

25. | The Falls



2010, calligraphies of steel, cardboard box.
Exhibition view from *Between the lines*, Galerie Hussenot, 2011, Paris.
Courtesy of the artist and Ceysson & Bénétière, Paris.
Ed. of 5 + 1 A.P.

Les chutes, qui désignent au départ les déchets de matière après découpe, deviennent ici les éléments précieux, placés au centre de la composition et conservés en vue d'une possible utilisation ultérieure. L'œuvre procède à une première inversion des valeurs qui annonce d'autres renversements à venir. L'action de se détacher de son support naturel évoquée par une des significations possibles du terme « chute » introduit le second retournement : extraits de leur contexte les éléments linguistiques abandonnent leurs connotations et gagnent en autonomie. La chute illustre finalement l'effondrement d'une autorité supérieure et première et aboutit à un renversement des pouvoirs : le langage est rendu à sa liberté, à sa précision et à son pouvoir critique, hors de toute idéologie.

Les recherches de Mounir Fatmi sur le langage s'inspirent des techniques du « cut up » et des poèmes permutés de Brion Gysin qui ont fortement influencé les artistes de la Beat Generation et guidé leurs recherches menées sur les possibilités de la conscience et du langage à travers diverses pratiques de l'écriture automatique, où était présent un constant désir de s'affranchir des questions esthétiques ou morales. Les Chutes mettent en scène un désordre linguistique, un fatras d'éléments, par opposition à l'ordre des textes où ils se trouvent habituellement. L'œuvre vient remettre en question l'organisation des significations et procède à un brassage linguistique qui pourrait bien être l'origine de textes à venir. Dans une phrase de son manifeste *Coma*, l'artiste exprime ce souhait en ces termes : « Si seulement les mots étaient libres sans aucune histoire ».

Studio Fatmi, Avril 2017.

The Falls is a sculpture comprising a cardboard box in which elements of Arab calligraphy made of laser-cut metal are piled up. The cutout letters are taken from religious texts and poems whose messages are no longer legible, as the letters form an untidy pile. The work presents a voluntary or accidental reversal: the cardboard box is open and placed in such a way that its contents seem to spill out onto the floor. The Falls resorts to materials and themes already employed in installations such as *The Day of Awakening*, *The Paradox* and *The Index and the Machine* – namely calligraphic motifs made of metal on one hand and the relations between language and culture on the other – and attempts to determine the conditions of the apparition of critical and autonomous thought.

The Falls, whose French title “les Chutes” can also designate the remaining offcuts after a material has been cut, signify here precious elements, placed in the center of the composition and safeguarded for possible future use. In this way, the work creates an initial inversion of values announcing other reversals to come. The action of detaching something from its natural support as implied by one of the meanings of the term “fall” introduces the second reversal: taken out of context, the linguistic elements shed their connotations and gain in autonomy. Lastly, the fall illustrates the collapse of a superior authority and leads to a reversal of power: language regains its freedom, its precision and its critical power, free from ideology.

Mounir Fatmi's research on language is inspired by the techniques of “cut up” and by Brion Gysin's permutation poems which had a strong influence on Beat Generation artists and guided their research on the possibilities of consciousness and language through various techniques of

automatic writing, with a constant desire to break free from esthetic and moral considerations. The Falls display linguistic disorderliness, a jumble of elements, as opposed to the order of the texts in which they are usually found. The work questions the organization of significations and carries out a linguistic mixing that could be the origin of new texts to come. In a phrase of his manifest Coma, the artist expresses this wish in these terms: "If only words were free, without any history."

Studio Fatmi, April 2017.

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Studio Fatmi, April 2017

exhibitions:

2024

Taken Apart & Put Back Together Again - A Tale of A Tub, Rotterdam - Group show

2014

They were blind, they only saw images - Galerie Yvon Lambert - Solo show

Walking on the light - CCC - Solo show

2012

Kissing Circles - Shoshana Wayne Gallery - Solo show

2011

Between the lines - Galerie Hussenot - Solo show

Art Dubai - Solo show - Art fair