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Press release
9 décembre 2022

ABDELKADER BENCHAMMA
COSMA
7 January – 18 March 2023



Engramme - A livre ouvert, 2021, ink and paint on paper, 300 × 150 × 2 cm — 118 1/8 × 59 × 4/5 in.

For his second solo exhibition at TEMPLON, Abdelkader Benchamma is unveiling a series of drawings, paintings and wall installations produced during his residency at Palazzo Butera in Palermo in conjunction with the Institut Français.

During his residency, the artist adopted a new approach to a subject he has been interested in for several years: the Cosmati, the singular use of marble which, fragmented in marquetry or when positioned symmetrically in Italian churches, play with our contemporary codes of representation in an uncanny manner. The forms created by these mineral veins appear to be neither figurative nor abstract, but evolve instead in a mysterious place between the two.

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Are they an esoteric system of representation that has been handed down through the centuries and survived until the present day? Could they be the ancestors of the Rorschach test where the anxieties of the Middle Ages were projected? Are they an attempt to give shape to the things that cannot be represented? The theories that abound open up a whole array of fascinating avenues the artist explores in his drawings.

In Palermo, Abdelkader Benchamma worked on numerous large-scale works where brown, ochre and violet mineral tones infiltrate the drawing, playing with our beliefs and our memories. Caught up in a profusion of details, amongst the different layers, miraculous and disconcerting scenes concealed, are they dreamlike or pareidolia?

The strange magma drawn by Abdelkader Benchamma escapes from the paper and invades the space, forming a sediment on the walls and turning the gallery into a landscape that evokes now a Baroque church, now a primal memory.

Abdelkader Benchamma studied at the Montpellier Fine Arts school and completed his studies at the Fine Arts school in Paris, graduating in 2003. He works in Paris and Montpellier. After winning the Drawing Now Prize in 2015, the following year the Drawing Center in New York invited him to inaugurate its mural drawing programme with his piece *Representation of Dark Matter* (2015-2016). His work has recently featured in a wide range of solo exhibitions, including at the Collection Lambert in Avignon (2022), MRAC in de Sérignan (2020), Centquatre and Collège des Bernardins in Paris (2018), BlueProject Foundation in Barcelona (2016) and FRAC Auvergne (2015).

He has also taken part in numerous group exhibitions: at the POLA Museum of Art in Hakone, Japan (2019); Eldorado Lille 3000 (2019); Melancholia, Boghossian Foundation in Brussels (2018); Tamawuj, Sharjah Biennial, Sharjah, UAE (2017); On aime l'art...!, Collection agnes b., Fondation Yvon Lambert, Avignon (2017); The Future of a Promise, 54th Venice Biennale (2011), and Told, Untold, Retold, MATHAF, Arab Museum of Modern Art, Doha, Qatar (2010).

In 2023, his work will be shown in solo exhibitions at the Fondation François Schneider in France, Het Noordbrabants Museum (HNBM) in the Netherlands and Power Plant in Toronto, Canada. He will also be taking part in the group show *Immortelle* at MO.CO, Montpellier Contemporain, in France (opening on March 10, 2023).