

MIARROC

COLORS DEL DESERT
TEIXITS CONTEMPORANIS
DE LES AÏT KHEBBACH



Photograph: Serge Anton

EXHIBITION

A touring exhibition co-produced by the Musée Bargoin (Clermont Ferrand) and Ethnistory.

CURATORS

Christine Bouilloc | Arnaud Maurières | Marie-Bénédicte Kermorgant

PHOTOGRAPHS

Serge Anton, Eric Ossart

DESIGN

Arnaud Maurières and Musée Bargoin

PRESENTATION

From a dry land of stone and sand on the fringes of the Moroccan Sahara comes an exhibition that throws light on the exceptional creative talents of a little-known Berber tribe. Since the 1980s, the women of the Aït Khebbach have been producing rugs, blankets and cushions with wool unravelled from old jerseys, giving them a surprising colour palette to work with. An essential part of the furnishings in the tribe's tents and mud houses, the rugs also serve as bed mats for every member of the family. Now, for the first time, the rugs of the Aït Khebbach have left their desert homes.

Unrestrained by decorative conventions, and working from a limitless array of colours, the first weavers of the Aït Khebbach have invented an original, bold and uniquely colourful style. A series of collecting trips over three years, working alongside the creators themselves, have made it possible to bring together a selection of the very first rugs they weaved, each one revealing a unique freedom of expression and a rare talent. By showcasing the work of the tribe's finest weavers, the exhibition invites us to get to know them better and to discover the surprising modernity of their creations.

The Berber tribe of the Aït Khebbach belongs to the broader tribal confederation of the Aït Atta and has roots dating back to the early sixteenth century, when it occupied a wide area of land between Algeria and Morocco. After Morocco separated from France in 1956, the Aït Khebbach were forced to relocate to the south-eastern part of the country, where they gradually adopted a settled lifestyle.



Photograph: Eric Ossart



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Starting out in the 1980s, the women of the Aït Khebbach had no practical experience of their craft, and their only sources of inspiration were the handful of patterns use by neighbouring tribes. Unusually among the Berber tribes, the Aït Khebbach were not accustomed to travelling to local markets to buy wool and instead devised an original solution: unravelling old jerseys to obtain threads of different colours to combine with the quieter tones of their natural wool. This generation of pioneers, now in their seventies and eighties, unwittingly created a unique style that has since been taken up and developed by their daughters.

This exhibition charts the development of the particular decorative language employed by each weaver, starting with the models from which her inspiration is likely to have been drawn. The evocative staging, soundscapes, video reports and striking photographs that accompany the fabrics transport us directly into to the women's homes and workplaces. Each weaver is given her own space in the exhibition, which displays her name and portrait together with a brief introductory text, in many cases the first rug she made, and later examples illustrating the evolution of her style, her various influences, and the birth of a singular aesthetic.

Morocco, Desert Colours is a joint initiative of the Musée Bargoin (Clermont Ferrand) and Ethnistory, both of which have worked with the CDMT in the past (for the exhibitions *Nomadic Architecture of the Mediterranean*, 2001; *Queens of Sheba*, 2004; and *The Sun and the Spirits*, 2007). The first two of these exhibitions were also built on the work of the researcher Arnaud Maurières, a landscape designer now based in Morocco and co-founder of Ethnistory, together with Eric Ossart and Lahcen Aït Khouya.

As on previous occasions, Maurières has painstakingly adapted the display to the installations of the CDMT, where visitors will get to know the work of fourteen talented weavers. For the new exhibition space, and to articulate the discourse that links the exhibits, Maurières has selected new pieces and examples that complement the ones originally displayed in Clermont Ferrand. In particular, the exhibition provides a first glimpse of the work of Aicha Marouche, a weaver who had not been "discovered" when the original selection was displayed at the Musée Bargoin in April to August of 2014.



Fatima Oukharbouch



Aïcha Marouche

The CDMT exhibition runs from 16/11/2014 to 15/03/2015