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Mgr. Alexandra Kollárová

Školitel: Mgr. Daniel Křížek, Ph.D.
Katedra Blízkovýchodních studií, Západočeská univerzita

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Statement of Authorship

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this dissertation thesis and that I have not used any other sources than those identified as 'informants' and those listed in the bibliography and identified as references. I further declare that I have not submitted this thesis at any other institution in order to obtain a degree.

(Signature) _____

(Pilsen, 27. 4. 2020) _____

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For Abdeslam

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PREFACE

The following text is a result of ethnographical field research held between the years 2017 and 2020 in the city of Marrakech.

'*Every era has its own version of Orient, whatever that might be.*'[1] L. Wagner and C. Minca

Endless art orientated articles refer to the city of Marrakech as to the latest North Africa's visual art hub. The interest of Western art professionals towards non-Western art production is, in the past two decades, significantly increasing and Marrakech became one of the sought-after. Within just two years — since 2017, two new cultural venues were opened, namely MACAAL (Museum of Contemporary African Art) and MYSL Marrakech (Musée Yves Saint Laurent). Additionally, an annual art fair dealing with contemporary African Art 1.54 had been launched in February 2018. The seemingly prosperous dynamics led many Moroccan artists, as well as the foreign ones, to establish their livelihood here and take part in the new and relatively small intimate field of cultural production. What one can witness is a lively, vibrant and appealing city full of challenging projects and investment possibilities, but to whom is flourishing cultural life visible and perhaps beneficial? Who is affected by the hasty development of infrastructure and artistic theoretical concepts, apart from the art world itself?

'*98 percent of Moroccans have never been to a museum, and only 0.3 percent of the national budget is for culture*,' states the director of Museum of Contemporary African Art in Marrakech Othman Lazraq in the article from August 3rd, 2019.[2] The relationship between small Moroccan, and even tinier (yet considered for the global art scene significant) Marrakech art scene, and the majority of *absent* local audience is characterised by indifference from both sides. What perhaps Mr Lazraq omitted is that this lack of interest is not conditioned by a rejection of something that majority of Moroccans simply do not want to participate in, rather it is defined as an inability to access due to fear, feeling of inappropriateness and by the inferiority complex towards Western or Westernised privileged elitist environment which art scene here appears to

[1] WAGNER, L., MINCA, C. *Moroccan Dreams: Oriental Myth, Colonial Legacy*. London: I.B. Taurus, 2016.

[2] Jaggi, Maya. *Casablanca's Gift to Marrakech and the Birth of Morocco's Modern Art Movement* [online] cit. 10. 8. 2019 In https://www.nybooks.com/daily/2019/08/03/casablancas-gift-to-marrakech-and-the-birth-of-moroccos-modern-art-movement/

be. Whereas from the opposite side, from those who are in charge of defining what art is and what art is not, we observe condescending attitudes such as – Moroccans are in terms of contemporary art, if not ignorant, then culturally incompetent, and such situation reacquires '*an effort in education and cultural mediation.*'[3] None of the major cultural actors in Marrakech, however, until today presented a set of solid pedagogical methods that would, in any way, mediate art production or systematically 'educate' the local audience.[4] Exhibition director of MACAAL Janine Gaëlle Dieudji in an interview from December 3rd 2019 blatantly stated that: '*for us, as a Museum, it is important to connect primarily to the Moroccans.'* Nevertheless, when I have asked Ms Dieudji in which manner she approaches, in Bourdieu's term — the uninformed local spectators, she offered ambiguous answers accompanied by evasive utters such as: '*We make sure that each of the exhibition is comprehensible to everyone, even to Moroccans*'. The more I had rejected vagueness and insisted on concrete examples of the methods, the less straightforward her responses were — a typical misleading accounts of art professionals in Marrakech. In a dialogue with researcher Nadine Fattaleh,[5] we both found very little evidence of the museum's real agency towards the public sharply contrasting to the official proclaimed engagement as a central goal. '*The museum*' Fattaleh notes, '*becomes just a display or guide to sound art investment'* and institution at large continues to make false promises about the audience they seemingly serve (Fattaleh, 2019, p. 16-17). Ms Dieudji finally, feeling slightly uncomfortable, admitted: '*we have no methods.*'

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[3] Information is based on semi-structured interviews with museum directors, curators and gallerists *in situ.*

[4] The imperative call of post-colonial theorist Achille Mbembe: '*Africa needs to write itself*' (Boulbina, Seloua Luste. Thinking in Lightning and thunder: An Interview with Achille Mbembe. In *Critical Philosophy of Race.* 2016, 4, no. 2, p. 145-62) seems to be, in the case of Morocco, a far off dream as the hegemony in a culture still persists (see Wagner and Minca, 2016; Fattaleh, 2019; Madhi, 2019; Ferguson, 2006). In postcolonial social settings, it is questionable how, and whether at all education in so called contemporary art appreciation and museum-going (widely associated with neoliberal economies hidden under blockbuster exhibitions understood as 'cultural development and modernisation attempts') can be executed. I. e., isn't building a culture capital through a certain often undefined type of education, in fact, omitting or even suppressing original diverse aesthetic expressions? This question — by the art world highly unpopular and rarely tackled, however, once articulated opens a range of ethical aspects, such as imposing ones dominant culture over the other hidden behind perplexed emancipation processes. Numerous postcolonial theorists are calling for 'rather than reshaping, recognising other forms as equally valuable' and as postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabha emphasises: '*We should listen to the subaltern voice — the voice of the oppressed peoples falling outside histories of colonialism*' (Huddart, David. *Homi K. Bhabha,* 2009, p. 4).

[5] Young Palestinian American scholar Nadine Fattaleh recently published a short critical article tackling false promises of cultural professionals in Marrakech, among others she directed her focus on MACAAL. Fattaleh on power positions of art professionals states that: '*The elite disposition is a familiar performance endemic to the neoliberal class that wants to work alongside the state and NGOs to fashion the people in its own image'.* (see Fattaleh, Nadine. Contemporary African Art On its Own Terms. In *Collecting Architectural Territories*, 2019)

The presented ethnographical study approaches the contemporary visual art scene in Morocco as a system of representational strategies, which are fabricated by Euro-American cultural institutions and their knowledge, based on binary logic and assumptions of the moral and cultural superiority of the West. As philosopher Seyla Benhabib puts it: the false, but widely acknowledged and practised generalisations about the Western uniformity of development process are visible on the concrete examples of human actions and interactions (Benhabib, 2002, p. 24-25).

The research follows such examples manifested mainly on the production conditions and relationships between concrete cultural actors in the city of Marrakesh, Morocco. As mentioned above, Marrakech became an important centre of contemporary non-Western post-colonial art production, gaining importance primarily due to the attention of the Western network of art professionals. These agents are not only influencing the circulation and representation of Moroccan art and artists in the international context but as well they fundamentally shape the art scene within the locality itself. This is done through various scholarly statements, economic instruments and information monopolisation. In practice, the new institutional structure is implemented in the form of galleries, museums of contemporary art and various projects that are being initiated. While at the same time, within these institutions, certain knowledge is introduced, i.e., a way of 'correct' understanding of what art is and what it represents. Such paternalizing attitudes in the art world of today, often less obvious and subtle, can be comprehended as a form of cultural dominance, using Achille Mbembe's term — a hegemony (Ferguson, 2006, p. 145-162). Following the postcolonial critical approach of Homi Bhabha who emphasised that colonialism isn't locked in the past but has real current consequences, I look into Moroccan cultural environment where the persisting forms of dominance are present and are closely linked to the 'legacy' of colonial representational schemes (see Abu-Lughod, 1989; Rabinow, 1995). By 'legacy' I refer to the Orientalist discourse that in the past formed the visual image of the so-called Orient and which now legitimises the representational strategies of Western or Westernised curators and cultural institutions towards Moroccans in general, Moroccan art and its producers in particular.

We can state that the success of the today's Middle Eastern art scene is due to the enormous attention of gallerists and curators seeking ways to satisfy the West's centuries-long unaltered desires for the 'exotic,' 'sensual' and 'oriental' (Shabout and

Mikdadi, 2009, p. 9-10). In the case of Morocco, contemporary visual art has become an important tool for restoring and reproducing Orientalist discourse. The first scholar to link the representational strategies of contemporary art production from the MENA region and the discourse of Orientalism was art theorist Nada Shabout more than a decade ago (Shabout, 2009, p. 14-15). She used the term *Neo-Orientalism* in the context of critiquing the exhibition *Without Boundary: 17 ways of seeing* (MoMA) in New York in 2006, as an indication of a discourse that has never been dismantled but was transformed according to the rhetorics of globalisation (Shabout, 2009, p. 14).

Even though one might have a feeling that the Marrakech art scene has happened almost overnight, the precipitous and rapid growth is conducted because the current conditions are enabling it. The facility of implementations of Western curatorial projects, knowledge production and cultural institutions is a result of a long history of a European presence in Morocco and the failed attempts and calls for decolonizing movements at the turn of 1960s and 1970s suffocated by years of political repressions known as *Les années de plomb* (Pieprzak, 2010, p. 94-95). Visible cultural life is executed in the shadow of the city's grandiose plan to sustain the growth in tourism, facilitated by powerful lobbies of real-estate developers. While, according to the logics of modernisation, museums of contemporary art are being established often serving as false reasoning for creating a self-profiting discontinuous and hierarchically ranked novel geographies (see Madhi and his recent publication *Urban Restructuring, Power and Capitalism in the Tourist City: Contested Terrains of Marrakech*, 2019). While the 'progressive' institutions in Marrakech are being lunched they are simultaneously being saturated by a specific (colonial) 'idea of Morocco' (Minca and Wagner, 2016, p. 1-2). This persisting 'idea' had been manifested for decades through highlighting the contrast between the 'Orient' — *irrational*, *decadent* and *archaic* and the Western rationality which is associated with *progress* and *modernity* (see Morton, 2002). Western artists, art professionals and foreign foundations are perceived as representatives of modernist ideologies and as development agents to the '*premodern and undemocratic country where cultural life is still aimed to be set*.'[6] Postcolonial contemporary art originates in an environment which is described by the West as culturally immature and where, in the case of Morocco, Moroccans themselves are perceived as culturally unqualified.

[6] A literal statement of a French gallerist Nathalie Loccateli running *127 Gallery* located in Marrakech (14. 3. 2018).

This ongoing proclaimed justification creates the conditions for 'civilisation projects' in the form of Western driven cultural institutions. Novel Orientalist discourse, or perhaps the traces of the old one, is established to that extent, that in some cases, it determines both consciously and unconsciously the repertoire of what is to be produced within the local artistic *œuvre*.

Representation of Morocco and its culture is undoubtedly firmly rooted in the colonial imaginary[7] and contemporary art circuit in Marrakech cannot stand isolated from this politics of representation, as much as it wouldn't exist without it. Some of the most significant Marrakech venues could possibly close overnight as they would remain empty once without pleasing the gaze of primarily Western visitors. In fact, in some cases, cultural institutions deliberately built or reshaped specific places into a tourist sites, to gain support (both financial and moral), and help to broaden the small audience for the contemporary arts (Smith, 2009, p. 22–23). Most of the spectators of contemporary Moroccan art in Morocco aren't Moroccans and most of the contemporary art galleries and museums in Marrakech are aware of such fact. This resulted in a practice that continues to vacillate between pragmatic satisfaction of tourist expectations (sustaining the idea of 'better some than none visitors') on one side, and the negotiated accountability towards the local communities, on the other. The exact scheme is followed by Moroccan artists who developed a certain state of schizophrenia where: inability to connect to own surroundings turned into a pragmatical pleasing of Western public. However, in the aftermath often substituted by acts of resilience forced by a desire to define artistic production under their own terms. This encompasses primarily the usage of self-developed vocabulary and a rejection of Western forms of epistemological frameworks.

In my dissertation output, I look at the contemporary art scene of Marrakech as, in fact, not being entirely contemporary, but rather as being constructed on the foundation of previous discourse, powerful enough to saturate discursive formations in which both contemporary local and foreign cultural actors operate. The metanarrative of 'The West and the Rest' haven't been abolished (see Hall, 1992) and the new discourse doesn't aim to correct the old errors. This is particularly evident as most of the art professionals are, in an assertive manner, implementing the categorisations and definitions of the ex-

[7] *Interview with Emma Chubb* [online] cit. 13. 12. 2019 In http://www.appartement22.com/spip.php?article382

coloniser. The 'Other' (read Moroccan artist) has to be fundamentally transformed into 'civilised' and 'global' according to the ideas of the West if he or she aims to succeed in the contemporary art world (Shabout, 2009, p. 21). Cultural actors of contemporary visual art in Marrakech scene internalised, in general, understanding of artistic production through the Western evaluative system where 'fine art' is on the peak on the development ladder. Colonisation was to them: '*not quite right, but at least in some aspects (such as in the field of culture) beneficial for the underdeveloped Global South*.'[8]

After spending the first couple of months in the field I have decided to abandon the original intention which was to follow recognised Moroccan artists and their production, although voices of many are fundamentally important to my thesis. Their work, enormously rich in content, kept on reminding me of J. W. Mitchell's 'state of visual illiteracy' in which contemporary societies exist. I never intended to diminish (and by now I hope I haven't) their significance as an important medium bearing various codes expressing the social conditions of the region from which they derive. However, I did not internally resonate with an approach that would look at works of art as an objective, simply because the power imbalance in which they exist, are embedded and circulate appeared as way too intrusive. Neither I felt comfortable with 'giving voice' to the nameless artists or local communities who are, as I have mentioned above, in a position of 'inequality of rights to participate in cultural life' — a phrase that I am borrowing from an art critic, curator and activist Lucy R. Lippard. I felt I would be in a similar position as many of those, who are entering this land (the land of the fetishised 'Other') through projects and research curriculums. As many of those intending to talk upon someone and even take something out, however, without tackling, at all, the ethical overlaps that Western research in ex-colonised societies can present (see Tuwihai-Smith, 1999; Schneider and Wright 2015). Contemporary art is still today inevitably tied to imperialism, notes Nada Shabout and continues: '*It is a superior Western historical construct that enforces a binary 'self' and 'other' and must be re-examined within the paradigms of imperialism and colonisation'* (Shabout, 2009, p. 17).

Following lines of my dissertation corpus are designed, therefore, as a form of critical ethnographical writing that aims to stand outside the paradigm of hegemonic cultural

[8] Quotation derived from a panel debate between Moroccan photographer Younes Fizazi and the moderator Juan Palao Gómez taking place in the art space *LE18* in Marrakech (6. 10. 2018).

positioning. It is looking into the field of the visual cultural production of Marrakech within a limited time — from fall 2017 till spring 2020 and it aims to answer in which manner cultural actors in power, most of them non-Moroccan, constructed a prestigious and celebrated world of the contemporary art scene — described as one of the most important on the African continent, yet without any local public for art at all. For whom then, the spectacle is intended and under who's terms? The art scene in Marrakech consists of two utterly unlike worlds: that is the contemporary art scene itself and the silent (silenced) Moroccan majority which is, in fact, neither creator of their representations, nor spectator; Moroccans have become through practices of the cultural actors a subalterns, an aesthetic objects of observation in order to encourage increasing tourist and artistic consumption (see Rabinow, 1989).

'*The New Creatives Putting Marrakech On The Map*'[9] — a head-title from the summer's edition of British Vogue (2019) I perceive here as an accurate metaphor in which Marrakech is by the art world repetitively marked on a map as if subjected to the powerful conquerors. '*The Middle East is seen as a vast new source of goodies for the markets limitless voracity*' notes professor of art history Salwa Mikdadi (Mikdadi, 2009, p. 8). Thus, through the ethnography of power, I am asking what are the intentions of these creatives, through which strategies they construct representations and ascribe meanings to these representations. Secondly, I tackle the real consequences of their symbolical cartography practises in the Moroccan postcolonial context. Answering these questions requires, on an intimate scale, addressing directly various institutional cultural actors, so as individuals, and understanding their personal interests: I am following their various statements, their decision making power, representational strategies and their quotidian practises towards the 'Other' who they aim to 'educate' but also incorporate or exclude. Following S. Hall and his premiss that discourses are never closed systems, but they always draw from the dominant previous narrations while altering and translating new ones (Hall, 1996, p. 201-202), and as Homi Bhabha insists: '*It is impossible to separate past from the present. They are not disconnected: the former is not a mere predecessor of the latter*' (Bhabha 1986, p. 23) – Orientalism here doesn't belong to the history. In my work, it exists as an alive coherent rational body of speech, writings and attitudes or a frequently used archive which serves as a principal source among various cultural actors. It provides a language how to talk

[9] *The New Creatives Putting Marrakech On The Map* [online] cit. 20. 11. 2019 In: https://www.vogue.co.uk/article/art-rugs-ceramics-in-marrakech

about, in other words how to represent a particular kind of knowledge, how to construct a topic in a certain way and limit other ways in which the topic can be fabricated (Hall, 1996, p. 201-202). The present is mirroring the past and continuous power positions of certain actors are conditioned by a particular discourse which had been ordered by a colonial force. As postcolonial critics put it: '*This is particularly evident if we consider the experience of colonialism not as a concluded chapter in global history, but as an intrinsic and indelible part of the contemporary world*' (De Angelis, Ianniciello, Orabona & Quadraro, 2016, p. 2).

Hereby, the thesis is divided into four major parts, in the first of them: *The Archeology of discourse* I am looking into the past to highlight the persistence of colonial logics and the similarities between how the 'Orient' was approached by the French colonial administrators, informal actors and scholarship during the French Protectorate in Morocco (1912-1956) and how is it governed by the Western art professionals today. Metaphorically speaking — it is like using archaeological excavation to uncover the remnants of the previous settlement, barely visible leftovers, yet on them, the whole new construction is firmly built. In part two*: 'We have never planted the seeds, yet we showed to pick the flowers' – The Field 2017-2020* I discuss the concrete reverberations and consequences of the past in the present social settings: I ask how does the dominance of a specific discourse which interwinds the local visual art scene manifests, how does the economical and informational monopolisation operates in practice and affect both — the local cultural producers and the local art professionals. In the context of Marrakech, this is particularly evident and deepened among emerging institutional sites, therefore *Part Three: The Power of Cultural Institutions* is dedicated to a specific complex of adjoined museums launched and governed by a powerful French Foundation Jardin Majorelle. This case study is looking into how discourse is produced through a 'discursive practise' — the practice of producing meaning in a physical manner: through the system of classification, displaying practices and spatial orderings and how statements of the museum professionals are in disjunction from what is, in fact, practised. Finally the statement of M. Foucault: *'where there is power, there is resistance… a multiplicity of points of resistance'* (Foucault, 1979, p. 95) serves as an entry point to the final part – *Contemporary counter-narratives*. These chapters are addressing independent cultural actors and their curatorial practices designed as a counter-narratives offering an alternative path in order to build up local audiences without imposing their 'accurate' forms of knowledge. Despite the fact their approach is

often based on vague creative experimentation, and regardless of the occasional aestheticism, these particular chapters show how independent actors present an important agency in the city's artistic dynamics.

The Orient – real and imagined land of the exotic 'Other' as produced throughout the Western academic disciplines in 18th, 19th and 20s century and as a mode to perpetuate European dominance, had been critically overviewed in a rich corpora of papers and accepted as a fact. Some might argue that discussions on *Orientalism* have reached its peak, yet at the end of the day, does it matter to have a list of scholars and existing academic debates on strategies of the 'otherness' when those in charge (read cultural actors) do not take the accountability to deconstruct monotonous representations? In fact, the facade had never been torn down, the opposite is happening: it is being carefully restored and contemporary world of visual art became 'space of possible' where the discourse of Orientalism, perhaps its new forms in old power structures, is being exercised. Inspired by the words of American writer, art critic, activist and curator Lucy R. Lippard, the circuit of artistic production and cultural actors within have a social mandate to risk, interpret and educate, yet unequal powers make unequal risks and aesthetic daring must be balanced with responsibility (accountability) to the communities with whom the creators are creating (Lippard, 2015, p. 26).

Exoticism does not need a VISA. Metal, glass, neon and fabric, Simohammed Fettaka, 2020 (source: courtesy of Simohammed Fettaka)

A Note on the Transliteration and Abbreviations

All transliterations from Arabic or French are in following lines mine, unless I have noted otherwise. The case of TAMA manifesto (Chapter 7) was from standard Arabic to English translated by Abdeslam Anzid. In Morocco, due to the historical presence of France, Arabic words, so as names have standard transliterations often derived from French which I have, in the entire corpus, followed. Other transliterations are respecting the standard and accepted spelling as the style of the International Journal of Middle East Studies.

AU - African Union

l'ÉSAV - High School of Visual Arts (*École Supérieure des Arts Visuels*)

MENA The Middle East and North Africa

MYSL Marrakech – Museum of Yves Saint Laurent in Marrakech (*Musée Yves Saint Laurent Marrakech*)

MACAAL - Museum of Contemporary African Art *Al Maaden* (*Musée d'Art Contemporain Africain Al Maaden*)

UNESCO United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

1.54 Contemporary African Art Fair 1.54

Notes on Existing Research

The word itself, 'research', is probably one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world's vocabulary.[10] Linda Tuwihai Smith

Interest in art production from the Middle East and North Africa (further as MENA) is, since the first decade of the 21st century, simply staggering (Muller, 2009, p. 12). Thus naturally the number of curatorial texts, papers, publications and pamphlets written about artists and their artworks is growing proportionally to the global concern which they face. While on the international scale we are encountering curatorial and institutional enthusiasm, back 'home' artists are facing more or less apathy towards their contemporary practices (Lazaar, 2016, p. 1). This disparity between the interest in art on an international level and (dis)interest within the domestic structures, is due to several historical reasons, however, above all primarily because of the existing disjunction and even constructed binary opposition between 'traditional Islamic art' and forms of new art practices (Mikdadi and Shabout, 2009, p. 8). The fracture between the *novel* and the *previous* and consequences it had and continuously has will be discussed in following chapters, nevertheless, we can state that there is an evident scarcity of research-based texts on contemporary art practices in the MENA region in general, on Moroccan case in particular. The existing publications are almost never originating from local writers, the ones available are presenting artists curriculums as if pinned on the wall of an art fair booths, rather than they would provide the reader with inner dynamics out of the market interests (as an example to be mentioned is the recent publication *Lumières Africaines* edited by André Magnin and Mehdi Qotbi, 2018). What the existing curatorial publications are usually fundamentally lacking, is the historical context — artistic practices are approached as a recent phenomenon, a boom or commodity à *la mode*, rather than being understood as a continuum firmly embedded in wider social, political and economical context (Shabout and Mikdadi, 2009, p. 12). Existing publications and (diverse) debates on the contemporary art in the region of MENA can be distinguished into two parts: curatorial expertise on works of art and more critical academical discourse conducted mainly by anthropologists and historians of art. The first discourse was, and I dare to state still is, highly problematic as it includes utilisation of politics of identity and generalisations, further it neglects local

[10] SMITH, Linda Tuhiwai. *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. London: Zed Books, 1999.

historical narratives etc, all often designed to please the Western spectator and to sustain the interest of the market in general, art collectors and potential buyers in particular. What one can read in such sources is, as Nada Shabout puts it: simplified uncritical versions of the popular theory about the development of local art as an offshoot of European styles (Shabout, 2009, p. 15).

The situation of the second (academical) discourse is best described by the following statement: '*Scholarly discourse is absent and it is problematic, even alarming*' notes both Mikdadi and Shabout in the introduction to the one of the rare publications on contemporary art practices from the MENA: *New vision: Arab Contemporary Art in the 21st Century*. Art historians and professors Salwa Mikdadi – an Associate Professor of Art History currently based in Dubai and Nada Shabout – Professor at the University of Northern Texas, are today considered as matadors of critical writing on the Middle Eastern art production. Perhaps from the previous generation, the name of still active Jordanian art historian Wijdan Ali (1939) who is an artist herself, has to be mentioned. Ali's works as an academic are significant for her 'revival of Islamic art' and its continuum within modern forms which are, according to her, beyond a 'mare repetitive decors' as Western art historians like to point out (see Ali, Wijdan. *Modern Islamic Art*, 1997). Among the new generation which have emerged in past decade are predominantly PhD candidates (meanwhile accomplished) in anthropology such as: anthropologist and scholar Marion Slitine (EHESS Paris) with her exceptional ethnography on Palestinian contemporary art since 1990, anthropologist Cécile Boëx (CéSOR Paris) focusing on political images in New Digital age in the Arab world. Among other names are: PhD candidate Elizabeth Derderian, independent curator Rachel Dedman, writer Yasmine Zidane, post-doctoral researcher Simon Debois or independent curator and writer Ania Szremski. Most of these scholars, interested in various phenomenons considering contemporary art and visual production in the MENA, contributed in a recent publication on contemporary cultural institutions in the Middle East – *FUTURE IMPERFECT: Contemporary Art Practices and Cultural Institutions in the Middle East, 2016* edited by Professor of Visual Culture in the Middle East and North Africa Anthony Downey. Before tackling the case of Morocco, it is important to mention an increasing trend which currently situates the Moroccan art production 'back on the African continent' and thus contemporary Moroccan artists are being included into writings on contemporary African art, as well as they are traditionally associated with the MENA region (Ferguson, 2006, p. 145-62). This

geopolitical shift is responding to current discourse ruled by the demands of the globalised art market focusing predominately on African art as an export to the world, which is according to American Palestinian writer Fatalleh resembling '*much like Africa's participation in the global capital flows which is predicated largely on the export of raw materials'* (Fattaleh, 2019, p. 2). More about how Moroccan art is being marked as 'African' again I reflect in *Chapter 5.1 Back of African continent*.

Writing on Morocco

Perhaps the most famous theorist of contemporary art practices in Morocco is an Italian curator, art historian and art critic Toni Maraini (1941) who lived in Morocco from 1964 to 1987. She taught at the *École des Beaux Arts* and at the *Institut de communication audiovisuelle* in Casablanca and as well at the University of Rabat.[11] Maraini published many articles and essays and undertook long-term research in which she questioned the modernity of new artistic forms in Morocco and its disconnection from traditional artistic expressions (Pieprzak, 2010, p. 93-94). Her stay in Morocco is inevitably linked to the artistic formation known as the Casablanca School: a collective of artists such as Farid Belkahia (1934-2014) and Mohammed Melehi (1936) (Melehi and Maraini were married at that time) sought to redefine colonial art education and display practices since the beginning of 1960s. The Casablanca School is also known as the very first generation who aimed to radically dismantle racist cultural categories being continuously alive since the French Protectorate (Irbouh, 2005, p. 8-11). Although Maraini's research represented for several decades an important and, in fact, the only critical source of post-independent scholarly writing on Moroccan art, her coherent analysis recently undertook strong criticism. On one hand, Mariani and artists from the Casablanca School launched a set of discourses that aimed to revise local visual heritage and the need of protecting it, on the other, as writer Hamid Irbouh in his publication *Art in the service of Colonialism: French Art Education in Morocco 1912-1956* notes: '*Mariani's remarks, in addition to exploring crafts from an elitist approach reflect, wittingly or unwittingly, the opinions of French colonial scholars who investigated Moroccan traditional industries'* (Irbouh, 2005, p. 13).

The vastest source available on Moroccan visual culture is, as one might expect, from

[11] *About the author* [online] cit. 15. 12. 2019 In http://www.africanbookscollective.com/authors-editors/toni-maraini

the French colonial scholarship employed as a part of the colonial agenda in North Africa. Most of the publications written during the French Protectorate of Morocco (1912-1956) has little or no reference to the larger political and economic conditions in which the local art production existed, therefore they offer a solely hegemonic analysis of Moroccan production labelled as, or more accurately — condemned as 'craft' (Irbouh, 2005). Majority of these texts are based on assumptions about moral and cultural superiority of France and with several exceptions, such as Hamid Irbouh's publication, haven't been yet critically overviewed. The habit of France and other Western scholars, researchers and writers to classify, make statements about and even adjudicate originated from the colonial orderings and is currently firmly rooted in the legacy of cultural dominance which rarely allows any critical self-positioning. Real consequences of the scholarly distinctions in relation to the contemporary Moroccan art scene are discussed in Chapter 4 of this thesis: *The Craftsman as a 'Noble Savage'*.

After Hamid Irbouh's analysis of French colonial scholarship and French colonial art education, I consider researcher Katarzyna Pieprzak and her ethnographical publication *Imagined Museums: Art and Modernity in Postcolonial Morocco, 2010* as a fundamental reference of any future analysis. Both her and Irbouh are loudly calling for an examination of 'the past' in order to understand current cultural life in Morocco. Irbouh intended to present a critical analysis in a postcolonial manner which, he hoped, would open up a discussion on ethnocentric approaches of French scholars that dealt with Moroccan craft industries and guilds. Whereas such debates might have been successful in Western academical environment, in Marrakech are purposely suppressed. He effectively brought up to light constructed theoretical justifications that segregated Moroccan 'archaic craft' within ethnic zones — according to them, material objects were evaluated (traditionally divided into 'Berber' rural areas — craftsmen were considered as more civilised and urban Arab areas — inhabited by tardy and lazy Arab craft producers). French colonial scholars, among them, for example, Georges Hardy (1884-1972), Henri Terrasse (1895-1971) and Prosper Ricard (1874-1952) were systematically providing French readers with a sectarian categorisation of Moroccan local artistic expressions, where some were, according to their promoted essentialism, indeed better than the others, however, none of the Moroccan art production could compete with the qualities of its Western counterparts (Irbouh, 2005, p. 28). Moroccan contemporary art world often avoids any discussions on colonial past arguing that it belongs to history. The statement '*I am so tired of academics continuously bringing out*

the colonial history' by *Sebta* (Ceuta) born Carlos Perez Marin in one the roundtable debates during Caravne Tighmert[12] (cultural festival annually held in the Southern region of Morocco and organised by Perez Marin in a collaboration with Ahmed Dabah and others from the local community of the oasis *Tighmert*) in spring 2019 is more than eloquent and is shared by most of the cultural actors forming contemporary art dynamics. Despite the existing dismissive attitudes of those in power (read art professionals) more and more analysis are uncovering silenced voices calling for critical discussions over Western cultural domination. One of the examples, in detail discussed further in this text, is the case of an unheard community of *Aghmat* – a small city 30 km south-east from Marrakech. During first edition of African Art Fair 1.54 held in Marrakech in spring 2018 the Voice Gallery, which organised an artistic intervention in the archaeological site of *Aghmat*, refused to set a dialogue with the local community asking to be involved as equal participants in discussions over own cultural heritage. The clash escalated into a manifesto titled *TAMA: a voice for the margins*[13] led by, among others, young Moroccan artist Noureddine Ezarraf.

> '*…Yes, we are tired of Western paternalistic attitude in our political and cultural institutions, we are tired of artistic projects that are only made to attract tourists, tired of art that gives little value to the local….*' (TAMA manifesto, 2018)

The existing disparity between the constructed image of Marrakech as a cultural hub and the actual empty and false promises towards the local audiences is a typical feature of the local scene (see Fattaleh, 2019). Pieprzak provocatively, in the introduction to her publication on cultural institutions in Morocco, appropriates the situation of empty museums as an entry point to highlight imbalance between the proclaimed modernity and the social, economic and political reality of the country (Peiprzak, 2010, p. 17-19). Cultural institutions and cultural life in general is, according to her, accurately mirroring this situation: absent political will, selective state fundings, lacking university curriculums and weak or non-existing infrastructure is to her a proof that art serves as an 'empty signifier' — '*symbolic gestures in order to attest to its allegiance to modernisation*' (Pieprzak, 2010, p. 20). She argues that even though Moroccan artists

[12] More about *Caravane Tighmert* available on the official website of Carlos Perez Marin: https://caravanetighmert.weebly.com/strateacutegie-culturelle.html

[13] Full text of the Manifesto in Arabic is available on the personal website of Noureddine Ezarraf: http://www.ezarrafnoureddine.com/p/tama_45.html or further in this text.

sought to decolonize Moroccan art from the dominance of the West, they have eventually surrendered as the quest for the local audience have had drastically failed. '*Moroccan museums do not exist. Moroccan museums are failed institutions*' she notes. Since Independence gained in 1956, the West remained as the only subject interested in practices of local contemporary artists (Pieprzak, 2010, p. 94). I argue that this situation isn't a result of Moroccan audience not being able to engage in cultural life (as it is usually explained by curators, museum directors and other self-proclaimed art professionals), but rather because 'art' was appropriated and commodified in order to fulfil the needs of a small group of elites both Moroccan and foreign. Breaking free from the dependency relation is conditioned by the process of cultural decolonisation, which in the case of Morocco never happened.

> '*French museum directors and administrators stayed on in Moroccan museums throughout the period following independence maintaining a national architecture that housed a primarily colonial imagination*' (Pieprzak, 2010, p. 18).

Every researcher writing on Moroccan culture in general, visual art in particular faces the lack of archives, beside the colonial ones of course. Important work, in this sense, is the research of anthropologist Amina Touzani. Touzani's work is based on her analysis of various ministerial archives in Morocco in both languages French and Arabic starting from the period of the Independence to the beginning of the 21st century. Touzani on the situation of Moroccan Ministry of Culture states: '*The Ministry of Cultural Affairs in Morocco is a department without memory because up to this day, it has not been able to organise its archives. In effect, there doesn't exist the smallest administrative cell to proceed to the collection, analysis and diffusion of the archives or at least their preservation. The question that haunts us is the following: Is there really something to preserve*?' (Touzani, Amina. Translated from french by Peiprzak, 2002 p. 16-17) Another significant figure in contemporary academical discourse to be mentioned is anthropologist Ahmed Skounti (Professor at the Department of Anthropology and Museology, *Institut national des sciences de l'archéologie et du patrimoine* in Rabat) as he is perhaps the only visible Moroccan actor that is frequently making statements on local cultural life, otherwise, most of the scholars are from or situated abroad. Skounti was a facilitator of the UNESCO ICH capacity-building programme and was a chair member of the Evaluation Body of the UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee for the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage in 2015 and 2017 and member of this

body from 2015 to 2017.[14] Currently based in Marrakech, Skounti for example, co-created the ethnographical collection of Berber Museum in Marrakech. However, his apparent and real decision making power in this very process is discussed in *Chapter 9 'A culture yet to be discovered' – Berber Museum.*

Further, concerning solely the contemporary Moroccan art scene name of two curators, scholars and writers have to be mentioned: first is Abdellah Karroum, who is currently the director of the contemporary art museum *Mathaf* in Doha, and second is New York-based curator and writer Omar Berrada. Both are perceived as an embodiment of the *zeitgeist* of the art scene in the post-Hassan II period (from 1999). Their curatorial practice is into greater detail, specifically, the agency of Omar Berrada, discussed in the introductory lines of the last part of my thesis – *Contemporary Counter Narratives.*

As a sort of a 'new wave' can be perceived the younger generation of 'travelling' academics, writers and researchers of which most I have met during my field research in Morocco and to whom I belong myself. Among them: French anthropologist Marie Pierre-Bouthier discussing forms of *Amazigh* resistance through Moroccan cinema from the 1960s and on (l'Université Paris 1), anthropologist Victoire Jaquet (Université Paris Nanterre) researching on contemporary dance in Morocco (with empathise on Marrakech contemporary dance formation *Nafas* launched by Toufiq Izeddiou), independent curator and writer Léa Morin specialising on archives, history and film heritage of North Africa. I am as well familiar with ongoing research of art historian Tina Barouti (Boston University) on Tétouan School of Fine Arts. Doctoral candidate Emma Chubb (Northwestern University) is, in her research, focusing on the representation of Moroccan national identity (Moroccanness) in contemporary art and official visual culture. Palestinian American PhD candidate in anthropology (Columbia University) George Bajalia although conducting fieldwork on migration in Northern Morocco, directs an annual *Youmein* Creative Media Festival[15] in Tangier – therefore he became an active cultural actor in the locality with an insight into various cultural structures. Anthropologist and postdoctoral fellow Sarah Dornhof (Freie Universität Berlin) is specialising in transnationalism and postcoloniality in contemporary art and

[14] [online] cit. 15. 12. 2019 In https://www.criticalheritagestudies.org/membership-directory#!biz/id/566d8dd84f952e7d4f4d0a47

[15] More about Youmein festival available on the personal website of George Bajalia: http://www.georgebajalia.com/youmein-media-festival

cultural politics in Morocco and currently discussing art practices as a possible substitution of lacking archives. Most of the young academia based researchers are sharing common affiliations towards interdisciplinary approaches. As an example to be mentioned is the research of Dutch Moroccan architect Sara Frikech adopting postcolonial perspective on water politics in the city of Meknès often experimenting with different forms of knowledge production, including artistic forms. Architect from *Sebta* (Ceuta) Carlos Perez Marin annually organises a cultural festival *Caravane Tighmert* in the oasis of Southern region of Morocco and in recent years became a cultural authority and an unquestionable reference.[16] Although the number of academics researching on contemporary art practices in the MENA region is growing, these mentioned names present more of an unsystematic intimate personal interests, than a solid academical debate and share of knowledge. Researchers and writers whether with an academical background or not are, despite the alarming lack of coherent research, surpassingly less interested in mutual collaborations. This inability of sharing, caused by competition often typical for Western academical environments, subsequently resulted in a continuous absence of cohesive knowledge about contemporary art production from both the MENA region and from Morocco. Research adventures on 'indigenous' lands as Professor of indigenous education Linda Tuwihai Smith calls the field-research of academics, writers and project workers in the non-Western countries, resembles well the situation. Her publication *Decolonizing Methodologies, 1999* became an important milestone of research methods based on self-reflexivity, self-positioning and social justice rejecting the 'white research' and 'outsider research' located in Western positivist tradition (Tuwihai-Smith, 1999, p. 42). '*It becomes so taken for granted',* notes Tuwihai Smith, '*that many researchers simply assume that they as individuals embody this natural representatives, when they work with other communities'* (Tuwihai-Smith, 1999, p. 2). Beside Tuwihai-Smith I draw from Eduard Said and his notion of Western discourse about the 'Other' which is supported by 'institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, doctrines, imaginary etc,' (Said, 1978, p. 2), as much from M. Foucault and Stuart Hall who both assume that: The West has created a colonial archive, a 'storehouse' of knowledge and it is a high time to acknowledge, that the so called Western epistemology is not a neutral but is itself classified, preserved, arranged and represented (see Hall, Stuart, *The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power*, 1992 and Foucault, Michel, *The archaeology of knowledge*,

[16] I have conducted several interviews with the co-founder of *Caravane Tighmert* Carlos Perez Marin in spring 2019 during my participation in the oasis of *Tighmert*.

1972). Recent anthropological studies on contemporary art practices are more aware of often subtle, but present hierarchical orderings when entering the foreign lands. As an example to be mentioned is, again, the work of French Moroccan anthropologist Marion Slitine: *La Palestine en créations. La fabrique de l'art contemporain, des territoires occupés aux scènes mondialisées, 2018*. Slitine dedicated one of her chapters to a comparison between her notion of Palestinian art and artists *before* stepping into the field and her research output *after* long-term fieldwork. Nevertheless, Slitine's self-reflexivity and awareness of biases presents an exceptional approach. The scientific field of art history and contemporary curatorial practices dealing with non-Western art are representatives of a much different approach. Curators and other cultural actors are often justifying their research, interventions and projects by a service for a greater good of a 'man-kind' (read art world) or even serving directly to the oppressed and marginalised (read Moroccans). Most of practices I have witnessed during my field-research were and are beneficial primarily for these actors themselves.

Anthropologists of art Arnd Schneider and Christopher Wright are in recent years opening a new discourse that would validate interdisciplinary approaches and overlaps between the disciplines of art and anthropology. I. e., how the art world can adopt ethnographical methods in a 'right way' and how anthropologists can in the aftermath of Writing culture critique (see Marcus, George E. *Anthropology Today and the Ethnographic in Artwork*, 2015) open up to the new challenging methodologies of artistic experimentations. Even though intuitive and unorthodox practices are increasing (see Chapter 11 of this thesis – *Between love and hate: contemporary Art practices and Anthropology*) some critics such as Hal Foster (see Foster's *Artist as Ethnographer?* 1995) and Lucy R. Lippard highlights the alarming absence of ethics in these research practices which are, according to them, often seldom and self-fulfilling (see R. Lippard, Farther Afield In *Between Art and Anthropology, 2015*). Nevertheless, in the case of Morocco several artistic research-based art outputs are successful and for local communities beneficial. For example *l'Atelier de l'Observatoire* in Casablanca initiated by Moroccan artist Mohamed Fariji and French researcher Léa Morin. Other examples considering Marrakech and beyond are discussed in the last part of this thesis: *Chapter 11 Alternative Projects: Qanat's poetics and politics of water*.

Notes on Theoretical Background

As it has been mentioned in previous lines, we are facing a scarcity of academical texts discussing the contemporary art production out of the Western canonical expertise. As art critic Nat Muller points out, the problem lies in the definition itself which associates the artistic production with the geopolitical region as a whole (Muller, 2009, p. 12). Spectators of non-Western artworks, as so much as the readers of various art publications, had, throughout the history, adopted conditioned gaze of how to read, think about and act towards the Middle Eastern region and its inhabitants. I. e., the Western world is firmly embedded in a certain kind of discourse which S. Hall titles as 'The West and the Rest.' Muller states: No matter how much the author attempts to redirect biased reader beyond the Othering eye, no matter how many claims about diversity and heterogeneity of things are listed, he or she is already '*a complicit in a game that attempts to offer the reader an epistemological framework for navigating a specific cognitive topography*' (Muller, 2009, p. 12). Therefore, most contemporary theorists tend to unconsciously reproduce narratives which they, in fact, aimed to critically tackle at first. The question to be asked is, hence: how to possibly approach this phenomenon out of an existing artificial juxtaposition? There isn't a clear answer, however, most of the theorists adopted several rules, as detailed contextualisation, self-positioning and ethics of research, especially when it comes to various collaboration with local communities (see Schneider and Wright, 2015). 'Arab world', 'Islamic world' or 'The Middle East and North Africa' ('MENA') are inscribed titles which were constructed mostly for ideological purposes and which are leading to subsequent generalisations. Non-Western artists are stripped from their individuality and treated as being a mouthpiece for 'The Arab', 'The Muslim', 'The Moroccan', 'The African' etc Similar situation is currently undertaking 'the contemporary African art' (see Olu Oguibe and Okwui Enwezor (eds), *Reading the Contemporary African Art from the Theory to the Market Place*, 1999).

Essays by renown scholars published in two major publications on the contemporary art from the MENA region: *Contemporary Art from The Middle East* and *New vision: Arab Contemporary Art from the 21st Century* both from the year 2009 do reflect upon this situation, therefore it is widely acknowledged that the global art world tends to operate in the discourse of so called 'neo-Orientalism' (Muller, 2009, p. 12). What is less obvious, and it is specificity for the case of Morocco, is that the foreign actors are not

only making statements about the local production and its producers in the international context but are significantly operating within the locality itself. These practices are saturated by preserved colonial legacy (formal coloniser have never stepped down) and wider shared notion about the land of the 'Other' — entrenched Orientalism and exoticism constructed through the histories of Western expansionism (Tuwihai-Smith, 199. p. 65). Some of the art professionals or artists entering Morocco are far from being aware of any potential misconduct, as the discourse operates within the, using Foucault's term: 'rules of practice' which are internalised to that extent, that they are taken for granted (Foucault, 2002, p. 14). I argue, that what we count as curatorial or museological approaches draws from the 'archive' in which set of values, rules and knowledge are stored, this system we identify as 'Western' and (thus) 'developed'. Cultural theorist Stuart Hall argues that the concept of the West operates as 1. Being in a legitimate position to classify cultures and societies distinct from the West into categories 2. It aims to provide a complex of images of the 'Other', i.e., construct a *system of representations* 3. Has a model of comparison as well as an elaborate system of evaluation and (4.) disposes of criteria trough which we (Westerners) rank other non-Western societies (Hall, 1992, p. 276-320). From what I have observed in Marrakech field of visual art production I assume that the former coloniser have never stepped down, but remained in a position of a *cultural authority, adviser, educator, facilitator and a reference.* Therefore analysis I have decided to conduct on a certain kind of discourse and power relations undertook a form of a critical ethnography embedded in postmodernist anthropological approach (Carspecken and Apple, 1992; Madison, 2005; Thomas, 1993). This approach is including more of an advocacy perspective and is a direct response to the current state of the field which I have encountered. I started to be particularly interested in *power*, *authority*, *privilege* and *prestige* of certain cultural actors creating inequality in rights to participate in cultural life while operating in structures of dominance and hegemony. Accordingly, these findings required a radical reassessment from the previous research design which was submitted for a committee approval in June 2015.

Approaching contemporary art scene in the postcolonial social setting, theorist S. Hall became fundamental to my writing, not only through his definition of Western meta-discourse but as well by his understanding of the culture which goes beyond the evaluation of material objects. Definition of culture is, according to him, first and foremost a *process*, a set of practices which are argued between members of a certain

group, however, not all of these members are in equal power positions and thus they possess various degrees of abilities to participate in cultural life (Hall, 1997, p. 2). Next, fundamental reference, which is particularly evident on an applied terminology in this thesis, is French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu who understands 'art' as a final construct of a powerful group based on shared common *belief*. Those in power (usually art professionals such as curators, museologists, buyers, dealers, collectors, critics or journalists) *believe* that a certain material object or a performance is, in fact, an art (Bourdieu 2010, p. 298-300). His theory on art enables to understand visual art scene as a complex mechanism of power relations constituting cultural production. In his various analysis, namely on the cultural institutions executed in the 1960s, he emphasised that museums and galleries are often both materially and symbolically inaccessible to specific groups (Bourdieu, 1966 trans. by Grenfell and Hardy, 2007, p. 177-178). Bourdieu first used empirical evidence to show how an individual's experience of culture is conditioned by class, education and social background (Bourdieu 1966, trans. by Grenfell and Hardy, 2007, p. 65). Contemporary critical theorists on art are inspired by Bourdieu's analysis assuming that the cultural is redistributed selectively and under certain predefined conditions drawing directly from the possession of cultural capital of individuals and groups (for example sociologist Sarah Thornton, artist and art critic Andrea Fraser). The art scene in Marrakech is, according to my initial findings, a status sphere where the concrete institutional structure *in situ* is maintaining clichés and is actively supporting the fixed image of Morocco as an Oriental territory. Based on the first few investigations in the field in fall 2017, I have decided to integrate selected institutions into my research design in order to understand how 'neo-Orientalist' discourse is reproduced and developed in their quotidian practice.

Discourse is a key term to Michel Foucault, both in grounded theory and in his elaborated methodological approach. As I have decided to tackle power and 'regimes of truth' embedded in certain kind of cultural institutions, the most suitable method of inquiry is the so called *discourse analysis*. This particular analysis is inspired by Foucault, however, subsequently developed by a visual theoretician Gillian Rose. In her publication Visual Methodologies (Rose, 2016, p. 220-253), Rose uses Foucault's approach to build own methodological apparatus for an analysis 'on the ground' in order to deconstruct institutional strategies of knowledge production. For Foucault, discourse is indivisible from power — it does not have to be necessarily repressive, i.e., discourse does not impose rules of conduct and behaviour on an existing actor, but through power

certain kind of notion of people, places and relations are produced. Thus discourse determines the understanding of the world around us (Rose, 2016, 189-190). The discourse-centred analysis doesn't necessarily relate only to the generation of postmodern and post-structuralist anthropologists adopting primarily Foucault's notion of discourse as: '*practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak*' (Foucault, 1972, p.49), but is often used in linguistic anthropology too (Bernard-Gravlee, 2014, p. 391). Notion of discourse is bringing a deeper insight into practices, usually into a collection of utters, that constitute and indicate relations, hierarchies, ideologies, power relations etc particularly helpful in every participant observation (Moeran 2007; Whitehead 2009). Even though I am not using central proposition of linguistic anthropology, according to a discourse centred framework: '*culture is an emergent process, historically transmitted but continuously produced and revised through dialogues among its members',* utters are at the core of my analysis (Farnell and Graham, 2014, p. 392). During the executed interviews and participant observations I have been paying particular attention to the statements of cultural professionals, through which representations of Moroccan artists and Moroccans, in general, are constructed. I haven't been focusing on the language forms solely, but rather on the social meaning of 'the spoken' and its relationship to identity, power, beliefs and ideologies (Farnell and Graham, 2014, p. 393).

Further, I ask, what does research in a state of postcoloniality can present in terms of ethical implications. Names of New Zealander Linda Tuwihai Smith and Indian English critical theorist Homi K. Bhabha are essential. While Tuwihai Smith and her decolonizing methodological approach had been already discussed, I will now mention Bhabha's paradigm which constituted an influential movement in a cultural theory known as post-colonial criticism (Huddart, 2006, p. 1). First Bhabha, through textual analysis, states that the colonial period is an ongoing social fact — situated in present remnants of past colonial orderings (constructed representations) or, in most cases, internalised by the (ex)colonised's minds (here he refers to an iconic F. Fanon's publication *White Skins Black Masks*). Second, that cultural imperialism isn't simply imposed (as all discourses, according to Foucault, aren't), more the coloniser's culture frameworks are opened for transformation and negotiation with the (ex)colonised population. Just like a text cannot be controlled by the author, states Bhabha (see Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 1994). Thus, Bhabha doesn't divide the world into bad (coloniser) and good (colonised), but his analysis demands deeper understanding of the

'present moment.' He developed colonial discourse analysis by applying post-structuralist methodologies on colonial texts following philosophers like Gilles Deleuze (1925-1995), Michel Foucault (1925-1984) and Jaques Derrida (1930-2004). Before Bhabha, the study of colonialism was traditional dominated by Marxist perspectives involved in many anti-colonial movements and forms of resistance, later it was the significant work of Edward Said – Orientalism (1978) which governed theories on post-colonial social worlds (Huddart, 2006, p. 3-4). Bhabha agrees with Said's argument that Orientalism created from the so called Orient an object to be manipulated for political and economical reasons, but he asks certain supplementary questions. Bhabha is arguing that the subaltern voice wasn't only oppressed, but had its own agency out of the notion of passivity. Said is, according to Bhabha, overpassing the agency of the subalterns (see Bhabha, The location of Culture, 1994). His well-known term to describe the complexity of intertwined relations and 'plural selfs' is *hybridity* — a term which undermines any claims about fixed identities, instead Bhabha notes that identities are always open-ended, in flux and constantly 'becoming'. *Hybridisation* is happening in the space in between, in the *liminal* where members of supposed different cultures meet and interact (Bhabha, 1994, p. 212). To summarise Bhabha's stance: all identities, whereas collective or individual are incomplete and this has to be in any of postcolonial analysis always acknowledged (Bhabha, 1994, p. 162). Adopting Bhabha's terminology, the art world of Marrakech is a space of *liminal* where various actors with multiple identities and cultural backgrounds interact. It is somehow obvious who is possessing more power, however, to blatantly state that it is 'the French/the West' who is dominating over Moroccan cultural life would be false. While Bhahba is warning against simplifications, Franz Fanon declares that notions of 'universal humanity' is to be 'White' or even European. Too subtle philosophical and theorising approaches are disclaiming the practices of daily life where *whiteness* is unconsciously absolute, whereas the black man always takes the form of thinking *as if he was white*. For Fanon, the white man acts as the blackness doesn't matter, but it, in fact, simply does. And the realities of colonial histories are nothing more than an explicit prove (Fanon, 1952, p. 110).

Adopting critical approach requires long-term research as various actors are reacting to domination/oppression differently: artists are often ashamed of existing dependency on the ex-coloniser and on the rest of the Western art world which validates and evaluates their work. Some of them became 'French' in the sense of their own understanding of

Frenchness, acting with gratitude towards the 'Western educator of modernity' longing to become part of the French Moroccan status-sphere. Some of them were brought up in a Moroccan elitist environment, which indicates their identity was constructed through the French educational system which is, likewise legitimate. Some of the cultural practitioners call for resistance while continuously benefiting from the collaboration with the West, whereas others are activistic and loud. There is too, a group of those who are silenced, however, most of them are pragmatically silent. Non-Moroccan cultural actors are, on the other hand, naturally denying any hegemonic attitudes over Moroccans, perceiving themselves solely as part of so much needed civilisation missions. '*A large part of the identity of the patron is fashioned around the image of the Western-educated, enlightened native who has come back from abroad to teach citizens of his country the value of contemporary art*' notes Fattaleh (Fattaleh, 2019, p. 17). Critical writing on social worlds in the post-colonial setting requires long-lasting and intimate relationships as the complexity of hybrid identities doesn't reveal unless within the field-work itself (Creswell and Clark 2007, p. 70).

Researching on Marrakech visual art scene means entering into a seemingly emerging cultural life, while at the same time gradually acknowledging it is a mare construction far from the decision of a popular appeal. As Moroccan artist, Lina Laraki noted: '*the art world in Marrakech is built from the air, thus it might happen that once it will just fade away*.' After several interviews, I have understood that the art scene I am facing is part of a specific structure where only 'some' have the power to pronounce the hierarchy of cultural geographies. Further, they maintain the access to these geographies under certain conditions, their expectations have to be fulfilled and they require obedience. Small and intimate field of visual arts in Marrakech is dominated by unquestionable authority of several individuals and by two dominant cultural institutions both claiming to be museums. To approach the field from the perspective of power relations embedded in a specific discourse which I perceive in a continuum from the era of French Protectorate of Morocco (1912-19156) was, according to my personal understanding, an inevitable choice. Simultaneously bearing in mind Bhabha's notion of *hybridisation*, I avoid statements that would entirely associate 'cultural dominance' with the Western actors (read 'Westerners are the oppressors'), rather I tackle a certain kind of knowledge which is to be uniformly produced and distributed by diverse cultural actors of which are naturally both Moroccans and foreigners.

Notes on Methodological Framework

Bhabha notes that every critical approach is a *process*, which has to be developed within the boundary of a specific location (Bhabha, 1992, p. 22). The presented research design builds on my previous qualitative inquiry, which I conducted for the purposes of my thesis in the years 2014 and 2015. Back then, I was interested in how Syrian, Palestinian, Iraqi and Iranian artists reflect, within their artworks, war conflicts, displacement and the aftermath of revolutions that took place across the MENA region from 2011 and on. I was particularly interested in the politics of representation of postmodern artistic production, nevertheless, I wasn't fully aware of the alarming neo-colonial tendencies which these non-Western artists faced. In Tehran, I have in-depth interviewed photographer Shadi Ghadarian and I still vividly recall the urgency in Ghadarian's voice when talking about exoticization of Iranian artists. Although she was, and most likely still is, persecuted by the political regime of the country, she chooses the uncertain life in Iran before living in a diaspora. Ghadarian stated: '*If I and my work is going to be continually viewed as 'Oriental', I will not participate on any further exhibition in the West, we (non-Western art producers) are just a spectacle.*'[17] At the end of the very same year, I have travelled to Cairo in order to follow the evolution of public art interventions in post-revolutionary Egypt. The local art scene is considered as being not fully, but to a significant extent, culturally decolonized (see Hamdy, Basma and Don Karl, *Walls of Freedom: Street Art of The Egyptian Revolution*, 2014). Working as an intern in Cairo independent gallery Townhouse, I have often felt dismissive stances towards fixed Western representations and opened critical debates on this topic were held regularly. I was even rejected by two street artists I intended to interview as they explained to me that the number of Western researchers on contemporary art in Egypt is increasing, but most of them rarely 'care' beyond their personal academical curriculums. While I have, across the region, often encountered resistance towards the aforementioned steady stereotyping and an explicit need to proclaim the right of self-presentation, Morocco was the first locality where I have encountered the opposite trend — an alliance. After I have spent some time in the field I have soon understood that what could have been, at first, seen as a conscious and equal affiliation, was actually a cluster of dependent relationships.

[17] Interview with Shadi Ghadarian conducted in Teheran, February 2015.

Anthropologist Paul Rabinow, who himself anchored his fieldwork in Morocco, is specifically close to my understanding of the studied phenomenon. His 'Anthropology of Contemporary' is a mode of inquiry which seeks to understand the present as construction where 'the past' world resembles the contemporary setting. Both 'the old' and 'the new' are continuously interacting and creating novel meanings within a specific context. This paradigm, is according to him, adequate when analysing the colonial power itself or perhaps the post-colonial social worlds (Rabinow, 1992, p. 258-261).

Being close to M. Foucault, P. Rabinow was particularly interested in power domination of the French colonists in Morocco, however, he emphasised that the classical understanding of power which is being associated primarily with force and directly imposed constraints is rather false. The colonists of the past, as much as 'the hegemons of today' are highly stratified and vary, thus power cannot be always clearly personified (Rabinow, 1992, p. 259-260). *Exploitation*, *domination* and *subjection* are Foucault's developed analytical tools which he used in order to describe power relations (Foucault, 1982, p.212). According to Rabinow, the usual description of colonial history is trough the realisation of the first two — domination and exploitation: '*who controls whom and who extracts the fruits of production from the producers*' (Rabinow, 1992, p. 260). Whereas, we (researchers and academics in general) should direct our attention to the third: *subjection*. This dimension of power is removed from the direct force, but to Rabinow, it is the most crucial one: the identity of groups and individuals is at stake in the setting, where culture plays the major role. This approach is particularly evident in his publications on Morocco where he analysed Lyautey's (French army general and colonial administrator) highly sophisticated large-scale social planning, based on race segregation executed by architectural and urban projects appearing as ideologically neutral and for the Moroccan society (falsely) beneficial (see Rabinow, *Symbolic Domination: Cultural Form and Historical Change in Morocco*, 1975).

Research Design and Research Questions

The aim of my dissertation thesis is to describe and analyse the field of contemporary visual art in Marrakech where I am taking into account the Western forms of dominance — namely, the power relations between the various actors involved in the emergence of the Orientalist discourse re-articulated according to the novel interest intersections *in situ*. This corpus of text aims to present visual art as being constitutive, negotiated, always in flux, an ongoing *process* where some have historically ascribed legitimacy to define what is valuable and by whom such can be consumed. I argue that non-Western art production and its producers are being approached by art professionals through the evaluative system entrenched in the Western epistemological framework. Accordingly, Orientalism hasn't been abolished but the opposite is happening — it operates as an 'archive' frequently used by those in power in order to *describe, depict, behave towards* and *rule* over the local cultural life.

Cultural actors who operate within and co-create the discourse are:

1. The cultural institutions (mainly museums) led by European foundations or by professionals trained in presenting a Western knowledge framework within blockbuster exhibitions and museum collections, often based on ethnocentric prior assumptions (from the fixed categories and definitions of what art is, to the strategy of how 'the cultural' should be consumed).
2. The private galleries and independent platforms led by those, who primarily determine the value of the artworks both economical and symbolic.
3. Curators and other cultural professionals (museum staff, exhibition directors, journalists etc) who represent Moroccan artists and link the local scene to the global art world.
4. In addition to the institutionalised structure, there are Moroccan art producers (artists) themselves, operating within the discourse of Orientalism on a wide range of the spectrum, ranging from a conscious rejection (calls for decolonisation actions) to indifferent attitudes towards unconscious references. They think (unconsciously) and act (create) in a certain way which is dictated by the Orientalist discourse.

The following lines present research questions of my dissertation output which were formulated according to collected data during my fieldwork carried out between the years 2017 and 2020 in Marrakech. In final chapter titled *Conclusion: disORIENTation* I provide summarised answers to these questions.

1. *How is the globalised contemporary art world representing the non-Western art producers? Are these powerful actors, as well, influencing the character of the art production in the locality itself?*
2. *How is 'the West' understood by the cultural actors in situ?*
3. *In which positions are the foreigners who are operating in the local cultural environment and how is their authority obtained?*
4. *Why the nationals have limited or none decision making power over own aesthetic expressions?*
5. *How are the empty cultural venues explained and why there isn't, according to the local art professionals, a Moroccan public for art?*
6. *What is the status of the Moroccan art in general, contemporary art in particular? And by whom are these expressions evaluated?*
7. *Why do the local producers agree upon the imposed hierarchical relations?*
8. *With absenting local audience for whom, then, the artworks are initially intended?*
9. *Is the discourse of Orientalism institutionalised, if yes how does it manifest?*
10. *What is the relation between contemporary art production and the promoted idea of Morocco as an Oriental territory?*

Realisation of Qualitative Inquiry and Methods of Data collecting

(1) In the course of ethnographic research, which I had set off in fall of 2017, I have in-depth *interviewed* in total 40 actors in the contemporary field of visual art production in the city of Marrakech,[18] some of them repetitively. Their names are: artists M'barek Bouhchichi, Simohammed Fettaka, Youness Atbane, Yassine Balbzioui, Ghizlane Sahli, Hassan Hajjaj, Houda Terjuman, Ibtihal Remli, M'hammed Kilito, Lina Laraki, MoBaala, Mariam Abouzid Souali, Nadir Bouhmouch, Noureddine Ezarraf, Amine Lahrach, Zainab Fasiki, Walid Ayoub, Mustapha Akrim, Amine El Gotaibi, Jérôme Giller, Eric Van Hove, Ramia Beladel and Nassime Azarzar; art professionals Francesca Masoero, Janine Gaëlle Dieudji, Marie Moignard, Aniko M. E. Boehler, Juan Asís Palao Gómez, Cassandre Gil-Frasnier, Björn Dahlström, Rocco Orlaccio, David Bloch, Nathalie Loccateli, Stefanie Aberer, Reda Zaireg, Yvon Langué, Soufianne Mezzourh, Zineb Aguisoul, Ferdaouss Affan and Abdelkarim Elghanami; in informal manner I talked to Yassine Sellame, Laila Hida, Mohamed Arejdal, Carlos Perez Marin, Soukaina Aboulaoula and Maha Elmadi. Formal interviews were all semi-structured, however, always respecting considerations of the participants who subsequently guided me towards thematic areas and concerns central to them. Following the canon of ethics (Fluehr-Lobban, 1994) all conducted interviews obtained informed consent and with the exception of two, they were recorded and subsequently transcribed for the analysis purposes. Endless informal chitchats were, of course, present as these dialogs were particularly important in the very beginnings, during the so called snow-balling process (Bernard-Gravlee, 2014, p. 675). Social media, particularly Facebook have been very helpful in obtaining most of my contacts, as well as it had provided me by useful information about art openings and other events happening in Marrakech. I have always presented honestly my attempts and talked openly about the purpose and duration of my research while respecting wishes of my informants — some of them insisted that certain information shouldn't be used or asked to be anonymised. Anonymity and confidentiality are crucial issues to ethical research which consist of 'hard' key principals designed by Economic and Social Research council which I have followed (ESRC Framework for research ethics, 2015, p. 4).[19] These six principals are: participants are taking part voluntarily, researcher is protecting their dignity and is committed to

[18] All of the interviews were taking place in Marrakech if I haven't noted otherwise.

[19] ESRC Framework for research ethics is available online: https://esrc.ukri.org/files/funding/guidance-for-applicants/esrc-framework-for-research-ethics-2015/

minimise any potential discomfort for participants, the participants should be given appropriate information about the purpose, methods of the research as well as about risks and benefits, if any, they can be involved in. Researcher respects preferences of anonymity and has to provide transparency of his or her output. Any conflicts of interests have to be explicitly tackled. Interviewed were predominantly artists, both independent curators and those working for commercial galleries, employees of cultural institutions, journalists writing about art, students of art schools and teachers at these schools, directors of museums, museum staff and gallery owners. The goal was to reach the complex contemporary art world of the locality, which happened to be, with several exceptions, fulfilled. The interviews tackled following themes: the presence of 'the West' (meaning curatorial practices and knowledge production typical for the West) in the current field of cultural production; the absence of local audience; the absence of critical discourse; the relationship between artists and craftsmen; the artist's responsibility towards the local spectator; pleasing the Western audience; artist's dependency on foreign fundings; artist's representation by the art world; educational function of cultural institutions and cultural mediation. I have also focused on more general topics, such as identity politics, the colonial history of Morocco and religion aspects of the creation. In my dissertation project, I have directed on the widest possible range of actors involved in the world of contemporary art — artists (production), institutional staff (distribution, circulation and representation) and art professionals (value creation and representation). The selection of the research sample was primarily based on the principle of inductive referral-based sampling strategy (Charmaz 2006; Glaser and Strauss 1967), however, due to the relatively minor number of individuals forming the field of contemporary art production, I was soon able to reach most of the major actors.

In the retrospect of my fieldwork experiences, I cannot avoid a dose of self-criticism. Although I had some previous experiences in research among non-Western art producers, as mentioned above, contemporary art and culture in Marrakech presents a highly sensitive research subject matter. Under the mask of international coverage of PR Arts company known as Pelham Communication which frequently advertises Marrakech as a novel art destination (see Fattaleh, 2019), the situation in the locality itself reveals quite a different story. Whereas independent structures were easier to reach, the private and corporate (the most visible) institutions were hardly accessible and even hostile to any open dialogue on the subjects of colonialism and Orientalism. Most of my personal

experiences, often hardships in obtaining authorisations among powerful art professionals running museums and art galleries, I reflect through my descriptions of situations in which interviews were set. Chapters dedicated to the Museum of Yves Saint Laurent and Berber Museum in Marrakech are describing the context of data collecting in greater detail, as I believe the form in which cultural institutions communicate their agency reveals certain unwanted and unwelcome topics. The unpleasant feeling of these encounters was eventually balanced by the notion of their *regularity*.' Regularity in order, positions and correlations' is, according to M. Foucault, revealing certain kind of *discourse formations* much needed for the analysis purposes (Foucault, 1972, p. 38).

(2) Method of *participant observation* is defined as a method in which the researcher takes part in daily interactions, events and activities of a group, he or she aims to analyse. It is a central and defining method of cultural anthropology and almost every ethnographic research (Musante, 2014, p. 251). During the second half of the 20th century, this method shifted beyond functionalist theory under which it developed and had a significant impact on theoretical development in social sciences in general, anthropology in particular (Musante, 2014, p. 251). For writers such as Marcus (2015) and Fischer (1986), McCall and Simmons (1969), Spradley (1980), Van Maanen (1988) and Grills (1998) 'participant observation' subsumes of what is to be, by them, called fieldwork in general, i.e., it is used often as a shield term for direct engagements with social worlds including interviews both formal and informal. Even though I follow Agar (1986) who emphasises 'in-depth interviewing' over mere observing, in Bernard's sense, participant observation puts researcher 'in action', which is a necessary step before collecting data of any kind (Bernard, 2011, p. 343). I have been systematically observing since October 2017, which included: visiting as many art openings as possible at various cultural centres such as commercial and independent galleries and museums but also entering schools, festivals and private households. I have participated in several art projects myself — namely in *Qanat's* autumn edition in 2018, where independent curator and initiator of the project Francesca Masoero asked me to join long-term curatorial project *Qanat* as an 'outsider' and critically reflect on it. Furthermore, I have been part of annual cultural week event titled *Caravane Tighmert* in spring 2019 in the Southern region of Morocco, where I have explored relations between contemporary artists and their use of ethnographical methods when approaching the field. During 1.54 African Art Fair, I wrote a curatorial text for contemporary Moroccan artist Simohammed Fettaka titled Water Maps and Reality – the art opening of the exhibition

took place in *Comptoir des Mines Gallery* in Marrakech in February 22, 2019.
This particular experience, through several conversations with Fettaka over his art pieces before setting up the exhibition, allowed me to explore the role of a curatorial expert on contemporary Moroccan art from the position of an insider (see Sansi, R., *The Anthropologist as Curator*, 2019).

With other curators and researchers, most of who were my informants, I have published part of my analysis in the local independent cultural magazine *Chergui* (February 2019) upon which I reflect in chapters dedicated to the power of cultural institutions. Gaining access into the art world of Marrakech was a slow and long process, perhaps the most important figure to my research from the very beginning was an Italian independent curator Francesca Masoero – she became of what is to be defined as a 'gatekeeper' (see Kawulich 2011; Maginn 2007; Rachid 2007; Wanat 2008). Eventually, we rented a *riad* together in the fall of 2018 and for year and a half lived together. Our house located in the Marrakech Medina became additionally a place of regular gatherings — such as dinners with various art actors and occasionally organised reading groups. Thus with artists always around, number '19' above our entrance door inspired us to title the house humorously *Le19* (symbolically referring to cultural centre *LE18* located nearby, where Francesca was and continuously is as a curator based). Throughout my entire research, I kept on writing a traditional time *field diary* as an important mean of self-report technique (Paolisso and Hames, 2010), some of my qualitative notes I have additionally included in this text as it appropriately complements the ambience of the researched context.

(3) In my dissertation thesis, I am, as well, focusing on how the discourse of Orientalism is formed and how it is manifested through the practices of institutions. M. Foucault first, and later S. Hall operates with the term 'regimes of truth' in order to apprehend *truth* more as an imposed set of rules rather than referring to metaphysics. They argue that statements about moral, political or social worlds are rarely ever simply true or false and that any fact is undoubtedly constructed (through language) in incoherent regimes (Foucault, 1972, p. 194 and Hall, 1992, p. 204-205). This is particularly evident when discussing power and related knowledge production of cultural institutions, such as museums which are, according to the theorist of visual culture Gillian Rose, constantly operating in the regimes of truth. Foucauldian methods were, within my approach, developed during carried fieldwork in Marrakech where

subsequently two new museums were, almost simultaneously, opened.

Both had fundamentally affected the form of my analysis — namely Museé Yves Saint Laurent and MACAAL (Museum of Contemporary African Art). The first insight into the YSL museum's practice directed my attention towards the powerful institutional structures, which became an important subject of my research. *Museé* Yves Saint Laurent attached to the cultural site of Jardin Majorelle (consisting of a botanical garden and Berber museum situated in the villa of famous Orientalist painter Jacques Majorelle) are the most visited cultural monuments in Morocco. Although their primary domain isn't contemporary art, they are significantly involved in the local field of cultural production. The Berber museum as YSL museum are venues managed by the influential French Foundation *Fondation Jardin Majorelle*, which financially supports many Moroccan art projects and independent cultural centres and occasionally is providing exhibition spaces for contemporary Moroccan artists. As part of my research subject is directed towards institutions and its apparatus, according to Rose's schema, in what follows *discourse analysis* is applied as the most suitable method of inquiry. This methodological framework complies Foucault in an understanding of visual images and textual narratives as planted in the practices of institutions and their exercise of power. The approach which I aim to introduce is concerned with the social production and its effects which operate through multiple details of an institution's habitude. The kinds of sources used for such analysis may vary, but generally speaking, crucial was to undertake a careful reading of diverse written texts on existing museums or galleries both produced from outside (articles and reviews written in journals) and from the venue's own textual narratives (pamphlets, exhibition catalogues and other documents as annual reports and mission statements). This approach was further combined with participant observation method on the object itself, which I considered equally necessary, as the first step is to understand the general atmosphere and possibly the nuances which remain hidden without the field-work. To conduct local ethnographic research on institutional site, interviews with directors, curators and designers were as well essential. Historical and contemporary studies on discourse often use photographs and other visual materials of the building, the exhibition rooms and the display cases, or examines the items on sale in the shop (Rose, 2001, p. 170). In this particular case, I have addressed the very importance of the building's architecture, the location of individual exhibition halls, private offices, the context of the neighbourhood, the content of the library and observed the construction of representations (focusing on visibility and politics of display). In other words, I looked at how discourse operates through the

day-to-day running of the institution. I was also interested in the concept of *inaccessibility*, *selective access* and *absence*, i.e., who controls, selects, organises and rejects what is to be on display and what is not, according to certain power positions. Theoretical and above all methodological grounding of my research is within the publication of visual theoretician Gillian Rose: *Visual Methodologies* first published in the year 2001. Rose's critical *Visual Methodologies* are in great detail offering tools in order to design own analysis according to the research subjects. Rose's discourse analysis draws naturally from Michel Foucault's theory on discourse explicitly formulated in *The Birth of the Prison* (1977),[20] the main concern of this publication is the functioning of *power*, *control* and *surveillance strategie*s applicable on various institutions as diverse as prisons and museums (Rose, 2014, p. 186-252).

[20] Persuasive strategies have resulted in a habit where cultural institutions (their statuses and practices) are rarely ever questioned and tend to be perceived routinely as beneficial for society; for more read Tony Bennett's Birth of The Museum (1995) where he discusses dominating statuses by the fact that modern museums and prisons were born in a similar historical period and that both 'deployed similar disciplining surveillance' (G. Rose: Visual Methodologies, 2001, p. 170-171).

PART ONE: The Archeology of Discourse

Chapter 1 The stolen Cultural Sovereignty

'Racial domination appears to be innocent through elegance of manners'[21] Renato Rosando

As an entry point to the first part of my thesis *The Archeology of discourse* I am quoting contemporary Moroccan artist M'barek Bouhchichi: '*We have never been image-makers through our traditional art, all of what we have created by our hands as well as by our minds was then classified by the French.*' A statement published on his social media profile in September 30, 2019, is seemingly referring to the past, however, Bouhchichi is commenting on current Western curatorial, academical and journalistic discourse defining what is to be estimated as *art* among the non-Western art producers. Constructed system of representations consisting of classification schemes originates from the French colonial era in Morocco (1912-1956) and today resembles with vast contemporary cultural practices supported by corporate institutions and individuals which are making statements about visual culture in Morocco. This is executed, as Edward Said's vocabulary puts is: *by authorising views of it, describing it, by teaching about it, settling it and ruling over it* (Said, 1978, p. 3). The concerns of Bouhchichi and some other contemporary Moroccan artists are here inevitably linked to the historical confiscation of cultural sovereignty, which I aim to explore in following lines as building blocks of the current discourse. I consider necessary to understand the wider historical and power context of this 'theft' that have left Moroccans without a right to decide about their own aesthetic expressions and cultural heritage, especially if we acknowledge that in some spheres, and contemporary art is one of them, cultural sovereignty hasn't been yet claimed back.

As a researcher I have encountered, during my interviews, many of the following statements: '*It is the French foundation that is taking care of cultural venues that were meant to be destroyed by Moroccans themselves;*[22] *thanks to the French we have a new Museum in Marrakech; because of the French Institute most of the artists have a*

[21] ROSANDO, Renato. *Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis*. Boston: Beacon, 1989.

[22] Referring to the *Foundation Jardin Majorelle* which is now maintaining the botanical garden and the villa of Orientalist painter Jacques Majorelle. The botanical garden Jardin Majorelle, which was initially planned to be sold in the 1980s and rebuild into a hotel complex, was subsequently bought by French designer Yves Saint Laurent and his partner Pierre Bergé and thus rescued from demolition.

proper place to exhibit their work; thanks to foreign funds we have a vast number of artists being able to produce their work, which would not be the case if they would fully rely on Moroccan institutions.' This repetitive positive statements about the Western presence in Morocco, this consistently described feelings that stretched from gratitude to more pragmatic valorisations lead me to several concerns: why weren't certain imperialist attitudes and practices dismantled after the establishment of state's independency, why is this phenomenon still present and even being successfully recycled? Is contemporary art scene in Morocco being instrumentalized to set off new forms of neo-colonialism? In order to understand the ongoing present discourse within the contemporary cultural scene in Marrakech, during more than two years of field research (roughly from fall 2017 to spring 2020), many of these questions arose and I had at a slow pace understood that I am tackling more than a delicate issue. Nevertheless, before attempting to answer the outlined concerns of mine, I can quite confidently state that: I was facing a local community which has a limited or no power to *represent* itself. And such situation includes both the artists themselves, who are part of the art world which is defined and run by non-Moroccans or Moroccans who adopted Western epistemological framework and the 'Rest' of the Moroccan society that became through various visual strategies a part of the constructed *image* without ever wanting.

The answers to these questions though are less straightforward as what some, especially those among academics and critics might call 'the loss of cultural independency', others tend to label as 'preservation', 'educational projects', 'given opportunities' or 'restoring indigenous knowledge' in a country which is, although 'in progress and prosperous' (Miller, 2017, p. 227), yet still in a need of a powerful leader. The leading possessors of the *know-how* are dwelling 'outside' the country and pointing, for the 'underdeveloped' Moroccans, the right direction. What, in fact, is wrong about Western presence when all is paved by good intentions? What is wrong about practices that leads towards evolutionary civilisational advancement? Despite these questions, the character of current intertwined relations between Moroccan cultural scene and the Western actors both operating in and outside the country, tracks back to the time of official cultural dominance executed by the apparatus of French Protectorate in Morocco (1912-1956), which here can be compared to an umbilical cord that have had never been clearly cut.

Ethnographers Claudio Minca and Lauren Wagner in the introduction chapter about the colonial legacy in Morocco notes: '*postcolonial studies dispose long paradoxical list of 'benign' imperialist destroying cultures they set to preserve at first*' (Minca and Wagner, 2016, p. 16). In the case of Morocco, referring to a 'destruction' might seem to appear as a harsh comparison, yet it is somehow relevant. Less in a material sense — buildings weren't torn down by a cruel colonial force, in fact, the opposite has been conducted: the practice of *preservation* (*préservation*) was introduced. Nevertheless, what had been violated is the right of local inhabitants to participate in cultural life. This included the loss of their own definitions of what is valuable and valueless, what is intended to be preserved and to be restored under their own terms, including the technique of how to do so, and finally the way of transmitting the knowledge both in formal and informal manner. In other words, within the establishment of colonial administration Moroccans were stripped from their cultural sovereignty (see Rabinow, 1975 and 1977; Winter, 2007; Irbouh, 2005; Pieprzak 2010) and thus power — the power to stand for themselves, the power to *represent* themselves.

No matter how distant and archaic the world of colonial orderings might appear, in the context of current Biennales, Art Fairs and conceptual exhibitions, the 'present' and the 'recent past' go hand in hand. As stated in the introduction, contemporary art in Morocco became one of the fields where the Orientalist discourse is practised. To answer previous questions regarding the origins of Orientalism in the contemporary art scene and the loss of power of self-representation, M. Foucault in his studies on discourse offers a helpful analytical tool, which is: we must consider the importance of historical derivations. M. Foucault, so as S. Hall (Hall, 1996, p. 202-203) argues that no analysis is possible to conduct without understanding the historical context and traces of previous discourse always embedded in the more recent (Foucault, 1972, p. 38-40). In the following lines, I intend to examine the historical process as a source, from which the most famous 'image-makers' emerged and actively co-created the discourse of Orientalism and pay attention to the similarities imprinted in the discourse of the contemporary art world of today. If we assume that the field of contemporary visual art in Marrakech is managed and even, to some extent, produced by non-Moroccans[23] and

[23] The art scene in Marrakech is constituted by both Moroccans and non-Moroccan actors, in order to avoid being trapped in the politics of identity (the Western actor doesn't have to necessarily be the representative of the Western knowledge production and vice versa). I appeal to the reader to adopt understanding, that what is primarily questioned is the Western framework of knowledge production in the non-Western environment and the real consequences it had and has.

Westernised Moroccan actors: imaginatively, scientifically and economically — by examining discursive formations in which they operate we are additionally able to understand the authoritative position they employ.

Moreover, as E. Said puts it '*no one writing, thinking, or acting on the Orient could do so without taking account of the limitations on thought and action imposed by Orientalism*.' In brief, it is because of this particular discourse, the Orient wasn't and till these days is not a free subject of thought and action (Said, 1985, p. 3). Considering E. Said, not all what we can encounter in the field of the contemporary art Orientalism determinate, yet a cluster of various interests (mainly economical) and the fact of the evident power misbalance creates very little chances that the 'Orient' is approached otherwise (Said, 1985, p. 3-4). Europe through colonial expansions brought its own cultural categories, languages, images, and ideas to the subjected lands in order to describe it and represent it (Hall, 1996, p. 204). As so the French tried to fit Morocco into an existing conceptual framework, to classify it according to its own norms and to absorb it into the Western traditions of representation. S. Hall states that such practise is hardly surprising: '*we often draw on what we already knew about the world in order to explain and describe something novel, but again it was never a simple matter of the West just looking, seeing, and describing 'the Rest' without preconceptions and that there were always certain definite purposes, aims, objectives, motives, interests, and strategies behind*' (Hall, 1996, p. 204).

Chapter 2 The 'Discoveries' — from Delacroix to Yves Saint Laurent

'*Travellers tales' have contributed as much to the West's knowledge about the 'Other', as has the systematic gathering of scientific data.*'[24] M. Foucault

Orientalism is for E. Said a 'library' or an 'archive' where united ideas (dreams, images and vocabularies) about 'the Orient' and 'the Orientals' are captured (Hall, 1992, p. 206-207). Due to this imaginary discursive source, Europeans (or the Westerners) were and are provided by particulars, guidance and advice how to deal with the 'Other' in terms of how to behave towards 'them', how to classify 'them', how to represent

[24] FOUCAULT, Michel. *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. New York: Pantheon, 1972.

'them' (Said, 1985, pp. 41-2). The storage of narratives which formed the understanding of the Orient phenomena and its inhabitants is possessing coherent characteristics — one of the most fertile and significant source is the so called 'Travellers tales.' Not only content of the narrations, but so the *authority* of the narrators were shaping the image of every land out of Europe that had been 'discovered'. Travelling stories, and images based on these encounters, are providing '*the cultural framework through which the people, places, and things of the other world were seen, described, and represented; and to underline the conflation of fact and fantasy that constituted 'knowledge'* (Hall, 1996, p. 208). According to the existing proximity, Europe was for centuries adversary to Morocco, which included a variety of relationships, from those of amicable towards more violent confrontations (Miller, 2013, p. 7). Out of a political necessity, the country remained, more or less, sealed for the outer world till the beginning of the 19th century. The year 1830 (France's planned attack on the city of Algiers) is symbolic to Morocco's transition from the independent state to a reality which is to be dictated by an assertive and expansive Europe. It is this period when famous Orientalist painter Eugène Delacroix (1832) travels to Morocco as a companion to French diplomatic emissary Count de Mornay freshly appointed by the new King of France Louise Philippe (Wagner and Minca, 2006 p. 36-37). Even though Delacroix's visit to Morocco took place almost two centuries ago, his figure remains important to my analysis in certain aspects.

First Eugène Delacroix (1798-1863) wasn't just a painter, he was an artist in a powerful position, in fact so powerful, that his art production (around hundred paintings and drawings) as a result of his visit in Morocco wouldn't exist without the political context he was part of. Delacroix's participation in French diplomatic mission allowed him not only to *access* but as he writes in his numerous Journals – it was the position he had, that allowed him to enter many private households and his artistic practise was, despite the local conservative conditions, tolerated (Delacroix, 1899, p. 130). His paintings were subsequently honoured in the Paris Salon (1834) as he was successfully fulfilling the aesthetic expectations of French public longing for Orientalist scenes (Thornton, 1994, p. 69). His visual narratives were and are perceived as an unquestionable interpretation of the foreign land. The *authoritativeness* his paintings are possessing is according to the art historians — due to an exceptional aesthetic quality and are immensely valuable for the attempt to capture *reality*. Can we, in fact, talk about the degree of realism in art works, or perhaps the lack of it, when there isn't an existing effort to clarify whose reality we are talking about? (Nochlin, 1989, p. 32)

Almost every monograph or a study about Moroccan culture in general, visual arts in particular, starts with an introduction about Western Orientalist artists or other travellers entering this land and, as I will highlight in the following lines, it presents an ongoing practice. These personas who for more than a century appropriated various cultural elements and depicted on grand oil canvases local inhabitants became a significant reference, the starting point of modern Moroccan art history (see Ali, 1997, p. 71-76). Moroccan sociologist and novelist, literary and art critic Abdelkebir Khatibi argues that the works of European artists including Eugène Delacroix, Henri Matisse, Paul Klee and Jacques Majorelle – all of whom visited the country in the nineteenth and the twentieth century tremendously influenced the local artistic expression and laid the foundation for the future development of modern artistic production (Khatibi, 1983, p. 219). What all these works on the history of art have in common is that they tend to oversee the historical context, concretely the colonial historical epoch of which these celebrated artist been part of at first, second, they commonly dismiss the rich history of art production which existed in the pre-colonial period — today often considered as pre-modern, empty in content, utilitarian and backward in its forms, lacking imagination and labelled as 'naive' (Shabout, 2007, p. 18). Rather than considering Orientalist painters as the founding fathers of modern art in Morocco who introduced easel painting and other forms of aesthetic expressions to the local pioneering generation of 'mimickers',[25] I consider them as a part of the Orientalist discourse fertilising the soil of today's visual representations. First, they themselves through their artistic practise produced visual representations of Morocco and its local inhabitants which are till these days present in the most celebrated metropolitan art centres while continuously serving to please the Western gaze; second, their presence within the colonial context created a powerful exoticising narrative that is saturating the ideas of the others who aim to 'discover Morocco', or more specifically to 'discover' – Delacroix's, Matisse's and Majorelle's Morocco. Since last couple of years who are seeking to unveil the Yves Saint Laurent's Marrakech.

[25] Anthropologists of art had recently draw attention to the power connotation terms *mimicry* and *appropriation* embeds: both refer to the alike, that is adopting something from a distant culture, however, whereas the 'white man' is always *appropriating*, the colonised is *mimicking* (see Schneider and Wright, 2006).

Another most celebrated foreign painter after Eugène Delacroix in Morocco is Jacques Majorelle (1886-1962),[26] his name is firmly related to the city of Marrakech, where he lived and produced most of his life. Again as Delacroix, he entered the land due to personal invitation of French colonial administrator General Hubert Lyautey (1854-1934), a close friend of his father. His name is today linked to the peak of tourist circuit in the country — botanical garden Jardin Majorelle and villa (Majorelle's original studio) inside the complex which currently functions as a Berber museum. Him insomuch as Delacroix 'discovered' Marrakech within the colonial apparatus, and became soon a significant producer of 'picturesque' project for Morocco (Minca and Wagner, 2016, p. 58). Majorelle constructed numerous posters that reinforced visual version of the country, which combined dichotomous image both of the modern and the ancient, all commissioned by Lyautey himself who's intentions were to visually promote tourism as an essential economical thrive to the Protectorate (Blanchard, 2007, p. 132). All was sent into a concert of colours, themes, characters and architecture that produced one version of Morocco ready to be implanted into a collective imaginary (Blanchard, 2007, p. 132). To state again, as Delacroix before him, Majorelle wasn't just a painter, he was a painter in a powerful position that allowed him to travel smoothly to a country and produce blatant visual representations mainly for the consumption of the French audience. His works became essential in attracting tourists and other travellers as so much at his time, as it is today.

The last but not least traveller I would like to mention in relation to his power position, is the perhaps most famous name of the contemporary Marrakech – the French fashion designer Yves Saint Laurent. He entered the country in the year 1966 and although he wasn't as his predecessors directly linked to the French political representatives (the country was independent from the year 1956), Yves Saint Laurent's stopover in Morocco did not differ from those of the previous Orientalist painters as he was part of the highest French elites circles that still remained in the country (Bergé, 2010). He, as much as Delacroix or Majorelle, had a notable impact in terms of promoting a certain vision about the land. It is his name that is attracting an enormously vast number of visitors each year. YSL and his formal partner Pierre Bergé became soon owners of Majorelle's house and the botanical garden, as the property was about to be sold to real

[26] Beside Delacroix, several other famous artists visited Morocco: French Alfred Dehodencq, Henri Regnault, Émile Aubert Lessore, Italians Stefano Ussi and Cesare Biseo, the English Hercule Barbazon and more (Ali, 1997, p. 71-72).

estate agency and eventually, become a hotel complex.[27] All three above mentioned personas represent a chain within a discourse connecting the past to the present, all of the traveller's names became a significant symbol of contemporary country's image and imaginary. Delacroix, and after him Majorelle, were the founding fathers of image-making process which resulted in a firm legacy. By 'legacy' we understand, besides their reproduced and distributed sensual scenes serving mainly for the purposes of country's massive tourist industry, the usage of their names as a reference, which was enhanced and promoted by the colonial administrators themselves. Today it is the contemporary field of cultural production that is referring to Delacroix when introducing the history of modern Moroccan art and building up cultural venues and museums in the names of the famous travellers. As it is the very case of Yves Saint Laurent museum in Marrakech which opened in 2017 and now stands for the contemporary Moroccan culture and its 'authenticity'. The travellers's authority allows for example the 'Berber' objects, which were selected by Yves Saint Laurent himself and his partner Pierre Bergé, to be dislocated and displayed in the Berber Museum in Jardin Majorelle under the terms of the French Foundation solely. The same phenomenon is pointed out by a number of post-colonial tourism theorists, namely E. Peyvel. In her study on French colonial legacy in contemporary Việt Nam, she points out how the persisting colonial imaginary creates or inscribes significance to specific touristic places, like Sa Đéc, the town of Marguerite Duras' childhood (see Peyvel, 2009).

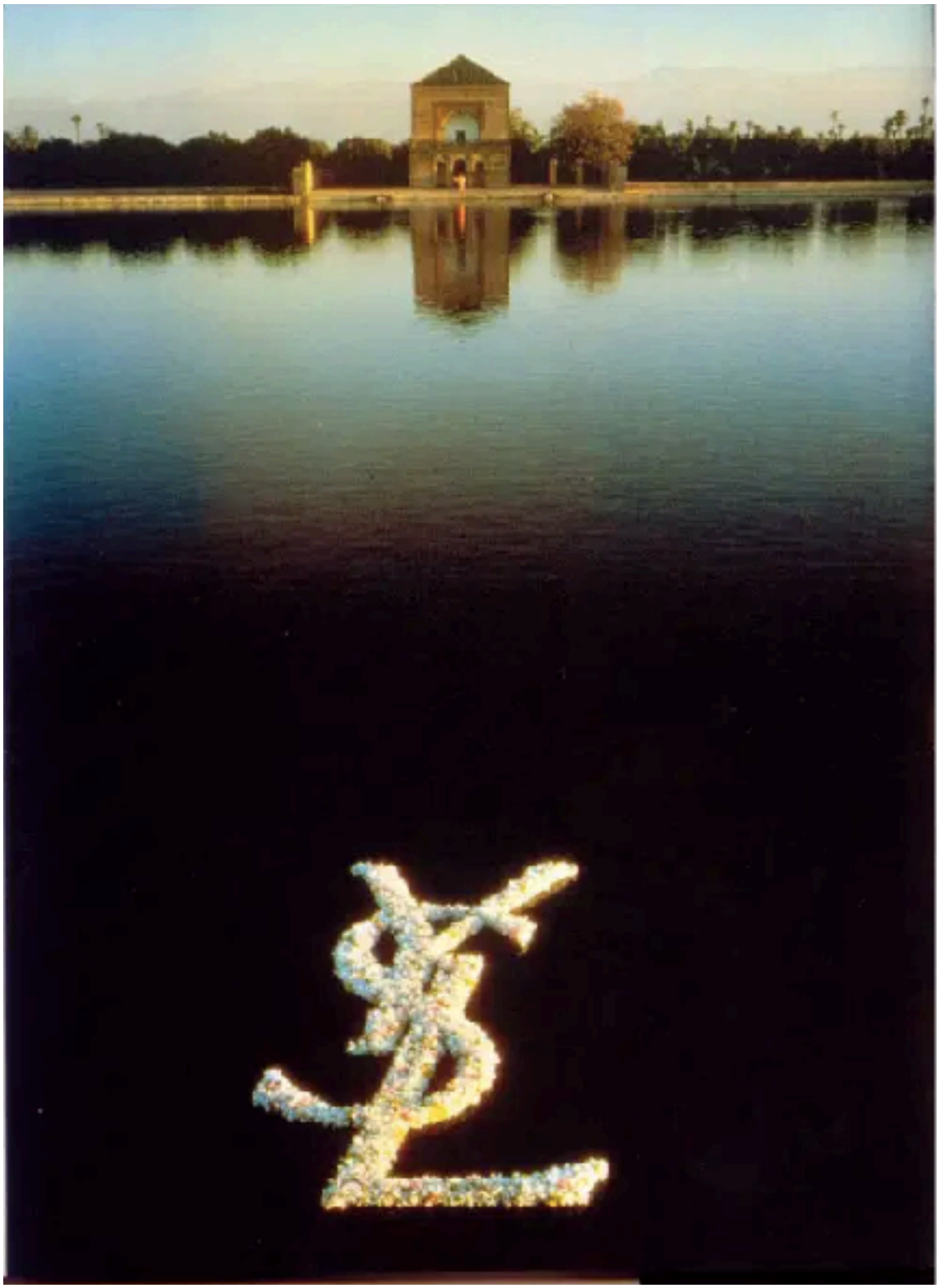
A common rhetorical question asked by most of the informants I have encountered was: Would the contemporary art exist without the French/the West? Not in terms of individual attempts of creativity, but in terms of implemented structure: meaning galleries, museums, schools, projects, exhibition spaces and more. The mentioned 'discoveries' aimed to highlight the long tradition of those who mostly participated in image-making process of Morocco. By addressing them through the perspective of their power positions, rather than parroting their names as if in art history publications, we can partly answer the question why do the representations remain fixed throughout the time. The right to represent remained in the hands of powerful foreign cultural institutions, who decide what to be told and how.

[27] *Yves Saint Laurent and Pierre Bergé buy the Jardin Majorelle in 1980* [online] cit. 28. 1. 2020 In http://jardinmajorelle.com/ang/yves-saint-laurent-and-pierre-berge-bought-the-garden-out-in-1980/

Opening of the new Museum Yves Saint Laurent in Marrakech in the fall of the year 2017 was inaugurated by an exhibition of the Orientalist painter Jacques Majorelle, the exhibition labels, as so the provided pamphlets, haven't mentioned once the word *Orientalism*. Art historian Linda Nochlin, in her study 'The Imagined Orient' examines statements of various Western cultural institutions and their professionals accompanying Orientalist exhibitions. In her findings, she highlights the ignorance or sometimes even denial of any re-evaluation on political issues related to these works of art (Nochlin, 1989, p. 34). Orientalist paintings are '*in a mode for defining the presumed cultural inferiority of the Islamic Orient*' (Said, 1979), but art world doesn't seem to be interested in anything else above the pure aesthetics. Such terms as: 'colonialism', 'dominance' or 'imperialism' are neglected, and in the case of Marrakech cultural institutions, they present tabooed topics. In a similar manner, we can read about the planned exhibition of Delacroix in Rabat, announced in June 2019, where President of Louvre Museum Jean-Luc Martinez and the chairman of Morocco's National Museums Foundation Mehdi Qotbi signed a contract accompanied by complimentary stamens on Delacroix and current relations between France and Morocco.[28]

The world of art, L. Nochlin notes, is based on the traditional notion of art history as a positive discipline rather than a critical one (Nochlin, 1989, p. 34-35). Due to the lacking historical context pronounced among Western curators, Delacroix's ascribed authority remains simply staggering: his representation of North Africa subjects are generally understood and accepted as 'truth'. Yet, most of the critical studies on Delacroix admit, that he unlike many, managed to reproduce what he had seen without exoticizing into an extreme (Ben Jelloun, 1994, p. 23). The purpose of this analysis is not to look at the degree of the distortion in his images, rather draw attention to the fact, that the image-making process of Morocco was formed at the very beginning of the colonial expansion. Delacroix's and Majorelle's meritorious statuses were determined by French expansionist ideological machinery and resulted in a vast number of visual representations depicting Morocco and its inhabitants in a certain manner well matching the colonial *zeitgeist*.

[28] *Rabat to Host Exhibition of French Artist Eugene Delacroix in 2020* [online] cit. 10. 11. 2019 In https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2019/06/276586/eugene-delacroix-rabat/



Branding the city, *Jardin de la Menara*, Marrakech, 1978

The foreigner stepping into the field of the 'Other' in order 'to discover' and 'to represent' became an inspirational pattern that repetitively occurred throughout the 20th century and that continuously exists. Today's cycled advertence to the past famous artistic figures in vast textual visual and narratives has a purpose and that is to legitimise agency of every new artist stepping into the country and producing art, while 'discovering', 'being inspired' and 'enamoured' with the local context, as so much as Delacroix, Majorelle, Paul Bowles and Yves Saint Laurent before him. It is, after all an established practice, a precedent enhancing Western position in the right to develop the model of comparison, to classify and to possess criteria of evaluations (Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999 p. 42). *Discovery* – a word that is present in almost every publication and article when talking about non-Moroccans stepping into Morocco (as much as to other non-Western lands). Such rhetorics are implying connotations as if the significance of the contested (even culturally) land was only established within the Western superiority apparatus, i. e., a space becomes worth attention/adorable only through dominant (colonial/ex-colonial) *authority* that manifests in its statements and practices. Morocco to this day remains a land to be discovered, as the article in British Vogue from the 10th of June 2019 states: *After Yves Saint Laurent: The New Creatives Putting Marrakech On The Map.*[29]

The title is accompanied by two images: by a photography of Yves Saint Laurent in traditional Moroccan *jellaba* gazing into a garden with a cigar and drink in his hands. On the second image, we can see Laurence Leenaert – Belgian designer living in Marrakech and producing designed rugs and ceramics with local artisans under the successful lifestyle brand LRNCE.[30] The text follows by a list of eight individuals, mainly designers and artists who are, according to the writer, keeping the Marrakech cultural scene alive. The message that this article implies is: Moroccans themselves aren't paying any attention to creativity and art, it is only within these individuals who voyaged to Marrakech and again discovered its neglected potential, through them the culture can be *recognised* and perhaps *rescued, rehabilitated, empowered or emancipated*. Such discourse stretches throughout the whole contemporary art scene of Marrakech, from artists and art professionals to cultural institutions. All of them are by their practise and statements referring to the previous famous names that were *enchanted and seduced* by

[29] Jennings, Helen. After Yves Saint Laurent: The New Creatives Putting Marrakech On The Map [online] cit. 28. 1. 2020 In https://www.vogue.co.uk/article/art-rugs-ceramics-in-marrakech

[30] *About* [online] cit. 16. 2. 2020 In https://lrnce.com/about/

the city — regularly described as an 'essential Eden.' Most of the travellers were and are inspired by *(…) 'zelliges, zouacs, jellabas and caftans*: a*ppearing as in relief — pink, blue, green and violet caftans blending with one another. One is surprised that these groups, which seem drawn or painted and evoke sketches by Delacroix, are in fact, spontaneous arrangements of everyday life*' (Benaîm, 2019) — writes Yves Saint Laurent his first impressions during his stay in Marrakech. In most of what we can read, a single reference to an actual Moroccan isn't present — interactions with living and breathing human beings are, almost always, absent. Those narratives helped effectively to commercialise and produce a tourist version of timeless Marrakech and turned its inhabitants into anonymous exotic subjects (see Nochlin, 1989, p. 39-40).

The only exception is the occasional link to craftsmen with whom the travelling artists and designers 'collaborate', yet again we can read about anonymous producers of a 'traditional beauty'. Craftsmen or craftswoman are, by contemporary artists, perceived in most cases as bearers of an 'archaic knowledge' and a 'source of inspiration.' Artists are described as experts offering by their interventions a guidance to the locals in order to produce something beyond an 'ordinary craft.' Only then, within the collaboration of the two, the artisan is able to create something more than a worthless trinket which can be spotted on every corner of Marrakech's Medina. The question to be asked here is why the craftsmen remain anonymous while the foreign artist possesses an actual name and appearance, as too his or hers final output has a branding narrative. The answer within which I argue is, that all contemporary artists and designers which are mentioned in the famous fashion and art magazines are first following the 'language of a *distinction*.' *Distinction* was, as we can read in the following chapters, implemented by French colonial scholarship. Second, yet again these artists and designers are in powerful positions,[31] this inequality of power allows them to represent Morocco, both consciously and wittingly or not, in a similar manner as the artists of colonial times did and thus continue to build up the archive of 'new Orientalism.'

[31] I had, during my interviews, repetitively heard comments on the sexual life of Yves Saint Laurent during his stay in Morocco. First, a great indicator of his power position is, according to some informants, the publicly admitted homosexual orientation – YSL and Pierre Bergé were openly appearing as partners, despite the fact that both male and female same-sex sexual activity is, in Morocco, illegal. This fact is seen by some critical voices as the highest act of state's hypocrisy, nevertheless, there has never been a public note stating anything negative about both figures. Second, most of my interviewers linked the figure of Yves Saint Laurent to controversies about sexual abuse of minor Moroccan boys which was, according to them, a practice about which no-one is doubtful.

My approach, in this chapter, is to question the contemporary 'discoveries' as a constructed narrative present in most of the visual and textual coverages on Marrakech in the international press which have, according to Fatalleh: '*the power to pronounce a hierarchy of cultural geographies, to advertise new destinations, and to utter into existence new concentrations of power*' (Fallateh, 2019, p. 8). The Colonial cartographers 'putting Marrakech on the map' have been replaced by a number of cultural art professionals through implemented institutional art structure with global interconnections. Narratives of discovery, today bearing the prefix — *re*, have occurred in other spheres than visual arts. Writers on Morocco's urbanism are, in fact, operating within similar discursive formations: '*traditional urban fabrics were rediscovered after years of post-independent neglect*' (Kurzac-Souali, 2017, p. 79). If the values (of monuments, cities, art works) were recently *rediscovered*, when then they have been discovered? Asks scholar Khalid Madhi in his critical study on *Marrakech: Urban Restructuring Power and Capitalism in the Tourist City: contested terrains of Marrakech,* 2019. For answer, he looks into the analysis of UNESCO where we can read: '*Marrakech Medina have enjoyed protection as a part of Morocco's heritage since 1922*' (UNESCO 2008). I. e., following these logics, Medinas were first 'discovered' by French colonial apparatus, whereas with the withdrawal of the French Protectorate cultural structures, the protection of cultural heritage has, of course, ceased (Medhi, 2019, p. 42-43). Marrakech patrimony is no longer a local or even national concern as it involves international actors such as UNESCO – for example, the classification of *Jemaa el-Fna* as 'Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity.'[32]

As C. Minca and L. Wagner puts it — the shared discourse dictates that: '*the present day inhabitant ('natives') aren't for economic, political and even 'cultural' reasons — to guarantee the proper preservation and valorisation of their ancestors*' (Minca and Wagner, 2016, p. 25). Simply it has become a norm that Moroccans are rarely making claims over their own culture, that includes as much as the notions of the heritage, as it is the case of Moroccan contemporary art. From what had been aforementioned about the constructed representation of Morocco inherited by French artistic trio Delacroix, Majorelle and Yves Saint Laurent as if from father to son, one might ask if there were, in fact, any attempts to break free from recycling the colonial fiction in the post-independent period.

[32] *Proclamation of the Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity (2001-2005)* [online] cit. 28. 1. 2020 In https://ich.unesco.org/en/proclamation-of-masterpieces-00103

Although the process of 'cultural decolonisation' has never achieved its goals, it is necessary to address *why*. Cultural decolonisation in Moroccan context is to be defined as: '*a process by which Moroccan writers and artists would break with stagnant French models and Arabic canons in order to forge new artistic forms and literary languages in dialogue with the rest of the decolonizing world.*'[33] At the beginning of 1960s, a group inspired by writings of a 'prophet of postcolonial disillusionment movements' Frantz Fanon was formed. Their concerns were expressed in bi-annual poetry and culture review *Souffles,* first published in 1966, however, subsequently banned in 1972. It's leading figure — writer Abdellatif Laâbi (1942) was imprisoned, tortured and sentenced for 'crimes of opinion' in the years 1972–1980. Later in 1985, he was forced into an exile in France (Miller, 2013, p. 198-199).

> *'Western science has held the monopoly on all research until now. Our history, our sociology, our culture, and our art have been studied and interpreted in the function of an externally motivated curiosity and rigor that fundamentally do not correspond to our perspective, our needs, or even our strict realities.*[34]

The cultural decolonisation as a long-lasting and complex process, however, cannot stand isolated from political context (Oelofsen, 2015, p. 131-132) and as Laâbi said: '*Political and cultural struggles go hand in hand.*[35] Laâbi himself was part of organisation *Ila al-Amam* ('To the Forefront') founded by communist, mining engineer and university professor and later political militant Abraham Serfaty (1926-2010). Composed of intellectuals, the so called young 'avant-garde' was directly opposing King Hassan II (1961-1999). Violent repression of *Souffles* and the entire Moroccan intellectual groups is considered as the beginning of the period known as *les années de plomb* (roughly dated 1975-1990). Famous King's speech on the national television suffocated once and for all possible attempts of the popular appeal to reclaim cultural sovereignty: '*Allow me to tell you, there is no greater danger to the state than the so*

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33 Harrison, O. and Villa-Ignacio, T. DECOLONIZING CULTURE – What a leftist Moroccan journal from the 60s can teach us about today's cultural crises. In: *Stratford University Press blog* [online] cit. 10. 10. 2019 https://stanfordpress.typepad.com/blog/2015/12/decolonizing-culture.html

34 Laâbi, A. Read the little Moroccan. Translated from the French by Lucy R. McNair In *Souffles-Anfas: A Critical Anthology from the Moroccan Journal of Culture and Politics* [online] https://www.sup.org/books/extra/?id=25641&i=Souffles%202.html

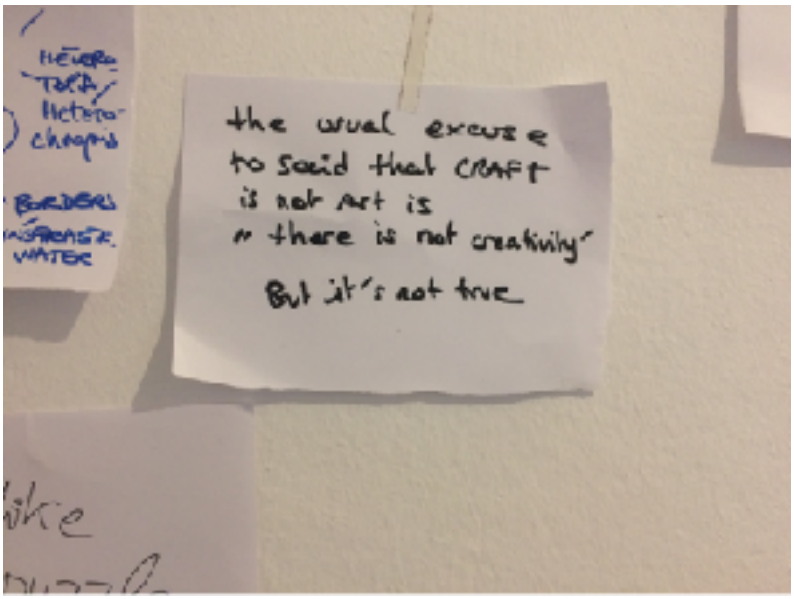
35 Harrison, O. and Villa-Ignacio, T.: DECOLONIZING CULTURE – What a leftist Moroccan journal from the 60s can teach us about today's cultural crises. In: *Stratford University Press blog* [online] cit. 10. 10. 2019 https://stanfordpress.typepad.com/blog/2015/12/decolonizing-culture.html

called intellectual; it would be better for you to be illiterate' (Miller, 2013, p. 169). Failed cultural decolonisation is, however, caused by another aspect and that is the Franco-Moroccan relation, which surprisingly started to improve soon after the Moroccan Kingdom gained independence — within the period 1962-1965 (Miller, 2013, p. 165). For mainly political and economical reasons many elements of the previous colonial system were kept in place, the physical presence of French cultural expertise, so as the language itself, resulted into a long-lasting uncritical official discourse towards France (Peiprzak, 2010, p. 18). Attitudes, statements, images and narrations, in other words — the discourse implemented by the colonial powers remained, therefore specific language and selected images continued to serve economical, political and personal interests. Nonetheless, it is important to state, that discourses are powerful in a specific way, as Foucault notes. They do not operate as a set of imposed rules for thoughts and behaviour, neither they are repressive. Their power manifests in their productiveness, they do not put a spell on a preexisting human agent instead human subjects are produced through a discourse — sense of ourselves so as various objects, landscapes, scenes, relations, places (Foucault, 1979, p. 95).

Thus, to translate some of the arguments in the previous lines, it might be said that a certain notion of what is Morocco today is produced and inscribed through colonial tropes that are being nourished by previous discursive textual and visual formations. The latter lies in the intentions and comprehensions that the above-mentioned artists constructed and shared in their visual and textual representations under a specific colonial outlook. This was transmitted and incorporated by above-mentioned Yves Saint Laurent and others, mainly newly coming designers and artists which are under a powerful dictate of Western conceptualisation of Morocco. Perhaps this is a price Morocco had to pay for an alliance with the West, notably with France established in the first years of the 1960s to sustain economical and political stability in the post-colonial period. Nevertheless, we have to bear in mind that the colonial project doesn't end once the troops depart (Bhabha, 1994; Rabinow, 1989), the psychological effects of colonialism on the subjects continuously exist. Numerous postcolonial studies state that cultural sovereignty cannot be claimed back until the intellectual landscape of the country, ultimately, decolonise the mind of the formerly (ex)colonised (Oelofsen, 2015, p. 131-132).

Chapter 3 The Power of Distinction

'There is nothing mysterious or natural about authority. It is formed, irradiated, disseminated; it is instrumental, it is persuasive; it has status, it establishes canons of taste and value; it is virtually indistinguishable from certain ideas, it dignifies as true, and from traditions, perceptions, and judgments it forms, transmits, reproduces.'[36] *Edward Said*



'*The usual excuse to say that craft is not art, that there is no creativity*'
— wall intervention, project *Qanat*, *LE18*, Marrakech, 2018

The constructed representations of Morocco and statements made upon Moroccans and their aesthetic expression is firmly rooted in the colonial scholarship (Rabinow 1989; Wright 1991; Benjelloun 2002; Touzani 2003; Minca and Wagner 2016). I argue that the art world became one of the fields where specific images and ideas can and are sustained and further reproduced. We can ask how specifically the contemporary art world in Morocco relate to its Orientalist visual representation. The actual connection between the two is to be described as a *continuum* of the visual regimes in which visibilities, representations and subjectivities of the Middle Eastern region in general, Morocco, in particular, dwell unchanged. In other words, the West is attracted by the artists from the 'exotic world' simply because Western curators and cultural institutions are continually saturating the global art cluster with a concrete exotic imaginary, that happen to be so powerful that it is impossible to think otherwise. Art historian L. Nochlin, along with a number of experts (among them: A. Marino, S. Hall, L. Abu-

[36] SAID, Eduard. *Orietalism*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1978.

Lughod, P. Dellios, O. Ezmer, B. Ghamari, D. Grigsby, A. Childs etc) had already pointed out how little the visual representational strategies of the West towards the East had been modified since the end of the 19th century, and how they are fundamentally influencing the way how the Orient is thought to present days (Nochlin, 1989, pp. 33-35). The contemporary Moroccan art is today a significant force of the global art world (Solomon, 2019, p. 95), yet the actors behind the scene — the ones giving or taking value are rarely mentioned so as the colonial history of the region, yet both play a significant role. The history of the colonial past of Morocco helps us to understand the development of modern art as much as the current discourse which Moroccan filmmaker Nadir Bouhmouch describes as: '*In Morocco, without the West, you are not an artist or not the one you want to be*'. Novel forms of Orientalism doesn't relate to the traditional visual representation of Morocco besides the tourist-focused market of cheap souvenirs,[37] rather 'the novel' in the discourse manifests in how the Western experts are dealing with the non-Western art producers and their production both on a global level and in the country itself. Their way of thinking, talking and acting directly derives from the expertise of the previous generations of scholars who had, through the power of *distinction*, foreshadowed the development of the contemporary cultural life in Morocco.

In these following lines, I tend to present, in brief, historical overview of modern art in the MENA region in general, Morocco in particular not as a result of a natural outburst of authentic creativity, but rather as a result of implemented colonial orderings — often neglected in art publications on this topic. I am drawing attention to the *distinction* as an act of subjection that once for all imposed categories on Moroccan art production and constructed an idea about 'the Other'. With some exceptions, the 'Other' is understood as someone who isn't able to produce nothing more valuable than repetitive utilitarian objects labelled as — craft. Mentioned exceptions I associate with local contemporary producers who were 'lucky enough' to break free from the Western classification system (popular versus fine art) and obtained a higher status: that is the one of a true artist 'ennobling our spirits'. Beside the mentioned 'discoveries' in the previous chapter, practises of *distinction* present another cultural framework through which not only material objects but people (Moroccans) are described and represented. Simultaneously both the action of *discovering* the unknown and the act of *distinction*

[37] Kotretsos, Georgia. *Inside the artist's studio: Emma Chubb* [online] cit. 16. 2. 2020 In http://www.appartement22.com/spip.php?article382&var_recherche=Chubb

are active when evaluating the non-Western art scenes in general (Hall, 2003 p. 2-3), in particular, both significantly marked the character of the contemporary visual art field in Marrakech and elsewhere in Morocco. Incorporated schemes of classification of art which were presented by French colonial apparatus in Morocco (1912-1956) have become one of the central aspects existing in continuum and linking the contemporary discourse of art and the previous historical one (Pieprzak, 2010; Irbouh 2005).

The non-Western art production labelled today as 'Contemporary Art from the Middle East' is a relatively young phenomenon. The history of modern art in the region of the Middle East and North Africa tracks back to 19th and 20th century and in most of the available publications we read that art (usually in form of easel painting), was presented in the region by the first Orientalist painters. Modern artistic trends were inherently associated with Western idioms and art within this period was limited only to educated elites and the wealthy audience collaborating with and profiting from the coloniser (the French and the Spanish in the *Maghreb* and the Brits in the *Mashriq*). In many cases, modern art in the Middle Eastern region was and still is, in its content, considered as 'too Western' and incomprehensible for the general public (Nashashibi, 1998, p. 166). Of course, there has always been art in the Middle East but not always public for the art itself, or to put it otherwise — not public for this certain type of art. Before modern forms of art were presented, the Middle Eastern region had a great artistic tradition in Islamic art, however, the absence of written sources documenting an artistic process, techniques or aesthetic criteria left Islamic art largely isolated from its social context (Shabout, 2007, p. 17). Thus despite the fact that Islamic art indisputably contributed to the Western canon of art history, it is still erroneously labelled as 'minor'. One of the causes of such perception could be the alleged Islamic ban against representation which resulted in the consideration of Western art historians that Islamic art is mostly superficial, decorative and in stagnation. The unrecognised problem was simply that Islamic art did not fall within the scope of Western aesthetics. Islamic abstraction is today redefined by many art historians as a cultural, intellectual and communal expression of faith with its main goal of serving Islamic monotheism (Shabout, 2007, p. 35) nevertheless, despite all attempts to readdress the stereotypes, the ideal academical theories still differ from the ongoing practice.

Local aesthetic expressions, whether it was an object distinguishable as Islamic art or another form of non-Western material product, had been within the colonial

scholarship simply labelled as ‘craft’ and thus could not, by its very essence, compete with its Western counterpart artworks acknowledged as ‘fine’ or ‘hight’ art. Although the traditional ethnocentric approach of Western art history is being by current critics rejected (see Price, 1989) the existing classification system, which is promoting the superiority of one cultural sphere above the other, is still more than present (Shabout, 2007, p. 43-44).

Islamic art with all its forms thus continues to be associated more with classical craftsmanship than original artistic movement. With very little exceptions, Islamic art is studied from a historical point of view rather than by an analytical perspective and a minor number of scholars deal with the continuity between traditional Islamic art and modern artistic expressions. One of the very fundamental reasons of such actuality is that modern art was introduced to the Arab world by the colonialists, therefore modern art education was solely based on European art techniques and styles, and the previous tradition was considered as an embodiment of backwardness and in decay (Nashashibi, 1998, p. 166). Colonial art scholarship in the Protectorate of Morocco (1912-1956) played a major role in framing traditional artistic expressions. Beside the fact that production had been categorised as ‘not art enough’, later, when the Western concept of modern art was successfully implemented in the local educational system, numerous Moroccan art producers were accused from being secondary producers or mimickers of the Western art forms (Shabout, 2007, p. 43-44). Modern art was from the very beginning perceived as something external and thus for the local communities, it presented mostly an alien import. We can also attribute that public’s disregard to modern art, which does remain until these days and it is particularly obvious in the case of Moroccan art, isn’t caused by the supposed ignorance of Moroccans but due to the lack of cultural ties to this kind of aesthetic expressions (Ali, 1997, p. 2). As it was said, the Western notion of Islamic art became more of a traditional craft based on imitation and repetition. European aesthetics were in the MENA region fully adopted by the early 20th century — easel painting and sculpture replaced all forms of traditional art, especially in French dominated North Africa and Egypt (Ali, 1997; Shabout, 2007). The period of imitation began — local painters were directly influenced by the style of European Orientalists and their images were, therefore, representing typically *odalisques*, *bedouins* or *nomads*, the *sūq* and other exotic landscapes. Nude female bodies were perhaps the most controversial theme that for many local authorities presented something unacceptable and was considered as anti-Islamic. Not only the

visual form was often rejected and figurative art evaluated as sinful, but as well modern art was considered as empty in meaning and lacking any spiritual content. An assumed central purpose of art production firmly embedded in the popular understanding of art consumption within the Islamic context of the country is more or less a single one, and that is to worship God. Kataryna Prieprzak in her study on Moroccan cultural life describes the absent local interest in contemporary art due to its desacralised forms and narratives accompanying these forms (Pieprzak, 2010, p. 99). Popular discourses continue to identify art and all it implies with nonfigurative artisanal production based on the concept of Islamic art, rather than exploring new expressions often too incomprehensible and located in alien cultural institutions. Contemporary art is lacking a respectable status within the Moroccan general public, simply because religion which is reshaping every aspect of a quotidian life doesn't correlate with such visual expressions. Many local artists, supported by the implemented educational system, considered the Western model as the most advanced form of art and uncritically reproduce colonial valorisations towards own visual heritage. Furthermore, as the West dominated the East economically and politically, the resulting physical and cultural foreign domination led to a loss of confidence in own heritage (Ali, 1997, p. 137).

A vast number of Islamic masterpieces were transferred to European museums and local artists lost access to their heritage as a fundamental source of inspiration (Shabout, 2007, p. 8-10). We can state that artistic achievements based on imitation were during the 20th century radically refused by domestic societies across the MENA, but started to be positively evaluated in the elite circles. It is a matter of debate, in which way groups of artists reflected on such cultural domination and in what way they adopted the formal and artistic criteria as denominators of their work. The diverse countries of the region spreading across two continents have the 'Western cultural interference' as a common ground, an entry point to the various movements *of modern art* (such as Casablanca School in Morocco or Surrealists in Egypt presented by poet Georges Henein and painters such as Ramses Younane and Amy Nimr) (see Bardaouil, 2017). Nevertheless, different art scenes have resulted into a unique clusters of identities shaped by specific socio-cultural and economical contexts, and are, despite the desire of Western curatorial attempts to label them as 'naive' and homogenised, incomparable to one and other. As art historian Nada Shabout puts it, we must never forget that modern art in the Middle East has its roots in the West and not in Islamic art, yet artists were and still are surrounded by a system of unique values related to Islamic culture (Shabout, 2007, p.

36). While objectively dealing with forms and manifestations of contemporary art in the Middle East, it is important to understand by whom it was originally presented and under what conditions it domesticated in this region. Only then, we can perhaps understand the existing detachment of Moroccan public towards contemporary art, the empty galleries and museums which are yet again visited by the Western art world itself. The modern history of artistic creation in Morocco is marked by a *distinction* between the Western introduced forms of art, that encompasses mainly painting and sculpture, and the products labelled as 'craft' to those of wood and metalwork, weaving and ceramics (Irbouh, 2005).

Until the 17th-century artists and artisans were generally considered as identical creators and their works were equally described as 'technical'. This is particularly evident in the etymology of the Latin word *ars* and greek *tekhne:* they both bear the identical meaning with the connotation of skill or craftsmanship, work, expert techniques and technology (Mitchell, 2005, p. 6; Ingold, 2007, p. 127). Art historians traditionally explain the division between the producers of 'the routine' and autonomous free creators by a capability of creative intelligence and imagination — those are the virtues possessed by the second-mentioned group and the lack of them among the first. This understanding of cultural material production is according to anthropologists of art misleading and, in fact, implies the superiority of some groups above the others. Anthropologist Tim Ingold for example notes, that it wasn't due to 'genius spirit' or a courage of some producers to break free from internalised aesthetic repertoire, but rather the subsequent growth of industrial capitalism which contaminated the labour division. The technology shifted from mind to machine, and as Ingold puts it: '*…the systematic studies of the process of production were incorporated into the machinery production itself*' (Ingold, 2007, p. 127). Following Ingold, those who could escape the determinations of technological systems were artists producing art. The rest — the artisans since then could only replicate (Ingold, 2007, p. 127). The tradition of *distinction* is according to art historians quite different. The theoreticians are pointing out that the Western tradition lies in the Kantian opposition between the constraints of the material world and the human freedom. Role of art was and is therefore seen as overcoming our ordinary relations to the world (Phillips, 1999, p. 6). According to this understanding, the highest forms of art are those which were and are breaking free from rules of the ordinary world: that is modern and contemporary art, and the lowest are naturally those which are being produced for their utilitarian reasons — products of

craftsmanship. This idea was then, within the Western scholarship and colonial apparatus brought to lands which French and other European powers intended to colonised. Judgements made upon Moroccan artistic production derived from new applied capitalist models of production pressured by the French authorities. Moroccan crafts were no longer personal expressions of its producers but were now 'strip-made' products driven by the need to satisfy the emerging market, more and more orientated on foreign clientele lusting mainly for holiday cheap trinkets (Irbouh, 2005, 227-228). Maurice Le Glay (1868 – 1936) famous colonial writer on Moroccan culture in his texts talks upon Islamic Arabic civilisation as being unproductive and without any artistic force. According to him it was, in fact, the Muslim Spain, not the *Maghreb* or *Mashirq* that fertilised Islamic civilisation, and once the Spanish crafts got into contact with Moroccans, he notes, they began to '*wane and subside in decay*' (Le Glay, 1922, p. 138). Scholar Hamid Irbouh has been analysing how the French used systematic means of modernisation of local arts and crafts to impose their control. Another significant aspect that primarily nineteenth-century historians of art adopted is the Hegelian understanding of progress: nations with the existence of artistic freedom and greater incidence of fine art are thus considered as more developed (Phillips, 1999, p. 7). The idea of 'progress' is particularly evident in vast examples of patronising attitudes that took part among scholars dealing with non-Western material cultures, including anthropologists of art.

Art historian Sally Markowitz notes that process of differencing is undoubtedly a question of power: '*it reflects our* (Western) *culture's elitist values: anything that is performed or materially produced by European white man is 'art', while everything else counts only as a craft or folklore*' (Markowitz, 1994, p. 55). According to her claims, the process of *distinction*, as a result of many different historical factors within the scientific discipline of art history, doesn't justify the real social implication it can have. The constructed divisions between art and artefact have soon been accepted as a universally recognised model which determined the classification of both Western and non-Western production. It implies the understanding that certain groups to whom we refer as to craftsmen are only capable of providing us with objects that we eat from, we sit on and we wear, whereas upon artists' production we contemplate, i.e., it is not an accident that work of the marginalised groups is often labelled as of lower status, thus craft (Markowitz, 1994, p. 67-68).

According to Markowitz, marginalised aren't only the producers, but it also implies the idea that the 'fine art' can be adored only by those who are capable of doing so — the intellectuals. In the case of Morocco, cultural capital (the ability to contemplate) was and is traditionally linked to the French and the educated local elites, additionally to the expatriates and tourists. Whereas 'the rest' of the public, the average Moroccans are only competent to enjoy 'repetitive decor' of traditional craftsmen production unable to step beyond conservatism that is dictated by 'strict religious constraints.' The *distinction* presents here a tool of social exclusion existing and active as much it was in the past as it is today and would be discussed and demonstrated on concrete examples in the following chapter — '*The craftsman as a Noble Savage*.'

For the past century or so the material objects of the cultural 'Other' have been categorised into two ongoing valid groups: the works of art and ethnographic specimen or an artefact (Phillips and Steiner, 1999, p. 3). Once traditional aesthetic expression in Morocco was understood through the Eurocentric perspective of French colonial scholars as a 'mere craft practise' (*l'artisanat*) Western canon of distinction has been accepted and incorporated in the educational system and reproduced throughout the colonial era and following years after the independence (see Irbouh, 2005; Stacy Holden, 2008; and Muriel Girard, 2010). However, despite the tradition of devaluation, Moroccan craftsmanship continuous to exist and presents a rich source of artistic practises and knowledge transmissions related to these practices. Various forms of craftsmanship in Morocco today lively intersect with the field of contemporary art. Such collaborations encompass both Moroccan artists who are dealing with artisans (in order to explore their practice by employment of new materials in conjunction with local symbols, often with a purpose of rehabilitating what was once devaluated) and foreign artists/designers entering Morocco for various pronounced reasons nourished by a discourse of 'discoveries' and emergent capitalist economy. Markowitz suggests that we must look at the 'background' of each of these practices, search for assumptions and values that determinate how we perceive art and craft in specific cultural context (Markowitz, 1994, p. 66). I argue that such described approach based on ethics of collaborations, in fact, doesn't exist in Morocco and very few foreign artists acknowledge the wider cultural meanings of production which historically internalised categories that were once artificially and violently imposed. The majority of outside producers and Western public accepts the distinction as *truthful*, *innocent* and *neutral* and despite the post-colonial context, are following the still lingering definitions of art as an 'aesthetic

conceptual knowledge' and craft as a 'technical knowledge' deriving from hierarchies of High Renaissance (Buczek, 2011, p. 3). This ranking practice so typical for the contemporary field of art production in Marrakech leads to subsequent neglect of local value systems and narratives, and continues to reproduce colonial schemes of classifications. Even though criteria of distinctions are widely understood and applied as 'scientifically neutral' and within the Western art history discipline understood as a generally acceptable evaluating system, classification of objects produced by non-Westerners is an act of Western hegemony for one very specific reason — it was not Moroccans themselves who decided to categorise, whether at all or how, their own artistic expressions. Art historian Ruth B. Phillips and anthropologist of art Christopher B. Steiner are providing us with an example of how the discourse on art *distinction* was shaped by the cultural evolutionists. They argue that: '*while in the West the 'symbolic' was identified with fine art and the 'natural and imitative" with decorative art, the reverse became true for 'primitive art*' (Phillips and Steiner, 1999, p. 8). The appearance or the lack of art practises typical for the West (such as easel painting or specific kind of sculpturing) among non-Western societies became an ultimate measure of 'human score' and always indicated the level of achieved civilisation degree among the 'natives'.

During my research in Marrakech I have been encountering, on various levels, a number of local and foreign artists working with artisans, these intersections were stretching from individual interests to grandiose implemented projects, founded companies, and organised events. Most of them adopted constructed representations framed by the discourse of French colonial scholarship and thus incorporated one general understanding of what culture and artistic production in Morocco stands for. Ongoing evaluations of material objects of the cultural 'Other' based on *distinction* are today projections of individual pre-assumed understanding saturated by, as Phillips and Steiner puts it: '*Inscribed Western models of commodity production which has been one of the most important aspects of global extension of Western colonial power*' (Phillips and Steiner, 1999, p. 4). The collaborations are enhanced by innovations in design and practice of marketing objects serving primarily to the economical needs which subsequently intensified the process of cultural appropriation. Artists and designers have the power of giving and taking cultural significance to local production. In the following chapters, I look deeper into this particular practice. My concern here is the relationship between the artist both local and foreign and the

craftsman *in situ*, more concretely the way power is exercised on the visible level and which representation is being constructed within these collaborations — how are the collaborations pronounced and how are the artisans credited.

3. 1 The Power to divide in Colonial Morocco

While European Orientalist artists were introducing methods of easel painting to Moroccans, interests of French protectorate administration was to 'preserve' traditional craft production in the old Medinas. It was the Governor-general Hubert Lyautey (1912-1925) who was deeply imbued by respect to country's *patrimonine* (heritage). Nevertheless what was and still is often interpreted as a respectful and consciously careful treatment of the French colonial administration towards an authentic Moroccan heritage was, in fact, a desire to preserve and later simulate the 'medieval' character of old towns for the benefit of tourism (Mitchell, 1991, p. 163). The 'preservation' of both original architecture and traditional craftsmanship (*hurfa*) is a process that is inscribed in the history of the modern culture of Morocco, giving France unlimited legitimacy to treat Moroccan cultural heritage according to their own established methodology of classification, justifying that the local inhabitants simply aren't or do not want to be interested in protecting their own cultural monuments (Minca and Wagner, 2016, p. 25). Moroccan case is possibly one of the few where former coloniser is often presented as educator, mentor, facilitator — the one who pays attention to the well being of 'undeveloped' world while simultaneously recognises its unique and rich culture (Minca and Wagner, 2016, 1-2).

In Morocco, colonial administrators took over the decisions which artefacts to conserve, something that had significantly reshaped which histories are recognised as Moroccan, and which are not. Lyautey shortly after he was appointed as *résident-général* founded *Service des Beaux-Arts* – an institution which was in charge of studying, classifying and conserving various local artefacts and historical monuments, later its agency became more active in the restoration process, however, his main goal was to '*ensure maintenance of the indigenous picturesque*' (Jelidi, 2007, p. 63). Through architect and urbanist Henri Proust, Lyautey considerably redesigned major Moroccan cities into grandiose projects of modernity (Miller, 2013, p. 92-93). On the same time he made sure that all what is behind the walls of old Medinas remain resistant to any change.

Lyautey's strategy of segregation was driven by a phenomenon first described by anthropologist Johannes Fabian, the so called 'denial of coevalness' is typical for a numerous of anthropological theorising about the world of the 'Other' (see Fabian, 1983). In other words, *time* is used in the political and ideological manner and as a mean of cultural distancing, something that was equally observed by art historian Linda Nochlin among various colonial images representing Moroccan cities and landscapes. None of the visuals representations bear any sign of contextualising within the contemporaneity. Representing contemporary societies as living in different historical epoch was, in the context of Morocco, a part of a colonial strategy. I argue, that such practice is one of the surviving remnants of previous colonial means to produce and perpetuate certain kind of representations, today obvious among a vast number of local cultural institutions. In Chapter 9 *'A culture yet to be discovered' – The Berber Museum* I highlight how material objects of *Imazighen* ethnical groups are classified and displayed on the commission of the French foundation Jardin Majorelle, resembling the exact strategy of the *timelessness*.

In order to induce the 'medieval character' of the traditional urban areas, Lyautey permitted only minimal modifications (Abu-Lughod, 1981). The French colonial apparatus could then enact its economical plan that would offer to the tourists or residences both the benefits of newly build *villes nouvelles* (the most technologically up-to-date parts of the city) as so much the old part of the city — the constructed *picturesque* of old Medina ready to satisfy the lust for 'the exotic.' According to historian Michael W. Doyle, a colonial rule can be done in a 'formal' or 'informal way.' The formal imperial rule is conducted by a force whereas informal rule could be achieved when the two states, one of the coloniser and the other colonised, are collaborating in a political and economic manner and actually profiting from each other, part of the important aspect of the informal imperial rule is the cultural dependence (Doyle, 1986, p. 45). The Protectorate of Morocco exemplifies a case of the informal rule that was executed primarily through the elaborated educational system. As Irbouh points out '*these educational institutions performed an instrumental role in diffusing French colonial cultural hegemony throughout the colonial society*' (Irbouh, 2002, p. 2). By segregating the French residents in the newly build modern areas, and Moroccans behind the Medina walls of Marrakech, Casablanca, Rabat, Fez and Mèknes, Lyautey intended to strengthen the traditional economy of craft production, involving the leather industry, carpet weaving, embroidery, pottery, metal and brass smithing, wood and stone

sculpting, ceramics, and tile making. The Protectorate administration started to support craft manufacturing and control of the production while the traditional power of the guilds, namely the institutions of *amin* (head of the guild) and the *muhtasib* (market inspector) were suppressed (Irbouh, 2001, 1-2). Moroccan craft workshops were reorganised and vocational schools introduced, such proceeding would prepare the next generation to develop their own sector of the economy and achieve their economic independence. Moroccans truly could manage their local sector without reliance on the French, however, the motive behind supporting the educational structure and enhancing craft production was to create a subordinate workforce that would serve the interest of the colonial state. Craftsmen were captured in a time loop, trained to the repetitiveness of 'decor' being perceived as inferior to Western, notably to French works of art and forced to subordinate their local aesthetic self-expression to the novel economical schemes and modes of production (Irbouh, 2005, p. 227-228). This division is visible in growing corpora of contemporary literature both local and foreign about the significance of the traditional and 'pre-modern' aesthetics, notably craft (Irbouh, 2012, p. 8). It was due to the long-lasting French concern of local culture (preservation and protection of Moroccan heritage and 'native' traditional areas), in other words, a colonial strategy (Mica and Wagner, 2016), that formed a strong meta-narrative which resulted into immutable division between traditional forms of art (such as Islamic art and craftsmanship) and new forms of aesthetic utterance introduced mainly by French Orientalist artists (see Ali, 1997).

This *distinction* frame determinate the actual relationships between what is considered as 'high' Moroccan art and craftsman's production. The world of contemporary cultural production in Morocco is thus defined by a fracture where an understanding of culture appears as a self-evident instrument of division between groups and as a tool to sustain the idea about 'the Other'. On the one hand there is an educated Moroccan population along with foreigners who understand the intellectual language of contemporary ('fine') art, on the other, there is a Moroccan majority for whom art still denote Islamic art and traditional handicraft, and for whom the current figure of artistic practice is the last possible option upon which one would or, in fact, *could* contemplate. Now this division between the minor scene known as the contemporary art world capable of grasping the language of the 'White Cubes' and 'the Rest' is a by-product of a longterm conscious and scientific *distinction* of local artistry skills introduced and practised by French colonial experts analogously with the canon of Western art history. As I have mentioned above,

multiple of art professionals and cultural institutions of contemporary art world are uncritically following and reproducing, often unconsciously, the inherited dogmatic Western models (Markowitz, 1994, p. 69). The fine art and artefact *distinction* is in this text particularly important, for understanding and analysing various observed phenomenons, or better — the direct social implications this imposed differentiation has in a specific post-colonial social setting.

Modernisation. Bust of general H. Lyautey, Plaster and paint, Mohamed Arejdal, 2019, (source: Alexandra Kollárová)

PART TWO: '*We have never planted the seeds, yet we showed up to pick up the flowers*' – The Field 2017-2020

On an official and visible level art scene in Morocco is considered as more than flourishing and Marrakech stands for the novel bustling cultural geography where artworks of local producers are — exotic trophies or souvenirs of art collectors, relics and trade samples for wealthy buyers, a specimen and rarity for art journalists and outer curators, art or craft for the spectators. In comparison to the other countries of the North African region, Morocco is quite exceptional: it has an active art market, the highest number of galleries and some important art festivals such as an annual event in Asilah, recently launched Biennales in Casablanca and Rabat, and two functioning schools of art — in Tétouan[38] and Casablanca.[39] In 2018 new annual African Art Fair 1.54 in Marrakech had been introduced — filling in a gap after the cancelled Marrakech Biennial in 2016. On the other hand, under the surface of the progressiveness, it is just recently, after decades of neglect, that artists are reaching for state fundings which, however, still doesn't present a reliable source of support. The Moroccan Ministry of Culture is perceived as an institution which is fulfilling the self-serving goals of the Moroccan government interested only in building up a selective 'cultural capital' to sustain the global standing and promote country's mass tourism (Solomon, 2019, p. 94-95). Artists who aim to be active in a different manner, beyond the market interest, are facing a scarcity of exhibition spaces and solid supportive cultural infrastructure. Despite this situation, since the inauguration of King Mohammed VI in 1999, the past twenty years are marked by a political liberalisation enabling independent spaces to be born and exist without a direct fear of censorship — a situation that most of the independent art scenes in the region are experiencing.[40] Independent spaces in Morocco arose in the late 1990s and till today present lifeblood, an important counterbalance to

[38] The School of Arts opened in Tétouan in 1925 during the Spanish colonial rule in Morocco (1912-1956). The Spain occupied Northern areas with the capital Tétouan and Southern strip Cape Juby – a coast area bordering with West Sahara.

[39] *École des Beaux-Arts* of Casablanca was founded in 1950 by the French during the Protectorate era in Morocco (1912–1956) and remains, as Tétouan School of Arts, continuously functioning. Both schools are following the Western art history canon.

[40] Art historian Cynthia Becker argues, that despite the ethos of liberalisation and democracy in Morocco, artists continue to show self-restraint and self-censorship, according to Bercker's words: '*they are creating art that falls within the scope of permissible public discourse under the new Moroccan king*.' Official discourse is based on three main principals which artists must never address in any sense, that is: Morocco's sovereignty over the Western Sahara, the ruling authority of the king and his religious legitimacy as a Commander of the Faithful (Becker, 2009. p. 2-3).

an existing metadiscourse of, otherwise commercialised, art scene. An insight into independent structures and conducted projects I discuss in *Part Four: Contemporary counter narratives* of this text.

Furthermore, the increasing number of Moroccan artists are being recognised abroad, hoverer, continuously seen through the lenses of ethnic and geographical identity (Hisham Khalidi interviewed by Chahrazad Zahi, 2019, p. 72). There are existing producers that reject continuous stereotypes and artists that use such tropes to their advantage. Among them perhaps the most famous photographers and mouthpieces of the contemporary art from North Africa – Hassan Hajjaj and Lalla Essaydi both firmly bounded with the city of Marrakech. Hajjaj moved to Marrakech after living for decades in London and Essaydi, who is currently based in the US, was born in Marrakech. Content of their visual production is largely embedded in glaring visual codes inviting the Western spectator to gaze at Marrakech as a *picturesque*. Both artists are, on the international art scene, demanded and both have had significantly contributed to the popularity of Marrakech. Besides the global dynamism and representation of the city as one of the most important art axis in the entire African continent, as much as in the MENA region, the situation in the locality itself reveals as quite different.

Despite the 'reformist' curatorial approaches, attention of both regional and international patrons and flowing capital, artists tend to feel uprooted and as if floating in the void — in between two worlds. They face their disconnection to the visual heritage of local production about which they've been told, through the (post)colonial educational apparatus, that it belongs to the past, to the Islamic, to the craftsmanship guilds of Medinas. They are caught in the polarised *self* — longing to be authentically Moroccan while being continuously *fetishized*. Adopting the postcolonial and postmodernist approach, art historian and curator Carol Solomon states: the situation of Moroccan artists is marked by a hybridity (multiple constructed identities as a result of colonial history), alterity (biases inherited in the colonial gaze) and liminality (space 'in-between' where artist collaborate within the Western anticipation on one side and the acknowledgement of lacking cultural sovereignty on the other) (Solomon, 2019, p. 94-95).

Ici. Crayon and acrylic on paper, 26x67 cm, Simohammed Fettaka, 2018, (source: Alexandra Kollárová)

As I have outlined in the previous chapters, it is impossible to comprehend Moroccan contemporary art scene and its practises without, actually, looking into the legacy of the colonial period which manifests in an incorporated understanding of what art should look like. One of the most challenging problems within the local field of contemporary art is, as curator and writer Omar Berrada puts it: the failure of intergenerational transmission as a direct outcome of the colonial period in Morocco (Omar Berrada interviewed by Soukaina Aboulaoula, 2019, p. 169-170). Colonisation according to Berrada doesn't quite kill the culture but it becomes a '(...) *counterfeit version of itself, it interrupts and unroots entire histories, it stifles the vibrant variety of popular artistic expressions*.' For Moroccan contemporary artist such as M'barek Bouhchichi, colonisation turned North Africa into an island in isolation from the rest of the continent, from own visual language, from own identity. As he points: '*we have forgotten our histories; we need first the process of unlearning and then to construct languages and learn how to put words on what we see and live; we have to try to get rid of everything imported to us from the Occidental culture*.'

During an art opening titled *État d'urgence d'instants poétiques* (25. 11. 2019-16. 11. 2019) curated by Bouchra Salih and located in the botanical garden in the city centre of Rabat, I have met a group of young emerging artists and graduates from Tétouan *Institut National des Beaux-Arts*. As we had dinner together later in the evening, I had been particularly interested about how does the youngest generation reflect on the above-mentioned situation.

They noted:

> '*We don't have our own archives, in most cases, we have to track down our own history through individual research. Many of us, of course, feel that we are not using our language and we are missing something. The Western canon of art history and techniques were, in Morocco, implemented and continues to be taught in the art schools. This situation resulted in a state were some young artists resigned for searching or a need to reclaim back our own visual language. It is for most of us, unfortunately, a forgotten history, and we are instead trying to identify with the so-called 'global language of art'. Some young Moroccan artists don't want to feel responsible towards failed decolonizing movements, they want to be free in their subjects and forms. I understand that. But then, when we are using techniques typical for Western artists, it clashes with the expectation of the Western institutions and curators who are lusting for something more exotic, something that would be authentically 'Moroccan."*[41]

According to Mehdi, a student from *Institut National des Beaux-Arts* in Tétouan, artists are currently in a state of great confusion:

> '*They have fabricated us as Westerners, expecting us to know the history of Western art from renaissance to fauvism and to think and talk as our Western counterparts in post-modernist Europe. Then, they are surprised that we are using new media, installations and photography, the content of our work simply addresses what at the very moment concern us, which doesn't seem to be Moroccan enough. I don't know what to think. It is a weird feeling of a fracture, in fact, we are a by-product of the colonial project with a feeling of being robbed of our own cultural identity, but on the other hand, I don't know how to reclaim back our sovereignty, it seems to be an extremely difficult task as we have been trained in the reverse tradition*.'[42]

Contemporary Moroccan artist born in Akka, currently based in Marrakech and Tahnaout M'barek Bouhchichi expresses his concerns as follows:

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[41] Interview conducted on the 25th of November 2019.

[42] Ibid.

> '*To tell the truth. I don't acknowledge a certain marocanité. I rather talk about contemporary Moroccan artists than contemporary Moroccan art. We are talking about a very layered scene where we are constantly looking for validation, we import models that don't fit with our contexts, we open museums here and there and portray a distorted 'image'. So much energy, money and time go into festivities, we celebrate our Africanity as we have just discovered that we are Africans. On the whole, I think we are in a sort of eternal starting because we have never planted the seeds, yet we showed up to pick up the flowers. Flowers fade fast. I am not into smoke and mirror games, I aim to create a new aesthetic, I am in the act, I do. I don't want to celebrate anything, celebrations ended.*' (M'barek Bouhchichi interviewed by Soukaina Aboulaoula, 2019, p. 172-173)

This concern, the constant feeling of lacking narratives, language and aesthetic forms that would originate from 'the local', rather than would parrot the representation schemes dwelling outside, had led numerous of contemporary Moroccan artists to rehabilitate own past. Many attempts to readdress own cultural heritage lies in looking into the various practices of the craftsmen. To contemporary Moroccan artists, they present a connection with the past visual forms, they are the original bearers of some forgotten or 'ancestral' knowledge as Moroccan artist Yto Barrada puts it. '*Decolonisation isn't over. That's why I really want local artisans to participate in my project and for us to be able to teach their expertise in the workshops*' (Barrada interviewed by Ludovic Delalande, 2019, p. 166). Some serious research has been done specifically on the origins of *berberitude* and *negritude*[43] by renown Marrakech based artists Mohmed Arejdal born and raised in southern town Guelmim and above-mentioned artist M'barek Bouhchichi originating likewise from the South.

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[43] *Negritude* is referring to a literary and cultural movement originated in the 1930s in Paris, France among black intelligence in order to rehabilitate and rediscover African history and African culture and oppose French colonial politics of cultural assimilation. Term *berberitude* is used here when referring to the process of revising *Imazighen* history and language in Morocco. Such attempts were recently formed into an artistic, cultural and social initiative titled *AWAL*/أوال ('word' in *Tamazight).* An attempt to save and enhance the unreleased history and oral traditions of those coming from the lands which the colonial administration labelled as 'useless Morocco'. *AWAL* wants to encourage the inhabitants of these 'useless' mountain areas, marginalised and impoverished regions to gather their own stories from a rich mosaic of oral culture. *AWAL* is located in regions such as the High Atlas, the Middle Atlas and the Southeast, where social and cultural infrastructure is lacking. As such, *AWAL* is a project that seeks to fill an existing void in the programs and cultural resources of these regions. Essentially, it is a project that seeks to decentralise culture, to involve rural *Amazigh*-speaking artists in the cultural scene, to promote cultural diversity by raising new voices from the margins and by archiving oral art to inspire artists, researchers and the general public is otherwise a national artistic scene dominated by the urban trend and by Euro-centric forms and aesthetics. *AWAL* aspires to enhance the indigenous North African oral cultures and considers them as a strong basis for new artistic, aesthetic and narrative forms which are applicable throughout the region (more about project *Awal*/أوال available online https://le18marrakech.com/awal/).

An increasing number of contemporary artists both commercial producers and art activists are considering the south of Morocco as an enormously important part of a cultural landscape less effected by the colonial legacy in comparison with the traditional urban nerves such as Rabat, Casablanca or Marrakech. First, because it had been and is a geographically distant area and thus more resistant towards foreign influences of any kind, second because it is bridging Morocco with the missing elements of Morocco's multilayered identity particularly linked to the African identity just recently restored. One of the significant and among artist popular event happening annually is a non-profit cultural project *Caravane Tighmert* which is taking part in the oasis Tighmert (17 km far from the city of Guelmim). Launched in 2015, *Caravane Tighmert* is currently functioning as one-week artist residency with the ambition to discuss what has been outlined in previous pages and to directly interact with local inhabitants in order to promote the cultural development of the region in exchange for reconnecting to the cultural heritage in tourist absent cultural landscape.

As it has been highlighted in the subchapter *The Power to Divide in Colonial Morocco,* the collaboration with producers of traditional handicrafts located in the guilds of Medinas disseminated around the whole country, as much as with the craftsmen and craftswoman in the rural areas of Morocco, is an increasingly sought-after practice and presents nowadays one of the possible practices in which Moroccan artists are reclaiming back the lacking cultural sovereignty. Such collaborations are, as well, highly popular among a vast number of 'travelling foreign artists' and designers describing their interest by an attempt to learn various techniques far forgotten, however, saturated by a dominant discourse of Morocco as an exotic land yet to 'discovered.' Furthermore, they justify their interventions by the need to emancipate the local communities often 'in stagnation' of creativity. Unfortunately, these practices lead to wittingly or unwittingly to cultural appropriations and various ethical transgressions. Thus the following chapter is discussing the character of the relationship between the contemporary art world both foreign and local and Moroccan craftsmanship in general, artisans in particular. I ask under which condition are those collaborations with different groups happening, in which sense are these groups benefiting from these practices and how is their knowledge represented and credited?

Chapter 4 The Craftsman as a 'Noble Savage'

Artworks as a result of collaborations with different artisans situated in the Medina guild quarters and elsewhere, typically in the rural areas of the country presents a frequent artistic *oeuvre*. Some are seeking the help of craftsmen for the purpose of a short-term commissioned piece, others like the Marrakech based Belgian artist Eric van Hove or French-Moroccan artist Sara Ouhaddou define their art practise by a longterm collaboration with various artisans and established workshops. Besides artists, it is the vast number of Western designers (producing mainly fashion and interior designs) who are entering Marrakech and seeking collaborations within traditional handicrafts. Fashionable studios are being all around the city opened almost overnight. Most of their visions are saturated by powerful narratives, referring to the city as to a 'sensual Eden' with welcoming weather and easy lifestyle. Following the footsteps of Yves Saint Laurent, Morocco stands for all of what most of the 'creatives' miss in the West – their utters are based on 'beautiful landscapes and inspiring colours' and additionally often undeclared cheap labour force. All of them identically mark the city from the fixed scale of subjects which personify, illustrate or substitute the discourse about Marrakech and which are more or less akin to those we read from the descriptions of the previous famous travellers. The June issue of British Vogue states: '*Marrakech has been tantalising stylish individuals from around the world ever since Yves Saint Laurent paid his first visit in 1966 and decided to make it his second home'*[44] The article continues by numerous of quotations of Yves Saint Laurent which have been already mentioned, however, which endlessly resembles with numerous of statements from the small designers to significant players such as fashion brand *Dior*.

The introductory lines of contemporary Belgian designer Laurence Leenaert (known under an established brand label LRNCE) stands: '*Based in Marrakesh and surrounded by palms trees and oversized jellabas, LRNCE is inspired by the cults and rituals of African tribes. Combining the knowledge and patience of Moroccan artisans, with the aesthetics and vision of a Belgian crusader, LRNCE aims to offer contemporary products, while encouraging local craftsmanship.'*[45]

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[44] Jennings, Helen. *After Yves Saint Laurent: The New Creatives Putting Marrakech On The Map* [online] cit. 28. 1. 2020 In https://www.vogue.co.uk/article/art-rugs-ceramics-in-marrakech

[45] *LRNCE* [online] cit. 22. 10. 2019 In https://lrnce.com/

Note from a field diary, 4. 5. 2019

In Marrakech independent art space LE18 I have met Dutch Moroccan architect Sara Frikech living in Rotterdam, working in between Morocco and Netherlands. Sara employs overlooked narratives and alternative lenses in order to explore various issues (most of them disturbing) connected to the built environment, currently working on water politics in the city of Meknès. I knew her from several meetings before, but finally this late spring night we had a chance to discuss in-depth my research. It became a tradition that Sara, once in Marrakech, comments on ridiculous and often racist representations which had occurred in the city in past weeks. 'Have you seen the website of LRNCE?' she asked me with a slight of anger in her tone. 'This is far over the edge, the girl is referring to herself as to a crusader!' The next morning, according to Sara's advice I have opened the brand's website to witness myself the lines about which she was talking the night before. Apparently Sara was right, the designer doesn't seem to know that crusading refers to someone who is imposing power by violent practices. Eventually, I have decided to contact LRNCE and understand more about her constructed narrative, within one hour from our talk, the official website of a Belgian designer Laurence underwent some of the transformation: from a crusader she became an adventurer.

Such examples are in Marrakech happening constantly, of course neither The Dior's creative director Maria Grazia Chiuri, on the question why she had chosen Marrakesh for her fashion show, couldn't answered differently: '*because the city across centuries has drawn a stream of influential travellers, artists and creatives, from former Dior Creative Director Yves Saint Laurent to novelist and philosopher Albert Camus, photographers Cecil Beaton and Irving Penn, and more.*'[46] Above mentioned statements within the constructed representations associate the city with sensuality and archaism worth 'discovering'. While analysing various visual and textual narratives I also looked upon to what remained unaddressed, unspoken, hidden, what is never or rarely mentioned. Drawing from the discourse analysis (Rose, 2014, p. 136), discourses also' limits the other ways in which a certain topic can be constructed' (Hall, 1996, p. 2012). I. e., discourse can also prevent us from talking and acting in a certain way. In this case, again any references to actual Moroccans have been left aside, articles suggest that it is not for them that the country or city is valuable, it's for the Western travels, perspectives and established histories of these travellers. As if Marrakech would be, according to these utters, more a city of walking *jellabas*, instead of people in the *jellabas*. Contemporary discourse on culture in Morocco simply does not include Moroccans, or more precisely the representation is marked by their absence or anonymity. Moroccan majority isn't present in most of the cultural venues including galleries and museums, as so Moroccan experts are not involved in the decision making process of ethnographical collections in Museums and further, it is the case of anonymous craftsmen behind the production process. In the field of cultural production, a Moroccan producer bears a real name and visage only under certain specific conditions — he or she must possess a certain cultural capital, i.e., be erudite in the Western language of contemporary art. Local craftsmen or craftswomen are in the position of nameless producers, they are rarely ever officially credited and in most cases, their contribution in the final output remains unaddressed.

Moroccan craftsman or craftswoman is in a position of a 'noble savage' who bear the ancient and ancestral techniques and knowledge of artistic production. He or she is considered as simple and unsophisticated, living in a state close to Nature, possessing virtues of forgotten tribes unfettered by social divisions, laws and economical constraints of global economic systems (Hall, 1992 p. 205-208).

[46] Penrose, Nerisha. *What You Need To Know About Dior's Cruise 2020 Show* [online] cit. 28. 11. 2019 In https://www.elle.com/fashion/a27319126/dior-cruise-2020-show/

I use the archetypical character of the *Bon Sauvage* here, simply because it does, in the most accurate sense, describe in which way designers and artists refer to craftsmen in interviews I had conducted. Examination of designers's Instagram accounts[47] and frequent articles on Marrakech in prominent magazines led me to a conclusion that these textual narratives, in most cases, follow the already established discursive formations. Websites' curriculums thus represent the new digital archive with the content of the old representational patterns. What this groups of statements have in common is, besides an evident promotion of exoticism, patronising relationship towards the craftsmen and craftswomen. It is not an exception that some of the artisans are following artists and designers into their new studios, working on looms installed in the shops while being observed by random visitors. This practise enhances the curiosity in casual tourist passengers; the weavers newly situated behind the looms is something that would be under usual circumstances difficult to witness. The production is traditionally located primarily in old *funduqs* of Medina, for a stranger difficult to distinguish, therefore always hidden to the non-locals and pedestrians in narrow streets of the old city. In recent years artisans are being dislocated from they everyday context, in return, they are offered a 'fair salary', which is, compared to the Western conditions a ridiculous wage for most of the foreign employers. Artisans are objectified and treated through the prism of their economic potential. This, however, doesn't mean artist and designers aren't establishing close relationships with 'their' craftsmen, yet such personal affiliation has nothing to do with official and visible constructed representations. Another question here to be asked is, where is the line between being 'just inspired' and practise which can be considered as a cultural appropriation? The discussion on such dilemmas remains in the art world unaddressed and, in fact, isn't in the centre of any concern. The so-called creatives are producing pieces in the 'collaboration' with artisans whose skills are in other parts of the world vanishing. Artist or designer then, just as Yves Saint Laurent, are in the position of an 'emancipator' of Moroccan cultural heritage, whereby without him or her and other travels the world wouldn't learn about Moroccan culture, simply because Moroccans themselves are lacking enough interest. In the context of contemporary art practices anthropologists of art Arnd Schneider and

[47] For the purpose of this analysis I have been looking into these websites: LRNCE: https://lrnce.com/; Instagram accounts of DIOR https://www.instagram.com/dior/; S|HE: https://www.instagram.com/she_archives/; Marie Bastide Studio: https://www.instagram.com/mariebastidestudio/; Louise Barthélemy: https://www.instagram.com/louisbarthelemy/; ARTC: https://www.instagram.com/maisonartc/; Marrakshi Life: https://www.instagram.com/marrakshi.life/ Riad Yima: https://www.instagram.com/riadyima/

Christopher Wright concludes that there are very limited if non-existing dialogues on the processes of artistic creation that would link artists, artefacts and their original producers and new works resulting from this collaborations. How to develop a process of a 'correct appropriation' doesn't only remain unanswered, but is even rarely asked. The general consensus of the critics stands: the best to be done here is to understand artists intentions *in situ* and what kind of relationship he or she establishes with the 'Other' (Schneider and Wright, 2006, p. 40). Criticism of superficiality and aestheticism is directed to those artistic practises where the artists are dealing purely with form and to whom, the understanding of the local communities is secondary. Anthropologists of art today more than ever call for contextualisation of the non-Western aesthetic expressions, that directly implies to recognise ethnographical specific symbolic and religious content in these sources (Schneider and Wright, 2006, p. 38-39) and above all, to set ethical criteria of these collaborations.

Note from a field diary, 17th November 2017

The appearance of the weaver in the polished salesroom is somehow disturbing, instead of being surrounded by his coworkers in funduq and mastering his own rhythm of work he is now on display. To highlight the truthful aspect of handmade production, the Western designer chooses to integrate a 'performer of authenticity' using what is to be called 'the ancient technique of production'. In his own city, the artisan is far from being in the equal power position, the cultural difference remains unmediated, far from a two-sided exchange or perhaps a dialogue. The appearance of his clothes is marked by striking contrast from those of his employer and clientele under whose gaze he works, nor he does speak the foreign languages. In a matter of fact, neither does his employer speaks the dialect, nevertheless, it becomes the artisan's disadvantage as he is the one who remains in silence. It is not the original producer who is asked about his knowledge, about the symbols that originates from his or her cultural context, but instead, it decorates now the newly designed pieces. He isn't there to make any decisions, he is there to work in silence, dislocated and framed by his own loom while being duplicated, copied and incorporated.

Acts of appropriating or copying stretches throughout the whole history of art (Schneider and Wright, 2006, p. 40), yet in the aftermath of the colonial expansion and the rise of critical voices calling for cultural decolonisation,[48] questions on representation and ownership became more urgent. The Western obsession with dislocating objects and displaying them in museums, seems at first, as a practice belonging to the past, nevertheless in the second decade of the 21st century the representation of the primarily material culture of non-Western societies is still remaining highly discussed topic. Targets of the critics are both — ethnographical museums as much as the way Western curatorial experts are displaying the so-called contemporary art from the Middle East and North Africa or solely Africa – executed under the fixed stereotypes enhancing the Orientalist gaze. Similar is, in fact, happening within these artist-artisan collaborations. Moroccan traditional craft industries were 'reformed' by French administrators, and as Irbouh points out, it had considerably bettered the material conditions of artisans through an improved organisation, entrepreneurship and patronage (Irbouh, 2005, p. 227).

However, such evaluations on 'the improvement of labour conditions' can be two-edged. Comparable claims we hear today about the Moroccan artisans working for foreigners: '*At least the working conditions have improved.*' To put it otherwise, because the foreign designer or artist isn't directly exploiting the artisans he or she is in the legitimate position of cultural appropriation. French colonial policies categorised craft exclusively according to their own schemes: some production of *nejjarine* (carpenters), *fekharrine* (potters) and *haddadine* (metal workers) were considered as repetitive and degenerative, some were approved to be more valuable (Irbouh, 2005, p. 55-56). Texts written on Moroccan handicraft usually follow the French colonial models of classifications, thus descriptive analysis are made according to the geographical locations, gender, racial and ethnic origins of manufacturing (see Prosper Ricard, 1924; Jacques Berque, 1939; Henry Terrasse, 1924; George Hardy, 1927; Roger Le Tourneau, 1965; J. Hainaut, 1925). Moroccan craft once labelled as 'decorative' by a vast number of French scholars supporting mutually their authoritative claims, the local artistic production remained fixed under these categorisations. Colonial 'experts' sustained classification of the craft by housing the 'right' prototypes in Museums claiming that traditional designs have to be protected and revived.

[48] One of the recent symposiums on cultural decolonisation in contemporary art was held in June 21 and 22, 2017 titled 'De-colonizing Art Institutions' at Kunstmuseum Basel with the speakers Sabih Ahmed (Asia Art Archive), Jeebesh Bagchi (Raqs Media Collective), Binna Choi (Casco), Eyal Danon (Holon Digital Art Archive), Kadiatou Diallo (SPARCK), Same Sizakele Mdluli (Lecturer, Wits University), Rohit Jain (ISEK, Uni Zürich), Shwetal A. Patel (Kochi-Muziris Biennale), Dorothee Richter (Postgraduate Programme in Curating, ZHdK).

The distinction made throughout the colonisation period in Morocco irreversibly 'widened the gap between the traditional and the modern' (Irbouh, 2005, p. 227). Moroccan craft was considered as 'lower indigenous art' and had been patronised by the French through the educational system of vocational schools all over the country and by a vast amount of scholar texts produced. Such attitudes resulted in a 'beautiful' but second-rate tradition attracting the attention of a cluster of Western designers who are seeking recognition through the various levels of appropriating. In most of the cases, while promoting novel products as a result of collaborations, the craftsmen or craftswoman remain anonymous.

In spring 2019 Marrakech hosted a grandiose fashion show of the brand Dior: Dior's Cruise 2020. The Dior show was underlined with a quotation 'Common ground' and was worldwide presented as an event that refuses ethnocentrism and is, actually, aware of the colonial past, further aims to problematise the practices of cultural appropriation and it prises and respects the local artistic tradition.[49] Why it wasn't a tribute to local craftsmanship after all is to be discussed in the following lines. Brand's Instagram account consists of several document videos that are explaining the purpose and process of collaboration with local female artisans shield by association *Sumano*, run by three foreigners under the concept of preservation of know-how of female weavers and potters in Morocco. Benches for more than 800 prominent guests coming from all around the world (such as Diana Ross and several other Hollywood celebrities were present), were lined by woollen handwoven cushions decorated by local *henna* dyed technique. It was meant to be a megalomanic show which would pay a tribute to '*craftsmanship from the whole continent*.' On every seat at the show was a quote by a Moroccan writer Tahar Ben Jelloun — '*Culture teaches us to live together, teaches us that we're not alone in the world, that other people have different traditions and ways of living that are just as valid as our own*.' Articles in the fashion magazines talked about a revolutionary approach of the Dior's creative director and her team. '*It was really the accumulation of these little touches that made the show so jaw-droppingly distinct*'.[50] Celebratory reviews made the show significant for the fashion industry in the same manner, as the exhibition *Magiciens de la Terre* for the world of contemporary art — one of the most discussed exhibition in the history of art at the Centre Pompidou in Paris till present days.

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[49] Jess Cartner-Morley. *Feminism, Marrakech and Diana Ross: the second coming of Dior* [online] cit. 1. 2. 2020 In https://www.theguardian.com/fashion/2019/apr/30/feminism-marrakech-and-diana-ross-the-second-coming-of-dior

[50] Losmithgul, Mary. *What You Need to Know About the Dior Cruise Show 2020* [online] cit. 1. 2. 2020 In https://www.prestigeonline.com/th/style/fashion/dior-cruise-2020-show/

This comparison can here serve as an adequate parallel. In 1989 the exhibition intended to re-articulate the power imbalance of representation between the North American and European artists on one side, and the unknown non-Western art producers on the other. Schneider points out, that critics of the exhibition argued that it did nothing but highlight the disparity between the non-Western and Western artists (Schneider, 2006, p. 34). Thus accordingly I ask: should Dior team be celebrated for acknowledging other forms of creativity as valuable instead of the usual cultural appropriation typical for the fashion industry?

Every effort in breaking down the stereotypes of the 'Other' is to be credited, but according to my analysis, it is not what has happened within this particular event. Former visual representation of Moroccan artisans by Dior brand took a form of a short video document published on the Instagram account and accompanied by official statements about collaboration with female weavers and potters. Five minutes lasting video[51] provides the spectator on the process of *henna* dyeing in the Lesser Atlas range of Morocco. The speech of the female artisans has less space in the document than the former french voice explaining the process, nevertheless, from the little, we can hear from the Moroccan female artisans it becomes obvious that the wool production and weaving are in the core of their livelihood. The only artisan that actually is introduced by her name in all of the available Dior's videos is Rabia, the president of the association of weavers. She explains that women in this region work predominantly with wool as there isn't existing agriculture in the very location: *'even children here want to work with wool because if there is no wool, there is no work*', she states. Rabia presents a strong and clear message about irreplaceable activity from which the entire village is benefiting. Nevertheless, such information contradicts with the very end of this video, where female artisans are invited to *Palais El Badii* in Marrakech, a ruined Saadian palace from the 16th century were the show took place. Group of Moroccan women were invited to observe how their dyed fabrics were used as cushion covers. Every cushion installed and ready for the guests was bearing a signature 'Christian Dior', so as on the plates and other pottery that evening, also produced by female potters for the purpose of the fashion show. At the end of the video we gaze at a blond young woman hugging female artisans while stating to the camera: '*Wool wasn't something they have necessary considered. Now wool is…amazing! They respect it*'.

[51] [online] cit. 1. 2. 2020 In https://www.instagram.com/p/BxCj1q_DVTj/

The question we can ask here is how cannot the artisans respect the wool and its production if it is the village's commodity of the greatest importance? Such patronising statements are giving the impression that only through Western experts, Moroccans can respect their own heritage and expertise in craft production. Questionable practices of the fashion industry, such as the branding of the local cultural production in Marrakech and the relation towards artisans is a direct result of the politics of *distinctions* made during the French Protectorate in Morocco. Attitudes towards them and the statements made upon their products became a narrative increasing with the notion of Marrakech as a tourist destination and 'progressive art hub.' Artisans present timeless groups, ancient and pre-capitalistic distant worlds which are so interesting to engage with. During my fieldwork it was almost impossible to meet, beside designers, artists both Moroccan and foreign that wouldn't interact to some level with artisans. Many artists in residency, especially those located in Medina, sooner or later orientated their research towards local craftsmanship; some of them just took the possibility of getting their pieces done by skilled craftsmen known for being able to execute any wish, some of them decided to establish a long term collaborations.

Claiming the ownership over the local artisanal production, Dior Cruise, Marrakech, spring 2019, (source: https://www.lofficiel.be/deco/dior-croisiere-2020-savoir-faire-les-secrets-des-poteries-du-defile)

Dior promotion video: Dior Cruise 2019, Marrakech, (source: https://www.instagram.com/dior/)

In early June 2019, I had met one of the few critical voices in the contemporary field of Moroccan artistic production – Marrakech based human right activist and filmmaker Nadir. While I intended to discuss other aspects of the contemporary field production, Nadir made his entrance point on craft immediately. For him the contemporary art scene is marked by the relationship between craft and the so-called high art, the *distinction* between 'the lower' and 'the higher' is for him is an indicator of persisting Western dominance. For Nadir the *distinction* that conditions the art world of today.

> *'In Marrakech, you have a very large layer of people who are producing art for an exclusive consumption, and then you have this other group.'* Nadir makes a dramatic pause, he sighs and continues — *'then we have artisans who are producing what is to be called folklore (in the case of performance) or craft (in the case of material production) and there is obvious striking duality.*

According to the Western art professionals this production is to be called 'indigenous art'. In fact, it is never called 'art' here, it gets totally another name as it is on the lower level and for me, as for Moroccan this is hard to understand. How can we value someone, who takes two pieces of wire and wraps it around a random piece of wood, puts it on the pedestal and call it 'art', whether someone who produces this (Nadir points on a handwoven carpet on which we are sitting) isn't artist enough? For me it this is hard to grasp and I would say it is absurd, how did we get to this point? My answer is that there are political and historical forces, Eurocentric views, ideas, colonial history, even Moroccans themselves started to devaluate their own aesthetic expressions. Some Moroccan artists are getting back to the usage of artisans techniques, but the question here to be asked is: in which manner? Often we can hear from them: I am using this specific technique from this artisan but I have purified it, I have transformed it — from craft to art. I have civilised it, I collaborated because I felt too guilty to think very little about my own heritage, but I had to bring it out from the dusky old Medina to a white cube, give it a concept, then I made it an art.'[52]

Perhaps the most famous name of an artist collaborating with Moroccan artisans is Algeria-born, Cameroon-raised, Belgian conceptual artist Eric Van Hove, based in the outskirts of Marrakech at km13 on the *Ourika* Road in *douar* called *Sidi Moussa*. Eric and his Moroccan wife Samia greeted me in their house part of which is simultaneously a workshop located in the garage space. Eric is working with more or less a stable number of ten craftsmen, creating different sculptures of whom all are produced and mastered by skilled local artisans using primarily local materials as lemonwood, Middle-Atlas walnut wood, Mahogany wood, recycled brass, camel bone, cow bone, yellow copper, nickelled silver, dye, recycled aluminium, resin, tin etc As I knew Van Hove sells his products in famous galleries around the Globe, my concern hence has been directed to primarily ethical aspects of his artistic practise. How is he dealing with sensitive questions of *appropriation* and *ownership*, how does he balance the financial aspect of the collaboration and how does he credit artisans he works with for decades? '*I use craft as a medium and it is a weird thing!*' Says Van Hove while rolling a cigaret under the still timid winter sun that allowed us to sit on the terrace above his workshop.

[52] Interview was conducted on 22nd of May 2019.

'You will find people in Europe that are stuck with the idea that craft is a decorative thing, and they cannot go beyond it. They cannot imagine there is anything else in it… Here is the same, Moroccans don't value craft anymore, of course, they will say they love it and it speaks to them very strongly, but they will go for Ikea anyway… there is this African frustration of non-consumerism. They need modernity, but simultaneously they have a deep respect for the craft. They don't know what to do with it, it is like gravel in their shoe that they want to get rid of. You have a Ministry of Craft here, that is not in every country and it means a lot! Contemporary art in Marrakech became an ivory tower and Moroccan majority is cynical about it, it's not beautiful for them… not at all, for Moroccans most of the contemporary art expressions are empty. For me using the craft language is a conscious decision on my path, and the main aim is to open the ivory tower. If you look around, of course, contemporary art doesn't speak to the people, all the writers we have in Morocco write in French, the relationship between the dominated and the dominator is love and hate at once, it is still unresolved … Moroccan cultural scene calls for decolonisation and it has to be done in two stages: first, the coloniser has to step down and then the colonised has to rise up and be equal in its gaze.'[53]

Eric talked about himself as about a globalised citizen, not belonging to any specific place, yet recognising himself as '*the privileged one with a Belgium passport*.' He is interested in Marrakech scene into a certain necessary level, rarely being spotted outside of his workshop. Eric's sculptures are recognised and highly popular among the Western public as they, according to his own words, do speak to everybody. If traditional aesthetic expressions were, due to several historical circumstances, understood and treated mainly for the purposes of growing tourist industry, if objects that were before an artefacts are now stagnating in repetitive patterns of souvenir mass production, then van Hove found a way how to effectively bring back craftsmanship from the discursive space of capitalist economy to a true fine art pedestal.

I have pointed out in previous lines, that artefacts of the non-Western producers to be considered as 'art' has to be first transposed into the Western system of classification of fine and applied art,' which is, as Phillips notes, a common determinant of Western curators dealing with non-Western art (Phillips, 1999, p. 7). The craft was condemned

53 All direct quotations from artist Eric Van Hove were derived from an interview conducted on 15th of January 2019.

simply because it did not fall within the scope of the definition of a 'correct' art, nevertheless, the practice of Eric Van Hove labelled as '*renaissance of African art and craft*,' is seriously opening up the dusty historical discourse to novel definitions. In February 2014 Eric presented sculpture titled 'V12 Laraki' — an exact replica of an engine on which he worked with a team of Moroccan craftsmen throughout the usage of traditional craft knowledge resembling Islamic art. London gallery Copperfield wrote about him: '*The conclusion of nine months of work and centrepiece to the Marrakech Biennale V12 Laraki is a replica of the Mercedes-Benz V12 engine used by Abdeslam Laraki in the 'Laraki Fulgara', Morocco's first-ever high-performance, luxury sports car. Laraki had hoped to manufacture the car entirely in Morocco but was forced to import its engine from Germany. 'V12 Laraki' brings the dream of an entirely Moroccan-made engine full circle. Each of its 465 components was handcrafted in 53 traditional materials, including ceramic, bone, tin, goatskin, and terracotta, by fifty-seven Moroccan artisans*' (Copperfield gallery, 2014).[54]

> '*I needed an object which doesn't belong to one territory, which doesn't belong to one nation and does speak to everybody… V12 engine belongs to modernity and it is recognisable all over the globe. And then, I was fascinated by the idea of the engine itself, because it changed the whole world and how a mankind function and it eliminated the poverty, it's an object that has the secular positive background. No matter if you are from the rural area or the city, if you can read or write or not, if you are from the South or the North … it's an engine. That is it. It's not just about cars, actually, its Europeans who think about a car first, but in the context of Africa it as a tool. It is pure life. Why do I work in Morocco? I came here because it has a huge variety of craftsmanship… The craftsmen reproduced the iconic tool of the 20th century and it bears the Islamic art too now, it has it all, the geometry, the precise order… For the craftsmen it made sense, they project themselves into it.' One Berber artisan is called Mohammed and when Jewish masters left for Israel (from year 1948 and on), there was a whole of a gap here… no one knew how to work with bone, and some craft practices were left without the knowledge, Mohammed decided to restore this knowledge, and when the bone sits into the metal or wood perfectly it becomes a metaphor for the whole society and he would feel it, he knew at that moment he was a part of a bigger scale. I saw the proudness they had, it is a*

[54] *ERIC VAN HOVE: V12* [online] cit. 17. 2. 2020 In http://www.copperfieldgallery.com/eric-van-hove-v12.html

collective success, there was always a rational brainstorming between us… you know I didn't come here for cheap labour, but I don't want to overpay either, because that is corrupting so I decided to pay the craftsman the wage that is locally considered as a salary of a public servant, so 25 USD a day was my counting. I cannot evaluate their knowledge but I can give a percentage of the sold pieces. And I am doing it. I never negotiate or estimate their work, if it's too expensive for me I never come back. Long term collaboration works the best, when the craftsmen saw that it's a common piece we are working on, they started to be more precise in what they do and suddenly some of them were bringing better stuff, better materials. It's there now.'

Eric Van Hove (on the right) in front of his workshop *Fenduq*. (source: Alexandra Kollárová)

Eric's second significant project is titled *Mahjooba* – a remake of cheep Chinese moped popular in Marrakech. By using local materials and of course a team of local artisans, it happened to be nominated for the 2017 Beasley Design of the Year Award at the

Design Museum, London – '*which is crazy if you think that it's the worst-ever Chinese design duplicated by African craftsmen*' comments Eric Van Hove.[55]

> *'With Mahjooba project I am surrounded by 50 people who are depending on this activity… I need to make money, I am not trying to tease or please people, I have the responsibility and now it is different… it is not about trying a random artwork as with V12 Laraki, I created a company meanwhile. I could have stayed informal but I needed them (craftsmen) … I had realised how important is that they are with me in the entire process, therefore I want to do everything so they can be by my side during the shows aboard. That, of course, means they need a visa to travel, as we are a company now (Fenduq) they can obtain it easier due to the fact they are officially employed. There is not a lot of infrastructure in Marrakech or Morocco to show our projects, so we have to go abroad. Practically I have been facing a lot of misunderstandings. One artisan could not understand what a bank account and social security means. I am not here to safe the world but I love them, and we are in this together, for me it is a mutual exchange. They came with me for few shows already and on the 2nd of February 2019, six of them are joining me and they are not coming to work, they are coming to accompany me at the show. Honestly, it cost me a thousand euros for hotels and air tickets, but I haven't thought for a moment that it would be a waste for me. They are guys among my artisans that couldn't look into policeman's eyes and now they are confidently travelling. Two of them, two months ago had to take care of themselves, alone they had to go to the airport and take a flight back from Europe to Morocco and they did it, it made me proud… they were so far from this when I have met them. This is really nice, I have kept the tickets, all the stories around… it's fundamental to sell the story from their perspective and their part in the whole affair. It took 4 years to create a team but it happened and they are very diverse… 55 years old secular guy from Hassan II period, a Berber from the mountains, a poor guy from the favelas in the Medina or a very religious man. They all have self-respect now. Each piece we produce we accompany with a silver placket with their names carved, all are signed, it makes a whole difference. It is even possible that Moroccan King may see this art piece as he is a great contemporary art collector and the artisans know it. Interesting is also to see how the neighbourhood changed and how they interact with us, how new shops*

[55] E*ric van Hove – Mahjouba Marrakech* [online] cit. 25. 10. 2019 In https://tlmagazine.com/eric-van-hove-mahjouba-marrakech/

opened around us with metalwork, hardware store and more, they supply us and we support them'.

Silver plaque with names of all artisans who participated on Van Hove's artwork, (source: Alexandra Kollárová)

Eric's art practice might be perceived as a conscious collaboration — while he talks to the Western public in the so-called White Cubes, he always prices the tradition of Moroccan craftsmanship, further he never forgets to mention that he is trying his best to promote individual creative freedom of craftsmen in the country where 3 million of artisans are locked in the routine of daily material replica of tourist pleasing designs.

When I arrived at the workshop titled *Fenduq*, Eric insisted that I have to talk to the artisans too, that an interview without them wouldn't make the story, therefore I have been introduced to the artisans and observed for few hours the working process. But the question I ask here stands: Are they really peers in the common enterprise? I have dared to ask this question even though it is, among other artists, highly unpopular. Cultural producers I have met traditionally avoided any greater discussions on this topic simply because they don't know how to deal with the ethical aspects of cultural appropriation. Eric Van Hove, on the other hand, was frank as much as possible and answered all my questions. Curator and activist Lucy R. Lippard is one of the few scholars discussing the question of ethics of those stepping in the field of the 'Other.' She asks if several dislocated artists producing out of the boundaries of own culture framework isn't more a quest for loot than anything else. According to her, such artworks become a raw material absorbed in the artist's careers and in most of the cases it doesn't present anything form the original source. Further, she asks: under which terms can these objects be possibly a product of an empirical reflection of anyone's lived experience? (Lippard, 2014, p. 24) Even though Eric might seem to do everything 'right', how can we distinguish between a noble rehabilitation of old visual forms and a coherent branding tool which made Eric Van Hove one of the most celebrated and respected artists of the Biennials and Art Fairs in and out of the country?

In order to explore the intersections between contemporary art practices and what is to be called as Moroccan craft I have during my research focused primarily on the social interactions and power relations between the artists, artisans and local communities with whom the art world engages. My interest lies in how artists chose their audiences, and what are the social effects, if any, on the local communities they intended to collaborate with. I paid particular attention to the representations artists construct about various local groups on the official and visible level (the story behind). Van Hove's contribution to TED talk platform Marrakech is a sophisticated personal life story with a hint of a love affair, which definitely charmed the public, but says nothing about the current situation of craftsmanship in the country.[56] Yet, the whole impression is that Eric is fond of all artisans he works with, he emphasise the fact that their names are all carved in silver plaques under the V12 engine object which for him is a significant gesture.

[56] *V12 Laraki by Eric Van Hove at TEDxMarrakech* [online] cit. 9. 1. 2020 In https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EyF3ZXMW_a4

He notes: '*If I wouldn't put their names on the art works it leads to the ideas about exploitation and they wouldn't be proud of their work.*' Nevertheless, Eric in the talk also mentions that thanks to the fact that Morocco became a French Protectorate diversity of skills was preserved. The act of *preservation* of traditional Moroccan handicrafts as introduced by Lyautey himself is a common narrative among contemporary art professionals and foreign artists. L. Lippard suggests that anyone from the ranks of both anthropologists and artists conducting research 'outside', should always ask a fundamental questions: Am I wanted here? If yes, by whom? (Lippard, 2014, p. 32) Traveling artists should according to her speak local languages and be able to give up the role of a final arbiter (Lippard, 2014, p. 32-33). By observation and analysing the artistic practise of both foreign and local artists in Morocco we acknowledge the opposite is happening. Art world had gradually constructed a relationship based on condescension, patronising attitudes and representations which doesn't credit anyone beyond the artist himself or herself.

Current attitudes, interventions and statements are taking a form of positively evaluated civilisation projects that are for 'them' (read an average Moroccans) economically beneficial, preserving their heritage, helping them to be proud of their own tradition, emancipating them, promoting their products, their knowledge, skills, helping them to innovate, giving them visibility, etc. Furthermore, rhetorics of such kind accompany the narratives of the foreign museum's and galleries in the city and agendas they present, as much they are part of individual project's statements. Throughout my fieldwork, I have encountered many artists working with urban artisans as with different communities in rural areas, but I have almost never witness any debate on ethical aspects of conducted research.[57] The notion of discovery and exploration carries an idea that art is engaged with a value-free environment, distant land from which the artist will bring back ideas, an 'ancient indigenous knowledge' in order to enhance and alter the quality of art practises. Morocco became enormously popular for many of 'quasi-anthropological artists' as an American art critic and historian Hal Foster likes to call them (see Foster, 1999), for its geographical proximity and 'ready-made exoticness'. The most aware among them (read artists) might seek to work with local communities with the best intentions and engaged approach, yet the real impact is at least questionable as many of them try to fulfil the social outreach grant requirements.

[57] In winter 2020 exhibition titled *Malhoun 2.0* for the first time tackled in more critical manner the representation and visibility of the original producers on which I reflect in chapter *Conclusion*.

Artist is only tactical in a careerist sense, notes Hal Foster (Foster, 1995, p. 303-304), which becomes even more evident with commercial artists as in Eric's case. Once dealing with cultural differences, the unpopular question of cultural appropriation appears, however, more in anthropological debates on contemporary art than among artists. Even though we are currently facing a critical discourse on Western insensitive classifications of ethnographical collections in the museums linked to colonial periods and we have a solid list of scholars opening discussion on 'primitivism' and 'indigenous artefacts' (Danto eds., 1988; Price, 1989; Hiller, 1991; Babcock, 1995; Appadurai, 1998, Kopytoff, 1986; Jules-Rosette, 1984;), practises of contemporary Western artists stepping into the field of the 'Other' presents much of an under-researched field. However, they these debates remain equally relevant. Schneider notes, that it is practically impossible to avoid cultural appropriation once the artist is travelling and have direct contact with local communities, but what must be an entry point of every researching artist is the *responsibility* once the fieldwork is carried out (Schneider, 2006, p. 43). From the conversations with Eric, I have understood that he is in every aspect of his practise confident and doesn't question any ethical overlaps of his output. It is without a doubt that he invested energy and capital to transform his atelier into a company (titled *Fenduq)* and provides the craftsmen with numerous, for Moroccan context, untypical benefits. Artisans became official employers with a bank accounts, social security and regular, considering within the local context, solid salary with a percentage from the sold pieces. Their 'self-confidence,' something that Eric likes to emphasis, arose as each of the finished pieces bear their name. The feeling of gratitude (something that I have witnessed among Moroccans working with or for foreign cultural institutions or individual artists) to Eric and his interest in traditional Moroccan craftsmanship creates a mutually beneficial well working environment.

The question to be asked here is: Is Eric Van Hove committing a revolution by rehabilitating Islamic art, or we are facing a tradition in which — objects are beautiful, but repetitive as the producers are in a lack of a creative spirit, however, through the (Western) artist Moroccan craftsmanship and Islamic art is, again, gaining a rightful status. Even if some techniques were recognised by the French scholarship as 'aesthetically valuable', it was the craftsmen (often referred as to 'Arabs') who, because of their fixed biological inabilities, never stepped beyond the mare decorative motifs. A French archaeologist and art historian Henri Terrasse criticised Moroccans for not being able to analyse their production methods and called the whole country as 'the

kingdom of arabesques', the artisan was seen as unable to explore the potentiality of different variations, stubborn and limited by his religion (Terasse, 1924, p. 274). I have pointed out in previous chapters that such discourse resulted into devaluation of the local producers in the perspective of the West, I argue that similar discursive formations exist in current claims of various artists and art professionals. Eric notes:

> *'I work now with more or less 10 craftsmen and I love them, that is why I am here, but they speak only darija, and unfortunately only by a darija of a working class. One of my artisans is called 'Dragon,' he is fifty-five and he is a true artist and a philosopher and he is developing the language beyond the actual grammar tools. He has the mouth to speak but no ears around him that would listen. There is almost no one in his social class that would truly hear what he says. Here the craftsmen use in one sentence five times smitu smitu smitu[58]... you have a missing vocabulary for various objects, they refer to everything as to 'things', sometimes you have a piece of wood and two screws and all you hear is 'smitu' ... and they are using it to describe the wood and the screws at the same time. Do you see where the problem is? Public education level and the religion on the top of it doesn't allow anyone to grow'.*

In Van Hove's highly elaborated speech at TED Marrakech, he prices the French Protectorate in Morocco to be able to preserve some of the handicraft techniques. The French truly established a vast number of vocational schools, as they have first published numerous studies on Moroccan craft production (Irbouh, 2005), yet here the discussion on the *responsibility* can reopen. First, should all the material and nonmaterial benefits for the artisans be considered as a virtue? Paying someone a decent salary isn't usually considered as something exceptional, with the very difference, that within Moroccan cultural context, it is perceived as an exceptional proof of the (Western) artist's philanthropical mindset. Many of discussions that I have been part of about Eric's practise led to statements such as: '*He gives them (artisans) respect and credit, and in fact, he wouldn't have to do it at all; 'Because of him, they are doing real art, they are in galleries, something they would never dream of.*' It is probably a matter of fact, that economical situation of all artisans had been, through the collaboration with Eric Van Hove, considerably improved. And as I have stated in the previous lines, I do not question the intimate established relations Van Hove has with his collaborators.

[58] Translated as: 'what is the name of this?'

Nonetheless, the responsibility towards the artisans simultaneously lies in the form of representation he produces. After his V12 project, a book was published consisting of the documented process with additional essays by Eric van Hove, Simon Njami, Maylis de Kerangal, Hamid Irbouh, Laurent Courtens, Amanda Sarroff-Robion and Ayoub El Mouzaïne. The core of the book is the interviews with the artisans in French, English and Arabic. *'I worked with the artisans at the workshop during the creation of the piece and I can tell you that it was a very equal rapport of creation between the 'artisans' and the 'artist'* states writer Ayoub El Mouzaïne who worked for a certain time in Van Hove's workshop.

Hal Foster in his essay about artists working with the 'Other' highlights the so-called danger of 'ideological patronage' (Foster, 1995, p. 302). I wouldn't be exaggerating here by claiming that artisans are presenting a group which is lacking the power of self-representation and without such a project and collaboration, they and their craft production would remain for curators/galleries and other cultural experts invisible. Yet, they managed to be part of the art world in Marrakech and elsewhere and travelled out of the country for the first time, however, despite Van Hove's best intentions — within marginalised positions and not under their own terms. The visibility they have achieved is exclusively through Eric van Hove, a Western artist who started a real '*renaissance of African art and craft*'.[59] Hal Foster was among the first contemporary art critics who have described a new 'quasi-anthropological paradigm', he states: it is the cultural/ ethnic other in whose name the artists create/struggle, located always outside, elsewhere in a postcolonial environment (Foster, 1995, p. 302). There is always an existing assumption that the artisan must be socially or culturally different, only through an outsider, the transformative alterity (from authentically indigenous to economically innovative) is possible (Foster, 1995, p. 302-303). Every single piece which was produced by *Fenduq* is signed by artisans who were part of the working process as we can see on the illustrative image, nevertheless, the labels we encounter in museums, galleries and the art fair booths once the object is released into the world of art bear solely the name of Eric van Hove. Just as the cushions and pottery marked as the final product by Dior's signature. As so the official website of Voice gallery where his work in Marrakech is presented, offers the curriculum of the artist, but never name of any

[59] *Eric Van Hove: Algeria/Belgium/Morocco* [online] cit. 20. 2. 2020 In https://africanah.org/eric-van-hove-algeriabelgiummorocco/

artisans Van Hove worked or works with.[60]In numerous art orientated articles we can read about his practise and life story and artisans, again, remain an anonymous group. The case of Eric van Hove, a Belgian artist producing objects that are an obvious visual reference to Islamic arts and crafts is an appropriation which is, according to him and despite my critical stance, done in a careful and continuous way — primarily because he is sharing the profit from the sold artworks. The uncritical understanding and celebratory attitudes and statements towards Van Hove as I have witnessed through various exhibitions and interviews among other cultures actors in Marrakech indicates the character of a discourse in which they operate. The contemporary Moroccan art scene is in a lack of any postcolonial and critical discourse, therefore a charismatic well build story of Eric Van Hove who enhances the art objects by the artisans signatures on silver plaques, produces a precisely and highly aestheticised artworks and additionally provides a 'fair' share of the profit makes from Van Hove's *Fenduq* an unquestionable phenomenon of the local art scene, and from Van Hove an emancipator of traditional Moroccan handicrafts and a true philanthropist.

The question of cultural appropriation, which definition stands: taking something from a culture that is not one's own: a knowledge, history, intellectual property or ways of artistic expression (Schneider, 2009, p. 37), can be considered as twice as problematic, once it is a case of an artists that are, actually, originating from the culture itself. The situation is thus considerably shifting when it comes to a 'Moroccan artist', often with fluid identity background such as 'French-Moroccan' or 'born and raised in Europe' when dealing with or representing Moroccan communities. This is the case of photographers Btihal Remli ('Moroccan, born and living in Germany'), M'hammed Kilito (Moroccan returnee from Canada), Laila Hida (Moroccan returnee from Paris), Hassan Hajjaj (Moroccan returnee from London) Sara Ouhaddou ('French-Moroccan'). These artists can claim ancestral ties and represent local cultures throughout their art practices mostly from an undisputed position (Schneider, 2006, p. 39-38). The presumed biological or cultural descent and belonging created a space for the construction of new identities even in the very case when artist descendent from or have been raised in the West. Above all, this category of producers is entitled, on the contrary to their Western counterparts, to unlimitedly represent. Most of these artists are coming from/or have ties to international art scenes and are part of Westernised art canon

[60] *Voice gallery: Eric Van Hove* [online] cit. 12. 12. 2019 In http://www.voicegallery.net/artists/eric-van-hove.html

mediated by the contemporary art world. The legitimacy is thus conditioned by and dependent on whether it is a 'Westerner' entering the field or someone claiming to be 'indigenous' while appropriating. The ancestral background usually implies the unquestionable right to represent and to collaborate, however, according to what I have observed in Morocco the art practise of the Western artist and the 'indigenous' one rarely differs. One of the well-known artist dealing with Moroccan craft is French Moroccan artist Sara Ouhaddou describing herself as hundred percent Moroccan and hundred percent French. Ouhaddou is represented, as artist Eric van Hove, by the Voice gallery based in Marrakech. In an article available on the artist's website titled *Rewriting history* we read: *As she works, she's inspiring the next generation of Moroccan artisans too, helping them find new direction from old ways — and escape the boredom of repetition*. For Ouhaddou it is a way how the artisans can become modern, she adds: '*they are waiting for someone to show them that it is not just a craft*', at the end of the article Ouhaddou states: '*I am turning craftsmen into artists.*'[61]

Writing on such discursive formations is always a balance on the edge; an artificial division between the Western and non-Wester art producers (the question of legitimacy) implicated on the practices of appropriation is clearly a blind end which can disrespect the multiply constructed identities and their alterity. Anthropologist of contemporary art Arnd Schneider emphasises, that there are no origins in art as there is no fixed ethnical or national categories, but only different claims to these material objects and intangible practices by various groups and individuals; however, he further admits that such understanding becomes problematic as different groups and individuals are in various positions of power. Current increasing discussions on claims and struggles over representation and power indicates that such debates are needed (Schneider, 2006, p. 42-44). However, we must without a compromise acknowledge the historical differences between the West and non-West, whereas the first, notes Schneider, has a vantage starting position. Once critically tackling different art practices and ways how foreign artists/designers are dealing with cultural appropriation, the acknowledgement of disparity of power positions must serve as an entry point. Art isn't happening in vacuum or power neutral landscapes, but in different economical, political and social environments within specific historical contexts. The art world of both North America and Europe forgets or omits that the communities with whom the artists are

[61] *Rewriting History*. [online] cit. 20.12. 2019 In http://blog.aishti.com/rewriting-history/

collaborating are living subjects with the right to claim ownership over their symbolic heritage. To come back to the question of origins and the fluidity of constructed identities — who then, has the right to work with Moroccan artisans or other communities? Is being Moroccan/Islamic/Arabic/Amazigh origin an advantage in these terms? Both Schneider and Wright argue by the need of a strict contextualisation, i.e., there isn't a correct answer, therefore all must be described by a precise analysis of each carried intervention. Further, the Western art world is often incorporating non-Western cultural producers whose curriculums are built-in metropolitan art centres (such as New York, London, Paris, Berlin), further individuals' identity is fashioned around the image of 'Western-educated enlightened native' possessing thus s higher symbolical status among the 'native' counterparts. Thus, by the very essence of these conditions, they are as much as their Western peers, in power position towards the land and cultures '*which, at the same time, are and are not, regarded as their own*' (Schneider, 2006, p. 37). Anthropologists are not in the positions of arbiters on who can appropriate, notes Schneider, however, artists' works have to manifest a dialogue and ethical engagement with the 'Other', even in such cases when these artists are directly dealing with their own roots 'back home'.

Susan Schaeffer Davis, an anthropologist who researched for thirty years on traditional art techniques with female communities in Morocco states: Many of Western companies are pushing women, which they hire as weavers, to weave rugs with a novel motives claiming that they are encouraging women to *evolve* and to try new styles, that they are offering them *freedom* from the static *arabesque* but, in fact, hoping for something that would distinguish the company's production from the classical style rugs available everywhere in the old city.[62] Something similar we can, in fact, observe among the contemporary artists. The act of imposing novel diverse colours and unprecedented designs is particularly evident among some of the artistic practices, namely projects by above mentioned Sara Ouhaddou and Marrakech based Moroccan artist Ramia Beladel. Both visual artists were inventing different colours of rugs, techniques (Ouhaddou) and motives (Belladel) with female weavers in various Moroccan localities. Ouhaddou's project 'The bou-Oumlil' addresses old techniques of weaving by transmitting the *bou-charouite* model of waving '*into more contemporary codes.*'

[62] *Marrakesh Express* [online] cit. 18. 2. 2020 In http://www.marrakeshexpress.org/

In her artistic statement she claims:

> '*I made them focus on the material itself and not on the patterns anymore. I asked them to have a deep reflection on the object itself as the first material, I encourage them to be more sensitive to the weaving. So I just draw their intention to angles of creation. After 120 meters of different white fabrics, 28 days working, 6 hours per day, involving 15 women we created 2 pieces of fabric, 2 m x 2, 50 m each. The project experiments with the practices of the local craftswomen, guiding them into unexplored territories to introduce them to the new territories and encourage them to innovation. I learned a lot from their everyday life, staying one entire month in their village, Ait Souka. I understood that they are not used to weave anymore because of many reasons, the modern life, their social habits, their family life, conflicts between villages, nothing is made to help them to sell their art in the local market etc Moreover, the region is very difficult to reach (Hight Atlas), and one of the poorest of the country for the natives meanwhile it's one of the most touristic (tourists are climbing Toubkal from all over the world). I felt that the women of Ait Souka in particular (and it is entire society) deeply wanted to evolve by the act of creation.*'[63]

Similar approach we can see in Ramia Beladel's practise introduced during her art residency in the oasis *Tighmert*,[64] which she describes as 'empowering female communities.' Beladel proposed to the female weavers various untraditional motives in order to emancipate them from the repetitiveness seen as something that imprisons not only women of the oasis but the Moroccan handicraft in general.[65] These lines of mine aren't questioning Beladel's or Ouhaddou's established relations with the women during their residencies, although Ouhaddou had been eventually criticised by the artisanal school in Tétouan *L'école des métiers et arts nationaux Dar Sanaa,*[66] with which she had collaborated. Ouhaddou was accused by the female artisans of *Dar Sanaa* for using their embroider motives typical of Tétouan in the design competition commissioned by

[63] *Sara Ouhaddou about the The bou-Oumlil Project* [online] cit. 20. 10. 2020 In http://saraouhaddou.com/portfolio/bou-oumlil/

[64] *Ramia Belladel* [online] cit. 12. 12. 2019 In http://www.ramiabeladel.com/

[65] Interview with artist Ramia Beladel was conducted on 22nd April 2019.

[66] *Dar Sanaa* [online] cit. 26. 1. 2020 In http://www.apdn.ma/tetouan/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=96%3Al-ecole-des-metiers-et-arts-nationaux-dar-sanaa&catid=31&Itemid=324&fbclid=IwAR00g6ZUU25m8WYelnMR_8bf-ZYXccCCA8mtZzk3dqzMp7vbiqfT7OEnPDE

Royal Air Maroc. Ouhaddou, who eventually won the completion, according to *Dar Sanaa* never credited anyhow the original producers. The only subsequent official statement the artist made was: '*I think the women are very proud to see their art on a plane. It's a way for them to travel.*'[67]

I aim to critically tackle from which power positions they both speak upon local producers and their traditions. According to both artists, female artisans represent production in stagnation, something that French colonial scholar Henri Terrasse named an *'emptiness in variation*' (Irbouh, 2005, p. 31). Irbouh in detail examined French colonial institutions and their archives to understand the constructed French value judgments towards visual art in general, craft industry in Morocco in particular. He emphasises that in order to understand not only the history of colonial visual culture (including subordinated craftsmanship) but the current development of cultural life in Morocco, the disparity in power between the French (today more alike The West) and Moroccans must be taken into account. The contemporary visual culture in Morocco presents a hierarchical model, where on the very bottom are above-mentioned artisans who do not possess any power of self-representation once they engage with what is to be defined as the contemporary art world. Despite the frequent collaborations with both foreign and local artists, they are rarely visible and credited. On the other hand, despite the status of Moroccan artist being higher than the one of an artisan, he or she is still not as equal as his or her Western counterpart. Local artists have been as much ranked, patronised and subjected, especially in the very first decades of the modern art era in Morocco. Curator at the Paris *Institut du Monde Arabe* Brahim Alaoui, for instance, categorises Moroccan artists of the 20th century into two groups — figurative and abstract. Such classification is an adaptation of Western hierarchic model, the similar we can read among Moroccan memoirs when referring to the development of artistic traditions in the country: '*his work resembles Paul Klee; he had a hint of Picasso; the composition truly is perhaps inspired by Hieronymus Bosch; his brush strokes are clearly as the once we can detect among the pointillists etc*' (Weigant and Castaigna, 2019, 61-64). The accepted view is that the modern/contemporary artistic production is clearly an outcome of encounters with Western artists. The *distinction* introduced by colonial powers was made through the 'good manners' based on expertise in

[67] *COP22: les trois artistes Africains du concours 'Wings of Africa' reçoivent leur prix* [online] cit. 20. 2. 2020 In https://atlasinfo.wpengine.com/COP22-les-trois-artistes-africains-du-concours-Wings-of-Africa-recoivent-leur-prix_a76983.html

preservation practices. The contemporary artist is, within the good intentions, as Sara Ouhaddou puts it: '*turning craftsmen into an artists*'. The archetype of 'an outsider emancipating the misled natives' is in Morocco present since the European expansionism and continues to be executed through a vast number of diverse art interventions.

Numerous scholars of the past, as so much as the contemporary artists deeply appreciate the material culture of Morocco and the so-called 'golden age'. They thus advocated the idea of a foreign cultural actor bringing back the glory of the ancient times, yet simultaneously never forgetting to emphasis that the decay is solely due to Moroccan *inability*, often based on essentialist ideas, of respecting their own heritage. The reasoning of the *incapacity* is, among ethnicity, the religion, further a grammatically poor character of Moroccan dialect *darija* and above all something defined as a sort of 'Oriental attitude' usually associated with laziness, narrowness, lacking interest etc All above-mentioned factors according to the artists and designers didn't allow the civilisation development and progress of Moroccan culture. Many of colonial administrators who were in charge, namely artist Tranchant de Lunel have described the monuments as '*turning into ruins, neglected for more than six centuries*' (Jeledi, 2007, p. 300). Such claims again enhance the discourse of Moroccans purposely disregarding their own heritage while it justifies the presence and interventions of the French as patrons, educators and facilitators — an existing discourse which allows contemporary Western or Westernised artists and designers, researches and implemented cultural institutions to, in a similar manner, restore material culture under own terms for the natives who dwell in ignorance.

The introductory chapters had been dedicated to 'the discoveries' which present a coherent body of speech about Morocco, an existing and lively archive. The narratives of the Travellers serves here as a building blocks of contemporary discourse which continuously saturates the understanding of the country and its martial culture as an exotic land of 'otherness,' while it simultaneously lures the contemporary foreign cultural practitioners and subsequently justify their agency. The following chapter discussed the act of *distinction* as presented by the colonial force that once for all, by modes of representations, divided the Moroccan material culture production into two unequal splits, two distant worlds of the 'archaic craft production' and 'the modern world of contemporary art'. Both local and foreign artists are, for various reasons,

successfully intersecting these two worlds, perhaps with an intention to bring them closer, to fix the fracture and to set a mutual dialogue. Nevertheless, they are, in fact, operating within an ongoing discourse of culture dominance where one group is always more: *openminded*, *progressive*, *sophisticated*, *playful* and *creative*, wheres the other half of the producers remain trapped in the timeless Medina guilds once sealed by Lyautey, or in the remote rural lands yet 'untouched by civilisation.' In the following chapter, I intend to explore some of the discursive formations (attitudes and statements) of concrete contemporary art experts *in situ*. I ask who has the right to decide what art is and what remains valueless? What we can observe within the cultural institutions today, as among individuals, is a rejection of any connection with the colonial past, while at the same time following the exact fixed canonical value judgements, attitudes and practices. I argue, that it is, again, the outsider who is presenting 'the correct' way how to *restore, display, describe, classify, store and evaluate* the artistic expressions as it was during the official colonial era in Morocco. To answer these concerns of mine I look into concrete statements of curators and gallerists in Marrakech.

Chapter 5 The Power of Experts

'*But who created the creators?'*[68] Pierre Bourdieu

In the previous chapters, I aimed to present discourse as a *continuum* originating from the time of colonial era in Morocco with its present-day manifestations. Concrete examples of how local material culture and its producers are approached by the various artist both Moroccan and foreign is a result of this *continuum* which I imagine as pulling threads connecting 'the past' with 'the present.' First of the threads presents the mythology of the 'discovery' saturating the social construction of the *difference* first set off by contact with the European colonial powers. As I had stated in previous chapters, stories about culturally fertile 'ancient' land continuously attracts Western cultural actors and justify their various forms of agency. European artists travelled, discovered and as mentors presented the more 'developed' ways of artistic expertise. Contemporary Western artists are today is similar manner travelling and appropriating, and in many cases, their artistic practice presents patronising attitudes lacking signs of any ethical approaches, self-reflexivity or self-positioning. The second thread is representing the way in which artists are, despite strong local decolonizing attempts in the late 1960s and in the beginning of 1970s, dealing with the so-called craftsmanship and artisans. I argue that the process of devaluation, in fact, not only influences the understanding of artistic 'native' production but does too fundamentally condition the current attitudes and claims towards the local contemporary artists. I have titled the first part of my thesis *The Archaeology of discourse* as I believe only by the method of 'excavation' we can, in fact, gather a vast number of examples resembling *the present* and *the past*. Another thread to be discussed is *expertise*. The cultural experts during the time of French Protectorate in Morocco tremendously influenced — throughout the educational system, implemented language and French scholarship, the way in which the Moroccan culture was perceived in the broadest sense (see Pieprzak 2010; Irbouh 2005). The question I ask is, to what extent the contemporary art world internalised or re-articulated and re-thought the imposed historical systems of hegemony. While the colonial administration approached the 'indigenous' culture in systematic highly sophisticated *modus operandi*, the world of both global and local contemporary art is less synoptical and genuinely fragmented. As art historian and sociologist Sarah Thornton notes: '*the art world is so*

[68] BOURDIEU, Pierre. *Sociology in Question*. London: Sage, 1993.

diverse, opaque, and downright secretive, it is difficult to generalise about it and impossible to be truly comprehensive' (Thornton, 2008, p. 17).

The historians can today, primarily by studying archives, clearly describe the colonial histories and concrete political and economical consequences it had in each of the colonised states, whereas field of art is a sphere where discourse operates as so much, yet in a more subtle and invisible conduct, often argued by the vague doctrine of aestheticism and principles of generally valid art expertise. New forms of Orientalism are disguised under the mask of good intentions, elegant manners, appealing as egalitarian and democratic. By adopting critical visual methodology with the emphasis on discourse analysis as articulated by G. Rose, we can analyse that unequivocally the opposite is happening, subsequently the unjust and prejudiced dealing with the 'Other' becomes more obvious. The contemporary visual art scene is now more than ever facing criticism towards the way curatorial practices are representing non-Western forms of artistic production and its producers, however, these voices, once out of the academia, remain rather minor. The art scene in Marrakech has the ability to act as new, emerging, playful and indeed harmless.

According to P. Bourdieu's art theory, art is akin to religion: work of art becomes an object of admiration in a moment of the common act of *belief*; in Bourdieu's term a 'collective act of magic' (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 52). Following Bourdieu's theory — in Marrakech as elsewhere, a group of powerful individuals act upon this shared *belief*, thus decides according to a specific constructed criteria which objects are, in fact, art and what art is not, what is valuable and what remains valueless. The transnational proliferation of the 'White Cubes' and the increasing cross-cultural debates around contemporary art practices allowed more non-Western artists to suppress the pinned 'otherness' and compete as an 'international artists' (Solomon, 2019, p. 95). Nevertheless, question often asked by anthropologists of art stands: under whose terms is the visibility and recognition possible? (Schneider and Wright, 2014, p. 4) Applied to the field of contemporary visual art production *in situ* I aim to look upon the structure where the art professionals: curators, writers, gallerists and museums employees are deciding about were pieces of art are circulating, in which way they are supposed to be displayed and represented. Art, according to the curator and art historian Linda Nead, has to be understood as more than a mare artefacts — we need to look into the 'language of art'.

This requires to critically tackle knowledge production, institutional practices, subjects and various acts which are shaping the final product labelled as 'art' (Nead, 1988, p. 4). In other words, she points out that it is necessary to understand the discourse of art as a form of academical, curatorial and institutional influences. The discursive approach is concerned primarily within the power structures in which art productions and value-creations are embedded, therefore it is, according to Nead, the most suitable method of inquiry (Rose, 2014, p. 135-136). Foucault was concerned with the dominance of certain discourses, particularly with those located in the powerful institutions operating in the *regimes of truth* (Foucault, 1972, p. 194), which happened to be relevant for any of analysis tackling various forms of domination. The power of concrete cultural institutions in Marrakech would be discussed in separate chapters dedicated namely to the Museum of Yves Saint Laurent and to a cultural venue Jardin Majorelle. In the following lines, I am discussing the agency, attitudes, intentions, interests and statements of powerful individuals who are in the positions of experts on contemporary Moroccan art. The agency of art professionals is traditionally, in the writings on art, left aside and their utters are often quoted as absolute *truth*. M. Foucault had been criticised for some unclear theoretical aspects of his work as so for his vagueness in conducted methodology; he, for example, acknowledged that power has concrete aims and effects, but never explained those effects by turning notion to a human agency, which some of his followers later added and which I am, in this chapter, emphasising (Rose, 2014, p. 191). Adopting Foucault's methods of discourse analysis means to pay attention to details both in textual and visual narratives, the importance lies in daily mundane routines, banalities that slipped during informal conversations, institutions that are taken for granted, informal rules and orderings, spoken language, humour and comments, but also modes of *visibility* and *invisibility*. 'The lack of' is equally eloquent and important in my analysis as a direct result of a certain agency (Rose, 2014, p. 191) as, for example, the ongoing *absence* of the local spectators. Following lines present derivations of interviews which took place in Marrakech from fall 2017 to spring 2020, additionally, I used various articles as a complementary source of statements.

Discourse appears as a coherent pattern of statements, or the coherent lack of them, across different 'archives' (Rose, 2014, p. 136-137). Despite increasing number of cultural institutions and doubtful gleaming spaces calling themselves galleries (whereas selling more antiques than anything else) to attract mainly tourist visitors in Marrakech, there is, in fact, only little number of actors that are shaping what is here to be defined

(by actors themselves) as a field of visual art production. According to P. Bourdieu understanding of art appreciation and taste in general, requires to be comprehended as a direct result of interactions between individuals, particularly important is to analyse their sociocultural origins from which they emerge, i.e., the tradition which they have internalised and which they convey (Bourdieu, 1968, p. 141).

During my interviews I have been repetitively reminded that, from the commercial aspect, only four galleries in total are functioning in a 'proper way', that is: being able to connect to the global art scene, have regular sales and representations in art fair booths, and thus can fulfil the international standards. The three of them – David Bloch Gallery, Gallery 127 and Voice Gallery are found and run by foreigners and one *Galerie Comptoirs* des Mines is maintained by Moroccan Hisham Daoudi.[69] Two of them are, among artists and other actors valued more for the actual impact on the international scale, but as well, for its relationships with local art environment. Oldest is Gallery 127 located in an apartment situated in the heart of Marrakech's *ville nouvelle Gueliz* founded by French Nathalie Locatelli. The space is primarily focusing on contemporary photography of both local and foreign photographers. The second is Voice gallery opened in October 2011 by an Italian Rocco Orlacchio representing various artists and diverse forms: from painters, photographers to sculptures and mixed media.

The experts which I aim to talk about in this chapter are mostly public figures in the field of contemporary art. To address, within the conducted interviews, themes beyond art itself presented a challenging research approach. I have been primarily directing conversations with art experts towards the obvious lack of local audiences which I have observed during my first art opening visits. Most of them initially undeclared problems of any kind, lately they stated that they have had tried different strategies to include more heterogeneous local public, however, eventually failed. The founder and owner of Gallery 127 Nathalie Locatelli is, for her ability to represent Moroccan photography on the international scale, highly respected figure. She had, since the existence of the

[69] Hisham Daoudi stands for one of the most powerful and controversial figures in the field of contemporary Moroccan art. Beside running CdM gallery in Marrakech he was for several years an owner of the only existing art magazine *Diptyk* and thus had a monopoly on representation and information distribution. According to some informants he used to decide about the coverage of the front pages as about the content of the articles leaving no space for the agency of the writers. Daoudi owns other galleries in Casablanca and he is, as well, known for his manipulative attitudes and unfair deals on the art markets and art fairs. Despite his power was limited after a scandal during an art fair (Art Fair held in Marrakech for emerging young Moroccan artists in 2017) where he manipulated the prices of artworks without informing the artists, he still remains an influential man in power and a close friend to numerous renown artists.

gallery, held fifty solo and group exhibitions and further represented Moroccan photographers at Paris Photo in 2009 and Paris Photo Los Angeles in 2011. Nathalie is an energetic mature woman with long hazelnut hair and a sharp look. As we sat down in her relatively small gallery space facing each other, she, without prompting at all, set off her story in Morocco. The gallery is now functioning for fourteen years (the interview was held on the 14th of March 2018), according to Nathalie: '*at the time of my arrival in Marrakech, there wasn't any cultural life, it was a non-existing scene. Only the French Institute could provide some space for art*'. Apart from Nathalie, most of the art professionals came from countries such as France, Switzerland and Italy expecting to encounter by their words: at least some cultural infrastructure. '*When I have arrived fifteen years ago, there was nothing*' states Nathalie. Self-proclaimed Swiss curator Aniko Boehler currently a partner to Moroccan artist MoBaala talks about Moroccan cultural life in a similar manner: '*We had to build cultural life and desire for art in Marrakech from zero*'. Many of these statements correlate with an idea that only within these foreign experts the true art scene was set, whereas before anything 'cultural' either hasn't existed or was in a state of chaos, decay or stagnating. '*It was the Western Eurocentric cluster they have missed here, their limited understanding of cultural production that cannot go beyond forms of declared fine arts, we had no galleries nor museums, therefore 'we are not there yet*' states ironically Moroccan artist Nadir Bouhmouch on the foreign art expertise in Marrakech.

Before I even pressed play on my recorder, Nathalie who settled conformably in an arm chair, started to evaluate cultural life in Morocco:

> *'You know, I have been educated in the best possible way, I had worked for Cartier for long years and therefore I am used to dealing with all kind of different people, but nothing prepares you for life here. By now I think it is impossible to work in visual arts and I am talking seriously. No one knows anything. Moroccans don't even know how to hang a picture, how to protect it, how to develop it. There is a very inspiring environment in Morocco, the landscapes primarily, but many of the local artists that I know stopped their practise simply because there is no art scene here. And, primarily there is no interest from an average population, thus these talented artists lost their confidence. No one understands anything about art. Currently, it is way better of course with all the Western impact and with all the valuable people coming from abroad. Here I am afraid is no culture, I don't know*

any real local Moroccan collector of contemporary photography and there is a lot of reasons for that. I wonder, do you feel that yourself? I was always thinking about why Moroccans are so ignorant in terms of artistic creation. I came with this idea that it is a certain kind of complex that the Moroccans suffer from. They don't like to show to the world that, they are themselves, lacking expertise'.[70]

Locatelli's power position is unquestionable, she is not only selecting concrete visuals, but she also provides narratives to these works. Most of her statements are, in fact, an account of her personal experiences with Moroccans. Since she moved in the country, they performed primarily 'laziness and greediness', additionally they are unreliable — in all, they are missing morals. Further Loccateli's constructed representation is a great denial of local artistic expressions on a broad scale, accusing the majority of Moroccans of not being able to contemplate upon 'true art,' they are short of interest in, what she defines, as a culture. The missing audience is solely understood as the essential inability of the masses to be hungry for knowledge. Art professionals share the vision that Moroccan cultural life is limited to an appreciation of handicraft production and popular performances at the Square (*Jemaa el-Fnaa*), both subjected to a Western ethnocentric viewpoint on art.

'There is no Moroccan audience for contemporary art and it is a big problem. I have organised once an exhibition in the building of Bank al-Maghrib on square Jemaa el Fnaa surrounded by hundreds of Moroccans, they could have gone inside but they refused, even though it was for free. Such limited thinking about art is a result of lacking education of course. But frankly, they don't understand what is going on behind the walls of their own houses. People are not curious. My gallery is for free and no one is coming here. Before I used to print paper invitations every single time before my art opening and I have distributed it to everyone in the building and down in the shops on the street. You can guess who came. Not a single foot, not even students from ÉSAV (École Supérieure des Arts Visuel de Marrakech) are coming to the gallery. It must be something in their nature.'

Most of the cultural actors in Marrakech are perceiving themselves as promoters of culture life, more precisely of a *certain* culture life fitting their internalised perspective.

[70] Interview with gallerist Nathalie Locatelli was conducted on 14th of March 2018.

The lack of audience is reasoned by statements such as: '*it is in their nature' or 'it is due to their ignorance*.' Another viewpoint about Moroccans and their inability to consume art has Juan Palao Gómez – a Spanish librarian who used to work for Berrada's dream project *Dar al Ma'mûn* Library about which I will talk later. Juan is currently maintaining the book collection in the library of Musée Yves Saint Laurent. Further he is close to most of the artists, spotted regularly during art openings, moderating debates both in commercial galleries and independent spaces (such as *LE18* or *Dar Bellarj*) and apparently became a significant reference, a much-respected authority within the field of cultural production in Marrakech. I have asked Juan during one of the numerous afternoons in the library of Yves Saint Laurent museum if the actual price of the entrance ticket can present a sort of a barrier which enhances the *inaccessibility* to the Museum. Juan provided me with an unforgettable answer resembling with shared attitudes of art professionals towards absenting Moroccans in the local cultural venues.

> '*Do you know how much a beer costs in Marrakech*? Juan looked at me with a triumph in his eyes. '*I don't know. Maybe in some cheap bars in Gueliz twenty dirhams?*' I have answered without any idea where Juan's question is heading. He nodded his head and continued: *'And how much people would drink in an evening?*' I have answered that this probably no-one knows. Juan, who seemed confident in his speech, noted: '*And that is the difference between the middle class in Europe and here, even Moroccans have 60MAD (the actual price of an entrance ticket into the museum of Yves Saint Laurent in Marrakech for Moroccan residents), and they can choose if they want to drink three beers or come to a museum. It is as simple as that. It can be seen as expensive, but everything here related to culture is expensive. Most of Moroccans cannot understand that they can enjoy something beyond the religion*.'[71]

Juan's statement follows the shared denial of local cultural life and its various forms which might be as much significant for Moroccans, as museum and gallery visits are for their Western counterparts. Generalisations of interviewed art professionals towards Moroccan artists, local audience and Moroccans, in general, are based on explanations originating from three main circuits: *religion* as a main cause of stagnation; *relationship towards finance* — stinginess and the *lack of interest* or *ignorance*, all

[71] Interview was conducted on the 10th March 2018.

shield by a vague term '*nature of being Moroccan*'. Those subjects became a source of explanation of an unsuccessful approach of contemporary art scene towards Moroccan audience: '*It is an Islamic way of education, just to listen and never express yourself*'; '*everything beyond Islamic art is forbidden'*; '*Moroccans are just longing for a quick profit' etc Nathalie Locatelli* (Gallery 127) and Rocco Orlacchio (Voice gallery) were frequently complaining about complicated relationships with local artists: '*sometimes the artists are just copying something from the West to make a quick profit'*, or '*they are poor of art knowledge, even in their own traditions*.' The only recognised, successful and prised Moroccan artist is when he follows well the rules of the Western art world. The assumption about how Moroccans behave towards finance is described as '*financial illiteracy*' or '*they have a very precarious way how to deal with money*.' According to interviewed experts both the middle class and the local elites in Morocco do have enough financial resources, but yet they chose to deliberately spend on something that is a *kytch*, this explanation is frequently used when talking about the lack of local collectors of contemporary art, i.e., the fact that even rich Moroccans didn't develop the taste for fine art is a sign of their '*natural inability*' and simply '*Moroccans don't know how to express their feelings through art*.' Most of the comments were made about how Moroccans prioritise culture: '*Instead of craft, their houses are full of Ikea*' states artist Eric Van Hove and calls this attitude as *new African consumerism*.

> Locatelli notes: *'Money is a key issue. It doesn't matter if I am as a gallerist dealing with a carpenter or with my artist, the relationship towards money is everything and it spoils everything. Most of the really good and even known photographers think I will disappear with their money. They don't know how the relationship between an artist and a gallerist work. I will tell you something that illustrates it all: I don't understand Arabic very well, but the most repetitive word you will hear from the terrace of a family having a Sunday lunch is flouss flouss (money, money).*

The lack of audience is explained by a poor education system, however, it seemed to me more as a secondary explanation. The centre lies in the missing interest originating from a certain biological predisposition of all Moroccans. I heard repetitive claims such us: '*Despite the entrance of some museums and galleries happens to be free, they simply do not care*.' Katarzyna Pieprzak in her study on Moroccan museums (more on the lack of them) notes that: regardless of the best intentions of artists and intellectuals (both Moroccans and foreign) in the 1960s and 1970s, the Moroccan public has never stopped

being perceived as an undifferentiated mass with 'underdeveloped' and 'timeless' identity, that is in a desperate need of enculturation (Pieprzak, 2010, p. 116-117). Very little has changed from the language of experts during the French protectorate towards the mediocre public, described by Pieprzak as: '*Moroccan public was figured as a monolithic bloc condemned to never make the transition from understanding craft to appreciating art by themselves*' (Pieprzak, 2010, p. 116).

Even though numerous of articles refer to the Moroccan art scene as emerging, very little has seemed to change considering the local audience: cultural venues are still absent of Moroccans and the attitudes/rhetorics of the art professionals remain at best condescending, in worse contemptuous. Postcoloniality is according to the cultural theorist Kwame Anthony Appiah a condition where the relatively small structure of Western-trained and Wester style intelligentsia — a group of writers, thinkers and artists mediate the trade in cultural commodities of world capitalism at the periphery (Appiah, 1993, p. 149). Marrakech art scene consists of cultural elites that are lamenting and targeting the often marginalised for not possessing enough taste for art and for having only limited desire in art education, yet by looking in detail how the cultural sites are functioning — from their agency to the architecture, we understand that dynamic of exclusion and discrimination in art museums and galleries is present. Despite the current debates on the needed of cultural mediation and integration, audiences are wittingly regulated. Bourdieu points out that anyone, operating out of his or hers specific traditions, is by a specific field of cultural production labelled as a 'naive' viewer and remains external to the Western history of art, he or she cannot comprehend the values and meanings in relation to a specific history and artistic tradition, which is to him or to her alien (Bourdieu, 1963, p. 234). Therefore, a certain competence in art appreciation has to be first obtained and cultivated, further, the internalised knowledge can present a 'correct' way of deciphering and interpreting works of art within a specific tradition. Following Bourdieu's theory (see Bourdieu, 1992), there is a homologues matching between art education and the culture at large. I will problematise this for the following reasons: first of all it is important to define 'education' as most of the art professionals are solely looking into an institutionalised education in Morocco first, omitting other forms of transmission of artistic knowledge. Such as trans-generational and oral acts of passing typical for various local artistic spheres as weaving or embroidery, again condemned as archaic. Second, they are naturally expecting Moroccan youth to be taught in the Western tradition of art history which is considered

as the peak of the development ladder. The transition from the 'uninformed' spectator to the 'informed' spectator in the case of Morocco, had never happened. If we approach cultural life in Marrakech through the mechanism of Bourdieu's theory, the local spectator is absent because he or she couldn't encounter, due to various predominantly economic reasons, the conditions which render possible aesthetic experiences (Bourdieu, 1963, p. 234). At this point, it is important to highlight that these experiences have to be analogues to those of Western museum and gallery-goers. In other words, to obtain certain social and cultural capital fulfilling the expectations of the above-mentioned art professionals, directly means to possess a capital identical to the one being built in Western societies.

Young and warm curator Cassandra welcomes me in Voice gallery located in the Industrial quarter of Marrakech. It's winter and we are sitting in front of a big gas heater while siping tiny Italian espresso. '*Some museums and galleries are simply hard to access*' starts Cassandra with a friendly smile and a strong Parisian accent '*but even a free exhibition of Leila Aloui's photography series at Musée Yves Saint Laurent did not make people come. It actually remained unvisited by Moroccans.*[72] *It's difficult to touch the local community. At the same time you have here the lack of interest, students from ÉSAV for example, don't visit our gallery, despite the fact we are always open, you even don't need to make an appointment here. You can come, sit and stay reading art books all day long, however, nobody ever came. And these kids are from the art school! Talking about the vast audience from the ranks of average Moroccans is useless. The absence is caused by something I would call the lack of curiosity.*' Elegant Moroccan woman suddenly steps in the gallery office and greets Cassandra, from a mutual affection I had understood they are friends. Apparently listening to us for a while, a novel participant in the interview adds:

> '*Moroccans don't go to the museums, for them it is a luxury, they have other things to do. We (Moroccans) think it is too expensive to go there and see something we even don't understand. We are afraid to take the first step, museum or gallery-going is something linked to the elites. Further, there is this other aspect — for us, other forms of expressions than Islamic art can be considered as haram. Therefore, it's hard for public schools to push such curriculums through. The directors will not*

[72] Interview was conducted on the 16th of January 2019.

allow it, what if the parents start to complain? We are simply afraid. And, honestly, we are not at the stage to understand it. It is difficult to state this, but being able to understand art is here linked to a civilisation development. We are considered by the art world us underdeveloped, but what is worse, we think about ourselves likewise.'

The mainstream of art history doesn't tackle curriculums and viewpoints of art professionals and power aspects of their decision making process in general, even less when it comes to art clusters in non-Western societies (Oguibe and Enwezor, 1999, p. 17-19). The particular successful trajectories of contemporary Moroccan artists in Morocco and abroad is inevitably linked to strong connections to the key foreign figures — gallery owners, curators and writers in the very locality. In Bourdieu's terms again — the social symbolic capital is a decisive factor to artist's failure or success in the field of artistic production (Grenfell and Hardy, 2007, p. 136). In other words, the power of art professionals today is manifested by their attitudes and statements towards the local producers: they chose a specific work of art matching well their taste (conditioned by a specific discourse) and accompany them by an accurate narrative they have had carefully constructed according to their various intentions. Producers, to please the curators and Western spectators have to be familiar with the Western historical examples and conventional concepts. Above mentioned two foreign commercial venues: Gallery 127 and Voice Gallery (both highly respected), have the legitimacy in ways of talking, thinking and responding about Moroccans in general, Moroccan art in particular. During my fieldwork, despite some of the obvious racist claims towards Moroccans, I have encountered only positive evaluations of all mentioned professionals. They are considered enormously important for the local art scene as they create in the otherwise 'chaotic and underdeveloped environment a working sustainable cultural structure.' Being represented as an artist whereas by a Voice gallery or Gallery 127 usually indicates an exhibition opportunities not only in Marrakech or Morocco but primarily abroad with easier visa politics included. The connections art experts have outside of Morocco gives them the status of a solid 'gatekeepers' to the global contemporary art world.

The Western world of art expanded the horizons of its map and established itself in Marrakech, which is not a rare situation (there is an existing tradition of foreigners founding independent cultural spaces, commercial galleries or even museums in the

postcolonial conditions), nevertheless Marrakech seems to be quite exceptional in many ways. It has a decade lasting tradition of a Biennial, relatively new established Art Fair of African Art 1.54, functioning School of Visual arts (*ÉSAV*) and the most visited Museums in the entire country — all of them were and are Western driven structures with mostly foreign experts who are in an unquestionable power positions to represent, make statements about and classify culture and its producers. The question I have asked during my field research was in which way art experts are transmitting their understandings of art into the local context and under who's terms? What is the character of the established relationships of Western experts towards Morocco and Moroccans in the postcolonial context of the country? In other words: are they following '*the Hegelian reading of stylistic development which privileges art above craft*' (Maraini, 1999, p. 211-218) implemented in Morocco during the French Protectorate era or they are fundamentally re-thinking the power of knowledge production?

Locatelli states:

> *'I am always saying forget the bad things from the French Protectorate and focus on the good ones, on the beautiful ones and really learn from them. It is always 'us' who are targeted as colonisers but what did the local rich people done for the wealth of Morocco?'*

Some of these professionals, namely Aniko Boehler (*KECH* collective, *ÉSAV*), Rocco Orlaccio (Voice gallery), David Bloch (Bloch Gallery), Juan Palao Gómez (*Dar al Ma'mûn/Musée Y*ves Saint Laurent/Atelier *Fenduq)*, Florence Vissy (*ÉSAV*), Björn Dahlström (Jardin Majorelle and *Musée* Yves Saint Laurent) and Nathalie Locatelli (127 Gallery) herself, entered Marrakech decade or two ago facing a scarcity of art infrastructure, this situation allowed them to create a novel platform with little or no competition. It was a combination of the unmapped terrain of contemporary local arts (thus a big investment potential) and the practical advantages of the cost and quality of living (low prices and additionally established French language) compared to the standards in Europe, that persuaded these figures to establish their long-term livelihood in Marrakech. With the political liberalisation happening from 1999 after the inauguration of King Mohamed VI, newly coming art professionals could simply present

art under their own terms and discover the potential of Moroccan artists according to their preferences with little or no fear of censorship.

5. 1 Back on the African continent

Morocco's identity has been fabricated under diverse historical circumstances including those of African, European and Middle Eastern influences, however, it was the major discourse of Islam, that has bonded the country to the Eastern region (Ali, 1997). Therefore, today we are more alike dealing with the geopolitical spatial category known as the region of The Middle East and North Africa, more than Morocco would be associated with the African continent. Nevertheless, the last decade is marked by Morocco's sudden turn towards Africa, bringing to question whether it is or not an implemented affiliation among a society which traditionally connected the continent to poverty, underdevelopment and recently with unwanted migration (Fattaleh, 2019) The shielding term pan-Africanism is considerably penetrating the discourse on Moroccan art inevitably linked to the new art market interests, rather than it would present a movement of solidarity that aims for peoples liberation, notes curator Omar Berrada (Berrada interviewed by Soukaina Aboulaoula, 2019, p. 170-171).

Instead, Africa is acknowledged as a site of economic investments which leads to an increasing number of large Moroccan companies settled in primarily sub-Saharan capitals. From January 2017 Morocco rejoined again, after thirty years, the African Union (AU) – Morocco left in 1987 after the organisation had fully accepted the membership of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic known as Western Sahara. Africa is in fashion now and art became a tool of a visual conduct, or as a French art historian based in Casablanca Marie Moignard puts it: '*art was always a soft power, when there is a sudden turn in modes of visibility, look into the art market interests and it will get you an answer.*'[73] Constructed enthusiasm for Africa is among the urban areas in Morocco, visible mainly in Marrakech – quite naturally corresponding with the generally shared image of the most visited southern city in Morocco as '*branded hedonistic site of leisure on the edge of the Sahara*' (Minca and Wagner, 2016, p. 142). Indeed Marrakech presents a key location in the production of the new cultural geographies which are now more than ever embracing African epithets. Since 2017 the

[73] Interview was conducted on 25th of February 2015.

number of major African themes exhibitions arose (Berrada, 2019, p. 170-171), museum of contemporary African art MACCAL had opened and African Art Fair 1.54 had been launched, both of course in Marrakech. As Omar Berrada puts it, the relationship, especially the one promoted through art is an empty signifier and beside engagement with Africa on a political, and primarily economic level, there isn't a real interest existing. What remains rarely articulated in the art world is that Morocco faces an increasing number of migrants from West Africa, often being by force removed from the Northern regions of the country back to the South. Some of the cultural actors who wished to remain anonymous stated, that the lack of cultural institutions being truly engaged with unpopular topics such as migration is only a proof about how much is the art world detached from the actual reality, remaining a closed elitist environment. Despite this shared opinion in recent years several artworks dealing with topics on illegal migration arose: namely paintings of Mariam Abouzid Souali or the project of Younes Baba-Ali titled WITHOUT NEGOTIATION, 2018 addressing ambulant street vendors as: '*caught up in an endless game of survival, between continents, the state and its economy becoming an inherent part of metropolitan landscapes.*'[74] Critical comments have been targeting primarily institutional sites such as MACAAL, a museum which, according to them, has the visibility and attention, but rather than using it to address disturbing aspects of the migration and suffering of sub-Saharan migrants, it is benefiting from the constructed regard and, in fact, even deepening the exoticism of Africa. Exhibition director at MACAAL Janine Gaëlle Dieudji presenting herself as an art activist stated that the museum is primarily targeting the city's migrant groups, young children and excluded social groups, however, Dieudji's agency is based on random and occasional events with marginalised groups in a lack of any deeper and systematic engagement.

> '*I am afraid MACAAL has nothing to do with activism, it is a museum surrounded by golf resorts with art openings that are taking a form of opulent parties with the Marrakech prominent figures, in fact, the official invitations are rarely addressed to independent curators or artists. I haven't seen any real attempts from their side to open discussion on those, who are facing racism and violence in urban areas of Morocco, marginalised desperate groups to whom we are referring as to Al-Afariqa. When I have arrived few years ago, no one said Morocco is in Africa, now*

74 Baba Ali, Youness. *WITHOUT NEGOTIATION, 2018* [online] cit. 5. 2. 2020 In https://www.younesbabaali.com/without-negotiation-2018

all changed. And it is a construction build in order to satisfy the new art market. That is all.' Notes on MACAAL anonymised independent curator based in Marrakech.[75]

Marrakech's art infrastructure, despite the growing celebratory articles and new events appearing, is remaining still very small. Attendance of an art opening is a gathering of familiar faces consisting of the local art world, that is mainly producers and art professionals, perhaps time to time expatriates, tourists or random stray visitors are present. Marrakech art scene is an intimate and tiny intertwined cluster of relations which are based on mutual admiration, or perhaps a consciously performed esteem where actors are solely 'producing for the producers' (Bourdieu, 1992, p. 147). Coherent group of statements presented by Nathalie Locatelli (127 Gallery), Juan (Musée Yves Saint Laurent) and Cassandra (Voice gallery) are powerful in a certain way: first, they produce a definite kind of knowledge about the nature of behaviour of Moroccans and second, this knowledge is considered, within the local context, as an absolute and undoubtedly *truth* (see Foucault, 1977, p. 27). Some of the above-mentioned professionals directly founded, or are part of, the very few venues that exist in Marrakech – a city which is now belongs to both the Africa as much as to the MENA. These figures put on sale selected artworks of Moroccan artists, attended or moderate conferences, write articles and give interviews. Beside their agency in the locality itself, they are active actors in the process of fabricating contemporary art of Morocco on the international level. Being a Moroccan artist, longing for recognition, fundings and spaces to exhibit you are inevitably entering infrastructure which happens to be mainly non-Moroccan. According to artist Nadir:

'*The only way how to validate your work here is through the West, even Moroccans won't give value to your work until it's not recognised by European critic or curator or doesn't go through the 'right' institutions. Therefore, works of art have to fit into a framework of European, often Orientalist, imperialist or racist imaginary.'*[76]

[75] Interview was conducted on the 6th of March 2019.

[76] Interview was conducted on 22nd of May 2019.

Chapter 6 Artists *out* of the West or Artists *of* the West?

> *Whereas in the Western ideal the artist is a fiercely independent, even rebellious, creator of art for art's sake, the African artist aims to please his public. This does not make all African artists crassly although that epithet can be justly applied to those who turn out knick-knacks for the tourist trade.*
>
> *'African Art Black Magic,' Economist, December 24, 1994*

Based on observations, semi-structured and informal interviews with art professionals in Marrakech since the year 2017, I have extracted following lines and turned them intentionally into a hyperbole to stress an obvious scorn rhetorics I have witnessed. Since the art experts (gallery owners, teachers, writers, curators and museum professionals) lost faith in ordinary Moroccans who are lacking curiosity in culture to that extent, that even a whole decade of Marrakech Biennial hasn't triggered any interest in art, the only hope of art professionals — the contemporary missionaries bringing enlightenment (education, knowledge, instructions and development) remains in Moroccan artists, who are by their own religious and narrow-minded society in decay misunderstood, and sometimes even condemned by their own families. It is only the Western world of art which can truly and without seeking a profit understand the creative mind of a Moroccan artist. Nevertheless, Moroccan art producers are allowed to access the world of art only under certain conditions: they are expected to behave and even to be dressed in a specific way — to be Western, but only to a certain point: be well educated and informed in the history of Western art and philosophy, act beyond the 'naiveness of a native' but still cultivate his or her identity of mysterious figure from an ancient exotic habitat; the ideal is a nonchalance appearance of a decadent artist with a touch of indigenous jewellery as a sign of belonging which simultaneously functions as a trademark. Artist must not overdo his or her look: not too Western (as he or she would be accused of a mimicry) not too local (as he or she would be linked to craftsmanship) — ready to be framed as a socio-cultural representative of the place and people he or she 'is from'. In Marrakech, the role of the artist's biography is used in an essentialist manner, meaning producers are expected to artistically express the *difference* — for which is the contemporary art world these days eagerly longing.

The common premises of diversity in the contemporary art world is, according to a Belgian curator Nav Haq, more of a strategy fetishising the politics of identity. He notes: '*celebrating difference is within the universalist understanding of cultures in art using the traditional imperialistic modern Western perspective for constructing a shared sense of humanity and 'dignity' in all its vagueness. It is something prominent in exhibitions in art institutions as well as other exhibition platforms such as Biennials. The fact is that the conditions for accommodating 'others' — their identities, and the accepted strategies for the constructs of their identification — has predefined parameters*'.[77] The existing dominant narratives towards non-Western artists are recently a more discussed phenomenon especially among the generation of young art curators with some serious attempts and calls for reopening debates on cultural decolonisation and readdressing established representations. Whereas in the locality itself the rigid discursive formations about the 'Other' are sustained. It had been highlighted in the previous lines how Marrakech art scene is minor to that extent, that the producers and the consumers exist in a symbiotic relationship to each other and their roles are swapped in the very next gathering — producers are simultaneously spectators and vice versa. Considering the lack of audience in most of the cultural venues, artists and art professionals in Marrakech are in anxious need of each other. There has to be, by definition of art itself, a generative mutually constituting relationship between the producers and the art clientele (Grenfell and Hardy, 2007, p. 47). In the moment of an absent audience, the necessary 'aesthetic experience' has to occur among a friend — artist, writer or a curator. Such an intertwined closeness leads to many intimate long-standing relationships. This social setting resulted in an absolute absence of official critical discourse. In practice, it is impossible to bring up to light certain topics not only on the official level, for example through critical wiring in published journals, but too in more private and informal debates. In this case, if not directly a friendship, then a cluster of mutual dependency created an ambience of silence and obvious avoidance of certain themes.

A significant part of the discourse of the contemporary visual arts in Marrakech is not what is told and how, but what *isn't* — these 'taboos' are typically linked to the colonial past and its impact on the contemporary art scene in Morocco, Western presence and dominance in Marrakech, Orientalism and its new forms. 'Taboo' stands for something

[77] *Art After Identity Politics Nav Haq in conversation with Stephanie Bailey* [online] cit. 7. 3. 2020 In https://www.ibraaz.org/usr/library/documents/main/art-after-identity-politics.pdf

prohibited, restricted and forbidden with an idea that once breached a direct punishment will follow. I had encountered some adverse responses from cultural actors especially at the beginning of my fieldwork. I had 'broke the rules' and talked about 'unthinkable' since Moroccan art, at the first, appeared to be much opened for any kind of discussion. A dose of naiveness of an apprentice researcher had caused me initially several difficulties. However, certain upheavals turned out analytically beneficial later on. Though I haven't been researching contemporary art scenes for the first time, introductory findings in Marrakech were in an extreme collision with my pre-assumed understanding. Since writing my master diploma I have spent a certain period of time interviewing artists in Iran and Egypt during the years 2015 and 2016, therefore I assumed I had adopted a set of skills such as sensitivity to certain topics if necessary. This was especially needed when it came to interviewing artists working in the context of state surveillance and limited freedom of speech. But nothing had prepared me on the treacherous discourse of neo-colonialism producing art as a homogenous cultural landscape in the locality itself. '*Marrakech is an example of a tremendously powerful visual discourse that have survived',* noted visual and performance artist Youness Atbane and continued: *'It is a real physical space constructed according to the images of Orient. And be careful, people don't like to hear it*.'

The process of stepping into the field and the very first attempts of data collecting was paved by a sequence of unpleasant experiences. My first markable clash happened in May 2018 – young Italian curator Francesca Masoero, which happened to be later my housemate and a close friend, invited me to deliver a speech about my research in the independent space of *LE18* in the Medina Marrakech. Since I haven't felt confident enough to make any statements about the Moroccan art scene — at that time I had only a few interviews, yet still not enough to understand the core dynamics within the scene, we had agreed that I will talk about the more general theme of the problematic relationship between the contemporary art and anthropology. At the end of my speech, the present public pushed me slightly to at least share my first impressions from the field. I have answered that I still don't feel entitled, however, according to some of my observations and first deep semi-structured interviews conducted (at that time with more commercial artists such as Hassan Hajjaj, Houda Terjuman and Ghizlane Sahli), I answered: '*Artist tend to be more of a luxury good producers than a critical voice of the society, further they seem to be dependent on the Western structures.*' This statement resulted in two hours lasting emotional clash with no result, hence its reverberations

have opted up a topic often publicly silenced. Numerous claims of recognised artists directly denied that there is anything wrong about Westerners present in the scene of art production as they are making everything better: they (foreigners) are reliable in terms of finance, that in practice means — galleries and foreign funds pay on time, cultural centres like French Institute is providing a professional support to exhibitions. '*The funding for culture is very bad and people are failing to organise anything. The Biennale in Marrakech collapsed for this very reason, it is almost impossible to get any money from the government. To organise anything in Morocco you need the power and connections. I used to organise a festival in Tanger and I had a hard time, eventually, it did not work*' states visual artist Simohammed Fettaka.

I have met Marrakech based visual artist Fettaka (1981) during the first edition of 1.54 African Art Fair in winter 2018. He personified everything that I have always imagined under the word 'dandy' — mysterious man in his early forties always with a dark *Rayban* sunglasses spending his nights in various bars of *Gueliz*. He cancelled our first meeting in a bar *Kechmara* while I was already waiting for him at the spot, however, we met the very next day. On Western presence in the art scene of Marrakech, he noted:
'*I think that this is something normal, Westerners are coming here and presenting all kind of different projects. I have nothing negative to say to this. Their agency in Marrakech is better than nothing of course. Who else is creating an infrastructure here? Without them, most of the artists would have to exhibit outside, as they usually do anyway*.'[78] I have felt that his sincerity, the repetitively articulated desire to do art primarily for himself, his indifference to the average public (which for him presents a mass too rigid to address), in fact, indicates more of a personal disappointment on rather an intimate scale.

A. K.: *Do you think an artist should be responsible?*
Fettaka: *For what?*
A. K.: *Well, you are producing a narrative…*
Fettaka: *Art is not powerful here (in Morocco) because it cannot change anything, there is no audience. It can affect, again, only the people from the art scene.*
A. K.: *Do you feel like changing it*?

[78] Interview was conducted on the 22nd of March 2018.

Fettaka: *No. Definitely not, I don't have a strength to change the people here. And I tried with my family. My family was and is a mirror of society and I cannot do anything about it. We were fighting and they just don't get it. The best I can do is just to do art for myself and bring it out, that means primarily abroad. I have been exhibited more outside than here. Paris, Bordeaux, Centre Pompidou... Italy and Germany ... I want to create something strong and I want to be a part of the history, of course. But it cannot be done here. I will give an example: now I can read Spinoza and Kafka and I can understand it, but at that time of these writers, the people around did not understand a thing. Change in Morocco will come with the time, but now it isn't here but elsewhere, where people understand my work.*

Fettaka is an example of a group of artist who's nationality and passport is Moroccan, however, their art practice is marked by a desire to belong to an international community, they reject borders and identify themselves and their practice within the global context. To refer to a quotation used as an entry point to this subchapter: there are Moroccan artists who're frustrations achieved an unbearable level and they simply reject any justification of their practice. They want to be as fiercely independent, even rebellious, creators of art for art's sake as it is expected from their Western counterparts. They are caught in between the two worlds — a Moroccan cultural landscape where they face disconnection with their public and limited infrastructure and the Western world where they are maybe fetishised, but have greater possibilities. They often refer to their practice as to a form of a global language and they insist that Moroccan identity shouldn't serve as a predefined parameter for any classifications or references.

A. K.: *Is the language of art a global language?*
Fettaka: *For me, this is a core question. Of course, I come from here and I am Moroccan. Artists should, according to me, have the ability to translate the local subjects and materials into a universal language. Moroccan problem is a human problem. Humanity, politics and family are general concepts. The translation is braking the borders, perhaps creating a new space of understanding...*

Fettaka presents an artist who is angry towards and aims to break free from imposed identity narratives. His speech was marked by a desire to bring out both the content and the form solely under his own terms. In cultural journal *Lamalif* from the year 1967 an academic painter Hussein Tallal states: '*I am a Moroccan, thus I have no need to paint*

a mosque or fantasia[79] *to prove it. It is not a nationality or an origin that tells me what to paint. I think Delacroix has already painted everything about Morocco and that there is nothing to add.*' (Daoud, 1967, p. 40). The above-described concern of painter Tallal illustrates well the situation which is resembling the frustration of some producers primarily on the international scene. It is an established curatorial practice that Moroccan artistic outcomes are incorporated to some foreign body — usual *exotic, primitive, naive, feminine* etc. Interview I had with Fettaka and others, such artists as Mustapha Akrim, Ghizlane Sahli, Houda Terjuman, Hassan Hajjaj, Ramia Beladel, Zainab Fassiki and Balbzioui Yassine revealed a collective fatigue from their pronounced *marocanité*. Language of art is, according to them, ownership of an individual throughout both local and global issues can be narrated. They want to develop a vocabulary without constraints of history, their practice addresses solely their lives and their individual concerns. Strong statements of Fettaka and other above-mentioned artists, however, doesn't mean artworks they produce are decontextualised. Both Akrim and Fettka are addressing issues relevant to Morocco, most of them highly disturbing — such as unemployment rates, migration crises or the relationship between the Occident and Orient. What matters to them, is to open up a discussion on such topics whenever they feel the need and through a form which they decide for, not for the sake of attracting Moroccan absent audience or pleasing Western spectators. '*How can anyone respond to my art, when no one is in the gallery? I don't have the ambitions to change it for the moment. I am just starting with my family little by little but I cannot do more. If I achieve something with them, I won*' notes Akrim, and continues: '*I am afraid audience here is a lost case'*. On how the situation shifts, once the Moroccan artist steps out of his or hers local infrastructure into an international scene, conceptual artist Lina Laraki comments:

> *'Europe in general, the Western cultural institutions, in particular, like to see artworks related to feminism, political activism, LGBT or Islamism; we of course, in our society, face these issues but it doesn't concern all of the artists from the Middle East. When I was studying in London, I had no particular interest in my own identity, in the so-called maroccanité. I was just being an individual, nevertheless, when I have returned to Morocco I have seen things that are more urgent, that needs to be addressed and thus my first work here had been about identity and*

[79] Fantasia is a traditional horsemanship performance typical for North Africa and states of Sahel.

about me being a Muslim. And it is just recently, that I have realised: maybe I have become one of those artists the West wants. Till today I am not sure if I did this particular work because I have felt the need, or I knew the Western galleries would like it. It is a trap! If you are a European artist you can speak about anything you want, but once you come from the Middle East, but also from Chine or India, your artistic practice has to be a statement about the society as a whole. Europe and North America are the centres of the civilisation and everything else is just 'exotic'. It is this kind of strategy that makes Europe a norm, curators and cultural institutions like to hear how we are oppressed by the governments and how women are harassed in the streets because it makes Europe feel more superior — they have the democracy, free speech and so on. Its always like this and so I realised that I have to address something different. Before I was answering the questions that Europe asked. For example religion, but why I should talk about this? I don't deny some people are questioning it, but I personally don't feel like talking about my religious identity. Do they want to hear about Islam as the religion of oppression? Why would I be talking about this? But sometimes it is my unconsciousness. It is an internalised feeling we all have: We feel entitled to answer about the terrorist attacks that had been committed in Europe by some Muslim because it gives us the feeling of being important. It's endless, then you have Syria and war across the Middle East and you are starting to position yourself. I am not even fabricated as Moroccan by my own society, but instead by Western media discourse and by a chain of statements of various Western cultural actors.'[80]

I have interrupted Lina in her speech and asked if she can possibly name the described attitudes of the Western cultural actors.

'To name it? I think I will call it imperialism. All the Moroccan artists are perceived as somehow politically involved, they are always activists even when being far from it, geographically and by their practice. We are clowns being used. I am currently in an ongoing project linked to Palestine, but my plan is not to directly address the political issues of Palestine in my work, because by that I would put myself in a position where the West wants me to be. They would love to hear about an Arab filmmaker who made a film about Palestinian struggles. Sometimes you have to be

[80] Interview with artist Lina Laraki was conducted on 23rd of November 2017.

trapped in order to understand what is going on, to deconstruct your current position within the system of power representations. In France it is present to an extreme level right now, you have African art everywhere and also you have Arab photography Biennials and so on. Do we have Biennials of European photography too?'

Lina's combative energy filled the room, in which we were sitting, into every corner. During our conversation she often raised her voice in anger — it was an obvious disappointment and growing frustration over the contemporary discourse of art which frequently operates on visible makers or geographical, linguistic and racial differences. Lina is just like other Moroccan artists caught in between two worlds. The exact ambience was present during my interview with Simohammed Fettaka, though his speech was delivered more in a cynical manner.

'It doesn't really matter if you are from Morocco, Lebanon, Syria or Egypt as we are, outside our countries of origin, always perceived as one entity' notes Moroccan artist Youness Atbane. I have met Youness at *LE18* in Marrakech where he was preparing for his performance, his artistic practice — often composed of satirical performances, are based on a critical relationship to the fields of art, its actors and its geopolitics.[81] '*From all cities of Morocco, Marrakech is the most specific*' states Youness and adds: '*As an artist from the MENA, it is a norm that you face the stereotypes on the international art scene, but it isn't common that the local field mirrors the exact discourse of the international scene. And this is the case of Marrakech. Here more than anywhere else you have the strong Orientalist gaze visually constructed from the times of colonialism, which continues to last it its new forms*'.[82] I have asked why there isn't a stronger resistance, or perhaps more visible counter narratives towards these misrepresentations. Youness answered: '*Its simple, exoticism is making money*'. Additionally Youness emphasise that being aware of politics of representations doesn't always happen, sometimes, as Lina notes: *'you tend to, throughout your practice, address unconsciously themes that would please primarily the Western gaze. Artists sometimes naively believe it is his or her duty to answer certain questions asked by the Western audience.*' Orientalist and colonialist representations of the 'Other' shifted —

[81] *Youness Atbane* [online] cit. 6. 2. 2020 In https://lecube-art.com/artiste/youness-atbane/?lang=en

[82] Interview with artist Youness Atbane was conducted on 30th of January 2019.

sensual foreign land is now a geopolitical area where various revolutions and violent upheavals are taking place, where corrupted governments dwell, where suppression of human rights is a daily routine etc Moroccan, Palestinian, Iranian or Lebanese artists are expected to defend or condemn mainly political phenomenas in their social settings. Artists are delivering and partly constructing the final image in collaboration with Western institutions and curators. Many interviews I had with Moroccan artists led to a conclusion which Youness pointed out as: '*We are trying to always redefine Orientalist gaze, but we feel it is here. All the time, it is such a powerful discourse that I don't think it can be dismantled, or some strong decolonizing process would have to appear. We still didn't find a way, how to deal with it, perhaps it is question of time. The discourse is influencing everything and is everywhere — in the way, how our work is contextualised at the exhibitions; in the statements of art professionals; how we are playing the game with them and thus becoming deliberately a fetishised Oriental subject.*'

A Figure of Zineb Fasiki[83] here serves as a great example of someone who is successfully fulfilling the expectations of the Western spectators — a young independent Moroccan artist produces primarily comic books on the topics of feminism, sexuality, women empowerment, further frequently leads discussions on violence based on gender discrimination in Morocco. Compare to the other forms of visual art production, comic books present an accessible medium highly popular among the contemporary youth across the MENA.[84] As an example to be mentioned is Fasiki's Egyptian predecessor Deena Mohamed with her superhero *Qahera* (a veiled character on the contrary to the exposed Fasiki's female bodies) or Joumana Medlej's *Malaak*: Angel of Peace. Latest Fasiki's comic book *Hshouma* (translated from *darija* as 'shame' or 'disgrace') was exceptionally successful predominantly outside of Morocco. Despite her growing popularity, Fasiki and her work had been recently questioned as it actively co-creates stereotypical representation of Morocco in general, female sexuality in particular. She, according to some Moroccan artists, joined the discourse of novelist Leïla Slimani[85] – a representative of the only 'rightful form of Western secular feminist movement',

[83] *About Zainab Fasiki* [online] cit. 5. 2. 2020 In https://lecube-art.com/artiste/zainab-fasiki/?lang=en

[84] The rise of the comic book in the Middle East [online] cit. 21. 2. 2020 In https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2015/06/rise-comic-book-middle-east-150630090108155.html

[85] Slimani is a popular French-Moroccan novelist and journalist and a close friend of former French president E. Macron. Her nonfictional writing boarders with sociology and is mainly focusing on the sexual life of Moroccan women.

recently considered as an official mouthpiece of the Moroccan/Muslim women in France. Fasiki's work is criticised first for generalising assumptions which might draw from her personal experiences but aims to speak on the behalf of the entire Moroccan society, second, her narrative is considered as an effective marketing tool: liberals who auto-proclaim themselves as secular, open-minded, progressive and in favour of women's rights. Despite the growing criticism of Fasiki, according to a young underground artist Amine Lahrach it is the Moroccan youth that presents a great potential. 'They are the missing audience' notes Amine — '*the photographers and painters who are simultaneously skaters, DJs, tattooers, LGBT activists, who believe they can through art commit a change and attract others' curiosity and this goes beyond the limited categorisation of artistic creations and commercial art marke*t.'[86] Such a scene is mostly formed in vast urban areas such as quarters of Casablanca and Rabat among the youngsters from the poor and marginalised areas, as Amine notes — 'favelas', and he adds: '*They struggle for a living but they are truly independent of any Western categorisations. It is the youth that organises, for example, the festival Hardzazat where you can see predominantly young Moroccans. Such gatherings and enthusiasm is lacking in Marrakech and is completely invisible to the mainstream discourse of contemporary art of Morocco. Fasiki's work is popular because she opened something that concerns us too, second its accessible to all of us.*'

Curator Omar Berrada on the emerging local youth states: '*There is so many talents around, and thirst for learning and sharing, but few places to go. I am still hopeful because the youth of Morocco, and Africa, in general, is not waiting for permission anymore; they are building their own spaces. They know the keys to their future are in their hands*' (Berrada interviewed by Soukaina Aboulaoula, 2019, p. 170-171). As an example to be mentioned is Yassine Sellame – a young man from Medina Marrakech I have first met in spring 2017. Yassine was a part of a small skating community in Marrakech, simultaneously he was always interested in photography and used to develop all his films in his grandmother's house. He later moved to Casablanca where, according to him, he could find an accessible independent scene beyond the world of commerce and elitism so typical for Marrakech. Recently he had an exhibition in *Bachibouzouk* in Casablanca which is, by words of Amine: '*One of the rare Moroccan art venues with a Moroccan public*'.

[86] Interview was conducted on 4th of April 2019.

Fasiski has a similar view: '*There is increasing public and people are eager to see art, you will always find an audience even in the Sahara, the problem is only the language, you have to know how to communicate the visual codes with the people. Before, art was considered as something for the wealthy classes. We, the youth are changing things, right now especially in Rabat and Casablanca through graffiti and street art, by different forms than the art you can see, for example, in Marrakech.*'[87]

It is more than clear, according to the presented utterances in this chapter, that any actor of the contemporary art scene of Morocco has to, at one point, always interact with the city of Marrakech. The city either presents a physical space where artistic careers are born, or the opposite — a city from which the independent actors and the resistant formations aim to escape both physically or discursively, a city which they denigrate and for which they have nothing but contempt. However, as my research is firmly embedded in the interactions of power, in the following subchapter I look closer into the contemporary visible and official cluster of Marrakech art scene as witnessed during the years of my fieldwork. Predominantly I tackle the non-critical discourse I have encountered within the institutional structure and the dependency relation (as much economic as mental) of local producers towards this structure.

[87] Interview with Zineb Fasiki was conducted on 16th of November 2017.

6. 1 Marrakech 'as a compromise to stay in Europe'

Marrakech is a city to which every artist migrates, or at least in which he or she frequently circulates. A fundamental reason for such phenomenon is, as I have already mentioned, the growing art infrastructure and concentration of renown artists and art professionals who are positively responding to powerful groups pronouncing Marrakech, on the hierarchical scale of cultural geographies, as the peak. '*Marrakech is a compromise to stay in Europe'*, notes painter Yassine Balbzioui and continuous: '*When I came here in 2000 it was, in these terms, Sahara and suddenly Westerners are here to build our infrastructure, you have Art Fair, the galleries, MACAAL and MYSL museums, it resembles Las Vegas build from nothing, but we must not forget there are no roots and if we will rely only on the West, it will one day surly collapse.*'[88]

Most of the prominent donors and patrons of contemporary art are coming from outside of Morocco. Perhaps one of the best-known figures in the context of contemporary art is a British wealthy entrepreneur Vanessa Branson[89] who founded Marrakech Biennale in 2004 and financially supported the following years (Branson personally donated more than €2m).[90] Marrakech Biennale eventually ended in September 2017[91] (due to a €250,000 deficit left) and according to the opinions of art professionals, it ended once Branson handed over the leadership to the Moroccans themselves.[92]As a reaction to the situation of cancelled Biennale, a trio of Moroccan artists M'barek Bouhchichi, Simohammed Fettaka and Youness Atbane launched an artistic intervention/statement titled 'The Fictional Biennale' on Facebook profile on 24th of February 2018,[93] according to them: *for the purpose of 'repair and remedy' the situation and to 'create debate and reflection around the disappearance' of the exhibition, which they describe*

[88] Interview was conducted on 12th of June 2019.

[89] In October 2014 Branson was awarded for her significant contributions to Moroccan Arts and Culture at the occasion of the ceremony inaugurating the Mohammed VI Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art in Rabat. Today Branson switched from art scene to business and runs one of the most prominent hotels in Marrakech: El Fenn.

[90] *Can Marrakech's 1-54 Art Fair step into the breach of city's cancelled biennial?* [online] cit. 21. 2. 2020 In https://www.theartnewspaper.com/news/can-marrakech-s-new-art-fair-replace-the-city-s-cancelled-biennial?fbclid=IwAR1goZET9aQncJn9INlvg4cWCFE2JuqzdSOPBCoylcKGUBu11V9NARuO0nk

[91] Artists sometimes mention the year 2016 when referring to the end of Marrakech Biennial.

[92] The exact reasons why otherwise successful Marrakech Biennale after a decade of annual interventions ended remains unclear, however, the popular answer to this question by many art professionals can be summarised as: another example of failed attempts by the 'natives' to maintain their culture and cultural life.

[93] Facebook profile of The Fictional Biennale is available here: https://web.facebook.com/FICTIONAL.MB7/

as 'a form of violence'.[94] The trio is accepting artists proposals that would help to answer questions such as: How can we build a path in an area that seems to be in permanent and continuous decline? How to produce art when material culture is under constant threat of degradation? The received projects will then be presented 'to the four corners of the imaginary map[95] of Moroccan contemporary art'.

94 *Can Marrakech's 1-54 art fair step into the breach of city's cancelled biennial?* [online] cit. 21. 2. 2020 In https://www.theartnewspaper.com/news/can-marrakech-s-new-art-fair-replace-the-city-s-cancelled-biennial?fbclid=IwAR1goZET9aQncJn9INlvg4cWCFE2JuqzdSOPBCoylcKGUBu11V9NARuO0nk

95 Image attached below (source: Alexandra Kollárová) presents the imaginary map installed in the public space in Marrakech *Gueliz* during the 1.54 African Art Fair in 2020. Poster published by the artistic trio Bouhchichi, Atbane and Fettaka are connecting the main artistic nerves in Morocco into one single city plan – Zone Tétouan, Zone Casablanca, Zone Rabat and Zone Marrakech. The artists reject constructed representation of contemporary art of Morocco as limited to 'the Berber', 'the Arab', 'the African' or 'the Mediterranean' territory, rather they emphasise the need for a dialogue which can be done only once the fragmented scenes of the country will rejoin again in a space of a 'fictional island'. The artists have decided to re-appropriate abandoned Biennial in order to create a space of debate and reflection on what *disappearance* is and what it can present in future.

Artist Bouchichi states: '*The 7th edition was cancelled, Fictional Biennial is the idea of how we can talk about re-appropriations, mediations, how we can build up a community. We should start talking about art, but first with our neighbourhoods rather than with Western curators. We need to create a real dialogue and the ability to talk should become a norm.*'

Another significant cultural centre initiated by a non-Moroccans is a *riad* alike venue in the heart of the Medina known as *Dar Bellarj* ('The house of Storks') founded by a Swiss couple Susanna Biedermann and Max Alioth. Today their foundation, beside *Dar Bellarj*, as well maintains and finances the only existing school of visual arts in Marrakech – *École Supérieure des Arts Visuels* (*ÉSAV*). Non-profit space of *Dar Bellarj* with its charismatic leader Maha Elmadi presents the only possible cultural centre, which manages to sustain a relatively large base of Moroccan public — the *riad* is traditionally overcrowded and according to my observations, it is here where the art consumption under the local terms is happening. The foreign visitor is often in a position of an uninformed spectator as suddenly, instead of expected French or English, it is the *darija* in which round tables and conferences are held. During the art openings, Elmadi is addressing the audience primarily in *darija* with adopted rhetorics reinforcing ties to local cultural heritage. She organises public events that are, instead of using incomprehensible intellectual language typical for contemporary visual art, build upon respect to the traditional cultural consumption. Nights of storytelling and musical events such as *Sufi* chants are being held to which the public is enthusiastically responding. In other words, the actually spoken dialect within this space and the visual codes communicated towards the spectator aren't, during the majority of events, resembling Western forms in any manner. As an example to be mentioned is a parade and dance performance titled *Ashora* taking a form of celebration of Islamic feast *Āshūra* launched in 2018. Despite organisational problems, parade happened again in 2019 in collaboration with Marrakech contemporary dance group *Nafas*.

Note from a field diary, 11. 9. 2019

The parade went out from Dar Bellarj located close to Medersa Ben Youssef, pasted by the Qotba and Marrakech Museum and continued towards Ben Salah mosque in front which the main stage was installed. On the way, actors in masks were spread around some rooftops waiting for the crowd to pass so they can traditionally water

them from the above or just to present a dance spectacle. Three musical bands were situated on the roofs around the little square where the final stop was. Grandiose masks suddenly appeared from the opposite direction swaying according to the sounds of tarija, qarqaba and derbouka and slowly moved towards the main stage. Parade caught immediately the curiosity of all the Marrakeshis from Medina. A diverse crowd had gathered around, clapping to the rhythms. The public could obviously relate: first, the parade was here for a celebration of a religious feast, second, it was the form that had spoken to them conducted in their own language accompanied by local musical bands.

Performer of the *Ashora* Parade in Marrakech, Medina, 2019, (source: Alexandra Kollárová)

Renown foreign contributor to the cultural life in Marrakech is the most visited cultural site not only in city but in the entire country – Jardin Majorelle. The venue is titled after an Orientalist painter Jacques Majorelle (1886-1962) and consisting of a botanical garden and a Berber Museum both maintained by a French foundation Jardin Majorelle (in charge of Majorelle's garden as well as of the novel Yves Saint Laurent Museum). Agency of both significant cultural venues will be addressed in the more detailed description in following separate chapters. Perhaps among the cultural actors of the contemporary art scene of Marrakech, the best known independent space is *LE18*, a non-profit multidisciplinary venue led by Moroccan returnee from Paris Laila Hida. *LE18* originated from a personal desire of Hida in 2013 and soon became a widely respected space, further considered as a safe enough for various nonconformist voices. Art actors I had interviewed described the venue as: 'space build up from the bottom' and 'a rare engaged space'. *LE18* presents a counter-discourse to a city's commercial or tourist cultural venues, claiming its cultural agency as inclusive and positioning themselves as facilitators of social change. Hida and curator Francesca Masoero frequently introduce various projects under the socially engaged nominative. Additionally, for a great number of artists, the venue serves as a pretext for social gatherings. Throughout seven years of existence, *LE18* managed to become a significant reference in the art world of Morocco and beyond; nevertheless, we can provocatively question if being more known elsewhere than by mediocre population in Marrakech Medina, does truly mean to be inclusive. Masoero is more than aware of all above-mentioned rebukes and she has commented on *LE18*'s agency by the following words:

> *'I can surely argue that Le18 has succeeded in bringing together a community of both practitioners and not, that today perceive the space as a COMMON and as a safe one. Most of the programmes that we had run until last year had remained within our own walls, somehow as a natural effect of the slow, contextualised temporality adopted in implanting in the neighbourhood. The still diverse groups for and with whom I believe we work, hence belong to a general extent to the art and cultural community, the students and the educated young ones. A challenge still ahead is to open the space to some of our very closest neighbours, embodying a fundamental segment of the population, an invisible majority living and feeding the Medina and the city at large. One challenging terrain (among others such as language and human resources) is a spatial one: there are invisible borders preventing certain segments of the population to even try to cross our door as we*

are being perceived as an art institution or a 'gallery', frequented by an eclectic crowd.'

In the following lines, I aim to present a fragment of a dialogue with a writer Soufiane[96] who is, according to me, accurately summarising more critical opinions of some cultural actors towards, otherwise praised, cultural venue *LE18*.[97]

Soufiane: *LE18 is doing a great job, they have created a secure space, however, they have created 'café littéraire' for themselves. Even though this space, which is proclaimed as independent, is somehow remaining very 'french'. It is especially evident in how they are presenting their projects. If you aim to unfold a different kind of cultural knowledge to a deeply uninformed public, you cannot produce a curatorial outcome that interests only you or your intellectual circle, but rather shape a visual and textual language of the public you aim to address and engage with. I think, on the one hand, they produce very interesting projects, but it is not the democracy of art that I hoped to see. They, of course, do what they can, better than nothing as we often say here. But it sounds also as we would resign or don't care, doesn't it? It is an indication of something. If you would look closely, the language of LE18 will still make more sense for a Berliner, than it does for a Moroccan living just next doors. LE18 had adopted ways of looking at and dealing with a culture that does originate from elsewhere, but not in Morocco. It simply doesn't seem to me as a 'from the bottom build-up' cultural site. We can ask if they are, in fact, maintaining the needs of the local communities or the needs of themselves and other artists?*

A. K.: *What do you imagine under the term democratised art scene?*

Soufiane: *Simply, it is the contrary of the scene here. The lack of public as a consequence is rarely considered as a priority. Art and its contemporary forms — experimentation, conceptual art and others is maybe necessary in Europe but not in here. It cannot resolve the problems people are facing. Of course, you can address all these existential issues throughout art, but if you want to have an audience, you must adopt the perspective of the public, which asks: What can I gain from it? Can*

[96] I have decided to include part of an interview specifically with Soufiane as he was the only one who agreed on publishing his critical opinion, others, despite pronouncing similar opinions did not feel comfortable about me using anyhow their utters, even if published under different names.

[97] Interview was conducted on the 23 of November 2017.

art solve my problems, economical, spiritual and social? And use adequate codes which curators rarely do. Cultural institutions as LE18 has a beautiful idea and desire to be engaged, but it's not enriching anyone besides the group of privileged.

AK: *By privileged you mean those possessing a cultural capital?*

Soufiane*: Yes and the gap is extremely wide. Institutions should feel the responsibility, at least the ones that have 'engagement' in their curriculums — the way that art is taught is problematic, in school we learn about art as something secondary, not essential.*

AK*: Can you give me a concrete example, where you think people understand what art can offer to them?*

Soufiane*: The opposite example can be seen in Essouira, everyone knows about the artistic scene in there, which relates primarily to the Gnawa music, the whole city is benefiting from it. During the festival even man selling trinkets at the corner knows about Gnawa music, different neighbourhoods are aware of it. The festival is something that they can benefit from directly first, second its music — a form of art which circulates everywhere. Gnawa is something Moroccan, something people can feel ties to, they understand it. It is nothing imported as we can see in Marrakech cultural venues under the classification which we as Moroccans, have never adopted.*

Visual anthropologist Amanda Ravetz notes that works of art and various artistic practices remain a fundamental premise of contemporary art, despite artists' increasing interests in social worlds. This premise, according to Ravetz, is fundamentally mediating other important relationships such as between the artist and the audience. On the contrary: '*in anthropology, however, the crucial element was not an individual practice, but the social world studied. Without it, anthropology has little meaning*' (Schneider and Wright, 2014, p. 156). By adopting Ravetz's critical point embedded in the anthropological approach, I am looking at the cluster of diverse institutions of contemporary art *in situ,* therefore not throughout the traditional differentiation according to usual adopted criteria of art history such as: commercial and non-profit, state-run and private or independent. Rather my analysis is tackling how the relationships with various audiences are mediated. By understanding the institutional structure of contemporary art scene in Marrakech by the premises of its audience, it is possible to conclude that they present, more or less, an akin institutions, i.e., with an identical public. Audiences of course slightly differ, however, the core

remains the same — the actors of the contemporary art world presents simultaneously 'the public' which circulates in each of these sites, no matter if they are commercial or independent. As I have mentioned before, most of the cultural actors argue that Moroccans are simply 'uninterested in anything cultural, they are unable to contemplate or critically think.' I argue that art infrastructure in Marrakech is wittingly or unwittingly remaining inaccessible in spite of numerous statements of inclusiveness. By adopting a perspective of a hypothetical average Moroccan visitor I present here a fictional character build on my personal observations of cultural institutions, second this profile derives from in-depth interviews I conducted among young Moroccan art practitioners and students from Cadi Ayyad University. Mutual long conversations in seminars I have taught at the Department of Sociology and English Studies in the year 2018 presents a fundamental source of an understanding about how is it to enter to a cultural institution for the very first time, or why some haven't entered yet:

I am unable to access the structures of contemporary art because it presents a world built on different, often alien, visual codes which I don't understand or perhaps I would need an explanation, however, the curatorial outcomes are often in foreign languages — pamphlets and panels with texts in French and English consists of various references which are based on the assumption that I, as a reader can comprehend. It is more probable I would understand French than English, but I don't know who Gramsci of Foucault is, texts are too abstract, too conceptual, too distant. But all this I can question if I would already enter or even if I had been allowed to enter. I have heard that sometimes they don't let some Moroccans in if they look too casual. It's true that this relates more to bars where the art world goes, but it gives me potential anxiety that my entrance would be denied. I have heard about the new African Art Fair 1.54 and the 3 days lasting Forum which is part of the public programme. However, it is set in La Mamounia, I don't think I can go, I mean I can as it is for free, but the guardians will look at me with contempt, they will search my bag and give me a clear sign that I do not belong there. The same feeling I have with Yves Saint Laurent museum. I cannot enter there to see a new exhibition, simply due to all I have already talked about, furthermore the ticket is too expensive.

For an uninformed spectator, it doesn't matter if the space is independent or private, commercial or not. He or she is simply not there because he or she doesn't possess the right culture capital.

Another point to be discussed here is the specific feature of contemporary art in Morocco in general, Marrakech in particular, that is the obvious *non-critical discourse*. My first public speech, about which I have referred earlier, took place in the *LE18* and resulted into hours of emotional discussion, where the public have been divided into two poles: one acknowledged that my claim about artists as a luxury good producers is a '*harsh accusation*', the second decided to defend me. Among them artist Noureddine Ezarraf – one of the representatives of Moroccan critical youth eager to commit a change. Year after the talk at *LE18* I have met a filmmaker and producer Walid Ayoub for an interview (I haven't remembered, but Walid Ayoub was part of the crowd back then). We met at *ÉSAV*, where he currently works and as he greeted me with a wink he noted: '*So you want an interview with another luxury good producer*? As we laughed I opened up the theme again. '*What was so intrusive about my statement?*' I have asked Walid. '*You haven't been diplomatic enough, in Marrakech art scene you always praise works of your artist friends and complement an exhibition of your curator friend. Otherwise, you will face a social punishment, or worse — an exclusion*'[98] Walid kept on explaining. The similar opinion I have confirmed with an artist Nassime Azarzar. '*If you will be as an artist too critical, they will exclude you*' stated Nassime. In Marrakech, I had, in fact, encountered a paradox where 'the Occident' — traditionally understood as more liberal, tolerant and progressive contrary to 'the Orient', presents an agency which reveals the opaque — self-centred and averse to an open dialogue. Contemporary art which is claiming to be a visual narrative presenting often new perspectives on social-political and economical issues (Buszek, 2011) is, within the context of Morocco an absolute unquestionable authority affirming its dominant position by being simply *mute*.

Film maker Nadir Bouhmouch, on the power status of Western art actors notes:

> *'They are mute because they are in the power position to be. They do not have to justify their positions here, negotiate it or explain. And no one will ever question*

[98] Interview conducted on 22nd of January 2019.

them. The reason is simple — it is the economical capital which lies in their hands or most of it. And of course, that brings conditions with it, for me this situation is even more concentrated in film production because the amount of recourses you have to obtain to make a film is vast and you are dependent on them. The wealth is concentrated in one part of the world which is, due to different historical consequences, in the West. You have some recourses in Saudi Arabia too or other Gulf states, but in terms of contemporary art or film production, it is always problematic. Nevertheless, if you want to produce art of any kind, you have to get through a metaphorical 'gate' which is guarded by various (Western) institutions and individuals, and you won't enter unless you will, of course, fit their conditions and you would be completely uncritical'.[99]

Moroccan actors involved in contemporary art scene both artists and art professionals are balancing between two poles — on one side there is awareness of dependency on Western fundings, and even desires to change it among some of them, on the other, there are those who are fully internalised. The first group considers the situation as disturbing, yet at the end of the day, most of them, accept the conditions. It becomes harder for a Moroccan art producer to criticise once his or her prestige rises among the Western public and with other opportunities cumulating. The increasing possibility of travels abroad and being part of '*functioning structure which cares about art*' is definitely an appealing situation. From the interviews, I have understood that for Moroccan art practitioners the fact of having an actual audience, so difficult to obtain at 'home,' is one of the reasons which makes the difference. In some cases, I have met Moroccan artists, which never exhibited in Morocco, or those who do not prioritise it anymore and depend solely on invitations from foreign cultural institutions, galleries, and Biennials. The more recognised Moroccan artist is the more exhibitions out of Morocco he or she has. The local cultural institutions, then, in the artists CVs are getting exceptional and figure primarily at the beginning of the artist's career. Some of them claim that the language of contemporary art is universal, thus it, in fact, doesn't matter where the show is as the art world itself became a globalised and connected space. Marrakech for most of them presents the only city in the entire country that can possibly provide come contact with the globalised art world. Nevertheless, here again, we encounter a paradox, Moroccan artist travelling abroad to escape frustrations from a

[99] Interview conducted on 22nd of May 2019.

society which doesn't respond to contemporary art (that includes the majority of Moroccans who are 'ignorant' and the *Makhzen* itself unwilling to provide any fundings) while being labelled as 'Moroccan', 'Arab', 'Muslim' or 'Middle Eastern artist', in other words becoming the 'the Other' in the very moment of entering the art scene abroad. The frustrations are usually compilations of many failures artists had to encounter: from not being allowed to enter to some of the art events as the Moroccan artist wasn't possessing the right image; not receiving grants from Moroccan Ministry of Culture on time; promising events that have eventually failed once Moroccans took over the agency (the very case of Marrakech Biennale); being tired of the same circle of elites; events in independent spaces which took time and energy to initiate and realise, yet facing a little attendance in the end; dealing with the information monopolisation of the only one existing art magazine in Morocco – *Diptyk*[100] and more.

Young Moroccan conceptual artist Lina Laraki on the economical dependency claims:

> *'Honestly, the situation in Morocco is just super sad, we will keep losing our intellectuals in the diaspora as it is impossible to do something within the local structure. The art scene here is built on air, there is no solid foundation, therefore it will one day probably collapse. And independent scene can work continuously, and as hard as it works, but the only serious funds you can find are really from the EU and Mediterranean projects. If your own country gives you no support then people are fed up, they will not value their identity because the state here just wastes your time and energy. It is common that you receive your grant with a great delay, in my case it was one year after! So when an artist can sell his work immediately, he will do it, because there isn't any other option. I had a discussion with my friends about selling art, and we talked a lot about which gallery is still ok, were to be careful and so on, but we agree on one thing: if you have an opportunity to sell, just do it. Or stick to the West and their funds, but of course, that creates dependency relation. Let's say it out loud! It is better in Europe. Everything that is related in Morocco to the government and the State in general sucks. What is tragic is that the French do better here and so long after the independency! And that pisses me off, I would love just for once see Moroccans how they are good at something and that they are*

[100] Art magazine *Diptyk* was founded in Casablanca by an editor in chief French Meryem Sebti and financed by a controversial gallerist Hicham Daoudi, eventually became independent on Daoudi in 2012. *Diptyk* today presents the only regular textual coverage on contemporary Moroccan art and is known for its self-censorship and the uncritical stance towards the *Makhzen*.

capable of providing fundings to their own people. I don't want to be an Arab artist saying that her own country is shit because it is shit everywhere. But! When you realise that it is true you are just disappointed! I want to be on your side you mother fuckers! (Laughs) But you are leaving me no choice, those things need to be published, need to be said.' [101]

Photographer M'hammed talked to me about his specific experience with the government fundings: [102]

'*Where else should an artist go? Yes, the West, especially the French have a kind of monopoly, but we can also perceive it as they are taking the responsibility where the Moroccan State doesn't. Now more structures exist, but of course, they are still few in the country. I will tell you about my experience. There is one grant from Moroccan government for contemporary art production and I have succeeded in obtaining this grant. Nevertheless, I was waiting for the money for more than a year, each month I went and ask them about it and they said to me: 'next month, next month'... and it would have been better for me, eventually, not to get the money, so I could find a way how to finance my production. When you go to the ministry of Culture in Rabat you meet people that have no idea about art at all, it's a very archaic institution, they aren't informed but yet they are making the decisions about us. Its also our fault, not engaging with it. We are just complaining, but we should create an alternative structure. Its unbelievable... last time when I was waiting for the money, I received it really late. Meanwhile, I had a three-month residency in Marseille, so I went to the Ministry and told them that I will not work in Morocco for the following three months, they replied it is not a problem. However, when I have arrived to Marseille, they had sent me an email stating I haven't sent my report and if I won't do in one week I will have to pay the money back. When I went to see them, they said: just do a quick exhibition anywhere, in a small room, take some pictures of your works and ask some people to pose like a visitors, so we can prove it. At that moment I understood the depth of the situation we are in. For them, the report was important but nothing else. I had to fake it in*

[101] Interview conducted on 23rd of November 2017.

[102] *Visual Art Project Grant of the Ministry of Culture of the Kingdom of Morocco* had been launched in 2011 under the minister of Culture Mohamed Amine Sbihi in Abdelilah Benkirane's government. The fundings for Moroccan visual artists were stopped in 2019 with the inauguration of the new minister of Culture El Hassan Abyaba.

the end and it was a dangerous situation for me and can be till now. I was really pissed off, but I was obliged to do that… they pushed me. They are not helpful, they don't care about artists, and they even propose to you to do something which is, in fact, illegal.'[103]

The two closing transcribed testimonies of this chapter can be comprehended as a summarisation of an ongoing frustration that the non-Western art producers face. One of the fundamental reason why the artists are turning deliberately towards the West, in a general sense, is the failure of attempts to gain the local public. The omnipresent *absence* of 'own' spectators escalated not only in an obvious bitterness and rejection from the side of the local artists ('we don't need them') but simultaneously into a feeling of deep sorrow. 'The Moroccan artists without the Moroccan audience' is the alfa and omega of the Moroccan contemporary filed of visual production. The ongoing lines will present some of the concrete examples of how the *absence* is negotiated within the contemporary power structures of Marrakech.

Chapter 7 The Infinite search for the Audience — is '1.54' a new English Sandwich?

On the 20th of September 2019, I had attended an art opening of the probably most renowned and celebrated artist of contemporary Morocco: Mohamed Melehi (1936). The show was titled 'NEW WAVES' *Mohammed Melehi et Les Archives de L'école de Casablanca* and took place in MACAAL – Museum of Contemporary African Art in Marrakech. The exhibition was commissioned and originally showed in Mosaic Rooms, a gallery situated in London and dedicated primarily to the contemporary Arab artists. Opening for the public was announced on Saturday, nevertheless, an independent curator working for *LE18* Francesca Masoero (at that time my housemate) proposed to sneak in for a private pre-opening tour and a cocktail on Friday night. The only officially invited figure from the independent structures was artist and co-founder of *LE18* Laila Hida through who we intended to enter. The entire event was a spectacle set up of both foreign and local wealthy elites from the ranks of real-estate developers accompanied by very few important cultural actors (mostly owners of Marrakech galleries such as David

[103] Interview was conducted on the 3rd of February 2019.

Bloch or Rocco Orlaccio and numerous recognised Moroccan artists). Visitors were provided by a curatorial tour followed by a cocktail party located in the garden behind the Museum. The ambience in which the art opening was happening resembled a grandiose gatherings and after-parties possible to witness in Marrakech cultural venues during 1.54 African Art Fair taking place in February each year. While we walked with the crowd around artworks on display which were commented by curator Morad Montazami (Zamân Books&Curating), Francesca whispered to me: *'It is a bit ridiculous to see a man (Melehi was present at the opening) who actually was an activist in the 1960s and 70s, accompanied now by all the elites in a 'White Cube' — a type of space he was opposing his entire life.*' Mohamed Melehi, indeed, presents a major artistic figure of post-colonialist culture movements of the Global South (Fattaleh, 2019), prised for many of his attempts to rehabilitate Moroccan visual language which has been, for decades, successfully suppressed by colonial forces. Nevertheless, the position in which he had appeared that very night turned him into a signifier of Moroccan failed cultural decolonisation. '*Melehi is a picturesque, a reverse embodiment of what he used to be. He is being admired by cultural actors who are representatives of the discourse he was fighting against, they as much as their colonial predecessors, don't have any real interest in reconnecting to the Moroccan public.*' Commented the situation in the very evening of the art opening young Moroccan artist Noureddine Ezarraf, one of the authors of TAMA manifesto presented further in this chapter.

Approximately fifty years ago the Casablanca manifesto was released — in Marrakech on May 9, 1969, a group of artists, most of them teachers at the Casablanca School of Fine Arts at that time, decided to exhibit their works for the period of ten days in the heart of *Jemaa el Fnaa* Square. This act has been accompanied by a statement, published in journal *Souffles* under the title *Action Plastique: Exposition Jamma Ilfna* (MoMa's edition on Primary documents, 2019, p. 324). These artists, particularly painters, identified themselves as a generation which no longer could bare first, the racist practices in *Ecole de Beaux-Arts* in Casablanca, traditionally following two distinct courses of study — a classical education was offered to European students while the other course presented training in handicraft intended for the 'natives' (Irbouh, 2005). Second, they were highly critical towards the devaluation of Moroccan aesthetic expressions and towards the existing disparity between established modern art scene and the local public.

Namely, Mohammed Ataallah, Farid Belkahia, Mohammed Chebaa, Mustapha Hafid, Mohammed Hamidi and Mohammed Melehi have decided to hung up paintings they have produced in one of the largest public spaces in Morocco which was, and continues to be, a significant traditional contact junction in the old city of Marrakech (Lenssen, Shabout, Rogers, 2019, p. 323-324). *Jemaa el Fnaa* is a tangled space of composed oral traditions where 'art' is consumed in a traditional *halqa* (a circle) formed by random spectators trans-passing Marrakech's Square. Performers such as storytellers, musicians, acrobats and snake charmers are in the very centre of the *halqa* — surrounded by a concentrated energy of the spectators. *Halqa* becomes a womb without which the producer won't be recognised or be able to perform, in other words, every artistic outcome is conditioned by its public — a situation so opaque from the realities of the fine art consumption. Though the Square has its own logics and hierarchal structures, mainly among the *hlaiqia* (the performers), the public creates an entity which for Melehi and others presented a symbol of the possible cultural decolonisation. The group of painters aimed to reconnect to these randomly formed gatherings of spectators consisting of casual pedestrians, travellers, families, youth and ordinary *Marrakechis* from whom, at this point, no performance of cultural predispositions had been expected and who presented an audience existing beyond the criteria of the predefined cultural capital of the West.
In the 1960s and 1970s the Casablanca School believed that without them, the cultural decolonisation movement can barely reach its goals (Pieprzak, 2010, p. 133-138).

> '*Works outside the closed circuit of the galleries, of the salons — places this audience has never entered, for these people have never cared about the type of show that exists in vacuum*.' (MoMa's edition on Primary documents, 2019, p. 324)

Culture, according to the Casablanca School, was in a need to be re-negotiated through '*assert of the native insight*' as artist Farid Belkahia stated about the urge for artistic interventions in a public space. The group acknowledged that they have to reach disregarded marginal groups, the mediocre Moroccans. The desire for a change shortly after the Moroccan Kingdom gained its independency is best illustrated by words of Moroccan writer Tahar Ben Jelloun (1944) published in *Souffles* year after the public intervention of Casablanca group in Marrakech.

In *On Art and Combat* (1970) he states: (…)

> *Finished: the myth of the artist, a misunderstood, exiled, isolated man and the barrier of thoughts*
> *Finished: the myth of the hero-artist who doesn't know where to demonstrate his prowess because he is a stranger to the masses aspirations*
> *Finished: the myth of art meant only for initiated intellectuals*
> *Finished: the contempt for popular culture and the uproar over folklore produced and consumed as merchandise*
> *Enough. The people doesn't need the artist. It is the artist who needs the people: he need to learn the language of the masses.*
> *May the painters and the masses leave the salons and museums (if people don't go see them in halls of the great hotels, it is because they know that those paintings do not concern them).*

Above-mentioned artists approached the public by allowing them to, using Bourdieu's term: 'decipher' artworks under their own terms and without imposing the original set of criteria and ascribed values. In this regard, such an intervention was truly a revolutionary one, however, recently several critical voices from contemporary cultural actors appeared as a reaction towards ongoing unconditional valorisation of the Casablanca School. According to them, rather than spending on grandiose retrospective shows of Melehi, cultural actors should seriously engage with the Moroccan public and re-think the existing neo-colonial rhetorics in the contemporary cultural structures.

Did Melehi's intervention in the *Jemaa el Fnaa*, in fact, changed the public's perception of art? Asks scholar Katarzyna Peiprzak. Her critical comments are tackling journal *Lamalif* which was in charge of reporting about the event and which conveyed only a certain kind of selective narrative. The reposts, for instance, never discussed concrete reactions of the audience, or in a very limited manner. Instead, they were solely focusing on artists themselves and the testimonies of the public remained out of the scope of anyone's interest. Another critical remark is towards the power positions of the artists, from what we can read, is that they acted as a 'mentors of the uneducated masses'. Pieprzak states: '*The public transcript as a hegemonic discourse remained in place, with the voice of the dominant group, the cultural elite, narrating*' (Pieprzak, 2010, p. 135-136). The artistic and intellectual discourse of the late 1960s and the beginning of

1970s was expressing frustrations over the lack of national support for culture at large, which subsequently resulted in a miserable situation of cultural institutions. According to cultural actors of that time, these infrastructures in decay presented a necessary space where the masses can be 'educated' and 'elevated' (Pieprzak, 2010, p. 136-137). Paradoxically the analysis of reports on *Action Plastique: Exposition Jamma Ilfna* isn't approaching the public in a respectful way. The individual responses of the spectators were reduced into one monolithic '*voice of the masses*' who according to *Lamalif* responded '*beyond the artists' expectations*' (Lamalif, 1969, p. 48). Peiprzak in her critique proposes a set of alternative questions such as: What value artworks can have for a random spectator? Could paintings for him or her present a reflection on the city, neighbourhood or perhaps his or her own life? In following years, artists of the Casablanca School kept on exploring the diverse mediums in order to approach to the varied public dwelling outside the institutional structures. Farid Belkahia turned towards the traditional craft industry for the sake to restore what had been condemned as 'not art enough'; Chebaa incorporated in his art-works Arabic calligraphy aiming to rehabilitate the value of Islamic visuality; Melehi used materials of the working classes such as a cellulose car paint on wood, instead of oil or acrylic paint on canvases and kept on searching for the audience with whom he can set a dialogue.[104]

In 1978 Melehi and Mohamed Benaïssa founded a public art festival in Asilah – a small town in the north-west coast of Morocco. They have titled it *Moussem* as a reference to Moroccan religious festivals and as a link to the city's historical sacred past (Pieprzak, 2010, p. 144-145). Benaïssa and Melehi have had managed to create one of the most import art events in the country which is still today considered as exceptional in many aspects, primarily for its annual interventions in the public space. In spite of the festival being evaluated as a highly successful project (in 1989 the festival won Aga Khan Prize for engagement in the rehabilitation of the city), its impact on the city and its residents if rather questionable. Scholar Eunice Lin, who wrote a critical article on Asilah *festival* states: the official intention was to increase the social well being and there was an obvious desire to maintain the town's future development, nevertheless, it wasn't beneficial for the local residents, as much it has been for the tourist purposes and prestige status of the artist themselves. According to her, the participation of locals was and is limited to the labour and provision supplies, as they haven't been part of any real

[104] Information was obtained from the Museum's exhibition pamphlet.

decision-making process over the project. Neither the intersection between the cultural elites, both local and international annually entering Asilah, and the residents of the city ever became an actual equal dialogue. Lin continues: for years only the ideas of particular artists are taken into account, either those who are visiting or those influenced by Melehi's work, or it is Melehi himself and his ever-present 'wave' motif that only matters.[105]

Mohamed Melehi at the street exhibition in *Jemaa el Fnaa Square*, Marrakech, in 1969, (source: Chabâa family archives)

Fifty years ago, this group of artists aimed to break free from the imposed distinctions and definitions operating within the discourse of the ex-coloniser. In the manifesto artists are stating the urgency to dismantle prejudices against the public, further, the text emphasises that the so-called masses at the *Jemaa el Fnaa* Square are possessing the same level of critical thinking, curiosity and receptiveness towards works of art as their intellectual bourgeoise counterparts in galleries located in the *villes novelles*. Considering Marrakech fifty years after, the dominant discourse of the visual arts is still preserving a set of attitudes towards the local public resulting in marginalisation and in-just representations. However, in other urban areas, especially in Casablanca and Rabat, the situation on the contrary to Marrakech slightly differs. In the begging of the 21st

[105] Lin, Eunice. *Rehabilitation and the Cultural Festival of Asilah* [online] cit. 2020. 2. 2020 In http://web.mit.edu/akpia/www/AKPsite/4.239/asilah/asilah.html

century several independent projects arose with an attempt to, again, engage with the abandoned public: by a long-term collaboration with various groups and engaging with their concerns under the shield imperative of radical contextualisation, numerous artistic projects succeeded. Anthropologist Lea Morin emphasises that it was the artists again who took the roles of initiators and leaders of an 'institutional' projects as open-ended interventions in social and cultural realities of the city (Morin, 2016 p. 63-64). While such interventions occurred and became successful elsewhere, Marrakech remained a byproduct of implemented colonial discourse successfully saturating the new forms of dominance. With the exception of *Dar Bellarj,* as the only representative of an institution with a regular Moroccan public, most of the cultural actors are still referring to the lacking local audience as to a mass being uncultivated and trapped in their backwardness. Next, the *distinction* made over the local aesthetic expressions remained and despite the fact, that the relation towards the craftsmanship is being actively re-negotiated, the local producers are still approached in a supercilious manner. Particular examples I have presented in one of the first chapters: *The Craftsman as a 'Noble Savage*.' The Moroccan Avantgarde of the 1960s and 1970s and their quest for public transformed into a nostalgia — a sentimental longing for 'cultural decolonisation that almost was'. Mohamed Melehi and the Casablanca School remain central to the contemporary art world of Morocco celebrated by the Moroccan artists for the attempts of emancipation and rehabilitations.

Two dominant private cultural institutions in Marrakech – The Museum of Contemporary African art (MACAAL) and Yves Saint Laurent Museum (MYSL) are officially promoting social-cultural mediation, education and inclusive cultural policies, while, on the other hand, the simplest barriers that are sustaining the inaccessibility aren't torn down. The very location of MACCAL and the charged admission in both Museums present, in itself, an eloquent fact. I argue that what we can encounter is a contradictory logics of both cultural venues, who are paying tribute to the Casablanca School movement and the group of the post-independent Avantgarde of the 1960s and 1970s period, while simultaneously forgetting or even denying that they are bearers of the very discourse these artists opposed. Yves Saint Laurent Museum and MACCAL are executing the opposite of what one could call an all-inclusive cultural agenda. As if by organising symposiums and grandiose retrospective art openings, they would fulfil the responsibility towards those who continue to be absent. The legacy Casablanca School, which they so officially prise, presents an empty signifier, in fact, belittling the

principles and doctrine of the critical thinkers, writers and philosophers around journal *Souffles* and group of artists, who believed that all of Moroccans are equal in their rights to participate in cultural life out of the constraints of privileged contemporary art world.

MACCAL is located at the outskirts of the city attached to the hotel complex known as *Al Maaden*. Surrounded by luxurious golf resorts and, as Fatalleh puts it: '*In a private enclave development of the high-end real estate and tourist hotels*' (Fatalleh, 2019). The potential visitor cannot just enter by walking around, thus the audience is obligated to actively search for it. The public transport doesn't reach this area, hence the best way to approach the Museum is by an average taxi, however, this results into paying more than a hundred dirhams for a round way and double at night. The Museum was, until recently, invisible from the main road. Without newly installed signs no one would ever guess a complex of buildings hidden behind large vegetation, and perhaps never an art museum in one of them. '*The actual location, the spatial arrangements, the architecture itself speaks by a powerful language, and it is a vocabulary of dominance*' commented Moroccan Dutch architect Sara Frikech in one of our conversation on politics of representations and architecture of Marrakech cultural institutions. I have talked about MACAAL with a number of cultural actors *in situ*, yet one particular provocative statement of filmmaker Walid Ayoub remained firmly rooted in my memory, I guess partly because it made me laugh: '*MACAAL? It is so far for all of us, that I sometimes even forget it exists*.' I remember this humorous statement made a point. Something in a similar manner I have heard from artists staying at MACAAL's art residency. Program of residencies opened in fall 2019 and artists complained about being detached from the actual cultural scene to that extent, that some of them occasionally prefer to stay in the city centre, instead of in the Museum's luxurious residencies apartment.

> By words of Cameroonian curator living in Marrakech Yvon Langué: '*Audience is something that is built, constructed, shaped by education, it explores how you can prepare people to be sensitive to aesthetics, it aims for art literacy so missing in local basic education. In Marrakech and Morocco art venues are not didactical, pedagogically skilled enough to promote curiosity, to open doors, to make it understandable: contemporary art is constantly creating a barrier between those who understand and those who don't and that is, of course, a global phenomenon, however, in a postcolonial context, it deepens the existing unfair and stereotypical*

representations of those who are stripped from right to participate in the cultural life. The amount of discrimination towards the audience, the inferiors, the marginalised is a specificity of Marrakech art scene.'[106]

Marrakech cultural venues and events are being situated in buildings truly alluring, nevertheless, despite all of the attempts of educational, 'free access' programs and statements on cultural mediation, none of the buildings can be, in fact, inclusive by the very nature of their visual appearance. The architecture of the venues, its locations and spatial arrangements of both MACAAL and Yves Saint Laurent Museum is creating a barriers of the most material sense. MACAAL is clearly far, invisible, hidden behind golf resorts and hotel complexes. Library founded by New York-based curator Omar Berrada *Dar al-Ma'mûn* is facing a similar problem. The library is situated in Fellah Hotel in outskirts of the city and despite its best intention formulated as a platform supporting emerging Moroccan artists and promotes cultural awareness internationally through a wide array of visual arts and literature projects, *Dar al-Ma'mûn* remains more or less abandoned. Events, art fairs and exhibitions located in the heart of the city, however, are remaining inaccessible as much as those situated further. This is happening due to different aspects of concrete venues: events are often taking place in distinguished hotels (such as Sofitel, Mövenpick or La Mamounia), other venues as Yves Saint Laurent Museum or Gallery *Comptoire des Mines* have luxurious facades with entrances surrounded by crowds of wealthy tourists or local elites while surveillance is present in form of guardians at the gate. Artist Noureddine on the accessibility of cultural institutions and events stated:

'(...) they (cultural sites) can write statements about how much they are or want to be engaged with the local public, but look at the architecture, it is far from being inclusive. When you gaze at the large gate, the guardians there... it evokes to be a police station. It happened many times that I haven't been accepted into places just because of my visual appearance'.[107]

The sample of venues during 1.54 African Art Fair presents the ones least accessible from what can Marrakech offer. Most of the events of the public programme are located in the typical commercial galleries which isn't, after all, unusual situation, especially

[106] Interview was conducted on the 6th of March 2019.

[107] Interview was conducted on 16th of October 2018.

when we take into a consideration the event is primarily a Fair. Though, the Fair's *Forum* is being held too, in the most luxurious hotel, a symbol of colonial times in Marrakech — *La Mamounia*. This very fact became even self-contradictory during the first edition in 2018 as the Forum, held from 23rd to 25th February, carried a title *Always Decolonize!* Three days lasting program consisted of series of talks, panel discussions, screenings and performances and aimed to '*foreground the need to decolonise knowledge production, to unlearn Eurocentrism, and to build new futures by remembering the remaining fragments of folklorised past.*'[108] Indeed the panel discussions presented many scholars, writers and artists for whom the decolonisation process is an everyday task, carrying out new methodologies to dismantle old discourses that firmly remained in diverse spheres across ex-colonised African states. For example, Ghanian curator and writer Nana Oforiatta-Ayim talked about how can ex-colonised nations re-order the narratives and representations from and about the African continent, her speech felt almost inappropriate according to the surroundings where the discussion took place. Art fairs situated in renowned venues is an international habit, but a Forum opening on a topic of cultural decolonisation in a hotel which was in 1921 inaugurated by general Lyautey himself communicates, on a symbolic level, certain kind of discourse best illustrated by words of Moroccan artist Hamza remembering his first visit in *La Mamounia* during 2018 edition of the African Art Fair 1.54 in Marrakech:

> *'I remember the strong feeling of not being welcomed, I have entered the building in sneakers and nylon jacket, but don't get me wrong — not a Western hip version of this outfit, but really authentically cheap secondhand stuff. I didn't even know how to walk in this strange environment. I was completely disorientated, detached from the real-life I am living and appeared in a world that had little to do with me and my social class.'* [109]

Moroccan artist Mouad comments on the situation in a similar manner as Hamza:

> *'I went to some of the events of 1.54 with friends from a working-class, we have entered the gallery Comptoir des Mines in Gueliz, the way my friends dressed for that evening was in a different way from mine. Let's say I knew what was expected,*

[108] Online archive of Fair's Forum is available here: https://www.1-54.com/marrakech/1-54-forum/

[109] Interview was conducted on 10th of October 2018.

however, they didn't. Once we walked in, the person who is managing the space was treating them with tension, as if they were less of a value. Do you know what is worst about these situations? All of these people — the guardians and the managers are Moroccan. They let Westerners in without ever questioning anything at all. And this was public, so even if Moroccans would be interested in art, even if they would manage to know about this event (which is solely an almost impossible idea) and choose to go there, would they want to undergo the looks that people give them? The difficulties to get in is because you are not a white and privileged, it is a shame of the contemporary art scene in Marrakech.'[110]

Artist known under the nickname MoBaala states:

'When you will say to people '1.54', they will respond: What? Is that a new English sandwich? After you will explain to them, that it is an Art Fair taking place in La Mamounia, I can assure you they will never ever put their foot in there. It is a symbol of the colonial era which means a space traditionally dominated by the Westerners and by the Moroccan elites only. Now, it is one of the most luxurious hotels in Marrakech, they know they don't belong there, they know they cannot enter.'[111]

Artist Youness Atbane on the Moroccan audience notes:

'I think we were very arrogant towards the audience as artists, I think for many years … I remember me and my artist friends were thinking … yes, lets shock this narrow-minded society, we were thinking we are different. But we are not. Instead, we need to be more sensitive and use humour. You can rarely get any open reaction, this is something cultural for sure… there is this curtesy of being non-critical, especially when Moroccans think all of these events are elitist and international and for an international audience. I disagree with the statements about the lack of education, that is what we all say, but from my point of view, I think the audience is smarter than us. It is us who did not find the right way to stimulate the interest of the people.' [112]

[110] Interview was conducted on 22nd of May 2019.

[111] Interview was conducted on 9th of March 2019.

[112] Interview was conducted on 30the of January 2019.

Painter Mariam Abouzid Souali comments:

> *'Sometimes I ask who are the people and from which social strata they are coming to see my artworks. They are always the same faces of course, but we should stop complaining and it, is up to us to take responsibility. There is no real engagement to prioritise access of art, not only because we are co-creating the elitist environment, but also we have some inner constraints how to convince those who think it has no real importance for them in life. It is as we would lose hope in our own society'*[113]

Aside from the *inaccessibility* caused by the location and appearance of the venue itself, three days lasting Forum *Always decolonize!* curated by a Moroccan curator based in New York City Omar Berrada brought up to light many important and often silenced problematic aspects when dealing with non-Western art: that included open talks on (mis)representation of African art on global level while enhancing discussions on African systems 'of making sense to the world' (looking onto traditional archiving and classification systems etc) Generally speaking, the Forum discussed in which way the West was, and still is, dealing with non-Western art and its producers. Most cultural actors discussed alternative approaches which would eliminate the imposed cultural domination and existing Eurocentrism in art structures. How wide is the actual gap between the ideal theory presented in the Forums and the real carried out attitudes of contemporary art world towards the subjects (Moroccans and the 'Others') well illustrates the case of *Aghmat*. Marrakech based Voice gallery organised in *Aghmat*, a city located 30Km south-east from Marrakech, an artistic intervention as a part of Art Fair extended public program. The intervention of Moroccan and Italian artists took place in the archaeological site of *Aghmat* known for its remnants tracking back to 11th century. The Art Fair organised a shuttle from *La Mamounia* hotel directly to the archaeological site. While artists and mainly foreign public were walking around the remnants, the local community of *Aghmat* desired to participate in these interventions, however, their attempts to even set a dialogue have been strictly rejected. This resulted in a Manifesto titled *Tama*: *Voice from the Margins* written by a community of *Aghmat* as a direct reaction towards a confrontation they have faced.

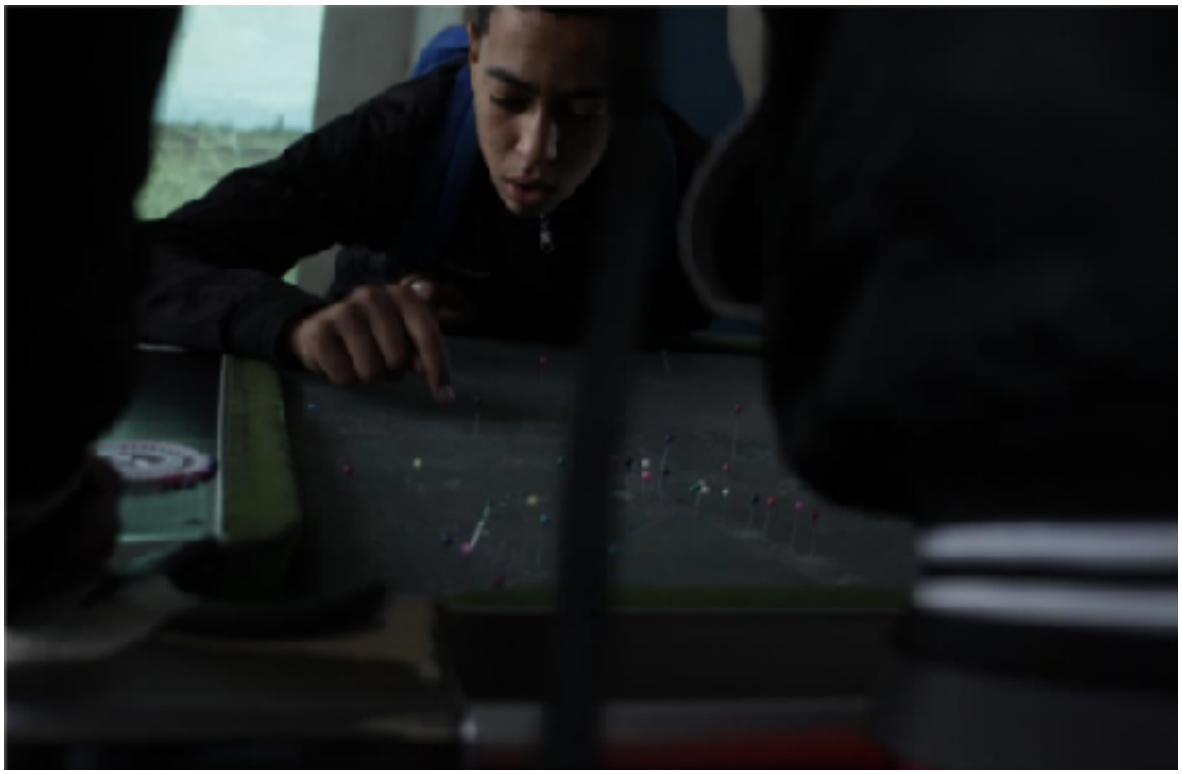
[113] Interview was conducted on the 24th of August 2019.

Artist Noureddine Ezarraf, who is a co-author of TAMA on the situation commented in the following lines:

'During the first edition of the Art Fair in 2018 I found deeply problematic how Voice gallery entered to Aghmat, I am from Aghmat and I found out that the local residents weren't even invited. It was a typical event where the artists do not feel the slightest responsibility towards the local people. I approached Voice gallery and they said to me that they are happy to see a recognised artist as M'barek (M'barek Bouhchichi) and international known curator Omar Berrada conducting interventions in the public space. What an absurd narrative they presented — the privileged are reconnecting to the Moroccan history, but without even looking at those who co-create the history. With the director of the Voice Gallery Rocco Orlaccio I had an argument, I wrote a statement for the whole Forum, and Orlaccio never even answered my email. The art scene here never takes into consideration the local communities, they came in cars, with buyers or collectors and few privileged artists and they symbolically exploit it. But these places are surrounded by real people. We don't want to be voiceless. It wasn't only me who was protesting, we were a group of young people from Aghmat and Orlaccio did not consider us at all. This not only resulted in a Tama Manifesto, but we simultaneously produced a counter-intervention with children of Aghmat such as workshops of photography and we produced a series of collages. Decolonisation is nothing more than a fashionable theme of the contemporary art world where the abuse of power and cultural dominance is still present.'[114]

Within the following pages, the full version of TAMA Manifesto translated from Arabic is attached, as well as some photographs from the counter workshop taking place in the Youth Centre in *Aghmat* as initiated by artist Nouredinne Ezarraf. Further, I provide the reader with the full version of *ALWAYS DECOLONIZE!* (an official curatorial statement of 1.54 African Art Fair written and presented by Omar Berrada) in order to highlight the disparity between the ideal theory of 'decolonisation' and the ongoing reality which has little or nothing to do will an actual engagement with the local communities.

[114] Interview was conducted of 16th of October 2018.



TAMA counter workshops with local youth of Aghmat, 'Siaar Nukal': the obsession about the land, 2018, (courtesy of Noureddine Ezarraf). The Billiard surface here serves as a metaphor to the city of Aghmat, children are piercing the 'land', 'the administrative map' of Aghmat with pins to reclaim back the power over their territory, history and cultural heritage.

Figure 1 TAMA: About a Voice from the Margins

تاما : عن صوت من الهامش نريد، أو ، أن نتقدم بالشكر لكل من ساهم من بعيد أو قريب في خلق هذه التدخل الفني

نعم، لقد سئمنا من وصاية الغرب وامتدادهم في مؤسساتنا السياسية والثقافية، سئمنا من مشاريع فنية تقام إ ستقبال السياح، سئمنا من فن يعير إ اهتماما ثانويا للمحلي، تاروان نتمازيرت، ويعتبرنا غير موجودين أو نحظى با عتبار الكافي لنتذوق الفن.

على هامش المعرض ا فريقي للفنون المعاصرة (...) المقام بمراكش ول مرة (أول مرة في افريقيا) من بعد لندن، وفي معرضا في الموقع ا ركيولوجيvoice ( ) سياق إلغاء بينالي مراكش (أهم منصة للفنون المعاصرة بالمنطقة)، نظم رواق غمات، وقدم أعمال فنانين مغاربة وإيطاليين، كانت أعمالهم بمثابة حوار مع اغمات وتاريخها، َوجب التنويه بها، و َصع ُب أن نصور فخرنا وسعادتنا عند اكتشافنا لتلك التراكيب الفنية والتجهيزات التي أقيمت في مختلف أرجاء المسجد القديم والحمام، وقال أحدنا : هذه ا عمال تحرر المكان، وهو يقصد النسيان أو والممارسة ا ركيولوجية ا ستعمارية ثانيا.

نحن، جمعية "أنماس : لنتحرك" لم نتردد فور معرفتنا بأن المعرض سيقام في اغمات با تصال بمنظمي المعرض والتنبيه بضرورة اعتبار الجمهور المحلي وكذا استعدادنا بالتطوع من أجل خلق الرابطة ا جتماعية وتنظيم أنشطة الوساطة، ننا نعتبر الثقافة حقا، والعمل على تسهيل الولوج إلى الثقافة مسؤولية. هكذا قامت الق ي َمة على التنظيم بترتيب لقاء مع صاحب الرواق الفني، والذي تعامل معنا بطريقة جافة فيها من التحقير شيء ليس بالهين، ووضعنا في موق ٍف وكأننا نتطفل، واكتفى بوعدنا أنه سيتصل بنا فيما بعد، وهو يوجه نظرات غريبة لنا. نتأسف حقا ! ترى، هل حشرنا أنوفنا فيما يعنينا ؟

في خضم خيبة ا مل هذه، لم نتردد مرة أخرى في ا ستمرار بتنظيم وتنسيق مداخلة فنية، أعلنناها بيانا بصيغة فنية، وهي كلمة أمازيغية تعني حاشية الشيء، جانبه، الهامش. خارج المركز، مركز السلطة، المال ،ⵜⴰⵎⴰ وعنوننا ها : تاما والمعرفة. تاما، تعني تجنب الصواب. تاما هي" ْب را"، إنها القرية، البربري، إنسان الجنوب. جنوب مراكش، جنوب المغرب، دول الجنوب.

كما أن تاما، لها نفس ا صل للكلمة ا مازيغية التي تعني حاجب العين "تيميوت"، العين كمركز، لكن يقول المثل " تعلو العين فوق حاجبها"،

TAMA: About a Voice from the Margins (Translation of Figure 1)

Firstly, we want to thank everyone who contributed to creating this artistic intervention.

Yes, we are tired of western paternalistic attitude in our political and cultural institutions, we are tired of artistic projects that are only made to attract tourists, tired of art that gives little value to the local, Tarouan n'Tamazirt, and consider us non-existing or as someone who doesn't have enough taste of art.
In parallel with the Exhibition of Contemporary African Art taking place in Marrakech for the first time (first time in Africa) after London, and in the context of cancelling the Marrakech Biennale (the most important platform of contemporary art in the region), the Voice Gallery organised an exhibition in the archaeological site of Aghmat, and presented Moroccan and Italian artists, whose work aimed to set a dialogue with Aghmat and its history, a work we have to prise, and it's hard for us to express our pride and happiness when we have discovered artworks that were presented in the different parts of the old mosque and hammam, that one of us said: 'these works are liberating the place' by which he meant first the unconcern (of this historical monument), and second the colonial archaeological practice.'
We, at the 'Anmas: let's move' association did not hesitate, as soon as we knew the exhibition will take place in Aghmat, to contact the organisers and bring to their attention the necessity to consider the local audience, as well as our readiness to volunteer and to create a social group and organise inter-activities, because we consider the culture as a right, and the access to culture a responsibility. The manager of our group organised a meeting with the owner of the art gallery, who responded in a cold and belittling way, and all he did was to promise he will call us later, looking at us in a strange and non-respectful manner, as if we were interfering in something that we do not belong to. Amongst this disappointment, we did not hesitate to organise an artistic intervention that we declared as an artistic statement, and we entitled it: Tama, which is an Amazigh which means something's margin, out of the centre, the centre of power, money and knowledge. Tama means avoiding the reason. Tama is out, it is the village, the barbarian, the southern man. South of Marrakech, south of Morocco, countries of the South.

Tama also derives from the Amazigh word that means eyebrow. The eye is the centre, but as the quote stands: 'The eye is never above its eyebrow.'

ALWAYS DECOLONIZE! *(Official curatorial statement of 1.54 African Art Fair by Omar Berrada)*

Our world may be post-colonial, yet it has not been decolonized. Colonial powers may have left, but their past presence casts a long shadow, stubbornly occupying our mental, aesthetic and epistemic spaces. Everywhere colonial wounds lie wide open.

If decolonization is another name for freedom, then it can only be unfinished business: a permanent horizon, never reached yet always longed for, as long as human life is structured by relations of race, class and gender domination. In the face of lingering coloniality, decolonization is not a bygone historical event; it is an everyday task. Always decolonize!

The historical figures of African liberation struggles never separated theory from practice or thinking from action. Theory is a weapon in the battle of self-reinvention. Colonization is like a thick cloud standing between us and ourselves, dispossessing us of our identity. The challenge is to un-distort the view, to achieve ownership over one's own image. "Independence, what for? First and foremost, to be ourselves." (Amilcar Cabral) This is not a selfish exercise. Nor is it a petty one. It does not consist of retreating into an exclusive, narrow identity. On the contrary, it is based upon solidarity among those who dwell in the margins. "We wish to be the heirs of all the revolutions of the world" (Thomas Sankara).

One of the main hurdles facing the project of self-determination is the hegemony of Western modes of thinking that have classified everything and everyone on the planet according to their own methods and categories, while producing a linear narrative of progress that pushes other cultures outside of history. Philosophical categories are turned into conceptual kernels of colonial violence, producing a double obliteration: erasing the human diversity of the world, while at the same time denying that erasure. In Morocco, the generation of artists and writers gathered around the journal Souffles knew this fifty years ago. They energetically called for a "cultural decolonization," without which political decolonization would remain moot. In the words of Abdellatif Laâbi writing in 1966, "it seems to me that any process of cultural decolonization must begin by questioning the status of the humanities and social sciences in the colonial context."

In a series of talks, panels, screenings and performances, 1-54 FORUM will modestly gesture toward these large issues by foregrounding the need to decolonize knowledge production, to unlearn Eurocentrism and build new modes of being, to invent new futures by re-membering the remaining fragments of folklorized pasts, to forget about catching up with Europe and instead wage a battle of the imagination in order to invent new ways of acting and thinking.

Omar Berrada
1-54 FORUM Programme Curator 2018

The following edition of Art Fair's Forum in 2019 was entitled to *Let's Play Something Let's Play Anything Let's Play* and transposed the life and work of African American Surrealist, painter, jazz musician and poet Ted Joans (1928-2003). Despite the strong criticism from *Aghmat* community towards condescending attitudes of cultural actors, we must acknowledge that considering Moroccan noncritical context, the very first Forum curated by Omar Berrada was still an exceptional step. It had awakened curiosity among many of local art practitioners who felt, this might be the first impulse to open the door to greater debate, additionally, they felt that this very annual platform can establish a tradition of critical discourse. From what I have observed during the 2019 edition, I have decided to mention, in following lines, a figure of London based artist and digital illustrator Vince Fraser and highlight some of the intrusive aspects of his delivered speech. The debate was led by a Cameroonian curator Yvon Langué (co-founder of the curatorial duo UNTITLED based in Marrakech). Fraser's work is consisting mainly of photography and animated collages which 'draws on both contemporary and past Surrealists as well as Afrobeat influences'. Mr Fraser was from the very begging talking solely about aesthetics of his work which was in a way contradicting the introductory lines of the chief curator Karima Boudou stating: his works is attempting to inspire, educate and empower positive images of the African diaspora. Mr Fraser was screening his produced visuals when classical colonial images of diverse African tribes appeared to be in motion. One of the young Moroccan artist seated in the public during the Q&A asked Fraser if he feels, as an artist, responsible towards these images which are presenting a clear visual narrative of subjection. Fraser, who felt blatantly uncomfortable from the first moment, tried to tactically change the topic. The very same reaction came after my question tackling cultural appropriation and how the origins and ancestral ties of an artist can legitimise his or her art practise. '*Can you, as a 'man of colour'* (an identity through which he had presented himself at the beginning of the talk) '*have the right to use portrays of African decontextualised tribes produced during the violent colonisation of Africa?'* Fraser again remained mute, more or less glossing over the surface without delivering any real answer. Moderator Yvon Langué, instead, had to react to my question in a very diplomatic manner. After the debate, I have discussed the situation with the few from the audience, among them Palestinian American PhD candidate in anthropology George Bajalia, who on the situation commented: '*I wouldn't dare to ask such questions, I mean I did before, but I am just so tired of having no answers in return*.' Symptomatic attitudes of silence about the colonial past are, as threads, interwinding the entire cultural structures, from

the independent spaces to the prominent art fairs. '*Why remembering the colonial past in Marrakech and elsewhere? Yes, France colonised and what can we do about it now? It is time to move on*' summarises the situation historian, museologist and director of Museum Yves Saint Laurent Björn Dahlström during an interview[115] in the aftermath of the 1.54 Art Fair in 2019, in which the Museum of YSL participated and about which I aim to talk in the following chapters.

Artist Vince Fraser (in front) delivering a speech during 1.54 Art Fair's Forum in 2018, rejecting to answer public's questions on cultural appropriation of colonial images, (source: Alexandra Kollárová)

[115] All quotations of the director of MYSL Marrakech Björn Dahlström derives from two interviews conducted on the 1st of February 2019 and 12th of March 2019.

PART THREE: The Power of Cultural Institutions

Chapter 8 Musée Yves Saint Laurent in Marrakech

'*Art and cultural consumption are predisposed, consciously and deliberately or not, to fulfil a social function of legitimating social differences.'*[116] P. Bourdieu

'So how is it to work for such a significant Museum?' A frequent question I had asked among the employees of a prominent museum of Yves Saint Laurent in Marrakech (further as a Museum). Answers were articulated in a form of grateful narrations about supportive working environment full of understanding colleagues and a loving employer. Random encounters and chit chats with the cultural experts, employed in the Museum, over tasty canapés during the art openings turned out to be the only legitimate conduct of a conversation. In the very moment, I had proposed an 'interview', the situation had radically shifted. Using any information about the Museum for the sake of my fieldwork became gradually unthinkable. Despite my persistence, I have been constantly told to contact the 'public relation department' for any further information, whereas none of my emails were ever answered and the average employees refused all my meeting proposals. I had been repetitively warned that anything written about both the Museum of Yves Saint Laurent or the next doors venue Jardin Majorelle has to be approved by the director himself, while insisting that this regulation applies as so much on journalistic articles, as on any academical outputs. Obtaining the very few interviews from which I derive the following lines, presented an extremely difficult task provided by constraints I never faced before, such as the full prohibition of voice recording and obtaining written records. Museum of Yves Saint Laurent in Marrakech was built throughout the year 2017 – the same year in which I had stepped into the field. It was a great coincidence to witness the new institution growing right in front of my eyes as my first accommodation was on the very same street as the venue stands – *Rue Yves Saint Laurent* in-between city quarters *Gueliz* and *Daoudiate*. What difficulties I can expect when researching on a museum? I asked one of my first informants, later on, a good friend Soufiane. He laughed and noted: '*It would be probably way easier for you to research on a Moroccan ministry of Inferior, than on this very institution.'* With a dose of self-reflexivity, I can profoundly state Soufiane's words were quite accurate.

[116] BOURDIEU, Pierre. *A Social Critique of The Judgment of Taste*. Oxon: Routledge, 1984.

First attempts to approach the Museum's employees presented almost an impossible quest, further, it took me more than a full year to interview the director Björn Dahlström.[117] In the beginning, my research visits to Morocco were limited time-wise and funds-wise, nevertheless, understanding of the Museum's agency was conditioned by relationships developed in time. I knew if I aim to come closer, I need to establish regular visits — if not on a daily basis, then at least several times a week.

Paradoxically because of how the Museum appeared — as an inaccessible mute fortress, and perhaps primarily because of that, I have decided to direct my research specifically towards this institution. Particularly I was interested in how does the discourse operates in the physical space of the Museum and in power position the institution occupies within the field of cultural production in Marrakech. The inaccessibility and self-censorship became, eventually, data equally relevant. I felt it was impossible to research on continuous novel forms of Orientalism and aspects of cultural domination if one of the most visited cultural sites of the whole country would remain excluded. Both venues Jardin Majorelle and Yves Saint Laurent Museum are located next to each other and both are maintained by the similar Foundation. These venues are functioning because of and profiting from a specific idea about Morocco firmly rooted in colonial imaginary, while simultaneously engaging with the contemporary art scene in various manners. Even though the executive power circle of experts is rather small, both venues employ by an estimation of more than two hundred Moroccans. Western cultural institutions in general, museums in particular, are facing strong criticism of employment policies (the existing disparity between the number of white curators and exhibition directors and the similar positions occupied those of colour)[118] thus I had accordingly asked: What understating does a Moroccan employee develop in an environment where knowledge production about a group he or she belongs to, is solely constructed by a Western art professionals?

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[117] Björn Dahlström was born in 1975 in Casablanca to parents with Swedish origins, he lived and studied in France. Björn Dahlström is an art historian and museologist (École du Louvre, Paris). Between 2000 and 2007, he was in charge of programming at the Museum of Modern Art in Luxembourg. He was a curator of the exhibition "Air conditioned" of the artist Su Mei Tse who receives the lion of gold for the best national participation in the 50th Venice Biennale in 2003, source: http://www.wearemuseums.com/wam18/speakers/bjorn-dahlstrom

[118] In 2019 New York City's Guggenheim Museum has hired it's first black curator. This act was highlighted by many cultural activists as meaningless and empty and in fact, hadn't changed anything about the ongoing marginalisation of both black cultural experts and art producers [online] cit. 10. 2. 2020 In *African American Artists Are More Visible Than Ever. So Why Are Museums Giving Them Short Shrift?* https://news.artnet.com/the-long-road-for-african-american-artists/african-american-research-museums-1350362

Tackling specifically the ethnographical Berber Museum situated in Jardin Majorelle – I often asked if *Amazigh* employees relate to the dislocated and artificially classified material objects they are familiar with since their childhood, objects they recognise because they are part of their household. Material objects that are on display in the ethnographical showcases will be discussed in the following chapter *'A Culture yet to be discovered' – Berber Museum*. As I haven't been provided by any of information I had demanded and as I was prohibited from talking with the curators of the venues, I had to focus on informal conversations with the staff members, and it happened to be these rather casual encounters, that eventually answered many of my questions. I talked to the guardians controlling the tickets in front of the Berber Museum in Jardin Majorelle, I whispered with a young woman cataloguing the books in the library of Yves Saint Laurent museum and I was listening to the gossips of a man at the counter while he was selling souvenirs in the Museum shop. These two venues became an important part of my fieldwork as they presented physical storage of all the discursive formations which were addressed in the previous chapters. Both museums are built on the mythology of discoveries by famous foreign travellers; the decision making power over many of local objects on display isn't dependent upon the Moroccans themselves — the collections were classified without considering the opinions of the nationals; the museum authority is powerful to that extent that it excluded all potential signs of criticism, and finally, they possess a developed strategy of institutionalising their Moroccan employees.

I have met young Moroccan woman Fatima-Zahra during my first visits of the Museum's library and she became one of the very few people who had openly talked with me about the Museum's agency and their personal views on the working environment they are part of.

> *'I have decided to work here even though I am far from my hometown, simply because it was a unique opportunity. But when I have entered this space my jaw literally dropped down, all is built upon stereotypes and about what 'Orient' meant to Yves Saint Laurent. The library here is full of colonial literature and there is no sign about any critical discourse on colonialism. How can Moroccans not see it? Once I happened to be in the library when some older British couple entered, with Juan (librarian Juan Palao Gómez) they have been discussing the great amount of colonial literature and I remember I have made some critical comments on the content of these books, on how terribly Moroccans are described there, far from*

being considered by French colonial scholarship even as human beings. I have been stopped and I felt that Juan tries to calm me down, in the end, they all started to justify French Protectorate in Morocco and general Lyautey as a promoter of modernisation of the country. He is for me, of course, nothing but a great symbol of colonialism. I remember how shocked I was, it was my first working day there and I hadn't said to anyone how awful I felt. I would never discuss this even with my colleagues here, they are just trying to be French, it is so obvious. They talk only in French, they read French literature and admire the figure of Yves Saint Laurent as someone who is leading us out of the darkness. I remember I only said it to my parents (she laughs). I was thinking: Can I work here? Surrounded by this? I once attended a conference about Yves Saint Laurent in Morocco and it was situated here in the Museum's auditorium. Writer Laurence Benaïm was invited — the author of YSL's biography and had a speech where she said that: 'it is amazing that YSL perceived Morocco still as a beautiful country, even encountering people on the streets with lice.' I have been horrified again, looking around convinced that someone from the Moroccan public would react, but they had said nothing. I am a coward to get into a confrontation and additionally I have been employed here, so I said nothing too and just left. I regret that reaction of mine. But do you know how little working opportunities are here in Morocco? How low the salaries are? In the Museum, not only the salary is more than good, we have insurance and medical care for granted. I can afford things I couldn't even dream about before and support my family.'[119]

Repetitive in-depth conversations I had with Fatima-Zahra was an exceptional experience, despite the fact that similar narratives from the ranks of employees were whispered to me at the corridors of the Museums, they never reached the fearless honesty of Fatima-Zahra. The opposite statements were more common: a vast amount of the employees were convinced that the agency of the Museum Yves Saint Laurent and Jardin Majorelle are based on pure philanthropy and positive promotion of the 'Berbers', the city and perhaps even the whole country. The doors of Yves Saint Laurent fashion Museum in Marrakech (known under the shortcut MYSL Marrakech) opened in October 2017 and in an environment with a scarcity of cultural infrastructure, it had immediately awakened curiosity.

[119] Interview was conducted on the 19th of June 2019.

However, the growing attention is emerging primarily from the foreign press, rather than it would be a concern of the *Marrakechis*. Professor Katarzyna Pieprzak in her study on Moroccan Museums states: '*there are no Museums in Morocco* or', she continues: '*we can encounter outdated and empty public museums, private storehouses and second-rate colonial imports from Europe*' (Pieprzak, 2014, p. 15). Museum Yves Saint Laurent is a classical import in all possible manners representing solely Western definitions of fine art, but it is far from being a second rate — object of the Museum soon became inseparable from the contemporary vision of Marrakech understood as modern and progressive, sustaining the logics of online branding of touristic version of the city (Fattaleh, 2019). Further, it deepened the legacy of Yves Saint Laurent who is now even more understood as the patron of the city's cultural life and further promoted his perspective on Morocco. Although novel, this physical space fulfils a phenomenon, which Pieprzak had analysed in her study almost a decade ago: '*ordinary Moroccans are kept at a distance from art and cultural patrimony*' (Peiprzak, 2014, p. 21). While cultural institutions, in general, are still being in the state of invisibility to Moroccans, to others, predominantly to 'the West' (tourists, Western journalists and foreign artists) this space is, in fact, the most visible Museum and the only 'proper' institution in the country. The Museum is located at the *Rue Yves Saint Laurent* right next to the famous Jardin Majorelle — a 12-acre botanical garden which formerly belonged to the Orientalist painter Jacques Majorelle and which was subsequently bought and restored in the early 1980s by Pierre Bergé and Yves Saint Laurent himself.[120] The garden immediately became the most visited site in the entire country.

Despite the very fact, that the Museum is dedicated to a French designer and visited almost only by non-Moroccans, Museum has to justify its agency in the country, i.e., they wittingly or not have to interact with the field of the local cultural production. Yet, on first sight, we can almost state that the Museum is participating in the city's cultural scene in a very limited and unpredictable manner. Museum's annual program is announcing two to four regular exhibitions per year presented in the temporary show hall, though not regularly and mainly non-Moroccan artists are on display. On the other hand, in a more informal, subtle or invisible way the Museum is committed to the local

[120] Frearson, Amy. *Studio KO celebrates Yves Saint Laurent's fashion oeuvre with Marrakech museum* [online] cit. 7. 2. 2020 In https://www.dezeen.com/2017/10/20/studio-kos-musee-yves-saint-laurent-marrakech-museum-morrocco/

art scene. This includes predominantly Museum's financial responsibilities. The venues both Musée Yves Saint Laurent and Jardin Majorelle are maintained by the Foundation Jardin Majorelle established in 2001 profiled as entirely non-profit institution (*Dahir* no. 2.11.647), therefore earnings are by an obligation fully reinvested in order to support local artistic projects, further the Foundation is providing grants for cultural and educational institutions in Marrakech and elsewhere in Morocco[121] (such as *Cinémathèque du Tangier*). Additionally the Foundation finances scholarships for young Moroccans studying abroad[122] and organises symposiums. On the city level Yves Saint Laurent Museum is supporting independent space of *LE18*, School of Visual Arts in Marrakech (*ÉSAV*), journal *Chergui* and in the building itself lunched an educational tours for neighbouring schools (since 2018), organising free *Ciné Club* (screenings of favourite YSL's movies) every Thursday and for various local projects (such as the festival of contemporary dance *On Marche* and Marrakech Film Festival) the Museum is offering a space of auditorium free of charge. In an environment with limited state funding, the Foundation Jardin Majorelle has a powerful economical monopoly and most cultural venues do not hesitate to accept, if possible, any financial support. By Foundation's full reinvestments into local projects, they have built an image of a generous and caring actor towards Moroccan patrimony. '*They are maintaining the most visited country's cultural sites, neatly clean and beautifully designed buildings where they can present whatever they want and no-one will question a thing. Why? They are French, in Morocco, it means they are experts, they have the knowledge and they have an interest in producing 'culture'. No matter under who's terms.*' Noted my Moroccan friend, an artist and writer, who wishes to remain anonymous.

Despite the cycle of earnings and (re)investments back into the local cultural infrastructure — which is often pronounced as Foundation's virtue despite the very fact, it is compulsory, Museum's agenda plays a double role in a very cautious way. As a fashion museum, its official central focus is to maintain conservation practices, present fashion pieces of Yves Saint Laurent and nourish his legacy. The local context, of course, cannot be ignored, however, intersecting 'the local' is marked by the Museum's anxiety and vague statements. Existing reinvestment policies presented as a 'philanthropic

[121] *Fondation Jardin Majorelle* [online] cit. 10. 2. 2020 In https://www.museeyslmarrakech.com/fr/fondation-jardin-majorelle/la-fondation/

[122] This very information is available at the website of the Foundation and had been repeated to me by the director of YSL Museum Björn Dahlström, however, very little was said about the concrete mechanisms of selection, or even ways of how to apply for such a support.

commitment' therefore functions well as a shield against possible sensitive questions that can occur such as: Isn't something disturbing about implemented French museum in a postcolonial social setting with primarily francophone public admiring how one French man perceived Morocco? Isn't it just an annexe of *Frenchness* in the country? Aren't their practises a form of cultural domination? These concerns, often carefully articulated by very few critical figures of the Marrakech local art scene, are here essential. One of the former employees of the Museum noted: '*They are aware of all of it (Orientalism) but they must preventively reject all remarks on the colonial past as it can provoke an unwanted discussion*.' The justifications of Museum's practise is often expressed as: '*we have good intentions; we are financially supporting local projects and artists; at least there is someone rising the level of cultural life*.' However, when it comes to an open encounter with 'the local', the institution is cunningly holding back. Perhaps we can argue, that once being fully engaged within the scene on an official level would simultaneously bring a certain responsibilities, i.e., such situation could then possibly open up unpopular questions which weren't till today answered such as the obvious lack of the local audience; the existing preference of foreign established artists instead of giving opportunity to the emerging Moroccan producers; the promoted elitism; existing display practices which are adopting ossified discourse build upon the traditional ideas of aestheticism and understanding Western forms of art as the highest possible peak of the development process etc.

The Museum would be expected to answer these concerns although its practice is rarely ever questioned. Conversations I had with the director of the Museum Björn Dahlström were marked by blurred explanations of the venue's agency: his statements were praising the Museum as a new cultural force in the locality and as an art centre for Moroccans, however, once I have opposed that both venues cannot serve to the Moroccan public simply because a mediocre local resident wouldn't be able to afford the price of the ticket, the discourse altered and Mr Dahlström was suddenly claiming: '*Well the Museum is fully dedicated to the legacy of Yves Saint Laurent and the additional engagement with Marrakech art scene and with the average Moroccans is based on our goodwill, above all, we are reinvesting all our earnings*.' Museum's invisible 'philanthropic' engagement and their politics of display and knowledge production (the content that is visible to a visitor) are two entirely different practises, however, the first advocates the latter. The Museum is in a power to produce whatever kind of knowledge and display whatever kind of art, expecting not to be questioned for one very reason,

and that is because all the earrings are returning to the Moroccan projects and to the Moroccan individuals who are in a lack of support of their own country.

In a rather intimate field of the local cultural production, the Museum's team naturally in informal and formal manner interacts with other local cultural actors: longterm relationships are being established through mutual support and attendance of cultural events, art openings, screenings, various projects and more. The Museum employees are simultaneously considered as specialists on the local cultural scene out of their own institutional structures. By having very few art professionals in Marrakech, all of those who are involved in cultural life are more or less becoming a reference. Museum's professionals can be spotted in most of the cultural events: as much in the position of an observer as in position of an active participant. Their presence manifests in moderating debates both in the commercial galleries (such as Voice Gallery) or in the independent spaces (*LE18, Dar Bellarj*). It had been highlighted in previous chapters, that art professionals and artists are, in Morocco, in a state of extreme mutual compliance bordering almost with servility. Curator Francesca Masoero commented on this by stating: '*There are just a few of us working in the art scene, we, of course, know everything about each other and, even if we disagree with ones approach we always support each other on an official level. It is a result of established long-lasting relationships.*'[123]

For an outsider who is entering Marrakech there isn't more magnetising, visible and visited space than the Museum YSL. Thus, in the context of the city, MYSL Marrakech and Jardin Majorelle remain the most powerful producers of a certain kind of representation which is, through the circulation of masses of visitors, reaching up to the global level. The Museum's existence is conditioned by a relationship the fashion designer Yves Saint Laurent had towards Morocco, therefore the discourse doesn't solely communicate his fashion garments on display, but constructs representation of which Morocco and Moroccans are firmly part of. Both painter Jacques Majorelle and his 'successor in discovering Morocco' Yves Saint Laurent present an inseparable figures from the constructed image of Marrakech. It wasn't anyone's else paintings but of Jacques Majorelle on display at the very first art opening accompanied Museum's inauguration in fall 2017. According to the clear historical link between the two, for the

[123] Interview was conducted on 21st of November 2019.

director of MYSL Marrakech, it was 'obviously logical' to open the new space with Majorelle's canvases. However, the Orientalist painter and his work were presented without providing any of social and primarily political contextualisation and the term Orientalism as an ideology influencing aesthetic expressions in the 19th and the first half of the 20th century. '*Orientalism became a dangerous word*' notes the Museum director Mr Dahlström during our interview and continued: '*Its better just to focus on the beautiful aspects of art*.'

The act of choosing Majorelle's canvases carried a significant message on a symbolical level, which is to be understood as a manifestation of ownership over the representation of Morocco and its inhabitants. The opening of the Museum was accompanied by the wife of Moroccan King Mohammed VI – Lalla Salma alongside actresses Catherine Deneuve and Marisa Berenson.[124] This event can be best described by the words of art historian Carol Duncan for whom '*western-style art museums are now deployed as a means of signalling to the West that one is a reliable political ally*', and she follows: '*it must be imbued with proper respect for and adherence to Western symbols and values*' (Duncan, 1995, p. 88-89). We thus can perceive attendance and support of local elites as an attempt of Morocco to reassure 'the West', particularly France that one is a safe bet for economic investments and affirm mutual interest agreements. By allowing the smooth implementation of Western cultural structures, Moroccans are simultaneously accepting the Western definitions of culture. As the director of Foundation Madison Cox notes: '*we aim to show the Moroccan public their own patrimony*'[125] (referring to the Majorelle's exhibition). Discourse which is produced, sustained and circulates through these two cultural venues is powerful, but as M. Foucault notes in a specific way: power embedded in discourse doesn't mean necessarily that we are dealing with repressiveness, nor it does directly impose rules for thought and behaviour, rather the power of cultural institutions manifests in their ability of *productiveness*. Therefore through the behaviour and used language (understood in oral, textual and visual manner) the sense of ourselves, various objects, relations, places and people are being produced (Foucault, 1972, p. 38). Academical critical discourse on museums is in recent years calling for an approach, which would critically reflect on cultural institutions as on

[124] *Yves Saint Laurent Museum Opens in Marrakech Near Popular Tourist Site* [online] cit. 7. 2. 2020 In https://skift.com/2017/10/21/new-yves-saint-laurent-museum-opens-in-marrakech/

[125] *Madison Cox about the Musée Yves Saint Laurent* [online] cit. 7. 2. 2020 In *You Tube* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H1SoPKXZZr8

symbolic objects and deconstruct their agency as according to their social, political and ideological instruments (Duncan, 1995, p. 5). Therefore, presented discourse analysis aims to clarify how curatorial methods, practices of display and production of narratives are both manipulating imperial history and constructing novel hierarchically ranked cultural geographies, which are in this very case based on the denial of and silence about aspects of French colonial history in Morocco.

> '*Do you know what I find really problematic?*' I have been asked by an independent curator based in Marrakech while discussing over the newly opened Museum in one of the popular bars in Marrakech in late fall 2017. '*That all these Moroccan men with straw hats on their heads sheltering themselves from the enormous heat in which they had to work, will never put their foot in this building (meaning MYSL). Which might be, of course, the case in other countries too, but here the workers haven't deliberately chose not to enter because they aren't interested, they simply cannot access. They are excluded from this imposed cultural structure from the very beginning. Most of them would never even dare to think about it.*'

I had very soon understood that researching on politics of representation, Orientalist discourse and cultural domination which is, according to my findings, omnipresent in the Marrakech field of cultural production I couldn't otherwise, but to follow practices of this Museum as an actual physical space where only certain kind of knowledge is being produced and, on official level, accepted as *truth*. Being present in the field from the very begging of Museum's existence I became curious to understand who are the actual professionals '*operationalizing discourses of culture and science in classifying and displaying practices*' (Rose, 2014, p. 172). Most of the studies on institutions and its power '*doesn't include scientists, curators and the technical experts*' as visual theorist G. Rose states (Rose, 2014, p. 172), additionally in the context of postcolonial analysis, it remains necessary to address the current relations between the foreign and the local, which historically resembles with the relations of the coloniser and the colonised. Plainly most of the behaviours, attitudes, fixed language constructions of 'how to talk about' weren't dismantled and replaced, but remain fixed and are supported by novel contemporary art actors. In fact, I haven't had an idea what researching on a grandiose cultural site as the Museum YSL can obtain. First of all, after a few unsuccessful attempts to contact the Museum's curatorial team, I have understood that fieldwork in this object can present almost an impossible conduct.

For the first couple of months, my emails remained unanswered which resulted in my prolonged stay in the field itself. Of course, I could have entered into the object of the Museum as any other ordinary visitor and start to ask around, but that directly implied I would have to pay for each on the entires and with additional visits the amount became unthinkable. As I had already mentioned, it took me literally more than a year to get an official reply and arrange an interview with the director Björn Dahlstöm, before that, I had set off my research by a regular library visits in the first floor of the Museum's building, which presented a possible access to the object of the Museum without an obligatory entrance fee. The Museum's library is a private, reserved space with limited access and it is opened by an appointment. In each of my visits, I have had first dwelled in the space of the library in order to study its content which I had found equally interesting, yet after spending some time, which wouldn't be considered suspicious anymore, I have always left with an intention to remain longer in the ground space of the Museum.

In the morning of my first visit in the fall 2017, I took a long walk from *Bab Doukala* and followed the *Allal Al Fassi Boulevard* to the main crossroad where I have turned left to *Jacob El Mansour Avenue* straight towards the garden of Jardin Majorelle, as I was getting closer to the complex of the botanical garden, the number of tourists like pedestrians and taxies increased. I have passed by the entrance of Jardin Majorelle marked by an infinitely long line of eager foreign visitors stretching several tens of meters in great advance before the official opening hour. Once I reached the museum of YSL, I was already expected at the main gate, after handing my bag for a regular security check up I have been accompanied directly to the space of the library. It was Juan Palao Gómez who had been waiting for me at the gate the very first visit — a Spanish librarian who I had mentioned in previous lines of this corpus, and with whom I had numerous disputations throughout my entire field research. As we passed through the main entrance I could not otherwise, than fixedly gaze at the iconic sculptured initials 'YSL' centred on a massive semicircle column resembling almost an altar behind which the gate to the Museum itself — to the 'sacred', is situated. 'YSL' is not just a symbol of *haute couture*, but an important part of the territorial marketing process of the city and equally important symbol for those who can afford to acquire symbols of a certain social status associated with adherence to the Western symbols and values.

Approaching the main entrance of Yves Saint Laurent Museum in Marrakech, 2018, (source, Alexandra Kollárová)

The stop at the altar of 'YSL', Yves Saint Laurent museum, Marrakech, 2018, (source: Alexandra Kollárová)

The interior of Library located in Yves Saint Laurent Museum, Marrakech, 2018, (source: Alexandra Kollárová)

Juan lead me deeper into the building followed by unsealing a heavy locked door and taking steps to the first floor where we have finally entered the relatively small room of the library situated just next to the offices of the Museum's staff. I sat down behind a long wooden desk in the middle of the room looking around the shelves which were consisting of various French colonial literature on local craftsmanship, descriptions of Moroccan cities, witchcraft, mystical forms of local Islamic practices and travel literature. I had been glossing over the content of the books for more than two hours while trying to have small chitchat with Juan sitting majestically behind the leading desk, nevertheless, his answers were fragmented as he seemed to be fully occupied by a cataloguing process. After some time in the library, I have dropped a polite 'goodbye' and slipped into the object of the Museum. The exact same process I kept on doing repetitively for the following year and a half. Downstairs I have observed objects on display of the permanent collection, watched a short movie about the fashion designer in the auditorium, walked around and observed the visitors, had endless small conversations with the guardians of the Museum and examined the content of Museum souvenir shop. This was my strategy of entering the object of the Museum which is not a research-friendly environment nor open to any interviews beside those for recognised magazines. For the following time, even though managing to gain more access, I haven't been fully welcomed and provided with more information than an ordinary journalist or visitor. It was only at the end of my field research when I had been allowed to enter to the next doors Jardin Majorelle without being obliged to pay, and received an authorisation to take pictures inside the Berber Museum, otherwise, most of the Museum's inner data and information remained hidden to me, despite the given promises and postponed meetings that never happened. I have for instance never seen any of the annual reports, I have never been told exact data (primarily daily turnovers and nationalities of visitors which I knew the Museum has been recording) and I was never allowed to talk to any of the visitors in the object of the Museum both Yves Saint Laurent and Berber Museum as I could distract their state of contemplation.

Despite this fact of ignorance towards my research requirements I have decided to keep on examining and accept the limited mobility around the objects and other constraints which were imposed on me. Therefore all the places in which I was conducting my data collection, with some exceptions, are visible and accessible to an ordinary visitor. Beside first frustrations I have faced, I took the *inaccessibility* and *silence* as relevant data and source of information.

After all, as Rose notes again: '*discourse analysis also involves reading for what is not seen or said and absences can be as productive as explicit naming; invisibility have just as powerful effects as visibility*' (Rose, 2014, p. 167-158). Soon I have realised that what I have understood at first as a failure, is an indicator of regulations of an existing discourse. My relationship with these cultural venues is marked by many emotional and intimate debates and encounters. As it was already sensitive to talk among other cultural institutions in Marrakech about aspects of Western cultural dominance, here uttering anything out loud about colonial past and Orientalism was and is far over the edge. The more I asked and more present I had been around the venues, the more uncomfortable people around me started to feel. I have even been said, that some employees were simply afraid that a talk with me would negatively affect their careers. At one point the situation reached its peak when employees were, from the very decision of Mr Dahstöm supported by Juan Palao Gómez, prohibited from answering any of my questions. In spring 2019 I have decided to publish article in local emerging cultural journal *Chergui*, first published in 2018 by independent curators and artists in Marrakech. *Chergui* became relatively soon a platform for more critical voices and perhaps a counter textual narrative to *Diptyk* – the only official magazine covering art and culture in Morocco which is well known among art producers and art professionals for its uncritical approach. An article which I had published under the title *Producing a Myth: On Discourse and Cultural institutions* offered a perspective build upon a critical visual methodology dedicated to a hypothetical visitor who is entering any cultural institutions operating in, using Foucauldian term: *a regime of truth*. Within the lines of the article, I had discussed the first results of my analysis of the museum Yves Saint Laurent and quoted some statements of the Museum's director Mr Dahlström from our interview. It happened, by a coincidence, that *Chergui* was resealed during 1.54 African Art Fair in Marrakech – an event with full attention on the Marrakech visual art scene, as the issues were distributed all over the main venues, the Museum's reaction to my writing was as it follows:

Note from a field diary, 29. 3. 2019

> *During one warm spring evening in 2019, I have entered a bar titled Chesterfield, which, due to its calm atmosphere and relatively cheap prices in the heart of the city, became soon my favourite interviewing spot. I came here with the intention to talk to a young woman called Zineb, one of the oldest employees of the Museum who*

was in charge of so-called social media communication. She was a particularly interesting figure to talk to, as I knew she is the one who decides upon the 'modes of visibility' of both Jardin Majorelle and YSL Museum through Instagram and Facebook accounts. Interview with Zineb had been on my list from the very begging, simply because I was eager to know how visual representations of these cultural venues are constructed. I. e., what is important to show and under what circumstances. She masters Instagram accounts with 30,9 thousand followers of Jardin Majorelle and 24,3 thousand followers of MYSL Marrakech. A couple of days before the actual meeting I have run into Zineb at an art opening of artist Christo held in the Museum, I was accompanied by an artist she clearly knew, she greeted me and subsequently confirmed our meeting later in the week stating that she will answer all my questions. She gave me her phone number and asked me to call her as soon as possible. Next day we set a time and place of our meeting. When I have arrived at the bar terrace, Zineb was already there talking to someone on the phone. I have ordered a drink and waited for her to return to the table. When she sat down she said: 'We have a problem, I have just talked to Juan (the Museum's employee) and Björn (the director of the Museum) and I am not allowed to tell you anything at all, I have been said that I shouldn't allow you to even take notes of what I say.' I have looked at her astonished. It was already difficult to get any interviews from the museum's staff and now I have been censored. Publishing a critical article in Chergui probably prevented me from all of my future interviews in the Museum. I sighed heavily. Zineb and I were sitting with two full glasses of beer, looking at each other and asking ourselves what to do now. After I had to swear I won't use in any way anything she tells me, we eventually had a long conversation. I haven't asked about the Museum, as she wasn't allowed to answer and I didn't want her to feel even more uncomfortable. We talked mainly about her life and difficulties young Moroccan graduates are facing. Conversation with Zineb made me understand why it is so easy to be part of the corporate/private institution, further why the employees are feeling more than grateful towards the French employer and how facile is to get institutionalised without even noticing.

The content of the published article is incorporated in the following lines, before presenting any further analysis of the Museum I felt it is necessary to contextualise the circumstances under which data collection took place. The strong reaction my text caused, among some of the cultural practitioners, reveals the limitations and rules of

existing discourse while exemplifying which kind of writing, despite its academical form, can be in a local context already considered as an inadmissible critique.

8. 1 The fictional Marrakech of Yves Saint Laurent

'*The act of representing others almost always involves violence to the subject of representation.*'[126] *E. Said*

This chapter is intentionally designed as a reflection on the existing discourse within a certain cultural institution, where concrete narratives are being produced and sustained by those who are in power to do so. Before addressing the cultural space itself, the simplest yet fundamental question still remains without a clear answer: what is, actually, *culture*? What does it stand for in its contemporaneity and indicates in the context of post-colonial social arrangements? The traditional 'sum of great ideas' represented in classical works of literature, philosophy, paintings, music etc considerably differs from an anthropological definition of culture which stands as follows: culture is *argued*, it is not a set of material objects but a *process*, an ongoing *practice*, projected into values shared by various social groups (Hall, 1997, p. 2). With the increasing understanding of the culture within it's socially constitutive role enhanced by what is to be called the 'cultural turn' (Steinmetz, 1999, p. 1-2), the traditional positivist epistemological framework is facing a decline (Nash, 2001, p. 22-78). The cultural studies and post-structuralist scholars, on the other hand, started to depend solely on cultural participants and how they are meaningfully interpreting the world around them (Hall, 1997, p. 2-3). Generally speaking, cultural institutions are no longer understood as unquestionable authorities, rather scholars approach them as entities providing a playground for cultural sovereignty. Its professionals are deciding which works of art should be displayed and how and which, on the contrary, will remain valueless, hence they are giving and taking meaning through various forms of social interactions. Institutions thus produce '*ways of talking, thinking, or representing a particular subject or topic; they create a cluster of ideas, images and practices*' (Hall, 1996, p. 201-202). In other words, they produce a meaningful knowledge within power which is recognised as a discourse.

[126] SAID, Eduard. *Orietalism*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1978.

Art historian Lynda Nead in her definition on this understanding adds: '*discourses are articulated through all sorts of visual images and texts, specialised or not, and also through the practices that those languages permit*' (Nead, 1988, p. 4). Language, understood in a broad sense, is signifying symbolic practise through which production and circulation of interpretations take place (photography and exhibitions on display in museums and galleries are therefore also forms of a language, which produces understandings about the subject matter) (S. Hall, 1997, p. 5). Thus, we might ask if certain discursive claims served by cultural venues are reflecting on what is actually truthful? Despite the growing critical discourse among scholars and writers and their call for self-positioning and self-reflexivity among cultural practitioners when dealing with non-Western societies and non-Western material objects (for example American movement *Decolonize This Place* advocating for indigenous rights and black liberation or Belgian platform *Black speaks Back*), positions of cultural institutions (particularly those which are private) remain inviolable. In fact, the agency of the most powerful institutions (in terms of the productiveness of their social effect) is built upon constantly persuasive strategies and knowledge production formulated as nothing but 'truth.'

M. Foucault first and later S. Hall operates with the term *regimes of truth* in order to apprehend *truth* more as an imposed set of rules rather than referring to metaphysics. They argue that statements about moral, political or social worlds are rarely ever simply true or false and that any fact is undoubtedly (through language) construed in incoherent regimes (M. Foucault, 1972, p. 38).[127] Anthropologists and sociologists of art are asking if we can possibly approach art otherwise than via aesthetic gaze: Can we interpret art differently than we are told by those who decided on behalf of us? (see Mitchell, 1994). A possible way out from W. J. T. Mitchell's 'state of visual illiteracy', which is leading us to consume served fictional discourses in art institutional structures as much as in our daily lives, is what visual theorist Gillian Rose calls 'to adopt a critical visual methodology.' Word critical offers an approach that rethinks visual and textual narratives (in our case produced by cultural institutions) in terms of social practices, power relations and cultural significance in which they are embedded (Rose, 2001, p. 3). By adopting methods such as discursive analysis, psychoanalysis, iconography, content

[127] Persuasive strategies have resulted in habit where cultural institutions (their statuses and practices) are rarely ever questioned and tend to be perceived routinely as beneficial for society; for more read Tony Bennet's *Birth of The Museum* (1995) where he discusses firm dominating statuses by the fact that modern museums and prisons were born in similar historical period and that both „*deployed similar disciplining surveillance*" (G. Rose: *Visual Methodologies*, 2001, p. 170-171).

analysis or semiology we are developing tools by which we can address various phenomena considering the specific context of the researched subject; that can vary from paintings, photographs, films, advertisements to institutions or landscapes.

Nevertheless, my research subject is an institution and its apparatus, thus according to Rose's schema, I am applying the most suitable method of inquiry which is *discursive analysis* (Rose, 2019, p. 186-252). This type follows Foucault in understanding visual images and textual narratives '*as planted in the practices of institutions and their exercise of power*' (Foucault, 1977, p. 27). An approach which I am aiming to outline is concerned by social production and effects that operate through multiple details of an institution's habitude. The kinds of sources used for such an analysis may vary, but generally speaking, crucial is to undertake a careful reading of diverse written texts on existing museums or galleries both from outside (articles and reviews written in journals) and simultaneously venue's own produced textual narratives: pamphlets, exhibition catalogues and other documents as annual reports and their mission statements are equally necessary. Combination with the fieldwork, especially the participant observation method in the object itself, is necessary as the first step is to understand the general atmosphere and possibly also nuances which remain hidden without terrain research.[128] I have conducted in total two in-depth interviews[129] with the director of MYSL Björn Dahlström, and numerous talks with other employees were equally essential, however, as I have stressed before, they were obtained in an informal mean. Attention was paid to spatial organisation and architecture itself: Is the construction inviting or does it reminded the visitor of a fortress? How and to whom is the space accessible, and to whom the barriers (both mental and physical) remain unbreakable? (G. Rose, 2001, p. 170) Once tackling the 'access' to certain kinds of institutions (museums and galleries) fundamental reference is certainly Bourdieu's *L'Amour de l'art* which presents the result of systematic and grandiose research directed in the 1960s on European museums and their publics.

[128] One of the most challenging approaches in researching specific field is to reconstruct the spaces of original opportunities in order to understand why certain positions are so powerful compare to others. Unfortunately there is very little mentioned in the memoirs or chronicles about liaisons and quarrels, perhaps we have to access a part of the so called couloir rumouring in order to grasp what Bourdieu calls the 'mood of the age' and what, in many cases, happens to be within the research subject unaddressed and hidden (see Bourdieu, 1993).

[129] All quotations of the director of MYSL Marrakech Björn Dahlström derives from two interviews conducted on the 1st of February 2019 and 12th of March 2019.

Bourdieu's findings have shaped subsequent discussions among curators and art historians about access to culture, and its links to education and social classes (Grenfell and Hardy, 2007). The starting point is to understand that unapproachability is not necessary linked only to the financial possibilities of certain social groups, but to other conditions as well: to visit and to appreciate is conditioned by the ability to understand i. e., to be able to 'decipher codes' and to be in an agreement with a specific discourse. If possession of such competence is not supported (usually caused by the lack of education), these social groups will remain excluded from the specific circuit of the art production.

As I have argued, relatively new but significant actor in the field of cultural production in Marrakech – *Musée* Yves Saint Laurent is an institution producing a definite discourse about Morocco. I am looking into the Museum's agency through S. Hall's structure of discourse agency (see, 1992, p. 202):

1. The Museum is operating within its own discourse, however, we conclude that *discourse is not a closed system*, it always draws from dominant previous narrations while altering and translating new ones.
2. Statements and language in its broader meaning (texts and visuals and their combination) are *producing a certain kind of knowledge* about Morocco and Moroccans
3. Subjects which personify, illustrate or substitute the discourse will be addressed — '*Eden*', '*Orient*', '*evoking sketches of Delacroix*', '*arabesques*', '*Myth*' etc in order to find *regularity and system of dispersion* of discursive formations in practice (Foucault, 1972, p. 38).
4. Knowledge production about a certain kind of topic acquires *authority*, here I look upon who is in charge of constituting the knowledge as *truth* within the local context.
5. *Rules* which *prescribe* certain forms of talking about these topics and *exclude* other ways (what is thinkable or sayable) are as important as explicit utters

'*This Culture became mine, but I wasn't satisfied with absorbing it; I transformed it and adapted it*.' The quote by famous French fashion designer Yves Saint Laurent refers to his visit and later established life in Marrakesh, where his legacy was transformed into an existing physical space of the Museum. On the official website, we read '*more*

than a museum'[130], before discussing the topic any further we might question if practice of this space actually falls in the scope of what social and cultural theorist T. Bennett defines as a 'museum.' He argues that museums and galleries differ in their definition of culture which manifests mainly in the sorts of objects they display. Museums are focusing on the appropriated collection of objects that are meant to exemplify certain historical era, i. e., they present way of life of particular social groups; next, classifications of objects are always justified 'according to scientific Rationality' and 'objectivity' and exists primarily for the purpose of education (Bennett 1995, p. 165). Galleries, in contrast, are exposing those objects that are unquestionably defined as *art*, thus rather than following the science, the agency of the space is driven by a *belief*. Taking in consideration YSL's exhibition hall (a surface area of 400 m²) displaying fifty designed garments and related jewellery collection, as so the temporary exhibition hall, we can conclude that according to the criteria mentioned above, MYSL is more of a gallery exhibition space, than a museum display. To analyse the Museum's position and related discourse within the field of cultural production, parts of textual material will be used. As stated above, discourses are never closed systems and they have always been built upon the previous ones. YSL is following the tradition of being '*profoundly enamoured*' — the most repetitive emotion used by European French artists such as H. Matisse and E. Delacroix when 'discovering' Morocco. In the Museum's publication 'Yves Saint Laurent and Morocco' by Laurence Benaïm we are accompanied by continual references to the previous visiting artists: '*The bustling markets, the vistas that seemed to leap from Matisse's Paysage vu de la Fenêtre and Marabout…*' The following line continues: '*YSL's Morocco evolved from this proliferation of natural tones and powerful colours found only in nature and in Art: Delacroix reds, Majorelle blues… a luxuriant nature that reminds one of the Villa Brooks in Tangier, so dear to Matisse…'* The repetitive advertence to famous artistic figures (Eugène Delacroix, Henri Matisse and Jaques Majorelle) in textual narratives has a purpose and that is to legitimise YSL's agency in Morocco; i.e., Western artist stepping into the country and producing art inspired by local context is an established practise, a precedent enhancing the institutional position.

[130] [online] cit. 11. 2. 2020 In https://www.museeyslmarrakech.com/en/le-musee/le-projet/

It has been said that discourses do not put a spell on a pre-existing human agent instead human subjects are produced through a discourse (M. Foucault, 1979, p. 95). Thus, to translate some of the arguments in the previous lines, it might be said that a certain notion of what is Morocco is produced and inscribed through postcolonial tropes that are being nourished by previous discursive textual formations. By metaphor, it is like using archaeological excavation to uncover the remnants of the previous settlement, barely visible leftovers, yet on them, the whole new construction is firmly built. Those remnants I associate with a form of Orientalism. Specifically, intentions and comprehensions that the three above mentioned artists constructed in their visual and textual representations and shared under colonial *zeitgeist* which transmitted and later inspired Yves Sint Laurent. In a discussion about Orientalism, director of the YSL Museum Mr Björn Dahlström declared: '*We are faithful to YSL and Pierre Bergé and their vision of Morocco, they were creating something new, something beyond Orientalism, it is more a syncretism.*'[131] In the same interview on still present European conceptualisation/viewpoint of *Le Maroc* I have argued that the Museum does not speak for contemporary Morocco as seen by their own inhabitants. Mr Dahlström on this noted: '*The Museum is not Moroccan and about Moroccans, it is how Morocco is seen by foreigners which were looking for something, perhaps a dreamed Orient. I agree it is a Myth.*' My question therefore is, what else is intentionally designed and fabricated sustainable 'version of Morocco' offered to masses of foreign visitors, than a form of Orientalistic manner?

'*This place is completely for artists … the beauty abounds here*' writes Delacroix in one of his letters to his friend Villot from Tangiers (Nochlin, 1989, p. 52). In publication accompanying the exhibition 'Matisse in Morocco' by MoMA we can read: '*For Matisse, Morocco represented a kind of earthly paradise'*[132] a similar statement can be attributed to YSL's: '*Morocco is an essential Eden.*' From the European perspective Morocco had been '*mythic land firmly rooted within colonial imaginary and for more than a century appropriated by travellers, explorers, writers and artists*' (Wagner and Minca, 2016, p. 14). The official conduct of the Museum rejects any connection to Orientalism, something similar had in fact observed art critic and historian L. Nochlin decades ago during opening of the exhibition titled 'Orientalism: Near East in French

[131] Quote is from an interview with Björn Dahlström, 1st of February 2019.

[132] Press release: *Marisse in Morocco: Drawings and Paintings 1912-1913* [online] cit. 21. 2. 2020 In https://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/1904

painting 1800-1880', where organiser of the show Donald Rosenthal once confronted: '*drops ideology and political dominance like hot potatoes*' (L. Nochlin, 1989, p. 34).
The ties to the previous historical discourse are not supported only by the ways of talking, but additionally by the very fact that the Museum itself is '*just a stone's throw from the Jardin Majorelle*' (declared by venue's official website). The Museum YSL is wisely located next to the most visited site in the country reaching up to 1 million visitors per year (this number relates to the year 2018). Jardin Majorelle is, of course, historically linked to the personas of Yves Saint Laurent and Pierre Bergé, additionally one of its functions is to commemorate Orientalist painter Majorelle – his studio was transformed into nowadays Berber Museum[133] and Yves Sint Laurent himself, whose ashes are scattered in the botanical garden. The fact of the piety and respect to the final resting place, which has a form of simple Roman column, is prescribing certain ways of talking about and behaving in the space itself, further it constitutes an authoritative position over again promoted by the sanctity.

Each site is a prolonged hand of the other; the opening of the Museum in October 2017, as mentioned above, was accompanied by the exhibition of Majorelle's paintings. On the introductory board, the visitor could read: '*Jacques Majorelle's Morocco includes paintings of Marrakech, discovered by Majorelle in 1917*'. No discussion on the context of Orientalism had been carried out, neither on the introductory panel nor in the catalogue, instead, narratives accompanying the exhibition were built upon the mythology of discovery which was parroting the exact cultural framework through which the places and people were described and represented by the colonial apparatus in Morocco. The existing circuits of artistic production and cultural actors within are possessing a social mandate to interpret and educate, however, the cultural institutions aren't abolishing the previous representations but, instead, they are bringing them actively to life.[134] The Museum is not just a place dedicated to one figure and his designed garments (even though we can see primarily his collection on display). Additionally, it is a monumental narration of a man who encountered another world, and as we can read: '*who had transformed*' other's culture and '*adapted it*.' As he did so

[133] The space of ethnographical Berber Museum and its collection sample, selected according to Pierre Bergé's appetite, will be analysed separately.

[134] Beside the mentioned Jardin Majorelle and MYSL, other venues convey similar representations of the country, such as MACMA – a private museum founded in 2016 or *La Maison de La Photographie* existing since 2009. Both semi-museums are presenting Morocco as an exotic land through the lenses of anonymous travellers or famous photographers since 1870 to 1960.

in the process of adaptation, his perspective, intentions, construction of emotions and lived experiences have had created his very own translation, that some are calling *a myth*. Yet, this seems an adequate term as myth was invented to provide a pattern of behaviour to be imitated. The figure of YSL is for now existing in role of the presenter and mediator of more 'digestible' ready-made exoticism, able to provide a secure narration for those who prefer his fiction over the local versions.

After the article in *Chergui* had been released and it circulated throughout the cultural venues (its issue was too in the library of Yves Saint Laurent museum) I was about to meet Björn Dalhström again. Concretely, I wanted to discuss the educational system he set off in the Museum and ask for a possibility to attend some of those sessions. His elegant secretary seated me in the main meeting room with a majestic black and white profile portrait of Yves Saint Laurent and offered me a cup of coffee. Mr Dalström entered the room a few minutes after me carrying the journal under his arm. The bright pink colour of the A3 format issue flashed at me with trouble and as he sat down with his tiny black notebook and prepared his pen, he did not look at me once. Finally, he lifted his head and gazed at me sharply. '*Very* w*ell*' he broke the silence, '*before you ask me any questions let me interview you first*.' For a second I froze and the perfectly neat and designed room started to feel even more impersonal and cold. '*Yes, of course, ask me anything you like*' I said trying to sound confident and calm and asked for permission to record. His answer was a strict 'no' as I could have anticipated. He told me that the article I had released presented a serious critic and his specific quote was thus misrepresented. Being aware of the ethics of the research I assured Mr Dahström that he provided me with the informed consent before the very first interview started. I insisted that he had said exactly this sentence:

> '*The Museum is not Moroccan and about Moroccans, it is how Morocco is seen by foreigners who were looking for something, perhaps a dreamed Orient. I agree it is a Myth*.'

The core of our clash — the 'about' in the sentence Mr Dahström interpreted as 'not for Moroccans'. He set off a deep emotional monologue, stating that the Museum is here primarily for the Moroccan public even though it is obviously lacking its local audience which is to be solved soon, further he added that from the very begging he is trying to increase the number of Moroccan audiences and that he is aware of this

unpleasant situation. He emphasised that he had started educational tours for neighbouring schools and that so far he is very proud of it. Such sentences I have used in the article were, according to him, unfair. '*The whole educational program*[135] *is expensive because the Museum is taking care of everything including the transportation of the students from their school to the venue, each class visits three spaces: the garden, the Berber Museum and the YSL Museum*. I nodded my head in an agreement and hoped to calm down the situation. *'We have developed a method of how to teach the kids*' Mr Dahlström continued in his speech. I have listed carefully and asked for more details, he told me I will be provided with all the information I will need, yet I have never received any materials even if I asked for it repetitively. I have been informed that the Museum has 13 mediators and they will train each year new facilitators from the Cadi Ayyad University in Marrakech. In the end, I have spent more than three hours with Mr Dahlström in a discussion about the article and the negative publicity it caused. He told me that he has a feeling that I am looking for 'something' to convict him, which I found absurd at that very moment. I continued to explain that I am not in a judgmental position of any kind and I am trying to conduct analysis of an existing discourse. '*Why can't you anthropologists let go of the colonialism*?' He asked. '*Because you are using the same rhetorics and definition of culture as the French during the Protectorate and your position is within the field so powerful that no one dares to question neither you nor your practices*' I have answered. '*I do admit we colonised this land*' Mr Dahlström suddenly risen his voice more than the courtesy which would allow him at that moment, putting himself deliberately in a position of a grotesque representative of an ex-coloniser and added: '*It is a fact, and Orientalism is a fact too, Jacques Majorelle was an Orientalist painter but what can we do about it*? I felt how much unpleased this conversation is to him, yet I couldn't but to ask: '*Why haven't you talk about historical and political intrusive context when exhibiting his canvases*?' He looked at me almost desperately and from his gaze, I could read tiredness from this talk. '*Look, the whole city is Orientalistic and I see that everywhere is still a tremendous need for exoticism and especially when we are talking about the tourist industry. I do admit not considering the political background of Majorelle's works, was a mistake because then someone like you marches in and points it out*.' As he answered I felt a glimpse

135 I haven't been able to receive more information about the Museum's educational program for public schools set off for the first time in fall 2018. The director Bjorn Dahström had eventually resigned for unknown reasons in 2019 and the new provisional director Saad Tazi haven't approved any of my requests to join the tours.

of sudden anger, but simultaneously I understood he is being honest. Mr Dahlström continued: '*When I have met Juan for the first time, we have discussed the content of the library and the whole collection of the books, he told me that all we have here is just the colonial literature and some books are surly racist. Juan also said it is problematic that we are missing books in Arabic. Yes, but again I ask what should I do about the French past? I have replied to him as I am replying now to you, that I am not responsible for the legacy of the colonialism. I have read the books and I have been terrified! Of course, what the French colonial scholarship was able to produce about Moroccans is something unacceptable in these days. But at least there is some literature about native art. If Berbers and Arabs would be able to write books about themselves I would have them it that collection. But they did not produce any textual narratives about their own heritage, so again I cannot do anything about that. Juan explains carefully to every visitor of the library, that we have these kinds of controversial books in there. I cannot do more.*'

In the introductory part of this chapter, I have presented methodology following Michel Foucault's notion of discourse which was further developed by Gillian Rose as a visual method suitable for understanding discourse in concrete institutions. In the first part of this thesis, I have looked into the past, i. e., in the origins of the representational practises and their consequences — how they prevail among cultural practitioners till today and how they remain influential. I aimed to highlight that institutions are never transparent sources of materials of any kind (Rose, 2000). In the following lines I will focus on the Museum's institutional apparatus with a specific focus on the architecture and some additional spatial orderings. First, the very existence of the Museum and Jardin Majorelle is conditioned by a specific discourse of a 'culture' which saturated the birth of these two sites. Moroccan culture life is in a postcolonial time marked by negotiations and sometimes struggles over the cultural sovereignty between local progressive artists, the state and dominant private actors while '*continuously struggling to address the material concerns of its inhabitants*' (Pieprzak, 2011, p. 17). On one hand, Moroccans are still facing strong implemented descriptions and definition of aesthetics which disregards their own culture alternated by the frustrations from the disinterest of the state actors, on the other they experience a sudden and hasty attention of Western cultural actors who yearn mainly for profit. This configuration created a specific landscape of a great confusion. In Morocco the institution of a *museum* is perceived as a concept which is to be manipulated by various actors justifying their

exercises of power by claiming their sites as symbolic 'beacon of modernity', protected space which is '*safeguarding Morocco's commitment to modernisation efforts and development*' (Pieprzak, 2010, p. 21). From the late 1990s, Morocco in the light of neoliberal privatisation of culture allowed extreme implementation of private quasi-museums and galleries all identically stating that their intention is based on protecting art from an environment which does not recognise the values of its own artefacts. Analysis of Pieprzak highlights the growing exclusion of the Moroccan public from art and a cultural patrimony at the same time as the social division between the wealthy and the poor in Morocco is widening (Pieprzak, 2011, p. 21). Both Museum YSL and existing Berber Museum situated in Jardin Majorelle was established in the climate where 'modernity almost was' — referring to the dynamics of cultural discourse in the 1960s and 1970s postcolonial Morocco and its attempts to discipline taste which have had drastically failed.

'Educational' program of Yves Saint Laurent Museum in Marrakech for neighbouring Moroccan schools, (source: FB account of MYSL Marrakech)

Morocco faces a scarcity of public museums that would successfully function, the venues which are newly build, namely Mohammed VI Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art in Rabat (opened in 2014) is undertaking an identity crisis and, again, it faces the lacking local audience. On the contrary, in Marrakech we encounter even an extreme amount of visitors (however, non-Moroccan), in these two prosperous venues which are '*the most beautiful and best-organised sites in Morocco.*'[136] Nevertheless, both venues have adopted a selective model that controls to whom the story is being told. Western museums and galleries which are being built today in the ex-colonised societies are committing a 'civilising missions', however, once they remain empty, their professionals accuse the majority of the nationals of nothing but pure ignorance. Yet, such statements are not a result of long-lasting pedagogical and mediation attempts which did not succeed, nor the institution's unsuccessful inclusive policies. But rather little or no interest in the popular appeal. Notion of culture produced in Museum originates in 19th century from '*the ruptures of the French Revolution which created the condition of emergence for a new 'truth', a new rationality, out of which came a new functionality for a new institution*' (Hooper-Greenhill, 1989, p. 63), therefore we can ask, why do an empty museums surprise anyone when it is more than obvious that the habit of museum visits belong to the West rather than to non-Western societies. According to the theorist of museums Hooper-Greenhill, museums presents an apparatus with a rather contradictory functions: first, historically it has been always an elite temple of arts. This is perhaps the most shared idea and an ongoing core function of the museums. In Western context it became a utilitarian instrument for democratic education, later the third function was added and that is — an instrument to discipline the society (Hooper-Greenhill, 1989, p. 63). Institutional apparatus which is purely Western by its practice, yet implemented on the 'periphery' (referring to the centre-periphery model) with colonial past presents for any kind of research an additional challenge. By the words of Carol Duncan: '*it does hold implications for the way non-Westerns cultures are seen*' (Duncan, 1996, p.2). There practically isn't an existing article about contemporary Marrakech in foreign press that wouldn't mention the figure of Yves Saint Laurent and his Museum – a narrative which is helping to understand Morocco as a society in the transformation from the undeveloped and medieval to a modern country with a flourishing and vibrant cultural scene. As Fattaleh puts it: '*Marrakech aggressively markets itself to Western tourists, creating demand for high-end facilities to cater for*

[136] A repetitive statement of most of non-Moroccan cultural actors in I have talked to.

the hospitality industry. The city's master plan is designed solely to sustain growth in tourism' (Fattaleh, 2019, p. 5). Following the research of Fattaleh, contemporary art actors in the city are well balancing the constructed representations of a liberal and progressive country which is attracting the attention of the global art world and perhaps potential investments into the local art market, well camouflaging the state of poverty with around 30 percent of illiteracy rate.[137] For the prestigious non-Moroccan private actors it doesn't seem to be a concern at all as they have their Western public and attention of the Western media. In the case of YSL Museum (presence of Lalla Salma at the inauguration ceremonial), as so much for the Berber Museum (directly supported by King Muhammed VI himself in the official letter to Pierre Bergé) their very existence and practises had been sanctified by the Monarchy, such power position is, therefore, irreversible.

8. 2 Additional Notes on the Power of Spatial Orderings

'*It is the most beautiful building in the city*' a repetitive statement shared by many cultural actors I have talked to in the past two years. Theorist on museums Tony Bennett (Bennett, 1995) pays attention to the visual character of the subject he is analysing, specifically to the architecture of the institutional site. According to him facades, entrance halls and internal layouts convey as many meanings as any textual narratives. Similar is discussing Dona Haraway (Haraway, 1989) in her study of AMNH (American Museum of Natural History), both considering that the visual character of the building determines accessibility and exercises the public. The building of MYSL Marrakech was designed by Parisian architectural studio *KO*, one of the most prominent studios in the city founded by creatives Olivier Marty and Karl Fournier. In fact, the studio itself started in Marrakech bureau located at the avenue *Mohamed V* where the duo set off their business by designing impressive homes for clients such as *Hermès* and *Agnelli*.[138] Aside from the experience in designing private villas, *KO* never conducted a public institution before. The problematic aspect of most of the modern architectural projects being done in different cultural contexts is, that they rarely communicating by the 'language of local terrain', instead they are reshaping the space solely through own

[137] *Morocco: Literacy and Education* [online] cit. 21.2. 2020 In http://uis.unesco.org/country/MA

[138] Levine, Joshua. *Meet the Duo Behind Studio KO* [online] cit. 23. 2. 2020 In https://www.architecturaldigest.com/story/meet-the-duo-behind-studio-ko

perspectives. The economic, geographic and spatial considerations aren't thus equally balanced with the social (Eleb, 2010, p. 159-160). The postcolonial critical studies on architecture are highlighting the persistent urban models which aren't rooted in local conditions, but are based on ideas about universal tools and methods with 'acculturating character' easily implemented in diverse altering contexts (see Gwendolyn Wright 1991; Samia Henni, 2017; Tom Avarmaete, 2010; Monique Eleb, 2010; Sara Frikech). Morocco has a great tradition of French colonial urban development plans stretching from the very establishment of the Protectorate in 1912 to post-independent period in the 1960s. French architects were addressing primarily housings necessities, reacting to the socio-economical aspects liked to the inner migration, increasing urbanisation and growth of shantytowns especially linked to the city of Casablanca which became, in these terms, a laboratory of French urban experimentation (see Avermaete's *Framing the Afropolis Michel Ecochard and the African City for the Greatest Number*, 2010).[139] Simultaneously colonial architecture became a tool of segregation, where Europeans, Jews and Muslims were housed according to their fixed 'habitat' — a term presented by an architect Michel Ecochard referring to a way in which different 'ethnical and racial' groups were living (see Henni, Samia From "Indigenous" to "Muslim", 2017).[140] These architectural outputs were, of course tackling different aspects of socio-culture realities, yet designing a private object of a museum share a common ground and that is the *discourse* in which it was built. As Avarmaete writes: '*In Morocco, for instance, the independence of 1956 did not result in the abolishment of the architectural and urban models which the French coloniser had introduced. On the contrary, as soon as independence from France was declared both Moroccan and French architects and urban planners continued their work at full speed.*' (see Avarmaete, *Nomadic Experts and Travelling Perspectives: Colonial Modernity and the Epistemological Shift in Modern Architecture Culture*, 2010, p. 147). It is not rare that commissioned buildings are being built by non-Moroccan architectural studios, however, circulating textual narratives about the construction are letting as believe that: '*space is a white page on which the actions of institutions and groups are inscribed*' while refusing any direct connection between urban forms and colonial power schemes (Bishop et al., 2003; King, 2004; Robinson, 2006). Following P. Bourdieu: the physical objects of architecture are

[139] Avermaete, Tom. *Framing the Afropolis Michel Ecochard and the African City for the Greatest Number* [online] cit. 13. 12. 2019 In https://www.oasejournal.nl/en/Issues/82/FramingTheAfropolis#077

[140] Henni, Samia. *From "Indigenous" to "Muslim"* [online] cit. 23. 2. 2020 In https://www.e-flux.com/architecture/positions/160964/from-indigenous-to-muslim/

being silenced although they are important instruments of social purposes, therefore it is necessary to address the very concrete material and spatial ordering of the buildings (see Bourdieu, P., *Raisons pratique: sur la théorie de l'action*, 1994).

Architecture became one of the important colonial instruments as for example educational system or production of knowledge throughout French colonial scholarship. Morocco has a very deep tradition of French architectural interventions which imposed ethnocentric ideas about local culture embedding definitions of where and how local inhabitants are supposed to live (Rabinow, 1986, p. 260). Making statements about 'the Other' — throughout the narratives of 'the discoveries', by promoting the *distinction* between art and craft and finally the architectural reshaping of the cities was a part of French colonial discourse which developed historically into the 'common sense' particularly noticeable in the institutional domains (Potter, 1996, p. 131). I argue that the Foundation Jardin Majorelle constructed a Museum which was never meant to be inclusive, simply because the assumed tradition commands that Moroccans were never included, with an exception of the acculturated local elites. The statements based on asserting the 'truth' are being constructed through the social authority and how the authority was and is established. The Museum is a product of a powerful authority of Pierre Bergé, but as well a product of persistent neo-colonial discourse which enables to set off such a project. The building of MYSL Marrakech is perceived as a modernisation attempt to advocate for the beauty of the city and surrounding landscapes often neglected by its own inhabitants. Is the Museum encompassing the public and their interests as claimed by the initiators of this project? In the following lines, I ask: How did the *KO* studio balance the local realities with the Foundation's interests? Is an understanding of a public institution correlating with the concepts of *the private* and *the public* as constructed within the socio-spatial understanding of the local inhabitants?

KO studio belongs to the elitist French circle in Marrakech, notably familiar to the initiator of the Museum YSL Pierre Bergé himself, therefore the decision of whom to entrust such a project was more than clear. Represented as a unique architectural commissioned piece, the literature and press tend to represent the object of the Museum as a distinctive work of art, worth adoration and respect. The figure of Yves Saint Laurent is produced as an exceptional visionary deepening the value of the city over and over again. The object of his Museum is built out of terracotta with Moroccan stone

fragments, all in earthen colour which is due to the attempt of the designers to create 'a *building which has to blend harmoniously with its surroundings*'.[141] On one hand, the visual character of the venue does respect the ethos of the neighbouring buildings, on the other, the actual existence of the Museum did not really '*harmoniously blend*', rather it had transformed the surrounding neighbourhood in a significant manner. The Museum is located in the *Rue Yves Saint Laurent,* the act of naming a street very well illustrates the character of the relationship the city has towards YSL's legacy, additionally, by constructing this site just next to already overcrowded Jardin Majorelle, it had supported the character of the area as a tourist facility of the greatest importance. What we can witness is how, just within two years, one existing historical site transformed into an actual district. The entire street had been carefully repaired and filled with lofty palm trees, cafes and restaurants, souvenir shops, luxurious boutiques, taxi and carriage waiting points, etc. All in order to satisfy the increasing number of visitors who still remain foreign. In spite of official claims about the '*need to present to the Moroccan public their own patrimony*' and '*It is for Moroccans and about Moroccans*' (interviews with both Madison Cox[142] and Björn Dahlström), both sites Jardin Majorelle and Yves Saint Laurent Museum were never meant to be something else than a spectacle for the outsiders. Beside pronouncements and committed statements of cultural professionals, there is no real need for being inclusive. Going back to Bennett's notion of *visual representation of the building*: an existing facade of the museum building is windowless, this is done for many reasons such as conservation and preservation practices or to lessen the Marrakech's enormously high temperatures. Yet *KO* studio likes to highlight the resemblance it has with Moroccan houses in Medina which are known for being plain and ordinary from outside, meanwhile rich in patterns from inside (Marty and Fornier, 2017). The official proclaimed intention of the public institutions in general and Yves Saint Laurent Museum in particular, is to be as much welcoming as possible. Museum's facade is presented as a decision inspired by/and respectful to the local environment, nevertheless to Moroccan public the facade is on symbolic visual level speaking otherwise and even deepens the existing barriers. Moroccan cultural and social context doesn't follow the Western habit of 'cultural visits' such as to the museums or galleries. However, this doesn't seem to be the concern of the

[141] *Musée Yves Saint Laurent Marrakech / Studio KO* [online] cit. 11. 2. 2020 In https://www.archdaily.com/925363/yves-saint-laurent-museum-marrakech-studio-ko

[142] Madison Cox is an American garden designer and a president of the Jardin Majorelle Foundation.

Museum's agency. One of the fundamental reasons behind is, that the Museum already has its public, in fact, by words of Björn Dahlström: '*The biggest problem of these days is that we have too much of visitors and it's growing!*' 'The cultural centre' as Madison Cox likes to call Yves Saint Laurent Museum, which aims to be accessible for the broad public is, in fact, to Moroccans completely alien. Besides above mentioned components, another aspect which promotes *inaccessibility* is that the space of the outside evokes an entrance typical for the most luxurious hotels in Marrakech with gates surrounded by the guardians. Whereas streets are full of foreigners who are released from their taxies and buses entering the building with a pretext of knowing what a museum visit embraces — from how to actually behave in the object itself under a constant surveillance, to the knowledge of how to perform an aesthetic response, a local uninformed spectator is left behind the wall with the only visible point: that of a counter offering enormously expensive ticket. Intentionally or not, the lacking insight into the object is actually a barrier of a physical kind that enhances those which are mental.

The infinite line of foreigners in front of Jardin Majorelle and YSL Museum, Marrakech, 2019, (source: Alexandra Kollárová)

Bookshop in Yves Saint Laurent museum, Marrakech, 2018 (source: Alexandra Kollárová)

Contemplations over art pieces are associated with space of sacred and according to Hooper-Greenhill's museum analysis, the traditional understanding of art museum building is of a *temple*. Such comparison is present among textual narratives produced about the Museum. We can read utters such as: '*temple to the fashion designer's legacy in his cherished Marrakech*';[143] '*Marrakech's Temple of Yves Saint Laurent';[144] 'The Museum is like a church*'; [145] '*A Temple To A Fashion Icon*'[146]; '*a shrine*'[147] and more. Available information is focusing only on the Museum's artistic statements: notes on how architects handled the lighting difficulty or what local materials were used, however, what remains, according to Duncan, usually ignored is the process of collecting and by whom is then the collection represented (Duncan, 1995, p.1). Such question isn't asked as the sacred character of the space is maintaining *the regime of truth* heavily supported by foreign press headlines.

The entrance of MYSL Marrakech is guided by two employees from each side, always warm and welcoming being able to communicate in all kind of languages, nevertheless in their blue uniforms and with transmitters in their ears they represent a surveillance which local visitor associates with entering into a confidential space rather than into the educational institution. From the eighteenth century till the mid-twenties museums were, in the Western world, intentionally designed to resemble the ceremonial monuments: shrines, temples and palaces (Duncan, 1995, p. 7) and Museum of Yves Saint Laurent in Marrakech fully operates in the Western regime of culture consumption. All of the textual and visual narratives are in the Museum concentrated around the idealised character of Yves Saint Laurent, who is within this object achieving a status of an eternal saint. Practically in every of the Museum's hall, even in private offices of Museum's staff, large formate portrait usually in black and white of YSL dominates the space. Omnipresent portraits evoking sepulchral and religious character are constituting the authority of YSL which is being saturated by the classical Western

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143 Levine, Joshua. *Meet the Duo Behind Studio KO* [online] cit. 11. 2. 2020 In https://www.architecturaldigest.com/story/meet-the-duo-behind-studio-ko

144 Forman, Liza. *Marrakech's Temple of Yves Saint Laurent* [online] cit. 11. 2. 2020 In https://www.thedailybeast.com/marrakechs-temple-of-yves-saint-laurent

145 *Musee Yves Saint Laurent Marrakech* [online] cit. 11. 2. 2020 Inhttps://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g293734-d12994921-r637508623-Musee_Yves_Saint_Laurent_Marrakech-Marrakech_Marrakech_Tensift_El_Haouz_Region.html

146 *Yves-Saint-Laurent Museum In Paris – A Temple To A Fashion Icon* [online] cit. 11. 2. 2020 In https://www.parisinsidersguide.com/yves-saint-laurent-museum.html

147 *A private tour of Villa Oasis, Yves Saint Laurent's magical Marrakech home* [online] cit. 11. 2. 2020 In https://www.telegraph.co.uk/luxury/travel/villa-oasis-yves-saint-laurent-marrakech-home-visit-review/

understanding of the artist as someone ennobling the visitor's spirit, additionally, in Marrakech, he is portrayed as patron guiding the cultural development of the country.

Once the visitor enters the main gate and walks through the corridor he immediately faces an arc with the grand initials of *YSL* which, in the context of Morocco, transmitted from the brand's label to a strong visual symbol conveying a specific representation of the city. This is the visitors first stop, where he performs an exact act as the group of visitors did before him. Iconic initials here became a physical social status marker of those who pass by. In fact, it became impossible to imagine Marrakech without the famous shortcut *YSL:* it has visually conquered the city and became a tool of division between two separate versions of the city. On one side is Marrakech as discovered and seen by Yves Saint Laurent, hence today by those who are in an agreement with such representations — visitors consuming what is presented as *beautiful*, *legitimate* and *truthful* through an institution who prises his legacy and further, and as mentioned in first chapters of my thesis, by those who are in his name approaching this land and its inhabitants in a similar manner — as a land of the exotic 'Other'. On the other hand, there is Marrakech with its diverse dynamics, yet invisible. To be able to see beyond the constructed representation requires an effort of breaking free from imposed (neo)colonial imaginary and develop resistance against the *regimes of truth*. This implies a search for alternative paths and perhaps even a pretext of a critical approach. Yves Saint Laurent Museum provides a safe space of the familiar and highly professionalized environment, in other words: it has the Western standards which visitors in Marrakech are searching for, or at least hope for and which they, in this Museum, so appreciate. The figure of Yves Saint Laurent for them is an ambassador, a translator, a guide, and an expert on Morocco who validates this land. Cultural actors perceive the Museum as the peak of ineluctable evolution which is part of every developed country, thus what might be possibly wrong about supporting the best from cultural institutions this country can offer?

The iconic arc with the initials 'YSL', Yves Saint Laurent museum, Marrakech (source: http://www.studioko.fr/#en-project-38-18)

The Museum consists of 150 m2 temporary exhibition space, a 130-seat auditorium, a bookshop, a café-restaurant with a terrace and a research library housing 5,000 books — all of what is expected from a standard Museum distinguishable in a Western tradition. According to my interview with the director Dahlström, most of the visitors do have no particular interest in fashion nor do not adore the figure of YSL, yet they have been told by endless articles that it is the best museum in Marrakech, and perhaps in the

whole country. To control a museum, notes Duncan, means to control representation over a society and its highest values and truths (Duncan, 1995, p. 3-4), to control such institution and its content in an environment without museums at all, multiplies the power over representation. The unquestionable sanity this space evokes is carefully set up space for contemplation and supposedly for learning. However, the Museums's educational function is highly questionable. A novel 'project' promoted by Dahlström targeting children from the neighbouring schools was implemented in fall 2018. The content on display is translated and communicated to children in the local dialect *darija* by specially trained young university students, nevertheless, the speech is saturated by the notion of French culture as a norm to be followed. Both the Museum of Yves Saint Laurent and Jardin Majorelle are promoters of art and artefact *distinction*, a dichotomy which have put Western and non-Western societies on a hierarchical scale, where the West is on the top as producers of the so-called fine art outputs and 'the rest' below as producers of usually utilitarian or decorative artefacts. This *distinction* is even more visible through a suggested 'tour' which the venues offer at the counter desk. Instead of buying a separate ticket for Jardin Majorelle (including the botanical garden and Berber Museum visit) and another separate for the Museum Yves Saint Laurent, the visitor is offered to purchase one joined discounted ticket. The tour starts in the Museum of Yves Saint Laurent where the visitor encounters the supposedly real art: in the first exhibition hall, fifty haute couture garments chosen from the collection of YSL and his selected designed jewellery are on display.

Whereas temporary exhibition hall is a space set for two to four exhibition per year. '*It is an exhibition space for the prominent artists who were close friends of the French circle around the couple Pierre Bergé and Yves Saint Laurent*'[148] whispered to me French journalist writing on contemporary art in Morocco Marie. Museum's first exhibition was, as had already mentioned, dedicated to Jacques Majorelle – a highly appreciated artist. Curated by art historian Félix Marcilhac and designed by Christopher Martin, the exhibition included paintings of Marrakech which Majorelle, according to the published pamphlet, *discovered* in 1917. Besides the city scenes, depictions of High Atlas *kasbahs* from the 1920s were presented, followed by controversial female nudes about which we can read in a publication available: '*these young girls always expressed an intense, natural joie de vivre, that was almost savage!*'.

[148] Interview was conducted on 25th of February 2019.

The Museum praises this exhibition as a '*tribute to a painter who captured and celebrated the beauty of Morocco during the first half of the 20th century.*'[149] Representing Moroccans, especially women through visuals was a frequent activity which Moroccan filmmaker Nadir Bouhmouch describes as: '*afforded only to the colonist in whose interest it was to portray the colonised in a way that benefited colonialism*'.[150] Always claiming to portrait 'reality', painters like Delacroix, Majorelle and photographers such as Marcelin Flandrin or Jean Besancenot cultivated a series of distorted images justifying exploitation and violent domination via 'ethnographic' and 'artistic' purposes. Beside Majorelle's paintings, the very same year was on a display contemporary Moroccan fashion designer Noureddine Amir. The following year four exhibitions were presented: a group exhibition of Etel Adnan, Simone Fatal and Bob Wilson titled *Garden of Memory*, followed by the only charge free access of much-disputed exhibition *Les Marocains* by deceased French Moroccan photographer Leila Aloui about which we could read: '*Foundation will present her work in Marrakech, the city where she was raised and where, as a child, she met Yves Saint Laurent.*' Thirty vast photographies portrayed Moroccans from *Jemaa El Fnaa* Square presented the Museum's first experimental attempt to attract the Moroccan public which has had drastically failed. The Museum fixed an extra entrance so passengers from the street could directly enter the exhibition space. Juan Palao Gómez during one of my library visits noted: '*This exhibition is intentionally for free, we made a separate entrance and I think it is a big gesture to the Moroccan people, I am often criticised by some that our Museum is too expensive, but do you see the paradox? There are no visitors anyway. What does it now say about the Moroccans?*' The exhibition which followed was displaying large canvases of French painter living in Marrakech Brice Marden, alternated by show of Christo's pieces produced in the 1960s. The last exhibition which I had during my field-work in MYSL Marrakech visited was titled 'Desert Design'. The show was curated by Christine Bouilloc and Arnaud Maurières and was dedicated to thirty contemporary rugs woven by Moroccan women of *Aït Khebbach*.

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[149] *JACQUES MAJORELLE'S MOROCCO* [online] cit. 12. 2. 2020 In https://www.museeyslmarrakech.com/en/expositions/temporaires/expositions-passees/

[150] Bouhmouch, Nadir. *The Moroccan Non-Exception: 'Much Loved' and Realism, Colonialism, and Pornography in Moroccan Cinema* [online] cit. 12. 2. 2020 In https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/32424/The-Moroccan-Non-Exception-%60Much-Loved%60-and-Realism,-Colonialism,-and-Pornography-in-Moroccan-Cinema

This last exhibition serves here as an entry point for further analysis of what MYSL Marrakech labels as *art* and what as an *artefact*. Practise of displaying art by the Museum clearly distinguishes between the works that are: philosophically and spiritually rich enough to provide an aesthetic contemplation, and those which are to be considered as artefacts produced by less evolved societies able to produce decorative objects, designed primarily for daily use. Following this logics of dichotomy, for art, there is an art museum and for artefacts there are ethnographical, anthropological, or natural history museums where objects are studied as scientific specimens (Duncan, 1995, p. 4-5). Applied to the case of Marrakech, the *distinction* is demonstrated by the very existence of *Musée* Yves Saint Laurent as a highly aestheticised space consisting of art objects, whereas Berber Museum located in next doors Jardin Majorelle is filled by artefacts produced by an ethnic group of so called Berbers. Two venues located next to two each other became an actual physical space where the visitor can encounter both fashion garments and jewellery designed by Yves Saint Laurent presented as 'high art' and 'native' artefacts labelled as a craft. Both are offered in one join ticket.

Even though the status of art had been recently challenged, especially by various critiques and anthropologists, yet most of these debates took part in the West and naturally in an environment where most of the museums are concentrated (see Schneider and Wright, 2015) Nevertheless, these debates rarely reach beyond the Western academia environment and among ex-colonised nations where the confusion over own cultural identity is still the case, and where the umbilical cord between the (ex)coloniser and (ex)colonised haven't been cut (De Angelis, Ianniciello, Orabona and Quadraro, 2016, p. 2), we are still facing practises of cultural classifications derived from the *distinction* model. Moroccan official cultural policies remain immune and even operate within a discourse that accepts and supports any instrument which would, effectively, promote the tourist industry. How museums should be organised is often a matter of '*serious concern in the highest circles of power*' notes Carol Duncan, and continues '*they are spaces where politically and socially institutionalised power most avidly seeks to realised its desire for beautiful, natural, and legitimate*' (Duncan, 1995, p. 6). Theorists such as Hooper-Greenhill, Bennett, Duncan, Rose, Chambers etc perceive museums as fields which are offering a brilliant insight of how power is exercised and negotiated between the history of diverse cultural forms both local and those being imposed, i.e., through perspective on culture, often comprehended a system

of hierarchical moral values, beliefs and notions of the universal truth, we can understand the relation between the (ex)coloniser towards the (ex)colonised.

Ethnographical museums, as it is the case of the Berber Museum, often present a space where the postcolonial subject experiences the political and cultural dominance through, as Chambers puts it: silent violence of hermeneutics of display which the ex-colonised is unable to bear or to confront for the various reason of the frailty (Chambers, 2014, p. 10). Representatives of Belgian activist cultural movement *Black speaks back*, which I had the chance to meet in Marrakech, after taking a brief insight on the collection noted: a 'ethnographical' collection of the Berber Museum and narratives it offers would elsewhere be highly condemned as being racist, especially in the ambience of increasing decolonizing movements around the Western cultural institutions. Nonetheless, in ex-colonised societies, the neo-colonial practices are particularly evident in scholarly construction about the 'Other' supported by various corporate institutions which constantly make statements and teach about the subalterns (Tuhiwai-Smith, 2008, p. 2). Thus according to Said, it is necessary to examine these practices of Western institutions, its vocabulary, imagery, scholarship and doctrines (Said, 1978, p. 2). Paul Rabinow is, in the context of Morocco where he had been researching, emphasising the need to study power of self-proclaimed practitioners in their quotidian and suggests ethnography as an effective tool of conduct (Rabinow, 1989, p. 6). In the following chapter I aim to talk about quasi ethnographical Berber Museum located in the botanical garden of Jardin Majorelle. The Museum is older than MYSL Marrakech and represents an ethic group of *Imazighen* (referred as to Berbers) through classified objects which Yves Saint Laurent and Pierre Bergé gathered by the time they have voyaged Morocco.

Chapter 9 '*A Culture yet to be discovered*' – Berber Museum

'The oppressed will always believe the worst about themselves.' Franz Fanon

Examination of what is remaining hidden, invisible, less obvious, rejected and excluded is central to my analysis. I seek a critical position outside the established terms of a museum culture, articulating the space in between the *obvious* (objects on display and narratives which accompany them) and *invisible* (exploring the questions of power and discourse). My research focuses on, as in the case of MYSL Marrakech, an official statements of cultural actors as well as on their informal intentions while looking at the actual practises, which in many cases contradicts one another. I examine how the Berber Museum is producing and disciplining its visitors through their *apparatus*, however, research on museum-goers themselves is, in the following lines, lacking. I am aware of the situation where the visitors as subjects constituted through discourses are being in the existing studies neglected (Rose, 2014, p. 183-184), and since P. Bourdieu's intense and vast research that included a detailed study of museum attendance in 1964 and 1965 among famous Western art institutions (Grenfell and Hardy, 2007, p. 66), there were only very few systematical studies conducted. An exception presents a study of by Gordon Fyfe and Max Ross (1996) – *Decoding the Visitor's Gaze: Rethinking Museum Visiting* where researches had interviewed a range of visitors in order to explore their particular ways of seeing (Rose, 2014, p. 184). This absence presents a weakness of my institutional analysis, yet to justify my acting I follow here the researchers Bennett, Lidchi, Duncan, Pieprzak, Chambers and Hooper-Greenhill who are emphasising that research on politics of representation simultaneously with the effects it has on the audience is methodologically demanding to that extent, that it becomes impossible to execute. Researcher's approach towards the institution requires a specific methodology, so as it does towards the visitor as the subject of a study. In other words, instead of discussing the consumption, I have chosen to analyse what is to be consumed.

Another reason that led me to focus more on the institutional site rather than on how are objects on display perceived by the spectators, is the character of the field. Both museums — the Berber Museum in Jardin Majorelle and Yves Saint Laurent Museum are strictly closed institutions unwilling to share more than what is beyond an ordinary

journalist's demand. Even though I have asked repetitively for data that would consist of annual reports and average of daily attendance, I haven't been provided by any of these. The ticket sellers at the entrance of the venues are obligated to ask each of the visitor about his or her nationality, therefore I understood that such information is purposely gathered, unfortunately not shared. The audience is within my text present as a hypothetical entity reading the museum's collection. Nonetheless, I can quite confidently state that, as I have been present for many hours in the object of the Museum I have developed a good understanding on the visitors profiles. They are, of course, inseparable part of the museum research; visiting presents, according to P. Bourdieu's theory an exercise in class identity, further he pointed out that one of the important results among museum-goers is recognised feeling of cultural belonging and ownership, whereas among some feelings of inferiority and exclusion is prevailing (Bourdieu 1979, p. 61). This is especially relevant in the postcolonial context of Morocco, where the locals are seeking to imitate French or Western culture through obtaining the symbols of a certain social status — museum and gallery visit in Morocco presents one of the instruments how 'a correct' social status can be acquired and consolidated. Analysis of 'audiencing' as a process of social circulation of meanings in postcolonial context can present a future possibility for extended research, as much relevant and needed would be to research on the taste and preferences in aesthetic consumption among the excluded groups: Moroccans who aren't identifying their culture consumption with the imposed categories of Western art production and museum/ gallery attendance as a means of affirmation of these categories.

Museum-goers in both objects are predominantly foreign tourists, who will enter the objects probably once a lifetime. Their number is enormously high: Jardin Majorelle reached in the year 2018 one million visitors, YSL Museum little less than half a million. The daily visit average in the highest season is around 5000 visitors per day.[151] Enormous popularity among the foreigners is a result of a well presented image; anglophone and francophone press massively fabricate representation of the city in which these institutions, alongside MACAAL (Museum of Contemporary African Art), are always pointed out (Fattaleh, 2019, p. 8). The venues are in fact doing more for promotion of tourism, (for example teaching Museum's staff Chinese as the number of Chinese visitors increased) than actually approving the *accessibility* for the Moroccan

[151] Information is based on an interview with the director B. Dahlström.

visitors or perhaps even admitting, on an official level, the lack of Moroccan audience. My intention is, in following lines, to look closer at how the Museum classifies, categories and represent other cultures, in particular how French Foundation Jardin Majorelle is presenting Moroccan ethnic group *Imazighen* in the space of quasi-ethnographic museum which is to be called the Berber Museum. The Berber Museum is located in a former blue facade studio in the heart of the botanical garden created by the Orientalist painter Jacques Majorelle (1886-1962). Majorelle, who was invited by French Resident-General Marshal Lyautey himself was, according to Museum's pamphlet, 'seduced' by Marrakech and decided to purchase a palm grove which eventually became the garden we know today. He commissioned architect Paul Sinoir to build a studio in art deco style which now servers for the purpose of the Museum.[152] The designed garden consisted of many exotic plants and was, till the year 1962, opened for public, however, after the death of Majorelle the complex fell into abandon. French couple Pierre Bergé and Yves Saint Laurent in 1980, according to what we can officially read, '*saved the complex from real estate developers*' and the blue villa was then turned into a Museum, first of Islamic Art and later serving to display the material objects of the 'Berbers.'[153] The venue was officially inaugurated in 2011 under the High Patronage of King Mohammed VI. In the Berber museum more than 600 objects from all over Morocco are gathered: such as garments, finery, accessories, jewellery, costumes, weapons, weavings, carpets, decorated doors and musical instruments which aims to present '*the oldest people of North Africa*.'[154] Before I will start to discuss the actual content of the Museum, my aim is to address a paragraph by Pierre Bergé which can visitor read on the official website of Jardin Majorelle, as so on the Museum's flyers:

> '*Since my arrival in Marrakech in 1966, I have not ceased to be fascinated with Berber art and culture. Over the years, I have collected and admired this art which extends over many countries at a time. The Berbers have always been rightly proud of their culture. They have not ceased to reclaim their identity in spite of the vicissitudes they have faced. In Marrakech, in Berber country, in the Jardin*

[152] *Jacques Majorelle in Morocco* [online] cit. 12. 2. 2020 In https://jardinmajorelle.com/ang/jacques-majorelle-in-morocco/

[153] Ibid

[154] *An Introduction to Berber Culture* [online] cit. 12. 2. 2020 In https://jardinmajorelle.com/ang/introduction-to-berber-culture/

Majorelle created by an artist who painted so many scenes of Berber men and women, the idea of this museum occurred to us quite naturally.'[155]

This very paragraph is letting the visitor understand that Berber Museum was established by someone who admired *Imazighen* material culture, however, besides that it also conveys a less obvious message which stands as: representing *Imazighen* as subjects through Orientalist imaginary was and is, actually, legitimate and continuing this tradition by establishing a Museum in the studio of an Orientalist painter is, therefore, a 'quite natural' act. Within Bergé's lines, *Imazighen* are described as a group respected and admired by the French, whereas by they own surroundings — they have been throughout the history facing oppression and neglect (*'They have not ceased to reclaim their identity in spite of the vicissitudes they have faced')*. Without assessing the situation of *Imazighen* communities in Morocco, the distinction between Berbers and Arabs tracks back to the history of the so called 'Berber separatism' by the French colonial agency in North Africa. Colonial officials believed that Arabs and Berbers were in fact two distinct 'races' distinguished by essential characteristics; beside obvious linguistic differences, Berbers were considered by nature as more 'civilised' and democratic compare to languid, orthodox and prolix Arabs (Miller, 2013, p. 126-127). On the official level, a *distinction* was inscribed in the legal domain — series of 'Berber dahirs', these subsequently resulted into protests in the cities of Salé, Fez and Tangier against the 'divide and rule' policy of France (Rachik, 2003, p. 64). The Moroccan leaders of *antidahir* revolt were young, urban aristocratic Arabs whereas the subject of the dispute – Berbers from the rural areas weren't present. Historian Susan Gilson Miller points out, that it remains unclear to what extent, or if at all, Berbers favoured the *dahir*. Nevertheless, *antidahir* revolt presents the first strong civil disobedience against the colonial authority and is today an important part of Moroccan national memory (Miller, 2013, p. 129). Hamid Irbouh in his publication *Art in the service of Colonialism* (2009) discusses how the French cultural scholarship significantly contributed to the 'race' division which promoted the Lyuatey's divisive colonial vision. Making statements about artistic production of the two divided groups played an important rule in the promotion of the colonial ideology as a whole (Irbouh, 2005). The French classification system labelled all Moroccan artistic production as 'craft' at once, however, in the 1920s and 1930s French scholarship started to segment the craftsmen products according to

[155] Ibid

their ethnicity. French colonial scholars followed, as Irbouh puts it, essentialist and sectarian categorisation through contrasting differences between craft that belong to the rural area inhabited by 'Berbers', and that of urban produced craft traditionally occupied by Arabs (Irbouh, 2005, p. 29-31). The urban craft was considered as commercial by nature, endlessly manufactured in guilds where nothing but reproduced utilitarian objects can be born. Arabic craftsmen cared only for earning a living '*without disturbing old forms and without spending too much energy*' writes French art historian and General Director of the public education sector Georges Hardy in 1926 (Hardy, 1926, p. 47). On the contrary rural production was considered as something purely Moroccan without outside influences described as 'manifestation of authenticity' and closer to nature. This representation resembles with the contemporary increasing trend of collaborations with the 'female artisans from the mountains', often characterised as those closer to the spirits and living in a state of dependence on the Nature. Both Arab and Berber artistic production was opposing Western arts, however Berber craft despite it 'technical imperfections' gained a higher status among French colonial scholars. Scholars never intermingled these two traditions, Arabs for the French presented a 'race' being able to produce richness in arabesque but emptiness in the meaning and lacking the 'true' artistic force. Berber craft was championed which was followed by the general ideas of French colonial administrators claiming that: '*Arabs had conquered and subjugated the Berbers by force*' (Irbouh, 2005, p. 27).

By a brief historical contextualising of French colonial divisive policies towards Moroccan populations, I intend to highlight the traces of persisting imperialist discourse. My concern here doesn't lie in the veracity of the Bergé's statement, but in the continuous practice of 'having the right' to talk upon the 'Other'. Such imposed idea about two different ethnic groups with different habits of mind, social organisation, physical characteristics and distinct aesthetic expression is today reproduced by cultural language and imagery and by current institutional forms dismissing the existence of friendships, mutual influences, coherence, cooperation and fluid creativity in and out of classified artistic creation and fixed 'racial' categorisations. 'The discourse analysis' offers, in great detail, a tool how to address power exercise and knowledge production through examining certain technologies and spacial orderings in public display areas of the institutions (Rose, 2014, p. 175). Here I will focus on small-scale techniques of display: display cases and how objects communicate and relate with accompanied textual narratives and other visuals. The question to be asked is '*what certain*

technologies are in terms of what they produce?' (Bann 1998; Haraway 1989, p. 35; Rose, 2014, p. 175) i. e., '*What are the diffuse set of tools and methods used to practise power/knowledge?*' (Foucault, 1977, p. 26)

Objects on display are solely those Yves Saint Laurent and Pierre Bergé had gathered during their stay in Morocco and small number of objects, primary carpets, are borrowed from Bert Flint's Museum *Tiskiwin* in Marrakech. Therefore, we can acknowledge that the selection of objects which 5000 visitors per day in high season can observe, is a result of a taste preference of two French men who settled in Morocco. Museums, according to museum theorist Lidchi, are producing certain kind of representation and are presenting a distinct classificatory system based on geographical and social distinctions framed by anthropological theory and ethnographic research (Lidchi, 1997, p. 161). In the case of Berber Museum, we are facing the effect of *truthfulness* comparable to the effects which educational institution usually has, however, without any real academical research behind the collection.[156] The question I ask here is: Does the stated affection towards a material culture of the so called Berbers legitimates an establishment of a museum? And does a hobby in collecting 'here and there' objects of an interest justify anyone to talk upon the group as a whole? In following lines I will examine the actual exhibition of the Museum's artefacts collection, as Lidchi puts it: '*how they are collected, interpreted and exhibited all as purposeful and motivated activities*' (Lidchi, 1997, p. 167).

[156] Museum published several journals titled *Cahier Musée berbère*, which aimed to explore more scientifically diverse topics related to the ethnical group of *Imazighen*. The relevance of this journal as a serious academical platform is, however, questionable as the editorial team was again composed, among others, by powerful trio Pierre Bergé (Chairman of the Foundation Jardin Majorelle), Madison Cox (Deputy chairman of the Foundation Jardin Majorelle) and Björn Dahlström (before P. Bergé's death the Curator of the *Musée Berbère*). Currently the Journal isn't published anymore for unknown reasons. English online version of the Museum's last edition from the 2017 is available here: https:// jardinmajorelle.com/ang/publications/

In front of the Berber Museum in Jardin Majorelle, Marrakech, 2019, (source: Alexandra Kollárová)

Entrance to the blue villa is occupied by numerous groups of tourists hurriedly taking pictures with the famous 'Majorelle's blue' facade and before the visitor is allowed to enter, the Museum's employees are once again checking the validity of the tickets and emphasise the prohibition of photographing in the interior. Once a visitor enters the first room — a small vestibule, he immediately gazes on an image placed opposite the entrance. Framed photography depicts the original owner of the villa — a portrait of Jacques Majorelle in black and white. On the opposite wall in a similar size is located a portrait of Yves Saint Laurent and Pierre Bergé, both visually enhancing their authoritative positions as art professionals, significant donors and promoters of cultural life in Morocco. On the left wall, framed panels in French, Spanish, English and Arabic languages are placed. Here the visitor can read: '*(...) Pierre Bergé decided to open a Berber museum to pay homage to a culture and art which is yet to be discovered.*'

Art historian Wijdan Ali states that all narratives about art and culture in Morocco originate from the discoveries as if aesthetic expression and consumption did not previously exist (see Ali, 1997). Here again, we are facing a narrative about a '*culture and art which is yet to be discovered*' and validated by some who is in power to do so. '*Finally, someone is giving visibility to the Berbers, what is wrong about that?*' — a common utter that I have heard during my interviews with the Museum's employees and the director himself. The Foundation Jardin Majorelle did, without any speculations, promote the visibility of *Imazighen*, with the daily crowed of tourists it, in fact, cannot be otherwise, however, representation is constructed solely under the Foundation's own terms. The first exhibition hall is an introductory one consisting of framed plaques with names of professionals who participated on the collection: that is the names of scientists who worked on the classification of the displayed objects, professionals who decided about the Museum's architectural and scenographic organisation to the ones who are responsible for the graphic design and costume reconstruction. Moroccan names are almost absent, however two experts are local: anthropologist and architect Salima Naji and anthropologist Ahmed Skounti, both are members of the Universities in Rabat. Whereas Naji had been more involved in the spatial design of the Museum, Skounti was responsible for displaying and arranging objects and providing the collection with general textual narratives. Professor Skounti had politely agreed on our meeting and was opened to answer few of my questions directed to the process of building up the Museum's exhibition. Skounti is living now with his wife in Marrakech and occasionally teaches at the Rabat University.

We have met in a cafe in Marrakech quarter *Daoudiat* where he was just about to finish a meeting with his PhD student. As I sat down, Mr Skounti in a good mood immediately asked me about how do I perceive the Museum's collection. I had apologised for my opinion, but I stated frankly that for me, the collection represents *Imazighen* as if the visitor would be encountering some *illiterate ancient mountain tribe*. Further, that I cannot forget a sentence of a Moroccan guide entering the building with five French young women, pointing at one of the photographs screened in a sequence on which was a farmer harvesting his field and noted: '*Berbers, they are simple but they are always happy'*. Mr Skounti smiled and replied: '*Believe me I have tried a lot to change it, but I wasn't allowed,*' then he continued:

> '*Working on a Museum's collection directly implies you are taking part in a creative process; how you put objects on display truly matters, it must be done professionally but still there is a space left for the politics of display. If you aren't careful enough you can deliver a wrong message, working on display is, in fact, influencing how the spectators will read it. When I have been asked to work on the collection for the Berber Museum I was really curious to see how it will be conducted. Nevertheless, in the end, I had limited decision making power. What I am trying to say here is, that some of my comments were respected when it came to contextualising material objects geographically, but when I expressed some of my concerns to Björn Dahlström, who was deciding about most of the major aspects of the Museum, all my disagreements about the collection and proposed changes were turned down. The greatest lapse of this collection is that we, besides the material objects, are not acknowledging the fact, that half on the population of Morocco is, actually, Imazighen – a contemporary society living as well in urban areas with a multiple constructed and fluid identities. The Imazighen have their own ideas about their identity and the minimum the Museum could've done is to, at least, consult with those who are actually the subjects of the representation. And this did not happen, not at all.'* [157]

The great tradition of non-Western material objects in ethnographic museums which were traditionally presented as 'pre-literate', 'primitive' or 'simple' is being re-articulated (Lidchi, 1997, p. 16). We are now more than ever facing cumulative

[157] Interview conducted on the 7th of June 2019.

academical debates which are all stating: museums will have to reinvent their language because '*yet they are still deeply scarred by old and new colonialism, marginalisation, economic and political inequality, racisms and sexisms*' (Chambers, 2014, p. 11). Nevertheless, again such debates rarely shift from the ideal theory into effective practice and in the context of Marrakech culture scene, it presents an impossible mission. Or to put it otherwise, the discourse of neo-colonialism is embedded to that extent that it allows implementing foreign projects and institutions, and further it imposes rules what to verbalise and in which manner. A widespread homogenised idea about one historical development of every nation's cultural life is sustained by educational system (primarily by the omnipresent use of French language)[158] going hand in hand with the existing massive tourism which is promoting everyday exoticism driven by fixed visual narratives of the alterity (Minca and Wagner, 2016; Madhi, 2019; Fattaleh, 2019).

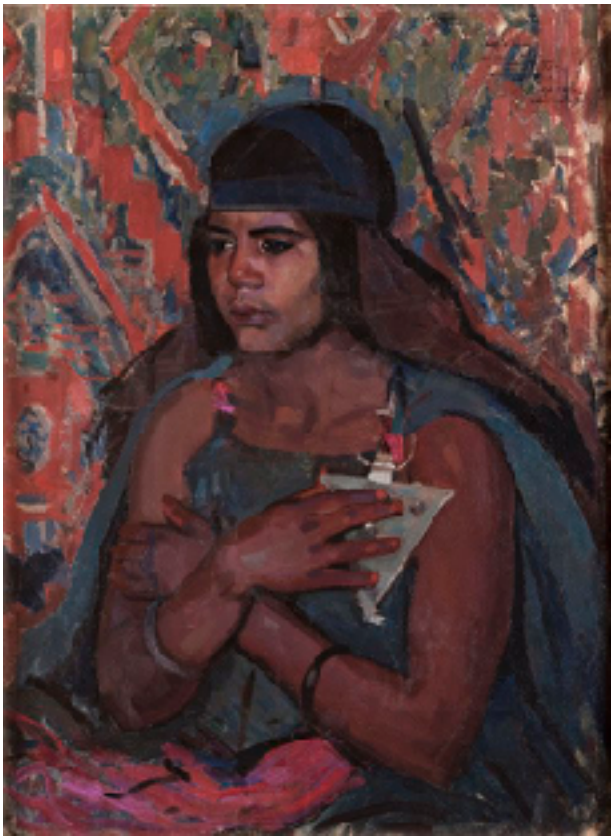
As philosopher and sociologist G. Rose notes, we are currently living in a world where knowledge is visually constructed and what we *see* is as important as what we can read (Rose, 2014, p. 1-2). We are exposed to all kind of images of some we accepted as truth, others we question but often without knowing *how,* hence according to the visual theorist W. J. T. Mitchell we are facing a state 'visual illiteracy' (W. J. T. Mitchell, 1994, p. 13) directly resulting into an acceptance of the imposed contents. Images are interpreting the world around us, producing and exchanging meanings and are central to the cultural construction of any social life. Process of *what is seen* and *how it is seen* is thus culturally constructed, often described by a term *visuality*.

[158] Since the French Protectorate regime, French has been implemented as an official language (1912-1956) and despite the post-independent Arabisation of the Moroccan educational system, French continued to be taught in Moroccan schools as a first foreign language. Additionally it remained to be the dominant language of economy, of all the ministries expect one, of a public life, of media and language of teaching of university's curricula. As Anass Benhassan notes: '*it was the only language that monopolised teaching scientific domains*' (Benhassan, 2017). In the relation to culture in the colonial era, French language served as a tool to discipline students. Irbouh notes, that in addition to the implemented craft vocational schools in colonial Morocco, students learned beside Arabic language, arithmetic and the Koran, '*the rudimentary notion of the French language which allowed them to carry on short and simple conversations with their French teachers, and later with their French bosses and clients*.' However, their knowledge of French should have not enhance their critical thinking, as Irbouh puts it: '*political and social continuousness that might, through language, develop*' rather, it should serve primarily professional concerns (Irbouh, 2005, p. 245). According to my observations, the world of contemporary art in Morocco uses predominantly French and English as the cultural practitioners emphasise that *darija* has no official status of a written language, and standard Arabic is for many even further than French itself. As Moroccan sociologist and linguist Ahmed Boukous states: Moroccans will use rather French than Standard Arabic in the oral interaction as much as in the institutions requiring communication in a formal framework (Boukous, 1977). The question of the language continuous to be the core of the clash between those artists and curators who are intersecting 'the global' and those who are reinforcing the culture decolonisation attempts by the usage of a local language as a main tool to reinvent novel terminology of art free from imposed French linguistic models.

Visuality, or the used synonym *scopic regime* is, according to scholar Haraway, constructed by social power relations, thus available only to someone — a small number of people in selective institutions, particularly in those who are part of militarism, capitalism, male supremacy and colonialism (Haraway, 199, p. 188). Haraway's critical stand can be useful when interpreting images and visuality in the postcolonial contexts where the history of power inequality has real consequences in the present settings. She suggests examining in detail how certain institutions deploy forms of *visuality* in order to understand the particular forms of representations which are being produced. According to her theory visuality is, in fact, producing social differences and imposing hierarchies of race, gender and sexuality while at the same time operating as *natural* and *universal*. 'O*rdering of difference depends on a distinction between those who claim to see with universal relevance, and those who are seen and categorised in particular ways'* (Rose, 2014, p. 9). W. J. T. Mitchell argues that it is important once for all to simply acknowledge that images are as much as seductive and powerful in their own right as written texts (Mitchell, 1994, p. 16). Besides this fact, visual images often work in conjunction with a range of different written and spoken texts which construct a certain kind of discourse (Rose, 2014, p. 10). Art historian John Tagg discusses the example of photography which is particularly relevant for these following lines: it rarely bears an identity in an individual manner, its status as technology is always carried within specific power relations, therefore for the visual analysis the configuration of different components of the field in which the image is embedded is as much important as the photography itself (Tagg, 1988, p. 63). Objects on display and the textual narratives that accompany them will be addressed, while additionally I will carefully look at some visuals (primarily photographies displayed and one particular painting) which are part of the first Museum's exhibition hall. Looking at the content of the images is as important as the attention towards the social conditions and effects of the visuals — cultural practices like curatorial and museological approaches play a significant role in articulating meanings about the world in general and, according to Haraway, have the power to produce social inclusions and exclusions (Haraway, 1989, p. 35).

After the visitor passes the small vestibule with the mentioned portraits of J. Majorelle, Yves Saint Laurent and Pierre Bergé, he or she enters the first windowless hall which here servers as a necessary introduction space before one continues into the exhibition halls with objects on display. The walls and the ceiling in the introductory hall, as well as

in the rest of the Museum's interior, is covered by solid wood panels. Visitor's gaze is immediately directed towards a female portrait — hanging centred on the wall opposite the entrance. It is an oil on canvas titled as *Berber woman, 1921* produced by the previous owner of the villa Jacques Majorelle. Here again, we can ask, what does the usage of an Orientalist image as a relevant source of 'describing the reality' communicates? First, the very fact of being able to represent, within a colonial visual archive, a certain ethnic group in general, women, in particular, indicates the strong power position which the Berber Museum has. Beside the images itself, this very fact underlines an attitude that I have observed commonly among current art professionals — the act of *disclaiming*. Their statements are solely directed to the aesthetic qualities of such images while rejecting any links to the European dominance (see Nochlin, 1989). French poet and art historian Camille Mauclair (1872-1945) writes about J. Majorelle: '(...) *he was expressing profoundly observed and deeply considered truth about the country*'.[159]



Berber woman, 1921. Oil on canvas, Jacques Majorelle, Berber Museum (source: Berber Museum, Marrakech)

[159] Jacques Majorelle. *Exposition de peinture.* [online] cit. 7. 3. 2020 In https://www.imarabe.org/fr/expositions/jacques-majorelle

Orientalist paintings are dangerous, as Linda Nochlin notes because it convinces the spectator that these visual images are 'reflections' and 'scientific in their 'exactitude' (Nochlin, 1989, p. 36-37). Nochlin argues, that Orientalist art conveys a certain kind of bifurcation — the spectator understands it as 'art' (considers it as aesthetically valuable), yet he or she at the same time faces the 'authenticity' of the very image to which the 'ethnographic' character has been historically ascribed. Paintings are understood as a *realist* and thus visitor is gazing at an aesthetically constructed images of the presumed *truth* rather than at a piece of art. The discourse of art as a vehicle of the universal truths is also conditioned by the technology of hanging (Rose, 2014, p. 77-78). Carol Duncan emphasises the spatial organisation of the paintings is an important component of the regime of truth (see Duncan, 1995). By a specific spatial manipulation, the idea of the painting is becoming a *realistic*, *naturalistic* and *authentic* and these effects are tracking back to the '*principles of legitimate construction established in the quattrocento*' (Lyotard, 1996, p. 167). The way Majorelle's *Berber woman* is installed maintains an understanding of this painting as a piece of art. This visual is the only object in the Museum which is hanged solely in the middle of the wall on the spot of the highest visibility — this arraignment produces the *Berber woman* as an image alluringly inviting and ready to be contemplated upon. I argue that this image represents a material object which is, on an imaginary hierarchical scale, obtaining the highest status in the Museum: none of the visitors would question, in fact, if this painting is possessing the qualities of an art piece, whereas there is no doubt about 'the rest' of the *Imazighen* objects in the showcases which are being, through an incorporated discursive scheme of classification, understood as craft products (thus less of a value). Full length of the right wall in the introductory hall is equipped by three screens — the biggest (the estimated size is around 1 m to 80 cm) of them presents a loop of colour anonymous photographies which depicts as it follows: *women in the field; moon over the village; snow-capped mountains; unspecified cave paintings; a donkey; Atlas Mountains; a random shrine in the mountains; henna tattooing; anonymous kasbah; chanting woman with a tattooed face; field with a herd of sheep; people on the overcrowded carriage; embroiders; a souk; a carpet; a field; hands holding a ball of wool.* On the other smaller screen (the estimated size is around 40 cm to 60 cm) visitor can observe black and white images first captured by French photographers within daguerreotype technique during the 1920s: these images are depicting countrysides houses and a group of people in the fields.

It is those sequenced visual narratives on a display of both screens, which are enhancing the comprehension of 'Berbers' as a group which is: illiterate, pre-modern and inhabiting remote landscapes. The last smallest screen closest to the Majorelle's painting is projecting black and white or sepia portraits of ornate 'Berber women' bearing a titled: *Jean Besancenot, Visages berbères, 1934-1939*. Large panels are located on the opposite wall, framed texts in English, French and Arabic are written by anthropologist Ahmed Skounti. Here we can read the brief history of *Imazighen* and general claims about their culture: '*Berbers are known for their strong attachment to the land, sense of community, hospitality, sharing food and specific relationship with spirituality*.' The reader isn't provided by any existing references of research made among *Imazighen* communities, i.e., all we can understand about the ethical group which spreads among eight countries in the MENA region is reduced into these two lines. I want to emphasise that the analysis here does not question if certain communities are, in fact, truly attached to the land, nor the degree of their sense of community, the core of my critic addresses first, the absence of reliable references, second the persistent narrative based on the denial of modernity. Statements that we can read are too simplifying to be applied as a relevant description of over thirty millions of inhabitants of Northern Africa who are, beside rural areas, inhabiting cities, who are not using the timeless tools, women who aren't wearing vast amount of jewellery as it is presented, groups who are occupying other means of livelihood than being shepherds, farmers, weavers or smiths. Skounti's lines accompanied by the selected visuals in the room are leading to generalisations and even stereotypical understandings of the 'Berbers' as a pre-literate group inhabiting hardy accessible mountain landscapes of the Atlas and Rif Mountain range. The visitor is incorporating these lines as truthful for several reasons. Notably, because they are framed in a vast panel with a signature of the *National Institute of Science: Archeology and Heritage of Rabat*. Such an institutional authority in hard to question. But more specifically because the museums, as it had been discussed in the case of YSL museum, are producing so called *regime of truth* as articulated by M. Foucault. The constructions of claims as truthful are directly related to the intersection of power and knowledge. Foucault states that there '*is no power without correlative constitution of the field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presupposes and constitute at the same time power relations*' (Foucault, 1977, p. 27). As knowledge is discursive and specific discourse is saturated by power, the most dominant narratives depend on assumptions and claims that their knowledge is true (Rose, 2014, p. 38). Certain statements are deepened by

using illustrative visual materials as photographies on display, which presents a crucial technology through which the claims about the 'Other' are illustrated (Rose, 2014, p. 38).

Photographies here are being considered as a relevant and unquestionable source of material for these following reasons: first and foremost their 'authenticity' directly relates to the emplacement — that is the Museum itself. This is particularly evident when we realise that the exact popular images of ornate Berber women by *Jean Besancenot* are installed on the walls of Marrakech cafes, bars, restaurants and on postcards, yet these other environments aren't capable of producing the effect of *truth*. These photographies are becoming out of a Museum's discourse more of exotic decorative posters, rather than visuals depicting the authentic visage of the 'Berbers.' Most of the foreign visitors are entering the object with a pre-understanding of museums as a space of education: they simply trust the experts and scientists building up exhibitions and accepting them as valid. Bennett argues that the uncritical appreciation of the museum's knowledge production was constructed discursively in the nineteenth century in the West (see Bennett, 1995). Despite lacking data on actual nationalities of the Museum's public, I assume, driven by observations and informal interviews, most of the visitors are Westerners, thus it is highly probable that the audience is familiar with the practice of museum attendance. Solidity and trustiness are supported by massive foreign press coverage on Jardin Majorelle, therefore constructed representations of 'Berbers' are perceived undoubtedly as truthful.

In the discussed panel by Ahmed Skounti Berbers are described as '*the original peoples of North Africa* and *proto-Mediterraneans*', this statement is directly communicating with accompanied photographies which are typifying the visual characteristics of the 'Berbers.' Both screens, depicting sequenced snaps from the non-specified rural areas of Morocco presumably inhabited by 'the Berbers', are without an author. The only images accompanied by the name of the creator are those of the female colonial portraits by Jean Besancenot — author of *Visages berbères*. Besancenot was a French photographer, artist and ethnologist who became one of the most prominent image-maker of the French Protectorate in Morocco, responsible for carrying out a documentation mission on the Moroccan folklore and craftsmanship.[160]

[160] *Jean Besancenot* [online] cit. 24. 2. 2020 In http://maisondelaphotographie.ma/article.php?id=403&t=lexique

Africanist Terence Ranger argues that camera served during the colonialism as a triumph of Euro-American technology which became an important tool for imperial 'Othering' controlled and distributed by the colonisers; nothing in the history of visual representations, he argues, could serve better to exemplify the '*intrusive colonial gaze in Africa*'. A vast number of publications have been written on how the landscapes and its inhabitants were visually constructed, numerous visual illustrations of 'tribes' and 'races' were produced among French, British and Belgium colonial photographers (Ranger, 2001, p. 203-215). Most of the images are presenting the local inhabitants of colonised lands as anonymous bodies smiling and posing deliberately or not; pictures of Berber women aren't presented otherwise — anonymous, heavily decorated by jewellery, smiling, stripped of any other identity. Neither a sign of their names nor locations are attached.

I argue here, that in the series of the images which are presenting solely female portraits, the woman isn't central to the narrator. It is the exotic spectacle of unknown *Amazigh* bracelets, earrings and necklaces she wears. This particular navigation towards the admiration of the material objects instead of enhancing interest in the actual female identities correlate with the Museum's discourse as a whole. Throughout the collection, we get to know very little about the life of *Imazighen*, yet we are able to distinguish their specific jewellery and other material objects. Women are presented as anonymous figurines bearing objects, tempting and awaking an expectation of what can the spectator see in the following showcases. A smile here plays a crucial role: compare to the colonial photographies of French photographer Marc Garanger who captured Algerian women with frown sand scowl, Besancenot's 'Berber' women are smiling. Professor Karina Eileraas interprets Garanger's portraits as being captured despite an obvious disagreement of the women, however, she further argues that a smile, on the other hand, doesn't have to imply an agreement nor enjoyment as can be expected. According to her it illustrates the subordination and asymmetrical power relation between the coloniser and the colonised as so much (Eileraas, 2003, p. 817). Photography series of Garanger conveys hostile and aggressive positions of Algerian women towards French militarism and as such was used by the author himself to promote anti-colonialism on several exhibitions in France, Berber Moroccan women, on the contrary, were frequently depicted otherwise (with a smile), but being in the same subordinated position as any other colonised subject.

By the installation of these sets of images, the Berber Museum is not only helping to promote constructed Orientalist trope of the 'native' woman as a spectacle, further, it is an obvious agreement with the colonial Orientalist imaginary and its usage as a relevant source complementing the knowledge production. Eileraas discusses the often lack of information about the circumstances and wider context in which were colonial pictures produced. Another important point is that it is highly unlike that women, within the Moroccan cultural and religious context, would deliberately pose in front of foreign or another man besides her family members. This is an acknowledged, however, suppressed fact. Delacroix or Majorelle weren't depicting an actual average Moroccan Muslim women, they were either obliged to paint Jewish women although still in decent poses, as Declaroix's paintings reveal or, as in case of Majorelle primarily prostitutes coming to Morocco from the Sahel region, hence it had very little to do with a pure ethnography (Nochlin, 1989, p. 43-44). We are here facing a pictorial homogeneity of bodies underlined by the absence of a 'civilisational' touch, framed as being timeless, yet letting the visitor simultaneously acknowledge that these pictures were captured by a 'civilised' camera user who here operated within a technology of an industrial age. As professor Awam Amkpa points out, travellers and explorers brought to 'the unknown land' a new exiting technology which, in the combination of new exotic compositions, resulted into images considered more as a work of art, rather than into serious archives of documentation data (Amkpa, 2012, p. 2-4). Linda Nochlin insists: '*photography itself is hardly immune to blandishes of Orientalism, and even a presumably innocent or neural view can be ideologized*' (Nochlin, 1989, p. 39). Visitors of the Berber museums are left without any information that would further discuss the origins of those images (where and under which conditions they have been taken, who are these women and in which occasions they wear such rich jewellery), we are again, as Amkpa argues, facing images of people who remain 'unknown' and curatorial expertise in the Museum decided to '*bury them into invisibility all over again.*' (Amkpa, 2012, p. 4)

9. 1 Objects on display

'*In the end, however, it is apparent that each generation reclassifies the arts of world cultures in order to set high against low, authentic against touristic, traditional against new, genuine against spurious.*'[161] *B. Phillips and B. Steiner*

First of all, I am making a clear mark that, although the spectator is visiting Museum located in Marrakech, he or she is navigated to consume knowledge production in the most Western sense. Space of the museum presents access to the world of the constitutive *difference* through exotic dislocated objects labelled as 'Berber' and as a *craft*. Art and craft *distinction* intertwines the entire text of mine as it presents a fundamental internalised evaluation system originating from the colonial period of Morocco, through these lenses most of the current cultural actors look at artistic production of 'the Other'. The objects of the cultural 'Other' have been traditionally appropriated into two categories: that is an ethnographic artefact produced by craftsmen and work of art produced by artists, this understanding tracks back to scholars domains of orthodox approaches of art history originating in the late nineteenth century (Phillips and Steiner, 1999, p. 3). In fact, cultural anthropology, which only managed to re-articulate some of the problematic central concepts and categorisations roughly in the past fifty years, had faced a similar situation in relation to art, thus had to fundamentally minimalize the existing entrenched paternalistic approach. By the words of anthropologist Sally Price: the tradition of deep-rooted ethnocentrism and aestheticism is, in the world of art, a matter of fact (Price, 1989, p. 100). Although we no longer encounter artistic creation considered as 'primitive', the generally shared idea about the art as 'high' and 'low', 'European' and the 'Other' is continuously present in most of the current institutions and contributes to representations through which the cyclical relationship of 'us versus them' is being affirmed.

Objects on display in the Berber Museum are divided into three sections — first is presenting artefacts of the daily use and ceremonial objects such from wood and leather, further pottery, metalwork or basket weaving — all demonstrated by a great variety, second, the most visually effective bow rounded showroom with a ceiling evoking night

[161] PHILLIPS, Ruth and STEINER, Christopher (eds.). *Unpacking Culture: Art and Commodity in Colonial and Postcolonial World*. London: University California Press, 1999.

sky strewn with stars presents a showcase of *Amazigh* jewellery. The jewellery is carefully classified according to the Moroccan regions: eight busts and fifteen display cases are showing various jewellery from Northern Morocco and The Middle Atlas, High Atlas, Anti Atlas, Souss, Bani, South-East and Guelmim. From the existing displayed collection, this particular space is the richest in its content. Visitor can read in a great detail described techniques and used materials, the reflection of stars on the glass cases creates a spectacle which is driving enormous attention of all visitors. The socio-cultural context of the jewellery is articulated by the quotation of Leo Africanus dating back to the 16th century in *Description of Africa (1526)*. My concern here doesn't target the usage of the specific historical source itself, nor it does question the authenticity of its claims. Yet the decision to provide the exhibition with this specific source again underlines the discourse which here transmits the idea about 'Berbers' as being ancient or somehow fixed in unspecified past. This practice known as 'the denial of coevalness' is a coherent component of the Orientalist discourse that have been highlighted in previous chapters and defined by its regularity. Further, I have described this phenomenon of *timelessness* in previous chapters stretching from the textual and visual narratives of the 'Traveller's Tales' to the contemporary foreign travelling artists who aim to frequently work with the so called 'local communities and their ancient techniques.' Time here becomes an irrelevant component, the spectator doesn't acknowledge easily in which historical epoch are 'Berbes' living, as most of the objects are lacking the specific time period classification. Therefore, in most of the cases it is impossible to understand if the objects which are displayed were produced just decades ago — still in use by many, yet within a discourse of the Berber Museum understood as premodern, or they are actually considerably older, perhaps a pieces of antiquities. The confusion here derives from the fact that it isn't clear if objects labelled as *traditional skills*: leather products, basketry and weaving, wood carving, fibula making, tools, mortars and measures, sugar hammers and teapots, millstone, barley and argan ewers, tableware, terracotta, ceramics and copper-ware are objects still produced and used today or illustrates the life of Berbers 'long time ago'. The effect this collection produces is an image of *Imazighen* being less technologically advanced and more 'natural'. The descriptions related to the 'artefacts' are supported by quotations of Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406) from *Kitab al Ibar* (1377) being partly available on the Museum's pamphlet. Another important part of this exhibition hall is the 'sacred life of the Berbers' — a hybrid exposure limited into one showcase is discussing the intangible heritage which is according to the description a *lived expressions of monotheism*.

Old learning rods (*karak*), prayer beads (*tesbih*) are placed next to containers of *mezuzah* and pagan talismans dominated by a mosque pulpit *minbar* at the back of the showcase. The accompanying text does talk about the religious beliefs but in a very unspecified manner, lacking any dating and references. Labels in front of each of the glass showcases are in French, additional detailed descriptions are available in Arabic, French and English at the left corner of the exhibition hall in forms of pamphlets, yet they are almost impossible to read as the Museum's exhibition halls are all windowless. The only sources of lights are directed to illuminate the objects, yet it doesn't provide enough light to read. Another aspect that doesn't allow the visitor to dwell longer upon the textual narratives is the feeling of being constantly pushed by the newcomers as the Museum is a space which is enormously overcrowded almost every single day of the year. Most of the groups are accompanied by impatient guides who are speeding up their observations as new groups are herding in. Very few of the spectators during my observations have actually used the extended A4 laminated texts to read more about the displayed objects.

The last exhibition hall presents the finery consisting of thirteen in detail described costumes from South-East, Rif, High Atlas, Siroua, Middle Atlas and Anti-Atlas and displays such as kohl containers, daggers, weapon and powder horns, locks, doors, carpets, mirrors and combs, veil keys, palanquin sticks and musical instruments. My intention within these lines isn't to disparage Skounti's expertise. I am aiming to address the way of speaking, writing and displaying authoritatively on a certain topic. I approach the Berber Museum as a complex of visible objects and narrations as well as I question the absence of some components. Further, I consider important to address the *ownership* over the collection as much as the *decision making power* over the classification and the general visual and educational character this institution intends to convey. The social and historical circumstances in which the Museum was born is important as much as the legacy of colonialism which here is present from the more obvious (using colonial photography archive as a confident relevant source illustrating the life of Berbers) to more hidden and subtle — the domination over the representation of the 'Other' presented as a philanthropic practise. All texts here foreground certain interpretations and exclude others, they navigate the spectator through a route of the unknown terrain. Labels are predominantly in French which again opens a question of politics of the language usage and to whom is the spectacle intended. Occasionally original 'indigenous' terms are present, yet only in Arabic, *Tamazight* is fully absent.

Next, we miss information about what the producers intended, and what other objects were in conjunction with the presented ones. How these objects were by the communities stored or preserved is another question which is, as well, remaining unanswered. As anthropologist Henrietta Lidchi emphasises, the texts accompanying the ethnographical objects are crucial: a basket for example, can be *encoded* as the work of a particular artists, or a fine exemplar, maybe an ancient and unique specimen, thereby guiding its interpretation and circumscribing it's meaning can eliminate disputations or reinterpretations (Lidchi, p. 166-167). What is missing in the content of both labels and pamphlets is the actual dating of the objects, another aspect which here symbolises the domination is the very fact of describing and classifying objects under own terminology and within own language. The colonial photography on display was provided by a controversial Museum located in the heart of Marrakech Medina – *La Maison de la Photographie* which is representing Morocco through travellers' perspective refusing the politics of display and collecting, intentionally dismissing the fact that such visuals have entered into Western/French collections as a result of the colonial past. The spectators get to know nothing, as it is usual here, about the original creators, they remain anonymous even though most of the wool, cooper and leather products on display are still being produced and used in endless of locations in the countryside of contemporary Morocco. Implemented art and craft *distinction* which I have stressed in the previous chapters is here demonstrated primarily through the jewellery collections. In one of the addressed Museums, the *Amazigh* jewellery producers are anonymous and their production is labelled as a handicraft, whereas in the second venue, the jewellery collection designed by Yves Saint Laurent is understood as distinctive work of art. Meanings of the objects aren't neutral nor fixed; they are culturally constructed and vary from one context to another, they become valuable or valueless according to specific classification systems and strategies of visibility (Lidchi, p. 167). Objects here are facing displacement, dwelling in its own country, yet detached from its original cultural and social context. The glass cases, in contrast, serves here as a sterile and ordered environment where the new context is born and accompanied by the communal labels. Objects became as individuals speaking for themselves, this practice Lidchi calls naturalisation: objects appear naturally seeming to represent themselves. Such practise, however, artificially separates objects in order to inscribe meanings which are, without the voice of the original producers, more hypothetical than scientific. Despite the fact that museum world is never static, permanent installations are limited, and the temporary ones will be dismantled entirely, my analysis does not depend on any

of the actual fixed installations, as rather on the discourse coherence in which they operate.

Note from a field diary, 23. 5. 2019

'*Some of the products here my grandmother has at home in the South where I am from*.' Notes the guardian at the entrance of the Museum Abdelkarim who turns out to be *Amazigh*. '*We sleep on these carpets and we have a hammer for breaking the sugar just as the one behind the glass. It feels strange, on one hand as someone being Amazigh I feel proud to see our objects being admired, on the other I don't know what to think, the real contemporary Imazighen are working here as cleaning labor or as me, whereas the foreigners are coming to look at 'us' into the Museum*.'

9. 2 Conclusion to the Politics of Representation

In a neatly and well-organised complex of the two Museums, we have seen practises of classification, documentation, preservation, and interpretation of a certain kind of artistic productions both considered as 'high art' and those labelled as a craft. It has revealed that the Foundation Jardin Majorelle has an ultimate authority with the power to define, to teach and to make statements about, but also to divide, to simplify, to dismiss and to exclude. The discourse of the Berber Museum is found on implemented ethnic politics as exercised by the French colonial administration. The criteria that governed the selection of 'Berber objects' were based on, using Adou Koffi's terms: '*aesthetic delight and ethnographic curiosity*' with zero participation of the nationals. In fact, a commonality in museums' practise when dealing with the material objects of the ex-colonised nations (Koffi, 1995, p. 87).

Orientalist visual archive, specifically photographies and Orientalist paintings are being used as a legitimate source to illustrate 'the real'. Totalising and unquestionable status of these cultural venues are deepened by the official approval of the King of Morocco Mohammed VI manifested in a personal letter addressed to Pierre Bergé expressing full support for the newly established Berber Museum opened in December 2011. The symbolical year marked by anti-government uprisings all over the MENA region came across Morocco too, the situation escalated in protests of various groups in Moroccan society — among them *Imazighen* demanding their rights, thus the inauguration of the Museum in the same year requires in the following lines a brief political contextualisation. The country has a long tradition of *Imazighen* activism articulated as: against the '*systematic marginalisation of Amazigh language and culture*' (Miller, 2013, p. 194-195), although shortly after the country's independence the 'Berber difference' lost its value — as historian S. G. Miller notes: '*Berbers were entering the highest levels of the state service as nationalists, confidants of the king, generals, and politicians*' however, not as 'Berbers' *per see* (Miller, 2013, p. 196-197). For the following years 'Berberism' became more of a kinship structure referring to the origins of inner migrants resettling from the countryside to urban areas rather than a group with distinct ethnical identity; the Arabic language was fully adopted and *Tamazight* became more of a family *jargon*. The situation shifted in the late 1980s and in the begging of the 1990s where a group of Berber cultural organisations were demanding the ability to develop a curriculum in teaching *Tamazight* language, which would be later followed by

an entry to the mass media. Increasing voices calling for linguistic pluralism in the country were in the mid-90s considered as subversive and resulted into several harsh treatments in detention. However, since then the situation had been for *Imazighen* population improving, even though in a slow manner and seen often as self-serving tactics of the *Makhzen* (Miller, 2013, p. 196). The situation which Morocco had to face during the so called Arab spring at the beginning of 2011 re-opened the 'Berber factor' and new requests for rights, primarily linguistic, were presented. Kings's rapid response to the demands of protesters concerned by a wide range of 'quality-life issues' led to several reforms. Subsequently a new constitution with significant political innovations was adopted in July 2011. Among these reforms was perhaps most important one — the limitation of King's ability to intervene in quotidian politics. Introduction of the new constitution was accompanied by gestures of doubling food subsidies, increasing salaries of civil servants and creating job opportunities, however, most of these steps were later seen as short-term solutions implemented for the sake of calming down the situation rather than they would stand for a systematic solution based on legal decisions (Willis, 2014, p. 203-205). *Tamazight* finally achieved the status of an 'official' language alongside Arabic. In the aftermath of the upheavals we can look at the Berber Museum in a political reading: sanctifying the opening of a Museum dedicated to *Imazighen* seemed to be, for the Moroccan ruling elite, an ideal step. It had, on the symbolical level, ensured 'the West' that the state, and notably the King of Morocco himself, is capable of a mature response to civil unrest in order to sustain country's stability and democratic character of the kingdom (Miller, 2013, p. 235-236). Such an image of the ruling monarchy has to be first and foremost visible and negotiated in the various practises of social interactions. The official inauguration of the Museum is presenting one of the platforms where such is possible to effectively obtain. On the December 3rd, 2011 in the attendance of prominent political figures: Frédéric Mitterrand the Minister of Culture and Communications of the French Republic, alongside with Bensalem Himmich, Minister of Culture in the Kingdom of Morocco and the Ambassador of France in Morocco Bruno Joubert, the Berber Museum had been officially opened for the public.[162]

The Berber Museum was and is in the city of Marrakech used as a symbol of allegiance to the Western modern and democratic community. Moroccan official discourse is more

[162] *Foundation Jardin Majorelle* [online] cit. 11. 11. 2019 In http://jardinmajorelle.com/ang/fondation-jardin-majorelle/

than aware that the 'support' of art and culture is, by words of Howard Becker: symbolising the cultural development and sophistication of the nation and sustains the international prestige (Becker, 1982, p. 165). Here it is necessary to note that the 'support' is always selective and self-beneficial: authorising a Berber Museum which is part of the already well established institution of Jardin Majorelle, was an act of political calculus. Agreement upon the 'temple' dedicated to the internationally known figure of Yves Saint Laurent who's name is imprinted in Marrakech postcolonial history was an act of pragmatism. With MYSL Marrakech the number of visitors has increased and the object well resembles with the exotic image of Marrakech which is now, more than ever, attracting the global world of contemporary art. Those who are in need of fundings: Moroccan artists and various independent cultural institutions are continuously being neglected by the state cultural policy which is, in fact, in decay. Public museums in Morocco which formally belonged to the colonial apparatus undertook a rapid transformation in the first decade of Independence, the rhetorics of colonial past were expunged and replaced by the narratives of nationalism, however, very little has changed within inner structure dynamics (Peiprzak, 2010, p. 17-18). As Katarzyna Piperzak notes: '*French museum directors and administrators stayed on in Moroccan museums throughout the period following after 1956 maintaining a national architecture that housed primarily colonial imagination*' (Peiprzak, 2010, p. 18). In other words, the discourse hasn't been replaced by own reinvented constructions of knowledge as language and thus definitions of Moroccan artistic creation remained identical with those of French colonial scholarship. Instead of decolonizing the structures of the past, all possible models of modernisation were forced: the state had to ensure that physical buildings of the museums exist as much as they belong to and are part of every developed country. By the words of Carol Duncan, museum are, even necessary, pictures of a well-furnished state — '*lately, both traditional monarchs in so-called under-developed nations and Third World military despots have become enthralled with them*' (Duncan, 1991 p. 88–89).

As I have discussed in the previous lines, the 1960s progressive attempts of the intellectual circles to sustain the existence of national museums were marked by failure as the local public remained absent. Moroccan cultural elites sought to decolonize Moroccan culture from all relations of dominance with the West, however, artists were simultaneously in the quest for modern aesthetics which led them to continuously rely on the Western narratives resting out of the country itself. I argue, that the inability to

give up the relationship with the West was a major cause of a failed cultural decolonisation. Artists needed the metropolitan centres of modern aesthetics such as Paris, London or New York in order to legitimise their works of art (Peiprzak, 2010, p. 94-95). Despite this fact, cultural elites continued to express their rhetorics heavily nourished by the ideas of Marxism reform, secularism and cultural decolonisation in major bilingual (French and Arabic) cultural journals: *Souffles/Anfas* (1966–1972), founded by poet Abdellatif Laâbi; *Lamalif* (1968– 1988), founded by Mohamed Loghlam and Zakya Daoud; and *Integral* (1971–1978), founded by painter Mohamed Melehi. Published articles tackled predominantly analysis of artworks, institutional critiques and encompassed by a various of manifestos. The ideological background of these texts laid in texts of thinkers such as Franz Fanon or Albert Memmi (Pieprzak, 2010, p. 96). Nevertheless, with the still present inability to break free from the relationship with the ex-coloniser caused by own identity bifurcation and by growing politically oppression and censorship of intellectual circles, their voices started to loose power and efficiency. The post-independence period in Morocco (1965-1966) was under the persuasive official discourse of the *Makhzen* based on the progress and modernity needed to be testified in successful industrialisation of the country.

The government was hastily building up the symbols of modernity by enhancing modern economic infrastructures and projects such as urban planning, electricity plans, ports and railroads (Ferguson, 1999 p. 235). Nevertheless, the social, economical and political reality in Morocco was distant from, as Pieprzak puts it: '*goals of the proclaimed modernity*' (Pieprzak, 2010, p. 20). At the beginning of the 1970s, Morocco was undertaking several political turmoils: King Hassan II faced two military *coup d'état* attempts (1971 and 1972), streets of Casablanca faced the civil unrest and resulted in a vast number of casualties primarily during the student strikes (Miller, 2013 p. 176-177). The state, exhausted by political tensions and serious economical problems such as the growth of shantytowns around Casablanca and increasing unemployment, soon acknowledged that full modernisation of the country is presenting somehow an unrealistic ideal. Soon the *Makhzen* understood that the country needs to sustain first and foremost tourist industry as a major source of country's income (Miller, 2013, p. 173). Further, the official discourse continued to be committed to modernity and modernisation of the country, however, strategically through symbolic practices than by a real improvement of the living conditions of the country's inhabitants. In the following years the state set off purposeful visible symbolic gestures towards signalising to the

outer world, primarily to the West, its commitment to development. Culture and art became one of the important tools, a soft power, to assure Western allies, primarily France, about the safe investments possibilities (Becker, 1984 p. 165). Therefore, physical spaces of the national museums were implemented to negotiate a cultural identity, not within own inhabitants, but for the outer world: '*a nation that invests in preserving art and history is responsible and committed to modern state infrastructures*' (Pieprzak, 2010, p. 44-45). The result of empty gestures and unwillingness to pursue goals other than the economic ones, the project of the Moroccan national museum have had drastically failed. The answer to the question *why* presents an interplay of several factors. Pieprzak's analysis on the history of decay of Moroccan museums is discussing the omnipresent poor state fundings in combination with the lack of trained professionals in the very first years of Independence while looking into the political situation. In the first decade of post-Independence period (1956-1966), the government have changed eleven times and the Ministry of Culture was marked by the lack of cohesive policy and loose definition of what 'culture' should, in fact, be (Pieprzak, 2010, p. 20-21). Even though rhetorics of several ministers, notably of minister Benaïssa (1985-1992) in close collaboration with painter Mohammed Melehi, were promising, the official commitments were rarely executed. '*In Morocco, culture as a domain is less clearly defined than other areas, and its conception and objectives depend enormously on the personality of the minister in charge. What follows is a personalisation of 'cultural power' to the profit of the minister, who in a sovereign manner, and in function of budgetary means put at his disposition by the government, chooses the projects and puts them into a production*' writes Amina Touzani in her analysis on Moroccan Ministry of Culture (Touzani, 2004, p. 34).

Stagnation of political will, confusion over own's cultural identity and forced modernisation attempts were, in fact, in disjunction from the living reality of Moroccan population and resulted into a mimicry of cultural institutional models set during the Protectorate. In late 1960s several museums were added to those from the colonial era as visible monuments of modernity, later they were used as a mean of 'marketing heritage' far from the public use and interest. Pieprzak states: '*National museums in Morocco were not intended for a local public as much as they were for the rest of the world*' (Peiprzak, 2010, p. 23). The official discourse thus significantly contributed to the continuous understanding of Moroccan visual arts in all their forms through a colonial paradigm — as exotic ethnographical objects displayed to attract predominantly

foreign spectators. On the contrary, Moroccan artists and writers campaigned for a novel concept of a museum that would reflect the cultural identity of an independent and confident nation and that would educate and serve the public. Many of them such as Moroccan painters André Elbaz and Ahmed Cherkaoui and poet Abdellatif Dennis lamented about the lacking state interest. Painter Mohammed Bellal targeted the state efforts in the construction of tourists seaside resorts and centres instead of creating a public institution where imposed colonial language can be readdressed. Instead of redefinition of the colonial and Orientalist visual legacy throughout the support of a cultural policy, images in guidebooks distributed in Protectorate era smoothly swam into emerging and enormously profitable massive tourist industry starting in the late 1960s (Bellal, 1964, p.4). Critical voices were expressed in journals such as *Lamalif* – in 1968 the words of Moroccan painter Amine Demnati can illustrate well the unfulfilled demands:

> '*It has been ten years now that one speaks of creating a museum of fine arts. Nothing has been done. Elsewhere one sees things being born, galleries, museums, things are being created. But here, nothing. There is no museum, no gallery and one must exhibit in back rooms and basements*' (Demnati, 1968, p. 50-55).

Despite the state ignorance, in 1960s artists such as Farid Belkahia, Mohamed Melihi, Mohamed Chabaa and art historian Toni Maraini set up a discourse which aimed to revise the traditional Moroccan aesthetic expressions. Italian writer Mariani till today belongs to one of the most important art critics in the country as she, through her coherent analysis of Moroccan contemporary art, stud against the marginalisation of the local artistic production, primarily craftsmanship (Irbouh, 2005, p. 12). She regularly contributed alongside with other artists and art critics to a biannual journal *Maghreb Art,* the content focused primarily on local visual heritage — architecture and various popular forms of art articulated as '*a respond to those (Moroccans) who condition the emergence of modern Moroccan art solely by assimilating the model of Western art'* (Maghreb Art 3, Casablanca: *École des Beaux-Arts*, 1969). The Casablanca School is today considered as one of the most important movements in Moroccan history of modern art, offering a counter narrative to persisting French discourse in culture. However, such attempts, along side with the famous act of hanging art works in public space of Jemaa el-Fnaa Square, discussed earlier in Chapter 8 of this thesis, did have only limited impact on the public relations towards post-independence artistic

production. The Casablanca School currently represents the golden era of the Moroccan post-independent cultural dignity and artistic confidence towards envisioning new Moroccan *self* (Fattaleh, 2019, p. 14). Nonetheless, this movement became more appreciated than the actual purpose due to which it was formed (see Chapter 8).

From the existing studies done on Moroccan cultural institutions, we can detect the reasons of the local *absent* audience: political instability in the first years of the Independence led towards apathy in the structures of the cultural sector, extreme growth of tourist industry thus directed the preferences of the official actors — it was now inevitably crucial to maintain the most important source of the state economy (Minca and Wagner, 2016). Critical voices calling for the rehabilitation of local cultural forms arose, as we could read above, from elitist circles educated in the West and somehow too distant to the average Moroccan population and the original producers (see Irbouh, 2005). This situation throughout the following decades even intensified and the majority of Moroccans are till today both practically and discursively detached from the forms of art defined as *modern* and *contemporary*. From the following presented interviews, we could have acknowledged that there isn't any real interest among contemporary cultural practitioners to step towards the audience and tear down all the barriers. Further to understand forms of local aesthetic expressions and contextualise them within the cultural values among those who are being traditionally *anonymous*, *absent* and *invisible*. Moroccan art once labelled as craft remains secondary and even art critic Toni Maraini who explored these expressions yet, despite her best intentions, couldn't avoid repentance of French colonial label of routine technology. All local art forms were for her therefore 'pre-industrial', based on 'uniformity' and 'anonymity' (Maraini, 1971, p. 6-8). In fact, the exact understanding of the material objects is possible to witness in the Berber Museum. The existing practices of presumed anonymity lead to an evaluation of art objects only through the visual forms these objects possess. Questions such as: from which communities are the specific object originating and among whom it circulates, were never even asked (Irbouh, 2005, p. 13). Private Museums such as Berber Museum and Museum of Yves Saint Laurent successfully filled the gap after the failed project of the national museums. Both sites are, by the Moroccan State actors, highly respected and supported for helping to efficiently construct novel cultural geographies. In this case, any misconduct is allowed. For the rest of the art world, both local and global the reading of this situation is as follows: foreign professionals are coming 'again' to present the 'correct way' of how to

consume art and how to build up a 'proper' cultural institution.[163] Although new and technically the most advanced of what we can encounter in the local environment, MYSL Marrakech and Berber Museum are following the established image of Morocco as an exotic land of the 'Other', which is, in fact in an agreement and even promoted by the Moroccan official discourse itself. Both Museums are built upon the ideas of long-established Western stereotypes yet, and perhaps because of that, they are attracting an enormous amount of the Western tourists supporting country's tourist economy. Whereas MYSL Marrakech is promoting the version of Morocco as seen by Yves Saint Laurent, Berber Museum is built upon the idea of desire for authenticity described as an effective tool to legitimise the culture outside the walls of the institution enhancing numerous foreigners to purchase endless craft products (Pieprzak, 2010, p. 23). As Ning Wang notes: '*Authentic experiences in tourism and the authenticity of toured objects are constitutive of one another*' (Wang, 2000, p. 49). Looking at the objects on display, *Imazighen* are represented as an 'ancient tribe' scattered around Moroccan Mountains and rural areas. Both Museums don't reflect the 'real' differences but rather they are actively creating them, *Imazighen* culture is reduced to material objects that are ranked and judged, while simultaneously practises of those who are in power to select and classify them — the Foundation Jardin Majorelle and their experts are being praised. Their 'altruistic agency' is considered as essential for the promotion of cultural life in Marrakech, or perhaps even in entire Morocco.

[163] Based on informal interviews with foreign art professionals entering Marrakech during 1.54 African Art Fair in 2018 and 2019.

PART FOUR: Contemporary Counter Narratives

'*… where there is power, there is resistance… a multiplicity of points of resistance.'*[164]
Michel Foucault

The beginning of the twenty-first century in Morocco presents a period which is by historians reflected as a significant turn towards 'democracy' emblematically marked by the accession of King Mohamed VI to the throne (Miller, 2013, p. 221). It is within this era that independent cultural spaces[165] across different cities were born: *Le Cube* (2005) and *L'appartment 22* in Rabat (2002), *l'Atelier de la Source du Lion* in Casablanca (approximately from 1995) and *Espace 150x295* in Martil (2004) (Morin, 2017, p. 62-63). Novel multidisciplinary approaches appeared as a consequence within the newfound freedom in Moroccan artistic expression. The first decade of the 21st century is linked to two Moroccan intellectual figures: first is the founder and director of *L'appartment 22* Abdellah Karroum (1970), who is currently the director of contemporary art museum *Mathaf* in Doha, and second is the New York-based curator and writer Omar Berrada. Both are considered as contemporary visionaries and authoritative references summoned once something significant is happening in the local art scene. During their presence in Morocco – Berrada in Marrakech[166] and Karroum in Rabat, they have had dedicated their curatorial expertise towards setting off a relationship with the local audiences both acknowledging the desperate need of education programmes and community build spaces. Despite their attempts to adopt more critical perspectives on institutional dynamics in a postcolonial context, their voices, however, remain more of an academical 'echoes from the outside'. Both intellectual figures, in fact, scarcely ever committed a change in local cultural realities which is continuously being defined predominantly by the lack of local audiences. In the publication *Future Imperfect: Contemporary Art Practices and Cultural Institutions in the Middle East*, curator and independent researcher on Moroccan contemporary art

[164] FOUCAULT, Michel. *Histoire de la sexualité - La volonté de savoir*. Paris: Gallimard, 1976.

[165] During the reign of King Hassan II from 1961-1999 independent structures in Morocco practically didn't exist.

[166] Omar Berrada is, together with Julien Amicel, Carleen Hamon and Reda Moali a founder of *Dar al-Ma'mûn* in Marrakech: a library and artists residency. He intended to create a space of meeting, workshops and conferences so much needed in a city with lacking cultural infrastructure. The residency programme did not last for long, but the library is till today run by Berrada from a distance. As Berrada notes: '*the situation of public libraries in Morocco is disastrous and the situation doesn't improve*' and although the library has a little attendance and, in fact, is quite far from the city centre, Berrada have created a book collection which can be in the local context considered as exceptional.

practises Lea Morin discusses the inevitable role of Moroccan artists producing art institutions *in situ* as a direct response to the community needs. Where the academia based theorists have failed, artists are on the contrary those, who are capable of committing a change. Moroccan artists, according to Morin, took several times, considering the last two decades of the contemporary art scene of Morocco, radical action and have succeeded. On the three concrete examples of independent spaces in different urban areas of Morocco: *L'Atelier de l'Observatoire* in Casablanca, *Cintémathèque de Tanger* (2007) and *Espace 150x295* in Martil, Morin demonstrates the artist's ability to subvert the orthodox institutional terminology, when needed. Thus in the Moroccan context, it happened to be the figure of an artist who responded, often without any state support, to different social and cultural realities — regularly to those which were and are marginalised, suppressed and silenced (Morin, 2017 p. 63-64). On the other hand, presented independent spaces which are often uncritically praised as: 'reacting to the needs of local communities', are simultaneously results of the artists's essential needs as so much, perhaps even more than the urgency of the communities themselves. The lacking culture infrastructure and spectators for the artistic *oeuvre* are leaving Moroccan artists with little or no choice. Those who don't seek primarily Western audiences, and those who reject the dependency on offerings from the foreign cultural institutions such as The French Institute or Cervantes Institute are establishing art spaces within own context and for their audiences. Role of an artist as a leader of new institutional projects and socially engaged art practices presents a counter narrative towards dominant discursive formations of the typically White Cubes. Collaborative, participative and research-based outputs situated in abandoned properties, narrating ceased memories, establishing and building archives, redressing forgotten histories — all of what is for the founders and initiators neither an alternative path nor a parallel activity, but a work of art, as Morin states, in their own sense and of an equal value (Morin, 2017, p. 73). Someone as Mohamed Fariji – the co-founder of *L'Atelier de l'Observatoire* in Casablanca is today perceived as an artist who is through his venue, opposing those cultural institutions whose interests aren't embedded in 'building up' the local public. As an equivalent of such space in Marrakech is most probably *LE18 co-*founded by an autodidact Laila Hida. Conceptual artist Fariji understands the situation of an absent public as alarming and his interventions in Casablanca's public space additionally presents his own intimate art practise (Morin, 2017, p. 69).

Nevertheless, a vast number of Moroccan artists are executing the contrary: they aren't existing movements of those who are 'for' or 'against' certain kind of politics of representation; most of them embody both poles. Some of these artists are very well established, they have fought hard to be recognised among Western curators and Western art institutions, they have achieved the level of international Biennials and they have their profiles in newest publications on 'contemporary art from The Middle East', they sell well their artworks and they are often represented by different commercial galleries through which they attend art fairs. However, it is, or it can be, just one part of the 'story.' While their careers might be perceived by the lenses of their curriculums as successful, once they step back from the globalised scene, they encounter the 'dismal local' which indicates: poor fundings and the legacy of the colonial discourse with all it embraces. Therefore, for most of them facing the local context is directly linked to the need to invent their own form of resistance far from intellectualism and conceptual art too difficult to grasp for anyone dwelling outside of the elitist circles. Their counter actions are often designed as various pedagogical approaches. Teaching young students art and art history is an example of artists such as M'barek Bouhchichi (teaching in Tahnaout) and Mohamed Arejdal (teaching in Marrakech) both delivering a different understanding of artistic production than the one imposed by 'the Occident.' They are, within the personal and intimate collaboration with their students, reinventing a new language of art rehabilitating, under their own terms, the value to the local artistic heritage. Beside teaching practises, artists such as Simohammed Fetaka, are occasionally, almost as out of a guilt, committing interventions out of the commercial field and exhibiting in various independent or public spaces (Fettaka has been part of exhibition in public space *État d'uregnce d'instants poétiques*, or created with Laila Hida project titled *Boulevard de la resistance* in order to explore peripheral urban spaces in Morocco). For them, the artistic practice presents a balance between a strategy of earning a decent living and remaining committed to the local context.

Artist M'barek Bouhchichi on this situation states:

> *'Art is just a concept, if there are commonalities between us, artists, then they are defined by the lack of our own ties towards the heritage, lack of own language beyond French and English definitions and terminologies, there is lack of the audience, lack of fundings, lack of education, but also lack of freedom, lack of confidence etc We do have the power, as an artists, to change something, but we will*

never do it without the society, it's easy to go to Europe, to talk about all this… but it becomes just a fantasia, we create new 'card postal.' Moroccan artists are in a permanent stage of negotiation like if we would be on a bazaar, we have to negotiate with ourselves first: I will do some exhibitions abroad so I obtain a decent curriculum, but then I have to go back home to my earth, my Moroccan terrain and to our children (meaning students) and teach them our history. We don't need more Western curators to come, we need Moroccan artists to work with craftsmen as with peers and then bring art to the Medina, to Jemaa El Fna. We need that. We need interventions in the public space and we need the youth to help us.' [167]

The growing infrastructural development is typical for the city of Marrakech – concentration of new galleries, museums and private foundations dedicated to Moroccan painters is the highest in the country. Marrakech has a great tradition of Biennale launched in 2004, and even thought it had been in 2017 cancelled, it provided visibility to various emerging artists and helped to sustain a shared idea about the city's lively and flourishing art scene. Despite the increasing number of institutions, Marrakech is lacking, in contrary to other urban nerves, some of alternative propositions, however, there are few projects existing which are effectively opposing and subverting the dominant discourse. Within these following lines I aim to present one of them: an ongoing project titled *Qanat* situated in the independent space of *LE18* which I had the chance to observe from the outset and which presents one of the rare critical actions in the field of local cultural production. As *Qanat* is a research-based curatorial project repetitively intersecting local contexts through what is being defined as 'anthropological methods of inquiry', I will first tackle some of the major intrusive aspects of such collaborative approaches.

[167] Interview conducted on 5th of March 2018.

Chapter 10 Love and Hate: Contemporary Art practices and Anthropology

'*Much art with the anthropological affinities is not made for those about whom the art is made.*'[168] L. R. Lippard

As I have stretched in previous lines, notably in the chapters dedicated to the collaborations with local craftsmen and craftswomen communities, the relationship between art and anthropology has been continuously problematic. Through traditional perspectives of anti-aestheticism, art and its overlaps towards research-based practices couldn't present for several decades, primarily for the academia, a constitutive knowledge that would contribute to an anthropological scientific know-how (Schneider and Wright, 2015, p. 2). On the other hand, as anthropologists Grimshaw and Ravetz points out, the growing interest and whirl in activities cannot be left without a dialogue among anthropologists and the cultural actors (see Grimshaw and Ravetz, 2015). Contemporary art forms and engagements of artists with the social worlds present for most of the anthropologists methodologically random actions, rather than a serious research output, therefore 'artists in the field' are often evaluated in a dismissive manner (Schneider and Wright, 2015, p. 1-3). As so much this claim is relevant towards the subsequent postproduction and fabrication of 'the collected hard data' translated into an artistic output often under a certain tendentious curatorial discourses. Despite a growing number of 'aware' art practitioners and cultural actors, we are still facing unethical approaches to the field (Inagaki, 2015, p. 75). This squabble between the artists and the anthropologists is best described as a love affair marked by sharing common visions followed by a sudden farewell (see George E. Marcus; Amanda Ravetz; Christopher Wright; Arnd Schneider; Hal Foster; Lucy R. Lippard; Tatsuo Inagaki; Anna Grimshaw and Elspeth Owen). Speaking in general, the increasing number of contemporary artworks are fieldwork based, thus directly interacting with various social groups embedded in diverse contexts both 'home' and abroad (Marcus, 2015, p. 7-8). What distortions can appear in the artistic research once ethics are brought up is described, in fact, in the following chapter dedicated to the project *Qanat*. Contemporary independent art spaces in Morocco are mostly research orientated as most of them are naturally, through art, reacting to the current phenomenas which are

[168] LIPPARD, R. Lucy. *Farther Afield*. In SCHNEIDER, A. and WRIGHT, Ch. (eds.). In *Between Art and Anthropology: Contemporary Ethnographic Practice*. London: Bloomsbury, 2014.

in a need of an examination such as: '*endemic poverty, disaffected youth, variable economy, political paralysis, runaway population increase, residual corruption etc*' (Miller, 2013, p. 234). The shared idea is that the marginalised and vulnerable groups can be potentially approached through artistic experimentations. In past years, independent spaces concerned by the socio-economical situation of the country are effectively building up or restoring archives and readdressing forgotten memories there, where official state structures are remaining uninterested.

As an example to be mentioned here is the case of Ahmed Bouanani (1938-2011) — a significant Moroccan writer and filmmaker who had been silenced in the 1970s and 1980s as he had belonged to the circle around the censored journal *Souffles*. Bouanani presented one of the rare voices calling for cultural decolonisation, which he himself executed by a numerous trips around the country. Bouanani documented dance costumes, rituals, crafts, folk tales and oral poetry aiming to purge Moroccan culture from still existing colonisation constraints and help to set off the modernisation process not without, but within the Moroccan roots, traditions and heritage of the local context (Interview with Omar Berrada and Soukaina Aboulaoula, 2019, p. 170-171). It was through artistic and curatorial practises that Bouanani's legacy has been resurrected: curator Omar Berrada in the library *Dar al-Mamûn* in Marrakech invited Bouanani's close friends, family members, scholars and artists to talk about his work and help to restore his legacy. Process of uncovering Bouanani's legacy reached its peak during the last edition of Marrakech Biennial in 2016 where Bouanani's major concerns were brought to light: the relationship between art and craft, writing and oral tradition, memory and the future, people and their narratives (Interview with Omar Berrada and Soukaina Aboulaoula, 2019, p. 170-171). Artists Yto Barrada, Mohssin Harraki and Sara Ouhaddou were invited to engage with Bouanani's personal archive and articulate some of these questions in the current context through their own outputs. These happenings featured intersection between artistic practice and the role of a researcher and were, according to some curators, successful. In the contemporary art world are experimentations and intuitive field practices perhaps nothing novel, but in the academical background, it is the anthropologist who finds artist's playful outputs to some extent disturbing. Even though anthropologists do not possess a monopoly on the fieldwork conduct, as Marcus's critique on Hal Foster's essay 'Artist as an Ethnographer' stands (Marcus, 2015, p. 83-84), yet artist is perceived as someone who is daringly appropriating and making use of what is frequently considered as anthropological

qualitative research tools (for further reading see Grimshaw and Ravetz, *The ethnographic turn — and after: a critical approach towards the realignment of art and anthropology*, 2015).

Artists are recording, executing semi-structured interviews, observing and anthropologists (most of them) are disapprovingly watching over their actions. Beside existing prevailing sceptical discourse, the interest of anthropology towards art and its contemporary forms is increasing. Anthropology had to eventually acknowledge that artists are sometimes working in the same territory (culture) and using similar tools (ethnography) (Grimshaw and Ravetz, 2015, p. 424). As a direct result of the research-based artistic outputs different novel terms came into play: artists became *practitioners of making* (Ingold, 2013) or *conceptual ethnographers* (Ssorin-Chaikov 2013). James Clifford in his much-cited 'The predicament of Culture' defines ethnography which stands as it follows: '*a hybrid activity, variously appearing as writing, as collecting, as a modernist collage, as imperial power, as a subversive critique*' (Clifford, 1988, p. 13). He refuses to distinguish between disciplinary science and avant-garde experimentation and calls for ethnography as a universal mode of inquiry (Clifford, 1988, p. 12). Both him and Tim Ingold are stating that anthropology doesn't have an exclusive and privilege position for claiming interpretations and representations. Ingold understands art as a *verb* rather than a noun and contemporary artistic experimentations present for him an analogous way of engaging with the world and life itself (Ingold, 2013, p. 7-8).

The *power* aspect is perhaps the stumbling stone of most misunderstandings and failed dialogues. The best known critical voice towards the research-based artistic practices is Hal Foster – artists are, according to him, in a sough of the cultural and ethnic other. In his famous essay 'Artist as an Ethnographer' he notes: *few principles of the ethnographic participant-observer are observed, let alone critiqued, and only limited engagement of the community is effected. Almost naturally the project strays from collaboration to self-fashioning, from a decentering of the artist as cultural authority to a remaking of the other in the neo-primitivist guise* (Foster, 1996, p. 196–7). Foster is claiming that the people with whom artists are engaging are objectified in the services of aesthetic contemplation, artists rarely step beyond their own artistic visions, rather, they scarfing human beings for their own purposes. Both disciplines are characterised by engaging in the site-specific setting on a relevant subject where afterwards visual and textual interpretations and representations are established. Both disciplines have the

power to represent, but whereas anthropological discipline has undertaken self-reflexivity and attempt to dismantle once for all paternalistic categorisations as 'primitivism', for art ethical implications are seldom the core of any concern. Foster notes that the artist's commitment to reflexive and participatory research is often only rhetorical, in fact, a mask to reassure own artistic authority (Foster, 1996, p. 197). Interdisciplinary border crossings are, despite all the concern, happening, and are enriching the mutual dialogue which is in globalised intermingled social reality almost a necessity. The main concerns of anthropology are more comprehensive — stretching from denouncing artificial construction of representations and its politics to criticising commissioned art pieces for Biennale circuits which are often leading to reduction of productive differences and increasing internalisation and homogenisation of cultural production in general. The art worlds had been way too long in a position of a strong unquestionable authority rarely approaching communities of the ex-colonised populations with accountability, and as Olu Oguibe and Okwui Enwezor puts it: '*habitual neo-colonial rhetorics towards non-Western artists are ongoing reality'* (Oguibe and Enwezor, 1999, p. 17-19). A Concrete example of above mentioned artistic engagement *in situ* is being discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter 11 Alternative Projects: Qanat's Poetics and Politics of Water

Qanat[169] is a long term trans-disciplinary research programme initiated by an independent Italian curator Francesca Masoero aspiring to 'reactivate the memory of water.' Such encompasses the methodological background in socio-historical reflection, artistic formalisation, museological practice and spatio-temporal experimentation.[170] Qanat's first edition took place in Marrakech in 2017 and presented an open-ended ambitious programme with a rich curatorial, artistic and research proposals. As young curator Masoero happened to be my *gatekeeper* into the curatorial world of Marrakech art scene, I have decided to follow up her project in next two years further in-depth, which according to my understanding, haven't had an existing local match.

[169] Qanat (*qanāt* in Arabic, in Persian *karez* or Berber Arabic *foggara)* is an ancient type of water-supply system, conducting the water along underground tunnels by gravity, often over many kilometres. Channels were developed and are still used in arid regions of the world, notably in Iran, North Africa, Mediterranean areas and Latin America.

[170] *Qanat: The Politics and Poetics of Water* [online] cit. 12. 2. 2020 In http://kibrit.org/en/qanat.html

Qanat thus stands for an exceptional intersection between contemporary art practices and ethnographical tools of conduct as discussed in previous lines. The project aimed and aims to critically reflect and build upon an exploration of the border zone between various contemporary art practices and diverse scientific and socio-scientific disciplines. These disciplines are combining approaches from architecture, anthropology, activism, ecology and more; all linked to, as the subtitle stands — *the politics and poetics of water*. I had personally attended the second following edition tiled as 'Performing change from the Margins' in fall 2018 situated in the art independent space of *LE18* where Masoreo is, as a curator, based.

Qanat was designed as a semi-public five days collective brainstorming among a group of participants: artists Heidi Vogels, Jérôme Giller, architects Edouard Soros, Flore Grassiot, Sara Frikech, cultural practitioner Carlos Perez Marin, anthropologist George Bajalia, curator Hicham Bouzid and several other cultural actors who contributed to the public programme. The daily routines of round tables and inner dynamics of the group were exceptional and in many aspects sharply contrasting otherwise commercial local curatorial approaches. First of all, *LE18* is, despite few of my critical comments in previous chapters, stepping far away from the concept of artificially constructed and restricted spaces of the typically White Cubes (read galleries). It is mainly due to its curatorial practices which are manifesting primarily in being critically aware of the need to search for artistic alternatives in order not to 'purge' art from culture itself. Both Laila Hida and Masoero are directing their outputs towards sustaining the idea of cultural relativism, which is, in the current discourse, a rare set of a knowledge production framework. Second, *Qanat's* format remains purposely unclear and opened, more or less in flux, after all as the water itself. In fact, it is more an embodied ongoing discussion than anything else, a dialogue thus existing beyond the fixed *regimes of truth* — a dominance of a concrete discourse traditionally linked to cultural institutions (as I have argued earlier) that are powerful enough to sustain certain discursive claims which are recognised and understood as an absolute *truth* (Hall, p. 208-210).

As an example of a practice, dismantling imposed rigid narratives, can serve semi-private informal debates brainstormings and so-called collective cartography. Regular 'wall interventions' were proposed and led by Casablanca based architect Flore Grassiot and encouraged each contributor, on a daily bases, to critically overview interconnected contents, position and reposition own perspectives in relation to others, or to the

established concepts and theories. Collective creation of meanings has been pined on the wall which little by little became egalitarian shared space communicating both mutually and with the border public. Beside interactions within the research team itself, evening sessions were dedicated to presentations enriched by other guests with different backgrounds — for example human right activist and filmmaker Nadir Bouhmouch, an independent researcher on Moroccan cinema and curator Léa Morin, PhD candidate in history Samir Aït Oumghar, writer and columnist Ayoub Mouazaïne and more. Presentations and discussions in the evenings were opened to a broad public, however, most of the contributions were delivered either in French or English which, again, have created a sort of a barrier for the potential local visitors of the neighbourhood communicating predominantly in *darija*. The group enhanced one of the *LE18*'s rooms with accessibility to diverse references designed as a shared space with personal recourses of participants such as books, videos, articles and internet links. Masoero on 2018 edition notes: '*the five days represented a moment to bring together a diverse set of actors either engaged in water specifically (both from a research perspective and an activist one) or in socially-engaged and participatory methods at the urban level. The programme also represented a space to experiment collaborative, participatory methods ourselves, such as collective cartographic experiments, with the participants and with students from Casablanca; city tours to map the traces of water systems (particularly in the Marrakech palm grove) and interventions in the neighbourhood, often led by artists were taking place, both in the direction of collecting the memories of inhabitants of water, commons and common spaces now disappeared, enclosed or in danger, but also in the direction of stimulating their imagination for the future*.'

Masoero is positioning the project as an 'ambitious one,' describing practises of the collective (consisting loosely of six to ten members), as working contextually, in relation to Marrakech specifically and '*for a collective interest yet-to fully come*,' while simultaneously, according to her words: '*Qanat is growing as a trans-national and methodologically diverse platform, a curated network of people with resonating passions and complementary focuses that are helping to map what commons may mean and how the project could develop, by bringing forth knowledge, narratives and visions of the past arrangements, present configurations and future imaginaries of water's presence and distribution and its social, ecological, cultural and political effects intersecting perspectives across various geographies*.'

The participants Masoero have connected together, most of them foreigners, are coming from a diverse geographical, academical, research and artistic backgrounds and to describe the projects, interests, and interventions of all who have been part of the program would build up an entire voluminous study. Despite that, one specific resemblance is shared to some extent by all the contributors. That is the act of *stepping into the field*; this very methodological approach presents a strong argument for artists, architects, anthropologists and others to learn directly from each other and to perhaps reflect on how such can be done in the field of the 'Other.' Mutual crossings considering art and different fields — environmentalism, architecture and primarily anthropology, presents a recent direction of most of the engaged artistic outputs.

As I have been analysing attitudes of those who are directly engaging with communities through diverse artistic or design collaborations (with local craftsmen and craftswomen), mostly highlighting their acts of often unconscious dominance; I have here been equally interested to look upon the methodologies Masoero and the *Qanat* team would introduce. Specific art and curatorial practices that have occurred around *LE18*, *Qanat* included, are positioning themselves as a counter narratives towards the contemporary dominant discourse of art which, in fact, awaken my curiosity. Independent research-based projects, proposals, interventions and engagements are all in use of the ethnographic methods in a quest for meaningful context out of the comfortable galleries and studios.

The initiative in 2018 edition was talking on the behalf of the 'margins' and linking the whole concept to a socially engaged art and activism as a tool to address forms of cultural resistance, silenced and suppressed narratives and political struggles over water resources. What has remained blurred from the very beginning was, for example, the definition of the researched groups whom the practitioners intended to address. We can ask if the 'margins' stand for more of a metaphorical description. But then, the programme consisted of several real interventions into the public space engaging beyond the abstract title, that is — with the real people, thus how was the sample designed? As Masoero noted in previous lines: *collecting the memories of inhabitants of water*. The art critic Lippard asks: Does any of experimental artistic interventions have a real impact on the local social worlds? And she adds: and it which sense? (Lippard, 2015, p. 32-33) Or it perhaps, like most of the contemporary artistic projects engaging

with social worlds, remain at the end of the day limited to the group of art practitioners themselves?

Field-work as an artistic practice, notes anthropologist George E. Marcus, is increasingly unstable as it has temporality limits and spatial boundaries both pushing the ethnographer to have a clear research design (Marcus, 2015, p. 86-87). In other words, constructed framework and research questions might change throughout the carried fieldwork, what must remain present is the *responsibility* towards the researched subjects, which is, however, in most of the artistic experimentations within the field tremendously omitted. Engaging with local communities, especially with vulnerable groups, or often with seldom children from the neighbourhood — the so called marginalised will, without conducted steps of *accountability*, simply remain reduced to anonymous entities well-fitting the artistic *oeuvre*. To reflect on the methods in which these interventions were done is truly difficult, however, according to my observations at least a conversations on ethical aspects were during the *Qanat's* roundtables lacking. The question here, again to be asked is, in whose benefit such acts are happening? Ethos of the fieldwork was and is in *Qanat's* program present, nevertheless methodologies of concrete actions were, at least in the 2018 edition, poorly articulated. Interventions were casually executed and they didn't, in fact, step beyond the vocabulary of the art world itself. Local vocabularies and languages weren't taken into account, or in very limited manner and local narratives on water weren't, at that time, anyhow systematically collected.

The so-called ethnographic turn (Clifford 1986; Foster 1996) in the art practices, the crises of representation in anthropology and the call for engaged research (as among other fields, often involving local inhabitants), resulted into new forms of experimental fieldworks (Marcus, 2015, p. 85). Growing interest in art as a process 'stepping out of a studio' rather than being focused primarily on the production site of objects, nourished number of various collaborations out of institutional structures and more in the landscapes and public spaces. The increasing interest to do so was directed to foreign countries, rather than being 'at home' (Schneider and Wright, 2015, p. 1-5). Nevertheless, this very actuality which anthropologists of art A. Schneider and Ch. Wright call the 'border crossing' presents much of an under researched space. Research-based art projects are encountering a striking need to raise, above all, primarily ethical issues once engaging with the social worlds.

Noticeable criticism is, not surprisingly, arising from the ethnographers and anthropologists of art commenting in a similar manner, as earlier Hal Foster claimed: the cultural or ethnic Other has today replaced the working class of those in whose name the artists struggle, however, despite the best motives, such works serve primarily for the purposes of the art sponsors, and remain a spectacle for those who are possessing an accurate cultural capital (Marcus, 2015, p. 85). Multiple engaged practices and interests are being done in the field of the 'Other' in diverse cultural and political contexts and therefore artists are being present (sometimes unconsciously) in the processes of a cultural appropriation of others through texts and visual medias. As a professor of indigenous Studies, Linda Tuhiwai Smith states: '*The word research is probably one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world's vocabulary*' (Tuhiwai, 1999, p.1). Although the volume of work produced by individuals adopting ethnographic methodologies are accumulating, and despite an obvious common ground, formal dialogues between artists and anthropologists remain tenuous and fragile. Rarely we meet a space where artists are confronted, 'striped' in debate and expected to articulate research methods used to achieve concrete results. More the opposite is prevailing.

Anthropologists Arnd Schneider and Christopher Wright in *Between Art and Anthropology* argues that there are fundamental differences concerning approaches to *cognition* and *ethics* (Schneider and Wright, 2015, p. 5). Once ethnographer is a part of academical research he or she must validate, not only textual conclusions and final outputs which are being critically overviewed but as well justify every single step taken in the field in terms of methods and self-reflexive approach. This is something that is not necessarily imposed on artists. They can, in fact, be unrecognisable from any other ethnographer (as technique of participant observations, semi-structured interviews etc is being used) when working with communities/on margins, but to what extent does artist feel a need to position her/himself once there is no institutional 'threat'? Furthermore the artists rarely consider training in the research ethics as a fundamental premise. This very fact is keeping alive ongoing more or less negative critical discourse from the anthropologists who tend to underline that artists are (sometimes due to inability of breaking free from the celebratory narratives on the 'great man/artist ennobling our spirits') lacking awareness of the existing *difference* between the researcher and the research subject. Those *differences* refer to the power positions, politics, economics, self-ascribed identities and educational training which must be referred to, in the outgoing research, *ab initio*. In order to craft knowledge from

intersections of art and different scientific fields, to enable migration of skills from one context to another there are certain conditions: it requires artists to be accountable and anthropologist (and others engaging with art) to risk irrelevancy (Grimshaw and Ravetz, 2015, p. 161). Again by the words of Hall Foster: '*The artists are just playing at the serious pursuit of ethnography in the interest of accumulating symbolical capital in the experimental ethos of artistic endeavour*' (Foster, 1996, p. 306). On the contrary anthropologist George E. Marcus as an answer to Foster notes: … *'once fieldwork/ ethnography proliferates as an ideal practice within wider communities, as occurred in the Writing culture critiques, then its virtues cannot be solely owned by anthropology*' (Marcus,2015, p. 86). *Qanat* is based on experimentation and improvisation — a key 'methods' that had been running through daily collective discussions as a spring of water; in one of those afternoon roundtable sessions American Palestinian anthropologist and a contributor George Bajalia have addressed the matter of fact, that even experiencing mutual mingling, overlapping, (dis)agreements, interweaving, reconsidering, rethinking, redressing, rehabilitating (in fact, *Qanat's* interventions were primarily about the prefix *re-*) the participants are still in lack of the knowledge how to conduct the semi-ethnographical research and present the subsequently produced knowledge.

Lucy L. Lippard points out that artistic outputs with anthropological affinities aren't produced for those who were at once the source of inspiration (Lippard, 2015, p. 25). She further asks, is it possible to avoid the vicious circle of intellectual debates distant from the research subject and their realities?

As P. Bourdieu puts it: *producers are producing on the recognition of whom they recognise* (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 320) and even in such programmes that are designed as an 'analogous modes of investigating the world'. There are artists who enter a community/landscape to take something out, or perhaps raise a civic dialogue, as Lippard notes: '*with, but not within the local community*' (Lippard, 2015 p. 25). The curatorial approach of Masoero, herself from a trans-disciplinary academic background of political economy, calls for an engagement beyond a narrative of classical visual artistic paradigm on one side and a conservative textual tradition on the other. Her interests in forms of resistance, forces of transformation, politics of commons, in general — socially engaged art practices, are offering us a perspective that is fundamentally lacking in the visible art spaces at local, and possibly even at a state level

(with several existing exceptions in Casablanca, Rabat and Tangier). Masoero connects people who are experts in their fields offering new perspectives. On the other hand, all of the actors are more or less fully occupied by their own projects out of the country. *Qanat's* team was later in the begging of the year 2019 joined by a Moroccan artist known for his expertise and critical stance as the team faced and is still facing a scarcity of Moroccan actors. The novel team configuration turned out to be smooth and beneficial, however, followed by artist's sudden withdrawal from the project couple of months later. From what I have understood within an interview conducted with the very artist shortly after he fled was a highly sensitive aspect of the project's funding. By his own words: '*I really deeply appreciate all the members of the Qanat's team, they are my friends. However, from the budget this project had received I haven't seen anything at all (so as the rest of the group). I understand there is a possible delay as the grant is coming from Europe, but I cannot work for free without knowing exactly when I will be paid. Lets be honest, they are all economically stable Westerners, so postponing a payment cannot cause them any greater harm, but to me, it is an essential question*.'

This very fact doesn't not only re-opens another *power*-related question linked to Masoreo's potential and real responsibility for the sample of those experts, who are with a great dose of certainty bringing ideas and practices from distant contexts to the Moroccan landscape. But also highlights the lacking deeper insight of the *Qanat* group into the local context and the understanding of the needs of the local practitioners, further an absence self-positing of Masoero and others. Masoero has the power to propose the project to any of the experts according to her own judgment, she too is in a charge of obtaining the funds (mainly from abroad sources) and delivers the final representational narratives to the public. The question I asked here is rather a critical one: Can one empower local silenced narratives, reactivate memories and forgotten ancestral heritage of the 'commons' and create a sustainable platform with a group of people who are leaving back to their social structures few days after the programme and returning to Marrakech twice a year? Wouldn't be perhaps better and even sustainable to work directly with the local communities living in and around Marrakech, rather than with those coming back and forth from Europe and the States? Lippard is questioning a position of an 'artist as a tourist' and notes: '*we must be aware not to experiment first and theorihtiaze later, once we realise that we should be thinking'* (Lippard, 2015, p. 23).

Research and experimentation are, according to Lippard, seldom without ethical implications and critical self-positioning; reflexivity is necessary perhaps in order to avoid being trapped in its own self-fulfilling prophecies.

Qanat's certain methodological vagueness is masked by the pursuit of playful experimentation and improvisation, however, despite several critical points, *Qanat* remains a project that has been tremendously missed in context of 'luxury good producing' art environment. Currently, the team, which core is now consisting of artists Jerôme Giller, Nassim Azarzar, architect Sara Frikech, curator Francesca Masoero, anthropologist George Bajalia, artist Amin Lahrach and ethnobotanist Louisa Aarrass is planning for way more, such as the school of commons, workshops for the neighbours and accessible community build archive. *Qanat's* attempt is to provide a space to those who are researching on various socially and economically excluded groups and forgotten entities, as well as to establish regular interdisciplinary collaborations. Every new project or program proposal is, in an environment without any precedent, a constant search for the frame, and so far there is no doubt about how ambitious, courageous but also precarious work related to socially engaged topics can be. Only probably with enough time and financial possibilities to continue on, we might overview if the programme has interrogated the marginalised lands both real and the imaginary or its potential sunk into the swamp of intellectualism. Artists who play too closely with the circuit of anthropology and its methodologies have to acknowledge, that what stands before the artwork itself (no matter how experimental it can be), is the necessity to first stand up for your sources and identify them; further the power is always unequal thus ethics and responsibility towards the native communities must precede the aesthetic daring (Lippard, 2015, p. 26). *LE18* is at the beginning of what we can refer to as spreading more awareness of social injustice and despite *Qanat's* questionable engagement with the local context, the research group continues to experiment and re-address the previous lapses.

CONCLUSION: *disORIENTation*

On the 14th of February 2020, I have entered newly opened space in *Gueliz* where exhibition curated by Phillip Van Den Bossche titled *Malhoun 2.0* was set. 'Malhoun' derives from Arabic *al-malhūn* meaning a 'melodic poem' and, as the panel installed by the entrance notes, it '*is a sung poetry that finds it origins in craftsmen's guilds.'* Since I have entered the field in 2017, this exhibition cannot be compared to anything I have witnessed among the visible cultural institutions in the city. *Mahoun 2.0* is truly a rarity as it exposes, without a usual strategy or diplomacy, the ambivalent relation between artists and craftsmen. Further, within the Moroccan context, the undeclared problematics over *representation*. The exhibition is initiated and produced by Eric Van Hove's atelier *Fenduq,* discussed and critically tackled earlier in this corpus of text. The art installation presents itself as a larger project aiming to set a dialogue between craftsmen, artists, writers and thinkers from the positions of peers.

The exhibition was accompanied by a text of British curator Natasha Hoare. In her polemic written for magazine *Chergui (#02, 2020)* Hoare rejects all criticism of *Fenduq* based on, according to her words, '*Marxist critical skittishness at the harnessing of the commodity form — and the perception of the colonial structures are play in the employment of Moroccan artisans* (Hoar, 2020*,* p. 30). She proposes, inspired by anthropologists Comaroff and Comaroff and their publication *Ethnicity Inc.* (2009) a novel term — 'ethnocommodity' claiming that an object (or a song, performance etc) can be turned into a commodity under the right terms: that is to constitute itself as a positive point of identity formation for an individual or a group that wilfully authors it. However, Hoar's understanding is one-sided and selectively forging new patterns according to the favour of a marketplace. Authors of *Ethnicity Inc.* are penetrating account of the ways in which diverse ethnic populations are remaking themselves in the image of the corporations, however, not 'wilfully re-fashioning identities' as Hoar suggests, but as a result of a 'survival strategy'. The agency of corporations which are co-opting ethnic practices to open up new markets and regimes of consumption are in a need of examination (see Comaroff and Comaroff, 2009). Hoar again claims that the 'indigenous groups possessing ancient knowledge' can have the agency to subvert corporate logics and calls it a 'spirit of hacking rigid systems contradictory to the usual effects of neoliberalism.' Nevertheless, I argue that such claims are again based on random assumptions and curatorial theorising, that have little or nothing to do with the

ongoing realities embedded in the intentions of branding and marketing the original culture, the *know-how* of those who are powerless. I do not want to belittle anyhow the agency of the marginalised but, as it has been manifested earlier in this text, the diverse practices of corporate institutions and various individuals in the field of culture are often done in an insensitive manner and without a deeper interest in individuals' needs and desires. It remains questionable in which manner the 'ethnocommodity' production is negotiated in the case of Eric Van Hove and his NGO *Fenduq*, but I argue that such model cannot by applied in a broad sense as a 'correct' artistic and curatorial approach. Especially when collaborating with and producing a culture brand with those, who are *ab initio,* in marginalised positions battling illiteracy and poverty, and when legacy of colonialism, hegemony of Western art history, dearth of institutional support system and thirsty tourist industry (2 million a year in Marrakech), is the very case. Further, an 'ethnocommodity' is an answer to the question: '*how we generate income from tourists with our tradition*?' but simultaneously it is (or can be) a result of power misbalance, forged performance often out of despair and a strategy to earn a decent life. 'Ethnocommodity' has more to do with so-called '*poverty tourism, designed for the consumption of the economically advantaged, in which the immiseration on display is often ethnicized*', rather than it would stand for a positive re-animating of cultural subjectivity (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2009, p. 147).

Despite few of my critical notes on the curatorial output of Natasha Hoare, *Fenduq* exhibition was admittedly an exceptional, primarily because artworks installed from both producers — from those consider as artists and those understood as craftsmen, were admitting the power imbalance caused by historical and economical circumstances. Thus *Malhoun 2.0* was displaying objects without labels in order to subvert the question of an ascribed *ownership*. As the author of TAMA Manifesto Noureddine Ezarraf participated himself with a research-based piece, he guided me through the entire installation. Truly astonishing pieces in wood were installed and Noureddine confidentially whispered to me which are those made by craftsmen. Objects on display were produced intentionally as a collaboration between the two, till now, *distinct* groups of producers. *Malhoun 2.0* was the last exhibition I had witnessed before accomplishing this thesis and, in a certain aspect, it became symbolical last drop of the field 'saturation'. I have witnessed a young and critical practitioner from Aghmat openly struggling with the ignorance of Voice gallery towards the demands of the local community in February 2018 (see Chapter 5 The Power of Experts), whereas

Noureddine two years after is penetrating the art world (owner of the Voice gallery Rocco Orlaccio was present). Though Noureddine did not enter the art scene as a result of an 'emancipated process' guided by the Westerner's *know-how* but as a result of his ongoing disputations with those who are in power, with those who are just now fully recognising the local producers. These producers (Moroccan craftsmen) were, throughout the existence of contemporary art scene in Morocco, far too long invisible and underestimated. But again we must be, in the aftermath of a euphoria, cautious in the power reading. Despite the obvious attempt to recognise local forms of aesthetic expressions as equal, at the end of the day, it was quite distinguishable which objects on display are those of recognised artists hence subsequently resulting into possessing the greatest visibility. The questions I ask here is: isn't *Fenduq* – which proposes to liberate craft from the repetitiveness, which is '*a trojan horse of the galleries and museums*' and '*breaking craft out of the mausoleum*' (Hoare, 2009, p. 30), presenting an 'emancipation' process executed solely under the terms of the art world, notably Eric Van Hove himself? Do Moroccans need to '*instil a cultural pride and visual recognition*' (Hoare, 2009, p. 30) in the Western museums and galleries? Isn't the economical rejuvenation more of a strategically thought-through branding process of Van Hove's art practice?

These questions will, for now, remain unanswered, however, this installation clearly indicated how much unrooted the Moroccan cultural producers, recognised by the Western art professionals as 'artists', are. Further, it exposes, how the power of *distinction* of colonial administrators effectively buried the value of Moroccan craftsmanship since the second decade of the 20th century and how alive and practiced the cultural domination is. Moroccan artists had perhaps realised that the cluster of Western hegemony in no longer sustainable, that the *responsibility* towards the local producers and local audiences can be a starting point of a long process of reclaiming back the cultural sovereignty. The question of *responsibility* remains crucial and was reopened in the third edition of the 1.54's Forum which followed later in February 2020 under the title 'On Focus: Communal knowledge at Large' curated by Elvira Dyangani Ose. It aimed to advocate for multiple practices of socially engaged art and introduce the necessity of shared communal knowledge among and within local communities. On Moroccan case, contributors Carlos Perez Marin (*Caravene Tighmert*) and Francesca Masoero (*Qanat*) delivered a speech and again we were facing, as endlessly before, the situation where on the behalf of the local communities two foreigners were making

statements in language (English) and place (La Mamounia hotel) far too distant from the ongoing reality of the margins which are, paradoxically, at the centre of their practice. Two speakers, among them Hisham Bouzid (Think Tanger) noted that talking about 'building up communities' indicates that from the very beginning the community was, actually, lacking, thus by the very essence some of the curatorial projects are simply imposed and not initially designed under the local terms.

We can state that some major aspects of the local cultural life remained unaltered since the conducted analysis of other researchers on Moroccan artistic scene a decade ago. Notably, analysis on the situation of Moroccan museums in the postcolonial period by Katerzyna Pieprzak (*Imagined Museums: Art and Modernity in Postcolonial Morocco, 2010*), and critical ongoing commentaries by Abdellah Karoum and Omar Berrada revels the similar: the absent local public and the lacking state interest. What have had been intensified is the ethnocentrism in knowledge production, practised denial of cultural relativism and somehow incorporated natural right to culturally appropriate and mentor those who are 'not yet there' all in the shadow of Marrakech growth as a novel and confident cultural axis. The increasing number of progressive artists seems to admit their dependency on the Western implemented infrastructures caused partly by the ongoing emptiness of symbolic gestures from the side of the Moroccan Ministry of Culture. Hence, the power of Western institutional structure and the flow of the foreign capital seems to be a barrier too thick to dismantle. Marrakech is already marked on the map of interest by the globalised art world. Such situation is a direct result, I argue, of cultural decolonisation that never happened and an ongoing discourse of carefully restored *Orientalism* which recognised, in the field of Moroccan visual art production, an effective instrument through which it can smoothly operate in order to produce particular human subjects. One of the direct and visible consequences in Marrakech is Hoare's advocated commodification of culture which, by the words of Comaroff and Comaroff: '*may also entrench old lines of inequality, conduce to new forms of exclusion, increase incentives for the concentration of power, and create as much poverty as wealth*.' (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2009, p. 52).

The aim of my dissertation thesis was to describe and analyse the field of contemporary visual art in Marrakech where I was taking into account the Western forms of dominance — namely, the power relations between the various actors involved in the emergence of the Orientalist discourse re-articulated according to the novel interest

intersections *in situ*. In the chapter dedicated to the methodological approach (see Chapter *Notes on Methodological Framework, subchapter Research Design and Research Questions*) I had outlined ten research questions which I had, initially, asked. Throughout the entire fieldwork of mine I kept them in mind as a firm contour, once formulating my textual outcome I had provided answers to these concerns in the individual presented chapters. However, for the sake of greater clarity, I will summarise my findings in the following points.

1. *How is the globalised contemporary art world representing the non-Western art producers? Are these powerful actors, as well, influencing the character of the art production in the locality itself?* Representation of Non-Western art production is still being understood, by the globalised art world, in an essentialist manner, meaning producers are expected to artistically express the *difference* (geographic and ethnic 'otherness'). Neo-Orientalist discourse is, concerning Moroccan art, undoubtedly an objective; the so-called art professionals (curators) are carrying out simplified categorisations as a result of the existing ethnocentric viewpoint of Euro-American cultural institutions. The identical scheme is followed as much on the international level as in the locality itself, where such is enhanced by the legacy of colonialism. (This question was addressed primarily in *Part Two* of this thesis, concretely in *Chapter 5 The Power of Experts*)
2. *How is 'the West' understood by the cultural actors in situ?* The West is, in the general sense, understood as 'modern', 'liberal' and 'progressive' whereas cultural life in Morocco is widely comprehended as 'underdeveloped', 'archaic' and 'in decay'. (To highlight the *continuum* of power position of the West, in the first part *The Archeology of discourse* I was looking at the 'past' in order to comprehend the 'now').
3. *In which positions are the foreigners who are operating in the local cultural environment and how is their authority obtained?* Non-Moroccan art professionals are in the positions of *educators*, *facilitators* and *mentors* classifying local production according to the internalised evaluative scale inherited from the French colonial scholarship. Their *authority* is unquestionable as the former coloniser had never fully stepped down. Moroccans are, according to these cultural actors, unable to take care of their own heritage and thus the West has the right to *preserve*, *classify* and *describe* practically without limits. (In *Part Two* I addressed the contemporary rhetorical strategies which are visually as much as orally asserting

'the truth', further this is evident on concrete examples *in situ*, predominantly on the agency of cultural institutions addressed in *Part Three).*

4. *Why the natives have limited or none decision making power over own aesthetic expressions?* Moroccans are in the official cultural life almost invisible as they were stripped from their cultural sovereignty since the establishment of the French Protectorate in Morocco (1912-1956). Despite strong attempts and calls for cultural decolonisation at the turn of 1960s and 1970s, cultural sovereignty has never been claimed back. (The historical circumstances that led to the loss of cultural sovereignty are discussed in *Part One: Chapter 3 The Power of Distinction, whereas* direct consequences are listed in *Chapter 4 The Craftsman as a Nobel Savage*).
5. How are the empty cultural venues explained and why there isn't, according to the local art professionals, a Moroccan public for art? Moroccans are perceived by the art world as 'culturally immature' and the absence of a local audience in cultural venues is explained as a biologically predefined inability to contemplate upon 'fine' or 'contemporary art.' Therefore, mediocre Moroccans are able to consume only popular forms of performances and enjoy the delights of utilitarian handicraft products. (The case of Moroccan audience and the absence of the natives in the cultural venues are addressed in *Chapter 7 The Infinite search for Audience – is '1.54' new English sandwich?*)
6. *What is the status of the Moroccan art in general, contemporary art in particular? By whom are these expressions evaluated?* Local aesthetic expressions (mainly craft production) can never be compared to outputs produced by the Westerners, these works of art will always remain less of a value. The aesthetic qualities of Moroccan contemporary art can, indeed, obtain higher status, yet only under certain conditions. Moroccan artists have to become 'civilised', i.e., well fitting the shared idea of the 'enlightened native'. Artworks of Moroccan artists have to be validated by the West, only then they are 'reborn' into what is to be labelled as 'fine art'. (How the non-Western producers have to fit the predefined parameters read in *Chapter 6 Artists out of the West or Artist of the West?*)
7. *Why do the local producers agree upon the imposed hierarchical relations?* The willingness of Moroccan artists to enter the loop of Oriental *clichés* is due to the feeling of 'gratitude' or pragmatism. The recognition and profit can be achieved almost exclusively through an institutional structure co-created and maintained by the Western or Westernised art professionals. (How are local cultural producers

dependent on the West read in the end of Chapter 6 *Artists out of the West or Artist of the West?)*

8. *With absenting local audience for whom, then, the artworks are initially intended?* In practice, local artists often, through their artistic outputs, address topics attractive to the Western spectator rather than they would strive for reconnection to the local visual heritage. They thus, use visual codes and curatorial language comprehensible for the informed spectators (predominantly the Westerners and local elites familiar with art consumptions in the so called White Cubes). (The Western gaze is discussed in *Chapter 6* and *7,* as well as it is the case of cultural venues addressed in *Part Three*).
9. *Is the discourse of Orientalism institutionalised?* In specific cultural institutions such as in the galleries and museums of contemporary art in Marrakech discourse of Orientalism is purposely promoted. Usually under the mask of 'civilisation projects' appearing as ideologically neutral and for local cultural life 'beneficial'. (In the case of Morocco the authoritative position of cultural actors is firmly embedded in the legacy of colonialism enhanced by powerful institutional sites nourishing certain discourses more than others, this is in detail tackled in the entire chapters of *Part Three The Power of Cultural Institutions).*
10. *What is the relation between contemporary art production and the promoted idea of Morocco as an Oriental territory?* Maintaining an idea of the so-called Orient is a strategy where contemporary art is instrumentalized in order to fulfil intentions of cultural actors in power. Diverse ethnic and religious groups, narratives and histories are reduced into a single story or a myth recognised by thirsty art collectors and buyers, curators and gallerists and, indeed, by tourists. This situation is effectively maintaining the image of the West as a moral guarantor of the local art scene and the image of Moroccans as underdeveloped and uneducated masses. (Perhaps this is obvious in the entire text of mine).

Throughout the lenses of a critical 'ethnography of power' I examined a particular local visual art scene as a space, or more accurately — as a trajectory of a discourse originating from the previous orderings implanted by the French colonial force in Morocco (1912-1956). What does the 'legacy' stand for and how does it manifests was again discussed, in detail, in the outset of chapters as threads interweaving the novel temporaries with the past arrangements. In the following points I am highlighting the

similarities between 'the past' and 'the present' discursive formations in order to entrap and present to the reader the existing continuous trajectory of the discourse.

1. Within the colonial discourse as so much as through the contemporary one, 'the Orient' presents *a project*: for French colonial administrator Hubert Lyautey Morocco was a laboratory of Western life and Western rationality taking a form of elaborated social engineering experiments (implemented architectural models, cultural *distinction* applied according to predefined racial parameters etc). Further Lyautey, within the colonial apparatus, encouraged numerous of foreign individuals to build up their careers enforced by an ongoing fascination of the country (mainly among Orientalist painters) (Vaillant 1934, p. 18 translated in Wright 1991, p. 85; Morton, 2000). Similarly, thanks to the existing long-lasting precedence, Morocco is understood by various foreign artists and designers entering this land and searching for the 'Oriental innocence' (Minca and Wagner, 2016) in order to build up novel enterprises and brands. Or, under the common denominator of 'civilisation projects', to implement various cultural institutions such as galleries, museums, ateliers etc
2. Morocco has been in past centuries penetrated by various image-makers such as E. Delacroix, H. Matisse, J. Majorelle and later by Yves Saint Laurent – all of them offering a fruitful textual and visual 'archive' available to be used whenever a novel travellers are in a need to describe or justify their voyages, collaborations and agencies.
3. Morocco was and is admired predominantly for its inanimate beauty and (constructed) *timelessness* (landscapes, architecture, *zellij*, *jellabas* etc), whereas Moroccans were and are always *anonymous* (for example referred as to a 'pottery maker' or a 'Jewish woman' among Orientalist painters); craftsmen and craftswomen are remaining equally nameless among contemporary designers and artists.
4. *Production of knowledge* was, during the colonial era of Morocco, framed by French colonial scholarship and professionals such as urban planners, architects and others who possessed a 'natural right' to make statements about, classify and preserve culture of those who were, according o them, culturally incompetent (Rabinow, 1975). Western art professionals (curators and other self-proclaimed practitioners) are, as so much in the positions of mentors, educators and facilitators in the shared idea of 'emancipation' processes. They are through the lenses of *Western*

epistemological frameworks representing ethnographical collections and contemporary exhibitions of local producers. Therefore, they are in the power to claim what art is and what art is not, just as their hegemonic predecessors distinguished between 'fine art' and handicraft (Irbouh, 2005).

5. According to the colonial administrators and scholars, as so much as among contemporary art professionals, *Moroccans are towards culture ignorant* in general, towards contemporary art in particular. They are lacking curiosity, further, they are neglecting their own patrimony, thus they are legitimately stripped from the right to claim power above their cultural life.
6. The Orient was always *a spectacle* for the West – a rampant decadence, irrationality and sensuality was, during the colonial expansion, performed in so-called 'pavilions of natives' (Minca and Wagner, 2016, p. 23). This symbolic performance marking the power relation between the exhibitor and exhibited (as defined by Kirshentblatt-Gimblett, 1998) is continuously present through curatorial systems of representations of the so called artists from the MENA. However, as the Pasha El Glaoui himself had to be present and gaze at the Oriental sensual dancers during his visit in Paris, Moroccan producers, as well, simply watch over Moroccan culture being narrated, interpreted and often essentialized within a set of Western cultural institutional structures continuously inviting to gaze at 'The Orient' and 'The Orientals.'

Finally the words of Moroccan visual artist Bouhchichi released (originally in French) in fall 2019 are, according to my understanding, accurately summarising the situation of the non-Western contemporary visual art scene in general, the state of Moroccan visual culture in particular.

To be debated,

Art is a responsibility in a context like ours. France, 'the former coloniser' of Morocco had always a power to create 'our images', us Moroccans.
Today, fabricating our images, producing them by ourselves is a duty and a responsibility. We want to express who we are, what we want or want to become or simply our anxieties or our despair.
Attempts are sometimes distorted, we have never been the constructors of images through our 'traditional Arts', according to the French qualification of what we have always made by our hands and our minds.

How shall we do it?
We cannot separate the image from the question of the gaze. To look, to watch, to admire.
Who I gaze at, where do I look from? What is the background I am looking at, what codes am I looking at?
Let's dwell upon our images, let's analyse them.
France, through the European House of Photography, is currently hosting a vast exhibition entitled The Moroccan House of Photography.

I would not say more.

M. Bouhchichi (30. 9. 2019)

Representation of Marrakech is a tinsel, a false facade a Potemkin Village where imperious attitudes, a confidence and an absolute right of making statements about the culture of the 'Other' is taking place (*France, 'the former coloniser' of Morocco, had always a power to create 'our images', us Moroccans*'). It is a real physical space where discourse of *Orientalism* operates — here the discourse doesn't belong to the history, but is present under the guise of playful curatorial projects and artistic outputs possessing unquestionable authority ('*...we have never been the constructors of images through our 'traditional Arts', according to the French qualification of what we have always made by our hands and our minds*'). The 'ORIET' in my title stands for a reference to 'the past' while describing 'the present' and conditioning 'the future,' — it is a legacy, a burden, a prophecy. *Disorientation* here alludes to a condition of a confusion ('*We want to express who we are, what we want or want to become or simply our anxieties or our despair*'...), in which, according to my conducted research, the contemporary art scene happens to be. Artists are in a state of 'schizophrenia' longing to be 'authentically' Moroccan while wondering what that, in the present postcolonial social setting marked by *hybridity* and *liminality*, can imply. They are in a quest for the rehabilitation of own visual heritage ('*How shall we do*?'), but simultaneously depending on the Western art infrastructure which continues to fabricate the non-Western art producers into Oriental subjects. Further, *disorientation* signifies a tremendous gap between the official representation of the city and the 'Rest' of the country which is not 'ignorant', but has its own understanding of cultural life (and all it encompasses), however, currently dwelling in invisibility awaiting for cultural sovereignty yet to be claimed back.

the pacha and the dancers in Paris

A poster and a painting, artist Ezarraf notes*: a picture of pacha La Glaoui 'the master of Atlas', the French Protectorate representer of the south of Morocco who played a major role in occupying Marrakech and the South, while watching a spectacle in the Lido Cabaret in Paris. This example is a trying to draw an attention to the colonial history, which has a continuum in culture and the spaces which it created. The current institutional artistic and cultural scene is an import of European bourgeois power that we need to reconsider*' (text and the artwork is part of the TAMA Manifesto, Aghmat, 2018, courtesy of Noureddine Ezarraf).

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A Glossary of Darija, Arabic and Tamazight words

Aghmat: a city 30 km South-East from Marrakech

Al Maaden: a hotel complex in Marrakech

Amazigh: (also 'Berber,' pl. *Imazighen*) non-Arab self-identifying ethnic groups in Morocco and other parts of North Africa

Amin: a head of a craftsmen guild

Ashora: from Arabic *āshūrā* — an Islamic feast celebrated on the 10th day of Muharram – the first month of an Islamic calendar. *Āshūrā* is commemorating the martyrdom of Husayn ibn Ali, the grandson of the prophet Muhammad in the Battle of Kerbala 680 AD (61 Hijri).

Dahir: Sultanic or royal decree

Darija: Moroccan colloquial version of standard Arabic (*fushā*)

Dār: a traditional house which, on the contrary to a *riad*, doesn't have an inside garden

Daoudiate: a city district of Marrakech

Derb: alleyway, usually the smallest public space in Medina before entering the private household *dār* or *riad*

Derbouka: a goblet drum

Essouira: a Moroccan port town at the Atlantic coast

Fenduq: literally 'a hotel' from Arabic word *funduq*, in Moroccan context referring to the centres of craft production in Medina – for example *Funduq al-Najjariyyi*n in Fes

fekharrine: potters

Gueliz: a city district of Marrakech ('*ville nouvelle*')

Gnawa: *Gnawa* is first and foremost a *Sufi* brotherhood music combined with lyrics with a generally religious content, invoking ancestors and spirits. Originally practised by groups and individuals from slavery and the slave trade

Halqa: in Arabic literally *a circle,* in the context of *Jemma el-Fnaa* Square in Marrakech it refers to the public which gather (in form of a circle) around the performer (*Hlaiqi, pl. Hlaiqia*)

Haddadine: metal workers

Haram: an Arabic term *harām* used in the Islamic jurisprudence meaning 'forbidden'

Hshouma: from *darija* translated as 'shame' or 'disgrace'

Hurfa: a craftsmanship

Jemaa el-Fnaa: In Arabic *Sāhat Jamā' al-Fanā*, is a main square and marketplace in Marrakech Medina known for traditional performance arts

Jellaba: both female and male long garment

Kasbah: a type of walled Medina or a fortress

Marrakechi(s): an adjective in *darija*, used for people or things from Marrakech

Mashriq: geographical term comprising the Eastern part of the so called Arab world — the Arabian peninsula and the area of the Fertile Crescent. Egypt and Sudan has traditionally been included in this spatial division.

Makhzen: in general — an administrative power or the proto-state model of political power, according to Madhi: '*The makhzen refers to the royal establishment and governmental network of patron-client relationships'* (Madhi, 2003, p. 268)

Medina: in Arabic literally 'a city', in Moroccan context we refer to the Medina as to the oldest walled part of the city

Moussem: an annual regional festival typical for North Africa associated with customary religious celebrations (often to honour a saint).

Muhtasib: a market inspector

Nejjarine: carpenters

Qrqaba: large iron castanet-like musical instrument

Souq: Arabic term *sūq* refers to a local marketplace

Sufism: mystical islamic belief and practice which emphasises introspection and spiritual closeness with God

Tahnaout: a city 30 km South from Marrakech

Tamazight: The *Amazigh* language, in Morocco *Tamazight* obtained a status of official language in 2011

Resumé

The Orient – real and imagined land of the exotic 'Other' as produced throughout the Western academic disciplines in 18th, 19th and 20th centuries and as a mode to perpetuate European dominance, had been critically overviewed in a rich corpus of papers and accepted as a *fact*. Some might argue that discussions on *Orientalism* have reached its peak, yet at the end of the day, does it matter to have a list of scholars and existing academic debates on strategies of the 'otherness' when those in charge (read cultural actors) do not take the accountability to deconstruct monotonous representations? In fact, the facade had never been torn down, the opposite is happening: it is being carefully restored and the contemporary world of visual art became 'space of possible' where the discourse of *Orientalism*, transformed according to the novel rhetorics yet nourished by old power structures, is being exercised.

*disORIENTation: Ethnography of Power in the Contemporary Visual Art Scene of Marrakec*h presents an intimate ethnographical textual output which aims to critically examine the role of cultural experts and contemporary art institutions in which expertise on non-Western art production is embedded. It follows the 'recent' dynamics in the field of visual art production *in situ* as witnessed between the years 2017 and 2020, but doesn't follow the present arrangements as an objective, rather, it looks back into the historical context of original power components and hegemonic structures. The author argues that it is 'the past' that significantly co-creates 'the present' as if on the old remnants the whole new foundation is being built. In the *First Part* of the text, the author highlights the persistence of colonial logics and the similarities between how the 'Orient' was approached by the French colonial administrators and scholarship during the French Protectorate in Morocco (1912-1956) and how it is governed by the Western art professionals today. In *Part Two* the concrete reverberations and consequences of 'the previous' are tackled, i.e., how does the dominance of Western epistemological framework, which interwinds the local visual art production, manifests in a relation to the local culture producers who are, in fact, still facing the lack of cultural sovereignty. The Western 'emancipator' is in an indisputable position and dominates the local cultural life by, using Eduard Said's vocabulary: *authorising views of it, describing it, by teaching about it, settling it and ruling over it*. This is particularly evident and deepened among emerging institutional sites, therefore *Part Three* is dedicated to a specific complex of adjoined museums launched and governed by powerful non-

Moroccan actors. This case study is looking into how discourse is produced through a 'discursive practise' — the practice of producing meaning in a physical manner: through the system of classification, displaying practices and spatial orderings and how statements of the museum professionals are in disjunction from what is, actually, practised. Finally the statement of M. Foucault: '*where there is power, there is resistance… a multiplicity of points of resistance*' serves as an entry point to the *Final Part* addressing contemporary counter-narratives as an alternative path, however, still more in a form of speculative possibilities, in order to engage with local audiences without imposing their 'accurate' conditions of knowledge.