in the middle of a lake, are all silhouettes that inhabit the work of Omar Mahfoudi. Intriguing, these phantasmagorical bodies are in immersion in an unknown environment. From the canvas, emerges a call of nature. A call to return to the origin of the world, to rethink the universe in the face of its instability.

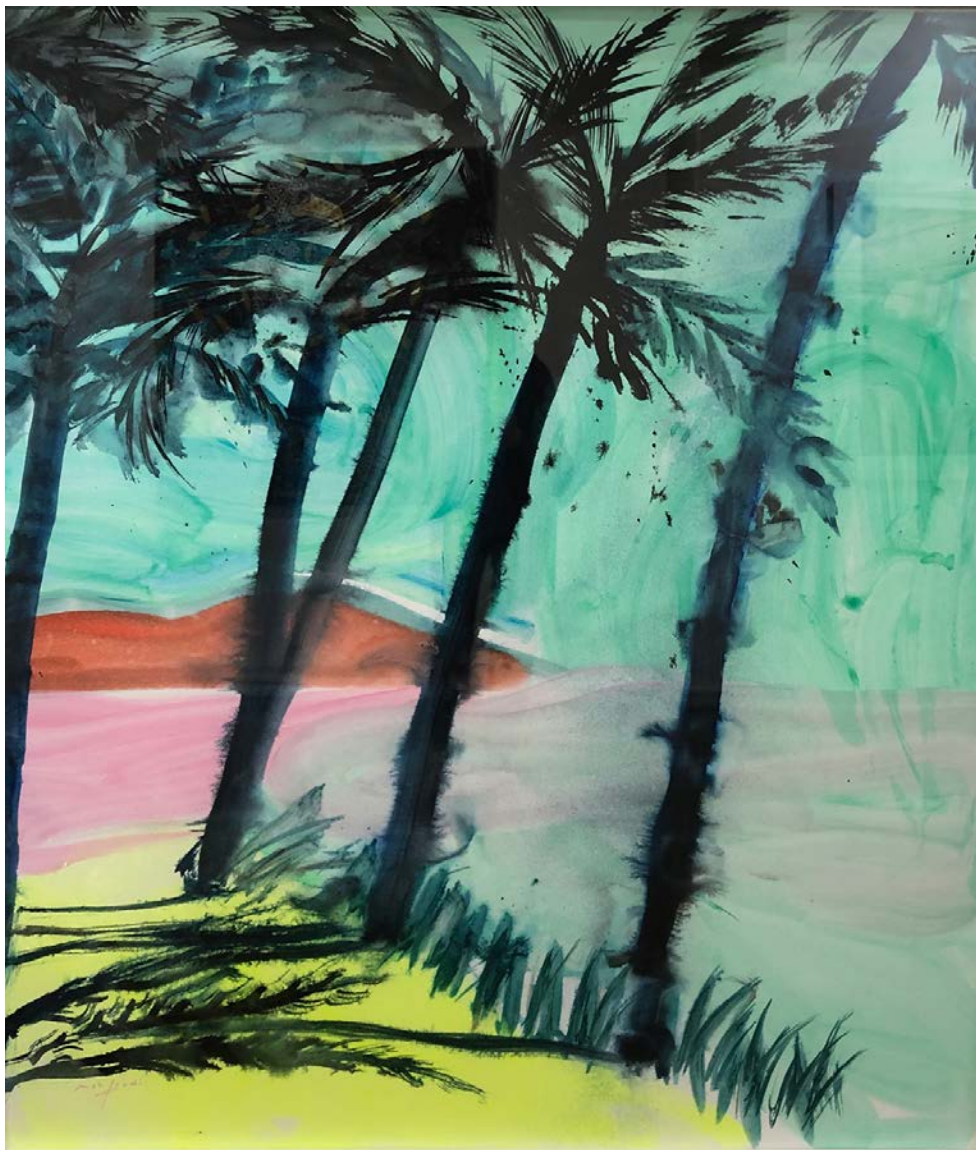
In the background of his work emerges a certain ecological awareness. He initiates the idea of appropriating and getting closer to nature.



LEFT
SANS TITRE, 2020
 Ink on paper
 176x150 cm / 69x59 in



RIGHT
SANS TITRE, 2020
 Ink on paper
 167x150 cm / 66x59 in



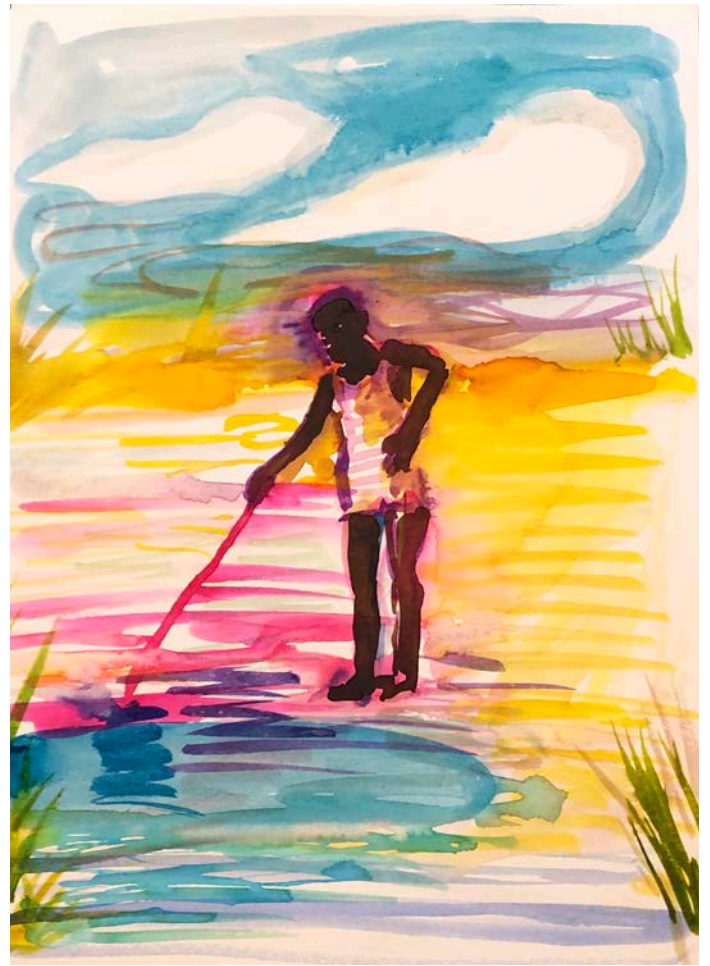
LANDSCAPE, 2020

Ink on paper

149x134 cm / 59x53 in

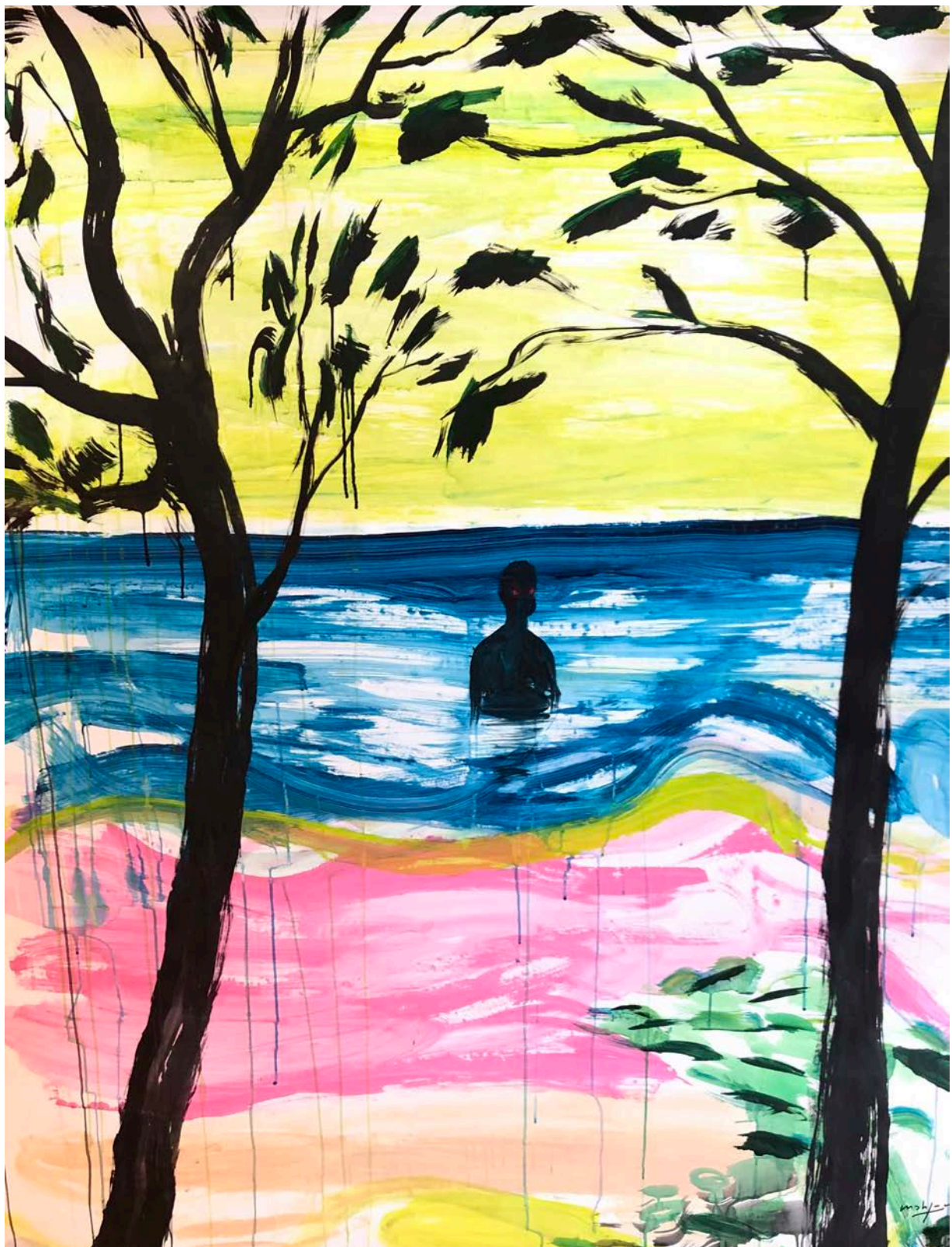


LEFT
SWIMMER 2, 2020
 Ink on paper
 49x37 cm / 19x15 in



RIGHT
SWIMMER 1, 2020
 Ink on paper
 41x30 cm / 16x12 in

The bather - the artist's alter-ego - is a recurring image in the work of Omar Mahoudi. A nostalgic figure linked to his past in Tangier, it represents a suspended moment. A moment with a beginning and an inevitable end. If you look closely, you will see that these 'swimmers' do not swim. They are static. They are characters who are waiting and at the same time in a deliberate solitude.



SANS TITRE, 2020
Ink on paper
173x150 cm / 68x59 in



THIS IS A BLUE WORLD WITHOUT YOU 2, 2021

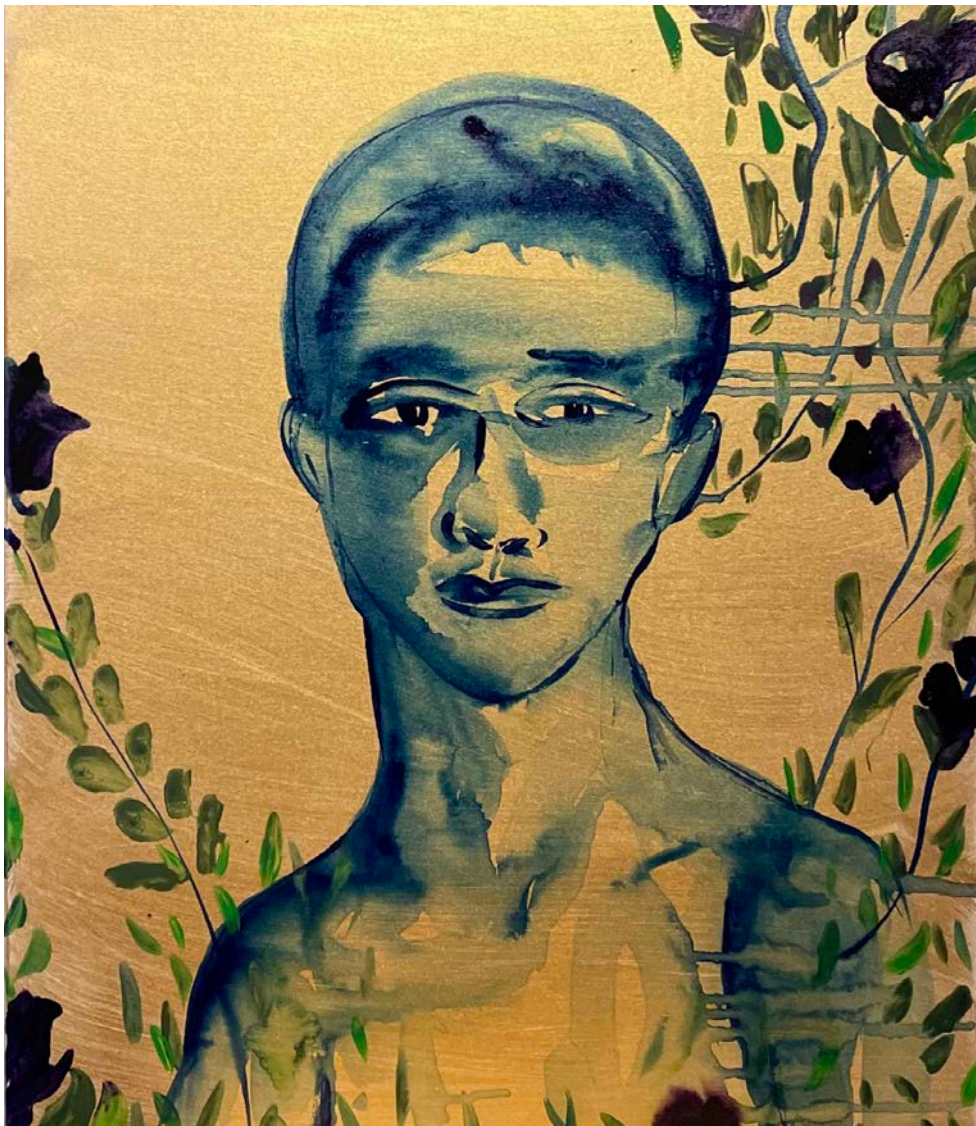
Acrylic and ink on canvas

50x50 cm / 20x20 in



THE BLUE JUNGLE, 2021
Acrylic and ink on canvas
150x200 cm / 59x79 in

I ALWAYS THOUGHT THAT LANDSCAPES WERE THE MOST BORING THING TO PAINT, BORDERING ON KITSCH. MY WORK INITIALLY FOCUSED ON THE REPRESENTATION OF HUMAN BEINGS AND ESPECIALLY THEIR PRESENCE. THIS PRESENCE WAS GRADUALLY TRANSFORMED INTO AN ABSENCE TO GIVE SPACE TO NATURE. FINALLY, I CAME TO REPRESENT LANDSCAPES.



TOMBOY, 2021
Acrylic and ink on canvas
50x40 cm / 20x16 in

In some of his artworks, Omar Mahfoudi shows a man alone, surrounded by flowers. This flower boy, as he likes to call him, symbolizes the acceptance of oneself and one's sensitivity, as well as the abandonment of the fear of not fitting in with society's standards.

WHEN I WAS YOUNG (15/20 YEARS OLD), I HATED CARRYING A BOUQUET OF FLOWERS IN PUBLIC. FOR ME IT WAS NOT A SIGN OF MASCULINITY AND I WANTED TO BE SEEN AS A BAD BOY: THE BAD BOY AND NOT AS THE FLOWER BOY.

The Flower Man is the man who decided to leave life as it pleases him, to reconnect with his true self and nature.



LES BRANCHES DE LA NUIT 3, 2021
Acrylic, ink and gold leaf on canvas
150x120 cm / 59x47 in



LEFT

I WAS OUT OF TOWN GETTING LOST TILL I WAS RESCUED, 2021

Acrylic and ink on canvas

50x50 cm / 20x20 in



RIGHT

I DON'T WANNA KEEP YOU WAITIN, 2021

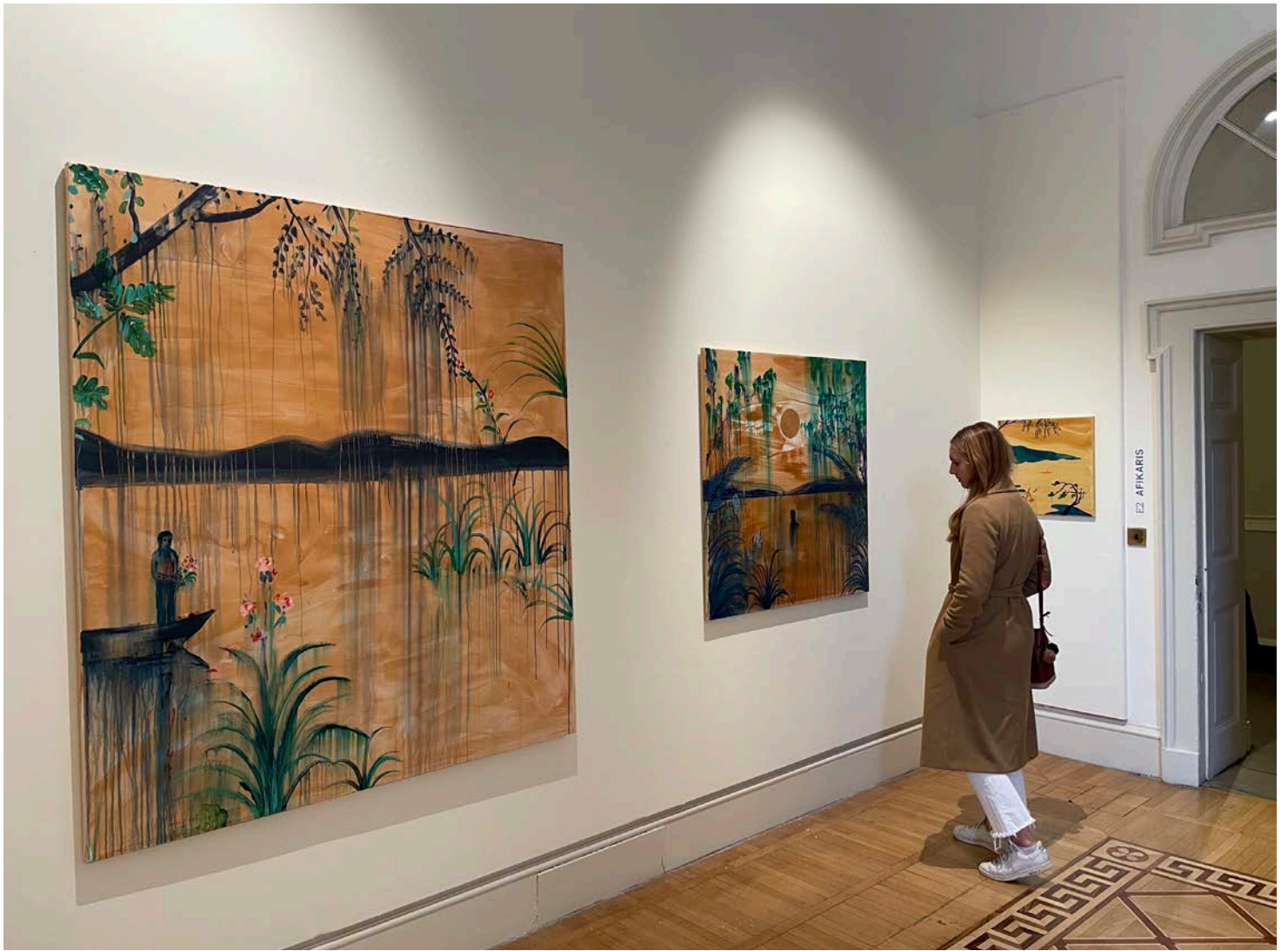
Acrylic and ink on canvas

50x50 cm / 20x20 in

The night is an important part of his work. It is the subject of experiments. The light of the moon fascinates him. It dresses his characters in a surreal atmosphere, close to science fiction.



GOLDEN OASIS #9, 2021
Acrylic and ink on canvas
169x149 cm / 67x59 in



EXHIBITION VIEW
1-54 London, London, United-Kingdom
October 2021



YOU GO YOUR WAY, I'LL GO YOUR WAY TOO, 2021

Acrylic and ink on canvas

120x180 cm / 47x71 in

The legend of El Dorado has been transformed over time. What was originally a man covered in gold ElDorado became a promised land - Eldorado, the city of gold, the object of vain expeditions - before becoming the symbol of an ideal that embodied not only immense wealth, but also limitless love and immeasurable success. The object of desire never really mattered. On the other hand, it is the quest that inspired the myth that counts. Omar Mahfoudi appropriates this quest and makes it a common purpose by including those who find themselves in front of his works. This is how the characters - transparent beings that blend into their environment, often faceless, without origin or gender - become the reflection of those who observe them. Floating and anonymous figures with a mystical ambiguity, they embody their thoughts, their spirit and their elevation. On horseback, on a boat or walking, they embody their own journey.



EXHIBITION VIEW
El Dorado, AFIKARIS Gallery, Paris, France
D cember 2021



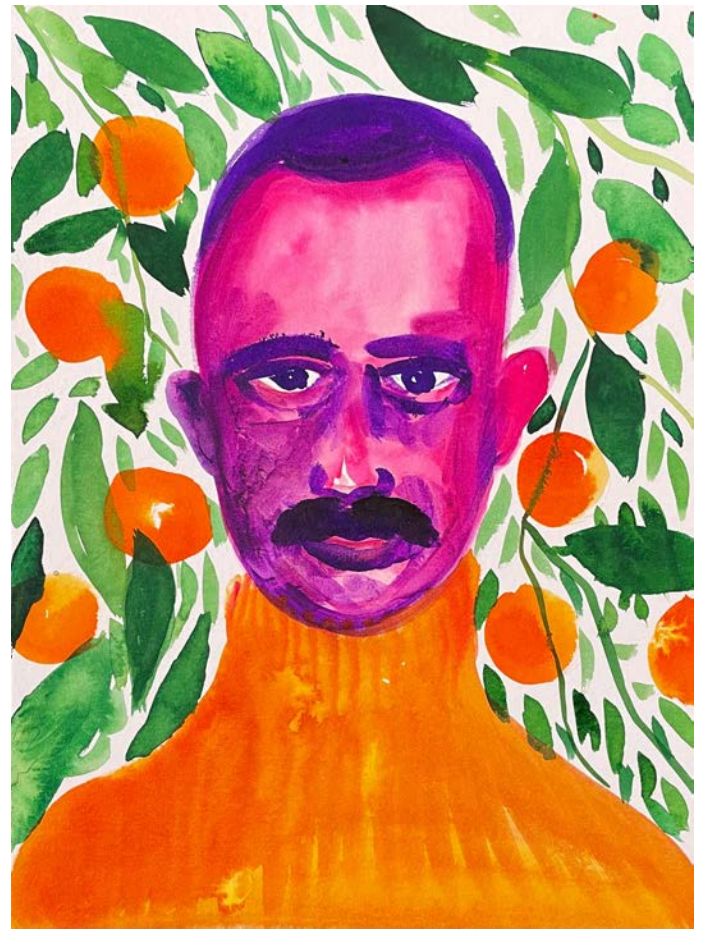
COME BACK TO ME, 2021
Acrylic and ink on canvas
200x200 cm / 79x79 in



WAITING IN MERZOUGA, 2021
Acrylic and ink on canvas
185x172 cm / 73x68 in



LEFT
LES FLEURISTES DE L'ATLAS 11, 2022
 Ink on paper
 40x30 cm / 16x12 in



RIGHT
LES FLEURISTES DE L'ATLAS 3, 2022
 Ink on paper
 40x30 cm / 16x12 in

Omar Mahfoudi travelled to the Atlas Mountains several years ago. There, he met men who cultivate the plants that are later transformed into essential oils. The *Fleuristes de l'Atlas* series is a melancholic memory of this trip. Mahfoudi explores the notion of identity by playing with the skin tone of the characters. He continues the theme of the 'flower boy' by questioning the concept of masculinity through the symbolism of flowers.



WANDERER ABOVE THE SEA OF FOG, 2022

Liquid acrylic on canvas

150x100 cm / 59x39 in

Omar Mahfoudi revisits Caspar D. Friedrich's *The Wanderer above the Sea of Fog* (1818). The variations of blue evoke the idea of the blue flower, symbol of the *Sehnsucht*, of absolute love and the passage between the real world and the dream. Inherited from German Romanticism and an image of inner unity, infinity and healing, blue plays transparently with white to achieve a complete harmony and pictorial union, a symbol of man's spiritual union with the divine. Omar Mahfoudi revisits the inner loneliness, close to the tormented soul, with an abstract style that borders on the figurative to represent a dreamlike universe that breaks with the world of reason. The artist's gesture leads to a meditative state and is inspired by the Japanese prints of Hokusai by its flat colours and its intent of spiritual awakening.



EXHIBITION VIEW

Classique !, AFIKARIS Gallery, Paris, France
July 2022

Photo Credit Candice Hénin



LEFT
SUR LA BRANCHE 5, 2022
Ink on paper
40x30 cm / 16x12 in



RIGHT
SUR LA BRANCHE 2, 2022
Ink on paper
40x30 cm / 16x12 in



J'AURAIS JAMAIS DÛ M'ÉLOIGNER DE MON ARBRE 1, 2022

Liquid acrylic on canvas

120x88 cm / 47x35 in

It is by looking out of his window that Omar Mahfoudi observes the world and lets himself go into a daydream. The tree in front of him becomes an object of his fantasy: a gateway to multiple horizons and timeframes, where he pictures beings in suspension. At the top of the branches, his characters overlook the world and let themselves be carried by their thoughts. If children climb trees without fear of falling, Omar Mahfoudi infuses his work with this same freedom. The silhouettes rise, in search of an escape.



EXHIBITION VIEW

The Forgotten Branches, AFIKARIS Gallery, Paris, France
December 2022

Photo Credit: Studio Vanssay



DES BRANCHES OUBLIÉES, 2022
Liquid acrylic on canvas
203x278 cm / 80x109 in



L'ORANGERAIE, 2022
Liquid acrylic on canvas
160x200 cm / 63x79 in