

Wilde



Adel Abdessemed

PRESS RELEASE

ADEL ABDESSEMED

DESCRIPTION OF A STRUGGLE

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He looked – how can I describe him to you? – like a stick dangling in the air, with a black-haired skull on top. His body was clad in a lot of small, dull-yellow patches of cloth which covered him completely because they hung closely about him in the still air of last night.

Franz Kafka, 'Description of a Struggle'

The first time Adel Abdessemed worked with printed sheet metal - the metal used for food tins and cans containing dangerous substances - was in 2005, for a small work of art that was never exhibited, *Monsieur Poulet*, based on the 1974 film "Cocorico Monsieur Poulet" (Cock-a-doodle-doo! Mister Chicken), by the filmmaker and French anthropologist Jean Rouch.

After the series of sculptures *Queen Mary II*, 2007, and the big series of *Mappemondes*, 2010 - 2014, the artist began in 2016 the *Cocorico* series of paintings, in progress to this day, made from the same recycled printed metal, with each part functioning as an unique work. Indeed, apart from the formal similarity that characterizes these works, each work has its own pictorial beauty and elegance.

Genève
Rue du Vieux-Billard 24
CH – 1205 Genève
+ 41 22 310 00 13
geneve@wildegallery.ch

Basel
Angensteinerstr. 37
CH – 4052 Basel
+ 41 61 311 70 51
basel@wildegallery.ch

Zurich
Waldmannstr. 6
CH – 8001 Zurich
By appointment only
zurich@wildegallery.ch

www.wildegallery.ch

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Abdessemed addresses the art of painting in a direct fashion. And yet, the words he places in each painting are neither titles, nor comments, nor even slogans that stand out on the pictorial background, but rather side notes in the margin where chance plays an evocative role.

Daniel Birnbaum writes, in the exhibition catalogue to be published in the autumn of 2020: *With Cock-a-doodle-doo, I'm drawn-in, beckoned into something intriguing. It's not so much the industrial approach and detachment from the production of the works, or the artist's attempt to reduce "creation" to chance and collective mechanics, but rather the transparency of his method. These are not paintings produced by an embodied subject. The subject in question would require countless hands. When I look at these shiny, beautiful surfaces, I can't help visualizing the frenetic activity of the artist trying not to lose control. I see him first as a spider, then as an octopus, and then as Edward Scissorhands. In any case, the artist cannot be fully human. The paintings are produced by a multitude. They are the filth and luxury of a globalized economy, unnecessary spending, the waste of the world.*

The works in the series are bold and yet seductive, like invitation cards. The tradition of making visually appealing souvenirs from scrap metal is widespread in North Africa where Adel Abdessemed produces all of these works, in his workshop in Fez, Morocco.

BIOGRAPHY

Adel Abdessemed (Constantine, 1971, lives and works in Paris)

Personal exhibitions (selection) : Art Front Gallery, Tokyo (2020); Tang Contemporary Art, Hong Kong (2019); MAC, Lyon (2018); MAC's Grand Hornu, Belgium (2018); Musée des Beaux-Arts, Montreal (2017); Musée de Vence, in collaboration with Jean Nouvel, Venice (2015); CAC Malaga (2015); David Zwirner, New York (2012); Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris (2012); Parasol Unit, London (2010); David Zwirner, New York (2009); Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Torino (2009); Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge (2008); Le Magasin, Grenoble (2008); P.S.1, New York (2007); Musée d'art moderne et contemporain, Geneva (2004).

Collective exhibitions (selection) : Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris (2020); *Rencontres de la photographie d'Arles*, with the help of Jean Nouvel, Arles (2018); Triennale Echigo-Tsumari Art, Japan (2018); Istanbul Biennale (2017, 2007) ; La Triennale, Milano (2017); Oku-Noto Triennial, Suzu, Japan (2017); *Bold Tendencies, Peckham*, London (2016); Biennale di Venezia (2015, 2011, 2007, 2003); Aichi Triennale, Japan (2010); Havana Biennale (2009); Gwangju Biennale (2008); São Paulo Biennale (2006); *Happiness*, Mori Art Museum, Tokyo (2003); P.S.1, New York (2001). Manifesta 3, Ljubljana (2000).

In 2015, he created the scenography and lighting of *Retour à Berratham*, during the Avignon Festival, for the choreographer Angelin Preljocaj.

Since 2018, he has been working on his first staging for Olivier Messiaen's *Opera Saint François d'Assise* at the Grand Théâtre de Genève. Performances scheduled for June 2020 have been postponed.

The three-volume catalogue raisonné, *Works 1988-2015*, has been published by Koenig Books, bringing together almost thirty years of creation.

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