

THE SCULPTURAL
DRESSES
NOUREDDINE
AMIR

Exhibition
23 February - 22 April
2018

musée
YVES SAINT LAURENT
marrakech



I've always been careful to distinguish between those couturiers who benefit from women and those who benefit them. So my choice to display the work of Nouredine Amir might come as a surprise. I use the word 'work' and not 'clothing' because Nouredine is an artist who uses garments to create his body of work. As others create what are called 'installations', he displays sculpted dresses made from raw materials.

PIERRE BERGÉ

THE SCULPTURAL DRESSES

COUTURIER: NOUREDDINE AMIR
EXHIBITION CURATOR: HAMID FARDJAD
EXHIBITION DESIGNER: CHRISTOPHE MARTIN

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THE SCULPTURAL DRESSES NOUREDDINE AMIR



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Open every day from 10am to
6pm except Wednesdays
www.museeyslmarakech.com

OVERVIEW

From 23 February through 22 April 2018, the Fondation Jardin Majorelle will exhibit work by the Moroccan couturier, Nouredine Amir, in the temporary exhibitions hall at the musée YVES SAINT LAURENT Marrakech.

The foundation pays homage to an artist who has distinguished himself through his unique creative work involving the transmutation of artisanal Moroccan crafts.

The couturier immerses himself in an ancestral Moroccan savoir-faire and heritage. He adjusts and resurrects them in his work, as manifested in his sculptural dresses born from raw, organic materials – native to Morocco – that determine their forms.

In 2014, at an exhibition of Nouredine Amir's work at the Institut du Monde Arabe in Paris, Pierre Bergé discovered the artist's work for the first time, and immediately offered him an exhibition at the Paris-based Fondation Pierre Bergé – Yves Saint Laurent in 2016.

Nouredine Amir has been invited by the Chambre Syndicale de la Haute Couture Française to participate in their runway show during the upcoming Paris Fashion Week from 1-5 July 2018. It is the highest distinction that can be bestowed on a fashion designer. Noured-

dine Amir is the first Moroccan couturier to take part in this prestigious event and high point of the international fashion calendar.

The Fondation Jardin Majorelle, faithful to its mission of promoting Moroccan heritage, and eager to have Nouredine Amir's work seen by a broader public, is delighted to showcase his sculptural dresses in the temporary exhibitions hall at the musée YVES SAINT LAURENT marrakech. The hall was designed to the highest international museum standards, and conceived as a cultural and artistic venue able to welcome exhibitions related to fashion, art, contemporary design, anthropology and botany.

Hamid Fardjad, the curator of the exhibition, and Christophe Martin, the exhibition's designer, have focused their gaze on the couturier's work and offer us a dreamlike setting for Nouredine Amir's sculptural dresses, as well as a dialogue between fashion and art.



MATERIA PRIMA
APPAREL/ARCHITECTURE

Noureddine Amir's creations raise ambiguous questions. Are they fashion or architecture from another time? Are they apparel or abode? The textures, colours and shapes certainly remind us of Amazigh constructions found in towns in the southern regions of North Africa, from Morocco to Egypt.

Amir works on a garment as if he were working on an animal hide. Whether wool, raffia or silk, he submits them to a specific treatment. They are transformed in order to be adapted or readapted to life. Before seen by the public, they undergo an initiation process. They are dyed with henna, dried pomegranate peel or indigo. Sometimes they are treated with alum. Yet those who know these materials, and the many ways in which they are traditionally used, know that many women use them to tan animal hides and fortify their own skin.



Wool, silk, and raffia are patiently spun over the course of many days. Nouredine Amir caresses them, thread by thread; he braids and tames them; he incorporates and exudes them before designing or constructing a garment. He needs to render these materials – sourced from flora and fauna, from the depths of his native land – more supple, and compose a second skin from them, so that their innermost essence may receive a human body. This skin will generously house the body, contain it, and affirm it. Only those who know the secrets of these materials, those who are capable of listening to their vibrations, are able to give them a voice and turn them into works of art.

Nouredine Amir reveals the joy of manipulating materials such as jute, wool and silk muslin in their raw state. Indeed, he is a stylist, but above all a couturier. His gestures are calculated, repetitive, and measured. He summons the childlike pleasure of manipulating materials, even those that are forbidden and dangerous (be they flammable, prickly, or sharp). Drawn to risk, and yearning to confront that which is prohibited, it assumes mythical proportions when accompanied by the creation of hitherto unseen forms. With unconcealed delight, Amir collects materials, appropriates them, gives free reign

to his hands and body; all in order to make the materials not only express his dreams, fears, and fantasies, but especially to reveal their nobility...

He has the ability to awaken our instinctive drive to reconnect with nature and the Earth, our nourishing mother. But the material is rebellious and does not immediately reveal itself. It must be seduced, loved, caressed, and artfully invited to confide its secrets.

Yet, in our globalized culture, objects tend to be emptied of their 'poetic' nature. Indeed, once delocalized, materials and forms become commonplace, commercial clothing, assembled by machines that have no respect for them at all. In Amir's hands, materials are poised and at ease.

By reinvesting jute, wool, raffia, and cotton muslin, Nouredine Amir re-establishes a bond with the African land, with its flora and fauna. In the beginning was matter. Since the dawn of mankind, experimenting with these elements has fed humanity's creative impulses. But man forgot his voluptuous relationship to matter. Tools and then machines came to stand between him and matter, the vital substance that was integral to his life.

Master magicians are needed to transform our relationship to the world and matter with their hands and their bodies. Nouredine Amir is one of them. I have always been fascinated by his relationship to materials. He always seeks out those materials that are rough, proud, and insolent. Like a child, he creates a personal history with the objects of his desire. In this carnal struggle, the artist knows not if he is the master. He lets his playful instincts roam free and allows himself to be guided, sometimes by the material, sometimes by the desire to touch it, rustle it, and caress it. You could say that, in this inanimate and formless materia prima, he is looking for a trace of what is hidden in the meanderings of its fibre. When he seizes it, he offers it to us. It is unique. It is apparel and abode at the same time.

There is certainly an explanation for all this. The return to matter – and the joy of being in direct contact with it – is accompanied by a return to a certain archaism, both in the images and the forms. The totems produced by Amir send us back to faraway forms we have inherited from so-called primitive societies; from a time when humans only listened to their senses and instincts, and lived with their bodies bound to nature, a time before dogmas and morality, before the birth of good and evil.





The material's truth and the pleasure of the entranced body allow the artist to seduce us with a powerful work, one that is instinctive and knowledgeable. There is no need to question the metaphor behind the materials as we encounter the playful register and artistic force that, without artifact and discourse, re-establishes contact with moments from a personal history and, from there, with the primitive childhood of humanity.

Noureddine Amir has the ability to read in the folds of matter all the symbols, magic, and love his African ancestors left within it. So let's imagine his sculptural dresses transformed into works of architecture...

MOULIM EL AROUSSI
PHILOSOPHER AND ART CRITIC

Noureddine Amir's sculptural dresses are powerful. They are fashionable yet exist in a realm beyond fashion. They propose a voyage to an imaginary place, suspended in time, which I've evoked by an exhibition design that suggests an otherworldly, surreal forest in which the visitor is transported to another realm. It was essential to establish a conversation between the dresses and those viewing them, one that was immediate and without affectation; barriers were deconstructed to allow an unrestrained dialogue.

CHRISTOPHE MARTIN
EXHIBITION DESIGNER



NOUREDDINE AMIR

Born in 1967 in Rabat, Nouredine Amir lives and works in Marrakech. He graduated from the Ecole Supérieure des Arts et Techniques de la Mode (ESMOD) in 1996. Shortly after his studies, he worked with the Iranian artist Shirin Neshat, for whom he designed numerous costumes. Beginning in 2001, Nouredine Amir worked mostly on Moroccan fashion shows, most notably one held in Casablanca devoted to caftans, during which his collection of haïks was held in high esteem. Since 2003, his work has been shown at the Musée de la Mode d'Anvers (MoMu), at the Palais des Beaux-Arts de Lille in 2004, and at the Institute du Monde Arabe in Paris (2014-2015). The most recent exhibition of his work, Nouredine Amir's Sculpted Dresses, was held at the Fondation Pierre Bergé – Yves Saint Laurent in Paris in 2016.

THE FONDATION JARDIN MAJORELLE

The Fondation Jardin Majorelle, established in 2001, is a non-profit Moroccan institution (decree N° 2.11.647 of 4 November 2011). Its own resources are used to ensure the conservation and functioning of the garden. Since 2011, the Jardin Majorelle belongs to the Fondation Pierre Bergé – Yves Saint Laurent, a non-profit French entity. The garden welcomes more than 700,000 visitors per year, whether tourists or Moroccan citizens and residents. It is open every day of the year and has over one hundred employees on its team. By appointment, the garden opens its doors without charge to Moroccan elementary school students. The foundation's earnings are entirely reinvested in Morocco to finance cultural, educational or social projects, including:

- Organising conferences and symposiums related to botany, literature, and Berber culture, as well as exhibitions in Morocco and overseas
- Providing grants to cultural and educational institutions in Morocco, such as the Fondation Ténor pour la Culture, the Cinémathèque in Tangier, and the School of Visual Arts (ESAV) in Marrakech

– Financing scholarships for young Moroccans studying abroad

– Contributing to numerous social initiatives within Morocco, including the Association de Lutte contre le Sida (combating AIDS) and the Association pour la réinsertion des lépreux par la tapisserie (combating leprosy)

The foundation's resources were used to establish the Berber Museum in December 2011. They have also made possible the new musée YVES SAINT LAURENT marrakech, whose doors opened to the public on 19 October 2017.

THE MUSÉE YVES SAINT LAURENT MARRAKECH

Over forty years, Yves Saint Laurent never ceased developing a style that was unique to him. His garments belong to the history of the 20th century, accompanying every aspect of the liberation of women. The pea coat, trench coat, 'smoking', pantsuit and safari jacket became indispensable elements of every modern woman's wardrobe. At the same time, Yves Saint Laurent was the last of the grand couturiers; someone nostalgic for an age when haute couture played an important and luxurious role. His magnificent evening dresses are often homages to artists, authors, playwrights and the fashion of other epochs. The two recently-opened museums dedicated to his work reveal the extent to which Yves Saint Laurent was a leading artist of his age.

Located a stone's throw away from the Jardin Majorelle – acquired by Pierre Bergé and Yves Saint Laurent in 1980 – the musée YVES SAINT LAURENT marrakech is housed in a new 4,000 m² building designed by the architectural firm, Studio KO, and is more than just a museum. Centred around a 400 m² permanent exhibition hall designed by Christophe Martin and showcasing the iconic fashion work of Yves Saint Laurent, the museum also includes a hall for temporary exhibitions and a research library.



The Sculptural Dresses
Noureddine Amir

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Rue Yves Saint Laurent, 40090 Marrakech, Morocco
museeyslmarakech.com

Exhibition curator: Hamid Fardjad
Exhibition design: Christophe Martin

Press contacts: Hanane El Hadi and Zora El Hajji
Telephone: +212 (0)5 24 31 30 47
z.elhajji@jardinmajorelle.com



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