
A step it further

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Quelques bribes arrachées au vide qui se creuse

A few snatches torn from the
deepening emptiness

Exhibition by Taysir Batniji

Curated by Julien Blanpied and Frank Lamy
Lighting designer: Serge Damon

The MAC VAL thanks its partners:



English

Exhibition until 9 January 2022

'To write: to try meticulously to retain something, to cause something to survive; to wrest a few precise scraps from the void as it grows, to leave somewhere a furrow, a trace, a mark or a few signs.'

Georges Perec, *Espèces d'espaces*, Paris, Galilée, 1974

MAC VAL is organising the first monographic museum exhibition by Taysir Batniji. Born in Gaza, Palestine, in 1966, he has lived and worked in Paris since the late 1990s.

Covering nearly twenty-five years of work, this exhibition brings together elements from his prolific output and sets about exploring its multiple aspects. The paintings, drawings, photographs, videos, installations and performances (from 1997 to 2021) assembled here form one big self-portrait, while offering a dynamic reflection on the question of identity. Paraphrasing Georges Perec, the exhibition title leads us into a melancholy space where separation and displacement are driving forces.

Best known for his photography, Batniji is a protean artist who works on a humble, human scale. From his early pictorial approach, he moved quickly towards more

conceptual objects, and began using photography and video.

Privileging no medium in particular, he makes palpable that intermediate space between the personal and the public, poetry and politics. Each of the "stones" he thus assembles enables Batniji to articulate a *mobile* definition of his own identity, to affirm his existence in the world, in spite of everything.

Batniji's work is no documentary and/or journalist report on the Israeli-Palestinian situation. True, some of his pieces touch on this particular regime of representation, or sometimes adopt its codes, but the great majority of them work in a much more distanced, symbolic and metaphorical mode, thereby instituting a certain tension between the real and its representations.

We may note the permanence of certain motifs, of certain visual

procedures. There is separation, emptiness, absence, superimposition, reservation, reconstitution. Simulacra. The unfinished, the incomplete. Erasure. The work focuses on traces, memories of a form, a gesture, the memory of a journey, the absence of a dear one, exile from a territory, the disappearance of an image. In a permanent dialogue with art history, his works reprise and answer each other over time.

He makes use of vestiges, of imprints, of what is left, of what if left to him. What he remembers. Reminiscences, resurgences, memories.

There is the pathetic, the infinitesimal, fixed moments, suspended time. Attention to tiny details, to nothings. To the fleeting. And to chance, too. To what will disappear. What is about to appear.

It is more threshold than frontier. The threshold, that space in-between that is neither one

thing nor the other. Being at home, here and elsewhere, and vice versa. Staying on the strand.

Undefined. Indefinite. This notion constitutes one of the work's central themes. While this non-definition is something the individual Taysir Batniji suffers in life, it is something he consciously works on his art. How to define oneself in the violence of imposed non-definition?

As if the best way of talking about the world's disasters was bound to be in relation to the self, one's personal situation. As if he was permanently giving (himself) proof of his existence, of his use of the world. In order to better resist.

He lays down no lesson, does not say what would should be done or how to think, but makes work that makes visible, that makes him visible, work in the first person singular, work that says *I*. That provides material and symbolic

proof of his real existence, that affirms him as an existing subject. In a movement that very certainly responds to the colonial process of *invisibilising* his identity, a whole people, and an entire history.

That resists. So that he can reconquer his own name, like Elias Sanbar, who says: 'I am here, and there.'

Julien Blanpied and Frank Lamy, curators of the exhibition

Exhibition organised with the support of BIC, Après Midi Lab and Atelier Populaire.

www.taysirbatniji.com