

Hamza Halloubi

*Seuls mes yeux resteront pour surveiller et hanter, et changer vos rêves en chaos*

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A round screen shows the jerky image of legs moving, filmed casually with a hand-held camera and accompanied by the sound of footsteps in spaces with wooden floors and white walls. The voice of a woman, speaking in French, is gently yet distinctly present. Her words, translated into English, appear in the middle of the image: "I am in the museum and I wonder what it means to be here! I never asked myself this important question before. What does it mean to find oneself in a museum with a heritage that doesn't belong to you?" Then she asks herself whether she can actually be there in that museum and ignore the fact that she is not part of its narrative.

In his first solo exhibition at tegenboschvanvreden, "*Seuls mes yeux resteront pour surveiller et hanter, et changer vos rêves en chaos*", Hamza Halloubi presents three new video works and a number of paintings. *Walking and Talking* (2018-2019) is the exhibition's central focus. Here we listen to a

message to a friend, an appeal made from a museum in London, where the woman reflects on her position as an African in a European museum of modern art. She speaks about concerns such as identity, class and artistic heritage and questions the position of a non-Westerner in relation to modern Western art: that very Western art which, while making a claim to universality, also excludes other narratives.

In *Walking and Talking* the 'brutal' manner of filming, combined with the round form of the image which suggests the absence of a beginning and an end, seems to bring about a negation of the film's narrative structure. As a result the voice in the video assumes a crucial role. The technique is not voice-over, but voice-on, shown on the screen, via the image of the narrator's mouth, as a means of accentuating the physical presence of the voice. By situating the English transcript of the text in the middle of the image, Halloubi allows the viewer to be 'guided' through the decoding of horizonless images which have a certain weightlessness due to their circular shape.

In this way the image, being neither entirely documentary nor purely fictional, is literally *and* figuratively reduced to its elementary form. Meanwhile, the position from which the artist acts is characterized by distance and the deliberate avoidance of a direct correlation between the text and the image. It is up to the viewer to find his or her own way through the image and to appropriate the text for interpretation. The same holds true for the exhibition's title, which is partly a quote despite the absence of any reference to the author. The quote provides no explanation; and consequently, removed from the original context, its words acquire the power to undermine certainties and presuppositions, and... to turn our dreams into chaos.

On view together with *Walking and Talking* are two other new, short video works: *Falling* and *Transfer*. The two works relate to *Walking and Talking* in terms of the way in which the image is reduced to its essence. Along with these works, a number of paintings hang from the ceiling as if hovering in space. The depiction in each painting consists of an accumulation of remnants from previous images that have been stripped away and reworked time and again. The paintings have been travelling with the artist throughout recent years and bear the marks of time. That notion of works travelling almost symbolizes the longing expressed in *Walking and Talking* when the woman says: "Walking and speaking, I would like my art to be just that...."

Hamza Halloubi (1982, Tangier, Morocco) is a multi-disciplinary artist whose focus is video and painting. Halloubi currently lives and works in Brussels (BE) and Tangier (MA). He holds a Master's degree in Fine Arts from the ENSAV la Cambre, in Brussels. From 2012 to 2014 he participated in the residency program of HISK, Higher Institute for Fine Arts in Ghent (BE), and from 2015 to 2017 he was resident at the Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten in Amsterdam (NL). Locations of Halloubi's solo exhibitions include Museo Hermann Nitsch, Naples (2017, IT); c-o-m-p-o-s-i-t-e, Brussels (2017 and 2014, BE); A Tale of A Tub, Rotterdam (2016, NL); Museum De Pont, Tilburg (2015, NL); KIOSK, Ghent (2014, BE); Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels (2013, BE). His work was part of group shows at a.o. S.M.A.K., Ghent (2019, BE); Kunsthal Extra City, Antwerp (2018, BE); Mystetskyi Arsenal, Kyiv, (2018, UA); SCHIRN KUNSTHALLE FRANKFURT, Frankfurt (2018, DE); De Pont Museum, Tilburg (2017, NL); Witte de With, Rotterdam, (2016, NL); EYE Filmmuseum, Amsterdam (2016, NL); tegenboschvanvreden, Amsterdam (2016, 2015, NL) Works by Hamza Halloubi are present in international private and public collections.