

Rachid Koraïchi

Les Sept Stations Célestes | The Seven Heavenly Stations

Aicon Gallery Exhibition September 20th – October 20th, 2018

Press Preview & V.I.P. Reception: Thursday, September 20th, 6:00pm – 8:00pm

35 Great Jones St., New York, NY 10012

Aicon Gallery New York is proud to present *The Seven Heavenly Stations*, the second major U.S. solo exhibition of Algerian born artist **Rachid Koraïchi**.

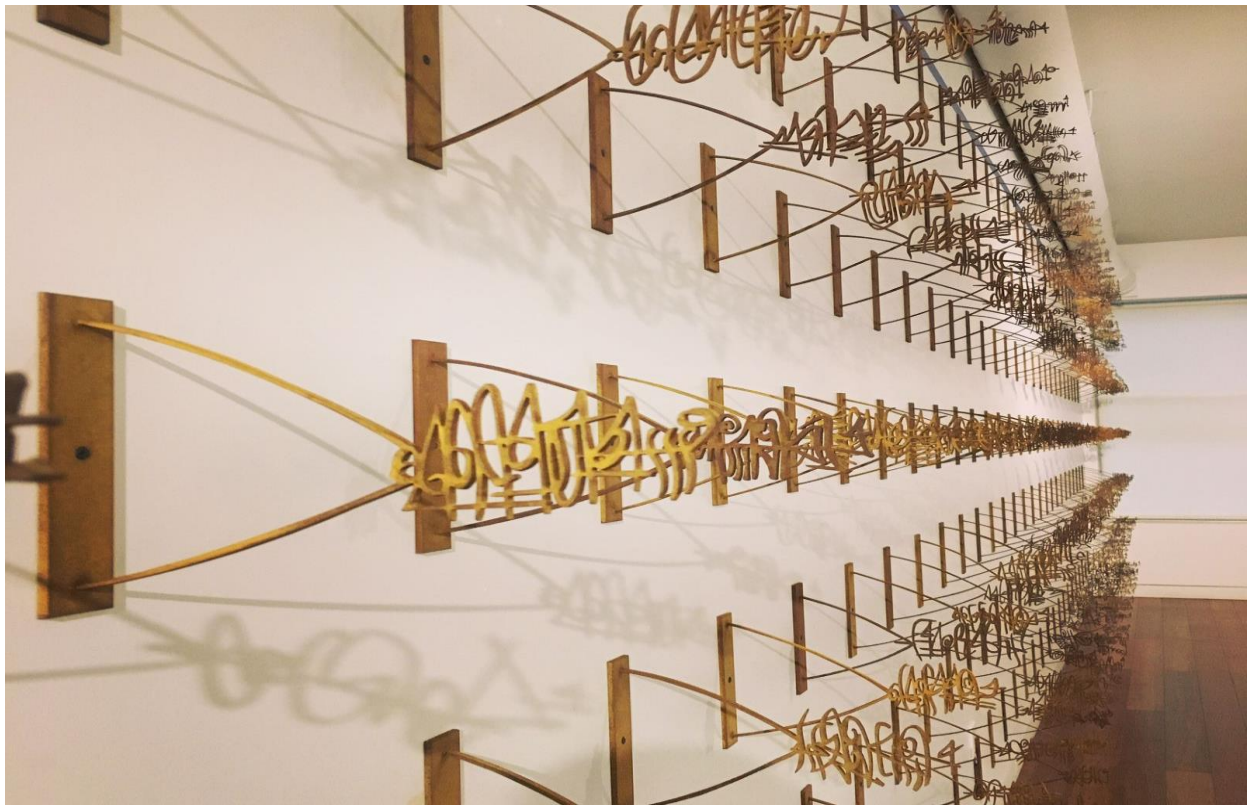
Based in France and working across the world, Koraïchi has held several solo exhibitions, participated in numerous group exhibitions and publicly commissioned projects and is widely recognized as a pioneer of Islamic contemporary art and an important and influential artist, with a career spanning five decades. Drawing on Arabic semiotics and dwelling on calligraphy as a means of interpretive transcendence, Koraïchi's work utilizes letters and signage to evoke figurative imagery and enumerate universal messages to a global audience.

Koraïchi's work in the current exhibition is comprised of three bodies of work centered around the mythological cosmology of the seven stations of heaven - a construct that permeates through cultures both East and West. Seen through the prism of Sufism, these represent the seven stages or *maqam* that the soul must traverse in its search for enlightenment. Koraïchi seems to draw parallels between the cultural transcendence of the seven heavenly stations construct with the widespread use of indigo dye in Africa, the Middle East and Asia as a metaphor for interconnectedness in *Les Sept Variations Indigo* or *The Seven Variations of Indigo*. The series takes the form of twenty-one towering silk banners ornamented with poetry from *Songs of the Recluse* by Rabia al-Adawiya, an eighteenth-century Sufi mystic, along with the artist's own annotations and illustrations. The reworked Sufi verses evoke arcane talismanic characters and numbers that, in accordance with Sufi philosophy, negotiate an aesthetical quality with revelation, divination and physical manifestation of intangible ideas, notably the quest for grace.



Rachid Koraïchi, From the series *Les Sept Variations Indigo*, 2002,
Serigraphy on Aleppo silk, ink, and paint, 126 x 19 in. each

Also on display will be a room of 700 steel sculptures from the series *Les Sept Stations Célestes* – a long standing engagement with immersive installation that the artist has come to be known for. Figures shaped from calligraphic forms will line the walls lending a sanctum-like quality to the space. In the words of art historian Christine Mullen Kreamer, “the large scale of many of Koraïchi's installations captures something of the sweeping histories, journeys and accomplishments of those who are recognized through his artwork.” She goes on to say, “the repeated forms are organized into experiential spaces that lead viewers along pathways or envelop them within inscribed panels of white linen or deep indigo suspended from the ceiling, possibly to suggest sacred spaces and the link between heaven and earth.”



Rachid Koraïchi, *Les Sept Stations Célestes*, 2018, 700 corten steel sculptures, dimensions variable

Koraïchi's work is influenced by his heritage as a Quraishite, a transcriber of Quaranic text, in the Aurès region in Algeria. The artist's exploration of script quickly went on to meld characters from Arabic with his own personal system of codes, numbers, and marks. He has referred to his visual lexicon as an "alphabet of memory," using it to articulate not only his aesthetic vision, but also his views on co-existence, tolerance, and perseverance. In the current exhibition, these ideas are realized in the form of 7 ceramic vessels and 14 alabaster tablets. Created in collaboration with local artists and highly skilled artisans, these objects reinforce the connection between local and global communities that is an integral aspect of the artist's work. In the words of Algerian poet Rachid Boudjedra, "Through these lines, signs and marks, these traces and tattoos, these scars, Koraïchi is expressing a desire to reestablish the legitimacy, not only of Arabic calligraphy, but also of all the symbols and signs that are rich with spiritual and physical history. They reflect all of our accumulated traditions, all of our ancestral customs, but are, at the same time, looking towards the future."

Koraïchi was born in Ain Beida, Algeria in 1947 and now lives and works in Paris with major projects in Algeria, Egypt, Spain, Tunisia, USA and Dagestan. Koraïchi's practice extends across an impressive range of media, including ceramics, textiles, bronze sculptures and canvases; all of which will be on display in the current exhibition. Koraïchi presented major installations at the Marrakech Biennale in 2016 and at the inaugural exhibition at the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi in 2015. Koraïchi won the prestigious Jameel Prize in 2011, and was included in the in 47th and 49th Venice Biennale, *The Future of Tradition*, Haus der Kunst, Munich 2010, *Word into Art* at the British Museum, 2006, and *Without Boundary: Seventeen Ways of Looking* at MOMA, 2006. We are honored to be hosting the artist in New York during the exhibition's opening.

Please contact Aicon Gallery (dheeya@aicongallery.com) for more information.