11. | History is not mine





2013, France, 5 min, HD, colour, stereo. Size may vary, video projection.
Exhibition view from History is not mine, metavilla, Bordeaux, 2015.
Courtesy of the artist.

Malgré le contexte politique et les bouleversements récents qu'ont connu le Mali ainsi que l'Afrique du Nord avec les Printemps arabes ou, plus récemment, le Burkina Faso, la Biennale africaine de la photographie fait son retour et signe son édition anniversaire.

La directrice artistique Bisi Silva, avec les commissaires associés Antawan I. Byrd et Yves Chatap articule cette biennale de Bamako autour de la narration du Temps afin de créer un lien entre le passé, le présent et le futur.

Sous le nom de TELLING TIME, Mounir Fatmi répond avec une de ses œuvres « HISTORY IS NOT MINE ». L'Histoire est souvent écrite par la violence et par les armes. Ce travail démontre l'ingéniosité de l'artiste à plonger le public dans ses propres anamnèses renvoyant ainsi à différentes perceptions. Cette vidéo en noir et blanc présente un homme assis qui frappe une histoire avec deux marteaux sur une machine à écrire. La résonance et la force des coups entrainent un charabia que l'on pourrait qualifier de symbolique.

Qui a commencé ? Où cela va finir ?

Les lettres se cognent contre un ruban rouge, s'imprimant ainsi dans un rapport au corps envoutant quasi – chamanique et cathartique. Les phrases incompréhensibles écrites par les marteaux peuvent renvoyer aussi bien à cette violence indicible qu'au récit de celle-ci pouvant s'écrire dans une langue de l'infini, « ad infinitium » jouant néanmoins d'un non finito en réitération rythmique quasiment conjuratoire et obsédante.

Despite the political context and recent upheavals experienced by Mali as well as North Africa with the Arab Spring or, more recently, Burkina Faso, the African Photography Biennial is making its comeback, marking its anniversary edition.

Artistic director Bisi Silva, along with associate curators Antawan I. Byrd and Yves Chatap, articulates this Biennale in Bamako around the narrative of Time to create a link between the past, present, and future.

Under the theme of "TELLING TIME," Mounir Fatmi responds with one of his works, "HISTORY IS NOT MINE." History is often written by violence and by weapons. This work demonstrates the artist's ingenuity in immersing the audience in their own memories, thus referring to different perceptions. This black and white video presents a seated man striking a story with two hammers on a typewriter. The resonance and force of the blows create a gibberish that could be termed symbolic.

Who started this? Where will it end?

The letters collide against a red ribbon, imprinting themselves in an enchanting, almost shamanic and cathartic bodily rapport. The incomprehensible phrases written by the hammers can refer as much to unspeakable violence as to the narrative of it, which can be written in a language of the infinite, "ad infinitum," nonetheless playing on a non finito in almost conjuring and obsessive rhythmic reiteration.

Barely does history formulate itself, it sometimes resurfaces in the shadow of its words. The characters collide, leaving a

A peine l’Histoire se formule t-elle, qu’elle ressurgit parfois dans l’ombre de ses mots. Les caractères s’y entrechoquent laissant un vaste flot de lettres traumatisées en perte de leurs signifiants les plus immédiats dans un monde commun. La mise en abîme de cette œuvre « History is not mine » depuis la Biennale de Bamako à Bordeaux, active avec puissance le levier de la force du partage et de la mise en réseau de l’ « écriture » des espaces. Les nouveaux médias ré-écrivent notre Histoire dans les miroirs et le reflet de leurs multidiffusions et certaines de leurs propriétés sont affectées par la puissance délocalisante de leurs manifestations simultanées. Les marteaux sont en dehors des métaphores vulcaniennes qui forgent les armes du langage, des évocations d’une loi écrite et édictée dans la douleur des coups potentiels. Mais ils sont également une allusion au prolongement du geste de celui qui tape. En réponse, nous tapons sur le clavier de nos smartphones, tablettes et autres interfaces et mettons du récit en trajectoire. C’est le mouvement qui fait sens.

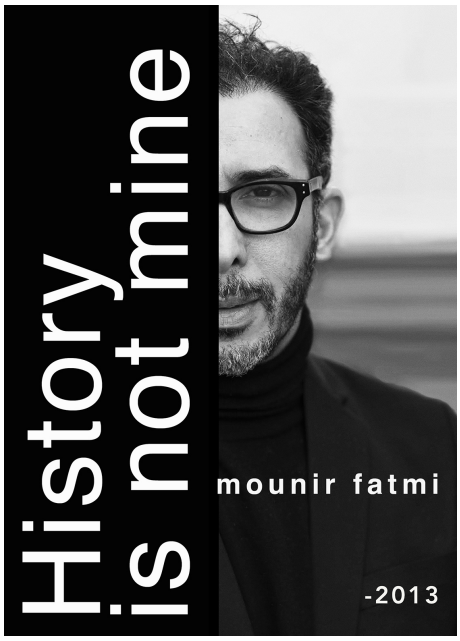
Marion Zilo, novembre 2016

vast stream of traumatized letters bereft of their most immediate significances in a common world. The mise en abîme of this work "History is not mine" from the Biennale of Bamako to Bordeaux, powerfully activates the lever of the force of sharing and networking the "writing" of spaces. New media rewrite our history in mirrors and the reflection of their multidiffusions, and some of their properties are affected by the delocalizing power of their simultaneous manifestations. The hammers are outside the Vulcanian metaphors that forge the weapons of language, evocations of a law written and decreed in the pain of potential blows. But they are also an allusion to the extension of the gesture of the one who strikes. In response, we tap on the keyboards of our smartphones, tablets, and other interfaces, and put narrative into trajectory. It's the movement that makes sense.

Marion Zilo, November 2016

"New media rewrite our history in mirrors and the reflection of their multidiffusions, and some of their properties are affected by the delocalizing power of their simultaneous manifestations."

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