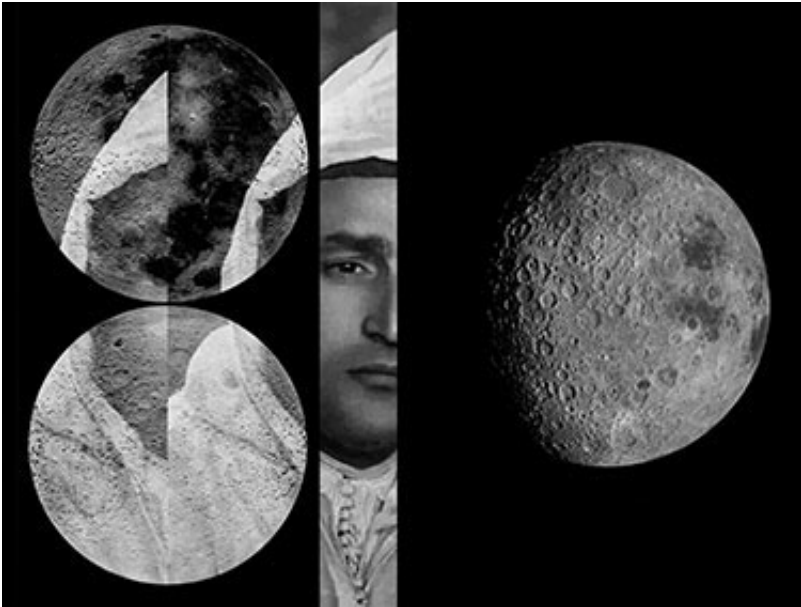


## 56. | The visible side of the King



2017, Pigment print on fine art paper, 30cm x 40 cm.  
Exhibition view from 11th Bamako Biennale, 2017.  
Courtesy of the artist and Ceysson & Bénétière, Paris.  
Ed. of 5 + 2 A.P.

This work was part of 11ème Biennale Africaine de la Photographie - Afrotopia, Bamako, 2017.

Durant l'enfance de mounir fatmi à Tanger dans les années 1970, l'un des rares objets culturels dans sa maison était une photo en noir et blanc du roi Mohammed V, connu des Marocains sous le nom de « roi lune ». Pendant longtemps, il a pensé que cette personne sur la photo était un membre de sa famille, et ce n'est que quand il a commencé à aller à l'école qu'il a appris la vérité, mais aussi l'histoire légendaire de son accession au pouvoir.

En 1955, les Marocains ont vécu une « hallucination collective », comme le dit mounir fatmi, qui les a menés à croire qu'ils avaient vu le visage de leur futur roi, Mohammed V, dans la lune. En réalité, les nationalistes marocains, qui travaillaient dur pour éjecter la France de leur pays, avaient réussi à monter ce qu'on appellerait aujourd'hui un coup médiatique, en demandant aux gens de regarder une photo du roi puis de tourner leur regard vers la lune. Ceci créait un effet d'optique leur donnant l'impression qu'ils voyaient vraiment son visage dans la lune, ce qui a permis de bâtir un mythe autour de lui qui a contribué au mouvement pour le porter au pouvoir. À l'époque, il était en exil à Madagascar et n'était pas au courant des événements qui se produisaient dans son pays, mais le mouvement populiste réussit son tour de force, il rentra chez lui en tant que roi, et la France fut obligée de se retirer.

When mounir fatmi was growing up in Tangier in the 1970s, one of the few cultural objects in his house was a black and white photo of the king, Mohammed V, also known to Moroccans as the "moon king." For a long time, he thought this person in the photograph was part of his family and it was only until he went to school when he started to learn otherwise, including the legendary story around the king's rise to power.

In 1955 Moroccans underwent a "collective hallucination," as mounir fatmi says, in which they believed to see the face of their future king, Mohammed V, on the moon. In fact, Moroccan nationalists, who were actively working to eject France from the country, generated what would today be called a public relations stunt, asking people to look at a photo of the king and then stare up at the moon. This created an optical effect that made it seem like they were actually seeing his face on the moon, thereby building a myth around him that helped fuel a movement to bring him to power. At the time he was exiled in Madagascar and unaware of the events going on at home, but the populist movement succeeded, he returned as king, and France was forced to go.

This story stayed with fatmi and recently he started a series of photographs titled, "The Visible Side of the King," that are

Cette histoire est restée présente dans l'esprit de mounir fatmi et il a récemment commencé une série de photographies intitulée « La face visible du roi », inspirées par le « roi lune » et le mystère entourant ce culte de la personnalité sans prétention. Les images jouent sur des effets d'optique, certaines d'entre elles suggérant les phases de la lune qui par moments traverse le portrait du roi habillé d'une djellaba blanche à capuche, une expression sereine et douce sur le visage. Dans certaines phases, il se confond avec la surface, alors que d'autres masquent son visage ou sont vides.

Dans notre culture contemporaine marquée par un marketing ultra efficace concernant aussi bien les pop stars que les personnalités politiques, le public est confronté quotidiennement à des subterfuges sous forme de campagnes médiatiques, repositionnement et autres secondes chances pour des célébrités en déshérence, ce qui rend d'autant plus incroyable cette histoire improbable d'imagination collective. Elle semble refléter une certaine innocence autant qu'une opération de manipulation, les gens ayant foi dans ce qu'ils « voient » tout en voulant probablement aussi croire en quelque chose qui les dépasse, qui leur donne de l'espoir – et cet espoir est porteur d'un vrai pouvoir.

Blaire Dessent, Mai 2017.

inspired by the “moon king,” and the mystery surrounding this unassuming cult of personality. The images play on optics and optical effects, with images that suggest the phases of the moon, which at times passes through or across the portrait of the king, who is shown dressed in a white, hooded djellaba, with a very serene, soft face. In certain phases he blends in with the surface while others block his face or are empty.

In today's ultra branded and over-produced culture whether its pop stars or political figures, the public undergoes a daily subterfuge of public relations campaigns, re-branding, and second chances of wanna be celebrities, making this unbelievable story of public imagination all the more incredible. The story seems to reflect an innocence as much as manipulation, with the people having faith in what they “see” while also likely wanting to believe in something bigger than them, something hopeful, and there is real power to that hope.

Blaire Dessent, Mai 2017.

“This work recounts the revolt against the French regime in Morocco during which photos of the exiled sultan were handed to the people who were told to look first at the image, and then at the moon, creating the optical illusion that his face was on the moon. This work is about collective memory and its power – Fatmi states that ‘the Moroccan people were under the influence

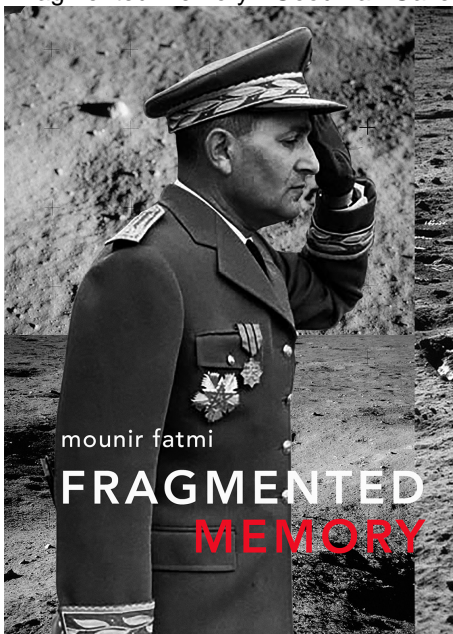
of a collective hallucination.’ As a result, there were demonstrations in his support in 1955, just before his return to Morocco where he became known as the moon king.”

Nicola Kritzinger, ArthroB, May 2017

**exhibitions:**

2017

Fragmented Memory - Goodman Gallery - Solo show



**Fragmented Memory**

The calligraphic work, titled Mother Language, is a visual link to his previous body of work, a continuity in his thinking and execution, evolving his visual language.

Nicola Kritzinger, ArthroB, May 2017



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The visible side of the King

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The visible side of the King

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