

גלריה דביר DVIR GALLERY

Adel Abdessemed

Le Chagrin des Belges

Dvir Gallery Brussels
2018



ADEL ABDESSEMED

Dvir Gallery is pleased to present *Le Chagrin des Belges* by Adel Abdessemed, marking his first exhibition in our Brussels location. Its title, *Le Chagrin des Belges* ("The Sorrow of Belgium") is taken from the eponymously titled novel by prominent Belgian writer Hugo Claus. The exhibition will run concurrently with two major solo shows by the artist: Otchi Tchiornie at the Musée des Arts Contemporains du Grand-Hornu, Belgium and *L'Antidote* at MAC Lyon, France.

Adel Abdessemed's work has been shown worldwide: at the Venice Biennale (2003, 2007, 2015); the Istanbul Biennial (2007, 2017); the Biennale de Lyon (2007); the Havana Biennial (2009); the São Paulo Biennale (2006); the Yokohama Triennale (2001) and Manifesta (Ljubljana, 2000). Solo exhibitions include PS1/MoMA, New York; MIT List Art Center, Cambridge; Musée National d'Art Moderne – Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris and Mathaf, Doha. In 2016 Koenig Books London published a three-volume monograph dedicated to the artist entitled "Adel Abdessemed, Works 1988–2015".

Using various media such as drawing, installation, performance, video, and sculpture, Abdessemed unveils the intensity of the present moment and "ignites" our perception on his own terms. He refuses concepts such as "The End of History" by taking both familiar or forgotten images and treating them as raw material. In turn, the viewer is invited to experience the physical and transformative nature of his work.

For *Le Chagrin des Belges*, Abdessemed extends an invitation for viewers to enter into a world of haunting stories and images. The works on show, all entitled *Feux*, are made from a natural element born of destruction, but also used for drawing: charcoal. These pieces embody the atrocities committed in the Belgian Congo under the reign of Leopold II, the Belgian king who claimed the colony as his own personal property for twenty-four years.

Six sculptures echo the shape of doors, opening onto Hell and reminding us of the torture inflicted in the colonies. These allegorical works also conjure up the image of Adam and Eve being cast out of paradise, as in Masaccio's fresco at the Brancacci Chapel in Florence.

Sculptures of severed and burnt hands are amassed, bearing witness to a sheer quantity of human suffering and loss of life while two spherical sculptures in charred wood bring torment and abstraction together. Each of these pieces function as a testament of history. The work offers a form of humanity where we can contemplate our own terror.

As the artist himself said: "When I am invited to a country, in this case Belgium, I examine what I can possibly create and, while roaming through the nation's history and past, I stumble upon something that haunts me. I came across images of hands being severed as punishment in the Belgian Congo. I began thinking about Adam and Eve's expulsion from the Garden of Eden. The torture scene in Pasolini's *Mamma Roma* also came to mind, which then led me to Mantegna's paintings. Being confronted with such images is like opening the door to a nightmare; as I see it, these visions haunt the country, they haunt me and now also collectively haunt us."



ADEL ABDESSEMED, *Feux*, 2017, unique, 125 cm ø chaque, bois de tilleul, carbonisé