

Latifa Echakhch “Screen Shot” at Museum Haus Konstruktiv, Zürich / MOUSSE CONTEMPORARY ART MAGAZINE

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Haus Konstruktiv and Zurich Insurance Group are delighted to honor this year’s winner of the “Zurich Art Prize”, Latifa Echakhch (b. 1974 in El Khnansa, Morocco). In 2015, this award, which was established in close cooperation with Zurich Insurance Group, is presented for the eighth time. The prize money of CHF 80,000 is put to use in a solo exhibition, specially conceived for the museum.

Latifa Echakhch, who grew up in France and now lives in Fully, Switzerland, attracted the attention of the international artworld with, among other things, her work *Fantasia* at the 2011 Venice Biennale: this comprised a series of tilted white flagpoles that lined the path to Padiglione Centrale.

Latifa Echakhch's works are characterized by the use of simple, but always impressive, gestures and materials. In a focused, accurate manner, this artist turns her attention to issues regarding individual and cultural identity, to personal and collective histories, and to sociopolitical changes that pose new challenges for our society. Recently, affected by the current migration and humanitarian dramas, she presented an installation at a Protocinema space in Istanbul, with two video works that thematize the sea as a bearer of hope. The images of dramas involving refugees also played a major role in the conception of her exhibition at Museum Haus Konstruktiv: In "Screen Shot" on the 2nd floor, folding screens based on the artist's height and arranged like a labyrinth are draped with clothes that have been immersed in ink. These coverings with nobody inside them are reminiscent of wet clothing that has been lost on the run. They leave behind thin rivulets of dark color on the folding screens.

Flowing trails of ink already appeared in Echakhch's 2007 work *For Each Stencil a Revolution*, the title of which refers back to a Yasser Arafat quote about the revolutionarily eventful late 1960s. Back then, blue carbon paper was often used for disseminating political proclamations; Echakhch had affixed such paper to the wall and treated it with a solution that caused the ink within it to run out, much like many a political idea that trickles away like ink and fades into oblivion.

Such ways of bridging gaps define Echakhch's works. With the motifs used in *Les Géants*, another new work for the exhibition at Museum Haus Konstruktiv, the artist addresses the "Géants" and "Gigantes" that appear in Romanic folk traditions. These figures, up to four meters tall, mostly symbolizing king and queen or other representative characters, are carried through the town in processions and festive parades. Echakhch removes them from their original context, and positions two female and three male disrobed figures in the museum's entrance hall. Giant-sized and with a skin color that cannot be definitively identified, they personify the foreign per se, the big Other. Right in the middle, *La dépossession* (2014) hangs from the ceiling as if it has come crashing down, a stage backcloth painted with an azure-blue cloudy sky. Both works on the 1st floor, as well as the installation on the 2nd floor, create the impression of scenery hurriedly left behind by unknown protagonists and raise questions, including questions about the cause of this element of absence.