



GRAND OPENING

THE
AMERICAN ARTS CENTER
-CASABLANCA-

2 KHALIL MATRANE (EX BALZAC), GAUTHIER

MEDIA KIT - MARCH 2022

THE
AMERICAN ARTS CENTER
-CASABLANCA-

For a creative city with a strong independent art scene

After almost 5 decades of serving the Moroccan community, the American Language Center in Casablanca has contributed to the development of the city's cultural and artistic ecosystem.

The American Arts Center is a non-profit space, an extension of the ALC Casablanca and as a multi-disciplinary, inclusive space, it aims to cultivate and encourage innovation and creation in arts and education. Through its diverse program of exhibitions, academic and cultural activities, the AAC aims not only to bring artists and communities together, but also to help advance cultural exchange and innovation in Morocco through dynamic programs, including artist workshops, open public events, studio classes, professional development opportunities, academic outreach and exchange and an international arts residency.

Located in the heart of the Gauthier neighborhood, a thriving cultural hub in Casablanca, the AAC with its 284 m² space features a wood-paneled 150-seat theater/cinema with mezzanine, three levels of exhibition space, individual meeting rooms wired for audio and video, and a fifth-floor panoramic space with terrace, overlooking Casablanca's Art Deco district. ACC is a 10-minute walk from the Parc de la Ligue Arabe, with very convenient access.

Opening events include three separate photographic exhibitions, featuring new work by Moroccan Street Photographer 'YORIYAS' (see attached press release), a mosaic installation by students of Brahim Benkirane's photography masterclasses, and a special presentation of the AAC workshop "Kids with Cameras", in which children from two communities in Morocco share their world through their own eyes.

AAC looks forward to present a diverse program for the month of Ramadan, including films, concerts, dance, and more.

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An Interview with Ricky Lavern Martin, Founder & Director of the American Arts Center

Could you walk us through the journey of the creation of the American Arts Center?

The dream for the American Arts Center came rather quickly. One day, I was walking to lunch and I saw a building for sale. I went back to my office, and called the owner. The building was zoned for six floors, and I took a paper to lunch and I drew out the plan. It was pretty much similar to what we came up with.

For years, I traveled around the world, soul-searching and doing things from the heart. I've learned it's better to just go for it, and that's the American spirit I grew up with. In a way, building an arts center is an extension of traveling and living intuitively. Luckily, the American Cultural Association is a wonderful organization that supports all these ideals that I'm talking about.

Everything happened in two weeks: we got board approval, purchased the land, developed the budget, and it was an odyssey of four years of hard work. During this time, I have had great joy in meeting people all over Casablanca and beyond to bring together the right combination of people that can pull off this incredible challenge of creating an arts and cultural center.

But now here we are, we've got the building, I look around and I'm thinking this is better than I could have ever imagined.

What sort of community does the American Arts Center hope to build?

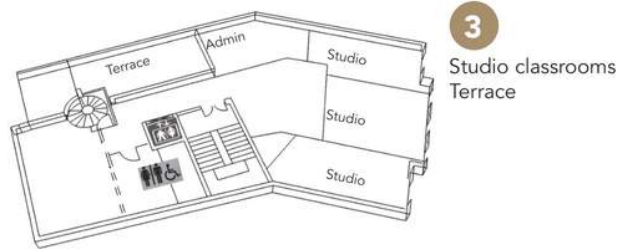
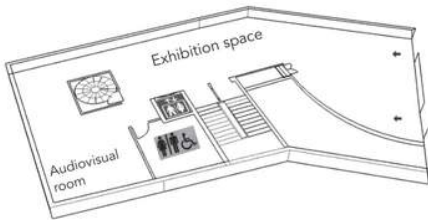
Our intention is to create a space that nurtures communication between artists and educators in a unique situation, providing value to the community.

We intend to build a community where we come together here to support one another, creating things that we dream up and manifesting our own positivity to the world that we live in. By going around to many art activities in Casablanca, I met a photographer who ignited this passion of photography and it changed my life. It's changed the course of what I'm doing and it also has changed who I meet and where I am headed.

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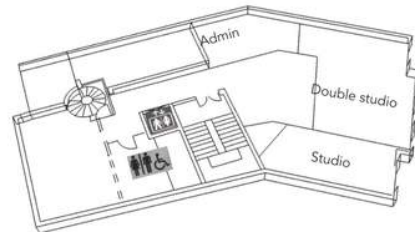
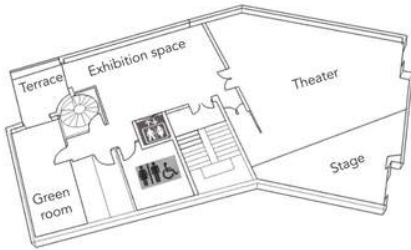


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Exhibition space
Audiovisual room
WC



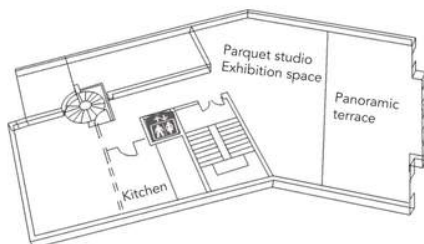
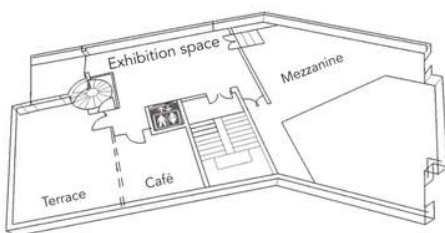
3
Studio classrooms
Terrace

1
Theater / Stage
Cinema
Exhibition space
Green room
Terrace



4
Studio classrooms
Double studio

2
Theater
Mezzanine
Exhibition space
Café / Terrace



5
Parquet studio
Panoramic terrace
Exhibition space
Kitchen



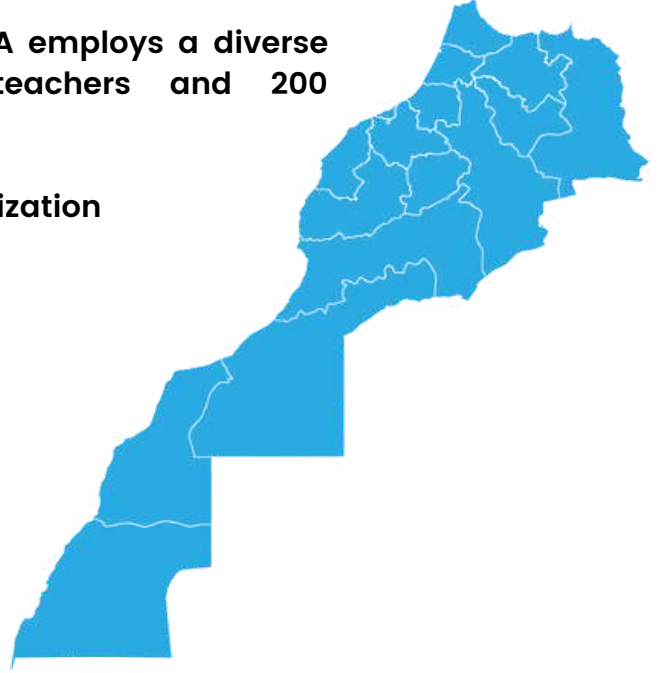
The American Cultural Association الجمعية الثقافية الأمريكية

The American Cultural Association (ACA) is the not for profit parent organization of the American Language Centers (ALCs) in Morocco, with the objective of ACA fostering language learning, community service, and cultural exchange.

With 12 ALCs throughout Morocco, the ACA employs a diverse workforce made up of over 500 teachers and 200 administrative staff.

The core activities carried out by the organization include:

- Teaching English
- Teacher Training Programs
- Arabic Language Instruction
- Cultural Initiatives
- Community Service Projects



From the 1950's to present, the ALCs in Morocco have multiplied from just one center and bookstore in Rabat to now 12 centers located around the country in Agadir, Casablanca, Fes, Kenitra, Marrakesh, Meknes, Mohamedia, Oujda, Tangier, and Tetouan. In addition, in 1983 the Arabic Language Institute in Fez was created at the ALC Fes. ALIF teaches both Colloquial Moroccan Arabic as well as Modern Standard Arabic to visiting students from around the world.

 @AmericanCulturalAssociation

 @aca_morocco

 The American Cultural Association



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200 YEARS OF FRIENDSHIP

Bicentennial Youth Outreach Activities American Cultural Association - US Embassy Rabat

To celebrate the Bicentennial of the American Legation Building in Tangier, which also marks the 200th anniversary of the relations between Morocco and the United States, the American Cultural Association implemented, with the support of the US Embassy, an extensive series of events and activities, parallel to the exhibition 'Of Voice and Stone', first at the National Library in Rabat and then at the Abderrahman Slaoui Museum in Casablanca.

These activities included the Hna W Mirican program, focused on teaching English while highlighting different aspects of the American and Moroccan cultures; a series of Workshops and performances by local artists and facilitators in both venues; the final ceremony of "Voices for Change", the ALL ALCs Public Speaking Competition; and many field trips and organized visits to the exhibition in both cities.

Hna W Mirican



The youth outreach program, which began last year, will continue through June 2022!

Stay tuned!

THE
AMERICAN ARTS CENTER
-CASABLANCA-
PRESENTS
WORLD PREMIERE
YORIYAS
TO THE MOON AND BACK
TRAVELING MOROCCO IN THE LAST MERCEDES TAXIS



@YORIYAS 2022. Courtesy of the artist and American Arts Center

EXHIBITION: 29.03. – 08.05.2022

VERNISSAGE: 29.03.2022

FREE ENTRY

THE
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PRESENTS

Yoriyas Yassine Alaoui Ismaili
-YORIYAS-
TO THE MOON AND BACK
Traveling Morocco by the last Mercedes taxis

A Mercedes 240 taxi took me to high school for final exams, and my entire family when we went on vacation. I've seen 240 taxis transporting sheep for Aid-al-Adha, while neighborhood children ran behind the car.

For many Moroccans, the Mercedes 240s – and their drivers – are a part of daily life, the tie that held our lives together. They brought strangers together, too; these taxis were "share taxis," picking up more than one passenger along the way, heading to more than one destination.

When a 2015 government plan announced that by 2022, the Mercedes 240s would be phased out by new taxis, I knew that a piece of Moroccan landscape would soon be lost forever. I set out to document these cars and their drivers before it was too late – to create an archive of a way of life that has been part of Morocco since Mercedes 240 first arrived from Germany in the late 1980s. I explored these taxi worlds, capturing memories of the Moroccans who have traveled in them.

I got to know the drivers, too, and the quirky relationships they've developed with their cars over the years. Some drivers speak of their 240s as if they were family members. They hear car trouble before it happens – and use home remedies, like using paprika to plug a hole in the radiator, or olive oil for the engine...

On one of those trips, a driver told me that in 20 years of driving, he traveled more than one million kilometers with his taxi. The mileage counter had set back to zero. I was surprised and told him: "Do you know that it is 400,000 kilometers from the earth to the moon?" He laughed and said: "I already drove to the moon and back."

EXHIBITION: 29.03. – 08.05.2022

FREE ENTRY

YORIYAS

TO THE MOON AND BACK

Traveling Morocco by the last Mercedes taxis



@YORIYAS 2022. Courtesy of the artist and American Arts Center

About Yoriyas:

Yassine Alaoui Ismaili, also known as Yoriyas, born in 1984, is a Casablanca-based photographer and performer.

He started playing chess at five years old, leading him to fall in love with mathematics. By the age of 16, the influence of Hip Hop culture paved a new path in his life: he became a break-dancer. In 2013, while traveling the world as a competing professional dancer, a serious knee injury halted his dance career. This sparked a new artistic transformation: photography as a means of self-expression. The unique blend of his Arab-North-African heritage, strategy of chess, and his love for dance led him to one-of-a-kind methods of experimentation through photography.

Yoriyas' work is an intuitively-based observation of urban/public space, and a documentation of daily life and change in Morocco and Africa. His images have been featured in print and online media like The Guardian and National Geographic. He has received awards from IMA (Paris, 2019) and Photo Basel (2018). He has been exhibited across the world, including in the HERMÈS Foundation in Paris, 836m Gallery San Francisco, and l'Institut pour la Photographie Lille.

During Covid, he was selected as one of five artists to follow by The New York Times.

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