

Events

JULY

Family Fun: Shubbak Family Day Sat 6 July, 11am FREE

Join in interactive storytelling, get creative with artist Dia Batal and take part in a cooking workshop with Damascus Chef in this day of family fun. Part of Shubbak Festival.

Artist's talk: Fatima Mazmouz Weds 10 July, 7pm FREE

Fatima Mazmouz speaks to curator Yasmina Naji and art critic Julie Crenn about her work which explores power relationships, individual liberties and feminism. Part of Shubbak Festival.

Live: Meriem Bennani's Youtube Playlist Sat 13 July, 7pm FREE

Artist Meriem Bennani presents a live DJ set from her archive collection of music and music videos spanning North Africa and South Asia. Part of Shubbak Festival.

In Response: Wrong Queens Weds 17 July, 7pm FREE

Pride of Arabia, a creative platform representing the LGBTQ+ MENA community, presents stories, music, dance and discussion celebrating influential women from the region.

Performance: Tales of the Mother Tongue Thurs 25 July, 7pm FREE

Most Amazigh female warriors are remembered through Morocco's oral histories and myths. Artist Estabrak Al-Ansari revives their tales in a performance incorporating live painting and film.

AUGUST

Film: Interior/Exterior Thurs 1 August, 7pm FREE

This evening of film shines light on women's lives in postcolonial Morocco through the lens of Moroccan female filmmakers. Followed by a conversation with curator Myriam Mouflih.

Music: Gnawa London Thurs 8 August, 7pm £5

Enjoy hypnotic sounds with Gnawa London. Gnawa music, brought to Morocco by

formerly enslaved black Africans, is marked by rhythmic guembri (traditional lute) melodies and call and response singing.

Listening: Encounters in Gendered Noise Thurs 15 August, 7pm FREE

Sound artist Gilles Aubry presents recordings and videos from his research in Morocco exploring female representation, resistance and women's daily struggle.

Readings: The Moroccan Feminist You've Never Heard Of Weds 21 August, 7pm FREE

Feminist author Malika Moustadraf (1969-2006) gained acclaim before her early death. What is her influence and how did her life as a survivor of childhood sexual abuse and chronic illness inform her work?

Book Launch: Sakine Cansiz: Memoirs of a Kurdish Revolutionary Thurs 29 August, 7pm FREE

Sakine Cansiz was one of the first female fighters of the PKK, this event marks the second book of her memoirs, her story in her own words.

SEPTEMBER

Discussion: Resistance is Her Weds 4 September, 7pm FREE

Explore the power and influence of women in activism, struggle and political resistance in North Africa, from the colonial period to the present day.

Symposium: The Paradox of Creative Constraints Sat 7 September, 10am-7.15pm £6.50/£5

What constraints do filmmakers face in the Middle East? How are these constraints harmful or productive? These discussions and screenings explore cinematic creativity in sites of conflict and crisis.

Discussion: The Salon of Disobedience Thurs 12 September, 7pm FREE

Hervisions, a platform supporting female and non-binary visual artists, presents an evening redefining the traditional salon. Performance, film and discussions focus on peripheral voices, fostering the spirit of rebellion.

The Mosaic Rooms present a unique programme of free contemporary art exhibitions, talks, films, and other special events. We are a non-profit gallery and cultural space in West London dedicated to supporting and promoting contemporary culture from and about the Arab world and beyond.

Bookshop

A wide range of fiction and non-fiction books, limited edition artwork, gifts and DVDs. In-store and at mosaicrooms.org/shop

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Follow the current exhibition
[#RawQueens](https://twitter.com/RawQueens)

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All sales support The Mosaic Rooms and our programme.

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Part of Shubbak Festival



Cover image: Fatima Mazmouz, *Chikhates* (2018) performance photograph. Design Hyperkit



Contemporary Culture from the Arab World and beyond

ENTRY FREE

RAW QUEENS Meriem Bennani and Fatima Mazmouz

05/07/19—
14/09/19



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Meriem Bennani, *Ghariba/Stranger* (2017)

RAW QUEENS presents artists Fatima Mazmouz and Meriem Bennani in this exhibition which seeks to re-evaluate perceptions of women in the Arab world, specifically in Morocco.

Through portraits of contemporary Moroccan women, RAW QUEENS questions gender relations, identity, race and colonialism, inviting us to move on from Orientalist imagery of the past. Though the colonial era is supposedly at an end, Arab women are still often seen through an Orientalist gaze, portrayed as docile objects of sexual desire. Far from the images of harems and the eroticised scenes staged by Western artists of the past, the works of Meriem Bennani and Fatima Mazmouz come from a different perspective. They invite the dismantling of colonial stereotypes, showing a figure unrecognisable in these depictions, the Arab woman free from objectification.

RAW QUEENS opens with Mazmouz's *Made in Mode Grossesse: La Danse du*

Ventre (Made in Pregnancy Mode: the Belly Dance) performed and filmed by Mazmouz whilst pregnant. In the main room Mazmouz presents new works created for this exhibition in which she explores Morocco's Aita tradition and its bold female performers. Downstairs, Bennani's film *Ghariba/Stranger*, is an intimate and humorous portrait of a group of women, staged as a television soap opera. Curator Yasmina Naji states 'As a project RAW QUEENS seeks to open new spaces for conversations on gender and popular culture, and to construct new representations of indigenous figures of power.'

The exhibition is a collaboration between The Mosaic Rooms and Kulte Center for Contemporary Art and Editions, Morocco, and is curated by Kulte's Director Yasmina Naji. It marks the UK debut of Casablanca based Fatima Mazmouz, alongside Moroccan born and New York based Bennani.

ROOM 1

Fatima Mazmouz creates work which critiques social constructions of womanhood and identity and explores colonial inheritance. The body and its communication are central in her work, which often includes an element of performance by the artist herself. In *Made in Mode Grosse: La Danse du Ventre* (Made in Pregnancy Mode: the Belly Dance) Mazmouz filmed herself dancing in the later stages of pregnancy.

In both pregnancy and the belly dance, the physicality of the body is at the forefront, the belly becomes all, blatant, autonomous, a defining feature of the woman's identity. Through performing her pregnant body the artist reflects on the association and portrayal of women with notions of origin and the construction of identity.

Fatima Mazmouz, *Made in Mode Grosse: La Danse du Ventre* (Made in Pregnancy Mode: the Belly Dance) (2009)



Fatima Mazmouz, *Chikhates* (2018) performance photograph



ROOM 2

Fatima Mazmouz, through new photographic and 3D works, explores the Aita tradition and the myth of the Aita performers known as Chikhates. The Chikhates perform the dances and songs of the centuries old cultural tradition of the Aita, which is still widely popular in Morocco today. In these images, Fatima Mazmouz embodies the Chikha. She performs against a background pattern composed of mirrored silhouettes of guns which in their pairs create the image of a uterus. In Morocco the gun is both a symbol of war and of celebration, Mazmouz arms the Chikha, further emphasising her power and strength.

Chikhates have influenced Moroccan literature, poetry, history and activism, they are a potent symbol of Morocco. In the dancing body of the Chikha, the woman transforms alternately into a rooster, a snake or a horse — here these figures are translated into cut out sculptures and onto wall vinyl. The vinyl also traces the movements of each dance along the wall.

The Chikha is a woman-warrior, fighting with dance and words, conveying through her body the tradition of an oral history of the country. Mazmouz has chosen to represent the Chikha as the powerful voice of unruly women, both disturbing and free. She encourages the viewers to walk and dance in the steps of the Chikha!



ROOM 3

Meriem Bennani's multimedia practice engages with issues of identity related to femininity, feminism, and the intersection of religious and secular pop culture in Morocco. Her video installation *Ghariba/Stranger* (2017), presented here, is a playful and moving portrait staged as a reality TV programme about the daily lives of four Moroccan women.

In *Ghariba/Stranger* Bennani plays with the aesthetic codes of soap operas and documentary, the film is at once intimate and whimsical. Bennani both celebrates and exposes the private lives of these women—from her own family members to Chaabi pop divas. The word 'ghariba' means stranger in Arabic, it can also denote something strange and unusual. These women are strange because they are unexpected. Bennani's intimate portrayal explores the strength and fragility of these women, and their multiple identities — bold women sharing thoughts on love and romance, dating and friendship, loneliness and community.

In her works Bennani uses digital effects and off-beat humour, leaning towards the absurd, to create a distinctive aesthetic. This humorously subverts the stereotypes and the aesthetic ideals imposed by the West which have constricted women, particularly Arab women, from the past to the present day.

Fatima Mazmouz, *Petit Musée de l'Utérus - Utérus arme de résistance* (The Small Museum of the Uterus - Uterus, Weapon of Resistance) (2016)



Meriem Bennani, *Ghariba/Stranger* (2017)

Comment from Rachael Jarvis, Director

This exhibition is the last in our anniversary programme celebrating the tenth anniversary of The Mosaic Rooms, presenting art from Egypt, Iran and Morocco. We have been excited to show modernist and contemporary art from these three countries, and to work in partnership with regional institutions and curators.

BIOGRAPHIES

Meriem Bennani (b. 1988 in Rabat, Morocco) lives and works in New York. Mixing the language of reality TV, documentary, phone footage and animation and high production aesthetics, she explores the potential of storytelling, amplifying reality through magical realism and humour. Her practice questions contemporary society and its fractured identities, gender issues and the dominance of digital technologies. Exhibitions include: *Ghariba*, Art Dubai, Dubai (2017); *FLY*, MoMA PS1, New York (2016); *Gradual Kingdom*, Signal Gallery, Brooklyn (2015); and *Fardaous Funjab*, Stream Gallery, New York (2015). She is in the 2019 Whitney Biennial and has featured in group exhibitions internationally.

Fatima Mazmouz (b. 1974 Casablanca, Morocco) grew up in France, visiting Morocco throughout her childhood. Through photography, performance and installation, her work questions the invisible domination enacted in individual and cultural identities. Exhibitions include: *The Small Museum of Utero*, Twin Gallery, Madrid (2018); *Casablanca Mon Amour*, Gallery 127, Marrakech (2017); *Super Oum*, Galerie Mamia Bretesche, Paris (2016). Group exhibitions include: *Semetrias*, CAAM, Las Palmas (2019); *Landless Bodies*, Casula Powerhouse Arts Center, Australia (2018); *Lucy's Iris*, MUSAC, Leon, (2016) and *Le Maroc Contemporain*, Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris (2014).

Yasmina Naji is a curator and the founding director of Kulte Galerie & Editions, Rabat, Morocco. Kulte is a Moroccan independent cultural platform, aiming to revisit a visual and cultural postcolonial history. It has research collections on aesthetics, gender and cinema. Kulte is also an active publishing house. Naji has organised over 20 solo and group exhibitions featuring artists including Yto Barrada, Abdelkader Benchamma, Touda Bouanani, François-Xavier Gbré, Kiluandji Kia Henda, Faouzi Laatriss, Aida Muluneh and Younès Rahmoun.