64. | Everything Behind Me 02





2018, table, antenna cable.
Exhibition View from Armory Show, Officine Dell'immagine, 2019, New York.
Courtesy of the artist and Ceysson & Bénétière, Paris.
Ed. of 1 + 1 A.P.

L'installation « Everything behind me » convie ses spectateurs à une table noire à l'allure et aux dimensions surprenantes. Reposant sur des pieds régulièrement espacés les uns des autres, son long plateau rectangulaire est percé à de multiples endroits par des trous de différents diamètres, et se voit traversé par plusieurs centaines de mètres d'épaisses sections de câbles coaxiaux blancs, réunis entre eux par des colliers de serrage. Les cables circulent à travers la table, au-dessus et en-dessous de sa surface, et forment un réseau complexe de boucles emmêlées, dont le début et la fin se rejoignent. Depuis 1998, le câble d'antenne est un matériau récurrent des œuvres de l'artiste. Son motif insiste sur la circulation des informations et entre dans une réflexion sur les rapports de l'individu à la société contemporaine, marqués par le pouvoir de l'image et la multiplication vertigineuse des productions culturelles et matérielles ainsi que de la complexité des échanges.

L'œuvre se propose comme un regard rétrospectif de l'artiste sur son parcours. « Everything behind me » opère un retour sur un projet esthétique qui consiste à penser le monde et à explorer les relations entre l'individu et le groupe, ainsi que les rapports entre l'interprète et son propre processus créatif. L'installation se présente comme une tentative pour modéliser un réseau de communication complexe, à savoir celui des interactions entre l'œuvre, l'artiste et le monde. Elle éprouve la capacité de l'artiste et celle du spectateur à appréhender le processus artistique et la réalité à la fois dans leur globalité et dans leur détail.

Effort pour (re)penser le monde, l'œuvre affirme la nécessité de se déplacer et de varier les points de vue. Son esthétique

The installation "Everything Behind Me" invites the viewers to a black table with an unusual aspect and size. Resting on evenly spaced feet, its long rectangular top is pierced in multiple points with holes of various diameters and several hundred meters of thick white coaxial cable run through them, bunched together with clamping collars. The cables run through the table, over and under its surface, and form a complex network of intertwined loops, their beginnings and ends joined together. Since 1998, antenna cables have been a recurring material in the artist's work. Its presence symbolizes the circulation of information and is part of a reflection on the relations of individuals to contemporary societies, on which the power of images and the dizzying multiplication of cultural and material productions, as well as the complexity of exchanges, leave their mark.

The piece constitutes the artist's retrospective look on his career. "Everything Behind Me" goes back to an esthetic project consisting in reflecting upon the world and exploring the relations between the individual and the group, as well as the connections between the artist and his own creative process. The installation represents an attempt to model a complex communications network, namely the interactions between the work of art, the artist and the world. It tests the artist's and the viewer's capacity to apprehend the artistic process and reality at the same time, in their entirety and in all their details simultaneously.

The work constitutes an effort to reflect upon the world, and as such it underlines the necessity to displace oneself and change points of view. Its esthetic is part of a strategy of obstacles as carried out through many of the artist's pieces

entre dans une stratégie de l'obstacle menée à travers de nombreuses œuvres (notamment celles qui emploient les barres de saut hippique). Elle oblige le spectateur à s'éloigner, à prendre de la distance afin de percevoir l'ensemble, la forme générale. Elle le contraint par la suite à se rapprocher pour observer les détails et découvrir les connexions entre les différents éléments de la composition, ou pour apercevoir la partie de l'œuvre sous la table. La présence de l'obstacle traduit la nécessité d'un engagement total du sujet, d'une implication du corps et de l'esprit sans distinction dans sa confrontation au réel. Efficace et opérante, elle appelle le spectateur à sortir d'un rôle passif et à ne pas se soumettre aux différents pouvoirs qui s'exercent sur lui : propagande, société des médias et de l'information, idéologies politiques ou religieuses. L'installation livre des effets de structure frappants et spectaculaires, telle que la conjonction presque « classique » du début et de la fin, et surtout une modélisation aboutie des possibilités et des limites de l'art. L'épreuve de réalité mobilise l'ensemble des capacités sensorielles, motrices et réflexives du spectateur.

« Everything behind me » est, de l'aveu de l'artiste, le lieu d'un constat paradoxal : si l'œuvre illustre une réussite sur le plan esthétique, elle révèle également un échec sur le plan personnel. L'espace de création y prend des allures de ruban de Moebius. Les dimensions de la table n'aident guère à voir l'œuvre dans son intégralité : elles rendent impossible la perception simultanée de l'ensemble et des détails, ou encore l'appréhension de toutes les connexions établies entre les divers éléments. L'installation élabore ainsi une phénoménologie du processus créatif et du rapport à la réalité à travers une esthétique du contraste et de l'alliance des contraires : courbes et lignes, désordre et structure, visibilité et invisibilité, « geste libre » et géométrisation, simplicité et complexité, sensualité et rigueur formelle. Elle met en évidence des mécanismes d'apparition et d'occultation des motifs, de perception et d'oubli des éléments. Table d'une Cène paradoxale, l'installation « Everything behind me » fait le constat d'un échec indépassable : toute prise de distance ou vue d'ensemble entraîne immanquablement un risque d'imprécision et de réduction, tandis que l'analyse et l'attention aux détails tend à perdre de vue le schéma général. Dans les deux cas, l'acte de voir et de penser l'oeuvre apparaît comme problématique.

Studio Fatmi, Juin 2018.

(in particular those using horse jumping poles). It forces the viewers to distance themselves in order to see the whole thing, the overall form. It then obliges them to get closer in order to observe the details and discover the connections between the various elements of the composition, or to see the part of it that is under the table. The presence of the obstacle signifies the necessity for the subject to engage completely, to fully implicate body and mind in the confrontation with reality. It efficiently and effectively calls upon the viewers to no longer have a passive role and to no longer submit to the various powers that apply themselves on them: propaganda, the information society, political or religious ideologies. The installation offers striking and spectacular structural effects, such as the almost “classical” conjunction of beginning and end, and above all a complete modeling of the possibilities and limitations of art. The confrontation with reality mobilizes all the viewer’s sensory, motor and reflective capacities.

“Everything Behind Me” carries with it, as the artist himself confesses, a paradoxical observation: the work might be a success from an esthetical point of view, but it also reveals a failure on a personal front. It gives the creative space the aspect of a Möbius strip. The size of the table makes it difficult to view the piece in its entirety, and even impossible to perceive in one glance the whole object and its details, or to apprehend all the connections established between the various elements. In this way, the installation elaborates a phenomenology of the creative process and of the relation to reality, by using an esthetic based on contrasts and the combination of opposites: curves and straight lines, disorder and structure, visibility and invisibility, “free gesture” and geometry, simplicity and complexity, sensuality and formal strictness. It highlights mechanisms of revelation and occultation of the motifs, perception and oblivion of the elements. A table for a paradoxical Last Supper, “Everything Behind Me” records an unsurpassable failure: looking at something from a distance to get a full view inevitably leads to the risk of imprecision and reduction, whereas carefully analyzing its details tends to make one lose sight of the overall scheme. In both cases, the act of seeing and reflecting upon the work of art poses a problem. ?

Studio Fatmi, June 2018.

[“Everything Behind Me” goes back to an esthetic project consisting in reflecting upon the world and exploring the relations between the individual]

and the group, as well as the connections between the artist and his own creative process. The installation represents an attempt to model a complex communications network, namely the interactions between the work of art, the artist and the world.

Studio Fatmi, June 2018

exhibitions:

2023

Whispered Stories of Forgotten Wires - Piero Atchugarry Gallery, Miami - Solo show

2021

The Age of Consequences - Officine dell'Immagine - Solo Show

2020

Our world is burning - Palais de Tokyo - Expo collective

2019

The Armory Show - Officine dell'immagine - Art fair

2018

180° Behind Me - Göteborgs Konsthall – Solo show

quotes:

-PRESS QUOTES

“The tangle of cables in 'Everything Behind Me' mirrors the entanglement of our communication, leaving observers both captivated and confounded, a symbol of our struggle to truly connect in an age of overwhelming informational

complexity.“

“It is impossible to understand where the rhythm begins or where it ends; the movement is completely lost among intertwining, descents and escapes. In this dizzying labyrinth, the observer remains disoriented. If he gets too close, he does not perceive its imposing overall structure; if conversely he moves too far away, he is sure to miss the minute details of the electrical wires. From whichever point he tries to observe it, the viewer will never be able to interact with it in an absolute way.”

Silvia Cirelli, May 2021

”Although cables are the emblem of circulation, sharing, exchange and the table symbolises conviviality, the impossibility of participation decodes mounir fatmi’s renowned “obstacle strategy”, a testimony to the ambivalent nuances of social experience. Affirmation and subtraction, presence and absence, dialogue and silence, are found here in a stylistic mimesis that sees defiguration and indecipherability at the base of the artistic message.”

Silvia Cirelli, May 2021

“Dwelling in particular on the issue of the distribution of information by new media, mounir fatmi seeks to raise questions about our understanding of memory, language and communication with respect to the obsolescence of new technologies. His installation points to the entropy of our societies via knots of cables used for telecommunications.”

Dimitris Lempesis, February 2020

-OFFICIAL WEB SITE QUOTES

“Everything Behind Me goes back to an esthetic project consisting in reflecting upon the world and exploring the relations between the individual and the group, as well as the connections between the artist and his own creative process.
The installation represents an attempt to model a complex communications network, namely the interactions between the work of art, the artist and the world.”

Studio Fatmi, June 2018

”The artist's use of antenna cables signifies more than material—it embodies a reflection on contemporary societies and the power of images in our interconnected world.”

Studio Fatmi, June 2018

”Within the intricacies of this installation lies a paradox—a Möbius strip of creative success and personal struggle, revealing the limitations and vast possibilities of art.”

Studio Fatmi, June 2018

press articles:

Mimi Wong, Roundup from the Armory Show 2019, Art Asia Pacific, March 8th, 2019

ArtAsiaPacific

MAR 08 2019

ROUNDUP FROM THE ARMORY SHOW 2019

BY MIMI WONG

The Armory Show has come to be regarded as the art event in New York City. In 2019, the fair celebrated 25 years since its modest beginnings at the Gramercy Park Hotel. Days before its opening, however, the event was displaced from part of its venue—originally Pier 92 and Pier 94 on the Hudson River along Manhattan's West Side—due to structural safety concerns with Pier 92. As a response, organizers cancelled the Armory's sister fair, Volta, making room at Pier 90 to house one third of the Armory.

Despite the last-minute shift, the on-ground chatter reflected a sense of excitement. Thirty-three countries were represented between the 198 participating galleries—including 63 first-time exhibitors, such as Oktem & Aykut from Istanbul and ShanghArt Gallery, which has outposts in Shanghai, Beijing and Singapore. International exhibitors deployed various strategies to maximize their moment before the eyes of the anticipated 65,000-plus attendees. Gallery Hyundai from Seoul showcased a survey of Korean contemporary artists alongside attention-grabbing installations by Korean-American Nam June Paik. Nearby, Mizuma Art Gallery opted to focus on three of their Japanese artists. Representing Southeast Asia, Singapore's STPI Gallery promoted pieces exemplifying print and papermaking techniques by Do Ho Suh and Kim Lim, among others.



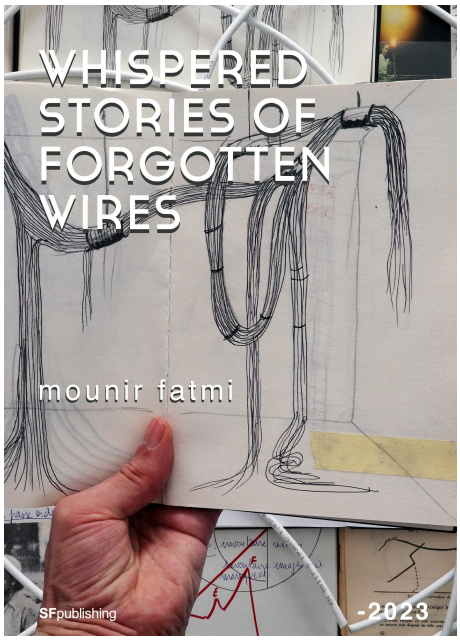
MOUNIR FATMI's Everything Behind Me 02 (2018), made of coaxial antenna cable, at the booth of Officine dell'Immagine (Milan) in The Armory Show's Focus section.

For the fair's Focus section, Lauren Haynes, curator of contemporary art at the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art and a veteran of The Studio Museum in Harlem, emphasized the "interconnectedness of history." Octogenarian Faith Ringgold maps the Black experience in America onto quilts at ACA Galleries' booth. Mounir Fatmi, based in Paris and Tangier, utilizes antenna cables to underline a sense of disconnect in his works at Officine dell'Immagine. Filipina-American Stephanie Syjuco speaks to immigrant identities, proclaiming in big, block letters "I Am An American" across a black curtain on view at Ryan Lee. Syjuco lifted the words from a 1942 Dorothea Lange photograph documenting a storefront belonging to Japanese-Americans who were sent to internment camps. From the South Asian diaspora, Pakistani-born Abdullah MI Syed repurposes actual currencies, crafting a flying rug out of US dollars and a Mao suit out of renminbi.
Similar themes of displacement and unrest cropped up in the Platform projects situated throughout the fair. Siah Armajani's "Seven Rooms of Hospitality" series (2016–17) features miniature, 3D-printed models, as well as one life-size construction, of bare-bones facilities for migrant workers, deportees, asylum seekers and refugees. In Quick Fix (2019), Super Taus, the alter-ego of the Russian artist Taus Makhacheva, invited participants to win trophies and rewrite their past by rolling dice in a game of chance. Meanwhile, Pascale Marthine Tayou amasses together and suspends from the ceiling a giant, multicolored heap of Plastic Bags (2019), symbolic of global consumerism, while portending environmental catastrophe.

These glimmers of urgent commentary served as thoughtful counterpoints to the otherwise commercial nature of the fair. In this way, The Armory Show strives to offer a bit of something for everyone.

Mimi Wong is a New York desk editor of ArtAsiaPacific.

The Armory Show is on view at Piers 90, 92 and 94 in New York, until March 10, 2019.



Whispered Stories of Forgotten Wires, SFpublishing 2023

Without dialogue, without communication, memory would not spread, and when it does not spread, memory loses its strength. For fatmi, the power of language, investigated as a sort of participatory experience, becomes an anthropological matter, reflecting cultural stratification.

Silvia Cirelli, Art curator, September 2023



Everything Behind Me

Resting on evenly spaced feet, its long rectangular top is pierced in multiple points with holes of various diameters and several hundred meters of thick white coaxial cable run through them, bunched together with clamping collars. The cables run through the table, over and under its surface, and form a complex network of intertwined loops





Everything Behind Me

The work constitutes an effort to reflect upon the world, and as such it underlines the necessity to displace oneself and change

points of view. Its esthetic is part of a strategy of obstacles as carried out through many of the artist’s pieces (in particular those using horse jumping poles). It forces the viewers to distance themselves in order to see the whole thing, the overall form.

Everything Behind Me

Everything Behind Me carries with it, as the artist himself confesses, a paradoxical observation: the work might be a success from an esthetical point of view, but it also reveals a failure on a personal front. It gives the creative space the aspect of a Möbius strip.



Everything Behind Me

Everything Behind Me records an unsurpassable failure: looking at something from a distance to get a full view inevitably leads to the risk of imprecision and reduction, whereas carefully analyzing its details tends to make one lose sight of the overall scheme. In both cases, the act of seeing and reflecting upon the work of art poses a problem.