

Raphaëlle Benzimra

Aller au désert

03.12 - 04.18.2026

In a desert, a hermit set out, beyond aridity and sun, in search of a presence greater than itself. In a damp, cold cell, a mystic composed incandescent verses in the dark. In a ring, a fighter stepped forward, alone amid the crowd, facing her opponent. On the white surface of her wooden panels, Raphaëlle Benzimra carefully lays down the brilliance of pure colours.

To paint is to fight. Against the inertia of the surface, with the history of art, against the indifference of the world, with one's own demons - like those that artists have depicted in tales of saints' temptations or Japanese *yōkai*. Yet it is a struggle that destroys nothing. Instead, it creates, transforming solitude into a gesture of love addressed to whoever is willing to receive it.

Saints and stars, heroes of asceticism and of the ring alike, all stand side by side in these enclosed spaces where a passage towards the infinite opens. Qur'anic interlacings blend with colours still resonant with the memory of Byzantine mosaics; geometric and stylised forms summon the strange fantasy of reality in the sky, the landscapes and the stands. Light refracts here as it does in the golden backgrounds of icons. The sound of the colours of past centuries meets that of the Dominican merengue, the flag of which becomes an angelic adornment; the material flashes of the past mingle with those of our everyday life: skulls and earrings, crucifixes and sunglasses.

Most of the paintings gathered here are small in scale. They invite proximity: an intimate, almost tactile encounter, a kind of bodily engagement. Like an illuminated manuscript that one opens, closes, and returns to, they encourage meditation - the slow rumination of the image. One approaches, observing the cut surfaces of flat colour, the certainty and doubt in the faces, the iconographic attributes resurfacing from the past. One steps back, recognises a narrative, a memory and plunges into a dense symbolism, whether familiar or unknown. When one moves away from these paintings and then returns to them later, something has shifted - within them or perhaps within ourselves (it is no longer entirely clear).

These images are like one-way mirrors, in which we glimpse familiar, admired, distant figures - and sometimes, behind them, our own reflection. Such is the ancient magic of painting: it gives body to things, to stories, to absences, to the past and the present, to convictions and uncertainties. It allows us to come face to face with ourselves, to find ourselves together before the icons of our time or of another, in that shared solitude that is the gaze cast upon a painting.

Raphaël Bories

Historian and curator at Mucem - Museum of European and Mediterranean Civilisations

Translation by Sadie Fletcher

Printemps des galeries Rue Saint-Claude and Rue des Arquebusiers

Thursday, March 19, 2026 from 7pm to 9pm

Special opening hours in the presence of Raphaëlle Benzimra

The galleries on Rue Saint-Claude and Rue des Arquebusiers are delighted to invite you to their spring cocktail party, which will take place on Thursday 19 March from 7pm to 9pm.

In her figurative works, inspired by miniatures with vibrant colors and meticulous execution, Raphaëlle Benzimra explores the desire for transcendence through the pursuit of glory, solitude, and love. She depicts heroes in complex detailed compositions, addressing themes of battle and spiritual elevation. Drawing on the vocabulary of ancient sacred texts as well as European and Asian medieval and Renaissance painting, she revisits classical poetic works such as *The Conference of the Birds* and *Paradise Lost*. Boxing appears as a recurring metaphor, drawing parallels between the world of the ring and Middle Eastern spiritual traditions.

Raphaëlle Benzimra (born in 1999 in Paris) graduated from the École nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts de Paris in 2023. That same year, she received the Bertrand-Demandolx-Dedons Portrait Prize. In 2022, she was selected for the Novembre Painting Prize in Vitry at Galerie Jean Collet. She is the recipient of the Encore! Foundation residency in La Rochelle and presented a duo exhibition with Clarisse Hahn at Galerie Jousse Entreprise in Paris in 2024. Her work is currently on view at MO.CO Panacée in Montpellier in the group exhibition *L'Esprit de l'atelier*, featuring students from Djamel Tatah's studio at the École des Beaux-Arts de Paris, on view until May 3, 2026.

jousses:entreprise

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ROOM 1



Mike Tyson et son tigre dans le jardin
2025
oil on wood
18 x 14 x 3 cm



Daniel dans la fosse aux lions
2026
oil on wood
16 x 22 x 3 cm



Sara tentée par le démon
2026
oil on wood
16 x 22 x 3 cm



Marie-Madeleine pénitente
2026
oil on canvas
116 x 81 cm



Jean-Baptiste au désert
2026
oil on canvas
116 x 81 cm



Majnoun dans le désert parmi les animaux sauvages
2026
oil on wood
18 x 14 x 3 cm

ROOM 2



Marie-Madeleine et Jésus ressuscité
2026
oil on wood
16 x 22 x 3 cm



Phetjeeja "The Queen"
2026
oil on wood
18 x 14 x 3 cm



Le Démon de la Tristesse
2026
oil on wood
16,5 x 21,5 x 1,5 cm

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ROOM 2



Mélancolie de Jean-Baptiste au désert
2026
oil on wood
22 x 27 x 3 cm

CORRIDOR



La Troisième Tentation de Jésus dans le désert
2026
oil on wood
18 x 14 x 3 cm

ROOM 3



Marie-Madeleine dans le ciel
2026
oil on wood
18 x 14 x 3 cm



*Marie-Madeleine au désert consolée
par un ange*
2026
oil on wood
18 x 14 x 3 cm



Katy Taylor
2026
oil on wood
18 x 14 x 3 cm



Mort de Jean de la Croix à Ubeda
2026
oil on wood
18 x 14 x 3 cm



Tentation de Saint-Antoine
2026
oil on canvas
195 x 114 cm



Le Démon de l'acédie
2026
oil on wood
18 x 14 x 3 cm