

Massinissa Selmani  
*a fault in the mirage*

March 8 - April 27, 2024

*"Drawing is a way of reasoning on paper."*  
- Saul Steinberg

Jane Lombard Gallery is pleased to present a *fault in the mirage*, the first solo exhibition in the United States by gallery artist Massinissa Selmani. Through drawing, collage, animation, and sculpture, the presented works combine decontextualized documentary photography with drawn motifs that ambiguously allude to narratives of power and authority.

Referencing Susan Sontag's 2004 essay *Regarding the Pain of Others*, Selmani notes that

drawings, rather than providing yet another example of linear history, are meant to *evoke* rather than *show*. *A fault in the mirage* highlights elements of humor, tragedy, and the absurd, evoking individualized narratives to be filled by reminiscences of the imagination. Recurring symbols such as walls, barriers, monuments, flags, and targets are preserved across media as non-specific contextual cues that serve to both provoke emotion and confound reason. Principally delineated by graphite, Selmani's grayscale figures and motifs are contrasted by bursts of colored pencil at key points in the composition. The artist sources many of his drawn figures from disparate newspaper photographs, situating them within settings of impossible architecture to create novel, imaginative contexts that mirror the abstractive capacity of his memory. In *Uncertain Rules*, the artist builds an oneiric scene of absurd humor, featuring a girl stacking large stones on top of an inflated red balloon that is placed on the raised end of a see-saw. The other end of the plank is weighed down by a monument-like bust, set before a strange configuration of wall, window, and ladder that fails to prevent or facilitate any intrusion. Indications of setting or the passage of time are suggested simply by traces of the absent - shadows, light, and perspective - set against a meticulously rendered skyscape of billowing clouds. Selmani's *mise-en-scènes* are snapshots in space and time, suspended situations that call upon the visual and perceptual memory of the viewer to render them strangely familiar yet firmly unplaceable.

Selmani's sculptural and installation works activate the gallery space to render his fabricated world in the third dimension, giving visitors an epistemological encounter with the absurd. Vague excerpts like "but then" or "into" carry the pretense of clarification while further entrenching the scene in confusion. The presented animations feature clips of nonsensical, comical actions, but the loop that remains in



# JANE LOMBARD GALLERY

time turns it toward tragedy. The animation *La place et le lieu* depicts a bird attached via a string to the lower half of a monument; tasked with eternally beating its wings, the bird is frozen in place as the force of its futile flapping holds the statue marginally suspended. Charged with non-specific political and nationalist critique, Selmani notes that his work aims “to show the unfathomable, to build a network of associations between ideas and forms, and to think of art for what it does to us rather than what it tells us.”<sup>1</sup>

---

## About Massinissa Selmani

Massinissa Selmani (b. 1980, Algiers) is an artist living and working in Tours, France and Tizi-Ouzou, Algeria. Selmani studied computer science in Algeria and graduated from the École supérieure des beaux-arts in Tours, France. In 2015, Massinissa Selmani received a special mention at the 56th Venice Biennale, curated by Okwui Onwezor. He was also the winner of the Art Collector Prize (France) and the SAM Art Projects Prize for Contemporary Art (France) in 2016. In 2023, Selmani was shortlisted for the Marcel Duchamp Prize.

Selected solo and group exhibitions include the 56th Venice Biennale, IT; Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, FR; Taipei biennial 2023, TW; the Palais de Tokyo, Paris, FR; Sharjah Biennial 13, UAE; Modern Art Oxford, UK; IVAM Valencia, ESP; Zachęta National Gallery, Warsaw, PL; the 13th Biennale de Lyon, FR; Centre de Création Contemporaine Olivier Debré (CCC OD) of Tours, FR; Museum of African Art, Belgrade, RS; The Mosaic Rooms, London, UK; 11th Dakar Biennial, SN; UGM Maribor, SI; Banjoun station, CMRN, among others. Collections include the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, FR; MAC Lyon, FR; Samdani Art Foundation, Dhaka, BANG; Frac Centre Val de Loire, FR; Centre National des Arts Plastiques (CNAP), FR; Fonds d’Art contemporain – Paris collections, FR and the British Museum, London, UK. Selmani’s work is featured in the publications *African Art Now* (Ilex/Tate), *Vitamin D3: Today’s Best in Contemporary Drawing* (Phaidon), and *Drawing in the Present Tense* (Thames & Hudson). An extensive monograph covering the artist’s work was published by Skira in 2023.

Sales Inquiries: [lisa@janelombardgallery.com](mailto:lisa@janelombardgallery.com) | [ariel@janelombardgallery.com](mailto:ariel@janelombardgallery.com)

Press Inquiries: [press@janelombardgallery.com](mailto:press@janelombardgallery.com)

---

<sup>1</sup> Massinissa Selmani, quoted in Roger Malbert, “Massinissa Selmani,” *Burlington Contemporary* Issue 8: Drawing (June 2023). In collaboration with Drawing Room, London), doi.org/10.31452/bcj8.malbert.selmani