

MECAM Traveling Academy

Mysticism and the City: Temporality, Spatiality, Culture, and Society

Convened by Cyrine Kortas and organized by Diana Abbani

31 March – 2 April 2026 | University of Gabès (Higher Institute of Languages), Ali Jamal Street-Jara, Tunisia

Tuesday, 31 March 2026

15:30-16:00	<p>Welcome and Opening Remarks, University of Gabès (Higher Institute of Languages), Tunisia</p> <p>Mehrez Romdhan (Rector, University of Gabès)</p> <p>Lassaad Heni (Director, ISLG)</p> <p>Emna Beltaïef (Director, MECAM /Vice President, University of Tunis)</p> <p>Cyrine Kortas (MECAM long-term fellow/University of Gabès)</p> <p>Diana Abbani (MECAM/Forum Transregionale Studien)</p>
16:00-17:00	<p>Keynote A Tapestry of Sufi Threads, Time, Space, and Self, to Revive the Maghreb City</p> <p>Chair: <i>Yassine Najjar</i> (University of Gabès)</p> <p>Cyrine Kortas (MECAM long-term fellow/University of Gabès)</p>
17:00- 20:00	Excursion and Dinner

Wednesday, 01 April 2026

9:00-11:00 (Parallel sessions)	<p>Working group 1 Vision, Liminality, and Cinematic Space (Workshop Format)</p> <p>Chair: <i>Miriam Hanses</i> (MECAM/Forum Tranregionale Studien)</p> <p>Friederike Pannewick (Philipps-Universität Marburg) – Magical Realism as artistic mode of liminality, transgression and imaginative agency</p> <p>Oraib Toukan (EUME fellow) – On Mustafa Akkad’s Message.</p>	<p>Working group 2 Framing Sufism: State Power, Heritage, and Religious Governance</p> <p>Chair: <i>Emna Beltaïef</i> (Director, MECAM /Vice President University of Tunis)</p> <p>Isabelle Werenfels (SWP) – Post-independence Framings of Sufis in the Maghreb: Dynamic, Contradictory, and Instrumentalizing</p> <p>Souad Matoussi (University of Sousse) – Les danses mystiques en Tunisie, entre espace sacré, espace privé ou public et espace scénique</p> <p>Rym Lajmi (University of La Manouba) – Saïda Manoubia entre chant de louange et mystique de la <i>nağra</i></p>
11:00-11:15	<i>Coffee Break</i>	

11.15-12.15	Listening Session Listening Otherwise Alia Mossallam (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin) – Listening in solidarity and with the heart. Towards a mystical-methodology of hearing North African prisoners of war in the Lautarchiv	
12:15-13:15	<i>Lunch Break</i>	
13:15-14:15 (Parallel sessions)	Working Group 3 Embodied Practices of Mysticism: Art, Ritual, and Sacred Movement Chair: <i>Julius Dihstelhoff</i> (MECAM director) Chiraz Mosbah (University of Manouba) – L’art contemporain au service de la réactivation des espaces mystiques de Sousse Çiçek Ilengiz (Forum Transregionale Studien) – The Spatial Infrastructure of the Annual Love Pilgrimage for Mevlana Celaleddin Rumi in Contemporary Turkey	Working Group 4 Text, Imagination, and Urban Transcendence Chair: <i>Rashof Salih</i> (MECAM/ Forum Transregionale Studien) Susan Abraham (EUME fellow) – Matters of the Heart: Morisco Ethics and Diasporic Disposition in Early Modern Tunis Yassine Najjar (University of Gabès) – Postmodern Mysticism and the City: Absence and Excess in Cormac McCarthy’s and Don DeLillo’s Fiction.
14:15-14:30	<i>Coffee Break</i>	
14:30-15:30	Art Session Narrating the City: Calligraphy, Fiction, and Urban Memory Chair: <i>Cyrine Kortas</i> (MECAM Fellow/ University of Gabès) Forat al-Hatab (Artist) – Where Did The Octopus Go? Where Did The Crab Come From? Tales and elements from Kerkennah Islands and Gabes Zeineb Mchirgui (Artist) – Spiritual Memory in Calligraphy (in Arabic)	
15:30-18-30	Excursion	

Thursday, 02 April 2026

9.30-10.30	Panel 1 Mysticism in Translation: Colonial Frames and Literary Reimagining Chair: <i>Diana Abbani</i> (MECAM/ Forum Transregionale Studien) نجاة الطاهر قرفال (جامعة قابس) – تمثلات الاستعراب البلجيكي للتصوّف عند ابن تيمية: يحيى ميشو مثالا هيكل الحزقي (كاتب) – أجواد المدينة وأوغادها: عن البانديّة كأنصاف صالحين في مدينة مأزومة
10:30-10:45	<i>Coffee Break</i>
10:45-11:45	Closing conversation Stambeli’s Future: Tradition, Art and Spirituality Vanessa Barisch (Journalist) in conversation with Mariem Mtiraoui (Journalist) and Ahmed Guerfel (Artist)
11:45-12:00	Closing Remarks