

## Berber weaving as a source of artistic inspiration

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### ABSTRACT

Weaving has long been associated with purely functional or decorative objects. It has gradually become an artistic medium in its own right, and is considered an "art craft". It is considered a minor art or craft. Thus, its consideration as art in its own right is synonymous with avant-garde or revolution in the artistic field. It is a choice made by artists wishing to reinvent techniques traditionally associated with crafts by giving them a new plastic image. The integration of textiles into the art scene began timidly at the end of the 19th century. This initiative was undertaken by the Arts and Crafts movement. This movement, whose name translates as "Arts and Crafts", was a reformist artistic movement that was born in England in the 1860s and developed between 1880 and 1910.

From then on, weaving was practised by artists, particularly women artists such as Sonia Delaunay in France, Natalia Goncharova in Russia and Anni Albers in Germany.

Thanks to the involvement of feminist artists, textile art was able to make its mark on art history from the 1960s-1970s.

The use of weaving as art or its consideration as art did not stop at the European or American borders, but spread to Tunisia.

In 1965, Mr. Hmida Wahada, who had become a delegate of the Tunisian National Handicrafts Office in Gafsa, reappropriated the traditional weaving of the region and drew inspiration from it to create his "table rugs". Table carpets displayed at "the first artistic tapestry exhibition held in Tunis in 1992. It was organised by the ONA which intended to "renovate" and modernise traditional tapestry" (TLILI, Hommage à H'MIDA WAHADA, 2014).

Following this event, many weaver-artists made their way and left their mark on the Tunisian scene.

Among them is the artist Amina Saoudi Aït Khay, whom we have chosen to study. This leads us to ask the following question:

How did the art of ancestral Amazigh weaving influence the artistic production of Amina Saoudi Aït Khay and in what form did it manifest itself?

**KEYWORDS:** Art, weaving, Amazigh

### I. INTRODUCTION:

Weaving has long been associated with purely functional or decorative objects. It has gradually evolved into a fully-fledged artistic medium, a field considered as "arts and crafts". The traditional hierarchy of fine or decorative arts and applied arts or crafts dates back to the Renaissance. Artistic expressions defined as major refer to the notions of idea and genius, while the arts described as minor are associated with know-how and material (GASPARINA, 2007). The relationship of minor art and craft is further developed by Immanuel Kant's words in his book Critique of the Faculty of Judgment: "Art is also distinguished from craft; art is called liberal, craft may also be called mercantile art. The former is regarded as if it could only be oriented towards an end (succeed in being) if it were a game, an activity that is pleasant in itself; the latter as work, as an activity that is in itself unpleasant (arduous), attractive only because of its effects (e.g., the salary), which can therefore be imposed in a binding manner" (KANT E., 1989, p. 257).

Weaving is a minor art or craft. Thus, its consideration as an art in its own right is synonymous with avant-garde or revolution in the artistic field. It is a choice made by artists wishing to reinvent techniques traditionally

associated with craftsmanship by giving it a new plastic image. The integration of textiles into the art scene began timidly at the end of the 19th century. This initiative was undertaken by the Arts and Crafts movement. This movement, whose name translates as "Arts and Crafts", is a reformist artistic movement that was born in England in the 1860s and developed from 1880 to 1910. It was initiated by John Ruskin and William Morris in England. «They considered industrial development to be a threat to creation because it standardized production and led to a loss of specific know-how" (CRENN, 2012., p. 9). Faced with the influence of industrialization on art, they turned to the claim of the relationship between craft and art. A relationship that would allow the craftsman, destroyed by industrialization, to be revalued. John Ruskin and William Morris encouraged humanized work through "handmade" work that valued the artisanal technique. From then on, weaving was practiced by artists, particularly women artists such as Sonia Delaunay<sup>1</sup> in France, Natalia Goncharova<sup>2</sup> in Russia and Anni Albers<sup>3</sup> in Germany.

Thanks to the involvement of feminist artists, textile art was able to make its mark on art history from the 1960s-1970s. The use of weaving as art or its consideration as art did not stop only at the European or American borders, but spread to Tunisia. In 1965, Mr. Hmida Wahada, who had become a delegate of the Tunisian National Handicrafts Office in Gafsa, reappropriated the traditional weaving of the region and drew inspiration from it to create his "table rugs". Table carpets displayed at "the first artistic tapestry exhibition held in Tunis in 1992. It was organized by the ONA which intended to "renovate" and modernize traditional tapestry" (TLILI, Hommage à H'MIDA WAHADA, 2014). Following this event, many weaver-artists made their way and left their mark on the Tunisian scene. Among them is the artist Amina Saoudi Aït Khay, whom we have chosen to study. The discovery of her world led us to choose her as a corpus to deal with Amazigh weaving practiced in an artistic context, as she seems to us to be particularly representative of contemporary Tunisian weaving artists. All this leads us to ask the following question:

How did the art of ancestral Amazigh weaving influence the artistic production of Amina Saoudi Aït Khay and in what form did it manifest itself?

### 1. Immersion in the world of Amina Saoudi Aït Khay:

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<sup>1</sup> "Sonia Delaunay was born in Gradshik (Ukraine, Russia) in 1885. Sara Ilinitchna Stern, known as Sonia Stern, was adopted by her uncle Henri Terk in 1890. She attended the Schmidt-Reuter studio in Karlsruhe from 1903 to 1904, then the Académie de la Palette in Paris where she settled in 1905. "(LEAL, 2003) She was a Ukrainian artist and designer known for her bold use of colour in abstract geometric patterns who left this land on 5 December 1979 in Paris.

<sup>2</sup> "The daughter of an architect, Natalia Sergeevna Goncharova was born in Nagayevo, Russia in 1881. She grew up in the countryside with her grandmother... Natalia Goncharova studied art at the Moscow School of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture from 1901 to 1909. From 1907 onwards, she took part in the important associations and exhibitions of the Russian avant-garde, "The Garland-Stephanos", "The Golden Fleece", "The Jack of Diamonds" (Larionov, Kasimir Malevitch and Vladimir Tatline, 1910), "The Tail of the Donkey", "The Target" (1914) "(BAZETOUX, 2011).

<sup>3</sup> "Anni Albers (born Annelise Fleischmann; 1899-1994) is considered one of the most important abstract artists of the 20th century, as well as an influential designer, printmaker and educator... Born in Berlin, she studied weaving at the Bauhaus from 1922, eventually joining the faculty in 1929. Her innovative textiles from this period combine avant-garde geometric abstractions with weaving for the first time, creating works that are both functional and aesthetic. "A foundation in the name of Josef and Anni Albers has been established since 2016. It has exhibited their works until 19 October 2019 (Anonymous, Biography of Anni Albers).



**Fig1 :** Portrait of Amina SaoudiAïtKhay

[Source : Page professionnelle Facebook. « Amina Saoudi Aït Khay ». En ligne : <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10209691152584866&set=a.10209691125344185&type=3&theater>]

The link between weaving and Tunisia is attested since the highest antiquity. Indeed, archaeological discoveries of a mosaic known as "the spinner", dating back nearly sixteen centuries, found recently in the north-west, confirm the reputation that Carthaginian weaving had throughout the ancient world.

This link is still alive today, and extends into many contexts, from traditional craftsmanship to functional weaving to art.

Indeed, the art of weaving is strongly spread in Tunisia. It is manifested, for example, through the involvement of the artist Amina SaoudiAïtKhay, whose portrait we wished to draw in the framework of this thesis.

**Portrait of the artist Amina SaoudiAïtKhay :** Amina SaoudiAïtKhay is a Tunisian-Moroccan artist, born in Casablanca on 5 December 1955 in the Elmmarif district, where she was introduced to the art of traditional Moroccan weaving at a very early age by her mother, Zineb ElKadmiri, who was originally of the animist persuasion and later converted to Islam. Her mother was a figure of Moroccan female resistance and an emblem for the craft. Indeed, she was quoted by Fatima Mernissi in her book entitled "*Moroccan Sindbads*".

"In the second part of this book, which she entitled "*Carpets and myths: the enigma of women who weave and men who navigate*" (BEN CHEIKH, 2011). As for her father Ibrahim, of Amazigh origin, he was born in AïtMe'yadh and spent his childhood in AïtOmghar, two villages located on the heights of the Atlas in the vicinity of Demnat, east of Marrakech (BEN CHEIKH, 2011). This bus driver was a film and photography enthusiast, a passion that was passed on to his children. This is how Amina SaoudiAïtKhay found herself immersed in an environment full of artistic works such as photographs, silent films and weavings. She opened her eyes in a family that loved art on both her father's and mother's sides. This artistic initiation made her a person with a deep sensitivity that influenced her career as well as that of her four brothers and five sisters. In the family home, they all lived with their mother's loom. It was in this intimate space that Zineb El Kadmiri introduced Amina to the art of weaving. Every day she asked her to help her with the design of her orders while she told her a story in "bilmalhoun" prose. Zineb El Kadmiri passed on her love of weaving to her granddaughter by weaving according to a plan. Her stories and songs gradually nourish the imagination of Amina SaoudiAïtKhay. Amina spent her childhood in Casablanca, where she remained throughout her primary and secondary schooling before leaving for France after obtaining her baccalaureate in the experimental science section. Unable to study biology and geology in Besançon, she returned to Morocco to study physics and chemistry.

It was in Morocco that she met her husband Naceur Ben Cheikh, a painter, but also a cultural and political journalist and professor emeritus in higher education in science and art techniques at the higher school of design science and technology. She came out of a family inhabited by art to create her own artistically sensitive family. This interest in art was sharpened by her husband, who detected a particular sensitivity in her and encouraged her to take up weaving. From then on, she began to rub shoulders with the closed circle of artists through her

husband. This encouraged her all the more to express and assert her artistic soul. A soul that materializes through her woven works with an original aesthetic.

**The aesthetics of Amina SaoudiAïtKhay's woven works:** After having tried her hand at integrating a new approach to MaghrebianKlim, Amina SaoudiAïtKhay discovered the pleasures and pains of her initiative. This initiative stands out from the crowd by the use of improvisation as a working method in the weaving process. A method which is very different from the methods of the Amazigh weavers. It was quickly circumscribed by the norms. Those that encourage drawing on traditional repertoires of forms whose origin goes back to the mists of time. A rule that relies on cartoons whose specificity only the great upholsterers of modern art have understood.

It is through this surpassing of normality that Amina manages to impose herself. While drawing inspiration from the forms of Klim designed by her mother, she elaborates an erratic and singular discourse, in reality a coded language narrating her life as her ancestors did before her.

Like her ancestors, Amina SaoudiAïtKhay proposes a weaving that reflects the abyss of her soul. She creates her own aesthetic language, with its cameos of colors and its ranges of forms. This aesthetic will be analyzed later.

**The artistic form of Amina SaoudiAïtKhay's works :** The artist Amina has designed a wide range of carpets. She has been involved in weaving for over ten years. The range of creations she proposes will be listed here by category and analyzed chronologically.

#### Analysis of the first series of works

##### **Analysis:**



**Fig2 :** Carpet of Amina SaoudiAïtKhay

[Source: RHOUMA, N.2019]

Amina's first creation is a high-wool knotted carpet dating from 2005. It is 1 metre wide and 1.50 metres long. It is characterised by "the large dyed surfaces which are woven wool. Large patches of yarn generated. Figures with clear contours that the straight and curved lines accompany without ever guiding..." (MESTIRI, 2019).

Straight lines driven by the scientist's logical mind. Amina is still marked by the scientific education she received during her adolescence and young adulthood.

The traces of her experience are formally and chromatically transcribed on the canvas. Hence, the ochre colours: beige, rust, yellow and dark brown are revealed in cadenced shades. The colour palette she applies in her work is related to that used by traditional weavers. Both evoke the natural landscapes of the artist's native land. This environment is permeated by the colour of the earth. The earth is so dear to her heart that it leaves its mark on her work. The colours reproduce the memories engraved in her memory as a little girl. The child she was.

This child is at the same time impregnated by the art that her mother practiced and by the science that she was taught. This little girl, the omnipresent entity of her being, reveals itself in her paintings. Through them, Amina translates her nostalgia of a little girl so far away and yet always present.

This child that we can feel and perceive. "She did not fade away. Powerful, selfish, insinuating - her presence rises, in memory or from the bubbling river of dreams. She is not gone, not very far. "She is still present in this hour and will remain so until her grave. (HARDOUIN, 2019)

Thus, as the artist Julieta Hanono says, the carpet is "a weaving of past time" (HANONO, 2009). Through it, the little girl manifests herself, the angel of the past who brings back the nostalgia of the present.

### 2.1.b. Analysis of the second series of works

#### **Analysis:**



**Fig3 :** Klim6 by Amina Saoudi Aït Khay

[Source: RHOUMA, N.2019]

The klim pictured above dates from 2009. It is a low smooth carpet, measuring 1.83 meters by 0.93 meters. It is distinguished by three zones, including an area at the feet of the carpet which is composed of three bands: a black band representing the bowels of the earth, topped by a broad azure blue line; a color that refers to water, the source of fertility. The whole is backed by a broad brown line; fertile land strewn with plantations represented by small vertical lines. The land area is overhung by a rhombus containing another rhombus, symbolizing the mother goddess, the pregnant woman, birth and fertility. This shape can also be identified with a mountain. A mountain which itself refers to the human being and in particular to the woman. Indeed, these two elements are founders of humanity and represent pillars of the universe. They share the same name. The names of certain human organs are also attributed to the mountain. For example (velee, ذلع), otherwise known as the flank, which is associated with both the human body (the flanks or sides) and the structure of the mountain (the side of the mountain).

The mother goddess gives life to entities that surround her. Straight lines emerging from the earth and rising towards the sky. The sky is represented by a juxtaposition of light and dark yellow bands. Only one sinuous line manages to rise to a parallel space. This one can be identified with the artist. The line goes beyond the norms in order to reach his ultimate desire to transcend the universe. It interrupts to integrate a parallel world made up of an association of orange bands. The passage of the wavy line, or rather of the artist from one space to another, creates a rupture that follows without interrupting the growth and elevation. This break could evoke a maturity, a profound change in Amina's being. A change that would allow her to transcend in order to reconnect with her mother. A mother figure that is also represented by a diamond at the top of the carpet. Thus the work reveals the child she was. The melancholic child wanting to find her mother, but also the attentive and social self. The caretaker with a scientific education. This scientific spirit is reflected in the use of geometrical forms which gradually evolve into a flexible form. This heralds the advent of her being an artist, which could impact her creations and reveal itself in the next works.



**Analysis of the third series of works :** Amina's intense investment and the impromptu changes in her being demanded so much energy that a break was necessary. Indeed, after the design collection developed between 2007 and 2009. The weaving artist did not resume her work until 2011. Since then, she has created more than ten wool rugs with supple shapes and unstructured compositions.

Analysis:



**Fig4 :** Work by Amina Saoudi Aït Khay

Source: RHOUMA, N. 2019]

The Klim here is 1.73 meters by 1.47 meters. It was made in 2011. Its composition is not subject to any standard. Like a silkworm, the threads are intertwined and so are the colors, creating a universe of its own. A universe taking shape without any reference to cardboard.

*"Each time, they are shores that face each other. Alternately illuminated by light, subdued by darkness or bathed in alluvium. Files that absorb the ever-wandering thread"* (SAOUDI AÏT KHAY, 2019).

According to these words, the first attempts systematically spring from his fingers, fingers governed by no plan, leaving the practice always primary and original. A way of doing which proceeds from a precision of gestures. All these forms, which emerge from his subconscious and are inspired by the natural environment, could be interpreted as analogues of Amazigh signs. Indeed, the Amazigh signs associated with traditional carpets also originate in the natural environment. They all represent the Man/Nature link, a link transmitted by the influence of animist beliefs. A belief originally followed and respected by Zineb El Kadmiri, Amina's mother. Thus, she taught her how to model the plants and animal tracks that she had come across.

The animal forms found in these weavings, like the signs once woven on her mother's carpets, are thematically linked to the natural cycle. The return to the Amazigh origins passed on by her mother is only possible through the manifestation of her nostalgic child soul associated with her creative being. And this is also true in creative work. Every creative, working artist does not contribute to making the world go round, but to making it move forward or even change through his or her different vision. This in itself is quite distinct from the ordinary. This does not mean that he refuses the ordinary, but that he detaches himself from it. His work requires a different perspective - a different order of priorities. An order that reveals the past through the present. But the past is guillotined by the present. The past disappears, and the realization of this causes a certain shock and pain. This feeling is expressed in the artistic moment. This lapse of time defines the artist's work weaver. Indeed, Amina's works are characterized by the moment, as they are conceived as they go along, while concealing the past history wrapped around the lower beam. The artist forgets the past work and ignores the future. A form of contradiction manifests itself in this project, as the creator is vaguely unsure of what she wants to do and mobilizes without thinking, giving the impression of an instinctive and mechanical gesture. For her, these are just, each time, shores that face each other. Alternately illuminated by light, subdued by darkness or bathed in alluvium. Files that absorb the thread, always creating; creating by fixing a detail in order to deign to emerge from this labyrinth of colors. According to Amina, the first scores, springing from her fingers, no cardboard preceded them, no plan governed them. This emancipation from cardboard goes back to the practices of traditional Moroccan Amazigh weaving. "The rigid framework, marked by an ideal stability, makes it possible

to understand a mode of creation that takes place without cardboard, if not without a project" (RAMIREZ, Francis and ROLOT, Christian, 1995, p. 148). The practice is always primary and is rearranged in the woven work, a weaving with liberating geometric forms. From then on, having mastered geometry, the artist can reduce everything to it with satisfaction and great pleasure. She can be spontaneous and controlled at the same time. She can control her body as well as the tools that surround her. To control means to be able to mock, distort and twist these forms. This notion of control also allows her to overcome homesickness or nostalgia for her homeland. Weaving is then a means of revolt, a demonstration trying to reanimate the young Amina in mourning for her country and her family. It is, in this case, a medium allowing a glimpse of the artist's inner world. This abyssal world appears from the moment she first takes up weaving. From that moment on, Amina felt the need to realize what her art allowed her to see. Art that can never be anything but a failure. Indeed, the weaving artist declares:

*"I am never satisfied with my work when I have finished it"* (SAOUDI AÏT KHAY, 2019).

And it is through failure that she manages to approach the past reality, because the fact of succeeding or failing is no longer meaningful, the finality is no longer important, only the essence of life counts. The artistic work thus becomes a way of understanding one's being a little better. A threefold being, manifesting itself in three different forms: either childlike or Cartesian or creative. Faced with this quest for knowledge of her soul. Even if she gives up, she returns to it to understand herself better. Weaving is then a long "psychiatric" exercise allowing, at the same time, to overcome the sufferings, but also to understand the deep entities of the being of the creator by the immersion in her unconscious. It represents a form of art therapy. It is a medium through which Amina transfers her dreams, her worries and her malaise. The canvas freezes, materializes and imprisons the emotions in its knots. The artist puts her emotions in black and white to put them back in place and tell her story like any other human being. Indeed, everyone feels the need to tell their story.

To a certain extent, they make art by reinventing stories, like the stories told by Amina's mother, which have left their mark on the artist's unconscious. The stories reflect the need to preserve the vulnerable past of the art weaver. She is an artist with a developed sensitivity that invites her to materialize her reinvented history. She thus becomes a weaver of memory like her ancestors who tried to tell their lives and ensure eternity. Perpetuity can only be fixed by the mastery of the skill of weaving, a work that Amina SaoudiAïtKhay also controls in order to give substance to her history. Thus the work of the creator becomes only sketches, tests and experiments allowing understanding the history of her life, the eternal cycle that a blessed child makes immortal. She makes us see so many things in order to cross the frontier of knowledge, or to gather the heritage that emanates from the depths of the ages in the harmony of a chain. A chain that never ceases to be in the face of the urgency of time and the need to define one's being, one's history. It thus traps the artist in its web like the web of an arachnid capturing its prey.

**d. Analysis of the fourth series of works :** In 2013, Amina SaoudiAïtKhay experiments with natural dyeing on wired cotton (used as warp thread) which she partially integrates into the weft in order to introduce dyed light into the body of her weaving.

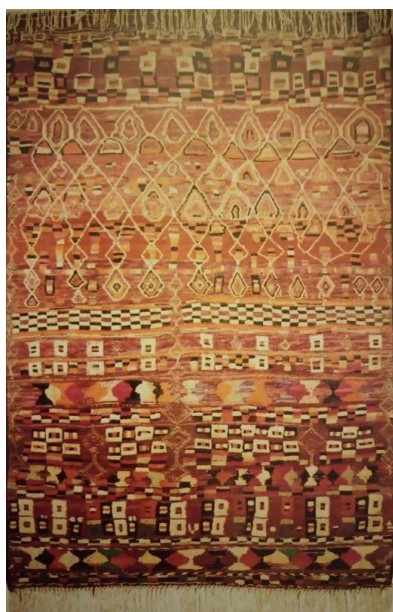
Analysis



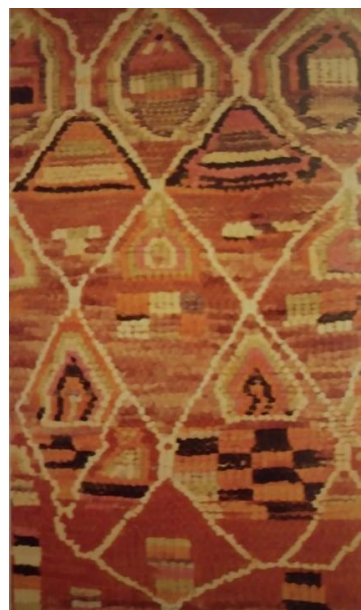
**Fig 6 :** Weaving of Amina SaoudiAïtKhay

Source: RHOUMA, N.2019]

The last weaving created by Amina is dated 5 September 2018. It is 1.89 metres by 1.90 metres. This carpet has a strong resemblance to the Chiadma carpet. This weaving is characterised by a composition of four frames with geometric patterns.



**Figure 5 :** Knotted Chiadma (485\*185)



**Figure 6 :** Detail of knotted Chiadma (350\*165)

[Source: RAMIREZ, F. and ROLOT, Chr.1995, p46]

[Source: RAMIREZ,F. and ROLOT, Chr,1995,p 51]

As is often the case in Moroccan coastal carpets, "the structure organizing the arrangement of the motifs ceases to be immediately apparent: no more grids, no more bands, but a kind of wandering of the motif in the field" (Ibid. p46). This field evolves in a world of its own, seemingly borrowing its composition from primitive sources.

*"Not that their apparent clumsiness makes them really more archaic works; but because one seems to perceive in them the terrible work of the birth of the motif. The virtuosity of these carpets is of the conceptual order: the game is not yet about fixed forms, but about the ideas that give rise to them"* (Ibid. p50).

This same idea gives rise to a multitude of forms that could make one think of cell multiplication. Cells give body to both Amina's work and the Chiadma carpet. The resemblance between the contemporary creation and its ancestor reveals a return to the Amazigh origins. This is only possible through the manifestation of her nostalgic child soul associated with her creative being; a being that evolves and rubs off on her works. From then on, Amina's carpets evolve progressively and reveal three series of weaving translating three phases of the artist's being. The first, "juvenile", is characterised by the use of two techniques: flat weaving and knotting. During this stage, the artist remains in a technical research that can affirm and coincide with his identity. This period is also defined by the application of formal representations inspired by the Moroccan relief: mountains, plains... Associated with geometric forms evoking the Amazigh signs that covered her mother's weavings.

A second phase of "young adulthood" is materialised by the use of a short weaving technique. Thus, the artist identifies the technique that corresponds to him. The works in this series of carpets are also distinguished by the application of strictly geometric shapes: lines, triangles and circles. These move under a panel of red, green, yellow and black colours. This category of weaving evokes her life as a young adult, a scientist, a biologist subject to Cartesian norms; themselves translated by the application of geometry. A third category of weavings is characterised by a more spontaneous, unstructured aesthetic, free from social norms and structures. It reflects the maturity of the artist who discards the rules imposed by society to assert his or her creative being.



"There is this notion that creative people are distracted, reckless, don't care about social obligations and social customs... Because they are completely in another world. It's a world in which the third self rules. ... There are irreconcilable differences between acknowledging and examining the fabrications of one's past and disguising them as if they were adult, art-worthy figures, which they will never be" (HARDOUIN, 2019).

This creative being expresses itself through aesthetic audacity; audacity produced from maturity creating a work analogous to the weaving of Moroccan craftswomen cited by Francis Ramirez and Christian Rolot. Like traditional Amazigh weaving, Amina's work has an aesthetic that plays on deconstruction, splintering and recomposition. Both testify to "the irregularity, the violence of their colors, the naturalness of their wool, and, above all, the disconcerting and almost wild disorder of their arrangement" (RAMIREZ, Francis and ROLOT, Christian, 1995, p. 8).

The work of the artist Amina also refers to traditional weaving by the fact that in both cases the carpet tells the story of its creator. Amina's fourth woven creation is made of cotton and wool. Given her many years of experience, Amina takes the liberty of integrating the cotton thread into the wool weft. The artist gives herself the right to play with materials and to accommodate wool and cotton. The cotton gives the work an airy feel that bears witness to the purity and maturity achieved by the artist.

It is thus evident that the weaving simultaneously reveals the three constituent entities of the artist's self. Nevertheless, these "selves" are not separate and distinct entities; they are linked by boundary zones whose existence is defined as an overlapping space.

In order to define these zones, we could use the term intensive threshold found in Gilles Deleuze. This concept expresses a passage from one intensity to another in an exclusively qualitative mode without any particular spatial consideration. According to Amina, this intensive threshold would enable her to reveal the three aspects of her Self:

*"I am, myself, three myself!"* (SAOUDI AÏT KHAY, 2019)

Three states of the self that could be assimilated to the concept of the vanishing line elaborated by Félix Guattari and Gilles Deleuze. They define three types of line in our lives: the hard line, the soft line and the line of flight. The hard line belongs to the power apparatus that sets the norms. The soft line is that which wanders around the hard line without contradicting it. These are the daydreams, the small refusals to respect the rules or the code, the occasional strikes, the skipped classes. That brief moment that disappears from a passage through a soft line, which quickly returns to order and to the hard line.

"And finally there are the vanishing lines, and from these we never return to the same place: a real rupture is something that cannot be returned to, which is irremissible because it means that the past has ceased to exist" (DELEUZE Gilles & GUATTARI Félix, 1980).

The lines of flight do not define a future, but a becoming. There is no programme, no possible career plan when we are on a vanishing line.

"One has become imperceptible and clandestine in a motionless journey. Nothing more can happen or have happened. No one can do anything for me or against me. My territories are out of reach, and not because they are imaginary, on the contrary, because I am tracing them" (Mille Plateaux). "We must invent our lines of flight if we are capable of doing so, and we can only invent them by actually tracing them, in life" (ibidem). The destination is unknown, unpredictable. It is a becoming, an uncontrollable process. It is our line of emancipation, of liberation" (SIMON, 2017).

A line or thread that designs Amina's works in her image. They transform over time as the artist's being metamorphoses through the ages. The evolution of the carpets with their abstract forms also shows the evolution of the artist's soul as she gradually gains in maturity. His maturity and assurance are felt, both aesthetically, chromatically and technically. The proof of his aesthetic evolution can be seen in his choice to approach abstraction in his creations.

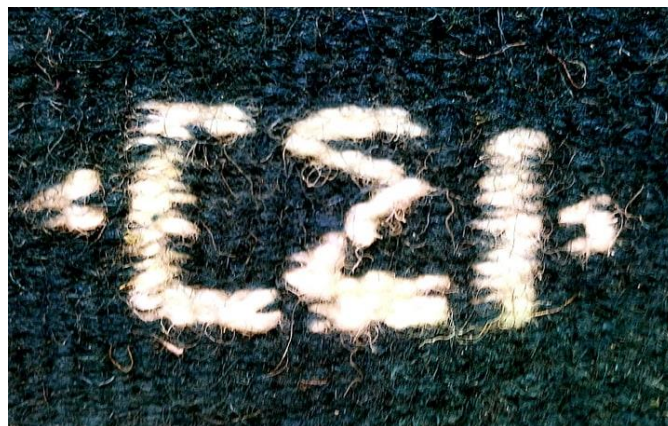
Thus, "abstract art can be seen as a very complete concept that is likely to last because it has many internal evolutions that conform to the individual needs of the artist. This discourse and these reflections on abstract art can be perfectly applied to the art of the table carpets that Berber women weave, which have always been created in the same spirit as modern abstract work" (DAMGAAG, 2008, p. 299)

Both in the so-called abstract carpet and in the table carpet, the creators narrate their lives. From then on, "the ancient carpet that came out of the hands of domestic weavers appears as the manuscript of a writing of silence" (RAMIREZ, Francis and ROLOT, Christian, 1995, p. 8). This form of expression was later abandoned by Amina to announce a return to painting on silk. The setting gave the artist a certain freedom. Thanks to it, she has tamed the line that she dares to apply to her weaving. Weaving, in turn, allows her to tame color, surfaces and fillings. This acquired richness will allow her to continue her research on the silk canvas. The two complementary techniques thus allowed the emergence and affirmation of his art. An art that is distinguished by many characteristics.

**Characteristics of the artistic weaving of Amina SaoudiAïtKhay :** The weaving produced by Amina SaoudiAïtKhay is distinguished by its interpretative character. It is situated halfway between continuity and rupture. Indeed, Amina tries in her experiments to preserve the essence of Amazigh weaving while integrating it into the abstract world of contemporary art. She creates her own language following the example of her ancestors; a language that remains in the abstract, but that takes on other forms. This same language translates the personality of the artist, who inscribes herself in a contemporary register while going beyond the industrial heritage; personality and identity attested by her signature. The latter represents his name written in Tifinagh, an Amazigh language. The choice to affix his name in Amazigh is a form of claim and affirmation of his origins, but also a way of satisfying the expectations of the State by integrating the trend of ethnicity. This decision also has a marketing aspect, as it allows him to establish his name in the art world.

Indeed, diasporic artists are frequently asked to play the role of worthy representatives of their continents and cultures. Cultural actors expect ethnic authenticity from Amina. In this case, ethnicity should be understood in the sense proposed by Stuart Hall. The one that gives the artist a positive and non-binding meaning. Stuart Hall writes:

"What is at stake here is the splitting of the notion of ethnicity between, on the one hand, the dominant notion that links it to the nation and to 'race', and, on the other, what I see as the premises of a positive conception of ethnicity from the margins and the periphery. Namely, a recognition that we all start from a particular place, a particular history, but are not confined to that position as 'ethnic' artists or filmmakers" (HALL 2007: 110).



**Figure 7:** Signature of Amina SaoudiAïtKhay

Source: RHOUMA, N.2019

It is obvious that cultural institutions are looking for stereotypical exoticism. Thus, they ask artists with a particular culture to become its spokespersons, as if their origins had to be visually displayed to legitimize the attribution of a label of African, Amazigh or Arab artists. A label that is imposed on them in order to classify and identify them on the art market. A label that Amina SaoudiAïtKhay refuses. Calm and measured, she serenely destroys the myth, the stereotype of the so-called nationalist painting. She elaborates her own language

in the dimension of her land. An artistic language, a pictorial weaving that she imagines in the image of her homeland, of her native country. She expresses her identity by excluding the aesthetics of the "authentically" Amazigh carpet. Instead, Amina manifests her roots through the way she makes, thinks and considers weaving. This mode of thinking being, thinking that merges the creator with his creation; a mode of thinking that reveals the concept of creolization. Creolization or crossbreeding is not only at the heart of Tunisian-Moroccan culture, but also in the whole of its practice. It appears as an art of exchange, a rhizomic art. Rhizomic thinking was proposed by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. It was also taken up by the West Indian writer and theorist Édouard Glissant in his work entitled *Poétique de la Relation*. This thinking corresponds to a creolization of reflections globally guided by theories previously described as marginal.

Édouard Glissant writes:

"The whole world is sensitive to the warmth of utopias, to the oxygen of a dream, to the beautiful wanderings of a poetics. It names art, and its divination, as the principle of our global politics and our shared words. It puts us in a position to foresee this new region of the world, where we will all enter together, by so many different ways and recourses" (GLISSANT, Édouard ; CHAMOISEAU, Patrick, 2009, p. 49)

In the "*Tout-Monde*" described by GLISSANT, the concept of creolization manifests itself as the continuation of the rhizomic concept. Etymologically, the notion of creolization is associated with colonialism. Thus, it refers to the "creation" of cultures characterized by crossbreeding. The writer Kamau Brathwaite states:

"The term itself has its origins in the combination of two Spanish words criards (to create, to imagine, to establish, to find, to install) and colon (a settler, a founder, a pioneer) into criollo: a dedicated pioneer" (VAUGHAN, 2005, p. 2)

The creolization present in the rhizomic system is a fundamental element in discerning the functioning of our current societies. Faced with the weight of this concept, a book called *The Creolization Reader: Studies in Mixed Identities and Cultures* was published in September (TONINATO, Paola & ROBIN Cohen, 2009). It proposes a body of research dealing with global creolization. This brings together the different forms of crossbreeding: cultural, social, racial and religious, which make it possible to understand the development of cultural globalization.

The concept of creolization is also dealt with in the book by Jean Barnabé, Patrick Chamoiseau and Raphaël Confiant, entitled *Éloge de la Créolité* and published in 1989. The latter, following in the footsteps of Édouard Glissant, write:

"Creolization is a crossbreeding of arts, where languages produce the unexpected. It is a way of continuously transforming oneself without losing oneself. It is a space where dispersion allows us to come together, where culture clashes, disharmony, disorder and interference become creative. It is the creation of an open and inextricable culture, which overturns the uniformity of the great media and artistic centres. It is happening in all fields, music, plastic arts, literature, cinema, cooking, at a dizzying pace..." (Joignot, 2005). (JOIGNOT, 2005).

The application of the concept of creolization in the world dates back to the end of the 1980s, from which time a progressive blossoming of manifesto exhibitions has been observed. This was dedicated to postcolonial studies, cultural studies and gender studies. Thus, from the beginning of 1990, major exhibitions were developed for the presentation, criticism and development of global art. (CRENN, 2012). Products of postcolonial studies, they provoke a new dynamic in the art world; a dynamic that continues to grow and evolve to find itself today associated with the creations of Amina Saoudi Aït Khay. Hybridization, exchange, sharing, mixing, cultural crossing and creolization are all concepts found in Amina's woven works.

A concept, in this case, induced by the artist's Amazigh origins. Indeed, creolisation, crossbreeding, hybridity and exchange are all notions conveyed by the Amazigh culture; a peaceful culture that has managed to cohabit with Phoenician conquerors, who then became Carthaginians, Punic, Romans, Vandals, Byzantines, Arab-Muslims and finally French. Let us now turn to the term hybridity associated with the cultural domain. A term commonly used since the birth of postmodern theories. It has fallen victim to an abusive use that has fuelled the fears of Paul Gilroy. For him, the notion of 'hybridity' could be perceived as a dangerous social label reflecting racial purity. In line with his views, Gilroy states:

"If the process of mixing is presented as fatal or redemptive, we must be prepared to give up the illusion that cultural and ethnic purity has never existed [...]. The absence of an adequate conceptual and critical language is undermined and complicated by the absurd charge that attempts to employ the concept of hybridity which is completely destroyed by the active residues of the articulation of this term within the technical vocabulary of nineteenth century racial science" (GILROY, 2000, pp. 250-251)

Of course, the notion of 'hybridity' associated with the cultural domain, which we wish to convey in our interpretation, does not relate in any way to the idea of race. Rather, in our case, the defined hybridity is associated with the concept at the heart of the texts of Homi K. Bhabha, Stuart Hall, James Clifford and Iain Chambers. In his book, *Places of Culture: A Postcolonial Theory*, (HOMI K, 2007) defines cultural hybridity as 'camouflage', a form of adaptation to colonialism. Thus, it seems easy to distinguish the different cultural productions or forms of mixing and exchange between two cultures. In this case, it is defined as a zone of continuously interdependent cultural relations, whose main actors would be, according to Michel de Montaigne's formula, mixed men. According to John Hutnyk, "Hybridity is an evocative term for identity formation; it is used to describe linguistic innovations (Creole, patois, pidgin, 'travellers' slang', etc.); it is the code for creativity and translation" (HUTNYK, 2005: 81). A translation reproduced by the diasporic artist who weaves into her work a form of Amazigh language, a hybrid, a mixture between Amazigh and contemporary abstract art. When Amina SaoudiAïtKhay, a Moroccan artist living in Tunisia, produces in her weavings iconographic elements inspired by both Western art history and Amazigh culture, a manifestation of the creolisation of her plastic language appears. This hybridization of ideas leads to a new plastic form. A marginal practical expression produced by a woman, a "mixed-race" artist-tissue artist, strong in her rhizomic identity. Rhizomic identity is a concept treated by Édouard Glissant in line with the research of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. The concept reflects an identity constructed by various influences. This makes it possible to weave links with the *"Tout-monde"*. In contemporary societies, rhizomic identity is a widely propagated concept. On a daily basis, it is easily visible in large and medium-sized cities, which are strongly affected by migratory flows. This phenomenon, which affects the big city in particular, produces a strong cultural diversity. This diversity does not only affect social relations or the development of populations, but also the field of art, in which hybridity is transformed into a space for artistic interaction. This environment allows the critique of history, the distinction of visible contrasts between its different cultures and societies.

A mid-place space named *"the third space"* by Homi K. Bhabha, in which artists are pushed to rethink the notion of the *"Tout-Monde"* initiated and proposed by Édouard Glissant; a concept inviting them to grasp intercultural relations. "A Tout-Monde, a third space, which is in fact a Creole zone that brings, when properly apprehended, a renewal of ideas and a critical reconstruction that, today, is more than vital" (CRENN, 2012., p. 48) From then on, creolization produces a mixture of ideas from a Francophone influence and Amina's Tunisian-Moroccan culture; ideas that breathe new life into Western abstract art, in which, she applies a deconstructed, disarticulated Amazigh touch, to also discard the stereotypical look of Amazigh weaving. This is how the artist-weaver reveals her creative memory, allowing her to create a symbolic weaving in her own image. The symbolism includes both a metaphysical dimension referring to the divinities and an empirical dimension revealing the imprint of the creator, a symbol applied by her. Amina SaoudiAïtKahy remains one of the rare artists in Tunisia who demystifies cardboard, creating her works without a model. Contrary to her, her colleagues conceive a cardboard, a model that they have produced at craftswomen.

This liberation of cardboard goes back to the influences of traditional Moroccan Amazigh weaving. Traditional weavings or spontaneous works of art with bright colors and abstract motifs do not only inspire the artist-weaver Amina SaoudiAïtKhay, but also, before her, great names in abstract art. It was at the beginning of the 20th century that this interest in African and primitive art was born, driven by the need to create a painting that represented the free expression of a sensitivity. A desire to create a new current is manifested in "the culmination of a succession of denials, thanks to which we can attempt to establish classifications and remove the chaotic appearance that characterizes it at first sight" (DAMGAAG, 2008, p. 298).

This period reveals a strong upheaval in the perception of art, art that denies the figuration of reality in order to retranscribe it differently. A shift towards a form of expression called "abstract art" appears. She invited three precursors of this movement to take an interest in the "primitive" forms associated with the carpets and weavings of Amazigh women. These three artists (Le Corbusier, Kandinsky and Klee) were enthusiastic about these productions, which they took up in their own works, as well as in their theoretical work and their teachings (Ibid. p 288). These visiting artists thus indirectly played a role in the promotion of Amazigh weaving on the national territory. A national investment that remains timid and insufficient. His unsponsored involvement has nevertheless allowed the emergence of a new vision of art unveiled to Paul Klee.



And it was in Tunisia that Klee painted some interesting canvases in which the "motif" was absent in favor of a synthetic perception. This perception is achieved by setting up a square structure inspired by the architecture of the medinas and the Amazigh carpets.

With this new way of making art, KLEE "tackles, in his own words, "the synthesis of urban architecture - architecture of the painting". This is what Macke foresaw in the Almanac of the BlaueReit (1911): the fusion of Europe and the East, in this "third style", which in fact characterises many works of modernity" (Ibid. p 302).

The fusion of the two sutures is the product of openness towards the "other" motivated by a need to share, allowing the enrichment of the self. This leads to a crossbreeding, a "creolisation" of cultures; creolisation giving life to a third universe. A universe in which cultural exchanges would represent reactors in the development of the artist's identity and in the affirmation of his practice enriched by creolisation. Achille Bonito Oliva writes:

"Contemporary art successfully exploits the overcoming of traditional barriers, to gain access to rapid routes playing on the principle of contamination. This principle counters the risk of standardisation, which is the consequence of telecommunication and globalisation" (BONITO OLIVA, Achille; BOULLATA, Kamal; FISHER, Jean; MOSQUERA, Gerardo., 2008, p. 44)

## II. CONCLUSION:

Thus, the art of contemporary weaving, such as that proposed by Amina Saoudi Aït Khay, attempts to counteract mechanical standardization in the face of a trend towards cultural uniformity. It reveals itself as both a cultural particularism marked by a character of diverse civilizational influences. A particularism or a cultural affirmation that appears through the integration of Amazigh signs on the artist's canvas. This reappropriation of Amazigh culture by contemporary artists raises a number of issues, such as the following: Does contemporary art use Amazigh signs to create its own language or does it retain the semiotics of these signs?

Signs that characterize Amazigh weaving, like its particular technique. It is also recognizable by its geometric forms and its refined aesthetic. After the formal analysis discussed in the previous chapters, it is necessary to begin the semiotic reading of his works. These interpretations are derived from reading and fieldwork. Thus, the meanings proposed remain suggestive and can always be questioned. Now that we can compare the practice of weaving in three different contexts (the traditional context, the context of industrial mechanization, and the context of contemporary art), we should ask ourselves: is the Amazigh symbolism still present in the aesthetics and poetics of the new weaving styles? Has it also undergone an evolution, and of what nature?

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