

# Shifting Identities

(Swiss) Art Now







\* 1974, El Khnansa, MA  
Lives and works in Paris and  
Martigny

Solo exhibitions

2007 *Il m'a fallu tant de chemins pour parvenir jusqu'à toi*, Magasin – Centre National d'Art Contemporain, Grenoble  
Karma International, Zurich  
*Dérives*, Interface, Dijon  
2006 *promesse*, Ecole des Beaux-Arts de Valence  
2005 *Désert*, Show Room, Paris  
2004 *Call Box*, La Box, Bourges

Group exhibitions

2008 *Manifesta 7*, Trentino, South Tyrol  
*Strategies of Learning*, National Museum of contemporary art, Bucharest  
2007 *Global Feminisms*, Brooklyn Museum, New York

Bibliography

2007 *Heterotopia*, Biennial Thessaloniki.  
*Global Feminism*, Brooklyn Museum, New York.  
2006 *La Force de l'art*, Guide of the exhibition Beaux Art Magazine, May 2006.  
*Wherever we go*, Spazio Oberdan, Milan.  
*Strategies of learning*, Periferic 7.  
"Latifa Echakhch," *Dauphiné libéré*, 20.4.2006.

Excerpt from: Thomas Lax, "Latifa Echakhch."

"Unlike a sketch that may be executed on a different scale from the final picture one draws, or that may lack all the details of the picture but still contain the imagination of the whole, the fragment marks the impossibility of such an imagination. Instead, fragments allude to a particular way of inhabiting the world..."

(Veena Das, *Life and Words: Violence and the Descent into the Ordinary*)

In her multimedia installation and video works, Latifa Echakhch descends into the language and sounds of everyday objects to build a portal of time-in-suspension. Moving deftly between juridical documents, food products, and the other necessary accoutrements for a foreigner in France, the artist creates—and critiques—from the in-between spaces of power. "She deconstructs [the objects she chooses] by cutting them up, by breaking them, by altering them in order to point out their intrinsic meaning and their limits. The materials are chosen for their banality and their accessibility. Once distorted, these everyday objects scare

and challenge: the broken glass cuts, the rug impresses, the envelope frightens..." In so doing, Echakhch takes up a semiotic tradition that has its roots in Jacques Derrida's theories of deconstruction, as she simultaneously situates herself within both a Minimalist and Conceptual art history that includes such artists as Carl André, Richard Serra and Lawrence Weiner. The result is a pedagogical approach to postcolonial discourse that is as site-specific as it is rigorous.

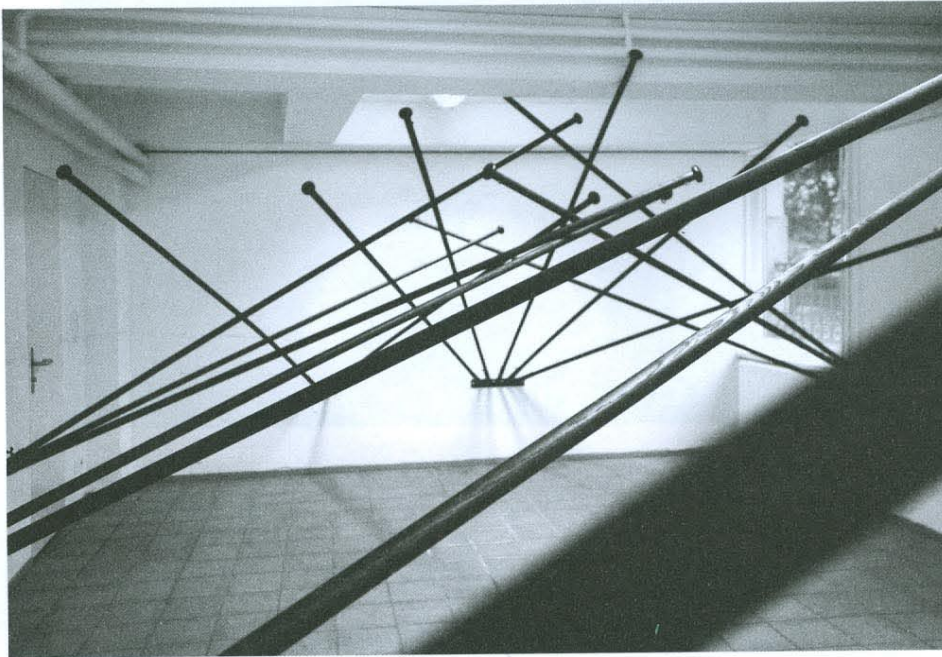
In *Espace à remplir par l'étranger* (2006), Echakhch appropriates this phrase (which translates as *Space to be filled in by the foreigner*) and



inscribes it 2 cm deep into the walls of the exhibition space. This instructional phrase is culled from the pages of legal documents that non-citizens must fill out when requesting visas. Relocating this demand from the police precinct to the gallery wall resignifies, nullifies and expands its functionality: the new space built directly into the room's structure enlarges the stranger's imagined domain of action, indelibly marking the Other's presence in an unwelcoming nation. [...]

In *Erratum* (2008), Moroccan tea glasses lie broken at the foot of the white gallery wall. The artist references Richard Serra's abstract, process-based *Splash* pieces from the 1960s and 70s, made in situ by hurling molten lead at the edges between wall and floor. Like Serra, Echakhch is a sculptor concerned with the building of walls and structures: the infrastructure of containment. Deploying close attention to place and the labor of violence, she has turned decorative objects into shards of glass by throwing them at these points of juncture. The former symbols of Oriental order lie in pieces, their geometric symmetry and floral decorations unusable and disorganized.

*And if we listen ...* Surely the resounding noise and title of these broken glasses index Marcel Duchamp's *Erratum Musical* (1913) in which he played with the dialectical relationship between sight and sound. [...] In *La Marseillaise pour orgue de Barbarie* (2005), Echakhch becomes a practitioner of this methodology of critical hybridity. Her sculpture of perforated cardboard inertly moving through an inactive shredder translates into English as both *The Marseillaise for the barrel organ* and as *The Marseillaise for a Barbarous organ*. By playing with a *double entendre* that reflects the quotidian nature of colonialism's linguistic residue, the artist reveals a reality of the postcolonial condition. [...] Like *Erratum*, the sharp addendum to the discursive errors of colonization, the perceptual cross-overs between eye and ear in *La Marseillaise* reflect a critique of aesthetics itself. The body has been dislocated by power; physiognomy has been reconfigured by dispossession.

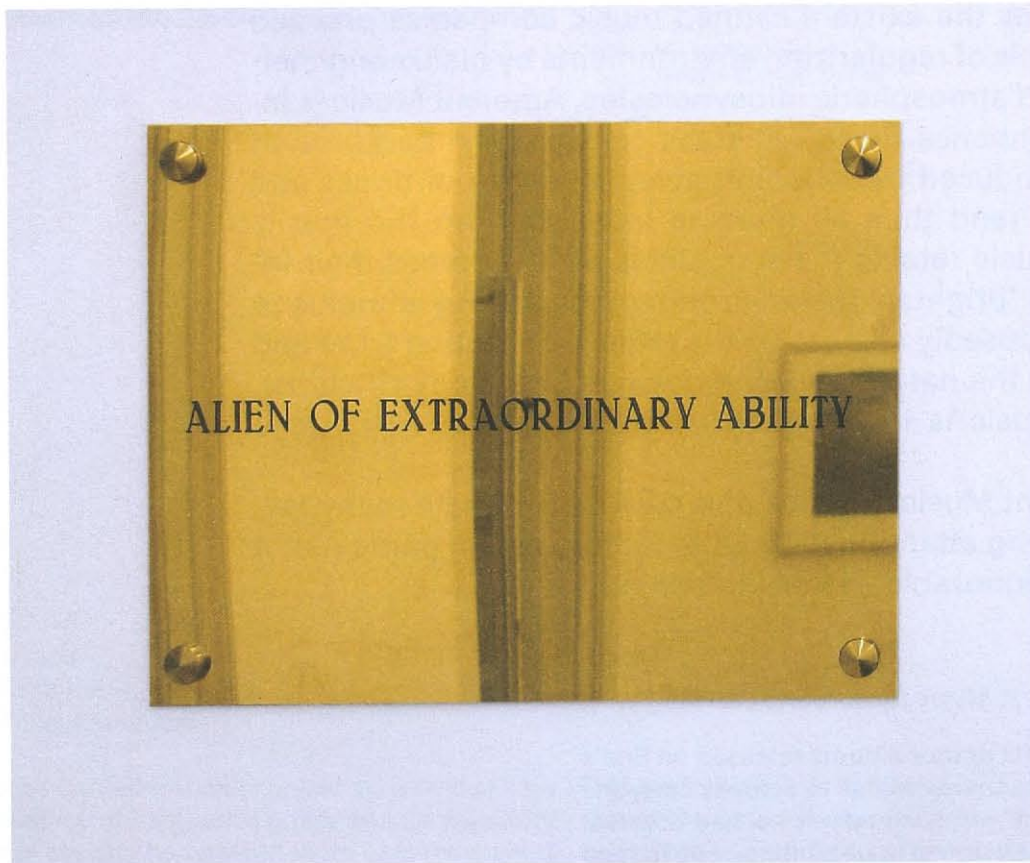


Latifa Echakhch, *Fantasia (empty flags)*, 2007  
Wall installation, metal, synthetic and wood, dimensions variable  
Installation view Karma International, Zurich





Latifa Echakhch, *Frames*, 2006  
Floor installation of the border of carpets,  
dimensions and number variable



Latifa Echakhch, *0-1 Visa (Alien of extraordinary ability)*, 2005  
Engraved brass plate, 21.59 x 27.94 cm