

TEMPLON

II

Press release

February 11, 2026

ABDELKADER BENCHAMMA

Signs and Wonders

March 21 — May 7, 2026

Opening on March 21, from 12 pm to 8 pm



Entre la terre et le ciel, 2026, ink and acrylic on canvas
130 × 105 cm – Photo © Laurent Edeline.

— « [...] Abdelkader Benchamma's work, drawing, his medium of choice, cannot be conceived as a fixed object, defined by the rectangle of the sheet of paper, but as an energy invading space and time. »

Jeanne Brun (curator at Centre Pompidou) on Abdelkader Benchamma's installation *Au bord des mondes* (2024), for the Marcel Duchamp Prize¹.

Abdelkader Benchamma returns this spring to Galerie Templon for his fourth solo show, *Signs and Wonders*.

Subtly playing with shifts in scale and pareidolia, his works turn surfaces into resonant spaces where currents, figures, turbulence, cosmic realms, and inner landscapes unfold. Long associated with black-and-white compositions and ephemeral installations, his practice now foregrounds color, deployed in ambitious new formats that hover between mural and painting. Benchamma has developed a visual language rooted in a taut, hypnotic style of drawing, shaped by literary, ethnographic, and esoteric influences drawn from the vast body of texts

¹ The Marcel Duchamp Prize, Centre Pompidou. (October 2, 2024 – January 6, 2025).

The title *Au bord des mondes* (At the Edge of Worlds) is taken from Mohamed Amer Mezziane's book, *Au bord des mondes. Vers une anthropologie métaphysique* (At the Edge of Worlds: Towards a Metaphysical Anthropology), Brussels: Vues de l'Esprit, 2023.

TEMPLON

ii

and images he has been collecting and expanding over the years. These diverse sources nourish his work and seem to exist at the threshold of the known world - that shifting terrain between science and magic - like an elusive atlas of invisible realms.

The works on view draw inspiration from two books that hold particular significance for the artist. The *Kitab al-Bulhan* (*The Marvels of Created Things and the Curiosities of Existing Things*), better known as *The Book of Wonders*, is a 14-15th century Arabic manuscript from medieval Mesopotamia, believed to have been written by Abd al-Hasan al-Isfahani. In its singular illuminations, astronomical observations appear alongside magical talismans, architectural marvels, and depictions of jinn - beings made of smokeless fire, invisible entities akin to spirits that may visit our dreams. Centuries before the first European scientific atlases, the *Kitab al-Bulhan* captivates through its poetic force, allowing the visible and invisible to coexist in enigmatic images that suggest a reality in constant flux, forever resisting complete comprehension.

In a different vein, the 16th-century German engravings of the *Book of Miracles* continue to fascinate the artist. This anonymous manuscript, which recounts supernatural phenomena, interweaves biblical narratives, folklore, and apocalyptic visions. In these strikingly modern images, the relationship between the heavens and the earthly realm is deeply fraught: the phenomena depicted become omens of catastrophe, harbingers of apocalypse threatening humankind. Once again, the unknown unsettles, reigniting fear of what lies beyond human understanding.

Benchamma connects these celestial anxieties to contemporary narratives that uncannily echo them—such as U.S. congressional hearings warning of potential extraterrestrial threats². Across centuries, belief systems persist, adapting to the technologies of their time while replaying the same ancient fears.

Conceived as the pages of a vast manuscript, *Signs and Wonders* transforms the gallery into an in-between space: a fertile, ever-shifting organism threaded with passages to other worlds, oscillating between unease and a longing for re-enchantment. The illuminations, bearers of memory, break free of their frames to infiltrate and redefine the space; pages where shimmering stars seem to morph into drifting drones or UFOs, and where, miraculously, the veneration of trees and stones endures.

This exhibition marks a pivotal moment in the artist's career. In September 2026, Abdelkader Benchamma will begin a residency at Villa Albertine in New York, where he will notably explore the archives of the American Society for Psychical Research (ASPR). This exceptional collection, devoted to parapsychological phenomena, will further extend his investigation of the invisible and its representations.

² <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/16/us/politics/pentagon-program-ufo-harry-reid.html>
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2022_United_States_Congress_hearings_on_UFOs

TEMPLON

ii

Biography

A graduate of the Montpellier School of Fine Arts and the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris in 2003, Abdelkader Benchamma works between Paris and Montpellier in the South of France. Winner of the Drawing Now Prize in 2015, he was invited that same year by the Drawing Center in New York to inaugurate their mural drawing program with *Representation of Dark Matter* (2015-2016). In recent years, he has had numerous solo exhibitions at the Het Noordbrabants Museum (HNBM) in the Netherlands (2024), the Power Plant in Toronto (2023), the Schneider Foundation (2023), the Lambert Collection in Avignon (2022), the MRAC in Sérignan (2020), at the Centquatre and the Collège des Bernardins in Paris (2018), at the Blue Project Foundation in Barcelona (2016), and at the FRAC Auvergne (2015).

He has also participated in numerous group exhibitions: “Apocalypse. Yesterday and Tomorrow,” BnF, Paris; “Reading the Sky,” Mucem, Marseille (2025); “Le jour des peintres” (The Day of Painters), Musée d'Orsay, Paris (2024), “Immortelle” (Immortal), MO.CO., Montpellier (2023), POLA Museum of Art in Hakone, Japan (2019), Eldorado Lille 3000 (2019); “Melancholia” at the Boghossian Foundation in Brussels (2018); “Tamawuj,” Sharjah Biennial, Sharjah (2017); “On aime l'art...! Collection agnès b.,” Fondation Yvon Lambert, Avignon (2017); “The Future of a Promise,” 54th Venice Biennale (2011); “Told, Untold, Retold” MATHAF, Arab Museum of Modern Art, Doha, Qatar (2010).

In 2024, Abdelkader Benchamma was a finalist for the Marcel Duchamp Prize, where he presented the installation “Au bord des mondes” (At the Edge of Worlds) at the Centre Pompidou.

His works are also on display until May 2026 in the group exhibition *L'École des beaux-arts de Montpellier : une histoire singulière* (The Montpellier School of Fine Arts: A Unique History) at MO.CO. in Montpellier and at Musée d'art contemporain [mac] Marseille from April 4 to September 20, 2026 in *La vie climatique. Histoires sensibles des collections privées – Triennale De leur temps #8*. The Espai d'Art Contemporani de Castelló (EACC) museum in Castelló de la Plana, Spain, will dedicate a major solo exhibition to him in June 2026.

Finally, from October to December 2026, Abdelkader Benchamma will join the Villa Albertine residency program in New York, continuing his dialogue with the American art scene.

Abdelkader Benchamma has been represented by the Templon Gallery since 2019.