

Latifa Echakhch

Hadash

December 13, 2014 – January 17, 2015

Adolescence, with its assorted baggage of mixed ideals, has a certain naiveté about it.

Looking back at that, which turned us both outward and against everything, we cannot but do it with bemused sympathy. That courage to leap from up high, to play among the gravestones, to pen manifestos on peace and friendship.

Such writings may have been kept secret, hidden for decades in the pages of diaries, and youthful defiance is surely made easier when roaming in bands; the same goes for the ground on which one plays, whose sheer gravity is easily forgotten by youthful distractions. Yet at the time we were quite certain of that, that we were *the new*. Such are the moments that Latifa Echakhch evokes in her current exhibition, instances of a time elapsed and forgotten.

Carian Hmimar, which translates as “reddish shantytown,” refers to Mediouna, a town in the vicinity of Casablanca, Morocco. A peripheral implant on the city’s outskirts, its children have made the adjacent cemetery into a playground, coming there regularly to play.

The single-shot video shows two boys at play. Shot at nightfall, the boys heckle one another and play at throwing pebbles. The surrounding graveyard is barely visible at first, as we are at the cemetery’s older quarter, where gravestones are overgrown with brambles and bushes. We only perceive them towards the end of the video, at the right edge of the frame, when the camera moves away from the children who have now concluded their game.

A small vignette of everyday life in the Moroccan slum of Carian Hmimar. It is filled with the simple insouciance of two children at play, whose chosen playground would normally bring to mind gravity and solemnity.

A second video on show is titled **Jadid**, Arabic for “new,” (or the Hebrew *Hadash* of the exhibition’s title). The name is taken from Al Jadid, a port city on the Moroccan shore where these images were taken. Local youngsters play at dive jumping from fortified walls, jumping one by one in succession for hours on end.

Their jumps, several meters high, are risky, yet they brave the danger and perform them with blind innocence. As we watch them hurl themselves one by one into the void, we are overcome by mixed feelings of joy and fear boarding on euphoria. One would gladly join them if it hadn’t been for the caution and diminishing courage that comes with age.

Vendredi 11 août 1989 consists of eight paragraph outtakes cut in vinyl letters. Originally stuck on the wall, they have later been removed, giving visitors the impression that they have entered the exhibition shortly after being dismantled, with its residues still lying on the floor.

Except for a few clusters of words here and there, it is nearly impossible to make out their meaning, and their significance can only be conjectured.

The text was written by the artist at the age of 14, and is highly characteristic of a guarded youth, with its dreams of love and peace. It is a form of statement, an engagement that could have come from just about any boy or girl of that age, riddled as it is with misspellings, swerves and inconsistencies. It is full of a naively idealist sentiment that is both endearing and pathetic to read. The text’s destruction marks a time elapsed, a page turned; that upon which one declares their intention to change the world. But it is also a time of greater innocence and reserve, where words still leave room for silence.