

Abdeljalil Saouli | HYBRIDATIONS**opening:****friday 30 october 2015 h 19:00****exhibition:****from 31 october to 10 december 2015**

Voice Gallery is pleased to invite you on Friday 30th 2015, to the opening of *Hybridations*, the first solo show of the artist Abdeljalil Saouli.

"Man's sublime function is literally and positively that of a new earthly Creator. His duty is to make all things what they ought to become. Not merely in the matter of the cultivation of the soil of our earth, but also as regards intellectual and moral culture justice, love, science, arts, trade and manufactures " no consummation nor true conclusion is possible save through Man, to whom creation was confided that he might till it - ut operatur terram - as the old text of the Book of Genesis runs." Charles Gounod, Memoirs of an Artist (1896).

It may be that iconoclastic vision is also an opportunity to give back to the image - which is a Weltanschauung "world view" - the power to leave the inertia of its initial state (as a sign or as doxa) to try the great adventure of aesthetic experience (which is invention of meaning and search for the essence). In his "constructive" approach, Abdeljalil Saouli breaks the visual cortex of the object shoving the usual epiphany of "things" or their functionality and conformity to reality which they have been extirpated, for we offer as sediments an experience that is like "art objects". In this sense, the work of Saouli calls us to what Walter Benjamin called a "visual unconscious" and therefore to our ability, sometimes oneiric, imaginative and interpretative.

Body: animate / inanimate / animal, mobile / static / fluctuating composed / decomposed / re-composed, constructed / deconstructed / reconstructed... a continuous movement animates these "objects" of static appearance; a self-traction tacit making objects living and mythical at the same time. Living in the sense that Saouli works on natural materials (wood, grass paste, raw metals, etc.), mythical because it holds strong symbolic weight (bullets, bats, flowers, fossils ...).

In his exhibition "Hybridizations" Abdeljalil Saouli refines a theme that is clean and that made his uniqueness as an artist; to know the secret links that may exist between a natural material (the material) and a work of art (the industrial process or the Teknè). Through a series of approaches, variations around a theme (herein that of death being part of life), the artist poses the crucial question "what is a Becoming in a proteiform world (a world in constant mutation)? "He questions not only the forms and their core creation, but especially their immutable principle, their essence. This is the definition that Kant gives to art as a unit "between forma and materia" (between form and matter). Ephemeral aspects of things are as well as Maya's veils behind which something more important and more fundamental is taking place.

"Death: Caged by nothingness, hiding from being" wrote Martin Heidegger. The epiphany of being in existence is conditioned by the withdrawal of being in the dying.

The new exhibition of Abdeljalil Saouli, on the picture rails of the Voice Gallery in Marrakech, retraces the itinerary of a research at a time metaphysical and technical, a research featuring an obsessive process from repetition up to variation (as in a natural process), multiplying the forms, metaphor after metaphor, to the point where the latter eventually dissolves into the unity of meaning. With irony and cynicism, with astonishment, the panoptic approach of the artist allows him to keep vis-a-vis distance from the carved or molded object, capable of reproducing the initial shock, ekstatic where the objectal show continues in this gray zone, this translucent but impassible border between the phenomenal and the noumenal, between the Epiphany and unfathomable principle, between a being and being. The approach is the one Pascal Quignard described in his *Rhétorique*

speculative (speculative rhetoric): "He (the rhetorician) shows. But what it shows is the open window." Thus, they are the Hybridizations of A. Saouli; "objects" he shows us are not "answers" but the ingredients of the Question.

Winged bullets, bat wings in the form of flowers, fossilized wings ... winged arms (or perhaps the armed wings) ... "strange" objects, of a primitive strangeness bordering on omen, which set free our ancient fears, our primitive anxieties ... But also objects of conspiracy, totemic objects in the original sense of the term recalling the childhood of man, his gropings in a virgin world, in discover, and that is frightening. "The discovery": this is the word that was common to the first man, the child and the artist. If "discovering" is serious; that which is probably more serious is the way to access them which is none other than the game, the fun of the game, the agonizing pleasure of the game. The artist is this "discoverer" playful but whose game consists of a continuous research, unbroken; a widening which seeks "racial sitting" of things, the immutable principle of the world, now this is the righteous that falls on the other side of reality, the scary side, enigma par excellence : death.

The series "Hybridizations" relates not death but the dying, not the finitude but the transformation. Abdeljalil Saouli instrumentalises the strangeness of intermediate states between "to-be", "being" and "to die." The hybrid object, in its strangeness, is a fluidization which prints the very sharp edges between the components of a single truth: "Having to be, it is also having to die." according to Heidegger's formula. The symbolism of the alloying object, in its very proximity is a continuum. The symbolic creature, even if mythical (in this case the bat) is both a mammal and a flying viviparous predator. Like humans, it is an animal that is capable of living independently, even before being born. This mammal symbolizes the human in all its complexity; a blind animal guided by the echo of his own voice, he prefigures the almost blind movement of man in his destiny, this narcissistic pilgrimage in an almost dreamlike reality articulated projects, in anticipation, but in an uncertain manner, where only the blind fate is decides.

A "living" is primarily and essentially a "dying". As a bullet, its path always ends in the heart of the same target; death. Living is to go blindly to the ultimatum, but in the meantime there are the soaring, the flying, the dream, the fantasy, sundry achievements ... be it the fleeting trajectory of the bullet fired by pressing the trigger until the final explosion and the achievement of the target, where everything disappears, where it remains only a fossil imprint, itself crumbling and disappearing over time. Abdeljalil Saouli questions time in the Aristotelian form: "Time is the number of the movement". The movement here being frozen, it also freezes the time to offer to the public speculation as complete form, and as a compendium. The visible object (or visual), while being there is not virtually invisible since the process continues to live it, to work it, and to carve it; so it is not out of time (like a dead object), but also under the influence of time, undergoing work, disintegrating, transforming, and weathering (that is to say, etymologically, becoming another "Alter").

In this exhibition, Abdeljalil Saouli traces the route of the living in the uninterrupted flow of time. This is the path of the bullet (which is that of a viviparous) since its initial inertia in the gun barrel or the revolver to final inertia of the fossil (the empty cartridge after detonation) from time zero, from conception and birth to death; the decomposition and liquefaction not in anything, but in the everything of the Cosmos. The artist's technique and materials are also the artificial vision and conception of the world and of art.

Saouli is not satisfied to neither "reproduce" the real nor to sublimate in conventional aesthetic forms, but forces it to deliver its own "signitive" codes. By extracting parcels of this reality and highlighting them; the artist enhances the acuity, amplifies the significance. Earth, grass pulp, wood, animal remains, bronze ... all these materials are alive and even continue to be deprived from their useful value. These are organizations in the elemental state and therefore inherently natural to thank the intrinsic energy that animates all things: chemical, biological processes, and environmental actions of abrasive or corrosive elements. This matter, as well as the living that we are, is subject to the same laws by which death is no longer considered as a rite of passage from one state to another; and is the best guarantee we have that we are all part of what Maurice Merleau-Ponty calls in his theory of perception "the flesh of the world". Matters to which the artist leaves his trace, that refines the forge of his creative flame without being identified by concepts or generic and conventional formulas. This material, shaped, molded, kneaded.... continues its adventure; it is oxidized, decomposed, dematerialized. Then, this is a way of denying death, seeing in it another form of living in a world where, inevitably, nothing dies, nothing is lost but everything is transformed.

HB: A dual strange feeling is sourced from your work, at least for me; that of almost-natural objects, nearly unprocessed, and that, on the contrary, of Objects thoroughly elaborated conceptually to constitute the pieces of a puzzle, resonant with each other. This comes from a technical prowess or a more intellectual and sensitive work on each particular subject and on the work in general?

AS: Every object, every piece in itself requires attention and effort necessary (intellectual and physical) into something that speaks, communicates. It is true that I have a particular interest in raw materials, a bit- not at all processed. This contact with the natural thing gives me more freedom as it puts me in contact with another freedom, that of matter. I do not force things to come, but I can say that I help them to come. Having said this, there is nothing free nor risky in my way of treating the material, because, having observed, in their own natural environment I can guess more or less exactly what it will become thereafter (whether on the level of form, texture or colour). I do not reinvent the Real, I let it act in accordance with its own law, not according to mine. It's somehow the same approach followed by Titus Carmel in the past century by treating the theme of rotting a banana for example. Everything is there, it is enough to know, watch and capture the right moment. That said, I stand at the level of idea and that of the manufacturing of the object; it's, somehow, bursting and pushing forward the message initially contained in the things I manipulate.

HB: One of the specifics of your work, not just in this exhibition, is this "anxiety" so to speak, or at least uneasy questioning about the work of time on matter and beings. There then arises the question on your source(s) of inspiration...

AS: I do not think too much of inspiration. There is, certainly, a kind of trigger, an idea that springs following an observation or a discovery; but the rest is work, hard work. I consider sculpture - and the artistic work in general - as a process both intellectual and industrial. Moreover, the very origin of the word art is "Tekne" in Greek. It is a technique which is acquired through experience and discovery and trying to expand. In this sense, there is no anxiety as to speak, but rather fun; a pleasure similar to that of a playing child and who, in doing so, discovers the world through this medium. This involves having an initial idea, and then the imagination embroiders around this idea. I am a homo-ludens: I play tremendously, but with seriousness and application. All is "programmed" in my work; nothing is left to chance, from the work on the idea itself until the industrial process to give birth to the visual object. I look, I touch, I handle (I am very tactile) ... the idea comes next. It is by manipulating the object we know if it holds a story or not. Aristotle said that the hand is "the instrument of instruments" and it's true. The eye discovers, the hand feels, and that is where the mind comes into play; this is the origin of homo faber, he discovers the world by transforming it. While in contact with an object, my hand dictates the gestures I have to do to create another object; not necessarily similar but the new object continues to bear the soul of the former. This is a set of processes that I cannot define, something that is between play and work in line with a given purpose and a given environment. For me, what we call "inspiration" is something that lasts as far as the job goes; neither before, nor after; because before there is an intuition or idea and then there is the final product, that is to say the finished work.

HB: In his "Hybridizations", which captures us and concerns us, it is this imaginary geography that can be guessed by the carved object which seems to hide more than it reveals. Your sculptures seem to furnish the place without overloading it, as objects on departure. Where does this come from?

AS: The region I come from -and from which the vast majority of my work results- Féchtala, is an area surrounded by mountains. It is a confined and open region confined that experienced many particularly deadly events during the colonial period. It was during my childhood that I discovered, rummaging in the land of this region, the first bullet cases which, undoubtedly, would have been used to kill the resisting people in this area. Meanwhile, in the surrounding mountains there are many caves inhabited by countless bats that I had fun catching during my childhood. Later, I read about "the Manhattan case" where bombs are put on giant bats that would bring death. From there comes this imaginary process that led, many years later, to this association between bullet/ bat / death. In fact the Hybridization is at the same time that of various ideas and objects and various materials. These "objects" can therefore only be worrying, given their emotional, imaginary, dreamlike but also notional charges. This is a hybrid that wants to carry out a visual shortcut between an idea and a manufactured object; Hybridization in line with contemporary reality that encompasses history as part of their actuality. It is also a questioning of art in general, both as a creator of new objects and a new reality, and as a totally practical and pragmatic activity that does not carry the real, but dialogue and interaction with it. Imagination is also a practical activity. "Beauty is nothing but the beginning of the terrible", said Rilke, and again, it's true; the work of art, beyond its objective side is the opportunity given to the ontological questioning, which is scary.

HB: Speaking of this "practical side" of artistic work, doesn't it then reduce art to a purely industrial activity?

AS: The sculpture "produces" objects. These objects may not be functional or useful, but they are there, they furnish the Real, inserting a hedonistic and aesthetic dimension. The object of art is an "object" in itself, an industrial object to fill the public space. There is therefore all the logistics of the industrial process that is set in

motion: from the idea, the canvas, the pattern, the manufactory (workshop) to the exhibition space (the gallery) and then public or private spaces that come at the end of this process. This is the "art market", but this "market" does not put into circulation consumable objects, but durable items made to transcend the time of their production to become heritage. If consumer products end up in landfills, those of art eventually, for the best at least, in museums or in private collections. Their durability depends on their emotional charge and the interest they have aroused, not on their usefulness.

Text and conversation with the artist by Hicham Benchrif