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SCMA ANNOUNCES 2023 ARTIST IN RESIDENCE ABDESSAMAD EL MONTASSIR

Artist in Residence shares stories of the Sahara through photo, video, and research



February 3, 2023, Northampton, MA —Artist Abdessamad El Montassir will join the Smith College Museum of Art (SCMA) as an Artist in Residence (AIR) from March 6 – April 21, 2023.

El Montassir practices art at the crossroads of research and creation. He creates photos and videos to revive buried histories of North Africa. His collaborations with scientists, citizens, and activists will bring a viewpoint rarely seen in the United States. El Montassir's engagement with the Smith College community adds to knowledge of Saharan, North African, and Middle Eastern scholarship and research processes. His residency will include a presentation to the public in Spring 2023.

During his residency, El Montassir will explore complex social situations through his work. *Âbide l'kadia* is an interdisciplinary project that shines a light on communities of slaves and Haratins (literally "second group of free people") in North Africa. In the Sahara, and particularly in Mauritania, slavery remains widespread despite its official abolition, and talking about it is still prohibited. Groups of former slaves and Haratins called the Meddaha have created contemporary spaces of emancipation and protest. *Âbide l'kadia* plunges us into the poetry and music produced by these communities, as well as non-human elements.

El Montassir is a bearer of stories and his backdrop is the Sahara: he tells the desert, unfettered, with the freedom of hypothesis. He was born in 1989 in Morocco, and currently lives and works between Boujdour and eastern France. He graduated from the National Institute of Fine Arts of Tetouan and the Ecole Normale Supérieure of Meknes. From 2017 to 2020, he was an associate fellow at IMÉRA - Institute for Advanced Study in Marseille. He is currently the recipient of the MÉCÈNES DU SUD grant and the ADAGP x Bétonsalon grant, for which he is developing a project in partnership with Bétonsalon and the Kandinsky Library of the Centre Pompidou in Paris.

He has participated in several exhibitions including *Mémoire des cendres* curated by Paul de Sorbier at Maison Salvat (Labège), *Maa ka Maaya ka ca a yere kono* for the 13th Bamako Encounters (Bamako), *Les Sentinelles* curated by Pascale Cassagnau and Camille Leprince at Institut du Monde Arabe (Tourcoing), *Leave No Stone Unturned [Remuer la terre]* curated by Clelia Coussonnet at Le Cube - independent art room (Rabat), *Ce qui s'oublie et ce qui reste* curated by Isabelle Renard and Meriem Berrada at the Musée de l'histoire de l'immigration (Paris), *Invisible* curated by Alya Sebti for the Dakar Biennale and the ifa Gallery

Berlin. *This residency is made possible by the trust and support of Amy Shepherd Weinberg '82; Robin Bracken Villa '65; and the Contemporary Artist Project fund.*

Image credit: Abdessamad El Montassir by (c) Franck Alix / La Cinémathèque de Toulouse

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ABOUT SCMA

As a teaching museum affiliated with Smith College, SCMA is dedicated to connecting people to art, ideas and each other by engaging people with firsthand experiences of art, artists and museum practice; collecting, researching, presenting and preserving an expansive collection of art in the service of learning, teaching and critical dialogue; and by fostering an environment that welcomes diverse perspectives and inspires imagination.

In SCMA's galleries, classrooms and Cunningham Center for the Study of Prints, Drawings, and Photographs visitors experience a world-class collection that includes modern and contemporary art, American and western European masterworks, antiquities, emerging collections of Asian and African art and a comprehensive collection of works on paper. SCMA and the Museum Shop are open to the public year round Tuesday–Sunday, 11am to 4pm.

An accredited member of the American Alliance of Museums and a founding member of Museums10, a regional cultural collaboration, SCMA is also a member of the College Art Association and the New England Museum Association.

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