



Controlled Stupidity or Selfportrait with potato, Lambda print, 2011

Galerie Dix9 is pleased to introduce

MEHDI-GEORGES LAHLOU

QUELQU'UN M'A DIT QUE LE MERVEILLEUX ÉTAIT REVOLU...

SOMEONE TOLD ME THAT THE «MERVEILLEUX» IS OVER...

from May 10 to June 23, 2012

opening on Thursday May 10 at 6 pm – performance at 6.30 pm

GALERIE DIX9 – Hélène Lacharmoise

19, rue des Filles du Calvaire 75003 Paris - M° Filles du Calvaire

Opening hours : from Tuesday to Friday : 2 to 7 pm, Saturday from 11 am to 7 pm, and by appointment

Tél-Fax: +33(0)1 42 78 91 77

<http://www.galeriedix9.com>

Hélène Lacharmoise : +33(0)6 33 62 94 07 - hlacharmoise@yahoo.fr

QUELQU'UN M'A DIT QUE LE MERVEILLEUX ETAIT REVOLU..

SOMEONE TOLD ME THAT THE «MERVEILLEUX» IS OVER...

Playing with his dual affiliation, Christian and Moslem, Mehdi-Georges Lahlou uses his body to question the identity in all its forms.

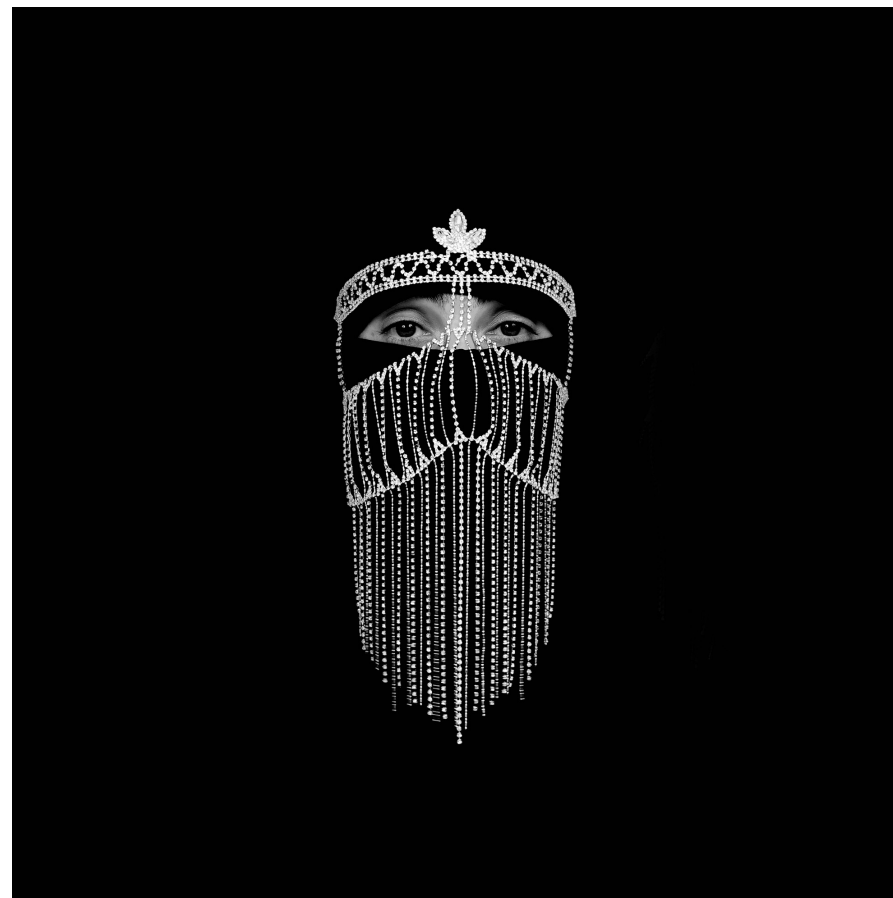
Renewing the vocabulary of sculpture and image, all his work shows a tension that goes along with great freedom.

For his second solo show at Galerie Dix9, the artist presents his last self-portraits in the form of sculptures and photographs. He still plays on ambiguity through displacements that he operates with great talent.

Swinging over prejudices, the artist stands beyond the cultural borders which hold back our societies. Still on a burlesque style, sometimes close to the absurd, his montages try to confuse the issue by manipulating the images. «Quelqu'un m'a dit que le merveilleux était révolu» (Someone told me that the «merveilleux» is over) is simply a new stage in his quest for freedom and emancipation from preconceived ideas.

Always in his singular approach that questions the image, Mehdi-Georges Lahlou provides, to the view as well as to the mind, a new and amazing regard on the beliefs, cultures and signs.

A work that embraces the marvellous.



Miroir 2 - Lambda print, 70 x 70 cm, 2012

TIGHTROPE – WALKING TO LAHLOUTOPIA

Oops-a-daisy! Mehdi-Georges Lahlou tumbled into the art scene like a jack-in-the-box. This French/Moroccan-Spanish artist living in Brussels was immediately able to charm the art world with a colourful variety of images that supply fanned out to include all sorts of sculptures and installations, as well as performances, photos and video works in which he himself appears.

Is he a court jester in black tights and red high-heels, a stand-up philosopher who explores questions of identity, a spiritual clown, an artful conjuror who produces attractive works of art out of his hat, a reluctant provocateur, an acrobat of the imagination or a meditative social researcher? He is probably a little bit of them all. With his infectious grin he puts Islam and Catholicism into the blender together with the macho-Muslim, women and prostitutes. He puts stereotyped attributes through the mangle, mixing them up, breaking them down and transcending them while also cherishing them. He adds a measured dose of art history, crumbs from the Thousand and One Nights and a generous splash of absurdity that sneaks in the tradition of burlesque and plain idiocy through the back door. And then sets course for the miraculous, the magic of the ordinary and the dream. Mind you, this art whizzes across many layers of meaning, does not hesitate to glide over slippery ice and marks out an exciting network of associations and possible angles of thought.

Exercises In Magic

The first time I saw this work its generosity was striking, as well as its ritual nature and seductiveness. In 2010 he installed a dark room with sensual photographic works and a living room cabin with a satellite dish at Art Brussels. After offering you tea and a Moroccan pastry, he put on a tête-à-tête performance of your choice. I have rarely witnessed such a stimulating performance. The only item no longer available on the handwritten menu was the 'performance sexuelle'. For me he played the flute under a niqab that exposed only his beseeching gaze, and that was enough to make you uncomfortable.

Mehdi-Georges Lahlou pumps fresh oxygen into performance art. In «Stupidité Contrôlée», a series of pointed video performances with a tennis ball in his mouth or a stone on his veiled head, this is done with a delightful penchant for burlesque. He never puts on the same performance twice in his live work. Either it's a piece with lots of elements that are not afraid of being kitschy, or else his endurance is put to the test by a concentrated or protracted action or pose. His beard makes him look entirely Muslim, and that creates a grotesque contrast with the red high-heels, which are a fairytale element and a typical accessory of the prostitute. Apart from this, he puts on black tights or an improvised niqab. In the skin-tight outfit he undertook races and walks of several kilometres while wobbling on the red shoes, ran on the spot on a mosaic tile and wrapped himself in the niqab to peel 65 kilos of potatoes, which is his own weight. This summer he stood in this robe for hours in the burning sun. For three days he motionlessly held a pose that came close to mystical ecstasy. This performance is accompanied by a group of still sculptures: casts of his own body in the Islamic prayer position plus a kneeling figure, all covered by the folds draped in white plaster. For Muslims this is the colour of mourning and in Christianity it represents purity. It might remind you of Kader Attia and other artists who touch on Islam, but no one else takes the combination of Arabic and Western culture so far and so consistently.

Exercises In Ambiguity

«I use only the aesthetics of the two religions'» this young conceiver of images emphasises. «It's just that Islam is so embedded in everyday life that they are inseparable. It is not a reconciliation of opposites, because the two religions have the same foundations». On the basis of his own multicultural identity, he asks whether people could evolve towards a different, more flexible identity. The mixing of religion, culture and gender seems like a plea for tolerance, a proposal for a harmonious, quasi utopian world.

But the result is often quite hilarious. He himself refers to 'exercises in ambiguity'. Fusions test out how ambiguous Islamic, Catholic, male and female elements can become. This ambiguity offers the possibility of tinkering with our stagnated identity. This topic first cropped up in «Ceci n'est pas une femme musulmane», a 2009 photographic work. «It is not a carnivalesque fancy dress party or a role-playing», he says, «It's rather that I dress Islam in Catholicism and vice versa».

Mehdi-Georges Lahlou is a fan of surrealism, Fluxus, the French leg fetishist Pierre Molinier, American feminist artists of the 1970s, such as Martha Rosler, and also Gina Pane, Valie Export and Marina Abramovic. He pumps fresh oxygen into these art movements too, without concealing their historical basis. He borrowed the title «Messe pour un corps» from the French performance artist Michel Journiac for a self-portrait with books, a many-layered sculpture with a headless body made out of colourful prayer mats.

Whether he likes it or not, these may be exercises in transgression. Which is a great strength in art: the avant-garde excelled in breaking rules. At the same time they are exercises in beauty, a form of critical elegance. «Home Sweet Home» is a black box on long legs showing a video of a cramped room in which he rummages around a small black cube stark naked apart from the red high-heels. This black cube, which is gradually becoming a permanent fixture in his work, might refer to the Ka'aba, Malevich's black square, Pandora's box, the camera obscura or a magic box. It gets bigger and bigger. «The Assembly», a recent black & white photo in which the artist transforms into a group of Muslim women around a cube on a table, hung in a cube the size of a room. Together they form «Construction cubique ou la pensée confuse». Whatever he undertakes, he always considers man's present-day confusion in an increasingly confused world.

Christine Vuegen
translated by Gregory Ball



Equilibre aux tapis, plaster and carpets, 2012



Couleur champagne, neon, 2009



Mouvement décomposé, Lambda print, 85 x 143 cm, 2011

BIOGRAPHY

Born in 1983 at Les Sables d'Olonne, France, Mehdi-Georges Lahlou lives and works in Brussels

Formation

2010

Post-graduate, St-Joost Academie, Breda (NL)

2007

Ecole des Beaux-Arts, Nantes, France

Master multimedia, cultural mediation and patrimony management, Angers, France

Solo Exhibitions

2011

- *Arts 10+1*, La Médiatime art center, Brussels, Belgium

- *Crochapoax*, Gand, Belgium

- residency at Espace Point CA, Alma, Quebec, Canada

2010

- *Kunstraum Richard Sorge*, Berlin

- *Les talons d'Allah*, Galerie Dix9, Paris

- Show Off Paris, Galerie Dix9

- *Les talons d'Allah*, galerie Transit, Belgium

Artist Project, Art Brussels, 2010

2009

- *Cocktail II*, Galerie M'atuvu, Brussels

- *Quelqu'un m'a dit que le Merveilleux était réculé*, Leo XIII, Tilburg, NL

Group Exhibitions

2012

- *Le corps découvert*, Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris

- Slick Brussels art fair, Galerie Dix9

- *Impertinence*, Musée Iankevici, Louvière, Belgium

- *The gate watcher*, Art and Amicitiae, Amsterdam

2011

- *Flying Camel*, Galerie Binyamin, Tel Aviv, Israel

- Marrakech Art Fair, Galerie Dix9

- *Anarchisations*, Fiac, France, curators Jackie Ruth Meyer, Pascal Pique and Patrick Tarres

- *Nature et paysage*, Espace d'art, Société générale Casablanca, Marocco

- Photo LA, Los Angeles, Galerie Dix9

2010

- *Try to december*, galerie Transit, Mechelen, Belgium

- *Confrontaties, de grote visser eten de kleine*, Voormalige Werkhuizen E. Devis N.V., Mechelen, Belgium

- Version festival, Chicago, USA

- Art Brussels, Galerie Transit, Belgium

- *Anti Beeld*, Amsterdam, NL

- Breda's Museum, Breda, NL

- *Kunstvlaai*, with the Brakke Grond, Amsterdam

2009

- *Pleurer et Bonheur*, Vienna International

Apartment, Brussels

- *Jeune Création 2009*, Le CentQuatre, Paris

- *Turn on*, Artivistic 2009, Montreal

- *Cocktail*, T.A.G., Bruxelles

- *Window Project by Night*, M.A.A.C., Brussels

- *Strange overtone II*, Lokaal 01, Anvers, Belgium

- *Strange Overtone*, Artis, Den Bosch, NL

2008

- *sos-art.com*, L'Avant Rue, Paris

- *Siteparasite*, La RTT, Bruxelles

- *Houseproud*, Vanabbemuseum, Eindhoven, NL

2007

- *Quartier Ecentrique*, Minard Schouwburg, Gand

2006

- *Glissement de terrain*, Galerie sur l'herbe, Nantes

2005

- *Hip hip oral*, Alain le Bras, Nantes, France

- *A 4 A5*, Ateliers Felix Thomas, Nantes, France

2004

- *La forêt*, Théâtre de Cornouaille, Quimper, France

Performances

2010

- *C'est Charmant ou les talons d'Allah*, Fiac, France

- *C'est Charmant IV*, Arti and Amicitiae, Amsterdam

- *C'est Charmant V* et *Hommage à nous-même*,

Kunstvkaauw avec the Brakke Grond, Amsterdam

- *C'est Charmant III*, Festival Version, Chicago

2009

- *Stupidité contrôlée*, Vienna International Apartment, Brussels

- *C'est Charmant I & II*, Le CentQuatre, Paris

- *Course de 8 km en chaussures rouges à talons 11 cm*

entre deux lieux d'art: from Mechelen (Galerie Transit) to Anvers (Lokaal 01)

- *On en veut du merveilleux*, Art Brussels

- *Saut de baies en chaussures rouges à talon sur carrelage mosaïque*, Artis. Den Bosch, NL

- *Exploit sportif en corde à sauté dans escarpins rouges*, Nieuwe Dingen Gastatekuern Tilburg, NL

2008

- 3 performances in the exhibition Siteparasite,

RTT Bruxelles: *The Prayer - Al Fatihah, Reys VS*

Coran, La Bonne à l'Enfant

- 3 performances during the festival Quartier Excentrique. Minard Schouwburg, Gand

- Organiseur of the performances festival Hip hip hip Oral, Atelier Le Bras' in Nantes: *Justine et Je vous aime*

2004

- *Particules privées n°2, 3 et 4*, Esplanade François

Mitterand, Quimper, France

- *Particules privées n°1*, Galerie de l'ESBAC, Quimper

- *Le supplice de Tantale*, ESBAC, Quimper, France

Videos and installation

2009

- *Dévoilé en Confort*, Installation and video, le CentQuatre, Paris

- *On en veut du Merveilleux !*, Art Brussels

- *Stupidité Contrôlée I & II*, Nieuwe Dingen Gastatelier, Tilburg, NL

2008

- *The Prayer - Al fatihan*, Brussels

2007

- *Et je sombre*, Atelier sur l'herbe, Nantes

- *Orchestre moi-même*, Installation

- *Flamenco*, Video, Ecole des Beaux-Arts, Nantes

2006

- *Mémoires de chutes*, Atelier sur l'herbe, Nantes

- *A vous Mesdames*, video installation

2005

- *A l'envers la magie*, Galerie Artem, Quimper

- *Sans artifice Juste Marilyn Monroe*, Ateliers Felix Thomas, Nantes

2004

- *Le supplice de Tantale*, Ecole des Beaux-Arts,

Quimper, France

Danse / Spectacles

2007

- *Optimistic VS Pessimistic*, Alkran Company, festival «Let'S Dance», le Lieu Unique, Nantes

2004

- Assistant of choreographer Maria Ribot - creation of *40 Espontaneos*, Centre Chorégraphique le Quartz, Brest, France

2003

- Danser for 2 representations with company of Le Douare, Quimper, France