

Parasol unit

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Press Release

Adel Abdessemed: *Silent Warriors*

22 September– 21 November 2010 (Private view: 21 September 6.30–9 pm)



Images: *Enter the circle*, 2009 (detail), video, 3 mins (loop), colour, sound, charcoal on wood, drawing composed of 10 panels; Overall dimensions: 491 x 716 cm, Image © Adel Abdessemed, courtesy the artist and David Zwirner, New York; *Habibi*, 2003, resin, fibreglass, polystyrene and aeroplane engine turbine, 17 metres, Collection of Mamco, acquired thanks to BFAS, Blondeau Fine Art, © Mamco, Genève; photo: Stephen White; *Music box*, 2009, steel, 96.5 x 172.7 x 88.9 cm. Image © Adel Abdessemed, courtesy the artist and David Zwirner, New York.

Parasol unit foundation for contemporary art is delighted to present the first solo exhibition dedicated to the work of **Adel Abdessemed** in London. Working across a wide range of different media, including sculpture, installation, video, photography and drawings, Abdessemed passionately tackles difficult subject matter and taboos within society and presents them as naked truth. Yet beyond their often challenging and provocative appearance, his works embody the fragility of life and are deeply imbued with beauty and poetry. Abdessemed's exhibition at Parasol unit highlights precisely the vulnerability and aesthetic sensitivity in the work of this important twenty-first century artist.

Silent Warriors is organised around two of Abdessemed's major works. In the ground floor gallery, *Habibi*, 2003, a 17-metre human skeleton made of fibreglass hangs horizontally from its spine together with an aeroplane propeller. Occupying the first floor is a new installation entitled *silent warrior*, which comprises over 800 colourful masks made from found and discarded empty tin cans, once used in Africa to contain food provisions or industrial and poisonous materials.

According to the artist, *Habibi*, which is the Arabic word for the masculine form of address for *my beloved*, is a self portrait. As he notes: *I have often said that Habibi was a self portrait because I like to think when I am lying on the floor, unlike Giacometti's Man Walking or Rodin's Thinker or a Buddha. I do my thinking laid flat out on my stomach in a position that resembles taking off or hovering.*¹ A metaphor for passage, the propeller offers a threshold between life and death and provides the vital propulsion for the piece.

¹ 'Adel Abdessemed in conversation with Elisabeth Lebovici', *À l'attaque*, JRP Ringier, April 2007, p. 165.

Silent Warriors also includes other works, such as *ALSO SPRACH ALLAH*, 2008; *Enter the circle*, 2009; the sculptural piece *Music box*, 2009, which plays a brief excerpt from Wagner's opera *Die Walküre (The Valkyrie)*; and *Moscow (five sisters)*, 2010, another new installation. *Moscow (five sisters)* is made of clear hand-blown glass and consists of five pairs of skates modelled on ice skates used by Russian figure skaters. All these works reflect Abdessemed's ongoing exploration of ideas surrounding violence, truth and beauty.

An exhibition catalogue with insightful essays by Ziba Ardalán, Gilane Tawadros and Guy Tortosa will be published and distributed worldwide.

Adel Abdessemed was born in Algeria in 1971. He moved to Lyon, France in 1994 and to Paris in 1999. In 2000–2001 he took part in the International Studio Program at P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, New York, which was followed by a stay in Berlin. Since 2004, Abdessemed has lived and worked in Paris. Abdessemed's solo exhibitions include: *Habibi*, Fonds Régional d'Art Contemporain Champagne-Ardenne, Reims, France, 2004; *Happiness in Mitte*, Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, England, 2005; *Dead or Alive*, P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, Long Island City, New York, 2007; *Situation and Practice*, List Visual Arts Center, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA, 2008; *R/O*, David Zwirner, New York, 2009; and most recently *Les ailes de dieu*, Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin, Italy, 2009. Abdessemed's work has been included in numerous important group exhibitions including: *Notre Histoire* at the Palais de Tokyo, Paris, 2006; the Venice Biennial, 2007; Istanbul Biennial, 2007; and the São Paulo Biennial, 2006. He has works in the collections of: Mamco, Fondation Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain de Genève, Geneva, Switzerland; Fondation François Pinault, Venice, Italy; The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, Israel; and the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France.

Visitor information

Gallery opening hours: Tuesday–Saturday, 10 am–6 pm; Sunday, 12–5 pm
Admission: Free

Directions:

From Old Street Tube station, leave via Exit 1 and walk up City Road for five minutes. Turn right into Wharf Road after passing the Texaco petrol station.

From Angel Tube station, turn left and walk down City Road for ten minutes before turning left into Wharf Road at the Texaco petrol station.

Buses 43, 205 and 214 all travel down City Road.

Note to editors

Parasol unit foundation for contemporary art is an independent educational charity devoted to promoting contemporary art for the benefit of the public. The core activity of the foundation is to showcase contemporary work of leading and young international artists who work in a variety of media. In conjunction with each exhibition Parasol unit organises a series of talks and educational events. Parasol unit mounts four exhibitions a year, most of which are accompanied by a publication. To encourage the widest possible access to its exhibition programme, Parasol unit does not charge admission fees for its exhibitions.