

lilia ben salah

Mahjoub Ben Bella

Lumière d'or

3 April | 18 May 2024



Mahjoub Ben Bella

Danse, 2017

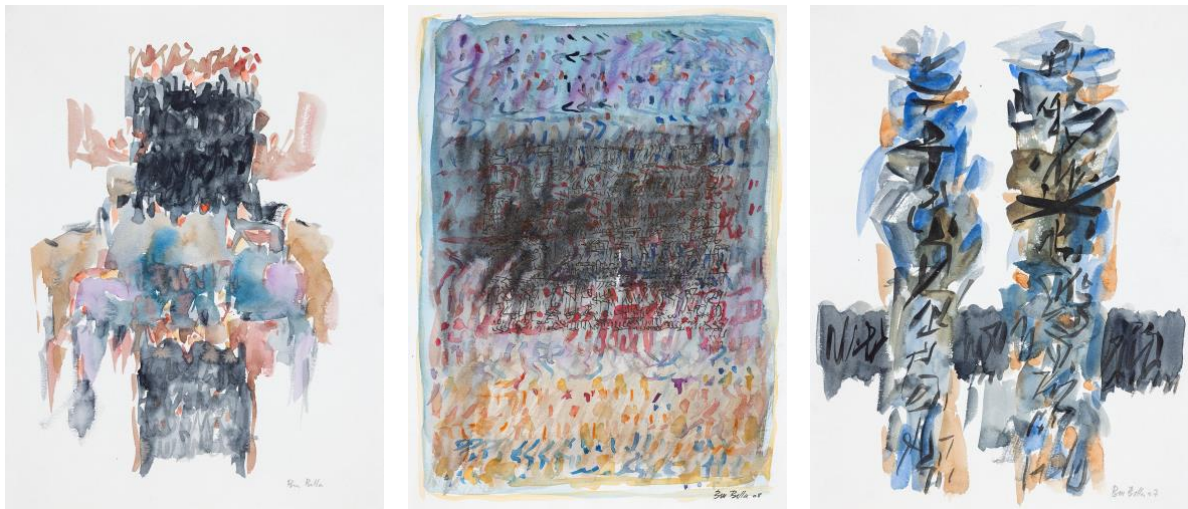
Huile sur toile | Oil on canvas

146 x 114 cm (57 1/2 x 44 7/8 in)

lilia ben salah gallery is pleased to present "Lumière d'or" (Golden Light), a solo exhibition by Mahjoub Ben Bella (1946-2020), from April 3rd to May 18th, 2024.

Presenting a broad selection of paintings, many of which have never previously been seen, this exhibition focuses on the most recent period of the artist's uninterrupted artistic activity until his death in 2020. Mahjoub Ben Bella is a multi-faceted artist who produced paintings on canvas, paper, and wood as well as happenings and monumental works in public areas. He belongs to what was known as Abstract Expressionism or Lyrical Abstraction, a movement that emerged in the second half of the twentieth century. This first exhibition by French Algerian Mahjoub Ben Bella at the gallery offers to see a series of paintings emblematic of his pictorial research, questioning the relationship between signs and abstraction.

Born in Algeria in 1946, he trained at the École des Beaux-Arts in Oran. From 1965 to 1970, he pursued his studies in France at the École des Beaux-Arts of Tourcoing under Claude Vicente, who was his director at the Beaux-Arts in Oran. From 1970 to 1975, he continued his training at the École Nationale des Arts Décoratifs in Paris and settled permanently in Tourcoing in 1975, where he played an active role in the regional and international art scene. The former stables of the Joire bank were home to his studio for the last 20 years of his life.



Mahjoub Ben Bella

Indiens 1, 2 & 4, 2008

Aquarelle sur papier | Watercolour on paper

32 x 24 cm chaque (12 5/8 x 9 1/2 in. each)



Mahjoub Ben Bella

Message, 2006

Cageot et huile sur bois | Crate and oil on canvas

123 x 60 cm (48 3/8 x 23 5/8 in.)

His painting draws on the same sources as the great names of modern art, such as Mark Tobey, Jean-Paul Riopelle, Henri Michaux, Jean Dubuffet, Georges Mathieu and many other artists who found graphic resources in the cultures and writings of the East and Far East, in order to enrich their relationship with the space of the painting. Like them, and inspired by the great masters such as Matisse, Picasso, Van Gogh and Delacroix, he gave abstract art new inclinations, and his painting, full of variations and vibrations of lines and colours, is immediately identifiable.

His work can be found in numerous private and public collections in France and abroad.



Mahjoub Ben Bella

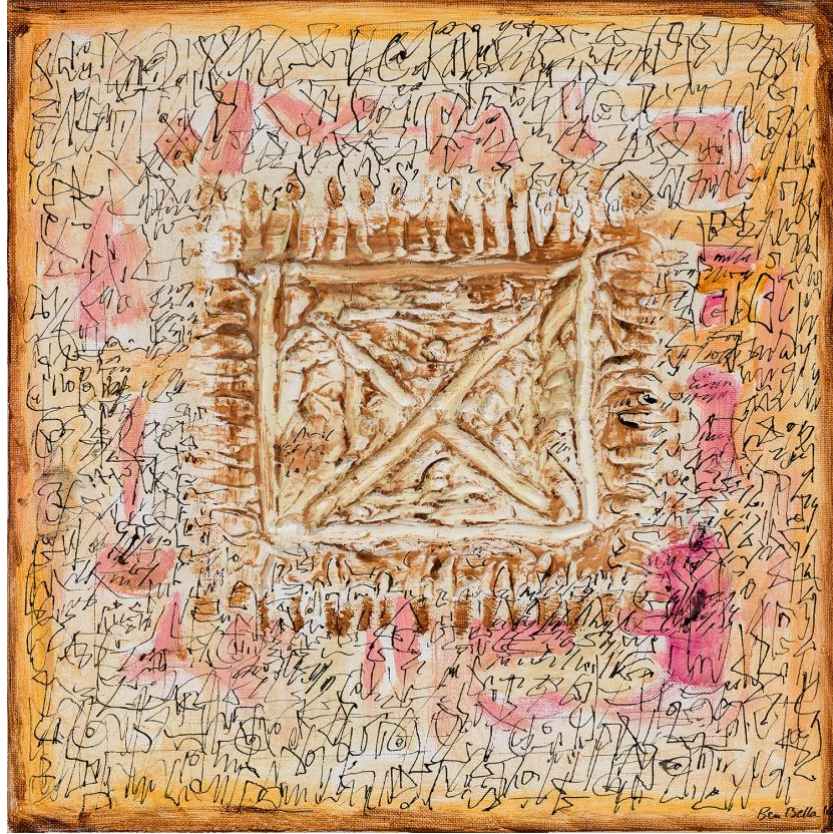
Tondo rouge, 2009

Huile sur cageot et bois | Oil on crate and wood

40 x 40 cm; (15 3/4 x 15 3/4 in.)

In her exhibition essay "**Mahjoub Ben Bella, under the sign, the painting**", **Céline Berchiche** writes "Ben Bella's paintings therefore deserve a fresh look because they can be viewed through the prism of strict abstract painting and its history, rather than through the prism of writing. It is through this first prism that we can discover his wealth of invention. Through this new paradigm, that of art history, graphic signs take on a different value: they are there to breathe life into the painting, to create rhythm and breaths, to play on transparencies, to introduce variations and modulations into an all-over process.

Ben Bella's nervous graphics and gestural signs underpinned the painting itself, i.e. his mastery of colour and composition, and it is fortunate that the lilia ben salah gallery, through this exhibition, is presenting a broad spectrum of the artist's creative work, which is an important part of the history of abstract art."



Mahjoub Ben Bella

Relief rose et ocre, 2016

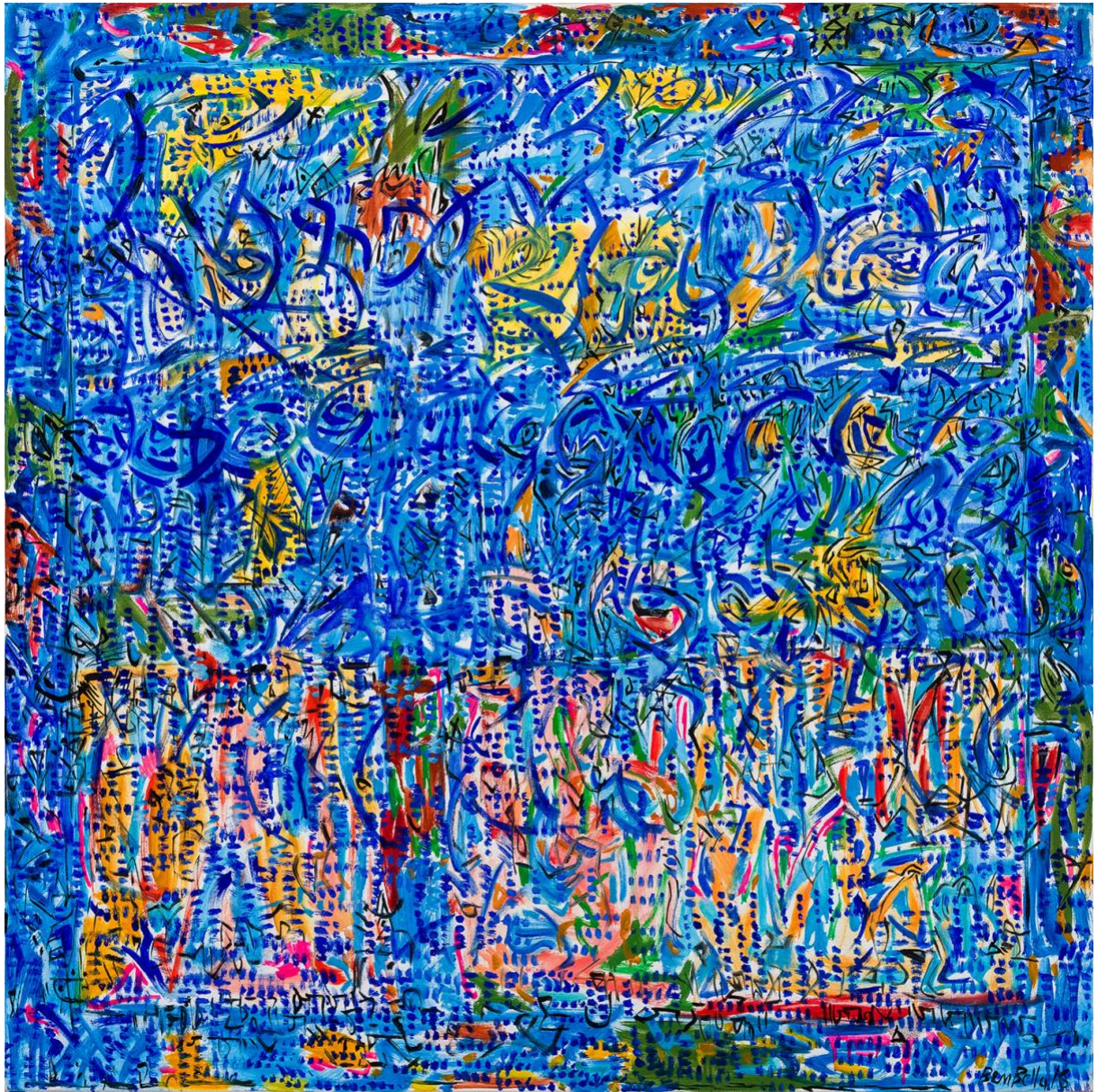
Huile, pâte à bois et encre de Chine sur toile | Oil, wood modelling and Indian ink on canvas

40 x 40 cm (15 3/4 x 15 3/4 in.)

Furthermore in **Morad Montazami's** exhibition essay **"Mahjoub Ben Bella: always magical, the sign is stronger than the bombs"**, his work is punctuated by lines, derived from calligraphy, always present in his paintings. Close to the Algerian avant-garde of the School of Signs, Ben Bella's work is nonetheless more emancipated and less identitarian. The line is not legible, it is like a language of its own, musical, and which animates the medium. He brings Ben Bella's work closer to the concept of Talisman magic. "Ben Bella's talisman-works are endowed with ubiquity, insofar as they transport the sign beyond the limits of the painting (you lose your bearings up, down, left, and right). They form divinatory systems or ink mirrors (very widespread in Algeria): the art of prediction consisting in pouring ink or oil into the palm of the hand. In this way, Ben Bella gives us (or not) his secret formula, that of the hidden symmetry between the lines of the hand, the lines of life, the lines of time."¹

Find out more about the exhibition

¹ Morad Montazami, Director of Zamân Books & Curating



Mahjoub Ben Bella

Arabesques bleues, 2016

Huile sur toile | Oil on canvas

120 x 120 cm (47 1/4 x 47 1/4 in.)



Mahjoub Ben Bella

Lumière d'or, 2016

Huile sur toile | Oil on canvas

146 x 114 cm (57 1/2 x 44 7/8 in.)

About Mahjoub Ben Bella

Mahjoub Ben Bella was born in 1946, in Maghnia, the Western part of Algeria. He studied at the École des Beaux-Arts in Oran, and in Northern France where he pursued his studies at the École Supérieure d'Art in Tourcoing. After graduating in 1969, Ben Bella joined the École Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs and the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris. In 1975, he returned to Tourcoing where he opened his studio and settled for the rest of his life. Ben Bella is a multifaceted artist, from monumental frescoes in public spaces, mural ceramics and sculptures to paintings on canvas, paper, panel or even on stone, not to mention performances as well. His works have been featured in numerous exhibitions in museums, foundations and art galleries across Europe, Africa and the Middle East.

His work can be found in numerous private and public collections in France and abroad.

Download artist's CV



Mahjoub Ben Bella

Hommage à Riopelle, 2016

Huile et encre de Chine sur bois | Oil and Indian ink on wood

30 x 30 cm; (11 3/4 x 11 3/4 in.)

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Courtesy of the Comité Mahjoub Ben Bella and lilia ben salah

About the gallery

lilia ben salah gallery seeks to showcase artists, both emerging and established, whose free, uncompromising expressions play a key role in the cultural hybridization that is so essential to the development of societies. Through its programming, the gallery aims to support the artists and work with them in close collaboration, invite curators to design projects, get closer to institutional players while participating in off-site projects and international fairs. In addition, Lilia Ben Salah hopes to provide another reading of art history over the past few decades by reconsidering the scope of the work of certain historical artists, originating from Africa and the Middle and Near East, by presenting them outside of their geographical context.

Practical Information

Exhibition from 3 April - 18 May 2024

Opening hours from Tuesday to Saturday, 11am – 7pm

lilia ben salah

6 Avenue Delcassé 75008 Paris

+33 9 80 33 15 21

info@liliabensalah.com

For further press inquiry, please contact:

Frédérique Fetiveau

Fetiveau RP

info@fetiveaurp.fr

+33 6 08 41 06 73

Noélie Bernard

info@liliabensalah.com

+33 9 80 33 15 21

+33 7 69 05 79 66