28. | The Monuments

2008-2009, 175 helmets, philosphers names, around 150 x 150 x 90 cm.
Exhibition view of 1st Brussels Biennial, 2008, Brussels.
Courtesy of the artist and Ceysson & Bénétière, Paris.
Ed. of 5 + 1 A.P.

Collection of Darat al Fanun, The Khalid Shoman Foundation, Amman

Collection of Nadour, Krefeld

This work was part of 5th Thessaloniki Biennale -Between the Pessimism..., Thessaloniki, 2015.

This work was part of Biennale de Bruxelles - Fuck architects: chapter III, Brussels, 2008.

This work was part of Chengdu Biennale - Pulse of Life, Chengdu, 2026.

Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Derrida, Jean Baudrillard, Georges Bataille, Walter Benjamin, Albert Camus, Jean-Paul Sartre, Michel Foucault, Pierre Bourdieu... autant de noms d'intellectuels, de penseurs de la modernité occidentale, qui ont construit la plupart des théories, des systèmes, des critiques, des structures idéologiques avec ou contre lesquels s'est construit le monde contemporain. Par leur manière de porter un regard toujours critique parfois révolutionnaire sur l'éthique, la politique, la sociologie, l'épistémologie, l'art ou le langage, ces hommes sont les bâtisseurs de la pensée moderne et post-moderne.
Leurs noms inscrits sur des casques de chantier suggèrent immédiatement la notion de construction, et fournissent d'emblée le moyen plastique de créer un lien avec l'architecture, qui dépasse ici la notion de mode de construction du bâti, mais opère un glissement vers un mode

Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Derrida, Jean Baudrillard, Georges Bataille, Walter Benjamin, Albert Camus, Jean-Paul Sartre, Michel Foucault, Pierre Bourdieu...many are the names of the intellectuals and modern Western thinkers who have constituted the theories, systems, critiques and ideological structures with which, or against which, the contemporary world is built. By maintaining a consistently critical, sometimes revolutionary, view of ethics, politics, sociology, epistemology, art or language, these men are the builders of modern and post-modern thought.
Their names inscribed on building site hard hats immediately suggest the notion of construction and at first sight provide a formal means to create a link with architecture, which goes beyond the notion of constructing a frame, creating a shift towards a way of formulating thought, its history and its connections. If thought is both a construction and

de formalisation de la pensée, de son histoire, de ses connexions. Si la pensée est à la fois construction et matière à construire, les systèmes de pensée s'édifient en architectures. D' autres formes d'architecture.
Le parallèle entre le travail de l'ouvrier, et l'ouvrage que constitue la structuration d'une pensée, d'une théorie, d'un système philosophique se fait ici évident.
C'est ainsi bien à dessein que Derrida employait le terme de « déconstruction » quand il s'agissait de déstructurer les modes de pensée occidentaux hiérarchisants.

Mais l'espace sémantique des *Monuments* ne se limite pas à ce parallèle et la métaphore se file en réseau polysémique. Le casque de chantier ne renvoie pas seulement à l'idée du penseur-bâtisseur, il signifie aussi ce qui est « en voie de construction ». Autrement dit la pensée en mouvement, en perpétuelle construction, reconstruction, déconstruction est un vaste chantier. C'est là l'essence même de la pensée, que de se déployer dans ce continuum nécessairement inachevé. Ce chantier permanent traduit la dimension fondamentalement critique de la pensée, dans la capacité qu'à l'homme de remettre en question ce à quoi il pensait un jour avoir répondu, dans cette curiosité sans cesse nourrie de la vision de l'univers, dans cette aptitude à hypostasier les raisons du monde, à bâtir des systèmes explicatifs, à s'interroger encore et encore sur le sens et la valeur de la condition humaine, à transformer les faits en problèmes, à ne pas se suffire du réel. On reconnaît ici le refus de mounir fatmi de la pensée totalisante –ou totalitaire-, des systèmes clos et des préjugés auxquels conduit l'ignorance.
Les monuments semblent rappeler la nécessité, plus que jamais, de laisser parler, d'écouter, de lire, ce que peuvent avoir à dire sur le monde ces « ouvriers de la pensée ».

Si ces penseurs sont des monuments, ce sont des monuments fragiles. Sur leurs chantiers aussi le port du casque est obligatoire car de tels chantiers sont éminemment dangereux. Si à première vue, l'idée que ces casques soient faits pour protéger leur outil de travail peut être perçue comme une boutade, elle révèle en fait cette fragilité de la pensée, menacée par l'ignorance, l'incompréhension, la violence du dogmatisme, l'aveuglement de l'illusion ; tout penseur reste toujours, d'une manière ou d'une autre, dans cette solitude et ce risque mortels de la caverne platonicienne.
Les penseurs sont des monuments fragiles et il faudrait en réalité bien plus qu'un casque pour les protéger car les chantiers qu'ils mettent en œuvre sont toujours menaçants pour les idolâtres, les philistins, les contempteurs de l'intelligence, les candides de toute sorte, et plus encore pour les dictateurs, tyrans et autres despotes pour qui le paternalisme dogmatique et l'ignorance populaire garantissent la perdurance du pouvoir.
Dans sa version de porcelaine, la vulnérabilité des ces Monuments est renforcée, dans ce paradoxe d'un objet censé protéger bien que lui-même si fragile.
Fragilité de la pensée, aussi, en ce qu'elle peut avoir de perverti. Car ne nous y trompons pas : la crise intellectuelle que nous traversons n'est pas tant une faillite de la pensée en tant que telle qu'une crise éthique. Le triomphe du capitalisme sauvage, de l'économie de profit, de la globalisation médiatique, conduisant à une anti-morale de

construction material, systems of thought are built up into architecture, a different sort of architecture. The parallel between workman's work and a piece of work that is constituted by the structuring of an idea, a theory or a political system is evident here.
It is clearly on purpose that Derrida used the term "deconstruction" when it came to dismantling hierarchical Western ways of thinking.

But the semantic space of The Monuments is not limited to this parallel and the metaphor hastens into a polysemous network. The hard hat does not just refer to the idea of a thinker-builder, it also signifies something that is "under construction". In other words thought in movement is a vast construction site, in perpetual construction, reconstruction and deconstruction. That is the very essence of thought, to unfold in this necessarily unfinished continuum. This permanent construction site conveys the fundamental critical dimension of thought: in man's capacity to call into question the things he thought he had already found the answers to, in the curiosity constantly nourished by the vision of the universe, in the ability to underpin the reasons for the world, in building explanatory systems, in questioning oneself more and more on the sense and value of the human condition, in transforming facts into problems, and in not letting the real suffice. Recognisable here is mounir fatmi's refusal of reductive or totalitarian thought, the refusal of closed systems and prejudices created through ignorance.
The Monuments are a reminder of the necessity, more than ever, to allow the "workmen of thought" to express themselves in the world; to let them speak, listen and read.

If these thinkers are monuments, they are fragile monuments. Wearing hard hats on construction sites is compulsory as these sites are eminently dangerous. If at first sight the idea of these hard hats being made to protect could be perceived of as a joke, it reveals in fact the fragility of thought, threatened by ignorance, misunderstanding, violence of dogmatism and blindness of illusion. Every thinker remains, in one way or another, in the solitude and fatal risk of Plato's cave.
Thinkers are fragile monuments and, in reality, a lot more than a hard hat is needed to protect them as the sites they are implementing are always threatening to the idolatrous, to philistines, to the naive and to those that hold intelligence in contempt. They are even more threatening to dictators, tyrants and other despots for whom dogmatic paternalism and popular ignorance guarantee enduring power.
In this porcelain version, the vulnerability of The Monuments is reinforced, the paradox being that an object that is meant to protect is itself so fragile.
Thought is fragile too in that it can be corrupted. Make no mistake here: the intellectual crisis we are going through is not so much a failure of thought as it is an ethical crisis. The triumph of savage capitalism, of the profit economy and of media globalisation, leading to an anti-moral of instrumentalism, even human reification, does not result from the absence of thought at all but on the contrary, from a chosen and pointed contemplation, to which Sun ZI, Machiavelli, Thomas Hobbes, Hegel, Malthus, Nietzsche, August Comte or Adam Smith are no strangers.
So the hard hats marked with the names of thinkers, abandoned in growing piles, as if the site had been deserted,

l'instrumentalisation, voire de la réification de l'humain, ne résultent nullement de l'absence de pensée mais au contraire d'une réflexion choisie, et orientée, à laquelle Sun Zi, Machiavel, Thomas Hobbes, Hegel, Malthus, Nietzsche, Auguste Comte ou Adam Smith ne sont pas étrangers. Alors, les casques d'ouvriers marqués au nom de nos penseurs, abandonnés en tas proliférants comme si le chantier avait été déserté, semblent manifester l'urgence de se remettre au travail, et d'opposer à nouveau une Pensée, humaniste si c'est encore possible, au règne du cynisme et de la matière consommable.

Les monuments présentés ici sont le point de départ d'un work in progress développant, à partir de cinq casques de porcelaine portant le nom de penseurs ayant marqué la réflexion de mounir fatmi, des installations proliférantes de casques de chantier multipliant les références, d'une série photographique et d'une vidéo.

Marie Deparis, Janvier 2009.

seem to demonstrate the urgency of getting back to work, to oppose one single thought, in a humanist way, if that's still possible in the reign of cynicism and consumer goods.

The Monuments presented here are the beginning of a developing "work in progress", from five porcelain hard hats, bearing the names of thinkers who have influenced mounir fatmi's thought process, to prolific installations of construction site hard hats, with multiple references, a series of photographs and a video.

Marie Deparis, January 2009.

Translation: Caroline Rossiter.

Just as ideas are part of a city being constructed passing through and beyond modern or postmodern thought;
the helmets not only refer to the configuration of the city planning approach
of the new postmodern megalopolises, they also evoke the inherent risks therein.

Ali Akay, 2011

exhibitions:

2026

Pulse of Life - Chengdu Biennale, Chine - Biennale

2020

ARCO madrid - Wilde Gallery - Art fair

2009

Fuck architects: Chapter III - FRAC Alsace - Solo show

2008

1st Brussels Biennial - Brussels - Biennale

Brussels Biennial, 2008, Brussels

Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Derrida, Jean Baudrillard, Georges Bataille, Walter Benjamin, Albert Camus, Jean-Paul Sartre, Michel Foucault, Pierre Bourdieu...many are the names of the intellectuals and modern Western thinkers who have constituted the theories, systems, critiques and ideological structures with which, or against which, the contemporary world is built.

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AKBANK PRIVATE BANKING'İN 2 AYLIK KÜLTÜR GAZETESİDİR. PARA İLE SATILMAZ / SAYI: 6 / OCAK 2011

Megalopoller

Akbank Sanat, 26 Ocak'tan itibaren mounir fatmi'nin 'Megalopoller' isimli sergisine ev sahipliği yapıyor. 19 Mart'a kadar sürecek olan serginin küratörlüğünü Ali Akay yapıyor.

'Les Monuments', 2008

mounir fatmi 'Megalopoller' sergisiyle, bir bakıma şehirlerdeki dönüşüm sürecini sorguluyor ve bir eleştiri ortaya koyuyor. Bunu yaparken şehirlerin mimarisine eğiliyor ve kaybolan bir dünyadan yeni teknolojilerin hakim olmaya başladığı başka bir dünyaya Arap aleminden ironik olarak bakıyor.

1970 Fas doğumlu mounir fatmi, Paris'te yaşıyor ve çalışıyor. fatmi yarattığı dil oyunları ve görsel alanlarla seyircilere mevcut politik ve dini algı ve belleklerinden bağımsız olarak inceleme olanağı sunuyor. Videoları, enstalasyonları, çizim ve heykelleri seyircilerin kuşku, korku ve arzularını ortaya çıkarmayı hedefliyor. Bir yandan güncel olayları konu ederek, bunların sebeplerini ve semptomatik orijinlerini araştırıyor, bir yandan da açıklamalar sunuyor.

fatmi'nin 'Megalopoller' sergisi, 90'larda ulus-devletlerin geriye çekildiği, devletler-üstü siyasi ve ekonomik yapılanmanın oluştuğu dönemi konu ediyor. Bu sergi, Berlin Duvarı ve SSCB sonrasında, Avrupa Birliği'nin de ortak para birimine doğru geliştiği yıllarda dünyayı yatay bir şekilde kesen şehirler yeni dünya merkezleri olmaya; çevre ve merkez arasındaki gerilim dünyayı yatay çizgiden itibaren yeniden oluşturmaya başladığı döneme ışık tutuyor. 'Megalopoller' sergisi, bu dönemlerde şehirlerde yaşanan mutenalaşma ve normalleştirme süreçleriyle ve marjinalleşen mahallelerin yeniden yatırım altına alınmasıyla başlayan şehircilik planlamasını inceliyor. Bu doğrultuda fatmi'nin en çok sorguladığı alan da mimari oluyor.

mounir fatmi'nin çalışmaları daha önce Zürih'teki Migros Museum fuer Gegenwartskunst'ta, Düsseldorf'taki Museum Kunst Palast'ta, Paris'teki Centre Georges Pompidou ve Tokyo'daki Mori Art Museum'da sergilendi. Gwangju Bienali'nde ve ikinci Seville Bienali'nde de yer alan sanatçı 2006'daki Dakar Bienali'nde en büyük ödüle layık görüldü. 2007'de Angola'daki Luanda Trienali'nde, 8'inci Sharjah Bienali'nde ve 52'inci Venedik Bienali'nde de yer alan fatmi'nin 'Embargo' isimli videosu Londra Tate Modern'deki 'Paradise Now! Essential French AvantgardeCinema 1890-2008' retrospektifinde gösterildi. Akbank Sanat'taki 'Megalopoller' sergisi 19 Mart'a kadar izlenebilir.

The Monuments

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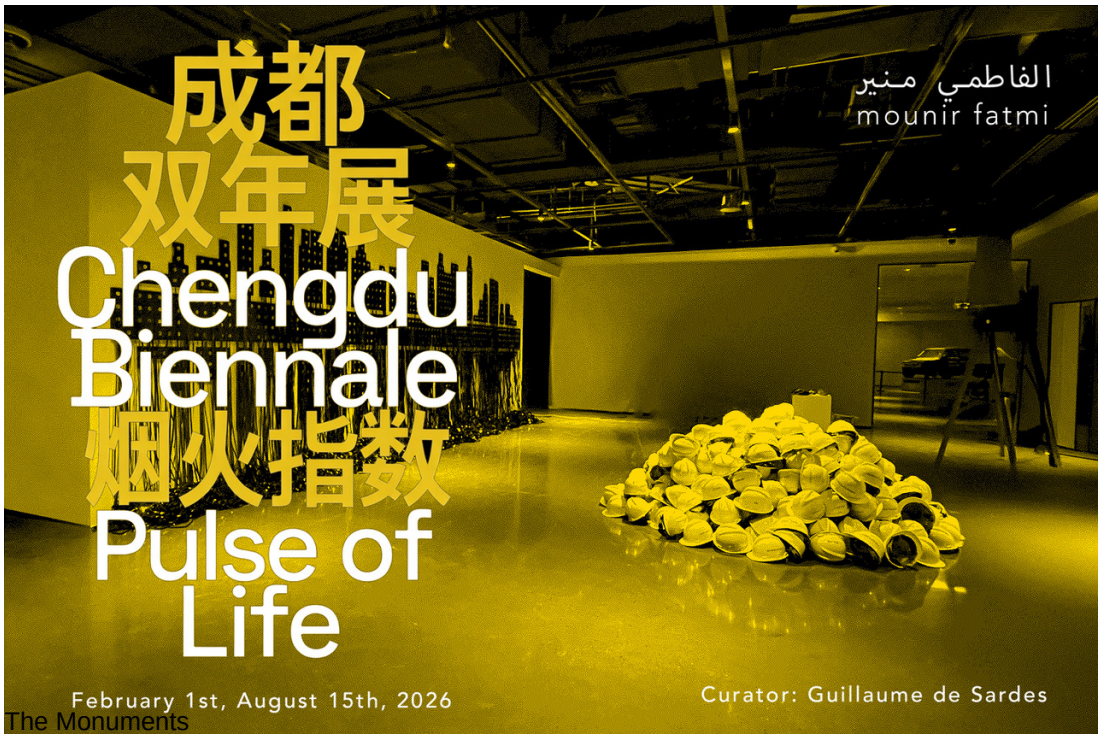

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