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Artissima XYZ: Artist Highlights

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With Artissima's 2020 edition including an online platform, XYZ, running from 3 November to 9 December, *Ocula Magazine* introduces some of the artists showing across XYZ's curated sections: Present Future, Back to the Future, and Disegni.

BACK TO THE FUTURE

Curated by Mouna Mekouar and Lorenzo Giusti, *Back to the Future* looks at works by artists made between 1960 and 1999.

Mohamed Melehi at Loft Art Gallery



Mohamed Melehi, *Début de déluge B* from the series 'déluge' (2019). Mixed media on canvas. 200 x 160 cm.
Courtesy Loft Art Gallery.

Following the news of his recent passing at the age of 84, Loft Art Gallery offers a video introduction to the timeless work of this pioneer of abstraction.

Melehi's hard-edge canvases of parallel lines that curve and wave in uniform patterns are distinguished by an electrifying play of colour. *SOLEIL OBLIQUE II* (1971), for instance, renders the form of a radiating sun in sharp, cellulose lacquer lines on plywood that move from yellow to black, as alternating waves of eggplant purple and grass green rise up.

Melehi was a cosmopolitan artist. His studies took him to Tétouan, Seville, Rome, Madrid, and Paris, before a 1962 scholarship brought him to Columbia University in New York, where he met the likes of Frank Stella. Returning to Morocco in 1964, he joined the Casablanca school, which blurred the lines between art, craft, design, and architecture, developing a distinctly North African modernism.

Among the group's interventions was the staging of an exhibition, *Exposition-Manifeste*, on the streets near Jemaa el-Fnaa square in Marrakech in 1969. On the show, Melehi recalls a conscious 'position against the government'—'Our works were in for a week, exposed to the sun and wind. It was an ideological message about what art could be.'¹

¹ Oliver Basciano, 'Give us a swirl: How Mohamed Melehi became Morocco's modernist master', *The Guardian*, 12 April 2019,

Source : <https://ocula.com/magazine/insights/artissima-xyz-artist-highlights/>