

The interest in Younes Atbane's work can be accounted for by the following: The plurality of his practices; his ability to slide from one discipline into another – between contemporary dance and visual arts, photography, installation, and performance; The exploratory nature of his work, which brings together performative and narrative practices; The nature of his work which shows both discursive and formal qualities. As a sharp analyst of the artistic field – its components, and the dynamics between cultural player – Younes Atbane redefines the status of the artist and his role in the writing of history.

The project which drew my attention in particular is a performance titled “The Second Copy 2045 that explores this very thin border line between fiction and documentary, as well as the prospective potential of the narrative. During this conference-performance, the artist proposes what he calls a filmed testimony to which he grants the status of a document. This document is meant to be incorporated into a future documentary which the artist expects to produce in 2043. The performance conference is an imaginary narrative of the historical remnants of today's Moroccan art and culture. The artist deals with the issues pertaining to the role of art institutions, the artist's social responsibility, and to the commitment of alternative structures, in a context largely characterized by the disaffection of public institutions.

The artist chooses an essentially descriptive rhetoric which boils down to making explicit the conditions for the emergence of a historical conscience geared toward the understanding of contemporary art between 2000 and 2015. His description is peppered with details and anecdotes about actors in the field of art and aims at asserting the most significant art events. The viewer is faced with a scenario which is both strange and humorous, a mix of factual and fictional narratives, which make the situation described a potentially credible one. The seemingly useless or minor details which adorn Younes Atbane's factual narratives are exactly the ones to which Barthes attributes “the reality effect” in the description, these “insignificant notations” which are guarantor of veracity<sup>1</sup>. The writer proposes a narrative of “what could happen”, which he treats as a real historic fact, a kind of speculation about history elaborated on the basis of current reality. The gesture of the artist, who is both the subject matter and the author of the narrative, aims at asking questions relating to possible representations of history, to the people who take up the writing of history, and to historiographical undertaking.

Not only is the border line between fiction and documentary erased in this project, but the intertwining between fictional and factual narratives is an invitation to question, among other things, the uses of prospective narratives – these « futures-made present oriented toward a not yet » in the work of history, according to Ricœur's phrasing. Prospective, as a discursive practice, would thus find its critical potential, not in verifiable forecasts but in the questioning of the present as it is stated in strange, ambiguous, or utopian narratives, the strength of which lies in the invitation to spot the points where change is possible and desirable.

Fatima zahra Krissa

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<sup>1</sup> Roland Barthes, «L'effet de réel», *Le bruissement de la langue. Essais Critiques IV*, Paris, Seuil, 1993, p. 167-174.