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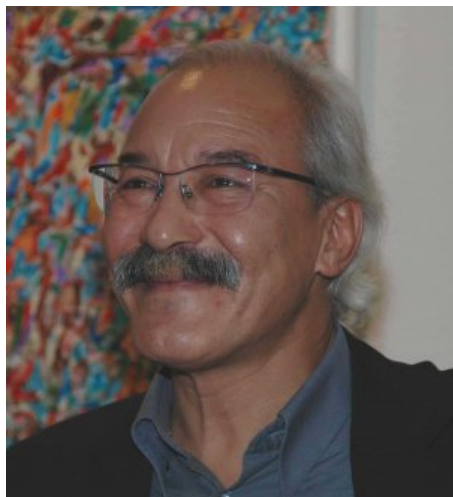
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Mahjoub Ben Bella



MAHJOUB BEN BELLA PASSED AWAY IN THE MORNING OF JUNE 11, 2020.

The artist Mahjoub Ben Bella died yesterday morning in Lille, surrounded by his relatives, after a long and courageous fight against the disease.

Claude and France Lemand share the grief of his family and join his many friends, artists, collectors, art historians and museum curators around the world, to present to his wife Brigitte and to his children Souhir and Nadgib our deepest condolences and express our admiration and loyalty to the great painter and to his so generous and radiant personality.

Claude Lemand.

Mahjoub Ben Bella was born in the Western part of Algeria, in Maghnia, in 1946. He did his artistic training first at the School of Fine Arts of Oran, then in Tourcoing and finally in Paris, and settled in France. Ben Bella is a multi-faceted artist, producing monumental artworks, painting ceramics, objects, in addition to large and small paintings on canvas, on paper, panel or even on stone, as well as performances and monumental compositions for public spaces. His works have been exhibited in many solo and group shows in museums, art foundations and galleries across Europe and the Middle East. Besides having his works featured in prominent private collections across the globe, Ben Bella's oeuvre is also present in the collections of twenty museums and public collections.

Jean-Louis Pinte.

The most distinctive aspect of his painting is his repetition of a particular sign or pattern, and how this sign or pattern resonates like a magical song. However, Ben Bella does not illustrate nor does he follow the illustrative steps of an ordinary Arabic calligraphy. Instead, he simply extracts from it a musicality that is given life through both his lines and colours. This eventually forms a music score that permeates throughout the painting, the sounds of which pulsate and vibrate across the artwork's surface. Whilst he neglects the silence of a monochrome surface, he generously covers his canvas with an abundance of quavers and other notes that diffuse the melody across the painting, transporting it towards a syncopated and linear abstraction. On some occasions, Ben Bella surpasses this simple tonality and tries to carry the viewer away into life's rustle and into its quivering landscapes. In the north of France, Ben Bella is renowned for the frescoes he produced along the roads, decorating more than 12 kilometers of cobblestone with his signs and patterns. In his canvas paintings, he creates sacred fields, the furrows of which lead the viewer to transcend the simple lyricism. It seems that he allows himself to be taken over by the vertigo of writing up until ecstasy, thus becoming the bard of a book of prayers celebrating the glory of art. (Jean-Louis Pinte, *Les champs sacrés de Ben Bella*, Figaroscope).

Mustapha Laribi.

For a very long time, Ben Bella's creations were reduced to being qualified as an Arabic written form, yet his oeuvre only preserved the pictorial aspect, producing a rich artwork that descends both from Arabic calligraphy and European painting. Whether he focuses on the profusion of motifs or on the effects of his chromatic scale, Ben Bella creates a continuous and meticulous dialogue of signs and colors. (Mustapha Laribi, *Algérie à l'affiche*, 1998).

Metropolitan Museum.

At nineteen years old, Mahjoub Ben Bella left Algeria to study at the École des Beaux-Arts in Tourcoing, France, then attended the École des Arts Décoratifs and École des Beaux-Arts in Paris. He established himself internationally as a diverse and expansive artist who paints





not only canvas but also ceramic pieces, fabrics, tiles, walls, everyday objects such as plates, and Métro stations. Ben Bella also uses color to invent a new language of signs. Working from his unconscious, he creates spontaneous images based on instinct and memory. The process and the resulting artwork therefore emerge from a trancelike state. His work evokes both Arabic calligraphy and European abstraction, the signs and symbols materializing out of composition and rhythm. Throughout, the movement of letters and calligraphy of symbols, traditional or invented, signify an exploration of the senses, of colour, and of form.

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