

musée  
**YVES SAINT LAURENT**  
marrakech

LE MAROC DE THÉOPHILE-JEAN DELAYE  
مغرب تيوفيل جان ديلاي  
THÉOPHILE-JEAN DELAYE'S MOROCCO  
(1896-1970)

**17.09.2022 — 15.01.2023**

**Press release**



Théophile-Jean Delaye, Les éboulements de l'Oumoukrim, vers 1935, gouache, Marseille, Mucem, 2019 6/4



**FONDATION**  
JARDIN MAJORELLE

Exposition réalisée avec la collaboration exceptionnelle du Mucem

**Mucem**

LE MAROC DE THÉOPHILE-JEAN DELAYE  
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THÉOPHILE-JEAN DELAYE'S MOROCCO  
(1896-1970)

**Théophile-Jean Delaye's  
Morocco (1896-1970)  
an exhibition at the Musée  
Yves Saint Laurent Marrakech**  
Saturday, September 17, 2022  
through Sunday,  
January 15, 2023

The Musée Yves Saint Laurent Marrakech is mounting an exhibition devoted to the cartographer and illustrator of Morocco, Théophile-Jean Delaye, from Saturday, September 17, 2022 through Sunday, January 15, 2023.

This exhibition is the fruit of a partnership agreement, signed in June 2020 between the Museum of European and Mediterranean Civilizations (Mucem) in Marseille and the Fondation Jardin Majorelle in Marrakech.

This ambitious partnership between the Mucem and the Fondation Jardin Majorelle, in collaboration with the Musée Yves Saint Laurent Marrakech, aims first and foremost to give prominence to the rich Berber heritage of the Kingdom of Morocco. The two institutions work together in the management of their respective collections and the archiving of their Moroccan objects, especially those of Amazigh origin, and they are planning the short-, medium- and long-term lending of objects from their collections, particularly in the context of exhibition projects.

In addition, the Mucem collaborates with the Fondation Jardin Majorelle in the area of digital development by maintaining an online database and a digital space dedicated to the Berber collections of both institutions. Finally, this partnership encourages the sharing of exhibitions between the two museums, such as Morocco as seen by Théophile-Jean Delaye (1896-1970) in Marrakech. A second exhibition is being planned, which is expected to travel from Marrakech to Marseille in 2023.

The exhibition, which was conceived by a special partnership with the Museum of European and Mediterranean Civilizations (Mucem) in Marseille, retraces Théophile-Jean Delaye's years in Morocco through a selection of 120 works, a significant number of which hail from the Mucem's collections. The museum acquired these works from the artist's descendants in April 2019.

The exhibition also benefits from a generous loan of artworks from the artist's family.

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In the 1930s, Théophile-Jean Delaye was the first cartographer to scientifically map the mountains of southern Morocco, in particular the Toubkal massif. His prolific pictorial work is as much characterized by a scientific approach as by an aesthetic one.

The exhibition opens with a sumptuous gouache depicting Toubkal, a rocky mountain landscape softened by snow and the effects it produces on light. Born in the Dauphiné region of France, at the foot of the Alps, Théophile-Jean Delaye was captivated by high mountains from a very young age.

All his books, and every article he published in the *Revue de géographie du Maroc* between 1930 and 1940, clearly show that he was interested in the mountains not only as a cartographer, but also as a mountaineer, or “rock climber,” as he would call himself.

He was able to render the relief of the Moroccan mountains so accurately in his maps and gouaches because he had an intimate knowledge of their peaks, walls and abysses, of their glaciers and snowfields, of the mass and the fragility of their boulders...

His deep affinity for the mountains of Morocco gave him the determination to preserve them: In 1942, he was instrumental in the creation of the Toubkal Natural Park, the first Moroccan natural park, which in time became the Toubkal National Park. He also established the Moroccan chapter of the French Alpine Club, which celebrates its 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year.

At the beginning of the 1920s, maps of Morocco still included many uncharted areas. Assigned to the Geographical Service of the Alpes-Maritimes region of France after the First World War, Delaye was sent to Tunisia in 1922 to participate in the production of a 1:50,000-scale map. He joined the Moroccan Geographical Service at the end of 1924, carrying out numerous topographical missions, which allowed him to travel through the southern areas of the country. In the 1930s, he surveyed Morocco from the northern Rif to the southern Djebel Saghro, and criss-crossed the Atlas Mountains. With his excellent knowledge of the country, he became head of the topography section of the Geographical Service of Morocco in 1932, at which point he introduced new cartographic techniques favoring aerial reconnaissance as a means to expand the range of possible points of view on the territory to be mapped.

This scientific approach to mountains was not without an aesthetic dimension that he expressed in his artwork, whether through drawings or paintings.

Over the fifteen years that Delaye created scientific imagery through cartography, he became aware of the limits of photography as a tool in the service of drawing maps. The production of these enduring scientific images contrasts with, and yet complements, Delaye’s colorful drawings, which reveal a Morocco that he knew intimately through his survey work,

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and which he captured as landscapes sketched in situ. The quality of the light on the Toubkal massif and the street scenes of the older neighborhoods of Fez, for example, affirm Delaye's intimate understanding of these landscapes. His depictions of the kasbahs of southern Morocco, drawn in graphite pencil, sometimes using two differently-colored pencils, or his ink-drawn industrial landscapes of the port of Casablanca, are equally striking for the acuteness of his gaze and his mastery of line.

In his high mountain landscapes, in a somewhat systematic way, Théophile-Jean Delaye introduced a human element: the red, eye-shaped *akhnif* motif characteristic of the coats worn by the shepherds of the Aït Ouaouzguite tribes. Seen on the figures appearing in his illustrations of Berber country, the *akhnif* became Delaye's signature of sorts. Through his drawing and paintings – whether done in pencil, ink, wash drawing, watercolor or gouache – Delaye aimed to show what was original or particular to Berber culture through his depiction of costumes, faces, tools and carpets.

His cartographic missions became opportunities for illustrated feature stories, as can be seen in his many illustrations commissioned for books and magazines. Through his drawings, Delaye's portrayal of the landscapes and peoples of southern Morocco mirrors that of his contemporary, the photographer Jean Besancenot.

His evident knowledge of the Moroccan territories, in their extreme diversity, was noticed by publishers such as Arthaud, which had embarked on the publication of a collection titled "Les beaux pays" (see in particular Antoine Chollier's *Ceux de l'Alpe. Types et coutumes* [Those of the Alps: Characters and Customs], 1937; or his *Toute la Provence*, 1939). The use of color drawings, rather than photography, to illustrate these books manifests a desire to highlight the experience of travel and the specific gaze of a qualified connoisseur, with the aim of making the reader want to discover the chosen country. Delaye was an ideal illustrator, at once confident of his talent as a draftsman and excellent colorist, and of his unique understanding of the Moroccan territories.

This led to Delaye richly illustrating a dozen works published by Arthaud, and to the general public's discovery of the natural and urban landscapes of Morocco through his gaze and draftsmanship.

Beginning in the mid-1930s, the dissemination of a certain representation of Morocco by the printed image is inseparable from the graphic work of Delaye. The works of Jacques Felze, *Au Maroc inconnu, dans le Haut Atlas et le Sud Marocain* [Unknown Morocco: The High Atlas and the Moroccan South] (1935) and of Henri Terrasse, *Maroc, villes impériales* (1937), published by Arthaud, helped establish a particular framework for representing Morocco, in which memory plays an important role, that still endures today.

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And yet Delaye was also an illustrator of modern Morocco and of its natural resources available for industry (ports, hydroelectric plants, etc.). He was also instrumental in the development of skiing in the country: Delaye promoted mountain sports and showed Morocco in the process of modernizing.

The proposals of the French Alpine Club went beyond taking an aesthetic approach to the mountains; they encouraged accessing them through an active infrastructure policy. Between 1923 and 1930, a high-altitude refuge was created in the Atlas, "less than two hours by road from Marrakech." Toubkal gradually became the "Moroccan Chamonix," although one should note, as Salima Naji reminds us, that *"the Berber High Atlas [has] opened up to tourism under the dual supervision of the army and mountaineers, with the additional support of the Marrakech Tourist Office"*. At the same time, one saw the development of both roads and eventually hotels, which together would encourage local development through tourism.

In parallel to this exhibition at the Musée Yves Saint Laurent Marrakech, the Musée de Valence – Art et Archeologie, located in the Drôme region of France, will mount an exhibition from November 27, 2022 through February 27, 2023, which will also be dedicated to the exceptional journey and work of this multi-faceted man.

*"The artist channels his drawing back to its essential lines by choosing among relevant details those he wants to highlight, exaggerating some at the expense of others. He thus makes a real pictorial synthesis, a synthesis where, thanks to his palette, the typical features of the landscape will appear, under their own sky and in all their nuances".*

Théophile-Jean Delaye



# **musée YVES SAINT LAURENT marrakech**

[www.museeyslmarakech.com](http://www.museeyslmarakech.com)  
Open everyday  
except Wednesdays  
from 10 am to 6 pm  
Last entrance at 5:30 pm  
[presse@jardinmajorelle.com](mailto:presse@jardinmajorelle.com)  
  [myslmarakech](https://www.instagram.com/myslmarakech)

## **Musée Yves Saint Laurent Marrakech**

The Musée Yves Saint Laurent Marrakech, which opened its doors in the fall of 2017, is a vibrant cultural center built around a central exhibition hall that showcases the work of the renowned couturier on a permanent basis. Much more than a simple retrospective of the iconic dresses YSL designed, one is led on a journey, with its focal point in Marrakech, through the many themes that inspired him. The fifty or so magnificent garments displayed – many rarely seen by the public – offer us an original reading of Yves Saint Laurent's œuvre and of his importance to the history of fashion. The dresses and other haute couture pieces are rotated every ten months in order to ensure their conservation as well as to offer the visitor a panorama that evolves on a regular basis.

The mYSLm also includes a hall for temporary exhibitions, a photography gallery, an auditorium, a reference library, a bookshop and a café-restaurant. The basement of the building houses the museum's collection and a state-of-the-art preventive conservation center.

The hall used for temporary exhibitions at the Musée Yves Saint Laurent Marrakech was conceived as a cultural and artistic showcase. It is where the museum displays talent from all over the world, with a special emphasis given to modern and contemporary Morocco.

[www.jardinmajorelle.com](http://www.jardinmajorelle.com)  
Open everyday  
from 9 am to 6 pm  
Last entrance at 5:30 pm  
[presse@jardinmajorelle.com](mailto:presse@jardinmajorelle.com)  
  [jardinmajorellemarrakech](https://www.instagram.com/jardinmajorellemarrakech)

## **Fondation Jardin Majorelle**

The Fondation Jardin Majorelle is a nonprofit Moroccan institution that uses its own resources to ensure the conservation and functioning of the Jardin Majorelle, the Pierre Bergé Museum for Berber arts and the Musée Yves Saint Laurent Marrakech.

The foundation's resources were used to establish the Berber Museum, inaugurated in December 2011, and the Musée Yves Saint Laurent Marrakech, which opened in October 2017. The foundation's earnings are entirely reinvested in Morocco to finance cultural, educational and social initiatives.

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**Mucem**

Located at the entrance to the Old Port of Marseille, the Museum of European and Mediterranean Civilizations (Mucem) serves as a bridge – past, present and future – between opposite shores of the Mediterranean. It organizes large-scale artistic, thematic and historical exhibitions as well as numerous events such as seminars, film projections, concerts and youth-oriented theatrical performances.

This national museum showcases the cultural, social, scientific and political richness of the Mediterranean Basin, from prehistory to today. It is home to a myriad of disciplines, from anthropology and history to art history and contemporary art.

Conceived as a cultural center in the heart of this vibrant city founded millennia ago by the Phoenicians, the Mucem has found its public: It has welcomed more than 8.5 million visitors since it opened in 2013. The Mucem's exhibitions have been praised for their quality, while its cultural programming, conferences and open-air film projections have been warmly received by the public.