

Achraf Touloub Pleiades

10 September – 31 October 2026

Opening: Thursday, 10 September, 6–10 pm

BERLIN ART WEEK Opening Hours

Friday–Sunday, 11–13 September, 12am–6pm

1999, the day of the great eclipse. The neighborhood's residents had gathered. A motley crowd. Each one held in hand a fragment of cut medical X-ray film, scrutinizing the celestial phenomenon through it. The painter, for his part, watched the watchers. Suddenly the eclipse's light revealed the fragmentary images held within the radiographs. "I have no memory of the sun, only of what appeared to me then: opaque bodies gazing at the sun through images of transparent bodies."

What becomes of a living, branching thought when it sheds its words to advance, under cover, into the field of colors and forms? The philosophical or metaphysical treatise undergoes its metamorphosis and becomes a talisman — the other name for a painting when it retraces the soul's initiatory path. There, thought crystallizes into cryptograms.

Line and touch unfold simultaneously from a double anchorage: the motif perceived by the eye, and the invisible flash of the idea. To paint, then, becomes a reflexive act: the painter's gesture retraces the archaeology of the visible world — registering the emergence and the manifestations of the forces that constitute material reality — even as it expresses the meaning of that very operation. This is precisely what Achraf Touloub's painting embodies.

The strength and the relevance of his work lie not in expressing a thought or an idea — which would confine it to mere illustration — but in constructing it, in folding it into the very substance of the work.

If Achraf Touloub's painting gives body to thought, it likewise strips bodies and objects of their materiality. The artist paints transparent territories, traversed by the gaze. He paints flows — of capital, of information, of populations — the wholesale colonization of real and virtual territories alike, and of our consciousness itself. And at the heart of these vast, global questions, one senses more intimate subjects stirring behind the anonymity of figures and places.

To write is not to describe, and to paint is not to depict, as Georges Braque so brilliantly put it — a remark that illuminates the particular quality of this work, which manages to fuse sensory observation with mental projection.

This singular approach finds its echo in mystical disciplines where ecstatic dance and prayer merge, where the practice of drawing meets meditation, uniting the workings of mind and body — plunging toward their dark, inviolate source, while at the same time projecting us into the dazzling, inexhaustible variety of their manifestations.

The painter traces the course of things back to that originary point where matter and consciousness are sown together. It is a celebration of fertility in the fullest sense of the word — at once physiological and philosophical.

Flesh, fire, spirit, light: metaphysics unfolds here beneath the veil of pictorial matter, lending this fire-breathing painting, blazing with images, its esoteric character.

The intelligible becomes tangible. Representation rises to the status of subject — it acquires a voice, it teaches.

Scene or stage: the protagonists merge with the setting, form with ground, figure with space.

Everything is porous, crossed through by currents of living force. We find ourselves at once underwater, on land, in the city, in the forest, in the sky, in the cosmic void; the Pleiades dwell

alongside bodies, fullness alongside emptiness, noise alongside silence, sensation alongside idea, the near alongside the far, myth alongside sensation.

This is a seer's painting – a painting nourished by solitude and concentration, which reveals as much as it conceals.

Opulence of color, refinement of composition: is this decorative, or metaphysical? One need only ask the question before Achraf's canvases – or before the works of Persian miniaturists, or the architects of Samarkand – to understand that the distinction does not hold.

When a work succeeds, it becomes threshold, door, bridge, or vessel. It looks back at us even as it welcomes and carries us.

Such is the price at which painting rises from form to myth.

David Rosenberg
Paris, June 2026

Achraf Touloub, born 1986 in Casablanca, Morocco, lives and works in Paris. He graduated from the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris in 2013.

Solo exhibitions and projects include: *By a ciphered fall*, Public Gallery, London (2025); *Traité de Métamorphose*, Parliament, Paris (2024); *'Assabiya*, Plan B, Berlin (2022); *Les Arrivées*, Centre d'art contemporain PASSERELLE, Brest (2021); *Art Club #30 Achraf Touloub*, Villa Medici, Rome (2019); *European Night*, Plan B, Berlin (2019); *CONT'D*, Plan B, Berlin (2016); *standard condition*, Galerie Albert Baronian, Brussels (2015); *Latent*, Plan B, Berlin (2014).

Group exhibitions include: *IT'S NO CRIME TO TICKLE TIME 20 Years of Plan B*, Galeria Plan B, Berlin (2025); *00:00:01*, Public Gallery, London (2025); *Liquid life*, Musée Départemental D'Art Contemporain Château De Rochechouart, Rochechouart (2024); *Le retour*, Musée régional d'art contemporain Occitanie (Mrac), Sérignan (2023); *Es-senze*, Museo di Palazzo Mocenigo, Venice (2022); *Landscape in a Convex Mirror*, Art Encounters Biennial, Timisoara (2021); *Anticorps*, Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2020); *Iulia Nistor and Achraf Touloub. Space (Continuation and End)*, Rezidenta BRD Scena9, Bucharest (2019); *Baltic Triennial 13: Give Up the Ghost*, Tallinn (2018); *The World on Paper*, Deutsche Bank Collection, Berlin (2018); *Night was paper and we were ink*, Barjeel Art Foundation, Sharjah (2018); *Auguries*, Art space Geumcheon, Seoul (2017); *Viva Arte Viva*, 57th Venice Biennale (2017); *100 chefs-d'oeuvre de l'art moderne et contemporain arabe. La collection Barjeel*, Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris (2017); *Mutations-Creations / Imprimer le monde*, Centre Pompidou, Paris (2017); *Dissolve into a red dwarf*, Island, Brussels (2017); *Art Club #12/ Folies d'hiver*, Villa Medici, Rome (2016); *Cher(e)s Ami(e)s. New presentation of works from the collection*, Centre Pompidou, Paris (2016); *Kochi-Muziris Biennale*, Kochi (2016); *Club of Matinee Idolz*, CO2, Turin (2015); *Des hommes, des mondes*, Collège des Bernardins, Paris (2014).