52. | Across the moon



2016-2017, France, 11 min 33, HD, B&W, stereo.
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.

Inspiré par cette histoire, mais aussi par « Le voyage dans la lune », le classique film muet de Georges Méliès, fatmi a créé un film expérimental intitulé « À travers la lune ». En partie science fiction, en partie hommage à l'histoire du cinéma, ce

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 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 learned otherwise, including the legendary story around the king's rise to power.

In 1955 Moroccans underwent a "collective hallucination," as 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 after years of colonization, 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 and he soon returned to be king.

Inspired by this story, as well as by the classic, silent film, "Travel to the Moon," by the French director Georges Méliès, fatmi created an experimental film titled, "Across the Moon." Part science fiction, part homage to film history, this short black and white film fuses images of the moon with the face of the king, along with archival images from the time when King Mohammed first took power and from his funeral

court métrage en noir et blanc mêle des images de la lune avec le visage du roi ainsi que des images d'archives datant de l'époque ou le roi Mohammed a pris le pouvoir jusqu'à son enterrement plusieurs décennies plus tard. Toutes ces images entremêlées sont accompagnées d'une bande son mystérieuse et inquiétante, plongeant le spectateur dans un voyage surréaliste.

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.

decades later. All of this swirling imagery is set to an eerie soundtrack that takes the viewer on a surreal journey.

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.

"It is a screen with an image of a revolving surface of the moon in the centre, round, framed by its borders. Layered transparently on this surface are film images from the French occupation of Morocco, leading up to the exile of King Mohammed V in the 50s."

Nicola Kritzinger, Arthrob, May 2017

exhibitions:

2022

Yesterday Was a Terrible Day - Casa Conti, Oletta - Solo show

2019

Les 22èmes Rencontres Traverse Vidéo - Rencontres Traverse Vidéo - Expo collective

INSIGHTS #5 - SCREEN IT - Art Brussels - Biennale

16th Tarifa & Tangier African Film Festival – FCAT - Video Festival

25ème édition du Festival international d'art vidéo de Casablanca - Video Festival

Videoformes 2019 - Clermont Ferrand - Video Festival

2018

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

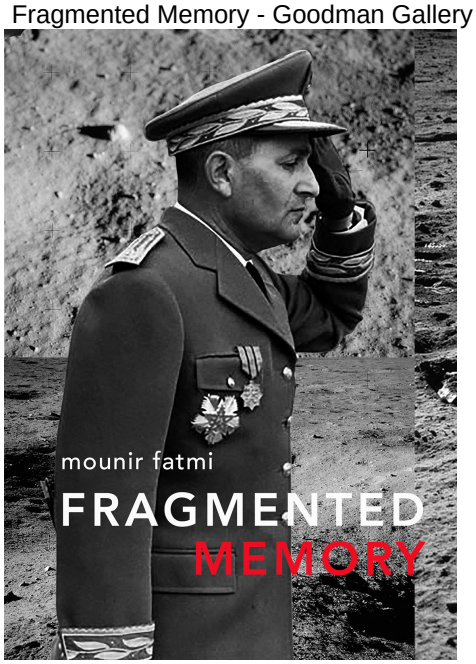
MICA IV Muestra Internacional de Cine Astronómico - Video Festival

31e édition des Instants Vidéo - Video Festival

4e Compétition Internationale de films Expérimentaux du Festival Tous Courts - Video Festival

2017

Fragmented Memory - Goodman Gallery - Solo show



Fragmented Memory, SF Publishing, 2020

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



across the moon

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