

PRESS RELEASE

Yto Barrada: *Agadir*

The Curve, Barbican Centre

7 February – 20 May 2018

Media view: 6 February 10am–1pm

Free Admission

#YtoBarrada

Supported by Nicoletta Fiorucci, Founder of Fiorucci Art Trust; Fluxus Art Projects; and using public funding by Arts Council England

Opening 7 February 2018, Barbican Art Gallery presents artist **Yto Barrada**'s first solo exhibition in a public gallery in London. For this new commission, Barrada transforms the sweeping form of the Curve with a dramatic site-specific installation – including a mural, a new film commission, sculptures, collages and a series of live and recorded performances – to consider how a city and its people might address the process of reinvention following disaster. She takes as her starting point the hybrid novel-play by Moroccan writer Mohammed Khair-Eddine – *Agadir* (1967) – which reflects on the devastating earthquake that destroyed much of the modernist city of Agadir, Morocco, in 1960.

Weaving together personal narratives and political ideals, Barrada presents a complex portrait of a city in transition, resonating with many of the challenges we face in contemporary society. **Yto**

Barrada: *Agadir* opens in the Curve on Wednesday 7 February 2018. The installation is part of the Barbican's 2018 season, **The Art of Change**, which explores how the arts respond to, reflect and potentially effect change in the social and political landscape.

Over the past two decades, Barrada's multimedia practice has explored questions ranging from migration to abstraction, from fossils to botany. She examines the strategies of resistance employed every day in her native Morocco and traces the 'hidden transcripts' of objects and people in her work, guiding us through the overlapping realities and fictions of these narratives.

At the Barbican, Khair-Eddine's text provides the stimulus for Barrada's commission. *Agadir* was written following a mission instigated by the government of King Mohammed V to assess the devastation and reformation of the city. It involves a king, a psychic, a cook, a trade unionist, a goat, a female warrior and others engaging in a fervent debate over how best to reform the structures governing their lives. Translated into English for the first time, the voices of these characters are manifested in a sound installation in the Curve, where the earthquake comes to represent the rising tensions of society facing the ruins of urban environment, political and religious power and social relationships.

A vast monochrome mural stretches along the length of the gallery's wall, curved like the city's bay. Barrada sketches the architecture of Agadir beginning before the earthquake and continuing with the iconic buildings constructed following the disaster. Agadir was rebuilt by several architects and urbanists, whose use of bare concrete and rigorously structured forms, heavily influenced by the Brutalist style pioneered by French architect Le Corbusier, resonates with the Brutalist expression of the Barbican's buildings. Echoing the Barbican's own history as a site of post-war destruction rebuilt with utopian ideals, Agadir's reconstruction followed Morocco's newly gained independence from colonial rule.

Furniture-like sculptural interventions interject the visitor's journey through the space, created using traditional Moroccan wicker weaving techniques. Drawing on the history of the 'conversation chair' and the psychoanalyst's divan, their configurations manifest different typologies of sitting – from squatting to lounging – evoking the potential of sitting as a practice of waiting, protest or rehabilitation.

Yto Barrada said; "*The Barbican Curve is as scary as a haunted house: some pretty great ghosts have already installed wonderful projects using the space in every possible way. And now for my sins, it's my turn. I'm honoured to have a chance to try. In my performance and installation piece, I will explore relationships between spatial proximity, affect and trauma. The segmented architecture of Agadir embodies a visual repertoire for all dreamers of a New Town or even of a New World.*"

Jane Alison, Head of Visual Arts, Barbican said; *"Incredibly, this will be Barrada's first large scale work shown in a public institution in London. As an artist at the cutting edge of contemporary art with a hugely eclectic, experimental practice, I am thrilled that Barrada has accepted this commission for the Curve. Focusing on the aftermath of the earthquake in Agadir in 1960, the commission is particularly relevant to the Barbican's history and foregrounds important contemporary debates around the rebuilding of society. I have no doubt that the installation, the 29th in the Curve programme, will be a highlight of the 2018 art calendar."*

Documenting the visual languages of the everyday to expose overarching structures of authority, Barrada's projects interrogate ideas around bureaucracy, archaeology, authenticity and myth-making. Early works included *A Life Full of Holes: The Strait Project* (1998-2004), exploring everyday life in and around the post-colonial city Tangier, evoking through their absence the perilous migratory routes crossing the Strait of Gibraltar. More recent work has investigated the evolution of urban space and the narratives shaping natural history and geology. The fossil industry is the subject of the 2015 film *False Start*, which visits the lunar Moroccan fossil landscape and the entrepreneurial preparators who supplement the region's export of archaeological finds with forged and wholly invented artefacts. *Unruly Objects (Suite for Thérèse Rivière)* (2016) takes the interned figure of ethnologist Thérèse Rivière as its starting point; her collections of toys, notebooks and drawings from Algeria's colonial era provide fertile ground for Barrada's fictional response to her fieldwork.

Yto Barrada (Moroccan; b. 1971, Paris) lives and works in New York. She is the founder of Cinémathèque de Tanger (2006-ongoing), North Africa's premiere cinema cultural centre and film archive, in a renovated 1930s cinema theatre in Tangier. She was nominated for the Prix Marcel Duchamp in 2016, won the Abraaj Group Art Prize in 2015 and was named Deutsche Bank Artist of the Year in 2011. Barrada's most recent project was the major commission *Tree Identification for Beginners* for Performa 17 in New York. Her work has been exhibited at Tate Modern (London), MoMA (New York), The Renaissance Society (Chicago), Witte de With (Rotterdam), Haus der Kunst (Munich), Centre Pompidou (Paris), Whitechapel Gallery (London), and the 2007 and 2011 Venice Biennales.

Notes to Editors

Press Information

For further information, images or to arrange interviews, please contact:

Ann Berni, Senior Communications Manager +44 207 382 7169, ann.berni@barbican.org.uk

Lily Booth, Communications Officer +44 207 382 6162, lily.booth@barbican.org.uk

Bréifne Ó Conbhúí, Communications Assistant, +44 207 382

7254, breifne.oconbhui@barbican.org.uk

Press images available online from the Barbican Newsroom

A link to the image sheets can be found in the 'Downloads' box on the top right-hand side of the page from <http://www.barbican.org.uk/YtoBarradaNews>

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Public Information

The Curve, Barbican, London

Public information: 0845 120 7550 / www.barbican.org.uk/artgallery

Free admission

The Curve opening times:

Saturday – Wednesday 11am–8pm

Thursday & Friday 11am–9pm

Bank Holidays; Good Friday 30 March 12pm – 9pm, Easter Monday 2 April 12pm – 8pm, 7 May 12 – 6pm.

Exhibition

The exhibition has been commissioned by the Barbican, London.

The sound installation and series of live performances that forms part of Barrada's installation are based on the book *Agadir* by Mohammed Khaïr-Eddine © Éditions du Seuil, Paris, 1967, and courtesy of Alexandre Khaïr-Eddine.

The film commission details are: Yto Barrada, *Anagramme Agadir (Agadir Anagram)*, 2018. Collage film, 16mm transferred to digital, 11 minutes. © Yto Barrada, courtesy of Pace Gallery; Sfeir-Semler Gallery, Hamburg, Beirut; and Galerie Polaris, Paris. The film includes Extracts from *Dernière minute: la tragédie d'Agadir*, directed by Etienne Lalou © INA, 1960; *Et maintenant Agadir* © INA, 1960 and in agreement with the estate of the director, Roger Louis; *L'architecte Le Corbusier au Maroc* © INA, 1960; *A City Dies* © British Pathé, 1960; and *The Tragedy of Agadir* © AP Archive / British Movietone, 1960. With voices from Isidore Isou, Nick Armfield, Tallulah Bond, Rory Francis, Ellis Howard, Shalifa Kaddu, Rosalind Lailey, Jonny Lavelle and Ellie Rawnsley.

Another Kind of Life. Photography on the Margins is shown in Barbican Art Gallery 28 February –27 May 2018 (Media view: Tuesday 27 February 2018, 10am –1pm).

For more information, please visit; <http://www.barbican.org.uk/AnotherKindofLifeNews>

Also coinciding with **Yto Barrada: *Agadir***, is the fifth of the changing foyer displays ***Flying Trees and Sunken Squares*** (20 October 2017– 20 March 2018) which explores the history and design of the Barbican Estate and Arts Centre. For more information, please visit [here](#).

Events

Performances

Throughout the run of the exhibition, actors from the Guildhall School of Music and Drama will perform extracts from *Agadir* live in the Curve.

These will take place on the following Saturdays and are free of charge;

10 February (12pm – 4.30pm) & 24 February; 3 & 31 March; 21 & 28 April; 5 & 12 May (11am – 8pm).

Architecture on Stage: Yto Barrada and Jean-Louis Cohen

Thursday 17 May, 7pm, Frobisher Auditorium 1

Join artist Yto Barrada as she discusses the history of modern architecture in Morocco with Architect and historian Jean-Louis Cohen.

Tickets £15

Cinema: Nevertheless She Persisted – Suffrage cinema and beyond

Be Pretty and Shut Up (Sois Belle et tais toi) (France, 1981, 110min)

Tuesday 24 April, 6.30pm, Cinema 2

Barbican Cinema screens a film chosen by Yto Barrada for the concurrent programme Nevertheless She Persisted – Suffrage cinema and beyond – a rare screening of Delphine Seyrig's 1976 documentary *Be Pretty and Shut Up*, in which 24 French and American actresses discuss the frustrations of working within a patriarchal studio system.

Tickets £10.80-13.50 plus booking fee

Weaving by Christabel Balfour

9 – 13 May, Barbican Shop

Inspired by the exhibition, tapestry weaver Christabel Balfour will create a rug in the Barbican Shop over five days. The completed rug will be on display until Sunday 20 May.

Free

To find out more about specific events, check the website for full listings;

www.barbican.org.uk/artgallery

Book

The exhibition is accompanied by a fully-illustrated publication, including a newly commissioned interview with the artist by acclaimed architect, architectural historian and scholar Jean-Louis Cohen, as well as text by exhibition curator Lotte Johnson. The book is the seventh in a new publication series by Barbican Art Gallery that focuses on the Curve exhibition programme.

£12.00

The Art of Change at the Barbican 2018

The Art of Change presents bold artistic responses to vital global issues including feminism, climate change and human rights, while providing a platform for voices currently underrepresented in the arts. The season includes world-class music, theatre, dance, film, visual arts and learning and runs throughout 2018. barbican.org.uk/whats-on/series/the-art-of-change

Barbican Art Gallery and The Curve

Our visual arts programme embraces art, architecture, design, fashion, photography and film. Many of our exhibitions explore the interconnections between disciplines, periods and cultures, and aim to imagine the world in new ways. Designers, artists and architects are our collaborators in this process.

We invest in the artists of today and tomorrow; the Curve is one of the few galleries in London devoted to the commissioning of new work. Through our activities we aim to inspire more people to discover and love the arts. Entrance to the Curve is free. Through Young Barbican we offer £5 tickets to 14-25 year olds for our paid exhibitions, children under 14 are free.

Our exhibitions are complemented by comprehensively researched catalogues and a full range of public events. We develop engaging online content for audiences and offer special tours for schools. In partnership with renowned museums and art galleries, many of our exhibitions travel to reach both national and international audiences.

About the Barbican

A world-class arts and learning organisation, the [Barbican](http://barbican.org.uk) pushes the boundaries of all major art forms including dance, film, music, theatre and visual arts. Its creative learning programme further underpins everything it does. Over 1.1 million people attend events annually, hundreds of artists and performers are featured, and more than 300 [staff](#) work onsite. The architecturally renowned centre opened in 1982 and comprises the Barbican Hall, the Barbican Theatre, The Pit, Cinemas One, Two and Three, Barbican Art Gallery, a second gallery the Curve, foyers and public spaces, a library, Lakeside Terrace, [a glasshouse conservatory](#), conference facilities and three restaurants. The City of London Corporation is the founder and principal funder of the Barbican Centre.

The Barbican is home to Resident Orchestra, [London Symphony Orchestra](#); Associate Orchestra, [BBC Symphony Orchestra](#); Associate Ensembles the [Academy of Ancient Music](#) and [Britten Sinfonia](#), Associate Producer [Serious](#), and Artistic Partner [Create](#). Our Artistic Associates include [Boy Blue](#), [Cheek by Jowl](#), Deborah Warner, [Drum Works](#) and [Michael Clark Company](#). The [Los Angeles Philharmonic](#) are the Barbican's International Orchestral Partner, the [Australian Chamber Orchestra](#) are International Associate Ensemble at Milton Court and [Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra](#) are International Associate Ensemble.

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