

TBA21
Thyssen-Bornemisza
Art Contemporary

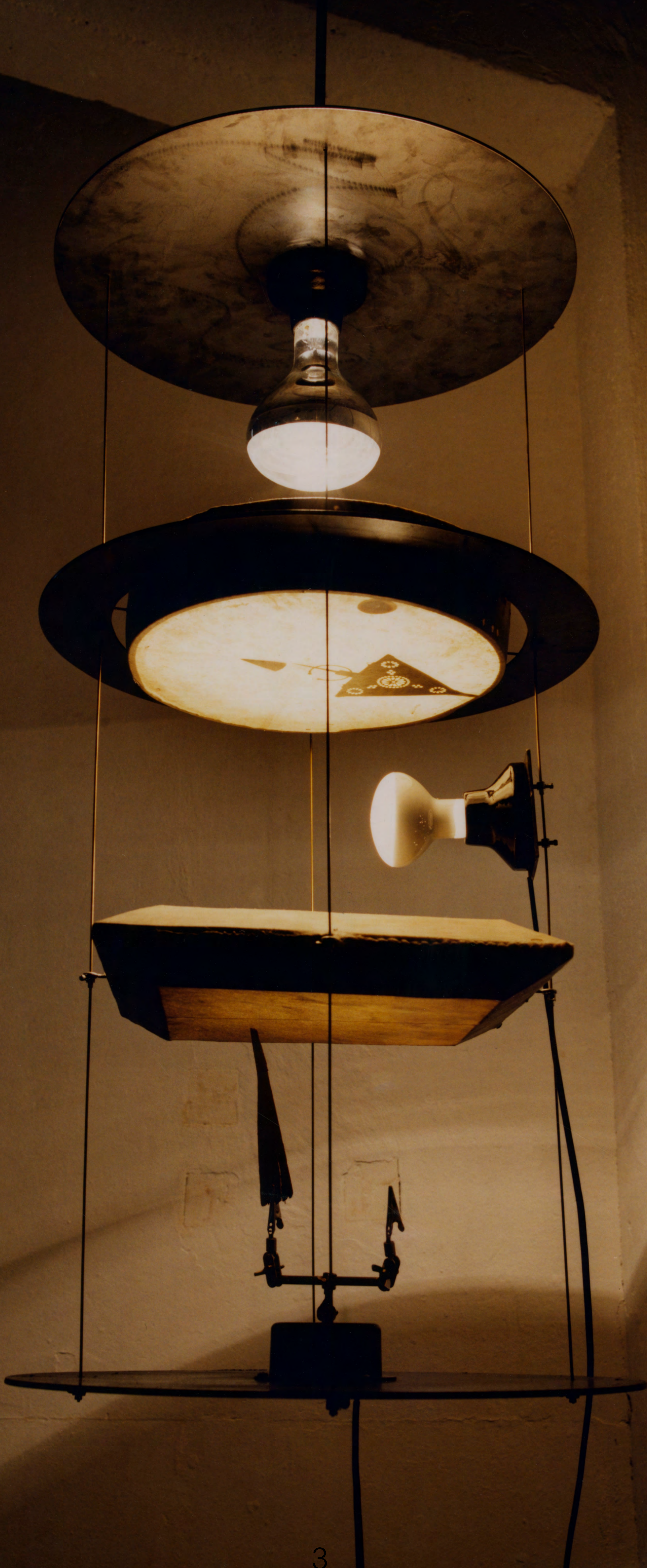
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A Journey Into Rural Music
Traditions in North Africa and
the Arab World

Thyssen-Bornemisza National Museum

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THE VOICE OF THE RURAL

Daniela Zyman

In 2015, I started an intimate and personal collection of recordings and musics in souks and shops in Essaouira and Marrakesh, from weddings in Bahrain, or music salons and diwan majlises in Kuwait, Sharjah, or Oman. With *At-Tāriq*, I plan to follow the ancient routes of pilgrimage and trade that traverse North Africa, the Sahara, and the sub-Saharan region, while focusing on the importance of rural traditions and their influence on religious, urban, and classical practices and how these were preserved while most coastal and urban practices, evolved, dissolved or disappeared with the political, technological and social changes traversing the Arab world since the 1940s.

—Tarek Atoui

This initial description by the peripatetic artist-musician Tarek Atoui outlines both the travel route and the methodology central to the development of the research/exhibition *At-Tāriq*. In preparation of the project, Atoui immersed himself in the musical, artisanal, and instrument-making traditions of the Arab world and the Tamazgha, the lands of the Amazigh peoples.¹ His journey evokes a historical cartography that for centuries has guided traders, nomadic tribes, and pilgrims to traverse wide and inhospitable swathes of land. Stretching from the



Map of North Africa and West Africa, published in Strasbourg in 1522.

Atlantic Ocean across the Nile River to the Arab Gulf and the banks of the Euphrates, and from the Mediterranean shores to the Southern boundaries of the Sahara, this immense territory formed part of a broader world system, a network of exchange centered on the Muslim world that connected the Indian Ocean, China, and Europe.

Looking at a contemporary map with its colorful jigsaw puzzle, delineating bounded and distinct nation-states, it is tempting to see geographic divisions, physical barriers, and cultural divides, staking out what distinguishes one place from another.² Atoui, however, sidesteps this modern politico-geographical framework and adopts a perspective that shifts from rigid divisions to networks, flows, and relationships. Woven around the practices of music and

1 The Amazigh are peoples native to North Africa, who have a rich cultural and linguistic heritage spanning regions from Morocco to Libya and parts of the Sahel to the Canary Islands. Often referred to by the colonial term “Berbers,” they refer to themselves as “Imazighen,” meaning “free people” or “noble people.” Their languages, collectively called Tamazight, have been preserved through oral and written traditions for millennia.

2 A common misconception is that the Sahara desert is a division between North Africa and sub-Saharan Africa. In reality, it has historically served as a bridge, facilitating overland trade and cultural exchange. Before maritime routes dominated as of the late sixteenth century, caravans traversed the Sahara, connecting China, India, the Middle East, the Mediterranean, and West Africa, carrying goods, religious scholarship, cultural practices, and stories, weaving an interconnected world.



Documentation from Tarek Atoui's field research
in the Atlas region, 2023-4.

hospitality, *At-Tāriq* revives the contours of an eclipsed, often forgotten, and possibly imaginary geography of interconnectedness and proximity. This nomadic methodology³– or what Edward Said calls via the metaphor of the voyage “traveling theory”⁴– forms the foundation for a musical and poetic exploration of what Atoui refers to as Arab rural musical traditions.

For lack of a better term, “rural music” broadly encompasses a variety of genres practiced by rural populations, both nomadic and sedentary, and typically by musicians who seldom pursue music as their only profession. This is not the music of a canon, not a classical repertoire, but a poetic mastery, which mixes the brilliance of oral rhetoric into the rhythms and patterns of instrumentation with the monotonies of duration. While deeply idiomatic and rooted in vernacular languages, poetry, and instrumentation, rural music also travels via (often poor or old) recordings and self-produced videos through shadow circuits and digital passages and connects the Arab world and North Africa with its many diasporas. According to the Italian ethnographer Alessandra Ciucci, who has been studying the voice of the rural (*Ṣawt l-‘arubiya*) among migrant Moroccan men in Italy, the experience, ethos, and music of the rural reemerge in the context of migration with unforeseen intensity. She writes: “*Ṣawt l-‘arubiya* travels where people travel, but it also travels where people cannot go, allowing its audience to elaborate and share life aspirations and political representations, building new forms of participation at a distance.”⁵

3 The process of becoming nomadic in the rhizomic mode favored by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari is not merely anti-essentialist, but a-subjective, trans-personal, and beyond received notions of individuality, ultimately collective.

4 Edward Said, “Traveling Theory,” *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), 226–47. “Traveling Theory” not only challenges the propensity of theory to seek a stable place, but asks how different populations, classes, and genders travel and what kinds of knowledges, stories, and theories they produce and circulate.

It should be noted that Atoui's fascination with the music, voice, and ethos of the rural is by no means ethnographic, folkloric, or rooted in spirituality. Rather, it responds to his interest in a certain intersection of orality, improvisation, errantry, and the everyday, which, when invoked, expressed, and embedded in the performance and experience of the rural, eschews romanticized claims to authenticity or originality. Rurality, in the context of *At-Tāriq*, offers a lens through which to reflect on what has been preserved, or can be reclaimed from loss, coloniality, displacement, or folklore. It encapsulates a material and sonic heritage that holds a productive potential for a contemporary world that fails to meaningfully recognize these vital cultural contributions.

This form of (non-hegemonic) orality, which emerges from the encounters between (creolized/hybrid) languages and sensibilities lies at the heart of Martinican writer-philosopher Édouard Glissant's poetics of relations. Shaped by presence, rhythm, and fluidity, and punctuated by repetition and improvisation, it is the medium of memory, resistance, and relationality. Appearing through the figure of the nightly storyteller, Glissant vividly recounts: "Clearly, one of the places engraved in Antillean memory is the circle drawn around the storyteller by the shadows of night. On the borders of this ring the children who will relay the word are beside themselves. He is quick to guess when they will shiver, wide mouthed in terror, or laugh to cover up their fear. [...] His voice comes from beyond the seas, charged with the movement of those African countries present in their absence; it lingers in the night, which draws the trembling children into its womb."⁶

5 Alessandra Ciucci, *The Voice of the Rural: Music, Poetry, and Masculinity among Migrant Moroccan Men in Umbria* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2022), 177.

6 Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009), 38–39.

THE EARS' DELIGHT⁷

“O beautiful one of this region, O wise man of the land of Babylon, pour into my ear something to gladden my heart and please my soul.” He sang, and Muhammad ibn Sa’id said: “I almost fell on my face because of the tarab.”

—Abu al-Faraj al-Isfahani⁸

Atoui’s deeply personal passion for Arabic music was first harnessed in the project *Re-visiting Tarab* (2010–13). Centered on the concept of *tarab*, which denotes not only a specific repertoire of Arabic music but also the profound trance-like emotional state it evokes, this project became a collective exploration of that particular musically induced ecstasy. Variably described as “enchantment,” “aesthetic emotion,” or a “feeling roused by music,” *tarab* specifies the intense connection between audience and performer as experienced in a musical performance. While such interpersonal arousal through music might seem decidedly contemporary, the concept of *tarab* actually dates back at least to the ninth century, if not earlier. It connotes a kind of hearing with the “ear of the heart” most pronounced in Sufi mysticism. To listen well, that is, attentively and reverently, is itself an art form or a special gift. Whether intended to deepen awareness of the divine or else, in the secular context of the *tarab*, to seek aesthetic rapture (metaphorically to fall on one’s face), it persists as a profound introspective practice. Embodied in the exercise of *sama’* (listening) and the figure of the *sammi’* (the listener), such practice “underscores the symbolic importance of listening in Arab and Near-Eastern civilizations in general.”⁹

7 I refer to Ibn Rajab’s (d. 1392 CE) book *Nuzhat al-asma’ fi mas’alat al-sama’* (The Ears’ Delight in the Practice of Musical Audition).

8 From Abu al-Faraj al-Isfahani, *Kitab al-Aghani (Book of Songs)*, trans. George Sawa, <https://www.shira.net/music/tarab-medieval.htm?utm>

9 Ali Jihad Racy, *Making Music in the Arab World: The Culture and Artistry of Tarab*, Cambridge Middle East Studies 17 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 40.



*Forgotten Tales Through Time,
Marrakech, 2025.*

In *Re-visiting Tarab*, Atoui invited a diverse group of musicians, including experimental hip-hop artist DJ Spooky and Tokyo-born composer Ikue Mori, to engage with the collections of the AMAR Foundation in Lebanon, which houses the world's most extensive archive of early twentieth-century Arabic music recordings. Each participant reinterpreted the *tarab* through contemporary composition, while retaining the aesthetic qualities that mark the tradition. "The idea was to open up the collection to a number of musicians from different practices but all related to sampling," Atoui explained, adding: "Even though I am from this culture and this region, I knew as little as they did."¹⁰ Subsequently, through his affiliation with AMAR, Atoui ventured further, ultimately immersing himself in the vast musical, poetic, and craft traditions, sustained by tribes and villages from the Atlas Mountains to the Persian Gulf.

Building on these earlier experiences, Atoui's most recent research took him to the southeastern city of Ouarzazate in Morocco in early 2022, where he began to explore the region's vibrant rural and Amazigh music traditions. Also referred to as *Ahwach*—a collective Amazigh traditional dance performance that is common in the High-Atlas and Anti-Atlas Mountains—it integrates songs, poetry, body movement, and percussion. More than just performance, *Ahwach* plays a fundamental role in Amazigh cultural heritage and its current revival. Its intricate musical and choral arrangements establish a shared ancestral vocabulary, nourished by rhythmic patterns, poetic inventions, and socio-cultural references, connecting communities through collective expression. *Ahwach* performances are woven into the fabric of daily life, taking place in streets, markets, private gatherings,

10 Atoui in: Nana Asfour, "Tarek Atoui: Visiting Tarab," Performa Archive, 2011, <https://archive.performa-arts.org/archive/11b-pc-0004>.



and ceremonies. Beyond its aesthetic value, *Ahwach* also serves as a form of mnemonic technology, preserving cultural memory in a region that has long been a crossroads of diverse influences. At the same time, it reflects resilience in the face of enduring marginalization, embodying both the richness of Amazigh identity and the struggles of its preservation.¹¹

EXPERIENCES REACHING INTO DEPTHS WE CANNOT FATHOM

‘Musicking’ in Africa is indexed by a variety of terms: we beat, shake, touch, and play; we say, recite, recollect, and sign; and we move, stir the body, look our way, and dance.

—Kofi Agawu¹²

Atoui’s engagement with music traditions rooted in rurality invites more nuanced reflections on their profound performative and transformative qualities. As discussed above, this transformative power of sound and rhythm aligns with the practice of *sama’*, or deep listening and the emotional upliftment and ecstatic intensities emblematic of the *tarab* experience. Describing *tarab*, Atoui helpfully explains that it is “a state of ‘melotrance’ that you reach after being exposed to music for a certain amount of time.” Such performances “used to happen in courtyards, where people would come and sit for hours.”¹³ This transformative potential of music and poetics lies in their capacity to co-create

11 Brahim El Guabli, *Moroccan Other-Archives: History and Citizenship after State Violence* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2023). El Guabli highlights how Morocco, as a self-defined Arab and Islamic state, has systematically overridden Amazigh linguistic and cultural rights and achievements and explores a range of “other archives”—including texts, artifacts, embodied experiences, and musical forms—that resist state silencing and preserve the richness of Amazigh identity and cultural memory.

12 *Musicking* refers to the act of participating in any form of music-making or listening, emphasizing music as a dynamic process that creates and reinforces relationships. Kofi Agawu, *The African Imagination in Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 3.

13 Atoui in Asfour, “Tarek Atoui: Visiting tarab.”

a shared world and elicit effects (emotions, states of mind, collective expressions) that are not easily produced otherwise. As in Glissant's account of the storyteller mesmerizing a flock of children around a campfire, it sparks experiences arriving from depths impossible to fathom, from "the shadow's edge," which to the Martinican are the unknowable aspects of individual and cultural identities. The orator's tale "from beyond the seas," much like what he calls the *plain song*, "ordinarily an occasion for transport or escape, holds us clearly in the world at its fullest."¹⁴

Whereas "music" is more likely to be associated with a certain formalism and the mastery of an instrument or repertoire, "musicking"—a term coined by musicologists—is collective, improvisational, durational, celebratory, and transformational. In these heightened moments of playing/listening, a kind of physical and mental contagion—or even interpenetration—is said to take place, fostering intersubjective and transcorporeal connections. I am thinking of the potential of this quirky neologism as I further reflect on Atoui's own performative musical practice, which he connects to oral traditions and cultures. He states: "What I'm doing is about present, live situations, moments of being together, being in a space or situation that is very hard to translate to other formats, such as texts, videos, CDs, recordings, albums, or any kind of documentation. I'm still on the ephemeral side. I like the ephemerality of things because I believe that it's one extension of modernity. [...] This aspect of ephemerality is important because it makes our reality valuable, and it completes our modernity, balancing it in an essential way."¹⁵

In insisting on the ephemerality, corporeality, and the affective labor specific to musical

14 Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 40.

15 Pamela Wong, "Journey Across Sound: An Interview with Tarek Atoui," *ArtAsiaPacific* (September 1, 2023), 65.

performance, Atoui gives voice to experiences that are otherwise difficult to translate into concepts. Frequently labeled as folkloric, mystical, or ecstatic, they are and have always been part of the rhythms of daily life. In reclaiming these practices—alongside what Amazigh scholar Brahim El Guabli terms their “other-archives”—as indispensable cultural expressions, often eclipsed by modernity’s preoccupation with “high” forms and rationality, Atoui offers a richer description of the quotidian and of modernity itself. He also pushes back against the (somewhat chauvinistic) correlation of music (as a high art form) with ideals of beauty, morality, and rationality to create space for the frayed edges, all the (in-between, lived, invisible, ephemeral, situational) manifestations of art.

For *At-Tariq*, the installation at Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, this musicking energy is pronouncedly articulated through the main “soundtrack,” composed and performed with Atoui’s collaborators, the percussionist Susie Ibarra (New York/Berlin), the musician Nancy Mounir (Cairo), and DJ-composer Ziúr (Berlin). Invited to study and intervene in the musical archive of *At-Tariq*, they together developed, rehearsed, and perfected the composition during a week-long residency in Córdoba in the summer of 2023. Subsequently and after a long process of revisions, Atoui strung the individual seances and tracks provided by his collaborators into a ninety-minute arrangement of layered sounds, vocalizations, and electronic composition. Here, traces are embedded within new layers—built upon, remixed, re-recorded and playfully explored—to create a composition that not only triggers aesthetic appreciation but also mobilizes social, political, and historical connections. This durational piece is neither a translation, nor a referencing of the source archive, but rather it stands as a shared compositional exercise of improvisation and experimentation *with* the archive. Also described

by Atoui as a practice of “hospitality,” this process “involves a careful and responsible approach to bringing ideas and people together. True improvisation is not random; it’s the result of years of dedication, honing unique sounds, techniques and identities.”¹⁶

EROSION: BECOMING GEOLOGIC

But what is the nature of (the fossils’) speech and what would they say *if* they could speak? Speak! Nothing? Only a spectre? A dumb object? What mutism is this that characterises our lack of language for this geologic dimension of life?

—Kathryn Yusoff¹⁷

In the Atlas region, rural music is embedded in a layered context of artisanal production and local economies. This extends from the crafting of instruments—such as doun-douns, percussion instruments made from a wooden corpus with natural cow-hide or skin stretched over both ends, held in place with rope, and struck with a piece of pipe¹⁸—to pottery, jewelry, leather production, and weaving. The gift of rural craftsmanship lies in imaginatively transforming the scarce materials found in the region’s arid landscapes. Amid the drastic and often unforgiving environmental transformations that affect life in the Atlas, the ability to repurpose everyday materials and employ inventive technologies is not merely a skill but a lifeline for survival.

In *At-Tāriq*, Atoui assembles the artisanal production with elements of the geological

16 Tarek Atoui and C. Spencer Yeh, “Tarek Atoui on Hospitality, Collaboration and Expanding Musical Instruments,” *Frieze* (January 8, 2025), <https://www.frieze.com/article/tarek-atoui-c-spencer-yeh-interview-248>.

17 Kathryn Yusoff, “Geologic Life: Prehistory, Climate, Futures in the Anthropocene,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 31, no. 5 (October 2013): 788, <https://doi.org/10.1068/d11512>.

18 As well as the *Taguena*, a certain type of tambourine fitted with multiple strings and a membrane made of sheep skin and the *Naqouss*, a metal instrument that produces a bell-like sound.





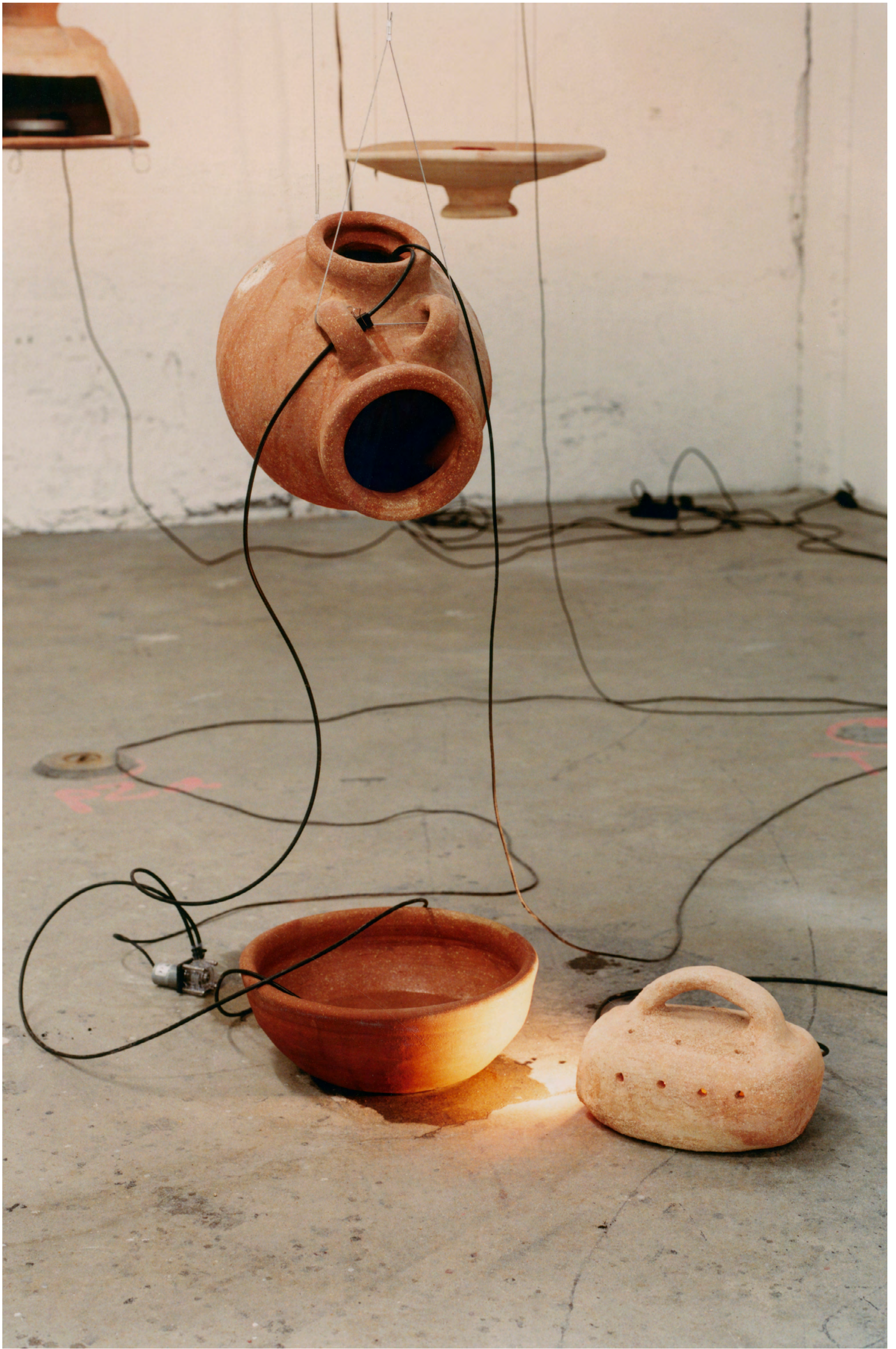
Documentation from Tarek Atoui's field research in the Atlas region, 2023-4.

landscape of the Atlas Mountains, incorporating its rich mineral and fossil formations into his archive of the rural. The earthen—the clay potteries, shards, minerals, fossils, and beads—becomes both the source and the ground from which musical forms and sounds emerge, reverberate, and are recirculated. As in many of his works, elemental matter is not mere material. It serves as “geologic witness and mimetic memory device,” recording and echoing the intertwined narratives of the earth’s history and human presence in the drying lands of North Africa.¹⁹ This perspective urges us to attune ourselves to the chrono-topological sedimentations of the geologic—viewing it not only as remnants of ancient life but also as mediators of anthropogenic processes of depletion and their lingering legacies. The barren earth of the Atlas with its minerals and fossils bears the marks of relentless erasure, heat, and environmental transformation, often beyond its natural regenerative capacity, accelerated by climatic rifts. It confronts us with the realization that we, too, are “the ghosts of mineralization rattling in our bones”—a living accumulation of extraction, consumption, and ecological exhaustion fueled by fossil biomass, as the geographer Kathryn Yusoff argues.²⁰

A suite of kinetic sonic object/instruments, assembled from the materials found and collected in Morocco are meticulously designed for *At-Tāriq* to harmonize music-as-collective-force, sound, movement, and material experience. Suspended in layered stacks from the gallery’s ceiling, they produce textured tonalities, as rotating elements scrape, strike, or brush against various surfaces. Many of the pieces are embedded with sensors, motors, and acoustic components, enabling them to react to environmental stimuli—sometimes produced by heat or else by water—or performer interaction.

19 Yusoff, “Geologic Life,” 784.

20 Yusoff, “Geologic Life,” 791.





As they move, vibrate, or resonate, they transform physical motion and friction into sound, generating subtle sonic events at the limits of audibility. Techniques of sound erosion—haunting material pulsations, reverberations blurring clarity, the grittiness of scratches and rubbings—enable experimentation with the acoustic properties of each material and how they transmit, reflect, and absorb sound.

These object assemblages embody Atoui's commitment to sound as an interactive and relational force, capable of bridging material, media, and conceptual divides. From an eco-political perspective, the ubiquity and transductive (traveling) energy of sound are mobilized to decenter human intelligibility (hence rationality and morality) as the sole agent and interpreter of musical expressivity. In Atoui's sounding worlds, nonhuman entities, such as oceans and rivers, lithic and fossil elements, and even artworks, become interlocutors. They carry voices that trouble and interrupt the operative logics in which humans monopolize the picture, expressing a (kind of) collaboration or complicity between the artist and a sounding (and semiotically intelligible) world that complicates music's exceptionalism. Beautifully captured by anthropologist Stefan Helmreich in *Sounding the Limits of Life*, sound and sounding disrupt the alleged mutism of life and channel worlds previously inaudible, even unimagined, "at a moment when modes of sonic representation and transmission bring into earshot sound from previously unheard realms—the deep sea, the inside of the head, outer space [...] and when techniques of 'sonification' render audible nonsonic material and information (sun spots, climate-change data, nineteenth-century visual tracings of vibration patterns)."²¹

21 Stefan Helmreich, *Sounding the Limits of Life: Essays in the Anthropology of Biology and Beyond* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016).

THE NIGHTCOMER

Night brings revolution against the archetypal. [...] It is where one fathoms otherwise, the time-space of the visionary, the imaginary, the unreal, the unknown, the elsewhere, the outside, and the emergent.

—Jason Bahbak Mohaghegh²²

Another signature element in *At-Tāriq* is the *majlis* (salon)—the traditional setting for hospitality in Arab and North African homes. The *majlis* typically serve as a place where guests and travelers (foreigners) are received. They offer not only shelter but also conviviality and connection to those arriving from afar. Sonified with embedded speakers, nested within cushions, drums, and ceramics, Atoui’s salons reach out to visitors, offering comfortable seating arrangements for the experience of communal listening and exploration. Yet, the comfort of the *majlis* and the comforting act of welcoming also raise a dilemma intrinsic to the practice of hospitality: the status of the foreigner. We can sense this tension in the project’s title, *At-Tāriq*, which translates as “the Nightcomer” or “the Morning Star”. It evokes the complexities of welcoming the “other” in a world marked by displacement and estrangement.

In his reflections on the problem, question, status of the foreigner, philosopher Jacques Derrida, whose seminars *Of Hospitality* have guided many reflections on the subject, speaks of “*the unconditional law of hospitality*.”²³ This law shapes the ethics of the *hostis* (Latin for stranger/foreigner and enemy), manifest in the ideal of welcoming others without reservation, precondition, or expectation, and offering them complete openness and acceptance. However, as Derrida states, “Not all new arrivals are received as guests if they don’t

22 Jason Bahbak Mohaghegh, *Night: A Philosophy of the After-Dark* (Lanham: John Hunt Publishing, 2019), 1.

23 Jacques Derrida and Anne Dufourmantelle, *Of Hospitality*, trans. Rachel Bowlby (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), 79.



have the benefit of the right to hospitality or the right of asylum, etc. Without this right, a new arrival can only be introduced ‘in my home,’ in the host’s ‘at home,’ as a parasite, a guest who is wrong, illegitimate, clandestine, liable to expulsion or arrest.”²⁴ In societies threatened by *nightcomers* and *arrivants from the dark*, the rules of proximity to foreigners are regulated by and relegated to the state’s law, “the becoming-law of justice.”

Art and art spaces are not immune to such misapprehensions. While aspiring to inclusivity and facilitating communal bonding, they are at risk of replicating exclusionary effects in the name of hospitality. With their overemphasis on politics of intimacy as antidotes to otherwise complex and painful realities, these allegedly safe spaces impose their own regulations and norms. Such frameworks, while well-intentioned, often end up reinforcing divisions, excluding those considered insufficiently radical, differently abled, or otherwise rendered invisible or *foreign*.

While insisting on this dilemma, or as Derrida puts it, “this paradox and this aporia of a right to hospitality,”²⁵ he invokes, in response, a philosophy of the night that sounds out a “poetic hospitality”²⁶ with the unknown and uncertain, aspects that refuse incorporation into systems of thought reliant on clarity, visibility, and order. After all, in many cultures, the night belongs to a different order, connected to the unknowable, to intimacy, to the poetic. Its philosophy foregrounds the vulnerability and fragility of engagement with the unmasterable, resisting to reduce it to the “daylight” of rational understanding. Poetic hospitality thus invites a surrender to the unfamiliar, embracing the mystery and incommensurability of encounters with the other. It manifests as an act of trust and creativity, a way of

24 Derrida, *Of Hospitality*, 59–60.

25 Derrida, *Of Hospitality*, 65.

26 Dufourmantelle, *Of Hospitality*, 2.

welcoming what cannot be fully known, and, in doing so, honoring the other's radical alterity. Here, "poetic hospitality" extends to an openness to collaboration, a sympathy between sensibilities, a morphology of alliance—an ethos that reimagines hospitality as an im/possible encounter with, as Glissant would suggest, "the Other of thought." In this spirit, *At-Tāriq* offers an invitation to engage with cultural and ecological legacies that resonate deeply in our contemporary world. Ultimately, it is both a place to hone the art of listening and a conduit for conversations about memory, identity, and poetic hospitality.

BIOGRAPHIES

TAREK ATOUI is a Lebanese artist and electroacoustic composer based in Paris, known for his innovative exploration of sound as a medium for shaping perception. Through dynamic installations, experimental acoustic environments, and collaborative performances, Atoui creates immersive, multi-sensory experiences. His practice involves working with composers, craftsmen, and communities worldwide to design and build complex instruments that double as striking sculptural objects. By testing the acoustic properties of materials such as bronze, water, glass, and stone, he uncovers unique ways in which these elements transmit and reflect sound.

Atoui's work integrates custom-built electronic instruments and cutting-edge computer systems, often addressing contemporary social and political issues. By blending music, technology, and education, he highlights their power as tools for expression, identity, and connection. Collaboration and community engagement are at the heart of his practice, frequently inviting audiences to interact with and experience his installations firsthand.

His works have been exhibited at major institutions globally, including the Serralves Foundation, Porto; Tate Modern, London; MCA Sydney; and the Venice Biennale. They are also part of prestigious collections such as the Tate Modern, the Guggenheim, and the Pinault Collection. Atoui's interdisciplinary approach underscores his commitment to redefining sound and music as communal, transformative experiences.

Tarek Atoui was born in Beirut, Lebanon, in 1980. Lives and works in Paris, France

DANIELA ZYMAN is a writer, curator, and the Artistic Director of TBA21–Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary. Since the foundation of TBA21, she has played a pivotal role in shaping its exhibition and commissioning programs, curating over twenty exhibitions and catalogs. In the past three years, Zyman has curated a trilogy of exhibitions drawn from the TBA21 collection at C3A in Córdoba: *Abundant Futures*, *Remedios*, and *The Ecologies of Peace*.

Prior to joining TBA21 in 2003, she served as chief curator at the MAK – Austrian Museum of Applied Arts / Contemporary Art in Vienna from 1995 to 2001, where she also co-founded and programmed the MAK Center for Art and Architecture in Los Angeles. She was later the artistic director of the Künstlerhaus, Vienna, and the director of A9 Forum Transeuropa from 2000 to 2003.

Zyman has lectured at the University of Art and Industrial Design in Linz and the University of Applied Arts in Vienna, among others, and frequently contributes essays to leading art publications. In 2024, Zyman published *Das Lachen der Quallen* (Walther and Franz König), a monograph outlining a prefigurative and antagonistic practice of artistic research, proposing an emergent genealogy of counter-research.

Public and Educational Program

At-Tāriq Exploratorium

Education, for me, is a shared journey of discovery, where listening, experimentation, and collaboration become conduits for creating new ways of understanding and engaging with the world.

—Tarek Atoui

To listen well means sharpening all sensual capacities. Humans can listen with their ears, through the bone of their skull, and by perceiving the vibrations of objects and materials. The *At-Tāriq Exploratorium*—designed by Tarek Atoui—welcomes participants of all ages and abilities to feel and interpret the sounding world through all their sensory modalities. It encourages free and embodied experimentation with sound and music, fostering a common space for discovery and creativity.

Drawing on research materials collected in Morocco and employing methodologies co-developed with sound-makers and educators, the lab provides objects, tools, and instruments for playing with sounds and music. During organized workshop sessions, the Exploratorium transforms into a vibrant space for tactile exploration, sonic activation, and deep listening—opening new pathways to connect with the unexpected sonority of the world around us.

Since 2005, Atoui has been deeply engaged with the pedagogical and community-building potential of performance and sonic activation, which over the years has become a foundational element of his artistic practice. He has devoted himself to teaching through workshops and educational programs for young people and students, honing an immersive methodology that incorporates compositional experiments and engages individuals from diverse backgrounds and abilities.

ON VIBRATION AND RESONANCE— THE HIVE

Every Tuesday and Saturday from
1 March to 17 May at 4:30 pm (except 19 April)
Activity in collaboration with Educathysen

This workshop introduces participants to the concept of vibration, emphasizing that every sound is a vibration traveling through air and materials. It draws attention to the sonic potential of everyday objects, encouraging participants to appreciate and explore their unique sounds. By combining percussion instruments with motorized and vibrating objects, the session demonstrates how instruments can be played in inventive and imaginative ways using simple daily items and organic elements. Together, participants will create sound objects and collaborate to build a collective sonic landscape, engaging with the space and surroundings in a dynamic and interactive way.

IMPORTANT NOTE: we recommend wearing comfortable clothing to better enjoy the activity. It is essential that children are always accompanied to encourage group dynamics and the intergenerational nature of the activity.

ARTIST TALK WITH TAREK ATOUI AND CURATOR DANIELA ZYMAN

February 17, 6:00 pm
Auditorium, Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza
In English with simultaneous translation into Spanish

Join us for the inaugural Artist Talk, featuring curator Daniela Zyman and artist Tarek Atoui as they engage in a dynamic conversation about his latest commission and artistic practice at TBA21. This event will blend discussion with a unique performative element, shedding light on Atoui's creative and research process and the interplay of sound, space, and history in his work. Together, they will explore the concept of "poetic hospitality" and the role of sound in building cultural connections.

FORGOTTEN TALES THROUGH TIME

March 3, 10:30 p.m.

Florida Park, Parque El Retiro, Reina Mercedes access, Madrid

In collaboration with the art fair ARCO Madrid

A night of music and sonic experimentation curated by Tarek Atoui and featuring an ensemble of vocalists and instrumentalists from Ouarzazate and Zagora, including Fatima El Habibi, Mohamed El Malyani, Mohamed El Kartaoui, Said Ait Lhaj, Fadoua Ennouri, Lahcen Amarrak, Ijja Id Haddou, and Aicha Boukhris, celebrating the exceptional artistry of Amazigh music. These “singers of a thousand verses” are keepers of an unbroken tradition, weaving classical Arabic epics, folk songs, poetic cadence, and vocal ornamentation into hypnotic performances.

Conceived as an experimental and collective compositional space, *Forgotten Tales Through Time* premieres a performance by Susie Ibarra, Nancy Mounir, Ziúr, and Tarek Atoui. The four have collaborated since 2022, experimenting with the interplay between Arabic and Amazigh music and contemporary sonic practices. Drawing on their diverse musical backgrounds, their composition, *At-Tāriq*, explore the rhythms, melodies, and oral traditions of the Arab world and North Africa, invoking and transforming them through electro-acoustic experimentation, improvisation, and live performance.

DJ MAMAKIL uses their art as a powerful tool for expressing activism and recontextualizing Moroccan and Middle Eastern music, incorporating familiar vocals and instrumentals from a wide range of influences.

CONCERT AT CASA ÁRABE

March 4, 8:30 p.m.

Casa Árabe, Calle de Alcalá, 62, Madrid

Activity in collaboration with Casa Árabe Madrid

An afternoon with Tarek Atoui and a traditional ensemble from Ouarzazate and Zagora, featuring the participation of Fatima El Habibi, Mohamed El Malyani, Mohamed El Kartaoui, Said Ait Lhaj, Fadoua Ennouri, Lahcen Amarrak, Ijja Id Haddou, and Aicha Boukhris. As part of the public program for the *At-Tāriq* exhibition at the Museo Nacional

Thyssen-Bornemisza, TBA21 and the museum are pleased to collaborate with Casa Árabe.

Designed as an intimate masterclass, the event will seamlessly blend the traditional acoustic sounds of the Atlas region—folk songs, poetic cadences, and vocal ornaments—in a captivating performance in the form of a workshop. The experience will offer a deep immersion into the rich sonic traditions of the region, fostering learning and connection between the performers and the audience.

Traditional Ensemble from the Atlas Region

Together, these musicians form a collective that represents the rich diversity and profound depth of the musical heritage of the Atlas region. By blending ancient traditions with new sonic possibilities, they create a truly unique and evocative musical experience. Each of them brings their own style and expertise, not only to preserve the traditional musical forms of their homeland but also to explore and expand these sounds in dialogue with contemporary trends. This collaboration with international artists adds a layer of innovation, taking the music of the Atlas beyond its roots into a different realm through experimentation and sonic transformation. The result is a sonic journey that transcends boundaries, uniting the past and the future, the traditional and the modern, inviting deep reflection and connection across cultures.

EN EL AULA: TAREK ATOUI

March 11, 5 p.m.

Exhibition space, Museo Nacional

Thyssen-Bornemisza

Activity in collaboration with Educathyssen

Aimed at teachers and educators of Kindergarten, Elementary, High School, and Vocational Training
A guided discussion with Marina Avia, Head of Exhibitions and Public Programs at TBA21. This session will highlight key aspects of the exhibition to assist in preparing for student visits or for independent classroom use. Atoui's installation features structures and sounds that evoke the geography and culture of North Africa, particularly the Amazigh regions—cradles of rich musical, artistic, craft, and intellectual traditions. It invites participants to engage with a soundscape rich in emotions and textured psychogeographical landscapes.

AT-TĀRIQ NOCTURNAL WALKTHROUGHS

Nocturnal walkthroughs tours in Spanish
Exhibition space, Museo Nacional
Thyssen-Bornemisza

Dynamic guided tours led by cultural mediators, including Pablo Zamorano, Marina Hervás, María Gomez Lopez, and La Liminal, all are experts in music, musical pedagogy, oral performance, or dance. The focus of each tour varies depending on the mediator, exploring different aspects of the exhibition. Some tours may emphasize the historical and geopolitical context of the work, while others engage with sound and silence as central themes. Through active interaction with the exhibition, the tours will offer visitors multiple ways of engaging with *At-Tāriq*.

NOCTURNAL WALKTHROUGH, WITH MARINA HERVÁS

Saturday, March 15, 9:00 and 10:00 p.m
By registration through the Museo Nacional
Thyssen-Bornemisza website

Marina Hervás's nocturnal walkthrough, *Elogio de lo roto* [In Praise of the Broken], offers a guided listening experience that explores the power of the fragmentary, the wounded, and the incomplete in shaping our relationship with tradition and rurality. Challenging the dominance of grand narratives and polished knowledge, she invites visitors to consider the informal, ephemeral, and ungraspable forms of knowing that disrupt conventional ways of perceiving and understanding. Through this lens, her tour engages with the sonic work of Tarek Atoui, delving into notions of imagined traditions and utopian geographies.

MARINA HERVÁS holds a degree in philosophy from the University of La Laguna, with degrees in history and music sciences from the University of La Rioja. She holds a master's degree in art theory and a PhD in philosophy from the Autonomous University of Barcelona. She is currently full professor in the Department of History and Science of Music at the University of Granada and deputy director of the Centro de Cultura Contemporánea La Madraza.

EL PRIMER TACTO (THE FIRST TOUCH).
NOCTURNAL WALKTHROUGH,
WITH PABLO ZAMORANO

Saturday, March 22, 9:00 and 10:00 p.m
By registration through the Museo Nacional
Thyssen-Bornemisza website

What is the sonic emanation of the body? What is the bodily emanation of sound?

El Primer Tacto, led by Pablo Zamorano, is an immersive activity that weaves together body, movement, and ritual to explore the liminal space between night and day, the living and the dead. Through guided exercises and creative research, participants will engage with ancestral poetics, sensing the unseen and embodying the transitions that shape our perception of time and existence. This experience invites participants to explore evidential mediumship, a practice where movement becomes a bridge to ancestral connections, unveiling the subtle relationships that link us to those who came before.

PABLO ZAMORANO is a Chilean researcher, creator, and performer living in Spain. His work is driven by approaches that connect new contexts between body and thought, such as creative research, theoretical-practical conceptualization in live arts, and contemporary choreography. His practice explores the knowledge and worldviews of ancestral cultures, such as intuition, embodiment, and transcendence, their means of transmission and contemporary interpretation in various contexts.

NOCTURNAL WALKTHROUGH,
WITH ÓSCAR BUENO

Saturday, April 5, 9:00 pm and 10:00 p.m
By registration through Museo Nacional
Thyssen- Bornemisza

Through a blend of questions, encounters, concerts, scores, and performances, Óscar Bueno explores our relationship with territory and nature. In his latest research, he has focused on the concept of ‘the excitement of the landscape’—a space for reflection and experimentation that has become central to his artistic practice, recurring throughout his work. In this performative visit to Tarek

Atoui's exhibition, Óscar will engage with participants in exploring how to excite the landscape—and, in turn, how to deepen our observation and listening.

ÓSCAR BUENO graduated in Music with a specialization in Piano and earned a degree in Dramatic Arts with a focus on Textual Interpretation from ESAD Asturias. He later completed a Master's in Scenic Practice and Visual Culture at the University of Castilla-La Mancha and the Museo Reina Sofía in Madrid. His artistic practice unfolds at the intersection of music, choreography, and visual arts. In addition to developing his own creative projects, he collaborates in the processes of other artists, creating broad frameworks that allow him to approach questions from multiple perspectives. Currently, his research focuses on *Los paisajes ajenos* (Foreign Landscapes), a project exploring how music, imagery, and action can generate new landscapes or reveal hidden ones within those we already know.

MUTUAL RESONANCES.

NOCTURNAL WALKTHROUGH, WITH JOHAN POSADA—LA PARCERÍA

Saturday, April 12, 9:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m.
By registration through the Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza website

This proposal will delve into the sonic memory of the communities that have passed through, lived, migrated, grown, and died in Madrid throughout different eras. We will explore the sonic traces of diverse traditions, such as Ecuadorian Andean music, Caribbean salsa from Panama, Cuban music, flamenco, and the vibrant Madrid scene of the 80s, creating a rich layering of these cultural resonances. The intervention will combine vinyl records, cassette tapes, visual acetate archives, historical concerts, and interview fragments, creating a listening space that links the migratory past with the present.

JOHAN POSADA is the founder of the Asociación Cultural La Parcería and the artistic director of the Centro de Experimentación y Documentación Artística (CEDA) at La Parcería. Holding a master's degree in Film and Television Production from the Instituto de Cine de Madrid, he has worked on Ibero-American film co-productions and projects that combine music, community, and memory. He has led programs such as *Relaciones Sonoras* and has

been a resident researcher in the Intersticios project at the Museo Reina Sofía. Additionally, he has created festivals like Nuestra Cosa Fest and events such as Salsódromo Madrid and the concert series Berlín Is Tropical. His work has been featured in major cultural events, including Madrid Navidad de Encuentro by the Madrid City Council, 1969, La Parcería at the Museo Reina Sofía, Reggaetón Manifiesto at Matadero Madrid, and Imaginarios Polirrítmicos at the Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza. Through La Parcería, he continues to promote projects that foster cultural re-existence, using art and music as tools for reclaiming identity and memory. Johan is also the director of the festival Sonidos Diaspóricos, whose first edition will take place in 2025.

NOCTURNAL WALKTHROUGH, WITH MARÍA GÓMEZ LÓPEZ

Saturday, April 26, 9:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m
By registration through the Museo Nacional
Thyssen-Bornemisza website

This tour, led by María Gómez López, explores how we construct a sense of belonging to the places we inhabit, examining the role of the soundscape in shaping our connection to space. Through a combination of selected works, personal experience, and research, she invites visitors to engage deeply with the sonic dimensions of place and memory.

MARÍA GÓMEZ LÓPEZ holds a PhD in art history and is a Juan de la Cierva postdoctoral researcher at the Autonomous University of Madrid, where she combines research with teaching. Her work focuses on the convergence of art and cartography in contemporary production from the Arab world, with a particular interest in the power of art to construct narratives and spatial belongings rooted in personal experiences of place. Currently, her research examines how fiction, utopia, and myth shape mobilities and the creation of narratives, images, and imaginaries between Spain and Morocco, as well as within the broader context of Atlantic and Mediterranean spaces.

NOCTURNAL WALKTHROUGH, WITH LA LIMINAL

Saturdays, May 10, 17, 9:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m
By registration through the Museo Nacional
Thyssen-Bornemisza website

La Liminal will present a journey that crosses the threshold between movement and stopping, between action and inactivity, directing the participants to contemplate and listen. A reflection on the meaning and the need for welcome and shelter at a time marked by mobility and displacement.

LA LIMINAL is a collective that investigates the city and its histories through activities that seek to analyze public space collectively. Their actions are activated through strategies of cultural mediation, and take the form of urban tours, walking investigations, drifts, visits to exhibition spaces, workshops and training projects. They have organized tours and programs independently as well as for institutions such as the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, the Centro de Arte Dos de Mayo (CA2M), the Centro de Cultura Contemporánea Condeduque, Tabacalera Promoción del Arte, and Medialab Prado.

AMAZIGH POETRY READING BY HIND HAIK WALD-GHZALA AND HASSAN LAGUIR

March 21, 5:00 p.m.
Exhibition space, Museo Nacional
Thyssen-Bornemisza
In collaboration with Fundación Euroárabe
de Altos Estudios

Hind Haik Wald-Ghzala will recite Amazigh poetry in both its original language and Spanish translation to celebrate International Poetry Day. This event will create a meaningful connection between the exhibition and the cultural roots of the poetry. This celebration will honor the origins of the poems while inviting reflection on the power of language, translation, and cultural exchange.

Hind Haik Wald-Ghzala holds a degree in translation and interpreting from the University of Granada and a diploma

in tourism business and activities from the UNED. She has a master's degree in Arab and Hebrew Cultures: al-Andalus and the contemporary Arab world from the University of Granada. She is currently working at the Euro-Arab Foundation for Higher Studies-Granada, in the department of cooperation and projects.

HASSAN LAGUIR originally from southern Morocco, is a researcher specializing in Amazigh culture. He coordinates the International Chair of Amazigh Culture, created in 2014 by the Fundación EuroÁrabefor Higher Studies under the patronage of the Dr. Leila Mezian Foundation of Morocco. In 2021, he edited the collective book *The Berbers in the Iberian Peninsula. The contribution of the Amazigh to the history of al-Andalus*. A poet in his mother tongue, Tamazight, he has published the poetry book **ⵜⴰⵎⴰⵣⵉⵏⵜ**.

DJ SET BY AZU TIWALINE

May 18

Garden, Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza

In celebration of International Museum Day and as a closing event for Tarek Atoui's *At-Tāriq*, Azu Tiwaline's celebratory DJ set will reinterpret the rich sonic landscapes of rural North Africa through contemporary electronic and experimental music. This immersive evening of deep listening and rhythmic exploration offers a fitting finale, honoring the journey of *At-Tāriq* through sound.

AZU TIWALINE is a Tunisian producer based in France, fusing Amazigh music with elements of dub, trance, and techno. Inspired by the need to explore her Saharan origins, Tiwaline mixes organic and raw sounds with the vibrations from the desert, where entrancing music resonates, and ecstatic rituals are integral to the cultural landscape.

GUIDED TOURS (ON DEMAND)

We are excited to announce that, for the first time, we are offering guided tours on demand! Groups from public institutions are invited to reach out to Claudia Schafer at public.programs@tba21.org to register for a tour.

Your requests will be reviewed and a visit tailored to your group's needs will be scheduled accordingly.

The public program of Tarek Atoui. *At-Tāriq* has been generously supported by Spain's Institut Français, Casa Árabe, Fundación Euroárabe de Altos Estudios and Melilla IWA Fest.

ABOUT TBA21 THYSSEN-BORNEMISZA ART CONTEMPORARY

TBA21 Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary is a leading international art and advocacy foundation. Established in 2002 by philanthropist and art patron Francesca Thyssen-Bornemisza, the foundation stewards the TBA21 Collection and its outreach activities, which include exhibitions as well as educational and public programming.

TBA21 is based in Madrid, working in association with the Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, and has other important hubs in Venice, Italy, and Portland, Jamaica. All activity at TBA21 is collaborative and fundamentally driven by artists and the belief that art and culture are carriers of social and environmental transformation and, ultimately, agents in the service of peace, understood as a continuous practice in the affirmation of life, diversity, and coexistence.

TBA21–Academy, the foundation’s research arm, pursues a better understanding and deeper relationship with the ocean and other aquatic ecosystems by working as an incubator for transdisciplinary inquiry, artistic production, and environmental advocacy. For over a decade, the academy has catalyzed new forms of knowledge emerging from the exchanges between art, science, policy, and conservation in long-term and collaborative engagement through new productions, exhibitions, public programs, fellowships, residency programs, and other activities in a wide range of formats.

Some of its flagship projects are the Ocean Space art and science center (Venice); the independent studies program Organismo | Art in Applied Critical Ecologies (Madrid, Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza), The Current Pacific/Mediterranean/Caribbean; the online initiative Ocean-Archive.org, with OCEAN / UNI; and the European project Bauhaus of the Seas Sails. TBA21–Academy offers artists’ residencies at the Jamaican-based Alligator Head Foundation. An organization which TBA21 helped launch in 2015, this foundation is devoted to the conservation of marine ecosystems and its practice focuses on the intersection of science, art, and community.

TBA21 CURRENT AND UPCOMING PROJECTS

EXHIBITIONS

THE ECOLOGIES OF PEACE
C3A Centro de Creación Contemporánea
de Andalucía, Córdoba
Curated by Daniela Zyman
26.04.2024–30.03.2025

OTRAS MONTAÑAS, LAS QUE ANDAN
SUELTAS BAJO EL AGUA [OTHER
MOUNTAINS, ADRIFT BENEATH THE
WAVES]
Ocean Space, Venice
Curated by Yina Jiménez Suriel
05.04–02.11.2025

ECHOES OF THE SANCTUARY
Ocean Space, Venice
Curated by Louise Carver
05.04–02.11.2025

BECOMING OCEAN: A SOCIAL
CONVERSATION ABOUT THE OCEAN
Nice Biennial of Arts and the Ocean,
Vila Arson
Curated by Hélène Guenin, Chus Martínez,
Sébastien Ruiz, and Marie-Ann Yemsi
08.05–24.08.2025

CLEAR, LUCID, AND AWAKE
Art Sonje Center, Seoul
Curated by Chus Martínez
09.05–20.07.2025

TERRAPHILIA. BEYOND THE HUMAN IN
THE THYSSEN-BORNEMISZA
COLLECTIONS
Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza,
Madrid
Curated by Daniela Zyman
01.07–28.09.2025

JOHN AKOMFRAH. LISTENING ALL NIGHT
TO THE RAIN
Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza,
Madrid
Curated by Tarini Malik
04.10.2025–08.02.2026

RESEARCH PROGRAMS

ORGANISMO | ART IN APPLIED CRITICAL
ECOLOGIES
Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza,
Madrid
Independent study program
October 2024 to June 2025

THE CURRENT IV: CARIBBEAN: “OTRAS
MONTAÑAS, LAS QUE ANDAN SUELTAS
BAJO EL AGUA” [OTHER MOUNTAINS,
ADRIFT BENEATH THE WAVES]
Curated by Yina Jiménez Suriel
2023–2025

DIGITAL AND EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

OCEAN / UNI: BÁRAWA PT. 2
Online on Ocean-Archive.org, Zoom,
and ocean comm/uni/ty
19.02–19.03.2025

OCEAN / UNI ACTIVATIONS:
WEBS OF WATER
Online
18.03–13.05.2025

Ocean-Archive.org Digital Residency

CREDITS

TAREK ATOUI. AT-TĀRIQ

A Journey Into the Rural Music Traditions
of North Africa and the Arab World
18.02.–18.05. 2025

Tarek Atoui, *At-Tāriq*, 2024

Listening space with custom-made
furniture, pottery, textile, minerals, and
musical instruments from the Atlas region,
Morocco; sounds from the Atlas region
and beyond

Courtesy of the artist and Galerie
Chantal Crousel, kurimanzutto,

Vitamin Creative Space

Commissioned by TBA21 Thyssen-
Bornemisza Art Contemporary

An exhibition organized by Museo
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Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary

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MOROCCO IMAGES

Tarek Atoui (p.8, 20)

STUDIO SHOTS

Alexandre Guirkinger
(p.3-5, 14, 19, 22-23, 26)

CONCERT IN MOROCCO

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