

conrads

mounir fatmi

Heavier Than Words

at CONRADS Berlin May/June 2021

Opening during Gallery Weekend Berlin Friday, April 30 thru Sunday May 2, 2021, noon – 8 pm*.

We are delighted to pronounce our third solo exhibition with mounir fatmi in our new space in Berlin-Mitte. Photographs, videos, sculptures and a large installation will be on show.

mounir fatmi, whose work participates in numerous international biennials, grew up in Casablanca in a traditionally Arab Muslim environment, but left Morocco at the age of seventeen to study art in Rome. Post graduate studies in Casablanca and at the Rijksakademie in Amsterdam followed. Already in his early works, he explored Western modernism, particularly fascinated by minimalism and conceptual art. He questions these concepts against the background of his own culture. Confronting Western concepts with fragments from the traditional Islamic tradition, he creates his own aesthetics, which can be understood as metaphors for the dynamics of globalized social processes and the resulting conflicts. Cross-culturally, fatmi questions the boundaries of memory, communication and language. The deconstruction of language and machine as communication tools is another focus. For his artistic works, he often uses discarded apparatuses and objects of analog communication technology and sends their codes and rules through a prism of architecture, language, and machine.

For example, fatmi's "Inside The Fire Circle" in our exhibition is build from a network of seventeen old typewriters interconnected by a large number of red and black jump-start cables.

The sculpture "Heavier Than Words," to which the exhibition owes its title, consists of a beam scale and a collection of weights and Arabic characters from heavy steel stacking in one of the two scale pans. The scale allows immediate visual assessment of the difference in weight between two objects. naturally it tilts to the heavier side. At first glance everything seems normal, but in fact the sculpture exhibits the paradox of defying gravity and is tilting significantly to the side with the empty bowl. The physical conundrum posed by this sculpture evokes questions: about emptiness from a scientific perspective, about the power of thought, and that of the weight that the spoken word can have. What is more powerful than language? What metaphors do we find for what exists beyond our conceptual thinking?

In mounir fatmi's multifaceted artworks in this exhibition, the main focus is the relationship between language and thought, language and perception, language and understanding. The artist is familiar with the main currents of modern western philosophy regarding on these questions and incorporates them into

his works, especially the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951), who made language itself the central theme of his philosophical reflections and came to the essential conclusion that "The limits of my language mean the limits of my world" (sentence 5.6) and, in circular reasoning, "What one cannot speak of, one must remain silent about" (sentence 7).

In fatmi's 2018 work, "Coma, Manifesto," we find a quotation from the artist's manifest "I did not have spring, I did not have summer, and here is winter already." The work consists of a massive, corroded metal plate of enormous presence, from which the text has been cut. It leans against the wall and in front of it on the floor lie the lasered out letters like wilted leaves under a tree. The experience of lost time that fatmi has captured in this poetic sentence from his manifesto is a universal one, and yet everyone will read it differently. In anticipation, these words accurately describe the current state of people under the conditions of the pandemic.

mounir fatmi and his team have prepared detailed digital information in German and English for this exhibition, which illuminates the artist's biographical background and introduces to his world of thought.

*The daily update of the Corona regulations in Berlin must be observed.

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