

At the Museum of Modern Art of Céret  
From June 30 to November 4, 2018

# Najia Mehadji

presents

## Trace and Breath

From June 30, 2018, the Museum of Modern Art of Céret will present the exhibition “Trace and Breath”, a retrospective of the work of artist Najia Mehadji. The exhibition will span the French-Moroccan artist’s entire career, tracing her artistic development between East and West, between pictorial and symbolic exploration. It will bring together some fifty canvases from public and private collections, as well as around one hundred graphic works. Meanwhile, historical works, many on loan from the Musée d’Orsay, the Institut du Monde Arabe and the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, will serve as a counterpoint to highlight the universality of the artist’s sources of inspiration.



Najia Mehadji, Spring Dance, 2011

Acrylic on canvas, 200 x 270 cm, private collection, © Jean-Louis Losi, © Adagp, Paris 2018

Najia Mehadji divides her life and work between Paris and Essaouira. She draws on her dual culture to select themes imbued with universality and symbolic power: the architecture of the cupola that unites the two cultures; peony and pomegranate flowers; dancing Dervishes or more recently Gnawas in the oriental tradition; and the movement of **El Greco's** drapery, **Loïe Fuller's** dancing and **Camille Claudel's** Waltz for the Western element.



**Drapé (after "The Waltz" by Camille Claudel), 2015**  
Acrylic on canvas, 167 x 145 cm, private collection, © Jean-Louis Losi, © Adagp, Paris 2018

*"At the heart of Najia Mehadji's work are the body, Eros, and mysticism. In her work, every graphic or pictorial act is rooted first and foremost in the dynamics of the body, in its most vibrant characteristics, driven by urges of desire, firmly anchored in the here and now of perception, but which is nevertheless constantly looking elsewhere, towards the supersensible world. Indeed, the artist always produces her spiritually significant creations by means of her own body acting on material media, be they paper or canvas".*

Mohamed Rachdi (Artist and curator)

These abstract, Arabesque motifs, and coiled, spiral designs are produced by means of pastel or oil paint in large format, created with free yet completely controlled movements to form a work of art that imposes itself through its perceptible, spiritual presence.

Najia Mehadji uses media as varied as sanguine, chalk, gouache, watercolor, graphite, acrylic paint and oil stick.

She uses different sizes of paper and also employs the technique of collage. Several thematic registers are present throughout the artist's work, which she has developed over the course of her artistic wanderings: architecture, plant life and dance. But she likes to define her creations as a continuous line that maintains her melody from one creation to the next.

*"If we wanted to pick one contemporary artist at random from amongst those who symbolize the union between the East and the West, it would be Najia Mehadji. This Franco-Moroccan or Moroccan-French artist was born in 1950 and spent her childhood and teenage years in Paris, with regular trips to Fes, from where her family originates. She graduated from the university of Paris I, where she presented her thesis on Paul Cézanne in 1973, and from the Paris school of fine arts. She has been exhibiting in Paris galleries since the 1980s and, in 1985, she decided to divide her time between her studio in Paris and her studio in Morocco, near Essaouira, in the Haha region, in a douar she converted into a traditional open-air riad."*

Pascal Amel (in *Monographie de Najia Mehadji*, Editions Somogy 2014)

**Nathalie Gallissot**, director of the Museum of Modern Art of Céret, who has known the artist for several years and who invited her to participate in a collective exhibition in 2014, explains her reasons for choosing this retrospective: *"Visitors to the Museum of Modern Art of Céret have already had the chance to discover some of Najia Mehadji's work at the 2014's exhibition **"Le peintre et Parène"**. In 2018, this retrospective will enable them to examine the path taken by this artist, who has constructed a very coherent collection of works that are nonetheless extremely diverse.*

*The various periods of her work correspond to themes that demonstrate her great capacity for renewal in terms of inspiration and techniques, the spirit of which pervades the entire exhibition. Najia's work demonstrates an equally material and spiritual approach rarely seen in contemporary art. The artist's choice of universal themes makes her work accessible to everyone, leaving a direct impression on the observer by inspiring a sense of wonder within them."*

The exhibition is in perfect harmony with the Museum of Modern Art of Céret's interest in artists from Mediterranean cultures, and is yet another homage to female artists, following the success of the **Vieira da Silva** exhibition held at the museum in 2016.

The exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art of Céret, which will run from June 30 to November 4, is therefore a significant opportunity to appreciate the artistic vitality that drives Najia Mehadji and the unique career of an artist who has produced her work in complete freedom and independence.

In spring 2019, the exhibition will move on to the **Villa des Arts de Rabat** and the **Villa des Arts de Casablanca**, both exhibition spaces funded by the **ONA Foundation**, whose aim is to promote Moroccan culture on an international level and to bring different peoples together through cultural diversity. We would like to express our gratitude to the President of the ONA Foundation, Mr. Hassan Bouhemou, and to Meryem Mouline, General Secretary of the Foundation. L'Atelier 21, a Casablanca's gallery regularly exhibits Najia Mehadji's work and will be contributing to the Moroccan exhibitions.



Najia Mehadji, Fleur de Grenade (Floral Series), 12/09 and 12/10/2002, 01/20 and 01/21/2003, sanguine chalk on paper,  
121 x 80 cm, Paris, Centre Pompidou,  
Musée National d'Art Moderne/Centre de Création Industrielle, © Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI.  
Dist. RMN-Grand Palais / Philippe Migeat © Adagp, Paris, 2018

### **In the lead-up to the exhibition:**

Before the retrospective, the artist's works will be on display at the Philharmonie de Paris until August 9 as part of the AL MUSIQA exhibition.

### **To find out more....**

-The artist's **website**: [www.najiamehadji.com](http://www.najiamehadji.com)

-**A film** about the artist will be produced by Brigitte Huault-Delannoy and presented as part of the exhibition.

-**Exhibition catalog published jointly with Editions d'Art Somogy**. Texts by Pascal Amel, Christine Buci-Glucksmann, Nathalie Gallissot and Mohamed Rachdi.

## Visitor information & Contacts

Musée d'art moderne de Céret

Public Institution for Cultural Cooperation

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### **Opening hours :**

July 1 to September 30: open every day from 10am to 7pm.

From October 1: open every day from 10am to 5pm, closed on Mondays

## Press relations

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