

# Keitelman Gallery

MOUNIR FATMI

A SAVAGE MIND

09.12 -24.03.2017

(opening 08.12.2016)

Thursday - saturday 12 to 6pm

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At the end of the year, the Keitelman Gallery has the honor of opening the second solo exhibition of the artist mounir fatmi, whose international renown steadily continues to grow. The exhibition presents a body of work (sculptures, photographs, and drawings) that address several themes dear to the artist: Confrontation between cultures, unfortunately often taking place in the form of violence, the subject of language and knowledge, and even the relationship between said knowledge and so-called ignorance. The questions that are posed around these themes manifest into forms that embody all the ambiguities of the time. Some of the implicit queries whispered throughout the works are these: How does the meeting between the one who "can do" and one who "knows how to speak of what is done" play out? Or, what is the relationship between the people who make up society on a daily basis and those who govern it? In other words: what is the relationship between a craftsman (the who does) and a machine (an engineered product that synthesizes, and thus simplifies thought and expertise)? In this exhibition and in the work of fatmi in general, it is as if a comparison has already been made, but is never fully at rest between the duo consisting of the "savage" and the "scholar."

The three-part work **Roots** reveals a drawing made of antenna cables. The pattern seen is reminiscent of Arab-Islamic art that has developed throughout history in the field of abstraction as religion forbade the representation of the human figure. Nevertheless, this work is a tribute to the architect, the handyman, and to all the anonymous individuals that create the status quo.

Like all of fatmi's sculptural work, **Roots** is an aesthetic trap. The eye becomes desperately lost as it searches for a beginning, an end, a center, an exit... During this moment in history when the notions of identity and boundaries come more into focus and are reflected by extremes, the **Roots** sculpture functions as a projection screen. Visitors may project their fears and hopes, and may question their place in this world.

At first glance the work is very aesthetic and complex. However, it attempts to answer a philosophical question posed by the artist: how deep do these roots actually travel?

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***The Journey of Claude Lévi-Strauss***, embroidery of the cover art from Claude Lévi-Strauss' "The Savage Mind," a classic book of anthropology. Embroidery handmade by an artisan, the subject of study is the savant ... Who knows what to do? Who knows what to believe? One of the principal lessons learned from the French anthropologist is that the savage is not quite who you think. Thus came about the study of the supposedly primitive Indians. He found that they had a much greater knowledge of their environment than he could have possessed: names of plants, birds, flowers, trees ... A plethora of things that he did not know. "It is the encounter with the other that reveals our primitive nature," says Mounir Fatmi, which suggests how the perception of migration is changing in terms of the individuals involved; individuals who possess experience and knowledge that we do not.

Unfortunately, as we know, the people and governments of Europe have not adopted this stance during this time when it is more a question of rejection than anything else. These two pieces evoke this rejection as well as the paradox of creating danger by wanting to protect oneself. The work entitled ***Defence*** emulates the metal structures we build around the periphery in order to protect ourselves from the intrusion of thieves, while offering an image of a black sun; a symbolic expression of a star that cools the heart instead of bringing it warmth. ***Dead Language*** installation expresses all the violence felt when one must abandon everything at border crossings, starting with one's language; the very first conveyance of a person's identity.

The piece entitled ***Archaeology***, meanwhile, also showcases one of the grim realities of our time. A broom, bones, a black flag ... It can be an evocation of the new iconoclasts that destroy ancient archeological sites. It is as though they kill the dead again. We once again see those who must do the "dirty work," like the soldier on the battlefield, the customs officer in the Mediterranean Sea, or the doctor in charge of collecting drowned corpses... all of those individuals who, for better or worse, have the task of facing the aftermath of decisions made in high places ... Order and its execution; the reality of the law of the land. Here is where we find the duality, intimately entwined, that fascinates Mounir Fatmi.

Finally, this exhibition also contains some of the artist's rare drawings. Intimate and fragile, this series of drawings with their primitive aesthetic brings us back to the beginning of the artist's work. We can see these drawings as a return to "the root" of the practice of an artist who strives never to lose sight of the essential humility of creation which is, probably more than any other philosophy, political thought, or religion, the true guarantor of society and evolution.