

Latifa Echakhch
Press Selection

ArtReview



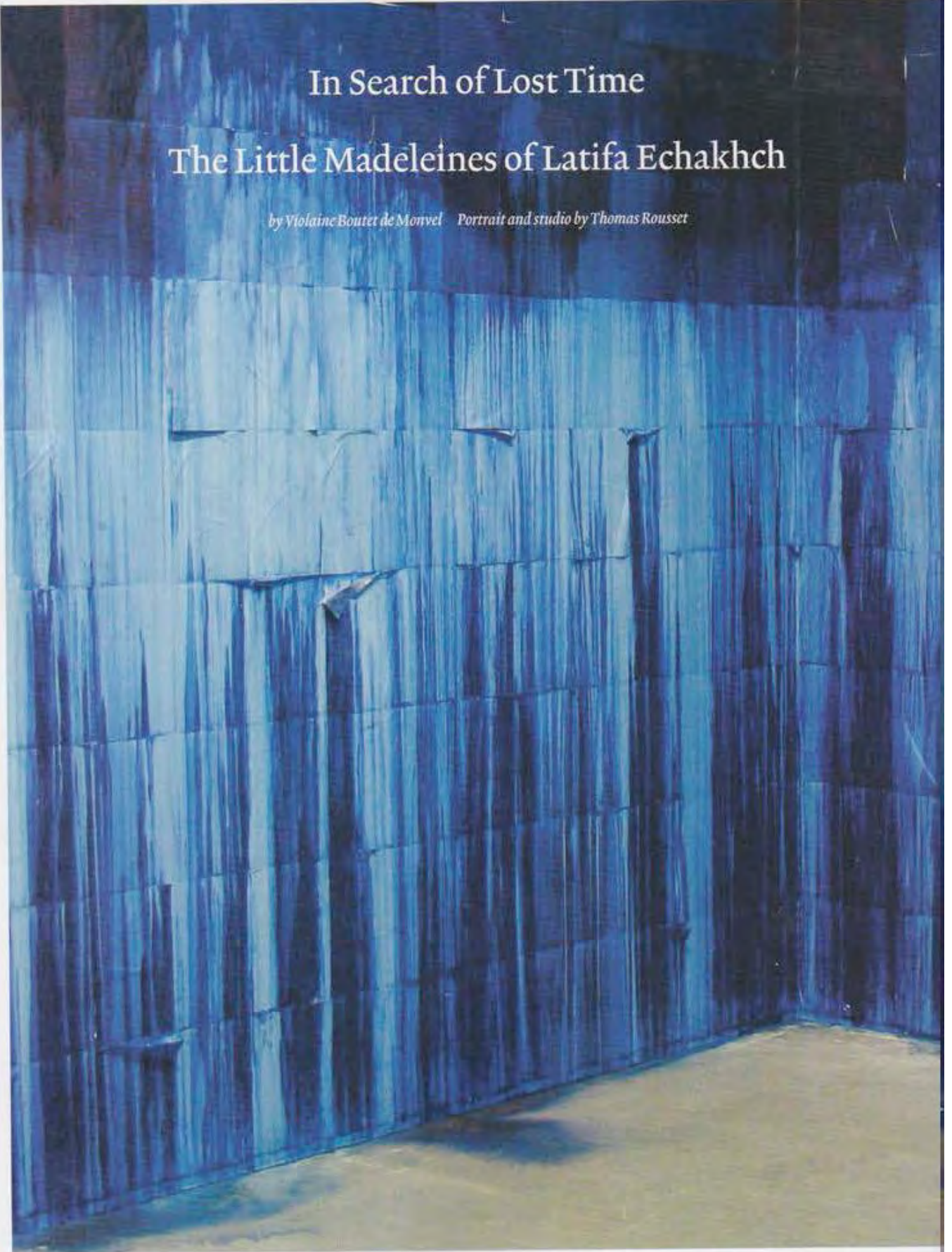
Latifa Echakhch

Richard Tuttle Sabelo Mlangeni Theo Eshetu

In Search of Lost Time

The Little Madeleines of Latifa Echakhch

by Violaine Boutet de Monvel - Portrait and studio by Thomas Rousset







above *La Dépossession*, 2014 (installation view, Galerie Kamel Mennour, Paris, 2014), theatre canvas, paint, steel tube and straps, variable dimensions. Photo: Fabrice Seixas

preceding pages, left *For Each Stencil a Revolution*, 2007 (installation view, Tate Modern, London, 2009), A4 carbon paper, glue, methylated alcohol, dimensions variable. Photo: the artist

right Latifa Echakhch photographed in her studio, Martigny, Switzerland, September 2014

“Suddenly I, Latifa Echakhch, first-generation immigrant, so to speak, since I arrived so young in France, was nominated for the Prix Marcel Duchamp, rewarded and invited to exhibit in one of the most important cultural institutions, the Centre Pompidou. Though in the end it is the ultimate recognition from the French art scene, the experience was really disturbing for me, because it reminded me of what I hated within sports – the competition – applied to the arts. Also I couldn’t ignore that somewhere in this process there was this little part of me that was looked at as alien. With another name, I wouldn’t feel the same pressure and I wouldn’t carry the same weight.”

Only the fourth woman to win the Prix Marcel Duchamp, France’s most prestigious award for contemporary art, since its creation in 2000, Latifa Echakhch was born in El Khnansa, Morocco, with a very humble background, about which she has always remained very reserved. She was only three years old when her parents moved to France and settled in Aix-les-Bains on the shores of Lake Bourget. A Romantic landscape par excellence, this is where, in 1816, Alphonse de Lamartine met his muse Julie Charles, who passed a year later, and which became the scenery of his famous 1820 poem *Le Lac*, in remembrance of their love and *flâneries*:

Thus ever drawn toward far shores uncharted,
 Into eternal darkness borne away,
 May we not ever on Time’s sea, unthwarted,
 Cast anchor for a day?
 (translated by Wilfrid Thorley)

The Alpine region has had a deep impact in shaping the sensibility and aesthetics of Echakhch, who, after having been to Paris and Stockholm for several years, has now returned ‘home’: she currently lives in Martigny in the Swiss Alps. She describes herself as a Romantic at heart, and her works, halfway between Conceptualism and Surrealism, and often taking the form of installations and compositions of found objects, might indeed be abstracted as Romantic readymades, for they emphasise imagination, emotion and introspection.

When presented with the award in October 2013 and in consultation with Bernard Blistène, who was just appointed director of Centre Pompidou, Echakhch faced two options for her upcoming exhibition at the institution’s Espace 315. The first would have been the easy one: creating a single spectacular installation. But instead she opted for something more difficult and courageous, confronting herself with her own history and childhood memories – what she describes, when we discuss her upcoming exhibition, as her “very poor cultural heritage” – and in doing so, perhaps she somehow sets the record straight in terms of the predictable clichés surrounding her ‘origins’. After all, she confesses, she never owned anything that could be characterised in cultural terms as being ‘oriental’ and speaks Arabic like a toddler, though she wishes to master it one day through writing poetry.

For us to travel back in time with her, Echakhch has conceived her show like a landscape, which will unfold as visitors stroll within the vast, rectangular 315sqm exhibition space. Upon entering, the first view will be of the reverse side of a theatrical set: the uneven black

versos and frameworks of 100 very thin wooden cutouts representing clouds and suspended from the ceiling on almost invisible threads all the way to the floor that they will touch (in other words, the viewers will come in from behind the scene). Each ‘cloud’ is approximately one metre high, though all differ in shape and size, and will be arranged in small herds of five across the length of the room, which will force visitors to slalom between them and, intentionally or not, make the airy props waver slightly. The parquet, meanwhile, will be thoroughly polished in order to reflect the entire decor: “I wanted to give the impression of a quiet lake mirroring the surrounding nature,” Echakhch says.

Reaching the far end of the room and finally being able to turn around and see the sculptures from the front, their other side painted in light blue, grey and white, viewers will discover, previously hidden

by the clouds and placed on the floor, about 15 small, seemingly trivial objects that are just like some the artist remembers having owned in her youth and which hold a personal significance to her. Bought, gleaned or fabricated, they include, for example, a preschool marionette, a collection of rocks and another of Bach records, the *Que Sais-je?* series of educational books, a Vallauris ceramic fish lamp, a pétanque set and a perfume bottle of *L’Air du Temps* by Nina Ricci. Each of these objects will have been plunged into brilliant black ink, giving the impression that they might have just about survived a muddy tide in a basement, a way for her to “reactivate, unify and transcend the memories they contain” – little madeleines in search of lost time and, sometimes, a metaphorical springboard for a greater cultural remembrance than her own history.

Take *L’Air du Temps*, for instance, which is also the title of the exhibition (as well as a nod to Duchamp’s 1919 readymade *Air de Paris*): the scent was created in 1948, during the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, and represents for Echakhch both a fresh breath after the horror of the events of recent history and a way to soothe the pain they left behind, like a balm. She filled the bottle with black ink and exhibited it for the first time this summer, in the Cabinet of Curiosities at the Cathedral Museum in Salzburg. When doing so, she told me that she couldn’t help but think about Dvir Intrator, her gallerist in Tel Aviv, whose family, originally from Austria, suffered deportations and spoliations: “I know that Dvir would have a hard time going to Austria, so this perfume also evokes to me this sentiment, the refusal to return to one’s native country,” she recalls.

This anecdote brings me to the most essential trait of Echakhch’s character: her raw, overwhelming, political sensibility, which engages and enlightens her entire practice. While I was interviewing her in August, she told me about the time she was starting as a postgraduate at the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux Arts in Lyons, between 2001 and 2002, during the height of the Second Intifada in the West Bank and Gaza: “It was really hard for me, as it is again since last July. I don’t know how I can allow myself to make art, only art, while there are such huge political impasses,” she says. As long as she can remember, the artist has always aspired to be politically involved, even during

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L'Air du Temps, 2014 (installation view, Cabinet of Curiosities, Cathedral Museum of Salzburg). Photo: Josef Kral

her schooltime career in sports, between the ages of fourteen and seventeen, when Jesse Owens was a role model, “because he was even more than an African-American athlete, he ran and won at the 1936 Berlin Olympics, he had a real political impact”. Later, as a freshman at the *École Supérieure d’Art* in Grenoble, she joined the *Mouvement des Jeunes Communistes de France (MJCF)*, a political youth organisation close to the French communist party, only to realise subsequently that it wasn’t open enough for her really to commit to it.

Instead her true moment of discovery came in 1996, when Philippe Parreno, her professor in Grenoble, suggested that she investigate the work of the Cuban-born American artist Felix Gonzalez-Torres, whose posthumous exhibition *Girlfriend in a Coma* had been held at the *Musée d’Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris* that year. Recalling that moment, Echakhch states that “his balance between the political and the sensorial spoke to me so much that I felt everything was possible. I had found my way.” In these various respects, it doesn’t strike one as a surprise that the installation Echakhch has exhibited most often is titled *For Each Stencil a Revolution* (2007), after a quote from Yasser Arafat. Having been shown at the *Tate Modern (Speakers’ Corner, 2007)*, *Art Basel (Art Unlimited, 2010)* and more recently the *Hammer Museum (Hammer Projects, 2013)* and the *Palazzo Grassi (L’Illusion des Lumières, 2014)*, the work consists in covering the walls of an entire exhibition room with blue carbon paper. An aggressive solvent is then sprayed all over it, causing the colour to deliquesce onto the ground as if erasing all the hopes and rebellions of the protesters who made the stencil their means of communication, at least before its relative obsolescence in the digital era.

Other examples of how Echakhch infuses her political sensibility into her art include *Saïd’s Tea* (2010), a gutter installed inside an exhibition space and able to collect rainwater in a teapot, which was first shown at *Dvir Gallery*. The piece reproduces a gesture of Saïd, the artist’s uncle, which has always fascinated her. Because of limited access to water supply in *Khouribga, Morocco*, he has a habit of putting a teapot under the gutter of his house to (hopefully) fill it with rain and then prepare his ‘special tea’. Installing this in *Tel Aviv* was for Echakhch an obvious reference to the ‘War over Water’, the battle between *Israel* and its Arab neighbours from 1964 to 1967 over control of the *Jordan River* and its sources. A year later, during a visit to *Beirut*, the artist noticed how red the earth was over there, which reminded her of an episode of *What Have We Learned, Charlie Brown?*, based on *John McCrae’s* poem ‘*In Flanders Fields*’ (1915). According to a legend mentioned in the cartoon, poppies were originally white, but were turned red by the blood spilled in the *First World War*. As an echo of this metaphor and in respect of the 2006 *Lebanon War*, the artist sculpted *Charlie Brown’s Poppies* (2011), fragile flowers in clay mixed with the red earth of *Beirut*, which was first exhibited at the *Beirut Art Center (The Beirut Experience, 2011)*. It was also in *Beirut* that she had the idea for *Fantôme (Jasmin)* (2012): a ‘ghost’ with a white shirt suspended from a floor-standing hanger with a necklace of *jasmine flowers* as an allusion to *Tunisia’s Jasmine Revolution*, in 2010–11, the first of the *Arab Spring*. She mounted it in *Tkaf* at *Galerie Kamel Mennour* in 2012, and again this year at *Palazzo Grassi*. If not screaming into the wind, at least figuratively whispering, on behalf of all the voices left unheard: yes, *Latifa Echakhch’s Romantic art* can stir up and inspire our political consciousness. ar



Charlie Brown’s Poppies, 2011 (installation view, Beirut Art Center, 2011), red soil and clay from Beirut, dimensions variable. Photo: Agop Kanledjian
all works Courtesy the artist and Galerie Kamel Mennour, Paris

kaufmann repetto

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ANGER**
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PORTFOLIO



LATIFA ECHAKHCH

**READY-MADE
ROMANTIQUES**



Latifa Echakhch, *A chaque stencil une révolution*, 2007, papier carbone A4, colle et alcool à brûler, dimensions variables. Vue de l'installation *Art Unlimited*, Kamel Mennour, Art Basel, 2010.

Propos recueillis par **Timothée Chaillou**

EN LICE POUR L'ÉDITION 2013 DU PRIX MARCEL DUCHAMP DÉCERNÉ DURANT LA FIAC, LATIFA ECHAKHCH (NÉE EN 1974 AU MAROC) PROPOSE UNE ŒUVRE PROTÉIFORME QUI CONVOQUE SIMULTANÉMENT VÉCU PERSONNEL, HISTOIRE COLLECTIVE ET NOTIONS CULTURELLES ET GÉOGRAPHIQUES, AUTANT DE RÉFÉRENCES CHARGÉES ÉMOTIONNELLEMENT, QU'ELLE TRADUIT DANS UN LANGAGE RARÉFIÉ, QUASI-MINIMAL. ARRÊTS SUR IMAGE, ENTRE POÉTIQUE ET POLITIQUE.



Latifa Echakhch, *Tkof*, 2011 (détail), installation in situ, briques et pigments, dimensions variables, vue de l'exposition, Kamel Mennour, Paris, 2012.



EREDOS FABRICE SEIXAS/COURTESY THE ARTIST AND KAMEL MENNOUR, PARIS.

Latifa Echakhch, *Tambour 102*, 2012, encre indienne noire sur toile,
173 cm de diamètre, vue de l'exposition "Tkaf", Kamel Mennour, Paris, 2012.

Latifa Echakhch,
Mer d'encre, 2012,
installation au sol,
24 chapeaux melon, résine
et encre, dimensions
variables, vue de
l'exposition "Laps",
Musée d'Art contemporain
de Lyon, 2013.

À VOIR

Exposition Prix Marcel Duchamp 2013,
Fiac, Grand Palais, Paris 8,
du 24 au 27 octobre, annonce du lauréat :
le 26 octobre.

L'OFFICIEL ART : A la Renaissance, le cercle renvoyait à l'idée de perfection. Le tondo, peinture ronde, prenait place au plafond, près des cieux, représentant le plus souvent des scènes tirées des *Évangiles*. Vos *Tambours* (2012), ces tondi de toile brute maculés de tâches d'encre noire en leur centre, sont-ils des cibles ou plutôt des "gouffres et sombres abysses / révélant des jardins de délices" (Kenneth White) ?

LATIFA ECHAKHCH : Imaginez un dégât des eaux, un plafond qui fuirait de façon préméditée. Le protocole de fabrication est toujours identique et très simple : je fais couler de l'encre de la hauteur la plus élevée possible sur une toile ronde parfaitement tendue. Ces tondis sont tels des fragments d'une histoire et, à l'instar des *Évangiles*, on sait déjà que cela finira mal.

Vos œuvres sont-elles des lettres d'amour ?
Toujours !

Vous dites être profondément attachée à l'idée de nature morte. "Les natures mortes sont des vanités. Ce sont des choses futiles, vides, laissées, périssables ; qui vont disparaître", rappelle Alix dans *Les Photos d'Alix* de Jean Eustache. Vos

Chaque grand moment de remise en question dans mon travail correspond à un événement marquant, comme la 2^e intifada, la guerre d'Irak en 2003 ou la votation anti-minaret en Suisse.

Quelle poésie aimez-vous lire ? Celle de Verlaine, de Celan, de Pasolini ?

J'aime ces trois auteurs pour des raisons très différentes. J'ai grandi au bord du lac d'Alphonse de Lamartine, un paysage romantique par excellence. Je me suis ensuite installée à Paris après la publication de la *Revue de Littérature générale*. C'était sublime ! Je me souviens de tension avec les amateurs de la revue *Perpendiculaire* lorsque nous assistions aux lectures dans les cafés. C'était une époque riche d'engagement. Après la mort du poète Christophe Tarkos, le climat s'est un peu assagi. J'aime voir comment la poésie survit ou résiste face à des impasses humaines, des *dead-ends* – décadence, génocide ou révolution.

Que pensez-vous de ce que disait Orwell : "Le langage poétique est destiné à rendre vraisemblables les mensonges, respectables les meurtres et à donner l'apparence de la solidité de ce qui n'est que du vent" ?

violent. Que voir dans ces "dépositions" ?

Votre question me rappelle la première fois où j'ai choisi de ne pas faire appel à un modèle pour un projet de photographies. J'ai dû me mettre en scène pour ne pas "utiliser" une autre personne. Je me suis mise de dos pour disparaître un peu. De face, le résultat aurait été trop personnifié. Pour ces installations, j'ai fait disparaître la figure humaine et son action, en ne laissant au sol que des restes. Réduire ainsi une scène est selon moi une forme de minimalisme.

Dégradation (2009) évoque un fait historique : le 5 janvier 1895 le capitaine Dreyfus, après avoir été reconnu coupable de trahison s'est vu retirer un à un tous les signes d'appartenance à l'armée.

Pour produire cette œuvre vous étiez assise sur une chaise, un costume militaire sur les genoux pour en arracher les ornements. Ce geste est d'une grande violence symbolique et physique, évoquant l'injustice, le rabaissement et la dépossession. Pour quelles raisons avez-vous choisi de ne jamais montrer directement la violence de votre action mais son état de fait, sans inviter le spectateur à vous voir effectuer ces gestes ?

Par pudeur peut être, par souci de responsabilité

"LES HOMMES SONT HUMAINS AVANT D'ÊTRE POÈTES OU POLITIQUES ; LORSQUE LA NATURE HUMAINE DÉSIRE LE POUVOIR CELA NE DONNE RIEN DE BON."

œuvres sont-elles toutes des vanités ?

Oui, tout à fait. A fortiori lorsque ces installations sont ensuite figées dans le temps une fois la mise en place terminée, un peu comme des restes bien assemblés qui feraient référence à un temps passé ou tout était habitué, utile et vivant.

Pour quelles raisons avez-vous parfois choisi d'utiliser des objets qui "proclament" une appartenance culturelle ?

Une chaise Thonet, un tambour, un costume de *pole dance*, un jeu de cartes espagnol ou un verre à thé témoignent d'une appartenance culturelle, mais c'est le cas de beaucoup d'objets à des degrés divers. C'est une dimension de lecture supplémentaire qui permet de convoquer d'autres enjeux socioculturels ou géopolitiques.

Je pense qu'un artiste doit se sentir impliqué, s'intéressant aux nouvelles du monde, sans se sentir en-dehors de celui-ci, à l'instar de Felix Gonzalez-Torres.

Avec Felix Gonzalez-Torres, c'est la première fois que j'ai vu des œuvres qui étaient tant en adéquation avec l'idée du romantisme lié à l'usage de la passion, du sentiment, du personnel et de l'engagement politique inconditionnel. Cette découverte fut un grand choc, c'était en 1995 peu après les attentats des islamistes intégristes à Paris. C'est alors que j'ai décidé de m'engager dans l'art.

Ne serait-ce pas plutôt de langage politique dont parle Orwell ? Au contraire, je pense que le langage poétique n'a rien à prouver et n'a pas besoin de mentir. Mais les hommes sont "humains" avant d'être poètes ou politiciens ; lorsque la nature humaine désire le pouvoir, cela ne donne rien de bon.

Des briques détruites (*Tkaf*, 2011), des verres à thé brisés (*Erratum*, 2004-2009), une partition de la *Marseillaise* pour orgue de Barbarie déchirée par un destructeur de documents (*La Marseillaise*, 2005), des pneus brûlés (*Smoke Ring*, 2008)... quels symboles trouver dans ces décombres, ces ruines et ces fragments ?

C'est une forme de déconstruction dans le sens physique du terme, il s'agit de ruiner un peu plus des objets qui sont inexorablement voués à l'usure et l'obsolescence. Il faut également y voir une réflexion sur la temporalité, une volonté de figer ces restes dans ce temps de l'après-événement. Cela évoque des questions dues aux différents gestes utilisés pour les transformer, et entraîne une réflexion sur l'essence et la résistance de ces objets.

Costume militaire (*Dégradation*, 2009), habits de fanfare (*Untitled (Fanfare, L'Indépendante)*, 2008), tenues de *pole dance*, (*Sans titre (Pole Dancer)*, 2011). Tous ces vêtements sont vides de corps, exposés au sol, comme laissés à l'abandon après un déshabillage plus ou moins

surtout. Le geste est induit, mais je ne veux pas que sa reconstitution paraisse centrale, car cela deviendrait une sorte de "spectacularisation" de mauvais goût, comme si je jouais à être un bourreau pour de faux.

Vos expositions au Gamec et au Frac Champagne-Ardenne en 2010 s'intitulaient "Le Rappel des oiseaux", nom d'une pièce musicale de Jean-Philippe Rameau. L'imitation du rossignol, du coucou, du chardonneret ont donné naissance à de nombreux concertos, sonates, cantates et airs d'opéras écrits par Mahler, Messiaen, Vivaldi, Ravel, Prokofiev ou Sibelius. Quelle musique vous inspire ?

Comme en art, j'aime la simplicité, la retenue, la réduction au minimum... mais que cela reste malgré tout furieusement romantique. Le badinage de Marin Marais en serait un bon résumé.

D'ailleurs, lors de votre exposition à la Kunsthalle Fridericianum de Cassel en 2009, une partition fut composée et jouée au piano en dodécaphonique.

Les numéros des résolutions du conseil de sécurité de l'Onu, dans leur ordre chronologique, ont servi de partition pour un piano quart de ton. A chaque réunion du conseil, le morceau de musique sera ainsi augmenté, et ce jusqu'à ce qu'il n'y ait plus de réunions, c'est-à-dire plus de conflits.

EXPOCHIGO 14

THE SEEN

CHICAGO'S INTERNATIONAL ONLINE JOURNAL OF CONTEMPORARY & MODERN ART

ART SEEN. INTERNATIONAL

PROFILE OF THE ARTIST // LATIFA ECHAKHCH

by Hilba Ali

PARIS, FR. Latifa Echakhch's installations displace concrete understandings of habituated space. Her most recent exhibition at galerie kamel mennour, *All around fades to a heavy sound*, featured a curtain made of canvas, depicting an archetypal sky. As the fabric rolls out onto the gallery space, the perfect color blue is met with fluffy white clouds to greet the viewer. This installation accompanies two paintings of organically made ink blots, which are entitled *The movement of steps slows down until perfect immobility* and *Arms opened and eyes closed*, referring to a poetic and object constructed narrative. In a review of her exhibition in *Art Daily*, her work is described as, "Only when supposedly known objects have been emptied of their original meaning can they be read in new ways,[1]" which an apt synopsis of Echakhch's methodology. Echakhch's objects appear as elements that through her translation of usage are able to hold meaning – while at the same time, they defer being understood in a literal manner; in this case, the sky is falling. This notion of story telling is one that she has considered through previous works, her carbon paper installations pointing toward the intersection between abstract art and politics, where the paper in the piece was also the material used to make underground newspapers, once used to pass on messages that would otherwise be intercepted. There is a sense of secrecy that abounds in the work, whether through hidden messages, or skewing familiar forms.



In a depression, 2014. Theater canvas, painting, steel tube and straps. Variable dimensions. Canvas: 1000 x 1000 cm. View of the exhibition "All around fades to a heavy sound", kamel mennour, Paris, 2014. © Latifa Echakhch, Photo: Fabrice Seixas. Courtesy the artist and kamel mennour, Paris

This installation harkens back to one done at the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles in 2013, where Echakhch used carbon paper and phalo ink, both mediums in which information is passed on, to create an installation that encompassed the hallway of the museum. The colors are modern referents in art history, but also a widely used color – existing in the space between the expected and the unexpected. The title, *A chaque stencil une révolution (For each stencil a revolution)*, is sourced from a quote by the Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat when he spoke of protest movements of the 1960s and the instrumental role that the mimeograph machine served. Echakhch's work discharges these symbolically loaded values through their formal aspects, as nothing besides the color is being communicated to the viewer. Though it seems like a didactic display, it also pictures a political history of abstraction. In another piece, entitled *Untitled (Red ball and figure)*, Echakhch reinserts the use of Yves Klein Blue poetically and inadvertently, transforming two familiar symbols in modern art – the red ball and the blue monochrome canvas – as if it were a garment previously worn. As the curator, Anne Ellegood, states, "...in the 1950s, [abstract art] was used as a kind of

propaganda tool to promote American values around the world.[2]" *All around fades to a heavy sound* is no exception; whenever Echakch uses a form, she uses it in such a way that it resists being understood one dimensionally.



Untitled (Red ball and figure), 2014, Floor installation: Balance ball, costume and slippers, Variable dimensions and The feeling of a discreet mist rises gently between fingers and suddenly freezes all the body, 2014, Ink on canvas, 200 x 150 cm. View of the exhibition "All around fades to a heavy sound", kamel mennour, Paris, 2014. © Latifa Echakch, Photo Fabrice Soixas. Courtesy the artist and kamel mennour, Paris.

The exhibition stimulates the visual presentation of a circus, but depicts instead the melancholic and emptiness of the spectacle. The "circus" in the *All around fades to a heavy sound* is the sky itself – a space commonly associated with the everlasting or transcendental. However, Echakch's rendering of the infinite, or the heavenly, offers a conception of space that destabilizes its present definitions, rendering what exists above us as anything but common.

—
Hiba Ali was born in Karachi, Pakistan and grew up in Chicago, Illinois. She is a graduate of The School of the Art Institute of Chicago with a dual degree in Bachelor of Fine Arts with an emphasis in Film, Video, New Media & Animation and Bachelor of Arts in Visual Critical Studies. She is writer, critic, and new media artist – her work occupies the intersections of architecture, queer

THE ART DAILY

LE QUOTIDIEN DE L'ART

NEWS

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EXHIBITION THE ILLUSION OF LIGHT

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PALAZZO GRASSI: INTO THE LIGHT

BY ROXANA AZIMI

— Some exhibitions radiate sensitivity whilst others highlight intelligence. A nice balance between the two hemispheres of the brain is proposed by "L'illusione della luce" (The Illusion of Light) organized by Caroline Bourgeois at the Palazzo Grassi, Venice. Straightaway, at the beginning of the exhibition, the visitor comes to a standstill before an opalescent, almost cloud-like blanket. Could Ann Veronica Janssens be the guardian of the secret behind this vertiginous fog? Or, perhaps it's a James Turrell room-trap? No, this infinite



space is the work of the Californian, Doug Wheeler. In this pristine desert, blurred perspectives force visitors to feel their way forward. The light itself seems to vacillate in this magical experience. But Wheeler is a magician who provides the keys to his tricks. The somnambulist reverie is quickly over and the visitors realize how the effect is achieved: their steps have led to the rounded edges of a hull where their shadows are gradually projected. Turning around reveals the row of spotlights modulating the light from above with extreme sophistication. Though there may be a sense of disappointment at the exposure

Vidya Gastaldon, *Escalator (Rainbow Rain)*, 2007. Courtesy of the artist, Galerie Art: Concept, Paris, Pinault Collection. Installation view at the Palazzo Grassi, 2014. Photo: © Palazzo Grassi, ORCH orsenigo_chemollo.

of the artifice, the visitor will not really have time to dwell on it, as upon climbing the stairs he is instantly seized by another dizzying, epileptic experience: a *Marquee* by Philippe Parreno. A critique of the society of spectacle, all the more pleasing for the way its flashes make the Palazzo's frescoes flicker, practically satirizing the aristocrats leaning on their balconies. This broken rhythm is succeeded by the lissome softness of a rainbow of threads and bits of wool tautened by Vidya Gastaldon. In this artist's work, calm or balance are often false, threatened by a dull tremor of the unconscious. Further on, Julio Le Parc mesmerizes visitors with an optical vortex resting upon a simple makeshift object, but to maximum effect in this fascinating piece already seen in the artist's retrospective at the Palais de Tokyo in Paris.

More effectively than the "Dynamo" exhibition at the Grand Palais in Paris - which by its extreme density induced, more than amazement, feelings of nausea - "The Illusion of Light", infinitely more modest in scale, smoother and more diverse, plunges visitors into the abyss in order to render them more attentive. Because light is not only treated like a sensory stimulus - one that would freeze visitors like animals caught in the headlights of a car. It also awakens a critical sense. Danh Vo and Latifa Echakhch attempt to shed new light on Vietnam's history and the concept of colonialism, or on the current issues relating to the Arab Spring. **CONTINUED ON P 3**

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Cover photo: Latifa Echakhch, *Ghost (Jama)*, 2012 / *Architectural revolution*. Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Kamel mennour, Paris. Pinault Collection. Installation view at the Palazzo Grassi, 2014. Photo: © Palazzo Grassi, ORCH orsenigo_chemollo.

PALAZZO GRASSI: INTO THE LIGHT

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03

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2 The utopian flame and its dark excesses are played upon respectively by Dan Flavin, whose clinical whiteness pays tribute to Tatlin, and Bruce Conner with his famous montage of nuclear tests carried out by the Americans on the Bikini Atoll in the aftermath of Hiroshima. With ruthless efficiency, this film magnifies the visual effects of nuclear bombs, creating an almost floating ambience, rendering horror attractive. What could be more appalling and fascinating than the mushroom cloud? The film by David Claerbout, showing Nigerian workers for the Shell oil company stranded in the rain, is also nurtured by paradox. In a long tracking shot, by a curious coincidence, two issues are intertwined: oil and water. The dialogue by Antoni Muntadas questions our society, opposing a light bulb and a candle, two economies, two temporalities and two states of consciousness. In his brilliant foreword to the exhibition catalog, Pascal Rousseau cites the philosopher Gaston Bachelard, who wrote in *La flamme d'une chandelle*: "The electric light bulb will never yield the reveries of this living lamp which made light with oil." The exhibition also plays subtly on a deathly chroma. From the black mourning of Marcel Broodthaers to the white shroud of *White Aids* by General Idea, where the viewer only gauges the piece by allowing the eye to adjust, the retina gently peeling the white layer to guess



Philippe Parreno, *Marquee*, 2013. Courtesy the artist and Galerie Esther Schipper, Berlin. Pinault Collection. Installation view at the Palazzo Grassi, 2014. Photo: © Palazzo Grassi, ORCH orsenigo_chemollo.

the word "Aids" painted like the famous *Love* by Robert Indiana. The exhibition course ends with an odd color, deliquescent green, fluorescent like fireflies in the night, enshrouding Claire Tabouret's painting, suggestive of science fiction. The blond heads in carnival dress recall the disturbing cherubs from the film *Village of the Damned*. They weigh us up, with an empty and impassive gaze. It only remains for the adults that we are to give way and leave. ■ [T](#) [W](#)

THE ILLUSION OF LIGHT, until December 31st, Palazzo Grassi, Campo San Samuele 3231, Venice, Italy. Tel: +39 041 523 1680, www.palazzograssi.it



David Claerbout, *Oil workers (from the company of Shell Nigeria) returning home from work, caught in torrential rain*, 2013. Pinault Collection. Courtesy of the artist and Yvon Lambert, Paris. © David Claerbout by SIAE 2014.

Los Angeles Times



CULTURE MONSTER
ALL ARTS, ALL THE TIME

Art Review: Latifa Echakhch at the Hammer Museum



Latifa Echakhch's "A chaque stencil une révolution (For each stencil a revolution)" (Photos by Brian Forrest. Courtesy of the Hammer Museum.)

By Holly Myers

April 26, 2013 8:00 a.m.

Latifa Echakhch's installation "À chaque stencil une révolution (For each stencil a revolution)" wraps the Hammer Museum lobby stairwell in a wave of brilliant indigo.

From ceiling to floor, the vivid pigment drips through a range of shades -- from the deep, near-black of a moonlit sky to a pale, electric sheen of dusk -- before gathering in delicate pools along the floor.

It is an enchanting color, a poetic color, sensually manipulated, drawing

associations with Yves Klein and Mark Rothko. It is also, surprisingly, an industrial color, developed not for an artwork but for the practical dissemination of information. It derives from thousands of sheets of carbon paper, plastered to the wall and sprayed with a solution of alcohol.

The work's deceptively political underpinning emerges principally in the title, which comes from a quote by the Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat describing the powerful role of the mimeograph machine in the protest movements of the 1960s.

Echakhch, who was born in Morocco and raised in France, has become known for her formally refined installations of symbolically loaded but gently disabled or neutralized objects: flagpoles without flags; prayer rugs whose pile has been unraveled and removed; gunpowder tea that's been hurled against a wall.

Here as in those other works, she neatly separates form and function, but leaves both components essentially intact. The brilliant hue of the paper -- a sensory pleasure -- and the revolutions it helped to underwrite in the days before Twitter and cellphone cameras are revealed to be products of the same once-ubiquitous material.

Hammer Museum, 10899 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles, (310) 443-7000, through July 18. Closed Mondays. hammer.ucla.edu

Sarah L. Stifler
Director, Communications
Hammer Museum
Direct: 310.443.7056



CULTURE MONSTER
ALL ARTS, ALL THE TIME



kaufmann repetto

frieze

ZEITGENÖSSISCHE KUNST UND KULTUR
IN DEUTSCHLAND, ÖSTERREICH UND DER SCHWEIZ

CONTEMPORARY ART AND CULTURE
IN GERMANY, AUSTRIA AND SWITZERLAND

FRIEZE d/e NO. 6
HERBST / AUTUMN 2012

BILDRÄUME PAINTING SPACE

Interviews mit / with
FRANK STELLA & MONIKA BAER

PHIL COLLINS, LATIFA ECHAKHCH, SEIICHI FURUYA
Rückblick DOCUMENTA 13 in Review



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Enluminure (Illumination)
2012, Tusche auf Glas
Maße variabel

Enluminure (Illumination)
2012, Indian ink on glass
Dimensions variable

Zeichen des Zerfalls

Latifa Echakhch verwendet Strategien der Zerstörung und Verlagerung, um Alltagsobjekte in Abstraktionen zu verwandeln

Minimal Ruin

Latifah Echakhch uses strategies of destruction and displacement to turn everyday objects into abstractions

Quinn Latimer

ZEICHEN DES ZERFALLS MINIMAL RUIN

Das Werk von Latifa Echakhch zeichnet sich aus durch eine geschickte und mit viel Erfahrung praktizierte Sorgfalt – eine geduldige Präzision der Berührung, die den geisterhaften Gast heraufbeschwört, die aufmerksame Einwanderin, die schon ihr Bett macht, bevor sonst jemand aufgestanden ist, die Tee aufsetzt und sich insgesamt rar macht. Und doch erfahren die häuslichen und bürokratischen Gegenstände, die diese imaginierte Mise-en-scène ausmachen, auf subtile oder gewaltsame Weise (oder beides) eine Verwandlung durch ihre Besucherin. Die farbigen Teegläser werden an der Wand zerschmissen und zerbersten dort in feinste Splitter; Zuckerwürfel liegen in einem losen Haufen am Boden; die Gebetsteppiche wurden sorgsam ausgerollt, bis nur noch die Rahmen ihres vorherigen Selbst zurückbleiben. Das neoklassizistische Oberlicht hat sich verfinstert, seine Oberfläche ist mit Tusche überflutet. Von den mit Kohlepapier und Alkohol bedeckten Wänden tropft es blau herab. Draußen haben die Rahmenmasten die Fahnen verloren, die sie tragen sollten: Signifikanten für Nationen, Staaten, Identität, Krieg und Vertreibung.

Die poetische Sinnlichkeit von Echakhchs Arbeiten verdeckt oft deren triviale Absurdität – diese resultiert daraus, dass die Künstlerin die ausgewählten Objekte ihrer erwarteten Nutzung entbunden hat –, dennoch bleibt die Farce, die beharrlich aus den Ecken hervorlugt. Darin erinnert das Werk der in Marokko geborenen und in Martigny in der Schweiz lebenden Künstlerin an Kafkas feine

There is a deft and practiced carefulness to Latifa Echakhch's body of works – a patient precision of touch – that conjures the spectral guest, the attentive immigrant, making her bed before anyone else is up, brewing the tea and generally making herself scarce. And yet in this imagined mise en scène, the domestic or bureaucratic objects that punctuate it are left transformed – subtly or violently or both – by their visitor. The coloured tea glasses are smashed and broken (ever so delicately) against a wall; sugar cubes lie in a messy pile on the floor; the prayer carpets have been carefully unravelled, until only the frames of their previous selves remain. The neoclassical skylight has gone dark, ink flooding its surface. The walls, covered in carbon paper and alcohol, drip blue. And just outside, the flagpoles have lost the flags they should bear: signifiers of nations, states, identity, war, and displacement.

The poetic sensuality of Echakhch's works often stands in front of their bathetic absurdity – the result of the artist emptying her chosen vessels of their expected utility – yet the farce remains, peering out assiduously at the edges. In this, the Morocco-born, Martigny-based artist's oeuvre effectively evokes Kafka's petite and nightmarish bureaucratic allegories. Each artist enacts scenes too improbable, and yet too familiar to be

confronted directly: affective approximations of the normative dissonance experienced by the oppressed. So, instead, the furniture is moved a bit, the architecture subtly and irrevocably altered. The convoluted language of UN resolutions and immigration documents is underlined and displaced. Even natural elements, a herd of tumbleweeds, say, turn up where they do not belong, in a museum or on an island off Manhattan.

This last work, *Tumbleweeds* (2012) – which found its way into Echakhch's recent solo exhibition at the Columbus Museum of Art in Ohio and her *frize* Project on Randall's Island, both earlier this year – showcased the artist's sleight-of-hand with objects that lightly push and darkly pull on expected cultural narratives (in this case, the lonely and glorified American West, the colonial stage par excellence for singular glory and nationalist expansion). But other works might be said to be more emblematic of her Conceptualist-tinctured practice. To that end, and closer to home, her body of objects and site-specific installations often set their sights on the migratory and industrial movements between North Africa and France, and the post-colonialist language of uneasy globalization – both visual and linguistic – that results. At the same time, Echakhch's affecting works employ the formal vocabulary of Minimalism

2
Tumbleweeds
 (Steppenläufer)
 2012
 Ausstellungs-
 ansicht
 Maße variabel

Tumbleweeds
 2012
 Installation view
 Dimensions
 variable

Echakhch's oeuvre evokes Kafka's petite and nightmarish bureaucratic allegories.



Photograph: Columbus Museum of Art, Columbus

2

und alptraumhaft bürokratische Allegorien. Jeder Künstler setzt Szenen um, die allzu unwahrscheinlich und doch allzu vertraut wirken, als dass man ihnen direkt gegenüber treten könnte: gefühlsmäßige Annäherungen an die von den Unterdrückten gemachten Erfahrungen normativer Dissonanzen. Also werden nur ein paar Möbel verrückt, die Architektur wird fast unmerklich und unwiderlich verändert. Die gewundene Sprache von UN-Beschlüssen und Einwanderungspapieren wird hervorgehoben und verschoben. Selbst natürliche Elemente, etwa eine Ansammlung von Steppenläufern, den typischen Büschen des amerikanischen Westens, tauchen auf, wo sie nicht hingehören, in einem Museum oder auf einer Insel vor Manhattan.

Diese letztgenannte Arbeit *Tom Newsees* (Steppenläufer, 2012) war Anfang dieses Jahres im Rahmen von Echakchichs jüngster Einzelausstellung im Columbus Museum of Art in Ohio und bei ihrem *Fixes*-Projekt auf Randall's Island zu sehen. Sie hebt das besondere Geschick der Künstlerin im Umgang mit Objekten hervor, die gängige kulturelle Traditionen und Vorstellungen sanft verschieben oder düster verzerrten (in diesem Fall den einsamen, glorifizierten amerikanischen Westen, die Kolonialbühne schlechthin, wenn es um einzigartigen Ruhm und nationalistische Expansion geht). Allerdings könnte man sagen, dass andere Arbeiten emblematischer für ihre konzeptuell geprägte Praxis sind. Ihr Werk, Objekte und ortsspezifische Installationen, setzt sich oft mit den Migrations- und industriellen Bewegungen zwischen Nordafrika und Frankreich auseinander sowie mit der visuell und linguistisch verstandenen postkolonialen Sprache einer beunruhigenden Globalisierung, die daraus folgt. Zugleich bringt Echakchich auch eindrucksvoll die Formensprache des Minimalismus und seiner Folgebewegungen zum Einsatz, indem sie dessen heroischste Persönlichkeiten und kanonischen Momente heraufbeschwört.

Erratum (2004) ist ein farbgeprägter Streifen aus Scherben von marokkanischen

Teegläsern, die an einer Wand zertrümmert wurden. Die Arbeit mag eine durchaus kluge und dem Anschein nach leichtmütige Erwiderung auf Richard Serra berühmte *Splash*-Serie (1968–70) sein – und auf die machistische, performative und materielle Position, die sie über ihr Material, verschüttetes Gussblei, in sich birgt. *Erratum* liefert aber gleichfalls einen düsteren und bissigen Kommentar zu Themen wie Kulturerbe, Kolonialismus, Gastfreundschaft und Weiblichkeit. Gleiches lässt sich über Echakchichs frühe Werkserie *Frames* (Rahmen, seit 2001) sagen: Marokkanische Teppiche werden ihrer inneren Webstruktur beraubt, sodass nur mehr die äußeren Umrisse zurückbleiben. Darin liegt eine in Worten kaum fassbare Bezugnahme, und zwar nicht nur auf die ideologische Folgekette des Ausrollens eines muslimischen Gebetssteppichs im Jahr des 11. Septembers (und auf die im Irak und in Afghanistan anschließend aufflammenden Kriege), sondern auch auf die Monochromie und den Titel gebenden Rahmen, auf geometrische Abstraktion und Pioniere des Minimalismus wie Carl Andre. Echakchichs Werkserie simuliert auf gekonnter Weise eben jene modernistischen Rahmenbedingungen, innerhalb deren zeitgenössische Künstler sich bewegen oder gegen die sie sich wehren, doch durchsetzt sie dabei diese Rahmung zugleich mit der heutigen postkolonialen Landschaft, die der Modernismus hervorgebracht hat.

3
Le thé de Saïd (Saïd's Tea), 2010
Teakettle and Rinnia, Maße variabel

Le thé de Saïd (Saïd's tea), 2010
Tea pot and gutter, Dimensions variable

4
Frames (Rahnen), 2009
Ausstellungsansicht

Frames, 2009
Installation view



and its attendant art movements, cleverly conjuring its most heroic personages and canonized moments.

See *Erratum* (2004), which comprises a colour-soaked line of broken Moroccan tea glasses smashed against a wall. If *Erratum* is a witty and seemingly light-hearted retort to Richard Serra's inescapable *Splash* pieces (1968–70) – and the macho, performative and material stance they encapsulate through splashed molten lead – the work is also a dark and cutting sentence on cultural heritage, colonialism, hospitality, femininity and much more. The same may be said of Echakchich's early series *Frames* (2001–ongoing): Moroccan carpets are divested of their interior threads, so that only the outlines remain. There is an ineffable reference not only to the ideological ramifications of unravelling Muslim prayer rugs in the year of 9/11 (the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan nascent) but also to the monochrome and the titular frame, geometric abstraction and Minimalist giants like Carl Andre. Echakchich's series expertly simulates the very modernist framework that contemporary artists invariably find themselves working in or against, while imbuing this framework with the contemporary post-colonial landscape that Modernism forged.

If the reductionist formal vocabulary in which Echakchich's works are manifested and which she has employed over the past decade to such great effect gets much notice, this might be because this vocabulary is reassuringly recognizable – one can easily see its foundation in Minimalism and her references to other movements in the high Modernist canon, including Colour-Field painting. Take the gorgeous installation *À chaque stencil, une révolution* (For each stencil a revolution, 2007). The artist papered a room with A4-size carbon paper and flooded the paper with alcohol, which caused the blue pigment to stain and then bleed down the wall, finally pooling on the floor. The work has been shown at the Queensland Art Gallery and at Art Basel, where I experienced it. The grid of

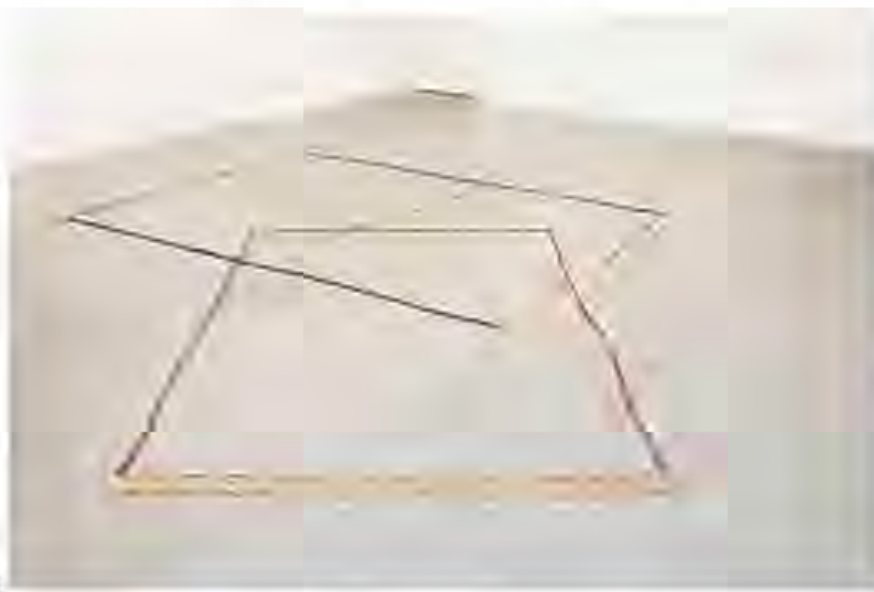


Foto: gale / photograph, Jacobo Velasco (3)

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Eindrucksvoll bedient sich Echakhch der Formensprache des Minimalismus und seiner Folgebewegungen.

Dass die reduktionistische Formensprache, die Echakhch im Verlauf des vergangenen Jahrzehnts so wirkungsvoll einzusetzen verstand, so viel Aufmerksamkeit auf sich zieht, mag daran liegen, dass sie auf so beruhigende Weise wieder erkennbar ist – ihre Grundlagen im Minimalismus sind ebenso offensichtlich wie ihre Bezüge zu anderen Bewegungen im Kanon der Hochmoderne einschließlich der Farbfeldmalerei. Hier denke man nur an die hinreißende Installation *À chaque siècle une révolution* (Für jede Schablone eine Revolution, 2007), für die Echakhch einen Raum mit DIN-A4-großen Kohlepapierbögen austapeziert und mit Alkohol getränkt hat, wodurch sich das blaue Pigment auflöste und die Wand hinunterrannte, um sich schließlich auf dem Fußboden zu sammeln. Diese Arbeit wurde in der Queensland Art Gallery und auf der Art Basel gezeigt, wo auch ich sie erleben konnte. Aus dem tiefblauen Quadrat-Raster ergossen sich hellere Sturzflüsse aus himmelblauem Pigment die Wände hinab und tropften auf den Boden – ein auf geradezu surreale Weise bewegendes Ereignis. In der Tat lässt sich *À chaque siècle une révolution* als Anspielung auf die Grundregeln und Wirkungsweisen der Farbfeldmalerei lesen. Die politische Spannung, die der Installation innewohnt, wirkte jedoch ungestellt und unberechenbar, selbst bevor ich bemerkte, dass es sich bei dem Werkstück um ein Zitat von Jassir Arafat handelt, des ersten Präsidenten des palästinensischen Nationalrats, der 2004 gestorben ist (und dessen sterbliche Überreste kürzlich exhumiert wurden, da der Verdacht bestand, er könnte vergiftet worden sein).

Es hat eindeutig etwas Seltsames, wenn die Künstlerin ihre Lieblingsmaterialien (Kohle, Tusche, Glas, Teppiche, Zucker) durch den allseits bekannten modernistischen Formdrill jagt (das Raster, der Haufen, die Wand, der Boden) – selbst dann, wenn dieser von ihrer persönlichen politischen Agenda (als Frau, als Migrantin, als Künstlerin)

durchzogen ist. Das alles wirkt einerseits ungezwungen intuitiv und andererseits bewusst unnatürlich – genau diese Reibung ist es, aus der diese auf den ersten Blick für Worte viel zu feinen und verdichteten Arbeiten ihre besondere Kraft beziehen. Zu Beginn dieses Jahres besuchte ich die Ausstellung *Morgenlied*, bei der Echakhch gemeinsam mit dem Künstler David Maljković in der Kunsthalle Basel zu sehen war. Der Titel bezieht sich auf Goethes Gedicht *Künstlers Morgenlied* (1773), das dem Architekten der Kunsthalle, Johann Jakob Stehlin in der jüngeren, im Jahr 1868 als Quellmaterial für seinen neoklassizistischen Entwurf diente. Licht und die Ideale der Aufklärung spielten dabei eine wichtige Rolle – das Oberlicht mit monumentalen Ausmaßen ist dafür charakteristisch. In der für sie typischen Art und Weise verdichtete Echakhch die Verbindung von Bezugspunkten und ideologischer Geschichte zu einem Werk von absurder Schönheit, das gleichzeitig einen deutlich düsteren Charakter aufweist. Mit überzeugender, sich am Abstrakten Expressionismus orientierender Ausdauer tropfte und spritzte sie schwarze Tinte über das gesamte 80 Quadratmeter große Glasraster des Oberlichts, wodurch ein fleckiger Schleier entstand, der ebene Galerie verdunkelte, die das Oberlicht erhellen sollte. Der Titel, den die Künstlerin ihrer ortsspezifischen Malerei gab, lautete dann auch folgerichtig *Eviluminaire* (Illumination, 2012), was ebenso auf eine Erhellung oder Beleuchtung verweist, wie es der Name für Miniaturmalerien aus dem Mittelalterlichen Handschriften ist – ganz als ob das Oberlicht die Seite eines Buches wäre. Doch wo zuvor Licht war, wurde nun Schatten.

Übersetzt von Clemens Krümmel

Quinn Latimer ist eine amerikanische Dichterin und Kritikerin und lebt in Basel.

deep blue squares bleeding lighter waterfalls of cerulean pigment down the walls, lapping against the floor, was surreally moving. Colour-Field painting's mores and effects were lucidly evoked, yes, but the political friction of the installation still felt unrehearsed and incalculable, even before I became aware that the work's title is a quote from Yasser Arafat, the first president of the Palestinian National Authority, who died in 2004 (and whose remains have recently been exhumed to test claims that he was poisoned).

There is something patently strange about the artist putting her preferred materials – carbon, ink, glass, carpet, sugar – through the dully familiar Modernist paces (the grid, the pile, the wall, the floor), even as her personal politics (as a woman, an immigrant, an artist) course through them. It all seems at once effortlessly innate and studiously unnatural – and this rub is where the works, at first glance too delicate and distilled for words, get their power. Earlier this year, I attended the exhibition that Echakhch did with artist David Maljković at Kunsthalle Basel. The title of their show, *Morgenlied* (Morning Song), was gleaned from Goethe's poem *Künstlers Morgenlied* (1773, Artist's Morning Song); in 1868, the architect of the Kunsthalle, Johann Jakob Stehlin Jr., used the poem as source material for his neoclassical design, with its emphasis on light (via a monumental skylight) and the Enlightenment. In typical fashion, Echakhch distilled this confluence of referents and ideological history into an absurdly beautiful and yet noir-ish work. Over the skylight's 80-square-metre grid of glass, she dripped and splattered (with convincing Ab-Ex muscularity) black Indian ink, which created a spotty veil that occluded light from entering the very gallery it was supposed to illumine. The title the artist gave her site-specific painting was, appropriately enough, the French word *Eviluminaire* (Illumination, 2012), which evokes luminescence yet describes the miniature paintings and drawings often found in medieval manuscripts – as if the skylight were a page in a book. But where there was light, there is now shadow.

Quinn Latimer is an American poet and critic based in Basel.

- 5
Erratum
2004–9
Zerbrochene Teegläser
Malle variable
- Erratum*
2004–9
Broken tea glasses
Dimensions variable
- 6
À chaque siècle une révolution, 2007
Kohlepapier, Kleber
und vergällter Alkohol
- À chaque siècle une révolution*, 2007
Carbon paper, glue
and methylated spirits

Fotografien / Photographs: Charis Durrak (5), Lukas Echakhch (6)



Courtesy: Jule Biller / For all images: de Koneforn / the art of G Canal Mennoir, Paris

8

Latifa Echakhch

KAUFMANN REPETTO

In Italian, the word *verso* has several meanings: a line in poetry (“verse”), the direction of movement (“toward”), and the back side of a sheet of paper (“verso”). As the title of Latifa Echakhch’s recent exhibition, the word reflected the complex and stratified nature of her work. The artist seeks and reveals the polysemic nature of words and things—meanings that slide into one another, sharing some aspects yet elsewhere diverging. *Enluminure* (Illumination), 2012, a site-specific work the artist prepared for the gallery, was made of black ink that had been dripped down the gallery windows. It was a written account of the space, rhythmic and unstable. The lines became a wall, a curtain, rain, tears. They could be read as arabesques, or one could take them as the manifestation of an aggressive gesture intended to negate the view, obscuring the transparency of the glass, or of an intimate desire to mark a time and space with one’s own hand. This multiplicity of suggestions was echoed in the title, which could refer to painted manuscripts, to lighting, and to enlightenment. The idea of casting light was contrasted with putting something in the shade, and the idea of revelatory writing countered the black trail delineated on the window in indecipherable fashion.

In relation to the exhibition title, *Enluminure* was a reminder that the most visible and clearest aspect of things does not always reveal what lies beneath them. Insofar as “*Verso*” alluded to a direction to be taken, one could not tell precisely which one, just as the ink, left to drip, followed various paths dictated by chance. The show’s title also suggested the rhythm of a poem unfolding in the space, embodied not only in the black lines of *Enluminure*, but also in the series “*Morgenlied*” (Morning Song), 2012–, structures of metal rods with hooks that could serve as a hanging system for paintings—perhaps the

Latifa Echakhch,
Enluminure
(Illumination) (detail),
2012, ink on
inside of windows,
dimensions variable.



paintings that were installed on other walls of the gallery. The latter works, from the “*Sans Titre*” series, 2010–12, were as luminous and light as birdsong.

Echakhch’s work often involves removing a thing’s center and leaving its support, frame, or outline—the functional part of the naked and exposed object. Paintings are taken off hooks, and flags off flagpoles (*Fantasia*, 2012). In the “*Sans Titre*” series, canvases are covered with carbon paper without text, just as in “*Framés*,” 2000– (not in the exhibition), the borders of carpets are shown with their centers cut away. Or Echakhch repositions objects in unexpected webs of references. *Fantôme* (Ghost), 2011, is a small installation made up of a chair, a harmonica, and an abandoned handkerchief. *Skin*, 2012, is a pile of shoes thrown onto the floor. The works always revolve around a void, an absence. The blank carbon paper in the “*Sans Titre*” series makes one think of censorship or, in any case, of some other kind of negation. All Echakhch’s works somehow or other critique the present and reflect on the everyday nature of being in the world.

—Alessandra Piselli

Translated from Italian by Marguerite Shore.

Latifa Echakhch

Latifa Echakhch
'Still life, Frame Still'
Installation view
2010



Fri Art, Fribourg, Switzerland

Latifa Echakhch's solo exhibition at Fri Art was her first in Switzerland, the country she has been living in for the past two years. At the heart of this presentation of both new and existing work was the artist's transformation of the symbols of her cultural heritage into still lifes, freeze-framed so as to seem either obsolete or already dead. Unlike some contemporary artists with an immigrant background, Echakhch distances herself in much of her work from these symbols; she left Morocco at the age of three, does not speak Arabic, has no memories of the country of her birth and is informed more by her upbringing in France. She is more interested in deconstructing cultural stereotypes that have repeatedly confronted her and reinvesting them with new meaning.

Echakhch has a talent for distilling the political and the personal via clearly recognizable objects and materials. This is taken up in installations such as *Untitled (Gunpowder)* (2008), a grainy black border that was made by hurling gunpowder tea (a form of Chinese green tea in which each leaf is rolled into a small round pellet) at a wall. A reference to both the popularity of tea in Morocco and to a battlefield, as well as a nod to Minimalism, the work establishes the artist's ability to create multilayered gestures that are both subtle and precise. This was enhanced by the rhythm of the exhibition, whereby works from the same series were repeated over two floors, suggesting that they are part of a much larger whole. 'Untitled I - V' (2010), for example, comprises a group of large canvases applied with uneven rows of either white or black carbon paper. Minimal, monochromatic and process-based, the works pay homage to the humble and nearly obsolete material that enabled revolutionary texts in France and other countries to be mass distributed in the 1960s and '70s.

Just as the carbon paper is empty of any text, so the drums that feature in the four versions of *Untitled (Drummer) [a, b, c, d]* (2010) are silenced and the clothes scattered around them on each plinth apparently abandoned. Echakhch represents marching-band drummers not with statues of figures or even with the uniforms of traditional bands, but rather by piling civilian clothes on plinths, thereby replacing possible associations with military or political activity with individual portraits.

This quietly restrained analysis of objects and processes avoids nostalgia but is imbued with the melancholy of absence. A white linen cloth conceals the objects on an occasional table while, in *Vanités* (Vanities, 2007), the traditional Moroccan poufs placed on the upper floor are on closer inspection no more than empty black plastic bags. The plastic is echoed in a series of five small photographs, each entitled *Still Life (Vanités)* (2010), taken in an abandoned graveyard near the place of her birth in Casablanca and close to her father's grave. Even in the context of this highly personal work, Echakhch's observation is discreet. Reflecting the title of the related 2010 video, *Raouda, the little garden* ('raouda' meaning both graveyard and garden in Arabic), she focuses primarily on the rubbish caught on the scrub and tiny snails clustered on leaves. Both the photographs and the video avoid any direct reference to the cemetery, tracing a path across the dried grass, thistles and mossy stones of the apparent wasteland. Only one of the images shows what gradually appears to be a non-descript tombstone on which is inscribed a name in Arabic and, adhering to Moroccan tradition, just one date, that of the person's death.

Felicity Lunn

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L'envers du décor

propos recueillis par Nicolas Trembley, portrait Julie Langenegger

Déconstruits et vidés de leur sens, avec Latifa Echakhch les symboles liés aux luttes ou aux mouvements contestataires deviennent de purs objets de contemplation.

Latifa Echakhch était invitée en novembre dernier au Level 2 Gallery de la Tate Modern à Londres. Née en 1973 au Maroc, l'artiste arrive en France à l'âge de 3 ans. Elle évoque la richesse de cette double culture, non pas dans l'addition, mais dans le manque. Son travail fait aussi bien référence à Yves Klein qu'à l'idée de protestation et ce qu'il en reste aujourd'hui. Elle nous a reçus en Suisse, au pied des montagnes neigeuses, là où elle a installé son atelier.

Numéro : Vous sentez-vous liée à la scène orientale ?

Latifa Echakhch : Je ne me sens pas liée à la scène dite "orientale". Je suis venue en France très jeune, mes parents ont toujours encouragé l'intégration, plutôt que le repli identitaire. On m'associe à l'Orient car aucune personne issue de l'immigration ne peut s'exprimer en France sans qu'on lui rappelle ses origines. **Vous avez produit des pièces avec des tapis, mais vous n'en avez laissé que les franges au sol...**

Le tapis préserve un homme, ou un fidèle, du sol qui est censé être impur. Si je l'ouvre dans un lieu d'art et que je le pose par terre, il devient autre chose. Mes références sont des pièces minimales conceptuelles, je ne suis pas dans la nostalgie des matériaux orientaux.

Vous avez exposé à la Tate Modern, c'est assez rare pour une jeune Française.

L'exposition s'appelait *Speakers' Corner*, en référence à ces endroits en Angleterre où l'on monte sur une caisse pour faire un discours. J'ai exposé une pièce composée de papier carbone collé au mur, qui s'intitule *A chaque stencil une révolution*. C'est une phrase que j'ai tirée d'une déclaration de Yasser Arafat, complètement par hasard, parce que je la trouvais belle. Il voulait dire qu'avec une machine à stencil et du papier carbone, on pouvait dupliquer un tract, le disperser dans la rue et commencer une révolution. Au lieu d'écrire moi-même un message politique, j'ai tapissé le mur de feuilles de carbone vierges, autant de monochromes bleus, et j'ai jeté dessus de l'alcool à brûler, qui sert normalement à la duplication des stencils. Une fois l'encre dissoute, le pigment bleu tombe au sol.

Vous considérez-vous comme le porte-drapeau d'une cause ?

J'essaie plutôt de présenter l'absence de messages, voire l'échec de l'engagement.

Vous produisez des sculptures de pneus brûlés, qu'on a pu voir à la Fiac. Évoquent-elles les manifestations de rue ?

Ce n'est pas parce que j'utilise des pneus brûlés que je suis forcément contestataire. On démonte une voiture, on prend un pneu et on le brûle. C'est un geste simple et minimal, mais très visuel et efficace. On obtient une ruine d'objet. En raison de la toxicité du procédé, il m'a été difficile de réaliser ces sculptures.

Vous dites refuser qu'on vous limite à vos origines, mais vous avez présenté des arabesques abstraites dans votre exposition au Magasin de Grenoble.

J'ai pris ce risque, mais encore une fois, ces arabesques, je les ai déconstruites. J'applique une technique, disons, situationniste, comme les "dérives psychogéographiques", pour montrer justement que ce n'est pas aussi simple.

Quels sont vos prochains projets ?

Je prépare ma première exposition chez Kamel Mennour, au printemps 2009, puis j'enchaîne avec des projets pour la Kunsthalle Fridericianum à Kassel, pour le Swiss Institute à New York, et pour le Henie Onstad Art Centre à Oslo.



NATURE MORTE

Milovan Farronato

Latifa Echakhch's research is a reaction to the identities normatized by society, religion, and the State. In 2001's *Frames*, Echakhch undid, one strand at a time, a number of Islamic prayer mats, leaving their frame untouched, thusly confusing the imaginary border between holy and unholy ground. Political and poetic, delicate and critical, the work of the Moroccan artist, through the destructuring of apparently ordinary objects, is an occasion to reveal the hidden codes that often we didn't get.

Certificate de Vie (2002) and Alien of Extraordinary Ability (2005), two works of yours, feature two sentences that refer to very different conditions – ultimately two sides of the same coin, ironic and dramatic at the same time. How much does citizenship affect human rights? What is this “extraordinary ability” you mention in your golden plate?

This “certificate de vie” is an official Moroccan document whose only function is to give proof that somebody is still alive. It is mainly used for administrative purposes – that’s why I did it initially. It’s given by the Consulate of the Kingdom of Morocco. I just presented my Moroccan ID and a paper proving my residence in Paris to a civil officer and they gave it to me. This document attests my official existence for the Moroccan administration and allows me to take advantage of this right! The United States Alien of Extraordinary Ability Visa or O-1 Classification is given to aliens who can demonstrate that they “have risen to the very top of their field of endeavor.” Aliens with extraordinary ability are those foreigners with “extraordinary ability in the sciences, arts, education, business, or athletics and who have received prestigious national or international acclaim and whose achievements in their given fields can be proved through extensive documentation”. I was interested in the strangeness of these two sentences, as in many of the official formulas I use in my works. This is an odd thing to need a certificate to prove: that we are alive for our native country. And to be defined as “super-alien,” a superman, to get such a visa!

And then also: “Decides to remain seized of the matter” (Resolution, 2003) and “Espace a Remplir Par l’Etranger” (Hospitalité, 2006). Other sentences, other stories – impressed, embossed on the surface, and deeply into our humanity. What about the sources of these other two works of yours?

Resolution is an extract of text from a United Nations Security Council resolution: passages often ended with this formula. It’s a strange sounding sentence, like a false translation. I did it first in Thailand in March 2003, during the last moments before the start of the Iraq war. The UN Council condemned a military intervention by the USA, but it wasn’t respected, and I wanted to question the efficacy of this international coalition. This is the source, but out of context you can use it for a lot of subjects. The formula is painted by hand on the wall in black. When you see it close-up you see all the imperfections of the application. You can easily imagine the artist in front of the wall painting this sentence as a punished kid at school! For *Hospitalité*, I took this sentence from a document that I have to fill out to receive a new resident card in France. There is one side to be filled out by the foreigner and the other side by the administration. I use it as an artistic statement. I engraved the sentence in the wall and after the exhibition another stranger filled the empty space with plaster to install a new exhibition, but the sentence is still hidden on the wall.

Something seems to be always missing – wherever it is, it is no longer here. I’m thinking of *Frames* (2001), for example, or *Micro vide* (2006). In the first case you cut away the interior motifs of a series of prayer carpets and leave just their borders. In the second one, you present three tripods with hollow microphones. And then also in the more recent *For Each Stencil a Revolution* (2007) and *Fantasia (empty flag)* (2008). What are you deliberately omitting or avoiding?

The only thing I removed is the main practical significance of each object: they are stripped of their well-known functions and made obsolete. This gesture is a kind of minimization and debilitating transformation. In the carpets I remove the delimiting space on the objects. In *Fantasia* I remove the flags that are supposed to be displayed on each pole, and I install them in such a way that we no longer see a coherent ensemble. Regarding *For Each Stencil a Revolution*, it’s primarily concerned with abstraction, like if I do every step of the process of duplication but in a different order of assembly. Certainly I omit the utility, but I’m not avoiding the foundation. It’s the well-known paradox of Melville’s *Bartleby*: in his “I would prefer not to”, he still strongly affirms his gesture, and that’s precisely why it leaves all fields of possibility open.

I feel there’s been a dramatic act, and we are seeing the climax. Sometimes, as in *Studio Oriental* (2002), the set for a photo shoot is left over. In other more recent cases, it is broken apart, as in *Erratum* (2004). How does “violence” enter into your work? Perhaps violence is inherent in a lot of art practice. To sculpt marble, for example, is not an easy action, to cut paper for collage, to break ceramics for mosaic. Violence in my work deals more with the result of a radical and irreversible action. It’s the simplest way to free an object from its use, to deconstruct it. I am deeply attached to an idea of a “still life,” this paradox of stillness and lively things – in French we call it “nature morte.” Sometimes one has to “kill” the object to make possible a different reading.

But the violence is never direct, the actions have been done before the exhibition opens – it’s not a performance. It’s the only way I can explain it. I am not particularly hysterical; I am known to be very calm and kind.

Despite all the political and social issues that your work raises, I’m unable to ignore the romantic, poetic side. In which of your works most directly questions your idea of *heimat* (with all its political and poetical references)?

I am not at all nostalgic about any idea of a *heimat*. It’s a suspected idea to try to find or rediscover an origin, even a fake approach. But suspicion is an interesting process, it creates a necessary distance to consider things. I cannot communicate without political or poetic references, because they are my main tools, and even if I relate all the little stories of each work and how I encountered the original objects in my everyday life, it’s always full of these references, that’s exactly why I’m interested in acting on it.

In just one work you are physically there, I guess: *French Touch (self-portrait)* (2004). A paradox, a question of identity? A simple gesture, but of course not simplistic.

One day in a shop a woman told me that I had a beautiful “French touch” [French manicure]. I’d never heard this expression before. In my case it’s completely natural, and that’s why I was so surprised to have this innate French identity because of my nails. I found it funny to work with that, to do a self-portrait as a perfectly integrated immigrant. We see only half of my left arm, life-sized, with a white wall in the back. I accentuated the darkness at the bottom of my arm. I mixed two very simple iconographies to show my nails: one related to a well-known gesture of protest – clenched fist raised – and the thumb is curved as the one in the hand of Fatma.

The next edition of Manifesta will be in the Spanish region of Murcia, the European area that is the closest to North Africa, and Morocco in particular. And the aim is to analyze the border between these two very different and very close cultural scenarios. I remember *Snow in Arabia* (2003), the first work of yours I saw: a black cube, a Mecca, realized in black tape on a input-free monitor. Since you are clearly involved in these topics, what are your expectations for this event?

I don’t have expectations about it, but I strongly hope that they won’t use North African or African artists as a subject, as has been done all these years since “Les Magiciens de la Terre”. There so many interesting artists, why do we always need to put them in boxes to define them or allow them to be shown? It’s the same with the gender question, and I am particularly sensitive about that. I do not want to be used as an immigrant and/or a woman, because I am not only that. It’s the reason I always refuse these kinds of invitations. These questions in a theoretical and historical way are really more complex than that – too complex to become simply a topic.

We have mentioned several of your past works. What new projects are you developing for the near future?

It would be a long answer and I prefer to talk about things after they’re installed. To be brief, I invite you to see my next works in Kamel Mennour gallery in Paris. I’m doing two-part exhibition – “Pendant que les champs brûlent” – from the end of May until the end of July. This summer I will present two solo exhibitions, “Les sanglots longs”, at Kunsthalle Fridericianum in Kassel and at the Kunstverein of Bielefeld. And in September I will have my first exhibition at Francesca Kaufmann in Milan. It’s mainly new works and site-specific installations. You have to see it and then we can talk about it!

La ricerca di Latifa Echakhch reagisce ai modelli identitari normati dalla società, dall'appartenenza religiosa e dallo Stato. In *Frames*, un lavoro del 2001, Echakhch ha disfatto, filo per filo, una serie di tappeti per la preghiera islamica, lasciandone intatta unicamente la cornice, confondendo lo spazio immaginario che delimita il suolo sacro da quello impuro. Politica e poetica, delicata e critica, la pratica dell'artista marocchina, attraverso l'utilizzo di oggetti apparentemente ordinari, è occasione di svelamento di quei codici impliciti che, talvolta, ci sfuggono.

Certificate de vie (2002) e Alien of Extraordinary Ability (2004), due delle tue opere, si servono di due espressioni che descrivono condizioni molto diverse. Alla fine si tratta di due facce della stessa medaglia, ironica e drammatica al tempo stesso. In che misura la cittadinanza influisce sui diritti umani? Che cosa sono le “capacità straordinarie” che menzioni nella tua targa dorata?

Il “certificate de vie” è un documento ufficiale marocchino la cui unica funzione è quella di dimostrare che una persona è ancora



Latifa Echakhch, *A chaque stencil une révolution*, 2007, view of the exhibition "Savonar's corner", Tate Modern, Bankside, London, 2008
 Courtesy: the artist, Kamal Mennour, Paris and Galleria Francesca Kaufmann, Milan. © Latifa Echakhch

viva. È usato per lo più per scopi amministrativi; ecco perché l'ho richiesto inizialmente. È rilasciato dal consolato del Regno del Marocco; ho dovuto solamente presentare a un funzionario dello stato civile la mia carta d'identità marocchina e un documento che comprovava la mia residenza a Parigi, e il certificato mi è stato rilasciato. Questo documento attesta ufficialmente la mia esistenza all'amministrazione marocchina e mi permette di avvalermi di questo diritto!

Il visto statunitense "Alien of Extraordinary Ability" o di categoria O-1 è dato a quegli stranieri in grado di dimostrare di "avere raggiunto il vertice nel loro settore di attività". Gli stranieri con capacità eccezionali sono quelli con "abilità straordinarie nelle scienze, nelle arti, nell'istruzione, nell'economia o nello sport, che hanno ricevuto riconoscimenti prestigiosi a livello nazionale o internazionale e i cui risultati nei rispettivi campi possono essere dimostrati per mezzo di un'estesa documentazione".

M'interessava la stranezza di queste due espressioni, così come m'interessano, in generale, tutte le formule ufficiali che uso nelle mie opere. È piuttosto strano aver bisogno di un certificato per dimostrare al proprio paese natale di essere vivi ed essere definiti "super-stranieri" – una sorta di superuomini – per ottenere un visto!

È ancora: "Decide di continuare a interessarsi della questione" (Resolution, 2003) e "Spazio da compilare a cura dello straniero" (Hospitalité, 2006); altre frasi, altre storie incise sulle superfici e impronte profondamente nella nostra umanità. Qual è la fonte di queste altre tue opere?

Resolution, del 2003, è un estratto del testo delle Risoluzioni del Consiglio di Sicurezza delle Nazioni Unite, che terminano spesso con questa formula. In inglese suona abbastanza strana, come se si trattasse di una traduzione errata. Ho presentato l'opera per la prima volta in Thailandia, nel 2003, durante la fase d'incertezza che ha preceduto l'inizio della guerra in Iraq. Il consiglio dell'ONU ha espresso una condanna nei confronti di un possibile intervento militare degli USA, ma la sua risoluzione non è stata rispettata, perciò ho voluto mettere in discussione l'efficacia di questo organismo internazionale. Questa è la fonte, ma fuori da tale contesto, la frase può essere usata per moltissime altre situazioni. La formula è dipinta a mano sul muro usando della vernice nera. Guardandola da vicino si possono vedere tutte le imperfezioni dell'applicazione. È facile immaginare l'artista, davanti al muro, che dipinge questa frase come se fosse un ragazzino in punizione a scuola!

Per *Hospitalité*, ho tratto la frase da un documento che ho dovuto compilare per ricevere un nuovo certificato di residenza in Francia e che deve essere riempito in una sezione dallo straniero e in un'altra dall'amministrazione. Io me ne servo come *statement* artistico; ho scavato la frase nel muro e dopo la fine della mostra, un altro straniero ha colmato lo spazio vuoto con dello stucco, per dar modo di allestire un altro evento, ma la frase è ancora celata nella parete.

Sembra che manchi sempre qualcosa, o di qualunque cosa si tratti, non c'è più, non è più qui... Penso, per esempio, a *Frames* (2001) o a *Micro vide* (2006). Nel primo caso hai ritagliato i motivi interni di una serie di tappeti da preghiera, lasciando solo i bordi. Nella seconda opera hai messo in scena tre treppiedi con dei microfoni vuoti. E poi anche nel più recente *A chaque stencil une révolution / For Each Stencil a*



Latifa Echakhch, *Brafatun*, 2005 - courtesy the artist and Kamel Mennour, Paris © Latifa Echakhch



Latifa Echakhch, *Almanac*, 2006 - courtesy the artist, Kamel Mennour, Paris and Galleria Francesco Kaufmann, Milan



Latifa Echakhch, *Principe d'Oronotto II*, 2007 - courtesy the artist, Kamel Mennour, Paris and Galleria Francesco Kaufmann, Milan

Revolution (2007) e Fantasia (empty flag), 2008. Che cosa stai deliberatamente omettendo o evitando?

L'unica cosa che ho tolto è stato il significato pratico dell'oggetto. Privando gli oggetti della loro funzione più evidente e rendendoli obsoleti, il gesto si configura come una sorta di trasformazione minimizzante e destabilizzante. Infatti, ho ritagliato i tappeti lasciando solo gli elementi che servono a delimitarne la superficie. In *Fantasia* ho tolto le bandiere che avrebbero dovuto essere appese a ciascun pennone e ho esposto questi ultimi in maniera tale che ciò che vediamo non sia più un insieme ben armonizzato. Per quanto concerne *A chaque stencil une révolution*, vi è in primo luogo una forte volontà d'astrazione; è come se compissi ogni passo del processo di duplicazione, ma ordinando e assemblando il tutto in modo diverso. Certamente metto da parte l'utilità, ma non elimino i fondamentali. È il noto paradosso del personaggio di

Bartleby di Melville che, con il suo "preferirei di no", continua ad affermare con forza il proprio gesto ed è proprio per questo che lascia aperto tutto il campo delle possibilità.

Percepisco un "atto" potente, e vedo anche un climax. Qualche volta, come in *Studio Oriental* (2002), il set di un servizio fotografico è lasciato in disordine, in altri casi, più recenti, è fatto a pezzi, come in *Errotum*. In che modo la "violenza" entra nella tua produzione?

Forse, la violenza è intrinseca a gran parte dell'attività artistica; scolpire il marmo, per esempio, non è un'azione facile, oppure tagliare la carta per dei collage o rompere la ceramica per un mosaico... La violenza, nelle mie opere, ha in larga misura, a che fare con i risultati di un'azione radicale e irreversibile; è il modo più semplice per liberare un oggetto dal suo uso, per decostruirlo. Sono profondamente attaccata all'idea di una

natura morta che, di fatto, è un paradosso tra la l'immobilità e la vita delle cose; in francese la chiamiamo *nature morte*, così talvolta bisogna "uccidere" l'oggetto per rendere possibile una diversa lettura. Ma la violenza non è mai diretta, perché l'azione è sempre compiuta prima dell'inaugurazione della mostra, non è una performance. Questo è l'unico modo in cui posso spiegarlo; non sono particolarmente isterica, sono nota per essere molto calma e gentile.

Nonostante tutte le questioni politiche e sociali sollevate dal tuo lavoro, mi risulta impossibile percepire, inanzitutto, il lato romantico e poetico... In quale delle tue opere viene messa maggiormente in discussione la tua idea di *heimat* (in tutti i suoi riferimenti politici e poetici)?

Non provo affatto nostalgia del concetto di *heimat*; trovo sospetta l'idea di tentare di trovare o di riscoprire un'origine; potremmo perfino dire che si tratta di un approccio ingannevole. Ma il sospetto è un processo interessante, ti offre la distanza necessaria a considerare le cose. Non posso rinunciare ai riferimenti politici e poetici, perché sono i miei strumenti principali, e anche quando racconto tutte le piccole storie che riguardano ciascuna opera, e il modo in cui l'oggetto iniziale è trattato nella mia vita quotidiana, vi è sempre una moltitudine di riferimenti. Questo è proprio il motivo per cui m'interessa agire su quell'oggetto.

Sei fisicamente presente solo in un'opera, mi pare: *French Touch (self-portrait)*, 2004. Un paradosso, una questione d'identità? Un gesto semplice, ma indubbiamente non semplicistico...

Un giorno, in un negozio, una donna mi disse che ho delle stupende unghie alla francese. Non avevo mai sentito quell'espressione; nel mio caso è assolutamente naturale ed è per quello che rimasi così sorpresa dal fatto di avere queste unghie francesi innata, per via delle mie unghie. Mi è sembrato divertente lavorare su questo aspetto, realizzare un autoritratto in veste di immigrata perfettamente integrata. Si vede solamente metà del mio braccio sinistro, a grandezza naturale. La parete bianca sullo sfondo accentua il colore scuro del braccio nella parte inferiore. Ho mescolato due motivi iconografici molto semplici per mettere in mostra le mie unghie, uno dei quali collegato a un gesto di protesta: pugno chiuso sollevato e il pollice curvato come quello della mano di Fatima.

La prossima edizione di Manifesta si terrà nella regione spagnola della Murcia, la zona dell'Europa più vicina all'Africa settentrionale, e al Marocco in particolare. Lo scopo è quello di analizzare il confine tra questi due scenari culturali tanto vicini e tanto diversi. Mi ricordo *Show in Arabis* (2003) (la prima delle tue opere che ho visto), un cubo nero, una Mecca realizzata con del nastro nero applicato su un monitor spento... Poiché sei chiaramente interessata a questi argomenti, quali sono le tue aspettative in merito all'evento?

Non ho delle aspettative a riguardo, ma spero fortemente che gli artisti nordafricani, o africani in generale, non verranno usati come soggetto, com'è stato fatto, invece, in tutti questi anni sin dai tempi di "Les Magiciens de la Terre". Vi sono così tanti artisti interessanti e non capisco perché si senta sempre il bisogno di rinchiodarli dentro delle scatole, di definirli o di metterli in mostra come se fossero delle attrazioni e scote.

È la stessa cosa con la questione del genere e io sono particolarmente sensibile a questo argomento: non voglio essere usata come immigrata e/o come donna, perché non sono solo quello. È questo il motivo per cui rifiuto sempre questo tipo d'invito orientato. Tali questioni, dal punto di vista sia teorico sia storico, sono davvero molto più complesse di così, ecco perché non possono essere ridotte a un solo aspetto.

Abbiamo menzionato molte opere della tua produzione passata: quali sono i tuoi progetti nel prossimo futuro?

Questa domanda richiederebbe una risposta lunga, e personalmente preferisco parlare delle mie opere dopo che sono state presentate. Per ora mi limiterò a invitarvi a vedere i miei prossimi lavori alla galleria Kamel Mennour di Parigi: farò una mostra in due parti dal titolo "Pendant que les champs brûlent", dalla fine di maggio fino alla fine di luglio. Quest'estate farò, inoltre, due mostre monografiche, "Les sanglots longs" alla Kunsthalles Friedericianum di Kassel e alla Kunstverein di Bielefeld. E a settembre esporrò per la prima volta alla galleria Francesca Kaufmann di Milano. Si tratta prevalentemente di nuove opere e d'installazioni site specific. Devi andare a vederle, e poi possiamo parlarne!

BACK

frieze

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Latifa Echakhch and Lili Reynaud-Dewar



James Fuentes LLC, New York, USA

Latifa Echakhch's deconstructed carpets are a literal exercise in reduction. The artist unravels them, thread by thread, until only the frame of the original shape remains. The resulting sculptures are mere markings, abstract outlines on the gallery floor, the cacophony of heritage and history reduced to the geometric and the purely formal.

Still, the more one contemplates these works, which are simply titled *Frame (red)* or *Frame (green)* (both 2006), the more the suppressed and erased connotations return. The fabric frames appear like partially dematerialized flying carpets, conjuring a vast landslide of narratives and imagined places. Echakhch's simple act of erasure is slowly inverted into a more complicated gesture of surplus and addition.

For this exhibition, which was curated by Karma International, Echakhch was paired with French artist Lili Reynaud-Dewar. In many ways the match was a canny one. Both artists are concerned with the construction of postcolonial

narratives, and with the presentation of African cultural 'artifacts' in distinctly Western settings. But where Echakhch is preoccupied with removing context and meaning, and with placing culturally laden objects in perfectly constructed Minimalist contexts, Reynaud-Dewar's work – a four-part collage, two videos and a performance element, which reference ancient Egypt, Italian Utopian group Superstudio, the banlieus of France, and hip hop culture – piles tangential association upon tangential association with an almost rococo largesse.

Both artists, however, resist the simple dialectic between reduction and amplification. Echakhch removes elements from the objects under consideration; the works cohere around that very absence, and around the redoubled awareness of what has been removed. Reynaud-Dewar employs a language of shuffling and collage, of

active juxtaposition (as literally evinced in her collage featuring fragments of text alongside Superstudio's images of imagined Utopias); those fragments coalesce into a single ontology composed of disparate parts.

Also for this show, Echakhch exhibited a pair of plywood plinths, *Les petites lettres* (The Little Letters, 2008), which were scattered, both on the work's surface and on the surrounding floor, with small black triangles. The sculpture initially seemed like an exercise in abstract Minimalism. Black is juxtaposed against white, the rectangular against the triangular. But upon closer examination, the black triangles become visibly brittle, formed as they are from sheets of paper coated in ink; the sculpture's impenetrable surface is cracked and exposed. The triangles are actually made from Moroccan paper pastry templates; cultural association infuses the previously abstracted form. Finally, Echakhch's title, *Les petites lettres*, references alphabets and systems of language; in their impenetrable signification, Echakhch's little letters almost appear like Modernism's hieroglyphics.

This sense of time travel is replicated in Reynaud-Dewar's work, *In Reality, Is the Sphinx an Annex of the Monument, Or the Monument an Annex of the Sphinx?* (2008), which operates like a freestyle mash-up of cultural and art-historical references. In one video, two children are dressed in street clothes and crowned with Pharaonic headpieces. While they dance, other children behind them arrange and rearrange a collection of white boxes, pyramids and busts. These objects reappear in the corresponding video, documentation of a performance that comprised a lecture and a musical interlude featuring Reynaud-Dewar. In the performance, the video of the children is projected onto the stage, amongst other images; in front of these projections, Reynaud-Dewar lays out and catalogues the same set of boxes and pyramids.

Reynaud-Dewar's work is full of this sense of separate but interlinked worlds. The tracing of fragile links between disparate ecologies is part intellectual exercise, part paranoid compulsion: she projects herself as a cartographer of imagined lands, a cultural archivist and a seer.

On the surface, Echakhch essays a more clearly defined marriage of postcolonial discourse and Minimalism. But both artists are interested in ideology at work both in the academy and in life, and in the life of objects within this realm. Whether it is in the fantasy of Utopia, in the art-historical canon or in the notion of history itself, Echakhch and Reynaud-Dewar use these objects to trace the contours of diverse ideologies, and then carefully twist and draw those lines together.

Katie Kitamura

Lili Reynaud-Dewar
*In Reality, Is the Sphinx an
Annex of the Monument,
Or the Monument an
Annex of the Sphinx?*
2008
Documentation of
performance

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OUVERTURE

Latifa Echakhch

Michele Robecchi

THE WORK OF Latifa Echakhch is refreshing proof of how art can be communicative and socially educational without being patronizing or exploitative. Echakhch's sculptures are very elegant and delicate, but the viewer shouldn't let her discreet sensitivity in examining issues such as religion, geography and personal and collective history be deceptive. The visual and conceptual power of her combination of minimalism and romanticism is potent, and what comes across is a fundamental belief in the dignity of her subjects, even in her most severe critical moments. This achievement is largely ascribable to Echakhch's gift for taking the best out of the materials she chooses. Ordinary items like sugar cubes, fragmented carpets and broken tea glasses are converted into silent testimonies of sentiments like nostalgia, anger and a sense of disheartenment towards failed utopias.

Part of Echakhch's art seems to adhere to Naomi Klein's theory about political battles moving to more sophisticated grounds and the necessity to reinvent the instruments for the fight. Echakhch's acknowledgement of past forms of political activities is respectful and passionate, but is inevitably shaken by the implicit consideration that when it's tribute time, it's also time to move on.

Speakers' Corner (2008) is an emaciated wooden soapbox that alludes to the famous Hyde Park square where people could step

on improvised podiums and freely address bystanders on whatever topics.

Almost a readymade, it is a testament to a time when the corner was one of the few spots of democratic speech and freedom before street preaching and the Internet transformed the whole scene into an empty exercise.

For Each Stencil a Revolution (2007) is an environmental sculpture named after one of Yasser Arafat's aphorisms. It refers to the days of political leaflets and how these rudimentary pieces of carbon paper could be effective weapons for the divulgence of political credos. Glued on the wall and washed with splashes of solvent, the paper sheets generate a series of drips and pools and are coupled with a set of old rubbers dispersed through the room, suggesting a degraded suburban area and creating a stark contrast with the spiritual, almost ethereal quality of the surrounding deep-blue painted scenario.

The removal of contents and the consequent re-contextualization of the container is a process by no means unusual in Echakhch's work. *Fifty Fifty Fantasia* (2007) is a group of intersected flagpoles bulging from the wall. Stripped of the banner that marks their identity, they engage an ambiguous dance that could be interpreted as either a moot brawl or a utopian act of unity.

Perhaps Echakhch's ability to express complex ideas by simple gestures is still best rep-

resented in one of her early pieces, *Snow in Arabia* (2003). Consisting of a detuned TV monitor with a cube-shaped strip of black tape glued at the center, it testifies at once the agitation of manhood in its spiritual quest, the detached authority of religion and how this is pictured by the world's most powerful and controversial media.

Michele Robecchi is an art critic and curator based in London.

Latifa Echakhch was born in El-Khauzma, Morocco, in 1974. She lives and works in Paris and Montigny, Switzerland.

Selected solo shows: 2008: Tate Modern; 2007: Le Magasin, Grenoble; Karma International, Zurich; Interface, Dijon. Selected group shows: 2008: "Transformational Grammars," Francesco Carlini, Milano; "Art Ficus Jerusalem 2008," Talpaot Beit Benit Congress Centre, Jerusalem; Manifesta 7, Biennale-South Tyrol, Italy; "Shifting Identities," Kunsthaus Zurich; 2007: "Global Feminisms," Biennial Museum, New York; La Triennale di Milano, Suite Migration of Contemporary Art, Thessaloniki, Greece; 2006: "Where Ever We Go," Spazio Oberdan, Milan/San Francisco Art Institute; "Revolution," Museum, Kunsthaus Budapest; "La fabbrica," AKZA, Stockholm; "La force de l'art," Grand Palais, Paris; "Strategies of Learning," Periferia 7, Iasi, Romania.

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LATIFA ECHAKHCH SPEAKERS' CORNER

Exhibition open
19 September - 23 November 2008

The Level 2 Gallery programme is conceived
and curated by Tate Modern's Assistant Curators,
in dialogue with Mark Godfrey, Curator

Latifa Echakhch 'Speakers' Corner
is curated by Ben Borthwick

Text by Simon Bolitho

The next exhibition in the
Level 2 Gallery will be Nicholas Hlobo
9 December 2008 - 1 March 2009

With thanks to the Institut Français for
their support of this exhibition

The Level 2 Gallery programme has been
made possible with the generous support
of Catherine Petitgas

MODERN
TATE

LATIFA ECHAKHCH

Level 2 Gallery

19 September - 23 November 2008

LATIFA ECHAKHCH

Level 2 Gallery

19 September – 23 November 2008

SPEAKERS' CORNER

Taking its name from the area in Hyde Park designated as a space for free speech, protest and debate, Latifa Echakhch's first exhibition in the UK explores themes of the individual and the state. It comprises two dramatic installations, each combining new and existing works.

The first space is an immersive dark blue environment, made by lining the walls with thousands of sheets of carbon paper. The title of this work, *For Each Stencil A Revolution 2007, or A Chaque Stencil une Révolution*, looks back to the radical protests of the 1960s, when carbon paper was used to print multiple copies of revolutionary statements and images. Echakhch's use of this archaic material, which has become almost redundant in an age of cheap photocopiers and laserprinting, casts a melancholy light on the legacy of 1968, itself now forty years in the past. There is also a performance element to the

© Latifa Echakhch 2008



work, as Echakhch splashes methylated spirit against the paper so that the blue seeps down, gathering in pools at the bottom of the wall. The performative element and deep blue may allude to the work of Yves Klein, while the resulting streaks are reminiscent of the surface of a Colour Field painting, drawing attention to the sometimes tenuous links between the political claims of abstract art and the radical politics of the 1950s and 1960s.

As an addition for this exhibition, Echakhch has placed a number of burned tyres in the centre of the room. As well as creating a contrast between different manifestations of civil disobedience, from ideological tracts and organised protest to destructive anger and spontaneous riots, there are formal links between the collapsed structure of the tyres and the dripped pools of blue.

The second space is dominated by *Fantasia 2007*, a dense network of bare flagpoles protruding from the wall. Without a specific flag to identify them, the poles suggest a generalised symbol for the nation-state; and the way in which they crowd and intrude upon each other can be seen as either the innumerable teeming arms of state bureaucracy, or the manoeuvrings of global politics. Raised aggressively like fascist salutes,



the poles prevent visitors from moving freely, but also disrupt their spatial ability and sense of the room's architecture. Here, the new element specially added by the artist is a box placed on the floor, reminiscent of the makeshift platforms used at Speakers' Corner - a space for the individual from which an analytical, subversive or eccentric challenge to state power might be articulated.

Speakers' Corner follows a series of works in which Echakhch has examined the traditions of liberty and protest espoused in Western democracies. In *La Marseillaise 2005*, she led a perforated cardboard barrel organ score of the French national anthem, with its fervent revolutionary associations, into a portable document shredder. In *Untitled (11 March 2005) 2005*, she filmed the cleaning crew that followed closely in the wake of a street demonstration in Paris. Fliers and other detritus left by the protestors are swept away with military efficiency so that - within a few minutes - any trace of the demonstration has been erased. Echakhch has described the work as reflecting on the 'poor heritage' of the French Revolution and the events of 1968 in a city where 'there are five demonstrations a week'.



LATIFA BCHAKHCH

interviewed by Ben Borthwick, 1 September 2008

How does *Speakers' Corner* relate to your practice in general?

I remember hearing about Speakers' Corner in my secondary school English lessons. I was completely amazed by this idea that people in Great Britain are allowed to make wild public speeches as long as they bring their own crate to stand on. But on the other hand, a speakers' corner is a very localised and limited territory. Can we consider an exhibition space as a speakers' corner and a crate for shipping art as a protected space, like a diplomatic suitcase?

How did you decide to use the particular materials of each piece in the exhibition?

I like the idea of a soapbox as a political tool – it gives politics a materiality. I am interested in the potentiality of a simple wood crate. It can be seen as a one person podium, a Minimal sculpture or simply a crate with something hidden inside.

The four elements of the exhibition all relate to public forms of political expression. What does it mean to isolate them from their context and present them in a gallery?

For *Speakers' Corner* I chose to work with elements related to easily identifiable political forms of expression. Emptying these materials of their content and leaving them as obsolete objects in the corner of a white space makes possible a state of strangeness and poetic transfiguration.

What is a speakers' corner without a speech, a soapbox without an orator? It's like carbon paper without any sentences, the flag poles without flags, or a tyre already burned. What interests me most about these objects is that we can appreciate their potential uses, even if we render them functionless.

The title of *For Each Stencil A Revolution* is a quotation by Yasser Arafat. It was a comment about this political period at the end of the 1960s when a lot of demonstrations and strikes emerged in every part of the world, and for each stencil used a little revolution began. The significance of carbon paper is not the same for everybody. For people of my generation it's a reminder of the time before the widespread use of photocopies at school when we received exercises or lessons from our teacher in this very smelly A4 paper. For people who were active politically during 1968 it's the memory of nights passed by printing tracts with

October 2005



via Each Stencil A Revolution 2007 and
The Principle of Economy in 2005



a stencil machine. For others it's just a very archaic material, no longer used today.

Several burned tyres are installed with no smoke, fire or smell, just a vague black circle set down on the floor. The last traces of a violent rebellion.

Fantasia, the empty flagpoles, is an installation built in the space. Flagpoles are usually positioned outdoors, high above us and at an opened angle, celebrating international co-operation. Here they are installed in a closed angle inside the room, crossing each other like a chaotic fight. It can be seen as an attempt at staging an international celebration in an enclosed space which didn't work at all, proving the opposite of its message of hopeful optimism.

There is a narrative running through the exhibition of different relationships to state power figured by *Fantasia*: you have the individual (*Speakers' Corner*), the organised (*For Each Stencil A Revolution*), and spontaneous (*Smoke Ring*). Which has the most potential?

The opposing elements of the flagpole and the crate, the stencil and the burned tyre, are also related to the masses and the individual. I don't really know which have the most potential. I don't have any special desire to change society, but maybe all of these elements together can make the beginnings of the perfect and strongest revolution!

Fantasia 2007
courtesy the artist and Kärns International, Zurich
Photo: © Kärns International, Zurich



Unstated // 11 March 2005-2005





Shifting Identities

(Swiss) Art Now



* 1964, El Kheima, MA
Lives and works in Paris and
Marigny

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
2005 *Derivas, interface, Dijon
promesse*, Ecole des
Beaux Arts de Valence
2005 *Desert*, Show Room, Paris
2004 *Call Box / La Box*, Bourges

Group exhibitions

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

Bibliography

2007 *Heterotopia*, Biennial
Triestatalna
Global Feminisms
Brooklyn Museum, New York
2005 *La Force de l'art*, guide
of the exhibition *Beaux Arts*
Magazine, May 2006
Wherever we go, Space
Oberdan, Milan
Strategies of Learning,
Resilient 7
"Latifa Echakhch,"
Deuxième étage, 20 4 2006

Zsuzsanna Horváth, Thomas Lak, "Latifa ECHAKHCH"

"I think 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..."

(Vleena Das, *Life and Words: Violence and the Desire to
Undo 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 Andre, 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 junctura. The former symbols of Oriental order lie in pieces, their geometric symmetry and floral decorations unusable and disorganized.

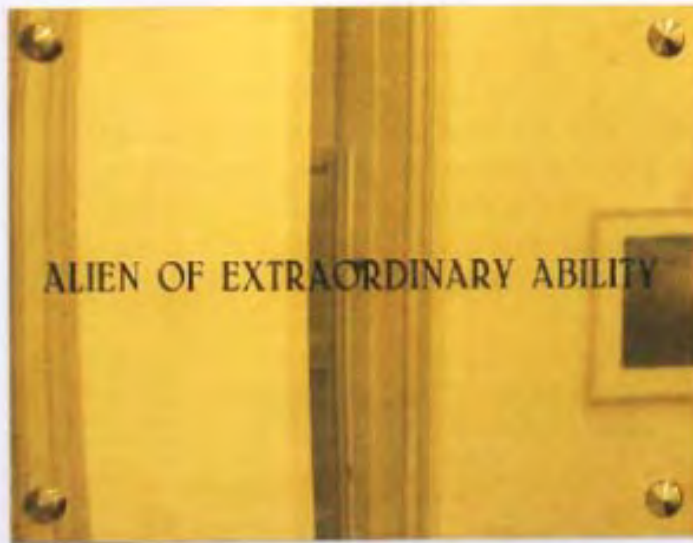
And if we listen... Surely the resounding noise and title of these broken glasses index Marcel Duchamp's *Erratum Musical* (1913) in which he played with the dialectical relationship between sight and sound. [...] In *La Marseillaise pour orgue de Barbarie* (2005), Echakhch becomes a practitioner of 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 Page)*, 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, Ø-1 Visa (Alien of extraordinary ability), 2005
Engraved brass plate, 21.59 x 27.94 cm

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

[Latifa Echakhch “Screen Shot” at Museum Haus Konstruktiv, Zürich](#)

January 15~2016



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.