

Latifa Echakhch

Ricordi di Campo

kaufmann repetto is pleased to announce *Ricordi di Campo (Field Memories)*, Latifa Echakhch's sixth solo exhibition with the gallery. Exploring the paradox between the projection of an idea and its representation, the new paintings are realized with a *décollage* technique, where fragments of pictorial images levitate on a rough concrete surface. Resonating with the harsh materiality of the substrate, the surrounding gallery walls are painted in a similar shade of cement grey, transforming the white cube into an urban grotto, and activating a poetic interplay between the narrative and abstract layers of Echakhch's works.

The large-scale paintings of the *Night Time* series are intimately correlated to the artist's interdisciplinary research for the Swiss Pavilion at the 59th Venice Biennale, which analyzes the interstices between various sensorial experiences connected to the perception of music. The figurative scenes presented in Milan are based on photography by Echakhch's friend Sim Ouch, who has been documenting nightlife events in the Lake Geneva region over the past two decades. The photo-diaristic snapshots that underpin the paintings capture people in a variety of casual situations that might occur during a concert or a party, like a woman standing in front of a sound system piled up in a car hood, or the close-up view of naked feet on a grassy terrain. A literal allusion to the exhibition title is evoked in a diptych that shows a woman and a man lying in a field, holding hands while being either sound asleep, or maybe daydreaming. Only key fragments of the painted images remain intact, as larger portions have been chipped away, unveiling the coarse layer of concrete underneath.

Another work - depicting a young, bare-chested man sitting on a window sill and turning his head up to observe something visible in the dark night outside - introduces the second series of works, that depict the sky, a recurring theme throughout Echakhch's practice. Here, the clouds and sunsets of previous works give way to the universe itself, inspired by the images transmitted by the Webb Space Telescope. Launched by the NASA in 2021, its infrared-sensing instruments can capture light that was emitted more than 13 billion years ago by the most ancient stars and galaxies. The imagery transmitted by the telescope shows us details of the universe hitherto unknown, revealing for instance the massive materiality of early galaxies, their complex spectroscopy data translated in a daring color palette. These scientific, yet spectacularly beautiful images have been painted and then partially scratched away by the artist, leaving only fragments, standing out like an abstract pattern on a coarse grey surface.

The works presented in this exhibition embody in an almost tangible way Echakhch's meditation on the bias between the initial projection of an idea and its representation, as well as on the element of temporality in the contemplation of an artwork. By first creating, and then destroying images based on photographic sources, she subtly tackles the anti-illusionist investigation of the Nouveau Réalisme movement, where the *décollage* technique resulted in the 'torn poster'

aesthetics employed by Wolf Vostell, Mimmo Rotella and their peers. Echakhch seems to invite the viewer to change perspective and to acknowledge the complexity and ambiguity of reality, yet at the same time the artist's enactment of two antagonistic gestures - creation and destruction - reechoes with the processual proceedings which are so central in her practice: "I am particularly interested in the exact moment coming after an action or an event, when we have before our eyes some traces which we—as viewers—have to rebuild as a narrative chronology, in order to be able to understand the context, as a kind of detective practice", says Echakhch, "It's one of the main tools I use to involve the public, first of all to establish a contemplative ground and then to push it in an active direction. I have to leave viewers with a visual understanding."

Latifa Echakhch represented Switzerland at the 59th Venice Biennale (2022). Her work has been exhibited internationally in solo exhibitions in museums such as BPS22, Charleroi (2020); Kunsthalle Mainz, Mainz (2019); Fondazione Memmo, Rome (2019); Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam (2018); Nouveau Musée National de Monaco, Monaco (2018); The Power Plant, Toronto (2016); Museum Haus Konstruktiv, Zurich (2015); Centre Pompidou, Paris (2014); Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (2013); Kunsthalle Basel, Basel (2012); Columbus Museum of Art, Columbus (2012); GAMeC, Bergamo (2010); MACBA, Barcelona (2010); Swiss Institute, New York (2009); Fridericianum, Kassel (2009); Tate Modern, London (2008) and many others. Echakhch is currently participating in the 14th Gwangju Biennale, Gwangju (2023) as well as in the 15th Istanbul Biennial, Istanbul (2017); Kochi Muziris Biennale, Kerala (2016); 18th Biennale of Sydney, Sydney (2012); 54th Venice Biennale, Venice (2011); 10th Biennale de Lyon, Lyon (2009); Manifesta 7, Bolzano (2008) and the 1st Biennale of Thessaloniki (2007). She won the Zurich Art Price (2014) and the Prix Marcel Duchamp (2013). Echakhch's group exhibitions include the Kunsthaus Baselland, Basel (2022); Kunsthall KAdE, Amersfoort (2022); Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (2021); Jewish Museum, Brussels (2021); Red Brick Art Museum, Beijing (2019); Frac, Doubs (2019); Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (2018); Boghossian Foundation, Bruxelles (2016); Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (2016); Swiss Institute, New York (2015); Palazzo Grassi, Venice (2014); The Power Station of Art, Shanghai (2014); Musée d'art Moderne, Paris; MoMA PS1, New York (2013) and many others.