



## ADN PLATFORM mounir fatmi \_ *Art of War*

"All warfare is based on deception" (The Art of War, Sun Tzu)

ADN Platform hosts *Art of War's* exhibition by mounir fatmi, an extension of *Light & Fire* solo show at ADN Galeria. *Art of War* takes the homonymous Chinese book's title on military strategy historically attributed to Sun Tzu in order to build a personal and contemporary discourse about war and the Role of historiography role, bringing to light desires, doubts and fears and inviting the viewer to assume a critical position away from conventions and dogmas. After the ideological, political and literary connections developed in *Light and Fire* exhibition, Mounir Fatmi links himself here to the body, to the human being caught by ideologies. *Art of War* might be interpreted as a strategy not only of territorial conquest but rather of bodies and individuals conquests.

Being war the exhibition's driving force, the selected works envisage the experience and interpretation of different agents and periods. The same photo file *Art of War (2014)*, chosen as the main broadcasting exhibition's image, portrays a group of scientists and thinkers exiled during World War II, either because of their ethnic origin or because they disagreed with the Nazi policy. Under this apparently pleasant group portrait, the tragedy of a chapter that damaged human history is hidden.

In order to build his discourse, fatmi accompanies produced works with archival materials and posters, reactivating the historic document into a contemporary context. The original poster from the Italian film *La Pelle (1981)* invites us to make a connection between the pages of the journalist Curzio Malaparte's homonymous novel, which inspires Liliana Cavani's film, and the human being growing thirst for power. The visionary Malaparte's look describes the misery in which the city of Naples is immersed after war, a place where the reality of the streets in ruins and another hidden reality under the appearance of its devastating context coexists, a complex and historical reality that emerges and overflows into scenes worthy of Brueghel's painting: A dinner served by an American general in which a mermaid stew is tasted, fish and meat of woman, vaginal blonde wigs made by the Neapolitans to please the Afro-American soldiers.

We find a similar devastating scenario in the archival photographs from *La battaglia di Algeri* (The Battle of Algiers, 1966) film, by Gillo Pontocorvo

This film chronicles Algeria's Independence battle won faced against the French soldiers, witnessing a key chapter in the history of Algerian revolution, the colonizing powers' destiny and the anti-colonial revolution. The Battle of Algiers is considered a historical work more than an explicitly political film for his artistic ambition that goes along the evident ideology and controversy. fatmi makes use of the film's historical and ideological importance to reflect the inevitable bilateral involvements that every national liberation war always implies.

In *Quatrième Couverture*, begun over 20 years ago, Mounir Fatmi appropriates front covers and back covers of French and International magazines to build a vast visual archive and establish his particular timeline of parallelisms and differences in the media and the advertising images. In this case, the cover of the French magazine Express shows the title "Les Six clés de la Guerre" [the six keys of war] associated with a Marlboro's cigarette advertisement. The artist identifies a convergence between the image that sells warfare information and the one that sells massive consumer products. The connections and divergences of these global images act as a common denominator between information and market economies of our times.



*La Quatrième Couverture (begun in 1991)*

*Muhammed Ali, The Labyrinth (2010)* interleaves images of African-American boxer at different stages of his life with the flickering image of a labyrinth, unceasingly accompanied by a voice-over that narrates some of the episodes of Muhammad Ali's life as a news broadcast. mounir fatmi uses the boxer's story in order to communicate his perceptions and interpretations on Islam 's relationship with the United States. Muhammed Ali had a great notoriety in the United States, partly due to his bond with Islam and his subsequent conversion. The boxer turned his back on any public opinion, shattering stereotypes about racism and religion. Despite of coming from a segregated society, he declared that America was the best country in the world, although his relationship with the US government radically changed in 1966, when he refused to be drafted to serve his country in the Vietnam War. Muhammed Ali, Afro- American and US citizen, had to accept all sorts of criticisms and was threatened being sentenced with prison.

The exhibition concludes with *After the Fall's* sculpture (2007), consisting of a fractured single broken horse jumping red pole leaning unsteadily to a mirror surface. Through the fragility of the chosen materials and his direct visual language, Fatmi makes an insightful reference to the United States, with a prescient suggestion of instability on the eve of the international financial crisis that began in 2008. Mounir Fatmi seizes visual poetic and meanings to translate with irony, violence and subversion the political, economic and social events in the course of history.