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Par Anna Sansom

Shows & Exhibitions

Meet the 4 Artists Nominated for the Marcel Duchamp Prize, Now Showing at the Centre Pompidou

Four artists contending with identity and migration have made the shortlist.

Anna Sansom, October 13, 2023

The Marcel Duchamp Prize is the most prestigious contemporary art prize in France, which is awarded each year to an artist who is either French or living in the country. This year's four nominated artists are Bertille Bak, Bouchra Khalili, Tarik Kiswanson and Massinissa Selmani, all of whom reflect individually on the Global South, identity, immigration and sociopolitical issues.

The prize was launched by the Association for the International Diffusion of French Art (ADIAF) in 2000. Since 2016, proposals by the four nominated artists have been exhibited at the Centre Pompidou. While the exhibition was previously held on the museum's first floor, this year the artists are showcased on the fourth floor next to the permanent collection (until January 12, 2024), in order to give the prize more visibility. Two of the artists, Bak and Selmani, have used the small space in between their respective rooms to present a joint research project about their proposals.

The winner of the 22nd edition of the Marcel Duchamp Prize will be announced on October 16 and will be awarded €35,000. Each of the four artists received €10,000 towards the realization of their presentation.



Massinissa Selmani, *Topography of latency* (2023). Exhibition view, Prix Marcel Duchamp 2023, Centre Pompidou, Paris. Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Anne-Sarah Bénichou, Paris; Selma Feriani Gallery, London/Tunis-Adagp, Paris 2023.

Massinissa Selmani

"I'm always looking for the lightest form, and drawing has that quality," Massinissa Selmani said about the 'drawn forms' in his practice, which encompass drawing, animation, sculpture and murals.

This lightness is matched by the enigmatic and elliptical manner with which he deals with migration, borders, and conflict in his new installation for the prize. Titled *Une parcelle d'horizon au milieu du jour* (*A plot on the horizon at midday*), it features drawn shapes employed across multiple media. "Rather than talking about immigration in a frontal way with suffering bodies, I prefer to talk about the idea of the horizon in my project," explained Selmani, whose starting point was Marc Guillaume's philosophical book *Puissance de l'ellipse* (2023).

Several elements recur with absurd flourishes. A bird flies into a birdhouse on a security wall and out the other side before entering again, in a repetitive cycle. Clouds, which also escape human border controls, move freely across the sky. In other drawings featuring isolated architectural elements, a young man is searched by a policeman, a sniffer dog inspects a miniature boat, and a figure holds up his hands, as if against a wall.

Born in 1980 in Algiers, Selmani—now based in the French city of Tours—grew up during the Algerian Civil War and initially studied computer science. Fascinated by press photography, he contextualizes and reconstitutes isolated elements. His diverse sources of inspiration range from the Belgian Surrealists to the Algerian poet Jean Sénac.

Selmani received a special mention from the jury at the Venice Biennale in 2015. His work has also been exhibited at the Dakar Biennale in 2014, the Biennale de Lyon in 2015, Sharjah Biennial in 2017 and [Kochi-Muziris Biennale](#) in 2022. He has had solo shows at the Palais de Tokyo and the Centre de Création Contemporaine Olivier Debré in Tours, and he won the SAM Art Projects Prize in 2016. He is represented by Galerie Anne-Sarah Bénichou (Paris), Selma Feriani (Tunis, London), and Jane Lombard Gallery (New-York).