

A d rive, through Casablanca, history and minds

A Public Programme by Bik Van der Pol
November 2021 and June 2022

ThinkArt
130 Boulevard Zerktouni
Casablanca, Morocco



The times of the Casablanca Art School (1960s-1970s) created a myth that is still resonating today. The school's emancipating curriculum was a fight for freedom. Based on art and working collaboratively, it set out to engage diverse publics, involving crafts and rural knowledges, with the aim to move away from the European modernist tradition of pedagogy.

The chemistry of people coming together in the school and in magazines such as *Souffles*—an iconic and avant garde cultural review founded in 1966 and banned by the authorities in 1972—coincided with political change and radical thought. This led to a desire to transition away from the French protectorate and culture, into something new, something Moroccan, but lasted a limited number of years.

The coming together of trembling energy that produces intensity more often than not lasts a short while, as other examples such as the Bauhaus movement and the Black Mountain College show. This brings to mind the Eros Effect; in his 1989 essay, researcher and activist George N. Katsiaficas attempts to understand and acknowledge the emotional aspects of social movements. He suggests that the struggle for liberation is equally an 'erotic' act and a rational desire to break free from structural and psychological barriers, that can therefore not last forever.

We are less interested to contribute further to the myth of the school. Rather we want to understand the energy, and the mentality, of the Casablanca Art School as a potential for the future. We are interested in how what happened in the 1960s-1970s can resonate, tremble, today. The School of Casablanca as a project should lead to something and to somewhere else than what was, but we need to start from the traces, the residue of history. Without history, no present nor future lessons can exist. What can we learn from this process of excavation? How can we read the ruins of modernisation? How do we speak with each other?

Oral exchanges, what is not (yet) written, ruins of buildings, of stranded initiatives, are taken on as 'objects of reverse-engineering', similar to how Bert Flint, passionate observer and self-taught cultural anthropologist with a deep affinity for Moroccan and sub-Saharan cultures, was teaching at the Casablanca Art School. His lessons would typically start with a new object, creating alternative perspectives and genealogies through linking that back to other objects from the past and other contexts. To reverse rules, or better, no rules. Speaking with and between each other taken as point of departure to build something together.

Forming a growing (study) group of interested people in public events in ThinkArt, aims to bring together ideas and perspectives. We invite artists, curators, writers, architects, researchers and citizens to embark on a form of research through which publicness is not only defined but also created, as stepping stones. By setting up different encounters as a process of working, walking, talking, and listening together, we propose to start to learn, speculate and imagine things differently, to answer the questions raised, and formulate new ones.

The meetings are recorded and edited for research and archival purposes.
—Bik Van der Pol

Part of the School of Casablanca

The *School of Casablanca* is a collaborative project that takes as its starting point the legacy of the Casablanca Art School and its innovative pedagogical methods and exhibition strategies in 1960s Morocco.

KW Institute for Contemporary Art and Sharjah Art Foundation, in collaboration with Goethe-Institut Marokko, ThinkArt and Zamân Books & Curating have initiated the School of Casablanca. The project includes research residencies, public programmes, a digital archive and a touring exhibition of new works created by the residents as well as an exhibition of historical works by the artists who were originally associated with the Casablanca Art School. Launched in 2020, the initiative will continue through 2024.

November 2021

Learning together

Throughout November, discussions are taking place at ThinkArt and outside with artists, curators, writers, architects and researchers, such as Mamma Group, Mohamed Rachdi, Kenza Sefrioui, Sabrina Kamili, Florence Darsi, Maud Houssais to name a few.

If you wish to know more about the gathering dates and guests, please send us an email at sl@schoolofcasablanca.com

Artist Talk with Bik Van der Pol

Thursday, 25th November 2021

5:00 pm–7:00 pm (GMT +1)

The talk, moderated by Salma Lahlou and Krist Gruijthuijsen, takes place in Casablanca at ThinkArt with a zoom live streaming.

The talk will be in English and shall start with a presentation by Bik Van der Pol on their practice and ongoing research for the School of Casablanca, followed by a discussion with the moderators and Q/A with the public.

Online registration:

https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_BC2zdMjNSdKJK4yVaSG-rg

On-site registration:

<https://www.thinkart.ma/artist-talk-with-bik-van-der-pol>

June 2022

A walk in Casablanca with Fatima Mazmouz



© Fatima Mazmouz. Photo: Bik Van der Pol

During their ThinkArt residency in Casablanca, Liesbeth Bik and Jos Van der Pol came across conceptual artist Fatima Mazmouz's series *Casablanca Mon amour-Resistants* (2014-2018). Exploring 30 portraits of Moroccan resistance fighters of the 20th century, this work questions the construction of history, collective memory and cultural/political identity. These historical figures remain forgotten in history, and yet their names are immortalised as boulevards and street names in Casablanca. Through her exploration of the city, Mazmouz revived her memory. She now wishes to return to the public space and re-infuse historical memory via specific interventions in the city.

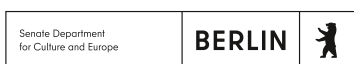
Artists' talk with Bik Van der Pol, Fatima Mazmouz and others

The talk, moderated by Salma Lahlou and Krist Gruijthuisen, will take place in Casablanca at ThinkArt with a zoom live streaming.

The talk, in French and English, will address the 'missing', the gaps left in between the fragments, how they can be filled and thought of as forms of 'making public'.

Links to online and on-site registration to be communicated.

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The *School of Casablanca* is initiated by KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin and Sharjah Art Foundation, Sharjah in collaboration with ThinkArt, Casablanca, Zamân Books & Curating, Paris, and Goethe-Institut Marokko.

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