

kamel mennour 

kamel mennour 47  
47 rue saint andré des arts  
paris 75006 France  
tel +33 1 56 24 03 63  
fax +33 1 40 46 80 20

kamelmennour.fr

# LATIFA ECHAKHCH PENDANT QUE LES CHAMPS BRULENT- Part I

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Latifa Echakhch has divided her first exhibition at the galerie Kamel Mennour "Pendant que les champs brûlent" entitled into two parts. Part one will be followed by part two and the pieces of work shown in the first version will be dismantled, removed and replaced by new ones: the exhibition closes and reopens. It can be assumed that the exhibition's cyclic course and reshaping of context is an experiment with ideas linked to development and expectations, and that, as well as prolonging the lifetime of the exhibition, it will release new sets of narratives and means of interpretation. Such broader reasoning facilitates a second assertion where the memory of earlier mounted works returns to form a spatial palimpsest in the confrontation with new works. The question is essentially what sort of assumptions we are dealing with - and in what direction we are pointed - when "Pendant que les champs brûlent, part I" primarily appears to present space and context conditioned by silence.

What is political in art, according to Jacques Ranciere, is not how it delivers messages but how it constructs relations between the visible and what can be said about the visible. Echakhch works with a poetic and political assemblage of objects and sculptures using a tactic similar to a film director's mise-en-scene, with an awareness of how two-dimensional framing, composition, and design can examine three-dimensional issues of a space territory. For *Each Stencil A Revolution (À chaque stencil une révolution, 2007)* refers to the radical protests that were characteristic of the late 1960s when carbon paper was used to reproduce and multiply revolutionary statements and pictures. This piece of work, a lucid blue wall covered with carbon paper - an archaic representation of a long before the possibilities of today's digital technology - is displayed on two floors in the galerie Kamel Mennour. Fixed to its walls, it is the only piece of work that will remain from the beginning of the first exhibition until the end of the last. By intersecting the architecture and moving from an upper gallery to the lower, a background is established, a pictorial surface and a type of bluescreen towards which scenarios laid out by the exhibited works will continue to act - now and in the future.

In Echakhch's Tate Modern exhibition from 2008, *Fantasia* (2007) and *Speaker's Corner* (2008) were exhibited together with the above-mentioned *For Each Stencil A Revolution*. In Paris the works showcased in London have been juxtaposed with *Sans titre* (La dégradation), a collection of objects comprising a sabre, a vintage military jacket, a small number of bronze buttons and some fragments of textiles positioned on the floor. This latter work articulates the consequences of ceremonial violence executed in the name of the army state, staging what remains and what is materialized after a minimal yet so violent gesture after the judicial system and state bureaucracy have imposed a degradation. *Fantasia* (2008) and *Speaker's Corner* (2008) examined the theme of the relation between the state and the individual's access to freedom, speech and protest, taking its starting point in Hyde Park's Speaker's Corner, a place densely charged with political, symbolic meaning.

Latifa Echakhch « Pendant que les champs brûlent » is on show at galerie kamel mennour Tuesdays to Saturdays, 9am to 7pm.

For further information, please contact Marie-Sophie Eiché, Jessy Mansuy-Leydier and Emma-Charlotte Gobry-Laurencin.

With *Sans titre (La Dégradation)* the discussion takes a new direction; it is moved backwards in a history-searching perspective since the work seeks out its historical references in the anti-Semitic judicial murder of the officer Alfred Dreyfus. In opposition to speech there is silence, silence becomes political at the very moment someone is prohibited to make his voice heard.

Echakhch's hand-blown glass flacons *Lacrymoires* also move along an anachronistic time axis. According to the philosopher and statesman Francis Bacon, antiquities are "history defaced", some remnants which, while being rediscovered and unearthed, just casually escape the "shipwreck of time". With *Lacrymoires*, Echakhch restages a kind of illusory archaeology where careful attention to detail has been a crucial part of the manufacturing process in order for objects to resemble their originals as closely as possible, both at a formal and technical level. This is a work of art, almost aspiring to become a non-art artefact: miniature bottles used at the time of the Roman Empire to collect the tears shed at funeral ceremonies and which were later placed in the grave together with the deceased. Tears comprise an expression which can represent both grief and joy but what emotive stories are sealed here is not disclosed.

In Greek, taxidermy means the shaping of skin. In the same room as *Lacrymoires*, the exhibition's last piece of work is shown, a stuffed crow with closed eyes, placed lying on its back on a pedestal. In contrast to the task of a taxidermist - to recreate an illusion of life, now from the defacement of death - Echakhch has commissioned an emphasizing of the simple fact that the bird is truly dead. But after the moment of death, the carcass, is arranged mimicking almost a human death, given human form, instead reflecting our own conventions about how non-life should be shaped from a pathological perspective. Contrary to the lives of museum objects which among themselves create relationships and narratives, building up to a context of history, *Untitled (Crow)* shows an ultimate silent state, an object made dead.

Mats Stjernstedt, May 2009.  
(Translation : Michel Pencreac'h)

Born in 1974 in El Khnansa (Maroc), Latifa Echakhch lives and works in Paris and Martigny (Switzerland).

Her work has featured in numerous solo and group exhibitions: at the Magasin in Grenoble, at the Box in Bourges, at the Tate Modern in London, at the CAC of Vilnius, in the ArtFocus Biennale of Jerusalem (Israel), at Manifesta 7 in Bolzano (Italy), at the Kunsthau of Zürich, at the Studio Museum Harlem in New York and the Museum Anna Norlander (Sweden).

She will be presented in solo shows later this year at the Kunsthalle Fridericianum in Kassel, at the Swiss Institute of New York, at the Bielefelder Kunstverein in Bielefeld, and in 2010 at the Frac Champagne Ardenne in Reims, at the MACBA (Barcelona) and in the FRI ART in Fribourg (Switzerland).