53. | Alif



2015, Black and white ink on baryté paper 50x75 cm and 30cm x 45cm.
Exhibition view of Survival Signs, Jane Lombard Gallery 2017, New York.
Courtesy of the artist and Jane Lombard Gallery, New York.
Ed. of 5 + 2 A.P.

Alif est une œuvre photographique en noir et blanc montrant l'avant-bras d'un homme serrant dans sa main une forme légère courbe et allongée, tel un poignard. Cette série de clichés commencée en 2015 est un work in progress qui doit se développer sur un ensemble de photographies, de vidéos et d'installations.

Cette forme longiligne appelée Alif, est la première lettre de l'alphabet arabe. La lettre Alif présente des caractéristiques particulières, notamment le fait qu'elle fasse partie des 6 lettres dites "non liées, ou Les lettres isolées ", c'est-à-dire qu'elle n'est jamais attachée à la lettre qui la suit.

Dans la calligraphie arabe la lettre Alif est le module, c'est-à-dire l'élément premier en fonction duquel la taille des autres caractères est proportionnée. Ainsi, sa valeur dans la numération arabe est le Un, qui est aussi le chiffre de la grâce du bien-aimé, mais aussi le symbole d'Allah, le dieu unique.

Lorsque le Coran fut transmis au prophète Mohamed en langue arabe, cela lui donna le statut de langue divine. C'est pourquoi la tradition islamique donne une place essentielle à la science des lettres. Cette recherche a été mené depuis l'avènement de l'islam par des hommes comme Ibn-Arabi, Ibn-Khaldoun, ou Al-Buni. Ce dernier disait : « Le alif est une lettre rectrice, les autres lettres ont été engendrées par lui. Il est leur ange. Il est l'équivalent de l'Intelligence, de la Science, du Trône, de la Tablette... La totalité des significations des lettres est contenue dans le alif qui est une synthèse des synthèses ». Les poètes arabes ont souvent proclamé qu'ils n'avaient appris qu'une lettre, le Alif. Elle est en effet plus importante que tout l'alphabet réuni : connaître l'unicité et l'unité de Dieu prime sur la

Alif is a black and white photographic piece that shows a man's forearm, grasping a slightly curved and elongated shape in his hand like a dagger. This series of photographs began in 2015 and is a work in progress that is to be developed on a set of photographs, videos, and installations.

This slender shape known as the Alif, is the first letter of the Arabic alphabet. The letter Alif has particular characteristics, namely that it is one of the six so-called "unrelated letters" or "isolated letters," which means that it is never attached to the letter that follows.

In Arabic calligraphy, the letter Alif serves as the guide. It is the main element that defines the proportions of the other characters. Thus, its value in Arabic numeration is One, which is also the figure of grace of a beloved, and the symbol of the one God, Allah.

When the Qur'an was transmitted to the Prophet Muhammad in Arabic, it was given the status of a divine language. This is why the science of letters is given such importance in Islamic tradition. Since the advent of Islam, men like Ibn-Arabi, Ibn-Khaldoun, or Al-Buni have carried out this study. Al-Buni said, "The Alif is a letter of authority, and it has engendered all other letters. It is their angel. It is the equivalent of Intelligence, Science, the Throne, the Tablet... The Alif contains the totality of significations of letters. It is a synthesis of syntheses." Arab poets have often proclaimed that they have learned only one letter: The Alif. It is indeed more important than the entire alphabet combined. Knowing the uniqueness and unity of God takes precedent over the knowledge of the visible things of this world. Moreover, the Alif is found in all other letters. The Hha' is nothing but a curved Alif, and the Mim, a circular Alif.

connaissance des choses visibles de ce monde. De plus, Le Alif, se retrouve dans toutes les autres lettres. Ainsi, le Hha' n'est autre qu'un Alif courbé et le Mim, un Alif circulaire.

Dans ces photographies, le Alif prend la figure d'un outil primitif, brut, à l'aspect tranchant. Sa pointe, particulièrement aiguisée, captive et donne aux clichés une atmosphère violente. On peut envisager cette œuvre comme une synthèse du travail de l'artiste qui se situe à la frontière entre la beauté et la violence, souvent comme sur le fil du rasoir.

Studio Fatmi, Decembre 2016.

In these photographs, the Alif takes the form of a crude, primitive tool with a sharpened edge. Its particularly sharp peak captivates and gives a violent quality to the images. One can imagine this piece as a synthesis of the artist's work that, like the edge of a razor, sits between beauty and violence.

Studio Fatmi, December 2016.

" Each photograph bears the title Alif, the first letter of the Arabic alphabet, which is always written unattached to any subsequent letters. In Fatmi's series of photographs, the letter serves a variety of purposes, as religion and language itself always do. By isolating the letter, Fatmi shows how it can be used to disrupt communication as much as facilitate it. "

The Brooklyn Rail, October 2017

exhibitions:

2025

ARCO Madrid - Wilde Gallery - Barcelone - Art fair

2020

Fonction critique 2 - Aperto - Expo collective

2018

180° Behind Me - Göteborgs Konsthall – Solo show

2017

Survival Signs - Jane Lombard Gallery - Solo show

Le monde et le reste - Galerie Ceysson & Bénétière - Expo collective

press articles:

‘Survival Signs’ by Mounir Fatmi at Jane Lombard Gallery, New York, Blouin Art Info, October 3rd, 2017

Mounir Fatmi 7 Sep - 21 Oct 2017 at the Jane Lombard Gallery in New York, United States, Wall Street International Art, September 12th, 2017

BLOUINARTINFO

‘Survival Signs’ by Mounir Fatmi at Jane Lombard Gallery, New York

BY BLOUIN ARTINFO | OCTOBER 03, 2017



Mounir Fatmi, Alif 04, 2015, black and white ink on baryté paper, 17point 72 x 11 point 81 inches, 45 x 30 cm
(Artist & Jane Lombard Gallery)

Topical contemporary concerns from across the world are addressed in the newest works by self-exiled artist Mounir Fatmi. Presented at the Jane Lombard Gallery as his third solo exhibition with the gallery, Fatmi has created ‘Survival Signs’.

This exhibition showcases Fatmi’s works from 2012-2017, where the artist addresses contemporary world events affecting people’s lives and also interconnections between different cultural signs, objects and images and their effects on our daily lives. Mounir Fatmi was born in 1970 in Tangier, Morocco and lives and works between Paris and Tangier. He left Morocco in 1999 and since then, he has been particularly interested in issues of exile. Fatmi views himself as an immigrant worker saying “my job is to question what it means to be an artist, even when I feel outside of my own cultural context.”

The principal point of attraction is the installation, Inside the Fire Circle, 2017, which consists of jumper cables, old typewriters, and blank sheets of paper on which visitors are to “jumpstart” their own story or history. For Fatmi, “the installation is like a palimpsest of the modern age; the rhythmic flow between the paper and the cables seem as if they are sending signals back and forth, but at each stop the information is erased and the process begins again. This is a reflection of the tendency of history to repeat itself. The recent rise in nationalism across Europe, from Brexit in the UK, the rise of the National Front in France, Holland, Hungary, to the United States, and the state of affairs in Russia, Turkey and elsewhere, all reaffirm this fear.”

The Blinding Light, 2013 inspired by a 15th century painting The Healing of Deacon Justinian is created as a photograph superimposed by an image of the painting on an image from a contemporary surgical room which fuses science and religion, present and past.

“Survival Signs” is being showcased from September 7 through October 21, 2017 at Jane Lombard Gallery, 518 W 19th Street, New York, NY

For details, visit:http://www.blouinartinfo.com/galleryguide/jane-lombard-gallery/overview

W ART

Mounir Fatmi

7 Sep — 21 Oct 2017 at the Jane Lombard Gallery in New York, United States

12 SEPTEMBER 2017



Mounir Fatmi. Courtesy of Jane Lombard Gallery

Jane Lombard Gallery is pleased to present "Survival Signs," Mounir Fatmi's third solo exhibition with the gallery. His work directly addresses the current events in our world and speaks to those whose lives are affected by restrictive political climates. "Survival signs" can also be seen as cultural signs, images, objects, experiences, and their connections and relationships to our everyday life. Is our society fluid, open and accepting, or the opposite? Several of the works in the exhibition teeter along a fine line of interpretation; are they revealing moments of construction or destruction, lightness or darkness? The artist presents his works as signs of survival; elements that allow him to resist and understand the world and its changes. The focal point of the exhibition, "Inside the Fire Circle," 2017, is a large, interactive floor installation consisting of jumper cables, obsolete typewriters, and blank sheets of paper on which visitors are encouraged to write, symbolizing a "jumpstart" to their own story or history. For Fatmi, "the installation is like a palimpsest of the modern age; the rhythmic flow between the paper and the cables seem as if they are sending signals back and forth, but at each stop the information is erased and the process begins again. This is a reflection of the tendency of history to repeat itself. The recent rise in nationalism across Europe, from Brexit in the UK, the rise of the National Front in France, Holland, Hungary, to the United States, and the state of affairs in Russia, Turkey and elsewhere, all reaffirm this fear." The artist wants the cables to symbolically jumpstart people out of their apathy so they can learn from the past and become actively involved in writing a new and different story on the blank pages.

Fatmi's wall sculpture, "Défense," 2016, is both an architectural object and readymade. In many parts of the world, these spiraled, pointed bars of metal function as security bars, installed to protect from intruders. It is aggressive and dangerous, but when placed within the context of an exhibition it takes on an added visual appeal, as a minimal sculpture that casts radiant shadows across the wall. The viewer must work around it in order to engage with the rest of the exhibition. Even in the distant past, these bars have been aesthetic and utilitarian, aggressive and attractive.

Another central work on view is a large photograph from "The Blinding Light," 2013 - ongoing, a series of work inspired by a 15th century painting by Fra Angelico entitled "The Healing of Deacon Justinian." The original painting depicts two saints, Cosmas and his brother Damian, grafting a black leg onto the deacon Justinian. Born in Syria, Cosmas and Damian were Arab by birth and later converted to Christianity. Fatmi's photograph superimposes an image of the painting with an image from a contemporary surgical room. The transparency of images essentially fuses science and religion, present and past. Fatmi first saw this painting when he moved to Rome at age 17 to attend art school. He saw in himself a connection to being like that black leg, existing in a world that was not his own, in his case as a cultural transplant.

Calligraphy of Fire, 2015, is a set of three black and white photographs. The images are enigmatic, as if offering a glimpse into a private ritual or an uncertain moment. For Fatmi, books and knowledge represent a means of survival, of opportunity, a path to independence, and a greater understanding of life. Calligraphy of Fire presents a set of situations, each of which links the idea of knowledge with light, and its absence, as darkness, a void. If the burning candle is symbolic of life, illumination, and knowledge, as it is throughout much of art history, in the left hand image the snuffed candle could suggest an impending opaqueness, the possible smudges as a form of censorship. On the right, the burning candle offers the possibility of light, yet if left unattended, the results will be destruction. In the center, the portrait of the artist suggests a movement from darkness into light, perhaps a path to self-awareness, growth, and even survival.

A small photo titled, "Walking on the Light," 2012 - ongoing, shows a man at night, standing on the edge of circular light projection made by the artist titled, "Technologia," which was a part of a 2012 exhibition in France. Fatmi took the photograph the night of the opening and it is only one of a few that exist as a few days later his installation was censored and removed from the exhibition. The light projection included verses from the Koran written out in beautiful calligraphy and combined into a swirling Marcel Duchamp inspired rotorelief. The controversy stemmed from the belief that the viewers would walk onto verses of the Koran, a sacred text, and as such considered destructive. But for Fatmi the work was about light and beauty, modernism and abstraction, and of course, no one could walk on those lines from the Koran as they were fleeting light, the shadow of the figure crossing onto the projection would in any case have blocked out the imagery under their feet.

At first glance, "Roots," 2015-16, a triptych made from white antenna cable seems to be simply an elegant work, but in fact the artist seeks to confront a more philosophical question: Just how deep can roots go? At a time when issues of identity and borders are increasingly in the news and being taken up by the extremes, the sculpture "Roots," defends the idea of harmony and stability through its interlacing composition, a metaphor for the possibility of eventual union. The antenna cable serves as both core material and valuable archive in the sense that it is quickly becoming an obsolete material. As such, the work itself and this archive find themselves in a similar position and create a sort of dialogue. The archive creates the work and the work stores the archive.

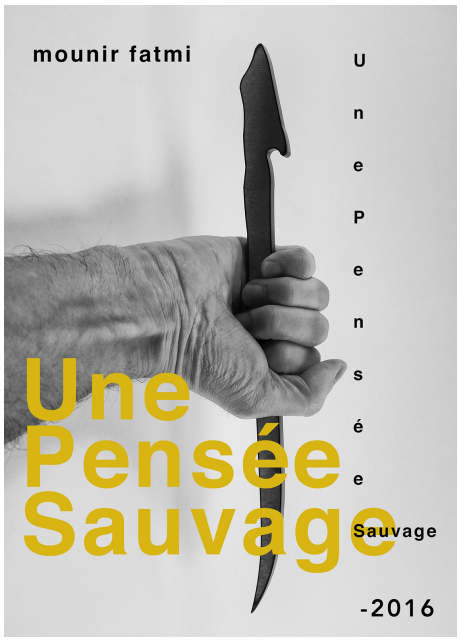
The video, "History is not mine," 2013, is a piece made partially in response to censorship. The black and white video depicts a man whose face remains concealed as he strikes a typewriter with two hammers. The only color comes from the typewriter's ribbon, a brilliant red, the color of blood; a collision of the beauty of the written sentence and the violence and difficulty of its creation. The video plunges us into the role of witness and accomplice, as if we are almost a part of this story's writing process. The simple and mundane gesture of striking the keys becomes crushing with the use of hammers. The weight that falls on the keys causes a deep, violent intonation. These effects, accentuated by the characteristic sound of a typewriter, also evoke the ticking of a clock or shots fired from a sub-machine gun. The artist urges the viewer to become aware of his or her stance vis-à-vis history. As evidenced by the title of the work, a feeling of hopelessness clearly emerges. The repetitive, angled shots overlooking the scene highlight a feeling of domination. By never showing the man's face as he strikes the machine, Mounir Fatmi encourages the viewer to identify with his or her own experience. Everyone is a part of this story being written, the violence of the hammers, and the impossibility of writing something coherent with this method.

"Alif," 2015 - ongoing, is a series of photographs showing a man's forearm, grasping a slightly curved and elongated shape like a dagger, and is a work in progress that is to be developed into a set of photographs, videos, and installations. This shape known as the "Alif," is the first letter of the Arabic alphabet. Alif is one of the six so-called "unrelated letters" or "isolated letters," meaning that it is never attached to the letter that follows.

Mounir Fatmi was born in 1970 in Tangier, Morocco and lives and works between Paris and Tangier. Since leaving Morocco in 1999, he is particularly interested in issues of exile, and the role of the artist in a society in crisis. Fatmi views himself as an immigrant worker: "My job is to question what it means to be an artist. Even when I feel outside of my own cultural context." He has participated in the 52nd and the 57th Venice Biennale, the 7th Dakar Biennial, the 2nd Seville Biennial, the 5th Gwangju Biennial, the 10th Lyon Biennial, and the 5th Auckland Triennial. Recent solo exhibitions include "Spot On: Mounir Fatmi," Museum Kunst Palast, Düsseldorf, Germany; "Permanent Exiles," MAMCO, Geneva, Switzerland; "Darkening Process," The MMPV Museum, Marrakech, Morocco.



Mounir Fatmi. Courtesy of Jane Lombard Gallery



A Savage Mind, SF Publishing, 2020

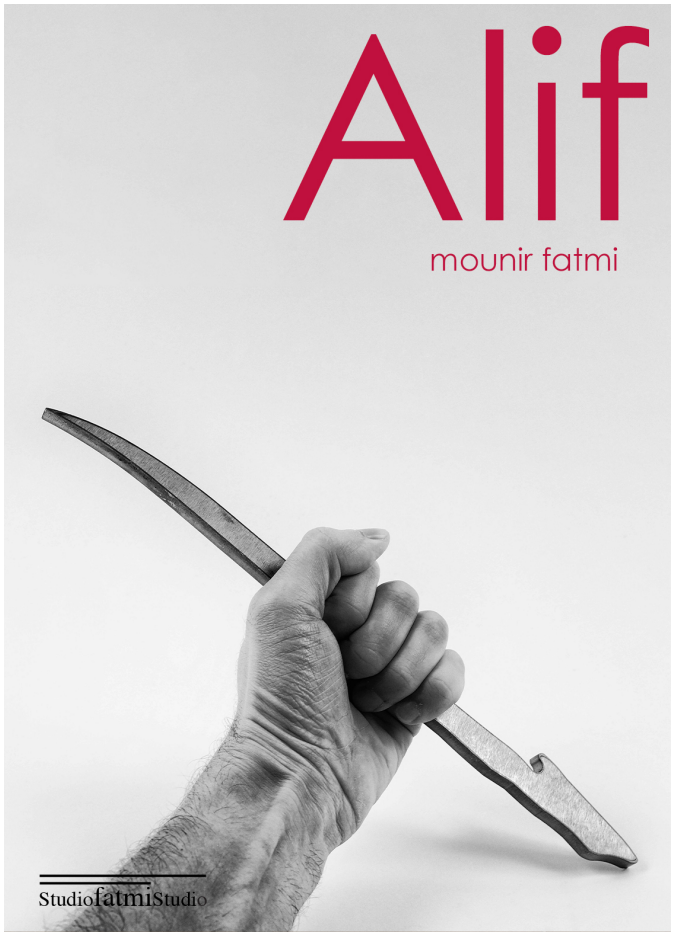
How does the meeting between the one who 'can do' and one who 'knows how to speak of what is done' play out?

Keitelman Gallery, December 2016



Alif

This slender shape known as the Alif, is the first letter of the Arabic alphabet. The letter Alif has particular characteristics, namely that it is one of the six so-called “unrelated letters” or “isolated letters,” which means that it is never attached to the letter that follows.




Alif

In Arabic calligraphy, the letter Alif serves as the guide. It is the main element that defines the proportions of the other characters. Thus, its value in Arabic numeration is One, which is also the figure of grace of a beloved, and the symbol of the one God, Allah.

Alif

Arab poets have often proclaimed that they have learned only one letter: The Alif. It is indeed more important than the entire alphabet combined. Knowing the uniqueness and unity of God takes precedent over the knowledge of the visible things of this world. Moreover, the Alif is found in all other letters. The Hha’ is nothing but a curved Alif, and the Mim, a circular Alif.


Alif

In these photographs, the Alif takes the form of a crude, primitive tool with a sharpened edge. Its particularly sharp peak captivates and gives a violent quality to the images. One can imagine this piece as a synthesis of the artist’s work that, like the edge of a razor, sits between beauty and violence.