

## The Power of Culture Review

### Contemporary Moroccan Art and Design

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The celebration of four centuries of relations between the Netherlands and Morocco gave reason for the exhibition 'Morocco: Art & Design 2005' ('Marokko: kunst & design 2005'), in the Wereldmuseum Rotterdam. Ten years ago the Wereldmuseum was unable to organize a similar exhibition due to lack of funding. The contact established at that time with artists, curators and cultural organizations in Morocco formed the basis for the current presentation with a feel of its own.



Hicham Benohoud



Nouredine Amir

Exhibitions of contemporary art from non-Western countries are often reviewed with unwarranted criticism. The makers are forced into the defensive even before the fact. Are they prejudiced in favor of orientalism? Are they setting non-Western art apart as being static, magical or folkloristic? Or has their enthusiasm rendered merely a naive picture of global art that hides cultural differences? No matter how relevant these questions are, they often lock our experience with art from non-Western countries in an iron fist.



Mounir Fatmi

Luckily, the makers of 'Morocco: Art & Design 2005' have not become discouraged by the tumultuous debate about orientalism and global art. Without avoiding this debate - it is kept on-going in Rotterdam with educational programs, learned publications and a symposium - the Wereldmuseum nevertheless maintains its own course: giving an impression of what is being made today by artists who live and work in Morocco and have established a reputation there.

The 21 expressive artists and designers - young and old, male and female - present a variegated picture of the contemporary art climate in Morocco through paintings, photographs, videos, machinery, jewelry and even a fashion collection. Overcoming hesitation is the subject of a nice video work by Myriam Mihindou (1964), who comes from Gabon and now works in Rabat. Greyish, Armando-like paintings by Fouad Bellamine (1950) witness a burning oil well in Iraq and recent terrorist attacks in Casablanca. Evidently lighter is the work by Mounir Fatmi (1970) from Tangiers, who has long since established an international reputation. His videos and photographs in which he involves the public appear to be playful. But appearances can be deceiving: his motto these days is: 'My father has lost all his teeth. I can bite him now.'

*Erik Hagoort*