**Unlocking the heart of Mo Baala exhibition ‘Under the Silver Tree’**

‘*It takes a village to raise a* child’. African proverb

What lay under the silver tree? This is the question. Let us try to find answers, if

there are any to be found.

For this solo exhibit, Mo Baala offers his very own perspective on a sensitive and

key topic: Childhood. Through both his artistic practice and his artist statement, “Me

and the Dirty Notebooks,” he synthesizes and presents existing knowledge about

this theme in provocative ways.

For the first time, this solo exhibit encompasses all of the artist’s mediums and

features innovative uses of materials. Baala incorporates strikingly bold, shimmering,

anthropomorphic elements on his artworks spanning from paper cutouts and

collages, to drawings of various sizes, to large-scale textiles, terracotta ceramics,

writings and works on canvas. All are equally populated with characters and objects,

bearing witness to historical and political events, as well as philosophical and literary

references.

The exhibit is both profoundly beautiful and deeply memorable. Visitors are welcomed

by a rusted iron labyrinth passage that leads to a vast courtyard, where remnants

and accessories from the artist’s opening performance lie in wait, as if expecting

his return... perhaps. As we raise our gaze, we encounter a calligraphy installation,

comprising drawings and paintings on wood cutouts assembled into an enigmatic,

incomprehensible message. From here, we access the exhibition’s main room,

where we are greeted by a newly created triptych: These three extra-large textile

pieces, composed of intricate leather hand-cut characters and symbols pasted on

fabric, forming a monumental chronicle reminiscent of ancient tapestries or antique

frescoes. Each panel invites visitors to explore Baala’s complex cosmogony and the

artist’s personal trilogy, PaMeMo—Papa, Me, Mother.

The blue piece, The Child: Mohammed Baala.

The silvery-grey piece, The Jewelry of Fatima, a magical treasure trove and homage

to The Mother.

The burnt-orange piece, The unknown Father, poses the question: Why were we

not introduced to African literature?

These works offer layers of meaning. Books are imprinted into the panels, while

the actual books lie scattered on the bare floor, silently questioning the audience.

Here the centerpiece features large leather hand-cut mythical horses symbolizing

the parents, flanking a purple mantis at the center, representing the child. Hundreds

of hand-cut leather children’s hands form the base of the artwork, begging for

attention—perhaps even for a silver coin.

On the right side of the room, visitors encounter another powerful installation: The

Children of the Souk. This large-scale piece features hundreds of leather winged

slippers—each intentionally designed as left feet, representing the castaways, the

overlooked, the rejected. These slippers form a large, flattened circle on a rough

rusted metal wall before trailing into a line on the floor, evoking spermatozoa in a race

for survival. The composition provocatively juxtaposes horizontality with verticality,

continuously challenging the concept of the center.

Throughout the exhibition, a series of wooden sculptures emerge, resembling blown-

up elements from the artist’s collages, drawings, and paintings. These include a hard-

to-earn piece of bread, a beloved bird, and a winged child perched on the edges of

the walls of Baala’s mother city, Taroudant.

On one wooden painted panel, the artist reminds us: “Poetry is the shield we use

to protect our minds from too much knowledge.”

Taroudant is both present and omnipresent—a walled fortress of a city that the

artist simultaneously cherishes and fears, loves and hates. It is an endless source

of pain, laughter, hope, and inspiration.

The exhibit evokes profound responses from viewers, offering a transformative

experience. As Saint-Exupéry once wrote: “We are from our childhood as we are

from a country.”

**Aniko Boehler,**

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