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| **Casablanca School (Ecole des Beaux-Arts of Casablanca)** |
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| The Ecole des Beaux-Arts of Casablanca was founded in 1950 by the French during the protectorate era in Morocco (1912-1956). It has remained open since its opening, and is a municipal school, unlike the art school in Tétouan, Morocco. The first Moroccan director of the school was Maurice Arama (1960-1962), who was succeeded by Farid Belkahia (1962-1974). Under Belkahia, the school was a significant institution and influence in the history of Moroccan modernism. In addition to exploring new modernist styles in their personal work, the group was known for a pedagogy that focused on rooting modernism in local visual culture, thereby rejecting inherited French models of easel paintings and still-lifes. Instead, this model highlighted Moroccan visual culture and architecture. Faculty taught students in multiple media, including painting, sculpture, ceramics, and in graphic design. Each year, for a final project, the students would work together on an urban space that would stay open for three months for public visits.For example, in the final year project for 1968, rather than a typical art school showcase, the students were asked to treat the architecture of the gallery in such a way as to highlight the broader materials, plasticity, and space of the gallery itself, thus attempting to integrate and synthetize arts of multiple disciplines and techniques.  The pedagogy of the Casablanca School was closely linked to the artists’ broader activities. In collaboration with fellow artists Mohammed Melehi and Mohammed Chebaa (both of whom taught at the school), Belkahia formed the Casablanca group who first worked together in Rabat in 1966. In 1969, these artists along with three other professors (Mohammed Ataalah, Mustapha Hafid, and Mohammed Hamidi) held the ‘exposition manifeste’ in Djemaa al-Fna in Marrakech, an open-air exhibition that sought direct contact with a larger public outside of official arts spaces. Later that same year, a similar exhibition was held in the Place du 16 Novembre in Casablanca.  During Belkahia’s tenure at the school, visual arts faculty included Mohammed Melehi, Mohammed Chebaa, Mohammed Hamidi, Mustapha Hafid, Mohammed Ataalah, and Andre Elbaz. Art history faculty focused on both the history of international modernism as well as the history of art in Morocco, and included Bert Flint and Toni Maraini as faculty memgers. The school was also closely linked to the cultural journal *Souffles* (edited by Abdellatif Laabi)in the first years of its existence, and had relationships with other cultural institutions in Casablanca, including the municipal theatre directed by Tayeb Saddiki.  Students at the school gained entry for three years based on a competition (a ‘concours’) to show aptitude in artistic disciplines. There were no scholarships, although entry fees were low and the school provided students with all artistic materials. Students were required to be at least 15 years old, and have reached the fourth year of a secondary school in either a high school or technical school. The school at this time was small, and in 1969, there were 40 students, with only 9 of those students being women. |
| Further reading:  Ataalah, M., Belkahia, F., Chebaa, M., Hafid, M., Hamidi, M., and Melehi, M. ‘action plastique: exposition jamaâ lfna. Marrakech.’ *Souffles* 13.14 (1969): 45-46.  Belkahia, F. *Ecole des Beaux Arts, Casablanca Maroc*. Casablanca: Ecole des Beaux Arts, 1965.  L’Opiniondes Jeunes(1969) ‘Entretien avec … un apprenti-peintre de l’Ecole des Beaux-Arts de Casablanca.’ *L’Opinion* 1346 (1969): 4. |