43. | The Silence of Saint Peter martyr



2011, France, 5 min 04, HD, B&W, stereo.
Exhibition view of the Angel's Black Leg, Conrads Gallery, 2011, Düsseldorf.
Courtesy of the artist and Ceysson & Bénétière, Paris.
Ed. of 5 + 2 A.P.

This work was part of 2nd International Bodrum Biennial - Tolerance, Bodrum, 2015.

Très loin dans la nuit des temps moyenâgeux, la torture existait déjà, avec grande sophistication. Liée à la folie et au plaisir de ceux qui torturent : modèle du genre,la légendaire comtesse hongroise Elizabeth Bathory. Ou alors, liée à la religion : ainsi, plus avant dans l'Histoire, au 13ème siècle, l'Inquisition faisait rage à travers l'Europe, avec son cortège de tortures institutionnalisées par la papauté. Eliminer les hérétiques. Amener l'Europe entière à la même foi. Supprimer les Cathares. Faire admettre à toutes et à tous leurs erreurs, accorder parfois le pardon, supplicier parfois et brûler les corps de celles et de ceux dont l'esprit libre voulait penser autrement. Des sorcières, notamment, auprès desquelles pourtant les inquisiteurs allaient apprendre leur métier (Carlo Ginzburg). Tout cela pour la bonne cause, toujours : celle de la foi juste. Modèle du genre : Saint Pierre de Vérone, qui depuis l'enfance prêchait cette juste foi, y compris au sein de sa propre famille. Inquisiteur, il tortura tant et si bien qu'à un moment donné il prévit lui-même que lui aussi mourrait assassiné. Ce qui ne manqua pas d'arriver, par un coup de hache sur le sommet de son crâne, un meurtre qui fut suivi de la sanctification de Pierre après que, mourant, il eût trempé son doigt dans son propre sang pour écrire sur la terre « Je crois en un seul Dieu ».

mounir fatmi s'intéresse à la religion, à toutes les religions, et au rôle qu'elles jouent dans la culture et les relations

Way back in the distant past of medieval times, torture already existed, with great sophistication. Related to madness and the pleasure of the torturer, the legendary Hungarian countess Elizabeth Bathory is a model of her kind. Related to religion, later on in history, the Inquisition was raging in 13th century Europe, with its host of tortures sanctioned by the papacy. To eliminate heretics. To unite all of Europe under the same faith. To wipe out the Cathars. To make each and everyone admit to their errors, sometimes granting them a pardon, to torment and sometimes burn the bodies of those whose free spirit wanted to think differently. Witches, in particular, though it's at their side that inquisitors would learn their job (Carlo Ginzburg). All of this for a just cause, always: that of true faith. A model of his kind: Saint Peter of Verona, who preached that true faith since childhood, including to his own family. As an inquisitor, he tortured so much that at one point he predicted that he himself would one day be murdered. Which eventually happened, with the strike of an axe on the top of his head, a murder that was followed by Peter's sanctification after he dipped his finger in his own blood as he was dying and wrote on the ground «I believe in only one God.»

mounir fatmi is interested in religion, in all religions, and in the role they play in cultures and intercultural relations – these very relations Fatmi sometimes likes to consider as

interculturelles – ces relations que fatmi se plaît parfois à considérer comme des greffes nécessaires. Sa position, par rapport à la religion, est celle de l'interrogation : l'artiste pose des questions, il nous pose des questions, avec une acuité hors du commun, mais sans ironie et toujours avec le plus grand respect pour ceux qui croient.

À l'âge de vingt ans, mounir fatmi découvre Fra Angelico et sa peinture. De *La guérison du Diacre Justinien* il dérive un ensemble de travaux sur les miracles superposés de la foi et de la science : c'est *La Jambe noire de l'Ange*. Du sublime portrait de Saint Pierre par Fra Angelico encore, fatmi tire la vidéo *Le Silence de Saint Pierre Martyr*. La beauté esthétique des images fonctionne ici comme un piège béant, un piège dont nous protège le son de la vidéo, typique des œuvres de fatmi : effrayant, douloureux, terrible. C'est à ce rythme grinçant que le Saint Pierre de fatmi ouvre et ferme ses yeux, tout en pressant ses doigts sur ses lèvres.

Silence : on ne parle pas de ces choses-là.

Barbara Polla, avril 2015

vidéo distribuée par Heure exquise ! www.exquise.org

necessary grafts. With regards to religion, his posture is interrogative: the artist poses questions, asks us questions, with uncommon acuity but without irony and always with the greatest respect for those who believe.

At the age of twenty, mounir fatmi discovered Fra Angelico, and from his painting The Healing of Deacon Justinian, he derived a series of works on the superposed miracles of faith and science: these are The Angel's Black Leg. Also from Fra Angelico's beautiful portrait of Saint Peter, Fatmi created the video The Silence of Saint Peter Martyr. The esthetic beauty of the images acts here as a wide open trap, a trap from which we are protected by the video's soundtrack, typical of Fatmi's works: frightening, painful, terrible. Fatmi's Saint Peter opens and closes his eyes following this harrowing rhythm, while pressing his fingers to his lips.

Silence: one mustn't speak of these things.

Barbara Polla, April 2015

vidéo distributed by Heure exquise ! www.exquise.org

"The theme of martyrdom also returns in the video The Silence of Saint Peter Martyr, with the protagonist St. Peter the Martyr, also known as Pietro da Verona, who was a 13th-century priest of the Dominican Order that was atrociously executed because of his strong opposition to heretics. The calm of the scene, where the subject slowly moves his finger and mimics
the peaceful gesture of silence, is violently opposed to the audio of the video itself with a disturbing

and aggressive background.”

Wall Street International Art, September 2017

exhibitions:

2018

This is My Body - Art Bärtschi & Cie - Solo show

2017

Transition State - Officine dell'Immagine - Solo show

2016

The Index and The marchine - ADN Platform – Solo show

Art Verona - Analix Forever - Art fair

2015

Constructing Illusion - Analix Forever - Solo show

Tolerance - The 2nd International Bodrum Biennial - Expo collective

2012

Narracje 4 - Gdanska Galeria Miejska - Expo collective

press articles:

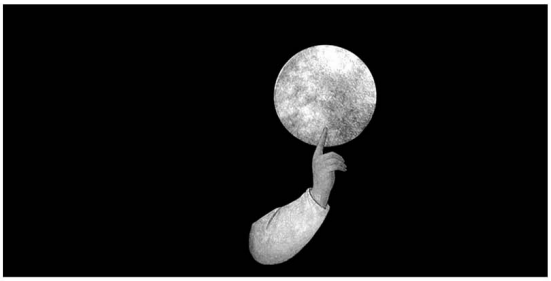
Mounir Fatmi 26 Oct 2017 - 7 Jan 2018 at the Officine dell’Immagine in Milan, Italy, Wall Street International Art, September 22nd, 2017

W ART

Mounir Fatmi

26 Oct 2017 — 7 Jan 2018 at the Officine dell'Immagine in Milan, Italy

22 SEPTEMBER 2017



mounir fatmi The Silence of Saint Peter Martyr, 2011 video HD in bianco e nero con audio, 5'04" edizione di 5
Courtesy l'artista e Officine dell'Immagine, Milano

From October 26th 2017 to January 7th 2018, Officine dell'Immagine gallery in Milan will inaugurate its new location in Via Carlo Vittadini 11, hosting the largest solo exhibition ever held in Italy dedicated to mounir fatmi (Tangier, Morocco, 1970). Curated by Silvia Cirelli, the exhibition represents an unprecedented opportunity to explore the artistic career of this celebrated key figure.

Internationally very well known, mounir fatmi is among the protagonists of the current Venice Biennale, where he is participating with two extremely fascinating projects, in the Tunisian Pavilion within "The Absence of Paths" exhibition, and in the NSK State Pavilion. Invited to exhibit at prestigious museums such as the Georges Pompidou Centre, the Brooklyn Museum, the Victoria & Albert Museum, the Mori Art Museum in Tokyo and the MAXXI in Rome, his works are part of large public collections including those at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, the Louis Vuitton Foundation pour la Création in Paris and the Mathaf, the Arab Museum of Modern Art in Doha.

Focusing on topical issues such as identity, multiculturalism and the ambiguity of power and violence, mounit fatmi over the years has managed to constantly reinvent himself, exploring a wide variety of stylistic languages ranging from video to installation, photography and performance. He follows a narrative pathway that in addition to confirming his remarkable lexical ability, combines personal ingredients and actual testimonies, tracing important passages of contemporary history.

The Milanese exhibition entitled Transition State will trace the distinctive features of his vast poetic synthesis, emphasizing the concept of cultural "hybridization": a combination of prejudices and stereotypes which are first revealed and then discredited, reinforcing an overall vision based on dialogue between religion, science, the ambivalence of language and how these transform over the course of history. Martyrs is a clear example of the power of language over the truth: it is a diptych made of black wooden panels whose surface is sliced by a multitude of lines that seem to move like wounds on a body's skin. The emblematic title plays on the semantic variants of this word, whose meaning has transformed through the course of history. From the ancient Greek word martus, which meant "witness", to the definition of a man who sacrifices himself in the name of faith, up to the present definition in which a martyr is improperly compared to the concept of kamikaze.

The theme of martyrdom also returns in the video The Silence of Saint Peter Martyr (2011), with the protagonist St. Peter the Martyr, also known as Pietro da Verona, who was a 13th-century priest of the Dominican Order that was atrociously executed because of his strong opposition to heretics. The calm of the scene, where the subject slowly moves his finger and mimics the peaceful gesture of silence, is violently opposed to the audio of the video itself with a disturbing and aggressive background.

The inspiration he draws from religious material is reconfirmed in the photographic series Blinding Light (2013), a project with both conceptual and visual manipulation of the so-called "Healing of the Justinian Deacon", a miracle that was also immortalized in a famous painting by Fra Angelico. The story tells of two saints who were famous for their medical skills, Cosmas and Damian, who entered Justinian's room one night and exchanged his sick leg with a healthy leg from a recently deceased Ethiopian man. Upon reawakening, Justinian was surprised to find that his leg had healed, but was of a different colour. Playing with superimposition between the ancient painting and modern surgery scenes, mounir fatmi amazes with his versatile lexical ability, which allows him to tackle major issues with surprising cultural sensitivity, including ethnic identity, hybridization and the notion of diversity.

The sensory vision of viewers is then exhorted in the video Technologia from 2010, where the convulsive succession of geometric structures and Arab calligraphic motifs of religious nature give rise to a highly hypnotic process. The spectator struggles to watch while his hearing is also put to the test with harsh noises. The juxtaposition between the object, its use and its cultural significance is central to the installation Civilization (2013): a simple work of art with a pair of black men's shoes placed over a book bearing the inscription "civilization". With these two objects, which are often used to indicate a person's level of civilization, the Moroccan artist questions the seduction of material objects and its deceptive power in contemporary culture.

During the opening ceremony of Thursday, October 26th at 7 pm, a performance at the presence of the artist will be held. It will be built around his installation Constructing Illusions, a participatory work that plays on the equilibrium between imagination and reality: concepts that often mingle with each other until they manage to completely exchange meanings.



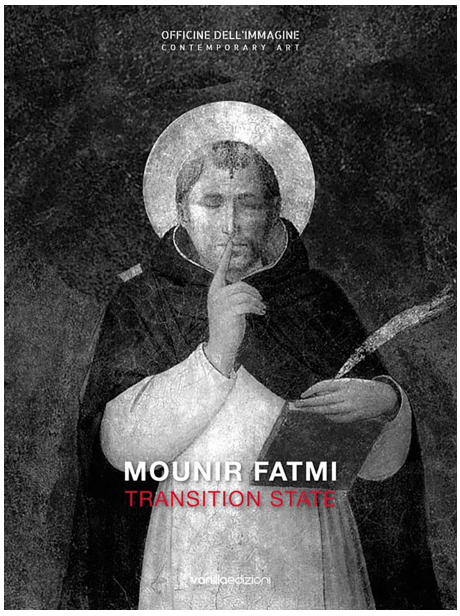
1. mounir fatmi The Silence of Saint Peter Martyr, 2011 video HD in bianco e nero con audio, 5'04" edizione di 5
Courtesy l'artista e Officine dell'Immagine, Milano

2. mounir fatmi Blinding Light #5, 2013 stampa inkjet su carta fine art 180x268 cm edizione di 5
Courtesy l'artista e Officine dell'Immagine, Milano

3. mounir fatmi The Silence of Saint Peter Martyr, 2011 video HD in bianco e nero con audio, 5'04" edizione di 5
Courtesy l'artista e Officine dell'Immagine, Milano

Officine dell'Immagine

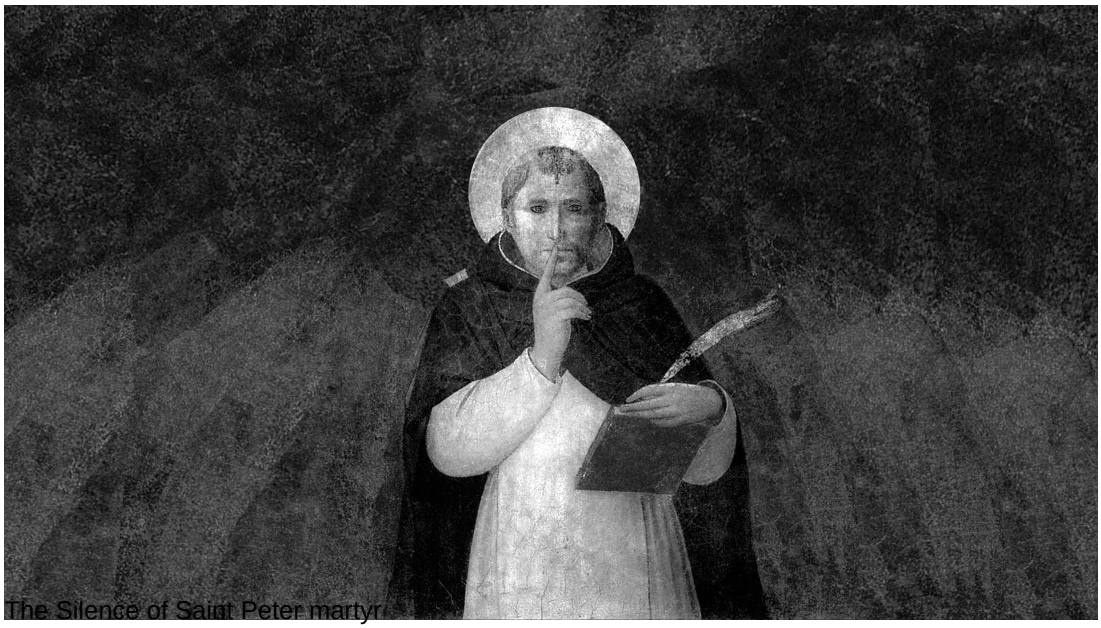
The gallery works with artists from Europe and Asia with a perceivable connection to the Middle East and Africa. Through a rich exhibition schedule, with fine pubblications and fair participations, the gallery prides itself on making collaboration a principal of its operations, working closely with artists to create insightful, often provocative, total presentations that challenge the conventions of a contemporary art gallery.



Transition State, SF Publishing, 2020

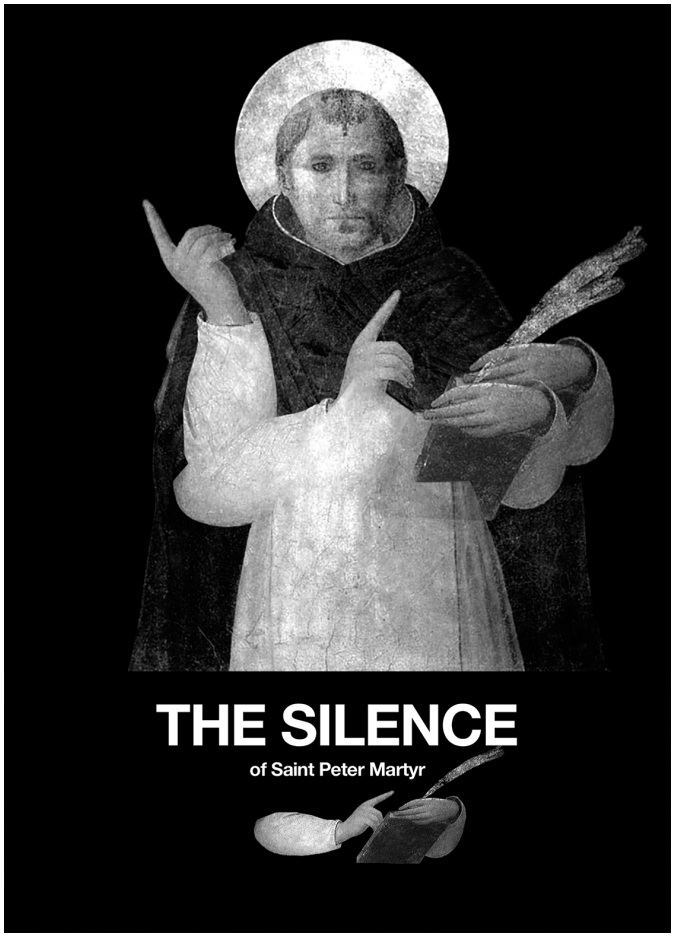
Concentrating on the contradictions of language, the artist explores the methods of communicative correspondence, investigating them with the awareness of how they reflect the evolution of society.

Silvia Cirelli, October 2017



The Silence of Saint Peter martyr

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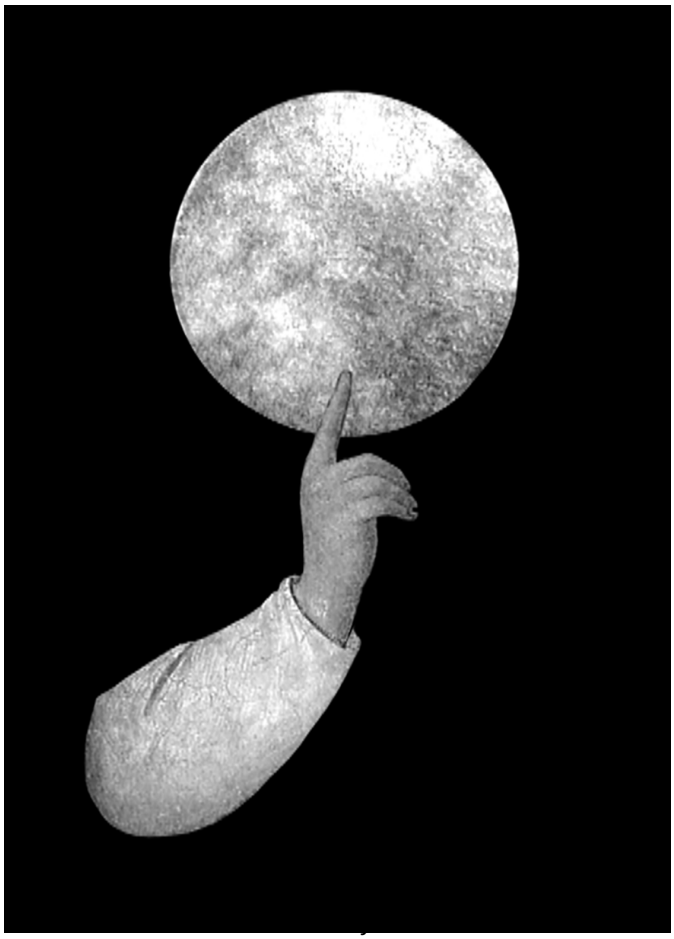




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The Silence of Saint Peter martyr

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