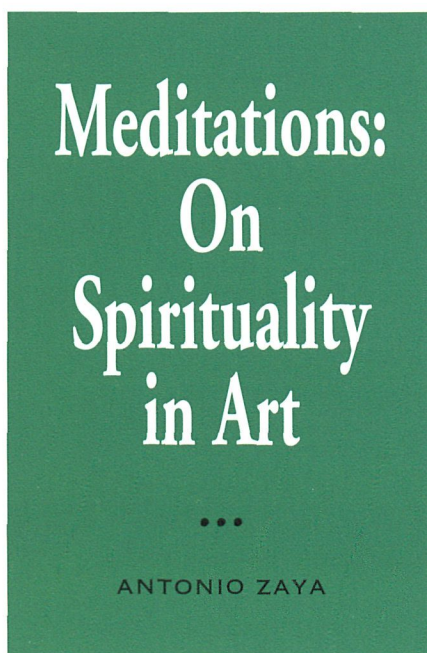


## REVIEWS

The exhibition *Meditations* opened last March 15 in the Medersa Ibn Youssef of the Medina of Marrakesh. The exhibition was organized by the cultural corporation ART for The World, under the supervision of Adelina v. Furstenberg.

In the 14th century the Medersa Ibn Youssef was a Koranic university; today, thanks to a wise union of public and private efforts (1), it is a majestic and labyrinthine monument to the historical memory in the heart of the Medina, having been rescued from the oblivion that frequently envelops the noble cultural and architectonic achievements of the past. The colours pink and ochre dominate the central patio, where a pool of clear water reflects the sky. The waters flow from their source in ripples, in a repetition that shuts out time and forces rather than invites one into contemplation. The rest of the building is arranged around a centre of stucco-covered walls.

ART for The World is a non-profit cultural entity dedicated to contemporary art, based in Geneva and founded by Adelina v. Furstenberg. The goal of ART for The World is to establish, via the creation and organisation of contemporary art exhibitions and forums, meaningful and permanent dialogue among various artists, cultures and publics, as well as to encourage solidarity and respect for education and the fine arts. ART for The



World is the direct offshoot of *Dialogues de Paix*, an international exhibition held in 1995 in Geneva as part of the 50th anniversary of the United Nations. In 1996, the two main events organised by ART for The World were *Bajo el Volcán*

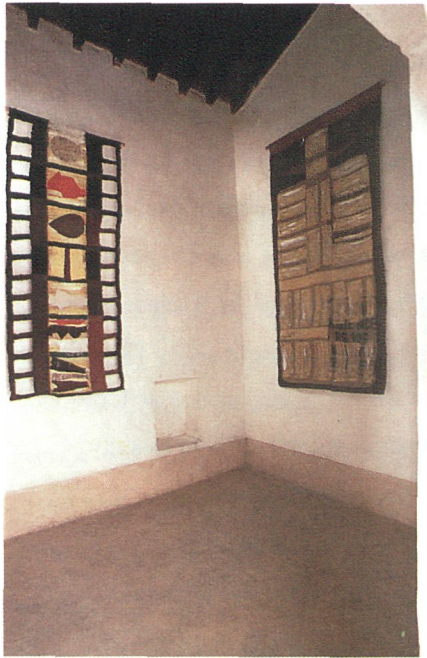
in the Exconvento de la Natividad de Tepozlan in Mexico, and the exhibition *Robert Rauschenberg* in the Mekhitarista Monastery on the island of San Lázaro in Italy. ART for The World is currently preparing a project entitled *The Edge of Awareness*, in conjunction with the 50th anniversary of the World Health Organisation.

The exhibition offers an opportunity to revisit the various chambers of the Medersa Ibn Youssef. It is a building that is at once lost in time and now re-occupied by these works which are subtle, floating and seem to be suspended by the very issues they address. But they also seem to be suspended by the private spaces of the chambers, which is not surprising; most of these works were created specifically for the exhibition. Via these works the



Andrea Marescalchi, "Le livre des oiseaux". 1997.





El Sy, "Objet de réminiscence", 1996,  
and "Cliché". 1996.

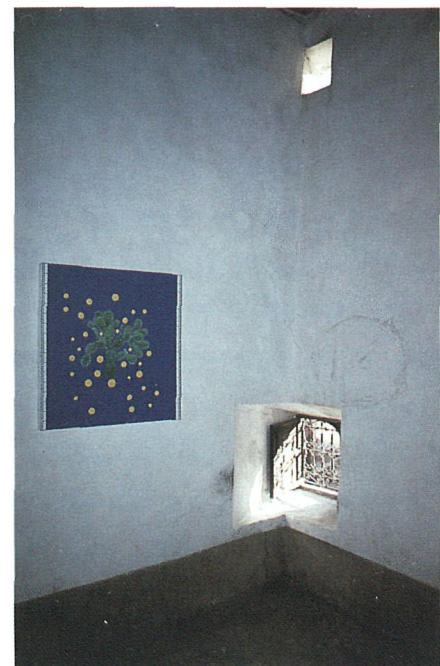
chambers — which are now welcoming the sole objective of spiritual convergence, while in earlier times were dedicated to Koranic studies and belief — recover a splendour that is lost, invisible and offers a collective meditation through the art of 17 artists from 5 continents (Marco Bagnoli from Italy, Farid Belkahia from Morocco, Alighiero & Boetti from Italy, Silvie Defraoui from Switzerland, El Sy from Senegal, Shirazeh Houshiary from Iran, Ilya Kabakov from Russia, Anish Kapoor from India/Great Britain, Kacimi from Morocco, Rachid Koraichi from Algeria, Andrea Marescalchi from Italy, Sol LeWitt from the U.S., María Carmen Perlingeiro from Brazil, Miguel Angel Ríos from Argentina, Pat Steir from the U.S., Sarkis from France and Chen Zen, from China). In addition, there are 9 poets and 7 musicians from

12 nations, whose works are offered for private reading or group listening; whether in or from the individual chambers, their verses and musical instruments provide an exceptional complementary counterpoint that envelops the entire event and the artworks in an atmosphere of pantheist and tacit complicities and latencies. Nicole de Pontcharra, vicepresident of *ART for The World*, and Dominique Follmi were active participants in the organisation of these collateral activities.

The precedents for this international event in Marrakesh and for this collective spiritual inclination can be found in *Promenades* (Geneva Contemporary Art Centre, 1987), *Tresor de Voyage* (Venice Biennale, 1993) and the already-mentioned *Dialogue de Paix* (Geneva, 1995), as well as the various individual exhibitions in the MAGASIN in Grenoble, all organised and promoted by Adelina v. Furstenberg.

At the same time, the city of Marrakesh and its historic significance — the meeting of great civilisations, the coexistence of the past and the present — lend a sufficiently explicit context of diversity and plurality, of simultaneity between East and West and between North and South. It is another dimension that from the very borders goes beyond the quotidian, where personal questions of existence acquire a new, journeying meaning, as yet undefined from each side of the four cardinal points. But we also join Clementine Deliss (2) and Achille Bonito

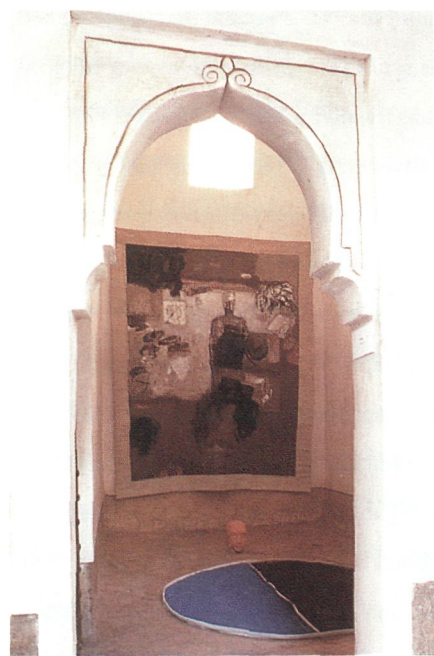
Oliva (3) in the floating, wandering and ethereal appreciation of this dialogue/meeting among artworks the labyrinth of the Medersa, where echoes of *El mulku lilla* and *El'izz lilla* can still be heard, in the heart of an architecture that allows the works to address the unnameable on the strength of being arranged along an overall concept that spans all the senses and all forms: the void, silence and its absence. Bagnoli offered a white baptismal font with a mirror instead of Christian holy water in the center. The Navajo Joe Ben created a mandala-like tapestry of sand with animistic cardinal signs. Silvie Defraoui presented two "Multiplication Tables" where two mirrors, facing each other, fertilised the profundity and the height of the platonic surfaces of difference and repetition. El Sy installed two sackcloth tapestries, floating in the chamber like carpets that rise from the floor, like



Miguel Ángel Ríos, "El cielo de México no se puede medir", 1996.



banners from another dimension. Shirazeh Houshiary displayed 2 monochrome paintings in which careful observation reveals a calligraphy that sketches geometric figures of concentration and expansion. Ilya Kabakov places us comfortably on a contemplative mat in *The Blue Carpet*, surrounded by small, repeating poetic works and academic nature drawings. Anish Kapoor fills the silence of his space with 2 blue circular structures, like black holes, confronting both sides of the chamber that absorbed all reflection and robbed all presumptions of meaning. Rachid Koraichi installed *Hommage a Ibn Arabi in a dialogue* with an otherworldly archaeology. Andrea Marescalchi, drawing on the *Sufi tradition of bird languages*, presented a coral-like installation of watercolours on paper, in which the song was silence. Mari Carmen Perlingeiro traced 5



Mohamed Kacimi, "Etat d'être", 1997.



Silvie Defraoui. "Dans le cadre des histoires... la maison sur la plage", 1996.

alabaster moons on the floor in tribute to femininity, the night and madness. Sarkis presented a white ceremonial robe in *La Domenika* and Chen Zen presented *Chaise de Nirvana*, an installation of assembled chairs that formed an empty sphere, open in its zenith, where it seemed impossible to sit and meditate about anything. This static, immobile character of meditation contrasts with the circular generality and its universal, mobile character. All of these works (along with the already-familiar and equally-outstanding works of Farid Belkahia, Alighiero & Boetti, Kacimi, Sol LeWitt, Miguel Angel Ríos and Pat Steir) converted this meeting into an event that holds many important and wide-ranging implications for the plural discourse that we aim to transmit in the pages of *Atlántica*: respect for differences and an active dialogue

between East and West, North and South.

#### NOTES

- (1) With the sponsorship of His Majesty King Hassan II, the Moroccan Ministry for Cultural Affairs and the Arab World Institute in Paris, in addition to the Swiss Chamber of Commerce and the Swiss Embassy, the Museum of Marrakesh and *Vogue Italy*, *Meditations* has also received exemplary institutional and economic support. Other contributors have included the National Office for Development and Cooperation of the department of Foreign Affairs in Bern; UNESCO; Royal Air Maroc, the Cimeteries de l'Oriental; the Societe Privee de Surveillance; the Hotel kenzi semiramis and Quadrichomie in Rabat. The inauguration of the Museum of Marrakesh, on the 14th, and the inauguration of *Meditations* were attended by S.A.R. Princess Lalla Hasna, the counsellor to His Majesty the King, Andre Azoulay and the Minister for Cultural Affairs Abdellah Azmani; the Minister for Youth and Sports; the Governor for the Marrakesh-Medina prefecture; and the president of the Urban Community and the *elus de la Wilaya* of Marrakesh.
- (2) She presented the 2 published editions of METRONOME, the traveling magazine that she now directs. Edition Number 0 was published in Dakar and Edition Number 1 in London. Edition Number 3 will presumably be published in Berlin.
- (3) He explained his new project concerning *art of the diaspora* that he will present next year in Naples, where he was born. It is a project that deals with *traveling art*, from the Renaissance to the present.



I. Kabakov, "The blue carpet", 1997.