

Ecstatic Flow: Lithographs Of 14 Sufi Masters

By: Karen Dabrowska

The central theme of Ecstatic Flow, a major exhibition of the works of Rachid Koraichi, relates to the lives and teachings of fourteen Sufi masters dating from the 7th to the 17th centuries, presenting fourteen sets of lithographs, one for each master.



Jacques Berque

The lithographs are spread over two spacious rooms at London's October Gallery which has been

instrumental in bringing to worldwide attention many of the world's leading international

artists, including El Anatsui, Romuald Hazoumè, Nnenna Okore, Laila Shawa and Kenji Yoshida. The Gallery promotes the Transvanguard, the very best in contemporary art from around the planet, as well as maintaining a cultural hub in central London for poets, writers, intellectuals and artists, and hosts talks, performances and seminars.

The title, for Koraichi's Ecstatic Flow, comes from the Arabic word

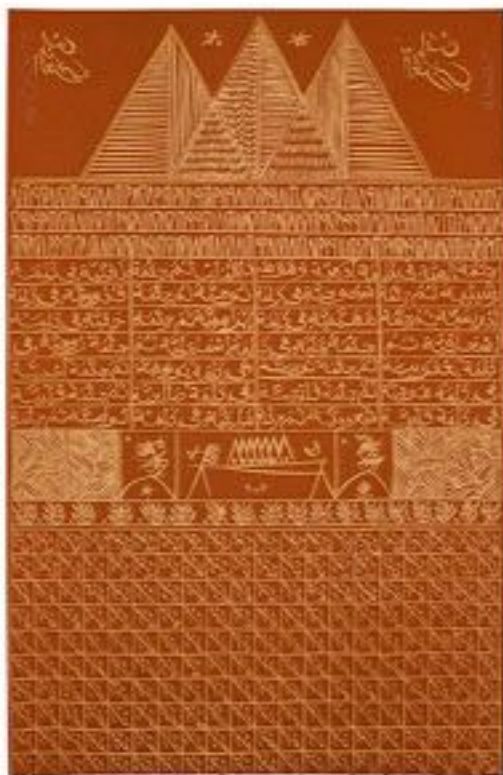
fa'-ya'-dad, which literally means "to overflow", "to flood" or "to emanate", and suggests an urgent outward movement, implying also ideas of exuberance and abundance. It is used to describe the feelings of the awakened heart in the presence of the divine, an ecstatic feeling of connection, which overflows the containing limits of the human vessel. It could also describe the feelings of the artist in the full flow of creative



Hallaj



Ibn Ata Allah Al Iskandar



Ibn El Arabi

inspiration as he seeks to put down on paper the torrent of visionary images that come pouring into his mind.

The subjects include such well-known figures as the mystic Ibn El Arabi and the poet and traveller Jalaluddin Rumi, as well as lesser-known (in the west) masters like Ahmad al Tijani. He was a member of the Khalwati order of Sufism (also known as the Halveti in Turkey), which places



Bronze Finial

emphasis on good actions and intentions rather than the requirements of elaborate ritual expression. Al-Tijani was the founder of the Tijaniya Order in North Africa, in the late eighteenth century, which extended the

borders of Islam towards Senegal and Nigeria as later adepts introduced large West African kingdoms to their practices.

Koraichi's artistic explorations extend across an impressive range of different media, with his installations including ceramics, textiles, various metals and painted work on silk and paper. His work is influenced by an abiding fascination with signs and

symbols of all kinds, both real and imaginary. Beginning with the intricate beauties of the Arabic calligraphic scripts the work is composed of symbols, glyphs and ciphers drawn from a wide variety of other languages and cultures. Whether the source be the numerological insights of ancient cultures or the ideogrammatic shapes of Chinese characters, Koraichi integrates these layered



Path of Roses

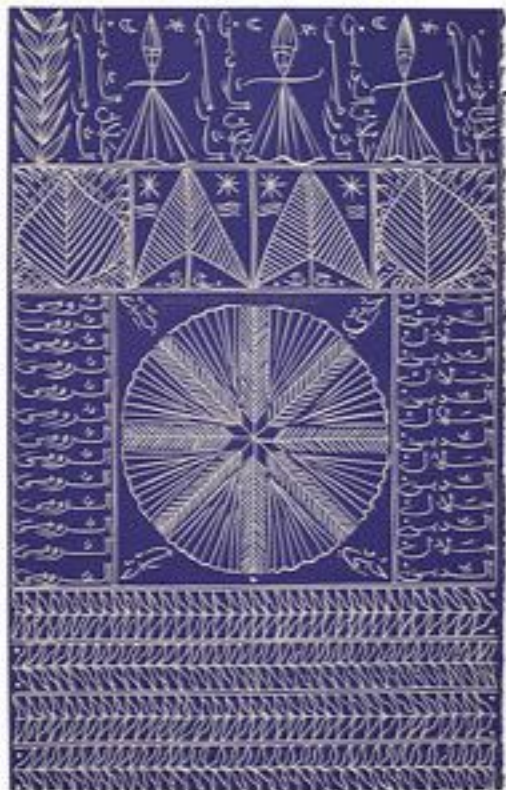


Rabia Al Adawiyya



photo: Jonathan Greet

Rachid Koraichi



Rumi

systems of signs into an organised and marvellous description of the world that surrounds us.

Born in Ain Beida, Algeria in 1947, Rachid Koraichi now lives and works in Paris, France. His artistic training includes diplomas from the Higher Institute of Fine Arts in Algeria, the Superior National School of the Arts, the National School of Decorative Arts, and the School of Urban Studies in Paris. He works with many media,

including ceramics, textiles, poetry, calligraphy, and paint. Born to a Sufi family in Ain Beida, Algeria, his work is intimately informed by the numerology, signs and ethos of Sufi mysticism. He was recently included in the international touring exhibition «Short Century», and in the 47th and 49th Venice Biennale. Part of his installation, «Path of Roses», comprising embroidered silk textiles, steel sculptures, roses and Turkish ceramics was recently

acquired by the British Museum. Concerned with the Islamic concept of Safar (travel and transcendence), the installation traces the journey of medieval Muslim traveller Jalal Al Din Al Rumi across the Mediterranean to meet the Sufi mystic and poet Ibn El Arabi.

While his aesthetics are deeply rooted in his multicultural Algerian heritage, Koraïchi is a truly

cosmopolitan artist who speaks to a global audience. He has participated in many international exhibitions and his work is included in several major private and public collections worldwide. His work is also represented in major collections, including the National Museum for African Art, Washington and the Museum of Islamic Arts, Doha, etc.



Sidi Abdelkader Jilali



Sidi Boumediene Chouaieb

Cheikh Sidi Ahmed Tidjani

