



Marrakech Biennale 4th Edition
ART, FILM, LITERATURE AND DEBATE

Surrender

29th February – 4th March 2012

An international gathering of performance, screenings and debate.

Venues: Various around the city of Marrakech including Riad El Fenn, ESAV Film School, Theatre Royal, Riad Denise Masson, Jemaa el Fna Square.

www.marrakechbiennale.org

Higher Atlas (Exhibition)

29th February – 3rd June 2012

Curated by Nadim Samman and Carson Chan

Venues: Theatre Royal and various venues, Marrakech

www.higheratlas.org

The Marrakech Biennale - formerly Arts in Marrakech (AiM) Biennale - is a Moroccan festival of contemporary international culture. In February 2012 the Marrakech Biennale will launch its fourth edition, Surrender, featuring key figures in literature, film and visual arts. Public screenings, talks, performances and debates will take place at diverse venues and locations around the city 29th February-4th March 2012.

The Marrakech Biennale is pleased to announce the participation of Roger Hiorns, Rian Malan, Kate Winslet, Hicham Lasri, Geoff Dyer, Anthony Horowitz, Faouzi Bensaidi, Dominic West and CocoRosie amongst others.

In this, its fourth and largest edition, the Marrakech Biennale is in partnership with; Dar al-Ma'mûn residency, Institut Français, Palais de Tokyo, British Council, Puma, Helisud Maroc, Calvert 22 Gallery, Tate, ESAV Film School, On Spot Story, Travel Link Morocco and the Goethe Institute.

Visual arts: As part of the Biennale, Higher Atlas, a major exhibition curated by Carson Chan and Nadim Samman, will take place at the Theatre Royal in Marrakech (29th February-3rd June 2012). High connotes reverie and transcendence. Higher Atlas suggests a cartography of the beyond. All works will be new site-specific commissions, conceived and created on location with local craftspeople and manufacturers. Over twenty-five international artists, architects, writers, musicians and composers will be showing their work, including Karthik Pandian, Aleksandra Domanovic, CocoRosie, Jon Nash, Juergen Mayer H and Turner Prize nominated Roger Hiorns. The exhibition seeks to engage in an expansive dialogue with the city.

Co-curator Carson Chan notes: "While trying to curate an exhibition that could become part of a contemporary Moroccan cultural identity, we can also challenge the received methods of biennale making that is routinely practiced elsewhere. Do we have to show art? Why not commission a novel, a symphony, an album or a prayer? "

Film: Alan Yentob, creative director of the BBC, leads the advisory board curating the film programme with discussions, screenings and debates held in Riad El Fenn and the ESAV film school. Confirmed participants include Anthony Horowitz, Kate Winslet, Dominic West, Lubna Azabal, Faouzi Bensaidi, Kevin McDonald, Michael Souvignier and Hicham Lasri.

Literature: Omar Berrada, Benedicte Clarkson and Elizabeth Sheinkman organise the literature events which include Rian Malan and Geoff Dyer and take place at the 17th century townhouse, Riad El Fenn. Readings, performances and interventions will also be taking place around the city.

Debate: A series of conversations on art and identity, presented by **Dar al-Ma'mûn** and featuring curators, editors and critics from the international art world, including Aziz Daki (Atelier 21), Simon Njami (Revue Noire), Khadija El Bennaoui (Art Moves Africa) and Negar Azimi (Bidoun). <http://dam-arts.org>

Education: In order to promote access to contemporary culture for all ages, the 4th Marrakech Biennale will conduct workshops for children led by local and international cultural practitioners, in partnership with Zidzid Kids. An internship programme pairing artists with students from the l'Université Cadi Ayyad Marrakech (UCAM) has also been established.

Official Parallel Projects: Official Parallel Projects will be selected and acknowledged as an integral and specific section of the Biennale, and will be autonomously organized by the promoting institutes/individuals. We aim to fuel creative production in Marrakech during the Biennale dates with many international and local organisations involved, ranging from book launches to round-tables to video installations.

General: These three months aim to highlight Morocco as a dynamic hub for current ideas and to establish its continued intellectual involvement on an international stage. The biennale's role, both locally and internationally, has evolved along with the climate of the times. In light of recent events in North Africa, its goals could not be more pertinent. In addition to sponsoring significant and lasting social, economic and cultural benefits for the area and its inhabitants, the Biennale aims to show the outside world that Morocco is an open society that encourages freedom of expression and debate.

Note to editors:

About the Marrakech Biennale In 2004 with the rise of global tensions, Vanessa Branson envisioned a cultural festival that would address social issues through the arts, using them as a vehicle for debate and discussion and to build bridges between diverse ideologies. The Marrakech Biennale would become a celebration of creativity in a city that has been the focus of artistic exploration for centuries but until now with limited emphasis on contemporary art.

First held in 2005, the Marrakech Biennale is the first major trilingual (English, Arabic & French) festival in North Africa focusing on cutting-edge contemporary art, literature and film. By bringing together artists, film makers and writers from around the world the Biennale aims to promote the status of the artist and contemporary culture in North Africa and to dynamize the regional creative scene. Held every two years, the Marrakech Biennale promotes inter-cultural and inter-disciplinary exchanges through an educational approach that addresses art professionals, students and the general public.

The Biennale has grown to become an internationally recognised event with a thriving visual art, film and literature programme. Past participants at the Marrakech Biennale have included Francis Alys, Yto Barrada, John Boorman, Richard E. Grant, Edmond El Maleh, Tracy Emin, Pieter Hugo, Isaac Julien, Abdellah Karroum, Joseph Kosuth, Julian Schnabel, Sadie Smith and Abdellah Taia.

President – Vanessa Branson

Visual Arts Curators - Nadim Samman and Carson Chan

Film Programme – Alan Yentob, Suzy Gillett, Mohamed Bakrim, Vincent Melilli.

Literary Programme – Omar Berrada, Benedicte Clarkson and Elizabeth Sheinkman

For more information, images and to arrange an interview with festival director Vanessa Branson and curators Carson Chan and Nadim Samman please contact Jody Gillett jody@freeassociates.org mobile + 44 (0) 7818 453 650

Please visit our website for full programme details and news updates:

www.marrakechbiennale.org

Vanessa Branson, Marrakech Biennale Founder:

“Back in 2004, when the Western world was full of mistrust and fear of the Arab world and North Africa was struggling to find a creative voice, an arts festival to celebrate our differences and share our common humanity struck me as not only incredibly exciting but also absolutely essential. By using the arts as a platform for debate we could approach contentious subjects openly and with enthusiasm - it was a revelation as many preconceived ideas were rapidly blown away. Over 5 days world class artists, writers and film makers share ideas and develop relationships.

Now in its fourth edition the festival has established itself firmly as the Marrakech Biennale. No longer are we solely responsible for all the artistic input, the official programme forms only the framework. The biennale has become a magnet for many parallel projects, our key role now is to harness this energy. Marrakech is finding its contemporary voice, it has always been buzzing with artisans making beautiful decorative objects, now with the film school setting the standard in North Africa, the Marrakech Art Fair attracting many international galleries, Dar Al Mamoun with its wonderful artist residency programme and new artist collectives forming by the week, Marrakech is being recognised as a city embracing new ideas.

A major arts event with the backdrop of the medieval city of Marrakech, with its tradition of hospitality, wonderful food and glamorous entertainment promises to enlighten, surprise, stimulate and above all be very, very entertaining...”

Carson Chan, Marrakech Biennale Co-curator:

“Curating this exhibition was a question of identifying artists as well as other cultural practitioners who could operate directly on site. We were interested in people that could call out or intensify the experience of Marrakech through their intervention. Higher Atlas, the title of the exhibition, obviously refers to the High Atlas mountains, their snow-caps visible from the city. Higher lends our exhibition the desire to go beyond the normal, physical bounds.

The precedents for art biennales are world fairs. The idea of bringing things from around the world to one location in order to show new and interesting things is still an imperative, but we have had to be aware of all the developments in communication technology and travel since the beginning of the Nineteenth century. A new imperative for the biennale making is to show information that is only receivable through a personal and physical experience of the space. Otherwise it is much cheaper to make a website or a book. That’s why the physicality of the city is so important for this edition of the Biennale. We’re sending almost all participants out to Marrakech for a research trip before they even propose work, and hopefully in doing so the work will be informed by that experience.

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Biennales, and other large-scale exhibitions have to consider the social effect of the exhibitions, how to connect the local public to global narratives and so on. Instead of producing works around the world and shipping them to Morocco, we’ve been encouraging our participants to collaborate with local craftspeople and manufacturers. The idea of creating a cultural legacy is pretty important for this edition of the Biennale and, on a social level, the Biennale is organizing workshops for local children, giving them first hand access and experience with participating artists and architects. Students from the local university will be trained as guides, and hopefully when they present international work to other Moroccans, the work will simply read as new, rather than alien.”