

Artsimous

Dounia

Exhibition: 17 june – 21 september 2019

Vernissage: 15 june 2019 | h20:00

Voice Gallery is pleased to invite you to the opening of the exhibition *Dounia*, presenting the duo ARTSIMOUS, Thursday, june 15th 2019 at 8 pm.

Dounia – that can be translated as meaning *Universe* – is the first exhibition of the ARTSIMOUS duo.

Formed over a year ago, the duo brings together fashion designer Artsi, born and raised abroad with Moroccan origins, settled now in Marrakech, and photographer Mous Lamrabet, also Moroccan and brought up in Belgium.

For the first time, the artists reveal their universe: Morocco, their roots, their love and work for fashion. From this genuine collaboration, through works thought and realized four-handedly, the duo wanders through mental images inspired by their origins. Colours, materials, as well as representations, are all extracted from their Moroccan heritage that they attempt to re-appropriate and turn towards the future.

Their commitment is towards a new generation, emancipating from certain codes and references while re-affirming embedded others. While the West's postcolonial dream still seems to prevail, the duo makes an attempt at exporting the re-visited richness of traditional Moroccan culture rather than importing foreign influences.

The construct of an inclusive artistic practice turned towards the other is an ode, a celebration of what the two find the most strikingly beautiful in their culture, a part of their DNA.

Having been brought up abroad, their aesthetic is composed, an assembled and shared imaginary world. At the heart of their process, their feelings and interpretations are staged, forming a hybrid, sensitive and extravagant artistic realm.

It is foremost an intuitive creative process the two artists develop, with their past dubbed aesthetic turned futuristic.

Both artists suggest their own vision of the future, encouraging the viewer into questioning their own outlook. Artsimous orchestrates the figures in their images not unlike a theatrical performance displaying their numerous influences: advertising, fashion, counter-culture...

Images become signs that acquire meaning and value thanks to the space they occupy inside a wider social codification and cultural system. As with the principles of structural linguistics and its philosophical offshoots (formulated by Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault) the meaning of the images isn't necessarily under the control of the authors, but rather it is determined by references to other images or symbols. In the same way as Tatsumi Orimoto and Cindy Sherman's photos, these from Artsimous propose experiences which are based on our own memory's image stock as with the different plots from the possible movies on stage of which we immediately read the evoked stories.

Throughout the various presented series, the viewer is confronted with a formal and Plastic combination: the propositions, as points of view are plural, though almost disconcertingly coherent and perfectly identifiable as belonging to the duo. *Dounia, (Univers), Souvenir du Maroc, L'houb (love)*... as many titles suggesting the artists guiding principles: An outlook onto a cosmopolitan mixed identity, mischievous and unwilling to conform to the preconceived social archetypes intrinsic to society.

The figures in the photographs are often veiled, but somehow exist outside any political or religious debate. Instead of being over exposed, the models maintain something mysterious. The viewer is therefore encouraged to imagine an image or a feeling. Going further on this idea, the duo uses non-gender-specific clothing, helping to keep secrecy around the gender of the models, and focusing uniquely on the exquisite plasticity of the materials, dramatisations and landscapes. The suggested identity is other, refusing to be defined or associated with an individuality, therefore re-affirming a wish to universalise the employed characters.

*Text by Cassandre Gil