

Press release | Turin, 20 February 2024

Fondazione Merz in collaboration with the MAO (Museo d'Arte Orientale)

MARIO MERZ PRIZE

Yto Barrada

DEADHEAD

Curated by Davide Quadrio with Giulia Turconi

A new exhibition by Yto Barrada, recipient of the 4th edition of the Mario Merz Prize, an international award devoted to art and music.

20 February – 18 May 2025

Fondazione Merz

Via Limone 24, Turin

Press preview: Wednesday 20 February 2025, 11 am

Opening: Wednesday 20 February 2025, 7 pm

The **Fondazione Merz** is pleased to present **DEADHEAD**, a solo exhibition by artist Yto Barrada, curated by Davide Quadrio with Giulia Turconi, in collaboration with the MAO (Museo d'Arte Orientale), from **Thursday February 20 to Sunday May 18, 2025**.

The exhibition's title, **DEADHEAD**, refers in part to the horticultural practice of removing dead flower heads to stimulate the growth of the entire plant. Taking up the notion of reducing to the essential, the show draws on a tight selection from Yto Barrada's artistic oeuvre, including films, sculptures, installations, textiles and prints, some of which have been specially created for the occasion.

Among the echoes, call-outs and visual experiments in the exhibition, one reference is to Barrada's research into the pioneer colour theorist collector and philanthropist **Emily Noyes Vanderpoel** and her book, *Color Problems: A Practical Manual for the Lay Student of Color* (1902) originally intended for a female readership of dressmakers, flower painters and decorators. The author's revolutionary colour-analysis charts converted images into geometric grids, through a systematic arrangement of the colour spectrum, which she dubbed the "music of light."

With the series **Color Analysis**, which debuted at the MAO (Museo d'Arte Orientale) as part of the exhibition *Trad u/i zioni d'Eurasia* (2023-24), Barrada presents hand-dyed velvet grids, in which she applied Vanderpoel's technique to transform images from Vanderpoel's personal collection of antiques, to selected works from the MAO's collection of Islamic art, and to a drawing by **Marisa Merz**. Many natural dyes used in the work were made in **The Mothership**, an artist-led project by Barrada envisioned as an 'ecofeminist-campus' for growing, making, and learning natural dyes and radical indigenous lost traditions, in her garden in Tangier.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a catalogue published by hopefulmonster.

The exhibition extends the collaboration between the Fondazione Merz and the MAO (Museo d'Arte Orientale), where Yto Barrada's work was presented in the group exhibition *Trad u/i zioni d'Eurasia* (2023-24.)

Yto Barrada (Paris, 1971) is the fourth artist to receive the **Mario Merz Prize**, a biennial international award which celebrates Mario Merz and new talents in art and music, by commissioning an exhibition or a new musical project. In this edition, Füsün Köksal is the recipient in the music category; her concert will take place on July 2, 2025, at the Fondazione Merz.

Five visual artists were shortlisted for the fifth edition of the prize: Elena Bellantoni (Italy), Mohamed Bourouissa (France/Algeria), Anna Franceschini (Italy), Voluspa Jarpa (Chile) and Agnes Questionmark (Italy). A group exhibition of the finalists will appear at Fondazione Merz in June 2025. The jury selecting the finalists consisted of Samuel Gross (special project manager, Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, Geneva), Claudia Gioia (independent curator) and Beatrice Merz (Fondazione Merz president).

Barrada has just been selected to represent France at La Biennale di Venezia in 2026.

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Yto Barrada (b. 1971, Paris, lives in New York) is an artist and educator recognized for her multidisciplinary investigations of cultural phenomena and historical narratives. Engaging with archival practices and public interventions, Barrada's installations uncover subaltern histories, and celebrate everyday forms of reclaiming autonomy.

Her practice encompasses film, photography, sculpture, painting, printmaking, and publishing, while her installations often comprised both original work and found objects.

Nonverbal communication, family myths, "hidden transcripts" that unearth new grammars—within the interlinked logic of Barrada's work lie secrets, pleasures, and a celebration of strategies of resistance to domination.

Her work has been exhibited by Tate Modern, MoMA, The Metropolitan Museum, Renaissance Society, the Walker Art Center, Whitechapel Gallery, The Power Plant, The Serralves Foundation and the following biennales Venice (2007, 2011), Gwangju (2018), the Whitney (2022) and São Paulo (2023).

Barrada's work has won numerous awards including the 2022 Merz Prize, 2022 Queen Sonja Print Award, 2019 Roy R. Neuberger Prize, the 2015 Abraaj Group Art Prize, The Robert Gardner Fellowship in Photography (Peabody Museum at Harvard University), and the 2011 Deutsche Guggenheim Artist of the Year award. She is a recipient of the 2023 Soros Arts Fellowship.

She has taught at Bard College, The Cooper Union, and the Vevey School of Photography. She is the founding director of the Cinémathèque de Tanger, an art-house cinema that has become a landmark institution bringing the Moroccan community together to celebrate local and international cinema.

More recently, Barrada is setting up *The Mothership* in Tangier, an eco-feminist research centre and residency, centered around a dye garden.

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