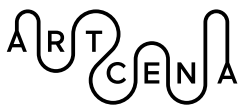




AN OVERVIEW OF STREET AND CIRCUS ARTS IN MOROCCO



ARTCENA is the National Centre for Circus, Street and Theatre Arts, created by the French Ministry of Culture. It coordinates Circostrada and has a permanent seat on its Steering Committee. It works closely with sector professionals and offers them publications and multimedia resources through its digital platform. It develops mentoring, training, tools and services to help them in their daily practices. It provides support to contemporary creation through national programmes and encourages international development of these three sectors.



This publication was written by **Claudine Dussollier** and edited by **Circostrada**



Since 2003, Circostrada Network has been working to develop and structure the fields of circus and street arts in Europe and beyond. With more than 100 members from over 30 countries, it helps building a sustainable future for these sectors by empowering cultural players through activities in observation and research, professional exchanges, advocacy, capacity-building and information.

FOREWORD

What is the landscape and what project(s) exist relating to street and circus arts?

In Morocco, cultural figures are strengthening the links between artistic creativity and place(s), on a local, regional and international level.

Since the inaugural États Généraux de la Culture (General Assembly on Culture) in 2014, the landscape for street and circus arts has evolved considerably, with the arrival on the scene of new companies and projects, the creation of a Moroccan street arts federation as well as international cooperation projects. At a time when the twelve Moroccan regions are developing their Regional Development Plans (RDPs), how are artists and culture professionals addressing artistic issues in their territories and promoting their development locally?

After Tunis in October 2017, Circostrada, in partnership with Racines (a member of the network) joined forces to run a conference in Tiznit providing a forum for reflection and discussions on questions relating to international cooperation and the structuring of street and circus arts in Morocco. This KAHWA was held in Tiznit on 8th November as part of the third États Généraux de la Culture, an event open to all street and circus arts performers and professionals.


The second KAHWA conference was convened as part of an annual meeting cycle initiated by Circostrada – the European Network for Circus and Street Arts (coordinated by ARTCENA, the Paris-based National Centre for Circus and Street Arts and Theatre) – with the aim of strengthening, nourishing and developing professional and artistic collaborations between Europe and the countries of the Southern Mediterranean region.



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© GriotTE, Awaln'Art
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ABOUT THE ÉTATS GÉNÉRAUX DE LA CULTURE

TIZNIT, the 8th Amur'Art festival and the third États Généraux de la Culture in Morocco

Racines has been organising the biennial États Généraux de la Culture (General Assembly on Culture) since 2014.

This national event is attended by Moroccan and international culture professionals and is dedicated to the evaluation of achievements in cultural policy that have taken place since the previous assembly. Evidence is collected through an ongoing process of monitoring, analysis, surveys, mapping, data collection and meetings with stakeholders throughout the country.

The États Généraux de la Culture is also an opportunity to share expertise and good practices, and to network with other professionals, institutions and users. It runs parallel to an arts and cultural programme of events that is open to the public.

The theme of the most recent event was 'Cultural policies in the regions'. It focused on evaluating the implementation of the new Moroccan law on regionalisation and the role of regional government in implementing regional cultural policies.

Each États Généraux de la Culture culminates with the issuing of recommendations in relation to cultural policies in Morocco, as



© Universe Pic

well as to cooperation projects with African, Arab and European partners.

Last year, the États Généraux de la Culture took place in Tiznit, in partnership with the Tiznit Association for urban cultures, as part of the 8th edition of the Amur'Art festival. Around a hundred attendees (artists, cultural professionals, experts, NGOs) came to-

gether in Tiznit and the surrounding region of Souss Massa from Morocco, Africa (Uganda, Zimbabwe, Senegal, Rwanda, Burkina Faso, the Democratic Republic of the Congo), the Arab world (Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon, Tunisia) and Europe (France, The Netherlands, Switzerland, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Germany, Slovenia, Turkey).



Further information

["Culture is the solution"](#), a documentary on the third États Généraux de la Culture

Racines

Racines is a Moroccan non-governmental organisation (NGO) that aims to incorporate culture into public human, social and economic development policy. Racines was founded in 2010 by Moroccan cultural figures who were convinced that all African and Arab countries were experiencing common issues relating to culture: a lacklustre approach to cultural policy by the government, a lack of recognition of culture as a human right, weak creative industries, a lack of protection for artists' rights, insufficient availability of training in the field of culture, and so on. Projects run by Racines revolve around different themes and commitments: cultural policy (research, advocacy, mapping), arts and culture for social

development, entrepreneurship, training and strengthening the capacity of the sector, freedom of artistic expression, and the rights and status of artists.

Racines has been a member of Circostrada since 2017. The organisation leads the MARSAD project on public cultural policies in the Middle East and North Africa region (MENA) and hosts the pro tempore secretariat of the African Cultural Policy Network (ACPN), which was co-founded by two Racines members who sit on the Steering Committee (2017-2020).

In Autumn 2018, a complaint related to freedom of expression was filed against Racines, whose premises were used for

the filming of an episode entitled *L'épopée des nihilistes* (*The Epic of the Nihilists*) of the satirical programme *Un dîner, deux cons*¹ (*One Dinner, Two Fools*), which was broadcast online. It was judged to be provocative and, on 16 April 2019, the Moroccan court ruled on appeal that the organisation should be closed, despite all it had accomplished in the country with its fundamental work on Moroccan cultural practices and the artistic potential of the country. Recognised nationally and internationally for the quality of its initiatives in support of cultural development in Morocco, the closure of this organisation is a huge loss in the cultural landscape of the country.

¹ Watch the [show](#)



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THE LANDSCAPE FOR STREET AND CIRCUS ARTS IN MOROCCO

A contrasting picture...

The landscape for street and circus arts in Morocco features dynamic teams, talented artists and organisations that do much in the fields of creation, production, promotion, training and research. Many of these cultural players form partnerships with a range of European representatives, securing invaluable artistic experiences and cooperation for all those involved.

However, these teams do not receive the recognition they deserve, nor any real support from the public sector and regional organisations, which significantly weakens the functioning of the sector and obstructs the professional development of artists in Morocco.

...that is taking shape in spite of it all.

From Marrakesh and Tangier to Oujda, Salé and Casablanca, those involved in the arts and with the public are running projects, festivals, biennales, open spaces and initiatives relating to circus and performance arts.

The talents of Colokolo¹ and the Groupe Acrobatique de Tanger² are internationally renowned; the École de Cirque de Salé has trained many circus performers over 20 years reaching more than 200 young people looking to start their careers; the Théâtre Nomade³ in Salé and Casablanca hosts many young people inside their big top and provides a variety of training courses while producing and touring shows that blend street arts, masks, puppetry, acrobatics and commedia dell'Arte performances.



© Hassan Amimi Awaln'art 2015 Place Jemaa El Fna

For the last 15 years, Marrakesh-based Awaln'art⁴ has been helping Moroccan, European and sub-Saharan African artists to rediscover the city, offering a new fusion between popular traditions and contemporary street arts.

These initiatives have been long-lasting, meaning that, two decades later, their impact can be measured. After having created four shows which became global sensations,

it is in Tangier itself that the collective of acrobats decided to base themselves, opening their own residential facility and studio. In Marrakesh, after ten years of the Awaln'art festival, the Éclats de Lune collective are shaking things up with a new urban laboratory in a former wasteland dubbed "La Cimenterie" (Cement Factory). In Salé, the École de Cirque de SHEMS'Y⁵ has launched Karacena, an International

¹ For more information on Colokolo, see page 20.

² For more information on Groupe acrobatique de Tanger, see page 17.

³ For more information on Théâtre Nomade, see page 12-13.

⁴ For more information on Awaln'art, see page 14.

⁵ For more information on Ecole Nationale de Cirque de SHEMS'Y, see page 18.

Circus Biennale that is the visible part of its public platform for art in the Mediterranean. In addition, it has opened a new venture in Fez, confident that there is a role for young people in this renowned artistic city, bringing together the circus school, the population and an international public with an interest in sacred music.

The Théâtre Nomade is preparing to hit the road again in the rural areas of the Salé region with both big-top and street shows, while maintaining its base in the centre of

Casablanca for as long as they are able to retain the former slaughterhouses as their premises.

These initiatives as well as others like the Karane¹ festival in Oujda are making their mark on the map of Morocco, forming an incipient network of street and circus arts groups active in nearly half of the country's 12 regions. It is this growth that Racines, a member of the Circostrada network, started to highlight in 2014 with its inaugural Moroccan "États Généraux de la Culture".

The KAHWA#2 conference in Tiznit, which was organised in partnership with Racines, was an excellent opportunity for an update on the position of street and circus arts in Morocco in the run up to the third États Généraux de la Culture on the theme of the regionalisation of cultural policies in Morocco. Preparations for KAHWA#2 provided an opportunity to mobilise stakeholders in advance of the États Généraux and to prepare an initial resource package. It raised several crucial subjects that are high on the agenda for Moroccan artists and professionals.

Blending traditional and popular practices with creation

From storytelling to acrobatics, sacred music to Gnawa, religious celebrations to urban and rural festivities, Morocco is rich in multiple traditions that often echo those in neighbouring countries to the East and South. A crossroads between Africa and Europe, Morocco has always welcomed merchants, travellers and artists who have brought their cultures and skills with them. Today, sub-Saharan migrants continue to cross Morocco, like those encountered during the evenings in Tiznit, waiting to set off on the next stage of their journey. The country is at once African, Arab and European, and its local and popular cultures are powerful sources of inspiration.

Contemporary artistic endeavours are not turning their backs on these riches. On the contrary, they are embracing them. Since early 2006, Khalid Tamer² and Alwaln'art have been working to create links between the acrobats of Jemaa el-Fna Square in Marrakesh and performing arts and street performers. Their programme is expressly focused on bringing together extremely

different art forms by arranging residencies and collaborations for African and European artists, and through workshops producing collaborations between young Moroccan and international artists in all disciplines.

His aim is to revitalise tradition through creativity, thereby opening up new perspectives and possibilities. The interplay between tradition and creativity also forged the destiny of the traditionally trained young virtuoso acrobats of the Groupe Acrobatique de Tanger, who, at the initiative of Sanae El Kamouni³, joined forces with Aurélien Bory, a French circus performer invited to give a workshop in Tangier with the support of the Institut Français. Their performances – the outcome of true artistic fusion – have toured the world. Ten years and several shows later, the collective of artists is refocusing on their home town, reinvesting in the tradition and realities of society to draw new inspiration and create a vocabulary that will support this new artistic synthesis.



© MarianFilali_2015_Jemaa EL Fna_CaravaneMarrakech_

Numerous examples currently exist of fruitful fusions between traditional and performance arts in Morocco that cut across the dynamics of street and circus arts.

¹ For more information on Festival Karane, see 15.

² Khalid Tamer, a Moroccan cultural entrepreneur and co-founder of the Éclats de Lune Collective and Alwaln'art, launched the African Capitals of Culture initiative, the first of which will take place in Marrakesh in 2020.

³ Sanae El Kamouni, who founded the Groupe Acrobatique de Tanger project, is the executive director.

Creating a public space and creating in public spaces

“There is no lack of audiences in Morocco; the slightest incident and there is a crowd of spectators”. This remark by Adel Essaadani¹ replaces the democratic significance of art at the centre of the debate. For artists who want to perform in public spaces, the issue is more one of appearing in public with a high-quality performance that is both entertaining and inspiring. This desire to ‘educate the public’ is important to the teams involved in KAHWA. The educational dimension of their work is key to many of them. This aim, in tandem with a commitment to high artistic standards, is easy to understand in a country where the vast majority of the population is distanced from all forms of culture apart from traditional festivals, television

and social media. The national education system is insufficient, and public policies are struggling to respond to the expectations and needs of young people. In this context, performing in public, including the community in initiatives and training young people in artistic skills are means of addressing the overwhelming need for education for all. Even when financial resources are scarce, these projects contribute to the creation of new public spaces within neighbourhoods, towns and villages.

Despite the vitality of urban cultures, creative endeavours and public performances are subject to regulations and prohibitions relating to political demonstrations. This classification places significant limitations

on what is possible, and artists performing in the streets of Casablanca or elsewhere may be arrested at any time and their instruments confiscated. A lobbying programme that seeks to change the law governing freedom of expression in public places through the creation of a distinction between artistic and other kinds of event is currently being deployed. This would avoid the difficulties that frequently arise from decision-making that relies on the authorities’ interpretations of performances. KAHWA participants highlight the fact that artists who perform innovative work in public often concern the authorities more than stilt-walkers or fire-eaters! Entertainment versus creativity.

Finance and professional aspirations

The three workshops organised as part of the KAHWA event were focussed on the sharing and comparison of professional experiences. The dominant concern is the absence of adequate financial resources to develop artistic projects. When a company develops a new show, it will only be performed in a very limited number of festivals due to a lack of venues with the financial resources required to purchase it. The sector is still far too reliant on European cultural institutions, particularly the Institut Français, when it comes to reaching audiences. The only way in which a Moroccan artist or circus company can perform and evolve artistically is to do five or six dates in Morocco and then tour abroad. The Ministry of Culture sometimes puts out calls for projects. However, without any continuity, these occasional measures do not allow organisations to introduce any long-term residency programmes or collaborative projects. As a result, Moroccan artists and performers are highly dependent on overseas institutes, private foundations and European backers for project financing. This



© MarianFilali_Awaln'art 2015 Av Mohamed V Caravane de Marrakech_Fodeba

¹ Adel Essaadani, co-founder and general coordinator of Racines until the closure of the organisation in April 2019.

situation is not without its consequences: it sometimes leads to let-downs and fails to cater to emerging needs. There is unquestionably a need for a proper public cultural policy at a national and regional level in Morocco. Despite the fact that most recognised artists, circus performers, dancers and street artists are obliged to work outside of Morocco to earn their living, some aspire to perform in their own country.

However, they do not see this as a possibility at present.

There is no lack of ideas and needs. Some are fulfilled, others, outstanding: artistic and professional training, pooling of resources through the creation of a production and promotion agency, further international cooperation. On the latter point, there is strong interest in the French operation Africa 2020, but it also raises lots of

questions. Exceptional cultural events such as 'Marrakesh, the first African Capital of Culture in 2020' represent real potential in terms of visibility and artistic recognition for street and circus arts. In addition, the creation of the Federation of Street Arts is an initial step in organising the profession, drawing recognition and support for operators and artists.

Cooperation: the challenges of "copy/create"

KAHWA participants from Morocco, Europe, the Middle East and Africa all agreed that international cooperation provides artists with confidence and recognition. It bolsters budding careers. However, relying solely on external funding and submitting to, rather than controlling, outside influence on aesthetics carries certain risks.

Retaining autonomy within a collaboration calls for reciprocity, an understanding of the other party and a shared view of the deve-

lopment of a partner's region, be they European or Moroccan. The concept of twinning organisations in different countries is a possible source of new approaches to international collaboration. Several co-productions and collaborations with partners of the Circostrada network are cited as examples. It seems possible, and indeed desirable, to seek further new models for international partnerships, which would benefit artists, companies, organisations and the partners'

respective regions. To draw inspiration from European production systems, but to create methodologies that suit the Moroccan context.

At its heart, the philosophy of cooperation is about getting out of one's comfort zone, understanding the expectations and constraints on both sides and making time for dialogue before co-creating projects.

Morocco: a country where culture is the solution

This KAHWA was part of the third États Généraux de la Culture, which has been organised by Racines since 2014. This year's event focused on 'Cultural policies in the regions'. Organised to coincide with the Amur'Art festival in Tiznit*, this two-day event focused on the implementation of the new Moroccan law on regionalisation and the

role of regional communities in implementing regional cultural policies. These new regulations improve the prospects of gaining recognition of the artistic strengths and potential in Moroccan regions. The next steps will be to bring performances to towns and villages, host performers on a regular basis and integrate culture into regional development.

Issues faced by those involved in street arts and raising awareness of circus companies and urban cultures in local and regional communities were, of course, also part of this two-day debate. However, tangible prospects are still few and far between in a country where culture is also a solution.

SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS OF STREET AND CIRCUS ARTS IN MOROCCO: WHAT'S THE DIAGNOSIS?

In 2014, Racines undertook a sectorial analysis of 18 artistic disciplines including street arts (urban dance, graffiti, parkour, skateboarding, etc.). Since then, there has been a considerable evolution in these sectors with the emergence of new organisations supporting creativity and production, an increase in international performances by certain companies and the establishment of cooperation projects. Paradoxically, promotion and, in particular, training continue to be the weakest link in these sectors.

The diagnosis can be summarised as follows¹:

| STRENGTHS | WEAKNESSES |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Dynamic environment, young artists and structures <hr/> ● Attempts to structure the profession and the creation of CNAR (National Centre of Street Arts) <hr/> ● Recognition of the sector as a live performance discipline by the Ministry of Culture, empowered to seek more support for creativity <hr/> ● Possibility of revenue complementarity between stage and street <hr/> ● The use of new media, both non-electronic (canvases, design, comics) and digital (digital arts, graphic design, illustrations, etc.) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Limited number of creation and distribution structures <hr/> ● Few performance venues (some festivals, a few galleries for street arts) <hr/> ● Scarcity of training (a single circus school) <hr/> ● Irregular educational opportunities (training, workshops) <hr/> ● Existing organisations are under-equipped <hr/> ● Scarcity of rehearsal studios <hr/> ● Little institutional support <hr/> ● Lack of resources (human, financial, technical) <hr/> ● Little involvement by girls (male-dominated) |
| OPPORTUNITIES | THREATS |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Desire of stakeholders to organise the sector: creation of the Moroccan Streets Arts Federation, feasibility study for the establishment of CNAR(s) <hr/> ● International presence and visibility of artists <hr/> ● Performances at multidisciplinary festivals or at events focussed on other art forms (such as music) <hr/> ● Development of training (amateurs) through workshops <hr/> ● Some private sponsors interested in supporting new work | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Problems accessing public spaces (permission from authorities) <hr/> ● Distorted perception of the artistic genre <hr/> ● Breakdown/lack of collaboration by sector professionals |

¹ This analysis was conducted as a SWOT analysis, i.e. of: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats.

STREET ARTS: A DIVERSITY OF APPROACHES IN THE PUBLIC SPACE

Théâtre Nomade in Casablanca - Towards a national stage for street arts?

After touring the world with Ton Und Kir-schen, a German travelling theatre, Mohammed El Hassouni and Soufia El Boukhari founded Théâtre Nomade in 2006. Returning to Moroccan audiences, they want to open up new possibilities for street artists and revive oral and ancestral tradi-

tion within contemporary street theatre. Masks, puppets, costumes, creating new apparatuses, acrobatics, music, and more: Théâtre Nomade has a rich wealth of material, knowledge and gimmicks to liven up the performances it gives in its big top, the streets or in the few theatres operating in Morocco. With a huge range of influences that include carnival-style street theatre, Moroccan popular arts, the oral effervescence of souks, and the energy of the streets and the inhabitants, they create a shared

experience and collective voice through a blend of artistic styles. Théâtre Nomade are advocates for universal and fair access to culture and art, and have developed a touring model that reaches areas with little or no access to culture. Touring has enabled the group to

start at the Cultural « Fabrique », on the site of the former slaughterhouses in the Hay Mohammadi district. From here, they work with the young inhabitants of this disadvantaged area, which is earmarked for redevelopment in the near future as part of the city's urban development plan.

In the meantime, the group is making the most of its artistic strengths and experience of working with different partners in Europe (including with FAI-AR in 2010*) to promote CNAR'M, a National Street Arts Centre project that will be a first for Morocco. This project would have both a fixed location (in Casablanca) and a touring arm (in several regions of Morocco to open up performances, workshops and the creative process to people throughout the country).

CNAR'M would enable Théâtre Nomade to strengthen its work in providing support to Moroccan artists. It could also give rise to projects and opportunities for collaboration. The organisation is currently pursuing the following courses of action at the slaughterhouse, despite limited resources and insufficient commitment from the public sector:

- Al Awrach, an introduction to street arts programme
- Al Machatil, a professional street arts training programme
- Al Maktaba, a resource centre and library
- Al Khayma, an artistic residency, studio and Big Top performance venue.

As part of the CNAR'M project, Théâtre Nomade is requesting the creation of diploma courses in the field of street arts in Morocco.



© Théâtre Nomade

tions within contemporary street theatre. Masks, puppets, costumes, creating new apparatuses, acrobatics, music, and more: Théâtre Nomade has a rich wealth of material, knowledge and gimmicks to liven up the performances it gives in its big top, the streets or in the few theatres operating in Morocco. With a huge range of influences that include carnival-style street theatre, Moroccan popular arts, the oral effervescence of souks, and the energy of the streets and the inhabitants, they create a shared

make themselves known all over the country with their spectacular urban parades. Théâtre Nomade's processions are unforgettable occasions involving entire communities - fantastical events that see daily life suspended and whole neighbourhoods brought to life.

Théâtre Nomade worked in various parts of Salé until 2011, before moving to the districts of Bouknadel and Sidi Taïbi. In 2014, the group moved to Casablanca for a new

Théâtre Nomade*'s 'La Fête Populaire'

"La Fête Populaire" was held in the Salé shanty town of Dawar Mika in 2010. The project was carried out in partnership with FAI-AR, the EU, INDH (Initiative pour le Développement Humain), the Goethe Institute and the Institut Français. It marked a true coming together of the population, Moroccan regional authorities and of Europe and Morocco in general in a highly disadvantaged area. 231 shanty town inhabitants took part. Over the course of a year, their lives centred around putting together a show combining street arts, circus and theatre. In addition to the purely cultural elements of the project, it also involved a free vocational training programme, created social ties and highlighted and promoted the skills and the history of the area.

The involvement of overseas organisations was essential to the project's success. It allowed the company to work in optimal conditions and to benefit from technical support from street arts specialists, with whom lasting relations were forged. The partnership with FAI-AR was then extended when FAI-AR students were invited to train at Théâtre Nomade.

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Cultural « Fabrique » of Casablanca old slaughterhouses © Claudine Dussollier

Awaln'art – A laboratory for creation in public spaces

In 2006, the Moroccan collective Éclats de Lune worked with French group Graines de Soleil to launch a festival called Awaln'art – Rencontres Artistiques Internationales en Places Publiques (international artistic encounters in public places) – and to open La Fabrique des Arts en Places Publiques (the Performing Arts Factory), a rehearsal and training studio and workshop venue. This festival provided impetus for the creation of shows and parades, hosted Moroccan and international artists and supported project initiators. For over a decade, Awaln'art has influenced policy-makers and cultural figures and institutions in Marrakesh and the surrounding region. Designed as a laboratory, Awaln'art has experimented with new forms of expression, new collaborations and new regions, whilst creating a full and diverse network of national and international partners.

From the outset, the question of the festival's wider impact was addressed through the creation of partnerships between Moroccan and overseas artists and professionals, the promotion of south-south partnerships and audience relations. A wide range of methods to encourage interaction between artists, professionals and audiences have been used, such as master classes, creation and design studios, workshops, courses, writing residencies, incubators, in-situ projects and seminars. Awaln'art has worked locally (in Marrakesh and its surrounding towns) whilst also developing cooperation projects with African and international partners, which have had a big impact in other parts of the world.

In 2016, the team decided to take stock and stopped running the festival in order to refocus this grand cultural and artistic laboratory into a "hybrid space" for fostering artistic creation, cultural intervention and support for stakeholders on a local, regional and national level. Awaln'art then moved the laboratory to a disused site in Marrakesh's former industrial quarter.

"La Conserverie" became a place for themed pluri-disciplinary experimentation in and around an urban factory setting. It hosts several street arts groups, attracts collaborations with those involved in arts and culture in Marrakesh and organises regular events that in-



© Saad Alami, gare de Marrakech Awaln'art, 2016

clude exhibitions, residencies, performances and shows. Awaln'art is supporting the area and relationships between the local public and private sector through the creation of a laboratory for "arts, heritage and urbanism". With the support of POLAU, an urban arts centre in Tours, France, Awaln'art organised its first "arts, heritage and urbanism" encounter in November 2018. The event was centred on the redevelopment of former industrial sites, urban transformation and the fostering of African expertise and experience in these areas.

Awaln'art has also initiated a new venture under the aegis of UCLG Africa (United Cities and Local Governments of Africa): African Capitals of Culture. In November 2018, the African Capitals of Culture organising committee designated Marrakesh as the first African Capital of Culture in 2020.



Coming soon

Awaln'art, Entretiens sur 10 ans de création en places publiques

Textes : Floriane Gaber / Format 19 x 23,5 cm / 350 pages

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AMCA and KARANE in Oujda

Achbal Maroc Culturel et Artistique (AMCA) works to promote culture and individual freedoms, freedom of expression for all and freedom of artistic creation. It fosters sustainable, fair and human development by means of generational and intercultural dialogue through the arts, and incorporates street theatre techniques in its projects.

In 2019, AMCA has been working on a project entitled “Nos femmes d’abord” (“Our Women First”), which promotes a

culture of gender equality in the seven provinces that make up Morocco’s Oriental region: Oujda-Angad, Jerada, Figuig, Guercif, Nador, Berkane and Taourirt, three of which are urban provinces and four rural. The project has a threefold strategy for involving audiences in questions of gender equality for a modern society: public debates, training and performance arts. It is supported by a French Embassy programme created to fight gender stereotypes.

The Karane Festival is open and accessible to all, and is developed with the active involvement of local populations. It is a participatory and artistic community event focussed on celebrating differences, whether they are cultural, artistic or generational. The fifth Karane festival will pay homage to oral and written literature in four languages (Arabic, French, English and Amazigh) on the theme “Literature as a means of accessing culture”.

Contact

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🌐 [Aftermovie Festival Karane 2017](#)

📍 [Festival Karane](#)



© Festival Karane

Fed-Lmaghrib/Féd-Maroc: the Moroccan Federation for Street Arts

This very young organisation was founded in 2018 by a group of artists seeking to address the isolated nature of initiatives in different regions of Morocco, to organise a budding new professional sector and to give a voice to Moroccan street artists.

The Federation is composed of both legal entities (organisations and companies) and individuals (artists and cultural entrepreneurs) who believe that organising the street arts sector in Morocco is key to garnering recognition for all types of art in the public space.

The objectives of Fed-Lmaghrib:

- To offer a forum for discussion and interaction for those involved in street arts (performers, project bearers, researchers, etc.).
- To further the recognition of street arts in Morocco and help them reach audiences across the country
- To support training for street arts performers

- To bring new meaning to the public space and support a dynamic of project development by new generations of street performers.
- To open the sector up to international opportunities to discuss good practices and develop street arts in Morocco.

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© Bérengère Bienfait - Awal'n'art 2013 - Cie Carabosse au Palais Badii Marrakech

As is often the case, the boundaries between art forms are not entrenched in Morocco. A single group of artists can cross over the boundaries between dance, circus, theatre and music, and will perform in public spaces, a big top or theatres in accordance with the projects and opportunities available. The distinction made between circus arts and street arts in Morocco in this KAHWA publication is therefore rather tenuous at best!

CIRCUS ARTS: ARTISTIC DYNAMICS AND TRAINING

Le Groupe acrobatique de Tanger - TANGER : Scènes du Maroc

Artistic tradition and creation

Morocco has a unique form of acrobatics with a long history, performed to a very high standard by many troupes and families. They generally reproduce the same numbers that they perform in the streets, in traditional circuses or for contracts with the tourism and entertainment industries.

In 2003, Sanae El Kamouni, who has known all the acrobats in her city since she was a child, met Aurélien Bory, who was developing his *Plan B* show. She recognised the potential for a crossover between Moroccan acrobatics and contemporary circus, and invited Aurélien to Tanger (where she was working at the time) with the support of the Institut Français. After just a few workshops, they decided to create something new together. *Taoub*, which was first released in June 2004, was a resounding international success with over 400 performances. It led to the formation of the Groupe Acrobatique de Tanger and Scènes du Maroc. In 2009, they met up with two Swiss directors, Martin Zimmermann and Dimitri de Perrot, who created *Chouf Ouchouf* for and with them. They then rejoined Aurélien Bory to create *Azimut*, a commission for the Grand Théâtre in Aix-en-Provence as part of the Marseilles 2013 celebrations.

In 2016, having won acclaim from global audiences and theatres and having grown through their collaborations and partnerships, the Group Acrobatique de Tanger decided to return to their roots in Tangiers and worked for the first time with Abdeliazide Senhadji from Cie XY, giving rise to the *Halka* show.

Since then, the company has grown to reflect its own influences at the crossroads of several cultures, drawing inspiration from encounters



© GAT

and collaborations. Its relationship with tradition and artistic creation has been radically transformed. Rooted in warfare tradition, their acrobatics resolutely belong to the circus arts, combining human pyramids, circular movements, songs, jumps and dance. Its priorities are to challenge, preserve and promote Moroccan acrobatics. The Groupe Acrobatique de Tanger base their approach on a permanent quest for links between a traditional art form and contemporary creativity, between a country and its people.

Rooted in Tanger

Placing popular culture at the heart of its work and with an activist and democratic culture open to all, the company has been developing circus training activities and collaborations in Tanger for several years. Its aim is to help circus skills take root in Morocco, while enabling circus performers to meet and work together to create and discover new circus disciplines. Training is offered free-of-charge and is open to all. Artists come from all over Morocco and

all their costs are covered (accommodation, transport, food and training).

Little by little, the dream of establishing a creative hub for circus arts in Tanger is becoming a reality thanks to the Groupe Acrobatique de Tanger. Highly aware of its relationship to the city and its population, the company tries to invite the public to see its representations of residency output as often as possible. Cultural mediation work is conducted in advance. Moroccan acrobatics workshops are held frequently. The big top is a place for collaboration, discussion and creation, open to all circus performers. In a country with desperately limited places for performers to work, the company hopes that its hub will play an important role in structuring the circus arts sector in Morocco. In the meantime, two teams are currently on tour with *Halka* and *Taoub*. In parallel, a new team of artists, who are excellent in their respective disciplines, is being put together to create a new show directed by Maroussia Diaz Verbèke for release in 2020.

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📍 [Groupe acrobatique de Tanger](#)



Relevant resource

🌐 [Documentary](#)

École Nationale de Cirque SHEMS'Y in Salé: a community artistic platform for the Mediterranean

Founded in 1999 in Salé, the École Nationale de Cirque (National Circus School) SHEMS'Y has enabled hundreds of underprivileged children to enjoy the educational and social benefits of circus arts. The provision of vocational training for young people from disadvantaged areas is crucial to the sustainable development of regions and populations.

Training professional Moroccan circus artists

Since 2009, the École Nationale de Cirque SHEMS'Y has been training professional circus artists in the new state circus artists diplomas recognised by the Ministry of Vocational Training.

The training programme has two distinct elements, with time split between training at the national circus school and working as a performance professional as an artist, in stage management or running circus workshops that enables students to explore the various aspects of an artist's career during the programme. This method introduces young apprentices to the realities of a career as a circus artist and encourages them to understand the importance of working together for individual development and the need to find a unique body lan-

guage and artistic style to express the world around them.

In 2018, SHEMS'Y had 41 graduates, all of whom secured jobs in the sector, 45 ap-

proaches to these apprenticeship cycles. It offers a range of professional experiences, from urban performance to big top shows, from collaborations to solo work, and from choreographed



prentice artists in vocational training, 80 young people in the preparatory class for admittance to the school and 200 children learning circus skills.

Karacena: Biennale of Circus and Travelling Arts

From vocational training to performance skills, Karacena offers a vital platform for

movements to spectacular feats and dramatic interpretations. Karacena also provides a backdrop for intercultural exchange through the creation of shows uniting artists with various professional backgrounds and cultures, largely those from the Mediterranean (France, Morocco, Germany, Spain, Portugal, Italy, etc.) *Faire Monde (Make World)*, was the title of the 7th Karacena in 2018. The 8th Karacena will take place in 2020.



© Programme cover of Karacena 2018, by Caroline Leïla Frachet

A local and international artistic performance hub

As well as developing artistic creative projects with apprentices since 2009, SHEMS'Y has also hosted artistic and educational residencies for Moroccan and European circus companies (in partnership with the Institut Français in Morocco). *Awal Qalam* is a project that enables students to take spectacular and innovative performances from the drawing board to production. With 20 years of experience, the circus school has become a key artistic and cultural player in the landscape, on both a local and international level. These international links have enabled this hub of artistic performance to consolidate its role as a model for cultural projects on the southern shore of the Mediterranean. SHEMS'Y has signed cooperation agreements with the French

Embassy in Morocco, the Belgian development agency, the Finnish Embassy in Morocco, and others. Since 2011, SHEMS'Y has supported contemporary circus performance tours in big tops or theatres in Morocco's major cities, including Jaouad Essounani's *Islid Tislit*, Guillaume Bertrand's *Djinn Tonic*, Thierry Poquet's *Ambouctou* and Jaouad Essounani's *Yettou*.

Guillaume Bertrand, a SHEMS'Y partner artist, supported five apprentice artists through a process that culminated in the creation of a show named *Tarkiz* (an École Nationale de Cirque SHEMS'Y and Cie du 13e Quai co-production, performed at the Alba la Romaine festival in 2018 after a residency at La Cascade/France). Following on from a theatre production of *Tarkiz*, the two different forms of the production are currently touring with Cie du 13e Quai in Europe and with SHEMS'Y in Morocco.

Several companies created by SHEMS'Y graduates are now starting to gain recognition and perform internationally, mainly in Europe but also in Africa.

SHEMS'Y graduates have become cultural ambassadors, travelling freely from place to place and advocating their values of openness for a better way of living together in harmony. In 2019/20, SHEMS'Y will step up its international collaborations, particularly with ENSATT (the French national school of theatre arts and techniques).

Future developments

SHEMS'Y is currently opening a new centre in the Medina of Fez, which will provide both artistic training leading to qualifications and artistic residencies in different disciplines (live performance, photography, radio, music, etc.). The school wants to build bridges

between the city's signature artistic events (the world sacred music festival, the international photography festival, etc.) and the people who live alongside these events without having the means to understand or access them.

The aim is that this new project will bring added value to the population itself, who will be guided and trained to grasp the techniques, concepts and gestures. Circus, of course, will be a part of the project with an initial artistic residency¹ dedicated to the discipline, to contemporary dance and to sacred music planned for June 2019. SHEMS'Y will celebrate its 20th anniversary in style with *Awal Qalam*, a highly original performance created by apprentice artists in April 2019.

¹ "From the Bab Semmarine gate to New Fez and the centre "Kan ya ma kan...rda" (translation "once upon a time...tomorrow").

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📍 Ecole Nationale de Cirque de SHEMS'Y



© Alice Dufour Féronce, *Échecs et Mâts* - Cie La Fabrique des Petites Utopies

Compagnie Colokolo – Cirque Urbain Marocain (Casablanca, Morocco)

Casablanca-based Compagnie Coloko – Cirque Urbain Marocain (Urban Moroccan Circus) was formed in 2013, bringing together eight circus performers from the Ecole Nationale de Cirque SHEMS'Y. Their performances involve the teeterboard, Chinese poles, juggling, acrobalance, object manipulation and music.

Drawing on the pluri-disciplinary talents of its artists, Colokolo combines circus arts, dance and theatre in an original way and has developed a recognisably Moroccan kind of live show.

Between 2013 and 2016, when the company was based in the former slaughterhouses of

Casablanca, Colokolo opened Le LABO (the lab): its own work space dedicated to creativity and collaboration, where the company ran residencies for artists and projects, provided circus arts initiation workshops to young people in the area and organised the Ftw'Art street and circus arts encounters in Casablanca.



© Colokolo

This internationally renowned company has established a range of partnerships over the last six years, notably with Le Plus Petit Cirque du Monde (Bagneux, France), the École Nationale de Cirque SHEMS'Y (Salé, Morocco), the Fondation Touria et Abdelaziz Tazi (Casablanca, Morocco), Nil Obstrat - Espace de Création Artistique et Technique (Paris, France), Karwan (Marseille France), with support from the Cooperation and Cultural Action Department of the French Embassy in Rabat.

One of the issues facing this company, which regularly tours outside of Morocco, is accessing audiences in its own country more frequently, which would require greater recognition of the art form and additional resources.

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📍 [Colokolo - Cirque Urbain Marocain](#)

EURO-MEDITERRANEAN COOPERATION: THE BEDROCK OF ARTISTIC DEVELOPMENT!

Case studies: experiences of Circostrada members

While it is true that the development of street and circus arts in Morocco has been largely built on the talent and determined initiatives of specific cultural figures in cities across the country, it has also received validation and support from various forms of international cooperation, such as artistic exchanges, creative co-productions and distribution in Europe, technical cooperation, artistic and skills training, and institutional and financial support, mainly from embassies and the European Union.

A range of initiatives and schemes have been implemented to promote the development of artistic groups who, today, are crafting the environment we are watching emerge in late 2018. FAI-AR played a hugely stimulating role in 2010 for Théâtre Nomade through a co-production with Saleh, one of the French street arts school's training workshops¹. Since then, FAI-AR², which is a member of Circostrada, has developed educational training and support modules that can be designed and adapted to various national contexts and needs, as they were in 2016 with Art Rue³ in Tunis and in 2018 with Mahatat for Contemporary Art⁴ in Cairo.



© Universe Pic

The Al Waln'Art Festival has run for over 10 years in Marrakesh and has provided an excellent springboard for many artistic co-operations with artists, companies and cultural organisations from both the north and south. Éclats de Lune⁵ is perpetuating this international approach with its current projects. For example, the opening act of the 2018 SPOFFIN Festival⁶ (Amersfoort, The Netherlands), another Circostrada member, was Azalaï, a company that emerged from Éclats de Lune.

The team behind the SPOFFIN festival is planning on putting together a pro-

gramme with a Moroccan focus for 2020 or 2021. With this in mind, international exchanges are ongoing with the Marrakesh team, with SHEMS'Y, with artists from the Colokolo collective (who they met on a research trip organised by Circostrada to Addis Ababa in 2018) and with Skizo Makhloufi and the Parkour Partage collective from Casablanca.

In the realm of circus arts, it was the team from La Cascade⁷, a centre for circus and clown arts based in the Ardèche, France – also a member of Circostrada – who sup-

ported the Tarkiz show. The outcome of a collaboration between Guillaume Bertrand, Artistic Director of 13^e Quai based in the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region of France and SHEMS'Y circus school graduates. La Cascade supported the show through co-production and residency for three weeks. The preview show performed at the Alba Festival in July 2018 was a roaring success and generated much excitement among the public.

These joint projects allow Moroccan artists to gain recognition internationally and to

¹ See article on Théâtre Nomade page 12.

² FAIAR launched a free and interactive MOOC (Massive Online Open Course) entitled 'Create in public space' in September 2019.

³ L'ART RUE and DREAM CITY. For more info, you can also refer to the publication dedicated to KAHWA#1.

⁴ Mahatat for Contemporary Art

⁵ Al Waln'art, see article page 14.

⁶ SPOFFIN

⁷ La Cascade, Pôle National des Arts du Cirque (Bourg-Saint-Andéol France). See article on SHEMS'Y page 18.

hone their careers. This is particularly the case for circus performers and dancers. However, these positive dynamics cannot ever replace a true public policy for culture in Morocco in these two emerging art forms. These collaborations help artists to become professionals who can live from their art. However they have their limits: they are dependent on current European policies and are sometimes contingent to fashions and finite cultural cooperation financing from European countries.

KAHWA #2 in Tiznit emphasised the importance of government departments and local and regional councils taking these factors into account and the need for them to establish real measures to support the work being carried out by the cultural organisations in Morocco that are struggling to develop cultural projects tailored to local populations, young people and emerging



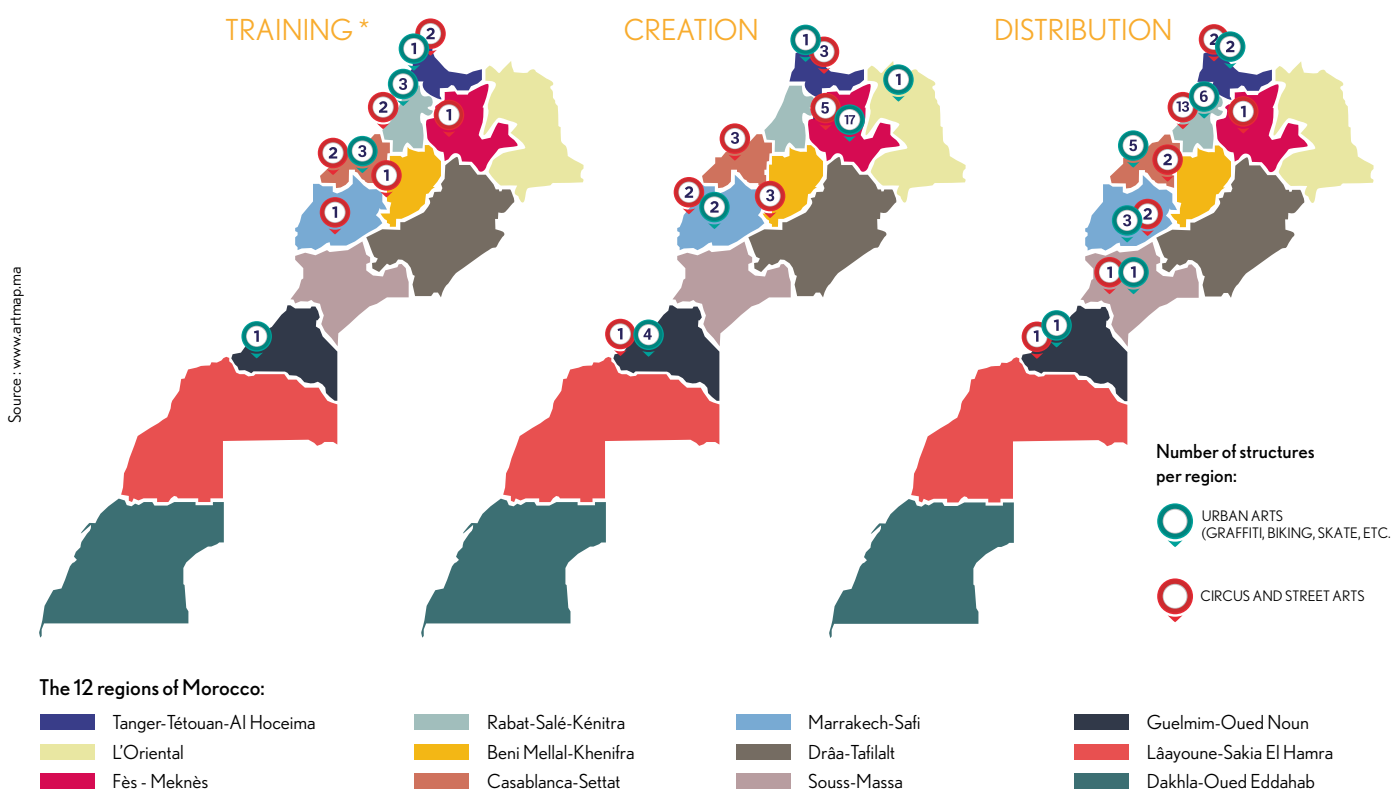
© Universe Pic

artists. Initiatives by Circostrada members that focus on sustainable cooperation in co-productions and reaching audiences offer windows of opportunity. In this very nuanced landscape, the projects run by

those involved in street and circus arts in Morocco are all the more interesting, and are very real sources of optimism.

INFOGRAPHIC OF STREET AND CIRCUS ARTS ORGANISATIONS IN MOROCCO

THE VALUE CHAIN IN MOROCCO: THE DISTRIBUTION OF CIRCUS, STREET ARTS AND URBAN ARTS STRUCTURES



* This infographic is based on information collected via the Artmap database. The classification criteria of a training organisation encompasses conventional trainings, such as higher education training institutions, but also ad hoc trainings courses (seminars, internships, workshops) and other more informal ones such as programmed offered by associations, cultural institutes, companies etc.

PUBLIC CULTURAL POLICIES AT THE CROSSROADS OF THE MEDITERRANEAN AND AFRICA

In parallel to the États Généraux de la Culture in 2014, 2016 and 2018, Racines has worked with partners from Africa and the Arab world to develop a discourse on the need for real public policies in education and culture. From these discussions arose MARSAD and, more recently, the African Cultural Policy Network. Active members from these two networks took part in the KAHWA meeting and the third États Généraux in Tiznit, making valuable contributions to discussions.

The MARSAD network

MARSAD (Mediterranean Action and Research for Sustainability And Development) is a network that was initiated by Racines in 2017 in partnership with three other organisations: Me'zaf (Beirut), El Madina for

Performing and Digital Arts (Alexandria) and Notre Culture d'Abord (Tunis). These four organisations, all of which advocate the need for cultural policies on a national level, created MARSAD in response to a

shared desire to pool their expertise and approaches to work towards a communal goal of establishing États Généraux de la Culture in Tunisia, Egypt and Lebanon, or even in all the countries of the Arab world with, in time, a regular Euro-Mediterranean États Généraux.

MARSAD's 12-month objective was to create a cultural policy research, implementation, monitoring and observation platform for the MENA region. It has facilitated the organisation of meetings between culture professionals in the four partner countries and has resulted in the production of a website intended to act as a regional observatory for cultural policies as well as a joint publication (in Arabic, French and English) entitled 'Why culture is the solution', which provided an analysis of the position of culture in Morocco, Lebanon, Tunisia and Egypt.

This project benefited from support from SouthMed CV, with co-financing from the EU's MedCulture programme.



© Racines



Further information

- 📍 [MARSAD](#)
- 🌐 [Publication " Pourquoi la culture est la solution ? "](#)
- 📍 [Me'zaf](#)
- 🌐 [El Madina for Performing and Digital Arts](#)
- 📍 [Notre Culture d'abord](#)

The ACPN

The African Cultural Policy Network (ACPN) was created by Mike van Graan and Adel Essaadani, two cultural activists from South Africa and Morocco, with the principle objective of strengthening the voices of informed, proactive and bold Africans in the field of cultural, arts and heritage policies, both in Africa and internationally, in order to ensure effective advocacy.

The ACPN was officially founded in August 2017 via the online election of its Steering

Committee. The network remains 'informal' but its 80 members (cultural figures and associations, artists, researchers, etc.) from 24 African countries and the African diaspora are incredibly active. They work collaboratively with others involved in the African creation scene. They take part in meetings, seminars and assemblies in Africa, Europe and elsewhere. They also produce analyses on different themes related to cultural policy. The ACPN also works to inform African practitioners about different funding, em-

ployment and cooperation opportunities as well as cultural news through the distribution of a monthly newsletter.



Further information

🌐 <https://africanculturalpolicynetwork.org>

📄 [ACPN](#)

Evaluation of the implementation of the UNESCO Convention 2005 in Africa [in French](#) and [in English](#) (Appendix II, page 36)

RESOURCES

Publications

« **Vers une politique pour mettre la culture au cœur du développement au Maroc** »,
first États Généraux de la Culture au Maroc (Racines, November 2014).

« **Politiques culturelles au Maroc. La culture est la solution** »,
second États Généraux de la Culture au Maroc (Racines, November 2016).

« **Enquête sur les pratiques culturelles des Marocains** »,
drafted and conducted by Racines (2015-2016).

« **Manifeste sur l'espace public au Maroc** »,
a project by FADAE - Free Access and Diversity for All and Everyone (Racines, January 2017),
in Arabic, French and English.

« **3^e édition des États Généraux de la Culture au Maroc: Politiques culturelles en régions** »
(Racines, October 2018), in Arabic and French.

« **Vers une politique culturelle pour mettre la culture au coeur du développement au Maroc** »
(Racines, November 2014, under the direction of Aadel Essaadani & Driss Ksikes at the first États Généraux de la Culture au Maroc), in French.

« **Vers une politique culturelle pour mettre la culture au coeur du développement au Maroc** »
(Racines, November 2014, under the direction of Aadel Essaadani & Driss Ksikes at the first États Généraux de la Culture au Maroc), in Arabic.

« **Journal des États Généraux de la Culture, 2^e édition** »,
(Racines, November 2016), in French and Arabic

« **Guide de l'action artistique dans l'espace public** »
(published by the Forum des Alternatives Maroc FMAS in 2017)

Websites

www.artmap.ma
expires 20/12/2020

www.racines.ma
expires 08/02/2020