

Exhibition from September 26th 2026 to February 07th 2027

Le bal des Ogresses



above

Ruisseau, Le ravin de la femme sauvage (Stream, The Wild Woman's Ravine) serie, 2026

© Lynn S.K.

Le bal des Ogresses

From September 26th 2026 to February 07th 2027

As part of the 2026 Mediterranean Season, sponsored by the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Culture in collaboration with the Interministerial Delegation for the Mediterranean, and organized by the Institut français under the general curatorship of Julie Kretzschmar,, the ICI team is continuing its collaboration with guest curator Sonia Recasens – a partnership that began in 2024 with *L'esprit du geste*, the inaugural exhibition in the renovated spaces of the ICI Leon site. This time, she is presenting her new project, which takes the legends surrounding Aïcha Kandisha as its starting point to explore the many figures of ogresses that populate the collective imagination across the Mediterranean region and beyond.

The exhibition *Le bal des Ogresses* shifts the focus from the fear inspired by Aïcha Kandisha to what is revealed by the stories that have shaped her myth. Ogresses and goddesses, monstrous and seductive, nurturing and devouring, protective and malevolent: Aïcha Kandisha and her sister figures become the prism through which to explore intimacy, the body and collective memory. These hybrid and transgressive creatures crystallise fears surrounding the night, femininity and sexuality.

From pre-Islamic mythologies to Sufi ceremonies, from Amazigh tales to Mesopotamian legends, thirteen female artists from different generations and regions bring to ICI the voices of those who tell the stories of the ogresses and claim them as their own. They explore the paradoxes of these figures – as feared as they are revered, objects of both desire and dread – who, through the power of oral tradition, elude any fixed representation.

Press Contact

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Press Visit
September 24th, 10am–noon
Opening
September 25th, 6–11pm

The exhibition

Welcome to the **Ogress Ball!**

The exhibition, which brings together thirteen artists, highlights marginalised narratives and weaves together genealogies that have been silenced, to create living archives – oral images of the ogress, here reimagined as a proto-feminist, queer, decolonial, Arab-Amazigh, pre and post-Islamic figure.

The ogress has no fixed representation.

She exists only through the voices of those who have been telling her story, evoking her and invoking her for millennia.

The exhibition is thus an invitation to recall and honour the stories our mothers and grandmothers used to tell us...

All these voices that have been singing for generations and across the borders of the Mediterranean, celebrating women's power, their resistance and resilience, their anger and their love, their outbursts and their tremors.

The exhibition is an invitation to devour.

A critical and utopian devouring.

Poetic and political.

An elusive and ever-changing embodiment, the ogress reveals herself to be immense and multifaceted. Unique and variable.

And above all, alive!

The ogress lives, survives, deviates, subverts.

She metamorphoses, reinvents herself.

The ogress resists norms, conventions and colonisation.

She defies both injunctions and definitions.

The ogress devours, overflows, unsettles.

Long live the ogresses!

Life is pure devouring.

Sonia Recasens



The curator

Sonia Recasens (1985, France) is an art historian, art critic and independent curator. She pursues a critical and curatorial practice that is engaged, sensitive and intuitive, exploring issues relating to intimacy, the body, memory and migration. She won the Special Jury Prize – AICA France Award 2019 and regularly collaborates with art centres, museums and publishing houses on publications, conferences and exhibitions. Her recent exhibitions include: *L'esprit du geste*, 2024 (ICI, Paris); *Aïta, fragments poétiques d'une scène marocaine*, 2025 (Frac Méca Nouvelle-Aquitaine, Bordeaux).

The exhibition will also feature the following experts, who are contributing to the free exhibition journal and who will be speaking at a series of events:

- **Mo Abbas**, philosopher, photographer and author of *Dictionnaire des Ogresses* (Port Jauni, 2023)
- **Taous Merakchi**, podcaster, web editor and author of *Monstrueuses* (Ville Brulé, 2025)
- **Rim Battal**, artist and poet

The artists

- **Khadija El Abyad**
1991, lives & works in Morocco
- **Rim Battal**
1987, lives & works in France
- **Amina Benbouchta**
1963, lives & works in Morocco
- **Imane Elkabli**
1998, lives & works in Morocco
- **Lucile Gautier**
1988, lives & works in Belgium
- **Nadira Husain**
1980, lives & works in Germany
- **Saodat Ismailova**
1981, lives & works in France
- **Kubra Khademi**
1989, lives & works in France
- **Rim Mejd**
1989, lives & works in Morocco
- **LALLA RAMI**
2000, lives & works in France
- **Lynn S.K.**
1986, lives & works in France
- **Silina Syan**
1996, lives & works in France
- **Nil Yalter**
1938, lives & works in France

on the left
Ghoulat En-nifas (detail), 2026
© Khadija El Abyad, ADAGP Paris 2026

Artistic creation support

Five artworks have been specially commissioned by ICI for this exhibition: those by Khadija El Abyad, Rim Battal, Lucile Gautier, Nadira Husain, Imane Elkabli and Rim Mejdi. The Dar Bellarj Foundation supported and coordinated the residency of artists Imane Elkabli and Rim Mejdi in Marrakech for the production of the collective work conceived with the women of the medina, in collaboration with the guest curator and the ICI team. A second phase of the residency, focused on research and discussions surrounding this work, will take place in the autumn in the Goutte d'Or neighbourhood with the support of the Institut français and the City of Paris.

The ICI is also producing a performance by Kubra Khademi during the exhibition.

This commitment illustrates two key aspects of ICI's support for artistic creation: a particular focus on women artists, whose work the team strives to facilitate and showcase, and a multidisciplinary approach which, beyond the visual arts, extends to performance and the performing arts.

Around the exhibition

To reflect the exhibition, ICI will be offering a programme of multidisciplinary events combining storytelling, round-table discussions, musical and poetry performances, film screenings followed by discussions, concerts, themed tours of the Goutte d'Or neighbourhood, and workshops aimed at young people and families.

The Ogress Ball (Le bal des Ogresses) is part of the Mediterranean Season 2026 organised by the Institut français.

The Mediterranean Season

The 2026 Mediterranean Season showcases the richness and diversity of Mediterranean cultures. It celebrates the artists, creators and young talents from these regions, whilst promoting cultural and human exchanges.

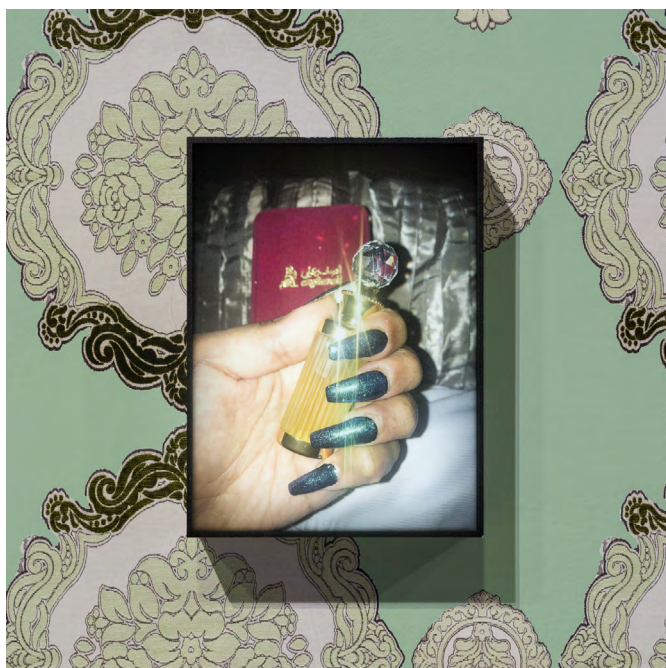
Following a popular and festive opening in Marseille, the Mediterranean Season will take place mainly across France, throughout the country, between May 15th and October 31th 2026. It will extend its reach to the shores of the Mediterranean through the organisation of several events in collaboration with the region's arts scenes and cultural organisations, as well as the French diplomatic network abroad.

This Season provides an opportunity to promote initiatives by young people and diasporas, to support creativity and innovation through the exchange of ideas and people, and to encourage cooperation between civil societies, particularly with Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt and Lebanon.

The Season explores five themes to address shared contemporary issues: speculative utopias, plural identities, contemporary spiritualities, the collective history of migration, and the construction of narratives.

Organised under the auspices of the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Culture, in conjunction with the Interministerial Directorate for the Mediterranean, this Season is led by the Institut français under the general curatorship of Julie Kretzschmar.

Visuals



J'aurais pas osé (I wouldn't have dared) serie, 2020
© Silina Syan, photo by Arthur Pequin, Confort Moderne



Aïcha Kandisha, 2021
© Amina Benbouchta



Untitled Birth Giving – Qoonos, 2025
© Kubra Khademi, ADAGP Paris 2026i



Hedera, 2021
© Rim Battal



Ghoulat En-nifas, 2026
© Khadija El Abyad, ADAGP Paris 2026



Ruisseau, Le ravin de la femme sauvage serie, 2026
© Lynn S.K.



Still from the video *La danse du ventre (Belly Dancing)*, 1974
© Nil Yalter, ADAGP Paris 2026



Still from the music video *AĪCHA CANDYSHOP*, 2025
© LALLA RAMI



Aïcha Kandisha in *Le dictionnaire des Ogresses*, 2023
© Lucile Gautier



Still from the video *Her Right*, 2020
© Saodat Ismailova



Giant, Foot and Tentacles, 2024
© Nadira Husain



above
Opening of the exhibition *L'esprit du geste* at ICI,
Dj-Set by La Louve in the patio, October 2024
© Chloé Bizot

ICI – Institut des Cultures d'Islam

Contemporary art center

ICI supports and promotes contemporary art in dialogue with the cultures of Islam. Alongside the artists, the team invites reflection on the narratives and representations of these cultures in their diversity, both in France and internationally.

The entire ICI team is involved in developing the artistic and cultural program. This collective dynamic extends to the collaborations we propose with independent artists and curators.

Each exhibition is accompanied by a multi-disciplinary program of performances, concerts, readings, lectures and workshops that explore in greater depth the themes explored in the works presented.

The ICI is an institution of the



Member of the following networks



Événement organisé dans le cadre de la Saison Méditerranée 2026



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cover page

Extract from the music video *AÏCHA CANDYSHOP*, 2025
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