

Exhibition journal 1

Exhibitions at Le Plateau, Paris, and Les Réserves, Romainville

Joyeuse retraite papa Rayane Mcirdi

24.09.26 - 21.02.27

Opening on Wednesday 23
September 2026, from 6 pm
to 9 pm

Curator :
Céline Poulin

At Le Plateau, Paris

Des gestes de nos mondes (*Gestures From Our Worlds*)

Group exhibition in partnership
with 32Bis in Tunis

13.09 - 14.11.26

Opening on Sunday 13 September
2026, from 3 pm to 7 pm

Co-curators:
Hela Djobbi, Salma Kossemtini and
Cindy Olohou

At Les Réserves, Romainville



Rayane Mcirdi, screenshot of the film *Joyeuse retraite papa*, 2026 © Rayane Mcirdi / Adagp, Paris, 2026



Djabril Boukhenissi, *Enfant*, 2022. Collection Frac Île-de-France © Djabril Boukhenissi / Adagp, Paris, 2026

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Opening hours of Le Plateau: Wednesday to Sunday, 2 pm to 7 pm. Late-night opening on the first Wednesday of every month, until 9 pm. Free entry - Closed on 25 December and 1 January

Opening hours of Les Réserves: Wednesday to Saturday, 2 pm to 7 pm. Free admission - Closed on public holidays. Special opening on Sundays 13 September, 20 September, 18 October and 8 November 26.

Joyeuse retraite papa Rayane Mcirdi 24.09.2026 - 21.02.2027

Curator: Céline Poulin
At Le Plateau, Paris

Opening on Wednesday 23 September 2026,
from 6 pm to 9 pm

Rayane Mcirdi, screenshot of the film
Joyeuse retraite papa, 2026. © Rayane
Mcirdi / Adagp, Paris, 2026



RAYANE MCIRDI was born in 1993 in Paris. He lives and works in Gennevilliers and is represented by the Anne Barrault Gallery in Paris. A graduate of the *École nationale supérieure des beaux-arts de Paris* in 2019, Rayane Mcirdi held his first solo exhibition in 2021 at the Galerie Édouard Manet in Gennevilliers. He has taken part in several group exhibitions at La Villette, the CENTQUATRE-PARIS and the Magasins Généraux. The artist presented the *Croissant de feu* trilogy at the Centre Pompidou in Paris in 2023, as part of the “Cinéma prospectif” programme. *Le Croissant de feu* won the Inmates’ Prize from the Bois-d’Arcy Remand Centre at the “Cinéma du réel – International Documentary Film Festival” (2022). In 2024, his film *Après le soleil* was selected for the Directors’ Fortnight at Cannes and was broadcast on Arte. His film *Le Jardin* (2021) forms part of the Frac Île-de-France collection.

Opening hours: Wednesday to Sunday, 2 pm to 7 pm.
Late-night opening on the first Wednesday of every
month, until 9 pm. Free entry - - Closed on 25
December and 1 January

Opening

Wed. 24.09.25
6-9 pm

Conversations at Le Plateau

(Artist/curator tour - Project Room)
Wednesday 07.10.26, 7:30 pm
with Irene Abello and Maëlle Dault

WEFRAC on November 21 and 22

Saturday 21.11

• 2:30-4 pm: *Familles d'artistes*
workshop- Project Room

• 5 pm: Guided tour of the exhibition
Joyeuse retraite papa

Conversations at Le Plateau

Wednesday 02.12.25, 7:30 pm
with artists Rayane Mcirdi,
Joshua Merchan Rodriguez and the
Frac team

Book presentation: *Faire alliance*

– *Art, pédagogie et éducation populaire*
Wednesday 13.01.27, 7 pm
Directed by Céline Poulin, Marie
Preston and Katia Schneller
and edited by ArTeC and *Les Presses
du Réel* (to be published in October
2026)

Conversations at Le Plateau

(Artist/curator tour - Project Room)
Wednesday 03.02.27, 7:30 pm

Late-night openings

Opening until 9 pm, each first
Wednesday of the month

Guided tours

Every Sunday at 5 pm

CHILDREN ACTIVITIES

Familles d'artistes

Aged to 6 to 12, children accompanied
by their family

Saturdays 03.10, 07.11, 21.11,
2:30-4 pm

Your memories become a film: you
create the storyboard, then together
we'll design the poster for your film!

Expo-trotter

Aged 1 to 3, children accompanied by
their family

Saturdays 10.10, 14.11,
11-12 am

Stories and discoveries to help you
explore the exhibition at a gentle pace,
suited to very young children.

Doudou visite

Aged 3 to 5, children accompanied by
their family

Wednesdays 14.10, 18.11,
3:30-4:30 pm

Open your eyes wide to the world of
painting through a sensory visit filled
with stories and a creative workshop!

Artistes en herbe

Aged 6 to 12

Wednesdays 21 et 28.10
2:30-4:30 pm

During the school holidays, build your
model, decorate your mini-studio and
bring your characters to life in photos
to create a keepsake with your loved
ones!

* Free events, further information and
a full list of events for young audiences
at fraciledefrance.com.

Joyeuse retraite papa

Rayane Mcirdi

24.09.2026 - 21.02.2027

Straddling the line between documentary and fiction, Rayane Mcirdi constructs his films from stories, memories and anecdotes gathered from his family, his loved ones and the residents of Asnières-sur-Seine and Gennevilliers, where he grew up. Drawing on the stories passed down through his family between Algeria and France, he brings these accounts to life with great cinematic precision, transforming these ordinary stories into a tapestry where the personal and the collective intersect.

His films bring to life rarely told stories and offer – far removed from conventional portrayals of the suburbs – narratives interwoven with solidarity, contradictions, dreams of elsewhere, humour and family ties. What unfolds in them is always unique, yet resonates far beyond the people filmed. From one film to the next, Rayane Mcirdi explores what is passed down between generations, the way in which identity is forged amidst multiple legacies, the bonds that unite individuals with those who came before them, with a place and a shared memory, but also those moments when a life is turned on its head and a new horizon opens up.

Designed specifically for Le Plateau, the exhibition version of his new film *Joyeuse retraite papa* (Happy Retirement, Dad) unfolds throughout the space as a journey comprising several chapters, extended by scenes that echo one another from one room to another. Inspired by the story of the artist's father, the film takes us through a seemingly ordinary day: the day on which a factory worker retires and thus leaves the factory for good after forty years of service. Between the final tasks carried out at his workstation, the camaraderie that binds his colleagues, and his return to his family, this suspended moment gradually reveals what it means to leave a world to which one has devoted an entire life. This moment of transition becomes the starting point for a sensitive narrative in which solidarity, tenderness, nostalgia and unspoken truths intertwine, until, behind this family portrait, a profoundly universal experience emerges.

Looking beyond the end of a career, Rayane Mcirdi sensitively captures a pivotal moment where generations intersect and where everyone is trying to find their place in the face of what is coming to an end, as well as what remains to be passed on.

Conversation between Céline Poulin and Rayane Mcirdi

Céline Poulin: The film presented in the exhibition *Joyeuse retraite papa* (Happy Retirement, Dad) is rooted in the memory of your father's retirement, **but it is not strictly an autobiographical account.** How did the film come about?

Rayane Mcirdi: What interested me was less the faithful reconstruction of a memory than **recapturing the emotion it carried.** It began with an event that I know remains somewhat hazy in my memory. My father's retirement marked the end of one world and the beginning of another. It took me around five years to make the film because I needed that distance.

What stayed with me was the feeling that, at the moment of his retirement, time seemed to explode. Different periods of the character's life seem to collapse into one another. The children are swept up in it all without really understanding what is happening. The character in the film is a very quiet, deeply stoic man. Ultimately, *Joyeuse retraite papa* is a film about silence. The real question was: **how do you tell the story of someone who says almost nothing?**

C. P.: Aside from the memory of the family meal, many of the scenes are reconstructions. How did you develop them?

R. M.: It is a mixture of memories, imagination and cinema. As a child, I did not even know exactly what my father did at the factory. He would tell me one thing, my mother another. I imagined his work through Charlie Chaplin's *Modern Times*: I pictured him moving through pipes or among enormous machines. Even today, I would be unable to describe exactly what his job involved. In the end, fiction became the only place where I could fill in these gaps. I could not make a documentary about this story, but **I could make a film out of the emotions that stayed with me.**

C. P.: Did you nevertheless try to compare your memories with those of your family?

R. M.: Yes, particularly with my younger sister. As the only girl among us, she often knew things that my father did not tell his sons. She had parts of the story that were missing from my own. The character of Sonia in the film emerged from this. It is a conversation that takes place fifteen years later. In fact, the film asks the question: what would we want to say to that father today?

C. P.: This is also the first film in which you appear, in a sense, as a character. **There is a shift from documentary towards a more personal form of fiction.** Was that your intention?

R. M.: In *Le Jardin*, for example, the documentary form was a necessity, as I wanted to film my mother's and my aunts' bodies. But ever since I entered the École des Beaux-Arts, my deepest desire has always been to make fiction films. The shift was also partly economic: at first, I made films with very limited means, a camera, a zoom, and we would simply shoot. Today, I spend more time writing. This is the film in which I worked most extensively on the screenplay. It is rather amusing, actually: it is probably the film in which the characters speak the least, yet the one that required the most writing from me.

C. P.: We have just been discussing this shift from documentary to fiction, yet **your films remain deeply rooted in reality**. How did cinema become your language?

R. M.: Cinema really is at the heart of my practice. I come from a cinephile background, and that cinephilia grew out of a form of institutional violence. When I entered art school, I felt that I was perceived as a student from a working-class neighbourhood, of Algerian descent, and therefore as someone without a cultural background. I experienced this marginalisation on two levels: within the art institution and, in a sense, within the social environment I came from.

Cinema was the place where I felt most at home. It is the quintessential popular art form. It allowed me to discover stories from all over the world: Taiwan, Hong Kong, Native American communities... Films that dealt with colonisation, transmission and family. Sculpture and painting seemed more difficult for me to access at the time, because they were connected to an art history in which I could not find my place.

What matters to me today is that my films are seen and understood. **I do not want to make works that keep the viewer at a distance. I would like us all to be on an equal footing in relation to the film.** That is why I have never disavowed the popular culture that shaped me: blockbusters, manga, animated films, video games and comics all inform my work just as much as auteur cinema.

C. P.: This diversity of references also comes through in *Joyeuse retraite papa*. How did you approach the film's mise en scène? **Did you draw on your cinematic influences?**

R. M.: Certain films accompanied me more directly while making *Joyeuse retraite papa*. I was thinking in particular of Celine Song's *Past Lives* for some of the dinner scenes, as well as Tsai Ming-liang's highly pared-back cinema, which greatly influenced the way I approached silence and the body. There is also the cinema of Hou Hsiao-hsien, Wong Kar-wai and Wang Bing, alongside much more popular films and Japanese animated series such as Jujutsu Kaisen. I like collecting images. I have watched an enormous number of films since I was a child. When I am preparing a project, all these influences naturally resurface, but above all, they help me find a way of filming an emotion. With *Joyeuse retraite papa*, **I was less interested in quoting these films than in recapturing what they evoke: a particular way of filming silence, bodies and melancholy.**

C.P.: This reflection on images may also explain why you are **constantly moving between cinema and exhibitions**. In my view, video is precisely the medium that best enables us to revisit the images we are constantly bombarded with (TV series, films, adverts, social media...) and to analyse them.

R. M.: Yes. Very early on, artists such as Pierre Huyghe and Philippe Parreno freed me from this opposition between cinema and contemporary art. I never wanted to choose between the two. **What interests me is telling stories. The medium comes afterwards.** Depending on the project, it might take the form of a feature film, a video, or several forms at once. Ultimately, these are simply different ways of telling the same story. *The Third Memory*¹ by Pierre Huyghe was a revelation to me in terms of how cinema can alter memories. It allowed me to free myself from the overly rigid conventions of art institutions that rejected narrative.

C. P.: Yes, in this example, there is a connection between information and the way cinema can alter our memories. **Ultimately, aren't our memories shaped by the images we see and by our cultural background?**

R. M.: Yes, I believe that a memory is never intact: it is shaped by all the films we have seen and by the stories we tell ourselves. *Joyeuse retraite papa* is also about this. **At what point does a lived experience become a cinematic scene? I have the feeling that some images from my childhood already existed as film shots.** They stayed with me for years before finding their form.

C. P.: When I discovered your work through *Le Toit* (2018), I was struck by the way you film people who are often reduced to stereotypes. You depict realities that can be violent, but never reduce your characters to simplistic representations.

R. M.: It was important to me to bring this everyday reality to the fore. I knew this world well. Although I no longer lived on the estates at the time of the riots, people close to me still did, and I experienced that period of particularly intense tension through their accounts.

What interested me about *Le Toit* was precisely the desire to show something else. I wanted to show that people also celebrate there. It may seem unremarkable, but it is deeply political. These are communities that are often denied access to public space. Everything is done to prevent them from staying out in the streets, from being able to celebrate together. We saw this again recently with the celebrations surrounding PSG.

I think this is also why cinema is so important to me: it allows me to portray characters in all their complexity, without reducing them to a role or an image.

¹Pierre Huyghe invited John Wojtowicz, who carried out a bank robbery in New York in 1972 – the basis for Sidney Lumet's film *Dog Day Afternoon* – to reprise the role that Al Pacino had played by modelling his performance on video recordings of the robbery. Recast as the protagonist, John Wojtowicz reactivates the memory of the event. Three narratives overlap: that of the event (reality), that of the media (the document), and that of the film (fiction).

C. P.: This attention to human relationships is also central to *Joyeuse retraite papa*. It is not simply a portrait of your father.

R. M.: No. It is also a love letter to him.

C. P.: This love letter is addressed to someone who is not always easy to love. The family dynamic of a father who rarely speaks and lives for his work is also deeply universal, transcending origins and social class.

R. M.: **It took me a long time to make this film because I wanted to try to understand this generation:** those who came to France before Algerian independence, their relationship to work, their family histories, and the place work occupied in their lives. For this generation, work was the only way out of poverty and a means of defining their place in the world. **But I realised that there would always be things I could never fully know, which is also why I chose fiction.**

C. P.: In the film, the character is also called Dino, a name he chose for himself that sounds more Italian than Algerian. This change of name also says something about his story.

R. M.: Yes, although I'm not sure I would describe it as a rejection of his origins. It was more a strategy for integrating into society. At a time when Italian and Spanish immigration was more readily accepted, choosing a name with an Italian or Spanish sound could make things easier. This detail says a great deal about that generation, and about the way they had to negotiate other people's perceptions in order to find their place.

C. P.: Why did you choose the meal as the central structure of the film?

R. M.: In our family, everything happened around the table. Meals were when stories were told, conflicts came to the surface and reconciliation became possible. Even where people sat around the table said something about the family, about authority and about the different generations. **At first, the film was almost entirely going to be built around a dinner. Other scenes were added later, but meals remained its backbone because, for me, that is where the whole drama of family life unfolds.**

C. P.: The lighting also reflects the character's emotional state. You paid particular attention to the film's colour palette.

R. M.: Yes. We created **two very different atmospheres**. The entire first part, set in the factory, is suffused with warm, yellow tones, almost like the light of a sunset. They evoke a familiar world, a sense of wholeness. **Then the film gradually shifts towards cooler, bluer and more melancholic tones as the character loses his bearings. The colour thus reflects his inner state.**

C. P.: You also chose Zinedine Soualem to play your father. **How did the actor influence the story?**

R. M.: It was very important to me to have **an actor of his stature, someone who embodied the Algerian presence in the cinema of my childhood.** What was interesting was that he is very different from my father. That discrepancy enriched the character. **We talked a great deal about silence, about what needed to be shown and what needed to be held back.** He too recognised something of his own father in the story.

C. P.: The exhibition does not simply present the film, however. At Le Plateau, **you made the radical decision to fragment it.**

R. M.: Yes, I quickly realised that I did not want to screen the film as it would be in a cinema. **The exhibition is conceived as a journey. Each room becomes a chapter, allowing the viewer to enter progressively deeper into the character's memory.**

I have also added more personal elements, including a voice-over that is absent from the cinema version. There will also be another film in which I interview my father. It is a way of bringing reality back into the picture after fiction, finally giving a voice to the man who, until then, had remained silent.

C. P.: Finally, **why did you choose to shoot on 16mm?**

R. M.: Because **the medium blurs our sense of time.** Its grain makes it difficult to immediately identify a particular period. That was exactly what I was looking for. **The character no longer really knows what time he inhabits:** the time of his childhood in Algeria, his working life in France, or the retirement that lies ahead of him. **16mm gives this sensation an almost physical form.**

There are silences that come after noise, silences that are pauses or breaths, allowing us to catch our breath before an answer, summon the courage to speak, or simply disappear. Silences that take the place of the words we search for, cannot find, or perhaps do not have. Silences that some would call golden, but that some ears may sometimes prefer to the so-called words of silver. Between the silence we endure and the silence we impose, there are stories that are nevertheless lived and passed on. Where can they be found? How can they be told? Must they be shared?

A mysterious paradox in which art and life converge: while Rayane Mcirdi's early films grew out of passionate conversations with his cousin, rapid-fire exchanges between the women in his family, memories shared with pride and emotion, and breathless discussions in which their journeys, dreams and anxieties emerged, *Joyeuse retraite papa* was born from the silence that perhaps punctuates this effervescence. Within the family dynamic that informs Mcirdi's films, the father is the one who says little, brushes questions aside with a wave of his hand, evades them with a joke or retreats behind an Italian nickname. As a son, Mcirdi had already experienced certain frustrations; as an artist and filmmaker, these have prompted him to rethink his approach. The camera, accustomed over the past few years to capturing reality without distorting it, to delving into the treasures entrusted to it and returning the words that others had been willing to help him decipher, has begun to explore new possibilities. It has plunged into darkness to become a mirror. Reflected in it are the images generated by silence, shaped by resignation and conjecture, and nourished by a long history of cinema in which the artist claims his place and his right to speak.

Emerging from a day that might have become a sacred one – the day his father retired after a long and exhausting career – *Joyeuse retraite papa* is rooted in a failure to understand: the refusal to celebrate the end of a cycle. The project lies somewhere between autofiction and legend. Between an illusory desire to understand and an acceptance of what cannot be resolved.

Images unfold across walls and screens: sequences like fragments of a life compressed into a single day, in which bodies embrace, wait, weep or cry out before coming together again over an iced dessert. Alongside what we see is what we hear: voice-overs and dialogue play with what the eye attempts to uncover. The former take the form of letters, while the latter provide a framework for fiction; together, they trace an unanswered correspondence in which different registers intertwine to outline a new kind of archive, born from the absence of sound, one that gives free rein to the imagination, to attempts to repair unknown wounds and, ultimately, to the self.

Joyeuse retraite papa was born from the silence that had to be filled. From a search for an answer that was destined to be desperately futile, and for which another purpose had to be found. The images and voices almost seem to reenact the mourning of a “world before”, one that must nevertheless be left behind in order to move forward and find reconciliation. Within the melancholy that colours the narrative as a whole, there emerges the light of a promise, offered to whoever might choose to catch it:

“Don’t worry, Dad, everything will be all right.”

by Horya Makhlouf

Actors and actresses: Zinedine Soualem
Sonia Faïdi, Fadila Belkebla, Aya Rechachi
Bellamine Abdelmalek, Adama Bathily
Farès Maouchi, Virgil Vernier, Horya
Makhlouf-Mcirdi

Scenario: Rayane Mcirdi & Marie Heyse

Produced by: Yannick Beauquis & Quentin
Brayer

Director of Photography: Jordane Chouzenoux
1st assistant operator: Clotilde Mignon
2nd assistant operator: Chloé Borgella

Head Set Designer: Léa Lemarchand
Props assistant: Pauline Doublier
Set designer assistant: Marilou Haber
Ripper: Camille Andreys

Head of production: Rose Vivès
Production manager: Miguel Metzger

1st assistant director: Marylou Weber
2nd assistant director: Clara Ziegler
Children's Officer: Clara Ziegler
Script: Tanguy Matignon
Head of Casting: Louise Anselme

Head Costume Designer: Rezvan Farsijani
Costume design trainee: Zoé Branchu
Make-up artist: Amanda Silaen

Chief Electrician: Xavier Allaire
Electrician: Victor Quintard,
Manfred Revuelta
Apprentice electrician: Oscar Cozic

Chief Stage Manager: Alexandre Quiroz
Martinet
Machinist: Louis Meslin
Machinist trainee: Aurélien Chartier

Sound engineer: Coppélia Robert
Perchman: Thimotée Robart

Stage Manager: Gabriel Maître
Assistant Stage Manager: Sacha Van Den
Berch
Catering assistant: Victoria Neefs, Nino
Mathey, Tara Constantin-Wastiaux, Mathis
Descamps

Editor: Mila Olivier
Sound editor: Émilien Pichon
Sound effects artist: Aurélien Bianco
Sound engineer: Nathan Robert
Mixer: Anna Devillaire

Original sound: Quentin Sirjacq
Music mixing: Vincent Taurelle, Mymelody
production

Calibrator: Jérôme Bigueur, Ulysse Gaillot

Set photographer: Aurelia Casse

Graphism: Akakir studio

Animation: Célia Choque-Quispe

Coproduction: Frac Île-de-France &
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contemporain d'intérêt national, Brest.

Executive production for the film:
Don Quichotte Films.

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Upcoming venues for the exhibition: Centre
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2027 (opening on 24 June).

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Claire Cornet Briot, Paul Perchet all the facto-
ry staff, Sacha Van Den Berch.

To our elders, mothers, fathers and children
who taught us pride and dignity.

Irene Abello

Avaler la brume et disparaître

24.09.26 – 15.11.26

Curator: Maëlle Dault

Opening: Wed. 23.09, 6-9 pm / *Conversations de Plateau* (artist/curator tour, Wed. 07.10, 7:30 pm)

Irene Abello, a 2021 graduate of the École des Beaux-Arts de Paris, draws inspiration from ephemeral natural phenomena - sometimes barely perceptible - which she treats as materials to be sculpted. Through minimal gestures, she crystallizes the physical transformations of matter and transposes our perceptual experiences into installations, photographs, and videos. Her works thus invite us to pay close attention to the elusive variations of reality that manifest themselves in our daily lives.



Joshua Merchan Rodriguez

19.11.26 – 03.01.27

Curator: Maëlle Dault

Vernissage : Wed. 18.11, 6-9 pm / *Conversations de Plateau* (artist/curator tour, Wed. 02.12, 7:30 pm)

& coming soon: 3rd Project Room, from 6 January to 21 February 27;
Gestures from our worlds and *Conversations de Plateau* on 3 February 27, at 7.30 pm.

PRACTICAL INFORMATIONS

**Frac Île-de-France,
Le Plateau**
22 rue des Alouettes
75019 Paris, France
Tél : +33 1 76 21 13 41/45
Wednesday to Sunday, 2 pm
to 7 pm.
Open late until 9.00 pm on
the first Wednesday of every
month. Le Plateau is closed
on 25 December and 1st
January.

**Frac Île-de-France,
Les Réserves**
43 rue de la Commune de
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93230 Romainville
Tél : +33 1 76 21 13 33
Wednesday to Saturday, 2 pm
to 7 pm.

Special opening hours on
Sundays 20 September, 18
October and 8 November
2026. Les Réserves is closed
on public holidays.
Free admission

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Horowitz (exhibition fitters for
'Réserves'); Félicité Landrison,
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and signage); Lorraine Husse-
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Des gestes de nos mondes

(Gestures From Our Worlds)

Group exhibition in partnership with
32Bis in Tunis
13.09 - 14.11.2026

Co-curators: Hela Djobbi, artistic director of 32Bis; Salma Kossemtini, independent curator; and Cindy Olohou, head of collections at the Frac Île-de-France.

At Les Réserves, Romainville

Opening: sunday 13.09.26, 3-7p.m

Featuring artworks by: Alex Ayed*, Ahmed Ben Nessib, Chams Barkaoui, Safouane Ben Slama*, Djabril Boukhenaïssi*, Eve Gabriel Chabanon*, Nidhal Chamekh, Dhia Dhibi, Férielle Doulain-Zouari, Wiame Haddad*, Kapwani Kiwanga*, Wafa Lazhari, Dalila Mahdjoub, Aymen Mbarki, Fanny Souade Sow*, Bochra Taboubi, Djamel Tatah*, Bochra Triki.**

Opening hours of the Réserves: Wednesday to Saturday, 2 pm to 7 pm. Free admission - Closed on public holidays.
Special opening on Sundays 13 September, 20 September, 18 October and 8 November 26.

Férielle Doulain-Zouari, *Tilling the soil*, 2024
Courtesy Louvre Abu Dhabi © Férielle Doulain-Zouari / Adagp, Paris, 2026



*Artworks from the Frac Île-de-France collection

** On loan from Frac Nouvelle-Aquitaine MÉCA

Foussana

Performance by Chams Barkaoui
Sunday 18.10.26, 6 pm

echo.II

Performance by Haythem Zakaria
Saturday 14.11.26, 6 pm

Special Sunday opening hours: 20.09, 18.10 et 08.11.26

Late-night openings

Opening until 9 pm, each first
Wednesday of the month

Guided tours

Every Sunday at 5 pm

* Free events, further information and
a full list of events for young audiences
at fraciledefrance.com.

CHILDREN ACTIVITIES

Expo-trotter

Aged 1 to 3, children accompanied by
their family

Wednesday 21.10, 11-12 am

Stories and games to help children
explore the exhibition at their own
pace.

Doudou visite

Aged 3 to 5, children accompanied by
their family

Wednesday 28.10, 11-12 am

Open your eyes wide to the world of
painting through a sensory visit filled
with stories and a creative workshop!

Familles d'artistes

Aged to 6 to 12, children accompanied
by their family

Wednesday 21.10, 3-5 pm

Memento

Commemorate? What? Why? How?

Choose a significant event you'd like to
remember and create a
commemorative object out of clay.

Wednesday 28.10, 3-5 pm

La grande odyssée

Like an archaeologist, discover a
forgotten civilisation. Analyse a
collection of mysterious objects and
documents, travel back in time and
create a fictional exploration journal.

Des gestes de nos mondes (*Gestures From Our Worlds*)

Des gestes de nos mondes emerged from a multivocal dialogue.

Taking shape across Paris, Tunis and Bologna, the exhibition brings together works from the collection of the Frac Île-de-France and the practices of artists based in Tunisia or originating from the southern shore of the Mediterranean. This interplay of perspectives and contexts gives rise to a reflection on the archive as a living material, where memory, imagination and the production of narratives intersect.

The archive is not simply what remains. Behind every preserved document lie processes of selection, structures of visibility and silences. It constitutes a framework that shapes the ways in which stories are told and transmitted. To make an exhibition about the archive today is to question the conditions under which history is produced: what is preserved, what disappears, and what resurfaces in unexpected forms.

The artists explore these spaces of uncertainty. Through family, historical and collective memories, they shift the document from its status as evidence towards that of a sensitive material, shaped as much by forgetting as by invention. The archive becomes a practice of the present, in which fragmentary voices, marginalised narratives and subtle gestures find new forms of expression.

The Mediterranean emerges here as a narrative construct shaped by layers of memory, language and movement: Who is speaking? From where, and within which frameworks of representation? By questioning both the narratives and the media through which they are produced, do these works not reveal that archives do more than simply document the world? They also participate in its making, inviting us to consider every trace as an act and every memory as a space in which reality continues to be negotiated.

Family Archives and Overlooked Narratives: Inheriting through Fiction

The family archive does not have the same claim to authority as institutional records. It is not validated by any official body. Fragile and mutable, it passes from hand to hand, is shared, lost and transformed as new layers of memory and storytelling gather around it. What gives a memory, a photograph or an object the authority to enter our collective memory, and ultimately to become a work of art? What gives a memory, a photograph or an object the authority to become part of our collective memory, and ultimately to become a work of art?

Family memory is rarely unmediated. It is already a reconstruction, already a narrative: the one we were told as children, or the one we have fashioned ourselves in retrospect to fill the gaps, as in Chams Barkaoui's sound fictions. Through *Foussana*, the artist projects herself into a particular landscape, creating a sense of familiarity with a place where stories of children's lives become intertwined with their own family history. Childhood memory occupies an ambiguous position: it is the most intimate of archives, yet the least reliable, composed of partial images and sensations rather than facts, often received at second hand through a parent's voice. This hazy atmosphere also permeates Djabril Boukhenaissi's painting. At once a tender evocation of the past and a record of traces that are fading, the canvas becomes a window onto what has been. To remember one's childhood is already to inherit a story that one did not entirely experience oneself.

The artists delve into this process of transmission, shaped by loss and reinvention. The hand becomes memory's primary instrument: a gesture that shapes the earth or paints a beloved face that nevertheless remains at a distance. In Djamel Tatah's work, the force of the painterly gesture flattens space, bringing the anonymous figure to the fore while keeping it suspended outside time and space, like the persistent memory of a face whose name has been forgotten, a recollection of the past already slipping away into the limbo of memory. How can we preserve a trace of what was never documented, what belongs to the private sphere, what has so often been left unspoken?

Created in 2024, Férielle Doulain Zouari's *Tilling the Soil* is an archaeological vestige made up of 400 ceramic pieces. Like a road paved with memory, the installation unfolds an anthropological meditation on the line as a trace of human existence from its earliest beginnings. Echoing the lines of the hand, these paths of life inscribe the story of a humanity whose history has been shaped through manual labour. From the artist's own hands, which fashioned the 400 bricks, to the assemblage of labels stitched together in Dalila Mahdjoub's work, a path is traced between the builders of the past and the workers of today. Composed of "made in" labels, *Mise à l'honneur #0* pays tribute both to the men and women who work in the textile industry and to the artist's father, an Algerian worker at Peugeot.

Family Archives and Overlooked Narratives: Inheriting through Fiction

What is passed down within a family is not made up solely of happy memories. It also carries the memory of work that has remained invisible: that of a generation of workers, many of them migrants, whose histories have rarely found a place in national narratives. The attic room in Wiame Haddad's film thus retrospectively lends legitimacy to lives that History seems not to have deemed worthy of an archive. The evocative power of the fragment, entirely constructed by the artist, conveys the living conditions of the *chibanis*¹ while connecting them to the events of 1961². This constructed memory, in which a man reenacts his departure, followed by glimpses behind the scenes with the film crew, illustrates the symbolic power of the image while also filling a gap in history. What remains of the interiors in which these workers lived, of the hardships that shaped their daily lives?

By fictionalising these memories, the artists are not seeking documentary accuracy, but a form of emotional truth. They acknowledge that every act of transmission is already an act of reinvention, that the family archive exists only through those who tell its stories, and that it is precisely this process of reconstruction that gives it its legitimacy: not the legitimacy of evidence, but of a gesture repeated, passed on and brought back to life.

¹Chibanis: a term derived from Arabic meaning 'old' or 'elderly'. It refers to older men from former French colonies, predominantly from the Maghreb, who migrated to France during the Trente Glorieuses France's post-war period of economic growth (1945–1975) and reached retirement age in precarious circumstances.

²The massacre of 17 October 1961 refers to the deadly crackdown by the French police, under the authority of Prefect Maurice Papon, on a peaceful demonstration by Algerians who had gathered in Paris at the call of the FLN to protest against the curfew imposed on them, against the backdrop of the Algerian War of Independence. The National Assembly voted to recognise and condemn the event on 28 March 2024.

From the Intimate Archive to the Collective Archive: The Dynamics of the Shift

Creating a collective archive is therefore not a matter of simply adding testimonies together, but of bringing different voices into coexistence. This polyphony requires dispersed traces to be gathered before being returned to the community from which they originate, as Eve Gabriel Chabanon's work demonstrates. Bringing together artists and other art-world professionals living in exile, the artist invites them to share their experiences, which they gather within a hybrid installation, allowing shared narratives to emerge from experiences of dispossession, professional practice and forms of knowledge and expertise.

This reflection also brings to light another issue at the heart of the collective archive: the mechanisms that determine which memories become visible and which are erased. This tension runs through Fanny Souad Sow's work. She takes the form of the commemorative plaque and turns it against itself, engraving in marble a statement that denies an event whose historical reality is well established. A material traditionally associated with permanence thus becomes the paradoxical medium of institutional forgetting, raising questions about how an event comes to be recognised — or not — as historical fact.

By contrast, Bochra Triki is concerned with creating the conditions for a shared memory. Through more than fourteen hours of interviews with women who have fought for women's rights since the 1980s, alongside a collection of publications from Tunisian feminist journals, the artist has assembled an extensive documentary corpus. The recordings do more than preserve testimonies: they capture voices, silences, hesitations, emotions and everything that eludes the written word.

This act of bringing archives together now runs through many contemporary artistic practices. Artists remove archives from their original contexts and place them in the public sphere, where they acquire new possibilities for interpretation. Drawing on the conventions of scientific inventories and archaeological excavation, Bochra Taboubi investigates how certain objects come to be regarded as evidence or archives.

Once gathered, brought into dialogue and made accessible, archives cease to be mere remnants of individual experiences and become part of a shared memory, always open to new interpretations.

The archive does not protect the past; it constructs it. And this act of construction already carries its own violence: what it preserves implies what it excludes, while what it chooses to keep determines what disappears. The Congolese philosopher Valentin-Yves Mudimbe³ demonstrated this in relation to Africa; the colonial archive⁴ (constituted by both colonising and colonised countries) never simply described a continent. It invented one, through its categories, hierarchies and carefully maintained silences.

For the artists, engaging with the archive is neither a moral duty nor a methodological reflex. What they share is not simply a method, but an approach to history that refuses to confine itself to official narratives produced by states themselves. They are not seeking to establish what happened, but to explore what it might still set in motion.

When Nidhal Chamekh turns to the archive, he does not seek either to correct it or to complete it. Instead, he re-enacts the gesture: a bust and a mask, two female figures, one imperial and the other ritual, are placed opposite one another at the same height. Both have been shaped by ideals. Despite the historical weight of what they represent, their status as copies strips them of their sacred aura. The space between them remains suspended, poised somewhere between confrontation and reconciliation, in the moment before a decisive act. History unfolds within this space of equality. It is both a body of evidence to be examined and a material to be reworked. What if the gazes were reversed, turned towards a future still taking shape, towards the possibility of becoming something yet to be?

Chamekh brings to light an iconography shaped by the way History has represented power in marble and bronze. Safouane Ben Slama articulates this same gesture differently: the title of his work comes from a line of rap, a voice from the suburbs equally charged with history, passed down through lived experience and spoken word rather than stone. The dialectic resides in the very posture of these figures, turned towards the horizon, offering their presence while keeping their faces to themselves. The image records a gesture, a silhouette, a light, while withholding what might allow an identity to be confirmed. Their gaze, directed towards elsewhere, extends this historical questioning into the everyday, at a remove from the frontal figure Chamekh places before us.

With Wafa Lazhari, geography gives way to elsewhere. Everything begins with a dream, in which different dimensions overlap, and the image becomes a keeper of memory, making it inhabitable rather than locating it in a particular place. Carried by the narrative, it becomes a space of action, shifting between reality and imagination, between recognisable forms and the computer-generated images that duplicate them.

³Valentin-Yves MUDIMBE, *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge*, translated from the French by Laurent Vannini, Paris, Présence Africaine, 'Histoire, politique, société', 2021 (1988 for the original English edition, *The Invention of Africa*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press).

⁴By the notion of the 'colonial library', Mudimbe refers to the body of texts, knowledge and systems of representation produced in the colonial context about Africa, particularly by colonial administrations and religious and anthropological missions. Colonised African peoples appear within it as objects of study rather than as producers of knowledge. This asymmetry shaped the prism through which Africa was understood, represented and inscribed within Western systems of knowledge.

As filming progresses, the mnemonic image takes on material form through a hand-made staging: water, a model, or the darkness of night illuminated by the brilliance of the stars. It is as though memory refuses the mourning usually imposed upon it, choosing instead to continue transforming itself, to keep writing itself anew, in the place where, in theory, the memory should have come to an end.

Taken together, these gestures, through which the artists claim no authority over the histories they engage with, trace another map of lived experience: identities that intermingle, images that split and multiply, invented rituals that, within the exhibition space, carry as much weight as any official document.

Here, the archive brings nothing to a close. It calls to be interpreted, displaced and sometimes contradicted, reminding us that no archive has ever been neutral, but is always shaped by a particular perspective and by those who construct it. To question it, in this context, is to refuse to let it determine what deserves to be passed on and what should be consigned to oblivion.

This exhibition asserts a right to opacity⁵, the right not to make everything legible, not to turn every gesture or object into evidence. Here, our worlds do not form a single, unified whole. They brush against one another, sometimes collide, without ever becoming fully translatable to each other. It is precisely this space between them that remains to be inhabited.

It is a space that continues to take shape beyond the exhibition, through other perspectives, other gestures and other archives yet to come.

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The exhibition was organised with the support of the Institut français, as part of the 2026 Mediterranean Season. Acknowledgements: Khouloud Benzarti, Samia Laabidi, Imen Bahri, production manager at 32Bis, and Sarah Nefissa Belhadjali, communications manager at 32Bis.