**7.** | Wall Painting - The Great Forgiveness





2007-2009, black acrylic painting, in situ.
Exhibition view from 1ere Biennale de Bruxelles, 2008, Brussels.
Courtesy of the artist.

This work was part of Port Izmir 2 Triennal - Silence_Storm, Izmir, 2010.

This work was part of Biennale de Bruxelles - Fuck architects: chapter III, Brussels, 2008.

Rien de tel pour éveiller des faits qui avaient ébranlé la Cité sainte du Vatican le 13 Mai 1981: Le Grand Pardon, peinture murale de Mounir Fatmi fut réalisée in situ, à  l'Isola di San Pietro, dans le cadre de l'exposition Cul de Sac en marge de la Biennale de Venise 2009. Représentation recueillie au top d'une actualité supposée être suffisamment dérangeante, l'oeuvre subit immédiatement la sanction des plus cruelles: l'effacement. Ce geste fatal qui assura par ailleurs la place clé de la réalisation de Mounir Fatmi au sein du forum ne fut pas sans nous rendre à  l'évidence que l'axe de l'art contemporain est désormais renversé. Si le meilleur de l'art vient du Sud et de l'Est, la censure est un privilège sans frontières.

Rappelons les faits: deux ans apès l'attentat raté contre le pape Jean-Paul II, ce dernier visitait en prison son bourreau, Mehmet Ali Agca, membre du groupement de l'extrême droite turque Les Loups gris pour lui accorder grâce. Le cliché photographique, devint l'icône de l'actualité parmi les plus médiatisées. 30 ans après une première condamnation à vie, Agca fut libéré pour devenir le messie contemporain, personnage fort convoité, l'image d'une conciliation possible des déchirures du monde actuel. Utopie à  l'aura romantique, ce consensus imaginé et mis en image dans le cas du Grand pardon renvoie quelque part aussi au mythe de la peinture.

There’s nothing like it to conjure up facts that shook the Holy City of the Vatican on 13 May 1981: The Great Forgiveness, a wall painting by mounir fatmi, was created on site, on the Isola di San Pietro, in the context of the Cul de Sac exhibit during the 2009 Venice Biennale. A representation staged in the heat of current affairs deemed sufficiently disturbing, the work immediately suffered the cruelest of sanctions: erasing. This fatal gesture actually granted mounir fatmi’s creation a key place in the forum that can only bring us to the realization that the axis of contemporary art is now reversed. If the best art comes from the South and the East, censorship is a privilege that knows no borders.

A quick reminder of the facts: two years after an assassination attempt against John Paul II, the pope visited his attacker, Mehmet Ali Agca, a member of the Turkish far-right movement The Grey Wolves, to forgive him. The picture taken on that occasion became an iconic image seen in the media around the world. 30 years after an initial life sentence, Agca was released and became a modern-day messiah, a highly sought-after character, the personification of a possible conciliation in today’s fractured world. This utopian consensus surrounded with a romantic aura was imagined and incarnated in an image in the case of The Great Forgiveness, which actually also evokes the mythology of

Le tracé serait ici aussi un acte de commémoration.

Le fait d'actualité, portrait mordant d'une humanité schyzophrène aurait-il ainsi accès au rang de l'expression plastique? Et le fait de reproduire cette image ne lui donnerait -elle pas le pouvoir de commenter et dénoncer autrement un témoignage journalistique que l'art désormais s'approprie à partir d'une mémoire collective? Ce fait capté par l'objectif, témoin d'une rencontre historique ressucite en tant qu'objet anxieux,(pour reprendre ici le terme d'H.Rosenberg ), et sa citation devient une forme artistique nouvelle. L'avoir reproduit, recopié sur le mur d'un temple dédié à  l'art, n'a fait qu'activer de nouveau et plus puissamment encore le pouvoir de sa représentation. L'artiste, lui, n'a fait que s'y tenir, alors que le monde autour en a extrait l'effet flamboyant des interprétations possibles.

Tzvetomira Tocheva

painting. Here, drawing would also be an act of commemoration.

Does this news story, a mordant portrait of a schizophrenic humanity, thus deserve to belong to the category of plastic expression? And doesn’t the fact of reproducing that image give the artist the power to comment and denounce in a different way a journalistic testimony that art has appropriated, based on a collective memory? This fact captured by the lens, witness to an historic encounter, is resuscitated as an anxious object (to use the term coined by Harold Rosenberg) and using it becomes in turn a new form of art. Reproducing it, copying it on the wall of a temple dedicated to art, only reactivated with renewed strength the power of its representation. As for the artist, he only stuck to the image, while the world around him extracted from it the flamboyant effect of possible interpretations.

Tzvetomira Tocheva

# " Drawing would also be an act of commemoration. "

Tzvetomira Tocheva

**exhibitions:**

2020

The Pope - MOCAK - Expo collective

2010

Silence_Storm - Port Izmir 2, International triennial of contemporary art - Biennale

2009

Fuck architects: Chapter III - FRAC Alsace - Solo show

Cul-de-Sac - Isola di San Pietro - Expo collective

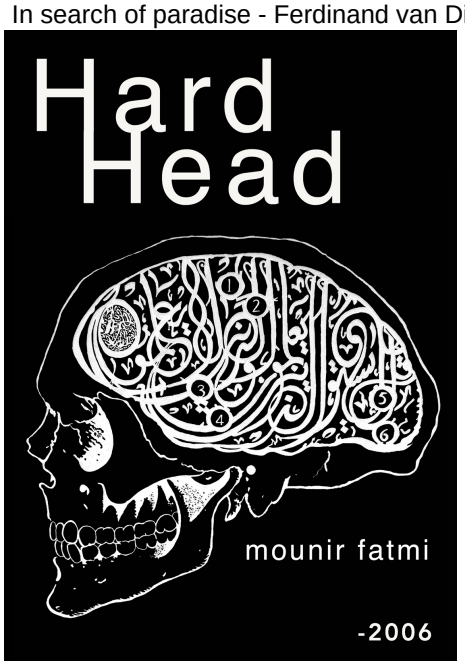
2008

Fuck architects : Chapter II - Centre d'art contemporain Le Creux de l'Enfer - Solo show

Fuck architects: Chapter III - Biennale de Bruxelles - Biennale

2007

In search of paradise - Ferdinand van Dieten Gallery - 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



# Sleep, Perchance to Dream

*Mounir Fatmi dares to go against the tide*

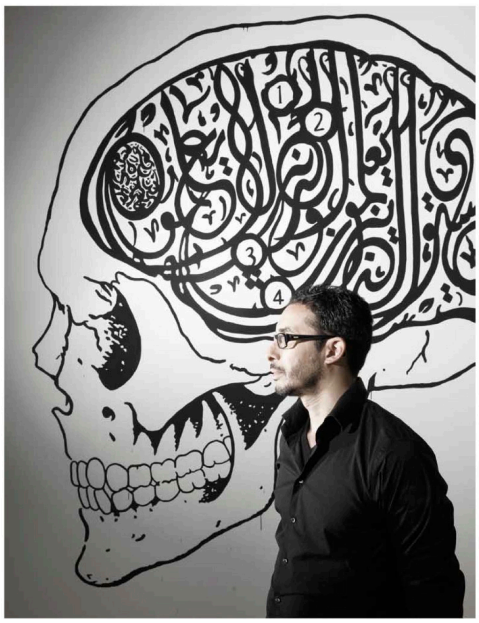
The works of Mounir Fatmi are pregnant with meaning. This is an artist who incorporates the complexities of the world – particularly its cultural and political characteristics – into his life and into each of the pieces he produces. Believing aesthetics to essentially be a trap, he is eager to imbue 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 SANSOM

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 Tangier 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 premiered. 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, Tangier, 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





HARD HEAD, 2007
Wall painting
Courtesy of the artist and Paradise Row, London
Photo: Fouad Maazouz



ard Head

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 misanthrophy, 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.