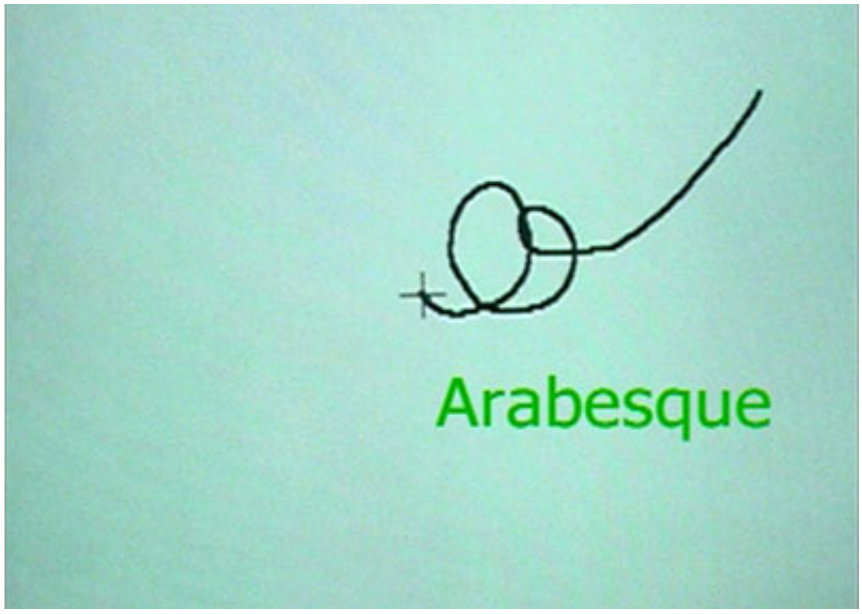
2. | Arabesque, tribute to Jackson Pollock





1997, Morocco, 2 min 22, SD, 4/3, B&W, stereo.
Courtesy of the artist and Ceysson & Bénétière, Paris.
Ed. of 5 + 2 A.P.

Collection of Musée de l'histoire de l'immigration, Paris

Dès les années 70, Oleg Grabar avait confronté d'une part les différentes manifestations de l'art islamique dans le temps (depuis 750 jusqu'à nos jours), dans l'espace (en Iran, en Syrie, en Lybie, en Inde, en Chine…), selon ses diverses manifestations (chiites, sunnites, soufiques etc) et, d'autre part, la culture algébrique islamique avec l'abstraction géométrique américaine, notamment celle de Frank Stella.

Prolongeant en images de telles interrogations fondamentales, Arabesque (1997) et Survival Signs (1998) reviennent sur la présence de la lettre et du chiffre dans l'esthétique ornementale propre à la culture visuelle islamique, en les faisant assonner avec les pratiques d'occupation all over de l'espace plan en Occident, en particulier bien sûr celles de Jackson Pollock. L'historien comme l'artiste concluent au même phénomène : l'exceptionnelle élasticité plastique des éléments structurels de l'art islamique. « Pour utiliser une comparaison biologique, la culture musulmane en général, l'art islamique en particulier, peuvent se concevoir comme une suite de greffes sur d'autres entités vivantes et, pour une part, la manière dont la greffe prenait et son succès dépendaient du corps auquel elle s'ajoutait. » Sur la base de ces premiers exercices d'importation d'une culture visuelle architecturale, calligraphique et décorative dans un médium contemporain électronique, Mounir Fatmi ne cesse d'étendre les feux de

In the 1970s, Oleg Grabar dealt on the one hand with the various forms of Islamic art in time (from 750 to the present day), in space (in Iran, Syria, Libya, India, China...), in its various manifestations (Shia, Sunni, Sufi, etc) and, on the other hand, the Islamic algebraic culture, with American geometric abstraction, and that practised by Frank Stella in particular (3).

By extending such fundamental questions as images, Arabesque (1997) and Survival Signs (1998) come back to the presence of the letter and the number in the ornamental aesthetic peculiar to Islamic visual culture, by making them rhyme, as it were, with the practice of the all-over occupation of the flat space in the west, in particular, needless to add, the work of Jackson Pollock. Historian and artist alike end up with the same phenomenon: the exceptional visual elasticity of the structural features of Islamic art. "To use a biological comparison, the Muslim culture in general, and Islamic art in particular, may be seen as a sequence of grafts on to other living entities and, to some extent, the manner in which the graft took and its success depended on the body to which it was added.(4)" On the basis of these early exercises involving the importation of an architectural, calligraphic and decorative visual culture into an electronic contemporary medium, Mounir Fatmi is forever spreading the spotlights of his critique, where, hitherto, any reuse of a cultural repertory in its dimension as aesthetic programme obviously tended to

sa critique, là où jusqu'à présent tout remploi d'un répertoire culturel dans sa dimension de programme esthétique tendait évidemment à confirmer la source spéculative dont celui-ci provient (l'Islam en l'occurrence).

Pour Mounir Fatmi il s'agit de renouer avec la culture visuelle arabe antérieure à l'Islam, et de créer la culture arabe critique contemporaine. Un monde s'ouvre à lui, rien d'étonnant à ce que son prochain film (en pellicule cette fois) appartienne au registre de la science-fiction.

Nicole Brenez, Août 2005.

vidéo distribuée par Heure exquise ! www.exquise.org

Oleg Grabar, *La Formation de l'art islamique,* 1973, tr. Yves Thoraval, Paris, Flammarion, 1987 et L'ornement. Formes et fonctions dans l'art islamique, 1992, tr. Jean-François Allain, Paris, Flammarion.

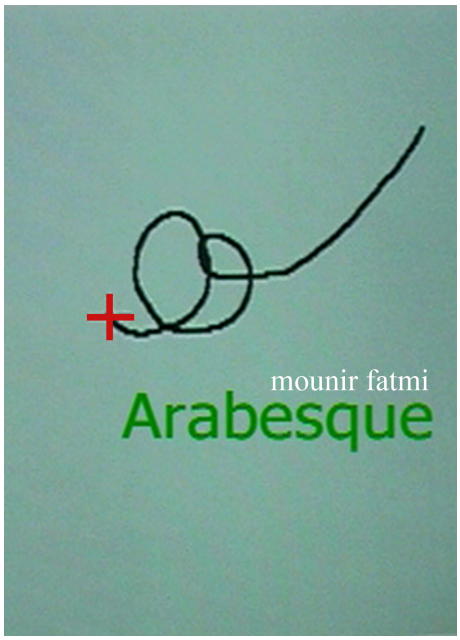
confirm the speculative source from which this issues (Islam as it happens).

For Mounir Fatmi, it's a linking back up with Arab visual culture prior to Islam, and creating contemporary critical Arab culture. A world opens up to him, and there is nothing surprising about the fact that his next film (in film form this time, rather than video) should belong on the science-fiction shelf.

Nicole Brenez, August 2005.

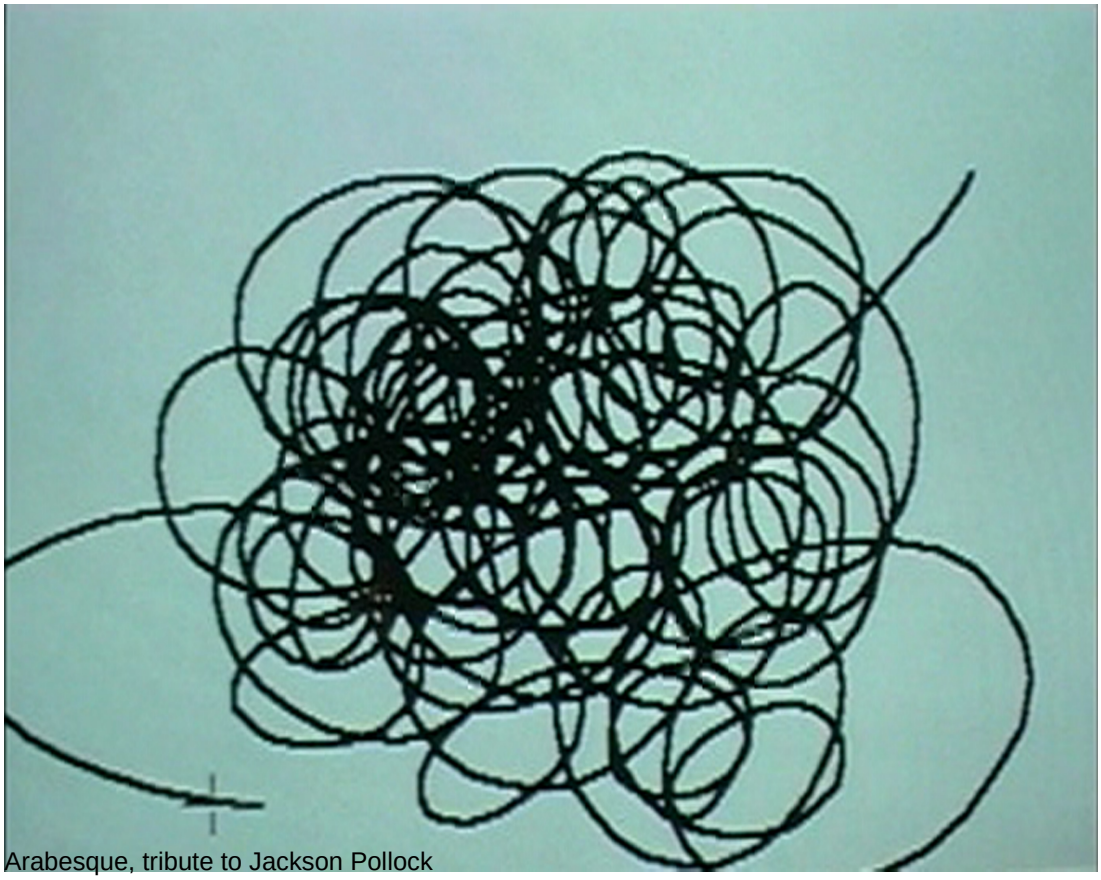
" The video mimics the horror vacui that Western critics attributed to Islamic art, while at the same time it shows that Pollock's action painting inherited the allover pattern of Islamic art. Arabesque neatly points out the debt of Western modernism to Islamic art, yet its awkward-looking scribble rejects the heritage of Islamic aesthetics. "

Laura U. Marks, Millennium Film Journal, 2010



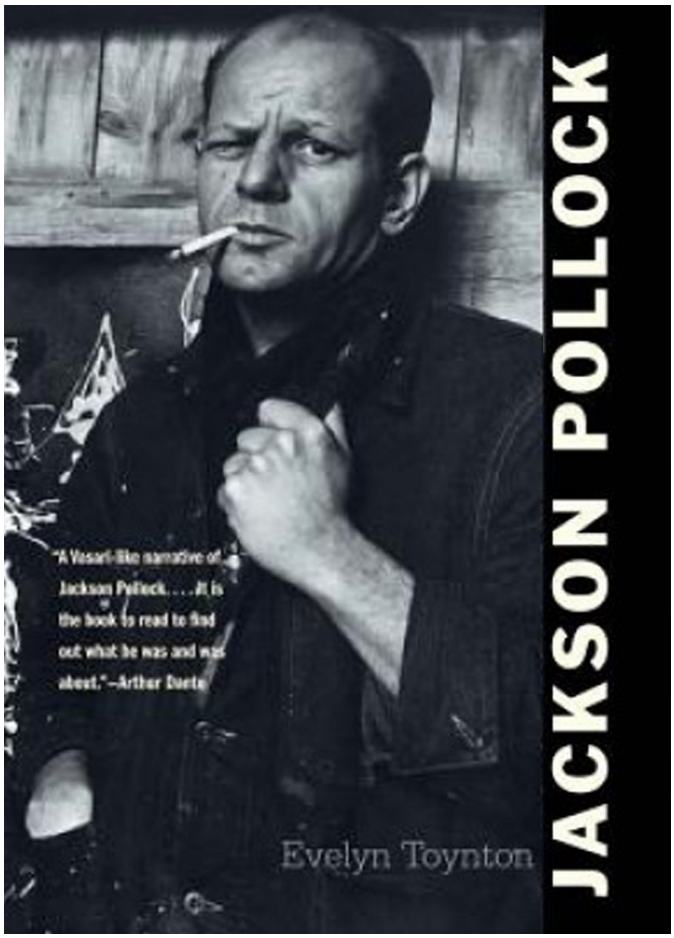
Arabesque, tribute to Jackson Pollock

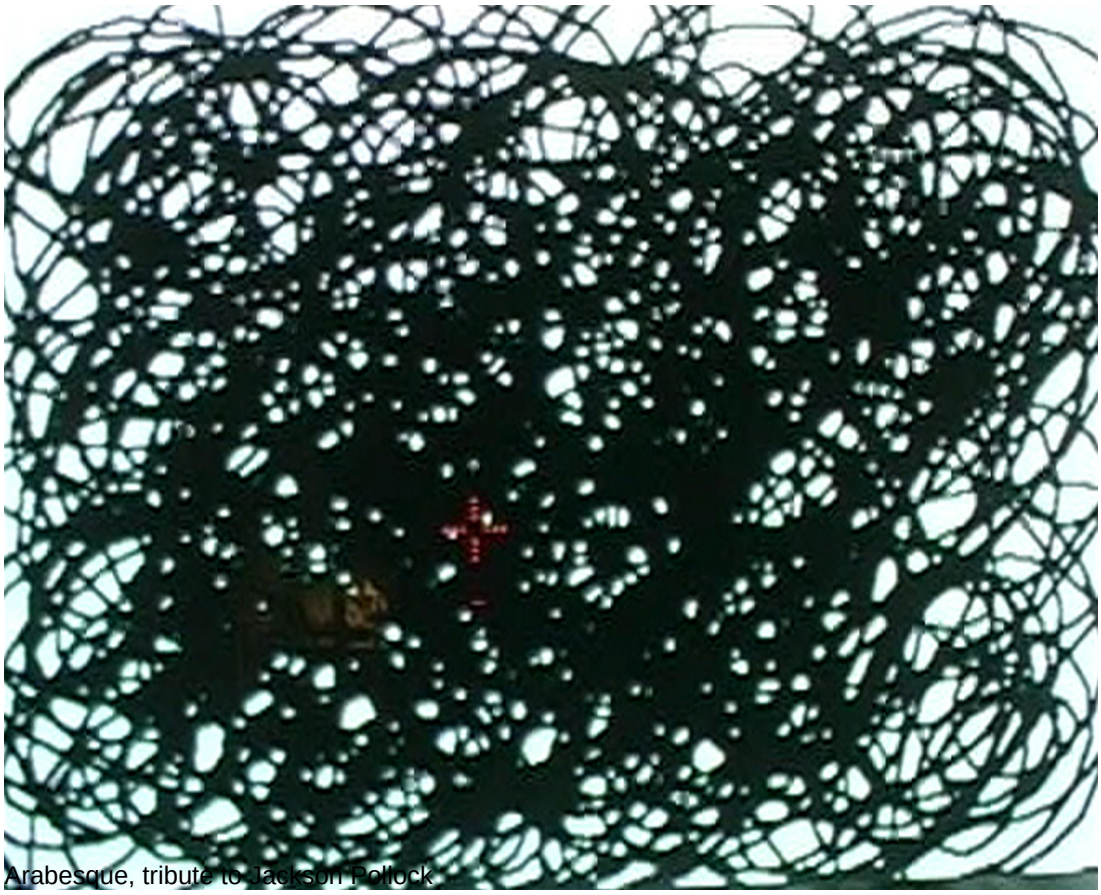
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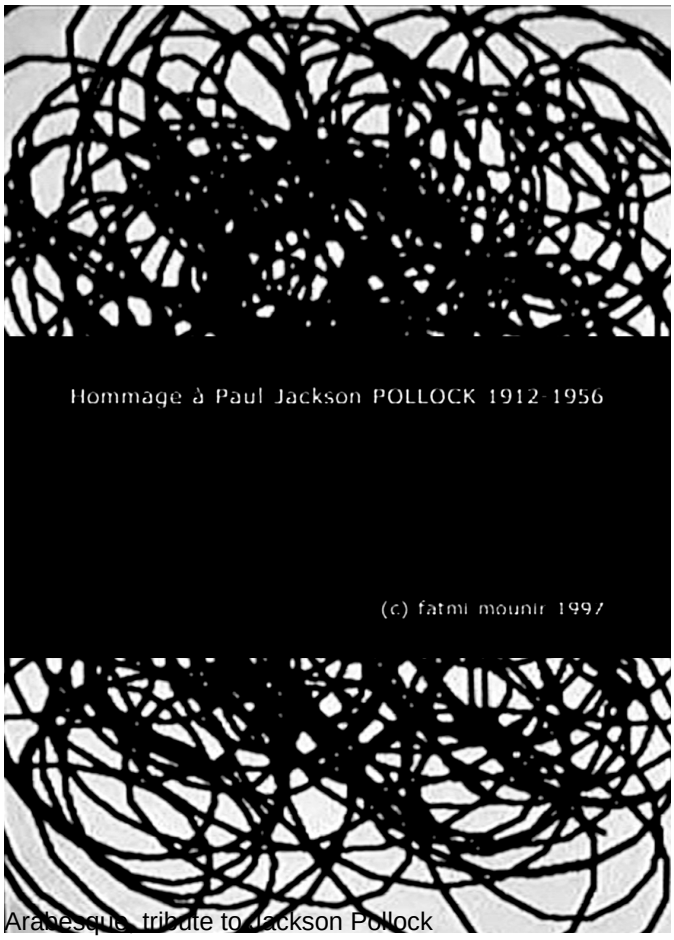


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