

TAREK LAKHRISSI MY IMMORTAL

3 JULY - 19 SEPTEMBER 2021
GALLERY 2-5

My Immortal is the first UK institutional solo exhibition by **Tarek Lakhrissi**. This new commission consists of existing and new work comprising film, sculpture and text presented as an installation across the gallery spaces. Rooted in poetry, Lakhrissi's practice seeks to challenge contemporary constructs of language and narratives around minoritised⁽¹⁾ communities.

Taking the 2003 song 'My Immortal' by American pop group Evanescence^(a) as its title, the exhibition reflects upon the notion of community, particularly a queer⁽²⁾ community which it considers as a complex, fragile and ephemeral entity. On the one hand it can offer possibilities of love, empowerment and protection but also nightmares and fears. English poet John Milton's 17th century poem 'Paradise Lost'^(b) serves as an illustration of the tension played out in the exhibition: whilst the possibility of a community offers paradisiacal⁽³⁾ solace, it can also be easily lost through its fragilities.

The exhibition starts with a film *The Art of Losing* (2021) which shows two figures in a loving embrace, setting the scene for the rest of the installation. Reflective metal plaques, each inscribed with new poems about desire, loss and personal mythologies written by Lakhrissi act as totems for different members of his close community. The permanence of the metallic media counter the ephemerality and fragility of communal love addressed in the works themselves.

This tension is further heightened by two new works and an existing

installation presented in dialogue in the two final gallery spaces. The first, a new sculpture formed of two metallic angel wings, *Gay Angel I* and *Gay Angel II* (2021) pays homage to the Greek myth of Icarus^(c) who fell to his death as his wings dissolved when approaching the sun.

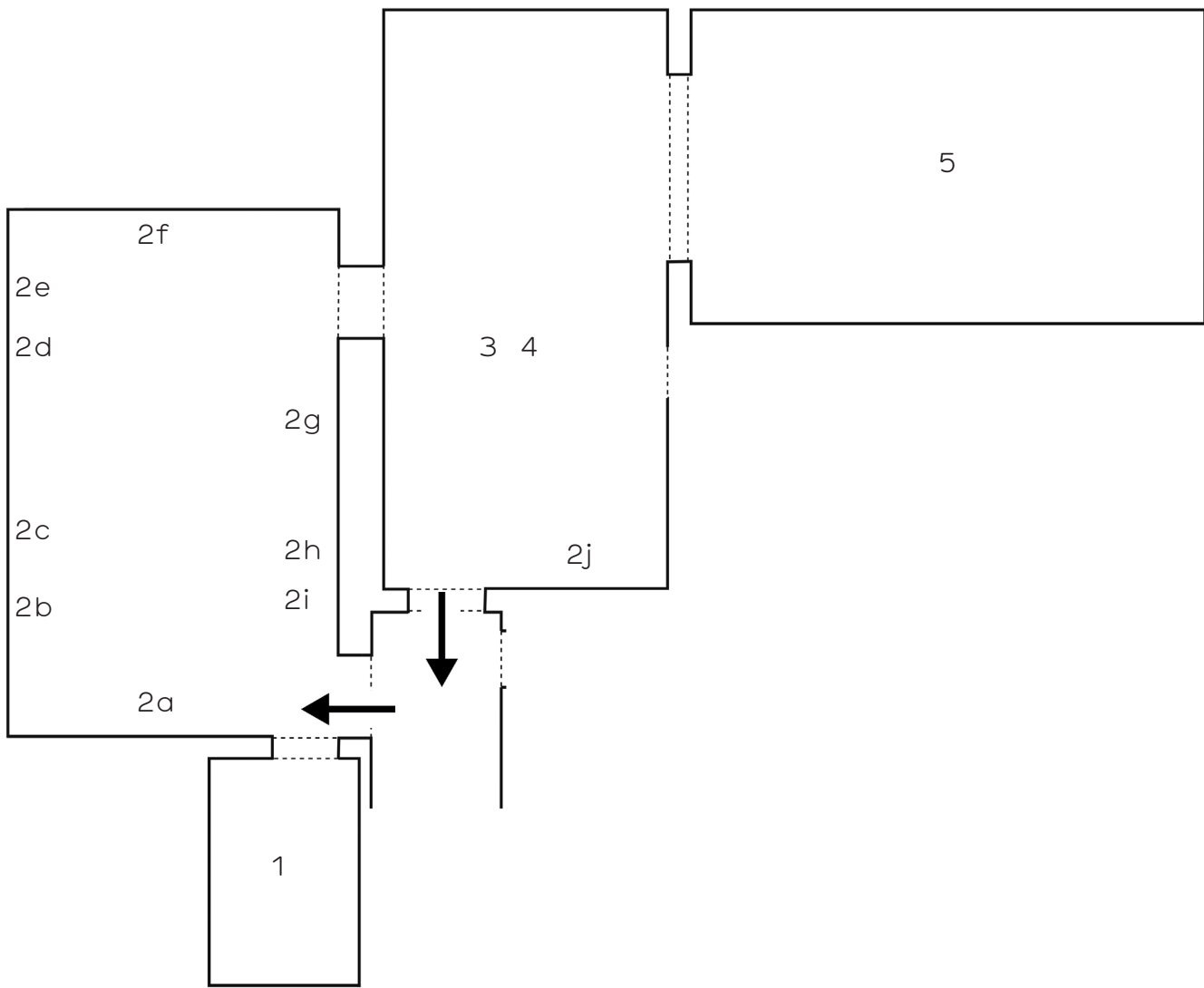
This 'non-monument'⁽⁴⁾ foregrounds an existing installation *Unfinished Sentence II* (2020). Metallic spears, peppered across the gallery ceiling form a cosmic constellation that references French feminist⁽⁵⁾ writer and activist Monique Wittig's seminal book *Les Guérillères*^(d) (1969), a fictional novel describing an army of female warriors that form an insurrection⁽⁵⁾ against men. The metallic works are bathed in a purple light that references both the militant feminist movement^(e) that Wittig was a part of as well as Lavender Menace^(f), a lesbian feminist collective founded in New York in the 1970s. These historical feminist literary and militant figures are put into dialogue with contemporary popular culture through a sound work which permeates the gallery spaces. Composed by artist and close collaborator *Ndayé Kouagou*, this sound piece borrows from the theme tunes of the 90s TV series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*^(g) and *Xena: Warrior Princess*^(h) to form an abstracted, threatening and contemplative sonic landscape. The exhibition becomes a battleground, a metaphor for notions of defence and self-defence and, in so doing, a symbol of love and transformative narratives.

So in the midst of despair, I have come to believe that love – the feeling of love, the politics of love, the ethics and ideology and embodiment of love – is the only good option in this time of the apocalypse.

Kai Cheng Thom, I Hope We Choose Love: A Trans Girl's Notes from the End of the World, 2019

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Tarek Lakhrissi is a visual artist and a poet based in Paris (FR) and Brussels (BE). He currently teaches at CCC Research Master Programme of the Visual Arts Department at HEAD (Geneva School of Art and Design). Lakhrissi has been exhibited internationally at galleries and institutions including: Museum of Contemporary Art; Biennale of Sydney (2020), Wiels; Brussels (2020), Palais de Tokyo; Paris (2020), Palazzo Re Rebaudengo/Sandretto, Guarene/Torino (2020), Quadriennale di Roma; Palazzo delle Esposizioni, Rome (2020), High Art; Paris (2020), Hayward Gallery; London (2019), Auto Italia South East; London (2019), Grand Palais, FIAC; Paris (2019), Fondation Lafayette Anticipations; Paris (2019), L'Espace Arlaud; Lausanne (2019), Zabriskie; Geneva (2019), Fondation Gulbenkian; Paris (2018), CRAC Alsace; Altkirch, France (2019), Kim?; Riga (2018), Arttexte; Montreal (2017), Gaité Lyrique; Paris (2017), SMC/CAC; Vilnius (2017). He is represented by VITRINE Gallery (London - Basel) and is shortlisted for the 22nd Fondation Pernod Ricard Prize (2020-2021).



LIST OF WORKS

Courtesy the Artist and VITRINE

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|---|---|
| <p>1) The Art of Losing (<i>Love Scene</i>), 2021
 HD Single channel video
 1 min 49 sec
 CGI: Sybil Montet
 Music Composer: Fatma Pnumonia
 Produced by Maison Populaire,
 Paris, FR</p> | <p>3) Gay Angel 1, 2021
 Metal
 180 × 80 × 80cm</p> |
| <p>2) Metal Tablets
 Engraved Aluminium
 110 × 70 × 0.5cm</p> | <p>4) Gay Angel 2, 2021
 Metal
 180 × 80 × 80cm</p> |
| <p>2a. To kiss your head, 2021
 2b. <i>A message to the fans II</i>, 2021
 2c. <i>Dysfunctional Moon</i>, 2021
 2d. <i>Home</i>, 2021
 2e. <i>Holy Contract</i>, 2021
 2f. <i>Fusion</i>, 2021
 2g. <i>A message to the fans</i>, 2021
 2h. <i>Possibly maybe</i>, 2021
 2i. <i>Trahi Trahi</i>, 2021
 2j. <i>Whisper secrets</i>, 2021</p> | <p>5) Unfinished Sentence II, 2020
 30 metal spears, chains,
 colour filter loud speakers,
 Soundtrack in collaboration with
 Ndayé Kouagou
 Dimensions Variable
 Commissioned by Palais de Tokyo,
 Paris (FR)</p> |

GLOSSARY

- 1) **Minoritised:** A term coined by Yasmin Gunaratnum in 2003. It describes the way the dominant social group in a society uses language to define or categorise another ethnic or social group, usually in a way which establishes a difference in power that benefits the former.
- 2) **Queer:** A term used to describe a gender or sexual minority. Originally used as an insult, it was reclaimed by the LGBTQI+ community in late 20th Century.
- 3) **Paradisical:** Adopted from the word Paradise, which is often used to describe a place or state which is peaceful, heavenly and beautiful.
- 4) **Non-monument:** Also known as an anti-monument, is an artwork in a public space which opposes existing symbols of power such as statues and plaques.
- 5) **Feminist:** A person who advocates for womens rights and gender equality.

REFERENCES

- a) **My Immortal** (2003), Evanescence. NGR Recording Studios. Released through Wind-up Records.
- b) **Paradise Lost** (1667) John Milton. First edition published by Samuel Simmons.
- c) **Daedalus and Icarus**, The Oxford Companion to World Mythology (2005) David Leeming. Published by Oxford University Press.
- d) **Les Guérillères** (1969), Monique Wittig. Published by Les Éditions de Minuit
- e) **Libération des femmes le M.L.F.** (1981), Naty Garcia Guadilla n. published by PUF. Published by Perseus
- f) **Tales Of The Lavender Menace: A Memoir Of Liberation** (2000), Karla Ja
- g) **Buffy the Vampire Slayer** (1997 - 2003), Mutant Enemy Productions. 20th Century Fox Television
- h) **Xena: Warrior Princess** (1995 - 2001), Renaissance Pictures. MCA TV (95-97), Universal (1997-98), Studio USA Television (1998-2001)

OPENING TIMES

GALLERY

Tue - Sun: 11:00 - 16:00

CAFE

Tue - Sun: 11:00 - 16:00

SHOP

Tue - Sun: 11:00 - 16:00

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