

7. | Wall Painting - The Tower



2007, black acrylic painting, in situ.
Exhibition view from Fuck Architects: chapter II, Le Creux de l'Enfer, 2008, Thiers.
Courtesy of the artist.

« La Tour » est une peinture murale en noir et blanc qui expose aux regards des spectateurs deux images disposées côte à côte. L'image de gauche est la reproduction agrandie d'une colonne vertébrale humaine, avec son empilement d'os articulés et ses courbures caractéristiques. L'image de droite relève apparemment à la fois du traité d'anatomie et du plan d'architecte. Elle associe une structure anatomique non identifiée, munie de cavités irrégulières et d'un prolongement vraisemblablement osseux et tombant - à la forme évocatrice - et un dessin architectural dont le cadre est formé par l'assemblage d'os, représentation composée de lignes se croisant à angle droit, de personnages, d'objets utilitaires ou de pièces de mobilier schématisés. La Tour Eiffel, en s'inspirant de l'os du fémur, le plus léger et le plus résistant du corps humain, est une des premières constructions anthropomorphique de l'ère industrielle. Plus récemment, l'architecture biomorphique élabore des projets à partir de modèles tirés de la nature, avec le souci constant de résoudre les problèmes liés à des contraintes techniques et matérielles, telles que le poids d'une matière, ou son coût, par une approche essentiellement structurale.

L'œuvre s'inscrit dans une critique de l'architecture menée par mounir fatmi à travers différents médias, notamment les vidéos de la série « Architecture Now », « Projet VF », les works in progress photographiques « Fuck the architect », ou « Le Centre d'aujourd'hui » qui s'attardent sur les projets urbanistiques des « cités radieuses » construites dans les années soixante dix, à destination des travailleurs immigrés, ou les vastes opérations immobilières des pays arabes. Ces œuvres produisent une critique qui vise l'architecture et ses rapports à l'humain et remettent en question le rôle de celle-ci dans l'avènement de changements sociaux bénéfiques.

« The Tower » is a black & white wall painting showing two images side by side. The one on the left is the blown up image of a human spine, with its piled up articulated bones and characteristic curves. The right image seems to be both an anatomical picture and an architectural blueprint. It associates an unidentified anatomical structure possessing irregular cavities and an extension apparently made of bone falling in a suggestive way, with an architectural drawing whose frame is made of an assemblage of bones: a representation combining lines that intersect at right angles, human figures, household objects and stylized pieces of furniture. The Eiffel Tower, inspired by the femur, the lightest and most resistant bone in the human body, was one of the first anthropomorphic constructions of the industrial era. More recently, biomorphic architecture develops projects based on models found in nature, with a constant preoccupation to solve problems related to technical and physical constraints such as the weight or cost of a material, through an essentially structural approach.

This work is part of an ongoing critique of architecture conducted by mounir fatmi using various media, particularly videos, such as with the « Architecture Now » series, « Project VF » and the photographic works in progress « Fuck the Architect » or « The Centre of Now » that address the urban projects of « radiant cities » built in the 1970s for immigrant workers as well as the large-scale real estate programs in Arab countries. These works produce a critique aimed at architecture and its relation to humans, and question its role in the advent of positive social change. They denounce the domination of architecture over people, its excessive proximity in certain cases with institutional and financial power, and study the way it contributes to the

Elles dénoncent la domination de l'architecture sur l'homme, sa trop grande proximité avec les pouvoirs institutionnels ou financiers dans certains cas, et étudient le conditionnement des individus auquel elle participe. « La Tour » tente ainsi d'appréhender un élément architecturant intérieur, un élément qui organise et conditionne notre rapport au monde, dans le but de prendre de la distance avec ce point zéro de la perception et de changer notre manière de voir.

Expérimentation géométrique en noir et blanc dont le style minimaliste est destiné, comme souvent chez mounir fatmi, à obtenir un maximum d'effets, « La Tour » développe une esthétique du contraste et du balancement avec l'association de motifs anatomiques et architecturaux. L'œuvre invite à des jeux de comparaisons où les effets de structures et les rapports se révèlent. Elle file une métaphore plastique qui vient poser une équivalence entre corps et l'architecture et insiste sur le rôle de la colonne vertébrale, pilier de l'anatomie humaine, principal axe d'articulation et de transmission des messages nerveux et du mouvement. La juxtaposition des images invite à relever des écarts et des différences également. Les courbures dessinées par les vertèbres s'opposent à la rectitude et à la linéarité du schéma architectural. La complexité de l'anatomie humaine contraste avec la simplicité, voire le simplisme du dessin d'architecte. Le système de mise en relation complexe entre organes que constitue la colonne est mis en regard d'un système de compartimentation des espaces et des individus qui empêche les communications. L'anatomie humaine se confronte à une morphologie déshumanisée, abritant des individus réduits à des micro-organismes au fonctionnement schématique. La structure hybride pourrait évoquer l'appareil reproducteur de quelque monstre urbain où les humains ont un simple rôle séminal ou germinateur... Structure monstrueuse qui exprime peut-être une tradition architecturale viriliste illustrée par les vastes projets de construction phalliques, érigeant leurs tours depuis les années soixante jusqu'à nos jours.

Studio Fatmi, Janvier 2018.

conditioning of individuals. "The Tower" attempts to apprehend an internal architectural element, an element that organizes and conditions our relation to the world, in order to take a step back from this first degree of perception and to change our way of seeing.

« The Tower » is a geometric experimentation in black & white whose minimalistic style aims, as is often the case with mounir fatmi, to create a maximum effect. It develops an esthetic of contrasts and balance by associating anatomical and architectural motifs. The work is an invitation to play with comparisons where connections and the effects of structure are revealed. It employs a plastic metaphor that creates equivalence between body and architecture and insists upon the role of the spine, that pillar of human anatomy, the main axis of articulation, for the transmission of nervous messages and movement. The juxtaposition of the two images is also an invitation to take notice of disparities and differences. The curves drawn by the vertebrae are opposed to the rectitude and linearity of the architectural plan. The complexity of the human anatomy contrasts with the simplicity, even the oversimplification of the architect's drawing. The complex apparatus of connection between the organs that is the spine is compared with a system that compartmentalizes spaces and individuals and prevents communication. The human anatomy is confronted with a de-humanized morphology containing individuals reduced to microorganisms with schematic functioning. This hybrid structure could be the evocation of the reproductive system of some urban monster where humans would have a purely seminal or germinative role... A monstrous structure that might be the expression of a masculinist architectural tradition illustrated by large phallic construction projects, erecting their towers since the 1960s, and to this day.

Studio Fatmi, January 2018.

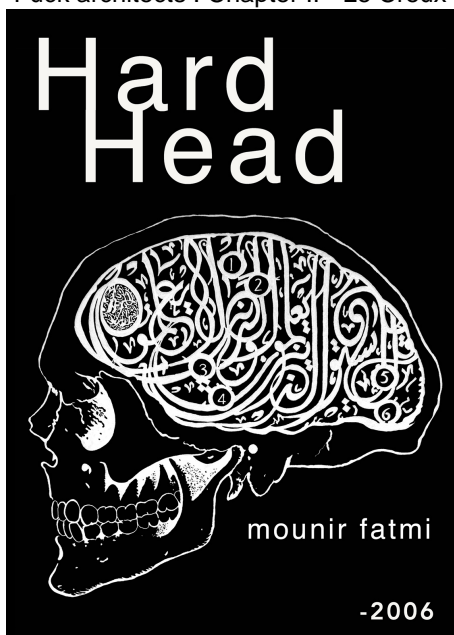
" "The Tower" attempts to apprehend an internal architectural element, an element that organizes and conditions our relation to the world, in order to take a step back from this first degree of perception and to change our way of seeing. "

[Studio Fatmi, January 2018](#)

exhibitions:

2008

Fuck architects : Chapter II - Le Creux de l'Enfer - Solo show



Hard Head, SF Publishing, 2021

With this minimalist, radical mural painting, mounir fatmi skins certain representations that form our occidental or oriental/profane or religious identities.

Evelyne Toussaint's, September 2006

DAMON magazine / MOUNIR FATMI

Sleep, Perchance to Dream

Mounir Fatmi dares to go against the tide

The works of Mounir Fatmi are pregnant with meaning. This is an artist who incorporates the complexities of the world – particularly its cultural and political characteristics – into his life and into each of the pieces he produces. Believing aesthetics to essentially be a trap, he is eager to imbue his artworks with guts, ingredients evoking the real, less-than-beautiful issues of our time. Fatmi's cultural background and international lifestyle bestow on him an openness and a balanced vision that enable him to observe controversies and injustices with clarity and fairness of mind. And it is this that he chooses to make manifest.

ANNA SANDOM

Mounir Fatmi is sitting in a noisy place called Café de Libre Échange in northern Paris. The café's name recalls his performance project, *Libre-échange* (Free trade), made in 1999, the year he moved to Paris from his native Tanger in Morocco, to participate in an artist's residency. Fatmi offered a white badge to passers-by onto which he had written his name, thereby circulating his work in the public domain through a simple, innocent gesture. Text, language, and the exchange of ideas still lie at the heart of Mounir Fatmi's work, though now on a more sophisticated and controversial level. Last October, two of his pieces were censored – one from the Printemps de Septembre festival in Toulouse in the south of France, another from the Institut du Monde Arabe (Arab World Institute) in Paris.

Dressed in a dark suit, Fatmi is just back from the opening of *History Is Not Mine*, his exhibition at Paradise Row in London, where *Sleep Al Naim*, the video of Salman Rushdie slumbering, is being pre-

miered. This is the same piece that was pulled out of an exhibition on 25 years of Arab creativity at the Institut du Monde Arabe just days before the show's inauguration. According to www.france24.com, the French institution claimed that the piece lacked pertinence. Fatmi says it was deemed too sensitive on religious grounds. The six-hour black-and-white video installation appropriates the form of Andy Warhol's film *Sleep*. Given that a fatwa was issued by Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran in 1989, in outrage over Rushdie's novel, *The Satanic Verses*, the film of Rushdie sleeping has political poignancy. "The idea was to put the public in a position of culpability", says the artist, who divides his time between Paris, Tanger, and Los Angeles. "After one minute of watching somebody sleeping, you start to feel voyeuristic and guilty. Salman Rushdie, and his right to freedom of expression, was not supported enough in the West and in the Arab countries." Fatmi made the video using 3D digital animation, after his request to meet Rushdie in person was declined by the author's



MOURIR FATMI, 2007
 Head
 Courtesy of the artist and Paradise Row, London
 Photo: Fouad Matar



Painted on the wall, a black calligramme. The interlaced curves and countercurves encircle the numbers from 1 to 6 forming the brain inside a skull. The profile is drawn with black paint on a white background.

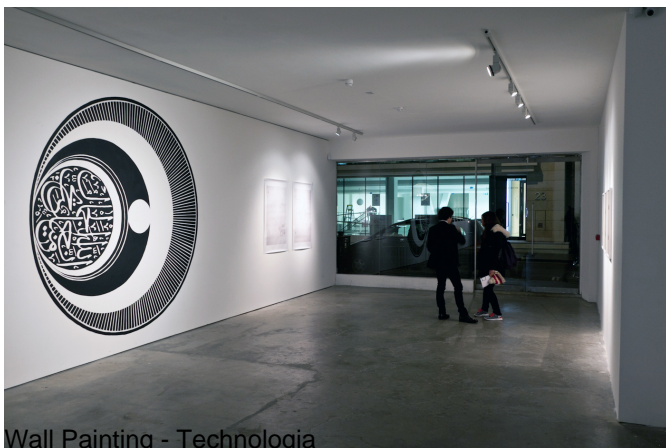


Wall Painting - Hard Head

Just like in ancient phrenology, the Arabic ciphers in Hard Head, locked up in this strange brain/ writing, might depict zones of desire, fear, hope, hate or melancholy, the ones that control memory and creativity, or that activate faith or atheism, compassion or misanthropy, the lust for life or the longing to die.

Wall Painting

There is no reason to believe that the artistic evolution is identical to the scientific one, because it would be easy to show that the parallel is little relevant. But what could really be a feature of artistic post-modernity is a certain capacity to observe truths as representations or as language games that steer a social, political and religious organisation.



Wall Painting - Technologia

The optical illusion is obtained here through the loss or the multiplication of the center of the composition. Its impressive effect suggests the idea of a frenetic production of images that violently impress themselves on the viewer's retina. The work also exercises a visual seduction and its esthetic and geometry constantly appeal to the eye.