

ENGLISH

GALLERIA CONTINUA

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ADEL ABDESSEMED

Jam Proximus Ardet, La Dernière Vidéo

20/01/2024 - 31/03/2024

20 January 2024 4pm - A conversation between artist Adel Abdessemed and curator Carlo Falciani

Opening Saturday 20 January 2024, 4-7.30pm.

Until 31 March 2024.

The gallery is open from Monday to Friday 10am / 6pm,
Saturday and Sunday 10am - 1pm / 2pm - 7pm.

Galleria Continua is delighted to present, for the first time in its San Gimignano spaces, *Jam Proximus Ardet, La Dernière Vidéo* (2021) by Adel Abdessemed. The video is inaugurated with a talk between the artist himself and curator, Carlo Falciani. Over the last thirty years, Adel Abdessemed, a French artist of Berber origin, has created a dedicated and ardent body of work that reflects on violence, memory and trauma. Born in Algeria, he fled the country at the beginning of the 1992 civil war. He has since declared that it feels as if he were born twice, once in Algeria and again when he permanently settled in France. Taking the memory of the violence and atrocities that have so tragically scarred that magnificent country into his art, his work asks very direct questions about how we manage and live in society today.

In *Jam proximus ardet* (Already the neighbor is burning), *La Dernière Vidéo*, fire is the primary element adopted by Adel Abdessemed to describe a powerful but fleeting entity like existence. Juxtaposed with water, its counterpart element, the video is visually disconcerting, drawing the viewer into a state of curiosity and amazement. Adel

Abdessemed's work directly speaks to its audience and in this video the message is clear: when your neighbour's house is burning, the artist cannot remain indifferent to the fire. Abdessemed does not provoke the fire, but he approaches it, and he brings it to us, in order to start difficult and existential conversations.

The video is not structured according to a traditional narrative but consists of one single shot that makes it look more like a moving picture. A burning ship appears, far away on the horizon, as the vessel gets closer, we slowly begin to see the artist himself, stoically standing on the main bridge of the boat, seemingly oblivious to the blaze burning behind him. Reminiscent of other works by the artist which have involved fire like *Adel Abdessemed Je suis innocent* (2012), *Description d'un combat* (2020) and *Tonight no man will sleep* (2022), exhibited at the artist's immensely visited solo show *Out, Out, Brief Candle* (2022) at Galleria Continua / Paris, the video is an allegory for all the tragedies that have occurred and still occur in the Mediterranean sea. The title comes from Virgil's poem *Aeneid*, in which, like many of

those that desperately cross the Mediterranean today, the fleet led by Aeneas is on a voyage to find a second home, and where eventually the city of Troy is in flames, destined for destruction.

Born in Constantine, Algeria in 1971, **Adel Abdessemed** lives and works in Paris, France. Adel Abdessemed embraces a wide variety of media, including drawing, sculpture, performance, video and installation. His work often deals with the themes of war, violence and religion and is characterised by brutal imagery that attempts to depict the inherent violence of the contemporary world. French artist of Berber origin, Adel Abdessemed has been building a committed and incandescent body of work for more than thirty years, which has quickly found an echo on the international scene. He fled Algeria after the beginning of the 1992 civil war, taking with him the memory of the war and the range of atrocities. "I've experienced very directly the violence that I talk about. Even today, the wounds remain open and the questions unanswered: the arson, the rapes, the unpunished murders." As the writer Kamel Daoud says about Adel Abdessemed: "You have to come from a country of origin like Adel's, with still alive terrible symbols, capable of real life and death, to understand that the artist's indignation is a necessity, rather than an aesthetic."

Once in France, he studied at the École nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Lyon. Steeped in classical culture, literature and poetry, and with a passion for music, Abdessemed has appropriated various media and languages to make art the place where a society exposes its violence and fragility. Kounellis asserts that his vehemence is a bulwark against conformism and the uniformity of the bien-pensance. It is this need to mix all forms of cultural expression that has led him to collaborate with writers and poets such as Hélène Cixous, Julia Kristeva, Christophe Ono-dit-Biot, Adonis, with whom he has published several joint works, but also architects such as Jean Nouvel and Jean Michel Wilmotte. In the eighteenth century, Lessing

made the cry the unrepresentable in art and the taboo of all visual arts. Through his work, Abdessemed has turned art into an organ of collective cry: an exercise in freedom, an exhortation to free ourselves once and for all from our barbarism.

Since Abdessemed's first solo exhibition in 2001, he has had others at: PS1/MoMA, New York; MIT List Visual Arts Center, Cambridge, MA, USA; CNAC - Le Magasin (Centre National d'Art Contemporain), Grenoble, France; Parasol unit, London; Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin, Italy; Centre Pompidou, Paris (Adel Abdessemed Je suis innocent, 2012); CAC, Málaga, Spain; Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, Canada (Adel Abdessemed: Conflict, 2017); Otchi Tchiornie at MAC's, Grand-Hornu, Belgium; L'Antidote at MAC, Musée d'Art Contemporain, Lyon, France .

Adel Abdessemed's work has been shown at the Venice Biennale three times (2003, 2009, 2015), as well as at the Biennial of Istanbul (2017), Havana (2009), Gwangju (2008), Lyon (2007) and São Paulo (2006). In 2017 he participated in the Triennale di Milano The Restless Earth and the Oku-Noto Triennale in Japan. In 2020 the artist exhibited at the Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris as part of the group show Crossing Views, and in March 2022 he inaugurated "An Imperial Message", a major solo show over five floors at Rockbund Museum, Shanghai. He is currently working on the staging, decors, costumes and video of Olivier Messiaen's opera Saint-François d'Assise, due to open on April 2024 at the Grand Théâtre de Genève, and is preparing a major solo exhibition at the Tel Aviv Museum of Art, in May. The artist will also participate in the 4th Biennale of Bangkok and the 15th Biennale of Dakar.

For further information on the exhibition and photographic material:

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