38. | The Lost Springs 01





2011, 1 broom of 3 meters, 22 flags of the Arab League, 300 x 375 x 40 cm.
Exhibitions view.
Courtesy of the artist and Ceysson & Bénétière, Paris.
Ed. of 1 + 1 A.P.

This work was part of 1st Trio Biennial - Who said tomorrow doesn't exist?, Rio de Janeiro, 2015.

This work was part of 54th Venice Biennal - The future of a promise, Venice, 2011.

« Les printemps perdus », l'installation minimale de mounir fatmi, portée par une scénographie sobre, légère, poétique, met en scène les 22 drapeaux en berne des pays de la Ligue des États arabes. Sous les pavillons tunisiens et égyptiens se dressent deux balais-brosses de 3 mètres de haut en référence aux soulèvements populaires qui ont mené à la chute respective de Zine El Abidine Ben Ali en Tunisie et de Hosni Moubarak en Égypte. L'actualité brûlante au Maghreb, au Machrek et dans la péninsule Arabique en proie à la contestation violente de pouvoirs néo-patriarcaux, inspire cette œuvre évocatrice, subtile et percutante.

La symbolique du drapeau est forte d'identité et d'attribution du point de vue de l'anthropologie de l'État. Totem moderne, il peut virer au fétiche en raison d'un surinvestissement affectif ou d'une dramatisation des passions politiques. Il participe d'une liturgie profane qui institue un espace sanctuarisé du sacré-politique. mounir fatmi semble l'avoir saisi avec cette remarquable intuition d'un dispositif iconique à mi-chemin entre l'autel et la dramaturgie protocolaire universalisante. Ce faisant, il touche au cœur même de la représentation démocratique c'est-à-dire à la capacité de catalyser métaphoriquement le lien civil, d'opérer un transfert de transcendance en même temps qu'un partage solidaire de

The Lost Springs, mounir Fatmi' s minimal, elegant and poetic installation comprises of the twenty two flags of the states that make up The Arab League, seen at half-mast. Leaning up against the wall, tucked underneath the Tunisian and Egyptian flags, like ersatz flag-poles, are two brooms that refer to the uprisings that led to the falls of, respectively, President Ben Ali in Tunisia and President Mubarak in Egypt. This subtle yet powerful work is inspired by the incendiary protests that have sprung up against neo patriarchal power across North Africa and the Arab world.

In the taxonomy of the state the flag is a symbol loaded with identity and attribution. A modern totem , it is the fetishized focus and site for the sublimation of the passions stirred by politics. It forms part of a new, secular and profane liturgy that creates a pseudo-religious space in which the political is sanctified. mounir fatmi captures the nature of the flag as a device that lies halfway between the altar and the formal language of universalising values. He gets to the core of the dynamics of representation in the democratic sphere, which is to say its ability to catalyse and animate civic bonds and to perform an act of transcendental transference of culture, values and sovereignty. These national emblems always carry with them an emotional charge, ritual and protective.

culture, de valeurs, de souveraineté. Les emblèmes nationaux renferment toujours une charge signifiante émotionnelle, rituelle, protectrice, voire performative à vocation fédérative. Ils rassemblent le peuple-enfant qui se drape sous leur égide telle une grande fratrie.

L'oblitération collective du père-chef recèle une dimension analytique, œdipienne, au sens de la fable freudienne de la horde primitive (Totem et tabou). Le ménage nécessaire suggéré par mounir Fatmi ne porte pas sur la communauté des frères, mais sur les potentats qui se rêvent en ses démiurges castrateurs au risque de verser dans la tyrannie. L'absence de balai interroge sur l'inertie de citoyens qui hésitent à se faire agents de salubrité dans leur propre foyer national. Elle ordonne, à la manière d'un planning, l'échéancier des tâches de ce vaste projet d'émancipation, de rénovation et de dégel sous les 20 bannières restantes. Les brosses indiquent ironiquement une dynamique et un effet d'entraînement euphorisant. À qui le tour ? Que reste-t-il à épousseter ? Où se cachent les ordures ?
Il y a dans cette héraldique contemporaine un caractère domestique qui souligne l'investissement civique de la sphère publique, l'espace national étant réapproprié par les peuples invités à l'agir-créatif en se saisissant de tous les manches à balai de leur Histoire pour ? comme dit l'adage ? balayer chacun devant sa porte.

mounir fatmi porte ici le témoignage par l'esthétique du coup-de-balai, d'un printemps intemporel. Le plasticien se fait porte-étendard de ce revivalisme révolutionnaire panarabe à l'utopie enchanteresse, rompant avec la monotonie ambiante de lendemains qui toujours déchantent. L'artiste mobilise les ressorts de la connivence, procède par allusion suffisante, mêle indistinctement roman familial et romantisme populaire de bon aloi, avec une irrévérence et une impertinence critique coutumières. Il dématérialise son objet en lui assignant une fonction symbolique cardinale, comme s'il s'agissait d'asséner à l'envie que tous les symboles donnent à penser.

Franck Hermann Ekra

Installation censurée à Art Dubai, mars 2011.

With such emblems and signs, the infantalized people wrap themselves together under the illusion of comprising a great brotherhood.

The collective obliteration of the father-chief carries within it a psychoanalytic dimension, an Oedipal act in the Freudian nomenclature. The housework that mounir fatmi suggests needs doing is not within the household that comprises the community in general, but instead of the sweeping away of the dictators who imagine themselves to be violent demiurges who castrate the people. The absence of the brooms underneath the rest of the flags questions the failures of the people to put their own houses in order. The form of the work proposes a schedule of cleaning, of the eradication of stains, a vast project of emancipation, renovation and restoration under the other twenty flags. The brooms here become
signifiers for the cathartic act of cleaning and cleansing. Who' s next? Where else needs to be swept clean? Where is the rubbish hidden?
There is in this contemporary heraldic symbolism a domestic element that underlines the civic foundation of the public sphere and of the national space being retaken by people invited to act creatively using the broom and the instrument of History, and so embodying that piece of popular wisdom – That one must always keep one' s side of the street clean.

Through the aesthetics of the act of cleansing, mounir fatmi tells the story of a timeless spring. A standard bearer of the pan-Arabic revolutionary revivalis, he breaks away from the prevailing monotony of always disenchanted tomorrows and irreverently deploys enough allusion, deployed with a language of high popular romance but informed by Fatmi' s typical critical perspective.
Giving his work an essential and symbolic function, he dematerialises it, as if to repeat over and over again that symbols are food for thought.

Franck Hermann Ekra

" These flags hang from what appear at first glance to be flagpoles but are in fact broomsticks,
playfully evoking the “political spring cleaning” of the Arab Spring
and the sweeping of detritus while foregrounding cleansing,

renewal and rebirth. "

Heba Mostafa

exhibitions:

2022

Flags - Fondation Boghossian, Brussels - Expo collective

African Voices - Officine dell'Immagine, Milan - Expo collective

2018

Motherland in art - MOCAK - Expo collective

2017

Diaspora now - Gifu Museum - Expo collective

State of the world - H&R Block Art Space - Expo collective

2015

Who said tomorrow doesn't exist? - 1st Trio Biennial - Expo collective

Le monde selon.. - FRAC - Expo collective

2014

Festival A-part - Expo collective

2012

Le monde comme il bouge - La Brasserie - Expo collective

2011

The Future of A Promise - 54th Venice Biennial - Biennale

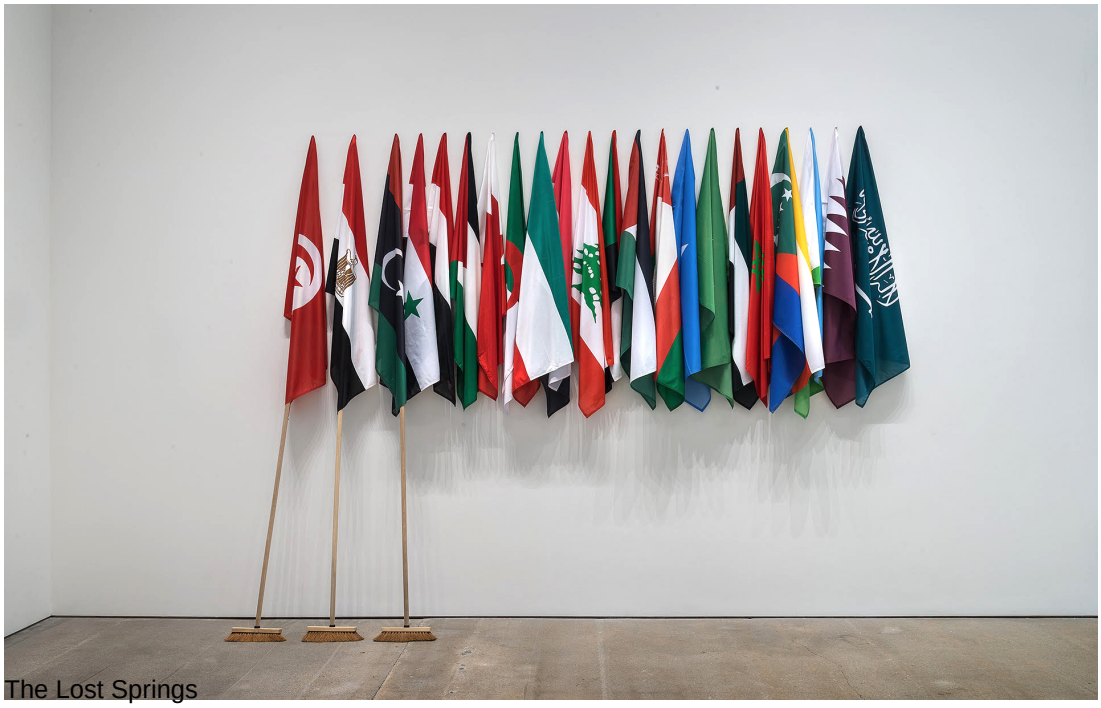
Art Dubai - Solo show - Art fair



The Lost Springs

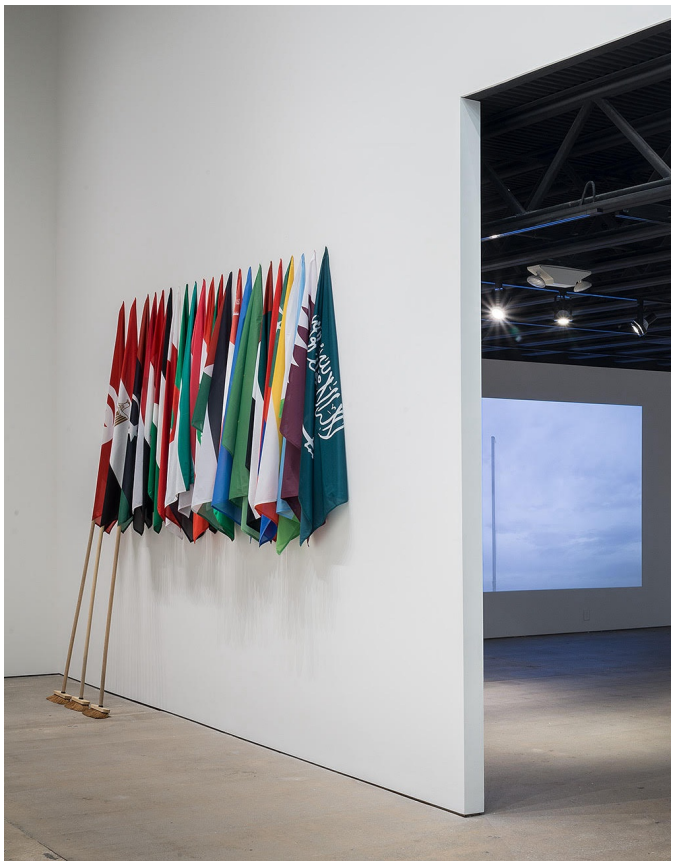
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Franck Hermann Ekra, 2011



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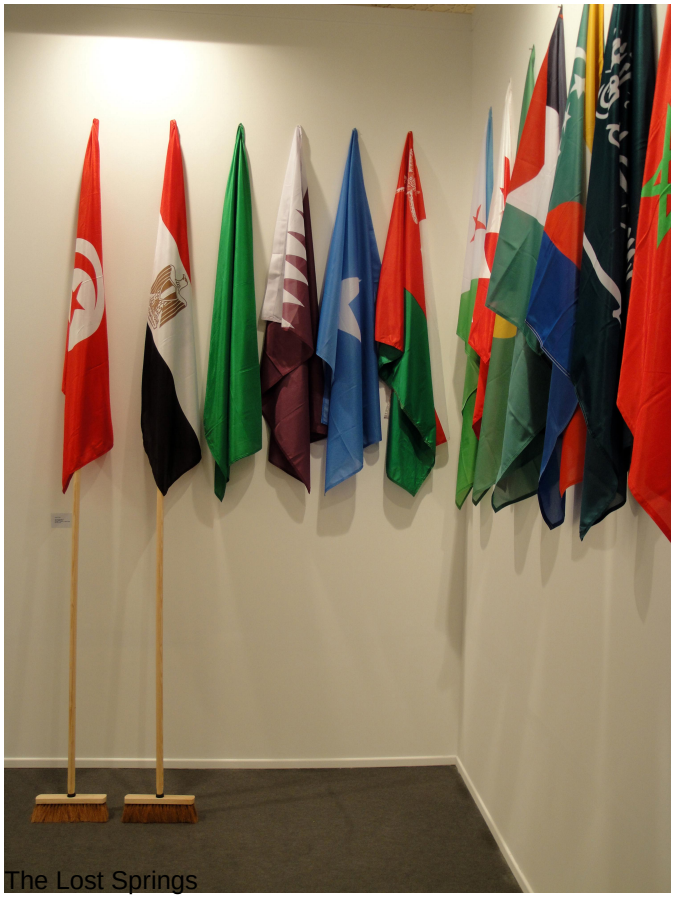


The Lost Steps

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