

New Waves: Mohamed Melehi and the Casablanca Art School

[Selections Arts](#) Posted [15 April, 2019](#)



Best known as one of the leading modernist artists in Morocco, Mohamed Melehi has since the 1960s created an ongoing body of work around the recurring motif of waves juxtaposed with Arabic iconography. His large abstract paintings draw from the waves of the beaches of his hometown, Asilah brought together with gestures evident when writing Arabic

calligraphy. For his first UK institutional solo exhibition at The Mosaic Room, London, the display will comprise of an expansive body of work that includes displays of never-before-exhibited paintings, posters, photographs and archival material centred on three distinct periods of Melehi's oeuvre. The exhibition will also include the archives of the influential Casablanca Art School to further contextualise Melehi's works and offer a glimpse into postcolonial modern Moroccan art and artists of the 1960s period.







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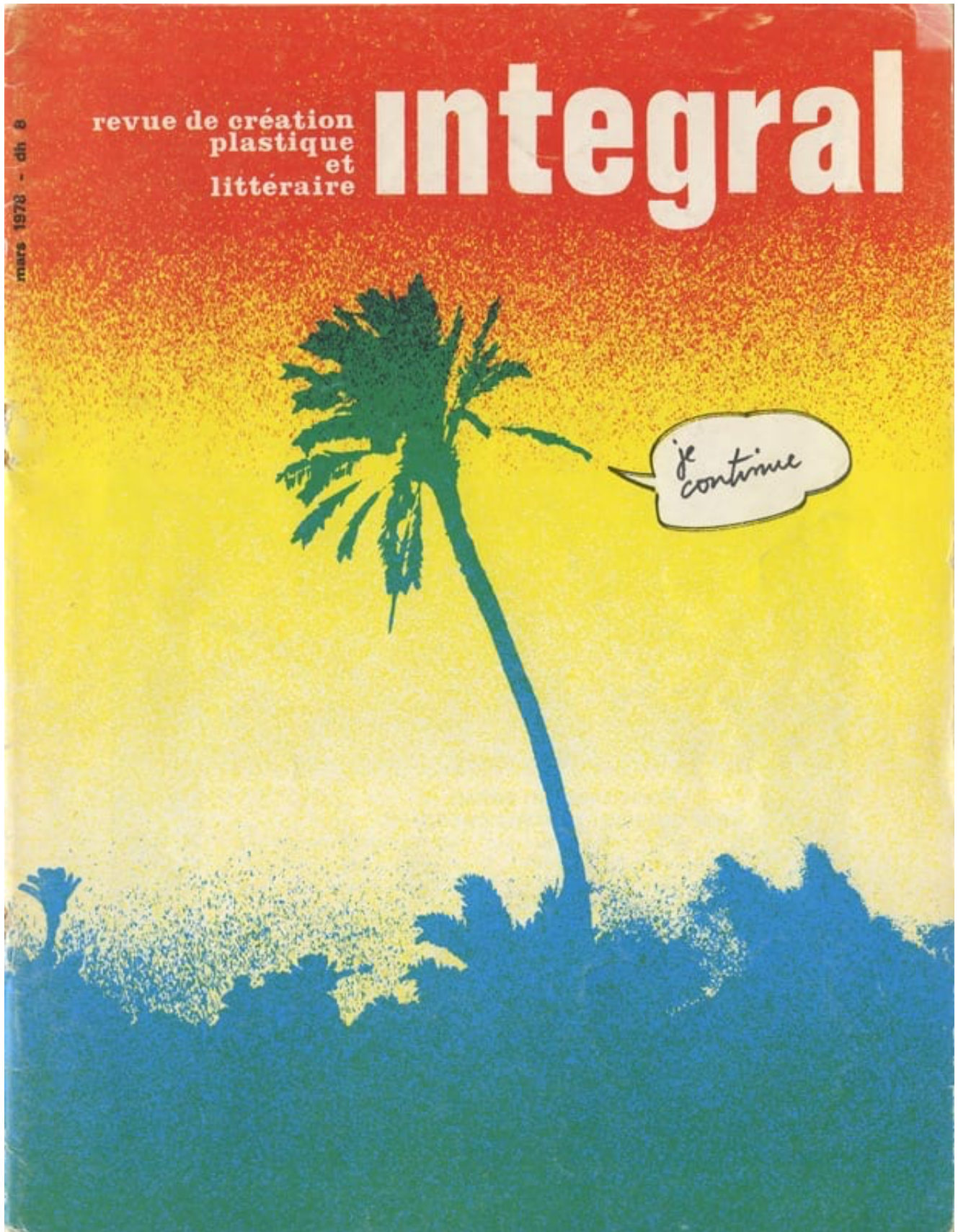
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Curated by Morad Montazami the exhibition gives insights to Melehi the painter, photographer, designer, teacher and cultural activist and unfolds as three distinct sections: the period between 1957 to 1963 during the artist's encounter with a cosmopolitan post-war art scene of Rome and New York, two cities where he 'sharpens his very singular appropriation of hard-edge painting.' This proceeds to the period between 1963 to 1975 when Melehi returns post-colonial Morocco after his New York years and he contributes to both a cultural and artistic revolution at the École des Beaux-Arts of Casablanca with artists Farid Belkhahia (1934–2014) and Mohamed Chabâa (1935–2013). Finally, the closing section investigates the 1980s when Melehi looks to Moroccan popular craft and architecture in a series of important works that "reframe" his wave motifs through the lens of neo-craft structures and transborder spaces.











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[New Waves: Mohamed Melehi](#) and the Casablanca Art School is the concluding exhibition in a special three exhibition series of modernists from the Arab world and Iran, curated by Morad Montazami.

News Waves is on view until the 22nd of June.







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Biography*

Mohamed Melehi's (b. 1936) prolific career which has seen him teach, publish, produced policy, and also work as a graphic designer. He was a professor at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts of Casablanca (1964–1969), and he was an active member of the group surrounding the leftist cultural journal Souffles from 1966 to 1969, designing its iconic original cover. From 1972 to 1977, Melehi was founder and director of the cultural journal Intégral. In 1974, he co-founded and became the director of the publishing house Shoof

and in 1978 with Mohammed Benaïssa co-founded the Al Mohit association and the annual cultural Moussem of Asilah, an arts festival known for its outdoor murals which remains active to this day. Melehi was arts director at the Ministry of Culture from 1984 to 1992.

*Biography courtesy of Powers, Jean Holiday. “Melehi, Mohammed (1936–).” *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Modernism*. Taylor and Francis, 2016. Date Accessed 10 Apr. 2019

<https://www.rem.routledge.com/articles/melehi-mohammed-1936>.

[doi:10.4324/9781135000356-REM478-1](https://doi.org/10.4324/9781135000356-REM478-1)