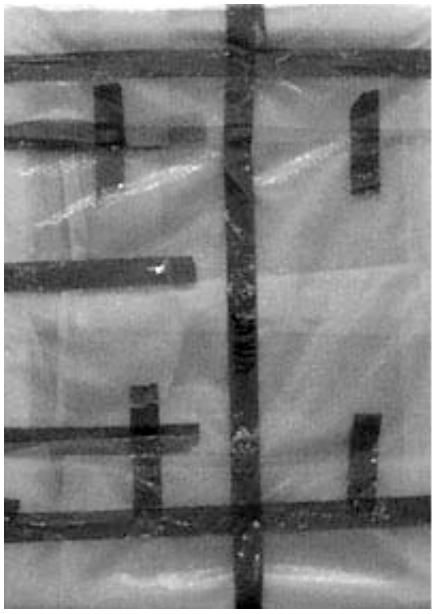
1. | Coma 01





1998, painting on canvas wrapped in plastic, photographs.
Exhibition view from Rien à voir, fondation Actua, 1998, Casablanca.
Courtesy of the artist and Ceysson & Benetiere, Paris.

La sculpture Coma se compose de longs tubes surmontés de portraits photographiques de spectateurs anonymes. Pour la réalisation de cette oeuvre Mounir Fatmi a réuni quelques unes de ses premières compositions picturales, proches de l'abstraction et de la figuration libre, ayant connu une reconnaissance critique et un certain succès à l'international. Chaque peinture est montrée à un petit groupe de spectateurs convoqués comme témoins. Une fois vues, les peintures sont enroulées sur elles-mêmes, emballées dans des housses en plastique transparent et scellées au moyen de rubans adhésifs. Sous forme de tube, chaque toile est ensuite accrochée aux murs de la galerie et surmontée des portraits photographiques des spectateurs ayant eu l'occasion de la voir avant son conditionnement.

Coma s'intéresse aux rapports du public à l'art et à l'artiste. L'oeuvre interroge en particulier le statut du témoin et explore certains aspects de la mémoire individuelle ou collective. Une démarche similaire s'observe avec les Peintures effacées (1997) où Mounir Fatmi efface ses précédentes compositions à l'aide de peinture blanche. Et avec les peintures Peint, vu, effacé (2003), l'artiste recouvre également ses toiles de peinture après que le public les aient vues. Comme dans le cas des peintures effacées et recouvertes, Coma est une mise en scène du rejet par l'artiste de sa production telle qu'elle a été perçue au Maroc, voire étiquetée, par une partie de la critique bourgeoise du milieu de l'art. Mounir Fatmi désire échapper à l'enfermement dans un statut d'artiste reconnu, dont les oeuvres feraient consensus et perdraient en pouvoir critique et esthétique. Le geste d'enroulement, comme celui d'effacement, sont ainsi destinés à la sauvegarde de l'intégrité artistique. Ils participent à un acte en quelque sorte médical consistant à plonger les oeuvres

The sculpture Coma is composed of long tubes on which photography portraits of anonymous spectators are placed. To create this piece, Mounir Fatmi gathered some of his first pictorial compositions close to abstraction and free figurativeness that were met with critical praise and had a certain international success. Each painting is shown to a small group of spectators who are called upon as witnesses. Once they have been seen, the paintings are rolled up, wrapped in transparent plastic covers and sealed with adhesive tape. Shaped like a tube, each painting is then hung on the walls of the gallery and crowned with photography portraits of the spectators who had a chance to see them before they were packed up.

Coma looks at the relation between the audience and art and the artist. It particularly questions the status of witness and explores certain aspects of individual or collective memory. A similar process can be found in Erased paintings (1997) where Mounir Fatmi erases his compositions with white paint. With the painting Painted, seen, erased (2003), the artist also covers his pictures with pain after the audience has seen them. As in the case of erased or covered paintings, Coma illustrates the rejection of the artist and his work as they were perceived in Morocco, labeled by a part of the bourgeois critique of the art world. Mounir Fatmi wants to avoid getting stuck in the status of recognized artist whose works of art would become consensual and lose some of their critical and esthetic impact. In that perspective, the gestures of rolling up and erasing aim to safeguard his artistic integrity. They are part of a somewhat medical act that consists in plunging recognized works of art in an artificial sleep in order to ensure the survival of the artist and his work. They aim to avoid the inertia to which certain forms of recognition can lead, particularly when it comes from official circles.

reconnues dans un sommeil artificiel afin d'assurer la survie de l'artiste et de son oeuvre. Ils veulent éviter l'inertie à laquelle conduisent certaines formes de reconnaissance, en particulier quand celle-ci provient des milieux officiels.

La représentation des spectateurs par des portraits photographiques affirme enfin une forme de rapport entre l'artiste et son public qui tient du lien particulier et personnel, par opposition à un lien général à la notoriété de l'artiste ou de l'oeuvre. Les portraits reportent toute l'attention sur le public et l'oeuvre passe au second plan, car ce qui est au centre dans l'art de Mounir Fatmi, c'est bien le rapport du spectateur à l'oeuvre. Coma rappelle que l'art de Mounir Fatmi est une affaire de témoignage.

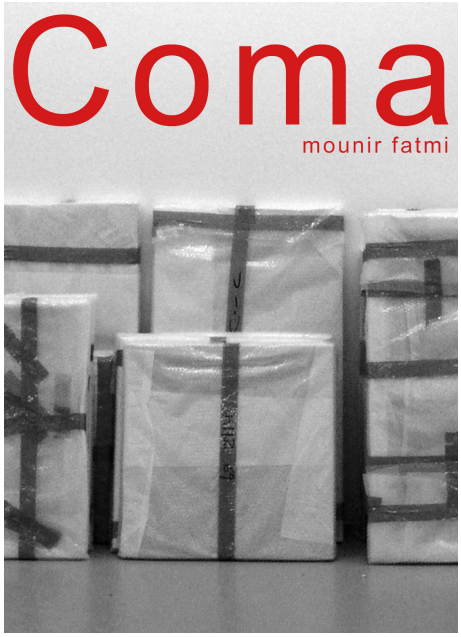
Studio Fatmi, Juillet 2017.

Finally, the representation of spectators with photography portraits affirms a type of relation between the artist and his audience that has to do with an individual and personal link, as opposed to a general relation to the notoriety of the artist or the work of art. The portraits transfer all the attention to the audience and the art itself is pushed into the background, because what is central is Mounir Fatmi's work is the relation between the viewer and the artwork. Coma reminds us that Mounir Fatmi's art is all about testimony.

Studio Fatmi, July 2017.

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