

ROYAL MANSOUR
MARRAKECH

ROYAL MANSOUR MARRAKECH

PRESENTS



INVISIBLE LIGHT

YAHYA & QOTBI

19 April - 15 September 2014

When I first took over as President of the Arab World Institute in Paris in 2013, I soon discovered that I had inherited an exhibition called “Invisible Light” that was to be shown in the Zaha Hadid pavillion, by the painter Mehdi Qotbi and the sculptor of light Yahya. I was familiar with both of their work, but was intrigued as to what they would do together and the results of such a collaboration, coming from two very different artistic backgrounds. Added to this, was my worry about how they would make use of Zaha's pavillion which is an incredibly challenging exhibition space, as remarkable as it is architecturally. When I glimpsed the set up of the sculptures I was overwhelmed and astonished at how perfectly the works of art seemed to complement and accentuate the space. The installation and lighting had yet to be finished so I decided to withdraw and leave it a complete surprise for the opening vernissage.

As I entered into the space a few days later, I was dazzled by the sophisticated simplicity of the scenography, the obsessive fine tuning of the lighting design and the extraordinary beauty of the sculptures that seemed to dance and shimmer. I was enchanted and realised that I was being taken on a journey through time and space, form and material.....from darkness to light. I was transported through the pavillion, that I now barely recognised, and guided effortlessly, as if by an invisible hand, my attention being drawn to each sculpture as and when the artists desired. It was a rare, moving and exceptional moment. Nobody left the same as when they entered after having experienced the exhibition. It felt like art, theatre and poetry entwined and began to make me consider the nature of internal, external and, above all, Invisible Light..... The light of wisdom that speaks across languages, communicates without words, bringing peoples and cultures together, reminding us of the beauty of what joins us and not what divides us. A rare gift.

I am delighted that “Invisible Light” has come home to Morocco and that the second showing of this exhibition is at the Royal Mansour. There is no more fitting setting than this illustrious hotel, already home to much of Yahya's work. Thankfully, it seems that destiny saw fit to close the circle and allow me to present, here in Morocco, an exhibition that I had inherited initially in Paris....



Jack Lang
President
Arab World Institute, Paris





ROYAL MANSOUR MARRAKECH

Nestled at the foothills of the snow-capped Atlas mountains, with the dunes of the desert to the south, Marrakech still remains, after a millenia, as magical and magnetic as ever. A crossroads of cultures that is as exotic as it is mysterious, it still entices its visitors with promises of piercing through the veil and slowly stripping away at its layers of secrecy and intrigue.

Adding to this mystique, hidden behind the walls of the ancient city lies a seemingly forbidden oasis of tranquility, a gateway to a labrynthine maze of elegant riads and courtyards set amongst an earthly paradise of lush gardens, where the delicate scents of jasmine and orange blossom and the subtle sounds of running water disappear away the frenetic bustle of the outside world.

A hotel in name alone, the newly built Royal Mansour has obtained mythical status in a short time, and has insinuated itself into the fabric of life and the collective memory of the ochre city. Its grandeur and opulence is off-set by the discreet refinement and understated elegance of a palace that is a showcase for the very finest of Moroccan architecture, craftsmanship and design.

Many of the most iconic pieces in the hotel were commissioned from Yahya, whose workshop of 300 artisans toiled by hand for several years, to create exclusively for the Palace many of its chandeliers, doors, fountains and furniture. Yahya's work is a contemporary vision of the artistic traditions of the past and epitomises perfectly the intricacy and sophistication of Moroccan Design.

As his name has now become synonomous with the exquisite craftsmanship of the hotel, it was decided to welcome and show, for the first time in Morocco, the exhibition "Invisible Light", a collection of 17 Sculptures and works of art, created in collaboration with the painter Mehdi Qotbi, and first shown at the Arab World Institute in Paris in 2013.

Parts of the hotel will be transformed to invite the visitor to enter a journey through light and shadow and discover a world of mystery, where the poetic movement of Islamic Calligraphy is transformed into an abstract language that transcends speech, and builds bridges between cultures and civilisations, past and present.

INVISIBLE LIGHT

Invisible Light is an encounter between a painter and a sculptor – between two and three dimensions, relief and colour, oil and bronze, words and shapes. The painter Mehdi Qotbi and the sculptor and designer of objets d'art Yahya present seventeen works that magnificently encapsulate the dialogue between the two artists in an imaginary language that freely reinterprets the calligraphic tradition in Islamic art.

Together the two artists have developed a series of intricately interwoven signs and letters that create a new form of abstraction. The three-dimensional calligraphy is infused with light that is by turns immanent and transcendent, conferring a quasi-magical aura on the sculptures, which are immobile, yet somehow seem to resonate, suggesting a world of light and shade.

The suspended sculptures often appear to float like intricately embroidered spun metal, delicate yet massive, defying the visitor to imagine the obviously complex techniques used to realise such works by hand, thereby heightening the intrigue and deepening the sense of mystery.

The abstract forms consist of arbitrary signs bearing no explicit message, yet still recount an epic, poetic narrative of the encounter between East and West, where cultures change each other through exchanges, and where artists define the future by redefining the past, whilst dreaming of an age-old calligraphic tradition and its universal relevance.

The abstract nature of this visual experience strives for formal perfection over imparted meaning and is designed to bypass the cognitive parts of the brain and to stimulate an emotional reaction, creating an internal dialogue directly with the heart and soul, thereby allowing each visitor's imagination to run free. Each piece is simply named, providing the only occasional glimpse into the thoughts of the artists thereby initiating a debate on their intentions and then an internal reflection on the paradoxical nature of Invisible Light...















N°1 **GLOBE**
2470 x 2470 x 2520 (h) mm
Polished stainless steel
Marrakech 2012





N°3 RECTANGLE
2730 x 100 x 1260 (h) mm
Brass, aged bronze finish
Marrakech 2012





N°4 SQUARED
1800 x 100 x 1800 (h) mm
Brass, aged bronze finish
Marrakech 2012



N°5

STELE

990 x 250 x 2260 (h) mm
Brass, aged bronze finish
Marrakech 2012



N°7

JUNGLE

1200 x 40 x 1200 (h) mm

Brass, aged bronze finish

Marrakech 2012

N°8 **MESOPOTAMIA**
1860 x 500 x 2630 (h) mm
Brass, aged bronze finish
Marrakech 2012





N°10

LAYERS

1450 x 40 x 1450 (h) mm
Brass, aged bronze finish
Marrakech 2012





N°12 **THE WALL**
1800 x 440 x 2500 (h) mm
Brass, aged bronze finish
Marrakech 2012







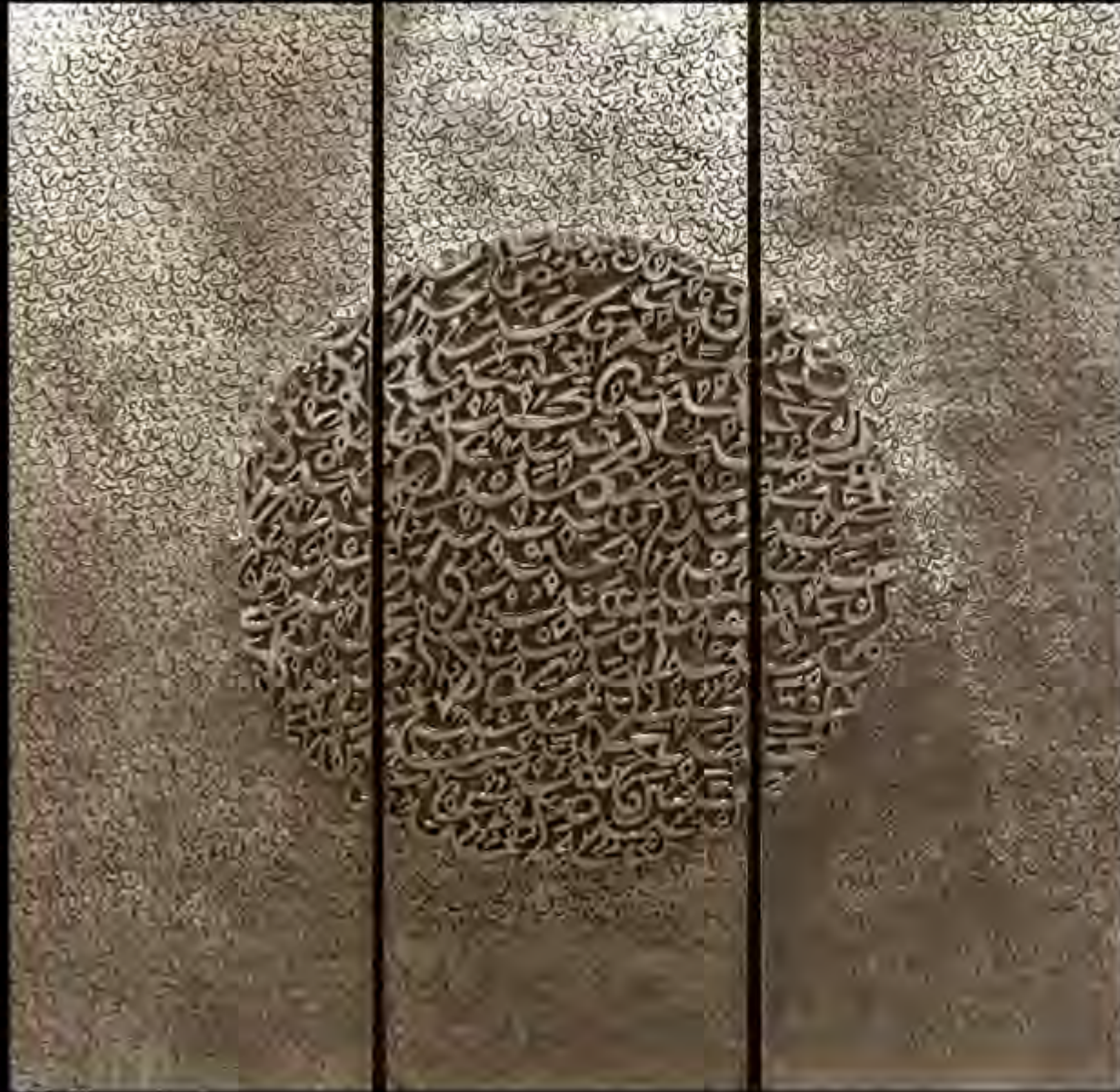
N°13 **SALAAM**
3810 x 805 x 2830 (h) mm
Polished stainless steel
Marrakech 2012





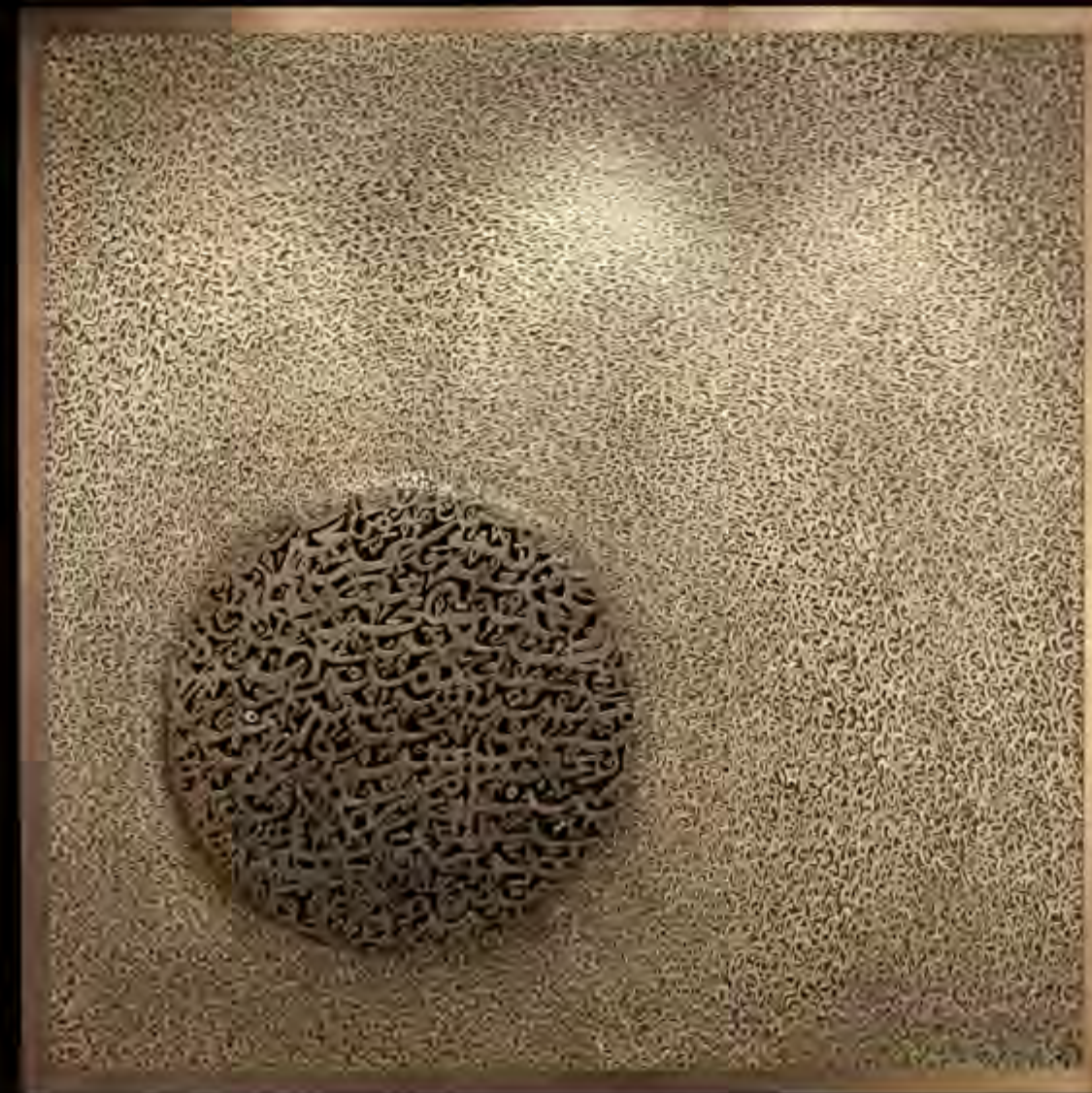
N°15 **MEDALLION**
1310 x 70 x 1310 (h) mm
Brass, aged bronze finish
Marrakech 2012





N°16 TRIPTYCH
1290 x 60 x 1310 (h) mm
Polished nickel silver
Marrakech 2012

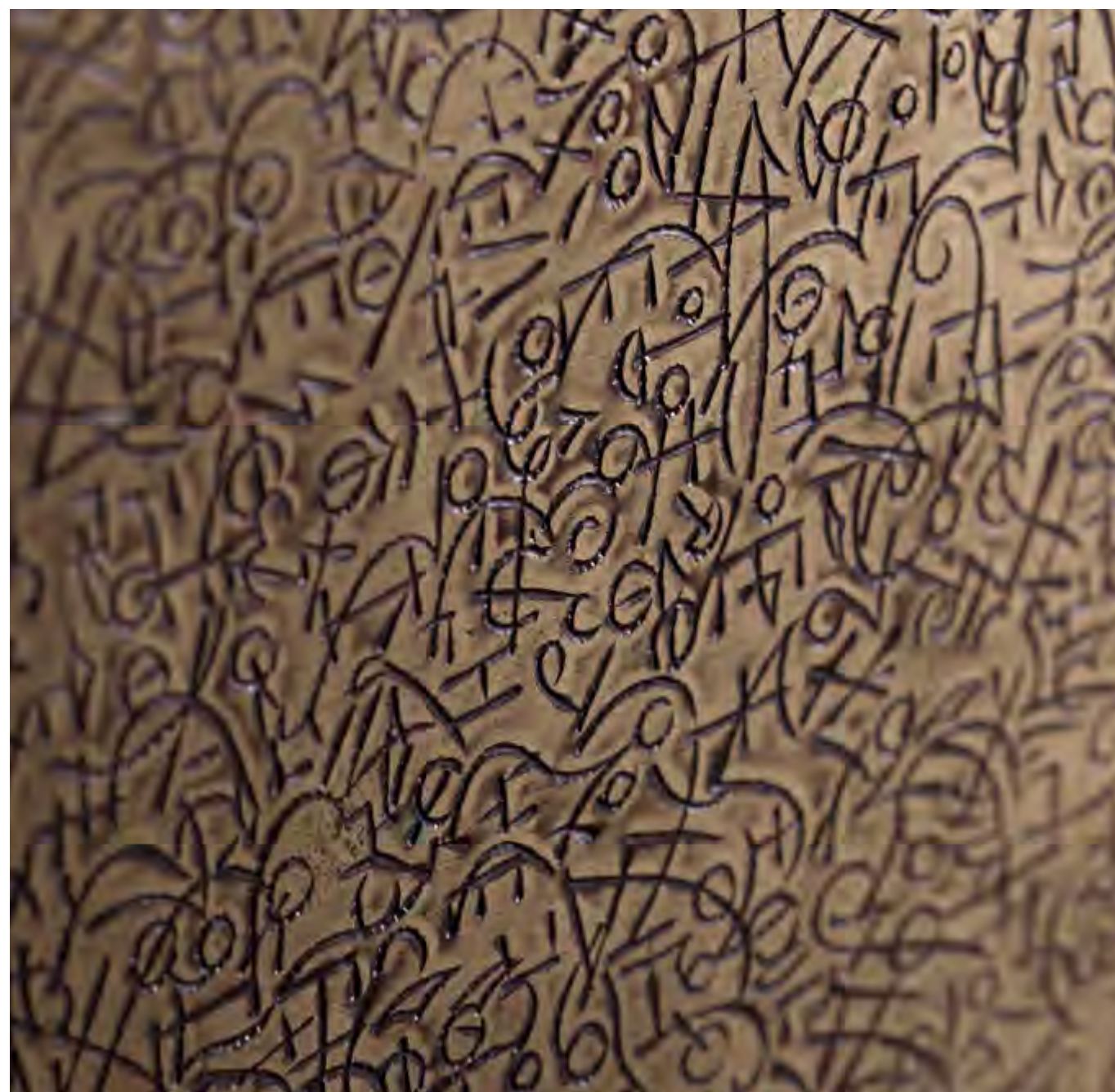




N°17 FOCUS
1255 x 55 x 1255 (h) mm
Brass, aged bronze finish
Marrakech 2012



N°18 EAST AND WEST
2200 x 65 x 1100 (h) mm
Brass, aged bronze finish
Marrakech 2012





N°22 **CIRCLE OF LIFE**
2365 x 700 x 2510 (h) mm
Polished stainless steel
Marrakech 2012





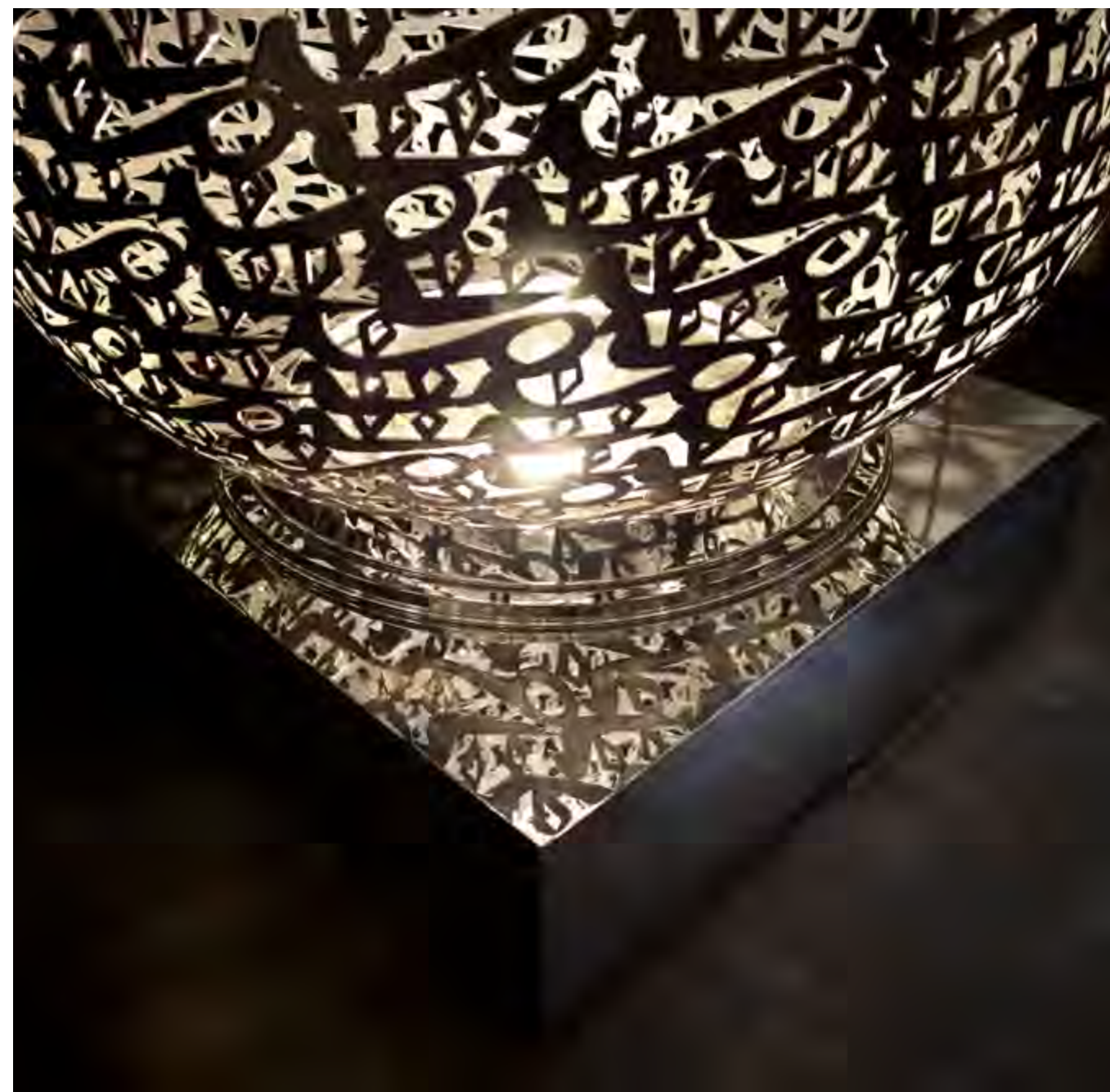
N°23

THREE PILLARS

575 x 575 x 2000 (h) mm
Brass, aged bronze finish
Marrakech 2012







N°25 **AMPHORA**
1860 x 1860 x 2675 (h) mm
Polished stainless steel
Marrakech 2012



N°26 LOVE
840 x 390 x 840 (h) mm
Polished stainless steel
Marrakech 2012



YAHYA

A fusion of cultures, nationalities and religions, Yahya was born in London in 1972 to an Anglo-German, Irish Christian mother and a Jewish Moroccan father from Meknes. He embraced Islam on his travels to Morocco where he discovered the ancient art of metalworking and an unknown, hidden artistic side to his nature.

A former martial arts instructor and events organiser, with no previous artistic training, his work is characterised by contrasting yet complimentary influences and is a harmonious fusion of eastern elegance and western minimalism.

Yahya's reputation has been established on a refined luxury which is both discreet and timeless. Each piece is made completely by hand and is the result of a unique heritage and a tradition of forgotten ancestral techniques and exceptional savoir-faire.

Yahya's body of work is diverse and encompasses many materials, he is one of the few artists who is able to bridge effortlessly the divide between Art and Design and work in each field. Difficult to classify, his works of art are subtle but sophisticated, audacious yet mysterious. Passionate about his art, removed from the constraints of formal training, he is a visionary, indifferent to trends and fashion, in constant search of the artistic ideal. In 2013, he was delighted and honoured to have been awarded the Medal of Commander for the Order of National Recompense by His Majesty the King Mohammed VI of Morocco.





MEHDI QOTBI

Mehdi Qotbi discovers a passion for drawing, which he develops at the fine art schools of Rabat, Toulouse, and Paris. A few decades later in 2005, he moves back to Morocco, where he becomes a member of the Advisory Council on Human Rights and works tirelessly to bring cultures together. In 2011, he was appointed by His Majesty King Mohammed VI as head of the Moroccan National Museum Foundation, while continuing his pictorial work.

Recognized worldwide, his pictorial work is a world open to infinity. As a meeting point between the East, Africa, and the West, between geometric abstraction and the elegant subtleties of Arab-Islamic decorative arts, his works allow one's gaze to get lost in the intertwining of Arab calligraphy and writing in the service of contemporary creation.

Mehdi Qotbi has exhibited on all continents and his works can be found, for instance, in the collections of the City of Paris Museum, Georges Pompidou Center, British Museum in London, the Museums of Fine Arts of Houston and Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, and the National Gallery of Art in Amman, Jordan.

PLAN

EXHIBITION ARTWORKS

- N°1

GLOBE
- N°3

RECTANGLE
- N°4

SQUARED
- N°5

STELE
- N°7

JUNGLE
- N°8

MESOPOTAMIA
- N°10

LAYERS
- N°12

THE WALL
- N°13

SALAAM
- N°15

MEDALLION
- N°16

TRIPTYCH
- N°17

FOCUS
- N°18

EAST AND WEST
- N°22

CIRCLE OF LIFE
- N°23

THREE PILLARS
- N°25

AMPHORA
- N°26

LOVE

GROUND FLOOR

- A

Main entrance
- B

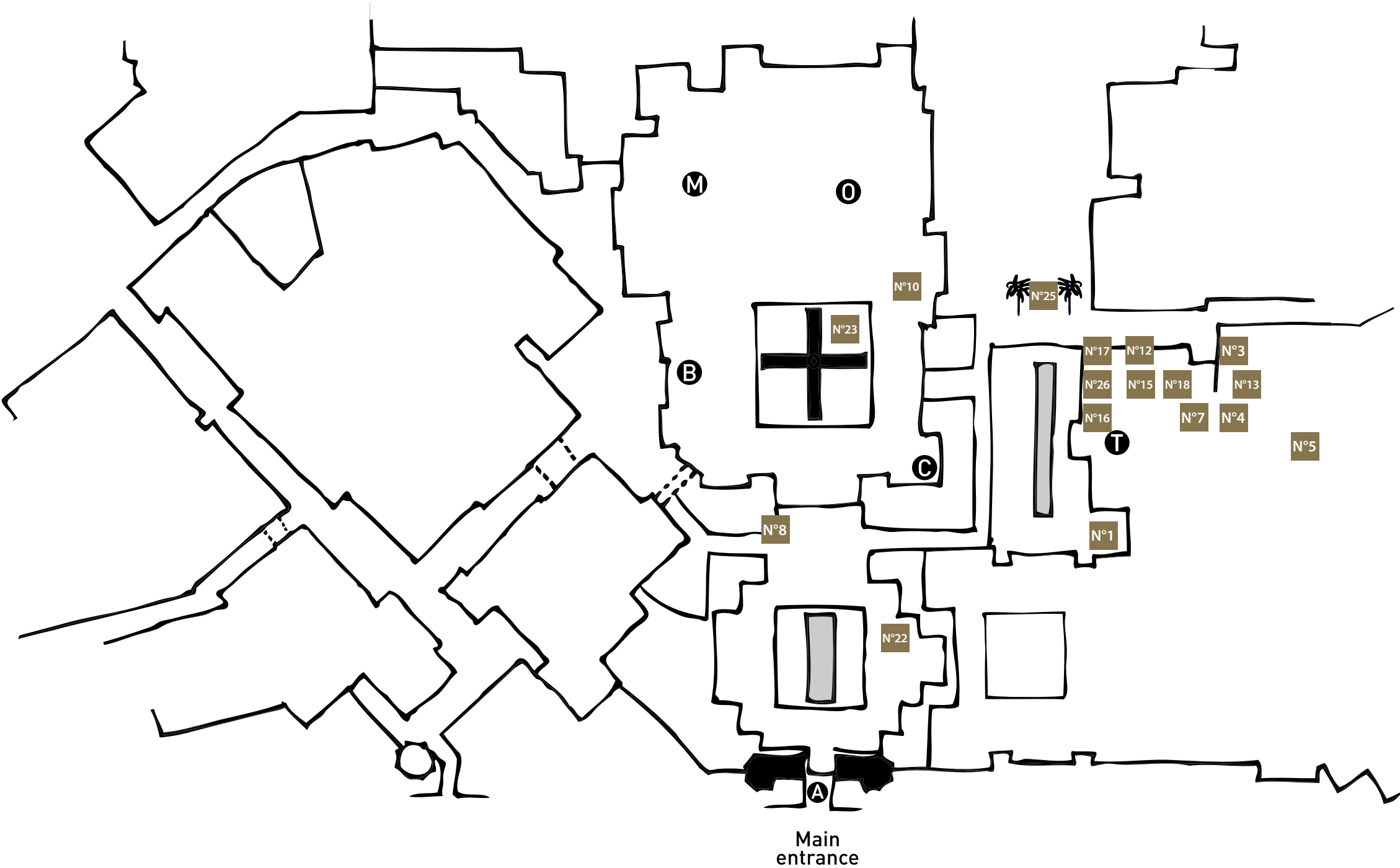
Reception / Concierge
- C

Boutique
- M

Le Bar
- O

Chimney lounge
- T

Function area



THE ARTWORKS OF THE EXHIBITION



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Harcourt
PARIS

INVISIBLE LIGHT Exhibition

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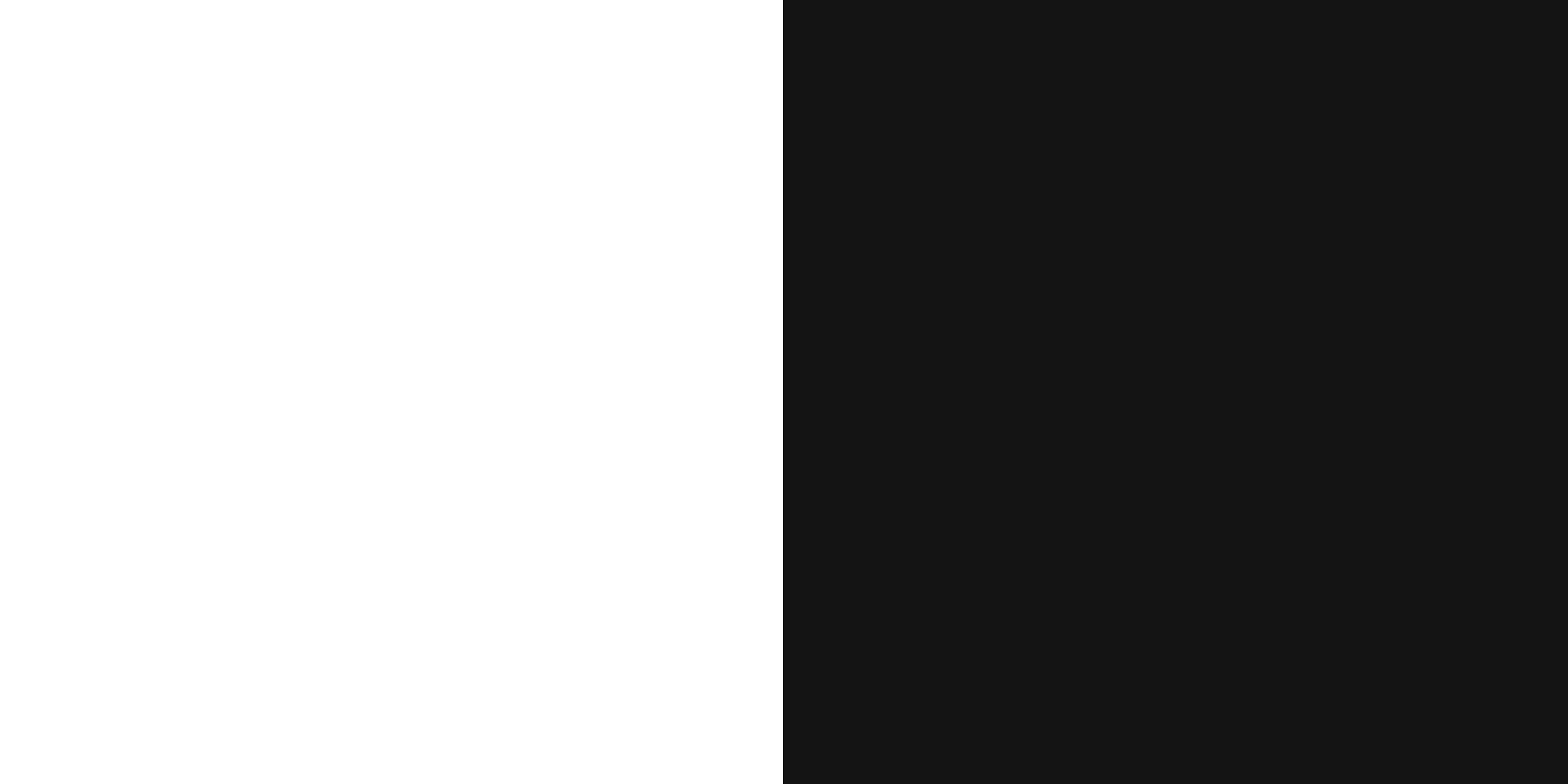
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