Stories of Order and Disorder.
The Djemma El-Fna Experience
Order or disorder? The seeming chaos of urban Marrakech hides what is in fact an elaborate organisational structure - apparent disorder is layered atop an underlying order.

Once united, these opposing and ostensibly exclusive characteristics bear witness to a type of urbanism that is distinctly Islamic; one in which the principles of the spontaneous city battle with those of the planned city.

From the vacant space between two mosques, Djemaa El-Fna - the pulsing centre of Marrakech - emerged over time, melding chaos and order with a singular finesse that resonates throughout the world, creating an extraordinary expression of these opposing forces.
THE DJEMAA EL-FNA EXPERIENCE
**Stories of Order and Disorder.**
The Djemaa El-Fna Experience

Acts in Marrakech International Biennale 2009

19-23 November 2009

**Artists:** Julien Fišera, Laurent P. Berger

**Patron:** Juan Goytisolo

Curator and Executive Producer: Eleanor O’Keeffe

**Consultant:** Frédéric Scholl

**Coordinator:** Clare Azzougarh

Architectural assistants: Sandra Boehm, Sarah Baldus

**Producers:** Arts in Marrakech, Compagnie Espace Commun, Archipel Ephémère

**Partners:** ESAV, Université Cadi Ayyad, Riad El Fenn

With the support of Culturesfrance and Institut Français de Marrakech
Stories of Order and Disorder. The Djemaa El-Fna Experience is a groundbreaking, innovative and multidisciplinary project to be realised in situ for the city of Marrakech in November 2009. Led by French artists Julien Fisera and Laurent P. Berger the project explores and questions the identity and meaning of the central square of Marrakech: Djemaa El-Fna.

A pillar of Moroccan culture, the Square reflects an ideal of exchange and interaction. The myriad activities that grace its open expanse have earned it the designation of “Masterpiece of Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity” by UNESCO.

Under the patronage of the preeminent Spanish writer and defender of the Square, Juan Goytisolo, this project will take place between 19th and 23rd of November 2009 during the Arts in Marrakech International Biennale.
Stories of Order and Disorder. The Djemaa El-Fna Experience attests to the magnetic attraction of Place Djemaa El-Fna. Running through each of the four elements of the project is a reflection on the nature of, and inestimable value of oral and intangible heritage of humanity.

This takes form through four distinct but complementary elements: a large 36-metre structure installed on the Place itself, a series of performances in Arabic, Berber, French and English by storytellers in a fleet of 40 small taxis, a series of micro-installations in the city itself, and lastly, production and distribution of t-shirts highlighting the immaterial and human aspect of the Place.

We belong to two different artistic fields. Julien is a theatre director and Laurnce is an artist. Theatre is our shared passion. This project in Marrakech arises from a desire to break free from institutional compartmentalisation and to encounter a geographically and culturally distant public on its own terrain.

**The Place had many names throughout its history: As-saha [the square], As Saha al-Kubra [the big square], az-Rabha [the large space]. It current name, Djemaa El-Fna, which means the Square of the Destroyed Mosque only appeared at the turn of the 17th century. The origin and significance of this name has been the subject of many different explanations and theories. A Sudanese historian of the mid-17th century gives a seemingly accurate explanation: “they told me that the Sultan Moulay Ahmad started the construction of the great mosque and had it built according to marvellous plans, thus he gave it the name of the mosque of happiness, but following a series of unfortunate events he could not complete the construction before his death and thus it earned the title of the destroyed mosque.” (La Médina de Marrakech, Quentin Wilbaux)
ELEMENT 1 - INSTALLATION ON PLACE DJEMAA EL-FNA

The disordered and labyrinthine character of the network of streets and “derbs” of the Medina of Marrakech is one of the particular features of the Islamic city. The streets emerge from the remaining space left by private residences; houses then create streets and the branches of the “derb” create an organic and wielding form.

However, Marrakech is a planned city. At its origin, Andalucian astronomers and theologians planned the sacred orientation that is the underlying structure of the city and the layout of separate neighbourhoods. Around a central mosque and the city ramparts, the city was drawn with the city gates being linked by axes that cross in the city centre. The form of the installation of Stories of Order and Disorder will reflect similar principles, opposing apparent chaos with precise structure.

Emitting light both day and night, over 36 metres long, this structure will resemble an urban organic causeway without distinct borders.

Its centre will be composed of a revolving platform made from mirrors, evoking the historic merry-go-rounds that graced the Place and that have long disappeared. It will act as an anchor for spectators. This central element will reflect the image of the spectator onto the Place and back into the crowd, moving and breaking as the platform revolves. Thus the viewer will find himself in a similar position to that of the traditional storyteller around which the “halqa” (or the circle of spectators) forms.

This raw and unexplained installation, without a function or use, will expropriate part of the public space at the same time as creating a new space to be absorbed by the Place. The structure will capture part of the urban fabric and transform it into an artificial landscape, a new territory to be explored.
As night falls, Marrakechis hurry towards the Place to gather and to listen to storytellers and musicians. We will harness this flow of spectators by inviting 40 actors, amateurs and professionals to become storytellers. They will tell their stories in “petits taxis”, small 4-person taxis, in Arabic, English, French and Berber.

If literature is an, “invitation to a voyage” as Baudelaire suggested, this taxi journey involves both geographic and cultural displacement. In each of the taxis a storyteller will lead the traveller-clients along the paths of 1001 Nights and Moroccan stories recounted by storytellers on the Place. It provides the public with an opportunity, in the words of Juan Goytisolo, “to apprehend the universe” through the images of Sherezade and Aladdin.

Oral Arabic literature is central to this project. In the intimate space of the taxi a storyteller will invite the passenger to discover the rapidly vanishing art of storytelling. Giving a voice to the storytellers (professional actors, amateurs, storytellers from the Place, or a surprise guest), it is through the Marrakechis themselves that this timeless and disappearing art will be highlighted.
Element 3 - Potential

Stories of Order and Disorder is an opportunity to gain perspective on the notion of oral and immaterial heritage. The term immaterial heritage leads us to question the relationship between the physical location of heritage and its abstract nature. The UNESCO designation reminds us that the Place is an ephemeral space where cultural exchange and knowledge transmission can take place. In other words, the project provides us with an opportunity to question: do other Djemaa El-Fnas exist in Marrakech?

We have identified different locations in Marrakech that one could term “potential Djemaa El-Fnas” where people gather and knowledge and learning can be exchanged between generations randomly and freely. Far from calling into question the obvious uniqueness of the Place, we seek to underline its inherently human composites. This element emphasises that the original Place is simply a spontaneous, generous and universal meeting point.

We will draw up maps of the city, identifying these sites and inviting the public to visit them and appreciate the wealth of human exchange that takes place on them.
Finally, the fourth element of the project brings the experience of Djemaa El-Fna closer. Focusing on immateriality, we can take the experience of the Place out of its geographical context. What is of value in the Place is what has been exchanged and transmitted.

The conclusion of this project for us is that each of us carries within him or herself what takes place on Djemaa El-Fna. We are all potential transmitters of knowledge, and what we have to exchange is our cultural genome. The individuality of each is the bedding ground for the universal and this potent idea involves us all in the task of disseminating and sharing culture.

In order to render this idea as clear as possible, we will print t-shirts in Arabic and other languages, with the inscription “I am Djemaa El-Fna”. These garments will be distributed for free throughout the city, donated to its inhabitants.
Julien Fišera

Julien Fišera was born in 1978 in Portsmouth, England, of French and British nationality. Following his studies of history of art, literature and drama at the Sorbonne, Paris, as well as in London and Austin, Texas, he specialised in theatre direction and dramaturgy.

Since 2002 he has worked with a number of theatre directors, including: Julie Bérès, Robert Cantarella, Hubert Colas, Frédéric Fisbach, Joel Jouanneau, Jean-Marie Patte. In 2005, he formed the Espace Commun theatre company in Paris and in 2008 he wrote B.MANIA, his first play.

As a theatre director, Julien focuses on contemporary writing, directing: Sammy Must Go by Ahmed Madani; No More School by Emmanuel Darley, at Théâtre du Rond-Point, Paris and The City by Evgueni Gischakovets, Théâtre de la Cité Internationale, in 2002. For the 2004 Frictions Festival, he directed Titus Tactare by Albert Ostermaier, the first French-language production of a work by this author. In July 2005, he directed Anne-Louze, based on the play by Philippe Manya, in Mexico City. In May 2006, he presented Martin Crimp’s Face to the Wall trilogy. In September 2008, the company presented Syndromes d’un autre temps, a project comprised of the play November 20 by Lars Nocén and The New World Order and A Slight Ache by Harold Pinter. In November 2008, This is a Chair by Caryl Churchill at the Théâtre National de la Colline. In March 2009 he was invited to take part in MAKE, a program for young international directors in Dublin.

In 2010 he will be in residency at CENTQUATRE, Paris, where he will adapt and direct Romeo & Juliet. He will also collaborate on Storytellers, shown at RedCat in Los Angeles.

Julien has also collaborated on productions at the Comédie-Française, the Conservatoire d’Art Dramatique and the Avignon Festival.

Laurent P. Berger

Laurent P. Berger is an artist who graduated from the École National Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs de Paris in 1998. He has lived in Rome and New York and currently lives in Paris.

Taking work techniques particularly from set and film design, he explores relationships between the public, time and space. By melding genres, his work proposes various systems of representation of perception and reinvents the rules of exhibition and presentation each time, through installations, sculptures, architecture, performance, video, photography, books and graphics.

In 1999, he received a grant through Académie de France in Rome to work and reside at the Villa Medici during one year. In 2006, he participated in the Whitney Biennale in New York (Day Zac Night). His work has been exhibited internationally including: at the Villa Medici in Rome (Jardin, 2000), at the Römeucopas Festival (2000), at the Act and Idea Foundation in New York (Iruancy, 2001), at the Watermill Center in New York, in Space in Progress/TBA2I in Vienna (Puppets and Heavenly Creatures, 2005), at the Museo Alejandro Otero in Caracas (Pulsar, 2006), and at the Museo de Arte Carillo Gil in Mexico (Bistoc, 2006).

In 2007, he participated in the Rock’n’Roll Vol. I exhibition at the Norkopings Konstmuseum (Sweden) and at the Soerlandet Act Museum (Kristiansand, Norway). He also participated in the exhibition entitled Un teatre sense teatre at MACBA (Barcelona) and then at the Museu Becadzo (Lisbon). He has also taken part in the collective project Don’t Trust Anyone over 30 with Dan Graham, Tony Duilsce, Rodney Graham, and Japanther at Art Basel - Miami Beach 2004, which then appeared at the Weiner Festwochen in Vienna, at the Deutsche Staatsoper in Berlin and in 2008, at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis.

In 2009, his work Hidden Land was awarded support by the Department of Cultural Affairs of the Ile de France.

In parallel, he works in theatre, opera and dance creating sets and lighting for projects in Europe, the US and in Asia. He has worked on productions in Paris, at the Théâtre de la Ville, Théâtre du Châtelet, Théâtre National de la Colline, Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier - Comédie Française, Théâtre du Rond-Point, at the Grande Halle du Parc de la Villette. He has also worked at the Festival d’Avignon, in the US at Perseverance Theater (Juneau, Alaska), in Germany at Deutsches Nationaltheater (Weimar), at Ruhr Festspiele (Recklinghausen), at Festspielhaus (Baden-Baden), in Portugal at the Almada Festival, in Belgium at the Théâtre de la Monnaie (Brussels), in the UK at the Royal Opera House Covent Garden (London) and in Japan for the 2005 Universal Exhibition (Nagoya). In 1998, he was a member of the European Academy of Music at the Festival International d’Art Lyrique in Aix-en-Provence. In 1999, he won an award to work with Robert Wilson at the Watermill Center in New York. They have since collaborated on a number of projects. In 2003 and then in 2008 he met the directors Robert Cantarella, Julien Fišera and Frédéric Fisbach with whom he continues to work.

Since 2006, he set up an architectural practice with his brother, Cyrille Berger under the name Berger&Berger. In 2008, they were awarded the NAJAP (young architects award) by the Ministry of Culture. In residence at CENTQUATRE since 2007, they have been working on a series of pavilions entitled: Une Ile paradisiaque est un spectacle artificiel. In 2008, they took part in the inauguration of CENTQUATRE and presented a series of talks: The Prophecy. In 2009, they participated in an urbanism project City Visions Europe organised by the Beclage Institute (Rotterdam) and Arc en Rêve (Bordeaux), and in the closed competition for the building of a mobile museum by the Pompidou Centre (Paris). In 2010, with architect Thomas Raynaud, they will deliver the extension of the Centre International d’art et du Paysage de l’Ile de Vassivière (Limousin).

In 2009, his work Jardin was awarded support by the Department of Cultural Affairs of the Ile de France.

In 2010 he will be in residency at CENTQUATRE, Paris, where he will adapt and direct Romeo & Juliet. He will also collaborate on Storytellers, shown at RedCat in Los Angeles.

Julien has also collaborated on productions at the Comédie-Française, the Conservatoire d’Art Dramatique and the Avignon Festival.