

BAS-RELIEF

with the complicity of Jean Nouvel

14.10 - 14.12.2024

Vernissage at Galerie AVELINE on 14.10.24

Galerie Aveline and GALLERIA CONTINUA are delighted to present *Bas-relief*, an exhibition by artist Adel Abdessemed, in collaboration with architect Jean Nouvel.

For the past ten years, Galerie Aveline and GALLERIA CONTINUA have forged a close partnership, inviting contemporary artists to take over the opulent spaces of Aveline's historic location on Rue du Faubourg-Saint-Honoré, shedding new light on the 18th-century masterpieces it showcases.

Adel Abdessemed's *Bas-relief* exhibition echoes with the proposal new GALLERIA CONTINUA holds in its space in the Matignon-Saint-Honoré district, just a few meters from Aveline Gallery, where a dialogue between the artist and Giorgio Morandi is created around the theme of still life: *Guerre et Paix* (War and Peace).

A fundamental element of his artistic vocabulary, the exhibition revolves around seven iconic bas-reliefs created by Adel Abdessemed between 2013 and 2014, complemented by a selection of more recent works that illustrate the remarkable diversity of his artistic approach. Through these pieces, ranging in scale from intimate to monumental, the artist reveals and highlights scenes that have become imperceptible, drowned in a society saturated with images, providing them with the solemnity traditionally associated with the practice of bas-relief. Using precious materials—Carrara marble, the three-thousand-year-old salt of Siwa, and black Belgian marble—as well as more ordinary substances like rubber, plaster, and terracotta, Adel Abdessemed brings back deliberately forgotten images. From the hanging of Saddam Hussein to the execution of the Ceaușescus, the 9/11 attacks, and the

tragic Mediterranean shipwrecks, the major events of our contemporary history find a disturbing resonance with the most pressing issues of our current reality.

Alongside these visions evoking a shared memory, more intimate, timeless images unfold, engage a reflection on the meaning of existence in the thickness of the present. Mock-ups of places dear to the artist—like the rotating bridge café run by Aïcha, and the Antidote, the bar where he met his wife Julie—engage in dialogue with porcelain sculptures of his memories and the imposing Vase Abominable, a symbolic object reminiscent of early artifacts resting on a sophisticated explosive base, reflecting humanity's capacity for both creation and destruction. Upstairs, the artist presents a new series of imposing charcoal drawings—a central medium in his practice, both for its artistic and symbolic significance—which once again explore the paradoxical connections between beauty and destruction, fury and creation.

As with *Guerre et Paix*, Adel Abdessemed designed the scenography and lighting for *Bas-relief* in collaboration with the multi-award-winning architect Jean Nouvel, who is familiar with the artist's work and with whom he has developed a friendship that has been reflected in numerous projects. Celebrating the idea that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, the architect transcends the concept of exhibition by creating a system where each object is interconnected, undergoing constant recontextualization.

In the wake of a decade of transhistorical and multidisciplinary experimentation, the exhibition creates a dialogue between the classicism of the finely crafted pieces presented by the Galerie Aveline and Adel

Abdessemed's contemporary approach—an artist deeply influenced by classical culture, whose codes he both questions and draws inspiration from. This new exhibition fully aligns with the reflection on modernity and the desire for continuity between eras, a theme embraced by GALLERIA CONTINUA and narrated throughout its spaces.

about the artist:

Born in Constantine, Algeria, in 1971, **Adel Abdessemed** uses multiple artistic techniques. His work, imbued with classical literature and poetry, addresses themes such as war and religion, characterized by a brutality that seeks to represent the violence inherent in the contemporary world. Memory, trauma, conflict, ecstasy, and lucidity: for over thirty years, the French artist of Berber origin has constructed a committed and incendiary oeuvre that has quickly resonated on the international scene.

Fleeing Algeria after the outbreak of the civil war in 1992, he carries with him the memory of war and the burden of atrocities. In France, he studied at the École des Beaux-Arts in Lyon, and immersed in classical culture, literature, poetry, and passionate about music, he uses various media to make art a place where the violence and fragility of contemporary society are exposed.

Adel Abdessemed's work will be featured at the Bangkok Biennale in October 2024 and the Dakar Biennale in November. He has exhibited three times at the Venice Biennale (2003, 2009, 2015), as well as at the Istanbul Biennale (2017), Havana (2009), Gwangju (2008), Lyon (2007), and São Paulo (2006). Since his first solo exhibition in 2001, many other monographs have followed, including at PS1/MoMA in New York; the MIT List Visual Arts Center in Cambridge, MA, USA; the Parasol unit in London; the Centre Pompidou in Paris (Adel Abdessemed. *Je suis innocent*, 2012); the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, Canada (Adel Abdessemed: *Conflict*, 2017); the MAC Museum of Contemporary Art, Lyon, France (Adel Abdessemed. *L'antidote*, 2018); and the Rockbund Museum of Arts in Shanghai (Adel Abdessemed: *An Imperial Message*, 2022). In 2024, the artist will direct the artistic staging, costumes, sets, and video for Olivier Messiaen's opera *Saint Francis of Assisi* at the Grand Théâtre de Genève.

About the galleries:

GALLERIA CONTINUA is a contemporary art gallery founded in 1990 in San Gimignano by three friends—Mario Cristiani, Lorenzo Fiaschi, and Maurizio Rigillo—today it operates in San Gimignano, Rome, Beijing, Paris, Les Moulins, Havana and São Paulo.

GALLERIA CONTINUA represents a desire to create, through art, a continuity between past, present, and future, with a commitment to actively contributing to the writing of the contemporary art scene. Investing in unique, historically infused spaces, often far from conventional ideals, the gallery has developed a strong identity over more than thirty years of activity, embracing themes related to creation and cultural blending. Its various global locations spaces foster encounters and exchanges centered around works of art, presenting a vision of beauty that is pluralistic, joyful, cosmopolitan, and rich in diverse influences.

For the past ten years, **Galerie Aveline**, in collaboration with GALLERIA CONTINUA, has welcomed contemporary artists who are both visionary and sensitive. Its open-mindedness, eclectic taste, and the quality of its furniture have quickly made Aveline a familiar address for connoisseurs. For these reasons, the greatest collectors, admirers of exceptional pieces, and museums are drawn to the masterpieces from all over Europe. What they all share is their quality, authenticity, and originality, dating from the late 17th century to the mid-19th century, often with royal or princely provenance.

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