

Hoda Tawakol "Silent Voices in a Palm Grove" at Dortmunder Kunstverein, Dortmund

19.05.2023

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Hoda Tawakol "Silent Voices in a Palm Grove" at Dortmunder Kunstverein, Dortmund, 2023. Courtesy: the artist, Dortmunder Kunstverein, Gallery Isabelle van den Eynde. Photo: Mareike Tocha

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"Where there is power, there is resistance. And yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power" ¹

Control over another person's body can be a tool of pleasure or a means of violence. Oscillating between sensuality and brutality, the large-format textile sculptures by Franco-Egyptian artist Hoda Tawakol attract the gaze and make social power structures visible. They transform the new premises of the Kunstverein into a palm grove, a place of fruitful utopias and of resistance. The power of the gaze is one of art's inherent issues, and it also appears in stories and folk beliefs—from the Eye of Horus to the Hand of Fatima. In many ways Hoda Tawakol turns the power of the gaze into a protagonist: as rapprochement and reassurance between people, between people and objects, but also as control over bodies, control over stimuli. As an interplay of allure, seduction and the suppression of reflexes or conditions, people and bodies. As power over access and exclusion. "Silent Voices in a Palm Grove," rising up from the undergrowth in the cover of twilight. They fight for freedom by reversing the means of repression. They are robed as warriors in armour made of hair, and they stand—like the visitors to the exhibition—behind a large curtain that protects the Kunstverein from prying eyes. In this exhibition Hoda Tawakol recurrently plays with scale in order to spell out the violence of certain cultural practices and patriarchal social structures: there is a shift here from the head to the whole body—from the braided mesh of the veil to the intricate mashrabiyya (ornamental wooden lattice used in the architecture of the Arabic-speaking world as permeable walls and windows on balconies or in courtyards). Or she transfers the formal language of the tiny leather falcon lures to attractors of her own: larger-than-life textile structures whose organic forms recall human body parts rather than the lumps of meat for training birds of prey. For the upper space Tawakol has created a trellis structure based on the layout of the men's area (*Salamlek*) of the famous Bayt Al-Suhaymi, the house of Sheikh Al-Suhaymi in Medieval Cairo. Traditionally reserved for male visitors, this space is open to all in the exhibition, and in it Tawakol presents ten falcon masks enlarged to human proportions. With her first institutional solo exhibition, Hoda Tawakol brings a utopian realm into being in the Kunstverein. A glowing palm grove that radiates out into the surrounding city, visible from afar.

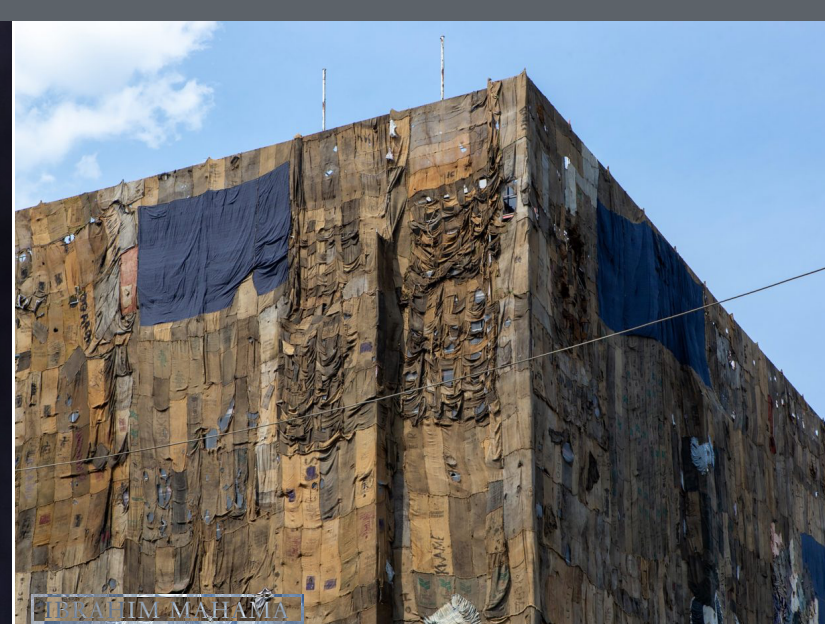
Curated by
Rebekka Seubert

at Dortmunder Kunstverein, Dortmund
until June 11, 2023

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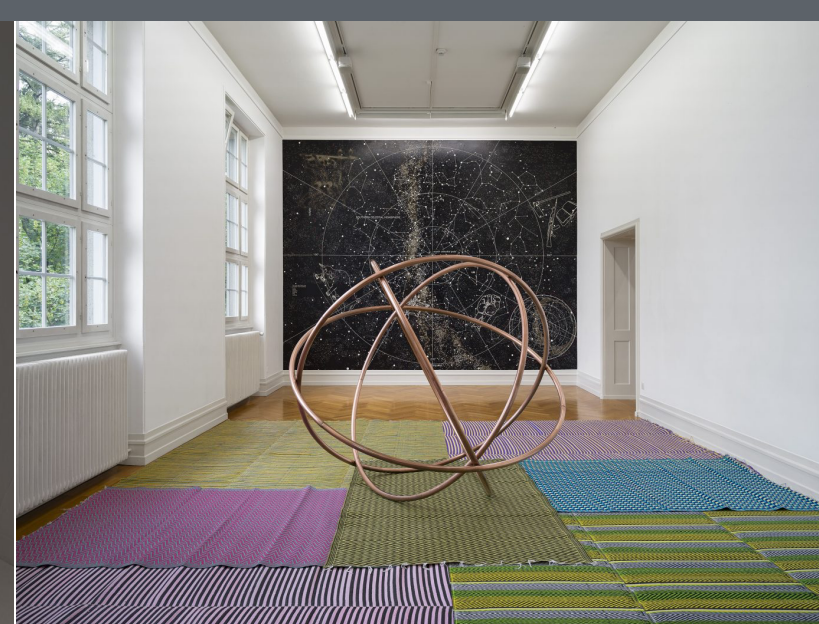
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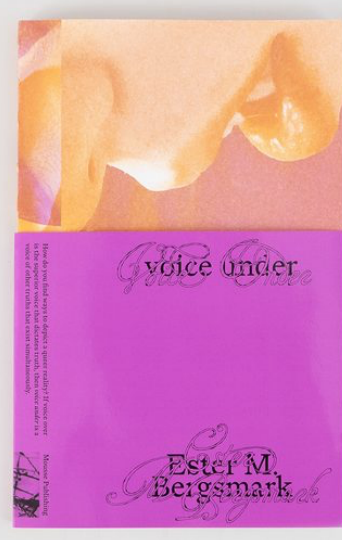


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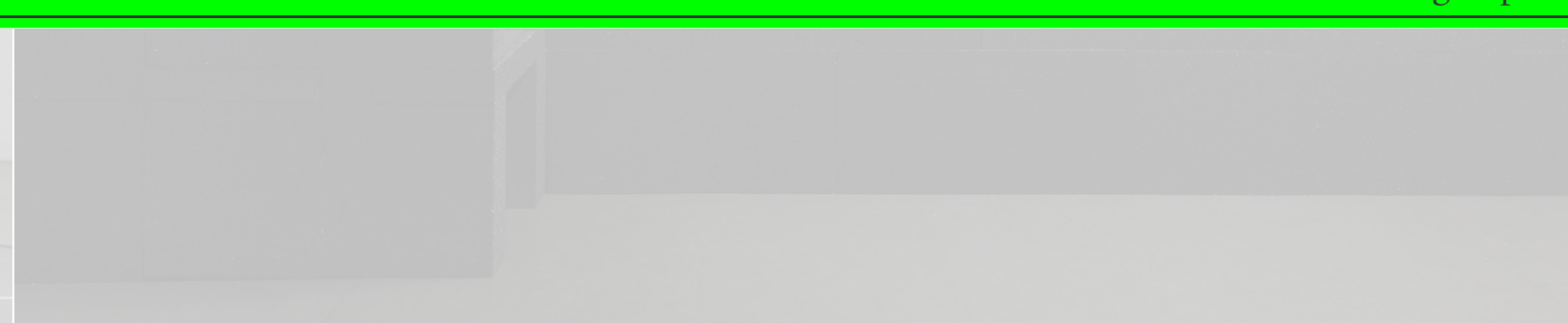
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