

AT THE MAC^{LYON}: ADEL ABDESSEMED, L'ANTIDOTE
 EXHIBITION → 09 MARCH > 08 JULY 2018
 OPENING: THURSDAY, MARCH 8, 2018

ADEL ABDESSEMED



Adel Abdessemed, *Shams*, 2013 / Adagp, Paris, 2018

ADEL ABDESSEMED

Two exhibitions in two European cities

mac LYON

MAC's

L'antidote

mac^{LYON}, France

09 March ⇨ 08 July 2018

Otchi Tchiornie

MAC's Grand Hornu, Belgium

04 March ⇨ 03 June 2018

L'antidote is the name of a Lyon bar frequented in the 1990s by Adel Abdessemed, who was then a student at the ENSBA (School of Fine Arts) in Lyon. It was here that he met Julie, his future wife, and an important figure in a large part of his work.

The exhibition fosters a dialogue between intimate personal experiences and a political message destined for authoritarian and violent regimes, of all kinds. Like an ode to the human condition...

The exhibition *Otchi Tchiornie* ('Dark Eyes' an important song in the repertoire of the Red Army Choir) in Grand-Hornu—the hub of the Industrial Revolution and the genesis of Western modernity—has been designed as a manifesto by Adel Abdessemed. A journey through our epoch, where everyone, along with the artist, can dance with contempt on the 'embers' of our world and develop, in his own unique way, a new relationship to the intensity of the present time.

Over two floors of the museum, Adel Abdessemed presents a selection of works never before shown in France, as well as a number of new creations, including *L'antidote*, the work that has given its name to the exhibition.

SUMMARY

THE TWO EXHIBITIONS	4
L'ANTIDOTE	5
THE ARTIST	6
ADEL ABDESSEMED IN 25 DATES	7-8
SELECTED WORKS OF THE EXHIBITION	9
PRACTICAL INFORMATION	12

Spring 2018 and Europe is at a crossroads, with one path leading to separation, the other to reconstruction. The Grand Hornu and the mac^{LYON} have come together to showcase the creative, humanist and radical dimension of a great European artist, Adel Abdessemed.

The two exhibitions, *L'antidote* and *Otchi Tchiornie*, can be seen as independent but complementary events. A single catalogue, bringing together images and essays specific to each venue, connects the two exhibitions (Editions Fonds Mercator – graphic design: Schaffter Sahli).



Adel Abdessemed, *Oui*, 2000, Exhibition view at the MAGASIN - Centre National d'Art Contemporain of Grenoble, 3 February - 27 April 2008, Photo : Ilmari Kalkkinen / © Magasin

Over two floors of the museum, Adel Abdessemed presents a selection of works never before shown in France, as well as a number of new creations, including *L'antidote*, the work that has given its name to the exhibition.

Born in 1971 in Constantine (Algeria), Adel Abdessemed lives and works between Paris and London. He is known for his powerful works, in tune with the constant flow of images and conflicts of today's modern world. Defying taboos, taking inspiration from literary and classical sources, Adel Abdessemed plays with his materials (barbed wire, dynamite, cannabis resin, marble, etc.) to invent, through his installations, sculptures and videos, his own narrative of violence. His hard-hitting artworks include the famous 'Coup de tête' (head butt) given by Zidane to Materazzi, immortalized by the artist in a monumental bronze sculpture.

L'antidote is the name of a bar in Lyon where the artist, then a student at the ENSBA Lyon, met Julie, his future wife, who would become a central figure in his artwork and his life. A souvenir of a personal experience lived by an artist who considers art to be a vital experience, necessary for one's own wellbeing and that of the world: here, the antidote could well be that of art in the face of a brutal reality.

The exhibition expresses a number of key themes in Abdessemed's artwork (self-portrait, family life, animal life, representations of violence), in an immovable grammar that makes use of a constantly evolving vocabulary. New plastic formalizations renew the figures: a sculpture in marble, an architectural model, a frieze remarkably executed on-site from clay...

The sober and natural beauty of the sketch in clay of *The Three Graces* by Canova, a master of neoclassical art, seen by the artist at the Musée des Beaux-arts de Lyon, undoubtedly inspired Adel Abdessemed to create *Is beautiful*. However, the subject of the work is in fact, Angela Merkel...

Shams, a powerful composition, is a work born from suffering, according to the artist ('similar to Dante's visit to hell'). This work occupies all of the third floor of the museum. Delacroix's masterpiece, *Dante and Virgil in Hell* (1822), was present in the artist's mind during the process of creation of this extraordinary monumental installation, a portrait of the 'damned' of contemporary times.

Paul Ardenne, in an essay he wrote for the catalogue, describes Adel Abdessemed's art as a 'mental concatenation: one form evokes another which in turn evokes another, in a maieutic ballet where the keywords, more than quotations, are eruption, collage and recomposition.' His work consists of 'throwing into the pond of contemporary presentation a constellation of poetic propositions where the totality writes the self, this accumulation of history, feelings and aspirations.'

Adel Abdessemed was born in Algeria to a modest family at the beginning of the 1970s. ‘I WAS BORN IN CONSTANTINE, TO A MUSLIM MOTHER, IN A JEWISH HOUSEHOLD WITH CHRISTIAN SISTERS WHO WERE THE MIDWIVES AT MY BIRTH. ALL OF THE MONOTHEISTIC GODS CAME TOGETHER ON THE DAY I WAS BORN.’

Of his childhood, he relates: ‘IN ALGERIA, AROUND THE 15TH OF EVERY MONTH, WHEN MY FATHER’S SALARY HADN’T YET BEEN PAID, MY MOTHER WOULD PREPARE A SLICE OF BREAD FOR US WITH A TOMATO AND SOME OLIVE OIL. AT THE BEGINNING OF EVERY MONTH, SHE WOULD PREPARE A FEAST WITH CAKES AND PASTRIES IN ENDLESS SUPPLY. I LIKED BOTH SCENARIOS. TODAY MY WORK IS LIKE THAT: I WORK AT THE CROSSROADS OF TWO EXTREMES.’

He knew the ‘bloody years’ and a ‘youth that had lost hope in their home country’. He insists on the fact that ‘ART WAS THE ONLY WAY OUT. [...] I DIDN’T CHOOSE ART, ART CHOSE ME.’



Adel Abdessemed, *Lincoln*, 2009, Biennale de Lyon *Le spectacle du quotidien*, Courtesy of the artist © Photo Blaise Adilon

Adel Abdessemed, who declares himself to have been ‘constructed in brutality’ draws upon the violence and turbulence of the contemporary world to create powerful images that are self-evident, which attract the eye and imprint themselves on the retina. He also positions himself in relation to masterpieces like the Isenheim Altarpiece by Grünewald and Picasso’s *Guernica*.

Defying taboos, frequently drawing upon references from literature and art history, Adel Abdessemed carefully chooses his materials (barbed wire, dynamite, cannabis resin, marble...) to invent his own form of writing, an antidote to the videos.

His hard-hitting artworks, including the famous ‘Coup de tête’ given by Zidane to Materazzi* immortalized in bronze is an ode to defeat, a counter-monument in bronze, four metres high. ‘I EXPERIENCED ALL OF THE VIOLENCE OF ZIDANE’S GESTURE, WHICH I WATCHED ON THE TELEVISION. I WANTED TO SHOW THE DARKER SIDE OF HEROES, THE TASTE OF AN INELUCTABLE DESTINY AND THE STRIKING IMMEDIACY OF SUCH A GESTURE.’

*By head-butting Italian footballer Materazzi in the final of the World Cup in 2006, Zidane brought his career to an early end.

1971

Born in Constantine, Algeria.

1990-1994

Studies at the Algiers School of Fine Arts.

1994

Assassination of the director of the Algiers School of Fine Arts, Ahmed Asselah, and his son, within the premises of the school by Islamists. Following this act of violence, Adel Abdessemed leaves the school and decides to settle in France.

1994-1998

He continues his studies at the École nationale supérieure des Beaux-arts de Lyon, from which he receives his degree.

1999-2000

Residency at the Cité Internationale des Arts in Paris.

2000

He exhibits *Oui*, a star made from cannabis resin at the Musée d'art moderne de la ville de Paris, resulting in a great deal of controversy.

In June, he participates in *Manifesta 3*, in Ljubljana, Slovenia, having been invited by curator Francesco Bonami.

'THE EXHIBITION ACTED AS AN OPEN-ENDED DEBATE ABOUT WESTERN ART AND GLOBALIZATION, THE DECLINE OF EUROPE AND VIOLENCE IN THE BALKANS.'

2000-2001

He participates in the International Studio Program at PS1 Contemporary Art Center in New York.

11 September 2001

He witnesses the collapse of the second tower of the World Trade Center.

2001

The Kunsthalle in Bern (Switzerland) devotes a large solo exhibition to the artist, his first.

2002-2004

He settles in Berlin, where he exhibits the suspended giant human skeleton *Habibi*.

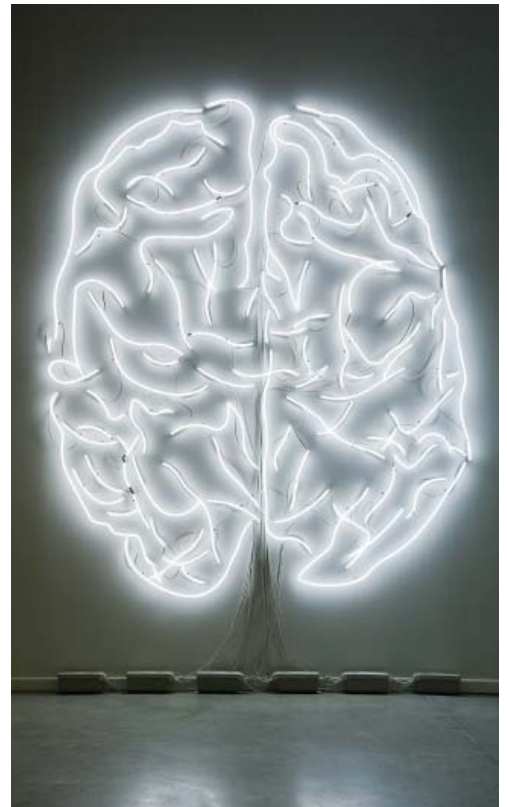
2003-2009

His work is shown in numerous

international biennials: Venice (2003 and 2007), São Paulo (2006), Lyon (2009), Istanbul (2007), Havana (2009), Marrakech (2009).

2004

Exhibition *Le citron et le lait* at the Musée d'art moderne et contemporain, Geneva.



Adel Abdessemed, *Head on*, 2009, Biennale de Lyon
Le spectacle du quotidien, Courtesy of the artist
© Photo Blaise Adilon

2006

Nominated for the Prix Marcel Duchamp.

2007

Solo exhibition *Dead or alive* at MoMA PS1 in New York.

2008

Exhibits at the International Festival of Contemporary Visual Art in Glasgow (Scotland) and at the San Francisco Art Institute (United States). His video work *Trust me* is censored at both events.

Exhibition *Situation and practice* at the MIT List Visual Arts Center, in Cambridge (United States).

His solo exhibition at the CNAC Magasin in Grenoble *Drawing for human park* presents the remarkable piece entitled *Telle mère, tel fils* (a braid of three airplanes).

2009

He returns to New York.

2010

He returns to Paris. Adel Abdessemed is named the 41st most influential figure in the French arts scene according to L'œil magazine (March 2011).

Exhibition *Silent Warriors* at the Parasol unit for contemporary art, in London.

2012

The Centre Pompidou devotes a solo exhibition to the artist, entitled « Adel Abdessemed *Je suis innocent* » and exhibits his monumental sculpture *Coup de tête* on the forecourt of the institution.

His work *Décor* is exhibited at the Musée Unterlinden, in Colmar. This ensemble of four Jesus Christs in barbed wire was placed within view of the famous Isenheim Altarpiece by Matthias Grünewald, from which Adel Abdessemed took his inspiration.

A second exhibition at the David Zwirner Gallery, New York, entitled *Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf?*

2013

Exhibition *L'âge d'or* at the Mathaf, the Arab Museum of Modern Art, in Doha, Qatar.

His work *Coup de tête* is removed from the ledge of the museum on the grounds that it is 'an invitation to idolatry and that Islam forbids all statues representing humans or animals.'

2015

He exhibits the artwork *East of Eden*, a collection of knives sticking into the soil at the Venice Biennale.

2016

Exhibition *Jalousies* at the Musée de Vence, organized by Eric Mézil of the Lambert Collection in Avignon, with the exhibition layout designed by Jean Nouvel, the architect behind the recent Louvre Abu-Dhabi.

An invitation by Olivier Py to create the poster for the 70th edition of the Avignon Theatre Festival. *Surfaces* Exhibition at the Eglise des Célestins (church).

Today

Currently lives in Paris.



Adel Abdessemed, *Telle mère, tel fils, Drawing for Human Park*, Exhibition view at the MAGASIN - Centre National d'Art Contemporain of Grenoble, 3 February - 27 April 2008, Photo : Ilmari Kalkkinen / © Magasin





Adel Abdessemed, *Shams*, 2013 / Adagp, Paris, 2018

***Shams*, 2013**

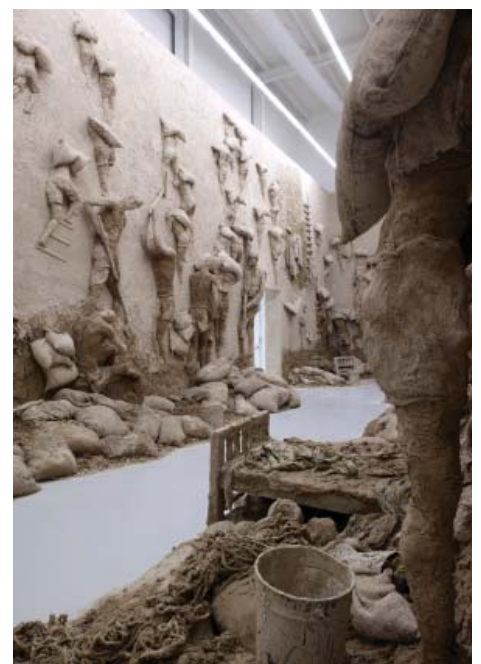
Shams (meaning ‘the sun’ in Arabic) shows, in an environment that subsumes its visitors, forced labourers surrounded by men with weapons: bodies fashioned from clay, tormented, exploited, weighed down by their burden. These men of the earth, heavily charged, may be said to evoke perilous working conditions (in the mines, gold miners, construction workers... or past wars).

Through the material used, they bring to mind a phrase from the Bible: ‘for you are dust, and to dust you shall return’, but also Surah Ar-Rum Thirty from the Quran: ‘And of His signs is that He created you from dust’. Clay, the material used in *Shams*, is not cooked: this monumental creation is therefore destined to a rapid disintegration, and must be reconstructed for each exhibition. *Shams* was presented in 2013 at the Mathaf, Doha.

For Lyon, *Shams* has been produced on-site by a dedicated team, and presented in a slightly different version that fills the entire space of the third floor of the museum.



Adel Abdessemed, *Shams* (detail), 2013 / Adagp, Paris, 2018



Adel Abdessemed, *Shams* (detail), 2013 / Adagp, Paris, 2018

Is Beautiful, 2017-2018

This piece is a sculpture in marble that appears to have been inspired from the three graces. The figure on the left draws the viewer's gaze however, it reminds us of a black and white photograph, which conveniently emerged from the archives in 2013, right in the middle of the German electoral campaign when Angela Merkel was running for a third term in office, and was republished in *Vanity Fair* in February 2015. The photograph shows the German Chancellor, naked.

The initial photograph seems to have been taken in the former East Germany (RDA) when Angela Merkel was a member of the popular youth movement, the FDJ (Freie Deutsche Jugend), that organized summer camps for young people between 14 and 25 years of age. In the German Democratic Republic before the fall of the Berlin Wall, naturism was a popular phenomenon and people's relationship to the naked body was a very natural one.



Adel Abdessemed, *Is Beautiful*, 2017 -2018
Adagp, Paris, 2018



Adel Abdessemed, *Aïcha*, 2017 / Adagp, Paris, 2018

Aïcha and L'antidote, 2017

In the exhibition, two cafés evoke the shared moments, friendships, and conviviality that punctuate the artist's existence, as is the case with us all: these are places of 'personal memories'.

A sculpture at the scale of 1:2 of Lyon bar *L'antidote*: its furniture is spectacularly hung in the air through the use of a blower.

And the model, almost like a doll's house of the Parisian café-hotel-restaurant situated close to Adel Abdessemed's home: Le Pont-Tournant. The title of this artwork, *Aïcha*, is a tribute to the owner of this lively spot, where people from all backgrounds and walks of life come together from morning till late at night.

Musée d'art contemporain de Lyon
Cité internationale
81 quai Charles de Gaulle
69006 LYON - FRANCE

T +33 (0)4 72 69 17 17
 F +33 (0)4 72 69 17 00
 info@mac-lyon.com
www.mac-lyon.com

#AdelAbdessemedLyon
 www.facebook.com/mac.lyon
 @macLyon
 maclyon_officiel

OPENING HOURS
Wednesday to Sunday, from 11am to 6pm

ADMISSION
 → Full: 8€
 → Concessions: 4€
 Free for visitors under 18

ACCESS
 → By car
 Along quai Charles de Gaulle, carpark P0 and P2, reduced rate for our visitors
 → ridesharing
 www.covoiturage-pour-sortir.fr
 → By bus, stop Musée d'art contemporain
 Bus C1, Gare Part-Dieu/Cuire
 Bus C4, Jean Macé/Cité internationale
 Bus C5, Cordeliers/Rillieux-Vancia
 → By bike
 Several vélo'v stations around the Museum
 Cycle lane from the Rhône's banks to the museum.



View of Musée d'art contemporain de Lyon
 Photo: Blaise Adilon

UPCOMING EXHIBITION
Rétrospective
Bernar Venet