

Rim Battal | NO MAN'S LAND
Opening;
saturday february 21st 2015 h 18:30
exhibition:
from february 23th to may 2nd 2015

Voice Gallery is pleased to invite you on february 21th 2015, to the opening of *No man's land*, the first solo show of the artist Rim Battal.

An aesthetic resistance, a social outcry, a fight waged with the weapons of knowledge: all means aimed at scrutinizing reality, drawing a creative EKG whose lines design the borders of a restricted territory that is more and more open to cultural contamination and to a postcolonial progression (and process) displaying all its human failures, all its social collapses, all its pressing socio-anthropological issues. The works of Rim Battal (b. Casablanca, 1987) points the finger at situations of real distress, in order to open a multi-functional folder where the obvious is left out and from where an explicit will emerges: the artist's will of exposing the current state of things, of criticizing institutional hegemonies, and of revealing the different faces of power, public taboos, and an oppressive and suffocating tradition.

From the contradictions of contemporary history to a reinterpretation of geography, from politics to the female condition, from common rituals (and beliefs) to a penetrating analysis of a social model based on a (truly unacceptable) male domination, Battal scrutinizes the several contradictions of Morocco and conceives multidisciplinary works juxtaposing the world of art to everyday life. In so doing, the artist devises a powerful meditative plan, an inquiry in progress, a chilling and sharp report casting a light on the absence of freedom, on inequality, on the miseries brought about by (un)civilization. Battal's job is that of a special envoy into the real, of a reporter describing, documenting, referring, and exposing, with the tools of art, the endless strains of life.

Inflamed by her desire for redemption, for a necessary balance aimed at equality, for the creation of a happy place for the near future, the artist delves into the public and the private spheres to create a double-edged device. On the one hand, she scourges the viewers by showing them the pain suffered by the women of today; on the other, she puts up a multilingual show where distinctions disappear and merge in a flow of expressive modes. Thus, we will have a rhythmical flux of signs yielding their place to photography – this is what happens in Battal's project entitled *La Marche Rose*, récit d'un voyage de femmes, where the artist realizes a retentissement médiatique – offering to the public of art lovers a rhizomatic formal context (where expressive languages do not entertain a hierarchical relationship). At the same time, there the image absorbs writing in order to represent the downfalls of freedom and equality.

By recurring to different and mutually contaminating forms in order to create a total and totalizing corpus of works, Rim Battal shapes its nucleus by putting together different themes and experiences over time. Also, she adheres to a model of thought whose discoveries, acquisitions, and a (fully developed) awareness confronts the crucial elements of women rights (and of human rights in general). Applying Hannah Arendt's words to Battal's art, in her aesthetic program "it is not knowledge or truth which is at stake, but rather judgment and decision, the judicious exchange of opinion about the sphere of public life and common world, and the decision what manner of action is to be taken in it, as well as to how it is to look henceforth, what kind of things are to appear in it" (H. Arendt, *Between Present and Future: Six Essays in Political Thought*, The Viking Press, New York 1961).

With *No Man's Land*, her first personal exhibition at the Voice Gallery, Rim Battal is now proposing an array of works summarizing her artistic history and describing an itinerary that opens with two atypical portraits of the series entitled *Mariage(s)*. Next comes a wall covered with drawings, notes, scrabbles, and marks – unassuming but precious material connected to a palimpsest of artworks whose grace couples ethics and aesthetics, the vocabulary of cartography with that of female beauty. Along with *Parfois je mens, parfois je dis la vérité / Sometimes I Lie, Sometimes I Tell the Truth*, presented for the first time at Musée d'Art Contemporain MVI de Rabat, we find four important photo installations (*Maryam, Izza, Qods, and Twa'a2*) that project the viewer in a land of remorse, a world illustrating a "parallel between the woman's body and a colonized land" (Rim Battal) and aiming at recalling our attention to a territory – human as well as geographic – to be reconsidered, respected, adored.

by Antonello Tolve