



mounir fatmi

The Observer Effect

20.03.2021 – 22.05.2021

ADN Galeria presents the fourth solo exhibition of mounir fatmi, an artist whose artistic work and research focuses mainly on language, architecture and the machine.

The exhibition, entitled *The Observer Effect*, will be open next March 20, 2021, from 11:00 to 15:00.

mounir fatmi was born in Tangiers, Morocco, in 1970. When he was four, his family moved to Casablanca. At the age of 17, he traveled to Rome where he studied at the free school of nude drawing and engraving at the Academy of Arts, then at the Casablanca art school, and finally at the Rijksakademie in Amsterdam.

He spent most of his childhood at the flea market of Casabarata where his mother sold children's clothes, one of the poorest neighborhoods in Tangiers, and an environment that produces vast amounts of waste and disposed objects. The artist now considers this childhood to have been his first form of artistic education, and compares the flea market to a museum in ruin. This vision also serves as a metaphor and expresses the essential aspects of his work. Influenced by the idea of dead media and the collapse of the industrial and consumerist society, he develops a conception of the status of the artwork located somewhere between Archive and Archeology.

By using materials such as antenna cable, typewriters and VHS tapes, mounir fatmi elaborates an experimental archeology that questions the world and the role of the artist in a society in crisis. He twists its codes and precepts through the prism of a trinity comprising Architecture, Language and Machine. Thus, he questions the limits of memory, language and communication while reflecting upon these obsolescent materials and their uncertain future. mounir fatmi's artistic research consists in a reflection upon the history of technology and its influence on popular culture. Consequently, one can also view mounir fatmi's current works as future archives in the making. Though they represent key moments in our contemporary history, these technical materials also call into question the transmission of knowledge and the suggestive power of images and criticize the illusory mechanisms that bind us to technology and ideologies.

Since 2000, Mounir fatmi's installations were selected in several biennials, the 52nd and 57th Venice Biennales, the 8th Sharjah Biennale, the 5th and 7th Dakar Biennales, the 2nd Seville Biennale, the 5th Gwangju Biennale, the 10th Lyon Biennale, the 5th Auckland Triennial, the 10th and 11th Bamako Biennales, the 7th Shenzhen Architecture Biennale, the Setouchi Triennial and the Echigo-Tsumari Triennial in Japan. His work has been presented in numerous personal exhibits, at the Migros Museum, Zurich. MAMCO, Geneva. Picasso Museum La Guerre et la Paix, Vallauris. AK Bank Foundation, Istanbul. Museum Kunst Palast, Düsseldorf and at the Gothenburg Konsthall. He also participated in several collective exhibits at the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris. Brooklyn Museum, New York. Palais de Tokyo, Paris. MAXXI, Rome. Mori Art Museum, Tokyo. MMOMA, Moscow. Mathaf, Doha, Hayward Gallery and the Victoria & Albert Museum, London. Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, at Nasher Museum of Art, Durham and Louvre Abu Dhabi. He has received several prizes, including the Uriöt prize, Amsterdam, the Grand Prix Léopold Sédar Senghor at the 7th Dakar Biennale in 2006, as well as the Cairo Biennale Prize in 2010.



mounir fatmi
Coma Manifesto 03, 2017



mounir fatmi
Racines 08, 2016

The exhibition we are now presenting, *The Observer Effect*, brings together a series of recent productions through which the artist explores new ways of creating from paradigmatic elements that have been present in his work: analog technology and the written word. The title refers to the theory of quantum physics by which the observer influences the observed matter. Something similar to what is known in psychology as the Hawthorne effect that establishes modifications in the behavior of individuals in response to the self-awareness of being observed. Similarly, Marcel Duchamp declared: "I sincerely believe that painting belongs to both the spectator and the artist." With these references, mounir fatmi asks the viewer to submit to observation in an unusual way; look and be seen from another point of view, transforming and altering the works in a game of reciprocity.

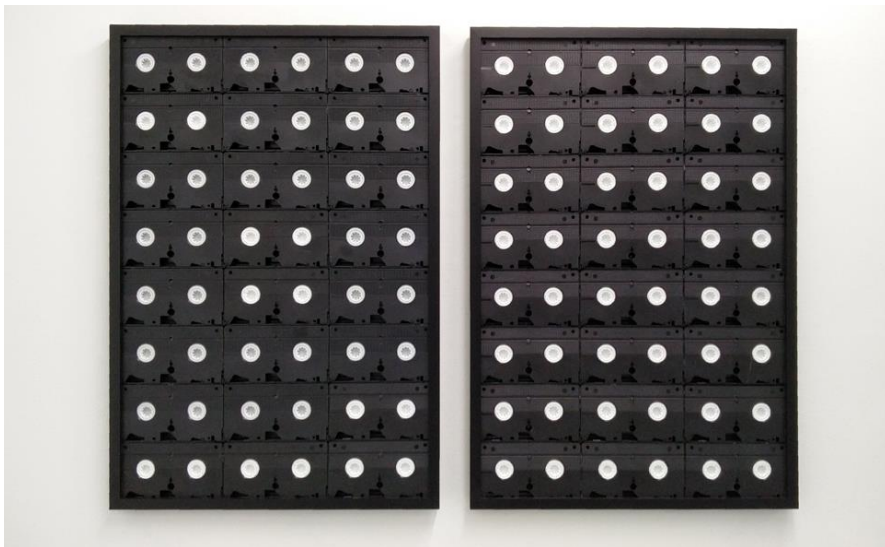
The installation *Already Dead 01* has been specially made for this space. For it, he uses VHS tapes, an obsolete medium to copy and transmit images, creating a black stain that spreads through the walls and the floor of the room invading the spectator's space and creating a kind of hallucinated dimension with which he must face. The VHS, freed here from its original function, works as an element of distortion and abstraction that questions the notions of media exposure and mass reproduction developed by Guy Debord in his book "The society of the spectacle", and with the reproduction and repetition techniques used by movements like pop art and minimalism. *Already Dead 01* questions the ways in which contemporary art examines the relationship between image and society, warning about the ability to manipulate images on the viewer.

Other pieces made from the VHS material occupy the entrance space. It is the *Propaganda* series that, like monochrome paintings, explore the relationships between communication and propaganda. This project is based on how the origin of mass

communication coincided with the popularization of video recording, which managed to enter millions of homes reaching the consciousness of a huge number of viewers.

Another common technological material in fatmi's work is coaxial cable with its clamps. An example of this is the sculpture *Racines 8*, a wall relief made with white antenna cable used by the artists to represent the decorative ornamentation of traditional Islamic art and at the same time to Jackson Pollock's dripping paintings. This work presents an aesthetic trap to the viewer who is lost in the entanglement of the cable in which beginnings and ends are not identifiable. The white on the white wall also suggests an erasure, a blank box that questions the concept of roots as a cultural stereotype defined by the individual's place of birth.

With *The Observer Effect 01* the artist faces us with an insurmountable obstacle. The horse jumping bar emerges from an urn marking with its verticality the impossibility of overcoming it. Jump bars are a recurring element in the formal vocabulary of mounir fatmi. The artist approaches this element from multiple angles: aesthetic, perceptual and physical, conceptual, existential and socio-political. It can evoke both the ready-made and pop and constructivism. Installed in a way that hinders the visitor's physical progression, *The Observer Effect 01* works like a trap, like an obstacle facing the resistance and complexity of the world against the body.



mounir fatmi
Propaganda, 2017



mounir fatmi
Peripheral Vision, 2017

Alongside this is *Peripheral Vision*, a series of four black and white photographic portraits where we see mounir fatmi himself from the front, from behind, and from the sides. His face partially disappears behind a large geometric measuring instrument through which we see only the artist's eyes. The montage recalls the futuristic aesthetic while the different approaches reveals a way of renewing the gaze, a new awareness of what connects us with the world around us and with its limits. However, what *Peripheral Vision* highlights are the deficiencies of aesthetic language and the inability of the artist to translate his ideas. Added to this is the importance of the viewer's gaze, which temporarily reverses his position with the artist by making the latter an attentive observer of the public passing through the room.

Finally, *Coma, Manifesto* is a sculptural series of large metal plates. In these plates the letters that we read through their absence pile up at the foot of the work like rubbish. The text belongs to a fragment extracted from the Manifesto written by the mounir fatmi himself: My tongue is a hemorrhage, I bleed every time I speak. One end of the plate rests against the wall, the other on the floor, with different angles of inclination, creating a play of light and shadow and projecting the text on the walls of the exhibition space.

In *The Observer Effect*, mounir fatmi presents a journey full of traps; an austere space in which the viewer is confronted with works that question the power of the image and encourage reflection on the harmful effects of hegemonic discourses on history, interpretation, memory and identity.

[mounir fatmi artist portfolio](#)