

13. | In Search of Paradise



2007, series of 5 inkjet print, 70 x 40 cm each.
Exhibition view from In Search of Paradise, Galerie van Dieten, 2007, Amsterdam.
Courtesy of the artist and Ceysson & Bénétière, Paris.
Ed. of 5 + 2 A.P.

« En quête du paradis » est une série de cinq impressions laser présentant une forêt verdoyante des Pays-Bas. Toutes les images sauf une placent le spectateur au milieu des arbres, les troncs sortant du cadre, les feuilles surplombant l'ensemble, tandis que la dernière, prise d'en haut, montre un chemin, une grosse branche cassée jonchant le sol à côté de la route. Aucune trace de présence humaine n'est visible, aucune impression qu'on aborde ici le thème de la présence d'un homme seul dans la forêt. Au lieu de cela, Fatmi renverse les clichés généralement associés à cette thématique en focalisant notre attention sur la forêt elle-même, sa propre vulnérabilité et sa disparition causée par la déforestation et le développement qui ont fait de la nature un thème politique hautement controversé. « En quête du paradis » ne porte pas sur la quête de l'homme, mais sur la quête du sacré, d'espaces préservés que procure la nature, alors que tant d'entre eux sont aujourd'hui sous le contrôle de puissances auxquelles on ne peut se fier, et victimes de destructions. Les images sont imprimées sur un tissu léger et soyeux qui ondoie dès qu'un spectateur passe devant, accentuant cette fragilité.

Les photos ont été à l'origine présentées dans le cadre d'une installation plus vaste intitulée « La forêt de Mondrian » ; elles étaient placées entre plusieurs sculptures constituées de barres en bois utilisées pour le saut d'obstacles à cheval. Lorsque le spectateur embrasse l'œuvre du regard, les grandes images de la forêt, réduites sur des morceaux de tissu délicat, contrastent fortement avec la taille et l'effet imposant créé par les barres d'obstacles. Comme si la forêt diminuait, dominée par l'utilisation par l'homme de ses

In Search of Paradise is a series of five inkjet prints of a lush, green forest in Holland. All but one of the images sets the viewer within the trees, the trunks pushing up and out of the frame, the leaves looming overhead, while the last one, taken from above, shows a path with a large branch broken laying off to the side of the road. There are no traces of humankind to be seen, no obvious sites of identification to place where or what, no impression of this being about man alone in the woods. Rather, fatmi spins the frequent clichés associated with that, turning the attention onto the forest itself, its own vulnerability, and its disappearance to deforestation and development that has made nature a highly contentious political platform. In Search of Paradise is not about man's own search, but about a search for the sacred, safe spaces that nature provides, so many of which are now controlled by unreliable powers and subject to devastation. Printed onto lightweight, silky fabric so that with any passerby the prints flutter about, underscores this fragility.

Originally presented as part of a larger installation titled, The Forest of Mondrian, the prints were placed between several sculptures made up of large wooden horse jumping bars, or obstacles, as fatmi calls them. As the viewer took in the work, the images of the large forest, reduced into a delicate piece of fabric, contrasted starkly with the size and assertiveness of the wooden jumping bars. It's as if the forest has diminished, dominated by man's use of its resources. In one sculpture, named after the title of the exhibition, The Forest of Mondrian, sixteen, very tall, white jumping bars are propped up against the wall. Onto the bars, fatmi has painted squares and panels of color in a style that calls to mind the red, yellow, and blue abstractions of Piet Mondrian, after whom

ressources. Dans l'une des sculptures, titrée comme l'exposition elle-même « La forêt de Mondrian », seize très longues barres d'obstacles blanches sont appuyées contre le mur. Sur les barres, Fatmi a peint des carrés et panneaux colorés dans un style qui rappelle les formes abstraites rouges, jaunes et bleues de Piet Mondrian, dont l'installation s'inspire. Avant que Mondrian ne commence à réaliser des peintures abstraites aux formes épurées et aux couleurs primaires, pour lesquelles il est sans conteste le plus connu, il reçut une formation de peintre paysagiste et était fortement influencé par la forêt. Nombre de ses premières peintures se concentraient sur la structure des arbres, les réduisant avec le temps à leur structure linéaire fondamentale.

Ce changement de style, ce mouvement de la forêt verdoyante vers l'abstraction pure, entre en résonance avec les pratiques artistiques de Fatmi, notamment son usage fréquent de formes minimalistes et ses palettes chromatiques. Pour la série de photographies « En quête du paradis », Fatmi s'est inspiré d'un dessin de Mondrian, « Forêt près d'Oele », réalisé vers 1906. Pour lui, cette œuvre représente une frontière entre le passé de Mondrian et ses innovations à venir, une sorte de confrontation entre l'ancien et le nouveau, entre des esthétiques lyrique et formelle, abstraction et minimalisme, déconstruction et modernité, poussant Fatmi à contempler lui aussi les deux facettes de la nature : la ressource riche et protectrice, et sa confrontation avec la modernité.

Blair Dessent, avril 2017.

the installation takes its inspiration. Before Mondrian began his hard edge abstract paintings with primary colors for which he is perhaps best known, he was trained as a landscape artist and was very influenced by the forest. Many of his early paintings focused on the structure of trees, and overtime he gradually reduced them to their bare, linear essentials.

This shift of style, the movement from lush forest to pure abstraction connects with fatmi's own artistic practice, his frequent use of minimal forms and color palettes. For the series of photographs, In Search of Paradise, fatmi was inspired by Mondrian's drawing, Woods near Oele, c. 1906. For him, this piece represented a borderline between Mondrian's past and his future innovations, a sort of confrontation between old and new, lyrical and formal aesthetics, abstraction and minimalism, deconstruction and modernity, provoking fatmi to contemplate the two sides of nature as well, the rich, protective resource and its confrontation with modernity.

Blair Dessent, April 2017.

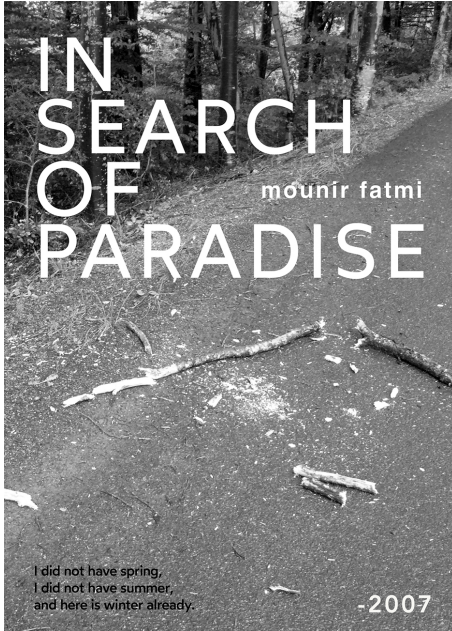
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exhibitions:

2007

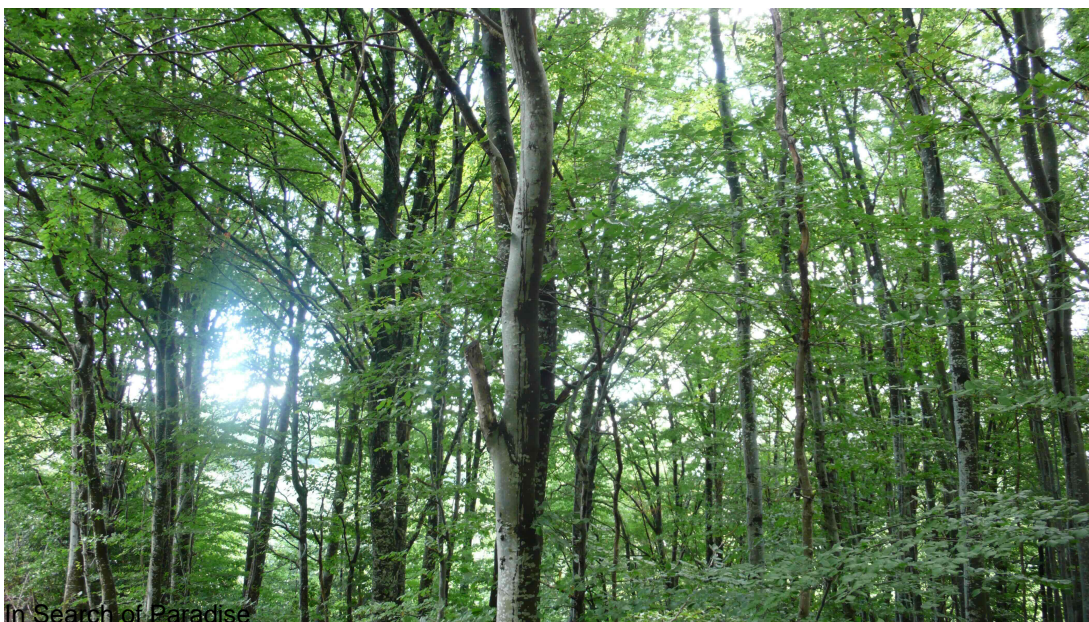
In search of paradise - Ferdinand van Dieten Gallery - Solo show



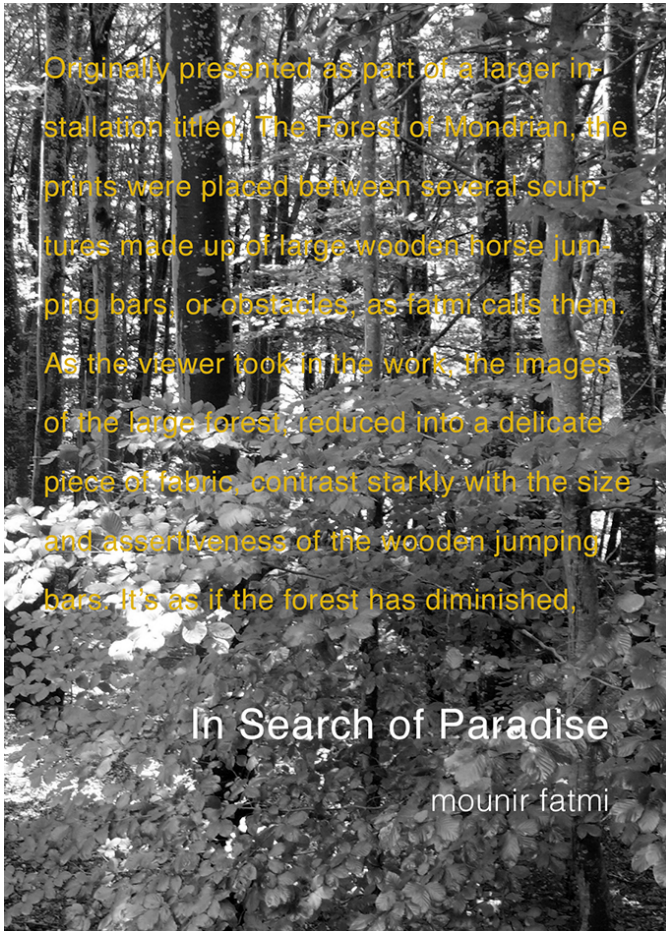
In Search of Paradise, SF Publishing, 2021

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