

The modern art movement in Morocco

To compare the Moroccan plastic movement with the movements in the rest of the Arab world, we notice that it is distinguished by the following paradox: the artistic scene in Morocco has reached a certain level of maturity both in theoretical and practical terms, but suffers, however, from a number of artists as creative as a rather low high cultural level. Of this, we recognize the main causes: the youth of our artistic movement as well as the absence of artistic training institutes offering a broad artistic education. The Moroccan artist has also been confronted (for more than a decade) with questions and problems to which he must seek answers and solutions. The most prominent are:

- Opt for abstraction or figuration (= realism)?
- Choose the commitment in its content or in the painting, as a realistic figuration?
- Let oneself be influenced by the West or by local tradition as a mark of cultural specificity, in a determined spatio-temporal context?

Faced with these questions, the artist's sensitivity has developed not only through considerations developed from his own artistic work, but also and in a more sustained manner through contact and debate with the public, in particular in through criticism carried out by intellectuals (albeit at a very preliminary, groping level). This reflection led by the artist, his desire to put in place the theoretical foundations capable of participating in the proposal of solutions to the questions with which he is confronted, unfortunately suffer, as we can notice, at a slow pace and encounter multiple difficulties. This essentially comes down to the stagnation of Moroccan artistic life, marked by the scarcity and mediocre quality of

artistic exhibitions, by the absence of art museums, etc. However, the maturity of the artist can only occur in a rich cultural life and is only realized in an intense artistic activity, in which the conflict stirs up between a quality art and a mediocre art, and where the choices of the artist are multiple and his social roots extended and deepened. This context is the one that accords with our conception of a genuine and prosperous art market. Another visible paradox: of this artistic stagnation of profound complexity, we often want to debate during a conference, for a few hours. We come away with a strong feeling of powerlessness in the face of the scale of the artistic problem with which we are confronted; this is obviously due to our inexperience, the absence of a competitive environment as well as the inconsistency of the method we adopt. One of the glaring mistakes that we sometimes make in our debates is to overlook the fact that art cannot exist without matter. Therefore, what interest will we have in developing a priori strategies for a possible Moroccan plastic movement, when we find ourselves unable to give birth to it on a practical level? The coherence, consistency and clarity of an artistic theory, however advanced it may be, has no effective value except through its respondent in artistic matters. This may sound like a generalities ramble, but I am convinced of the need to have recourse from time to time to generalities. Indeed, the majority of those who approach the question of the treatment of humans in painting have a clear vision of all the paintings that (engaged) artists have to paint so that they deserve this qualification! Relevant ideas find their confirmation in concrete practice, so too do misconceptions. For ten years, we have been leading a heated debate around questions relating to the visual arts. Without the experience of the Casablanca Group, whose educational work is based on the need to reconnect with tradition, the fight against imported academic education, openness to modern world art, the highlighting of teamwork, the realization of outdoor exhibitions (Jamaâ El Fna, Place du 16 novembre, several high schools in Casablanca; exhibitions and seminars organized by AMAP) ..., without all this, we would always be (as is the case

of several people) plagued by the tales, wasting our time to spread the theories! However, the creations of artists belonging to this movement have started to provide us with concrete solutions to the debated problems, like a dream that comes true. What was just pure theory has become more and more concrete in the practice of these artists. This is the reason for the apparent evolution which one observes recently in some texts of the literature relating to the plastic arts, as well at the level of the visual awareness as of the confirmed clarity of the artistic vision. This is what prompts me to say surely that the criterion underlying our criticism today is inherent in what artists will offer us as creations in the years to come. A good plastic literature will hardly evolve far from visual art, the latter not being literature but a significant expression, governed by its own rules and components and finally, ordered by a specific dynamic.

Our progress in research is often slowed down because we ignore the historical aspect of our creations. Also, it often happens that we create from scratch. However young our plastic movement is, it is part of a set of facts governed by a History, a certain reality. To ignore this is to be immersed in a most vicious circle! Artists cannot evolve and grow their experience while they remain on the edge of society. It is society (with all its nuances and contradictions) that leads the artist to honor his social commitment, by arming him with the legitimacy of his profession in the community body. In the past, the artist existed in society ubiquitously, his creativity affecting all aspects of life, from household utensils to architecture.

However, rare are the moments when we feel this presence of the Moroccan artist in social life.

To perpetuate this situation, which we have qualified as an artistic slump, inevitably leads to a crisis. This is due to the hold of the big bourgeois on the productions of the most eloquent painters and their attempts to also carry in their nets the emerging artists. Indeed, the absence of a national

and global art market reduces the chances of artists to make a living from their production. The alternative recommended by conscientious artists – that of setting up open-air exhibitions and cultural events supported by reflection seminars in order to orient art towards the people through the cultural and architectural milieus is, for our plastic movement, a boost and a tradition that deserves to be supported.

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